Classical Art and Ancient India

Edited by
Peter Stewart

Classical Art and Ancient India

Proceedings of the Workshop held in Oxford, 21-22 March 2023

Edited by

Peter Stewart

Archaeopress Archaeology

ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD
First and Second Floors
13-14 Market Square
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 6AD

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-963-3
ISBN 978-1-80327-964-0 (e-Pdf)

DOI:
http://doi.org/10.32028/9781803279633

© Archaeopress and the individual authors 2025

Front cover: Queen Māyā's Bath from Amarāvatī. Chennai, Madras Government Museum.
(Photo: C. Luczanits 2006, courtesy of the Government Museum, Chennai.)
Back cover: Gold necklace including pendant housing Roman *aureus* of Severus Alexander
(RIC IV 52 and 140), Egypt (?), AD 222-8. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.190.1655.
(Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art CC0 licence).

Published as part of the Ancient Art Connections initiative of the Classical Art Research Centre,
University of Oxford

With the generous support of the Bagri Foundation

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0
International License.

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Contents

Contributors iii

Note on Object Provenances v

Preface vii
Peter Stewart

From Berenike to Ajanta:The Romano-Egyptian Connection to the Early Buddhist art of South and Central Asia 1
William Dalrymple

Greeks and the Art of India: Philosophy through Art 15
Richard Stoneman

Yavanas in Early Indian Inscriptions 34
Upinder Singh

Beyond Gandhāra: Expressions of Art along Ancient Indian Trade Routes (3rd century BC to 5th century AD) 54
Sunil Gupta

Small Figurines Shaping the Ancient Global World across the Indian Ocean 68
Serena Autiero

Coining *Koine*: Reading Numismatic Images in the Context of Global Exchange 87
Jeremy A. Simmons

Exploring *Navagrahas* (the Nine Planets) in Indian and Graeco-Roman Art 112
Mandira Sharma

Reflections of Roman Art in Southern India: Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa 127
Elizabeth Rosen Stone

On Ivory and Theatre: The Exchange between Āndhradeśa and the West 152
Monika Zin

Contributors

Serena Autiero is an archaeologist and historian specializing in ancient globalizations and transcultural contacts in the Indian Ocean World. She is currently employed at Ruhr University Bochum, where she also teaches at the South Asian section of the Centre for Religious Studies (CERES).

William Dalrymple is a bestselling writer and historian, whose prize-winning books have ranged widely from the ancient Mediterranean to colonial India. He has held visiting fellowships at Princeton and Brown Universities and All Souls College, Oxford. He co-founded the Jaipur Literature Festival and in 2018 he was awarded the President's Medal of the British Academy for his contributions to literature. His 2024 book, *The Golden Road*, explores the impact of India on the ancient world.

Sunil Gupta is former Director in Charge of the Allahabad Museum, a national level museum under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. He also served as Officer on Special Duty at the Prime Ministers Museum, New Delhi. Dr Gupta is the author of a book, *Early Sculptural Art in the Indian Coastlands* and more than fifty research papers. He is the editor of the *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology*.

Mandira Sharma is an art historian specializing in early Indian art, with research interests in Buddhist narratives, iconography and pre-modern illustrated manuscripts, focusing on Sanskrit texts, divination and astrology. A former Visiting Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin and IIAS Leiden, she has published widely on the intersections of art, history, religion, and culture.

Jeremy A. Simmons is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Maryland, College Park. His research addresses the consumption of commodities traded across the Indian Ocean in antiquity, as well as the human agents who made global connections possible.

Upinder Singh is Professor of History, Ashoka University, Sonepat. Her books include *Kings, Brāhmaṇas, and Temples in Orissa: An Epigraphic Study (AD 300–1147)*, *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology*, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, *Political Violence in Ancient India*, *Ancient India: Culture of Contradictions*, and *The World of India's First Archaeologist: Letters from Alexander Cunningham to J.D.M. Beglar*.

Peter Stewart is Director of the Classical Art Research Centre and Professor of Ancient Art at the University of Oxford. He has worked widely in the fields of Graeco-Roman sculpture and ancient world art. His publications include *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (2003), *The Social History of Roman Art* (2008), *A Catalogue of the Sculpture Collection at Wilton House* (2020), and *Gandharan Art and the Classical World* (2023).

Elizabeth Rosen Stone is an independent scholar and former Andrew W. Mellon Senior Fellow in Art History at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Her many publications on Buddhist and Indian art include *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (1994).

Richard Stoneman is an Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of Exeter, where he taught for several years after retiring from a career as an editor at Routledge. He has also been Chairman of Westminster Classic Tours (2011-2016). His book, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend*, was published by Yale University Press in 2008. Of his commentary on the *Alexander Romance* (Fondazione Valla) two volumes have appeared (2007, 2011) and the third is forthcoming. His most recent books are *Xerxes: A Persian Life* (Yale 2015), *The Greek Experience of India* (Princeton 2019) and *Megasthenes'* Indica*: A New Translation of the Fragments, with commentary* (Routledge 2022).

Monika Zin studied literature, art history and Indology in Krakow and Munich, where she taught the art of South and Central Asia for twenty-five years. She has contributed to numerous studies on Buddhist narrative art and is author of books on Ajanta, Kanaganahalli and Kucha. Since 2016, she has been heading the research group 'Buddhist Murals of Kucha on the Northern Silk Road' at the Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Note on Object Provenances

The Classical Art Research Centre does not normally publish previously unpublished ancient artefacts which have no recorded provenance and have become known since 1970. We seek to avoid adding value and legitimacy to objects whose origins have not been documented. Occasional exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis, where the scholarly value of referring to an artefact justifies inclusion and where problems of provenance are explicitly addressed. In the present volume, this principle applies to Jeremy Simmons's paper, where five coins in a private collection are illustrated and two further coins from the market are cited.

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-01

Preface

Peter Stewart

This book captures the exchange of ideas and lively debate that took place at the hybrid workshop of the same title, in Oxford University's Classical Art Research Centre (CARC), 21-22 March 2023. The event brought together speakers from three Continents under the umbrella of CARC's Ancient Art Connections initiative. This effort to stimulate research on cross-cultural connections in ancient art built upon the success of a previous CARC project, *Gandhāra Connections*, which ran from 2016 to 2022. Like our Gandhāran events, the 'Classical Art and Ancient India' workshop – and the resulting publication – were made possible by the generous support of the Bagri Foundation. We are deeply grateful for all the Foundation's assistance and encouragement, which have underpinned the expansion of CARC's art-historical horizons. In particular I should like to acknowledge Dr Alka Bagri, Alessandra Cianetti, and Dr Juan De Lara. I am also very grateful to the various colleagues who made the workshop and preparations for the publication possible, especially Sarah Knights Johnson.

Throughout the earlier *Gandhāra Connections* project (which resulted in five sets of open access conference proceedings in a similar format to this volume), a subject that was raised time and again was the wider relationship between the Graeco-Roman world and the Indian subcontinent as a whole. These events raised questions that applied to material far beyond Gandhāra and the neighbouring regions of Central Asia and across a much broader chronological span, from the age of classical Greece (fifth-fourth century BC) or even earlier, to late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

Throughout these eras, India was more or less connected with the world of the Mediterranean and Western Asia, sometimes by land or through direct conquest, sometimes through the maritime links of the Indian Ocean. In the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods the movement of artistic ideas intensified. Notably, it appears to be vividly attested in the earliest cave-paintings at Ajanta in Maharashtra and in the Buddhist sculpture of Andhra Pradesh. In the first two centuries AD, when trade with India was central to Roman luxury consumption and brought colossal revenue to the Empire, Roman coins and other artefacts reached India in abundance. However, the *artistic* connections are subtle and elusive, demanding detailed analysis and prompting debate, including discussion about the very premises embodied in terms such as 'classical' or 'Indian', or implied in the pursuit of cross-cultural 'influences'. In contrast to the conspicuously 'classicizing' aspects of Gandhāran sculpture (themselves contentious and difficult), the art of the rest of the subcontinent affords only puzzling glimpses of the possible influence of Graeco-Roman traditions. Conversely, the impact of Indian products and ideas on the classical world has to be teased out of challenging and fragmentary evidence and individually exceptional cases.

The character of the links between Graeco-Roman art and ancient India, and the appropriate methodology for explaining them, is therefore a frontier for new research, fuelled by a rapidly increasing body of evidence from different areas and periods and a growing consciousness of the global nexus of ancient art.

The purpose of the workshop was to contribute complementary – and competing – ideas about cultural contact within this sphere of artistic production, some of them building on decades of research, others questioning traditional interpretations of evidence or proposing different paradigms. Besides William Dalrymple's opening contribution, which is a lightly modified version of his keynote lecture delivered to the workshop (with the addition of some supporting footnotes), the papers published here have been revised in various ways, but they preserve the character of the original workshop and its conversations,

recording differing perspectives and approaches both within and between academic disciplines, and occasionally contradicting one another. As editor, I have sought neither to synthesize the papers, nor to suppress disagreement, nor homogenize the plurality of voices. These are offered as fascinating insights into the material, provocations to thought, and stimuli for further research in a rich and expanding field of inquiry.

Peter Stewart

Oxford, November 2024

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-02

From Berenike to Ajanta: The Romano-Egyptian Connection to the Early Buddhist art of South and Central Asia[1]

(Keynote lecture)

William Dalrymple

Everyone listening to this paper will already know about the remarkable finds excavated by Steven Sidebotham's team at Berenike last year, particularly the gorgeous Buddha head with his dramatic solar rays and what Marianne Bergman nicely called his 'tortellini curls'.[2] Made from marble quarried in the Roman Empire (in what is now Turkey), showing a strong influence of Gandhāra (in what is now Pakistan), it was probably made in Alexandria (in Egypt) for a sailor from what is now India. It is a cliché that Gandhāran art is cosmopolitan, but this piece is so multinational and multi-ethnic and multi-religious in its connections that it is a perfect symbol for what we now know of the astonishing internationalism, sophistication and wealth of the trade passing up and down the Indian Ocean with the winds of every monsoon.

Other finds from the same Indian trading milieu have been emerging from the Egyptian desert sand for some time, hinting at the treasures to come. A Tamil-Brahmi pottery graffito found nearby was written by a Tamil visitor, who called himself 'the chieftain Korran', while Prakrit and Sanskrit inscriptions found at the site recorded the visits of several other Indians. Deposits of rice, dal, coconuts, coriander, tamarind and huge 10 kilogram pots containing several thousand black peppercorns from India show that the Indian merchants who arrived in first-century Egypt preferred their own deliciously spicy cuisine to that of Egypt, much as their successors still do today.[3]

The dramatic new discoveries at Berenike are thus part of a remarkable renaissance in studies of the Indian Ocean world and its connections, which over the last two decades has illuminated the scale of the contact between Roman Egypt and India up the Red Sea and across the Indian Ocean. There is now growing evidence of intense contact between early India and Roman Egypt and the Indian finds in Berenike have been mirrored by equally remarkable evidence of Roman trade from excavations in India. The scale and importance of this trade is being radically revised by scholars working on both sides of the Indian ocean and in many different disciplines – not just art historians and archaeologists, but those working on the ancient economy, classicists studying Roman plays and novels, as well as numismatists, historians of science, Buddhist scholars and Sanskritists.

Together, this new work on the links between Egypt and India represents a thorough rethinking that dramatically changes the understanding of the Indian Ocean trade in antiquity: according to calculations, first made by Raoul McLaughlin in his *The Roman Empire and the Indian Ocean,* and much debated since, custom taxes on the Red Sea trade with India, Persia and Ethiopia may have generated as much as one third of the income of the Roman exchequer.[4]

1 The themes in this lecture are developed in a wider context and with further references in the author's book, *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World* (Dalrymple [2024]).
2 Sidebotham et al. (2023), 23-5.
3 Tomber (2008), 153; McEvilley (2002), 383; Cobb (2018), 153, 225.
4 McLaughlin (2018).

Ever since the first reports of the incredible riches and luxuries of India began reaching Europe after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the third century BC, Europeans had fantasized about the wealth of India where, according to Herodotus and the Greek geographers, gold was dug by up by gigantic ants and guarded by griffins, and where precious jewels were said to lie scattered on the ground like dust. As the two worlds were brought into regular contact through the ports of the Red Sea in the first century BC, the Romans became eager consumers of Indian goods and luxuries, particularly the spices of southern India, while the Indians tended to play the role of the wealthy merchants who satisfied these cravings at considerable personal profit.

While it was Ptolemaic rulers who established the Red Sea ports and initiated the traffic to India long before the rise of Rome, it was the defeat of Cleopatra and Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC that changed the scale of everything. The incorporation of Egypt into the Roman Empire marked the beginning of large fleets of merchant ships passing seasonally between the two worlds, giving Indian and Roman traders direct access to one another via the Red Sea ports. According to Strabo, Roman control of Egypt quickly led to a five-fold increase in the shipping heading to India compared to the Ptolemaic period preceding it: 'formerly not even twenty vessels ventured to navigate the Persian Gulf, but now large fleets are despatched.' He notes that 120 boats left for India every year from one port alone.[5] The traffic also brought a steady stream of Indian embassies to the Roman imperial court.[6]

From around this time there begin to be references to Indians among the audiences of shows and games at Alexandria, while one classical author, Xenophon of Ephesus, writes the story of an Indian raja who had come to the great Mediterranean port to sightsee and trade, and who seemingly possessed a home in the port.[7] Alexandria was, after all, the hub where goods from India and the Red Sea were received, and from where they were exported across the Mediterranean to Rome and beyond.

The principal source for the sheer value of the Indian Ocean trade is a remarkable papyrus document known as the Muziris Papyrus, now in Vienna. The document was was drawn up by an Alexandrian-based Romano-Egyptian financier for the purchase of goods from an Indian merchant based in far-away Muziris on the coast of Kerala. It is a fragmentary loan contract and shipping manifest that followed the standard template used by Alexandrian shippers for such orders and which gives a detailed assessment of the fiscal value of the cargo being imported. It gave precise details of one particular cargo that had been sent to Berenike all the way from Muziris, aboard a ship called the *Hermapollon*. What caught the attention of historians was the jaw-dropping value of the goods in question.[8]

The exports included nearly four tonnes of ivory with a value estimated at seven million sesterces, at a time when a legionary in the Roman army would have earned little more than 1,000 annually, and a would-be senator from the cream of the aristocracy had to demonstrate assets of one million sesterces to be allowed to stand for office. The consignment also included a valuable shipment of eighty boxes of aromatic nard used in the manufacture of perfume, a consignment of tortoise-shell and 790 pounds of Indian textiles, probably cotton, then considered a luxury product as valuable as silk. The total value of the 150-ton shipment has been calculated as worth 131 talents, 'enough to purchase 2,400 acres of the best farmland in Egypt' or 'a premium estate in central Italy'. A single trading ship such as the *Hermapollon* could apparently carry several such consignments, each worth a small fortune.[9] No wonder Pliny mentions that cohorts of archers were carried on board the ships sailing to India to offer

5 Strabo 2.5.12. Parker (2008), 179; Autiero and Cobb (2022), 144; Evers (2017), 140-1; Turner (2004), 59.
6 McEvilley (2002), 384.
7 Young (2001) – the authors he quotes are Dio Chrysostom and Xenophon of Ephesus; Evers (2017), 90. Cobb (2022), 154.
8 De Romanis (2020) gives the fullest and most sophisticated reconstruction and analysis of the Muziris Papyrus.
9 De Romanis (2020); Ray (2003), 231; Evers (2017), 45, 78, 97-116, 171.

protection against pirates.[10] One successful shipment of this value could turn the merchants behind it into some of the richest men in the Empire.

That was not all. According to the papyrus, the import tax paid on the cargo of almost nine million sesterces was over two million sesterces. Working up from these figures, and the other receipts that have survived from the period, McLaughlin has estimated that by the first century AD, Indian imports into Egypt were worth probably over a billion sesterces per annum, from which the tax authorities of the Roman Empire were creaming off no less than 270 million.

These vast revenues surpassed those of entire subject countries: McLaughlin notes that Julius Caesar imposed tribute of 40 million sesterces after his conquests in Gaul while the vital Rhineland frontier was defended by eight legions at an annual cost of 88 million sesterces. If the figures given on the Muziris Papyrus were correct – and there are no reasons to doubt them – then custom taxes raised on the trade coming through the Red Sea would alone have covered around one third of the entire revenues that the Roman Empire required to administer its global conquests and maintain its vast legions from lowland Scotland to the borders of Persia and from the Sahara to the banks of the Rhine and Danube.[11]

The implications of this unprecedented scale of direct sea trade between India and Rome are enormous. The sea trade between Rome and India was clearly an immense operation, dangerous and complex, but highly profitable both to the shippers who operated the trade and to the Roman state that taxed it. Contrary to popular ideas about the overland ‘Silk Roads’, it is now clear that historians have been looking at entirely the wrong place when they thought about ancient trade routes. It was India, not China, that was the greatest trading partner of the Roman Empire. It is also clear that the main arteries of early East-West travel lay less overland, through a Persia often at war with Rome, and much more across the open oceans, via the choppy waters of the Indian Ocean, then punted up the Indus and its tributaries to the monasteries whose distribution clearly follows the same rivers.

* * *

If the scale of contact between Roman Egypt and India was so much larger than we previously recognized, what are the implications for art history? Scholars have talked for over a century about Greek/Hellenistic and Roman influence on the art of South Asia, especially visible in sculpture of Gandhāra, but maybe we should be being more precise than that: if all the shipping and most of the trade reaching India from the Mediterranean was coming via the Red Sea ports of Egypt, what are the signs of specifically Ptolemaic, Romano-Egyptian or Byzantine-Coptic influence on Indian art and culture? This raises further questions: how far should we regard Egypt at this time as simply a subservient part of Rome, and how far should we look at it as a semi-independent agent with its own pre-existing and long-standing connections to India, Bactria, Gandhāra and Central Asia? Certainly we know that there are Italians working this route – the Peticii in the Abruzzi with their famous camel gravestone[12] – but judging from the evidence of ostraca, graffiti and papyri this was a business run out of Alexandria by Alexandrian families of Ptolemaic descent, at least some of whom were Jewish.

10 Cobb (2022), 85.

11 McLaughlin (2014); McLaughlin (2016). In 2014, the Cambridge University Press published *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy* which included contributions from Professor Andrew Wilson, the co-head of the Oxford Roman Economy Project. In a ‘Forum on Trade’, Wilson drew on McLaughlin’s work, acknowledging that ‘with 100 such cargoes a year (a conservative estimate, as Strabo a century before speaks of 120 ships a year leaving Myos Hormos for India), the customs revenue on the import trade alone through the Red Sea would have amounted to perhaps between a quarter and a third of the entire military budget for the Empire.’ Wilson, (2014), 287-320. See also Cobb (2022), 121, 134. Evers (2017), 108.

12 Tchernia (2016).

In a previous *Gandhāra Connections* conference, Peter Stewart talked about the difficulty of distinguishing Roman from Greek or generalized Hellenistic influences on Gandhāran sculpture, and pointed to one or two specific indicators that suggest we are dealing with Roman and not earlier Greek influence.[13] In the same way, what are the exact indicators we can look for to show we are dealing with Romano-Egyptian and not more generalized imperial Roman influence? Perhaps the most visible and unequivocal of these is the presence, or at least the shadowy presence of the iconography of Egyptian gods.

Elsewhere in this volume, Mandira Sharma describes the *Navagrahas* or Nine Planets in Indian art: an important subject for us as it is in astronomy and astrology that Egyptian influence on Indian thought is especially clear. David Pingree's seminal work shows, for example, how Indian study of the Decans and Horas, which first appeared in the work of the great Indian astronomer Varahamira, derives from a jyotiṣa text called the *Yavanajātaka*, which itself seems to have been written in Alexandria and has a zodiac full of Egyptian deities which later find their way into Indian art and thought.[14] In art history, it is again the presence of specific Ptolemaic Egyptian deities that gives away that we are dealing with the influence of objects from Egypt rather than the wider Roman Empire. In most cases these gods are not the great gods of the Pharaonic period so much as syncretic deities of the Ptolemaic era that make their presence felt, especially Serapis, Harpokrates and his mother, Isis.

We do not have many specifically Egyptian gods appearing on the stone dishes, sometimes called toilet dishes that are made in Gandāra, now thought to be a connected to rituals, possibly of marriage, that are usually said to mark the earliest classically-influenced sculpture in Gandhāra. But Ptolemaic Egyptian Gods are very much there in the the biggest haul of Egyptian material ever found in Central or South Asia: the Begram horde, found in two walled-up chambers of what was probably once a merchant's storeroom dating from AD 50 to 125. It was dramatically uncovered by archaeologists near what later became the US military base at Bagram airfield.

Here alongside ivory furniture, possibly from Sātavāhana territory in India are spectacular finds imported from Roman Egypt: superbly coloured Egyptian glassware most spectacularly delicate fish-shaped perfume flasks, drinking rhytons, blown-glass bowls and beakers, pear-shaped jugs and pitchers of the deepest purple.[15] Most remarkable of all are the cut-glass goblets painted with images of fishing, hunting and the date-harvest, as well as a unique representation of the Pharos Lighthouse at Alexandria, topped with the colossal statue of Poseidon and his trident (Figure 1).[16] Other goblets depict Roman gladiators and a battle scene from the life of Alexander the Great.[17] According to David Wilson, most of the glass appears to be imported directly from Egypt, probably Alexandria, which would certainly explain the image of the Pharos. There is also a superb bowl and a vase made from the most expensive stone in the Roman world – purple imperial porphyry which could only be found in a single quarry, Mons Porphyrites in Roman Egypt, and which was usually reserved for imperial portraits and sarcophagi.[18]

The Begram treasure is a dramatic illustration of the new purchasing power of the Kushan elite of the first century AD. Behind it lies the remarkable flourishing of the Kushans' international trade and their new place as a prosperous and stable hub of the global economy. The Kushan aristocracy, who had now embraced Buddhism, were quick to use this wealth to support the building of monasteries with large, square-based, elegantly domed stupas, lined with Corinthian columns.

13 Stewart (2020).
14 Pingree (1963).
15 Ahuja (2019), 35.
16 Boardman (2015), 162-3.
17 Aruz and Fino (2012); Ball (2000), 153.
18 Ahuja (2019), 31.

Here they supported the patronage of Buddhist literature and the carving of superb and increasingly colossal Buddhist sculptures that reflected their cosmopolitan tastes. Gilded statues, jewels, silk and incense gifted to the monks by pious pilgrims amassed in the new Buddhist religious complexes. These in turn gave them a sense of both permanence and magnificence, further encouraging the Buddhist caravan traders, who could now make their expeditions knowing that they would find security at the fortified monasteries which now dotted the trade routes. The monasteries provided other services too, becoming rich by reprovisioning merchants, translating documents and even lending money. The caves along these caravan routes honeycombed ever deeper into the rock, so as to accommodate the fast-growing monastic communities.[19]

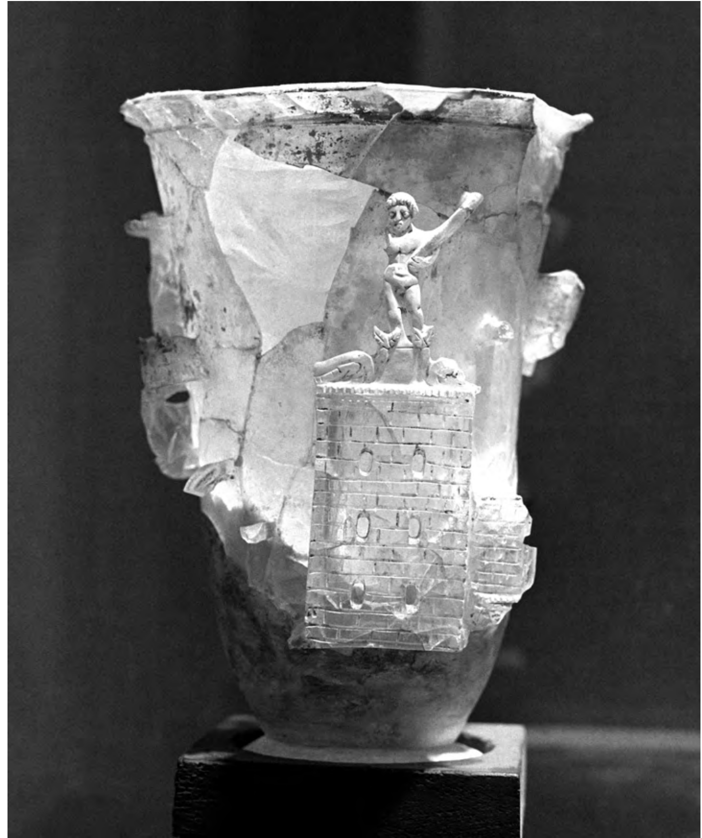

Figure 1. Glass beaker showing the Pharos (lighthouse) at Alexandria, from the Begram Treasure, c. *first century AD. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan. (Photo: John C. Huntington, courtesy of the John C. and Susan L. Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Asian Art.)*

As trade with Rome continued to filter in through the Kushans' new ports, and up the Karakorum river valleys, Indic religious ideas, both Buddhist and Hindu, began to be expressed in hybrid art forms that took on an increasingly classical Roman form, inspired by the importation of a variety of Roman decorative arts. Nowhere is this clearer than the bronze figurines of the Romano-Egyptian deity Harpokrates in a long robe, finger on his lips (Figure 2). Another Harpokrates was found Taxila – and the influence of these figures can be seen both in Mathurā, where his iconography may have been grafted onto the figure of the shy boy hermit Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, and in Gandhāra where he can be seen playing beside the Yakṣī Harītī, as spotted and studied by Naman Ahuja.[20]

In this syncretic world of evolving divine pantheons, at a crossroads where different civilizations and deities merged, different peoples no doubt recognized and worshipped different Gods in the same images, though the parallels are well thought out, whether we think of Oesho/Shiva, Herakles/Vajrapāṇi or Isis/Harītī. For the image of Harītī herself has an Egyptian genesis, as Ahuja has pointed out. The image of the Yakṣī seems to be closely modelled on that of Isis Lactans, a figure who cast her shadow westwards as well and may well have formed the basis for what became the Christian theme of the Virgin and Child, or Madonna. Another Ptolemaic god whose bronze was found at Begram is Serapis (Figure 3). This god, whose cult, was centered in the great Alexandrian Serapeion, brought together Apis and Zeus into a single all-powerful deity. He may be represented in a rare Kushan terracotta plaque now in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 4). Serapis also certainly appears prominently on rare coins of the Kushan ruler Huviṣka (Figure 5).

***

19 Elverskog (2010), 26; Cunliffe (2015), 315.
20 Ahuja (2019).

Figure 2. (a) Bronze statuette of Harpokrates from the Begram Treasure, c. first century AD. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan. (Photo: John C. Huntington, courtesy of the John C. and Susan L. Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Asian Art.) (b) similar figure from Sirkap (Taxila), c. first century AD. Taxila Museum (Photo: after Marshall [1951], vol. 3, pl. 186e).

Figure 3. Bronze figurine of Serapis from the Begram Treasure, c. *first-second century AD. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan. (Photo: John C. Huntington, courtesy of the John C. and Susan L. Huntington Photographic Archive of Buddhist and Asian Art.)*

Figure 4. Kushan Central Asian terracotta with painting representing Zeus/Serapis/Ohrmazd with a worshipper, c. *second to sixth century AD. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 2000.42.2. (Photo: Museum, CC0 licence.)*

Figure 5. Gold quarter dinar *of Huviṣka,* c. *AD 151-90, with inscribed image of Serapis. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 1944.100.6367. (Photo: ANS, public domain.)*

I now want to turn to the murals of Miran, near Loulan on the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert. It was here that Aurel Stein discovered paintings reminiscent of Gandhāran style (Figure 6). The fragments which Stein brought back to India have be kept stored in the National Museum in New Delhi and have rarely seen, but have recently become accessible, with some pieces on public display. What interests me about the example illustrated here is that from the outset Stein and other art historians regarded it as showing Coptic Egyptian influence.[21] More recent research has pointed to other sources, and clearly this is a complex and sophisticated set of murals with many influences. Carol Bromberg has written about what she calls the 'Iranian gesture' of one of the figures that has a Sasanian flavour.[22] Arcangelo Santoro has written about the very strong affinities to the representation of the *Viśvāntara Jātaka* in Indian visual narrative.[23] Anna Filigenzi has written beautifully about the similarity of the Miran pictures to sculpture at Butkara and Saidu Sharif in the Swat Valley.[24] So, as with everything Gandhāran, we have a soup of influences – Iranian, Buddhist Indian, and classical. But what strikes me very clearly is how many of the figures seem to suggest the influence of portable Coptic textiles. I think it is these portable objects, with which merchants perhaps travelled, including figurines such as small terracottas and bronzes, rather than the expensive, luxury items of the kind seen at Begram, that might have provided a vehicle for the travel of iconographies. Filigenzi discusses the cartoons of the sculptors that might have transmitted ideas from Butkara in Swat over the Pamirs to Miran, but I suggest that, stylistically, the strongest parallels remain those with Coptic art, and specifically Coptic textiles. Compare also the marked similarity of a textile from Loulan itself, probably an import, representing the head of the god Hermes with his *caduceus*, which is also in the National Museum in Delhi – a fragment which is itself very close to the Coptic textile tradition (Figure 7): note the red of the lips, the treatment of the eyes, and the artist's use of black lines and the range of tones used by the artist in comparison with the Miran faces (Figure 8). Moreover, these are features encountered also in some of the painted Fayyum mummy-portraits of Roman Egypt.

Most surprising of all is the comparison of sixth-century Coptic images of saints from the Monastery of St Jeremiah at Saqqara with the face of a garland-bearer figure at Miran (Figures 9). Note especially the ball-like delineation of the chins, as well as the treatment of eyes, noses and mouths. They could almost be works from the same hand. We can also compare the images of Christ at Saqqara and the Buddha at Miran. Especially striking is the gesture of the fingers (Figure 10). In respect to the composition as a whole, Peter Stewart drew my attention to the similarity between the Miran painting and an Egyptian illustrated Christian papyrus in Florence, of perhaps the sixth century AD.[25] We have a very similar style employed for the Buddha and his disciplines, and Christ and his: the same bald heads, the same halo, a very similar composition.

There seems, therefore, to be a whole world here which has not been properly explored and would repay much further study. Imagine if we could also see the dark schist Buddhist sculptures of Gandhāra fully painted (as we see colours preserved on some clay and stucco sculptures of the region). Would the affinity of these images to Coptic art be much clearer if the original pigments survived?

***

21 Stein (1928), vol. 1, 241-5, 255; vol. 3, pl. 30.
22 Bromberg (1991).
23 Santoro (2006).
24 Filigenzi (2006).
25 Florence, Museo Archeologico, PSI VIII 920 (inv. 8683).

Figure 6. The Buddha with disciplines in a wall-painting from Miran, c. third-fourth century AD. New Delhi, National Museum. (Photo: Nomu420 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buddha_with_Six_Disciples.png>, CC BY-SA 3.0.)

Figure 7. Woollen tapestry fragment showing the god Hermes with a caduceus, c. third- fourth century AD (?). New Delhi, National Museum, Stein Collection L.C. iii. 010. a. (Photo: after Stein, 1933, vol. 1, 153, pl. 65; courtesy of Toyo Bunko, The Oriental Library.)

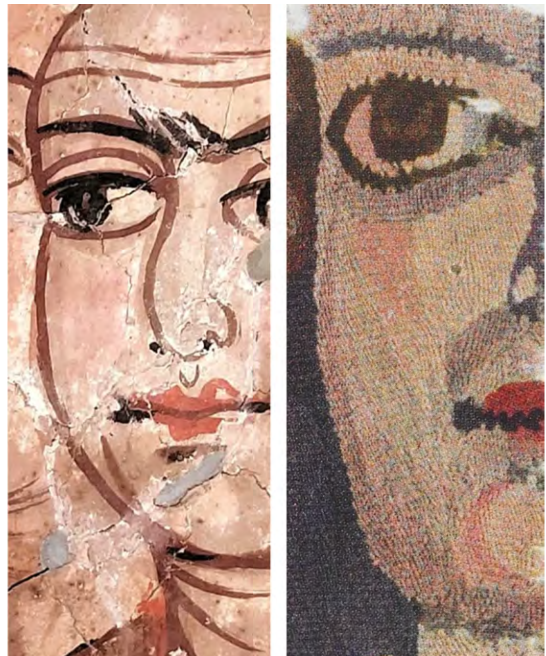

Figure 8. Comparison of details of Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 9. Paintings of saints from the Monastery of St Jeremiah at Saqqara, Egypt (sixth century AD, Cairo, Coptic Museum), compared with a face from the mural at Miran (New Delhi, National Museum). (Photos: W. Dalrymple.)

Figure 10. Painting of Christ from the Monastery of St Jeremiah at Saqqara, Egypt (sixth century AD, Cairo, Coptic Museum), compared with a face of the Buddha in the mural at Miran (New Delhi, National Museum). (Photos: W. Dalrymple.)

As well as imported Egyptian-style textiles, the sands of the Taklamakan have also yielded a few hints of what may be a lost tradition of partly Hellenized or Romanized Kushan textiles. There are very few surviving fragments and we really do not know enough this tradition it to draw any firm conclusions, or even exactly what to call it. The Shanpula 'trouser leg' (which was a tapestry before it became a trouser-leg) has a version of a classical centaur and part of a spear-bearer wearing a hair-band, in three-quarter profile: probably a Parthian or Kushan.[26] Another, relatively little studied site, Noin Ula in Mongolia has produced other fragments from graves in a Xiongnu (or Hun) burial ground, but which seem to derive from a Kushan millieu in western Central Asia.

These gorgeous, humanistic textiles seem to be part of a wider aesthetic, which played out over a vast Hellenized region, and which is also visible at Palmyra and in Parthia, but which, judging from the newly cleaned fragments of the earliest murals at Ajanta Cave 10, seems to have extended down India and affected even the work in Sātavāhana lands.

So this takes us to Ajanta; but not the famous and much celebrated murals of the fifth to sixth century, probably painted under the patronage the Vākāṭaka king Hariṣena (*c.* AD 475-500) ruler of the Deccan, so much as the much less well known and very fragmentary murals of early Ajanta at Cave 10 which date from six hundred years earlier, and reflect Sātavāhana taste around 100 BC (Figure 12).

Indeed such has always been the celebrity of the fifth-century masterworks that most scholars, and almost all modern accounts of the Ajanta caves, have more or less ignored the earlier second- to first-century BC caves and their picture cycles. The reason for this was that the murals in Caves 9 and 10 were badly damaged, covered with graffiti and obscured by dirt and shellac. Early British art historians who had worked on copying the murals between 1844 and 1885 had coated them with layers of varnish to bring out the colours, and they left the varnish in place after their work was finished, leaving a thick layer of discoloured glaze intermixed with soot and dirt. Moreover, these earliest murals were not only more fragmentary, they were also considerably more smoke- and incense-blackened in antiquity than the relatively pristine later murals elsewhere in the site, and perhaps for this reason seemed, blackboard-like, to invite the attention of early graffiti artists and tourists who wanted to leave an inscribed record of their visit. By the time the Nizam of Hyderabad sent the leading art historian of his state, Ghulam Yazdani, to produce the first photographic survey of the murals in the late 1920s, the murals of Caves 9 and 10 had already been irreparably damaged.

At the same time as the Nizam despatched Yazdani to study the murals, he also sent two Italian conservationists to help restore them. Unfortunately their efforts only obscured the murals further: they coated the pigments with a thick layer of unbleached shellac which sat on top of least two existing Victorian layers of varnish. The shellac attracted grime, dust and dried bat dung and quickly oxidized to a dark reddish brown which totally obscured the images from both travellers and scholars. Less than a century after being rediscovered by a British shooting party in 1819, the figures of Caves 9 and 10 had been lost again. For the entire length of the twentieth century they remained effectively hidden, invisible to the naked eye, forgotten by all.

Because of the dirt obscuring them, to this day the murals of Caves 9 and 10 have still attracted only passing scholarly attention. Remarkably for so famous a site – Ajanta is after all a World Heritage Site, attracting 5,000 visitors a day in season, as well as generations of art historians – Stella Kramrisch, Dieter Schlingloff,[27] Monika Zin, Naomichi Yaguchi, but perhaps most notably, and prolifically, Walter Spink

26 See now comprehensive discussion in Wagner et al. (2009).
27 Dieter Schlingloff is widely regarded as the greatest art historian of Ajanta murals, and his work, assisted in many cases by Monika Zin, has revolved around minutely identifying the stories told in the murals. Many of his most important essays are

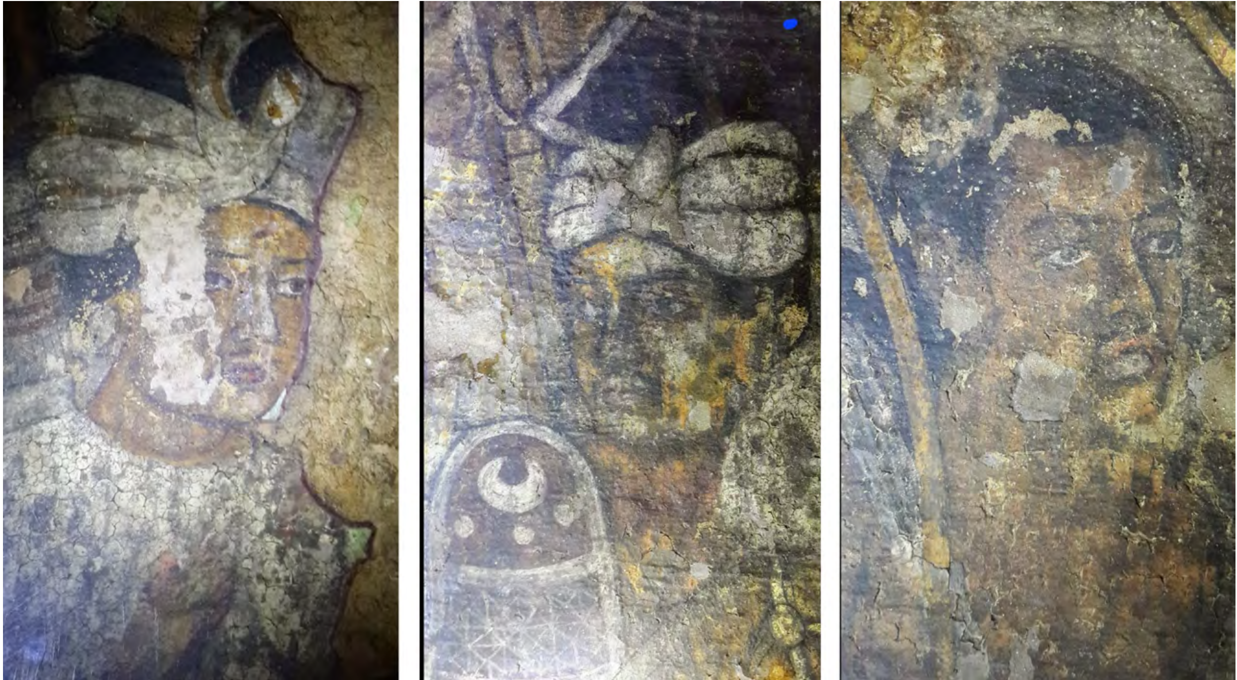

Figure 11. Comparison of details of wall-paintings in Cava 10 at Ajanta, c. *100 BC(?). (Montage by W. Dalrymple).*

of the University of Michigan, whose work stretched to six volumes[28] – their wall paintings were only recently properly photographed. Ghulam Yazdani included four almost totally illegible shellac-obscured black and white shots in his exhaustive four-volume work, *Ajanta,* published in 1930; but until recently the early mural cycles had never before been published in colour, nor had any close-ups appeared in print. The true beauty and importance of these frescoes have therefore been almost completely missed.

* * *

In 1999, Manager Rajdeo Singh, the ASI chief of conservation at Aurangabad, began work on the restoration of the murals in Caves 9 and 10 at Ajanta. Manager Singh, as he is always known, had been in charge of conserving the murals of Ajanta for a number of years, but the work in Caves 9 and 10 was, he knew, especially difficult, and of the greatest importance. This was partly because these two caves contain the most severely damaged of all the Ajanta frescoes: 'The paintings were so fragile that in some places there was a great fear even to touch them with the hand,' he wrote later. 'At some places the pigment was found completely detached from the ground plaster and stone surface'.[29]

But largely Manager Singh was concerned because the murals in those two caves are recognized to be not only the oldest images at the site, but the oldest Buddhist paintings in existence - dating from only three hundred years or so after the death of the Buddha. Manager Singh's remarkable work revealed for the first time since the 1920s the extraordinary images which lay beneath and are now on display. I happened to stumble across them on a visit to the caves in March 2014. The ASI does not have much of a tradition of PR work or public outreach, and even internally there is perhaps little recognition of what Manager Singh has actually achieved and uncovered. For his work is nothing short of a revelation: peeling off the successive layers of shellac, varnish, and dirt and bat dung, Manager Singh has uncovered

translated into English in Schlingloff (1987). His recent *Handbook to the Ajanta Murals* (Schlingloff [2013]) is the best existing guide to the murals.
28 Spink (2005-2014)
29 Singh and Balasaheb Arbad (2013).

the oldest paintings of Indian faces in existence, and restored to something approaching their former glory, murals which predate by perhaps six hundred years the better known work elsewhere on the site.

More exciting still, this earliest phase of work is not just very old, but very fine indeed and painted in a quite different style, and using markedly different techniques, to those used in the rest of Ajanta. The murals of Caves 9 and 10 represent nothing less than the birth of classical Indian painting.

On the façade of Cave 10 there exists a carved panel which mentions Vāsiṭhiputa Kaṭahādi as contributing to the excavation of the cave's frontage. From his name he was probably a prince of the Sātavāhana dynasty, which controlled the Deccan after the breakup of the Mauryan Empire and the assassination of the last of the Mauryas in 187 BC. The style of the turbans, the costumes the figures wear, the absence of images of the Buddha, and the similarity of the figure style to that of other early sites like Sanchi also point to this period. In addition, the presence of very different fifth-century AD overpainting confirms this very early date.

The early caves of Ajanta, like the sculpture decorating the stupas and gateways at Sanchi, Bharhut and Amarāvatī, contain inscriptions which show that the caves were the result of numerous small contributions, mainly from pious monks and nuns, but also from local noblemen, guilds and craftsmen rather than from a single king as became the norm later. Inscriptions in Cave 10 mention a Kanhaka of Bāhaḍa, presumably a nobleman, and monks named Dharmadeva, Buddhināga, and Śīlabhadra, the latter 'in honour of his mother and father'. One donative inscription stated: 'Whatever merit is in this, let that be for the good of all sentient beings'. The guilds and pious individuals sponsored – appropriately enough – a crowded, vibrant narrative art, teaming with people and alive with drama and incident.

In illustrating three stories – the *jātakas* – the early artists of Ajanta open wide a window on an age which remains otherwise dark and shadowy to us. We see the costumes of this very early period: the King of Varanasi, for example, wears a white cotton tunic of strikingly Central Asian appearance, wrapped around the waste with a cummerbund, while on his head he wears a turban wound around his hair and twisted into a top knot. He has a bow and a full quiver of arrows. His guard are bare-chested but wrap an *antarīya* lungi around their hips and are armed with spears and bows and bell-shaped shields decorated with the emblems of half-moons and shining suns. The different turbans of the different ranks are shown with great care and seem to be an important indicator of status, the different materials – some with red or gold stripes, other pure white – and the different styles of wrapping delineated with great care. As at Miran, there is an intimacy, classicism, and striking realism, combined with the haunting wistfulness of the features of these faces is not a million miles away from the melancholy world of the encaustic wax Fayyum portraits of Roman imperial Egypt, which were also the products of the Hellenization of the East. But the most interesting parallels are closer to home, in respect to culture, with the extraordinary textiles from the Taklamakan and Noin Ula, all of which share with Cave 10 their wide eyes and the three dimensional modulation of the face.

As with those other images, we are in a world so astonishingly realistic and lifelike that even today, even in reproduction, they can still make you gasp as you find yourself staring eyeball to eyeball with a silently watching soldier who could have fought the Bactrian Greeks, or a monk who may have seen the sculptures at Sanchi being carved. So realistic are the faces of the people depicted, so direct are their expressions, that you feel that these have to be portraits of real individuals, glowing still with the flame of eternal life. There is none of the idealization or otherworldliness you see in the later images of the Boddhisttavas. Instead there is something deeply hypnotic about the soundless stare of these silent often uncertain Sātavāhana faces. Their fleeting expressions are frozen, startled, as if suddenly surprised by the king's decision to loose his arrow or by the nobility of the great elephant breaking through the trees. The viewer peers at

these figures trying to catch some hint of the upheavals they witnessed and the strange sights they saw in ancient India. But the smooth, humane, Indo-Hellenistic faces stare us down.

Perhaps the most disconcerting thing about the people in these murals is that they appear so astonishingly familiar. Two thousand years after they were painted these faces convey with penetrating immediacy the character of the different sitters: the alert guard, the king caught in the excitement of the hunt, the obedient son fetching water. Indeed so contemporary are the features, so immediately recognizable the emotions that play on the lips, that you have to keep reminding yourself that these sitters are not from our world, that they are pigments attached to the wall of a cave, and depict a court and jungle world of hunters and hunted, and Buddhist monks and devotees, that vanished from these now bare Deccan hills more than two millennia ago.

Yet these are self-evidently the same people who inhabit Western India today: looking at these images you cannot help but feel the great distance of time separating them from us; and yet we find in their eyes an emotional immediacy that is at once comprehensible. Some of them look strikingly like the guards who admit you to the caves: indeed while the glass coverings were being removed to allow the photography that I had arranged, the guards joked among themselves about which painted king looked most like which guard. The women on the cave walls wear the same bangles that the Banjara tribes of these hills still stack along their forearms, and their dupattas are decorated with fringes of *taarkaam* or Paithani still popular in Maharastra today, as are the fishscale *kham* textiles which clothe the hunters in the *Śyāma Jātaka*.

It is odd and eerie to stare into the eyes of men and women who died more than two thousand years ago; but odder still to feel that their faces are somehow reassuringly familiar. One final word, to take us back to where we started – Berenike and Egypt. The sharp eyes of Pia Brancaccio recently spotted that the circular pattern on two of the shields or textiles of guards from the *Śyāma Jātaka* and the *Ṣaḍdanta Jātaka* are very similar to a fragment of Indian cotton textile recently found at Berenike, bringing us back full circle to the point we began – the port which seems to be the key to understanding the links this conference was called to study.

Bibliography

Ahuja, N. (2019), 'One mother, many mother tongues', *Marg* 70/4: 33-46.

Aruz, J. and Fino, E.V. (eds.) (2012), *Afghanistan: Forging Civilisations along the Silk Road* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).

Autiero, S. and Cobb, M.A. (eds.) (2022), *Globalization and Transculturality from Antiquity to the Pre-Modern World* (London: Routledge).

Ball, W. (2000), *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge).

Boardman, J. (2015), *The Greeks in Asia* (London: Thames and Hudson).

Bromberg, C. (1991), 'An Iranian Gesture at Miran', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* n.s. 5: 45-58.

Cobb, M.A. (2018), *Rome and the Indian Ocean Trade from Augustus to the Early Third Century* (Leiden: Brill).

Cunliffe, B. (2015), *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Dalrymple, W. (2024), *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World* (London: Bloomsbury).

De Romanis, F. (2020), *The Indo-Roman Pepper Trade and the Muziris Papyrus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Elverskog, J. (2010), *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

Evers, K.G. (2017), *Worlds Apart Trading Together: The Organisation of Long-Distance Trade between Rome and India in Antiquity* (Oxford: Archaeopress).

Filigenzi, A. (2006), 'From Saidu Sharif to Miran', *Indologica Taurinensia* 32: 67-89.

Marshall, J. (1951), *Taxila: An Illustrated Account of Archaeological Excavations 1913-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

McEvilley, T. (2002), *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (New York: Allworth Press).
McLaughlin, R.F. (2014), *The Roman Empire and the Indian Ocean: The Ancient World Economy and the Kingdoms of Africa, Arabia and India* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword).
McLaughlin, R.F. (2016), *The Roman Empire and the Silk Routes: The Ancient World Economy and the Empires of Parthia, Central Asia and Han China* (Barnsley: Pen and sword).
McLaughlin, R.F. (2018), 'Indian Ocean Commerce in Context: The Economic and Revenue Significance of Eastern Trade in the Ancient World', in M.A. Cobb (ed.), *The Indian Ocean Trade in Antiquity: Political, Cultural and Economic Impacts* (London: Routledge), 117-134.
Parker, G. (2008), *The Making of Roman India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Pingree, D. (1963), 'The Indian Iconography of the Decans and Horâs', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26/3-4: 223-54.
Ray, H.P. (2003), *The Archaeology of Seafaring in Ancient South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Santoro, A. (2006), 'Miran: The Viśvāntara Jātaka on Visual Narration along the Silk Road', *Rivista degli studi orientali* 79, fasc. 1/4: 31-45.
Schlingloff, D. (1987), *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings: Identifications and Interpretations* (Ajanta, 1987).
Schlingloff, D. (2013), *Handbook to the Ajanta Murals (*New Delhi 2013)
Sidebotham, S.E. et al. (2023), 'Results of the Winter 2022 Excavation Season at Berenike (Red Sea Coast), Egypt', *Thetis* 27 [2022]: 13-28.
Singh, Manager R. and Balasaheb Arbad (2013), 'Chemistry of Preservation of the Ajanta Murals', *International Journal of Conservation Science* 4/2: 161-76.
Spink, M.A. (2005-2014), *Ajanta: History and Development.* Vol. 1, *The End of the Golden Age* (2011); vol. 2, *Arguments About Ajanta* (2006), vol. 3, *The Arrival of the Uninvited* (2005), vol. 4, *Painting, Sculpture, Architecture Year by Year* (2009), vol. 5, *Cave by Cave* (2007); vol. 6, *Defining Features* (2014). (Leiden: Brill).
Stein, M.A. (1928), *Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-Su and Eastern Īrān* (4 vols.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
Stein, M.A. (1933), *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and North-Western China* (London: Macmillan).
Stewart, P. (2020), 'Roman Sarcophagi and Gandhāran Sculpture', in W. Rienjang and P. Stewart (eds.), *The Global Connections of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Third International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 18th-19th March 2019* (Oxford: Archaeopress), 50-85.
Tchernia, A. (2016), 'The Dromedary of the Peticii and Trade with the East', in A. Tchernia, *The Romans and Trade* (Oxford: Oxford Univesity Press), 220-8.
Turner, J. (2004), *Spice: The History of a Temptation* (London: HarperCollins).
Tomber, R. (2008), *Indo-Roman Trade: From Pots to Pepper* (London: Bloomsbury).
Wagner, M. et al. (2009), 'The Ornamental Trousers from Sampula (Xinjiang, China): Their Origins and Biography', *Antiquity* 83/322: 1065-75.
Wilson, A. (2014), 'A Forum on Trade', in W. Scheidel (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 287–320.
Young, G.K. (2001), *Rome's Eastern Trade: International commerce and imperial policy, 31 BC–AD 305* (London: Routledge).

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-03

Greeks and the Art of India: Philosophy through Art[1]

Richard Stoneman

Between the period of the Indus civilization and the earliest Maurya productions there is little that can be described as art in the Indian subcontinent. A few simple figurines and shaped bronzes, and no architectural remains to speak of since most buildings were of perishable materials (Figure 1). With the rise of the cities, exemplified by the excavated remains of Pataliputra, there is a marked change. 'Mother-goddesses' with bulging hips and breasts, in the form of small terracottas and a few small bronzes, yakṣīs or apsaras or tree-spirits with opulent breasts and beatific features, fill several cases in the Patna museum and are represented also in the collection at Mathurā. Their wondrous headdresses, tumbling turbans of many folds or, perhaps, an abundance of ostrich feathers, evoke an elusive stylishness at the courts of the Maurya kingdom. But the human form is still represented in a stylized, one could even say primitive form: the features of the mother-goddesses that are emphasized are breasts and hips, not facial detail, and there is no kind of harmony of form or contrapposto. There are exceptions to this generalization, notably the over-life-size fly-whisk bearer that is the pride of the Patna museum (Figure 2); though usually identified as Maurya work because of its high polish, this ascription is controversial and the piece is an uneasy fit with the more securely dated items (see below). A change comes in the later Maurya period with the large-scale sculptures of Sanchi and the first paintings at Ajanta, and the beginnings of Mathurā sculpture in the succeeding Indo-Greek period.[2] All these belong to the period of Greek presence in north-west India, and to a Buddhist context. As Jonathan Walters has written, 'the great stupas with their ornamentation – regularly improved into the third century CE, and periodically thereafter - ... transformed the Buddhist (and Indian) world into an artistic and monumental one, seemingly out of nothing'.[3] This is the more remarkable given the hostility of Buddhism, and of the Buddha himself, to art and to anything that appeals to the senses. The bhikkhu 'Should overcome passion/ for forms, sounds and tastes, smells and contacts'.[4]

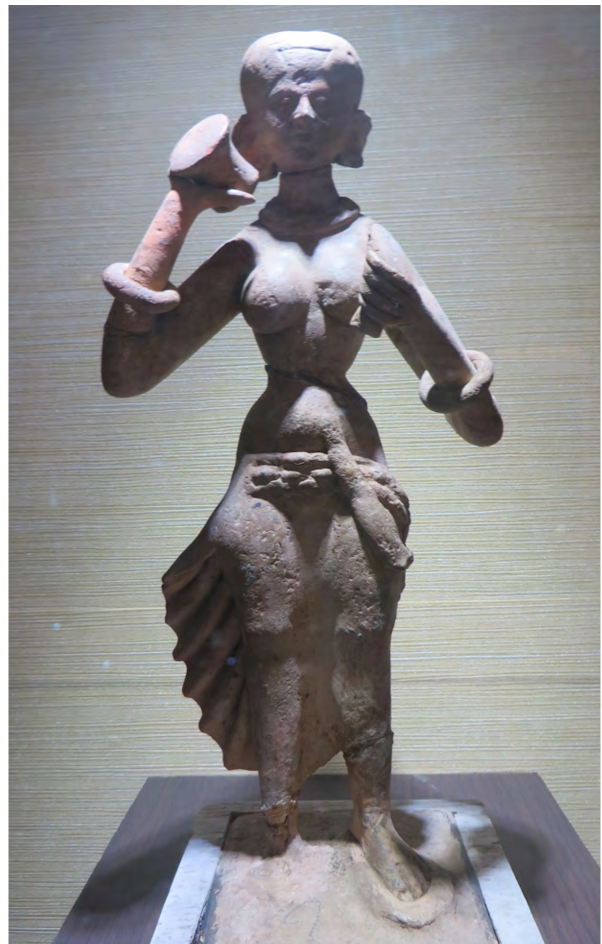

Figure 1. A mother goddess figure from the Maurya period. Patna Museum. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

1 This chapter draws upon the discussion of Greeks and the art of India in Stoneman (2019), esp. 427–60.
2 Quintanilla (2007), 9 is of the opinion that Mathurā was under Indo-Greek control from *c.* 185 to 85 BC, since there is no evidence of Śunga domination.
3 Walters (2022), 283-4.
4 Sutta-Nipata v. 1974, quoted in Walters (2022), 264. See also Reddy (2022), 76.

Figure 2. The fly-whisk bearer, life size statue. Patna Museum. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

The Buddha is often said to have disapproved of representational art, on the grounds that 'images feed desire', and it was several centuries before he was depicted in art.[5] Nonetheless, tradition associates the origin of painting with the career of the Buddha, and the state of Bihar. A king wished to have a portrait painted of the Buddha, as a gift for another king. The painter who was assigned to the task went to visit the Buddha, but was so overwhelmed by the subject's enlightened glow that he could not look at him. Instead they went to a nearby pond and the painter painted the reflection of the Buddha. The king, on seeing the portrait, understood that 'the world we see with our eyes is just a reflection of a reality that we cannot quite grasp'.[6] The point is a Platonic one, that contemplation of worldly reality may be a route to contemplation of transcendent truth: so representational art is to that extent redeemed in this tale. It is nonetheless a surprise that monumental art emerges so suddenly in the third century BC and in a Buddhist context.

When European scholarship got beyond seeing Indian sculptures as 'monsters'[7] and began to discern the historical trajectory of Indian art, many were convinced that Greek art was the mainspring that got Indian sculpture going.[8] As early as 1809, Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859, governor of Bombay) had visited a Buddhist stupa at Maunikyaula (Manikyala, near Rawalpindi), and written in his *Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (i.e. Kabul) of 1839 that it reminded him of the beehive tombs of Mycenae: 'there was nothing at all Hindoo in the appearance of this building; most of the party thought it decidedly Grecian'.[9] The chronological coincidence of Alexander's arrival in the north-west explained the sudden emergence of sculpture in the Maurya lands. James Fergusson asserted that Bactria was the origin of *all* Indian art.[10]

Inevitably the sculpture of Gandhara, with its pronounced Hellenistic features, was the first to catch the eye of explorers with a background in classical art. But the art of an earlier period was quick to follow. When the Architectural Courts of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert

5 Soper (1950).
6 The story is told by Finlay (2002), 228-9, from whom my quotation is taken. Her source is Gega Lama, *Principles of Tibetan Art* (1983).
7 Mitter (1992).
8 On the 'monstrous' character of Indian art see Mitter (1977).
9 Cited from Levi (1972), 48.
10 Fergusson (1868), 221; see Singh (2004), 262, 333-4.

Museum) opened in 1873, the European Court was balanced by an Indian Court containing a cast of the eastern gateway of the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi (Figure 3). The remains at Sanchi had been excavated by Alexander Cunningham and F.C. Maisey and presented in the publication by Cunningham, *The Bhilsa Topes* (1854).[11] This included a thorough discussion of Greek sources. The archaeological surveyor for the North-West Frontier provinces (since 1868) was Henry Cole, and he wrote in the catalogue of the exhibition 'the exceptional excellence of the Sanchi bas-reliefs suggest that Greek masons, or possibly designers, may have been called in to assist the great work. These bas-reliefs were executed between the end of the third century B.C. to about 78 A.D.'[12] As Zareer Masani observes in a recent article (2023), the comparison with Greek art was part of 'an entirely new approach to Indian art, giving it equal status with its western counterparts'.

Next to arrive in South Kensington were painted copies of a number of the wall-paintings from the Ajanta Caves, the earliest of which date from the second to first century BC, while the better preserved ones are from the 460s AD (see Dalrymple's chapter in this volume). Thus all the Indian arts that received serious study at this time were of Buddhist origin, and displaced the Hindu gods with many arms that had become familiar at an earlier period, though the originals belonged to a later period than the Buddhist works. When John Lockwood Kipling (the father of Rudyard) was appointed simultaneously the first

Figure 3. Sanchi: east gateway. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

11 Singh (2004), 44-52.
12 Bryant and Weber (2017), 22-23; the quotation is from H.H. Cole, *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art exhibited in the South Kensington Museum*, 15.

Figure 4. The Lahore Museum. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

director of the Mayo School of Industrial Art in Lahore and curator of the Lahore Central Museum – posts he held from 1873 to 1893 – his aim was to encourage the development of the indigenous arts of India through the study of the art of the past (Figure 4). The aim recalls that of the Society of Dilettanti, who sent Stuart and Revett to Athens in 1751 to 'improve the arts in England'. The collection Kipling assembled in the Lahore Museum is noted for its representation of Gandhāra sculptures.[13] Again the Buddhist tradition is given primacy.

The presuppositions of the scholarship of the imperial period are easy to discern,[14] but they were not without historical foundation since Greeks had been prominent, and indeed rulers, in the north-west for more than two centuries, and had extended diplomatic contacts as far as Vidiśa/Besnagar, which is only a few miles from Sanchi (Figure 5). The emergence of Buddhist art, and of large-scale sculpture, at Mathurā and elsewhere, is contemporaneous with Indo-Greek dominance. Many scholars since Ram Raz, writing in 1834, have determinedly resisted the idea of outside influence on the arts of India.[15] Recent work (such as Quintanilla [2007]) tends to play down any possibility of external influence on this newly emergent art form, but classical scholars (such as John Boardman) find it difficult to look at it and not to see Greek elements. Who is right?

13 Bryant and Weber (2017), 45-6. There is a charming photograph of the elementary drawing class in 1908 on p. 172.
14 See Hagerman (2013).
15 Singh (2004), 311-12.

One should also distinguish the different but related arts of architecture, figural and decorative sculpture, and painting. Within sculpture let us also make a distinction of style and content; techniques of carving, for example, are not the same as choice of subject matter, and choices of decorative detail lie somewhere between. 'Copying' is not the only model: interaction and creative re-use may be more rewarding concepts. Foreigners, for example, are often represented with their distinctive features.[16] This kind of issue has arisen, for example, in the differing interpretations of the art of Persepolis by John Boardman and Margaret Cool Root, for the former sees similarities, and probably influence, in technique and style, while the latter denies influence on the basis of pictorial content and ideological infrastructure; and both seem to be right.[17] The argument seems less developed in the case of India and has been largely confined to generalities, and often to assertions.[18]

Figure 5. The column of Heliodoros at Vidiśa/Besnagar. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

Vincent Smith in 1889 argued that the art of Ajanta was impossible without Greek influence, while at the same time holding a low opinion of its quality.[19] Frederick Asher, by contrast, says 'one does not have to imagine foreign artists finally teaching the poor benighted Indians, ignorant of the potential of an image as an object of worship, how to create such forms'.[20] The sarcasm may betray some unease, and he does go on to concede that the Kushans (if no earlier kings) might have hired artists from distant regions because of the power of their empire.[21]

A more nuanced approach arises from consideration of the appearance of life-sized sculpture of gods and mortals in India. Pāṇinī in the fourth century BC discussed the making of images of deities for worship, and Quintanilla rightly takes this to show that sculpture existed before the stone tradition of Mathurā. She writes: 'Once the artists at Mathura did begin to fashion architectural sculpture and iconic statues from stone, apparently during the mid-second century BC, they did so in a style that conforms

16 Quintanilla (2007), 56 mentions the Phrygian caps worn by foreigners. One may think also of the 'Greek' musicians at Sanchi, below, or the 'Greek' warrior depicted at Ranigumpha Cave, Bhubaneshwar.
17 Cf. my brief discussion in Stoneman (2015), 173.
18 E.G. Sistla 2020, 167: 'Though it remains a hardly discussed aspect, [!] at least to me, the Indian-ness in Gandhara's sculpture is vividly evident'.
19 Mitter (1992), 268.
20 Asher (2006), 64.
21 In fact Xuan Zang states that Bactrian artists were employed to paint monuments under Kaniṣka: Banerjee (1919), 118; Puri (2014), 321-2.

quite closely with the styles used by sculptors from other regions of the Indian subcontinent as well.' She calls this a 'pan-Indian unity of sculptural styles'.[22]

As early as the eleventh century AD al Biruni observed the parallelism of the Greek and Indian employment of 'idols' in worship. After quoting at length from the *Bṛhatsaṃhita* of the encyclopaedist Varahamihira (AD 505-87) on the practical instructions for making of 'idols' of particular gods, he goes on, 'the ancient Greeks, also, considered the idols as mediators between themselves and the First Cause, and worshipped them under the names of the stars and the highest substances'. He quotes from Plato and Galen on the power of idols, and concludes with a curious quotation from Aristotle:

> There is a treatise of Aristotle in which he answers certain questions of the Brahmins which Alexander had sent him.[23] There he says 'if you maintain that some Greeks have fabled that idols speak, that the people offer to them and think them to be spiritual beings, of all this we have no knowledge, and we cannot give a sentence on a subject we do not know'.[24]

In so far as this story is anything more than a pious fiction by a pseudonymous Arab writer, it might indicate an interest among Indian thinkers in the theory of divine images. Could one imagine a Gupta craftsman seeking to understand the nature of his art through a contemplation of the power of Greek images of the gods? Varahamihira himself makes no such connection; however, Jawaharlal Nehru was prepared to believe that the idea of making images of the gods had come from the Greeks:

> It is an interesting thought that image worship came to India from Greece. The Vedic religion was opposed to all forms of idol and image worship. There were not even any temples for the gods... But Greek artistic influence in Afghanistan and round about the frontier was strong and gradually it had its way.[25]

Nehru also quotes with approval Tarn's pronouncement that 'what the Asiatic took from the Greek was usually externals only, matters of form; he rarely took the substance – civic institutions may have been an exception – and never spirit. For in matters of spirit Asia was quite confident that she could outstay the Greeks, and she did'.[26]

Zareer Masani quotes the proposition made by the art historian Ernest Havell in 1910, that the Indian artist had the ability 'to see with the mind, not merely with the eye, to bring out an essential quality, not just the common appearance of things... above all to identify himself with the inner consciousness of the nature he portrays'.[27]

So far my emphasis has been on what Indians could have learned from the Greeks, but in assessing the emergence of Buddhist art it may be relevant to consider what Greeks had learned from Indians. Greek thinkers are important witnesses for the Buddhism of the third to first centuries BC. This is not an uncontroversial statement, though the idea has been gaining adherents in the last few decades. In 1980 the British scholar Everard Flintoff first proposed to the English-speaking world that the Sceptical philosopher Pyrrho of Elis (*c*. 365-275 BC) was influenced by Buddhist thought. He had been preceded by the Romanian scholar Aram Frenkian (1957) who drew attention to the form of argument known as

22 Quintanilla (2007), 35
23 I do not think this treatise, which must have been one of the many attributed to Aristotle by Arab writers, is extant.
24 Al Biruni, 123-4.
25 Nehru (2004), 161.
26 Nehru (2004), 160; Tarn (1951), 67; cf. 407-8.
27 Masani (2023). See also Havell (1908), 223.

the tetralemma (Latin: quadrilemma) used both by the Buddha and by Pyrrho. A classic example of this form of argument occurs in *Sāmaññaphala-Sutta* (D.1 58):[28]

> Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta answered me as follows 'Is there another world?' ... that is not what I think. I do not say it is so, I do not say it is otherwise, I do not say it is not so, and I do not say it is not not so. Is there no other world? ... Is it that there both is and is not another world? ... Is it that there neither is nor is not another world?

