

THE ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIAN PLACE NAME “MELUḪḪA”

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INTRODUCTION

The location of the Ancient Mesopotamian place name “MeluḪḪa” has proved to be difficult to determine. Most modern scholars assume it to be the area we associate with Indus Valley Civilization, now including the so-called Kulli culture of mountainous southern Baluchistan. As far as a possible place at which MeluḪḪa might have begun with an approach from the west, Sutkagen-dor in the Dasht valley is probably as good a place as any to suggest (Possehl 1996: 136–138; for map see 134, fig. 1).

Leemans argued that MeluḪḪa was an area beyond Magan, and was to be identified with the Sind and coastal regions of Western India, including probably Gujarat. Magan he identified first with southeast Arabia (Oman), but later with both the Arabian and Persian sides of the Gulf of Oman, thus including the southeast coast of Iran, the area now known as Makran (1960a: 9, 162, 164; 1960b: 29; 1968: 219, 224, 226).

Hansman identifies MeluḪḪa, on the basis of references to products of MeluḪḪa being brought down from the mountains, as eastern Baluchistan in what is today Pakistan. There are no mountains in the Indus plain that in its southern extent is Sind. Eastern Baluchistan, on the other hand, is marked throughout its southern and central parts by trellised ridges that run parallel to the western edge of the Indus plain (1973: 559–560; see map [=fig. 1] facing 554).

Thapar argues that it is unlikely that a single name would refer to the entire area of a civilization as varied and widespread as Indus Valley Civilization. MeluḪḪa she identifies with Gujarat and the northern Konkan coast. Magan she identifies with Sind and Baluchistan (1975: 2, 11–12, 28–29; 1983: 187).

Trade with MeluḪḪa appears to have extended from ca. 2600–1800 BC, a period of approximately 800 years (Possehl 1996: 182; see also Leemans 1960a: 164–165; Hansman 1973: 564, 574). Reference to it is first attested in the Mesopotamian historical record in the Early Dynastic period (Michalowski 1988: 160, 163–164; Possehl 1996: 133). With regard to the Early Dynastic period and the dating of the

Early Dynastic period, see Porada (1965: 159–165, chart on 178–179). Another oft-quoted early reference appears in a boast by Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 BC) (Leemans 1960a: 159; Sollberger 1968–1969: 248; Hansman 1973: 555; Possehl 1996: 133). For other early references, see Leemans (1960a: 159–162); Hansman (1973: 555–557); Possehl (1996: 136–146).

Mention of Meluḥḥa in Mesopotamian material does not occur again till an inscription from the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208 BC) in which the name appears to be used in a traditional formulaic title of little meaning. It then does not occur in the historical texts for 500 years, when it reappears in the annals of Sargon II (721–705 BC), in an inscription of Sennacherib (704–681 BC), and in later materials. From these materials, it appears that Magan is being associated with Egypt, and Meluḥḥa with Sudan and Ethiopia. The latter usage seems to date at least from the time of letters written by Rib-Addi, regent of Egypt at Gubla (Byblos), to Amenophis III (1411–1375 BC) and to Amenophis IV (1375–1358 BC) (Hansman 1973: 574–578; see also Leemans 1960a: 165, Gelb 1970: 1).

Some scholars have considered these later identifications, which rest on clear and firm evidence, to apply to the earlier period as well (see Gelb 1970: 1–2).

For bibliographic references to the literature regarding the geographical areas covered by the place names Magan and Meluḥḥa, see Landsberger (1966: 261–262); Sollberger (1968–1969: 247–248); Hansman (1973: 554–555); Parpola and Parpola (1975: 207); Possehl (1996: 136).

EXISTING PROPOSALS FOR THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE PLACE NAME “MELUḤḤA”

The place name “Meluḥḥa” has received three proposed etymologies, two offered by Asko Parpola and one by Romila Thapar in consultation with Bhadriraju Krishnamurti. All three proposals are Dravidian. For an argument as to the general reasonableness of suspecting a Dravidian etymology for this name, see Thapar (1983: 179–180), who there also responds to the objection of During Caspers and Govindankutty (1978: 116–118) that other possible linguistic connections were not explored (see also Thapar 1975: 5–7). A matching argument can be found in Parpola and Parpola (1975: 215–216).

Parpola’s first suggestion develops over time (Parpola *et al.* 1969b: 38; 1970: 38; Parpola and Parpola 1975: 217–218, 220, 222, 232–233 nn. 66–74, 234 nn. 87–93; see also Aalto 1971: 236–237). This suggestion would break the name into two parts.

The first part he would relate to *DEDR* 5086 “Ta. *mē* excellence; *mēkku* height, high place, superiority; west; [...] *mēl* that which is over or above, extra; sky, west, head, leadership, superiority, excellence; [...] *mēlimai* excellence; *mēlukku* on

the outer side, extremity; *mēlai* upper, western, etc.; *mēlōr* [...] the great, those of superior rank or caste; *mērku* west; *mēnmai* greatness, eminence, excellence, dignity, superiority. Ma. *mē* over; *mēn* what is above, superiority, excellence; *mēnavan* a superior (title of Śūdra writers); [...] *mēlan*, *mēlavan* a superior; [...]”. This etymological set as listed in *DEDR* has cognates in South Dravidian in Tamil, Malayalam, Kota, Toda, Kannada, Koḍagu, Tulu, in Central Dravidian in Telugu and Gondī, and in North Dravidian in Brahui.

This set of etyma in *DEDR* is cross-referenced with *DEDR* 4841 Ta. *mīcai*, also ‘eminence, elevation’, but with more Central Dravidian and North Dravidian languages represented.

It is also cross-referenced in *DEDR* with *DEDR* 5091 “Ta. *mēṭṭi* haughtiness, excellence, chief, head, land granted free of tax to the headman of a village; [...]” with forms in Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu only. With regard to “Te. *mēṭi* chief, head, leader, lord”, it is noted “prob. *mēṭi* < **mēl-ti* [cf. 5086]; Ka. Ta. < Te.”

The first edition of *DEDR*, which Parpola used, did not have this last cross-referencing. Also, the Gondī and Brahui forms for *DEDR* 5086 were not noted in the first edition of *DEDR*, though Parpola and Parpola (1975: 234 n. 87) refer to them.¹

In Parpola and Parpola (1975: 220, 222, 234 n. 88, 235 n. 104), this suggestion is stepped away from on the grounds that it is not clear whether a South Dravidian syncope pointed out by Zvelebil (1970: 75; see also 120–123) could be applied to Proto-Dravidian.² It is also argued that the vowel in the Pali and Prakrit cognates of Skt. *mlecchā* ‘foreigner, barbarian, non-Aryan, any person who does not speak Sanskrit and does not conform to the usual Hindu institutions’, such as Pali *milakkha*, *milakkhu*, would be difficult to explain from a Dravidian form **mēlakam* (= *Mēl(u)-akam*), and that there is no evidence of Central Dravidian forms with metathesis (→ CDr **mlē-*) which might explain Skt. *mle-* in *mlecchā* (Skt. *e* = Dravidian *ē*). Parpola, following a suggestion of Pentti Aalto (see Parpola *et al.* 1969a: 50), would see these forms as being connected with the place name “Meluḥḥa”. Parpola *et al.* (1969b: 38) notes that *-kkh-* of these forms cannot be a derivation from *-cch-*, but must have a different origin. See also *CDIAL* 10389, which comments of these forms, “With unexpl. *-kkh-*”. This will be discussed in a separate treatment below.

The second element in the name “Meluḥḥa” Parpola at first suggests may be related to the etyma in *DEDR* 729 “Ta. *ūkku* (*ūkki-*) to make an effort, act with energy; n. zeal, spirit; *ukkam* [...] effort, strength, power, [...]”, or to the etyma in *DEDR* 333 “Ta. *ā* (*ān-*, *āyi-*), *āku* (*āki-*) to come into existence, happen, be, [...] *ākku*

¹ In the instance of the Brahui forms, the reference is incorrect. It should be to *JAOS* 92 (1972): 414b; not 418.

² But see Zvelebil (1970: 120–123, esp. §1.26.2.1), referred to by Parpola; as well as Telugu, Gondī, and Brahui forms, the Gondī forms also referred to by Parpola in n. 88.

(*ākki-*) [...]; n. creation; [...]” (Parpola *et al.* 1969b: 38). He then settles, though, on a relationship with “Ta. *akam* inside, house, place, agricultural tract, [...]” (*DEDR* 7), which term is used in the classical Tamil locution *Tamiḷ-akam* “Tamil country”, current in the early centuries BC to the early centuries AD (Parpola *et al.* 1970: 38; Parpola and Parpola 1975: 217–218, 232–233 nn. 66–74). For comparable usages of this term in Tamil outside of this locution, see Parpola and Parpola (1975: 233 n. 71). He notes that there is in Dravidian an alternation between country names ending in *-m*, ethnic derivatives with the masculine suffix *-an*, and forms ending in *-u* denoting primarily the country, but also its language and people (Parpola and Parpola 1975: 220, 234 nn. 91–92).

Such a name, he notes, might have referred to “either the mountain country of Baluchistan, which was the home land of the pre-Harappan Neolithic settlers of the Indus valley who later evolved the Indus civilization, or it may have referred to a central cosmological concept in the Harappan world view” (Parpola and Parpola 1975: 220, 234 n. 90).

Parpola’s second suggestion ends up being his preferred suggestion:

It keeps the same argument for what he sees to be the second segment of the place name.

The first segment he views as being reflected in the later name “Tamiḷ-akam”. He notes that the etymology of the ethnic name “Tamil” is an old problem. He suggests that it is to be broken into two elements: “*Tam-* is the oblique form of the third person and reflexive pronoun *tām* ‘they, themselves’, which is commonly prefixed especially to kinship terms in the possessive sense: ‘one’s own, their own’, and is in this sense attested in Old Tamil also before the word *nāṭu* ‘country’. The etymon of the [... second element] could be Dravidian *viḷu* ‘to fall (down), descend (hill or mountain)’, which would suit the ‘low’ lands of the Indus valley (to which the Brahuis still use to descend yearly) and of the Tamiḷnāṭu” (Parpola and Parpola 1975: 219–220; see also 233–234 nn. 79–85).

He does not see any phonological difficulties in relating the name so construed to the Pali and Prakrit cognates of Skt. *mlecchā* (Parpola and Parpola 1975: 222).

Thapar (1975: 10), as in Parpola’s first proposal, would also connect the place name “Meluḥḥa” with the etyma in *DEDR* 5086 Ta. *mē*, specifically with a Proto-Dravidian reconstructed form **mēlukku* “meaning ‘up, high, the extremity’ and by extension ‘superior’ and also ‘western’. The latter, occurring in a more limited number of Dravidian languages would derive from the root **mēl* by the addition of *ukku* indicating direction as in the case of other words of direction, viz. **kīr*: **kīr-a-kku* ‘east, place below’ (DED 1348 [= *DEDR* 1619]), **teṅ-kku* ‘south’ (DED 2839 [= *DEDR* 3449]) and **vaṭ-a-kku* ‘north’ (DED 4267 [= *DEDR* 5218]). A possible alternative in Dravidian would be *mēl-kku*; *mēl-u-kku*, meaning ‘high place, west extremity’. **mēl* means ‘high, excellent, eminent’.”

Thapar finds support for her etymology in the Sanskrit place name “Aparānta” < *a-para* + *anta*, which means “the western extremity, the country or inhabitants of the western border” (*MW* 50c). She understands this in keeping with her methodology, which is to find later Sanskrit names that are translations of the Proto-Dravidian names as a crosscheck (Thapar 1975: 7), to be a translation of the PDr **mēlukku*. “Aparānta in most of the *Purānas* was the name of the western sea-board and more specifically of southern Gujarat and northern Konkan” (Thapar 1975: 10; see also 11–12).

Krishnamurti (1983: 191) concurs with her etymology, but notes the reconstruction should be “**mel-u-ku* or **mel-u-kku* (*mēlukku* in Thapar’s paper was a misprint) consisting of the root **mēl* and a derivative suffix *-u-ku/-u-kku* meaning ‘highland, west’”. This, he comments, is justified on analogy of the other direction words in Dravidian as cited by Thapar. “[W]hen a derivative suffix is added [...] the radical long vowel becomes short in Dravidian [...]”

AN EVALUATION OF THE EXISTING PROPOSALS

The formal title of Parpola’s Indus Valley script decipherment project refers to Indus Valley inscriptions as being Proto-Dravidian. Parpola seems to view the language, however, and with it the form “Meluḥḥa”, to be Proto-North Dravidian (Parpola and Parpola 1975: 215). Along with Zvelebil (1972; see also 1990: 123) and McAlpin (1981: 134b–135a; stem diagram, 117b), for instance, he views the Dravidians to have entered India from the northwest around the 4th millennium BC, and North Dravidian to be the first group to break off from the mainstream of Dravidian languages (see Parpola 1994: 161a, 165a–167a). This view places Proto-North Dravidian close to Proto-Dravidian. It must be emphasized, however, that the North Dravidian language Brahui, for instance, does not have archaic features, whereas the South Dravidian Tamil is very conservative.

