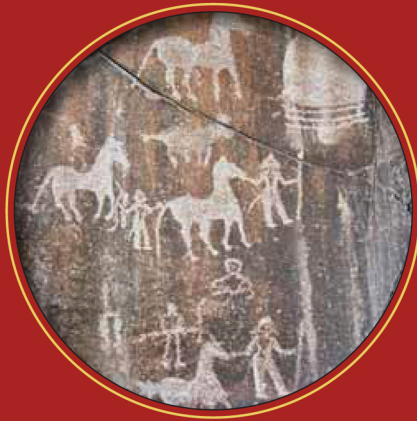


DYNAMICS IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS 5



# Religions and Trade

*Religious Formation, Transformation and  
Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West*

EDITED BY

*Peter Wick and Volker Rabens*

BRILL

## Religions and Trade

# Dynamics in the History of Religions

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Peter Wick and Volker Rabens



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*For*  
*Joan Goodnick Westenholz*  
*(1.7.1943–18.2.2013)*



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## PREFACE

*Religions and Trade* is the fruit of the labour of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg “Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe,” a trans-disciplinary research consortium at Ruhr University Bochum (Germany) that brings together scholars from different fields studying present and past religions of Europe, Northern Africa, South, East, and Central Asia, and the Middle East.

Contact between religions is key to their formation and development. People become aware of their own religious identity through encounter with other religious traditions. This identity is both reinforced and transformed as people assimilate elements of different religions into their own religion or demarcate themselves from them. Trade is a prominent generator of intercultural contact and is thus one of the most important triggers of religious contact. Through trade-based interactions, not only is merchandise traded but sooner or later religious goods are also “traded” and interchanged.

Phenomena like these that occur in the context of trade have been investigated from different perspectives by an array of international scholars. The results were then presented and discussed at the conference “Trading Religions’: Religious Formation, Transformation and Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West,” which was held January 25–27, 2010 at Ruhr University Bochum. The conference was organized by Volker Rabens who was a postdoctoral researcher at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg from 2009–2013. The conference embodies the work of the 2009–2010 fellows of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg’s Research Field 1 (“Formation”) of which Peter Wick is co-chair.

It is only through the generous support of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg “Dynamics in the History of Religions,” which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, that this conference and conference volume could be realized. Our warm thanks go to the many people who contributed to both in one way or another. Here we can mention only a few by name: Volkhard Krech, the Kolleg’s director, for his vision which was a major driving force behind the project; and Marion Steinicke, the co-editor of the series “Dynamics in the History of Religions,” for her competent advice and editorial skill. We are grateful to both of them as well as to the two peer reviewers for their positive feedback and for

welcoming this volume into the series. We also thank Christian Frevel (co-chair of Research Field 1), whose ideas have inspired the thematic orientation and title of this conference; Daniel Klinkmann for his enduring and skilful help in copy-editing this volume; and Karen Finney-Kellerhoff for meticulously proof-reading the essays in this book. Moreover, we are grateful to the editorial team at Brill, particularly for Maarten Frieswijk's valuable and highly professional handling of the many difficult questions connected with layout, image copyright, and suchlike.

Finally, we would like to thank all colleagues at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg who participated actively and with great commitment in the broad interdisciplinary process of dialogue and who brought to bear their specialist knowledge in order to investigate the significance of trade for the development of different religious traditions. We dedicate this volume of essays to Joan Goodnick Westenholz, KHK Visiting Research Fellow 2009–2010, who sadly died before it could be completed.

Peter Wick and Volker Rabens  
Bochum and Jena, June 2013

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“TRADING RELIGIONS”:  
FOUNDATIONAL AND INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Peter Wick and Volker Rabens

1. THE AIMS OF THIS VOLUME

The relationship between religion and trade is complex and multi-layered. Both impact on one another in manifold ways. The title of this introductory chapter, “Trading Religions,” effectively captures and conveys the complexity of this relationship through its very ambiguity.

The thirteen articles of this volume engage with religions and trade from different angles and offer a kaleidoscopic view of this broad field of study. A group of international scholars investigates, from the perspective of trade, the various processes in the formation and transformation of eastern and western religions from the time of their emergence. Looking at religious dynamics from the viewpoint of trade proves to be profitable since different cultures and religions have been (and still are) brought into contact with one another in places of commerce and along trans-regional and transcontinental routes of trade. Trade—in the sense of a real exchange of (physical) goods between people—thus leads to contact and interaction between people of different faiths. In this context, various ideas and religious “commodities” are exchanged—“offered,” “negotiated” and “bought.” Thus, a more metaphorical notion of trade comes to the fore when religious goods are exported and imported, not exclusively but particularly on the basis of (literal) trade contacts. It is a metaphorical notion of trade not least because the exchange is not always intentional, nor does it need to be reciprocal. For this reason “trading religions” is put in quotation marks in the title of this introductory chapter.<sup>1</sup> Both notions of trade (commercial and metaphorical) are closely intertwined and can mutually reinforce one another.<sup>2</sup> Both lead to expansion and densification as well as the amalgamation of religions and religious traditions.

---

<sup>1</sup> This volume is not intended to make a contribution to a market theory of religion. However, through focusing on “trading religions” it indirectly provides a number of perspectives on this theme.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Foltz points out that in the context of the Silk Road, “the religion–trade relationship was mutually reinforcing. For example, the expansion of Buddhism brought an increased demand for silk, which was used in Buddhist ceremonies, thereby further

In order to find new pathways into the world of religious dynamics, this volume focuses on four elements or “commodities” of religious interchange. The essays in the first section investigate the *Topology of Religious Space*. A “topology” of religious spaces and places encompasses a wide spectrum of both real and imagined geographies and cosmologies which have developed at sites of cross-cultural exchange between east and west (e.g., temples and wayside shrines; supramundane heaven and hell realms). These religious spaces were often connected with trade routes. They had an impact on them and on the trading activities carried out on them. But even the sacred spaces themselves were sometimes exported and imported to other regions. That is, the notion of a particular sacred space was introduced to a different location. This location then shared in the sacredness of the original space; the new notion of the sacred place could even take precedence over the former notion of the location.

The second section concentrates on *Religious Symbol Systems* which make a religion visible, different and identifiable. One of the main factors in densification is the establishment and the reproduction of religious symbols as the media of religious beliefs. Religious symbol systems are shaped gradually through cultural exchange and encounters, undergoing adaptation and transformation in many different ways. Religious symbols gained significance in the context of trade because they accompanied merchants and their goods along trade routes and in places of commerce.

This also holds true for *Religious Knowledge*, the topic of the third section. When religious knowledge travels to a new environment, a dynamic reaction is set into motion whereby conventional wisdom is challenged by new and unfamiliar knowledge. At the same time the new knowledge itself is transformed and reappraised in its new religious, social and cultural setting, for religions do not remain unchanged in the context of continuous inter- and intra-religious encounters through trade and/or travelling along trade routes.

Because all of these three elements have an effect on religious-ethical living, the last section focuses attention on *Religious-Ethical Ways of Life*. Individual expressions of spiritual life, ethical convictions and other forms of prescribed conduct are formed and transformed in dialogue with different religious and ethical traditions. In this context, trade and trade networks provide an important stimulus for dialogue as well as for inclusion or demarcation with regard to religious-ethical ways of life.

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stimulating the long-distance trading activity that had facilitated the spread of Buddhism in the first place” (Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization*, 2nd ed. [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010], 10).

## 2. THE ESSAYS IN THIS VOLUME

The volume starts with a programmatic essay by *Christoph Auffarth*. In his study “With the Grain Came the Gods from the Orient to Rome: The Example of Serapis and Some Systematic Reflections,” Auffarth takes his readers straight to the heart of the subject matter by examining the central categories of economy, globalization and cultural exchange. In his systematic reflections he focuses on different types of agents of religious trade, religious merchandise, and restrictions and challenges which affect the religious market. Auffarth illustrates the varied interactions of these categories with the example of the import of the god Serapis to Rome. Serapis had for political reasons been newly invented as a divinity by the Ptolemies, and was later introduced to Rome as the god of grain. He represents the grain that was imported from Egypt. The religious product “Serapis” is directly interlinked with the commodity “grain.” However, there is a shift of meaning with regard to the god which is based on the importation. At the same time, this new god causes a shift within the religious system of Rome as his importance increases over time. This shift is the consequence of a religious dynamic that is induced through trade but that subsequently creates its own dynamic. The outsourcing of grain production had caused Rome to become dependent on importing grain. This dependency had the potential to destabilize Rome in the event of a crisis. In its effort to stabilize the economy, therefore, Rome accepted and even deliberately embraced and absorbed a new deity.

In the first part of the volume, entitled *Trade and the Topology of Religious Space*, three articles investigate processes of cultural and religious formation and transformation in the context of places and regions that stimulate religious interaction. In this respect, the new insights gained from social and cultural studies, namely the so-called “spatial turn,” prove to be helpful because they show that space is always a discursive construct. Even geographical spaces that appear to be identified unambiguously by their physical characteristics are always “*spaces with meaning* whose symbolic content is not determined by their physical materiality . . . but is the product of cultural ascription.”<sup>3</sup> Trade routes play an important role in all of these case studies. The reconstruction of the religious dynamics that developed along these routes would be incomplete if one were to disregard the transformative force of trade. Nevertheless, the case studies show

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<sup>3</sup> Julia Lossau, “Räume von Bedeutung: Spatial Turn, Cultural Turn und Kulturgeographie,” in *Kommunikation—Gedächtnis—Raum: Kulturwissenschaften nach dem “Spatial Turn,”* eds. Moritz Csáky and Christoph Leitgeb (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 43.



that the interactions between trade and religious formation have to be examined from different angles because trade plays diverse roles and has various functions in the context of religious dynamics.

In the first essay (“Localizing the Buddha’s Presence at Wayside Shrines in Northern Pakistan”), *Jason Neelis* takes the literal, economic aspect of “trade” as his starting point and examines the role of long-distance trade in facilitating the expansion and transmission of Buddhism in South Asia. Donations of material goods in exchange for religious merit and the “gift of dharma” (*dharmadāna*) entangled the Buddhist monastic community with groups of donors who could provide social, political, and economic patronage. Beside this religious economy, long-distance trade played an important role in spreading Buddhism. Intercultural exchange on the so-called “silk roads,” facilitated by migrating groups of Indo-Scythian Śakas and Kuṣāṇas from Central Asia, had a deep cultural and political impact in South Asia and stimulated Buddhist mobility.

Long-distance Buddhist mobility did not require monasteries along routes because the multidirectional movement of Buddhist agents (who selectively left traces of their journeys in various forms) involved complex patterns of transmission via shifting networks in various stages of consolidation. Visual and written traces of journeys by travellers with Buddhist backgrounds who moved across cultural boundaries testify to the flexibility of Buddhism to adapt to different environments without losing coherence. Neelis focuses on thousands of petroglyphs and inscriptions along the Karakorum Highway in Northern Pakistan, especially drawings of *stūpas* by Buddhist visitors and local devotees which demonstrate Buddha’s presence. Even simple drawings functioned as donations (*deyadharmā* or *devadharmā*) which generated merit and served as objects of veneration. This evidence of popular worship at wayside shrines provides concrete testimony of remarkable mobility on trade routes through the deep river valleys and high passes of this mountainous region, where religious aspects of long-distance transmission overlapped with economic interests.

In his article “When the Greeks Converted the Buddha: Asymmetrical Transfers of Knowledge in Indo-Greek Cultures” *Georgios Halkias* provides evidence in support of the view that the Persian empire was an influential political and cultural space which bordered on India, Asia Minor and Egypt, and connected the Central Asian steppe with the Indian ocean. This vast geo-cultural space has always been a region of trade whereby trade routes ensured the exchange of goods, knowledge systems and traditions between these major regions. Even North Africa and Europe

were connected through trade because central gateways of the Silk Road led through this space. Alexander the Great created an empire which brought these trading routes under his rule, leaving Macedonian settlements in the Near and Far East (e.g., Bactria). Only the Parthians cut through the political rule which still existed under the Seleucids from the coast of the eastern Mediterranean up to the shores of the Indus. Nonetheless, the trade routes were not interrupted but became an important economic foundation of this empire.<sup>4</sup> Politically they separated the Greek territory of the West from the Greek-ruled Bactria as well as the (later) Greek-dominated North-West India—but at the same time they united these regions economically.

Halkias offers a detailed and insightful overview of the religious and political processes of exchange between Hellenistic, Indian and Central Asian cultures. He concentrates on the Greek influence on Buddhism, which varied at different times and in different regions so that it cannot be interpreted as the influence of a donor on an inferior culture. Rather, one should speak of an intentional inclusion, adaptation, integration or absorption at different levels which served a number of different purposes. For example, in the regions of contemporary Pakistan and Afghanistan in the second century C.E. the philhellenic Kushans seemed to favour Greek elements as a matter of prestige. One cannot overestimate the impact of Hellenism during the formative phases of Buddhism in Central Asia and its subsequent spread in other parts of India and Eastern Asia. The artistic-cum-narrative portrayal of the Buddha, the cult of his figure, the manner of Buddhist philosophizing, and the use of stupas as funereal monuments cannot be properly understood without recognizing the impact of Hellenistic elements. At the same time, several indications suggest that this inclusion was often bound up with reciprocal processes: numerous Greek-born inhabitants of these regions, particularly those from the educated elite, converted to Buddhism and gave expression to their new faith, while Buddhism made its way to the West. All these asymmetrical processes of interaction and exchange cannot be explained without appreciating the central role of trade, particularly that of long-distance trade, which was eventually pushed into the background when Greeks and Buddhists lived next to each other in Central Asia and North-West India, giving room to

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Peter Wick and Markus Zehnder, eds., *The Parthian Empire and its Religions: Studies in the Dynamics of Religious Diversity* (Gutenberg: Computus, 2012).

intense short-distance trading and cultural opportunities in the transmission, production and expression of religious knowledge.

In the essay "The *Buddhakṣetra* of Bodhgaya: Saṅgha, Exchanges and Trade Networks," *Abhishek Singh Amar* then traces the emergence and subsequent growth of the *Buddhakṣetra* of the historical Gautama at Bodhgaya in the early historic India. He analyzes the construction of space at Bodhgaya (the place of Buddha's enlightenment) and the ways in which the constructions and functions of this space changed over the centuries. In this context he sheds new light on the interconnection of the construction of this space with trade routes. Examining the location of Bodhgaya, Amar argues that the Buddha came to Bodhgaya because of its religious sanctity and strategic location along the *Uttarapaṭha* (northern) trade route. This location further facilitated the spread and expansion of his teachings, subsequently leading to the cultivation and extension of this space as a "life-event" site as well as a major monastic establishment. The establishment subsequently grew into a major one with the foundation of new monasteries from different regions of South Asia, including Sri Lanka. This monastic establishment developed and extended this sacred landscape by creatively connecting Buddha legends with the respective locations, which in turn further facilitated the development of an economic base. Later many pilgrims from various countries, like China and Tibet, visited Bodhgaya. Numerous Buddhist traditions converged here and enjoyed fruitful interaction. Bodhgaya became a model to be followed in the expansion of the Buddhist traditions. The conception of this space, or at least parts of it, became commodities of "trade" themselves and were exported to Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and further regions, where they were reconstructed. A more general conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that trade and trade routes are not necessarily central to the explanation of the genesis and evolution of Bodhgaya and its concept of space. However, they are essential to understanding the dynamics that were triggered by them.

In the second part of the volume, religious traditions themselves become commodities of trade. The essays under the heading *Trade and Religious Symbol Systems* highlight the exchange between different religious symbol systems along trade routes. From both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, the three essays in this section look particularly at the different ways of exchange and transfer that took place over long distances and long periods of time.

It is commonly accepted that religious symbol systems make a religion visible, different and identifiable and play a significant role in the

diffusion of a faith and in the densification of its core doctrines. These visual symbols (such as icons and emblems) can be exchanged between different cultures, travelling along international routes of communication (which were used not only by traders, but also by conquering armies, etc.). Also ideas and religious beliefs are reflected in visual symbols. In this way certain gods travelled, were exchanged between different cultures, and some became “global players.” Often the gods needed to acquire new venerated and new supporters in a new environment. In this process symbols of a deity could remain the same, while its character and veneration, or even its nature, would change.

In the first essay (“‘Trading Religions’ and ‘Visible Religion’ in the Ancient Near East”), *Izak Cornelius* investigates the way in which deities and their visual symbols as found in the iconographic sources from the Ancient Near East “travelled.” First, some general examples are discussed, showing how divine effigies could travel, in some cases along the trade routes (including maritime routes). Then, two specific cases receive attention: the winged disk and the symbol of the moon god. The winged disk (sun) was “exported” from Egypt to the East as far as Persia. The symbol was not only adopted retaining the same meaning, but also adapted, reflecting local meanings. The medium of exchange might have been the military expansion of Egypt, but more likely it was trade since the Egyptian armies had not marched into some of the regions where the symbol was found. The second case study traces reverse migration, from East to West. The city of Harran was a major post along the trade routes between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, with rich religious traditions. The crescent symbol of Sin, the moon god of Harran, was carried to the West, reaching as far as Egypt. In this case the local adaptations were not substantial. The emphasis in this paper is on “visible religion,” *visual* symbols as found in Ancient Near Eastern iconography and how these were exchanged between cultures and travelled along the international communication routes and were possibly used in “trading religions.”

The second paper showcases the goddess Nanaya who was a popular commodity on the religious market of various polytheistic traditions. The goddess was worshipped by the Sumerians, Acadians, Elamites, Arameans, Hellenistic Greeks, Egyptians, Syrians, and many Iranian groups. The various Iranian peoples—the Bactrians, Sogdians, Chorasmians, Yuezhi, and in particular the confederation of the latter which established the Kushan (Kuṣāṇa) empire—venerated Nana(ya) throughout the millennia. *Joan Goodnick Westenholz* shows with her article “Trading the Symbols of the Goddess Nanaya” how efficient the “trade” of this goddess was along the

trade routes, the transregional trade exchanges, the hubs and networks in the Near East, in Central Asia and beyond. Nanaya's symbols were *flexible*. Nanaya was not the embodiment of only one sign. Rather, her astral luminosity and her divine radiance were represented by the moon and sun; sceptre and feathered crown were two of her symbols which could vary and were connected in different ways. Some images and inscriptions testify to the adoption of the worship of Nanaya by the Parthians and the transference of her imagery from a Babylonian representation and its transformation into a Hellenic one. On their trade missions, the Parthians would have carried these images of Nanaya further afield. She could be represented as a Hellenized nude woman, sometimes conflated with Artemis with bow and arrow. She could also adopt symbols of a four-armed Warrior Goddess of India. Westenholz discusses the question what caused the goddess Nanaya to be "bought." She suggests that Nanaya's ability to absorb other symbols may be the factor that made her worship attractive. She underwent multiple transformations and was worshipped as a native deity by the local populace along the trade routes of the historical Silk Road that crisscrossed Eurasia from the early first millennium C.E. through the middle of the second millennium C.E. Westenholz shows how the religious symbol system of Nanaya was gradually shaped in cultural exchange and encounters, undergoing adaptation and transformation in many different ways.

*Sylvia Winkelmann* devotes her study "Trading Religions' from Bronze Age Iran to Bactria" to a vast area which forms a cultural koiné during the Bronze Age, stretching from Iran over the whole Iranian plateau to the Indus valley in the east, and to Afghanistan, southern Turkmenistan and southern Uzbekistan in the north. This area formed a cultural region that developed parallel to, though independently of, the Mesopotamian world. Nonetheless, both show significant similarities in terms of material culture, iconography and religious symbol systems. This vast area was crisscrossed by many long-distance trade networks, and it is an impressive example of how religious symbols (e.g., animal-human mixed beings) are spread by trade. This remarkable variety of religious symbol systems can be attributed to the economic and political developments in the third millennium B.C.E. During the period of the early and middle Bronze Age, great political entities developed. They were interconnected by a flourishing long-distance overland trade in natural resources as well as in specialized handmade wares. Through the trading of religious symbols, the symbols themselves were changed—through modifications, new combinations or even abbreviations of motifs. Symbols were transformed through their integration with other motifs and motif systems.

The transfer of symbols is often combined with the exchange of religious knowledge. In the third part of the volume, three scholars thus look at *Trade and Religious Knowledge* from different angles. In order to address this particular aspect of “trading religions,” *Michael Willis* in his essay “From World Religion to World Dominion: Trading, Translation and Institution-building in Tibet” takes the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet in the eighth century as his test case. The result is one of the most well-known and remarkable cultural transformations before the modern era. But Tibet was not culturally transformed by Buddhism until sometime after the fall of the Tibetan Empire.<sup>5</sup> The key question is the degree to which the idea of “trading religions” applies to or serves as a useful explanatory device for Buddhism in Tibet at this time. To address this, the author examines one of the key sources, notably a text known as the *dBa' bzhed*. A study of this narrative shows that it was compiled between circa 1000 and 1100, that is, about three hundred years after the event. The Buddhism presented in the *dBa' bzhed* is clearly a royal cult, advanced by the king and controlled by him. This raises questions about the generally received opinion that Buddhism has long been a religion supported by merchants and advanced by trade. By way of conclusion, the author looks at the wider context, arguing that since its inception there has been tension in Buddhism between mendicancy, supported by ordinary lay-followers, and institution-based monasticism, supported by the state. Accordingly, the Tibetan case shows that Buddhism can only be regarded as a “trading religion” at specific points in its history.

In a second study, “Religious Transformation between East and West: Hanukkah in the Babylonian Talmud and Zoroastrianism,” *Geoffrey Herman* demonstrates how religious traditions adapt to their new surroundings when they travel. Like all imported goods, they are often consciously or subconsciously packaged in a way that is comprehensible to their potential clientele. Herman seeks to account for the development of the ritual observance of the festival of Hanukkah, a festival that travelled from Judaea to Babylonia. The Babylonian Talmud weaves intricate legal details around the practice of lighting a candle, comparing it with other more established religious rituals. It discusses the kind of fuel permitted, and addresses its status. It ritualizes and thematizes one relatively minor aspect of the Hanukkah tradition using allusions in earlier works to

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Christopher I. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

transform the candles into the central part of the festival. This Babylonian focus on the lighting of candles should be compared with the centrality of the fire cult amongst the Zoroastrians amongst whom they lived. In this article it is suggested that the inspiration for this shift may indeed be accounted for by the significance of the fire cult amongst the Zoroastrians. The encounter with Zoroastrian fire veneration, the most pronounced and iconic aspect of Zoroastrian religious practice at this time, may ultimately have led to a transformation of this ancient Jewish festival. Hence, Hanukkah is like a “good” that was exported to another place where it was developed further and transformed by a specific cultural framework. Later Hanukkah was exported as a ritual and symbolic shape to many other places in the Jewish world. When a ritual is thus exported to and imported from various mutations of a religious system (e.g., Judaism), it becomes transformed. Transfers of knowledge, of rituals and of symbols into different religious frameworks thus not only change their respective shapes and contents but have the ability to transform the whole (Jewish) system—particularly through re-export to the broader (Jewish) world.

In the third article, “Sharing the Concept of God among Trading Prophets: Reading the Poems attributed to Umayya b. Abī Ṣālt,” *Al Makin* sheds new light on a contemporary of Muḥammad, Umayya b. Abī Ṣālt. During the seventh century, numerous figures from various tribes of the Arabian Peninsula claimed prophethood. Most of these prophets blended the indigenous values of Arab local pagan traditions with some elements from Judaism and Christianity. It seems that local prophets arose in many towns and settlements and attracted a considerable number of local followers. In Ṭāʿif, a town south east of Mecca, Umayya claimed prophethood even earlier than Muḥammad. Although it is difficult to reconstruct the historical details from the sources (as with other cases in the history of the seventh century of the Arabian peninsula), Makin is able to shed light on the figure of Umayya b. Abī Ṣālt and his claim to prophethood by analyzing poems attributed to Umayya. These materials show significant parallels to Qurʾānic teachings with regard to the concepts of God as the creator, God’s way of intervening in the world, human repentance, and the praxes and traditions of worship (e.g., chanting God’s names, *dhikr*). Accordingly, the Qurʾān was not the only *qurʾān* (reading) revealed during Muḥammad’s lifetime. Other *qurʾāns* beside the Islamic Qurʾān existed in the Arabian peninsula, given the number of prophets living in many regions who were affiliated with the various tribes in different areas. One factor that helps to explain why there was so much common ground between the Meccans and the people of Ṭāʿif is trade. Whereas the Meccans depended on their

neighbouring towns for food supplies, the inhabitants of Ṭāʾif came to the Kaʿba (a pre-Islamic shrine which has later become the direction of Muslims’ prayers) for religious reasons. They were connected through trade networks which furthered the exchange of ideas between the Meccan and the Ṭāʾifite prophets. In fact, even Muḥammad himself was a trader. The same appears to be true for the remainder of the Arabian Peninsula: trade served as a critical factor in linking not only the people living in different towns but also prophets who shared many important religious concepts and show—as do Muḥammad and Umayya—even substantial similarities in terms of the content and style of their revelations and teachings.

Finally, based on transcultural and intrareligious or interreligious contact along the trade routes (both near and far), religious-ethical convictions and ways of life can also be transferred, exchanged and transformed. Accordingly, the fourth part of the book addresses *Trade and Religious-Ethical Ways of Life*. Once again we find that interreligious contact is often initiated through trade. The interaction and exchange processes between religious communities that live together can be helpfully understood with the heuristic categories of “trade.” The success of one particular religious tradition in the competitive religious market regularly leads to the inclusion and adaptation of that tradition or elements thereof by other religious groups.

This dynamic is well illustrated by *Livia Kohn’s* article “Trading Institutions: The Design of Daoist Monasticism.” According to Kohn, Daoist monasticism developed over a period of several hundred years, from the second to seventh centuries. The first Daoist communities, established in the Later Han dynasty, were millenarian and utopian, sharing some fundamental principles and a similar liminal status vis-a-vis ordinary society with monasticism, but eschewing celibacy and individual cultivation. The first semi-monastic communities were established under the so-called Daoist theocracy, sponsored by the northern rulers who were non-Chinese and insisted on Buddhist patterns for priests in government service. After it ended in 451, Daoists congregated in an institution called Louguan which became the first *bona fide* Daoist monastery and the foundation of the full-fledged institution that was organized and codified under the Tang in the seventh century. In the process of this development, Daoists consciously (and intentionally) adapted Buddhist precepts, site plans, schedules, and forms of worship to their particular needs—Buddhists providing a model that was new to Chinese society but which had achieved success and gained widespread acceptance. Daoism imported aspects of monastery life, rituals, and political structures and ethical norms



from Buddhism. Competing for the same resources, imperial sponsorship, and standing in the community, Daoists imported numerous elements of organization and worship while yet contributing visions of ideal rulership and Great Peace to Chinese Buddhism. The import of Buddhism to China along the Silk Road led to a religious process of competition and exchange which can be comprehended as domestic trade with religious commodities. Not only did the agents of Daoism and Buddhism have an effect on each other, but also the people and the state were “players” in this commercial “game,” and the aim was to win their favour.

In a second article, *Volker Rabens* elucidates the aspect of “attraction” in the context of (religious) trade by investigating “Philo’s Attractive Ethics on the ‘Religious Market’ of Ancient Alexandria.” Rabens studies the Jewish religious-ethical way of life as it is presented by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15 B.C.E.–45 C.E.) in a situation of religious destabilization in the Diaspora. Interaction between Judaism and Hellenism in the trade centre of Alexandria was varied and included elements of assimilation, creative re-elaboration, and reaction. There was a strong element of reciprocity. Jews were attracted by the Hellenistic culture. It is also clear that non-Jews were attracted to Judaism and that its religious-ethical practice (which followed from Jewish teaching, e.g., on the Sabbath) played a key role in this process. Philo writes for Jews who may feel tempted to leave the Jewish faith and for non-Jews who may feel tempted to embrace the Jewish faith. In this context, he presents both the Jewish moral teaching *and its practice* as an attractor for “staying in” as well as “getting in.” This makes Philo an agent of religious formation and transformation, because he gives new emphasis to a number of “Jewish goods” in the context of the “market place” Alexandria. He puts weight on the law and on piety. Both of these are entities to which members of the Greco-Roman world could easily relate. Philo had precious “goods” to offer. A final comparison with the Apostle Paul shows that perhaps more people bought these goods on the religious “market places” of antiquity than is often assumed.

The concluding essay by *Loren Stuckenbruck* analyzes multi-cultural processes of exchange in a small space. In “Travelling Ethics: The Case of the Household Codes in Ephesians 5:21–6:9 in Cross-Cultural Perspective” Stuckenbruck demonstrates how the so-called “household codes” in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians convey a complex world in which regulatory and normative ideas “travelled” through a process of dissemination. During this process the household codes not only came to reflect Greek-speaking Mediterranean culture but also picked up and drew on distinctive elements

known from early Jewish traditions outside the Hebrew Bible (i.e. the Dead Sea Scrolls). In the household codes one encounters a blending of cultural, socio-religious and socio-political mores which contribute to our understanding of the religious framework within which the writer of Ephesians introduced a Christological component to his ethics. The writer does not simply copy and convert Aristotelian household codes. Nor does he merely juxtapose elements taken from different places. Rather, against the background of complex processes of exchange and negotiation, the author creates a text that is composed of Aristotelian, early Jewish biblical and non-biblical (e.g., *4QInstruction*) as well as Christological traditions. This text is presented as a “new product” to the recipients of the letter. This trade of ideas is thus based on the intercultural exchange which shapes both the author and the recipients of the letter.

### 3. THE RESULTS OF THIS VOLUME: A MODEL OF TRADE AS A DYNAMIC FACTOR IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

This collection of essays provides new support for the thesis that intercultural and interreligious exchange plays a substantial role in the way religions and religious traditions take shape and develop. Both symmetrical and asymmetrical processes of exchange are significant. Trade can be comprehended as a *symmetrical* process of exchange. It can become the medium and stimulus of cultural and religious processes of exchange. The latter, however, are usually *asymmetrical* because by and large they are not rationally negotiated. Through contact and encounter, religious identity can become destabilized and has to be redefined in the light of what is new. Accordingly, “trading religions” means a dynamic process which commonly leads to the transformation of religious traditions and to the formation of new religious identities and new clusters of religious traditions.

Typical characteristics of processes of exchange induced through religious contact include inclusion and demarcation. By means of inclusion, religious traditions absorb other traditions which were previously foreign to them. In this way, individual elements or even entire systems of religious traditions can be incorporated. Additionally, a new element can be placed next to an old element; or it can be absorbed in a way that its original character becomes unrecognizable. However, more generally the new element is integrated into the old, so that both old and new are transformed through this association. Demarcation is also a possible reaction

to the encounter with a new tradition, where it is perceived as either a threat or as sufficiently attractive to stimulate change in one's own tradition. Demarcation presupposes both the will and the intention to fight the new influences, and one has to deem one's own tradition worthy of protection from the new. Nonetheless, demarcation, too, puts old and new traditions into a relationship, albeit a negative one.

One of the results of this volume is that a simple cause-and-effect approach to religious formation and transformation should be superseded by a relational model that looks at the breadth of the dynamics which are at work. Trade is a relational event which places two or more partners into a particular kind of relationship. This relational dynamic influences the trade partners and changes their identity. Through interaction they change from being protagonists of trade to being trade partners. This not only implies an extension and change of identity (A becomes a *trade partner of B*) but it also means by implication that the trade relations and the societies of which they are part will be influenced too. Different networks of relationships are thus brought into interaction with one another on the basis of individual protagonists of trade. Through the exchange of goods, societies import and acquire "commodities" which were previously foreign to their culture, thus exposing themselves to transformative processes. First of all, however, the exchange of goods implies the personal encounter of different people. Whoever comes into contact with foreigners through trade is at risk of being changed.

A second result is that "trade" in its multivalent sense emerges as an important driving force of religious contacts. Trade leads to religious contact. Particularly long-term trade relations induce a slow but lasting exchange of further goods, namely cultural and religious "goods." The exchange of goods thus becomes the basis of metaphorical trade. Religiously motivated forms and norms of living, religious knowledge, religious symbols and concepts of space can become metaphorical commodities. They may be transported over long distances, along trade routes like the Silk Road, or they may be subject to intense processes of exchange in a confined space as, for example, a commercial centre like Alexandria.<sup>6</sup>

The effects of long-distance trade occur over long periods of time. "Metaphorical commodities" were generally not traded deliberately, except where the trade routes were used for a mission strategy. However, this only

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<sup>6</sup> On the latter, cf. Volker Rabens, "Philo's Attractive Ethics on the 'Religious Market' of Ancient Alexandria," ch. 12 of this volume.

happened in exceptional cases.<sup>7</sup> In addition, even the actual commodities were seldom traded deliberately over long distances. The exception here seems to be long-distance sea trade such as, for instance, the route across the Indian Ocean, which connected India in the first century C.E. directly with the Arabic Peninsula and indirectly with Rome.<sup>8</sup> In this sense there was no “Silk Road” which would have connected China by camel caravan with the Near East. Rather, the Silk Road was an extensive network of primarily local trade routes on which neighbouring nations and cultures exchanged goods with each other, particularly for regional use. Essentially it connected central Asia internally within itself and from its centre also Greater Central Asia, Central Eurasia, which, as a big cultural area, borders on India, China and the West. Indigenous nations exchanged goods on the Silk Road and thereby also Central Asian culture. Accordingly, “Silk Road” is used in this volume in the sense of the local economy of Central Eurasia, which was also connected to other regions at its borders. In this way particularly valuable goods, after they had been traded several times between regions, were able to even travel great distances.<sup>9</sup>

While silk and other goods remained more or less the same as they travelled between China and Europe, one cannot assume that this was also true of religious commodities such as ideas, rituals, images, symbols, concepts or illustrations. In the context of such a transfer across great areas, they were exposed to manifold processes of transfer and transformation—both with regard to their form and particularly also with regard

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<sup>7</sup> The missionary journeys of the apostle Paul are a good example of such exceptional cases. Paul deliberately spread the gospel of Jesus Christ along the well-established sea and trade routes in the Imperium Romanum. See the discussions in Jens-Christian Maschmeier, “Paulus: Der Missionar. Zeitgeschichtliche, biographische und theologische Wechselwirkungen der paulinischen Mission,” in *Paulus*, ed. Peter Wick (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 162–183, and Volker Rabens, “Von Jerusalem aus und rings umher . . .” (Röm. 15,19): Die paulinische Missionsstrategie im Dickicht der Städte,” in *Das frühe Christentum und die Stadt*, eds. Reinhard von Bendemann and Markus Tiwald (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 219–237.

<sup>8</sup> Albrecht Dihle, “Indien,” in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, eds. T. Kluser et al.; (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1998), 1–56.

<sup>9</sup> On this new concept of “Silk Road,” on Central Eurasian long-distance trade, and on the significance of the Central Eurasian cultures, see Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). For an example of the primarily regional significance of the trade on these routes (although from a later period), see Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The Sogdians stand *pars pro toto* for all other cultures in this region; they were both warriors and traders (cf. Étienne de la Vaissière and Éric Trombert, eds., *Les Sogdiens en Chine*, Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 2005).

to (the interpretation of) their content. Such processes are usually very slow and require that the transfer, which usually takes place by degrees, is sustained over a long period of time. For this reason, long-term trade has the capacity to lead to transformations and new formations of religious traditions. In this way trade contributes to creating and sustaining dynamic religious environments in all cultures which are connected through trade.

A third result could be the draft of a model of “trading religions” as proposed above. Trade becomes an essential form of religious contact which can be crucial not only for the formation of religious traditions but also for their inner differentiation and consolidation. Moreover, trade also triggers the intensification and the increase or decrease of “inclusion” and “demarcation” of new traditions in the development of religious traditions. The reasons for the varying intensity of the dynamics initiated through trade have to be explained by further categories of dynamics, because trade does not always stimulate the same intensity of exchange of traditions between trade partners, and the trade relationship does not have to be reciprocal. For this reason, one needs to investigate whether destabilization on at least one side can be observed or even presupposed. In other words: Is trade as a trigger for religious contact the only presupposition for processes of interaction (like demarcation or inclusion) between different religious traditions? Or is it necessary for a particular tradition to have a particular predisposition in order to enter (religious) interaction through contact? Is destabilization a suitable term to describe the main reason for this increased “readiness” for interaction? It seems that the destabilization of a religious tradition is a favourable presupposition for the initiation of intense exchange processes through trade contact. New rituals, new knowledge and new ethical practices have the potential to destabilize a religion and make it aware of and receptive to these new values. Nevertheless, the reasons for the destabilization of a particular religion may also be predominantly economic or political and in this way prepare the way for change through new religious “commodities.”<sup>10</sup>

Time and again processes of religious formation will come to a (preliminary) end, as do the relatively longstanding stabilizations of networks of religious traditions which allow us (at least for heuristic reasons) to give a name to huge movements over a certain period of time, such as early

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<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that destabilization does not automatically imply the inferiority of the destabilized tradition.

Buddhism, early Judaism, and early Christianity. Nonetheless, it seems that the stabilizing of religious traditions seldom happens through the freezing or termination of trade relationships. Stabilization and destabilization of religious traditions (as well as metaphorical trade) can be stimulated through non-religious influences such as economic and political factors. However, these determine whether or not trade contacts trigger identity-transforming religious contacts.

Returning to some of the central elements of our argument, we can thus conclude that contact between different people facilitates trade with commodities. Trading with goods leads to extended cultural exchange, including the exchange of religious traditions. The latter can be conceptualized as metaphorical trade. The boundaries between primary trade and (usually successive) metaphorical trade are fluid. For missionaries tended to follow first of all the well-developed major trade routes. In this way Christianity spread through Central Eurasia along the so-called Silk Road as far as China, to name just one example. The inclusion of religious traditions which were originally foreign to a receptor has the potential—through attractive “commodities” like particular religious rituals or customs—to lead to the demand for further commodities that need to be imported from far away through long-distance trade. Therefore, wherever people trade and enter binding agreements with one another, trade and religion will always be interconnected. Trade changes religions, religions expand with the help of trade infrastructures, and religions extend and enrich the trade with religious “commodities” which they contribute to the “market place” of human culture and religion.



WITH THE GRAIN CAME THE GODS FROM THE ORIENT TO ROME:  
THE EXAMPLE OF SERAPIS AND SOME SYSTEMATIC REFLECTIONS

Christoph Auffarth

1. NEGOTIATING RELIGIONS—“SYNCRETISM” AND “WORLD RELIGION”  
IN THE CONTEXT OF TRADING AND ADVERTISING

The concept that religions can be “traded” appears at first sight to be an obvious research question, but it meets with serious obstacles. “Selling” and “buying religions” is a polemic standard argument levelled at so-called sects, esoteric offers and religious start-up enterprises by representatives of “true religion” in the long tradition of institutions like churches, open to every member of society. Especially the German church tax, levied together with other compulsory federal, state and local taxes, is often disputed, but nevertheless it provides a firm and reliable income for institutionalized religion, viz. the churches.<sup>1</sup> Church services or rituals are available for free or aim to appear so. However, religious economy, the economic foundations and interests of religious institutions, constitute a fundamental part of religions but one that is not to be spoken about too loudly.

The prototype of a religious enterprise based on an economic relationship with its patrons is Simon Magus, who tried to buy the ability to cure people by miracles from the apostle Paul.<sup>2</sup> He became the antitype of

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<sup>1</sup> On religious economy as a sub-discipline within the academic study of religion, see Burkhard Gladigow, “Religionsökonomie,” in *Lokale Religionsgeschichte*, eds. Hans Kippenberg and Brigitte Luchesi (Marburg: Diagonal, 1995), 253–258 (and the following case studies by Auffarth, Rüpke and Offe); Hermann Schulz, “Wirtschaft,” in *Kröner Wörterbuch der Religionen* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2006), 569–570. On the topic of church taxes, cf. Gerhard Wegner, *Wie finanziert man Glaube, Liebe und Hoffnung? Alternativen zur Kirchensteuer?* (Hannover: Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland EKD, 2005); Roman Seer, *Bochumer Kirchensteuertag: Grundlagen, Gestaltung und Zukunft der Kirchensteuer* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2004); Felix Hammer, *Rechtsfragen der Kirchensteuer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> *Acta Apostolorum* 8, 9–25; Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* 1, 23 (head of a Gnostic sect). *Acta Petri* 32: levitation in heaven as evidence for his messianic claim, but after a short while he fell down and crashed on earth. Cf. Christoph Auffarth and Loren Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Fall of Angels* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 269–273; Gerd Theißen: “Simon Magus: Die Entwicklung seines Bildes vom Charismatiker zum gnostischen Erlöser. Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte der Gnosis,” in *Religionsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift für Klaus Berger zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Axel von Dobbeler (Tübingen: Francke,



Christian religion, the model of illegitimate private economic interests in the guise of religion: the first heretic.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of shopping in a mall of religions and *Weltanschauungen* was and is considered strange by many people. Polemic terms such as “Warenhaus für *Weltanschauungen*,”<sup>4</sup> “cafeteria religion,”<sup>5</sup> “market of religions,” “divine supermarket,”<sup>6</sup> or the older terms such as “syncretism” and “eclecticism” are opposed to the idea of the unnegotiability of religion which is considered true on the object level. This type of polemic derives from the perspective of religious professionals, intellectuals who are part of a religious institution and who are therefore committed to a specific method, a systematic way of thinking and deducing norms from guiding principles.<sup>7</sup> This is the difference between prescribed religion and religiosity or—if we shift the perspective from the norm-giving professionals to the users—between theory and “belief.”<sup>8</sup>

“Belief” expresses the embeddedness of a religion in its contemporary cultural contexts more than its connection with its utopian and unhistorical “original” or essential meaning. It is necessary to cope with the circumstances of life, especially when it is changing in the incessant and

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2000), 407–433; Jürgen Zangenberg, “Dynamis tou theou: Das religionsgeschichtliche Profil des Simon Magus aus Sebaste,” in *Religionsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift für Klaus Berger zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Axel von Dobbeler (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), 519–541; Alberto Ferreiro: *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Christoph Auffarth, *Die Ketzer, Katharer, Waldenser und andere Bewegungen* (Munich: Beck, 2009), 20–21.

<sup>4</sup> In disgust, Max Weber applied this term to publisher Eugen Diederichs on the occasion of the first conference at the castle of Lauenstein 1917, as reported by Theodor Heuß in “Deutsche Zukunft” (20.6.1937).

<sup>5</sup> Ingo U. Dalferth, “‘Was Gott ist, bestimme ich!’ Theologie im Zeitalter der ‘Cafeteria-Religion,’” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 121 (1996): 415–430.

<sup>6</sup> Malise Ruthven, *The Divine Supermarket: Shopping for God in America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1989); Eileen Barker, “New Lines in the Supra-Market: How Much Can We Buy?” in *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 31–42.

<sup>7</sup> Christoph Auffarth, “Theologie als Religionskritik in der Europäischen Religionsgeschichte,” in *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 15 (2007): 5–27.

<sup>8</sup> Belief as a term has been discarded for a long time—with good reasons, for it implicitly transports Protestant ideas of the individual and personal habitus stressing the cognitive side of religion. But religiosity is too weak (with the connotation of arbitrary choices) to express the same as belief “I trust in . . .” See Catherine Bell, “Belief: A Classificatory Lacuna and Disciplinary ‘Problem,’” in *Introducing Religion: Essays in Honour of Jonathan Z. Smith*, eds. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Equinox, 2008), 85–99; Christoph Auffarth, “Religiosität/Glaube,” *Metzler Lexikon Religion*, eds. Christoph Auffarth, Jutta Bernhard and Hubert Mohr (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), vol. 3, 188–196; cf. *Brill Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden: Brill, 2006). See also my forthcoming article “Allowed and Forbidden Words,” in *Word*, eds. Jan Bremmer et al. (Fordham University Press, 2012).

increasingly rapid waves of globalization. The daily confrontation with the unfamiliar norms of other cultures forces individuals and societies to seek out common rules or to impose their own tradition on others—often in conflicts.

The notion of globalization as a unique phenomenon in history during the last two generations has been challenged by studies in cultural change and the spread of economic goods and culture in earlier historical periods. In this sense, epochs of globalization are also: (1) the Americanization in the period after World War II, (2) the Europeanization in the era of colonial imperialism, (3) the Iberianization during the Conquista, (4) the late medieval “maritime Silk road” controlled by the Arabs in the Indian Ocean, and (5) the era of the crusades. Or—as my example will subsequently show—we can speak of globalization already in antiquity, in the times of the Roman Empire, although in my opinion not as early as Hellenism which has been addressed as the beginning of all “mishmash” in the 19th century (Herder, Droysen).

In a paper on “world religion” I outlined the term’s origin and agenda in the 1880s.<sup>9</sup> First, it is part and parcel of an evolutionist mode of thought which was intended to legitimize the European world conquest in the age of colonialism: evolution of a civilization starts with house and family, grows more refined as a city, then forms a nation, which builds a national state. But the last stage of this development has just begun: in the era of imperialism the European nations are challenged to compete for global hegemony. In this mode of thought a world war seemed inevitable. But the goal of this evolution will be one world power which provides common wealth for mankind. The following scheme may sum up the evolutionary model:

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house	city	nation	world
family	citizens	people	mankind
house economy	city economy	national economy	world economy
			World War
family religion, ancestors	<i>polis</i> -religion	national religions/ churches	one world religion

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<sup>9</sup> Christoph Auffarth, “‘Weltreligion’ als ein Leitbegriff der Religionswissenschaft im Imperialismus,” in *Mission und Macht im Wandel politischer Orientierungen: Europäische Missionsgesellschaften in politischen Spannungsfeldern in Afrika und Asien zwischen 1800 und 1945*, eds. Ulrich van der Heyden and Holger Stoecker (Stuttgart: Steiner 2005), 17–36.

