Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Tamil:  
The Meaning of the Word Ἐρυθράς in Erythraean Sea  

By D Pugazhendhi*

Ἐρυθρὰς of Greek and Erythraeos of Latin denote a portion of ocean. From the Greek word ἐρυθρός, it is thought that the sea is red in colour and so got its name, the Red Sea. There is also another thought that the name of the sea is not due to its colour, but the first person who crossed this sea was called Erythras, and so the sea is named after him. The research that has been done so far has taken into account the Greek and Persian language root to this word, but has not yet reached a final conclusion. Tamil Nadu also has a remarkable place in this connection. In the word Ἐρυθράς θάλατταν, “Ery” means “throw” both in Greek and Tamil and “thrae” means hair in Greek and “wave” in Tamil. The word “thrae” has a common meaning which is that of either a group, or in general any gathering of a small number of objects. Thus, Ἐρυθρὰς of Greek and Erythraeos of Latin has the meaning of ‘throwing ocean wave’ in Tamil. In studying the other word Περίπλοσς (Περί + πλος), of Περίπλοσς τής Ἐρυθρᾶς Θαλάσσης, the first part of the word, Peri, means big or long and the latter part of the word πλος, which is the metathesis of πόλις has the meaning land or city. Thus the words Περίπλοσς τής Ἐρυθρᾶς Θαλάσσης has the meaning – “the cities or the lands of the ocean of throwing waves”. It is well known that both the Greeks and Romans had a flourishing sea trade with Tamil Nadu in the ancient period of history and there was ample possibility of words being borrowed from Tamil to Greek.

Keywords: Erythraean Sea, Greek, Latin, sea trade, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Many are aware of the Red Sea, but may not know the reason for calling it so. Only a few know the ancient name of the Red Sea, and when looked by its name, has a lot of hidden mysteries.

Ἐρυθρὰς Θάλατταν (Red Sea)

The ancient literary sources of Greek mention a sea name called Ἐρυθρὰς Θάλατταν; this is translated as “Red Sea.”

After this they pass through Babylonia and empty into the Red (Ἐρυθρὰς) Sea.  
(Oldfather 1989)

Diod. 2.11. 2, 3

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The ancient literary sources of Latin also mention the name of the same sea. Here it is translated as Indian Ocean (Heraeus 1976).

Puella senibus dulcior mihi cyclis,
Agna Galaesi mollior Phalantini,
Concha Lucrini delicatior stagni,
Cui nec lapillos praeferas Erythraeos,
5. Nec modo politum pecudis Indicae
dentem
Nivesque primas liliumque non tactum;
Martial, Epigrammata 5. 37.

Child, more sweet to me than the song of aged swans, more tender than a lamb of Phalantine Galaesus, more delicate than a shell of the Lucrine lake; you to whom no one could prefer the pearls of the Indian Ocean, or the newly polished tooth of the Indian elephant, or the newly fallen snow, or tho untouched lily;

Thus, the words Ἐρυθραῖς θαλάτται of Greek and Erythraeos of Latin sometimes denote Red Sea, and at other instances denote Indian Ocean or Arabian Sea or Bay of Bengal as depicted in the Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Location of the Erythraeos or Ἐρυθραῖς Θαλάτται**

![World Map](image)

**Significance of the Location**

There were two trade routes between Europe and Asia. One route was by land and the other by sea. The way through the land was called the Silk Road; along the path of the sea, Erythraeos or Ἐρυθραῖς θαλάτται has an important place. From the
many articles that were transported through this sea route, the much valued pearls from Pandion Country in the Tamil land finds a special mention here (Pugazhendhi 2021a) (Heraeus 1976).

9. Splendent *Erythraeis* perlucida moecha Your mistress shines resplendent lapillus, 
   Martial, Epigrammata 9. 2.

The pearls are mentioned as Erythraean pearls in Latin literature. At many times silk was the main material of trade and transport along the silk route and also through sea route (Warmington 1928). This was due to a problem that was raised in the silk route (Zuchowska 2013) as shown in the Figure 2.

59. From Comari toward the south this region extends to Colchi, where the pearl-fisheries are; and it belongs to the Pandian Kingdom. Beyond Colchi there follows another district called the Coast Country, which lies on a bay, and has a region inland called Argaru. At this place, and nowhere else, are bought the pearls gathered on the coast thereabouts; and from there are exported muslins, those called Argaritic.

5. Certain of the Indians tell the following story about Heracles, that when he had passed over every land and sea and had rid them of every evil beast, he found in the sea a woman's ornament, such as up to the present day those who bring wares from India to us still buy with zeal and carry away. In former times the Greeks and now the Romans who are fortunate and wealthy with still greater zeal buy what is called in the Indian tongue the marine pearl. The ornament seemed so fine to Heracles that he collected pearls like this from all the sea and brought them to India to be an adornment for his daughter.” 8–10, Chapter viii, Indica, Arrian (Eberhard 1885)

3. Woven silk destined to be dyed for wear, and unwoven silk destined to be worked up in Egypt, Syria, and Galilee could be sent conveniently byway of the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea, and this cheaper route avoiding Parthia would be encouraged by the Romans.…. silk sellers frequented *Kaviripaddinam in the Chola Kingdom*… Rome, who encouraged such developments for the purpose of eliminating the Parthians and the expensive land-route, and we ultimately bear of Indian silks besides Chinese, Parthian, and Median robes. But the Indians became intermediaries in two ways—for though part of the silk sent by them to the Romans was
Thus Ἐρυθραῖον θάλασσα or Erythraeos has an important place in the sea trade, much more than on the Silk Road. There is no clear evidence available as to how the people of these far away places came to know each other and were able to take up the journey of such a long sea trade. It is said that the frequent occurring floods might have been one of the reasons that have made people of these places to meet. It can be assumed from the words of Berossus, from Apollodorus of the Chaldaean Kings, who belonged to the third century BC (Cory 1832):

He tells that the first king was Alorus of Babylon, a Chaldaean: he reigned ten sari: and afterwards Alaparus, and Amelon who came from Pantibiblon: then Ammenon the Chaldaean, in whose time appeared the Musaros Oannes the Anedotus from the Erythrean Sea. Then succeeded Megalarus from the city of Pantibiblon and he reigned eighteen sari: and after him Duonous the shepherd from Pantibiblon reigned ten sari; in his time (he says) appeared again from the Erythrean Sea a fourth Anedotus, having the same form with those above, the shape of a fish blended with that of a man. Then reigned Euedorachus from Pantibiblon, for the term of eighteen sari; in diverted from the land-route for that purpose, part of it was the result of India’s own trade in Chinese silk.

