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GUABBA, THE *MELUḪḪAN* VILLAGE IN MESOPOTAMIA

P.S. VERMAAK

ABSTRACT

Although a *MeluhḪan* village (é-duru₅ me-luḫ-ḫa) integrated under the jurisdiction of Girsu/Lagash in southern Mesopotamia has been known since Sargonic times, it has never previously been identified with a specific place name. In this article the *MeluhḪan* village has now, for the first time, been connected in a Ur III text with the well-known village/town of Guabba (Gú-ab-ba^{ki}) based on the (twice) published text MVN 7 420 = ITT 4 8024 from Ur III Girsu.¹

INTRODUCTION

Since the Sumerian and Akkadian documents became available to the scholarly world, it was evident that the southern Mesopotamian region had direct contact with various foreign places (or countries) during the second part of the third millennium BC.² From these far away places came a variety of goods, often exotic items, which were exchanged for local commodities.³ However, three places became well known through the cuneiform documents and in scholarly publications, namely Dilmun, Magan and Meluḫḫa, of which the first seems to be the closest and the latter the furthest from Mesopotamia.⁴ The obvious focus of most of the scholarly discussions became the locations of these places and the speculations in this regard have accumulated until today. The direct contact

¹ For the abbreviations of Ur III textual references throughout the article see Sigrist (1991).

² For the pre-Sargonic and Sargonic place names mentioned in the texts see Edzard et al. (1977) and during the Ur III period see Edzard and Farber (1984).

³ Cf. Crawford (1973:232-241), Edens (1992:118-139), Potts (1993a:379-402; 1993b:423-440) and Stieglitz (1984:134-142).

⁴ Cf. the discussions by Thapar (1975:1-42), Michalowski (1988:156-164), Hansman (1973:553-554), Potts (1993b:423-440) and Oppenheim (1954:6-17)

with these three foreign places continued from the Sargonic period until the time of Gudea of Lagash. Even trading colonies seemed to be the order of the day where interpreters (eme-bal, lit: “the language turner”)⁵ had to translate the foreign languages into the local languages of Mesopotamia (Sumerian and Akkadian which were used simultaneously). It will eventually become clear that the search for these distant foreign localities is not the focus of this article, although the conclusions made in the article may contribute to form a more comprehensive picture of one group of these foreign peoples.

However, since the Ur III period in southern Mesopotamia no direct contact could be determined with either of the two far away places, namely Magan or Meluḥḥa (Potts 1993a:379-402). Dilmun seemed to be acting as an appropriate gateway for both regions and connecting indirectly via Dilmun to Magan and Meluḥḥa.⁶ It seems that large numbers of foreigners remained in southern Mesopotamia and integrated into the local (hybrid) Sumerian and Akkadian populations (cf. Leemans 1960:139-142). They played a substantial role in the economy of the country and even paid taxes (known as the gun-mada- taxes)⁷ to the local government.

One of these foreign groups kept appearing in local Sumerian and Akkadian texts from the Sargonic period to the Ur III periods in a variety of contexts, namely the *Meluhhans*.⁸ These people with a *Meluhhan* heritage apparently

⁵ The presence of the *Meluhhans* in southern Mesopotamia has already been confirmed by the Sargonic cylinder seal of Šu-ilišu, the ema-bal me-luḥ-ḥa-ki which indicate that a *Meluhhan* group or groups have been around there for some time. Cf. Possehl (2006:42-43) and Oppenheim (1964:353, note 24). Unfortunately the seal does not show any “foreign” features which might help us to identify the location of *Meluhha*.

⁶ Cf. Crawford (1998), Potts (1993b:423-440), Stieglitz (1984:134-142), Edens (1992:118-139), Crawford (1973:232-241) and Howard-Carter 1981:210-223).

⁷ For the foreign tributes paid to Neo-Sumerian authorities and gun-mada-texts see Michalowski (1978:34-49), Steinkeller (1987:19-41) and Gelb (1973:70-98).

