



INDO-HELLENIC CULTURAL TRANSACTIONS

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Between Hind and Hellas: the Bactrian Bridgehead (with an Appendix on Indo-Hellenic Interactions)

by
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IN PIAM MEMORIAM
ADRIANI DAVIDI HUGONIS BIVAR (1926-2015)
MAGISTRI INDO-IRANICI

Bactrian, in this cyclopaedic survey,* refers to the inhabitants, Greek βάκτριοι, βακτριανοί, Old Indian *balhika-*, *bāhlika-*, *v/bāhlīka-* (*Atharvaveda* 5:22:4, 6, 8, *Rāmāyaṇa* 2:68, *Mahābhārata* 2:27, *Bṛhat-samhitā* 18:6), Aramaic *bḥtry*, Syriac adj. *bḥtry*’, Khotanese *ba’līya* (apud Sims-Williams), Sogdian *βytyk*, *βxtyk* and Bactrian βαγδδιγο (de la Vaissière apud Sims-Williams); and their eastern Middle Iranian language spoken in the region called Bactria, Greek βακτρία βακτριανή, Latin *Bactriana*, Elamo-Old Persian *pá-ak-ši-iš*, Elamite *ba-ik-tur-ri-iš*, *ba-ak-tar-ri-iš*, Akkadian *ba-aḥ-tar*, Aramaic *bḥtry*, Median **bāxtri-*, Old Iranian **baxθrī-*, Proto-Bactrian **bāxδī-*, Old Persian **bāxçi-* (apud Gnoli), nom. sg. **bāxçīš* (apud Witzel), nom. sg. *bāxtriš*, Avestan **bāxəδrī-*, **bāxδrīš* (apud Humbach), *bāxδī-*, nom. sg. *bāxδīš*, acc. sg. *bāxδīm(cā)* (*Vīdēvdād* 1.6-7), Vedic *bāhli-*, *bālhi*, Classical Sanskrit *bāhlīka bhāṣā* ‘Bactrian language’ (*Nāṭyaśāstra* XVII), Buddhist Sanskrit *bāhulaka-*, *bāhūlaka-*, Khotanese *bāhulaka-*, Pahlavi *b’hl* (*Bundahišn* 31.10), *baxl*, New Persian and Arabic *balkh*, Christian Sogdian *bhl*, Armenian *bahl*, *balx*, Tibetan *bag-lo*, *bag-la*; Chinese variants *boluo* < Early Middle Chinese **bak-la*, *boti* < Early Middle Chinese **bak-dej*, *baiti* < Early Middle Chinese **bajik*, Pašto *bākhtar*, Tajik *боxmap*, located in modern north-central Afghānistān, namely, the plain between the Hindu Kuš and both banks of the upper and partially middle Oxus valley or present-day Āmū Daryā.

Some homonymic confusion in our Indian historical sources merits clarification: *vāhika* is the old name of Panjāb (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.7, 3, 8), as identified by Bhandarkar, but one encounters in subsequent Sanskrit inscriptions and texts *vāhlīka*, *bāhika* and *bāhlīka* conflated for the entire area and its inhabitants, namely, nearly all of the Panjāb which initially and exclusively would have only referred to the Salt Range (Urdu *silsilah-yi kūh-yi namak*), the hilly stretch between the Indus and Jhelum valleys of northern Panjāb, today’s Pākistān. The only reasonable explanation, as pointed out by Misra, is that *vāhika* and *bāhlīka* in the *Mahābhārata* imply the same region. These toponyms and demonyms overlapped and persisted in usage until the Kuṣāṇa occupation of Panjāb, for they arrived from Bactria (*bāhlīka*) as a foreign tribe, and so this identification endured following their emigration.

Popular credence in Buddhist lore has a certain Bhallika introducing that faith to Bactria. Two travelling traders, Bhallika (Pali *Bhalliya*) and his elder brother Trapuṣa (Pali *Tapussa*), according to Xuanzang, brought Buddhism to Bactria. Both became, so normative sources maintain, the first lay followers (Sanskrit *upāsaka*) of Śākyamuni after his Enlightenment. They were the sons of a caravan driver (Sanskrit *sattavāha* apud *Theragāthā Aṭṭakathā*) allegedly hailing from Puṣkalāvatī (*utpalāvatī* apud *Divyāvadana*, Pali *pukhalāvatī*, Greek πευκελαίτις [Arrian *Indica* 4.11]), the former capital of Gandhāra between the sixth century BC and second century AD, at the western end of the Khybar Pass and the first gateway to ancient India on the *uttarāpatha* (Sanskrit ‘northern route’; India’s National Highway 1 which terminates at the 1947 border). Puṣkalāvatī (‘lotus city’) was an important mercantile centre

* Hence no references but a very exhaustive bibliography of consulted sources follows this *Forschungsstand* survey submitted as an encyclopaedic entry.

between Bactria and India on the banks of the river Swāt. Its ancient ruins are 17 miles northeast of Peshāwar on the outskirts of present-day Chārsadda. Homonymic confusion conflating Bactria with this namesake disciple of the Buddha notwithstanding, it is revealing that Xuanzang, when visiting Bactria around AD 630, records two towns to the northwest of the provincial capital named after both brothers, Trapuṣa and Bhallika, as *ti-wei* and *bo-li* respectively. The existence as well as distance between both towns as attested by him is not disputed. Both individuals and their father would have hailed from the environs of Puṣkalāvātī although our Buddhist sources provide varying details.

The Oxus (Greek Ὠξος [Ἀράξης *apud* Herodotus 1.202], Sanskrit *cakṣu*, *vakṣu*, *vaṅkṣu* [*Raghuvamśa* 4.67-68], Bactrian 𐬪𐬀𐬎𐬌, Latin *oxus*, Arabic *jayhūn* ‘flood’, *wakhš* [*apud* Bīrūnī], Chinese *guishui*, *wuhu*, Tajik *amy dapyo*, Book Pahlavi *wehrōd*, New Persian *āmu daryā*, Pašto *āmu sind*), according to Arrian (*Anabasis* 3.29.2ff.), originated in the Indian Caucasus (*hodie* Hindu Kuš): its source, at 4,900 m, lies in Afghānistān’s Vrevsky glacier, where it begins its eventual 2,494-2,540 km course, as the Wakhjīr river. The territory derived its name from the southern and most important affluent of the Oxus called Bactrus (Pliny, *Historiae Naturalis* 6.48.52, Curtius 7.4.31. *inter alia*), today’s *Balkh āb* or *Daryā-yi Balkh* (Book Pahlavi *baxlrōd*, Bundahišn 11.a.17) on whose southern bank was situated the capital, Bactra. The *Šāhnāma* contains notices of Bactria, a land of venerable Kayānian heroes ruled by Kavi Vīštāspa (New Persian *guštāsp*, Arabic *bistāsf*), who bestowed royal assent and patronage to Zoroaster and his ministry. Omitted, however, in the Firdawsian version is acknowledgment of Āraš, the legendary archer (Avestan *arəxša*, Book Pahlavi *ēraš* > Arabic *ēraš*, *araš*), whose exploit is preserved in Tha‘ālibī (*Ghurār akhbār mulūk al-furs*, 133-34), and who noted how his arrow aimed from Ṭabaristān struck east of Balkh at sunset in Kholm (Arabic *khulm*, today’s Tašqorgān) thus demarcating Irān and Tūrān. In the Sasanian geographical treatise *Šahrestānīhā-ī Ērānšahr* (8) is the sobriquet *bakhl-i bāmīg* ‘brilliant Bactria’ which too serves as the easternmost boundary of the Iranian oecumene as does the hydronym in the preface of the now lost New Persian prose recension, *Šāhnāma-yi Abū Maṣṣūrī*. Firdawsī thought nothing of comparing Balkh’s grandeur ‘among the worshippers of God’ to that of Mecca (Arabic *makkah al-mukarramah*). Marco Polo recounts in his Travels (*Le Devisement du monde*, 45) that the ‘noble and great city of Balkh’ (Franco-Italian, Tuscan, Old French, Venetian *balc*) is located at the edge of ‘the land of the Tartar of the East’ and ‘where Persia ends to the east-northeast.’

