

ARYAN PANIS MIGRATE TO WEST ASIA

by

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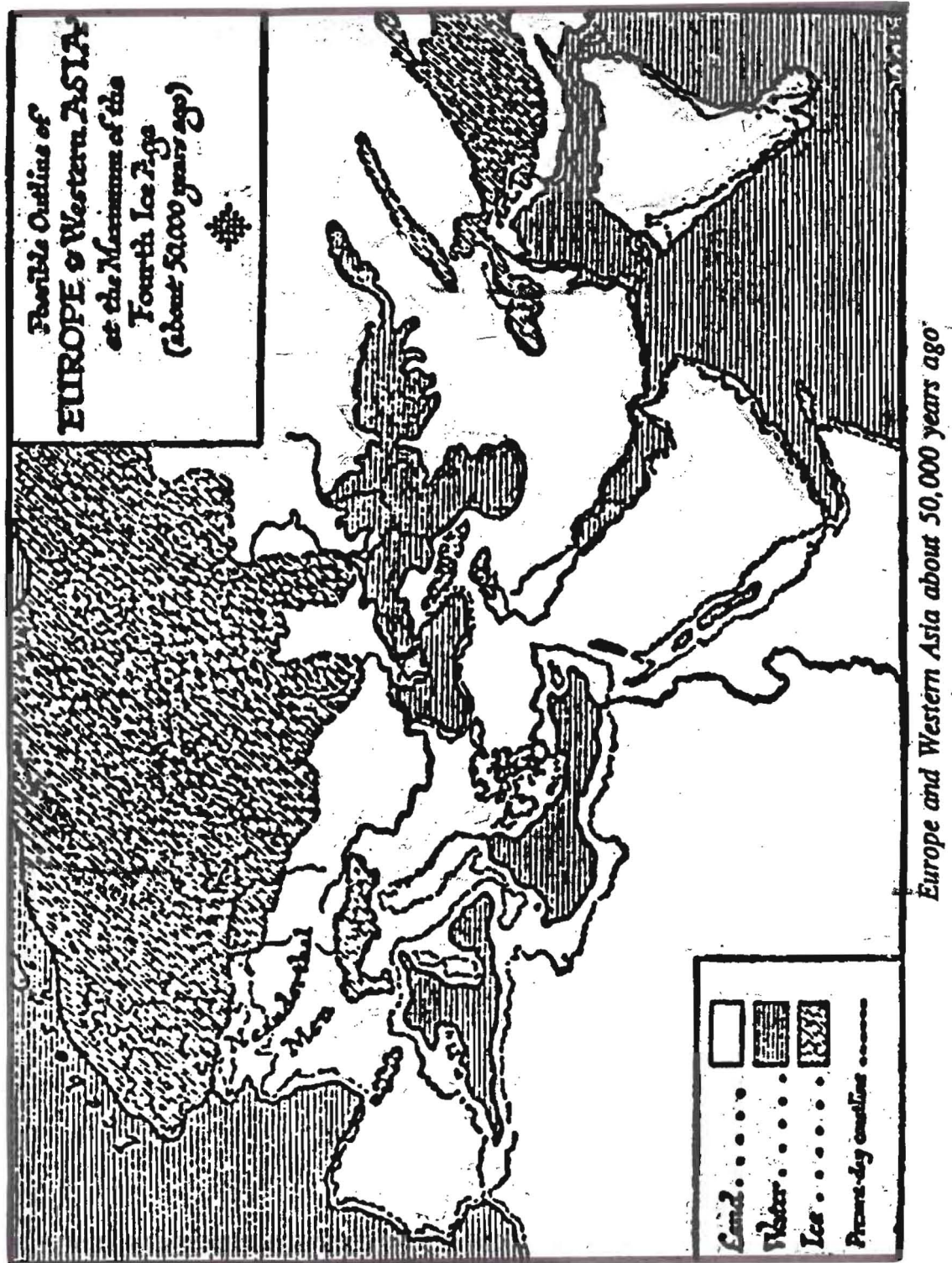
Summary

The Aryan merchant class called Vaniks or Panis, who lived among the Cholas in the south, migrated to West Asia in the early third or late second millennium BC. They were expert shipbuilders and navigators. They first settled in the valley of Euphrates and Tigris and called the place as Chola Desh which was later distorted to Chaldea, and came to be known as Mesopotamia/Sumeria. They travelled West and reached the eastern coast of the Mediterranean where they established Phoenicia.