⁸ The locality of the *Me-luḥ-ḥa^{ki}* has not been identified with certainty. The early Sumerologists Kramer (1963:61) and Jacobsen (1960:184, note 18) have been quite certain that *Meluhha* refers to an African location. It was later also connected to the

grouped together in settlements and eventually formed a *Meluhhan* village(s) and played a substantial role in the economy, mainly in the textile industry of Girsu.

The existence of a *Meluhhan* village in the region of Girsu/Lagash during the Pre-Sargonic and Ur III periods in southern Mesopotamia has been known by scholars for quite some time, but has never been connected to a specific place name. A discussion of some features and activities of this Neo-Sumerian *Meluhhan* village has been done by Parpola and others (Parpola, Parpola & Brunswig 1977:129-165) which they retrieved only from ten Ur III texts⁹ from Girsu/Lagash.

Since the article by Parpola et al. (1977:129-165) several other texts from Girsu, Drehem, Umma and Ur have become available which relate to a *Meluhhan* village and a more comprehensive picture can now be formed about this village. In fact, 44 texts (48 references to *Meluhha*) are now accessible in order to revisit the information on this foreign village *or* village with foreign descendants.

However, the main purpose of this article is to show that one text (MVN 7 420 = ITT 4 8024) from the Istanbul Archaeological Museum in Turkey first published by Delaporte in 1912 (ITT 4 8024) and later collated and republished by Pettinato et al. in 1978 (MVN 7 420), has never been really noticed by scholars and never received any scholarly translation or discussion regarding the *Meluhhans* in Sumer. It connects the *Meluhhan* village with the place name of Guabba.

area around the Gulf such as Oman, but the majority of scholars lately agree per convention that the Indus Valley is the most likely to be connected with the *Meluhha*, although it cannot be taken for granted at this stage. (Cf. Postgate 1992:217-218, Chakrabarti 1975:337-342, Kulke 1993:154-180, Leemans 1960, Michalowski 1988:156-164, Potts 1993a:379-402, Thapar 1975:1-42, Heimpel 1977:53-55 and Moorey 1994:xxii-xxii).

⁹ L7157, OBTR 242, BM 177751, STA 19 (= JESHO 20, 138 04), Amherst 54, HLC III 368, BM 14594 (=CT 3 17), TUT 154, L 705, UCP 92 65, L 8015, L 1426.

THE *MELUHĦĦAN* VILLAGE IN GIRSU/LAGASH

The *Meluhhan* village (é-duru₅ me-luĦ-Ħa)¹⁰ in southern Mesopotamia has been known for quite some time and although often referred to by scholars, it was Parpola et al. (1977:129-165) who first made the layout of the features of this village, but they utilized only about 20 percent of the texts now available for discussion. Before discussing the name of the town, it is appropriate to outline the basic features of this town or village with the additional available Ur III texts since the article by Parpola et al. (1977:129-165).

In order to form a comprehensive view of the *Meluhhan* remnants a variety of texts could be consulted, although they all display a picture of a people that have been integrated into the Sumerian and Babylonian cultures much earlier than the Ur III period.

The *Meluhhan* granaries

The *Meluhhan* village was known for its granaries (i-dub é-duru₅ e-luĦ-Ħa)¹¹ and the large amounts of royal barley that were delivered to the town of Girsu. When one calculates the amounts delivered by the *Meluhhan* granaries in comparison to other regions, towns or villages it was surprisingly high. It cannot exactly be determined why they delivered more barley (up to three times more) than most of the other granaries. It might be that the *Meluhhan* granaries had a larger region under their premises or perhaps they had to deliver more to the Girsu authorities due to their foreign origin, but this is pure speculation at this stage. There are, however, two texts dating from the sixth year of Amar-Sin

¹⁰ Cf. CT 05 36 (BM 017751 = OrAnt 15, 142 = JESHO 20, 136 03) (SH 48 from Girsu), ITT 4 4 08024 (= MVN 07 420)(SH 34 from Girsu), and SANTAG 7 167 (SH 48 from Girsu).

¹¹ Cf. the texts Amherst 054 (=JESHO 20, 140 05) (SH48, Girsu), ASJ 03 152 107 (AS 6, Girsu), MVN 12 371 (AS 3 Girsu) , MVN 13 223 (SS 9, Umma), ITT 2 705 (SS 8, Girsu), TCTI 2 3666 (SS 8, Girsu), BPOA 2 1881 (SS 01, Girsu).

