



# INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA

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R. N. PRASHER

RGVEDIC PANIS AND PHOENICIANS:  
TRADE AND CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFUSION

**Synopsis**

Conjectures have been made about the identity of R̥gvedic Panis and the Phoenicians. The term Phoenician is of Greek coinage applied to people who were earlier known as Canaanites/Sidonians in Biblical times. In this paper, we are not getting into the quagmire of identification of the Panis and Phoenicians with each other or the issue of the relative chronology of the Vedic age and the Indus valley cities. We have tried to show that some aspects of the technological, cultural and philological overlap between the ancient civilisations of the Near East and the people living in the north-west part of the Indian sub-continent continuously from 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. till the Mauryan times are the consequence of extensive maritime trade between the two regions and that both the Panis and the Phoenicians were renowned as traders in their respective regions. We have noted that both the R̥gvedic Panis and the Canaanites/Phoenicians were skilled carpenters and shipbuilders. The conflict of the Panis with the Vedic people and indication of their shifting their base towards the west while maintaining trade contacts with India enriched the overlap. Similarity of dentistry knowledge between Mehrgarh and Phoenicians has been noticed. These further strengthen the view that there was continuous cultural and technological

diffusion between the Indian sub-continent and the west over millennia through trade carried by the Paṇis and the Phoenicians. Finally, the name of the important Phoenician site of Pani Loriga in Sardinia, gives first-ever indication of the presence of the R̥gvedic term Paṇi in the Phoenician Mediterranean.

### Phoenicians and Paṇis

Phoenicians find repeated mention in the works of classical writers. Herodotus, while narrating the Persian and Phoenician versions of kidnapping or eloping of Io at Argos, incidentally mentions that the Phoenicians had formerly dwelt on the shores of the Erythraean Sea. They migrated to the Mediterranean and settled in the parts that they inhabited in the days of Herodotus.<sup>1</sup> It has been noted that the Phoenicians are the same people who are called Canaanites or Sidonians in the Bible.<sup>2,3</sup>

The Erythraean Sea, in modern spelling, Eritrean Sea, is the Greek name for the Red Sea. Yet, to the ancient Greeks, it included the Indian Ocean and its branches, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.<sup>4</sup> The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, is an account of maritime trade from Roman and Egyptian ports on the coast of the Red Sea, to the Horn of Africa, then to Sindh region in the Indus delta and finally to western and south western coastal regions of India. It mentions that a direct sea route from the Red Sea to the Indian west coast was discovered by Hippalus of 1<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Blakeney, E. H., Ed., *The History of Herodotus, Translated by George Rawlinson, vol. I*, 1910, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *The Old Testament*, New International Version (NIV), Genesis 10:19; Numbers 13:29.

<sup>3</sup> Haber, Marc, et al, Continuity and Admixture in the Last Five Millennia of Levantine History from Ancient Canaanite and Present-Day Lebanese Genome Sequences, *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 101(2):274-282, also Kristine, Romey, Living Descendants of Biblical Canaanites Identified Via DNA, *National Geographic*, accessed online at <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/canaanite-bible-ancient-dna-lebanon-genetics-archaeology/>

<sup>4</sup> Huntingford G. W. B., Trans. and Ed., *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, By an Unknown Author, With Some Extracts from Agatharkhidēs 'On the Erythraean Sea'*, The Hakluyt Society, London, 1980, p. 1.

century B.C. Pliny, the Elder wrote that the discovery of Hippalus was not the route but the monsoon wind which is also called Hippalus. André Tchernia, however, calls Hippalus a myth and supports this word's reading as Hypalus, the wind Hypalus meaning the wind that comes from under the sea, this being the Greeks' belief that the winds come from inside the sea.<sup>5</sup> The Monsoon winds must have been known from the earliest times to all who sailed along the African and Arabian coast, and the normal trade route from the Persian Gulf to India could never have been along the inhospitable shore of Gedrosia.<sup>6</sup> It is, however, now known that the sea trade with the Near East had continued since at least 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.<sup>7</sup> The evidence from Mehrgarh, Pakistan, though scanty, may take this date further backwards.<sup>8</sup> Excavations at Mehrgarh have placed the Neolithic of the Indian sub-continent chronologically on the same footing as the West Asian Neolithic.<sup>9</sup>

The Periplus, which is subsequent to Herodotus, does show that the term Erythraean Sea was used by the Greeks to denote the waters from the Red Sea to the west coast of India. Hence, it can be safely concluded that the Phoenicians who, in terms of the account given by Herodotus, had the strongest maritime presence in the region for more than two millennia before Herodotus, were familiar with the Sindh region and the west coast of India.

It is noticed that the words Phoenicia and Phoenicians are based only on Greek sources and as mentioned above, they are the same people as the Canaanites or Sidonians, under which name they are known in the Old Testament. Many conjectures

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<sup>5</sup> Tchernia, André, *The Romans and Trade, Translated by James Grieve (with Elizabeth Minchin)*, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 229-231.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.229, Ref. 2, Kennedy (1898). The Early Commerce of Babylon with India, 700-300 BC, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JRAS)*, 30: 241-88 at 272-3.

<sup>7</sup> Katz, Nathan, From Legend to History: India and Israel in the Ancient World, *Shofar*, (Spring 1999), Vol. 17, No. 3: 7-22 at 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Tosi, Maurizio and Vidale, Massimo, 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium BC Lapis Lazuli Working at Mehrgarh, Pakistan, *Paléorient*, vol. 16/2 – 1990: 89-99.

<sup>9</sup> Naseem, Mohd., Indigenous Origin of the Neolithic Cultures in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 41 (1980): 905-911 at 906

exist regarding the etymology of Phoenicia and Phoenicians. These words may come from Greek *Phoinikes*, from *Phoinos*, meaning blood-red, which may be further related to *phonos*, 'murder'. The purple dye, of which the Phoenicians had the monopoly of manufacture and trade, and which became a symbol of power and wealth, earning the names of Tyrian purple and royal purple, would strengthen that association.<sup>10</sup>

Phoenicians traded in dates (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.) too and had carried the Palm cult to all parts of the Mediterranean as early as the Neolithic period. The Phoenician god Baal appears to have an association with the date palm. Baal is an old Semitic word that, even today in Arabic, means an unirrigated palm.<sup>11</sup> It was considered important enough to be called the Tree of Life.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the Greeks obtained their knowledge of the date palm from the Phoenicians is evident from the name they gave it – Phoenix, the tree of the Phoenicians and the purple colour of dates could have reinforced that association. As the symbol of Phoenicia, date palm is found on the Phoenician and, later, Carthaginian coins struck in Sicily.<sup>13</sup> The earliest archaeological evidence of date cultivation is from Mehrgarh around 7000 B.C. It remained an important food item in the cities of Indus Valley Civilisation. It is indigenous to the “Sahara-Sind region”, a desert or semi desert belt extending from the Indus valley to North Africa.<sup>14</sup> It is believed by some to have been derived from the wild or date-sugar palm of western India (*Phoenix sylvestris* Roxb.)<sup>15</sup> Greek mythology connects the date palm to the immortal Phoenix. Ezekiel, the dramatist, and Ovid, the Latin

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<sup>10</sup> The Phoenicians (1500-300 B.C.), essay accessed at [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phoe/hd\\_phoe.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phoe/hd_phoe.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Popenoe, Paul, The Date-Palm in Antiquity, *The Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Sep. 1924): 313-325, at 320.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 318.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 321.

