

ABOUT DILMUN, MELUHA, MAGAN AND THEIR LOCATIONS

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In this document I would like to give some considerations about the alleged identifications:

- Dilmun = Bahrain
- Meluha = Indus Valley
- Magan = Oman

using some texts that have been associated to this topic.

The first text I would like to analyze in some of its statement is from Vidale: **"The short-horned bulls on the Indus seals"**. This text focuses on the findings of some seals found in certain locations. They are mostly round and have one thing in common: they seem to show a particular kind of short-horned bull or gaur. This figure is widely present in the Indus square seals, but seems to be the main theme on the Western Indus round seals.

The article proposes some images and analysis of the seals with commentaries by some authors (including Parpola, Shah, Crawford, etc) about shape and occurring intelegible writing signs. How does this connect to Meluha - Dilmun - Magan? In the article we have some (very few actually) mentions of these names:

- 1) on page 150, chapter **"similar short-horned bull seals in the gulf"** we have this mention:
"The same steatite seals found in Ur and Mohenjo-Daro, plus some variants, were used (rarely or by minorities) in the Dilmun settlements."
- 2) on page 152 chapter **"gaur seals with cuneiform inscriptions"** we have these quotes:
- "From Diqdiqah comes also a terracotta plaque with the image of a mounted indian elephant; on the whole, it might have been a reasonable location for a local Meluhan enclave"

and,

- *"On the other hand, it is well known that generally wood and timber trade and timber construction are notoriously identified in the cuneiform texts as one of the main spheres of activities of the traders and craftpeople from meluha"*

and,

- *"At the times of the late III dynasty of Ur, in facts, in economic text dealing with the managements of the royal dockyards (mar-sa) of Lagash (where a Meluha village was supposedly established) dogs and their keepers are sometimes mentioned as consumers of substantial rations of bread and beer"*

on page 155 we have these statement.

"in some of the western cities, in the latter centuries of the III millennium, some indus families might have established their enclaves, possibly similar to the 'Meluha Village' known from the cuneiform texts at Lagash."

and

- "later indian residents in the west (both in mesopotamia and in the gulf) maintained the icon of the gaur, but adopted round steatite seals instead of the quadrangular types, in which they probably used indus characters or ideograms for rendering one or more foreign languages ten currently spoken at the Meluha village"

- 3) on page 156, chapter **"a possible patronymic in the western inscriptions"** we have:
"According to Glassner the personal names identifiable in the cuneiform texts and referable to the cultural areas of Dilmun and Magan (Failaka, Bahrain and coastal Oman) would be Amorite."

Now reading all these excerpts cautiously, none of them is useful to establish nor just theorize any identification. What they indicate is:

- that the terms Dilmun, Meluha, and Magan were used in cuneiform texts (which we already know)
- that a 'Meluha Village' MAY HAVE been established in Lagash

Let alone the huge amount of 'may have', 'probably' and 'supposed', we have no clear identification at all. As anyone can see, particularly in point 4, the association between regions and names is pure statement, with no reasoning or explanation behind.

So this document cannot be used in order to find HOW or WHY the 3 identifications were made.

The second document, still from Vidale, and dedicated to the alleged Meluhan Villages, is called: **"Growing in a Foreign World. For a History of the *Meluhha Villages* in Mesopotamia in the 3rd Millennium BC"**

The introduction tells us about some findings that show the presence of indo-pakistani people in ancient Mesopotamia:

- 1) *"In 1932, C.J.Gadd opened a new line of archaeological research, collecting and publishing in a fortunate paper a series of seals from Mesopotamia (found during digs or*

acquired on the antiquarian market) sharing what he regarded as an "Indian style". Gadd's interpretation was fundamentally correct, although the series of seals he published included also specimens of what we presently identify as Dilmunite seals coming from the Gulf islands of Faylaka and Bahrein."

as we see here, the seals from the Gulf are defined Dilmunite but with no explanation for this identification. It is just stated, not justified nor explained.

- 2) *"As the identification of the land of Meluhha with the coastal areas controlled by the Indus Civilization is almost universally accepted, the textual evidence dealing with individuals qualified as "men" or "sons" of Meluhha or called with the ethnonym Meluhha, living in Mesopotamia and of a "Meluhha village" established at Lagash (and presumably at other major cities as well) unexcavably points to the existence of enclaves settled by Indian immigrants (see Parpola et al .1977; Possehl 1984, 185; for the original debate Lamberg-Karlovsky 1972)"*

Here, too, we have an 'accepted' identification (no explanation about why or how) so the indian-like seals found in mesopotamia MUST be Meluhan. This is a huge logic fallacy.

In chapter 1. **"Separating facts from conjectures"** we have a hint that, I believe, points out the problem.

- 3) *"Separating facts from interpretations is not easy, because each scholar – the present writer included – is tempted to include what he or she deems as "very likely interpretations" to some fundamental facts. Even in the title I arbitrarily assume that the Indus enclaves in Mesopotamia were identified as "Meluhha villages," whereas the only positive evidence of this entity comes from Lagash (I did it because thus the title sounds much better)."*

So what do we have here? Let's read again: *"I arbitrarily assume that the Indus enclaves in Mesopotamia were identified as "Meluhha villages," whereas the only positive evidence of this entity comes from Lagash"*

Arbitrarily assuming is neither a precise nor a valid way of dealing with texts.

The chapter 2 **"textual and archaeological evidence"** is a collection of textual extract where the 'Meluha' word is mentioned, or where some people have been described using the word Meluha. Gudea's tale is mentioned, where we find the indication that from Meluha came wood and some other materials (described in Vidale's text as *"raw material"*). Vidale then indicates that for the building of the Girsu many countries sent a wide variety of

materials and he writes.

