

The collapse of the indus-script



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Collapse of the Indus-Script 1. Identify the author's thesis or major claims (or, if the article seems to lack a thesis, the author's purpose in writing the article). What Farmer's article is about is the long held idea that Indus script is a written language, Farmer attacks that idea. He explains that the symbols used in the recovered Indus texts do not define it as a written script. He then goes on to explain why and how he believes that the myth of a written Harappan/Indus script developed from several thousand recovered Harappan seals. 2. Tell how the author supports his or her thesis. What arguments does the author make, and what kinds of evidence does the author use Farmer cites reasons for this 130 year myth which range from the how the scripts were deciphered to lost manuscripts written on perishable material that has since rotted away, but must have existed in the first place.

He also explains that limited number of symbols and how few texts/seals have been recovered. He basically states that there is not enough evidence to support the theory if you compare it to other literate civilizations of the same time frame. 3. Tell whether the author successfully demonstrates his or her thesis, and support your judgment. One way that seems to make a sense is the brevity of the texts, how can texts that range in size from one or two symbols be considered a written script language. Farmer explains that of 2, 095 objects that have Indus symbols the average length is only 4. 6 signs.

He also explains that other than the seals, the script/symbols were not written on other durable material. Other literate civilizations have written texts on buildings, stones, sculptures the Indus do not. Farmer also shows that of the 300-400 different symbols, four symbols account for 21% of Indus

texts, eight symbols account for 31% and twenty symbols account for over 50% of texts. He also explains that high sign frequencies and low repetition rates ??? in single inscriptions are inconsistent with what you would expect to find in a fully enabled script???. Another point that Farmer makes is that many of the Indus symbols are only found once in texts and many others only rarely used.

He explains that the more symbols that are found the less rare they would become. Because you would see them in more texts, however this is not the case in reference to the Indus symbols the more that are found are similarly just as rare as the ones that have been found previously and often used only once. Farmer makes a good point, it would make sense that the more texts that are found you would find fewer and fewer symbols only once or rarely used, if the symbols were indeed a written script.

Farmer??™s research seems to be more scientific base, his method seems more logical, and he even emits that if certain criteria are met he would change his view. 4. If the article challenges or supports the interpretations presented in Thapar or in Asher and Talbot, explain how.

I didn??™t read anything in Thapar about issue; I don??™t yes have the Asher& Talbot book yet. 5. Tell what contribution this article makes to our understanding of Indian history (if any). I assumed that an advance civilization such as Harappan would have had a written language.

However after reading both articles I believe that the Harappan civilization did not have a written language. And if they didn??™t how did they function in reference to trade, and how did they govern themselves6. Optional:

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discuss further the issues raised by this article. Farmer??™ s article attacks 130 years of common historical thought, about the Harappan civilization and its written symbols. I think he makes a lot of sense, which if you apply scientific method, common sense, and take the politics out of the issue, then it appears that he has proved his point. I think what is needed is an agreed upon set criteria that defines what makes a written language.