(AS 6-vii) and the eighth year of Shu-Sin (SS 8) respectively (from Girsu)¹² where the *Meluhhan* granary was the only deliverer of the royal barley and it seems that the various granaries had separate monthly instalments to pay (text ASJ 03 152 107).

The *Meluhhan* garden

Some references can be found to the *Meluhhan* garden (^{gis}kiri₆ me-luḥ-ḥa) in the Neo-Sumerian period, but no more specific details can be derived from these texts except to note that they were connected to the temple of ^dNinmar^{ki}. However, several types of *Meluhhan* artefacts have been identified which probably made up the *Meluhhan* garden, especially the ^{gis}ab-ba me-luḥ-ḥa which is a sort of *Meluhhan* wood, or the ^{gis}ab-ba could refer to some kind of water feature in a garden (see “The *Meluhhan* timber/woods” below: ^{gis}kiri₆ me-luḥ-ḥa ^dNin-mar^{ki}¹³).

The *Meluhhan* temples

Two temples have been connected to the *Meluhhan* village in Ur III Girsu, namely those of the gods’ ^dNanshe and ^dNin-mar^{ki}.

In a text where a number of scribes (dub-sar-me) are listed it has been summarized in three interesting lines, namely šu-nígin 6 guruš, arád ^dNanše-me, ugula` me-luḥ-ḥa (“A total of 6 men, servants of the god ^dNanshe, while the overseer is a *Meluhhan*”)¹⁴ which definitely seems to connect the *Meluhhan* village with the temple of ^dNanše. This text relates to the temple of ^dNanshe and the *Meluhhan* official, which is a good illustration of the *Meluhhans* being incorporated into the society of southern Mesopotamia. Another text suggests

¹² Cf. ASJ 03 152 107 and ITT 2 705.

¹³ Cf. STA 19 = JESHO 20, 138 04 = CBCT-PUL Ex 191.

¹⁴ Cf. ITT 4, 8015 = JESHO 20, 145 11 = MVN 7 411.

that the *Meluhhans* worked in the temple of ^dNanše: *dumu me-luḥ-ḥa erín é* ^dNanše¹⁵ (“the *Meluhhan* worker in the house of ^dNanše”).

In a balanced account (*níg-kas₇-ak*) regarding the different types of barley delivered to the temple of ^dNinmar^{ki} (*níg-kas₇ ak Lú-^dŠul-gi šabra še é ^dNin-MAR.KI*)¹⁶ the seal of the well-known *Meluhhan* appears twice in the text (*Kišib Ur-^dLamma dumu me-luḥ-ḥa*).¹⁷ The royal barley deliveries sent to the different gardens (^{gis}kiri₆ en-ne) in the region of Girsu (year 48 of Šulgi) and the *Meluhhan* garden was again connected to the temple of ^dNin-Mar^{ki} (^{gis}kiri₆ me-luḥ-ḥa ^dNin-MAR.KI-ka), but in the following line there is another temple of ^dNin-marki (^{gis}kiri₆ ^dNin-MAR.KI) which was not connected to the *Meluhhan* temple. This means there had to be two gardens in the same temple of ^dNinmarki, one as a *Meluhhan* garden and another one not.¹⁸

The *Meluhhan* avifauna

The *Meluhhan* bird (*dar me-luḥ-ḥa*) appears five times¹⁹ in the Ur III texts, only once²⁰ with the determinative of a bird (*mušen*). In most of the cases the *dar* has been listed together with images (*alan*) which indicates that in these instances the *dar* probably does not refer to a real bird, but to an image of a bird, maybe as a carved bird (as *curio*) from wood or ivory. In all instances these texts came from Ur and date from the fifteenth year of Ibbi-Sin. It has been speculated that the *dar* might a “multi-coloured” *Meluhhan* bird, described by Leemans (1960:166) as a “peacock”, but he (Leemans 1968:222) later corrected himself

¹⁵ TUT 154 = JESHO 20, 135 08 = OrAnt. 13, 206.