Nāgārjuna, writing *c.* AD 100, uses the same form of argument to describe the Buddha following his *parinirvana*: 'Having passed into Nirvana, the Victorious Conqueror/ is neither said to be existent/ nor said to be non-existent./ Neither both nor neither are said'.[29]

Pyrrho used the same form of argument in order to induce the radical suspension of belief which, in the Sceptical view, is supposed to induce freedom from anxiety, tranquillity. He says 'one should not trust in our sense-perceptions or our opinions, but should be without opinions, uninclined, and unwavering, saying about each single thing that it no more is than is not, or it both is and is not, or it neither is nor is not'.[30] Since Flintoff wrote, other scholars have developed the argument and reinforced it, Adrian Kuzminski in two books, *Pyrrhonism: How the Greeks Reinvented Buddhism* (2008) and *Pyrrhonian Buddhism* (2021), Christopher Beckwith in his *Greek Buddha* (2015), and Giorgios Halkias in two papers of 2014 and 2020, the second of them published in a collection edited by Oren Hanner and entitled *Buddhism and Scepticism*.[31] But there have been dissenters. Most notably, the classical scholar Richard Bett ([2000], 171-7) examined the resemblances of Buddhist and Sceptical doctrine, and concluded (176) 'it is extremely difficult to believe that anything as abstruse as a quadrilemma could possibly have been communicated in any remotely intact form from the Indian 'naked wise men' to Pyrrho'. I take issue with this assertion on several grounds. First, the tetralemma does not seem to me a particularly abstruse idea, though it is certainly paradoxical. Secondly, Bett assumes that Pyrrho's only exposure to Indian philosophers took place on an afternoon in Taxila. Thirdly, he assumes that the naked philosophers of Taxila were purveying Buddhist doctrine. The second and third points are the important ones.

We must not forget that Pyrrho, who travelled with his teacher Anaxarchos on Alexander's expedition, spent six months with the rest of the court on board ship on the voyage down the Indus from November 326 to July 325 BC. Also in Alexander's entourage at this time was the renegade Naked Philosopher Calanus, who had abandoned the disputations in Taxila to join the king, seduced, some said, by the comforts of his court. (Anaxarchos, too, was accused by contemporaries of being too in love with the luxuries the king could provide). In those six months' voyaging, I cannot imagine that the king and his philosophers did not gather on the poop deck of the royal ship to learn something of each other's languages and to apply them in philosophical discussions.

But as regards the third point, there is little reason to characterise the Naked Philosophers of Taxila as Buddhists. Some have thought they might be Jains. Most likely is that they professed a variety of creeds.[32] I have come to think it likely that Calanus was an Ājīvika, a sect much despised by both Buddhists and Jains for its combination of extreme ascetic mortification with bursts of decadent hedonism.[33] All we are told of the Naked Philosophers in what survives of the account of Onesikritos, who interviewed them, is that they are vegetarians, receive alms, seek to eliminate pleasure and pain from the soul, and regard

28 Trans. Gethin (2008), 15.
29 Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 25.17. Trans. J. Garfield; see Garfield (1995).
30 T 58 Decleva Caizzi = Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14.18.1-5; Stoneman (2019), 348-9.
31 I have also proposed this in my book, Stoneman (2019), 346-57.
32 Stoneman (1995).
33 I argue the case in Stoneman (2019), 303-7. The standard survey of the Ājīvikas is Basham (1951).

death as a release. These features are true of almost any Indian sadhu. Calanus, however, was surely in a position to outline the salient features of all these creeds to his Greek companions, and it seems to have been the Buddhism that impressed Pyrrho.

So, if Bett's argument is based on false premises, and we may regard Pyrrho as an inheritor of Buddhist ideas, there is a danger of circular argument and of using what little we know of Pyrrho as evidence for the state of Buddhism in his time. Buddhist philosophy was elaborated through the centuries following the Buddha's death (late fifth century BC?) up until the *Mādhyamaka* of Nāgārjuna (*c.* AD 100) and for many centuries afterwards,[34] while our fullest source for Scepticism is the works of Sextus Empiricus, probably third century AD. Are we in danger of reading into Pyrrho – or into early Buddhism – ideas that were only developed several centuries later?

Perhaps surprisingly, I think this is unlikely. The essential ideas of Buddhism seem to have sprung fully-formed from the head of the Buddha himself. Beckwith, it is true, has suggested that even the Pali canon is an unreliable witness for originary Buddhism;[35] but I would say there is a remarkable consonance between the texts that purport to be records of the Buddha's own teaching and conversation. We have already noted the presence of the tetralemma in an early text, and it may be found in other places too. Nāgārjuna says firmly 'Everything is real and is not real, both real and not real, neither real nor not real. This is the Lord Buddha's teaching'.[36] The fundamental results of the Buddha's long journey of discovery are the Four Noble Truths – suffering, the causes of suffering (craving and attachment), the cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering. This end is to be achieved by understanding the non-existence of self, the impermanence of all things, and dependent arising: that is, nothing has existence of itself but only as a result of something else. Beckwith asserts that 'it is widely accepted that the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path are later inventions', and goes on to apply the same claim to the First Sermon.[37] But this claim is too extreme. For example, the verses that form the opening of the collection of *Jātakas* (former lives of the Buddha) are probably to be attributed to the fifth century BC,[38] and in their listing of the Ten Perfections, number eight is Truth, which must be read as the Four Noble Truths.[39] One of the earliest compilations of Buddhist piety, the *Therīgāthā,* repeatedly emphasises these fundamental points. Number fourteen runs:

> Once you see as suffering
> Even the basic bits that make up everything,
> You won't be born again,
> Calm is how you will live
> Once you discard the desire for more lives.[40]

The art of Amarāvatī includes many representations of the basic episodes of the Buddha's birth, life and teaching, and some *jātaka* tales. This, and the art of Bharhut, are evidence that predates any written texts and disproves Beckwith's contention that everything is late. The essentials of the doctrine existed in the earliest stages of Buddhism, prior to the arrival of the Greeks.

So, if some Indian art shows evidence of Greek handiwork and style, while some Greeks took an interest in Indian Buddhism and philosophy in general, can we see any impact of this interchange of perspectives in the art of early Buddhism?

34 See Westerhoff (2018).
35 Beckwith (2015), 169.
36 Nāhārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 18.8.49 (Garfield [1995]).
37 Beckwith (2015), 169.
38 Shaw (2006), liv-lv, Cone and Gombrich (1977).
39 The Four Noble Truths are also extolled in *Dhammapada*, 190-2.
40 Hallisey (2015), 7.

(a) Mathurā

Figure 6. Statue of an inebriated woman from Mathurā, second century BC. National Museum, New Delhi. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

Mathurā sculpture begins from the second century BC, in the Indo-Greek period, with its heyday in the early centuries AD (the Kushan period). There is no archaeological evidence for urbanisation at Mathurā before the third century BC, at which time Megasthenes referred to it as a 'great city.[41] Sculptures in the mottled red sandstone form the nearby Sikri quarries are found all over India, indicating that the Mathurā school of sculpture was highly regarded. It was the most prominent artistic production centre from the second century BC onwards.[42] Its influence may have spread widely, since the Hāthigumphā inscription (line 12) refers to a Jina image from Kalinga, in this period.[43] Dating Mathurā sculptures is not easy, though Quintanilla has established a number of criteria for stylistic development.[44] It is the earlier pieces (in her chronology) that concern us most.

Cunningham unhesitatingly saw the art of Mathurā as influenced by Greece.[45] It represents a sharp break from Maurya art in scale, materials, and style. John Boardman has written 'There is an even stronger classical element to be detected in what is otherwise a far more robustly Indian style than that of Gandhara.[46] He judges it 'more varied' and 'more monumental'.[47] Characterizing the Śunga school as a parallel phenomenon to that of Gandhāra, he remarks that its human figures are 'more voluptuous even than the Hellenistic, if sometimes less anatomically plausible (a trivial point in the circumstances).'[48] He seems to imply that the Page Three proportioning[49] of the female bodies is of less importance in determining the affinities of this art than the artists' concern for anatomical realism: faces, hands, postures and emotions, movement are all there and the fecund bosoms are perhaps just a hangover from the earlier mother goddesses. One of the most classical compositions of all, apparently a Dionysiac scene of a drunken woman from second century BC Mathurā (Figure 6), still gives the woman a double-E cup size.[50] Men, by contrast, and elephants, are treated with loving attention to realistic detail and lively action. Trees are instantly recognizable from their foliage. Perspective is first used soon after 150 BC.[51]

41 Megasthenes, F 13a J, 50.13 Schw. Quintanilla (2007), 2 and 7 discounts the evidence of Megasthenes; but why? See also Thapar (1989).
42 Cort (2010), 176 and 36 n. 30, quoting Quintanilla.
43 Cort (2010), 52; Kant (2000), 29 for the text of the inscription.
44 Cort (2010), 290 n. 14 suggests that her dates may be too precise.
45 Singh (2004), 68
46 Boardman (1994), 137.
47 Ibid. 139.
48 Boardman (2015), 134.
49 [The expression refers to the British tabloid newspaper tradition of featuring images of topless models on page three (ed.)]
50 Delhi museum: reproduced in V. Smith; Boardman (1994), 139 pl. 4.82 and Boardman (2015), 136.
51 Quintanilla (2007), 72 and fig. 69.

In addition, these sculptures include many small details of presumably Greek origin: girdles are tied in a 'Herakles knot' (Figure 7); the god Lakuliśa carries a club that assimilates him to Herakles (Figure 8). Herakles himself appears, wrestling with a lion, on a Mathurā relief now in the Kolkata Museum, as well as wearing a lion-skin.[52] (In Gandhāra, Herakles also becomes a model for depictions of Vajrapāṇi, as in a now vanished relief from Haḍḍa in Afghanistan, in which another of Buddha's companions seems to bear the features of Alexander.) Bodies bend and bear their weight on one foot in a way that is first seen in Hellenistic Greek sculpture such as the Knidian Aphrodite. Nudity itself seems to have a different connotation from that of the mother-goddess type, and the śālabhañjikās of Sanchi have a sensual allure that is absent from the Maurya figurines (Figure 9).

If Greek models did influence these artists, how did it happen? One possible mechanism is as follows: there were Greek artists established in Bactria where they produced the dies for the beautiful coins of the Bactrian kings, from the moment of Diodotos' breakaway onwards. Their fame might spread to the south and east and invitations might be issued to come and work on buildings there, particularly if they were not employed full-time at the mint. In addition, Greeks were probably settling further south and east in India as early as the second century BC, facilitating the advance of Greek armies when the Indo-Greek kingdoms expanded.

Figure 7. 'Herakles knot' on a statue in the Mathurā Museum. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

52 Banerjee (1919), 95; Boardman (1994), 4.81.

Figure 8. Lakuliśa with a club, like that of Herakles. Mathurā Museum. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

Figure 9. A Śalabhanjika from the east gateway at Sanchi. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

(b) Sanchi

The Buddhist complex at Sanchi is one of the earliest and most extensive such Buddhist settlements in Central India.[53] It represents the institutionalization of what had, to begin with, been a religion of wandering ascetics and mendicants. A mendicant order needs to settle near a city (in this case, Vidiśa/Besnagar) in order to have sufficient resources for begging; but Sanchi quickly developed into an economic centre in its own right, attracting artisans and traders in the same way as a Roman camp might do. The scale of the buildings at Sanchi dwarfs anything that had preceded them, even the slightly earlier monuments at Bharhut and Amarāvati. The massive Stupa 1 dates from the third century BC, and further stupas, temples and other buildings were added to the complex over the years. Stupa 1 is surrounded by a circuit wall with four tall gateways which are covered with a profusion of sculptural decoration. Most of the relief panels depict scenes from the life of the Buddha and from the *jātakas* (the Buddha's previous births); others depict scenes of worship in rural settings as well as kings' processional departures from cities. One well-known scene depicts a king paying homage to a stupa; he seems to be overcome with emotion and is supported by two women, perhaps his wives (Figure 10). This figure is often taken to be a portrait of Aśoka who is likely to have provided support for the foundation as he did for other *śramaṇa* establishments such as the Barabar caves.[54] Fergusson wrote 'the expression of the king's face is certainly that of a man in liquor';[55] but perhaps he has been overcome by religious emotion. Another intriguing scene depicts musicians. They are described by local guides as 'Greek,' and the instruments they play include a thoroughly Greek *aulos*, as well as the kind of drum that may be seen in any musical performance in present-day India; they wear kilted tunics and boots (Figure 11). However, they also wear pointed caps which may be taken as *piloi* like those of the Dioscuri, but could perhaps also be seen as Scythian pointed hats.[56] The features, too, could be interpreted as Central Asian rather than Greek.

Let us turn from the subjects depicted to the style of portrayal, and look first of all at the decorative details. The supporting columns of the buildings depicted sport capitals, echoed in the Sanchi gateways themselves, that bear addorsed lions and griffins in a very Persian style (Figure 12),[57] as well as extending the model to Indian creatures such as the nilgai and camel. The free-standing lions and the four addorsed lions of the 'Aśokan' capital on the Sanchi gateways – especially the details of their claws – convinced Alexander Cunningham that they were the work of Greek artists,[58] and while one must admit that a lion is a lion is a lion, many of the details, such as the manes, do remind one strongly of Greek styles of carving. The lion, it may be observed, is essentially a West Asiatic royal beast, while the characteristic royal beasts of India are the elephant and the bull.[59] A visitor steeped in the traditions of classical art is also likely to look at the elaborate whorls on the end of some of the Sanchi beams and be reminded of Ionic volutes (Figure 13). The *śalabhañjikās* (nymphs swinging from tree-branches) in the corners of some panels, here and at Bharhut, strongly resemble Greek winged victories.[60] Banerjee (1919, 62) compares a *yakṣī* from Bharhut, about 300 BC, with a caryatid. The sculptures at Amarāvati have also

53 It precedes Bharhut and Amarāvati: Shimada (2013). Shaw (2007) is a comprehensive study. Another major Buddhist site, Kanaganahalli in Karnataka, also begins in the second century BC and boasts a number of sculpted panels with captions in Brāhmī script, including one naming Aśoka; but the captions are of a later date (*c.* AD 120) than the images: Quintanilla 2017. The architectural depictions resemble those of Sanchi. See Meister (2007).

54 His features resemble those of the figured captioned as Aśoka at Kanaganahalli: Quintanilla (2017), 122.

55 Fergusson (1868), 125 with plate xxx.

56 I am not sure that the hats are tall enough for Scythians. Dhavalikar's guidebook to the site (2003, 59-60) describes them as Śakas (Scythians), though it seems a little early for Śakas to be prominent in this part of India.

57 Also to be seen at Ghazni: Levi (1972), 115.

58 Singh (2004), 50. Puri (2014), 321 mentions other Hellenistic motifs such as gryphons, sphinxes, tritons and erotes that appear in Buddhist art, though not all at Sanchi.

59 Huntington (1985), 45.

60 Boardman (2015), 133.

Figure 10. A king, probably Aśoka, overcome by emotion on pilgrimage. West gateway, Sanchi. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

Figure 11. 'Greek' musicians on the west gateway at Sanchi. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

Figure 12. Addorsed 'lions' at Sanchi. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

Figure 13. Ionic-style volute at Sanchi. (Photo: R. Stoneman.)

drawn comparisons with Greek work on account of their proportions.[61] There is, then, evidence here for detailing influenced by Greek art, often through Persian models, in the architecture of the third to second centuries BC.

What of the figures themselves? M.K. Dhavalikar is emphatic that there is no Hellenistic influence:[62]

> Although Marshall has inferred that these sculptures were the handiwork of artists from northwest India who were influenced by Hellenistic (Greek) art, it is apparent that they are closer in style to the Satavahana sculptures in Western Indian caves, and an inscription on the Southern Gateway even refers to the artist of a Satavahana king. The sculptures are clearly in the Satavahana style and there is no trace of any Hellenistic influence on them.

The Sātavāhana dynasty of South India (including Kanaganahalli) originated in the third century BC, though it may be later. But the point simply adds another body of evidence to the discussion. Should we see Hellenistic influence in Sātavāhana art as well?

Any assessment is bound to be subjective. I would simply like to suggest that, before these sculptures, there is no large scale sculpture in stone in India. The flexibility with which the human form is depicted

61 Shimada (2013), 20, quoting Fergusson; though he entertains the possibility that influence here might have come through Arikamedu, after the establishment of trading relations with Rome.
62 Dhavalikar (2003), 81. Contrast Banerjee (1919), 53.

is utterly different from the terracotta (and, rarely, bronze) figurines of mother goddesses and dancers that characterize the Maurya period. The one exception to this generalization is the breathtaking life-size fly-whisk bearer from Didarganj in the Patna Museum, which is generally attributed to the Maurya period, both on account of its find-spot in the Patna district, and because of the 'Maurya polish' given to the stone of which it is made (Figure 2). However, Frederick Asher and Walter Spink (1989) produced forceful arguments that the statue is in fact of Kushan date: the polish need not be the sole prerogative of the Maurya period, and the monumentality of the figure, as well as its posture, are more reminiscent of Kushan art. The case remains open, but there is no doubt that, if it is Maurya, it stands alone at a very great distance from all other Maurya art.

So far I have been speaking about stylistic matters in which the Indian sculptures resemble Greek art. Both Greek and Indian relief sculpture present narratives as well as static images. Rather little has been written on Greek pictorial narrative, the major exception being the excellent book of Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Pictorial Narrative in Ancient Greek Art.* This investigates and typologizes the many ways in which an image can tell a story, facing up to the challenge made by G.E. Lessing in *Laocoon:*

> If the artist can only ever make use of one single moment out of ever-changing nature, and if the painter in particular can only make use of this moment from one single point of view; if, what is more, their works are made not only to be seen, but to be contemplated, then it is certain that this single moment and the single chosen point from which it is viewed cannot be too fruitful.[63]

The problem may be more acute with Buddhist art where sculpture is vying with verbal narrative to convey not just story but doctrine, preaching, even philosophy. A story has a punchline, an argument has a conclusion. How can this be portrayed in sculpture. Is this a new problem in Buddhist art? I want to suggest that here too Greek artists had some track record.

I turn first to the content of the scenes adorning the stupas. At all these early sites these include scenes from the life of the Buddha, from birth to parinirvana, and including scenes of his preaching, as well as many *jātaka* tales, not all of them familiar from literary sources. A recent book edited by Naomi Appleton collects a number of penetrating papers about the techniques of narrative and representation in Indian Buddhist art.[64] Some of the contributors emphasize the narrative style of the reliefs while others suggest that many images, both on the stupas and in the painted caves of Ajanta, are so difficult to see that we cannot regard them as any kind of story-telling. S.R. Mace (153) neatly outlines the possibilities, and concludes that many images are not talismanic, apotropaic or ornamental, but are intended for contemplation. They are aids to meditation (139).[65] Appleton and Clark (177) suggest that the role of images is to make the Buddha present. The idea seems to come close to the Orthodox Christian concept of the icon: icons are not objects of worship in themselves, 'idols' as al-Biruni termed the Indian sculptures in the passage I quoted earlier, but windows through which one may view a divine reality. As Timothy Ware wrote in his book on the Orthodox Church, even a beautiful bed of flowers may be an icon. In an Indian context this is conceptualized as the pilgrim's goal of *darśan*, 'seeing'.

This idea of the icon is ultimately Platonic. Plato often expounds the ascent of the soul through the contemplation of earthly beauty, especially that of the beloved, to contemplation of the Forms of Beauty and the Good.[66] Greek art, too, is able not only to tell a story but to offer objects of contemplation. As usual the first example comes from Homer. The description of the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18 'reads' the images described as if they tell a story (Figure 14). For example:

63 Lessing 190, 32; tr. Nina Lübbren in Cooke and Lübbren (2018), 3.
64 Appleton (2022); Elsner (2024), 99-130.
65 See also Eck, quoted in Rutherford (2000), n. 55
66 E.g. in *Alcibiades, Phaedrus* and *Symposium.*

> He forged on the shield two noble cities filled
> With mortal men...
> And the people massed, streaming into the marketplace
> Where a quarrel had broken out and two men struggled
> Over the blood-price for a kinsman just murdered...
> Both men pressed for a judge to cut the knot... [67]

And the story goes on, one event after another envisaged as taking place in the static image.

An early example from tragedy describes pilgrims contemplating narrative reliefs: in Euripides' *Ion* (185 ff.) a group of Athenian women react to the carvings on the exterior of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi:

> See there! Look! The son of Zeus is slaying the Lernaean Hydra with a golden sword. Do come and look... And look at this man riding a winged horse! He's slaying a three-bodied, fire-breathing monster![68]

The exposition of these easily identifiable scenes by the Athenian ladies is a simple version of a representational technique that was often more complex. At the beginning of his novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, the second century AD author Longus states that he saw in the grove of the nymphs a painted image which was a history of love: *eikonos graphēn, historian erōtos.* The rest of the novel consists of his record of the explanation of the image provided by a learned old man who was present. The set-up is comparable to the perceived need at many Buddhist sites for a leaned expositor to explain the images to the pilgrim.[69]

Jaś Elsner sets this type of viewing in the context of the growing philosophical approach to viewing of images which is expressed frequently in Plotinus (third century AD).[70] For example, *Enn.* 6.9.11.18 f. concerns the ascent beyond images to the Divine, and at *Enn.* 5.1.6.12 Plotinus sees the viewing of temple images as an important technique. It is significant that the word for both pilgrimage to holy sites and philosophical contemplation is *theoria.* Ian Rutherford has drawn attention to the many similarities of *theoria* and *darśan.*[71] A Greek work of the late first/early second century AD known as the *Tabula of Cebes* is an account of a complex image which the author/narrator came upon in a Temple of Kronos. He professes to be unable to understand it until it is expounded by a local sage:[72]

> [It] presented a circular enclosure, within which were two other circular enclosures, one larger than the other. The first enclosure had a gate, and it seemed to us that a large crowd was standing near to this gate, whilst within the enclosure we could see a large number of women. Beside this entrance to the first enclosure stood an old man who appeared to be giving instructions of some sort to the crowd that entered.

At first seeming comparable to the Riddle of the Sphinx, this *pinax* turns out to be an allegorical representation of the choice of lives. Not only does it present instruction, but it appears that it is risky to investigate the meaning of the picture unless one can understand it properly.

Here we have a theorization of the practice of studying a religious image and trying to interpret it correctly. The large crowd of figures depicted outside the gate reminds me of the often very crowded

67 *Iliad* 18, 490-1, 497-501; trans. R. Fagles.
68 Eur. *Ion* 190-3, 201-4; trans. R. Waterfield.
69 Discussed by Strong (2022), 186-209.
70 Elsner (1995).
71 Rutherford (2000).
72 F. Drosihn, *Tabula Cebetis* (Leipzig: Teubner 1871), p. 1, section 1 (translated by Jaś Elsner).

scenes on Buddhist reliefs; one purpose of this crowd is to draw the viewer in so that they become a participant in the scene depicted – in the case of a Buddhist image, a member of the crowd venerating the Buddha. Such an approach helps to cross the divide between the static presentation of a sculptured image, fixed in an unchanging Now, and the oral or written narrative which moves through time. A story has a punchline, an argument has a conclusion. An image seems to have neither, but by inspiring contemplation and meditation it enables the viewer herself – like the Athenian ladies at Delphi – to reflect on possible meanings.

This common function of Greek sculpted images, latent in the earliest example but increasingly explicit from the first century AD and in the theories of Plotinus, suggests that Greek artists had the capacity not only to bring to India the ability to carve volutes and to represent drapery and contrapposto, but to suggest ways of presenting a scene that would give it narrative value and contemplative power. The *theoria* of Greek religious images and the *darśan* of Indian ones are certainly comparable, parallel phenomena. It is not impossible that the creation of the new kind of images that adorn Buddhist stupas was also suggested by the Greek artists who came in the wake of Alexander's army.

Bibliography

Appleton, N. (ed.) (2022), *Narrative Visions and Visual Narratives in Indian Buddhism* (Sheffield: Equinox).

Al-Biruni: see Sachau (1910)

Asher, F. and Spink, W. (1989), 'Maurya Figural Sculpture Reconsidered', *Ars Orientalis* 19: 1-25.

Asher, F. (2006), 'Early Indian Art Reconsidered', in P. Olivelle (ed.) *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 51-66.

Banerjee, G.N. (1919), *Hellenism in Ancient India* (London: Butterworth).

Basham, A.L. (1951), *History and Doctrines of the Ajivikas: A Vanished Indian religion* (London: Luzac).

Beckwith, C. (2015), *Greek Buddha* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Boardman, J. (1994), *The Diffusion of Classical Art in Antiquity* (London: Thames and Hudson).

Boardman, J. (2015), *The Greeks in Asia* (London: Thames and Hudson).

Bryant, J. and Weber, S. (eds.) (2017), *John Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London* (New York and London: Bard Graduate Center Gallery and Yale University Press).

Cone, M. and Gombrich, R. (1977), *The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara: A Buddhist Epic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Cooke, P and Lübbren, N. (eds.) (2016), *Painting and Narrative in France, from Poussin to Gauguin* (London: Routledge).

Cort, J.E. (2010), *Framing the Jina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Decleva Caizzi, F. (2020), *Pirroniana* (Milan: Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto).

Derrett, J.D.M. (1992), 'Homer in India: The Birth of the Buddha', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 2/1: 47-57.

Dhavalikar, M.K. (2003), *Sanchi: Monumental Legacy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Elsner, J. (1995), *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Elsner, J. (1997), 'The Origins of the Icon: Pilgrimage, Religion and Visual Culture in the Roman East as "Resistance" to the centre', in S. Alcock (ed.) *The Early Roman Empire in the East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 178-99.

Elsner, J. (2024), *Amarāvatī: Art and Buddhism in Ancient India* (London: Reaktion Books).

Elsner, J. and Rutherford, I. (eds.) (2005), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Fergusson, J. (1868), *Tree and Serpent Worship or Illustrations of Mythology and Art in India* (London: India Museum; reprinted Delhi: Indological Book House, 1971).

Finlay, V. (2002), *Colour: Travels through the Paintbox* (London: Hodder and Stoughton).

Garfield, J. (1995), *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagaurhuna's Mulamadhyamkakarika. Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Gethin, R. (2008), *Sayings of the Buddha: New Translations by Rupert Gethin from the Pali Nikāyas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Hagerman, C.A. (2013), *Britain's Imperial Muse: The Classics, Imperialism and the Indian Empire 1784-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
Hallisey, C. (2021), *Poems of the First Buddhist Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
Havell, E.B. (1908), *Indian Sculpture and Painting Illustrated by Typical Masterpieces* (London: John Murray).
Holliday, P.J. (1993), *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Huntington, S. (1985), *Art of Ancient India* (New York: Weatherhill).
Lessing, G.E. (1990), *Laokoon; oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* [1766] in W. Barner, et al. (eds.), *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke und Briefe* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag), vol. 5/2.
Levi, P. (1972), *The Light Garden of the Angel King: Travels in Afghanistan* (London: Collins).
Marshall, J. (1917), *The Monuments of Sāñchi* (Bombay).
Masani, Z. (2023). 'How the British saved India's Classical History', *Spectator,* 29 January 2023, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/how-the-british-saved-indias-classical-history> (last accessed 5 December 2023).
Meister, M.W. (2007), 'Early Architecture and its Transformation: New Evidence for Vernacular Origins for the Indian temple' in A. Hardy (ed.), *The Temple in South Asia* (London: British Association for South Asian Studies), 1-20.
Mitter, P. (1977), *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
Nehru, J. (2004), *The Discovery of India* (Gurgaon: Penguin India [First edition 1946]).
Nightingale, A. (2005), 'The Philosopher at the Festival: Plato's Transformation of Traditional *Theoria*' in Elsner and Rutherford (2005), 151-80.
Puri, B.N. (2014), *Kuṣānas in India and Central Asia* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).
Quintanilla, S.R. (2007), *History of Early Stone Sculpture at Mathura* (Leiden: Brill).
Quintanilla, S.R. (2017), 'Transformations of Identity and the Buddha's Infancy Narratives at Kanaganahalli', *Archives of Asian Art* 67: 111-42.
Rutherford, I. (2000), 'Theoria and Darśan', *Classical Quarterly*, 50: 133-46.
Sachau, E.C. (1910), *Alberuni's India* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner; repr. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal 1992).
Shaw, S. (2006), *The Jatakas: Birth Stories of the Buddha* (Gurugram: Penguin Random House India).
Shaw, J. (2007), *Buddhist Landscapes in Central India: Sanchi Hill and Archaeologies of Religious and Social Change, c. third century BC to fifth century AD* (London: British Association for South Asian Studies).
Shimada, A. (2013), *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context* (Leiden: Brill).
Singh, U. (2004), *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology* (Delhi: Permanent Black).
Sistla, S. (2020), 'Greek Art – The Early Art Schools, Modern Telugu Literature and Popular Culture of India' in R. Seshan (ed.), *Indo-Hellenic Cultural Transactions* (Mumbai: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute), 167-78.
Smith, V.A. (1962), *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, 3rd edn., revised and enlarged by K. Khandalavala (Bombay: Taraporevala).
Soper, A.C. (1950). 'Early Buddhist Attitudes toward the Art of Painting', *Art Bulletin* 32: 147-51.
Stansbury-O'Donnell, M. (1999), *Pictorial Narrative in Ancient Greek Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Stoneman, R. (2015), 'Tales of Utopia: Alexander, Cynics and Christian Ascetics', in M. Futre Pinheiro and S. Montiglio (eds.), *Philosophy and the Ancient Novel* (Groningen: Barkhuis), 51-63.

Stoneman, R. (2019), *The Greek Experience of India: From Alexander to the Indo-Greeks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
Strong, J. (2022), 'Interpretations and (Mis)understandings: Three Case Studies of Illustrations of the Buddha's Lifestory' in Appleton (2022), 186-209.
Tarn, W.W. (1951), *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Thapar, R. (1989), 'The Early History of Mathura', in D.M. Srinivasan (ed.), *Mathura: the Cultural Heritage* (New Delhi: Manohar), 12-18.
Walters, J. (2022), 'Making Sense of the Story', in Appleton (2022), 263-86.
Westerhoff, J. (2018), *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-04

Yavanas in Early Indian Inscriptions

Upinder Singh

The term 'Yavana' and its Middle Indic variants such as 'Yona,' are generally understood to derive from Ionia (via Old Persian *Yauna*) and were used in Indian sources not only for Greeks but also in a more elastic sense of 'westerner'. Yavanas were also clubbed with other 'outsiders' in the wider category of *mleccha*, which included tribal and foreign people and can be translated as 'barbarian'.[1] The earliest Indian epigraphic references occur in Aśoka's inscriptions (rock edicts 2, 5 and 13), where Yona is used in two senses – to refer to Greeks who were part of a set of three north-western peoples, namely Yavanas, Kāmbojas and Gandhāras, who lived *within* Aśoka's empire; and to refer to five contemporary Greek kings (with the Seleukid Antiokhos at their head) who ruled *beyond* Aśoka's domain. This essay examines the post-Maurya epigraphic references to the term Yavana.

The textual references to Yavanas have been admirably collated and analyzed by Klaus Karttunen. The epigraphic references were assembled long ago in 1934-35 by Otto Stein,[2] and have been discussed by historians who have worked on trade and cultural interactions. However, there is a need to look at them afresh because there have been many changes in ways of interpreting and contextualizing inscriptions – in relation to other inscriptions, the larger archaeological landscape, and visual sources. Static readings of inscriptions have been replaced by attempts to understand the epigraphic process, including the production and reception of inscriptions, as well as their inter-textuality and dialogic aspects. There has also been a significant expansion in the understanding of the history of the Indo-Greeks, India's trade with the Mediterranean, and the history of Buddhism during the period *c*. 200 BC to AD 300. During these centuries, Yavanas appear as political envoys (Besnagar pillar inscription of Heliodoros); political adversaries (Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela; Nashik inscription of Gautamī Balaśrī); patrons of religious establishments (Sanchi, Nashik, Karle and Junnar); governors/administrators (Junagadh inscription of Rudradāman); and part of a cosmopolitan Buddhist world (Nāgārjunakoṇḍa).

Heliodoros: envoy and devotee of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa

The ruins of the ancient city of Vidiśā, an important commercial and political centre, are located in Besnagar (in Vidisha district, Madhya Pradesh). An inscribed pillar here is generally assigned to *c*. 100 BC (Figure 1). The pillar shaft is a monolith consisting of four sections of unequal length – the lower three are faceted into 8, 16, and then 32 sides, and the topmost section is round. The lowest section is separated from the second one by a row of half lotuses and petal bunches, within an arched border. The second and third sections of the pillar are separated by a relief of a festoon of garlands, each of which has the carving of a fruit or flower. Above the inverted lotus/bell is a cable necking and a broken abacus which seems to have been carved on the top with pairs of geese, honeysuckle and lotus patterns. The crowning element is missing, but as the longer inscription refers to the pillar as a *garuḍa-dhvaja*, it can be presumed that it was a representation of Viṣṇu's avian vehicle, *garuḍa*. It is widely held that a fragmentary capital in the Gurjari Mahal Archaeological Museum in Gwalior Fort, of which only the feet of a bird holding a *nāga* remain, represents the lower part of the *garuḍa-dhvaja* of the Heliodoros pillar (Figure 2).[3]

Two inscriptions (Besnagar A and B), are inscribed on the upper part of the octagonal section of the pillar, facing east and west, both at eye level and readable. They are in Middle Indic/Prakrit (the first

1 Karttunen (2015). On the *mlecchas*, see Parasher (1991).
2 Stein (1934-35).
3 Dass (2001).

Figure 1. The pillar of Heliodoros at Besnagar. (Photo: U. Singh.)

Figure 2: Fragmentary capital in Gujari Mahal, Gwalior Fort (Photo: U. Singh).

has a few Sanskritic spellings) and inscribed in the Brahmi script.[4] The first (Besnagar A) is a seven-line prose inscription. It states that this *garuḍa* pillar (*garuḍa-dhvaja*) of Vāsudeva, the god of gods (*deva-deva*) was caused to be made here by Heliodora (Heliodoros), the Bhāgavata (worshipper of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa), son of Diya (Dion), of Takhkhasilā (Takṣaśilā), the Yavana envoy (*Yona-dūta*) who came from the great king (*mahārāja*) Aṁtalikita to king (*raño*) Kāsīputra Bhāgabhadra, the saviour (*trātāra*), prospering in his fourteenth regnal year.[5]

On the eastern face of the pillar is a short two-line inscription (Besnagar B), which was clearly related to the longer donative inscription. This refers to three steps to immortality, which, when correctly followed, lead to heaven – control (*dama*), generosity/detachment (*cāga*) and attentiveness (*apramāda*). Similar statements can be found in texts such as the *Dhammapada* and *Mahābhārata*.[6] The shorter inscription weds ethical content to the sectarian sentiment and donative purport of the longer one.

This is the first instance of Yavana being used as a self-descriptive term for social identity in an inscription, and its meaning is quite clear – it refers to a Greek envoy from an Indo-Greek king. Aṁtalikita can identified with Antialkidas, known from coins, whose rule can be placed in 119-95 BC.[7] Kāsīputa Bhāgabhadra is generally identified with the fifth Śuṅga king Bhadraka (or the eighth king Bhāgavata). The inscription indicates that the Śuṅgas continued the Maurya practice of receiving envoys from Greek courts. It can be noted that Aṁtalikita is referred to as a *mahārāja* while the Śuṅga king is given the lesser title *raño*. According to V.S. Sukthankar, the syntax of the inscription shows a strong stamp of Hellenism, in that some parts seem to be a word for word Prakrit rendering of Greek.[8] He suggests that the composer of the inscription must have been a Greek who knew Prakrit, perhaps Heliodoros himself.

Over the years, the idea of a Greek 'convert' to Bhāgavatism has excited considerable scholarly interest. What exactly 'conversion' meant in the second century BC can be debated. Does the reference to Bhāgavatism reflect Heliodoros's personal religious beliefs, or given the fact that he advertizes his political role, was it a political act? The full significance of the Heliodoros pillar emerges when it is placed within its larger political context. Vidiśā was an important political centre in the Śuṅga period. A war between the Śuṅgas and the Indo-Greeks is alluded to in Kālidāsa's fourth/fifth-century play, the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. The Heliodoros pillar may reflect a post-war truce or alliance. Or Antialkidas may have reached out for an alliance with the Śuṅgas to strengthen his hand. As is well-known, the Indo-Greek connection with Bhāgavatism is not an isolated one. Antialkidas' own coins generally depict Zeus, but a silver drachm of Agathokles (reigned *c*. 180-170 BC) from Ai-Khanoum depicts Saṁkarṣaṇa Balarāma and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.

The Heliodoros pillar also has to be situated within its larger archaeological landscape. M.D. Khare's excavations near the pillar revealed the vestiges of two apsidal temples belonging to different periods – fourth to third century BC and second century BC. [9] He offered a 'conjectural' plan of a *possible* superstructure of the latter. This Bhāgavata temple at Vidiśā is one of the earliest Hindu temples in India.[10] When extant, it must have been very impressive. The Heliodoros pillar was one of eight pillars

4 Salomon (1998), 265-7; Sircar (1942), 90-1.

5 Sircar (1942), 91. In this case, Kāsīputra would be a matronym. *Trātāra* is a translation of the Greek *soteros* (savior). It is not usually used as a royal epithet for Indian kings.

6 Salomon (1998), 267 note. Barnett (1909) drew attention to similarities with the doctrine of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and a possible connection with the three legendary steps of Viṣṇu.

7 Bopearachchi (2015), 106. Indo-Greek chronology is, however, a fraught issue.

8 Sukthankar (1918-19).

9 Khare (1967), 92-7. A sample of charcoal from the mid-NBP level yielded a date of 295 +/- 110 BC. Ghosh (1989), 62; *Indian Archaeology: A review,* 1963-64, 16-17; *Indian Archaeology: A review,* 1964-65, 19-20.

10 Other early Hindu temple remains include those of a shrine at Nagari, Dangwada, the Durgā and *nāga* shrines in Sonkh, a Lakṣmī temple at Atranjikhera, and a Śaiva temple at Gudimallam.

associated with it, seven of them standing in a row.[11] The stump of a second *garuḍa* pillar which was apparently found at the same site, refers to a *garuḍa-dhvaja* associated with the best temple of the Bhagavat (*Bhagavato prāsādotama*) having been caused to be made by Bhāgavata, son of Gotamī, when *mahārāja* Bhāgavata had been consecrated twelve years.[12] The kings mentioned in the two *garuḍa-dhvaja* inscriptions may be the same. This second inscription may even have provided a template for that of Heliodoros. Both inscriptions consist of seven lines. Both donors take the epithet 'Bhāgavata'. This one is dated with reference to the king's consecration, Heliodoros's in the king's regnal year. In this inscription, the ruling king is given the epithet *mahārāja*, while in Heliodoros' inscription he is downgraded from *mahārāja* to *raño*, and the Middle Indic translation of an Indo-Greek epithet (*soteros*) is introduced.

Grand as it must have been, the Bhāgavata temple was one of many religious establishments in the Vidiśā area. The second century BC remains found in the area include pillar capitals, *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* figures, and remains of one or more Buddhist structures.[13] Besnagar also has to be looked at in dialogue with Sanchi, which was less than 13 km away. Aśoka was closely associated with Buddhism and Sanchi, but the Śuṅga relationship with both was fraught with conflict. When Heliodoros arrived in Vidiśā, there were many different kinds of religious establishments there, Sanchi was humming with building activity, and the Bhāgavata temple in the city was undergoing a makeover. Whether or not Heliodoros was personally a devout Bhāgavata is impossible to say. But the fact that the envoy of the Indo-Greek king chose to participate in the building of a major Vaiṣṇava shrine in Vidiśā rather than a politically unconnected or disfavoured Buddhist establishment on its outskirts made good political sense.

Yavanas as political adversaries: the Hathigumpha and Nashik inscriptions

Epigraphic references to Yavanas as political adversaries occur in the Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela and the Nashik inscription of the Sātavāhana queen mother Gautamī Balaśrī.

The Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela

Cave 14 on Udayagiri hill (in Khordha district, Odisha), known as the Hathigumpha, contains a seventeen-line royal inscription in fine Middle Indic literary prose (Figure 3). It is an epigraph of *mahārāja* Khāravela of the Mahāmeghavāhana family and Cedi lineage, a king of Kaliṅga who ruled in the mid-first century BC.[14] Lines 7-8 concern us here. These refer to Khāravela sacking Goradhagiri with a large army and causing pressure on Rājagaha (Rājagṛha). As a result of the loud report of this act of valour, a Yavana king (*Yavana-rāja*) retreated to Madhurā (i.e. Mathurā) after extricating his demoralized army and transport. Owing to the damaged nature of the inscription, it is difficult to read the king's name. K.P. Jayaswal and R.D. Banerji suggested that it could be Dimita. However, D.C. Sircar states that while 'Yavana-rāja' is clear, Dimita or Ḍimita is doubtful.[15]

---

11 Khare (1975).

12 Bhandarkar (1917), 190-91.

13 The city was also a centre of remarkable artistic innovation and experimentation. The finds include remains of the lower part of a pillar capital with two addorsed elephants and two addorsed lions, only the feet of which survive. The pillar capitals include the remains of an unusual capital on Lohangi hill, near the railway station, which had four addorsed animals – two lions and two elephants (Stadtner [1975]).

14 The dates suggested for Khāravela range from the second century BC to first century AD. I am placing him in the mid-first century BC. The Hathigumpha inscription is fragmentary in parts and there are divergent readings and interpretations of various segments. See Jayaswal and Banerji (1929-30). Also see Sircar's reading, which differs in several significant respects (Sircar [1942], 213-21).

15 The reading given by Jayaswal and Banerji (1929-30), 79, 87 is as follows: 'Etin[ā] ca kaṁmapadāna-sa[ṁ]nādena samb[i]ta-sena,vāhane vipamu[ṁ]citu Madhuraṁ apayāto Yavana-rāj[ā] D[i]mi[ta].....' Translation: 'On account of the loud report of this act of valour, the *Yavana* king Dimi[ta] retreated to Mathurā having extricated his demoralized army and transport...' Sircar (1942), 216 reads: 'Etin[ā] ca kaṁmapadāna-sa[ṁ]nādena...sena-vāhane vipamuvituṁ Madhuraṁ apayāto Yavanarā[ja] [Dimita?]....' He adds that even if Jayaswal and Banerji's reading is correct, this Dimita cannot be identified with Demetrios who flourished in the second quarter of the second century BC.

Figure 3. Hathigumpha, Udayagiri hill. (Photo: U. Singh.)

Historians have long debated who the Indo-Greek king mentioned in the Hathigumpha inscription might have been. As mentioned above, the reading 'Dimita' is contested and anyway, the dates do not fit with Demetrios.[16] The *Yavana-rāja* in question is connected with Mathurā. But Indo-Greek rule is not known in the Mathurā region in the first century BC. There are three possible explanations of the term Yavana in Khāravela's inscription. The first is that it is used in an elastic sense and actually refers to the Śakas, who we know from other epigraphic sources *did* rule in the Mathurā area. The second possibility is that the reference invokes the memory or spectre rather than the reality of Indo-Greek rulers as political adversaries. The third possibility (which can be combined with the first two) is connected with an argument I have made elsewhere: that Khāravela's inscription was an epigraphic chronicle with a long historical memory and is in direct dialogue with Aśoka's edicts.[17] The reference to the Yavana king in the Hathigumpha inscription can be seen as part of this dialogue. Aśoka boasts of spreading *dhamma* and engaging in various welfare measures in the domains of yona/Yavana kings, Khāravela of defeating one of them.

Yavanas in the Nashik inscription of Gautamī Balaśrī

The second inscription which refers to the Yavanas as political adversaries comes from western India. From the late second century BC up to the mid-third century AD, the Sātavāhana dynasty ruled over a kingdom straddling the eastern and western parts of the Deccan.[18] In the later part of the first century

16 Bopearachchi (2015), 492 places Demetrios's reign in *c.* 200-185 BC. He places Menander's invasion of India in *c.* 150 BC. Both these kings are too early to be Khāravela's contemporaries (if the latter is placed in the first century BC).
17 See Singh (2022).
18 Sātavāhana chronology is the subject of debate. I am going by the hypothesis that Sātavāhana rule began in the second century BC. Vidya Dehejia (1972), 19-21 suggests 120/110 BC for the beginning of Sātavāhana rule; Shailendra Bhandare (1999)

AD, the Sātavāhanas were embroiled in a bitter conflict with the Indo-Scythian/Śaka Kṣatrapas of the Kṣaharāta line, whose political domain lay to their north (and included areas of modern-day Gujarat and Rajasthan).

An extremely significant Sātavāhana intervention in expressions of royal ideology was made in the Buddhist caves on Tiraṇhu hill (today Pandulena) in Nashik (Nashik district, Maharashtra). Cave 3 contains an eleven-line early second-century AD donative inscription of Gautamīputra's mother, Gautamī Balaśrī, dated in the nineteenth regnal year of Gautamīputra's successor, Vāsiṣṭhīputra Pulumāvi, who reigned *c.* AD 84-119 (Figure 4).[19] It states that Gautamīputra had had this cave made, the queen mother had given it to the monks of the Bhadāvanīya *nikāya*, and her grandson, king Vāsiṣṭhīputra Pulumāvi, had gifted nearby Piśācīpadra village for the cave's embellishment. The description of the deceased king Gautamīputra gives the first full expression of what can be described as the classical Indian model of a great king and a great emperor, permeated with epic-Purāṇic elements. His political domain is described with great specificity as consisting of many lands across central and southern India. The most important of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi's achievements (*ll.* 5-6) are contained in his epithets as an exterminator of the Kṣaharāta lineage (*Khakharātavasa-niravasesakara*), restorer of the glory of the Sātavāhana family (*Sātavāhanakulayasa-patithāpanakara*), and destroyer of the Śakas, Yavanas and

Figure 4. Nashik, Cave 3. (Photo: U. Singh.)

suggests *c.* 150 BC; Ollett (2017), 189 suggests *c.* 120-96 BC.

19 As pointed out by Ollett (2017), 35-8, the language is usually described as Prakrit or Middle Indic but its use of figures of speech and long compounds suggest that it is neither Sanskrit, nor Prakrit (of the kind found in the *Gāthāsattasai*). It is *kāvya*, political poetry that reflects a new kind of cultural practice. Inscription No. 3 (consisting of four lines), dated in year 22 of Pulumāvi's reign, is engraved in continuation with No. 2, separated by a *svastika*; it records the exchange of village Sudisaṇa (gifted in the king's nineteenth regnal year) with another one, Sāmalipada. The cave is referred to as the Devi-leṇa (Queen's Cave).

Pahlavas (*Saka-Yavana-Pahlava-nisūdana*). This is the first epigraphic reference to Yavanas featuring as part of a group of political adversaries, along with the Śakas and Pahlavas (the latter term is used in Indian sources both for Persians and Parthians). The Śakas are mentioned for good reason, as it is they who were the main political adversaries of the Sātavāhanas. But the reason for mentioning Yavanas (as well as Pahlavas, i.e. Persians or Parthians) is unclear.

The references to Yavanas in the Hathigumpha and Nashik inscriptions come from eastern and western India respectively, far beyond the areas where the Indo-Greeks had any political control then or even earlier.[20] In both cases, rather than actual political events, we seem to be seeing a later *memory*, an evoking of the spectre of Indo-Greek rule, rather than actual historical events, and/or a conflation of Yavanas with Śakas.

Yavanas as donors at Buddhist sites

A third major role in which Yavanas appear in the post-Maurya period is very different from the instances discussed above. In the account given below, the emphasis is on situating the inscriptions in their larger archaeological and architectural setting. The relevant historical context this time is not political history but the flourishing Indo-Mediterranean trade between *c*. 200 BC and AD 200.

Sanchi

Yavanas occur as donors in three Sanchi inscriptions associated with Stupa 1; the reading in two cases is not certain.[21] No. 89, inscribed on the balustrade, reads: '[Sv]etapathasa (Yona?)sa dānaṁ' ('The gift of Yona? of Svetapatha'). No. 433, engraved on two adjacent pavement slabs, reads: 'Cudayo[vana]kasa bo silayo' ('Two slabs of Cuda, the Yovanaka') (Figure 5). No. 475, inscribed on the berm balustrade, reads: 'Setapathiyasa Yonasa dānaṁ' ('The gift of Yona/the yona of Setapatha'). These three donative inscriptions belong to the late second/early first century BC. It can be mentioned that another pavement slab inscription (No. 435) records the gift of the whole family (*sava-kula*) of Cuda of Pulapha. It is likely that this refers to the family of the same person as in No. 433.

A few conclusions can be reached on the basis of this admittedly meagre evidence. At Sanchi, Yavanas are only associated with patronage towards Stupa 1. The fact that the record of one of the Yavana donations covers two rather than one pavement slab may suggest a larger than usual contribution, but overall, relatively modest financial contributions are suggested. The Yavana donations are associated with plain parts of Stupa 1, and not with the sculpturally-embellished gateways. The number of Yavana donations (relative to the total number of donations, over 800) is rather few. In two cases, there is an unidentified place name associated with the donors – Svetapatha of No. 89 and Setapatha of No. 475 seem to be the same place, but it is difficult to identify. The Śvetadvīpa of the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas seems to be a mythological place. Cuda is not a Greek name; it has been seen as the Middle Indic form of Kṣudra. In two cases, if the reading is correct, only the label yona/Yavana occurs, giving primacy to the donor's Yavana identity even at the expense of their names. It is difficult to say what precisely Yavana means here, whether Greek or westerner. Most of the donors at Sanchi came from the Malwa region, so the Yavana donors too may well have lived in this area.

20 In fact, the Indo-Greeks seem to have moved further into the interiors of the subcontinent only briefly, during the reign of Menander in the mid-second century BC.
21 N.G. Majumdar in Marshall and Foucher ([1902] 1982), 308, 345, 348.

Figure 5. Slab inscription (No. 433), Sanchi Stupa 1. (Photo: U. Singh.)

Nashik, Karle, Junnar

The Yavana presence is much stronger in western India, at Nashik, Junnar and Karle. Apart from the inscriptions themselves, the larger context in which they occur suggest Yavanas who gave substantial amounts of money to finance the Buddhist establishments located here.

Nashik

Of the 24 main caves at Pandulena, Cave 17 interests us here, and is dated by Vidya Dehejia to *c*. AD 100 (Figure 6).[22] A Middle Indic inscription on the back wall of the verandah is positively loquacious compared to the terse Sanchi donative inscriptions discussed above. Beginning with the auspicious word 'Siddham,' it states that this cave (*leṇa*) on the Tiraṇhu mountain, the *cetiyaghara* inside the cave, and cisterns (*poḍhi*) were caused to be excavated (*khānitaṁ*) by Īdrāgnidata (Indrāgnidatta**)**, son of Dhaṁmadeva, the Yonaka (Yavana), a northerner (*otarāha*) from Dātāmiti (Dattāmitri), who was devoted to *dhamma* (*dhaṁmātman*). The *leṇa* is said to have been caused to be made (*kāritaṁ*) by Indrāgnidatta for the sake of his mother and father, in order to honour all the Buddhas (*sava-Budha-pujāya*), and was bestowed (*niyātitaṁ*) on the *saṅgha* of four quarters (*cātudiśa bhikhūsaṁgha*), together with his son Dhaṁmarakhita.[23] This is the only donative inscription in Cave 17, and it seems that the Yavana donor financed the whole thing. For reasons unknown, the cave was left unfinished.[24]

22 Dehejia (1972), 160.
23 Senart (1902-03), Inscription Nos. 18, 90-91. Nagaraju (1981), 344.
24 For a discussion of the many 'unfinished' monuments in the context of ancient and early medieval India and how the ancient concept of 'finish' is different from modern notions, see Dehejia and Rockwell (2016).

Figure 6. Nashik, Cave 17. (Photo: U. Singh.)

The names of three generations of this Yavana donor's family are Middle Indic. The 'dhamma' ending in the father and son's names can be seen as Buddhist elements. Dattāmitri, the place Iṁdāgidatta hailed from, was identified by Senart with Demetrias, a place in Arachosia,[25] but this identification has been disputed.[26] What could have brought Indrāgnimitra from somewhere in the north to the western Deccan to finance the excavation of an entire cave at the prestigious Buddhist monastery at Nashik? It was probably business.

Cave 17 was conceived of as an impressive edifice, with a verandah in front, a hall in the centre flanked by monastic cells, and a *caitya* at the back.[27] The verandah is faced by four pillars, two of which are attached to the rock matrix. A stepped platform flares into a pot-shaped base which supports an octagonal pillar with a bell-shaped capital. The abacus is in the form of a fluted cushion enclosed within a square frame. This is followed by an inverted pyramidal stepped platform that supports the crowning features. The outward-facing side of the capital has addorsed elephants, each surmounted by three riders; the inward-facing side has riders mounted on addorsed fantastic animals, with tiger's body and bird's beak.[28] The interior of the cave consists of the hall, flanked on the right by five cells (one incomplete) and on the left by a niche and two incomplete cells (Figure 7). The rear of the hall is divided into a horizontal aisle created by two full and two attached columns, both square and without a base, with a capital consisting of a stepped base and elephants with riders. The *caitya* is a simple, incomplete cell. As pointed out by Nagaraju, it displays one of the earliest instances of an architectural innovation in the western Deccan – the insertion of a *caitya* inside the cave (*leṇa*). Other new architectural features include pillars with animal capitals inside the hall.

The scale, architecture and inscriptions in the caves on Tiranhu hill indicate that this was a very high-profile monastic establishment. The donors (whose gifts included land grants and monetary endowments) included political elites. Cave 17 is next to Cave 18, under whose doorway arch is an inscription recording a gift by the people of Nāsika and a donative inscription of the daughter of a royal officer (*rāyāmāca*); and it is not far from the royal caves endowed by Uśavadāta (Cave 10) and

25 Senart (1905-6) 91.
26 Karttunen (2015), 297.
27 Nagaraju (1981), 270-1.
28 Nagaraju (1981) 270-1. As pointed out by Dehejia and Rockwell (2016), 88-89, the original plan (which was abandoned) was to cut one more column to the right.

Figure 7. Interior of Nashik, Cave 17. (Photo: U. Singh.)

Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi and other Sātavāhana royals (Cave 3). Even if his cave remained unfinished, Yavana Indrāgnidatta was in the midst of extremely exalted company.

Karle/Karla

Karle (in Raigadh district, Maharashtra) has sixteen caves, of which the great *caitya* (Cave 8) is the most important from the architectural and historical point of view (Figure 8).[29] Dehejia dates the inscriptions and cave to *c.* AD 50-70. [30] A large number of inscriptions (thirty-one) in the *caitya* hall (Nos. 1-31) record gifts to the Vāluraka/Valūraka establishment.

Cave 8 was clearly planned as a spectacular monument, and the inscriptions within it indicate the participation of a large number of wealthy donors, many from Dhenukākaṭa town, suggesting a concerted collective attempt at fund-raising from its inhabitants towards constructing a spectacular Buddhist shrine. D.D. Kosambi identified Dhenukākaṭa with Devgad or Devaghar, not far from Karle, and suggested that there was a settlement of Greeks here, bearing Indian or Indianized names.[31] There are seven inscriptions recording Yavana donations inside the *caitya*.

Before going into the details of the Karle donative inscriptions, it should be mentioned that one of the striking features of the inscriptions recording Yavana donations here (as well as at Junnar) is the juxtaposition of the term Yavana in the genitive singular with another word in the genitive plural. The

29 For a description see Nagaraju (1981), 221-31.
30 Dehejia (1972), 177-8.
31 He also suggests that Yavana could perhaps refer to a Persian, going by the suffix 'pharaṇa' in the name of one of the donors in the cave: Kosambi (1955), 56.

Figure 8. View of Karle, Cave 8. (Photo: U. Singh.)

question is whether the genitive plural is to be read as a personal name (this is the approach taken by Burgess, Senart and Vats) or as the name of a collective or corporate group to which the Yavana belonged. The possible collectives that can be envisaged are a family/kin-group, occupational group, guild, or religious community, but these names of are not known as collectives from any other sources. Further, the position of the genitive plural occurs where the personal name would be expected. It is difficult to interpret these as names of guilds, as guilds mentioned in inscriptions are clearly identifiable as such.[32] Another explanation is that these are names of families or religious groups. In the Sanchi inscriptions, nouns in the genitive plural qualifying a single named donor seem to indicate the names of families to which the donor belonged. Applying this to the Yavana donors at Karle seems difficult, as it would mean that the personal name of the donor, which was important for the purposes of the merit of the inscriptions, had been omitted. There are inscriptions at other sites where the genitive plural is used as an honorific, most notably for the epithet *thera*. But the genitive plural is not usually used for the personal names of individual donors, except for Nashik inscription No. 7.[33] The use of the genitive plural for the name of the Yavana donors can only be understood as an atypical addition of an honorific to the name, and was only used for Yavana donors in western India. This suggests that the donors in question were considered to occupy (or considered themselves as occupying) an exalted social status.

32 David Pingree (1978), 8 states the *saṅgatas* may have been trading corporations, and perhaps hereditary organizations. But while the terms *śreṇī*, *saṅgha*, *gaṇa*, *pūga*, *vrāta*, and *negama/nigama* are used in texts and inscriptions of this time for guilds, *saṅgata* is not.

33 Senart (1905-06), 76.

Figure 9. Interior of Karle, Cave 8. (Photo: U. Singh.)

The apsidal hall of the Karle *caitya* has fifteen octagonal pillars with capitals on the right and left sides (Figure 9). The pillar capitals have couples riding elephants on the side facing the hall, and couples seated on horses (with one exception) on the side facing the aisles. The seven pillars in the rear are plain, without capitals. Of the records of Yavana donations, four are on the left side of the hall (when one is facing the apse), and three are on the right.[34] All the inscriptions are quite visible and readable. It should be noted that pillar 5 in the left row contained relics.[35] So the 'Yavana pillars' – pillars 3, 4 on the left would have been very close to them. The 'Yavana pillar' no. 5 on the right would have been in direct line with the relic-bearing pillar on the left; and the 'Yavana pillars' 13 and 15 and 17 on the right would have been close to the *stupa* that formed the main focus of veneration in the *caitya*. Other donations recorded in the cave include those of traders, perfumer, carpenter, a *bhāṇaka* of the Dhammutarīya school, a group of merchants, *gahapati*, monk, nun, *seṭṭhi*, Uśavadāta, a *mahāraṭhi* of Pulumāvi and another (later) *mahārathi*. The text of the inscriptions referring to Yavanas is given below.

On the left side of the chaitya hall

No. 10 (on pillar 3)
Dhenukākaṭā DhaṁmaYavanasa
'Of Dhaṁma, a Yavana from Dhenukākaṭa.'

34 See Senart (1902-03), Vats (1925-26), Nagaraju (1981). I am going by the numbering of the inscriptions in Nagaraju's book. Kosambi pointed out that there was an error in the numbering of the pillars in earlier publications. Nagaraju has the correct numbering.

35 Senart Nos. 8, 9, and Nagaraju Nos. 8, 9 refer to the gift of a pillar containing relics (*sarīro thabo*) by the preacher (*bhāṇaka*) Sātimita of the venerable Dhamutariyas (Dhamutariya school), from Sopāraka. The pillar has a receptacle where the relics would have been placed.

Nos. 7, 26 (identical inscriptions, both on pillar 4)
Dhenukākaṭā Yavanasa Sihadhayāna(ṁ) thaṁbho dānaṁ
'The gift of the Yavana Sihadhaya from Dhenukākaṭa.'

No. 29 (on pillar 9)
Dhenukākaṭā Yavanasa Yasavadhanāna[ṁ] thabho dāna[ṁ]
'This pillar is the gift of the Yavana Yasavadhana from Dhenukākaṭa.'

On the right side of the *caitya* hall

No. 20 (on pillar 5)
Umehanākaṭā Yavanasa Viṭasa[ṁ]gatānaṁ* dānaṁ *thabho*
'This pillar is the gift of the Yavana Viṭasaṁgata from Umehanākaṭa'

No. 23 (on pillar 13)
Dhenukākaṭā Ya[va]nasa Dhamadhayānaṁ thabho dānaṁ
'This pillar is the gift of the Yavana Dhamadhaya from Dhenukākaṭa'

Many years ago, Kosambi pointed out that the capital of Pillar 13 has a unique feature on the side facing the aisle.[36] All the other pillars have couples on horses on the side facing the aisle. But on pillar 13, while the woman rides a horse, her male companion rides an animal that can be called a sphinx, i.e. a figure with a human head and animal body. This is indeed the case. (Kosambi saw this as evidence of a powerful Greek influence.)

No. 25 (on pillar 15)
Dhenukākaṭa Culayakhan[āṁ] [Ya]vaṇasa thabho dāna
'This pillar is the gift of the Yavana Culayakha from Dhenukākaṭa.'

Reference may also be made here to an inscription on the plain octagonal pillar 17 on the right side of the *caitya* apse (this is not given in Nagaraju's list of inscriptions). K.A.N. Sastri and K. Gopalachari read this as recording a donation by the physician (*veja*) Miṭidasa (Miṭidāsa) of Dhenukākaṭa, along with his wife Jayamitā, their sons Bhayabhūti and Jebubhūti, and one Vasumitā (perhaps their daughter).[37] Kosambi read the name of the principal donor as Miliṁda, i.e. Menander.[38] He observed that the script of this inscription is a bit later than the ones discussed above. If Kosambi's reading is correct, it gives evidence of a Greek following a profession other than trade, residing in Dhenukākaṭa. The term Yavana does not occur in this inscription but it gives us evidence of mixed marriages that resulted in progeny with Indian names.

