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CULTURAL PARALLELS BETWEEN INDIA AND MESOPOTAMIA:
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Geographically, India and Mesopotamia are two different worlds separated from each other by a huge expanse of water and mountainous territory; and judging from the points of contact between Indology and Assyriology, a similar gulf seems to separate the cultures of India and Mesopotamia. Only a handful of Indologists have displayed serious interest in Mesopotamian (textual and archaeological) evidence as a means of elucidating the genesis of the Indus civilization and the history of Indian religions, while most Assyriologists happily ignore India altogether.

The situation is understandable considering the scarcity of direct references to India in Mesopotamian sources and vice versa, but it may be questioned whether it is justified from a wider perspective. With all their differences, which of course should not be forgotten, the cultures of India and Mesopotamia display so many similarities and common features that they could justly be called "sister" or "twin" cultures — notwithstanding that one of the "sisters" has been dead for millennia, while the other is still very much alive. The significance and implications of this cultural parallelism are hardly fully understood today for the simple reason that the parallels have never been systematically mapped out, let alone properly analyzed or discussed.

This paper does not attempt to fill that vacuum, but I will try to provide a preliminary discussion of the issue from the viewpoint of an Assyriologist exposed to "Indian influence" through association with his Indologist brother. My point of departure will be a list of some notable cultural parallels that have attracted our common interest over the years. It is admittedly limited both in coverage and in scope,¹ but I would like to emphasize that it could, with more time and effort, be made much more comprehensive and detailed.

Some Cultural Parallels

In the field of religion, we have two polytheistic religions with similarly organized pantheons composed of similar deities, similarly organized cult, public festivals and religious rituals, and similar religious iconography, symbolism, mythology and philosophy. Specifically, both cultures have:

¹ The same applies to the note apparatus, which has been kept to the barest essentials. I wish to thank my brother, Professor Asko Parpola, for stimulating discussions and bibliographical references. Abbreviations are those of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.

- anthropomorphic deities wearing horned crowns, riding on specific animals and associated with specific planets, stars and constellations;²
- an ithyphallic creator god (Enki/Ea ~ Varuṇa) carrying the epithet “king” and associated with dark waters;³
- a war goddess (Inanna/Ishtar ~ Durgā) associated with tigers, panthers or lions, and worshipped by devotees engaged in orgiastic rites;⁴
- youthful fertility gods (Tammuz/Ištaran ~ Murukan/Rudra/Skanda) associated with trees, snakes, and the netherworld;⁵
- deluge myths involving a cultural hero saved by a fish deity and an ark stranding on a high mountain;⁶
- mythical seven sages associated with the deluge.⁷ In the field of religious architecture and symbolism we have
 - oval or round temples dedicated to the goddess of love;⁸
 - staged temple towers symbolizing cosmic mountains;⁹

² For Mesopotamia see, e.g., R. M. Boehmer, “Hörnerkrone,” *RLA* 4 (1975), 431-4; F. Thureau-Dangin, “Les sculptures rupestres de Maltai,” *RA* 21 (1924), 185-97; H. Hunger and D. Pingree, *MUL.APIN. An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform* (Horn, 1989), pp. 18ff and 137-50; B. L. van der Waerden, *Erwachende Wissenschaft, Band 2: Die Anfänge der Astronomie* (Basel and Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 51f. For India see A. Parpola, “New correspondences between Harappan and Near Eastern glyptic Art,” in B. Allchin (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1981* (Cambridge, 1984), 176-95; idem, “The ‘fig deity seal’ from Mohenjo-Daro: its iconography and inscription,” in C. Jarrige (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1989* (Madison, 1992), p. 227. In Rigveda, the word *opaša* refers to horned headdresses of gods. Note also the headdresses decorated with horns of bison, buffalo, stag, or with horns of wood or brass, worn at present-day Dravidian tribal festivals, in V. Elwin, *The Tribal Art of Middle India* (London, 1951), pp. 55-62.