BELIEVE IT or not, there were far more meaningful contacts among the peoples of the world in earlier times than they are at present. Thanks to modern jet age, a person may take his breakfast in Moscow, lunch in London and dinner in Damascus. Some tourists 'do' a country in a couple of weeks and a capital city like Delhi in a day or two. In distant past travelling was cumbersome, but once the people reached a new country they lived there for long and if they liked the place and the people, they stayed on for good. Thus, there were greater opportunities of cross-fertilization of ideas and imbibing each other's customs and culture. The early Dynastic Egypt and Mesopotamian

prototypes, for example, show religious and artistic traits which go back to Indus Valley and Vedic civilizations. "It has been claimed by diffusionists that the Indus civilization, and even that of Shang China are derivative from Mesopotamia (or it could be vice versa), and hyper-diffusionists have even gone so far to propose that New world high cultures are a reflection of Indo-Chinese civilization of the late Bronze Age." (1)

Till recently, that is about a million year ago, South India was totally cut off from the north by a surging sea extending from the Arabian sea to the Bay of Bengal.(2) The north was known as



Sapta Sindhu and south as Jambu-Dvipa. It is not yet settled whether the Aryans who lived in Sapta Sindhu were the original inhabitants or came from outside. A.N. Das, Raghunandan Sharma and some other scholars strongly contend that the Aryans did not come from outside and India was their original home. But the Russian Vedicologist Ragozin and the German Professor Oppert are equally certain that there was an Aryan invasion. "Far anterior to the Aryan invasion," Ragozin says, "Kolarians from the east or northeast, and Dravidians from the north-west (?) had entered India possibly through the very passes which later admitted the Aryan tide". (3)

These pre-Aryans, she says, had extensive intercourse with the outside world, specially the north-west. For example, in the temple of Ur-Bagash, who ruled a united Babylonia not less than 3000 BC, was found a piece of Indian teak which tree "grew close to the Malabar coast and nowhere else....." (4) Indian muslin, a prized possession, was called by Mesopotamians as Sindhu, that is, they referred to the stuff "by name of the country which exported it." (5) Ragozin further points out that the Dravidians of the northern and western India and the Babylonians of the Shumiro - Akkads, before the advent of the Semites, "were of the same race or stock which is broadly designated as Turanian". (6)

OPPERT WAS a Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at the former Presidency College of Madras (now Chennai). He was also a translator of Telugu to the Government and knew several south Indian languages. In his considered opinion the original inhabitants of India were Gauda-Dravidians and when the Aryans came,

both culturally blended into one" (7). There were close contacts among the three ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Vedic India. The two great doctrines of Trinity of gods and transmigration of souls appeared in all the three simultaneously. The Indian Trinity, or Trimurti, comprised Brahma (the Creator), Visnu (the Preserver) and Mahesh (the Destroyer). The Chaldean triad was formed of gods Anu, Bel and Ea, representing heaven, lower world and water. The Egyptian triad is of Osiris, Isis and Horus (8) which seem to be the metamorphosed forms of the Aryan deities Isvara, Usa and Hari or Siva.