That Cave 8 was a high-profile *caitya* is evident from its spectacular architecture and sculpture. If we just take the pillars in the interior of the cave (which belong to an earlier phase), we find the following: of the total number of thirty-seven pillars, fifteen bear donative inscriptions. Out of these fifteen pillars, six bear Yavana records (there are a total of seven inscriptions, two on one pillar), which is a high proportion. Many of the pillar donors came from Dhenukākaṭa and other cities in western India; in respect to occupations, they included a monk, relative of a *gahapati*, and a *vāniya-gāma* (village or community of traders). A later inscription on the back wall of the verandah boasts that this cave, the most excellent one in Jambudvīpa, was completed by the *seṭṭhi* Bhūtapāla from Vaijayanti (identified with Banavasi in Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka). That it was connected not only with the wealthy

36 Kosambi (1955), 26-57.
37 Sastri and Gopalachari (1937-38), 282.
38 Kosambi (1955), 57.

business community of western and south-western India but also with political elites is indicated by the later inscriptions of Uśavadāta and two *mahārathis* that are found here.

Junnar

Four groups of caves on four hills in and around Junnar – Tuljalena, Manmodi, Ganesh Pahar (Sulaiman) and Sivaneri – constitute the largest concentration of caves in the region (about 252) and many inscriptions.[39] Although the Junnar caves are mostly small and many are unfinished, there is evidence of interesting architectural and artistic experimentation. Three Yavana donations are recorded in the Junnar hills – one in the Manmodi group and two in the Shivaneri group (Junnar inscriptions Nos. 19, 30, 33).

In ancient times, the Manmodi hill was known as Mānamukuḍa and the monastic establishment here was known as Gidha-vihāra. The caves consist of three sub-groups – the Bhimashankar group (on the southeastern side of Manmodi hill), Ambika group (to the north of the Bhimashankar group) and Bhutling group (to the west of the Ambika group). Cave 40 in the Bhutling group is the largest cave in the Manmodi group and can be dated to *c*. AD 50-70.[40] There is an inscription (No. 19) carved in the semi-circular space above its arched doorway:

Yavanasa Caṁdānaṁ deyadhama gabhadā(ra)
'The pious gift of the doorway/façade by Canda, the Yavana'.[41]

The cave was planned as an apsidal *caitya* with a ribbed and barrel-vaulted roof (as at Karle) and was left unfinished because of a band of soft rock. Inside the hall (about 9.1 m deep and 3.7 m wide), on the right are some roughly shaped pillars which were supposed to be octagonal. In the apse is the roughly carved drum and dome of an unfinished stupa. The most striking feature of this cave is its unique carved façade (Figure 10). Above the doorway is a semi-circular band containing a series of figures within outlines of angular petals, flanked and interspersed with lotuses. On the left and right are a female and male devotee and an elephant standing on lotus, a jar in his raised trunk. The central panel has a female figure flanked by lotus plants, her right hand raised in the *abhayamudrā*. She is the goddess Lakṣmī. Further up on the façade, in the spandrel above the *caitya* arch, on either side of the pinnacle, to the left is a stupa and male figure with wings (*garuḍa*) holding a *cauri*; on the right a *nāga* figure and a stupa. To the right of the arch is an unfinished tree (perhaps intended to represent a *kalpa-druma* with the eight treasures of Śrī Lakṣmī). While Gaja-Lakṣmī occurs elsewhere at early Buddhist sites (for instance at Sanchi), this

Figure 10. Facade of Cave 40, Junnar, Bhutling group. (Photo: U. Singh.)

39 For a description of the four groups of caves in the hills around Junnar, see Nagaraju (1981), 133-90.
40 Dehejia (1969), 152. This description is based on Nagaraju (1981), 152-3.
41 Burgess ([1883] 1994), 95, Inscription no. 16.

imposing integration of Vaiṣṇava elements in a Buddhist shrine has no precedent or parallel and shows a daring experimentation and innovation.

The Shivaneri caves seem to be later than the ones discussed above. Dehejia places them between *c.* AD 110 and 138.[42] There are two records of Yavana donations here (Nos. 30, 33). Caves 42 and 43, a *leṇa* and *caitya* respectively, share a common verandah.[43] To the right of Cave 43, and associated with it, are four cisterns. One of these (Excavation 46) has an inscription on its back wall (No. 30):

Yavanasya Irilasa Gatāna(ṁ) deyadhamma be poḍhiyo
'The pious gift of two cisterns by Irila, a Yavana of Gatā (country)'[44] or
'The pious gift of two cisterns by the Yavana Irila of the Gatas.'

Cave 64 in the Sivaneri group is a hall with a low bench running along the three inner walls; there is a cistern next to it.[45] The left wall of the cave has a four-line inscription (No. 33) which reads:

Yavanasa Ciṭasa Gatānaṁ bhojanamaṭapo deyadhama saghe
'The pious gift of a refectory for the *saṅgha* by the Yavana Ciṭa (Caitra) of the Gaṭas/Gatās (or of the Gaṭa/Gatā country).'[46]

According to Burgess, Gata corresponds to Sanskrit Garta, a district (part of Trigarta or Kangra) in the Panjab; so Gatāna may be translated as 'of the Garta country.' But the donor may also have belonged to a collective or corporate group known as the Gatas/Gatās.

Junagadh inscription of Rudradāman: a Yavana provincial governor or administrative officer

A rock found at Junagadh/Girnar (in Junagadh district, Gujarat) bears three sets of royal inscriptions – the 14 rock edicts of Aśoka, an inscription of the Śaka Kṣatrapa Rudradāman, and an inscription of the Gupta king Skandagupta (Figure 11). Rudradāman's twenty-line inscription is the oldest long inscription in fine literary Sanskrit prose.[47]

The inscription begins with a *praśasti* (eulogy) of lake Sudarśana (literally 'beautiful to look at'). Line 8 states that this lake was ordered to be made by the Vaiśya Puṣyagupta, the *rāṣṭrīya* of the Maurya king Candragupta. It was adorned with conduits during the time of the Maurya king Aśoka by the Yavana-rāja Tuṣāspha. A terrible storm, which took place in year 72 (this no doubt refers to the Śaka era of AD 78, which

Figure 11. The structure enclosing the Junagadh rock. (Photo: courtesy of Nayanjot Lahiri.)

42 Dehejia (1969), 166. Nagaraju dates these caves to an even later date.
43 Nagaraju (1981), 174-90.
44 Burgess (1883), 93, Inscription No. 5.
45 Nagaraju (1981), 188.
46 Burgess (1883), 94, Inscription No. 8.
47 Kielhorn (1905-06): 36-49. Remains of an ancient embankment were discovered at Junagadh by A. Jamsedjee (1890-94).

corresponds to AD 150), tore a huge breach into the lake, leading to its drying up. Against the counsel of his advisors who considered it an impossible task, Rudradāman initiated a massive repair operation (described in lines 16-20) at enormous expense, owing to which the reservoir was enlarged threefold and made supremely beautiful. The work of repairing the lake was supervised by one Suviśākha, the son of Kulaipa, a Pahlava, a devoted and able minister (*amātya*), who had been appointed by the king to rule over the whole of Ānarta and Surāṣṭra. This man is described as an able and honest officer who was loved by the people, and who, through his able governance, increased the merit and fame of his master, Rudradāman.

The name Tuṣāspha (governor of the area during Aśoka's time) suggests a man of Iranian descent. The fact that he is referred to as *Yavana-rāja* suggests that in this area, in the mid-second century AD, when Rudradāman's inscription was inscribed, the term Yavana was used in an elastic sense. It can be expected that the description of Suviśākha, governor of this area in Rudradāman's time, would have been accurate. The fact that he is described as the son of Kulaipa, a Pahlava, suggests a long tradition of men of Persian extraction occupying important administrative posts in the Gujarat area.

Nāgārjunakoṇḍa: Yavanas as part of an idealized Buddhist cosmopolitan world

Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh), located between the Nallamalai hills and the Krishna river, was once a huge archaeological site, rich in remains ranging from the stone age to the medieval period. Vijayapurī, capital of the Ikṣvāku dynasty (*c*. AD 201-325) was located here. An inscription in the apsidal temple associated with the Cula-Dhammagiri Vihāra (Site 43; Figure 12), which was endowed by the *upāsikā* Bodhisiri, describes it as having been constructed for the benefit of the Taṁbapaṇṇaka *ācārya*s, who had gladdened (through their teaching) the lands of Kasmira, Gaṁdhāra, Cīna, Cilāta, Tosali, Avaraṁta, Vaṅga, Vanavāsi, Yavana, Damila, Palura, and the island of Tambapaṇṇī.[48] Another Nāgārjunakoṇḍa inscription (from Site 38, which has a monastic unit consisting of a stupa, *caitya*, and three small stupas, in the middle of a *vihāra* enclosure) refers to the *vihāra* as belonging to ācariya *theriyas* who were Vibhajyavādins, Mahāvihāravāsins, and who had caused delight (*pasādaka*) (by spreading the Buddha's teaching) to the people of Kaśmīra, Gandhāra, Yavana, Vanavāsa, and Tāmraparṇī-dvīpa. Here, Yavana is a land, apparently not far from Gandhāra.

On the basis of the textual parallels (for instance, in the *Dīpavaṁsa* and *Mahāvaṁsa*) to the geographical terms mentioned in the above inscriptions, Vincent Tournier suggests that such statements should not be taken literally but should be understood as part of a rhetoric of widespread spiritual conquest or conversion of the borderlands.[49] However, similar formulations do not occur at other Indian Buddhist sites. At the very least, they indicate that the term Yavana had become part of the Buddhist ecumene by *c*. AD 300. These inscriptional references can be situated within the larger archaeological context that points to western contact, including the unusual 'stadium' at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa; the finds of Roman coins (some of Hadrian), imitations of Roman coins and gold-gilded bullae; a few terracotta heads which seem to be of Graeco-Roman type; and 'Scythian figures' appearing as a guard and cup-bearer.[50]

48 *Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa (EIAD)*, École française d'Extrême-Orient (Paris) in collaboration with the HiSoMA Research Centre (Lyon) and TGIR Huma-Num (France), Inscription 20 <http://hisoma.huma-num.fr/exist/apps/EIAD/works/> (last accessed 25 September 2024).

49 Tournier (2018).

50 Elizabeth Rosen Stone (1994) has suggested a Roman template for the carving of a queen on a memorial pillar (Site 24). She makes a larger argument that objects imported from the west directly influenced some of the sculptural compositions found at sites such as Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Amaravati (see her contribution to the present volume).

Figure 12. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Site 43. (Photo: U. Singh.)

Conclusions

The inscriptions discussed in this essay come from various parts of the Indian subcontinent.[51] The Besnagar inscription of Heliodoros represents a strategic intervention by the envoy of a Hellenistic king at an important religious site. References to the vanquishing of Yavana enemies in the Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela and the Nashik inscription of Gautamī Balaśrī seem to reflect a confusion between real (Śaka) enemies and fictive (Yavana) enemies, the latter based on a memory of Indo-Greek invaders and rulers. The use of Yavana in the sense of an epithet for an outsider-enemy (used interchangeably with other terms such as *mleccha*, Śaka and Turuṣka) continued for many centuries in India. The beginning of Yavana donative activity at Buddhist sites occurs in the late second century BC/early first century BC (Sanchi); the height and concentration of the ostentatious participation in donative activity is in the first century AD (Karle, Nashik and Junnar). The last set of references (associated with modest donations) is in the early/mid-second century AD at Shivaneri (at Junnar). The term was clearly not considered pejorative by the donors, and was considered an important aspect of their social identity. When some of the inscriptions are seen in their larger context, they present the Yavanas as patrons of architectural and artistic innovation. The Junagadh inscription of Rudradāman indicates the role of Yavanas (here to be understood as Persians) in higher level administrative positions in the Gujarat area over time. The Nāgārjunakoṇḍa inscriptions indicate the incorporation of the term Yavana as a land that was part of the idea of a Buddhist cosmopolitan world.

51 We can also note the occurrence of term Yavana in an inscription of the early centuries AD found in Hoq cave on the island of Socotra. The Middle Indic inscription in the Brahmi script reads: *Yavaṇo cadrabhūti mukhasa* 'Of the *Yavana* Cadrabhūtimukha.' (Strauch [2012], 181-2, No. 14.17).

The coins of Indo-Greek rulers assert their Greek-ness through Greek names and motifs. There are also many Greek and hybrid names in inscriptions found in Gandhāra in the Gāndhārī language and Kharoshthi script,[52] but the term Yavana is not associated with them, suggesting that this term was not considered essential to denote Greek identity. The names of most of the individuals mentioned as Yavanas in the inscriptions discussed in this essay (except Amtalakita and Heliodora) make it difficult to associate them with any specific ethnic affiliation. Were they Greeks, Romans, Scythians, Persians or generic 'westerners'? The question may be the result of expectations arising from the Sanskrit texts or from our own expectations of clear ethnic/cultural specificity in the markers of social identity. What we are faced with instead is ambiguity. In trying to connect the term Yavana with one or other specific ethnic/cultural identity, we are probably asking the wrong question. Centuries of movement, migration and inter-mixture of people, ethnic mixture and ambiguity would have resulted in hybridity and ambiguity in social identity.[53]

The Indian names of Yavana donors have been seen as evidence of the 'Indianization' and 'assimilation' of these groups. In practical terms, this must have involved inter-marriage, including with members of the Brāhmaṇa community. Apart from the fact that some of the *mlecchas* were rulers, it must have been the large-scale phenomenon of inter-marriage between local women and the 'barbarians' that inspired the Dharmaśāstra authors' attempts to explain the origins of the *mlecchas* through the fictive theory of the *varṇa-saṁkara* (mixture of varṇas). It is interesting to note that at the very time when the Brāhmaṇa *dharma* experts were busy making dark remarks about the Yavanas and other *mlecchas* and presenting their rule as a calamity, other Brāhmaṇas were helping to legitimize their rule by composing *praśastis*, advising, and facilitating their marriages with local women.

In later centuries, in inscriptions of the Gupta-Vakataka period (*c.* AD 300-600), Yavanas do not appear as envoys or donors. Samudragupta's Allahabad *praśasti*, which expresses a new kind of imperial vision, does not mention Yavana enemies. Instead, the adversaries in the north-west include the terms Śaka-muruṇḍa and Śāhi-śāhānuśahī. However, Yavanas (along with the Pārasīkas and Hūṇas) are included in Kālidāsa's description of Raghu's *digvijaya* in the *Raghuvaṁśa*, which reflects the poet's acute understanding of the ideals and realities of kingship and a depth of historical memory. Yavanas, along with others such as the Śakas, Tuṣāras and Muruṇḍas, feature in the dynastic accounts of the Purāṇas and loom large in the description of the evils of the Kali age; they became part of a long-standing Brahmanical narrative of barbarians. The spectre of Yavana rule, enveloped within the broad category of *mleccha*, lived on many centuries after Yavana invaders, rulers, diplomats, administrative officers and religious donors had vanished from the scene.

Bibliography

Barnett, L.D. (1909), 'The Besnagar Inscription B', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 41/4: 1093-1094.

Baums, S. (2018), 'Greek or Indian? The Questions of Menander and Onomastic Patterns in Early Gandhāra', in H. Prabha Ray (ed.), *Buddhism and Gandhara: An Archaeology of Museum Collections* (London and New York: Routledge), 33-46.

Bhandare, S. (1999), 'Historical Analysis of the Sātavāhana Era: A Study of Coins' (unpublished PhD thesis, Bombay University).

Bhandarkar, D.R. (1917), 'Excavations at Besnagar', *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1913-14* (Calcutta, Superintendent Government Printing), 186-224.

52 See Baums (2018).

53 For a similar conclusion, see Baums (2018) and Mairs (2014).

Bopearachchi, O. (2015), *From Bactria to Taprobane: Selected Works of Osmund Bopearachchi*, vol. 1, *Central Asian and Indian Numismatics* (New Delhi: Manohar).
Burgess, J.A.S. ([1883] 1994) *Report on the Buddhist Cave Temples and Their Inscriptions. Archaeological Survey of Western India,* vol. 4 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India).
Dass, M.I. (2001), 'Heliodorus Pillar from Besnagar: Its Capital and Worship', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 62: 1136-7.
Dehejia, V. (1969), 'Early Buddhist Caves at Junnar', *Artibus Asiae* 31/2-3: 147-66.
Dehejia, V. (1972), *Early Buddhist Rock Temples* (London: Thames and Hudson).
Dehejia, V. and Rockwell P. (2016), *The Unfinished: Stone Carvers at Work on the Indian Subcontinent* (New Delhi: Roli Books).
Ghosh, A. (ed.) (1989), *An Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology,* vol. 2 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).
Jamsedjee, A. (1890-94), 'The Sudarshana or Lake Beautiful of the Girnar Inscriptions, B.C. 300-A.D. 450', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18: 47-50.
Jayaswal, K.P. and Banerji R.D (1929-30), 'The Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela', *Epigraphia Indica* 20: 71-89.
Karttunen, K. (2015), *Yonas and Yavanas in Indian Literature* (Helsinki: Studia Orientalia).
Karttunen, K. (2017), *India and the Hellenistic World* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).
Khare, M.D. (1967), 'Discovery of a Vishnu Temple Near the Heliodoros Pillar, Besnagar, Dist. Vidisha (M. P.)', *Lalit Kala* 13: 92-7.
Khare, M.D. (1975). 'The Heliodorus Pillar – A Fresh Appraisal by John Irwin (AAARP-- Art and Archaeology Research Papers –December 1974): A Rejoinder', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 36: 92-97.
Kielhorn, F. (1905-06), 'Junagadh Rock Inscription of Rudradaman, the Year 72', *Epigraphia Indica* 8: 36-49.
Kosambi, D.D. (1955), 'Dhenukākaṭa', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* 30: 50-71.
Mairs, R. (2014), *The Hellenistic Far East: Archaeology, Language, and Identity in Greek Central Asia* (Oakland California: University of California Press).
Marshall, J. and Foucher, A. ([1902] 1982), *The Monuments of Sanchi*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Swati Publications).
Mirashi V.V. (1981), *The History and Inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapas* (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture).
Nagaraju, S. (1981), *Buddhist Architecture of Western India (c. 250 B.C. – c. A.D. 300)* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan).
Ollett, A. (2017), *Language of the Snakes: Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India* (California: University of California Press).
Pingree, D. (ed. and transl.) (1978), *The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, vol. 1 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Parasher, A. (1991), *Mlecchas in Early India: A Study in Attitudes towards Outsiders Up to AD 600* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).
Salomon R. (1998), *Indian Epigraphy* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal).
Sastri, K.A.N. and Gopalachari K. (1937-38), 'Epigraphic Notes,' (XVI, 'A Karla Chaitya Pillar Inscription'), *Epigraphica Indica* 24: 279-82.
Senart, E. (1902-03), 'The Inscriptions in the Caves at Karle', *Epigraphia Indica* 7: 47-74.
Senart, E. (1905-06), 'The Inscriptions in the Caves at Nasik', *Epigraphia Indica* 8: 59-96.
Singh, U. (2022), 'Inscribing Power on the Realm: Royal Ideology and Religious Policy in India, c. 200 BCE—300 CE' (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science [KNAW]).
Sircar, D.C. (1942), *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization,* vol. 1, *From the Sixth Century B.C. to the Sixth century A.D.* (Calcutta, University of Calcutta).
Stadtner, D. (1975), 'A Śuṅga Capital from Vidiśā', *Artibus Asiae* 37/1-2: 101-4.
Stein, O. (1934-35), 'Yavanas in Early Indian Inscriptions', *Indian Culture* 1: 343-58.
Stone, E.R. (1994), *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).

Strauch, I. (ed.) (2012), *Foreign Sailors on Socotra: The Inscriptions and Drawings from the Cave Hoq*, Vergleichende Studien zu Antike und Orient 3 (Bremen: Hempen Verlag).

Sukthankar, V.S. (1918-19), 'Besnagar Inscription of Heliodoros', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 1/1: 59-66.

Tournier, V. (2018), 'A Tide of Merit: Royal Donors, Tāmraparṇīya Monks, and the Buddha's Awakening in 5th–6th-century Āndhradeśa', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 57: 20–96.

Vats, M.S. (1925-26), 'Unpublished Votive Inscriptions in the Chaitya Cave at Karle', *Epigraphia Indica* 18: 325-9.

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-05

Beyond Gandhāra: Expressions of Art along Ancient Indian Trade Routes (3rd century BC to 5th century AD)

Sunil Gupta

The emergence of trade routes in the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to networks of the Bronze Age Harappans and their interaction with the Chalcolithic communities of peninsular India in the third to second millennia BC. Long-distance trade routes had become fully active in the transition to the Common Era. The impact of external trade, especially Roman sea trade in the early centuries AD, led to a quickening of urbanism and industry in Early Historic India. Several ancient art centres, including Gandhāra and Mathurā, emerged at the crossroads of trade routes. These hubs of art were unique as well as syncretic, expressive of influences from the Mediterranean and West and Central Asia (Figure 1). This paper articulates the interconnections of trade and cultural interactivity, a symbiotic process nurtured by the meeting of varied peoples, beliefs and lifestyles at the hubs of commerce. The major trade routes of early Historic India are indicated alphabetically in Figure 2.

Route A: Western Coast – Rajasthan – Punjab – northern Pakistan

An important trade route connecting trade-ports on the Gulf of Khambhat with resource-areas in Gujarat and further north is plotted as Route A in Figure 2. This route is visualized as starting from the coastal settlement of Nagara[1] at the head of the Gulf of Khambhat and leading to the passes in the Aravalli ranges immediately north of the fortified Early Historic settlement at Shamalaji (Figure 3). The efficacy of this route for coastal/sea trade is made clear by the excavators of Shamalaji. To quote from the Shamalaji excavation report:[2]

Figure 1. Map of the early Indian Ocean World showing major trade ports and art centres with special reference to the Indian subcontinent. (Map: S. Gupta.)

1 Mehta (1968).
2 Mehta and Patel (1967), 51.

Figure 2. Map showing the major trade routes in the mainland Indian subcontinent in the early historic period. (Map: S. Gupta.)

> The river Meshvo probably helped the traditional traders, who moved along its banks, and reached the interior from ports of the Arabian Sea. This route entered hilly track from Shamalaji, so this industrial habitation might have acted as an intermediate station for these traders, and this function probably led to further development of this town.

Mediterranean amphorae pieces have been found at the inland trading station of Shamalaji as well at Devnimori, an Early Historic Buddhist stupa-site situated a few kilometres from the former.[3] North of Shamalaji, the land route from the Gujarat coast touched major Early Historic settlements in southern Rajasthan. A major crossroad is represented by the sites of Gilund and Nagari (Figure 3, point 4). Nagari, in particular, dominated the passage to Gujarat. Branching out from Gilund and Nagari the route cut north-west across Rajasthan, passing through the Early Historic settlements around Sambhar and thence to the Rangmahal Culture area in the Bikaner District of the state. The Rangmahal Culture flourished in the early-mid first millennium AD in western Rajasthan, midway between the Gujarat

3 Mehta and Chowdhary (1966); Gupta (1997), Appendix A.

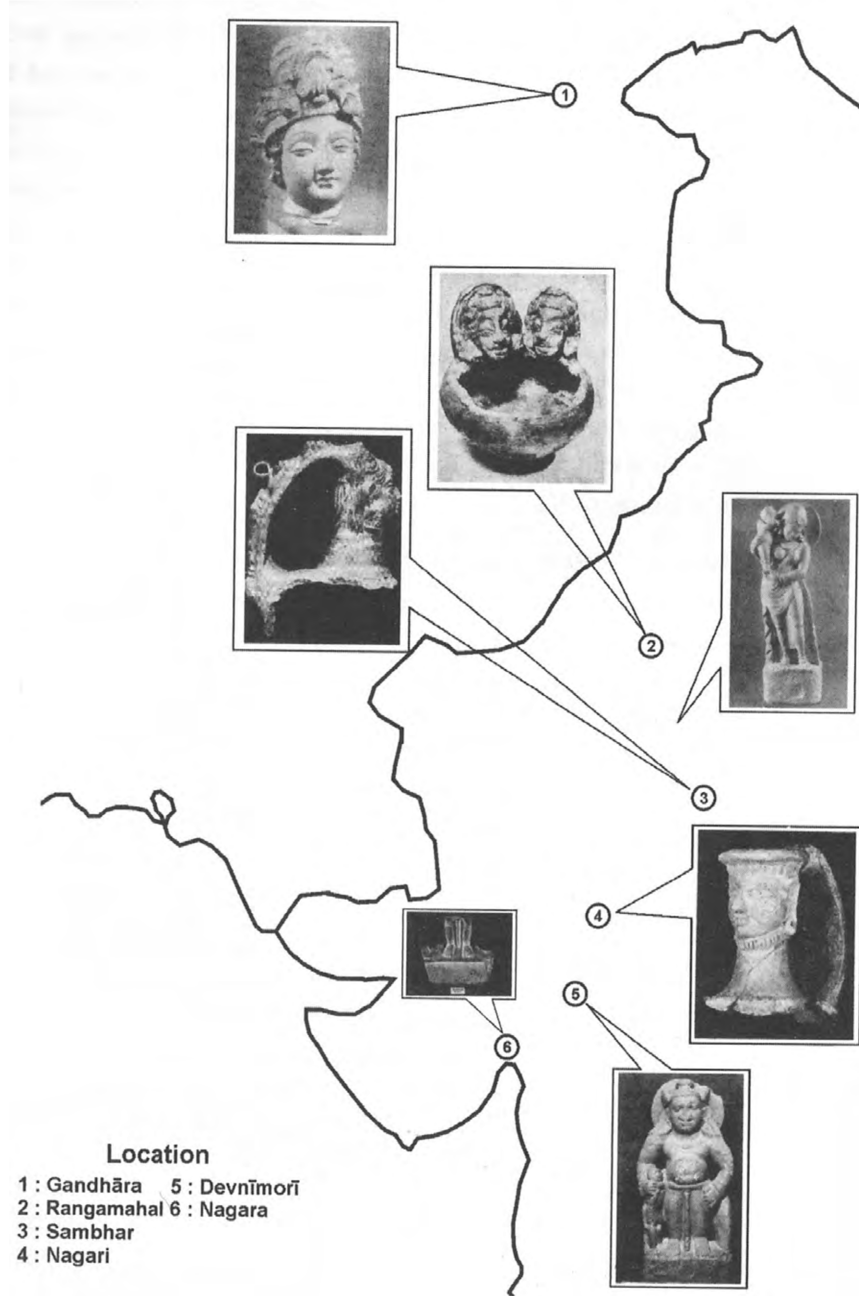

Figure 3. Route A: Gujarat coast to Gandhāra region through Rajasthan. (Map: S. Gupta.)

coastlands and the region of ancient Gandhāra (northern Pakistan) which had emerged as a centre of a unique sculptural art style incorporating Graeco-Roman, Indic and Central Asian elements (Figure 3, point 1). Excavations at Rangmahal by a Swedish expedition have brought to light Red Polished Ware 'sprinklers' of the type excavated in western India and chank originating from the Kathiawar region of Gujarat.[4] The ceramics and other material from Rangmahal also show affinity with finds from Taxila in the Gandhāran region.[5]

4 Rydh (1959), 147-9, 189-95.
5 Rydh (1959) p.155-156.

Elements of the art of Gandhāra penetrated into the littoral state of Gujarat through this route. A unique clay pot from Rangmahal has the busts of two human figures on its lid. The conception of the facial features resembles images made in Gandhāra region in the fourth to fifth centuries AD (Figure 3, point 2).[6] A statue of Skandamātā from Tanesara-Mahādeva shows Hellenistic quality in the folded drapery and facial features reminiscent of the late phase of the art of Gandhāra (Figure 3, between points 2 and 3). Some of the terracotta figures from central and southern Rajasthan show a Hellenistic influence which may have come from the Parthian-Sasanian regions of West Asia. This influence is manifested in the moulded figures on handles of terracotta vases, such as the figure of a lady from Sambhar and another from Nagar (Figure 3, points 3 and 4). The stupa at Devnimori near the Aravalli passes in northern Gujarat also shows the influence of late Gandhāra art (fifth century AD). The stupa site of Devnimori was excavated in the early sixties by a team from the M.S. University, Baroda. According to the excavators, the Buddha panels at Devnimori resembled this late period of the Buddhist art of Gandhāra. To quote from the report:[7]

> On all considerations the images belonged to the Late Gandhara (Indo-Afghan) period, though some, with ribbed drapery and the Gandhara hair-style, would affiliate themselves to the third group of Ingholt (A.D. 300-400). It is difficult to be dogmatic at this stage, as profound questions of the relation between west and central Indian art traditions are involved. In spite of the chronological overlaps between the late Kshatrapa, late Gandhara and early Gupta, it is also possible to visualize certain regional diversities, but there is little doubt that in the main the *stupa* belonged to the Gandhara tradition...

A number of *gana* figures from Devnimori, sculpted in green schist and dated to the second to third century AD, seem to be made by local sculptors who incorporated elements from the art of Gandhāra and Mathurā (Figure 3, point 5). The impression gained from the Devnimori finds is that the Gandhāran art tradition permeated down to the Gujarat-Sind littoral region over time. Closer to the Gujarat coast, the influence of Gandhāran art is seen in the festoons and *malavahaka* decorations on rock cut pillars in the Buddhist cave at Junagadh near the Saurashtra coast (Figure 4).

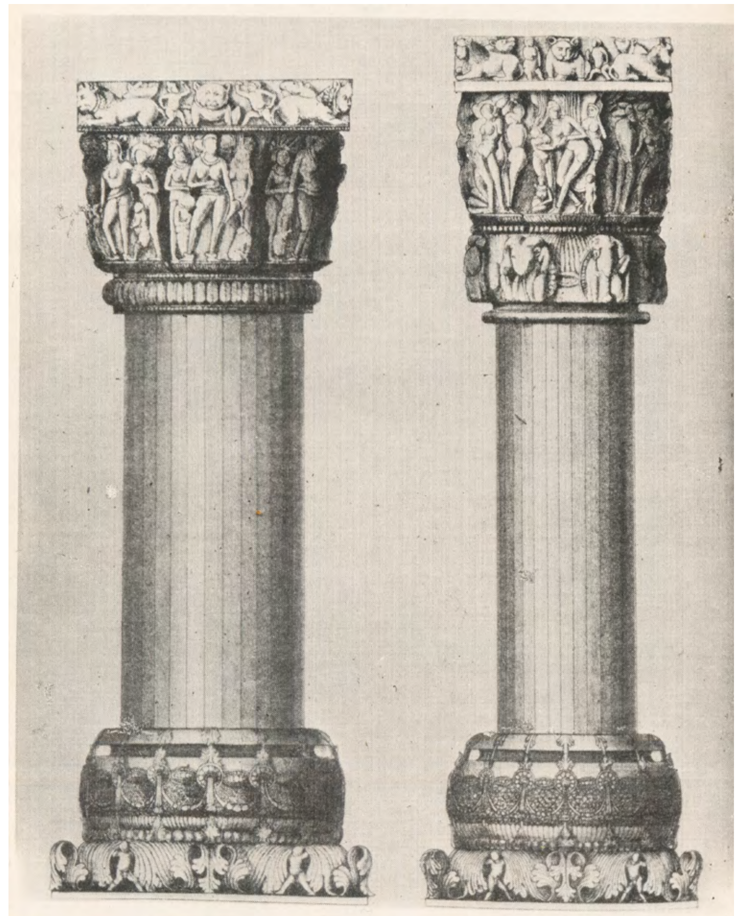

Figure 4. Details of 'romanesque' acanthus-leaf patterns and Gandhāran stylization on the pillars in Junagadh Cave (early centuries AD). (Photo: after ASI, source unidentified.)

6 Agrawala and Devkar (1970).

7 'Excavations at Devnimori, District Sabarkantha', *Indian Archaeology 1959-1960: A Review* (1960): 19-21, at 21.

Route B: Bharuch – Ujjain – Vidiśā – Mathurā

Another line of communication, beginning at the great port of Brgukaccha/Barygaza (modern Bharuch), charts its way upstream to Maheshwar on the Narmada and then turns north towards Ujjain (Figures 2 and 5). The Bharuch-Ujjain stretch is mentioned in the Greek sea guide *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (first century AD) as the conduit for a range of northern (Gangetic) goods reaching the coast. As Route B in Figure 5 shows, the route starting at Bharuch is plotted through Maheshwar – Ujjain – Vidiśā – Mathurā. In particular, Maheshwar or ancient Māhiṣmatī was a major inland crossroad, strategically situated between northern India and the trade ports of western India. This was the trade route along which the art of the Mathurā school permeated to the western coastlands. While assessing the spread of art styles along Route B, it is to be noted that besides Mathurā, the route also ran through the traditional art centres of Central India like Vidiśā and Sanchi. The ivory carvers of Vidiśā were involved in creating the exquisite *yakṣī* figures at the stupa of Sanchi. These influences were transmitted into the western Deccan where beautiful ivory figurines have been discovered at the sites of Bhokardan and Ter.[8] At Ujjain, a sandstone head of a lioness resembling Graeco-Roman lioness figures is indicative of foreign influences in art.[9] Ujjain (Greek Ozene) is mentioned in the *Periplus* as a former seat of royal power and a crucial link in the movement of trade commodities to the great port at ancient Bharuch (Greek Barygaza).[10]

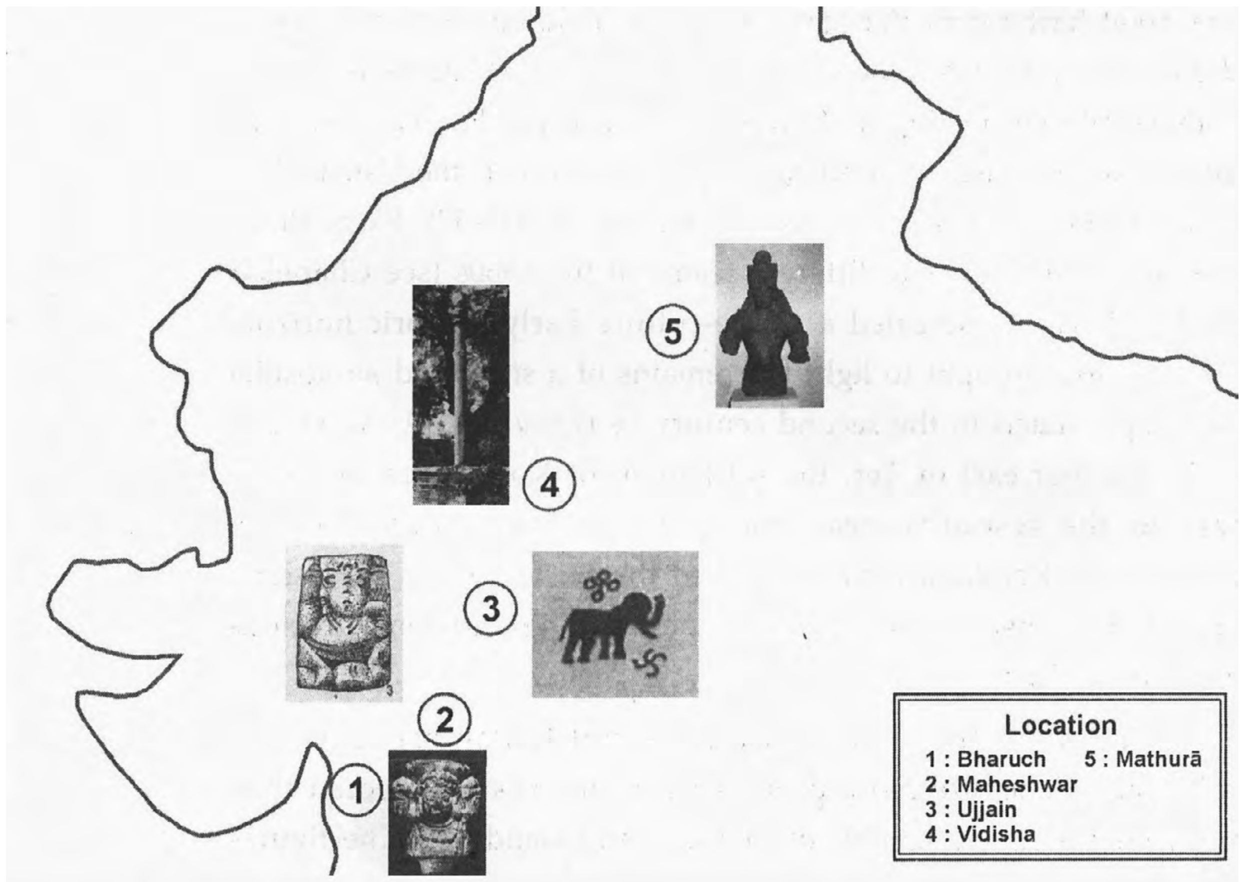

Figure 5. Map showing Route B. Bharuch – Ujjain – Vidiśā – Mathurā. (Map: S. Gupta.)

8 For Bhokardan see Deo and Gupte (1974); for Ter see Chapekar (1969).
9 *Indian Archaeology 1968-69: A Review* (1971): 66.
10 *Periplus*, 48. To quote from the translation by Casson (1984), 81: 'There in this region [sc. of Barygaza] towards the east a city called Ozene, the former seat of the royal court, from which everything that contributes to the region's prosperity, including what contributes to trade with us, is brought down to Barygaza...'

Route C: Western Coast – Western Deccan (trans axis)

A major overland channel for overseas trade was the trans-peninsular route described in the *Periplus*, 51. The *Periplus* states that Paithan was twenty days' journey from the port of Barygaza/Bharuch and a further ten days' journey eastward from Paithan lay the market-town of Tagara/Ter. This trans-peninsular route is plotted as Route C in Figures 2 and 6. The extension of this route into the eastern Deccan is plotted as Route H in Figure 2. The points of Route C are represented by the sites of Bharuch - Kamrej - Paithan - Ter – Kondapur (Figure 8). The *Periplus* (49) vividly details the imports and exports of the great harbour of Barygaza/Bharuch. Paithan was a centre of semi-precious stone export. The *Periplus* (51) speaks of Tagara as a market-town dealing in textiles, identified with ancient mounds at the town of Ter in the Osmanabad District of Maharashtra.[11] Excavations carried out at Ter by two different teams around the sixties revealed a single-culture Early Historic horizon.[12] There were also brought to light the remains of a stupa and an apsidal brick temple dated to the second century AD.[13] Further east of Ter, the settlement of Kondapur provided access to the resource-areas and ports of the eastern Deccan. Excavations at Kondapur have revealed the existence of a flourishing Sātavāhana township with iron manufacturing and semi-precious stone bead industries.[14]

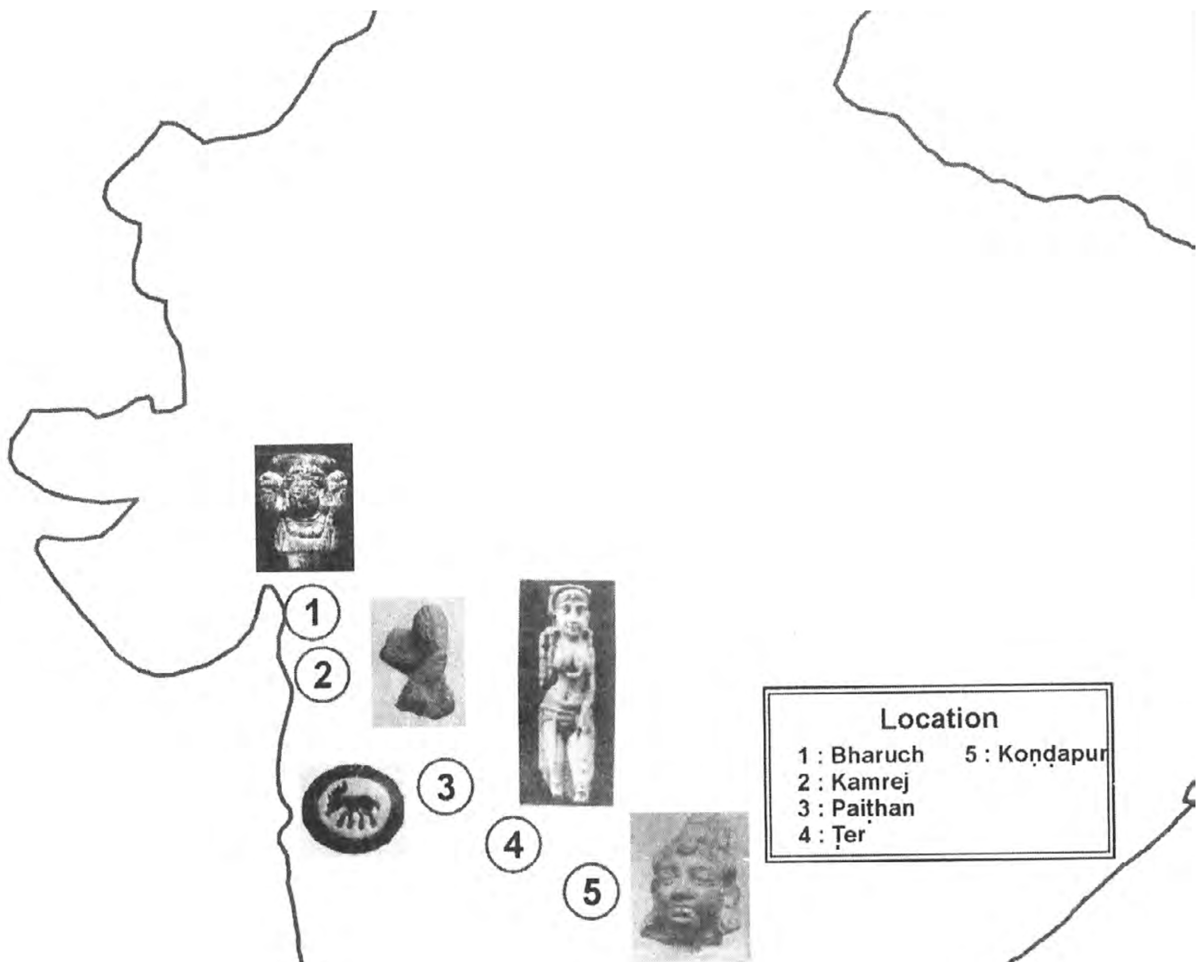

Figure 6. Map showing Route C: Western Coast – Western Deccan (trans axis). (Map: S. Gupta.)

11 Ghosh (1990), 435-37.
12 Chapekar (1969); *Indian Archaeology 1968-69: A Review* (1971): 17-18.
13 Ghosh (1990), 435-7.
14 Yazdani (1941), 171-85

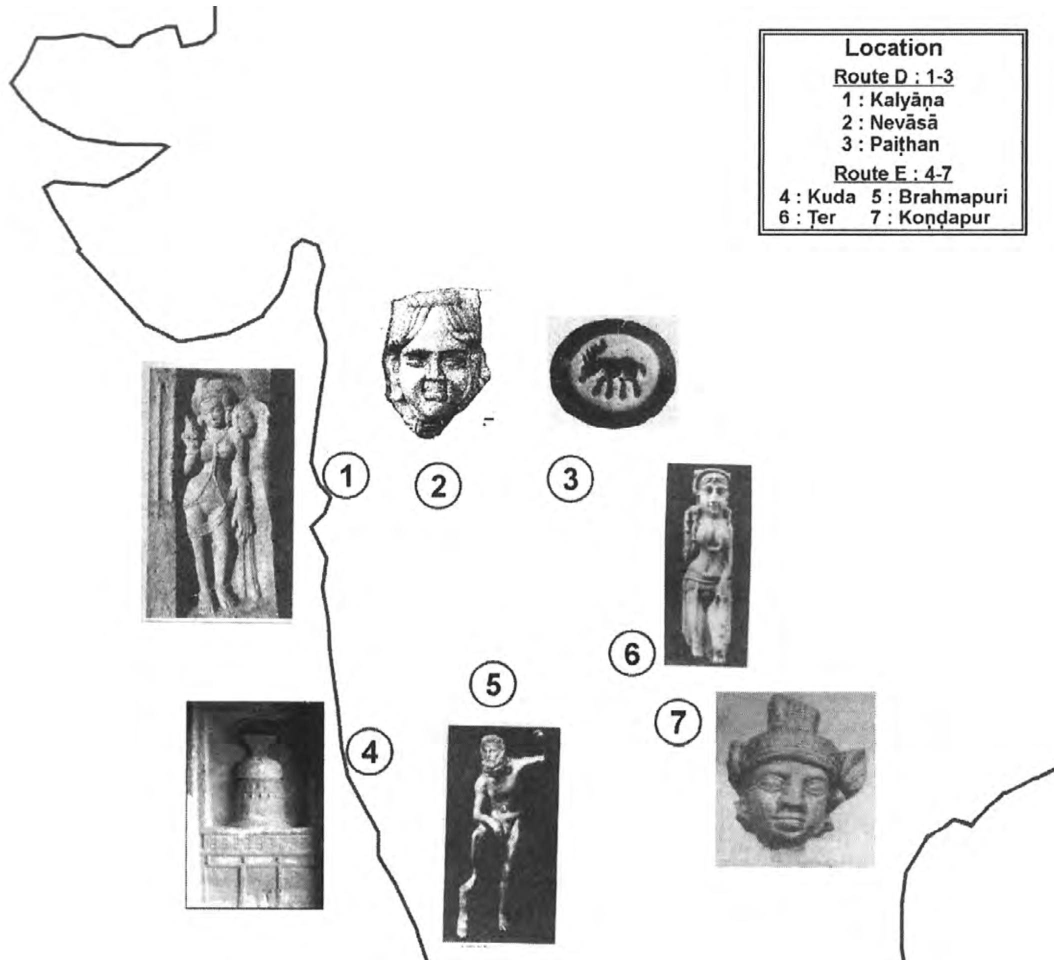

Figure 7. Map showing Routes D and E. (Map: S. Gupta.)

Figure 8. The port site of Kamrej on the banks of the river Tapi. The site has been identified as the settlement of Kammoni mentioned in the Greek sea guide Periplus Maris Erythraei *(first century AD). (Photo: S. Gupta.)*

Figure 9. Entrance of the Buddhist rock-cut cave at Bhaja, western India, second to first century BC. (Photo: S. Gupta.)

The cultural influences from the Central Indian art centres of Bharhut and Sanchi are more prominent in the western Deccan than those from the classic schools of Mathurā and Gandharā. The figures sculpted in relief in the Buddhist rock cut caves at Nasik, Junnar and Karle are inspired by the Buddhist stupa art of Central India (Figures 9 and 10). By the early centuries AD, the trans-peninsular routes across the western Deccan reveal cross-cutting influences of art from northern, central and southern India. Some of the cross influences are expressed by a range of terracotta figurines which show impact of Roman overseas trade in the interiors of western India.[15]

Figure 10. Carving at the entrance of the Buddhist rock-cut sanctuary at Karle depicting a couple, first to second century AD. (Photo: S. Gupta.)

15 For stylistic transmissions of terracotta art from Roman Egypt to peninsular India see Autiero (2017), 79-89; Autiero (2019), 573-84.

Route D: Western Coast – Western Deccan (straight axis)

This land-route connecting inland centres in western India with the flourishing harbours of Kalyan/ Kalliena and Surparaka passed through the crucial Nanaghat Pass (Figures 2 and 7).[16] An inscription discovered on a rock-cut cave at Kanheri records an endowment of a *kuti* (temple) and *kodhi* (hall) excavated in *Rajataleka Paithanapatha* or the royal road to Paithan.[17] This linked also to the smaller routes in the southern Konkan connecting the Periplus harbours of Semylla/Chaul, Mandagora/Kuda and Palaepatmae/Palshet with inland trade centres like Nasik, Kolhapur and Karad. The linkages are marked out by Buddhist cave groups (Figure 11). This route cut through the western Deccan, connecting the ports on the Konkan to the large inland centres at Nevasa and Paithan. Here, the focus is on art of inland sites in the western Deccan which were involved in trade with the Roman world. The art objects in question are a set of terracotta and kaolin busts showing Hellenistic influence. The 'smiling boy' heads from the sites of Nevasa, Junnar and Ter have been related to similar sculpture from Gandhāran centres in Taxila (Figure 12).[18] The attributions are not contradictory, as elements of Graeco-Roman art heavily influenced the art of Gandhāra, with the same Mediterranean art infusions spreading into the western Deccan.

Figure 11. A stupa carved inside the Buddhist rock-cut sanctuary at Kuda overlooking the Arabian Sea. First to second century AD. The site has been identified as the port of Mandagora listed in the Periplus. (Map: S. Gupta.)

Route E: Brahmapuri – Ter – Kondapur

The *Periplus*, 51 mentions that goods were brought up to Barygaza from coastal areas beyond Tagara. The extension of the trans-peninsular route passing through Kondapur to the estuarine areas of the Krishna and Godavari indicates acquisition of trade-goods from the east coast. Route E in Figures 2 and 7 shows the links between Early Historic ports on the Konkan and inland settlements in southern Deccan such as Brahmapuri, Karad and Vadgaon Madhavpur. Brahmapuri, in particular, has yielded a rich hoard of bronze objects of Mediterranean origin. These objects include the bronze figure of the Greek sea god Poseidon (Figure 7, point 5).

Figure 12. A 'smiling boy' terracotta head from Junnar, first to second century AD. (Photo: courtesy of Prof Vasant Shinde.)

16 Barrett (1957), 1.
17 Lüders's List No. 988 in *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 10 (1909-1910), Appendix, 102.
18 For discussion see Brancaccio (2014), 33-41

Route F: Kausambi – Tripuri – Pauni – Sannathi

This land route came down from the Gangetic site of Kausambi through Tripuri and connected to the major Early Historic settlements in Vidharba (Figure 2). In the Vidharba region, the crossroad is represented by the large settlement of Adam. Adam was a major inland centre of trade (like Ter, Paithan, Ujjain), offering access to goods from ports of Kalyana/Soppara/Chaul for traders from ancient cities like Tripuri and Kausambi. This route passed through the famous stupa site of Pauni. Excavations at Pauni reveal that the sculptural friezes were directly inspired by the Buddhist art of Bharhut and Sanchi. A sculptural frieze from Bharhut, now displayed in the Allahabad Museum, carries the inscription of a donor from the Vidarbha region where Pauni is situated.

Route J: From Gandāra – Mathurā to Lower Bengal

The trans-Gangetic route went from Mathurā through Kausambi to Patna and Champa up to the Bay of Bengal coast (Figure 13). It is through this route that the art styles of Mathurā and Gandhāra penetrated to the eastern coast of India. That the influence of these art schools was transmitted to the coast is evidenced in a image from Mathurā found in lower Bengal and also a range of terracotta images showing influence of Scythian art of north-west India.[19] One of the major centres of this route was the ancient city of Kausambi, capital of the *mahājanapada* of Vatsa, which figures in recorded history in the period of the Epics. There are credible reasons to assert that the art of the Kausambi region was particular and individualistic enough to be distinguished from powerful contemporanous art centres at Mathurā and Sarnāth. The exquisite terracottas of Kausambi display the best of the clay art of the Gangetic valley. A terracotta image of a headless figure – probably the Buddha – betrays the influence of the Gandhāra school of art in the folded drapery (Figure 14). The terracottas of Kausambi depict secular subjects as much as religious. The secular themes can be seen in the special Kausambi plaques showing scenes of hunting, chariot racing and Bacchanalian revelry. Terracotta portraits of men with fancy headdresses are expressive of the cosmopolitanism of the trade center of Kausambi in the early centuries AD. The religious element in Kausambi terracottas is manifested in iconic images of gods and goddesses. Of particular interest in this regard are two life size images of the deities Gajalakshmī and Harītī excavated

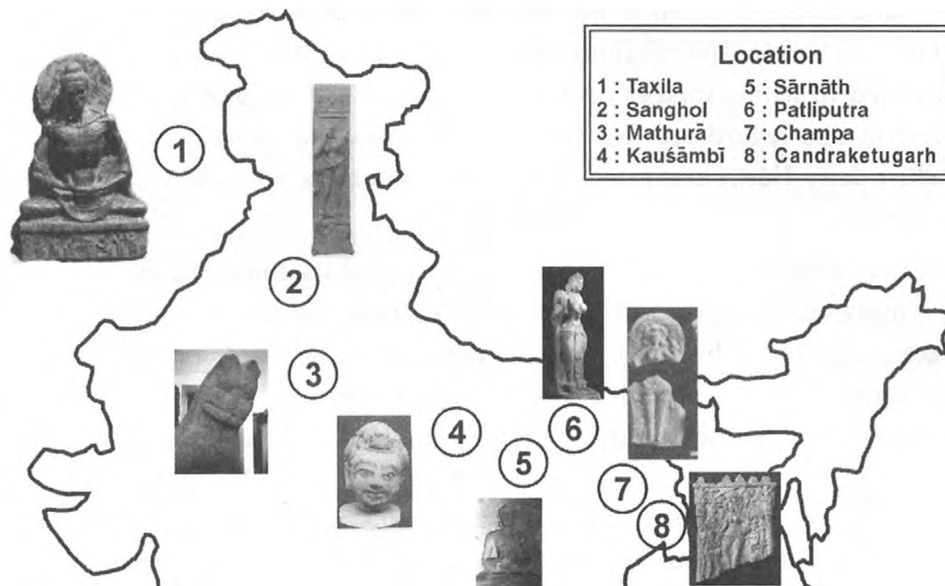

Figure 13. Map showing Route F: From Gandhāra-Mathurā to Lower Bengal. (Map: S. Gupta)

19 Mukherjee (1992), 135-46.

from the Buddhist monastery of Ghoshitaram at Kausambi dating to the early to mid first millennium AD.[20]

Figure 14. Headless terracotta figure, probably of a Boddhisattva, from Kausambhi, northern India. The drapery of the figure shows influence of Gandhāran Art. Allahabad Museum Collection. (Photo: S. Gupta.)

Routes G, H, I: the Deep South and the Eastern Deccan

The Routes marked G, H, I in Figure 2 (detailed in Figures 15 and 16) make up the south-eastern part of the Indian peninsula. Route G was a key trans-peninsular route connecting the Malabar coast abutting the Arabian Sea with the Tamil coast along the Bay of Bengal. This route is celebrated in the ancient Tamil Sangam literature, with descriptions of harbours, inland cities and precious goods of trade.[21] The *Periplus* refers to the great harbour of Muziris on the Malabar coast and to anchorages on the Tamil coast such as Podouke. Archaeological prospections have brought to light rich evidence of commercial and artistic activity in the trade routes of the deep south. In particular, the harbour sites of Pattanam on the Malabar and Arikamedu on the Coromandel have yielded exquisite art works such as a gold miniature axe (Pattanam) and beautiful cameos in semi-precious stones A giant stone *yakṣa* figure dating to the fifth century AD still standing in a grove in Haigunda island on the Kanara coast shows influence of Gandhāran art with classical Gupta iconographic features (Figure 17)

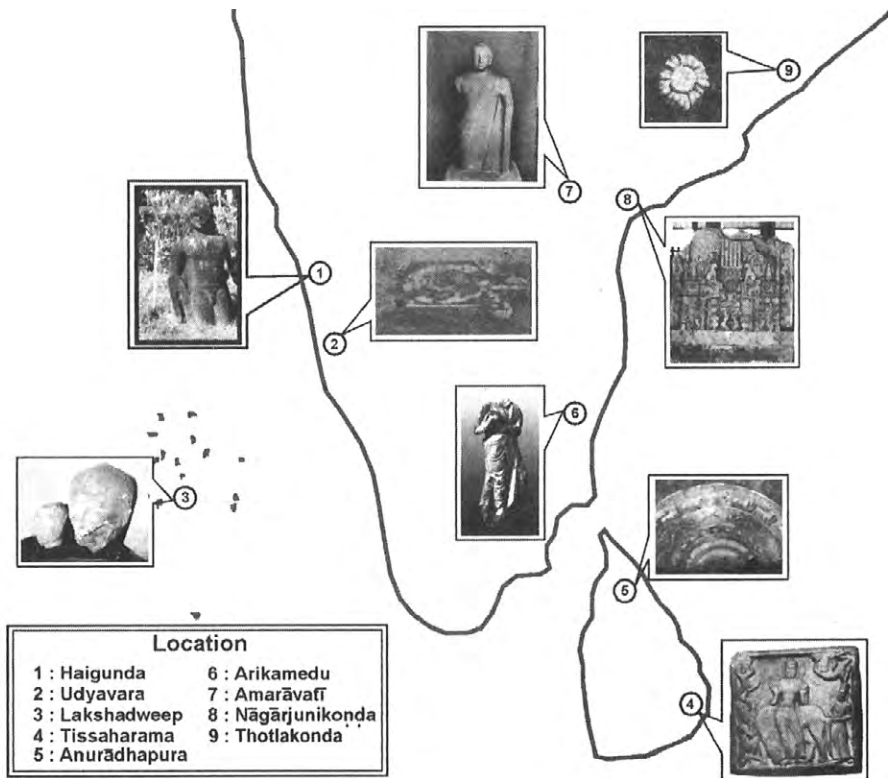

Figure 15. Routes G and H in the deep south and the Krishna estuary region of the eastern Deccan. (Map: S. Gupta.)

20 Museum of the Department of Ancient History, Archaeology and Culture, University of Allahabad.
21 For archaeological review and recent finds see Rajan (2020), 56-80; Selvakumar (2020), 1-23.

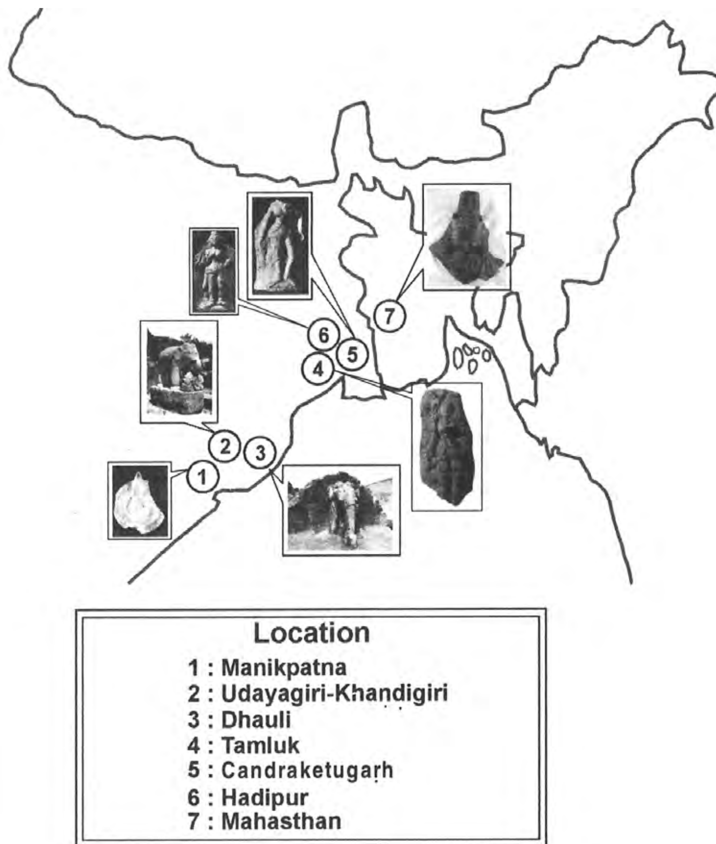

Figure 16. Route I along the Odisha and northern Andhra coast of eastern India. (Map: S. Gupta.)

Figure 17. A giant stone yakṣa *figure dating to the fifth century AD still standing in a grove in Haigunda island on the Kanara coast shows influence of Gandhāran art with classical Gupta iconographic features. (Photo: S. Gupta.)*

The Routes H and I connected the rich estuarine areas of the eastern Deccan and the Odisha coast. The string of sites marked out in Route I were Buddhist stupas and sanctuaries. Route H marks out the Krishna estuarine area which looked to South-East Asia as well as receiving sea trade from the west. The Buddhist art exemplified by the remains at the sites of Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa are testament to the fusion of art, architecture and international trade.

Conclusion

The brief review of the major trade routes of Early Historic India and the artistic activity along these routes reveals that the transmissions of classical idioms along the routes was marked by experimentation and syncretic expressions. Early Indian art also spread overseas. This occurred firstly by actual physical movement of art objects, as is evident in the ivory statuette from western India found in Pompeii, the Buddha figure discovered in Sweden or the *yakṣī* figure in bronze from the ancient port of Khor Rori in southern Oman (Figures 18 and 19). The second mode involved the transfer of idioms and concepts to foreign lands. In this category falls the silver dish from Lampsakos (Turkey) which has the image of India (as a female figure) upon it (Figure 19, no. 2). Another mode involved wholescale transfer of classical art styles, as seen in the introduction of Indian sculptural art across South-East Asia in the mid-first millennium AD.[22] The evidence shows that there is an inextricable and dynamic link between emergence of art styles and the mechanisms of long distance trade.

22 For discussion see Gupta (2003).

Figure 18. The ancient trade port of Khor Rori, Oman, where an Indian yakṣi *figurine was found. (Photo: S. Gupta.)*

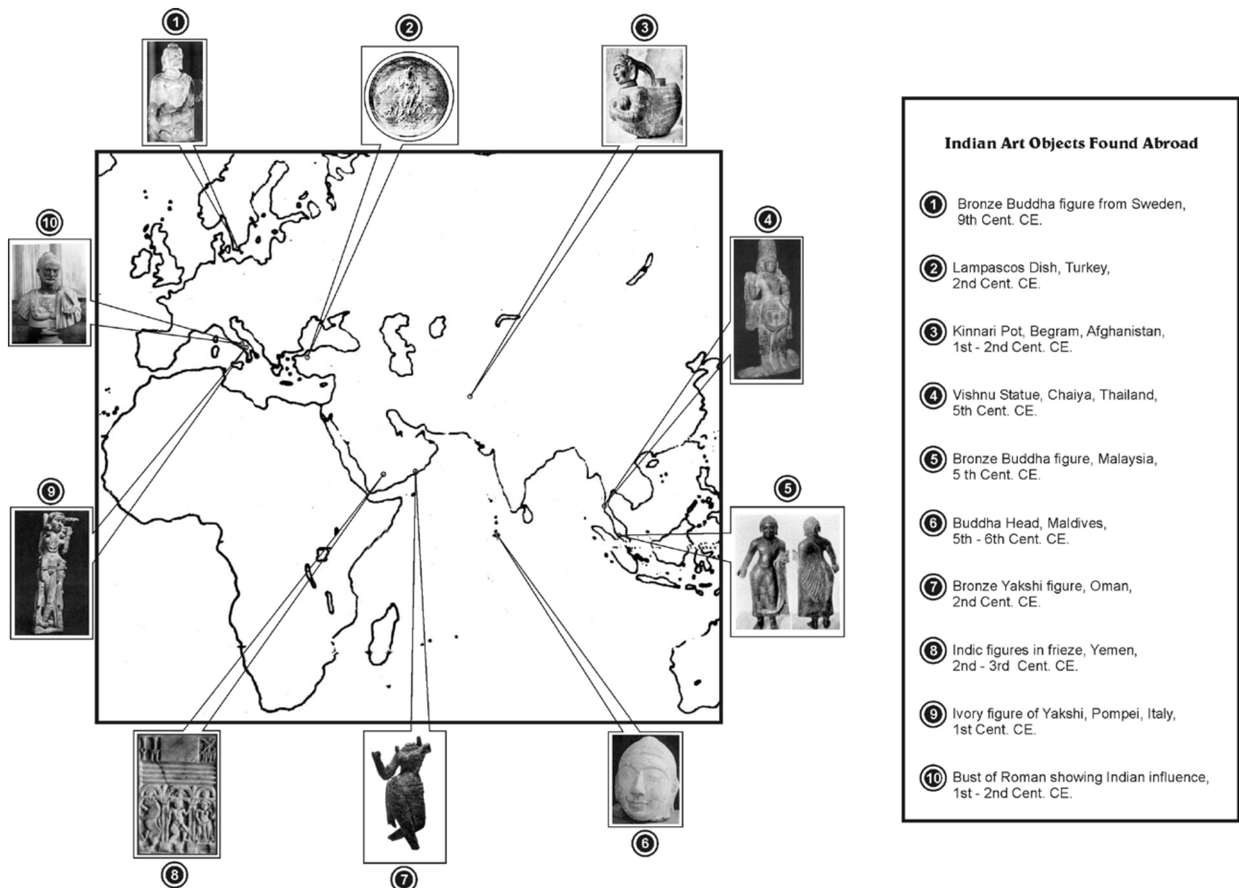

Figure 19. Map showing the find places of Early Historic Indian art in the Mediterranean/Indian Ocean Region. (Map: S. Gupta.)