The term world religion is seen as the result of competition for superiority among the (evolutionary) most vital and powerful nations. The Dutch professor of comparative religion Cornelis Petrus Tiele maintained in his entry on “religion” in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from 1886 that we have to distinguish

the three religions which have found their way to different races and peoples and all of which profess the intention to conquer the world, from such communities as are generally limited to a single race or nation, and where they have extended farther, have done so only in the train of, and in connection with, a superior civilization. Strictly speaking, there can be no more than one universal or world religion, and when one of the existing religions is so potentially, it has not yet reached its goal. This is a matter of belief which lies beyond the limits of scientific classification. [...] Modern history of religions is chiefly the history of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, and of their wrestling with the ancient faiths and primitive modes of worship, which slowly fade away before their encroachments, and which, where they still survived in some parts of the world and do not reform themselves after the model of the superior religion, draw nearer and nearer to extinction.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, out of the three truly universal religions only one will prevail, *the* world religion, the best and most vital. At the Chicago World Fair in 1893, the market of nations, civilizations and their industrial products was combined with a market of religions through the so-called “World Parliament of Religions.” However, the result turned out to be quite different from what Tiele had foreseen. Instead of being the national Indian religion, the construction, mission, and spread of Neo-Hinduism began with this economic fair.

The sophisticated missionary of Neo-Hinduism Swami Vivekananda, educated at Oxford, offered a blend of Indian religious traditions—without their social, ritual, or political context—with natural religion, mainly as a technique of meditation, according to the taste of modern urban individuals of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant origin to whom he offered this export type of religion.<sup>11</sup> Vivekananda is a model for a type to which I will later refer as cultural brokers. In a lecture given in 2000 in Berlin, Peter Burke outlined a programme of “cultural exchange” (*kultureller*

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<sup>10</sup> Cornelis Petrus Tiele, “Religion,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th ed. (1886), vol. 20, 358–371. See also Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 269–284.

<sup>11</sup> Christoph Auffarth, “Synkretismus: Weltreligion und Globalisierung. Chicago 1893—Edinburgh 1910—Chicago 1993,” *Zeitschrift für Missions- und Religionswissenschaft* 93 (2010): 42–57.

*Austausch*), which he explicated later as “cultural translation.”<sup>12</sup> He treats cultural exchange analogously to material exchange. Up to a certain amount, imported goods do not affect the importing culture; as soon as the amount crosses a certain line, it creates a vogue, and in a next step, a distinctive area within this culture.

Peter Burke’s model is partially useful, but not ideal for describing culture: it neglects the dynamics of negotiating culture, the notion of mutual agency, the erection of borders and guarding mechanisms, the notions of door-openers, culture brokers, power and clashes. He speaks of cultures as entities within national borders, of goods like Chinese porcelain, which are not transformed through trade. Indeed, there are such goods, traded as entities, such as a bust of Buddha, incense candles, a Tibetan thangka or a Russian icon. They can be put down, lit or hung up without leaving any trace in daily life.

However, culture in general and religion in particular involve many other issues which the model of material exchange is not able to grasp.<sup>13</sup> And by this I do not mean the surplus of the transcendental dimension of religion (as the joker in discussions) with a checking account in heaven.<sup>14</sup> No, I will not speak of a balance with one invisible side. I will discuss the human and earthly side of religion. Negotiating religion can be conceptualized in two directions. One is the spread of religion with the extension of power. But the other direction, partly subversive to power, can be detected in the discussion of the invention of Neo-Hinduism. Diversity and not unification is one fundamental result of trading religion. In the context of a research programme on the religion of the Roman Empire, Andreas Bendlin speaks about “peripheral centres and central peripheries.”<sup>15</sup> I would like to present just one example.

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Burke, *Kultureller Austausch* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000), 9–40; Peter Burke and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, eds., *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Fritz Stolz, “Austauschprozesse zwischen religiösen Gemeinschaften und Symbolsystemen,” in *Im Schmelztiegel der Religionen: Konturen des modernen Synkretismus*, eds. Volker Drehsen and Walter Sparr (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1996), 15–36.

<sup>14</sup> Günter Kehrer, “Wirtschaft,” in *Metzler Lexikon Religion*, vol. 3, 666–672; cf. the English translation in *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden: Brill, 2006), vol. 2, 544–551.

<sup>15</sup> Andreas Bendlin, “Peripheral Centres—Central Peripheries: Religious Communication in the Roman Empire,” in *Römische Reichsreligion und Provinzialreligion*, eds. Hubert Cancik and Jörg Rüpke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 35–68.

## 2. A GOD DESIGNED FOR EXPORT: THE EGYPTIAN GOD SERAPIS IN THE “WEST”

### 2.1 *The Conqueror Becomes Dependent: The Romans in the Network of Eastern Trade*

In the second and first centuries B.C.E., the Romans conquered the Eastern Mediterranean city after city, kingdom after kingdom. When in 66 Pompey rid the Levant of pirates, sea trade and travel became less dangerous. The Mediterranean Sea, then, provided the opportunities for trade and exchange (Fig. 1).

There remained, however, the dangers of the “corrupting sea,” which have been brought to our attention by Peregrine Horden’s and Nicholas Purcell’s excellent study.<sup>16</sup> Even during the summer season, seafaring was dangerous. Sailors were well advised to navigate along the coasts in order

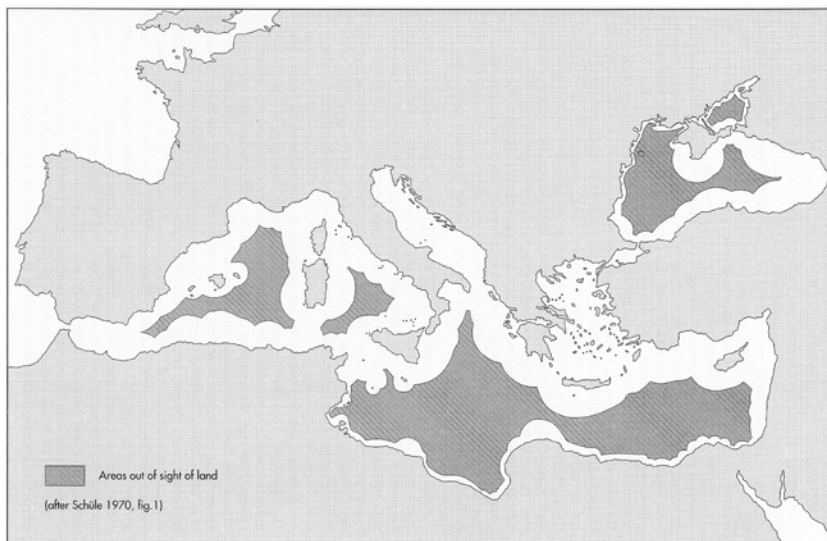


Fig. 1: Dangerous seafaring on the Mediterranean Sea (areas from where you cannot see the coast). Courtesy of Blackwell Publishers, Oxford. Source: Peregrine Horden and Nicolas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, 127 Map 9.

<sup>16</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Gadi Algazi, “Diversity Rules: Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell’s *The Corrupting Sea*,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 20 (2005): 227–246; C. Mattusch, “The Mediterranean after Braudel and Horden-Purcell,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 22 (2009): 461–466.

to avoid the Bermuda triangle. The famous map in Horden/Purcell shows where on the Mediterranean Sea the coast was visible for the sailor from deck.<sup>17</sup> Due to safe trade conditions the amount of imported goods and mobility increased from year to year. The conqueress Rome became more and more dependent on goods and eventually ceased to produce herself.

A Roman senator was not a senator without a purple lined toga as a sign of his rank. The purple dye, known as Tyrian purple, was obtained from sea snails harvested and processed in Phoenicia.<sup>18</sup> There could be no Roman senator without the import of this purple dye. Another example are the ritual offerings of incense and wine, *turac vino*, to the emperor's image. Incense had to be imported from *Arabia Felix*. Without the import of incense, offerings to the emperor would have been impossible.<sup>19</sup>

But everyday life, too, was to the same extent dependent on the import of goods from the East, especially of a staple commodity: grain. As early as the first Punic war (264–241 B.C.E.), Rome and its surroundings had ceased to produce wheat and had become dependent on imports of this basic commodity. First, Rome imported wheat from Sicily, later increasingly from North Africa and Egypt.<sup>20</sup>

Besides grain, purple and incense, Rome also imported obelisks,<sup>21</sup> lions for use in hunting spectacles in the circuses, and a large number of statues. The latter caused quite a controversy: had the statues lost their original meaning—especially their sacred nature—when removed from their original contexts? This issue was debated among governors, wealthy citizens, artists and lawyers, poets, and theologians. The definition was fluid: were they just ornamental or did they still represent the deity's power in

<sup>17</sup> Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 127 map 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Murex brandaris*, currently known as *Haustellum brandaris* [Linnaeus, 1758]. Cf. the excellent information in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian\\_purple](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple) (January 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Incense was expensive; there is evidence that a rich donor provided the offerings IG VII 2711 = Dessau 8792 (A.D. 138). See, in a broader context, Christoph Auffarth, "Teure Ideologie—billige Praxis: Die 'kleinen' Opfer in der römischen Kaiserzeit," in *Transformations in Sacrificial Practices: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, eds. Evtychia Stavrianopoulou, Axel Michaels and Claus Ambos (Münster: LIT, 2008), 147–170, especially 154–155 (with further evidence).

<sup>20</sup> On the history and figures, see Frank Kolb, *Rom: Die Geschichte der Stadt in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 1995), 185–187 (Punic wars); 233–239 *leges frumentariae* of the Gracchi, since 123 B.C.E. grain was price-reduced, since 58 B.C.E. it was distributed free of charge; 451–454 Augustus restricts the number of those who received free grain to 200,000 adults; 485–488 ca. 200 ships a day for the transport of grain from the harbour of Ostia to Rome. Crises in the *annona*, the distribution of grain 514–521.

<sup>21</sup> Many of the obelisks in Rome were imported later on. In antiquity 14 instances can be counted. Karl Jansen-Winkeln, "Obelisk," in *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, ed. Hubert Cancik (Metzler: Stuttgart, 1996–2007), 8 (2000), 1081–1082.

his or her image?<sup>22</sup> This question of secularization is connected with the transportation of a good from one location to another.

For the purpose of this volume on “trading religions,” I will provide a striking example of a deity who was deliberately exported and imported through trade under the conditions of the market conventions of the receiving society and its taste for the sacred.

## 2.2 *A God Designed for Export*

As early as the second Punic war, a god from the East was imported to Rome: the black stone from Pessinous in Anatolia—named Kybele or Mater Magna—was brought to the Roman capital at the height of the war (Fig. 2). In Anatolia the sacral object was a baetyl, a heavenly stone. In Rome, however, the seated anthropomorphic statue was placed in the centre of the temple. This case is interesting insofar as (1) the image was fashioned in the classical mode of perception of the sacred and combined with the already existing cult of Mater Magna known and received from the Greek neighbours in Southern Italy.<sup>23</sup> But (2) the stone was imported along with its priests and attendants who performed rituals which may have appeared strange to the Roman people.<sup>24</sup>

Now I turn to my example of a god connected with the import of grain: the Egyptian Serapis.<sup>25</sup> There was no such god in Egypt. Serapis is a blend of different deities. Connected with Isis, the most popular Egyptian

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<sup>22</sup> Hubert Cancik, “Fremde Bilder: Kult und Kunst in den Talmud-Traktaten Abodha Zarah,” in *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs. FS Kippenberg*, eds. Brigitte Luchesi and Kocku von Stuckrad (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 273–289; Auffarth, “Götterbilder im römischen Griechenland: Vom Tempel zum Museum?,” in *Ritual Dynamics and Religious Change in the Roman Empire*, eds. Olivier Hekster, Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner and Christian Witschel (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 307–326.

<sup>23</sup> Philippe Borgeaud, *La mère des dieux: De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie* (Paris: Seuil, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> For the other way round, an Eastern god with Roman rituals (2nd century C.E.): *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Vita Marci Antonii 13*, see Auffarth: “Reichsreligion und Weltreligion,” in *Die Religion des Imperium Romanum: Koine und Konfrontation*, eds. Hubert Cancik and Jörg Rüpke (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 37–54, esp. 46–47.

<sup>25</sup> Comprehensive collection of the sources: Ladislav Vidman, *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Serapiacae* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969); Ladislav Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis bei den Griechen und Römern* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970); Sarolta Takács, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Jürgen Quack, “Serapis,” in *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, ed. Hubert Cancik (Metzler: Stuttgart 1996–2007), 11, (2001), 445–448; Reinhold Merkelbach, *Isis Regina und Zeus Serapis* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1995). For iconographical sources, see Gisèle Clerc and Jean Leclant, “Sarapis,” in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Artemis/Winkler: Zurich/Munich, 1981–1999), 7 (1994) I, 666–692; II, 504–518.



Fig. 2: The Mater Magna coming twice to Rome (the black stone travelling non-stop from Inner Anatolia with the anthropomorphic goddess which came from Greece via Southern Italy). Illustration by Tilman Hannemann after a sketch by Christoph Auffarth.

goddess, it was a composite god designed for political representation of the dynasty of the Ptolemies in Egypt and then for export.

The Egyptians themselves venerated the god Apis who was said to have the strength of a bull. As was common in Egyptian religious iconology, Apis was depicted in animal form as the Apis bull. In Egyptian culture, super-human powers were represented in the form of animals, such as, for example, a falcon, a crocodile or—as in my example—a bull (Fig. 3).

But for the *classical* Greek and Roman taste and iconography of sacred objects the Egyptians must have seemed foolish: an animal—so the Romans said—is inferior to a human being, for example, it cannot think and it has no free will. But God must be superior to a human being. The polemic against the Egyptian representation of gods is abundant in classical literature, religious treatises, and philosophical statements.<sup>26</sup> This stands in contrast to the fact that during the Roman Empire Egyptian religion permeated classical culture.

<sup>26</sup> K.A.D. Smelik and E.A. Hemelrijk, "Who Knows not what Monsters Demented Egypt Worshipers? Opinions on Egyptian Animal Worship in Antiquity as Part of the Ancient Conception of Egypt," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, eds. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), II 17 4 (1984):1852–2000. Though Plutarch, e.g., concedes in *De Iside* that the animal is nearer to god with respect to its vitality.





Fig. 3: The Egyptian Apis showing the vigour of a bull. Courtesy of Liebighaus, Frankfurt. Source: Peter C. Bol, ed., *Katalog Ägypten, Griechenland, Rom*, Frankfurt: Liebighaus, 2000, fig. 307.

There may be two reasons for this discrepancy: (1) the aforementioned polemic is voiced especially by intellectuals; and (2) the Egyptian religion was reshaped and redesigned to fit it for export. The god Serapis is a striking instance.

Through the combination of elements from Apis with those of Osiris, a new deity was created: Serapis. A majestic human figure is seated on a throne, it retains nothing of an animal, its left hand grasps a sceptre and its right hand is raised over a three-headed dog: it is the guardian of the gates to the underworld, of which Osiris is the king<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 4).

The human form of Serapis is inspired by the majesty of the highest god, the ideal image of god *par excellence*, the image of the Olympian Zeus, created by Phidias in Olympia.<sup>28</sup> With flowing hair and full beard, he is seated on a throne, grasping a sceptre: a majestic king with a

<sup>27</sup> Quack, "Serapis," 445–448.

<sup>28</sup> Christoph Auffarth, "Das angemessene Bild Gottes: Der Olympische Zeus, antike Bildkonvention und die Christologie," in *Tekmeria: Archäologische Zeugnisse in ihrer kulturhistorischen und politischen Dimension. Beiträge für Werner Gauer*, eds. Natascha Kreutz and Beat Schweizer (Münster: Scriptorium, 2006), 1–23.



Fig. 4: Serapis seated on a throne wearing the modius on his head. Courtesy of "Direktion der Vatikanischen Museen."

diadem. What is different are the attendants: Zeus holds a Nike (Victory) in his hand, Serapis is taming the dog which guards the entrance to the underworld. This gesture promises safe passage through the gates of the underworld, a function which is not characteristic of the Olympian Zeus but of the Egyptian Osiris (Fig. 5).

And on his head Serapis wears a significant headdress: a grain-measuring vessel. This again points to the sphere of trade. Grain imported from Egypt is measured with such vessels (Latin *modius*; Greek: *κάλαθος*, "basket"). By wearing such a grain measure on his head, Serapis guarantees that the quantity and quality of the grain are correct and will foster the well-being of the Roman people.

The Roman emperors patronized the cult in Rome, and especially Vespasian (in 68 C.E.) attributed his well-being to the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis; a large temple complex was built in what became the centre



Fig. 5: The Olympian Zeus as the ideal divine image.  
Reconstruction by Friedrich Adler, 1890.

of the capital, the Iseum Campense.<sup>29</sup> Under the emperor Commodus a new title was added: Serapis was called *Serapis conservator* who “secured” the ships loaded with grain from Egypt to Rome.

### 2.3 Recast Again: A Christian Serapis

Serapis symbolized the never-ceasing abundance of food from Egypt. We can consider him the trade mark for a satisfactory supply of commodities. Even until the 5th century C.E., Christian Roman emperors distributed medals at the New Year festivals which depicted Serapis.<sup>30</sup>

In Late Antiquity, the task of the Emperors still was to provide a constant supply of grain. But he had a serious image problem with his trade mark because Serapis was regarded as one of the outstanding enemies of Christian religion. The destruction of the temple of Serapis in Alexandria in 392 C.E. counts as the most important event in the implementation of

<sup>29</sup> Katja Lembke, *Das Iseum Campense: Studie über den Isiskult unter Domitian* (Heidelberg: Verlag für Archäologie, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Andreas Alföldi and Elisabeth Alföldi, *Die Kontorniat-Medaillons* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990).



Fig. 6: Joseph as the Christian ‘Serapis’ overseeing the grain supply. Courtesy of Episcopal Museum of Ravenna.

the Christian religion. Rufinus describes it at length in his addition to his Latin translation of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>31</sup>

A new trade mark for the secure supply of daily grain had to be found. Accordingly, Serapis was replaced by Joseph, who was also associated with Egypt and could be adapted to the Christian tradition.

This Christian relief is a carved ivory plaque which is part of bishop Maximinianus’s throne in Ravenna (mid-6th c.), depicting Joseph’s dream of the seven fat and the seven meagre cows. Grain, harvested and packed, is stacked in store houses. Joseph is portrayed in the act of coordinating

<sup>31</sup> Book 11 is preserved only in a Latin version of Rufinus. Socrates also used Eusebius’ *Historia ecclesiastica* (H.E. 5.16). Cf. the exemplary battle explained by Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt: Studien zu den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Christen, Heiden und Juden im Osten des Römischen Reiches von Konstantin bis Theodosius II* (Berlin: Akademie 2004), 78–97. On the literary topos of conversions of temples into churches, see Ulrich Gotter, “Rechtgläubige—Pagane—Häretiker: Tempelzerstörungen in der Kirchengeschichtsschreibung und das Bild des christlichen Kaisers,” in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, eds. Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel and Ulrich Gotter (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 43–89.

these efforts, which will ensure grain supplies for the following meagre years. He is seated on a throne, and in his hand he holds a symbol of rulership; a secretary at his side counts the sacks (Fig. 6).

On his head we find the same measuring vessel which was the trade mark of Serapis. With divine help grain supply is still guaranteed. But it is no longer with the help of a pagan god. Now it is a man inspired by a prophetic dream, sent by God himself—the exclusive Christian God—who represents the Egyptian origin of the grain distributed by the Christian emperor. The trade mark is still the measuring vessel. But Joseph does not need an outside helper, a non-Christian god.<sup>32</sup>

#### 2.4 *A Silk Road Trading Center*

Even in Central Asia figurines and coins of the tradable god Serapis have been discovered.<sup>33</sup> A small bronze statue combines two features: It is clear that the figurine shows Heracles with a club in his right hand and an apple (from the Hesperides—the remotest of his labours—which proves him to be a seasoned traveller) in his left hand. But the head is undoubtedly that of Serapis: the full-bearded Zeus-like head wears the familiar measuring vessel.<sup>34</sup> The statuette was found among other objects in a building of the ancient city of Begram in the Hindu Kush which is located in present-day northern Afghanistan. Given the precious finding, the first excavator assumed that this building was a royal summer palace. Among the items found in its two great halls are some of great material value, while others are used as casting moulds in local workshops. Therefore, we must assume that it is a trade depot rather than a treasury:<sup>35</sup> traded religion (Fig. 7).

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<sup>32</sup> The best black-and-white illustration can be found in Günther W. Morath, *Die Maximianskathedra in Ravenna: Ein Meisterwerk christlich-antiker Reliefkunst* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1940). A thorough discussion of the motif and possible parallels is provided in Friederike Ruprecht, *Die Ikonographie der Josephszenen auf der Maximianskathedra in Ravenna* (University of Heidelberg: Unpublished Dissertation, 1969).

<sup>33</sup> I thank Jason Neelis (one of the former fellows of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg at Bochum University) for this hint as well as bibliographical support. His book provides further insights into this context (Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* [Leiden: Brill, 2010]). An additional statuette can be found as far east as Khotan in south-western Xinjiang, China.

<sup>34</sup> Kabul NM 04.1.90. Date: first century C.E.; height: 24.1 cm. LIMC, s.v. Serapis, Catalogue Nr. 232.

<sup>35</sup> In her unpublished PhD thesis, Sanjot Mehendale speaks of “commercial depot.” See the short version in her essay “Begram: At the Heart of the Silk Roads,” in *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*, eds. Frederik Hierbert and Pierre Cambon (Washington: National Geographic, 2008), 131–143.



Fig. 7: Herakles/Serapis found on the Silk Road in Inner Asia (Begram). Source: Pierre Cambon, ed., 2010, *Gerettete Schätze—Afghanistan: Die Sammlung des Nationalmuseum in Kabul*, Bonn: Katalog Bundeskunsthalle, fig. 220.

### 3. SYSTEMATIC REFLECTIONS

In the third part of my paper, I will reflect on a number of systematic questions. I will start with the ancient patronage of imperial Roman religion and then turn to theoretical categories which may allow us to systematically approach different cultures and epochs.

#### 3.1 *Agency*

The religion of the Roman Empire was not another instrument for implementing Roman power. Even the cult of the emperors was not enforced by the central power and its governors in the provinces. Instead, the provincial elites asked for permission to worship the emperors and their families. Though elements of Roman religion were spread by the Roman army, the religion of the latter itself can be described as a blend of (1) commitment to their unit, (2) personal loyalty to the emperor and (3) specific regional elements of religious traditions practiced in the area from which

the division originated. Actually, the army's religious practice had only a marginal impact on the people in the location of their headquarters.

With respect to the Roman Empire, we can generally say that a forced implementation of religion strongly affected the practice of local native religion and led to stronger group identity. Therefore, the suppression of local religious practices was more frequent than the conversion of the new subjects to a common religion of the empire.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, if rulers and subjects shared the same religion, their inequality—a constitutive element of imperial Roman government—would be undermined. More generally one may say that in imposing their power many empires did not aim at converting the new subjects to their own religion.

So, if the spread of religion is not intrinsically tied to the expansion of political and military government, there must be other agents which distribute and trade religion. I find four such agents: (1) traders who traded religious goods among their merchandise. (2) Migrants who brought their own religions and culture in their backpack. For these mostly unprofessional practitioners their religion became a constitutive element of their identity in their new cultural environment. (3) We see far fewer instances of experts among the migrants. (4) A separate group are the individual religious entrepreneurs. These people sold, e.g., oracles, interpretations of dreams, magical cures, spells (for example, against enemies), astrological expertise, and sacred books.

At the other extreme, where so-called pure religion is the propagated good, Christian mission comes to mind. Latest research has shown that the missionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries found their model in the early missionaries like Peter and Paul. But this ancient model is not consistent with the ideals of modern Christian mission. In the time of imperialism, institutional mission was directed and financed by a central institution and practiced by agents under the control of a chief supervisor of the respective missionary society. Paul was more of an individual salesman than part of a larger, well-organized enterprise.<sup>37</sup> The word drummer might well serve as Paul's colloquial job title. We find

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<sup>36</sup> The question was analyzed for different ancient empires in a conference of the research program *Römische Reichsreligion* in Eisenach, published in *Saeculum*. See, e.g., Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "Rituelle Strategien zur Definition von Zentrum und Peripherie in der assyrischen Religion," *Saeculum* 58 (2007), 185–204.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Reinbold, *Propaganda und Mission im ältesten Christentum: Eine Untersuchung zu den Modalitäten der Ausbreitung der frühen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Volker Rabens, "Von Jerusalem aus und rings umher . . ." (Röm. 15,19): Die paulinische Missionsstrategie im Dickicht der Städte," in *Das frühe*

more instances of such types: trading individual skills in religious practice is a common feature in the Roman Empire.<sup>38</sup> However, the fact that Paul did not want to be paid constitutes an exception. As he himself says, a teacher of religion deserves to be paid for his service.<sup>39</sup> But right from the beginning, Christians were warned to be cautious when itinerant prophets asked for money. The *Didache* counts such behaviour as proof of their falseness; we can therefore conclude that this was often the case (*Didache* 11.9). Other examples of salesmen who became wealthy through their religious shops are the two famous examples described by Lucian, namely *Peregrinos Proteus* and *Alexander the lying prophet*.

I should add one more model of a migrating entrepreneur: the magician. As Jan Bremmer has shown, magicians were originally members of the *Magoi*, a Persian tribe which was forced into exile.<sup>40</sup> They brought with them nothing but their knowledge. The exotic sound of their language promised barbarian lore of cures and spells. Later on other people imitated the procedures of the *Magoi*, speaking and writing a mixture of Greek and non-Greek words while piercing a voodoo doll or reducing a fracture.

### 3.2 *Merchandise*

Concerning the merchandise, I would like to distinguish those goods which were traded as “art” objects from other objects which were traded as religious items. By the former I mean objects valued on account of their material and/or their recognition as an artistic masterpiece, not because of their religious meaning.

But in practice this distinction was often not sharp. Goods which were considered interesting for import had to fit into two categories: they had to be neither too acculturated nor too exotic. Too acculturated would mean that nobody could see the difference to local products; too exotic an object may not have suited the taste of the Roman shopper.

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*Christentum und die Stadt*, eds. Reinhard von Bendemann and Markus Tiwald (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 219–237.

<sup>38</sup> Jan Bremmer, “Peregrinus’ Christian Career,” in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino Garcia Martínez*, eds. Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech and Eibert Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill 2007), 729–747.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor. 9:12–20; 2 Cor. 11:7–12; 2 Cor. 12:13ff; 1 Thess. 2:9. See Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997), 258–259.

<sup>40</sup> Bremmer, “The Birth of the Term ‘Magic,’” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 126 (1999): 1–12.



There were other quite marketable religious goods, but they needed translation and explanation by an expert. Sacred books and “letters” were explained by those who had brought them and those who were able to read and interpret them in a different cultural context for the addressed community.

In this connection we encounter the religious shops of one or two migrants whom one could call cultural brokers.<sup>41</sup> This term denotes people who made their living from translating the meaning of words and products into a different cultural setting based on their knowledge of both cultures. This necessarily encompassed knowledge of the religious and cultural market: the demand (and interest) of the receiving culture’s public and—of course—features which would be considered disgusting or unacceptable, or, in economic terms, without market opportunities.

### 3.3 *Restrictions and Challenges*

Concerning the market and its rules we have to distinguish the following conditions: (1) It is necessary to find people who want to buy the offered goods, the potential clientele, considering the taste of the receiving society (demand). (2) The market surveillance and regulation in form of restrictions: rules to protect against cheating and fakes, and against the import of dangerous items. (3) A third issue is, however, of minor importance: the demand for certain items which were not yet to be found on the existing market (market gap).

Places for exchange were (1) cities with large harbours, and (2) cities with a minority of people of the same origin, language, and food preferences large enough to form a diaspora or parallel society. However, this form of merchandise between the country of origin and those who migrated from it to a foreign country does not yet constitute cultural exchange in the sense we are interested in.

Most important for exchange is what I call neighbourhood. This means that a contingent of vacant houses or a new construction terrain enables a coexistence of different cultures which is not planned. In neighbourhoods, places of exchange emerge among neighbours. Interest in a stranger’s food or in help from his god or fascination with another’s god are aroused by watching one’s neighbours. The first step toward building a bridge can lead in the longer run to a bonding within the community and integration

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<sup>41</sup> Margaret C. Szasz, *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2001).

into a “modern” and new form which takes elements of both societies. Thus, the notion of strangeness and difference is eventually lost.

These forms of exchange are not offered in an open market but emerge out of mutual trust as people become acquainted with their neighbours.<sup>42</sup>

From time to time the market is purged by rules or even laws which are intended to prevent competing offers, e.g. by casting them as dangerous. One famous example is the law against magic. Offered outside the open market but very much in demand, the Roman emperors could not control the stranger’s expertise. When an expert prophesied an emperor’s imminent end, the authority of the ruler was undermined. The “expropriation of the soothsayers”<sup>43</sup> is a measure of political power to prevent the purveyors of this popular and highly sought-after procedure from causing a disaster. It is encountered especially at the centre of power, that is, in the capital and in the west of the Roman Empire, whereas in the east there was less fear of instability.

### 3.4 Structures and Preconditions

The Roman Empire provided the necessary infrastructure for trading religions. First, the Romans provided the roads and transport, harbours and secure shipping routes, and means of transportation. However, the trade in religious merchandise did not require broad highways or large vessels because an individual migrant was able to make his way through mountainous paths and to find customers in the remote places he visited from time to time.

The Roman infrastructure made mobility possible and comparatively easy for people who were (1) forced to travel, (2) travelled professionally, (3) or chose to travel. So not only the temples in central cities, but also out-of-the-way shrines were goals for travellers—thanks to the peace and security of the *pax romana*.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Concerning “neighbourhood,” see my “Religio migrans: Die ‘Orientalischen Religionen’ im Kontext antiker Religion: Ein theoretisches Modell,” in *Religioni in Contatto nel mondo antico: Modalità di diffusione e processi di interferenza*, eds. Corinne Bonnet, Sergio Ribichini and Jörg Rüpke (Rome: Fabrizio Serra, 2008), 333–363.

<sup>43</sup> Marie T. Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager: Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> Hupfloher, “Heil-Kultstätten in der Provinz Achaëa,” in *Religion auf dem Lande: Entstehung und Veränderung von Sakrallandschaften unter römischer Herrschaft*, ed. C. Auffarth (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2009), 221–246. Or another example is the Oracle Cult of Alexandros of Abunoteichos, fiercely attacked by Lucian of Samosata in his *Alexandros* or *Pseudopropheta*.

Secondly, the trading of religion required a certain openness on the buyer's side, a willingness to test the new product rather than sticking to the familiar.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To sum up, if we think about the concept of trading religion, we can find further historical and social processes besides the well-known and already scholarly debated questions of ideological and intellectual attempts to define religious essentials. Negotiating religions means changes and transformations of religions in new contexts.<sup>45</sup> Cultural brokers and individual entrepreneurs are most prominent in this form of trade.

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<sup>45</sup> I would like to give thanks to Marvin Döbler for his help, especially in correcting the English text but also for further suggestions. Moreover, I thank the members of the research consortium at Bochum for the stimulating atmosphere and the opportunities for research which I enjoyed during the academic year 2010–2011. Above all my thanks go to Volkhard Krech and to Marion Steinicke. For the invitation to the conference I thank Christian Frevel and Peter Wick.

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PART ONE

TRADE AND THE TOPOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS SPACE





# LOCALIZING THE BUDDHA'S PRESENCE AT WAYSIDE SHRINES IN NORTHERN PAKISTAN

Jason Neelis

## 1. INTRODUCTION: MONASTIC RELIGIOUS ECONOMIES AND TRADE RELATIONS

Engagement in the marketplace, commercial metaphors, and links between long-distance trade and patterns of religious transmission may appear to conflict with normative ideals of renunciation thought to be associated with the earliest phases of Indian Buddhist and other *śramaṇa* movements that shared ascetic origins in the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. Nevertheless, a structural impetus to seek donations of material goods in exchange for religious merit and the “gift of *dharma*” (*dharmadāna*) thoroughly entangled the Buddhist monastic community with groups of donors who could offer social, political, and economic patronage.<sup>1</sup> Although Max Weber attributed a “lack of economic rationalism and rational life methodology in Asia” (1958 [1921]: 340) to a contrast between Buddhist “worldly-indifferent behaviour” and Protestant “inner-worldly asceticism” (333), Buddhist economies of merit simultaneously encouraged donors to selflessly renounce surplus resources while embedding a stimulus to generate more wealth.<sup>2</sup> Epithets of the Buddha

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 17–19. I am very grateful to IKGf/KHK at Ruhr University Bochum for a valuable opportunity to benefit from the perspectives of fellows and colleagues who participated in the “Trading Religions” conference and other activities of the consortium in 2009–2010. I would also like to thank Andrea Philips for her work on the maps accompanying this chapter and the book publication.

<sup>2</sup> Max Weber, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921), translated by Hans W. Gerth and Don Martindale as *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1958) [dates in brackets hereafter indicate original date of publication]. Ilana Friedrich-Silber, *Virtuosity, Charisma, and Social Order: A Comparative Sociological Study of Monasticism in Theravāda Buddhism and Medieval Catholicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10, discusses Weber’s “Western” and more specifically “Calvinist” bias against monasticism and his underestimation of worldly economic dimensions of Buddhism. According to Russell F. Sizemore and Donald K. Swearer, eds., *Ethics, Wealth, and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 1, Buddhism provisionally affirms material prosperity by promoting norms for handling wealth.

as a “Caravan Leader” (*sārthavāha*) who guides his followers (fellow merchants) across the worldly ocean of repeated rebirth (*saṃsāra*) to the ‘far shore’ of *nirvāṇa* in texts and inscriptions and the role of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as a saviour of traveling merchants in distress had special significance for potential patrons engaged in long-distance overland and maritime trade.<sup>3</sup> Widely disseminated literary and visual narratives of wealthy donors who became lay followers (*upāsakas*) encouraged audiences to emulate exemplary figures, such as the two merchants (Trapuṣa and Bhallika in Buddhist Sanskrit versions), who received hair and nail relics after making offerings of gruel and honey to the Buddha.<sup>4</sup> Numerous stories about previous births of the Buddha as a trader in Jātaka, Avadāna, and Pūrvayoga literary collections reflect Buddhist efforts to cultivate donors belonging to commercial classes, whose titles are widely attested in Indian Buddhist epigraphic records of donations by female and male patrons in families of merchants and artisans.<sup>5</sup> While laudatory portrayals of merchants and traders as ideal patrons whose donations result in rewards (or, conversely, whose stinginess incurs punishments) should be seen as literary motifs and metaphors to illustrate doctrines of karmic retribution rather than as concrete historical evidence, donative inscriptions recording gifts by members of merchant families and the distribution of Buddhist *stūpas* and monasteries along trade routes and outside of cities

<sup>3</sup> For references to the Buddha as a “caravan leader” (*sārthavāha*) in the Pāli *Milindapañha* and in the Senavarma Kharoṣṭhī inscription, and the role of Avalokiteśvara and other Bodhisattvas as saviors of merchants in distress, see Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 30–34. Pia Brancaccio, *The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad: Transformations in Art and Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 160–164 focuses on iconographic traits of Avalokiteśvara as a protector of merchants from the dangers of long-distance travel. Also see André Bureau, “Constellations et divinités protectrices des marchands dans le Bouddhisme ancien,” *Journal Asiatique* 247:3 (1959): 303–309.

<sup>4</sup> Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 26–27, fig. 1.1 and fns. 79–80 for further citations of primary and secondary sources for the Trapuṣa and Bhallika story, including a Gāndhārī version in the Senior manuscripts belonging to the 2nd century C.E. (introduced by Mark Allon in Andrew Glass, *Four Gāndhārī Saṃyuktāgama sūtras: Senior Kharoṣṭhī fragment 5* [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007], 17–18, 24–25, as well as Mark Allon, “A Gāndhārī Version of the Story of the Merchants Tapuṣa and Bhallika,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 23 [2009], 9–19) and an article by Phyllis Granoff (“The Gift of the Two Merchants: Defining the Buddhist Community through Story,” *East and West* 55 [2005]: 129–138), who suggests that Buddhists appropriated their version of the story from the Jains, with whom they competed for the patronage of merchants.

<sup>5</sup> Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 24–25 discusses epigraphical references to *śreṣṭhins*, *sārthavāhas*, *vaṇīks*, and *vyāvahārikas*, among other groups. Also see Andy Rotman, *Thus Have I Seen: Visualizing Faith in Early Indian Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12–14, for comments on “an unmistakable mercantile ethos in these stories” (2009: 12).

provide tangible corroboration of the significant role of traders in establishing and sustaining Buddhist monastic communities.

While directly benefiting from the support of traders, monastic institutions of the corporate Buddhist *saṅgha* also facilitated commercial transactions and accumulated significant resources of land and portable wealth. Buddhist monks and nuns were not just passive recipients of unreciprocated gifts restricted to basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, and lodgings, but made their own donations of personal property to earn merit for themselves and their relatives.<sup>6</sup> Vinaya rules intended to regulate transactions between monks and nuns with lay communities, including a basic rule specifying punishments for those who handle gold and silver and who take part in commerce (literally “buying and selling”), refer to monastic involvement in a wide range of economic activities, including monastic landholding, lending and borrowing on credit, investment of perpetual endowments, dealing in commodities, and ownership of servants and slaves.<sup>7</sup> Pāli vinaya rules granting monks exceptions to travel with merchant caravans during rainy season retreat periods, specific expiations for offenses committed in the course of commercial travel, and limitations on donations from caravans indicate links between religious and commercial mobility.<sup>8</sup> The “*Jisa* mechanism” in Himalayan Buddhism permits funds donated to Buddhist monastic “storehouses” to be increased through re-investment in trade and moneylending by

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<sup>6</sup> Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still more Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004) suggests that Protestantization or romanticization of early Buddhism may account for hesitancy to acknowledge the religious economy of Buddhist monasticism, despite abundant evidence from medieval Sri Lanka and China in studies by Ranavira Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and economic interest in early medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: University of Arizona and Association of Asian Studies, 1979) and Jacques Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du V<sup>e</sup> au X<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Saigon: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1956), translated by Franciscus Verellen, *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 34–36 (Religious Economy of Buddhist Monasteries in Vinaya Literature) refers to specific examples from articles on the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* collected in Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*.

<sup>8</sup> Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 36–37 n. 105–108, cites provisions allowing monks to travel with caravans and for seeking donations from traders in the *Pācittiya-vagga* and other sections of the Pāli Vinaya translated by I.B. Horner, *Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka)* (London: Pali Text Society, 1938–1966), vol. 2, 322, vol. 3, 15–17, and vol. 4, 201. Some of these passages are also discussed in Gregory Bailey and Ian Mabbett, *The Sociology of Early Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 62, 218 and Himanshu Prabha Ray, *The Winds of Change: Buddhism and the Maritime Links of Early South Asia* (Delhi/New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 132.

middlemen (*nyerba*).<sup>9</sup> Permanent endowments of tax-free revenue from arable land and irrigation networks controlled by Buddhist monasteries in medieval Sri Lanka alleviated dependence on donations from individuals and consolidated the economic as well as political position of the *saṅgha*.<sup>10</sup>

Brief comparisons with Christian religious economies highlight analogous literary metaphors of merchants as exemplary figures and imbricated relationships between monastic orders and commercial activities.<sup>11</sup> The New Testament simile comparing a Christian devotee's quest for the kingdom of heaven to a "merchant in search of fine pearls" who finds a pearl of great value (Matthew 13:45–46) is further elaborated in the Syriac version of the "Hymn of the Pearl" incorporated into the Acts of Thomas, which emphasizes the role of merchants as early Christian missionaries.<sup>12</sup> Much later in the eleventh century, various Christian mendicants adapted to the growth of a profit economy in Europe by establishing monasteries in rapidly growing cities, benefitting from material patronage, engaging in moneylending (despite prohibitions against usury), and offering critiques of moral problems associated with avarice.<sup>13</sup> Like their Buddhist monastic counterparts in Asia, the Cistercians, Franciscans, Dominicans, and other

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<sup>9</sup> Robert J. Miller, "Buddhist Monastic Economy: The Jisa Mechanism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3.4 (1961): 427–438.

<sup>10</sup> Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, examines the economic and political roles of Buddhist monasteries in medieval Sri Lankan history.

<sup>11</sup> Ilana Friedrich Silber, *Virtuosity, Charisma, and Social Order*, 85–88, 143–145, contrasts Buddhist "monks' near total reliance upon the laity for their material support" (1995: 85) with a Christian social context in which monks could work and manage property (1995: 143).

<sup>12</sup> For the role of merchants as missionaries, see B.C. Colless, "Traders of the Pearl: The Mercantile and Missionary Activity of Persian and Armenian Christians in South East Asia," *Abr-Nahrain* 10 (1970): 102–121. The Syriac "Hymn of the Pearl" has received considerable attention: Christelle Jullien and Florence Jullien, "Porteurs de salut: apôtre et marchand dans l'Empire iranien," *Parole de l'Orient* 26 (2001): 127–143; Christelle Jullien and Florence Jullien, *Apôtre des Confins: Processus missionnaires Chrétiens dans l'Empire Iranien*. *Res Orientales* 15 (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 2002), especially 215–222; Paul-Hubert Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle des Actes de Thomas* (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1981); Javier Teixidor, "L'apôtre marchand d'âmes dans la première littérature syriaque: Voies commerciales et voies de l'Évangile au Proche-Orient," in *Apocalypses et voyages dans l'Au-delà*, ed. Claude Kappler (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1987), 375–396. I am grateful to Joel Walker for pointing out these sources to me.

<sup>13</sup> Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), translated by Patricia Ranum from *La Bourse et la Vie* (Hachette, 1986).

orders fashioned monastic religious economies with varying degrees of separation from or involvement in society.<sup>14</sup>

Further development of comparisons between Buddhist and Christian monastic religious economies in relation to traders and merchants is beyond the scope of this article, but the examples briefly discussed here show that the corporate Buddhist *saṅgha* and the early and medieval Christian church both depended upon and facilitated commercial ties in ongoing processes of institutional expansion and consolidation. The intertwining of trade routes with paths of Buddhist transmission was linked to practices of localizing the Buddha's presence by establishing his relics in *stūpas* and other types of shrines outside of his home region in northern India. Following a short discussion of categories of Buddhist relics and South Asian trade and travel networks, the focus shifts to wayside shrines in northern Pakistan on long-distance pathways through the Karakorum mountains, where devotees marked the presence of the Buddha with rock drawings of *stūpas* and donative inscriptions.

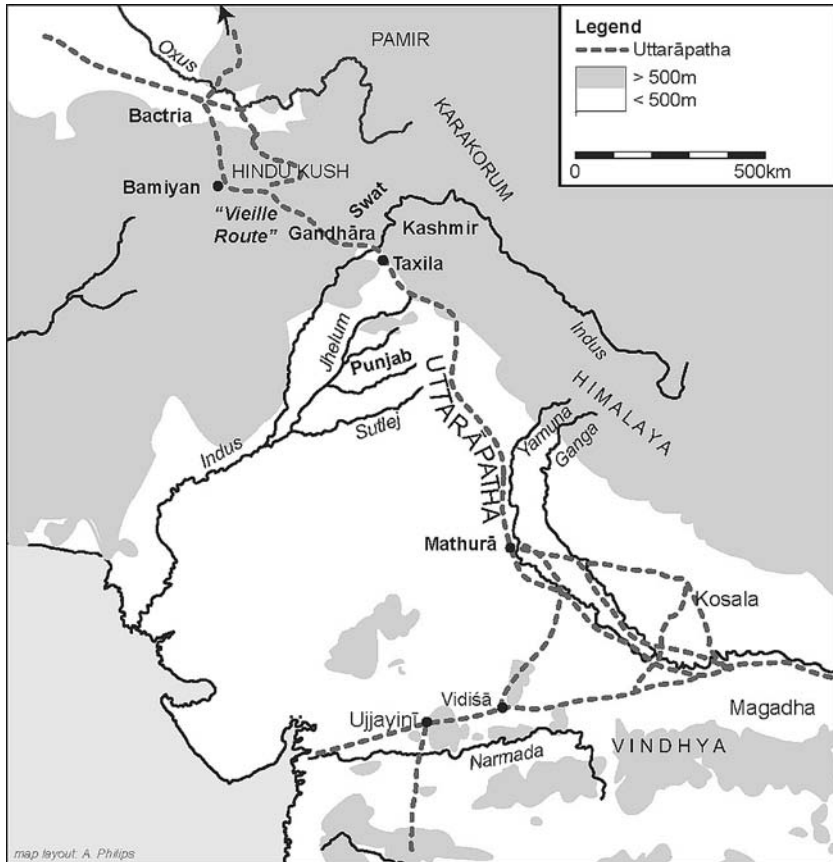
## 2. LOCALIZING THE BUDDHA'S PRESENCE ON LONG-DISTANCE TRADE AND TRAVEL ROUTES

Archaeological materials provide tangible evidence of Buddhist mobility by demonstrating patterns in the movement of artefacts, images, and coins on trade and travel routes belonging to regional and trans-regional networks. Buddhist worship is localized at *stūpas*, mound-like structures in which bodily relics of the Buddha have been deposited in order to establish the Buddha's living presence.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of relics in *stūpas* was a crucial catalyst for expansion far beyond the Buddha's original homeland

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<sup>14</sup> Nicole Bériou and Jacques Chiffolleau, eds. *Économie et religion: L'expérience des ordres mendiants (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Collection d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévales 21 (Lyon: University Press, 2009); John Gilchrist, *The Church and Economic Activity in the Middle Ages* (London/New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 1969); Richard Roehl, "Plan and Reality in a Medieval Monastic Economy: The Cistercians," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 9 (1972): 83–113; Werner Rösener, "Religion und Ökonomie: Zur Wirtschaftstätigkeit der Zisterzienser," in *Von Cîteaux nach Bebenhausen: Welt und Wirken der Zisterzienser*, eds. Barbara Scholkmann and Sönke Lorenz, (Tübingen: Attempto, 2000), 109–126; Ramona Sickert, *Wenn Klosterbrüder zu Jahrmachtsbrüdern werden: Studien zur Wahrnehmung der Franziskaner und Dominikaner im 13. Jahrhundert* (Münster: LIT, 2006). I wish to thank Nikolas Jaspert for identifying many of these references.

