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GENERAL NOTES ON THE PREHISTORIC POPULATIONS AND CIVILIZATIONS OF THE INDIAN PENINSULA

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Abstract

The civilization of the Indian peninsula comprises multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious features, exhibiting an uninterrupted continuum since the prehistoric times and, thus, demonstrating a remarkable endurance that attracts the interest of scholars world-wide. Accordingly, the present paper briefly comments on the common theories of populating the Indian peninsula, notably considering maritime trading and referring to several sources that also include biblical text in historical context and potential consequences. The focus of these general notes mainly regards some features and origins of the prehistoric civilizations of the region, especially of the Indus valley and its relationships with other contemporary civilizations. Various pieces of evidence are commented from the study fields of linguistics, genetics and archaeology that aim at defining the overall cultural context of the Indus civilization during and after the 3rd millennium BCE.

Keywords: Altaic, Aryans, Dravidians, Indian peninsula, Indus Valley civilization, Sumerians.

Introduction

Nowadays, information, knowledge and culture can be propagated world-wide instantly through the mass media and especially the internet. In prehistoric times though (and even until early antiquity, approx. 2,500 years ago), knowledge and culture were propagated through the presence of knowledgeable persons, either individually or in settlements of trading posts, or as massive migrations (Papakitsos, 2019). Especially the technical knowledge of any craftsmanship was kept secret, in order to protect the monopoly of knowhow, as alike in modern copyright (Papakitsos, 2020). In this respect, knowledge of the migration of prehistoric populations

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through every means available (notably anthropological/genetic, archaeological/cultural and linguistic) is of paramount importance for understanding the formation of cultures.

The civilization of the Indian peninsula is millennia old, consisting of a combination of several cultures that existed in the major area even before the Indus Valley civilization. Its study and interest in it are of significant importance, not only for the scholars of Humanities but in general for every person who likes to consider him/herself knowledgeable and civilized, because many aspects of the Indian culture, such as philosophy, religions, languages, mathematics, music, dance, cuisine, etc. has been either influential or of a profound impact to a far larger area of the world, besides the Indian peninsula itself (Keay, 2012). In this context, the present study is focused on discussing the origins of the Indus Valley civilization.

Methodology and Background

As stated in the previous introduction, the methodology of the research herein is based on Systems Science (see for example Papakitsos, 2019; 2020), aiming at gathering, combining and studying evidence from all available resources (i.e., anthropological/genetic, archaeological/cultural and linguistic). Considering the above thoughts and focusing on the Indus Valley civilization as a cultural milestone of prehistory, the presentation of the herein general notes on the prehistoric populations and civilizations of the Indian peninsula will be conventionally classified to pre-Indus, Indus and post-Indus times.

The pre-Indus context

According to the advocates of the monogenesis theory, all human languages originate in the language of the most recent group of Homo-Sapiens (Papakitsos & Kenanidis, 2018), who left Eastern Africa nearly 70,000 years ago or less to colonize the entire planet (Stringer, 2011). One branch of these people followed the so-called southern route towards the East, to eventually inhabit Australia, from about 50,000 to 65,000 years ago, so being the direct ancestors of nowadays Aboriginal Australians (Hublin, 2021). Along this route lies the Indian peninsula. According to genetic studies, it is suggested that during the Initial Upper Palaeolithic period this wave of population, anthropologically called East Eurasian Core, left the Persian plateau to migrate towards South and Southeast Asia (Vallini et al., 2024). They were the ancestors of Ancient Ancestral South Indians (AASI), Andamanese, East Asians, and Australasians that include Aboriginal Australians and Oceanians (Papuans and Melanesians) (Bennett et al., 2024). It is suggested through genomic analysis that some descendants of the AASI populations nowadays are the Paniya people of Kerala (Yelmen et al., 2019).

The next major migration phase from the West, after the last glacial period, will be related herein with the Neolithic Revolution and the diffusion of agriculture after nearly 9000 BCE to c. 3300 BCE, though not in a single wave. This phase will be inquired in terms of archaeological/cultural, anthropological/genetic and linguistic evidence.

Considering cultural evidence, so far (the authors herein always have a certain degree of reservations, which may be cleared by future archaeological findings), the earliest prehistoric (Neolithic) agricultural activity of the Indian peninsula has been discovered in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, in a mountain site called Mehrgarh (Gangal et al., 2014). The related scientific debate on the nature and origins of this agricultural activity suggests combining both Near Eastern and local agricultural resources, which were much later augmented by resources from East Asia and Africa (Tauger, 2013). At the same time, and especially after 4300 BCE, in the Indus Valley area, ceramic similarities are evident with northern Iran and southern Turkmenistan, indicative of the relevant trade (Parpola, 2005).

