

Rainer Hasenpflug

The Inscriptions of the Indus Civilization

Texts — Deciphering — Contents

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Introduction

This submitted book consists of the deciphering, translation and analysis of the contents of about 2000 commonly published and, to some extent, well-preserved inscriptions of the Indus Civilization.

The inscriptions of the Indus Civilization are mainly handed down to us in the form of rectangular stone stamps, formerly known as seals¹. They have been found — with a few exceptions — at many Indus Civilization sites in present-day Pakistan and in the northwestern part of India since the beginning of the excavations there in 1922. Other texts were written on copper plates or vessels. Scripts were almost exclusively found in the settlements of the so-called Urban (or Mature) Phase, which was between ca. 2400 and 1900 BC². During that time the cities, the most famous of which are Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, were densely populated. Three of these stamps were found in Mesopotamia from the time of Sargon I. (ca. 2414 - 2358 or 2350 - 2295 BC³)⁴. The main part of the original texts are presently preserved in the National Museum of India in New Delhi. The original texts of the Indus Civilization used in this work were taken from the publications of different authors, but mainly from the works of Professor Asko Parpola⁵, who had researched this subject for many years.

In the past there were different attempts to decipher the script of the Indus Civilization. In the end all of these attempts were shown to be insufficient. The main reason for the failure of many of the attempts, until now, was the fact that they were based on the wrong language, namely Dravida, or that they did not find the appropriate key to start the deciphering with. Completely different is the Sanskrit⁶ deciphering of the German defence ministry linguist Kurt Schildmann⁷ submitted here, which is immediately and easily understandable for laymen. He found the key in the so-called pictural bilinguals, the texts which contain the animal name of the accompanying animal pictures. The script is constructed according to a logical system of phonetic signs, vocal rows and pictograms like some other script systems of related civilizations of the same time⁸. Each sign of the script is also clearly defined, and reading is possible with every conventional Sanskrit dictionary. The correctness of the deciphering was also confirmed from the beginning through the fact that each of the more than 2000 texts makes unequivocal sense as well as has a clear, logical and intelligent statement.

The next logical step after successful deciphering was to test and improve the deciphering as well as to get information about the Indus Civilization. Then followed the analysis of the relatively short texts. All of the approximately 2000 texts already made logical statements from the beginning, but there was a big confusion of many obviously repeated subjects. Because of this, these texts were arranged according to subjects and their contents were then compared. The result was much more marvelous and convincing than could have been expected at the beginning of the work. The texts were proven to be a coherent and reasonable system with countless cross references. Only through recognizing that the texts, which mostly consisted of five to ten signs, were composed of a mosaic was it possible to understand the many details of the statements. It is shown that even the smallest detail which was unknown at the beginning (like the use and meaning of a single term, metaphors or the statistic assigning of terms) fit exactly on all levels of the previously partly ambiguous statements. The process of understanding the texts was made easier by the Indus authors through the use of some standard phrases which often recur. With these they express a logical chain of cause and effect, like criminal acts and the corresponding punishments, in hundreds of texts. Therefore pure chance must be

¹ The designation *seals* was used in the first days of their discovery because of their very few similarities to the Mesopotamian cylindrical roll seals. But in fact, it was unreasonable from the beginning. Now the designation *seals* is finally refuted by this work.

² Fischer/Jansen/Pieper p. 103.

³ Bray/Trump p. 315.

⁴ According to the opinion of Prof. Langdon, the Indus script is closely related to archaic Sumerian script as found in Jemdet Nasr, Nippur and Kish (Marshall, J., Vol. I, p. 104).

⁵ Mainly from: Parpola, A./Joshi, J. P. (eds.) 1987: *Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions. 1: Collections in India*. Helsinki. And Parpola, A./Shah, S. G. M. (eds.) 1991: *Corpus of Indus Seals and Inscriptions. 2: Collections in Pakistan*. Helsinki.

