

## MOHENJO DARO-THE MOST IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN INDIA

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Father Heras is widely known as a great Indologist who threw light on Indo-Gangetic civilization and its relation to Dravidian Culture. He quotes Sir John Marshal and other archaeologists to substantiate his views.

During the winter of 1923, the late Mr. R.D. Banerji, Super-intendent of Archaeology, Western Circle, while excavating the remains of a Buddhist *stuupa* and monastery situated on some mounds in a place called Mohenjo Daro in the Larkhana District of Northern Sind, was lucky enough to find some relics of a much more ancient civilization. Mr. Banerji, one of the greatest scholars that India has ever produced, at once realized the great importance of that discovery. The civilization, the relics of which so accidentally came into his hands, was a totally unknown civilization, not only in India, but all over the world. That was the beginning of the discovery of a new period in the history of man.

The excavations carried out by the Archaeological Department in subsequent years fully confirmed the surmise of Mr. Banerji. Mohenjo Daro and for the matter of that also Harappa in the Panjab, and several other sites in the Indus valley are cities of a pre-Aryan nation whose civilization was in a highly flourishing state, which may be fully styled the proto-civilization of India. Accordingly, Mohenjo Daro and other similar sites in Sind and the Panjab are the most important archaeological sites in India.

1. The consequence deduced by Sir John Marshall after the study of the Mohenjo Daro remains that this civilization probably is Dravidian is now fully

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\* Source: *Journal of Indian History*, Vol XVI. 1937. Parts I to III. pp. 1-12.

confirmed by the decipherment by the present writer of about one thousand eight hundred inscriptions found in all these sites.




First of all there are signs the values of which can only be explained in Dravidian languages. Let us take the three following ones:

*miin*, "fish"


*miin*, "shining", "glittering", "illustrations"

*miin*, "star" (or proper name of a person)

Only in Dravidian languages these three signs, which evidently represent a fish, may have the same phonetic values corresponding to three different meanings, according to the three differences shown in the signs themselves. If we suppose, for instance, that the language of Mohenjo Daro were Samskrta and we read the three above signs *matsya* or even *mina-a* word borrowed from Dravidian languages-these two words in Samskrta have no other meaning than fish and therefore we shall not be able to give a proper meaning to the two other signs.

Another case. The sign  in Sumerian writing means "One-sixth". Now this division being totally exotic in Dravidian languages, should be converted into "one-fourth", Therefore it will read *kaal*. Now a sign equal to this but drawn in the opposite direction, thus  should also have similar phonetic value but reading in the opposite direction. Since the first sign reads *kaal*, this must read *lak*. Now this word which is lost in all other Dravidian languages, keeps still its meaning in Tulu, it means, "to rise". Now let us put the two signs together thus 

If one of these two signs separately reads *kal* and the other *lak*, both put together will read *kal-lak=kalak*, which in Dravidian languages means "union" "mixture."

Let us put another combination :  The two parallel lines joining both original signs in several other signs have the phonetic value of *a*.



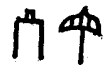





This *a* according to the sign itself must be placed between *kal* and *lak*. Hence this sign will read *kalalak*, i.e., *kaal-alak*, which means, "stone weapon". Still another sign:



The two parallel vertical lines in other signs phonetically read *am*.

Therefore the syllable must be joined to the value of the preceding sign *kaalalak*; thus the whole sign will read *kalamalak*, which means "field-measuring". Neither is Samskrta nor in any other language will this wonderful phonetic values, following so easily the value of the original sign, ) have any meaning.

