A Dravidian decipherment Indus script

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We only sketch some brief outlines here. Details will be presented in a separate independent development by M.V.Bhaskar (MVB). This publication is for feedback and further elucidation on the basic decipherment for larger community of enthusiast out there in the world.

Important documents for understanding Indus script is the corpus created by Asko Parbola and Iravadham Mahadevan's concordance work. We also need the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary by Burrow and Emaneau. Please download the two PDFs from Internet Archive and you should be ready. There are two excellent software versions of these PDFs: Iravadham Mahadevan's concordance maintained by Roja Muthiah Research Library and Dravidian Etymological Dictionary maintained by Digital South Asia Library of the Chicago University. Another rich source of conjectures and data is the great work of Bryan Wells: The Archaeology and Epigraphy of Indus Writing, Archaeopress, 2025, who also has an excellent online database.

If you want to write documents with Indus signs then you need Asko Parbola's NFM Indus Script font. This document was written in that font, a lovely gift from MVB to me. Now on to the beautiful discovery of the decipherment.

The decipherment became possible with the arrival of the splendid work by MVB in Sasanam: M.V. பாஸ்கர் (Bhaskar), அன்றைய தலைப்பு செய்திகள் (Yesterday's headlines), சிந்துவெளி நாகரீக சிறப்பு வெளியீடு (Indus Valley Civilization Special Issue), கிருஷ்ணகிரி மாவட்ட வரலாற்று ஆய்வு மைய்யம் (Krishnagiri District History Research Center), சாசனம் (Sasanam), 2025.

This laid down the map that lead to all the linkage between graphics and the text, building this beautiful journey of discovery enabled by M.V. Bhaskar, with whom I have been working for the past several years. My learning in art, Brahmi and Indus Script derived from his interactions.

Numbers

Numbers are treated separately, but they are just like other glyphs, easily welded and affixed to other glyphs, producing a plethora of possibilities.

M77 Sign 86	Glyph 	Syllable onn-, mu-, muthal-	DED	Description one, primary	Tamil முதல், -ல், ஒண்ணு
87		ra-, ir-, iru-	474	two	ர-, இர்-, இரு-
89		mu-, mun-	5052	three	மு-, முன்-
95	IIII	nal-, -naal, nalla-		four	நல்-, நால்-, நல்ல-

96	IIII	ai-	2826	five	- ஐ
108		-ar	2485	six	ஆறு
110		elu-, -elu	910	seven	ஏழு, எழு
	Application of	f above phonemes			
112	1111	nalam, munnal	-	Healthy, before	நிலம், முன்னால்
116	1111	nellai	-	rice	நெல்லை
121		nallonal	-	good person	நல்லோனால் -
120	,,,	mumunnonum	-	Three generations back	மும்முன்னோனும், மும்முன்னமும்
119	<i></i>	mum-munnor	-	Two generations back	மும்முன்னோர்

Clitics

Clitics provide sentence structure (the subject and the object). The reading order is right to left only after the clitics; before that the reading is left to right.

M77 No.	Glyph	DED	Description	Tamil
97	ī	-	-il, -da, -ta, -in	-ட, -டு, -த, -து, -இல், - இன்
99	11	-	-ra, -ru	-ர, -ரு, -ற, -று
123	^y	-	-yar, -yin	-யர், -யார்

Learn through pun

Following are an indication of the pun that abounds in Indus script, which is termed as the "rebus principle". Of course, it only makes sense if your language is close to ancient Dravidian. For deeper understanding you may have to refer to some of the sign values below this in the section on "Syllabic development". We only sketch a few, but the Indus script syllabary abounds in such pun. They are also termed as rebus principle.