Regarding genetics and based on dental evidence, a change of population is visible in Mehrgarh, despite the cultural continuity between the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Ages; i.e., the Neolithic population was different from the Chalcolithic one (Coningham & Young, 2015). Furthermore, genomic studies on lactose tolerance suggest earlier migrations from the Middle East and Iran (Gallego Romero et al., 2011), while, after 3800 BCE, West Asian body types have been discovered in the graves of Mehrgarh (Mascarenhas et al., 2015).

Regarding linguistic evidence and according to Cavalli-Sforza et al. (1994) and Renfrew (1996), the proto-Dravidian languages were brought to India by migrating farmers from the Iranian and Middle Eastern areas, something that is also compatible to the estimated original location of the Dravidian languages in Eastern Anatolia and Western Iran (Southworth, 2012). Although there is an argument that the Dravidian languages are native to India because no conclusive linguistic relations have been found with other languages (Heggarty & Renfrew, 2014), there is nothing to deny the extinction of the Dravidian Languages in their original location in Middle East where they became extinct just because their natural speakers either massively migrated East or assimilated to other local cultures (violently or not).

The Indus context

The plethora of literature regarding the Indus civilization, from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE (Wright, 2009), has made the brief presentation herein an extremely difficult task for the authors. The Indus valley civilization is classified into three periods: Early from 3300 BCE to 2800 BCE (Possehl, 2000), Mature from 2800 BCE to 1900 BCE (Shaffer & Lichtenstein, 1989) and Late Phase from 1900 BCE to 1300 BCE (Robbins-Schug, 2013). Substantial documents of the Indus script come from the Mature Phase only (2800 to 1900 BCE).

Considering the genetic evidence for the Indus civilization, there are anthropological populations present, both local and not. The Early Phase began with people from the mountains migrating to the lowland river valleys (Possehl, 2000). Further genetic analysis indicates that in such ancient times a continuum existed between the regions of Mesopotamia and Trans-Himalaya (Płoszaj et al., 2013), therefore having locally the same genetic origin as in the pre-Indus period (namely, early Iranian and native South Asian). Before the 2nd millennium BCE, no "Steppe ancestry" related to the later Indo-European migrations is visible, although it is stated that more samples are required for having a better picture of the Indian population history (Narasimhan et al., 2019; Shinde et al., 2019). It has been also discovered that some individuals originating beyond the Indus Valley were buried at Harappa (Watson, 2013). The migration of Indo-Aryan populations started at the beginning of the Late Phase, since approximately 1,800 BCE, from the steppes of Central Asia around the Aral Sea through the Bactria-Margiana region (and culture) (Anthony, 2007; Beckwith, 2009). According to Lazaridis et al. (2016), the demographic impact of these populations forms a major genetic component in South Asia and northern India in particular.

The cultural evidence consists of numerous findings in Indus Valley and beyond. Besides, the maritime history of the Indian peninsula is evident at least since the 3rd millennium BCE, when trading contacts had been conducted between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley (Gosch & Stearns, 2007). The prehistoric naval activity is also clearly mentioned in the mythological epic of Mahabharata (Chakravarti, 1930). These commercial contacts between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley had been multifarious both directly and indirectly. In the first case, there are inscriptions discovered in Mesopotamia dated to the reign of Sargon the Akkadian (c. 2300 BCE), indicating that merchants from the Indus Valley were present in the area (Gosch & Stearns, 2007). In addition, there are indications of established communities of traders and craftsmen from the Indus Valley in the Sumerian citystate of Ur on the Euphrates river. In the second case, merchants from the two regions (i.e., the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia) were trading in ports of the Persian Gulf along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula, especially in Oman and Bahrain, known to the Sumerians as Magan and Dilmun respectively. This commerce is confirmed by archaeological research through numerous artefacts of the Indus Valley civilisation that have been discovered at these locations. On the other end of this commercial route lie the ancient cities of Sutkagan Dor on the Makran coast, considered as the westernmost maritime trading station (McIntosh, 2008), and the easternmost harbour of Lothal, in the Gulf of Khambhat (Kenoyer & Heuston, 2005). In this respect, a marvellous image of a boat has been found (Fig. 1) on a moulded terracotta tablet from Mohenjo-Daro, dated to 2200-2000 BCE (Kenoyer & Heuston, 2005). The trading between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley concerned a wide variety of goods and artefacts, including hardwoods (special woods and timber), pearls, copper, gold, ivory, colourful carnelian beads, stone weights, stamp seals carved in soapstone and lapis lazuli from northern Afghanistan (Gosch & Stearns, 2007). In addition, intensive caravan trade with the Iranian plateau and Central Asia is documented through the discovered similarities in seals, pottery, ornaments, figurines, etc. between 3200-2600 BCE (Parpola, 2005). Despite the gradual decline of the Late Phase, there were cities that continued to have long-distance trade, like Bet Dwarka (Singh, 2008), while innovations were introduced in glass making, faience and carving of stone beads (Kenoyer, 2006).