Thapar, too, views that Proto-Dravidians entered South Asia from the northwest in the 4th millennium BC. On this basis, she assumes that a form of Proto-Dravidian was the earliest language stratum of northwestern India. The place name “Meluḥḥa”, therefore, would be a rendering into Sumerian of a Proto-Dravidian name (Thapar 1975: 6–7).

This opinion has been modified recently by Witzel (2001: 21, 35–36, 37, 48–49) on the grounds that the *Rgveda* shows no evidence of Dravidian till the middle *Rgveda* to an argument that the Dravidians enter South Asia in the early to mid-2nd millennium BC, displacing an earlier Meluḥḥan population the language of which is unconnected with anything we know. He (2001: 9–10, 19–20) argues that this unknown language may be related to the unknown language hypothesized by Colin P. Masica to have existed in Northern India on the basis of 31% of the agricultural

terms in Hindi having no known etymological connection that can be found (see Masica 1978: 134–138).

To be kept in mind here, however, is David McAlpin's 'Stem Mutation Rule' (McAlpin 1981: 29a; Zvelebil 1990: 15), which observes that in South Dravidian, the second consonant of a tri-consonantal stem frequently weakens and is lost, resulting in the fusion of vowels which in its turn results in a long vowel. For an earlier statement of this, with greater detail, see Zvelebil (1970: 36, 66–70, 75). This is the South Dravidian syncope referred to by Parpola. Note that Zvelebil (1970: 36, 66–67) records opinion that in at least some cases the contracted forms may be older, which suggests that this process may have been present in Proto-Dravidian itself. See in this regard also Zvelebil (1970: 120). And see Levitt (1980: 38–39, 55 n. 24, 59–60 [table]; 2003c: 10, etc.) with regard to what he refers to as 'syllabic loss' in Proto-Dravidian, and evidence that this process was present in North Dravidian as well. Such create stems that may not be readily recognizable.

Also note with regard to Masica's observation that among those forms in Sanskrit considered in *DEDR* to have Dravidian etymology, over 160 are the names of plants. These represent over 70 sets of Dravidian etyma. This is a considerable number in comparison with the total number of Sanskrit forms that *DEDR* suggests have probable Dravidian etymology.

In sharp contrast to the above authorities, I think there is more merit in the opinion championed today by P. Ramanathan that the Dravidians moved into South Asia over a land bridge, probably a series of islands, from Africa when the seas were lower on account of glaciation. Scholars of the Australian aborigines see Australian aborigine languages as being connected with Dravidian (see Dixon 1980: 236–237). The evidence for this is remarkable, including phonological features, such as both retroflexes and alveolars beside dentals, and typological similarity, such as word order, an agglutinative morphology, and an inclusive/exclusive distinction in non-singular first person pronouns, to note just three such similarities, as well as lexical similarities. There is also connection between Australian aborigines and Dravidians in the kinship system, and in the use of the boomerang. The Australian aborigines were cut off from the rest of civilization by the rising of the oceans since about 6000 BC. Scholars of the Australian aborigines calculate them to have entered Australia from South India at least 40,000 years ago. Some would opt for a date of 50,000 years ago, or even earlier (Dixon 2002: 8–9). Oppenheimer (2003: 159–163, 192) on the basis of genetics, archeology, and sea levels argues for a date of 65,000–70,000 years ago, and suggests that the earliest arrivals may have reached the area even before 74,000 years ago and the catastrophic eruption of the Toba volcano in Sumatra (2003: 165, 192). Thus Dravidians in India go back this far, at least. By this argument, Dravidian moves from south to north, and into Iran and further, and Uralic, Altaic, and Indo-European, etc. break off from a main Dravidian stock. It has not yet been set in stone whether Dravidian is a parent or whether Dravidian as

we know it is a sister of Indo-European. See in this regard Ramanathan (1984; 1998: 1–17; 2002: 79–85, 92–97; 2003), Ramanathan’s “Introduction” to Devanayan (2004: 5¹–22¹), and many papers on this topic presented by Ramanathan at various conferences. For the listing of some of the lexical similarities between Australian aboriginal languages and Dravidian, with their sources, see Ramanathan (n.d.). Ramanathan’s list, which can be found as well in his “Introduction” to Devanayan (2004), for instance, supersedes the comment by Dixon (1980: 237) with regard to the lack of systematic correspondences of form and meaning between the two families.

It is only in this way that we can explain the worldwide connections with Dravidian that have been argued by various scholars (see Levitt 1998: 134–136; 2000: 426–427; and Ramanathan’s “Introduction” to Devanayan 2004: 13¹–14¹ for literature, and map with charting by Ramanathan in Devanayan 2004: [51¹]). It has been argued by some that these arguments are of uneven quality and many are of questionable value. But it must be remembered that the people who argued them were experts in their fields. And their critics are not, but rather are usually professional critics.

Consonant with Ramanathan’s position, Fairservice (1975: 9–10) has noted that “though a land area continental in size was unlikely to have existed, it is very likely that faulted blocks were uplifted to form land bridges from time to time. [... T]he possibility that a land bridge existed until the Pleistocene between Africa and India has to be considered in view of human artifactual parallels in the Paleolithic [...].”

Alternately, I emphasize, it may perhaps be the case that the Dravidians entered South Asia from Africa during the Pleistocene by a coastal route at a time when the seas were lower, as argued in Field and Lahr (2005; see also Stringer 2000; Oppenheimer 2003; Flemming 2004; Forster and Matsumura 2005; Derricourt 2005). Ramanathan would accept this developing position growing out of recent genetic studies as vindicating his earlier argument (personal communication; see also Ramanathan 2007b; 2007c: 50–53; and Ramanathan’s “Introduction” to Srinivasa Iyengar 2007: 6–9).

The evidence of modern genetics shows that pockets of Dravidian populations in South India are genetically similar to Australian aborigines. The frequency with which the Y-chromosome genetic marker M130 is found in both, and its relative scarcity elsewhere, indicate this (National Geographic Society and IBM 2005–2006: video and pamphlet, p. 7; see also Oppenheimer 2003: 171, 185, 187, and esp. chart on 186). Interestingly, the M130 genetic marker was found in an entire village of Kallar near Madurai in Tamil Nadu (Wood 2007: 15–16). The Kallar are one of the two main groups among whom the boomerang has been found in Tamil Nadu (Thurston 1909/3: 53, 70–71, 5: 46–47; Francis 1906: 93, 95, 352a [index; see under *Vallàritadi*]; Hornell 1924: 336–340, 346; Davidson 1935: 174–176). Davidson (1935: 163–164) notes that like the Indian boomerang, most Australian

boomerangs are also of the non-returning type. Hornell (1924: 339) notes that in modern times many of the country people in Tamil Nadu in the districts of Madura and Ramnad, in parts of Tanjore and Tinnevely, as also in Pudukkottai, who indulge in hunting, use the boomerang. “Thus we find Vellalas, Valliyans, Nādars (Shanars) and Muhammadans using it, though, of course, less freely than the Maravans and Kallans, with whom it is particularly identified.” P.L. Samy (1976), who also associates the boomerang with the Kallar, suggests that references to various weapons in classical Tamil literature are in fact references to the boomerang, in *Aiṅkuṟunūru* 421, lines 1–2, *Aiṅkuṟunūru* 87, line 2, *Cilappatikāram*, Book 1 (*Pukār Kāṅṅam*), Canto 17 (*Āycciyar Kuravai*, “The Dance of the Cowgirls”), stanza 17, and *Puṟaṅāṅūru* 339, line 4, for instance. The most usual Tamil term for the boomerang of the Kallar is *vaḷaitaṭi* (pronounced, *vaḷaitaḍi*), literally, ‘curved throwstick’.³

Also shared by Australian aborigines and pockets of isolated Dravidian populations in South India that are considered to be relict populations that recovered after the extinction that followed the catastrophic eruption of the Toba volcano in Sumatra 74,000 years ago, is mtDNA from the same female human ancestors (Oppenheimer 2003: 157, 171, 182–184, and esp. chart on 178 and fig. on 181).

Recent archeological research, it can be noted, has found similar sets of stone tools in South Indian sites both below and above the layer of ash from the Toba volcano, giving archeological foundation to the genetic data that indicate that modern human foragers reached India by that time and that they took the eruption in stride (Patel 2007: 15).

Further, Kivisild *et al.* (2003: 313) state that “Indian tribal and caste populations derive largely from the same genetic heritage of Pleistocene southern and western Asians and have received limited gene flow from external regions since the Holocene. The phylogeography of the primal mtDNA and Y-chromosome founders [showing maternal and paternal ancestry respectively] suggest that these southern Asian Pleistocene coastal settlers from Africa would have provided the inocula for the subsequent differentiation of the distinctive eastern and western Eurasian gene pools.”

The mitochondrial DNA it should be emphasized, shows a clear maternal link between the Indian population and the late Pleistocene hypothesized coastal migration of modern humans out of Africa in that the most common Indian type is virtually absent in the Near East, Southwest Asia, and West Eurasia (see Kivisild *et al.* 2003: 313b–314a, 327a; Sahoo *et al.* 2006: 843a).

³ I would like to thank P. Ramanathan for pointing out to me that the M130 genetic marker was found in Tamilnad among the Kallar and for sending me a copy of his source for this, for pointing out to me some of the references cited above with regard to the South Indian boomerang, and for providing me with a Xerox copy and an English translation of P.L. Samy’s most interesting article.

The Y-chromosome data, showing paternal links, some recent research has suggested on the basis of the relatively small genetic distances displayed by the Y-chromosomes between Indian populations and those of Central and West Eurasia, shows evidence of an Indo-Aryan migration (see Kivisild *et al.* 2003: 314a, 328b–329a and Sahoo *et al.* 2006: 843b, 847b for literature and discussion; also National Geographic Society and IBM 2005–2006: video).

More recently, though, Sahoo *et al.* (2006: 843a) argue in opposition to this that “recent external contribution [of Y-chromosomes] to Dravidian- and Hindi-speaking caste groups has been low. The sharing of some Y-chromosomal haplogroups between Indian and Central Asian populations is most parsimoniously explained by a deep, common ancestry between the two regions, with diffusion of some Indian-specific lineages northward. The Y-chromosomal data [...] argues against any major influx, from regions north or west of India, [...]” Similarly, Oppenheimer (2003: 152) has noted with regard to the Y-chromosome mutation M17 (R1a), the so-called ‘Caucasoid’ genetic marker, that “South Asia is logically the ultimate origin of M17 and his ancestors; and sure enough we find highest rates and greatest diversity of the M17 line in Pakistan, India and eastern Iran, and low rates in the Caucasus. M17 is not only more diverse in South Asia than in Central Asia, but diversity *characterizes* its presence in isolated tribal groups in the south, thus undermining any theory of M17 as a marker of a ‘male Aryan invasion’ of India” (see also 2003: 185, 187). Oppenheimer adds (2003: 154) that this M17 marker traveled from India or Pakistan through Kashmir, Central Asia, Russia, and then Europe after 40,000 BC

Thus it would seem that Dravidian populations moved northward out of South Asia with the Y-chromosome lineages, which include the so-called ‘Caucasoid’ genetic marker, M17, consonant with Ramanathan’s argument, and there gave rise to other language families.

It should also be noted here that Ramanathan’s earlier theory of island hopping over a land bridge from Africa would seem to fit in better than does the coastal migration theory with the San Bushman in southern Africa being seen to be closest to the original human foragers from the vantage of their Y-chromosomes (see National Geographic Society and IBM 2005–2006: video and pamphlet, pp. 1b, 6b). Ramanathan’s island hopping theory would have the original human foragers come from this area. So also, Oppenheimer (2003: 176) notes that the Makrani, found at the mouth of the Indus and along the Baluchistan sea coast of Pakistan, have an African Y-chromosome marker previously only found in Africa that is characteristic of sub-Saharan Africa. The same marker, though, is found at slightly lower frequencies throughout other populations of southern Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, and at higher rates in Iran, which suggests the hypothesized coastal migration out of Africa.

Suggesting the coastal migration theory, the ‘black Saudis’ are today understood to be a relict population from this coastal exodus from Africa. I had always thought of them, though, since I first heard of them from a Saudi student, to be remnants of a South Asian population that came to Saudi Arabia from South Asia with Indian Ocean trade – in part on the basis of ethnographic photographs I saw that showed the way their womenfolk sport jewelry, which is not unlike such among Indian women (see, for instance, Great Britain, Naval Intelligence Division [1946]: photograph no. 224, facing p. 421). About the ‘black Saudis’, Great Britain, Naval Intelligence Division ([1946]: 365–366) notes that “[t]he origin of the non-Mediterranean peoples in south Arabia is obscure; culturally the Veddoid peoples have primitive traits relating them, on the one hand, to the aboriginal Australians and Veddas [of Sri Lanka], on the other hand to the cattle-breeding Todas [of Tamil Nadu] in India and Bantu in east Africa”. Oppenheimer (2003: 157) notes of them that “the Hadramaut [...] have been described as Australoid but almost certainly contain an element of much more recent African admixture”. Later on (2003: 175–176), he writes that “[a]long the south coast of Arabia are the isolated Hadramaut peoples, described by some as Australoid. Their maternal genetic make-up includes 40 per cent of African genetic lines; but although some of these markers could be related to the founding Out-of-Africa Eve, the majority of such lines have arrived from Africa more recently. Farther along the Indian Ocean coast the peninsular Indian populations also group genetically closer to the African root than do most easterly Asian peoples. Indian ethnic groups, both caste and tribal, were included in a large study of nuclear autosomal (non-sex-linked) markers. They were found to retain a higher rate of the African ancestral types than do most Europeans and other Asian groups.”