³ On Enki see H. Galter, *Der Gott Ea/Enki in der akkadischen Überlieferung* (Graz, 1982), and J. S. Cooper, “Enki’s Member: Eros and Irrigation in Sumerian Literature,” in H. Behrens et al. (eds.), *DUMU-É-DUB-BA-A. Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg* (Philadelphia, 1989), pp. 87ff. On Varuṇa and the ithyphallic deity of the Indus seals see A. Parpola, “New correspondences” (above, n. 2), 178-85, and idem, *The Sky Garment* (Helsinki, 1985), p. 207.

⁴ See, provisionally, B. Groneberg, “Die sumerisch-akkadische Inanna/Ištar: Hermaphroditos?,” *WO* 17 (1986), 25-46; H. Balz-Cochois, *Inanna: Wesensbild und Kult einer unmütterlichen Göttin* (Gütersloh, 1992); H. von Stietencron, “Die Göttin Durgā Mahiṣasuramardīnī: Mythos Darstellung und geschichtliche Rolle bei der Hinduisierung Indiens,” *Visible Religion* 2 (1983), 118-66; A. Parpola, “New Correspondences” (n. 2), pp. 185f.

⁵ See T. Jacobsen, “Toward the Image of Tammuz,” *History of Religions* 1 (1961), 189-213; A. Parpola, “The pre-Vedic Indian background of the *śrauta* rituals,” in F. Staal (ed.), *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, II (Berkeley, 1983), esp. p. 52; idem, “Bangles, Sacred Trees and Fertility,” in M. Taddei (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1987* (Rome, 1990), 263-84, and “The Metamorphoses of Mahiṣa Asura and Prajāpati,” in A. van den Hoek et al. (eds.), *Ritual, State and History in South Asia: Essays in Honour of J. C. Heesterman* (Leiden, 1992), 275-308. Note Tammuz’s ophidian appellative Amaušumgal-anna and the equation of Ištaran with the snake-god Nirah (see G. McEwan, *Or* 52 [1983], 218f.).

⁶ On the Indian deluge myth see M. Winternitz, “Die Flutsagen des Alterthums und der Naturvölker,” *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 31 (1901), 268f.

⁷ See G. Komoróczy, “Berosus and the Mesopotamian Literature,” *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 21 (1973), pp. 136-52, and J. Mitchiner, *Traditions of the Seven R̥ṣis* (Delhi, 1982), especially pp. 70, 268f and 303

⁸ See V. Dehejia, *Yogini Cult and Temples. A Tantric Tradition* (New Delhi National Museum, 1986); J. Krecher, “Ibgal,” *RLA* 5 (1976), p. 8; T. Jacobsen, *AOAT* 25 (1976), p. 251 n. 16.

— astronomically oriented temples with dark cellas for the image of the god, occasionally exposed to the rays of the rising sun.¹⁰

In the field of religious practices and rites, we have

— images of gods bathed, anointed, dressed, fed and worshipped in their abodes like kings;¹¹

— periodic illumination of the face of the divine image by lamp;¹²

— journeys of gods, the divine image being carried through the city in palanquins or carts, or taking a boat ride;¹³

— offerings returned as “leftovers” of divine meals.¹⁴

In the field of magic and magical rites, we have

— magic circles drawn by a priest or magician by means of a special colored powder;¹⁵

— ringing of bells to dispell evil demons, e.g. during an eclipse;¹⁶

⁹ On the symbolism of the Mesopotamian ziggurat see D. O. Edzard, “Deep-Rooted Skyscrapers and Bricks: Ancient Mesopotamian Architecture and Its Imagery,” in M. Mindlin et al. (eds.), *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East* (London, 1987), pp. 13-23. For India see A. Snodgrass, *The Symbolism of the Stupa* (Ithaca, 1985); Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, pp. 161ff.; R. Cook, *The Tree of Life: Image for the Cosmos* (Thames and Hudson, 1974), pp. 9-11 and pls. 7, 8.

¹⁰ See K.-H. Golzio, *Der Tempel im Alten Mesopotamien und seine Parallelen in Indien* (Leiden, 1983); E. Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im alten Mesopotamien* (Berlin, 1982); S. Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple I-II* (Calcutta, 1946), esp. I, p. 235, to be compared with the pure eastern orientation of the cella of Nabû at Nimrud and Khorsabad (J.N. Postgate, “The Bit Akiti in Assyrian Nabu Temples,” *Sumer* 30 [1974], 51-74).

