UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Material Matters: Archaeology, Numismatics, and Religion in
Early Historic Punjab

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Religious Studies

by

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September 2007

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July 2007

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by

Daniel Merton Michon

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

researcher, and now a professor, is seen as well worth it. I would like to thank Cambridge University Press for granting me permission to reproduce so many of the images from Sir John Marshall's 1951 excavation report, *Taxila*.

Finally, I would like to thank my immediate family for all their support. My mother- and father-in-law, Rajni and Nanoo Patel, always asked inconvenient questions that made me rethink my highly theoretical perspective and returned my thoughts to the practical. My mother and father, Linda and Joe Michon, have given me the gift of curiosity. As they continue to do work in Latin America well after their appointed retirement time, they serve as an inspiration that good hearts and good work is well rewarded. And to my wife, the Lovely Lina Patel—she had to live with me through the process, a feat in and of itself. Through it all, she remained steadfast in her support and gentle in her love.

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ABSTRACT

Material Matters: Archaeology, Numismatics, and Religion in

Early Historic Punjab

by

Daniel Merton Michon

This study examines the relationship of material culture, text, and religion in early historic period Punjab. It argues that in the study of the archaeology and numismatics of a particular chronological frame, circa 180 BCE – 100 CE, and a particular region, the modern Pakistani and Indian states of Punjab in the northwest corner of the sub-continent, the over-determination of the text—most commonly religious texts—has left the material culture under-interpreted, or worse, mis-interpreted. The normative religious texts produced in the early historic period are more often than not a record of what the socio-economic elites wanted their world to look like rather than a reflection of what their world did look like; that is, these texts are more prescriptive than descriptive. This study takes material culture seriously as an independent source of evidence; in turn, it seeks to engage in a more sophisticated use of text and artifact for historical reconstruction. In Part I, the thesis presents a brief history of archaeological theory and method in general, and then situates early historic South Asian archaeology within these traditions. In Part

II, it examines a specific place, the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian city of Sirkap, and demonstrates how previously published excavation reports, in this case Sir John Marshall's 1951 *Taxila*, can be interrogated with new theories and methods to produce more nuanced religious histories. This part demonstrates how religious shrines were used by royalty to engender legitimacy, by the mercantile community to produce wealth, and by the common folk for protection and well-being. In Part III, the study turns to a particular class of evidence that is under-interpreted in the history of religions, coins. It traces the emergence of the Imperial Kuṣāṇa Empire from its most nascent form: the tribal *yagbus* of the southwestern Central Asia, to its beginnings of an Imperial power. In doing this, it demonstrates how religion was used as a marker of authority, power, and legitimation rather than as a spiritual pursuit.

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the relationship between artifacts and text in the reconstruction of religion and culture in early historic period Punjab. It argues that in the study of the archaeology and numismatics of a particular chronological frame, circa 180 BCE – 100 CE, and a particular region, the modern Pakistani and Indian states of Punjab in the northwest corner of the Indian sub-continent, the over-determination of the text—most commonly religious texts—has left the material culture under-interpreted, or worse, mis-interpreted. The normative religious texts produced in the early historic period are more often than not a record of what the socio-economic elites wanted their world to look like rather than a reflection of what their world did look like; that is, these texts are often more prescriptive than descriptive. This is not a new insight into the nature of hegemonic religious texts, and scholars of South Asia have been diligently deconstructing these texts to find evidence of non-elite religious and cultural beliefs and practices. While these efforts are necessary and produce good results, they often overlook the value of material culture in pursuing these alternate histories. At the same time, most archaeologists have not given enough attention to the religious dimensions of material culture. As a discipline, archaeology puts religion—understood as a complex set of abstract ideas pertaining only to individual belief—beyond its interpretive capabilities. This study, then, tries to soften, and ultimately harmonize, these two extreme positions. It aims to take

material culture seriously as an independent source of evidence for religious belief and practice; and in turn, it seeks to engage in a more creative use of artifact and text for historical reconstruction.

In Chapter One, divided into three sections, the thesis presents a brief history of both archaeological and numismatic method and theory in general, situates early historic South Asian archaeology and numismatics within these traditions, and concludes by suggesting ways in which contemporary methods and theories of material culture can illuminate previously obscured issues in the study of religion. The thesis begins by introducing scholars in the field of Religious Studies to the basic concepts and debates within archaeological and numismatic reasoning. Archaeologists and numismatists will find that it presents material that is already covered, often in greater detail and sophistication, within the literature of their own disciplines; however, it is essential that those coming to this material for the first time—that is the majority of scholars in the field of Religious Studies who are primarily, if not solely, textualists—understand both the benefits and limitations of these strategies.

The first section of Chapter One traces the beginnings of scientific archaeology through the evolutionary and culture-history paradigms, to the revolutionary theories and methods of the New Archaeology of the 1970s and 1980s, and ends with an analysis of the various postprocessual responses to these previous models. The second section of Chapter One follows a similar path to the first section in reviewing the field of numismatics. This section begins by describing traditional numismatic studies, and it ends by outlining the difference

between the hermeneutical value of ancient and modern coinage. While outlining these basic archaeological and numismatic methods and theories, it folds in a brief history of how South Asian archaeology and numismatic studies have either conformed to or deviated from the disciplinary norms. Finally, the last section of Chapter One demonstrates how these methods and theories can further the understanding of religion and culture in the early historic period. It argues that the insights of archaeologists working on prehistoric culture can be applied to historic archaeology to gain fresh interpretations. Further, it argues that understanding the function of ancient coinage can shed light on the role of religious symbols in establishing authority, power, and legitimacy rather than understanding these religious symbols as a reflection of personal spiritual beliefs.

Part II, divided into two chapters, is dedicated to the fresh exploration of the archaeological record of a specific place, the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian city of Sirkap circa 180 BCE − 100 CE. Chapter Two begins with a critique of previous methods and theories in the study of early historic texts and material culture and explores how the over-determination of the text has muted the hermeneutical value of the archaeological record. The most common texts correlated with the archaeological evidence are the early historic Buddhist texts, and the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyana*, and the *Arthaśāstra*. It then demonstrates how a presentist classification of religious traditions—that is the division of traditions into the "Great World Religions" which reflect our modern society— obscures the local and hybrid nature of religious belief and practice in early historic

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Punjab. The chapter ends by introducing the site of Taxila, of which Sirkap is only one part, and its place in modern scholarship.

Chapter Three is a close analysis of the archaeological record of the early historic city of Sirkap. Sirkap is commonly referred to as a "Buddhist city" because of the close proximity of numerous ruins of monastery complexes and the presence of *stūpa* shrines within its urban matrix. However, most of the monastery complexes were not extant during the occupation of Sirkap, and many of the Buddhist shrines served more than strictly "Buddhist" purposes. Thus, eschewing the lens of "Buddhism," it demonstrates how previously published excavation reports, in this case Sir John Marshall's 1951 *Taxila*, can be interrogated with new theories and methods to produce a more nuanced religious history. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first section explores public ritual and religion in an urban setting. It demonstrates how religious shrines, ostensibly Buddhist but functioning to serve many needs, were used by royalty to engender legitimacy, by the mercantile community to either produce or display wealth, and by the common folk for protection and well-being. The second section looks beyond public space to domestic space and suggests the residents of Sirkap engaged in various types of rituals including oracular gambling and the propitiation of deities for health and well-being.

Part III, also divided into two chapters, turns to coins, a class of evidence that is both under- and mis-interpreted in the history of religions. Chapter Four begins with a review of the geographic and chronological history of the Yuezhi, a nomadic people from the eastern Central Asian steppes. It also critiques the ways

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in which a singular Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa period is thought to dominate much of the early historic period. It then traces the emergence of the Yuezhi from their origins as the tribal *yagbus* who migrated to southwestern Central Asia and then crossed into the Indian subcontinent to challenge the various Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, and Indo-Parthian kings that dotted the landscape. In doing this, it points to the ways in which the Yuezhi made use of already established symbols to engender authority and legitimacy.

Chapter Five follows the newly powerful Yuezhi through to their ascension as the Imperial Kuṣāṇas. It pays particular attention to the regional differences in the use of religious symbology, differences which arose from local variations in the configuration of power. Kujula Kadphises, the first Kuṣāṇa king known by name, was certainly aware of these regional differences, and his coinage reflects his attempts to justify his authority through image and legend on his coins. His successor, Vima Takto, the famous issuer of the Soter Megas coins, took a loose alliance of regions ruled tentatively by Kujula Kadphises, and standardized both the monetary and symbolic aspects of Kuṣāṇa coinage, to solidify hegemonic control over a vast empire. In tracing these developments, these chapters demonstrate how religion was used creatively as a marker of authority, power, and legitimation rather than as an indicator of personal spiritual belief.

Thus, this thesis makes three broad assumptions. One, the discipline of archaeology in South Asia has largely relied on textual data to interpret material culture—what I call the over-determination of the text. Two, the religious landscape of early historic Punjab was hybrid one, and this was true not just of the

domestic sphere where local cults dominated, but also in the public sphere. People practiced simultaneous plural belief even in situations that seemed to be dominated by one religion, in this case Buddhism. Three, the religious symbols of the early historic period were carriers of cultural traits that mutually influenced and were influenced by the population. They were adopted by various public actors as they carried forward notions of legitimacy and authority, and in this process these symbols were assimilated in the hybrid cultural cauldron that was early historic Punjab.

PART I: THEORY AND METHOD

CHAPTER 1: ARCHAEOLOGY, NUMISMATICS, AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Archaeology and History

In most historical reconstructions of the past, the understanding of the relationship between the written word and the material artifact is quite simple: the textual sources speak to the historian, offering insight into the political, economic, religious, and overall cultural history of a people or region, and the material evidence from the archaeological survey serves merely as confirmation of that history. In this view, archaeology is useful as an independent source only in making inferences about simple production and consumption activities, and any higher order conclusions can only come from texts.[1] These assumptions are illustrated most clearly in Christopher Hawkes' 1954 "ladder of inference,"

1. To infer from the archeological phenomena to the techniques producing them I take to be relatively easy.
2. To infer to the subsistence economies of the human groups is fairly easy.
3. To infer to the social/political institutions of the groups, however, is considerably harder.
4. To infer to the religious institutions and spiritual life . . . is the hardest of all.[2]

While Hawkes does not go as far to say it is "impossible" to infer social, political, or religious phenomena from the archaeological record, his influential *American*

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[1] John Moreland, *Archaeology and Text* (London: Duckworth, 2001), p. 10.
[2] Christopher Hawkes, "Archaeological Theory and Method: Some Suggestions from the Old World," *American Anthropologist* 56 (1954): pp. 155-168. Christopher Hawkes' paper, presented before the Wenner-Gren Foundation at Harvard University, took as its starting point Walter W. Taylor, *A Study in Archaeology* (American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 69, 1948). Taylor's work would also be highly influential in the work of Lewis Binford and the New Archaeology. Binford, in fact, writes about his reading and rereading of Taylor's book, and his layer upon layer of notes in his subsequent readings, see Lewis Roberts Binford, "Archaeological

Anthropologist article unmistakably rejects such attempts in certain circumstances. For Hawkes, perhaps attempting to infer non-material processes and structures from the material record is forgivable in the pre-historic period where the absence of text leaves the archaeologist with no other option, but certainly such speculation is foolish when texts can be consulted. The elevation of the text over the artifact is pervasive in historical reconstructions, as Moses Finley, a respected Greek classicist and archaeologist of the second half of the twentieth century, argues, "it is self-evident that the potential contribution of archaeology to history is, in a rough way, inversely proportional to the quantity and quality of the available written sources."[3] Clearly, historical archaeologists do not write history, rather, they simply illustrate it.[4]

In his paper, Hawkes also makes a clear distinction between what he terms the "text-free" archaeology of proto- and pre-historic cultures and the "text-aided" archaeology of historical cultures. He also recognizes that American archaeology

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Perspectives," in *An Archaeological Perspective*, ed. Lewis Robert Binford and George Irving Quimby (New York: Seminar Press, 1972), p. 79.

[3] Moses I. Finley, "Archaeology and History," in *The Use and Abuse of History*, ed. Moses I. Finley (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986), p. 93.

[4] Recently, a number of contemporary theorists have detailed this bias quite extensively. For the best short introduction, see Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, pp. 9-32. For other general overviews, see C. Arnold, "Archaeology and History: The Shades of Confrontation and Cooperation," in *Archaeology at the Interface: Studies in Archaeology's Relationship with History, Geography, Biology, and Physical Science*, ed. J. Bintliff and C. Gaffney (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, International Series, 1986), pp. 32-39 and J. N. Postgate, "Archaeology and Texts - Bridging the Gap," *Zeitschrift fur Assyriologie* 80 (1990): pp. 228-240. For studies with more specificity to a certain temporal or geographic frame, see P. Geary, "The Uses of Archaeological Sources for Religious and Cultural History," in *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Geary (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 30-45; Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History: Words and Things in Iron Age Greece* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2000); A. N. Lahiri, "What the Numismatist Expects from the Archaeologists," in *Historical Archaeology of India: A Dialogue between Archaeologists and Historians*, ed. Amita Ray and Samir Mukherjee (New Delhi: Books & Books, 1990).

is concerned almost solely with the "text-free" cultures of the New World indigenous inhabitants. He then argues that the "text-aided" mode of archaeological reasoning is quite helpful for those pursuing "text-free" societies.[5] In short, he is calling for New World archaeologists to recognize an important insight gleaned from historical archaeology, ". . . that several cultures could exist within the same broad region simultaneously . . . [and] the notion of periods of time that are automatically also units of culture history has proved to be a serious nuisance in European prehistory".[6] New World archaeologists should heed this warning and adjust accordingly. While his argument here is certainly sound, I, however, will argue in the balance of this introduction that the opposite is also true: it is the archaeological reasoning of those working in a "text-free" zone that have spurred the field of historical archaeology to new, innovative insights.

This understanding of the value of the archaeological archive is not just the purview of the historian alone; most archaeologists concur with these conclusions reached by historians. David Clarke, the doyen of European archaeology, argued that archaeology had no place at all in history, "[a]rchaeological data is not historical data and consequently archaeology is not history."[7] This led to his famous, and oft quoted and manipulated, statement, "archaeology is archaeology is archaeology."[8] However, Clarke's definition of an archaeologist is quite narrow.

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[5] Hawkes, "Archaeological Theory and Method: Some Suggestions from the Old World," pp. 157-163.
[6] Ibid.: p. 164.
[7] David L. Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology*, 2d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978 [1968]), p. 13.
[8] Ibid.

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For Clarke, the archaeologist's activities are limited to three spheres: (1) excavation, that is data recovery, (2) systematic description, that is the organization of the data into taxonomies and classifications, and (3) integrating and synthesizing, that is the creation of models and theories.[9] Clarke's is but one voice of the overwhelming majority of archaeologists who see archaeology as a predictive science rather than a humanistic endeavor involving historical reconstruction.

This general view of the relative value of both the textual archive and the archaeological archive is clearly evident in the study of early historical India. Within South Asian archaeology, the traditional word/artifact hierarchy is further entrenched due to the nature of Indology. From its inception, Indology has been a discipline of the word since for many years it was dominated by philology, and the mastery of Sanskrit, Pāli, and other ancient languages was, and to a large extent still is, the litmus test for good scholarship. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, studies of ancient India combined philological acumen with anthropological research, that is, the study of the voice was put alongside the study of the word. But anthropological analysis continued to be trumped by philological analysis. In current academic circles, anthropology needs special pleading before it is accepted on the level of classical Indological philology, and even this equal status pertains almost exclusively to western scholarship.[10] Archaeology has fared

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[9] Ibid., p. 12.
[10] This is not to say that many fine anthropologies have not been written by South Asian scholars—there are many—but their value in the academy, whether assessed by native South Asians or not, is much lower than that of textual studies.

much worse in both Indian and western scholarship on South Asia, as those playing in the dirt are most often relegated to footnotes and "interesting asides." The object, that is the material artifact, is subservient to both the word and the voice.[11]

In recent years, however, historians who make a claim for the extended evidentiary value of the artifact have begun to fight back, and the understanding of the relationship between word and artifact is changing. This movement began as archaeologists accepted the postmodern challenge to objectivity and subjected the discipline to interrogation by a vast theoretical corpus derived from anthropology, history, and even literary criticism. In the works of these archaeologists, who still form quite a small cadre within the vast field of archaeology, it is not uncommon to see the likes of Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Robin Collingwood, and Michel Foucault invoked alongside images of pot shards, analyses of carbon-14 dating, and discussions of thermoluminescence testing. According to these scholars, not only must archaeologists be able to read and digest the minutia of the excavation report, but they must also actively participate in theoretical discussions of interpretation of this data. These theoretical discussions have extended far beyond mere interpretation, and the skeptical gaze has been turned on the very methods of excavation itself. In other words, in a typically postmodern move, the politics of the archaeologist and their impact on the very project of excavation have come under scrutiny. These internal archaeological debates over the objectivity of methods and interpretations of material culture

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[11] See Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, pp. 35-44 for a clear statement on how these relationships have historically been understood.

inevitably led to new ways of assessing the interpretive value of archaeological data in general, and as archaeologists gained confidence in their ability to theorize with the postmodern literary critics, historians, and anthropologists, they began to challenge their status as the lowly stepchild to the word and voice.

Now, while it is true that the intersection of archaeology and theory has come under heightened scrutiny in the past few decades, it is also true that on some level they have been in conversation for quite some time.[12] These meta-archaeological conversations remained quietly in the background for many decades, a low hum behind the ever increasing din of the published archaeological data, but they came to the fore in the 1960s with Lewis Binford's processual archaeology, also called the New Archaeology.[13] Thus, while Binford's attention to the theoretical and methodological issues surrounding archaeology was not entirely "new," there certainly was something "new" in the force and vigor with which Binford's processual archaeology put forth its claims, and it encouraged the archaeological community to grapple explicitly with many of the issues that had only periodically appeared amongst the mountains of pot shard and stratigraphal data.

Because of Binford's explicit and aggressive theorizing that came to dominate archaeological debate, most contemporary reviews of archaeological

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[12] Alison Wylie, *Thinking from Things: Essays in the Philosophy of Archaeology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). See her "Introduction: Philosophy from the Ground Up," pp. 1-24, and "Chapter 1: How New is the New Archaeology," pp. 25-41.
[13] This movement is referred to by both names, the New Archaeology or processual archaeology. In much of the more recent literature, the most common appellation given to this movement is simply "processual archaeology," and I will follow this trend.

theory and method take the processual archaeology as their starting point. This strategy is well founded as archaeologists are still responding to Bindford's research program, and while many of these archaeologists may now bristle at the early name applied to their counter movement, postprocessual archaeology, it is undeniable that Binford's processual archaeology was a much needed stimulus for the field.[14] In addition to these two interpretative strategies, two other models continue to exert influence: the evolutionary model and the culture-history model. Thus, the balance of this section will outline the theoretical assumptions and methodological programs of these four models, all of which are encountered in contemporary archaeology, as a basis for the particular study of early-historic South Asia.

Evolutionary and Culture-history Archaeologies

Evolutionary archaeology arose alongside the western colonial project. European nations sought to prove their superiority over their colonial subjects through the archaeological record, and "[i]t was accepted that arranging modern cultures in a series from simplest to most complex illustrated the stages through which the most advanced cultures had developed in prehistoric times."[15] However, this ranking was no mere innocuous enterprise, but rather it clearly advocated that

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[14] The names of this movement are quite diverse as well. Some have argued the proper terminology for this movement should be "antiprocessual archaeology" to mark its often belligerent rejection of processual archaeology. However, I will use the most inclusive term, postprocessual archaeologies, as a shorthand for the diverse set of theoretical and methodological moves made under the guise of contextual archaeology, interpretive archaeology, and cognitive archaeology among others.

advanced cultures, clustered around western Europe, had developed more rapidly
than the others due to their intellectual superiority. Differences in societies were
not the result of environmental factors, as was previously believed, but rather
biological/racial ones, and white Europeans were far superior to other darker
skinned peoples. This understanding of racial difference served as one of the
justifications for colonial activity.[16]

Culture-history archaeology followed closely behind the evolutionary
model, both in time and in theory, but it was fueled more by western European
conceptions of nationalism than the ideology of colonialism. As each European
nation sought to emphasize the historical continuity and natural solidarity among
its *own* people, archaeological evidence was increasingly used to buttress these
claims. The previous emphasis on broad cultural evolution—the notion that
progress could be traced through the archaeological record—and its indifference to
identifying to which particular culture within Europe each archaeological complex
belonged, gave way to an intense search for cultural specificity. Thus, this early
culture-history model sought to justify the distinctiveness of each European ethnic
group—whether it be French, German, or English—and traced this unity back to

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[15] Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1989]), p. 110.
[16] The best example of this evolutionary thought is found in the works of John Lubbock (1834-1913), later knighted as Lord Avebury. Working mostly with the archaeology of Africa, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, he produced two seminal works, John Lubbock, *Pre-historic Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1865) and John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* (London: Longmans, Green, 1870). Key to his argument are the contentions that modern primitive societies shed light on the behavior of prehistoric human beings (an idea taken from biological analogy), and technologically less advanced people were culturally,

prehistoric times. The task of the archaeologist was to describe these discrete archaeological cultures, and in this description a normative view of the "nature" of these people would emerge.

These archaeologists emphasized the conservative nature of culture and the rigidity of human behavior. It was argued that the French, German, and English were ethnically and culturally different from one another, and it was these ethnic and cultural differences, not economic or political factors, that determined their behavior. Change was inimical to culture, and when it did occur, albeit rarely and with much effort, two main explanations emerged: diffusion and migration. In the late nineteenth century, Friedrich Ratzel warned ethnologists and archaeologists about the folly of assuming that a particular technology was invented more than once in separate societies, as humans were fundamentally resistant to change. Rather, he argued that the world was small and any technological innovation could be traced back to one common source. Franz Boas expanded and refined these ideas, arguing for a cultural relativism and historical particularism in which each culture was a product of a unique sequence of developments. For Boas, cultural 'development' was due to chance operations of diffusion which created reluctant change. Using these ideas, the British archaeologist Grafton Elliot Smith posited Egypt as a prime source for many innovations that were subsequently carried all over the world. But by the 1920s, this kind of hyper-diffusionist argument had lost

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intellectually, and emotionally more primitive than civilized ones. For a nice summary of Lubbock's thought, see Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, pp. 114-118.

its steam, though less grandiose scenarios of diffusion and migration continued to fuel archaeological theories.

Differences between the evolutionary model and the diffusionist/migrationist model began to widen. The most influential culture-history archaeologist was Gordon Childe.[17] His seminal work, *The Dawn of European Civilization*, was the model on which the study of archaeology hinged for the first half of the twentieth century.[18] Childe sought to identify prehistoric cultures situated within a complex mosaic. According to Childe, the most useful artifacts in identifying a culture were home-made pottery, ornaments, and burial items as they were the most resistant to change and reflected local tastes. Tools, weapons, and other utilitarian items were most prone to rapid diffusion and as such were poor indicators of distinct cultures.

Despite their differences, the evolutionary and culture-history models made some key assumptions about how the archaeological record could be interpreted. In both models the artifact is evidence of a reified culture. It is the culture, not the people within that culture, which is to be studied. People are reduced to mere the bearers of culture, and it this abstract 'culture' that is the agent, not humans. Thus, cultural change is accounted for by external factors, usually by "diffusion of ideas from one group to another or [by] migrations that led to the replacement of one

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[17] Gustaf Kossinna's (1858-1931) work made the strongest link between archaeology and cultures as he explicitly identified the similarities and differences in material culture with similarities and differences in ethnicity. However, because of Kossinna's German bias, his work did not have much influence outside of his home country, so it was Childe who really brought culture-history archaeology to the fore.
[18] Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, p. 172.

people and their culture by another."[19]   These approaches lend themselves to nationalist archaeologies, that is, archaeologies that glorify a nation's history by positing discrete racial/ethnic groups in a golden age of truth, morality, and purity. This model remains the dominant approach to archaeology in many countries.[20] In China, Japan, Mexico, Africa, the Near East, and most importantly for this study, India, the search continues for the prehistoric peoples that determine the nation-state.   Bruce Trigger succinctly identifies the postcolonial effects of such archaeologies:

> Ethnic and national groups continue to desire to learn more about their prehistory and such knowledge can play a significant role in the development of group pride and solidarity and help to promote economic and social development. This is particularly important for peoples whose past has been neglected or denigrated by a colonial approach to archaeology and history.[21]

These perfected national ancestors have been used for various purposes. Within European politics, archaeology was a key justification for the position of the ruling classes of each nation state. This took its most pernicious form in the ideology of the German National Socialist Party, but other European countries were certainly not immune to such romanticization of their ancestors. On the international scene, it was a lynch-pin in European colonial endeavors, but was also important in anti-colonial revolutions as well. This is clearly seen in the creation of Great Britain's colonial authority throughout the world and the subsequent independence movements of colonized people, as in India and her *swadeshi* ideology. Nationalist

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[19] Ibid., p. 154.
[20] Ibid., p. 174.
[21] Ibid., p. 205.

archaeologies currently are used for similar purposes: for example in India archaeology has been pivotal in the claims of the Vishva Hindu Parishad's *Rāmjanmabhūmi* movement.[22]

In South Asia, the culture-history model has been, and continues to be, the dominant mode of archaeological practice and reasoning. Both Sir John Marshall and R.E.M. Wheeler, Director Generals of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1901-1928 and 1944-1948 respectively, emphasized the connection between discrete spatio-temporal units of material culture and ethno-linguistic human groups. After Independence, South Asian archaeologists continued to follow the colonial British paradigms. The two most celebrated contemporary doyens of Indian archaeology, H.D. Sankalia and B.B. Lal, have followed and continue to follow decidedly traditional culture-history models.[23] As Peter Johansen so eloquently writes:

> . . . the notion of culture that is prevalent with a culture history of South Asia's archaeological past is a descriptive rather than explanatory category. The 'culture' in culture history consists of the artifacts themselves, which are viewed as the reflection of a people's normative customs, beliefs, and behavior. It is decidedly disinvested of any sense of diverse systems of meaning, agency, socio-political difference, or any form of internal variability, nor does it appreciate the dynamic and processual nature of human behaviour through time. As closed-off spatio-temporal, analytic entities, archaeological cultures essentialize past peoples into units

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[22] Often this nationalist archaeology becomes a caricature of itself, and the ideology of the nation-state surpasses sound archaeological reasoning. See Michael Witzel, "Rama's Realm: Indocentric Rewritings of Early South Asian Archaeology and History," in *Archaeological Fantasies: How Pseudoarchaeology Misrepresents the Past and Misleads the Public*, ed. Garrett G. Fagan (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 203-232.

[23] For a incisive review of H.D. Sankalia's archaeological method and theory, see Peter G. Johansen, "Recasting Foundations: New Approaches to Regional Understandings of South Asian Archaeology and the Problem of Culture History," *Asian Perspectives* 42, no. 2 (2003): pp. 198-199.

of identity that have little character beyond a description of the artifacts they produced.[24]

The most obvious example of this is the equation of cultural-ethnic groups with pottery analysis. Thus B.K. Thapar, T.N. Roy, and C. Margabandhu sought to identify "Painted Grey Ware Culture" and "Northwest Black Polished Ware (N.B.P.W.) Culture," assuming that a particular style of pottery had a one-to-one correspondence with a cultural-ethnic group.[25] These investigations yielded further studies with titles such as *The N.B.P. Culture of Eastern India*,[26] *The Painted Grey Ware: An Iron Age Culture of Northern India*,[27] and the aforementioned study by T.N. Roy, *A Study of Northern Black Polished Ware Culture: An Iron Age Culture of India*.

Thus, while this culture-history paradigm encourages a much-needed focus on the spatial and temporal particularity of certain historical peoples, it also denies people any agency for change. People, with the exception of the political ruler invoked most often for chronological purposes, are absent from these archaeologies, and instead the idealized 'ethnic/racial' group is thrust to the forefront.

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[24] Ibid.: pp. 197-198.
[25] Each of these scholars make explicit connections between a style of pottery and an ethnic-cultural complex. See B. K. Thapar, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in India* (Paris: UNESCO, 1985); T. N. Roy, *A Study of Northern Black Polished Ware Culture: An Iron Age Culture of India* (New Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1986); C. Margabandhu, *Archaeology of the Satavahana Kshatrapa Times* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1985).
[26] Durga Basu, *The N.B.P. Culture of Eastern India*, 1st ed., 2 vols. (Kolkata: R.N. Bhattacharya, 2005).
[27] Vibha Tripathi, *The Painted Grey Ware: An Iron Age Culture of Northern India*, 1st ed. (Delhi: Concept Pub. Co., 1976).

Binford's Processual Archaeology

Just as there was a slow development and much overlap in the movement from the evolutionary model to the culture-history model, so too is there a continuity between the culture-history model and processual archaeology. The dissatisfaction with the inability of the culture-history model to *explain* culture change except through chance encounters with diffusion and migration led to an increasingly functionalist approach to these problems. The functionalists sought a systematic understanding of human nature, a system that would be universal and thus predictive in any circumstance. Processual archaeology continues the functionalist desire to explain culture change rather than merely describe it. This move toward explanation rather than description came from within the culture-history approach itself; for example the "father" of the culture-history approach, Gordon Childe, moved towards more functionalist explanations later in his career, though it is important to note that he never gave up on diffusionist models altogether.

The focus of functionalism was firmly rooted in systems-theory. The first explanation for difference and change in the functionalist mode reverted to environmental factors. This gave way to economic functionalism, which gave way to ecological and settlement archaeology. All of these functionalist approaches were attempts to rectify inadequacies in explanation that the culture-history approach failed to address. As Bruce Trigger argues:

> From an internal point of view cultural-historical archaeology was a logical prelude to the systematic study of prehistoric cultures from functional and processual perspectives. The cultural-historical

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approach had revealed the basic framework of cultural distributions in time and space and of intercultural relations that was complemented by a functionalist emphasis on the systematic study of the internal configurations of cultures. Yet, while initially building on traditional cultural-historical chronologies, functional and processual approaches soon raised archaeological questions that required refinements in chronology and the understanding of spatial variation (especially intra-site variation) in the archaeological record.[28]

While American archaeologists looked to anthropology and ethnography for parallels and borrowed some of their theoretical concepts for comparing unrelated cultures, European archaeologists were more skeptical of making linkages without direct historical connections between the cultures. Thus, it is no surprise that it was an American archaeologist, Lewis Binford, who made the boldest ahistorical claims.

Binford, in his 1968 introduction to *New Perspectives in Archaeology* titled "Archaeological Perspectives," recognizes this progression of thought, while at the same time offering a series of new perspectives. He sees himself as answering the call of those who for thirty years had been "urging" for such a processual approach. For example, he cites Steward and Setzler's 1938 article in *American Antiquity*, "Function and Configuration in Archaeology":

> Surely we can shed some light not only on the chronological and spatial arrangements and associations of elements [i.e. the goal of the culture-history model], but on conditions underlying their origin, development, diffusion, acceptance and interaction with one another. These are problems of cultural process.[29]

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[28] Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, p. 288.
[29] Binford, "Archaeological Perspectives," p. 79, quoting J.H Steward and F.M. Setzler, "Function and Configuration in Archaeology," *American Antiquity* 4, no. 1 (1938): pp. 5.

Also in 1937, A. M. Tallgren, in an article in *Antiquity,* saw the classification of forms and types as a dead end, a "cul-de-sac," and asked, "[h]ave we reached a crisis where the procedure and aim of our science must be revised?"[30] Binford goes on to cite many calls for a processual approach over the next three decades.[31] He then takes up three aims of archaeology: (1) reconstruction of culture history, that is the traditional culture-history model outlined above, (2) reconstruction of the lifeways of extinct peoples, and (3) delineation of cultural process. While he does not completely disavow any of these aims, he does offer incisive critiques of each.

Binford believes the reliance on diffusion to explain similarity in the culture-history model is lacking in rigor and explanatory power. How can the archaeologist be sure that the similarities between artifacts found in separate locales are due to diffusion and not chance, what he calls analogous vs. homologous traits? Why is the possibility of independent development ruled out? For Binford, the theories under-girding the culture-history model are mere assumption, assumptions which stem from present world-views heaped upon those of the past. These assumptions have been taken for true with no real scientific testing. Thus, Binford writes:

> If we hope to achieve the aim of reconstructing culture history, we must develop means for using archaeological remains as a record of the past and as a source of data for testing propositions which we set forth regarding past events, *rather than as a record we can read according to a set of a priori rules or interpretive principles whose*

[30] A. M. Tallgren, "The Method of Prehistoric Archaeology," *Antiquity* 11, no. 42 (1937): p. 155, cited in Binford, "Archaeological Perspectives," p. 79
[31] For a list, see Binford, "Archaeological Perspectives," pp. 79-80.

application allow the skilled interpreter to 'reconstruct' the past.[32]
(italics mine)

In other words, we know so little about the archaeological data and the laws governing the formation of culture, that any conclusions drawn within the framework of the traditional culture-history model are "shallow and suspicious."[33] Binford further argues that the shallowness of these conclusions is occluded by the institutional hierarchies within the field of Archaeology. Binford argues that the validity of an interpretation of a particular set of data is not judged on the methodological rigor or theoretical sophistication of the work, but rather on the authority of the scholar making the statement. In a particularly vitriolic, and in the end silly, essay, "'Culture' and Social Roles in Archaeology,"[34] Binford creates a taxonomy of archaeologists. The most influential are the "Guppies," older archaeologists who have logged more time in the field, seen more artifacts, and know more detail than any other scholar in their chosen field. Their defense of the culture-history model lies in rebuffing any challenges by "taking seriously" any alternative theory, but in the end, the challengers' "failure to cite an obscure reference, or their lack of familiarity of the data, or their less than journeyman investment of energy in the relevant region or time period is certain to be pointed

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[32] Ibid., p. 82.
[33] Ibid., p. 84.
[34] The essay constitutes Chapter One of Lewis Roberts Binford, *Debating Archaeology* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989), pp. 3-11. Binford claims that "this intellectual safari is meant to be fun, so don't take it too seriously," which seems a bit disingenuous as his critiques are not light-hearted jabs, but quite cutting dismissals of the life work of many scholars and calls into question many of the up-and-coming scholars emerging in the field. Just one example: he refers to many up and coming archaeologists as "infertile subspecies" (p 9), implying that their intellectual abilities are worthless. It is hard to see how this is a "friendly" critique of his opponents.

out."[35]   While authority alone should not be a criterion for the acceptance of an interpretation of a data set, some postprocessual archaeologists argue that a deep knowledge of the material *is* essential to any interpretation.   Contextual archaeologists such as Ian Hodder plainly state that familiarity with *all* aspects of the culture under study, the archaeological data, literary data, and any ethnographic insights, are *exactly* what make for a convincing interpretation.   Intellectual bullying is certainly not advocated by Hodder, but if an "obscure" reference has a significant role to play, then maybe it is not so "obscure" after all. For Hodder, it is the lack of familiarity with the data that creates most of the problems.[36] The role of "inference justification" in both processual archaeology and contextual archaeology will be discussed in further detail below, but for now Binford's critique of archaeology remains the focus.

The second aim of traditional archaeology outlined and critiqued by Binford is the reconstruction of the lifeways of extinct peoples. The method here is to take prehistoric data alongside modern anthropological knowledge in order to draw comparisons. Binford seems to accept this as a legitimate goal of archaeology, although he calls for more rigor in the sampling techniques. He also points to a serious problem: this procedure denies the ability to deal with forms of life not represented by living populations. His solution is an appeal to rigorous testing of

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[35] Ibid., p. 8.
[36] Hodder faults Binford for just this in Ian Hodder, "Review of Binford's *Debating Archaeology*," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 18, no. 3 (1991): pp. 383-387. Binford's study of the Alyawara Aborigenes is based on very short visits to the sites, sometimes as short as one day. Hodder is at a loss to understand how Binford can dismiss certain interpretations of the data after such a short research period.

deductively drawn hypotheses against independent sets of data. In other words, he

wants to find modes of living that are common to *all* prehistoric populations, and

thus he can make generalizations about prehistoric lifeways that are not represented

by living peoples. It is here that Binford first focuses on the creation of general

laws concerning cultural process.

Binford then outlines and critiques the contemporary attempts to study

cultural process. Two methods have generally been used: one either seeks to

understand a transformational process outlined in progressive stages, or one does a

comparative study of temporal and spatial changes from which general empirical

statements about cultural process can be induced. According to Binford, neither of

these methods will yield insights into how cultural process works:

> [a]n empirical generalization of data – no matter how accurate it is –
> is never an explanation for the data . . . In short, traditional
> archaeological studies have often recognized the desirability of
> investigating process, but methods for successfully conducting such
> studies have not been developed.[37]

Thus, Binford rejects the first two aims of traditional archaeology, the culture-

history model and the reconstruction of past lifeways, but accepts the idea of the

investigation of cultural process and sets out to develop methods to do this

properly.

The key to Binford's "new" perspective on archaeology is his belief in the

objectivity of the scientific model. For science to work, one must be able to set up

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[37] Binford, "Archaeological Perspectives," pp. 88-89.

experiments in order to test hypotheses, and conclusions must be deductive rather

than inductive.[38] In his words,

> What is argued here is that the generation of inferences regarding the past
> should not be the end-product of the archaeologist's work.   While an
> awareness of as great a range of variability in sociocultural phenomena as
> possible [i.e. the culture-history model] and the citation of analogy to living
> peoples [i.e. the reconstruction of past lifeways] are not belittled here, the
> main point of our argument is that *independent means of testing*
> *propositions about the past must be developed.   Such means must be*
> *considerably more rigorous than evaluating an author's propositions by*
> *judging his professional competence or intellectual honesty*. (italics mine)[39]

The processual model of archaeology *begins* with a hypothesis which is then tested

against data sets. So, each excavation should *begin* with a series of questions that

are to be answered, a set of propositions that will be tested.   The major

methodological shift is between understanding culture as a summation of traits and

understanding culture as a system. As a system then, culture can be understood at

the level of its most basic, non-culturally-specific functionings. The ultimate goal,

for Binford, is the formulation of laws of cultural dynamics, and this is

accomplished by what he calls a "hypotheticodeductive" method.[40]

Now, the case for Binford's belief in the scientific method should not be

misunderstood. He does not claim that science has all the answers, and even his

hypotheticodeductions are subject to error and revision. In fact, for Binford good

science is not about creating absolutes, but it is a work in progress. Furthermore, it

is not that nothing can be known as the relativist position would have it; no, much

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[38] This presents a unique problem for the archaeologist, as the experiment, once performed (i.e. an
excavation) is not repeatable. While Binford recognizes this problem, he contends that there are
still enough unexcavated sites to begin to test hypotheses.
[39] Binford, "Archaeological Perspectives," p. 90.

is known. But this knowledge needs constant revision. It is important to note that Binford does see in the archaeological record the possibility for real knowledge. In other words, the archaeological record is not just objective information, data to be described but not interpreted. Rather, this information, these data, can be interpreted. The interpretations become the laws of cultural dynamics, which in the end are just a series of statements about the constraints on our knowledge.

Thus, Binford calls for a re-visioning of the ways in which archaeologists examine the record. They should abandon the listing of cultural traits and look at a culture as a system, should relate artifacts to the structural and functional characteristics of cultural systems, and must move beyond description to explanation. Throughout Binford's work, despite a growing bitterness towards postprocessual archaeology, there is a note of optimism. While traditional archaeological models assume the archaeological record is incomplete (see Hawkes' Ladder of Inference), Binford claims that there is every reason to expect that most, if not all, of past sociocultural systems are preserved in the archaeological record.[41] This optimism is most apparent in his earlier work where Binford suggests that "[t]he formal structure of artifact assemblages together with the between element [of] contextual relationships should and do present a systematic and understandable picture of the *total extinct* cultural system"[42] (italics Binford's). He identifies three classes of artifacts—the technomic, socio-technic,

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[40] Ibid., p. 96.
[41] Ibid., p. 79.
[42] Lewis Robert Binford, "Archaeology as Anthropology," *American Antiquity* 28, no. 2 (1962): p. 219.

and ideo-technic—each of which would have different laws concerning the process of change they undergo. Technomic artifacts refers to those objects that have "their primary functional context in coping directly with the physical environment," socio-technic artifacts have "their primarily functional context in the social sub-systems of the total cultural system," and ideo-technic artifacts have "their primary functional context in the ideological component of the social system."[43] The problem is not the incompleteness of the record but our inability to deduce the processes that it holds. However, with the bitter debates of the late 1970s through the end of the twentieth century, the latter parts of this program, the socio-technic and especially the ideo-technic, is virtually forgotten.

The influence of Binford's processual archaeology cannot be underestimated. Despite an initial reluctance to accept his theories—processual archaeology was poorly funded in the early 1960s—by 1968 it had become the norm in many universities. Therefore, while the disciplines of anthropology and history seriously grappled with the postmodern shifts in method and theory coming from literary criticism and struggled with notions of objectivity and positivism, much of the world of archaeology remained resistant to such changes. Archaeological method and theory in the 1970s ran against the current of postmodernism in every way, and the discipline sought to mark its territory as a "hard science" proper rather than a social science. In doing this, processual archaeologists chose the philosophical models of the analytic schools over

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[43] Ibid.

continental schools of philosophy. But they could not escape external critiques, and just as they continued to rely on Hempelian models of positivism, these very models were under attack by Thomas Kuhn's critique of science itself.[44] It was not until the early 1980s that a serious, self-conscious introspection within these circles emerged from obscurity, and even then it was met with much resistance.

Postprocessual Archaeologies

Early critiques of processual archaeology, a theory and method most dominant in the United States and most often applied to New World archaeological problems, came from Britain in the form of "postprocessual archaeologies." However, as is indicated by the plural in postprocessual archaeolog*ies*, it is impossible to speak of a unified program uniting postprocessualists in the same way one *can* speak of the singular program advocated by processualists.[45] Invoking the academic fancy for a "post" world, postprocessualists see the varied

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[44] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). The Second Edition was published in 1970, just at the time that the processual archaeology began to make its influence felt.

[45] This is most apparent in the number of attempts to arrive at such a definition. For a general overview, see Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, pp. 329-411, but for some short attempts at a clear definition see Mark P. Leone, "Some Opinions about Recovering Mind," *American Antiquity* 47 (1982): pp. 742-760, Bruce G. Trigger, "Archaeology at the Crossroads: What's New?," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 13 (1984): pp. 275-300, Ian Hodder, "Post-Processual Archaeology," in *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, ed. Michael B. Schiffer (New York: Academic Press, 1985), pp. 1-26, Ian Hodder, "Interpretive Archaeology," *American Antiquity* 56 (1991): pp. 7-18, T. C. Patterson, "Some Theoretical Tensions within and between the Processual and Postprocessual Archaeologies," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 9 (1990): 189-200, and Robert W. Preucel, "The Philosophy of Archaeology," in *Processual and Postprocessual Archaeologies: Multiple Ways of Knowing the Past*, ed. Robert W. Preucel (Carbondale, Illinois: Center for Archaeological Investigations, Occasional Paper No. 10, 1991). There have been two journal volumes dedicated to the question, see the *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, volume 22, 1989, and the Viewpoint section of the *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, volume 3[2], 1993. Amongst the many edited volumes on archaeological

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theories and methodologies as one of the very strengths of the movement – that is, the tyranny of grand narratives constructed out of singular theories and methods can only be combated with multiple theories, methods, and narratives. Despite the desire for heterogeneity among these groups, they do cluster around one common idea: their commitment to the postmodern move away from positivism, meta-narratives, and what they see as naïve claims to objectivity.

Justified or not, the name most identified with postprocessual theorizing is the British archaeologist Ian Hodder.[46] In a series of journal articles, edited volumes, and single-author monographs, Hodder has been the most outspoken critic of processualism. But he has not been content to be a mere critic; he has also been quite active in proposing how *doing* alternative archaeologies might work.[47] The thrust of Hodder's work can be understood as a rejection of the Hawkesian "Ladder of Inference".[48] Hodder and postprocessualists explicitly reject a type of

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theory, one of the best in dealing with the definitional question is David S. Whitley, *Reader in Archaeological Theory: Post-processual and Cognitive Approaches* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[46] Before Hodder, Kent V. Flannery, *The Early Mesoamerican Village* (New York: Academic Press, 1976) and Bruce G. Trigger, *Time and Traditions: Essays in Archaeological Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) had already begun to explore the flaws in the processual approach. In particular, Flannery derides the processualist program for producing only the most obvious laws of universal culture process. These processualists, whom Flannery calls "law and order archaeologists," are derided for positing ". . . series of low level generalizations that some critics have called 'Mickey Mouse laws,'" see Kent V. Flannery, "Archaeology with a Capital 'S'," in *Research and Theory in Current Archaeology*, ed. C. L. Redman (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), pp. 47-53. Emerging at the same time as Hodder were Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley in Britain and Mark Leone in the United States, who were also key theorists promoting a postprocessual understanding. However, despite these antecedents and conversation partners, it is fair to say that Hodder was the most influential, both in the volume of work published and the volume of students produced.

[47] Hodder himself draws a distinction between postprocessualism, which is at its base a reaction to the processual methods and theories of the 1960's and 1970's, and interpretive archaeology, which is actively involved in rebuilding method and theory in archaeology. See Ian Hodder, "Post-Processual and Interpretive Archaeology," in *Archaeology: The Key Concepts*, ed. Colin Renfrew and Paul G. Bahn (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 209.

[48] See p. 1 above.

materialism "which is seen as a hierarchy of factors going from ecological, technological, and demographic considerations to social organization, and to a vaguely defined ideological or religious organization."[49] The implications of this rejection results in a series of oppositional moves in all facets of the archaeological project: from the understanding of how to excavate to the interpretation of the evidence.

Postprocessualists reject the positivist assertion that archaeological data can exist separate from theory.[50] Rather, they posit that archaeological data are always already theory-laden, and archaeology belongs not to the domain of the natural sciences but to the social sciences and the humanities.[51] This, logically, also entails a rejection of the Hempelian hypotheticodeductive methodologies in which general theories are tested against observable data. The most postmodern of the postprocessualists, such as Christopher Tilley, would go even further and put archaeology firmly in the tradition of critical studies. Tilley's vision of a "critical archaeology"—that is an archaeology that is dedicated to exposing the underlying structures of social domination in the *present*, an archaeology committed to understanding how archaeological research and publications serve to reinforce

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[49] Mark P. Leone, "Symbolic, Structural, and Critical Archaeology," in *Reader in Archaeological Theory: Post-Processual and Cognitive Approaches*, ed. David S. Whitley (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 51.

[50] See Ian Hodder, *The Archaeological Process: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 30-65, for a nice introduction to these ideas.

[51] Of course, the debate as to whether *any* data exist separately from the observer continues to be an important issue in the philosophy of science. But for the purposes of this study, I will limit myself to the discussion of archaeological data.

uncritically this hegemonic power—is clearly tied to a political agendum.[52] Closely allied with Tilley's activist vision of archaeology is feminist archaeology. Here, the lens is turned not only on contemporary society at large, but most intensely on the field of archaeology itself.[53] Joan Gero has been at the forefront in demonstrating how even the most basic aspects of fieldwork are effected by the gender of the worker and surveyor.[54]

However, much of the work of postprocessual archaeologies is not primarily concerned with addressing contemporary societal ills, but rather with methodological and theoretical issues in the interpretation of the archaeological record.[55] In other words, postprocessual archaeologies are most concerned with hermeneutics—how do archaeologists interpret the material record, that is, assign meanings to objects? These meanings must be inferred as there is no direct access to the minds of the dead, and all archaeologists, whether they realize it or not, say postprocessualists, are constantly working with theory.

Postprocessual archaeologies seek to transcend the opposition between the "idealist" culture-history models and the "materialist" processual models by

[52] For a particularly amusing, and certainly illuminating, critique of the United Kingdom's university education in archaeology, see Christopher Tilley, "Prospecting Archaeology," in *Interpretive Archaeology*, ed. Christopher Tilley (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 395-416. In this article, a fictive A level student searching for a good archaeology department culls through sixteen prospectuses where he finds "Good Thatcherite (or Majorite) values . . ." (p. 409). The A Level student concludes that, ". . . what was really striking was that 'the past' seemed, in fact, to be very low on the list of priorities. What was obviously really important was fame, status, prestige, and power in the present" (p. 416).
[53] Obviously, Tilley also looks at the practice of archaeology itself, but it is in feminist archaeology that this self-reflection is most clear.
[54] Joan Gero, "Archaeological Practice and Gendered Encounters," in *Gender and Archaeology*, ed. Rita P. Wright (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 251-280
[55] Ian Hodder would prefer to call what he does "Interpretive Archaeology."

rejecting the opposition between the ideal and the material altogether.[56] Rather, the

material and the ideal are intertwined in ways that makes them dependent on each

other. The twentieth century notion that all human actions are "texts" to be read is

logically extended to the archaeological process itself, and the hermeneutic circle—

wherein derived meanings are not final but work back on the original question and

fundamentally change it, thus inaugurating new meanings and the continuation of

the circle—allows for multiple meanings to emerge. Thus, postprocessual

archaeologies challenge the prejudgments that are present at the beginning of a

study.[57] But, again, postprocessual often goes a bit further and questions the use-

value of studying material culture as a text. Rather, they suggest that it is better

understood in the context of theories of practice and embodiment.

Therefore, postprocessualists see, and ultimately reject, a common

assumption about the role of culture in the production of the archaeological record

that under-girds both the culture-history and processual models. For both culture-

history and processual archaeology, the object of study is simply culture itself, not

the individuals who make up that culture. For the culture-history model, "humans

act primarily to reproduce their particular cultural traditions," and in the processual

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[56] For a nice example of how postprocessualists might do this, see the example of how both culture-history and processual models would treat the idea of landscape in Matthew Johnson, *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers: 1999), p. 103.

[57] A good example of this in practice is Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History: Words and Things in Iron Age Greece*, pp. 37-106, where he first "pre-figures" the field by clearly outlining the traditional assumptions that have been made in previous scholarship and then spends the rest of the book "re-figuring" Iron Age Greece in a contextual manner. But as Hodder, *The Archaeological Process: An Introduction*, pp. 34-42 demonstrates in an example from the Neolithic period Haddenham causewayed enclosure in the southern Cambridgeshire Fens, this also applies to the way in which the archaeological project is set up in the first place. Here, the archaeological "rule"

model, "humans act in response to environmental conditions to maximize their chances of survival."[58] In both, the individual actor plays no role; in other words, both models lack a theory of individual agency. Postprocessualism attempts to reintroduce the individual into the archaeological record.[59] Much of the early work in this vein was inspired by the social theory of Anthony Giddens and its emphasis on both the constraining and enabling nature of social structures.[60] It was John Barrett who first made an explicit attempt to apply Giddens' idea of structuration, or the duality of structure, to archaeology.[61] This led many, in an obvious move, to look at Pierre Bourdieu and his notion of the *habitus*.[62] As in other disciplines, Bourdieu and Giddens come under scrutiny by those who claim that these frameworks still suggest a certain determinism (ironic as they set out to undermine functionalist and determinist arguments for human action), that their models imply that there really is no free will and all actions are the result of either the structures within society or their interaction with a hidden *habitus*. These critiques apply more to Bourdieu than Giddens, but certainly do not take into account how they are

that a site should never be fully excavated so as to leave areas to future research when both new technology and new ideas have emerged is critically important.