¹⁶ Cf)(OBTR 242 = JESHO 20, 135 02)(SH 40)(Girsu)

¹⁷ Cf (OBTR 242 = JESHO 20, 135 02)(SH 40)(Girsu)

¹⁸ Cf . STA 19 = JESHO 20, 138 04 = CBCT-PUL Ex 191.

¹⁹ Cf. UET 3 761)(IS15, Ur), UET 3 764)(IS15, Ur), UET 3 768)(IS15, Ur), UET 3 768)(IS15,Ur), UET 3 770)(IS15, Ur) and UET 3 757 = OBO 160/3, 277-278)(IS15, Ur).

²⁰ Cf. UET 3 757 = OBO 160/3, 277-278)(IS15, Ur).

and regarded it as a kind of a “hen” due to his understanding of it as a bird from “India”.²¹

The *Meluhhan* fauna

Although in earlier and later texts references are made to the *Meluhhan* fauna species from other periods such as the multicoloured *Meluhhan* dog²² which was given as a gift to Ibbi-Sin and a *Meluhhan* cat (Akkadian *šuranu*) in a Babylonian proverb (Lambert 1960: 272).²³ The only *Meluhhan* fauna in the Ur III texts is a reference to the goat: 1 máš ga mel-luḫ-ḫa, “the *Meluhhan* milk goat” (ITT 4 7089 = MVN 6 88).

The *Meluhhan* timber/woods

Special kinds of timber/woods came into southern Mesopotamia from various places such as *Magan* and *Meluhha* from the Early Dynastic III to the Gudea period.²⁴ Lexical texts confirm the import of *Meluhhan* timber which entered via the ports in the Gulf.²⁵ Various kinds of *Meluhhan* wood have been identified during the Ur III and other periods and they were mostly used for different kinds of furniture.

The mes me-luḫ-ḫa-wood only occurs twice (UET 3 818; UET 3 1241) in the Ur III texts, but also continued to be used for furniture and household utensils²⁶ during the Old Babylonian period (Leemans 1960:126). Its Akkadian equivalent *musukkannu* (CAD M II 237 & Ahw II 678) was referred to as a

²¹ For a discussion on the birds see the latest book by Veldhuis (2004).

²² Cf. the discussion by Leemans (1968:222). This might also be a African wild dog or even a hyena, both found throughout Africa.

²³ Cf. also the discussions by Leemans (1960:161 and 1968:122).

²⁴ Cf. the discussion by Moorey (1994:252-253); Leemans (1960:125-126); Cooper (1986:22-23) and Salonen (1972-75:453-454).

²⁵ Cf. the discussions by Powell (1987:75-104) and Pettinato (1972:86-87)

²⁶ Cf. the discussions by Mieroop (1992:159-160) and Moorey (1994:352-3530).

Magan and *Meluhhan* import and it was probably a hard and/or black wood. However, it was locally available during the first millennium BC (Maxwell-Hyslop 1983: 70-71). The ^{gis}ab-ba me-luḫ-ḫa-wood²⁷ had a special purpose to make *inter alia* special chairs or thrones with ivory inlays. Heimpel (1993:54) describes it as “Meerholz” which indicates its usage as boat building material, but its Akkadian equivalent is even more well known, *kušabku* (cf. CAD K 597; AHW I 516).

The *Meluhhan* bronzes

Since the Uruk III period up to the Gudea period the acquiring of bronzes from the three places Dilmun, Magan en Meluḫḫa was well documented, however during the Ur III period only one reference was found which connects the bronze (uruda) with the *Meluhhan* village: 6 ma-na uruda *me-luḫ-ḫa* (UET 3 368)(SH 26 ii)(Ur).²⁸

THE MELUḪḪAN VILLAGE OF GUABBA

According to the electronic UR III databases²⁹ there are more than four hundred references in texts mentioning the place name *Gú-ab-ba*^{ki} and the texts mostly originate from Girsu/Lagash. Several features immediately come forward when

²⁷ Cf. *mí-ús-bi* ^{gis}ab-ba me-luḫ-ḫa 2-a (UET 3 430 (Ur); 1 ^{gis}dúr ^{gis}ab-ba me-luḫ-ḫa-bi (UET 3 660 (Ur); [...] ^{gis}ab-ba me-luḫ-ḫa (UET 3 828 = SaU 26)(n.d)(Ur); *dagal-bi* ^{gis}ab-ba me-luḫ-ḫa-kam (CBT 3, BM 025086 = Nisaba 07 40)(SH 39-xi)(Girsu).