<sup>15</sup> Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 54–59, provides a brief overview of archaeological sources and material contexts for establishing the presence of the Buddha in *stupas*, but also see essays in Jason Hawkes and Akira Shimada, eds. *Buddhist*



Map 1: Northern route (*Uttarāpatha*) of South Asia; map designed by Jason Neelis and Andrea Philips.

in northeastern India.<sup>16</sup> The concept of a relic extended beyond physical bodily relics to materials that had been contacted by the Buddha or could be used to commemorate his life and teachings. What Michael Willis calls a “sliding scale” of relics was eventually broadened to include textual materials regarded as “dharma body” (*dharmakāya*).<sup>17</sup> Just as relic *stūpas* localize and expand the geographical range of Buddhist devotional practices, the installation and consecration of images as “commemorative relics” broadened the “field of merit” to encompass a vast array of visual and written materials, including colossal images of the Buddha carved into mountainsides and cliff faces at Bamiyan in central Afghanistan and Gilgit in northern Pakistan, where petroglyphs and inscriptions belonging to the spectrum of materials that can be classified as commemorative relics of the Buddha marked his presence at wayside shrines in the upper Indus valley (see “Drawing for Merit at Wayside Shrines,” in section 3 below).

Paths for Buddhist transmission did not remain stable or fixed, but adapted to fluctuating religious, economic and political conditions. The “Northern Route” (*Uttarāpatha*) was the main artery of commercial and cultural exchange between the Ganga-Yamuna plains and the northwestern borderlands of South Asia (see Map 1). Rather than a single road, the Northern Route was a network of flexible itineraries in configurations that shifted according to geographical and cultural perspectives.<sup>18</sup> Archaeological materials clearly demonstrate that interconnected arterial routes arranged along an axis from the northeastern to northwestern Indian subcontinent were used for trans-regional interactions. Intercultural exchanges with migrating groups of Indo-Scythian Śakas and

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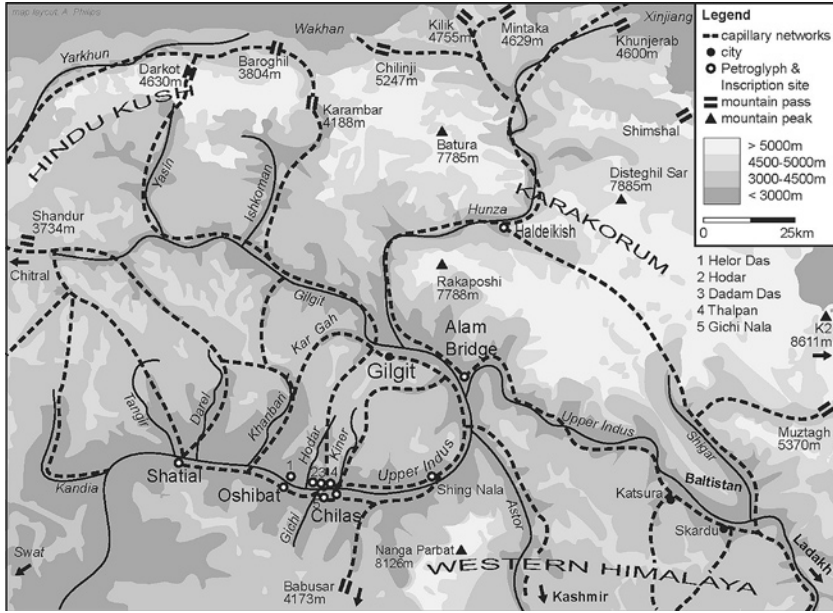
*Stūpas in South Asia: Recent Archaeological, Art-Historical, and Historical Perspectives* (Delhi/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 232.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Willis, *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India* (London: British Museum, 2000), 16, points out that relics of commemoration (*Pāli uddesika dhātu*) were probably accepted as worthy of veneration after the development of the Buddha image in the first century C.E., while the two other types of relics (bodily relics and relics of contact) were accepted earlier in the Pāli tradition. Peter Skilling investigates textual sources for *ekaghana* and *vaistārika* relics in “Cutting Across Categories: Relics in Pāli Texts, the *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*, and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*,” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University* 8 (2005): 269–332.

<sup>18</sup> Jason Neelis, “Overland Shortcuts for the Transmission of Buddhism” in *Highways, Byways and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World*, eds. Susan Alcock, John Bodell and Richard Talbert (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 12–32, and “Polyvalent Perceptions of the *Uttarāpatha* in History: Archaeological Evidence, Epigraphic References, and Literary Demarcations” in *Revisiting Early India: Essays in Honour of D.C. Sircar*, eds. Suchandra Ghosh, et al. (Calcutta: R.N. Bhattacharya, 2013), 13–24.





Map 2: Wayside shrines on capillary routes in Northern Pakistan; map designed by Jason Neelis and Andrea Philips.

Central Asian Kuṣāṇas between the first century B.C.E. and third century C.E. had definite impacts on South Asian material cultures, especially at Mathura and Taxila. Regional Buddhist artistic and literary cultures (now confirmed by recent discoveries of early Buddhist manuscripts) flourished in Gandhāra during a period of intensive growth of cities and towns beginning in the first century B.C.E./C.E. Geographical, economic, and political conditions in the Gandhāran heartland were optimal for Buddhist traditions imported from northern India to grow and expand in new directions. An extension of the Northern Route, called the *vieille Route* by Alfred Foucher, connected Gandhāra and Taxila with Bactria, thus linking South Asia with Central Asian overland networks.<sup>19</sup> A long period of

<sup>19</sup> Alfred Foucher, *La vieille Route de l'Inde de Bactres à Taxila*. 2 vols. Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 1. Paris: Les Éditions d'art et d'histoire, 1942–1947. I re-assess Foucher's hypothesis of an "Old Road" between the northwestern borderlands of South Asia and western Central Asia in *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 246–251 and "La Vieille Route Reconsidered: Alternative Paths for Early Transmission of Buddhism Beyond the Borderlands of South Asia," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 16 (2002, but appearing 2006): 143–164 (reprinted in *The Silk Road: Key Papers*, Part 1: Pre-Islamic Period, ed. Valerie Hansen. [Leiden: Global Oriental, 2012]). Recent

rapprochement between peoples and cultures in contact zones between India and Central Asia probably strengthened the appeal of Gandhāran Buddhism.

### 3. DRAWING *STŪPAS* FOR MERIT AT WAYSIDE SHRINES

An amazing panorama of petroglyphs and inscriptions offers valuable perspectives for viewing patterns in the formation and transformation of Buddhism in a transit zone between South Asia and Central Asia. Visitors and local residents drew a wide range of images and wrote graffiti on rocks lining an intricate network of routes through the valleys of the upper Indus, Gilgit, and Hunza rivers in the Northern Areas of Pakistan (see Map 2: Wayside shrines on capillary routes in Northern Pakistan).<sup>20</sup> These intertwined passageways through the formidable high-altitude terrain of the Karakorum mountains directly linked Gandhāra and the north-western borderlands of the Indian subcontinent with the Tarim Basin of eastern Central Asia. Traders, travellers and local devotees wrote their names in proximity to images of *stūpas*, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and narrative scenes at wayside shrines. In lieu of building actual *stūpas* and patronizing residential communities of monks and nuns, donors commemorated their gifts of “ordinary images” of *stūpa* drawings and other Buddhist petroglyphs with inscriptions recording their “religious offerings” (Sanskrit *deyadharmā*, more often *devadharmā*).<sup>21</sup> Itinerant traders and monks and regional inhabitants marked their journeys, established the Buddha's presence, and gained merit in pursuit of overlapping commercial and religious goals by writing inscriptions and abrading petroglyphs, thus expanding opportunities for others to worship and remember the Buddha at wayside shrines.

Approximately fifty thousand rock drawings and five thousand graffiti inscriptions abraded into the dark patina of desert varnish covering the rocks demonstrate remarkable mobility though the deep river

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discoveries of petroglyphs and inscriptions in northern Pakistan demonstrate that alternative pathways to Foucher's *vielle Route* also connected Gandhāra, Swat (ancient Uḍḍiyāna), and Kashmir to routes in eastern Central Asia.

<sup>20</sup> Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, 256–287 (Chapter 5: Capillary Routes of the Upper Indus).

<sup>21</sup> Stanley K. Abe, *Ordinary Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002) uses the term “ordinary image” to designate “a large body of visual imagery ‘of the usual class’ . . . created for those of a lesser social, political, and economic standing” (1).

valleys and high mountain passes of this region. Since the opening of the Karakorum Highway between Pakistan and China in 1979, a research group (*Forschungsstelle*) in the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften has produced studies of selected inscriptions and petroglyphs in five volumes of *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan* with extensive documentation of specific sites (*Felsbildstationen*) in ten volumes of *Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans*.<sup>22</sup> Petroglyphs in northern Pakistan belonging to periods from prehistoric to present time range from very common simplified drawings of mountain goats (*caprini*) to skilful renderings of Buddhist *stūpas*, portraits, and narratives. Each site has its own distinctive characteristics—concentrations of zoomorphic petroglyphs may indicate hunting grounds or trails into the mountains where game was available, while drawings and inscriptions at complexes located near settlements were more likely to have been produced by local inhabitants than visitors, whose inscriptions and drawings tend to be clustered near important river crossings. Buddhist images are less numerous than other types of drawings at most sites, and a Buddhist presence definitely did not exclude other religious and cultural traditions. A comprehensive typological survey of petroglyphs and inscriptions in northern Pakistan is beyond the scope of this article, but a short discussion of different layers of Buddhist images and donative records from historical periods illustrates how these drawings and records marked the Buddha's presence.

The function of *stūpa* drawings as locative foci for venerating the Buddha merits the most attention, since *stūpas* vastly outnumber images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, narrative scenes of the Buddha's biography, and illustrations of Jātaka stories of previous births.<sup>23</sup> Based

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<sup>22</sup> Karl Jettmar in collaboration with Ditte König, Volker Thewalt and Martin Bemmann edited the first two volumes of *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1989–1993), the third volume is edited by Gérard Fussman and Jettmar (1994), the fourth volume on Sazin, a fortified village in Indus-Kohistan is authored by Peter Alford Andrews and Karl Jettmar, and the fifth volume by Oskar von Hinüber (2004) is devoted to sources for studying the Palola Śāhi dynasty of Gilgit (see below). Publications in the series *Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans* (MANP) ed. Harald Hauptmann include MANP 1: Ditte Bandini-König and Martin Bemmann, *Die Felsbildstation Oshibat* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1994); MANP 2: Ditte Bandini-König and Gérard Fussman, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1997); MANP 3: Ditte Bandini-König, *Die Felsbildstation Hodar* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1999); MANP 4: Ditte Bandini-König and Oskar von Hinüber, *Die Felsbildstationen Shing Nala und Gichi Nala* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2001); MANP 5: Martin Bemmann, *Die Felsbildstation Dadam Das* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2005); MANP 6–10: Ditte Bandini-König, *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> In a table of petroglyphs and inscriptions from Oshibat, Shatial, Hodar, Shing Nala, and Gichi Nala in the first four MANP volumes, Bandini-König and von Hinüber, *Die*

on comparisons with *stūpa* architecture in Gandhāra, Swat, Bāmiyān paintings, *stūpa* reliquary models, and representations in Gandhāran sculptures, Laurianne Bruneau identifies thirteen types of *stūpas* in petroglyphs from the upper Indus region of northern Pakistan and Ladakh.<sup>24</sup> Significant concentrations of *stūpa* petroglyphs at Shatial, Hodar, Chilas, Thalpan, and Shing Nala reflect a wide range of types belonging to different chronological periods from approximately the first to eighth centuries C.E. based on palaeographic analysis of accompanying inscriptions. Among over one thousand inscriptions and seven hundred petroglyphs at an especially significant junction of ancient byways used by long-distance traders and Buddhist travellers at Shatial Bridge on the upper Indus River, drawings of 138 *stūpas* indicate the site's religious significance for Buddhist visitors.<sup>25</sup> The most impressive Buddhist image at Shatial is a large triptych composed of an intricate drawing of a *stūpa* flanked by an illustration of the Śibi Jātaka and a structure with a triangular roof along with devotees portrayed in positions of prostration below the images.<sup>26</sup> Based on Sogdian, Brāhmī, and Kharoṣṭhī graffiti densely written within and around these images, Gérard Fussman dates the drawing to ca. 350 C.E.

Over 130 drawings of *stūpas* demonstrate popular Buddhist devotion at Hodar, a settlement site located upstream from Shatial on the upper Indus River. Brāhmī and Proto-Śāradā donative inscriptions indicate that many drawings were "religious offerings" (*devadharmā*) of local inhabitants, including a scribe (*divīra*) named Bhita, who shared the merit from drawing abstract geometric *stūpas* with his mother and father.<sup>27</sup> These images of *stūpas* with only the most basic architectural features (perhaps reflecting a wooden framework) of multi-levelled foundations leading to an apex crowned by a staff, sometimes in the form of a trident, show that

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*Felsbildstationen Shing Nala und Gichi Nala* (2001), 120 give a total of 538 *stūpa* carvings, which surpasses all other types of petroglyphs with the exception of *caprini* (572 total). The proportion of drawings of *stūpas* and other "Buildings" (*Bauwerke*) to other types of rock carvings and inscriptions at individual Stations ranges from 1% at Dadam Das to 43% at Shing Nala.

<sup>24</sup> Laurianne Bruneau, "L'architecture bouddhique dans la vallée du Haut Indus (Pakistan): un essai de typologie des représentations rupestres de *stūpa*," *Arts Asiatiques* 62 (2007): 63–75.

<sup>25</sup> Bandini-König and Fussman, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial* (MANP 2).

<sup>26</sup> Bandini-König and Fussman, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial* (MANP 2), 178–79, Scene 34:A, pl. Vb. Gérard Fussman, "Une peinture sur pierre: Le triptyque au *stūpa* de Shatial," in *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan*, eds. Fussman and Jettmar, vol. 3, 1–55 (Mainz: von Zabern, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> Bandini-König, *Die Felsbildstation Hodar* (MANP 3), no. 4:1–2, 4:5–8, 6:1–11.

simple drawings provided a focus for veneration and generated merit in essentially the same way as more elaborate petroglyphs. The popularity of drawing and venerating *stūpa* images at Hodar contrasts with the relative paucity of Buddhist images at the nearby site of Dadam Das (only 5 *stūpa* petroglyphs).<sup>28</sup> At Gichi Nala, *stūpa* petroglyphs with anthropomorphic features are associated with a local devotee named Saṅgamitra [Sanskrit: Saṅghamitra], who seems to have introduced his own unique innovations into the designs.<sup>29</sup>

At Chilas II, early petroglyphs of *stūpas* belong to periods between the first and third centuries C.E., since approximately 60 Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions accompany the drawings.<sup>30</sup> *Stūpas* at Chilas II typically have only three to five disks (*chattras*) attached to a mast (*yaṣṭi*) above a rectangular *harmikā* which crowns a cylindrical dome (*aṇḍa*).<sup>31</sup> Some anepigraphic images depict dismounted horsemen venerating *stūpas* (illustrated on this volume's cover), but other labelled images of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma shed light on the multi-religious proclivities of visitors, who were not exclusively Buddhists.<sup>32</sup> A contrast between abundant *stūpa* drawings and the absence of anthropomorphic images of the Buddha at Chilas II seems to indicate a pre-iconic phase at this stage in the upper Indus.<sup>33</sup>

Some of the most impressive *stūpa* petroglyphs and other Buddhist drawings are concentrated near the modern bridge between Chilas and the village of Thalpan, where local patrons named Kuberavāhana and Sinhōṭa donated several ornate *stūpas* as well as visual narratives of Śākyamuni Buddha's religious biography and Bodhisattva images (discussed below). A Buddhist shrine at Shing Nala, located approximately thirty kilometres upstream from Thalpan, has a remarkable concentration of Buddhist petroglyphs, including 156 *stūpas* (41% of the total engravings)

<sup>28</sup> Bemann, *Die Felsbildstation Dadam Das* (MANP 5).

<sup>29</sup> Bandini-König and von Hinüber, *Die Felsbildstationen Shing Nala und Gichi Nala* (MANP 4), 113, no. 311, 3, 4, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Gérard Fussman, "Les inscriptions Kharoṣṭhī de la plaine de Chilas," in *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan*, ed. Karl Jettmar (Mainz: von Zabern, 1989): 1–40.

<sup>31</sup> Volker Thewalt, "Rockcarvings and Inscriptions along the Indus: The Buddhist Tradition," in *South Asian Archaeology 1983*, eds. Janine Schotsmans and Maurizio Taddei (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1985), 782–785.

<sup>32</sup> Fussman, "Les inscriptions Kharoṣṭhī de la plaine de Chilas," no. 7.3 and 7.6 (*Antiquities of Northern Pakistan*, vol. 1, pl. 18).

<sup>33</sup> Martha Carter, "Petroglyphs at Chilas II: Evidence for a Pre-iconic Phase of Buddhist Art in Gandhara," in *South Asian Archaeology 1991*, eds. Adalbert J. Gail, Gerd J.R. Mevissen, and Britta Zehmke (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1993), 349–366.

often recorded as “religious offerings” in Brāhmī donative inscriptions.<sup>34</sup> Since Shing Nala was not located on a major transit route, Ditte Bandini-König hypothesizes that the localization of a Buddhist shrine was tied to the residential retreat of a Buddhist forest monk (*araṇyavāsin*), who attracted visitors for a limited period around 500 C.E. If this hypothesis is correct, Shing Nala was not a “wayside shrine” *per se*, but primarily functioned as a pilgrimage place.

While drawings of *stūpas* of various types and size dominated the repertoire of Buddhist imagery at wayside shrines in northern Pakistan, interesting petroglyphs of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, hagiographic events of Śākyamuni's lifetime and Jātaka illustrations of previous births also deserve attention. In addition to donating ornate rock drawings of *stūpas*, Kuberavāhana was also responsible for extraordinary visual narratives of the Buddha's awakening and first teaching illustrated on rocks at Thalpan, which may have served as “relics of commemoration” (*uddeśika dhātu*). Kuberavāhana is portrayed along with his teacher Mitragupta in a detailed drawing at Chilas Bridge of the Vyāghrī Jātaka, a widespread narrative in which a Bodhisattva (labelled *Mahāsattva*) makes a gift of his own body to save a hungry tigress and her cubs (Fig. 1).<sup>35</sup> Other petroglyphs of the Śibi Jātaka (which is also illustrated in the triptych at Shatial) and the Ṛṣipaṅcaka Jātaka at Thalpan suggest that these narratives may have been localized in this region of the upper Indus River valley.<sup>36</sup> Another local donor named Sinhota donated “religious offerings” (*devadharmā*) of petroglyphs depicting the previous Buddha Vipasyin and the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya along with *stūpa* drawings at Chilas Bridge. Other inscriptions pay homage to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas associated with the Mahāyāna such as Amitābha, Akṣobhya, Prabhūtaratna, and Ratnaśikhin.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Bandini-König and Hinüber, *Die Felsbildstationen Shing Nala und Gichi Nala* (MANP 4) catalogue and analyze inscriptions and petroglyphs from Shing Nala.

<sup>35</sup> The Vyāghrī Jātaka at Chilas was initially published by Aurel Stein, “Archaeological notes from the Hindukush region,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1944): 20–21. Now see Bandini-König, *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan* (MANP 6), 43–49, Ensemble 30 a, Scenes 30: A–B, pl. 41, IVa–c, Va, for detailed analysis and Oskar von Hinüber's updated readings of Brāhmī inscriptions.

<sup>36</sup> Bandini-König, *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan* (MANP 6), 118–22, Scenes 30:D, 30:X; Volker Thewalt, “Jātaka-Darstellungen bei Chilas und Shatial am Indus.” in *Ethnologie und Geschichte: Festschrift für Karl Jettmar*, ed. Peter Snoy (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1983), 622–634.

<sup>37</sup> Oskar von Hinüber, “Brāhmī inscriptions on the history and culture of the Upper Indus Valley” and “Buddhistische Inschriften aus dem Tal des oberen Indus,” *Antiquities of*



Fig. 1: Petroglyph of a *stūpa* with the Vyāghrī Jātaka at Chilas Bridge (Stone 30). Source: Ditte Bandini-König, 2003, *Die Felsbildstation Thalpan: Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans* 6, Mainz: von Zabern, pl. III, stone 30.

Epigraphic evidence of graffiti inscriptions at these sites reveals patterns of Buddhist circulation in a multilingual environment. Alam Bridge near the confluence of the Indus and Gilgit rivers and Haldeikish in the Hunza valley were important graffiti and petroglyph complexes for Buddhist travellers.<sup>38</sup> Onomastic analysis of proper names written in the earlier layers of Kharoṣṭhī graffiti from the first three centuries C.E. indicates that a significant proportion of visitors to these sites can be explicitly identified as Buddhists, but there are very few drawings of *stūpas* at these two sites. Despite the fact that Buddhist travellers (including some monks and novices whose titles are attested in the epigraphic records) visited these sites, Alam Bridge and Haldeikish seem to have primarily served as transit points at river crossings rather than Buddhist wayside shrines. Shatial is

*Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies*, ed. Karl Jettmar (Mainz: von Zabern, 1989), vol. 1, 41–106.

<sup>38</sup> Gérard Fussman, “Inscriptions de Gilgit,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 65 (1978): 1–64; Jason Neelis, “Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī Inscriptions from Hunza-Haldeikish: Sources for the Study of Long-Distance Trade and Transmission of Buddhism,” in *South Asian Archaeology 1997*, eds. Maurizio Taddei and Giuseppe De Marco (Rome: Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 2000), vol. 2, 903–923.

distinguished from other upper Indus sites by almost 600 Iranian visitors' inscriptions belonging to periods from the third to seventh centuries C.E. and mostly written by Sogdian merchants who controlled a triangular network of trade routes between their Central Asian homeland, the upper Indus River valley extending to Ladakh, and China.<sup>39</sup> Over 400 Indian inscriptions written mostly in Brāhmī, with some examples in Kharoṣṭhī and Proto-Śāradā, suggest that South Asian merchants met their Sogdian counterparts at this commercial hub or entrepôt. The site of Dadam Das also seems to have functioned as both a prehistoric hunting station and border post for long-distance traders such as Ḍovalā, who wrote his name in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī next to an image of an Iranian fire altar and at Shatial.<sup>40</sup> At the "crossing station" (*Durchgangsstation*) of Oshibat, numerous Brāhmī inscriptions record Indian, Iranian, and local personal names, along with the names of visitors in Sogdian inscriptions.<sup>41</sup> Routes of some travellers along the upper Indus River can be reconstructed based on the repetition of their names at Shatial, Dadam Das, Oshibat, and Gichi Nala.<sup>42</sup>

Buddhist names written in graffiti inscriptions, various types of *stūpa* drawings, illustrations of jātakas and other Buddhist biographical narratives, and images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas reflect different stages in the regional establishment and transmission of Buddhism in the transit zone of northern Pakistan, which was definitely not devoid of a Buddhist presence. "Religious offerings" (*devadharmā* / *deyadharmā*) of Buddhist petroglyphs localized the presence of the Buddha at wayside shrines by serving as visual commemorative relics for local and itinerant devotees to worship in an environment that could not initially sustain permanent *stupas* and residential monasteries. The enigmatic absence of a Buddhist institutional presence in an early period did not mean that Buddhists were missing from the contact zone of the upper Indus. Instead, Buddhist petroglyphs and inscriptions demonstrate that traders, itinerant monks, and local patrons began to venerate images at wayside shrines long before

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas Sims-Williams, "The Sogdian Merchants in India and China," in *Cina e Iran: da Alessandro Magno alla dinastia Tang*, eds. Alfredo Cadonna and Lionello Lanciotti (Firenze: L.S. Olshki, 1996), 45–67. Etienne de La Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders: A History* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 79–81 (translated by James Ward from *Histoire des marchands sogdiens* [Paris: Boccard, 2002]).

<sup>40</sup> Bemmann, *Die Felsbildstation Dadam Das* (MANP 5), no. 37:10, 15, 24.

<sup>41</sup> Bemmann and König, *Die Felsbildstation Oshibat* (MANP 1).

<sup>42</sup> Bandini-König and Hinüber, *Die Felsbildstationen Shing Nala und Gichi Nala* (MANP 4), 109.



élite patronage led to high levels of Buddhist literary and artistic production under the Palola Śāhi dynasty of Gilgit between the sixth and early eighth centuries C.E.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS: LONG-DISTANCE TRANSMISSION, TRADE, AND RELIGIOUS MOBILITY

The growth of the Buddhist *saṅgha* was closely tied to trade networks, but patterns of institutional expansion were not exclusively determined by economic conditions. The ability to adapt to shifts in material support and to consolidate multiple sources of patronage by appealing broadly to wide audiences certainly contributed to the establishment and survival of Buddhist monastic communities within political domains and across cultural boundaries. A deeply engrained symbiosis between religion and trade was a significant catalyst for contact, transfer and exchange. Epigraphic attestations of donations by merchants and their female and male family members and the archaeological distribution of *stūpas* and monasteries near junctions of regional and long-distance routes reflect significant patronage by traders and other commercial agents. As in early Christian literature, Buddhist literary and visual narratives extol their role as transmitters of religious practices and ideas to regions outside of the Buddha's homeland. Similar to medieval Christian monasteries in the European profit economy, Buddhist monasteries stimulated trade and commerce by engaging in economic transactions, acting as monastic landlords, and lending money from surplus capital generated from interest on donations.

A long Buddhist history of trans-regional and trans-cultural mobility from very early to present periods has deep roots in intrinsic motivations to set forth on the path in order to propagate the Buddha's *Dharma* wherever material support was available for constructing *stūpas* and building residential monasteries. Flexible means of localizing the Buddha's presence in multiple centres contributed to Buddhist transmission outside of South Asia. Portable relics, images, texts, and other materials that established locative foci for devotional practices facilitated translocational processes of establishing Buddhist shrines and monastic communities in new

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<sup>43</sup> Oskar von Hinüber, *Die Palola Śāhis: Ihre Steininschriften, Inschriften auf Bronzen, Handschriftenkolophone und Schutzzauber: Materialien zur Geschichte von Gilgit und Chilas* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2004).

areas. If material surpluses were not immediately sufficient to build and maintain monumental *stūpas* and monasteries, devotees could worship images of *stūpas* or commemorative scenes from the Buddha's life at wayside shrines, like those located in the upper Indus transit zone of northern Pakistan. Long-distance Buddhist mobility did not require monasteries along routes, since multidirectional movement by agents of Buddhist transmission, who selectively left traces of their journeys in various forms, indicates complex patterns of transmission via shifting networks in various stages of consolidation. Rather than viewing the spread of Buddhism as a process of gradual diffusion from one point to another along major arteries (such as the Northern Route of South Asia or the so-called Silk Routes of Central Asia), paying closer attention to asymmetrical flows of Buddhist monks, nuns, and other missionaries through capillaries that connected nodes of Buddhist literary and material culture helps to clarify processes of transcultural Buddhist mobility. Visual and written traces of journeys by Buddhist monks and merchants who moved across cultural boundaries reinforce the obvious impression that religions which are sufficiently flexible to adapt to different environments without losing coherence are much more likely to survive and expand than unchanging traditions that remain fixed in place.

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# WHEN THE GREEKS CONVERTED THE BUDDHA: ASYMMETRICAL TRANSFERS OF KNOWLEDGE IN INDO-GREEK CULTURES

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## 1. THE MEETING OF HELLENISM AND BUDDHISM AT THE CROSSROADS OF TRADE AND CONQUEST

Following the theme of this volume, this article will revisit the documented effects of Hellenistic conquests and commercial activities on the development of new forms of religious knowledge at the core and fringes of Indo-Greek communities. It will be shown that international trading centres and routes substantially enhanced the frequency and intensity of cultural exchange between Greek travellers and settlers in the Hellenistic East, following the campaigns of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.), and Indian and Central Asian laymen, ascetics and missionary Buddhist monks. The flow of commodities broke through not only geographical borders, but also ethnic, political, linguistic and personal barriers. In fact, there are numerous contact points and levels of interaction between traders, institutions and religious communities that foster unprecedented crossings between material culture and ideology and between the material value of items and their symbolic capital as personal and cultural artefacts, and ideological markers.

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<sup>1</sup> Greco-Bactrian inscription at Jaḡatu, Afghanistan, of the Sanskrit refuge formula to the “three-jewels” (triratna): *I go for refuge to the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha*; Helmut Humbach “Two Inscriptions in Graeco-Bactrian Cursive Script from Afghanistan,” *East and West* 17 (1967): 25–26. I am most grateful to the Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Ruhr University Bochum, for supporting and encouraging my research on Hellenism and Buddhism in Central Asia, and to all my colleagues at the Consortium for their inspiring presence during the completion of this article, especially Adam Knobler, Andreas Bedlin, Dan Martin and Christopher Beckwith for their stimulating discussions and valuable suggestions. My warm thanks go to Professors Y. Karunadassa and Ven. Guang Xing at the Centre of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, for their feedback and insights.

In order to fully appreciate the intellectual and material reciprocity that transpired between Indo-Greeks and Buddhists, it may be useful to frame their historical encounters as synchronic and diachronic processes that unfolded because of geographical proximity, trading exchange, cultural compatibilities, and wider political developments in the region. Drawing from the fields of archaeology, numismatics, art history, epigraphy, and literary sources preserved in Greek, Latin, Indian, and Tibetan, we can assess the intensity of their interactions and reconstruct their joint contributions to the unique development of Buddhism in the Hellenistic East.

In the first section, I shall track Alexander's campaigns in Central Asia and NW India and examine how at different times and because of trade, the Hellenes of the East remained in close historical contact with their Mediterranean cousins and with their Indian and Central Asian neighbours. In the second section, Alexander's policy of integration between East and West will serve as a prelude to the meeting of Pyrrho of Elis with Indian ascetics—some of them in all probability Buddhists who had a decisive impact on the philosophical orientation of Pyrrhonism. In the third section, I will offer an overview of the encounters between Buddhist missions and Greek communities in the Mauryan Empire vis-à-vis the alleged impact of Buddhist missionaries as attested by the Greek edicts of Aśoka. Drawing from the evidence presented, in the fourth section I will argue for the formation of Greco-Buddhist art as an endemic development initiated by Indo-Greeks who had converted to Buddhism. In the final section, I will address the phenomenon of cultural conversion among the Indo-Greeks to Buddhism and of Buddhism to Hellenism drawing some instructive insights from Kroeber's theory of stimulus diffusion. I will conclude that the fusion of Hellenism and Buddhism is the side effect of an asymmetrical recreation of religious and cultural horizons neither exclusively Indian nor uniquely Greek.

### 1.1. *The Macedonian Legacy of Alexander in Bactria and India*

As early as the sixth century B.C.E., cross-cultural exchanges between Greeks, Indians and Persians are documented in the Persian Empire that fostered the international movement of people and goods from the eastern coast of the Aegean all the way to the Persian satrapy of Bactria in modern-day Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> The well-known voyage of Carian Scylax of

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<sup>2</sup> Greek communities on the Mediterranean coast of the Persian Empire and in Bactria are attested and apart from special cases of envoys and delegations there are at least nine

Caryanda in 517 B.C.E., written in Greek in a book lost to us, describes his passage from the Kabul River in Paskapyrus (perhaps Peshawar) to the Indus River and through the Arabian Sea to Suez.<sup>3</sup> The circulation of Greek coins in Bactria before Alexander's arrival "suggests that long-distance commercial contacts were fostered right through the Persian period."<sup>4</sup>

Alexander III of Macedonia arrived with his army in Persian Bactria in 330 B.C.E., leaving behind three thousand five hundred cavalry and ten thousand infantry to safeguard the fortified towns he had established in what came to be known among Greek and Latin authors as the 'land of a thousand cities,' a flourishing centre of Hellenistic culture. It is said that nearly seventy newly founded cities were named Alexandria after the Macedonian conqueror but not all of them have been discovered. The Hellenistic towns he established in the Hindu Kush range, namely Sagala (Śākala) and Taxila (Takṣaśīlā), are shown by excavations to have been located on strategic positions along the ancient western trade routes that linked Sānchī, ancient Vidiśā, with Ujjain.<sup>5</sup>

Along with the migration of Greek populations, names of places and legends of origins translocated in new environments forging historical

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records documenting journeys undertaken by Indian parties to Persia; see Adrian Bivar, "The Indus Lands," in *Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean C. 525 to 479 B.C.*, ed. John Boardman, et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 207. It appears that the first Bactrians to face Alexander were not in Bactria but "two thousand military colonists in Asia Minor who fought at the Granicus River in 334 B.C.E.;" see Frank Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 45.

<sup>3</sup> The exact geographical locations mentioned in the voyage of Scylax have been a subject of debate among historians; see Klaus Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1989), 41–46, and Bivar, "Indus Lands," 200–204. As shown by Duncan Derrett, "Homer in India: the Birth of the Buddha," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2:1 (1992): 47–57, according to Plutarch (45–120 C.E.), Dio Chrysostom (40–111 C.E.), and Aelian (174–235 C.E.) Greek themes exerted their fascination among the Indians. India continued to cast its spell on Greek travellers and writers up until the sixth century when the Greek Nestorian monk Cosmas Indicopleustes (literally, 'he who has sailed to India') composed the *Christian Topographia* (Χριστιανική Τοπογραφία), a work that offers vivid descriptions of his supposed voyages to Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and India; see John McCrindle, *Kosma Aiguptiou Monachou Christianikē Topographia*, London: Hakluyt Society, 1897.

<sup>4</sup> Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 28. Holt (ibid.) notes the abundant evidence for the heavy traffic of lapis lazuli that was mined in the Badakhshan Mountains of eastern Bactria to India and Mesopotamia.

<sup>5</sup> Vidiśā, near Sānchī, seems to have played an important part in the economic relations between the Greek kings of the northwest and the Indian rulers of the towns along the western trade route as indicated by the inscription erected by Heliodorus, an inhabitant at Taxila, who served as the Greek ambassador of King Antialcidas at the Śunga court.



continuity with mainland Greece where there had been little to none.<sup>6</sup> Hence, some Hellenistic towns were given names derived from Greek royalty such as Antiochia in Persis, Seleucia on the Eulaeus, and Laodicea in Media, while others were assigned toponyms of places back home like Pella, Dion, and Amphipolis.<sup>7</sup> The Macedonian colonies implanted by Alexander and maintained by his successors, the *diadochoi* (Grk. δῖαδοχοί), were not merely trading posts and military garrisons. Many of them became vibrant cities with Greek socio-political institutions cultivated by the arrival of specialized migrant workers to fill administrative posts and to provide Hellenic scientific and technical expertise.

The fortified city of Ay Khanum is one of the best examples of a centre of Hellenistic particularity in Bactria. This royal city, whose Greek name is lost to us, was founded around 300 B.C.E. by Alexander's general, Seleucus I Nicator (c. 358–281).<sup>8</sup> Ay Khanum, or “Lady Moon” in Uzbek, occupied a site of about 1.5 square kilometres wide on a strategic position along the trade routes on the Oxus River. It featured typical components of a *polis* mixed with Hellenistic and Persian artistic and architectural styles. The palace was adorned with Greek antefixes opening into an impressive forecourt surrounded by four Corinthian limestone colonnades of one hundred and eight pillars. From the enclosure one entered various buildings including, for example, official reception halls, a double chancellery section, a large bath house with a floor mosaic made of river pebbles, two private residences, and an inner courtyard with sixty Doric columns. Like many Hellenistic cities of that size, it had a large semi-circular theatre built against the inner slope of a sixty meter high acropolis where,

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<sup>6</sup> The ‘Alexandrias’ of Asia maintained contacts with the Mediterranean basin, as seen in the case of Clearchus of Soli, who around 275 B.C.E. visited the city of Ay Khanum and left behind a copy of Delphic maxims. Suchandra Ghosh, “Understanding Transitions at the Crossroads of Asia: c. Mid Second Century B.C.E. to c. Third Century C.E.,” *Studies in History* 23, no. 2 (2007): 302, discusses the migration of Greek legends during the Indo-Greek period and draws our attention to the previous birth-story of the Buddha, the Ghata Jātaka No. 454, which bears striking similarity with the Greek myth of Danae.

<sup>7</sup> Apostolos Mpousdroukis, “Oi Poleis ton Diadoxon tou M. Alexandrou stin Eggus kai ti Mesi Anatoli,” in *O Ellinistikos Politismos stin Anatoli*, ed. Potitsa Grigorakou (Athens: Politistikos Omilos Palmyra, 2009), 40–42.

<sup>8</sup> Some scholars identified Ay Khanum with the ‘Alexandria of Oxus,’ but in fact its ancient name remains uncertain. Others contend that it is Eukratidia, named after the Greco-Bactrian king Eukratides I Megas (171–145 B.C.E.), who is credited with the largest gold denomination ever issued in antiquity. For references concerning the ancient name of Ay Khanum see Rachel Mairs, *The Archaeology of the Hellenistic Far East: A Survey. Bactria, Central Asia and the Indo-Iranian Borderlands, c. 300 BC–AD 100* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series, 2011), 10.

in all probability, performances of Dionysian dramas and comedies were staged, and which also served as the *agora* (Grk. ἀγορά) for social and commercial gatherings.<sup>9</sup> Ay Khanum also housed a gymnasium dedicated to the Olympian god Hermes and the Pan-Hellenic hero Heracles comprising an inner courtyard and a series of rooms built for the physical and intellectual training of the youth. The discovery of several crowned statuettes of Heracles confirms his cultic prominence in Bactria and other areas of Central Asia and NW India.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.2. *The Development of Hellenism in Central Asia*

Alexander's conquests in Central Asia mark the introduction of Hellenism in the East. Like all *isms* the term presents its own problems of definition embroidered in a medley of discourses concerning periodization, ethnicity, and language. In this study Hellenism designates a political and cultural enterprise, roughly from the fourth century B.C.E. to the second century C.E., which is made evident along an intricate mosaic of trading routes connecting vibrant Hellenistic cities in Central Asia and NW India including Kandahar, Alexandria of Oxus, Alexandria Eschate, Begram

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Bernard, "The Greek Colony at Ai Khanum and Hellenism in Central Asia," in *Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World* (London: British Museum Press, 2011), 88–89. The Neo-Pythagorean Apollonios of Tyana writes of his visit to Taxila around 46 C.E. where he met the King Phraotes and the inhabitants of a Hellenized settlement who spoke fluent Greek and could converse on the *Iliad*, the play *Heraclidae*, and Greek philosophy; Osmond De Beauvoir Priaulx, "The Indian Travels of Apollonius of Tyana," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 17, (1860): 70–105.

Though his travel accounts should be treated with caution, the popularity of Greek plays can be inferred by the size of the theatre in Ay Khanum which was capable of seating five thousand spectators. The discovery of a fragment of a locally manufactured vase found near Peshawar depicting a scene from Sophocles' *Antigone*, is one of several references to the performance of classical plays in the regions under Macedonian control. According to Bruno Snell, *Scenes from Greek Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 117, probably the first Greek drama ever performed in India was the satirical play *Agen* staged during the feast of Dionysos at the military camp of Alexander on the banks of the river Hydaspes during his Indian campaign. The case of the Sophytos inscription is most telling since the author cultivated in his youth the virtues of Apollo and the Muses, the patrons of Greek theatre and culture. Rachel Mairs, "Greek identity and the settler community in Hellenistic Bactria and Arachosia," *Migrations and Identity* 1 (2008): 35, adds that the "literary style of the inscription also betrays him as a man familiar with the Homeric epics, and not above the flowery style and ostentatious use of recherché vocabulary that are the hallmarks of many works of Hellenistic literature."

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Errington and Joe Cribb, *The Crossroads of Asia: Transformations of Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Cambridge: Ancient India and Iran Trust, 1992), 99–103.

(Alexandria of the Cacausus), Taxila (Sirkap), Gyaur-Kala (Alexandria of Margiana), Bactria at Termez, Ay Khanum, and Bactria (Balkh).<sup>11</sup>

A degree of cultural and racial fusion is implicit in the Hellenistic constitution of Central Asia. The so-called “Greco-Bactrians” (250 B.C.E.–c. 125 B.C.E.) and “Indo-Greeks” (180 B.C.E.–10 C.E.) reigned during distinct periods of history and over specific territories that encompassed populations of pure and mixed descent—Macedonian, Indian, Persian and Central Asian stock.<sup>12</sup> The parallel use of Greek, Aramaic, Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī scripts attests to the multilingualism that prevailed in these regions.<sup>13</sup> Persians and Indians adopted Greek names for a variety of reasons, while many Greeks took on Indian names.<sup>14</sup> The stone inscriptions and ostraca

<sup>11</sup> There are many sites excavated in Central Asia that date to Hellenistic times, including Afrasiab, Khojand, Kobadian, Takht-i Sangin, Tepe-i Dinistan, Emshi-tepe, Tepe Nimlik, Dilberjin, Herat, Charsadda and Shaikan Dheri. For a detailed list see Paul Bernard, “The Greek Kingdoms of Central Asia,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. János Harmatta, (Paris: Unesco Publications, 1994), 103–104. For some estimates the Hellenistic period starts after the death of the Macedonian king in Babylon in 323, while its ending seems to vary according to the geographical regions in question; see Gary Reger, “Hellenistic Greece and Western Asia Minor,” in *The Cambridge History of the Greco-Roman World*, eds. Walter Scheidel et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 460. For a discussion of chronological and geographical delimitations of Hellenism in the Far East see Mairs, *Hellenistic Far East*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Concerning the designations ‘Greco-Bactrian’ and ‘Indo-Greek’ Mairs, *Hellenistic Far East*, 10, notes: “It has become customary to refer to the Greek kingdoms north of the Hindu Kush as ‘Graeco-Bactrian’ and those in the Indian Subcontinent as ‘Indo-Greek.’ These designations are, for obvious reasons, unsatisfactory . . . The conventional distinction between the two terms is intended to be (loosely) chronological and geographical, and the flexibility in their usage should be borne in mind.”

<sup>13</sup> A. Narain, “The Greeks of Bactria and India,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History* eds. I.E.S. Edward et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1989) 419. For instructive examples and case studies of Greek bilingualism in the ancient world see J.N. Adams et al. eds., *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 197–392. It is important not to define the Greeks of the East exclusively by virtue of their classical education *paideia* (Grk. παιδεία) and association with a single *polis* (Grk. πόλις). They were spatially and temporally distant from mainland Greece, and their ethnic identities were challenged over time, reconstituted by shifting political, economic and social conditions. The possible conversion of the Greek ambassador of the Indo-Greek King Antialcidas to Brahmanism around 110 B.C.E. is indicative of such a break from Hellenistic traditions; see John Irwin, “The Heliodorus Pillar at Besnagar,” *Purātattva, Bulletin of the Indian Archaeological Society*, no. 8 (1978): 166–176. For a critical study on the subject of Greek identity in Hellenistic Bactria and Arachosia see Mairs, “Greek Identity.”

<sup>14</sup> A funerary Greek inscription from Kandahar, which dates to the second century B.C.E., offers a good example. It was sponsored by an international trader, a culturally-Greek Indian who Hellenized his Indian name Subhuti into Sophytos; see Paul Bernard et al., “Deux Nouvelles Inscriptions Grecques de l’Asie Centrale,” *Journal des Savants* (2004): 231–232. According to Mairs, “Greek Identity,” 34, the use of non-Greek names in

in Greek from the Treasury at Ay Khanum in Bactria are not the only example.<sup>15</sup> At the excavated site of Takhti-Sangin in present-day Tajikistan, amid the discovery of fine Hellenistic portraits of Seleucid monarchs and of Alexander the Great in the guise of Heracles, a Greek inscription was made by an Iranian for his votive dedication to the river deity Oxus.<sup>16</sup>

The enduring prestige of Greek culture is attested by the adoption of Greek currency, iconography and reproduction of elite symbols and structures by the Śakas, the Parthians and the Kuṣāṇas who succeeded as rulers of the Greeks in Central Asia and NW India. The compelling design, purchasing power, and symbolic capital of Hellenistic coinage account for its wide circulation and imitation across the commercial routes linking the East with the West. Moreover, it stimulated the diffusion of Greek technology, science, astronomy, architecture, medicine, religion and the arts.<sup>17</sup>

The liquidation of the Achaemenid treasuries,<sup>18</sup> the exploitation of natural resources, and various commercial investments formed a major source of revenue for Hellenistic states built on prosperous colonies and extensive trading networks. The Hellenistic *poleis* raised money by imposing taxes on agricultural production, collecting import and export dues,

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Greek texts in Hellenistic Bactria suggests that the adoption of dual personal names was not a common strategy.

<sup>15</sup> Some of the personal names recorded in these mediums are Greek and others are of Iranian origin; see A.K. Narain, "On Some Greek Inscriptions from Ai-Khanum," *Annali* Vol. 47 (1987): 269–293. The Greek epigraphic corpus from Central Asia is collected in F. Canali De Rossi *Iscrizioni dello Estremo Oriente Greco: Un Repertorio* (Bonn: Habelt, 2004), 285–413.

<sup>16</sup> The inscription runs: 1. Εὐχὴν 2. ἀνέθηκεν 3. Ἀτροσώκης 4. Ὀξῶι, which translates: Atrosokes (an Iranian name) dedicated his votive offering to Oxos; see János Harmatta, "Languages and Scripts in Graeco-Bactria and the Saka kingdoms," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. János Harmatta (Paris: Unesco Publications, 1994), 407.

<sup>17</sup> For detailed numismatic studies in the region see Osmund Bopearachchi, *Monnaies gréco-bactriennes et indo-grecques: Catalogue raisonné* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1991) and Amarendra Lahiri, *Corpus of Indo-Greek Coins* (Calcutta: Poddar-Publications, 1965). Bernard, "Greek Kingdoms," 125, explains that the distribution of silver coins is a good indication "both of their use as international currency beyond the borders of the countries in which they were issued, and of the geographical range of the country's commercial activities. The area in which Graeco-Bactrian tetradrachms are found . . . reached as far as Syria-Mesopotamia with finds at Baarin, Susa, and the Kabala hoard in Caucasia. Indo-Greek coins circulated as far as the heart of the Ganges valley at Panchkora."

