

# Indus Valley Writing

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# The Harrapan Writing

Archaeological and linguistic evidence indicates that the Dravidians were the founders of the Harappan culture which extended from the Indus Valley through northeastern Afghanistan, on into Turkestan. The Harappan civilization existed from 2600-1700 BC. The Harappan civilization was twice the size the Old Kingdom of Egypt. In addition to trade relations with Mesopotamia and Iran, the Harappan city states also had active trade relations with the Central Asian peoples.

To compensate for the adverse ecological conditions, the Harappans first settled sites along the Indus river. (Fairervis 1987:48) The Dravido-Harappans occupied over 1,000 sites in the riverine Indus Valley environments where they had soil and water reserves. The Harappan sites are spread from the Indus Valley to Ai Kharnoum in northeastern Afghanistan and southward into India. In Baluchistan and Afghanistan Dravidian languages are still spoken today. Other Harappan sites have been found scattered in the regions adjacent to the Arabian sea, the Derajat, Kashmir, and the Doab.

The Indus region is an area of uncertain rains because it is located on the fringes of the monsoon. Settlers in the Indus Valley had to suffer frequent droughts and floods. Severe droughts frequently occurred in the Indus Valley so the people dug wells to insure for themselves a safe supply of water.

To compensate for the adverse ecological conditions, the Harappans settled sites along the Indus river.

The Mature Harappan civilization is divided into two variants the Sorath Harappan and the Sindhi Harappan. The Sindhi Harappan sites are sites characterized by elaborate architecture, fired brick construction, sewage systems and stamp seals. The Sindhi Harappan styles have been found in

Gujarat, Kutch, the Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The major Sindhi cities include Mohenjodaro, Lothal, Rangpur, Harappa, Rangpur, Desalpur, Shirkotada, Manda, Ropar, Kalibangan and Chanhudaro.

The Sindhi Harappans possessed writing, massive brick platforms, well-digging a system of weights-and-measures, black-and-red ware (BRW), metal work and beads. (Possehl 1990:268)  
The Harappans were masters of hydraulic engineering.

They were a riverine people that practiced irrigation agriculture. They had both the shaduf and windmills. (Fairservis 1991) In the Harappan sites domestic quarters and industrial areas were isolated from each other.

The Sorath Harappan sites lack stamp seals, ornaments and elaborate architecture. Sorath is the ancient name for Saurashtra. The Sorath Harappan sites are located in Saurashtra, Kulli, and the Harappan style of Baluchistan and Gujarat .

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The Harappans were organized into chiefdoms, averaging between two and five acres. The Harappans were sedentary-pastoral people organized into various corporations such as sailor-fishermen, smiths, merchants and farmers. The Harappans also possessed the social technology of writing seals.

The Harappan sites are small and occupy only a few acres with little depth. This suggests that the Dravidian speaking colonists settled the Indus Valley over a period of a few decades. Fairservis has

shown that the site of Mohenjodaro was occupied for around 200 years.

Many archaeologists are beginning to accept the fact that the Harappan civilization was founded elsewhere and taken to the Indus Valley by the Harappan people.

The Sumerians called the Indus Valley: Dilmun or Tilmun according to Sumerologists S.N. Kramer in **The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character**. Other specialists have begun to popularize the idea that the Indus Valley was called Meluhha, because of the Aryan mention of Meluhhaites in India when they arrived. There were Meluhhaites in India living along the Ganges, but these Meluhhaites were settled in India after Sesostris I, of Egypt conquered the Ganges region. It was also around this time that the Egyptians established colonies in Colchis near the Black Sea.

During the times of Sargon the Great of Sumer, Dravidian-Harappan ships from Dilmun were anchored at Agade docks in Mesopotamia. The ships of Dilmun exported gold, copper utensils, lapis lazuli, ivory, beads and semiprecious stones.

Today there are isolated pockets of Dravidian speaking groups surrounded by Indo-Aryan speakers. Dravidian languages are spoken by tribal groups in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar.



## Harappan Government

The Harappans were organized into chiefdoms. Their towns were between two and five acres in diameter. The Harappans were a sedentary pastoral people organized into various corporations: smith, sailor, fisherman. The Harappans also possessed a social technology of writing.

The Harappans were fine engineers and craftsmen. They built large cities with complex drain systems under the streets of some of their cities.

The Harappans cultivated wheat, barley and millet. They had domesticated sheep/- goats and cattle.