Chinese sources reveal that the Parthians did not encourage foreign traders, striving to retain their monopoly on commerce between East and West. In Hou Han Shu, the Chronicle of the Later Han Dynasty covering the first two centuries AD, we can read: King of this country [Da Qin – Roman Empire] always wanted to send envoys to China, but people from Anxi [Parthia], wishing to control their trade in the multicoloured silk, blocked the road and they could not reach [China] (HHS 88, Account on Western Regions 78, Account on Da Qin [Roman Empire]).
his days there appeared another personage from the Erythraean Sea like the former, having the same complicated form between a fish and a man, whose name was Odacon Chron. 39. Euseb. Chron. 5.
Berossus: From Apollodorus of the Chaldean Kings.

Thus, the floods might have made the people of Ἕρυθραν 0̱άλατταν — Erythraeans to shift and move to far away places. Here it is noted that the Ionic Greeks also had the name Ἕρυθραν who had inhabited that place.

Eρυθράοι δὲ οἱ Ἴωνες Ἐπιθέρσην τὸν Μητρόδώρου, δύο μὲν ἐν Ὀλυμπία πυγμῆς, Paus. 6.15.6.

Those people seem to differ from the people who belong to Greece.

(3) γλώσσαν δὲ οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν οὗτοι νεωμίκασι, ἀλλὰ τρόπους τέσσερας παραλλαγῶν. Μιλήτων μὲν αὐτέων πρώτη κέται πόλις πρὸς μεσσαμβρίνην, μετὰ δὲ Μυσῆς τε καὶ Πρήνην. (4) αὐτὰ μὲν ἐν τῇ Καρίᾳ κατοίκηται κατὰ τάξαν διαλεγόμενα σφίσι, αἰδέ δὲ ἐν τῇ Λιδή, Ῥέσσων Κολοφόνον Λέβεδος Τέσσας Κλαξόμεναι Φώθας: αὐτὰ δὲ οἱ πόλεις τής πρώτης λεξικείας ὁμολογέονσι κατὰ γλώσσαν οὐδέν, σφίσι δὲ ὁμοφωνέονσι. ἓτι δὲ τρεῖς ὑπόλοιποι ἱάδες πόλεις, τῶν αἱ δύο μὲν νήσους οἰκεῖται, Σάμον τε καὶ Χίον, ἢ δὲ μία ἐν τῇ Ῥήγαιρῳ ἱδρύται, Ἕρυθραῖ. Χίοι μὲν νῦν καὶ Ἕρυθράοι κατὰ τόι τούτῳ διαλέγονται, Σάμιοι δὲ ἐπ᾽ ἔσοδον μιὸν τοῖς χαρακτηρῖς γλώσσας τέσσερες γίνονται.
Hdt. I. 142.

(3) They do not all have the same speech but four different dialects. Miletus lies farthest south among them, and next to it come Myus and Priene; these are settlements in Caria, and they have a common language: Ephesus, Colophon, Lebedos, Teos, Clazomenae, Phocaea, all of them in Lydia, (4) have a language in common which is wholly different from the speech of the three former cities. There are yet three Ionic cities, two of them situated on the islands of Samos and Chios, and one, Erythrae, on the mainland; the Chians and Erythraeans speak alike, but the Samians have a language which is their own and no one else’s. It is thus seen that there are four modes of speech.
(Godley 1920)

The reason for this name Erythrae - Erythraeans is not clear to understand, but there are possibilities for one to assume that it may denote some person.
There is also some thoughts that they might have originated from Crete.

According to the myth which the priests give, the gods had their origin in Crete, and were led by Zeus to Panchaea at the time when he sojourned among men and was king of the inhabited earth. In proof of this they cite their language, pointing out that most of the things they have about them still retain their Cretan names; and they add that the kinship which they have with the Cretans and the kindly regard they feel toward them are traditions they received from their ancestors, since this report is ever handed down from one generation to another. And it has been their practice, in corroboration of these claims, to point to inscriptions which, they said, were made by Zeus during the time he still sojourned among men and founded the temple.

(Oldfather 1989)
Figure 3. Locations of Ionia, Babylon and Crete

Thus the word Ἐρυθραῖοι - Erythraeans has an important place in both sea trade and inhabitation. Due to this, the root meaning of this word has an important place in the research field.

Ἐρυθραῖοι - Erythraeans – The Meaning

There are some arguments in the search of the meaning of these words (Schoff 1913). The colour red is also related with this name (Schoff 1913).

Red Colour

The name of the sea is related with the word “red”. There are many words for “red” in ancient Greek like πυρρόν, φοινίκιος and ἄρεόςα.

5The origin of geographical names is often beyond explanations: they arise by accident, pass from mouth to mouth and from age to age, taking on new meanings and new locations, until they become mere arbitrary words, and imagination must come in to explain them. So it is with the name of the Erythraean Sea.
6Now it is true that from Roman times onward Mare Rubrum, Red Sea, meant the long gulf that separates Egypt from Arabia; and it is equally true that under certain conditions of wind and climate a reddish vegetable scum forms on its almost stagnant waters, from which the name “Red” might have been suggested.
315ιππο μελαίης ἱγεμών τρισμυρίας, πυρράν ζωτική δάκτυλον γενειάδα ἐτεγγ', ἀμείβων χρώτα πορφυρά βαρη. Aesch. Pers. 316

185. πολύθυτον δε δι' ἄλοσος Αρτέμιδος ἠλύθον ὀρομένα, φυλισσούσα παρηδ' ἐμαν αἰσχίνα νεοθαλεῖ, Eur. I. A.
(Murray 1913)


άλλ' οὐ Ζεὺς ἀνδρεσα λοήματα πάντα τελευτᾷ: 329. ἀμφο γάρ πέρπετοι ὀμοίψ γαῖαν ἑρέθεσαι

In this ἑρέθεσαι is the word used for red which has phonetic resemblance with the word Ἕρυθραν that is related with sea. So the name of the sea is related with the word red.