<sup>18</sup> Alexander seized, mostly from Persepolis and Susa, roughly one hundred and eight thousand talents in the form of about three hundred and twelve tons of gold and two thousand tons of silver; see Reger, "Hellenistic Greece," 471.

and from the sales of land, citizenship and priesthoods.<sup>19</sup> During this period, we discern a striking increase in the international and national slave market and an unprecedented growth of banks and private money-lending institutions. Regional and transregional guilds traded in raw material (i.e., timber, metals, wool, cannabis, coal-tar, flax, marble, dyes), edible goods (i.e., salt, oil, wine, honey, dried fruits, grains, spices, fish, birds and animals), household goods (i.e., papyri, parchment, textiles and coloured cloths, wool, glassware, carpets), and luxury items (i.e., pearls, gold, silver, precious stones, scents, and ivory).<sup>20</sup>

With the trafficking of commodities, many fortune-seekers, emissaries, translators, officials, soldiers, artists and others migrated to the East encountering in all probability Indians who would have gone West in search of new prospects. There are some intriguing references to Buddhism spreading from Central Asia to the West, along the Persian Gulf and across the Iranian plateau to the Mediterranean.<sup>21</sup> The famous Greek orator and historian, Dion Chrysostomos (c. 40–c. 112 C.E.), during his address

<sup>19</sup> Reger, "Hellenistic Greece," 464.

<sup>20</sup> For relevant studies see Mikhail Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941); Robertus Van der Spek, "The Hellenistic Near East," in *The Cambridge History of the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Walter Scheidel et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 409–433; and Alexander Despotopoulos, "Megas Alexandros / Ellinistikoi Xronoi," in *Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous*, ed. Georgios Christopoulos et al. (Athens: Etairia Istorikon Ekdoseon), 475–480.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the evidence on the spread of Buddhism westwards see David Scott, "The Iranian Face of Buddhism," *East and West* 40 (1990): 43–77, and A. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Buddhist ritual in the literature of early Islamic Iran," in *South Asian Archaeology, Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe*, ed. Bridget Allchin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 272–279.

While there are indications for the westward spread of Buddhism in earlier times, it was re-introduced in Iran by the Mongol Īl-Khāns during the thirteenth century. For Russell Webb, "The Early Spread and Influence of Buddhism in Western Asia," *Buddhist Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (1993): 73, "the intrusion of the Mongols put a temporary check to rampant Islam and even reversed the declining fortunes of Buddhism. A grandson of Genghis Khan, Hülegü (1217–1265), conquered Persia from 1253 and established the Il-khan dynasty with the capital of Marāgheh (later Tabriz). His son, Abagha (d. 1282), was Buddhist and married a Christian. Their son, Arghūn (ruled 1284–1291), endeavoured to establish Buddhism as the state religion but his final effort to stabilize the westernmost territorial limit of Buddhism was completely undone by his successor who became known as Maḥmūd Ghāzān (1271–1304). Although educated by bhikṣus, he was persuaded to embrace Islam prior to his coronation in 1295—if only to legitimize his rule in the eyes of the predominantly Muslim population." Inter-marriage between Muslims and Buddhists was not uncommon among the royalty in the NW Himalayas; see Georgios Halkias, "The Muslim Queens of the Himalayas: Princess Exchange in Ladakh and Baltistan," in *Islam-Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*, eds. Anna Akasoy et al. (Surrey: Ashgate Publications, 2011), 231–252.

to the people of Alexandria (*Oratio* XXXII. 40), confirms the residence of Bactrians and Indians in Egypt when he writes: “I see among you, not only Greeks [Ἑλληνας] and Romans, Syrians, Libyans and Cilicians, and men who dwell more remotely, Ethiopians and Arabs, but also Bactrians, Scythians, Persians, and some of the Indians, who are among the spectators and are always residing there.”<sup>22</sup>

## 2. ALEXANDER AND PYRRHO: THE PHILOSOPHER IN ARMS AND THE GREEK BUDDHA

Alexander owed his education to the towering figure of Greek philosophy, the polymath Aristotle of Stageira (384–322 B.C.E.). However, unlike his teacher who had envisioned a world of Hellenic hegemony over the ‘barbarians,’ Alexander aspired to ethnic integration—a task he meant to accomplish by promoting intermarriage among Greeks, training Persian youth in Macedonian fashion and employing foreigners in his army and public administration. It is recorded that he encouraged ten thousand soldiers to take Persian wives in Iranian mode and himself set an example by marrying a Persian princess and on another occasion the eldest daughter of the Bactrian chief Oxyartes, Roxana, on the eve of his march to India. In line with his vision for the creation of an ecumenical empire, his policy of cross-cultural integration aimed at preventing and pacifying ethnic tensions in his settlements, a propaganda that may have had a wider appeal among the people he conquered than among his Macedonian compatriots back home.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Dio Chrysostom* III, trans. James Cohoon and Henry Crosby (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932–1951), 209–211. Webb, “Buddhism in Western Asia,” 64 n. 22, suggests that Chrysostomos’ reference (XXXV, 23) to a class of Indian merchants in Alexandria, held in low repute by their countrymen, were in fact Buddhists who were regarded as heretical by the Brahmin establishment of the Śunga dynasty. At any rate, after the dissolution of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom we may reasonably assume that a number of Bactrian Greeks went to the south of the Hindu Kush Mountains to join Greek settlements, while others returned to lands nearer to their places of origin transmitting their acquired beliefs and knowledge of different religious practices. As recorded by Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.E. to 50 C.E.), the presence of early Buddhist settlements in the West could explain the unusual convictions of an active sect in Alexandria of Egypt, the Therapeutai, whose doctrines and practices resemble Buddhist ideas; see Erik Seldeslachts, “Greece: The Final Frontier? The Westward Spread of Buddhism,” in *The Spread of Buddhism*, ed. Ann Heirman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 158–160.

<sup>23</sup> See Arrian *Anabasis of Alexander*, trans. E. Iliff Robson (Loeb Classical Library, 1967), 7.4.4–8. Intermarriages also served as diplomatic missions and Alexander’s example was followed by his general Seleucus who married Apama, the daughter of a Sogdian warlord

Alexander was unusually open to foreign religious influences and over the course of his lifetime he embraced many non-Greek deities and practices, sacrificing to the Egyptian gods while in Egypt and rebuilding the temple of the god Bel in Babylon.<sup>24</sup> He travelled with his mobile court, a think tank composed of Macedonian captains, scientists, artisans, architects, engineers, physicians, historians, translators, and remarkably also philosophers. The historian Strabo (c. 63/64 B.C.E.–c. 24 C.E.) reports that Alexander arrived in India with the philosopher Onesicritus whom he dispatched to interview Indian sages and report back to him about their native systems of beliefs. Reportedly Calanus, a leading figure among the Indian ascetics, called by the Greeks *gymnosophists* ('naked sophists'), spent two years in Alexander's company.<sup>25</sup>

Alexander and the philosophers at his court had knowledge of Indian religions comprising brahmins and *śramaṇs*, the so-called *samanai* (Grk. σαμαναί) in the Greek sources. This observation was corroborated by many references in the centuries following his death.<sup>26</sup> After Alexander's

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Spitamenes (Grk. Σπιταμένης). A side effect of intermarriage was the creation of blood-ties with Asia so that Alexander's troops would not wish to return to Greece. This cultural mixing may not have been seen in a favourable light among conservative Macedonians back home keen to preserve the 'Greek purity' and guard it against foreign influence from the 'barbarians.' The murder of Alexander IV and Roxane demonstrates how the ambitions of Alexander's generals overshadowed their commitment to the great king's plans and progeny. As aptly noted by Holt, *Alexander the Great*, 99, "if Alexander did dream of mixing east and west into one world government, it is certainly beyond question that his generals—and most others of his generation—did not."

<sup>24</sup> Paul Christesen and Sarah Murray, "Macedonian Religion," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, eds. Joseph Roisman et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 435.

<sup>25</sup> Megasthenes's account of the Calanus story is probably also founded on Onesicritus, see Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 99. Strabo, *Geography*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones (Loeb Classical Library, 1969), 63–65, reports that after falling ill, Calanus decided to end his life by setting himself on fire at Susa amid great honours by Alexander and his generals.

<sup>26</sup> John McCrindle, *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great as described by Arrian, Q. Curtius, Diodorus, Plutarch and Justin* (New York: AMS Press 2004 (1896)), 7–8, furnishes a substantial list of writers on India who reported on their visit either in the company of Alexander, or some years after his death, or who were at least his contemporaries. It is likely that some of these *śramaṇs* may be broadly identified by what we understand today as Buddhists. For a discussion and interpretation of the sources see Richard Stoneman, "Naked Philosophers: The Brahmans in the Alexander Historians and the Alexander Romance," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995): 99–114, and Paul LeValley, "Naked Philosopher-Ascetics: Some Observations on the Shramana Religious Spectrum," *Sophia* 39, no. 2 (2000): 143–158. In fact, we know little about the appearance and practices of early Buddhist ascetics, but we find some clues in Buddhaghosa's *Purification* where he describes a set of optional ascetic rules for forest monks, thirteen *dhutanga* practices said to have been instigated during the times of the Buddha. The aim of the *dhutanga* is to perfect the qualities that arise from contentment with a strict renunciant life-style, including practicing in cemeteries, sleeping in all places, and so forth.

campaigns in the East, India remained a point of reference not only for travellers and writers of fiction, but also for Hellenistic poets like Posidippus of Pella. Indian themes figured in Greek public festivals, like the great procession at the Ptolemaia that featured a float representing Alexander's return from India with "Indian women dressed as captives on display," "Indian hunting dogs," and "all-white Indian cattle."<sup>27</sup>

The biographer Diogenes Laertius reports that Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360–c. 270) travelled with his mentor Anaxarchus to India in the entourage of Alexander and was greatly influenced by the *gymnosophists*.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to Plato, who regarded self-knowledge as the supreme virtue and the means through which one reaches not only sound answers but also happiness (Grk. εὐδαιμονία), Pyrrho maintained that the entire dialectical enterprise possessed little value. For him happiness is not attained through dialogue but through the recognition of the indeterminate nature of phenomena and the attitudes we adopt towards them. His gnoseological mistrust marked a noticeable turn in the direction of philosophical inquiry in Greece.<sup>29</sup>

His ethical doctrines resonate with the Buddha's suspicion of beliefs and dogmas concerning the "self" (Skt. ātman) as a "source of true knowledge." Pyrrho and Buddhists employed the tetralemma against reified views so that one cannot say with certainty of any one thing "that it is," or "that it is not," or "that it is and is not," or "that it neither is nor is not." The

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<sup>27</sup> Kathrine Gutzwiller, *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 282. Indian hunting dogs were a well-known breed in the West before Alexander, and the Molossian dogs were perhaps their descendants, see Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 164.

<sup>28</sup> Writing in the early third century C.E. but using older sources, Diogenes Laertius (IX, 61–62) reports: "Afterwards he [Pyrrho] joined Anaxarchus, whom he accompanied on his travels everywhere so that he even forgathered with the Indian Gymnosophists and with the Magi. This led him to adopt a most noble philosophy, to quote Ascanius of Abdera, taking the form of agnosticism and suspension of judgment. He denied that anything was honourable or dishonourable, just or unjust. And so, universally, he held that there is nothing really existent, but custom and convention govern human action for no single thing is in itself any more this than that. He followed these principles in his actual way of life, avoiding nothing and taking no precautions, facing everything as it came, wagons, precipices, dogs, and entrusting nothing whatsoever to his sensations. But he was looked after, as Antigonus of Carystus reports, by his disciples who accompanied him. Aenesidemus, however, says that although he practiced philosophy on the principles of suspension of judgment, he did not act carelessly in the details of daily life. He lived to be nearly ninety"; see Anthony Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13.

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed treatment of Pyrrho's philosophy and its relation to later tradition see Richard Bett, *Pyrrho: His Antecedents and his Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).



method of the fourfold negation poses antinomies in order to make them disappear and posits the disturbing uselessness of metaphysical theorization; the consequence being the cessation of mental wandering so that a certain tranquillity of mind can supervene.<sup>30</sup> According to passages attributed to Pyrrhonism, the systematic “suspension of judgment” (Grk. ἐποχή; *epoche*), leads to “verbal abstinence or silence,” (Grk. ἀφασία; *aphasia*)—a contemplative process of cultivation that culminates in “an undisturbed mental state” (Grk. ἀταραξία; *ataraxia*), an inner and outer tranquillity.

Pyrrhonism shows remarkable affinity with Indian Buddhist thought in its unusual teleology (Grk. τέλος; *telos*) and methods to attain the goal of philosophical contemplation. The affinities between them are all the more striking when we examine Pyrrho’s use of the term *pragmata* (Grk. πράγματα; *pragmata*) that has been generally glossed over as ‘things.’ The relevant passage translated by Long and Sedley reads:

Pyrrho of Elis... himself has left nothing in writing, but his pupil Timon says that whoever wants to be happy [εὐδαιμονήσειν] must *consider these three questions*: first how things [πράγματα] are by nature? Secondly, what attitude should we adopt towards them? Thirdly, what will be the outcome for those who have this attitude?

According to Timon, Pyrrho declared that things are equally indifferent [ἀδιάφορα], unmeasurable [ἀστάθμητα] and inarbitrable [ἀνεπίκριτα]. For this reason neither our sensations nor our opinions tell us the truth or falsehoods. Therefore for this reason we should not put our trust in them one bit, but we should be unopinionated, uncommitted and unwavering, saying concerning each individual thing that it no more is than is not, or it both is and is not, or it neither is nor is not.<sup>31</sup>

It has been pointed out elsewhere that there is a semantic range of meanings in Pyrrho’s employment of the term.<sup>32</sup> A careful study reveals that

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<sup>30</sup> Seldeslachts, *Final Frontier*, 134, writes: “The quadrilemma is, to be true, only evidenced in Indian texts from much later times than that of Pyrrho. In essence, the quadrilemma is a sceptical device, not in the first place a Buddhist one. Probably, both Pyrrho and Buddhism were influenced by Indian scepticism.” Adrian Kuzminski in his “Pyrrhonism and the Mādhyamaka,” *Philosophy East and West* 57, no. 4 (2007): 488, points out that Aristotle was aware of the tetralemma and mentions it in his *Metaphysics*, but nevertheless considers it pointless since it proves nothing.

<sup>31</sup> Italics and brackets are mine, 14–15. The translation of the Greek text as “must consider these three questions” is at best misleading. The text reads: εἰς τρία ταῦτα βλέπειν, which literally means “seeing, observing, or looking, at these three.”

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Beckwith in “Pyrrho’s Logic: A re-examination of Aristotle’s Record of Timon’s Account,” *Elenchos* (2011): 10, problematizes the usual translation of *πράγματα* as things arguing that the term “is ethical in intent and refers primarily... to ‘troubles, conflicts’, etc... which arouse emotions or passions... There is no reason to think that here,

Pyrrho's use of the term *πράγματα* is not restricted to physical objects but to a whole range of phenomena, which are designated by their nature 'equally' (Grk. ἕπ' ἴσης) 'without differentiation' (Grk. ἀδιάφορα), 'without measure' (Grk. ἀστάθμητα), and 'beyond the scope of reasoning and judgment' (Grk. ἀνεπίκριτα). It follows that upon observing (Grk. βλέπειν) and examining the dispositions we hold towards phenomenal reality, we ought to mistrust our senses and suspend our judgments and opinions concerning their truth value. This training in *seeing* beyond the phenomenal deception of our senses leads to the Pyrrhonian state of calm (Grk. ἀταραξία), a state that invites comparison with the *nibbānic* realization propounded in the early Buddhist sermons (Pāli. sūttas).

Pyrrho's employment of the polysemic term '*πράγματα*'—which generically describes 'things' in Greek as it does in English—may have been a translation of a non-Greek notion that was in wide currency among Hindus and Buddhists in India at the time. Given the context of its usage, *πράγματα* serves as a good translation of the polysemous term *dhammas* (in the plural), which has multiple significations, and was understood in Buddhist texts also as 'objects of consciousness.' For example, in the manner described in the *Satipatṭhāna-sūtta* and the commentaries, one trains to observe *dhammas* as *dhammas*, that is to say, apprehend their arising and passing without assigning to them a defining essence (Pāli. nissattatā)—they 'are soul-less' (Pālinijjīvatā) and empty (Pālisuññatā).<sup>33</sup> Buddhaghosa who is considered an authority by early Buddhists, alludes to several images and similes drawn from the Nikāyas (collection of Buddhist texts) in order to illustrate the manner in which *dhammas* are non-hypostasized entities beyond differentiation, since they are "things that vanish almost as soon as they appear—like dew drops at sunrise, like a bubble on water, like a line drawn on water . . . things that lack substance and always elude one's grasp—like a mirage, a conjuring trick, a dream . . ."<sup>34</sup>

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or anywhere, Pyrrho refers to *pragmata* as neutral physical objects viewed essentially as geometrical abstracts, natural phenomena such as mountains, stars, etc., with no real connection to human beings, as in the 'dogmatic' approach to philosophy, which he explicitly and sharply criticizes."

<sup>33</sup> Rupert Gethin, "He who see Dhamma sees Dhammas: Dhamma in Early Buddhism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32 (2004): 523, argues that the word *dhamma* was already in use in the Nikāyas "in a sense of a basic quality, both mental and physical, a plurality of which in some sense constitutes experience or reality in its entirety." The meaning of "thing" as *dhamma* is associated particularly with the plural usage *dhammas* that refers to the things that constitute the world of experience as perceived by the mind.

<sup>34</sup> Gethin, "Dhamma in Early Buddhism," 525–526.

Withdrawing from the affairs of the world and disregarding social conventions was a usual practice among many Indian ascetics, and it appears that Pyrrho spent his life much in the same way in solitude, leading an austere life detached from the pointless seduction of through sensual pleasures. In fact there are several anecdotes, shared by his disciples and contemporaries, which made Pyrrho into a cult image of an illuminated sage, a ‘Greek Buddha.’

[Timon says] This, O Pyrrho, my heart yearns to hear, how on earth you, though a man, act most easily and calmly, never taking thought and consistently undisturbed, heedless of the whirling motions and sweet voice of wisdom? You alone lead the way for men, like the god who drives around the whole earth as he revolves, showing the blazing disk of his well-rounded sphere.<sup>35</sup>

And in the *Pyrrhonian Arguments*, the philosopher Aenesidemus reports:

As for him who philosophizes according to Pyrrho, besides being happy in other respects, he is wise in knowing above all that nothing has been grasped securely by himself. And as to whatever he does know, he is clever enough to assent no more to the affirmation [of these things] than to their denial.<sup>36</sup>

Admittedly Pyrrhonism does not, as it may be reconstructed based on the accounts of his devoted disciple Timon, represent any known formulation of early Buddhism. However, given Pyrrho’s protracted exposure to Indian philosophical currents and *śramaṇic* practices, his system of thought may arguably represent the first attestation of early gnoseological and soteriological objectives of Buddhism in Greek sources.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Sextus Empiricus*, II.1, 1.305. Elsewhere we read, “He led a life consistent with this doctrine, going out of his way for nothing, taking no precaution, but facing all risks as they came, whether carts, precipices, dogs or what not, and, generally leaving nothing to the arbitrament of the senses;” Diogenes Laertius, *Pyrrho* (IX, 61–62).

<sup>36</sup> Brad Inwood, and L.P. Gerson, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), 183.

<sup>37</sup> There have been several studies pointing in this direction; see Everard Flintoff, “Pyrrho and India,” *Phronesis* 25, no. 1 (1980): 88–108; and Adrian Kuzminski, *Pyrrhonism: How the Ancient Greeks Reinvented Buddhism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008).

## 3. THE SELEUCID EMPIRE AND THE MAURYAN-GREEKS

The birth of Buddha Śākyamuni, the architect of the tradition known as Buddhism, may be dated to sometime in the fifth century B.C.E.<sup>38</sup> For a long time his religious movement does not appear to have spread beyond the Middle Ganges where he spent most of his life.<sup>39</sup> However, a century later the regional constitution and provincial outlook of Buddhism was to undergo a profound metamorphosis through the formation of the Mauryan Empire (c. 320–180 B.C.E.) and its direct contact with Greek civilization.<sup>40</sup>

The first emperor of the newly formed Indian empire was Chandragupta Maurya (Sandrokottos in Greek texts), a contemporary of Alexander the Great, who spent his early life and received his education at Taxila, one of the greatest learning centres in India at the time. Although of humble origin, he succeeded in consolidating his power in Magadha and in overthrowing Greek rule in NW India.<sup>41</sup> It has been suggested that in

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<sup>38</sup> For a detailed treatment of sources and current debates on the dating of the Buddha see Heinz Bechert, *When Did the Buddha Live? The Controversy on the Dating of the Historical Buddha* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> There is a story, preserved in several versions, that forms an exception to this commonly held assumption. It tells of Trapuṣa and Bhallika, two merchants from Bactria, who became the first lay followers of the Buddha. They subsequently ordained as Buddhist monks and built *stūpas* and monasteries in Central Asia. However, in the absence of any archaeological evidence for a Buddhist presence in Bactria during the Buddha's time, it may very well be that this story postdates the period in question.

<sup>40</sup> The Mauryan system of governance was a comparatively new feature in Indian politics in that it united many small Indian kingdoms, promoted more or less tolerant public policies, and fostered the spread of non-Brahmanic religions like Jainism and Buddhism. It also fostered international trade along the overland routes with neighboring countries like Bactria, and across Persia to the Mediterranean ports. Romila Thapar, "Ashoka and Buddhism," *Past and Present* 18 (1960): 48, notes that the Nandas had ruled an empire before the Mauryas for a short period, but it was not nearly as extensive and did not include such a variety of peoples and cultures as that of the Mauryas.

<sup>41</sup> Justin in his *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* (B.XV, Ch. IV) reports: "The author of this liberation was Sandrocottus [Chandragupta] . . . stimulated to aspire to regal power by supernatural encouragement; for, having offended Alexander by his boldness of speech, and orders being given to kill him, he saved himself by swiftness of foot; and while he was lying asleep, after his fatigue, a lion of great size having come up to him, licked off with his tongue the sweat that was running from him, and after gently waking him, left him . . . Some time after, as he was going to war with the generals of Alexander, a wild elephant of great bulk presented itself before him of its own accord, and, as if tamed down to gentleness, took him on its back, and became his guide in the war, and conspicuous in fields of battle. Sandrocottus, having thus acquired a throne, was in possession of India, when Seleucus was laying the foundations of his future greatness; who, after making

his youth Chandragupta joined Alexander the Great before founding his empire.<sup>42</sup> Whatever may be the truth of the matter, there is no doubt that Chandragupta was familiar with the Greeks and encouraged intimate relations with the Seleucids, his Greek neighbours and heirs of Alexander's cities in Central Asia. He concluded a war treaty with Seleucus I Nicator (c. 358–281 B.C.E.) and sealed it in exchange for marriage rights (Grk. *ἐπιγαμία*) and five hundred elephants.<sup>43</sup> Not long after, Megasthenes was assigned to the Mauryan court as the Greek ambassador and spokesman for Seleucid interests that included Greek communities annexed by the Mauryan Empire. Greek diplomats from the Hellenistic world continued to reside at the Indian court,<sup>44</sup> but it is not clear if Indian missions were sent to Hellenistic courts prior to the reign of King Aśoka (c. 268–233 B.C.E.).

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a league with him, and settling his affairs in the east, proceeded to join in the war against Antigonus.”

<sup>42</sup> Seldeslachts, “Final Frontier,” 134, argues that the diplomatic understanding reached between Seleucus and Candragupta goes back to their common past as officers serving under Alexander. He writes: “For Candragupta such a past is not commonly acknowledged as a fact, but I consider as correct the bold old hypothesis of H.C. Seth according to which Candragupta is identical with Sisikottos, a young political refugee from India who joined Alexander. This identification fits with what is known from Indian sources about the young Candragupta. It also gives sense to the information of the Greek historian Plutarch (ca. A.D. 46–120) that Sandrókottos (Candragupta) as a young man had met with Alexander, and that later, as a king, he still cherished a great worship for him. Finally, it is in my opinion supported by the fact that in a Jaina Prākṛit source Candragupta is referred to as *Sasigutta*, a form which like Sanskrit *Candragupta*, Prākṛit *Caṃdagutta* means ‘protected by the moon.’ Now, *Sasigutta*, or a closely related form, must lie at the basis of Greek *Sisikottos*.”

<sup>43</sup> Following Strabo's assessment (XV), G.P. Carratelli and G. Garbini, *A Bilingual Graeco-Aramaic Edict by Asoka: The First Greek Inscription Discovered in Afghanistan*. (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Esterno Oriente, 1964), 11, suggests that *ἐπιγαμία* was a *jus connubii*—an agreement that would authorize mixed marriages between Greeks and Indians. It would have been “an important measure reflecting the concern felt about overcoming the obstacle of the caste system that was spreading, which would enable the Greeks to participate actively in the life of the Maurya empire and have an established social position.”

<sup>44</sup> Friendly relations continued between India and the West. Chandragupta's son Bindusāra asked Antiochos I to send him sweet wine, figs and a philosopher. There are sources that mention a certain Deimachos of Plataea who was dispatched from the court of Antiochos I to serve as the Seleucid ambassador to Bindusāra, and of Dionysios from the court of Ptolemaios Philadelphos II of Egypt sent to an unnamed Indian king who might have been either Aśoka or his father Bindusāra; see Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 99–100, and Demetrios Vassiliades, “Greeks and Buddhism: Historical Contacts in the Development of a Universal Religion,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 36, no. 1–2 (2004): 141.

Aśoka was also acquainted with Greeks residing at his father's palace and while serving as viceroy in Taxila, a thriving Hellenic settlement from the times of Alexander.<sup>45</sup> He inherited a large empire but continued to wage wars of expansion until the conquest of Kalinga (Orissa), the horror of which is said to have impelled him to embrace Buddhism and organize the Mauryan Empire according to Buddhist precepts. He respected other religions and creeds of faith, yet his conversion to Buddhism and open support of the Buddhist monastic community (*sangha*) is attested by a careful study of all the major and minor edicts he issued. Drawing from a mixture of legends and historical facts, his figure exerted enormous influence across Asia, influencing a number of Buddhist rulers in South and East Asia to pattern their states after his own.

There is regrettably little written in traditional Indian literature about Aśoka. For example, the Purāṇas simply list his name probably on account of his overt preference for Buddhism. On the other hand, there are many sources in Pāli, Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan in which he figures as one of the greatest patrons of Buddhism that India has ever known. The *dharmacakra* (wheel of *dharma*), the symbol of the 'righteous state,' is found in association with a number of his edicts and features most prominently on the Lion Capital of Sarnath, which was to be adopted nearly two millennia later by the independent Republic of India as its national flag.

During their travels in the North West fringes of India, the Chinese pilgrims Sungyun (521–581 C.E.) and Xuanzang (629–645 C.E.) witnessed many Buddhist reliquaries (Skt. *stūpa*) whose foundation was attributed to Aśoka.<sup>46</sup> These narratives are collaborated by the *Aśokāvadāna* of the *Dīvyāvadāna* that describe in detail how Aśoka convened a great assembly of about three hundred thousand monks and announced his donation of a thousand million pieces of gold to the Buddhist *sangha*.<sup>47</sup> The Tibetan historian Tāranātha (1575–1634) refers to generous donations granted by the king to Buddhist monastic communities in Thogar (Tib. tho-gar), the Tibetan term for the Hellenistic areas of Tokharistan-Bactria. Tāranātha

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<sup>45</sup> W. Tarn, "Notes on Hellenism in Bactria and India," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 22, (1902): 274. George Woodcock, *The Greeks in India* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), 17, glossing over the practice of polygamy prevalent among Indian kings, suggested that since Candragupta, or more likely his son Bindusāra, was married to the Greek treaty-bride, Aśoka's blood-line may have been partly Greek.

<sup>46</sup> David Scott, "Ashokan Missionary Expansion of Buddhism Among the Greeks (In N.W. India, Bactria and the Levant)," *Religion* 15 (1985): 137–138.

<sup>47</sup> Kanai Hazra, *Buddhism in India: A Historical Survey* (Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2009), 36–37.

writes: "Towards the end of his life the king [Aśoka] took the vow to donate one hundred *crores* [ $100 \times 10,000,000$ ] of gold to the Buddhist communities of each [of the following countries, viz.] Aparāntaka, Kashmir and Thogar. He donated in full to the Buddhist communities of Kashmir and Thogar and also made offerings of other things equal to that amount."<sup>48</sup>

In order to propagate rules based on morality, equality and righteousness (Pāli dhamma; Skt. dharma), he employed several official languages and scripts derived from Aramaic, namely Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī, and also used Greek and Aramaic in public inscriptions carved on polished rock or stone. His pragmatism was likely to have been inspired by the Buddhists who propagated their teachings in the languages spoken in different regions. In what may have been the earliest of these inscriptions issued in 258 B.C.E. Aśoka declares himself to have been a lay Buddhist disciple for more than two and a half years, and by the eighth year of his reign he publicly expresses remorse for the massacre in Kāliṅga and denounces the taking of lives.<sup>49</sup> In the twelfth year of his reign, he issued another series of edicts that prescribed: 1) No votive offerings are to be made with living beings (animal sacrifice is prohibited), while the killing of animals for food has been restricted and will henceforth cease so far as the royal kitchen is concerned; 2) Medical services for men and animals are to be established throughout the kingdom and medicinal herbs have been distributed and planted for this purpose. This has been done throughout the empire and its borders, including the Coḍas (Coḷas), Pāṇḍyas, Sātyaputras, Keraḍas, and as far as Sri Lanka and its neighbours.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.1. *The Greek Edicts of Aśoka in Kandahar*

Aśoka's major edicts in northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan were written in Greek and Aramaic because of the prevalence and importance of Greek and Persian settlements in the Mauryan Empire and its borderlands.<sup>51</sup> The presence of the Greek script was noted by Indians as

<sup>48</sup> Tāranātha, *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 65.

<sup>49</sup> The primary moral principle of Buddhism and Jainism, i.e., 'abstention from taking life,' is stated in the Greek version of Edict XIII and in the bilingual Greek-Aramaic edict issued in Alexandria of Arachosia.

<sup>50</sup> A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), 244.

<sup>51</sup> Two sets of Aśokan edicts at Shahbazgarhi and Mansera on the upper Indus were rendered through an Aramaic-derived alphabet (Kharoṣṭhī), while summaries of edicts in Aramaic have been discovered at Taxila and Kandahar; see Scott, "Buddhist Attitudes," 433–434. Fergus Millar, "Looking East from the Classical World: Colonialism, Culture, and

early as the fifth century B.C.E.,<sup>52</sup> and it remained in use during the reign of the philhellenic Parthians,<sup>53</sup> during the rule of the Śaka kings who used it in their titles and coin-legends,<sup>54</sup> and by the Kuṣāṇas who utilized the Greek language for the administration of their own empire and the Greek alphabet to write the Bactrian language.<sup>55</sup> The refined use of spoken and written Greek (cursive and capitals), attested in parchments, ceramic jars, vases, and inscriptions, indicates that Greek was adopted in intellectual life serving as a shared language of trade and administration across Central Asia. The discovery of papyrus fragments of a Greek philosophical treatise and the Delphic precepts inscribed in limestone in the burial monument of an eminent citizen in Ay Khanum, a certain Kineas, reflect a linguistic

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Trade from Alexander the Great to Shapur I," *The International History Review* 20, no. 3 (1998): 518, explains that "both the languages and scripts used by Aśoka suggest that monumental writing in India owed its origins to the influence of the Achaemenid empire, in which Aramaic was widely used as an official language, and of the Seleucid empire, in which Aramaic was still used alongside the primary language, Greek."

<sup>52</sup> Pāṇini of Gandhāra called it *Yavanānī*; see Narain, "Greeks of Bactria and India," 388–389.

<sup>53</sup> Greek was a common and established language used for public documents in the Parthian empire—a practice that continued during the Sassanids, the successors of the Parthians in the early third century. Millar, "Looking East," 522–23, refers to a long Greek text that Shapur I left at Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis to commemorate his wars against Rome and explain the principles of his civil government. This document "may be regarded as the ultimate testimony to the long lasting legacy of Alexander's conquests six hundred years earlier."

<sup>54</sup> The Śakas in India occupied provinces that had been ruled by the Indo-Greeks since the time of King Menander. They inherited and continued to use Greek political and administrative institutions. According to B. Puri, "The Sakas and Indo-Parthians," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. János Harmatta (Paris: Unesco Publications, 1994), 205, "the Sakas at Taxila followed Greek ideas in town planning, copied Greek prototypes in their architecture and were inspired by Greek forms in minor arts and crafts. Among Saka buildings at Taxila the temple of Jandial has a typical Greek plan with classical moulding and Ionic columns. Greek in concept are the small stupas dated by coins to the period of Azes I and II... Subsequently Indian influence becomes increasingly noticeable, and there is a mingling of Greek and Indian motifs."

<sup>55</sup> The Greek phrase *διὰ Παλαμίδου* (by Palamedes), a Greek architect or mason mentioned in a Bactrian inscription from Surkh Kotal provides evidence for the survival of the Greeks and their language up to the end of the second century C.E. during the Kuṣāṇa empire; see Harmatta, "Languages and Scripts," 408. According to Millar, "Looking East," 518–519, the reign of Kuṣāṇa Emperor Kaniška offers some of the most remarkable of evidence for the long-lasting influence of Greek in Afghanistan and North India. Kaniška's coins "show a transition from the use of royal titles in Greek to ones in Iranian language conventionally labelled 'Bactrian.' But the script used continues to be Greek... The truly remarkable new find is an extensive inscription of the first year of Kaniška's reign, found in 1993 in Rabatak in Afghanistan, and written in Bactrian using this version of the Greek alphabet. The text, proclaiming the king's assumption to power, with divine favour, and recounting the cities in northern India which he ruled, records explicitly that 'Kaniška the Kushan [*Kanēshke koshano*] 'issued a Greek edict and [then] put it into Aryan.'"



development similar to that found in documents from the Mediterranean basin.<sup>56</sup>

A Greek version of the end of Edict XII and the beginning of Edict XIII (inscribed on a block of limestone) was discovered in 1963 in Kandahar. Old Kandahar has a long history of settlers. It has been identified with Alexandria in Arachosia after the discovery of the first Greek pre-Aśokan inscription on a special *temenos* (Grk. τέμενος) dedicated to the cult of its founder Alexander the Great.<sup>57</sup> In the late fourth century B.C.E. it passed from Seleucid to Mauryan control only to be brought under the reign of the Greco-Bactrians in the first half of the second century. It would appear that a public building in the city had once housed all fourteen Aśokan edicts written in Greek, a practice that was undertaken elsewhere in the Mauryan Empire utilizing Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī.<sup>58</sup>

Edicts XII and XIII bear evidence for the high culture of the Bactrian Greeks that is comparable to other Hellenistic centres of civilization. Edict XII informs us that in the Mauryan Empire there were frequent debates between different philosophical schools or religious orders (Grk. διατριβάς), a situation that was also not uncommon among Greek philosophers. What is unusual is that a powerful ruler like Aśoka should make a public proclamation to instruct philosophers and monks not to disparage each other's doctrines, but to accept and learn from each other's teachings. While the principles of *dhamma* would have been acceptable to people belonging to any religious sect, given Aśoka's expressed commitment to Buddhist precepts and the *sangha*, his edict of toleration for

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<sup>56</sup> Bernard, "Aī Khanum and Hellenism," 95. For a translation and discussion of the philosophical treatise of Ay Khanum that reads like an Aristotelian response to Plato's theory of ideas, see Jeffrey Lerner, "The Aī Khanoum Philosophical Papyrus," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 142 (2003): 45–51.

<sup>57</sup> N. Oikonomides, "The [τέμενος] of Alexander the Great at Alexandria in Arachosia (Old Kandahar)," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 56 (1984): 145. For a discussion of sources see Carratelli et al., *Graeco-Aramaic Edict*, 18–24.

<sup>58</sup> Oikonomides, "The [τέμενος] of Alexander the Great," 145 n. 2, explains that inscribing important texts "on the long wall of a roofed building where the citizens could read them protected from the sun or rain is a very old Greek tradition." He cites the Law Code of Gortyn in Crete and the Law Code of Drakon and Solon in the *Basileios Stoa*, the Agora of Athens as the earliest examples, and the "*Momentum Ancyranum*" as one of the latest. He concludes that "a *stoa* in the agora of Alexandria in Arachosia donated by Aśoka seems a logical possibility for the origins of the rectangular stone inscribed with parts of two of his edicts." For a linguistic comparison of the Greek with the Prakrit versions of the edicts see R. Norman, "Notes on the Greek Version of Aśoka's Twelfth and Thirteenth Rock Edicts," *A Half-Century of Irano-Indian Studies* (1972): 111–118.

all religions seems to have been an attempt to indirectly facilitate the spread of Buddhism across his empire and at its borders.<sup>59</sup>

#### Edict XII

[εὐ] σέβεια καὶ ἐγκράτεια κατὰ πάσας τὰς διατριβάς ἐγκρατῆς δὲ μάλιστα ἐστὶν ὅς ἄγ γλώσης ἐγκρατῆς ἦι. Καὶ μῆτε ἑαυτοὺς ἐπα[ι]νώσιν, μῆτε τῶν πέλας ψέγῳσιν περὶ μηδενός· κενὸν γάρ ἐστιν· καὶ πειράσθαι μᾶλλον τοὺς πέλας ἐπαινεῖν καὶ μὴ ψέγειν κατὰ πάντα τρόπον. Ταῦτα δὲ ποιοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς αὐξοῦσι καὶ τοὺς πέλας ἀνακτῶνται· παραβαίοντες δὲ ταῦτα ἀκλεέστεροί τε γίνονται καὶ τοῖς πέλας ἀπέχθονται. Ὅτι δ' ἂν ἑαυτοὺς ἐπαινῶσιν, τοὺς δὲ πέλας ψέγῳσιν φιλοτιμότερον διαπράττονται, βουλόμενοι παρὰ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἐκλάμψαι, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον βλάβου[σι] ἑαυτοὺς. Πρέπει δὲ ἀλλήλους θαυμάζειν καὶ τὰ ἀλλήλων διδάγματα παραδέχεσθαι[ι]. Ταῦτα δὲ ποιοῦντες πολυμαθέστεροι ἔσονται, παραδιδόντες ἀλλήλοις ὅσα ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ἐπίσταται. Καὶ τοῖς ταῦτα ἐπ[α]σκοῦσι ταῦτα μὴ ὀκνεῖν λέγειν ἵνα δειαμείνωσιν διὰ παντός εὐσεβοῦντες.

Observance of piety [dhamma] and self-control [should be exercised] towards all philosophical orientations. He who possesses self-control is in control of his tongue. And they should neither praise themselves nor degrade others in any respect, for it is meaningless. Following this, they better themselves and win [the respect] of others; transgressing this, however, they will be without fame and become despised by others. For should they praise themselves and belittle others, they behave with much zeal wanting to impress others, [but in effect] they do much harm to themselves. There should be an acceptance of others and of their teachings. Doing this they will become more knowledgeable sharing with one another that which they know well. And towards those who practice [these edicts] do not tire educating them [about the aforementioned] so that they will remain in piety forever.

The following lines of the Greek Edict XIII are not a literal translation of the Indic versions but a local adaptation that preserve a striking testimony of Aśoka's remorse over the slaughter in Kalinga.

#### Edict XIII

Ὅγδῶμι ἔτει βασιλεύοντος Πιοδάσσου κατέστρεπται τὴν Καλίγγην. Ἦγ ἐζωγρημένα καὶ ἐξηγμένα ἐκείθεν σωμάτων μυριάδες δεκαπέντε καὶ ἀναίρεθησαν ἄλλαι μυριάδες δέκα καὶ σχεδόν ἄλλοι τοσοῦτοι ἐτελεύτησαν. Ἀπ' ἐκείνου τοῦ χρόνου ἔλεος καὶ οἶκτος αὐτόν ἔλαβεν· καὶ βαρέως ἤνεγκεν δι' οὐ τρόπον ἐκέλευεν ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἐμψύχων σπουδῆν τε καὶ σύνταξιν πεποιήται περὶ εὐσεβείας. Καὶ

<sup>59</sup> It is worthwhile to note that the term *dhamma* has many meanings both in Buddhism and Brahmanism, an ambiguity that Aśoka would not have found objectionable. In later bilingual Indian-Greek coins, *dharma* is equated with the Greek word *dikē* (δική), right or justice and is not restricted to *eusebeia* (εὐσέβεια).

τοῦτο ἔτι δυσχερέστερον ὑπέλιψε ὁ βασιλεύς·καὶ ὅσοι ἐκεῖ ὠκουν βραμειναι ἢ σραμειναι ἢ καὶ ἄλλοι τινὲς οἱ περὶ τὴν εὐσέβειαν διατρίβοντες, τοὺς ἐκεῖ οἰκούντας ἔδει τὰ τοῦ βασιλέως συμφέροντα νοεῖν, καὶ διδάσκαλον καὶ πατέρα καὶ μητέρα ἐπαισχύνεσθαι καὶ θαυμάζειν, φίλους καὶ ἐταίρους ἀγαπᾶν καὶ μὴ διαψεύδεσθαι, δούλοις καὶ μισθωτοῖς ὡς κουφότατα χρᾶσθαι, τούτων ἐκεῖ τῶν τοιαῦτα διαπρασσομένων εἰ τις τέθνηκεγ ἢ ἐξήκται, καὶ τοῦτο ἐμ παραδρομῆι οἱ λοιποὶ ἡγεῖνται, ὁ δὲ [β]ασιλεύς σφόδρα ἐπὶ τούτοις ἐδυσχέραινεν. Καὶ ὅτι ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐθνεσὶν εἰσιν . . .

In the eighth year of his reign, Piodasses [Aśoka] destroyed Kalinga. A hundred and fifty thousand people were taken prisoner and sent into exile, and another hundred thousand disappeared and almost the same number died. From that time onwards, compassion and sadness overcame him and he was heavily distressed by the ways [he had acted]. Thereafter, he ordered to abstain from living beings [ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἐμψύχων] and without delay and with effort he established [the observance of] piety, and this was very difficult. And the King further considered that those living there, as many *brāhmaṇas*, *śramaṇas* and others debating the *dhamma*, should keep in mind such things that are of interest to the King. Their teachers, fathers and mothers should not be ashamed of them but admire them; and they should not deceive their friends and partners, nor avoid hearing the needs of slaves and those hired by them. And all those who are living under such conditions if any of them died or left, and those following them disregard these [the edicts], the King would show his displeasure with a heavy hand. And all that there is with the other peoples . . .<sup>60</sup>

It is remarkable to read a written expression of Buddhist-inspired moral precepts in Greek and be told, from a complete version of Edict XIII issued in Brāhmī script at Kalsi, that Aśoka dispatched international missions consisting of *dhamma* commissioners from major towns (*dhamma-mahāmātras*) to the Greek rulers in Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene and Epirus.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The English translation of texts and use of brackets are my own. The phrase 'ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἐμψύχων' literally means to 'abstain from sentient beings,' in the sense of killing them, harming them, and so forth. Harmatta, "Languages and Scripts," 405–407, who provided without translation the Greek texts of Edicts XII and XIII reproduced here, notes on the basis of stylistic features that two different translators were employed, both of whom were erudite and versed in Greek philosophical terms used by Plato, Xenophon, Isocrates and Aristotle. The edicts were formerly kept at the Kabul Museum but their present whereabouts are unknown. For a bibliography and related literature see Harry Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts: A Source-Book with Bibliography* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2006), 244–245.

<sup>61</sup> We can get a fair idea of the obligations of the local *mahāmātra* from Aśoka's Minor Edict II which concerns their duty in conveying the king's orders to subordinates; see Falk *Aśokan Sites*, 57. The *mahāmātra* is to tell the *rajūka* to spread the rules of conduct recommended by the king to the people in the settlements of the provinces and the countryside, stressing that he only repeats the words of the king. Furthermore, the *mahāmātra* is to

The conquest by *dhamma*, this has been won repeatedly by Aśoka both here and among all borderers, even as far as six hundred *yojonas* where the Yonaking [Greek king] Antiyoga [Antiochos II, Theos of Syria, 261–246 B.C.E.] rules, and beyond this Antiyoga, (to) four kings named Tulamaya [Ptolemaios II, Philadelphos of Egypt, 285–246 B.C.E.], named Antikini [Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, 283–239 B.C.E.], named Maka [Magas of Cyrene], named Alikyashudala [Alexander of Epirus, 274–240 B.C.E.]... Likewise here in the king's territory, among the Yonas... everywhere [people] are conforming to Aśoka's instruction in *dhamma*.<sup>62</sup>

In the absence of western records we cannot confirm whether Aśoka's missionaries ever reached their destinations. Nevertheless, it is clear from Edict XIII that he was keenly aware of the strategic importance of Greek communities and had accurate knowledge of the Hellenistic rulers far beyond the political sphere of influence of the Mauryas. The Mauryan Greeks and those in neighbouring Greco-Bactria occupied vital centres of commerce that linked the Mauryan capital Pāṭaliputra with Asia Minor, facilitating the circulation of trade in both directions, from the Ganges valley to the Punjab, Taxila, Pushkalavati, and Alexandria of the Caucasus, and onwards towards Persia and the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>63</sup>

Edicts V and IX acknowledge the Greeks as the king's subjects devoted to the *dhamma*,<sup>64</sup> while Edict XIII states that there is no country, except the Yonas, where the Indian caste system does not exist.<sup>65</sup> The language of Edict V from Shahbazgarhi is explicit in this respect: "In times past *mahamatras* of dharma did not exist. But *mahamatras* of dharma were

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instruct the teachers of four groups that comprise elephant trainers, the scribes, the *yugyas* and the *brāhmaṇas*, to educate their pupils to adhere to the traditional behaviour. The Buddhists are not mentioned among the groups to be instructed.

<sup>62</sup> The brackets are mine; translation from the Kalsi version by Eugene Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 178.

<sup>63</sup> Even before Alexander's campaigns, India was famous in Greece as a country full of gold; see Karttunen, *India in Early Greek Literature*, 171–176. The Greek playwright Sophocles (496–406 B.C.E.) mentions in *Antigone* a profitable trade in gold from India; "Make good profits, drive your trade, if you will, in the amber of Sardeis and the gold of India"; translated by Demetrios Vassiliades, *The Greeks in India: A Survey in Philosophical Understanding* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2000), 30.

<sup>64</sup> The end of Edict XIII confirms that Aśoka's Empire comprised different ethnic communities and that the Greeks addressed in his imperial edicts were his own subjects, unlike their Greek neighbours in Bactria who were under Seleucid sovereignty.

