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The So-Called Proto-Śiva Seal from Mohenjo-Daro: An Iconological Assessment

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1. Introduction

Since the discovery in the 1920s of the Indus Valley Civilization (ca. 2300–1750 B.C.), the so-called proto-Śiva seal from Mohenjo-daro has been much discussed and debated (Fig. 1). The controversial nature of the seal stems from the initial interpretation ascribed to it by Sir John Marshall, pioneer excavator of this major site of the Indus, or Harappan, civilization.¹ The many distinguishing features associated with the figure on the seal were interpreted by the excavator as indicative of the prototype of Śiva: the figure looks tricephalic and Marshall compares this with medieval representations of Śiva; the figure sits in a yoga-like posture, and Śiva is the yogi par excellence in Hindu mythology; the figure's headdress, composed of two horns and a tall central portion, is suggestive of the shape of Śiva's emblem, the *triśūla*, or trident; the group of animals around the figure evoke Śiva's later aspect as Paśupati, "Lord of Beasts." This interpretation, in effect, postulates that Śiva worship stems from a non-Aryan culture predating the coming of the Aryans in the Vedic period.

The force of Marshall's argument has endured. Indeed no matter what position is taken regarding the seal's iconography, it is always prefaced by Marshall's interpretation. On balance, the proto-Śiva character of the seal has been accepted. Thus this view, often repeated as fact, has greatly influenced an understanding of the developments in Hindu art and religion.

Thoughtful objections have been periodically expressed, however, and a wide range of different identifications have been offered. Saletore in 1939 was one of the first to point out the difficulties in assigning

later Hinduistic ideas to a prehistoric seal. He considered the seal's figure to have three faces and a headdress consisting of three horns. He related these attributes to the Vedic god Agni, who indeed is described as having "three heads" and whose flames are his "horns."² Almost immediately this view was opposed by a series of articles reverting back to aspects of Marshall's original position.³ Next, Chaudhuri reviewed the seal's iconography in his study on the Indus civilization and raised significant doubts regarding the proto-Śiva attribution by noting that (1) the features Marshall isolates are not associated with Śiva until the Epics and Purāṇas and that (2) except for the trident, these features are not very common in the iconography of Śiva.⁴ In any case, Chaudhuri was doubtful of Marshall's trident theory, which requires accepting not only that the form of the headdress could evolve into that of the trident, but also that a headgear could be the source of an emblem held in the hand.⁵ K. Nilakanta Sastri questioned the tricephalic feature. He maintained that "the god is neither three-faced nor even human faced. His whole form, though apparently human, is cunningly contrived to be a combination of various animals."⁶

A proposal to conceive of the figure as female was advanced by H. P. Sullivan.⁷ Sullivan's reasons for viewing the figure as female are (1) no evidence of a phallus; (2) the presence of a waistband (an ornament associated with female figurines, whereas males, the author maintains, are always nude); (3) a "pig-tail" worn by another so-called proto-Śiva figure (seal 235, see Fig. 3) matches that of a tree goddess⁸;



Fig. 1. Mohenjo-daro seal 420. Reprinted with permission from Sherman E. Lee, *A History of Far Eastern Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1964), Figure 6, p. 22.

furthermore, the coif on seal 222 (likewise usually considered to depict a proto-Śiva, see Fig. 2) is also compared to that of female figurines; (4) the appearance of bangles and necklaces. However, it may be countered that (1) the figure on the seal is devoid of both male and female sex characteristics; (2) males



Fig. 2. Mohenjo-daro seal 222.

are by no means always portrayed nude,⁹ and a waistband is worn, on seal 222, by the figure which is most probably male; (3) a pigtail like the one on seal 235 may be compared with a similar hairstyle worn by a male figure.¹⁰ Clearly these counterarguments serve only to show that on the basis of the above criteria, the figure could be either male or female. For this writer the figure is judged to be male because the horns and head may be compared with representations of humanized bulls (see below). Sullivan states that the Indus religion probably contained a cult centering around a mother goddess whose dual nature was that of a vegetation-fertility deity and mistress of animals. The figure on the seal, he suggests, represents the goddess in the second role (*a paśupatnī*, as it were). The main difficulty with this position stems from the inconclusive criteria Sullivan used to establish the figure as female. In a review of the seal made in the mid-1960s, B. Prakash concludes that the three-headed figure may be identified with the Vedic *Viśvarūpa Tvāṣṭṛ*.¹¹ This conclusion is based on a series of comparisons making the tacit assumption (one not shared by the present writer) that a cultural continuity exists between the Indus civilization and the civilization of the *Rig Veda*.

None of these identifications, to judge from a series of important and relevant works published in the last decade, have replaced Marshall's suggestions.¹² It is the aim of this paper to review recent archaeological



Fig. 3. Mohenjo-daro seal 235.

findings together with Vedic textual evidence in an effort to assess whether this material bears upon the significance of the seal. Indeed such an assessment indicates that an understanding of the seal's iconographic features depends less on relating them to Vedic and Hindu symbolism, and more on comparing them to remains from Indus and pre-Indus sites. Such a comparison shows that the figure on the Mohenjo-daro seal is likely to be a divine bull-man. As such, the figure is seen as directly related to, and consistent with, the emphasis placed upon the bull (and on occasion the bull-man) in the material remains of the Indus civilization. It is worthwhile therefore to take a closer look once again at seal 420 from Mohenjo-daro.¹³