Ἐρυθράν γάρ λέγειν τινάς τὴν θάλατταν ἀπὸ τῆς χρωτῆς τῆς ἐμφανομένης κατ' ἄνάκλασιν, εἶτε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἤλου κατὰ κοριφήν ὄντος εἶτε ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρέων ἑρυθραμένων ἐκ τῆς ἀποκατάσεως ἀμφοτέρως γάρ εἰκάζεται. Κτησίας δὲ τῶν Κλίνθου πηγῆν ἱστορεῖν ἐκδιδόσαν εἰς τὴν θάλατταν ἑρεθῇς καὶ μυληθῆς ὀδωρ: Strab. 16.4.20

Some of these say, that the sea is red from the colour arising from reflection either from the sun, which is vertical, or from the mountains, which are red by being scorched with intense heat; for the colour, it is supposed, may be produced by both these causes. Ctesius of Cnidus speaks of a spring which discharges into the sea a red and ochrous water.
(Jones 1924)

The word Ἕρυθραν – Erythraeans is related to the word ἑρεθῶν, and so the word ‘red’ is not fully accepted by both Latin and Greek scholars.
14. Nec, cur vererit se natura, causa. Mare certe, quo adluitur, ne colore quidem abhorret a ceteris. Ab *Erythros* rege inditum est nomen: propter quod ignari rubere aquas credunt. Terra lini ferax:
Roman historian, 1st-century AD
(Curtius 1908)

Thus, the reason for the name of the Erythras which is related with the red colour seems to shift to a Persian person called Erythras (Schoff 1913).⁷

Agatharchides, his fellow-citizen, relates, on the authority of a person of the name of Boxus, of Persian descent, that when a troop of horses was driven by a lioness in heat as far as the sea, and had passed over to an island, a Persian of the name of Erythras constructed a raft, and was the first person who crossed the sea to it; perceiving the island to be well adapted for inhabitants, he drove the herd back to Persia, and sent out colonists both to this and the other islands and to the coast. He [thus] gave his own name to the sea. But according to others, it was Erythras the son of Perseus who was the king of this country.
(Jones 1924)

Thus the word Ἐρυθρᾶν – Erythraeans is related with a Persian name Erythras. Even today the argument is divisive, because so far as this research is concerned it is only related with the evidence found in Greek and Persian sources (Schoff 1913).⁸ However, there are many sources related with the word Ἐρυθρᾶν, meaning Erythraeans Sea. One other source is Tamil.

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⁷The word Erythraean, which came to them from Persia. It is through that connection that its origin and meaning must be sought.
⁸The presence of algae in sufficient quantity to colour the surface over a large area would be an exceptional occurrence, not likely to lend a name to the sea. This suggestion was made by Lobo more than a century ago. In conclusion we may say that looking out of Greece through Persia to the ancient East, we may gather from the name Erythraean several meanings, all of them reasonable. “Sea of the East, the Orient, or the rising sun”; “Sea where the sun was 55
Tamil and Ἐρυθραῖαν

Tamil Nadu is situated on the Ἐρυθραῖαν – Erythraeans Sea route and also took part in the sea trade (Schoff 1917). The pearl (Seland 2016, Warington 1928), pepper (Warington 1928), (Cappers 2006), sapphires (Warington 1928), worshipped”; “Sea whence came the people who brought the purple or Erythraean dye”, and finally, “Sea of King Erythras” typifying the ancient pre-Semitic Akkadian- Dravidian trade. Certainly with these vistas of the past opened through that name, we cannot rest satisfied with an interpretation that would limit it to a temporary accumulation of vegetable matter localized at a point to which the name was not originally applied. The Tamil poem Paddinappalai gives us a vivid description of a busy port of the Chola Kingdom, Kavirippaddinam, which was built on the northern bank of the Kaviri River, then a broad and deep stream into which heavily laden ships entered from the sea without slackening sail. At the beach were raised platforms and warehouses where cargoes were stored. The goods were stamped with the royal tiger stamp after payment of customs duty and then released to the merchants. Close by were settlements of the Yavana merchants, which name included not only Ionians or Greeks, but Graeco-Bactrians and Parthians. Here were quartered foreign traders from other lands beyond the seas, and precious cargoes of many kinds were brought from all directions. The author of the Periplus mentions the three kingdoms of southern India: Chera, with its port of Muziris, the Muchiri of the Tamil poets; Pandya, the capital of which, Madura, Pliny reports as Modiera; and the “coast country”, that is, Chola, with its capital called Argaru, that is Uragapura, Uraiyyir, the modern Trichinopoly on the Kaviri, while the port of Kavirippaddinam he mentions as Camara, and says that there were in that port not only the large single-masted vessels peculiar to the Malabar coast, but others very much larger which made the voyage to Chryse and the Ganges. He mentions Chryse as an island opposite the Ganges and under the rising sun and tells us that beyond Chryse the sea comes to an end, and that to the north was “a land called This with an inland city called Thinae from which silk was brought overland through Bactria to the Gulf of Cambay and by way of the Ganges to the ports of Damirica”, that is, Tamil Land, the Tamilakam of their poets (Peripl. Mar. Erythr. 63, 64).

In the early Empire, when Barygaza was the port most frequently visited, the ultimate source of the pearls was probably the Persian Gulf, for it was from here that the merchants of Barygaza procured them; but some of better quality may have been brought from South India and Ceylon, which are still among the chief producers. Literature tells us that traders in coral and pearls frequented Kavirippaddinam of the Chola Kingdom, and this town contained resident Greek merchants; similarly, a poet who visited Uraiyyir, the ancient Chola capital, speaks of coral and pearls together, with rare gems also, and as is shewn by the passage in the “Toy cart”, jewellers’ shops regularly sold coral.