<sup>14</sup> A'lam, Hūsang, “Date Palm”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, VII/2, P.117. Accessed online at <http://iranicaonline.org/articles/date-palm>

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

poet, speak of the Phoenix as a bird that is perched on the homonymous palm tree.<sup>16</sup>

Sidonius Apollinaris mentions Cinnamon with the phoenix, particularly in his description of the triumphant procession of Bacchus as the conqueror of India, in which the phoenix marched among prisoners, carrying a tribute of cinnamon.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the phoenix got transferred to India, where the cinnamon came from. The homelands of the phoenix, Arabia and later India, were usually called Felix, meaning primarily 'fertile'. Later, as it found a home in Rome, it was seen along with the tiger and the elephant in books and mosaics.<sup>18</sup>

The Phoenicians seemed to have knowledge of dentistry including bridgework. The method used false teeth carved from ivory and attached to natural teeth by thin gold wire.<sup>19</sup> The Phoenicians are said to have obtained this knowledge from the Egyptians. Evidence of tooth drilling has been found from 7000 to 5500B.C. at Mehrgarh. They used bead-making technology to drill holes in molars. A few holes had concentric rings showing drill marks. Wearing of tooth along these drill marks showed that these individuals continued to live for a considerable time after drilling was completed.<sup>20</sup> The much earlier date of Mehrgarh does point to this site being the source of the Phoenicians' knowledge of dentistry.

Lastly, association is pointed out with Phoenix, brother of Cadmus.<sup>21</sup> Herodotus credits Cadmus with introducing the Phoenician alphabet and places him around 2000 B.C.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, in Biblical Hebrew, the word Canaanite became

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<sup>16</sup> Lecocq, Françoise, *Inventing the Phoenix: A Myth in the Making Through Words and Images*, Ch. 21: 449-478, at 453-454, in *Animals in Greek and Roman Religion and Myth, Proceedings of the Symposium Grumentinum Grumento Nova (Potenza) 5-7 June 2013*, Ed. Johnston, Patricia A., Mastrocinque, Attilio and Papaioannou, Sophia, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 459.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 462.

<sup>19</sup> Zogheib, Carina Mehanna, "Dentistry, a Gift from Phoenicia to the World", *EC Dental Science* 9.2 (2017): 33-36. Accessed at <https://www.econicon.com/ecde/pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Coppa, A., Bondioli, L., Cucina, A, et al., *Nature* 2006; 440: 755-756, Quoted in *British Dental Journal* 200, 425 (22 April 2006), Accessed at <https://www.nature.com/articles/4813555>

<sup>21</sup> Menoni, Burton, *Kings of Greek Mythology*, 2016, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

the equivalent of “merchant”<sup>23</sup> and the Sidonians and the Phoenicians were primarily traders.

Variations of the word Phoenician are also seen in classical works. Puni was used for the Phoenicians before Carthage arose and thereafter it was used for the Carthaginians. Poeni too has been used. But there was no instance of the use of Pani. Yet, we do not know what appellation, if any, these seafarers, maritime traders, inventors of the alphabet and colonisers used for themselves. Paṇis are mentioned repeatedly in the *R̥gveda*, mostly in a negative light. Conjectures have been made for a long time that both Phoenicians of the Mediterranean and Paṇis of *R̥gveda* represent the same people. The name Paṇi is not, however, met in classical works. Later in this paper, we report the use of Pani as a qualifying word for an archaeological site of the Phoenicians on the island of Sardinia.

The *R̥gveda* has numerous references to Paṇis. They stole the cows of Indra and hid these in caves. Interlocutor Saramā tries to persuade them to give back the stolen property but they taunt her.<sup>24</sup> There is war and defeated Paṇis retreat westwards. There is another interpretation of the verse where Indra is the aggressor and has taken the cows. Lastly, the verses are interpreted with no cows in the picture but rays of the sun.<sup>25</sup> Whatever be the object intended, Paṇis are described as rich, wise and given to introspection.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, they are shown as garrulous, arrogant, lazy, showing no respect for rituals and of rude speech.<sup>27</sup> They were gluttons<sup>28</sup>. The word Paṇi has roots in *paṇa*, which denotes the process of bargaining and selling. *paṇa* is a well known unit of money since earliest times. *Vanij*, a derivative of Paṇi means a trader, and Paṇis too are mentioned in the *R̥gveda* as traders.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Broek, R. Van Den, *The Myth of the Phoenix: According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*, Trans. Seeger, I., Leiden, 1971, p. 65.

<sup>24</sup> *R̥gveda* X.108.

<sup>25</sup> Max Müller F., *Lectures on the Science of Language*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1873, pp. 511-513.

<sup>26</sup> *R̥gveda* 4.25.7, 3.58.2, 6.61.1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 7.6.3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 6.51.14.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 1.33.3.

This vilification of Paṇis does seem to flow from their financial success and their refusal to respect the rituals which meant that they did not share their wealth with the priests. Similar scorn was expressed by the Greeks and Romans for the rich Phoenicians who did not have any respect for Roman and Greek gods and worshipped their own gods. While adopting Phoenicians' alphabet, medical science, metallurgy shipbuilding, and even some of the gods, Homer described Phoenicians as slippery and swindlers. Isaiah called Tyre a whore while Romans depicted them as treacherous.<sup>30</sup>

Some writers have mentioned a few points of similarity between Paṇis and Phoenicians. Scholars have, however, not taken these seriously because of lack of strong correlation with existing research on the subject. Yet, some of these conjectures have been substantiated by deeper research later.

As early as 1852, it was surmised that the Phoenicians were migrants from a place near "Logurh in Afghanistan".<sup>31</sup> It was mentioned in 1904 that Phoenicians originally lived in Afghanistan and when driven out, they migrated to the west.<sup>32</sup> It was stated in 1902 that based on the commentary of Sāyanāchārya, Paṇi can be interpreted as *vaṇij*, a merchant. The writer was of the opinion that the word *vaṇij* can be derived from the root *paṇ* following rules for *unnādi* suffixes in Pāṇini's Sanskrit grammar. Thus, it was surmised that Paṇi might refer to Phoenicians.<sup>33</sup> Kosambi surmised that the Paṇis were the same as people of the Indus Valley Civilization.<sup>34</sup> A 1977 publication again has tried to establish that the ancient Phoenicians "were no other than the Paṇis of the *Rgveda*".<sup>35</sup> Some of the arguments, or lack of them, drew justified derision,

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<sup>30</sup> Bikai, Patricia M., Stieglitz, R. Robert and Clifford, Richard J., Rich and Glorious Traders of the Levant, *Archaeology*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (March/April 1990): 22-30 at 25.

<sup>31</sup> Pococke E., *India in Greece*, 1852, p. 219.

<sup>32</sup> Rajeswar Gupta, *The Rig Veda: A History Showing How the Phoenicians Had Their Earliest Home in India*, 1904, p. 4, 37.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37, quoting a letter of Prof. Satish Chandra Achārya, Vidyābhūsan, of the Presidency College, Calcutta.

<sup>34</sup> Kosambi, D. D., *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, 1956, pp. 87-88.

<sup>35</sup> Prasad, Prakash Charan, *Foreign Trade and Commerce in Ancient India*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1977, p. 35.

as is this remark of Rahul Peter Das, "... I would, for comic value, prefer the argument of an Indian scholar presented in 1984 at the Sixth World Sanskrit Conference in Philadelphia, who opined that the Paṇis were obviously the Paṭhāns, a fact which was self-evident, since 'even today these are known as miserly persons'".<sup>36</sup> Yet, in research of considerable merit, mention has been made of Afghan tribes called Panni, Pani or Parni. It has been postulated that Paṇis lived in what is today called Afghanistan and from there they moved westwards after their defeat.<sup>37</sup>

Both Paṇis and Phoenicians were associated with serpents from the earliest times. Sanchoniathon, who comes to us through Philo of Byblos and Eusebius, says that the Phoenicians were among the earliest of the nations that adopted ophiolatrea. In the words of Sanchoniathon, "Tautus consecrated the species of dragons and serpents; and the Egyptians and the Phoenicians followed him in the superstition. An Indus valley seal shows a serpent being worshipped. In the *R̥gveda*, Vṛtra is called 'ahi', a serpent. As chief of the Paṇis, Vṛtra must have been worshipped by them. Indra slayed Vṛtra and is called Vṛtraghna. It is interesting to note that the name Verethraghna (=Sanskrit Vṛtraghna) appears in the *Avesta* too.<sup>38</sup>

Other scholars have come to even more radical conclusions. In the opinion of Kinnier Wilson, the Harappans and Sumerians were initially one people, or at least closely related. It is opined that Harappans were the parent stock and the Sumerians were a small branch that left the parent (Indian) stock to develop independently in a new surroundings.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Das, Rahul Peter, The Hunt for Foreign Words in the *R̥gveda*, *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 3, (July 1995): 207-238, at 218, ref. 55.