Chaldea was Chola Desh

SOME SCHOLARS who hold that Aryans were the original inhabitants of India observe that when their merchant class called Vaniks, or Panis were pushed down to south by the blue-blooded Aryans, they settled down among the Cholas and Pandyas. They were also expert shipbuilders and navigators. With the Malabar teak, cordage, resins, gums etc available there in plenty, they constructed good ships and traded with the countries of the Persian Gulf and the Nile. Finally, they settled down in the fertile valley of the Euphrates and Tigris and called their new country as Chola Desh, which was later distorted to Chaldea. The Chaldeans were actually a mixed race which sprang from the Panis and the Cholas and were immigrants from the Coromondal and Malabar coasts. These migrations must have taken place long before Babylonia bloomed and the Semites made their appearance in West Asia. A branch of the "Aryan - Dravidians emigrated to Egypt in prehistoric times, around 10,000 B.C... and laid the foundations of Egyptian and

Babylonian civilizations." (9) Das quotes Dr. Hall who says: "the southerners had braved the perils of the sea and went up to Sumerja; some of them have reached the regions far beyond it." He maintains "that a Sumerian was very much like a southern Hindu of Deccan, and it is by no means impossible that the Sumerians were an Indian tribe which passed certainly by land, perhaps also by sea, through Persia to the valley of the two rivers."(10).

THERE ARE many legends, like that of the Great Flood, which are common among the peoples of West Asia, Egypt, and India. It is therefore likely "that the event did occur and referred to the great cataclysm when the north and south portions of India were separated by the sea."(11) In the Indian version, a celestial fish warns the early man Manu of an impending flood. He is advised to construct a sturdy ship, preserve all the seeds, embark in it with the seven rsis (surprisingly, no woman is mentioned in the Matsya Purān story), and look out for the Fish recognizable by a horn. As the flood water rose, Manu tied the cord of the ship to the horn of the Divine Fish. After whirling and swirling for long the Fish dragged the ship to the highest peak of Himavat which even today is known by the name of naubandhana ('the binding of the boat'). The flood subsided and the creation continued.

A Deluge is mentioned in the Gilgamesh Epic of Babylonia. In another account of Babylonia by Berossus, in the ancient flood story of Egypt it was Noha who saved himself from the Great Flood. In Genesis VII -IX God said unto Noah "... I do bring a flood of water upon the earth...40 days and 40 nights of rain... Thou shalt come into the ark; thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons wives with thee. And of every living

thing shalt thou bring in the ark... to keep them alive." In the Chaldean Deluge Tablet, when wicked men rebelled against God Ea, He "brought together and stowed into the ship the seeds of life of everything." (12) and was saved from destruction when heavens rained hail.

With a minor modification, the Celestial Fish of India becomes the divine Fish - god Oannes in Chaldea. Ragozin comments: "The identity between Manu's divine preserver and Ea the preserver of Hasisadra, is more than accidentally indicated by the fish guise of the former..." (13). In the line drawing of Eâ or Oannes given by her, the body and face of the fish beautifully merges with that of a well-built bearded man. He holds a Kamandal in the left hand, usually carried by the Hindu mendicants, and raises the right hand in abhay mudra granting benediction and boons to his devotees.

TO CITE another example: the worship of Earth, and its emblem snake, is very common among all these civilizations. The snake was being worshipped by the Kolarians and was incorporated into the Aryan pantheon of gods in the form of the Sheshnag. The serpent was also a sacred symbol of the Shumiro - Akkads of Babylonia. Even Ea was worshipped at his holiest shrine of Eridhu in the form of a serpent. As "Eridhu was the centre from which the first Chaldean civilization started and spread, so the serpent symbol was accepted as that of the race and its religion."(14) The Turanian Proto-Medes also worshipped the snake -symbol of Earth. The Egyptians had their serpent too. The hood of a serpent is generally shown in the crown of an Egyptian king or queen. We do not know if he was worshipped like the other god Osiris. But he was



The Chaldean god Oannes

certainly dreaded and propitiated. When sun, the offspring of sky-god Nut, passed over the heavens in a boat on the Nile and returned in the evening, the terrible serpent, Apophis, lay in wait to destroy him. Therefore the Egyptians also worshipped Garuda, the enemy of serpent, and one of their most important gods, Horus, is depicted wearing the face of a Garuda.