Black Pepper which, when the Periplus was written was exported in vast quantities from Muziris and Nelcunda, being brought down from Nelcunda to Bacare in large boats, while doubtless the port of Tyndis, receiving supplies down the river Ponnani, sent them on to swell the quantities gathered into Muziris and carried away by Greeks in especially large ships brought for the purpose...Pepper became part of the everyday life of every respectable household in Rome, since its chief use was as an ordinary spice, only a few old people, it was said were unable to taste pepper and other eastern fruits in their food. In consequence the spice appears in almost every recipe given by Apicius in his ten books and seems to have been more important than salt or sugar is in the cookery books of today. But besides this both species of peppers were used in all kinds of medicines and drugs, as Pliny, Galen, Celsus, Scribonius, and other writers who deal with medicines, constantly shew, and pepper is generally the only Indian spice which appears in medical recipes preserved on papyri. Its use as a medicine dates from the time of Hippocrates to whom it was the “Indian remedy”, and the constant mention of it in Graeco-Roman medicine, particularly in connection with agues and fevers, has led Dr
iron (Warmington 1928)\textsuperscript{14} and timber (Pugazhendi 2021b)\textsuperscript{15} were the important articles of trade. This trade leads to literary transactions also. This category is of three types, viz. 1. Literary Themes, 2. Literary Forms, 3. Literary Policy.

**Literary Themes**

The theme of the Latin subjective love elegy related with Erythraean pearls is parallel with the Tamil subjective love elegy (Wilhelm, 1976).

May you live long, my heart!
Even if this city were gifted to me, I will not leave my girl with long, black hair and blazing jewels.

218-220, Pattinappālai,  
Sanga Ilakkiam,  
(Tamil Virtual University 1995)

I prophesy you’ll wish for your wife’s true love:  
I think the Gods themselves have learnt that by now.  
You’d not prefer to have all the land in the world that sturdy farmers plough with strong oxen,  
nor all the pearls produced by happy India,  
where the waves of Eastern Seas redden.

II Cornutus’s Birthday, Book II,  
Tibullus, (Smith 1913)

**Literary Forms**

Latin subjective love elegy has the form consisting of a hexameter verse followed by a pentameter verse. This form and theme are parallel with the Tamil subjective love elegy.

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\textsuperscript{14}Jones to the conclusion that it was used as an antidote against the ever present malaria in the Roman Empire. We need not wonder that attempts were made to introduce the cultivation of pepper to the West, and in Petronius the wealthy Trimalchio grows his own pepper, but Pliny says that when planted in Italy it lost its flavour.

\textsuperscript{15}Black pepper (Piper nigrum) is native to southern India and is attested by archaeological evidences.

\textsuperscript{16}For the author of the Periplus found sapphires at Muziris and Nelcunda only..... The hard sapphire first came into use as a gem-stone in the Graeco-Roman period, and extant examples shew us its use (generally unengraved, as was natural) in jewellery and rings and shew too the quantities obtained under the Byzantine Empire. Engraved sapphires one-half and even one inch wide, the so-called signet of Constantius II (a sapphire of 53 carats) and a perforated stone of Hadrian’s time are all extant examples of ancient trade in splendid oriental sapphires

\textsuperscript{17}Fine swords made of Indian steel had been famous, since the time of Ctesias, and the Roman trade in Indian Iron and Steel was an important one. Since Pliny says that the finest of all iron was sent by the Seres with their tissues and skins the natural conclusion is that this metal was from the province of Shan-Si in China or at least from Ferghana. But, as Schoff has pointed out, the Periplus does not indicate the exportation of silk and steel together at the same marts, and we must take Seres as being Cheras of the Malabar coast (981).

\textsuperscript{18}The three woods σαμαριτίων, δοκός and κεράτων have been transported through sea trade from the Tamil land to the Greek and Hebrew lands.
Her gorging eyes have two gazes, one gaze inflicts the malady, the other gaze is remedy for that malady.

Medicine cures all the anguish of mankind; love alone loves no physician

**Literary Policy**

Tamil subjective love elegy has some literary policy in its subjective love elegy. It won’t be mentioned the name of the subjective and its partner in the text. This policy is also seen in Latin love elegy (Beyers 1962). This was due to the travel of commercial ships between these two lands and this is confirmed by the ancient Greek work called Περίπλους τῆς Ῥωμαίας Θηλάσσης. Tyndis is of the Kingdom of Cerobothra; it is a village in plain sight by the sea. Muziris, of the same Kingdom, abounds in ships sent there with cargoes from Arabia, and by the Greeks; it is located on a river, distant from Tyndis by river and sea five hundred stadia, and up the river from the shore twenty stadia. Nelcynda is distant from Muziris by river

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16The form of E. 7 is interesting because it is not really dramatic. All critics note that the singers do not themselves appear. Meliboeus introduces the words of the singers as he introduces Daphnis’ words, and the text should dispense with the words Corydon Thrysis alternately. Since in E.1, 3, 5 and 9 the odd number and the dramatic arrangement really are the sign of interplay between characters actually present, would we not be justified in thinking that this departure from the norm is intentional, specially emphasizing the absence of any data on which to judge character? Even if there is not any special emphasis, it is true that we learn nothing of the characters of the two poets from their own actions either before or during the contest.

17In Greek language the word ‘βάρβαρος’ is used to denote the foreigners.

τὸ μὲν Ἑλληνικὸν ὡς ἐν ἀπὸ πάντων ἀραιοφόρων χωρίς, σύμπαν δὲ τοὺς ἄλλους γένεσιν, ἀπεφόρος ὦς καὶ ἀμείκτος καὶ ἀμυγμόφως πρὸς ἀλλήλα, βαρβάρον μὲν κλήσαν προσεπώνας αὐτῷ διὰ τούτην τὴν μίαν κλῆραν καὶ γένος ἐν αὐτῷ εἶναι προσδιοκόνοις: Plat. Stat. 262d

(Burnet 1903)

In Tamil language the words “Barbar” and “Parpanar” (Tamil Virtual University 1995) are used to denote the foreigners including Greeks. (B and P sounds are same in Tamil language)
πεντακοσίων, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ κατ᾽ αὐτὴν εἴκοσι. Ἡ δὲ Νέλκυνδα σταδίους μὲν ὄπω Μονέκερνους ἀπέχει σχεδὸν πεντακοσίων, ὄμοιος δὲ τις ποταμῶν (καὶ πεζῷ) καὶ διὰ θαλάσσης. βασιλείας δὲ ἐστὶν ἐπάρχει, τῆς Πανδίονος καθίσται δὲ καὶ αὐτῇ παρὰ ποταμῶν, ὅσει ἀπὸ σταδίων ἕκατὸν εἴκοσι τῆς θαλάσσης.