¹¹ See A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 183-93, and C. J. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess: the Priests of a South Indian Temple* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 10ff.

¹² For India see Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-5, and C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 65f and 73. For Mesopotamia see provisionally CAD N/1 (1980) 217a, citing ABL 951 r.4 (“the woman who provides lighting for Tašmetu”) and G. van Driel, *The Cult of Aššur*, p. 130 v 27 (“the king illuminated the face of the god”); many more examples of the practice could be cited from unpublished or inadequately edited Assyrian cultic texts.

¹³ See H. Sauren, “Besuchsfahrten der Götter in Sumer,” *Or* 38 (1969), 214-236; Å. Sjöberg, “Götterreisen,” *RLA* 3 (1971), 480-3; C. G. Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose: Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India* (Lund, 1956), pp. 167 and 176; B. Walker, *Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism*, II (1968), p. 609; Fuller 1984 (n. 11), pp. 18ff, and 1992 (n. 12), pp. 63f.

¹⁴ See Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 189, and S. Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 329: r9. In India, leftovers from divine meals (*prasāda*) are believed to be charged with sacred healing potency. Part of the sacrifice is returned to the worshipper, who eats it or takes it home to his or her relatives, see Fuller, *op. cit.*, pp. 74ff; Walker, *op. cit.*, II, p. 609; Diehl, *op. cit.*, p. 152. The first to receive *prasāda* is the most important worshipper (the king), see Fuller, p. 79.

¹⁵ For a typical Mesopotamian example see M. Geller, *Forerunners to Udu-gul* (Stuttgart, 1985), p. 71: 730ff; the Mesopotamian term for magic circle (*zīsurrû*) literally means “poured-out flour.” For India see Diehl, *op. cit.*, pp. 263f, 275-7, n. 1; Archana, *The Language of Symbols: A Project on South Indian Ritual Decorations of a Semi-Permanent Nature* (Madras, n.d [c. 1981]); G. Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala* (London, 1960).

¹⁶ For Mesopotamia see, e.g., Geller, *op. cit.*, p. 61: 675ff, and S. Parpola, *LAS* II (1983), p. 268: 9f; on the Mesopotamian word for “(magic) bell” (urudu.níg.kal.ga) see Gurney, *AAA* 22 (1935), 58:455, and J.S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (Rome, 1978), pp. 150ff. For India see Fuller 1992, p. 65, and A. Parpola, “The Use of Sound as a Ritual Means: Why is the Goddess of Victory Called Vāc in the Veda?,” in K. Venkatachari (ed.), *Upāsānā by the Religious and Areligious* (Bombay,

— elaborate purification rites involving bathing, sprinkling of water, and incensing.¹⁷

Accident or Contact?

What do these parallels imply and how are they to be explained? In principle, there are two basic possibilities:

(1) The parallels are fortuitous and explainable purely on the basis of environmental factors, the genetic properties of the human species and other similar generic laws governing the evolution of human society and culture at large.

(2) The parallels, or at least some of them, are due to cultural contact and thus not accidental. In this case, one should consider two possibilities: (a) the contact has been fully reciprocal, in which case the emergence of the common features could be explained as a sort of mutual assimilation, or (b) it has been dominated by a center-periphery type cultural dependency, in which case the source of the common features would have to be primarily sought in the other, dominant culture.

The possibility of purely fortuitous parallels is a real one and has to be taken seriously. This is shown e.g. by the evolution of the urban civilizations of Mesoamerica, which largely parallels that in the Old World without any proven contact between the two. The point, however, is: is it likely to be the answer in this particular case? Some of the parallels just mentioned, like the association of the seven sages with the flood myth, are so striking that the likelihood of similarity based on pure chance seems if not totally excluded then minimal indeed. More importantly, there is unquestionable evidence proving that certain cultural changes both in India and Mesopotamia did result from direct cultural contact. Such evidence is the introduction of the Indian water buffalo into Mesopotamian glyptic¹⁸ and the introduction of Mesopotamian mathematics and astronomy into India (through translations of Ptolemy) in the Hellenistic period.¹⁹ Recently David Pingree has shown that fundamentals of Babylonian astronomy and astrology were already being transmitted to India in translation as early as the early first millennium B.C.²⁰

in press).