⁶ "Language of the Aryans in India, which is in the religious field in use till today. It is, as Sir William Jones already recognized in 1786, an Indo-European language related to Greek and Latin" (Bray/Trump p. 314). Linguistics today often distinguish between classical Sanskrit, the previous Vedic language and the ancient Persian Avesta language. Maybe some scholars will later add the language of the Indus texts as Indus language. However because of their only slightly dialectic, resp. grammatic differences, they can be considered here as the common ancient Persian/Indian language.

⁷ Among others partly published in: Schildmann, K. 1999: *Als das Raumschiff Athena die Erde kippte*. Suhl.

⁸ Similar to the old Egyptian hieroglyphs and the oldest Mesopotamian pictural script of Uruk: "Both scripts contain three kinds of symbols: pictograms, resp. ideograms, which express a term pictorially; phonograms, which describe some reading words following the principle of pictural riddle (rebus) without which the meaning of the term corresponds with the picture; and finally determinativa, which specify the meaning group of the word to the reader, what was meant to make it easier for him to recognize the meaning of the word in case of some reading words (therefore with same phonetic signs)." (Bray/Trump, p. 143).

completely ruled out. Finally, their correctness is also proven by the correspondence of the contents to research results of different scientific fields up to now, which is also shown in this work, but could only be slightly broached. Therefore the submitted deciphering is not a theory as former attempts were, but proven as the real deciphering.

The system of the texts contains extensive information about life in the Indus Civilization between approximately 2400 and 1900 BC. The high quality of the original deciphering could be confirmed through the discovery of this complete, all-encompassing system out of countless and multilayered single information which supported one other. In the first comments of the attached deciphering manuscript by Kurt Schildmann, it is obvious that essential connections or correlations at the beginning — after simply deciphering — were not recognized or were evaluated wrongly by him. Through this it is shown that no prejudice has influenced the deciphering.

In principle the translation of a Sanskrit text has, like the translation of all old languages into a modern language, some problems. Many words can have some different meanings according to various dictionaries, like skt. *vi* can mean *without* or *through*, skt. *ratha* resp. *cakra* can mean *wheel*, *chariot*, *year*, *era*, *empire*, etc. In most of these cases a typical Indus inscription meaning could be found for these terms out of the context. For some words the meaning offered by dictionaries seems to be right, but somewhat blurred. The reason for this may be the great age of the inscriptions. In these cases it was possible to find a good translation out of the context. Just the meaning of some pictograms appearing only once could not be deciphered until now.

Another challenge is the poetic and pictural expression which uses many metaphors, allegories, plays on words, ambiguous meanings and allusions which are difficult or even impossible to translate with all their hidden meanings without extensive discussion in English. It is clear that the ancient background of some statements is, from today's point of view, difficult to understand completely. In the field of hidden messages there is still probably something left undiscovered up to now, but it is supposed that most of the multilayered intensions of the texts were discovered. While reading the analysis it is therefore also to be considered that, with the goal to show the original intention of the Indus authors, only the translated main statements are in the quotations whereas some of the additional secondary statements are discussed in the comments.

Because of the simple and standardized grammatic construction of the short sentences and the well-known language, there are only very few difficult or unclear grammatic parts. But surely it is not only the grammar which needs further detailed investigations by linguists experienced in the Sanskrit language. In summary it is to be noted that the problems discussed were generally easy to grasp and could hardly influence the results.

The analysis of the texts gave great results. The most conspicuous outcomes are surely the evidence for the use of the Sanskrit language and the existence of Hinduism in India of the 3rd millennium BC. The existence of a Proto-Hinduism was indicated until now through a series of archeological finds, but that the texts make such clear evidence for this, and that there is no essential difference to the Hinduism of later times, is surprising. But more than this, the texts contain unlimited valuable information about many other subjects which are very revealing not only for residents of India and Pakistan and experts of different fields, but also for every layman interested in cultural history worldwide.