To return to Parpola’s suggestion for the etymology of “Meluḥḥa”, Parpola should not have abandoned his first proposal as quickly as he did. As he himself notes in Parpola and Parpola (1975: 234 n. 88), there is evidence that the South Dravidian syncope that made him back off from his suggestion was operative across the board in Dravidian with regard to the etyma in *DEDR* 5086 Ta. *mē* and elsewhere as well. Indeed, the evidence of *DEDR* 5086, in combination with *DEDR* 4841 Ta. *micai* and *DEDR* 5091 Ta. *mēṭṭi* strongly suggest that if these etyma are indeed related to *DEDR* 4838 Ta. *miku* (*mikuv-*, *mikk-*), as they well might be, the relationship is within Proto-Dravidian.

His eventual insistence that the name “Meluḥḥa” is composed of two elements, with the second element being a word cognate with Ta. *akam* creates phonological problems on account of the initial *a-*, while “Meluḥḥa” has a medial *-u-*. He is aware of the problem, as evidenced by his forced argument that the reading in the Sumerian and Old Babylonian texts ought indeed perhaps be *Me-lāḥ-ḥa* instead of *Me-luḥ-ḥa* (Parpola *et al.* 1970: 37; Parpola and Parpola 1975: 223–224), and by his statement that “[t]he reading *Me-luḥ-ḥa* (or perhaps *Me-lāḥ-ḥa*) must of course

not be taken at face value. It is just a sign-by-sign transliteration of a sequence of cuneiform signs and does not – as such – tell much about the *phonetic* shape of the word these signs seek to render” (Parpola and Parpola 1975: 224).

With regard to his second etymology, it is true that *v-/m-* and *-v-/m-* alternation is frequent and wide-spread in some Dravidian languages (see Zvelebil 1970: 125–128). But Levitt (1998: 142–143) has shown that the name “Tamil”, which it is generally accepted today is related to Skt. *draviḍa*, *dramiḍa*, *dramila*, Pali *damiḷa*, and Pkt. *daviḷa*, *daviḍa*, is to be etymologically connected on a deep Nostratic level to Germ. *Deutsch* ‘people, nation’ and the name *Druid* for the ancient inhabitants of Gaul and the British Islands. Such a meaning of the name “Tamil” is supported from a literary aspect within Tamil, I might note, by Sivaraja Pillai (1936: 344–346). And it is consonant with the names of such tribal groups in the hills around the Assam Valley in northwest India, such as the Dafla and the Mizo, meaning, ‘people’. See also in this regard Bailey (1959: 109–110), who notes that such ethnic names as “Goth”, the name “Evenki” for the Tungus, and the name “Bantu” derive from words meaning ‘man’ or ‘men’; so also, Bailey argues, the people called by the ethnic name Ir. *daha-*, OPers. *dahā*.

This nullifies Parpola’s preferred etymology.

With regard to Thapar’s etymology, I must state right off that while I agree in general with her etymology, I disagree with her on certain specifics.

I also disagree with her location of the various places that she discusses, and with her usage of later Sanskrit place names that she sees to be equivalent to hypothesized Dravidian meanings for the Ancient Mesopotamian place names to support her identifications of these regions. I think that in the main, she pushes her methodology beyond the limits it might reasonably allow. In general, Thapar weakens her argument by trying to find Dravidian etymologies for too many of the place names in Sumerian and Assyrian sources, some such as Dilmun and Magan generally accepted to have nothing to do with South Asia, some with such questionable identifications as Qadê and its King Padê, Sumerian Gubin/Kupin and Assyrian Kuppi, and the personal name Ḫundaru, mentioned in an Assyrian source as the king of Dilmun.⁴

The problem with seeing “Meluḥḥa” as meaning primarily ‘west’ or ‘western’ is that there is no evidence of a referent, such as a cultural center to which it is west of, or a migration from a more easterly region. The Sanskrit name “Aparānta”, referring as it does to different areas depending on the locus of Sanskrit civilization, I doubt has any connection with the name “Meluḥḥa”. Similarly, it would be tempting to see a parallel in the Dravidian etyma in *DEDR* 1649 Ta. *kuṭakam*, *kuṭaku*, referring to the direction “west”, and as an adjective “western”, as well as to Coorg, a Coorg

⁴ Glassner (1996: 240) views the name Ḫundaru to be Elamite, and the names of the other kings of Dilmun during the 1st millennium BC that are mentioned to be either Semitic, West Semitic, or Elamite as well.

man, and an Oraon man and the Oraon (or Kurukh) language, noted in different contexts by Parpola and Parpola (1975: 220) and Parpola (1994: 165a). But it is likely that the name Kurukh refers to the group's tradition that they came from a more Western region (the area identified as Meluḥḥa by Thapar, in fact) to the area that they now inhabit (Hahn 1900: iv–v; [1908]: xii–xiii; Elfenbein 1987: 229–230; for map see 216), and that its application to Coorg and Coorgs is because geographically this group is located in western India, in the hill country west of Mysore and to the west of the Tamil Nadu (*TED* 2.2: 340b).

During Caspers and Govindankutty (1978: 118) note with regard to the multiplicity of proposals, “Romila Thapar has reconstructed *-uḥḥa* as **-ukku* and Parpola has found *akam* in *-uḥḥa*. The alternative reconstructions have only contributed to demonstrate that our knowledge of reality is inadequate.” This comment is comparable to that of Kazanas (2002: 315–317) in which he notes of the considerable disagreements with regard to loanwords in the *Rgveda*, that they show “something important is amiss”. Witzel (2003: 120) refers to this as “the well-known scholastic trick of pointing out minor differences of opinion between researchers to show that *all* their results are null and void. [...] Disagreements about details are, of course, expected in every scientific field. But [...] no serious scholar would claim that these disagreements were grounds for tossing out valuable evidence wholesale.” In general, many of the arguments in During Caspers and Govindankutty (1978: 118–121) treating linguistic matters smack of ‘logic chopping’.

THE PROPOSED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PLACE NAME “MELUḤḤA” AND SKT. *MLECCHÁ*, PALI *MILAKKHA*, *MILAKKHU*

The Sanskrit word *mlecchá* ‘foreigner, barbarian, non-Aryan, any person who does not speak Sanskrit and does not conform to the usual Hindu institutions’ does not have an etymology within Sanskrit. Its oft-cited first occurrence is in the late Vedic *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 3.2.1.24 where it refers to demoniacal beings who speak indistinctly, like a foreigner or barbarian. A related verbal formation, *mlecchad*, 3rd sing. act. present subjunctive, occurs in the same passage. A verbal base as such, *mlech-*, from which the form might be explained internally within Sanskrit occurs first in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, which grammar may perhaps be dated to ca. 350 BC (*HOIL* 3.2: 423). The *Mādhaviya-Dhātuvṛtti* by Mādhava, the brother of the great 14th c. AD Vedic commentator Sāyaṇa (*HOIL* 1:70; 3.2: 438), put forward what is perhaps chronologically the first hypothetical reconstruction of *mlecchá*, the form *mlekṣi*. 19th c. AD European philologists postulated this formation to be the most acceptable earlier form for *mlecchá*, from which it might be derived (Parasher Sen 2002: 57). See in this regard Bailey (1973: 585) who takes as the starting point

of his interpretation of Skt. *mlecchā* and cognate forms in Middle and New Indo-Aryan languages a form **mlekṣ-*, **mlikṣ-*, tracing *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa mlecchā* to an older **mlekṣa*.

Master (1943: 38 n. 3) had noted that many derivations had been suggested, and he offered **melepsu* ‘devotee of darkness, obscurity’, referring the reader to *malinamukha* ‘goblin’. On the basis of Sanskrit sources, primarily in the *Mahābhārata*, Sengupta (1971) understood the Sanskrit term to have referred to people who dwelt on the seashore. On this basis, he derived the term from Molech or Melek, the god of the sea-faring Phoenicians. The name from which he is deriving the term would be cognate to the Hebrew and Arabic words with which we below connect the Sumerian place name “Meluḥḥa” on a Nostratic level. For references to various derivations, see *KEWA* 2: 699, 3: 782 and *EWA* 2: 389.

Rapson (1900: 535) noted that the word *mlecchā* has been used in Sanskrit to refer to many different foreign groups. Bailey (1973: 584–585) surveys very briefly its usages and referents in its earliest Vedic usage (*Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*) and in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mānavadharmasāstra*, and Varāhamihira’s *Brhatsamhitā* (6th c. AD). Following this, Parpola and Parpola (1975: 208–214) provide a fairly thorough survey of the usages of this word and its Pali and Prakrit cognates in Indic literature.

Leemans (1960a: 164; 1960b: 30; 1968: 223) repeatedly comments that Cyril John Gadd had pointed to this Sanskrit word, not of Indo-Aryan origin, as possibly having an etymological connection with the Sumerian place name “Meluḥḥa”. Hansman (1973: 564), agreeing that the older toponym “Meluḥḥa” and the Sanskrit word *mlecchā* show certain similarities of form, added that the earliest reference to the *mlecchās* would seem to indicate that they occupied at least a part of the country where he had placed Meluḥḥa.

Parpola *et al.* (1969a: 4, 50) take as accepted that Skt. *mlecchā* is the etymological derivative of Sum. Meluḥḥa, which they see to corroborate the well-established identification of Meluḥḥa with India. On the basis of a suggestion of Pentti Aalto they identify Meluḥḥa, read with an alternative phonetic value *me-laḥ-ḥa*, with the Pali form *milakkha*. Skt. *mlecchā*, they argue, would be a hypercorrect form. In Parpola *et al.* (1969b: 38) they note fully the Pali and Prakrit forms, and emphasize that the *-kkh-* cannot be derived from *-cch-*, but must have a different origin. As noted above, see *CDIAL* 10389 for a comparable observation. Parpola *et al.* in this location, in the course of their suggestion here of an etymology from *DEDR* 5086 Ta. *mē* for Sum. Meluḥḥa, pointedly bring our attention to the Tamil form *mēlukku*. In Parpola and Parpola (1975: 217) the Pali and Prakrit variant forms are also noted fully, along with their New Indo-Aryan cognates. See *CDIAL* 10389 for all these forms as well.

Aalto (1971: 234) as well brings out attention to the Pali and Prakrit forms. He cites *KEWA* 2: 699 as stating that the variations between the Sanskrit form on the one

hand and the Pali and Prakrit forms on the other point to a foreign word or foreign tribal name as the probable lost source. In *EWA* 2: 389, Mayrhofer emphasizes that the etymology is unclear; noting further that while in principle tracing the forms back to a foreign tribal or country name is not likely, here connection with the country name “Meluḥḥa” has been pointed out many times.

Witzel (2001: 38) commented that the word would have originally been a self-designation that came to be used as a name of foreigners, much as the name “Frank” > Ar. *ifranjī/fīranjī* ‘foreigner’.

Thapar (1975: 10–11 n. 34), too, weighs in on this proposed connection, citing Pali and Prakrit forms as well as the Sanskrit. She comments, “Could the original *mleccha* then have been the P.Dr. speakers of Melukku/western India who were either mispronouncing Sanskrit or were continuing to speak their own language?”

The entire problem has been discussed fully in Parasher Sen (2002).

A NEW PROPOSAL

As indicated above, I agree with the connection proposed at first by Parpola and proposed as well by Thapar between Sum. Meluḥḥa and the etyma in *DEDR* 5086 Ta. *mē*. I, too, would focus on the form, Ta. *mēlukku* which, however, occurs with limited semantic spread in Tamil (see above). In linguistic archeology, however, one ought consider the entire semantic spread of a set of etyma. This form would be represented by a hypothetical proto form **mēl-V-kk-*, where *-V-* stands for a union vowel, and *-kk-* stands for a standard suffix of Proto-Dravidian type (see Krishnamurti 1961: 136–137).⁵ I would not focus on the Tamil form *mēṛku* ‘west’, Ma. *mēṛkku* ‘westward’, the suffix of which form Thapar focuses on as being citable in words for the other directions as well, or on the meaning ‘west’. No one knows the meaning of such suffixes from the vantage of Proto-Dravidian. I would take the form to mean something on the order of ‘the country above’, i.e. ‘the eminent country’ (< ‘that which is above’), or ‘the excellent, or superior place (or kingdom)’, just as China, from the earliest times, referred to itself as “The Central Country”, or *Zhong-guo*, which name is often translated as “The Middle Kingdom” (Reischauer and Fairbank 1960: 37). The personal name “Meluḥḥa” that occurs in Ancient Mesopotamian records would thus mean ‘the eminent one’, ‘the superior’.

