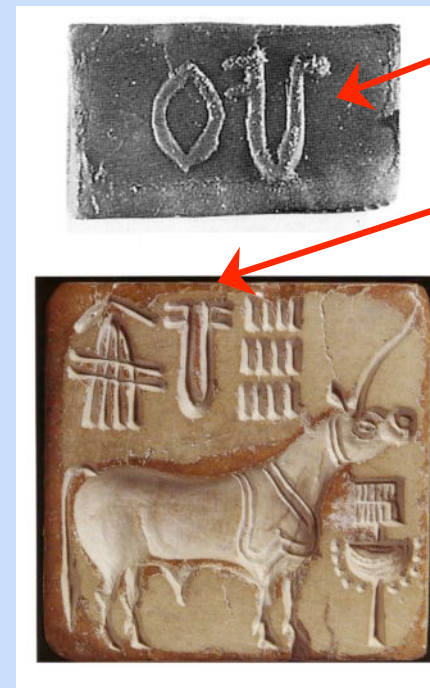**The most famous implied 'proof' that Indus inscriptions encode speech lies in the fact that some signs show up more often than others in certain positions — supposedly suggesting that they function as 'suffixes', 'diacritical signs', or 'grammatical markers', etc.**

In the late 1960s independent Soviet and Finnish research groups made dramatic international announcements that the Indus 'code' had been 'cracked' using the infant field of computer science — which in that period was still new and sexy. The fact that some signs appeared most often at or near the end of inscriptions (which had been known since the 1920s) was claimed as proof that the supposed "language of the inscriptions" was a so-called suffixing language like ancient Dravidian.

Asko Parpola and his Finnish colleagues claimed that the most common sign in the Indus corpus — often (but certainly not always) found at the far left side of inscriptions — functioned as a probable 'genitive suffix'. (The assumption here is that the inscriptions were 'read' right to left.)

The supposed "genitive suffix" of Parpola

H-668 a

M-18 A (flipped horizontally to show how it would appear as a seal impression)

Obvious exceptions to claims concerning the position of this symbol, like those shown in the two inscriptions above, were ignored or reinterpreted as examples of special uses of the sign — e.g., cases in which it served as a supposed logogram (whole word sign) or putative word divider, etc.

But it is easy to show that statistical regularity in sign position is a regular feature of symbol systems of many sorts — not just of writing systems. Here is my favorite example:
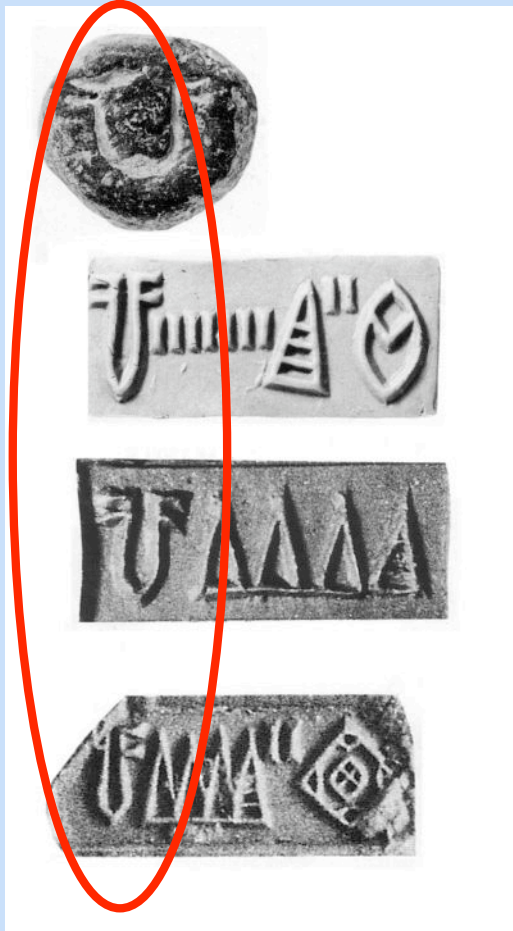
On the right: Evidence that the 'mysterious undeciphered American script' (read right to left) belongs to a suffixing language like proto-Dravidian.

Circled symbols on the right = the holiest American sign. Foreigners (and Americans too) are regularly sacrificed to this sign, just in the Indus Valley humans were apparently ritually sacrificed in front of holy trees = Circled symbols on the left (discussed elsewhere).

Low-frequency sign of the 'undeciphered American script'