2. Description of the Seal

The seal depicts a figure seated, erect and frontal, in a manner evocative of the yoga posture *padmāsana*. The legs, bent at the knees, are folded; the feet touch heel to heel and the soles point downward. The arms are completely covered by a series of bangles. The hands rest lightly at the knees. An open chest is covered with a graduated series of five inverted triangular striations. These are usually taken as a series of necklaces or torques, or as a triangular pectoral.¹⁴ The waist is marked by a double-banded sash ending in hanging tassels. The lower body is bare. Marshall cautiously suggested that an erect phallus can be seen on the figure, granting however that "it is possible that what appears to be the phallus is in reality the end of the waistband"¹⁵; indeed Mackay inclined toward the latter view.¹⁶ This view gains support from two other Mohenjo-daro seals, 222 and 235 (Figs. 2 and 3). These seals show a figure, quite similar to the 420 figure, wearing something like a waistband with an endpiece hanging down.¹⁷ Indeed there seems to be no explicit example from Mohenjo-daro, or from any other Indus site, of a god depicted with the erect phallus.¹⁸

The figure wears an elaborate headdress crowning a long and rather rectangular face. The headdress consists of two curved horns; the tips of the horns point upward to the fan-shaped central form.¹⁹ This form contains markings which spread, branch-like, from the lower portion. The headdress rests firmly on the diminished brow of a face marked by a set of

distinctive features. The small eyes are set high and slant downward. The nose is prominent and elongated. A double-line contour, suggestive of a pendulous fold of skin, extends from the eyes around the face, which seems to grow directly out of the shoulders. On either side of the face appear lateral projections, each consisting of a long pointed flap over two horizontal strokes; Marshall considered these projections to be the profiles of a three-headed god.

The figure sits on a low dais. Beneath are two deer standing with heads regardant and horns turned to the center. In the field surrounding the figure are four animals: an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros, and a buffalo.

In section 3 those four iconographic elements singled out by Marshall, namely, the headdress, the face, the posture, and the surrounding animals, are reassessed by means of comparative prehistoric material and Vedic textual evidence. Perhaps the usefulness of the latter needs some explanation. Two concepts Marshall associates with the seal, *paśupati* and three-headedness, occur in the Vedic *saṃhitās*, the earliest literature in the ancient Hindu tradition. As is well known, Śiva's Vedic forerunner Rudra is also mentioned in these texts. It is especially valuable that these concepts occur in the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda, for the former is the oldest *saṃhitā* and the latter is the *saṃhitā* most likely to reflect some folk—possibly non-Vedic—beliefs. In extending the inquiry into these texts, the aim is to determine whether any correlation exists between the seal's iconography and the Vedic concepts of Rudra, *paśupati*, and three-headedness. To be sure, there is a considerable chronological and cultural gap between the Vedic references and the Indus seal. Yet the Vedic evidence must be taken into account if only to gauge whether it can in any way support or deny the proto-Śiva hypothesis.

3. Iconological Analysis

THE HEADDRESS

A terracotta 'cake' from the Harappan levels at Kalibangan, a site about 120 miles south-east of Harappa, provides insight into the nature of the headdress.²⁰ The 'cake' has incised figures on both



Fig. 4. Kalibangan 'cake,' Harappan period. From B. B. Lal and B. K. Thapar, "Excavations at Kalibangan," *Cultural Forum* 9 (July 1967). Photograph, Archaeological Society of India.

sides. On the obverse there is a human figure wearing a headgear composed of two large horns curved on either side of a central branch-like configuration (Fig. 4).²¹ The casual workmanship does not indicate whether the headgear is intended to be a crown, or whether actual horns and branches are attached to the head.²² Nevertheless, the Kalibangan headgear shows a definite relation to the headdress on seal 420, bearing in mind the graffito quality of the former and the engraver's skill of the latter.²³ Indeed the miter on 420 appears to represent the most stylized rendering of the horn and branch motif among a series which include the more naturalistic examples seen on the aforementioned seals 222 and 235²⁴ (see



Fig. 5 Mohenjo-daro terracotta female figurine.

Figs. 2 and 3). The pronounced fan-shaped contour of the branches on seal 420 may be influenced by the shape of the headdress frequently worn by Mohenjo-daro terracotta female figurines (Fig. 5).²⁵

The horn and branch miter is not unique to Indus sealings. Such components form the miters worn by gods on Mesopotamian cylinder seals dating to the Akkadian period (c. 2330–2180 B.C.).²⁶ In the Mesopotamian context, this type of miter is emblematic of divinity.²⁷ It may be that in the Indus context, the horn and branch headdress has a broader meaning. Seal 430 from Mohenjo-daro would indicate this.²⁸ A horn and branch headdress similar to that on seals 222 and 235 is worn by both a standing "tree-god-

Fig. 6. Kalibangan bull, Harappan period. Photograph, Archaeological Society of India.



dess”²⁹ and a kneeling figure (perhaps a worshipper³⁰), suggesting thereby a more basic symbolic meaning for the headdress; perhaps it connotes “fertility, and abundance” symbolized by the horns and the spreading branches.³¹

THE FACE

Again from the Harappan period at Kalibangan comes a terracotta bull whose modeling the excavators Lal and Thapar compare to the typical Mohenjo-daro bull figurine.³² Of interest is the way in which the dewlap is depicted (Fig. 6). The folds of skin hanging loose below the neck are indicated by a series of wavy incised lines. These markings recall those which contour the face on seal 420. Does the face on seal 420 also have a dewlap? As several previous studies have pointed out, the face looks much like that of a bucranium.³³

The degree to which the bull-like features and proportions are retained is best seen when the face is compared to several horned masks also from Mohenjo-daro. Figure 7 is a hollow pottery mask having



Fig. 7. Mohenjo-daro hollow mask of a humanized bucranium.