The Bactrian heartland (Chinese *daxia* ‘great Xia’) comprised essentially of the territory around and to the south of the Oxus. Marquart proposed it could probably mean ‘bestower, distributor’. Witzel plausibly suggested along the same lines as the Old Iranian form was **baxθri-* ‘distributing one [fem.]’, ‘belonging to **baxθra-* ‘share’, Younger Avestan *baxēdra-* ‘share’ (cf. Younger Avestan *baxtar* ‘distributor’; Pārsī Sanskrit calque *vibhaktar* ‘distributor’ for Avestan *bagəm* in *Māh Yašt*, Yt. 7.5 [*apud* Bailey]) thus the province could connote ‘[land] belonging to the share’ or ‘[land] belonging to the *bāxθra* river’ with the river meaning ‘connected with share/distribution [of wealth]’. Strabo (11.516) also states that this riparian capital straddled both banks of the Bactrus. The urban appellation is frequently synonymous in several sources for the entire region. Strabo (11.8.9; 11.11.2) also informs us that *Ζαρίασπα* was another synonym for Bactra (Greek βάκτρα, Ἀλεξάνδρεια κατά βάκτρα [*apud* Stephanus Byzantinus], Old Persian *bāxtri-*, Chinese *lan-shi*, Bactrian 𐬪𐬀𐬎𐬌, New Persian and Arabic *balkh*), the capital city, and that it was located on both banks of the Bactrus itself formed from the streams of the Band-i Amīr and Darrah. Originally, however, βάκτρα only denoted the land, not town, for *Ζαρίασπα* (*Zariastes apud* Pliny, *Historiae Naturalis* 6.48) was the old name of the latter.

Althiem and Stiel reasonably proposed that the toponym implied ‘having golden horses’ (Younger Avestan *zāiri.aspa-*) but then implausibly surmised the presence of two distinct towns for Bactra. Pliny (6.48) states that the name of the river was *Zariasta* [*sic*] and Ptolemy (6.11.6) notes a people

called Zariaspi were domiciled there who could have been, broadly, Iranians. The ruins of Bactra, located towards the southern edge of the ridge of the Kūh-i Alburz, watered by the Band-i Amīr and its so-called ‘eighteen canals’ (New Persian *hijdah nahr*), actually ten, whose waters are some 16 km south of the town centre, lies 74 km south of the Āmū Daryā and 20 km northwest of the present-day capital of the Afghan province of Balkh, Mazār-i Šārīf (‘noble mausoleum’). The town (36°45’ N, 66°54’ E) is situated within the oasis of Balkh that stretched for almost one hundred kilometres between Āqchah, forty miles west of Balkh, and Mazār-i Šārīf, and stood on an alluvial delta on the lower course of the *Balkhāb*, until the Mongols razed it in the early thirteenth century. Bactra, according to Barthold, may well have been the ‘earliest center of Iranian culture’ and ‘Iranian governmental structure.’

Historic Bactria also included areas north of the Oxus, the region east of Balkh, and, at times, certain parts of ancient Sogdiana (*hodie* southern Özbekistān and Tājikistān, Old Persian *suguda*, Greek Σογδιανή, Arabic *sughd*, Chinese *su te*). The Kūh-i Bābā range and river Murgāb (Greek μάργος, Pašto *muryāb*, Turkish *aq su*, New Persian *murghāb*) approximately marked the western and southern limits of Bactria respectively. Ṭukhāristān, correctly eastern Bactria, was its new toponym from the late fourth century AD as attested in mediaeval chronicles (Chinese *tuholo*, *gu guo* [apud Xuanzang], Bactrian *τοχοαραστανο*, Khotanese *ttahvārasthāna*-, Manichaean Middle Persian *twryst’n*, Armenian *t’ukhari-k’*, Syriac *ṭhrwstn*, Buddhist and Manichaean Old Turkish *twry*, *twqry*, Uyghur **ṭw’ry*, **ṭw’ry* [apud Henning], New Persian and Arabic *ṭukhāristān/ṭakhairistān/ṭakhāristān*). It acquired currency after the overrunning of Bactria by Iranian-speaking, nomadic hordes designated as Tokharians (Greek Θάγυρροι, Latin *tochari/thogarii*, Sanskrit *tukhāra/tuḥkhāra*, *tuṣāra/tuṣkāra*, Sogdian *ṭxw’r’k*, *twyr’kč’ny* [pl.], Bactrian **τοχοαπο* [apud Sims-Williams], Tibetan *thod-kar*, *tho-gar*, Chinese *tuholuo*) hailing from north-west China sometime in the first half of the second century BC (apud Frye 175-150 BC; apud Zeimal before 25 BC). Xuanzang, while imprecise, correctly conveyed that the Tocharians hailed from twelve homelands east of Khotan. Although Arab geographers differed about Ṭukhāristān’s precise determinants, they would, in some sources, specifically term Ṭukhāristān as just that territory east of Balkh along the Āmū Daryā upto western Badakhshān. Iṣṭakhrī (*Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 270) came closest to defining accurately its limits as east of Balkh, west of Badakhshān, south of the Oxus and north of the Hindu Kuś ridge. In extant geographical literature Bactria covers those lands nestled between the Hissār, Kugitang and Baisur ranges in the north, upper reaches (left bank) of the Āmū Daryā in the east, Hindu Kuś in the south, and the middle stream of the Āmū Daryā adjoining Kerki (*hodie* Atamyrat) district in the west.

Bactria was dotted with agricultural oases irrigated by extensive waterways extracted from the Balkh, Šīrīn Tagāō, Taškurgan, Kundūz and Sar-i pul. Its prosperity and prestige, since the Bronze Age, was famed as far as Mesopotamia (Chinese *tiaozhi*) where lapis lazuli was eagerly sought obtained from Badakhshān (Chinese *badakesha*) or the Wākhān corridor of present-day northeast Afghānistān. Surveys on both banks of the upper Oxus in eastern Bactria point to its fertility known from the pre-Achaemenid era or the first half of the first millennium BC. Several sobriquets are attested in our sources such as ‘brilliant Bactria’ (New Persian *balkh-i bāmī*, Arabic *balkh al-husnā*, *balkh al-baḥiyyah* [apud al-Muqadassī]), ‘the Mother of Cities’ (Arabic *umm al-bilād*), ‘Paradise on Earth’, and ‘Land of a thousand cities’ (Strabo 15.1.3; Justin 41.1, 4). Quintus Curtius waxed eloquent about its abundant fruits and excellent pastures where lucerne grew freely as fodder for steeds. Strabo (11.516) commented that its agricultural bounty was the basis of Bactrian pride and for which it was known as the ‘Jewel of Iran’ (Apollodorus of Artemita apud Strabo 11.11.1, τῆς συμπάσης Ἀριανῆς πρόσχημα ‘the ornament of Arianē as a whole’).