M77 Sign 298	Glyph	Syllable valai = vala+ai	DED -	Description) = vala+5	Tamil ഖல+ഇ=ഖலെ
	"valai". "vala"	sis is "vala" (curved is curve, as well as " iis is further explaine	ʻright", which	n fits well with des	cription of right
62	(�)	valai-kanni	-	vaalai fish	வாளை மீன்

The fish "vaalai" is known as the shark fish that has sharp teeth. A nice tooth is drawn at the top to elucidate the learning. This explains that the parenthesis sign (299, 287) carry the phonetic value "valai".valai-kanni ஏரி வாளை 295 eri-valai 902 Another sharp (மீன்) tooth fish A fresh water fish, Wallago attu, also known "eri-valai", a pun again on the word with rebus equation: "vaalai" ≈ "valai". The prefix "eri" comes from "two" or "iru", leading to one more rebus equation: "iru" ≈ "eri". (∮◊) kanni-pori-valai கன்னி-பொறி-63 Trapping of birds ഖതെ This learning tablet defines the phonetic value of fish as "kanni" and the bird as "puri" by defining it through a polysyllabic pun as "kanni-pori" with a parenthetic "valai". The "kanni-pori" in Tamil is "trapping". 64 ···(众) valai-kanni The clitic கன்னி-பொறிreverses reading ഖജെ order The clitic sign 64 reverses the reading order to the right of it. This learning script defines that. (i)° 376 பல்லு pal teeth A teeth is indicated by the protruding teeth effect, just like in the fish teeth. \$ 57 irumpu 486 இரும்பு iron Now we have triple pun: iru-pu (two insects) = erumpu (ant) = irumpu (iron)

Syllabic development

We outline from top to bottom how the syllabary is slowly developed from simple to complex glyphs. Happy journey!

M77 Sign Gly 1	ph Syllable an	DED 131, 132	Description person	Tamil அன்
大大	an(n)-an	131, 132	brother	அண்ணன்
2 太	aran, muthalvan	311	gentleman, primary man	அரண், முதல்வன்
3 🛣	ath-an	142	husband	அத்தான்
4 ₹	natt-an	3638	country man	நாட்டான்
5	natt-ar-an	3638	country rules	நாட்டரன்
6 *	val(i)-an	5276	skilled man	வலியன்
7 ₹	vel-an	5368	lance fighter	வேலன்
8)**)	valai-velan, valaiyan	5288	animal trapper	வலையன்
12	vuravan	688	farmer	உழவன்
13	vuraval	688	farming	உழவல்
14	per-uravan	688	big farmer	பேர் உழவன்

1 -	alfa a		C00	C • • • •	0.400±
15	☆	uravur	688	farming town	உழவூர்
54	*	pu	4345	flower, Insect	பூ (பூச்சி)
55	<u></u>	pol	4550	flowering	பொலி, பொலிவு
374	0	-n	1159b, 3621, 3621a	night, bug	நீர் (துளி), (ப)னி, நள், நல்லு
410	8	naan	3639	me	நான்
415	8	naan	3639	shame	நாணம், நண்ணன்
299	6	nanan ida idai			இட-, இடை
	(ida, idai	449	hip, left	
301	(idayan	450	herder, herdsman	இடையன்
287)	vala-, valai	5313, 5314	bent, trap, right	ഖര, ഖതണ
293)	valaiyan	5288	animal trapper	ഖരെ ദേഖരങ്,
		-		(short form)	ഖതെധങ്
328	U	vu	651, 761	ooze, mortar	ഖ, ഉ, ഉണ
?	U	vala, valla	5304	strong, fertile	ഖல-, ഖണ-
336	lacksquare	valan	5276	skillful person	வலன்
32		vuvan		person between	உ வன்
J _	^	v a v a i i		two	
342	T	vur	752	town	ஊர்
347	Ű	vellore	-	hunter's town	வேலூர்
358		chevur	_	bronze worker's	•
550	~	Ciicvui	_	town	5.6 12 55
344	∜	ur-ar	_	important sign	ஊரார்
J 	O	ur-ar		with clitics	
343	ij	ur-il	_	important sign	ஊரில்
J-1J	O	ui ii		with clitics	
373	\bigcirc	pa	3805, 4016,	sun, pot	பகல், பள்ளம், பானை
575	V	pu	4124	sun, pot	,
375	<u>()</u>	pal, pala	3986a	teeth, many	ച ര്, ചര
391	\oplus	palla	3986a	elephant	பல்லா (யானை)
216	×	tha	2946	earthen pot	த (தண்டி)
222	\bowtie	thalu	3105	beat, crush	 தள்ளு
223	 	mumutha	5105	grand-parent	மும்மூத
?	\&	than	3045	cold	தண் (தண்ணீர்)
36	**	than	3045	cold, water	தண் (தண்ணீர்)
	^ /√				பாண்
?		paan	4068	song, melody	
31	† ®	paanan	4068	tamil bard	பாணன், பாடுபவன்
59	\Diamond	kan, kanni	1159a, 1166,	boat, bamboo	கண், கன்னி
CO	\公	11 1	1167, 1417	raft	جنب جنب
60		nalla-kan	- DD16	good boat	நல்ல கன்னி
67	X	konda, konde	2216	bull, horn	கொண்ட, கண்ட
70	\$	kaal, kala, kal	1479, 1480	leg, canal	கல், கல, கால் (கால்வாய்)
78	À	-pur, -puri	4374	bird	-புர், -புரி, புரா
81	(<u>A</u>)	valai-puri	.0, ,	trapped bird	ചമം ചാം, ചാം ചരെപ്പുറ്റി, പ്പുറിചരെ
319	6	-mura	4977	snail, Curl	ധ്രത്വെ, ധ്രമ്വക്ക്
	∧				பெரு-, -மா
134	\Diamond	-peru, -ma	4411	big, Large	-கோ, கோட்டை
261	V	-ko	2207, 2203	fort, gentry	−യത⊓, യത∏ഥയിഥ
				(west wind,	
				western practice	
				of having kings	