On a deep Nostratic level, I would see the Dravidian set of etyma in question, and this form, to be related to Heb. *melekh* (Greenberg 1965, *mēlek*) ‘king’, *malakh* (Greenberg 1965, *mālak*) ‘to be king’; Ar. *malik*, pl. *mulūk*, *amlāk* ‘king, sovereign, monarch’. See also, for example, “Ar. *malaka i* (*malk*, *mulk*, *milk*) to take in possession, take over, acquire (something), seize, lay hands (on) [...] to possess,

⁵ Despite Krishnamurti (1983), cited above, I see no evidence for the reconstruction of a form with a short *e* here.

own, have (something), be the owner (of) [...] to be master (of), to rule, reign, exercise power or authority, hold sway [...], *milk*, *amlāk* property, possessions, goods and chattels, fortune, wealth [...], *malakūt* realm, kingdom, empire; kingship, royalty, sovereignty, *mālik* reigning, ruling; owning, possessing, holding; owner, proprietor, master, possessor, holder” (Wehr 1979: 1081a–1083a). The personal name “Maleek” would be comparable to “Meluḥḥa” being a personal name as well as a place name, as recorded in Sumerian sources (see, for instance, Possehl 1996: 139–142).

In that the more basic meanings as well as forms without the final consonant *-k* are in Dravidian, we must judge that the Dravidian forms are primary. This argues against the current opinion that Afroasiatic separated from the rest of Nostratic first, and then Kartvelian and Dravidian (Bomhard and Kerns 1994: 34–35). Rather, it suggests that Dravidian separated first.

It may be objected that I am treading on thin ice to reconstruct for a form that is attested as such only in the South Dravidian Tamil a hypothetical proto form, and to push it back further to Nostratic. But it has been observed that South Dravidian preserves many very old forms, many not reflected elsewhere in our Dravidian lexicons (see below with regard to words for “sesame”).

The possible antiquity of the South Dravidian syncope pointed out by Zvelebil has been referred to above.

To note here just one additional point, the loss of initial **c-* in South Dravidian and the geographically southern Telugu is dated by Burrow to the time between the expansion of the Mauryan empire, roughly 300 BC, and the beginnings of palatalization in Tamil in the 1st c. BC (Burrow 1947: 146–147). Thus the negative verb *DEDR* 2559 “Ta. *il* non-existence, death; *illai* it is not (in Old Tamil with a complete negative paradigm), no”, is reconstructed on the basis of Central Dravidian and North Dravidian forms to PDr **cil*, PSDr **il-* (see Krishnamurti 1961: 481 [no. 1110]). Yet on a Nostratic level, Levitt (1998: 148) has suggested it to be related to Eng. *no*, *not*, Germ. *nein*, *nicht*, and Skt. *na*, *an-*. See also *il-* in Eng. *illegal*, *im-* in Eng. *immobile*. There is no evidence of the initial **c-* in these Indo-European forms (see, though, Levitt 2000: 429 with regard to Lat. *sine*, Sp. *sin*, Fr. *sans*). The alternation between *l* and *n*, Levitt points out, can be seen elsewhere as, for instance, in *DEDR* 494 “Ta. *il* house, home, place, wife; *illam* house, home [...] Te. *illu* (adj. *inti*) house, dwelling, habitation”, and Eng. *inn*. An alternation between *r*, *l*, and *n* in Dravidian, reflected in correspondences between Indo-European and Dravidian, is also to be found in Afroasiatic (see Levitt 1989; 2000: 429; Hodge 1998: 237, etc.).⁶

⁶ Pokorny (1960: 161) also mentions an alternation in Afroasiatic between *r*, *l*, *n*, and *d* as well. An alternation between *l* and *t* similarly occurs in Dravidian. See Levitt (2001, 2003a) and various etymologies in *TED* such as *kuti* ‘endeavor’ < *kutu* < *kul* (2.2: 412a). I would as well argue *kutirai* ‘horse’ < *kul* ‘to move the body forward in a graceful and affected manner’ (*TED* 2.2:

Clearly, South Dravidian forms reflect both very old shape and structure.

Many years ago now, I suspected that the name “Nimlocanī” in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 5.21.7, which refers to Vāruṇa’s city situated on the mountain Mānasottara, situated towards the west (*MW* 551c), might be related to the place name “Meluḥḥa” (see Gorakhpur 1964 or 1965 edn/1: 634–635 [text]; Sanyal 19[64]–1965/2: 286 [translation]). “Nimloci” it can be noted, is used as a personal name in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 9.24.7 (Gorakhpur 1964 or 1965 edn/2: 105 [text]; Sanyal 19[64]–1965/3: 259 [translation]).

The Sanskrit root *mluc-*, or *mruc-*, of questionable connection outside Indo-Iranian (see *EWA* 2: 388), means primarily ‘to go down, set’, which usage occurs in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 14.4.3.33. It also carries the meaning ‘to bring to rest’. In an *-r-* form, *mroká*, it refers in the *Atharvaveda* to the name of a destructive Agnī. To be kept in mind here is that the Vedic dialect of Sanskrit, in common with Iranian, converted all *l*’s to *r*. Pre-Vedic Indo-Aryans, who were outside the Vedic circle, retained in their dialects both *r* and *l*, as does as well later Sanskrit.

The Sanskrit prefix *ni-* similarly has the directional connotation ‘down’. Skt. *ni-mruc-* also means ‘to set, disappear (as the sun)’ in the *Atharvaveda*, *Taittirīyasaṃhitā*, etc. As a noun, Skt. *ni-mrú* occurs with the meaning ‘sunset, evening’ in the *Ṛgveda* four times, in for instance *Ṛgveda* 8.27.19 and 10.151.5. It carries the meaning ‘slack, loose’ in the *Atharvaveda* once, in *Atharvaveda* 4.3.6. With an *-l-*, the form *ni-mloca* carries the meaning ‘setting of the sun’ in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 3.2.7. In the *Mānavadharmasāstra*, the verbal form with *-l-* is used with the sense ‘to set upon (acc.)’ (*MW* 551c notes, see *abhi-ni-mluc* [i.e., *abhi-ni-mruc*]).

The root with an *-r-* occurs with the prefixes *abhi-ni-* carrying the meaning ‘to set upon anybody who is sleeping or has not finished his work (said of the sun)’ in the *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* and *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa*. The past participle *abhi-ni-mrukta* occurs with the meaning ‘upon whom while not doing any work or while sleeping the sun has set’ in the *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa* as well, and in later Sanskrit. The Sanskrit prefix *abhi-* carries the force ‘to, unto, against (often with implied violence)’.

The root with an *-l-* also occurs with the prefix *anu-* (‘after, along, toward’) in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 8.6.1.18, perhaps with the meaning ‘to rise from the resting place’. It is used here to explain the name “Anumlócantī” of an Apsarás in *Vājasaneyisaṃhitā* 15.17 (see also “Anumlocā” in *Mahābhārata* 1[7].114.54 [v.1.] and the *Harivaṃśa*, as well as in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, and other *Purāṇas*).

506a). The usual derivation of *kutirai* is from *kuti* ‘to jump, leap, spring, bound’ (see Devaneyan 1966: 58; *TED* 2.2: 414a). Also, with regard to an alternation in Dravidian between *l* and *t*, and *l* and *t*, compare *ītam* ‘place, room, site, spot’ and *il* ‘place, house, home’ (*TED* 1.2: 252b–3a, *ītam* < *ītu* < *īl* < *il*); and *kuṭam* ‘waterpot’ and *kuḷam* ‘tank, pond, reservoir’ (*TED* 2.2: 344b, *kuṭam* < *kuḷ*).

It is also used in *Ṛgveda* 10.52.4 with the prefix *apa-* (‘away, forth, off’), with a meaning ‘retired, hidden’.

It is used in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 1.2.5.8 with the prefix *upa-* (‘to, toward’) with a meaning ‘to hide one’s self among (with gen.)’.

It is used in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 8.6.1.18 with the prefix *pra-* (‘forward, onward, forth’), with the meaning ‘to go down, sink down’. As in the case of “Anumlócantī”, it is used here to explain the name of an Apsarás, “Pramlócantī”, in *Vājasaneyisaṃhitā* 15.17 (see also the name “Pramlocā” in *Mahābhārata* 1[7].114.54 and in the *Harivaṃśa*, as well as in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, for instance).

This root, I would argue, is in some fashion related to Skt. *mlecchá*, which refers to a person of low status in the Aryan scheme of things.

The west, of course, is where the sun sets. Parpola (1994: 165a) notes of the Tamil word *kuṭa* in *DEDR* 1649 Ta. *kuṭakam*, *kuṭaku*, which etyma as noted above refer to ‘Coorg’, ‘Coorg man’, ‘The Oraon language’, ‘Oraon man’, and also ‘west’, that the word also means ‘setting sun’. I have not been able to find this meaning for this word in *DEDR*, *TED*, Fabricius 1933, or Visvanatha Pillai 1963. Perhaps he was referring to Telugu and Kui etyma in *DEDR* 1826 “Te. *krūṅku*, (K.; modern) *guṅku*, *gūku* to sink, plunge, set (as the sun) [...]”, which however are from a PCDr root **kur-*. Note, though, the etyma in *DEDR* 1619 “Ta. *kīr* place or space below, [...] east, [...] inferiority; [...] *kīrōr* persons inferior in status; [...] *kīnar* mean, low, vulgar people; *kīraku* east, bottom, low place, lowness. Ma. [...] *kīrma* inferiority; [...] *kīriyuka* to descend, be low, degraded; [...] Kur. *kiyyā* beneath, under (postposition, adv.); [...] *kītantā* low-born. Br. *kī-*, *kī-*, *kē-* below, down; [...]”.⁷ The etyma in *DEDR* 5086 Ta. *mē*, to which forms I would relate the place name “Meluḥḥa” and Skt. *mlecchá*, carry the meanings ‘west’ and ‘above’, as has been pointed out. What we seem to have is another of those well-known flip-flops in evidence, for example, in Skt. *devá* ‘god’ in comparison with its Avestan cognate *daēva* ‘demon’; or Skt. *ásura*, originally in the *Ṛgveda* meaning ‘lord’, but already in the early *Ṛgveda* and exclusively in the latest parts of the *Ṛgveda* and on referring to ‘the enemies of the gods, demons’, whereas in Avestan it means ‘lord’ and appears in the name of the great god Ahura Mazdāh. Thus, instead of a meaning ‘superior’, or the like, we have ‘barbarian, non-Aryan’, and a person of low status who does not conform to the norms of Aryan society.

In this context, note the late lexicographic meanings of Skt. *mlecchá* ‘a person who lives by agriculture or making weapons’, ‘copper’ (*MW* 837c). In consideration of the argument of Levitt (2003b; 2007: 22–23) that dates the *Ṛgveda* on the basis of synchronisms with Ancient Mesopotamia to the 3rd millennium BC to ca. 1500 BC, with the earliest hymns going back to the 4th millennium BC, this would suggest that the Indo-Aryans were the cattle herders, and the Meluḥḥans were the cultivators,

⁷ PDr **ɹ* > Ta. Ma. *l* in the usual transcription used for Tamil and Malayalam, adopted in this paper. *DEDR* transcribes these as *ɹ*.

miners, and at least some of the artisans. This may explain why the *Ṛgveda* does not mention some of the things, such as bricks and cotton, which Kazanas (1999: 29–31; 2003: 229) argues suggest that the *Ṛgveda* is to be dated before Indus Valley Civilization.

Váruṇa, whose city Nimlocanī is said to be, is considered to be one of the older gods in the *Ṛgveda*, standing in a known opposition to the later god Índra (Oberlies 1998–1999/1: 194; see also 173). In the *Ṛgveda*, Váruṇa receives the epithet *ásura* ‘lord’ in proportion more than any other god (Keith 1925/1: 96). In Indian tradition from the *Ṛgveda* onward, the Ásuras are known as the older brothers of the gods (Oberlies 1998–1999/1: 173 n. 119). It has been suggested in Levitt (2003b: 349ab) that the demon Vṛtrá slain by Índra is in fact, on etymological grounds, a malevolent or non-benign aspect of Váruṇa. Índra’s act is suggested in that place to be an act of patricide. As Índra is sometimes described by the poets as a calf, the cows, or waters, would be Índra’s mother. And this would make Váruṇa’s emblem be a bull. Indeed, Vṛtrá is described in *Ṛgveda* 1.32.7 as a bull, though he is usually described from a different aspect as a serpent. Such might be a link to the common representation of a bull on Indus Valley seals, and would suggest an identification of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*’s Nimlocanī with Meluḥḥa.

Thapar (1975: 21) also refers to Váruṇa as having his location in the western region and as being specifically linked with the Indus River, and with Dvārkā, in her discussion of her identification of Dilmun with Saurashtra. Her reference to *Mahābhārata* 2(20).9 (van Buitenen 1975: 48–49), though, is to a description of Váruṇa’s divine hall where he is attended by the Ādityás, various snakes, and hosts of Daityas and Dānavás. These as well as many rivers such as the Sārasvatī, Síndhu, Ganges Bhāgīrathī, Narmadā, and even the southern Godāvarī and Kāverī, in bodily form wait on him, along with the quarters, the earth, all mountains and all water creatures. This does not make her point at all. I do not see why she cited it.