Figure 1. A tablet of a boat from Mohenjo-Daro (Kenoyer & Heuston, 2005).

Yet, the focus of this paper is on the reverse influence, namely, from other locations (e.g., Mesopotamia and/or Central Asia) to the Indus Valley. Several authors detect various possible influences from Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley, in terms of iconography (Littleton, 2005) on cylinder seals with Mesopotamian motifs (Elisseeff, 2000) and religion in general (Wright, 2009), which attract particular interest. The iconographic motifs depict various themes, like a combat between men around centaurs (Ameri et al., 2018), while others are connected to the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh (Possehl, 2002); for example, there is a man fighting two lions or there is a bull-man fighting a tiger-like monster, the former being similar to Enkidu, the partner of Gilgamesh, and the

latter being similar to the beast that goddess Aruru created to fight Gilgamesh.

Finally, regarding the linguistic evidence, the earliest artefacts bearing the Indus script are dated to the 3rd millennium BCE (Peter, 1996), still undeciphered. This topic deserves an exclusive presentation, due to its magnitude and broad interest. The authors herein are working on this topic and their comments will be published shortly.

The post-Indus context

The times after the decline of the Indus Valley civilization are not of particular interest in this study. The archaeological research indicates that the collapse of the Indus Valley civilization was not sudden. There are excavation sites exhibiting a co-existence between the Late Phase of the Indus Valley civilization and of the successive one (Kenoyer, 2006), while populations from the Indus Valley gradually moved to eastern regions (Sarkar et al., 2016).

Discussion

As it has been evident by the archaeological research in Mehrgarh (see previous subsection "The pre-Indus context"), there were two migration waves from West Asia, one during the Neolithic Age and one during the Chalcolithic Age. The first one is identified herein with the Dravidians, who were the first known immigrants into India after the last Ice Age, their previous homeland being eastern Asia Minor and the western Iranian plateau. The second wave of immigrants will be identified herein as the tribe of Qain, drawing information from the Bible that says that "Qain" migrated from Mesopotamia towards the east and settled in the land "Nod" (as read from the Masoretic text) or "Naid" (as found in the much older Septuagint text) and built a city(-state) there, and named the city after his son. That word which is read as "Nod" is simply a corruption of a name like "Hind" for India; also, the name "Hodu" for India, found only in one passage of the Old Testament, is simply a corruption of "Hind(u)", due to copyists' mistakes over long time, while vowels were not written and letters were similar to each other. The whole context and the fact that "Qain" settled and built a whole city(-state) there means that Qain is referred to as the head of a whole tribe or nation, and not as a single person (accordingly, Habel was mentioned as the head of another tribe, who fell victim to Qain's tribe). The fact that "Qain" put a sign on himself (obviously on his forehead), so that those who saw it would not dare to attack him, explains the origin of the "tilaka" that is worn by Hindus, for protection, since ancient times. This means that "tilaka" was originally worn by the descendants of Qain's tribe only; but as the rest of the people needed protection from the former, they had to start wearing their own versions of "tilaka".

The immigration of the Qain's tribe into India explains what has been a mystery for millenia: how the "candālās", the caste of the outcastes was formed. Since old times there is much Indian literature (films too nowadays) aiming mostly to make peace between the "candālās" and the rest of the society, but in all that literature and films there is a desperate question which has never been answered: why those people are so different, so ill-fortuned, and why they cannot belong to any caste. And that concerns not only the "candālās" of India, but also, to a certain degree, those who left India and roam in the rest of the world as the "Romani people".