<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, the same observation is reiterated by Buddha Śākyamuni in the *Assalāyana Sutta*, a text possibly dating to Aśoka's times or later. [The Buddha] "What do you think about this, Assalāyana? Have you heard that in Yona and Kamboja [Greece and Persia] and in other outland countries there are only two castes, masters and slaves, and that masters become slaves and slaves masters?" *Majjhima Nikāya*, II, translation by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, et al., 764.

appointed by me when I had been anointed thirteen years. These are occupied with all sects in establishing dharma, in promoting the dharma, and for the welfare and happiness of those who are devoted to dharma among the Yonas [Greeks], Kambojas [Persians] and Gandharas, among the Rathikas, among the Potinikas and whatever other western borders of mine there are.”<sup>66</sup>

Even if the proclamations in the Aśokan edicts are somewhat exaggerated, the fluent use of Greek in inscriptions excavated in Alexandria in Arachosia demonstrates the presence of an educated Greek community familiar with Aśoka’s predilection for Buddhist morals and precepts. According to Scott’s observations:

One is neither faced with a servile translation from Indian forms, nor a barbarized, corrupted, local form of Greek. With the Kandahar inscriptions in Greek we are instead faced with a polished Greek writer who was familiar with both Hellenic and Buddhist worlds. Perhaps it was a local member of the Greek community who had been employed as a translator for this new imperially encouraged message. Since the author seems so familiar with both worlds it may be suggested that it was actually a fairly cultured Greek convert to Buddhism who was responsible for this.<sup>67</sup>

Among the extant epigraphic sources in Kandahar we find a Greek-Aramaic bilingual inscription discovered in 1957 near Cehel Zina. It was written on an implanted rock along the old road to the ancient city and has no precise counterpart anywhere else. The Greek part of the inscription, fourteen lines (50 cm × 50 cm), is not a servile translation of the Prakrit version of Aśoka’s first minor edict and differs considerably from the Aramaic section.<sup>68</sup> The fluent use of standard Hellenistic language and vocabulary (*koine*) shows that it was adapted to the cultural needs of a Greek audience.

Δέκα ἐτῶν πληρῆ[... ]ων βασιλεὺς Πιοδασσης εὐσέβειαν ἔδειξεν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου εὐσεβεστέρους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐποίησεν καὶ πάντα εὐθηνεῖ κατὰ πάσαν γῆν· καὶ ἀπέχεται βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐμψύχων καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ δὲ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ὅσοι θηρευταὶ ἢ ἀλιεῖς βασιλέως πέπαινανται θηρεύοντες· καὶ εἴ τινες ἀκρατεῖς πέπαινανται τῆς ἀκρασίας κατὰ δύναμιν, καὶ ἐνήκοοι πατρὶ καὶ μητρὶ καὶ τῶν

<sup>66</sup> Text translated from the Karoṣṭhī version by Hulzsch, *Inscriptions Asoka*, 56. The Kamhojas refers to the people north west of Gandhara that spoke a semi-Iranian language. They were regarded by the Indians as semi-civilized and may have been direct descendants of the Achaemenids and heirs of a declining stage of Persian civilization in Central Asia.

<sup>67</sup> Scott, “Buddhist Attitudes,” 435.

<sup>68</sup> Carratelli et al., *Graeco-Aramaic Edict*, 5.

πρεσβυτέρων παρὰ τὰ πρότερον καὶ τοῦ λοιποῦ λώιον καὶ ἄμεινον κατὰ πάντα ταῦτα ποιούντες διάξουσιν. (*vacat*)<sup>69</sup>

The above version informs us that after ten years have passed since his coronation, King Aśoka, known by his title ‘benevolent-looking,’ Piyadassi (Skt. Priyadarśin), showed the *dhamma* (Grk. εὐσέβεια) to men (εὐσέβειαν ἔδε[ι]ξεν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις) by personal example, and from that time onward he made men ‘more pious’ (εὐσεβεστέρους) and ‘everything on earth’ (κατὰ πάσαν γῆν) ‘prospered’ (εὐθηνεῖ).<sup>70</sup> The King (βασιλεὺς) ‘refrained from sentient beings’ (ἀπέχεταιτῶν ἐμψύχων) and so did others—those who were hunters and fishermen similarly refrained from taking life. And those who were ‘intemperate’ (ἀκρατεῖς) ceased being intemperate to the ‘best of their ability’ (κατὰ δύναμιν), and obeyed their parents and elders.

There is not much in the edict that would have sounded strikingly foreign to the ears of a Greek audience. The prescription to abstain from ‘consuming sentient beings’ (Grk. ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων) was introduced into Greek philosophy by the sixth century philosopher Pythagoras of Samos who had preached similar tenets. Similarly, observing principles of morality was at the heart of Delphic maxims. On a monument erected in honour of a founding hero of Ay Khanum by the name of Kineas we find the last five maxims (of a series of one hundred and fifty maxims in Apollo’s sanctuary at Delphi) donated by Clearchus of Soli in the Hellenistic city. Copies of the Delphic precepts are not unique to Ay Khanum, but circulated in the Greek speaking world as well as among educated Romans.<sup>71</sup> Those copied in Ay Khanum read: ΠΑΙΣ ΩΝ ΚΟΣΜΙΟΣ ΓΙΝΟΥ, ΗΒΩΝ ΕΓΚΡΑΤΗΣ, ΜΕΣΟΣ ΔΙΚΑΟΣ, ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΗΣ ΕΥΒΟΥΛΟΣ, ΤΕΛΕΥΤΩΝ ΑΛΥΠΟΣ. In translation: “In childhood practice good manners, in youth practice self-control, in middle-age be just, in old age be of right counsel, and at death have no regrets.”

<sup>69</sup> Transcription and translation of the Greek text in Carratelli et al., *Graeco-Aramaic Edict*, 29–39. For a bibliography and related literature see Falk, *Aśokan Sites*, 242–243.

<sup>70</sup> The idea that a righteous and just ruler causes ‘everything on earth to prosper’ (κατὰ πάσαν γῆν εὐθηνεῖ) finds an exact parallel in Homeric hymns and in early conceptions of Buddhist kingship; for an analysis of Buddhist notions of kingship see Georgios Halkias, “The Enlightened Sovereign: Buddhism and Kingship in India and Tibet,” in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Steven Emmanuel (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 491–511. Compare with Homer, Ode XIX: *As the fame of some blameless king who, like a god, maintains justice; to whom the black earth brings forth wheat and barley; whose trees are bowed with fruit, and his sheep never fail to bear, and the sea gives him fish*; Evelyn-White, *Homeric Hymns*.

<sup>71</sup> N. Oikonomides, “The Lost Delphic Inscription with the Commandments of the Seven and P. Univ. Athen 2782.” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 37 (1980): 179–183.

The Delphic importance placed on self-control (*enkrateia*) is a central theme for Hindus and Buddhists and one that is taken up again in the Greek edicts of Aśoka. Self-control and tranquillity of mind were later embraced by the Greek School of Stoicism, whose founder was Zeno from Citium in Cyprus. As we have seen before, it is likely that Buddhist philosophical ideas travelled to the Hellenistic world through the teachings and doctrines of Pyrrho of Elis. Recent philological studies of the Greek edicts and inscriptions from Afghanistan purport that Buddhist philosophy and ethics exerted their influence on the Hellenistic traditions of Bactria spreading from there to the larger Greek world.<sup>72</sup>

### 3.2. *The Conversion of the Indo-Greek King Menander to Buddhism*

Through imperial initiatives, the expansion of transcontinental trade, and the activities of charismatic Buddhist monks, Buddhism spread across the Indian subcontinent and beyond its southern and northern borders where the Greeks were politically, culturally and economically prominent. Indian Buddhists defended and formulated their religious ideas through their contact with foreigners and prevailing religious traditions, like Hellenic deity cults, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, and Brahmanism. Over the centuries the Yona (Skt. Yavana, from Ionians known to the Persians as Yanna) laid the foundations for the creation of a cultural market that reflects not just a fusion of religions and cultures, but the celebration of their newly acquired faith. In fact, Aśoka's edicts are highly suggestive of organized attempts to introduce Buddhist ethics among the Hellenic people of Asia.

The adoption of Buddhism among the Indo-Greek elite classes is attested by the celebrated conversion of Menander (c. 155–130 B.C.E.), the greatest of all the Indo-Greek kings of the Euthydemid dynasty who ruled over much of Afghanistan and Pakistan and whose conquests extended in

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<sup>72</sup> David Sick, "When Socrates met the Buddha: Greek and Indian Dialectic in Hellenistic Bactria and India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3, no. 17 (2007): 253–278, argues that the Greek translations of Indian terms namely, *εὐσέβεια* and *εγκράτεια* (self-control) and their interpretation in Bactria influenced the development of these concepts in Hellenistic traditions. Furthermore, there is a growing body of research suggesting that Buddhism exerted its influence on the Pagan and Christian Gnostic communities that flourished in the Hellenistic Near East; for a critical discussion of the evidence see Seldeslachts, *Final Frontier*, 149–158. For a discussion of the spread of Buddhism westward see Webb, "Buddhism in Western Asia," and Scott, "Buddhist Attitudes," 433, and "Face of Buddhism."

the east as far as the river Ganges and Palibothra (Pataliputra).<sup>73</sup> The story of Menander's conversion is narrated in the well-known Buddhist text, the *Milindapañha* (Milinda's Questions) preserved in Pāli, and in Chinese translations under the title, *The Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra*.<sup>74</sup> In the Pāli version we read that his capital was situated at Śākala (Sialkot) in the Punjab, "a great centre of trade... situated in a delightful country... abounding in parks and gardens... splendid with hundreds of thousands of magnificent mansions which rise aloft like the mountain peaks of the Himalayas [and with] streets filled with elephants, horses, carriages, and foot-passengers... crowded by men of all sorts and conditions, Brahmans, nobles, artificers and servants [and]... teachers of every creed... the resort of the leading men of each of the differing sects."<sup>75</sup>

The *Milindapañha* is a Buddhist philosophical dialogue between King Menander and the otherwise unknown Buddhist monk Nāgasena, who may have been an Indo-Greek monk of Gandhāra.<sup>76</sup> It appears that it was not unusual for Indo-Greeks and Buddhists to engage in philosophical debates, while it has been put forward that several key portions of this Socratic-type dialogue are connected thematically and, to some extent, in their specific language to the twelfth and thirteenth edicts of Aśoka.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Narain, "Greeks of Bactria and India," 409.

<sup>74</sup> There are two versions of the Chinese text (T32, no. 1670 (a) and (b)). For an English translation and noted differences between the two Chinese versions see Guang Xing, "The Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra," *Journal of Buddhist Studies* 5 (2007): 113–216. Guang Xing notes that the fact that it is called a *sūtra* "shows that its transmitters regarded it as an authoritative text equal to the words of the Buddha."

<sup>75</sup> The translation from the Pāli version is by Rhys Davids, *The Questions of King Milinda* (New York: Dover, 1963), 50. As we have seen, in the Greek edicts of Aśoka the term *dhamma* was translated as *eusebeia*, but Menander adopted in his coins the word *dhammaka*—translated in Greek as *dikaioi* (just)—and included a wheel similar to the Buddhist *cakra*. For the Buddhist tradition, King Menander, like Aśoka and Kaniṣka, is considered a protector and patron of Buddhism.

<sup>76</sup> Woodcock's hypothesis that Nāgasena was part of the Indo-Greek *saṅgha* of Gandhāra, is substantiated by one reference in the *Milindapañha* where it is said that he was a student of the Greek monk Dharmarakṣita. Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (New York: Allworth Press, 2002), 378, puts forth the following argument: "The transmission story is historically possible, if Dharmarakṣita lived past the end of Aśoka's reign and converted Nāgasena, who then lived into old age before meeting Menander; or it may be slightly off in a way that is common in the sources, namely, that Nāgasena may have been converted by a disciple of Dharmarakṣita, perhaps one who has taken the same name." Pāṇini's passing reference (*Ganapatha* 178) to shaven-headed *yāvanas* lends credence to the Buddhist ordination of Greeks.

<sup>77</sup> Sick, "Socrates met the Buddha," 271–275.



There are other currents of continuity at work in the relation of the *Milindapañha* with Greek philosophy. Scott explains:

Menander himself is described as a cultured king skilled in rhetoric. Indeed the presentation of the actual conversations between Menander and Nagasena evokes something of the well-established Socratic mode of questions and answers. The repeated interventions by Menander to pose various wise, and also obscure, questions, goes beyond Indian literary patterns where the norm would have been for Menander to have only posed questions at the very start rather than throughout. On the other hand this pattern was a familiar Greek one, and Tarn has gone so far as to argue that there existed an earlier Greek text of the 'Questions of Menander,' from which the later Pali and Chinese versions stemmed.<sup>78</sup>

Like the Indo-Greek King Agathocles before him, the Yavana King Menander was attracted to Buddhism,<sup>79</sup> and according to the *Milindapañha* and later traditions, he devoted himself to the Buddhist teachings and attained *arhatship* (enlightenment). According to Marshall, the Greeks and Buddhists were brought together by Menander because they had a common enemy, the commander in chief Puṣyamitra (184–148 B.C.E.) who assassinated the last Mauryan emperor, Brihadratha, ruling over a much diminished empire, and seized the throne.<sup>80</sup> In the Buddhist tradition, Pushyamitra had gone to Sākala and exterminated many Buddhist monks, an event that suggests that among the subjects of King Menander there were Buddhists. However, since the *Milindapañha* refers to Sākala as Menander's capital, it is possible that Menander, or an earlier ruler like Demetrius, had taken this important city from Pushyamitra.<sup>81</sup>

Plutarch reports that after Menander's death his relics were distributed, like those of a Buddhist 'wheel-turning monarch' (Skt. cakravartin), across

<sup>78</sup> Scott. "Buddhist Attitudes," 436–437. Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 83 n. 292, states that "Greek influence has been postulated frequently [but] erroneously" and that "there is no traceable Greek influence on form or content of the purely Indic dialogue, derived from Upaniṣadic traditions." Without further discussion it is hard to see how he arrived at this conclusion.

<sup>79</sup> For Narain, "Greeks of Bactria and India," 406, Agathocles was "the first Yavana king to possess Taxila and initiate a forward policy of extending patronage to Indian religions and cults, both Buddhist and Brahmanical." On a unique coin issued by him, there is a depiction of a Buddhist *stūpa* and the legend 'Akathukreyasa'; on the reverse there is a depiction of a tree inside a railing with the legend Hirañśame.

<sup>80</sup> John Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 21.

<sup>81</sup> H. Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 54.

his capitals in Buddhist monuments (Skt. *stūpa*) erected to enshrine them.<sup>82</sup> An inscription on the Bajaur relic casket, dated to the reign of Menander at the main *stūpa* of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, suggests that both monks and lay people considered the essence of the Buddha to be contained within the relics.<sup>83</sup> It is curious that the word *stūpa* is a Sanskrit word for “a knot or tuft of hair, the upper part of the head, crest, top, or summit.” The word is etymologically related to the Greek *stupos* (στύπος) meaning “stem, stump, block.” It is curious that the practice of the Macedonians to construct elaborate burial chambers covered by earthen tumuli resemble Buddhist funerary monuments, while the manner in which the dead bodies of the Macedonian monarchs were disposed of is strikingly similar to the way the remains of a Buddha and the universal wheel-turning king were treated. In Macedonian fashion, the dead were cremated and wrapped in purple cloth and then placed in gold chests along with many offerings.<sup>84</sup> The royal treatment of Macedonian kings accords with the distribution of the Buddha’s relics described in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sūta* (5.11):

But, Lord, what are we to do with the Tathāgata’s [Buddha] remains? Ānanda, they should be dealt with like the remains of a wheel-turning monarch. And how is that, Lord? Ānanda, the remains of a wheel-turning monarch are wrapped in a new linen-cloth. This they wrap in teased cotton wool, and

<sup>82</sup> Plutarchus, *Moralia*, 52.28. There are also passing references that Menander would erect a Buddhist *stūpa* in Pāṭaliputra; see Vassiliades, *Greeks in India*, 59, 119.

<sup>83</sup> See N. Majumdar, “The Bajaur Casket of the Reign of Menander,” *Epigraphia Indica* 24 (1932): 1–7 and Gregory Schopen, “On the Buddha and his Bones: The Conception of a Relic in the Inscriptions from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 4 (1988): 527–537. Hazra, *Buddhism in India*, 46, accounts for sources which show that Buddhism continued to flourish in Menander’s kingdom. He writes that Menander is said to have “constructed a monastery named Milinda and gave it to Nāgasena. The Shimkot casket inscription refers to the patronage of Buddhism by the people during the rule of King Menander. It describes “The establishment of the relic of the Buddha by one Vijayamitra during the reign of King Menander on the fourteenth day of the month of Kārtikeya.” The first reference to Buddhists in Greek literature is attributed to the Greek theologian Clement of Alexandria (150–218 C.E.) who quotes the ethnographer Alexander Polyhistor (c. 100 B.C.E.). It has been suggested that Polyhistor’s work on India derives from Megasthenes’ *Indica*, a work no longer extant; see P. Almond, “Buddhism in the West: 300 BC–AD 400,” *Journal of Religious History* 14, no. 3 (2007): 237–239. Clement is the first extant western source to mention the name of the Buddha. In the *Stromateis* (I, 15), he writes: “among the Indians are those philosophers also who follow the precepts of Bouta [Βούττα/Buddha], who they honour as god on account of his sanctity.” In the same work, III, 194, he refers to the worship of the *śramans* who hold “a certain pyramid beneath which, they think, lie the bones of a certain god”—a clear reference to a Buddhist reliquary, the *stūpa*.

<sup>84</sup> See Christesen and Murray, “Macedonian Religion,” 439.

this in a new cloth. Having done this five hundred times each, they enclose the king's body in an oil-vat of iron, which is covered with another iron pot. Then having made a funeral-pyre of all manner of perfumes they cremate the king's body, and they raise a stupa at a crossroads. That, Ānanda, is what they do with the remains of a wheel-turning monarch, and they should deal with the Tathāgata's body in the same way.

### 3.3. *The Conversion of the Greeks to Buddhism and their Missions: Historical References*

It is unlikely that Menander's support of Buddhism was a pious reconstruction of a Buddhist legend, for his deification by later traditions resonates with Macedonian religious trends that granted divine honours to monarchs and members of their family and worshipped them, like Alexander, as gods.<sup>85</sup> It is no coincidence that similar motifs highlight the Buddha's deification and his funereal rituals are commensurate with those of Macedonian kings and universal monarchs. The evidence is in favour of the conversion of King Menander to Buddhism, which is neither an isolated historical incident nor an invention of later traditions. Rather, it is a part of a gradual and successful conversion of the Greeks to Buddhism and of Buddhism to Hellenism, a process that was begun by King Aśoka and attests to the proselytizing importance of his Greek edicts. The conversion of the Greeks occurred prior to Menander's reign as recorded in historical sources and chronicles written in Pāli. They preserve an account of the so-called "Third Buddhist Council"—said to have been convened by Aśoka in his capital to settle disputes over Buddhist doctrines and monastic conduct under the extraordinary leadership of the *thera* Moggaliputa Tissa, the alleged author of the *Points of Controversy* (*Kathāvatthu*).<sup>86</sup>

The early history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka may be reconstructed from two Sinhala chronicles, *The Great Chronicle* (*Mahāvamsa*) and *The Chronicle of the Island* (*Dīpavamsa*). These draw from older sources and no doubt contain legends but also include a great deal of historical

<sup>85</sup> Christesen and Murray, "Macedonian Religion," 441–442.

<sup>86</sup> The number of Buddhist councils actually convened is in dispute; see Charles Prebish, "A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils," *Journal of Asian Studies* XXXIII, 2 (1974): 239–254. The *Kathāvatthu*, the fifth book of the Pāli Abhidharma corpus, lists two hundred and nineteen different controversies covered in twenty-three chapters with no apparent order but with a dialectical approach consisting of a complex series of statements and counter-statements.

information prevailing in India.<sup>87</sup> Here we read that among the Buddhist missionaries, who were active after the third Council, there was an Indo-Greek monk called Dhammarakkhita who was sent to Aparāntaka—the peninsular part of Gujarat where western traders have been active for centuries. Another Buddhist missionary by the name of Mahārakkhita was dispatched to the ‘country of the Greeks’ (probably Kandahar), and Majjhantika was sent to Gandhāra, which was largely a Hellenized area at the time.<sup>88</sup> *The Great Chronicle* records that Buddhist preachers were dispatched to nine different countries at the Mauryan borders; they included Majjhima who was sent to the Himalayas (Himavanta), Mahinda to Sri Lanka (Tambapaṇṇi) and Soṇa and Uttara to Myanmar (Suvaṇṇabhumi).<sup>89</sup> In the same history we read that the Elder Mahādhammarakkhita departed with thirty thousand monks from the city of the Yonas, Alasanda (one of the Alexandrias of Western Central Asia), to attend the inauguration of the great *stūpa* at Anurādhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka.<sup>90</sup>

*The Great Chronicle* informs us that the Buddhist missionary Mahārakkhita Thera delivered the *Kālakārāma-sūta* in the country of the Greeks. The discourse, as recorded in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, does not provide us with the context of how it was inspired, but only states that it was delivered by the Buddha when he was staying at the Kālaka monastery in Sāketa—a region besieged by the Greeks, according to the Indian grammarian Patanjali, during (or before) the reign of the Indo-Greek King Menander.<sup>91</sup> It appears to have been an extraordinary event that led thirty-seven thousand people to attain the reward of the Buddhist path, while ten thousand received the *pabbajjā* (entering the Buddha’s order).<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> For a discussion see Wilhelm Geiger, “The Trustworthiness of the Mahāvamsa,” *The Indian Historical Quarterly* VI, no. 2 (1930): 205–227.

<sup>88</sup> The Greeks referred to in these texts occupied settlements within the Mauryan Empire that included Arachosia, Aparāntaka, Mahiṣa, Mahārāṣṭra and Vanavāsa; see Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 256.

<sup>89</sup> Hazra, *Buddhism in India*, 40. The identification of Suvaṇṇabhumi with Myanmar is debated and it may be referring to the region of Southeast Asia in general.

<sup>90</sup> Wilhelm Geiger and Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Mahāvamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon* (London: Pali Text Society; Oxford University Press, 1912), XXIX, 39.

<sup>91</sup> See The Cambridge Shorter History of India, 54.

<sup>92</sup> Geiger, *Mahāvamsa*, XII, 39–40. Vassiliades, “Greeks and Buddhism,” 145–146, relates the conversion of the Greeks to Buddhism as preserved in the memory of the Ceylonese Theravāda tradition, who even today recite in their daily prayers the following stanza: “I bow my head to the footprints of the silent saint (Buddha) which are spread on the sandy bank of the Narmada River, on the Mountain Saccabhadda, on the Mountain Sumana, and in the city of the Yonakas [Greeks].”

While the cited number of Indo-Greek converts to Buddhism and monasticism is exaggerated, the terse reasoning style of the *Kālakārāma* and its employment of the *tetralemma* would have perfectly suited a philosophically mature Greek audience. Not unlike the insights proffered by Pyrrho, who also utilized the *tetralemma* in his reasoning, in the *Kālakārāma* a Tathāgata does not conceive form apart from sight or sound apart from hearing or a thing to be sensed apart from sensation or an object of cognition apart from cognition.

If I were to say: 'Monks, whatsoever is seen . . . by the mind—all that I do not know'—it would be a falsehood in me. If I were to say: 'I both know it and know it not'—that too would be a falsehood in me. If I were to say: 'I neither know it nor am ignorant of it'—it would be a fault in me. Thus, monks, a Tathāgata does not conceive of a visible thing as apart from sight; he does not conceive of an unseen; he does not conceive of a 'thing-worth-seeing'; he does not conceive about a seer . . . Whatever is seen, heard, sensed or clung to, is esteemed as truth by other folk, midst those who are entrenched in their own views being 'Such' I hold none as true or false.<sup>93</sup>

Many centuries later, the Tibetan historian Tāranātha preserves in his *History of Buddhism in India* a story of the conversion of the pagan Greeks to Buddhism by a certain Arhat named Dhītika.<sup>94</sup>

Once upon a time there lived in the country called Thogar [Tokharistan] a king named Mi-nar [Menander]. In this country everyone worshipped the sky-god [Zeus?]. Besides this, they knew no distinction between virtue and vice [possible reference to Dionysiac cults]. During their festivals, they worshipped the sky-god with great smoke by burning grains, clothes, jewels and fragrant woods. . . . Along with his five hundred arhat followers Aiya Dhītika once flew through the sky, appeared at the place of their worship and took his seat at the altar there. They took him as the sky-god, bowed down at his feet and worshipped him elaborately. When, however, he preached the Doctrine, about a thousand people—including their king [Menander]—were led to the realization of the Truth.<sup>95</sup>

While we must be cautious since Tāranātha was writing in the beginning of the seventeenth century, he is generally a reliable and critical historian who had access to older sources currently lost to us. The rendition of

<sup>93</sup> From the *Kālakārāma Sutta*, translated by Bhikkhu Nananda, *The Magic of the Mind: an Exposition of the Kālakārāma Sutta* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1974), 9–11.

<sup>94</sup> This is no other than the Buddhist monk Nāgasena substituted by the Sarvāstivādins with Dhītika, a master of their own school; see Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 315.

<sup>95</sup> The brackets are mine. Tāranātha, *History of Buddhism in India*, 46.

Taxila in Tibetan as *dojog* (Tb. *rdo-'jog*), a city built by stone masons, is an accurate portrayal of the Greeks who were proficient in the techniques of stone construction. In any case, the Greeks were not totally unknown to the Tibetans. Physicians with Greek and Iranian names had been active at the Tibetan imperial court, while the discovery of Greek artefacts now on display at the Ashmolean museum in Oxford suggests possible contacts prior to the seventh century.<sup>96</sup>

Buddhist texts may not always be relied upon as accurate historical records, but together with other texts, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological finds, they draw a convincing picture of systematic Buddhist proselytism in the western territories and Central Asian borders of the Mauryas. Inscriptions from the end of the Indo-Greek occupation of Gandhāra (or not long thereafter) substantiate the claim that a number of prominent Greeks converted to Buddhism through ordination, or as lay followers. An inscription on a reliquary urn containing the Buddha's relics in Swat valley records that it was installed by a local Greek governor, the *meridarch* (Grk. Μεριδάρχης) Theodorus. Another inscription from Shahpur near Taxila commemorates the establishment of a *stūpa* by a *meridarch* whose name is illegible.<sup>97</sup> This evidence in relation to other factors mentioned before calls for a re-examination of sobering claims concerning the intense interactions between Greeks and Buddhists, their sharing of

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<sup>96</sup> See Christopher Beckwith, "The Introduction of Greek Medicine into Tibet in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99.2 (1979): 297–313; Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim "On urine analysis and Tibetan medicine's connections with the West," in Sienna Craig, et al., eds. *Studies of Medical Pluralism in Tibetan History and Society* (Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2010), 195–211; and Dan Martin, "Greek and Islamic Medicines' Historical Contact with Tibet: A Reassessment in View of Recently Available but Early Sources on Tibetan Medical Eclecticism," in *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*, eds. Anna Akasoy et al. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 117–135; and Philip Denwood, "A Greek Bowl from Tibet." *Iran* 11 (1975): 121–127.

<sup>97</sup> Seldeslachts, *Final Frontier*, 140. Hazra, *Buddhism in India*, 48–49, notes several inscriptions that mention the names of people who are identified as Ionians (Yona/Yavana) and who contributed to the propagation of Buddhism in their regions. He cites inscription No. 364 discovered at Sañchi *stūpa* by the Yona from Satapatha; inscription No. 10 describes a '(gift) of Dhamma, a Yavana from Dhenukākatā;' inscription No. 7 found at Karle describes, "(This) pillar (is) the gift of the Yavana Sihadhaya from Dhenukākatā;" another inscription discovered at Karle records '(This) pillar (is) the gift of the Yavana Yasaradhana from Dhenukākatā;' inscription No. 5 found at Junnar in the Poona (Pune) district records that a Yavana wished to give two cisterns at his expense at Junnar to the monks; inscription No. 8 of Junnar tells of the construction of a dining hall at Junnar by a Yavana for the Buddhist Saṃgha; and inscription No. 16 also found at Junnar describes the erection of a hall-front at Junnar by a Yavana for the use of the Buddhist Saṃgha.

customs and faiths, which, *inter alia*, led to the adoption of the Greek calendar by some Buddhists.<sup>98</sup>

#### 4. CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND THE CONFLUENCE OF HORIZONS: EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH IN MATERIAL CULTURE

Following Aśoka's death and the decline of the Mauryas, the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek rulers extended their political sway in Afghanistan and Pakistan and presided over a flourishing economy as attested by the wide distribution of their coinage and the monetary exchange they established with other currencies.<sup>99</sup> With the collapse of Greco-Bactrian hegemony in 125 B.C.E., the mobilization of Bactrian Greeks over the Hindu Kush furthered contacts with established Buddhist communities and introduced new trading patterns of interdependency between Greek and non-Greek populations. Their eventual loss of power did not herald the eclipse of Hellenistic culture that continued to exert its influence in Asia for several centuries. The construction of statues modelled in unfired clay or stucco supported by wooden frames (the hands supported on wooden armatures), was a major innovation of Greco-Bactrian artists that left a long-lasting imprint in Buddhist art.<sup>100</sup> Hellenistic traditions continued to flourish long after the reign of the Indo-Greeks for a variety of reasons, not least because of the latter's accumulated wealth and technical know-how in warcraft, irrigation, administration, medicine, architecture and astronomy. To these reasons we may add their familiarity with the international land trade, which was regenerated by maritime trade in luxury goods that

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<sup>98</sup> Siglinde Dietz, "Buddhism in Gandhāra," in *The Spread of Buddhism*, eds. Ann Heirman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 59. See also Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien: des origines à l'ère Śaka* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires [et] Institut Orientaliste, 1958), 469–487, where other forms of Greek influence on Buddhism are discussed. There are similarities between the Greek and Buddhist divisions of time, in that they both utilize three periods for day and night, they use the same terminology and the same order. Iranian influence can be ruled out, for in the Persian calendar the day was divided into five parts and the night into four.

<sup>99</sup> Narain, "Greeks of Bactria and India," 417.

<sup>100</sup> Bernard, "Aī Khanum and Hellenism," 101. Greco-Bactrian innovations, however, are not limited to sculpture making and architecture. The iconography of some of their coin issues, compared to their Seleucid contemporaries, is characterized by exceptional creativity. The commemorative coins, also known as "pedigree" coins issued by Agathocles and Antimachus I were among these novelties; see Osmund Bopearachchi, "Contributions of Greeks to the Art and Culture of Bactria and India: New Archeological Evidence," *Indian Historical Review* 32 (2005): 103–125.

brought Greek and Roman merchants from the Mediterranean basin to India, as attested by archaeological findings in the south of India, but also in Taxila, Tillya Tepe, and Begram.<sup>101</sup>

Begram, or Alexandria of the Caucasus, was situated at the confluence of the western Silk Routes and served as the capital of the last Greco-Bactrian kings and later of the Kuṣāṇa rulers. This ancient capital of the Kāpiśa region, mentioned in the travelogues of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, was the summer residence of the Kuṣāṇa Emperor Kaniṣka. The successor of Vima Kadphises, Kaniṣka was the third of the Kuṣāṇa emperors to extend his influence in Afghanistan and Northwest India. His reign is a landmark in the history of Indian Buddhism. He was not Indian but came from the stock of Central Asian people who invaded Bactria called Yuezhi by the Chinese and Tocharians by the Greeks. In Buddhist traditions he is represented as a great patron of the Buddha's teachings, and he is frequently associated with many Buddhist masters who were responsible for shaping Mahāyāna Buddhism in later times, like the philosopher and poet Aśvaghōṣa who resided at his court. While there are only few coins that bear an image of the emperor with the standing Buddha on the reverse side,<sup>102</sup> there are many inscriptions dating to his

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<sup>101</sup> One Greek work dating to the early first century C.E., the *Parthian Stations* of Isidorus of Charax, is an account and testimony of the overland trade route between the Levant and India that continued during the times of the Parthian empire; see Wilfred Schoff, *Parthian Stations by Isidore of Charax: An Account of the Overland Trade Route between the Levant and India in the first century BC. The Greek Text with a Translation and Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Commercial Museum, 1914). In the late fourth century and during the Hellenistic period the circulation of sailing guides (*periploi*) describing coastal features and particular towns were not uncommon. In the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (*Περίπλους τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς Θαλάσσης*) the anonymous author of this manual composed in Greek refers to Greek settlements in India and details the trading routes and goods exchanged in the first century C.E. across the Red Sea, the east coast of Africa and the Indian sea ports; see Lionel Casson, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). Archeological discoveries of Roman pottery and coins in the South of India confirm the prevalence of trade between the Roman Empire and the Indian subcontinent, adding credence to reports of Indian embassies meeting the Roman Emperor Augustus, and one from Taprobane (Sri Lanka) sent to the Emperor Tiberius Claudius. Knowledge of the Indian Ocean monsoon patterns is attributed to Eudoxus of Cyzicus in the late second century B.C.E., making it predictable to sail to India and back. This resulted in an increase of trade in the spices and other exotica that entered Greece via Alexandria; see Reger, "Hellenistic Greece," 480.

<sup>102</sup> This coin bears a representation of the standing Buddha on the reverse accompanied by the Greek legend ΒΟΔΔΟ (Buddha); see Errington et al., *Transformation of Image*, 199–200. The gilded bronze reliquary recovered from the ruined Buddhist monument is Kaniṣka's casket has been for a long time in dispute. A recent reassessment of the evidence from Shāh-jī-kī-Dherī resolves two contested issues, namely: that it cannot be dated to the first year of Kaniṣka nor can it be a gift from Kaniṣka. Rather the casket would appear



time, as well as that of his successors, which clearly suggest that it was a period of great religious activity. Buddhist monks from India carried Buddhism to Central Asian and China, and the Greco-Buddhist school of art of Gandhāra, which had originated earlier, saw its greatest development. During this time we discern a Buddhist iconographic appropriation of the martial cult of Heracles, the cultic hero and ancestral progenitor (*Ηρακλής πατρώος*) of the Macedonian royal line of the Temenids. Alexander the Great was especially devoted to the son of Zeus Heracles and performed regular sacrifices to him in many places including the Hydaspes, the river Jhelum in India.<sup>103</sup> Heracles with his attributes (lion skin and club) was associated with masculine achievements and came to be substituted as the guardian of the Buddha with the powerful Buddhist deity Vajrapāṇi, the holder of the ‘thunderbolt-sceptre’ (Skt. *vajra*).<sup>104</sup>

There are many similarities between the treasures discovered in Begram and Tillya Tepe and findings from Taxila, the capital of Gandhāra. It appears that these cities had viable commercial and cultural interactions with each other around the beginning of our era, and may have developed a common artistic tradition in earlier times.<sup>105</sup> A good number of glass pieces from Begram, dating to the first century of our millennium, bear Greek inscriptions, while there are many artefacts of Hellenistic style that include rhyta, kantharoi and amphorae for the storage of wine among other things. Refined works of art with Greek themes feature a small mask of Silenus crowned with flowers and bronze statues of winged Eros, Athena with a helmet and chest armour decorated with the head of a Gorgon and serpents, the god Harpocrates, the Greco-Egyptian god Serapis that was adopted by the Macedonians with attributes typical

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to have been the gift of the architects (*navakarmiana*) of the fire room during the time of Huviška; see Elizabeth Errington and Harry Falk, “Numismatic Evidence for dating the ‘Kaniška’ reliquary,” *Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies* 8 (2002): 101–120.

<sup>103</sup> Christesen and Murray, “Macedonian Religion,” 430.

<sup>104</sup> F. Flood, “Herakles and the ‘Perpetual Acolyte’ of the Buddha: Some Observations on the Iconography of Vajrapani in Gandharan Art,” *South Asian Studies* 5 (1989): 25, argues that the “syncretic combination of non-Buddhist borrowing in concept and iconography, the protective function of Vajrapani, and the quasi-martial role accorded to him in Early Buddhist thought rendered the character uniquely suited to the adaptation of Heraklean iconography from readily accessible Graeco-Bactrian and Graeco-Roman prototypes.” This combination may very well have been instigated by Greek Buddhists.

<sup>105</sup> Pierre Cambon, “Begram: Alexandria of the Caucasus, Capital of the Kushan Empire,” in *Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World*, eds. Fredrik Hiebert et al. (London: British Museum Press, 2011), 159.

of Heracles, and plaster medallions depicting Greek mythological pairs, like Eros and Psyche, Ganymede and Zeus, and Endymion and Selene.

Some hundred kilometres to the west of Bactria, the startling discovery of the necropolis at Tillya Tepe ('Hill of Gold') provides the missing link between the end of the Greco-Bactrian era and the rise of the nomadic confederacy of the Kuṣāṇas. Excavated some five hundred meters from the ancient walled city of Emshi Tepe, the necropolis yielded the discovery of over twenty thousand golden items of exquisite workmanship dating from between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. Just like Begram, the artwork at Tillya Tepe is a diverse mixture of Chinese, Indian and Hellenistic traditions.

The wealth, quality and superior craftsmanship of the artefacts are reminiscent of the precious finds in the necropolis of Aegae, the burial ground of the Macedonian kings. The jewellery at Tillya Tepe resembles that worn by Macedonian women who were keen to adopt gold jewellery and jewel-like decoration on their clothing.<sup>106</sup> In this large collection we find gold pendants and rings intended as seals portraying the goddess Athena with a long sharp nose, which are dated to the second quarter of the first century C.E. Many of the items are indebted to Greek style and some rings and medallions represent Dionysian motifs. There are also Parthian coins with Greek inscriptions, appliqués of Aphrodite, and a pair of clasps depicting Dionysus and Ariadne. Some of the larger gold items record their weight according to the Ionic system which utilizes the Greek alphabet in a decimal system.<sup>107</sup>

Alfred Foucher of the *Délégation Archéologique Française* argued that two engraved ivory plaques from Begram depict Jātaka tales of the Buddha's previous births,<sup>108</sup> while one inscribed gold coin from Tillya Tepe, dated to the first century B.C.E., depicts a standing man in half profile, who resembles Heracles or Zeus, pushing an eight-spoked wheel with both hands. The Kharoṣṭhī legend above reads: 'He who brings the wheel

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<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth Carney, "Macedonian Women," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, eds. Joseph Roisman et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 412.

<sup>107</sup> Véronique Schiltz, "Tillya Tepe, the Hill of Gold: A Nomad Necropolis," in *Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World*, eds. Fredrik Hiebert et al. (London: British Museum Press, 2011), 259, 269, 278. The rapid growth and spread of Buddhism in the eastern sector of the Parthian kingdom is attested by Parthian scholars of Buddhism who went to China as missionaries; see G. Koshelenko and V.N. Pilipko "Parthia," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. János Harmatta (Paris: Unesco Publications, 1994), 149–150. This region may have served as another hub for the dissemination of Buddhism among Greek settlements situated at the eastern borders of Parthia.

<sup>108</sup> Cambon, "Begram: Alexandria of the Caucasus," 158.

of the law in motion.’ The obverse side shows a standing lion with its right forepaw raised that resembles the heraldic lions decorating the ceremonial shield of Philip II. In the left field a *nandi-pada* monograph (a trident form above a circle) symbolizes the ‘three jewels.’ The above legend in Kharoṣṭhī reads: ‘The Lion had driven away fear.’ If the interpretation is correct, this gold coin from Tillya Tepe may be the oldest representation of the Buddha ever to be discovered.<sup>109</sup>

The decorative tradition of architecture and stone sculpture of the monumental phase of Buddhist art in Kuṣāṇa has Hellenistic roots that can be traced to the Greco-Bactrian period. While the Buddhist iconography is of Indian origin, the technique of modelling through the use of light and shade in Bactrian Buddhist painting was virtually unknown in Indian art of the Kuṣāṇa period.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, Macedonia was most famous for the large-scale paintings that have been uncovered in the magnificent tombs excavated in several locations. Judging from donor inscriptions, Buddhism was supported by the Kuṣāṇa nobility that allocated funds to the building of Buddhist monuments and in support of the Buddhist community. The discovery of a *stūpa* at Bactria containing coins of the philhellenic Kuṣāṇa King has him addressed by the Greek title ‘Great Saviour’ (Σωτήρ Μέγας).<sup>111</sup>

The undeniable links between the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra and the art of Bactria from Surk Khotal to Kara Tepe, and from Kountuz to Dimperlin,<sup>112</sup> confirm the continuity of Hellenistic culture across “Greater Gandhāra” and reveal that the real roots of the classical influences evident in Greco-Buddhist art are to be sought “in this easternmost branch of Hellenism, while Rome’s contribution was merely secondary.”<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Schiltz, “Tillya Tepe,” 276.

<sup>110</sup> Tigran Mkrtichev, “Buddhism and Features of the Buddhist Art of Bactria-Tokharistan,” in *After Alexander, Central Asia before Islam*, eds. Joe Cribb et al. (British Academy: Oxford University Press, 2007), 480.

<sup>111</sup> Paul Bernard, “Oi Ellines sti Bactriani: Apo ta Baktra stin Ai Xanoum,” in *O Ellinistikos Politismos stin Anatoli*, ed. Potitsa Grigorakou (Athens: Politistikos Omilos Palmyra, 2009), 81.

<sup>112</sup> Bernard “Ellines stin Baktriani,” 81–82. The chronology of Greco-Buddhist art is difficult to determine with precision, but it appears to have flourished between the end of the first century C.E., during the reign of pro-Buddhist Kuṣāṇa Emperor Kaniṣka, and the first half of the second century.

<sup>113</sup> Bernard, “Greek kingdoms,” 128. He explains that “since at Tepe Shotor an artist of the fourth century A.D. can portray Vajrapāṇi so similar to the Heracles on the Graeco-Bactrian coins of Euthydemus, and since Indo-Scythian coins provide an intermediate link, there is no need to look for prototypes in some distant country beyond the sea when the local traditions provide them.” In either case, there is no compelling reason to dichotomize

Innovative expressions of Buddhist faith in anthropomorphic representation prospered during the cohabitation of Hellenism and Buddhism in the Indo-Afghan world, “sometimes a little on the clumsy side, but growing stronger every day and developing into the flourishing Gandharan art form with its apex of stucco modelling in the Hadda district.”<sup>114</sup>

#### 4.1. *The Greco-Buddhist Art of Gandhāra*

It appears that Buddhism emerged out of its Indian cocoon after its encounter with the cosmopolitan culture of the Macedonians, who were culturally Greek and noted for their openness to foreign cults, their preoccupation with death as a passage into the afterlife, their construction of funereal monuments instead of temples, and the deification of their rulers.<sup>115</sup> There were many deities that held particular significance for the Macedonians which find their parallel in the cultic pantheon of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is not farfetched to contemplate how Hellenistic cosmopolitanism and polytheistic forms and attitudes of religious worship contributed to the universalization and hybridization of the Buddha in Northern traditions. Gandhāra art featured a pantheon of stylistically-Hellenized buddhas and bodhisattvas who, like their Olympian gods and demigods, have their own legendary lives and possess spiritual markers and physical attributes corresponding to exalted human virtues.

Buddhism was probably known in Gandhāra prior to the reign of Aśoka.<sup>116</sup> Gandhāra was strategically situated at the heart of the main trading route that connected Western Central Asia with India, the Mediterranean Sea, and China to the east. Its composite cultural base goes back to the Persian Empire and Alexander III who established Greek rule that lasted nearly a century after his demise in Babylon. Alexander’s legacy finds expression in the extraordinary sculptures of Gandhāra, which from the time of the

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the Alexandrian Greek settlers from later Greco-Roman merchants since they chronologically overlap with each other and their communities would have mingled, having much in common in terms of culture and language.

<sup>114</sup> Cambon, “Begram: Alexandria of the Caucasus,” 158–159. G. Pugachenkova, et al., “Kushan Art,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. János Harmatta (Paris: Unesco Publications, 1994), 359, cautions: “The problem of the chronology of the stucco sculptures from Hadda needs further elucidation. While it is certain that the majority belongs to the Kusha period, it is clear that some of the material excavated should be assigned to a date before the arrival of the Kushans.”

<sup>115</sup> Christesen and Murray, “Macedonian Religion,” 429.

<sup>116</sup> Hazra, *Buddhism in India*, 14, reports that it was through King Bimbisāra’s efforts that the king of Gandhāra, Pukkusāti, who was a contemporary of the Buddha, converted to Buddhism and supported the Buddhist monastic community, the *saṅgha*.

Kuṣāṇas are all predominantly Buddhist. The Buddha's Apollo Belvedere type of face, though just "one among the numerous types known, is no doubt the earliest to provide a model for others,"<sup>117</sup> while the arresting nudity of Jain sculptures may have been inspired by some Apollonian archetypes.

In the first centuries of the millennium the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra integrated Indian and Hellenistic styles. This is discerned in statues of bodhisattvas adorned with royal jewellery (bracelets and torques) and amulet boxes, the contrapposto stance of the upright, an emphasis on draperies, and a plethora of Dionysian themes. However, we should bear in mind that Greco-Buddhist art did not come all at once or in a single act of creation, but emerged as the by-product of a continuous exchange of material, linguistic and cultural expertise among Indo-Greeks, Indians and Persian populations. While Yona missionaries may have seduced many to Buddhism there would have been among them a good number of Greeks. This would mean that the entire event also involved a Greek-to-Greek conversion to Buddhism where the Indo-Greeks had been active supporters of their new faith. From the earliest times the syncretistic styles at Ay Khanum showed no clear Greek-Oriental dichotomy;<sup>118</sup> a state of affairs we encounter in the surviving samples of Greco-Buddhist art. This gives rise to developments which do not necessitate concessions to foreign elements or a radical break with traditional models of representation, but a re-conceptualization of possibilities emerging within a cultural milieu that allowed for a prodigious intermingling in the first place.

Despite discernible similarities no formation provides the model for the other, while the novel delivery and arresting expressions of Greco-Buddhist art would probably not have been possible had there not been a substantial number of Buddhists among Greek donors and Hellenized intellectuals and artists. Elaborate depictions of Hellenistic themes in

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<sup>117</sup> Pugachenkova et al., "Kushan Art," 364. The authors, 361, explain: "in early Buddhism, introduced here by Aśoka (third century B.C.), the Buddha was never represented in human form. But constant exposure of the Gandhāra Buddhists to the art and pantheistic religion of the Western world created a schism between the purist and the more forward-looking Buddhists."