¹⁷ For Mesopotamia see provisionally J. Laessøe, *Studies on the Assyrian Ritual and Series bit rimki* (Copenhagen, 1955), and S. Parpola, *LAS* II, pp. 8 (r5), 123 (11), 157 (r8), 198, and passim; note also S. Parpola, "Mesopotamian Astrology and Astronomy as Domains of the Mesopotamian 'Wisdom'," in H. Galter and B. Scholz (eds.), *Die Rolle der Astronomie in den Kulturen Mesopotamiens* (Graz, 1993), pp. 000f. For India, see Walker, op. cit., II, pp. 258-261; S. Rodhe, *Deliver us from Evil: Studies on the Vedic Ideas of Salvation* (Lund and Copenhagen, 1946).

¹⁸ See R. M. Boehmer, "Das Auftreten des Wasserbüffels in Mesopotamien in historischer Zeit und seine sumerische Bezeichnung," *ZA* 64 (1975), 1-19.

¹⁹ See O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Providence, 1957), 166-75, and D. Pingree, "The Mesopotamian Origin of Early Indian Mathematical Astronomy," *Journal of the History of Astronomy* 4 (1973), 1-12.

²⁰ D. Pingree, "Mesopotamian Astronomy and Astral Omens in Other Civilizations," *CRRRA* 25 (1982), 613-31; "Venus Omens in India and Babylon," in F. Rochberg-Halton (ed.), *Language, Literature and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (New Haven, 1987).

Political and Commercial Contacts

The truth, of course, is that the geographical distance and barriers notwithstanding, there has been lively, variegated and intensive contact between India and the Near East in all times, from prehistoric times down to the present day. The significance and intensity of this contact is dramatically illustrated by present-day India, whose religious and political map reflects the deep penetration of Near Eastern cultural influence (Islam) into the area. A similar situation has repeatedly obtained in the past: going backwards in time, we first have the Parthian empire, then the Hellenistic empire of Alexander, the Achaemenid empire, the Assyrian and Elamite empires, the Akkadian empire of Naram-Sin, and finally the Proto-Elamite state, all banging at the gates of India in Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Note the consistent and monotonous trend: a major Near Eastern power extending its sphere of influence towards India. Probably for geographical reasons, India has never been able to expand in a comparable way towards the west. Whatever the explanation, direct contact with a Near Eastern political power has always involved direct subjection to Near Eastern cultural influence as well.

Trade contacts between India and the Near East, attested on a small scale from the fifth millennium B.C. on, intensify toward the end of the fourth millennium and remain active throughout the third millennium B.C. Both textual and archaeological evidence prove the existence of overland trade through Iran and Baluchistan as well as maritime trade through the Persian Gulf and along the coast of the Indian Ocean. Mesopotamian ships and caravans may not have actually travelled beyond Makran and Baluchistan, because there is little archaeological or textual evidence of Mesopotamian presence in India. Indian merchants, however, certainly made it all the way to Mesopotamia. Indus seals and artifacts have been found in Early Dynastic Diyala sites, indicating the presence of Indian merchants at the other end of the overland trade route; and the existence of Indian trade colonies in Southern Mesopotamia during the second half of the third millennium is strongly suggested by both textual and archaeological evidence.²¹

The overall pattern of trade contacts, accordingly, seems to deviate significantly from that observed earlier in the field of military-political contact, at least as far as the third millennium B.C. is concerned. One cannot help getting the impression — which of course may be conditioned by our documentation — that the Indians were more eager to come to Mesopotamia than vice versa. This seems significant to our topic in so far as we know that India represented to Mesopotamia an important source of raw materials and various luxury items, such as exotic plants and animals.²² What did the Mesopotamians have to offer in return that made trade with Mesopotamia so important to India?

Mesopotamia did not possess any raw materials that the Indians did not have or could not acquire; from the mid-fourth millennium B.C. on it did, however, have a

²¹ See S. Parpola, A. Parpola and R. H. Brunswig, "The Meluhha Village: Evidence of Acculturation of Harappan Traders in Late Third Millennium Mesopotamia," *JESHO* 20 (1977), 129-65.