Many elements in modern India's culture and religion go back to the tribe of Qain. Many researchers think that Śiva appears in some Indus seals, so he was worshipped by that Indus nation; still, in those ancient times, it is extremely unlikely that the Indus nation made any distinction between Siva and Visnu. The most common interpretation of the name "Vișnu" is from a Sanskrit root "viś", meaning "to enter" (because Vișnu has entered every particle of matter in the universe); this is a scholastic and esoteric interpretation; the true etymology of Vișnu is from a Proto-Human root *wəs, meaning "manly power; erection; potency; power in general" and that is not unrelated to the erect penis of the deity depicted in the so-called "Paśupati" or "Mahāyogi" seal (which ought to be named "Prajāpati", as lord of all creatures including humans, the human figure being included among animals around the deity depicted on that seal). The root *wəs is found in all languages, e.g.: in Sumerian "uš" (erect penis; erection; standing up); Old Turkic "uri" (from *usi), "boy"; Japanese "osu" (male); Indo-European (IE) Greek wis-khus (power); also, Proto-IE *wisrós" (a strong man; hero; a potential warrior; a man), which is reconstructed from the Latin "vīr" and the Sanskrit "vīrá". The Indus seals that depict a male deity render him as sitting in "mulabandhasana", which "prevents the escape of apana"; in other words, the posture is used for retaining the sexual energy and life in general, and there is nothing in these seals to indicate a destructive force; we can call him "Siva" (one of the thousand names of Visnu), still the deity on those seals powerfully protects life and has nothing like the garland of skulls, ash of the dead, the aggressive trident, the horizontal triple tilaka, and the begging bowl; such a symbolism (which identifies Siva with the destructive or "tamasic" element and with the outcastes who are often beggars), together with the idea that Siva is other than Vișnu, and along the belief that Siva is superior to all other deities, forms an ideology that could not have originated unless in the tribe of "Qain".

On the other hand, Hindu mythology is all about demons that had to be fought and eliminated by God in his various forms and avataras. Most characteristic is probably the story of prince Rāma against the demons who had Lanka as their stronghold. Indologist Monier-Williams in his famous dictionary (1899) notes that such wars against demons are simply poetic representations of the Aryas (IndoEuropeans) fighting against former settlers of India. But not all former settlers deserved to be represented as demons: it was those settlers described in the Old Testament as "Qain".

The lamentable episode between the tribe of Qain and that of Habel is the biggest hidden trauma in the collective subconscious mind of the entire humanity. As a historical event with long consequences, it must be revealed so it can be eventually healed.

And yet, the major part of India's culture and population is obviously not from Qain's tribe; before them, were the AASI population and the Dravidians; after them, more waves of immigration were to come.

A new wave populating the Indian Peninsula

Not much needs to be said about the commercial and cultural connections of Sumerians with the Indus civilization (see the previous subsection "The Indus context" and the next one "Few Samples of Cultural Proximity"). In this respect, another, third wave of migration, was one of an Altaic nation that was closely related to the Sumerians, which the present study is focused on.

Next were the Aryans (Indo-Europeans). Much later were the Greeks with Alexander the Great (and it was because of contact

with Greeks that the Brahmi script came to be written rightwards). Next were the Moghuls, then the British.

About the 5th century BC and somewhat earlier, there were probably two new visits from Turkic speaking tribes, who brought with them their syllabary, which was modified into the Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts. We have not overlooked the hypothesis that Brahmi and Kharosthi might have originated in the Indus script itself; this hypothesis has been rejected for reasons briefly explained below:

Although a plethora of cultural elements of the Indus civilization survived and revived in the historical era of India, the Indus script did not survive after the decline of the Indus civilization, because the Indus language did not survive; the script was dependent on the language, as each sign was used for the name of the thing depicted in the Indus language, so, for people not using the Indus language, the script was too difficult to use.

If we hypothesize that the Indus script survived during the "dark ages" of India, then, during those centuries, it would have evolved into one writing system and not two different ones, as the Brahmi and Kharosthi.

While there is totally no intelligibility or visible relationship between Brahmi and Kharosthi, the Turkic speaking tribes had different versions of one script, just as in historical times; so, from two different tribes immigrating into different places and in different centuries, two different scripts evolved: the Brahmi and the Kharosthi. Because the Old Turkic syllabary at that time had a number of signs for each consonant, the Indian speaking people had a good variety of signs to choose one for each consonant.