<sup>118</sup> The transmission of ideas and practices across historical periods and semantic fields brings about mutations in the source and target cultures and arguably innovation comes about when the expressions of one tradition are organically restructured according to the inner logic of another. The worship of River Oxus in Ay Khanum is attested in an inscription of the pedestal of a small Greek-style statuette of a satyr-like figure. It reveals that even in cases where a non-Greek name of a god was retained Greek iconography might nevertheless still be introduced.

Buddhist art are not likely to have been the impersonal outcome of hired Greek artisans, who would have been asked by their patrons to stick to more traditional Buddhist themes. A Gandhāra relief, dated sometime in the second century C.E., depicts Cassandra in Indian attire naked to the waist with anklets and necklets ominously framed by the Scaian Gate, while to her left is depicted the procession of the Trojan horse being led into Troy.<sup>119</sup> Other reliefs are orgiastically embellished with leitmotifs of Dionysian revelry (music, dance and wine) that do not resonate with the renunciation of early Buddhist 'hearers or disciples' (Skt. śrāvakas). Furthermore, there is nothing regal in the persona of an Arhat, unlike depictions of Bodhisattvas. The portrayal of Buddha Śakyamuni's ectopic birth not from the womb but from his mother's side, a popular theme in Gandhāra art, seems to have been a visual adaptation of Dionysus's birth from the thigh of Zeus.<sup>120</sup>

The synthesis of Dionysian motifs with Yaksha imagery in Mathurā reveals the acquaintance of Indian Buddhists with Bacchanalian rites.<sup>121</sup> The worship of Dionysus was associated with practical knowledge of viticulture and viniculture in Western Central Asia and India. Delphic theology emphasized a fraternal relationship between Apollo and Dionysus, two deities for whom the Macedonians maintained a lasting attachment in their worship.<sup>122</sup> A passage from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, possibly redacted in Gandhāra during the Kuṣāṇa period, has the Buddha explaining to his disciples how to distil and consume wine, a thriving custom in Macedonian court symposia.

<sup>119</sup> See Allan, "A Tabula Iliaca."

<sup>120</sup> Martina Stoye, "The Deva with the Swaddling Cloth: On the Western origins of Gandhāran Birth Iconography and their Implications for the Textual History of the Buddhist Saviour's Nativity," in *Religion and Art: New Issues in Indian Iconography and Iconology*, ed. C. Bautze-Picron (London: The British Academy, 2008).

<sup>121</sup> For a discussion of Dionysian-Yaksha imagery from Mathura see Martha Carter, "The Bacchantes of Mathura: New Evidence of Dionysiac Yaksha Imagery from Kushan Mathura," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 69, no. 8 (1982): 247–257. In the *Gargi Samhitā* the colonial presence of Greeks in Mathura is alluded to prior to the reign of the Kuṣāṇas. According to this *Purāna*, "the wicked and valiant Greeks" occupied Sakata, Panchāla, and Mathura and advanced as far as Kusāmadhvaja (i.e., Pātaliputra); Dodwell, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India*, 55.

<sup>122</sup> The practice of viticulture in Gandhāra is corroborated by the archeological records; see Pia Brancaccio, and Xinru Liu "Dionysus and drama in the Buddhist art of Gandhara," *Journal of Global History* 4 (2009): 219–244. During the spring festival of Theoxenia ('hospitality of the gods'), Dionysus was urged to appear along with other deities and partake of food, wine and entertainment, while in the Delphic cult of Dionysus his statue was erected in a chariot drawn by golden lions amid sacrifices and dithyrambic competitions; see Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 138.

When the Buddha was travelling in the north-west along with a retinue of monks, a *yaksha* offered them grapes. The monks did not know such fruits, and thus the Buddha explained to them: "These are fruits from the northern region. They are called grapes. One can eat them after having purified them with fire." Apparently, after the Buddha and his monks ate some grapes, and there were some left, he added: "The grapes should be pressed to extract the juice, and then the fluid should be heated and removed from the fire before it is completely cooked . . . To store the syrup and serve it to the *samgha* out of the proper time."<sup>123</sup>

The extraordinary evolution of Greco-Buddhism was not confined to Buddhist art and Hellenistic forms of entertainment. The region of Gandhāra was also a centre of Buddhist philosophy, the *abhidharma*, which in all likelihood fermented during the Indo-Greek period and not during the later periods of the Śakas or the Kuṣāṇas, to which the earliest Buddhist manuscripts in Karoṣṭhī can be dated. Further studies are needed to evaluate Bronkhorst's intriguing claim that close contacts between Gāndhārī Buddhists and Indo-Greeks in philosophical debates informed the philosophy of the Sarvāstivāda, as evidenced in the Abhidharma-Piṭaka that is distinct from the one compiled by the Theravada school. In his words, the Buddhists of North West India did not adopt Greek philosophical ideas, but the Greek method of dialectical argumentation.

They [Sarvāstivāda] adopted this method and along with it the willingness (or obligation) to use it in areas that used to be the exclusive territory of tradition and religion, but they adopted nothing else in the domain of philosophy. This method alone, however, was able to affect their ideas profoundly. It forced them to rethink their intellectual and religious heritage, and organize it in a way so as to make it more coherent and more resistant to critical questioning by outsiders.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Brancaccio and Xinru, "Dionysus and drama," 226.

<sup>124</sup> Johannes Bronkhorst, "Why is there Philosophy in India?" (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences 1999): 22–23. Christopher Beckwith, "The Sarvāstivādin Buddhist Scholastic Method in Medieval Islam and Tibet," in *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*, eds. Anna Akasoy et al. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 172, notes that the scholastic method originated "within the encyclopaedic scholastic commentary literature of the Sarvāstivādin school of Buddhism, which flourished mainly in the region of central Asia (especially Gandhāra, Bactria and east Turkistan) and north-western India (especially Kashmir)."

#### 4.2. *Ideological Affinities between Greeks and Buddhists*

We may better appreciate the unique traditions of Buddhism that developed in the Hellenistic East if we take into consideration some ideological affinities between Hellenism and Indian religious thought. The Macedonians and their descendants would have seen in Buddhism a flexible religious-cum-philosophical movement with aspiring egalitarian principles and an ecumenical philosophy that encouraged the individual attainment of spiritual excellence.<sup>125</sup> Given their preoccupation with the afterlife, they would have been drawn to Buddhist soteriology provided that it did not restrict them in the cultic worship of their gods or deny them essential features of their lifestyle like philosophy, drama, music and wine—elements which are celebrated in Greco-Buddhist art and culture.

The Macedonians inherited from the Greek classical world epic traditions and divine genealogies, but they were not followers of a homogenous religion nor did they have an organized or hereditary priesthood to oppose newcomers. For the most part, the Indo-Greeks were followers of several Hellenistic and foreign cults. They may have contributed to the hero-cult image of the Buddha and in either case they would have embraced it without much difficulty—especially as it enjoyed regional support by wealthy merchants and Indian monarchs. Most importantly, on the daily level of practice Buddhism would not deny lay ritual practices and expressions that were familiar to Hellenic supporters of cults—such as, offering burnt offerings, reciting prayers, propitiating deities, worshipping relics, purifying oneself and places, performing rites and prayers of protection against harm, and so forth.

The Greeks were experts in debate and systematic inquiry and fostered democratic principles in their communities of citizens. These aspects would have been praised by the Buddhists who needed the tools to dismantle an oppressive Indian caste system and phenomenal reality itself, and who arrogated in all persons regardless of their religious or social status the same potential for liberation from the cycle of suffering. Lastly, it is generally agreed that Buddhism localized itself in new areas by

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<sup>125</sup> Hazra, *Buddhism in India*, 403, explains that the rules and regulations of the *sangha* were inspired by democratic principles. It was formed “like a Republic and its members in its regular meetings in the Assembly moved all proceedings and settled them by resolutions. In the eye of its law, every member had equal rights and privileges... By the introduction of the system of votes of the majority, it decided the cases of difference of opinions.”



accommodating regional deities, while its skilled missionaries welcomed converts regardless of language, ethnicity, and social status. That was not necessarily the case with rival religious movements led by Hindus and Jains. The Brahmanical tradition would readily dispute that a Brahmana could learn nothing from foreigners (Skt. *mlecchas*) in matters concerning religious precepts (Skt. *dharma*), while conversing with them was perceived as a source of defilement. Conversion to Brahmanism was not a readily available option for *mlecchas* who could not aspire to initiation (Skt. *abhiṣeka*) into the sacred traditions of the Hindus.<sup>126</sup> In short, there is no reason to assume that Greek supporters of Buddhism had to renounce their customs and *paideia*, any more than Buddhists had to alter their soteriological aims when adopting Greek methods of argumentation and reasoning and anthropocentric representations of enlightenment.

##### 5. CONCLUSION: ASYMMETRICAL DIFFUSIONS BETWEEN CULTURES AND SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE

In this article I have identified cultural affinities, economic interdependence, and socio-political arrangements as contributing factors in the formulation of Buddhism in the Hellenistic East. Specifically, I have argued for the synchronic and diachronic impact of transnational trade on the transmission, production and expression of religious knowledge. The encounters between Indo-Greeks and Indian Buddhists bear witness to an unenforced and asymmetrical appropriation of knowledge that gave rise to new models of interpretation in discrete historical periods—the Aśokan era, the Indo-Greek, the Indo-Scythian, and the Kuṣāṇa.

With the term “unenforced” we acknowledge that both communities engaged, on different occasions and with varying intensity, in displays of cultural propaganda and forms of resistance by designating the “other” as “barbarian” or “*mleccha*.”<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, we find no evidence for religious

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<sup>126</sup> Vassiliades, *Greeks in India*, 61, 96 n. 101, notes that the rigidity of the Brahmanical caste would exclude outsiders from access to the sacred Vedas. While this may not have been exactly the case with the Jains, they nevertheless debased the *mlecchas* just the same as the following quote by Vassiliades illustrates: “As a *mleccha* repeats what an Ārya has said, but does not understand the meaning, merely repeating his words, so the ignorant, though pretending to possess knowledge, do not know the truth, just as uninstructed *mleccha*.”

<sup>127</sup> For recent discussions concerning Indian perceptions of the Greeks and Greek perceptions of the Indians see Ghosh, “Understanding Transitions,” and Vassiliades, *Greeks in India*, 105–126.

conflict and coercion instigated between Indo-Greeks and Buddhists. Instead we identified *topoi* of cultural conversion by voluntary association and through an internalized assimilation of foreign elements facilitated by trade across multiple zones of contact: trading routes, cities, courts, markets, caravans, public buildings, and so forth.<sup>128</sup> Given the continuity of evidence surveyed, there is no reason to postulate formative Roman influences on the creation of the Greco-Buddhist art of the Hellenistic East, other than in a sense of renewal and revitalization of pre-existing trends.

And finally, the kinds of exchange that transpired between Hellenes and Buddhists were “asymmetrical” in the sense that neither the cultural conversion initiatives of the respective agents nor the effects of their conscious and unconscious activities are equally or isomorphically distributed in the ideological and material culture that survives. Interactions between cultures do not represent tightly symmetrical processes. Asymmetrical cultural transfers of this degree of complexity and lack of conformity have been addressed in Kroeber’s theory of “stimulus diffusion”, defined as a set of dynamic correspondences between cultures that encountered no visible resistance to their spread. According to Kroeber, “what is really involved in every true example of stimulus diffusion is the birth of a pattern new to the culture in which it develops, though not completely new in human culture. There is historical connection and dependence, but there is also originality. Analogically, ordinary diffusion is like adoption, stimulus diffusion like procreation . . . In essence, stimulus diffusion might be defined as new pattern growth initiated by precedent in a foreign culture.”<sup>129</sup>

His model may be relevant here, for Hellenistic Buddhism is not a forced or hierarchized unity, but the side effect of a re-creation of horizons neither exclusively Indian nor uniquely Greek.<sup>130</sup> The Indo-Greeks and Indian Buddhists of Central Asia are not tidy and discrete categories,

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<sup>128</sup> Cultural conversion reflects, in its wider context, the diffusion and absorption of knowledge and it is not limited to religious affiliation. The phenomenon of “cultural conversion by voluntary association” has been described by Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Arguably, in pre-modern times commerce and trade provided the most significant introduction of foreign influences by voluntary association, in addition to pressing political and social advantages.

<sup>129</sup> Alfred Kroeber, “Stimulus Diffusion,” *American Anthropologist* 42, no. 1 (1940): 20.

<sup>130</sup> We have suggested that the Greek-Buddhist interface reflects a gradual process of an eclectic procreation of expressions of spiritual conduct, moral depictions and art forms produced and reproduced in cross-religious and non-religious contexts; it may be instructive to compare with examples furnished by Kroeber, “Stimulus Diffusion.”

but organic bonds intersecting and overlapping with each other in complex and personal ways over time, in diverse combinations and to differing degrees. The similarities they came to share are neither the straightforward result of external borrowings nor the quantifiable outcome of completely independent processes at work within each culture. They are the expressions of cross-cultural creations of knowledge fostered by conquests and an international trading network of people, commodities and shared currency. In retrospect they reflect the coming together of the civilizations of East and West and the enduring legacy of the Greeks in Asia as the first Europeans ever to be converted to Buddhism.

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THE *BUDDHAKṢETRA* OF BODHGAYA:  
SAṄGHA, EXCHANGES AND TRADE NETWORKS

Abhishek Singh Amar

1. INTRODUCTION

Bodhgaya (coordinates 24° 42' N, 85° 0' E), a world heritage site, has been and continues to be one of the most sacred Buddhist destinations and is revered by Buddhists from every part of the contemporary world. Located in the Gaya district of the south Bihar region in India, Bodhgaya is the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment and is, in many ways, the *de facto* birthplace of the Buddhist religion. A number of early historic and early medieval remains such as the Bodhi seat, the railing-pillars and the Mahābodhi temple, numerous sculptures and miniature stone *stūpas*, and some fifty-six inscriptions, attest to the emergence of the sacrality and ritual importance of Bodhgaya.

The earliest archaeological remains from the sacred Mahābodhi temple complex is the Bodhi seat, which dates to the time of the famous Mauryan King Aśoka in the third century B.C.E. Being one of the earliest (or probably the earliest Buddhist sacred site), the establishment of this site became a model to be followed in the expansion of the Buddhist tradition. Bodhgaya contained the Bodhi tree and a seat which were understood as the *paribhogika dhatu* (Buddhist relics of use) of the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> It is also known that the saplings of the Bodhi tree of Bodhgaya were distributed widely in the construction of sacred sites, the most prominent example being the establishment of a tree *caitya* (shrine) in Sri Lanka which was sent by King Aśoka himself.<sup>2</sup> There is also evidence of the depiction of the Bodhi tree shrine in pillar railings at early Buddhist *stūpa* and monastic sites such as Bharhut, Sanchi, and Amaravati, which attest to the representation of this sacred site in imagery. Lastly, the establishment of Mahābodhi temple

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the Buddhist Relics, see Michael Willis, "Relics of the Buddha: Body, Essence, Text," in *Buddhist Stūpas in South Asia*, eds. J. Hawkes and A. Shimada (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 46. The concept of three different types of relics emerged much later in the Buddhist tradition, which has been recorded in the Buddhist texts.

<sup>2</sup> Willis, "Relics of the Buddha," 44.

complexes in Burma (Pagan), Thailand (Chiang Mai), and Nepal (Patan) modelled on the Bodhgaya Mahābodhi temple in medieval times confirms the importance of Bodhgaya in the Buddhist world. All these examples illustrate that the sacred landscape of Bodhgaya, including the Mahābodhi temple, became a model to be followed for later Buddhist establishments. Considering the importance of Bodhgaya, this paper will examine the process of emergence of the sacred landscape at Bodhgaya and its role in the “localization” of Buddhist monastic institutions (*saṅgha*) in the region. This study of localization of Buddhist *saṅgha* in Bodhgaya will also provide insights into the processes of formation, consolidation and subsequent transformations of Buddhist religious orders in the region.

## 2. TRADING RELIGIONS AND TRANSFORMATION

The role of trade in facilitating the expansion and transmission of Buddhism in Asia and particularly ancient South Asia has been widely researched.<sup>3</sup> It has been further attested by the documentation of numerous Buddhist monastic sites along trade routes in central, western, southern and north-western India.<sup>4</sup> This expansion began from the middle Gangetic Zone, the region in which the historical Buddha spent his life. By the time of the Buddha, there were several trade routes within this region, which have been indicated by archaeological and textual evidence.<sup>5</sup> In fact Buddha’s journey to Bodhgaya from Kapilavastu (identified at Piprahwa and Ganwaria) is along these older trade routes.<sup>6</sup> He travelled through Vaishali and Rajgir, where he practiced austerities under the guidance of his two teachers. However, dissatisfaction with his teachers led the Buddha to travel to Gaya and eventually to Bodhgaya, where he spent over six years achieving enlightenment. The question then is why did Buddha choose Bodhgaya as the place of enlightenment? Two scholars have addressed this question in their recent works.

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<sup>3</sup> For a good literature review of the link between trade and Buddhism, see Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), ch. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Dilip K. Chakrabarti, “Buddhist Sites across South Asia as Influenced by Political and Economic Forces,” *World Archaeology* 27 (1995): 185–202.

<sup>5</sup> For archaeological evidence, see Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *The Archaeology of Ancient Indian Cities* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 200–215.

<sup>6</sup> Chakrabarti, *Ancient Indian Cities*, 204.

Bodhgaya is located ten kilometres south of Gaya town (district headquarters) of south Bihar. Gaya town is and has been an important Hindu pilgrimage centre—known primarily for the *śrāddha* (funerary/ancestor worship) ritual from the early centuries of the Common Era. This has led Robert DeCaroli to argue that the ancient Gaya area including Bodhgaya was a sacred centre because of its important links to spirit deities and the dead.<sup>7</sup> By examining three Buddhist texts *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistāra* and *Nidānakathā*, all dated between the first and fifth centuries C.E., DeCaroli attempts to link the biographical account of Sujātā's donation of milk-rice to the funerary ritual of *śrāddha*. Through this reading of the biographical narrative, he further emphasizes the sacrality of Bodhgaya in terms of its associations with *śrāddha*, spirit deities and ancestor worship, which may have led the Buddha to Bodhgaya.

Questioning DeCaroli's argument, Matthew Sayers has analyzed the ritual of *śrāddha* in early Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist texts. He argues that there is no evidence to suggest that Gaya had any connection with *śrāddha* at the time of the Buddha and in fact Gaya begins to emerge as a place of *śrāddha* only from the early centuries of the Common Era.<sup>8</sup> However, he does point out that Gaya is mentioned eleven times in the *Sutra* literature and a few times in the *Vinaya* literature. And the analysis of these literary references suggests that Gaya was a sacred place—a place probably known for purification baths which attracted ascetics. This suggests that the Gautama Buddha may have been attracted to Gaya because of its general sanctity and its importance as a place frequented by ascetics.

The *Mahāvagga* book of *Vinaya* literature supports this argument by providing references to the fire-worshipping ascetics, the Kaśyapa brothers, who lived in this region.<sup>9</sup> The other biographical accounts of the Buddha also suggest that the first five disciples of the Buddha preceded him to Gaya, which may also be regarded as supporting evidence of movement along the route from Rajgir to Gaya. All the above cited evidence is drawn from texts, most of which were compiled at least four

<sup>7</sup> Robert DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 117–119.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew R. Sayers, "Gaya-Bodh Gaya: The Origin of a Pilgrimage Complex," in *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site*, eds. D. Geary, M.R. Sayers and A.S. Amar (London: Routledge, 2012), 13–28.

<sup>9</sup> *Mahāvagga: The Book of Discipline vol. 4*, trans. I.B. Horner (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1993), 32–46. The *Vinaya* literature was probably composed in the last centuries B.C.E. For a detailed description of the Buddha's meeting with the Kaśyapa brothers and their conversions, see *Mahāvagga* I. 15–20.

centuries later. Therefore, the textual evidence may not provide a certain and complete explanation. Despite this limitation, it can be argued that the Gaya region including Bodhgaya did have some sanctity. Aśoka's donation of Barabar caves to the Ājivikās confirms the presence of other religious orders in this region.<sup>10</sup> To investigate the Buddha's choice of Bodhgaya further, I will examine the archaeological evidence from the area surrounding the Mahābodhi temple complex.

Taradih mound, located twenty meters west of the Mahābodhi temple complex, was excavated for eleven seasons between 1980 and 1999 and contains the remains of a settlement dated to as early as the Neolithic period (c. 1500 B.C.E.).<sup>11</sup> The excavations have shown that Taradih may have been located on the western bank of the river Niranjana, which has since moved two hundred meters east. The excavations have revealed a Neolithic settlement (c. 1500 B.C.E.) which continued through the Pāla period (c. 1200 C.E.) without any discontinuity.<sup>12</sup> Though the mound has not been excavated completely, the partial excavations have suggested that the settlers of the Neolithic (c. 1500–1000 B.C.E.), Chalcolithic (c. 1000–650 B.C.E.) and Iron Age period (c. 650 B.C.E.–200 C.E.) were involved in farming and craft production. Apart from growing a number of crops such as rice (wild and domesticated), barley, wheat, lentils (grass peas, horse gram, *masur*, and other), they also relied on hunting and fishing (proved by findings of fish-hooks and other implements). The above details from the Taradih excavations suggest a number of possibilities—which may have informed the Buddha's decision to practice austerities and settle at Bodhgaya.

The first reason may have been the proximity of the site of the enlightenment to the settlement, thus ensuring a secure supply of food and other resources for Buddha's own sustenance. He spent more than six years at the site. Secondly, the place may have had some sacred significance as several fire-pits were revealed in excavations, a fact that was cited by A.K. Prasad to argue for the presence of fire-worshippers at the site. The excavations have also revealed *nāga* figurines, suggesting that *nāga* worship

<sup>10</sup> For details on the Barabar caves, see Harry Falk, "Barabar Caves," in *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2006), 258–269.

<sup>11</sup> A.K. Prasad, "Excavations at Taradih," *Indian Archaeology: A Review* (1987–88): 9–11.

<sup>12</sup> Prasad, "Excavations at Taradih," 10. Though A.K. Prasad pushes the date of Neolithic Taradih to the third millennium B.C.E., it is difficult to accept these dates. So far, no radiocarbon dates have been obtained for the site. Based on the regional tradition, a more probable date would be the mid-second millennium B.C.E.

may have been prevalent here.<sup>13</sup> Lastly, the settlement, though located at a distance from Gaya, was on a trade route and definitely connected to other settlements. The intra-settlement connection has been proved by the findings of copper slag and iron slag from the excavations of the site. Neither of these metals were available locally and may have been brought through existing networks.<sup>14</sup> This is further supported by the findings of beads of agate, jasper, carnelian and steatite. Furthermore, the literary evidence attests that the first two lay worshippers of the Buddha, Trapussa and Bhallika, were traders traveling along the route, who, upon seeing the Buddha, offered food to him. Though it is difficult to attribute a specific reason for the Buddha's decision to choose Bodhgaya for his enlightenment, the above-discussed factors definitely suggest that a combination thereof may have informed his decision.

After his enlightenment, Buddha moved to the Sarnath and gave his first sermon. Subsequently, he returned to Bodhgaya and Rajgir and other major cities of the middle Gangetic zone. In the forty-five years after his enlightenment, he spent most of his rainy season retreats in monasteries located in five major cities of early historic India—Sarnath, Rajgir, Vaishali, Sravasti and Kaushambi. This suggests that he moved between these ancient cities along the trade routes connecting them.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the early Pāli text refers to one hundred and twenty-seven other settlements along the routes of his travel where he stayed and propagated the religion.<sup>16</sup> Though most of these smaller settlements remain unidentified, it is likely that some of them gradually evolved as small-scale Buddhist monastic settlements and became nodal points along the trade routes. These smaller centres played an equally important role in the propagation of Buddhism. Bodhgaya was initially one of these smaller centres, which gradually developed into a major monastic complex. This development will be examined in the following section.

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<sup>13</sup> Prasad, "Excavations at Taradih," 10. Considering that the various versions of the biography of the Buddha suggest a strong link between the Buddha and *nāga* Mucalinda, the region may have had a strong *nāga* cult.

<sup>14</sup> Prasad, "Excavations at Taradih," 10.

<sup>15</sup> For details, see Chakrabarti, *Ancient Indian cities*, 194, 202, 206 & 212. These five cities comprise about sixty-five percent of all places referred to in the early Pāli literature. See also, James Heitzman, "The Urban Context of Early Buddhist Monuments," in *Buddhist Stūpas in South Asia*, eds. Hawkes and Shimada (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 196.

<sup>16</sup> James Heitzman, "The Urban Context," 96.

### 3. THE EMERGENCE OF BUDDHAKṢETRA (C. 270 B.C.E.–550 C.E.)

Bodhgaya emerged as a prominent Buddhist centre because of being the place of the enlightenment of the historical Buddha. The historical Buddha lived in the fifth century B.C.E., whereas the earliest archaeological remains from the sacred Mahābodhi temple complex date only from the third century B.C.E.<sup>17</sup> For a period of almost two hundred years, there is no archaeological evidence to suggest any activity within the temple complex at Bodhgaya.<sup>18</sup> This lacuna has been addressed by the Taradih excavations which suggests a “*settlement*” and “*socio-religious*” context within which the Buddhist order, as reflected in the growth of the sacred *Buddhakṣetra* (sacred landscape of Bodhgaya), emerged in the region. I have already discussed the ‘settlement context’ of Bodhgaya in the previous section; the ‘socio-religious context’ of *Buddhakṣetra* will now be discussed in this section.

I will begin by discussing the meaning of the term *Buddhakṣetra*. “*Kṣetra*” literally means field, therefore the term *Buddhakṣetra* means the field of the historical Gautama Buddha. I have employed this term to demonstrate how a sacred site develops because of its association with the founder of the religion. Being a life-event site, almost all the sacred structures and features of Bodhgaya are linked to the events of the life of the Buddha himself. I have borrowed this term from the *Lalitavistāra*, which was composed in the second century C.E.<sup>19</sup> This biography of the Buddha provides intricate details of every event in the Buddha’s life that occurred at Bodhgaya. Though the emergence of Bodhgaya precedes the compilation of this text, the usage of the term *Buddhakṣetra* reinforces the connection between intricate details of the Buddha’s life and the

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<sup>17</sup> The precise dates of the Buddha’s life are uncertain. There are two major chronologies—southern long-chronology (based on Sri Lankan Pāli sources) and northern short-chronology (based on Sanskrit sources). For a short summary of the discussion on the dates of the Buddha, see R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 13–14.

<sup>18</sup> Multiple excavations and conservations under amateur archaeologists, Burmese Buddhists and Alexander Cunningham in the nineteenth century resulted in the destruction of earliest layers, which cannot be recovered. Hence we have to rely on the existing material records.

<sup>19</sup> *Lalitavistāra: English Translation with Notes*, trans. B. Goswami (Kolkata: Royal Asiatic Society, 2001), Preface & 259. The *Buddhakṣetra* is used repeatedly in this text to refer to the Buddha’s imprints on this world, which is reflected in the life-events, including the event of enlightenment at Bodhgaya. Bodhgaya also draws its sacrality from its connections with all other previous Buddhas.

construction of multiple shrines in and around Bodhgaya over a long time span. Moreover, the development of biographical details and shrines overlap and are intertwined because of the role of the monastic community in the consolidation of biographical accounts and the creation of sacred shrines. In making this connection, I draw on the study of Jonathan S. Walters.<sup>20</sup> Walters, while researching the emergence and growth of Buddhist *stūpas*, argues that ideology and practice presuppose each other and that a study of the ideology (in the biographical texts) and the structures (constructed as a result of religious practices) can help reconstruct the historical situation(s) in which they were, simultaneously, produced, used and considered. Walter's argument provides a framework to examine the relationship and intertwined growth of archaeological structures and textual biographies, both of which were produced due to intersections of religious ideology and ritual practices. A combined study of the two, therefore, could further unravel the multi-layered emergence of the *Buddhakṣetra* over a longer time frame.

The Mauryan king Aśoka initiated the process of monumentalization by constructing the Bodhi seat at the Bodhgaya in the third century B.C.E.<sup>21</sup> Aśoka's construction is further confirmed by the Girnar VIII rock edict inscription, which mentions his visit (*dhamma-yātra*) to Saṃbodhi.<sup>22</sup> This Bodhi Seat and Tree were converted into a shrine in the first century B.C.E. A new plaster facing was added to the Bodhi seat, and a jewelled walk (*ratanacaṃkama*) and sixty-four railing pillars were erected around the

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<sup>20</sup> J.S. Walters, "Stūpa, Story, and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-Aśokan India," in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and South-east Asia*, ed. J. Schober (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 160–192.

<sup>21</sup> A. Cunningham, *Mahābodhi or The Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya* (London: W.H. Allen & Co. Limited, 1892), 4–7 and 17–23. Cunningham proposed this date on the basis of much later textual accounts, and Xuanzang's description, which has been uncritically accepted by other scholars. Cunningham also relied on the depiction of the Bodhgaya shrine at Bharhut, approximately dated to circa 150–100 B.C.E. The inscribed Bharhut railing specifically mentions "*Bhagvato Sāka Munino Bodhi*" (Bodhi tree of the Lord Śākyamuni), which was accepted by Cunningham as a historical representation of Bodhgaya shrine.

<sup>22</sup> "Saṃbodhi" is the term commonly used for the enlightenment of the Buddha and is generally accepted as the place of the Bodhi Tree. A.L. Basham has challenged this meaning. He claims that the term does not refer to Buddhism at all but to Asoka's righteous *dharma*. This explanation hardly seems plausible. The use of the same term for Bodhgaya in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* suggests that the term in the Girnar VIII edict did refer to Bodhgaya. See A.L. Basham, "Saṃbodhi in Aśoka's 8th Rock Edict," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 2 (1979): 81–83.



Bodhi seat shrine later.<sup>23</sup> This walk is a simple brick wall and measures fifty-three feet in length, three feet in width and a little more than three feet in height. On each side of this wall, there is a row of eleven pillar-bases decorated with the well-known pattern of a vase placed above three or four steps and surmounted by a parabolic moulding with an octagonal top for the insertion of an octagonal shaft.<sup>24</sup> The sandstone polish and letters inscribed on these steps suggest a first century B.C.E. date for the structure. The first textual reference to the concept of *Ratanacaṃkama* is in the first chapter of the *Buddhavaṃśa*, dated to the post-Aśokan period.<sup>25</sup>

The railing pillars, critically examined and studied over the last century, have been conclusively dated to the first century B.C.E.<sup>26</sup> The tree-*caitya* shrine, called *Bodhimaṇḍa*, originally consisted of sixty-four pillars with a circuit of 255 feet and a single eight-foot wide eastern entrance. The pillars are approximately six feet eight inches high and are topped with a twelve-inch coping. These pillars depict episodes from the life of the Buddha, local legends, tree and spirit deities such as *Yakṣhas* and *Yakṣhīs*, Vedic gods and the worship of Buddhist shrines by men, animal and gods. There are eight depictions of the Bodhi seat and Tree in the railings found at the site, which hints at the replication of the sacred shrine at the site itself. For example, one of these railings depicts the Bodhi seat and Tree within railings, two *Chhatras* (royal canopies) and two garlands on both sides. Another one, commonly accepted as a shrine, is broken on top and depicts *Suryā* on the bottom panel.<sup>27</sup> Two of the railing pillars depict the seat and tree being worshipped by mythical creatures and elephants. All the others simply depict a seat, a tree and kneeling worshippers. The lack of uniformity in multiple depictions of the Bodhi seat shrine raises important questions about its nature and the function of these pillars. Did they depict an actual shrine at Bodhgaya? Or was the didactic function of these

<sup>23</sup> Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, 5. During his excavations at the site, Cunningham found a shattered and broken plaster facing on the previously existing sandstone seat.

<sup>24</sup> Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, 8–9.

<sup>25</sup> For the discussion on post-Aśokan dates of the text, see Walters, "Stūpa, Story, and Empire," 165.

<sup>26</sup> See K.K. Chakravarty, *Early Buddhist Art of Bodh-Gaya* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997), 58; see also Vidya Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997), 135–139.

<sup>27</sup> See Janice Leoshko, "The Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures of the Pāla and Senā Periods from Bodhgaya," (Ohio State University: Unpublished PhD dissertation, 1987), 231–234.

pillar representations considered more important than the actual representation of the shrine? There is an element of uncertainty and the lack of inscriptional evidence impairs our ability to answer these questions.

The railing pillars of Bodhgaya also suggest a conscious Buddhist attempt to incorporate existing religious beliefs and practices.<sup>28</sup> These pillars portray mythical sea creatures, *nāga* (snakes), and *devas* (gods) offering garlands and paying respect to the Bodhi Tree. They also depict Vedic gods such as a Sūrya, Brahmā, Lakṣmi, Indra, and *Yakṣhī*. By providing space to local deities and Vedic gods within a Buddhist shrine, the Buddhist *saṅgha* attempted to reach out to the larger socio-religious context. This attempt to incorporate locally important figures may be attributed to two major factors: firstly, the Buddhist expansion brought the monks and monasteries into closer contact with the existing settlements in the surrounding regions, the inhabitants of which probably believed and worshipped these figures. This is indicated by the findings of snake (*nāga*) figurines and *Yakṣha* and *Yakṣhī* plaques at the Taradih excavations, suggesting the prevalence of related practices in the region. By consciously incorporating them within the Buddhist fold, the *saṅgha* attempted to propagate Buddhist ideas and attract a larger social following. Secondly, sites such as Bodhgaya emerged as major pilgrimage centres for Buddhist communities and an inclusive iconography at the site helped the *saṅgha* to didactically present Buddha and Buddhism as hierarchically superior to other pre-existing orders. These developments illustrate the dialogue between the *saṅgha* and the existing socio-religious context which subsequently shaped the complex process of the formation of the *Buddhakṣetra*.

Another major constituent of the *Buddhakṣetra* was the Sujātā's *stūpa*, which is located on the eastern side of Niranjana river. Fragments of dark grey polished ware and a punch-marked coin were found during the excavation of a partially exposed monastery-like structure northeast of the *stūpa*, which indicate the origins of the *stūpa* in the second century B.C.E.<sup>29</sup> Textual accounts suggest that this *stūpa* was constructed to mark Sujātā's donation of milk rice to the Buddha. Though this story is mentioned in the early Pāli and Sanskrit biographies, the earliest dated textual reference is in the 'Senior collection' of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts which, according to

<sup>28</sup> Chakravarty, *Early Buddhist Art*, 52–53.

<sup>29</sup> K.M. Srivastava, "Excavations at Bakror Stūpa," *Indian Archaeology: A Review* 9–10 (1972–1973): 5–8.

Richard Salomon, were buried in a *stūpa* in Hadda near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan in c. 140 C.E. The fact that this story was recounted and written down in Kharoṣṭhī script in a region far away from Bodhgaya indicates the exchange mechanism and transfer of ideas between Buddhist monastic establishments. The Kharoṣṭhī account was written a few centuries after the construction of the *stūpa* at Bodhgaya, which also reflects the role of religious structures in consolidation of biographical accounts and their intertwined developments. The later recounting, writing and subsequent interment of the written account in a *stūpa* hints at the usage of this story as a relic for the construction of a Buddhist sacred site in Afghanistan. Furthermore, this example also illustrates how the memorial *stūpa* of Bakror may have inspired this replication.

Therefore, the sacred landscape of the first century B.C.E. at Bodhgaya consisted of a *stūpa* at Bakror, a jewelled walk and a Bodhi seat at the base of the Tree, all surrounded by sixty-four railing pillars. In later centuries, all these shrines underwent repairs and reconstructions. The *stūpa* was enlarged at least twice: firstly, by increasing its diameter and height (addition of new moulded bricks to the outer wall) and by constructing a new five-meter circumambulation path (*pradakṣiṇa paṭha*) of thick lime plaster for ritual purposes in the fourth-fifth centuries. The second enlargement included the addition of a new casing and gateways in all four directions of the *stūpa* in the eight-ninth centuries.<sup>30</sup>

The Bodhi Tree shrine also underwent numerous changes in the later period. The Bodhi seat itself was enlarged at least twice, first in the third to fourth centuries of the Common Era, when a new layer with numerous remains including a coin-copy from the second century was added. The fact that a copy of a gold coin of the reign of Huviṣka (late second century as *terminus post quem*) was found proves that the slab was definitely added after this period, possibly in the third or fourth century. A partly defaced inscription at the edge of the Bodhi seat affirms this.<sup>31</sup> The second layer was added at the time of reconstruction of the Mahābodhi temple in the latter half of the sixth century. In order to place the Buddha image on the Bodhi seat in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, the seat was enlarged on its northern, southern and eastern sides.

In addition to these shrines, there are two hills in proximate distance, which may also be considered as part of the *Buddhakṣetra*. The historical

<sup>30</sup> Srivastava, "Excavations at Bakror," 7.

<sup>31</sup> Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, 58.

importance of Gayāśīrᶤa hill has been emphasized at least from the early centuries of the Common Era in the Pāli literature (*Mahāvagga*). No early historic archaeological remains have been found from the top of this hill perhaps due to its occupation by the Brāhmaṇical groups from the fifth century onwards when it began to be claimed as the place of Sūrya and funerary worship.<sup>32</sup> Though Xuanzang mentions a large *stūpa* on top of this hill and another three at its base in the mid-seventh century, the destruction of archaeological evidence due to post-eighteenth century constructions makes it extremely difficult to validate his claims.<sup>33</sup>

The second hill, identified currently as Mora hill and located about five kilometres northeast of Bodhgaya, is named as the Prāgbodhi in the travel accounts of Faxian and Xuanzang.<sup>34</sup> Halfway up the western slope of the hill is a cave with a partially broken and inscribed image of a goddess. The image is currently worshipped as Dugeswari *devī* and is dated to the ninth-tenth centuries. Faxian records his visit to the cave as a place of Buddha's meditation, which is the earliest evidence of the cave.<sup>35</sup> At the top of the hill, there are remains of seven brick *stūpas*. Two of them are rectangular *stūpas* (measurements are 6.5m × 9.5m and 4.2m × 4.2m) whereas the other five are circular brick *stūpas* (diameters varying between three meters and five meters). The smallest of these has a height of two meters, and the highest is ten meters.

The survey of these *stūpas* did not reveal any ceramic or other reliable evidence to indicate a date for these structures. Faxian does not mention any *stūpa* at this site whereas Xuanzang's mention of the cave and the *stūpa* structures on the hill suggests that they certainly existed in the mid-seventh century.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, these *stūpas* may have been erected between the fifth and seventh centuries, though a firm date can only be arrived at from future excavation of these *stūpas*. The existence of these *stūpas* meant that these shrines had to be attended by monks on a regular basis. This is affirmed by the traces of the foundations of two buildings—a rectangular and a circular one, which may have been erected to house

<sup>32</sup> *The Mahābhārata*, trans. J.A.B. Van Buitenen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 430.

<sup>33</sup> *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Region*, trans. Li Ronxi (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation & Research, 1996), 242–243.

<sup>34</sup> D.R. Patil, *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute Publications, 1963), 289–290.

<sup>35</sup> "The Journey of the Eminent Monk Faxian," in *Lives of Great Monks and Nuns*, trans. Li Ronxi (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation & Research, 2002), 196.

<sup>36</sup> Ronxi, "Great Tang Dynasty," 244.

monks here. These structures are located on a large artificially levelled terrace of sixty-five meters near the cave. Xuanzang further affirms the presence of a monastic community, as he records religious offerings to the *stūpas* at the end of the rainy season every year.<sup>37</sup>

The first Buddhist sculpture appeared within the Mahābodhi complex in the third-fourth centuries. An inscribed sculpture was found near the remains of an old temple to the south of the Bodhi Tree, currently housed in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. This sculpture has been dated to the third-fourth centuries based on the palaeographical and stylistic considerations. The inscription mentions that a monk, with the help of a laywoman (*upāsikā*), set up two lion-vehicle statues (*sīharaṭha patimā*) by his own strength during the reign of king Trikamāla (in the *saṃvat* 64).<sup>38</sup> King Trikamāla remains unidentified in the early historic period whereas *saṃvat* 64 can be either the Śaka or Gupta period. Therefore, the exact date of the installation of this first sculpture at the site remains uncertain. The second sculpture mentioned in the inscription remains unidentified.

The first sculpture, constructed in the Mathura art style, was transported from the Mathura region to Bodhgaya. By the third century, images of the Buddha were regularly installed and worshipped in the western (Mathura) and north-western regions of South Asia. The installation of this image at Bodhgaya demonstrates that the local monastic community borrowed a new practice from a different region. It also hints at exchanges between monastic establishments, which may have relied on traders to transport this sculpture from Mathura to Bodhgaya on the *Uttarapaṭha* route.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4. *BUDDHAKṢETRA* IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD (C. 550–1200 C.E.)

With the construction of a temple, and three monastic structures including a Sri Lankan one, the nature and ritual practices of *Buddhakṣetra* were significantly transformed by the time of Xuanzang's visit in the mid-seventh century. The construction of the Mahābodhi temple is attested through the Mahānāman's inscription.<sup>40</sup> Scholars have debated the actual

<sup>37</sup> Ronxi, "Great Tang Dynasty," 244.

<sup>38</sup> Beni M. Barua, *Gaya and Buddha-Gaya: Early History of the Holy Land* (Calcutta: Chuckervertty Chatterjee & Co. Ltd., 1931), 70. For the details of the inscription, see appendix-table A.

<sup>39</sup> Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission*, 187.

<sup>40</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (CII, hereafter) 3 (1888), no. 71, 274–278.

date of this inscription on two grounds: the reading of numerical letters (200, 60 and 9) and assigning of the date to the Kālachuri-Cedī (c. 248 C.E.) or the Guptā era (c. 319 C.E.).<sup>41</sup> It is further complicated by the date of the Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman. It is now accepted that the date on the inscription is the 269th year of the Guptā era, which suggests that it was installed in c. 588–589 C.E. Written in the Siddhamātrkā script, it mentions that a new temple (*bhavanam*) at the *Bodhimaṇḍa* was constructed by Mahānāman.<sup>42</sup> Another inscription by Mahānāman from the site mentions his donation of a Buddha image, which may have been installed in the new temple.<sup>43</sup>

A tenth-century eulogistic Sri Lankan inscription from Ramkale near Sigiriya also affirms Mahānāman's patronage and constructions at Bodhgaya.<sup>44</sup> This inscription mentions that Mahānāman went to the *Bodhimaṇḍa vihāra* three times in his life-time and on his last visit made donations for the construction of a new temple and the installation of a new sculpture in the new shrine (*Buddhapratimālayam*). Furthermore, this also suggests that Sri Lankan monks were influential patrons who maintained a constant presence at the site. In fact Xuanzang during his visit to Bodhgaya recorded the story of the construction of a Mahābodhi monastery, which was erected to house the visiting Sri Lankan monks.<sup>45</sup> This testifies to the special significance of this sacred site, which motivated monks and pilgrims from places as far as Sri Lanka and China to travel along existing trade routes to reach Bodhgaya. They often patronized and added new structures and, in the process, transformed the nature of *Buddhakṣetra* as evinced in the construction of the Mahābodhi temple.

The construction of the temple resulted in a major shift in ritual practice.<sup>46</sup> Unlike earlier times when the Tree-shrine was the focus of worship, the Buddha, seated on his seat of enlightenment within the temple, became the focus of rituals and the predominant shrine. It began

<sup>41</sup> CII 3 (1888), no. 71, 274–278. Also see Richard Solomon, *Indian Epigraphy* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1998), 39.

<sup>42</sup> CII 3 (1888), no. 71, 277.

<sup>43</sup> CII 3 (1888), no. 72, 278–279.

<sup>44</sup> S.V. Sohoni, "Epigraphia Miscellanea," *Journal of Bihar Research Society* 42, 1–4 (1975–1976): 190–204. Mahānāman is also presented as the author of the famous Sri Lankan text *Mahāvamsa* in this inscription.

<sup>45</sup> Ronxi, "Great Tang Dynasty," 258.

<sup>46</sup> Fredrick Asher has noted that the construction of the temple led to the reconceptualization of the site as its central focus was shifted from the Bodhi Tree to a shrine housing an image of the Buddha. See Fredrick Asher, *The Art of Eastern India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 27–28.

to be referred to as either *Vajrāsana* or Mahābodhi, and both of these terms symbolized the seat of enlightenment. This is also attested by the repeated use of this term in epigraphical sources such as the Ghosarawa inscription of Viradeva (who mentions his pilgrimage and adoration to the *Vajrāsana* at Mahābodhi), and royal charters of the Pāla kings, such as the Khalimpur grant of the Dharmapāla.<sup>47</sup> Viradeva travelled from north-western India to the site to perform his pilgrimage and installed an inscription at another monastic site. His inscription also refers to another popular name of the place as the Mahābodhi, which is also proved by a further dedicatory inscription at Bodhgaya. This inscription, donated by an individual named Kesava, records the donation of a four-faced Mahādeva and the construction of a tank for the residents of Mahābodhi.<sup>48</sup> The Tibetan monk-pilgrim Dharmasvāmin, who came to Bodhgaya in the third decade of the thirteenth century, also uses the terms *Vajrāsana* and Mahābodhi to refer to Bodhgaya.<sup>49</sup>

The construction of the temple was followed by the donation and installation of numerous Buddhist sculptures to the temple complex between the seventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>50</sup> Many of these sculptures, donated by monks and pilgrims, are inscribed and record the names of their donors. In addition, a large number of un-inscribed sculptures were also donated and installed within the Mahābodhi complex. Of all the sculptures, the most popular form seems to have been the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* Buddha.<sup>51</sup> This representation was clearly linked to the enduring importance of the event of the enlightenment and the *Vajrāsana*, which led to the large-scale production of this form and popular worship in the surrounding region.

Numerous images of Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, Khasarpaṇa, Tārā, Mañichī, Yamāntaka, and Jāmbhala have been documented from the Mahābodhi complex. This diverse sculptural assemblage from the temple complex indicates their installation and active ritual

<sup>47</sup> For Viradeva's inscription, see F. Kielhorn, "A Buddhist Stone Inscription from Ghosarawa," *Indian Antiquary* 18 (1888): 310. For the Khalimpur Grant, see *Epigraphia Indica* 4 (1896–1897), no. 34, 249.