THE ARYAN merchants had also settled in Egypt and there is a good deal of similarity between the religious ideas of the two countries. Murray in his book, The Splendour That was Egypt, gives graphic account of temple worship in ancient Egypt. The gods were woken up in the morning with the chiming of gongs and cymbals; after dressing and adorning them and offering lunch, they were put to siesta and the doors of the temple were closed. In the evening they were entertained with music and dance, and after the swinging of lights -aarti - they retired for the night (15). These are exactly the ways that worship is offered to gods in most of the temples in India today. The point we are trying to make is that there were extensive migrations among the three ancient civilizations of the Asian region Vedic, Sumerian and Egyptian.

Similar Religious Concepts

In philosophical ideas, the Sumerian theologians assumed as axiomatic the existence of a pantheon of gods "manlike in form but superhuman and immortal, who, though invisible to mortal eye, guide and control the cosmos in accordance with well-laid plans and duly prescribed laws." (16). Each of these superhuman beings was deemed to look after of a specific component of the universe. The Aryans also have a large number of gods and goddesses, though all

working as the symbol of a single Supreme Being. These gods look after specific 'departments' -Brahma being incharge of creation, Visnu of preservation, and Siva or Hari of destruction. A universal law, called *riti*, pervades the entire universe and guides all activities.

THE MOUNTAIN regions of Sumeria, or modern Iraq, are almost exclusively the preserve of Kurdish tribes. "The kurdish language is Indo-Iranian... and probably entered the area during the late second or early first millennium BC." (17). As in case of Sanskrit Vedic texts, mere pronunciation of words was not enough, the name had to be "uttered in the proper tone." (18). As in ancient Aryan India, there were city-states in Sumeria. The king was considered as the 'representative' of God. There were elaborate rituals accompanying the installation of a ruler (19) who performed his duties for the welfare of the people. It appears that the main deity he worshipped was the air-god, Enlil – 'the father of the gods', 'the king of heaven and earth', 'the king of all the lands'. One of the most important hymns to Enlil was pieced together in 1953 from a number of tablets and fragments. Kramer uncovered the lower half of a four-column tablet whose upper half is in the University Museum in Philadelphia. The text is still incomplete, and its translation is very tedious. Here are some of the more intelligible parts of the 170-line hymn :(20).

ENLIL, whose command is far-reaching,
whose word is holy,
The Lord whose pronouncement is
unchangeable, who forever decree
destinies,
Whose lifted eye scans the lands,

Whose lifted light searches the heart of
all the lands...
The earth-gods bow down in fear before
Him
The heaven-gods humble themselves
before Him.