— παράγραφοι 53-54.

Περὶ πλουὸς τῆς Ἑριθηρίας Θαλάσσης

This is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Greek and Tamil Nadu**

In this way, the ancient Greek works guarantee the sea trade that took place between the Greeks and the Tamilians. This Pandion (Πανδίον) is the Panchaea (Παγραία) associated with Crete and Pantibiblon of Babylon. Here it is to be noted that the king Pandion (Πανδίονος) of Tamil Nadu was one among the members on the side of the Trojan army that is indicated in the epic Iliad.

'37ο ὡς ἄρα φονήσας ἀπέβη Τελαμώνιος Ἀιας, καὶ οἱ Τεῦκρος ἄμε, ἢ κασίγνητος καὶ ὀπατρὸς; τοῖς δ' ἄμα Πανδίον Τεῦκρου φέρε καμπύλα τόξα. Hom. II. Book 12.

So saying Telamonian Aias departed, and with him went Teucer, his own brother, begotten of one father, and with them Pandion bare the curved bow of Teucer. (Murray 1924)

This Tamil Pandion was also related with the myth of Karna who has resemblance with Ion of Ionia. The Greek Sapphic stanzas of Lesbos that is situated near the Ionic of Erythrae has resemblance with Tamil Seppal songs (Pugazhendhi 2020). The Greek epics Argonautica and Medea have resemblance with Tamil epic, Silappathikaram (Pugazhendhi 2021a). This evidence ensures
that the people of Tamil Nadu took part in the sea trade of Ερυθραίς Θαλάσσης and so had relationships with the Greeks. Thus, apart from Greek and Persian there is also a need to search in Tamil language the meaning of the word Ερυθραίς. Hence to get to know more about it, it is not apt to search for its meaning in Tamil sources in isolation, but when it is related along with Greek sources it will be more meaningful and relevant.

Ερυθραίς in Tamil

Ancient Tamil literary sources mentions Ερυθραίς - Erythraeans as Erytherai. The original text that shows its occurrence is as follows:

The phonetic form and their meanings are given below (Tamil Virtual University 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tamil Text</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>valam paTu tIvin polam pUN vaLavan;</td>
<td>Valavan wears gold ornaments that he took from an island with his unfailing sword.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ekytheraep perug kadal iRutikkaN celinum,</td>
<td>Even if the Ερυθραίς Θαλάτταν should end or the sun with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teRu katirk kanali ten ticait tOnRinum,</td>
<td>its hot rays appears in the south, we will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'en?' enRu ajcalam, yAmE; ven vEl</td>
<td>not fear and worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aruj camam kaTakkum ARRal avan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tirun'tu kazal n‘On tANG n‘izalEmE.
tiNat atu; tuRai paricijviTai; kaTain‘lai
viTaiyum Am.

Thus, Ερυθραῖες – Erythraeans mentioned as Erytherae in Tamil. Here it is expressed as a combination of two words.

**Ερυθραῖες – Two Parts**

The words found in Greek such as Ερυθραῖες, Ερυθράζ, Ερυθροῖοι, and that in Latin Erythraeis shall be looked at as a combination of two words in the same way as seen in Tamil language. That is Ερυ + θραῖες or θροῖοι in Greek, and Ery + thraeis in Latin. There is a resemblance in the words such as “Ερυ or Ery or Éri” as that seen in Tamil (Tamil Virtual University 1995).

1. il ezu vayalai IRRu A tinRena,
   pan‘tu n‘lattu eRin’tu, pAvai n‘Ikki,
   Natrinai 179, Sanga Ilakkiam
   my capable young daughter beat
   on her belly, threw her ball down on
   the ground, and abandoned her doll,

   Uz aTi otugkinum uyagkum aim pAR
   ciRu pal kUn‘taR pOtU piTittu aruLAtu, 20
   eRi kOL citaiya n‘URavum ciRupuRam,
   ‘enakku urittu’ ennAL, n‘inRa en
   amark kA n ajaiyai alaita kaIyE!
   makaTpOkkiya cevilittAy colliyatu.
   even if she walked
   with her usual delicate steps, she
   suffered.

   When I held her short, thick five-part
   braid
   with flowers and beat her without
   grace,
   and the **Throwing stick** that I used
   cracked and broke,
   she stood there without uttering,

   pakal ARRuppaTutta pazagkaN mAlai,
   10. kAtalarp pirin‘ta pulampin n‘Otaka,
   Ar ajar uRUn‘ar aru n‘iRam cuTTik
   kUr eHku eRijaran alaital AnAtu,
   painful evening that brought distress
   to lovers, has caused the sun to set,
   and helpless sorrow that surprisingly
   removes intelligence has come.
   It has come to hurt us like a sharp
   spear **thrown** at our precious chests.

   Akanānūrū 71, Anthi Ilankieranār,
   Sanga Ilakkiam

Thus, the Tamil word “ery or eri” has the meaning “throw”, the meaning for which can be searched in Greek and it also has these type of words.
κρόσσας μὲν πύργων ἢρυον, καὶ ἔρειφον The pinnets of the fortifications
ἐπάλξεις, they dragged down and
Hom. II. 12. 258 overthrow the battlements,

(Μurray 1924)

dόμων πάντων, πᾶν δ’ ἔρειφον I saw the cornice of the house fall, and
στέγος the whole roof hurled in ruins on the
Eur. I. T. 48. ground, from the highest pillars.

(Potter 1938a)

κόματος ἑξαναδός, τά τ’ ἔρειφται Making his way forth from the surge
ἦπαιρόνδε, νίχει παρέξ, where it belched upon the shore, he
Hom. Od. 5. 438 swam outside,

(Murray 1919)

τοιγάρ σ’ ὁ δαίμον εἴσορὰ μὲν οὐ τί πως αὐτίκ’, εἶπερ οἴδε καὶοὐντα λόγοι πρὸς ἄστου Θήβης, οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ’ ὅπως πόλιν 1373. κεῖνην ἔρειφες, ἀλλὰ πρόσθεν

(Murray 1919) ἀμάτη πετεῖ μιανθείς χῶ σύναμος ἐξ ἴσου.
Soph. OC. (Storr 1912)

Thus the Greek root word “ἔρει” conveys the same meaning “throw” as that of the Tamil word “ery”. Here it is used in the verb form. Some of the words that are used in the noun form are related with water bodies. For example, one such root word “ἔρει” which is used in noun form has relation with sea.