<sup>48</sup> Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, 54.

<sup>49</sup> Chag Chos-rje-dpal, *Biography of Dharmasvāmin: A Tibetan Monk Pilgrim*, trans. G. Roerich (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959), 73.

<sup>50</sup> Leoshko, "Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures." See also J. Leoshko, "Pilgrimage and the Evidence of Bodhgaya's Images," in *Bodhgaya: the site of Enlightenment*, ed. J. Leoshko (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988), 43–46. Leoshko has discussed the sculptural additions to the temple in depth.

<sup>51</sup> Leoshko, "Pilgrimage and the Evidence," 49.

usage.<sup>52</sup> The images demonstrate a strong Mahāyāna presence, which is also affirmed by the epigraphic remains. There are two inscriptions from the site with the Mahāyāna formula.<sup>53</sup> The first of these is inscribed on a sculpture donated by Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman in c. 588–589 C.E. It clearly mentions the Mahāyāna formula: “*Yad-atra puṇyaṃ tad-bhavatu sarvasattvānām-anuttara-jñān-āvāptayē-stu.*”<sup>54</sup> This can be translated as “whatever religious merit (*there is*) in this (*act*), let it be for the acquisition of supreme knowledge of all sentient beings’. This verse is repeated in the second inscription, which was found on an image donated by *Sthavira* Viryendra from Somapura in the tenth century. Moreover, Viryendra clearly presents himself as a follower of Mahāyāna (*Mahāyāna-yāyin*).<sup>55</sup> These examples indicate a much broader outlook of the Buddhist *saṅgha* of Bodhgaya, which accommodated practices from multiple Buddhist orders within the Mahābodhi complex and in the *Buddhakṣetra* of Bodhgaya.

This broader outlook of the *saṅgha* questions the previous understanding about the exclusive Theravāda nature and control of the Mahābodhi complex. This understanding was based on the dominant presence of Sri Lankan monks at Bodhgaya, who supposedly belonged to the Theravāda school. Were all the Sri Lankan monks necessarily Theravādins? Walters has extensively examined the Sri Lankan monastic tradition and shown that the *Sthaviravādins* at the two main Sri Lankan monasteries of Abhayagiri and Jetavana called themselves “Theravādins” though they followed Mahāyāna ideals. Xuanzang attests their Mahāyāna leanings in his account.<sup>56</sup> It was only the third group of *Sthaviravādins* at Mahāvihāra

<sup>52</sup> Leoshko, “Pilgrimage and the Evidence,” 53.

<sup>53</sup> “Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions,” in *Figments and Fragments of Mahayana Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers*, ed. Gregory Schopen (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 223–269. Schopen includes these two inscriptions from Bodhgaya in this study of the references to the Mahāyāna formula and argues for their Mahāyāna nature. He also discusses the validity and emergence of the Mahāyāna formula and argues that these formulae began to be engraved on inscriptions from the fourth century C.E. onwards.

<sup>54</sup> CII 3 (1963), no. 72, 279.

<sup>55</sup> D.C. Sircar, ed., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization* (New Delhi: Motilala Banarsidass, 1983), vol. 2, 59. The inscription is called “Bodhgaya Buddha Image Inscription of Viryendra” and was first published by T. Bloch in *The Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1908–09* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1961).

<sup>56</sup> Walters, “Mahāsena at the Mahāvihāra,” in *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, ed. Daud Ali (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 328. Walters clearly writes that “abundant evidence in the form of inscriptions, archaeological ruins and even the Mahāvihāran sources confirm without doubt the indication given by the Chinese pilgrims that the residents of Abhayagirivihāra practiced Mahāyāna, and that



monastery at Anuradhapura who clung to the Theravāda practices, and they were marginalized until the tenth century. They were certainly not the recipients of royal favour, which also meant that they probably had no influential presence at Bodhgaya.<sup>57</sup> This is further affirmed by the patronage of Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman, who demonstrated his leanings by inscribing Mahāyāna formula on the Buddha image in the Mahābodhi temple. The site was probably not under the exclusive control of any one order and attracted monks from many Buddhist orders because of its direct links with the Buddha. The co-existence of different orders has been recorded at several other Buddhist monastic centres including Bodhgaya.<sup>58</sup>

## 5. INTER-RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS

The *saṅgha* was also cognizant of the emergence and growth of the Brāhmaṇical orders—Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava—in the surrounding region. This is illustrated by the documentation of several Hindu sculptures from the precincts of the Mahābodhi temple complex between the sixth and twelfth centuries. The Hindu orders of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, which emerged in the early centuries of the Common Era, appeared and grew in the surrounding region of Bodhgaya from the fifth century onwards.<sup>59</sup> Since they did not originate in this region, these religious orders must have travelled along the trade routes to this region. For example, Varanasi

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they dominated Anuradhapura until about the tenth century. See also Peter Skilling, "A Citation from the Buddhavaṃsa of the Abhayagiri School," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 18 (1993): 165–175. Skilling also refers to the broader outlook and Mahāyāna leanings of the Abhayagirivihāravāsī, who were often questioned and challenged by the Mahāvihāra monks (168).

<sup>57</sup> R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979), 212. Gunawardana mentions that there were many successful Abhayagirivihāravāsī and Jetavanīya graduates of Nalanda University. Several Mahāvihāravāsī monks also studied at Nalanda in the ninth century, though some were expelled for their belligerent refusal to accept Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna teachings.

<sup>58</sup> For a detailed discussion on the interaction between various orders of Buddhism and the nature of Buddhism after the emergence of Mahāyāna, see D.S. Ruegg, "Aspects of the Study of the (Earlier) Indian Mahāyāna," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27 (2004): 1–62. Ruegg has also discussed the distinction between the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna Schools, the interaction between them and the impact of such interactions on Buddhism.

<sup>59</sup> A.S. Amar, "Contextualizing the Navel of the Earth: The Emergence, Sustenance and Transformation of Buddhism in the Bodhgaya Region (c. 300 B.C.E.–1200 C.E.)" (University of London: Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 2009), ch. 5.

was a major Śaiva centre, from which Śaivism was gradually transmitted to the surroundings of Bodhgaya. The growth of these orders forced the Buddhist *saṅgha* to take notice of their growth and subsequently compete with them in the region. In order to maintain its dominant position, the *saṅgha* attempted to appropriate these orders by installing images of Hindu gods within its own sacred precincts. The documentation of three Viṣṇu sculptures along with an inscribed four-faced Mahādeva from the Mahābodhi complex reflects this approach of the *saṅgha*.<sup>60</sup> The appropriation of Hindu gods through the installation and active worship of these images within a Buddhist shrine suggests a conscious attempt by the *saṅgha* to speak to its local socio-religious context, which ultimately resulted in the acceptance of these Hindu gods as minor deities within the Buddhist order. This practice by the *saṅgha* transformed the Buddhist order and resulted in the development of an inclusive *Buddhakṣetra*.

#### 6. THE AGENTIVE ROLE OF THE SAṄGHA

The *Buddhakṣetra* was imagined, planned and developed by the monastic community of Bodhgaya to commemorate the presence of the Buddha in the local landscape. New shrines and structures (such as the Bodhi seat or Bakror *stūpa*) were initially erected to remind followers of the Buddha's stay at Bodhgaya. Gradually, these structures became the markers of the Buddha's continued presence at Bodhgaya. These concrete structures, constituting the *Buddhakṣetra*, manifested the materialization of the biographical events in the landscape of Bodhgaya. As the Buddha himself supposedly asked people to visit Bodhgaya, these shrines and structures became the connecting dots of the Buddha's life to visiting pilgrims. Therefore, they also played an agentive role in *solidifying* the events and stories of the life of the Buddha into a coherent biographical account over a long time span.

The *saṅgha*, being the repository of the Buddha-*dharma*, retained (and imaginatively developed) and relayed the biographical stories and events through these shrines to the Buddhist community. Stories such as Sujātā's donation and its subsequent commemoration through a shrine emphasized Buddhist ideals and became a didactic tool for the *saṅgha*. The pursuit of merit through right actions and intentions was illustrated and

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<sup>60</sup> S.J. Huntington, *The 'Pāla-Sena' Schools of Sculpture* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 205–206.

propagated by the *saṅgha* through such shrines. Together, the *saṅgha*'s understanding of Buddhist *dharma* and associated practices shaped the formation of the *Buddhakṣetra*. The *saṅgha*'s understanding evolved, changed and was transformed from time to time, which is mapped in the chronological growth of the *Buddhakṣetra* in this chapter.

Archaeological excavations and travel accounts have confirmed the continued presence of the *saṅgha* at Bodhgaya from the third century B.C.E. The excavations at Taradih have revealed a small monastery, suggesting the presence of monks at the site in the third century B.C.E.<sup>61</sup> Another monastery-like structure was also exposed to the northeast of the Bakror *stūpa*, likewise dated to the second or first centuries B.C.E. Faxian refers to the presence of three monasteries, whereas Xuanzang refers to a Sri Lankan monastery at the Bodhgaya. Dharmasvāmin, a Tibetan pilgrim who visited Bodhgaya in the thirteenth century, mentions twelve monasteries at the site. Yet another monastery existed at the Prāgbodhi hill. The continued presence of the *saṅgha* at and around Bodhgaya over such a long period of time also explains their key role in the growth and transformation of the sacred *Buddhakṣetra*.

## 7. CONCLUSION

To summarize, this chapter has tried to unravel the complex process that shaped the emergence and development of the *Buddhakṣetra* of the historical Gautama Buddha at Bodhgaya. Firstly, the choice of the place for enlightenment may have been influenced by its location on a trade route, which made the place accessible for ascetics like the Buddha. Secondly, many shrines and structures were built with materials which were not available locally. For example, the red sandstone that was used to construct the jewelled walk and railing pillars was probably transported from the Chunar, which is located on the route to Varanasi. The process of transportation must have involved traders and stonemasons. Similarly, a ball of clay recovered from the excavation of the Bodhi seat contained a number of relics—two gold copies of the impressions of the obverse face of a gold coin of Huvīṣka, joined together and held by a ring, five punch-marked silver coins, one crescent of thin gold, four flowers with a pale sapphire in the centre of each, three shells, four *Kamarak* fruits,

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<sup>61</sup> Prasad, "Excavations at Taradih," 11.

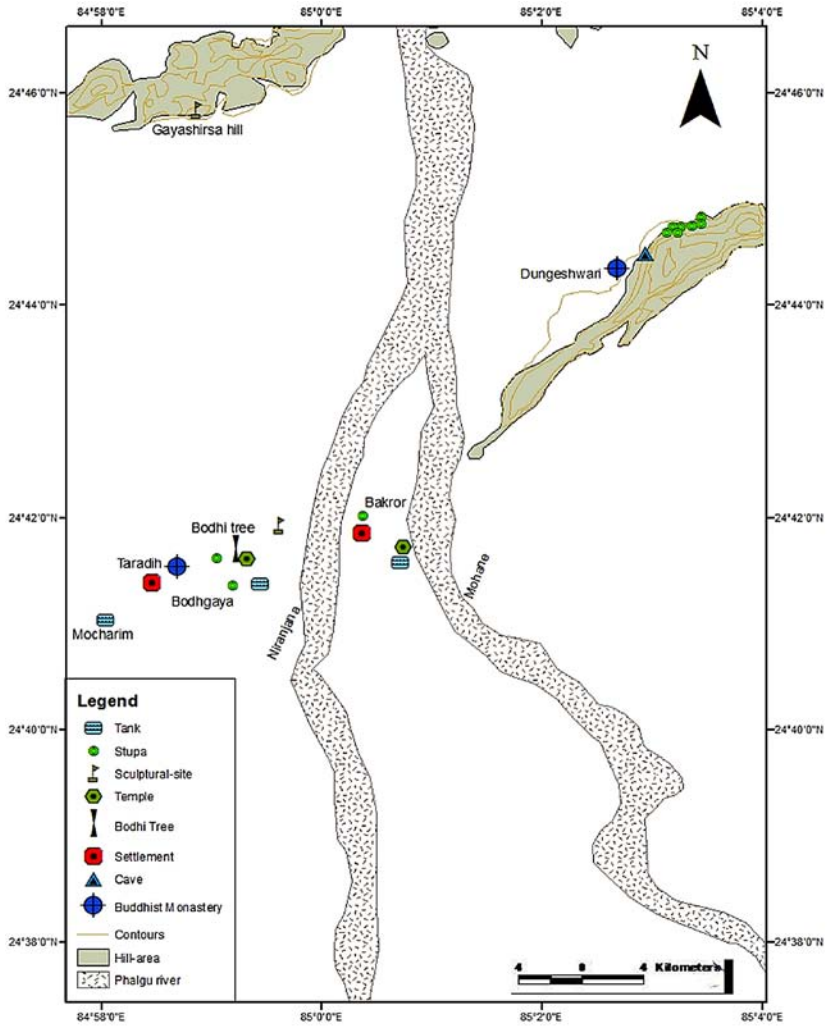
five buttons or knobs, fifty-three large discs, forty-three small discs, pearls, coral, crystal, sapphires, rubies and emeralds.<sup>62</sup> All these objects, including the copy of a gold coin of the reign of Huiṣka (late second century as *terminus post quem*), were not available locally and were brought from elsewhere. Similarly, the first sculpture at the site was brought from the Mathura region and a Sri Lankan monk funded the construction of the Mahābodhi temple. All these examples affirm the role of exchanges, trade networks and trading communities in the multi-phased construction of *Buddhakṣetra*.

The development of the *Buddhakṣetra* also reflects the re-appropriation of an existing sacred place, which was facilitated by borrowing and incorporating religious figures from other religious orders within the Buddhist fold. This became a model to be replicated subsequently. The initial inclusion of local deities and Vedic gods was followed by the appropriation of Śiva and Viṣṇu in the early medieval period. This inclusive approach was necessitated by the inter-religious dynamics that forced the *saṅgha* to compete with the influx of Hindu orders. Similarly, intra-religious dynamics also shaped the development of this landscape, as reflected in the presence of numerous Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna images from the site. Together, these different processes transformed the *saṅgha* as well as the *Buddhakṣetra* of the Bodhgaya.

This *Buddhakṣetra* played a crucial role in the localization of Buddhism at Bodhgaya and the surrounding region. By planting a new meaning onto the landscape, the *saṅgha* was able to create an exchange mechanism. It provided the laity with an opportunity to interact and worship the Buddha for merit acquisition locally and thereby developed a social following which supported its continued existence in the region. Interaction with local society made the *saṅgha* aware of its socio-religious context, which subsequently informed its appropriation of local figures and practices. This also reflects the role of exchanges, adaptability and flexibility that shaped the contours of Buddhist *saṅgha* and facilitated its localization in various regions. Thus, experience gained at Bodhgaya was shared widely between the monastic establishments, which also explain the rationale for the replication of the *Buddhakṣetra* in the wider Buddhist world.

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<sup>62</sup> Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, 20.



Map 1: Sacred sites in and around Bodhgaya. Map designed by Abhishek Singh Amar.

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PART TWO

TRADE AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOL SYSTEMS





# “TRADING RELIGIONS” AND “VISIBLE RELIGION” IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Izak Cornelius

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Religious symbol systems can make a religion *visible* and these visual symbols are communicated through the medium of iconography. Such symbols (as icons and emblems) could be exchanged between different cultures, travelling along international routes of communication that were used not only by traders, but also by conquering armies. As the icons of a specific region, these deities were literally “exported.” After a few brief remarks on visual religious symbols, the present article will discuss a few examples of how gods could “travel” and be “exported” along the trade routes (including maritime trade); this will be followed by two more detailed case studies, the travels of the winged disk/sun from Egypt to Persia, and the emblem of the moon god Sin of Harran to Egypt.

### 1.1 *Visible Religion*

Homo sapiens is a symbolizing animal and, as Moore points out, it is almost a truism to say that religion is a system of symbols.<sup>1</sup> The definition of symbols suggested by Bowker will be adopted here: “compressed expressions of religious beliefs and ideas in visible form.”<sup>2</sup> For Hornung, “In the language of religion, words do not suffice,”<sup>3</sup> religion operates with pictures and symbols which existed long before the advent of writing (texts). As a matter of fact visual symbols, such as the abstract engravings from Blombos cave, South Africa,<sup>4</sup> might go back 70,000 to 100,000 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Albert C. Moore, *Iconography of Religions* (London: SCM, 1977), 26.

<sup>2</sup> John Bowker, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), xxii.

<sup>3</sup> Erik Hornung, “Ancient Egyptian Religious Iconography,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. III, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Simon & Schuster MacMillan, 2001), 1711.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Balter, “Early Start for Human Art? Ochre May Revise Timeline,” *Science* 323 (2009): 569; and Balter, “On the Origin of Art and Symbolism,” *Science* 323 (2009): 709–711.

Christoph Uehlinger wrote that “iconography provides a historical source at least as valuable as texts and literature for studying local or regional symbol systems, their diffusion and interaction.”<sup>5</sup> This is “Visible Religion,” to adopt the phrase used by Hans Kippenberg.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.2 *Travelling Deities and Deities in the Cargo*

The Sumerians might have believed that “kingship descended from heaven,”<sup>7</sup> but no religion “fell” from heaven. Religions developed over long periods of time and were influenced by political, social, and cultural factors (and many others, even economic conditions). Religions influenced each other; this is also true of the symbols of religions in their visual forms (iconography). The spread of ancient religions could have been brought about by trade and traders functioning as the bearers of these beliefs. According to Hörig, the *Dea Syria* (Artagatis) was introduced to the Greek world by Syrian merchants.<sup>8</sup> Writing on Isis in the Greco-Roman world, Witt noted: “The faith of Egypt was thus effectively carried far and wide . . . The missionary work was helped both by ordinary *traders* and by professional priests.”<sup>9</sup> Deities or rather their statues, especially their symbols, were highly *mobile* and could *travel*. In the Amarna letters (ca. fourteenth century B.C.E.) King Tushrattu of Mitanni writes to the Egyptian pharaoh, the goddess Shaushka of Nineveh wishes to go to Egypt.<sup>10</sup> In the Egyptian

<sup>5</sup> Christoph Uehlinger, “Introduction,” in *Images as Media: Sources for the Cultural History of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium B.C.E.)*, ed. Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg: University Press, 2000), xxv.

<sup>6</sup> Hans G. Kippenberg, “Iconography as Visible Religion,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), vol. 7, 2–7 and the series *Visible Religion. Annual for Religious Iconography 1982–1990* (unfortunately discontinued). Cf. Christoph Uehlinger, “Visible Religion und die Sichtbarkeit von Religion(en): Voraussetzungen, Anknüpfungsprobleme, Wiederaufnahme eines religionswissenschaftlichen Forschungsprogramms,” *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (2006): 165–183.

<sup>7</sup> As in the Sumerian King List, cf. Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

<sup>8</sup> Monika Hörig, *Dea Syria: Studien zur religiösen Tradition der Fruchtbarkeitsgöttin in Vorderasien* (Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon und Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 12.

<sup>9</sup> Reginald E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 48 [my emphasis]. On Isis and traders, cf. Reinhold Merkelbach, *Isis regina—Zeus Sarapis: Die griechisch-ägyptische Religion nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Stuttgart & Leipzig: Teubner, 1995), e.g. 128. Cf. the discussion in the article of Christoph Auffarth above (“With the Grain Came the Gods from the Orient to Rome: The Example of Serapis and Some Systematic Reflections”).

<sup>10</sup> William Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 61.

New Kingdom (ca. 1500–1100 B.C.E.) “Egypt became part of trans-regional cultural systems.”<sup>11</sup> Levantine deities like Baal, Anat, Astarte, Resheph and Qudshu were very popular in Egypt, some even with the pharaohs themselves.<sup>12</sup> As far as the modes of transfer were concerned, scholars include *trade*.<sup>13</sup> Baal and Astarte were worshipped in *peru-nefer*—the harbour of Memphis, or as argued by Manfred Bietak, Avaris (ed-Daba in the Nile Delta).<sup>14</sup> A cylinder seal from Avaris depicts a menacing god, identified with the Levantine Baal Zaphon, protector of sailors.<sup>15</sup> For this reason a sailing ship is also shown. “Trading” deities and their symbols might have occurred via the sea and maritime trade. Maritime religions are subsets of ancient religions, as Brody has argued.<sup>16</sup> Sailors honoured deities who could benefit or devastate a voyage; they performed religious ceremonies on land and at sea to protect them, and ships contained sacred spaces. Anchors were sacred symbols and placed, for example, in the *temenos* of the temple of Baal at Ugarit.<sup>17</sup> Divine symbols are shown on depictions of ships, such as the goddess Tinnit (Tanit)—famous at Carthage, but originally worshipped in the Levant.<sup>18</sup> The goddess went along with the Phoenician traders when they ventured with their ships into the Mediterranean. Ships’ cargoes containing hundreds of statuettes

<sup>11</sup> Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (London: Routledge, 1989), 33.

<sup>12</sup> Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (c. 1500–1000 B.C.E.)* (Fribourg/Göttingen: University Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); and Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Asherah, Astarte and Qadeshet c. 1500–1000 B.C.E.* (Fribourg/Göttingen: University Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). Cf. now Keiko Tazawa, *Syro-Palestinian Deities in New Kingdom Egypt* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Cornelius, *The Canaanite Gods*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Manfred Bietak, “Peru-nefer: The Principal New Kingdom Naval Base,” *Egyptian Archaeology* 34 (2009): 15–17.

<sup>15</sup> Manfred Bietak, “Zur Herkunft des Seth von Avaris,” *Ägypten und Levante* 1 (1990): 9–16.

<sup>16</sup> Aaron Brody, “Each Man Cried Out to His God”: *The Specialized Religion of Canaanite and Phoenician Seafarers* (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1998), and Brody, “Further Evidence of the Specialized Religion of Phoenician Seafarers,” in *Terra Marique: Studies in Art History and Marine Archaeology in Honor of Anna Marguerite McCann on the Receipt of the Gold Medal of the Archaeological Institute of America*, eds. Anna M. McCann and John Pollini (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 177–182.

<sup>17</sup> Izak Cornelius and Herbert Niehr, *Götter und Kulte in Ugarit: Kultur und Religion einer nordsyrischen Königsstadt der Spätbronzezeit* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2004), 71–72, Figs. 113–115.

<sup>18</sup> Brody, *Each Man Cried*, 31–33, Fig. 16 and Hans-Peter Müller, “Philologische und religionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Göttin Tinnit,” *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 21 (2003): 123–138.

(some identifiable with the goddess Tinnit) were found in the sea, at Tyre and at Shavei Zion in Palestine.<sup>19</sup> There must have been a market for such objects, perhaps even a “trade” in such votive offerings. In this way deities and their symbols were “exported” via the trade routes, carried to far-away ports along the maritime trade routes. On the Ulu Burun shipwreck (ca. 1300 B.C.E.) found off the coast of Turkey are artefacts reflecting international contacts and trade, but the cargo also included effigies of goddesses. One of the female figures was the protector who stood on the stern of the ship and travelled along with the sailors.<sup>20</sup> Writing on “Migrating Gods as Forms of Cult Transfer in the Mediterranean,” Walter Burkert discusses bronze statues of the “smiting god” which spread from the East to Cyprus and Greece, but not just as items of “commercial” trade, since they were also used in religious contexts on both sides of the Aegean.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. THE TRAVELS OF THE WINGED DISK/SUN DISK

On the stela of Bel-Harran-beli-usur the “image” of the deities described in the Akkadian text refers to the five symbols of the gods depicted in relief on it.<sup>22</sup> Two symbols which are also shown are the winged sun disk and the symbol of the moon god. Two specific case studies on how gods could travel will now be discussed, with particular focus on divine *symbols*, namely the winged sun disk and the symbol of the moon god.

The winged disk/sun disk<sup>23</sup> makes a good case study because it helps in understanding the dynamics of the transfer of ancient visual

<sup>19</sup> Elisha Linder, “A Cargo of Phoenicio-Punic Figurines,” *Archaeology* 26 (1973): 182–187 and Astrid Nunn, *Der figürliche Motivschatz Phöniziens, Syriens und Transjordaniens vom 6. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2000), 68, Pl. 41:143.

<sup>20</sup> Kemal Pulak, “The Ulu Burun Shipwreck and Late Bronze Age Trade,” in *Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.E.*, eds. Joan Aruz et al. (New York: MMA, 2009), 289–310.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Burkert, “Migrating Gods and Syncretisms: Forms of Cult Transfer in the Ancient Mediterranean,” in *Kleine Schriften II*, eds. Walter Burkert, Christoph Riedweg and M. Laura Gemelli Marciano (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 22.

<sup>22</sup> Jutta Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1982), Fig. 232 and Dominik Bonatz, “Was ist ein Bild?,” in *Bild—Macht—Geschichte: Visuelle Kommunikation im Alten Orient*, eds. Marlies Heinz and Dominik Bonatz (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2002), 11. The stela is from the 8th century B.C.E. and is now in Istanbul.

<sup>23</sup> The literature is both vast and varied. Specific studies are Joseph Azize, *The Phoenician Solar Theology* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 172–175; Stephanie Dalley, “The God Salmu and the Winged Disk,” *Iraq* 48 (1968): 85–101; Otto Eissfeldt, “Die Flügelsonne als künstlerisches Motiv und als religiöses Symbol,” *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 18 (1942):

symbols.<sup>24</sup> The symbol involved was not only adopted, but also adapted. The first case study will take us from Africa to Asia, or more specifically from Egypt to Persia. It is not possible here to give a comprehensive historical overview, an iconographic typology, or to analyze and interpret every image in detail.<sup>25</sup> The emphasis will rather be on the *how* than the *what*: how these visual symbols travelled and were transferred, what their meaning was and how that meaning changed in different contexts.<sup>26</sup> No attempt will be made to identify or name the deities which might be represented by or linked with the winged disks. Not in all cases does the disk represent only the sun or is it a symbol representing the sun god, but also a variety of deities. For this reason it would be safer to talk in general terms of the "winged disk" instead of the specific "winged sun disk" as was done by Ornan.<sup>27</sup> But this does not refute the basic idea that the origin of the symbol was the Egyptian sun disk which was then adapted. The migration of the image will be presented in its geographical movement from Egypt to Persia. No complete and strict historical overview is given,

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416–419; Juliane Kutter, *nūr ilī: Die Sonnengottheiten in den nordwestsemitischen Religionen von der Spätbronzezeit bis zur vorrömischen Zeit* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008); Stephan Lauber, "Zur Ikonographie der Flügelsonne," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 124 (2008): 89–106; Lauber, "Euch aber wird aufgehen die Sonne der Gerechtigkeit" (vgl. *Mal* 3,20): *Eine Exegese von Mal 3,13–21* (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 2006); Ruth Mayer-Opificius, "Die geflügelte Sonne: Himmels- und Regendarstellungen im alten Vorderasien," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 16 (1984): 189–236; Tallay Ornan, "A Complex System of Religious Symbols: The Case of the Winged Disc in Near Eastern Imagery of the First Millennium B.C.E.," in *Crafts and Images in Contact*, eds. Claudia Suter and Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005), 207–224; Dominique Parayre, "Les cachets ouest-sémitiques à travers l'image du disque solaire ailé (perspective iconographique)," *Syria* 67 (1990): 269–314; Birger Pering, "Die geflügelte Scheibe in Assyrien: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 8 (1932–1933): 281–296; Thomas Podella, *Das Lichtkleid JHWHs: Untersuchungen zur Gestaltlichkeit Gottes im Alten Testament und seiner altorientalischen Umwelt* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 26–31 and 132–154; Hans-Peter Stähli, *Solare Elemente im Jahweglauben des Alten Testaments* (Fribourg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985); John G. Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun. Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993). The motif is also dealt with by Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven* (Fribourg: University Press, 1999), 196–216, 257–262, and now Joel M. LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2010), 49–54, 95–106, 119–126.

<sup>24</sup> Ornan, "The Winged Disc," 207.

<sup>25</sup> For the types, see the illustrations in the tables of Mayer-Opificius, "Die geflügelte Sonne," 209–224; Parayre "Disque solaire ailé," Pls. I–XI, and Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age* (Fribourg: University Press, 1996), 155–158.

<sup>26</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, "Eagle and Serpent: A Study in the Migration of Symbols," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 4 (1929): 293.

<sup>27</sup> Ornan, "The Winged Disc," 207.

but the periods dealt with are approximately in chronological order from the third to the first millennium B.C.E.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.1 *From Egypt to Syria/Anatolia*

In Egypt the winged sun disk is pervasively present on monuments. This is a typical Egyptian icon and symbol, going back to the earliest phases of Egyptian history and continuing throughout Egyptian history.<sup>29</sup> The wings might be linked with the sky and the falcon with the god Horus, as on a comb from the first dynasty.<sup>30</sup> The link between the king and the sun disk goes back to the third dynasty. Wings also had a *protective* function in many cases, as will be indicated. There is also strong *royal* symbolism; it was not so much a symbol of a god, but an emblem and “coat of arms” of the united Egypt.<sup>31</sup> Winged sun disks are shown in temples and also on funerary stelae.<sup>32</sup>

From Egypt the winged disk spread to Western Asia: to the Levant (North Syria), Mitanni, Anatolia (the Hittites), the Levant (Syro-Palestine), Mesopotamia (Assyria) and Persia. The earliest examples of the winged disk outside of Egypt are from Middle Bronze Age Syria and Anatolia (ca. nineteenth to sixteenth centuries). As stated clearly by Teissier, the motif was adopted from Egypt, but it developed independently in Syria. It was modified, but still shared some of the symbolic meaning it had in Egypt.<sup>33</sup> A seal impression from Ebla depicts a ruler in front of a smiting god and his consort; above him hovers a winged sun disk with uraei or Egyptian cobras, a depiction which is very close to the Egyptian prototype.<sup>34</sup> The solar symbolism and the relationship with the ruler in this case are clear. Other examples changed the solar disk into a rosette, added the crescent

<sup>28</sup> All dates are B.C.E. unless indicated otherwise. Unfortunately it is impossible to give illustrations of all the material, but sources will be provided where they can be located.

<sup>29</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, “Horus the Behdetite,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 30 (1944): 46–52, and Dietrich Wildung, “Flügelsonne,” in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, eds. Wolfgang Helck, Eberhard Otto and Wolfhart Westendorf (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977), vol. 2, 277–279; cf. Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 155 (Figs. 4q–r), 196.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 100–101.

<sup>31</sup> Gardiner, “Horus the Behdetite,” 48, and Wildung, “Flügelsonne,” 278: “nicht ein Göttersymbol... sondern eine zum Symbol verdichtete Erscheinungsform gottbegnadeten Königtums.”

<sup>32</sup> Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 101.

<sup>33</sup> Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 95.

<sup>34</sup> Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 98 (97 no. 184, cf. no. 188).

or even changed the disk into an anthropomorphic being.<sup>35</sup> In other cases there are not rulers, but figures without crowns or rulers' mantles.<sup>36</sup> Trees provide support, flanked by rulers or bull-men and other animals.<sup>37</sup>

Travelling further north, reliefs and seals of the great Hittite king (ca. 1400–1200) depict him with a winged disk (sun). There is no doubt about the protective function, but the royal imagery also persisted as the Hittite ruler bore the title “My Sun.”<sup>38</sup> A unique ivory from Megiddo in Palestine (1350–1250) continues the idea of the Hittite king and the sun.<sup>39</sup> It shows a complex cosmology in five registers: below are bulls and three registers with *Mischwesen*, mountain gods and atlants. The winged sun above is supported by Janus-headed beings and there are two images of the king with the Luwian hieroglyphs for “sun.” This winged sun also stands for heaven and indicates the prominent position of the “sun god of heaven.”<sup>40</sup> Another image of “cosmology” can be found at the open-air shrine of Eflatun Pinar (ca. 1300–1200), where there is a large winged sun and two smaller winged suns supported by three figures.<sup>41</sup>

Mitannian and Assyrian seals from the second half of the second millennium depict the winged disk, but it was associated with heaven and even rain as indicated by the wavy lines.<sup>42</sup> A winged sun is shown above a throne on a Middle Assyrian cylinder seal (thirteenth century), but without the support found on other images.<sup>43</sup>

From Ugarit in North Syria there is the so-called “El stele” showing a worshipper and above a winged sun as a “cosmic” symbol.<sup>44</sup> A winged sun

<sup>35</sup> Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, no. 186, 187, 196.

<sup>36</sup> Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, no. 190–191.

<sup>37</sup> Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, no. 189, 192–193.

<sup>38</sup> Dominique Beyer, *Emar IV: Les sceaux* (Fribourg: University Press, 2001), 341–347; Wolfgang Fauth, “Sonnengottheit (<sup>d</sup>UTU) und ‘Königliche Sonne’ (<sup>d</sup>UTU<sup>si</sup>) bei den Hethitern,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 11 (1979): 227–263. Othmar Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und die Entstehung des Monotheismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), Figs. 77–78.

<sup>39</sup> Robert L. Alexander, “Shaushga and the Hittite Ivory from Megiddo,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50 (1991): 161–182; Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, Fig. 79.

<sup>40</sup> Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, “Jahwe und der Sonnengott von Jerusalem,” in *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, eds. Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein (Fribourg/Göttingen: University Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 278.

<sup>41</sup> Volkert Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 466, Fig. 77.

<sup>42</sup> Lauber, “Ikongraphie der Flügelsonne,” Fig. 8 and emphasized by Mayer-Opificius, “Die geflügelte Sonne.”

<sup>43</sup> Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, Fig. 190 and Ursula Seidl, “Das Ringen um das richtige Bild des Šamaš von Sippar,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 91 (2001): 120–132, Figs. 1b–c.

<sup>44</sup> Cornelius and Niehr, *Götter und Kulte*, Fig. 68.



also appears above a menacing god on a seal and above a king or priest on a cult stand.<sup>45</sup> In Palestine an ivory from Megiddo (ca. 1250–1150) shows a chariot, with captives and a soldier in front, while above them hovers a winged sun disk.<sup>46</sup> The captives are being led into the presence of a king on a sphinx throne. Here the sun has a protective function, but is—as in Egypt—still linked with kingship, as indicated by the enthroned king. This ivory shows strong Egyptian influence.

On the Neo-Hittite (tenth to ninth centuries) reliefs of Tell Halaf (Guzana) the winged sun disk is set on a throne, which is held by two bull-men with their other hands supporting the wings of the sun.<sup>47</sup> The bull-men, in turn, are supported by a man with a curly wig. The same motif occurs on another relief without the additional figure. On the left is a seated figure with a flower, who might be a ruler of Guzana. In this case the original sun disk has been changed: it is carried by bull-men and an “Atlas” figure, although the king is still involved. The North Syrian/Southern Anatolian storm god is shown on stela reliefs from the tenth to eighth centuries, armed and standing on a bull.<sup>48</sup> Above him hovers a winged disk which shows a crescent and not a sun. This is a combination of the moon god and the storm god.<sup>49</sup> A clear winged disk with crescent occurs on a helmet from Zincirli and winged rosettes are also shown.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.2 *First Millennium: Assyria, Palestine, Persia and Phoenicia*

The Assyrians—who ruled the Near East as the Neo-Assyrian Empire from the ninth to the seventh centuries—adapted the winged sun disk even further and gave new meanings to it. The image was re-interpreted in different ways. The image of the winged disk with the wavy lines (“rain”) continued,<sup>51</sup> and it was depicted above a “sacred tree.”<sup>52</sup> The winged disk

<sup>45</sup> Cornelius and Niehr, *Götter und Kulte*, Figs. 75 and 98; Kutter, *Die Sonnengottheiten*, 199–201, Figs. 3 and 6. On the second item the function of the winged sun on the stand might be protective, but on the first a connection with the Baal myth and the sun goddess as suggested by Kutter forces a direct relation between text and image.

<sup>46</sup> Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, Fig. 111.

<sup>47</sup> Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, *Der Tell Halaf: Eine neue Kultur im ältesten Mesopotamien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1931), Pls. 98, 104; Keel *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, 302–303, Figs. 188–189.

<sup>48</sup> Guy Bunnens, *Tell Ahmar*, 70–73; Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, Figs. 164–166a; Kutter, *Die Sonnengottheiten*, Figs. 26–28.

<sup>49</sup> Miko Novak, “Zur Verbindung von Mondgott und Wettergott bei den Äramaern im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 33 (2001): 437–466.

<sup>50</sup> Ornan, “The Winged Disc,” 224–225.

<sup>51</sup> Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 205–211.

<sup>52</sup> Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 211–216 (e.g. Fig. 43).

and the “water-providing god” might be “supported” as seen on the earlier examples.<sup>53</sup> But the biggest change was from being a symbol of heaven to becoming an *anthropomorphic* god, what Mayer-Opificius called an “epiphany.”<sup>54</sup> In one case it is threefold (“dreifach anthropomorphe Flügelsonne”) and in another the disk has a fully developed anthropomorphic figure standing on a horse and supported by bull-men.<sup>55</sup> A tail was also added and finally there was further “innovation”<sup>56</sup>—the anthropomorphic figure was shown with a bow and present in scenes of war, making it a warrior god.<sup>57</sup> On the “Broken Obelisk” a winged disk with hands only (no face!) hands a bow to the king.<sup>58</sup> On a glazed tile a winged human figure in a blazing sun disk is shown above a charioteer (war!) shooting a bow.<sup>59</sup> The Assyrian palace reliefs of king Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud depict a god in a ring shooting his bow in support of the king in battle.<sup>60</sup> Later the god involved in battle disappeared, but the winged disk persisted, as, for example on the decorations of the chariots.<sup>61</sup>

The protective function persisted as well, also with regard to the king of Assyria, but now the sun god is *fighting* on behalf of the king, which is a unique rendering of a “particular religious and political system.”<sup>62</sup> The same figure appears hovering over the “sacred tree,” but holding a ring.<sup>63</sup> Royal stelae show the Assyrian king with a *starburst of divinity*,<sup>64</sup> including the symbol of the non-anthropomorphic winged sun.<sup>65</sup> On a stela from Zincirli king Kulamuwa stands (reflecting Assyrian influence) with

<sup>53</sup> Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, Figs. 39–40, 42.

<sup>54</sup> Mayer-Opificius, “Die geflügelte Sonne,” 207; cf. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 196–197, and Lauber, “Ikonographie der Flügelsonne,” 94.

<sup>55</sup> Lauber, “Ikonographie der Flügelsonne,” 93, Fig. 12, in accord with Podella, *Das Lichtkleid JHWHs*, 142 and Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 201, Fig. 32.

<sup>56</sup> Lauber, “Ikonographie der Flügelsonne,” 94.

<sup>57</sup> Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 257–262; LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form*, 96–99; Ornan, “The Winged Disc,” 211–213.

<sup>58</sup> Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, Figs. 87–88.

<sup>59</sup> LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form*, 97, Fig. 1.4.

<sup>60</sup> Janus Meuszynski, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrud)* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1981), Plate 2, with detail of the figure in Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, Fig. 91.

<sup>61</sup> Ornan, “The Winged Disc,” Fig. 3. LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form*, 99, refers here to the Megiddo ivory as the “militarizing of the solar disk,” because the prince returns in his war chariot and there are soldiers. Note, however, that here the sun is not depicted as *fighting*, as is the case in Assyria, but in “traditional” Egyptian form.

<sup>62</sup> Ornan, “The Winged Disc,” 312.

<sup>63</sup> Ornan, *Triumph of the Symbol*, 90, Figs. 108a–109.

<sup>64</sup> Ori Z. Soltes, *Our Sacred Signs: How Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Art Draw from the Same Source* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2005), 42.

<sup>65</sup> Julian E. Reade, “Shikaf-I Gulgul: Its Date and Symbolism,” *Iranica Antiqua* 12 (1977): 38–41.

symbols of the gods, including the winged sun.<sup>66</sup> The non-anthropomorphic winged ring/disk is also found on an Assyrian helmet depicting a coronation scene.<sup>67</sup> The identification of the god represented is not the concern here and it is hotly debated. It might be the sun god Shamash, the national god Asshur or even Ninurta.<sup>68</sup> The Assyrian emblem was also used in Urartu in the ninth to the seventh centuries, where the god is also armed and supported by two figures.<sup>69</sup> On an ivory from Nimrud in the eighth century there is a winged disk, but above it a female face holding flowers, a sun goddess.<sup>70</sup>

The winged sun also influenced Israel and Yahwism itself, but it goes back to much earlier Egyptian influences, as shown by the Megiddo ivories. On the famous Taanach stand (ca. 1000) there is a winged sun disk on the topmost register above an animal (bull or horse?).<sup>71</sup> This might represent YHWH,<sup>72</sup> but also heaven, as was already seen on earlier examples.<sup>73</sup> Keel has emphasized the role of the sun god of Jerusalem.<sup>74</sup> Two bullae found in 2006 in Jerusalem (dating from the ninth century) also show a winged disk, one of them with a throne, comparable to the Tell Halaf material.<sup>75</sup> The seal of an official with a Yahwistic name from

<sup>66</sup> Ornan, "The Winged Disk," Fig. 24.

<sup>67</sup> Izak Cornelius, "Aspects of the Iconography of the Warrior Goddess Ištar and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecies," in *Images and Prophecy in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean*, eds. Martti Nissinen and Charles E. Carter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), Fig. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. earlier Pering ("Die geflügelte Scheibe"), who favoured Ninurta. The warrior god might be Asshur (Ornan, "The Winged Disc," 212), but Shamash also has martial traits (Peter Calmeyer, "Das Zeichen der Herrschaft... Ohne Šamaš wird es nicht gegeben," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 17 (1984): 136–153).

<sup>69</sup> Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 259, Fig. 89, and Ursula Seidl, "Achaimenidischen Entlehnungen aus der urartäischen Kultur," in *Continuity and Change: Proceedings of the Last Archaemenid Workshop*, eds. Helen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amelie Kuhrt (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 122.

<sup>70</sup> Kutter, *Die Sonnengottheiten*, 284, Fig. 18.

<sup>71</sup> Pirhiya Beck, "The Cult-Stands from Taanach," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, eds. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman (Washington: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1991), 352–381; Frank S. Frick, *Iron Age Cultic Structures from the Excavations at Tell Taanek 1963–1968* (Birzeit: Palestinian Institute of Archaeology Birzeit University, 2001), 119–128 (detailed photograph on 123) and Taylor *Yahweh and the Sun*, 24–37, Pls. 1a–d (detail 1d).

<sup>72</sup> Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 30, 37.

<sup>73</sup> Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 157–160, Fig. 184.

<sup>74</sup> Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, and now Keel and Uehlinger, "Sonnengottheit von Jerusalem."

<sup>75</sup> Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, Figs. 191–192.

the eighth century shows winged suns.<sup>76</sup> A fragmentary plaque from Tel Dan depicts an offering scene with winged sun above.<sup>77</sup>

A series of seal impressions on jar handles with winged disks from Judah in the latter part of the eighth century contain the word *lamelek* (“belonging to the king”).<sup>78</sup> The symbolism is surely royal; Welten talked of “eine Art Wappen oder Kennzeichen des Königshauses oder der königlichen Verwaltung.”<sup>79</sup> But the symbol has also been linked to the solarization of the god YHWH.<sup>80</sup> In Ps 84:11 “the Lord God is a sun,” and in Maleachi 4:2 (Heb. 3:20) the image of the *winged* sun occurs.<sup>81</sup> A seal impression on a jar handle from En-Gedi showing a winged sun and with an inscription (perhaps *lmr*: “to the Lord”) is not from the Persian period, but earlier.<sup>82</sup>

In the next period—when the Neo-Babylonians ruled the Near East—the winged sun disappeared; in fact, the winged sun (disk) was never common in this region, but rather the wingless sun.<sup>83</sup> Further south at Teima in Arabia there is a monument with winged suns.<sup>84</sup> Conoid seals from En-Gedi in Palestine near the Dead Sea depict symbols of gods such as Marduk, but also the winged sun.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Images of God*, Figs. 263a–b.

<sup>77</sup> Abraham Biran, “Dan,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2008), vol. 5, 1688.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Welten, *Die Königs-Stempel: Ein Beitrag zur Militärpolitik Judas unter Hiskia und Josia* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969). For the dating see now Oded Lipschits et al., “Royal Judahite Jar Handles: Reconsidering the Chronology of the *lmlk* Stamp Impressions,” *Tel Aviv* 37 (2010): 3–32.

<sup>79</sup> Welten, *Die Königs-Stempel*, 171.

<sup>80</sup> Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems*, 417–419, Figs. 285–289; Keel and Uehlinger, *Images of God*, 274–277; Taylor, *Jahweh and the Sun*, 42–58.

<sup>81</sup> Lauber, *Sonne der Gerechtigkeit: Sol Iustitiae illustra nos* “Son van geregtigheid bestraal ons” (Sun of righteousness illuminate us) is found in the motto of the *Teologiese Seminarium* in Stellenbosch, South Africa, taken over from the motto of the University of Utrecht in Holland—which shows how far symbols can travel. It should be remembered that the Dutch came to the Cape of Good Hope because of . . . *trade*. An Egyptian winged sun disk is found on the entrance of the L’Agulhas lighthouse (the “Pharos of the South,” linking the Cape with Egypt and both lighthouses guiding shipping) on the southern Cape coast at the southern-most tip of Africa (Izak Cornelius, “Van Karnak tot Kakamas: die Naleef van Ou Egipte in die Suid-Afrikaanse Boukuns,” *Akroterion* 46 (2001): 75–91, Fig. 4b) and “Egyptianising Motifs in South African Architecture,” in *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture*, eds. Jean-Marcel Humbert and Clifford Price (London: University College, 2003), 247–255, Fig. 14:6.

<sup>82</sup> Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit Katalog Band II: Von Bahan bis Tell Eton* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2010), 560–561 (En-Gedi 2).

<sup>83</sup> Seidl, “Das richtige Bild.”

<sup>84</sup> Dalley, “Winged Disk.”

<sup>85</sup> Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette II*, 562–563 (En-Gedi 7).