30	☆	kovan		in Sumeria) herder, herdsman, gentry (cattle class becoming the ruling gentry)	கோவன்
197	П	-mel, -madi	5058	top, terrace	மேல், மாடம்
402	k	naadu	3638	country (as a contrast to village)	நாடு
162	Ψ	vel	5536	spear, valor	ි ඛබ්
245		thatti	3036	cloth, wooden frame	தட்டி
149	※	naalvali	3610, 5297	cross-road	நால்வழி
249	\vdash	carakku, acu	47, 2353	load, sack	சரக்கு, அச்சு
153	\uparrow	perupavan	4422	receiver	பெருபவன்
155*	+	anupu, anbu	330	send	அனுப்பு, அன்பு
211*	Î	ambu, anupu	5536	send	அனுப்பு, அன்பு
83	***	irappan, iraapu	501	death	இறப்பு
50	Ä	athu, adu	5153	goat	ஆத்து, ஆடு
124	人	aer	2815	plough	கலப்பை
125*	Κ	vilagu	5423	diverge	ഖി ഖക്ര
323	₽	Ila, illam	497	Leaf, home	இலை, இல்லம்
326	\Leftrightarrow	nal-ilantha	497	Good home	நல்-இலந்த
327	%	iru-vali-nal-ilanthai	497	home	
47	, S	aran	204	squink	அரண், அரணை
43	, v N≣	nal-aran	-	Good behavior	நல் அறன்
?	(;;;;)	munal-valai	_	3 by 4 (yards)	முன்னால் வலை
•	(,,,,	manar varar		net	
415	8	mu-pala	_	Many many	முப்பல
171	Ψ	nil-(v)anji, nilai	_		நில்வஞ்சி, நிலை
?	E	nal-inai	_	Joining four	நல்லிணை, நாலிணை
403	00	patru, pattu, parai		Announcement	பற்று, பட்டு, பறை
		F, F, F		with a drum beat	
404	:00:	nal-parai		Good	நல்ல பறை
		1		annoucement	
49	<i>S</i>	kula	1829	generation,	குலம்
				geneology	
51	\$	maru-, mu-kula-iru-	4834	reliable third	மாறு - , முக்குல
		maran		generation barter	rமும்மாறனார்
130	\checkmark	kol	2151	exchange,	கொள், கொள்முதல்
				buy/sell	
304	D	vil	5422, 5421	Bow, sell	ഖിல்
305	8	vilai	5421	price	ഖിலെ
127	٦	alaku/alagu	239, 246, 255	Beak, beauty,	அலகு, அழகு
		-		grains of paddy	
306	F	alaku- v ilam	-	Good home	அழகு வி இல்லம்
397	þ	thiral	?	Pearl necklace	திரள், முத்து மாலை
377	¦⊕ ∳¦	nal-thiral-pala	-	Many good pear]நல்திரள் பல
				necklaces	

233	₿	mumalai	-	Three mountain மும்மலை
235	₩ <i>"</i>	mumalai-vel	-	range Three mountain மும்மலை வேல் range worker