Note Bactria is here conflated with the region called in classical sources as *Areia* or *Arianē* (Greek Ἀερία, Ἀριανή, [latinised *ariana*], Latin *arianē*) a lemma covering the eastern Achaemenid lands of the Harī Rūd (Old Iranian **harayu*) valley, northwestern Afghānistān, which bordered India (Greek Ἰνδική, Latin *India*). Its capital must have been, since antiquity, the main centre of Herāt (inscrp. Pahlavi *hr'y* apud Marquart), whose surrounding district too harks back given its mention in *Vīdēvdād* 1.9 and *Mihr Yašt*, Yt. 10.14 (Avestan *harōiva-*, Old Persian *haraiva*, inscrp. Pahlavi *hryw*). Erroneously inferred by Nöldeke to include the entire Iranian expanse — taking a cue from Apollodorus — Ἀριανή is first described by Eratosthenes (apud Strabo 15.2.1, 8-9): ‘After India one comes to Ariana, the first portion of the country subject to the Persians after the Indus River and of the upper satrapies outside the Taurus. Ariana is bounded on the south and on the north by the same sea and the same river, the Indus, which flows between itself and India’. He subsequently elaborates by stating that, ‘the name of Ariana is further extended to a part of Persia and of Media, as also to the Bactrians and Sogdians on the north; for these speak approximately the same language, with slight variations’ εἰσὶ γὰρ πῶς καὶ ὁμόγλωττοι παρὰ μικρόν. (Panaino has judiciously cautioned recently, however, against assuming a ‘permafrosted Irano-Aryan’ spoken by Iranic peoples since any such *ante litteram* common tongue designated *arya-* is historically untenable but predicated on a partly invented and semi-original tradition of ancestral heritage with decidedly socio-political overtones.) Eratosthenes elsewhere (Strabo 2.1.31) also records that Ἀριανή is a ‘single ethnic group’, ἅν ἐνός ἐθνός. Diodorus (1.94.2) informs us that Zoroaster preached ‘among the *Αρειανοί*’ or the inhabitants of *Arianē*, which conflates the ethnonym Aryan, with what become the collective for subjects of the Iranian empire under the Achaemenids: Greek Ἀριανή is derived from Old Iranian **āryānā-* cognate with Younger Avestan *airyana-* (cf. *airyā dainhāvō* [*Vīdēvdād* 1.1] and *airyō šayana-* [*Mihr Yašt*, Yt. 10.14]), as ‘aryan lands’. It is from the same root of Old Iranian **āryā-*, **āryānām* ‘[land] of the Aryans’, Avestan *airyanam vaējō* > Pahlavi *ērānvēz* ‘aryan expanse’, Manichaean Sogdian *’ry’nwyjn* (apud Henning), Sanskrit *ārya-*, Avestan *airya-*, Old Persian *ariya-* nom. sg. m. adj. ‘aryan, compatriot’, gen. pl. adj. *airyānām* ‘of the Aryans’ (cf. Sanskrit *āryānām*), inscrp. Parthian *’ry’n* ‘aryan’, Pahlavi *ēr* plus gen. obl. pl. *-ān* hence autonym *ērān*, New Persian *īrān* ‘[land] of arya/Irānians’; Pahlavi *ērān-šahr* < **āryānām xšaθra* (inscrp. Parthian *’ry’n ḥštr*) was the Sāsānian denomination for their imperial heartland. (In sceptically reappraising the ‘Iranian identity’ *Problemstellung*, de Jong now perceptively rethinks ethno-confessional specificities imbued in the qualifier *ēr* ‘Iranian’ and its application to Zoroastrians within and without the Iranian oecumene.) The misinterpretation of Ireland and Irān as cognates is still discernable in discourse, popular and scholarly. Ireland most probably denotes ‘abundant/fertile land’ (PIE **píhxxweryōn-*, PIE adj. stem **piHwer-* ‘fat, abundant’, cf. Avestan *piθwa-*, Book Pahlavi *pyt*, Manichaean Parthian *pyd* ‘meat’, Armenian *pih* ‘victuals’, Proto-Celtic **īweryon-* and Proto-Goidelic **īweriū*, Proto-Celtic **landā* ‘land’ < PIE **lendh-*, Old Irish *Ériu* ‘matron goddess of sovereignty’, Old English *Írland*, Greek Ἰουερπία [apud Ptolemy], Latin *Hibernia*, Modern Irish *Éire*).

Ariana’s revival in contemporary parlance, romantic at once as exotic, is attributable to Horace Hayman Wilson, first Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford and sometime superintendent of studies at Sanskrit College, Calcutta, one of the oldest educational institutions in South Asia. Following the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42), one encounters in his 1851 work, *Ariana Antiqua: a Descriptive Account of Antiquities and Coins in Afghanistan*, the third chapter entitled ‘Ancient Ariana: a land between Persia and India’. Shahbazi opined that this fired the imaginings of latter-day Afghan nationalists who sought to resuscitate Afghan pride by dismissing Achaemenids and Sāsānians, even-handedly, as usurpers. The Paštūn chauvinist, to be fair, cannot be faulted for partisanship as he roundly scorns all superpowers, past or present whether near abroad or distant. It was quite possibly this work, which inspired the late amīr of Afghānistān to consider naming the Afghan national carrier as *Ariana Afghan Airlines* in 1955, a collaborative venture set up between the Afghan government and a Bombay-based company, Indamer Aviation, belonging to the Birlas, one of India’s leading entrepreneurial family. Panam purchased that

Indian stake in 1957. A domestic carrier, inspired by conjuring ancient Bactria, *Bakhtar Alwatana Airlines*, was formed in 1967 and merged into Ariana in 1988.

Classical sources, however, are our concern here insofar as they adumbrate Bactrian prosperity: grains, when ripened, were putatively plump as olive piths (Theophrastus, *Hist.* pl. 8.4.5); Pliny (*Historiae Naturalis* 37.17) mentions *Bactrianorum smaragdi* [emerald]; and that learned and *meliglossos* ‘honey-tongued’ Aelian remarked about Bactria’s flourishing fauna and the presence of gold deposits (*De Natura Animalium* 4.25; 15.8). The latter now confirmed by recent geological surveys in Balkh, which have yielded gold albeit of a less dazzling sort: oil. For gold now one must excavate in Ghaznī province, where deposits are estimated at \$25 billion, and, cumulatively estimated across Afghānistān at \$1 trillion.

Bactrian gold, a byword for Bactrian plenitude, and now Afghānistān’s national collateral assets or crown jewels, discovered just a year before Moscow’s Christmas Day 1979 invasion — a day irrelevant to the god-fearing invaded and godless invader — might be synopsisized here: a joint Soviet-Afghan archaeological team was first set up in 1969, and among other projects, had intended to survey a promising hillock where painted potsherds, similar to those only found in southern Türkmenistān, harking to the end of the second millennium BC, were stumbled upon in the open. Apart from Turkmenia, nothing of the sort had been found elsewhere. The hillock or mound in question, 100 m in diameter and 3–4 m high was west of Bactra. It was known locally as Ṭilā-tepe ‘mound of gold’, and situated along the Sar-i pul river in the northern suburbs of Šibargān, a town located in that namesake district, and capital of Jowzjān province (Bactrian γωζαγανο, γωζογανο, Chinese *hushijian* [apud Xuanzang], New Persian *gowzgan*, Arabic *juzjān*). Roadworks in successive years led to the destruction of these sherds as did wanton digging and destruction of Ṭilā-tepe. Limited excavations yielded nothing.

The political turbulence, just over the horizon, however, was an unexpected bonus. For the new regime in Kābul, Marxists to a man, was eager to foster co-operation on all fronts with their northern comrades. Unusually heavy downpours hampered the annual autumnal dig that resumed during the 1978 season. But on November 15, the very day an International Kushan Seminar opened in Kābul, the team struck, literally, gold. Some 164 gold plates came to light. Simultaneous excavations around five other burial sites would subsequently lead the contingent led by Viktor Sarianidi, a Soviet archaeologist of Pontic Greek descent, to the eventual discovery of six undisturbed tombs consisting of five females and one male buried with over 21,168 gold artefacts. A family cemetery, most likely of local ruling dynasts, it must have been of one among the five ruling Kušāṇa principalities during the first century BC, and arguably, the richest. A proviso in concluding this excursus is that Bactrian gold, so Tarn reminds us, was actually transit, not local, gold obtained from Siberian ores via southern Russia to the imperial Persian court. It was this that led Darius to declare, without actually elaborating, that gold came from Sardis and Bactria for constructing the Apadāna at Susa, as he stated in his inscription (Darius Susa F. [DSf 35-6]): *daraniyam hacā Spardā utā hacā Bāxtriya abariya tya idā akariya* ‘gold was brought from Sardis and from Bactria which here was wrought’. It merits mentioning that the Greek δᾱρεικός, a gold coin first issued around 515 BC, was derived from the name of the emperor, Darius, and not the Old Persian substantive *daraniya*- ‘gold’. Their Sāsānian successors, however, would be identified with silver whose coinage’s high purity content was a benchmark maintained until that dynasty’s demise: Sāsānian (but also Byzantine) silver, not gold, was the preferred currency among the steppe peoples.