Moreover, in these inscriptions a number of phonetic combinations of signs have been found which also prove that the language of Mohenjo Daro cannot but be Dravidian. Each sign separately has its independent value and meaning. But when the signs are united their values combine and this third reading has a totally different meaning. Let us put some examples:

		<i>Kude</i> , "umbrella"
		<i>Ir</i> , "dwelling"
Combination :		<i>kudir</i> , granary,
		<i>Adu</i> , "that"
		<i>ir</i> , "to be"
Combination :		<i>adir</i> , "to tremble," "to shake"
		<i>nai</i> , "dog"
		<i>vel</i> , "trident"

Combination :



*naaiveel*, a shrub or creeper, scientifically called *Flacourtia Sapida Roxb.* or *Faccourtia ramoutchi, L' Herit.*

A much more powerful argument to determine the language family is the construction of the phrase which is purely and exclusively Dravidian. It is a construction which may be called qualificative: the main word is always relegated to the end, but it is preceded by a number or qualificatives which have likewise other qualificatives of their own. Moreover, according to Dravidian construction the verb must always be at the end of the sentence and the adjectives in front of the nouns. Let us read, for instance, the following inscription.

The inscription  reads thus :  
*Miin eel saa kadavul kan iir maram*

It means: "Two trees (under which) the seven shining (persons) saw the god of death. Let us analyse this epigraph:

Main word: *maram*, "tress" (at the end)

Qualificatives : 1. numeral: *ir*, "two"

2. the whole sentence: *Miin eel sea kadavul kan*,

"the seven shining people saw the god of death."

Subject of the sentence : *Miin eel*, "seven shining (people)" (at the beginning).

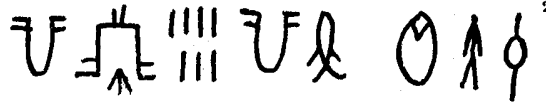
Verb of the phrase : *kan*, "to see". (at the end)

Complement of the phrase : *saa kadavul* "the god of death"

Qualificative of *kadavul* : *saa*, "death", taking the place of an adjective qualifying the noun.

All this arrangement is according to the rules of Dravidian construction.

Another example :



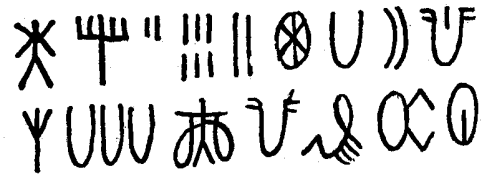
This inscription reads thus:

*El An uril ire min adu el sa adu*

That means : “Of the death of seven (persons) of this fish who were in the country of the sunny Supreme Being”. This inscription ends by the suffix of possession, *adu*, showing that something which is not mentioned belongs to or is about the death of seven etc. otherwise the phrase may be analysed as we did with the preceding inscription. One thing we may add here. Dravidian languages do not know the relative pronoun. Accordingly no relative pronoun has ever been found in the inscriptions, though possessive and demonstrative pronouns are often come across. Instead of the relative pronoun they use a participle, for instance, *irekara* in Tamil. Thus for instance, instead of saying “who is”, they say “being”. Now in the participle *irekera*, the termination *kara* evidently smacks of Samskrta origin. So the real old Dravidian will be *ire*. Now the participle *irekera*, the termination *kera* evidently smacks of Samskrta origin. So the real old Dravidian will be *ire*. Now the sign that represents this sound is the fourth sign of the preceding inscription (always commencing from the right). This sign  $\text{||}$ , independently from the above reading cannot but read *ire* phonetically. The numeral  $\text{||}$  reads *iir*, “two”. So those two small strokes must read *iir*, also. But, besides those two small strokes are placed in the upper portion of the writing line. Now this location, “above”, is always expressed by the sound *e* in Dravidian languages.<sup>3</sup> Therefore this sign necessarily reads *ire*, “being”, “who is” or “who was”.