4) *"As we shall see, recent studies would better suggest that the Indus families in Mesopotamia imported raw materials rather than finished beads"*

So is this it? He defined 'raw material' the ones from Meluha, and then indicates that Indus families in Mesopotamia imported raw material. Is this an indirect way to say that Meluha is the Indus on the basis of the alleged 'raw materials'?

Some pages later we have a mention of Dilmun.

5) *"For the Gulf, Glassner found that the majority of the proper names in the inscriptions ascribed to the Dilmun and Magan have Amorrite affinities. While such Amorrite names in the Gulf in the late 3rd millennium BC would constitute an interesting historical question, I think that another possible candidate language for the Gulf inscriptions in Indus characters would be some form of protohistoric south-eastern semitic language"*

Eventually on page 271 we have one of the most acclaimed indications of the equation Meluha = the Indus: the beads.

"Just to give an impression of the possible cost of an Indus necklace or belt made of long bar-rel-cylinder carnelian beads, on the basis of experimental replications we calculated that the production of one of these ornaments roughly amounts to 480 days of work by an highly skilled artisan. No wonder that such precious beads were actively sought for and monopolized by the Sumerian élites competing for kingship at the times of the dinastic lords buried in the Royal Cemetery of Ur (late 25th-24th century BC?). In contrast, the cheaper but quite showy etched carnelian beads became popular after the conquest of Sargon. Actually, these beads are reliable indicators of the activities of the Meluhhan traders in Mesopotamia in the last centuries of the 3rd millennium BC (Figs. 2, 4)."

We here see that these beads came from the Indus, or have an indus style... but... where is the textual sargonid or UrIII material saying that the beads came from Meluha? We have none.

No explicit text tells us that the beads came from Meluha. Again, the beads came from the Indus, which is INTERPRETED as being Meluha. It is another logic fallacy based on recursive arguments.

What we have is some text saying the akkadians imported Lapis-lazuli from Meluha. Lapis lazuli were mined in the 7th and 6th millennium from modern Afghanistan, and by the IV millenium they were widely spread in Mesopotamia, Iran, Egypt, and also Eastern

Europe. Though it is very much probable that one who wanted to mine lapis lazuli went to Afghanistan, we have no textual evidence that akkadians imported from there nor that they imported raw mined lapis lazuli. But we have another indication coming from texts. *Parpola and his colleagues (1977: 150) remarked that "Textual references to Meluhha and Meluhhans prior to the Ur III dynasty (relegated) that country and its inhabitants to a non-Mesopotamian, foreign status. Goods and materials were exotic to Mesopotamia and came from a distant Meluhha..." The authors convincingly argue that in the Akkadian period Meluhha was referred to as foreign, remote land, providing exotic goods under the control of shipowners and long-distance commercial enterprises, and requiring the help of professional translators. In the light of the probable involvement of Meluhhan traders and craftpersons with the ED III Sumerian courts, I would rather suggest that such a distance was mainly a political one."*

All we know, from texts, is that Meluha was a 'foreign and distant land'. Not much for a valid identification.

After analyzing all these excerpts, I would now pass to comment some of the most used assertions about these regions and mesopotamian culture. Comments will be given in the form: Statement – Comment

There are scholars today who confidently identify Meluhha with the Harappan Civilization, in modern Pakistan, on the basis of the extensive evidence of trading contacts between Sumer and this region

comment: the fact that there were trades between the Indus and Sumer is not enough to call the Indus Meluha

There is sufficient archaeological evidence for the trade between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley.

comment: same as above

Early texts (c. 2200 BC) seem to indicate that Meluhha is to the east,

comment: still looking for these text. No one found yet.

Writings in the Ur-III period describe Meluhha as the 'land of the black mountains'. It may also be referred to by this name in a poem praising King Shulgi, reigning in about 2000 BC, in which he claims (among other accomplishments) to understand the language of men 'from the black mountains' well enough to talk to them without interpreter

comment: this has no reference to the Indus valey

Sargon of Akkad was said to have "dismantled the cities, as far as the shore of the sea. At the wharf of Agade, he docked ships from Meluhha, ships from Magan."

comment: still no reference to the Indus

However, much later texts documenting the exploits of King Assurbanipal of Assyria (668–627 BC), long after the Indus Valley civilization had ceased to exist, seem to imply that Meluhha is to be found somewhere near Egypt, in Africa

coment: oh, here we are. The ONLY textual geographical reference to Meluha points to Egypt or a neighbor land.

There is sufficient archaeological evidence for the trade between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley.

comment: again, the evidence of trade is not a good reason for associating a name.

Now I would like to spend some words on another kind of evidence, this in fact giving credit to the theory, which I have always considered right, of a correct african identification.

We do have a sargonic text claiming that it was 240 marching hours (120 bere = double hours) from Mari/Sumer to Meluha. At a given ratio of 3 miles per hour, we get approx 720 miles. The southern part of Egypt (Nubia) is approx 700 to 730 miles from Mari (Tell Hariri). On the contrary, all other presumed identifications don't match this description. Afghanistan is over 1000 miles from Mari, and Harappa is over 1300 miles from Mari. The sargonic text i mentioned is stored and can be read on JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/593644>

Interestingly enough, the akkadian dictionary of the French Association of Assyriology still has a Meluhha entry for Ethyopia:

<http://www.assyrianlanguages.org/akkadian/dosearch.php?searchkey=7597&language=id>

Meluhha

[Humanities → Geography → Countries]

Ethiopia , Abyssinia ; meluhhāiu : (noun and adjective) Ethiopian ;

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