Virgil (*Georgics* 2.138), a veritable son of the Roman soil, held that nothing could hold a candle to Italy’s glories including the ‘gorgeous Ganges ... Bactra nor India’ *pulcher Ganges ... non Bactra neque Indi*.

*Sed neque Medorum silvæ ditissima terra
Laudibus Italiæ certet, non Bactra neque Indi*

His comparison testified to its well-deserved reputation in antiquity. Virgil later fused Medea with the Panjāb's Jhelum (*Medus Hydaspes*) (*Georgics* 4.211). While incorrect, this Indo-Iranian link cannot be dismissed out of hand as it reveals a lingering, vague notion of commingling among peoples of such diverse lands since and prior to the Achaemenids. Horace (*Odes* 3.29.8) exclaims just that: 'and Bactra, Cyrus once ruled' *et regnata Cyro Bactra*. Propertius (3.1.16) coveted and wished Rome 'to sing that Bactra will be our empire's bound' *qui finem imperii Bactra futura canent*. This oblique reference to the wars between Rome and Persia also signaled a hopeful extension of the empire as far afield as India.

Bactra commanded the royal road to India for in the first-century AD chronicle, Voyage Round the Red Sea (*Periplus Maris Erythraei* 64.9-10), is a mention of wares being conveyed by foot, notwithstanding the enormous distances to Bharūch (Greek βαρύγασα, Latin *barygaza*, Sanskrit *bhārukaccha*) through Bactria and back to Limyrica (Greek λιμυρικῇ) on the Malabar littoral through the Ganges river. The anonymous author-navigator who chronicled his invaluable knowledge of Indian oceanic trade was cognisant of the vast stretches between both emporia and so presently cautioned: 'It is no simple matter to enter that place, for few and far between are those who come back from there.' Bactria, according to the *Mahābhārata*, was the source of good mules and is noted alongside China for felts, woollens and silks, all of which were bound for the Indian plains. But the *Arthaśāstra* (2.30.29) notes the import of mediocre steeds from Bactria.

Pursuant to its annexation by the Achaemenids in the sixth century BC, Bactria constituted the Twelfth Satrapy of the empire. Ctesias of Cnidos offers us a fragmentary attestation of Bactria after its incorporation into the empire. Its initial mention is in an Old Persian list of Darius's conquests (Darius Susa [DSm 8]): *mām xšāyaθiyam ahyāyā būmiyā akunauš vašnā Ahura Mazdahā imā dahyāva tyaišām adam xšāyaθiya abavam ... Bāxtriš* '[H]e (= Ahura Mazda) made me king in this earth. By the favour of Ahura Mazda these are the countries of which I became king ... and Bactria' is cited ninth in the list of territories. And to the king-of-kings this satrapy's treasury forwarded 360 silver talents as annual tribute. Silver, unlike gold, was locally mined in Bactria. They were, nominally, vassals who wielded direct, regional control and answerable to the local satrap, a kinsman of the sovereign whose duties were civilian rather than military in Darius's era. It must also be pointed out that central Achaemenid administrative practices were not implemented and that the Bactrian vassalage, in all likelihood, continued with its autonomy broadly intact as was before the Persian conquest. There is circumstantial evidence to support this contention. The fourth-century Roman historian, Ammianus Marcellinus (d. ca. AD 391-400, *Res Gestae* XXIII.6.14) highlights decentralised, extant Achaemenid practices in Bactria among other regions for, 'There are, however, these very large regions in the whole of Persia which the Vitaxae (that is, the cavalry commanders) look after ...' *sunt autem in omni Perside hae regiones maximae, quas Vitaxae id est magistri equitum curant ...*. This cavalry commander (OP *bitaxš*, Aram. *byt'ḥš*) is a designated title found from the first to eighth century AD. Its etymological origins, function and position are controversial. Hinz's proposition of Old Iranian **dvitiya-xšaya-* 'ruling as second' is attractive. It does not denote crown prince and most probably was a member of both the royal house and entourage thus 'second king' or something of a grand vizier. This arrangement is surely significant given that all satraps appointed were close kin of the Achaemenid sovereign.

Ctesias is, on certain aspects, unreliable — the Assyrian annexation of Bactria, for instance. Something of an independent Bactrian confederacy, perhaps, did exist in that hoary epoch? For he tells us how the Bactrians afforded assistance to the Assyrians against the Medes at Nineveh in the seventh century BC thus alluding to their then autonomy. These Bactrians, as Gnoli pointed out, retained a lingering fear of Median intentions against their richly famed lands. It came to pass, so Ctesias again reveals,

when they fell under Medean control. And no sooner had Cyrus overcome and defeated Astyages, the last Median ruler, than the Bactrians prudently recognised his suzerainty. This politic move on the part of the Bactrians — for what was it but an Achaemenid overlord replacing a Medean one — was not lost on the incoming rulers. Bactria is amply attested in Old Persian primary sources as the fifth (DSe 21-30, DNa 22 -30), sixth (Darius statue), eighth (XPh 19-28) and seventeenth province (DB I 14-17, DSaa 18-31, DPe 10-18). Herodotus's tribute list (3.90-94) enumerates them in the twelfth district of the empire.

Commerce, cultivation and cavalry were Bactria's contribution to the empire's heartland in Persis: its prodigious produce, strategic mercantile position on east-west routes, and its exceptionally gallant cavalry saw action at Salamis and Gaugamela. At the former battle under direct command of the king-of-kings, and at the latter led by the Bactrian Bessus under who were the Sogdian and Indian contingents of the empire (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.8.5). Some 30,000 Bactrian cavalymen stood by the doomed Darius III Codomannus (b. ca. 380-d. mid-330 BC, Old Persian *dārayavauš* '[one] holding firm the good', Middle Persian *dārāy*, New Persian, Arabic, Urdu *dārā*, Elamite *da-ri-(y)-a-ma-u-iš*, Babylonian *da-(a)-ri-ia-(a)-mu-iš*, Aramaic, Hebrew *dryhwš*, Egyptian *tr(w)š*, Greek *Δαρεῖος*, *Δαρεῖος*, Latin *dārīus*, *dārēus* > Italian *dario*, German *darios* and French, English *darius*, Pārsī Gujarātī *darāyus*) as his throne name having been born Artasata (Babylonian *ar-ta-šá-a-ta*, Old Persian *artašāta* < Old Persian **artašiyāta* 'happy in/through truth' < Old Iranian **ṛta-š(y)āta*). He died fleeing en route to Bactria from two of his Persian generals. Bactria, like the rest of Central Asia, fiercely resisted the Macedonian marauders. Alexander's Bactrian campaign lasted for some two years. And it was in Bactria, two years later, that he was enthused with the idea of pushing further to conquer south of the Hindu Kuš into the farthest Indian territories of what had nominally been under the Achaemenids.