The decipherment of the inscriptions of the Indus Valley has supplied us with yet another proof of the Dravidian family of the language spoken there. Almost mechanically I had placed the respective values under each sign in every inscription. Last October, thanks to the generosity of the University of Bombay, I could go to Nallur, Jaffna (Ceylon), to revise all my interpretations with Rev. Fr. S. Gnana Prakasar, O.M.L., who is rightly held as the foremost Dravidian

philologist.<sup>4</sup> What was not my surprise when while reading my interpretations of the inscriptions, Fr. Gnana Prakasar discovered about twenty-five fragments of poetry. These verses are written in different metres, five most beautiful metre of Tamil literature. Our readers will like to read one of these fragments of poetry properly scanned. The inscription as found in one of the Mohenjo daro objects is this :



Now this inscription is carved on two different lanes of a prism, and the impressions of the two lines are placed in the above order in the plate of sir John Marshall's work.<sup>5</sup> The lines are not placed in the proper order: the second line reads first and the first line continues the reading of the second. This inverted order of the lines is not strange, for neither the authors nor the editor. Were able to read the script. But what is most extraordinary is that the reading of the second line (actually the first) is from left to right, while the first line (actually the second) reads from right to left. This makes one suspect that perhaps there was another really first line, reading from right to left; thus the actual first line of the inscription would be in reality the second of the full inscription. This presupposed the epigraph reads as follows:

*Nan rururu tuuku adu karumugil uurveli ooruur  
Eedu etu ru uyarel iir ar ire peer kadaoul*

Which means: "The great god who has the two paths of the noisy high sun reaching the year of Orur (is) outside the country of the rain clouds of the approaching thunder- sounding scale."<sup>6</sup>

Now this inscription contains two verses that are scanned in the following way:

*Nan rururu | tuuku adu | karumugil uur | veli ooruur ||  
Eedu etu | ruu uyarel | iir ar ire | peer kadaoul*

For the sake of Tamil readers we transcribe these verses in Tamil characters below.

īṭ ÁÁÁ É,Üŋ è¼°AÖ~ ªõOæĩ~  
 ā`â†´ Áàò~â™ ß~ÝPªó «ð~èì¾œ

The remains of the cities discovered in the Indus valley, being therefore early Dravidian, offer unique materials for the study of the pre-Aryan civilization of India, which hitherto was only known through stray and indirect references in the Vedas and epics and other works of ancient Samskrta literature.

2. Contrary to what was clearly hinted at in those works, it was always supposed twelve or fifteen years ago that the Dravidian peoples at the time of the Aryan invasion were in a totally uncivilized state, almost next to savagery. Thus Mr. Romesh C.Dutt described the first encounters of the two races, in the beginning of our century: "There was a continuous war between the Indo-Aryans and the dark-skinned aborigines during this age. The aborigines retreated before the more civilized organization of the Aryans, but hung around in fastness and forests, plundered the peaceful village of the Aryans and stable their cattle. With that tenacity which is peculiar to barbarians, they fought for centuries as they retreated; they interrupted the religious sacrifices of the conquerors, despised their "bright gods", and plundered their wealth. But the Aryans conquered in the end; the area of civilization widened, waste and jungle lands were reclaimed and dotted with village and towns, and the barbarians either submitted to the conquerors or retreated to the mountains where their descendants still live.<sup>7</sup>

Such statements could on no account be substantiated by any historical source. They were only the last expression of the baseless feelings of many Dravidian kings<sup>8</sup> and groups of people<sup>9</sup> who being unreasonable ashamed of their Dravidian origin, claimed Aryan descent. But after the discovery of Mohenjo Daro, Mr.R.D.Banerji could daringly challenge all Aryan feeling by writing that the "Dravidians were certainly far more civilized than the Indo-Aryan invaders".<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he states: "At this time (when they settled in the Panjab) the Indo-Aryans were carrying on a ceaseless war with the earlier and more civilized inhabitants of the country".<sup>11</sup> Thus the discovery of the Mohenjo Daro civilization marks the opening of a new era of Proto-historical research in India by finally settling the true and unmistakable point of view.