While in the Old Turkic script no letter comes from the modification of another, a few letters of the Brahmi and the Kharosthi are indeed modifications of other letters: in both Brahmi and Kharosthi, "ph" is a modification of "p"; In Brahmi, "h" is a modification of "gh" and "ch" is a modification of "c". In Kharosthi, "gh" is a modification of "g". The nature of modified letters indicates that the original language of the scripts that came to be Brahmi and Kharosthi was Turkic: namely, "ph" was made from "p", because Old Turkic had no "ph" or something similar like /f/. Brahmi "h" was made from "gh", because Old Turkic had /y/ that was used for the similar "gh", but no /h/, which had to be made from the similar /y/. "Ch" was made from "c", because Old Turkic (until today) has /c/ but not the aspirated of /c/. Kharosthi used Turkic /y/ for "g" because Old Turkic did not have /g/, and then Kharosthi had to differentiate the rarer "gh" from the frequent "g" by modifying the letter. On the other hand, Brahmi and Kharosthi use various different letters to differentiate between retroflex and dental, and then between aspirated and unaspirated of them, because the Turkic syllabaries of those times had plenty of letters with "t" and "d", e.g. "at", "et", "ot", "ad", "ed", "od" and so on. In general, the "parent script" of Brahmi and Kharosthi shows a language distinguishing between voiced/unvoiced and palatal/velar consonants, and having a voiced non sibilant fricative in every articulatory position - this is the description of Old Turkic. On the other side, the Indus language, as we shall show in our following publication, although related to Turkic, had no distinction between voiced/unvoiced or palatal/velar, and its fricatives were fewer and unvoiced.

Those familiar with the Devanāgari script will be surprised to notice that the Devanāgari "i" is not only similar to Old Turkic "i":

 \Box , but also that it is written on the left of the consonant (as in Old Turkic) although the Devanāgari is written rightwards.

For the aforementioned reasons, refraining from more detailed linguistic analysis at the present, we hold that the Brahmi and Kharosthi came from two new immigrations of Turkic speaking tribes from the north, and not from a surviving version of the Indus script.

Every new wave of immigration, as mentioned above, pushed the Dravidians towards the south of India (and that did not have to be done with much violence, since India was not so densely populated when the second and third wave of immigration came, so there was an easy option for Dravidians to move further south). That is why, ever since ancient times, Dravidian population and culture was based in the south of India and not in the north, where the Indus valley civilization flourished. If Dravidians were those who created the Indus civilization, then they would have kept that civilization (and the writing system) for the next centuries, until even today; but that did not happen. The Dravidians had a primitive civilization when they immigrated into India, because they immigrated in very ancient times. We do not say that derogatorily: all human nations come from one; and if any person is scorned because of his/her nationality, s/he should reply as Anacharsis the Scythian said to an Athenian who scorned him because of his Scythian origin: "emoi men oneidos hē patris, sy de tēi patridi" ("for me, shame is my homeland; but you are a shame for your homeland").

Anyway, the similarity between the reconstructed "Proto-Dravidian" language and the Aboriginal Australian languages is so obvious (in terms of phonology, grammar and syntax), that we may deduce that what is known today as Dravidian comes mostly from the AASI population which eventually reached Australia, and not from ancient Dravidian.

The Indo-Europeans too had a primitive civilization. There is no native Indo-European word for any processed metal, not even gold or copper, which can be found unmixed in nature; Encyclopedia Britannica mentions *hes as the only Proto-Indo-European word for metal, but this must be a loanword from some ancient Turkic language, in view of the Old Turkic "yez" (copper). On the other hand, Old Turkic languages had native Turkic names for all metals known in the pre-modern era, including iron and mercury. G. Clauson (1972) says that "korığın" (lead) must be borrowed, only because it contains the non-Turkic sound "j" (/3/); but that "j" could easily be due to a misreading (given the inaccuracy common in old texts), or it could be a voiced version of $s_{(/j/)}$, because it was next to the voiced "ğ". Some IE names for domestic animals are demonstrably loanwords from an ancient Turkic language, most evidently the Ancient Greek word for calf, "moskhos": - ğu is an ancient Turkic suffix for animal names found in "buzağu" (calf), where b- comes from an older m- (all m- has turned to b- in Turkic, since very old times). Clauson (1972) says that "buzağu" is "a very old word, ending in -ğu", borrowed into Mongolian as "bura'u". The b- of "buzağu" was surely m-, which is kept in Sumerian "amár" (calf), without the suffix "ğu"; in Chuvash it is "păru" from *marğu. Even nowadays, the Southeast Turkic language Türki has it with m-, as "mozay". So, in an ancient z-Turkic language, modern "buzağu" was approximately "mozğu", or (given that Old Turkic/Altaic, like Sumerian, did not have voiced consonants), it was */mosxu/ (or /mosxo/, given that historical Turkic languages turned every "o" to "u" except in the first syllable words). This is the origin of the Ancient Greek "moskhos". Also, the Turkic öküz (ox) is not borrowed from IE,