Would that the pine trees had never been felled in the glens of Mount Pelion and furnished oars for the hands (5) of the heroes who at Pelias’ command set forth in quest of the Golden Fleece!

(Kovacs 1994a)

μηδ’ ἐν νάσσαις Πηλίου πετείν ποτε Τιμήθεια πεφκή, μηδ’ ἔρειφον ἄριστεον οὐ το πάγχωσον

(Kovacs 1994a) δόρος Πελίας μετῆλθον. οὐ γὰρ ἂν δέσποιν’ ἐμὴ
Eur. Med. Would! shall countless warriors,

(Κovacs 1994a) περιπατεμένοι, armed with shields, those
μηρίοι δ’ ἔρειφ’ ἐχοντες, πατρίδος Dief χρυσῆρας, ἃραν τι τολμήσουσιν ἐχθροῖς χύπερ Ἐλλάδος

(Coleridge 1891) πεπεχθῆν’ ἐθνείν,
Eur. I A. What! shall countless warriors,
(Murray 1913) armed with shields, those
μηρίοι δ’ ἔρειφ’ ἐχοντες, πατρίδος
θόκηκενηίν,

(Coleridge 1891) ὁράν τι τολμήσουσιν ἐχθροῖς χύπερ Ἐλλάδος

(Coleridge 1891) πεπεχθῆν’ ἐθνείν,
Eur. I A. What! shall countless warriors,
(Murray 1913) armed with shields, those
μηρίοι δ’ ἔρειφ’ ἐχοντες, πατρίδος
Fulfil this my prayer, and fix upon the mound my oar wherewith I rowed in life when I was among my comrades.’

(Murray 1919)

(280) Man with twenty rowers the best ship thou hast, and go to seek tidings of thy father,

(Murray 1919)

In Latin “eruere” means “to belch or vomit forth, to throw up”.

For soon as, gorged with feasting and o’ercome with drunken slumber, the foul giant lay sprawled through the cave, his head dropped helpless down, disgorging as he slept thick drool of gore and gobbets drenched with bloody wine; then we, calling on Heaven and taking place by lot

(Williams 1910)

and even the pearl, fished from the Indian seas.

(Pearse 2008)

Thus the Tamil word “Ery or ery or eri” and Greek word “ἐρεῖ” and Latin “erueta” have the same meaning “throw” in all these languages. Further it is also related with oar and it has resemblance with “Ἐρο” of Ἑροθραῖ (Ἐρο + ὀράν) of the Greeks.

Θραῖ - Θραῖοι – Thraeis

The second part of Ἑροθραῖοι or Ἑροθράν in Greek and Erythraeis of Latin are ὀράν - ὀράιοι – thraeis. Resemblance with this second part of the word is also seen in subjective love elegy poems of Tamil literature (Tamil Virtual University 1995).
avan tAnum, n’ilam thiraikkam kaTal
tAnaip
15. polan’ tumpaik kazal pANti
kaNai poruta tuLaIt tOlannE.

Puranānūru 97, Poet Avvaiyār sang for
Athiyamān Nedumān Anji, Sanga
Ilakkiam

puL uRa ocin’ta pU mayagku aLLal
kazic curam n’ivakkum inuj ciRai ivuLi
10 thiraic taru puNarįyn kazUum
mali thiraic cErppanoTu amain’ta n’am
toTarpE?

Natrinai 63, Ulōchanār, Sanga Ilakkiam

ini n’inain’tu irakkam AkinRu: tiNi
maNal
ceyvRu pAvaikkuk koy pUt taii,
naN kayam ATum makaLiRoTu kai
piNain’tu, tazuuvazit tazli, tUgkuvaZit tUgki,
5. maRai enal aRiyA maYam il
AyamoTu
uyar cinai marurat tuRai uRat tAz’n’tu,
n’Ir n’aNip pTi kOTu ERi, clr mika,
karaiyar maruLa, thiraikam pitira,
n’eTu n’Irk kuTattut tuTumenap
pAyn’tu,
10. kuLittu maNal koNTa kallA
iLamai
aLiOAnE! yANTu uNTu koliO
toTIt talai vizut taNTu UnRi,
n’aTukuRRu,
irum iTai miTain’ta cila col
peru mUTaLarEm Akiya emakkE?

Puranānūru 243, Poet Thodithalai
Viluthandinār sang for Ollaiyūr Kīlān
Makan Perunchāthan, Sanga
Ilakkiam

He himself, with an army like the wave
surfEd
ocean that contains the land, wears a gold
thumpai flower
garland and carries a shield pierced by
arrows

Will our friendship
with the lord of the ocean with
abundant waves, who washes his horses tied to
large
yokes in the water brought by waves,
after riding through brackish waters
near mud
where birds have sat and dropped
flowers,
ruin her?

Sadness is what it will be if I think about it
now.
When I was young, I used to play with girls
near the cool pond as they made sand dolls
and decorated them with the flowers they
plucked.
We held hands, hugged each other, I swayed
when
they swayed, and we played with innocence
with
nothing to hide. I would climb on a low
branch
of a marutham tree with tall branches, close
to
the
water, and dive into the huge pond with a
splash
as those on the shore would look in
amazement
as I brought out a handful of sand from the
bottom.
That was being an ignorant youth. Where
did
that go? It’s pitiable now that I have a thick,
metal-capped walking stick and a trembling
gait.
I have become too old and can just utter a
few
close words between coughs. This is
pathetic.
Here the waves are denoted with the word “therae” and the water bodies are called as “tiraiakam”. The word “therae” derived from its verb form which is equivalent to the verb form that represents “swarm” - a large number of particles that are together. Here the water particles related to the meaning of “swarm” join and make the waves. How this word is used in the Sanskrit language may also be studied.

**Therae in Sanskrit**

_in the_ Sanskrit language the word “therae” is not meant as wave, but “Samutherae” (Samu + therae) means flood or ocean (Griffith 1896).