[58] John Robb, "Agency," in *Archaeology: The Key Concepts*, ed. Colin Renfrew and Paul G. Bahn (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 3.

[59] For a fantastic introduction to theories of agency in recent archaeological discussions, see Jennifer L. Dornan, "Agency and Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future Directions," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 9, no. 4 (2002): pp. 303-329. For extended discussions of agency in archaeology see the various contributions to Marcia-Anne Dobres and John E. Robb, *Agency in Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[60] Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[61] John C. Barrett, *Fragments from Antiquity: An Archaeology of Social Life in Britain, 2900-1200 BC* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) is the text most cited. But I have found John C. Barrett, "Agency, the Duality of Structure, and the Problem of the Archaeological Record," in *Archaeological Theory Today*, ed. Ian Hodder (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001) to be much more manageable for a brief introduction to his thought.

applied to archaeology.   In the end, for archaeological theory, the key moment is the recognition of the recursive nature of culture.[63]   That is, individuals are not "free agents" with unlimited possibilities, but neither are they automatons merely reacting to environmental conditions or meekly playing roles subscribed to them by the dominant players in a particular society.   They are constrained by the pre-existing frameworks within which they are situated; however, at the same time they *do* act in ways that both support and challenge those pre-existing frameworks, and these actions change the culture, and in turn this abstract "culture" pushes back. Much like the hermeneutic circle, agent and culture work together in an ever-changing dance of new creative possibilities.

Furthermore, these agents act purposively.   This has long been recognized in the study of texts—the written word "documents" the wishes and desires of past actors.   However, this is also true of material culture, as John Moreland states, "the reality is that people in the past, as in the present, made and manipulated objects (and texts) as projections of their views about themselves and their place in the world."[64]   Or, even more concretely, as John Robb so clearly points out,

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[62] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
[63] This appeal to the recursive nature of culture binds together a number of theories of agency in archaeological reasoning including: Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, *Re-constructing Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 1987); Ian Hodder, "Agency and Individuals in Long-Term Process," in *Agency in Archaeology*, ed. Marcia-Anne Dobres and John E. Robb (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 21-33; James Bell, "On Capturing Agency in Theories about Prehistory," in *Representations in Archaeology*, ed. J.-C. Gardin and Christopher S. Peebles (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1992), pp. 30-55; Timothy Pauketat, "Practice and History in Archaeology," *Anthropological Theory* 1, no. 1 (2001): pp. 73-98; Arthur Joyce, "The Founding of Monte Alban: Sacred Propositions and Social Practices," in *Agency in Archaeology*, ed. Marcia-Anne Dobres and John E. Robb (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 71-91.   For a review of all five understandings of the relationship between agency and archaeology see Dornan, "Agency and Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future Directions," pp. 309-314.
[64] Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, p. 80.

1. humans reproduce their being and their social relations though everyday practices;
2. practices can take place in material conditions and through material culture;
3. practices happen within historical settings inherited from the past, including cultural beliefs, attitudes and habits; thus actors possess values which both help them to act and constrain their actions
4. in action, humans do not simply reproduce their material conditions, inherited structures of meaning, and historical consciousness, but change, reinterpret and redefine them as well.[65]

Thus, the material record is also a record of how people in the past projected their identities outward.

Finally, postprocessualists have consistently argued for a contextual archaeology.[66] Objects on their own are open to multiple interpretations both in the past and the present. How are archaeologists to determine what a particular object meant to a particular person? They suggest that it is only possible if the object is placed in its context. This argument is akin to Geertz's notion of a thick description.[67] In historical archaeology, the interpreter must use *all* possible data to arrive at an interpretation. Most importantly, this includes the details of its provenance, that is, where it was found and what was found with it.[68]

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[65] Robb, "Agency," p. 5.
[66] Elizabeth Demarais, "Holistic/Contextual Archaeology," in *Archaeology: The Key Concepts*, ed. Colin Renfrew and Paul G. Bahn (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 144-145.
[67] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 1-30.
[68] This problem, that is ripping an artifact out of its context and displaying it in a museum case or a book plate by itself, is not so easily remedied in Indian archaeology. Part of the project of this thesis is to rectify this situation, that is, to replace objects into their contextual matrix. This is the basic methodology and argument behind Chapter 3: Taxila Revisited.

Numismatics: On the Fringes of History and Archaeology

Much like the situation between archaeologists and historians, numismatists and historians have a tense, often confrontational relationship. As Michael Grant, in his study of Roman coinage, observes,

> historians are not always willing to use the information that we numismatists claim to extract from our coins. They point out that our historical conclusions are frequently based on difficult and questionable arguments . . . [most historians believe] it is safer not to accept evidence deduced from a coin unless it is confirmed by an ancient literary source. But this attitude ignores the positive, primary contributions made by coins.[69]

This echoes the attitudes of historians towards the artifact, and predictably, this divisiveness that Grant identifies in the field of Classics also endures in Indology. As seen in the previous section, with the persistent efforts of postprocessual archaeology over the last two decades, archaeological evidence has begun to make its way into historical reconstructions as a source of independent evidence, but even as archaeological evidence has gained minimal entry into the interpretation of religion, numismatics, particularly in the case of Indian religion, is still almost completely absent. Or, if it is there, it is dealt with uncritically.

The only clear call for cooperation between numismatists and others studying ancient India was given by A. N. Lahiri at a 1988 national seminar in Calcutta which brought together archaeologists and historians to discuss possible interdisciplinary cooperation. Lahiri pleads for more cooperation from the archaeologist and reveals the carelessness with which excavators treat coin finds.

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[69] Michael Grant, *Roman History from Coins: Some Uses of the Imperial Coinage to the Historian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 58.

He asks that the most basic information be provided by the archaeologist: one, number the coins serially and have them properly cleaned. Two, photograph the coins against a clear scale. And three, record the details of the find spot, including the site, location, sector, trench and stratum, and put these details on the accompanying envelope.[70] The lack of care given to coins in excavations is a clear indicator of the relative historical value they are assigned, and numismatists continue to be marginal players in the study of ancient Indian history. How did the field of Indology arrive at this point? The beginnings of an answer come from how the field of numismatics developed in India.

Traditional Numismatic Studies

The development of Indian numismatics follows a now well known and well documented trajectory mirroring other disciplines in Indology from antiquarianism to scientific study.[71] The collection of Indian coins by individuals began with the eighteenth century antiquarian interests of British army officers, engineers, and other Europeans working in India. Indian coins were prize possessions in private collections, valued more as curiosities than for their historical value. When their historical value began to emerge in the early

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[70] Lahiri, "What the Numismatist Expects from the Archaeologists," p. 214. While these requests may seem most basic, I can personally attest to the large number of coins in archaeological archives that are not properly cleaned and documented. I have seen hundreds of such coins languishing in storerooms under lock and key.

[71] This process has been analyzed in regard to the creation of museums in colonial India by Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), in relation to ethnography, see Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), and for

nineteenth century, they were used to understand how Hellenistic colonialism or Roman imperialism functioned in the eastern world rather than as evidence for Indian history. In fact, the first published coins from India were in studies of Greek and Roman numismatics and history, not Indian history. [72] These rare appearances in western classical histories did nothing to quell the antiquarian treasure-hunt mentality which continued well into the first half of the nineteenth century. While coin finds were sporadically published in newspapers, journals, and private memoirs, no systematic study was taken up.

The first attempts to study coins from India systematically began in the early nineteenth century. The Asiatic Society in Bengal created a museum in 1814 where antiquarian finds could be sent, but it attracted very little in the way of coins. A decade and a half later, M. A. W. de Schlegel's 1828 article in the November issue of the *Journal Asiatique* was the first effort at reconstructing Indian history from Indian coins. [73] De Schlegel struggled to access a significant portion of the coins as they were scattered in private collections and various public societies' cabinets, and his endeavor highlighted the importance of a single point of access for the study of Indian coins. In the next few years, British antiquarians began to

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archaeology see, Upinder Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

[72] J. N. Tiwari and P. L. Gupta, *A Survey of Indian Numistography* (Varanasi: The Numismatic Society of India, 1964), mentions the very first numismatic "contribution relating to Pre-Muhammadan [*sic*] coinage of India may be traced back to 1738 when two coins of the Greco-Bactrian kings [were] suggested to Theophlilus Bayer [in] the plan of his *Historia Regni Graecorum Bactriani* published at St. Petersburg." (p. 1). See T. S. Bayer and Christoph Theodosius Walther, *Historia Regni Graecorum Bactriani: In Qua Simul Graecarum in India Coloniarum Vetus Memoria* (Petropoli: Academic Scientist, 1738).

[73] M. A. W. de Schlegel, "Observations Sur Quelques Médailles Bactriennes et Indo-Scythiques Nouvellement Découvertes," *Journal Asiatique* (1828): 321-349.

take stock of what had been found in the previous century in a more systematic way. In 1831 H. H. Wilson, then Assay Master at the metropolitan mint in Calcutta, published a list of all the coins in the cabinet of the Asiatic Society. But it was James Prinsep, in many ways Wilson's protégé and also eventual Assay Master of the mint in Benaras, who brought Indian numismatics to the fore by preparing a more organized catalogue raisonnés of the Asiatic Society's Roman, Greek, Persian, and Sassanian coins.[74] James Prinsep's 1830s numismatic essays in the *Journal Asiatique* would be the first in his incredible output of numismatic and antiquarian analyses. Prinsep hoped that these essays would

> tend to our future enrichment, both by establishing a nucleus to which the antiquities henceforth discovered will naturally be attracted, and by affording to enquirers, who may not have the opportunity of consulting books on the subject, some clue however insufficient to the deciphering of worn and imperfect metallic remains, which appear to a novice to defy scrutiny.[75]

Through Prinsep's efforts, the field of Indian numismatics began to take shape, and while coin finds were not sent to one central museum or society and many still

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[74] Prinsep's contributions to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* were so important that in 1858 Edward Thomas edited two volumes of his essays for republication as James Prinsep, *Essays on Indian Antiquities, Historic, Numismatic, and Palaeographic, of the Late James Prinsep* (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1971 [1858]). In many of his early studies, Prinsep notes that there were indigenous Indian coins in the collection at this time, but he leaves them for a future works. Furthermore, Prinsep's introductory notes to his 1832 and 1833 essays in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* are a good example of the challenges that early numismatists faced in obtaining the various coins for comparison. In his 1832 introduction to "Ancient Roman Coins in the Cabinet of the Asiatic Society" he laments that, "[m]ost private individuals, who have interested themselves in collecting medals and coins, have carried their spoils to England, where, indeed, they may be mortified in finding them swallowed up and lost among the immense profusion of similar objects in the public and private cabinets of European antiquarians." Of those few he did have, he found precious little information about the provenance of these coins, and he studied them "without any record of the exact localities in which they were found, or of the parties who presented them." Prinsep, *Essays on Indian Antiquities*, pp. 1-2.

[75] Quoted in Tiwari and Gupta, *A Survey of Indian Numistography*, p. 10. Cf. Prinsep, *Essays on Indian Antiquities*, pp. 2-3.

went to private collectors, his plea for a the systematic recording of coins prompted many to either add their coins to public collections or publish them in journals.[76]

While these early essays and catalogues raisonnés are interesting for their historiographical value, much of the material contained in them was reworked in later numismatic catalogues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Each catalogue began with a brief historical commentary followed by the descriptions and drawings, and later photographs, of the coins in tabular form. Much of the groundwork for these numismatic catalogues was laid by Alexander Cunningham who, in addition to his comprehensive *Archaeological Survey Reports* (1862-1884), published four volumes dedicated to ancient Indian numismatics.[77] Cunningham pushed the field away from antiquarianism by focusing on not only the well-made, beautiful, and quite valuable gold and silver coins, but also the less stunning and less valuable copper coins. He also insisted on knowing, when

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[76] This is still one of the most challenging problems in the study of Indian numismatics. Many coins are still in private collections where one needs special permission from the individual collector to see them, not to mention a large budget to travel the world to these various locations. Those that are published are scattered in various journals and catalogues. A numismatist needs access to a very good library to track down many of the more obscure journals and even some of the major numismatic catalogues. For example, Michael Alram's catalogue of Iranian, Central Asian, and Indian coins (Michael Alram, *Nomina Propria Iranica in Nummis: Materialgrundlagen zu den Iranischen Personennamen auf Antiken Münzen* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986)) is not available in any U.S. library. The only copy available is from the British Library in London.

[77] Cunningham first published a series of papers in the Numismatic Chronicle (NC VIII 1868, IX 1870, X 1872, XII 1873) which he then collected for a single publication as Alexander Cunningham, *Coins of Alexander's Successors in the East* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1969 [1884]). Subsequent publications include: Alexander Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India, from the Earliest Times Down to the Seventh Century A.D* (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1963 [1891]), Alexander Cunningham, *Later Indo-Scythians* (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1962 [1893]).

possible, the find-spots of the coins.[78]   Cunningham's work inspired others to take

up the task of cataloguing and publishing the various collections found in India and

Europe. The most important of these includes C. J. Rodgers,[79] Percy Gardner,[80] E.

J. Rapson,[81] Vincent A. Smith,[82] and R. B. Whitehead.[83]   More than twenty years

after Whitehead's 1914 catalogue, in 1936, John Allan published his *Catalogue of

Coins in Ancient India*, a volume still used by many numismatists today.[84]   Each

catalogue organized the coins by dynasty: Graeco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek, Indo-

Scythian, Indo-Parthian, Kuṣāṇa, and the catch-all category, Indigenous Indian

coinage.

Post-Independence Numismatic Studies

In the first thirty years after Independence there was a renewed interest in

Indian numismatics as nationalist sentiments came to the fore. Two types of

studies emerged: one, the finely tuned historical reconstructions focused on kings

and their kingdoms; and two, the wide ranging art historical accounts focused more

on iconography and the beauty of the coins themselves. In the first category, there

[78] Olivier Guillaume quotes both Tarn and Lahiri to this effect in Olivier Guillaume, *Analysis of Reasonings in Archaeology: The Case of Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Numismatics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5, n. 8 and 9.
[79] C. J. Rogers, *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum* (Calcutta: Indian Museum, 1895).
[80] Percy Gardner, *The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1886), Percy Gardner, *The Types of Greek Coins: An Archaeological Essay* (Cambridge: University Press, 1883).
[81] E. J. Rapson, *Indian Coins* (Strassburg: K.J. Trèubner, 1897).
[82] Vincent Arthur Smith, *Coins of Ancient India: Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta* (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972 [1906]).
[83] R. B. Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914).
[84] John Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India* (London: British Museum, 1936).

were two main classes of studies: numismatic compilations and historical explanations. The compilations sought to catalogue and describe a particular corpus of coins. These studies represent the craft of the traditional numismatist who does the necessary, but painstaking, work of meticulously detailing each individual coin—documenting each variation of symbol, legend and its arrangement, monogram, dimension, weight, die axis, and metal content. Often there was an attempt to present brief historical commentaries on the lines of succession, chronology, and geographic boundaries of the various kingdoms, but they rarely offered any kind of explanatory statements. The work in this area, which continues today, matches the intensity and detail of philological studies, and the results have been stunning. For example, in recent years these types of studies have begun to convincingly determine the geographic range not only of individual kings, but also of individual coin issues.

The short "historical commentaries" which introduced the descriptive catalogues were expanded into full-blown explanatory historical reconstructions. The most famous of these are the two competing historical reconstructions based on the coins of the Graeco-Bactrians and Indo-Greeks, often referred to as the BIG (Bactrian Indo-Greeks): W. W. Tarn's 1951 *The Greeks in Bactria and India* and A. K. Narain's 1957 *The Indo-Greeks*.[85] Both Tarn and Narain did much more than just catalogue coins; they presented whole narratives of conflict and conquest.

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[85] W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951). A. K. Narain, *The Indo-Greeks* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957). See Guillaume, *Analysis of Reasonings in Archaeology* for an analysis of both the most popular numismatic catalogues and these two historical reconstructions.

Interestingly, coins of the indigenous kings of India received much less attention than the coins of the Graeco-Bactrians, Indo-Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, and Kuṣāṇas. It was not until the 1970s that full historical reconstructions of indigenous kings began to emerge.[86]

The second category of Indian numismatic studies is the exact opposite of these finely tuned chronologies and geographies. They are wide ranging studies of the art and symbology of the coins, often devoting whole chapters to religion. These studies are less numismatic and more "art historical" in nature, but this latter term is used very loosely, as they are most often completely ahistorical. That is, they do not attend to chronological or spatial differences, but rather treat the numismatic record as a single "text." The chapters are organized on abstract artistic grounds—such as the gathering of all Lakṣmī or Śiva images on coins, gathering all taurine symbols on coins—and then studying them in reference to textual material derived from the Vedas, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyana*, and even the Purāṇas.[87]

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[86] In 1970 the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture at the University of Calcutta held a seminar whose proceedings are published as D. C. Sircar, ed., *Early Indian Indigenous Coins* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1970). The most comprehensive studies of indigenous coinage are Mahesh Kumar Sharan, *Tribal Coins: A Study (the Yaudheyas, the Malavas, the Audumbaras, and the Kunindas)* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1972); Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta, *A Tribal History of Ancient India: A Numismatic Approach*, 1st ed. (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1974); Shatrughna Sharan Singh, *Early Coins of North India: An Iconographic Study* (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1984).

[87] Two good examples of this type of study (of which I will have more to say later) are Bhaskar Chattopadhyay, *Coins and Icons: A Study of Myths and Symbols in Indian Numismatic Art* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1977) and Swati Chakraborty, *Socio-Religious and Cultural Study of the Ancient Indian Coins* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1986). A brief example will have to suffice here. In Chakraborty's monograph, she points to the bull on early Śiva coins dated to the first century before the common era and uses narratives of Śiva and Nandi from the *Visnudharmottara Purāṇa* and the *Matsya Purāṇa*, texts written at least six centuries later, as an interpretive tool. See Chakraborty, *Socio-Religious and Cultural Study of the Ancient Indian Coins*,

In the last three decades, the literature surrounding Indian numismatics has continued to mount. Much of the work falls neatly into the category of the finely tuned historical reconstruction. In addition to wide ranging summaries of all types of coins found in northern India,[88] there are those catalogues that are organized along the lines of "ethnic groups." There are detailed numismatic studies of the Graeco-Bactrians and Indo-Greeks (most often treated together),[89] the Indo-Scythians,[90] indigenous groups,[91] and the Kuṣāṇas.[92] Amongst these corpora, the

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pp. 48-52. Throughout this section on "Hindu Divinities," Śiva (pp. 43-58) is treated as a singular deity with remarkable continuity. Coins from the second century before the common era are placed next to indigenous and Kuṣāṇa coins from four centuries later.

[88] The most popular, but also often criticized at the same time, reference is Mitchiner's nine volume catalogue, Michael Mitchiner, *Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coinage*, 9 vols. (London: Hawkins Publications, 1975-6), which covers more than just the Indo-Greeks and Indo-Scythians. More wide ranging, in that it details coins beyond India, is Mitchiner's other catalogue, Michael Mitchiner, *Oriental Coins and their Values: The Ancient and Classical World*, 3 vols. (London: Hawkins Publications, 1977). Strangely, these two catalogues do not always match in every respect. However, they really are impressive compilations of much of the corpus of northwestern Indian coins. A very good update on many of the issues surrounding these coins is the volume edited by Michael Alram and Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *Coins, Art, and Chronology: Essays on pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands* (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999).

[89] The earliest attempt to create a comprehensive catalogue of these coins was A. N. Lahiri, *Corpus of the Indo-Greek Coins* (Calcutta: 1956). Osmund Bopearachchi is now clearly the leading numismatist dealing with these coins. He has a number of catalogues, but the two most comprehensive are: Osmund Bopearachchi, *Monnaies Gréco-Bactriennes et Indo-Grecques: Catalogue Raisonné* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1991); Osmund Bopearachchi, *Sylloge Nummorun Graecorum: Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Coins*, vol. 9 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1998).

[90] R. C. Senior, *Indo-Scythian Coins and History* (Lancaster: Classical Numismatic Group, 2001). Senior has created quite a stir in the numismatic community with some of his classifications of Indo-Scythian coins. He often disagrees with Bopearachchi regarding the role of Indo-Scythians in the centuries preceding the Common Era. Senior clearly understands the Indo-Scythians to play a much larger role than others would have.

[91] See the aforementioned catalogues and historical reconstructions of Sharan, Dasgupta, and Singh detailed in n. 81 above.

[92] Studies of Kuṣāṇa coins far outnumber all the others put together. However, two deserve special mention. First, there is Satya Shrava, *The Kushaṇa Numismatics* (New Delhi: Pranava Prakashan, 1985). But clearly the standard is the majestic catalogue by Robert Göbl, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung des Kušānreiches* (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984). However, strangely, Göbl's catalogue begins with Vima Kadphises (c. 105-127 CE) and ignores the first century of Kuṣāṇa coinage in northwest India. Göbl also insisted that the date of Kaniṣka was in the third century of the common era, with new evidence emerging in the early part of the twenty-

only group from northwest India that is missing its own catalogue is the Indo-Parthians.[93]   Finally, there are numerous studies scattered throughout a number journals, edited books, and the ever-popular Festschrift volumes. Sometimes they are notes on a single coin,[94] and sometimes they are learned essays bringing together disparate sources in new ways. Unfortunately, there is no one central, searchable database with all these studies indexed, and often the scholar has to find these gems by tediously leafing through various publications.

Coinage in Ancient and Modern World

While there may be these two extremes in numismatic studies, the result is a massive archive of primary source data. The interpretive value of this archive is often underappreciated because our modern relationship to metal currency is very different from the ancient one. Contemporary economic activity has moved away from traditional uses of metal currency in two ways. First, the actual value of the metal of modern currency is not what gives the coin value, but rather modern coins are tokens referring to a system of value that lies elsewhere. Second, many of our transactions are with plastic, and even more abstractly, with digital bytes; in this case, hard currency is completely absent. Even with this movement towards

first century, most scholars agree the date of Kaṇiṣka has to be somewhere in the early second century of the common era, most like right around 127 CE.
[93] One can find the coins of the Indo-Parthians in Mitchiner's volumes, but a better study is found in Alram, *Nomina Propria*, pp. 244-270. Alram also deals the problems of Indo-Parthian coinage in Michael Alram, "Indo-Parthian and Early Kushan Chronology: The Numismatic Evidence," in *Coins, Art, and Chronology: Essays on pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*, ed. Michael Alram and Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), pp. 19-48.

greater and greater digitalization of our currency, metal currency is still a significant mode of economic exchange in our daily lives, but, as Michael Grant argues, "[i]n order to interpret the significance of ancient coins, we have to forget many features or our modern [hard] currency."[95]

Modern hard currency is characterized by a physical, temporal, and cultural flatness. Physically, modern coins are minted in low relief giving a tactile uniformity that discourages any direct engagement with the coin. Ancient minting techniques, whether punch-marking or casting,[96] produced coins in high relief. Holding an ancient coin, one is struck by the tactile variation that can be discerned, and even coins within the same series can feel different due to differences in coin moulds. Further, since the value of the coin is tied to the actual value of the metal in ancient currency, one instinctively takes note of its heft. Modern currency does use this kind of variation to mark its coins' values—the silver dollar is larger and heavier than the quarter, which is larger and heavier than the dime—but, again, these coins are tokens which signify their value rather than objects which embody their value. The worth of the modern coin is not tied to the type, quantity, and purity of the metal itself. This was not so in the ancient world: the type, quantity, and purity of the metal of the coin determined its actual value, and thus the physical weight and visual indicators were essential in determining its value. Easily determined differences, such as between a bronze coin and a silver coin, were

[94] This genre is quite easy to spot. The title of such published notes is usually something like, "An Interesting Coin from X."
[95] Grant, *Roman History from Coins*, p. 11.

significant, and harder to determine differences, such as the quality of the metal, were based on trust in the minting power.

For the above reasons, people in the ancient world paid much more attention to the actual coin—they looked at it, felt its weight, and evaluated its worth—than people in the modern world. Those with the power and authority to mint coins in the ancient world knew the attention their coins would receive and used this to their advantage. Coins in the ancient world, more so than texts, were public documents meant to be read. But like all public documents, they were not neutral reflections of a static situation, but were created for a purpose: to project the authority and power of the sovereign. In a rapidly changing political landscape, the appearance of the currency would constantly change. This is in stark contrast to the temporal flatness of modern currency. Modern coin designs do not change much over time, and it is this very stability of design that lends legitimacy to them.[97] An American penny from the early twentieth century is not very different from an American penny in the twenty-first century. The images on them are quite stable: both have the same bust of Lincoln, and the legends and symbols are almost identical. The image and legend of these coins do not change with each successive leader, and the symbology of modern coinage is so stable that we do not need to really look them. Only when confronted with a different currency do we actually

[96] For an extensive study on the casting of coins from Punjab, see Birbal Sahni, *The Technique of Casting Coins in Ancient India* (Bombay: Numismatic Society of India, 1945).

[97] The metal content of the penny *has* changed significantly over time. The metal content of the penny has gone from pure copper in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, to bronze (that is 95% copper with slight variations of tin and zinc composing the other 5%), to the

pay attention to the design of the coin, reading it rather than just putting it in our pocket or purse.[98]

In the ancient world, it was commonplace to use the image of the king on coins to declare sovereignty over a particular area. The bust of the king was accompanied by monograms which identified the location of the mint that produced the coin, images of deities and heraldic signs to promote legitimacy, and legends which described the station of the king. Along with the content of the designs, the workmanship was important. Beauty was an indicator of wealth—it indicated the ability of the sovereign to hire talented engravers and minters to produce high quality issues. Poorly designed coins, of which there are many, demonstrated the lack of power of the issuer.[99]

Thus coins became a cultural marker as well. The fact that there are so many beautiful coins in the ancient world suggests that it was worthwhile to put the time and effort into making them so. If the design held no significance, it follows that the issuers would not exert the expense and effort to make them this way. In other words, coins are public documents and should be interpreted as such. They hold the same biases as other public documents. They are not ahistorical productions reflecting the culture in which they were produced, but rather they

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current mixture which is 97.5% zinc and 2.5% copper. But, again, we need not assess the *value* of the actual metal to assess the value of the coin, and we therefore do not pay much attention to it.

[98] The US government has begun to understand power of different designs on coins in the early twentieth century by introducing new images to its quarters and now its nickels. The first time I obtained one of these newly designed nickels, the size of Washington's face jumped out at me, and I actually stopped and fingered the coin a bit, re-acquainting myself with the symbols on it.

[99] The connection between sovereignty and the ability to mint coins is not readily accepted by all, and I discuss the relevant discussion of the function of coinage in the next section "Sovereignty, Economics, and Religion."

were produced purposefully, and the context in which they are produced must be taken into account.

Sovereignty, Economics, and Religion

In the late twentieth century, the traditional numismatic assumption that minting coinage was primarily a political act[100] was challenged by a number of scholars working in Greek and Roman numismatics. Michael Crawford, using Roman coinage as his foundation, argued that ancient states minted coins only to make state payments,

> Coinage was probably invented in order that a large number of state payments might be made in a convenient form and there is no reason to suppose that it was ever issued by Rome for any other purpose than to enable the state to make payments, that is, for financial reasons . . . it [coinage] acquired an important role as a means of exchange. But this monetary, economic function, like the other

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[100] For an excellent review of the common view that coins functioned primarily as political symbols see Chapter One, "Scholarly Opinion on Macedonian and Thessalian Coinage," in Thomas R. Martin, *Sovereignty and Coinage in Classical Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 15-33. In his introduction, Martin also points to a number of key historians and cites them on p. 6, n. 4. I think it is important enough to include these quotations and citations from Martin's work as it establishes a strong pedigree of scholarship that understands the function of ancient coinage, at least in part, as political. From Moses I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (London: 1973), pp. 166-169, the passion for Greek coins was "essentially a political phenomenon", and coins functioned as "the traditional symbol of autonomy." From Ed Will, "Les Sources des Métaux Monnayés dans le Monde Grec," in *Numismatique Antique: Problèmes et Méthodes*, ed. J. M. Dentzer, Philippe Gauthier, and Tony Hackens (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 1975), p. 102: "Le monnayage est l'un des signes de l'*autonomie*, sinon de l'*eleutheria*, et ce symbole dût devenir plus cher aux cités á mesure que leur autonomie et leur liberté furent plus fréquemment mises en question." And finally, from M. M. Austin and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 56-58, on the invention of coinage, "One must emphasize especially the development of civic consciousness in the history of the Greek cities coinage was always first and foremost a civic emblem. To strike coins with the badge of the city was to proclaim one's independence." As for the Yuezhi and Kuṣāṇa coinage, the idea that these coins were political and religious propaganda as well as economic facilitators has been expressed by many. Some of the most eloquent and forceful statements include, Göbl, *Münzprägung des Kušānreiches*, p. 11.

monetary functions of coinage, was an accidental consequence of the existence of coinage, not the reason for it.[101]

The importance of the article lays not it its claim for the origin of coinage, but in its influence on the numismatic community: it signaled a shift in numismatic explanation away from the political aspects of coinage to the investigation of financial ones. In other words, this shift *mirrors* that of processual archaeology. There was a move away from culture-history explanations of coins and towards investigations of underlying universal cultural processes. In this case the prehistoric concern with subsistence and patterns of migration was replaced by the functional role of capital markets.

This shift reaches the study of Greek coinage in Thomas Martin's influential work on the relationship of Macedonian kings and Thessalian coinage. Martin argues that the assumption behind the scholarly consensus—that ancient coins functioned primarily as political symbols—comes from modern understandings and justifications of monarchy anachronistically applied to the ancient world. He traces the origin of these ideas to Jean Bodin's sixteenth century treatise on sovereignty, *Six Livres de la République*, where Bodin lists the necessary attributes of a sovereign, one of which is the power to coin money.[102] It certainly served an economic function for Bodin, but more importantly the sole

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[101] Michael Crawford, "Money and Exchange in the Roman World," *Journal of Roman Studies* 60 (1970): p. 44; see also Christopher Howgego, "Why did Ancient States Strike Coins?," *Numismatic Chronicle* 150 (1990): p. 1.

[102] For the relevant sections of Jean Bodin's work, see Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty: Four Chapters from Six Books on the Commonwealth*, trans. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

right to coin money was essential to a sovereign's claim to hegemony, and any foreign coinage must be suppressed.[103]

Martin convincingly demonstrates how Thessalian coinage disappeared during a period of colonial domination by the Macedonians not because of issues of legitimacy and sovereignty, but rather for economic reasons. He argues that the Macedonian kings—in the traditional interpretation, those kings who were taking over Thessalian territory and suppressing the local Greek coinage to project their sovereignty—"gave hardly a thought" to the suppression of Greek coinage, but rather wanted to secure a steady and large supply of precious metal which could be turned into coinage for the efficient payment of expenses. Demanding payment in Macedonian coinage made it easier for the Macedonian kings to pay expenses without having to melt down the coinage and reissue it—a time-consuming and expensive proposition. The increase in Macedonian coinage led to a decrease in the need for local Greek coinage. It became harder for small city states to maximize their access to precious metals, so they had to stop minting and used whatever they could to keep monetarily afloat. In this case, Macedonian coinage replaced the local Greek coinage for economic reasons.

However, he also clearly points out that each case must be taken individually, and he points to the diverse ways in which sovereignty is established,

> A political state must possess the power to establish and to fulfill some goals in the political, economic, social, and other areas of government if it is to exist and to function properly. The ability to exercise this power can be called sovereignty, the ability which

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[103] Martin, *Sovereignty and Coinage in Classical Greece*, pp. 15-16.

belongs to the sovereign in the state. It is necessary to say 'ability' rather than 'right' because the sovereign need not conceive of his sovereignty as an abstract notion in order to exercise power.[104]

For Martin's study of Thessalian coinage, minting was primarily a way to engage in economic activity, and any ideas to project political legitimacy or social cohesion were secondary. However, I argue that in the case of ancient Indian coinage, there are clear indications that coinage's function was equally important to both spheres, the economic and the political. In the political sphere, it was the religious import of such images that served as the primary sign of sovereignty.

Material Culture and the Study of Religion

With the above, admittedly very cursory, introduction to the recent relevant research on material culture and archaeology—both the interpretation of the traditionally conceived archaeological artifact and the less often analyzed coin—we now can ask how this bears on the study of religion. In archaeological works, religion is a surprisingly under-theorized category, as Timothy Insoll argues, ". . . the relationship between archaeology and religion is predominantly one of neglect."[105] This neglect by archaeologists comes from a number of assumptions. The two assumptions most prevalent in archaeology are: one, that religion is a relatively simple area of investigation and does not need any special treatment.

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[104] Ibid., p. 7.
[105] Timothy Insoll, "Are Archaeologists Afraid of Gods? Some Thoughts on Archaeology and Religion," in *Belief in the Past: The Proceedings of the 2002 Manchester Conference on Archaeology and Religion*, ed. Timothy Insoll (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), p. 1. This introduction to the Manchester Conference Proceedings is a shortened version of Insoll's Chapter 1,

The result of such a view is that the theorizing that *does* occur is naïve in many ways, and religion/ritual becomes "the archaeologists' favorite catch all category of 'odd' or otherwise not understood behavior."[106] Two, according to Insoll, "the frequent absence of religion in archaeological interpretation is also perhaps a reflection of the archaeologists' worldview themselves; often largely a secular one. Hence in turn this might be projected onto the past, even if inappropriate."[107] Rather, Insoll replies, religion is a complex system that is not easily defined, let alone understood with some certainty, and even more importantly, the modern dichotomy of the religious and the secular is highly dubious at best.

The argument that religion suffuses all aspects of ancient societies, unlike the modern secular world where it is set apart from much of political, social, and economic, is one from analogy. That is, the view that religion is not a stand-alone category to be separated out from other categories (such as the political, the social, the economic), but rather the superstructure which informs many aspects of past behavior does not come from a theological understanding of the inherent truth of any particular religion. The argument comes from a very basic kind of ethnoarchaeology.[108] In many societies in the modern world, in particular "traditional societies," religion permeates every aspect of life. If this is so, it stands

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"Introduction to the Theme," in his book Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-32.

[106] Insoll, "Are Archaeologists Afraid of Gods?," p. 1.

[107] Ibid.

[108] For a good introduction to the methods and theories supporting ethnoarchaeology, see Nicholas David and Carol Kramer, *Ethnoarchaeology in Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

to reason, by analogy, that ancient societies would function in much the same way if not even more so.[109]

Clearly the category of religion is fraught with anxiety and ambiguity in archaeology; however, in the field of Religious Studies, the analytical value of the category of religion also suffers from two equally extreme positions. One position understands religion as "an inherently meaningful, non-empirical, uniquely personal experience that transcends historical difference."[110] This conception of religion, what Russell McCutcheon calls the "religionist" position, is still powerful in the field of religious studies today, and although it has its roots in the liberal Protestant tradition, it is the model for most scholarly works, both western and Indian. In this tradition of inquiry, religions are understood as discrete traditions which derive from experiences of the divine. These expressions take the form of the major world traditions, and thus the analyses are divided into Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and etcetera. I will show how using this understanding of religion is inadequate and distorts the evidence before us by collapsing time and space. In addition, it does not take seriously the impact of local concerns which blur the lines of these major traditions. In fact with respect to ancient northwest India, I will argue that using the categories of Hinduism,

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[109] See Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) for an extended discussion of this argument. See also Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion*, p. 13.
[110] Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 4.

Buddhism, and Jainism inhibits the interpretation of these local traditions and obscures more than it reveals.[111]

However, I also reject the notion that the category of religion is useless for academic studies. This position, most forcefully put forth by Timothy Fitzgerald, argues that the category of religion is "analytically redundant and even misleading," and therefore it should be thrown out altogether.[112] Fitzgerald recommends the dissolution of Religious Studies and its incorporation into other fields. I think there is a middle ground between a "religionist" use of the category of religion and the absolute denial of the category altogether. This middle ground does precisely what Insoll argues for—it conceives of religion as an integral part of much of lived life, but religion is not identical to politics, society, or economics. Religion, in this case, can be understood as that body of thought and practice which serves to explain past, present and future existence based on supernatural assumptions and the ability to contact and participate with/in that supernatural.

This understanding of religion, particularly the idea that religion serves as the framework for much of the thought and activity in what moderns would consider the "non-religious" realm, dovetails nicely with those few studies that deal with the subject in postprocessual theorizing. Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus,

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[111] For an excellent example of how the local blurs the boundaries of the universal in central India circa 6th c. CE, see Richard Cohen, "Nāga, Yakṣiṇī, Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta," *History of Religions* 37, no. 4 (1998): pp. 360-400.
[112] Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 5.

although not considered postprocessualists proper,[113] brought the incipient attempts

to outline a cognitive archaeology to the fore in their work on the ancient Zapotec

Indians.[114] In an influential *American Scientist* article, Flannery and Marcus move

beyond processual subsistence-settlement archaeology by demonstrating how

> one could explain a higher proportion of ancient Zapotec
> subsistence behaviour if instead of restricting oneself to a study of
> agricultural plants and irrigation canals, one took into account what
> was known of Zapotec notions about the relationship of lightning,
> rain, blood sacrifice, and the 'satisfizing ethic.'[115]

While this article was met with quite a bit of resistance from mainstream processual

archaeology, Flannery and Marcus continued to explore those aspects of ancient

culture that were the product of the human mind that survive in the archaeological

record: cosmology, religion, ideology, and iconography. Thus, rather than treating

the previous four aspects of human culture as epiphenomenal, they began to pursue

a "holistic/contextual archaeology" in which a comprehensive investigation of *all*

aspects of human society (a holistic approach) is coupled with a method of placing

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[113] Flannery and Marcus' work put into practice what many archaeologists involved in the processual/ postprocessual debate would come to recognize twenty years later: that while there are some irreconcilable differences between the two with regards to theory (most clearly the postprocessual rejection of the processual commitment to a Hempelian notion of positivism), methodologically they are very close. As Peter Kosso, *Knowing the Past: Philosophical Issues of History and Archaeology* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2001), p. 61 argues, "A look at the substance behind the slogans of these two positions [Binford's approach of "middle range theories" and Hodder's approach of "reading the past"] will reveal that there is little methodological difference . . . these models of archaeology [are] presenting essentially the same structure of justification of archaeological knowledge." Kosso's chapter on the structure of justification in archaeology is an exceptionally clear presentation of these issues, see Kosso, *Knowing the Past*, pp. 59-74.

[114] Kent V. Flannery and Joyce Marcus, "Formative Oaxaca and the Zapotec Cosmos," *American Scientist* 64 (1976): pp. 374-383. This type of theory has been called "cognitive processualism," however, it bridges the divide between processualism and postprocessualism nicely, and I think it clearly leans more towards postprocessualist assumptions.

[115] Kent V. Flannery and Joyce Marcus, "Cognitive Archaeology," in *Reader in Archaeological Theory: Post-processual and Cognitive Approaches*, ed. David S. Whitley (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 36.

artifacts in their depositional context (a contextual approach). Thus, the archaeologist is concerned not with single artifacts, but with the relationships between artifacts as found at the site.[116]

This methodology can be adapted to begin to rectify a serious problem surrounding the present situation in Indian archaeology. The practice of archaeology in Independent India is in a peculiar situation: while the discovery of new sites and prompt excavation is much prized and therefore well funded and quite common, the subsequent publication of the excavations is severely lacking. Dilip Chakrabarti details how this situation, that is, plenty of excavation and little publication, arose in post-Independence India.[117] Sir Mortimer Wheeler, immediately before his departure as the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, envisioned the progress of Indian archaeology in very different terms. Wheeler stressed that the written report of the past season's activity must be submitted before continuing the fieldwork in the next year. As Wheeler argued,

> If need be, a whole season's digging must be postponed to enable this essential task to be accomplished. . . . Complete and punctual publication must be the invariable rule; no excuse whatsoever can condone deferment.[118]

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[116] Demarais, "Holistic/Contextual Archaeology," p. 144.

[117] See Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *Archaeology in the Third World: A History of Indian Archaeology Since 1947* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., 2003). Chakrabarti puts most of the blame on the centralized Archaeological Survey of India, the institution which has been the least interested in publishing excavation reports. Certain universities, in particular Deccan College at Pune, have done a much better job in this regard. But, ultimately, Chakrabarti blames a skewed system of rewards, "if one goes through the list of the defaulting excavators, one will find many 'famous' archaeologists of the country, and one will also realize that the non-publication of reports never stood in their way to fame, power, and career-advancement" (p. 31).

[118] Sir Mortimer Wheeler, "Archaeological Fieldwork in India: Planning Ahead," *Ancient India* 5 (1949): p. 11, cited in Chakrabarti, *A History of Indian Archaeology Since 1947*, p. 3

But, as Chakrabarti goes on to illustrate by tallying all the sites excavated since Independence and comparing that to the number of actual excavation reports published, in reality Indian archaeology falls far short as this goal. A summary of Chakrabarti's findings is presented in the chart below:

Years of Excavation	Sites Excavated	Published Reports	Remain Unpublished
1953-1965	144	39	105
1966-1973	112	19	93
1973-1983	191	46	145
1983-1990	145	14	131
1990-1995	106	12	94

In addition, Chakrabarti is quite generous in his definition of "published reports." Many of the sites that Chakrabarti deems published are cursory at best, at times consisting of less than one hundred pages and a series of plates in a journal. Thus, for the vast majority of excavations in India, no analytical work has as yet been done.

Therefore, the task before any student of Indian archaeology today is not to excavate more ground, to find more "stuff": plenty of un-analyzed, or even "under-analyzed," material is out there sitting under lock and key in central ASI, regional State, and even University archives. The task is to gain access to these archives and begin to sift through the material as meticulously as possible. As for Flannery and Marcus' "contextual" approach, this would involve "re-placing" artifacts to their original contexts in order to see their associations with other artifacts and the built environment in which they were found. The few artifacts that are published in the annual *Indian Archaeology: A Review* are ripped out of their context. They are

presented in black and white photos without any detailed information concerning their matrix, provenience, or association with other finds. Furthermore, the artifacts chosen for display are the most beautiful or most "representative" of the whole. For a contextual archaeology, the scholar is interested in the total picture. The broken, or ugly, artifacts are just as important as the intact beautiful ones. The scholar can triangulate between the accession books, the artifacts themselves, and the excavation notebooks (including any site maps that can be found) to "re-create" the excavation as much as possible. This technique can also be of help in re-interpreting old, colonial excavation reports as well. By taking another look at older, published material with new assumptions, the scholar can begin to see connections that the original report may have overlooked. [119]

Flannery and Marcus' cognitive archaeology opened up new avenues to inferring religious thought and practice from the material record. These issues were taken up most vigorously by prehistorians, and thus those scholars working in historical archaeology have much to learn from prehistoric archaeology in this respect.[120] Colin Renfrew and Steven Mithen, both prehistorians concerned with how religious ideas are developed and transmitted, point to the evolution of human

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[119] The most famous "re-excavation" project is Donald F. Easton's work on Heinrich Schliemann's excavations at Troy. Easton not only culls through Schliemann's excavation notes, but he actually excavates the dump where Schliemann discarded all the material he deemed uninteresting in his relentless, and ultimately terribly misguided, attempt to dig up the city of Troy. See Donald F. Easton, "Reconstructing Schliemann's Troy," in *Heinrich Schliemann nach Hundert Jahren*, ed. William M. Calder and Justus Cobet (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1990), pp. 431-434 and Donald F. Easton, "Schliemann's Excavations at Troia, 1870-1873" (Part of revised thesis Ph D --University College London, von Zabern, 2002).

[120] See n. 3 above for how historical archaeologists argue that insights from "text-aided" archaeological reasoning can help those working in prehistoric, or "text free," zones. I argue, here, that the opposite is true for the study of religion and archaeology.

cognitive abilities in understanding how religious ideas are embedded in material culture.[121] Mithen argues that religious ideas find external storage in material form *not* because of the *quantity* of information, but rather because of the *kind* of information contained within them.[122] With the development of the "cognitively fluid mind"—that is a mind that can smoothly mix different domains of thinking—material objects area able to carry symbolic meanings. Religious ideas, according to both Pascal Boyer and Steven Mithen, are ideas "which contradict our intuitive understanding of the world."[123] They are about supernatural beings that characteristically involve *violations* of natural phenomena, and

> such violations to our intuitive understanding of the world are essential to the cultural transmission of religious ideas so as to make them attention-grabbing: they are something different, something special, something needed to be treated with reverence.[124]

Religious ideas, that is ideas that conflict with our intuitive understandings of the world, are difficult to transmit as opposed to information about social behavior which is easily transmitted as it does not violate our intuitive understanding of the world. This necessitates a special "anchoring" in the human mind to keep this religious information intact. The anchor is provided by taking these violations and lending some familiarity to them; thus, religious ideas have the dual character of

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[121] Both have essays in Colin Renfrew, "Mind and Matter: Cognitive Archaeology and External Symbolic Storage," in *Cognition and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Symbolic Storage*, ed. Colin Renfrew and Christopher Scarre (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 1998).

[122] Steven Mithen, "The Supernatural Beings of Prehistory and the External Symbolic Storage of Religious Ideas," in *Cognition and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Symbolic Storage*, ed. Colin Renfrew and Christopher Scarre (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 1998), p. 104.

[123] Ibid., p. 101.

[124] Ibid.

both violation and conformity to intuitive knowledge of the world. If an idea has too many violations, it is too difficult to grasp and is lost, if it has too many conformities, it lacks the adequate attention grabbing qualities to keep its unique status. A second, and perhaps more important, anchor for religious ideas is their representation in symbolic, material form. It is this material form, that is external symbolic storage, that archaeologists can study to find religious ideas.[125]

Colin Renfrew builds upon Mithen's ideas by asserting that within the development of human cognitive abilities, external symbolic storage, in the form of material culture, is a necessary phase. Renfrew critiques Merlin Donald's *Origins of the Human Mind* (1991) where Donald puts an insufficient emphasis on the role of material culture in the development of human cognitive abilities.[126] Donald identifies four cognitive phases separated by three major transitions:

Episodic culture, characteristic of primate cognition

(first transition)

Mimetic culture, characteristic of *Homo erectus*

(second transition)

Linguistic or mythic culture, characteristic of early *Homo sapiens*

(third transition)

Theoretic culture using External Symbolic Storage[127]

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[125] Ibid., pp. 97-106.

[126] In doing this, Renfrew finds Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) particularly helpful.

[127] Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 275.

This last phase in Donald's schemata, theoretic culture using external symbolic storage, refers to the development of writing systems, and theoretic culture is to be associated with urbanism, state society, and literacy. Renfrew, however, argues that Donald is missing a key phase, a phase he puts after the development of linguistic or mythic culture and before theoretic culture using external symbolic storage. Below are Renfrew's additions, in bold, to Donald's schemata:

Episodic culture, characteristic of primate cognition

(first transition)

Mimetic culture, characteristic of *Homo erectus*

(second transition)

Linguistic or mythic culture, characteristic of early *Homo sapiens*

(third transition)

**External Symbolic Storage employing symbolic material
culture, characteristic of early agrarian societies with
permanent settlements, monuments, and valuables**

(fourth transition)

Theoretic culture using External Symbolic Storage, **using
sophisticated information retrieval systems including both
writing and material culture**[128]

Renfrew argues that without this fourth phase in cognitive development, that is without external symbolic storage employing material culture, many forms of thought simply could not have developed.[129] Key here is the notion that the fifth

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[128] Renfrew, "Mind and Matter," p. 4.
[129] Renfrew gives a number of examples: the concepts of a house and roof must come after these "artifacts" exited; the concept of hot must have something to be hot; weight is meaningless without something to weigh (Ibid., p. 3).

phase (Donald's fourth phase) includes both literate and non-literate societies. Thus, for Donald contemporary non-literate societies would be stuck in the third stage of linguistic or mythic culture, unable to "progress" to theoretic culture. In fact, non-literate individuals living in literate societies would also be stuck in the third phase. In Renfrew's system, non-literate people also have a theoretic culture, and that culture uses material culture for its external symbolic storage. For Renfrew, literate cultures use *both* forms of external symbolic storage *simultaneously*, particularly for religious ideas. That is, religious ideas are stored both in text *and* in material culture. This clearly opens up the study of material culture for understanding religion in societies with texts (i.e. historical archaeology!), and it underlines the importance of recognizing that even in "literate" cultures, not every individual is literate, but they still can maintain theoretic culture through material expression.

Renfrew is also responsible for the most detailed attempt to actually outline a method for studying religion in the material record. In the opening essay in his study of the Minoan sanctuary at Phylakopi, Renfrew explicitly argues for

> a framework of inference, of the kind which Lewis Binford[130] terms 'middle range theory,' which would allow one to make warranted statements about the past, in this case, about past cult practice and religious belief, on the basis of archaeological evidence.[131]

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[130] Lewis Roberts Binford, *For Theory Building in Archaeology: Essays on Faunal Remains, Aquatic Resources, Spatial Analysis, and Systemic Modeling* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), p. 6.
[131] Colin Renfrew, "Towards a Framework for the Archaeology of Cult Practice," in *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, ed. Colin Renfrew, Penelope A. Mountjoy, and Callum Macfarlane (Athens: British School of Archaeology, 1985), p. 11.