Fig. 8. Mohenjo-daro human horned masks.

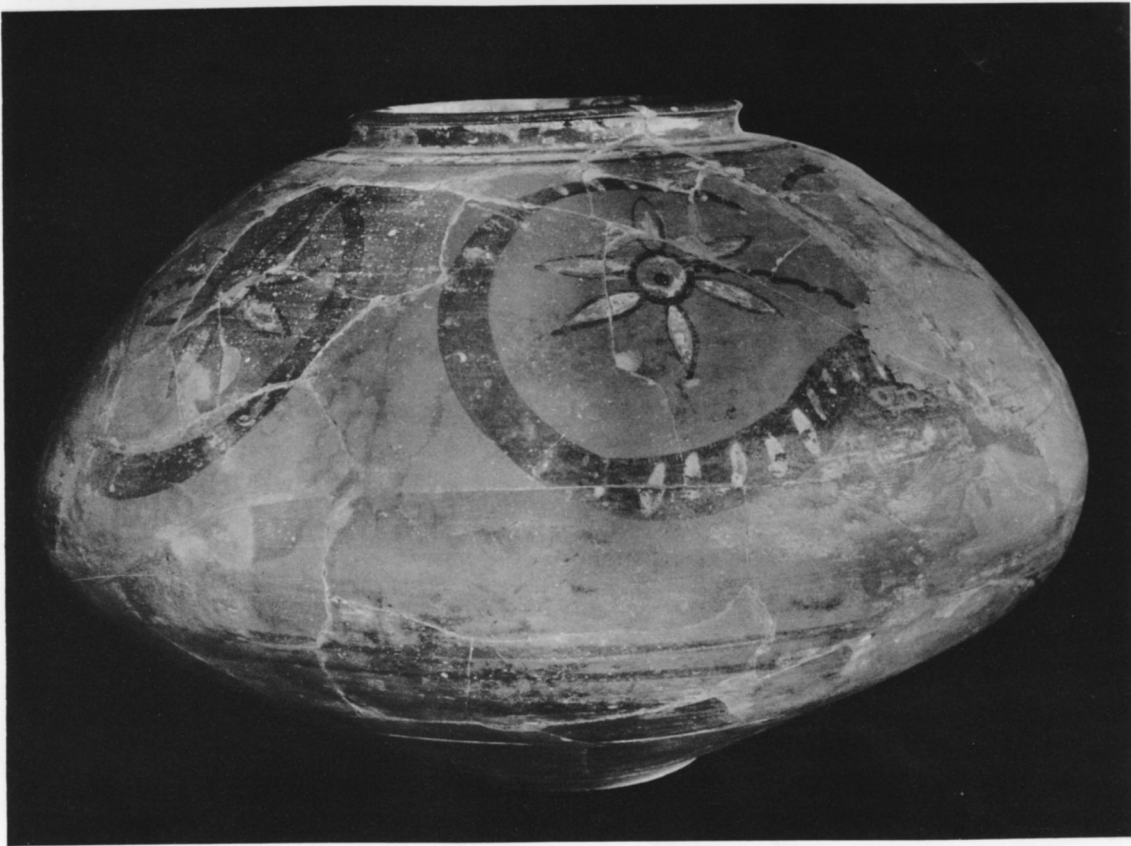
a hole on each side for fastening; unfortunately the horns are missing.³⁴ As noted by Mackay, the features are unusual; Mackay decided to classify the mask with oxen figurines, thereby clearly differentiating it from a set of human horned masks he described elsewhere³⁵ (Fig. 8). However, when the profile of Figure 7 is compared with that of a typical Indus bull (Fig. 9), it becomes evident that the features of the mask are somewhat human as well as bull-like. Apparently, the mask depicts a humanized bucranium. These features compare very well with the face on seal 420, whose features also fall between the range established on the one hand by the human horned masks, and on the other by the Indian bull. Indeed, were the facial characteristics of the 420 figure projected into profile, they would show a definite similarity with the pottery mask in respect to the vanishing brow, the small lozenge-shaped eyes, the snout-like nose, and the slight indication of a dewlap.

Another humanized bucranium head painted on a vessel from Kot Diji offers additional points of comparison. Kot Diji, a site 25 miles northeast of Mo-

henjo-daro, contains both Harappan and pre-Harappan levels of occupation; the vessel comes from a transitional layer 3A.³⁶ The vessel displays a unique design painted in black on a dark brown slip over a red background (Fig. 10). It shows a head adorned