With regard to the name “Nimlocanī” in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* referring to a city, and not a country or region, there is confusion in South Asian sources as to whether a specific name refers to a country or the major city of that country. For example, the *Pañcagarujātaka* (no. 132) refers in one place to the city of Takkasilā, which is the capital of the kingdom of Gandhāra, and elsewhere in the same *Jātaka* refers to it as the city of Gandhāra. Similarly, witness the confusion in Buddhist sources as to whether the name “Uttarapañcāla” is that of a city in the country of Kampilla, or of a country the capital of which is Kampilla (Malalasekera 1937–1938/1: 357–358).

MELUḤḤAN WORDS IN SUMERIAN

Witzel (2001), as noted above, has argued that there is no evidence of Dravidian in the *Ṛgveda* till the middle *Ṛgveda*. Similarly, Hock (1975: 113; 1984: 89–91,

93) has argued that there is no evidence of contact of the early Vedic Aryans with Dravidian, or even that Dravidian was in the area.

If the Sumerian place name “Meluḥḥa” is indeed Dravidian, we would expect some of the 40 or so Meluḥḥan words recorded in Sumerian (Witzel 2001: 37) to also be Dravidian. And sure enough, enough of them can be identified as Dravidian to convincingly argue that Meluḥḥa was a Dravidian center.⁸

Thus:

1. *magilum*-boat, identified as coming from Meluḥḥa and described by parallel expressions as being a large boat, Sum. *má-gal* (Falkenstein 1964: 67, 101; Leemans 1968: 221; Parpola *et al.* 1969a: 3–4, 6; see also *IK* 2: 648, s.v. ^g*má-gal*, where it is translated as well as ‘cargo ship’).

Parpola *et al.* (1969a: 6) has suggested an etymology from *DEDR* 4638 “Ta. *mañci* cargo boat with a raised platform; *vañci* canoe. Ma. *mañci* a large sort of boat, single-masted Pattimar in coasting trade, holding 10–40 tons; *vañci* a large boat. Ka. *mañji* a large boat with one mast used in coasting trade; [...]”. These etyma are only in South Dravidian which, as suggested above, is not significant but is worthy of note. *DEDR* has added a note to its entry in the earlier edition that these etyma are possibly from Indo-Aryan, with reference to *CDIAL* 9715 *mañca*-‘stage, platform’.

The form, however, is probably a compound word the second member of which belongs with the etyma in *DEDR* 1305 “Ta. *kalam* vessel, plate, utensil, earthenware, ship; *kalavar* navigators. Ma. *kalam* pot, vessel, ship. [...] Kod. *kala* big pot. [...] Te. *kalamu* ship; *kalamari* sailor. ?Br. *kaland* broken earthen pot, any old pot”. These forms are probably cognate on a deep linguistic level with Australian aborigine (Worrorra) *kalum* ‘catamaran’ (Love 1936: 6–9; see Ramanathan 2002: 97, 2003: 103, and Ramanathan’s “Introduction” in Devaneyan 2004: 19¹). Also probably cognate on a Nostratic linguistic level are Eng. *galley*, med. Lat. *galea*, late Gk. *galéa* ‘ship’ (Devaneyan 1966: 233; Levitt 2000: 419).

The first member would belong with the etyma in *DEDR* 4786 “Ta. *mā* great; [...] Ka. [...] (Hal.) *mā* big, great. Go. (Mu.) *māy(i)* very big (*Voc.* 2794); (G.) *mayali* big (*Voc.* 2709)”. Compare on a Nostratic level Celtic *mawr* (Welsh) or *mor* (Irish) ‘large, great’, OHG. *māri*, OEng. *mā* ‘more’, *māra*, *mæst* ‘greater, greatest (in size, quantity, number)’, Eng. *more*, *most* (not used of size). Pei (1962: 76) notes, “A combination of Celtic and Germanic is presented by the IE root **mē* ‘big’. [...] There is a possible, perhaps probable, connection with the root of Latin *magis*, *magnus*, Indo-Iranian *maha-* of *maharajah*, Greek *megas*, [...] and numerous other words” (see Levitt 1998: 147).

⁸ I have taken these words primarily from Leemans (1960a; 1968) and Possehl (1996). When specific references would prove helpful, or when other sources were used as well, these will be noted.

For usage comparable to the Meluḥḥan compound, compare Du. *een schip groot* (measuring) *1000 ton*; *mijn groote* (big) *broers*; *groote en kleine* (large and small) *boeren, handelaren, winkeliers* (Jansonius 1972–73/1: 594b). Du. *groot*, of course, is cognate with Eng. *great*.

2. *mes* wood, referred to in the Ancient Mesopotamian lexical text 𒄩AR - ra = *hubullu* as, literally, ‘black wood’ of Meluḥḥa (Leemans 1960a: 9, 160). *Mes* wood was an article both from Magan and Meluḥḥa (Leemans 1960a: 34). Leemans speculates that the black wood may be ebony (1960a: 160). So also, though, *esi* is identified as being possibly ebony, and Leemans speculates further that the two woods may be the same (1960a: 11 n. 5; see also below). Leemans emphasized, though, that the exact translation of this term was questionable (1960a: 17). Gershevitch (1957), however, has argued convincingly that the *mes* wood of Sumerian and Old Babylonian texts is to be identified with OPers. *yakā-* in an Achaemenian trilingual inscription, and that this tree is in fact the sissoo tree, *Dalbergia sissoo* Roxb. (see also Leemans 1968: 216; Hansman 1973: 559, 560; *IK* 2: 672, 673).

Compare the etyma in *DEDR* 5101 “Ta. *mai* collyrium for the eye, ink, ink-paste, black pigment, black, blackness, darkness, [...]; (-*pp-*, -*tt-*) to become black, be dim; *maippu* black, blackness. [...] Ka. *masi* [...] the black of culinary vessels, soot, lamp-black, black color, blackness, ink, antimony. Koḍ. *masi* charcoal. [...] Te. *masi* blackness, sootishness, soot, charcoal, ink. Nk. (Ch.) *mas* soot. [...] Kur. *maš* ink”. These etyma are reflected in South Dravidian, Central Dravidian, and North Dravidian. They are cross-referenced in *DEDR* with, among other sets of etyma, *DEDR* 4781 Ta. *mā* ‘black’.

The Ancient Mesopotamian lexical text proves to be an invaluable help here.

3. *gišimmar*, the date-palm of Meluḥḥa; such are also mentioned of Magan (Leemans 1960a: 9, 160; *IK* 1: 423).

Witzel (2001: 14, 37) would seem to derive this form from Skt. *śalmali* ‘the milk-cotton tree, *Salmalia malabarica*’ which *EWA* 2: 622–623 suggests is probably not to be separated from the form *śimbalā* in *Ṛgveda* 3.53.2 (see also Kuiper 1991: 65). Following Kuiper (1991: 65), Witzel takes these two words to be different dissimiliations of **śammal*/**śimmal*. Witzel would see these forms to be loanwords in the *Ṛgveda* from what he refers to as “Para-Munda”. With regard to the geographic distribution of *Salmalia malabarica* in South Asia, see Watt (1889–1896/1: 487, 490) under *Bombax malabaricum*. With regard to its uses and properties, see Watt (1889–1896/1: 487–92).

The form, however, proves to be composed of two elements.

The first proves to be a form belonging with the etyma in *DEDR* 2617 “Ta. *intu* date-palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*; dwarf wild date-palm, *P. farinifera*; *īñcu*, id., wild date-palm, *P. sylvestris*; [...] Ka. *īcal*, *īcala*, *īcale*, *īcil* wild date tree, *P. sylvestris* Lin. Tu. *īcilu* the wild date; [...] Pa. *cīnd* date-palm. Ga. (S.²) *sīndi* id. Go. (Y.) *sindi* wild date-palm; [...] Kur. *kīndā* palm tree, date tree (= H. *khajur*) / Cf. Skt. *hintāla-*,

the marshy date tree, *Phoenix* or *Elate paludosa* (Turner, *CDIAL*, no. 14093), [...]”. The etyma, again, are reflected in all three sub-families.

The medial -š- of the Meluḥḥan form reflects the medial -c- in the Kannada and Tulu forms.

The initial *k-* of the North Dravidian form suggests that the Meluḥḥan form is clearly North Dravidian. Initial *k-* is sporadic in North Dravidian for PDr **c-* (see Emeneau 1988: 364).

Also note the Proto-Bantu form **mu-kindu* (Nurse 1983: 142). Southworth (1988: 659; 1993: 83, 84 n. 4) opines that both the Dravidian and Proto-Bantu forms may go back to a third source. But the Bantu proto-language goes back only a thousand years or so, and was probably spoken somewhere in southern Somalia, that is, was coastal (Nurse 1983: 129). Note in this regard the *dhow* trade of the Indian Ocean between the western coast of India and the eastern coast of Africa, mentioned in Leemans (1960: 5 n. 4). With regard to an etymology of the term *dhow*, and a description of *dhow*s, see Prins (1965: 78–80, 283). This trade is documented from both archeology and historical sources from the 8th and 9th centuries AD onward, and is documented by two classical authorities for ca. 40 AD and ca. 150 AD (Horton 1996: 439, 451, 454). The African archeological data supporting this latter documentation is summarized in Horton (1996). Chittick (1970: 97) notes that the earlier of these sources mentions that to the northern Somali coast, wheat, rice, ghee, sesame oil, cloth, and molasses were brought from northwestern India. It is thus very likely that the Bantu forms go back to the North Dravidian.

The second element falls in with the etyma in *DEDR* 4711(a) “Ta. *maram* (in cpds. *marattu-*) tree, wood, timber; [...] Te. *m(r)ānu*, *m(r)āku* tree. [...] Kuwi (Su.) *mārnu* (pl. *mārka*), [...] (S.) *marnu*, *mrānu*, (Isr.) *mrānu/marnu* (pl. *marka*), (P. D.) *mara* id. Kur. *mann* id. Malt. *manu* id.” This element is used as a characterizing word to prevent ambiguity, as reflected in the early grammar of Tamil, the *Tolkāppiyam*, *Collatikāram*, *sūtra* 54 (Subrahmanya Sastri 1979: 49–50). For such usage with regard to the etyma in *DEDR* 2617, see Koṇḍa *sīntel maranu* ‘date tree’ and Kuwi (Isr.) *sīndi marnu* ‘wild date-palm’.

The double *-mm-* in the Meluḥḥan form would be on account of euphonics.

That this form is composed of two independent elements each of which is found in Dravidian clearly indicates the form’s Dravidian origin.

4. *gug*, ‘carnelian’ (*IK* 1: 369–370). Leemans (1960a: 16–17) comments that it “may have been a red stone according to its Akkadian equivalent *sāmtu* or *sāntu*. It is translated as a rule by carnelian but other red stones, like agate and garnet, were also used. Many beads of red carnelian have been found in southern Mesopotamia and, therefore, it is probable, indeed, that it was some kind of carnelian of which red was the predominant color. The translation carnelian is, therefore, used in this book, but it should be kept in mind that it is meant to indicate a red variety.”

Compare the etyma in *DEDR* 1931 “Ta. *ce-*, *cem-*, *cevv-*, *ceyya*, *cētakam*, *cēttu* red; *cekkam*, *cekkar*, *cekkal*, *cekil*, *cemmai*, *cey*, *cevvu*, *cevval*, *cevēr-eṇal*, *cē*, *cēkkai*, *cēku*, *cēkai*, *cēntu*, *cēppu*, *cēy*, *civv-eṇal*, *civappu*, *civēr-eṇal* redness; [...] Ma. *ce-*, *cem-*, *cēya* red; *cemma*, *cevva*, *cona*, *covva* redness; [...] *cuvappu*, *cōppu* red; red color; ruby; *cecca* a kind of ruby; [...] Ko. *ken*, *ke-t* red; *kep* red, redness; [...] *keky* red clay; *keb gal* flint; [...] Ka. *ke-*, *kem-* red; *keṅka*, *keṅgal*, *keccane*, *keccu*, [...] redness; [...] Tu. [...] *kempu* redness, ruby; [...] Te. [...] *kempu* red, redness, a ruby. [...] Kur. *xēsō* red, blood; *xēs* blood, anger. Malt. *qésō* red; *qéslo* reddish; *qésu* blood; *qésolāre* to redden (as the eyes, face, or fruit when ripening). Br. *xīsun* red, gold”.

The Proto-Dravidian initial here is **k-*.

In North Dravidian a development takes place more or less the opposite of the palatalization that takes place in Tamil, Malayalam, and geographically southern Central Dravidian, specifically Telugu. In the North Dravidian languages initial **k-* is preserved before *i* and *ī*, before all other vowels it is changed to a guttural spirant. In this case, the vowels *e* and *ē* are classed with the back vowels *a*, *ā*, etc., and not as is usually the case with *i* and *ī* as front vowels (Burrow 1943: 132, 135). Burrow judges this change to have taken place fairly early.