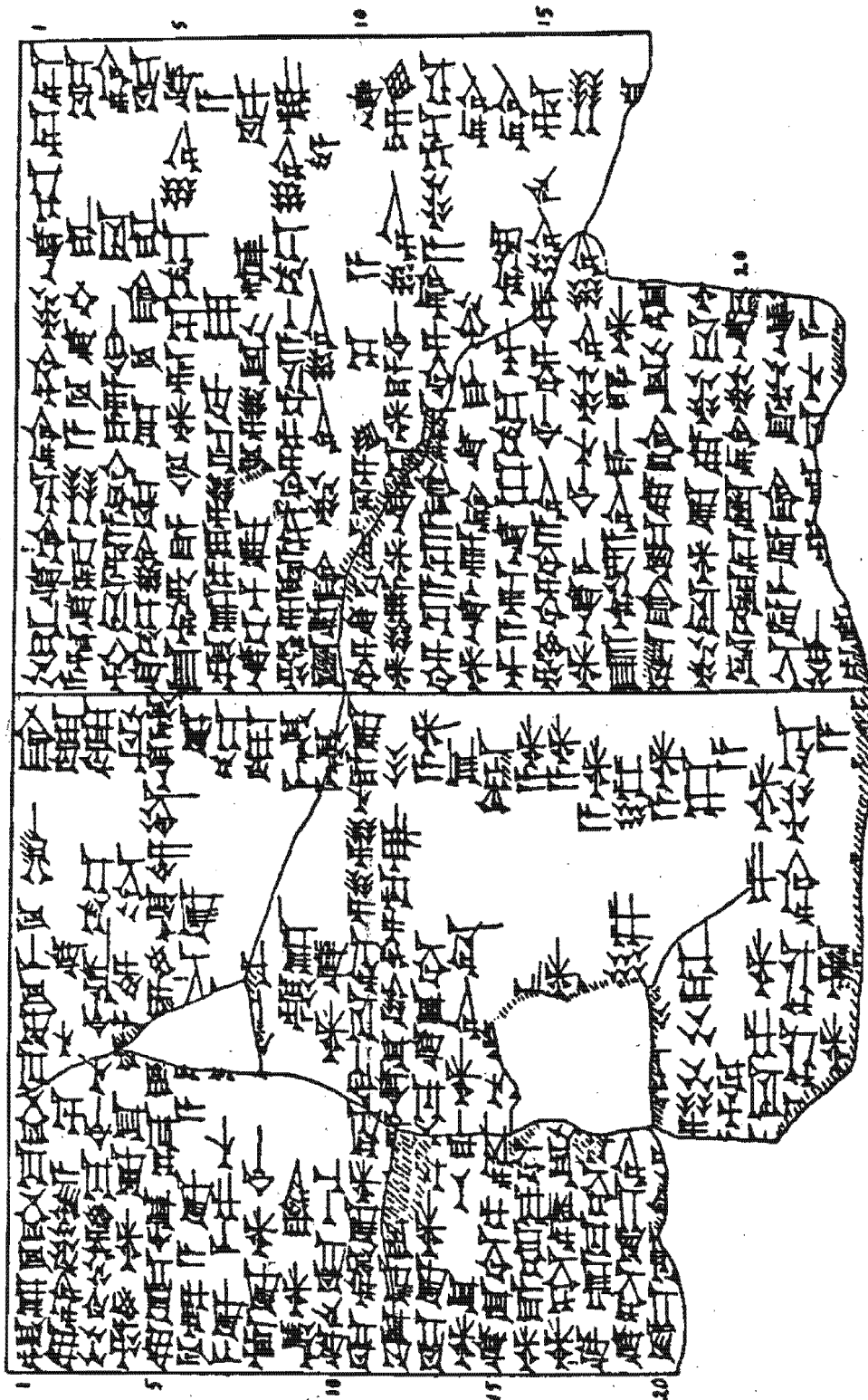
THE SUMERIANS were well aware of grammatical classifications, mathematical problems and their solutions, and compiled numerous law codes (21). They noted down many significant events but did not write a connected and meaningful history-Sumerian men of letters developed a number of literary genres-myths, epics, hymns, proverbs and essays. It is not known whether they picked up these subjects from the Aryan Panis or developed them independently.

After a long sojourn in Sumeria / Mesopotamia, the Panis left their new colony, may be because the invading Semitic hordes ousted them. They travelled north-west and found perhaps a better place as a seafaring traders on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The Greek historian Herodotus (C484-425BC) who faithfully jotted down the traditions of these Panis as still prevalent in his times -then variously called Poenis, Phoenis and Phoenicians - says that the Phoenicians "formerly dwelt, as they themselves say, on the coast of the Erythraean Sea. From thence, they travelled transversely across Syria, and now dwell on the sea shore" (of the Mediterranean). This Erythraean Sea was a common designation of the Arabian Sea popularized by the unknown Greek traveller in his book *Periplus*. As a writer points out"... the Babylonian coasts of the Persian Gulf and those which lie to the west of them, are so little qualified to favour the rise of navigation owing to want of suitable woods that, as Aristobulus informs us, when Alexander the Great conceived the