3. The relics of the Hindu Valley disclose extraordinary similarities with the relics of ancient Sumer. These similarities were already pointed out by several scholars in the Illustrated London News<sup>12</sup> and elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> even before

the publication of the work of Sir John Marshall. These similarities suggest intimate connections between the Mohenjo Daro people and the Sumerians. The study of these connections will undoubtedly discover the foreign relations of our proto-Indian people and perhaps will solve the so-called Sumerian problem. Besides other arguments derived from the study of the script and of the inscriptions, it is interesting to note that the ancient tradition of Sumer points to the East as the country of origin of the Sumerians.<sup>14</sup> Berosus, the Babylonian priest of the first century B.C., has kept two names of the several chiefs who brought civilization and the art of writing to Sumer. One was called Oannes,<sup>15</sup> an evident Hellenized form of the name *Uvanna*, "elder brother of the flower", a name very common even at present among the Tulus. The other name, *Odakon*,<sup>16</sup> is in this very form a Tamilian name which means "the master of the boat", from *ooda*, "boat", and *koon*, "lord", "master", "king". This tradition so faithfully recorded by the Babylonian historian has its parallel account in Genesis. After narrating the different generations of the sons of Noah, the biblical account continues thus:

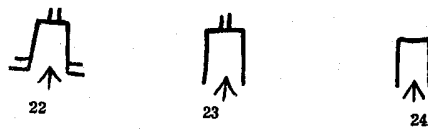
"And when they removed from the East, they found a plain in the land of Sennaar (Sumer), and dwelt in it."

"And each one said to his neighbour: come let us make brick and bake them with fire. And they had brick instead of stones, and slime instead of mortar."<sup>17</sup>

4. But the connections with ancient Sumer are not the only foreign connections of Mohenjo Daro. A small carving on a steatite seal shows a bull-fight scene<sup>18</sup> altogether similar to those that take place in Spain at present. Similar bull-fights have been found represented on the walls of the palace of Minos in Crete.<sup>19</sup> The authors of the Minoan civilization as well as the Iberians of Spain are supposed to belong to the so-called Mediterranean race,<sup>20</sup> to which according to modern anthropologists the Dravidians belong also. This view is now confirmed by the archaeological discoveries at Mohenjo Daro. A good historical illustration of such taurine customs might be found in the so-called "bull marriage" described in the Tamil works of the Sangam period. When several young-men were courting a girl, the father of the latter used to set loose a bull within a ring. The lad who succeeded in catching the bull by the horns proved to be worthy of his beloved.<sup>21</sup>



5. Among the relics found at Mohenjo Daro, Harappa and other sites, the collection of steatite seals is of extraordinary importance. These seals, as a general rule, bear the figure of an animal in the lower portion, animal which seems to represent the totem of the tribe, viz., a unicorn, an elephant, a bull, a buffalo, a tiger, etc. The upper portion of the seal is occupied by an inscription in characters which were totally unknown. The study of these characters reveal undreamt of contacts with other nations of the ancient world – China, Sumer, Egypt, Crete, the Hittites, etc., contacts which may prove some ethnological affinities and may finally detect the parent of all the scripts used by them. I shall only mention one case which is very significant: the sign meaning “death” in the Mohenjo Daro script. The upper portion of this sign is the funeral monument, called *stuupa*, at a later period. The small arrow-like sign below is full of interest and meaning. The sign | in our script means “one”. Therefore it reads or. Now if we want to speak of one person we shall write the determinative of personification of this sign, thus ↑. This sign consequently reads *oorvan* “one person.” This is precisely the sign placed under the funeral mound. The whole sign therefore is a pictograph representing a person buried under the funeral mound. Now this sign passes through three stages of simplification within the Mohenjo Daro period. These stages are the following:



Now in early Sumerian script, in the tablets of Jemedt Nasr, death is expressed by the arrow – like sign only, turned 90 degrees to the left as usual this: ←<sup>23</sup>. This seems to be the last stage of simplification of this sign, impossible to explain in Sumerian writing without reference to the Mohenjo Daro script. (The above signs of Mohenjo Daro read *saa*, which etymologically means :“to fall on one side.” The majority of the corpses buried in Harappa<sup>20</sup> and also the corpses of the royal cemetery of Ur<sup>27</sup> were found lying on one side, practically always on the right side.)