<sup>37</sup> Bharadwaj, O. P., The *R̥gvedic River Rasā*, *Indologica Taurinensia*, Proceedings of the XIth World Sanskrit Conference, (Turin, April 3-8, 2000): 9-26.

<sup>38</sup> MacDonell A. A., Mythological Studies in the *R̥gveda*, *JRAS* (July 1893): 419-496 at 484.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, Kinnier, Fish Rations and the Indus Script: Some New Arguments in the Case for Accountancy, *South Asian Studies*, 3, 1987: 41-46, quoted in Caspers, E. C. L. During, The Indus Valley 'Unicorn': A New Eastern Connection?, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of Orient*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (1991): 312-350 at 319, ref. 17.



It has also been opined that the Phoenicians are a creation of the Greek mind and the people that are connoted by this term never existed as a self-conscious collective or “people”. Though there is ancient evidence for a conception of them as a group, yet this evidence is entirely external.<sup>40</sup> Common mythology between far-flung groups of Phoenicians, however, points to a common thread between these apparently unconnected people. Baal was a common deity for all groups of Canaanites, the Phoenicians, and the Puni, his personality and functions known from a number of tablets excavated at Ugarit (Ras Shamra, on the outskirts of modern Latakia, in northern Syria) and dating to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium B.C. Biblical sources tell of vehement opposition of Israelites to Baal.<sup>41</sup> In the *R̥gveda*, Vala is mentioned with the Paṇis. Vala is a god or a cave that holds the cows, horses and other wealth of the Paṇis. Vala is rent asunder by Indra to take back the wealth stolen by Paṇis or to steal Paṇis’ wealth in different interpretations.<sup>42</sup>

It has been pointed out that there is no good evidence in our surviving ancient sources that these Phoenicians saw themselves, or acted, in collective terms above the level of the city or in many cases simply the family.<sup>43</sup> It appears that the same is true of what is called the Indus Valley Civilization. Starting at the latest in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C. but perhaps much earlier, the more than 1400 towns and settlements of this civilization were spread over a vast geographical area from the environs of Delhi to south-western Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Vast similarity is found in these sites in terms of the yet un-deciphered script, the material, style and motifs of the iconic seals, trade practices, pottery, town planning, sanitation, system of weights etc. Yet, there is no hint of a central authority and each town seemed to be self-governing but lacked in ostentatious palaces, temples or monuments, without any

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<sup>40</sup> Quinn, Josephine, *In Search of the Phoenicians*, Miriam S. Balmuth Lectures in Ancient History and Archaeology, Princeton University Press, 2018, p. xxi.

<sup>41</sup> *The Old Testament*, New International Version (NIV), Numbers 25:1-3.

<sup>42</sup> Srinivasan, Doris, The Myth of the Panis in the Rig Veda, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 1973): 44-57 at 48-49.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p. xviii.

obvious central seat of government or evidence of a king and hence, these appear “pretty faceless”.<sup>44</sup>

Some seals from Mohenjo-daro show a three-headed animal. In one of these, the heads are from different animals, a bull, a unicorn, and an ibex. In another, the three heads are from the same animal but their horns are different.<sup>45</sup> In the *R̥gveda*, Indra slays the three-headed, six-eyed demon. Trita.<sup>46</sup> In Greek mythology, Cerberus, the monstrous watchdog of the underworld is more often shown with three heads, though rarely with two or four heads also. Heads of snakes grow from its back and it has a serpent’s tail.<sup>47</sup> The *Avesta*, too, has its three-headed, six-eyed serpent Azi Dahāka.<sup>48</sup> Thus, we have similar myths permeating the Indus Valley civilisation, the *R̥gveda*, the Mediterranean world and the *Avesta*.

It is being increasingly felt that there was no disconnect between the late Harappan and the Vedic periods and an alien culture did not subjugate a local one. In the words of Romila Thapar, “It would seem that the transition from the Harappan culture pattern to the Vedic was very gradual with a continuity of Harappan institutions into the Vedic. The above analysis would not support the theory of a sharp conflict between the two with a submergence of the earlier culture under the dominance of the latter, believed to be alien. It would be of interest to the historian to examine the transformation from one language and cultural pattern into another; the process probably not brought about by invasion or large scale migration so much as by migrating technologies and ideas, travelling repeatedly across

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<sup>44</sup> Roach, John, *National Geographic*, Mohenjo Daro: “Faceless” Indus Valley City Puzzles Archaeologists, , accessed at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-history/archaeology/mohenjo-daro/>

<sup>45</sup> Heras, H., Three Headed Animals in Mohenjo Daro, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. 23, No. 1/4 (1942): 187-195 at 187.

<sup>46</sup> *R̥gveda* 10.99.6.

<sup>47</sup> Bloomfield, Maurice, *Cerberus, the Dog of Hades: the History of an Idea*, Chicago, 1905, pp. 3-4, also Cerberus, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed online at [www.britannica.com/topic/Cerberus](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Cerberus)

<sup>48</sup> MacDonell A. A., Mythological Studies in the Rigveda, *JRAS*, July, 1893, pp. 419-496 at 486.

the borders of north-western India and west Asia, over many centuries, and in both directions.”<sup>49</sup>

The continuity of the culture from Harappan times to even the present is beautifully presented in an article in the *Scientific American*.<sup>50</sup> The Archaeologists watched the traditional *sang* or “gathering fair” close to Harappa excavation site. As new excavations began, the surface layer had debris from the recent fairs including pottery fragments, pieces of glass bangles, modern coins, lead pellets from air guns, toy fragments, etc. Then, just below the surface level, they found similar debris of market from ancient Harappa. This continuity shows that while the fortunes of the settlements may fluctuate with circumstances, there is no break with the past and essential cultural elements show a remarkable continuity. This is true of all ancient civilisations of the Near East also. Hence, when we find cultural, technological or linguistic overlap between Indus cities and the ancient Near East, the timelines are not as important as the fact that this is evidence of sustained trade contacts and two-way diffusion of culture over millennia between these civilisations.

Traders and trade routes were the lifeline of this continuity. Two major ancient Indian arterial land routes were the Uttarāpatha<sup>51</sup>, the northern trade route which included the later-christened Silk Route, and the Dakṣiṇāpatha<sup>52</sup> linking southern India. These are also called northern and southern regions. In addition there were the maritime routes linking India with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea with islands like Socotra (Sanskrit Sukhādāra, meaning “Island abode of bliss”. Agatharchides refers to it as (“Island of the Blest”)<sup>53</sup> and trading centres like

<sup>49</sup> Thapar, Romila, A Possible Identification of Meluḥḥa, Dilmun and Makan, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Jan., 1975): 1-42 at 41-42.

<sup>50</sup> Kenoyer, Jonathan Mark, Uncovering the Keys to the Lost Indus Cities, *Scientific American*, Vol. 289, No. 1 (July 2003): 66-75 at 68.

<sup>51</sup> *Mahābhārata*, ŚāntiParva, 207.43. For map, see Jason, Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia*, 2011, p. 185.

<sup>52</sup> *Mahābhārata*, ŚāntiParva, 207.42. For map, see Jason Neelis, *supra*, p. 205.