This framework of inference is necessary because it is impossible to observe

religious beliefs directly. Rather, there are four classes of data that must be used to

infer these beliefs:

1. Verbal Testimony, whether oral or written, relating to the religious activities of the community, elucidating the meaning ascribed by it to its religious practices.
2. Direct observation of cult practices, involving the use of expressive action, of vocal utterances and of symbolic objects and materials.
3. Study of non-verbal records, mainly depictions, which document either (a) the beliefs themselves, e.g. portraying deities or mythical events; or (b) the cult practices carried out in the community.
4. Study of the material remains of cult practices, including structures and symbolic objects and materials.[132]

The anthropologist has recourse to all four classes of evidence, the prehistoric

archaeologist has recourse only to the last two classes of evidence, but the

historical archaeologist has recourse to classes one, three, and four. Obviously, for

the historical archaeologist, the only verbal testimony available is written, and even

here it must be emphasized that the verbal testimony in texts will reflect only the

beliefs of a certain socio-economic status, that of the elite, and not the whole

society.[133] Thus, once again, Renfrew demonstrates that even in ancient societies

that have texts the material record is a category of evidence that should not be

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[132] Ibid., p. 12.
[133] I explore the relationship between text and artifact more fully in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

ignored. That is, abstract ideas are materialized in two *equally* important ways: in a story and in the creation of objects.[134]

But how does the archaeologist distinguish between ritual objects and ordinary objects? How does the archaeologist tell the difference between *technical actions*, that is altering the world for practical purposes, for example digging a hole in the ground for a fir pit, and *expressive actions*, that is altering the world in order to say something about it, for example digging a hole to represent the netherworlds. The distinction here is one of intention. First, any recognition of cult must be on the basis of context, and single examples are not sufficient in themselves. Second, Renfrew argues that formal and redundant behavior are good indications or religious activity, but they are not sufficient by themselves: secular ceremony and games are also formal and redundant. With these first two necessary but not sufficient conditions met, the archaeologist looks for other indications of sacred ritual and various religious activities. Renfrew presents a number of such indications: if the contextual association of objects (a) present a sense of awe, (b) indicate worship, offerings, or gestures, (c) occur in a special location, (d) use specific equipment, and (e) are associated with birth or death.[135]

In addition to the five indications of ritual/religious activity above, Renfrew offers a number of "archaeological correlates" which can help in identifying ritual behavior. These include: (a) attention focusing which includes spatial and temporal strategies as well as attempts to heighten the senses such as smell (perfumes,

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[134] Edmund Ronald Leach, *Culture & Communication: The Logic by which Symbols are Connected* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 37.

incense), taste, touch, sight, and hearing, (b) special architectural features that indicate a liminal zone, that is an interactive zone between this world and on "other-world" as well as indicators of attention to notions of purity and pollution, (c) the presence of the transcendent and its symbolic forms, and (d) participation and offering in which the celebrant offers gifts, presents votives, and/or demands are made on the celebrant.[136] Renfrew expands upon these basic categories by offering a list of eighteen material consequences of ritual behavior, ten strategies to distinguish a cult image from a votive image, and forty-one matters concerning ritual, religion, and belief that the archaeologist can try to answer. [137]

Renfrew concludes this essay by emphasizing the importance of studying each object in its context and in correlation to other analogous sites. He outlines a three step process:

Step 1   is therefore the identification of a cult assemblage.

Step 2   is the recognition within it of certain specific symbols as carrying a religious meaning (although the content of that meaning need not, and in general cannot, be identified explicitly [this is less true for historical archaeology]).

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[135] Renfrew, "Archaeology of Cult Practice," pp. 13-17.
[136] Ibid., p. 18.
[137] I will not include all these lists here, but they are quite helpful in many ways. They can be found in Ibid., p. 19-26.

Step 3 is the use of these symbols to identify as ritual or sacred other contexts whose cult status might not otherwise be evident.[138]

In other words, the thicker the description, to use Geertz's phrase, the more plausible the interpretation. In essence, Renfrew has outlined a complex series of "middle range theories" for studying the archaeology of religion.

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[138] Ibid., p. 24.

Part II: ARCHAEOLOGY

CHAPTER 2: EARLY HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY AND TEXT

The discussion in Part I concerning the theories and methods most appropriate to the interpretation of material culture bear directly on the study of early historic South Asian archaeology. The temporal frame from the historic period in South Asia begins with two processes: the rise of urbanism and the production of text. Both of these phenomena occur c. third century BCE to fourth century CE,[139] but they are not given equal value in most scholarship. The over-determination of the textual archive has not only left the material culture under-analyzed, but even when material culture is taken into consideration a misunderstanding of how text and artifact relate has led to even larger problems concerning the reconstructed picture of early South Asian life. This is particularly true in the study of religion. Modern understandings of religion as a discrete set of beliefs and practices—with an emphasis on beliefs—that can fit into one of the

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[139] The periodization of early South Asia is divided into two phases of urbanism: the Bronze Age Indus (Harappan) period, c. 2500-1900 BCE, and the Early Historic period, c. 400 BCE to 300 CE. See Monica L. Smith, "The Archaeology of South Asian Cities," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 14 (2006): p. 99. For general discussions of the Early Historic period as a "second urbanization," see F. R. Allchin, ed., *The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia: The Emergence of Cities and States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), George Erdosy, *Urbanisation in Early Historic India* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), George Erdosy, *The City in Early Historic India* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1986), A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1973), R. S. Sharma, "Urbanism in Early Historic India," in *The City in Indian History*, ed. Indu Banga (Columbia: South Asian Publications, 1991), pp. 9-18.

However, the division of early India into the pre-textual and textual periods is poorly understood. Sheldon Pollock argues that the earliest writing in South Asia, in this case in the form of inscriptions, was in the third c. BCE, and that around the beginning of the Common Era there was a transformation of culture and power centered on the production of Sanskrit texts for literary and political purposes. See Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 39-89.

contemporary "world traditions"—in this case Buddhism, Brahmanism-Hinduism, or Jainism—has obscured the local quality of religion.

The focus on the "World Religions" as discrete categories of analysis is most evident in historical archaeology; however, prehistoric archaeology is often co-opted into this framework as well. Timothy Insoll, a British scholar active in promoting the investigation of archaeology and religion, has edited two volumes which are organized around the use of major world religions as discrete categories.[140] Writing on the archaeology of Hinduism for the volume *Archaeology and World Religion*, Dilip Chakrabarti argues that it is inadequate to begin such a study with the last three centuries BCE when iconographic attributes of the gods and goddesses of India began to emerge in the archaeological record. Rather, he draws the archaeology of Hinduism back to the ninth millennium BCE at the site of Baghor in the upper Son valley in central India. Here, he identifies stone platforms and triangular shaped stones with modern *Shakta* practices.[141] In making this link, Chakrabarti is able to claim a continuous Hindu tradition dating back eleven millennia. Here is a clear case where the categories through which early Indian religion is studied reflect modern categories of religion and inhibit broader understandings of historical processes. In South Asian archaeology in general, the identification of certain archaeological sites as "Buddhist,"

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[140] Timothy Insoll, *Case Studies in Archaeology and World Religion: The Proceedings of the Cambridge Conference* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999) and Timothy Insoll, ed., *Archaeology and World Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[141] Dilip K. Chakrabarti, "The Archaeology of Hinduism," in *Archaeology and World Religion*, ed. Timothy Insoll (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 36.

"Brahmanical-Hindu," or "Jain" often prevents a holistic approach to the study of each particular site.

Within South Asian archaeology, a better approach is emerging which challenges the above trifurcated paradigm. The most recent manifestation of this is a volume of the journal *Asian Perspectives* which is dedicated to the study of regional understandings of South Asian archaeology and culture. In the introductory essay, Peter Johansen observes that South Asian archaeology is slowly moving away from the dominant culture-history model and toward "many newer approaches [that] examine sociocultural organization within regional-scale contexts, rather than focusing on static 'archaeological cultures' [i.e. the culture-history model]."[142] In this formulation of the categories of analysis, the delimiters are not the discrete "world religions," that is the well-known "–isms," but rather a geographic distinction broadly construed as South Asia, and, more importantly, narrowed to a regional unit of analysis which recognizes that the lines between the "great religions" in these early periods are blurred.

Text and Material Culture in Early Historic South Asia

Since Edward Said's publication of *Orientalism*, the western study of early India, both colonial and modern, has come under intense scrutiny. The Saidian re-evaluation of colonial forms of knowledge production led to the creation of the field of postcolonial studies. However, it is not just colonial forms of knowledge

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[142] Johansen, "Recasting Foundations," p. 193.

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that have been questioned, but more recently the scholarship of the latter half of the twentieth century, both postcolonial and more traditional, also has been re-examined. Many have judged much of this scholarship to be at best inadequate and naively romantic and at worst misleading and yet another example of the intellectual colonization of India. Part of this critique emerges from a major theoretical shift in the halls of academia which is founded in assessments of source material. For studies of early historic civilizations, there are two categories of source material: the textual archive, traditionally the most popular and often the sole basis for the scholarship coming out of Western and Indian universities, and the material archive, that is archaeological and numismatic data, an archive often viewed as the specialty of art historians and other marginalized disciplines.

The traditional methods of interpretation of the textual archive, the bulwark of the central academic discourse, have come under attack from a number of disparate disciplines. Scholars concerned with issues of gender have opined that early texts were written, almost without exception, by and for men, and thus women's voices are occluded or left out all together. To rectify this bias, there have been a number of fine studies trying to read "between the lines" to find women's voices, but the very nature of the material limits the results significantly.[143] Other studies have pointed to the fact that early texts were the

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[143] For a fine statement of this problem, see Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy, "In Search of Our Past: A Review of the Limitations and Possibilities of the Historiography of Women in Early India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30 April 1988: pp. 1-7. In addition to Chakravarti and Roy's work, of which there is quite a bit, there is a study of women in epigraphy, see Kirit K. Shah, *The Problem of Identity: Women in Early Indian Inscriptions* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

domain of the rich and powerful, and thus the voices of the rest of society are not represented.[144] The illiterate artisan and agriculturist's voices are not heard within the textual tradition, and if they are, they are being spoken *for* by those in control and not given an accurate rendering, and the uncritical academic focus on textual material alone reiterates the marginalization of the majority of society. As Uma Chakravarti argues, these marginalized groups "hardly figure in the texts of high culture except as a collective category upon whom certain rules were sought to be imposed."[145] Finally, and most significantly, many scholars argue that there is a problem with the intent of these documents. That is, normative texts such as these tell us what people are supposed to do, not what they actually did; in other words they are manuals of ideal behavior, not reflections of reality.

Now, the case against the textual archive and for the importance of the archaeological and numismatic archive for the study of early India must not be overstated. It would be a gross oversimplification to claim that textual sources are completely useless for the reconstruction early civilizations,[146] but a reliance on

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Much of the work on women reacts directly to A. S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978 [1959]).

[144] See Aloka Parasher-Sen, ed., *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004). Essays in this edited volume include studies of untouchability, slavery, women and foreign "barbarians."

[145] Uma Chakravarti, "Women, Men, and Beasts: The Jātaka as Popular Tradition," *Studies in History* 9, no. 1 (1993): p. 43, quoted in the Introduction to Parasher-Sen, ed., *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, p. 38.

[146] A fine statement of this view is given by Patrick Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Ancient India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xli, as he offers a necessary corrective to the overemphasis on non-textual sources at the expense of textual sources:

> They [normative texts] contain norms of correct behavior and action. They tell people what to do; they do not tell us what people actually did. Normative texts have had a bad press lately among scholars. Some argue that these sources are unreliable and worthless for historical purposes, proposing instead the use of archaeological, inscriptional, and art historical materials for historical

texts *to the exclusion of other data* does create misperceptions. In the case of

scholarship surrounding early Indian Buddhism, Gregory Schopen has indicated

some of the limitations of focusing exclusively on elite doctrinal texts in his article

"Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism,"

> [There is] a large body of literary material that in most cases cannot
> be dated and that survives only in very recent manuscript traditions.
> It has been heavily edited, it is considered canonical or sacred, and it
> was intended—at the very least—to inculcate an ideal. This
> material records what a small, atypical part of the Buddhist
> community wanted that community to believe or practice.[147]

Schopen then argues that in modern scholarship of early Indian Buddhism it is

these very texts that have been the basis for reconstructions of early Buddhist

belief, practice, and society. Interestingly, this reliance on texts is not due to the

fact that the textual archive has been all that is available to scholars, but rather

Schopen contends—and as the title of the article cited above suggests—that the

primacy given to textual sources is a function of the overriding "Protestant

presuppositions" of the modern academy.[148] Thus, although textual sources as well

as archaeological and numismatic sources "became available to Western scholars

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reconstruction. Clearly, these are invaluable sources for any study of India's past.
But I think the dismissal of normative texts is unwise and unwarranted and
betrays a singular ignorance of these documents. Many scholars unfortunately
derive their knowledge of these texts through secondary sources, which often
flatten the intellectual landscape and describe these documents as presenting a
uniform code of conduct. The divergent views and dissenting voices are silenced.
The reality, as anyone who undertakes a close reading of these documents can
see, is very different.

[147] Gregory Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian
Buddhism," *History of Religions* 31, no. 1 (1991): pp. 2-3. Schopen's footnotes are particularly
helpful for those interested in sources for his arguments.
[148] Ibid.: pp. 15-23.

more or less simultaneously,"[149] the inherent bias of the Western intellectual tradition, that is the Protestant elevation of the word, places the textual archive far above all other sources. It is not only in the study of Buddhism that the Protestant elevation of the word impacts historical reconstruction; these understandings also form the basis for much of the work on the emerging Brahmanical-Hindu traditions.

Buddhist Texts and Material Culture in Early Historic India

A group of Buddhist scholars have been diligently working to bring the non-textual evidence—much of which need not be "discovered" in the literal sense as the archaeological tracts, epigraphic sources, and numismatic studies have been available for decades—to light. I will focus on the primary scholars doing this kind of work in the field of early Indian Buddhism, most notably Gregory Schopen and Robin Coningham, but there are many others working on different temporal and geographic manifestations of Buddhism. [150] These scholars demonstrate that the

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[149] Ibid.: p. 3.
[150] Gregory Schopen has collected his more than thirty years of scholarship into three fantastic volumes published by the University of Hawai'i Press: Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), and Gregory Schopen, *Figments and Fragments of Mahayana Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005). Robin Coningham primarily studies the archaeology of Sri Lankan Buddhism, but he has begun to write more on the archaeology of Buddhism in general, see Robin Coningham, "The Archaeology of Buddhism," in *Archaeology and World Religions*, ed. Timothy Insoll (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 61-95. For Tibetan Buddhism and its ties to India, see David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc., 1987). For Sri Lankan and Theravādan Buddhism see, Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravāda Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For Japanese Buddhism, see Brian Douglas Ruppert, *Jewel in*

consequences of the elevation of text over other evidence are far reaching for the study of early Indian Buddhism.

Gregory Schopen argues that the reconstructed picture of early Buddhist society makes a number of problematic assumptions, all of which are a result of a reliance on texts alone. For example, the early doctrinal texts present us with early Buddhist ascetic monks who did not engage the world in any way, and thus Buddhism has been identified as "the world-renouncing religion *par excellence*."[151] These canonical texts also tell us that monks did not own property, broke all familial ties, and did not participate in social exchanges of any kind. Thus, their family was the *saṁgha*, their filial relationships were replaced by devotion to the Buddha, their focus was always inwards, and their practice consisted almost entirely of meditation. However, archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence points to the contrary: monks had strong ties to family,[152] they certainly engaged in exchange with the outside community,[153] they were often concerned

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the Ashes: Buddha Relics and Power in Early Medieval Japan*, *Harvard East Asian Monographs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). For an iconographic analysis of Ellora, see Geri Hockfield Malandra, *Unfolding a Maṇḍala: The Buddhist Cave Temples at Ellora* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). The scholarship on relics and relic worship goes well beyond Buddhist Studies. In fact, one could argue that much of the interest in relic worship in Buddhist Studies comes from Peter Brown's seminal work on relics in medieval Christianity, see Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Cult of the Saints : Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[151] Schopen, "Protestant Presuppositions," p. 6, quoting R. C. Zaehner in his forward to Patrick Olivelle, *The Origin and the Early Development of Buddhist Monasticism*, 1st ed. (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1974).

[152] See Gregory Schopen, "Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism," *T'oung Pao, Revue Internationale de Sinologie* 70 (1984): pp. 110-126.

[153] Lars Fogelin, *Archaeology of Early Buddhism* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2006). Fogelin examines the archaeological evidence for the monastic life at the Thatlakonda Monastery in Andhra Pradesh and demonstrates that they were certainly involved in all kinds of exchange activities with the surrounding communities.

with royal patronage and the outside world,[154] and most significantly, their religious practice was not governed by meditation alone, but the *stūpa*/relic cult was pervasive.[155]

Certainly one can understand how the everyday life of the monk may be a bit idealized in these texts, but surely the doctrinal portion of the texts is an accurate reflection of Buddhist belief. Surely the foundational view of karma as a nontransferable, individual issue is upheld. Unfortunately for those who put their faith in texts alone, once again the non-textual evidence is to the contrary. For example, Schopen argues that "where doctrine is known at all it is generally invoked in very limited and specific contexts, and behavior and its motivations are largely governed by other ideas or forms of a doctrine of karma that differ, sometimes very markedly, from the classical, textual doctrine."[156] In the earliest donative inscriptions from all over India—including Bharhut and Sanchi in central India, Mathura in northern India, and the Jamalpur Mound near Peshawar— Schopen finds numerous cases of transference of karma throughout the early Buddhist world, rendering these doctrinal reconstructions, supported by texts alone, flawed.[157]

Much of the Buddhist literature available to modern scholars, both primary and secondary, centers around subtle doctrinal distinctions which differentiate

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[154] Vidya Dehejia, "Patron, Artist, Temple," in *Royal Patrons and Great Temple Art*, ed. Vidya Dehejia (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988), pp. 3-8.
[155] Gregory Schopen, "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Layman/Monk Distinction and the Doctrines of the Transference of Merit," in *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, ed. Gregory Schopen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), see chapters V, VI, and VIII.
[156] Schopen, "Protestant Presuppositions," p. 11.

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competing schools from one another, and this material has consumed modern

Buddhist scholarship for the past two centuries. Whether it be debates within one

"vehicle" alone, for example Theravādin distinctions between Sarvāstivādins and

Kāśyapīyas, or later struggles between the vehicles themselves, for example the

classic debates between Theravādins and Mahāyānists, fine philosophical

argumentation has received the majority of print.[158] However, an overemphasis on

this rationalistic argumentation is misleading, as David Snellgrove argues,

> It may be safely assumed that no greater proportion of practicing
> Buddhists than of practicing Christians have concerned themselves
> with abtruse doctrinal problems, and that is why those that write
> about Buddhism as though it were nothing more than a severely
> rational system of doctrine and practice can be very misleading if
> their views are taken as anything more than a particularized
> interpretation.[159]

And he continues later in the same discussion,

> The exaggerated distinctions that [scholars][160] draw between
> Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna may have some substance if one contrasts
> the modern practice of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and its practice in
> Tibetan communities today (those now in exile, let it be understood)
> . . . [but Snellgrove argues for a] total rejection of any idea of such a
> dichotomy existing even in seventh century India, Central Asia or

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[157] Schopen, "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism," pp. 30-43.

[158] It is important to note here that the very names given to the "vehicles" is a later development. While David Snellgrove pushes the standardization of the "vehicle names," Theravāda and Mahāyāna, to the eleventh century as this material moves into Tibet, G. Schopen has convincingly argued that, "epigraphically—the 'beginning' of the Mahāyāna in India is not documentable until the 2nd century A.D., and that even as 'late' as that it was still an extremely limited minority movement that left almost no mark on Buddhist epigraphy or art and was still clearly embedded in the old established purposes of earlier Buddhist groups . . . It is again a demonstrable fact that anything even approaching popular support for the Mahāyāna cannot be documented until the 4th/5th century A.D., and even then the support is overwhelmingly by monastic, not lay, donors." Gregory Schopen, "Amitābha and the Character of Early Mahāyāna in India," *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10, no. 1 (1987): p. 124.

[159] Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 25.

[160] Here, Snellgrove is referring specifically to Fedor Ippolitovich Shcherbaskoi, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa* (New York: Gordon Press, 1973), but this holds true for much of the discussions of the two vehicles.

even during the early period of Tibet's conversion to Buddhism . . .
Such differences are unthinkable in the 'first centuries A.D.'"[161]

Thus, for an understanding of Buddhist belief, practice, and society in its early development one must look to alternative sources which do not focus solely on such highly philosophical, rationalist arguments.

Furthermore, if one believes Snellgrove has gone too far in his line of argumentation and wants to argue that there was a limited number of practicing, literate Buddhists for whom doctrinal considerations *were* understood and important, even then there are problems with most modern understandings of these doctrines. Snellgrove continues,

> It may be observed that exclusively doctrinal considerations become all the more misleading when they are interpreted in Western terms. Thus while such terms as 'atheistic' and 'soul-denying' may be in some respects applicable to certain early Buddhist teachings, they are totally misleading when applied to early Buddhist beliefs as a whole.[162]

For example, in regards to the assertion of an "atheism" present in early Buddhist thought, Snellgrove counters,

> Many modern accounts of Buddhist developments give the impression . . . that in the early Buddhist period, often referred to inadequately as 'Theravāda Buddhism,' Śākyamuni was regarded as a mere man, while in the later period known as the Mahāyāna, he became divinized as the focal point of an ever more elaborate cult. Such a suggestion falsifies the true state of affairs not only by its gross oversimplifications (the Theravādins were certainly an important early sect, but only one of many), but also in that it interprets Buddhist beliefs in terms of a largely Christian conception of God and Man as distinct spheres.[163]

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[161] Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, fn. 30, p.27.
[162] Ibid., p. 27.
[163] Ibid., p. 30.

Here, Snellgrove's argument follows the same line as Gregory Schopen's "Protestant Presuppositions" in identifying the problems of the Western gloss given to early Buddhism. As for the "soul-denying" character of early Buddhism, the doctrine of rebirth and personal responsibility for that rebirth are certainly expressed, but they are integrated seamlessly with a belief in a *personal* survival throughout rebirths and the ability to effect another's rebirth through one's own virtuous actions—which is in consonance with Schopen's argument for the practice of transference of karma.

Even in the understanding of the physical body the archaeological and epigraphic evidence seems to be contrary to doctrinal texts. Thus, the early textual evidence of the doctrine of impermanence, in which the physical body is inconsequential as it is merely a collection of *khandas* that has no real existence, is countered by the concern for the proper ritual disposal of the dead found in the archaeological evidence. Certainly, it is hard to find details of burial rituals in canonical texts, but as early as the mid-nineteenth century, archaeologists such as Alexander Cunningham (1854), W. D. West (1862), and James Burgess (1883) were finding vast Buddhist cemeteries which suggest a significant concern for such issues.[164] The failure to include this evidence in reconstructions of early Indian Buddhism led to the inherently flawed depictions presented by most Western scholars. Schopen summarizes the problematic attitude of textualists well,

> . . . [textualists assume that] Indian Buddhism and Indian Buddhist
> practice were contained in canonical texts. What Indian Buddhists

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[164] Schopen, "Protestant Presuppositions," p. 15.

> actually did was of no consequence. And since this was 'true,' Buddhist archaeology and epigraphy were of no consequence.[165]

It is clear that the over-reliance on textual sources and their unquestioned authority has distorted the picture of early Indian Buddhism.

Epic Texts and Material Culture in Early Historic India

While much of the work on the archaeology of Buddhism has been done by non-Indian scholars,[166] the bulk of the work on the archaeology of Hinduism has been done by Indian scholars, the Indian State Archaeological Surveys, and the central Archaeological Survey of India. With these groups actively excavating from year to year, the documentation of ancient Indian sites continues to mount. However, questions have been raised concerning the quality and use of this collected data. The most vocal critics of the state of Indian archaeology were the members of the Association for the Study of History and Archaeology (ASHA), a group that held informal monthly gatherings in Delhi in the mid-1990s, but which is now defunct. ASHA, which held its inaugural conference in December of 1994, was founded explicitly to confront traditional archaeological methods and theories widely employed throughout India. K. M. Shrimali, one of the organization's principal members, found the agenda set forth for post-Independence Indian archaeology simplistic, and in his introduction to the inaugural issue of its conference proceedings he quoted M. K. Dhavalikar, who asked "[h]ow far have we been able to go beyond replicating the 'Mickey Mouse Laws' enunciated by the

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[165] Ibid.: p. 14.

practitioners of 'New Archaeology' [i.e. processual archaeology] or being 'potsherd chroniclers?'[167] Or as D. K. Bhattacharya, a professor at the University of Delhi, stated,

> Excessive emphasis is being put on producing mountains of written work or classifying a plethora of type and layers but seldom have we directed our enquiries to understand the culture producing these material remains . . . Explanations, whenever sought, have invariably been with either evolution or diffusion.[168]

In the second session of ASHA held at Aligarh in 1996, K. M. Shrimali further clarified the Association's purpose as "rooted in widening the horizon of Indian archaeology through a critical review of assumptions, methodologies, and directions discernible in writings thereon."[169] Interestingly, although M. K. Dhavalikar was invoked to underscore the misguided mimicking of processual Archaeology and endless classification of pottery, he has himself come under attack in many of ASHA's conference papers for his interpretations—or in ASHA's view his misinterpretations—of the data. Thus, while ASHA certainly found many of the archaeological publications to be lacking the interpretive move of the postprocessualist movement, they were even more concerned with the misuse of data to advance a political agenda. In the case of India, according to ASHA, the

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[166] See note 11 above.
[167] Krishna Mohan Shrimali, "Introduction," in *Indian Archaeology Since Independence*, ed. Krishna Mohan Shrimali (Delhi: Association for the Study of History and Archaeology, 1996), p. viii quoting M.K. Dhavalikar, "New Archaeology and the Indian Situation," *Purātattva* 10, no. 1978-1979 (1981): p. 38.
[168] D.K. Bhattacharya, "Towards a Regional Archaeology in India," in *Indian Archaeology Since Independence*, ed. Krishna Mohan Shrimali (Delhi: Association for the Study of History and Archaeology, 1996), p. 85.
[169] Krishna Mohan Shrimali, "Introduction to the Second Session of the Association for the Study of History and Archaeology," in *Reason and Archaeology*, ed. Krishna Mohan Shrimali (Delhi: Association for the Study of History and Archaeology, 1998), p. vii.

politics of Hindutvā have colored the interpretive lens, rendering faulty conclusions.

In this last regard, three giants of Indian archaeology, M. K. Dhavalikar, B. B. Lal, and H. D. Sankalia, all sought to use archaeological evidence to substantiate the historicity of the Indian tradition. Their work serves as a perfect example of a common understanding of the relationship between texts and material culture. In this approach—an approach which fits well with the culture-history approach—the text is consulted first to identify potential archaeological sites, and then the excavation is undertaken to "find" material evidence that the text is describing an actual historical event.[170] For early historic India, the two texts best suited to this kind of over-determination of the text are the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*. Hastināpura, the site of B. B. Lal's 1950-1952 excavations, was chosen for its central role as the capital of the Kauravas in the *Mahābhārata*.[171] Similarly, his national project concerning the archaeology of *Rāmāyana* sites, particularly the excavations at Ayodhyā, were conducted to confirm the narrative of the *Rāmāyana*.[172] Lal's primary goal in these reports was to prove that the events recorded in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* really occurred, and his results were fitted just to that agenda. In other words, much like much of early Biblical

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[170] The best example of the textual approach is the work of Heinrich Schliemann and his attempt to find the city of Troy. See Easton, "Schliemann's Excavations at Troia, 1870-1873" . But this approach is also very common in traditional Biblical archaeology, where archaeologists find evidence to prove that the events of the Bible actually happened.
[171] The original summary of the excavation was published in B. B. Lal, "Excavations at Hastināpur and Other Explorations in the Upper Ganga and Satluj Basins, 1950-1952," *Ancient India*, no. 10 & 11 (1954 and 1955): pp. 5-51. See also S. K. Gupta and K. S. Ramachandran, eds., *Mahābhārata: Myth or Reality* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1976).

archaeology, or much like Schleimann's quest for Troy, the direct-historical approach was used to prove the text as true.

Textual Over-determination and the *Mahābhārata*

Lal's work at Hastināpura uncovered a five-fold sequence of cultures. The most innovative results centered on the discovery of two cultural complexes, one identified with Ochre-Coloured Pottery (OCP) and the other with Painted Grey Ware (PGW).[173] These two cultures filled the period once considered a "dark age" for archaeology, that is the period between late Harappan culture, circa 2000 BCE, and the rise of Buddhism and the second urbanization, circa 600 BCE. Most important for Lal was the PGW cultural complex spanning 1500 BCE to 600 BCE, and he dated Period II PGW at Hastināpura between 1100 BCE to 800 BCE. He then correlated this Period II PGW culture with the events and people in the *Mahābhārata*. Lal also identified other pre-Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) cultures, that is pre-Buddhist cultures, at Mathura, Panipat, Kurukshetra, Ahichchatra, and Purana Qila, all sites mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. Lal concluded that the *Mahābhārata* war occurred in 950 BCE, and he argues that archaeologists needed to find the material evidence for these events.[174]

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[172] See entries in *Indian Archaeology – A Review* from the years 1975-1976 to 1985-1986 and H. D. Sankalia, *Rāmāyana: Myth or Reality* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973).
[173] PGW was first discovered at Ahichchatrā in 1944, but B. B. Lal was the first to make the explicit connection between PGW culture and the *Mahābhārata*. See A. Ghosh and K. C. Panigrahi, "Pottery of Ahichchatra (U. P.)," *Ancient India* January, no. 1 (1946): pp. 37-59.
[174] The search for the historicity of the *Mahābhārata* is still a primary issue for many, and it has continued well after Lal's publications in the 1940's and the 1950's and the flurry of literature in the 1970's. For example, see Sandhya Chatterjee Chakrabarti, "The Mahabharata: Archaeological and

Lal worked under a number of assumptions to come to these conclusions. First, he believed that there was much literal truth to the events outlined in the *Mahābhārata*. While it may have been written down at a later date, it recorded the cultural landscape of the time of the war pegged to 950 BCE. Kṛṣṇa and the other heroes were historic personages and the descriptions of cities, towns, palaces, groves, and other geographic markers were memories of real centers of activity, and furthermore these places bear the same names in modern India and thus can be easily identified. For Lal, the Purāṇas functioned in a similar way: while they may have been written down later, they came from an unchanged oral tradition that described the cultural landscape of the early first millennium BCE. For example, Lal claimed to have found evidence of the very the flood that destroyed Hastināpura as detailed in the Purāṇas. The problem with these identifications is twofold. First, many of his conclusions are pure speculation. For example, the rivers of the Ganga valley flood often, and identifying a specific narrative event in a Purāṇa with a site more than a millennium removed from the writing of a story is difficult at best.[175] But such identifications through correlation are the nature of historical and archaeological work, and with stronger evidence such a theory may be proven. However, in this instance, the case being made does not garner enough supporting evidence to be acceptable.

But more problematic is Lal's dating of PGW culture. The dates for PGW

Literary Evidence," in *Case Studies in Archaeology and World Religion: The Proceedings from the Cambridge Conference*, ed. Timothy Insoll (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999), pp. 166-174.
[175] Suraj Bhan, "Recent Trends in Indian Archaeology," in *Reason and Archaeology*, ed. Krishna Mohan Shrimali (Delhi: Association For the Study of History and Archaeology, 1998), p. 5.

culture seem to have been chosen for no other reason than to fit the theory that they are evidence of the culture reflected in the *Mahābhārata*. In fact, subsequent carbon-14 dating has shown that PGW has an upper limit of 700 BCE, not 950 BCE and certainly not 1500 BCE.[176] Despite a plethora of carbon-14 dating, proponents of the early dating of PGW continue to publish work claiming correlation between PGW and the *Mahābhārata*.[177] Pushing the date of PGW back so far also serves to push back other dates, and thus Vedic civilization can be set as far back as the fourth or third millennium BCE. The ascription of such early dates to the Vedic and Epic periods has not been confined to the early post-Independence period in India; their acceptance has grown in the past few decades. ASHA continued to address these issues, and Irfan Habib[178] rightly pointed to the 1993 issue of *Purātattva*, the Bulletin of the Indian Archaeological Society, where an article by Navaratna S. Rajaram, the spokesman for the Indo-American school of archaeology, put forward the following chronology:

Vedic Age:	ends circa 3730 BCE
Mahābhārata War:	occurs circa 3100 BCE
Age of Chaos:	1800 BCE to 900 BCE[179]

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[176] See Irfan Habib, "Unreason and Archaeology: 'The Painted Grey Ware and Beyond'," in *Reason and Archaeology*, ed. Krishna Mohan Shrimali (Delhi: Association for the Study of History and Archaeology, 1998), pp. 17-27 for a complete discussion of the relevant studies concerning carbon-14 dating and thermoluminescence dating.

[177] This correlation did not go unchallenged, as A. Ghosh, the head of the Archaeological Survey of India in the 1950's, warned, ". . . a word of caution is necessary, lest the impression is left on the unwary reader that the Hastināpura excavation has yielded archaeological evidence about the truth of the story of the *Mahābhārata* and that here at last is the recognition by official archaeology of the truth embodied in Indian traditional literature. Such a conclusion would be unwarranted . . . caution is necessary that fancy does not fly ahead of facts." In A. Ghosh, "Notes," *Ancient India* 10 & 11 (1954-1955): pp. 2-3.

[178] Habib, "Unreason and Archaeology," p. 35.

[179] The Indus Culture is identified with the age of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Sūtras*, thus the Vedic Age and the Indus Culture are the same here.

Rajaram ends by claiming, ". . . so many scientists are working in the USA, all reaching to the same conclusion that the Indus-Saraswati and the so called Vedic-Aryan civilization are only the two sides of one and the same culture-complex datable to the 4th and 3rd millennia BC or even earlier."[180] Where PGW culture fits in this schema is not clear (would Rajaram correlate it with the *Mahābhārata* war or with the Age of Chaos?), but more important is the fantastically early date set for the origin of the "Indian Tradition."

Textual Over-determination and the *Rāmāyana*

Equally fantastic, and perhaps more politically significant, was a similar archaeological correlation to the *Rāmāyana*. Here, Lal not only pushed NBPW culture back to 700 BCE—again the carbon-14 dating suggests something more like an upper limit of 400 BCE—but he also argued that the *Rāmāyana* was written at this very time, that is 700 BCE. Furthermore, in 1990 Lal published a report based on his *Rāmjanmabhumi* area excavations in which he claimed to have found medieval remnants of an eleventh century CE Hindu temple under the Mughal Babri Masjid of 1528 CE. This was lauded by most Indian archaeologists and led to other publications supporting such a theory.[181] However, after being challenged by Suraj Bhan, Lal admitted that he had not found a single Hindu artifact or image that

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[180] Navaratna S. Rajaram, "Vedic and Harappan Culture: New Findings," *Purātattva* 24 (1993-1994): pp. 10-11.
[181] Y. D. Sharma, ed., *Ramjanmabhumi Ayodhya, New Archaeological Discoveries* (New Delhi: K. S. Lal, 1993).

could be construed as Hindu.[182]

Bhan's contribution to ASHA's second conference proceedings summarized the construction of myths supported by archaeology in three stages. According to Bhan, this approach to Indian archaeology began to gain force when B. B. Lal identified PGW with the events of the *Mahābhārata* in the 1950's. In the second stage, the publication of the Vivekanand Commemoration Volume by Lokesh Chandra, S. P. Gupta *et. al.*,[183] built on Lal's assumptions and undercut the scientific standards of archaeological research. In the final stage, Lal expanded his scope and undertook the *Rāmjanmabhumi* project and the Ayodhyā excavations. These publications, according to Bhan, have completely communalized Indian archaeology. Bhan concluded with this evaluation of the current state of Indian archaeology,

> By now the issue of Ayodhyā (*Rāmjanmabhumi* and Babri Masjid) had already charged the social and political atmosphere emotionally and a communal divide was widening and deepening. B. B. Lal's biased interpretation of selective archaeological evidence was appropriated, twisted, distorted, and misused in the name of "archaeological proof" for communal ends. The archaeologist like any other person is the product of his age and society. B. B. Lal was not the only unwary archaeologist whose perceptions and perspective gradually changed to the disadvantage of the discipline and the society at large.[184]

Thus, in the second half of the twentieth century, the methods and theories used to correlate archaeological evidence and textual data were manipulated for political

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[182] Bhan, "Recent Trends in Indian Archaeology," p. 9.
[183] Lokesh Chandra, ed., *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture* (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970).
[184] Bhan, "Recent Trends in Indian Archaeology," p. 10.

ends.[185] Does this mean that we should abandon any attempt at working with both

text—in this case the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*—and archaeological data,

in Indian OCP, PGW, or NBPW pottery groups? Certainly not. But a re-

evaluation of both sets of data and carefully constructed methods of investigation

must be laid out before an interpretation can be offered.[186]

The *Arthaśāstra* and Urban Planning in Early Historic India

Still another early historic text has been used in unjustified ways in

interpreting early historic archaeology: the *Arthaśāstra*. The Arthaśāstra was

composed by Kautilya who is traditionally affiliated with the reign of

Chandragupta Maurya circa 321 BCE. This traditional understanding has been

challenged and the *Arthaśāstra's* dates have been revised forward. Most scholars

now put the finished work at the first or second century of the Common Era, and

thus, by any reckoning, the text is broadly placed in the early historic period.[187]

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[185] Sudheshna Guha connects the controversies surrounding early historic archaeology and the Babri Masjid excavations at Ayodhya to the controversies surrounding prehistoric archaeology and the interpretation of the Indus Civilization's connection to the Vedas, see Sudheshna Guha, "Negotiating the Evidence: History, Archaeology, and the Indus Civilisation," *Modern Asian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2005): pp. 399-426. The conclusions reached by Irfan Habib, Suraj Bhan, Romila Thapar, and other contributors to ASHA have not gone unchallenged by the leaders of the Archaeological Survey of India. There have been a number of rejoinders from S. K. Gupta, V. S. Pathak, B. P. Sinha, K. S. Ramachandran, and A.K. Sinha. The most public of the rejoinders erupted in a prolonged argument between B. B. Lal and Irfan Habib in the pages of the Indian Express. Throughout the 1990's there were many articles published concerning this issue. Finally, it should be noted the ASHA is now defunct, and Indian archaeology in the early twenty-first century largely continues to follow the Hindutvā agenda.
[186] The "social world" approach was taken by Gouri Lad, *Mahabharata and Archaeological Evidence* (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1983). This is a more subtle treatment of the archaeological data and the *Mahābhārata*, but it is focused primarily on identifying common objects that can be found in both such as beads, furniture, toilet-trays, etc.
[187] See R. P. Kangle, *The Kauṭīlya Arthaśāstra: A Study* (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1965), p. 61 and Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oxford

Many scholars have assumed that this is a practical, descriptive account of early historic India rather than a prescriptive, theoretical treatise on statecraft. Those who understand the work as a descriptive account have sought confirmation for Kautilya's details of city construction in early historic site plans. George Erdosy, considered the foremost expert of the early historic city, argues that "as the social system [of caste] operated at both village and city levels and as the idealised plan of the ancient texts themselves [here, most particularly the Arthaśāstra] were meant for both types of settlements, we may expect to find our hypothesis drawn on the basis of village plans to be confirmed in cities."[188] Scholars of India both before Erdosy (see Hocart, Auboyer, Thapar)[189] and after Erdosy (see Thaplyal)[190] have confirmed this correlation, and it seems that corroboration comes from archaeological theory as well.[191] The most detailed exposition comes from Rangarajan's reconstruction of the early historic city based on the Arthaśāstra (fig. 1).[192]

University Press, 1997 [1961]), p. 218. Charles Malamoud rejects this latter dating as well and places the text in the 4th or 5th century CE (personal communication). Even if Charles Malamoud is correct, the point of this section is to demonstrate that the ideal of urban planning of the Arthaśāstra is not confirmed by the archaeological data, and thus it remains "ideal."

[188] Erdosy, *The City in Early Historic India*, p. 156.

[189] A. M. Hocart, "Town Planning," *Ceylon Journal of Science* Section G, no. I.4 (1928): pp. 150-156; A. M. Hocart, "Town Planning," *Ceylon Journal of Science* Section G, no. II.2 (1930): pp. 86-87; Jean Auboyer, *Everyday Life in Ancient India* (London: Winfield and Nicolson, 1965), p. 212; Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 73. All these are cited in Robin Coningham, "The Spatial Distribution of Craft Activities in Early Historic Cities and Their Social Implications," in *South Asian Archaeology 1995: Proceedings of the 13th Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists*, ed. Raymond Allchin and Bridget Allchin (New Delhi: Oxford, 1993), pp. 353-354.

[190] Kiran Kumar Thaplyal, *Guilds in Ancient India: A Study of Guild Organization in Northern India and Western Deccan from circa 600 BC to circa 600 AD* (New Delhi: New Age International Limited, 1996), pp. 60-64.

[191] Coningham, "The Spatial Distribution of Craft Activities," pp. 354-355.

[192] L. N. Rangarajan, *The Arthashastra* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1992).

Crematorium
for higher
varnas

Brahma Gate

Jewellers, workers in metal

| Hospitals | BRAHMINS | Treasury |
| Storehouses | Royal Temple | Horses, Cows |

S U D R A S

Chariots and Carriages

Stables for camels, donkeys. Palace Workshop

Royal Residence (*Antahpura*)

Teachers Purohitas Councillors Ritual Areas

Water Storage

Kitchen Granary Elephant Stables

City Centre

K S H A T R I Y A S

Perfumes Flowers Liquor Store

Toilet Articles

Many Articles

Senapati gate

Indra gate

ARMOURY
Storehouse for forest produce

Commodity Warehouse
Records/Audit Office
Palace Workers Qrs.

VAISHYAS

| Guilds (Washermen, Tailors, etc.) | Grain Merchants Other Merchants Factory Officials Control Officials | Guilds |
| Foreign Merchants | Restaurants Entertainments | Bars Courtesans | |

Yama gate

Crematorium
for lower
varnas

Figure 1: Idealized plan of city from the Arthaśāstra after Rangarajan (1992)

However, Robin Coningham has convincingly demonstrated that for three early historic cities—the Sri Lankan city of Anuradhapura, the city of Bhita just south of Allahabad, and the northwestern Indian city of Sirkap, Taxila—the archaeological evidence does not bear this out. In Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, Coningham culls through the old excavation reports and finds the co-occurrence of dissimilar craft activities in many parts of the city. For example, in periods I and G (both correlated to the early historic period), Coningham finds that glass-working,

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shell-working, metal-working, and perhaps even bone-working occurred in the

same areas throughout the city. He concludes that

> [this evidence] suggests that our concepts and assumptions
> concerning the spatial layout of Early Historic cities will need to be
> reassessed. Our traditional view as to the social and spatial
> organization of the city was that of a royal settlement spatially
> oriented around a single individual – the king . . . However, our
> findings may suggest a far more egalitarian pattern. We can
> conclude by suggesting that we *cannot* use the Arthaśāstra to fill in
> our gaps of archaeological knowledge. If we are to further
> understand the social and spatial planning of Early Historic cities *we
> must concentrate on the recording of all artefacts*, and what we
> might normally consider to be waste, three-dimensionally so that we
> may project their exact position with respect to their structural
> context.[193] (italics mine)

Coningham found similar evidence for co-occurrence of craft activities spread

throughout the urban environment in similar studies of both Bhita and Taxila. It is

the latter site, in particular the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian city of Sirkap, that

Coningham comes back to in a more comprehensive study three years later.[194] And

it is to this very site that the remainder of this section will also turn.

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[193] Coningham, "The Spatial Distribution of Craft Activities," pp. 361-362.
[194] Robin Coningham and Briece R. Edwards, "Space and Society at Sirkap, Taxila: A Re-Examination of Urban Form and Meaning," *Ancient Pakistan* 12 (1997-1998): pp. 47-75.

Archaeology, Text, and Taxila[195]

Gregory Schopen's revolutionary reconstruction of the life of a Buddhist monk is a convincing and much needed corrective for the field of early Buddhist Studies. Robin Coningham's re-assessment of the Arthaśāstra's influence on urban planning in early historic cities necessitates a re-evaluation of the evidence and highlights the need for fresh interpretations. The lack of an appropriate study of the relationship between Indian Epics and the archaeology of the early historic period is a lacuna that needs to be filled. Both Schopen and Coningham point to Sirkap—the middle of three cities that are the heart of the complex of Taxila—as a potential site for further work to be done. Schopen, when discussing the pervasive Buddhist *stūpa*/relic cult, wrote,

> The history of Buddhist monastic architecture, however, does not simply confirm the active participation of monks in the *stūpa*/relic cult. It would also indicate that the cult was, from the very beginning of our evidence, both monastically controlled and dominated. That this was the case seems to follow from the fact that the *stūpas* that we know are almost always found in close association with monastic complexes and very frequently incorporated into such complexes. The significance of this relationship is reinforced when we note that only very rarely do we find *stūpas* or *caityagṛhas* disassociated from monastic establishments. The only instance, in fact, that I am able to cite is Sirkap.[196]

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[195] There are various spellings of Taxila, and these spellings carry with them theories of its origin. Some of the suggestions are *Takhaśila* or *Takshaśila* as found in Pali epigraphs, *Takkhasilā* as written by the Greek ambassador Heliodorus, or even *Takṣaśilā* as found in Sanskrit sources. I will use Taxila in following Sir John Marshall and much of the early British archaeological works for convenience, not for any ideological reasons. For a detailed account of Taxila's names and accompanying significances see Ahmad Hasan Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila* (Tokyo: Unesco, 1986), pp. 1-4.
[196] Schopen, "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism," p. 34. He goes on to suggest in n. 58 p. 50 that these *stūpas* may not be Buddhist at all. I disagree with this assessment and will present my argument later in the thesis.

This last sentence is an intriguing one. It seems that Sirkap presents a set of evidence spatially disassociated from large monastic complexes—it reveals *stūpas* within the city limits, away from monasteries. Not surprisingly, the surrounding environment of *stūpas* found within the city walls is quite different from those found in monasteries located outside the city walls.

The typical central monastery *stūpa* was a massive hemispherical dome, called the *aṇḍa*, which, according to tradition,[197] housed relics of the Buddha (fig. 2). The dome was decorated at the top with three superimposed umbrellas, the *chhatrāvali*, and was surrounded by a small railing called the *vedikā*. The whole structure was surrounded by a larger fence, also called a *vedikā,* through which the devotee could enter via four *toraṇas* or gateways (fig. 3). The devotee could then circumambulate the *stūpa* on a designated path called the *pradakṣiṇapatha*. The *toraṇas* and *vedikā* set the central *stūpa* apart from the rest of the structures in the monastery complex. [198] Surrounding the great central *stūpa* were both monastic residences and many smaller *stūpas*. These smaller *stūpas* housed the relics of other buddhas and well-known monks. These *stūpas* were housed in shrines which

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[197] This comes from the later Buddhist tradition found in the 5th-16th century CE *Aśokavadāna* which holds that the Emperor Aśoka distributed the actual relics of the Buddha in 84,000 *stūpas* constructed all over India. This tradition is also found in the 5th century CE Sri Lankan *Mahāvaṃsa*. For more details see John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) and John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[198] For further definitions and analysis of the *stūpa* beyond this brief discussion, see Debala Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments* (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press Ltd., 1971), pp. 8-56; Anna L. Dallapiccola and Stephanie Zingel-Avé Lallemant, *The Stúpa: Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979); and the glossary in Kurt A. Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 305-310.

in turn were located in larger courts. [199] These large complexes, located at the

outskirts of urban centers, were places of worship for monks and the local lay

community.[200]
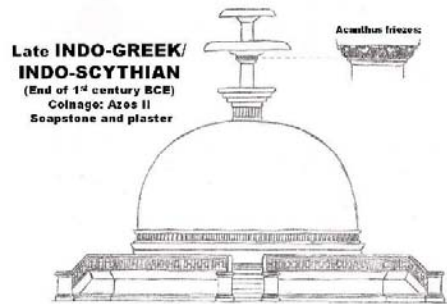
Figure 2: Line Drawing of Great
***Stūpa* at Butkara**

Reference: Domenico Faccenna, Butkara I, Swat Pakistan, (1956–1962), Part I, IsMEO, ROME 1980 (image under GNU Free Documentation License).

Figure 3: Great *Stūpa* at Sanci showing *aṇḍa*, *vedikās*, and *toraṇas*.

Photo: Silver Gelatin Developing Out Paper (OGZ); Kern Institute, Leiden University (image under GNU Free Documentation License)

At Taxila, while the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* and surrounding structures

certainly fit the above description of a typical extensive monastery complex, within

the city of Sirkap itself the *stūpa* shrines were not connected to any central,

massive *stūpa*. Thus, rather than large, open spaces for worship, in the urban plan

of Sirkap the *stūpas* themselves were housed in shrines, often without a proper

court. These *stūpa* shrines had spatial relationships tied to the non-monastic

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[199] Here I follow the architectural classification scheme of Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 309. He defines a *stūpa* shrine as an "[a]rchitectural relic temple that houses a *stūpa*." These shrines are located in larger *stūpa* courts which Behrendt defines as "the part of the public sacred area made up of the main *stūpa* and surrounding small *stūpas*, relic and *stūpa* shrines, and in the later periods, image shrines.".

structures around them rather than the monastic structures. Schopen, in his ground breaking work on Buddhist monasticism, did not take Sirkap and lay practice as a unit of analysis, but continued to explore Buddhist monastic practice in outlying monastery complexes.

The presence of these urban *stūpa* shrines has led scholars to assume that Sirkap is a "Buddhist city." In effect, this preconception has excluded much of the academic community—those not formally studying Buddhism—from taking a closer look at the city. In the balance of this chapter, I will argue that Sirkap was not a Buddhist city at all. This is not to deny that there is evidence of practice that involves various Buddhist deities, including the Buddha himself, but these deities are *local* deities and *local* spirits. Furthermore, these local deities and spirits are representative of a much broader religious culture, a culture that did not adhere to strictly defined boundaries of any of the "Great World Traditions." This line of reasoning builds off of Richard Cohen's work in which he argues that in fifth century CE Buddhist practice at Ajanta the Buddha himself was not the pan-Indian Buddha that moderns know, but rather this Buddha at Ajanta was a local deity that participated in local religious and ritual configurations. Cohen takes "place" seriously as the ground for interpretation.[201]

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[200] In central India, the most famous of these massive hemispherical *stūpas* are at Bharhut and Sanchi. In the northwest of the subcontinent, there are similar *stūpas* at Taxila, Shāh-jī-kī-ḍherī, Butkara, and Takhi-i-bāhī, to name but a few.

[201] Cohen, "Nāga, Yakṣiṇī, Buddha," pp. 360-400. Cohen not only discusses the local quality of religion and ritual at the Ajanta caves, but he details the intense resistance from the modern Buddhist community in recognizing these practices as "proper" Buddhism. In an internet debate on the Buddha-l discussion group which inspired Cohen to write the article, almost all participants located normative Buddhism (both ancient and modern) in the pure philosophy of the Buddha, not in the local ritual and practice of active Buddhists (see Cohen, "Nāga, Yakṣiṇī, Buddha," p. 361).

