

The Indus Valley/Harappan Script
சிந்துவெளி/ஹரப்பா வரிவடிவம்
Translation

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Abstract

Symbols were taken from intact seals of the Indus Valley/Harappan civilisation and analysed for similarity to other known languages. Identical symbols were demonstrated. Text from eight Indus Script seals were analysed and appeared to be related to the Germanic languages. The symbols identical to the Germanic languages were present in multiple seals from the Indus Valley/Harappan period and, therefore, may help elucidate some of the meaning of the Indus Script.

Keywords: Indus Valley; Germanic languages; Harappan period; Indus Script

Introduction

The Indus Script translation task has been largely unsuccessful. The language is remarkable for resisting translation attempts and for its associated enigmatic illustrations. Observing multiple languages, the symbols of the Indus Script appear visually similar to the Germanic languages.

Despite decades of research, no one has successfully deciphered the script or identified any linguistic relatives. The true meaning of the script remains elusive (Bhargava, 2025). A novel comparative approach helps attempt translation.

Method

I have classified symbols from eight of the Indus Script seals according to the degree of similarity with the alphabets of three Germanic languages, regardless of other features, as either “identical”, “identical base letterform” and “near identical”. In certain cases, the symbols are identical.

The symbols of the Indus Script were focal on their specific seals and lacked significant gaps between them suggesting a possibly ritualistic language following the “criptio continua” structure of runic alphabets, where symbols placed close together gained holistic meaning rather than individual words or phrases.

Where there is no animal diagram, text is rare. Text is often found with an animal diagram underneath. The intricate animal drawings have several rare features such as animal decorations and the associated kiln.

The extraordinary features of the Germanic language symbols are that their relationship to the Indus Script is unknown to linguists and researchers alike, that they are identical to certain symbols, and that the languages are so distant geographically and historically yet share some linguistic similarity.

Germanic Language Symbols

Language	Symbol	Translation
Younger Futhark	ƿ	kaun ("ulcer")
Younger Futhark	*	hagall ("hail")
Younger Futhark	ᚠ	nauðr ("need")
Younger Futhark	ᚢ	ísa/íss ("ice")
Younger Futhark	ᚦ	ár ("plenty")
Younger Futhark	ᚱ	sól ("Sun", personified as a deity—see Sól (Germanic mythology))
Younger Futhark	ᚹ	Týr ("Týr, a deity")
Younger Futhark	ᚷ	maðr ("man, human")
Anglo-Saxon runes	ᚷ	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god")
Elder Futhark	ᚱ	othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property")
Elder Futhark	ᚷ	ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity")
Elder Futhark	ᚱ	hagalaz ("hail")

Out of the total 64 symbols – 16 Younger Futhark, 24 Anglo-Saxon, 24 Elder Futhark – 12 relevant symbols are included in the table above.

Indus Script Seals

Seals 1–8 are presented in no specific order.



Figure 1. Seal 1, 6 symbols. (Business Standard, 2025)

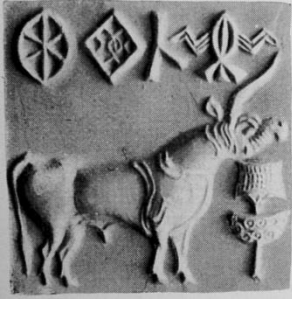


Figure 2. Seal 2, 4 symbols. (Mackay 1935, 129)



Figure 3. Seal 3, 11 symbols. (J.M. Kenoyer / Harappa.com)



Figure 4. Seal 4, 9 symbols. (Vijayabhaaratil)



Figure 5. Seal 5, 7 symbols. (British Museum)



Figure 6. Seal 6, 9 symbols. (Gleimius, 2022)





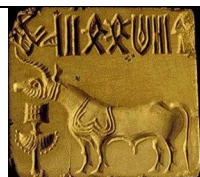
Figure 7. Seal 7, 11 symbols. (Hays)










Figure 8. Seal 8, 4 symbols. (Hirst, 2009)

Identical Symbol

Table 1. Identical Symbols with Meaning

	Indus Script symbol	Corresponding Germanic language symbol	Meaning in Germanic language
 Seal 5	symbol 2	1	ár ("plenty") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 5	symbol 3 and 4	I	ísa/íss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 3	symbol 5, 6, 11	I	ísa/íss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]





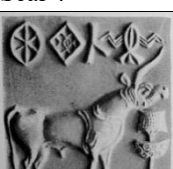

 Seal 6	symbol 6, 7, 8		ísa/íss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 7	symbol 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 11		ísa/íss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 1	symbol 1, 2		ísa/íss ("ice") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 6	symbol 2	ʀ	kaun ("ulcer") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 2	symbol 3	ᚠ	nauðr ("need") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 8	symbol 4	ʏ	maðr ("man, human") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 3	symbol 1	ᚱ	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god") [Anglo-Saxon runes]

21 identical symbols.

Identical Base Letterform

Table 2. Identical Base Letterforms with Meaning

Herein identified visually identical base letterforms between the Indus Script and Germanic symbols, with enclosing elements.