In that the initial of the Meluḥḥan form is *g-*, this suggests preservation of the initial **k-* as in North Dravidian before *i* and *ī*, should the form be North Dravidian.

The final *-g* of the Meluḥḥan form would reflect a Dravidian *-k-* suffix.

With regard to the appearance of a back vowel in the Meluḥḥan form, however, note the back vowel in the Malayalam forms cited above. Also note that elsewhere in Dravidian, in Toda and Koḍagu, there is a split of front vowels into front and back vowels. Also, there was a split of *e* in Brahui to *a* and *i*. And note the alternation of front and back vowels between Dravidian and Indo-European etyma related on a Nostratic level in Levitt (1998).

5. *guškin*, ‘gold’ (*IK* 1: 381). This was imported from Meluḥḥa according to one of Gudea’s inscriptions, and elsewhere (Leemans 1960a: 11, 160; 1968: 222; Possehl 1996: 140, 143, 145).

Compare the Brahui form cited from *DEDR* 1931 Ta. *ce-* above, “Br. *xīsun* red, gold”.

This identification strengthens the argument with regard to the form *gug* above.

6. *dar*-bird, noted by Leemans (1968: 222) to be a kind of hen a variety of which comes from Meluḥḥa. With regard to the problem of its identification, see Falkenstein (1964: 75). Notice also the meaning of *dar*-bird as ‘francolin’. Sollberger (1968–1969: 249) notes that it is referred to in Akkadian as the ‘little black (bird)’. See *IK* 1: 181, which reflects all these speculations, and also adds ‘wild pigeon’.

Compare *DEDR* 3169 “Ta. *tārā* duck, heron. Ma. *tārāvu* duck”.

Other identifications are less certain:

7 and 8. *esi*, both ‘diorite’ and ‘ebony’, the two words being distinguished in Sumerian by the use of different determinatives (Leemans 1960a: 11 n. 5; see also *IK* 1: 281, 411, which also notes the tree to be ‘maple’ as well as ‘ebony’). Diorite came from Magan, and ebony, if that is what *esi* wood refers to, came from Meluḥḥa (Leemans 1960a: 12). That the stone *esi* is diorite is deduced from the claim by Gudea that he quarried stone in the mountains of Magan for use in making statues, and nearly all the recovered statues of Gudea are of this stone (Hansman 1973: 558, esp. n. 35). Leemans bases his conjecture that *esi* wood may denote ‘ebony’ on the fact that the two words *esi* are distinguished only by their determinative, “which gives an indication that they may resemble each other in outward appearance”. That the wood would be ebony would be consistent with the location from where it comes, as ebony comes from either India or tropical Africa (1960a: 11 n. 5). Hansman (1973: 560) comments that its exact identification is not known, but ebony has been proposed and this tree grows in parts of India.

I have not been able to find any sets of etyma in *DEDR* that carry in them words meaning ‘ebony’, that might provide here an appropriate match. The only even remotely possible match might require too much “finagling”.

Note, though, the comments of Leemans (1960a: 16) that indicate that the names of stones often matched a stone’s color. Thus, the name of lapis lazuli, Sum. *za-gin*, was also used for the color. And see above with regard to the stone *gug*, used of a red stone, perhaps a kind of carnelian in which red was the predominant color.

In this context, compare the etyma in *DEDR* 2552 “Ta. *iravu*, *ira*, *irā*, *rā* night; *iru* black; *iruč*i, *iruṭṭu*, *iruṇmai*, *irumai* darkness; *iruḷ* darkness, dark color, [...] Kol. (Kin.) *cirum* very dark; *sindi* soot. Pa. *ciruṇ* charcoal. Ga. (Oll.) *siriṅ* black; [...] *siriṅ* (pl. *siriṅil*) charcoal, cinders; [...] Go. (Mu.) *hirk*, (S.) *hirki*, (M.) *hīrki*, *-irki*, (Ma. Ko.) *irk* charcoal (*Voc.* 3551). [...]”.

The Proto-Dravidian root here is **cir-*. In order to arrive at a form such as, *esi*, we would have to have metathesis. Such a process is a feature in Dravidian primarily of the Telugu-Kui subgroup of Central Dravidian. Levitt (1980: 44–45, 55–56 n. 27) has proposed such a process for North Dravidian as well, and has suggested that it is evidenced not only within Dravidian itself, but also in early loans from Dravidian in Sanskrit.

With regard to this term’s referring to “diorite”, notice its usage to refer to “charcoal”.

Also note the cross-reference in *DEDR* 2552 to *DEDR* 483 “Ta. *īṭṭi* blackwood, *Dalbergia latifolia*. Ma. *iruviḷ*, *irūḷ* *D. sisu*; *vīṭṭi* Bombay blackwood, *D. latifolia*. Ka. *irugundi* *D. sissoo*; *ibaḍi*, *ibbaḍi*, *bīṭe* *D. latifolia* Roxb. Tu *bīṭi* blackwood; *kari-bīṭi* ebony, *D. latifolia*. Te. *iruguḍu*, *iruvuḍu* *D. latifolia*; (B.) *ibbaḍa*, *ibbeḍa* a certain tree”.

Note that two identifications here are to *Dalbergia sissoo* (or *sisu*), which has been identified as *mes* wood, as noticed above. Also note there is one reference here to ‘ebony’, but the botanical classification for this is given as *Dalbergia latifolia* as in most other cases in this set of etyma.

Watt (1889–1896/3: 7–10) writes of *Dalbergia latifolia*, “heartwood extremely hard, dark purple, with black longitudinal streaks; no distinct annual rings, but alternating connecting belts of dark and light color, which, however, run irregularly into each other. [...] It is a valuable furniture wood [...]”.

With regard to the tree’s geographic distribution, Watt cites authorities that: “The tree grows extensively and vigorously in the Deccan, Konkan, and Guzerat forests [...]”. “It is found throughout the Madras Presidency, Mysore, Coorg, Bombay, Central India, and parts of Bengal, Sikkim, and the Andaman Islands.” “It is not found in Ceylon, nor I believe in Burma. It ascends the mountains to nearly 4,000 feet, and grows equally well in the dry deciduous forests with teak, and in the moist evergreen shoals, and is often associated with bamboo.”

Interestingly, Watt also notes that “[...] in Sind this plant has been experimentally cultivated, but with indifferent results”.

Thus, if this tree is indeed to be identified with *esi* wood, the wood must have come from Gujarat or the Konkan. This is the area identified as Meluḥḥa by Thapar. It is, however, also included in the area covered by Meluḥḥa according to most other authorities as well.

If this identification indeed stands, it would suggest that not only the language of Meluḥḥa was Dravidian, but also the language of Magan.

9. *igi* ‘pearls’ from Meluḥḥa are mentioned in a year formula of king Irdanene of Uruk (Leemans 1968: 222; Possehl 1996: 143, 145).

In this regard, notice *DEDR* 2535 “Ta. *ippi* pearl-oyster, shell; *cippi* shell, shellfish, coconut shell for measuring out curds. Ma. *ippi*, *cippi* oyster shell. [...] Go. (Ma.) *ipi* shell, conch (*Voc.* 174)”.

The Proto-Dravidian form here is **ci-pp-/-mp-*. With regard to the initial **c-*, though, see what was noticed above with regard to Indo-European forms possibly related on a Nostratic level to *DEDR* 2559 Ta. *il*. With regard to the suffix, note that *-pp-* and *-mp-* are just two of the frequent suffixes that we find in Dravidian. *-k-* is also a frequent suffix, though it is not in evidence in the etyma in *DEDR* 2535.

This proposed connection on the surface is not very strong, but compare the etyma in *DEDR* 533 “Ta. *ī* fly, bee; [...] Ma. *īcca* fly. Ir. *i-ppi* id. [...] To. *i-py* id. [...] Te. *ĩga* id.; [...] Kol. *ni-ṅga* fly. Nk. *niṅga* id.” In this set of etyma we have suffixes *-k-*, *-ñk-*, *-cc-*, and *-pp-* side-by-side in forms of roughly comparable shape (see also Zvelebil 1970: 120).

10. *za-gin* ‘lapis lazuli’ (*IK* 2: 1160). As mentioned above, Leemans (1960a: 16) comments that the name lapis lazuli was also used for the color. The color of lapis

lazuli is a rich azure blue. *IK* notes that the name refers to turquoise as well as to lapis lazuli.

Compare *DEDR* 2149 “Ta. *koruntu* tender twig, tendril, tender leaf, shoot, anything young, tenderness; [...]”. Note among the North Dravidian forms in this entry: “Br. *xarrun* green, blue, black and blue; fruitful; *xarruni* greenness; wife”. Also, “Malt. *qóro* infant, Indian corn when green”.

The Proto-Dravidian root here would be **kur-*, **kōr-*.

With regard to the pronunciation of *-*r-*, it is not found in its original phonetic value in most Dravidian languages. As preserved in Tamil, it is generally agreed that it is a retroflex or retracted voiced fricative (Zvelebil 1970: 148–149).

Required here for a match would be metathesis of C¹ and C², where C stands for a consonant. With regard to metathesis in Dravidian, and in North Dravidian, see above under *esi*.

11. *zú-am-si* ‘ivory’ (*IK* 2: 1197). Leemans (1960a: 125) comments, “Ivory must have come from India or East-Africa. Manufactured articles of ivory were imported in a finished form at the end of the Ur III dynasty, in the form of birds, fruits, etc. [...] There is evidence of such craftsmanship in India, but not in East-Africa” (see also 161–162). Contradicting this, however, Possehl (1996: 145) comments, “Ivory is not mentioned as part of the trade with Meluhha, although it is mentioned in connection with Dilmun.” He does, though, note figurines of birds cut from ivory as being mentioned in the Ur III economic texts with reference to Meluḥḥa (1996: 141), and Leemans specifies that the economic Ur III texts mention “multicolored birds of Meluḥḥa, made of ivory” (1960a: 161).

In this regard, notice *DEDR* 4720 “Ta. *maruppu* horn of a beast, elephant’s tusk, part of a lute, branch of a tree, horns of crescent moon, ginger. Kur. *mar^ag* horn, antler. Malt. *margu* horns; *margo* male deer. Br. *margh* horn”.

Required here for this etymology to work would be, again, metathesis. With regard to the initial *z-* of *zú-am-si*, note that **r* and **r̥* merge in Brahui, the two being represented by both *r* and *rr*, among other options. Compare the suggested etymology of *za-gin* ‘lapis lazuli’ above.

12. *ḥa-ja* or *ḥa-ja*, ‘peacock’, described as a divine bird whose sound was heard in royal palaces, which bird came from Meluḥḥa (Falkenstein 1964: 75, 105; Leemans 1968: 222; Parpola 1994: 14b).

In the context of the specifics of the literary reference given by Falkenstein, perhaps we can entertain a connection with the etyma in *DEDR* 1093 “Ta. *kaya* great; *kayam*, *kayavu* greatness; Ma. *kaya* big. Te. *gaja* large, as in: *gaja nimma* the large hill orange, *Citrus bergamia* [...] Pe. *gaja* big. Kuwi (Su.) *kaja*, (F. S.) *kajja* big, great”.

The *ḥa-ja*^{mu^{sen}} would be ‘the great bird’.

With regard to the initial *ḥ-* of our form here, where above initial PDr. **k-* > *g*, as noticed above, in North Dravidian *k-* split, yielding in Kurukh *x*, *k*, in Malto *q*, *k*,

in Brahui *x*, *k*, depending on the following vowel. See in this regard Burrow (1943: 132).

Unexpectedly, one word proved to suggest an Indo-Aryan etymology:

13. (*a*-)*ab-ba* wood. Leemans (1960a: 17, 160) notes this to be an unknown kind of wood. On account of Sum. *a-ab-ba* meaning ‘sea’, it has sometimes been translated as ‘sea wood’ (Landsberger 1964–1966: 261; Hansman 1973: 560; Thapar 1975: 9; Parpola 1994: 14b). On account of it having been borrowed into Akkadian as *kušabku* (Sum. *gišab-ba*), which carries the meaning of ‘a thorn tree’ (see Landsberger 1964–1966: 261; Gelb *et al.* 1971: 597a), it is sometimes regarded as “a thorn tree apparently associated with Meluhha” (Possehl 1996: 141, 144; Possehl’s statement that “*giš-ab-ba* is a loan word *from* [italics mine] Akkadian *kušabku*” is erroneous). Landsberger (1964–1966: 261) also notes the opinion that it may be teakwood. Thapar (1975: 9) as well suggests it may have been teak, understanding the locution ‘sea wood’ to indicate that it is a wood resistant to weathering by seawater, such as teak. Hansman (1973: 560–561), on the basis of its translation ‘sea wood’ suggests that it is the common mangrove, *Ceriops candallearia*, which grows in tidal shoals and stream outlets along the coast of Sind and on the eastern coast of eastern Baluchistan in Pakistan. Mangrove wood, he notes, is extremely hard. “[I]f we accept that the association of GIŠ.A.AB.BA with the sea may mean that this wood grows in sea-water and if Meluhha is to be placed in eastern Baluchistan, then the mangrove which grows in salt-marshes and tidal creeks there, would seem to hold fair claim to be identified with A.AB.BA wood” (1973: 561). With regard to this tree, see Watt (1889–1896/2: 261). See also Champion, Seth, and Khattak ([1965]: 95–96) with regard to mangrove forests in Pakistan. In consideration of the later location of Meluhha as the Sudan and Ethiopia, also note that Horton (1996: 450) with regard to the ephemeral nature of archeological remains of maritime trade further down the East African coast from northern Somalia, mentions that there is there as well “rapid mangrove growth, forestation and erosion”. And Prins (1965: 5) notes the cutting and sale of mangrove to be a primary source of income in the Lamu economy. Lamu is an island belonging to Kenya lying below the Somali border in what is known as the Lamu Archipelago that was engaged in the ancient maritime *dhow* trade. Prins (1965: 47–48) also notes mangrove islets fringing on Pate Island, near Lamu.