Nor is Sirkap primarily a Brahmanical-Hindu city; nor is it a Jain city, the usual default positions if something is not identified as Buddhist. Rather, I will explore the local character of religious practice and belief in Taxila as a whole and in Sirkap in particular. This focus on the local quality of religion is also found in Pierfrancesco Callieri's work regarding the early historic Swāt valley in Pakistan. Callieri finds that at the early historic urban settlement of Barikot the evidence strongly suggests a local quality to religious and ritual practice. He extends the argument to a general observation about the urban dwellers in early historic northwest India who "followed local cults that only partially can be identified as Brahmanical . . . [and] the archaeological evidence shows us a town [Sirkap] where the main religion was a local one . . . [and] the local religions must have been particularly intense – as is appropriate to the 'frontier' character of the region."[202] In effect, Callieri is arguing for a less "doctrinal" approach to the interpretation of the material culture which immediately slots an object into a singular tradition. This approach is rare, but not altogether absent from scholarly work on early historic Indian art. Maurizio Taddei suggests that the famous Peshawar Museum relief[203] depicting a meditating Buddha with six extant radiating Buddhas has been misidentified: those radiating "Buddhas" are not necessarily Buddhas at all, rather they are a mix of Buddhist, Brahmanical, and local deities. He tentatively

Cohen's most recent work has continued the analysis of modern notions of Buddhism, see Richard Cohen, *Beyond Enlightenment: Buddhism, Religion, Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2006).
[202] Pierfrancesco Callieri, "Buddhist Presence in the Urban Settlements of Swāt, Second Century BCE to Fourth Century CE," in *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*, ed. Pia Brancaccio and Kurt A. Behrendt (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), p. 65, p. 76, p. 78.

identifies them as a Brahmanical Brahmā, a local *yakṣa*, Kumara, Śiva, a local male youth, and a single Buddha.[204] This relief certainly blurs the lines between the highly reified labels of Buddhism and Brahmanism.[205]

Taxila in Modern Scholarship

Taxila is best known in modern scholarship for its Gandhāran stucco and stone sculptures of the Buddha which are submitted as prime examples of the Greek influence on the northwest of the Indian subcontinent in the centuries surrounding the Common Era.[206] Recently the early assumptions that sustained these studies have been deconstructed to demonstrate their Eurocentric bias. In this process the standards of Gandhāran craftsmanship have also been re-evaluated in an attempt to rid the discourse of the underlying assumption of the superiority of the Greek artistic form over the Indian artistic form. Furthermore, the notion that the image of the Buddha was first introduced to India through the Greeks in northwest India has also been challenged by those searching for an Indian origin to the Buddha image, and the site for the origin of these images is pegged to a more

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[203] Registration number 850 in the Peshawar Museum. It is a fragment of a larger piece, but the fragment we have is 18.5 x 16 x 9.5cm. The larger relief may have had eight radiating figures, but only six are extant.

[204] Maurizio Taddei, "Non-Buddhist Deities in Gandharan Art," in *Investigating Indian Art*, ed. Marianne Yaldiz and Wibke Lobo (Berlin: Museum fèur Indische Kunst, 1987), pp. 349-350. Taddei details a number of pieces which have been hastily misidentified as purely "Buddhist" in character as local deities that belong to neither Buddhist nor Hindu.

[205] This emphasis on place and "the local" is also apparent in the recent work of Susan Huntington. See Susan L. Huntington, "Early Buddhist Art and the Theory of Aniconism," *Art Journal* 49, no. 4 (1990): pp. 401-408 where she argues that the so-called aniconic reliefs which are usually understood as depictions of the Buddha's life without depicting the Buddha do not, in fact, represent the events in the life of the Buddha, but rather they portray the worship and adoration of sacred Buddhist sites.

traditionally "Indian" location, Mathurā.   Whether a scholar believes the first

Buddha image came from Taxila or Mathurā has become a litmus test for their

loyalties. The dominance of these debates, however, has silenced the multivocality

of Taxila's voice, for Taxila speaks of much more than Buddha images and

colonial assumptions. Taxila unfolds a local narrative, a narrative which does not

necessarily belong to an "–ism," but rather speaks to religious development, both

monastic and lay, both Buddhist and local, both Brahmanical and folk, in

northwestern India.

Located twenty miles to the northwest of the modern Pakistani city of

Rawalpindi, Taxila was at one time at the intersection of three great trade routes

connecting India, Central Asia, and Western Asia.[207] It was inhabited in the late

sixth century BCE, and it flourished from the third century BCE to the seventh

century CE.   Its decline can be linked to changes in the trade routes and a

subsequent population decrease.[208] It is a vast complex of monasteries, temples,

and three separate cities which covers almost ten square kilometers.   It was

"discovered" by Alexander Cunningham in the late nineteenth century as he

traveled throughout India following the pilgrimage routes of the Chinese monks Fa

Xian, who traveled through the Indian subcontinent in the fifth century CE (404-

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[206] For a discussion of the geographic boundaries of Gandhāra, see Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, pp. 1-2.

[207] John Hubert Marshall, *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*, First Indian Reprint 1975 ed. (Varanasi: Bhartiya Publishing House, 1951), pp. 1-2.

[208] For a concise chronology of the rulers and empires in Taxila, see Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, pp. 175-176.

414), and Xuan Zang, who did the same in the seventh century CE (630-644).[209]

While Cunningham did not engage in a full excavation of Taxila, he did carry out some preliminary digs in and around the area.[210] But it was the twentieth century British archaeologist Sir John Marshall who did the most extensive work there from 1913 to 1934. His finds were steadily published in his yearly *Annual Reports*, and in 1951 Marshall re-published his data in a three volume final report now known simply as *Taxila*. He wrote in his introduction, "in such an excavation there comes a time when the entire body of data has to be re-examined and coordinated, and a comprehensive account of the whole put at the service of archaeologists and historians."[211] Although there have been various small archaeological digs in the area since the 1951 publication of *Taxila*, Marshall's work is by far the most comprehensive archaeological record of the site to date.[212] In *Taxila* Marshall identified three separate cities: the earliest, and smallest, was located on Bhiṛ

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[209] Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India*, pp. 36-39. For Alexander Cunningham's whole program and details of his years as the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, see Ibid., pp. 23-134.

[210] The most extensive archaeological data from Taxila published by Alexander Cunningham can be found scattered throughout his annual reports to the Archaeological Survey of India. See Alexander Cunningham, *Four Reports Made During the Years, 1862-63-64-65*, 2 vols. (Simla: Government Central Press, 1871), Alexander Cunningham, *Report for the Year 1872-73*, vol. 5, *Archaeological Survey of India* (Varanasi: Indological Bookhouse, 1875), and Alexander Cunningham, *Report of a Tour in the Punjab in 1878-79*, vol. XIV, *Archæological Survey of India* (Varanasi: Indological Bookhouse, 1882).

[211] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. xvii.

[212] Unfortunately, some 400 pages of Marshall's original notes were lost during the Second World War, as he relates in his introduction, "[s]ome of these I was able to replace with the help of duplicates kept for safety's sake at Taxila; others I could not replace, and have had to fall back occasionally on my memory" (Ibid., p. xviii). In regards to other digs, of note are some articles in the journal *Pakistan Archaeology* and the *Journal of Central Asia*, some parts of J. E. van Lohuizen-De Leeuw, *The "Scythian" Period: An Approach to the History, Art, Epigraphy and Palaeography of North India from the 1st century B.C. to the 3rd century. A.D* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1949), and a very good summary work Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, op cit. Most recently, there has been an ongoing excavation of parts of Taxila by a Korean team, but they have yet to put forth a full publication.

Mound which was the city inhabited by the Achaemenids,[213] the first wave of Greeks, and was in decline by the end of Mauryan rule. In the late Mauryan period and during Indo-Greek rule, the population moved to Sirkap, the site with which this study is most interested, which soon came under control of both the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians. With the arrival of the Kuṣāṇas, the city moved to Sirsukh which, unfortunately, has yet to be adequately excavated.[214]

The Early City at Bhiṛ Mound

After an early Achaemenid and Greek occupation of Bhiṛ mound, the Mauryans took control of the city in 321 BCE when it was conquered by Chandragupta Maurya. Chandragupta Maurya's son Bindusāra and grandson Aśoka both took special interest in the city. In fact, before Aśoka became emperor of the Mauryan Empire, he was appointed viceroy of Taxila by his father. As is well known, with Emperor Bindusāra's death, Aśoka ascended to the Mauryan throne in 274 BCE and proceeded to bring much of the subcontinent under his control through violent means. After securing his empire, Aśoka felt remorse for the suffering he had inflicted during his conquests and, as his Rock Edicts reveal,

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[213] Recently, J. Mark Kenoyer, "New Perspectives on the Mauryan and Kushana Periods," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 39 observes that "there is very little evidence for Achaemenid cultural influence in the layout of the site or the pottery." He suggests that these early layers have more in common with the indigenous culture Indus valley region itself.

[214] It seems Sirsukh is closed to any excavation activities in the near future as in the last half century more and more dwellings have arisen to cover the site. Any excavation today would have to displace a large population.

he converted to Buddhism.[215] Bhiṛ mound was eventually abandoned for a new site just up the Tamra Nala river, called Sirkap, at the end of the second century to the beginning of the first century BCE.

In almost all histories of this period Aśoka is given credit for introducing Buddhism to Taxila, and it is assumed that during his reign the great Dharmarājikā *stūpa* was built. Whether the eponymous "Dharmarājikā" *stūpa* is a reference to the Buddha or Aśoka is yet another issue debated in scholarly circles, but it is agreed upon that it was originally constructed by Aśoka during his reign. However, this accounting for the construction of the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* is an example of how an over-reliance on the text mutes the archeological record, and how the over-determination of the text, that is the search for confirmation of the textual record in material culture, can override good archaeological analysis.

The association of the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* with Aśoka was first suggested by Sir John Marshall. It is worth quoting Marshall in full here as his reasoning serves as a great example of how an over-determination of the archaeological record by the text is so easily accomplished:

> The precise meaning of the world Dharmarājikā is open to question. The *Divyāvadāna* calls Aśoka the Dharmarāja, and on the strength of this Prof. Vogel took *dharmarājikā* to mean a *stūpa* erected by Aśoka, the Dharmarāja. But the *Divyāvadāna* also informs us that Aśoka was designated Dharmarāja because he had erected dharmarājikās, and Prof. Konow infers therefore that dharmarājikā denotes a *stūpa* erected over a body-relic of the Buddha who was the true Dharmarāja. Since, however, nearly all the *stūpas* containing Buddha's relics were known to have been erected by Aśoka, the term

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[215] The nature of Aśoka's conversion and what it actually meant has been the subject of debate. But again, this essay is not meant to detail Aśoka's Buddhist beliefs. See Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, pp. 137-181.

would naturally come to bear both meanings, viz. a *stūpa* containing one of those relics or a *stūpa* erected by Aśoka. We have good reason accordingly to infer that Taxila was one of the many cities in the Mauryan Empire which received from Aśoka a share of the holy relics, and that the Dharmarājikā was the *stūpa* originally erected by him to house that share.[216]

Once Marshall determined from the textual evidence—in particular the *Divyāvadāna*, but other scholars refer to the legend in the *Aśokavadāna* that Aśoka built 84,000 *stūpas*[217]—that the large *stūpa* in Taxila was built by Aśoka, he found other material evidence to corroborate this interpretation. Marshall argued that the two small chunar sandstone objects that he found near the *stūpa* were fragments from an Aśokan pillar broken during a revolt in Taxila under the viceroy Kunāla, Aśoka's son.[218] For Marshall, the presence of these materials confirmed the textual tradition as found the *Divyāvadāna*.

However, both Elizabeth Errington and Kurt Behrendt argue that the material evidence suggests otherwise. Errington analyzes the numismatic evidence for dating early historic Gandhāran structures. For the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* in Taxila she finds four second century BCE Indo-Greek coins and twenty-six coins from the first century BCE.[219] Behrendt uses masonry types to develop a four-phase chronological system for dating monuments in Gandhāra. The *kañjūr* ashlar masonry of the early Dharmarājikā *stūpa* dates it well into the second century

[216] Marshall, *Taxila*, pp. 234-235.
[217] Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, p. 203.
[218] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 235
[219] Elizabeth Errington, "Numismatic Evidence for the Dating the Buddhist Remains of Gandhara," in *Silk Road Art and Archaeology, Papers in Honor of Francine Tissot*, ed. Elizabeth Errington and Osmund Bopearachchi (London: Strathmore Publishing Ltd., 1999-2000), p. 192.

BCE.[220]   Thus, both Errington and Behrendt, using numismatic and architectural evidence independently, date the structure to the middle to late second century BCE—or perhaps even later to the early first century CE—at least a full century after Aśoka's rule. As for the *Divyāvadāna*'s evidence, while there are some earlier *avadāna*s that date to the two centuries before the Common Era,[221] it is dated to circa fourth century CE, a good five hundred years after the reign of Aśoka.[222] The *Aśokavadāna*, the text that claims Aśoka built 84,000 *stūpas*, is an even later text written circa fifth to sixteenth century CE. These texts, then, are better understood as records of what later Buddhists *wanted* Aśoka to have done, not a record of what Aśoka actually did.[223] They are also a good example of chronological telescoping, where, for memory's sake, a number of significant achievements of smaller kings are attributed to the one great king of that era.

So much for the great Buddhist presence at Taxila during the Mauryan period in the form of the Dharmarājikā *stūpa*. But even evidence for Buddhist activity on a smaller scale, that is within the urban environment of Bhiṛ Mound itself, is hard to demonstrate. No *stūpas* have been found, no images of the Buddha have been uncovered, and there are no inscriptions which would lead one to believe

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[220] Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, pp. 41-42 and Appendix A pp. 258-259. Appendix A has all the details of his four-phase chronological system.
[221] The earliest *avadāna*s, the *Apadāna* and the *Sthavīrāvadāna*, are dated to the second century BCE. See Joel Tatelman, "Avadana," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), pp. 36-37.
[222] The *Divyāvadāna* (Heavenly Exploits) contains thirty-eight biographical narratives of paradigmatic figures in early Buddhist history. As some of the stories are based on the earlier Vinaya literature, it may contain material as early as the first century CE, but its final compositional form is dated to the fourth century CE.

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it was a Buddhist center. Thus, the culture at Bhiṛ Mound is better understood as a local formulation, one that might have engaged with early Buddhist ideas but was not "Buddhist" in the way modern scholarship and modern practitioners understand Buddhism. But apart from references to the Dharmarājikā *stūpa*, most scholars have not seen Bhiṛ Mound as a Buddhist urban environment. This is not true, however, for its later sister city, Sirkap.

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[223] This does not mean they are completely useless in thinking about Buddhist life in the centuries surrounding the Common Era. They might retain some hints of earlier practice, but they are certainly not reliable sources for the actions of Aśoka.

Of Chronologies and Site Maps

This brings us to the most interesting site for the analysis of early historic religious practice and belief in Taxila, and perhaps in all of the Indian subcontinent, the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian city of Sirkap. The analysis of any historic city is determined by the quality of the excavation, and fortunately Sir John Marshall was a careful archaeologist who left a detailed excavation report. He was not perfect, however, in either his technical or interpretive techniques, and Marshall's dating of the basic stratigraphy has come under intense scrutiny.[224] Marshall himself continually refined his chronological schemata throughout his reports, and his final conclusions appear in the 1951 publication of *Taxila* where he identified seven strata.[225] These were later dated with greater accuracy, but little change in the general outline, by Saifur Rahman Dar,

Stratum	Rulers	Date
VII	Pre-Greek	before 190 BCE
VI, V	Greek	190-90 BCE
IV and	early Scythian	90 BCE to 60 CE
III, II	later Scythian-Parthian	
I	Kuṣāṇa conquest and post Kuṣāṇa rulers	60-80 CE and afterward[226]

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[224] As Robin Coningham states, "Marshall's control of the vertical record was not particularly strong, however, it would be true to say that his horizontal recording was amongst the best of his day." See Coningham and Edwards, "Space and Society at Sirkap, Taxila," p. 54.

[225] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 118. The vast majority of the artifacts were recovered from strata III and II.

[226] Saifur Rahman Dar, "Dating the Monuments of Taxila," in *Urban Form and Meaning in South Asia*, ed. Howard Spodek and Doris Meth Srinivasan (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), p. 108.

George Erdosy, focusing on the Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian, and Kuṣāṇa layers, further refined this chronology by separating out strata III and II, and he pushed the overall dates forward by at least fifty years. Erdosy's refinement is the following,

Stratum	Rulers	Dates
III	Late Scythian	early first c. CE
II	Parthian	mid-late first c. CE
		early second c. CE
I	Kuṣāṇa	mid-second c. CE[227]

All of these chronological systems can be generally linked to the first two phases of Kurt Behrendt's four-phase chronological system based on a correlation of architectural features, masonry types, and numismatic evidence.[228] Outlined below is Behrendt's architecturally based phase system correlated to the archaeologically based strata system.

Behrendt Phase	Rulers	Dates	Marshall et. al. Strata
I	Mauryans, Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian and other kings	circa 200 BCE to middle to late 1st c. CE	IV, III, and II
	upper boundary is marked by coins of Kuṣāṇa king Kujula Kadphises circa 78 CE		
II	Great Kuṣāṇa Kings: Vima Takto, Vima Kadphises, Kaniṣka I and Huviṣka	circa middle to late 1st c CE to circa 200 CE	I
III	begins with reign of Vāsudeva I and includes later Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa-Sassanian rulers	circa 200 CE to 5th c. CE	I

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[227] George Erdosy, "Taxila: Political History and Urban Structure," in *South Asian Archaeology 1987*, ed. Maurizio Taddei (Rome: Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990), p. 670.
[228] Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, Appendix A, pp. 255-267. Behrendt uses Taxila, even more specifically Sirkap, as the baseline for all of his dating of Gandharan material culture. For Behrendt, understanding Sirkap is essential for understanding the rest of the region. Sirkap holds this place as it is the largest urban excavation in the region by far.

In all these systems, general agreement centers around the conclusion that strata III and II, that is Phase I of Behrendt's system, belong to the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian layers dated to the first century before the Common Era to the mid-late first century of the Common Era.

Not all of the strata present enough evidence to make justifiable inferences about the local culture and society. There are two reasons for this: one, Sirkap existed as a small settlement before and during the Mauryan Empire, and the subsequent development of the city in later periods destroyed, or better re-used, much of what was there. In addition, Marshall chose not to excavate below the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian levels in much of the city, thus leaving much of earlier city, that is strata VII, VI, and V, buried under the later city. Marshall explains this decision,

> . . . seven-eighths of the digging in this area [Sirkap] has been devoted to the Śaka-Parthian[229] structures of the second stratum; one-eighth only to the earlier Śaka and Greek remains below . . . I am particularly glad that I decided from the start to resist the temptation to remove any part of these Parthian and Śaka remains until a substantial area of the city had been cleared and ample opportunities afforded to other archaeologists to study it . . . Another and no less cogent reason which influenced me in the course I followed was that it was evident from the outset that the later remains comprised a number of sacred structures, some Jaina, some

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[229] Śaka and Indo-Scythian are interchangeable in most contexts. Similarly, Pahlava and Indo-Parthian are, for the most part, interchangeable as well. There are debates concerning the various waves of Śakas that entered the Indian sub-continent, but these need not delay us here. For more details, see A. K. Narain, *The Earliest Sakas of South Asia* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1998).

Buddhist in origin, the destruction of which would have aroused great resentment among the members of those faiths.[230]

In later studies of Taxila, most authors quickly skip over the earlier layers. For example, Ahmed Dani summarized his brief section on these early Greek strata with a very general statement, "[a]fter accepting the technologies and some material elements that imperceptibly came with them, Taxilans continued their own life pattern and followed their own social pattern and religious traditions."[231] What these social patterns and traditions were he did not venture to guess as the evidence is too scant to draw any solid conclusions. With stratum IV, the earliest Indo-Scythian layers, the material evidence begins to grow. But it is the evidence from strata III and II which is by far the most complete, and in Marshall's 1951 *Taxila* the primary site map of Sirkap is of the city layout of these two strata.

The first entry point into the study of a published excavation report is the site map, but often the site map can conceal more than it reveals. Rodney Stark's insights into the nature of classical ruins holds equally true for early Indian ruins,

> [w]hen we examine the magnificent ruins of classical cities we have a tendency to see them as extraordinarily durable and permanent—after all, they were built of stone and have endured for centuries. But this is an illusion. We are usually looking at simply the last ruins of a city that was turned to ruin repeatedly.[232]

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[230] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 120. The only part of Sirkap which was excavated beyond the Scythian-Parthian levels was a narrow band near the northern gateway in Blocks I', A', B', and C'. But in this explanation, again, Marshall makes clear his assumptions going into the excavation: he expects to find Jaina and Buddhist structures. This choice not to excavate the site to its lowest levels is good archaeological practice. Archaeologists generally recognize the importance of leaving unexcavated portions of a site for later study when new assumptions and new technologies might be available.

[231] Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, p. 65.

[232] Rodney Stark, "Antioch as the Social Situation of Matthew's Gospel," in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches to an Open Question*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), pp. 189-210.

For Sirkap, Marshall's primary site map reveals some of the last structures from a time when the city was moving to Sirsukh with the coming of the Kuṣāṇas in the late first century of the Common Era. This is very fortunate for those interested in the centuries on either side of the Common Era because there is a fairly intact city that was not *completely* put to ruin and rebuilt by new inhabitants. Rather, the city was almost completely abandoned by the end of the first century of the Common Era, and only a few structures from earlier strata were modified in the second century CE.

However, when the city of Sirkap is placed in its larger context, that is, when the map of the whole complex of Taxila is analyzed, Stark's warnings must be heeded. In Marshall's general site plan, which included the three cities—Bhiṛ Mound, Sirkap, and Sirsukh—and the extra-urban monasteries and temples, there is no chronological distinction between the structures. In other words, all the structures appear to be contemporaneous. However, as Kurt Behrendt has detailed, before circa 78 CE very few of these structures would have been extant.[233] The city at Bhiṛ Mound was basically abandoned and would have had few inhabitants, and the walled city of Sirkap was the main urban center. Within easy walking distance of the city were the Dharmarājikā *stūpa*, the Jaṇḍiāl B *stūpa* and monastery complex, the Jaṇḍiāl C temple, and the Moḥrā Maliārāñ complex. The latter three structures are all on the north side of the city within a half kilometer of the main northern gate; the Dharmarājikā *stūpa* is a kilometer and a half from the eastern

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[233] Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, pp. 41-50, 61-76, and fig. 6.

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gate. Thus, out of the myriad of ancient monuments found outside the walled city of Sirkap in the general area of Taxila—close to fifty structures of various sizes—only four date to this period and the rest date to after the end of the first century CE (fig. 4).[234] While a detailed study of the structures of the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian period beyond Sirkap's city walls is needed, this thesis will attend primarily to the urban environment of Sirkap itself. These four structures will be used only when they can illuminate some aspect of Sirkap's urban culture.
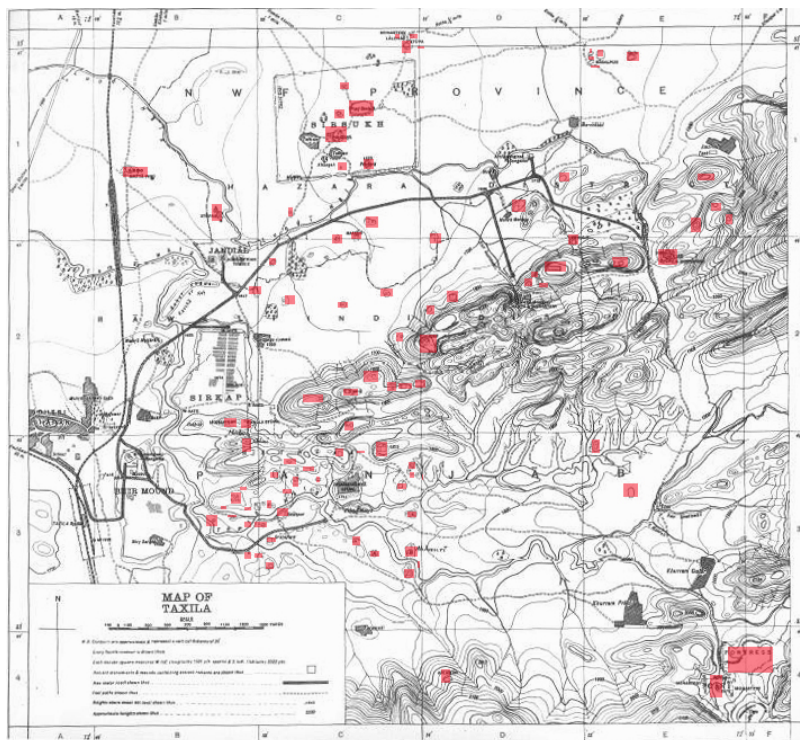
Figure 4: Taxila with Phase II structures shaded

After Plate 1 of Sir John Marshall's *Taxila*

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[234] Some of the more famous monuments that do not fit into this period include Kālawān, Akhaurī A, B and C, Khāder Moḥrā D1 and D2, Kunāla, Jauliāñ, Moḥrā Morādu, Pippala, and Bhamāla, just to name a few. In the area of greater Gandhāra, the only major Buddhist monument that would be attributable to this period is Butkara I.

Public Ritual and Religion: *Stūpas*, Sovereignty, and Commerce

Marshall identified nine religious loci within the lower city of Sirkap: six public shrines—that is enclosed spaces which were easily accessible to the general public from the street—located at 1A, C', 1D, E', 1F, and 1G and three private shrines—that is enclosed spaces that were accessible only from within a private house—located at 3A, 1E, and K (fig. 5). These identifications were made based on the presence of *stūpas* and certain architectural features. Almost all subsequent scholarship has followed this lead. However, Robin Coningham has re-evaluated the distinction between public and private space and suggested that the two of the private shrines actually served a public function. The *stūpa* at 1E stands near the junction of Main Street and Sixth Street and certainly had street access. The *stūpa* shrine at the far eastern end of Block A is small, it is not located in a house but opens out to the street. Therefore, Coningham suggests that of the nine religious loci identified by Marshall, eight of them are public.[235]

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[235] Coningham and Edwards, "Space and Society at Sirkap, Taxila," p. 57.
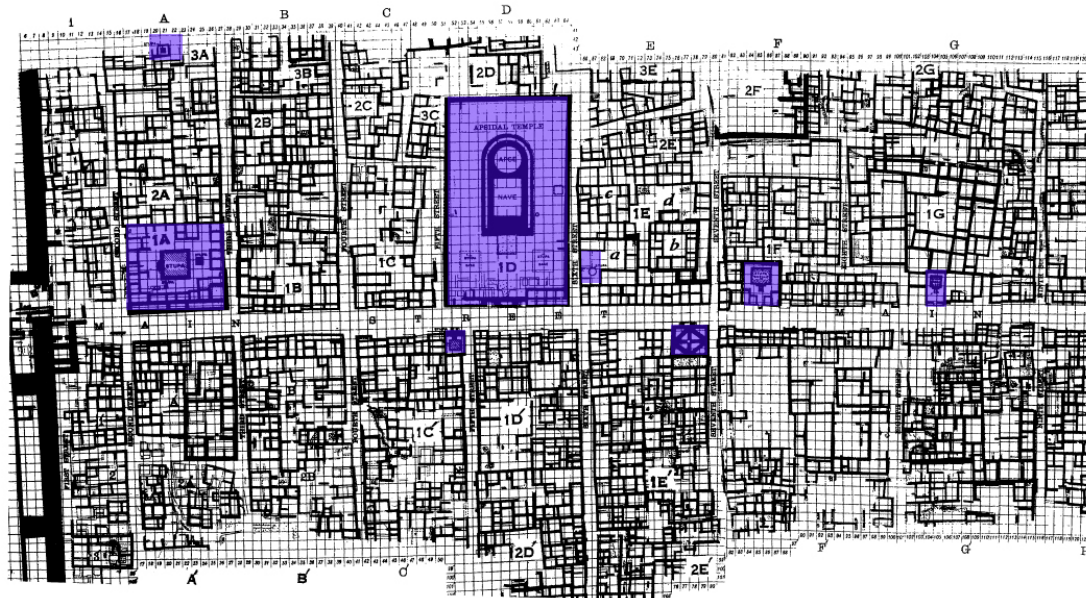
Figure 5: Ritual Space in the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian city of Sirkap

Shaded areas = Sites identified by Marshall as loci of ritual activity
After Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 10

Once Marshall identified religious loci, he was most concerned with matching each of these structures with a particular religion. His choices were quite narrow; they were either Buddhist or Jain. The distinction between the two hinged on the presence of "non-Buddhist" objects, that is, objects that would suggest something other than meditation or worship of the Buddha and his relics. However, these courts indicate much more than individual religious affiliation, but rather suggest a local form of practice that was evolving over time. This local form of practice does not always fit the models of religion as understood in the modern world.

The Apsidal Temple

The most obvious devotional structure in the lower city is the apsidal temple found in Block D (see fig. 6). Its size is striking; the extant rectangular outer enclosure wall is approximately 69.4 meters in length and 45 meters in width, while the temple itself measures 39.9 x 15.5 meters. The whole complex occupies much of Block D and on its north side spills into Block C. Marshall identified this structure as a Buddhist structure. And it certainly was, but there is only sure evidence for this in its phase II (post 78 CE, that is stratum I) use,[236] as the extant walls and sculpture uncovered by Cunningham and Marshall *do not* belong to its phase I (strata IV, III, and II) use. According to Behrendt, the "entire temple and

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[236] This chronological marker, "phase II," refers to Kurt Behrendt's system of dating the monuments of greater Gandhāra. This should not be confused with Marshall's "strata III and II" at Sirkap which would belong to phase I of Behrendt's system. See discussion on pp. 101-103 above.

the outer square enclosure were fabricated out of phase II diaper masonry."[237] Furthermore, the Buddhist sculptures that Cunningham found and recorded clearly belong to, at the earliest, the second century CE.[238] Behrendt identified the temple as a Buddhist direct-access relic shrine—shrines that openly displayed relics so that they could be seen by devotees—but this only applies to its later, second century CE form.[239]

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[237] Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 69.

[238] Marshall, *Taxila*, pp. 152-154. Found in the temple were a number of fragmentary stucco sculptures, mostly Hellenized Buddha heads of which a significant portion seem to be female, but, unfortunately, not much else. Alexander Cunningham, in an earlier dig, found some interesting burnt clay figures as well. One was the fragment of a hand that measured 6.5" across the breadth of the figures, and the other was a head which had a face 10.5" in length. See also Alexander Cunningham, "Shahderi or Taxila," in *Archaeological Survey of India: Report for the Year 1872-1872*, ed. Alexander Cunningham (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of government Printing, 1875), p. 74, and Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 71.

[239] Kurt Behrendt has pioneered the understanding of these direct-access relic shrines, as he argues in Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 61:

> Until now, such shrines have gone unnoticed in the architectural record, but there is considerable evidence in texts, sculptural depictions, and architectural remains to provide us with insight into the function and importance of such structures. These 'direct-access' relic shrines were constructed at many Gandhāran Buddhist sacred areas to provide place where important relics, like the alms bowl of the Buddha, could be seen, touched, and venerated. These shrines also had to be constructed in such a way that they provided security for the relics when they were not on display.

See also Kurt A. Behrendt, "Relic Shrines of Gandhara: A Reinterpretation of the Archaeological Evidence," in *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*, ed. Pia Brancaccio and Kurt A. Behrendt (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), pp. 83-103. It should be noted that not all scholars agree with Behrendt's conclusions.   At the very same conference that Behrendt presented his interpretation of the Apsidal Temple, Pierfrancesco Callieri disagreed and suggested that the original Phase I temple was perhaps a *nāga* shrine. He points to both the apsidal shrine at Bhiṛ
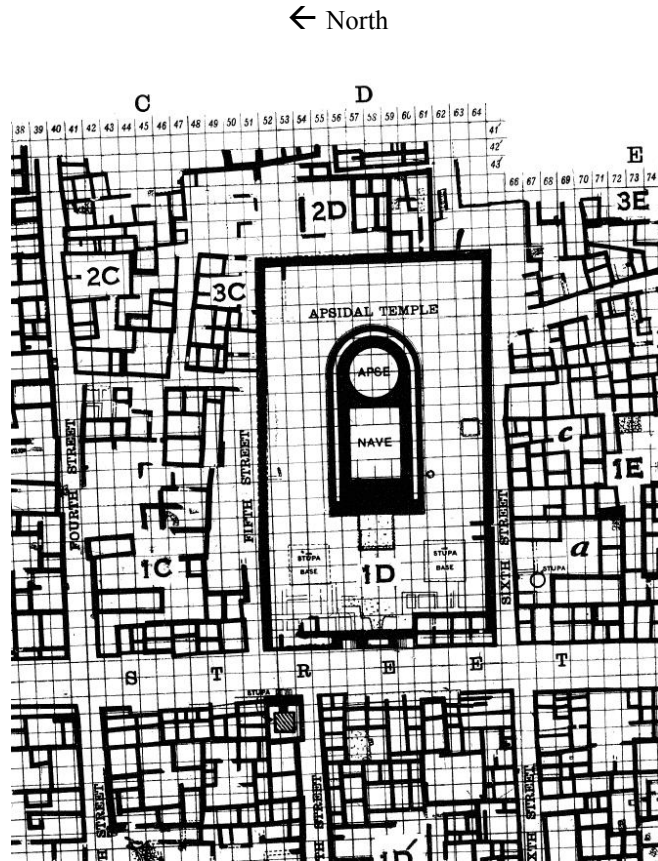
Figure 6: Apsidal Temple in Block D
After Plate 10 of Marshall, *Taxila*

The Phase I Block D urban layout, then, certainly looked quite different from the way it is illustrated in Marshall's *Taxila* (fig. 6). There are a number of features of the outer enclosure wall which suggest it was an interpolation within the grid structure of Sirkap. On the northern side of the temple complex, the existing

Mound and the similarly constructed *nāga* shrine at Mathurā, see Callieri, "Buddhist Presence in the Urban Settlements of Swāt," pp. 74-74 and notes 24-28.

structures in the southern portion of Block C were razed and fifth street was moved ten meters to the north. This is clearly seen in Marshall's city plan where structure 3C abuts the enclosure wall at its northeast corner. Structure 3C was there first and part of it was destroyed to make room for the expansion of the temple complex. Similarly, at the east end of Block D structure 2D suffered the same fate. What is left of structure 2D partially abuts the eastern portion of the outer enclosure wall. Within the enclosure—Marshall called the enclosed area the courtyard—earlier structures were also destroyed and covered. Just inside the entrance to the courtyard on the east end of Block D, Marshall uncovered a number of earlier structures which had nothing to do with the temple.[240] Marshall also found "the remains of a small apartment abutting on to the south wall of the court in a line with the entrance of the temple, and of another [apartment] in its north-east corner."[241] To properly cover all these structures, the court platform upon which the temple was rebuilt was raised about 1.4 meters above the surrounding street level by using rubble fill to level out the platform.

As for the temple itself, it was built out of Phase II materials, but Behrendt also found evidence of a fragmentary foundation from Phase I.[242] So, it seems that there was a temple in Block D during the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian period, but no outer enclosure wall and accompanying courtyard. Even without the enclosure wall and courtyard, the temple would have been one of the larger

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[240] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 151.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 47.

devotional structures at Sirkap and still an important place of worship.[243] Some very circumstantial evidence for the temple's importance comes from an intentionally buried hoard of gold and silver objects found beneath the strata III and II floor of a room in structure 2D. Marshall suggested that the hoard

> was no doubt hidden, like most of the other treasures found among these buildings, at the time that the city was sacked by the Kushāns. The fact that several of the vessels bear the names of different persons suggests that the vessels may have been gifts to the temple and the names those of the donors who presented them, but the presence of the names might be equally well accounted for in other ways.[244]

There is, contrary to Marshall's claim, much doubt as to the reason for such a buried hoard. There is not way to determine where the material came from nor why it was buried.

Furthermore, Marshall's claim that Sirkap was first destroyed by an earthquake in the early decades of the first century CE, and then in its weakened state sacked by the Kuṣāṇas, also has scant evidence to recommend it. It is certain that the population did move to Sirsukh with the coming of the Kuṣāṇas and much of the city of Sirkap was abandoned.[245] Thus, unfortunately, as it was probably an important ritual location, there is little material evidence available from the apsidal temple for the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian period.

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[243] As Behrendt argues, ". . . clearly it [the apsidal temple] was an important place of worship, as indicated by its size and the fact that it was rebuilt and maintained for a time when the city of Sirkap was in decline," Ibid.

[244] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 156.

[245] Marshall argued that the city was largely abandoned after a major earthquake destroyed much of the city circa 30 CE. His argument rests on the clear change in masonry styles, from rubble masonry to diaper masonry (see Ibid., p. 137). Behrendt responds that "this transition in masonry [styles] need not be linked to such a dramatic event" (Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 47).

Stūpas in Block A: Religion and Urban Geography

Thus, the evidence for the reconstruction of Sirkap's phase I religious practices and beliefs cannot not come primarily from the analysis of the apsidal temple in Block D. Marshall's city plan is therefore quite deceptive; the large enclosure wall and courtyard in Block D does not belong to Phase I (strata III and II), but to Phase II (stratum I). The manner in which Marshall has illustrated the urban layout of Sirkap immediately focuses attention on this Block D religious complex as it seems to be the largest devotional complex in Phase I Sirkap. Accordingly, this complex receives the majority of attention in discussions of religion at Sirkap. However, the large *stūpa* court in the eastern part of Block A was most likely larger than the Phase I Block D structure. Without the large enclosure wall and taking into account the buried Phase I structures that Marshall found within the courtyard, the Block D *stūpa* shrine was about 45 meters long x 20 meters wide.[246] The *stūpa* court in Block A was 34 meters long x 30 meters wide. Thus, the total area of the Phase I Block D structure was approximately 900 sq. meters; the total area of the Block A *stūpa* court was approximately 1020 sq. meters. Without the focus on the court in Block D, the geography of public religious space in Sirkap looks quite different.

The *stūpa* court in Block A was perhaps the only proper "court" in Sirkap.[247] The complex contained a central *stūpa* which sat on a square plinth,

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[246] The actual temple base was approximately 39.3 meters x 15.5 meters, but one can add a five meter buffer around the edges.
[247] The distinction between a full-fledged *stūpa* court and merely a *stūpa* shrine is ambiguous. But in this case, one can say that the complex in Block A is significantly larger than all the others, and it

three smaller, votive *stūpas*, and a few small rooms.[248] In addition to its size, a

closer analysis of its location—and particularly its orientation within the city

streets and city walls—offers hints to its function within the city (fig. 7). The

entrance to the *stūpa* court was not on Main Street as expected, but it opened out to

Second Street instead. The intentionality of this orientation is further confirmed by

the fact that the *stūpa* itself faced towards Second Street. Marshall suggested that

this peculiar orientation, that is facing and opening onto a smaller, secondary street

rather than the main thoroughfare like the rest of the public *stūpas*, can be

explained by "the danger to which the front of this building [that is, the front that

abuts Main Street] was exposed from the flood-water pouring down the Main Street

during the rainy season."[249] Dilip K. Charkrabarti points to the odd construction of

the nearby northern gate to both strengthen and further Marshall's argument. The

northern gate does not lead directly to Main Street, but rather, a direct pathway

leads to an unorganized set of houses in Block 1. Chakrabarti suggests this "off-

center" gate was for both sanitation, so dirty water would not flow directly out the

front gate making for an unpleasant welcome during the rainy season, and

defensive purposes, the off-center entrance would add extra protection to Main

Street.[250] There may be a third reason the *stūpa* court and northern gate were built

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is the only one to have a number of permanent votive *stūpas* surrounding it. Further, except for
four rooms in the Block F *stūpa* shrine, it is the only *stūpa* surrounded by what seems to be monks'
cells.

[248] Marshall suggested they were used by monks (Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 142), but Behrendt is more
skeptical as there were no finds reported from the cells (Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of
Gandhāra*, p. 43 n. 17).

[249] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 143

[250] Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *The Archaeology of Ancient Indian Cities* (Delhi: Oxford University Press,
1995), p. 179.

as such. According to Marshall's excavation report, the houses in Block 1 were not built until the late Indo-Parthian period and thus belong to late stratum II only. [251] Without these poorly built houses, the entry to the city would lead the visitor directly to the Block A *stūpa* complex—there is a direct line from the entrance to the city (square 2-68') to some rubble (square 15-68') that indicates some kind of walkway leading to the entrance of the *stūpa* court from Second Street (square 15-65').
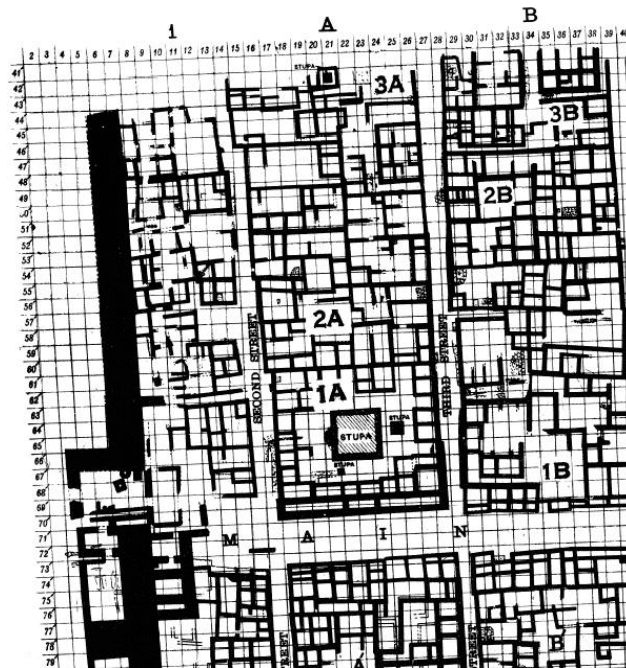

Figure 7: Block A *Stūpa* Court and Main Gate

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[251] Marshall indicates that they were "poor dwellings" that were haphazardly built, many of them not until the Kuṣāṇa period (post-60 CE), see Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 142. Here is a clear case where the site map obscures the realities of urban construction. A site map must be analyzed alongside the detailed commentary of the excavator.

Thus, this *stūpa* court held a privileged place in the city as the initial structure encountered by all visitors. The focus of the ritual geography of Sirkap was not on the Block D *stūpa*, but rather on the Block A *stūpa* court. New arrivals would most likely make initial offerings here, and the structure would showcase the power of the rulers.[252] This is not to discount either Marshall or Chakrabarti's arguments; structures can have multiple purposes, and it is quite possible that the "odd" orientation of both the northern gate and the Block A *stūpa* court served to facilitate waste management, bolster a defensive posture, and afforded an initial contact point for visitors to the city.

Marshall opened the *stūpa* and found the typical contents: a relic bone, pieces of a small crystal casket, some pearls, beads, one coin of Apollodotus II, and three coins of Azes II. The coins of Azes II suggest that the *stūpa* be dated to the last decades before the Common Era.[253] Within the court itself, scattered throughout, Marshall found four bowl-shaped bells (figs. 10-12), a stone saucer,[254] two ritual tanks (fig. 8 and 9), and a bell shaped flask (fig. 13).[255] Due to the presence of these objects, Marshall cautiously claimed the *stūpa* as a Jain shrine. It seems that Marshall cannot imagine that a Buddhist shrine might allow some non-Buddhist elements. In this case, he was most concerned with the ritual tanks for

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[252] Support for the conclusion that this *stūpa* shrine was a locus of royal patronage comes from its similarity to two other *stūpas* in urban Sirkap, those in Block F and Block G—two *stūpas* which, as will be shown later in this chapter, received direct royal patronage and served as tools to express the power of the rulers.

[253] Of course, a *stūpa* deposit is not as reliable as a floor level for such a *terminus post quem*. A *stūpa* can be opened and a relic deposit replaced, but while possible, it is unlikely.

[254] For image see *Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India* (ASR), (1915-16) p. 15 n. 6.

[255] Marshall, *Taxila*, pp. 144-145.

which "it is not unreasonable to surmise that they [the ritual tanks] were particularly connected with Jaina ritual."[256]   This identification has influenced scholars for the past seventy-five years, as Hem Chandra Sarkar,[257] Debala Mitra,[258] and even Gregory Schopen[259] all take Marshall's Jain determination at face value.
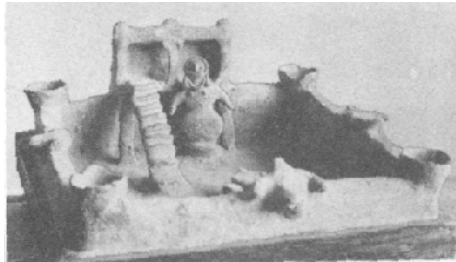
Figure 8: Ritual tank from Block A *stūpa* court.

J. H. Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 136 n. 158

Figure 9: Ritual tank from Block A *stūpa* court.

J. H. Marshall, *Taxila*, 136 n. plate 159

Marshall's identification of the *stūpa* as Jain stems from his textualist understanding of Buddhism which is of the very nature that scholars like Gregory Schopen are trying to revise. Marshall believes in the existence of an original, pure, philosophical monastic Buddhism which was only corrupted over time,

> Why should . . . these ritual tanks which appertained to an essentially Hindu cult, have been dedicated at Jaina—if there is any doubt about them being Jaina—at Buddhist *stūpas*? The answer is to be found in the contamination which has taken place in every known religion to us, and which in the first century was affecting Jainism as much as it was affecting Buddhism.   However

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[256] Ibid., p. 463.
[257] Hem Chandra Sarkar, *Studies in Early Buddhist Architecture of India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966), p. 53, 55.
[258] Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*, p. 124.
[259] Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, p. 50 ff. 58.

philosophic and abstract in their essence these two religious systems may originally have been, it was inevitable that they should take much of their subsequent colour from the primitive and long-established faiths of the people, and that, as they cast their nets wider and wider among the many nations of India and its various classes of society, they should absorb into themselves many beliefs and concrete cultural practices undreamt of by their founders.[260]

There is no more succinct statement of Schopen's "Protestant Presuppositions" than this. It is even more ironic as it comes from an archaeologist himself, the very person who, one would think, would elevate non-textual evidence over the textual.

The archaeological evidence quite strongly suggests that the *stūpa* in Block A is primarily a Buddhist structure. First, it is architecturally similar to many other Buddhist *stūpas* found in and around Taxila, including the *stūpas* in Block F and G in Sirkap itself and twelve *stūpas* built simultaneously around the Dharmarājikā.[261] All these *stūpas* have a square base and a rubble core *kañjur* ashlar construction typical of Phase I architecture. Second, the presence of a bone relic encased in a crystal casket is clearly an indication of the relic cult which was so prominent in early Buddhism.[262] But even the other items, catalogued as minor antiquities by Marshall, suggest a Buddhist determination, as he indicates in his catalog of items found at Taxila, ". . . there are a considerable number [of bells] from the earlier and later strata in Sirkap, mainly of the first century AD, and from the Buddhist monasteries of the fifth century AD"[263] He also indicates the bells' Buddhist affiliation in a discussion of items found at the *stūpa* site, "[s]uch bells have been

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[260] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 598.
[261] Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 42.
[262] For the most comprehensive treatment of the literary sources and relic worship, see Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* .

found in many Buddhist monuments and were, no doubt, used in connexion [sic] with the ceremonial observances, as they still are."[264]   So, comparing the bells found at the Block A *stūpa* court (fig. 10 is one example) with those found at Jauliāñ (fig. 11) or with other bells found at Sirkap (fig. 12) which have been identified as Buddhist, are found to be of the same kind.
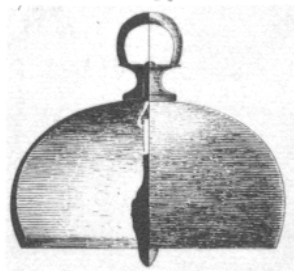

Figure 10: Bell from Block A *stūpa* court

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 175 n. 350
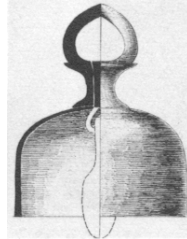
Figure 11: Bell from Buddhist Monastery

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 176 n. 351

Figure 12: Bell from Sirkap

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 176 n. 349

Figure 13: Bell shaped flask from Block A *stūpa* court

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 121 n. 24

[263] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 598.
[264] Ibid., p. 144.

Furthermore, the bell shaped flask (fig. 13) is a common vessel for the oil used in shrine rituals. However, it is the presence of the ritual tanks (figs. 8 and 9) that pushed Marshall to ignore the Block A *stūpa*'s resemblances to other Buddhist *stūpas*, the relic bone, the crystal casket, the ritual bells, and the oil flask.

Thus, for Marshall, the only criterion for dividing the *stūpas* between Buddhist and Jain was the presence or non-presence of ritual tanks in the court. Marshall described them as

> . . . square, with a small shrine on one side and steps descending into the tank, and by the side of the steps a primitive idol of a goddess. On the corners of the tanks are lamps; and on three sides, between the lamps, is perched a bird. Inside the tank on the floor are eels, water snakes and other aquatic creatures, as well as a small protuberance near the foot of the steps on which, in one of the tanks, a bird is perched.[265]

Even though ritual tanks may be absent from *stūpa* courts at the Dharmarājikā, ritual tanks with a goddess in them were not specific to the Jains at all. There is no reference to any Jain temple or *stūpa* at Taxila in the Chinese accounts. There is no reason to attribute any of these *stūpas* to the Jains.[266] U. P. Shah points to "the total absence of any other Jaina relic in the whole of this extensively-excavated site."[267] Thus, it is clear that the *stūpa* court in Block A was most likely a Buddhist site, and the minor antiquities surrounding it are evidence of the lay communities'

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[265] Ibid., p. 145.
[266] Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, p. 93.
[267] U. P. Shah, "Monuments and Sculpture 300 B.C. To A.D. 300," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974), p. 91. The editor of this volume, A. Ghosh, also critiques Marshall's faulty identification in his introduction, "While the Jainas must have been present in the Gandhāra region (Hsuan Tsang saw them there in the seventh century), there is no justification for Marshall's doubtful supposition that some *stūpas* in Sirkap, the second city of Taxila, were Jaina in affiliation." See A. Gosh, "Editorial Observations," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974), p. 8.

ritual worship, worship which may or may not fit a textual understanding of Buddhist worship. In particular, the votive tanks point to the remarkably stable Indian tradition of goddess worship.