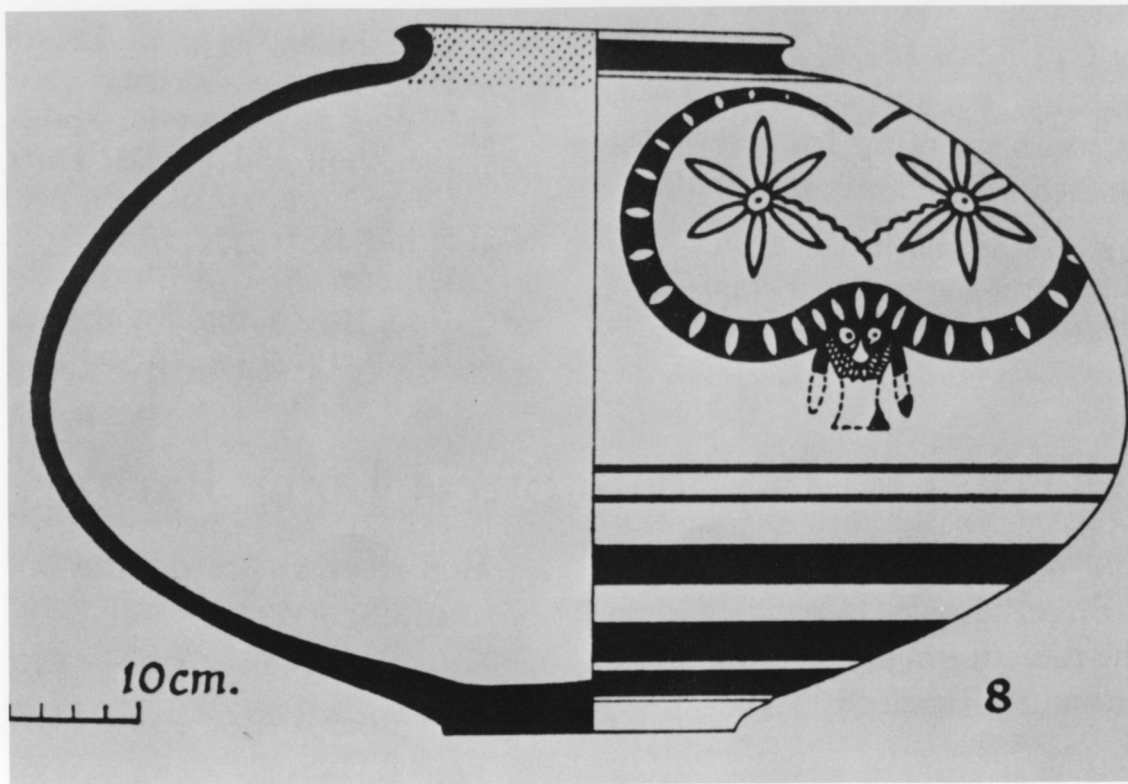


Fig. 9. Typical Mohenjo-daro bull.



(A)

Fig. 10. (A) Water pitcher painted with a horn deity, Kot Diji. (B) Diagram of painting on A. A copyright reserved by Directorate of Archaeology & Museums, Government of Pakistan.



(B)

with huge stylized horns whose upward curving tips nearly touch. Within the curvature of each horn is a large six-petalled flower.³⁷ “From the junction of the horns seems to ‘hang’ down an elongated human head, its chin and cheeks shown in black dots, the low forehead, and the upper part of the long drooping ears in solid black.”³⁸ Sankalia, in his study of this vessel, considers the design to represent a humanized bucranium head, of the type directly preceding the figure on the Mohenjo-daro seal.³⁹ Certainly the rectangular facial frame and the relation of horns to head is markedly similar. A comparison may also be ventured between the ears of the humanized bucranium and the flap-like projections on either side of the 420 face. To consider these projections as the ears of the bull-man is of course very suitable; however, the significance of the extensions below the ears remains unresolved.⁴⁰ Even so, the above evidence goes counter to Marshall’s idea of a tricephalic proto-Śiva wearing a headdress of indeterminate meaning in the Indus culture; instead there emerges the face of a bull-man whose headdress may mark him as a fertility figure.

The tricephalic attribution runs into further difficulty. First, no convincing tricephalic human head exists from any Indus site, nor to the best of my knowledge, from any pre-Indus site.⁴¹ Second, three-headed animals do however appear on Indus seals. The stylistic rendering of these composite creatures gives good indication of how the Indus craftsman met the challenge of inventing a tricephalic form

with horns.⁴² The convention adopted, both original and successful, was to have three separate heads and necks grow out of a common body in such a way that each unit could form a separate and convincing corporeal entity. A seal from Amri illustrates this well (Fig. 11).⁴³ This convention represents the tricephalic feature unambiguously; were the figure on seal 420 intended to be three-headed, one would expect equal clarity of conception.

The Vedic evidence also argues strongly against the possibility of a tricephalic proto-Śiva. The Rig Veda knows well the notion of multiple bodily parts, including that of multiple heads. The text contains about 70 multiplicity references describing divinity in this manner⁴⁴; such descriptions are used throughout the text in a fundamentally consistent way.⁴⁵ There are nine references to multiple heads associated with four different gods and one demon⁴⁶; Rudra is not among these.⁴⁷ It would indeed be difficult to account for the omission of the polycephalic feature from Rudra’s imagery were the tricephalic prototype already conceptualized in prehistoric times. The evidence from the Atharva Veda is not at variance with the above. Rudra is never described with three or with any other number of multiple heads. His characteristic multiple bodily part seems to a “a thousand eyes.” Hymn 11.2 mentions “the thousand-eyed Rudra” in three different verses (vss. 3, 7, 17; note that Bhaga and Śarva [see p. 56] are also “thousand-eyed” in AV 4.28.3). The image of a thousand-eyed god does not need to imply additional multiple bod-