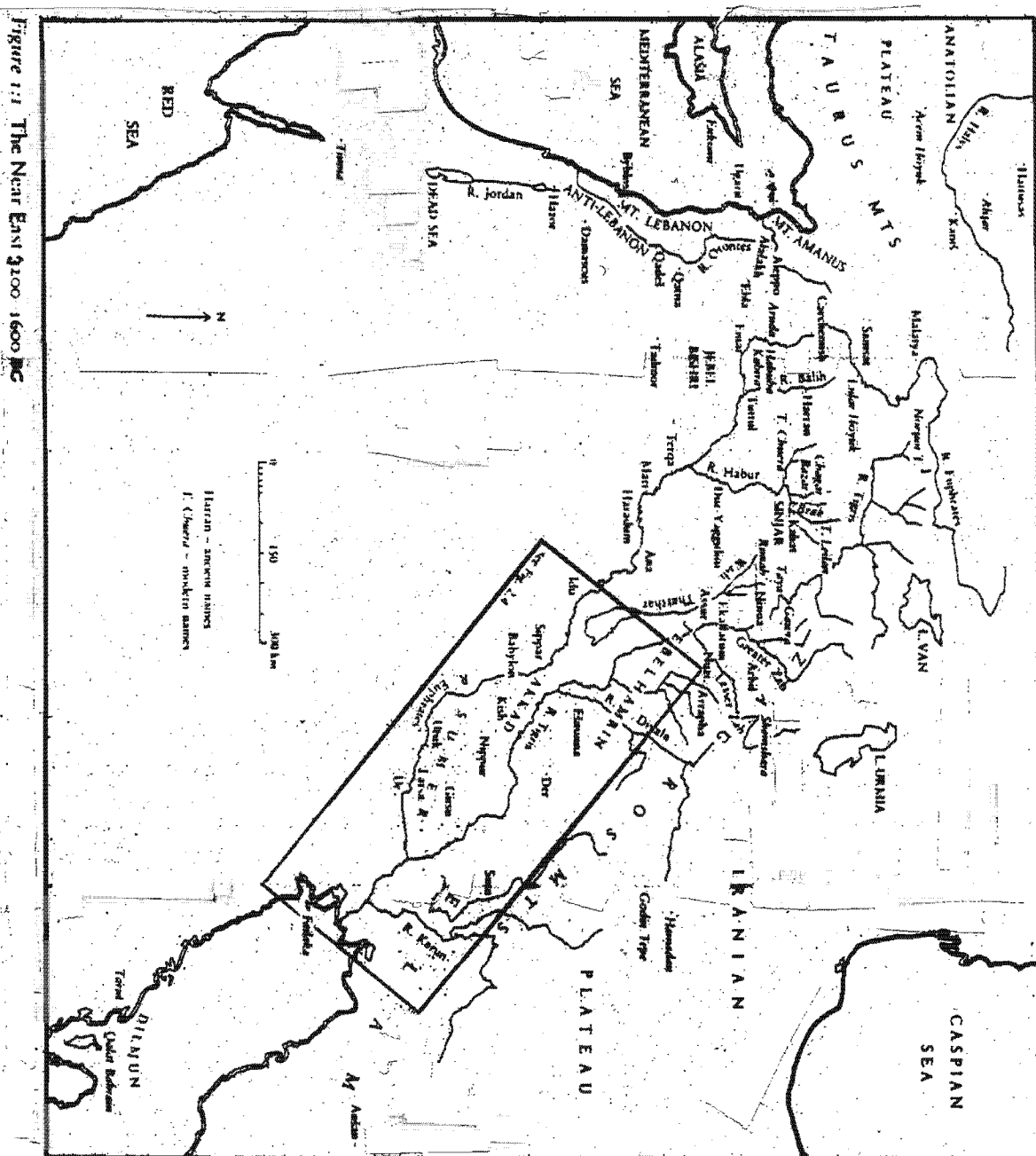
idea of bringing the coast district of Eastern Arabia under his dominion, both seamen and probably ready-made ships had to be brought from Phoenicia to Babylon, and this was done with the express intention of making of Babylonia what it had never hitherto been, namely a second Phoenicia."(22) The Phoenicians also worshipped Uranus or Oannes which term was also applied to Baal, clearly traceable to Vedic Varuna, one of the oldest gods of the Aryans. Baal was introduced by the Panis into their first settlement in Sumeria where it became a principal deity among the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians.(23).