but vice versa. Öküz is a word of typical Turkic appearance, and there is no indication of IE origin; the same Proto-Human root (meaning "the strong animal") has given "ekwos" (horse) in Proto-Indo-European, so öküz cannot be a native IE word. Even IE g^wow- (bovines) can well be a loanword, in view of the Sumerian "gu₄" (bull). We could go on farther with more ancient IE words (especially words related to economy and culture) of Altaic origin, which prove that the Proto-Indo-Europeans were neighbours of the Proto-Altaic nation.

The Indus culture, which is argued herein that it was of Altaic origin, was not extinguished when the Indo-Europeans took over. Simply, the Indo-Europeans mingled with the previous population and absorbed their whole civilization, with the only exception of writing. The Indus writing was too difficult for the Indo-Europeans to learn, because for them there was no connection of the signs' image to their sound, as it was for the creators and users of the script. So, as the Indus language (an ancient language closely related to Sumerian, as it will be demonstrated by the authors in a separate study) was replaced by Old Sanskrit, the script was forgotten too. If the language were Dravidian, the Dravidians would uninterruptedly retain the script that would be always easy for them, as the signs would always explicitly depict the objects named by their phonetic value. Then the whole Dravidian population would know how to read, so there would be many inscriptions found from the period known as the "dark ages" of India, from which there is no extant written document. In other words, if the Indus script were IE or Dravidian, it would never cease to be used and it would always be pictographic and syllabic at the same time; that was not the case. The same analogy is also evident in Minoan (Bronze Age) Crete and the Aegean: when the Minoan (Sumerian) language was forgotten (although some small rural "pockets" of Minoan speaking populations did remain until even 300 BCE or later) the Cretan Minoan scripts disappeared and never revived.

Regarding Mesopotamia, it is estimated that the first Sumerians settled in the region during the mid-6th millennium BCE (Carter & Graham, 2006). Through excavations, those people were described as short, having straight noses, a forehead sloping backwards and slanted eyes (Kyriakidis & Konstas, 1974, p. 3707), which is a description typical of those populations of Central Asia. Relevant genetic studies indicate the presence of Dravidian individuals at that time (Płoszaj et al., 2013), considered by some scholars to be merchants (Zhang & Chaudhuri, 2014).

Few Samples of Cultural Proximity

Among the divinities of the Indus nation was a hero depicted in the seal of Fig. 2.



Figure 2. The so-called "Gilgamesh seal" (Ismoon, 2019).

Copyright © ISRG Publishers. All rights Reserved. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15363609 This is one of the most famous extant artefacts of Indus civilization (Fig. 2). It is called the "Gilgamesh seal", although the name "Gilgamesh" is Sumerian and not of the Indus, because in the "Epic of Gilgamesh" that was a feat that made the hero glorious: when Gilgamesh was wandering in the wilderness, two lions attacked him and he managed to kill them with bare hands. If the above is called "the Gilgamesh seal", then the figure in the tympanon (gong) of Fig. 3 is definitely Gilgamesh himself.



Figure 3. A bronze tympanon with a hero defeating the strong ferocious animals, obviously imported from Mesopotamia into Crete (Heraklion Archaeological Museum, n.d.).

In the tympanon of Fig. 3 (found together with other objects, dated around the 8th century BCE), the hero is shown treading on a bull and lifting a lion over his head, having defeated the strongest animals, while two winged deities (angels in modern terminology) are beating their tympana in praise. Surely this tympanon is imported from Mesopotamia: the style of the persons depicted is typically Mesopotamian and not Greek. More samples can be seen in Papakitsos (2020) that denote common religious beliefs from Minoan Crete up to Indus Valley, having as central themes the "Lady of Animals" and the "bull-man", reminiscent of the Minotaur of the Ancient Greek mythology, who lived in Minoan Crete.

In our opinion, the man in the Indus seal is not Gilgamesh; he is the hero which came to be known in classical Hindu literature as Kṛṣṇa. There are many (scholastic and esoteric) interpretations of the name Kṛṣṇa: in fact, every etymology of the name Kṛṣṇa in Sanskrit is false, although esoterically important. The real etymology of "Kṛṣṇa" must have been from a well-known Turkic root "koru-", meaning "to protect; save; rescue". In the Indus language it would have been something like "korəšna". The word "koru" (protection) is found on many seals of Cretan Hieroglyphic (Fig. 4), written with the "mountain" sign (for "ko") and a prop (for "ru")



Figure 4. Cretan Hieroglyphic seal (modified from Kenanidis & Papakitsos, 2015).