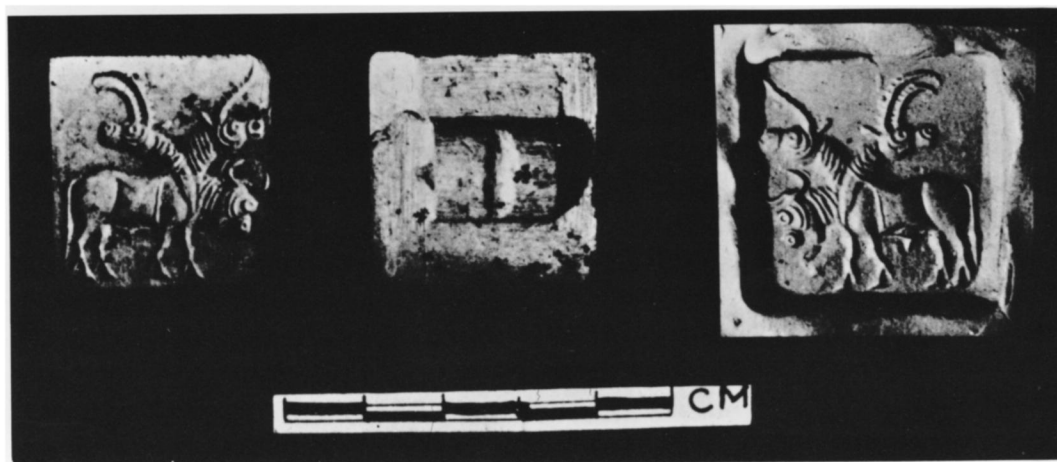


Fig. 11. Amri seal, mature Harappan period. Tricephalic composite creature with horns.

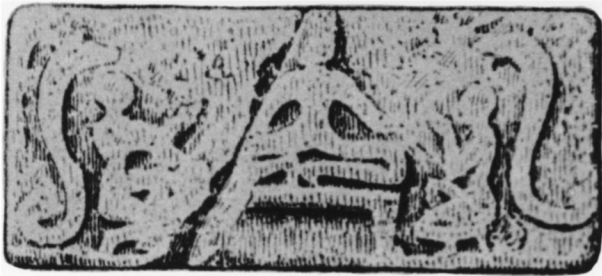


Fig. 12. Mohenjo-daro faience sealing.

ily parts. The expression may stand independently as an allusion to the supranormal power of omniscience; it is so used with Varuṇa (RV 7.34.10), Soma (RV 9.60.1,2), Agni (RV 1.79.2), and with Rudra in the above examples from the Atharva Veda.

THE POSTURE

Previous remarks on the seated posture of seal 420 have clustered around two divergent opinions. The posture is seen by some investigators as a natural mode of sitting and therefore devoid of special significance.⁴⁸ For others it represents a yoga posture and one writer even states that it attests to the *Yogīśvara* aspect of the god Śiva.⁴⁹ A survey of seals and statuettes showing sitting positions indicates that the significance of the posture lies somewhere in between.

To begin with, other sitting positions besides the yogic one are depicted, and some of these suggest greater ease and naturalness of pose. Several statuettes from Mohenjo-daro show a seated male having one knee raised and the other leg probably tucked under the body.⁵⁰ The so-called “European posture” with both feet resting on the ground is also represented.⁵¹ Compared to these, the yoga-like posture is a much more formal, possibly cultic pose. These three types of postures are to be distinguished from a fourth, the kneeling posture usually assumed to be a worshipper’s pose (e.g., seal 430, noted above).

The occurrence of kneeling personages with a figure in the yoga-like posture suggests that the yogic posture is a mark of divinity. Examples come both from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. An amulet from Mohenjo-daro shows two kneeling “worshippers” flanking the “yogi” seated on a dais.⁵² Behind each “worshipper” is a serpent. Mackay finds this amulet identical to a small faience sealing also from Mohenjo-daro (Fig. 12).⁵³ From Harappa comes a terracotta triangular prism (310⁵⁴) showing the blurred out-

lines of a yogic figure attended by a worshipper to the right seated on his haunches.

It is to be inferred that the “yoga” posture of the 420 bull-man indicates that he is divine; further, his plant and horn miter indicates that he may be a fertility god. Probably the same status ought to be accorded the figures on seals 235 and 222. The latter is seated on a dais whose supports are shaped like the legs of a bull. Another “yogi” seated on a dais having bull legs appears on one side of a hitherto unpublished triangular prism reputedly from Mohenjo-daro and now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Fig. 13).⁵⁵ The figure, devoid of headdress, is similar to the type on the amulet and faience sealing noted



Fig. 13. Mohenjo-daro triangular prism sealing (left face). Figure on a throne in “yogic” posture. Department of Eastern Art, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 14. Mohenjo-daro triangular prism sealing (bottom face). Animal figure. Department of Eastern Art, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 15. Mohenjo-daro triangular prism sealing (right face). Characters in the undeciphered Indus Valley script. Department of Eastern Art, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

above. However, like the divine bull-man, the Ashmolean figure is surrounded by four animals. A gavial and a fish can be distinguished on the right; possibly the same animals are intended on the left. Figures 14 and 15 depict the other two sides of this prism.

The above assemblage of “yogi” seals is a curious one. Only two are alike; only three are associated with worshipping figures. Yet as a group they share a network of numerous interrelated symbols; to those noted above may be added the pigtail noticed on 235 as well as on the Harappan seal 303.⁵⁶ Does this assemblage represent different kinds of fertility gods? Possibly, although much more needs to be known about the civilization to affirm this.

THE SURROUNDING ANIMALS

The four wild animals—elephant, tiger, buffalo, and rhinoceros—grouped around the figure prompted the suggestion that the concept *paśupati* (Lord of Beasts, or Creatures) frequently associated with Rudra-Śiva from the Vedas onward, is already pre-figured in the nature of proto-Śiva. However, a closer look at the relation between Rudra and creatures indicates that there is no correlation between the early Vedic evidence and the seal’s iconography. A survey of the term *paśupati*, especially as it relates to Rudra, shows that (1) *paśupati* does not protect wild animals, and (2) Rudra’s dominant trait toward all creatures is one of wrath rather than protection.