IN BRIEF, our view is that the Aryan merchant-class called Vaniks or Panis, after leaving *Sapta Sindhu*, settled down on the southern coasts among the Cholas and the Pandyas. From there, along with the Cholas, they sailed to the Persian Gulf, made the fertile valley of the Euphrates and Tigris their home and called it Choladesh. From there when they were ousted by the aggressive Semites, they travelled to the sea coast of Syria, which they called Phoenicia, or the land of the Panis or Panikas. They were notorious for their sharp business practices and are also said to have gone to Greece, Egypt and other places for all sorts of trading. The philosophy, mythology and theological ideas of Mesopotamia and Egypt bear close similarity to those of the Aryan Panis, which lend support to extensive migrations among these peoples from the times immemorial.

Modern research scholars of Mesopotamia generally do not make any mention of the migration of Panis to West Asia. The reason may be that several ancient cultures suffered serious cataclysm at one point or the other



9. Hymn to Enlil. Reverse of lower half of four-column Nippur tablet in Istanbul Museum of the Ancient Orient.



obliterating memories of past events. India, on the other hand, is one civilization, which has enjoyed unbroken

continuity over millennia. The researchers may like to probe the topic raised here.

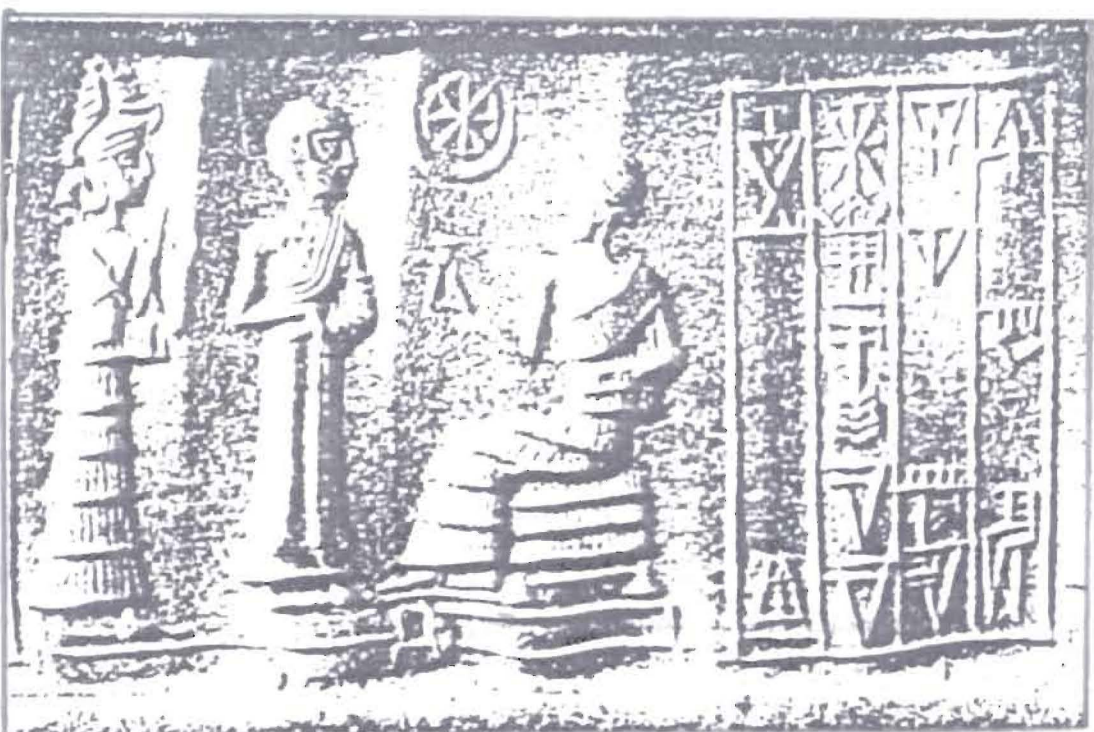


Figure 14:1 Impression of the cylinder seal of Šulgi-ili, a servant of the king's daughter. He is brought into her presence by his protective goddess on the left. Imitating the king in similar scenes, the princess sits on a dais to receive him, like a deity but on a fleece-covered stool rather than an altar. (A.255, L. Delaporte, *Musée du Louvre: Catalogue des cylindres orientaux*, II. *Acquisitions*, Paris, 1923, Planche 77:2)

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