<sup>53</sup> Shcoff, Wilfred H., *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century*, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912, p. 133

Mleiha acted as transit stations while also serving the purpose of keeping the sources of goods secret. Trade brought prosperity and with the relative egalitarian society of the Indus cities as compared to the rulers of the ancient Near East who frittered wealth on palaces and tombs, money was available for public works. For the excellent water and disposal structures excavated in the Indus cities, it has been noticed that “Save for the Indus cities, no other city in the ancient world featured such sophisticated water and waste management system. Even during the Roman Empire, some 2000 years later, these kinds of facilities were limited to upper-class neighbourhoods.”<sup>54</sup>

### **Traders as Carriers of Culture and Technology**

As mentioned above, extensive land routes were already developed in Babylonian times for trade between India and the West. Babylonian manufactured goods penetrated to the cities of India, not only by sea, but also through Persia.<sup>55</sup>

The discovery of ancient cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa and the presence of artefacts having origin in Western ancient civilisations and identification of some artefacts excavated from Mesopotamian sites with those of the Indus Valley sites provided many links in the story of trade between these two regions. Yet, much before these excavations, mention had been made of the trade between ancient India and Babylon. In 1887, it was stated that Babylonians’ commerce with India by sea must have been carried on as early as 3000 B.C. This was proved by the finding of Indian teak in the ruins of Mugheir. An ancient Babylonian list of clothing mentions *sindhu*, or muslin, the *śadin* of the Old Testament, the *sindon* of the Greeks, which had been long recognised as the Indian cloth. The fact that it begins with a sibilant and not a vowel proved that it must have come to the west by sea and not by land, because on the land

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<sup>54</sup> Kenoyer, *op. cit.* at 71.

<sup>55</sup> Moscati, Sabatino, *Ancient Semitic Civilizations*, 1960, p. 85.

route, the original ‘s’ would have become ‘h’ in Persian mouths.<sup>56</sup>

The port where this Indian cotton would have been bought “was probably Patāla, meaning the port, which has been identified by Alexander Cunningham with the modern Hyderabad, in Sindh. It is mentioned by Arrian as the only place of note in the delta of the Indus, and was the capital of the king of the snake race who ruled the country.”<sup>57</sup> The close association of Paṇis and Phoenicians with snakes as mentioned later in this paper makes Arrian’s remarks even more interesting. Pātāla, the lowest underworld in Indian mythology is the world of *nāgas* (snakes), with Vāsuki as their leader.<sup>58</sup> Only two serpents, Vāsuki and Takṣaka had survived the sacrificial fires of Janamejaya. Takṣaka the leading figure for snake-worshipping people in India would be an important figure for Paṇis too. This long chain hints at connection of the Paṇis to the trade of Patāla with ancient Baylonia. Agatharchides of Cnidus tells of merchants from Patāla, which he calls Potana, coming to the island of Socotra to trade with merchants from Alexandria.<sup>59</sup>

Ever since the discovery of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa there is mention of their trade with the west. It has been concluded that there was export of Nal vessels, steatite seals, pottery, *turbinella pyrum*, (raw as well as with elaborate inlays), pipal wood (raw as well as finished goods), etched carnelian beads, and faience bangles from Indus valley to Helmand Civilization in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Sayce, A. H., Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Babylonians, *The Hilbert Lectures*, 1887, Fifth Edition, Williams and Norgate, London, 1898, pp. 137-138.

<sup>57</sup> Hewitt, J. F., Notes on the Early History of Northern India, *JRAS*, New Series, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Jul. 1888), pp. 321-363 at pp. 337-338.

<sup>58</sup> *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5.24.31.

<sup>59</sup> Burstein, Stanley M., Trans. and Ed., *Agatharchides of Cnidus on the Erythraean Sea*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1989, p. 169.

<sup>60</sup> Cortesi E., Tosi M., Lazzari A., Vidale M., Cultural Relationships Beyond the Iranian Plateau: The Helmand Civilization, Baluchistan and the Indus Valley in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C., *Paléorient*, vol. 34.2, pp. 5-35 at p. 29, 2008.

The evidence of trade contacts between Indus valley cities and the ancient civilisations of West Asia cropped up at the earliest stages of excavations at Mohenjo-Daro. When it was first discovered, Sir John Marshall had called attention to several points of affinity between the antiquities of the “Indo-Sumerian” period of the Indus Valley and the contemporary antiquities of Mesopotamia, calling the script of the Indus-seals “Indo-Sumerian pictographic script”.<sup>61</sup> The next year, he again referred to the materials from Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa as Indo-Sumerian.<sup>62</sup> The very next year, however, he said that he would use the term “Indus” instead of Indo-Sumerian.<sup>63</sup> This was in keeping with the trend of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century archaeology to initially consider foreign influence as the most salient cultural feature of ancient India. Even for various phases of development of Taxila, Marshall gave appellations as “the Greek-city”, the “Indo-Scythian city”, the “Indo-Parthian city” and the “Kuṣāṇa city”.<sup>64</sup>

Sir John Marshall published a preliminary account of the seals and other objects discovered at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the *Illustrated London News* of 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1924. Just a week later, on 27<sup>th</sup> September, Sayce pointed out strong resemblance of these objects with those found at Susa. After another week, on 4<sup>th</sup> October, S. Smith and C. J. Gadd compared these objects with those from Mesopotamia. A seal found in 1923 at Kish in a chamber was shown to have been brought as part of debris to fill the foundation and was judged of early Sumerian date. It had very strong similarities with Harappa seals indicating the antiquity of Harappa as well as existence of trade between early Sumer and the Indus Valley.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Marshall, Sir John, Ed., *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASIAR)* 1923-24, Calcutta, 1926, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Blakiston J. F., *ASIAR*, 1924-25, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 60-63.

<sup>63</sup> Blakiston, J. F., *ASIAR*, 1925-26, Calcutta, 1928, p. 75.

<sup>64</sup> Michon, Daniel, *Archaeology and Religion in Early Northwest India: History, Theory, and Practice*, Routledge, 2015, p. 58.

<sup>65</sup> Mackay, Ernest, Sumerian Connexions with Ancient India, *JRAS*, No. 4 (Oct., 1925): 697-701 at 697-698.

Ernest Mackay, who took over the excavations from Sir John Marshall in 1927, enumerated large number of clear indicators of such trade contacts.<sup>66</sup> Among these are seals of “Indian workmanship” found at Sumerian sites and a steatite vessel similar to the one found at Susa,<sup>67</sup> which seemed to have been imported into India as many such vessels were found at Sumer and Elam. Carnelian beads of a deep red colour decorated with white lines by a “peculiar and unusual process” were exactly similar to the beads found at Ur.<sup>68</sup> Mackay had earlier sent a sample of one such bead found at Kish to Marshall who informed that similar beads have been found in large quantities in India dating from early to comparative recent times from North-West to Madras (now Tamil Nadu) in the south of the country. Mackay concluded that India was the original home of manufacture of these beads.<sup>69</sup> A particularly remarkable similarity is of a seal which represents “a hero or deity wrestling with two animals, a scene which is well known in Sumerian art and was also depicted in very early times in Egypt.” In Sumer and Egypt, the animals represented are always lions while at Mohenjo-Daro these are tigers,<sup>70</sup> an indication of abundance of different fauna in the two regions.<sup>71</sup>

A saw, with roughly notched teeth, is exactly the same shape as those used in ancient Egypt and Crete. It has, however, a unique feature in that the edge undulates to prevent the blade from getting stuck in the cut. It was stated to be the earliest known example of a saw with such an edge and this feature does not appear again before Roman times.<sup>72</sup> A piece of shell, 2.6 inches long, with carefully spaced lines incised on it

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<sup>66</sup> Mackay, E. J. H., Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 82, No. 4233 (January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934): 206-224.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 214.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 215.