5. aṛṣṭiṣṇo hotraṁ ṛṣimirīdan 5 Knowing the God's good-will, Devapi, Rṣi, the son of Rṣistena, sate as 
dēvāpyāparimādadharaṁ samudramapo Hotar.
śa uttaramādadharaṁ samudramapo He hath brought down from heaven's
dīvyā asjadvāryā abhi || most lofty summit the ocean of the rain,
6. asmin samudre adhyuttarasminiṇpo celestial waters.
devebhirinītṛa atiśhan || 6 Gathered together in that highest
 tā adravannāṛṣṭiṣṇenā sṛṣṭā devāpinā ocean, the waters stood by deities
preśītāṁrksiniṣu || obstructed. 
Rig Veda Book 10 Hymn 98 They buried down set free by
Arṣistena, in gaping clefts, urged
forward by Devapi.

Here “Sam” means meeting,

8. tveṣaṁ ṛūpaṁ krūta uttaraṁ yat 8 He makes him a most noble form of 
samprṛcānaḥ sadane ghobhiradbhiḥ || splendour, decking him in his home with
kavīrbdhnaṁ pari marmjyate dhīṁ sā milk and waters.
devataṁ samitiṁṛbaḥbīva || The Sage adorns the depths of air with
Rig Veda Book 1 Hymn 95 

6. pari sadmeva paśumānti hotā rājā na 6 As the priest seeks the station rich in
saṁtiṁṛiyānaḥ || 
cattle, like a true King who goes to
Rig Veda Book 9 Hymn 92 great assemblies.

3. saṁmāṇo mantraṁ samitih samāṇi 3 The place is common, common the
saṁmāṇo manalḥ saha cītameṣam || assembly, common the mind, so be
Rig Veda Book 10 Hymn 191 their thought united.

Thus sam + udre or sam + therae, literally means “gathering of water bodies”, to represent a flood or ocean. Thus the word “therai” means “wave” that is seen in
both Tamil and Sanskrit. This is a word that has the meaning of “swarm” which means a “group” in general for any gathering of a small number of objects, whether of persons, animals, or inanimate things that are represented by the words στίφος, ευμός, σμήνος, όχλος in Greek. Thus many water particles join together to form the wave which is called as “therae” in Tamil. There is a word in Greek, which has resemblance with this word, but with a different meaning.

“Τρίχας”

“Τρίχας” is the word that occurs in Greek language.

77. ἦ δ’ ἡ γέρον, πολιάς δ’ ἀρ’ ἀνά τρίχας ἐκεῖθε φερθει τύλλον ἐκ κεφαλής: οὐδ’ ἔκτοι θομον ἑπάθη. Hom. II. Book 22.

And the son of Atreus drew forth with his hand the knife that ever hung beside the great sheath of his sword, and cut the firstling hairs from the boar, and lifting up his hands made prayer to Zeus; (Murray 1924)


Here the word “τρίχας” has the meaning hair. Hair present in the head, the hair covering the animal body are denoted by the word τρίχας. Thus, Tamil “Therae” and Greek “τρίχας” have phonetical resemblance, but with different meanings. At the basic level, both the words are related with “swarm” which are similar to the group of water particles that join to form the wave, the hairs also are seen to occur in groups as that found in the head and body as shown in the Figure 5.
In this way, at the basic level these two words have resemblance. More than this, the word Θρινακίη\(^{18}\) which represents the old name of Sicily, derived from trident (as sacred to Poseidon), has the resemblance with the word θράν - θραῖοι read thraeis and the second part of the word Ἑρυθραῖοι or Ἑρυθρᾶν in Greek and Erythraeis of Latin.

> ὁπέτε κε πρῶτον πελάτης ἐνεργέα νήμα as soon as thou shalt bring thy well-

> 107. Θρινακίη νήσιο, πρωφυγών built ship to the island *Thrinacia*,

> ιοιδέα πόλεως,...... escaping from the violet sea,......

(Murray 1919)

Here it is noted that this Θρινακίη is also related with water and sea. Thus the combination of “ery + therae” denoting the sea metaphorically with the meaning

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\(^{18}\)Whet’er there was anything more than an accidental connection with the name of the Greek city Erythrae in Boeotia.
of throwing of the waves in subjective elegy poems of Tamil literature (Tamil Virtual University 1995).

Do you know, or do you not know, oh charioteer, about the confused mental state of my beautiful woman in anguish?

When I went and told her about my inner pain, she was unable to reply. She plucked clusters of fragrant flowers from a beautiful, low gnālal tree branch along with tender sprouts, and crushed and threw them down, the peerless young woman who got tired chasing striped crabs that play in the fragrant heaps of sand brought by the *Eriθeraia Kadal [throwing waves ocean].*

If separated from him even for a day after our intimate friendship, in the fragrant grove on the sand dunes brought by the *roaring waves*, …

Thus the word used to denote ocean in Greek “Ἐρυθραῖς” and “Erythraeis” in Latin are denoted as “Eriθeraia” in Tamil with the meaning of “Ocean of throwing waves” as described in Figure 6.
Another word Periplous represented by Περίπλους which is related with “Ερυθράν” also needs to be researched. Here the word Periplous is thought by the author of the Greek work as “Περίπλους” and the same is denoted by Περίπλους της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης. There are some thoughts raised by this author (Seland 2016), but the same word in Tamil gives rise to different thoughts.

Περίπλους

This word can be sub-divided as Περι + πλους. In Greek the word “Περι” has a meaning which is described below.

Περι

άλλως οὖν ὃς θέλει σε δυνήσεται: οὐ γὰρ ἐλάσσα
φάρμακον ἐσθλόν, ὦ τοι δώσω, ἐρέω δὲ ἐκκοίτασα.
293. ὅπλοτε κεν Κήρκη σ’ ἐλάσῃ περμήκει
ῥάβδον,
δὴ τότε σὺ ξίφος ὥσπερ ἐρυθρόσμενος παρὰ

but even so she shall not be able to bewitch thee, for the potent herb that I shall give thee will not suffer it. And I will tell thee all. When Circe shall smite thee with her long wand, then do thou draw thy sharp sword from beside thy thigh and rush upon Circe, as

19Recent studies have questioned this, raising questions about whether the work, although written in the form of a single author, might be of a cumulative nature and later date, thus placing it in the tradition of ancient geographical scholarship rather than as a practical guide.
Here the word “Πεξί” has the meaning of “long” in Greek language which is also the same in subjective elegy poems of Tamil literature (Tamil Virtual University 1995).