²⁸ Cf. the discussion by Moorey (1994:245-246) and Leemans (1960:160; 1968:223).

²⁹ I have to acknowledge the excellent Ur III databases developed by Manuel Molina and others of which I have made extensive use. With the large numbers of UR III texts which are spread across the globe in private and public possession, these texts, in transliterated format and often with pictures of the tablets, provides a great advantage by allowing every scholar to make various rapid electronic searches. The Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts has been developed at the *Instituto de Filología* of the *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (Madrid) (<http://bdts.filol.csic.es/>).

you retrieve these texts, but we will only outline some of these features in order to find the common business of the area concerned.

The only reference in the Ur III texts referring to the place of Guabba as a real *Meluhhan* village comes from MVN 7 420 = ITT 4 8024 at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum in Turkey.

MVN 7 420 = ITT 4 8024

1. 490.0.0 še gur lugal 1 sìla-ta
2. še-ba gáb-ús udu gukkal
3. Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka é-duru₅ me-luḥ-ḥa-ta
4. ki Ur-^{gis}gigir ka-gur₇-ta
5. mu Ur-^dLamma dumu Ka₅-a ka-gur₇ Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka-šè
6. Ur-^dIg-alim dumu Ur-^dBa-ba₆ šu ba-ti
7. gùr Ur-dun šeš-na
8. iti mu-šu-du₇
9. mu An-ša-an^{ki} ba-hul

The importance of this text is that the *Meluhhan* village often referred to is now connected to the well-known place/village of Gú-ab-ba^{ki} which is also mentioned twice in this text. It is also linked with a person called Ur-^dLamma who has often been mentioned in several other Ur III texts (cf. Ur III databases) and seals as a *Meluhhan* (dumu me-luḥ-ḥa). If this text has been interpreted correctly, in this instance, several other texts regarding the prosopography of Ur-^dLamma and the toponomy/onomastics and major activities of the place of Guabba within the region of Girsu/Lagash can now be pursued in order to form a more comprehensive insight of the foreigners living in Sumer and more specifically the *Meluhhan* population/s living together with the Sumerians and Akkadians in southern Mesopotamia. Currently, all 44 texts have been published and are available electronically referring to *Meluhha* as a place or as a qualifier (a so-called “adjective”). On the other hand the place Gú-ab-ba^{ki} is to

be found several hundred times in the Sargonic and Ur III texts. The challenge now would be to find as many as possible cuneiform tablets which could be related (via prospography and onomastics) to this village which will enhance our understanding of the hybrid population of the Sumerians. The question of the exact distant location of *Meluhha* is, however, not addressed in this article (cf. Introduction above). Further discussions on this text may bring us closer to this point in future.

Guabba continued with *Meluhhan* temples

In the above discussion it has been concluded that the two temples which have often been associated with the *Meluhhan* village in Ur III Girsu, are namely those of the gods ^dNanše and ^dNin-marⁱ (cf. 2.3 above). However, these temples, especially the one of Ninmar³⁰, have also been associated with the place of Guabba in earlier periods.

One royal inscription during the time of Ur-Bau in Lagash II dates the year according to the building of temple of Ninmar in Guabba:

mu é-^dnin-mar-^{ki}-ka gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka ba-dù-a

“Year in which the temple of Ninmar in Guabba was built” (AO 3355)

In a Sumerian temple hymn (TH 23)³¹ Guabba is twice mentioned in connected with the temple of Ninmar:

Line 291: [é-gú-ab-ba^{ki}] kù-^dnin-mar^{ki}-ke₄

“[O house of Guabba], the holy/pure Ninmar”

³⁰ For temple of ^dNin-mar^{ki} and the direct connection with the place Guabba see (MVN 17, 002 = CT 05 17 BM 012231; MVN 02 284 = ASJ 18, 118 no. 21 = WMAH 284; TCTI 1 00720; TUT 117 = SVS I/1 117; CT 07 20 BM 013130 = OrAnt. 15, 143; TUT 072 = SVS I/1 072 = OrAnt. 13, 202; TUT 117 = SVS I/1 117 = OrAnt. 13, 203).