	Indus Script symbol	Corresponding Germanic language symbol	Meaning in Germanic language
 Seal 6	symbol 1	(*)	hagall ("hail") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 2	symbol 1	(*)	hagall ("hail") [Younger Futhark]
 Seal 5	symbol 1	(◇)	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god") [Anglo-Saxon runes]
 Seal 4	symbol 1	(◇)	ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god") [Anglo-Saxon runes]
 Seal 2	symbol 2	(⌘)	ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 4	symbol 9	[ᚠ]	nauðr ("need") [Younger Futhark]






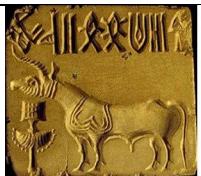
6 identical base letterforms.











Near Identical Symbol

Table 3. Near Identical Symbols with Meaning

Near identical symbols defined by the presence of either additional lines or altered curvature.

	Indus Script symbol	Corresponding Germanic language symbol	Meaning in Germanic language
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 Seal 5	symbol 5 and 6	𐌚	sól ("Sun", personified as a deity— see Sól (Germanic mythology))
 Seal 6	symbol 9	↑	Týr ("Týr, a deity")
 Seal 1	symbol 6	↑	Týr ("Týr, a deity")
 Seal 3	symbol 10	𐌛	hagalaz ("hail") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 1	symbol 4	𐌜	ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 3	symbol 8	𐌜	ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 3	symbol 7	𐌝	othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 4	symbol 8	𐌞	maðr ("man, human") [Younger Futhark]

 Seal 6	symbol 3		ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 6	symbol 4		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 7	symbol 8, 10		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 1	symbol 3, 5		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]
 Seal 2	symbol 4		othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") [Elder Futhark]

16 near-identical symbols.

Animals

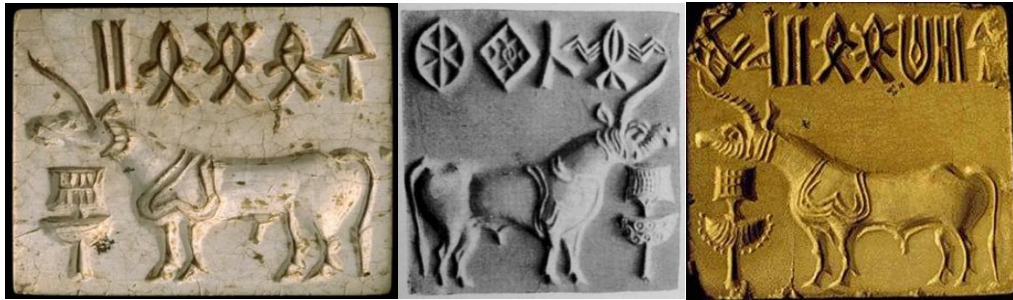


Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3

The presence of a prominent udder, large horns, and a robust build suggests that these animals in the Indus Script seals (Figures 1–3) are possibly a cattle relative, such as the aurochs, an extinct pastoral predecessor to cattle, hinting at agricultural or spiritual significance to the seals. They are accompanied by a kiln underneath.



Figure 9. Image 1 (left), Image 2 (centre), Image 3 (right). (du Bois)

In Puthur, Tamil Nadu, Velar potter-priests create terracotta horses (Fig. 9.1) near Aiyanar shrines, firing them in adjacent kilns (Fig. 9.3) as ritual offerings. There are visual similarities between the terracotta horses and the Indus aurochs, particularly in the saddle and neck decorations, inviting speculation, perhaps, that the Indus aurochs served a similar purpose and were, too, offerings to gods such as Aiyanar.



Figure 4 and Figure 7 depict elephants without accompanying kilns.



Figure 5 and Figure 8 depict zebus without accompanying kilns.



Figure 6 depicts the armoured body folds of a rhinoceros.

Results

Table 4. Summary table.

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	Number of Samples	Total Characters (n=)
Germanic Languages	3 alphabets	64 symbols
Indus Script Seals	8 seals	61 symbols

Table 5. Summary of results observed.

	Identical	Identical base letterform	Near Identical	Total Similarity to Germanic languages
Indus Script (n=67 Symbols)	21	6	16	43/61 (70.5%)


70.5% of symbols in the eight Indus Script seals analysed in this study shared some similarity with symbols of the Germanic languages – 21 fully identical symbols, 7 symbols with identical base letterforms, and 16 that were deemed near identical.


The symbol pairs were *selected for similarity*, and so this is not a random sample. However, a hypothetical probability baseline for how likely it would be to achieve such a degree of similarity is relevant to this study.

This does not prove linguistic relatedness but shows that the visual overlap between the Indus Script and the Germanic languages far exceeds statistical expectations. The high rate of correspondence, even under a deliberately matched set, suggests that the Indus Script and the Germanic languages share structural commonalities worth investigating further.



