

# The Influence of Egyptian Hieroglyphics on the Indus Script

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**Abstract:** Many Indus script symbols resemble Egyptian hieroglyphs, and there is a close connection between these two writing systems. Egyptian priests, scribes, and those from Sumer and Vedic traditions likely contributed to the development of the Indus script. The Indus symbols show a composite culture of all three great civilisations. It was a mixed culture 3500 years ago, but scholars are unnecessarily quarrelling over that legacy as Aryan and Dravidian civilisations.

**Keywords:** Indus script, Egyptian hieroglyphics, logographic writing, symbol comparison, ancient rituals

## 1. Introduction

The basic fundamental principle in any writing system is the direction of writing. Hieroglyphs are written in rows or columns and can be read from left to right or from right to left. In hieroglyphic writing, the direction the human or animal figures face is the beginning of the line. Further, the upper symbols are read before the lower line symbol. (1) The Indus script follows a pattern similar to that of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing.



The Indus script follows the same method used by Egyptian scribes. The red arrow in the seal picture above shows the

direction of the reading. The direction faced by the bull is the side from which the reading should begin.

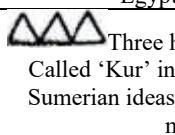
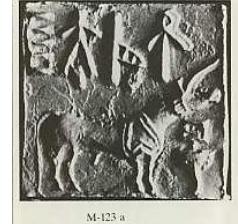
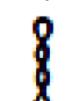
Indus inscriptions are written in an 'Ideogram' (Idea) way.

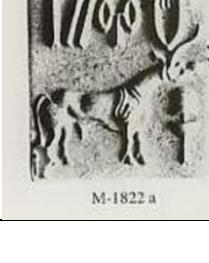
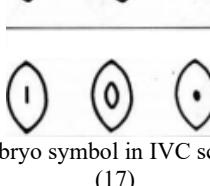
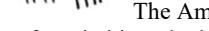
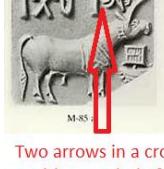
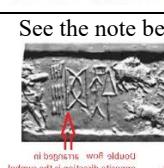
Logograms are visual symbols representing words rather than the sounds or phonemes that make up the word. It is relatively more straightforward to remember or guess the meaning of logograms, while it might be harder to remember or imagine the sound of alphabetically written words. Decipherment efforts indicate that the Indus inscriptions are primarily written in ideograms. However, the 'logo-syllabic way of writing also exists in a few cases. A notable example is 'Pithru-Karma', frequently referenced in Indus inscriptions. This word is written in an 'ideographic way' and 'logo-syllabic way'. Iravatham Mahadevan first advocated the 'ideographic way' of interpreting symbols of the Indus Valley civilisation in 2014. (2) However, his idea that those symbols indicate tablets of communication of the Dravidian people has not made much progress.

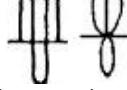
At this juncture, it is pertinent to introduce Ms Bahata Ansumali's research paper. Her article established that the Indus script uses a logographic rather than a syllabic writing system. (3) Her conclusions support my research finding that the Indus script uses a hieroglyphic (Logographic) writing system.

The table below shows that the Indus symbols have evolved from Egyptian hieroglyphics.

S.no.	Hieroglyphic Symbol Reference to Gardiner's list	Description	Egyptian Hieroglyph explanation	Indus symbol and notes
1	 D- 28	Two arms upraised	Ka (Life spirit) According to the Egyptian idea, life consists of four components: 'Ka' was the 'spirit'.	 Indus symbol is with the same meaning and the same sound, 'Ka.' (4)
2	 D-31A	Two arms upraised and a "club" in the centre.	Dead priest The 'Ka' priest was most probably involved in the death ceremony and could have specialised in dealing with the spirit (ka) of the dead men.	 The Indus symbol looks similar, meaning 'Karma' (Pithru Karma). This 'tilak' symbol was likely worn on their forehead by priests dealing with the dead man's spirit. (5)