³¹ Cf. Sjöberg and Bergman (1969:33-34, 108-109) for the publication, transliteration, translation and comments of this Sumerian temple hymn in the Old-Akkadian period.

Line 293: é-^dnin-mar-^{ki} gú-ab-ba^{ki}

“The house of Ninmar in Guabba”

In the Lamentation over Sumer and Ur the temple of Ninmar was again mentioned in connection with Guabba (LSUr : 168-170):³²

Line 168: ^dnin-mar-^{ki}-ra èš gú-ab-ba-ka izi im-ma-da-an-tej3(?)

“Fire approached Ninmarki in the shrine Guabba” (and)

Line 169: kù^{na4} za-gìn-bi má-gal-gal-la bala-šè ì-ak-e

“Large boats were transported precious metals and gem stones”

Line 170: nin-níg gur₁₁-ra-ni hul-lu tî-la-àm kù ^dnin-mar-^{ki}-ke₄

“The sacred lady Ninmar was desponded of her perished goods”

It is noteworthy that the *Meluhhan* garden (^{gis}kiri₆ me-luḥ-ḥa ^dNin-mar^{ki} was connected to the temple of ^dNinmar^{ki} while the temple at Guabba was also linked with the ^dNin-mar^{ki}.³³ A large number of granaries were listed under the jurisdiction of Guabba (šà Gú-ab-ba^{ki})³⁴ and they had to deliver barley of which the *Meluhhan* village was only one of the many villages, as well as two different villages of ^dNanshe (î-dub ^dNin-gír-su-à-zi-da-^dNanše) and another new one (î-dub é-duru₅ gibil ^dNanše),

Guabba as a *Meluhhan* textile hub

The above text under discussion (MVN 7 420 = ITT 4 8024) from the Ur III period, may lead us to interconnect this *Meluhhan* village of Guabba with the

³² Cf the discussion by Michalowski (1989:lines 168-170 with notes) and Cooper (2006:39-47).

³³ Cf. STA 19 = JESHO 20, 138 04 = CBCT-PUL Ex 191. An annual balanced account (níg-kas₇ ak)(CT 05 17 BM 012231 = MVN 17, 002) at Sulgi 45 retrievals were made from various places within the region of Girsu. In one long text a royal retrieval (zi-ga lugal) was made from Girsu. Animal retrievals were made on different days during the time of Shulgi 45 from Gír-su^{ki} ù ki-nu-nir^{ki} Nina^{ki}

³⁴ Cf. CT 05 36 BM 017751 = JESHO 20, 136 03 = OrAnt. 15,142.

entire textile industry of Girsu. Ur III texts with the place name *Gú-ab-ba^{ki}* often list (in 36 texts)³⁵ two other places *Ni-na^{ki}* and *Ki-nu-nir^{ki}* within the region of Girsu/Lagash which led Falkenstein to identify the so-called triangle of Girsu.³⁶ Although it is not certain what type of relationship these three places had, it has to be pursued in future.

During the UR III period Guabba provides the largest group of people from Girsu working in the weaving sector, mainly women and children. In one text (HSS IV 3) 4272 women and 1800 children from Guabba are listed as being in the weaving industry (cf. Waetzoldt 1972:94).³⁷ It still has to be determined why the largest group of weavers are to be found here, but if Guabba was indeed a *Meluhhan* village then one could speculate that this group could have been ancestors of a distant group which diffused into this area, bringing their skills of textiles into the region or being used as cheap labour.