Just where or what was Achaemenid India will always elude us. Majumdar, regrettably for an otherwise prolific Indianist, dismissed out of hand Jackson, that leading American Iranist of the early twentieth century, in the *Cambridge History of India* (1922), a distillation which repays reading among present-day Indo-Iranists. Majumdar aimed his guns in the wrong direction by declaring it was doubtful if Cyrus ever attacked India, correctly northwest historic India, which included Balochistān and Afghānistān. But he correctly questioned just what satrapies had Darius I in mind when citing India in his later, not the earliest, inscriptions and the presence of Indians in treasury records. The date and actual territories (Sind, southern Afghānistān, Panjāb) remain moot though Gandhāra is included in his Bīsutūn edict (DB 1.16). India (Old Persian *hinduš*) is enumerated in a much later monumental edict (DPe 17-18) and is listed immediately before Gandhāra. Sircar reasonably inferred from this that Darius had annexed the former and inherited the latter. Herodotus's mention and the above-noted citation of Indians in the Persepolitan records afford, admittedly, but the slimmest of evidence. Majumdar overstretched himself by doubting if the Panjāb (Vedic *saptá sindhavaḥ* 'seven rivers', Avestan *hapta hēndu/hinḍu*) or any part of it was ever under Persian control during Darius I's reign and following his demise. Granted Cambyses never campaigned in the east but the satrapy of Ōataguš was inherited from Cyrus II and his successors as part of the empire and enumerated by Darius I as one of his 'provinces' (Old Persian *dahyāva*) in the Bīsutūn inscription (DB 1.17; cf. DB 2.7-8 when Sattagydia is cited among other provinces as having rebelled against his authority). Admittedly there is justified scepticism of Achaemenid control over the lands which overlap with the Panjāb and listed as the satrapy of Sattagydia (Old Persian *Ōataguš*, Greek *Σατταγυδία*, Elam. *sa-ad-da-ku-iš*, Akk. *sa-at-ta-gu-ú*) but this was only so when the empire was on the wane or nearing collapse. Scholarly consensus now considers Sattagydia to have been between Gandhāra and Arachosia, and not in the environs of Multān and southern Panjāb. Recent archaeological finds reveal congruence in ceramic design patterns excavated in Sattagydia, namely, Pākistān's Bannu district (Avestan *varəna*, NWFP/Khybar Paḥtūnkhwā) and Tepe Yahyā, southeast Irān. It is entirely

probable that local, warring rulers held sway in this satrapy when Alexander encountered them before his Bactrian campaign. He personally appointed one Sambus as satrap when there (Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.16.3). Darius was but emulating Cyrus II who staked, as Badian sensibly suggested, an anterior claim to hold sway over these outlying Indian territories.

There is unanimity about the increasing gaps in our sources now beginning with the two decades following Alexander's death (323 BC) and consolidation of Central Asia under his successor Seleucus I (305-304 BC). The violent uprising, following Alexander's demise, by some war-weary, compulsorily settled 23,000 Greeks to return to their Mediterranean hearths began in Bactria and spread across Sogdiana and the environs (Diodorus 18.7). It was during the first half of the third century BC under Seleucus I (311-281 BC) and that of his successors, Antiochus I (r. 281-261 BC) and Antiochus II (r. 261-246), when Bactria along with other annexed provinces of Greek Central Asia were consciously sustained by Hellenism as was recognisably known to flourish in Anatolia and Hellenized western Asia.

This is the more remarkable given that the Seleucids had come to accept Mauryan authority over lands west of the Indus (Old Indian *síndhu*, Avestan *hiṇdu* 'border' [*apud* Thieme], 'river' [*apud* Gershevitch and Humbach], *uṣastaire hiṇdvō* 'eastern river' loc. sg. m., *Mihr Yašt* Yt. 10.104, *Yasna* 57.29, *Tištār Yašt* Yt. 8.32, *Vīdēvdād* 1.18], Babylonian *in-du-ú*, Elamite *hi-in-du-iš*, Old Persian *hinduš* 'Indus province' > Hebrew *hoddu* 'India' [*Esther* 1:1, 8:9, *Jubilees* 8:21, 9:2, I *Maccabees* 6:37, III *Esdras* 3:2], Greek Ἰνδός > Latin *Indus*) covering Gedrosia (hinterland of southern Pākistān's Makrān littoral), Arachosia or modern Kandahār (Greek Ἀραχωσία > Latin *Arachosia*, Indo-Iranian **sarasuatī*, Old Persian *harauvatiš*, Vedic *sárasvatī*-, Avestan *harax^vaitī*- 'one with many ponds', Elamite *ha(r)-ra-u-ma-ti-iš*, *ha(r)-ru-ma-ti-iš*, Akkadian *a-ru-ḥat-ti*, Aramaic *hrḥwt*, Pahlavi *harahmand*, New Persian *argāndāb*); and Paropamisadae (Greek παροπαμισάδαι), properly, the country in the south-eastern Hindu Kuš (Ptolemy 6.18, cf. Strabo 15.2.9 'along the Indus are the Paropamisadae, above whom lies the Paropamisus mountain'), which is frequently substituted for Paropamisus, the actual Hindu Kuš range (Greek παροπάμισος, Avestan *upāiri.saēna*-, Volksetymologie '[range] above the eagles', Book Pahlavi *abārsēn*, *apārsēn*, cf. Vedic *uparīsyena*-, Chinese *poluosena*, Babylonian *pa-ar-ú-pa-ra-e-sa-an-na* is the rendition of the Gandhāran satrapy in the Babylonian version of Darius's Bīsutūn inscription). Paropamisus was the Greek equivalent of Old Iranian **para-uparīsaina* 'front [south] of *uparīsaina*, land beyond *uparīsaina*' via Babylonian *pa-ar-ú-pa-ra-e-sa-an-na*, which, as stated above, was the designation of the north-west Indian satrapy. This becomes meaningful when considering that Paropamisus was regarded an extension of India by the Achaemenids as well as classical geographers. Hence Paropamisadae would be the region comprising of **para-uparīsaina* and **uparīsaina* traversed by Alexander as his contingent headed northwards from the Kābul valley (Vedic *kubhā*, Greek κοφῆν, Book Pahlavi *k'pwl* > New Persian and Arabic *kābul*, Chinese *gaofu*) to Bactria. It was lost to the Mauryas and subsequently became part of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom after the second century BC.

Greek settlers under Indian control managed to retain and nurture their traditions with the 'old country'. Those intrepid colonists would undo the last Alexandrine link to go their own way when these principalities north of the Hindu Kuš overthrew the Seleucids by 238 BC to form what is now known as the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. These Graeco-Bactrians — Indo-Greeks and Indus Greeks to Indian and Pakistani nationalists — would in turn overrun those lands south of the Hindu Kuš by about 200 BC to bring into their fold those fellow Hellenes then under Mauryan rule. Some thirty plus rulers are numismatically attested for this Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, which lasted about two and a half centuries from Diodotus I to the last ruler, Strato II (AD 10). Bactria proper remained the Graeco-Bactrian homestead. For in Bactria's agricultural strength lay its ability to expand economically and politically.

The Seleucids undertook renovation of irrigation works in the wake of attendant destruction from their triumph. This also led to an increase in cultivable land, which in turn gave a fillip to crafts, urbanisation and trade along the established networks, all of which straddled the kingdom between India and the Mediterranean.

Setting their sights on the Indian mainland, the Indo-Greeks were briefly successful in annexing the Indus basin. The Indian campaigns began under Demetrius I, son of Euthydemus I (Greek Εὐθύδημος), a ruler at the end of the third century BC, who expanded the kingdom to include Arachosia and Paropamisadae. Arachosia, ‘White India’ (Greek Ἰνδική λευκή) to the Pārthians, tenuously noted by Isidore of Charax (*Parthian Stations* 19), can only be so if it fell under *de facto* Indian control ca. 30 BC-AD 19. This stands to reason for Darmesteter, in consonance with Mas‘ūdī’s civilizational views (*Murūj al-dhahab* II, 79-82), declared that the stylistics of *Vīdēvdād* 1 and environs of Kābul and Sīstān, as Indo-Iranian borderlands, betrayed Indic overtones during the two centuries preceding and following the Common Era. Eucratides I (Greek Εὐκρατίδης ca. 171-145 BC) led a revolt in Bactria during these expeditions and overthrew Demetrius I around 170 BC. Eucratides I (ca. 171-155 BC), the self-styled king of ‘the thousand cities of Bactra’ was, so it is assumed, slain by a son of Demetrius I (ca. 200-185 BC), Demetrius II ca. 150 BC, who would be incorrectly introduced by Chaucer at the beginning of his *Knight’s Tale*: *With Arcite, in stories as men find, The grete Emetrius, the King of Ynde...* . Bivar had examined these mediaeval traditions to demonstrate that distant echoes of Bactrian history were accessible to Chaucer, Boccaccio and Laurence de Premierfait of the version of Eucratides’ death, most probably from Trogus’ account, via the Alexander Romance.