<sup>69</sup> Mackay, 1925 *op. cit.* at 698-699.

<sup>70</sup> Mackay, 1934 *op. cit.* at 216.

<sup>71</sup> Caspers, Elisabeth C. L. During, Cultural Concepts in the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Transmissions in the Third Millennium and Their Significance, *Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar for Arabian Studies held at The School of Oriental and African Studies and the Institute of Archaeology, London on 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> July, 1975* (1976): 8-39 at 30.

<sup>72</sup> Mackay, 1934, *op. cit.* at 220.

appeared to be part of a longer measure on the decimal system. The weighted average width of one space is 0.264 inch, the mean error of graduation being 0.003 inch. It was surmised based on this find that the Sumerians derived the decimal system from India.<sup>73</sup>

Mackay was associated with the excavations at Chanhu-daro also. Here again, he found several indicators of trade with the West. He found evidence of small model doves with outstretched wings associated with Mother-goddess figurines. It was mentioned that the dove was intimately associated with the worship of the Mother-goddess in ancient Crete, Sardinia, Mesopotamia and elsewhere.<sup>74</sup> Small cones of pottery or shell that were found at same levels at Harappa and Chanhu-daro are “very similar” to the cones which served an architectural purpose at Warka, Ur, and other early Sumerian sites.<sup>75</sup>

It is clearly emerging from the textual and the archaeological records of Mesopotamia “that the third millennium, especially the second half of the third millennium, was a period of unprecedented interaction between and among the peoples of the Middle Asian Interaction Sphere, and that the Harappan Civilization was the eastern “anchor” of this institution”.<sup>76</sup>

One of the earliest items of trade between the Indian subcontinent and the West was Lapis Lazuli. It was mined in Badakshan in Afghanistan since the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.<sup>77</sup> This mine had almost a monopoly in the old world as the only other source at Lake Baikal produced inferior quality and hence, presence of good quality lapis lazuli at any ancient site indicates a link to the trade network with Indus Valley civilization. The Dwarka-Kamboja land route, which was part of the silk route, connected Kamboja in Afghanistan to Dvārakā (Dvārāvati) and

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* at 222.

<sup>74</sup> Mackay, Ernest, Excavations at Chanhu-Daro by the American School of Indic and Iranian Studies and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Season 1935-36, *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Vol. 34, No. 205 (Oct. 1936): 83-92 at p. 89.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>76</sup> Possehl, G. L., The Mature Harappan Phase, *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Vol. 60/61, Diamond Jubilee volume (2000-2001): 243-251 at 248.

<sup>77</sup> Sarianidi V. I. and Kowalski Luba H., The Lapis Lazuli Route in the Ancient East, *Archaeology*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (January 1971): 12-15.



the other major ports in Gujarat<sup>78</sup>, permitting goods from Afghanistan and China to be exported by sea to southern India, Sri Lanka, the Middle East, ancient Greece and Rome up to historical times. This route finds mention in Buddhist, Hindu and Jain works.

Based on latest excavations in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, it has been indicated that use of iron and iron smelting was prevalent in the Central Ganga plain and the eastern Vindhya from the early second Millennium B.C. It has been further surmised that the quantity and types of iron artefacts, and the level of technical achievement indicate that the introduction of iron working took place even earlier. Further there is evidence of early use of iron in other areas of India and of the fact that India was indeed an independent centre for development of the working of iron.<sup>79</sup> Forbes quotes Philo of Byblos stating on the authority of Sanchoniathon, the Phoenician historian (1200 B.C.) that his people were inventors of iron working.<sup>80</sup> Early Phoenician iron objects like arrow-heads, rings and nails date from 1000 B.C.<sup>81</sup> Forbes is of the opinion that the word 'ayas' is strong proof of the existence of iron in the Vedic age supported by words like *karmār* for "smith" and *dhamātr* for blower.<sup>82</sup> Others have disagreed saying that 'ayas' may refer to bronze but agree that *śyāmayas* in the *Atharva Veda* refers to iron.<sup>83</sup> Taking note of the mention of black and red 'ayas', Tripathi has also concluded that black 'ayas' refers to iron.<sup>84</sup> It has been shown that working of iron in India could be placed as far as back as 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Moti Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, 1977, p. vii.

<sup>79</sup> Tiwari, Rakesh, The Origins of Iron-working in India: New Evidence from the Central Ganga Plain and the Eastern Vindhya, *Archaeology Online*, 2014. Accessed at <http://archaeologyonline.net/artifacts/iron-ore.html>

<sup>80</sup> Forbes R. J., *Metallurgy in Antiquity*, 1950, p. 436.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* at 432-433.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* at 436.

<sup>83</sup> Singh, S. D., Iron in Ancient India, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (Jul. 1962): 212-216 at 215.

<sup>84</sup> Tripathi, V., Emergence of Iron in India: Archaeological Perspective, in *Metallurgy in India: A Retrospective*, Eds. Rao, P. Ramachandra and Goswami, N. G., pp. 25-51 at 37.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

There is evidence of Indian iron exports to Alexandria where *ferrum indicum* is mentioned as one of the items subject to import duty.<sup>86</sup>

Another important item of trade for both Paṇis and Phoenicians was tin, being very vital for every Bronze Age civilization and even thereafter. Egyptians obtained their tin from Phoenician traders and it is said that they got it from the British Isles, where it had been mined 3000 years ago.<sup>87</sup> Simultaneously, it is stated that the ancient Assyrians obtained tin from India.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Herodotus, the diligent historian, does not know the location of “Tin Islands” or the Cassiterides from where the Phoenicians got their tin.<sup>89</sup> Clearly, there was profit in maintaining secrecy about source of supplies. Afghanistan has good sources of tin and it has been surmised that it may have come to Mesopotamia from that source.<sup>90</sup>

The importance of tin for ancient India is borne out by the fact that one source gives the following words for tin<sup>91</sup>:

*Vanga, trapu, svarṇaja, nāgajīvana, mṛdvanga ranga,  
gurupatra, piccata, cakra, tamara, nāgaja, kastira,  
ālīnaka and siṃhala.*

It has been surmised that the name of the chief ore of tin, cassiterite, possible derived from Sanskrit kastira. It was felt that the original area of the Vedic people, Brahmāvarta, in Haryana state of India, does not have any tin deposits. Deposits

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<sup>86</sup> Schoff, Wilfred H., The Eastern Iron Trade of the Roman Empire, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 35 (1915): 224-239 at 230.

<sup>87</sup> Phillips, George Brinton, The Composition of Some Ancient Bronze in the Dawn of the Art of Metallurgy, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1922): 129-143, at 129.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Muhly, James D., Sources of Tin and the Beginnings of Bronze Metallurgy, *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vo. 89, No. 2 (Apr., 1985): 275-291 at 276.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid* at 281.

<sup>91</sup> Dube, R. K., On the Sanskrit Word Svarṇaja used for metal, Tin, *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 44.1 (2009): 95-102 at 95.

of tin found in Tosham in this state appear to resolve this anomaly.<sup>92</sup>

Another item of trade mentioned in the Periplus is *lakkos chromatinos*. It leaves everyone guessing as it is not found elsewhere in ancient trade accounts or in the Greek or Roman literature. Yet, *lacca* of medieval Latin is borrowed from Arabic *lakk*, which in turn is borrowed from Sanskrit *lāksā*, Prakrit form being *lakkha*, which means red-coloured resin called *lac* in English. The *lac* insect (*Tachardia Lacca*) is native to India,<sup>93</sup> still confined to this country and is used as lacquer and also as a red colourant.