This long tradition of goddess worship should not be mistaken with the elite, sanskritic, and ultimately modern worship of a trans-local, pan-Indian Goddess, *Devī*. Rather, these ritual tanks are better understood as material evidence of the goddess traditions which are, according to J.N. Tiwari, a "loose confederation of cults that embraces within its fold elements of the most diverse nature and origin."[268] In other words, these goddesses were eminently local, and it is likely that their names did not find there way into Indian literature or sophisticated arts,

> it is only the more popular goddesses, whose concepts have undergone a certain sophistication and whose cults, for one reason or the other, have outgrown their original narrow functions, that are likely to be noted pointedly in literature as having votaries, and whose more or less standardized iconographic forms are likely to be recognized in art."[269]

David Gordon White extended Tiwari's arguments, and concluded that, "textual and iconographic data are further supported by ethnographic material from modern-day India, in ways that indicate that these semi-divine (or, if one prefers, semi-

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[268] J.N. Tiwari, *Goddess Cults in Ancient India (With Special Reference to the First Seven Centuries A.D.)* (Delhi: Sundeep, 1985), p. xi.
[269] Ibid., p. 1. Tiwari draws a parallel to ancient Roman goddess cults by citing R.G. Collingwood, *Roman Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 129, in regards to goddess cults, "[f]ew religions were more widespread in the western Roman Empire; bu there is no mention of it by any writer."

demonic) female deities have been a permanent fixture of Indian religions for well over three thousand years."[270]

The votive tanks in the Block A *stūpa* shrine were constructed to hold water, and the female figure positioned near the stairs of the tank can be identified as one of the many local goddesses, most commonly called *apsarasas*, that lived in or near the rivers of India. *Apsarasas* are found in early Brahmanic, Buddhist, and Jain literature, and they function in similar ways. These watery nymphs are manifestations of India's life giving rivers, and as such they are linked to health and well-being. But just as they are "life-giving" when propitiated and kept happy, they can become malevolent when crossed or ignored. White cites a list of thirty-six *apsarasas* found in *Mahābhārata* I.114.49-54,[271] and their names point to their ambivalent nature (as in the *apsarasas Sācī*, "crooked") or their power (as in the *apsarasas Anūnā*, "having full power" or *Adrikā*, "solid as a rock"). Thus, it is likely that these votive tanks functioned as portable portals through which residents of Sirkap could ritually interact with these goddesses.[272]

Further back in Block A stands another small *stūpa* shrine in house 3A. Marshall argues that " . . . there can be little question, I think, that this was a small private *stūpa* shrine set up in the women's quarters and intended for their use."[273] He makes this determination by comparing it to another such small *stūpa* shrine

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[270] David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 29.

[271] Ibid., p. 35.

[272] For a extensive discussion of nature of these goddesses, see Tiwari, *Goddess Cults in Ancient India*, pp. 1-60 and White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, pp. 27-66.

[273] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 146.

found in the women's quarter of the palace in Block K. However, Coningham classified the House 3A shrine as public because it opens out onto a back street. Unfortunately, this *stūpa* shrine does not reveal much more than the location of the shrine, and any suggestion that is was primarily used for the sole use of women is unfounded.

Stūpas in Block C', E', and E: Religion and Commerce

The *stūpas* in Block A and Block D were not the only public *stūpas* in the city of Sirkap. There are four other *stūpas* that open out on to Main Street: the Block C', Block E', Block F, and Block G *stūpas*. There is also a small *stūpa* in Block E that opens out onto Sixth Street. From the northern gate to Block G, of the structures that front Main Street, two types dominate: *stūpa* shrines and shops.[274] The shops are "small, single-story structures of one or two rooms, raised on a high plinth above the roadway and often with a shallow veranda or open platform in front."[275] The face of public life in Sirkap centered on commerce and ritual.

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[274] The only exception seems to be the rooms opening onto Main Street at the northern end of Block E'. While they still may be shops, Coningham does not identify them as such. See Coningham and Edwards, "Space and Society at Sirkap, Taxila," p. 72 fig. 7. It should be noted that Ahmed Dani challenged Marshall's assessment of these structures as shops and suggested that they could be verandahs in the front of houses. Further, he argues "no marketable antique or craftmen's quarters have been specified [by Marshall]", see Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, p. 92. While Dani's doubts are not without reason, Coningham's careful study of artifact distribution in Sirkap, and his comparison of these structures to similar ones found in Bhiṛ Mound, push the explanation in favor of shops. L. d. La Vallée Poussin, *L'Inde aux Temps des Mauryas et des Barbares, Grecs, Scythes, Parthes et Yue-tchi* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1930) cites the *Rāmāyana* as evidence for such an urban arrangement where there was "intensive commerce [and] shops were symmetrically arranged in rows on both sides of the main thoroughfares" (p. 25).

[275] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 140.

The *stūpa* shrines in Block C', E, and E' (fig. 14) all indicate that their caretakers were not monks, but non-monastic city dwellers that profited from their maintenance. All three *stūpa* shrines had no attached rooms that could have been used by monks, and all three were attached in some way to wealthy households. The *stūpa* shrine on the southeast corner of Block C' dates from the first century CE, and thus was not part of the original city plan.[276] Next to it, also facing the street, are a number of shops, and behind it is the remains of a large, "typically well-to-do house of the Śaka Parthian period" (house 1C') which was perhaps connected to the *stūpa* shrine.[277] In Block E there is a small *stūpa* shrine in courtyard *a* of house 1E, but it also opens onto Sixth Street, and thus it had clear public access. House 1E, similar to the house in C', was quite large, and in courtyard *b* Marshall uncovered a hoard of jewelry and coins.[278] On the corner of Main Street and Seventh Street stands another *stūpa* shrine in Block E' which measured 12.2 meters by 15.2 meters. Marshall wrote,

> The most noteworthy feature of Block E' is the high plinth of the *stūpa*-shrine at its south-eastern corner fronting on to the Main Street, access to which is provided by two double flights of steps on one side from the Main Street, on another from Seventh Street . . . The house to which this *stūpa* was attached occupied the whole width of the block between Sixth and Seventh Streets, and probably extended as far west as square 95', i.e. for a distance of 210 ft. from Main Street.

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[276] The foundations of the stūpa were about .8 meters deep, and another 1.2 meters below these foundations, i.e. at a depth of 2 meters from the surface, Marshall found a wall running east-west. This wall belong to the early Indo-Scythian period, stratum IV-III.

[277] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 191.

[278] The hoard was intentionally buried in a large pot. For the complete contents of this pot, see Ibid., pp. 159-161.

Thus, this *stūpa* shrine was attached to one of the largest houses in Sirkap. There are two possible interpretations for the evidence from the *stūpa* shrines in Block C', Block E, and Block E':[279] one, it was quite lucrative to be the caretaker of a public *stūpa* shrine. Or, two, that the wealthy in Sirkap used their wealth to build public shrines. Either interpretation suggests a close connection between wealth and public ritual.
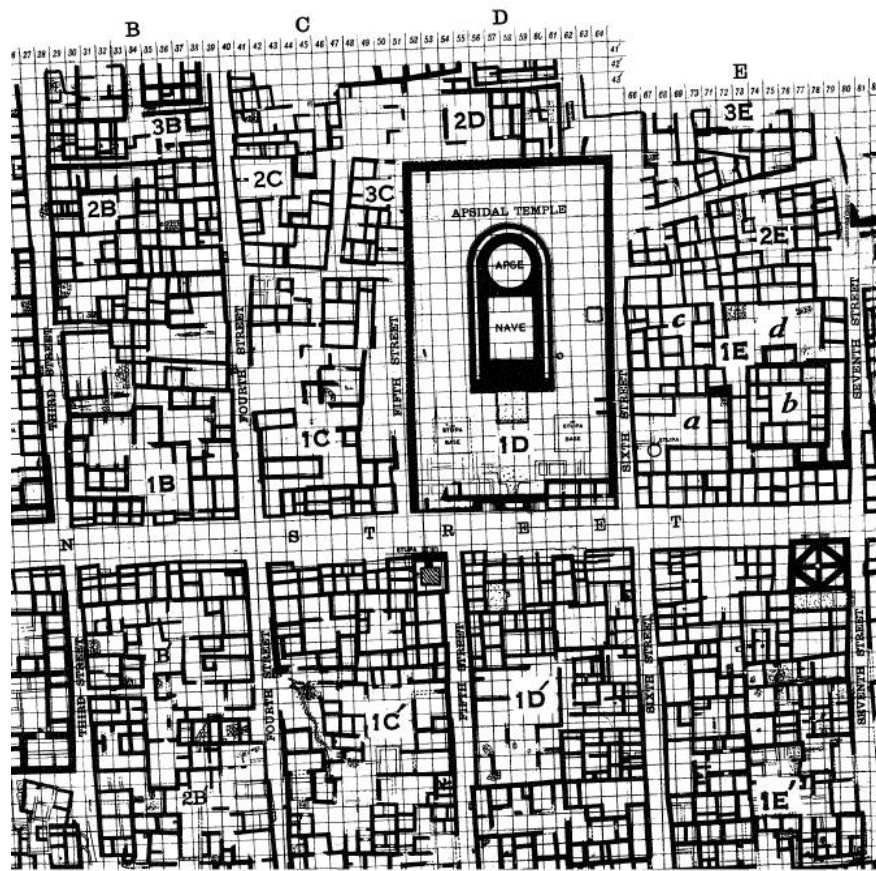
Figure 14: Detail of Blocks B, C, D, E
After Marshall, *Taxila*, 1951, Plate 10

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[279] If the large hoard found buried by the Block D shrine could be properly dated to the Phase I, then this shrine could be included as well.

Figure 15: Plinth of Block E' *stūpa*
Image: Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 37c

Stūpas in Block F and G: Religion and State

The last two public *stūpa* shrines which opened out to Main Street were in Block F and G (fig. 16). They were also the two public *stūpa* shrines closest to the Block K palace and their location, architectural features, and iconography suggest a royal connection. The Block F *stūpa* shrine measured approximately 12.2 meters square and the *stūpa* base measured 6.7 meters x 8.2 meters. The dome (*aṇḍa*) of the *stūpa* is not extant (fig. 17). Against the western wall of the shrine there were four chambers which Marshall argued, ". . . were no doubt occupied by the keepers of the shrine."[280] Marshall offered no evidence for this assertion, and there were no artifacts found in any of these chambers. The Block F *stūpa* is best known, however, for the surface decorations on the front of its square base,

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[280] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 163.

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The front of this *stūpa* is embellished with three niches, now empty, to either side of the stairway. These niches, modeled as miniature building façades, take the form of a north Indian *toraṇa*, a *caitya* hall, and a Greek pedimental temple. Two of the three niche designs that adorn the base of the stūpa follow Indian formats (the *caitya* façade and the *toraṇa*), motifs that otherwise appear within the relief sculpture but not in the architectural remains. It has been suggested that these empty niches can be viewed as passageways connecting the worshipper to the presence of the enclosed relic.[281]

Over the *caitya* façade and the miniature *toraṇa* were perched four eagles in relief, one of which was double-headed (fig. 18). There were no symbols above the Greek pedimental temples. The frontality of this *stūpa* is striking; in contrast with the highly decorated front facing the Main Street entrance, the back and sides of the *stūpa* base were decorated austerely and not meant to be viewed. Thus, it clearly was not meant to be circumambulated, but encountered straight on. The connection between the double-headed eagle motif and heraldic symbology is mentioned in passing by both Marshall and Dani.[282] Both attributed its introduction into India to the Indo-Scythians, but neither one expanded upon how this came to be nor did they explain its significance in Sirkap's urban setting.[283]

The genealogy of the double-headed eagle as a heraldic symbol begins not with the Scythians homeland north of the Black Sea as Marshall suggested,[284] but

[281] Behrendt, *The Buddhist Architecture of Gandhāra*, p. 46. The suggestion as to the function of the empty niches was made by Pia Brancaccio, "Gateways to the Buddha: Figures under Arches in Early Gandhāran Art," in *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*, ed. Pia Brancaccio and Kurt A. Behrendt (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), pp. 210-224.

[282] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 164; Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, p. 104.

[283] For a survey of bird symbology in ancient India, see Asis Sen, *Animal Motifs in Ancient Indian Art* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1972), pp. 91-98.

[284] Marshall may have had in mind a single example of a double-headed eagle image on bronze plaque found in a kurgan of Popovka near Kiev, see Ellis Hovell Minns, *Scythians and Greeks: A Survey of Ancient History and Archaeology on the North Coast of the Euxine from the Danube to the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 178.

rather further to the south with the Hittites in central Anatolia circa mid-second millennium BCE. Old Hittite and New Hittite seals from Alçahöyük, Kültepe, and Boğazköy depict both eagles and double-headed eagles.[285] By the beginning of the first millennium, the double-headed eagle motif moved further south to Hama, an Aramaean city located on the Orontes River, now in modern Syria. Here, carved on a stele of basalt, a king is depicted "seated in front of a four-legged table, he is served by a courtier or his son, the little scene [is] borne and sustained by his royal emblem, the double-headed eagle."[286] The motif also appeared in Persia during the Arsacid Parthian Empire (c. 248 BCE – 224 CE)[287] on a tessera from Palmyra which depicts a double-headed eagle with a hare in each claw.[288] The double-headed eagle on the *stūpa* in Block F continued in this thoroughly near eastern use of heraldic symbology, and its use on the *stūpa* façade connected the power of the Arsacid Parthian king to the ritual landscape of the city.

The last public *stūpa* shrine that opened out to Main Street was in Block G. It was smaller and simpler than the Block F *stūpa*: the shrine measured 6.1 x 10.7 meters and the *stūpa* base measured 4.2 feet x 6.1 meters. There were no chambers

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[285] On Hittite seals, one can find the representation of an eagle with two unidentified animals, an eagle with two hares, a hare with two eagles, a single-headed eagle, and a double headed eagle with two lions. For a general discussion of these seals and bibliographic references to their published images see Nimet Özgüç, "Two Hittite Seals," *Artibus Asiae* 10, no. 3 (1947): p. 236.

[286] Harald Ingholt, "The Danish Excavations at Hama on the Orontes," *American Journal of Archaeology* 46, no. 4 (1942): p. 472 and fig. 10. This particular stele was found in Hama F which dates to 1200 – 900 BCE.

[287] For maps of the extent and principal provinces of the ancient Persian Empire, see John Curtis and Nigel Tallis, eds., *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), p. 11.

[288] Eugene Goblet d'Alviella, *The Migration of Symbols* (New York: University Books, 1956 [1894]), pp. 22-23 and fig. 6. D'Alviella cited the original note on this particular tessera from M. de Gobineau, *Revue Archéologique* of 1874, vol. xxvii, pl. v, no. 371. See also Robert Du Mesnil du Buisson, *Le Tessères et les Monnaies de Palmyre* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1962), fig. 215.

inside the shrine itself, and the function of the chambers located immediately to the left and right of the shrine is unknown. Marshall speculated that they were the quarters for the "priest in charge,"[289] but similar to his assertions regarding the function of the chambers in the Block F *stūpa* shrine, there is no hard evidence to substantiate this interpretation. Most importantly, however, like the Block F *stūpa*, there are indications that this too was patronized by the king.

While the base of the *stūpa* was decorated simply, Marshall found the remains of two columns with Persepolitan bell-shaped capitals,[290] one of which was crowned by a lion (fig. 19), near its front corners. It is likely that there were originally four such columns, each one placed at a corner of the *stūpa*.[291] Marshall argued that "[t]he idea of the lion pillar was taken, no doubt, from the pillars set up by the Emperor Aśoka at many of the famous monuments of Buddhism, including, in all probability, the Dharmarājikā Stūpa at Taxila itself."[292] This was a logical conclusion considering that Marshall believed that the Dharmarājikā *Stūpa* at Taxila to have been built by Aśoka himself. But as was shown above (pp. 30-31), Aśoka was *not* responsible for the construction of the Dharmarājikā *stūpa*. Certainly the royal symbolism of the lion here is unmistakable, and it is possible that it was inspired by Aśokan pillars; however, when taken with the Arsacid royal

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[289] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 167.
[290] For a discussion, line-drawings, and photographs of the bell-shaped capitals found at Persepolis see John Curtis and Shahrokh Razmjou, "The Palace," in *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*, ed. John Curtis and Nigel Tallis (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 50-51 and figs. 39-49.
[291] Marshall compared these columns to a Gandharan relief illustrated in Alfred Foucher, *L'Art Gréco-Bouddhique du Gandhâra; Étude sur le Origines de l'Influence Classique dans l'Art Boudhique de l'Inde et de l'Extrême-Orient* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1905), vol. 1, fig. 41.
[292] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 167.

symbolism found in the adjacent Block F *stūpa*, these columns and lion capitals were more likely inspired by the Persian Achaemenid Empire. The Arsacid Parthians deliberately modeled themselves after their Achaemenid predecessors, drawing on their royal language and symbology to bolster their claims to the lands formerly under Achaemenian control,

> The revival of the ancient Persian tradition under the Parthians shows itself in the reappearance of the royal title 'king of kings' in the early first century BC. Roman sources also mention the significance of ancient Persia for the Parthian kings. When the first century AD Rome and Parthia quarreled over Armenia and the appointment of a Parthian prince as king of Armenia, the Parthian king Artabanus II (AD 10-38) informed Rome 'that whatever we possessed by Cyrus, and afterwards by Alexander, was his undoubted right, and he was determined to recover the same by force of arms' (Tacitus, *Annals*, VI.31)[293]

During the Achaemenid period, decorative columns crowned by heraldic symbols were ubiquitous. At the capital city of Persepolis, in addition to numerous columns scattered throughout the site, the palace complex had a designated area for the display of such symbols, the "Hall of 100 Columns."[294] The column bases were made of stone and were bell-shaped. The column capitals were elaborate and crowned by human and animal forms back-to-back. There were four types of column capitals: bulls, lions, griffins or 'homa birds,' and human-headed bulls.[295]

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[293] Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, "The Legacy of Ancient Persia," in *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*, ed. John Curtis and Nigel Tallis (London: British Museum Press, 2005), p. 250.
[294] John Curtis, "The Archaeology of the Achaemenid Period," in *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*, ed. John Curtis and Nigel Tallis (London: British Museum Press, 2005), p. 33 fig. 14.
[295] Curtis and Razmjou, "The Palace," pp. 51-53 and figs. 39-49.

While the lion capital is not a "back-to-back" form, the lion was a symbol of

Achaemenid power that the Arsacid Parthians imitated.[296]

Figure 16: Detail of Blocks F and G from Sirkap
After Marshall, *Taxila*, 1951, Plate 10

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[296] Perhaps the double-headed eagle on the façade of the Block F *stūpa* was also inspired by the "back-to-back" form of the 'homa-bird' capital. This would further connect the Block F and G *stūpas* to royalty.

Figure 17: Block F *stūpa*

Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain*. (New York: Weatherhill, 1985) p. 118.

Obtained by free-license from *ARTStor*.

Figure 18: Double-headed Eagle

The John C. and Susan L. Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art, The Ohio State University.

Obtained by free-license from *ARTStor*.

Figure 19: Stone Lion from Block G *stūpa*

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 27d

Thus, the animal motifs on the *stūpas* at Block F and G can be read as indicators of royal power and patronage.[297] This was a common strategy among early Indian rulers, and Brian Ruppert's analysis of relic veneration and reliquary distribution can be extended to *stūpa* construction as found in Sirkap,

> [r]ulers attempted to establish themselves as the greatest patrons of the faith by constructing reliquaries and venerating relics; actions such as the distribution of relics throughout the land clearly were designed not only to display the emperor's largess but also to improve government oversight of the temples throughout the realm. Rulers and other lay Buddhists presumably also believed that such construction and veneration enabled them to improve their karmic destiny.[298]

Thus, patronage of Buddhist shrines took on many forms. Certainly, as the texts tell us, many *stūpas* were built by monks for the sake of worshiping the Buddha, but the evidence from the Block F and G *stūpa* shrines also tells us that *stūpas* were important indicators of power for the ruling class. And, as Ruppert suggests above, doing good deeds such as building a *stūpa*, was an efficacious method of accruing good karma. In fact, Vidya Dehejia contends that care was taken by rulers to make *sure* that craftsmen were paid well,

> . . . for only thus could the king ensure that the religious merit involved in the construction of this sacred monument would accrue to him alone . . . One of the prime concerns of the patron of sacred monuments in India, whether of Buddhist, Jain, or Hindu affiliation, was this acquisition of *punya* or religious merit which would bring divine favor on matters of state, and more significantly, would ensure favorable conditions in a future birth.[299]

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[297] Sen, *Animal Motifs in Ancient Indian Art*, p. 74 and pp. 95-105.
[298] Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes*, p. 35.
[299] Dehejia, "Patron, Artist, Temple," pp. 3-4.

Once again the archaeological evidence pushes us to broaden our understanding of early Buddhist practices and beliefs. In the public sphere, Buddhist *stūpas* indicated worldly sovereignty, power, and patronage. The popularity of a new ruler would be increased by his willingness to make donations to his conquered communities, and in turn the *stūpa* would not only serve as a religious center and show his piety, but it would also serve as monument to his power and wealth as well as a place for royal patronage.[300]

Domestic Ritual and Religion

However, not all ritual practice in Sirkap was centered on public *stūpa* shrines. In addition to the one private *stūpa* shrine located in the palace area of Block K (fig. 20), scattered throughout the city are various clues to the thriving local traditions—traditions that at times incorporate Buddhist motifs but are not strictly Buddhist—which were located in the domestic sphere. Marshall, Dar, and Dani focused solely on the public *stūpa* shrines in their discussions of religion and ritual in Sirkap, but for a more complete understanding of Sirkap's ritual and religious landscape, these domestic ritual complexes must be examined.

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[300] For an excellent theoretical introduction to the use of gifts to religious institutions by the most important cultural, political, and economic elites in early Indian society see James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power: Lordship in the Early Indian State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). While Heitzman's study focuses on the Chola Empire c. 849 – 1279 CE, his introduction is still useful in thinking through the use of eleemosynary grants. He writes, "The driving force behind donations

Ritual Tanks and the Block K *Stūpa* Shrine

The only domestic ritual space which is identifiable by looking at Marshall's site map of urban Sirkap is the *stūpa* shrine in Block K (fig. 5). Located in a back room of the palace, it had no public access. The *stūpa* was almost completely destroyed and only the square plinth on which it stood survives, but at its center Marshall found two relic caskets—one of grey schist with a relic bone wrapped in gold inside (fig. 21)—and a row of four ritual votive tanks like those found at the Block A *stūpa* court.

Figure 20: Women's Quarters in the royal palace.

The boy is standing in the private *stūpa* shrine where the votive tanks were found.

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 34b
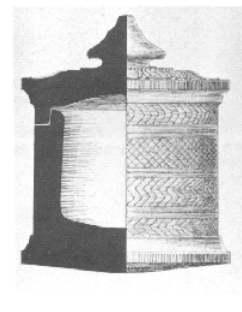
Figure 21: Grey schist casket from *stūpa* shrine in royal palace

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 36h

Once again Marshall ignored the obvious Buddhist motifs—the *stūpa* plinth, the two relic caskets, and the relic bone which was considered so precious it was wrapped in gold—and argued that this must have been a Jain shrine because of the presence of the votive tanks. Because of this determination, he then assumed

was the concept of legitimation of authority, whereby gifts to the gods or their representatives on early resulted in a transfer of divine sanctity and merit to the givers" (p. 1).

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that the "Queen" of Taxila must have been Jain, and "[n]othing is more likely, then, than that the royal family of Taxila would count among its members some followers of the Jain faith."[301] But to the contrary, as discussed above in regards to the Block A *stūpa* court, there is no reason to doubt that this was a Buddhist shrine that also served a variety of local devotional practices to various unnamed goddesses centered on the use of votive tanks.

Artifacts of Domestic Ritual

Evidence for domestic ritual from locations not easily recognizable by their architectural features comes to light only after a close analysis of the spatial distribution of artifacts.[302] In his analysis of Sirkap, Robin Coningham employed a particularly effective methodology to determine if objects found outside the obvious religious structures were ritually charged. He identified classes of objects as ritually charged due to "their association with known shrines within the city as well [as] their presence in the monasteries surrounding Sirkap."[303] These objects include stucco and schist sculptures, bells, schist caskets, ritual tanks, clay figurines, votive *stūpas*, *stūpa*-shaped caskets and vessels, incense burners, terracotta portraits, and ivory and metal caskets.[304] In his analysis of the ritual space in Sirkap, Coningham tentatively identified eleven sites where the context of

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[301] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 174.

[302] See the discussion in Part I of this thesis on pp. 57-63 regarding the work of Renfrew, "Archaeology of Cult Practice," pp. 11-26.

[303] Coningham and Edwards, "Space and Society at Sirkap, Taxila," p. 57.

[304] Ibid.: pp. 57-58. Coningham uses both the Kalawan and Dharmarājikā monastic complexes from outside the walls of Sirkap and the *stūpa* courts within the walls of Sirkap as his baseline.

the objects suggests a ritual usage; however, his analysis stops at the identification of the location of these domestic rituals. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to exploring the possible function of such ritual artifacts.

The clearest example of domestic ritual occurs in Block C'. In square 47-48·95', Marshall found a group of intentionally buried objects in a sealed deposit, dated to the first century before the common era,[305] which included a copper spouted pot (figs. 16 and 17), a copper three legged incense burner (fig. 18), two standard offerings bowls made of copper (figs. 19 and 20), six small copper bells and one bronze bell, three oblong dice of bone (fig. 21), decorated legs of an "image throne" made of wood and covered in copper sheeting[306] (fig. 22), and ten beads of blue glazed faience.[307] Marshall did suggest that some of the objects—the spouted pot, incense burner, and bells—may "have come from a sacred shrine,"[308] but he went no further in his exploration of their function.

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[305] Marshall found the items in stratum V which belongs to the earliest period of Greek occupation. However, the items were clearly buried beneath a floor for safe-keeping. Thus, they do not belong to the Greek period, but rather to the Indo-Scythian period. Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 125.

[306] Marshall writes, "Four legs of an image throne (?) of wood covered with copper or brass sheeting which is decorated with acanthus designs and mouldings." See Ibid. Marshall is not sure of the identification of an "image throne," but this may be a good inference as will be shown in the balance of this section.

[307] Ibid.

[308] Ibid.
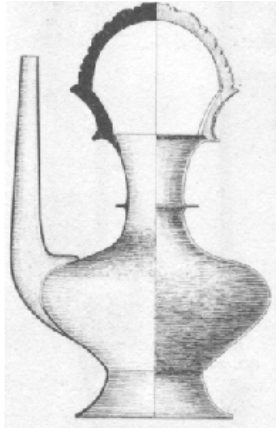
Figure 22: Spouted Pot

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 174 n. 259

Figure 23: Spouted Pot

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 183 n. 259

No. 320
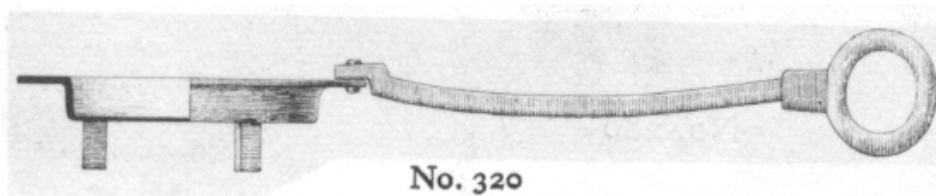
Figure 24: Incense Burner

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 176 n. 320
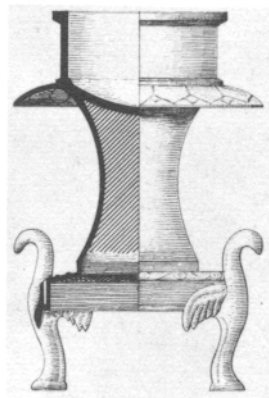
Figure 25: Offering Bowl

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 176 n. 323
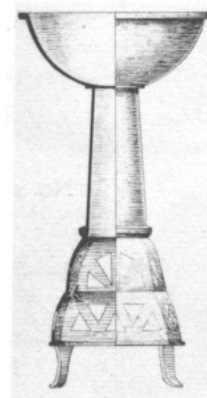
Figure 26: Offering Bowl

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 176 n. 327

Figure 27: Oblong Playing Dice of Ivory

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 200 n. 92
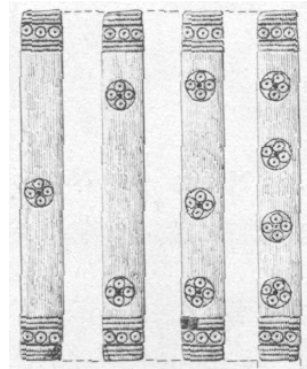
Figure 28: Decorated Legs of a wooden Image Throne
Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 20b and 210h

A closer analysis of the stash buried in Block C' opens up the local quality of Sirkap's ritual practice. First, the fact that almost all the objects are made of copper suggests the objects held a ritual function. As Nayanjot Lahiri argues, "the persistent and numerically dominant tradition of working in copper of high purity that one observes in the early Indian archaeological record does not have any technological implication and, on the contrary, fits in with what we know about the ritual importance of pure copper in ancient Indian texts."[309] Most conspicuous here

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[309] Nayanjot Lahiri, "Indian Metal and Metal-Related Artefacts as Cultural Signifiers: An Ethnographic Perspective," *World Archaeology* 27, no. 1 (1995): p. 117.

are the altar legs made of wood which were purposefully covered in sheets of copper to mark them as sacred.

The copper bells and incense holder were common ritual implements throughout ancient India. One should not assume that these ritual implements were used to "awaken the deity" as is commonly understood in the practice of modern Indian temple worship,[310] but other functions are more likely. For example, bells were associated with *yakṣas and yakṣīs*, the ubiquitous semi-divine beings who can be either benevolent or malevolent. The ritual import of bells is further established as they were found in many ritually-charged locations in Taxila in general,[311] and in Sirkap itself copper bells were found in the Block A *stūpa* shrine.

The spouted pot is of particular interest as it was a common ritual implement used throughout India for devotions, and this very type can be seen from the reliefs at Barhut and Sanchi.[312] The offering bowls are significant because, as Marshall wrote in his summary of the findings at Sirkap, "for the first time we have standard offering dishes."[313] Whether they are meant to hold liquids, food, or worshipers were to put their offerings of money or jewelry in them, we just do not know, but they quickly became popular as tools used in the ritual repertoire of ritual practice throughout India.[314]

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[310] On entering a Hindu temple today, devotees often ring a bell which hangs over the entrance. This has been explained to me as the devotees announcing their presence before the deity, and/or as a way of "awakening" the deity in preparation for *darśan*.

[311] Coningham, "The Spatial Distribution of Craft Activities," pp. 58-59.

[312] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 124.

[313] Ibid., p. 208.

[314] Similar looking offering bowls are found at Pitalkhorā, Maharashtra (circa 100 -70 BCE) and at Mathurā (Kushāṇa period). However, at these sites the base is often a dwarf-like figure holding the

Found in association with the ritually charged objects above were beads. Found alone, it would be difficult to discern the function of beads; they could function in many ways—as decoration and/or indicators of status, for example. Marshall had this to say about the extraordinary number of beads found, often among other ritual implements, at Sirkap,

> Out of a total of over 5,500 beads found in Sirkap, nearly one-tenth came from the Early Śaka settlement. Considering the relatively small area excavated in this settlement, this represents a very high percentage and confirms the evidence from the Śaka *stūpas* at the Dharmarājikā that this class of ornament was much in vogue among the Śakas, principally, no doubt, because its manufacture required little technical skill and little artistic taste.[315]

Or they could have been "much in vogue" because they served a ritual function;[316] perhaps they were early examples of the now ubiquitous *mālās* used in ritual prayer.[317] The possibility of a ritual function of these beads is further strengthened by Marshall's finds of large numbers of beads in the relic chambers of the small *stūpas* at the Dharmarājikā complex from the Indo-Scythian period.[318]

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bowl on his head (at Mathurā they are certainly Kubera figures). Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, 1st ed. (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), p. 84 and p. 159.

[315] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 135.

[316] See Renfrew, "Archaeology of Cult Practice," p. 19, where in his "list of correlates" to acts of worship, number thirteen on the list reads, "[t]he sacred area is likely to be rich in repeated symbols (redundancy)."

[317] The earliest visual evidence of the use of garlands of beads in a ritual setting is found on early sandstone sculptures from northern India c. 185 BCE, see Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India, 3000 B.C.-1300 A.D.* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1985), p. 62 pl. 15. The earliest textual evidence for prayer-beads, *mālās*, comes from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.5.21, 12.8.7-111 and 12.8.33-34.

[318] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 136. Faience beads have been found in association with Buddhist relic caskets elsewhere in India. For example, in a third century CE stone casket found at Devnimori in Western India, archaeologists found a copper box, and inside the copper box were faience beads along with strips of gold and silver "ritual offerings . . . [that were] placed in [the copper box] when it was enshrined in the *stūpa* . . . [these] inner offerings were wrapped in cloth," see Karunakara T. Hegde, "Treatment of a Metal Casket Containing Relics of Lord Buddha," *Studies in Conservation* 9, no. 2 (1964): p. 71 and n. 8.

Finally, found amongst all these ritually charged objects were three oblong dice (fig. 27). Marshall consistently catalogued dice under "toys" or "games" despite their frequent appearance among other ritual implements. In Block C', in addition to the three dice found in the buried stash, Marshall found two more, one of ivory and one of bone.[319] The latter die made of bone (fig. 29) was found in square 52·75', which is the small *stūpa* shrine which opens out to Main Street, clearly a ritually charged location. Dice were also found in Block H, Block G, Block I', and Block I. The die in Block H was found in association with a sculpture of a malevolent looking *yakṣa*.[320] Thus, their frequent association with ritual implements, *stūpa* shrines, and semi-divine beings suggests another use, that is sortition, or oracular gambling, which was very common throughout India as early as the beginning of the first millennium.[321]

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[319] Dice were also found in Block H, Block G, Block I', and Block I. The dice in Block H hold particular importance as I will discuss shortly.

[320] See pp. 147-150 below for further analysis of this particular association.

[321] There is a long textual tradition of oracular gambling, that is using dice throws to both predict and control the future, in India. Jan Heesterman's study of the Vedic ritual of royal consecration, the *rājasūya*, demonstrates that dicing was more than just a mere game and had cosmological implications, see J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The Rājasūya described according to the Yajus Texts and Annotated* (Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957), pp. 150-157. In the Vedic context, however, the dice used in the 'game' are not similar in shape to the oblong dice found at Sirkap, but they were hewn from the nuts from the *vibhītaka* tree (*Terminalia Bellerica*). However, the association of oracular gambling with celestial forces, both benevolent and malevolent, survived into the early historic period. This is not to suggest that the objects found buried in Block C' are the artifacts from a Vedic ritual such as the *rājasūya*. Such a suggestion would fall back into the errors of textual over-determination—that is, trying to prove the text "true" by finding one to one correspondences—not to mention the chronological dissonance; the material evidence at Sirkap was deposited at least a half millennium after the composition of the Vedic texts. Rather, it is meant to establish the tradition of oracular gambling as part of the ambient religiosity in northwest India prior to the early historic period.

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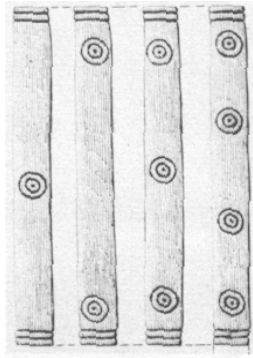
Figure 29: Oblong Playing Dice of Bone

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 200 n. 93

Allusions to oracular gambling are found both in Brahmanical and Buddhist texts of the early historic period. Dice played a central role in the ritual gambling of the *Mahābhārata*;[322] however, it is unclear whether the dice used in the Śakuni-Yudhiṣṭira dicing episode in Book Two and the Nala dicing episode in Book Three of the *Mahābhārata* were similar to the oblong dice found at Sirkap, often called

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[322] Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader's Guide to the Education of the Dharma King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 5 puts the main composition of the text between 200 BCE – 0 CE, but allows for various changes in the text up to the third or fourth century CE. As is well known, the epic hinges on a dicing match (*Mahābhārata* 2.42-72), an event which determines the fate not only of the participants, Yudhiṣṭhira and Duryodhana, but also the very kingdom of the Paṇḍavas and the Kauravas—that is, the whole known world. Throughout the dicing, while the righteousness of using dice to manipulate the world is called into question, the efficacy of that gambling is certainly not. Often the role of the dicing as sortition in the *Mahābhārata* is overshadowed by the analysis of its ritual ties to the Vedic *rājasūya*, but clearly the dicing here is a form of oracular gambling. Again, this analysis of the dicing in the *Mahābhārata* is not meant to demonstrate that the objects found in the Block C' stash were used in a ritual of establishing sovereignty, but to further establish that ritual oracular gambling was part of the ambient religiosity of the early historic period. For studies of the dicing episode, see Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 86-101; Gerrit Jan Held, *The Mahābhārata: An Ethnological Study* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1935), pp. 243-293; and J.A.B. Van Buitenen, "On the Structure of the Sabhāparvan of the Mahābhārata," in *India Major: Congratulatory Volume Presented to Jan Gonda*, ed. J Ensinck and Peter Gaeffke (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 68-84.

pāśakas,[323] or made of the nuts from the *vibhītaka* tree (*Terminalia Bellerica*), often called *akṣas*. Heinrich Lüders argued that despite the ambiguity in the *Mahābhārata*, one could discern that the earlier dice-play had to be modeled after the Vedic *rājasūya* ritual and therefore only used nuts from the *vibhītaka* tree, and later dice-play—beginning with Book Four, the Virāṭaparvan—changed significantly to incorporate the use of the oblong dice.[324] Thus, it is difficult to make any firm statement on the use of *pāśakas* in the *Mahābhārata*.

However, oblong dice, or *pāśakas*, are certainly the type used for dice-play in Buddhist texts. Stories from the *Jātakas* and the *Mahāvastu* suggest a connection between dice and various demi-goddesses, both *apsarasas* and *yakṣīs*, who are often connected to sexuality and childbirth. For example, in the popular *Guttila-Jātaka* (no. 243),[325] an aging, lute playing Guttila's musical skills are challenged by a precocious pupil, Mūsila. Guttila flees to the woods to avoid a public competition in which he fears he will be bested. While there, he is visited

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[323] Heinrich Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im Alten Indien* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1907), p. 17, described the oblong dice as used in the modern game of Caupur and compared them to the ancient form of the *pāśaka*, ". . . ist ein rechtwinkliges vierseitiges Prisma, ungefär 7 cm lang und 1 cm hoch und breit. Nur die vier Langseiten sind mit Augen versehen; die beiden Schmalseiten, die bei der ganzen for des Würfels überhaupt nie oder doch nur durch einen Zufall oben oder unten liegen können, sind unbezeichnet. Dieselbe Form hatte der *pāśaka* sicherlich schon in alter Zeit." A quick look at the dice found at Sirkap confirms this description.

[324] Ibid., pp. 57-60. Held, *The Mahābhārata: An Ethnological Study*, p. 256 held that Lüders' argument "can hardly be correct," and then pointed to numerous places in both Vedic and Epic texts where other forms of dice are used. However, Held's chapter on gambling (pp. 243-293) is rarely as contextual as Lüders'. Held moves from theories of North American Indian potlatch ceremonies and totemism, to Melanesian rituals, to Korean board games to set up his argument. Held does provide some excellent insights, but Lüders is more reliable in the details of dice-play.

[325] Edward B. Cowell, *The Jātaka, or, Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, trans. Robert Chalmers (London: The Pali Text Society, 1981 [1895]), vol. ii pp. 172-178.

by Buddha Śākyamuni.[326] Buddha Śākyamuni tells Guttila not to worry, but to purposely break his strings to show his mastery over the lute. In addition, he gives Guttila three dice and these instructions,

> When the sound of the lute has filled all the city, you must throw one of these dice into the air; and three hundred nymphs (*apsarasas*) shall descend and dance before you. While they dance throw up the second, and three hundred [*apsarasas*] shall dance in front of your lute; then the third [die], and then three hundred more [*apsarasas*] shall come down and dance within the arena.[327]

In Buddhist Pāli literature, *apsarasas* are female nymphs exuding sexuality. They often tempt ascetics away from their celibate meditation. In the Epic texts, particularly the *Mahābhārata*, *apsarasas* both exude sexuality but also protect heroes—always male—on the battlefield.[328] Thus, *apsarasas* play the double role of seducer and protector. These connections between dicing and sexuality are further exemplified in the second century BCE to fourth century CE Buddhist text the *Mahāvastu*.[329] In one story, amorous couples engage in dicing for play. But clearly this "play" has connotations of fertility and sexuality.[330]

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[326] I have used the Sanskrit spellings of these terms; in the original Pāli text the Bodhisattva is rendered "Bodhisatta" and Buddha Śākyamuni is rendered simply "Sakka."

[327] Cowell, *The Jātaka*, p. 175.

[328] Paola Rossi, "The Apsaras-es' Image in the Pali Buddhist Canon " in *Love and Nature in Kavya Literature: Proceedings*, ed. Lidia Sudyka (Kraków: Ksiegarnia Akademicka, 2005), p. 175-193. See also White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, p. 35.

[329] For the dating of this text, see John S. Strong, "Mahāvastu," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), p. 491.

[330] *Mahāvastu*, trans. J. J. Jones, 3 vols. (London: Luzac, 1952), vol. III, p. 169. This connection between *apsarasas*, dicing, and sexuality is also found in the late Vedic period. As Patrick Olivelle writes, "*AV(Ś)* 4.38 [Atharvaveda Saṃhitā, Śaunaka recession] is a good-luck charm for victory in gambling. The first part of the charm is addressed to Apsarā, who is said to 'rejoice in the dice' (*akṣeṣu pramodante*). She is characterized in verse 4 as *ānandinīṃ pramodinīm*. The context appears to indicate that these terms are used with reference to the pleasure of gambling, but the Apsaras are closely associated with sexuality." [Patrick Olivelle, "Orgasmic Rapture and Divine Ecstasy," in *Language, Texts, and Society: Explorations in Ancient Indian Culture and Religion*, ed.

In another *Jātaka* tale, the *Vidhurapaṇḍita-Jātaka* (no. 545), the dicing is controlled by *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*.[331] In this story, a *yakṣa*[332] Puṇṇaka challenges a king to a game of dice for jewels and riches. As they begin to play, the king calls forth his "guardian deity,"[333] a former mother of his in a previous birth. Puṇṇaka "having recognized the power of the guardian goddess (*yakṣī*), [opened] his eyes wide as if he were angry and looked at her [the *yakṣī*] and she being frightened fled . . ."[334] Puṇṇaka, using this malevolent face, goes on to defeat the king. Here, the connection to dice is not necessarily oracular, but it is clear that *yakṣas* take a particular interest in dicing.

The oracular use of *pāśakas*, oblong dice, finds its most obvious form in the *Pāśakakevalī*, or the "The System of Dice."[335] This mid-fourth century CE text[336] is one of the seven birch-bark manuscripts purchased by Lt. Bower in 1890,[337] now known as the Bower Manuscript. It came from a *stūpa* at Kumtura, a Buddhist

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Patrick Olivelle (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2005), p. 80]. See also White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, p. 34.

[331] Cowell, *The Jātaka*, vol. vi, pp. 126-156.

[332] Again, I have Sankritized this word, the original Pāli renders it *Yakka*.

[333] This is Chalmers' translation of *yakṣī*.

[334] Cowell, *The Jātaka*, vol. vi, p. 137.

[335] Julius Erich Schröter, *Pāsakakevalī: Ein Indisches Würfelorakel* (Borna: Druck von R. Noske, 1900). There are parallels to this dice oracle in the Hellenistic world. For and overview of cleromancy, that is the casting various items including dice, see W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination: A Study of Its Methods and Principles* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1967), chapter 10 and entries on dicing and board games in Hubert Cancik et al., eds., *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World, Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

[336] This date has been challenged and set as late as the first half of the sixth century CE, see Lore Sanders, "Origin and Date of the Bower Manuscript: A New Approach," in *Investigating Indian Art: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Development of Early Buddhist and Hindu Iconography held by the Museum of India Art Berlin May 1986* (Berlin: Museum für Indische Kunst, 1987), pp. 313-323. But these dates refer to the translating of the text into Chinese, not the period of the social world which it reflects.

Cave Temple in the Kucha Oasis.[338] A.F. Rudolf Hoernle edited the text and determined that the scribes of the *Pāśakakevalī* were Buddhists from India, probably Kashmir or the Swāt Valley, who had migrated to the Kucha region.[339] However, the text itself reflects the social world of the northwestern Indian subcontinent in the first three centuries of the Common Era.[340] The *Pāśakakevalī* details the names of sixty-four dice throws. It is clear from the ordering of the throws and their given names that the diviner was to throw three dice. Each die had four possibilities—the four "pips" of the dice, the oblong ends were not marked—and thus the list begins at the result of 1-1-1, and moves to a throw of 1-1-2, 1-1-3, 1-1-4, all the way to 4-4-4.[341] The sixty-four oracles are quite

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[337] A.F. Rudolf Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript: Fascimile Leaves, Nagari Transcript, Romanised Transliteration and English Transltation with Notes*, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Print, India, 1893; reprint, New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1983).

[338] For a review of the Buddhist Literature of the Kucha Oasis before the seventh century CE, see Marylin Martin Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia: The Eastern Chin and Sixteen Kingdoms Period in China and Tumshuk, Kucha and Karashahr in Central Asia*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 591-595.

[339] Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript*, vol. I, pp. xxi-xxxvi.

[340] Another of the manuscripts found among the Bower collection is the *Mahāmāyūrī vidyā-rājñī*. In regards to this text, Sylvain Lévi, "Le Catalogue des Yakṣa dans la Mahāmāyūrī," *Journal Asiatique* 11è série, tome 5, vol. 1 (1915): p. 118 argues that it "reflète un état géographique qui correspond aux trois premiers siècles de l'ére chrétienne."

[341] In a recension of the *Pāśakakevalī* from 1611 CE (MS., in the Deccan College Library, Poona, No. 70, dated saṁvat 1668), there is an appendix written in Gujarati, which describes how the dicing works. In the description, included below, one die is thrown three times. However, in the Bower Manuscript *Pāśakakevalī*, there are numerous references to the "dice falling," clearly in the plural. Thus, it is unclear if one die is thrown three times or three dice are thrown at once. See Hoernle, *The Bower Manuscript*, vol. I, pp. xcii-xciii and vol. II, p. 214. The text from the Deccan College Library MS. reads:

> The mode of throwing divination die (*pāsō*, singular) is as follows. When the die is wanted for an oracle (Skr. *śakuna*), it must be thrown three times; and the first cast must be counted as hundred. Thus, if one pip (*pagaḍam*, sing.) falls, it counts 100; if two pips (*pagaḍāṁ*, plur.) fall, they count 200; if three pips fall in the first cast, they represent 300; if four pips fall, they count 400. Next, the die (*pāsō*, sing.) is thrown for the second time. then, of the pips that fall, one counts as the figure (*āṁk*) 1; similarly if two pips fall, they are 2; if three pips fall, 3; if four fall, 4. In the same way, the cast of the third time must be understood.

diverse, but the most common themes center on (listed in order of frequency): wealth and prosperity; health and well-being; love, marriage, sex, and children; and predictions of either conquering or being conquered by enemies.[342] Thus, the three dice found in the intentionally buried stash in Block C' were most likely part of the ritual association. These dice were most likely used for oracular gambling.

The previous analyses serve to demonstrate that in the early historical period ritual gambling was commonly used to predict and control the future and that dicing had clear connections with *apsarasas* and *yakṣas* who were intimately tied with sexuality and protection. Thus, the presence of dice in the buried stash in Block C' is explained by their relationship to divination. However, it is not just this single stash that supports this interpretation. Throughout the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian layers at Sirkap there is ample evidence of such rituals of oracular gambling. For example, in Block H, square 121·49', Marshall found an oblong terra-cotta die (fig. 30, I), and in the adjacent square, 120·49' he found a stone sculpture "of chloritised mica schist in the form of [a] grotesque male Kubera-like figure, seated cross-legged on [a] thin rectangular base." (fig. 31)[343]

Finally, the hundred of the first throw, and the figures (*āṁk*) of the second and third, must be placed together. Whatever (combined) figure results, upon that the oracle must be pronounced . . . this is the correct manner of proceeding.

Translation by Hoernle, in Ibid., vol. I, p. xcii.

[342] This list comes from my analysis of the sixty-four oracles in the translation of the *Pāśakakevalī* by Ibid., vol. II, pp. 197-202.

[343] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 703.

| I | II | III | IV |

Figure 30: Oblong Playing Dice of Terracotta, Die I from Block H

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 135y n. 122-125

Figure 31: Malevolent Figure from Block H

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 213 n. 14

Kubera shared his role as wealth bringer with another god, Pañcika, as Ram Nath Misra argued, ". . . Pañcika could not retain [his] characteristic features; and underwent a change in the other Indian art-schools . . . Pañcika took on the appearance of Kubera or Jambhala."[344] Pañcika's iconography depicts him with a pot-belly, holding a skin purse (probably full of gold coins or jewels) and an offering bowl.[345] It is hard to tell as the figure is quite damaged, but our schist sculpture certainly has a pot-belly and may even be holding a bowl of some sort. In the third to fourth century CE text the *Divyāvadāna*, a compendium of Buddhist stories which illustrate life in ancient India, Pañcika is a lord of the *yakṣas*, "[h]arm is not to be done to any other being, but help is to be given to him, having known this, Pañcika, the great leader of the army of the *yakṣas* [*mahāyakṣasenāpati*], is to

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[344] Ram Nath Misra, *Yakṣa Cult and Iconography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981), p. 78.

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be invoked,"[346] and depending on your state of favor with Pañcika, he could be a protector or a destroyer.

Thus, the die found in association with this ambivalent god, Kubera-Pañcika, was possibly used for oracular purposes. Since he is the wealth giver, one might ask for success in business or for a good yield of crops. But he is not just a benevolent god, and Pañcika's malevolent side is intimately tied up with childbirth and disease through his consort Hārītī. Hārītī is a child devouring *yakṣī* that must be properly propitiated to avert the death of unborn children. Sure enough, Marshall also found evidence of her image at Sirkap,

> [a] somewhat remarkable find made in the ruins of this block [C'] was a miniature relic *stūpa* of Gandhāra manufacture (fig. 32), and by the side of it the stone image of a goddess (fig. 33).[347] The two objects, which had evidently been buried together under the floor of a chamber in square 52-85' (fig. 34) . . . the image by the side of the model *stūpa* . . . is of pot stone and represents a goddess seated on a throne crowned by a low *polos* and holding a cornucopia in her left hand . . . In India it is found on coins of Azes I and II, where it may represent the yakṣī Hārītī—the consort of Pañcika, 'Giver of Riches.'[348]

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[345] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, ed., *Yakṣas: Essays in Water Cosmology* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 36.

[346] *Divyāvadāna*, ed. E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1970), p. 447.