6. The script of Mohenjo Daro is a pictophonographic script of such a logical nature that it may be at times read without knowing its meaning.<sup>29</sup> It is a script which depict the sound, when in its phonetic signs it cannot depict the objects meant by the sounds. Such a script discloses a clear tendency to become alphabetic. When the Aryan entered India, they had no script of their enemies,

the Dasyus. Thus the script developed through two different channels. In northern India under the Aryas and their Aryanized friends, the Dravidians. In Southern India and Ceylon it developed under its own inventors, the Dravidians, more or less influenced by the Aryas of the North and by their Samskrta language. Such is the origin of the two kinds of Brahmi characters of North and South India, from which all the modern Indian alphabets proceed. The value of many of these Brahmi characters is still a consonant sound of the Primitive word represented by the Mohenjo Daro sign.<sup>29</sup>

7. The language used in these inscriptions most certainly belongs to the family of Dravidian languages. I style it the proto Indian language. It must be older than all the Dravidian languages spoken in India at present, and may finally be acknowledged as the parent of all these languages. This evidently opens an extraordinarily vast field, totally new indeed, for philological studies in Dravidian languages. My good friend Rev. S. Gnana Prakasar, O.M.I,m has already made use of one of the inscription published by me<sup>30</sup> in a recently published article on *Tamil Verse Seven Thousand Years Ago*.<sup>31</sup>

8. After the study of above one thousand eight hundred inscriptions which up to now have been deciphered by the present writer, it is easy to realize that the wave of migration of the Mediterranean race which was supposed to have been from West to East,<sup>32</sup> must now be finally settled as having taken place in the opposite direction, i.e., from East to West. The development of the script of Mohenjo Daro in relation with the Sumerian script, the religion of these two countries and that of Egypt,<sup>33</sup> the titles of kings, the number of zodiacal constellation among the proto-Indian people and the relative position of these constellations, the changing of the proto-Indian constellation of the Harp (*yaal*) from Taurus (the bull) which must have taken place in Sumer, the tradition of the ancient people of Mesopotamia recorded by Berosus, the parallel biblical account in Gen. II, 1-5, - all point to the same conclusion that the migration of the Mediterranean race commenced from India and extended through Southern Mesopotamia and Northern Africa; spread through Crete, Cyprus, up to Ireland is marked by an interrupted chain of dolmens and other megaliths, that seem to be relics of this enterprising and highly civilized race which is termed the Mediterranean by the anthropologist and which in India has been quite unreasonably despised under the name "Dravidian".

9. It has been an error to call the civilization discovered at Mohenjo Daro, Harappa and other sites, "the Indus Valley Civilization," for this phrase seems to suggest that such civilization flourished in the Indus Valley only. Relics of the same civilization have also been found in the Gangetic valley<sup>34</sup> and in Kathiawar.<sup>35</sup> Signs like those of the Indus Valley have also been discovered in pieces of pottery found in the Tinnevely District,<sup>36</sup> the southern most district of India, on some rocks in the Nilgiris,<sup>37</sup> and on pottery found in the pre-historic tombs of the Hyderabad State.<sup>38</sup> The background of the *taks*, so common in the Deccan, bearing images of Khandoba or another Saiva deity, is covered with similar signs too,<sup>39</sup> The Linkayats of Karnataka make their house with another Mohenjo Daro sign, the meaning of which now totally unknown to them. The present writer has lately discovered some signs of that script in a pre-historic cave of the Kegalle District of Ceylon and also in the earliest struck coins of Ceylon which bear quite intelligible inscriptions.<sup>41</sup>