In a pre-Sargonic text a family of 55 people went up to Guabba, the temple property of Bau and this led Gelb to the conclusion that the text “deals with destitute or impoverished families which placed themselves as clients at the disposal of the temple household of Bau in Girsu, whence they were sent to Guabba” (Gelb 1979:61). The list of twelve families of which five are headed by a widow is regarded by Gelb as “abnormal family structure”, but in his analysis of these early Mesopotamian households, he did not make any reference to the possibility of the economic factor as being an indication of a foreign ethnic community living in southern Mesopotamia. However, if the entire village of Guabba was *Meluhhan* all these earlier texts have to be

³⁵ Cf. HLC 274 = ASJ 2 220; CT 05 17 BM 012231 = MVN 17, 002. Cf. the UR III databases.

³⁶ Cf. *ša NINA^{ki} u₃ Gú-ab-ba^{ki}* (TUT 164-11 = SVS I/1 164-11 = OrAnt. 13, 208);

³⁷ There are currently over fifty Ur III texts associating Guabba with the weaving industry of a large involvement of women. Cf. also *é uš-bar^d Šu-^dSuen šà Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka* (BPOA 1 0061); *še-ba gemé uš-bar Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka* (BPOA 1 0308)(SS 9-iii); *uš-bar Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-me* (HLC 074, plate 26 = ASJ 2, 201); *gemé uš-bar Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka-ke₄* (HSS 04 146).

reinterpreted with the possibility of an ethnic connotation.

The shepherds of Gu₂-ab-ba^{ki} are often mentioned, even in various types of texts. In one text (HLC 274 = ASJ 2 220) 23 shepherds (lú-sipa 23) are involved and delivered various commodities as a group (ki sipa-e-ne-ta).³⁸ The phrase ki sipa-dè-ne-ta occurs 5 times in this text and one has to believe that the sipa-dè-ne must have been the sheep supervisors of the place.

Ur-^dLamma the *Meluhhan* of Guabba

Although the name Ur-^dLamma occurs several hundred times in the UR III texts, it seems that several persons carried the name Ur-^dLamma, because there are often references to the names of their fathers or sons, thus several could be distinguished. However, Ur-^dLamma the *Meluhhan* occurs in a few texts and in seals, but *Meluhha* occurs only once as a personal name from Guabba.

Ur-^dLamma dumu Ka₅-a ka-gur₇ Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka (MVN 7 420 = ITT 4 8024)

Ur-^dLamma dumu me-luḥ-ḥa (CT 3 17 = BM 014594 – JESHO 20, 142 07)(AS 01)(Girsu)

According to the references in texts the personal name Ur-^dLamma occurs at least twice in seals from texts, namely Kišib Ur-^dLamma dumu *me-luḥ-ḥa* (OBTR 242 = JESHO 20, 135 02)(SH 40)(Girsu)(2X in text) in a financial “balanced account” (nig₂-kas₇-ak), and Kišib Ur-^dLamma dumu *me-luḥ-ḥa* (UDT 64 = CBCY 3, NBC 64)

Guabba as a *Meluhhan* seaport

Guabba has been interpreted as a harbour town under the jurisdiction of Girsu/Lagas due to the literal meaning of the reading gú-ab-ba which did not

³⁸ Cf. also CT 05 36 BM 017751 = JESHO 20, 136 03 = OrAnt. 15,142.

include the determinative KI for the place name in text SRT 49 II 4, thus **gú-ab-ba** (“sea-shore”) in stead of the normal **gú-ab-ba^{ki}**.³⁹ It was supported by texts such as UET III 292 (šu-ha **gú-ab-ba** “fishermen of the seashore”) and UET III 1294, 1297, 1302 and 1314 referring to saltwater fisherman and marine fish (cf. Zarins 1992:66).

Since pre-Sargonic and Sargonic times, references to “large boats” hint at a trading colony which initially had direct contact with their distant ancestors (cf. “Introduction” above). The following literary document (Lamentation of Sumer and Ur, Michalowski 1989) confirms its previous status:

Line 168-169: ^dnin-mar-^{ki}-ra èš **gú-ab-ba-ka izi im-ma-da-an-te kù**
^{na4} za-gìn-bi má-gal-gal-la bala-šè ì-ak-e
“Fire approached Ninmarki in the shrine Guabba” (and) large boats
were transporting precious metals and gem stones”

In a Sumerian temple hymn (TH 23)⁴⁰ Guabba is twice mentioned in connection with the seas:

Line 283: é ab-šà-ga lá-a ki-kù-ga dù-a
 “House which extends over the midst of the sea, built on a holy place”
 Line 284:
gú-ab-ba^{ki} šà-zu nì-ù-tu erìn gar-gar-a
 “Guabba, your interior brings forth everything, (a firmly) founded storehouse”

During the Ur III period Guabba was nothing more than a village distant from the seashore, and probably extended its textile assets, because its workers

³⁹ Cf. Sjöberg and Bergman (1969:109, notes 64 and 65). This interpretation was then followed by others, such as Wilcke (1969:32-33), Foster 1982:162, note 18), Zarins (1992:66-67) and Heimpel (1976:527-528).

⁴⁰ Cf. Sjöberg and Bergman (1969:33-34, 108-109) for the publication, transliteration, translation and comments of this Sumerian temple hymn in the Old-Akkadian period.

became tremendously numerous (cf. Waetzoldt 1972:94). Guabba could now be reached inland by river boats and several texts refer to saltwater as well as river fishes. Several texts refer to the distance of the location to and from Guabba, namely twelve days travel from Guabba to Drehem (ITT V 6946), five towing days from Girsu to Guabba (ITT III 5084) which according to Zarins (1992: 67) works out to about ten kilometres per day which amounts to fifty kilometres, and according to Diakonov (1969:527) the distance measures fifty kilometres from Guabba to Girsu in the south. But Heimpel (1976:528) identifies it with Ishan Hoffa, fifty kilometres east of Girsu, and Zarins (1992:67) associates Guabba with Ijdaiwah, southeast of Girsu. However, this scenario fits into the description by Nissen (1988:194) that the sea waters decreased tremendously before the Ur III period which implies that several coastal towns were now situated much further from the seashore. This information would make perfectly sense if these foreign *Meluhhan* people were integrated into the local Mesopotamian civilization, because the various references to the *Meluhhans* in the Ur III texts do not implicate a foreign trade with *Meluhha* anymore, but rather that several exotic items were often coined as typical *Meluhhan*.

CONCLUSIONS

The implication of the connection of the place name Guabba with the *Meluhhan* village in the Ur III texts means that extended information can now be utilized with more related texts for the discussion of the location of *Meluhha* in the ancient world. All the possibilities of this connection cannot be explored at once, but still needs to be analysed. The following preliminary conclusions open further possibilities for additional research.

The text MVN 7 420 = ITT 4 8024 from Ur III Girsu does, however, link the *Meluhhan* village with Guabba (Gú-ab-ba^{ki}-ka é-duru₅ me-luḥ-ḥa).

The related evidence to the village or town is that Ur-^dLamma (Ur-^dLamma dumu me-luḥ-ḥa) (CT 3 17 = BM 014594) who has often been mentioned in other Ur III texts and two seals (Kišib Ur-^dLamma dumu *me-luḥ-ḥa*) (OBTR 242 + UDT 64) is a *Meluhhan* (dumu me-luḥ-ḥa).

The temple of Guabba has been described as the temple of ^dNinmar^{ki} while it is noteworthy that the *Meluhhan* garden (^{gis}kiri₆ *me-luḥ-ḥa* ^dNin-mar^{ki} (STA 19) was also connected to the temple of ^dNinmar^{ki} which means that the *Meluhhan* temple must have been ^dNinmar^{ki}.

When the above-mentioned evidence is taken into account one might be able to say that Guabba is a *Meluhhan* village in southern Mesopotamia, but it is still to be determined how the other two villages, namely the places Ni-na^{ki} and Ki-nu-nir^{ki}, are associated with Guabba (Gú-ab-ba^{ki}). Kunir and Nina might also be foreign related villages such as Guabba, but the matter needs further investigation.⁴¹

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⁴¹ Cf. šà NINA^{ki} ù Gú-ab-ba^{ki} (TUT 164-11 = SVS I/1 164-11 = OrAnt. 13, 208).

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Prof P S (Fanie) Vermaak
Department of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
University of South Africa
P O Box 392, Unisa, 0003 South Africa
Email: vermaps@unisa.ac.za