Mainly sedentary pastoralist, the Harappans had a highly developed grain storage system. The main cities of the Harappan civilization were Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Chanhudaro, Kalibangan and Lothal. These cities, and the towns, were built on a regular plan of straight streets. The buildings were made of kiln-burned mud bricks.

Each house contained several rooms plus bathrooms and storage areas. A court yard was placed in the middle of most Harappan homes surrounded by the living quarters.

In the center of each city there stood a citadel surrounded by a wall. This citadel appears to have been a religious center.

The recent discovery of the site of Manda, in the Himalayan foothills points out the Harappan control of the Himalayan timber. Gumba, another Harappan site might have been the trade terminal for the export of metals, minerals and timber from Afghanistan and the former Soviet Central Asia.

### HARAPPAN CITIES

The Dravidians built the first major port in Lothal. Lothal was situated at the head of the Gulf of Cambay in Gujarat. Here archaeologists have found large warehouses ready to hold goods for export.

At Mohenjodaro, the streets were paved with bricks. The windows of the houses faced interior courtyards not the street. The site of Mohenjodaro was occupied for 200 years.

Kalibangan, situated on the southern bank of the Ghaggar, now a dry bed, in ancient times was a large river. The people here lived in multi-storied buildings, and had streets large enough to carry carts, similar to those that are used in the Sind today.

There were also Proto-Dravidian/Harappan colonies in Central Asia, established in Eastern Bactria. The Harappans had trade relations with the Namazga V site. Masson has proposed that the Altyn-Depe people spoke Proto-Dravidian.

The Proto-Dravidian of the Harappan civilization controlled the trade of Central Asia. The major Harappan colony in this area was Shortughai, situated at the confluence of the Amou Darya and the Kokcha river. Shortughai flourished between 2500 and 1800 B.C.

Due to changes in the environment of the Indus Valley much of the area became more arid. This led to many Harappans migrating out of the Indus Valley into India, to settle sites in Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and other parts of western Uttar Pradesh between 1700-1000 B.C.

It was in Gujarat, that the Dravidians probably first came in contact with the Aryans. Here we find examples of the plain grey ware (PGW) used by the Indo-European speaking peoples of India.

After 1700 B.C., with the end of the Harappan culture BRW spread southward into the Chalcolithic culture of Malwa and Central India, down to northern Deccan and eastward into the Gangetic Basin.

The users of the BRW of Gujarat between 1700-100 B.C., were in communication with the Dravidians of the Malwa culture. The BRW people of the Malwa culture occupied the Tapi Valley, Pravara Godavari and the Bhima Valleys. As a general rule the BRW horizon precedes the PGR periods. The PGR period is associated with the Indo-Aryan speakers. (Singh 1982)

Here on the Gangetic plain we see the emergence of PGW. The presence of PGW points to the probable first contact between the Proto-Dravidians and Indo-Aryans.

#### HARAPPAN RELIGION

The Harappan religion was polytheistic. They used cattle, elephants and other animals to represent their gods. The Harappan seals are amulets addressed to the Harappan gods.

The gods of the Harappans depicted on their seals represented the gods of the various economic corporations in the Indus Valley.



















The unicorn god, probably represented Mal, while the cattle god probably represented Kali or Uma, Amma or Pravar-ti, the mother goddess (Winters 1984, 1987).

Seals have been found in almost every room at Mohenjodaro. Many of Indus seals were found in a worn condition and show signs of repair. Archaeologists have found holes on the back of the seals that indicate that the Harappans wore them tied around their neck or ankles with a string.

















*Perforated boss on the back of Harappan seals*

## Indus Valley Dictionary

Signs	Phonetic (Dravidian)	Syllabic meaning
	ā!	Maintain, keep;laborer; man, servant; to rule
	i ā!-i	(to) thou servant
	pa ā!	distribute to the servant
	pa ā!	Thou servant, thou rule, thou reigh over
	ā:i	To the servant
	ā!var Tu ā!	The supreme God The pure servant
	i- ā!	Thou servant, thou rule, etc.
	u-pa ā!	Bring God's distribution to the servant
	u - ā!-ta	Bring (it) here to the servant
	Taṭa ā!	Bestow glow, bestow greatness
	Ka ā!	Protect your servant
	U ā!	Bring the servant
	I say ā!	Give the servant rectitude
	Tu ā!	The pure servant