The Graeco-Bactrian kingdom shortly came to an end after his death following clashes with predatory nomads such as the Yuezhi and Sāka/Śākas originating in north-west China between 145-130 BC. Besides its eastern losses, Bactria also lost two of its outlying western provinces to the rising Pārthians. The intervening period is less known and largely realised from internecine warfare between the so-called successors of Euthydemus and Eucratides wielding control south and north of the Hindu Kuś respectively. Heliocles — and since there were two we cannot tell with certainty if the second was sired by the first — was probably the last Graeco-Bactrian ruler of Bactria (Greek Αἰκαίος, Prakrit *heliyakriya*, r. 145-130 BC). Those Indo-Greeks in the south hobbled for a century before succumbing to the onslaught of the Sāka/Śākas led by one Maues (r. ca. 90-80 BC) who descended into Gandhāra (Old Persian *gandāra*, Elamite *gán-da-ra*, Akkadian *gan-da-ri*, Sanskrit *gandhāra*-, Chinese *qiantuoluo*, Arabic *al-qandahār* [apud Bīrūnī]) through the Gilgit (Sanskrit *sargīn*, Khotanese *gīdagītā*, Wakhi, Khowari, *gilt*, Tibetan *bru-sha*, Chinese *nieh-ho-to* < N.-W. T’ang *giu-γᵘā-tā*) and Swāt valleys (Sanskrit *suvāstu*, Greek Σό(υ)αστος; for the modern district called Yūsufzai between the Indus and Swāt rivers: Greek Σουαστηνή, Sanskrit *uḍḍiyāna*, *ujjāna*, Tibetan *o-rgyan*), and temporarily occupied Taxilā (Greek Τάξιλα, Sanskrit *takṣasīlā*, Gandhari Prakrit *taḥsāila*, Pali *takkasīlā*) around 85 BC. To Gershevitch we owe the identification of North Indian Rosewood (*dalbergia sissoo*) and import of indigenous *yakā* timber, when Gandhāra was an Achaemenid satrapy, by the imperial court at Susa (DSf 44). It is, as the *śīśam* tree, the state tree of both Panjābs in present-day India and Pākistān. Gandhāra, as a Greek possession, was divided into two. Political appointees assigned to that satrapy never used its name but always referred to it as ‘the country this side of the Indus’ or ‘part of India bordering on the Paropamisos’. By ca. 55 BC Indo-Greek rule ended in Gandhāra and Taxila. These dynasts were relegated to a remnant between the Chenāb (Greek Ἀκεσίνης, Vedic *asiknī*, Sanskrit *candrabhāga* > Greek Σανδαβάλ [apud Ptolemy]) and Sutlej (Greek Ζάραδρος, Ζάδαδρος, Latin *sydrus*, Vedic *śutudrī*, Sanskrit *śatadru*) rivers under Strato II (AD 5-10), and were to be eventually replaced in the eastern Panjāb by the Indo-Pārthians in the first century AD.

These Yavanas (Greek Ἴωνία 'Ionia', Elamite *(i)-ia-u-na*, Akkadian *ia-ma-nu* 'Ionia', Old Persian *yauna-*, 'Ionia, Ionian', Sanskrit *yavana*, Pali *yona* 'Ionian'), as listed in the Indian tradition alongside various foreigners such as the Bāhlikas or Bactrians (*Mahābhārata* 12.65.13, *Manusmṛti* 10.44, *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa* 14.16), including Aśoka's fifth edict as *yona*, are the Greeks of Asia as implied in that monarch's Aramaic and Greek bilingual Kandahār inscription. But the Indo-Greeks did not wield *de facto* power east of Mathurā (Greek Μέθορα, Chinese *matiaoluo*). In the *Gargīsaṃhitā* section (97-105) of the *Yuga Purāṇa* is described the predations of the Indo-Greeks and their occupation of Pāṭaliputra (Greek Παλιμποθρα, Παλιβοθρα, Sanskrit *pāṭaliputra*, Prakrit *paḍaliputta*, Bactrian Παλαβοτρο), also known as Puṣpapura, a city of the Magadha kingdom and former Mauryan capital located at the confluence of the lower Ganga (Greek Γάγγης, Sanskrit *gaṅgā*) and Soan (Greek Σῶνος). Ghosh pointed out recently references to *Yavana/Yona* names betraying Indic or Iranian origins, while initially identified as Greek, did evolve in attribution to range from 'Graeco-Iranian, Hellenist Indian, Indianized Greek, and Graeco-Roman or anyone coming from the West.'

The most famous dynast among the Indo-Greeks attested in Sanskrit sources remains Menander I (Greek Μένανδρος, Pali *milinda*, Prakrit *menamdra*, inscrip. *mine(m)dra*, 165-130 BC), commander-in-chief of Demetrius I and a contemporary of Eucratides I. His ethical reputation was as pervasive as his coinage for no other Indo-Greek ruler before or after him could match the number of coins struck by him varying in monograms, dies and series in both bronze and silver. His rule extended from the Hindu Kuś to the Panjāb and for some time did include parts of the west Gangetic valley upto the Chambal river which flowed south of Mathurā. Menander, according to the *Yuga Purāṇa*, marched from Mathurā to Pāṭaliputra via Sāket, Prayāg and Vārāṇasī. Some archaeological finds from Rājghāt now bear testimony to this as evinced in the seals bearing Hellenic deities as well as a Bactrian camel. Menander's retreat westwards following his defeat by Puṣyamitra Śunga (184-148 BC), founder of that dynasty's namesake, is commemorated in Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*. It is unclear if either Menander or Apollodotus (inscrip. Prakrit *apaladata*), an Indo-Greek ruling over Paropamisadae (*ca.* 180-160 BC), who too had set his sights on occupying India, managed to reach Sind much less Saurāṣṭra or the Gulf of Cambay. Bharūch, to be sure, was a prized mercantile town and harbour port. Menander's coins have been found there in great numbers so it may well be that Greek money was sought given that the Graeco-Bactrians controlled the southern Hindu Kuś trade. It is tempting to rely on the *Periplus*, which would have us believe that Menander controlled Bharūch in the first century AD. But it was only at the end of the second century BC, however, with the Greek discovery by one Hippalus of the southwest monsoon winds, that maritime trade developed between India and Egypt. Scylax of Carynda had been delegated by Darius I to reconnoitre down the Indus (Herodotus 4.44) until it joined the 'southern ocean', actually northern Arabian Sea, and therefrom to the Persian Gulf (Akkadian *tāmtu šaplītu* 'lower sea', Greek Περσικός κόλπος [Eratosthenes *apud* Strabo XVI, C 765, Ptolemy 6.4, Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.9.5], Latin *persicus sinus*, *aquarius persico* [apud Quintus Curtius], Arabic *baḥr al-fāris*, New Persian *khalīj-i fārs*). Greek drachmas discovered in Bharūch reveal that the Greeks, the very picture of maritime enterprise, were getting into the fray of this trans-Arabian sea boom, whose journey time was reduced to a month. Nominal colonisation gave way to commercial activism. There is nothing to suggest that they were thoroughly committed to conquering India.