Bibliography

Agrawala, R.C. and Devkar, V.L. (1970), *Human Figurines on Pottery Handles from India and allied Problems* (Baroda: Dept. of Museums, Baroda State).

Autiero, S. (2017), 'Bes Figurines from Roman Egypt as Agents of Transculturation in the Indian Ocean', *Thiasos* 6: 79-89.

Autiero, S. (2019), 'Indo-Roman Lamps from Ter: the Long Shadow of Rome or the Light of Transculturation', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 28/1: 573-84.

Barrett, D. (1957), *A Guide to Karla Caves* (Bombay: Bhulabhai Memorial Institute).

Brancaccio, P. (2014), 'Looking to the West: Stone Molds and Foreign Visual Models in Satavahana Material Culture (First – Second century ce)', *Archives of Asian Art* 64/1: 33-41

Chapekar, B.N. (1969), *Report on the Excavations at Ter, 1958* (Poona: self-published).

Deo, S.B. and R.S. Gupte (1974), *Excavations at Bhokardan* (Nagpur-Aurangabad: Nagpur University and Marathwada University).

Ghosh, A. (1990), *Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill)

Gupta, S. (2003), 'From Archaeology to Art in the Material Record of Southeast Asia: The Indianization Phenomenon Reviewed', in A. Karlstrom and A. Kallen (eds.), *Fishbones and Glittering Emblems* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities), 391-404.

Mehta, R.N. (1968), *Excavation at Nagara* (Baroda: M.S. University).

Mehta, R.N. and Chowdhary, S.N. (1966), *Excavation at Devnimori* (Baroda: M.S. University).

Mehta, R.N. and A.J. Patel (1967), *Excavation at Shamalaji* (Baroda: M.S. University Archaeology).

Mukherjee, B.N. (1992), 'New Epigraphic and Paleographic Discoveries', *Pratna Samiksha: Journal of the Directorate of Archaeology, Govt. of West Bengal* 1: 135-46.

Rajan, K. (2020), 'Trade and Technology in Early Historic South India: The Trans-Oceanic Dimension with Special Reference to Kodumanal (Tamil Nadu)', *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology* 15-16 (2019-2020): 56-80.

Rydh, H. (1959), *Rangmahal* (Lund: CWK Gleerup Publishers).

Selvakumar, V. (2020), 'Umanars and Salt Trade in Early Historic Tamizhagam, South India', *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology* 15-16 (2019-2020): 1-23.

Yazdani, G. (1941), 'Excavations at Kondapur', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 22/3-4 (July-October): 171-85.

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-06

Small Figurines Shaping the Ancient Global World across the Indian Ocean

Serena Autiero

Introduction

Going on a stroll along busy German, Dutch, or British roads it is not surprising to spot on window bays, in gardens, or on doorsteps images of foreign deities such as Buddha, or the multi-armed elephant god Ganesh. Even before thinking of a religious affiliation, we are now used to looking at them just as items of design. As scholars we have the tools to see and debate how problematic this can be, but it is also very interesting to look at the cultural processes – fostered by colonization and globalization – that fuelled this phenomenon. The circulation of religious imagery deprived of its original meaning is perceived – and condemned – as an exclusive product of modernity. Such an idea is misleading. Indeed, if we travel back in time, we can identify similar processes already two millennia ago.[1]

In the centuries around the turn of the Era intense exchange patterns in Eurasia led to cultural transformations that are reflected in the material culture. In this period, for example, in India a new style of terracotta figurines emerged, different from traditional assemblages both in technique and in subjects. Archaeologists already in the late nineteenth century labelled the new terracotta production as Hellenistic, recognizing a direct influence from Western production. The observation of this new style happened during the revolutionary discovery of ancient long-distance transregional contacts across the Indian Ocean. However, the initial understanding of such contacts was heavily biased by a West-centred prejudice, mostly due to the overwhelming amount of knowledge already acquired on the classical world, compared to the almost complete ignorance about the past of extra-Mediterranean countries. In the last few decades, a collective scholarly effort has been dismantling this Western bias, and using more and more transculturality and globalization studies to widen our understanding of global dynamics in the centuries around the turn of the Era.

Previous research shows that the circulation of portable objects functions as a catalyst for change and innovation. Therefore, looking at how figurative systems interact in antiquity is a fundamental step towards getting an unbiased understanding of transregional dynamics. This is, indeed, a topical subject that needs to be investigated from multiple points of view and starting from diverse cultural traditions. The focus of this paper is on understanding the historical impact of globalization by looking at small figurines. Small figurines with transcultural elements identified at different ends of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), as well as those relocated foreign figurines known so far, highlight, indeed, the importance of a shared figurative culture at the time of early historic globalization.[2]

Finds from Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula, for example, are fundamental to understanding the Western outreach of Indian culture in the frame of ancient globalization and contribute to a new comprehension of cultural exchange in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) network. Research on transcultural visual culture in the context of ancient globalization makes clear that the adoption of foreign elements in local productions happened in several areas of the Indian Ocean world, including Roman Egypt.

1 The phenomenon of globalization and its origins are objects of debate among scholars. Some scholars claim that globalization is a product of modernity, while others place its origin in the pre-modern world. For an overview of the topic see: Autiero and Cobb (2021b).
2 Autiero (2015); Autiero (2017); Autiero (2019).

Globalization theories and transculturality: a brief overview

Before delving into a selection of case-studies, this section offers a brief overview of the theoretical backbone of this research. In the last few decades discussion of globalization in the past has become more and more frequent, almost pervasive. However, using globalization and related theories for historical and archaeological research requires a certain degree of understanding of this phenomenon as it was theorized as a tool for understanding the contemporary world.[3]

Until the 1990s using globalization theory for historical consideration was very challenging and challenged; in the last two decades this situation has drastically improved. Globalization is a potent theoretical framework for understanding connectivities. It allows a better comprehension of social interconnections and of the cultural outputs of complex networks.[4]

Several scholars attempted to define globalization in brief. Economists tend to define globalization through some of the conditions it enables, such as the existence of global trade, the impact of production on trade partners, and price convergence;[5] however, this point of view is difficult to adapt to ancient material culture since the record is uneven, dictated by accident and mere luck, and, moreover, research is also utterly uneven in geographical coverage and quality. Therefore, the simple track-and-trace of archaeological findings, backed by biased and uneven written sources, cannot establish a reliable base to determine globalization through quantitative criteria, as economists would suggest. In this field of study, we need to define globalization through its cultural effects. John Tomlinson, in his book *Globalization and Culture*, defines globalization – briefly but effectively – as 'complex connectivities'; he argues that intense connectivities between people across physical and cultural borders creating a network of interaction and interdependency (exchange of goods, information, technologies, ideas, etc.) trigger cultural transformation.[6] Robertson effectively defines globalization as a form of connectivity, specifying that globalization is a process by which the world increasingly comes to be seen as one place and how we are made conscious of that process.[7] In a similar way, Hodos more recently defines globalization as those processes of increasing connectivities that unfold and manifest as social awareness of those connectivities, making clear that it concerns more than just complex connectivities.[8]

Many definitions of globalization share the occurrence of two characteristics: time-space compression and global consciousness. The latter does not necessarily imply an actual global awareness ('globe' intended to mean the 'known world'). Clearly 'globalization' identifies a phenomenon that occurs on different scales over different periods of time. Today, as in the past, globalization promotes uniformity as well as fragmentation, it is an unpredictable process that does not follow any inner universal logic. Its geographical scope can vary just as its chronological scope.[9] Globalization described as complex connectivities and subsequent cultural transformation is not a concept limited to the contemporary world; such a definition can also be adapted to ancient periods.

The effects of ancient globalization are not limited to the movement of objects across large distances, but they include modification, transformation, and changing of local material culture through 'soft-exchange', meaning the transmission of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs. Material culture, also in accidental or fragmentary contexts, can tell stories of globalization. Discussing ancient globalization implies the abandonment of the idea that cultural globalization equals cultural homogenization: globalization also

3 For an overview see Autiero and Cobb (2021a).
4 Knappett (2017), 30.
5 Nederveen Pieterse (2015), 230.
6 Tomlinson (1999), 2.
7 Robertson (1992), 8; Robertson (2017), 54.
8 Hodos (2017), 4.
9 Autiero (2021), 22.

stimulates differentiation and boosts the creation of new local cultural facets. The cultural responses to globalization at a local level are intended as manifestations of glocalization, an umbrella term encompassing seemingly opposite and complementary trends of globalization.[10] Glocalization happens with the adoption, adaptation, and re-interpretation of foreign items, in full or only their single components. Such phenomena provide interesting avenues for analysis drawing from transcultural theory.[11] Transcultural theories – as this paper demonstrates – are especially useful and successful when discussing material culture in the context of the Indian Ocean exchange network. Transculturality is taken to mean those cultural conditions characterized by permeation and intermingling; the concept of transculturality overlaps with some elements already highlighted for the concept of glocalization; transculturality indeed goes beyond globalization and localization, covering global and local following the logic of transculturation intended as the process behind transculturality.[12]

Despite glocalization and transculturality often overlapping, the latter proves to be more effective as an interpretative tool for material culture, since it focuses on the neo-culture derived from intense connectivity, instead of looking at the 'mix' of global and local. Transculturality is a cultural phenomenon that can happen also in non-globalized contexts when simple connectivity is enabled.

A shared figurative culture

With this theoretical frame in mind, we can now focus more specifically on the geo-historical context of the present research which is the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) in the centuries at the turn of the Era, namely the Early Historic Period of India or the Hellenistic-Roman Period of the Western periodization. The study of WIO interconnections has a long history. However, this has been a particularly biased field. When European scholars first engaged in the field of WIO studies, their approach was indeed skewed by unbalanced research and documentation in favor of the Graeco-Roman world. The most striking example of this biased approach is what happened to the so-called Indo-Roman trade. Warmington was the first scholar to use this definition to refer to the early links between India and the Egyptian Red Sea under Roman control.[13] Until relatively recently, the interpretation of Indo-Roman trade followed an existing orthodoxy – fostered by Sir Mortimer Wheeler in the 40s/50s – as trade controlled by Rome. This initial approach strongly affected our comprehension of the nature of the exchange process in the WIO. Moreover, most of the relevant written sources are from the classical world, thereby reinforcing the unbalanced approach. The tremendous work carried out by several philologists and historians of the classical world certainly adds a lot to our understanding of past interactions, but at the same time, it makes clear that the documentation from the West is overwhelming if compared to the scant written record from the East. As for the study of material culture, great efforts have been carried out lately by archaeologists working in different WIO countries.[14] In particular, the work on pottery conducted by Roberta Tomber has the merit of shedding light on a network of exchange that is far more complex than the simple import of Roman amphorae.[15] Old excavation reports hide data and information on terracotta figurines. Some suggestions about the path to follow for their understanding in a transcultural

10 For different conceptualizations of the glocal and glocalization, see Robertson (1995); Ritzer (2003), 193; Stek (2014), 39; Roudometof (2016), 79.

11 For transcultural theory and its applications to material culture studies see Cobb (2021).

12 Welsch (1999), 212.

13 Warmington (1928).

14 Suffice it to mention the excavations in Berenike (Egypt) carried out by a team co-directed by Steven E. Sidebotham (University of Delaware) and Iwona Zych (PCMA UW; Sidebotham and Zych [2011]); in Oman excavations have been conducted in Khor-Rori by an Italian Archaeological Mission lead by Alessandra Avanzini (2002 and 2008), and in Qani (Salles and Sedov 2010). In India, the Archaeological Survey of India conducted several excavations along the Indian Ocean coast (e.g. Gupta [1998], Cherian [2009]).

15 Tomber (2008); this work is a precious handbook for this field of study.

context have been assessed by Pia Brancaccio.[16] The most recent studies on the topic are mine; the most significant results for the present study are presented in what follows.[17]

(a) Sātavāhana terracotta figurines

Early historic Sātavāhana terracotta figurines suggest that this group of artifacts is representative of transcultural processes in the area. This class of terracotta figurines – produced in central India during the heyday of trade with Roman Egypt – shows how religious iconography that originated in Egypt reached peninsular India.[18] Recently, several studies have investigated the reception of Egyptian gods in the Mediterranean and the Near East, where mostly they kept their identity. In the Indian Peninsula, in a completely different context, that same religious imagery has been received but re-shaped according to the local religious imagery, adopting foreign visual solutions to represent ancestral divinities. The narrative behind the foreign image is completely lost, besides the persistence of some visual features; a divorce takes place between the motif and its 'original' semantic ties. This phenomenon is not unique to India nor Indic religions. Indeed, a similar phenomenon can be observed, for instance, in Commagene with Persian/Achaemenid gods.[19] This modality of reception and re-semantization of religious imagery reveals how local religious traditions react to the impact of alien imagery, whether it is understood as religious or not.

Transcultural terracotta figurines in Sātavāhana India depict a variety of iconographies, among which some typologies are particularly easy to detect, such as the Baubo/Yoninilaya type (Figure 1). In Egypt (and adjacent areas) this iconographic model is depicts Baubo,[20] while in India it is known as Yoni or Yoninilaya, the personification of the vulva/vagina, as the name *yoni* indicates. A link between these iconographies has been identified as early as 1934.[21] Baubo is a character in Demeter's mythology in the religious frame of the Eleusinian Mysteries. This female character takes on a comical crouched position, showing her vulva to make Demeter smile, while the goddess is desperately in search of her kidnapped daughter Persephone/Kore. Baubo's crouching position is a clear reference to the generative power of the female body. Terracotta representations of Baubo were already common in Ptolemaic Egypt.[22]

During the first century AD, this Graeco-Roman iconography travelled to peninsular India, not through imported artefacts but most probably following traders by means of personal belongings. In India, the representation of female deities with exposed genitalia has a long history, but starting in the early centuries of the Common Era a new typology of terracotta figurines witnesses the impact of an alien iconography on the Indian substratum as suggested by stylistic features and by the archaeological context.[23] The local population in India and Roman (more or less temporary) settlers probably recognized the use of terracotta figurines as a common religious language, causing the 'translation' of Baubo figurines into figurines representing the personification of the Yoni, female genitals, or Yoninilaya, in a process of adaptation to the indigenous culture.

16 Brancaccio (2005).
17 Autiero (2015); Autiero (2017), Autiero (2019).
18 This type of terracotta figurines has been often labelled as 'Sātavāhana', referring to one of the reigning dynasties in the area that only in the second century AD controlled the whole Deccan; in the centuries around the early common era, indeed, local dynasties extended their power in different areas. In this text 'Sātavāhana' is occasionally still used as a quick label to address this specific class of material, while still acknowledging the related periodization issues owing to outdated biases and to the difficulty of applying labels that cross regional and dynastic boundaries.
19 Blömer et al. (2021).
20 Ackermann and Gisler (1981), 87-90; Török (1995), 132.
21 Murray (1934).
22 Brancaccio (2005), 56.
23 Autiero (2012), 210.

Figure 1. Left: Egyptian Baubo, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (Török [1995], pl. 150 [copyright 1995 L'ERMA di Bretschneider]); right: Yoninilaya from India, Ramalingappa Lamture Museum (after Sankalia[(1960], 120, fig. 18). (Photo after Autiero [2015], fig. 1.)

Figure 2. Left: Bes from Egypt, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (edited after Török 1995, pl. 3 [copyright 1995 L'ERMA di Bretschneider]); right: an Indian yakṣa *(after Bautze [1995], pl. 90, c). (Photo after Autiero (2015), fig. 4.)*

Another common type of Indian transcultural terracotta figurine is the male dwarfish figure, generally identifiable as *yakṣa* or semi-divine natural spirit, related to the Egyptian Bes (Figure 2).[24] Bes is depicted as a chubby dwarf with a wide face and pronounced features. He is often depicted in a crouched position with a stocky body and short limbs. Bes has an apotropaic power and therefore it is likely that small effigies of this deity travelled with Egyptian traders. In India, this figure was easily related to local *ganas* or *yakṣas*, and the new Western iconography contributed to reshaping a strongly local image (Figure 5). *Yakṣas* in Indian mythology are ambivalent nature spirits, whose principal role is as custodians of hidden treasures buried in the earth and in the roots of trees. The origin of *yakṣa* worship is rooted in early indigenous pre-Vedic beliefs. Bes also has a long history, however, he was very successful in the Hellenistic and Roman periods as a member of the Isiac Family.

A peculiar phenomenon that is very significant in this context is that the name Bes was eventually used as a generic designation for characters with common traits, paving the way for his widespread diffusion and assimilation in different contexts. In his western area of diffusion, a grotesque type of figurine could depict Bes, comic actors, chubby children, satyrs, or sileni. The functions of Bes are the key point in the assimilation and re-elaboration of its iconography outside Egypt. Bes type figures can be traced across the ancient world, from Egypt to Mesopotamia, Iran, and as far as India.[25] These persistent types remain unchanged for hundreds of years, making identification a difficult task. For example, in Seleukia on the Tigris, dwarf-like figures were popular, and they have been associated with Bes. They have an apotropaic significance, a power extended generally to 'ugly' or 'abnormal' figurines. Foreigners can also be considered as 'abnormal' figures. This point in particular, together with the functions of Bes-related figures, paved the way for the introduction of such iconography to India. Apotropaic figures aimed at scaring off evil would indeed depict foreign elements, derived from people and objects coming from the West. Artistic evidence shows how in India foreigners, such as Roman soldiers, are represented assuming an apotropaic function.[26] Their unusual aspect made them as

24 Ackermann and Gisler (1981), 107.
25 Autiero (2017), 84-5.
26 Autiero (2019), 86.

mysterious and powerful as *yakṣas*. The *yakṣas* are liminal figures from the wild, outside the established society, and so are the foreigners, being from another world (in this case Roman Egypt). Giving a foreign look to terracotta *yakṣas* makes them more effective and powerful since their aspect conveys their liminality.

Baubo/Yoninilaya and Bes/*yakṣa* are not the only iconographies showing transcultural elements due to contacts between Roman Egypt and Sātavāhana India. For example, across types, it is possible to detect in India a series of elements seen on Harpokrates or pseudo-Harpokrates figurines from Egypt. This case is especially complex since in Egypt itself the iconography undergoes profound transformations and adaptations across the centuries, making identifications often conventional and unreliable. In the novel case study considered below, this issue will be further clarified.

(b) South Arabian imagery

In the WIO exchange area, Southern Arabia has an important role owing to its prominent intermediate position; this role is also mirrored by artistic production. There is a prevalence of figurative relief sculpture in South Arabian art, primarily crafted from local alabaster and sandstone.[27] In the centuries around the turn of the Era, also in this area are attested some novelties in the artistic rendering of traditional subjects. In particular, stone reliefs manifest both western and eastern characteristics. The most common example is the Hombrechtikon Plaque, an alabaster relief that showcases a unique representation of a naked man and a voluptuous woman with clear connections to Indian art (Figure 3).[28] Looking at possible comparisons, I have previously hypothesized a syncretic production in the urban Zafar area.[29]

Figure 3. The Hombrechtikon Plaque, private collection (when published in 1954, built into interior wall of the home of Gottfried Schaerer at Hombrechtikon in Canton Zürich (after Honeyman [1954], pl. 4).

While stone remains the primary material in South Arabian art, a minor production of bronze sculptures indicates a dialogue with the Hellenistic-Roman world and Indian art (e.g. the Lady Bar'at statuette, a bronze representation of the goddess Dhat Himyam, stylistically related to Gandhāran art).[30]

In the 1960s and 1970s, Pirenne and Ryckmans already identified Gandhāran influences in South Arabian art, noting challenges in telling

27 Doe (1971).
28 Honeyman (1954), 23-28.
29 Autiero (2019), 420.
30 For an overview of the debate see Autiero (2019), 423.

Gandhāran elements apart from Iranian or Palmyrene ones.[31] The connection between South Arabia and Gandhāra probably stems from the shared adoption of Indian iconographic elements, rather than direct contact. Bronze statuettes from Yemen, such as a standing figurine and a small female bust, reveal indeed clear Indian elements, notably derived from Gangetic models. Another South Arabian bust, displaying Hellenistic features, shares similarities with the *Yakṣī* of Didarganj. Various South Arabian bronzes, including a putto, exhibit Roman and Indian elements. Notably, a male head from Yemen resembles Gandhāran bodhisattva iconography. This cultural transmission, facilitated by South Arabia's trade connections, reflects a shift from local traditions to syncretism and exoticism during a period of political stability under the Himyarites. The case of the South Arabian kingdoms contributes to confirming the key role of small portable figures in shaping a shared figurative culture that is global in nature.

'Indian' terracotta figurines from Roman Memphis, Egypt: a fresh look at some old finds

In this overview, I have considered portable figurines from India and South Arabia; this selection does not imply that the same phenomenon did not happen at other ends of the WIO exchange network; preliminary research indeed already suggests that transcultural figurines were also produced, for example, in Mesopotamia and Persia.[32] While new material continues to emerge in many Indian Ocean countries in Asia and Africa, assessing the transcultural value of small figurines must also be a work of re-interpretation. As scholars, we also need to look back and apply new ideas to old finds. For example, this process is necessary for a small collection of terracotta figurines from Egypt, discovered in the early twentieth century by Flinders Petrie, a pioneer of archaeological excavations in Egypt;[33] among his many finds a dozen terracotta figurines from Memphis deserve a careful re-evaluation in the light of recent research on ancient globalizations. Petrie in his report defines these figurines as 'Indian' or just describes their position as Indian.[34] Discussing these Egyptian figurines offers multiple insights; indeed, such artefacts are at the crossroads of classical, South Asian, and Indian Ocean studies.

The so-called Indian figurines from Memphis were brought back to the attention of Indologists by Ashtana in 1976 and were then evaluated again by Harle in the 1990s.[35] The research questions they asked were actually limited to a binary view of cultures, where a Hellenistic-Roman aspect was opposed to a generic 'other', and the two would communicate in basically two ways: transfer and influence. Transfer means that an object was materially moved from one place to another by means of trade or as personal belonging of a travelling agent. More complex is the idea of influence, because it implies that an alien layer overlaps on a local artefact or motif. The concept of influence is outdated, and lately, more and more scholars have tried to avoid it since it implies a linear relation between two actors. Moreover, the two actors are usually put in a hierarchy in which a stronger culture imposes an influence on a weaker one. It is clear that such a pattern cannot work, and that cultural relations are much more complex. Another shortcoming of this line of thought is the idea of cultures as closed boxes, an approach defined as 'container thinking'.[36]

In the light of a transcultural approach that goes beyond the outdated idea of 'artistic influence', this group of terracotta figurines from Memphis offers new food for thought. The scant available study on this group of figurines so far concentrated on whether they are Indian in origin or created by an Indian

31 Pirenne (1960), 326-347, in particular 342; Ryckmans (1976), 67-78.
32 See for example the work conducted by Langin-Hooper (2014 and 2023) on Mesopotamian figurines, using an anthropological approach that gives three-dimensionality to the topic and aims at investigating long-distance connections of local iconographies.
33 Petrie (1909a), (1909b) and (1910).
34 Petrie (1909a), 15 and pl. 39.
35 Ashtana (1976); Harle (1991 and 1992).
36 For an argument against 'container-thinking' see Versluys (2015), 144-6.

diaspora for the use of migrant Indians. It is necessary to go beyond these out of date and simplistic views and focus on transcultural value.

The context: Roman Memphis

Memphis, located near the Nile Delta in Egypt, was an ancient city that played a significant role during Roman times. It had been a prominent city for centuries, dating back to the early dynastic period of ancient Egypt. By the time of the Roman Empire, Memphis retained its status as an important centre, although its political and administrative influence had diminished compared with earlier periods. Already Petrie pointed to the multicultural environment of Memphis, where he documented a 'foreign quarter' and identified figurines depicting a diverse population.[37] Despite some chronological issues and a blurred definition of foreign elements, Petrie's first interpretations – although outdated – anticipate current views on a globalized Roman Egypt.

Memphis was an ancient capital of Egypt and had served as the capital during the Old Kingdom. However, by Roman times, Alexandria had become the primary administrative center of Egypt. Despite this shift, Memphis retained its historical, cultural, and religious significance, particularly through the Temple of Ptah. Situated near the Nile River, Memphis continued to be a strategic location for trade and commerce. The river facilitated transportation and trade activities between Upper and Lower Egypt. The Nile was used as the main conduct of Indian Ocean goods toward the Mediterranean; cargoes arrived on the Red Sea shore and were transported through caravans to river port cities such as Coptos, a major entrepôt for goods moving between Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and other regions.

Memphis boasted impressive architecture, including temples, palaces, and statues. However, much of the ancient city has been eroded or buried over time, and modern Cairo has expanded over its remains.

The corpus of 'Indian' terracottas from Memphis

The catalogue of the Petrie Museum at UCL[38] describes twelve terracotta figurines as showing an 'Indian attitude' and one figurine as depicting 'an Indian'. Of these, only two are not from Memphis. UC8753 is unprovenanced, while UC8743 is from Hawara. Information about the provenance is particularly relevant since many of the terracotta figurines scattered in collections around the world have an unknown origin losing most of their documentary value. The original group of twelve has been extended to sixteen, including related specimens whose original description does not include a reference to India. Considering the number of artefacts excavated in Egypt, this group of figurines is very small, however, it provides important information if we look at these figurines in the frame of ancient globalization.

The most characteristic terracotta figurines produced in Hellenistic and Roman times were mould-made, with many types repeated over and over, or with minimal variation. In the group of 'Indian' figurines from Memphis as well, the largest part is mould-made. Indeed, a first typological distinction can be made according to the production technique, in particular, there are five solid-modelled figurines whose style is especially peculiar. These five figurines are also those having the showiest 'Indian' elements (Group 4: UC8747, UC8923, UC8924, UC8925, UC8931).

Egyptian terracotta production, despite the repetitiveness of moulded types, is also known for the creation of very original items, often the result of spontaneous artistic creation. These peculiarities usually happen in the so-called grotesque figurines, aimed at representing specific human traits in an exaggerated and caricaturist way. Before proposing an interpretative hypothesis, it is necessary to

37 Petrie (1909a), 15-17.

38 Available online at <https://collections.ucl.ac.uk/>.

scrutinize and describe the artefacts briefly. The sixteen terracotta figurines of the Petrie collection considered as having Indian elements – mostly an 'Indian attitude' – can be divided into five typological groups.[39] Besides Group 4 and Group 5, the others all have overlapping elements in common, such as a head wreath or some features usually associated with the figure of Harpokrates (e.g. lock of hair on the right or finger to the lips).[40] Similar figurines are indeed sometimes described as 'pseudo-Harpokrates'.

Group 1: figures reclining on an amphora (3)

These three figures were identified as male in the UCL catalogue, perhaps Dionysos of the East and/or a form of Harpokrates. However, their gender attribution is very doubtful, considering especially the shape of the body.[41] Some elements, such as the head wreath with lotus buds and the lock of hair on the right of the head, are common in Harpokrates and pseudo-Harpokrates figurines. The head wreath, however, is also extremely common on female figurines, with a 'global' geographic reach.[42] The lock of hair on the right of the head is an element associated with youth. Therefore, considering the immature breasts of these figures, we can possibly think that they represent young women and that the hair lock used to indicate youth in Harpokrates figures has migrated to female figures. This isolation of an iconographic element to indicate youth, regardless of the gender, is plausible, considering that the original coiffure was exclusive to boys in pharaonic times and in the Roman period this immediate association to boys could have been lost. The pronounced facial features of Group 1 figurines suggest that the subjects are foreigners, whose provenance, however, is impossible to ascertain. The attribution to an Indian origin, mostly on account of the posture, does not find confirmation in any comparison with Indian material.

UC8788 (Figure 4)

Female figurine with grotesque facial features in a slanting position, an attitude described as 'Indian' probably because of a similarity to the *tribhanga* position. She only wears a band around the chest covering her breasts, a large pendant (amulet in the shape of a small bag) and an ornate headdress composed of a large wreath topped by two protuberances, probably lotus buds. On the right, she has a loose lock of hair. The left hand is raised to the ear, while the right rests on the out-thrust hip. The figure leans on the proper left over an amphora; under the right arm, on the other side of the figure, there is a disk-shaped object that could be a musical instrument. The navel is indicated by a deep circular line. The figurine was originally hollow (now filled with plaster) and mould-made. It is broken below the upper thighs. On the plain back, the breakage line suggests the presence of a vent hole.

UC33607 (Figure 5)

Female(?) figurine in slanting position ('Indian') broken just below the navel. The figure has pronounced facial features and large ears. She only wears a band around the breasts and a pendant in the shape of a small bag (an amulet?). The navel is indicated by a deep circular line. As in the previous specimen, the figure leans on an amphora on the left, and the right hand rests on the hip; the figure wears a large

39 Proposing this typological classification does not come without some thought. Typology in archaeology is indeed subject to arbitrariness, arising from the subjective and variable nature of classifying artefacts. Archaeologists categorize objects into types based on selected characteristics. However, this process is subjective, varying among researchers, and influenced by cultural biases. Typologies can evolve over time, and incomplete knowledge about a context may lead to misclassifications. Despite these challenges, typology is still a valuable tool for an initial understanding of material culture. Questioning objectivity, transparency in methodological choices, and openness to reinterpretation are essential tools to mitigate the arbitrariness of typological classifications.

40 Dunand (1979), 38-42.

41 It is maybe possible to see in these figurines a representation of the female form of Harpokrates (Dunand [1979], 41, figs. 322-23).

42 For example, similar head wreaths are common on Gandhāran reliefs and terracottas (Tissot 1985/2003: pls. 397, 398b).

Figures 4-6. Terracotta figurines from Memphis. London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, inv. 8788, 33607, 8932. (Photos: Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology CC BY-NC-SA licence.)

wreath topped by two lotus buds(?), with a lock of hair falling on the right, a common attribute of Harpokrates figures. The hollow figurine is covered in a bright red wash and is broken just below the navel. It has a plain back with remnants of a vent hole.

UC8932 (Figure 6)

Terracotta figurine in slanting position ('Indian'), preserved only from the waist up. The figure has pronounced facial features, and is naked, only wearing armlets and bracelets, and a pendant in the shape of a small bag (an amulet?). The figure wears a large wreath on the head, surmounted by two cone-shaped elements, probably lotus buds. Remnants of a crown of leaves are visible around the head. The leaves were applied manually to the figure before firing – they were not part of the mould. She also has a loose lock of hair on the right. The proper left hand is raised to the ear, probably hiding another symmetrical lock of hair; the right hand rests on the out-thrust hip. The figure has small breasts or maybe large nipples if identified as male. The navel is pronounced. Traces of white paint on the surface. The figurine is now fixed to a marble base, the hollow filled with plaster. On the plain back, the breaking line suggests the presence of a vent hole.

Group 2: Harpokrates with large phallus (2)

These two figurines have been grouped because they share the representation of the genitalia and the type of headdress. Both the figurines are described as sitting in an 'Indian' attitude; however, their position has nothing explicitly comparable to the coeval Indian terracotta production. Considering that this description is based on observations made over a century ago, I believe that the 'Indian' attitude seen in these objects better refers to a then contemporary idea of relaxation and the oriental 'harem' attitude. However, when they are regarded in the wider context of Roman-Egyptian terracotta production, one can see how novel plastic elements and a general style change may indicate the effects of contact with different traditions.

As for the representation of the phallus in a figure still retaining the chubby childish appearance and the youth's hair lock, as pointed out already by Dunand, this should not come as a surprise, since the representation of Harpokrates is frequently associated with ideas of prosperity and fertility, while also maintaining an apotropaic value.[43] In a Roman context such characteristics are associated with the figure of Priapus, therefore the representation of hypertrophic genitalia is not unique to these figurines.

43 Dunand (1979), 78.

Figures 7-8. Terracotta figurines from Egypt (Figure 7 from Memphis). London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, inv. 8744, 8753. (Photos: Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology CC BY-NC-SA licence.)

This type of figurine is widespread in collections around the world and constituted a common type of Harpokrates figure in Hellenistic and Roman times.

UC8744 (Figure 7)

Figure of Harpokrates with pot. He is seated slightly reclining to the left, with both legs extended to the proper right. He holds a globular pot with his left, while the right is taken to the mouth of the pot. The young deity is depicted with a large phallus between the legs, which is not immediately indentifiable because of the thick white slip. He wears a pointed crown (the double crown?), with two elements at the sides. On the right of the head falls a lock of hair. The hollow figurine is made of buff pottery; the back is smooth, and on the front surface are traces of a white slip and red paint.

UC8753 (unprovenanced) (Figure 8)

Figure of Harpokrates with pot. He is depicted naked with a large phallus, slightly leaning to the left on a globular pot. The figure rests on a raised moulded base. He is possibly wearing the double crown. The figurine is hollow; the back surface is not figured and it has a vent hole. The pottery is buff/yellow in colour and the surface is pitted by salt.

Group 3: Other Harpokrates and pseudo-Harpokrates (4)

When this group of figurines was catalogued, their posture was described as an 'Indian attitude'. This phrase has been maintained, but nowadays it needs to be completely dismissed since there is nothing especially Indian in the figures' position. These types of figurines are actually common in Hellenistic and Roman times, depicting either Harpokrates or figures derived from or connected to his iconographic type (pseudo-Harpokrates). Moreover, one should also consider that referring to this body position as Indian is also problematic since it reflects an Orientalist view. Three figurines out of four in this group

depict the type usually indicated as 'Harpokrates with pot', a common representation across collections. The pot is a symbol of fertility related to the Nile waters.[44]

UC8771 (Figure 9)

Figure of a naked Harpokrates with pot. He sits on a podium leaning on the left on a large (disk-like) basket. He holds a globular pot with his left arm. The right finger is held to the mouth. He only wears the double crown over a large head wreath.

The figurine is made of pink/brown pottery, it is mould made and hollow, with a circular vent hole on the unfigured back.

UC8763 (Figure 10)

Terracotta figurine representing Harpokrates with pot. The base and the lower part of the legs are broken away. He sits leaning on his left while holding a globular pot in his left arm. The right hand is placed at the mouth of the pot. He wears the double crown and a large head wreath with a lock of hair falling on the right. He has drapery around the hips, leaving the genitalia exposed; a piece of draped cloth also wraps the left shoulder. The figurine is made of brownish pottery and is mould-made and solid. The unfigured back surface is corroded.

UC8764 (Figure 11)

Terracotta figurine of Harpokrates with pot, broken just under the hips. He sits leaning on his left while holding a globular pot in his left arm, while bringing his right forefinger to his mouth. He has a cloak draped over his left shoulder, while otherwise naked, with exposed genitalia. He has a sidelock and a broken headdress probably originally with a pointed end. This figurine is solid and made of brown pottery pitted by salt. The back is plain.

UC8743 (Hawara) (Figure 12)

Buff/pink terracotta figure of Harpokrates, seated on an oval base with his right knee raised, and the left leg folded on the base with the foot touching the groin (this position gained this figurine the

Figures 9-12. Terracotta figurines from Memphis (9-11) and Hawara (12). London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, inv. 8771, 8763, 8764, 8743. (Photo: Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology CC BY-NC-SA licence.)

44 Dunand (1979), 75.

attribution to the group in 'Indian attitude'). The right finger is held to the mouth in the typical gesture of this deity. He wears a draped tunic and the atef crown, and a lock of hair falls on the right of his head. To the proper right of the figure stands a basket surmounted by a miniature figure of a standing Harpokrates. The figurine is double-moulded in the round, and the draped tunic continues on the back as well as the headdress. This figurine is hollow and bears traces of white paint (or slip) on the surface.

Group 4: Modelled figures (5)

This group of hand-modelled figures deserves considerable attention since they show a sharp divergence from the rest of the collection, and from is considered quintessential Hellenism, namely mould-made figurines. Moreover, the figures clearly overlap with Indian iconographic conventions. Already Gordon, looking at Indian comparisons for the first time, suggested dating these figures to a period as late as the first century AD, and not the seventh to fifth centuries BC, as originally suggested by the excavators.[45] After almost a century, Gordon's observation that 'Had these figurines been found in an Indian context I should have had not the least hesitation in pronouncing them Kuvera figures of the first or second centuries A.D.' still applies to this group, here conventionally called Group 4. Since the first interpretation, the identification as Kuvera (or Kubera), needs to be updated to a more generic '*yakṣa* type'. As for the only female figure of the group (UC8924), it also depicts a type well known in India: the enthroned deity, including figures of Hariti, as also suggested by Gordon.[46]

The coarse fabric of these terracotta figures makes them particularly fragile. For some of the figures, it has been impossible to analyse the back because of the need to avoid moving them from the study tray. They were intended to stay in a fixed position, probably in domestic or communal shrines, and were not meant for transportation as personal items. Unfortunately, none of them retains the head.[47]

UC8747 (Figure 13)

Solid terracotta figure of a corpulent seated man; the head, right arm, and right leg are missing. The figure sits with the remaining left leg folded so that he stays cross-legged. The left hand rests on the knee. He wears a draped cloth around the waist, lying under the prominent belly, and a sash falls on the shoulder. To his left is a basket(?) on top of which there is something difficult to identify. According to Petrie it is a basket of snakes, while according to Harle it is a miniature Harpokrates.[48] The back and base are flat. On the surface there are traces of red and white paint. The fabric is coarse and full of inclusions; the inner part is grey/dark grey.

UC8923 (Figure 14)

Solid terracotta figure preserved only from the waist down. The feet are also missing. Still visible are the remnants of a scarf, which was probably draped over the left shoulder. There are probably traces of an anklet on the left ankle. The back is plain and flat. The figurine has a coarse fabric with many inclusions. In section, a darker core is visible.

UC8924 (Figure 15)

Solid terracotta of a seated female figure. Head and feet are missing. She is seated on a low seat; the left leg is in a relaxed position, while the right one is lost (it was probably held closer to the body). The

45 Gordon (1939), 36.
46 Also see Harle (1991), 58.
47 Gordon mistakenly suggests that the head UC17811 could belong to this type of figure, but differences in fabric, coating, and size discredit this hypothesis (Gordon 1939, 36).
48 Harle (1991), 58.

figure holds in her right hand an oblong object, probably a cornucopia or an elephant tusk.[49] Her left hand is on the knee. She has a basket in her lap, whose content is unidentifiable. Traces of a long tunic type of dress are visible on the torso and left arm. The proper right side of the seat is flat, while the left one shows some moulding probably intended to represent pillows or a basket. The figure has a flat plain back and base. There are traces of white and red paint.

UC8925 (Figure 16)

Fragment of a terracotta figure, head and right side half lost. The male figure is probably seated cross-legged on a low seat (in an 'Indian' attitude). He wears drapery around the waist. Besides the left arm, there is an element not clearly identifiable, probably pillows or a basket. The figure has a coarse fabric with many inclusions and is formed with a flat plain back and base. On the surface are visible traces of a white slip.

UC8931 (Figure 17)

Headless terracotta figure depicting a potbellied male. Hands and feet are missing. He is seated in a position originally described as an 'Indian attitude'. He wears a scarf over the shoulder and a draped

Figures 13-17. Terracotta figurines from Memphis. London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, inv. 8747, 8923, 8924, 8925, 8931. (Photo: Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology CC BY-NC-SA licence.)

49 The cornucopia, to my knowledge, is held exclusively in the left arm. A variation, while not impossible, is probably unlikely. This figurine shows resemblance to the Personification of India depicted in the apse of the Great Hunt mosaic in the Villa del Casale (Piazza Armerina, Sicily, Italy, fourth century AD) which holds an elephant tusk in her left hand; in this case, variability in the position of this attribute may be more likely. Such a comparison is tentative and deserves further attention in the future.

garment around the waist. Such attire is strongly reminiscent of the Indian combination of *uttarīya* and *paridhāna*. The right hand was raised in a lost gesture. The left arm is lost. The figure is seated on the spiral of a snake. The figure is solid, with a flat plain back and base. There are traces of a thick red coating and white and blue paint. Condition fragile.

Group 5: Other figures (2)

This group includes two unrelated heads. Both include very peculiar elements. However, while UC8775 preserves some recognizable iconographic elements belonging to Harpokrates figurines (finger on the lips, chubbiness), UC17811 is an extremely peculiar piece with the main element being the presence of two monkeys on the head. So far, I have not found any comparisons for this figure.

UC8775 (Figure 18)

Part of a pottery figure identified as Harpokrates from the hand gesture of the finger on the lips. Of this figure there remains only the head with part of left shoulder and left side of the chest. He wears a peculiar ornate patterned head-dress with a top knob that also continues on the back, which is otherwise plain. On the chest are visible remnants of a cross-chest ornament. This figure finds comparisons in the unpublished collection of terracotta figurines from Ter (Maharashtra, India).[50] The figure is mould-made and hollow.

UC17811 (Figure 19)

Terracotta head of a male figure with strong facial features, including protruding forehead, full cheeks, elongated eyes, large nose, and full downturned lips. Climbing on his head, behind each ear, there is a monkey, probably a baboon. According to the UCL catalogue, at registration, the figure was considered a possible representation of the Buddha, a hypothesis now untenable. Petrie referred to it as 'Tibetan' in style. Such attempted identification of the iconography as alien in origin only testifies to the uniqueness of this figure, which probably just belongs to the so-called 'grotesque' class of figurines, a passepartout term for unidentifiable and peculiar figures that escape classification according to known typologies.

Figures 18-19. Terracotta figurines from Memphis. London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, inv. 8775, 17811. (Photo: Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology CC BY-NC-SA licence.)

50 Courtesy of Prof Rosa Maria Cimino.

Some observations on the 'Indian' figurines from Memphis

Besides the small selection presented here, the large quantity of terracotta figurines from Memphis also includes several heads that have been classified according to their supposed ethnicity.[51] Over a century after their discovery, they need a careful re-evaluation in light of the increased knowledge attained in the last few decades. This paper cannot cover such a huge topic; therefore I will limit the discussion to one class of 'heads' that overlap with the 'Indian figurines' case-study: the 'Sumerian' heads (Figure 20).[52] Petrie considers these terracotta heads as a survival of a Sumerian type fifteen hundred years after the originals. Such an idea is untenable, while a derivation from Indian models sounds much more convincing.[53] In particular, the Gandhāran representations of Buddhist monks pose a striking resemblance to these Egyptian figurines.

A similar iconography that suggests links to Buddhism also emerged in the Axumite site of Hawelti, suggesting an even larger reach in the WIO world.[54] In Memphis the most 'Indian' of the terracotta figurines were hidden behind a wrong label; while, among the figurines bearing in their original descriptions the attribute 'Indian', only those belonging to Group 4 are undoubtedly related to Indian iconographic models.

Small figurines from the large Indian Ocean koine demonstrate that some common research questions, such as 'Where is it from?' or 'Where is a specific element from?', cannot be answered easily, since their iconography does not depend on a direct transmission of immutable elements. Those very characteristics that gained the Memphis figurines the 'Indian' label cannot, in most cases, be traced back to India, and we already saw how the claim can be entirely dismissed for most of the material. However, many of these figurines show elements that tell them apart from the majority of local Egyptian terracottas. These figurines do not copy known foreign models and are not directly linked to an external influence, but are the product of a cosmopolis, implying phenomena such as cross-contamination, adaptation and hybridization.

The research questions asked so far – 'are these figurines from India?' or 'were they made by/for Indian immigrants?' – were, therefore, missing the point. These figurines were definitely not imports.[55] The

Figure 20. Three of the so-called 'Sumerian' heads from Memphis. London, Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, inv. (right to left) UC47826, UC8926, UC8933 (not to scale; average heights ca. 6 cm). (Photos: Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology CC BY-NC-SA licence.)

51 Petrie (1909), 15-17, pls. 35-44.
52 Petrie (1909), 16, pls. 37, 38.
53 Gordon (1939), 37.
54 Japp (forthcoming).
55 Harle (1991), 60.

production of this type of artefact represents, instead, a local product newly created in a cosmopolitan environment. We could indeed use the terms glocal or transcultural. The idea of a neo-culture is strictly related to the concept of transculturality and therefore using this interpretative frame seems particularly fitting. A neo-culture, transcultural in nature, develops, indeed, in regions involved in transregional exchange and contact. Such neo-culture is not transmitted willingly through intentional communication (e.g. circulation of written texts, or missionary-type contacts), but arises from gradual and unintentional acquaintance with alien visual culture and figurative elements. Looking at the many examples of small transcultural figurines described above, it is safe to argue that such artefacts had a pivotal role in the development of a shared figurative culture. Small plastic figurines (both in terracotta and metal) are particularly sensitive to new inputs, and to what we can define as 'fashion trends'. The production of transcultural figurines is generally limited in time and probably also limited to a few specific workshops.

The presence of foreigners in Roman Egypt is corroborated by several sources and archaeological finds. Direct contacts from India are also common knowledge. However, these figurines from Memphis add important information about the WIO network. Both the *yakṣa* figures (Group 4) and the 'Sumerian' heads, find comparisons in Gandhāran art, adding to the growing understanding of Gandhāra's involvement in Indian Ocean exchanges.

Concluding remarks

The selected instances of transcultural figurines described in this short survey highlight the multidirectionality of cultural contact and exchange in the Western Indian Ocean two millennia ago. Owing to the history of research and a colonial approach, for a long time scholars gave a great deal of attention to the impact of Western culture (Graeco-Roman) on Asian actors, especially South Asia, neglecting the reciprocity of such exchange. The last part of this paper clearly shows how Egypt in Hellenistic-Roman times was not exempt from adopting and adapting alien imagery to local productions. The case study presented here – the Indian terracottas from Memphis – highlights the variety and richness of the iconographic models behind the production of terracotta figurines in Roman Memphis, while at the same time, it shows the complexity beyond the re-elaboration of these models. The process leading to the creation of such peculiar images is transcultural in nature, and results in the creation of new visual solutions perfectly functional for a multicultural urban environment. In the set of so-called Indian figurines, we can indeed see how models of diverse origins were used in a local context related to local traditions.

The typologies of figurines observed so far at different places dated to the early centuries AD seem to show the existence of a small figurines koine across continents. An important catalyst of this phenomenon has been the diffusion of Hellenistic elements over a long period. However, many of the elements of the small figurines koine cannot be considered genuinely Hellenistic, since they were originally developed in a context where Hellenism was just one of many components, and had been already transformed and re-elaborated in local environments.

The transcultural theoretical frame in the study of ancient artefacts unlocks these new levels of understanding. Globalization theories are a tool that we scholars can use to throw light on the past. However, this exercise has a (positive) side-effect, that is the re-discussion of established 'truths' that are unveiled as interpretative biases, or as just plain misunderstandings. This means that, as in the case of the figurines from Memphis that have been known since 1909, a thorough re-assessment of finds from old excavations is a good scholarly practice, and we can be sure that old finds and collections in storage can still provide new data and new information on the globalized past.

Bibliography

Ackermann H.C. and Gisler J.-R. (1981), *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), vol. 1 (Zurich and Munich: Artemis).

Ashtana, S. (1976), *History and Archaeology of India's Contacts with other Countries* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing).

Autiero, S. (2012), 'I rapporti culturali e commerciali nell'Oceano Indiano Occidentale alla luce dei dati storici, letterari, epigrafici, numismatici, archeologici e storico-artistici (III sec. a.C. – V sec. d.C.)' (unpublished PhD thesis, Sapienza University of Rome).

Autiero, S. (2015), 'Terracotta Figurines from Egypt as Agents of Cultural Globalization', M. Pinarello, J. Yoo, J. Lundock and C. Walsh (eds.), *Proceedings of the 15th Current Research in Egyptology Conference (CRE)* (London: Oxbow), 90-99.

Autiero, S. (2017), 'Bes Figurines from Roman Egypt as Agents of Transculturation in the Indian Ocean', *Thiasos: Journal of Archaeology and Ancient Architecture* 6: 79-89.

Autiero, S. (2019), 'Foreign Iconographic Elements in South Arabian Art: The Indian Contribution', in A. Manzo, C. Zazzaro and D.J. De Falco (eds.), *Stories of Globalisation: The Red Sea and the Persian Gulf from Late Prehistory to Early Modernity. Selected Papers of Red Sea Project VII* (Leiden: Brill), 408-42.

Autiero, S. (2021), 'From the Field to the Globe: The Archaeology of Globalization', in in Autiero and Cobb (2021a), 19-35.

Autiero, S. and Cobb, M. A. (eds.) (2021a), *Globalization and Transculturality from Antiquity to the Pre-Modern World* (London: Routledge).

Autiero, S. and Cobb, M.A. (2021b), 'Utilizing Globalization and Transculturality for the Study of the Pre-Modern World', in Autiero and Cobb (2021a), 1-15.

Avanzini, A. (2002), *Khor Rori Report 1 (1997-2000)* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus).

Avanzini, A. (2008), *A Port in Arabia between Rome and the Indian Ocean (3rd C. BC – 5th C. AD) – Khor Rori Report 2* (Arabia Antica 5) (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider).

Bautze, J. (1995), *Early Indian Terracottas* (Iconography of Religions, section 13, Indian Religions, fasc. 17) (Leiden, Brill).

Blömer, M., Riedel, S., Versluys, M.J. and E. Winter (eds.) (2021), *Common Dwelling Place of all the Gods: Commagene in its Local, Regional and Global Hellenistic Context* (Stuttgard: Franz Steiner Verlag) [https://doi.org/10.25162/9783515129268].

Brancaccio, P. (2005), 'Sātavāhana Terracottas – Connections with the Hellenistic Tradition', *East and West* 55(1-4): 55-70.

Cherian, P.J. (2009), 'Maritime Traditions on the Malabar Coast and the Findings on the Pattanam Excavations', in *Recent Research Trends in South Asian Archaeology* (Pune: Deccan College Post Graduate & Research Institute), 321-31.

Cobb, M.A. (2021), 'Mediterranean Goods in an Indian Context: The use of Transcultural Theory for the Study of the Ancient Indian Ocean World', in Autiero and Cobb (2021a), 165-82.

Doe, B. (1971), *Southern Arabia* (London: Thames and Hudson).

Dunand, F. (1979), *Religion populaire en Egypte romaine: les terres cuites isiaques du Musée du Caire* (Leiden: E.J. Brill).

Gordon, D.H. (1939), 'The Buddhist Origin of the "Sumerian" Heads from Memphis', *Iraq* 6/1: 35-8.

Gupta, S. (1998), 'Nevasa: A Type-site for the Study of Indo-Roman Trade in Western India', *South Asian Studies* 14/1: 87-102.

Harle, J.C. (1991), 'Indian Terracottas from Ancient Memphis: Are They Really Indian?', in G. Bhattacharya (ed.), *Akṣayanīvī: Essays Presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in Admiration of Her Scholarly Contributions* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications), 55–61.

Harle, J. C. (1992), 'Indian Terracottas from Ancient Memphis: A Hitherto Unknown Deity?', in C. Jarrige (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology: Papers from the Tenth International Conference of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe* (Madison: Prehistory Press), 375-84.

Hodos, T. (ed.) (2017), *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalisation* (London: Routledge).

Honeyman, A.M. (1954), 'The Hombrechtikon Plaque', *Iraq* 16: 23-8.

Japp, S. (forthcoming), 'Terracotta Figurines from Hawelti (Ethiopia): Indian Imports in the Aksumite realm?', in D. Kumar-Dumas and V. Grasso (eds.), *Moving Images in the First Millennium: Papers from 'Indian Ocean Figures that Sailed Away', an ISAW workshop series, spring 2022* (Paris: Brepols).

Knappett, C. (2017), 'Globalization, Connectivities and Networks', in T. Hodos (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalisation* (London: Routledge), 29-41.

Langin-Hooper, S.M. (2014), 'Terracotta Figurines and Social Identities in Hellenistic Babylonia', in B. Brown and M. Feldman (eds.), *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter), 451-80 [https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614510352.451].

Langin-Hooper, S. M. (2023), 'Burying the Alabaster Goddess in Hellenistic Babylonia: Religious Power, Sexual Agency, and Accessing the Afterlife through Ishtar-Aphrodite Figurines from Seleucid-Parthian Iraq', *American Journal of Archaeology* 127/2: 209-40 [https://doi.org/10.1086/723488].

Murray, M.A. (1934), 'Female Fertility Figures', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 64: 93-100.

Nederveen Pieterse, J. (2015), *Globalization and Culture* (Malden, MA: Rowman & Littlefield).

Petrie W.M.F. (1909a), *Memphis I* (Cairo: School of Archaeology in Egypt: Bernard Quaritch).

Petrie W.M.F. and Walker J.H. (1909b), *The Palace of Apries (Memphis II)* (Cairo: School of archaeology in Egypt University College).

Petrie W.M.F., Mackay E.J.H. and Wainwright G.A. (1910), *Meydum and Memphis (III)* (Cairo: School of Archaeology in Egypt).

Pirenne, J. (1960), 'Notes d'archéologie sud-arabe, I: Stèles à la déesse Dhât Himyam (Hamîm)', *Syria* 37: 326-47.

Ritzer, G. (2003), 'Rethinking Globalization: Glocalization/Grobalization and Something/Nothing', *Sociological Theory* 21/3: 193-209.

Robertson, Roland (1992), *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage).

Robertson, Roland (1995), 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage), 25-44.

Robertson, Robbie (2017), 'Globalization Thinking and the Past', in T. Hodos (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalisation* (London: Routledge): 54-65.

Roudometof, V. (2016), *Glocalization: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge).

Ryckmans, J. (1976), 'A Bust of a South Arabian Winged Goddess with Nimbus in the Possession of Miss Leila Ingrams', *Arabian Studies* 3: 67-78.

Salles, J.-F. and A.V. Sedov (2010), *Qāni'. Le port antique du Ḥaḍramawt entre la Méditerranée, l'Afrique et l'Inde. Fouilles Russes, 1972, 1985-1989, 1991, 1993-1994* (Indicopleustoi: Archaeologies of the Indian Ocean) (Brepols: Turnhout).

Sankalia, H.D. (1960), 'The Nude Goddess or 'Shameless Woman' in Western Asia, India, and South Eastern Asia', *Artibus Asiae* 23/2, 111-23 (Zurich, Museum Rietberg).

Sidebotham, S.E., Zych, I., and Wendrich, W.Z. (2011), *Berenike 2008–2009: PCMA Excavation Series 1* (Warszawa: PCMA).

Stek, T.D. (2014), 'Roman Imperialism, Globalization and Romanization in Early Roman Italy: Research Questions in Archaeology and Ancient History', *Archaeological Dialogues* 21/1: 30-40.

Tissot, F. (1985), *Gandhāra* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve).

Tomber, R. (2008), *Indoroman Trade: From Pots to Pepper* (London: Duckworth Debates in Archaeology).

Tomlinson, J. (1999), *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Török, L. (1995), *Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas from Egypt* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider).

Versluys, M.J. (2015), 'Roman Visual Material Culture as Globalising Koine', in M. Pitts and M.J. Versluys (eds.), *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3-31.

Pitts, M. and M.J. Versluys (eds.) (2015), *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Warmington, E.H. (1928), *The Commence between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge University Press).

Welsch, W. (1999), 'Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today', *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, 13/7: 194-213.

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-07

Coining *Koine*: Reading Numismatic Images in the Context of Global Exchange[1]

Jeremy A. Simmons

Numerous products and peoples crossed the western Indian Ocean in antiquity. Amid all this movement, the exchange of gold for pepper along the Malabar Coast elicited polarized commentary: the 'black gold' so dear to westerners, while celebrated in Tamil verse, receives hostile treatment in Latin literature of the Principate.[2] Over the last century or so, scholars have also sparred for control over this so-called 'Indo-Roman' trade, privileging one side of the hyphenated label over the other.[3] Despite the fact that no ancient state actually controlled the wider oceanic world between them, the intellectual compulsion to pick winners and losers persists.[4] Some claim that Rome's demand for commodities, as opposed to its legions, subjected the subcontinent to economic dominance; others present dubious GDP calculations to tout the subcontinent's comparative wealth in antiquity.[5]

Similar in-fighting has raged over visual expression throughout the subcontinent. Early studies of artistic imitation and mimesis are steeped in their colonial-era contexts, as work by the anthropologist Michael Taussig has shown.[6] Even less charged models of artistic exchange depend on zero-sum interpretations of 'influence' with winners and losers, innovators and imitators, which deprive the latter of an active role. Unidirectional trajectories, where ingenious (Roman) motifs are transmitted to passive (Indian) artisans and subsequently undergo 'decline', are still to be found in relatively recent scholarship.[7] An increasing number of objects of Indian style or manufacture discovered throughout the Indian Ocean world has challenged these vestiges of colonialist thinking.[8] However, when confronted with images that appear far from their supposed place of origin, it is all too easy to lean upon past suppositions that valorize innovation and belittle imitation, even though all art is, in some sense, imitative – it is indebted to a vast sea of formal inspiration, from which artists have long drawn, adapted, and incorporated aspects of visual language within their own expressive repertoires.

In many ways, the gold coins traded for pepper and other South Asian commodities circulate between these loci of intellectual contestation: they are physical evidence of economic processes linked to Indian Ocean commerce; they are also portable objects stamped with visual markers of their value, and as such, they disseminate images across vast geographic distances and over long spans of time. These images were the careful and deliberate products of workshops of intaglio artists. These artists used specialized tools such as bow-drills and chisels to carve their designs into the flat surface of a metallic tool known as a die. Striking two dies together with a blank precious metal disk placed in between them resulted in the

1 I would like to thank Peter Stewart for his invitation to present my work in Oxford and for his editorial feedback on this piece. I am also very grateful to the Government Museum Chennai, Telangana State Archaeology Museum, and the Nagarjunakonda Archaeological Museum for allowing me to view the numismatic and epigraphic holdings in their collections and the American Institute of Indian Studies for funding my research in India. Finally, I would like to thank Elizabeth Stone, Emily Everest-Phillips and Kyle Houston for the fruitful discussions we shared on the topic, some of which found their way into this paper. [Editor's note: images of coins in this paper are not reproduced to scale.]
2 Thapar (1992), 12.
3 Simmons (2023), 1-3.
4 Simmons (2022b), 372-6.
5 E.g. Maddison (2007). For criticism of ancient GDP, see Bowes (2022).
6 Taussig (1993).
7 One-way trajectories have been repeatedly posited: for the theory of the pattern book together with Hellenistic and/or Roman coins, see Göbl (1960), Sagar (1992), and Stone (2016); for the theory that Roman artisans made dies for production of imitations for use by Mediterranean visitors while in the subcontinent, see Tameanko (1991); for the theory of Roman artists coming to India or training Indian coin-makers, see Suresh (2004).
8 Sidebotham et al. (2021), 11-21; Sidebotham et al. (2023), 20-5; Bhandare (2023). See also Autiero (2019).

stamping of two mirror images in relief on either side of a newly fashioned coin: the obverse and reverse (i.e., 'heads' and 'tails'). This allowed for the same images to be reproduced on thousands of objects.

The study of coins as crafted objects – or even *objets d'art* – has not been an academic priority. This is particularly true of imitative Roman coins in India: some merely note their existence and speculate on their original types or issuing authorities without paying close attention to their formal design; others simply ignore formal elements or dismiss them as 'superficial' when compared to other numismatic data (e.g., metrology) or specific historical questions (e.g., chronology); and still others banish these objects to the realm of 'corruption,' 'barbarization,' or 'degeneration.'[9] Of course, these artefacts possess multiple sides worthy of study; and in recent years, scholars have offered more generous treatments of numismatic imitation, notably the late Peter Berghaus and Lawrence Adams, but also Reinhold Walburg, Rebecca Darley, Emilia Smagur, and myself.

First, it should be noted that die-cutters and artists throughout South Asia already demonstrated the considerable skills necessary for unique forms of expression prior to the major influxes of Roman specie in the early centuries AD. The diversity of regional traditions and personal adaptations challenges monolithic cultural categories such as 'foreign' and 'local,' or ethnonyms such as 'Greek,' 'Roman,' or 'Indian.' Static labels such as these serve little heuristic value beyond the convenience of putting things into mental boxes – what scholars such as Miguel John Versluys have called 'container-thinking'.[10] They tend to result in unilateral dynamics such as 'influence,' which are not only insufficient as explanatory models, but also can be made to serve harmful ideologies.[11] They also misrepresent how objects and even immaterial things readily become 'deterritorialized': how they are released from their initial contexts and webs of meaning, only to be ensnared again in new ones.[12] Multidirectional dynamics are often simultaneously 'global' and 'local,' looking to both the past and the unfolding present.[13]

Perhaps it is because coins are so small that they do not meet the level of interest as 'art' among the larger creative products of antiquity. However, I would argue that it is precisely their status as miniature objects produced in great numbers that warrants attention. The incidence of coin finds must be viewed in the context of increased material outputs throughout the Afro-Eurasian world roughly two thousand years ago. Scholars such as Rachel Mairs have pointed to technologies that enabled forms of 'mass-production' in both the Roman Mediterranean and Central Asia – 'minor arts' like terracottas, molded glass, beads, and precious metal applique – which facilitated the short- and long-distance transmission of artistic styles.[14] As Stephanie Langin-Hooper notes in her discussion of figurines produced in Hellenistic Babylon, small things elicit intimate relationships with human actors: they are held in the hand, closely inspected, and manipulated.[15] Roman coins, as standardized objects minted on a massive scale and changing hands well beyond their site of production, are perfect candidates for studying objects in motion and the 'objectscapes' they create in their wake.[16] These miniscule items provide opportunities

9 E.g. Gupta (1965); Metcalf (1979); Hill (1984); Turner (1989); Berghaus (1989); Berghaus (1990); Berghaus (1991); Berghaus (1993); Deshpande (1994); Suresh (2004).
10 Versluys (2014b), 144-6. See also Serena Autiero's contribution in this volume.
11 For the dissatisfaction with 'Romanization' and 'native resistance' (e.g. in Roman Britain), see Pitts (2007); Gardner (2013); Pitts and Versluys (2014); Versluys (2014a); Autiero (2022). For the ideological stakes in the present day, see Bromberg (2021), 7-8.
12 Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 3-25; Appadurai (1990); Appadurai (1996), 17, 27-8, 192.
13 Jennings (2017), 12-28; Autiero and Cobb (2022), 3-7; Hoo (2022), 234-7; Bromberg (2022), 17-26.
14 Mairs (2012) and Mairs (2014).
15 Langin-Hooper (2019), 13-38.
16 Pitts and Versluys (2021). One thinks of the apocryphal anecdote preserved in Graeco-Roman sources involving the king of Taprobane, who closely inspects the images on Roman coins and turns them over in his hands (Pliny *Natural History* 6.24.84-5; Kosmas Indikopleustes, *Christian Topography* 11.18-19; Solinus, *Wonders of the World* 56.

to explore artistic interplays on a global scale, perhaps more so than phantom pattern books or the spectres of itinerant artists.

This paper investigates a range of aesthetic engagements with Roman imperial *denarii* and *aurei* once they arrived in the Indian subcontinent in the early centuries AD. In focusing on representative examples from a much larger body of evidence, it argues that Roman coins were not just a form of money circulating at an interregional scale, but also objects valued for aspects of their materiality and their engaging images – elements that warranted replication to meet a wide range of demands and tastes. What we see on the surface betrays something more profound: an increasingly interconnected ancient world facilitated by an unprecedented 'object boom' around the turn of the epoch.