In the Rig Veda, the synonym *paśupā* occurs six times. The nature of a *paśupati*/*paśupā* comes out best in connection with hymns to Pūṣan. This god, who is guardian of roads and protector of men and animals from danger on the road, is called *paśupā* in 6.58.2. Hymn 6.54 explains the epithet in detail: Pūṣan follows the cattle (6.54.5, 6); he guards the horses (6.54.5). He keeps animals from injury and from getting lost (6.54.7), and those that have gone astray he drives back home again (6.54.10). Atharva Veda 11.2.9 specifies the five kinds of animals assigned to the protection of Paśupati: cows, horses, men, goats, and sheep. From these verses it becomes clear that Paśupati protects the domestic animals upon which the Vedic agrarian economy depends, as well as the Vedic sacrificer himself (cf. 6.54.4).

Rudra injures precisely those creatures under the

protection of *paśupati*. In the Rig Veda, Rudra threatens to harm the sacrificers, their parents, offspring, progeny, cattle, and horses (cf. RV 1.114.7, 8, 10). On that account, it would appear, the worshipper seeks Rudra’s protection over the very creatures he might otherwise slay (cf. 1.114.1). The Atharva Veda portrays Rudra in the same light. In AV 11.2.21, he is asked not to covet cattle, men, goats, and sheep, the very creatures verse 9 of the same hymn consigns to *paśupati*.⁵⁷ In that Rudra is requested to show mercy and restraint toward *paśupati*’s creatures, he is euphemistically called the overlord of creatures (*paśūnām adhipatiḥ* AV 5.24.12). The same ambivalence is demonstrable in AV 11.2.1, a verse praising Bhava and Śarva. (These two names, though ascribed to Rudra in the Yajurveda, are probably separate deities in the Atharva Veda). Though Bhava and Śarva are lauded as *paśupati*, they are at the same time requested not to attack the sacrificer, nor to harm his bipeds and quadrupeds.

It may be deduced, from the Vedic evidence, that such animals as appear on seal 420 (including the deer, which was also hunted at that time) are not within the domain of the Paśupati. Nor are the gavial and fish on the Ashmolean seal or the serpents on the Mohenjo-daro “yogi” seals (see fnn. 52, 53). Nor is there indication that Rudra is considered to be a benevolent guardian of creatures, as for example is Pūṣan. (Later notions of Śiva Paśupati, especially those of the Paśupata sects, apparently stem from re-interpretation of concepts within the Hindu tradition). In consequence, there seems to be no reason to associate the concept *paśupati* with the representations on seal 420.

Assuming that the 420 figure is a divine bull-man, what would be the significance of the four animals? A few possibilities are worth noting, although nothing can be said with certainty. Perhaps the animals signify the divine strength of the bull-man. A similar interpretation for a Mohenjo-daro plaque was offered by Fairervis; he suggests that “animal spirits or representatives of godlike powers” may be represented on a square pottery plaque depicting a tiger, elephant, two bulls or buffaloes, and a rhinoceros arranged (as in 420) on either side of a central form, in this case a gavial.⁵⁸ Several of the same animals are seen on a triangular prism from Mohenjo-daro. One

side shows “a lion looking askance, followed by a lioness, a rhinoceros and an elephant . . . with a gavia! above; the other sides are occupied by a bison (?), deer and fore-parts of wild goats joined back to back along with some human figures engaged in fighting or hunting.”⁵⁹ These scenes suggest that seal 420 may express a wish, directed toward the divine bull-man, for success in hunting. Or, it may be that seal 420 unites creatures worshipped independently. It is noteworthy that each of the four animals appears alone on Indus sealings, often in conjunction with a ‘manger’ which is frequently interpreted as having a ritual significance.

On the basis of the archaeological and textual evidence reviewed above, Marshall’s identification may need revision. The likelihood that the figure represents a divine bull-man, possibly a deity of fertility and abundance, appears to have greater internal support. This theory is further enhanced by the great stress placed on different types of bull forms on Indus seals and figurines. Both short-horned and Brahmanī bulls appear often on the seals; among figurines these two are the most popular animal types. The seals also portray a half bull-half human personage. Two such seals from Mohenjo-daro⁶⁰ show a standing human figure adorned with hoofs, tail and horned headdress. It is within this general cultural context, showing preoccupation with the bull, that the rightful significance of seal 420 is to be found.

Notes

1. Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, London, 1931, vol. I, pp. 52–56.
2. B. A. Saletore, “Identification of a Mohenjo Daro Figure,” *The New Review*, X (July–December, 1939), 28–35. For an analysis of Agni’s multiple bodily parts in the Rig Veda see D. Srinivasan, “The Religious Significance of Multiple Bodily Parts to Denote the Divine: Findings from the Rig Veda,” *Asiatische Studien*, (1976), section II, D.I.c.
3. See G. M. Moraes, “A Mohenjo Daro Figure,” *The New Review*, X (July–December 1939), 438–448. A. Aiyappan, “Śiva-seal of Mohenjo-daro,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters*, V (1939), 401–406. Aiyappan compares the headdress on the seal to that of modern Indian tribes.
4. N. Chaudhuri, “Indus People and the Indus Religion I,” *The Calcutta Review* (July–December 1952), pp. 75–90.
5. Marshall, to support his interpretation, notes that “The Raudras, a sect of Śaivites, had the trident branded on the forehead; the Jangamas, another sect, bore it on the head . . .” (*Mohenjo-daro*, I, 55).