3	 D-54	Legs walking/	Approach the enterprise, do not move, stop. Injured leg, thigh /  This leg symbol also means "come." Determinative for motion.	 E-189 A	This 'walking leg' logo appears to have the same meaning as 'come.' There is a second possibility that this could be a symbol for a mountain, indicating God Varuna. This aspect needs further verification.
4	 F-25	Leg of an ox	1. "Repeat, repetition." 2. Ideogram for "bovine leg." 3. (to repeat, narrate, recount, tell a story, tell a dream)		The leg of an ox appears in the Indus script, but the leg symbol indicates the God 'Pusan' (Pan) (6)
5	 N-1	Sky	sky	 INDUS EGYPTIAN	God in the sky. Same meaning as given in Egyptian hieroglyphics.
6	 N-25A	Three hills	Ideogram for mountain		Three hills indicate the nether world. Called 'Kur' in the Sumerian Language. In Sumerian ideas, the 'Kur' was located atop mountains. (7)
7	 N-26	Two hills	Ideogram for mountain		Egyptians thought the 'netherworld' lay beyond these two mountains. Indus people also believed in a similar idea. This symbol indicated the god Aker.' (8)
8	 N-35	Ripples of water	The letter 'n.'		This water symbol also appears in the Indus script, indicating the same meaning as 'water.'
9	 O-43	Low fence	fence		A similar ideogram appears in the Indus script, but indicates the fence put up on the Anav-Astakia ceremony (9)
10	 Q-3	Stool-- support, a stool made out of reed (Originally the stool's Mat)	Typical usage is for the name of God, Ptah-		The mat symbol indicates 'invitation' and a seat offered to the gods /pithrus in a Yajna in the Indus script. (10)
11	 R-2	Table with slices of bread	Offering table		The same offering table appears in the Indus script with the same meaning. (11)
12	 S-34	Ankh -life	Ideogram for 'life' and 'live.'	 M-123 a	Ankh has the same meaning in the Egyptian hieroglyphics.
13	 U-6A	Hoe	Beloved of the gods		The same symbol appears, but the meaning is different. This symbol indicates the ploughing ceremony that took place at the location where the corpse was burned. (12)
14	 V-28	The symbol for the word eternity/ -- an extended period/	wick-Ra-wick God-Huh		The same symbol, the caduceus, appears on IVC seals, indicating snake gods. The second possibility is that this symbol resembles Varuna's rope. The third possibility is that it could also have stood for the meaning "eternity," as in Egyptian hieroglyphics.
15	 X-8	Cone-shaped bread	Ideogram for the words 'give', 'given', and 'to give.'  In iconography and reliefs used for pharaonic statements: "Given, Life, Power...Forever"		The same symbol appears in IVC seals with the same meaning. The cone symbol means given "eternal life". (13)