### Notes

1. Marshall, Pl. CXVIII, No. 3 (HR.4337). The Mohenjo Daro script reads from right to left, though the second line reads in the opposite direction, as all *boustrophedon* scripts.
2. *Ibid* M.D. No. 553.
3. Cf. Gnana Prakasar, *Root-words of the Dravidian group of Language, Anthropos, XXX*, pp.140-141.
4. Fr. Gnana Prakasar is now publishing the first part of his etymological Dictionary of the Tamil language.
5. Marshall, MD., Pl. CXVI, No.23.
6. The explanation of this inscription, which is totally outside the scope of the present article, would be too long to be put here. The inscription will be fully explained in my work on the *Proto-Indian script and Civilization*.
7. Dutt, *The civilization of India*, p.3 (London, 1900).
8. Cf. Moraes, *The kadamba Kula*, p.8 ff, etc.
9. For instance the Singhalese of Ceylon, the South Indian Brahmins, or the Paravas of the Fishery Coast.
10. Banerji, *Prehistoric, Ancient and Hindu India*, p.19,
11. *Ibid*, p.24

12. Gadd-Smith, *The New Links between India and Babylonian Civilization. Illustrated London News*. Oct.4, 1924, pp.614-616.
13. For instance by Waddel, *Indo-Sumerian Seals Deciphered*, (London, 1925.
14. Cr. Woolley, *The Sumerians*, pp.6-9 (Oxford, 1928)
15. Schnabel, *Berosos und die Babylonisch Hellenistische Literature*, pp.173-174.
16. *Ibid.*, p.175.
17. *Gen.* XI, 2-3 The beautifully built houses with bricks and cement which have been found at Mohenjo Daro seem to be the best comment on this passage of the Bible. Evidently the read-and-mud huts of Mesopotamia in pre-Sumerian days did not please those who had inhabited brick-built dwellings.
18. This object found in the DK area, in 1931-2, is not yet published.
19. Evans, *The Palace of Minos*, III, pp. 219-232.
20. Cf. Melida, *Arqueologia Espanola*, pp.70-71 (Barcelona, 1929); Barton,. *Semitic and Hamitic Origins*, p.53 (philadelphia, 1934)
21. *Kalitogai*, 104, vv.50-51.
22. Marshall Mr.D., Nos, 14, 20, 84, 99, 146, 344, 553, 557, and *passim*.
23. Marshall, H., No.23; Photo M.D., 1930-1, No, 11359; Photo, H. No. 3006.
24. Marshall, M.D., No.535.; Photo, M.D., 1929-30, D.K. Nos. 7875 and 8254.
25. Langdon. *Pictorial Tablets of Jendet Nasr*, No.271.
26. Marshall. Op. I, P. 80, fig.2.
27. Woolley, *Ur Excavation II the Royal Cemetery*, Plates, pl.71.
28. Cf. above p.2
29. Cf. Heras, *Light on the Mohenjo Daro Riddle*, The new Review (Calcutta), III, p.7.
30. Cf. Heras, op. cit., p.15.
31. *The Ceylon spectator*, (Jaffna), Nov.11, 1936, pp.291-292.
32. Cf. Sergi, *The Mediterranean Race*, pp.157-185 (London, 1901)
33. Cf. Hera, The Religion of the Mohenjo Daro people according to the inscriptions, *Journal of the University of Bombay* (Hist & Econ). III p.17.
34. Benerji – Sastri. *Remains of a Pre-Historic Civilization in the Gangetic Valley* J.B.H.S., III, pp.187-191.
35. In the Museum of the Indian Historical Research Institute there are some specimens unearthed at Vala by the present writer which belong to the same proto-Indian period of history.
36. Bruce Foote, *Government Museum, Madras, Catalogue of the Prehistoric Antiquities*. pl. XXXV (Mardas, 1901).

37. Brecks, *An account of the Primitive tribes and Monuments of Nilgiris*, Pl. XLIVA (London 1873).
- 38 *Journal of the Hyderabad Archeological Society*, 1917.p.57
39. I am indebted to my late friend Mr. Vishnu R. Karandikar for drawing my attention to this science.
40. I am likewise indebted to Professor, K.S.Kundankar, Kolhapur, for this information.
41. Cf. Codrington *Ceylon Coins and Currency* Plate I & II.

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