Many other important names of Kṛṣṇa do not have any convincing Sanskrit etymology; notably "Govinda", "Dāmodara" and "Mādhava". Interestingly, these names coincide with the Indus language phonology as reconstructed by the authors (to be published shortly): a language with four (4) vowel phonemes: a, ə, o, i, and the vast majority of consonants followed by vowels. "Govinda" may be derived from a root related to the Japanese "kowai" (meaning "afraid"), in the sense "the one who terrifies (all his opponents)". That -nda seems to be an old ending for the active participle, the same found in the name "Mukunda" too, which again has no Sanskrit etymology except for scholastic and esoteric. "Mukunda" in our opinion comes from an Indus word like "məkənda", meaning "the one who sees (everything)"; "mək" was the Indus form of the Turkic "bak-" (meaning "to see"), where bcame from an earlier m-, as all old m- has turned into b- in Turkic; and that "mək" is cognate to old Chinese "muk" (目), meaning "eye". Krsna is not mentioned in the Veda, but he was a central element of Indus religion, which reappeared in Classical Hindu culture.

As to "Dāmo-dara", it should be compared to Sumerian "dingir" (God) and "tur" (little one; child); "Mādhava" must be from a Proto-Human root *math (hence Greek math- "understanding, perceiving"; ProtoAustroNesian *matsa "eye").

Ganeśa was originally an Indus deity too, if we judge from the numerous seals which depict elephants; the animals of the Indus seals, typically herbivorous, strong and male animals, are obviously symbolic of the personal deities of those who owned the seals. Mentions of Ganesha or an elephant-faced deity are even found in the Vedas (we do not consider those later interpolations). In Turkic culture, all animals symbolize certain spirits and they are associated with personality or class or tribal classification, just as in Aboriginal Australian societies. This is how the 12 symbolic animals came to be signs of the zodiac - a zodiac consisting of units of time and not parts of heaven - and that zodiac is Turkic and not Chinese in origin (Walters, 1984). The old Chinese names of the 12 signs (子丑寅卯辰巳午未申酉戌亥) are inexplicable unless as originating from sketches of animals in the old Altaic pictography. For example, the sign \blacksquare (the "ox" sign) cannot be explained unless from the Old Turkic sign for a bovine; the sign Ecame from the sketch of a snake; the sign \pm came from the sketch of a ram, and has nothing to do with the use of sign \ddagger in Chinese, where it means "not yet"; and so on with the other names of the 12 signs.

Commentary on "Meluhha"

During the Middle Bronze Age, the Sumerians called "Melubha" an important trading partner of theirs. Although this identification remains an open question, most scholars associate the Indus Valley with Meluhha (McIntosh, 2008). According to Parpola & Parpola (1975), the word "Meluhha" is a Dravidian derivative from the words "mel" (elevated) and "akam" (place), thus meaning "high country", while another etymology is also proposed from the Vedic word "mleccha' that meant "barbarian". The related Sumerian inscriptions of c. 2200 BC refer to Meluhha as a trading source of materials typical of the commerce with the Indus Valley (carnelian, lapis lazuli and "aba" wood) (Michalowski, 2011; Moorey, 1999). Yet, in much later Assyrian texts of the 7th century BCE, Meluhha is located in the neighboring region of Egypt (Hamblin, 2006) and particularly at Kush/Nubia.

We have not been convinced that "Meluhha" refers to the Indus valley, but rather that "Meluhha" was the Sumerian name for Egypt. The name "Meluhha" cannot be from Dravidian *mel-akam as all known languages of those old times put the adjective after the noun, so "high place" would be *akam-mel, that is if the words "akam" and "mel" were the same in such ancient times - and yet, the Indus valley is a valley and not a characteristically "high place" to be named so.

Meluhha cannot be connected to "mleccha" either, as "mleccha" comes from a Sanskrit (neither Sumerian nor Dravidian) verb root "mlich", meaning "to talk indistinctly". The corresponding Turkic verb was sumlı-; as the Old Turks considered their language most explicit, derogatorily called every person ignorant of Turkic a "sumlım" (Clauson, 1972).