²² For goods imported from India (Meluhha) see S. N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 280ff, and cf. A. L. Oppenheim, "The Seafaring Merchants of Ur," *JAOS* 74 (1954), p. 15 with n. 24.

cultural and technological edge over the neighboring world that materialized in superior tools, arms, irrigation techniques, accounting systems, writing, mathematics and science at large. These innovations were quickly and hungrily taken over by the neighboring civilizations. It can be taken for granted that the products of the advancing Mesopotamian culture, spiritual as well as material, continued to appeal to the outside world for centuries to come. At the same time, Mesopotamia absorbed ideas and new practices from its trade partners — e.g. the cultivation of sesame, whose third-millennium Sumerian and Akkadian names may be loanwords from Dravidian.²³ Businessmen alone were certainly not the only people involved in this import and export process; they brought in their train other kinds of visitors — soldiers, artists, noblemen, priests — who may have stayed in the host country for a long time, learning its culture and habits. The exchange of ideas between third-millennium India and Mesopotamia is strikingly documented by distinctive artistic conventions and religious symbols shared by both cultures (e.g. the six-locked hair of the Mesopotamian Lahama god and the trefoil-dotted back of the Lamassu bull, both well-attested elements in the Indus art as well).²⁴

The Indo-Mediterranean Cultural Area

In sum it seems safe to state that in and through the third millennium B.C., Mesopotamia, Elam, Baluchistan and India formed a common, more or less uniform cultural and commercial area — a sort of “common market” — characterized by regular overland and maritime trade, exchange of ideas, and political and military contact, just as in later Hellenistic and Islamic times. The formation of this cultural area was preceded by the revolutionary urbanization process of the late fourth millennium, which indisputably first got underway in southern Mesopotamia. Overdoing it a little, in order to bring the point home, we may speak of an early Mesopotamian “superculture” intermittently radiating its influence to the surrounding world.

In this light, the Indo-Mesopotamian cultural area can be seen as part of a larger whole, the Ancient Near Eastern “oikumene” encompassing, beside Mesopotamia and the Levant, the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean including Egypt, Anatolia and Greece. Even at the risk of being branded as a pan-Babylonian, I would claim that the economic and cultural center of this “oikumene” down to the first millennium B.C. was Mesopotamia with its fringe areas. Cultural impulses from center to periphery were transmitted along routes and channels that had been in existence for millennia. Areas in direct contact with Mesopotamia, such as Elam, were gradually “Mesopotamianized,” and in due course they rendered the same favor to their neighbors. By 2900 B.C., strong Mesopotamian cultural influence in the form of proto-Elamite culture had already reached Seistan and Baluchistan.

A cultural area can be defined as consisting of several independent, closely related

²³ See D. Bedigian, “Is še-giš-ì Sesame or Flax?,” *Bulletin on Sumerian Agriculture* 2 (1985), 159-78.

²⁴ See A. Parpola, “New Correspondences” (n. 2), p. 177f, and *The Sky Garment* (Helsinki, 1985), passim.

regional cultures speaking different languages. The area can be delimited by mapping the common features of the cultures concerned, which are the result of prolonged mutual contact and serve to enable mutual communication, such as a common set of values, a common level of technology, common conceptual systems including religious ideas, etc. Language differences as well as other regional differences between the individual cultures, of course, tend to mask the common features so that they are not readily recognized; a classic example is the attitude of the ancient Greeks toward the Persians — both members of the Near Eastern “oikumene.”

As regards the Indo-Mediterranean “oikumene” in particular, one has to bear in mind, of course, that each of its regional cultures had a long prehistory before the emergence of Mesopotamia as the cultural center of the area. Accordingly, the influences from the latter were certainly not taken over passively but dynamically, and cultures at the “periphery” may soon have passed the “center” in certain areas of know-how (cf. the development of the Japanese automobile and electronic industry). The direction of cultural influence would then become inverted (it now is “periphery” → “center”), but its net effect would still remain the same: contributing to and increasing the homogenization of the area. We see these processes operative in today's world, and they can be explicitly documented for the Indo-Mediterranean “oikumene” as well.