[347] This statuette is also significant for its western and eastern characteristics, a typical transitional figure which Dani explains, "the deities that appear on the coins show how iconographic representations of the local gods and goddesses were gradually shaping, probably under the influence of the western model but with all the iconographic details deriving from local traditions. This should not be considered the marriage of east and west, but rather, presents an expression of the local concepts in the medium of the west—an attempt to represent local ideas on the basis of western technology and perhaps form." Dani, *The Historic City of Taxila*, p. 70.

[348] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 192.

Figure 32: Relic *stūpa* from Block C'

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 35g

Figure 33: Hārītī prototype? from Block C'

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 211 n. 1

Figure 34: Items from Block C' as they were found

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 35f

Marshal's identification of this figure as Hārītī and the earlier one as Kubera (or better in the Buddhist context, Pañcika) is well-justified. As is well-known, the seventh century Chinese monk I-tsing records seeing many Hārītī and Pañcika figures, most of them installed in Buddhist refectories, throughout the north of the Indian subcontinent. But images of an abundance giving goddess, either Śrī or Hārītī, alone or with her consort, are quite common in the last century before the Common Era and the first two centuries of the Common Era.[349] So, these statuettes

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[349] There are a few good examples of the goddess of abundance, identified as either Śrī or Hārītī, seated alone with a cornucopia from the second century CE, see Madhuvanti Ghose's excellent review of such images, along with an example, in Osmund Bopearachchi, *De l'Indus à l'Oxus : Archéologie de l'Asie Centrale: Catalogue de l'Exposition* (Lattes: Association Imago-Musée de Lattes, 2003), pp. 244-245 pl. 229. This motif continued to be popular in the fourth and fifth centuries CE. Most of these images are found in or around sacred sites, but Pierfrancesco Callieri found one of the few in an urban site during his excavations at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, see Callieri,

found at Sirkap might be some of the early Hārītī and Pañcika prototypes,[350] but perhaps they are better understood as local *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*.

The local nature of goddess cults, as discussed above, can be extended to local cults of the semi-divine tutelary deities of India in general. Most of the individual names of local tutelary deities, as a group called *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*, did not find their way into the elite textual traditions such as the *Mahābhārata* or the *Rāmāyana*, but they were lost as the cults died out. Some evidence for the vast pantheon of local deities comes from the aforementioned *Mahāmāyūrī*. The *Mahāmāyūrī* is a circa fourth c. CE text that reflects the social world of the northwest of the Indian subcontinent in the first three or four centuries of the Common Era.[351] It is part of the Buddhist "five-fold protection" (*pañca-rakṣā*), a set of charms meant to ward off serpent spirits called *nāgas*.[352] Its literary value, in the words of Sylvain Lévi, is "null," and merely "consiste essentiellment dans une série de formules en abracadabra, groupées artificiellement autor d'un noyau ancien."[353] But the *Mahāmāyūrī* is full of local names of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* and the cities they protect. The city of Taxila shows up in verses 32-33,

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"Buddhist Presence in the Urban Settlements of Swāt," p. 73 fig. 3.13. The tutelary couple of abundance, most often identified as Hārītī and Pañcika, is even more ubiquitous. Again, see Maduvanti Ghose's commentary in Bopearachchi, *De l'Indus à l'Oxus*, pp. 242-243 p. 227. Ghose gives bibliographic details to a number of other examples.

[350] Albert Grünwedel, *Buddhist Art in India* (London: B. Quaritch, 1901), p. 105.

[351] Lévi, "Le Catalogue des Yakṣa dans la Mahāmāyūrī," p. 118 and p. 121.

[352] The name of the text, the *Mahāmāyūrī*, means the Great Peacock, or more literally "Pea-Hen." Here the name alludes to the idea that peacocks feed upon snakes keeping the farmers in their fields safe.

[353] Lévi, "Le Catalogue des Yakṣa dans la Mahāmāyūrī," p. 19.

32. The [*yakṣa*] who facilitates the entrance to heaven of the people [who live] in Gandhāra and Taxila,
33. Is the Great *Yakṣa* Kharapostā, who resides in the mountain.[354]

Kharapostā is unknown to the elite tradition, but in this text he shows up as the local tutelary deity of Taxila. The sculptures found in Sirkap, then, do not necessarily have to be matched with a well-known deity, they may have local names, perhaps Kharapostā.

Apotropaic Figures

Also scattered throughout Sirkap are statues of chloritised mica which have the appearance of apotropaic figures, that is, figures that ward off evil and in turn protect the devotee.[355] One such figure is the above *yakṣa* in Block H, but there are others. Often they are attached to a bracket (fig. 35), suggesting they were placed over doors at entrances or high up in the corners of rooms.

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[354] See Ibid.: pp. 38-39. The original Sanskrit provided by Lévi in romanized letter reads,
     32. Pramardanaś ca Gāndhāre Takṣaśilāyām Prabhañjanaḥ
     33. Kharapostā mahāyakṣo Bhadraśaile nivāṣikaḥ

[355] For an excellent theoretical introduction to the function of apotropaic figurines in the ancient world, in this case the Neo-Assyrian world of the early first millennium BCE, see Carolyn Nakamura, "Mastering Matters: Magical Sense and Apotropaic Figurine Worlds of Neo-Assyria," in *Archaeologies of Materiality*, ed. Lynn Meskell (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 18-45.

Figure 35: Guardian Figure

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 213 n. 11
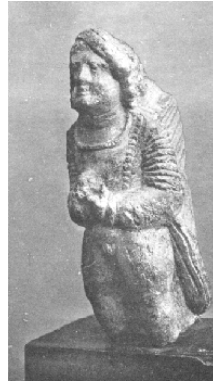
Figure 36: Guardian Figure

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 212 n. 8

Figure 37: Guardian Figure

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 213 n. 13

Many of them are similarly adorned in heavy jewelry, whether it be bangles, necklaces, or ear-rings, and are winged (fig. 36). The winged figures suggest a connection to the ubiquitous semi-divine beings, typically female, called *apsarasas* or *yakṣīs*.[356] Thus, they seem to be some kind of celestial guardian figures which are common throughout India from an early period. Two of these figures are particularly instructive. The first (fig. 37) is quite damaged and all that remains is the head, but the figure's wide-eyed stare and fierce grimace evokes comparisons to other ferocious deities in India such as Bhairava. This is *not* to suggest that this figure is an early Bhairava prototype, but rather to point to the tradition of propitiation of ferocious deities as protectors. As is well known, Indian religiosity

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[356] For the textual evidence related semi-divine winged beings, see Chapter 2: The Origins of the *Yoginī*—Bird, Animal, and Tree Goddesses and Demonesses in South Asia in White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, pp. 27-66. For a review of the material evidence see Tiwari, *Goddess Cults in Ancient India*, p. 53 and n. 403-407.

is often not content with devotion to benevolent gods, but also takes care to appease ferocious deities for personal, familial, and clan safety.

The second figure is the aforementioned winged sculpture of chloritised mica schist attached to a volute bracket (fig. 35). This is of interest for the Kharoṣṭhī inscription found on it, which reads:

savatrateṇa niyatito vihare matapitu puyae devadato

Presented by Sarvatrāta in the Vihāra, in honour of his mother and father, Devadatta.[357]

Obviously the figure is meant to guard the *vihāra* to which it was donated, but as this was found nowhere near a *vihāra*,[358] thus there may have been a private shrine within the house that it was meant to protect.[359]

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[357] Sten Konow, *Kharoshṭhī Inscriptions, with the Exception of those of Aśoka* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 100.

[358] It was found in Block J, square 148·51'.

[359] While it is not in the scope of this study as it concerns monastic practice and belief in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, the use of the Kharoṣṭhī script for donative inscriptions long after it ceased to be used for common communication deserves a brief note. Many of the later donative inscriptions found on reliefs in monasteries such as Jauliāñ may have had magical significance, they may have ensured "religious merit through the mystic power of the aksharas." (Konow, *Kharoshṭhī Inscriptions*, p. 99). Thus, at Jauliāñ where a number of sculptures of Buddhists meditating would suggest that a "pure" form of Buddhism (that is a form that adheres to the textual sources) was being practiced, the plethora of Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions suggests otherwise,

> We might therefore think it possible that such ex-voto inscriptions might have been written in Kharoshṭhī even after that alphabet had ceased to be the common one in Taxila, in imitation of older inscriptions of the same kind, which would easily lead people to think that Kharoshṭhī was more efficacious than Brāhmī in such inscriptions, which were more or less some kind of charms, and which would be still more considered as such, if Kharoshṭhī had ceased to be the usual script. It is even conceivable that some of the inscriptions are copies of older ones, executed when the old images and decorations were restored or repaired.
>
> Konow, *Kharoshṭhī Inscriptions*, p. 93.

Local Devotees

Scattered throughout Sirkap are images of various local and foreign gods and demi-gods. Once one takes into account this diversity—from a bronze statuette of the Egyptian god Harpocartes, to a Greek-style goddess figurine, to local mother goddesses—it is hard to categorize Sirkap as "Buddhist" city. But not all sculptures are deities to be worshipped; some are images of the devotee in devotional poses. For example, a female figure sculpted from grey slate found in Block D' is a rendering of a worshiper offering flowers or other items to a shrine (fig. 38). Similarly, the female figure sculpted from chloritised mica schist also found in Block D' is not a "goddess holding a lotus"[360], but rather a rendering of a worshiper offering a lotus at a shrine (fig. 39). Finally, the male figures of chloritised mica schist found in Block C that hold bowls may also be an example of the citizens of Sirkap making offerings (fig. 40 and fig. 41). Even in these figures, one should note the variation in dress and physical features.

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[360] Marshall, *Taxila*, p. 701.

Figure 38: Female figure in grey schist from Block D'

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 212 n. 5a

Figure 39: Female figure in chloritised mica schist from Block D'

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 211 n. 3a

Figure 40: Male figure in chloritised mica schist from Block C

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 213 n. 12

Figure 41: Male figure in chloritised mica schist holding offerings

Marshall, *Taxila*, plate 213 n. 9

Clearly, Sirkap represents a complex mosaic of ritual practice and religious belief. The map of ritual space, both public and private, might look more like map below (fig. 42) than Marshall, Dani, and Dar's map (fig. 5) which focuses only on public ritual space.

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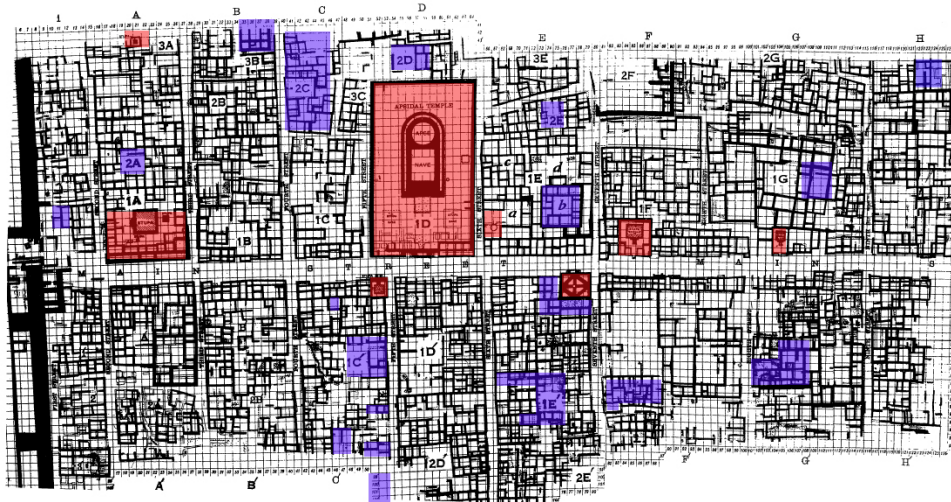
Figure 42: Public and Domestic Ritual Space in Sirkap

Robin Coningham expresses the diversity of Sirkap in this way,

> The pattern of religious, or rather ritual, activities with the lower
> city of Sirkap was extremely wide and varied. Undoubtedly many
> inhabitants and pilgrims focused on the major architectural
> complexes, however, we should not, as has often been done, ignore
> the broader pattern beneath. The relationship between the sub-
> urban monasteries, the major urban shrines and the localised or
> private urban shrines must have been extremely complex involving
> ancient and modern, local and foreign divinities.[361]

But it is not just the patterns of ritual engagement that were complex and diverse,

the content of such rituals, as has been shown, must have been localized and

complex as well.

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[361] Coningham and Edwards, "Space and Society at Sirkap, Taxila," p. 60.

Part III: Numismatics

In Part II a limited geographic area, that is the single site of Sirkap, served as the archive for an exploration of the religious dimensions of the archaeological evidence in early historic Punjab, c. 180 BCE – 100 CE. Part III, in contrast, takes a broader geographical view. It is primarily concerned with the coinage of early historic Punjab and the Central Asian borderlands, but remains in the same chronological frame as the previous section, that is c. 180 BCE – c. 100 CE.

Chapter 4 traces the appearance and development of Yuezhi coinage. It explores the ways in which the legends and symbology, particularly religious symbology, of ancient Indian coinage functioned as a tool for establishing the identity of the Yuezhi in a foreign territory. Chapter 5 explores how the Yuezhi, with their new-found identity and authority, used coinage in creating an Imperial Kuṣāṇa state. An analysis of this coinage demonstrates how image and legend were used purposefully to create hegemony.

In navigating through this argument, these chapters attend to the ways in which religion is integral to the process of social formation, to the establishment of authority, and to the strategies of legitimization.[362] Early historic Punjab is the location of colonial projects on the one hand, the early Greek and Parthian empires set up colonial outposts there, and imperial designs on the other, it was an integral part of the extensive Kuṣāṇa Empire. The distinction between the terms colonialism and imperialism defies easy explanation. Broadly, both terms refer to

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[362] Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

the subjugation of one people by another, and they are often used interchangeably. Distinctions arise in two areas: temporally, imperialism seems to be the preferred term for forms of foreign domination in the ancient world, and colonialism is the preferred term used to refer to domination in a particular moment in time, that of the modern world in the form of European domination. But, of course, this is not always the case. For example, it is common for many of the areas in the Hellenic world to be called "Greek colonies." This temporal distinction has broken down even further as postcolonial writers have looked to the ancient world to find examples of "postcolonial" resistance. [363]

The other distinction is a geographic one. Imperialism is often used for the expansion of an empire within a single land mass, and colonialism implies the empire need not be geographically coherent. Of course there are exceptions to this rule as well. Robert Young outlines the basic distinction as follows,

> the basic difference emerges between an empire that was bureaucratically controlled by a government from the centre, and which was developed for ideological as well as financial reasons, a structure that can be called imperialism, and an empire that was developed for settlement by individual communities or for commercial purposes by a trading company, a structure that can be called colonial . . . Colonialism functioned as an activity on the periphery, economically driven; from the home government's perspective, it was at times hard to control. Imperialism on the other hand, operated from the centre as a policy of state, driven by the grandiose projects of power."[364]

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[363] For an excellent collection of essays dealing with the latter, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back : Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).
[364] Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 16

In this section, I will use the terms interchangeably, often choosing the term imperialism to describe what might, at times, be seen technically as colonialism. This is not a study of the differences of colonialism and imperialism, and the theoretical slippage will affect neither the analysis nor the conclusions. In fact, imperialism does seem more appropriate, as Young, working off of Baumgart, conveys the multi-valence of imperialism as "'a hybrid term', many faceted, covering a wide range of relationships of domination and dependence that can be characterized according to historical and theoretical or organization differences."[365] Or, as John K. Papodapolous writes, imperialism is "at the same time, a culturally-specific local phenomenon as well as a system that transcends specific regions and time-periods."[366] Papodapolous' work on Greek colonial coinage and resistance to such colonialism is the inspiration for the notion of "Minting Identity" in Chapter 4. I follow his work in that rather than focusing on the mythic and literary representations of the coins' images and legends, this study will look to coinage as a symbolic strategy of self-expression in the pre-imperial and imperial context. This chapter, then, links this process of social formation to broader discussion of the academic study of religion.

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[365] Ibid., p. 26.
[366] John K. Papadopoulos, "Minting Identity: Coinage, Ideology and the Economics of Colonization in Akhanian Magna Graecia," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 12, no. 1 (2002): p. 22.

Dynastic Labels and the Periodization of Indian History

In studies covering the period from c. 185 BCE to c. 350 CE, the class of evidence examined determines the nature of the history written, and the differences are striking. Histories based on numismatic evidence cover all of north India and tend to be solely dynastic histories untangling the web of succession and geographic boundaries among the many competing rulers, both local and foreign. Histories based on literature focus on the Gangetic plain. In these studies, the Punjab and its northwestern regions, with its foreigners and *mlecchas*, is invoked as a foil to the purity of those residing in *Madhyadeśa*.[367] Histories based on

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[367] Many texts composed in the years bracketing the Common Era—including the *Mahābhārata*, the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* (MDh), the *Dharmasūtras*, and Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* —all give detailed accounts of geographical divisions. All these texts make a clear distinction between *Madhyadeśa* (the middle country) which is the seat of classical Brahmanism where the normative texts were composed, and a land to the northwest, called *Saptasindhu* (Land of the Seven Rivers), *Madradeśa* (Land of the Madras), or *Pañcanāda* (Land of Five Rivers).

Madhyadeśa is defined in MDh 2.21-23,

> [21] The country between the Himālayas and the Vindhya mountains, to the east of the 'Disappearance' and to the west of Prayāga, is known as the Middle country [*Madhyadeśa*]. [22] From the eastern sea to the western sea, the area in between the two mountains is what wise men call the Land of the Aryans. [23] Where the black antelope ranges by nature, that should be known as the country fit for sacrifices; and beyond it is the country of the barbarians *(mlecchas)*.
>> [Translation from Patrick Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-dharmáśāstra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)].

We can also look to the *Dharmasūtras* for a similar description. The *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* 1.8-15 states,

> [8] The region east of where the Sarasvatī disappears, west of Kālaka forest, north of Pāriyātra mountains, and south of the Himalayas is the land of the Āryas; [9] or else, north of the Vindhya mountains. [10] The Laws and practices of that region should be recognized as authoritative everywhere, [11] but not others

archaeological material simply refer to the post-Mauryan to pre-Gupta period as the "Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa Era." However, in all these histories, no matter what the perspective, the politics of northwest India prior to the Common Era is a well established narrative: with the death of Aśoka Maurya in 213 BCE and the subsequent disintegration of the Mauryan Empire, which ended dramatically in Puṣyamitra Śuṅga's assassination of Bṛhadratha in 185 BCE, the eponymous Śuṅga Empire began its rule of northern India. Their borders were vague, but it is generally assumed that they continued to rule a unified northern subcontinent. A dynastic list of the Śuṅgas is presented in which the surname "Mitra" is the unifying link, and the other Mitras found in northern India establish a commonality amongst the rulers of northern India. The Śuṅga/Mitras repelled brief territorial challenges from the Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians, and Indo-Parthians, but remained unified until the beginning of the Common Era. The empire began to wane and was eventually conquered by the Kuṣāṇas in the middle of the first century of the Common Era.

The Kuṣāṇas, whose foreign nature was overcome by Indian culture, continued the unifying work of the Śuṅgas and ruled a peaceful empire until their gradual disintegration and usurpation by the Guptas. The Guptas were the culmination of this lengthy process, issuing forth a Golden Age of Indian

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found in regions with Laws contrary to those. [12] According to some, the land of the Āryas is the region between the Ganges and Yamunā. [13] According to others, vedic splendour extends as far as the black antelope roams. [14] The Bhāllavins, moreover, in their *Book of Causes* cite this verse, [15] "Vedic splendour extends only as far as the black antelope roams east of the boundary river and west of where the sun rises."

civilization. In the midst of all this, there were many local communities, labeled "tribes," which played a minor role in this overarching dynastic history. Thus, between the Mauryan Empire and the Gupta Empire, north Indian history is dominated by the categories of Śuṅga and Kuṣāṇa. However, these labels are misleading, and a careful consideration of their actual impact on India reveals a more complicated political and religious history.

Śuṅga

More so than the Kuṣāṇa designation, the naming of the first half of the dyad, the "Śuṅga Empire," reflects the Indian post-Independence interest in creating a long, unified history to support national goals of hegemony rather than an accurate historical assessment. This notion of a Śuṅga hegemony comes primarily from Puranic sources, sources written at least four centuries, and often many more, after the events described. These textual references are supported by a single inscription which mentions the rule of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga[368] and two inscriptions which mention Śuṅga rule.[369] The "Śuṅga Empire" was in fact a short-lived, relatively minor kingdom and certainly not the model of a culturally or politically unifying state. Its center, in *Madhyadeśa*, was one of many small

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[Translation from Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras*].
[368] The Ayodhya Inscription of Dhanadeva, see *Epigraphia Indica*, (Delhi: Manager of Publications., 1939), vol. xx, p. 57.
[369] One is an inscription celebrating the rock-cut caves at Pabhosa near Kausambi by the king Vaihadariputra Āṣāḍhasena and uses a regnal year thought to be set by the Śuṅga ruler Udāka. The second is an inscription at Barhut which begins, "during the Śuṅga rule." See Shailendra Bhandare, "Numismatics and History: The Maurya-Gupta Interlude in the Gangetic Plain," in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 76-77 and p. 96.

kingdoms that emerged at the end of the Mauryan Empire, and in the adjoining regions it is doubtful that the Śuṅgas had any influence at all. This led Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya to conclude, "that there was no empire of the Śuṅgas after the death of Puśyamitra and it is, therefore, *a misnomer to think of a Śuṅga age in ancient Indian history* [italics Chattopadhyaya's]." [370] Despite such studies, the idea of the Brahmanical, orthodox Śuṅga Empire following the Buddhist, heterodox Mauryan Empire survives in contemporary Indian history. Many studies still see Puśyamitra Śuṅga as the defender of the Brahmanical faith, boldly fighting foreign invasion and cultural intimidation to bring back the purity of Vedic religion, while still allowing for religious freedom of Indian Buddhists, as Vijay Kachroo writes,

> Pushyamitra showed himself a leader of significance. His resorting to the ancient practice of [the] Asvamedha sacrifice to strengthen the morale of the people who had felt humiliated at the Yavana invasion [which was] perceived [as a] danger to their religion and heritage in view of the peculiar Yavana practices [*sic*]. The movement of the sacrificial horse through the dominions of the independent states, [and] their submission and subsequent sacrifice of the horse must have boosted the spirits of the people and strengthen[ed] their political will. Pushyamitra, though orthodox, was not a fanatic. His orthodoxy need not be taken to imply that he was a persecutor of Buddhist monks. [371]

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[370] Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya, *Early History of North India, from the Fall of the Mauryas to the Death of Harśa, c.200 B. C.-A. D.650*, 2d ed. (Calcutta: Academic Publishers, 1968), p. 22. This very argument is made in reference to the Gangetic plain by Bhandare, "Numismatics and History: The Maurya-Gupta Interlude in the Gangetic Plain," pp. 67-111.
[371] Vijay Kachroo, *Ancient India* (Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2000), p. 253. Kachroo's interpretation is mild compared to some nationalist historians, for example, see the description of Pushaymitra's re-introduction of Brahmanical norms and persecution of Buddhism in B. G. Gokhale, *Ancient India: History and Culture* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1959 [1952]), pp. 46-47.

In the field of Indian archaeology, the persistence of the Śuṅga designation is remarkable. It is still used as the geo-temporal category to cover all of the northwest of the Indian subcontinent between c. 180 BCE – c. 100 CE.[372] Certainly Marshall did not use the designation in his three volume *Taxila*, but the post-Independence state archaeological departments use it to this day. For example, in Punjab, where it is certain that there was no Śuṅga influence whatsoever, all pottery and terracottas found in post-Mauryan to pre-Gupta strata are labeled Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa by the Punjab State Archaeological Department. There has been no attempt to find a more appropriate designation for this period.

Kuṣāṇa

The situation is a bit more complicated with the second half of the dyad, the Kuṣāṇa Empire. Unlike the Śuṅgas, there certainly was quite a strong empire under the Kuṣāṇas who swept down from Central Asian in the centuries surrounding the Common Era to dominate much of the western parts of North India. And while the many histories of post-Mauryan to pre-Gupta period certainly do cite the myriad invasions and intermingling of cultures, they also point to the overwhelming unifying nature of the Kuṣāṇa Empire. As Bhaskar Chattopadhyay states, "[t]he grievances of the indigenous people under foreign rule, if there may have been any, found no expression in any form till [*sic*] the decline of the Kuṣāṇa

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[372] Shankar Goyal, *Recent Historiography of Ancient India*, 1st ed. (Jodhpur: Kusumanjali Prakashan, 1997), pp. 156-157.

power towards the middle of the third century A.D."[373] This unification, it is argued, did not come from the introduction of a Central Asian culture into Indian society, but rather the rulers themselves were drawn to the culture of the conquered. In other words, the Kuṣāṇas became more Indian than Indians became Central Asian.

The most common language used in this argument is one of synthesis, but it is always clear that there is an imbalance and Indian culture gains preeminence. Peter van der Veer calls this "'big Indianism,' namely, the idea that India simply absorbs all foreign influences without changing fundamentally."[374] In Buddha Rashmi Mani's words, this "broad synthesis" created by the Kuṣāṇas tended towards an "Indian expression." For Mani, this wide cultural assimilation of Indian artistic, social, and political values was not a conscious choice, but rather occurred by a "cultural osmosis."[375] This "internal harmony," "unity," and "syncretism" was certainly bolstered by a uniform bureaucracy; however, all these forms pale in comparison to the ultimate unifying force, religion. Mani argues that this tendency towards syncretism ultimately came "from Mahāyāna – specifically its principle of *mādhyamika* dialectic – [and] shaped the thought of the times and helped in developing common culture."[376] Buddhism was not just *the* unifying force, but also the personal religion of the Emperor Kaniṣka. Mani brings together historical

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[373] Bhaskar Chattopadhyay, *The Age of the Kushāṇas: A Numismatic Study* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1967), p. xxi.
[374] Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 6.
[375] Buddha Rashmi Mani, *The Kushan Civilization: Studies in Urban Development and Material Culture* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1987), p. 238.

personages with ease, and thus Aśvaghosha, the author of such works as the *Buddhacarita* and the *Saundaranand*, is held as Kaniṣka's personal spiritual advisor, and Caraka, the author of the great work on Ayurveda, is his personal physician. Kaniṣka emerges as a Philosopher King ruling with wisdom and grace, both traits acquired, by osmosis, from his Indian environment. He is ultimately compared to the other great convert to Indian civilization,

> The conciliatory policy of the Kushans may be compared to [a] certain extent with the policy of Akbar who tried to bring harmony in a postulated manner [*sic*]. They had been so greatly influenced by the Indian sentiments and India's cultural heritage that their process of assimilation, though not sudden or radical, became a reality.[377]

For Mani, the harmony of the Kuṣāṇa Empire derived from Indian benevolence, most clearly expressed in the Indian ideal of *ahiṁsa* or non-violence, which invariably creeps into the consciousness her conquerors.

Mani's 1987 monograph is just one example of such thinking, but others write of the Kuṣāṇas spiritual and cultural transformation in the same way. What is striking in all of these accounts is the attention given to Buddhism as the medium through which Indian civilizational mores can be grafted onto other cultures. In a further move, it is the culture of *ahiṁsa*, an attitude attributed not just to Buddhists or Jains but to almost all early Indians, which conquers the invaders.

Discovery of the Kuṣāṇa Empire

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[376] Ibid., p. 239.
[377] Ibid., p. 240.

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In the first half of the nineteenth century, colonial adventurers with antiquarian interests began finding and publishing coins from Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Northwest India. With the recent success of numismatists working in Greece and Rome in understanding ancient dynastic lines and territorial boundaries foremost in their minds, they optimistically began to piece together the histories of the region. This optimism was not unwarranted as in the following century they discovered whole civilizations that had not been known before. The most dramatic example of these 'unknown' civilizations is the Kuṣāṇa Empire.

Despite being territorially massive, temporally long-lived, and politically and economically powerful, the Kuṣāṇa Empire slipped through the net of modern western historians for centuries. This gap in knowledge is partially explained by the lack of documents left behind by the Kuṣāṇas themselves. But more importantly, they are scarcely mentioned in the Classical accounts of ancient history, the very documents that record proper History. Their empire emerged after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the region, and thus they play a small role in the Alexandrian histories of Ptolemy and Strabo, where they appear as the *Tochari* or *Tokharoi*.[378] Furthermore, they did not go to war with Rome, and thus they do not figure prominently in the Roman histories that so define the history of the centuries surrounding the Common Era. As David Jongeward writes,

> The Kushan Empire expanded essentially south and east of the Amu Darya. Parthians, Scythians, and Sassanians, situated between the Kushans and the Mediterranean, effectively shielded the Kushans

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[378] For a detailed study of the relationship between the Chinese name Yuezhi and the Greek names *Tochari* and *Tokharoi* see Bratindra Nath Mukherjee, *Studies in Kushāna Genealogy and Chronology*, vol. I (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1967), pp. 23-26 and pp. 41-42, n. 222-224.

from Roman armies, and consequently, Roman historians. It is useful to consider that the beginning of the reign of Kanishka, the Kushan's most famous king, is roughly analogous to the birth of a man named Marcus Aurelius, whose presence in history books is somewhat more persistent than that of the great Central Asian empire builders.[379]

In Trogus, Pliny, Justin, and the other Roman historians, the Kuṣāṇas appear only obliquely.

So, the nineteenth century was an exciting time as European antiquarians pieced together a significant piece of world history solely on the basis of numismatics. They created a world of court intrigue and inter-nicene dynastic battles, told stories of fratricide and patricide, and imagined great conquering heroes and defeated monarchs. Much of this work was speculative and would be overturned or refined in the twentieth century, but its value should not be underestimated as much of the work produced today depends on their pioneering methods and insights. But, in time, the early history of the people who call themselves the Kuṣāṇas did begin to show up in literary records—but not the Greek or Roman ones. It was the work of Sinologists and their translations that linked the Central Asian nomads, know to the Chinese as the Yuezhi,[380] to the Kuṣāṇa Empire.

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[379] I would like to thank David Jongeward for allowing me to cite this from a manuscript of his unpublished lecture, David Jongeward, "Kushana Numismatics," (University of Toronto, 2006).
[380] The Wade-Giles transliteration is Yüeh-Chih; Yuezhi is the more modern Pinyin rendering. Both are used with equal frequency.

This textual evidence for the migration of the Yuezhi comes from imperial Chinese historical and geographical literature.[381] The bulk of the material is found in two sources contemporary with the Han Dynasty (c. 206 BCE – 220 CE) that relate directly to the Yuezhi: the *Shiji*[382] and the *Hanshu*.[383] A third main source is the fifth century CE *Hou Hanshu*.[384] These court records document the Yuezhi's four hundred year arc from tribal traders pushed out of western China,[385] to bullying nomadic pastoralists sweeping through the Central Asian heartland, to great rulers of an empire. This empire, at its height, extended from the Aral Sea in the north, through the Amu Darya and Syr Darya river valleys incorporating part of the Bactrian territories now occupied by Afghanistan, and continued southwest

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[381] The most recent exploration of these Chinese sources is François Thierry, "Yuezhi et Kouchans: Pièges et Dangers des Sources Chinoises," in *Afghanistan, Ancien Carrefour entre l'Est et l'Ouest: Actes du Colloque International au Musée Archéologique Henri-Prades-Lattes du 5 au 7 Mai 2003*, ed. Christian Landes, Osmund Bopearachchi, and Marie-Françoise Boussac (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 421-539. See also Michael Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: 1993). The other oft cited source is Zürcher's paper given at the famous 1968 London Conference dedicated to solving the problem of the date of Kaniṣka and the Kuṣāṇa empire. See E. Zürcher, "The Yüeh-chih and Kaniṣka in the Chinese Sources," in *Papers on the Date of Kaniṣka*, ed. A. L. Basham (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp. 346-390.
[382] The *Shiji*, prepared for Sima Tan and complied by Sima Qian (148-86 BCE), contains chapters on the Xiongnu, the South-Western barbarians (the Man), and on the country of Da-wan which is generally identified with the Central Asian region of Ferghana.
[383] Ban Biao (3-54 CE) began the redaction of the *Hanshu*; it was completed by his son Ban Gu (32-92 CE) and Ban Gu's son Ban Zhao (48-116 CE). This source fills in some of the gaps concerning the peoples of Central and Western Asia that the *Shiji* left open.
[384] The *Hou Hanshu*, the official history of the Later Han Dynasty (25-221 CE), was compiled by Fan Ye (398-445 CE). Fan Ye used a number of earlier histories, most of which did not survive. Within this text are notes from and even later date written by Li Xian (c. 670 CE)
[385] On the borders of ancient China, the Yuezhi were particularly known for supplying the much sought after jade to the royal courts. All 750 jade items found in the famous Shang Dynasty tomb of Fuhao have been traced to the region of Khotan where the Yuezhi resided. They were also known for their huge supply of strong and swift horses: see Xinru Liu, "Migration and Settlement of the Yuezhi-Kushan: Interaction and Interdependence of Nomadic and Sedentary Societies," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 2 (2001): p. 265 and p. 272.

across the Hindu Kush mountains, across the Indus River system, and into the Gangetic plains.[386]

The history of the Yuezhi begins with their occupation of the area west of China's Ordos desert, roughly in the area of the modern Chinese province of Gansu, in the third and second centuries before the Common Era.[387] They were nomads who, seeking fresh grasslands for their cattle, constantly moved. The Yuezhi shared the region with others, and their main rival was the Xiongnu (W-G Hsiung-nu), a powerful tribal kingdom that even the great Han dynasty feared. Han dynasty sources, primarily concerned with the power of the Xiongnu, detail a period of particularly fierce fighting in the early second century BCE.[388] When the dust had settled, the Xiongnu forced the majority of the Yuezhi, called the Da (W-G Ta) Yuezhi or 'Great Yuezhi,' to move west, while a minority, the so-called Xiao (W-G Siao) or 'Lesser' Yuezhi,' stayed in the Xiongnu territories.[389] The flight of the beaten Yuezhi westward cannot be underestimated, as Jan Nattier argues, "the significance of the Hsiung-nu [Xiongnu] defeat of the Yüeh-chih [Yuezhi] . . . [was] surely one of the most momentous events in all of Inner Asian history."[390]

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[386] Just how deep into the Gangetic plains Kuṣāṇa power penetrated is a subject of debate. Kuṣāṇa coins are found as far east as Bengal, but this may be due to trade rather than formal incorporation into the empire.

[387] Ganzu is the Pinyin transliteration; the Wade-Giles transliteration would be Kan-su. The Wades-Giles transliteration has, for the most part, been superceded by the more modern Pinyin romanization system. Unfortunately, much of the older work on the Yuezhi uses the Wade-Giles system. So I will make note of the words which might cause problems. Most of the texts remain transliterated in the earlier Wade-Giles system to avoid confusion

[388] Bratindra Nath Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1988), p. 5.

[389] According to the *Hanshu*, Ibid., p. 6.

[390] Jan Nattier, "Review Article of: The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 4 (1991): p. 778.

This event "set up repercussions that rippled to the west and south of northern Turkestan (Kashgaria, Tibet, the Tarim Basin) into the expatriate Greek kingdoms of Bactria, Sogdia, and Farghana; the Indian regions of Gandhara, Kashmir, the Punjab, and Sind; and, eventually, the eastern and western Roman Empire, Gaul, Spain, and North Africa."[391]

By 160 BCE, the defeated Yuezhi[392] had moved through the Kucha region and as far west as Lake Issik-kul, a territory occupied by the Sai, a people identified with the Śakas or Scythians. From this Central Asian Basin, the westward migration of the Yuezhi continued as pressure from the east never ceased, and the displaced Yuezhi continually pushed the Scythians ahead of them, forcing them further westward and southward over a half-century. [393] The *Hanshu* condenses this complicated series of moves and counter-moves into a singular summary,

> When the Hsiung-nu [Xiongnu] had defeated the Great Yüeh-chih, the Yüeh-chih went to the west and became rulers of Ta-hsia [Daxia], whereas the Sai-wang [Sai King] went southward and became the ruler of Chi-pin [Jipin or Kashmir]. The Sai race was divided and dispersed, and everywhere they formed several kingdoms.[394]

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[391] David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 127.

[392] The Xiao, "Lesser," Yuezhi ceased to play a significant role in the history in China, Central Asia, and northwestern portion of the Indian subcontinent. Thus, as Thierry, "Afghanistan, Ancien Carrefour entre l'Est et l'Ouest," p. 421 n. 1 argues, "Par ailleurs, contrairement á ce qu'on trouve parfois, l'ethonyme 'Dayuezhi' n'existe pas, le caractère *da* doit être traduit par 'grands,' car il y a les Grands Yuezhi (*Da Yuezhi*) et les Petits Yuezhi (*Xiao Yuezhi*). Avant la séparation entre ces deux branches, il n'y a que des Yuezhi."

[393] Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, p. 18.

[394] Ibid., 8. Mukherjee's translation from the *Hanshu* chapter 96a.

A more detailed account of the Yuezhi arrival into Sogdiana and Bactria can be found in the *Shijii*. An envoy of the Han emperor wrote of the Yuezhi in the Western provinces between 138 and 126 BCE,

> Les Grands Yuezhi sont situés à peu près à 2 ou 3,000 *li* à l'ouest du Dayuan [Ta-yüan, Ferghana], ils sont installés au nord de la riviére Gui [Kuei, Oxus]; au sud, ils sont frontaliers avec le Daxia [Ta-hsia, Bactria], à l'ouest, ils sont frontaliers avec l'Anxi [An-shi, Parthia], et au nord, ils sont frontaliers avec le Kangju [K'ang-chü, Sogdia]. C'est un royaume nomade, don't la résidence change au gré des déplacements (nécessaires) au pacage du bétail; ses us et coutumes sont les mêmes que ceux des Xiongnu. Ceux qui savent tirer à l'arc sont à peu près au nombre de 100 à 200,000. Autrefois ils étaient puissants, ils méprisaient les Xiongnu; cela, jusqu'à l'avènement de Modu [the Xiongnu leader], qui attaquea et écrasa les Yuezhi. Plus tarde, le *chanyu* [chieftan] Laoshang des Xiongnu tua le roi de Yuezhi, et fit de son crâne une coupe à boire. À l'origine, les Yuezhi étaient installés entre Dunhuang [Tun-huang] et (le Monts) Qilian [W-G Ch'i-lien]; après leur défaite face aux Xiongnu, ils partirent au loin, et, traversante le (Da)yaun, à l'ouest ils assaillirent le Daxia et le soumirent; ensuite, ils s'installérent au nord de la riviére Gui [W-G Kuei, the Oxus or Amu Darya], (où) ils montérent l'*ordu* royal. Un petit groupe de Yuezhi qui n'avait pu fuir, se plaça sous la protection de (tribus) Qiang des Nanshan, on les appelle les Petits Yuezhi.[395]

This narrative is indirectly confirmed by Greek sources which report a Scythian— the Sai or Śaka—migration out of this very region and into Parthian territories by 130 BCE.[396]

The history of the early Yuezhi was closely linked to the histories of the nomads inhabiting Inner Asia. Thus, the culture of the Yuezhi was very similar to

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[395] Translation of *Shih-Chi* 123 lines 3161-3162 by Thierry, "Afghanistan, Ancien Carrefour entre l'Est et l'Ouest," p. 490-491. For the most popular and oft cited English translations see Zürcher, "Papers on the Date of Kaniṣka," p. 360 and E. G. Pulleyblank, "The Wu-sun and the Sakas and the Yüeh-chih Migration," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, no. 1 (1970): p. 154.

that of their arch-enemies to their east, the Xiongnu, and their foes to their west, the

Sai or the Scythians. These semi-nomadic groups, contrary to popular images—

both contemporary Chinese stereotypes in the centuries surrounding the Common

Era and the understandings of modern scholars in the previous century—of

unorganized groups of barbarians, had highly developed cultural formations.[397]

They lived in a combination of wagons and yurts which allowed them to have

"mobile base camps," veritable "cities on wheels."[398] Thus, they could move

quickly but also remain in rich grazing land when necessary. Their societies were

hierarchically organized around a chief who derived his authority from the

heavens: his title *Ch'eng-li Ku-t'u Shan-yü* is translated by René Grousset as

"Majesty Son of Heaven."[399] This internal sophistication was lost on their

enemies, particularly the Han state. As René Grousset writes,

> Their religion was a vague shamanism based on the cult of Tängri or
> Heaven and on the worship of certain sacred mountains . . . All the
> Chinese writers present these barbarians as inveterate plunderers
> who would appear unexpectedly on the fringes of cultivated land;
> attack men, flocks, and wealth; and flee again with their booty
> before any counterattack could be launched . . . [and their] mobility

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[396] Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, pp. 14-16. Mukherjee's reconstruction relies on the Chinese, Greek and Roman sources.

[397] For general overviews of the Hsiung-nu and nomadic culture see Thomas J. Barfield, "The Hsiung-nu Imperial Confederacy: Organization and Foreign Policy," *Journal of Asian Studies* 41, no. 1 (1981): pp. 45-61; René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walword (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 20-23; Ying-Shih Yü, "The Hsiung-nu," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 118-149; and Ma Yong and Sun Yutang, "The Western Regions under the Hsiung-nu and the Han," in *The Development of Sedentary and Nomadic Civilizations: 700 B.C. to A. D. 250*, ed. János Harmatta, *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* (Paris: UNESCO, 1994), pp. 227-246.

[398] Renate Rolle, *The World of the Scythians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 114-117. In this section of wagons and the semi-nomadic way of life of the Scythians, Rolle makes particular reference to the Hsiung-nu (Xiongnu).

[399] Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, p. 20.

of their cavalry and their skill with bow and arrow, were to vary little if at all among the natives of the steppe.[400]

The portrait of a highly mobile, hierarchic paramilitary group centered around a dynastic chieftain connected to the gods and worlds beyond is supported by archaeological evidence from graves. The Scythians and the Hsiung-nu buried the elite of their society in large underground tombs filled with great wealth to be used in, and objects for transportation to, the next world.[401] Finally, these semi-nomadic groups used a savvy combination of intimidation and diplomacy to create favorable trade alliances with surrounding communities, particularly the Han Dynasty.[402]

The Yuezhi brought this semi-nomadic culture to the greater Daxia region which included the land on either side of the Syr Darya; the inter-fluvial region between the Syr Darya and Amu Darya; and the eastern Bactrian territories of Badakshan, Chitral, and Wakhan located south of the Amu Darya.[403] In the process of migration, the Yuezhi divided into five smaller units: the Hsui-mi, Shuang-mi, Hsi-tun, Tu-mi, and Kuei-shang, and by 130 BCE each group had a chieftain called the *hsi-hou*, or *yagbu*.[404] At this juncture, the Yuezhi disappear from the Chinese histories, but they re-emerge a century and a half later, re-united

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[400] Ibid., p. 23.

[401] For the Scythian evidence see Rolle, *The World of the Scythians*, pp. 19-38 and for the Hsiung-nu see Karl Jettmar, *Art of the Steppes*, Rev. ed. (New York: Greystone Press, 1967), pp. 141-146.

[402] Sechin Jagchid and Van Jay Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade along the Great Wall: Nomadic-Chinese Interaction through Two Millennia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), particularly Chapter 1, "Trade or Raid," pp. 24-36.

[403] Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, pp. 14-18. This seems to be confirmed by one of the few references to the Daxia in Greek sources as Strabo mentions them on either side of the Jaxartes, i.e. the Syr Darya, and in the area that adjoins Sogdiana and the Sakia (Śaka) county. We also have confirmation of this in Justin who tells us that the Yuezhi killed the Parthian monarch Artabanus II in 124-3 in eastern Parthia.

under the *yagbu* of the Kuei-shang, on the verge of becoming a great empire. This century and a half, from ~130 BCE to ~30 CE, is a confusing period in Yuezhi-Kuṣāṇa history, but it is also an essential piece of the story. What scholars know of this story comes from a few oblique references in Greek sources, and the rest comes almost exclusively from numismatics.

From the Yuezhi to the Kuṣāṇas: The Religio-Politics of Imitation

This transition from a relatively weak and fractured group of migrants characterized by divisions and competing clan leaders, *yagbus*, to a unified force capable of asserting its power over diverse territories stretching from the Aral sea to the central Ganges is marked by the evolution of their name: from the Yuezhi found in Chinese sources—rendered as *Tochari* or *Tokhario* in the contemporary Greek sources—to the their imperial name, the Kuṣāṇas, found on their coins and in later imperial inscriptions.[405] The rise to imperial power of the Yuezhi can also be traced through the gradual development of the interplay between legend and symbols on their coinage as they conquered first the Graeco-Bactrians, then the Indo-Greeks and Indo-Scythians, and finally, the Indo-Parthians and local indigenous states of India.

The Graeco-Bactrians were the heirs to Alexander the Great's empire building two centuries earlier. Alexander the Great conquered the Achaemenid

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[404] This is one of the most often quoted passages of the Chinese sources, *Hou-Han Shu* 118.9a. For an English translation see Zürcher, "Papers on the Date of Kaniṣka," pp. 367-368.
[405] For details on the various rendering of Kuṣāṇa, see Mukherjee, *Studies in Kushāna Genealogy and Chronology*, pp. 23-26 and pp. 41-42 n. 222-224.

satrapy of Bactria-Sogdiana in 329-327 BCE and then crossed the Hindu Kush into India. After his defeat at the hands of the Indians and his subsequent death, most of his army went back to Macedonia, but a significant group kept a colonial outpost in Bactria. These colonies lost contact with the home Empire in the late fourth century BCE when the Seleucids took control of the satrapies of Parthia, Aria, and Bactria-Sogdiana, effectively cutting off the lines of communication. At the same time the Mauryans took control of the Indian territories of Gandhara and Eastern Punjab ending the already tenuous Greek control south of the Hindu Kush. However, in the middle of the third century BCE, Diodotus, the Greek satrap of Bactria-Sogdiana under the Seleucids, revolted and established himself as king creating the famous Graeco-Bactrian Kingdom. The Graeco-Bactrians began to expand, and soon they crossed the Hindu Kush again, establishing small kingdoms in India, known as the Indo-Greeks.

In some sources, the distinction between the Graeco-Bactrians, those Greeks in control of territories north of the Hindu Kush, and the Indo-Greeks, those Greeks in control of territories south of the Hindu Kush, is not made. But it is an important distinction, as the demise of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom at the hands of the Yuezhi in the early second century before the Common Era does not signal the end of Greek rule in India. The Indo-Greeks survived in eastern Punjab until the early decades of the Common Era.

The Yuezhi's first encounters with the Graeco-Bactrians were violent. They overran and destroyed the Graeco-Bactrian cities, forcing the local inhabitants to flee elsewhere. The most striking evidence for this is the city of Ai Khanum,

located at the intersection of southern Sogdiana and the far northeastern parts of the Bactrian plain at the confluence of the Amu Darya (Oxus) and Kokcha rivers.[406] Ai Khanum,[407] occupied by Greeks as early as c. 330 BCE, became the jewel of Graeco-Bactrian culture in Central Asia. The city was truly a Greek *polis* complete with an *acropolis*, *basileion* (administrative quarters and palace), *bouleuterion* (Council Hall), gymnasium, and theatre.[408] The sovereign Eucratides I, after toppling the Euthydemids and taking control of Bactria, ruled the city from c. 170 – c. 145 BCE. The city was thrown into chaos when Eucratides I's son—Eucratides II, Heliocles I, or Plato, there is not consensus as to which son it was—assassinated him and took momentary power in 145 BCE, but this created a weakened city-state which was ripe for the Yuezhi to attack. The Yuezhi swept through the city burning it to the ground, and the Greek population moved to southern Bactria under the leadership of Heliocles I. [409] There seems to be a disdain shown for Ai Khanum in its destruction, and the Yuezhi, as nomadic herdsmen led by mounted

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[406] Osmund Bopearachchi makes the argument that Ai Khanum is in Sogdiana, not Bactria as is so often assumed, in Osmund Bopearachchi, "Graeco-Bactrian Issues of Later Indo-Greek Kings," *Numismatic Chronicle* 150 (1990): p. 97, n. 69.

[407] Ai Khanum is the name of a nearby Turkish village meaning "Lady Moon." Its ancient Greek name is not known, but some speculate that it is the Alexandrian Oxiana of classical sources, F. Raymond Allchin and Norman Hammond, *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Times to the Timurid period* (London: Academic Press, 1978), p. 218.

[408] David W. MacDowall and Maurizio Taddei, "The Early Historic Period: Achaemenids and Greeks," in *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from earliest times to the Timurid period*, ed. F. Raymond Allchin and Norman Hammond (London: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 224-226.

[409] Paul Bernard, *Les Monnaies Hors Trésors: Questions d'Histoire Gréco-bactrienne* (Paris: Boccard, 1985), p. 103, n.4. Here Bernard amends his date given for the destruction of Ai Khanum proposed in Paul Bernard, *Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), p. 109. This latter work was a preliminary report based on the data accumulated at the end of the fourth excavation season. Osmund Bopearachchi has made the case for Eucratides I as the last Greek king to rule there based on numismatic evidence. At Ai Khanum, many Eucratides I coins are found, but not a single Heliocles I, his son and successor. See also Osmund Bopearachchi, *Indo-Greek, Indo-*

warriors to new pasture land, showed no intention of either ruling the city or inhabiting it. As a hierarchic paramilitary community, always on the move and dependent on the strength of the battle-leader-chieftain who was possibly worshiped in close association to the gods,[410] they did not settle in one area but kept moving. Clearly, this early incursion into southern Sogdiana and northern Bactria was not meant for the settlement and creation of a dominant imperial structure, but was an aggressive raid aimed at looting and destruction.

After these initial raids on the cities of southern Sogdiana and northeastern Bactria, the Yuezhi, now divided into the five smaller clans each with its own *yagbu*, continued south and west to southern Bactria where Heliocles I held a precarious position. By c. 130 BCE,[411] the Yuezhi conquered Heliocles I and the last of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdoms—that is, the Greek-ruled territories north of the Hindu Kush. But there was a distinct change in their character at this moment, and rather than wrecking havoc and destruction, they began to settle down and assert their power in ways other than brute force. In other words, their bullying nomadic ways which they had cultivated in the previous century as they continually pushed the Scythians westward were replaced by an attempt to settle down, create

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Scythian and Indo-Parthian Coins in the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D. C.: Manohar Publishers, 1993), p. 31.

[410] See pp. 15-16 above and Martha L. Carter, "Coins and Kingship," in *A Treasury of Indian Coins*, ed. Martha L. Carter (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1994), p. 33 and p. 38, n. 5.