16	 Z-1	Single stroke Egyptian Numeral One	indicates that the prior sign is an Ideogram as if it has no feminine ending and can stand as a stroke of abundance in empty places.	The ordinary meaning is the number one of numerals. However, it also represents the ‘Agnoukaran’ ceremony. It refers to the death anniversary ceremony in which a stick is offered to the deceased ancestor as a symbol of the Stick of Varuna. (14)
17	 Z-2	Three strokes Egyptian numeral three	plural, majority, collective concept (e.g. meat) It can be used as a replacement for signs perceived as dangerous to be written.	Along with the ordinary meaning of the number three of numerals. It could also mean plurality and serve as a danger sign, as in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. (15)
18	 Z-2c		It can be used as a replacement for signs perceived as dangerous to be written.	A similar symbol exists in the Indus script with the same meaning as Egyptian hieroglyphics (15)
19	 Z-3a	Three horizontal strokes	No explanation in the Wikipedia list (16)	It may be used as a replacement for signs perceived to be dangerous to be written/(or may indicate plurality (Many gods) (15)
20	 Z-3b	Three horizontal strokes	 M-321 a	 It may be used as a replacement for signs perceived to be dangerous to be written//(or) may be indicating plurality (Many gods) (15)
21	 Z-4	Dual stroke (slanting)	Egyptian numeral two, plural, majority, collective concept (e.g. meat), Duality  It can be used as a replacement for signs perceived as dangerous to be written.	 M-1822 a  Dual stroke (Slanting) can be seen here. With a similar meaning to that of hieroglyphics (15)
22	 Aa-1	Placenta	 Embryo symbol in IVC scripts. (17)	A similar symbol appears with the meaning ‘Embryo’, which is more or less the same meaning as ‘Placenta’.  See the note below
23		Reference: List of hieroglyphic characters, serial no: 68. Book of Wallis Budge. (18)	The Crocodile symbol indicates the Egyptian demon Ammit and the Goddess Tawaret. (19)	 The Ammit is depicted in pictorial form in hieroglyphics, but in IVC script it is represented in logo form. (19)
24		Reference: Book of Wallis Budge. (14)	The double arrow indicates the Egyptian goddess Neith. In IVC, this symbol could have shown Neith. (20)	See the note below:   Two arrows in a crossed position symbol of Neith
25		The double Bow symbol means goddess Neith. Reference (18)	The double bow symbol appears in IVC with the same meaning. (20)	See the note below:   Goddess Neith in IVC script

				VARIANTS
26		Plummet	Plummet is a kind of amulet inserted during mummification (21)	 This symbol, the plummet, appears many times in IVC seal inscriptions. (22)
27	 Reference- Wikipedia	Sa – symbol	Sa – symbol means protection –the papyrus reed rolled up as a lifebuoy – implies protection.	 The Sa-symbol appears in a slightly modified form but with the same meaning, 'Protection' (23)
28	 Reference - Wallis Budge (18)		"Swathe a mummy" is a hieroglyphic symbol that represents wrapping a mummy in cotton during the mummification process.	 A similar symbol appears in IVC scripts with similar meanings. (24)
29	 G54	Hieroglyph- character- Plucked bird	Determinant for the Egyptian idea 'Twist the neck of a bird'	 The same symbol appears in a modified form. It is a twisted bird symbol with the same meaning, 'fear'. (25)
30		The X symbol appears on the mummy of Osiris and other mummies	The X symbol could have represented the Egyptian god of death, Osiris, and was often associated with the dead, particularly with mummies.	 The X symbol represents the god of death and the dead. (26) In IVC, this symbol indicates the god Varuna.



### Serial No.1. (Ka-Symbol)

This symbol of 'two arms upraised' indicates the meaning of 'Ka' (life spirit) in Egyptian hieroglyphics. This Indus symbol  gives the same sense and the phonetic sound of 'Ka'. I have already written an exclusive article on this issue titled "Upraised hands mean 'ka' (soul)". (27) Read this article for more information on this symbol.



### Serial. No.2 (Pithru Karma)

Egyptian Hieroglyphics explains this symbol as 'Two arms upraised and club in the centre', meaning 'Dead priest'. The idea of a 'dead priest' does not give a proper definition. It was probably a priest who dealt with the death ceremony and dealt with the 'Ka' spirit of the dead man. The Indus symbol has a similar meaning to 'Pithru Karma'. I have already explained this symbol in the article, " Tilak symbol means 'Pithru Karma'". (5) Read this article for more information.



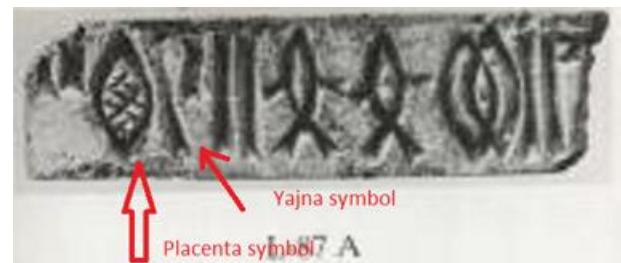
Yajna was performed. The second symbol is the 'walking leg' symbol, which signifies 'come' (an invitation). The third symbol, the 'stick symbol', suggests that the 'Agnoukaran' ceremony was performed for the dead ancestor. (28) In ancient times, it was a ritual to offer a 'stick' to ancestors during the Pithru karma ceremony. Thus, the 'walking symbol' indicates an invitation for Pithrus to attend the 'Agnoukaran' ceremony.