Roman coins in India

Despite some methodological hurdles to their interpretation, Roman imperial coins in the subcontinent make up a defined corpus of evidence for scholars working on ancient Indian Ocean trade. This has been made possible in large measure thanks to the work of scholars such as Paula Turner and Sethuraman Suresh, who have catalogued the various hoards and stray finds in collections throughout India, amounting to thousands of coins.[17] The distribution of Roman coin finds in peninsular India and Sri Lanka constitutes what we might call 'eddies of circulation'; the regions with the largest concentrations include central Tamil Nadu (around Coimbatore), the Krishna and Godavari River deltas in Andhra Pradesh, and Sri Lanka for late antique bronze issues. Hoard finds tend to be restricted to single denominations, whether it be silver *denarii* or gold *aurei* (and later *solidi*).

The movement of bullion to the subcontinent is a perennial phenomenon within the larger material continuum throughout the Afro-Eurasian world which has existed since prehistory.[18] Much like ancient critics, scholars of the present are at a loss to quantify these commodity flows exactly, though we can identify periods of intensification and see that trajectories went in different directions at different times.[19] So long as mountains in Spain could be subjected to ruin by hydrological mining and forced labour, the Roman economy could survive the hemorrhages of capital beyond the empire's borders;[20] the fisc was also perfectly happy to collect hefty tariffs from Indian Ocean imports despite this outflow.[21] We have come a long way from blindly trusting ancient writers like the Roman encyclopaedist Pliny the Elder, who bemoans a Roman trade deficit with the producers of luxuries in the East, thereby flattening a complex phenomenon into a financial approximation for rhetorical effect.[22] Even if he consulted 'accurate' figures – and that is far from certain – his account is given credence because it fuels fantasies of economic domination and decline, the fixations of early scholarship of 'Indo-Roman' trade.

17 Early catalogues that sought to record all Roman coin finds in India, such as Hill (1898), Sewell (1904), Wheeler et al. (1946), Wheeler (1951), and Gupta (1965), contain errors (specifically in terms of place names) and lack both previously recorded finds and updated museum holdings. Many of these mistakes were rectified in Turner (1989), which remains the standard catalogue. Slightly updated lists can be found in Champakalakshmi (1996), Suresh (2004), and Cobb (2015a). Later Roman coin catalogues include Walburg (2008) and Darley (2013). The 'Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire Project' (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum) has attempted to map the Indian hoards digitally, but some of the data are skewed or unverified (<https://chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk>). Publication of more recent single finds and hoards largely happens on an individual basis (e.g. the Budinathan hoard: Sridhar et al. [2012]); still more are known through auction catalogues and word of mouth.

18 Potts (1990), 113-25; Wilkinson (2014), 190-201. See also Fuller et al. (2015) and Muthukumaran (2023).

19 E.g. Bracey (2021).

20 Wilson (2002), 17-29.

21 Morley (2007), 42; Wilson (2015), 17, 23; Simmons (2022b), 381-3, 388; Simmons (2023), 10, 19-20.

22 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 6.26.101, 12.41.84. For criticism of Pliny's deficit figures, see Raschke (1978), 634-5; Veyne (1979); Cobb (2015b), 199; Evers (2017), 68-9; De Romanis (2020), 266.

Pliny's words do not tell us much about how coins went from Roman mints to Indian hoards – and, to some extent, the details of this itinerary are still subject to speculation.[23] A prevailing theory among scholars is that Roman coinage first reached the subcontinent through barter at entrepots like Bharkaccha/Barygaza (modern Bharuch, Gujarat) and Muciri/Muziris (possibly Pattanam, Kerala), as described in ancient sources such as the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*.[24] Barter provided a path of least resistance, sidestepping the difficult task of reconciling competing currencies and allowing coins to become commodities of trade in regions whose political-economy did not (have to) treat them as 'money.' Commodity markets also better accommodated the less predictable patterns of production and eventual export of these items. The batched production of ancient coinage was often linked to select economic purposes, such as state payments (e.g. Roman coins for military pay); coins could then go well beyond that intended function.[25] This complicates our understanding of circulation beyond regional contexts and helps to explain ebbs and flows in Roman issues discovered in India.[26]

Some coins were delayed in their arrival from the Mediterranean world. For example, higher purity silver coins of the early Julio-Claudian emperors were driven out of circulation decades after their minting by Gresham's law – that 'bad' money, in this case increasingly debased silver, drives out the 'better' alternatives preceding it. Silver issues, showing signs of wear, arrive in India in large numbers starting in the second half of the first century AD to participate in a competitive bullion market there, as suggested by chance literary and epigraphic testimony. By contrast, gold coinage, far more valuable than silver issues, remain metallurgically stable over the course of the Principate. As a result, gold coins proved convenient for export, but also possessed limited liquidity compared to smaller units of money. Thus, they arrived on the subcontinent soon after being issued and almost immediately went into hoards; indeed, some examples are pristine, if not in mint condition, with obverse portraits in particularly high relief.

The seeming popularity of certain coin types in India can be linked to large batches of issues known for their metallurgical purity: one example is a type minted by Augustus around the turn of the epoch (RIC I^2 207), which celebrates his then heirs Lucius and Gaius Caesar as *principes iuventutis* (see Figure 1). As Himanshu Prabha Ray and Federico De Romanis have noted, those engaged in the science of *rūpasutta*

Figure 1. Silver denarius *of Augustus (RIC I^2 Augustus 207), Lyon, 2 BC-AD 4. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 0000.999.16780. (Photo: public domain image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)*

23 E.g. Dario Nappo's theory, presented in Nappo (2017), which involves 'sacks' (of coins?) mentioned in documentary evidence in Egypt, is suspiciously satisfying, but fails to account fully for the closed currency system in Egypt and the extensive credit networks associated with Indian Ocean commerce: see Van Minnen (2008), 237-8 and De Romanis (2020), 188-206.

24 *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* §39, 49, 56. See Sidebotham (1986), 46; MacDowall (1991), 145-53, MacDowall (1996), 81-92; Young (2001), 205; MacDowall (2002), 39-44; Sidebotham (2011), 245; Cobb (2015a), 380.

25 Howgego (1990); Duncan-Jones (1994), 65-94; Bresson (2005).

26 Thapar (2002), 263.

throughout south Asia would have been in a strong position to evaluate and absorb incoming coinage.[27] Recognizing the images on especially valuable coins, such as those on these Augustan issues, probably numbered among the discretionary tactics of these assayers, one that was less invasive than the test-cut or touchstone. As Brigette Borell argues, this also bestowed potent semantic value upon the wandering faces of Roman emperors, one tied closely with the bullion bearing their visage.[28]

Economic motivations certainly governed a coin's eventual or immediate conferral on India – after all, money in the ancient world usually went where it was needed. However, attempts to find universal economic explanations for the distribution of Roman coins in India after this initial moment of exchange are insufficient. These metallic objects do tend to survive in the 'eddies of circulation' listed above, but it is difficult to know exactly where they had been prior to their deposition or accidental loss. Coins have also faced literal liquidation in both antiquity and modernity and are largely beholden to chance discovery rather than systematic excavation.[29] Needless to say, many acquired via the market have no provenance, at least when it comes to their longest period of deposition. Still others remain hoarded in inaccessible repositories – ranging from private collections and museum storage rooms to temple treasuries in India (e.g. the Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Kerala).[30] Several hoards in India also contain high-quality imitations produced there, which in turn call into question traditional interpretations. Suffice it to say, the data set is ambiguous, as it is for many elements of the ancient world that scholars so desperately wish to study.

Ancient India possessed sophisticated, endogenous means of exchange in varying geographic distribution, in the form of punchmark coinage, coins based on Aegean traditions, and credit instruments. It also was home to different economic regimes beyond the market, such as religious donations and gift-exchange. Thus, human actors could use Roman coins in a variety of ways that did not reflect purely economic decisions. Auspicious gifts (*dāna*) made in gold, whether *suvarṇa* or *hiraṇya*, receive praise in later shastric texts, and depictions of elites as 'givers of innumerable pieces of gold' speak to their importance in antiquity as well, particularly in the realm of acquiring merit (*puṇya*).[31] For instance, members of the Ikṣvāku royal family record their dedication of several *dīnari* or *dīnārimāṣakas*, or Roman gold coins, to the Buddhist complex at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.[32] Similar practices can also be found in the Tamil Sangam corpus of southern India, which describes gold coins, variously called *kāṇam*, *kāśu,* or *paḷankāśu,* as gifts among kin groups, as well as for priests and poets.[33]

A Buddhist endowment, a gift of gold, or a dowry involving Roman coins transcends a financial investment. They all serve as instantiations of prosperity, merit, and good fortune so central to many ancient Indian ideologies. [34] These acts, through which the social and cosmic order is reaffirmed, are what Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch would describe as a 'long-term function' of coinage.[35] Borrowing concepts from Arjun Appadurai and Ian Hodder, we might understand Roman coins as possessing long and complex social lives worthy of biography, as forming constant entanglements with human beings.[36]

27 Ray (1986), 152-8; De Romanis (1997), 182-8.
28 Borell (2014), 30.
29 Krishnamurthy (1993), 27; Rajgor (2002), 70-71.
30 I am thankful to Sethuraman Suresh for letting me know about the Padmanabhaswamy material.
31 For shastric praise of gold-giving, see *Manusmṛti* 4.230, Epigraphic attestations of gold-givers (*suvarṇadāna-karan, ahusuvarṇaka-yājin, anekahiraṁṇakoṭipa-dāyin*) include: EI 8.8.12; EIAD 4-6, 9, 12-19, 25?, 27?, 28, 30, 34, 40, 44-46, 48, 51, 53, 55-6, 58, 83. See also *āyaka*-pillar relief of Ikṣvāku king Vāsiṣṭhīputra Cāṃtamūla dedicating a mound of gold coins (NM Accession no. 73; associated with inscription in EI 34.4.1 = EIAD 30); and sculptural representations of the *yakṣas* Padmanidhi and Sankhanidi with overflowing sacks of coins (NM Accession no. 11–12).
32 EIAD 10, 56; see De Romanis (2006), 72-6 and Simmons (2022a), 221.
33 Champakalakshmi (1996), 94-117; Gurukkal (2010), 144-9; Gurukkal (2016), 267-73.
34 Brancaccio (2005a), 401-2.
35 Parry and Bloch (1989), 21.
36 Appadurai (1986) and Hodder (2012). For recent examples of this trend in scholarship, see Darley (2015); Smagur (2018); Bhandare (2021); Smagur (2022c).

Ultimately, the 'moneyness' of coinage was a fluid condition throughout an ancient world defined by uneven monetization; other elements of 'value' defined how individuals used coinage, especially once it left regions where systems of trust ensured its use as 'money.'

Physical adaptations to coins mark their journey through space and time. Relevant actions include scratching, punching, piercing, refilling, and slashing flans, in addition to soldering additional metal to these coins. Many of these adaptations, such as slashes, reflect a multiplicity of motivations. Traditional explanations for this practice include testing Roman coins for purity, removing the coins from circulation, and even iconoclasm.[37] However, no singular explanation fully accounts for the social complexities and personal motivations behind the act. Slashes vary in different geographical contexts, from single lines down the portrait (such as the issues from the Pudukkotai hoard), to Xs across the bust, to extensive slashing or chiselling that essentially obliterates the image at the expense of the coins' precious metal content (notably in practice among various Andhra hoards) – presumably, a single slash would be enough if this were only about testing metallic purity or demonetization. The raised faces especially prominent on gold coins, attracting the human gaze and encouraging tactile engagement, also seem to have elicited a complex set of intimate engagements characteristic of miniature objects, such as the symbolic negation of their power with a knife or chisel.

Figure 2. Pierced aurei*: (a) gold* aureus *of Septimius Severus (RIC IV Septimius Severus 224b), Rome, AD 208, doubly pierced. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 1973.17.9; (b) gold* aureus *of Faustina (RIC III Antoninus Pius 349a), Rome, AD 140-41, doubly pierced with an additional aborted piercing. Private collection. (Photos: public domain image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society and courtesy of the collector.)*

Traces of physical engagement with images on these coins should prompt us to think of their aesthetic value as well. Indian jewellers pierced coins with single holes in order to attach them to necklaces with clamps, while coins with two holes (as shown in Figure 2a-b) could be threaded along cords or sewn to garments.[38] Other coins have metal loops soldered to the edge of the flan.[39] These altered coins would have served as singular pendants or contributed to more elaborate pieces of jewelry with multiple coins, roughly corresponding to the *niṣka* necklaces of Sanskrit sources or the *kāśumālai,* a 'gold garland' that is still produced to this day.[40]

Many, but not all, of these jewellery adaptations to Roman coins were carried out so that the imperial portrait would be correctly oriented when the piece was worn.[41] Coins and their potent portraits possessed aesthetic value worthy of

37 E.g. Hill (1898), 304-20; Wheeler (1954), 169; Turner (1989), 33-66, 43-64; Champakalakshmi (1996), 110.

38 Stone (1994), 30; Stone (2007), 68-73. I am indebted to Elizabeth Stone for her suggestion of how coins with one hole were linked to necklaces. I have only seen one example with holes made across from one another on opposite sides of the flan: a *denarius* of Faustina (RIC III Antoninus Pius 360) now housed at the British Museum (BMIOC 1262, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_IOC-1262 >, last accessed 19 November 2024).

39 Suresh (2004), 77-8.

40 Bhandarkar (1921), 64-9; Subrahmanian (1980), 226; Suresh (2004), 79; Stone (2007), 71; Smagur (2023).

41 One example, now in private collection (CNG Auction 537, Lot 460; Figure 2b) demonstrates this preference through a mistake. An initial piercing near the neck of the imperial portrait on the obverse was aborted (this would have allowed the

Figure 3. Gold necklace including pendants housing Roman aurei *of Severus Alexander (RIC IV 52 and 140), Egypt (?), AD 222-8. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.190.1655. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art CC0 licence).*

display, even when seemingly defaced. They not only afforded bodily adornment, conspicuous consumption, and sensory engagements (see below), but also appealed to the broader forces of prosperity in the world – the amuletic functions so common in antiquity and in the *longue durée* history of coin-shaped pendants. Examples from the subcontinent, while unique in some respects, can also be seen as part of a globalizing moment, in which several jewellery traditions throughout Eurasia accommodated Roman coins as pendants, especially in late antiquity (e.g. Figure 3).

reverse to be displayed in correct orientation). Two successful piercings were made on either side of the head.

A view from the mint

Many of these alterations demonstrate the semantic value of Roman coins and their images throughout the subcontinent. They encouraged in varying combinations viewing, display, defacement, and, for lack of a better word, 'replication.' Coin motifs also jumped between flans, including coins minted as currency by potentates throughout the subcontinent and Indian reproductions of Roman coins. Both phenomena are predicated on the fact that Roman coins contained elements of aesthetic value or formal convenience that artists, working in differing techniques, could adapt to create unique visual languages across the Indian subcontinent.

As mentioned earlier, ancient India possesses a rich numismatic landscape, including issues that follow a tradition set by Hellenistic coins produced by Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kings. These issues are often heralded as the ultimate source of rounded portrait coinage throughout the subcontinent, transmitted through various intermediaries such as the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians. That Roman imperial examples should factor among these seems only reasonable: after all, in formal terms they stem from the same common ancestor as these Hellenistic-style coins; and their presence in India is concurrent with other stylistic engagements with a broader 'Hellenistic' milieu (e.g. terracottas).[42]

These Roman coins might be understood as 'objects in motion' – what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would call 'nomadic'. These entities, whose value arose from varied estimation of and engagement with their material composition and the images they carried, constantly 'de-' and 're-territorialized,' configuring with the changing multiplicity of (im)material entities around them to form new groupings (*agencement*).[43] For example, coins minted in the north of the subcontinent – where there has been a comparative paucity of Roman coin finds, but their presence is nonetheless felt – reveal the complexity of multilateral agency within broader 'assemblages' of things.[44]

One might look first to the Kushan Empire, spanning Central Asia and the north of the subcontinent, starting in the first century AD. An issue of the first Kushan king, Kujūla Kadphises, often appears in discussions of long-distance exchange: namely, a bronze denomination minted at Taxila, whose portrait clearly resembles that found on a silver issue of Octavian/Augustus minted in Rome between 29 and 27 BC; the obverse possesses a bust of the autocrat, while a Roman curule chair appears on the reverse (see Figures 4 and 5). The arrival of this coin almost a century after its production corresponds to economic explanations – i.e., silver coin debasement in the Mediterranean. However, closer examination gives us insight into the experimental nature of the minting programme during the decades of Kujūla's reign. There are several bronze denominations on which the portrait of the monarch appears to be in nomadic costume;[45] still others follow the conventions of Hellenistic coin portraits, like that of the Indo-Greek king Hermaios.[46] In addition, larger silver issues boasting the title 'Heraus' depict iconography in use north of the Oxus.[47] Minters were not merely replicating the same message by use of similar visual languages, but forming new formal vocabularies within distinct domains of expression. In many ways, this marks the success of Kujūla's amalgamative empire, an approach which is continued under his immediate successors.

42 Deshpande (1965); Brancaccio (2005b); Autiero (2017).
43 Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 351-423.
44 For criticism of *agencement* as 'assemblage,' see Hamilakis and Jones (2017), 80-81. Hamilakis (2014) and Barrett (2017) offer treatments of complex 'assemblages' (as opposed to Deleuzian *agencement*). For the agency of things, see Latour (2005).
45 E.g. Senior (2001-6), no. B4.1Di, B4.1Dii, B4.2D.
46 Dobbins (1971), 288-90; Widemann (2000), 245.
47 Cribb (1993), 108, 133.

Figure 4. Bronze denomination of Kujūla Kadphises, Taxila, second half of the first century AD, often called the 'Augustus' type. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 1973.56.220. (Photo: public domain image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)

Figure 5. Silver denarius *of Octavian (RIC I^2 Augustus 270), Spain(?), 29-27 BC. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 1954.203.150. (Photo: public domain image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)*

Another major adaptation comes with the ascension of Wima Kadphises, grandson of Kujūla, in AD 115 – namely, the development of gold coinage. Of particular interest is the denomination weighing just shy of 8 grams, which has been linked to the Roman *aureus* in traditional scholarship.[48] At some point in Kushan history, this denomination began to be called the *dīnāra* (probably from the Latin *denarius aureus* or Greek *denarion* [*chrysoun*]). However, as very clearly proved by Joe Cribb and Robert Bracey among others, the Kushans minted these gold coins following local minting practices: *dīnāras* followed a different weight standard (with additional larger and smaller denominations) and possessed a metallic composition distinct from that of Roman equivalents;[49] they also carry a newly standardized Kushan royal iconography which is consistent across media. Affinities between the two coinages have been increasingly dismissed as 'superficial' by numismatists focused on metrology.[50] Disciplinary priorities have minimized these parallels at the expense of understanding the wider phenomena they represent.

Figure 6. Obverse of gold drachm ('dīnāra') of Kanishka I, Balkh, AD 127-151. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 1944.100.30714. (Photo: public domain image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)

Figure 7. Reverse of silver denarius *of Vespasian (RIC II^2 Vespasian 874), Rome, AD 76. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 1956.127.44. (Photo: public domain image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)*

48 E.g. Warmington (1928), 298; Wheeler (1954), 169; Göbl (1960), 78-9; Rosenfield (1967), 19-23; Srivastava (1968), 179-93; Thorley (1979), 182.

49 MacDowall (1960), 67-8; MacDowall (2006), 49-53; Blet-Lamarqand (2006); Bracey (2009), 46-7; Jongeward and Cribb (2015), 7. The closest match would have been with Augustus's early *aurei* (~7.86 g), but even then, the Kushan issue is heavier. In contrast to the weight standard revealed by coin finds, the hypothetical *aureus* standard as derived from 1/40 of a Roman pound (322.8 g) is 8.07 g, much heavier than the Kushan *dīnāra* standard (Duncan-Jones [1994], 216; Bracey [2009], 47).

50 Bracey (2009), 46; Falk (2015), 107, 113.

Roman iconographic details may well have served as working models, for instance, on the so-called 'pantheistic' coinage of Kaniṣka I and Huviṣka, or in the presentation of the libating Kushan king (e.g. Figures 6 and 7) – in fact, in his systematic studies of these issues, the numismatist Robert Göbl understood a Kushan dependence upon Roman exempla in what amounts to a dismissal of their creative potential.[51] However, we find more subtle dialogue with Roman coin design, and perhaps a much wider world, in the cosmetic arrangements of script. Similarities between issues of Kaniṣka I and his successors, and contemporary Hadrianic and Antonine *aurei* are especially striking; they often depict a right-facing bust of the sovereign surrounded from shoulder to shoulder by a legend, whether in Bactrian or Latin. The position of letterforms, together with the deployment of a language built from constituent parts – Greek script, Bactrian language, Roman orientation – are part of a layered messaging strategy on the part of the Kushan kings. Together with explicit royal pronouncements like that of Kaniṣka in the Rabatak inscription, these coins promote a new (or perhaps renewed) Aryan age in the region, while also forging links to the nomadic, Hellenistic, and even the Achaemenid kings before them.[52] In essence, these coins reflect the creation of a coherent 'semantic system': a bundle of signs that implicitly and explicitly engaged with various counterparts past and present, but also remained wholly distinct from them.[53] Flexible webs of meaning accommodated the shifting assemblages of things and could be shaped by them in return.

Similar processes are to be found south of Kushan dominion, on the silver coins of the Western Kṣatrapas (or 'Satraps'), who ruled the regions of Saurasthra, Malwa, and portions of the Deccan. The traditional assumption in scholarship, which began with British colonial enthusiasts and persisted until quite recently, is that Hellenistic coins of Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kings served as working models for the Western Satraps (e.g. Figure 8a), who had these designs mindlessly copied by increasingly unskilled die cutters, resulting in 'corrupt' legends around the image of the sovereign. Once more, this teleology of decline overlooks some fascinating interactions with Roman script on these coins.[54]

Starting with coinage of the king Nahapāna, reigning in the second half of the first century, the Latin letter H is added to a modified Greek script in order to transliterate a Prakrit phrase marking the coins as those of the Kṣaharata king Nahapāna.[55] From the mid-second century and into the third century, letters on the obverse use serifs akin to the Roman script found on contemporary Antonine and Severan imperial issues (and also to the Brahmi script on the reverse).[56] New letters, such as V and S, were also added, while all Greek-specific characters, like upsilon and omega, gradually fall out of use.[57] The letters are regular in shape, spacing, and style – even if retrograde from a normative use of these letters in Latin; much like Kushan *dīnāra*, these letters are placed shoulder-to-shoulder (or rather back-to-front) around an image of the sovereign in profile. The patterns of letters are also standardized into one series of letters under the third-century king Vijayasena, a pattern deliberately reproduced by die-cutters for

51 Göbl (1960), 80-91; Göbl (1984), 26-8; Göbl (1993); Göbl (1999). For further debates on origins of iconography, cf. Malandra (1981); Sims-William and Cribb (1995/1996), 104-5; Singh (2006); Bracey (2009); Bracey (2012).
52 Sims-William and Cribb (1995/1996), 110-1.
53 Hölscher (1987).
54 Simmons (2019), 227-33; Simmons (2022a), 221-3.
55 Simmons (2019), 240-41. For the argument against 'H' as representative of only the Greek *eta*, see Simmons (2019), 241-2, especially n. 33. For 'Greek' elements of early Kṣatrapa coinage, see Fishman (2013), no. 7.2a and Fishman (2016).
56 E.g. Antonius Pius: RIC III 177 (found in Rajkot district, Gujarat); RIC III 200 (Junagadh district, Gujarat); RIC III 331 (Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh); RIC III 292A, 350, 356, 394, 452d-e (Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh); RIC III 394-5 (Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh). Marcus Aurelius/Lucius Verus: RIC III 492 (found in Sholapur district, Maharashtra); RIC III 41 (Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh). Commodus: RIC III 214 (found in Bilaspur district, Madhya Pradesh); RIC III 252 (Mysore district, Karnataka). Septimius Severus: RIC IV 73, 174, 285, 1466 (found in Sholapur district, Maharashtra); RIC IV 66 (one in Sehore district, Madhya Pradesh; one in Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh); RIC IV 305 (Raverpeta district, Maharashtra). Caracalla: RIC IV 229a (Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh).
57 Simmons (2019), 249.

Figure 8. A study in obverse portraits: (a) silver drachm of Indo-Greek king Apollodotus II, Bactria, first half of the first century BC; (b) gold didrachm of Kushan king Wima Kadphises, Bactria, 112-27 AD; (c) silver issue of Vasiṣṭhiputra Pulumāvi, Western Deccan(?), 85-125 AD; (d) gold aureus of Roman emperor Lucius Verus (RIC III Marcus Aurelius 494), Rome, 162-3 AD; (e) silver issue of Western Kṣatrapa Rudrasena I, Gujarat, 212 AD. New York, American Numismatic Society, inv. 1944.100.49558, 1944.100.74839, 1949.66.2, 1978.51.5, 1981.120.2. (Photos: public domain images courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)

decades.[58] This so-called 'gibberish' legend also includes the Śaka Era date in Brahmi numerals beginning with the reign of Rudrasiṃha I in the centennial of Satrapal rule (AD 178). Indeed, the legend was meant to be 'read' alongside the image of the king, with the Brahmi numerals corresponding to a left-to-right orientation of what might be called 'Graeco-Roman' letterforms (see Figures 8b and 8e).

Aesthetic qualities of Roman coinage proved useful for royal minting programmes in south Asia. Elements of Roman coin design, such as portraiture in profile, Roman script, and their orientation on the flan (e.g., Figure 8d), are adapted in different degrees to represent dynastic strength in their regional contexts, replacing Roman faces with regional hegemons. They served important communicative roles beyond their original intent and were often rendered through local techniques. They become a sort of blueprint employed (even if in sparing fashion) by further minting programmes in the subcontinent: for instance, the limited number of silver portrait coins of the Sātavāhana rulers of the Deccan, who apply their own style of portraiture and linguistic preferences to these obverse conventions (Figure 8c).

Far from simplifying matters, 'superficiality' adds further complexity to the deployment of seemingly 'foreign' elements on coins produced in the subcontinent. It represents something at the heart of global connectivity: compressions of space and time.[59] Contemporary adoption of Roman coin aesthetics involved drawing from a still older repository of imperial messaging in development for centuries – what Sheldon Pollock has deemed as the 'historical imitation' so common among empires.[60] The shift toward portrait coinage over the course of the Hellenistic period and into the early centuries AD, particularly on high value, prestige issues, also marks a wider synoecism felt from Iberia to India. In evaluating the material culture of an Afro-Eurasian world in the making since the early first millennium BC – what we might cautiously call the *oikoumene* – scholars such as Miguel John Versluys, Marian Feldman and Milinda Hoo have spoken in terms of a wider *koine* or a 'community of style,' in which superficial affinities, often carried by the smallest of things, link distinct iterations of artistic expression across space.[61] Terms like 'imitation' or 'influence' collapse these dynamics.

58 This legend appears on coins regardless of the number of numerals in the Śaka Era date, e.g. coins of Viśvasiṃha dated 200, which consist solely of one numeral (=).
59 Autiero (2022), 22-31.
60 Pollock (2006), 178-84.
61 Versluys (2014b), 152-8; Feldman (2014) 26-38; Canepa (2017), 269-72; Versluys (2017), 20-4, 201-7; Langin-Hooper (2019), 203-46; Morris (2020), 586-9; Morris (2021), 406-39; Hoo (2022), 237-43.

'Roman' 'coins' produced in India

Denarii and *aurei* produced in India readily appear alongside genuine Roman issues in hoards.[62] They sustained the same forms of manipulation mentioned above: slashing;[63] soldering;[64] punching;[65] piercing;[66] (re-)filling and plugging.[67] As a result, these objects could fulfill the same roles as their genuine counterparts: for instance, a well-known Roman coin necklace discovered at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, which includes a pierced, imitative *aureus* depicting Faustina as the central pendant and a variety of accompanying gold beads.[68] Refilling holes with precious metal (often stamped with auspicious symbols) or even paste made these objects 'whole' again; but, as Emilia Smagur has recently argued, such modifications could also alter their respective weights, allowing pendants to return to legitimate circulation as money.[69] In light of these factors, scholars such as Turner and Suresh have shied away from terms like 'imitation' owing to implications of inferior quality or fraudulent activity, though alternatives they have suggested, such as 'copy,' also do not quite capture the forces at work.[70]

Based on the quality of their portraits, fineness, and weights, many of these replications have been so good as to fool several modern scholars, who have been more interested in obverses for the purpose of dating. In fact, the hybrids of the Soriyapattu hoard found in Tamil Nadu have been classified by 'emperor' on the obverse without establishing whether their reverses are from the coins of other *principes*; of course, this has been because scholars have long dated the coins by their emperors.[71] After examination of these coins at the Government Museum Chennai, I can report that this is the case for many specimens, often high-quality imitations drawn from genuine coins minted decades apart. Other hybrid types are to be found in private collections, going beyond the traditional stylistic conventions of Roman originals with elements like portraits on both sides of the coin (e.g. Figure 9).[72] The modern fixation on when coins of certain emperors reached India reveals that, much as in antiquity, the faces on these objects attract more attention.

These coins, regardless of whether they were created through casting or the free-hand production of imitative dies, reveal distinct aesthetic priorities.[73] For instance, while some imperial portraits on

62 Smagur (2022a).
63 E.g. a *denarius* imitation of the Akkenapalle hoard of the Lucius and Gaius type (Gupta 1965: no. 720); an imitation portrait of Nero in the Soriyapattu hoard is slashed (GMC 1415.160), while other imitations produced by same 'dies' are not (GMC 1415.51, 1415.64, 1415.69), revealing that slashing was a practice done at the level of the individual specimen; imitations in the Nagavarappupadu (e.g., TSAM 10.346 [cf. Berghaus (1993), no. 3]) and Darmavaripalem hoards (TSAM 10.954 [cf. Berghaus (1993), no. 5, though erroneously labeled as Nagavarappupadu]). A couple of coins from the former Adams Collection possess slashes (CNG Auction 366, Lot 25 and 42).
64 E.g. in the Soriyapattu hoard, at least three imitation *aurei* based on issues of Antoninus Pius – all possessing the same obverse and reverse designs – were adapted with golden loops through the same granulation and filigree techniques (GMC 1415.56, 60, 139; these share a reverse with another coin in the hoard GMC 1415.30). Others possess flattened edges, signs of formerly being looped (GMC 1415.74, 1415.76, 1415.123, 1415.139, and 1415.148). Several examples from the Adams collection possess double piercing or else demonstrate signs of being mounted in a bezel: CNG Auction 366, Lot 28, 30-4, 37, 39-44, 46-7, 49-50, 51-4, 56. See also CNG Auction 366, Lot 848-9, 878.
65 E.g. GMC 1415.10, 1415.57 and 1415.110. See also CNG 366, Lot 25.
66 E.g. several cast imitations based on Severan issues (now housed in the Government Museum Chennai). Cf. a cast imitation of Faustina with a double-piercing from the Penuganchiprolu hoard (TSAM 15.126).
67 E.g. BM 1988.0808.12, < https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1988-0808-12 >, last accessed 19 November 2024; CNG Auction 366, Lot 28, 43, 51-2, 849, 878. See Berghaus (1991), 110; Darley (2015), 79.
68 Nagarjunakonda Archaeological Museum, Reserve Collection 2 <https://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/nkm_hyd-gscmo-reg-0001-7056>, last accessed 19 November 2024. Ghosh (1957), 38, Pl. LX Fig. B; Krishna Murthy (1977), 81; Stone (1994), 40.
69 Smagur (2021).
70 Turner (1989), 40; Suresh (2004), 65.
71 This is much the case with Suresh's 2004 catalogue, which lists coins by 'emperor' without taking into consideration hybrids.
72 'Hybrids' from multiple known types, including a coin with obverse and reverse portraits, were in the former Adams Collection (CNG Auction 366, Lot 24-5, 28, 37, 46-8); see also CNG Auction 366, Lot 849.
73 Metcalf (1979), 126-7.

Figure 9. Imitative gold aureus*, with a Roman-style portrait and pseudo-legend on both the obverse and reverse, pierced, produced in India, third century AD. Private Collection. (Photo: courtesy of the collector.)*

imitations reflect very close emulation of Roman originals, others are stylized differently;[74] the Roman script legends on these coins also vary from exact transcriptions to a random assortment of pseudo-Roman letters, often misshapen or retrograde, much as we find on Western Satrapal coins. The final products reflect the efforts of their makers: as suggested by the various kinds of manipulation seen across examples, it is the faces on these objects that carried potent meaning, while the general shape of the letters around them mattered more than their exact transcription. Faulty legends or deviations from Roman portraiture were not necessarily a matter of ability, but often conscious choices of die-cutters designing these imitations.[75] In other words, the skills and tools were available to make exact copies; that many chose not to is far more interesting than a model of decline.

The producers of imitative Roman coin jewellery in India often worked in precious gold, whose material properties added to the value and experience of these objects. Rare literary attestations to *niṣkas* in Classical Sanskrit literature emphasize the sensuous and aesthetic qualities of their metal fabrics: for instance, a well-known description of Sītā from the *Sundarakāṇḍa* of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, alluding to a time when she would wear a fine *niṣka* prior to her imprisonment on Lanka;[76] or in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhavam*, which at one point compares the *cakra* of Hari, whose splendour flickered as it clashed against the *asura* Tāraka, to a *niṣka* fastened on his neck.[77] However, we also possess numerous lead, precious metal, or clay '*bullae*' imitating Roman coins.[78] These objects, created by clay impressions of Roman coins, freehand manipulation of clay, casting, or repoussé, involved less production or transferable skillsets beyond those of die-carving. They often have only a single decorated side much like bracteates – a lone portrait or one surrounded by pseudo-script. *Bullae* signify not only the expansion

74 Variations based on the same prototype are to be found in the same hoard, e.g., GMC 1415.13 and 1415.66, both of which have Faustina on obverse and a variant of a known Antoninus Pius reverse (RIC III Antoninus Pius 200a–c): one is far closer to Roman prototypes, with a coiled hairdo and correct Roman script legends; the other, with imitative Roman script in more randomized patterns, boasts a portrait with far more pronounced physical features.

75 We can compare these to other Kushan imitations, such as those found from Samatata, on which imitation Greek or Bactrian script is present – a continuous sequence of letters was more important than specific letters or patterns thereof. See Majumdar (2012/2013), 28-30, figs. 16-7.

76 *uṣṇāditām sānusṛtāsrakaṇṭhīm | purā varārhottamaniṣkakaṇṭhīm | sujātapakṣmābhiraktakaṇṭhīm | vane ~pranṛttāmiva nīlakaṇṭhīm* (Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* 5.5.25).

77 *jayāśā yatra cāsmākaṃ pratighātotthitārciṣā | haricakreṇa tenāsya kaṇṭhe niṣkamivārpitam ||* (Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhavam* 2.49). The commentator Mallinātha defines *niṣka* as *urobhūṣaṇam* ('neck-ornament') and mentions *niṣka* necklaces of *dīnāra* in his commentary on the line. By the medieval period, *dīnāra* often refers to an Indian gold denomination and does not exclusively mean Roman *aurei* or *solidi*.

78 Borell (2014), 10-24; Smagur (2018), 63-78.

of these designs beyond die-cutters, casters, and those engaged in the metallic arts, but the further dissemination of these images to individuals who did not handle high-value coinage.[79]

Artistic agency abounds in the adaptations of miniature images found on imitation Roman coins. These minute changes, long overlooked in scholarship, range from simple tweaks – small drill holes or modifications – to more substantial reworking of coin motifs. The Soriyapattu hoard contains several examples. Four coins in the hoard, created from the same obverse and reverse dies, demonstrate a simple, but significant transformation of images of Hadrian.[80] These coins are close imitations of a known type (RIC II Hadrian 91), with a laureate portrait of Hadrian on the obverse and genius on the reverse. While most of the regalia on the obverse portrait are present as expected from the original, the designer of this die added four drill holes around the neck, with an additional one suspended beyond it. We need not look far for an explanation – they represent a coin necklace, the *niṣka* or *kāśumālai* styles, jewellery which made use of genuine Roman coins and their imitations.

The selective nature of transformations such as this become clear when looking across coins based on those of the same emperor: for example, Septimius Severus. Some, such as an imitation *aureus* in the American Numismatic Society's collection, have meticulously copied portraits and legends.[81] Others present more stylized imperial portraits and pseudo-Roman legends, as is the case with two examples now in private collection (see Figure 10). In particular, the curls so distinctive of representations of Septimius Severus across media in the Roman world appear globular (through drill holes in the die) or even as carved circles enclosing negative space on the flan. These globules, also placed tangentially along the crest of the profile and mingling with the wreaths often worn by the emperor, result in images that resemble the portraits of Sātavāhana kings on silver drachms mentioned above. In these examples, the image of the emperor now is stylized for Indian context, or at least reflects the use of similar die carving techniques displayed on Indic issues. Furthermore, these images feature on objects that may well have contributed to actual elements of habitus enjoyed by Indian consumers. This doubling is especially noteworthy in the case of Hadrian wearing a necklace, appearing on coins that could have formed an actual *niṣka*. These amount to minimal intrusions on the 'original' image, but ones that utterly transform the objects and the experience of them.

More explicit artistic moves are discernable. An example of this can be found again in the Soriyapattu hoard, which is clearly based on a known type depicting Domitian in his sixth consulship as *princeps iuventutis* (RIC II Vespasian 1080);[82] clasped hands holding an *aquila* standard (alternating wreaths and

Figure 10. Imitative gold aurei *of Septimius Severus, with globular and circular locks: (a) doubly pierced (b) slashed, both produced in India, third century AD. Private Collection. (Photo: courtesy of the collector.)*

79 Wheeler (1951), 351; Gupta (1965), 77; Narasimha Murthy (1984) 45-6; Sharma (1987), 68; Narasimha Murthy and Devaraj (1995), 59-62; Suresh (2004), 79-81; Brancaccio (2005a), 401-2.

80 GMC 1415.73, 121, 159, 173.

81 ANS 1978.14.1 (<https://numismatics.org/collection/1978.14.1> last accessed 19 November 2024).

82 See also RIC II Nerva 3, 15, 27, and 49 (*concordia exercituum*).

shields topped by an eagle) set into a ship's prow appear on the reverse of the Roman original. The reverse design of the imitation contains a fundamental transformation: instead of an *aquila* standard, clasped hands grasp a pillar topped by a schematic *triratna*, a symbol representing the three jewels of Buddhist faith; an articulated base to the pillar replaces the ship's prow, whose crest becomes a flourish above it. It is an easy transformation: the eagle atop the topmost wreath of the standard becomes a schematized trident above a circle, the core of the *triratna* symbol; fillets on the Roman original are made more pronounced on the Indian imitation; and the top of the shield below the topmost wreath become a horizontal base beneath the *triratna*, perhaps the *vajra* lightning-bolt that often accompanies the Buddhist symbol. Here, the artist decided to transform the *aquila* standard, with no endemic meaning, into something auspicious. It approaches what Finbarr Flood has identified in medieval Hindu-Muslim material encounters – a moment of 'translation' or 'transculturation.'[83]

The devil lies in the smallest of details. On one coin now housed in the British Museum, a bovine from the Roman original is transformed in ways that might make more sense to audiences in the subcontinent, with a shoulder hump.[84] In another example, a hybrid type now in a private collection possesses a reverse image drawn from known types depicting a captive beneath a military trophy;[85] the prisoner's limbs, far from being bound, are presented in such a way to indicate movement, with his hands holding what appear to be fluttering fillets. Another imitation *aureus* in private collection features a reverse female figure, who, although now obscured owing to a plug soldered in antiquity, has formal elements reminiscent of those used in depicting the goddess Lakṣmī in various seated positions on Gupta coinage (see Figure 11): the figure sits in three-quarter profile; her right leg dangles from the surface upon which she sits, with her foot breaking the register of pseudo-Roman characters and almost becoming one itself; her left thigh up to the knee is visible, suggestive of sitting cross-legged; and her left hand, holding an inscrutable object, is bent at the elbow and wrist much like the deity's when holding a diadem.[86] Even for items that might otherwise be considered emulative of originals, labels such as 'copy' or 'imitation' fail to describe the complex processes on display in these miniature works of art.

Figure 11. Imitative gold aureus*, depicting Constantine(?) on the obverse and a seated female figure on the reverse, doubly pierced and plugged, fourth century AD. Private Collection. (Photo: courtesy of the collector).*

83 Flood (2009), 1-9.
84 E.g. BM 2002.0102.5247, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_2002-0102-5247>, last accessed 19 November 2024 (see Abdy et al. (2018), 27-8). A still further example was recently auctioned (CNG Auction 366, Lot 848).
85 The reverse appears Flavian in inspiration: RIC II Titus 29-30. The obverse is drawn from an issue of Antoninus Pius, based on the garbled inscription. The coin in question was recently sold at auction (CNG Auction 366, Lot 28).
86 This item, now in private collection, was recently sold at auction (CNG Auction 366, Lot 878). Despite being an imitation tenuously linked to Constantine I, the weight of this specimen (7.59 g) suggests it was designed to function alongside *aurei* as opposed to the smaller *solidi* introduced during Constantine's reign.

Yet another example, whose authenticity has been questioned but is now housed in the British Museum, shows even further experimentation within the medium.[87] The coin imitates an *aureus* of the divine Faustina, with coiffed hair and a garbled, but recognizable Roman-script legend. Its reverse is wholly unique: a figure, dressed in distinctive cap and flowing garment, props a foot on the base of a domed structure and reaches an outstretched right hand toward its dome; pseudo-Roman legends fill a brief exergue beneath the structure and arc around the figure's bent left arm, which holds what appears to be an elephant goad. The faux Roman lettering appears with serifs, much like Kṣatrapa drachms and Antonine/Severan imitations produced in the subcontinent, which, together with the portrait of Faustina, would place its production sometime in the second or third century AD. The domed structure (perhaps a votive *stupa*?), the paraphernalia, and even the slight nimbus around the figure's left leg all suggest connections to images on the pantheistic coinage of the Kushans.[88]

The British Museum example (if indeed an ancient object) numbers among others, such as an imitation Severus now in a private collection, on whose reverse stands a figure in Kushan nomadic dress, with shalwar pants and moustache to boot.[89] Issues such as these seem to belong to several 'Kushano-Roman' pieces manufactured as jewellery.[90] One famous hybrid medallion, also held in the British Museum, possesses an obverse portrait of Constantine – though, much like our *niṣka*-wearing Hadrian, he is made to wear earrings in Indian fashion – while the reverse includes an image of the goddess Ardoxsho drawn from Kushan coinage minted in the preceding century.[91] Once proximity to the Roman original no longer serves as the metric for evaluation, we become free to embrace imitation Roman coins as unique *objets d'art*, developed by artists working in local styles throughout ancient south Asia.

Such objects betray multiple layers of engagement, with intaglio artists navigating between later Roman and earlier Kushan coin designs – both 'foreign imports' to many portions of the subcontinent – to create something entirely new and mutually legible. Even more striking iterations of this are so-called 'Romano-Sasanian' types, hybrid coins on which motifs with origins among mortal enemies in the west are separated by the width of a flan (e.g. Figure 12).[92] The conscious determination of equivalency among things in motion once more approaches Flood's understanding of 'translation'; here, a shared 'foreignness' allows for the easier (de)coding of seemingly distinct artistic motifs onto singular emulative objects. Catch-all conceptions of wealth-bringing 'westerners,' of which the Sanskritic term *yavana* is emblematic, reflect possible intellectual conflations involved in their formation and their allure;[93] but they are also the logical extensions of a coin-fuelled *koine*. High-value coinage, arriving from the west and bearing the 'superficial' similarities afforded by global connections, elicited intimate viewing, sematic negotiation and ingenious forms of reproduction.

---

87 BM 1988.0808.11, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1988-0808-11>, last accessed 19 November 2024. Berghaus (1993), no. 10; Smagur (2022b). I am grateful to Shailendra Bhandare for suggesting the questionable authenticity of this issue, which Berghaus and Smagur treat as a genuine imitation from antiquity.

88 For similarities, see representations of Rishti, Shatreogo, and Boddo (i.e. Buddha) on Kushan *dīnāra*.

89 Adams (1989), fig. 9. This coin, formerly part of the Adams collection, was recently sold at auction (CNG Auction 366 Lot 44; cf. Lot 53).

90 E.g. a double-pierced gold coin found at Śiśupālgarh, with the image of the standing Kushan king on the obverse and a Roman portrait on the reverse. See Altekar (1948), 77; Altekar (1949), 100-102; Altekar (1950), 1-4; Suresh (2004), 78.

91 BM OR.5200, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_OR-5200>. For more on this object, see Göbl (1976) and Göbl (1999), 163-5. Another similar imitative Constantine medallion is now housed in the Münzkabinett at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (GR 042074).

92 Two examples, formerly part of the Adams collection, were recently sold at auction (CNG 366, Lot 51-2). They possess Roman-style portraits and elements of Roman script on the obverse and Sasanian fire altar imagery on the reverse. See Smagur (2022c).

93 Ray (1988), 312; Thapar (2000), 246; Brancaccio (2005a), 402-4, n. 9; Borell (2014), 30. See also Upinder Singh's contribution in the present volume.

Figure 12. Imitative 'Romano-Sasanian' gold aureus*, depicting a Roman-style portrait on the obverse, Sasanian fire altar on the reverse, and Roman characters in pseudo-legend, doubly pierced and plugged, produced in India, third or fourth century AD. Private Collection. (Photo: courtesy of the collector.)*

'Imitation' coins remain associated with not only artistic inability and decline, but also fraudulence. As Shailendra Bhandare has discussed in the context of ancient coinage of Gandhāra, this extends both to ancient 'imitations' and modern 'fakes' created for contemporary collectors who acquire them as souvenirs or else are tricked into purchasing what they think are 'genuine' issues.[94] Determining the authenticity of an object can contribute to the historian's mission of establishing what happened in the past, but it also participates in subsequent tournaments of value that are by no means objective. Such designations have origins in an antiquarian spirit – estimations of rarity and fineness – and thus can inflate the personal, historical, and financial value of 'real' objects for collectors.[95] Even if motivated by insidious values, the production of these modern 'fakes,' much like ancient examples, allow for nuanced forms of consumption. These objects possess multifaceted value tied to aesthetics, material qualities, and a variety of other aspects of their reterritorialization (e.g., their perceived antiquity, which makes them 'antiquities'). They reflect creative energies of their makers, even artistic fantasy beyond the confines of known coin types. Ultimately, the valiant effort to verify objects can prevent us from seeing with ancient eyes – how an ancient 'fake' may well have been just as 'genuine' as an 'original.'

Conclusions

As 'objects in motion,' Roman coins were able to communicate on several levels simultaneously. Various adaptations attest to the symbolic value of Roman coins and their images, one that demanded attention and afforded defacement, display, replication, or some combination thereof. All the while, we can read the agency of individuals in ancient India, including various artisans and the consumers who encountered and manipulated coin flans. They were not passive but rather brought their own ingenuity to bear even in the act of 'imitation.' The relegation of reproduction coins to subordinate status all too often reflects scholarly prejudices, not the ancient experience of these long-lived objects and their images.

Numismatic motifs also went beyond the confines of coin flans. Scholars like Pierfrancesco Callieri and Judith Lerner have argued that carved gems recovered from ancient Gandhāra in particular have 'close and complex relationships' with the designs found on local and imported coinage.[96] Some items of

94 Bhandare (2022), 172-88. See also Bracey (2008).
95 Many 'genuine' items in collections possess dubious provenance. Indeed, the market for antiquities has incentivized practices of looting and robs historians of data that the 'authenticity' of these objects alone cannot offer.
96 Callieri (1997), 253-5; Lerner and Sims-Williams (2011).

jewellery reflect clear numismatic inspiration: for instance, the profile images of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, probably drawn from Severan coin issues, appear on a gold ring along with the Sanskrit inscription *damaputrasya dhanaguptasya* ('of Dhanagupta, son of Dama').[97] This is all perfectly reasonable: after all, both incised gems and coin dies involved the work of intaglio artists, rendering images in negative, images that could be replicated a great number of times in sealings and upon coin flans.[98] Carved gemstones also circulated throughout the wider Indian Ocean world alongside coins and took on similar forms of significance due to their material properties and aesthetic value.[99] The translation of images across media can also be seen in sacred spaces, which received Roman specie as a part of religious dedications. Elizabeth Stone among others has noted the presence of Roman coin motifs in the sculptural art of Āndhradeśa, which, alongside other vectors of transmission, warrants further investigation.[100]

The examples explored in this paper speak to a world becoming smaller. They form part of what several scholars have deemed a globalizing 'Eurasian' *koine* of the early centuries AD. Times of intense connectivity such as this encouraged the formation of standardized or else compatible forms of expression. Even if considered 'exotic,' Roman coins and their images were especially adept in this context, not because their 'Roman-ness' was particularly special, but because these imported collectables translated easily and superficially into several mutually intelligible semantic systems. Moreover, they were malleable enough that even minor emendations could bring about something entirely new.

The 'global' appears increasingly often in publications regarding the ancient world – though often not on its own terms.[101] As with all things that enjoy meteoric rises in popularity, we might proceed with caution before embracing it unconditionally. Global phenomena tend to operate at a rather elite level. Gold and silver coins were not exactly the pocket change most often used in transactions. Moreover, certain communicative forms, including written language, were exclusive media. The opportunities afforded by de-territorialization do not translate into singular or wholly predictable outcomes. For instance, pictorial images would not have always been 'legible' to their intended audiences, let alone those situated thousands of kilometres away.

Nevertheless, coins were mass-produced objects in antiquity. They circulated in a period defined by increased material outputs that catered to the demands of an interconnected Afro-Eurasia. More important, seemingly 'global' styles were replicated in both precious and more widely accessible materials, appeared in larger formats at communal spaces, and factored in moments of life that really mattered. Potentials for exposure were thus numerous; and, among the proliferation of things, extensive webs of meaning developed and shifted beneath the surface of 'superficial' iterations. Elements of Roman coin design could support complex messaging in this complicated world – they communicated not just to individuals or localities, but also expressed affinities across a wider ancient world.

97 This piece sold at auction in 2008 (Triton Auction XI, Lot 953).
98 Plantzos (1997), 38-41.
99 E.g. Borell (2017), McHugh (2017).
100 Stone (2016), 62-4; Guy (2023), 112-4. See also the contribution by Elizabeth Stone in the present volume.
101 Hoo (2020), 554-60.

Abbreviations

ANS = American Numismatic Society

BM = British Museum

CNG = Classical Numismatic Group

EI = *Epigraphia Indica*

EIAD = *Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa*

GMC = Government Museum Chennai

RIC = *Roman Imperial Coinage*

TSAM = Telangana State Archaeology Museum

Bibliography

Abdy, R. et al. (2018), 'Vespasian and a Humped Bull?', *Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* 231: 27-8.

Adams, L. (1989), 'The Indian Imitations of Roman Aurei', *Journal of the Society for Ancient Numismatics* 17/4: 68-76.

Altekar, A. (1948), 'A New Type of Kushanāno-Roman Coin', *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 10/1: 77

Altekar, A. (1949), *State and Government in Ancient India, from Earliest Times to c. 1200 A.D.* (Banaras: Motilal Bandarsidass).

Altekar, A. (1950), 'A Unique Kushano-Roman Gold Coin of King Dharmadamadhara (?)', *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 12/1: 1-4.

Appadurai, A. (1986), 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3-63.

Appadurai, A. (1990), 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Theory, Culture and Society* 7/2-3: 295-309.

Appadurai, A. (1996), *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Autiero, S. (2017), 'Bes figurines from Roman Egypt as Agents of Transculturation in the Indian Ocean', *Thiasos* 6: 79-89.

Autiero, S. (2019). 'Foreign Iconographic Elements in South Arabian Art: The Indian Contribution', in A. Manzo et al. (eds.), *Stories of Globalisation: The Red Sea and the Persian Gulf from Late Prehistory to Early Modernity.* Selected Papers of Red Sea Project VII (Leiden: Brill), 408-42.

Autiero, S. (2022), 'From the Field to the Globe: The Archaeology of Globalization', in S. Autiero and M. Cobb (eds.), *Globalization and Transculturality from Antiquity to the Pre-Modern World* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 1-15.

Autiero, S. and Cobb M. (2022), 'Introduction: Utilizing Globalization and Transculturality for the Study of the Pre-modern World', in S. Autiero and M. Cobb (eds.), *Globalization and Transculturality from Antiquity to the Pre-Modern World* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 19-35.

Barrett, C. (2017), 'Recontextualizing Nilotic Scenes: Interactive Landscapes in the Garden of the Casa dell'Efebo, Pompeii', *American Journal of Archaeology* 121/2: 293-332.

Berghaus, P. (1989), 'Funde severischer Goldmünzen in Indien', in H.-J. Drexhage and J. Sunskes (eds.), *Migratio et commutatio: Studien zur Alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben T. Pekáry dargebracht* (St Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag), 93-101.

Berghaus, P. (1990), 'Römische Münzen in Indien', in A. Rainer (ed.), *Handel und Verkehr im Spiegel der Münzen* (Speyer: Numismatische Gesellschaft Speyer), 67-89.

Berghaus, P. (1991), 'Roman Coins from India and their Imitations', in A. Jha (ed.), *Coinage, Trade and Economy (January 8th-11th, 1991, 3rd International Colloquium)* (Nasik: Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies), 108-21.

Berghaus, P. (1993), 'Indian Imitations of Roman Coins', in T. Hackins et al. (eds.), *Actes Du XIe Congrès International de Numismatique, Bruxelles 8 - 13 Septembre 1991,* vol. 2 (Louvain: Association Prof. M. Hoc), 305-10.

Bhandare, S. (2021), 'Connected Words: Coins and Maritime Worlds of the Indian Ocean', in H.P. Ray (ed.), *The Archaeology of Knowledge Traditions of the Indian Ocean World* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 240-61.

Bhandare, S. (2022), 'The Art of Deception: Perspectives on the Problem of Fakery in Gandhāran Numismatics', in R. Rienjang and P. Stewart (eds.), *The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March, 2021* (Oxford: Archaeopress), 172-86.

Bhandare, S. (2023), 'PCMA Seminar: Interesting Indic Finds from Berenike', Lecture at University of Warsaw (26 June 2023), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ku1YH1scQ8&t=1s> (last accessed 12 July 2023).

Bhandarkar, D.R. (1921), *Lectures on Ancient Indian Numismatics* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta).

Blet-Lamarqand, M. (2006), 'Analysis of Kushana Gold Coins: Debasement and Provenance Study', in F. De Romanis and S. Sorda (eds.), *Dal denarius al dinar: L'Oriente e la moneta romana (Atti dell'incontro di studio, Roma 16-18 Settembre 2004)*. (Rome: Istituto italiano di numismatica), 155-71.

Borell, B. (2014), 'The Power of Images: Coin Portraits of Roman Emperors on Jewellery Pendants in Early Southeast Asia', *Zeitschrift für Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen* 6: 7-43.

Borell, B. (2017), 'Gemstones in Southeast Asia and Beyond: Trade along the Maritime Networks', in A. Hilgner et al. (eds.), *Gemstones in the First Millennium AD: Mines, Trades, Workshops, and Symbolism* (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums), 21-44.

Bowes, K. (2021), 'When Kuznets Went to Rome: Roman Economic Well-being and the Reframing of Roman History', *Capitalism* 2/1: 7-40.

Bracey, R. (2008), 'A Flood of Fake Bactrian Coins', *Oriental Numismatic Society* 196: 2-5.

Bracey, R. (2009), 'The Coinage of Wima Kadphises', *Gandharan Studies* 3: 25-74.

Bracey, R. (2012), 'Policy, Patronage, and the Shrinking Pantheon of the Kushans', in V. Jayaswal (ed.), *Glory of the Kushans: Recent Discoveries and Interpretations* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International), 197-217.

Bracey, R. (2021), 'Ancient Indian Coins in the Portable Antiquities Scheme: Challenging Notions of a One Way Trade', Lecture at University of Warsaw (18 June 2021).

Brancaccio, P. (2005a), 'Perceptions of "Westerners" in Sātavāhana Times: The Archaeological Evidence', C. Jarrige and V. Lefèvre (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 2001: Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists, held in Collège de France, Paris, 2– 6 July* (Paris: Editions recherche sur les civilisations), 401-6.

Brancaccio, P. (2005b), 'Sātavāhana Terracottas: Connections with the Hellenistic Tradition', *East and West* 55/1-4: 55-69.

Bresson, A. (2005), 'Coinage and Money Supply in the Hellenistic Age', in in Z. Archibald et al. (eds.), *Making, Moving, Managing: The New World of Ancient Economies, 323-31 BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 44-72.

Bromberg, J. (2021), *Global Classics* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge).

Callieri, P. et al. (1997), *Seals and Sealings from the North-west of the Indian Subcontinent and Afghanistan (4th Century BC – 11th century AD): Local, Indian, Sasanian, Graeco-Persian, Sogdian, Roman* (Naples: Istituto universitario orientale).

Canepa M. (2017), 'Cross-Cultural Communication in the Hellenistic Mediterranean and Western and South Asia', in F. Naiden and R. Talbert, *Mercury's Wings: Exploring Modes of Communication in the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 249-72.

Champakalakshmi, R. (1996), *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Cobb, M. (2015a), 'The Chronology of Roman Trade in the Indian Ocean from Augustus to Early Third Century CE', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58: 362-418.

Cobb, M. (2015b), 'Balancing the Trade: Roman Cargo Shipments to India', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 34/2: 185-203.

Cribb, J. (1993), 'The "Heraus" Coins: Their Attribution to the Kushan King Kujula Kadphises, c. AD 30-80', in M. Price et al. (eds.), *Essays in Honour of Robert Carson and Kenneth Jenkins* (London: Spink), 107-34, Pl. XXIII-XXVII.

Darley, R. (2013), 'Indo-Byzantine Exchange, 4th to 7th Centuries: A Global History', Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Birmingham).

Darley, R. (2015), 'Self, Other and the Use and Appropriation of Late Roman Coins in Peninsular India (4th–7th Century CE)', in H.P. Ray (ed.), *Negotiating Cultural Identity: Landscapes in Early Medieval South Asian History* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 60-84.

De Romanis, F. (1997), 'Romanukharaṭṭha and Taprobane: Relations between Rome and Sri Lanka in the First Century AD', in F. De Romanis and A. Tchernia (eds.), *Crossings: Early Mediterranean Contacts with India* (New Delhi: Manohar), 161-237.

De Romanis, F. (2006), 'Aurei after the Trade: Western Taxes and Eastern Gifts', in F. De Romanis and S. Sorda (eds.), *Dal denarius al dinar: L'Oriente e la moneta romana (Atti dell'incontro di studio, Roma 16-18 Settembre 2004)*. (Rome: Istituto italiano di numismatica), 55-82.

De Romanis, F. (2020), *Indo-Roman Trade and the Muziris Papyrus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Deleuze, G. and Guattari F. (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Deshpande, M. (1965), 'Classical Influence on Indian Terracotta Art', *in Le rayonnement des civilisations grecque et romaine sur les cultures périphériques: huitième Congrès international d'archéologie classique (Paris, 1963)* (Paris: E. de Boccard), 603-10.

Deshpande, M. (1994), 'The Archaeological Site of Ter (Tagara)', in R. M. Cimino (ed.), *Rome and India: Commercial and Cultural Contacts between the Roman World and India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers), 175-7.

Dobbins, K. (1971), 'The Commerce of Kapisene and Gandhara after the Fall of Indo-Greek Rule', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14/3: 286-302.

Duncan-Jones, R. (1994), *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Evers, K.G. (2017), *Worlds Apart Trading Together: The Organisation of Long-distance Trade between Rome and India in Antiquity* (Oxford: Archaeopress).

Falk, H. (2015), 'Indian Gold Crossing the Indian Ocean through the Millennia', in F. De Romanis and M. Maiuro (eds.), *Across the Ocean: Nine Essays on Indo-Mediterranean Trade* (Leiden: Brill), 97-113.

Feldman, M. (2014), *Communities of Style: Portable Luxury Arts, Identity, and Collective Memory in the Iron Age Levant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Fishman, A. (2013), *Silver Coinage of the Western Satraps in India (50-400 AD): Catalogue and Rarity Guide* (Middletown: A.M. Fishman).

Fishman, A. (2016), 'Some Notes on Coins of the Western Kshatrapas', *Numismatic Digest* 40: 51-61.

Flood, F. (2009), *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Fuller D. et al. (2015), 'The Archaeobiology of Indian Ocean Translocations: Current Outlines of Cultural Exchanges by Proto-Historic Seafarers', in S. Tripati (ed.), *Maritime Contacts of the Past: Deciphering Connections amongst Communities* (New Delhi: Delta World Books), 1-23.

Gardner, A. (2013), 'Thinking about Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalisation and Beyond?', *Britannia* 44: 1-25.

Ghosh, A. (1957), *Indian Archaeology 1956-7: A Review* (New Delhi: Department of Archaeology).
Göbl, R. (1960), 'Roman Patterns for Kushana Coins', *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 22: 75-95.
Göbl, R. (1976), 'The Roman-Kushan Medallion in the British Museum', *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 38: 21-6.
Göbl, R. (1984), *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung der Kušānreiches* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften).
Göbl, R. (1993), *Donum Burns: Die Kušānmünzen im Münzkabinett Bern und die Chronologie* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften).
Göbl, R. (1999), 'The Rabatak Inscription and the Date of Kanishka', in M. Alram and D. Klimburg-Salter (eds.), *Coins, Art, and Chronology: Essays on the Pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), 151-76.
Gupta, P.L. (1965), *Roman Coins from Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad: Govt. of Andhra Pradesh).
Gurukkal, R. (2010), *Social Formations of Early South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
Gurukkal, R. (2016), *Rethinking Classical Indo-Roman Trade: Political Economy of Eastern Mediterranean Exchange Relations* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
Guy, J. (2023), *Tree & Serpent: Early Buddhist Art in India* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).
Hamilakis, Y. (2014), *Archaeology and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Hamilakis, Y. and A.M. Jones (2017), 'Archaeology and Assemblage', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 27/1: 77-84.
Hill, G.F. (1898), 'Roman Aurei from Pudukota, South India', *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Numismatic Society*, 3rd series, 18: 304-20.
Hill, P.V. (1984), 'A Puzzling Aureus of Septimius Severus from India', *Spink Numismatic Circular* 92: 259.
Hodder, I. (2012), *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell).
Hölscher, T. (1987), *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System* (Heidelberg: C. Winter).
Hoo, M. (2022), *Eurasian Localisms: Towards a Translocal Approach to Hellenism and Inbetweenness in Central Eurasia, Third to First Centuries BCE* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag).
Howgego, C. (1990), 'Why Did Ancient States Strike Coins?', The *Numismatic Chronicle* 150: 1-27.
Jennings, J. (2017), 'Distinguishing Past Globalizations', in T. Hodos (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalization* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 12-28.
Jongeward, D. and Cribb J. (2015), *Kushan, Kushano-Sasanian, and Kidarite Coins: A Catalogue of Coins from the American Numismatic Society* (New York: American Numismatic Society).
Krishna Murthy, K. (1977). *Nāgārjunakoṇḍā: A Cultural Study*, 1st edn. (Delhi: Concept Pub. Co.).
Krishnamurthy, R. (1993), 'Seleucid Coins from Karur', *Studies in South Indian Coins* 3: 19-28.
Langin-Hooper S. (2019), *Figurines in Hellenistic Babylonia: Miniaturization and Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Latour, B. (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Lerner, J. and Sims-Williams, N. (2011), *Seals, Sealings, and Tokens from Bactria to Gandhara (4th to 8th century CE)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften).
MacDowall, D. (1960), 'The Weight Standard of the Gold and Copper Coinage of the Kushāṇa Dynasty from Vima Kadphises to Vāsudeva', *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India 22: 67-8.*
MacDowall, D. (1991), 'Indian Imports of Roman Silver Coinage', in A. Jha (ed.), *Coinage, Trade and Economy (January 8th-11th, 1991, 3rd International Colloquium)* (Nasik: Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies), 145-63.
MacDowall, D. (1996), 'The Evidence of the Gazetteer of Roman Artefacts in India', in H. P. Ray and J.-F. Salles (eds.), *Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi: Manohar), 79-95.