One of the unusual items of trade from India to the West appears to be Indian elephants. One piece of terracotta from Diqdiqeh near Ur shows an elephant being ridden and could be dated to late third millennium B.C. It also appears that only Indians knew the art of domesticating the elephant and it was Indian mahouts who seem to have domesticated the African elephants for the Egyptians and Carthaginians.<sup>94</sup> One Harappan ivory duck figurine has been found at Tell Abraq, an undisturbed tomb, the grave goods of which gave evidence of a trade network linking Mesopotamia, Iran, Arabia, Afghanistan and the Indus Valley. Ivory combs have been found here which differ in shape from the Indus Valley combs but the ivory is from Indian elephants.<sup>95</sup>

In the trade of Indian Subcontinent with the West, we get a curious indication of a long-standing trade monopoly. Though initially there was direct trade, certain products of India in large demand in the Mediterranean world were later handled only by South Arabian merchants and were not offered by Indians to ships of Roman registry which succeeded in finding their way to India. There were way stations like Ocelis which were reserved

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<sup>92</sup> Pareek, H. S., (1986) Petrography and Geochemistry of the Tosham Hill Felsic Volcanics, Haryana, Journal of Geological society of India, vol. 27(3): 254-262.

<sup>93</sup> Schoff, Wilfred H., *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea: Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century*, 1912, p. 71.

<sup>94</sup> Colon, Dominique, *Ivory*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 219-222.

<sup>95</sup> Potts, Daniel T., Arabian time Capsule, *Archaeology*, Vol. 53, No. 5, (September/October 2000), pp. 44-48.

for vessels arriving from India. The *Periplus of the Erythraen Sea* says that Ocelis was not a market town but the first landing for those sailing into the gulf. This effort at secrecy kept hidden the actual source of many items of trade. For example, the Romans believed cinnamon to be a product of the Horn of Africa but it never grew there and Arab and Tamil vessels brought it to the Horn from Malabar.<sup>96</sup>

### **Wood and Carpenters of Phoenicians and Papis**

Descent of the term Poeni, and subsequently Punicus from ancient Egyptian word 'FNHW', meaning carpenters<sup>97</sup> has also been surmised as Mediterranean Phoenicians had the best cedars and they were so famous for making ships from it that they were repeatedly commissioned by Biblical kings to provide cedar logs and artisans to build their temples and palaces. The Phoenician king Hiram of Tyre sent cedar, carpenters and masons to Jerusalem to build a palace for King David.<sup>98</sup> Hiram also provided cedars and carpenters to King Solomon for construction of his palace and the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>99</sup> There is evidence of Indian cedar-wood in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar at Birs Nimrud and teak seems to have been used in a temple rebuilt by him and Nabonidus.<sup>100</sup>

Export of wood from India to the West may be much older. A small piece of wood found at the ancient site of Ur during recent excavations may have come from India 4000 years ago, obviously from the time of Indus Valley civilization.<sup>101</sup> It is now

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<sup>96</sup> Schoff, 1915, *op. cit.* at 231.

<sup>97</sup> Goedicke, Hans, Sinuhe's Reply to the King's Letter, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. 51, (Dec., 1965), pp. 29-47, at p. 40, Ref. 5.

<sup>98</sup> *The Old Testament*, New International Version (NIV), 2 Samuel 5:11.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 2 Chronicles 2:3,7.

<sup>100</sup> Barnett, L. D., Commercial and Political Connexions of Ancient India with the West, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, University of London, Vol. I, No. 1, (1917): 101-105 at 101.

<sup>101</sup> Andrew Lawler, City of Biblical Abraham Brimmed with Trade and Riches, *National Geographic*, Published March 11, 2016 accessed at

known that wood was brought to Indus valley cities from distant places in India. A high-status Harappan was buried in an elegant coffin made of elm and cedar from the distant Himalayas and rosewood from central India.<sup>102</sup>

The *Rgveda* refers to men, eager for gain, going to sea.<sup>103</sup> The story of rescue of Bhujyu from the ocean mentions a ship with hundred oars.<sup>104</sup> A group of Paṇis called Bṛbus are described as carpenters.<sup>105</sup> The *Rgveda* says a *takṣa* would like to have a *riṣṭam* (saw).<sup>106</sup> The *Mānasāra*, an ancient treatise on architecture, mentions *takṣaka* as a carpenter. *Takṣaka* is supposed to know the Veda and to be skilled in his craft of wood joinery. It has been said that the knowledge of the Veda for lower members of the guild of carpenters should not be taken literally. Rather, it indicates some awareness of a purpose of their craft in the divine scheme of things.<sup>107</sup> It can be visualised that Paṇis, the ship-builders and traders, would be more interested in the worldly and practical aspects of the Vedas.

Takṣaka is mentioned as King of snakes<sup>108</sup> and thus has an association with snake worshipping Paṇis. Both for Phoenicians and Paṇis, as well as for the Indus valley people, marine trade in valuable timber and work of carpenters and shipbuilders was clearly very important.

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<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/03/160311-ur-iraq-trade-royal-cemetery-woolley-archaeology/>

<sup>102</sup> Andrew Lawler, Boring no more, A Trade-Savvy Indus Emerges, *Science*, New Series, Vol. 320, No. 5881 (Jun. 6, 2008): 1276-1281 at 1279.

<sup>103</sup> *Rgveda* 1.56.2.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 1.116.5, 1.182.7.

<sup>105</sup> Max Müller, F., *Chip From a German Workshop*, Vo. II, Longmans, Green and Co., 1868, p. 131.

<sup>106</sup> *Rgveda* 9.112.1.

<sup>107</sup> Jose Jacob, *The Architectural Theory of the Mānasāra*, A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Study and Research, School Of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal, 2003, p. 52.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, Vincent A., *Art of India*, Parkstone International, 2012, p. 248.

## Meluhḫa

Meluhḫa finds repeated mention in cuneiform texts. It is mentioned 76 times in documents prior to the reign of Hammurabi. The citations include reference to wood (*mesu*, identified with *sissoo*<sup>109</sup>), carnelian, Meluhḫan furniture, copper, a ship of Meluhḫan style, lapis lazuli, pearls, fresh dates, and gold.<sup>110</sup> It is now generally accepted that Meluhḫa referred to the Indus region and that there are good grounds for the conclusion that, in the early second millennium B.C., the eastern end of Meluhḫa matched with the very confines of ancient India, against that part of it which today is denominated as independent Pakistan.<sup>111</sup> This opinion will be strengthened by the fact that *turbinella pyrum*, mentioned above as an item of trade from the Indus valley to Helmand, is the sacred conch blown at Hindu temples and at religious ceremonies in India. It is unique to the Indian Ocean and thus objects made from *turbinella pyrum* found in Mesopotamia could have been acquired only from the coastal areas of Indus civilisation.<sup>112</sup> It has been noted that large convex/concave perforated discs were made at Mohenjo-daro from the body whorl of *turbinella pyrum*. The presence of identical discs has been noted in Mesopotamia.<sup>113</sup> This does strengthen the identification of Meluhḫa with Indus Valley area.

The mention of trade in an inscription of Sargon (2334 – 2279 B.C.) refers to Meluhḫan ships docked at his capital, the city of Akkad.<sup>114</sup> A late Sargonic tablet datable to 2200 B.C.

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<sup>109</sup> Mallowan, M. E. L., *The Mechanics of Ancient Trade in Western Asia: Reflections on the Location of Magan and Meluhḫa, Iran*, Vol. 3 (1965): 1-7, at 4.

<sup>110</sup> Possehl, *op. cit.* at 245.

<sup>111</sup> Mallowan, *op. cit.* at 5.

<sup>112</sup> Gensheimer Thomas. R., *The Role of Shell in Mesopotamia: Evidence for Trade Exchange With Oman and the Indus Valley, Paléorient.*, 10-1(1984): 65-73, at 67.

<sup>113</sup> Kenoyer, Jonathan Mark, *Shell Working Industries of the Indus Civilization: A Summary, Paléorient*, 10-1 (1984): 49-63 at 55.