Nearly a century after the Achaemenids, the vestiges of their bureaucracy were still to be seen in their former Indian provinces where now Aśoka's edicts were being disseminated in Aramaic as a medium of expression and from that language's script was derived and developed the *kharoṣṭhī* (Old Iranian *xšaθra-piṣtra* 'royal writing' *apud* Bailey; probably a nickname 'donkey lip', *Mahābhārata* 8.30.11 *apud* Witzel) script for Middle Indian (Aśokan Prakrit) which, centuries later, was misidentified by scholars as 'Bactrian' or 'Indo-Bactrian'. It is not entirely implausible that Aśoka consciously had the Achaemenid king-of-kings in mind when issuing his edicts for posterity (Aśokan Prakrit *dhammalipi*

‘text of *dharma*’, Sanskrit *lipi*, *libi* [Pāṇinī 3.2.21], Jain Prakrit *livi*, Middle Indian *lipi* ‘script, writing’ and Bactrian $\lambda\beta o$ ‘copy, document, text’ < Old Persian *dipam* acc. sg. f. noun, *dipī-* ‘inscription’; Late Elamite *tippi* < Middle Elamite *tu₂pp₂*; Achaemenid Elamite *tup-pi* < Akkadian *t/tuppu* ‘tablet, document, letter’ < Sumerian *dub* ‘tablet, tablet-case’; Old Elamite *teppir* ‘chancellor, scribe, secretary, high juridical official’; Middle Elamite *tu₄-up-pi-me* ‘inscription’; Achaemenid Elamite *teppir* : Babylonian *sepīru* ‘scribe’ [*apud* Tavernier]; Achaemenid Elamite *tippi* : Old Persian *dipi-* ‘inscription’, *tippime* : *dipičiṣam* ‘form of writing’ [Schmitt *apud* Tavernier]). Darius I, after all, declared Aramaic to be the *lingua franca* of the empire and that he created a new *tippime* in Aryan (DB 70). No Indian script was either attested or deployed in ancient India, except in those Iranian-influenced northwest regions, prior to 300 BC. Aramaic, both language and script, pursuant to the Persian conquest of Gandhāra, entered the subcontinent in the last half of the sixth century BC. Babylonian linear zigzag functions and the gnomon only reached India from Achaemenid Irān during the fifth or fourth century BC. The Indian reception of Babylonian astronomical ideas too could have occurred earlier in the pre-Mauryan period as has been now proposed by Potts. Indeed this would have taken place during the Hellenistic interlude in the Indo-Iranian borderlands. It is, as Harry Falk has rightly observed, to the influence of Bactrian Greeks that the ancient Indians owe the chronological dating of eras.

Further, it is in Hellenistic Irān, namely, Bactria that we must seek the antecedents and impulses of Gandhāran art hitherto assumed to be Roman. This decidedly independent Hellenistic but increasingly orientalised artistic and architectural tradition imbibed and amalgamated elements from the Classical, Iranian, Indian and, note, also indigenous Central Asian art of the steppes. Those serene and superb schists and reliefs, created between the first and fifth centuries of the common era, sculptural productions, in the first stage, are marked by independent Hellenic and Indic stylistic features leading to a mature Gandhāran art during the Sāka/Śāka-Pārthian-early Kuṣāṇa eras.

The Tocharians or Kuṣāṇas, as Bactrian-speaking Iranians, used a modified Greek script for their edicts and correspondences in that medium of communication, the sole Iranian language attested to do so. Bactria was where the Tocharians came, conquered, stayed and set forth to create their Kuṣāṇa empire stretching from Central Asia to north-eastern India during the first three centuries AD. Under Kaniṣka, Greek usage came to an end. Kuṣāṇo-Sāsānian rule in Bactria followed by rulers nominally owing allegiance to the Iranian plateau. For six centuries these inscriptions and documents, the latter civil documents consisting of letters, contracts, tallies and receipts, written in Bactrian have been deciphered, interpreted and now published by Sims-Williams, who has provided an invaluable glimpse of life in late antiquity Afghānistān.

Appendix: Indo-Hellenic Interactions

Associations of West Asia and the colonial Hellenic world with historic or Greater India, correctly, its northern landmass, are considerably more difficult to discern in the interchange of ideas than has been with the peninsular south where foreign commerce left a clearer economic impact on society and, consequently, scholarship. A gripe in our contradictory and crabbed sources notwithstanding, this is the more lamentable given the north’s longer direct, cultural exchanges with the Greeks and their Graeco-Asian legates, even prior to the Alexandrine invasion, for well nigh a millennium from the sixth century BC to the fifth century of the common era across present-day Afghānistān, India and Pākistān heretofore Greater India. Such studies have, in the main, attracted the attention of classicists whether as historians or numismatists. Their orientalist or Indological counterparts exhibited limited enthusiasm for such endeavours. The training and orientation required for two distinct fields with their own problems and methodologies has, understandably, not enhanced a keener mutual awareness. Insofar as cross-cultural examinations go, both guilds have peremptorily poached the other’s preserve to bolster the provenance or influence of their contentions, either suggestive or superficial but frequently circumstantial.

The convening of a symposium to review as well as further the scope and state of research in Indo-Hellenic studies by the K R Cama Oriental Institute in 2013 was an admirable advance to an initiative formally proposed by the European Cultural Centre, Delphi, to Indira Gandhi during a 1983 visit to the Hellenic Republic. (This volume goes to press after her 2017 birth centennial.) An Indo-Greek foundation was established the following year, in 1984, as a cultural and scholarly platform whose maiden symposium's papers were published by MARG, arguably the finest forum of Indian aesthetics, entitled *India and Greece: Connections and Parallels*, ed. S Doshi (Bombay, 1985). Also, in 1985, Indo-Greek studies, a degree course, as well as an *Indian Society for Greek and Roman Studies* (ISGARS) were inaugurated at the then Rohilkhand (now Mahatma Jyotiba Phule) University, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. The journal *Yavanika* published from that university's ancient history department remains the sole publication in the subcontinent exclusively concerned with Indo-Hellenic studies. In 1999 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi and the Greek government, which led to the subvention of a chair of Greek studies. Since its inception in October 2000 at JNU's School of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, it has been named after Dimitri Galanos (d. 1833), a noted Greek Sanskritist, who first settled at Calcutta in 1786 to assume charge of the Greek school attached to that city's Greek Orthodox Church consecrated in 1782. (Calcuttan Greeks, some of whom were leading traders and merchants of their day, raised funds alongside British philhellenes for the 1821-30 Greek War of Independence).

A reasonable *terminus post quem* is the third century AD for the Indianisation and eventual dispersion and diffusion of the Greek minority in the subcontinent. But this was not before they left a fascinating impress having first arrived, according to Sanskrit sources, in considerable numbers on the frontiers around the fifth century BC. Their advent was via Irān: and it was in Iranian Bactria where one discerns the nucleus of the original Hellenic population of exiles and settlers who formed the Graeco-Bactrian state in the third century BC which would attack India a century later. Profit is likely to come to those who would explore the Iranian buffer between India and Europe and thence navigate Indo-Hellenic confluences in art, administration, philosophy and religion. Only sustainable speculation refracted through the Persian prism will illumine our blur of alleged borrowings and transmissions otherwise debated dimly. Thanks to Kipling, the nostrum among Afghans and Pakistanis, in some measure popularized by romantic occidentals, that the former inhabitants of Kāfiristān and present-day Kalāsh of Dardistān are descendants of Alexander persists despite being disproved in successive studies by geneticists and linguists. One may usefully propose an alternative in that, perhaps, some Greek stragglers from the army of Darius who founded the Nysan statelet in the Swāt valley may have encountered these Kalāsh indigenes who later adapted the vine and worship of Dionysus. It certainly gives lie the fact that full-blown bacchanalian rites in the Chitrāl valley, an exotic outpost so distant from mainland Hellas, are plainly due to their Alexandrine heritage.

An extreme case in point is the Greek antecedents sought for Indian drama because the curtain mounted in Sanskrit plays was called *yavanika*, 'Greek cloth' — a broad, exoticising descriptor to include even, for example, the oil of thyme derived from carom or bishop's weed (*trachyspermum ammi*, Sanskrit *yavanika*, Hindi-Urdu *ajvān*), an indigenous flowering herb. That no curtains were used in Greek plays — except, possibly, Attic mime — is inconsequent. But to dismiss any Hellenic influence out of hand, the *communis opinio* of several Indologists, is untenable. Surely an amphitheatre at Aī Khanoum that could hold 6,000 spectators would not be unnoticed among Indians cohabiting alongside Greek colonists. All surviving Indian dramas, even if Indian in origin, ought not be immune to influences *qua* exact borrowings but specific connotations or conceptions unconsciously transmitted and absorbed. The *longue durée* plea between the fall of the Indo-Greeks in the first century BC and the age of Kālidāsa's literary efflorescence some six centuries subsequently needs to be qualified by the discovery of Buddhist dramatic fragments dating to the first century AD as well as the antecedents of Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* to

that era. The advent of Sanskrit theatre under the aegis of the most hellenized of indigenous dynasts, the Western Kṣatrapas (approximately first-fifth centuries AD), must be also foregrounded against the aforementioned what with Johannes Bronkhorst justifiably requering it recently.