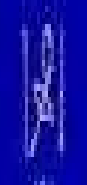


# Indus Valley Dictionary

## ā! Series 2












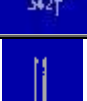
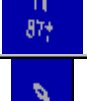
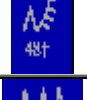
Sign	Phonetic (Dravidian)	Syllabic meaning
	Po ā!	pure servant
	Tu- ā!	The pure servant
	i-ā!	(to) thou servant
	ā! Ta pa ta pa	To the servant give a great distribution
	i-ka-ā!	Give balance to thou servant
	I ka-ā!-ika	Give balance to thou servant, give him protection
	I say ā! I-say	Give thou servant abundant rectitude
	i-ka ā!	Give balance to thou servant
	i-i ā! i-i	Give (it to) thou servant, thou give it leave
	i ā! Kaka pa i ā! Kaka	Give the servant much perfection (as his) great distribution
	po ā! Papa ippo	1) proceed to (make) the Distribution to the servant;2) a flourishing condition the servant's Distribution
	Tu tu papa ā! ippo	Increase now the Distribution of the servant
	ā! papa ippo-i	The servant's Distribution of God's mercy. Now give it.
	Po ā! papa	A flourishing condition (for) the servant's Distribution

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## Indus Valley Dictionary

Sign	Phonetic (Dravidian)	Syllabic meaning
	U pa ā!	Bring God's Distribution to the servant
	Pa ā!-i	Distribute (God's Mercy) to the servant
	i ā!	Thou servant
	ā! po	Flourishing condition for (your) servant
	u ā!	Bring the servant
	ā! pa a Tu ā! pa (y)e a	Distribute God's Mercy to (your) servant To (your) servant distribute thou rectitude/righteousness
	Kaka	Deliverance, protection; safe keeping; pressure
	ye annal ye	Increase (my) righteousness
	annal	Superiority, righteousness, greatman, greatness, king, god
	annal	Superiority, righteousness, greatman, greatness, king, god
	uy	Soul, to live, to subsist, have being, salvation; to ensure, to be relieved (from trouble), escape from danger
	I ka ta i!	Thou balance and virtue give (them) leave
	ii ta ta ii	Thou give (me) virtue give (its) leave ; thou give (me) rectitude, give (its) leave
	ii min-i ii ā!	Thou give illumination give (its) leave (now)

## Indus Valley Dictionary

Sign	Phonetic (Dravidian)	Syllabic meaning
	i tu tu i	Thou purity (and) immaculateness give (it)
	u	Demonstrative this; v. to bring; singular ending
	u-ita	Bring it here
	Tar ya utata	Glory (from) ye who binds; Encircle (me) ye who binds
	uppa pa	Give the distribution; give the Distribution of God's Mercy; bring the Distribution
	upa pa vey	Give opening to the Distribution (of God's Mercy)/Compassion); bring the Distribution of a glorious condition
	u tata ii	Bring greatness thou give (it)
	u tutu	To put (on), surround, encircle
	utu tu-ta	Bring purity and virtue here
	uss	This is a generic term used to denote the power of God, expressed in terms of justice. Fate, Power of God, Law of Nature
	(y)e, ye	What; which; where; v. to increase, grow, mature, expand, progress; and; that, thing
	tu ga vey	Make virtue bloom
	kumari	paradise
	kumari kumari	Grand paradise

## Indus Valley Dictionary

Sign	Phonetic (Dravidian)	Syllabic meaning
	ipapa Kumari	Thou perfect paradise
	say/ sey	Straightness; righteousness, merit, rectitude; v. to do, to make, create, cause; deed, act, action; Uprightness, incorruptibility, honourableness, high character
	ita	Give virtue. Give rectitude
	tata	Large, broad; full, greatness; glory; bestow on (me) greatness
	ta say	Bring rectitude
	tu ta	Purity here; virtue this place
	tu- i	purity give (it)
	tutu <sub>2</sub>	Abundant virtue; abundant purity
	tutu <sub>3</sub>	Abundant virtue; abundant purity
	ta po	Bring a flourishing condition; give richness
	tu i tata	To see your greatness; to see the bestowal on (me of) greatness
	ta	To give, to bring; here, place
	tata	Large, broad; full, greatness; glory; bestow on (me) greatness
	tar ya	Ye who binds;
	tar ya po	Ye who binds to richness

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