

Harappan Fish Signs

by
Clyde Winters, Ph.D

The Harappan fish has nothing to do with metallurgy or the heavens.
This figure is an ideographic sign which equals *min* ‘glitter, shine, etc.’ in the Dravidian languages.

Asko Parpola believes that the Indus Valley writing is concerned with



astrological ideas, especially his association of *min* with stars.

Generally, Parpola believes the Harappan inscriptions are concerned with stars and planets. He fails to understand the real significance of the word because he claims that the Indus Valley inscriptions are written in an aspect of Dravidian, but he uses Indo-Aryan and Middle Eastern religious traditions to interpret the signs, instead of the living religious traditions of the Dravidian people themselves. This makes his decipherment nothing more than smoke and mirrors.

The Harappan seals are wish messages in which the Harappan people would request goodness and right character from their gods. The goal of the Harappan citizen was to acquire *aram* ‘benevolence’ from his/her God.



The min sign is very popular in the Harappan inscriptions. For example



vey-ga Uss min puka Uss

‘Balance blooms a shinning Fate, glory and justice’.

A very famous Harappan seal which has the min in the inscription is the famous ‘Lord of the Beast’ seal now found in the National Museum of India, in New Delhi. This seal was found in the lower town at Mohenjo-Daro.

In the ‘Lord of the Beast Seal we find a three faced deity sitting on a stool in the attitude of a yogi. This figure wears buffalo-horned headdress, bangles, bracelets and a triangular collar. This figure is surrounded by a tiger, an elephant, a buck and a rhinoceros. Some researchers have suggested that this figure may represent Pasupati, ‘lord of the animals’, or Vanaspati ‘lord of the wilderness. But I believe that this seal relates to Yoga, and not Shiva worship.



al ka ke-aṇṇal ye Uss min Uss

‘[Give to your] servant balance and preserve [his] righteousness, increase

God’s justice (and) illumination (to my) Fate’.

(If we read the inscription from the other direction: uss min ye uss ke-aṇṇal

ka al “Fate [provides] illumination,(and) increase God’s Justice. Preserve

(my) righteousness and the Glory (of your) servant’.)

The posture of the man in the attitude of a yogi clearly suggest the practice of yoga among the Harappans. The buffalo-horn headdress indicates that this figure was a Dravidian dignitary, i.e., ‘ a man with horns’. The association of this figure surrounded by various zoomorphic deities of the Harappans, suggest that this seal encouraged its bearer to train his consciousness for a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility , so he could serve his God. The search of the Yogi for discipline of his mind and

body, explains the wish inscription above the yogi figure :” Fate [provides] illumination,(and) increase God’s Justice. Preserve (my) righteousness and the Glory (of your) servant”.



This means that appearance of ‘illumination or enlightenment’ would denote the spiritual insight sought by the yogi.



The ***min*** sign can appear as a single character or it can have other



Harappan signs attached to it e.g., ***min-i*** ‘ let it shine’. There are



several Harappan signs often associated with ***min*** , this signs include



and -a-, -i-, and (y)e-. The most popular Harappan sign



associated with ***min*** is -a-. This sign can also be interpreted as ***vey***



‘ blossom, growth, development, Florence, and to come’. In the Dravidian languages ā , is the demonstratives ‘that, he, it’; it can be the ‘come into existence, happen, be, be fit; the verb ‘to come, bring about’; the

interjections pity, regret, wonder, admiration’. As a result, reading the sign



ā min ‘Become phosphorescent’ or ‘Glowing Admiration’. For example,



i u a min

‘Thou bring glowing admiration’.



min a i tūtū min ta

‘Glowing admiration give [me] much virtue and illumination’

Another sign frequently associated with ***min*** is  -i-. The sign  -i-,

can be the pronouns ‘you, thou’; the particle for the past tense -i, and the

verb ‘to give’. Sometimes -i, can represent the negative, e.g.,  pa-i ‘do not divide’. In most Harappan inscriptions the -i particle is placed inside of the ***min*** figure. Here are some example of the use of -i, with ***min***.



aṇṇal lu min i u i set ta

‘ Much righteousness let it shine (and) bring here virtue!’

Other min signs with ligatures include  tu min tu ‘to experience glowing

purity’,  ii min-i ii ‘thou give illumination, thou give it (now)!’ For example:



Uss tu tu pu-ga e tu ta

‘Fate (is) to experience glowing purity. Mayest thou flourish [here and] give
[me] virtue!’