Graeco-Persian, *faute de mieux*, is the Sārnāth lion and Aśokan pillars so emblematically representative of modern India. It was the Seleucids who introduced techniques of polished stone carving to a land where sculptural art was commonly prepared from perishable materials. Indeed no material evidence exists of pre-Aśokan monuments or dressed sculpture in stone between the end of the Indus Valley and the Mauryan age. The most conspicuous intermingling of Indo-Seleucid craftsmanship occurs in architecture during the Parthian era. No freestone architecture is attested anywhere across South Asia prior to the Mauryans which, while indirectly Iranian-inspired, eventually evolved as Indo-Hellenic (material, polish, artistic elements of the capital). Evincing later in the friezes of Gandhāran art is the telling interpenetration of Greek, Persian and Indian elements. The iconography, principally Hellenic in its humanism and naturalism, but whose lively plasticity was eventually modified to suit the demands of Indian (Mahāyānist) theological content culminated in an indigenous, independent tradition albeit ancestrally Greek. For the face of the Buddha — originally Apollonian in physiognomy and treatment — was not coincidental because Apollo, like the Buddha, advocated the middle path and was responsible for the purification of sinners. Flanking the Enlightened One were *Bodhisatvas* whose facial features as well as those of pilgrims and donors remain unmistakably Parthian and Kuṣān, namely, Iranian. Iranian sculpture adopted from Greece stacked folds in dress and this has been proposed as the inspiration of zigzag patterns for dress borders of *yakshas* in early Hindu stonework. Its reception, as suggested by J C Harle, could have been due to an archaic hellenizing feature prevalent in Bactria.

That some Hellenes had ‘gone native’, given the logical appeal of *Śākyamuni*, is entirely plausible. The correspondences between Buddhist and Orphic tenets, and, later, Mahāyānist overtones in neo-Platonic doctrines merit more than the academic *obiter dicta* expressed to date. Plato may not implicitly be in the fee of Indian thought yet his doctrine of reincarnation is strikingly similar to that among Brāhmanical, Buddhist and Jain votaries long developed during the preceding centuries. Democritus was since his teachings on atomism, deliberated a century after that of his earliest Indian counterparts in Therāvada cosmology and ethics as well as Jain atomism, fused with human omniscience. To note laconically the apocryphal sojourns by either Democritus or Plato to India — unlike Pyrrho — is pointless. (It was still time before Pliny would report the presence of Indians in Egypt and Syria or Alexandrians of the first-century AD could distinguish among Indian credos.) It is debatable if early Pyrrhonism is the earliest, datable, historic manifestation of Buddhism.

It is nothing if not daring to declare next that early Buddhism (like early Brāhmanism) were domestic doctrines which evolved in eastern Achaemenid Gandhāra to challenge the advent of reformed Zoroastrianism there subsequent to its trumping unreformed Mazdeism on the Iranian plateau. Christopher Beckwith has done just that recently by also positing that the Buddha was not a Magadhan but a Scythian who travelled and preached in and around Gandhāra. He contends that the adoption of concepts such as heaven and hell by Brāhmanism, and later Buddhism, which, despite being initially hostile to that Iranian credo, internalised its notions as good and bad *karma*. The reception to these claims has been, predictably, apoplectic. Just as bold are the pioneering propositions of Michael Witzel and Steve Farmer, whose ‘Gandhāra thesis’ eschews broadstrokes for learned postulates detailing ideational interface between Achaemenids and Indians, following the introduction of literacy and accelerated canon-formations, in Vedic and Achaemenid Zoroastrian traditions.

It would be fruitful to reconsider the Persian common ground for Democritus or Plato, in all likelihood, must have met itinerant philosopher-soldiers or mercenaries in Egypt, southern Italy and the Academy. Some mutual intelligibility was evident: Richard Stoneman, in a profoundly learned assessment of the

Graeco-India epoch, has highlighted how a rare Greek dramatic text, *Charition*, contained non-Greek (south Indian and quite probably Tulu) utterances in that second century AD papyrus fragment from Oxyrhynchus. That such plays were also widely enjoyed is now evinced in a Peshāwar-discovered vase depicting a scene from Sophocles' *Antigone*.

Pythagorean tradition, on the other hand, definitely owed more to Indian than Alexandrian currents insofar as the theory of transmigration is concerned. Its parallels immediately betray Indian and not Egyptian — *contra* Herodotus — resemblances. Further, in his monastic fraternity at Croton and its demanding dietary taboos (upheld much later by neo-Pythagoreans too), one is presently reminded of Jain and Buddhist practices. To underscore Indian vegetarianism among Pythagoreans as well as adumbrate its exacting endorsement enjoined in Manichaeism, a gnostic, anti-cosmic dualism that was to evolve in third-century AD Parthian Assyria, would not be an overstatement.

Although spoken Greek had by then vanished in northern India, its cursive script was employed to write Bactrian, the sole Iranian language for which we possess such evidence. The last decade of the twentieth century and the first one of the present have witnessed a watershed in Bactrian and Kuṣān studies with the discovery, decipherment and interpretation of almost a hundred well-preserved Bactrian civil documents, all of which were archived in principalities of north-central Afghānistān between the mid-fourth and late eighth centuries AD. Unknown to them, these Kuṣāno-Sāsānians assuredly inherited Eratosthenes' choice encomium for those Indians and Iranians he encountered in Bactria as 'the best of the barbarians'. A survey of the Sasanian East has now been fulfilled by Khodadad Rezakhani.

Good poets, even a national poet (*rāṣṭrakavi*) of Maithilī Śaraṇa Gupta's stature (1886-1964), are not averse to composing cadenced verses laden with inadmirable sentiments: his nationalist hymn, *Bhārata-bhārātī* (written in 1912-13), may have enthused a generation waging Indian independence but it is regrettable he analogised the Indo-Greek interlude, *daurātmya yavanom kā yahām* 'Greek depravity here' to Awrangzīb's *dvāra jo nij nāś kā banā gayā* 'door/exit of self-destruction', a millennium later (*Bhārata-bhārātī* 242.1-4). The Mughals, like their British successors, were hegemonies who set themselves apart. They appropriated and adjusted, admittedly, more than the latter to their Indian environs. But both remained conscious of their distinctive otherness and rulership which never fully identified with the ethos of those ruled. There is therefore a smidgen of truth when both are occasionally declaimed as, in a word, alien. Against Gupta's uncharitable comparison, A K Narain's classic, *The Indo-Greeks* (1957), published a decade after independence, generously and fairly surmised:

[Bactria's] rulers did not look back to the Seleucids or to the Greek world in the Middle East for inspiration and help, and they never cared to meddle in the struggles of the Hellenistic powers. The new state of Bactria cannot be regarded as a succession state of Alexander's empire; it developed from the revolt of a governor who had the backing of the people. ... Bactria became independent in the same way as Parthia and possibly other areas close to it. Once the Yavanas stood upon their own feet their isolation prevented them from planting new Greek settlements in their kingdom as the Seleucids did in the Middle East. ... Bactria was not a 'fifth Hellenistic state', much less the little Yavana kingdoms in India. Moreover, whereas in countries like Syria and Egypt there was no break in the continuity of Greek domination after the death of Alexander, in India there was the intervening Mauryan period between his death and the rise of the Indo-Greeks. The Indo-Greeks were more influenced by Indian religion and thought than any Hellenistic king by the faith and ideas of the land in which he lived or ruled. ... Their history is part of the history of India and not of the Hellenistic states; they came, they saw, but India conquered.

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