MacDowall, D. (2002), 'Foreign Coins Found in India' and 'The Indo-Roman Metal Trade', in D. MacDowall and A. Jha (eds.), *Foreign Coins Found in the Indian Subcontinent (8th-10th January 1995)* (Nasik: Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies), 9-14, 39-44.

MacDowall, D. (2006), 'Bimetallism in the Roman and Kushan Coinage', in F. De Romanis and S. Sorda (eds.), *Dal denarius al dinar: L'Oriente e la moneta romana (Atti dell'incontro di studio, Roma 16-18 Settembre 2004)*. (Rome: Istituto italiano di numismatica), 43-53.

Maddison, A. (2007), *Contours of the World Economy, 1-2030 AD: Essays in Macro-economic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Mairs, R. (2012), 'Glassware from Roman Egypt at Begram (Afghanistan) and the Red Sea trade', *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 18: 2-14.

Mairs, R. (2014), 'Models, Moulds and Mass Production: The Mechanics of Stylistic Influence from the Mediterranean to Bactria', *Ancient West & East* 13: 175-95.

Majumdar, S. (2012/2013), 'Coins and Currency Patterns of Early Historic Bengal–An Overview', *Numismatic Digest* 36/37: 22-36.

Malandra, G. (1981), 'Transitional Style in the Śiva Images on Kuṣāṇa Gold Coins', *Museum Notes (American Numismatic Society)* 26: 195-202.

McHugh, J. (2017), 'The Symbolism of Gemstones in Indian Religions', in A. Hilgner et al. (eds.), *Gemstones in the First Millennium AD: Mines, Trades, Workshops, and Symbolism* (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums), 219-32.

Metcalf, W. (1979), 'Roman Aurei from India', *Museum Notes (American Numismatic Society)* 24: 123-7.

Morley, N. (2007), *Trade in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Morris, L. (2020), 'Roman Objects in the Begram Hoard and the Memory of Greek Rule in Kushan Central Asia', in R. Mairs (ed.), *The Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek World* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 580-94.

Morris, L. (2021), 'The Begram Hoard and its Context', PhD Dissertation (Munich, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität).

Muthukumaran, S. (2023), *The Tropical Turn: Agricultural Innovation in the Ancient Middle East and the Mediterranean* (Oakland: University of California Press).

Nappo, D. (2017), 'Money and Flows of Coinage in the Red Sea Trade', in A. Bowman and A. Wilson (eds.), *Trade, Commerce, and the State in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 557-78.

Narasimha Murthy, A. (1984), 'A Roman Coin Mould from Banavasi', *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 46: 45.

Narasimha Murthy, A. and Devaraj, D. (1995), 'A Roman Coin Mould from Talkad Excavations', *Studies in South Indian Coins* 5: 59-62.

Parry, J.P. and Bloch, M. (1989), *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Pitts, M. (2007), 'The Emperor's New Clothes? The Utility of Identity in Roman Archaeology', *American Journal of Archaeology* 111/4: 693-713.

Pitts, M. and Versluys M.J. (2014), 'Globalisation and the Roman World: Perspectives and Opportunities', in M. Pitts and M.J. Versluys (eds.), *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3-31.

Pitts, M. and Versluys M.J. (2021), 'Objectscapes: A Manifesto for Investigating the Impacts of Object Flows on Past Societies', *Antiquity* 95/380: 367-81.

Plantzos, D. (1997), *Hellenistic Engraved Gems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Pollock, S. (2006), 'Empire and Imitation', in C. Calhoun et al. (eds.), *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power* (New York: The New Press), 175-88.

Potts, D. (1990), *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity I: From Prehistory to the Fall of the Achaemenid Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Rajgor, D. (2002), 'Roman Currency in Gujarat', in D. MacDowall and A. Jha (eds.), *Foreign Coins Found in the Indian Subcontinent (8th-10th January 1995)* (Nasik: Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies), 69-72.
Raschke, M. (1978), 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II/9/2: 604-1378.
Ray, H.P. (1986), *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Sātavāhanas* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
Ray, H.P. (1988), 'The Yavana Presence in India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31: 311-22.
Rosenfield, J. (1967), *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
Sagar, K. (1992), *Foreign Influence on Ancient India* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre).
Senior, R. (2001-6), *Indo-Scythian Coins and History,* vol. 1-4 (Lancaster: Classical Numismatic Group).
Sewell, R. (1904), 'Roman Coins Found in India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 23: 591-637.
Sharma, R. (1987), *Urban Decay in India (c.300 - c.1000)* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers).
Sidebotham, S. (1986), *Roman Economic Policy in the Erythra Thalassa: 30 B.C.-A.D. 217* (Leiden: Brill).
Sidebotham, S. (2011), *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
Sidebotham, S. et al. (2021), 'Berenike 2019: Report on the Excavations', *Thetis* 25: 11-22.
Sidebotham, S. et al. (2023), 'Berenike 2022: Report on the Excavations', *Thetis* 27: 13-28.
Simmons, J.A. (2019), 'Making Sense of Nonsense: Approaches to Greco-Roman Legends on Western Kṣatrapa Coinage', *American Journal of Numismatics* 31: 227-78.
Simmons J.A. (2022a), '"Indo-Roman" Trade and the Dakshinapatha', in A. Garimella (ed.), *The Long Arc of South Asian Art: Essays in Honour of Vidya Dehejia* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited/Marg), 215-28.
Simmons, J.A. (2022b), 'Ancient Indian Ocean Trade and the Roman Economy', in D. Van Limbergen et al. (eds.), *Reframing the Roman Economy: New Perspectives on Habitual Economic Practices* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), 371-403.
Simmons, J.A. (2023), 'Behind Gold for Pepper: The Players and the Game of Indo-Mediterranean Trade', *Journal of Global History*: 1-22.
Sims-Williams, N. and Cribb, J. (1995/1996), 'A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great', *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4: 75-142.
Singh, M. (2006), 'Kukkutadhvaja on the Gold Coins of Huvishka', *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 68: 65-9.
Smagur, E. (2018), 'From Coins to Bulla: A Cultural Response to the Influx of Roman Denarii into India', *Numismatic Digest* 42: 63-78.
Smagur, E. (2021), 'Regulated Roman Coins and Their Imitations from India: Did Roman Coins Circulate as Money in the Subcontinent?', *Notae Numismaticae* 25: 179-204.
Smagur, E. (2022a), 'Indian Imitations of Roman Aurei Reconsidered', *The Numismatic Chronicle* (fifth series) 182: 153-78.
Smagur, E. (2022b), '"Indianisation" of a Roman Coin Design in Early Historic India: A Study of an Imitation from the British Museum', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 31: 231-44.
Smagur, E. (2022c), '"Romano-Sasanian" Imitations from India: Notes on Their Life Histories and the Indo-Sasanian Trade', *South Asian Studies* 38/2: 192-205.
Smagur, E. (2023), 'Ethnoarchaeology of Foreign Coins in India: Reinterpreting Venetian Ducat Design, and Implications for Archaeonumismatics', *Antiquity* 97/392: 1-9.
Sridhar, T.S. et al. (2011), *Roman Coins in the Government Museum Chennai. With a Detailed Catalogue of the Denarii Hoard from Budinathan (Tamil Nadu)* (Chennai: Government Museum Press).
Srivastava, B. (1968), *Trade and Commerce in Ancient India (from the Earliest Times to c. A.D. 300)* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office).

Stone, E. (1994), *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers).
Stone, E. (2007), 'An Early Image of Maitreya as a Brahman Ascetic?', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 42: 57-81.
Stone, E. (2016), 'Reflections of Roman Art in Southern India', in A. Shimada and M. Willis (eds.), *Amaravati: The Art of an Early Buddhist Monument in Context* (London: British Museum), 59-69.
Subrahmanian, N. (1980), *Sangam Polity the Administration and Social Life of the Sangam Tamils* (Madurai: Ennes Publications).
Suresh, S. (2004), *Symbols of Trade: Roman and Pseudo-Roman Objects Found in India* (New Delhi: Manohar).
Tameanko, M (1991), '"Indian Type" Denarii of Tiberius Facilitated Trading Relationships between Rome and India', *The Celator* 5/6: 10-4.
Taussig, M. (1993). *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge).
Thapar, R. (1992), 'Black Gold: South Asia and the Roman Maritime Trade', *South Asia* 15/2: 1-28.
Thapar, R. (2000), *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
Thapar, R. (2002), *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
Thorley, J. (1979), 'The Roman Empire and the Kushans', *Greece & Rome* 26/2: 181-90.
Turner, P. (1989), *Roman Coins from India* (London: Royal Numismatic Society).
Van Minnen, P. (2008), 'Money and Credit in Roman Egypt', in W. Harris (ed.), *The Monetary Systems of the Greeks and Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 226-41.
Versluys, M.J. (2014a), 'Understanding Objects in Motion: An Archaeological Dialogue on Romanization', *Archaeological Dialogues* 21/1: 1-20.
Versluys, M.J. (2014b), 'Roman Visual Material Culture as Globalising Koine', in M. Pitts and M.J. Versluys (eds.), *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 141-74.
Versluys, M.J. (2017), *Visual Style and Constructing Identity in the Hellenistic World Nemrud Dağ and Commagene under Antiochos I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Veyne, P. (1979), 'Rome devant la prétendue fuite de l'or: mercantilisme ou politique disciplinaire?' *Annales ESC* 34/2: 211-44.
Walburg, R. (2008), *Coins and Token from Ancient Ceylon: Ancient Ruhuna: Sri Lanka-German Archaeological Project in the Southern Province* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reichert Verlag).
Warmington, E.H. (1928), *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Wheeler, R.E.M. (1951), 'Roman Contact with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan', in W. F. Grimes (ed.), *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond: Essays Presented to O.G.S. Crawford* (London: H.W. Edwards), 345-81.
Wheeler, R.E.M. (1954), *Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers* (London: G. Bell and Sons).
Wheeler, R.E.M. et al. (1946), 'Arikamedu: An Indo-Roman Trading Station on the East Coast of India', *Ancient India* 2: 17-124.
Widemann, F. (2000), 'Scarcity of Precious Metals and Relative Chronology of Indo-Greek and Related Coinages (1st Century B.C.-1st Century A.D.)', *East and West* 50/1-4: 227-58.
Wilkinson, T. (2014), *Tying the Threads of Eurasia: Trans-regional Routes and Material Flows in Transcaucasia, Eastern Anatolia and Western Central Asia, c. 3000-1500 BC* (Leiden: Sidestone Press).
Wilson, A. (2002), 'Machines, Power and the Ancient Economy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 92: 1-32.
Wilson, A. (2015), 'Red Sea Trade and the State', in F. De Romanis and M. Maiuro (eds.), *Across the Ocean: Nine Chapters on Indo-Mediterranean Trade* (Leiden: Brill), 8-24.
Young, G. (2001), *Rome's Eastern Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy, 31 BC-AD 305* (Abingdon and New York).

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-08

Exploring *Navagrahas* (the Nine Planets) in Indian and Graeco-Roman Art

Mandira Sharma

Introduction

The word 'graha', which means 'seizer', designates a planet or celestial entity in the sky that may have either malevolent or beneficial effects. The *navagrahas*, thus, comprise the nine planetary deities in Indian astrology with Sūrya or the Sun as the primary planetary deity overseeing the *navagraha* system and leading the remaining *grahas* (Figure 1). The other six *grahas* include Candra (the Moon), Bhauma or Maṅgala (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Bṛhaspati (Jupiter), Śukra (Venus) and Śani (Saturn). They are joined by two pseudo-planets: Rāhu (ascending lunar node) and Ketu (descending lunar node).

There exist numerous forms of devotional and ritualistic practices, closely integrated with diverse myths and legends, in contemporary Indian culture, all inextricably connected with the *navagrahas*. The continuous devotional practices revolving around these planetary deities underscore their enduring significance in both religious and societal contexts. According to Hindu astrology, seeking advice from a *jyotiṣī* (astrologer) is customary before taking decisions on significant life events like starting a new project, getting married, having a child named, or purchasing a new home. This consultation aims to avert pre-emptively any potential adverse planetary influences, with the astrologer's guidance and remedial measures often factored into the decision-making process. The tradition of venerating the *navagrahas* applies on the pregnant woman's fourth, sixth, and eighth month, on which a purificatory rite is observed,[1] at the birth of the child, and throughout one's life, culminating at the time of death. This practice underlines the integral role of the *navagrahas* in ensuring the fulfilment of various sacred rituals (*saṃskāra*).

Figure 1. Temple lintel with navagrahas *at Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, India. Pratihāra dynasty, eighth century AD. New Delhi, National Museum, inv.71.L/10. (Photo: copyright Mandira Sharma.)*

1 This rite is called *sīmānta* ('parting of hair') and is regarded by Hindus as one of the twelve *saṃskāras*. Such a woman is called *sīmāntinī.*

The *navagrahas* have come to be represented in scores of visual representations, be it painting, sculpture, ritual chariots, and temples devoted to them in the Indian sub-continent. The earliest knowledge of the planets came down to us from Ṛgvedic times (1500-1000 BC) but it was possibly around the mid-second century AD that they were presumed to have gained deification in anthropomorphic form, when astrological influences were also attributed to them. They can appear as individual entities or as a collective ensemble. When they appear in a group, they may follow distinct sequences. One of the oldest and best known depictions of the *navagrahas* is from Eran, Madhya Pradesh (Figures 2 and 3), dating back to the fifth century AD. This depiction shows the *navagraha*s positioned on the colossal sculpture of Varāha (the boar, an *avatāra* or incarnation of Viṣṇu), with the conspicuous absence of Rāhu and Ketu. Several sculptures portray the *navagrahas* as a set of eight celestial divinities, known as *aṣṭagrahas*, encompassing Rāhu alongside the seven other planets, while Ketu is notably absent. The early seventh century saw the inclusion of Ketu as a later progression. From their first representations in the fifth century AD to subsequent ones in the eighth century AD, the *navagrahas* betray a remarkable diversity in artistic traits and roles. For example, when portrayed above the lintel of a temple doorway, they served as protective symbols; occasionally, they functioned as cult icons, as in eastern India; or served as secondary deities positioned alongside prominent deities.[2] Compared with the early medieval era (AD 600-1200) which saw an increase in the visual representations of the *navagrahas*, especially as a collective entity, there are fewer such representations from the early Indian period.

Figure 2. Varāha, the Cosmic Boar at Eran, Madhya Pradesh, fifth century AD. (Photo: copyright Puratattva, India.)

2 Markel (1995), 15-16.

Figure 3. Navagrahas (third row) (detail of Varāha) at Eran, Madhya Pradesh, fifth century AD. Photo: copyright Puratattva, India.)

Although the planetary deities have an extensive historical presence, there is evidence that various prehistoric cultures venerated Sūrya or the Sun and Candra or the Moon in symbolic manifestations. The Vedic literature from the second millennium BC contains the oldest written accounts of the origins of the planetary deities in India. While the sun, moon and stars are given substantive prominence in the hymns of the Vedic literature composed allegedly around 1500 to 1000 BC, planets (*navagrahas*) as such do not figure explicitly. However, in the *Ṛgveda*, the 'seven suns' are taken in the sense of the sun, the moon, and the five planets.[3] In Book 10 of the *Ṛgveda*, hymn 55, an invocation is made to Indra (the god of rains). Verse 3 of this hymn mentions 'four and thirty lights' that are equated with the sun, the moon, five planets and the twenty-seven lunar asterisms of the moon.[4] These and some other hymns in the text attest to the recognition of the planets during Ṛgvedic times, signifying a definite awareness of their presence, even though these do not involve the invocation or worship of the planets as divine entities. So it seems that before reaching any firm conclusions, it is necessary to delve a little deeper into this body of literature. The *Atharvaveda* (*c*. 1000-500 BC) presents the most explicit and definitive textual evidence of the planets. One verse refers to the '*grahāḥ* (planets) traversing in the heaven' (in the chapter 'For appeasement and weal: to various divinities' [*Atharvaveda* 19.9.7]) which are worshipped alongside the deities Mitra, Varuṇa and Antaka for prosperity and well-being.[5] Thus, it looks plausible to suggest that during the Vedic period, there did exist a fairly good knowledge about the planets and various celestial

3 Kak (2011), 105; Griffith (1897), 382. The verse *Ṛgveda* 9.114.3 reads: *sapta diśo, nānā sūryāḥ...*
4 Kak (2011), 13. See *Ṛgveda* 10.55.3; Griffith (1897), 458.
5 Whitney and Lanman (1905), 913.

phenomena in astronomical and astrological contexts. It was this knowledge and understanding that formed the basis of the evolution of planets as deities in later times. Later texts, including the *Bṛhat Jātaka* and *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* by Varāhamihira in the sixth century AD, along with several *Purāṇas*, form significant literary sources, providing vivid descriptions of the *navagraha*s and their varied facets.

As in the Indian context, in the ancient Graeco-Roman world too the planets were associated with specific deities. In both the traditions, the planetary deities were venerated and also believed to exert powerful influence on many aspects of life, including war, knowledge, love, health, and agriculture. Their worship and understanding shaped cultural practices, religious rites, and philosophical contemplations, highlighting the shared significance of these celestial bodies in the ancient world. With the exception of Rāhu and Ketu, Graeco-Roman culture recognized all seven planets – Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. (These celestial bodies are visible in the sky to the naked eye.) While Indian astrology and astronomy appear to have originated in the time of the *Ṛgveda* in the second millennium BC, mathematical astronomy and predictive astrology are credited to Hellenistic influence in the second century AD. Scholars such as David Pingree and Stephen Markel also propose that Rudradāman I (reigned *c.* AD 130-160), a prominent Śaka ruler of the Western Kṣatrapa dynasty, and the court astronomers in the Western Kṣatrapas were instrumental in the introduction of Hellenistic astronomy as also the concept of the seven-day week. It is also suggested that Hellenistic astronomy served as a source for the representation of the planetary deities during the Gupta period. In light of this, the reigns of Kumāragupta I (reigned *c.* AD 415-455) and Skandagupta (reigned *c.* AD 455-467) are believed to have been especially significant for artistic growth and iconographic innovation.[6] Stephen Markel, who in certain matters follows David Pingree, regards the visual representation of the planetary deities as having taken place during the second half of the fifth century AD.[7] This visual representation, he says, was an import from Graeco-Roman culture. However, here the question can arise whether those ideas were indeed so novel and significant that their importation to India became irresistible. It is true, of course, that there exist certain similarities between the Indian *navagrahas* and their counterparts in Graeco-Roman mythology and art, but it cannot be denied that several notable distinctions also exist which are worth taking note of. It is evident that at the macro level, the artistic renderings of the planetary gods in both cultures exhibit iconographic and stylistic traits that set them apart from one another.

There seems to be a consensus that the fourth to fifth century AD marked the establishment of significant interactions between the Gupta dynasty and the classical world. Nevertheless, it would be presumptuous to attribute and trace every cultural development to this particular phenomenon. To understand the differences, one can begin by examining one of the earliest sculptural representations of the seven planetary deities on the Varāha (an incarnation of Viṣṇu as boar)[8] from Eran (fifth century AD) (Figures 2 and 3). Alongside these planetary deities are depicted several figures of saints and sages. The sequence commences with Sūrya, identified by two lotuses as his attributes, adorned with a *mukuṭa* (tiara) on his head. Except for Sūrya, who dons a tunic and boots, the remaining *grahas*/planetary deities have distinctly Indian dispositions and are shown as ascetics with *jatāmukuṭa* (matted hair). Their right upraised hand is in *abhayamudrā* (gesture of fearlessness) while the left holds a *kamaṇḍalu* (pitcher). Their torsos are exposed, and they are dressed in the traditional Indian lower garment, the *dhotī*, revealing thus a clear Indian artistic imprint.

6 Markel (1991), 5.
7 Ibid., 5-6.
8 In Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* 13.8, Viṣṇu assumes the form of (the first) boar to uplift the earth from the netherworld. See Kale (1924), 75.

The Graeco-Roman connection of the *Navagrahas*

I will now attempt to provide an overview of the individual *navagraha*s or planetary deities, aiming to identify parallels and distinctions with their Graeco-Roman counterpart deities.

Sūrya (Figure 4), the crimson-hued planet,[9] occupies a central position both in its celestial manifestation and in its deified anthropomorphic form. In the *Ṛgveda* (1.50.9), Sūrya, the creator of light, is described as appearing on seven horses yoked in a chariot.[10] The number seven here also symbolizes the seven rays of Sūrya, which correspond to the seven constituent colours of the rainbow. The text portrays Sūrya as an effulgent, bright-haired divinity. In artistic representations, Sūrya often came to be visualized as drawing a chariot pulled by either seven horses or a single horse with seven heads, a recurring iconographic feature in various artworks when the deity appears individually rather than in a group. The image portrays Sūrya with upraised hands clutching two lotuses, accompanied by four attendants, and his consort, the goddess Nikṣubha, standing between his feet. Positioned in front of the female attendants are small figures of Daṇḍi with a sword and shield, and Piṅgala with a *patra* (a letter). The base of the image features the depiction of the seven galloping horses.

A comparable parallel can be observed in Graeco-Roman art and literature where Sun or Helios is typically represented as a youthful male deity steering a *biga* yoked with four horses.[11] The visualization of Sūrya on a horse-drawn chariot dates back to the *Ṛgveda*, demonstrating a continued and lived tradition evident in modern imagery as well. In contrast, Helios did not rank among the most significant

Figure 4. Detail of the temple lintel in Figure 1 (left to right): Sūrya, Candra and Maṅgala. New Delhi, National Museum, inv. 71.L/10. (Photo: copyright Mandira Sharma.)

9 The references to the colours assigned to each *graha* are based on the description found in the *Bṛhat Jātaka* 2.4-5. See the eleventh-century Sūrya in the British Museum collection, inv. 1872,0701.56 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1872-0701-56>; last consulted 20 March 2024).
10 Dutt (1986), 107, n. 1.
11 See e.g. an Apulian red-figure *dinos* in the British Museum collection, inv. 1873,0820.342 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1873-0820-342>; last consulted 21 March 2024).

deities in the Greek pantheon, – something which suggests that the deity was not accorded as much importance. However, both Sūrya and Helios illuminated the heavens and earth.[12] Even though in the *Ṛgveda* the Sun may not have been explicitly described as one of the *navagrahas*, the purported notion of the *navagrahas* being an importation from Greek culture appears less convincing. Varāhamihira invokes him as the 'chief among the gods, planets and stars (the centre of the universe)' (*Bṛhat Jātaka* 1.1).

Figure 5. Candra in his Chariot with wife and attendant From West Bengal, second–first century BC, Shunga period. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 2004.173. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, CC0 licence.)

Following Sūrya in significance is the Moon, Candra, who derives its light from Sūrya and hence appears to be of a much smaller stature (Figure 4). Among the various names by which this white-hued deity is addressed include *Niśākara* (maker of the night), *Nakṣatranātha* (lord of the lunar mansions), and *Śītamārīci* (having cool rays). Bestowed with a unique attribute that is conspicuous by its absence in Sūrya, Candra governs the unseen and the occult. For this very reason, Candra is recognized as the mind (*manas*) of the universal being, with Sūrya regarded as the eye of the universe. Candra's association with the mind is reminiscent of the Moon being seen as a cause of madness or lunacy in Greek tradition.

The Moon is regarded as a benefic planet in Indian astrology, with its effect fluctuating with its waxing and waning phases. A parallel thought is encountered in ancient Greek literature, where the time of the waxing moon was believed to be particularly favourable for growth and commencement of new endeavours.[13] Instead of being an outcome of celestial influence, this belief appears to have originated in the common human predisposition to correlate development and growth with the waxing of the Moon.

Again, while Candra is imagined as a male divinity in India, his Greek counterpart in art and mythology is the goddess Selene.[14] Similar to Helios in Greek visual art, she is shown as driving a chariot drawn by horses in the heavens, or occasionally riding on a goat or a horse. She is also known to steer a bull-drawn chariot. In one of the several visual representations, Candra is usually shown riding a chariot pulled by a deer, thus earning the epithet *Mṛgāṅka* (marked like a deer) (Figure 5). Interestingly, a striking commonality seen between Candra and Selene is their being represented as or with a crescent or a lunar disc. The presence of the crescent moon on the matted hair of Śiva in Indian mythology reflects the intuitive and psychic wisdom embodied by Candra.

12 *Gods and Goddesses of Greece and Rome* (2011), 121.
13 Ibid., 264.
14 Selene is the daughter of the Titans Hyperion and Theia and is the sister of Helios. See e.g. an Attic red-figure pyxis in the British Museum, inv. 1873,0915.14 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1873-0915-14>; last consulted 21 March 2024).

In Indian astrology, among the most fierce and hot but also otherwise beneficial (depending upon its position in a person's horoscope) *navagrahas* is Maṅgala (Figure 4),[15] equivalent to the Roman deity Mars. As the son of the Earth, he is named Bhauma (from the term *bhūmi*) or Aṅgāraka, and is identified with the god of war Kārttikeya. Within the framework of Indian astrology, Maṅgala signifies the protector of the landed property and the guardian of a person's wife. In artistic traditions, Maṅgala is portrayed as a red-skinned deity with four arms, often riding a sheep or a buffalo, adorned in crimson red attire and jewellery. Sanskrit literary and astrological texts depict Maṅgala as Kārttikeya, the commander-in-chief of the gods' army and the adolescent god of war.[16] In visual representations from western and central India, he is portrayed with an ascetic hairstyle, holding a rosary and a *kamaṇḍalu*. When shown as four-armed, he holds weapons with three of them, while the fourth makes the gesture of benediction, as is, for instance, mentioned in the *Matsya Pur*āṇa (94.3). In Indian astrology, a well-placed Maṅgala in a horoscope is believed to bestow peace and joy upon an individual.

In Greek mythology Mars is Ares, a formidable, muscular, and often cruel figure, personifying war, strife, and brute force.[17] He is identified as a militaristic deity, and also carries this attribute in astrology. Similar attributes of the deity are also reflected in the Roman god of war, Mars. After Jupiter, Mars was regarded as the most significant deity in Roman art and literature. Before a battle, he was worshipped and invoked as a symbol of military might. The militaristic and war-like characteristics are shared between these deities, Maṅgala and Ares/Mars. Initially, Mars was as the Roman god of fertility, vegetation, and protector of cattle before being associated with warfare and combat.[18] Although Jupiter held the position of the chief god of the Latin people, Mars enjoyed a unique place of honour in the pantheon due to the Roman belief that the founding hero Romulus was his son.

Embodying intellect, wisdom, learning, and speech is the planetary deity Budha (Figure 6), also known as 'the wise one',[19] who is characterized by green colour in Indian art and literature. Often depicted with either two or four arms, Budha possesses various attributes such as a bow, a rosary, a sword, a shield, and a mace. He rides a mythical animal, Yali, combining the physical traits of a lion and an elephant,[20] while the *Agni Purāṇa* (120.36) mentions Budha's mount as eight horses and refers to him as the son of Candra. According to the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (*Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 133.6–11), the presence of Budha in the sign of one's nativity brings land, grains, and wealth to the individual.

The equivalent Roman counterpart of the Indian Budha is Mercury (Hermes in Greek), the son of Jupiter and Maia (Figure 7). Mercury/Hermes is associated with financial prosperity, merchants, travellers, trade, communication, and thieves. In the Indian context, Budha is sometimes identified with Viṣṇu because his characteristics resemble those of the cosmological god – or principle – responsible for maintaining creation or the universe.

15 See e.g. a thirteenth-century sculpture from Orissa in the British Museum, inv. 1872,0701.102 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1872-0701-102>; last consulted 21 March 2024).
16 Sivapriyananda (1990), 71-2.
17 *Gods and Goddesses of Greece and Rome* (2011), 25. See e.g. a Romano-British votive altar from King's Stanley in the British Museum, inv. 1805,0704.2 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1805-0704-2>; last consulted 21 March 2024).
18 *Gods and Goddesses of Greece and Rome* (2011), 174.
19 This 'Budha' is not to be confused with Śākyamuni Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.
20 Sivapriyananda (1990), 72. In the *Matsya Purāṇa,* Budha is described as riding a lion (*Matsya Purāṇa* 94.4). See e.g. a thirteenth-century sculpture from Orissa in the British Museum, inv. 1951,0720.5 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1951-0720-5>; last consulted 21 March 2024).

Figure 6. Detail of the temple lintel in Figure 1 (left to right): Budha, Bṛhaspati and Śukra. New Delhi, National Museum, inv. 71.L/10. (Photo: copyright Mandira Sharma.)

Greek art and literature portray Hermes as the messenger of the gods, traversing boundaries to deliver messages.[21] He is revered as a divine guide, leading both gods and mortals to safety. He held the important role of being the god of boundaries, and was associated with shepherds. Many myths describe him as one of the youngest gods. While the pre-fifth century BC art presents him as a mature male with a full-grown beard, in later sculpture and paintings, he appears as a beardless youth, wearing a winged cap and sandals which symbolize his speed. He is often depicted as carrying herald's staff adorned with intertwined snakes, with the latter serving as symbols of immortality. Interestingly, Hermes is occasionally equated with the Ṛgvedic god Pūṣan, who shares similarities with him, as a god of herds, a messenger, and a traveller. Attesting to Hermes' role as a god of boundaries were herms or stone pillars built by ancient Greeks placed at the boundary between properties or at crossroads.

Figure 7. Archaizing Roman marble relief of Hermes/Mercury, c. 27 BC to AD 68 (Augustan or Julio-Claudian). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1991.11.8. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0 licence.)

21 *Gods and Goddesses of Greece and Rome* (2011), 142.

Extolling Bṛhaspati (the Roman god Jupiter), the *Ṛgveda* describes him as the 'Father' ensuring smooth functioning of sacrifices, safeguarding the worshipper or instituting sacrifice (Figure 6).[22] Described as the father of all sacred prayers (*Ṛgveda* 2.23.2), the deity presides over wealth, and along with Indra, bestows prosperity upon people. He was the upholder of the law (*Ṛgveda* 2.23.17). The *Matsya Purāṇa* (sixth century AD) elevates him to the status of the teacher of gods (*devaguru*) (*Matsya Purāṇa* 94.5). In the Vedas, Bṛhaspati is given the epithet of *purohita* (family priest; placed foremost or in front) of the deities, as he is the prototype of the priests and upholds the priestly order. As 'the father of the gods', he possesses great creative power. He is also known by the epithet *guru* meaning 'the preceptor' or 'the preceptor of the gods'. Bṛhaspati is revered as a deep thinker with profound knowledge and firm convictions. Thus, the exhortations he made to the gods are referred to in various philosophical doctrines.[23]

Figure 8. Zeus on a fragment of a Lucanian red-figure (drinking cup) attributed to the Palermo Painter, c. 430-400 BC. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 11.212.12. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0 licence.)

As a planetary deity, Bṛhaspati has his earliest mention in the *Mahābhārata* (400 BC-AD 400). Astrologically, Bṛhaspati is perceived as one of the most auspicious and benefic *grahas*, governing happiness, wisdom, religion, and fertility.[24] In iconographic portrayals, he appears as a bearded and a pot-bellied elder, commonly represented in yellow or molten gold. In his four-armed depictions, his hands wield a staff (*daṇḍa*), an oblong water pot (*kamaṇḍalu*), and a rosary (*akṣamālā*), with the fourth hand frequently portrayed in a gesture of benediction (*Matsya Purāṇa* 94.5). In his two-armed disposition, Bṛhaspati, according to the *Citrasūtra* of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* (3.69.3),[25] holds a manuscript and a rosary. He rides a goose or swan (*haṃsa*), symbolizing higher spiritual life, or a chariot yoked with eight horses.

In Graeco-Roman mythology, Jupiter/ Zeus is revered as the god of the sky and thunder, and the king of the gods (Figure 8).[26] He presides as the supreme god of the cosmos, which he rules from Mount Olympus. He is typically portrayed in art as a bearded, powerful man wielding a thunderbolt. He was originally a sky god in the Greek pantheon, a weather deity who sent rain, and when angry hurled lightning

22 *Ṛgveda* 4.50.1-11 and *Ṛgveda* 2.23.2. See e.g. a thirteenth-century sculpture from Orissa in the British Museum, inv. 1872,0701.103 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1872-0701-103>; last consulted 21 March 2024).
23 Mani (1975), 163-4.
24 Gansten (2009), 651.
25 The text is assigned different dates: fourth, fifth, or sixth century AD.
26 See e.g. a restored Roman sculpture in the Louvre, Paris, inv. MR 255; N 213; Ma 13 (<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010275445>; last consulted 21 March 2024).

and thunderbolts.[27] He similarly holds the position of supreme deity in the Roman pantheon. Several Roman temples dedicated to Jupiter were erected atop hills. In art, Jupiter/Zeus is depicted either as the mightiest of the deities or in disguise during one of his amorous exploits. The visual portrayal of and mythological narratives surrounding him differ significantly from the visualization of Bṛhaspati in Indian art and literature.

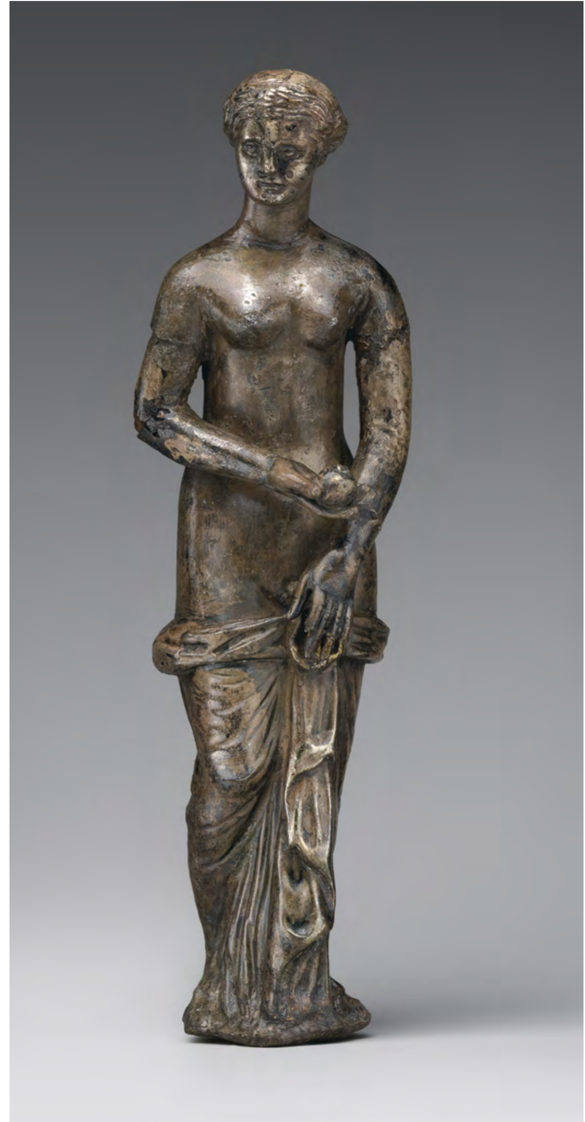

Figure 9. Roman silver figure of Venus, first to second century AD. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1995.539.14. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0 licence.)

Following Bṛhaspati, the next in the order of the *navagraha*s is Śukra (Roman Venus) **(**Figure 6**)**.[28] The term Śukra makes multiple appearances in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas,[29] translating to 'resplendent' or 'pure.'[30] Astrologically, Śukra is considered the creator of beauty and marital happiness. The earliest documented evidence confirming his deification occurs in Pāṇiṇi's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (fifth or fourth century BC), a grammatical treatise. A *sūtra* (aphorism) in that work (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.2.26) mentions, 'an oblation belonging to Śukra' (*śukriyam haviḥ)*.[31] The *sūtra* reads: *śukrād ghana* which was understood in the sense of a deity or was invoked as one. This reference leaves little doubt about Śukra's already established deified status at this point. In contrast to the male god Śukra, his Roman counterpart in mythological and artistic portrayals is Venus (Figure 9), a goddess who in synonymous with the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Venus was known as the lover of Mars and as the wife of Vulcan. In one of the earliest and explicit references in Roman literature from the mid-third BC, she is symbolically associated with green vegetables.[32] Venus is predominantly recognized as the goddess of love and fertility, and is comparable to Śukra in some contexts where the term *śukra* means semen, sperm, or seed, and in this way is similar to Aphrodite. Varāhamihira describes him and Budha as the planets of passion in the *Bṛhat Jātaka* (2.7).

According to the *Mahābhārata*, Śukra is the preceptor of the demons, with his four sons as their priests, although more often he is considered as their priest himself. Occasionally, Śukra is described as having

27 *Gods and Goddesses of Greece and Rome* (2011), 294.
28 See e.g. a thirteenth-century sculpture from Orissa in the British Museum, inv. 1880.3532 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-3532>; last consulted 21 March 2024).
29 Brāhmaṇas (900-700 BC) are a collection of ancient Hindu texts that form part of the Vedas and are considered to be some of the earliest texts providing detailed explanations and interpretations of the sacrificial rituals and ceremonies mentioned in the Vedas.
30 Markel (1995), 47.
31 Vasu (1896), 705.
32 Naevius, frag. 30 a-c.

lost one of his eyes during an encounter with Viṣṇu – a legend that finds mention in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In iconographic terms, Śukra's attributes include a book, a shield, a rosary, a mace, and a noose, some of which overlap with those of Bṛhaspati. These nuances suggest significant literary and iconographic distinctions between Śukra and his counterpart deities in the Graeco-Roman tradition.

Renowned as the slowest moving planet among the *navagraha*s, Śani (Saturn; Śanivāra or Saturday) **(**Figure 10**)** is called *śanaiścara* (slow moving) and *manda* (slow). The Roman god Saturn[33] is commonly associated with farming and is often depicted wielding a farming implement.[34] He is identified with the Greek god Kronos, who was also popular as the god of harvest, frequently depicted carrying a sickle. Kronos's origins remain obscure but in his pre-Greek version, he was a grain deity. Some versions portray his reign as a golden age when all creatures co-existed peacefully with nature and one another. This conceptualization of Saturn betrays substantial differences from Śani. The Indian mythology portrays Śani as the son of Sūrya and Chhāyā (Shadow). In this form, he is often depicted with dark complexion, dressed in black garments. His riding animals, frequently mentioned in texts and shown in visual forms, range from a vulture (*gṛdhravāhanaḥ*), a buffalo, a crow, to a horse (*Matsya Purāṇa* 94.6). Similar to other planets, Śani is sometimes illustrated as a two-armed and, on other occasions, as a four-armed divinity. The *Mahābhārata* recommends daily worship of this deity. Despite being often described as a malefic and a destructive *graha* and as a planet of adversity in the *Purāṇic* mythology, in many other, particularly esoteric, traditions, he is perceived as a spiritually beneficial planet, guiding individuals on a path of introspection, which lends this *graha* the status of a 'transformer'.[35]

The last among the *navagrahas* are Rāhu and Ketu who existed as distinct entities from very early times till about the sixth century AD, denoting celestial phenomena like comets and meteors.[36] They are non-existent and have no equivalents in the Graeco-Roman tradition of planetary deities or religion. According to various popular narratives, Rāhu (Figure 10) is believed to devour the Sun and the Moon, causing eclipses. One version of the myth asserts that during the process of producing ambrosia by churning the ocean, Rāhu disguised himself as a god and drank the elixir (*Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 5.1). Viṣṇu decapitated Rāhu for this act with his discus, as a consequence of this deception. Since consuming ambrosia guaranteed immortality, Rāhu could not be killed. His two parts remained alive and subsequently came to be known as Rāhu, representing the head, and Ketu, symbolizing the body.[37]

The eclipse's swallowing of the Sun connects with the identification of Rāhu as Svarabhānu in the *Ṛgveda* (5.40.5).[38] According to this, the eclipse was caused by the demon Svarabhānu who disrupted the cosmic order. Svarabhānu is renamed as Rāhu in Atharvaveda (19.9.10).[39]

Rāhu is ubiquitously depicted in iconography as ferocious, though sometimes he also appears as a large head with two fangs. Other sculptures and paintings add two hands in which he holds a crescent or moon,[40] and he is occasionally depicted even with his torso. While elucidating the characteristics of Sūrya and other *graha*s, the *Agni Purāṇa* refers to Rāhu as the ascending node of the moon and considers him as a *graha* (51.12), designating half of the lunar disc as his distinctive attribute. The same text

33 See e.g. Roman silver coins minted by L. Appuleius Saturninus in 104 BC (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_2002-0102-1472>; last consulted 21 March 2024).
34 *Gods and Goddesses of Greece and Rome* (2011), 261.
35 Sivapriyananda (1990), 74-5.
36 Kochhar (2010), 296.
37 Mani (1975), 171.
38 Griffith (1896), see the corresponding footnote of the above verse, 501.
39 Whitney and Lanman (1905), 914.
40 See e.g. a thirteenth-century sculpture from Orissa in the British Museum, inv. 1951,0720.2 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1951-0720-2>; last consulted 21 March 2024).

Figure 10. Detail of the temple lintel in Figure 1 (left to right): Śani, Rāhu and Ketu. New Delhi, National Museum, inv. 71.L/10. (Photo: copyright Mandira Sharma.)

describes Ketu (Figure 10)[41] as the descending node of the moon and assigns him the status of a *graha*. In both the *Ṛgveda* (1.50.1-9) and the *Atharvaveda* (13.16-24), the term 'ketu' is used to denote a ray of light. Usually, it implied a combination of fire and smoke.[42] The *Atharvaveda* (19.9.10) describes the term *dhūmaketu* as a comet or 'smoke bannered', like the smoke rising from a funeral pyre. In certain instances, in the same text (*Atharvaveda* 11.10.1-2), Ketu is referred to in plural as 'ketavaḥ', alluding to comets or meteors. Visually, Ketu is recurrently rendered in a serpentine form, and at times, as a headless man with a fish tail, or even as a complete male form. His attributes are a sword and a lamp, as mentioned in the *Agni Purāṇa.* Astrologically, both Rāhu and Ketu are perceived as malefic planets bringing inauspiciousness and unfavourable circumstances in one's life.

With all this evidence before us, there is a fair possibility that the *navagraha*s had indigenous origins. It would be hard to imagine that even with the literary sources indicating substantial knowledge of the planets and also of cosmological phenomena, astrology, and astronomy, the genesis of the *navagraha*s should be regarded as an importation from Graeco-Roman culture.

A word about *Yavanajātaka*

As previously mentioned, while the Vedic literature does testify to the presence of planets, their appearance as personified deities is believed to be a subsequent development. In the view of David Pingree, it was not before the second century AD that the planets acquired their anthropomorphic form and were accorded astrological power in India. Pingree claimed that this anthropomorphism and astrological association were a product of the Graeco-Roman influence. However, this view has faced opposition in recent times. Again, Pingree, a historian of science, is known for his theory of transmission of Greek astrology to India. He discusses Hellenistic characterizations of Indian planetary deities and

41 See e.g. a thirteenth-century sculpture from Orissa in the British Museum, inv. 1951,0720.3 (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1951-0720-3>; last consulted 21 March 2024).
42 Kochhar (2010), 291.

traces their artistic representations to a Sanskrit translation of what he argues to be originally an Alexandrian Greek text on astrology. Pingree identifies the author of the text as Yavaneśvara who wrote the work in AD 149/50[43] while at the court of the Western Kṣatrapa king Rudradāman I (reigned *c.* AD 130-160), a Śaka ruler. Although the original work is no longer extant, and Pingree identifies the text *Yavanajātaka* (literally meaning 'The Horoscopy of the Greeks') as the Sanskrit translation of the lost Greek text. The *Yavanajātaka* was composed around AD 269/70 by Sphujidhvaja (regarded as an 'Indianized Greek') during the reign of Rudrasena II (reigned *c.* AD 255-276 – another Western Kṣatrapa ruler).

Yavanajātaka holds significant historical importance in the fields of Indology, history of mathematics and astral science, Indian chronology, and historical contacts among ancient cultures. This extensive work, comprising 79 chapters, has in it a large variety of topics related to horoscopy and natural astrology including the delineation of the planets (Sūrya, Candra, and five other planetary deities) in anthropomorphic form, their respective lords, characteristics, physiological traits, predictions relating to professions, predictions of the future on the basis of inquiries, omens, and military astrology.[44] The *Yavanajātaka*, suggests Pingree, was also a source that seems to have influenced the works of Varāhamihira (*c.* AD 505-587) and his son(?) Pṛthuyaśas (seventh or eighth century AD), *Bṛhatparāśarahorāśāstra* of Parāśara (seventh to eighth century AD), and *Sārāvalī* of Kalyāṇavarman (*c.* AD 800).

Though Pingree has put forth this theory suggesting that *Yavanajātaka* is a translation of an original Greek work, there are compelling reasons for regarding the original Indian character of *Yavanajātaka*, the work which serves as a foundational text for subsequent Indian astrological works and a source for later visual art, as beyond debate. The purported original Greek work, highlighted by Pingree as forming the basis of the *Yavanajātaka*, is for all we know lost. And needless to say, this in itself presents a considerable challenge because with the original so-called Greek text being not extant, the translation of the text looks to be a non-entity.[45]

The date and the nature of the text have been reconsidered by Bill Mak in the light of new textual evidence, including an unreported paper manuscript of the *Yavanajātaka* from Nepal.[46] Notably, Pingree concedes that a substantial portion of Sphujidhvaja's material does not originate from Greek sources but rather derives from the ancient Sanskrit tradition of military astrology. Moreover, Pingree's assertion of the *Yavanajātaka* being a translation of a Greek original remains unsubstantiated. Also on this issue, Subhash Kak raises doubts about the accuracy of the dates presented by Pingree which are not present in the manuscript from Nepal used by him, and asserts that they rather seem to be made up by Pingree. K.S. Shukla points out that Pingree's translation of *Yavanajātaka* is marred by faulty editing and incorrect readings and misinterpretations at several places. Therefore, Shukla continues, the meaning really intended by the author often seems to be unclear. Consequently, it appears more plausible to consider the *Yavanajātaka* as an indigenous Indian work rather than as a translation of some work written in the Greek language.

In his 'Introduction', Pingree argues, 'the prose translation of Yavaneśvara was evidently deemed an unsuitable vehicle for the transmission of *śāstric* knowledge'.[47] He, therefore, proposes that Sphujidhvaja was forced to versify the work in AD 269/270, during Rudradasena II's rule. Pingree, however, offers no convincing reason or evidence which shows Yavaneśvara's work was found to be unacceptable or unsuitable in India. Further, in his 'Commentary', Pingree discusses Sphujidhvaja introducing new

43 Pingree (1965), 250.
44 Sarma (2008), 2342-3.
45 Is it not possible that the *Yavanajātaka* is a commentary on some text?
46 Mak (2013), 1. See also Shukla (1989), 211.
47 Pingree (1978), vol. 2, 4.

chapters to 'Indianize' the text. These include, for instance, the chapters on reincarnation (Chapter 43); minerals, plants and animals which were influenced by *āyurveda* (Chapter 62); military astrology, which, as he mentions, was based on Sanskrit sources such as *Gargasaṃhitā* (Chapters 73-76: which talks about expeditions that are derived from the Sanskrit tradition of military astrology rather than being an importation from any Greek source [48]); and the reference to *Vaśiṣṭhasiddhānta* (an early astronomical text, dated; Chapter 79-3).[49] The presence of such a number of Indian concepts and terms in the text militates against its being taken as a translated text from an original Greek work. There are many other Indian elements running through the *Yavanajātaka* such as the discussions on *karma*, 28 *nakṣatras* and description of Indian deities (e.g., Chapter 77 begins with prescribing sacrifice to the gods of the planets that include Jala [water], Vahni [fire], Viṣṇu, Prajāpati, Skanda, Mahendra, and Devi[50] with many of them being Vedic deities). Further, the text talks about *apacaya*[51] ('diminution, decay, decrease; N. of several planetary mansions"), *upacaya*[52] ('accumulation, increase, growth'), and the *kapālikas* (skull-bearers) that do not find attestation or reference in any Greek source – all of which makes it very doubtful that the prose text was Greek or that any original work in Greek ever existed. All of this rather points towards the indigenous origins of the concepts. What, therefore, looks more plausible to maintain is that the *Yavanajātaka* was an Indian *jyotiṣa* text that came to incorporate certain Greek elements.[53] The date assigned to it falls after AD 22 and as late as the early seventh century.[54]

Further, the references and description of planetary deities going so far back as the Vedic corpus underscore more of an Indian lineage and character rather than a Graeco-Roman association. The indigenous roots of the planetary deities also need to be corroborated from their iconographic traits. Whether these deities appear in a group of nine, eight, or seven planets or as individual deities, the examples suggesting their Indian character surpass those reflecting Graeco-Roman artistic traits.

Conclusion

Considering all of this, it seems evident that while there are some parallels between the *navagraha*s and the planetary deities of Graeco-Roman culture, striking differences also unambiguously exist. What it means is that skeptical voices on the issue not withstanding, a fair appraisal of it requires our taking into account their iconography as well as mythological and literary sources. In any case, on the whole it seems more reasonable to maintain (i) that the text *Yavanajātaka* bears an essential Indian character and (ii) that, therefore, the source(s) forming the basis of the artistic representations of the *navagraha*s too was Indian, rather than otherwise.

Bibliography

Dutt, M.N. (1986), *Ṛg-veda Samhitā* (English translation), vol. 1; reprint of 1906 edition (New Delhi: Parimal Publications).

Gansten, M. (2009), 'Navagrahas', in K.A. Jacobsen, H. Basu, A. Malinar, and V. Narayan (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill), 647-53.

Gods and Goddesses of Greece and Rome (2011), (New York: Marshall Cavendish Reference).

Kak, S. (2011), *The Astronomical Code of the Ṛgveda*, 3rd edn. (Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University).

48 Pingree (1978), vol. 2, 'Commentary', 389.

49 Pingree (1978), vol. 1, 4-5.

50 Pingree (1978), vol. 2, 183.

51 *Apacaya* indicates when the planets located in the *apacaya* houses in a horoscope – first, second, fourth, seventh, and eighth – lose their strength with time.

52 *Upacaya* refers to the houses of growth in Vedic astrology. In this the planets located in third, sixth, tenth, and eleventh houses in a horoscope grow in strength and give progressively better results as one gets older.

53 See also Mak (2013), 16.

54 Ibid., 17.

Kochhar, R. (2010), 'Rahu and Ketu in Mythological and "Astronomical" Contexts', *Indian Journal of Science* 45/2 (June): 287-97.
Mak, B. (2013), 'The Date and Nature of Sphujidhvaja's Yavanajātaka Reconsidered in the Light of Some Newly Discovered Materials', *History of Science in South Asia*, 1: 1-20.
Mani, V. (1975), *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia: A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Purāṇic Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).
Markel, S. (1991), 'The Genesis of the Indian Planetary Deities', *East and West*, December, 41/1-4: 173-88.
Markel, S. (1995), *Origins of the Indian Planetary Deities* (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellon Press).
Pingree, D. (1963), 'Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran', *Isis* 54/2 (June): 229-46.
Pingree, D. (1965), 'Representation of the Planets in Indian Astrology', *Indo-Iranian Journal,* 8/4: 249-67.
Sarma, K.V. (2008), 'Yavaneśvara', in H. Selin (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, 2nd edn. (New York: Springer), vol. 2: 2342-3.
Shukla, K.S. (1989), 'The *Yuga* of the *Yavanajataka*: David Pingree's Text and Translation Reviewed', *Indian Journal of History of Science* 24/4, 211-23.
Sivapriyananda, S. (1990), *Astrology and Religion in Indian Art* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications).
The Ashtādhyāyī of Pāṇiṇi. (1896), translated by S.C. Vasu, Book IV, (Benares: Panini Office).
The Hymns of the Rigveda. (1896), translated with a popular commentary by R. Griffith, Vol. 1 (2nd ed.; Banaras: E.J. Lazarus).
The Hymns of the Rigveda. (1897), translated with a popular commentary by R. Griffith, Vol. 2 (2nd ed.; Banaras: E.J. Lazarus).
The Raghuvaṃśa of Kālidāsa. (1924), edited and translated by M.R. Kale, Cantos XI to XV (Bombay: P.S. Rege).
The Vishnudharmottara. (1928), translated by S. Kramrisch, Part 3, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press).
The Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja (1978), 2 vols. Edited, translated and commented by D. Pingree (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press).
Varahamihira's Brihat Jataka. (1956), translated by V.S. Sastri, 2nd ed. (Bangalore: Sadhana Press).
Whitney, W.D. and Lanman, C.R. (eds.) (1905), *Atharva-Veda Saṁhitā, Translated with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary. Second Half: Books VIII to XIX* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University).

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-09

Reflections of Roman Art in Southern India: Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa[1]

Elizabeth Rosen Stone

In the first three centuries of the Common Era, the Buddhist art of South India was influenced by Roman artistic conventions. There was active trade between India and Rome in which Rome imported Indian spices, especially pepper, gems, ivory, and other luxury goods, while India was paid in Roman gold and silver coins.[2] We know from inscriptional evidence that Roman coins often reached the hands of patrons who built Buddhist monastic compounds. Much of the trade went through intermediaries, but there are some Tamil literary references to *Yavanas* (probably Romans) in Southern India, cited by Nagaswamy which state that there were sculptors and artisans who contributed to the construction of the monuments in different regions.[3] There is vast literature on this trade, but the artistic results of trade are barely mentioned, in comparison to similar confluences throughout world art: and more so, since Gandhāra, the north-west part of ancient India, has been studied and re-studied for generations. However, South India still needs to be addressed as it has been all too often ignored. While the subject of this article is classical influence on Indian sculpture, Western visual sources also permeated the minor arts. Andhra terracottas have clear Western prototypes, as Deshpande has taught us.[4] Roman coins were found in India, and Indian copies were made of them.[5] While there are various theories as to how they were used, Roman originals and Indian copies became parts of jewellery. Necklaces containing gold coins were popular; clay copies of them were also made, presumably for less affluent people, as can be seen in the finds from the trading city of Ter, midway between the east and west coasts of India.[6]

There was never a time when India, with its two long coasts running up and down the enormous sub-continent, functioned in complete isolation. Greek cultural influence upon India has been discussed in a book by Richard Stoneman.[7] Roman influence should theoretically have begun with the inclusion of Egypt into the Roman empire. This took place upon the arrival of Octavian (later called Augustus) in 30 BC following his defeat of Marc Antony and Cleopatra in the battle of Actium. From that time, on, military garrisons were formed to protect the stability of Egypt, and active trade with India had increased. It is not surprising that one begins to see battles in Indian art first appearing around that time at Sanchi.[8]

1 This paper is based upon my paper given at the Classical Art Research Centre's workshop in Oxford in March 2023. I thank Peter Stewart for his invitation and for a brief but concise suggestion. Beginning in the 1960s, the influence of classical art in Southern India had been integrated into all my studies on Indian art. Many scholars deny this influence, so I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak at Oxford. My late husband Richard E. Stone encouraged me to study Roman sarcophagi, and Peter Stewart encouraged me to refine this study which led me to look at third-century Roman sources.

2 It is important not to think of this trade as direct and solely between two countries. Trade had been going on for centuries in India and India/Rome trade was to join the many countries participating in the ancient Indian Ocean trade. See Simmons (2022a), 371-401.

3 Nagaswamy (1995), 98. In his brief book, Nagaswamy was the first Indian archaeologist to have serious understanding of the impact of Rome upon Indian art. While many scholars reject the idea of Roman influence, the archaeologists find abundant evidence for the trade.

4 Deshpande (1965), 603-10. This seminal article is brief and has too few illustrations. It is worth taking the time look up all the footnotes to understand his thesis fully. It describes the evolution from a beautiful white kaolin terracotta from Ter which clearly has a classical prototype, to a gradual Indianization through the centuries. See also Brancaccio (2005) and (2014).

5 Simmons (2022b), 221-4, and in the present volume.

6 Sivaramamurti (1942), 111 mentions a reference to 'a string of dināras on the breast'. Line drawings of these can be seen on pl. VIII, 24 and 29. See Stone (1994), 30 and fig. 46 for clay versions.

7 Stoneman (2019). See also his contribution to the present volume.

8 Guy (2023), 244.

Figure 1. Roman bronze figurine of Poseidon, excavated at Brahmapuri. Town Hall Museum, Kolhapur, Maharashtra. (Photo: courtesy of Richard Daniel de Puma.)

Trade between Rome and India was centred on commercial goods. Nevertheless, the knowledge of Western art seeped into India through various means, and certainly not with the active intention of its being copied. Only one important Western work of art was discovered in India. A bronze of Poseidon, god of the sea (Figure 1) was discovered at the site of Brahmapuri in the state of Maharashtra.[9] It is a copy of a famous original by Lysippos, the favorite sculptor of Alexander the Great, who accompanied him on his trip to the East.[10] The original of the Brahmapuri Poseidon was a large sculpture done in 340 BC, but the hand-size copy, which appears to have been made in Alexandria, probably dates to the first century AD.[11] It is a very detailed sculpture in the round and its magnificent, twisting, muscular body may be seen from all sides. Despite its appearance as a massive sculpture in photographs, it is only 15 cm high and can be held easily in one hand. It is so detailed that it appears to be cast by a jeweller. I know of no Indian copies or adaptations of this work. Despite this, there must have been many more bronzes which found their way to India and were eventually melted down for reuse, not necessarily for artistic purposes, but for tools and kitchen utensils such as jugs and other water-pots frequently used for ritual purposes.[12] The Brahmapuri Poseidon and a beautiful Indian ivory chair leg excavated in Pompeii[13] are the two major objects which attest to a two way exchange between India and the Roman world.

This paper is centred on the sculpture of Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa which was originally used to adorn stupas. Stupas are reliquary mounds that contain relics of the Buddha or Buddhist saints. They are decorated with narratives of the life and former lives of the Buddha and bear a Buddhist message. From a stylistic point of view, the sculpture at Amarāvatī reveals conspicuous aspects of Roman art. The earliest sculpture at Amarāvatī goes back to the second century BC, but by the first century AD one can see reflections of Roman art in them. This of course does not prevent the sculptures from being pleasing to the eye and suitable for worship, for as Coomaraswamy wrote of Amarāvatī in 1927,[14]

9 Stone (2023), 184-86; De Puma (1991), 82-7, figs. 5.1-5.3.

10 For a Hellenistic copy of this bronze from Pella see Stone (2004), 74-5, figs. 12 and 13.

11 De Puma (1991), 82-5. This and other imported bronzes found at Brahmapuri were placed in ships as ballast. Many other bronzes must have come into India but have been lost to the Indian tradition which is to melt down an old metal object to create a new one.

12 See for examples, a group of objects in Sivaramamurti (1942) pl. vi, nos. 18-31; Brancaccio (2023), figs. 89-92.

13 Guy (2023), 182-83, pls. 95-6.

14 Coomaraswamy (1965), 70-1.

> It would hardly be possible to exaggerate the luxurious beauty or the technical proficiency of the Amarāvatī reliefs; this is the most voluptuous and delicate flower of Indian sculpture.

But it was Stella Kramrisch, with her magnificent ability to remember and analyse the details of any work of art, wrote in 1933,[15]

> Hellenism reached southern India by way of trade. As also in the school of Mathurā, it was neither dully accepted nor was it misunderstood by the south Indian artists. It is significant that their interest was captivated, as a few reliefs show, not by Hellenistic anatomy and modelling but by the contrapost, the Hellenic tradition of carrying the weight of one's body.

A well-known relief of Queen Māyā's Bath from Amarāvatī (Figure 2) with the two standing figures facing forward shows the early use of *contrapposto* in India. The central figure has been identified as Venus Anadyomene by Martina Stoye.[16] A Hellenistic bronze sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 3) serves as the type of figure which may have been seen in India. In this case, the artisan had not only adapted this type of figure for *contrapposto*, but for the posture of the Anadyomene figure as it was used in classical art and survived in many Renaissance and post-Renaissance works of art.

Figure 2. Queen Māyā's Bath from Amarāvatī. Chennai, Madras Government Museum. (Photo: C. Luczanits 2006, courtesy of the Government Museum, Chennai.)

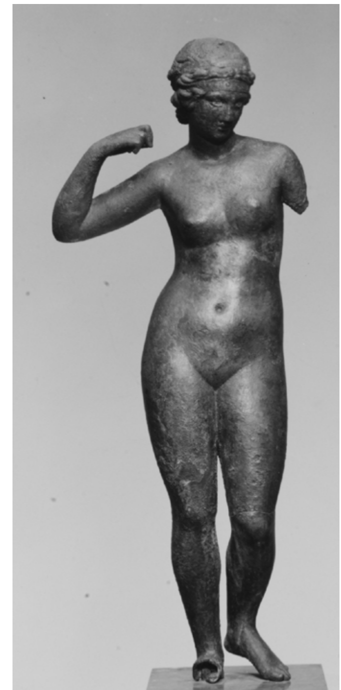

Figure 3. Bronze statuette of Aphrodite, from Greece, late Hellenistic period, second or first century BC. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr & Mrs Francis Neilson, 1935, 35.122. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, public domain.)

15 Kramrisch (1933), 46. It is not well known that Kramrisch was conversant with Western art.
16 Stoye (2006), 224-33.

The following provide excellent clues about sources for the art of Andhra. The study of inscriptions from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and terracottas found throughout the Deccan have been of great support in discussing Roman influence in southern India. So have Roman coins, Iliac tablets, Roman sarcophagi, Roman paintings, and imperial Roman sculpture (particularly dealing with military themes). The subject is endless. The Indian religious function is well discussed by others.[17]

The major works from the railing at Amarāvatī had long been dated from the second to the third centuries AD. However, new studies by Akira Shimada date the major works at Amarāvatī back to the first century AD.[18] This is followed by a hiatus and other works overlap with the third-century sculptures of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. While I have found it difficult to adapt to the new dates, they solve a problem in that they close the long gap between a Western prototype that I had chosen for a particular work of art from Amarāvatī and the classically influenced relief. The bulk of trade is documented in the first century, and it appears to peter out during the second and third centuries. Nevertheless, we have both numismatic and stylistic resonances of the Roman world in Andhra Pradesh during the third century. While most of the iconographic sources have their roots in India there is something in many of the compositions that separate them from more traditional Indian art, an art whose style is difficult to define. Those parts of the composition are often found to be from the classical world,[19] concerning the structure of a composition, the use of perspective, and the relationship of individuals to each other and to the composition.

While many minor Western objects have been found in India, apart from one terracotta and one coin, we have not yet been able to show a one-to-one correspondence between a Western work of art found in Southern India and an Indian stone sculpture based upon it. Nevertheless, we must presume that those works of Indian and Western art that had survived are representative of a larger corpus of what Indian artists saw, for the art of Andhra Pradesh speaks loudly and tells us to search for Roman sources. Consequently, I have no choice but to cite works of art from the Roman world itself, as similar works of art must have been seen through copies. But an unexpected result of this study is that an occasional work of Indian art reveals more than one source, which tells us that south Indian artists saw a much wider collection of Roman art than originally anticipated. Other than the speculation that Indian artists saw Roman art in some form or other, we must believe that Roman artisans lived and worked in India as stated in the Tamil literature.[20] But for us, the ultimate evidence is the structure of the art itself.