[411] The date of 130 BCE is corroborated by archaeological evidence, see Paul Bernard and Henri Paul Francfort, *Études de Géographie Historique sur la Plaine d'Aï Khanoum, Afghanistan* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1978); Chinese textual evidence, Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 267-269; and numismatic evidence, see Raoul Curiel and Gérard Fussman, *Le Trésor Monétaire de Qunduz* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1965).

political alliances, and gain legitimacy as the rulers of the land.[412] For historians,

the only evidence for these early attempts at asserting their sovereignty over

Bactria and northwestern India comes from their coinage.

Early Yuezhi Power

On 23 August 1946 at Khisht Tepe, about 90 km northwest of Qunduz,

Afghanistan, workmen unexpectedly unearthed a hoard of 627 coins while digging

the foundation for a new shed near the Afghani border-guard barracks.[413] The so-

called Qunduz hoard[414] contained three Seleucid tetradrachms, and the rest were

issues of Greek kings, both Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek, minted on the Attic

standard bearing exclusively monolingual Greek legends.[415] It was no surprise to

find monolingual Attic standard Graeco-Bactrian issues in the hoard, but prior to

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[412] Xinru Liu documents this transition from a nomadic pastoral community to a sedentary community in India: see Liu, "Migration and Settlement of the Yuezhi-Kushan," pp. 276-283 and pp. 288-290. However, his focus remains on a few archaeological sites, such as Ai Khanom, Tillya-tepe, Surkh Kotal, and Mat, and he only dedicates one paragraph to the numismatic evidence. In fact, he only discusses the numismatic evidence for the already established Kuṣāṇa kings and ignores the possible value of the early Yuezhi coinage discussed here. As for the archaeological evidence, he traces influences from the various conquered peoples on the Yuezhi-Kuṣāṇas and vice-versa, but does not offer any insights into the way these changes took place. For other discussions of Central Asian nomads and their transition to sedentary societies in which the Yuezhi would fit, see Nicola di Cosmo, "State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History," *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999): pp. 1-40; David Christian, "Silk Roads or Steppe Roads? The Silk Roads in World History," *Journal of World History* 11, no. 1 (2000): pp. 1-22.

[413] Curiel and Fussman, *Le Trésor Monétaire de Qunduz*, p. 9. There is an excellent map of the Bactrian sites in the Curiel and Fussman monograph, plate LIV.

[414] The name "Qunduz Hoard" comes from A. D. H. Bivar's early articles concerning the hoard, see A. D. H. Bivar, "The Qunduz Treasure," *Numismatic Circular* LXII, no. 5 (1953): pp. 187-191 and A. D. H. Bivar, "The Bactrian Treasure of Qunduz," *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, no. 3 (1955): pp. 37-52.

[415] The three Seleucid coins belonged to Seleucus I (1), Antiochos Hièrax (1), and Alexander I Bala (1). The Graeco-Bactrian sovereigns represented in the hoard are Diodotus (2), Euthydemus I (12), Euthydemus II (5), Demetrius I (8), Demetrius II (50), Agathocles (3), Antimachus I (14), Eucratides I (144), Heliocles and Laodice (3), Eucratides II (130), Plato (12) and Heliocles I (204).

this discovery all but two known Indo-Greek coins were based on the Indian standard with bilingual legends.[416] Most Indo-Greek coins were minted for an Indian populace, so why were they minting coins that did not fit with the usual language and metrology of their kingdoms?

Numismatists, now confronted with Indo-Greek monolingual coinage minted on the Attic standard, posited that the Indo-Greeks must have had some political control over territories north of the Hindu Kush after 130 BCE, perhaps even as late as 70 BCE.[417] However, further study of the hoard by Paul Bernard and Osmund Bopearachchi has convincingly demonstrated that Greek domination over the territories north of the Hindu Kush certainly came to an end in 130 BCE at the hands of the Yuezhi.[418] How then do Bernard and Bopearachchi account for the metrology and legends of these coins? Bopearachchi suggests two possibilities for the Indo-Greek kings to issue such coins: 1) the coins were a currency for

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The Indo-Greek sovereigns represented in the hoard are Antialcidas (3), Lysias (4), Philoxenos (1), Theophilos (1), Amyntas (5), Archebios (2), and Hermaeus (1).

[416] See Bopearachchi, "Graeco-Bactrian Issues of Later Indo-Greek Kings," p. 79-80 n. 2.

[417] Ibid.: p. 94. Bopearachchi cites Narain, *The Indo-Greeks*, pp. 48-107, and Raoul Curiel and Daniel Schlumberger, *Trésors Monétaires d'Afghanistan* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1953), pp. 62-63.

[418] Bopearachchi, "Graeco-Bactrian Issues of Later Indo-Greek Kings," pp. 79-103, Bernard and Francfort, *Études de Géographie Historique sur la Plaine d'Aï Khanoum, Afghanistan* . This contention, that the Yuezhi had complete control north of the Hindu Kush by 130 BCE in effect ending all Greek influence over the region, has been refuted by Gérard Fussman, "L'Indo-Grec Ménandre ou Paul Demiéville Revisité," *Journal Asiatique* 281, no. 1-2 (1993): 61-138. However, Bopearachchi fights back with a stinging reply in Osmund Bopearachchi and Wilfried Pieper, *Ancient Indian Coins* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), pp. 196-200. In this work Bopearachchi accuses Fussman of "having distorted our thesis" (p. 199), "making contradictory statements" (p. 198), and not understanding the extent of imitation by the Yuezhi (p. 198, f. 80).

commercial exchanges with the Yuezhi, or 2) such coins were tribute paid to the Yuezhi,[419]

> Is it not possible to imagine, in this context, that the Indo-Greek kings were obliged to mint coins of Attic standard for their transactions with the populations of Bactria [ruled by the Yuezhi], who would have only accepted a currency they were accustomed to? . . . It is not improbable that the Greeks in the Indian territories would have been under the permanent pressure of the Yuezhi, in the northern neighborhood, who finally overpowered them. One may well imagine that in their [the Indo-Greeks'] desperate effort to keep their kingdom, they may have paid tribute to their enemies [the Yuezhi], at least to stop temporarily their advance.[420]

Regardless of which explanation is correct, both possibilities only serve to demonstrate the growing economic and political power of the Yuezhi in Bactria. Thus, in the late second century and early first century before the Common Era, the once nomadic Yuezhi now functioned as a loose confederation of incipient states—each ruled by a *yagbu*—asserting direct control over Sogdiana and Bactria, demanding that other kingdoms conform to their monetary standards, and posing a menacing presence to rulers of the territories south of the Hindu Kush.

Yuezhi Imitations c. 145 BCE – 70 BCE

The Yuezhi also asserted their sovereignty by minting coins themselves. They first struck imitations of the Graeco-Bactrian kings they conquered rather

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[419] H. Nicolet-Pierre, *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque Nationale* 3 (1978): p. 100, and A. D. H. Bivar, "Victory Medallions," *Numismatic Circular* LXI, no. 5 (1953): pp. 201-202 suggest a third and fourth alternative, that these may have been prestige issues or victory medallions, both of which Bopearachchi rejects. Bopearachchi rejects both of these suggestions for two reasons: 1) if they were prestigious issues or victory medallions of the Indo-Greeks, why were they found in the Yuezhi controlled territories? 2) if they were exceptional issues, then they should be limited to exceptional sovereigns, but the hoard contains such issues from minor kings such as Theophilis. See Bopearachchi, "Graeco-Bactrian Issues of Later Indo-Greek Kings," pp. 99-100.

than their own designs. As the Uzbeki Kuṣāṇa numismatist Edward Rtveladze

argues,

> Among barbarian peoples, who have no coinage traditions of their
> own, but want to issue coins, there are two main forms of
> development observed. In some cases they issue imitations of the
> coins previously used in their territory, for example: the Yuezhi
> coinage, after they had conquered Bactria, was in imitation of the
> coins of Heliocles and Eucratides. In other cases they overstrike
> original coins and then their imitations, [these overstruck originals
> and imitations] are, according to E. V. Zeymal [*sic*], at a higher
> phase of development than 'barbarian' imitations.[421]

As the balance of this chapter will show, the Yuezhi follow not just the first of

Rtveladze stages, that is the imitation of established coinage, but in time, they also

overstrike the coinage of powerful kings with their own designs. This chapter,

then, is not just a rehashing of old arguments tracing the early coinage of the

Yuezhi; rather, it demonstrates how this imitation was no a mere slavish copying of

previous designs, but rather involved a clever selection of iconographies from the

abundant choices.

By minting coins that would be familiar to those they were seeking to

control, the Yuezhi created continuity between Greek rule and their own.[422] Not

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[420] Bopearachchi, "Graeco-Bactrian Issues of Later Indo-Greek Kings," pp. 100-102.
[421] Edward V. Rtveladze, "Coins of the Yuezhi Rulers of Northern Bactria," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 3 (1993-4): pp. 87-88. For the Zeimal monograph that Rtveladze refers to, see E. V. Zeimal and E. A. Davidovich, *Drevnie Monety Tadzhikistana* (Dushanbe: Izd-vo Donish, 1983).
[422] In the western Sogdian territories, territories which were taken from the Parthians, another branch of the Yuezhi minted coins which imitated the Sogdian rulers, but the legends proclaimed the "*Yagbu*" as the ruler, see Mani, *The Kushan Civilization* , Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 4, pp. 293-294, types 493-495. These are reduced tetradrachms minted on the Persic standard. The legend, in Aramaic, reads, "MaLHAT YaVUG" or "MaLHAT SUG," meaning "King Yavug" or "King Sug." Here, it seems the Yuezhi are already confident enough to put their own name on the coins, but the situation in the Graeco-Bactrian territories was a bit more precarious, and the Yuezhi in these eastern regions did not put there own names on their coins until after the beginning of the Common Era. This also supports the theory that the Yuezhi, in the second and first centuries BCE, were divided into a number of separate groups, each ruled by its own *Yagbu*.

unexpectedly, the two most common imitations that the Yuezhi cast were of Eucratides I and Heliocles I, the last two Greek kings to control territories north of the Hindu Kush.[423]   While the Yuezhi did not choose new legends or new iconography on their early Graeco-Bactrian imitations, they did limit the range of iconography to those images with which they most identified and through which they wished to present themselves to their new subjects.

Eucratides I, while king of Bactria c. 171 – 145 BCE, issued coins with two portraits of himself on the obverse—both busts, one diademed and the other with a crested helmet. He chose a variety of images for his reverses: Apollo, Hercules, a winged Nike, the busts of Heliocles and Laodice, the palms and pilei of the Dioscuri, the Dioscuri on horseback, the Dioscuri standing, and the city goddess of Kapisa with elephant.[424] Eucratides I's coins were not the only coins in circulation. Residents of Bactria would have also been familiar with the coinage of the previous Graeco-Bactrian kings Euthydemos, Demetrios, and even farther back to the Dioditoi, and thus the available repertoire of iconography would have been even greater.[425]   However, the Yuezhi chose to ignore most of these devices and minted

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[423] The Yuezhi also imitated the coins of Demetrius I as evidenced by a single coin, see Bopearachchi, *BNBact.*, p. 52, pl. 4, n° 5. Compare this single coin to Bopearachchi's analysis of the Qunduz hoard where he cites fifteen coins of Eucratides I as imitations (and he is fairly sure that there are another thirty-two, but he needs a more exhaustive die-study to confirm this) and two coins of Heliocles I as imitations, see Osmund Bopearachchi, "Recent Coin Hoard Evidence on Pre-Kushana Chronology," in *Coins, Art, and Chronology: Essays on Pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*, ed. Michael Alram and Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), p. 114 n. 59. In addition, Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 1, p. 102 and vol. 4, p. 295 cites four types of Eucratides I imitations (types 200-202, and type 497 – type 496 is the same as type 200), and in vol. 4 p. 298 he cites six types of Heliocles I imitations. From the Qunduz hoard, Mitchiner cites numbers 472, 582-3, and 592-3 of Heliocles I as imitations.
[424] Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 1, pp. 86-100, types 164-195.
[425] Other designs include a trident, caduceus, tripod, various forms of Hercules, and Athena.

almost all their Eucratides I imitations with the helmeted bust on the obverse and

the Dioscuri on horseback on the reverse (figs. 43 and 44).[426]

Figure 43: Eucratides I Lifetime Issue c. 170 – 145 BC

Obverse: Helmeted bust
Reverse: Dioscuri on horseback

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC* vol. 1, p. 91, type 175

Figure 44: Yuezhi Eucratides I Imitation c. 145 - 70 BCE

Obverse: Helmeted bust
Reverse: Dioscuri on horseback

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC* vol. 1, p. 102, type 200

The Yuezhi made clear choices with these early imitations to suit their own

purposes. It is unlikely the Yuezhi chose the helmeted bust of Eucratides I because

the crested helmet resembles a Boeotian design recommended by the Greek

historian Xenophon as the best headgear for cavalrymen.[427] It is also unlikely that

on the reverse they imitated the Dioscuri on horseback because the image evoked

Castor and Pollux who in Greek mythology were the valiant sons of Zeus. But

surely the choice of these designs to the almost complete exclusion of others is not

accidental. The Dioscuri on horseback certainly would resonate with the Yuezhi

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[426] See Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 1, p. 102, types 200-202. The only exception here is a few obols with a reverse of the palms and pilei of the Dioscuri, see Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 1, p. 102, type 201. There seems to be a typo regarding coin type 200. The text indicates that they are "tetradrachms imitating type 115 above." But type 115 refers to the coins of Euthydemos I as associated king of Demetrius, which are silver hemidrachms: obverse, diademed young bust of king, reverse, Hercules standing holding club and lion skin in left hand wreath in right. (vol. 1, p. 62). It seems Mitchiner meant type 185, which are Eucratides I bronze Afghan obols (~16 grams): obverse, helmeted bust of king right, reverse, Dioscuri with palms and spears mounted on horseback charging right. Type 200 are tetradrachms, making them close to 16 grams as well, and have the same obverse and reverse as type 185.

[427] A. D. Fraser, "Xenophon and the Boeotian Helmet," *The Art Bulletin* 4, no. 3 (1992): pp. 99-108.

and remind them of their own mounted militias and nomadic ways.[428]   Indeed, the

Yuezhi were known in China as great horsemen, but this reputation extended to

their newly conquered territories in Sogdiana and Bactria as well.   As an

anonymous Sogdian observer remarked, "While China is famous for its numerous

population, and Rome is famous for its numerous treasures, the Yuezhi is famous

for its numerous horses."[429]   The consistent manufacture of such coins in great

numbers and flooding the market would eventually begin to make its presence felt

within the communities using them.

The other Graeco-Bactrian king that the Yuezhi imitated extensively was

Heliocles I. Heliocles I was the son and successor to Eucratides I, and after his

father's regicide and the Yuezhi destruction of Ai Khanum, he managed to rule over

the remaining southern and southwestern portions of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom

for another decade and a half (c. 145 – 130 BCE) keeping the Yuezhi at bay.

However, circa 130 BCE, his kingdom was overrun by the Yuezhi as well, and

shortly after his defeat the Yuezhi began minting imitations of his coins too. The

iconic repertoire of Heliocles I's monolingual silver tetradrachms found north of the

Hindu Kush was not nearly as diverse as that of Eucratides I. [430] One type has on

the obverse a diademed bust and on the reverse Zeus standing facing holding a

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scepter and thunderbolt. The other type has a helmeted bust on the obverse and on the reverse Zeus enthroned left holding a winged Nike and a spear.[431]   The imitations of Heliocles I, like those of Eucratides I, were not finely crafted pieces like those issued by the Graeco-Bactrian kings themselves, but rude caricatures of the Greek king's coins. On the obverse was the diademed bust, and on the reverse was Zeus standing facing holding a scepter and thunderbolt. The corrupted legend reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΗΛΙ·ΚΛΕΕ ΔΙΚΑΙ·V, "[coin of] the Just King Heliocles".[432]

Figure 45: Heliocles I Lifetime Issue c. 145 – 130 BCE

Obverse: Diademed bust
Reverse: Zeus standing, thunderbolt in right hand, scepter in left hand
Image: Bopearachchi, *ANS*, 633

Figure 46: Yuezhi Heliocles I Imitation c. 130 -70 BCE

Obverse: Diademed bust
Reverse: Zeus standing, thunderbolt in right hand, scepter in left hand

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, vol. 4, p. 298, type 501

These early imitations of both Eucratides I and Heliocles I, c. 145 BCE – 70 BCE, suggest that coins *were* symbols of political power and *did* indicate sovereignty. The Yuezhi artfully chose symbols that embodied an image of themselves they

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or a bull facing right. But these would not be part of the series with which the Yuezhi came into close contact before 100 BCE.

[431] The diademed bust obverse with Zeus standing facing holding a scepter and thunderbolt of Heliocles I are much more common, see Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 2, pp. 160-162, and compare types 284 and 285 (diademed) of which there are hundreds of examples, and type 286 (helmeted) of which there are only a few.

[432] Ibid., vol. 4, p. 298, type 501. There are other types of Heliocles I imitations, but they were minted much later, after the death of Hermaeus. These will be discussed in the following pages. The earliest attestation to the expression ΔΙΚΑΙΟV or ΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ is on the coins of the Graeco-Bactrian king Agathocles (ruled c. 171-160 BCE), see Mitchiner, *IGISC*, p. 77 type 141. It appears

wished to project to those they had conquered. These images were not new, but rather would also be in the symbolic lexicon of those they controlled. That early symbolic lexicon, however, was limited to the Greek pantheon represented on the Graeco-Bactrian coins they were imitating.

Yuezhi Imitations c. 70 – 55 BCE

The Yuezhi remained in the conquered Graeco-Bactrian territories well into the first century BCE. Meanwhile, across the Hindu Kush to the south, there was political chaos. Between the years 100 BCE – 70 BCE, Indo-Greek coins were minted with no less than fourteen kings' names: Polyxenus, Demetrius III, Philoxenus, Diomedes, Amyntas, Epander, Theophilus, Nicias, Menander II, Artemidorus, Archebius, Hermaeus, Telephus, and Apollodotus II. Further confusion was created by the Indo-Scythian invasion under the conquering army of Maues who took Gandhāra and its most important city Sirkap, Taxila in 90 BCE, pushing the Indo-Greek kings further east. In 80 BCE, the Indo-Greek king Apollodotus II retook the territories lost to Maues, and he was succeeded in 65 BCE by Hippostratus. In the midst of all this chaos, the Yuezhi crossed the Hindu Kush and began their own invasion c. 70 BCE.

The key to understanding the rise of the Yuezhi in the territories south of the Hindu Kush is found in understanding the diverse coinage minted with the name of the Indo-Greek king Hermaeus, Greek ERMAIOY. Hermaeus, perhaps the

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later on the coins of the Indo-Scythian kings, and it is translated into Prakrit, written in the Kharoṣṭhī script, as *dhramiasa* or *dhramikasa*.

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strongest of the many Indo-Greeks, ruled the Paropamisadae from c. 95 – 70 BCE.[433] The length and stability of his rule is quite impressive considering that to the north the Yuezhi, who had swept through the Bactrian plain with ease, were now were encroaching on this territory; to the south and east the Indo-Scythian Maues, who ruled the largest city in the region, Sirkap, was firmly in control; and his only real allies, the other Indo-Greek kings, were weak and in disarray. Hermaeus' political legacy was such that posthumous coins with his image and name continued to be minted in this region well into the first half of the first century CE. The name Hermaeus became synonymous with stability, strength, and legitimacy.

Hermaeus' coinage, both the lifetimes issues and the posthumous imitations, span a period over one hundred and fifty years, and they have created much confusion in the numismatic community.[434] But some clarity has begun emerge in

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[433] The region of the Paropamisadae lies within the Hindu Kush mountains themselves. It is the region that acts as the border between Bactria, which is to its north, and the Indian subcontinent, which is to its south. Therefore, it always has been a very important region: the group that controls the Paropamisadae effectively controls trade between Central Asia and India.

[434] This is quite a complicated issue, but Bopearachchi has given a lucid explanation in a number of places, see Bopearachchi, *Coins in the Smithsonian Institution*, pp. 44-56 and Osmund Bopearachchi and Aman ur Rahman, *Pre-Kushana Coins in Pakistan* (Karachi: IRM Associates Ltd., 1995), pp. 144-158. Bopearachchi explains that numismatists have puzzled over what to make of this unknown king, that is unknown to the literary sources, and the longevity of his image and name. He certainly is not a recognizable name outside the world of numismatic studies. He does not make it into the Greek histories as does Menander who is held up as a great innovator and champion of Buddhism, his name is not linked with the beginning of a new era as is the Indo-Scythian Azes I, he is not attested to in western literature as is the Indo-Parthian Gondophares in his meeting with St. Thomas, and he does not leave statues of himself as do the Kuṣāṇa kings. So what accounts for the persistence of his image on coins?

In 1836 Charles Masson solved the problem by suggesting that there were three separate Greek kings minting under the name of Hermaeus. This would explain the unevenness in style, workmanship, and value of the coins, and it would account for the apparent longevity of the name, see Charles Masson, "Second Memoir on the Ancient Coins Found at Beghram in the Kohistan of Kabul," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3 (1836): pp. 23-24. By the end of the nineteenth century, most numismatists rejected the idea that there were three Hermaeus', but rather linked

recent years. Bopearachchi, working off the insights of K. W. Dobbins,[435] divides

the Hermaeus coinage into ten groups,[436] and he convincingly demonstrates that

only one group of the ten minted in the name of Hermaeus belong to lifetime issues

of Hermaeus himself—the subsequent nine groups are all posthumous issues

minted first by the Yuezhi (groups two through seven), and then later by Kujula

Kadphises, the eventual king who unified the five *yagbu*s under the name of

Kuṣāṇa (groups eight through ten).

The lifetime issues of Hermaeus were issued on the Indian standard and are

clearly the products of good workmanship. [437] The obverses have four designs: the

bust of Hermaeus himself (either diademed or with a crested helmet), a king

mounted on a prancing horse, an "amazon-queen" on horseback, and a few with a

bearded Zeus-Mithra enthroned, sometime the Zeus-Mithra figure is radiate (fig.

47). The legend reads, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ, "[coin of] Hermaeus,

Hermaeus to the first Kuṣāṇa king Kujula Kadphises and placed *all* the posthumous issues in the first century CE, see Cunningham, *CASE*, pp. 297-303. In these hypotheses, Hermaeus is either a pageant king under the control of the great Kujula Kadphises, or he is reduced to a minor colleague of Kujula Kadphises, see also Gardner, *BMC*, pp. 62-66, Smith, *CCIM*, pp. 31-34, and Whitehead, *PMC*, pp. 82-86. For these reconstructions, Hermaeus is not important on his own, but rather his importance comes from his association with Kujula Kadphises and the early Kuṣāṇa empire.

Modern numismatic studies have followed this hypothesis fairly closely, basically attributing the first nine groups to lifetime issues of Hermaeus and only the last, group ten, to Kujula Kadphises. See A. M. Simonetta, "A New Essay on the So-Called Indo-Greeks, the Sakas and the Pahlavas," *East and West* 9 (1958): p. 170; Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, pp. 503-504; and Narain, *The Indo-Greeks*, p. 161.

Bopearachchi, however, attributes only the first group (*BNBact.*, Hermaeus, series 1-9) to lifetime issues minted by Hermaeus, groups 2-7 to posthumous issues minted by the Yuezhi (*BNBact.*, Hermaeus, series 10-21), and groups 8-10 (*BNBact.*, Hermaeus, 22-24) to posthumous issues minted by Kujula Kadphises. I will follow Bopearachchi's version.

[435] K. W. Dobbins, "The Question of the Imitation Hermaios Coinage," *East and West* 20 (1970): pp. 307-326.

[436] Bopearachchi, *Coins in the Smithsonian Institution*, pp. 45-56. He repeats these comments almost verbatim in Bopearachchi and Rahman, *Pre-Kushana Coins in Pakistan*, pp. 37-44.

[437] Bopearachchi, *BNBact.*, Hermaios, series 3-9. Series 1 and 2 are also lifetime issues, but they are minted in the names of Hermaeus and Calliope which the Yuezhi did not imitate.

King and Protector."[438]   The reverses are almost all of Zeus-Mithra enthroned

holding a scepter in his left hand, his right hand outstretched and making a gesture

with the Kharoṣṭhī equivalent of the obverse legend, *Maharajasa tratarasa*

Heramayasa.

The later monolingual and bilingual Yuezhi imitations, groups 2-7, are of

poor quality, both stylistically crude and progressively debased in silver content,

and are minted on both the Attic standard and the Indian standard in continuation

with previous Greek coins in the Paropamisadae.[439]   These imitative issues under

the Yuezhi can be further divided into two chronological sub-groups: early

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[438] The title ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ (SOTEROS) in Greek and *tratarasa*—a Prakrit in the Kharoṣṭhī script, are almost always translated as "Savior." This translation works in the most literal sense–SOTEROS comes from the Greek verbal root SOZO meaning to save [Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 1748]. But its semantic range can be extended to mean "to keep, to preserve, to bring one to safety." It can also mean protector, as in Zeus the Protector. This last meaning is important because often early SOTER coins have Zeus on the reverse, as is the case here. The Prakrit equivalent *tratarasa*, which comes from the Sanskrit verbal root *trai*, means "to protect, preserve, cherish, defend, rescue from,"[Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), p. 462]. As long as we understand the use of the term Savior in this sense, not in the soteriological Christian sense, its use works just fine. But I think a better translation of SOTEROS and *tratarasa* is "Protector" rather than "Savior." The use of a word without the heavy Christian overtones links kings and gods in a protective capacity, as is the intention. The intention on these coins is *not* to suggest a savior in the sense of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, but to suggest the king as the protector in the political sense.

[439] Robert C. Senior, "Posthumous Hermaeus Coinage: Transition from Indo-Greeks to Indo-Scythians," *Numismatic Digest* 19 (1995): pp. 43-72 has offered a different source for the minting of posthumous Hermaeus coinage. Senior suggests that these coins were issued by Indo-Scythian rulers such as Maues and Vonones. He holds that Bopearachchi's contention that the Charles Masson collection of 1833-35 contains no coins of Maues or Azes I (and thus Bopearachchi claims that these kings never ruled in the Paropamisadae) is incorrect as further studies of Masson's collection in fact have identified Azes I coins, see R. B. Whitehead, "Notes on the Indo-Greeks, part III," *Numismatic Chronicle* Sixth Series, no. X (1950): p. 207. Senior then draws out the connections between posthumous Hermaeus coinage and Indo-Scythian coinage by looking at the continuity of monograms (see Senior's table 2, p. 55 for details). However, Bopearachchi does not base his theory just on Masson's work, he includes a number of other coin hordes to support the idea that Azes I and Maues did not control (or at least did not mint or distribute) coins in the Paropamisadae, see Bopearachchi, *Coins in the Smithsonian Institution*, p. 46. Although there is no direct acknowledgment of it, Senior's thesis works off of Dobbins, "The Question of the Imitation Hermaios Coinage," p. 317-319. I have yet to see any recent publication supporting this thesis, and

Hermaeus imitations minted c. 70 – 55 BCE[440] and a later period of issues minted c. 55 BCE – 30 CE.[441]

Almost all the iconography of the early Hermaeus imitations c. 70 – 55 BCE have a diademed bust of Hermaeus on the obverse and a radiate Zeus enthroned (fig. 6), holding a scepter in his left hand, his right hand outstretched and making a gesture on the reverse. They all contain both the Greek and Kharoṣṭhī legends reading "[coin] of Hermaeus, King and Protector." It is important to notice, as it will become quite significant later, the exaggeration of the rays emanating from the head of Zeus on the Yuezhi imitations. This solar iconography connects the Greek god Zeus with the common Mithra.

Figure 47: Hermaeus Lifetime Issue c. 90 – 70 BCE

Obverse: Diademed bust
Reverse: Radiate Zeus-Mithra Enthroned

Image: Bopearachchi, *ANS*, 1326 (*BNBact.*, Hermaeus, series 2 B)

Figure 48: Yuezhi Hermaeus Imitation c. 70 – 55 BCE

Obverse: Diademed bust
Reverse: Radiate Zeus-Mithra Enthroned

Image: Bopearachchi and Rahman, *PKP*, 532
(*BNBact.*, Hermaeus, series 10 A)

In addition to these early Hermaeus imitations, between c. 70 – 55 BCE the Yuezhi continued to issue further imitations of Eucratides I and Heliocles I's

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it has been put into question not just by Bopearachchi, but most notably by Alram, "Indo-Parthian and Early Kushan Chronology," p. 26.

[440] Bopearachchi, *BNBact.*, Hermaeus, series 10-13.

coinage. Once again, on all the obverses of their Eucratides I imitations the Yuezhi

chose to put the bust of the king with a helmet. On the reverses, they continued to

imitate the iconography of the Dioscuri on horseback,[442] but they also added two

other imitations to their repertoire. One reverse depicted a naked Heracles standing

facing, crowning himself with his right hand, carrying a club and animal skin in his

left hand (figs. 49 and 50).[443] The other reverse depicted the city goddess Kapisa

enthroned, holding a palm in one hand and her other hand outstretched making a

gesture. In the field are also a mountain and the forepart of an elephant. The

legend reads in Kharoṣṭhī, *kavisiye nagara devata* (fig. 8).[444]

Figure 49: Yuezhi Eucratides I Imitation c. 70 – 55 BCE

Obverse: Helmeted bust
Reverse: Naked Heracles crowning self

Image: Bopearachchi and Rahman *PKP*, 614
(Mitchiner *CIGISC*, type 166 a)

Figure 50: Yuezhi Eucratides I Imitation c. 70 – 55 BCE

Obverse: Helmeted bust
Reverse: City Goddess Kapisa Enthroned

Image: Bopearachchi and Rahman, *PKP*, 611
(*BNBactr*., Eucratide I, 24 A)

This last issue, that of the city goddess Kapisa, demonstrates how local

religious traditions were represented on coins. All of the other reverses were

deities from the Greek or Iranian pantheon, for example Zeus, Mithra, and

[441] Ibid., Hermaeus, series 14-22 and Mitchiner, *IGISC*, p. 684, vol. 8, type 1048.
[442] Bopearachchi, *BNBact.*, Eucratide I, series 19-21. Bopearachchi, *ANS* , #'s 608 -611.
[443] See also Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 1, p. 87, types 166 and 167.

Heracles. But the goddess Kapisa is certainly a purely local deity meant to protect the city. In putting her on their coinage, the Yuezhi suggested their rule was sanctioned by the local goddess and should be accepted by the inhabitants of Kapisa.

The Heliocles I imitations are almost identical to the previous ones from fifty years earlier, that is, on the obverse there is the diademed bust of a king, and on the reverse is a radiate Zeus (as opposed to a non-radiate Zeus as in the lifetime issues of Heliocles I) standing facing, holding a thunderbolt and scepter (fig. 51).[445] The Yuezhi also add a reverse depicting a standing horse with a raised foreleg (fig. 52).[446]

Figure 51: Yuezhi Heliocles I Imitation c. 70 – 55 BCE

Obverse: Diademed bust
Reverse: Zeus standing radiate, holding thunderbolt and scepter

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, p. 298, type 504

Figure 52: Yuezhi Heliocles I Imitation c. 70 – 55 BCE

Obverse: Diademed bust
Reverse: Horse standing with raised foreleg

Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, p. 300, type 506

Although the repertoire of reverses used by the Yuezhi as they crossed the Hindu Kush expanded, it is doubtful that the full import of Zeus, Zeus-Mithra, and Herkales' Greek mythology or the goddess Kapisa's Indian mythic meanings were

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[444] Bopearachchi, *BNBact.*, Eucratide I, series 24.
[445] Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 4, pp. 298-299, types 502-505.

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meant to be invoked by the choice of these reverses. We can assume the new rulers
of the land did not immediately convert to the religion of those conquered. But the
selection of these particular images as opposed to others that were available
demonstrates that the Yuezhi did make clear choices concerning how they wanted
to present themselves to their potential subjects within the repertoire that was
available. On their imitations, there is a heavy emphasis on kingship and royalty.
Both Zeus and Kapisa are depicted enthroned, and the Heracles figure is crowning
himself. Perhaps the most important aspect of these imitations is a subtle change
that the Yuezhi make to the Heliocles I coins, as D. W. MacDowell so astutely
pointed out, "whereas the head of Zeus had been bare on the coins of Heliocles it is
unmistakably rayed on the barbarous copies of Heliocles. We seem to have a
deliberate change from Zeus to Zeus-Helios [or Zeus-Mithra]."[447] MacDowell
does not link the radiate Zeus to the Hermaeus radiate Zeus that the Yuezhi were
already copying, but his point still has some force. This was a subtle change that
may not have been readily obvious to those handling the new coins, but the Yuezhi
clearly took the Hermaeus Zeus-Mithra as the preferred form of the deity. These
associations with solar deities continued in subsequent Yuezhi coinage and became
an essential part of the Kuṣāṇa Empire's attempts at linking itself to the gods. This
solar symbolism will be dealt with in more detail later. MacDowell also connects
the use of a radiate Zeus enthroned to second reverse type of the Heliocles I

[446] Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 300-301, types 506 and 507.
[447] David W. MacDowall, "The Role of Mithra among the Deities of the Kuṣāṇa Coinage," in
Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies, ed. John R.
Hinnells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p. 146.

imitations, " . . . but instead of the standing Zeus [they have] a riderless horse, which is itself used in Central Asia as symbolic of the sun."[448] The riderless horse may serve as a multivalent symbol: it connects the Yuezhi with solar symbolism and echoes their preference for depicting their powerful cavalry.

Yuezhi Imitations c. 55 BCE – 30 CE

During the second half of first century BCE, the territories south of the Hindu Kush experience a modicum of stability. Azes I once again expelled the Indo-Greeks from Gandhāra and Taxila in 57 BCE, reclaiming western Punjab for the Indo-Scythians. Meanwhile, the Indo-Greeks continued to rule in the eastern Punjab. While Indo-Scythian rule under Azes I was strong, the Indo-Greeks were still quite weak.[449] But this stability was short-lived, as in the early decades of the first century CE the Indo-Scythians in western Punjab were conquered by the Indo-Parthians led by Gondophares. The Yuezhi, too, lost much control of their holdings south of the Hindu Kush to Gondophares. During this confusion and political melee, the Yuezhi continued to mint imitations of Hermaeus coins in and around the Paropamisadae, but their hold was severely weakened.

The iconographic repertoire during this second phase of Yuezhi imitations of Hermaeus coinage, c. 55 BCE – 30 CE,[450] was limited to the obverse with diademed bust and reverse with radiate Zeus-Mithra enthroned. These coins are

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[448] Ibid.
[449] The quality of Indo-Greek coinage in eastern Punjab was consistently debased. It is clear that these small kingdoms did not have much the coffers to support a well organized program of minting coins. See Bopearachchi, *Coins in the Smithsonian Institution*, pp. 61-65.

classified as later issues based not on their iconography, but by their metrology. They were minted as Indian standard tetradrachms, drachms, and quadruples, and are marked by a further debasement of the silver content until they are pure copper (fig. 53). In other words, the more debased the content, the later the coin was minted. The debasement in metal content is mirrored by a degeneration in style.[451]
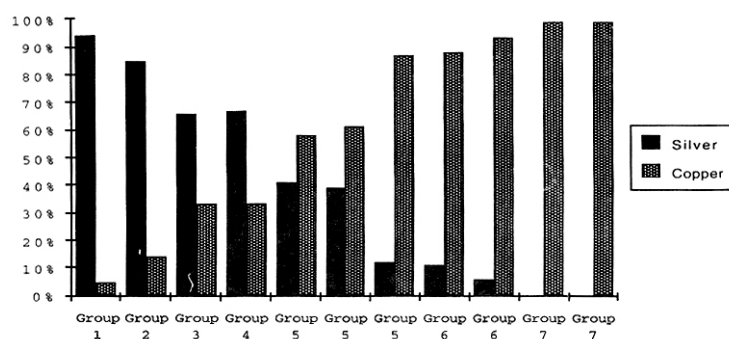
Figure 53: The Silver and Copper Composition of Hermaeus Coins

Image: Bopearachchi and Rahman, *PKP*, p. 41

Throughout this period, the Yuezhi still had not put their own iconography or legends on the coins they produced. This begins to change slowly, and by the opening of the Common Era a few *yagbus* of the Yuezhi began to mint coinage under their own name. These first coins were instrumental in procuring the legitimacy necessary to transition from a regional power to a full fledged imperial state.

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[450] These include groups 4-7 which are Bopearachchi, *BNBact.*, Hermaeus, series 14-21.
[451] Bopearachchi and Rahman, *Pre-Kushana Coins in Pakistan*, p. 42-44.

CHAPTER 5: MINTING HEGEMONY

The Yuezhi's slow transition from a loose union of five chiefs, or *yagbu*s, each having control over only their own, small clan, to a unified community under a single *yagbu* of the Kuei-shuang, the Kuṣāṇa, took almost two centuries (c. 145 BCE – 30 CE).[452] The coinage discussed so far tracks that development from the silver, Attic standard, monolingual imitations of the conquered Eucratides I in southern Sogdiana and northern Bactria c. 145 – 70 CE and the similar imitations of Heliocles I in southern Bactria c. 130 – 70 CE, to the gradually debased silver and copper imitations, both monolingual and bilingual, of the posthumous Hermaeus[453] and the later Eucratides I[454] and Heliocles I[455] coinage on the eastern slopes of the Hindu Kush rampart c. 70 – 55 BCE. This was followed by further imitations of Hermaeus c. 55 BCE – 30 CE[456] in which the metal content was progressively more debased until coins were minted with no silver at all. This debasement in the metal content was coupled with the general decline in the amount of coinage minted overall. However, in each case, although the Yuezhi were minting imitations and therefore did not have the full imaginative range of their own, it is important to recognize that they still made conscious choices as to what imitative designs they placed on their coins.

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[452] Good overviews of the link between the Chinese usage of the names Yuezhi (Yüeh-chih), the Kuei-shuang-wang (Ruler of the Kuei-shuang), and the self-identification of the Kuṣāṇas can be found in John M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 7-9 and Lahiri, "What the Numismatist Expects from the Archaeologists," pp. 1-3.
[453] Bopearachchi, *BNBact.*, Hermaeus, series 12-15, groups 2-3.
[454] Ibid., Eucratides I, series 21-25.

Early Attempts at Minting Hegemony c. 20 BCE – 20 CE

The earliest evidence for the beginnings of the Yuezhi rise to imperial power comes from the far northwestern area of Bactria, on the borderlands of the Parthian empire, where three Yuezhi princes minted coins in their own names c. 20 BCE – 20 CE.[457] The first is Sapalbizes, previously read incorrectly as Sapadbizes[458], who issued a series of Attic standard silver hemidrachms and silver obols. On the obverse he put a Greek helmeted bust right and the Greek legend CAΠAΛBIZHC.[459] On the reverse is a lion standing right, a hill and crescent

[455] Ibid., Heliocles I, series
[456] Ibid., Hermaeus, series 16-22, groups 4-7.
[457] For images and descriptions of the coins, see Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 4, p. 303, type 509-511. The recent and complete discussion of these coins can be found in Rtveladze, "Coins of the Yuezhi Rulers of Northern Bactria," pp. 81-96. The approximate dates given will be discussed below in reference to the Parthian king Phraates IV (c. 38 BCE – 2 CE). I will limit my discussion to three kings, but it should be noted that there are other kings that may fit into this category. Alram, *Nomina Propria*, pp. 290-297, groups together the "Clan Chiefs of Bactria and East Iran" in which he includes Sapalbizes, Arseiles, and the illegible king in the same group with a few others: Heraus, Phar-, Pabes, Phseigacharis, Tanlismaidates and Rangodeme, and Cheires. As I will show in the course of this chapter, Heraus coins should be attributed to the Kuṣāṇa King Kujula Kadphises, and the only other so-called 'clan chief' that could be included easily is Pabes.
[458] As for the correct reading of CAΠAΛBIZHC and APCEIΛHC, see Pankaj Tandon's website CoinIndia. He argues that "The first identified Yueh-Chi prince has always been called Sapadbizes. However, as a close examination of the coins shows, the name should be Sapalbizes, not Sapadbizes. The fifth letter is a Λ, not a Δ. A discussion on the southasia-coins eGroup confirmed that all coins of this ruler do indeed read 'Sapalbizes,' except that reportedly there is *one* coin at the British Museum that carries a Δ. Perhaps it was this coin that first led numismatists (presumably in this case Major General Cunningham was the first) to name this prince "Sapadbizes." It is interesting to note that the name Sapalbizes is more in keeping with a line of Scythian names that are known from the coins: Spalirises, Spalagadames and Spalahores. The prefix 'Spal' or 'Sapal' connects the words to 'the army.'"

In further personal communications, Tandon finds more evidence for the mistaken Δ for Λ. For example, he points to the Pāratarājas ruler Yolamira where the name is written as Yodamira. "Yola" is Iranian for war, and Yuddha is Sanskrit for war. So, these two words split from one another. There are also coins from south-central India where the name is variously written as Chutukulananda and Chutukudananda or Mulananda versus Mudananda. See Pankaj Tandon, "New Light on the Pāratarājas," *Numismatic Chronicle* (forthcoming) and www.CoinIndia.com.
[459] Here, the Greek letter sigma, Σ, has the form of C.

tamgha above,[460] and the legend in Greek right and left NANAIA (fig. 54).   The

second is Arseiles, previously read incorrectly as Agesiles, who also issued both

silver hemidrachms and silver obols.   On the obverse he put a Greek helmeted bust

right and the Greek legend ΑΡСΕΙΛΗС.   On the reverse is a lion standing right,

tamgha of hill and crescent above, and a Greek legend right and left NANAIA (fig.

55).   The third name is uncertain as the obverse legend cannot be read clearly, but

the coin obverses and reverses are similar to the previous two.

Figure 54: Sapalbizes silver hemidrachm c. 20 BCE – 20 CE

Image: www.CoinIndia.com

(Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 4, p. 303, type 509; Mitchiner, *MAC*, type 2824.)

Figure 55: Arseiles silver hemidrachm c. 20 BCE – 20 CE

Image: www.CoinIndia.com

(Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 4, p. 303, type 510.)

These coins can be place chronologically during and immediately after the

reign of the Parthian emperor Phraates IV (38 BCE – 2 CE), as there are many

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[460] For the nomads of the Inner Asian steppes, the *tamgha* or *tamga* was used as a clan mark. It began as a horse and cattle brand to connote possession. George Vernadsky argued that the term "*tamga*" is from early Ossetic, a language part of the Iranian language group to which Scythian pertains. Interestingly, possession is tied to the genetic code of the clan; Vernadsky wrote, "In Alanic (Ossetic) 'clan emblem' is *damyghoe*; 'clan' is *mygkak*, from *myg*, 'sperm,' 'semen.' *Mygkak* literally means 'belonging to the sperm,' *i.e.* 'of the same sperm,'" see George Vernadsky, "Note on the Origin of the Word Tamga," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76, no. 3 (1956): pp. 188-189 and Yaroslav Lebedynsky, "Tamga: Une "Héraldique" des Steppes," *L'Archéologue, Archéologie Nouvelle* 76 (2005): pp. 38-41.

overstrikes of his silver coins.[461]   These Yuezhi princes from north-central Bactria

ran into these far eastern Parthian outposts as they began to expand their kingdoms.

The use on the obverse of an imitation of a Greek bust with the typical Macedonian

helmet signals their desire to continue to influence the still sizable Greek

population in Bactria. This form was clearly copied from Eucratides I coins.[462]

But the coin legends and the choice of reverse designs signal a clear moment of

transition for these particular clans of the Yuezhi. On the obverse, rather than

minting in the name of a previous Greek king, they inscribed their own names on

them. Gone are the names of Eucratides, Heliocles, or Hermaeus: Greek names

that signaled power and legitimacy. Sapalbizes and Arseiles were now respected

names—*they* were the legitimate authority through which trade and economic

activity could continue.

Furthermore, on the reverses, the legend of the goddess Nanā, the image of

a lion, and the use of their own *tamgha* is a clear departure from the Greek and

Parthian forms of iconic legitimacy. All three of these motifs will be essential in

later Kuṣāṇa coinage as well, but for the moment, we should focus on the

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[461] For the coinage of Phraates IV, see Mitchiner, *MAC*, pp. 115-116, types 584-599. For a detailed analysis of the Phraates IV overstrikes, see Rtveladze, "Coins of the Yuezhi Rulers of Northern Bactria," pp. 86-91.

[462] Rtveladze, "Coins of the Yuezhi Rulers of Northern Bactria," p. 83 takes issue with Zeimal's 1984 hypothesis that this form was copied from the imitations of Eucratides I coins (see Zeimal's argument in E. V. Zeimal, "Podrazhanija obolam Evkratida," in *Kulty i Ritualy Kushanskoj Baktrii*, ed. B. A. Litvinskij and A. V. Sedov (Moscow: 1984), pp. 189-190. Rtveladze contends that these early Yuezhi coins had to be imitations of the *original* Eucratides I coins as (1) there are very few imitation Eucratides obols, and (2) that the Eucratides imitations were so degenerate in form that the Macedonian helmet does not resemble the original at all. His first point is well-taken, but this is not conclusive proof that Sapalbizes did not handle Eucratides I imitations himself. His second point is less convincing. There are many examples of Eucratides I imitations which have a fairly accurate imitation of the Eucratides I Macedonian helmeted bust. It must be remembered the Eucratides I

unmistakable assertion of Yuezhi independent authority and pay close attention to how these emerging leaders chose to represent themselves and from where they derived this authority.

It was the Yuezhi and other Scythian migrants who brought the *tamgha* to Bactria. It was "an indispensable thing for nomadic nobility,"[463] a patrimonial and dynastic sign used to mark the possession of their cattle as they traveled across the great expanses of Central Asia. In a remarkable innovation, the Yuezhi transferred the location of the *tamgha* from animals to coins. The meaning was extended beyond the object, i.e. the animal or the coin, to the territory that the coin represented. Therefore, those using the coins with Yuezhi *tamghas* were within the territory of said rulers.[464]

In addition to the *tamghas*, Sapalbizes and Arseiles chose particular religious iconography and legends to assert their claim to power. They both put the legend NANAIA with an image of a lion on the reverse of their coins. The goddess Nanā has a long history which began in Mesopotamia where she controlled both heaven and earth. The Mesopotamian Nanā was intimately involved in power, sovereignty, and the use of force to attain and sustain such worldly fruits. A clay tablet inscription from in the Temple to Marduk in Babylon reads: "Lady of ladies,

originals would have been over a century old at this point, so it is probable that both originals and imitations were the prototype for this form.

[463] Rtveladze, "Coins of the Yuezhi Rulers of Northern Bactria," p. 84.

[464] Rtveladze argues that the difference in the *style* of *tamghas* between Sapalbizes and the later Kushans is evidence that "permits us to say that western Bactria was ruled by representatives of a clan or dynasty other than the Kushans [sic]." This argument misses the important usage of the *tamgha*. Certainly different leaders use different *tamghas*, but it is the continuity of the meaning of the *tamghas* that is important. Sapalbizes introduces the use of a dynastic symbol (a *tamgha* is *not*

Goddess of Goddesses, directress of mankind, mistress of the heavenly spirits, possessor of sovereign power, light of heaven and earth; daughter of the Moon God; ruler of weapons, mistress of battles; goddess of love; the power over princes and over the scepters of kings."[465]   Nanā moved into the ancient Akkadian-Assyrian pantheon as Ishtar, and she was known as the goddess Anāhita in c. fourth century BCE Persia.[466]   In all these forms, she was primarily known as a war goddess, and the lion motif

> was one of the symbols emphasizing her warlike character.   In ancient Mesopotamian glyptic art and statuary she was sometimes shown in full panoply of a war-goddess armed with a bow, quivers, arrows and a sword (or scepter) and standing on a lion . . . [as] Ishthar [she] was supposed to have appeared in a dream in the period of Assurbanipal as armed with quivers, bow and sword . . . [and] was also known as 'arbitress of battles' and 'ruler of weapons.'[467]

In the Hellenistic and Parthian periods she continued to appear in temple inscriptions, votive plates, and coins as a war goddess and protector. [468]   Thus, not only did Sapalbizes and Arseiles assert themselves by not imitating earlier Graeco-Bactrian coins, but they also injected their own patron deity—a deity intimately

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mint designation as used by the Graeco-Bactrians, Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians, and Indo-Parthians) to identify a particular people, the Yuezhi.
[465] Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, p. 86.
[466] Bratindra Nath Mukherjee, *Nanā on Lion: A Study in Kushāṇa Numismatic Art* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1969), p. 11.
[467] Ibid., p. 11 and p. 22 note 28a.
[468] In the city of Dura-Europos during Roman times she was identified with the Hellenistic Artemis, and a temple dedicated to the two, an Artemis-Nanā Temple, was built at its center. Inscriptions reveal that Nanā was considered the chief goddess of the city. The temple also held images of Aphrodite, winged Nike, and Tyche, thus linking her with the functions of these Graeco-Roman deities. A later image at the Dura Temple (c. third century CE) identifies her with both fecundity and war. See Franz Valery Marie Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos (1922-1923)* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1926), pp. 196-199, and a good discussion of Nanā in G. Azarpay, "Nanā, the Sumero-Akkadian Goddess of Transoxiana " *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 4 (1939): pp. 536-542.

related to conquest, power, and sovereignty—into the culture. Their kingdom was both legitimized and protected by the patron goddess Nanā.

Now, the influence of these coins should not be overestimated. These coins were rare and their production was confined to the remote northwestern corner of the Bactria. But while their significance for the contemporary populations of Bactria and Northwest India might have been slight, for the historian, who has the advantage of diachronic and panoptic vision, they represent an identifiable moment when the Yuezhi began to assert their dominance in a different way, in a way that did not rely on the nostalgia of previous Greek or Parthian kings. The use of religious symbols, here the patron deity Nanā, was a key way of asserting this dominance, and subsequent Yuezhi-Kuṣāṇa kings slowly established their hegemony in similar ways.

