R. Thapar’s paper entitled “A Possible Identification of Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan” must, undoubtedly, be seen as a challenge, highlighted most emphatically by the order in which the three names are mentioned in the title. It may be expedient to open our critical observations with a short introduction intended for those who are not acquainted with the cuneiform material, which mentions these three geographical localities. Throughout our discussion of Romila Thapar’s interpretation, we will merely comment on the author’s dissertation, and where required, add further linguistic and cuneiform evidence to corroborate our points and clarify our, frequently opposing, viewpoints. This is done in order to avoid a tedious and superfluous repetition of the generally known facts which have lead to the specific identifications of Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha and which are now fairly unanimously accepted.

Assyriologists, Near Eastern and South Asian archaeologists generally accept the idea that the three names of Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha, which occur repeatedly in historical, geographical, mythical and economic cuneiform texts of the third millennium B.C., denote three separate areas. These were apparently situated on, or reached by way of the “Lower Sea”, i.e. the present Persian or Arabian Gulf and its adjacent waters, the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea (formerly called the Indian Ocean). Their ships are often referred to in the cuneiform records and they acted as sea trade centres, with whom the Sumerian cities
traded and from which they obtained various raw materials in exchange for their own export products. It is noteworthy that there is no clear textual evidence that during the third millennium B.C. areas other than Dilmun, Magan and Meluḫḫa were engaged in this flourishing Gulf trade; nor are there for that matter cuneiform records which mention directly any other sea-going boats except for those from these three regions\(^1\). A lexical text, probably of an Ur III date (end third millennium B.C.) gives details of ships and harbours and mentions only boats of Dilmun, Magan and Meluḫḫa besides those of Mari, Aššur, Ur and Akkad. These may in fact denote the main centres of trade, as Leemans suggests. Dilmun, Magan and Meluḫḫa are referred to both separately and together, according to context, but when jointly, usually Dilmun is named first followed by Magan and then Meluḫḫa. In one instance Sargon of Agade (2371-2317 B.C.) mentions them in the reverse order. Since Romila Thapar refers frequently to W. F. Leemans we quote: “The three countries are mentioned in the reverse order in the inscription of Sargon of Akkad, UM XV 41 VI 10-15. The former texts point out that the three countries were situated in the same direction reckoned from southern Mesopotamia and that Meluḫḫa was the most distant country. Sargon may have mentioned Meluḫḫa first, because in the relevant passage he boasts that boats from far away came to Akkad. As has been said already, Tilmun must be identified with the island of Bahrain and it is plausible that Magan was the region of ‘Omân in south-eastern Arabia. Meluḫḫa, therefore, may have been situated beyond the Gulf of ‘Omân.”\(^2\). Thus in most cuneiform texts in which the toponyms Magan and Meluḫḫa occur in succession, Magan is given first. Meluḫḫa in the Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform records apparently stands for a country located be-

1) For a possible location of Gu-pi-in\(^1\) or Ku-pi-in on or near the Persian Gulf and the possibility that Gupi(n) and Magan did not lie so far apart see W. F. Leemans, *Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period* (Studia et Documenta Vol. VI), Leiden, 1960, p. 12, note 1. Thapar identifies Gubin/Kupin with the west coast of India, either the coastal area of Karnataka or the western Deccan.

2) Leemans, 1960, p. 159.