6. K. Nilakanta Sastri, *New Light on the Indus Civilization*, Delhi, 1957, p. 8. For Sastri’s observations that the head is that of a buffalo, and the headdress consists of two horns and a central pipal tree, see pp. 8 and 9. His other views, not easy to see, are that the arms are those of centipedes; the body is made of two looped cobras; the chest is tigrine, and the supports of the seat on which the figure sits are crabs.

7. H. P. Sullivan, “A Re-examination of the Religion of the Indus Civilization,” *History of Religions*, IV (1964), 115–125.

8. See E. J. H. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro*, Delhi, 1937, vol. II, pl. 94:430.

9. See Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*, III, pls. 98:1–4; C:1–3.

10. Marshall, *ibid.*, III, pl. C:2.

11. Buddha Prakash, *Rgveda and the Indus Valley Civilization*, Hoshiapur, 1966, chap. II. Prakash notes that Tvaṣṭṛ’s son, Viśvarūpa, is tricephalic (RV 10.99.6; 10.8.8, 9). According to R. N. Dandekar, *Some Aspects of the History of Hinduism*, Poona, 1967, p. 9, a very similar theory was expressed over twenty years ago by S. Srikantha Sastri in *Proto-Indic Religion*, Mysore, 1943. This book was not available to me. On tricephalic Viśvarūpa and omniform Tvaṣṭṛ see Srinivasan, “Religious Significance of Multiple Bodily Parts,” section II.C.1 and fn. 2.

12. V. S. Agrawala, *Śiva Mahadeva*, Varanasi, 1966, see pp. 45–47, 60. R. N. Dandekar, *History of Hinduism*, pp. 3–10; Dandekar makes one modification, namely, that the headdress evolves into Śiva’s crescent moon, not into the trident. Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, 3rd ed., Cambridge, 1968, p. 105. B. and R. Allchin, *The Birth of the Indian Civilization*, Middlesex, 1968; however, the authors express uncertainty regarding the tricephalic feature (see p. 311). W. Fairervis in *The Roots of Ancient India*, New York, 1971, also seems to have the same reservations (see p. 275). W. D. O’Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*, London, 1973, p. 9; the seal is seen as illustrative of a major mythic motif (No. 26 ea in the Index), namely, Śiva the ithyphallic ascetic.

13. It was found in the so-called “lower city” (G section of the DK area). For recent comments on the stratigraphy of this site see H. T. Lambrick, “Stratigraphy at Mohenjo Daro,” *Journal of the Oriental Institute M.S. University of Baroda*, vol. XX, no. 4 (June 1971), pp. 363–369.

14. Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*, I, 52 and fn. 6. Mackay, *Further Excavations*, I, 335.

15. Marshall, *ibid.*; his uncertainty regarding the presence of the phallus is also expressed on p. 55, fn. 5.

16. Mackay, *Further Excavations*, I, 335.

17. Mackay (*ibid.*) saw on the figures of seals 420, 222, and 235 “a cincture worn around the waist and apparently also passed between the legs, a garment very similar to the *langat* worn at the present day in India.”

18. Marshall (*Mohenjo-daro*, I, 46 and pl. 11) however conjectured that one torso from Harappa may have been ithyphallic “since the *membrum virile* was made in a separate piece.” He further suggested that it may represent a prototype of the youthful Śiva Natarāja.

19. Cf. Mackay, *Further Excavations*, II, pl. 102:5 for a similar headdress.

20. The Harappan levels at Kalibangan have been dated by C 14 analysis to ca. 2300–1800 B.C. See B. B. Lal and B. K. Thapar, “Excavation at Kalibangan,” *Cultural Forum*, 9 (July, 1967), 88.

21. Some painted designs on pre-Harappan pottery from Kalibangan prefigure the sweeping curves of the headgear. See A. Ghosh (ed.), *Indian Archaeology 1962–63—A Review*, New Delhi, 1965, p. 21, figs. 2Y and 2AA.

22. Nor is the figure’s posture certain because the ‘cake’ is broken. But by comparing the standing figure on the reverse with the obverse, it may be conjectured that the horned figure too is a standing one. I. K. Sarma and B. P. Singh, “Terracotta Art of

Protohistoric India," *Journal of Indian History* 45 (1967), 773–798, propose that the reverse shows "a stylized male figure to the left dragging an animal by neck with a rope" (p. 782).

23. This likeness has already been noticed by Sarma and Singh, *ibid.*

24. Mackay, *Further Excavations*, I, 335, also noticed that a combination of horns and plant forms constitute the headdress on seals 222 and 235. Cf. K. N. Sastri, *Indus Civilization*, p. 8.

25. Further examples are in Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*, III, pl. 95:7, 8, 13, 26, 28.

26. See Edith Porada (ed.), *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals, The Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Washington, D.C., 1948, vol. I, pl. XXX:198E. Note that G. F. Dales, A Suggested Chronology for Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the Indus Valley, in R. W. Ehrich (ed.), *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology*, Chicago and London, 1965, pp. 274–275, mentions several mature Harappan objects which parallel the Akkadian sufficiently to warrant assumption of contact.

27. Edith Porada, *Mesopotamian Art in Cylinder Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, New York, 1947, p. 34.