κεξν ὕ Κίξθῃ ἐπαίμαη, ὥ ηε θηάκελα Κελεαίλσλ.

through thou wouldst slay her.
(Murray 1919)

Here the word “Πεξί” has the meaning of “long” in Greek language which is also the same in subjective elegy poems of Tamil literature (Tamil Virtual University 1995).

Oh man from the town where water flows,
carts that bring liquor to paddy reapers who
reap and heap red paddy which has
flame-like,
lotus blossoms growing in between, gets
stuck in the
mud and sugarcanes are lined to get
them moving!
You certainly have no big shame!

My friend! It would not be difficult for us, to go in the middle of the night,
on a path where a big male bear uses his
pointed, sharp claws covered by loose
skin to grab the fungus combs that
are on the wet side of a termite mound,

Mother knows about him
from great words, my friend,
the lord of the seashore
"Πλούς"

In Greek language the word “πόλης” is used to denote the land.

For as you go always over the earth that wanderers tread, they will drive you on, even across the wide mainland, beyond the sea and the island cities.

(Stevenson 1926b)

294. Εὐβοι’ Ἀθήναις ἔστι τις γαίτων πόλις ... There is a city, Euboea, which is a neighbor to Athens.

(Potter 1938b)

144. φράζον δὲν ὀποιως κε πόλιν καὶ ἄστρο σαύρης οἷος σὺν λαοῖς τοῖ Ἑλιον ἐγγεγάζασιν: Bethink thee now how by thyself thou mayest save thy city and home aided only by the folk that were born in Ilios;

(Murray 1924)

Thus in Greek the word “πόλης” which denotes the city is seen as a metathesis of the word “πλούς” (Πεξίππος - Πεξί + πλούς). There is a resemblance with this word and it is represented by the word “Pulam” in subjective elegy poems of Tamil literature.

Pulam

maNi miTain’anna kunRam kavaiyya the mountains appear like coral
5. am kATTu Ar iTai, maTap piNai set with sapphire, a stag embraces its
tazli, doe, grazes on grass and romps around
tiri maruppu ural pul arun’tu ukalA, on a beautiful forest path, mullai vines
mullai viyan pulam parappi, kOvalar have spread on the vast land, and near
kuRum poRai marugkin n’uRam pU
ayara, the hills cattle herders adorn themselves
patavu mEyal arun’tu matavu n’aTai n’al
An with fragrant flowers,

Akanānūru 14, Okkūr Masāthanār,
Sanga Ilakkiam
(Tamil Virtual University 1995)
yAyum jAyum yAr AkiyarO?
My mother and your mother,

20Metathesis – is the transposition of sounds or syllables in a word or of words in a sentence like foliage > foilage, anemone > anenome, cavalry > calvary.
en'taiyum n’un’taiyum em muRaik what are they to each other?
kELir? My father and your father,  
yAnum n’Iyum ev vazi aRitum? how are they related?  
cem pulam peyal n’Ir pOlA You and I,  
anpuTaI n’eJcam tAm kalan’tanavE. how did we know each other?  

Kurunthokai 40, Sempulapēyaneerār,  
Sanga Ilakkiam (Tamil Virtual University 1995)  

In Greek φύλαξ, φυλασσέ means “guarded” and “watch”.

Φυλάσσειν  
86. κόμηνος ἐρμοῦνη γὰρ ὀυ συμφρόν  
φύλαξ.  
Eur. Andr.  
Servant  
86. There is risk. Hermione is no  
slouch as guard.  
(Kovacs 1994b)

Thus the Greek words πόλις which means city and φύλαξ that denotes guard have resemblance with the Tamil word “pulam” which means land or guarded city. So the word “Περίπλους (Περί + πλούς)” of “Περίπλους της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης” has the meaning “big or long land or guarded cities” as indicated in Figure 7.

**Figure 7. Περί + πλούς**

![Diagram showing the relationship between Peria (Peri) and Pulam (Pulam), with intermediate terms such as Big, Long, Place, Land, and Guard, Live together - Land.]

So the Greek word “Περίπλους” doesn’t denote the author, but places in Greek language, hence the words “Περίπλους της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης” represent...
big cities of the ocean of throwing waves, in both the languages, Greek and Tamil as indicated in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Περίπλοσς της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης - Meanings**

Periplus of the Erythraean Sea
Περίπλος της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης

![Diagram showing meanings of words related to the Erythraean Sea](image)

**Periplus of the Erythraean Sea**

**Big or Guarded Cities of Throw Wave Ocean**

**Conclusion**

The Greek word Ἐρυθράς which means Erythraean Sea is mentioned in ancient literature. It is famous for the sea trade route. The Greek word ἤρθθομεν made one to misunderstand that the Red Sea is reddish in colour. In those times, this Greek word not only represented the present Red Sea, but also the places such as the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. After that it was only attributed to denote Red Sea. There were also other thoughts which aroused against the colour red being the reason and so called Ἐρυθράς, which meant Erythras, a name of a Persian, who first crossed that sea. This sea route connects Greece to Far East Asia. One among them was Tamil Nadu. There are many references that prove the occurrence of sea trade of Greeks with Tamil Nadu. The word “Ἐρυ” pronounced as “Ery” means “throw” in both Greek and Tamil, and the word “θραέ” means wave in Tamil and hair in Greek. Both languages relate it with “swarm”, which means joining of small particles into one big mass. Thus the word Ἐρυθράς called Erythraean means the ocean of throwing waves. Periplus is also related with this sea and might be the author of the work called “Ἐρυθρὰς Θαλάσσης”. Peri means “big or long” both in Greek and Tamil and “pulam” means land, city in Tamil and polis means city and pulas means guard in Greek. Thus the words Περίπλος της Ερυθράς Θαλάσσης means the “Big guarded cities of the Ocean of Throwing Waves or Throw Wave Ocean”.

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