EXOTIC FRUITS - R. Englund

When in the pursuit of material goods the ruling houses of Mesopotamia discovered important sources which, as a result of difficult access, did not lend themselves to direct intervention and plundering, they often resorted to the establishment of monopolies over foreign trade and domestic markets to secure their uncommon needs. Dilmun, itself only a clearing house primarily of metals from Oman, thus lay in all periods on the periphery of Babylonian economic interests; by no means a vital element, it was nonetheless a matter of some prestige to be able to count the island outpost among those areas coming under the rulers' "sphere of interest".

The rapid and lucrative expansion of the empire of Sargon of Akkad (ca. 2340-2284 B.C.) is a case in point. Having consolidated his power in Sumer with military victories over Uruk, Umma, Lagash and Ur, the ruler concentrated his efforts on regions essential to the acquisition of metals, stone and wood: Elam to the East, and Syria perhaps as far as Anatolia to the Northwest. Yet in the well-known 28 column Old Babylonian copy from Nippur of inscriptions on Sargonic statues, the almost magical triad of overseas trading posts — Meluhha, Magan (4), and Dilmun — assumes a more than passing role:

The goods carried by these ships are not mentioned, but with some certainty have to do with copper, hardwoods, and diorite (6). Although the circumstance of tablet recovery — and it might again be noted that the capital Akkad has not been identified — should warn against any judgment of the available material, there is a striking lack of comprehensible references to Dilmun among Old Akkadian economic documents. Of the five texts known to me, four appear to come from Umma. USP 2 (7), a mu-iti text, records quantities of flour to be loaded (1) in a boat for Dilmun (rev. 8: má Dilmun.e ī.gu.); gurš-workers under assignment to the depot (2) of a Dilmun boat (3) are registered in the Girsu text ITT I, 1418. Finally, the bread and beer ration list CT 50, 55 as well as two unpublished Umma texts (9) record two men from Dilmun.

If on the other hand the overseas trade was in fact a state monopoly in the hands of the ruling family, the sparseness of text references from the "provinces" shouldn't be surprising: the sought documentation could instead...
lie buried, with Akkad, in the sands of Iraq.

Notes


2. If the epic of Sargon Šar tamhāri, found at El-Amarna (s. VS 12, 193 and KAV 138; E. Weidner, "Der Zug Sargons von Akkad nach Kleinasien," Bogazköi-Studien 6(1922):57–99) is to be believed.

3. CBS 13972 = PBS 5, 34 + 15, 41, photo of complete tablet PBS 15, pls. 3-7; edited H. Hirsch, AFO 20, 34-53. The scribe went from statue to statue copying the inscriptions and describing the spot where he found them; for example, after a short dedicatory inscription, with curse formula against anyone who tampers with the statue, is written rev.iv20'f. ki.gal.an.ta igi.ni.še a.ab.šar "written above the pedestal toward his (Rimuš') face".

4. For possible identifications of these two lands s. B. Alster in this volume; D. Potts, "The Road to Meluhha", JNES 41(1982):279-88 with pertinent literature.


6. Gudea Statue Div2-vi (s. E. de Sarzec, Decouvertes en Chaldée, Paris, 1884-1912, p. XVII-XIX) should be compared:

    As a result of the power of Nanše, and Ningirsu, the wood-bearers

    á dNanše.ta
    á dNin.gir.su.ka.ta
    Gù.dê.a

5 gidru sum.ma
    "Nin.gir.su.Ka.ra
    Mâ.gan̄;
    Meluh,ha ki
    Gu.bi ki

10 kur Dilmun̄;
    gu giš mu.na.gâl.la.am
    má giš dû.a.bi
    lagaš ki.sè
    mu.na.DU

15 hur,saq Mâ.gan̄; ki.ta
    na.eši im.ta.e!
    al.an na.še
    vî mu.tu

An indirect reference to copper and hardwood-producing Dilmun is made in Cyl. A (TCL 8, I-XXX) xvii-18: "He (Gudea) conferred with the divine Ninzagā (= Enzak of Dilmun), who transported copper like grain deliveries to the temple-builder Gudea. He conferred with the divine Ninsikila (= Meskilak of

7. B. Foster, *Umma in the Sargonic Period* (= Memoirs of the Conn. Acad. of Arts and Sciences 20, Hamden 1982) pl. 1; edited pp. 11–12. Correct there obv. 5 a.l.gā.iš.a 1.si (s. A. Salonen, *Die Hausgeräte der alten Mesopotamier* = AASF 139, Helsinki 1965, 184–87 to a.gā.iš = naruqqu); rev. 7 0,1,2,3 silla; p. 227 read Dilmun 12, 144.

8. Both USP II and ITT I, 1418 write dilmun NI+TUKU — like CBS 13972 — compared to the sign form in Sumerian documents NI+HUB, also attested in the Old Akkadian text CT 50, 55.