Ankh symbol

### Serial. No. 12:

In ancient Egyptian ideas, the "Ankh" symbolised eternal life, and IVC appears to have followed similar concepts. The symbol indicated by the arrow in the nearby seal seems identical to the Ankh symbol of Egyptian hieroglyphics.



### Serial. no.3 ('walking legs' symbol)

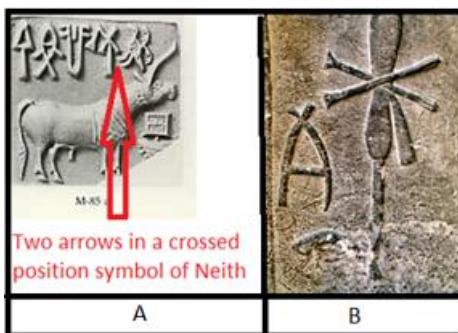
In the seal presented beside, read the inscription from left to right. The first ideogram indicates the Yajna pit, stating that a

Placenta symbol

Yajna symbol

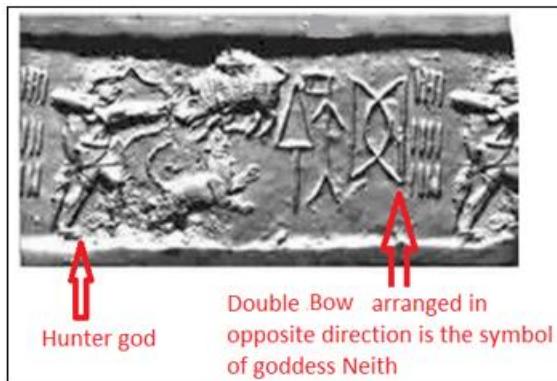
In the seal nearby, the placenta and Yajna symbols appear side by side. However, this placenta symbol indicates a

growing embryo in IVC symbolism. The Yajna was conducted to protect the growing embryo. Read the article “Yoni symbol indicates mother goddess” for more information. (17)



#### Serial no.24

This IVC symbol (Figure A) looks similar to the two crossed arrows of Goddess Neith—the hieroglyphic name of Goddess Neith(B). (20) The figure labelled “B” in the nearby figure is the Egyptian hieroglyph for the word “Neith”(goddess).



#### Serial No. 25:

In Egyptian civilisation, a double bow and arrow indicated the goddess Neith. The double-bow symbol in the Indus Valley civilisation could have represented the same goddess. (20)

Thus, it can be seen that many Indus script symbols have meanings similar to those of the ‘Hieroglyphic symbols’ of ancient Egypt. It shows the definite influence of Egyptian Hieroglyphics on the Indus script. However, the Indus script language is a composite language that incorporates elements of Egyptian writing and Sanskrit. The details regarding the influence of the Sanskrit language can be seen in my article titled “Sanskrit influence on the Indus script.” (29)

## 2. Conclusion

Surprisingly, the similarities between Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols and Indus symbols have not been noted by scholars so far. The above details confirm a link between Egyptian hieroglyphics and Indus symbols. This finding eliminates the need for bilingual evidence, such as the Rosetta Stone, to decipher the Indus script. Because of these 30 similar ideograms, the Indus scripts can be confidently read and deciphered.

## Acknowledgements

I hereby acknowledge that the Indus script symbols are adapted from the figures in the book of Asko Parpola. (30) And the book of Iravatham Mahadevan. (31) (32) I have redrawn those figures and used them in this article. It is further acknowledged that the seal figures are from the book of Iravatham Jagat Pati Joshi and Asko Parpola. (33) Further details are as per the reference list.

## Conflict of interest:

Author declares no conflicts of interest.

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