With regard to the Sumerian word *apsû*, though, which refers to the immense body of sweet water underneath the earth that was the realm and habitat of the god Enki, Bottéro (1992: 289) comments that it is a word of unknown origin. On this basis, Levitt (2003b: 350–351) suggested that this word came from Vedic Skt. *áp* ‘water’, a feminine form that is declined in the nominative plural as *âpas* ‘the waters’. The locative form would be *apsú*, but Levitt opines that the evidence is that the borrowing was done from the nominative. This form has a well-attested etymology in Indo-European (see Pokorny 1959: 51–52; *EWA* 1: 81–82).

In this context, I looked up compound words with *áp* as the first member in *MW* and came up with *ab-ja*, literally ‘born in water’, and used as a name of the tree *Barringtonia acutangula* (*MW* 60b). This name occurs in the *Nānārthaśabdakośa* of Medinikāra, a lexicographical work probably written in the 14th c. AD, shortly called the *Medinīkośa* or just *Medinī* (*HOIL* 3.2: 460). It is well known, though, that later Indic materials often preserve very old forms. Required here for us to get the form that appears in Sumerian, we would need a Prakritic-type sound change, such that *abja* > *abba*. This is not as such a Prakritic change, since by normal Prakritic changes we would expect **ajja* (see Pischel 1965: 191 [§270]). Instances of progressive assimilation, as opposed to regressive assimilation, do occur in Prakrit, though. Thus Pkt. *aggi*, Skt. *agni* ‘fire’; Pkt. *pappoi*, *pappodi*, Skt. *prāpnoti* ‘he obtains’ (see Pischel 1965: 194–195 [§276]).

A comparable, but regular Prakritic-type sound change occurs in the Mitanni material of ca. 1500–1300 BC, in which Skt. *saptá* appears as *satta* (see Burrow 1955: 28, 29; 1973: 28; Misra 1992: 5, 10). Misra, however, has used this and other Prakritic-type sound changes in this material (see Misra 1992: 9–10) to argue that Middle Indo-Aryan goes back to 2500 BC, and that Old Indo-Aryan and the *R̥gveda* go back to 5000 BC or earlier (Misra 1992: 11, 91–92). Prakritic sound changes are often considered to reflect the speech of native Dravidian speakers speaking Sanskrit (see, for example, Ananthanarayana 1991; Emeneau 1974: 93). Further, some of the forms pointed out by Burrow (1973: 27–30) and Misra (1992: 9–10) suggest not Prakritic sound changes, but changes of a type we find in Sanskrit loanwords in Tamil, for instance. Thus, with regard to *aratiyanni* (in which *-ni* is an appended Hurrian suffix), Skt. *ráthya* ‘belonging or relating to a chariot’, compare Ta. *aracaṇ*, Skt. *rājan* ‘king’ and Ta. *nāṭṭiyam*, Skt. *nāṭya* ‘dancing’; with reference to *Indara*, Skt. *Índra* ‘name of the chief Vedic god’, compare Ta. *intira* (see Fabricius 1933; Vaidyanathan 1971; Fabricius, Ta. *aracaṇ* is not a loanword but its synonym Ta. *irācaṇ* is, while Vaidyanathan 1980 views both to be loanwords). Among the Aryan traces in the documents of the Kassite dynasty of Babylon (ca. 1750–1170 BC), compare *Šuriaš* (Gnoli 1980: 72 n. 81, *Šurijaš*), Skt. *sūrya* ‘sun’, and Ta. *cūriyaṇ* (Fabricius 1933; Vaidyanathan 1971; 1980). Burrow (1955: 29) commented that “the phonetic changes observed, in so far as the inaccuracy of the script allows, appear to be local and independent changes”.

In this regard, note that the Hurrian language of the Mitanni is today considered to be an unaffiliated extinct language once spoken by a non-Semitic, non-Indo-European ethnic group customarily assumed to have come from the Armenian mountains. During the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, they apparently spread over large parts of southeast Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia (Houwinck ten Cate 1974; *EB*, Propædia, 32: 186). Brown (1930), though, had suggested the possibility that Hurrian was related to Dravidian. That the idea that the nearby Elamite is related to Dravidian was picked up by David McAlpin and developed by

him so thoroughly, whereas Brown's observation has gone virtually unnoticed, is a fluke in the history of scholarship.⁹ So also, the language of the Kassites, who were invaders from the Zagros region, was a non-Semitic, non-Indo-European language unaffiliated with anything else (Mallory 1989: 39).

With regard to the form *ab-ba*, if indeed it does come from Skt. *abja*, we appear to have an Indo-Aryan form filtered through Dravidian speech.

Watt (1889–1896/1: 401–402) notes of *Barringtonia acutangula* that it is sometimes called “Indian Oak”. The tree is referred to in a few South Indian forms only, in *DEDR* 4713 “*Ta. maravam, maravu, marā, marām* seaside Indian oak, *Barringtonia racemosa*; small Indian oak, *B. acutangula*; common cadamba, *Anthocephalus cadamba*; *marā-maram* sal tree; pipal. Ma. *marā-maram* the sal tree”. Watt notes of this tree that it is a moderate-sized evergreen tree “met with in the Sub-Himālayan tract from the Jumna eastward; in Oudh, Bengal, Central and South India, and Burma. [...] frequent in Kanāra, Bombay, along the banks of streams and in moist places”. Of the wood, he notes of it, “moderately hard, even-grained, said to be durable. [...] It is used for boat-building, well-work, carts, rice-pounders, and cabinet-making. [...] the wood turns black when buried in mud.”

Barringtonia racemosa, it might be mentioned, is also a moderate-sized evergreen tree, “common on the Eastern and Western Coasts, from the Konkan to the Sunderbuns, Burma, Andaman Islands, Ceylon, and Malacca”. Its wood is very soft and porous, and is used for house and cart building (Watt 1889–1896/1: 402–403).

At first glance, the geographic distribution of *Barringtonia acutangula* would seem to rule it out, till we remember that the Yamūnā (Jumna) is a young stream that is viewed to have captured the waters of the now dried up Vedic Sārasvatī and Dṛṣādvatī Rivers (Possehl 1997: 446). It is not unreasonable to assume therefore, on this account, that this tree was in just the area where the Vedic Aryans are reputed to have been located. This would explain why its name would be of Indo-Aryan derivation. With regard to the Indo-Aryans being in this area in the time of Indus Valley Civilization, Levitt (2003b; 2007: 22–23), for instance, has been referred to above.

We here have six good Dravidian etymologies and six that admit some doubt, plus one possible Indo-Aryan etymology.

To be kept in mind here is that on a deep level, Sumerian and Dravidian are related. Thus:

1. Sum. *kur* carries the meanings ‘mountain(s)’ and ‘land’, also ‘foreign land’ (During Caspers and Govindankutty 1978: 131, 141; *IK* 1: 587: *IK*, also ‘mountainous region’). Parpola (1994: 14ab) refers to it as ‘land’ and ‘highland’, Parpola and Parpola (1975: 223) as ‘(foreign) land’. Compare the etyma in *DEDR*

⁹ See McAlpin (1975: 105 n. 2) and the first paragraph of William H. Jacobsen, Jr.’s comments on p. 109b of this reference, for the history of the thesis that Elamite and Dravidian are related.

1864 “Ta. *kunram*, *kunru* hill, mountain; [...] *kuṛu* hill [...]”, cross-referenced with *DEDR* 1844 “Ta. *kuṛam* Kurava tribe, [...] *kuṛavāṇar* the Kurava tribe of the mountain; *kuṛiñci* hilly tract; [...]”. Both sets of etyma contain entries for both South Dravidian and Central Dravidian. With regard to *kunram* and *kunru*, *TED* 2.2: 616a, 617b notes *kunram* < *kunru* < *kul*. As alluded to above, there is an alternation in Dravidian between *r*, *l*, *n*, and *r̥* comparable to the alternation in Afroasiatic of *r*, *l*, and *n*. By Tamil rules of euphonic combination *l* + the common suffix *-nt-* > *-nr-*. Assadian and Hakola (2003: 77) would relate Sum. *kur* to *DEDR* 2178 “Ta. *kō* mountain [...]” and *DEDR* 2887 “Kui *sōru* hill, mountain [...]”. These may ultimately also be related, though not as immediately. Also on a deep level, all these terms are probably related to Skt. *giri* ‘mountain, hill, rock, elevation, rising ground’ (*Ṛgveda* and later), Alb. *gur* ‘rock, stone’, OCSl. *gora* ‘mountain’, Lith. *gìre*, *girià* ‘forest (< [mountain]-forest)’ (*MW* 355b; Pokorny 1959: 477–478; *EWA* 1: 487).

2. Sum. *urudu* ‘copper’ (Leemans 1960a: 121–123, 161; *IK* 2: 1141; *IK*, also ‘bronze’, ‘ore’). Assadian and Hakola (2003: 133–134) point out a comparison with the etyma in *DEDR* 817 “Ta. *eruvai* blood, (?) copper. Ka. *ere* a dark-red or dark-brown color, a dark or dusky color; [...]”. This source as well includes here etyma for *DEDR* 865 “Ta. *erul* a hill tree with red flowers; [...] Te. *erupa*, *erra*, *errana*, *errani* redness, red, scarlet, crimson”. Also on a deep level, cognate would be Skt. *lohá* ‘red, metal, copper’ (*Vājasaneyisaṃhitā* and later), *lōhita* ‘red, red-colored, reddish; made of copper, copper, metal’ (*Atharvaveda* and later), Skt. *rōhita* ‘red, reddish’ (*Ṛgveda* and later), Skt. *rudhirá* ‘red, blood-red, bloody’ (*Atharvaveda*), Gk. *eruthrós* ‘red’, OCSl. *rudt* ‘red’, *ruda* ‘ore, metal’, Eng. *red* (*MW* 884bc, 890c, 908c–909a; Pokorny 1959: 872–873; *EWA* 2: 453–454, 471, 484–485). Devaneyan (1966: 226) and *TED* 1.1: 333a–334a, however, would take these Indo-European forms to be cognate rather with Ta. *arattam* ‘red color, blood’, also ‘copper’, for which *TED* gives an etymology within Tamil. Usually, Ta. *arattam* is understood to be a loanword from Skt. *rakta* ‘red’ through Middle Indo-Aryan (see Fabricius 1933: 30a; Vaidyanathan 1971: 29), which Sanskrit form is related to an entirely different set of Indo-European etyma (see *MW* 861b; *EWA* 2: 424).

Not considered in this paper are Meluḥḥan words in Sumerian texts without attached significations, such as *kapazum* (Leemans 1960a: 166; see also 26, 33), *lahakitum* (Leemans 1960a: 166; see also 26), *arazum* (Leemans 1960a: 166; see also 24, 26), and *tuḥarum* (Leemans 1960a: 166; see also 27, 28). Most of these words, as Leemans observes (1960a: 166), have an Akkadian and not a Sumerian form. With regard to the Semitic ending *-um*, Glassner (1996: 242–243) points out that Ancient Mesopotamian scribes, trying to express the pronunciation of foreign words through their own graphic system, conforming to settled habit ended such words with indigenous grammatical terminations. In that these words do not have significations, or identifiable referents, nothing can be told.

Also, nothing can be told for the same reason of the Meluḥḥan names mentioned in the sources. These indicate the name of the Meluḥḥan interpreter that appears on an Akkadian cylinder seal, Šu-ilišu (Sollberger 1968–1969: 248; Parpola 1996: 132 [fig. 8.4]), and names that appear in Ur III economic texts with reference to Meluḥḥa, Urkal and Ur-^dlama (Possehl 1996: 142). The personal name “Meluḥḥa” has been discussed above, on the other hand.

Similarly, nothing can be determined from the Indus Valley-type seal with archaic cuneiform writing on it discovered unstratified at Ur. Collon (1996: 218, 220) has commented that the inscription seems to be the transcription of a foreign name. The reading is not at all certain, though (see Woolley 1928: 26, pl. 11.2; Gadd 1932: 193–194, pl. 1.1; Collon 1996: 217 [fig. 15g]).