28. See Mackay, *Further Excavations*, II, pl. 94:430; enlarged on pl. 99:A.

29. So identified by Mackay, *ibid.*, I, 337–338; he too associates the headdress with the one appearing on seals 222 and 235. Cf. Sullivan, "Re-examination of the Religion," 117.

30. Mackay, *Further Excavations*, notes that because the worshipper wears the same headdress as the tree-goddess, the figure may be a deity of lower rank, or an ordinary human being.

31. For horns as indicative of sexual vitality in Hindu symbolism see O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism*, p. 50. For the tree as a fertility symbol see M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Cleveland and New York, 1970, chap. VIII, esp. nos. 102–103.

32. B. B. Lal and B. K. Thapar, "Excavation at Kalibangan," p. 86.

33. See K. N. Sastri, *Indus Civilization*, p. 8; Sullivan, "Re-examination of the Religion," p. 120.

34. The piece is included in Mackay, *Further Excavations*, II, pl. 79:32. Mackay notes (I, 288) that it "comes from as much as 28 ft. below datum."

35. Mackay, *ibid.*, I, 267.

36. F. A. Khan, "Excavations at Kot Diji," *Pakistan Archaeology*, II (1965), 57. For a description of layer 3A, see pp. 20, 82.

37. It is of interest that flowers are also inserted within the curvature of the horns on seal 235 (see Fig. 3).

38. H. D. Sankalia, "Kot Diji and Hissar III," *Antiquity*, 43 (1969), 142.

39. Sankalia, *ibid.*, p. 144. Khan, "Kot Diji," p. 57 suggests that the design represents a horned deity.

40. K. N. Sastri, *Indus Civilization*, p. 8, viewing the projections as ears, had this to say about the part under the ear: "Below each ear are two horizontal strokes which produce the illusion of human lips, but which in fact are the protruding ends of a U-shaped ornament or amulet the god is seemingly wearing under the chin."

41. This is however a very controversial point. Seal 235 from Mohenjo-daro is cited by Mackay as showing a three-faced god

(*Further Excavations*, I, 335; he considers 222 to have one face). A. D. Pusalker in *The Vedic Age*, vol. I in R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker (eds.), *History and Culture of the Indian People*, London, 1951, p. 187, considers 222 to have three faces. Fairservis, *Ancient India*, p. 275, sees 222 as having a single face looking upward. Sullivan, "Re-examination of the Religion," p. 120, does not associate the tricephalic feature with either seal.

42. See examples in Mackay, *Further Excavations*, II, pls. 83:24, 96:494; Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*, III, pl. 112:382.

43. J.-M. Casal, *Fouilles d'Anri*, Paris, 1964, II, pl. 27D. The seal is dated to phase III C, representing the mature Harappan period ("Mohenjo-daro tardif"). H. Heras reports on a surprisingly similar three-headed animal image from the historic period in "Three Headed Animals in Mohenjo-daro," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 23 (1942), 187–195.

44. See Srinivasan, "Religious Significance of Multiple Bodily Parts."

45. "In the Rig Veda, a deity associated with the act of creation, on a cosmic scale, is denoted as having multiple bodily parts or forms," Srinivasan, *ibid.*, see Section II, A.

46. They are: 4.58.3 (*dva śiṛṣan* two heads of Soma); 10.99.6; 10.8.8, 9 (*tri śiṛṣan*, three heads of the demon Viśvarūpa); 3.56.3 (*tryanīka*, three faces of the Asura Bull); 1.146.1; 9.73.1 (*trimūrdhan*, three heads of Agni and Soma, respectively); 5.48.5 (*caturanīka*, four faces of Agni); 10.90.1 (*sahasra śiṛṣan*, a thousand-headed Puruṣa). For discussion on these verses see Srinivasan, *ibid.*

47. He is however described as being "multiformed" (*pururūpa* RV 2.33.9). The meaning is that Rudra creates multiple material forms which are to be considered as his phenomenal manifestations; see Srinivasan, *ibid.*, section II, D.1.g on Rudra.

48. Sullivan, "Re-examination of the Religion," p. 120.

49. A. D. Pusalker, *Vedic Age*, p. 187.

50. See Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*, III, pl. 100:1–6; Mackay, *Further Excavations*, II, pl. 74:23–24.

51. Mackay, *Further Excavations*, II, pl. 76:14.

52. Mackay, *ibid.*, II, pl. 102:9.

53. Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*, III, pl. 118:11.

54. M. S. Vats, *Excavations at Harappā*, Delhi, 1940, II, pl. 93:310.

55. In a personal communication, Dr. James Harle of the Ashmolean Museum noted that the base of the piece is painted "Surface 36" and is thus likely to be a surface find. The other two sides of this piece (Mus. No. Md. 013) show (1) a composite animal (see Fig. 14) of the type similar to the one in Mackay, *Further Excavations*, II, pl. 96:521; and (2) an inscription composed of 5 characters (see Fig. 15).

56. Vats, *Harappā*, II, pl. 93:303.

57. AV 11.2.24 states that forest creatures and wild animals have been placed in the forest for Rudra. Perhaps the implication is that Rudra is to discharge his anger on these animals and not on those in the care of *paśupati*.

58. Fairservis, *Ancient India*, p. 277. Mackay also notes a "monkey-like figure holding something in its hand" and two human figures in the lower register (I, 358; illustrated II, pl. 69:23).

59. *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report 1924–25*, Calcutta, 1927, p. 64, pl. 22c.

60. See Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*, II, pl. 111:356, 357.