From the first to early fourth centuries, the repertory of Buddhist narrative subjects was expanding, and many new stupas needed to be adorned. At that time, Rome must have been the single largest centre of sculptural production on the planet, and Indian Buddhists were finding new ways to produce sculpture that would attract lay worshippers. Fortunately, Roman artisans dealt swiftly with complex compositions that could be used in India for the rapid growth of Buddhist Art. What the south Indian artists gained from Rome is a clear sense of hierarchy and the use of perspective, but most of all, its tremendous energy, which makes the art of the Amarāvatī school so very special. South Indian artists borrowed big and small compositions from the Roman world and adapted them to Buddhist narrative. It is important to stress that Indian sculptors from Andhra Pradesh never tried to create a Buddhist sculpture that looked Roman. They simply tried to borrow motifs and techniques to make

17 An excellent discussion of rituals performed at the stupa is by Catherine Becker in Becker (2015), 1-124.
18 Shimada (2013), chapter 2, 66-112.
19 Two exceptions are the appearance of Bactrian camels at both Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.
20 Suresh (1991), 631-3.

their compositions look better. Classical influence on south India has been mentioned in a few general textbooks by Stella Kramrisch,[21] Benjamin Rowland[22] and Susan Huntington.[23]

I was first introduced to the narrative art of Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in 1964, when an extraordinary exhibition of Indian art came to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Amongst the sculptural treasures were two narrative reliefs: one from Amarāvatī representing the Presentation of Rāhula to his father, the Buddha (Figure 4) and the other was from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa representing unknown scenes (Figure 22).[24] The central one is clearly a battle scene. This is peculiar because battles are not usually part of the Buddhist tradition. The difference between these two sculptures is one of time: the Amarāvatī works which I illustrate here were done in the first century AD, while the bulk of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa sculptures were carved in the third century. It was particularly the Amarāvatī roundel that confused me, as a young student, because it conflicted with the definitions of Asian which I had learned as an undergraduate. But it was the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa sculptures that taught me the complexities of one culture adapting individual elements from another culture. 1964 was the only time I ever saw the two sculptures in the same room. I have discussed and published both repeatedly, each time finding a new approach.[25]

The thesis of this paper is that Indian artists and/or Roman artists working in India, understood Western painting. A major question is, 'How is the knowledge of images transported one place to another, especially since there are very few instances of Roman art found in India?' The question applies both to the transmission of images from one place to another within India, and equally to the transport of images from the classical world. Part of the answer must lie in the presence of paintings that were executed on impermanent materials and are no longer available to us. On the basis of Indian texts, Coomaraswamy cited evidence for the existence of Indian painting, including scroll painting.[26] An Indian painter could easily have copied Roman painting and expanded its influence within India. Even though we have not yet found existence of these paintings, Maurizio Taddei[27] strongly believed that there existed a tradition of painting in Andhra Pradesh that was used to transfer images to later painting in Ajanta. It is my own belief that paintings or drawings were used to transfer Buddhist themes from one Buddhist site to another, which explains repetition of compositions across sites. Thus, the iconography could be kept intact while the stylistic details were either modified, or not, according to the preference of the artist or supervisor at each site.

We begin with the Amarāvatī roundel which shows the Presentation of Rāhula asking for his inheritance from his father the Buddha (Figure 4).[28] It was originally on a crossbar of the Great Stupa at Amarāvatī . The Amarāvatī roundel is deeply carved by creating four planes receding into a near distance, thereby giving the impression of perspective. The Buddha is represented aniconically by an empty throne, in front of which is a small foot-rest with images of the Buddha's feet. Behind the chair stands the symbolic representation of the flaming Buddha topped by a *triratna* (the three jewels of the Buddha). Aniconic images of the Buddha are typical of Andhra reliefs, although Buddha images appear largely toward the end of the Andhra narrative tradition. At the base of the composition are two women paying homage

21 Kramrisch (1933), 46.
22 Rowland (1977), 210-214. This edition of Rowland's important textbook was revised and updated by J.C. Harle. Little is said of Roman influence in Andhra in the earliest edition of Rowland's book. I suspect this is Harle's addition.
23 Huntington (1985), 176.
24 Lee (1964), no. 43 and 46.
25 Particularly Stone (2016, 2008, 2005, 2006)
26 Coomaraswamy (1929), 182-7.
27 Taddei (2003), 29-30; Spink (2009), 41 suggested that painted compositions at Ajanta were laid out in cloth before proceeding to work on the painting.
28 For a variant of the story see Knox (1992), 60 and fig. 12, inner face. Here we see Rāhula's mother presenting the child to the Buddha. Further discussion of the subject is in Sivaramamurti (1942), 100.

to the Buddha's feet. The method of carving this relief is unique to Amarāvatī and suggests that it was carved by a master sculptor who was trying to achieve Western perspective. While the eye of the viewer goes to the back of the throne, which is at the deepest level of the actual stone, the worshippers are at the highest point (representing *us*, the viewer, as the worshipper). Now let us compare this image to a painting which celebrates the cult of Isis, excavated at Herculaneum (Figure 5). In both cases, the movement is toward a central axis which has two main groups. In the foreground of the Amarāvatī sculpture figure, a male figure bends towards the Buddha's throne, pushing forth the young child Rāhula. In the middle ground, we see a flaming pillar behind the altar topped by a triratna. In the Herculaneum example the foreground consists of a priest bending toward the altar, while in the middle ground, the figure of Isis parallels the tall back of the throne. In both cases, parallel groups of onlookers and worshippers move toward the middle ground and are seen in perspective.

Figure 4. Presentation of Rāhula on a crossbar from the Amarāvatī stupa railing. Amarāvatī, Archaeological Museum. (Photo: after P. Stern and M. Bénisti, Évolution du style indien d'Āmarāvatī *[Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961], pl. XXXa.)*

What causes these two works of art to be similar? They both have similar compositions, despite the difference in subject matter. In the Isis painting, the illusion of depth is achieved by converging lines and the use of *chiaroscuro.* However, the Amarāvatī relief is carved in stone, and as far as we know, it was never painted. I suggest that the Amarāvatī sculptor was impressed by the sense of depth in works such as the Herculaneum painting and tried to copy it by digging into the stone. How then did the Amarāvatī sculptor see Roman painting? It is possible that drawings of such compositions circulated in India? Or is it possible that an artisan

Figure 5. Scene of the cult of Isis in a Roman fresco from Herculaneum, c. second quarter of first century AD. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 8924. (Photo: copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

or his son came from Italy to teach about perspective? It is important here to note that the use of the structural elements of Roman painting in no way changes the Buddhist narrative. For after Rāhula asks the Buddha for his inheritance, the Buddha answers that Rāhula is to become a monk. As in the Herculaneum example, there are two major groups of people in the composition. The group, urging Rāhula on, is on the side of Rāhula, while on the opposite are the monks preparing to ordain Rāhula , thereby giving him his inheritance.[29]

There are other aspects of the composition which remind us of Roman art. Looking at a detail of this roundel (Figure 6), at the left lower quarter of the composition is the young Rāhula, being urged to go forth and ask his father for his inheritance. In early Buddhist narrative, children are rarely represented but when they are represented, there is no human interaction between an adult and a child, except when there is strong Western influence.[30] There are many such reliefs of adults with children in Roman art, particularly in the Ara Pacis.[31] My favorite comparison with the Amarāvatī relief is a detail from Trajan's Column (Figure 7), in which a Dacian elder gathers together women and children. He shows a particular sensitivity towards the reluctant child as he urges him to move forward. Another motif with Western parallels is the use of a curtain as a backdrop for major events in a relief, which is seen at the top of the composition. This motif is common in Hellenistic and Roman art. A pertinent example found

Figure 6. Detail of the Presentation of Rāhula in Figure 4.

Figure 7. Scene 39, showing Dacian adult and child, from the Column of Trajan, Rome (plaster cast in Museo della Civiltà Romana). (Photo: copyright Roger B. Ulrich.)

29 Stone (2008), 101.
30 Stone (1994), fig. 37. It seems to be from a yet unknown classical source.
31 Brendel refers to a naturalistic rendition of details on the Ara Pacis: Brendel (1979), 50.

Figure 8. Comedy Scene on a Roman Relief. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 6687. (Photo: copyright Alinari Archives/Art Resource, NY.)

in Pompeii takes place in a theatre, and on the stage is a comedy (Figure 8);[32] here the curtain relates to other architectural elements as in the Amarāvatī work. In both examples, the curtain sets apart only a small group of people, while in Western art, the curtain is used as a background for a play. Thus, even though we have chosen one work of art to represent a prototype for the Rāhula composition, it gradually becomes clear that the artists of Amarāvatī had a large variety of compositions and individual motifs available to them which they could adapt to their own needs.

I have used the Presentation of Rāhula as a model to show how we can loosely reconstruct the types of images that the talented artists working at Amarāvatī might have seen. I will continue with variants at Amarāvatī before going on to the sculpture of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa which has different sources. Pompeii seems to illustrate the source for other compositions at Amarāvatī. Our knowledge of classical painting is heavily dependent on wall paintings excavated in Pompeii and Herculaneum, which were fortuitously preserved through the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.

32 Spinazzola (1928), 74; Stone (2008), fig. 2. For other examples see also Pollitt (1986), 196-7, figs. 210-211.

An Amarāvatī relief of Suddhodana's visit to Queen Maya (Figure 9)[33] now in the Madras Government Museum in Chennai, is an obvious response to the use of architectural settings in Roman art to create the illusion of perspective, as in a painting in the House of Lucretius Fronto at Pompeii (Figure 10). The Pompeii painter created a composition in which two wings of a building come forward, apportioning off the distant space, while at the top of the Amarāvatī composition is a building with two wings coming forth, creating a similar effect.[34]

Figure 9. Suddhodana's Visit to Queen Maya on a crossbar of the Amarāvatī Stupa. Chennai, Madras Government Museum. (Photo: C. Luczanits 2006, courtesy of the Government Museum, Chennai.)

Figure 10. Wall painting from the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto, Pompeii. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. (Photo: copyright De A Picture Library/Art Resource, NY.)

But there is another sculpture from Amarāvatī which I have not previously discussed. It is a crossbar from the Amarāvatī stupa representing the Worship of the Buddha as a Flaming Pillar (Figure 11). The throne, an aniconic representation of the Buddha, is similar to the one represented in the Presentation of Rāhula (Figure 4), except that the throne does not have the same deep perspective. In this relief, we find a uniquely complex arrangement of architectural elements, to my knowledge not found elsewhere in early Indian art. Roofs and ground lines form sharp diagonals, combined with horizontal and vertical lines that show the limits of a compound. It appears that the events had taken place in an open courtyard, with a few worshippers at the entrance to the compound, paying homage to the Buddha from a distance. The whole composition is in bird's-eye view. There is one Western form of art which stands out as a possible prototype for this sculpture. It is the *Tabulae Iliacae* (or Iliac Tablets), a series of twenty small tablets cut from marble and made in or around Rome from the first century BC to the mid-second century. In contrast to the Amarāvatī Relief, which shows one scene in a well-known narrative, the Iliac tablets

33 The same story appears in an Amarāvatī roundel currently in the British Museum. The sculptor of the piece added a traditional Indian gate to the composition. Knox (1992) 81, no. 25, inner face.
34 For other examples see my article, Stone (2006).

Figure 11. Worship of the Buddha as a Flaming Pillar, Crossbar of the railing of the Amarāvatī, Amarāvatī, The British Museum, 1800.0709.119. (Photo: copyright The Trustees of the British Museum.)

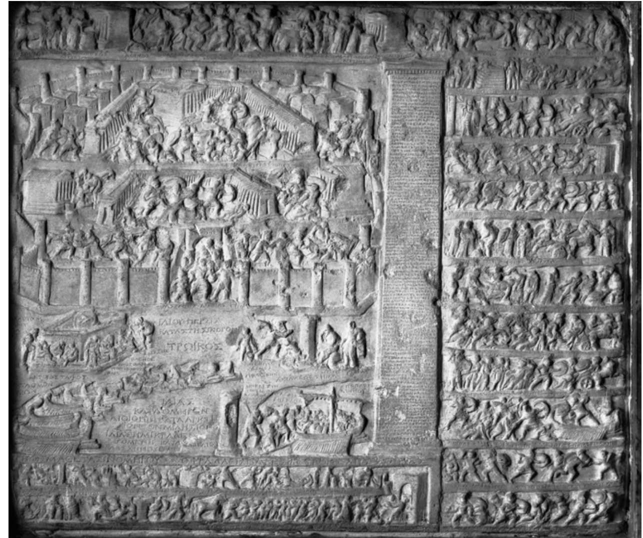

Figure 12. Tabula Iliaca, c. first century AD, Capitoline Museum in Rome. (Photo: copyright Alinari Archives/ Fratelli Alinari/ Art Resource, NY.)

show a complex combination of story and text creating a continuous narrative across the surface. This unusual format is possibly derived from scroll painting on papyrus.[35] The best known of the Iliac tablets is the Tabula Iliaca Capitolina in the Capitoline Museum in Rome (Figure 12). The main portion of the composition illustrates the Flight of Aeneas from Troy.[36] However, it is not the details or the subject matter that interested the Amarāvatī sculptor. It is the sharp angles that frame the central composition. By comparing the two compositions, we find that the worshippers of the Buddha are seated in gates that parallel the gates of Troy.[37]

As we move from the sculptures of Amarāvatī to those of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa we are entering different territory. We can no longer quote the wise words of our elders, as the excavations at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa were completed in 1960 and the final excavation report was published in 2006. Fortuitously, in 1994 I was able to publish my own book, *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* laying out a basic chronology of the site and touching upon Roman influence.[38] Since that time, there has been a significant change in Andhra Buddhist studies. Most important are the discoveries of the archaeological sites of Phanigiri in Andhra [39] and Kanaganahalli in Karnataka,[40] which create a framework for the Buddhist art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. These discoveries allow us to study both the predecessors and successors of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Smaller sites have also been found and have been brought together in the exhibition and catalogue, *Tree and Serpent Worship.*[41] This allows us to see sculptures of the different sites together as would otherwise be impossible.

35 Pollitt (1986), 204, with a quote from quote from Weitzmann (1947), 40.
36 Because the action in the panel is difficult to see in a photograph, line drawings are helpful: e.g. Brilliant (1984), 55, fig. 1.
37 A simplified version of the Iliac tablet in the Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw, published by Sadurska (1964), represents an event from the Odyssey in which we can easily see the city walls (pl. XII).
38 This could not have happened without the incredible support of H. Sarkar, Joint Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India.
39 Pandya Dhar in Guy (2023), 248-250.
40 For an overview of Kanaganahalli see Zin (2023); Poonacha (2011). For comparisons of Kanaganahalli with Amaravati, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and the Begram ivories see Stone (2008b)
41 Guy and Patil (2023).

Amarāvatī was first discovered at the end of the eighteenth century. The bulk of its sculptures are divided among the Madras Government Museum in Chennai, the British Museum in London, and the Archaeological Survey of India's Museum at Amarāvatī in Guntur District. The sculptures of Amarāvatī are well-known and have been the subject of many important studies. The sculptures of the other sites are more difficult to access as they are in regional museums near their excavation sites.

The Indian scholarly community first learned about Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in 1925, when a local schoolteacher found fragments of inscribed stone in Brahmi script and Prakrit language in the area which we now call Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. The ancient name of the site is Vijayapurī. In ancient times, the site was near the Krishna River system, which afforded easy transportation between the Buddhist sites. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa underwent several excavations between 1926 and 1937. Its final excavation took place between 1954 and 1960, just before the site was submerged to build the magnificent Nargarjunasagar Dam. As many sculptures as possible were rescued and brought up to the medieval hill fort, also called Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, in the middle of the lake (Nargarjunasagar). Other structures were rebuilt on the hillsides and many submerged buildings exist in small models which can be seen in the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa Museum. It was not until 2006, that final official publication appeared, long after several of the archaeologists passed away.[42]

I first arrived in 1971, when the valley was already submerged and the water in Nargarjunasagar had not yet reached full height. Aside from the museum, and a sampling of monastic compounds, the island contains the transplanted Mahācetiya or Great Stupa, which originally housed a relic of the Buddha. Originally, the structure was 106 feet (32.3 m) in diameter, it had a five-foot (1.5 m) tall drum, and the dome was originally 70 to 80 feet (21.3 to 24.4 m) high. Protruding from the round base are four rectangular platforms, in four directions. Each platform has five pillars on which contain donative inscriptions dated to the sixth regnal year of King Vīrapuruṣadatta (mid-third century AD). This stupa and other Buddhist edifices contained important historical information. Even though Ikṣvāku Kings of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa were Hindus, their female relatives contributed to the Buddhist communities. Large donations were made by various Buddhist groups, these being paid in Roman gold coins.

An interesting aspect of this is that a female lay worshipper named Bodhisiri built a Great Shrine and a stone pavilion at Kantakosala (Ghantaśāla), an important emporium on the east coast of India. But the most quoted inscription regards the claim that, 'Theravādin Monks [who dwelt in Nāgārjunakoṇḍa] from Tambapaṁni (modern day Śri Lanka) converted the monks of seven different regions in India including Gandhāra and Kashmir'.[43] While most of the area of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa is underwater, sculptures and inscriptions inform us that under the Ikṣvāku dynasty, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa had a vibrant monastic community which benefitted from international trade. Ikṣvākus of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa were wealthy and well-connected.

Nāgārjunakoṇḍa is largely a third-century site, which is influenced by later Roman art, even though it had been generally believed that most of the trade with Rome, which passed through Egyptian intermediaries, took place during the first century AD. At Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, it is the details in the sculptures which attest to knowledge of late Roman art. Further evidence is a gold coin of Septimius Severus, who reigned from 193 to 211, which was excavated in Yeleśwaram (a site contiguous to Nāgārjunakoṇḍa), in the same level at which a painted jar of Roman origin was also unearthed.[44] At that

42 Soundararajan (2006).
43 Vogel (1929-30), 22-23.
44 Turner (1989), 86; Khan (1963), 14-15. Khan reports that Pameshwari Lal Gupta identified the coin.

Figure 13. Drawing of a Roman-style terracotta head excavated at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. (Drawing: Emilio Martinez after Soundararajan [2006], pl. 123C, 363.)

Figure 14. Head of Bacchus from the Casa di Marco Lucrezio, Pompeii. Naples Museo Archeologico Nazionale. (Photo: courtesy of Eugene Dwyer.)

time, there was still contact between south India and Roman Egypt, which had been confirmed by finds at Berenike,[45] as well as other trading posts[46] on the Red Sea.

While Buddhist narrative is the core of my study, I would like to point out a small third century AD terracotta (Figure 13) excavated at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and published by Subrahmanyam.[47] I have only seen this piece in a photograph but based upon the image, it appears to have a Roman source. It is described as made of fine red ware. Its style is typical of third-century Deccani terracottas. We could compare it with a stone head (Figure 14) excavated at the Casa di Marco Lucrezio in Pompeii datable to the first century AD and published by Eugene V. Dwyer.[48] The Pompeii head is made of *rosso antico* marble and it represents an unbearded Bacchus intended for a herm. Long wavy tresses descend from behind his ears and a crown of leaves is studded with clusters of ivy-berries, two in the centre and one over each ear. Several other such herms were found at Pompeii, but they are not as close to the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa terracotta. The crown on the terracotta copies the ivy berries on the herm. Line drawings of both objects clarify their similarity. I have shown the image of the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa terracotta with Eugene Dwyer, who noted that in Pompeii, the image would have been called Dionysus.[49] This is puzzling because the cult of Dionysus is well-documented in Gandhāra,[50] but not in southern India.

We begin our study of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa Buddhist narrative, with the Great Departure of the Buddha (Figure 15) which was excavated at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and is now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. This sculpture, as well as many others in Buddhist art, has textual sources in Indian Buddhist literature.[51] While these sources convey the Buddhist message, they do not give the means to represent the stories contained in them. It dates to the early part of the third century or perhaps the end of the

45 Of particular interest is an inscription written in Brahmi script and Sanskrit language dated to the sixth Regnal Year of the Roman Emperor Philip the Arab (AD 248-249) Sidebotham et. al. (2023), 20.
46 Salomon (1991), 733 published an ostracon Prakrit inscription from Quesir in a style close to that of Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.
47 Soundararajan (2006), 363, pl. 123 for description, illustrated on 366, fig. 18, no. 4. The author implies that this terracotta reflects Indo-Scythian sculpture.
48 Dwyer (1982), 25-6, figs. 7-8.
49 Personal communication, 10 August 2023.
50 For an interesting discussion of Dionysus in Gandhāra see Brancaccio and Liu (2009).
51 See Guy (2023), 263, cat. no. 117. There are examples of Hindu narrative at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (Zin [2014], 77-89).

second century.[52] A Roman coin showing the Roman Emperor Hadrian on horseback was excavated at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.[53] I show a coin from the same die formerly in the collection of the Hispanic Society of America (Figure 16). I would not necessarily have made the association, but a Roman emperor with extended right arm in proximity to the Buddha sculpted on horseback in a weak *abhayamudrā* is certainly suggestive. In south India the main events in the Life of the Buddha are aniconic and the Great Departure consists only of a riderless horse (Figure 17).[54] Thus, we must consider that the coin of an emperor on a horse might have introduced a new way of representing an ancient tradition.

A later third century relief of the Great Departure (Figure 18) is even closer to a coin of *profectio/ adventus* type, signifying the emperor going off to war (Figure 19). The diagonal lines of spears on the coin are transformed into the diagonal line of the umbrella held over the head of the Buddha. Look at the figure on the extreme left of the Great Departure; he seems to be dancing to celebrate the event of the Buddha's departure from his home and from his life as a prince. He would like to extend his arms beyond the border of the composition, but is unable to do so. He bends his arms backwards, now reflecting the shape of the top of the umbrella. But now, the diagonals are accentuated by the slender bent legs of the accompanying figure, and parallel to the shape of the umbrella shaft. It is a fascinating abstract composition, vaguely reminiscent of the multiple diagonals of the Portonaccio sarcophagus (Figure 20).[55] While comparing these two may be a bit of a stretch, it is apparent that weapons, in either case, help to create a composition of diagonals in both India and Rome.

An important part of stupas at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa is the āyaka which is a rectangular projection on the drum of the stupa. While facing a stupa, we see a long frieze narrow frieze running across the top of the face of the āyaka. We refer to these friezes as āyaka friezes and mention the site number from which they were excavated if known.[56] The friezes are 10 to 11 feet (*c.* 3 m) in length and run horizontally across a the āyaka. They are placed in the four directions of the round stupa (Figures 21a and 21b) and are adorned with a series of events of the life Śākyamuni Buddha or the former lives of the Buddha. Try to envision the broken āyaka panel from Site 2 (Figure 22) above a large panel containing a single event in the Buddha's life, the transportation of the Buddha's turban to heaven (Figure 23). The reason that we use a broken āyaka is that it is difficult to photograph and publish a complete one, as illustrated below. This arrangement can best be explained by looking at a small model of a stupa in the Baudhaśri Archaeological Museum in Guntur (Figure 24). Āyaka platforms often appear on stupas that do not have elaborate entrance gates. They are symbolic entrance ways and are substitutions for the entrance gateways of the type that we find at Sanchi,[57] and Phanigiri.[58] We will suggest that these āyaka friezes, when combined with an āyaka panel which is placed beneath, parallel the structure of a Roman sarcophagus. Not only do they echo the structures, but also the concept behind the details of the sarcophagus. Thus, the figure of a Roman general should be interpreted as a central figure in battle at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

52 Stone (1994), 24-50; Shimada (forthcoming) convincingly argues for a pre-Ikṣvāku date for this relief.

53 Ramachandran (1953), 30, pl. 36.1.

54 See a first century AD sculpture from the site of Dupadu representing a stupa with the major events is the life of the stupa represented aniconically. In the center of the composition is a riderless horse. Guy (2023), 112, cat. no. 52.

55 We have discussed further examples of the use of Roman coin imagery in Stone (2016), 62-5.

56 There is some confusion regarding the find-spots of certain images and they are designated by different site numbers in different publications. After meetings with both H. Sarkar and C. Sivaramamurti they encouraged me to arrange the wrongly placed images in sites according to style in my 1994 book (Stone 1994).

57 Guy (2023), 24, fig. 52.

58 Pandya Dhar in Guy (2023), 248, fig. 131.

Figure 15. Detail of a drum panel from Site 6, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa representing the Temptation of the Buddha and the Great Departure. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1928 (28.01). (Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, CC0 licence.)

Figure 16. Hadrian on Horseback. Reverse of a Roman aureus, AD 128-32. New York, American Numismatic Society (former collection of the Hispanic Society of America). (Photo: Courtesy of the American Numismatic Society, Image 1001.1.3010.)

Figure 17. The Great Departure of the Buddha. Detail of a drum panel on a stūpa. Dupadu, Prakasam District. Amaravati Heritage Centre and Museum, inv. A/M. 1.7 (Photo: Sonya Rhie Mace.)

Figure 18. The Great Departure of the Buddha, from Site 3, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Archaeological Museum. (Photo: E.R. Stone.)

Figure 19. Scene of profectio/adventus on a coin of Trajan, showing the emperor on a Horse, AD 114-117. New York, American Numismatic Society (Photo: courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.)

Figure 20. Battle between Romans and Barbarians. The Portonaccio Sarcophagus, from Portonaccio, Via Tiburtina (near Rome), AD 180-190. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Massimo al Terme). (Photo: copyright Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

Figure 21. (a) The Mahācetiya (Great Stūpa) at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa after excavation and repairs. (Photo: after Longhurst [1938], pl. 12a). (b) The Mahācetiya (Great Stūpa) after being transported to its island of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. (Photo: E.R. Stone.)

Figure 22. Āyaka panel with unidentified scenes, from Site 2, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Archaeological Museum (Photo: Thierry Oliver and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, courtesy of the Archaeological Survey of India.)

Figure 23. Transportation of the Buddha's Headdress to Heaven, from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Archaeological Museum. (Photo: E.R. Stone.)

Figure 24. Model of a stupa from Guntur. Guntur, Baudhaśri Archaeological Museum (Photo: Courtesy Sonya Rhie Mace.)

A Severan sarcophagus with flying erotes and holding a clipeus portrait (Figure 25) provides interesting comparisons with Nāgārjunakoṇḍa friezes. The Nāgārjunakoṇḍa panels (Figures 22 and 27) typical in format of many others, represent a series of Buddhist narrative reliefs that are separated by auspicious couples (*mithuna*). These couples, both in their quantity and quality, have become the signatures of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa art. In Buddhist terms, they represent *the realm of desire*, which is to be overcome as one worships the Buddha. The purpose of the addition of the couples is to attract the laity who can provide money for the monastic community. The use of couples appears early in Buddhist art so we need not look abroad for sources.[59] What we see at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa are figures which interact with each other in a large variety of poses, which may have precedents in Italy. A bonze emblema, which was excavated

59 Coomaraswamy (1956), pl. 15, fig. 37, bottom of the composition. These are amongst the earliest examples of the *mithuna* couples in India.

Figure 25. Roman marble sarcophagus with flying Erotes, holding a clipeus portrait. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Joseph P. Noble, 1956, 56.145. 9. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0 licence.)

Figure 26. Details from Figures 25, 27 and a further couple from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

Figure 27. The Conversion of Nanda, from Site 3, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Archaeological Museum. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

at Brahmapuri along with the Poseidon (Figure 1) represents Perseus and Andromeda with their arms entwined.[60] This type of metalwork could have provided an example for Indian artisans to show more intimacy between the two figures. At each end of the Roman sarcophagus are figures of Eros, the son of Aphrodite and Psyche, personification of the human soul. *Mithunas* appear throughout Indian art, but never in such abundance as in Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Look at the Indian couples from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (Figure 26, details of Figures 25 and 27) and the details of the classical figures of Eros and Psyche. Eros is nude and his genitals are touched by Psyche. The Roman example would be unthinkable on an early Buddhist monument in India in which male genitals are always covered up while their presence is subtly implied. However, female figures may be dressed or scantily dressed, but they are considered dressed if they wear their jewelry. Their differences are clear; the Roman figures are more blatantly erotic than

60 Stone (2023), 185-5, cat. 87.

those in the more subtle Nāgārjunakoṇḍa reliefs. The fact that amorous couples appear on the outer wall of a sarcophagus while the Indian loving couples are at the entrance to a stupa containing the relics of a Buddha merits comparison. Both the Indian and Roman couple are on monuments associated with death.

An exquisite Nāgārjunakoṇḍa āyaka panel (Figure 27), which illustrates the Conversion of the Buddha's half-brother Nanda, shows an episode in the life of the Buddha's brother, based on Chapter 10 of the Sanskrit text, Aśvaghoṣa's *Saundarānanda.*[61] It is an almost complete āyaka panel from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. We compare it to a Roman battle sarcophagus from Portonaccio (Figure 20), from about AD 180, showing scenes from the life of the deceased and his family on the sarcophagus lid, while the body of the sarcophagus contains one triumphal scene from his life. Note the decorative features at the end of each: a Roman head versus a beautiful Indian tree goddess. The missing section on our right side of the āyaka panel would have been a similar tree goddess. As mentioned above, if the *āyaka* panel were in situ, beneath it would have been an aniconic scene from a single major event in the life of the Buddha, while the Roman sarcophagus has an aggrandized Battle Scene from the life of the deceased. It is apparent that there is a conscious effort to use the general layout of a sarcophagus in the creation of the āyaka platforms.[62] One must admit that it is doubtful that sarcophagi were in use in India as Indians cremated their dead. The sculptors of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa must have learned of the format of the sarcophagus from drawings, or perhaps even sculptors who came from the West. But what is most important in this comparison is that āyaka panels with abundant *mithuna* couples were done in the last quarter of the third century,[63] contemporary with the sarcophagus. This would indicate continuous contact between India the West.

Now let us look at the detail (Figure 28) of the late third century āyaka panel from Site 2 at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (Figure 22), which I first saw in 1964 in New York. The dominant figure is a man on horseback who comes in from right and moves toward the left. The scene is very crowded, leaving very little space between figures, suggesting the expression *horror vacui*, which has been applied to late Roman art. The terms previously associated with this relief are such phrases as 'Classical', 'Roman influenced' or 'Trajanic'. It has long been a puzzle in the field of Indian art. Were Romans working in India? Or did Indian artisans only see a few works of art with motifs that they could adapt to an Indian composition?

Figure 28. Unidentified battle scene (detail of Figure 22).

61 Stone (1994), 67-9.
62 In another context, I have previously cited a Meleager sarcophagus as a source for a Nāgārjunakoṇḍa composition. Stone 1994, 42 and fig. 82.
63 Stone (1994), Ch. 2.

Figure 29. Reversal of Figure 28 (flipped horizontally).

Figure 30. Panel from the so-called Great Trajanic Frieze on the Arch of Constantine, Rome, c. AD 110. An emperor identified as Trajan (later recut as Constantine) defeating Dacians. (Photo: copyright Alinari Archives [Anderson photograph, ca. 1890]/ ART Resource, NY.)

In a previous article, I flipped the picture over so that the main figure is moving from left to right (Figure 29).[64] The purpose of this was to suggest that the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa battle scene is based on a relief of the Emperor Trajan riding against the Dacians, AD 106-113 (Figure 30). This comparison strongly suggests that images based upon the Trajanic relief, or similar battle scenes were circulated in India and could be copied either directly or in reverse. The Roman relief is dominated by the emperor Trajan on a rearing horse; he twists so that his chest is facing the viewer. Before him are figures in submission, while behind are his supporters. Variants of this composition are also seen in the Sassanian rock reliefs carved after Shapur's defeat of the Romans.[65] See for example the Triumph of Shapur I carved at Naqsh-e Rustam, dated to the second half the third century.[66] The dominant figure of the Trajanic relief is the emperor on horseback. He is bare-headed, having left his helmet behind. His broken right arm is raised, but it is believed that it originally held a spear. This scene is part of a long tradition dating back to the Alexander mosaic of battle scenes which represent the ruler in battle. The direction of Trajan's action is toward a kneeling Dacian before the horse: the scene is clearly one of victory and defeat: the triumph of the emperor and the subjugation of his enemies. Visually, the left hand of the composition forms one group, the right hand another. It is important to remember that this composition is part of a much longer relief called the Great Trajanic Relief, parts of which were ultimately placed on the Arch of Constantine in the early fourth century, which provided a long life for the image.

64 Stone (2016), 65-66.
65 Mackintosh (1973), 181-203. I thank Prudence Oliver Harper for the references to Mackintosh's articles.
66 Ghirshman (1962), 161, fig. 205.

Looking again at the reverse of the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa battle relief (Figure 29), the figure on the horse raises his right arm and stretches it backwards, exposing his chest to the viewer. His arm is not ready for a weapon as we see on the Portonaccio Sarcophagus and is believed to have been present in the Trajanic relief. It is more like a posture of victory. His hairdo is confusing, as he does not wear the traditional turban worn by Indian male figures. It appears to have the curls of the Buddha, but instead of the traditional *uṣṇīṣa* it has a flap of hair like that of a Gandharan bodhisattva. Is this a reference to a victor on Roman sarcophagi? I know of no prototype in India for the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa equestrian figure with his arm extended, himself not engaging in battle. On the basis of my own study of the sculpture of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, I have dated this image to the last quarter of the third century or possibly early fourth century.[67] A military figure on the well-known Ludovisi Sarcophagus (mid-third century) is quite suitable to be a prototype for the equestrian figure claiming victory over the warriors (Figures 31 and 32). The the leader of the Roman army is on horseback and in a gesture of victory rather than being engaged in battle. Those open arms on the sarcophagus are repeated in several of the figures of the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa battle scene. The right leg of the general is dominant, and he looks as if he is trying to jump off the horse, in fact off the sarcophagus itself to show us how that he is victorious and no longer needs to fight. The fact no weapon is shown in the hands of the general means that the fight is effectively over; such is also the case with the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa victor. The term *horror vacui* which is generally used to define the style of the Ludovisi sarcophagus also applies to much of the art of the late works from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. In the latest art of Amarāvatī, and the āyaka panels from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, there is often a central figure, surrounded by a crowd.

Thus, we ask ourselves, 'Was the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa battle relief adapted from the Great Trajanic Frieze, or from a work like the Ludovisi sarcophagus?' The answer is that it has elements of both; and the design of the Site 2 Nāgārjunakoṇḍa battle relief was created by someone with knowledge of the variations of representations of Roman victories sculpted over time. This must have taken place in the period when

Figure 31. The Ludovisi Sarcophagus, c. *250s AD. Scene of battle between Romans and Barbarians. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Altemps). (Photo: Vanni Archive/Art Resource, NY.)*

67 Stone (1994), chapter 2.

Figure 32. Detail of the Roman military leader in Figure 31.

Figure 33. Harness-ornament with battle Scene. Aosta, Museo Archeologico. (Photo: after R. Bianchi Bandinelli [1971], fig. 111.)

multiple styles were visible in Rome, during the latter half of the third century A.D.

I firmly believe that there were foreign-trained artisans in India, but admit that this theory is speculative. I have not rejected the importance the circulation of small Roman objects having been seen in India. While the Brahmapuri bronze is our best excavated evidence for considering Roman influence, there are many objects in the West that could have ended up in India, even if it was only for its metal use. The scant number of bronzes known in India are all datable to the first century. But perhaps we should look more carefully in the West to see if there were other objects which could have been exported from Rome to India. Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli writes of the importance of small Roman bronzes that were made in Italy large numbers and disseminated by travelling craftsmen.[68] These were made by the thousand and sold in Europe and beyond imperial frontiers. Decorated parade harnesses, made according to Hellenistic canons, were discovered with battle scenes dating from the time of Trajan onward. These were common during the third century. Bianchi Bandinelli has published an extraordinary metal harness (Figure 33) on which the major figure raises his hand in the same gesture of victory which we find on the battle scene from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and on the Ludovisi Sarcophagus.

While trade between India and Rome was at its height during the first century AD, the visual evidence clearly indicates classical influence was seen through the third century AD. Surprisingly, the sculptors of Andhra Pradesh kept pace with the developments in the Roman world. With this in mind, we can better study the development of the visual aspects of Buddhist narrative.

68 Bianchi Bandinelli (1971), 121-23.

Bibliography

Becker, C. (2015), *Shifting Stones, Shaping the Past: Sculptures from the Buddhist Stūpas of Andhra Pradesh* (London and New York: Oxford University Press).

Bianchi Bandinelli, R. (1971), *Rome: The Late Empire, AD 200-400*, trans. P. Green (New York: George Braziller).

Brancaccio, P. (2005), 'Satavahana Terracottas: Connections with the Hellenistic Tradition', *East and West* 55/1-4: 55-69.

Brancaccio, P. (2014), 'Looking to the West: Stone Molds and Foreign Visual Models in Satavahana Material Culture (First-Second Century CE)', *East and West* 64: 31-41.

Brancaccio, P. (2023), 'Indian Bronzes from the Brahmapuri Hoard', in Guy (2023), 187-8.

Brancaccio, P. and Liu, X. (2009), 'Dionysus and Drama in the Buddhist Art of Gandhara', *Journal of Global History* 4: 219-44.

Brendel, O. (1979), *Prolegomena for a Study of Roman Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).

Brilliant, R. (1963), *Gesture and Rank in Rank in Roman Art. The Use of Gesture to Denote Status in Roman Sculpture and Coinage*, Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy Arts and Sciences, 14 (New Haven, Connecticut: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences).

Brilliant, R. (1984), *Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press).

Coomaraswamy, A.K. (1956), *La sculpture de Bharhut,* Annales de Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque d'art nouvelle, serie V (Paris: Vanoest, Editions d'Art et d'Histoire).

Coomaraswamy, A.K. (1965), *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (New York: Dover Publications; London: E Goldstone; New York: E. Weyhe).

Coomaraswamy, A.K. (1929), 'Picture Showmen', *The Indian Historical Quarterly* 5: 182-7.

De Puma, R.D. (1992), 'The Roman Bronzes from Kolhapur', in V. Begley and R.D. Puma (eds.), *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), 82-5.

Deshpande, M.N. (1965), 'Classical Influence on Indian Terracotta Art', *Le rayonnement des civilisations grecque et romaine sur les cultures périphérique. Huitième Congrès internationale d'archéologie classique, Paris, 1963* (Paris: Boccard).

Dwyer, E. (1982), *Pompeian Domestic Sculpture: A Study of Five Pompeian Houses and their Contents* (Rome: Bretschneider).

Garimella, A. (ed.) (2022), *The Long Arc of Southasian Art: Essays in Honour of Vidya Dehejia* (New Delhi; Women Unlimited in association with The Marg Foundation), 215-28.

Ghirshman, R. (1962), *Iran: Parthes et Sassanides* (Paris: Gallimard).

Guy, J. (ed.) (2023), *Tree and Serpent Worship: Early Buddhist Art in India* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).

Guy, J. and Patil, V. (2023), 'Gazetteer of Buddhist Sites, Principally in the Deccan', in Guy (2023), 82-9.

Holliday, P. (1997), 'Roman Triumphal Painting: Its Function, Development, and Reception, *Art Bulletin* 19/1: 130-47.

Huntington, S.L. (1985), *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (Tokyo and New York: John Weatherhill).

Khan, A.W. (1963), *A Monograph on Yeleswaram Excavations*, Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series, 14 (Hyderabad: The Government of Andhra Pradesh).

Knox, R. (1992), *Amaravati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stupa* (London: British Museum Press for the Trustees of the British Museum).

Krishna Murthy, K. (1977), *Nāgārjunakoṇḍa: A Cultural Study* (Delhi: Concept Publishing Company).

Lee, S. E. (1964), *Ancient Sculpture from India* (catalogue of exhibition, M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, May 29-July 19, 1964; Seattle Art Museum Pavilion, August 14-October 4, 1964; the Cleveland Museum of Art, November 25-January 3, 1965; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New

York, February 9-March 21, 1965; the Honolulu Academy of Arts, May 13-June 27, 1965) (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art).

Lessing E. and Varone, A. (1996), *Pompeii* (Paris: Finest S.A./Editions Pierre Terrail).

Longhurst, A.H. (1938), *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Madras Presidency,* Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 54 (reprinted 1999) (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India).

Mackintosh, M.G. (1973), 'Roman Influences on the Victory Reliefs of Shapur I of Persia', *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 6: 81-203.

Nagaswamy, R. (1995), *Roman Karur: A Peek Into Tamils' Past* (Madras: Brahad Prakashan).

Pollitt, J.J. (1986), *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Poonacha, K.P., *Excavations at Kanaganahalli (Sannathi)* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India).

Ramachandran, T.N. (1953), *Nāgārjunakoṇḍa 1938*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 71 (reprinted 1999) (New Delhi: Manager of Publications).

Rowland, B. (1977), *Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, reprint with revisions and updated bibliography by J.C. Harle (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Sadurska, Anna (1964), *Les tables iliaques* (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe).

Salomon, R. (1991), 'Epigraphic Remains of Indian Traders in Egypt', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 3/4: 731-6.

Shimada, A. (2013), *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great Stūpa at Amaravati (ca. 300 BCE – 300 CE)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill).

Shimada, A. (forthcoming), 'The Beginning of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa: Sculptures from Sites 6 and 9', in A. Griffith, A. Shimada, A., and V. Tournier (eds.), *Early Andhradesa: Towards a Grounded History* (Leiden: Brill).

Simmons, J. (2022a), 'Ancient Indian Ocean Trade and the Roman Economy', in D. Limbergen, et. al. (eds.), *Reframing the Roman Economy: New Perspectives on Habitual Economic Practices* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 371-401.

Simmons, J. (2022b), '"Indo Roman" Trade and the Dakshina Patha', in Garimella (2022), 215-28.

Shimada, A. (2006), 'The Great Railing at Amaravati: An Architectural and Archaeological Reconstruction', *Artibus Asiae* 66/1: 89-141.

Shimada, A. and Willis, M. (eds.), (2016), *Amaravati: The Art of an Early Buddhist Monument in Context* (London: British Museum).

Sidebotham S.E. (2023), 'Results of the 2022 Excavation Season at Berenike (Red Sea Coast), Egypt', *Thetis: Mannheimer Beiträge Zur Archäologie und Geschichte der Antike* 27: 13-28.

Stern, P. and Bénisti, M. (1961), *Évolution du style indien d'Amarāvatī* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France).

Stoye, M. (2006), '"Māyā Anadomene" – die schöne Śākya-Fürsten beim Bade: zum Import einer etablierten Bildformel in ein erzählendes Relief aus Amarāvatī (Südindien)', in G.J.R. Mevissen and K. Bruhn (eds.), *Vanamālā: Festschrift A.J. Gail* (Berlin: Vieder Buchverlag), 224-23.

Sivaramamurti, C. (1942), *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum*, Bulletin of Madras Government Museum, new series - general section, 4 (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press).

Soundararajan, K.V. (2006), *Nagarjunakonda (1954-1960)*, vol. 2, *The Historical Period*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 75 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India).

Spinazzola, V. (1928), *Le arti decorative in Pompei e nel Museo nazionale di Napoli*, (Milano: Bestetti e Tuminelli).

Spink, W.M. (2009), *Ajanta: History and Development,* vol. 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill).

Stone, E.R. (1994), *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).

Stone, E.R. (2004). 'A Buddhist Incense Burner from Gandhara', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 39: 69-99.

Stone, E.R. (2005), 'Spatial Conventions in the Art of Andhra Pradesh: Classical Influence?', in G. Kamalakar (ed.), *Buddhism: Art, Architecture, Literature and Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House), vol. 1, 67-71, pls. 2-3.

Stone, E.R. (2006) '"The Amaravati Master": Spatial Conventions in the Art of Amaravati', in A. Banerji (ed.), *Hari Smriti: Studies in Art, Archaeology and Indology. Papers Presented in Memory of Dr Hari Bishnu Sarkar*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Kaveri Books), vol. 1, 51-60, pls. 3.1-12.

Stone, E.R. (2008), 'The Sculpture of Andhra Pradesh and Roman Imperial Imagery', in P. Chenna Reddy (ed.), *Krishnābhinandana: Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Studies, Festschrift to Dr. V.V. Krishna Sastry* (New Delhi: Research India Press) 100-6.

Stone, E.R. (2016), 'Reflections of Roman Art in Southern India', in Shimada and Willis (2016), 59-69.

Stone, E.R. (2023), 'Brahmapuri Roman Bronzes', in Guy (2023), 184-6.

Stoneman. R. (2019), *The Greek Experience of India: From Alexander to the Indio-Greeks* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press)

Suresh, S. (1991), 'Paintings in Sangam Literature', in C. Margabandhu et. al. (eds.), *Indian Archaeological Heritage: K.V. Sundararajan Felicitation Volume* (Delhi: Agam Prakashan).

Taddei, M., (2003), 'An Ekamukhaliṇga from the N.W.F.P. and some Connected Problems: A Study in Iconography and Style', in Verardi and Filigenzi (2003), 29-30; also published in *East and West* 13 (1962): 288-310.

Turner, P. (1989), *Roman Coins from India,* Institute of Archaeology, Occasional Publication, 12; Royal Numismatic Society, Special Publication, 22 (London: The Royal Numismatic Society and The Institute of Archaeology, University College).

Verardi, G. and Filigenzi, A. (eds.), (2003), *On Gandhāra, Collected Articles of Maurizio Taddei.* Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale', 'Collana' collectanea, 3 (Naples: s.n.).

Vogel, J.P. (1929-30), 'Prakrit Inscriptions from a Buddhist Site at Nagarjunikonda', *Epigraphia Indica* 20: 1-36.

Weitzmann, K. (1947), *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Zin, M. (2023), 'Buddhist Narratives in Kanaganahalli', in Guy (2023), 203-6;

Zin, M. (2014). 'Non-Buddhist Narrative Scenes at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa', in D. Klimburg-Salter and L. Lojda (eds.), *Changing Forms and Cultural Identity: Religious and Secular Iconographies. Papers from the 20th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art Held in Vienna from 4th to 9th of July 2010* (Turnhout: Brepols), 77-89.

DOI: 10.32028/9781803279633-10

On Ivory and Theatre: The Exchange between Āndhradeśa and the West

Monika Zin

The European viewer often does not realize how much the art of South Asia in the areas under the rule of Sadas[1] and Sātavāhanas was influenced by classical antiquity. What we easily recognize in the reliefs are the individual elements – depictions of rinceaux, of furniture or goblets known from Mediterranean culture – but we take dynamic poses and visible muscles of people for granted because we know them well from our own art. It is enough, however, to think of the inflexible bodies depicted in reliefs from earlier times – for instance on an old pillar in the Amarāvatī Museum[2] – to notice the change that turned the archaic, stiff depictions of bodies into those pulsating with life and expressing emotions. The impetus for this change came from the West. Scholars disagree on how these motifs came to the Sātavāhana territories. Some are of the opinion that the route was through Gandhāra, even though we are so well informed about the direct trade relations with the Roman Empire and know of innumerable finds of coins, amphorae and several other objects from the Mediterranean world found in the southern part of the subcontinent. This seems to be a preconception, for the reason that generations of researchers have understood only Gandhāra to be the entrance for Mediterranean culture into South Asia.

There are also several other preconceived opinions and they concern not only art; probably the most serious one concerns the association of early Ajanta and especially of Andhra with Pali Buddhism. But the facts are different: Andhran art illustrates several stories or the versions of the Buddha legend that are not even mentioned in Pali, but are known from 'Northern' Buddhism only and not infrequently available today exclusively in Chinese translation (see e.g. Zin [2018a] with references).[3] We know the names of the schools from which the Andhra narrative reliefs originated (Tournier [2020] and [2021-2022]), but the writings of these schools have not survived the centuries, so we have to rely on the representations in art as merely testimony to the nature of Buddhism, as well as other aspects of life in the area. The representations, however, are informative enough and must be consulted: if one knows the paintings of early Ajanta or the reliefs from Amarāvatī, it appears completely incomprehensible where the opinion could have come from that the area was underdeveloped and '[t]he expensive luxuries that were so important in the north could not be absorbed by the poorer, socially and economically less developed south', as Raschke puts it.[4]

In particular, the art of the ancient Āndhradeśa (today's Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and part of Karnataka), with its images of courtly life (with professional court jesters), unconstrained elegance and luxury, gives us just the opposite insight: this was a shining culture, ruled by the Sātavāhanas, with kings whom the Buddhists of Kanaganahalli presented as prosperous, donative and peace-loving sovereigns (Figure 1).[5] What remains of the culture are mainly Buddhist monuments, which were certainly not the

1 What becomes clear to us only slowly but is confirmed by more and more numismatic and epigraphic evidence is the existence of the Sada dynasty in Andhra, which seems to have been replaced by the Sātavāhanas only in the second century AD; cf. Shimada (2013), 40-2, 111-12; Tournier (2021-2022); the 'Āndhradeśa of the Sātavāhana time' should possibly be corrected into 'Sata and Sātavāhana time'.

2 Amarāvatī, Archaeological Site Museum, no. 62, see Ghosh and Sarkar (1964-1965); Dehejia (1969-1970); Guy (2023), fig. 103.

3 As for Ajanta, the stories of King Udayana and of *nāgarāja* Elāpatra depicted in the paintings from the first century BC (Caves IX and X) illustrate the versions known today from 'northern' sources, not from Pali; cf. Zin (1998 and 2000).

4 Raschke (1978), 671.

5 Kanaganahalli, slab no. 39, for references see Zin (2018a), 211-2 and pl. 22 (drawing); illustrated in Poonacha (2011), pl. 112; Guy (2023), 147 and frontispiece; the inscriptions state that King Puḷumāvi (Vāsiṣṭhiputra Śrī Pulumāvi) is giving the city of Ujjain to the 'non-victorious' suggesting the peaceful handover of the territories which he lost to the Western Kṣatrapa Caṣṭana; cf. von Hinüber (2014).

most important in the empire of the non-Buddhist Sātavāhana dynasty. However, the Buddhist art of the area surprises with its western-influenced vines and masterful renderings of the narratives. It is important to mention that the reliefs include depictions of literary motifs that are shown here for the first time (and in all likelihood originated here) before they were incorporated into the fairy-tale literature of mankind.[6]

What survived the ages besides the Buddhist art are luxurious ivories: a huge treasure found in Begram, Bactria, and several objects found in South and Middle Asia, Arabia and Rome, which reflect this same exquisite, sensual, courtly culture, elegantly and gracefully portrayed by means of an adapted Western mode of representation. This present paper aims to demonstrate that the ivories originated in the territories of the Sātavāhana Empire, most probably in the area of ancient Āndhradeśa. If it can be proven one day that, as has been suggested (see below), the ivories were produced in the North, this would be of even greater significance and would show that the art of the South was imitated there, not unlike Mediterranean art.

The immediate reason for this paper was provided by an archaeologist friend of mine, Prof Paul Yule from Heidelberg, a specialist in pre-Islamic Oman, who sent me photos of two ivory combs found in Dibba al-Hisin in the Emirate of Sharjah (Figures 2 and 3). Yule knew about the South Asian origin of the objects and just wanted to know my opinion about their dating. Where the combs came from was beyond question for him: from the Kushan Empire, of course, since they resemble the Begram ivories.

The association of the Begram ivories with the Kushan Empire and Bactria is often taken for granted and not questioned further, especially by colleagues who do not study Indian art in depth, but work mainly on Arabia or the Middle Asia. They refer to the study by Lolita Nehru from 2004 (see below), whose research, however, could not encompass the discoveries published in the last twenty years from Kanaganahalli and Phanigiri. It

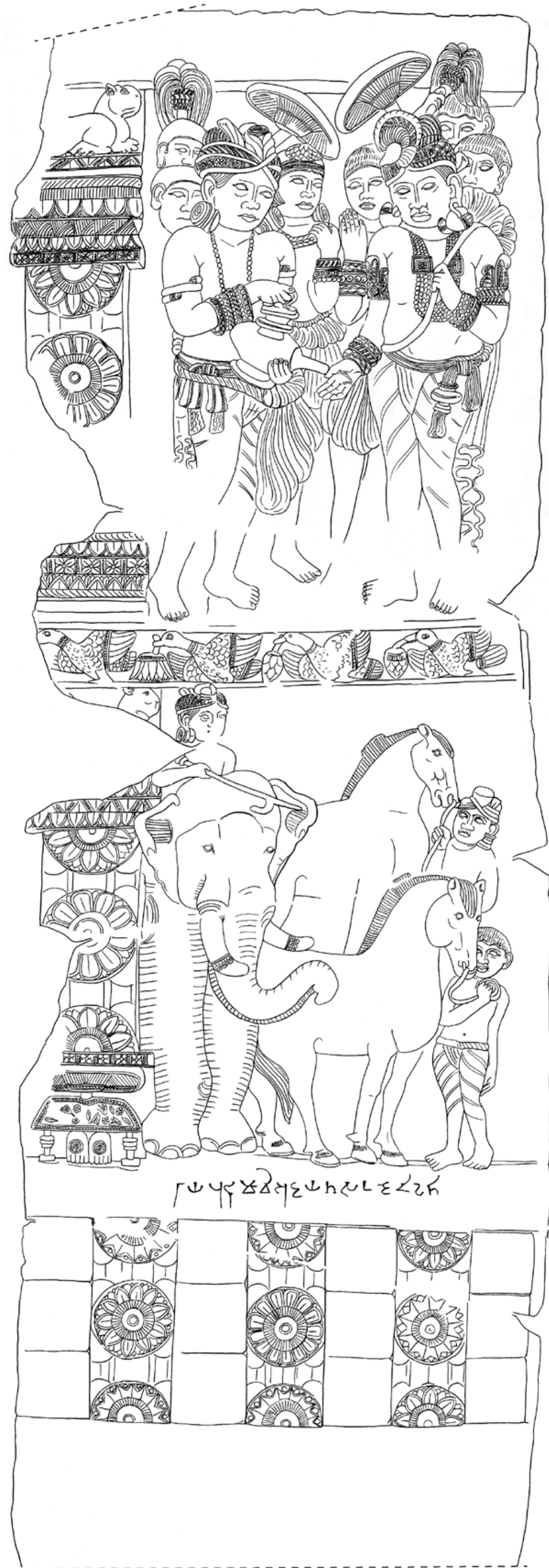

Figure 1. Kanaganahalli, dome slab no. 39, in situ. (Drawing: copyright M. Zin CC BY-NC-SA.)

6 Zin (2011); Zin (2020).

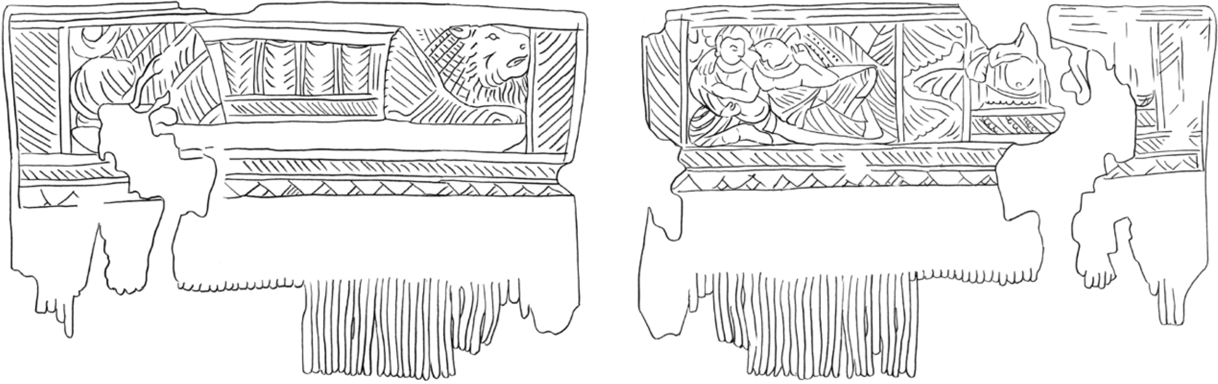

Figure 2. (a and b) 'Royal comb' from Dibba al-Hisin (Emirate of Sharjah). (Drawing: M. Zin after Jasim and Yousif [2021], fig. 8 a–b; copyright M. Zin CC BY-NC-SA.)

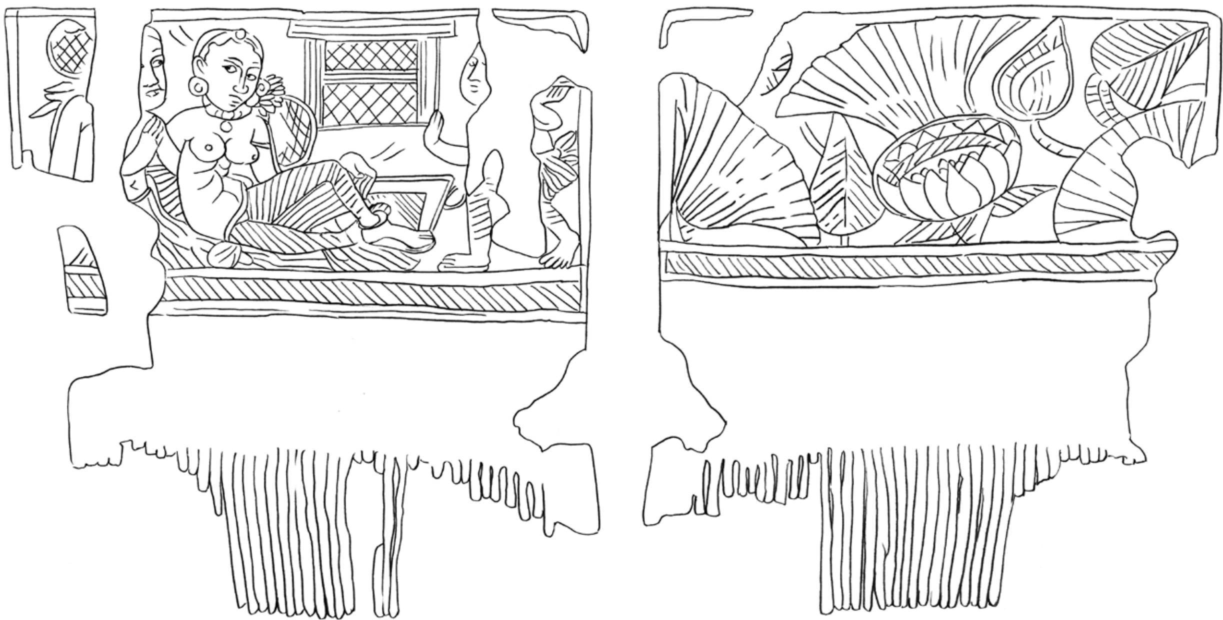

Figure 3. (a and b) 'Royal comb' from Dibba al-Hisin (Emirate of Sharjah). (Drawing: M. Zin after Jasim and Yousif [2021], fig. 4 a–b; copyright M. Zin CC BY-NC-SA.)

appears that there is a great need to point to the stylistic affinity of the ivory objects with the art of the Sātavāhanas we know today. I am perfectly aware of the difficulty of this task, as I intend to compare secular luxury objects with Buddhist reliefs. Comparing the ivory items among each other can also be treacherous because the similarities could arise through the use of the same material. Above all, it should never be forgotten that both, ivories and Buddhist centres in the Sātavāhana era, are only chance discoveries, which show us only a fraction of the world at that time. We will never be able to say that a particular motif corresponds exactly to Amarāvatī or Kanaganahalli, since the Sātavāhana Empire lasted over 300 years and was huge, in the first century extending as far as Ujjain.[7]

But even if the Sātavāhana and Kushan empires were in the first century geographically not far from each other, it is of major importance to consider from where the luxury objects went into the world, i.e. the economy of which empire enabled their production and distribution, since the objects were obviously very highly valued and spread over thousands of kilometres.

7 See above, n. 5.

As for the two combs from Dibba al-Hisin,[8] they were found in 2004 in an underground tomb for fifteen individuals, in which several other luxury objects were also discovered, datable to the Parthian and Roman periods. Because of their exquisite quality, they are called by archaeologists 'Royal Indian Combs. I cannot say much about the worse-preserved comb (Figure 2 a-b),[9] except that I think it shows not a lion but a ship in the shape of a winged lion, its cabin covered with a curtain. I know of nothing directly similar; a relief, now no longer extant, from Sanchi showed a ship with a griffin protome in front.[10] For the further course of this essay, it is perhaps only significant that ships did not play too great a role in the culture of the Kuṣāṇas. The other side of the comb shows a couple and it is said that the man holds a lion cub – which I do not recognize in the publication – the explanation was probably inspired by the lion on the other side of the object. The couple is reminiscent of flying *genii*; the lady often sits on her companion's leg and embraces him around the neck while he flies with the other leg bent; he may be holding a *vīṇā* (arched harp).

The other comb (Figure 3 a-b) also represents a pair in intimate companionship and an arriving servant, while lotus flowers are shown on its other side.[11] A quite similar comb is housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Figure 4); unfortunately it is not known from which part of India it originates.[12] A comb excavated in Maharashtra is only poorly published (Figure 5 a-b); it shows a similar subject on its one side.[13] The other side presents a lady between elephants, apparently four elephants. It is not the known iconography of Gaja-Lakṣmī but certainly not a depiction of a normal earthly woman.

The couple in intimate togetherness depicted on the combs, especially while in connection with the lotus pond, brings us into the imagery of the art of Andhra, as similar scenes are part of the repertoire from the area (Figure 6).

Figure 4. Comb 'from India'. London, Victoria and Albert Museum inv. RP/37/3241 and 2547, purchased from J.E. Gejou of Paris in 1937. (Photo: copyright the Trustees of the Victoria & Albert Museum.)

But let us turn to the objects found in Begram, Bactria, i.e. territory of the Kushan Empire, where shortly before World War Two hundreds of ivory and bone carvings were discovered, which were used as adornments of luxury furniture. The objects were found together with numerous other luxurious goods from distant countries, such as lacquerware from China or glass and metal objects from the Roman Empire; the finding place has been explained as a royal treasure or supply depot of commercial goods.[14]

8 Potts (2011); Jasim and Yousif (2021).
9 Illustrated in Potts (2011), figs. 6-9; Jasim and Yousif (2021), figs. 8a-b, 9, 10a-b; Lapteff et al. (2024), 160.
10 Sanchi, Stupa I, western *toraṇa*, northern pillar, inner side, illustrated in: Fergusson (1868), pl. 31, fig. 1 (drawing), and Maisey (1892), pl. 21, fig. 2 (drawing); Marshall and Foucher (1940), vol. 2, pl. 65.
11 Illustrated by Potts (2011), figs. 2-5; Jasim and Yousif (2021), figs. 4a-b, 5, 6a-b, 7; Lapteff et al. (2024), 159. Sharjah Archaeology Authority has made this comb available online as a 3D model (my sincere thanks to Prof. Bruno Overlaet for this information): <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/ivory-comb-with-nudes-dibba-al-hisn-sharjah-9a8214dd77884c2bb74647e1fa7943b2> (last accessed 13 November 2024).
12 Victoria and Albert Museum, purchased from J.E. Gejou of Paris in 1937. RP/37/3241 & 2547, illus.: Dwivedi (1976), pl. 40.
13 Patil (2022), 5800.
14 For a summary of the history of discovery and research, see e.g. Mahendale (1996 and 2008), Cambon (2008), Simpson (2011), 8-35; L. Morris (2017a). For in-depth studies see Mehendale (1997), L. Morris (2017b); see also Mahendale's catalogue of Begram

Figure 5. Comb excavated in Kunda (Ter), by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Maharashtra State. (Photos: after Patil [2022], 5800.)

Figure 6. Detail from a relief, Amarāvatī. Chennai Government Museum, inv. 158. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

As for the style of the ivory and bone carvings discovered in Begram, there is almost universal agreement on the fact of the absence of the Gandhāran idiom. Only with reservations, however, are they considered Indian products and are also called Indianesque or Indian-Style (Mahendale [2012]). The debate about their origin has been going on for decades and I cannot even begin to attempt to comment on all the arguments. Having access to good pictorial material from Andhra and having studied it for a longer time – e.g. after making meticulous tracings all the massive reliefs from Kanaganahalli (see Zin [2018b]) – I would like to point out their numerous similarities to the Begram objects.