<sup>114</sup> Parpola, Simo, Parpola, Asko, and Brunswig, Robert H., Jr., *The Meluhḫa Village: Evidence of Acculturation of Harappan Traders in Late Third Millennium Mesopotamia, Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (May, 1977):129-165 at 130.

mentions a man with an Akkadian name as ‘the holder of a Meluḥḥa ship’. An Akkadian seal describes a person as Meluḥḥa interpreter.<sup>115</sup> Thus Meluḥḥa must have been a seafaring nation. Among the imports from Meluḥḥa were various kinds of wood, including the highly appreciated *sissoo* wood. Copper imported from Meluḥḥa was of a different quality than that which came from Magan. There are close parallels for bump-shaped copper ingots, copper amulets and a copper animal figurine from both Susa and Lothal during the third millennium B.C.<sup>116</sup> Further, the presence of the ‘reserved slip ware’ at Ur and Brak as well as in the early levels of Mohenjodaro and Lothal, at various sites in Baluchistan, and in Kutch, suggest possible pre-Akkadian contacts.<sup>117</sup>

Other imports from India were gold, silver, ivory and ivory objects such as combs, multi-coloured birds, and pearls.<sup>118</sup> It has been opined that, “it would seem strange that the name of the Harappan culture should not have been known in Southern Mesopotamia in spite of the fact that archaeology clearly shows that since about 2600 B.C. and especially between 2400 and 2000 B.C. the two regions must have kept up fairly frequent contacts. No other name than that of Meluḥḥa fits the description.<sup>119</sup> Because of the absence of aspirant ‘ha’ in the Semitic languages, it has been pointed out that Meluḥḥa should be taken as Melukkha, this being closer to Prakrit Milakkhu, “which is the same as Pali Malikkho or Malikkhako (*Childer’s Pali Dictionary*), and both of them are the Prākṛit forms of the Sanskrit word *mlechchha*, meaning a stranger, a foreigner.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Thapar, Romila, *op. cit.*, at 4.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Caspers, Elisabeth C. L. During, Harappan Trade in the Arabian Gulf in the Third Millennium B.C., *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, Vol. 3, *Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar for Arabian Studies held at the Institute of Archaeology*, London 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September 1972 (1973): 3-20 at p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Dhavalikar, M. K., Meluhha – The Land of Copper, *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, 1997, Issue 1, Special Number in Celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Independence of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, pp. 275-279 at p. 275.

Here, we may again mention the place Mleiha, in the Emirate of Sharjah where material of Indian, African, Iranian, and Mesopotamian origin has been found, showing that it was also connected to a comprehensive Indian Ocean trade network in the first centuries A.D.<sup>121</sup> It will require more studies to establish whether similarity in name with Meluḥḥa is a mere coincidence or it is also case of a colony of Meluḥḥans keeping memories of home alive in the place name.

The trade with Meluḥḥa continued even after the fall of the Akkadian empire. Inscriptions of Gudea of Lagaš (2143-2124 B.C.) describe the coming of Meluḥḥans from their country to supply wood and other raw material for construction of the main temple of Gudea's capital.<sup>122</sup> This trade continued even as city-states like Lagaš were submerged in the multi-state empire of the Ur III dynasty established by Ur-Nammu (2112-2095 B.C.). In this period, a Meluḥḥa village, situated in the territory of the old city-state of Lagaš, is mentioned repeatedly over a period of 45 years (2062-2028 B.C.). Most of "Meluḥḥans" mentioned now have Sumerian names. Two are mentioned as "sons of "Meluḥḥa" and in one case Meluḥḥa is used as personal name. It indicates that certain Meluḥḥans had undergone a process of acculturation into Mesopotamian society by Ur III times during three centuries when that description changes from a distinctly foreign people to an ethnic component of Ur III society.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Seland, Eivind Heldaas, *Archaeology of Trade in the Western Indian Ocean*, 300 BC-AD700, *Journal of Archaeological Research*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 2014): 367-402 at 375.

<sup>122</sup> Purpola *et al.*, *op. cit.* at 131.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* at 152.



## Purushkhanda and Parshukhanda: Homonyms Across Oceans

The first mention of Meluḥḥans in Sargonian Akkad reminds us of an interesting episode involving a palpably Indian place-name. Merchants of Purushkhanda (the Hittite Parshukhanda) beseech, with offer of rich inducements, the help of Sargon against an oppressive ruler Nur-dagal. The journey is long and difficult and Nur-dagal boasts that because of floods and forests, Sargon will never reach there. “Who could, with such a huge Army, cross these tracts, climb up the summits of these unparalleled mountains, and penetrate jungles? Even the bushes would become nets hunting that army,” mocked Nur-dagal.<sup>124</sup> Yet, in spite of incredible difficulties, Sargon reaches Purushkhanda and Nur-dagal makes immediate submission. Evidence indicates that Purushkhanda lay in neighbourhood of Caesarea (Kayseri) in Cappadocia.<sup>125</sup>

The significance of Purushkhanda is seen from the fact that just 20 km north-east of the modern city of Kayseri lies the great circular mound of Kültepe rising 20 meters above the surrounding plain. A smaller mound about 90 meters to the north-east of the main mound has yielded about 15000 cuneiform tablets. This site is now identified with the Anatolian principality of Kanesh.<sup>126</sup> The levels at this site extend from the early third millennium right through 1200 B.C. and the tablets show extensive trade contacts with the major Assyrian trade centre of Ashur 1200 km away.<sup>127</sup> An important trade centre Purushhattum finds mention, the ruler of this place being called ‘great prince’.<sup>128</sup> This name Purushhattum is Akkadian version of Purushkhanda and has been identified with modern Acem-

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<sup>124</sup> Hanna-Fatuhi, Amer, *The Untold Story of Native Iraqis: Chaldean Mesopotamians, 5300 B.C.-Present*, 2012, p. 56.

<sup>125</sup> Gadd, C. J., The Dynasty of Agade and the Gutian Invasion, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 1966, Vol. I, Ch. XIX, pp. 12-13.

<sup>126</sup> Parkins, Helen and Smith, Christopher, Ed., *Trade, Traders and the Ancient city*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005, p. 18.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, at 19.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, at 23.

Hoyuk or Karahuyuk-Konya.<sup>129</sup> Another version of the name of this place is Parsuhanda.<sup>130</sup>

Doubts were cast on the veracity of this story of Sargon's expedition to far off Purushkhanda but a Hittite cuneiform text was excavated asserting that Sargon really fought the battle. The text was inscribed much later in 1650 B.C. by Hittite king Hattusili/Khatusili and it seems unlikely that a king will make up the story of defeat of his own people by a foreign king.<sup>131</sup> The name of this place crops up again with Naram-Sin, where Purushkhanda appears to be the utmost bound of his dominion and is destroyed by invading hordes.<sup>132</sup>

As mentioned above, the Hittite variation of Purushkhanda is Parshukhanda.<sup>133</sup> One of the words for battle-axe in Sanskrit is Khaṇḍaparaśu.<sup>134</sup> Dowson says Paraśurāma "bears the appellation Khaṇḍa-paraśu, 'who strikes with the axe'..."<sup>135</sup>. The *Mahābhārata* narrates the battle between Nara and Rudra: "112. In the meantime Nara, for destroying Rudra took up a blade of grass and inspired it with Mantras. The blade of grass thus inspired, was converted into a powerful battle-axe. 113. Nara suddenly hurled that battle-axe at Rudra but it broke into pieces. For that weapon thus breaking into pieces, it came to be called Khaṇḍa-paraśu."<sup>136</sup>

The earliest reference to Khaṇḍa-paraśu is found in *Subāla Upaniṣad* of *Śukla-Yajurveda*.<sup>137</sup> Here, the translator's note says:

<sup>129</sup> McIntosh Jane R., *Ancient Mesopotamia: New Perspectives*, 2005, p. 323.