In this study, there are limitations. There is subjectivity and ambiguous thresholds in visual comparisons. The human visual system engages in pareidolia, explored in Sproat, 2007, wherein there is a tendency to perceive meaningful patterns where none exist. Visual similarity does not prove two languages share a common origin, as symbols can evolve separately in time and space and yet coincidentally be identical without explanation.





However, assuming the similarity is not random, 18 symbols remain undeciphered, which represents 29.5% of the total symbols in the 8 seals. Some meaning derives either from context or from prior studies such as Parpola/Kenoyer.



Symbol	Image	Explanation
Seal 3, symbol 2, 3 Seal 4, symbol 2, 3 Seal 7, symbol 4, 5		The double stroke looks similar to the English apostrophe. In the Indus Script, it is either a grammatical marker with the genitive case meaning “of”

		(Parpola, 1994) or a titular or clan/title divider, marking social or administrative roles (Kenoyer, 1998).
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5 Symbols remain undeciphered, which X denotes here, and an attempt is made to translate.

Seal		Transcribed	Literal Translation	Translation
1		ððð↑	= ísa/íss ("ice" or destruction) = ísa/íss ("ice" or destruction) ð = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") ð = ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") ð = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property") ↑ = Týr ("Týr, a deity"), related to a sacrifice	<i>"Destruction, in the land, destruction, oh fertility god, for the land, accept this sacrifice."</i>
2		(*) (ð) 1 ~ ð ~	(*) = hagall ("hail") (ð) = ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity") 1 = nauðr ("need") ~ ð ~ = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property")	<i>"Oh hail the fertility god, the land needs you!"</i>

3		◊"XIIIXXHl	<p>◊" = ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god")</p> <p>X = (unknown), but in this context the feather may represent a deity such as Krishna</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>⌘ = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property")</p> <p>ǵ = ingwaz ("Ingwaz, a god/fertility deity")</p> <p>X = (unknown), but in this context the three pronged symbol may be a trident, which represents Shiva</p> <p>hagalaz ("hail")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p>	<i>"Oh hail (Krishna), the destruction in the land, oh hail the fertility god, oh hail (Shiva) the God of destruction."</i>
4		(◊)"IIIIΨ[ǵ]	<p>(◊)" = ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god")</p> <p>IIII = number four</p> <p>Ψ = maðr ("man, human")</p> <p>[ǵ] = nauðr ("need")</p>	<i>"Dear God, four men need you."</i>
5		(◊)"IIIIHlX	<p>(◊) = ing ("Ingwaz, the hero/god")</p> <p>l = ár ("plenty")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>Hl = sól ("Sun", personified as a deity)</p> <p>Hl = sól ("Sun", personified as a deity)</p> <p>X = (unknown), in this context, may represent a deity</p>	<i>"Oh god, there is plenty of destruction by the sun (God)."</i>
6		(*)PǵǵXIIII↑	<p>P = kaun ("ulcer")</p> <p>(*) = hagall ("hail")</p> <p>ǵ = Týr ("Týr, a deity")</p> <p>⌘ = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property")</p>	<i>"Oh hail the god of destruction, in the land, Oh hail (Shiva) the destroyer!"</i>

			<p>X = (unknown), the three pronged structure suggests a trident, which may represent Shiva in this context</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>↑ = Týr ("Týr, a deity"), related to a sacrifice</p>	
7		X í í	<p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>X = (unknown), but, in this context, the leaf symbol may represent Krishna's peacock feather</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>ð = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p> <p>ð = othala ("heritage, inheritance, ancestral property")</p> <p>l = ísa/íss ("ice")</p>	<i>"The destruction oh (Krishna), the destruction of the land, the land is destroyed."</i>
8		Ψ	<p> = number 3</p> <p>Ψ = maðr ("man, human")</p>	<i>"Three men."</i>

These translations suggest a frantic and desperate plea to deities to help the land which is being destroyed or in which destruction is threatened by other worldly forces. Requests are made to revitalise the land and prevent destruction. The logographic symbols (Kenoyer) are accompanied by Tamil Nadu Velar pot style sacrificial animal offerings (Asko Parpola) for ritualistic purposes in the context of the impending 1900 BCE destruction (Asko Parpola). The prayers are written using the Germanic languages, which are visually similar to the Indus Script (Bhargava, 2025).

There are, of course, limitations. The two languages may be coincidentally similar, and the unknown symbols may not translate as described here, though the context lends itself to the trident of the Hindu God Shiva and the feather of the Hindu God Krishna.

Discussion

The above results raise the following questions: why have they not been seen before; are they merely coincidentally similar languages that developed at different times; and are the languages related?

Investigation of the Indus Script has been hampered by the false assumption that the symbols were related either to Dravian languages or Sanskrit. The Indus Script seals are, however, visually similar to the Germanic languages.

Conclusion

While the similarity of the Indus Script to other languages remains unproven, its visual correspondence with symbols in the Germanic language is unexplored. If these symbols are truly associated with Germanic runes, they may offer insight into other undeciphered writing systems and may warrant further investigation.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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