I am not the first to have noticed these similarities. Elizabeth Stone has been pointing out the relationship of the ivories to Nāgārjunakoṇḍa for decades.[15] But even Hackin, the discoverer of the Begram treasure, pointed to several Andhra motifs as the most similar to the ivories.[16] Hackin, however, pronounced Mathurā to be the source of the similarities and thus their descent.[17]

The association of the ivories with Mathurā seems to be the prevailing opinion to this day, although other opinions are also held. On the basis of the similarity of the objects discovered in Middle Asia (combs, see below), Begram ivories have been regarded as local products from Bactria or Begram itself

objects in Hiebert and Cambon (2008), 162-209.

15 Rosen [Stone] (1974-1975); Stone (1994), 91-7; (2008) with further references.

16 See multiple instances in Hackin (1939) and Hackin et al. (1954).

17 It is conceivable that he would have come to a different conclusion if he had known the finds known today. It is indeed the case that some motifs appear in Mathurā, but these are not the examples that most resemble Begram finds. Representations of Tritons are known from Mathurā and Gandhāra but the form in which the lower extremities of a Triton form two *makaras* facing each other (as on Hiebert end Cambon [2008], no. 151) has the closest equivalent in Āndhradeśa: compare Phanigiri (Telangana) example illustrated in Ahuja (2021), 73 and Guy (2023), 253.

(Mehendale); as already mentioned, this seems to be the usual opinion of researchers working on similar objects from Middle Asia (like Aripdžanov or Kornacka). However, the similarity of the combs not only to the Begram works but also to the famous ivory statuette found in Pompeii,[18] and its similarity in turn to objects from Ter[19] and Bhokardan[20] in Maharashtra, have also led to their being understood as originating from Western India.[21]

As already mentioned, the carvings are sometimes called 'indianesque', i.e. repeating Indian models but fabricated in the north. As Sanjyot Mehendale formulates it, they (or at least some of them, since the carvings are heterogeneous) were made in Begram 'by Indian, Indian-trained or Indian-influenced artisans'.[22] Mahendale presents good reasons for the assumption that the objects were local productions: pieces of unworked ivory were discovered in Begram; some of the carvings bear Kharoṣṭhī characters on the back and some show elements of clearly northern origin. There can be no binding arguments against this thesis – given the importance of various imitations in Indian art – but there are also very good reasons to understand the carvings as imports from continental India. Arguments that the carvings show motifs that connect them to the North can easily be questioned. Women dressed in tunics and trousers(?) (Figure 7), for example, are depicted in Amarāvatī (Figure 8).[23] Also the Kharoṣṭhī letters might perhaps only be simple signs and not letters at all.[24] It seems that we cannot clarify where all the carvings were made on the basis of our current knowledge, because all arguments have counter-arguments, but I do think we can show where their style comes from.

Figure 7. Ivory plate discovered in Begram. Paris, Musée Guimet, inv. 95-018507. (Photo: copyright bpk/RMN – Grand Palais/image Musée Guimet.)

18 Naples, Museo Nazionale Archeologico, no. 149425; cf. Maiuri (1938-1939); illustration in e.g. Hackin et al. (1954), fig. 567; Dwivedi (1976), pls. 41-2; Evers (2017), figs. 2-4 (with further references).
19 Illustrated in Barrett (1960), pls. 10-11; Dehejia (1972), pl. 85; Gorakshkar (1975), front cover; Dwivedi (1976), pls. 54-5; Patil (2022), 5799; for further illustration and the discussion on dating see Evers (2017), 23, n. 161.
20 Housed in the Department of History and Ancient Indian Culture, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad, illustrated in Dwivedi (1976), pls. 43-4; cf. Evers (2017), 23, n. 162.
21 Behrendt (2007), 17-19.
22 Mehendale (1996), 59.
23 Compare also another part of the same relief housed in the British Museum, no. 77 (illustrated in Knox [1992], 114, no. 55), showing a very similarly clad woman. We should not rule out the possibility that the woman in our Figure 8 also wears the peculiar head ornament made out of three leaves (like in Figure 7). The leaves are not visible but such a high vertical decoration above the forehead is peculiar. Three leaves as decoration of the head are unusual; compare, however, the old paintings in Ajanta X, left side wall: in the retinue of Māra appears a woman(?) with three peacock feathers above the forehead (illustrated in Yazdni [1930-1955], vol. 3, pls. 24a (drawing), 26-7).
24 L. Morris (2017), 337-41.

Figure 8. Detail from a relief, Amarāvatī. Chennai Government Museum, inv. 105. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

The similarities of the ivories to works from Mathurā comes, in my opinion, from the fact that the art of Andhra and Mathurā schools is sometimes very similar. In particular, the representations of female bodies are often alike. Some characteristics – such as the round hair elevation above the forehead – even appear in both art schools.[25] Where to look for the beginning of such details will probably never be clarified – and that is a pity, because it could also be the result of Roman influence, or perhaps it was the Indian hair style that went to Rome.[26] As we shall see, however, some details in the Begram ivories go beyond the similarities with Mathurā. For example, the earrings on the ivories could have the same shape as in Mathurā and Gandhāra, but they could also be also 'twisted' earrings (Figure 9),[27] which were very popular in Andhra among both men and women (Figure 10),[28] or something rather unusual: earrings in the shape of round discs over which tiny strings of pearls are laid (Figure 11),[29] the form which is well documented in Kanaganahalli (Fig. 12).

Before I come to details, first to the general impression that makes the ivories and reliefs from Andhra seem intuitively similar, even before the intellectual analysis begins. These are beautiful and opulent female bodies, shown in a sensual way, not infrequently downright provocative; the fences (*vedikā*s) and gates (*toraṇa*s) are a self-evident architectural background.[30] It should be mentioned here that such architecture was known from daily life in Andhra, which is conveyed to us by representations in the narrative reliefs but also by preserved stone objects.[31] The beautiful women in the Begram ivories look as if they were standing in front of the façades of the caves at Guntupali (Figure 13).

Figure 9. Detail from an ivory plate discovered in Begram, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-60. (Photo: after Hackin [1939], fig. 155.)

25 For examples from Amarāvatī see e.g. the woman standing to the left of the bathing lady in our Fig. 19, or the woman to the right of Māyā giving birth to the future Buddha in a relief in the British Museum (no. 44, illus. e.g. in Stern and Bénisti (1961), pl. 18a; Knox (1992), 121, no. 61).

26 R. Morris (1989), (1990).

27 Such earrings appear on other ivories too. Compare the three-dimensionally worked out piece in the National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul, inv. 04.1.6; well-illustrated in Hiebert and Cambon (2008), no. 149.

28 Compare our Figs. 18 and 21; there are several further examples on the dome reliefs in Kanaganahalli, see e.g. on the dome slabs in Kanaganahalli (in situ), nos. 8 (lower panel), or 51 (lower panel); for references cf. Zin (2018b), 69, and 141 respectively and pls. 10, 31 (drawings); Poonacha (2011), pls. 88, 74. A pair of such earrings have been excavated: see Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1981.398.3,4; illustrated in Guy (2023), fig. 76.

29 It is not the only example among the ivories; compare Hackin (1954), figs. 14, 29 (on both ivories, women on the left), fig. 24 (woman on the right).

30 See for instance Hiebert and Cambon (2008), 188-95.

31 Compare e.g. the *toraṇa* excavated in Phanigiri (illustrated in Ahuja [2021], 162-7); Guy (2023), 247-50.

Figure 10. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, dome slab no. 38, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt)

Figure 11. Detail from a ivory plate discovered in Begram, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-76. (Photo: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 22)

Characteristic of both, the ivory carvings in Begram and the art in Andhra, is the omnipresence of some ornamental motifs: bead and reel and rows of geometric flowers in square fields. The latter motif, occasionally with some variation, is especially common in Amarāvatī and Kanaganahalli, both as decoration of the depicted objects and in accompaniment to the entire figurative compositions.[32] The motif was adopted (like so much from the Andhra style) in the paintings of Ajanta in the fifth century.[33] Certainly, the simple motif will be found elsewhere too, but not with such omnipresence – to the extent that it could be called a leitmotif – as it has in Andhra of the Sātavāhana period and many ivory carvings from Begram.

In 2004, Lolita Nehru published a study 'A Fresh Look at the Bone and Ivory Carvings From Begram', in which she analysed the objects in a masterly manner and also pointed out characteristics that, in her opinion, did not occur in South Asian art. Carvings that contain these characteristics are understood to have been manufactured in Bactria. The other group of objects Nehru calls 'the Mathura series', but even in these carvings there are some details

Figure 12. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, dome slab no. 40, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

32 The strip of such geometric flowers in squares appears, for example, over the reliefs on the coping stones of the Amarāvatī railing, see e.g. Knox (1992), 94-100; see Figure 47, below.

33 Zin (2003), 53, motif 4h.2.

Figure 13. Facades of the Guntupalli caves, Andhra Pradesh. (Photo: copyright Akira Shimada.)

that are found in the 'Bactrian group'; therefore Nehru states that some objects of the 'Mathura series' could also have been manufactured in Bactria.

The 'un-Indian' elements of the carvings are several. To them belongs: 'impressionistic treatment' – as Nehru calls the realism of representation, with individually shown faces, understood as local, with diverse facial expressions and which are to be understood in contrast to 'generalised rendering of the face (following Indian norms)'.[34] 'Impressionistic treatment' also includes representations of rapid and continuous movements, such as the birds and animals masterfully depicted in the ivories,[35] which Nehru interprets as artistic norms from the Greek and nomad cultures. Another feature of the ivories is an unadorned background, in contrast to the overloaded backgrounds of Indian depictions.[36] Nehru points also to several details in the depictions of women (Figure 14): the hairstyle with the bit shown sticking out at the back; 'the bow which adorns the head of the women, made from what appears to be a piece of decorative ribbon'; girdle type, in the form of a single chain of large medallions worn much lower than in Indian representations, or a 'curious device of a scalloped edge which appears along the side of the leg to convey the folds of the lower garment'.[37] Such details, which according to Nehru appear neither in India, nor in Bactria or Gandhara, are understood as 'local Begram genre of taste and manner of representation'.[38]

34 Nehru (2004), 104.
35 Nehru (2004), 105-7.
36 Nehru (2004), 105.
37 Nehru (2004), 105-9 (quoted comments from 109). For illustration of the entire piece from the 'Coffret IX' (National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-43) see Hackin et al. (1954), fig. 182; Stone (1994), figs. 235, 276 (mirror-reversed); Nehru (2004), figs. 20, 38; Tissot (2006), 159; Stone (2008), pl. 7 and figs. 6-7.
38 Nehru (2004), 109.

Lolita Nehru's detailed study is of great value because it shows the characteristic distinctiveness of the Begram objects that do not appear in the art of South Asia, however, they do appear frequently in Andhra which is much easier to observe today, after the publication of the Kanaganahalli and Phanigiri, but which Nehru could not have known in 2004. Elizabeth Stone has already pointed out that 'the hairstyle with the bit shown sticking out at the back' is found in Kanaganahalli's later objects (third century) – I can add to it some earlier depictions on the reliefs from Amarāvatī (Figure 15).[39] It is no different with the girdle from single chain of large medallions, worn much lower than in India – such girdles appear repeatedly in Amarāvatī (Figure 16) and Kanaganahalli.[40] It seems that the ribbon bow on the women's heads does appear in Andhra, although it looks a little different in the reliefs.[41] The wavy line on the side of the legs is rare (Figure 17),[42] which has to do with the fact that the reliefs are far too deep. Even in Begram they do not appear on more deeply elaborated carvings.

Figure 14. Detail from an ivory plate discovered at Begram. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-43. (Photo: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 182.)

What I find most interesting in Nehru's arguments about the distinctiveness of the style of the Begram

Figure 15. Detail from a relief, Amarāvatī. London, British Museum, no. 17. (Photo: copyright bpk /The Trustees of The British Museum).

Figure 16. Detail from a relief, Amarāvatī. Archaeological Site Museum, no. 20. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

39 Stone (2008), figs. 12-13. A similar hair arrangement displays e.g. a woman sitting on the left lower edge of the medallion in the Chennai Government Museum, no. 17 (illustrated in Sivaramamurti [1942], pl. 25.2; Stern and Bénisti [1961], pl. 63).

40 Stone (2008), fig. 9. Compare e.g. girdle of the woman in the lower panel in Kanaganahalli dome slab no. 10 (in situ; for references see Zin [2018b], 46, pl. 5 [drawing]; Poonacha [2011], pl. 40).

41 See e.g. our Figure 15, or a frieze from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in the National Museum in Delhi, inv. 50.18 (illustrated in Stone [1994], fig. 207; Rama [1995], fig. 37).

42 For the entire drum relief see Poonacha (2011), pl. 53; the lines on the background marking the folds of her garment are, however, hardly visible in the photograph.

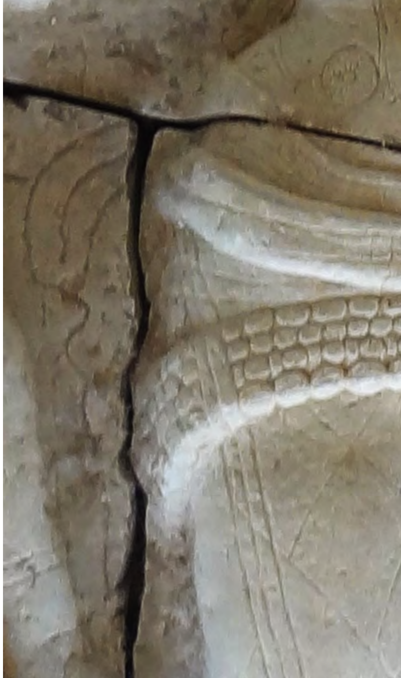

Figure 17. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, drum slab showing 'Lakṣmī', in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

Figure 18. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, dome slab no. 45, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

ivories is her observations about the blank backgrounds and the manner of depiction, which she calls 'impressionistic' and counts among them the artists' skills in depicting movement and the individual idiosyncrasies of the persons. These are all qualities that are rare in South Asian art and are apparently the results of Western influences. But even on these points – or rather, precisely on these points – the affinity of the ivory objects with Andhran art is easy to observe. Free background – as a contrast to that dominated by *horror vacui* – is not infrequently observed in Kanaganahalli, for example (Figure 18). As I have pointed out elsewhere, it is in Andhra that the artists manage to depict individual characteristics of the persons and make a teenage girl appear different from a mature woman, which is not observed elsewhere in South Asia, not even in Gandhara.[43] The reliefs are characterized by renderings of the expressive movements of people and animals, where the artists are not afraid to show poses that are difficult to depict, such as the back view (see Figure 47, below).

The renderings of the human bodies give a feeling of anatomical properness, even if exaggerated, in both – Andhra reliefs and on the Begram ivories – but the artists go beyond that in directions that might be called hyperbolic emphasis. It goes further than the features usual in India for emphasizing the grace of the woman – too narrow waist and too heavy breasts and hips. The artists of the carvings occasionally show the hands as being too big (Figure 14) or the thighs too thick (Figure 20), in both cases intentionally and not out of lack of craftsmanship. A similar thing is to be met in Andhra also: small feet were certainly not part of the ideal of beauty and the artist could certainly be trusted to show the feet in the right proportions (Figure 19).[44] Incidentally, the relief was explained – correctly in my opinion – by Martina Stoye as an imitation of a Western motif, the bathing Venus wringing out her hair.[45]

43 Zin (2018b), 36. For the representation of women: Kanaganahalli slab no. 56 (upper panel, in situ); Zin (2018b), 35, pl. 2 (drawing); Poonacha (2011), pl. 79.
44 Compare the big feet of a lady in our Figure 6.
45 Stoye (2006).

Figure 19. Detail from a relief from Amarāvatī. Chennai Government Museum, inv. 166. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

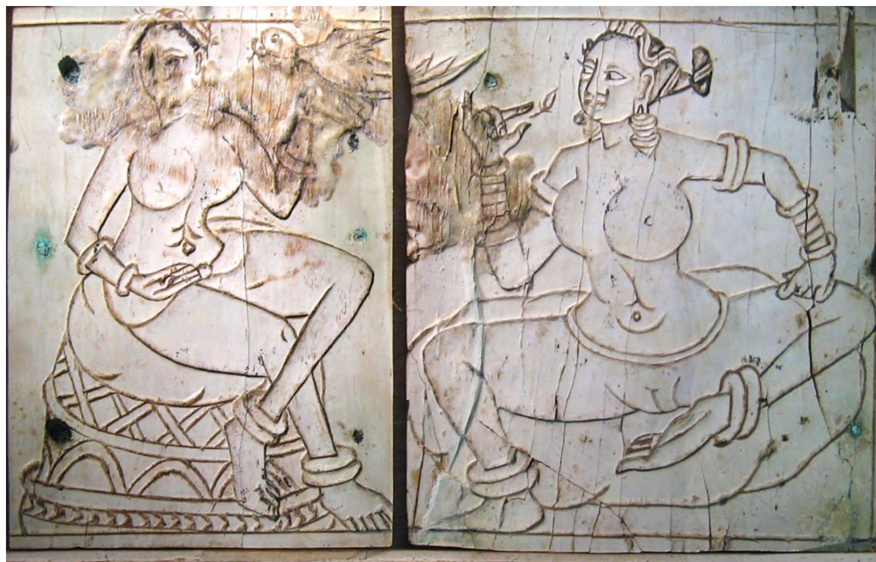

Figure 20. Ivory plate discovered in Begram. Paris, Musée Guimet. (Photo: Monika Zin with kind permission of the Musée Guimet.)

We shall stay a while longer with the conventions that we can observe but not explain – or at least I cannot – that the Begram objects and Andhra share. One of these is the often depicted relaxed body position, not infrequently combined with exposure of the genital area (Figure 20) appearing also in Andhra (Figure 21).[46] But it is not only about the laid-back body posture; the modestly standing women are also shown with a naked genital area. This may also appear in other art schools, such as Sanchi and Mathurā, but the focus here is on emphatically dressed women. The women in the carving group that Nehru associates with Mathurā are shown with diagonal double lines on their legs, suggesting their close-fitting wraps (Fig. 22).[47] In Andhra, the cloths around the hips are similarly indicated with slanting double lines, which – as can be observed on several examples from Kanaganahalli – also run over the pubic region which, however, remains visible (Figure 23),[48] or stops at its edge and presents the pubic region without any fabric covering it at all (Figure 25).[49] It seems that the convention (which concerns exclusively women) means something more than just reproduction of a transparent, i.e. expensive, fabric and is perhaps related to fertility, or sexuality. Whatever it is, the convention is repeated many times in the ivories of Begram (Figure 24).

Figure 21. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, dome slab no. 29, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

46 Ladies sitting in such a way appear on both panels of the slab; for references see Zin (2018b), 108-9, pl. 21 (drawing); Poonacha (2011), pl. 115.

47 The double lines (folds of the garment) that cover the genital area, which nevertheless stays visible, are often seen on the ivories (e.g. one illustrated by Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 11); several instances can be well observed on objects displayed in the Musée Guimet.

48 For the entire slab see Zin (2018b), 101-2, pl. 19 (drawing); Poonacha (2011), pl. 62.

49 For the entire slab see Zin (2018b), 131, pl. 28 (drawing); Poonacha (2011), pl. 67; Guy (2023), fig. 2.

Figure 22. Detail from a ivory plate discovered at Begram. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 59-1-150. (Photo: after Hackin [1939], fig. 107.)

Figure 23. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, dome slab 23, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

Figure 24. Detail from a ivory plate discovered at Begram. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 59-1-252. (Photo: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 45.)

Among conventions of representations of the body can be counted a bend in the arm of a seated person, which actually looks like an anatomical flaw. This arm posture, repeated several times in Andhra and in various male and female persons (Figure 26),[50] appears also in Begram (Figure 27).

The conventional depiction of the interior of a city is interesting (I would not be surprised if western origins for such depictions come to light): the gate and adjoining city-wall are represented, the walls running down in a curve, thus making visible what is happening *intra muros*. Such depictions are common in Andhra (Figure 28),[51] and can be found in the ivories too (Figure 29).

Figure 25. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, dome slab 43, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

50 For an example of a woman sitting in such a way see a relief from Amarāvatī in the Chennai Government Museum, no. 17, woman at the lower left edge of the medallion (illustrated in Sivaramamurti [1942], pl. 25.2; Stern and Bénisti [1961], pl. 63).

51 For the entire relief fragment see Bachhofer (1929), pl. 122.2; Sivaramamurti (1942), pl. 51.1; Nagar (1993), C.P. 23; Zin (2020), fig. 6. For the reconstructive drawing of the entire relief see my Figure 47. Representations of such city walls appear in Andhra frequently:

Figure 26. Detail from a relief from Amarāvatī. Chennai Government Museum, inv. 147. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

Figure 27. Detail from a ivory plate discovered at Begram. Paris, Musée Guimet, inv. 70697558. (Photo: Monika Zin with kind permission of the Musée Guimet.)

Figure 28. Detail from a relief from Amarāvatī. Chennai Government Museum, inv. 75. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

Figure 29. Ivory plate discovered at Begram. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-123. (Photo: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 160.)

compare e.g. a relief from Amarāvatī, Chennai Government Museum, no. 56 (illustrated in Sivaramamurti [1942], pl. 46.1) or from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Archaeological Site Museum, no. 28 (illustrated in Stone [1994], fig. 224).

A very interesting decoration of horses can be observed between the third century BC and the eighth century AD, which is called in research the 'crenelated mane'; it seems to be a Central Asian custom and is observed in several cultures.[52] As for India, Maenchen-Helfen could present only two objects which he understood as derived from Central Asia by the Kushans.[53] One object is a tile discovered in Shotorak (with several triangular 'merlons') and another is a bone carving from Begram (Figure 30).[54] Maenchen-Helfen was aware that such a mane was depicted in Amarāvatī (he does not give a picture), which he understood as influence of the Kushans. What he did not know is how often it is shown in Andhra and that some examples can be securely dated to the first century BC.[55] On the Begram ivory, the horse is depicted with a single 'merlon', as in all examples in Andhra (Figure 31). The examples are numerous, but to my knowledge all from the earlier period (I am not aware of any example from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa or Phanigiri), which may give a clue to the dating of the Begram object.

Let us remain for a little while with depictions of horsemen. I cannot show a representation of the 'Parthian shot' (i.e. backwards shot) from Andhra – as it appears on one Begram carving (Figure 32) – but shooting from the galloping horse is documented from the first century BC (Figure 33).[56] To my knowledge, it is the only representations to the south of Gandhāra.

A clue to the dating of Begram carvings can perhaps be given by the snakes arranged in the ornamental knots, which appear in some ivories in the representations of the architecture (Figure 34).[57] Such decoration out of knotted snakes is a common motif in the art of Āndhradeśa of the Sada and Sātavāhana period (Figure 35).[58] The snakes appear on the domes of the stupas, which are thus interpreted as the stupa of Rāmagrāma, where the *nāga*s kept their share of Buddha relics. The representations from

Figure 30. Ivory plate discovered at Begram. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-48. (Photo: after Hackin [1939], fig. 180.)

Figure 31. Detail from a relief from Amarāvatī. London, British Museum, no. 50. (Photo: copyright the Trustees of The British Museum.)

52 See Maenchen-Helfen (1957); Trousdale (1968 and 1971).
53 Maenchen-Helfen (1957), 115-16.
54 Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58.1.46(e); illustrated in Hiebert and Cambon (2008), no. 153a.
55 Among many others can be mentioned Kanaganahalli slabs no. 8 (lower panel), no. 39 (lower panel), or no. 59 (lower panel); for references see Zin (2018b), 69, 111, 123, pls. 10, 22, 25 (drawings), respectively; illustrations in Poonacha (2011), pls. 88, 109, 112; Guy (2023), fig. 119; and also from Amarāvatī: see e.g. reliefs in the British Museum, no. 51 (illustrated in e.g. in Knox [1992], 186, no. 103).
56 For the entire relief see Zin (2018b), 76, pl. 12 (drawing), illustrated in Poonacha (2011), pls. 37A, 94.
57 See Hackin et al. (1954), figs. 90-2, 94.
58 Compare e.g. Amarāvatī, Chennai Government Museum, no. 182 (illustrated in Sivaramamurti [1942], pl. 61) or Kanaganahalli, dome slab no. 46; for references see Zin (2018b), 132-4, pl. 28 (drawing), illustrated in Poonacha (2011), pl. 120. Another example

Figure 32. Ivory plate discovered at Begram. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-86. (Photo: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 112.)

Gandhāra and Mathurā, are rare and later, and they look different.[59] Such knotted *nāga*s are to my knowledge not repeated in the later art.[60]

Nehru's study has pointed out the differences in the Begram objects from Indian art, leading her to the conclusion that they are from Bactria and are influenced by the western aesthetics and nomadic culture. Impressive, individual faces are being understood as 'an-Indian'. But if we look at what we know from the Kushan world in the Sātavāhana period – recently exhibited at the Louvre in the exhibition 'The Splendours of Uzbekistan's Oases'[61] – can we talk about any similarity with Begram carving? Bone carvings were also exhibited in Paris, the famous Orlat plates[62] – likewise a masterpiece of carving art, but how different. The ivory comb discovered in Dalverzin Tepe (Figure 36) looked like a foreign body in the exhibition.[63] The Orlat plate showing knights in full armour on horseback hunting and at war is of course of a completely different character and difficult to compare with

Figure 33. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, dome slab 14, in situ. (Photo: copyright Maiko Nakanishi.)

from Kanaganahalli is illustrated in Guy (2023), 26.

59 Compare illustrations in *Gandhara: das buddhistische Erbe Pakistans* (2008), 338 and Kurita (2003), vol. 1, fig. 530.

60 There is one representation on a drum slab at Phanigiri (illustrated in Ahuja [2021], 130-1, 134) which Shimada (2021), 135 dated to the second century AD.

61 See the catalogue edited by Rante, Lintz and Buresi (2022), 29-70.

62 Illustrated e.g. in Ilyasov and Rusanov (1997-1998); Rante, Lintz and Bures (2022), 43-5.

63 Cf. Aripdžanov [Aripjanov] (2018) with references to earlier research. Photographs of the comb e.g. in Nehru (2004), fig. 36; Aripjanov (2019), fig. 1; Rante, Lintz and Bures (2022), 66-7.

Figure 34. Ivory plates discovered at Begram. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 58-1-80. (Photo: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 90.)

Figure 35. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, drum slab, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

the female scene on the comb.[64] Nevertheless, one should ask oneself whether someone from the Kushan culture would depict a horseman or hunter barefoot and with a naked upper body (compare Fig. 32) – unless he wanted to imitate something or represent a foreign culture.[65]

We are touching here on the most important argument in support of the opinion that the Begram carvings come from the North: that similar objects have been found in the North. These are the combs. Only one comb, made of bone, was found in Begram (Figure 37). Others combs, made of ivory, have been discovered in different places. Except for the one from Dalverzin Tepe mentioned above (Figure 36), two combs were found at Sirkap (Taxila) (Figure 38),[66] one comb comes from an unknown place in Afghanistan (Figure 39), and one from Tilya Tepe (Figure 40).[67] About all the objects it can be said that they do indeed resemble the Begram carvings in one way or another: it could be the delicate plants in the background, bead and reel patterns, soft women's bellies masterfully drawn in a few lines or the anatomically not quite correctly presented arm of a seated woman (comb from Dalverzin Tepe, Figure 36).[68]

As I said at the outset, there are also 'royal combs' from Dibba (Figures 2-3), and combs found in India (Figures 4-5). The distances between the discovery sites are large. I do not know what would be of greater significance: that the objects were brought from the Sātavāhana realm, or that they were made

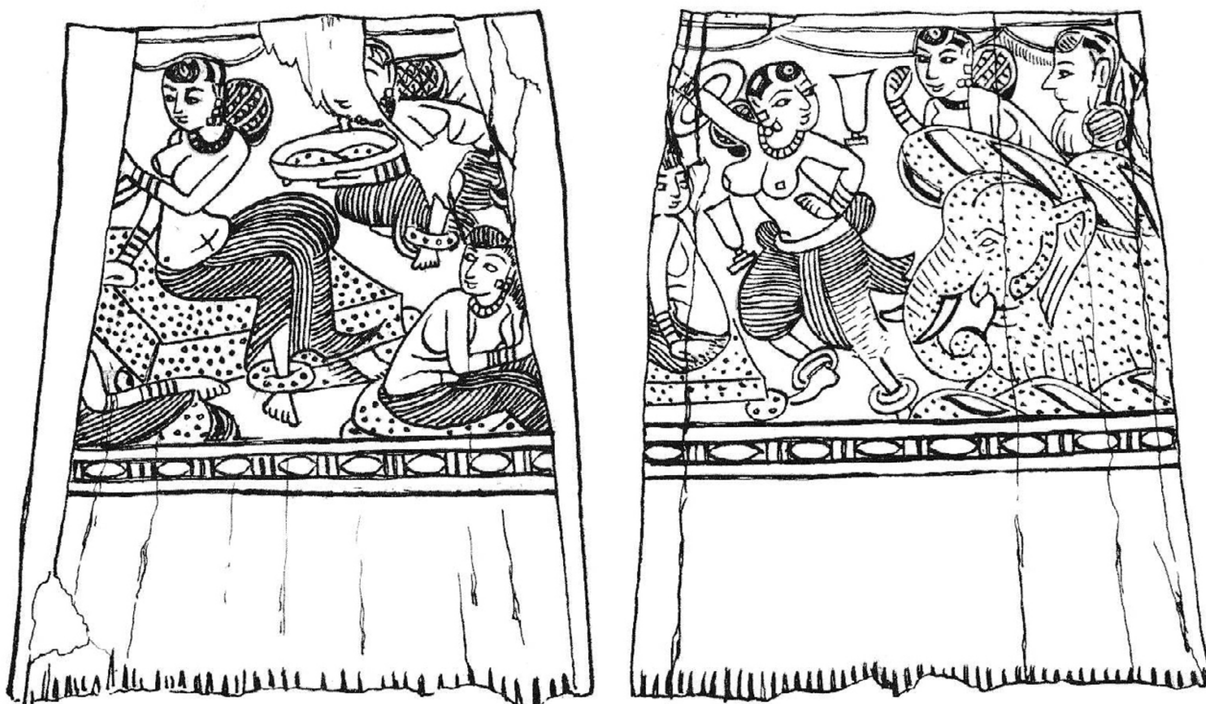

Figure 36. Comb from Dalverzin Tepe (Uzbekistan). (Photo: after Aripjanov [2019], fig. 2.)

64 Compare also the ivory carving from Takht-i Sangin, Tajikistan (illustrated in Nehru [2004], fig. 27) with mounted hunters dressed in sleeve robes and boots. The crenelated main of the horse also looks different here: three fluttering wisps of hair.
65 Compare the paintings of Kucha, which show the donors or painters in boots and heavy long cloaks (e.g. Grünwedel [1912], figs. 12-20, 50-3, 116, 216, 334-38, 366) while the depictions of the deities or narrative scenes repeat Indian iconography and show the persons with bare upper body and feet.
66 Our Figure 38 shows only one side of one of the combs. For both sides see Ghosh (1948), pl. 20; Dwivedi (1976), figs. 47-8; Mahendale (2003), fig. 13; Nehru (2004), figs. 34-5. Another comb excavated in Taxila shows on one side heads of a couple and on another a duck (illustrated in Marshall [1951], vol. 3, pl. 199.21; Nehru [2004], fig. 34).
67 The comb has been illustrated several times, sometimes as here with an additional fragment in the middle, see Mahendale (2003), fig. 11; Nehru (2004), fig. 7; Hiebert and Cambon (2008), 263.
68 A comb decorated with an ink(?) drawing was also discovered; see the comb from Kampyr Tepe, Uzbekistan (illustrated in Nehru [2004], fig. 16; Rante, Lintz and Bures [2022], 40).

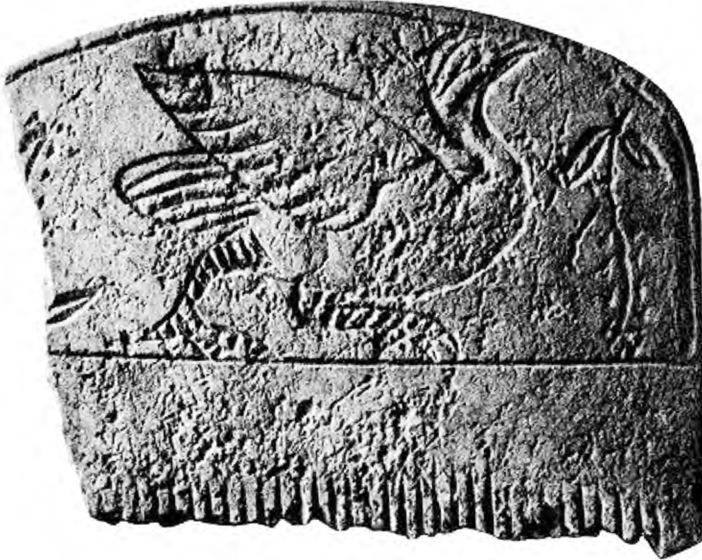

Figure 37. Bone comb, discovered at Begram/ Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 59-1-69. (Photo: after Hackin [1939], pl. 79.)

Figure 38. Comb from Taxila (Sirkap). (Photo: after Ghosh 1948, pl. 20.)

Figure 39. Comb reportedly 'from Afghanistan'. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 2000.284.8, Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Bequest of Samuel Eilenberg, 1998. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum, New York, CC0 licence.)

Figure 40. Comb from Tilya Tepe (Afghanistan).
(Drawing: M. Zin, after Hiebert and Cambon 2008, 265.)

in the North, imitating the southern idiom. Since the imitation of art forms is a proven fact in Bactria, we may never be able to exclude this possibility, but I cannot confirm it either.

In one example, I thought that I recognized something made in the Andhran style, but representing something unknown in India. This was the ivory plaque found in Turkmenistan in a Zoroastrian temple (Figure 41a-b). Depicted is a bovine, a shepherd and two elephants, apparently in front of a female deity standing on a lotus. The iconography is not familiar from South Asia; but the other side of the plaque shows the reason for it. From India in that period we know religious art and the plaque is not at all religious in character (Figure 42a-b). A nun (obviously Buddhist) is shown here. On her one side sits a woman (note that her pubic region is shown uncovered – compare Figures 24-25). On the other sits a man – that is beyond doubt, for the women always wear foot rings – and the man plays a *vīṇā*. Buddhist nuns (or rather false nuns), as bawds and go-betweens appear in many places in narrative and dramatic literature.[69] That it is a nun is certain – the bare breast is depicted in exactly the same way as the breast of the seated woman. I need not say that, according to the *vinaya*, (real) nuns have to cover their breasts with a particular piece of cloth.[70] The fact that this plaque was found as a donation in a fire-temple also tells us a lot: the donor did not understand the content, only the high luxury value of the object.

The plaque thus depicts a secular or even frivolous theme, perhaps even a particular narrative. That may possibly explain its verso – with two elephants and a bovine by the side of a female. We have seen something similar before on the comb discovered in Maharashtra (Figure 5) showing a woman between four elephants (compare also the row of pyramid-shaped 'merlons' as the upper decoration). It is not a well-established iconography of a great goddess but rather of a local deity or perhaps an illustration of a deity mentioned in a narrative. And it is certainly Indian. The plaque from Turkmenistan is not a comb; archaeologists suppose it was a piece of furniture.

69 See for instance the nun in the play *Padmaprābhṛtaka* by Śūdraka, whose hero is Mūladeva, the legendary king of thieves; cf. Warder (1972-1992), vol. 3 (1977), 39.
70 Hinüber and Anālayo (2016).

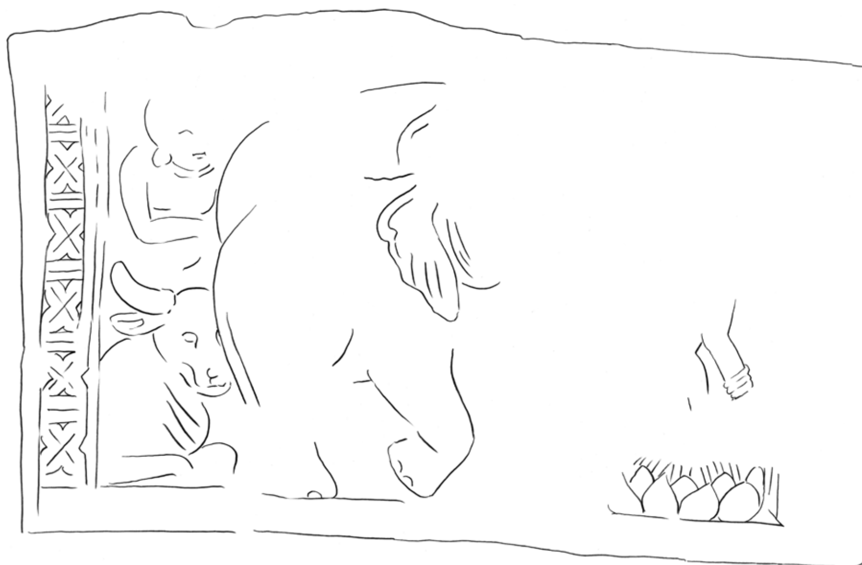

Figure 41. An ivory plaque from Mele Hairam (Turkmenistan). (Photo: after Kornacka [2007], fig. 2 with kind permission of the excavators [Prof. Barbara Kaim, University of Warsaw] and drawing by Monika Zin, CC BY-NC-SA.)

An interesting book was published a few years ago: *Worlds Apart Trading Together: The Organisation of Long-Distance Trade Between Rome and India in Antiquity* by Kasper Evers. It is about this 'organisation', according to Roman law, involving the constitution of corporations, the *collegia*, which acted like companies with common property. In Trastevere (Rome), an inscription from the time of Hadrian (AD 117-138) has been preserved concerning the collegium *of negotiatores eborarri et citriarii*, i.e. 'ivory and citrus wood merchants'.

What is important is the connection of otherwise different mercantile branches resulting from the trade in fashionable elegant furniture. This can be seen from several documents and descriptions in literary sources that mention pieces of furniture made of both materials, such as a citrus wood table with ivory legs. Such objects were extremely popular and exorbitantly expensive, so much so that Pliny

Figure 42. An ivory plaque from Mele Hairam (Turkmenistan). (Photo: after Kornacka 2007, fig. 1 with kind permission of the excavators [Prof. Barbara Kaim, University of Warsaw] and drawing by Monika Zin, CC BY-NC-SA.)

called them 'table madness' (*mensarum insania*).[71] The carvings were made in Rome of ivory from Africa or India, but also imported, as evidenced not least by the famous 'statuetta indiana' which is obviously not a mirror handle, as long assumed, but part of a piece of furniture.[72] This is of course also true for the Begram carvings: they were inlays of wooden furniture, or their three-dimensional parts, like the elaborated statuettes of beautiful women standing on *makaras*.[73] Evers understands that the trade in materials for such objects and also the objects themselves was the essential part, or even the driving force behind, exchange across the Eritrean Sea. Some of the many sources do indeed explicitly mention Indian ivory and reference is made to a 'rampant panther with gaping jaw', which of course reminds us

71 See Evers (2017), 17; Plint the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, 13.29-40.
72 Evers (2017), 15-22. See note 18, above.
73 Kabul National Museum, inv. 04.1.14, 04.1.15 and 04.1.16, illustrated e.g. in Tissot (2006), 135-6; Hiebert and Cambon (2008), nos. 147-9.

of the Begram pieces (Figure 43 and Figure 44), but also of the reliefs from Andhra (Figure 45).[74] Such thrones are rarely observed in detail, but they are widespread in the art of Andhra (Figure 46).

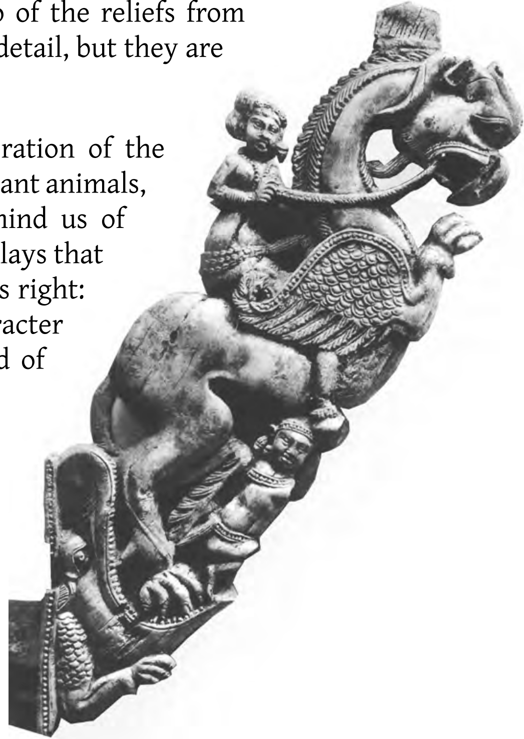

Figure 43. Ivory bracket. Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 03.1.116. (Photo: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 152.)

But what are we actually dealing with here? The decoration of the Buddha's throne displays a western-looking vine and rampant animals, whether they are lions or griffons, which strongly remind us of Roman chair legs; and such motifs were applied in ivory inlays that were exported 'back' to Rome. It seems to me that Evers is right: that this was a large-scale cooperation of a reciprocal character and mutual influences, planned over an extended period of time.

I would like to emphasize the word mutual, not only because in Andhran art we find furniture that was fashionable in Rome. Working with material culture, it is easy to forget that there are other goods too. At their beginning, the studies of comparative literature spoke of 'India, the mother of all fairy tales'. Certainly not all narrative motifs came from India, but many did and were carried with narratives, e.g. the renditions of the *Pañcatantra*, towards the West. I have tried to show this in an essay on an Amarāvatī relief presenting the dramatic escape of a boy, a future king, who is on the run because of a prophecy in which poor people help him to survive

Figure 44. Reconstruction of a chair back-rest with ivory inlays discovered at Begram. (Drawing: after Hackin et al. [1954], fig. 636.)

74 Evers (2017), 17. Most of the Begram carvings are inlays for decorating furniture; some are carved in the round – they must have been legs, braces or other supports. See e.g. pieces in Kabul, National Museum of Afghanistan, inv. 59-1-301, 302, 58-1-152; illustrated in Hiebert and Cambon (2008), nos. 147, 149, 209, 152; Simpson (2011), 90.

Figure 45. Detail from a relief, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Archaeological Site Museum, inv. 585 (depot). (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

Figure 46. Detail from a relief, Kanaganahalli, drum slab, in situ. (Photo: copyright Robert Arlt.)

(Zin 2020). The relief (Figure 47) is designed in a very western style, with dramatic movements of muscular bodies and no less than ten back views. But we should take note of the fact that the narrative motif depicted here (the 'child of destiny') appeared in Indian literature for the first time before it entered fairy tale literature in the West. The exchange between the cultures went both ways.

In the title of this essay I have mentioned not only the ivories but also the theatre, which I would like to come to briefly, because it seems to me that we may have something tangible for the mutual exchange in the realm of the theatrical imagination.[75] A manuscript has survived the centuries, a papyrus found in Egypt, containing the Greek text of a play called 'Charition mime' (parody of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*).[76] The mime, *mimus*, was a popular and widespread kind of theatre. The text gives us a hint of how distant India was imagined in the West. It is about a kidnapped priestess whose brother and his companions come to India on a ship to free her. The natives who fight the Westerners speak a language, about the identity of which research has reached no conclusion: is it invented, or a Greek transcription of a Dravidian tongue? The play is an extremely important document, rare if only for the reason that mime

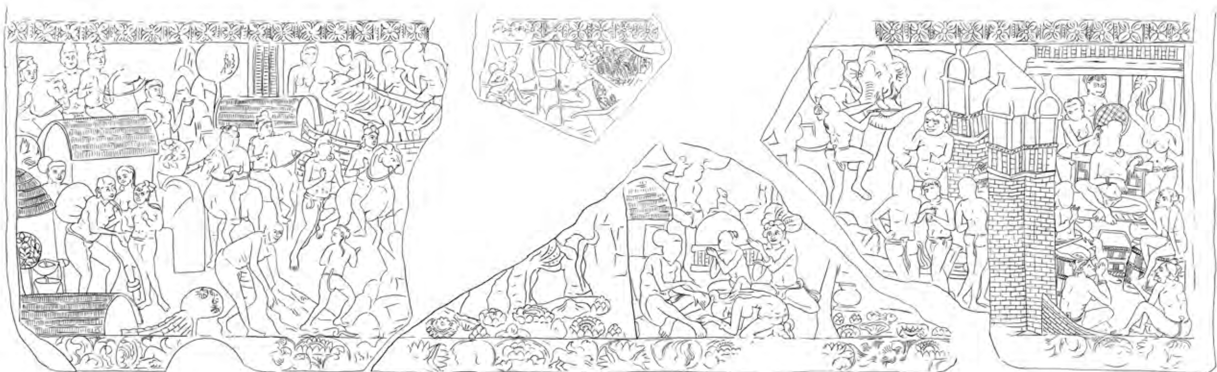

Figure 47. Relief on coping stone, Amarāvatī. Chennai Government Museum, inv. 53, 54, 75 and 124 (reconstruction drawing: copyright Monika Zin, CC BY-NC-SA).

75 Zin (2023).

76 Manuscript P.Oxy. III 413 (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Gr.class. b4), second century AD, discovered in Oxyrhynchos (Al Bahnasa); cf. Tsitsiridis (2011) with references to the earlier research.

Figure 48. Detail from a relief, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Archaeological Site Museum, no. 36. (Photo: copyright Wojtek Oczkowski.)

often did without transcripts of the texts at all, but above all because it gives us a picture of how the mime audience – not a particularly well educated audience – imagined faraway India. The manuscript is a chance find of text of which there must have been many. It shows a way in which the appearance of Indian actors could have reached the West. I am thinking here of the *vidūṣaka*, who is described in Sanskrit theory of drama and dramaturgy, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The description corresponds to the court jester and who is very often shown in art, especially in Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, but several depictions from Mathurā and Gandhāra (and later from Ajanta) also exist.[77] The jester carries a stick bent several times and has strands of hair on his head forming a 'crow's foot' (i.e. four bird's toes), which according to the description in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is shaved bald, but very often looks like a tight-fitting cap (Figure 48). For me, it is impossible to determine what the original was: the court jester with his characteristic appearance or the theatrical figure. What is significant for the discussion at hand is that such an appearance does not correspond to that of the classical mime actors, nor to classical court jesters, because such individuals – professional court jesters, as we know them from the Middle Ages, attendants of the kings who told them the truth to their faces – did not even exist in the Mediterranean culture.

To my surprise, there are some depictions of a clearly comic character – with warts on their faces – shown with strands of hair. The most striking example can be seen in the Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Cologne, where it is labelled 'Isis Priest'.[78] The head – which is a jar with a lid – is characterized by a wart and four strands of hair: one to the front, one to the back and one above each ear, i.e. the most important characteristic of the Indian theatrical *vidūṣaka*, or perhaps rather of a jester. Another head featuring a similar personage is kept in the J. Paul Getty Museum (Getty Villa) Collection at Malibu (Figure 49a-d). The museum's description calls the object a 'balsamarium in the shape of a boxer's head'.[79] If it is a boxer, then the squinting eyes give him a comical expression. The boxers were characterized by a single strand of hair (*cirrus*) on the skull, while the head of the individual in the Getty Villa has four, like the Indian *vidūṣaka*.

Whom the objects in Cologne and Malibu portray I cannot say. If it is a boxer, it was endowed with characteristics that were known to the viewer as comical, but perhaps it is an actor showing an Indian character in a mime play, or maybe a court jester. As mentioned above, the professional court jesters were not part of the traditions of classical antiquity, but perhaps they did exist where the Indian *vidūṣaka*/jester was known.

Whether it is through plays with the participation of Indian characters or actors, or through the transmission of narratives, the fact is that Indian narrative motifs reached the West, which is perhaps to be seen as a counterbalance to the visual motifs that came from there to South Asia.[80]

77 Cf. Zin (2022) and Zin (2023), with references to earlier research.
78 Roman bronze vase in form of a head, Cologne, Römisch-Germanisches Museum, no. L 2175, illustrated in Zin (2023), figs. 19 a-c.
79 Lapatin and Wight (eds.) (2010), 196.
80 Zin (2011) and (2020).

Figure 49. Roman bronze vessel ('balsamarium') with silver inlays in the form of a head, c. *first century AD. Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. 2007.14. (Photo: J. Paul Getty Museum, CC0.)*

The role that Sātavāhana culture played in this exchange cannot be overestimated. Admittedly, the finds that have come down to us are only accidental, and yet it is worth noting that it is not the luxury objects of Gandhāra culture that reached Rome but the objects of the Sātavāhana empire, presumably from Andhra, or at least artefacts trying to look Andhra-like.

Bibliography

Ahuja, N.P. (ed.) (2021), *Phanigiri: Interpreting an Ancient Buddhist Site in Telangana* (Mumbai: Marg).

Aripdžanov [Aripjanov], O.Û. Арипджанов, Отабек Ю. (2018), Kostânye grebni iz Baktrii: novyj vzglâd na ikonografiû izobraženij i techniku izgotovleniâ Костяные гребни из Бактрии: новый взгляд на иконографию изображений и технику изготовления [Bone Combs from Bactria: a New Glance on Iconography of Images and Production Techniques]. *Kratkie soobŝeniâ Instituta archeologii* 250 *Краткие сообщения Института археологии* 250 [*Brief Communications of the Institute of Archaeology*, 250]: 276-92.

Aripjanov, O. (2019), 'Artistic and Craftsmanship Specificities of a Unique Comb from Dalverzintepa', *San'at* 83/2: 10-14.

Bachhofer, L. (1929), *Early Indian Sculpture* (Paris: Pegasus).

Barrett, D. (1960), *Ter* (Bombay: Bhulabai Memorial Institute).

Boardman, J. (1994), *The Diffusion of Classical Art in Antiquity* (London: Thames and Hudson).

Cambon, P. (2008), 'Begram: Alexandria of the Caucasus, Capital of the Kushan Empire', in F. Hiebert and P. Cambon (eds.), *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul* (Washington: National Geographic), 145-61.

Dehejia, V. (1969-1970), 'Early Activity at Amaravati', *Archives of Asian Art* 23: 41-54.

Dehejia, V. (1972), *Early Buddhist Rock Temples: A Chronological Study* (London: Thames and Hudson).

Dwivedi, V.P. (1976), *Indian Ivories: A Survey of Indian Ivory and Bone Carvings from the Earliest Times to the Modern Times* (Delhi: Agam Prakashan).

Evers, K.G. (2017), *Worlds Apart Trading Together: The Organisation of Long-Distance Trade Between Rome and India in Antiquity* (Oxford: Archaeopress).

Fergusson, J. (1868), *Tree and Sent Worship: or Illustrations of Mythology and Art in India in the First and Forth Centuries after Christ from the Sculptures of the Buddhist Topes at Sanchi and Amaravati* (London: India Museum).

Gandhara: das buddhistische Erbe Pakistans. Legenden, Klöster und Paradiese (2008) (Bonn and Mainz: Philipp von Zabern).

Ghosh, A. (1948), 'Taxila (Sirkap), 1944-45', *Ancient India* 4: 41-83.

Ghosh, A. and Sarkar, H. (1964-1965), 'Beginnings of Sculptural Art in South-East India: A Stele from Amaravati', *Ancient India* 20-21: 168-77.

Gorakshkar, S. (1975), *Dawn of Civilization in Maharashtra: An Exhibition of Archaeological finds in Maharashtra of the Prehistoric Period to the Third Century A.D.* (Bombay: Prince of Wales Museum of Western India).

Grünwedel, A. (1912), *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkestan: Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuča, Qarašahr und in der Oase Turfan* (Berlin: Reimer).

Guy, J. (2023), *Tree and Serpent: Early Buddhist Art in India* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven and London: Yale University Press).

Hackin, J. (1939), *Recherches archéologiques à Begram, Chantier no. 2 (1937)*, Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9 (Paris: Presses Universitaires).

Hackin, J. et al. (1954), *Nouvelles recherches archéologique à Begram, ancienne Kâpicî (1939-1940)*, Mémoire de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 11 (Paris: Presses Universitaires).

Hiebert, F. and Cambon, P. (eds.) (2008), *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul* (Washington: National Geographic).

Hinüber, O. von (2014), 'Mitteilungen aus einer vergangenen Welt: frühe indische Buddhisten und ihre Inschriften', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 164/1: 13-32.

Hinüber, O. von and Anālayo, Bhikkhu (2016), 'The Robes of a Bhikkhunī', *Journal of Buddhist Studies* 13: 79-90.

Ilyasov, J.Y. and Rusanov, D.V. (1997-1998), 'A Study on the Bone Plates from Orlat', *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 5: 107-59.

Jasim, S.A. and Yousif, E. (2021), 'Royal Indian Combs from Dibba al-Hisin (Sharjah-UAE)', in A.J. Domínguez Monedero, C. del Cerro Linares, F.J. Villalba Ruiz de Toledo and F.L. Borrego Gallardo (eds.), *Nomina in Aqua Scripta: Homenaje a Joaquín María Córdoba Zoilo* (Madrid: Solana e Hijos, S.A.U), 233-45.

Knox, R. (1992), *Amaravati, Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stūpa* (London: British Museum Press).

Kornacka, M. (2007), 'An ivory plaque from Mele Hairam, Turkmenistan', *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 13: 183-91.

Kurita, I. (2003), *Gandhāran Art*, 2 vols. (Revised edition, Tokyo: Nigensha).

Lapatin, K. and Wight, K. (eds.) (2010), *The J. Paul Getty Museum: Handbook of the Antiquities Collection* (Los Angeles: Paul Getty Trust).

Lapteff, S. et al. (2024), *Mleiha: Arabian Caravan Kingdom at the Sea Silk Road* (Miho Museum and Sharjah Archaeology Authority).

Maenchen-Helfen, O. (1957), 'Crenelated Mane and Scabbard Slide', *Central Asiatic Journal* 3/2: 85-138.

Maisey, F.C. (1892), *Sanchi and its Remains: A Full Description of the Ancient Buildings, Sculptures and Inscriptions* (London: Trübner).

Maiuri, A. (1938-1939), 'Statuetta eburnea di arte Indiana a Pompei', *Le Arti* 1: 111-15.

Marshall, J.H. (1951), *Taxila: An illustrated Account of Archaeological Excavations Carried Out at Taxila under the Orders of the Government of India between the Years 1913 and 1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Marshall, J.H. and Foucher, A. (1940), *The Monuments of Sāñchī*, 3 vols. (London: Probsthain, reprinted New Delhi 1982).

Mehendale, S. (1996), 'Begram: Along Ancient Central Asian and Indian Trade Routes', in *Inde – Asie centrale: routes du commerce et des idées* (Tachkent: Institut Français d'Études sur l'Asie Centrale (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud), 47-64.

Mehendale, S. (1997), 'Begram: New Perspectives on the Ivory and Bone Carvings', PhD dissertation (University of California, Berkeley), <http://ecai.org/begramweb>.

Mehendale, S. (2003), 'The Begram Ivory and Bone Carvings: Some Observations on Provenance and Chronology', *Topoi: Orient-Occident* 11 (2001): 485-514.

Mehendale, S. (2008), 'Begram: At the Heart of the Silk Roads', in Hiebert and P. Cambon (2008), 131-43.

Mehendale, S. (2012), 'The Begram Carvings: Itinerancy and the Problem of "Indian" Art', in J. Aruz and E. Valtz Fino (eds.), *Afghanistan: Forging Civilisations along the Silk Road* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), 64-77.

Morris, L. (2017a), 'Revised Dates for the Deposition of the Begram Hoard and Occupation at the New Royal City', *Parthica* 19: 75-104.

Morris, L. (2017b), 'The Begram Hoard and its Context', PhD dissertation (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München) <https://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/28897/1/Morris_Lauren.pdf>.

Morris, R. (1989), 'The Didargañj Yakṣi and the "Coque ou Bouffant de Chevelure" Hairstyle: A Reassessment', *Archives of Asian Art* 42: 77-81.

Morris, R. (1990), 'Roman Hairstyle in Mathurā?', in M. Taddei (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1987. Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe, held in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente), 787-800.

Nagar, S.L. (1993), *Jātakas in Indian Art* (Delhi: Parimal Publ).

Nehru, L. (2004), 'A Fresh Look at the Bone and Ivory Carvings From Begram', *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 10: 97-150.

Patil, M.J. (2022), 'New Approach to the Ivory and Bone Artifacts from Tagar (Ter), Dist. Osmanabad, Maharashtra', *International Journal of Health Sciences* 6: 5796-804 <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS1.6161>.

Poonacha, K.P. (2011), *Excavations at Kanaganahalli (Sannati, Dist. Gulbarga, Karnataka)*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India 106 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India).

Potts, D.T. (2011), 'Indianesque Ivories in Southeastern Arabia', in C. Lippolis and S. De Martino (eds.), *Un impaziente desiderio di scorrere il mondo, Studi in onore di Antonio Invernizzi* (Florence: Le Lettere), 235-344.

Rante, R., Lintz, Y. and Buresi M. (eds.) (2022), *Splendeurs des oasis d'Ouzbékistan: sur les routes caravanières d'Asie centrale* (exhibition catalogue, Musée du Louvre) (Paris: Louvre éditions Éditions and El Viso).

Rama, K. (1995), *Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan).

Raschke, M.G. (1978), 'New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East', in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, vol. 9/2 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter), 604-1378.

Rosen [Stone], E. (1974-1975), 'The Begram Ivories', *Marsyas* 17: 39-48.

Sarianidi, V.I. (1985), *The Golden Hoard of Baktria* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers/New York: Abrams).

Shimada, A. (2013), *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great Stupa at Amaravati (ca. 300 BCE-300 CE)* (Leiden: Brill).

Shimada, A. (2021), 'Phanigiri in the Buddhist Landscape of the Ikshvaku Era', in N.P. Ahuja (ed.), *Phanigiri, Interpreting an Ancient Buddhist Site in Telangana* (Mumbai: Marg), 131-51.

Simpson, S. (2011), *The Begram Hoard: Indian Ivories from Afghanistan* (London: British Museum Press).

Sivaramamurti, C. (1942), *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum*. Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, n.s. 4 (Madras: Government Museum) (reprinted 1956, 1977, 2000).

Stern, P. and Bénisti, M. (1961), Évolution du style indien d'Amarāvatī (Paris: Paris Presses Universitaires de France).

Stone, E.R. (1994), *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).

Stone, E.R. (2008), 'Some Begram Ivories and the South Indian Narrative Tradition: New Evidence', *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 3: 45-59.

Stoye, M. (2006), '"Māyā Anadomene" – die schöne Śākya-Fürsten beim Bade: zum Import einer etablierten Bildformel in ein erzählendes Relief aus Amarāvatī (Südindien)', in G.J.R. Mevissen and K. Bruhn (eds.), *Vanamālā: Festschrift A.J. Gail* (Berlin: Vieder Buchverlag), 224-34.

Tieken, H. (2001), *Kāvya in South India, Old Tamil Caṅkam Poetry* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten).

Tissot, F. (2006), *Catalogue of the National Museum of Afghanistan, 1931-1985* (Paris: UNESCO).

Tournier, V. (2020), 'Buddhist Lineages along the Southern Routes: On Two Nikāyas Active at Kanaganahalli under the Sātavāhanas', in V. Tournier, V. Eltschinger and M. Sernesi (eds.), *Archaeologies of the Written: Indian, Tibetan, and Buddhist Studies in Honour of Cristina Scherrer-Schaub* (Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'), 857-910.

Tournier, V. (2021-2022), 'Kings as Patrons of Monasteries and Stūpas in Early Āndhra: Sada Rulers, the Rājagiriya Freternity, and the "Great shrine" at Amaravati', *Buddhism, Law, & Society* 7: 1-57.

Trousdale, W. (1968), 'The Crenelated Mane: Survival of an Ancient Tradition in Afghanistan', *East and West* 18/1-2: 169-77.

Trousdale, W. (1971), 'The Crenelated Mane: New Materials and Speculations', *East and West* 21.3/4: 341-4.

Tsitsiridis, S. (2011), 'Greek Mime in the Roman Empire', *Mimos*: 184-232.

Warder, A.K. (1972-1992), *Indian Kāvya Literature*, 6 vols. (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas).

Yazdani, G. (1930-1955), *Ajanta: The Colour and Monochrome Reproductions of the Ajanta Frescoes Based on Photography*. 4 vols. (London: Oxford University Press) (reprinted New Delhi, 1983).

Zin, M. (1998), 'The Oldest Painting of the Udayana Legend', *Berliner Indologische Studien* 11-12: 435-48.

Zin, M. (2000), 'Two Nāga-Stories in the Oldest Paintings of Ajanta IX', in M. Taddei and G. De Marco (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1997*: *Proceedings of the 14th International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Rome* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente), 1171-99.

Zin, M. (2003), *Ajanta. Handbuch der Malereien / Handbook of the Paintings 2: Devotionale und ornamentale Malereien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz).

Zin, M. (2011), 'The Parable of "The Man in the Well": Its Travels and its Pictorial Traditions from Amaravati to Today', in P. Balcerowicz and J. Malinowski (eds.), *Art, Myths and Visual Culture of South Asia* (Delhi: Manohar), 33-93.
Zin, M. (2015), 'Nur Gandhara? Zu Motiven der klassischen Antike in Andhra (incl. Kanaganahalli)', *Tribus: Jahrbuch des Linden-Museums, Stuttgart* 64: 178-205.
Zin, M. (2016), 'Buddhist Narratives and Amaravati', in A. Shimada and M. Willis (eds.), *Amaravati: The Art of an Early Buddhist Monument in Context* (London: The British Museum), 46-58.
Zin, M. (2018a), 'Kanaganahalli in Sātavāhana Art and Buddhism: King Aśoka in Front of the *bodhi* Tree', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 41: 537-68.
Zin, M. (2018b), *The Kanaganahalli Stūpa: An Analysis of the 60 Massive Slabs Covering the Dome* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International).
Zin, M. (2020), 'Traces of Reciprocal Exchange: From Roman Pictorial Models to the World's Earliest Depictions of Some Narrative Motifs in Andhra Reliefs', *Religions (MDPI)* 11/3, no. 103 (26 February 2020) <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030103>.
Zin, M. (2022), 'About Visual Language, Drunken Women, Jesters and Escaping the World', *Cracow Indological Studies* 24: 91-116.
Zin, M. (2023), 'Vidūṣaka's Cousins', *East & West* n.s. 4(63)/1: 153-82.

Throughout the centuries of classical, Graeco-Roman history, India had strong connections with the world of the Mediterranean and Western Asia, sometimes by land or as a result of direct conquest, at other times through the maritime links of the Indian Ocean. In the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods (*c.* fourth century BC to fifth century AD) the movement of artistic ideas between these regions intensified. It appears to be vividly attested in the earliest cave-paintings at Ajanta in Maharashtra, for example, and in the Buddhist sculptures of Andhra Pradesh. In the first two centuries AD, when trade with India was central to Roman luxury consumption and brought colossal revenue to the Empire, Roman coins and other artefacts reached India in abundance and artistic connections are manifest, albeit often subtle and elusive.

Building on the Classical Art Research Centre's earlier *Gandhāra Connections* project, this volume brings together research presented by international scholars at a workshop in Oxford in 2023. The papers, which include a keynote address by the historian William Dalrymple, seek to make sense of the cross-cultural artistic currents that joined India to the classical world. They offer new insights on particular topics and refine our picture of the broader cultural relationship. In doing so, they also question some of the assumptions that underpin it.

Peter Stewart is Director of the Classical Art Research Centre and Professor of Ancient Art at the University of Oxford. He has worked widely in the fields of Graeco-Roman sculpture and ancient world art. His publications include *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (2003), *The Social History of Roman Art* (2008), *A Catalogue of the Sculpture Collection at Wilton House* (2020), and *Gandharan Art and the Classical World* (2023).

Archaeopress Archaeology
www.archaeopress.com