There is also a Sumerian proverb (Lambert, 1960, p. 273; EBL tablet N.3395) that speaks quite derogatorily of the populations surrounding the Sumerians: "the donkey of Anšan, the wild boar of Marhaši, the cat of Meluhha, the elephant of the wild mountain lands, are those who break off a sacred pillar as though it were a leek!". (The expression is analogous to modern Greek "they can eat you like cabbage!"). This shows the Sumerian mindset that all other nations around them were uncivil and dangerous (the worst of all being the people of Marhaši, as a Sumerian hymn of the city of Ur says that even a man of Marhaši if he lives for six months in the city of Ur will become civil): the people of each of those despised nations were nicknamed after an animal, among which the people of Meluhha were the "cats" - for Sumerians, a symbol of cunningness but also notorious for their habit of cleaning themselves all the time (hence the Sanskrit mārjara, "cat", from the root "marj" = "cleaning"; rather accidentally, the consonants of "marj" closely correspond to those of Meluhha). That would be a fitting nickname for the ancient Egyptians who were also well known as clever, diplomatic, and for their habit of frequently cleaning themselves (washing, shaving and grooming). Wikipedia, under "Egypt", gives in one paragraph three etymologies of "Misr" (Egypt) which contradict each other:

- 1. Ancient Semitic term that originally connoted "Civilisation" or "Metropolis" (quite flattering for Egypt);
- 2. Biblical Hebrew (Semitic) Mişráyīm meaning "the two straits"; and

 Akkadian (Semitic) "mi-iş-ru", related to mişru/mişirru/mişaru, meaning "border" or "frontier" (which sounds like the most realistic etymology).

The latter, (probably pronounced "meşru", hence modern Egyptian "Maşr") could easily be taken by the Sumerians as "Meluhha", as they could not pronounce it without a vowel after each consonant and because the Sumerian "l" was retroflex, so verging to "r" and close to "ş". The -h could be due to a supposed relation to the Sumerian verb "luh", meaning "to clean" - an idea that fitted well with the "cat", which was also the favourite animal of the ancient Egyptians; the cats saved the agriculture of Egypt from the pernicious rats. Even the Egyptian name for lower Egypt (($t^{j} mhw$), where Sumerians would substitute t^{j} "land" with "ki") could influence the name to become "Meluhha".

For all the aforementioned reasons, we prefer to think that "Meluhha" was Egypt and not the Indus valley, so those who identify "Meluhha" with the Indus should retrace some ancient tablets (where misreading is easy for modern readers).

The Indus nation, as cognate to the Sumerians and speaking a mutually understandable language, would rather be well respected by the Sumerians and not be despised as "the cat of Meluhha".

Epilogue & Conclusion

Concluding on the origins of the Indus Valley civilization, we must clarify once more herein that we have no reason to favour the Altaic nations or disfavour the Dravidian one, given that all nations come from one and there is no pure nation in the present era. Every person carries the genes of many races. The saying of wise Anacharsis has already been quoted. The human race did not sprout from the earth in various different places; rather, it was originally one only nation that spread and branched out into many different races. Exactly in the same way, the "high" civilization (marked by the use of metals, wheeled vehicles, herding dairy animals, agriculture, devising a full system of writing, and mathematics) was not awakened independently in various different nations; rather, it was one nation where the "high" civilization, and especially the art of writing, took place, and from there it spread and branched out to all nations. Nothing starts without a centre and all the evidence available indicates that the art of writing, in particular, started in the original Altaic nation.

Not that the original Altaic nation was a "pure breed": even that was formed as an alloy of different tribes; it was exactly the fusion of different cultural elements and the mobility of the Altaic nation that accounts for the creativity and grace that gave the boost of civilization. To understand this, we may think, for example, of the Tasmanian Aboriginals: they used no domesticated dogs or other domesticated animals, not even spear-throwers, and their whole material culture was quite more primitive than that of the mainland Aboriginal Australians, who, in turn, had a very "primitive" culture compared to nearby Asia. Why? Because they were isolated on their island. Again, "primitive" culture does not imply less intelligent or less humane. Rather on the contrary, less technology requires more inventiveness, more skill, more collaboration. Crete and Cyprus are islands too, but the Minoan civilization is the most graceful and most technologically advanced of the whole premodern world; that would have been impossible if people in Crete were isolated from the rest of the world; in fact, they were not isolated at all: they travelled as far as possible and sought for experience no less than for wealth. In that spirit, they communicated even with the Indus valley, and this, together with the common descent as Altaic nations, explains the similarity between the Sumerian, Minoan and the Indus cultures.

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