What has been pointed out in this paper, though, makes it probable that Dravidian is the source of Akk. *ellu* ‘(good) sesame oil’ (see *DEDR* 854 “Ta. *el*, *eṇ* *Sesamum indicum*”, with etyma in South Dravidian only). As Franklin C. Southworth pointed out to Dorothea Bedigan and Jack R. Harlan, there is an alternative pronunciation *eḷlu*, the doubling of the consonant and addition of final *-u* being a normal alternant in the oldest Dravidian (Bedigan and Harlan 1986: 141). See also the Malayalam and Kanarese forms, for instance.

Bedigan and Harlan (1986: 143) entertain the possibility that the Akkadian word is a loanword from Dravidian, but note (1986: 151) that this needs support from philologists for such a connection to be established. They do emphasize, though, that evidence indicates that sesame as a crop originated in the Indian sub-continent, and that it has some archeological presence at Harappa, ca. 3050–3500 BC (Bedigan and Harlan 1986: 140–142, 151)

Southworth (1993: 83; 1995: 270 n. 16) opined that it is impossible to determine without further evidence which one is the source of the other, or whether there was perhaps some third source. However, he added, the similarity of the words given that sesame was grown in the ancient Indus Valley and was involved in the trade with Ancient Mesopotamia, provides support for some sort of relationship between speakers of Dravidian languages and Indus Valley Civilization, and is consistent with Dravidian being a language of the Indus Valley.

The Dravidian forms, though, are only South Dravidian, and on this account Southworth (1995: 269) refers to “sesame” as a ‘new crop’ in his Proto-Dravidian-2 subgrouping. Regarding the antiquity of many forms found only in South Dravidian, though, see above.

With regard to Skt. *tila* ‘sesame’ (*Atharvaveda* and later; *Atharvaveda*, *tilā*), both *KEWA* 1: 504–505 and *EWA* 1: 648 comment that the etymology is not clear, and that it is probably a foreign loanword. Burrow (1947: 142) connects this with the Dravidian etyma in *DEDR* 854 Ta. *el*, *eṇ* on the basis that “the initial *t-* stands for an original *c-/s-* which has been lost in the alternative forms”; so also, with question, Southworth (1988: 661 [chart]).

That it can be determined that the names of other economic products from Meluḥḥa in Ancient Mesopotamia can be connected with Dravidian, forcefully strengthens the probability that Ak. *ellu* is a loanword from Dravidian, and further that Burrow’s argument with regard to Skt. *tila* is correct.

What has been pointed out in this paper may also support the suggestion of Southworth (1988: 659; 1993: 83) that the etyma in *DEDR* 2617 “Ta. *īntu* date-palm, [...] Pa. *cīnd* date-palm. Ga. (S.²) *sīndi* id. Go. (Y.) *sindi* wild date-palm; [...]” gave their name to the region known as the Sind and to the Sindhu (or Indus) River, Sind being an area famous for its dates.

Alternately to be considered here is Periannan Chandrasekaran’s recent connection of the name of the Sindhu River, and of the Cintā and Sindli rivers, with the etyma in *DEDR* 1546 Ta. *citar* (-v-, -nt-) such as Ta. *cintu* (*cinti*-) ‘to be strewn, spilled, trickle, [...]’ and Te. *cindu* ‘to be spilt or shed, run out of a vessel; spill (tr.), suffer to run over’, and with etyma in *DEDR* 2525 Ta. *citampu* (*citampi*-) and *DEDR* 2524 Ta. *citar*, *citaram* such as, respectively, Kui *sindali* ‘moist, damp’ and Malt. *cithge* ‘to begin to rain drop by drop’, on the basis of parallels with other river names in South Asia which suggest that often these are related to inherent properties of a fluid (2007: 57).

For other etymologies of Skt. *sindhu*, see Levitt (n.d.).

Earlier, Pentti Aalto had suggested that a positive solution to the problem of the etymology of the place name “Meluḥḥa” would be possible if the words of unknown origin used in Babylonian sources when talking of the imports from Meluḥḥa could be explained with the help of Dravidian.

The three Akkadian etyma he mentioned, though, may be related with Dravidian etyma rather on a deep linguistic level. Thus, Ta. *kavi* ‘ape, monkey’ (expunged from *DEDR* on the basis of being a loanform from Sanskrit; see, though, *TED* 2.1: 589b), the etyma in *DEDR* 2142 “Pa. *kovva* red-faced monkey. Ga. (P.) *kove* id. Go. (A. Ko.) *kove*, (Y. Ph. D. Mu. S.) *kovve*, [...] id. (*Voc.* 950); (ASu.) *kōvē* id.”, Skt. *kapī* ‘ape, monkey’, Gk. *chēbos*, also *chēpos* ‘long-tailed monkey’, Hebr. *qōf* ‘monkey’, Akk. *uqūpu*, *iaqūpu* a ‘monkey’, OHG. *affo* ‘monkey’, Eng. *ape*. With regard to the etymology of the Sanskrit word, *EWA* 1: 300–301 comments that it is “unclear”, and that the connections between it and the reminiscent words in Greek, Hebrew, and Akkadian, for instance, are as problematic as the connection with the Germanic forms. He does not mention any Dravidian forms. See also *KEWA* 1: 156, where it is noted that the Sanskrit word clearly belongs together with the Hebrew, Old Egyptian, and Greek forms, but the starting point of this culture word is not securely ascertained. Pokorny (1959: 2–3) comments that the Germanic forms are adopted from a Celtic name for their water demons, and that the Slavic forms stem from the Germanic. So also *OED* 1: 543bc. Pokorny (1960) corrects his earlier statement, though, and comments that the Germanic forms have an African origin and are to be connected with Nubian *abalan*, Bedouin *abalây* ‘dastardly monkey’,

as also the Celtic words. These African forms can be connected with Hebr. *qōf* and other Semitic forms, he argues. Compare in this regard, as well, Eng. *herb*, Lat. *herba*, Pg. *herva*, but OF. *erbe*, It. *erba*, related etymologically according to Pokorny (1959: 454) to Eng. *grass*, Germ. *Gras* and Eng. *grow*, *green*, the former obtained out of a lighter root from the latter's (De Mauro 2000/2: 898a, Lat. *herba* is of uncertain origin; see also *OED* 7: 153b with regard to the English and Romance forms). All the opinions with regard to the forms for "ape, monkey" were written without taking into account recent work on super-families of languages. We may have here connection on a very deep level.

CONCLUSION

In that we have fairly good Dravidian etymologies for Sum. *magilum*-boat, *mes* wood, *gišimmar* 'the date-palm of Meluḥḥa', *gug* 'carnelian', *guškin* 'gold', and the *dar*-bird of Meluḥḥa, and acceptable, though not as good and perhaps open to question Dravidian etymologies for Sum. *esi* 'diorite', *esi* wood, *igi* 'pearl', *zagin* 'lapis lazuli', *zú-am-si* 'ivory', and *ḥa-ja* 'peacock', as well as one possible Indo-Aryan etymology for (*a*-)*ab-ba* wood, with a Prakritic-type sound change in effect, which sound changes have at times been attributed to Indo-Aryan speech in Dravidian mouths, it can be considered fairly certain that Meluḥḥa was a primarily Dravidian civilization.

In that an area that can be argued for the Indian oak tree identified with (*a*-)*ab-ba* was the area of the now dried up Śárasvatī and Dṛṣádvatī Rivers, this suggests as argued by Southworth (1988: 661) for other reasons that the earliest Vedic texts were associated with a mountain-dwelling, primarily herding people who were unacquainted with the type of floodplain agriculture practiced by the Harappans. This argument is also supported by late lexicographic meanings of Skt. *mlecchá* which lead to a similar conclusion, as noted above.

Several points in the Dravidian etymologies suggest that the language of Meluḥḥa was distinctly North Dravidian.

Thus, *gišimmar* 'the date-palm of Meluḥḥa' shows an initial *k*-, which occurs for the relevant etyma only in North Dravidian. Initial *k*- is sporadic in North Dravidian for initial **c*-.

The back vowel in *gug* 'carnelian' and *guškin* 'gold', whereas in the main the etyma in the set of etyma in question contain a front vowel, suggest perhaps the split of *e* in Brahui to *a* and *i*.

Such may perhaps explain the vowel *u* in "Meluḥḥa", whereas Pali has *milakkha*, etc. as a reflex of Skt. *mlecchá*, which problem as was noted bothered Asko Parpola. As was discussed, Skt. *mlecchá* is generally seen today to reflect the Ancient Mesopotamian place name "Meluḥḥa". Such would also explain the vowel

alternation between the Sanskrit root *mluc-*, or *mruc-*, and what is seen here to be the related Skt. *mlecchá*. As can be seen below from the comments here regarding the initial *h-* of *ḥa-ja*, there does not seem to have been merger between the two vowels *a*.

esi ‘diorite’ and *esi* wood, for the etymology offered here to work, would require metathesis. Such has been argued before is a process in North Dravidian as well as in the Telugu-Kui subgroup of Central Dravidian. This etymology is strengthened by cross-referenced forms in *DEDR* to *Dalbergia latifolia*, ‘blackwood’.

In that *esi* as ‘diorite’ came from Magan and *esi* as a black wood came from Meluḥḥa, and that the names can possibly be traced back to the same set of Dravidian etyma, this suggests that not only was the language of Meluḥḥa Dravidian, but also the language of Magan. So also, this is suggested by *mes* wood coming from both Magan and Meluḥḥa, as also *gišimmar* ‘the date-palm’, for both of which we can find clear Dravidian etymologies. Note in this regard the connection between Elamite and North Dravidian, especially Brahui.

Metathesis is also required for the etymology for *za-gìn* ‘lapis lazuli’. Here, the appropriate color words appear in the North Dravidian Brahui in the set of etyma in question, and only in these Brahui entries, just as a word for “gold” of appropriate shape appeared only in a Brahui entry in the set of etyma with which the firmer connection with *guškin* was made.

And metathesis is required for the etymology of *zú-am-si* ‘ivory’. Also for the etymology proposed here to work, the merger of **r* and **r̥* as in Brahui would have had to be in force.

Finally, the initial *h-* of *ḥa-ja* ‘peacock’, by the admittedly questionable etymology here, would require the split of **k-* in North Dravidian to *k-* and a guttural spirant depending on the following vowel, whereas elsewhere in our proposed etymologies **k-* > *g-*.

This North Dravidian guttural spirant can also be seen in the place name “Meluḥḥa” as well, argued here as elsewhere to come from a Dravidian form **mēl-V-kk-*. We can here perhaps amplify this on this possible basis to a form **mēl-V-kk-a*.

It has been argued before that loans from Dravidian in early Sanskrit were coming from North Dravidian (Levitt 1980: 29, 35–36, 39, 45, 55 n. 24, 55–56 n. 27; 2003c: 7, 10–11, 13–14, 17–18, 19–20). The data presented here supports that conclusion.

It has been suggested here that there may be a mention of Meluḥḥa in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* in the place name “Nimlocanī” associated with Váruṇa, who was one of the older gods in the *Ṛgveda*; and as was just noted in different context that the root of this name, Skt. *mluc-*, is related to Skt. *mlecchá*, Pali *milakkha*, *milakkhu* ‘foreigner, barbarian, non-Aryan’, which forms have been associated before with

the place name “Meluḥḥa”. The bull commonly depicted on Indus Valley seals, it is suggested, may represent Vāruṇa.

The place name “Meluḥḥa” itself, it has been argued, is a Dravidian word meaning ‘the country above’, i.e. ‘the eminent country’, or ‘the excellent, or superior place (or kingdom)’, or the like, and is cognate on a deep linguistic level with Hebr. *melekh* ‘king’, Ar. *malik* ‘king, sovereign, monarch’, Ar. *malaka i* (*malk, mulk, milk*) “[...] to possess, own, [...] to be master of, to rule, reign, exercise power or authority, [...]”, etc. In that the more basic meanings, as well as forms without the final consonant *-k* are in Dravidian, we must judge that the Dravidian forms are primary. This suggests that Dravidian separated from Nostratic first, not Afroasiatic as is the current opinion.

The set of Dravidian etyma with which the place name “Meluḥḥa” is grouped is the same as argued for earlier by Romila Thapar, though with different specifics, and initially by Asko Parpola, although as well with different specifics. The interpretation of the place name here lends itself to also being a personal name, as it appears to have been. The place name is seen to be comparable to the early Chinese reference to itself as *Zhong-guo* “The Central Country”, often translated as “The Middle Kingdom”.

The identifications of names of economic products of Meluḥḥa with Dravidian etyma makes it likely that the place name “Meluḥḥa” itself is as well Dravidian.

ABBREVIATIONS

CDIAL=Turner (1966–1985)

DEDR=Burrow and Emeneau (1984)

EB=*The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15th edn (1974)

EWA=Mayrhofer (1992–2001)

HOIL=Winternitz (1927), and Winternitz (1967)

IK=Hübner and Reizammer (1985–1986)

KEWA=Mayrhofer (1956–1980)

MW=Monier-Williams (1899)

OED=*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (1989)

TED=Devaneyan *et al.* (1985–2004)

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