Kolam designs, a Dravidian art form, in Indus Valley Civilization

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Summary

1 Research Goal

1.1 Research Goal Description/Formulation

1.1.1 See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: Kolam designs, a Dravidian art form, in Indus Valley Civilization Preprint · 163 1 author: Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects: On a sign in a seal of the Indus Valley Civilization View project Rethinasamy Kittappa 10

1.1.2 Kolam designs, a Dravidian art form, in Indus Valley Civilization R. Kit Kittappa formerly Lincoln University, Pennsylvania USA rk_kittappa@yahoo.com It will be shown in this paper that a sign in a seal of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) (3200 BC -1700 BC) is formed by overlapping two designs of the Dravidian art form called kōlam. This art form is practiced to this day in South India. Because a paper was presented at a recent conference [2] by the author, on the mathematical properties of kolam, it has been possible for the author to formulate a definition of a kolam and establish that the design, mentioned above, is a kolam, in spite of some variations that possibly happened during the long passage of time.

1.1.3 The seals are small in size and carry pictures and/or linear sequences of signs. According to Lawler [3], rudimentary signs began to appear by 3200 BCE, began to diminish by 1900 BCE and vanished entirely by 1700 BCE.

1.1.4 These signs have been considered to be a script for a long time.

1.1.5 Many have attempted to decipher the seals but there has been no general consensus to accept the “decipherments”.

1.1.6 A paper in 2004 put forth the idea that the sign sequences do not encode speech but possibly had religious, political or social functions or were just memory aids. In this paper, no attempt to decipher the message in any seal and no attempt to find out how any sign should be read will be made.

2 Key Insights

2.1 Key Insights

2.1.1 It will also be shown that another sign is also a kolam design, after “restoring” changes that possibly happened during handling the seal or reproducing the sign.

2.1.2 A design found in a seal from IVC

2.1.3 The seal in Figure 1 is 478-A in the Corpus by Parpola and Joshi [5]. The leftmost sign in the seal, which is the only sign in the seal that will be considered in this paper, is strangely not found in the well known sign-lists that have been compiled by Mahadevan [4], Parpola [6], Brian Wells [10] and Kumbhar and Buriro [7]. These lists are intended for signs that are supposed to have linguistic value. So, it appears that the sign under consideration was not included because it was possibly thought of as a decoration or it was possibly not readily available when the lists were compiled.

2.1.4 From a long time, kolam has been drawn on the ground, with rice powder, at the entrances of South Indian homes, marriage halls and places assigned for worship.

2.1.5 The word kolam has been used at least from the 17th century onwards, as seen from Tamil literary works like Maturai Mīnāṭci Ammai Kuṟam, (verse 6) by Kumara Guruparar and Thiru Kuṟṟāla Kuravañci (song 56, 1) by Tirikūda Rāsappa Kavirāyar.

2.1.6 Tamil is one of the Dravidian languages spoken in South India. These literary works say that the ground must be smoothed out and then kolam must be drawn, as is the practice today.

2.1.7 The leftmost sign in Figure 1 appears to be the image of a design, made with strings and twelve wooden triangles framed on a rectangular wooden board.

2.1.8 A model constructed by the author can be seen in Figure 2.

2.1.9 Eight holes, two on each side of the frame, just large enough for the string to pass through, was made.

2.1.10 A dot was painted at the center of each triangle. For each of the twelve triangles, a horizontal hole from one midpoint of a side to another was made, for the string to pass through and groves along the edges of the triangle were made to hide the string.

2.1.11 Now, a long string was passed through the holes in six triangles, two at the top, two of the top triangles along the sides and two of the bottom triangles in the interior, after passing the string through the corresponding holes on the frame. The remaining six triangles were similarly connected in an upside down fashion. The authors have redrawn the design for clarity in Figure 3.