Internal Cultural Evolution

The evolution of regional cultures within the confines of an “oikumene” is thus regulated by two factors:

- (1) impulses received from other regional cultures within the “oikumene,” and
- (2) the internal dynamics of the regional culture itself. After all that has been said so far, it is important to stress the latter point.

There is no such thing as a homogenous regional culture. Every regional culture is composed of several locally or socially co-existent subcultures, which on the “micro-level” influence one another in the same dynamic way as the independent regional cultures on the “macrolevel.” This applies particularly to cultural areas of the size of India and Mesopotamia, whose geography favors the emergence of locally coexistent subcultures.

In the case of Mesopotamia, we can observe a steady influx of new ethnic elements into the area both from the northwest and the east (Hurrians, Gutians, Amorites, Kassites, etc.), leading to the establishment of new political entities within the area under the control of foreign aristocracies. Sure enough, these were usually relatively short-lived and rapidly acculturated, but some of them lasted for centuries and left indelible footprints in the indigenous culture of the area. The distinctive characteristics of Mesopotamian culture, however, remained basically unaltered from their establishment in the fourth millennium B.C. down to the advent of the Christian Era.

Similar observations can be made in the case of India. Its first truly urban culture, the Indus civilization, covered a huge area in the northwest of the subcontinent, which seems to have been politically divided into rivalling city states but culturally and linguistically relatively uniform. It certainly dominated the cultural evolution in the

whole subcontinent in the third millennium B.C. At the beginning of the second millennium, the situation changes. The Indus civilization collapses and degenerates into several local cultures, while new ethnic elements, probably identifiable with people called Dasa in the Vedic texts, invade India and become dominant in the former Indus area. Recent archaeological discoveries indicate that this new element arrived partly acculturated, having undergone a lengthy process of urbanization in northern Afghanistan. Nevertheless, its arrival meant the introduction of new cultural elements into the area. A few centuries later, about 1800 B.C, a new wave of invaders, the Vedic Aryans, penetrates the country and gradually takes over the northern part of it.²⁵ At the same time, contacts with the Near East break up for a millennium.

The culture of India thus represents an amalgam of elements inherited from the Indus, Dasa and Veda cultures, plus whatever influences have been later received from the outside world. In theory, then, any given feature in the Indian culture, and for that matter in any other culture, could ultimately derive from several different sources, foreign as well as native. In practice, however, this is not the case. Elements of fundamental importance to the identity of a culture, such as religious ideas, symbols and rituals, are not discarded as long as they make up a viable and coherent system. The system itself may be continually refined and expanded in the light of new ideas and impulses, but as long as the core of the system remains valid, it will be kept virtually unaltered.

The Background of the Indo-Mesopotamian Cultural Parallels

The driving force of the Indian culture, Hinduism, represents a form of religion that has its roots in the Indus civilization.²⁶ Accordingly, it must be essentially composed of very ancient elements that go back to the third millennium B.C. and even earlier times. It goes without saying that as a result of religious syncretism, it also contains a lot of later, Aryan, features. But from a historical perspective, these features, important and prominent as they are, are only additions to, or modifications and expansions of, the original system; they are not the system itself, alongside which they live, so to speak, a sort of parasitical life.

It would thus seem to pay off, both for the Indologist and the Assyriologist, to take a serious look at the cultural parallels listed at the beginning of this paper. There is every reason to believe, as we have seen, that they are not due to chance but have a common origin dating to the birthtime of the Near Eastern urban civilization. The Assyriologist would profit from the task by gaining a living paradigm that may help him make better sense of the dead bones he is working with; the Indologist would profit by gaining a firm point of comparison that might get him out of the mist veiling the prehistory of the Indian culture and religion.

²⁵ See in detail A. Parpola, "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dasas," *StOr* 64 (1988), 195-302.

²⁶ See A. Parpola, *Från Indusreligion till Veda. Studier i de äldsta indiska religionerna* (Copenhagen, 1980), and *Deciphering the Indus Script* (Cambridge, 1993).