<sup>130</sup> Mallowan, *supra*, at 2.

<sup>131</sup> Amer Hanna-Fatuhi, *supra*, at p. 57.

<sup>132</sup> Edwards, I.E.S., Ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Third Edition, Vol. 1, part 2, 1971, at 442.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* at 426.

<sup>134</sup> Patil, Devendra kumar Rajaram, *Cultural History from the VāyuPurāṇa*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1973, p. 226.

<sup>135</sup> Dowson, John, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 240.

<sup>136</sup> Dutt, Manmatha Nath (Shastri), *A Prose English Translation of The Mahabharata: Shanti Parva*, Calcutta, 1903. Ch. CCCXLIII, 112-113.

<sup>137</sup> Aiyar, Nārāyaṇasvāmi K., Tr., *Thirty Minor Upanishads*, 1914, at p.61, *Subāla Upanishad* of *Śukla-yajurveda*, Khaṇḍa I.

“Khaṇḍa means divided or with parts. Paraśu literally injuring another. Hence Mṛtyu with his khaṇḍa-paraśu divided eternal time into its parts and conditions the absolute through primordial matter. In the Purāṇas and other books, Mṛtyu and Yama are represented as having an axe broken in conflict.”<sup>138</sup>

We find mention of Puruṣapura as the ancient name of modern city of Peshawar<sup>139</sup>. We have noted the indication of Paṇis in Afghanistan in the Rgvedic times. In some texts a variation of the ancient name is Parṣupura.<sup>140</sup> Abul Fazl and Al-Beruni use *Parashawar* as a variation.<sup>141</sup> It does appear that the trading people, be they Cananites, or Phoenicians or the Vedic Paṇis would have caused this diffusion of similar names between India and Anatolia.

Hittites called themselves Hattis. Since Semitic languages do not have the aspirant ‘ha’, it is substituted by ‘kha’, as the name Hattusili having a variant Khatusili. This indicates that ‘Hattis’ could be read as *Khattis* also. Hittites occur in the records of the other people of the region variously as Kheta, Khatti or Hatti.<sup>142</sup> We find Khattis mentioned in the play *Mṛcchakaṭikam* of Śūdraka:

“Candanaka: What is the matter with you, man? We southerners don’t speak plain. We know a thousand dialects of the barbarians – the Khashas, the Khattis, the Kadas, the Kadathobilas, the Karnatas, the Karnas, the Pravarnas, the Dravidas, the Cholas, the Chīnas, the

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Wilson, H.H., Summary Review of the Travels of Hiouen Thsang, *JRAS*, Vol. 17, London, 1860, pp. 106-137 at p. 114.

<sup>140</sup> Kaur, Satwant, *Bhai Vir Singh*, Tran. BimalKaur, Bhai Vir Singh SahityaSadana, New Delhi, 2008, p. 93.

<sup>141</sup> Saleem, Samina, *Significant Dilapidated Havelis (Residential Places) in Peshawar*, *Pakistan, Sci. Int.* (Lahore), 29(4), 851-859, 2017 at 852.

<sup>142</sup> Sweeney, Emmet, *Gods, Heroes and Tyrants: Greek Chronology in Chaos*, 2009, p. 87.

Barbaras, the Kheras, the Khānas, the Mukhas, and all the rest of ‘em, ....”<sup>143</sup>

It has been stated that Khattis were members of a community associated with the Hūṇa intrusion into North Punjab and Kashmir regions, as noted by Xuanzang.<sup>144</sup>

*Pani Loriga: The Name Pani on Phoenician Sardinia*

All these conjectures for more than a century of scholarship remain mere conjectures because the word Pani (people on the Mediterranean cannot pronounce *ṇ*) is not found in the Phoenician heartland, that is, the colonies around the Mediterranean. However, such scholarship seems to have ignored the word Pani to qualify a Phoenician site which has been excavated on the island of Sardinia since 1960s.

Pani Loriga is an important Phoenician site on southern Sardinia.<sup>145</sup> Excavation has revealed significant fortifications and even a necropolis with 150 burials. It has been noted that while at the main site of Monte Sirai burial was almost exclusively by inhumation, at the fort of Pani Loriga, also a Nuraghic site, cremation was common.<sup>146</sup> Loriga is the name of the place and Pani is prefixed to signify its association with Phoenicians.

Pani Loriga is near the modern town of Santadi, on a low relief with the Mannu River as its eastern border. The name of this river does evoke the name Manu, occurring in Indian mythology from pre-flood to Pauranic period legends. Ferruccio Barreca discovered the site in the mid-1960s. The existence of a Nuraghe was already known but the topographic survey carried

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<sup>143</sup> Sohoni, S.V., Some Aspects of Act VI in the Mṛchhakaṭikam, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. 69, No. ¼ (1988): 155-182 at 176-177

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, at 174.

<sup>145</sup> Moscati, Sebastino, A Carthaginian Fortress in Sardinia, *Scientific American*, Vol. 232, No. 2 (February 1975): 80-87 at 84.

<sup>146</sup> Whittaker, C. R., The Western Phoenicians: Colonisation and Assimilation, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, NEW SERIES, No. 20 (200) (1974): 58-79 at 73.

out in 1965 revealed the existence of Punic remains suggesting a large settlement, a necropolis and a sacred area. Excavations in 1968-1976 revealed the Phoenician necropolis with 150 burials identified. The grave goods showed a trade network involving not only Sulci but also Greeks and Etruscans.<sup>147</sup>

Further surveys and excavations at Pani Loriga started in 2005 by Istituto di Studi Sulle Civiltà Italiane e del Mediterraneo (ISCIMA) of the National Research Council are continuing at present by the Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo Antico (ISMA). Ceramic material found at the site shows that trading contacts between the local communities and Phoenicians date back to 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, that is, even prior to the founding of the Punic settlement.<sup>148</sup> This is in conformity with the Phoenicians practice of first establishing trade and if the volume of trade was sufficient, then establishing a settlement and later even manufacturing facilities.

Thus, we have a least one instance where Phoenicians, on an Island that was an important Phoenician settlement, are signified as Pani. It may be sheer coincidence that the surname Pani continues to this day in Afghanistan as well as in Sardinia. The famous Afghan Daud Khan Pani, who died in a battle in 1715, left a hundred elephants, some Persian grey-hounds, tigers, leopards, and a number of birds. He was described by the British as ‘very precarious in his temper when sober, free and generous when supplied with the liquor he asks’.<sup>149</sup> A search on webpage of Sardegna<sup>150</sup> for this surname show that though this surname Pani is found in 397 Italian towns, it is mostly concentrated on Sardinia.

Before closing, we refer to another such “coincidence”. Sardinia, which has a very high prevalence of centenarians, has a greeting, “A Kent’Annos” which means “may you live to be 100”. A Vedic prayer goes:

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<sup>147</sup> Botto, Massimo, The Punic Settlement of Pani Loriga in the Light of Recent Discoveries, *Fasti Online Documents and Research*, Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica, p. 2, accessed at [www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2017-393.pdf](http://www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2017-393.pdf)

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, at 1.

<sup>149</sup> Tate G. P., *The Kingdom of Afghanistan: A Historical Sketch*, 1911, p. 30.

<sup>150</sup> [www.mondosardegna.net](http://www.mondosardegna.net)

For a hundred autumns, may we see.  
For a hundred autumns, may we live,  
For a hundred autumns, may we know,  
For a hundred autumns, may we rise,  
For a hundred autumns, may we thrive,  
For a hundred autumns, may we be,  
For a hundred autumns, may we become,  
Aye, and even more than a hundred autumns.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> *Atharva Veda* 19.67, translation from Crawford, S. Cromwell, *Dilemmas of Life and Death: Hindu Ethics in North American Context*, State University of New York Press, 1995, p. 22.