The Coinage of Kujula Kadphises c. 30 CE – 80 CE: Legitimization of Authority through Image and Legend

It is generally agreed that three decades after the turn of the Common Era, Kujula Kadphises, the *yagbu* of the Kuei-shuang clan of the Yuezhi in Bactria, united all five Yuezhi clans under his leadership and began to solidify control of the territories north of the Hindu Kush and the Paropamisadae. Soon after this successful unification, he moved further east and re-conquered the lands that the Yuezhi had slowly lost to the Indo-Scythians and Indo-Parthians in the first century

BCE. [469] At his death some fifty years later in 80 CE, he left the beginnings of an empire for his son, Vima Takto.[470]

Kujula Kadphises' coinage is prolific, and the very volume of his coinage marks a significant change in the ambitions of this Yuezhi *yagbu,*

> In Bactria the use of coinage after the Greek period was rare, and it is only in the reign of Kujula Kadphises that issues become commoner. There are a few local issues, such as the Sapadbizes [*sic*] coinage (Rtveladze 1993/4), but the use of coinage seems to re-emerge in the area in a significant way with the rise to power of the Kushan king Kujula Kadphises, uniting the Yuezhi tribes who ruled north of the Hindu Kush and in the Kabul valley.[471]

As can be expected from such an active and ambitious king, the coinage is also very diverse. This diversity reveals that he did not rule over an organized, unified empire with a consistent imperial currency; but rather, he was engaged in an creative process of finding the best means to solidify his authority both internally amongst the Yuezhi themselves, and externally over his newly conquered territories. Internally, he needed to put forth the Kuei-shuang name as the patronymic of the emerging empire and convince the other Yuezhi clans to accept this. This was an extended process, one that ended in the dynastic formulation of "Kuṣāṇa". Externally, he had to walk the fine line of imposing his will upon his

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[469] There is a broad agreement that the Yuezhi lost most of their holdings south of the Hindu Kush, but there is still quite a controversy as to who controlled the Paropamisadae. While some scholars argue that the Indo-Scythian rulers Maues and Vonones pushed the Yuezhi completely north of the Hindu Kush, that is, out of the Paropamisadae altogether, others argue that, "[t]his region [the Paropamisadae] remained the unchallenged centre of power of the Yuezhi, who minted the Hermaios imitations there [from c. 70 BCE – post 40 CE]," see Alram, "Indo-Parthian and Early Kushan Chronology," p. 27. Alram is in agreement with the earlier arguments of Bopearachchi that have already been outlined above. I am convinced by Bopearachchi and Alram's arguments that the Yuezhi remained in the Paropamisadae throughout this period. The abundance of Kujula Kadphises' early issues make this all the more likely.
[470] Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, p. 11.

subjects, while at the same time compromising with them to make sure they accepted his authority. As for this latter task, he adapted his coinage to both the regional monetary standards and the regional iconography as a strategy for gaining and maintaining legitimacy. Once he gained legitimacy in a certain region, he continued to experiment with his legends and designs, searching for ways to present himself, and his clan, as the sole authority. He was involved in a process "imaginative remaking" of who he was and who the Kuei-shuang were.[472]

Mints in the Paropamisadae and Western Punjab

Kujula Kadphises' early coins were copper issues from the mint town of Kapisa, located in the Kabul valley at the center of the Paropamisadae, and represent the earliest stages of his rule. [473] In these early stages, he continued the Yuezhi practice of imitating the coins of Hermaeus. The obverses contained the, by now, quite retrograde diademed bust of Hermaeus with a Greek legend

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[471] Alram, "Indo-Parthian and Early Kushan Chronology," p. 122.

[472] Thus Dobbins, "The Question of the Imitation Hermaios Coinage," p. 39, is partially correct in stating, "Kujula Kadphises almost always follows the pattern of the denominations that he found in each of his provinces." This is true for Kujula Kadphises' early issues, but as the balance of this chapter will demonstrate, once he begins to experiment with his later coinage this changes.

[473] There has not been a detailed, definitive study of Kujula Kadphises' coins, therefore, there is not one accepted classification. The six types that I refer to here were set forth first by Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, pp. 12-16, followed by Shrava, *The Kushaṇa Numismatics* , and slightly modified by Senior, *Indo-Scythian Coins and History* . The major difference in the classificatory scheme of Alram, *Nomina Propria*, pp. 299-302, n. 1271-1285, is that he has eight types. His type 7 is an issue in the name of 'Heraus-Kushanno,' which I also include as the coinage of Kujula Kadphises, but I will single these out for separate classification later.

Alram's Kujula Kadphises type 1, n. 1271 is in continuation with the Yuezhi imitations of Eucratides I (c. 70 – 55 BCE). This inclusion is quite interesting: the reverse is the diademed helmeted bust of Eucratides I, and the reverse has the palms and pilei of the Dioscuri. If this indeed is an issue of Kujula Kadphises, and it will be very difficult to prove this, it would have to be a very early issue. It would connect him to the obverses of Sapalbizes, Arseiles, and Pabes. It would also

identifying him as the King and Protector of the land. The Greek legend changed slightly as Kujula Kadphises added the Greek –ΣV. On the reverses, there is either the very familiar Zeus enthroned (fig. 56) or a winged Nike walking to the left (fig. 57).[474] Through these images, Kujula Kadphises projected royalty and victory, respectively, to his subjects. The reverse legend is not a slavish imitation of the earlier Hermaeus imitations coins: Kujula Kadphises included the title, "King of Kings," a title, in this case, meant to signify his authority over the five Yuezhi clans.

Figure 56: Kujula Kadphises Hermaeus Imitation Zeus Enthroned c. 30 – 60 CE

Obverse: diademed bust to right
Legend in Greek: ΒΑΣΙΛΩΣ ΣΤΗΡΟΣ ΣV ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ (of the King and Protector Hermaeus)

Reverse: Zeus enthroned to right
Legend in Kharoṣṭhī: *maharajasa mahatasa heramayasa* (of the great king Hermaeus)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, vol. 8, p. 683, type 1046

Figure 57: Kujula Kadphises Hermaeus Imitation Winged Nike c. 30 – 60 CE

Obverse: diademed bust to right
Legend in Greek: ΒΑΣΙΛΩΣ ΣΤΗΡΟΣ ΣV ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ (of the King and Protector Hermaeus)

Reverse: winged Nike walking to left
Legend in Kharoṣṭhī: *maharajasa rajarasa mahatasa heramayasa* (of the great king of kings Hermaeus)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, vol. 8, p. 684 , type 1048

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present an interesting continuation of the use of the Dioscuri on the reverse, here an oblique iconographic reference, from the Yuezhi to the Kuṣāṇas.
[474] Notice again the combination of the Greek legend ΣΤΗΡΟΣ with the reverse of Zeus, the guardian of political order and peace.

These bilingual imitations with the Greek legend in the name of Hermaeus circulated for quite some time, perhaps ten or twenty years, but they were eventually replaced by a different bilingual copper issue minted first in Kapisa (fig. 16), but later minted in Pushkalavati, the largest mint town in Gandhāra (fig 17-18).[475] These coins, known as the Heracles issues, are the most common coins of Kujula Kadphises,[476] and through these issues we can trace the stages of the military conquests of Kujula Kadphises as he moved beyond the Paropamisadae and into northwest India. His main rival was the Indo-Parthian Gondophares (c. 20 CE – 46 CE), and overstrikes indicate that they were in constant battle with each other.[477] It seems that Kujula Kadphises and Gondophares, along with his satraps, never fully defeated the other, but by the time of Kujula Kadphises' death, the Kuṣāṇas had gotten the better of the Indo-Parthians, substantially weakening their control over the Indian territories.

As Kujula Kadphises gained more territory, he began to assert his personal power by inserting his own name in the obverse Greek legend. There is a precedent for this among the Yuezhi in the Sapalbizes and Arseiles coinage, but while those were rare and confined to a remote northwestern corner of Bactria, these issues were plentiful and circulated widely both north and south of the Hindu Kush (figs 58-60).

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[475] Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 8, p. 681.
[476] Ibid., vol. 8, p. 681.
[477] There are Kujula Kadphises Heracles issues overstruck by Gondophares Nike issues, but there are also Gondophares Nike issues overstruck by Kujula Kadphises Heracles issues. These coins must have been in circulation side by side, competing with each other. See, Alram, "Indo-Parthian and Early Kushan Chronology," pp. 28-29.

A.

Figure 58: Kujula Kadphises Heracles (Legend A), c. 50 – 80 CE

<u>MINTED IN KAPISA</u>
Legend in Greek: ΒΑΣΙΛΩΣ ΣΤΗΡΟΣ ΣV ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ (of Your King and Protector Hermaeus)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*,1044 (Alram 1272, Senior Kujula Kadphises Types 6.1, 6.2)

B.

Figure 59: Kujula Kadphises Heracles (Legend B), c. 50 – 80 CE

<u>MINTED IN PUSHKALAVATI</u>
Legend in Greek: ΚΑΔΦΙΖΟΥ ΣΥ ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ (of Kadphises Your Hermaeus)

Image: Alram, 1273

C.

Figure 60: Kujula Kadphises Heracles (Legend C), c. 50 – 80 CE

<u>MINTED IN PUSHKALAVATI</u>
Legend in Greek: ΚΟΖΟΥΛΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΖΟΥ ΚΟΡΣΝΑΟΥ (of Kujula Kadphises Kushana)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISCI,* 1049 (Alram 1274-5)

Obverse: diademed bust to right
Legend in Greek: see right column

Reverse: Heracles standing facing, holding club and animal skin draped over right arm
Legend in Kharoṣṭhī: *kujula kasasa kushana yavugasa dhramathidasa* (of Kujula Kadphises, Kushana *Yagbu*, steadfast in the Law)

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The Greek legends on the obverses show the way in which Kujula Kadphises experimented with his name on the coins as he conquered new territories to the east. The legends progress from their earlier formulation, ΒΑΣΙΛΩΣ ΣΤΗΡΟΣ ΣΥ ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ, to a legend where he inserts his name alongside that of Hermaeus, ΚΑΔΦΙΖΟΥ ΣΥ ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ, to a legend where he drops the name Hermaeus and puts his full name, ΚΟΖΟΥΛΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΖΟΥ ΚΟΡΣΝΑΟΥ, "of Kujula Kadphises Kushana."[478] These obverses, then, were hybrids meant for the Greek speakers of the region. Kujula Kadphises combined previously articulated ways of projecting power and legitimacy—the Greek bust, Greek coin design, and the Greek name Hermaeus—with his own name. That he introduced his own name slowly, attaching himself first to Hermaeus before going it alone, suggests a clever political maneuvering whereby he asserts himself slowly, rather than risk complete rejection.

On the reverses of these coins, the Prakrit legend in the Kharoṣṭhī script remains consistent. Here, Kujula Kadphises announces himself as the *yagbu* of the Kuṣāṇas, as one who is steadfast in the *Dharma*, or the Law. The image of Heracles with a club and an animal skin draped over his arm suggests power and strength. Again, the use of Greek deities does not indicate an allegiance to Greek forms of religious belief and ritual, but rather is a strategy to build legitimacy. Understanding this process is essential to understanding later Kuṣāṇa issues that include gods and goddesses from a range of pantheons: Greek, Iranian, and Indian.

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[478] See Alram, *Nomina Propria*, p. 300, n. 1272-1275 for details on this very important progression of Kujula Kadphises' legends.

As Kujula Kadphises gained confidence in his ability to rule Gandhāra, he began to experiment with different types of coins. A rare coin type minted in only Gandhāra, the so-called "Macedonian Soldier" type, identifies the sovereign on the obverse as Kujula Kadphises the Kushan, ΚΟΖΟΥΛΟ ΚΑΔ(ΟΦΙΗΕΙ) ΚΟΡΣΑΝ, and on the reverse uses the formulation, in Kharoṣṭhī, *kuṣaṇa yavuasa kuyula kasvasa*, of Kujula Kadphises, Kushana *Yagbu*. The reverse design of the soldier suggests a powerful army under his rule (fig. 61).

Figure 61: Kujula Kadphises Soldier, c. 50 – 80 CE

Obverse: helmeted bust right
Legend in Greek: ΚΟΖΟΥΛΟ ΚΑΔ(ΟΦΙΗΕΙ) ΚΟΡΣΑΝ

Reverse: Helmeted soldier advancing right with shield and spear
Legend in Kharoṣṭhī: *kuṣaṇa yavuasa kuyula kasvasa* (of Kujula Kadphises, Kushana *Yagbu*)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, 1052

Mints in Chach

To the north of Gandhāra, in the region of Chach, the Indo-Parthian satrap Zeionises/Jihonika also came under the sway of Kujula Kadphises. Here, Kujula Kadphises copies the Bull/Camel coin design of Zeionises almost exactly: on the obverse is a humped bull, and the reverse has a camel (fig. 62). Once again, however, he used the legend to assert himself as the ruler of the territory. But here

he goes one step further and refers to himself as *devaputrasa*, or, the "Son of the Gods."

Figure 62: Kujula Kadphises Bull and Camel, c. 60 – 80 CE

Obverse: humped bull walking to right
Legend in Greek:
Reverse: Camel walking to right
Legend in Kharoṣṭhī: *maharayasa rayatirayasa devaputrasa kuyula kara kapasa* (of the Great King, King of Kings, Kujula Kara[479] Kadphises, the Son of the Gods)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, 1055 (variations of legend to 1060)

Similar to the issues in Gandhāra, Kujula Kadphises also minted another series of coins in Chach that explicitly identifies him as the *Yagbu* in both Greek and Prakrit (fig. 63).

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[479] The word "*kara*" is not explained by any of the numismatists. It seems to be an extension of Kujula Kadphises name.

Figure 63: Kujula Kadphises King lounging on Curule chair, c. 50 – 80 CE

Obverse: diademed bust right
Legend in Greek: ΚΟΖΟΛΑ ΚΑΔΑΦΕΣ ΧΟΡΑΝΟΥ ΖΑΟΟΥ (Kujula Kadphises Kushana *Yagbu*)

Reverse: King seated in curule chair
Legend in Kharoṣṭhī: *kuṣaṇasa yauasa kuyula kaphsasa sachadhramathidasa* (of the Kushan *Yagbu* Kujula Kadphises, steadfast in the true law)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, 1053 "Roman type copper"

The obverse is a portrait taken not from previous Greek models such as Hermaeus or Eucratides I busts, but from Roman coinage. The reverse of this coin is important for its iconography. The King sitting in a roman type curule chair is dressed in typical Indo-Scythian clothing: a pointed hat, large boots, trousers, and carrying a sword. This is the first time a Yuezhi leader put an identifiable image on a coin, there is no mistaking this for a Greek king. In addition, the full-length portrait is also important, "In the coin symbolism of the ancient world, the depiction of the full figure of a prince on coins is considered a sign of the heightened status of the ruler."[480]

Finally, also in Chach, there is an interesting issue of Kujula Kadphises that has created much controversy (fig. 64). On the obverse of this copper coin is a

figure in the cross-legged position holding an object, perhaps a flower.[481] On the reverse there is a standing Zeus holding a long scepter. These coins resonate with other such images of cross-legged figures on the coins of Maues and Azes I.[482] The figure on the coins of Kujula Kadphises has been identified as the Buddha by many including R. B. Whitehead, Vincent Smith, and more recently, Satya Shrava.[483] The great interpreter of the iconography of Hinduism, J. N. Banerjea, suggests that the figure is Śiva.[484] These identifications have been refuted by many, including Marshall, Coomaraswamy, and Rosenfield.[485]

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[480] Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, p. 13.

[481] Mitchiner, *IGISC*, p. 689 suggests that the object is a flower, others, including Shrava, *The Kushaṇa Numismatics*, p. 71 are not so sure.

[482] For images of the Maues coins see Whitehead, *PMC*, pl. X no. 31; Gardner, *BMC*, pl. XVII no. 5; Smith, *CCIM*, p. VIII no. 4. For images of the Azes coins see Whitehead, *PMC*, pl. Xi no. 195 and Gardner, *BMC*, pl. XIX no. 1. However, Robert Senior's study of Indo-Scythian coinage has, by far, the best drawn images of these coins, see Senior, *Indo-Scythian Coins and History*, p. 149

[483] See Whitehead, *PMC*, pp. 173 and 181, pl. XVII, 29; Vincent Arthur Smith, "Numismatic Notes and Novelties II," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* LXVI (1897): p. 300; Shrava, *The Kushaṇa Numismatics*, pp. 71-72. The seated figures on the Maues and Azes coins have also been identified as the Buddha, see Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, p. 400 and M. Longworth Dames, "Review of Whitehead 1914," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1914): p. 793.

[484] Jitendra Nath Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, 4th ed. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1985 [1956]), p. 112 n. 2.

[485] Marshall, *Taxila*, pp. 792, 818, and 840; Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, *The Origin of the Buddha Image*, 1st Indian ed. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972 [1927]), p. 12; Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, pp. 14-15.

Figure 64: Kujula Kadphises Seated King/Zeus in cross legged position, c. 50 – 80 CE

Obverse: King seated cross-legged facing; left hand on hip, raised with hand holding flower
Legend in Kharoṣṭhī: *kuyula kadaphasa kuṣaṇa* (of Kujula Kadphises, the Kushan)

Reverse: Zeus standing to right, holding long scepter in left hand, right hand outstretched
Legend in Greek: ΚΟΖΟΛΑ ΧΟΡΑΝΟΥ ΖΑΟΟΥ (of Kujula Kushana *Yagbu*)

Image: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, 1054 "Zeus type"

Currently, most scholars identify the image as the king himself. Thus, the image is not trying to depict the Buddha, nor suggest the blessing of the Buddha is with the king, nor does it imply that Kujula Kadphises' personal religion is Buddhism, as some have suggested.[486] But rather, as David Gordon White argues, "in the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era, the lotus posture [that is, the cross-legged seated position] was a mark of royal sovereignty: royal gods or goddesses, their priests and kings, sat enthroned in this posture, upon a dais, lotus, or cushion."[487] White continues by citing Joe Cribb's assessment of a first century

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[486] For example, see A. K. Narain, "Indo-Europeans in Inner Asia," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 162.
[487] In forthcoming 2007, David Gordon White, "Never Have I Seen Such Yogis, Brother: Yogis, Warriors, and Sorcerers in Ancient India," in *Ancient to Modern Religion, Power, and Community in India*, ed. Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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CE sculpted image from the Swāt Valley, "[w]hile crossed legs and folded hands, postures associated with the practice of meditation, are characteristic of Buddha and Bodhisattva images . . . a notable precedent for these postures within the secular context exists in the image of the seated king on the Maues coin."[488]

While it is now generally accepted by scholars, except for those such as Shrava, that the seated figure is not the Buddha or Śiva, Cribb's insight has been overlooked by most. The arguments against the figure as Buddha stem neither from a contextual understanding of the purpose of Kujula's coinage nor from a nuanced understanding of religion in the early historic period. Rather, these arguments invariably posit that the image does not look like the other iconographic representations of the Buddha in sculpture nor does it match descriptions of the Buddha in scripture, thus, it cannot be the Buddha.[489] These comparisons, while they do end up with the correct conclusion, are flawed in two interrelated ways. First, there is the assumption that early images of the Buddha would be uniform in their adherence to some kind of universal standard. Similarly, these comparisons assume that only the scriptural depiction of the Buddha would be translated into iconography. The local quality of art and religion is flattened by the modern idea of "Buddhism" as a fully formed, coherent religion in the centuries surrounding the Common Era.

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[488] Elizabeth Errington and Joe Cribb, *The Crossroads of Asia: Transformation in Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan, An Exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 6 October - 13 December 1992* (Cambridge: Ancient India and Ancient Iran Trust, 1992), p. 169.

Minting as Heraus-Kushanno[490]

Kujula Kadphises made a radical break with all previous Yuezhi coinage late in his rule when he struck his 'Heraus-Kushanno' coins in Bactria c. 50 – 80 CE.[491] The design and placement of the iconography and legends are *structurally* similar to the later Yuezhi imitations of the Graeco-Bactrian Eucratides I c. 70 – 55 BCE, but they mark a radical break with the *content* of previous iconography and legends.[492] Since these coins represent such an important transition in the history of the Yuezhi/Kuṣāṇas, it is worth detailing the three main types extensively.

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[489] See Savita Sharma, *Early Indian Symbols: Numismatic Evidence* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1990), pp. 162-163; Chattopadhyay, *The Age of the Kushāṇas*, pp. 185-188; Chakraborty, *Socio-Religious and Cultural Study of the Ancient Indian Coins*, pp. 184-188.

[490] In an attempt to maintain some continuity with almost all the work written on these particular coins, I will keep the name "Heraus" for these coins. But, as will be shown in the balance of this chapter, I agree with Joe Cribb that Kujula Kadphises used the term HIAOY for "king" or "*yagbu*," and took his own name to be KOPPANOY, transliterated as "Kushanno." I will refer to these coins as Kujula Kadphises' Heraus-Kushanno issues. Also confusing is the various spellings of this name. Heraus is written as "Heraeus" or Heraios" in other works, but they all refer to this same set of coins.

[491] The most complete catalogue of Heraus-Kushanno coins can be found in Joe Cribb, "The 'Heraus' Coins: Their Attribution to the Kushan King Kujula Kadphises, c. AD 30-80," in *Essays in Honour of Robert Carson and Kenneth Jenkins*, ed. R. A. G. Carson, et al. (London: Spink, 1993), p. 109-119. This article has been quite controversial for some of its bold interpretive claims, but there is no doubt that Cribb's catalogue is the standard. As for his chronological claims, namely that the 'Heraus' coins (he puts scare marks around Heraus as he thinks this is not his personal name, but a title meaning 'king') were actually issued by Kujula Kadphises in the late first century CE, while his radical reformulation of the Heraus coins is not accepted by all, it has found acceptance with Michael Alram and Robert Senior. See Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 4, pp. 304-306, types 514-517, for his listing the "Heraios" coinage.

[492] Early efforts to connect Heraus-Kushanno coins to Graeco-Bactrian coinage by Cunningham and Gardner mistakenly assumed that they followed the lifetime issues of Eucratides I (c. 170 – 145 BCE). This faulty assumption led many subsequent numismatists to date the Heraus-Kushanno coins to the second century BCE. However, as was demonstrated above, two series of Eucratides I imitations were issued by the nomadic Yuezhi, one series as they settled in Bactria c. 145 – 70 BCE, and another series as they moved into India c. 70 – 55 BCE. It is this last series that is the model for the structural designs of the iconography and the placement of the legends. See Cribb, "'Heraus' Coins," p. 120.

The first two types are a silver tetradrachm and a silver obol minted on a reduced Attic standard, a common metrology for Graeco-Bactrian coins minted in northern Afghanistan.[493]

1. Silver Tetradrachm (fig. 65)[494]

> Obverse: Bust of man to right, with long hair to below ear level, tied in diadem with short ties at back, and with tunic collar visible around neck. The man's features are distinctive, with a well defined moustache, hooked nose, heavy jowls, jutting chin, and large eyes with raised eyebrows.
>
> Reverse: Male figure riding horse to right. The head of the man appears to be the same as that shown on the obverse, but with less detail. He wears a tunic, with the same collar as on the obverse, and trousers. He carries a bow and quiver. The horse stands to the right with the front far leg raised, perhaps the tail is braided. Behind the rider's head a small winged Nike, in Greek dress, flies to the right about to crown the rider.
>
> Legend on reverse only: starting from top left of coin and curving around the top to the right: ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΗΡΑΟΥ;[495] along the bottom in a

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[493] The find-spots of these coins are also in northern Afghanistan, and thus they can be firmly located in Bactria. For a map of hoard locations, see Boris A. Staviksy and Paul Bernard, *La Bactriane sous les Kushans: Problemes d'Histoire et de Culture* (Paris: J. Maisonneuve, 1986), p. 135, cited in Cribb, "'Heraus' Coins," p. 119, n. 13.

[494] In the following descriptions of all three types, I use the language of Cribb, "'Heraus' Coins," p. 109-119, in order to remain consistent, but I have shortened some of the descriptions, focusing on what is important for this study.

[495] Reading the legends on Heraus-Kushanno coins can be confusing. That confusion is caused by both the ill-formed letters of the actual legends themselves and the similarity of two Bactrian Greek letters. I use the transliterated letter P to indicate two different letters: one, it is a Greek *rho*, but in the actual legend it is poorly formed and looks like an -*I*. The same -*I* is also used to form a Bactrian Greek letter with the phonetic value -*Ṣ*. In ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΗΡΑΟΥ, the *rho* has the phonetic value of a *rho*, that is "R." In KOPPANOY, the *rho* has the phonetic value of -*Ṣ*.

straight line under the horse's legs: KOPPANOY; and in smaller letters placed within the legs of the prancing horse: ΣΑΝΑΒ.

Figure 65: Kujula Kadphises Heraus-Kushanno Silver Tetradrachm c. 50 – 80 CE

Figure 66: Yuezhi Eucratides I Imitation Tetradrachm c. 70 – 55 BCE

Image Source: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, p. 304, Type 514

Image Source: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, p. 102, type 200

2. Silver Obol (fig. 267):

Obverse: The design is the same as that on the silver tetradrachms.

Reverse: A standing male figure facing right. The detail of head and dress are the same as those of the mounted figure on the tetradrachm, but the short skirted bottom of the tunic can now be discerned.

Legend on reverse only: two vertical lines to be read from top to bottom. On the left, the same legend as the last section of the arched inscription on the tetradrachm: HPAOY. On the right, again the same legend as below the horse's legs on the tetradrachm: KOPPANOY.

Figure 67: Kujula Kadphises Heraus-Kushanno Silver Obol c. 50 – 80 CE

Minted by first Kuṣāṇa King

Image Source: Mitchiner, *CIGISC*, p. 305, Type 515

Figure 68: Yuezhi Eucratides I Imitation Obol c. 70 – 55 BCE

Minted by Yuezhi

Image Source: Bopearachchi and Rahman *PKP*, 614
(Mitchiner *CIGISC*, type 166 a)

The third type of Heraus coin is known only by two actual coins. They are made of copper and pertain to a series of coins from western Punjab.

3. Copper Coins (figs. 69 and 70):

    Obverse: Although they are quite worn, the central design is a version of the design on the silver tetradrachm, exhibiting similar hair styles and moustaches. There is a Kharoṣṭhī monogram which reads *jatha*.

    Reverse: The design and framing inscription are the same as those which appear on the reverse of the silver tetradrachm (neither specimen has the full inscription due to the placing of the die, but Cribb demonstrates that they were meant to have the full inscription), except that the bottom inscription is curved, not straight. The inscription through the horse's legs (on the silver tetradrachm, ΣΑΝΑΒ) is missing as well, but the Kharoṣṭhī letter *bu* appears in the same position of the final B on the silver tetradrachm.

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Figure 69: Kujula Kadphises Heraus-Kushanno Copper c. 50 - 80 CE

Image Source: Cribb, "'Heraus Coins'", p. 118.

Figure 70: Kujula Kadphises Heraus-Kushanno Copper Drawing of Image on left

Image Source: Cribb, "'Heraus' Coins", p. 118.

The parallels between the structural design of the Yuezhi later Eucratides I imitations and the Heraus-Kushanno coins is important for more than just the *terminus post quem* they provide; the clear imitation of the legend placement on the reverse reveals the way in which Kujula Kadphises sought to identify himself. On the Eucratides I tetradrachm coin reverses, the arched legend at the top of the coin, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ, indicates the title and disposition of the sovereign, in this case "of the king, the great." The straight line legend on the bottom of the coin, ΕΥΚΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ, indicates the name of the sovereign, "Eucratides." And in the general field of the coin there are various monograms identifying the location of the mint. When this design logic is applied to the Heraus-Kushanno coins, it seems the *name* of the issuer is not Heraus, but Kushanno. The curved legend at the top of the Heraus-Kushanno coins reads: ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΥΝΤΟΣ ΗΙΑΟΥ, or "of the tyrant, the king."[496] The straight legend on the bottom of the coins reads ΚΟΡΡΑΝΟΥ, or "Kushanno." As for the letters within the feet of the prancing

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horse, ΣANAB, their placement and smaller size (which suggests that their function is not connected to the rest of the inscription) occupies the position of the mint responsible for its production.[497]

The intended meaning of these words is confirmed by the legend placement on the Heraus-Kushanno silver obols. On the Yuezhi later Eucratides I obol imitations the left vertical legend is the name of the king, EYKPATIΔOY, and the right vertical legend is his title, BAΣIΛEΩΣ. On the Kujula Kadphises Heraus-Kushanno obols, similarly, the left vertical legend reads KOPPANOY, which in this case would mean the name of the sovereign is "Kushanno," and the right vertical legend reads HIAOY, or "King."

Kujula Kadphises' 'Heraus-Kushanno' coins, then, are more properly 'Kushanno' coins. In the center of the emerging empire, that is Bactria, he took the moniker Kushanno not just as a descriptor of his clan, but for himself. Kushanno is the rendering of clan name Kuei-shuang, one of the five divisions of the Yuezhi mentioned in the HHS.[498] The appellation 'Yuezhi' was not a self-referential term of these central Asian nomads, but a name given to them by the Chinese

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[496] Cribb, "'Heraus' Coins," p. 130, suggests that HIAOY parallels Kujula Kadphises' use of ZAOOY to mean king.
[497] See Chattopadhyay, *The Age of the Kushāṇas*, pp. 13-14 where he cites F. W. Thomas, *Indian Antiquary* (1881): p. 215. F. W. Thomas suggested an interesting reading of ΣANAB over a century ago which fits well with Cribb's understanding of the significance of the legend arrangements. Thomas argues that first three letters, ΣAN, are the Greek equivalent to *saṁ*, the abbreviation for *saṁvatsara*. The fourth letter A is equivalent to the Greek numeral equal to 1, and the final B denotes a particular mint. Whether this is a completely satisfactory explanation or not, it does work well with Cribb's notion that ΣANAB does not mean Śaka as many numismatists have previously thought, but is a mint mark. For an extensive historiographical discussion of the varies meanings concerning the position of the legend ΣANAB on Heraus-Kushanno coins.
[498] There is scholarly consensus that Kuṣāṇa is a particular rendering of Kuei-shuang. For the fine philological details see Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the Kushana Empire*, pp. 1-3.

chroniclers. It is doubtful if these five clans ever thought of themselves collectively as 'the Yuezhi,' but rather they most likely continued to call themselves by their individual clan names. It is not until the turn of the Common Era that they are able to present themselves to others on their own terms in visual media. Kujula Kadphises gained the confidence to name himself and the power to represent himself in the public sphere.

It is not just the content of the legend that announced the arrival of this power, but Kujula Kadphises also uses iconography to reinforce his dominance. His most innovative move was to put his own image on these coin obverses. This was the first time a Yuezhi leader used his own likeness on coins, and his portrait is clearly meant to depict a non-Greek ruler. Rather than the fine-boned features of the Greek sovereigns, the bust on Kujula Kadphises Heraus-Kushanno coins, in Cribb's words, exhibit a "well defined moustache, hooked nose, heavy jowls, jutting chin, and large eyes with raised eyebrows."[499]

The reverses are also different from the previous coinage: rather than the typical dress modes of dress: a kausia, helmets, chlamys—he is dressed in the cloths of the nomadic tribes: heavy collared tunics and heavy Central Asian boots. There is no mistaking that this is not an native Indian, but someone who is ruling at a cultural distance. Furthermore, the interpretation of the reverse of a winged Nike, in Greek dress, crowning a Kuṣāṇa mounted rider, now becomes very clear. The contrast of the small, effeminate winged Nike giving her authority to the mounted

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[499] Cribb, "'Heraus' Coins," p. 109.

warrior announces the arrival of Kuṣāṇa power, the dominance of the fierce Central Asian over the Greeks. Here, religious iconography continues to be used in the realm of worldly power.

The Coinage of Vima Takto/Soter Megas c. 80 CE – 105 CE

While Kujula Kadphises made great strides in establishing the legitimacy of Kuṣāṇa rule, the sustained and stubborn resistance of the Indo-Parthians, as well as some resistance from the Indo-Scythian satraps, prevented him from solidifying the nascent empire south of the Hindu Kush. At his death in c. 80 CE, he left his son, Vima Takto, with an unruly, disorganized kingdom, not a unified empire. Vima Takto took up the task of strengthening the Kuṣāṇa hold of their core territories in Bactria, organizing his father's newly won northwest Indian territories by breaking the last vestiges of Indo-Parthian and Indo-Scythian power, and expanding the empire further east with forays as far east as Mathura. He would leave his own son, Vima Kadphises, an empire ready to flourish.

Regional Mints

Vima Takto's early issues reflect the fragmented nature of the Kuṣāṇa kingdom he inherited. In each region he minted coins meant only for local distribution in accordance with the previous local iconography and legends. [500]

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[500] The most complete and up to date analysis of Vima Takto's coins is found in Joe Cribb, "The Rabatak Inscription, its Historical Implications and Numismatic Context: The New Kushan King, Vima I Tak[to]," *Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies* 4 (1995/96): pp. 97-142. The best earlier work on the Vima Takto's coins can be found in David W. MacDowall, "Soter Megas, King

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Thus, we find three distinct regional issues particular to Bactria, Gandhara and Western Punjab, and Kashmir. In Eastern Punjab, a territory he conquered later in his reign, he introduced a coinage similar to his Bactrian models. But unlike Kujula Kadphises who never really issued a standard inter-regional coin type, Vima Takto minted a general issue which circulated in all four regions, bringing the Kuṣāṇa kingdom together under one monetary system.

In Bactria, where the core of Kuṣāṇa hegemony was already firmly established by Kujula Kadphises, Vima Takto first issued bilingual (Kharoṣṭhī and Greek) copper tetradrachms on a reduced Attic standard (fig. 71).[501] The obverse helmeted bust of these large copper coins is linked to Kujula Kadphises' early imitations (c. 30 CE – 50 CE) of the later Yuezhi imitations (c. 55 BCE – 30 CE) of the Graeco-Bactrian kings Eucratides I and Heliocles I. Vima Takto made a clear effort to legitimate his minting authority by linking himself to his powerful predecessors who had ruled in Bactria for at least a century before him. However, he added his own novel flourish to the image: the king holds an arrow in his right hand which is raised in front of the bust, further suggesting the power of Vima Takto's rule. The reverse has a mounted horseman with a raised right hand holding a goad with the Greek legend, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ, "Of the King of Kings, the Great Protector." These early Bactrian copper issues would

of Kings, The Kushāṇa," *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 30 (1968): pp. 28-48 and David W. MacDowall, "Implications for Kushan Chronology of the Numismatic Context of the Nameless King," in *International Conference on History, Archeology and Culture of Central Asia in the Kushan Period (1968: Dushanbe)* (Moskow: Nauka, 1974), pp. 246-264.
[501] Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 113, type 3.

become the model for both his issues in the newly conquered region of eastern Punjab and for his general issue.

Figure 71: Vima Takto Heliocles Imitation copper tetradrachm

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 113, Type 3

In Gandhāra and Western Punjab, the region in which Kujula Kadphises and the Indo-Parthians had fought bitterly without a clear victor, Vima Takto succeeded in ending Indo-Parthian rule completely. After securing Kuṣāṇa hegemony, he issued silver tetradrachms and drachms based directly on the coin designs of the Indo-Parthian satrap Sases, his conquered foe (fig. 30).[502] Vima Takto used the same images as Sases, a horseman on the obverse and Zeus on the reverse (figs. 72 and 73),[503] and he copied the legends almost exactly as well. On the obverse, he inscribed the Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ, a direct translation of Sases' Kharoṣṭhī legend, *maharajasa rajatirajasa mahatasa tratarasa* (of the Great King of Kings, the Great Protector). Vima Takto then added his own name, *Vema*, to Sases' reverse Kharoṣṭhī legend, which now

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[502] Ibid.: pp. 112-113, type 1.
[503] The Zeus figure on the reverse is also found on Kujula Kadphises' coins in this region, see Mitchiner, *IGISC*, vol. 8, p. 689, type 1054. Cribb connects the Zeus reverses of Sases, Kujula Kadphises, and Vima Takto, so it is clear that all three employ the same Zeus design on these local Gandhara/Western Punjab coins. See Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 120.

read, *maharajasa rajatirajasa mahatasa tratarasa Vema* (of Vima, the Great King

of Kings, the Great Protector).[504]

Figure 72: Sases Horseman/Zeus silver tetradrachm

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 112-113, Type 1

Figure 73: Vima Takto Horseman/Zeus silver drachma

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 138 coin a or b

    Once Vima Takto had established himself in the region of

Gandhara/Western Punjab, he began to take a more active control of the local

monetary system, asserting his coinage as the standard for trade, and consequently

asserting himself as hegemon. He started by issuing a copper denomination to

serve as small change to the silver tetradrachms and drachms.[505] This would begin

to replace the other Indo-Parthian coins in circulation.[506] This issue was

uninscribed, but clearly has Vima Takto's *tamgha* on the obverse. Cribb identifies

these coins as "Shiva and Ardochsho uninscribed" type. I rarely challenge the

interpretation of the key numismatists working in the field of Kuṣāṇa coins and

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[504] It is not entirely clear how Vima Takto meant to have his name recorded, as there is no single coin with a perfectly clear legend. However, Alram reads the legend as either *vemasa* (of Vima) or *vema ta* (of Vima Ta[kto]). The legend is truncated by the small flan, so there must have been more at the end. It is clear that Vima did put his name, in some form, on the reverse of these coins, so "[i]f we stick to the facts then – besides the more or less clearly legible epithets – only the form *vema* can be regarded as secure," in Alram, "Indo-Parthian and Early Kushan Chronology," p. 34.
[505] Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," pp. 112-133, type 2.

focus on bringing out the implications of their fine work, but this identification is quite a stretch. There is no reason to believe that either Śiva or Ardochsho is depicted on these coins. Perhaps Cribb makes this identification because he thinks they "point towards the designs of later Kushan kings."[507]

In Kashmir, Vima Takto minted the Bull and Camel type in continuation with the previous Zeionises/Jihonika and Kujula Kadphises Bull and Camel issues (figs. 74 and 75).[508] There are two types found, a larger and smaller version, and both are copper issues which have a blundered Greek obverse legend and a Kharoṣṭhī reverse legend. The reverse Kharoṣṭhī legend has various forms of title *maharayasa rayatirayasa devaputrasa Vema Takto(Takho)*, "of the Great King, King of Kings, son of the gods, Vima Takto." Both types also have "the same magnetic-sensitive metallurgical characteristics of the previous reign's coins."[509] Vima Takto changed very little on these issues, preferring to stay in continuity with the Indo-Scythian satrap Zeionises/Jihonika and Kujula Kadphises' coinage.

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[506] Much of Sases' coinage is minted in billon and was quite common, so Vima Takto may have been trying to replace these small denominations with his own. For Sases' coinage see Alram, *Nomina Propria*, pp. 264-266, types 1203-1211.
[507] Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 120.
[508] Ibid.: pp. 115-118, type 6 and 7.
[509] Ibid.: p. 119.

Figure 74: Vima Takto Bull/Camel copper drachma

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 115-118, type 6

Figure 75: Vima Takto Bull/Camel copper drachma

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 115-118, type 7

In the newly conquered territories of eastern Punjab, Vima Takto minted coins based on the designs of his Bactrian coinage (fig. 76).[510] The obverse bust of these Attic standard copper drachms is, once again, taken from the imitation Heliocles I coins issued by Kujula Kadphises, but Vima Takto adds a stereotypical Central Asian cloak to the image. The reverse is also copied from Yuezhi Heliocles I imitations of Zeus holding a thunderbolt in left hand and scepter in his right hand accompanied by the Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ.[511]

Figure 76: Vima Takto Mathurā type copper drachma

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 4 Cribb SRAA Vima Takto

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Imperial Mints

In addition to these four local types, Vima Takto also minted a general issue
of Attic standard copper didrachms, about 8.5 grams, and an identical smaller
denomination of Indian standard drachms, about 2 grams, which circulated in
Bactria, Western Gandhāra and Taxila, and Kashmir (figs. 77 and 78).[512] It seems
that the general issue did not circulate as far as eastern Punjab where the cloaked
bust/Zeus with thunderbolt coins dominated, and only under his son, Vima
Kadphises, would a truly empire-wide coin be minted. However, the general issue
discussed here served to unite the Bactrian and NW Indian territories under one
monetary system, facilitating trade and commerce while simultaneously projecting
a singular sovereign.[513] In the political realm, the combination of legend and
iconography sent a clear message to the subjects of the empire.

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[510] Ibid.: p. 114, type 4.
[511] MacDowall, "Soter Megas, King of Kings, The Kushāṇa," p. 30.
    [512] Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," pp. 114-115, type 5. Whether these were minted on the
Attic standard or the Indian standard is not entirely clear. Vima Takto minted on both standards,
and the majority of varieties a and b of type 5 weigh about 8.5 grams, which could be either an Attic
standard drachm or a reduced Indian standard tetradrachm.

Figure 77: Vima Takto Cloaked Bust/Zeus

type a (8.5 grams); type c (2 grams)

obverse: diademed male bust with rays emanating from head, wearing a cloak on shoulders, holding an arrow, three pronged *tamgha* behind head
reverse: Horseman wearing Iranian cap with diadem ties, holding a goad, horse waling right
Greek legend in rounded letters:
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 114-115, type 5

Figure 78: Vima Takto Cloaked Bust/Zeus

type b (8.5 grams); type d (2 grams)

same as type a and c but with squared letters and four pronged *tamgha* behind head

Image Source: Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 114-115, type 5

The most striking feature on the obverse is the radiate diademed bust. The bust is, once again, a clear imitation of the previous Heliocles I busts that have been shown to confer respect and authority for almost two centuries. The addition of the Central Asian cloak, however, removes the iconography from the Greek world and places the image squarely in the Bactrian realm. Most important, however, are the rays emanating from the bust. Cribb suggests the rays perhaps "identify it as an image of the Kushan solar deity Mioro (Mithra)."[514] This identification of the link between solar rays and a solar deity is well founded. As

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[513] This is argued most forceful in MacDowall, "Central Asia in the Kushan Period," p. 246-264.

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we have seen, the Zeus reverses of the Yuezhi Eucratides I imitations have the deity radiate, bringing together Zeus and Mithra with solar symbolism. On Vima Takto's coins, however, the rays emanate not from the head of a deity, but the head of the sovereign. This can be taken as an iconographic representation of the Kharoṣṭhī title *devaputra*, son of the gods. This use of solar symbolism, of rays and flames, to indicate the elevated status of the Kuṣāṇa sovereigns, a status that touches the realm of the gods, becomes a key theme for future Kuṣāṇa kings.

Finally, Vima Takto dropped the Kharoṣṭhī legend and opted for the Attic weight standard on the general issue. This marks a clear break with Kujula Kadphises whose coinage was consistently bilingual, that is, there were legends in both Greek and Kharoṣṭhī, and consistently minted on the Indian standard.[515] Coins minted on the Attic standard with only Greek legends are typical of the older Graeco-Bactrian coinage minted north of the Hindu Kush. Thus, Vima Takto begins the standardization of the Kuṣāṇa monetary system squarely on models north of the Hindu Kush.

Conclusion

In this section I have tried to show that the rise to power of the Kuṣāṇas was marked by the intentional use of numismatic legends and symbols to establish legitimacy and authority. The coins were used in three different ways: first, the invading Yuezhi culled a specific set of images from the multiplicity of designs

[514] Cribb, "Coins of Vima I Tak[to]," p. 121.
[515] MacDowall, "Soter Megas, King of Kings, The Kushāṇa," pp. 40-41.

available to them in northern Bactria. These images served to identify the Yuezhi as both fierce horseman and as royalty. Second, once they had established pockets of control, one clan of the Yuezhi, the Kuei-shuang, used a combination of image and legend to unify the various clans under one leader and created a distinct, unified social group, the Kuṣāṇas. Third, these early imperial-minded Kuṣāṇas used a combination of imitation and innovation to extend their control into territories south of the Hindu Kush. In all three phases, the coins are not residues of their behavior, but rather must be seen as an active engagement with the social situation, a medium of communication that was manipulated in various ways to create new social and political realities.

In all three phases, religious imagery was used not as a profession of a personal faith, but rather as a means to bring together different groups under the domain of one sovereign. All of the religious imagery, most commonly in the form of deities, was used to confer sovereignty and power to the issuer of the coins. This was most obvious with the images of the goddess Nike crowning a standing figure – conferring her power and authority in a very visible way. But more importantly, there is a significant innovation in the ideology propagated: emanating rays, which were used to demonstrate the divinity, power, and radiance of Zeus-Mithra were now conferred upon the Kuṣāṇas themselves, most visible in the coinage of Vima Takto. This obverse of a radiate bust clearly signaled the elevation of the status of the Kuṣāṇa sovereign to a level beyond the merely human and signaled his connection to the divine.

Concluding Remarks

In a recent article published in *History and Theory*, David Gordon White argues that the task of writing an adequate history of South Asian religions is as yet unfulfilled. The work to be done is a daunting:

> It may be that such a history will never be written, if only because a pan-south Asian canvas is simply too large to fill. At the other extreme, local micro-histories are rarely practical due to the fact that very few locales have bequeathed historians with sufficient textual, archaeological, and art-historical data to reconstruct their multiple pasts in a meaningful way.[516]

We are left to fill in the lacunae where we can. Where the evidence is of a quantity and quality which allows historians of religion to proceed on solid ground, they should proceed cautiously, but steadily. The varied quantity and quality of evidence means that most histories will be written on one of two more practical scales:

> The one is thematic, and consists of tracing the history of a body of practice across time and space, attending to multiple human actors, voices, conflicts of interpretation, change over time and across space . . . The second consists in writing regional histories of Hindu [or South Asian] religious lifeworlds, histories that are attentive to lives and words and acts of human religious practitioners in relation to gods of the place, family, occupational group, landscape, and so on.[517]

In all these histories—whether broad or narrow, thematic or regional—historians of religion must be attentive to the very real concerns of human actors. It is not culture that acts, but people, and too often both texts and artifacts have been stripped of their human quality and understood as ahistorical cultural signifiers.

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[516] David Gordon White, "Digging Wells While Houses Burn? Writing Histories of Hinduism in a Time of Identity Politics," *History and Theory* 45, no. 4 (2006): p. 128.

[517] Ibid.: p. 128 and no. 112-124.

The ahistorical approach to both textual studies and archaeological interpretation flattens the historical landscape and only serves the interests of the present, whether it was the British creation of a permanent underclass of irrational native subjects practicing a false religion which served to justify colonial rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Indian Nationalists who posit perfected Hindu ancestors which serve as forerunners to the creation of a homogenous Hindu state in twenty-first century India, or even the modern western practitioners of a Protestantized Buddhism who generate models of their wealth-abjuring, always-meditating doubles from the distant Indian past. Without human agency, the past becomes the location from where those in the present justify their particular ideology. Elite texts, such as the *Mahābhārata*, and folk texts, such as the *Pāśakakevalī*, and elite material culture, such as Buddhist *stūpa* shrines and coins, and folk material culture, such as dice, beads, and votive tanks, are products of human intention. Proper histories will foreground the motivations and goals of those who created these objects, not the motivations and goals of those who write about them.

This thesis, then, adds a small chapter to the project of writing a history of ancient South Asian religion which is populated by motivated and intentional actors. It accomplishes this task by writing on two of White's four scales. One part of the dissertation is a local micro-history of the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian city of Sirkap.[518] Here, the primary archive is the archaeological evidence as found in Sir John Marshall's 1951 excavation report, *Taxila*. The other part is a regional

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[518] For an example of such a local micro-history, see Hans Bakker, *Ayodhyā* (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1986), cited in White, "Writing Histories of Hinduism," p. 128.

history of early historic Punjab, and here the archive is the numismatic evidence found in the various *catalogues raisonnés*, journal articles, and numismatic treatises. What ties the two parts together, other than geographic and chronological boundaries, is the concern for the motivations and interests of human actors in the creation of material culture and text pertaining to religion.

The early historic city of Sirkap presents a rare set of data that enables the scholar to write a local micro-history. In this case, it is not the textual sources that allow for such a fine-tuned history, but the abundance of archaeological evidence. The close analysis of such evidence, making use of new methods and theories, led to a number of findings. First, without the later mid-second century CE form of the Apsidal Temple superimposed onto the earlier first century BCE and first century CE city, Sirkap's public ritual space is re-oriented to the northern part of the urban landscape. Thus, the northernmost *stūpa* shrine located in Block A, seen in the context of the whole urban layout, takes on new importance as the first site to be encountered on entering the city. As the largest shrine in the city, it served as a focal point for visitors and kings alike. Further, the other *stūpa* shrines also attest to how local actors sought to use these monuments for various purposes. Some shrines were used by royalty to promote their authority and bolster their legitimacy, other shrines were used by the mercantile community to either increase or display their wealth, and all the shrines were simultaneously used by the common folk as sites to address their own concerns of health and well-being.

Sirkap also holds evidence of religion in the domestic sphere. Here, the tight boundaries between Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism/Brahmanism break

down, and we see how local concerns and local deities dominated private belief and ritual. From oracular gambling for predicting the future to ritual of propitiation of tutelary deities for protection, the local matrix was complex. Religion in the domestic sphere was dominated by local *apsarasas*, *yakṣas*, and *yakṣīs*. Local inhabitants of the city, both native born Indians and foreign-born migrants, made up the body of devotees. The names of the deities they propitiated were local ones and a few, for sure, made their way into the great classics such as the *Mahābhārata*, or into lesser known protective charms such as the *Mahāmāyūrī*, but the vast majority of these names are now lost to us as the cults died out. While the names may be lost, their basic functions are not: local and foreign deities and devotees were tied together by the rituals which generated good luck, wealth, health, and success in love.

In the last part of the thesis, the focus shifted from a local micro-history, where distances measured in feet and inches mattered, to a much broader regional history, where significant distances were measured in hundreds of miles.[519] This section demonstrated that the primary function of religious symbols on coins was not to profess the particular faith or to promote the personal religion of the issuer, but rather to engender feelings of loyalty within the clan and to create legitimacy in newly conquered territories. The thesis first traced the appearance and development of Yuezhi coinage. The Yuezhi culled a specific set of images from the multiplicity of designs available to them in northern Bactria. These images

served to identify the Yuezhi as both fierce horseman and as royalty to the conquered Graeco-Bactrians.

The thesis then demonstrated that once the Yuezhi had established pockets of control, one clan of the Yuezhi, the Kuei-shuang, used a combination of image and legend to unify the various clans under one leader, Kujula Kadphises who created a distinct, unified group, the Kuṣāṇas. Symbols commonly interpreted as signifying religious affiliation, such as a cross-legged figure, were shown to signify royalty and authority. Other iconography—the tiny winged Nike crowning a large mounted warrior, the heavy nomadic cloths in contrast to the light Greek chlamys—announced the power of Kujula Kadphises. Further, the coins of Kujula Kadphises began to identify the ruler himself as son-of-the-gods. This was done through the Kharoṣṭhī legend *devaputrasa*, but also through the use of solar imagery surrounding the king's portrait. Finally, the thesis ended with the imperial coinage of Vima Takto. Vima Takto standardized the images, legends, and weights of Kuṣāṇa coins to solidify his control and to create hegemony throughout the empire. His most famous legend, SOTER MEGAS, or "The Great Protector," was a standard epithet of Vima Takto distributed to every corner of his empire.

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[519] White, "Writing Histories of Hinduism," p. 128-129 cites a number of such studies, but he singles out Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious Process: The Purāṇas and the Making of a Regional Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001) as a particularly excellent example.

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