In the Achaemenid Period and in Persia itself the winged disk/ring occurs in different forms.<sup>86</sup> Margaret Cool Root argued that there are two styles (or two influences): Egyptian and Assyrian—the Assyrian one where the king is directly related to the god and the Egyptian one (directly derived from Egypt) where the god protects the king. On material from Egypt a traditional Egyptian winged disk is shown.<sup>87</sup> The second type, the winged disk with a man in it in Persian dress, has its origin in Assyria and also Urartu.<sup>88</sup> The most famous example is on the rock relief at Behistun, where the figure holds a ring and is shown hovering over King Darius I and the rebels.<sup>89</sup> There are further examples from the Persepolis reliefs, e.g., the Council Hall: the king with attendants, and above hovers the winged being.<sup>90</sup> In some cases the winged figure is shown together with the “purely” Egyptian winged sun, as in the council hall, or only Egyptian winged suns, as in the throne hall.<sup>91</sup>

The winged disk figure supported by other beings has been encountered before. This is also shown on Achaemenid seals, although they are sometimes the typical Persian bulls.<sup>92</sup> When the king hunts lions from his chariot, the winged being hovers above to protect him, as shown earlier on the Megiddo ivory. On scenes of “Heroic Encounter” portrayed on seals from the Persepolis Treasury and Fortification archives there is a winged sun disk.<sup>93</sup> Again the identification of the figure in the disk is disputed.

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<sup>86</sup> Mark B. Garrison, “Visual Representation of the Divine and the Numinous in Early Achaemenid Iran: Old Problems, New Directions,” [http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublications/e\\_idd\\_iran.pdf](http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublications/e_idd_iran.pdf) (accessed December 2010), 25–40; Barbara Kaim, “Das geflügelte Symbol in der achämenidischen Glyptik,” *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 24 (1991): 31–34. Margaret C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Archaemenid Art: Essays in the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 215–215. Cf. Sabrina S. Maras, *Iconography, Identity and Inclusion: the Winged Disk and Royal Power during the Reign of Darius the Great* (Berkeley: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2009).

<sup>87</sup> Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire* (London: Routledge, 2007), Fig. 11.6, and Root, *King and Kingship*, 61–64, Pl. IX.

<sup>88</sup> Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 556, Fig. 11.45, and on Urartu, Seidl, “Achaimenidische Entlehnungen,” 125.

<sup>89</sup> Root, *King and Kingship*, 58–61, Pls. VI–VIII.

<sup>90</sup> Erich F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I: Structures, Reliefs, Inscriptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, 1953), 116, Pl. 75.

<sup>91</sup> Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, Pls. 79 and 99.

<sup>92</sup> Hildi Keel-Leu and Beatrice Teissier, *Die vorderasiatischen Rollsiegel der Sammlungen “Bibel + Orient” der Universität Freiburg Schweiz* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004), 237, no. 261, Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, Fig. 35, also Root, *King and Kingship*, 148, Pl. XLI.

<sup>93</sup> Erich F. Schmidt, *Persepolis II. The Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1957), 7–11, and Mark Garrison and Margaret C. Root, *Seals on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. Volume I: Images of Heroic Encounter. Part 1: Text* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2001), 69.



Fig. 1: The winged sun disk. Source: Hugo Gressmann, 1927, *Altorientalische Bilder zum Alten Testament*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1927, Tafel CXXV:311

Traditionally it has been linked with the god Ahura Mazda,<sup>94</sup> but this view has been criticized.<sup>95</sup> It might be “a sign of legitimate kingship.”<sup>96</sup>

A winged sun disk is also found on a Phoenician terracotta plaque and the stele of Yehawmilk dedicated to the Lady of Byblos (fifth century).<sup>97</sup> The inscription reads “the winged solar disc of gold, which is set in the midst of the stone”—a *golden plaque* may have been affixed to the pictured solar disk.<sup>98</sup> The winged sun is a symbol of cosmic order.<sup>99</sup> A rock relief near Tyre shows a seated goddess and other figures, and above a winged sun disk with uraei.<sup>100</sup> Another winged sun disk appears on a stela from Amrit which shows a smiting god over a lion on mountains. The inscription (added later?) mentions the healing god Shadrapa.<sup>101</sup> This is

<sup>94</sup> Root, *King and Kingship*, 169–176.

<sup>95</sup> Especially by Alireza Shahbazi, “An Achaemenid Symbol I. A Farewell to ‘Fravahr’ and ‘Ahuramazda,’” *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 7 (1974): 135–144; now also Garrison, “Visual Representation of the Divine,” 36–40.

<sup>96</sup> Garrison, “Visual Representation of the Divine,” 39.

<sup>97</sup> Nunn, *Der figürliche Motivschatz*, 13, Pls. 1,1–2.

<sup>98</sup> Martin Leuenberger, “Blessing in Text and Picture in Israel and the Levant: A Comparative Case Study on the Representation of Blessing in Hirbet el-Qom and on the Stela of Yehiawmilk of Byblos,” *Biblische Notizen* 141 (2009): 16.

<sup>99</sup> Kutter, *Die Sonnengottheiten*, 278.

<sup>100</sup> Nunn, *Motivschatz*, 17, Fig. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Nunn, *Motivschatz*, 14, Plate 1,6.

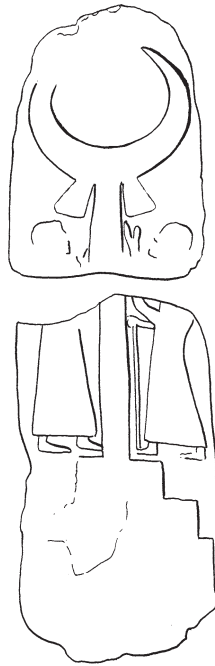


Fig. 2: Stela with standard of Sin of Harran. Courtesy of BIBLE+ORIENT foundation Fribourg, Switzerland. Source: Othmar Keel, 1994, “Das Mondemblem von Harran auf Stelen und Siegelamuletten und der Kult der nächtlichen Gestirne bei den Aramäern,” in *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel IV*, edited by Othmar Keel, Fribourg/Göttingen: University Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, fig. 8.

reminiscent of Malachi 3:20 (4:2), where the “sun of righteousness shall rise, with *healing* in its wings.”<sup>102</sup> The sun disk on funerary stelae might serve as a “regenerative symbol.”<sup>103</sup> On glyptic material from Persian Period Palestine a winged disk is shown above a hero, even above the Egyptian Bes.<sup>104</sup> There was “an interregional symbolic system in the Achaemenid empire that served to signify and legitimate the new socio-political order”

<sup>102</sup> Kutter, *Die Sonnengottheiten*, 282.

<sup>103</sup> Kutter, *Die Sonnengottheiten*, 280. In Egypt the sun was a symbol of regeneration.

<sup>104</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *Images of God*, Figs. 361a, 361c, 366b. From April 2009 to March 2010 I was an international fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Ruhr University Bochum working (together with Christian Frevel) on a project on the Symbol Systems of Palestine in the Persian Period as found in the iconographical sources.

as reflected by seals with “Powerful Persianisms,” but “seals could also travel along the ways of business without regard for politics or religion.”<sup>105</sup>

In sum, this first case study has traced how the winged disk/sun travelled from Egypt to the East as far as Persia. The emblem/symbol of the winged sun was adopted from Egypt, but adapted locally and given other meanings. The royal symbolism (or some link with royalty) prevailed in most cases, from the Hittites to the Persians. In Assyria (and taken over by the Persians) a figure was added to the disk and the Assyrians made this figure a war deity.

The medium of exchange might have been the military expansion of Egypt into Palestine, but as far as the other regions are concerned, *trade* might be another option, since Egyptian armies had not marched into some of the regions where the symbol is found. Traders did not only transport merchandise to faraway places, but also ideas and these could include religious ideas.<sup>106</sup>

### 3. THE TRAVELS OF THE MOON GOD OF HARRAN

The next case study will focus on migration in the opposite direction, *from East to West*. The travels of the moon god of Harran will be traced. The moon god was called Sin (Suen) and was “the lamp of heaven and earth.”<sup>107</sup> The cult of Sin of Harran is already mentioned at Mari in the second millennium. The god with his crescent symbol is depicted on Assyrian seals

<sup>105</sup> Elspeth R.M. Dusingberre, “Imperial Style and Constructed Identity: A ‘Graeco-Persian’ Cylinder Seal from Sardis,” *Ars Orientalis* 27 (1997): 99, and Christoph Uehlinger “Powerful Persianisms in Glyptic Iconography of Persian Period Palestine,” in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, eds. Bob Becking and Marjo Korpel (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 140.

<sup>106</sup> Izak Cornelius, “The Commercial Relations of Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.—A Discussion of the Cuneiform texts from Mari and Ugarit,” in *Pillars of Smoke and Fire: The Holy Land in History and Thought*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988), 23.

<sup>107</sup> Manfred Krebernik, “Mondgott A.I. In Mesopotamien,” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, eds. Erich Ebeling, Bruno Meissner and Dietz O. Edzard (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993–1997), vol. 8, 360–369; and Brian B. Schmidt, “Moon,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, eds. Karel van der Toorn et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1098–1113. On the iconography of the moon god, see Dominique Collon, “Mondgott B. In der Bildkunst,” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, eds. Erich Ebeling, Bruno Meissner and Dietz O. Edzard (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993–1997), vol. 8, 371–376.



with the goddess Ishtar.<sup>108</sup> The temple of the moon god, known as “house of joy,” was at Harran on the upper Balikh.<sup>109</sup> From here the cult spread, as shown by material found in Turkey and Syria-Palestine.<sup>110</sup>

### 3.1 *Stelae*

Six stelae (ca. 1.5 m high) from Turkey and Northern Syria show the emblem alone, consisting of a crescent on a standard, sometimes with tassels.<sup>111</sup> Two examples depict the standard flanked by two figures with raised hands.<sup>112</sup> Two items show an armed anthropomorphic god: on a relief standing on a winged-horned lion with a standard in front,<sup>113</sup> and on a terracotta relief on a tower with a crescent symbol on his crown, on his sword, in his hand, and to his left and right standards (as on the larger stela) with a large crescent moon and tassels.<sup>114</sup>

Some stelae have legible inscriptions mentioning “Sin” and “Sin who dwells in Harran.”<sup>115</sup> The god was the guarantor of agreements and therefore appears on stelae described as “boundary-stones.”<sup>116</sup> The two figures flanking the standard might be treaty partners. At Zincirli in Southern Turkey (200 km from Harran), the ancient Aramean Sam'al—a stela of king Barakib (now in Berlin) shows the king and scribe and above the (small)

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Staubli, “Sin von Harran,” in *Werbung für die Götter*, ed. Thomas Staubli (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 2003), 79–80; Christoph Uehlinger, “Figurative Policy, Propaganda und Prophetie,” in *Congress Volume Jerusalem 1996*, ed. John A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1997), Figs. 19–20.

<sup>109</sup> Tamara Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) and Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 388–425.

<sup>110</sup> For the material see Steven W. Holloway, “Harran: Cultic Geography in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and its Implications for Sennacherib’s ‘Letter for Hezekiah’ in 2 Kings,” in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, ed. Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995), 299–303; Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), Part II and Othmar Keel, “Das Mondemblem von Harran auf Stelen und Siegelamuletten und der Kult der nächtlichen Gestirne bei den Aramäern,” in *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel IV*, ed. Othmar Keel (Fribourg/Göttingen: University Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 135–202. Staubli, “Sin von Harran;” Theuer, *Der Mondgott*, 330–351, 516–526; Uehlinger, “Figurative Policy,” 314–323.

<sup>111</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Figs. 1–6, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Figs. 1–6. For the find spots of these and other stelae see the map in Staubli, “Sin von Harran,” Fig. IIC.

<sup>112</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Figs. 7–8, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Figs. 7–8.

<sup>113</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Fig. 9, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Fig. 9.

<sup>114</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Fig. 10, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Fig. 10.

<sup>115</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 110–112, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” 199–202.

<sup>116</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, “Mondemblem von Harran,” 147, and Othmar Keel and Monika Bernett, *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor: Die Stele von Betsaida (et-Tell)* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 1998), 84. Cf. the texts translated in Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 110–112.

symbol of the moon god, with tassels,<sup>117</sup> but also an inscription (KAI 218): “my master is the lord of Harran,” as the Arameans called him.<sup>118</sup>

In Palestine at Beth Saida a fascinating stela was found.<sup>119</sup> It shows a bull figure, but with horns in the form of a sickle moon, making it a moon god. In Sumerian and Akkadian texts the moon god is “lord of horns,” or “horned bull.” The stela stood at the city gate and was perhaps part of the cult at the city gate.<sup>120</sup> The market place or bazaar was also there. At Rudj el-Kursi near Amman a sanctuary was found with two reliefs flanking the gate showing the symbol of the moon god.<sup>121</sup>

### 3.2 Seals

The emblem of the god is found on various seals (glyptic) in Palestine and Jordan.<sup>122</sup> Keel divided the seals into three groups: the Eastern or Assyrian-Babylonian group; the intermediate group from the Harran region; and the Western or North Syrian-Phoenician-Palestinian group. The last group can be subdivided into examples with the emblem alone and the emblem and worshipper(s), sometimes with tree(s). There are also earlier examples and, last but not least, the Aramaic name seals.

It is impossible to give a comprehensive overview of this material, not even a fully representative selection is possible; only a few types can be mentioned to give an indication of their *function*. From Gezer comes a seal with the emblem on a sales document of a seller with a Yahwistic name, Netan-Jahu.<sup>123</sup> Here the moon god is the guarantor of an agreement (as on the larger stelae), but it also indicates the popularity of the god within the YHWH religion.<sup>124</sup> A seal impression (bulla) from seventh-century Jerusalem also shows the symbol of the moon god.<sup>125</sup> A cylinder

<sup>117</sup> On other Zincirli stelae the crescent appears alone in its simple form (Gabriela Theuer, *Der Mondgott in den nordwestsemitischen Religionen Syrien-Palästinas* (Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), Fig. 6c).

<sup>118</sup> Keel *Goddesses and Trees*, Fig. 11, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Fig. 11; Theuer, *Der Mondgott*, 333, Figs. 7a–b.

<sup>119</sup> Keel and Bernett, *Kult am Stadttor*; Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 115–120, and Staubli, “Sin von Harran,” 68–69.

<sup>120</sup> As shown on artistic representations, e.g. Staubli, “Sin von Harran,” 69.

<sup>121</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 113–114, Fig. 105.

<sup>122</sup> Keel *Goddesses and Trees*, Figs. 15–102, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Figs. 15–102; Keel and Uehlinger, *Images of God*, Figs. 296–307; Staubli, “Sin von Harran,” 75–89; Theuer, *Der Mondgott*, 336–351, 516–526, and Helga Weippert, “Siegel mit Mondsichelstandarten,” *Biblische Notizen* 5 (1978): 43–58.

<sup>123</sup> Keel and Bernett, *Kult am Stadttor*, 84, and Fig. 112.

<sup>124</sup> Theuer, *Der Mondgott*, 519.

<sup>125</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Fig. 36, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Fig. 36.

seal from Mt Nebo depicts two musicians in front of the symbol of the moon god.<sup>126</sup> Two worshippers flank the emblem, a single worshipper is shown with a tree and two trees flank the emblem.<sup>127</sup> The god is also represented in anthropomorphic form in a boat.<sup>128</sup> These are indications of the strong “astralization” or rather “lunarization” of the YHWH cult.<sup>129</sup> Whereas the inspiration for the solarization in the eighth century and much earlier came from Egypt as shown above, the influence in the seventh century came from Mesopotamia.

### 3.3 *Other Material*

Of great value is the 17×21 cm bronze standard in the form of a crescent found at Tel Sera (in an Assyrian fort)—an example of the standards carried into battle on the road of expansion by the Assyrian armies.<sup>130</sup> In the year 671 Esarhaddon of Assyria invaded Egypt—with the help of the god Assur, and of course the god Sin, as the texts inform us.<sup>131</sup> Accordingly, a cylinder seal depicts not only the well-known Sin standard, but also with it an Egyptian cobra, the ureaus, as if it is honouring Sin.<sup>132</sup>

The moon god of Harran travelled to the West, perhaps as part of the military expansion of the Assyrians in the ninth to seventh centuries. For Holloway, this “was a self-conscious act of imperial statecraft, designed to foster the acceptance of a cult whose pantheon was understood as protecting and legitimating Assyrian interests in the West”<sup>133</sup> In this process of transmission the Aramaeans played an important role as

<sup>126</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Fig. 34, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Fig. 34.

<sup>127</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Figs. 44–46, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Figs. 44–46.

<sup>128</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Figs. 80–81, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Figs 80–81; Tallay Ornan, *The Triumph of the Symbol: Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban* (Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 68, and Theuer, *Der Mondgott*, 524–526.

<sup>129</sup> Matthias Albani, *Der eine Gott und die himmlischen Heerscharen: Zur Begründung des Monotheismus bei Deuterjesaja im Horizont der Astralisierung des Gottesverständnisses im Alten Orient* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 2–3; Angelika Berlejung, “Geschichte und Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel,” in *Grundinformation Altes Testament*, ed. Jan C. Gertz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 148.

<sup>130</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, Fig. 12, and “Mondemblem von Harran,” Fig. 12; Staubli, “Sin von Harran,” 66, Fig. IId; Uehlinger, “Figurative Policy,” 31, Fig. 148. On these standards see Erika Bleibtreu, “Standarten auf Neuassyrischen Reliefs und Bronzetreiarbeiten,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 23 (1992): 347–356.

<sup>131</sup> Uehlinger, “Figurative Policy,” 317.

<sup>132</sup> Staubli, “Sin von Harran,” 83, no.90; Uehlinger, “Figurative Policy,” Fig. 15.

<sup>133</sup> Holloway, “Harran,” 307. He compares it to the (Christian) cross and Constantine.

intermediaries.<sup>134</sup> The armies followed the typical routes of communication, but these were also used by traders and merchants.<sup>135</sup>

The veneration of the moon god did not end with the fall of the Assyrian empire. Nabonid, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian-Chaldean dynasty, was a “Sinophile,” a “prophet” of the moon god of Harran, and even lived as a “monk” in the desert at Teima in Arabia (an oasis on the Arabian trade routes). On a stela he holds a ringed staff/standard with (broken) crescent symbol on top. Above are the symbols of the gods: crescent (Sin, the largest and closest to him), the winged sun disk of Shamash and the star of Ishtar.<sup>136</sup> A seal from Palestine/Israel (En-Gedi) shows a worshipper with divine symbols and above him a crescent.<sup>137</sup> The symbol of Sin of Harran lived on. This well-known symbol is found as late as the third century C.E. at Dura Europos.<sup>138</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Merchants and commodities travelled along the trade routes of the ancient world, but so too did ideas and art objects. Ideas and religious beliefs are also reflected in visual symbols. In this way certain gods were carried along, gods travelled, were exchanged between different cultures, and some became “global players.” Two examples have been examined more closely.

The symbol of the winged disk (or sun disk) “travelled” from Egypt, perhaps along the trade routes and not only through conquest, because Egypt never conquered some of the regions involved. The symbol (emblem) of the moon god of Harran was brought by the Assyrian armies to the West, although they (like the Egyptians) never enforced their religion on other peoples.<sup>139</sup> These armies used the same routes as merchants and traders.

<sup>134</sup> Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 93.

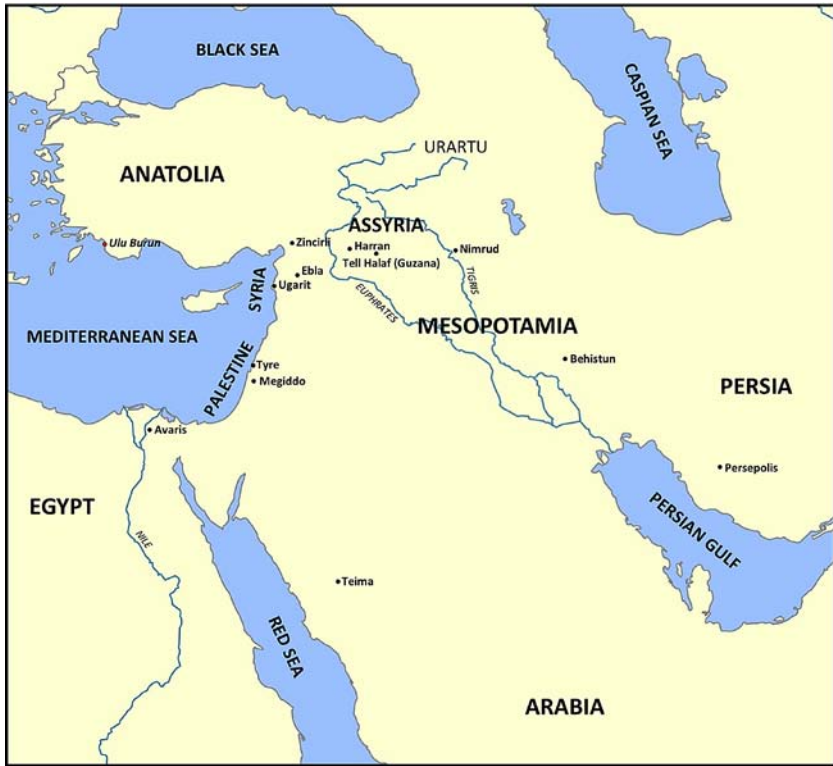
<sup>135</sup> For a map of the Neo-Assyrian empire with its routes, see Simo Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part 1: Letters from Assyria and the West* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1987).

<sup>136</sup> Börker-Klähn, *Altorientalische Bildstelen*, Fig. 266 (BM ME 90837).

<sup>137</sup> Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette II*, 564–565 (En-Gedi 9).

<sup>138</sup> Hans T. Bossert, *Altsyrien* (Tübingen: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1951), 567. The crescent symbol has its “Nachwirkung” until the present day in the flags of many countries, like Pakistan, Turkey and Algeria.

<sup>139</sup> Mordechai Cogan, “Judah under Assyrian Hegemony: A Reexamination of Imperialism and Religion,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993): 403–414, e.g. 412: “There is not the slightest hint anywhere that the adoption of foreign ways was imposed.”



Map 1: The ancient Near East. Map designed by Liani Swanepoel.

As a matter of fact, the city of Harran was a major post along the *trade routes* between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean and with rich religious traditions stretching back thousands of years, as shown by Tamara Green.<sup>140</sup>

Not only the emblem, but sometimes also the *meaning* was transmitted. The *royal symbolism* of the winged disk so typical of Egypt was taken over by the Hittites and was still around at the time of the Judahite kings. In the same way the emblem of the moon god of Harran as protector of agreements was depicted on stelae serving as “boundary-stones” from near Harran, but also on the legal documents from Gezer in Palestine.

<sup>140</sup> Green, *City of the Moon God*, 19.

However, there were also *changes in meaning* and, as was seen in the visual changes in the iconography, these added other attributes to the original Egyptian symbol. The original Egyptian *sun* disk became a symbol of heaven and was associated with rain. For this reason the winged sun is shown with atlants supporting it and streams of water are added. The Assyrians and Persians went even further and *added* an anthropomorphic figure in the disk, which then changed into a *ring*. In Assyria the anthropomorphic figure is shown as armed with a bow, making it a god of war who fights alongside the king, a far cry from the original Egyptian sun symbol.

These were some ideas on “trading” religions, “trading” deities through the medium of visual symbols in the Ancient Near East. Through their symbols (as icons and emblems) deities were “exchanged” between different cultures. These symbols “travelled” along the international routes of communication used for trade. Utilizing the trade metaphor, the deities were “traded” and “exported.”

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## TRADING THE SYMBOLS OF THE GODDESS NANAYA

Joan Goodnick Westenholz\*

In the marketplace of religions, the goddess Nanaya was a popular commodity among worshippers of various polytheistic traditions.<sup>1</sup> Her cult was adopted and adapted by the Sumerians, Akkadians, Elamites, Arameans, Hellenistic Greeks, Egyptians, Syrians, and the many Iranian groups. The area of her deepest veneration was in central Asia. The various Iranian peoples, the Bactrians, the Sogdians and the Chorasmians, and the probably non-Iranian Yuezhi<sup>2</sup> who established the Kushan (Kuṣāṇa) empire venerated Nana(ya) throughout the millennia. The goal of this paper is to evaluate and consider one set of possible factors relating transregional trade exchange, the hubs and networks thereof, to the receptiveness of these distinct ethnic and religious communities to the worship of this goddess.

As stated in the aims of this conference, in general through trade exchange, various ideas and religious “commodities” were “offered”, “negotiated” and “bought.” In this context, I will attempt to answer the question: What caused the goddess Nanaya to be “bought”? The inquiry focuses on her sacred symbols as one medium for conveying religious beliefs, since icons and images have always played an important role in the process

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\* Joan Goodnick Westenholz sadly died before completion of this volume which we dedicate to her.

<sup>1</sup> All abbreviations are those of *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956ff) and *The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1984ff), with the following addition: ETCSL = Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Ebeling, J., Flückiger-Hawker, E., Robson, E., Taylor, J., and Zólyomi, G., *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>), Oxford: 1998–2006. SEAL = *Sources of Early Akkadian Literature*, A Text Corpus of Babylonian and Assyrian Literary Texts from the 3rd and 2nd Millennia B.C.E., edited under the direction of Prof. Dr. M.P. Streck of the Altorientalisches Institut of the University of Leipzig and Prof. Dr. N. Wasserman of the Institute of Archaeology of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> The Yuezhi are reliably identified with the Tokharoi of ancient Greek sources (as well as early Chinese sources and Sanskrit sources, which also transcribe the name). Their original language has not been established with absolute certainty, but the current state of specialist knowledge about the issue is that it was probably a “Tokharian” (Tocharisch) language, and was in any case probably not Iranian. The people however shifted to Bactrian (an Iranian language) after their conquest of the region.

of densification and diffusion of those beliefs. The basic axiom is that religious symbol systems are shaped gradually in cultural exchange and encounters by various forms of adaptation and transformation.

The trade network to be surveyed constitutes the western part of the ancient trading network of Central Asia and of greater Central Eurasia, the so-called Silk Road. This section leads from Mesopotamia to the foothills of the Pamirs by way of the important entrepot towns of Nisa and Samarkand further to Panjikent and south of the Pamirs down to Bactria and India.

It is commonly accepted that religious symbol systems make a religion visible, different and identifiable and play a significant role in the diffusion of a faith and in the densification of its core doctrines. This is normally expected of cults of individual deities. Nevertheless, what symbols can be attributed to Nanaya?

In the latter half of the second millennium B.C.E., the first known depiction of the goddess Nanaya identified as such by an accompanying inscription occurs on a land donation made by king Melišipak (1186–1172 B.C.E.) to princess Hunnubat-Nanaya whose name reflects royal devotion to the goddess (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> As stated by Slanski,<sup>4</sup> this monumental stele (termed *kudurru* in Akkadian) is one of the few examples of integrated text and imagery. Contrary to the canonical system of symbolic invocation of the divine forces to guarantee the charter, the pictorial element of this stele seems to be an illustration of the grant itself: *ṭuppa zakūt ālāni iknukma iddinšī u mala iddinuši in narī išturma in maḥar* *“Nanaya . . . “Nanaya an dār ušziz: “He (Melišipak) gave her (Hunnubat-Nanaya) a sealed tablet (establishing) the exemption of the villages, and he wrote everything he gave her on a stele and placed it before Nanaya forever in sanctuary(?) of Nanaya”* (ii 9–15). The image depicts a traditional presentation scene: Melišipak is shown leading his daughter by the hand to the enthroned goddess Nanaya. The goddess, dressed in the divine flounced robe hal-

<sup>3</sup> Louvre Sb 23, published by Vincent Scheil, *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse* 10 (1908): 87–94, Pl. 13, left; cf. discussions by Ursula Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs, Symbole mesopotamischer Gottheiten* (Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 26 n. 23 and 24, 79, 195ff. (LIV. Anthropomorphe Göttinnen), 198, 208 (LXV. Kultszenen); Kathryn E. Slanski, *The Babylonian Entitlement narūs (kudurru): A Study in Their Form and Function* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research 2003), 44–48, 52, 56, 142; Michael Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens in der 2. Hälfte des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr.: Das anthropomorphe Bild in Verhältnis zum Symbol* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2006), 23, 45, 50, 193 n. 1031.

<sup>4</sup> Slanski, *Babylonian Entitlement narūs*, 47.



Fig. 1: Goddess Nanaya identified by an accompanying inscription on a land donation made by king Melišipak (1186–1172 B.C.E.) to princess Hunnubat-Nanaya whose name reflects royal devotion to the goddess; photograph by Marie-Lan Nguyen; source: Wikipedia.

lowed for centuries and wearing the new-style cylindrical feather crown, sits enthroned on a seat shaped like a temple, which is placed on a dais with lion claw feet. Her hands are raised in blessing. Above her hover the three celestial emblems, the sun disk of the sun-god Šamaš, the crescent of the moon-god Sin and the star of the goddess of the planet Venus, Ištar, which represent the traditional symbolic invocation of the divine forces to guarantee the charter.<sup>5</sup> Together with the Code of Hammurabi and the Victory Stele of Narām-Sîn, this stele was taken to Susa in the Khuzistan area of western Iran in the twelfth century B.C.E. as war booty. Her statue

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the function of the divine symbols, see Kathryn Slanski, "Representation of the Divine on the Babylonian Entitlement Monuments (kudurru) Part I: Divine Symbols," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 50 (2003/2004): 308–323.

had already been taken by the Elamites at an earlier period, importing her cult into Susa. What symbols of Nanaya did the Elamites see on this stele? A goddess clothed in divine garments hallowed through the ages on a dais with lion claw feet, a millennium-old divine throne, symbolizing the power and terror of various goddesses, especially Ištar.

Twelve hundred years later, distinctive symbols and attributes of Nanaya appeared and are most visible in Central Asia. This is clearly demonstrated in the Kuṣāṇa coinage, which was used in trade throughout the vast Kushan Empire and beyond (30–375 C.E.). What was the Kushan iconic image of Nanaya? First, it was an

1. anthropomorphic image

- (a) most commonly depicted standing in profile, wearing a long gown (fig. 2)
- (b) or, less frequently, wearing a short flared tunic over a long skirt holding a bow while reaching over her right shoulder for an arrow from a quiver (fig. 3)
- (c) seated side-saddle on the back of a lion (fig. 4) or shown frontally en face.

2. in all images Nanaya bears a *crescent* on her head<sup>6</sup>

3. in all images Nanaya holds a *sceptre* / staff with an animal protome, which has been variously identified as the forepart of a lion,<sup>7</sup> as a leaping leopard or lynx,<sup>8</sup> and as a horse or stag.<sup>9</sup>

This iconic palimpsest needs unravelling. Let us strip away the layers that account for the multicultural components in the goddess's imagery. Is the top most recent Kushan layer evidence of the densification of worship of Nanaya in central Asia? If so, was the development of symbols local? When the Yuezhi settled in northern Bactria, they could have discovered that Nanā was revered in the region and later adopted her as a patron

<sup>6</sup> See further, Martha Carter, "Nanā with Crescent in Kuṣāṇa Numismatic Imagery," in *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, eds. Eli Franco and Monika Zin (New Delhi: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010), 141–150.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Sims-Williams and Joe Cribb, "A new Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4 (1995–1996): 108.

<sup>8</sup> Martha Carter, "China and the Mysterious Occident: The Queen Mother of the West and Nanā," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 79 (2006): 116.

<sup>9</sup> John M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 83.



Fig. 2: Coin of Kushan King Vasudeva I (ca. 190–229), depicting on obverse Vasudeva holding spear and making offering over fire altar and on the reverse Nana with halo around head, crowned by crescent (AN783910001, © Trustees of the British Museum).



Fig. 3: Coin of Kushan King Huviška (ca. 150–190), depicting on obverse bust of Huviška holding spear and making offering over fire altar and on the reverse Nana in guise of Artemis with bow and quiver (AN783858001, © Trustees of the British Museum).



Fig. 4: Kushan Seal intaglio depicting Nanaya shown in profile seated side-saddle on a lion, crowned with a crescent (AN299550001, © Trustees of the British Museum).



goddess of the Kušāna dynasty. In order to answer these questions, I will scrape the palimpsest to uncover the first layer.

## 1. MESOPOTAMIA

For the first two thousand years, the third through the second millennia B.C.E., we are dependent on the Mesopotamian evidence for the delineations and depictions of Nanaya.

In the Mesopotamian religious symbol system in general, symbols, icons and standards, aniconic representations of the deities from earliest times, were abundant. Some icons were generic symbols and others were specific, some were attributed only to certain deities, others were associated with a few deities and still others linked to many deities. Furthermore, the transfer of attributes is the underlying problem in ancient Near Eastern imagery. There are three types of attributes: transferable attributes (with general meaning) pertaining to high status and associated with the patron deity of a city (e.g. lion, unspecific standards held in hand, etc.), non-transferable attributes of a deity (dog, saw, etc.), and 'generic' attributes pertaining to the function of the deity, (an example would be those of Ištar connected to her warrior aspect). Standards were carried in procession and borne into battle as well as worshipped. Consequently, divine image 'recognizability' is difficult with only a few exceptions.

The major problem with deciphering the Mesopotamian religious symbol system is that the epigraphic and archaeological evidence is not evenly distributed in time and space. Even more important, epigraphic and archaeological evidence is neither corroborative nor comparable. Unfortunately, the texts come without pictures and the pictures come mostly without text. Perhaps a chronological presentation of synchronic textual and visual evidence would be the best way to understand the formation and spread of Nanaya's symbols along the trade routes.

### 1.1 *Second-Millennium Evidence*

#### 1.1.1 *Written Documentation*

In the first half of the second millennium, there is solely textual evidence for Nanaya's astral imagery and a lion sceptre

##### 1.1.1.1 *Star*

A Sumerian tigi-hymn to Nanaya with a prayer for Išbi-Erra, king of the kingdom of Isin, captures many of the facets of the personality of the goddess:

nin-me-nun-na u<sub>4</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> dalla-è ̣i-li-zi-da ul-šè pà-da  
 ᵀna-na-a me-te é-an-ka in-nin-ra túm-ma  
 gal zu nu-u<sub>8</sub>-gig-ge nin kur-kur-ra zid-dè-eš-šè pà-da  
 ᵀna-na-a kalam é-an-ka igi-ġál šúm-mu ba-e-zu  
 an-gin<sub>7</sub> sag<sub>9</sub> munus saġ màš nin dal-dal-le-e du<sub>7</sub>  
 ᵀna-na-a kug ᵀinana-ke<sub>4</sub> zid-dè-eš umun<sub>2</sub> ak  
 munus mul-an hé-me-a nin kug zu níġ-nam-šè ġál-la  
 munus zid šag<sub>4</sub> sù-rá nin inim-šè ġál ġál-la-bi i-zal-le-eš  
 umuš kug ᵀinana-ke<sub>4</sub> ak nu-u<sub>8</sub>-gig-e ki áġ  
 ᵀna-na-a di-kud gal diġir dúr mah ki unug<sup>ki</sup>-ga tìl-la  
 Lady of the princely powers, emerging brilliantly like the sun, chosen forever  
 for her true sensuality.

Nanaya, ornament of E-ana, worthy of the Lady!

Wise one, correctly chosen as lady of all the lands by the Mistress

Nanaya, you instruct the Land, bestowing wisdom in E-ana.

As fine as An [the god of the Heavens], woman with a holy(?) head, made  
 perfect by the ... lady!

Nanaya, properly educated by holy Inana,

Woman, star of An/Heavens, wise lady who is available for everything,

Righteous sympathetic woman, lady who is always available on request,

Counselled by holy Inana, beloved by the Mistress!

Nanaya, great judge, deity who occupies the high throne of Uruk!

(Išbi-Erra C: lines, ETCSL 2.5.1.3)<sup>10</sup>

The synonymy of Nanaya's astral luminosity and her divine radiance occurs in other Sumerian paeans of praise in Sumerian and Akkadian. This literary description took physical form, with a star as her icon adorning her temple. It can be inferred from the wrongdoings of Iddin-Nanaya, the sanga-priest of Nanaya in Uruk, among which was his tearing down the star from the doors of her temple.<sup>11</sup>

#### 1.1.1.2 *Moon and Sun*

In one of the major Akkadian hymns, composed for king Samsuiluna of Babylon (1749–1712),<sup>12</sup> she is *iltam šamaš nišēša* “the goddess, the sun of her people” which can be compared to the simile *utu-gin<sub>7</sub>* “like the sun” in the Sumerian hymn; both phrases emphasize her cosmic aspects (also line 24). Looking at her is like looking at the moon; her shadow is

<sup>10</sup> The translation is based on ETCSL but has been altered by the author.

<sup>11</sup> Shirin Sanati-Müller, “Texte aus dem Šin-kāšid-Palast,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 21 (1990): 191ff. Nr. 135:7–10.

<sup>12</sup> VAS 10 215: 1, text edition Wolfram von Soden, “Altbabylonische Dialektdichtungen,” *ZA* 44 (1938): 26–44. See the most recent translation by Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2005), 89–92. See further on-line transcription, SEAL 2.1.10.3.

resplendent with a corona (ll. 3–4). Repeated similes with the sun and moon are to be found in this hymn. In Line 12 [*al*]kassa addar damiqtum ittum “her path (through the heavens will remain) forever a good sign/is always a good sign.” The emphasis on her light is a leitmotiv in her hymns (*birbirrēt kala ni[šē x x]* “the illumination of all the peoples of...” UET 6 404:1).<sup>13</sup> Nanaya bestows the sun as a luminary on her beloved Samsuiluna (VAS 10 215:50).

On earth, her temple in the city of Ur was called *é-iti-da* “the house of the month/moon”<sup>14</sup> which recalls her connection to the lunar phases. We know that it housed an anthropomorphic cult statue of the goddess Nanaya since we have records of the manufacture of statues which had a core made of copper and plated with silver and overlaid with gold for the eyes, mouth and arms.<sup>15</sup>

### 1.1.1.3 *Lion*

In the same hymn, composed for king Samsuiluna of Babylon, Nanaya bestows *šibir nēšim* the lion sceptre (VAS 10 215:37) on her beloved Samsuiluna. In her city Uruk, there were distributions of bitumen for the construction of a large lion (*pirikkum*) for the temple of Nanaya.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.1.2 *Contemporary Visual Evidence*

The ideogram for the sun and crescent moon frequently appears with gods and goddesses. In particular, there are images of several frontal seated goddesses either flanked by poles topped with lunar crescents or holding palm-like standards with crescents or stars in the background (fig. 5). Among the possible images for Nanaya are a seated figure with only astral symbols and another cloaked figure, wearing a necklace, with a medalion in the form of the sun and crescent moon and similar decorations on her garment.

<sup>13</sup> For an on-line transcription of this text, see SEAL 2.1.10.3.

<sup>14</sup> For this temple, see Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1993), 180, and Andrew George, *House Most High, The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 106 no. 540.

<sup>15</sup> UET III 509, 525, 529, 538, 740; UET IX 569.

<sup>16</sup> Sanati-Müller, “Texte aus dem Šin-kāšid-Palast,” 202–203. Nr. 142:9–11. See Thomas Richter, *Untersuchungen zu den lokalen Panthea Süd- und Mittelbabyloniens in altbabylonischer Zeit* (Münster: Ugarit, 2004), 305. The Akkadian lexeme *pirikkum* is a loan word from Sumerian *pirig* ‘lion.’



Fig. 5: Moulded plaque depicting seated goddess, holding palm-like standards in each hand with lunar crescents in field. Old Babylonian, ca. 1800 B.C.E., from Ur (AN 425624, © Trustees of the British Museum).

The double-headed lion sceptre is a well-known image since the Old Akkadian period (ca. 2300 B.C.E.)<sup>17</sup> and seems to be a functional attribute of the ‘warrior aspect’ of many deities, chiefly the gods Ninurta and Nergal and among goddesses, principally Inana-Ištar.<sup>18</sup> The goddess with a double-headed lion sceptre could also be Nanaya in the absence of any further iconic attributes.

## 1.2 *First-Millennium Evidence*

One thousand years later in first-millennium Mesopotamia, we can see the continuation and specification of iconic imagery. In general, worship scenes occur together with icons/symbols. During the reign of the Neo-Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II (reigned 883–859 B.C.E.) freestanding gypsum monuments were erected as the royal message of respect and supplication towards the gods. These monuments encoded this message in the form that became conventional for the next three hundred years. Such stelae were placed inside and outside temples, both within the empire and in neighbouring lands which had been forced to recognize Assyrian rule. The gods are shown in symbolic form. A helmet with horns represents the supreme god Aššur; a winged disc stands for the sun god Šamaš; a crescent within a full circle is the emblem of the moon god Sin; a fork is the thunderbolt of the storm god Adad; and a star, the planet Venus, signifies Ištar, goddess of love and war. The king wears a row of similar symbols on his chest, with the addition of a Maltese cross, which is understood as a symbol for the sun.<sup>19</sup> A straight equilateral cross, enclosing a cross-shaped design, usually termed the ‘Kassite’ cross, occurs in monuments and other artistic media beginning in the latter part of the second millennium.<sup>20</sup> Because of its appearance in varied and ambiguous contexts, this cross may or may not represent the sun.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 19 fig. 13, 97 fig. 76, 169 s.v. ‘standards, staves and scepters of the gods’; Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs*, 157–161 (XXXIX Doppellöwenkeule), 233–234, and Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, 244–245. Note that the double-headed lion sceptre was a symbol of a particular but indeterminate deity on Kassite and Neo-Assyrian monuments.

<sup>18</sup> Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, 244.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Black and Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols*, 54–55.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Erica Ehrenberg, “Kassite cross,” *Iconography of Deities and Demons*, 2009, [http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublications/e\\_idd\\_kassite\\_cross.pdf](http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublications/e_idd_kassite_cross.pdf), [http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublications/e\\_idd\\_illustrations\\_kassite\\_cross.pdf](http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublications/e_idd_illustrations_kassite_cross.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, 27, 71, 257–259. Despite statements to the contrary (Black and Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols*, 54–55.), it does not substi-



Fig. 6: One half of an Assyrian trinket mould used for making metal trinkets (800–612 B.C.E.) and modern impression. From Nineveh (AN 106254, © Trustees of the British Museum).

### 1.2.1 *Trading Religious Symbols*

During this period, the spread of these icons throughout the Assyrian empire and neighbouring countries takes place through trade and conquest. One means is the sale of religious trinkets. Moulds (fig. 6) were used for making trinkets or small items of jewellery, mostly with a magical or apotropaic purpose, probably to protect the wearer. The mould consists of a square block with matrices or negatives on both sides for casting trinkets, probably in lead but possibly in gold. The mould in fig. 6 has a variety of matrices: on the one side shown, there are forms for casting miniature standards with the sun-disk of sun god Šamaš, the bull horns of the storm god and the crescent of the moon god Sîn, It also has forms for casting pendants of a goat and a naked human body as well as a medallion with gazelle and seven dots of the divine Pleiades stars. Most interestingly, it includes a plaque showing the fiendish rapacious goddess Lamaštu needed to protect the mother in childbirth. Moulds probably belonged to traveling smiths who journeyed from village to village producing trinkets on demand. This is a literal example of the trading of religious goods. The

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tute for the solar disk (see Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, 257–259). Examples where both the solar disk and the cross occur together are Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, kudurru no. 5 and seals 235, 241, 273. Felix Blocher (“Sonnen- und Mondsymbolik nach altorientalischen Darstellungen aus der 2. Hälfte des 2. und der 1. Hälfte des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.” [Heidelberg: unpublished Habilitationsschrift, 1995], 193) observed that the astral trinity of the *kudurru*s—sun, moon and star—are replaced in the seals by the trinity: cross—lozenge—rosette, see critique by Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, 96 n. 497, 295.

question is whether the wearer of these trinkets saw them as symbolic objects or just as exotic trade goods, as fashionable adornments.

### 1.2.2 *Visual Evidence During First Millennium B.C.E.*

#### 1.2.2.1 *Cross*

From around the middle of the eighth century, from the period of the infamous king Nabû-šuma-iškun (ca. 760–748), comes another *kudurru*-like monumental stele from Borsippa (VAS 1 36), on which it is stated that the deities, the goddess Nanaya and the god Mār-bīti, chose the recipient of the divine grant upon his induction into temple service.<sup>22</sup> It is a unique example of a donation in which the gods are the donors. The hymnic paean of praise is addressed to Nanaya: “O Nanaya, exalted lady, the greatest among the gods, valiant, goddess of goddesses, highest among the ladies, who listens to prayers, who grants supplications, spouse of Nabû, sister of Šamaš, beloved of Marduk, firstborn daughter of Anu, whose word is obeyed, the one who has in the assembly of the great gods power unmatched, counsellor of the Igigi-gods . . .” This *kudurru* concludes with the blessings of the deities and is sealed with their seals, probably on the original clay tablet. Above the inscription, as can be seen in figure 7, are carved symbols and figures. The figurative agenda needs highlighting. There are only three anthropomorphic images of deities among the myriad symbols. While the identification of the one male deity as Mār-bīti is straightforward, the determination of the two female deities is fraught with difficulties. As Nanaya is the only goddess mentioned in the accompanying text, she must be one of the two goddesses depicted. The two goddesses are differentiated by dress and attributes. The depiction of the first goddess corresponds to the commonly rendered image of Ištar standing on her lion, holding the ring of kingship in her left hand and a scimitar in her right and she has been so identified,<sup>23</sup> although there was no cult of Ištar in Borsippa. The dress of the second goddess is decorated with crosses<sup>24</sup> and her hands are extended in a gesture similar to that of

<sup>22</sup> For discussions of the image and text, see Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs*, n. 103, and Slanski, *The Babylonian Entitlement narûs*, 99–100, 122.

<sup>23</sup> Tallay Ornan, *The Triumph of the Symbol: Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban* (Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 61. Note, however, that she does not take the inscription into consideration.

<sup>24</sup> Divine garments were frequently decorated with golden appliqués, cf. Adolph Leo Oppenheim, “The Golden Garments of the Gods,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 8 (1949): 172–193. References to such on the garments of the goddess Nanaya are frequent, e.g. 706 *ajari* KÛ.GI 706 *tenšî* KÛ.GI *ša kusîti ša* <sup>d</sup>*Na-na-a* “706 rosettes of gold, 706 *tenšû*-s of gold



Fig. 7: A *kudurru*-like monumental stele from Borsippa (VAS 1 36) from the period of the infamous king Nabû-šuma-iškun (ca. 760–748), including carved symbols and figures. Courtesy of Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

the goddess on the Melišipak *kudurru*. In her study of the Ezida Temple of Borsippa, Caroline Waerzeggers points out that two manifestations of Nanaya were worshipped in Borsippa—Nanaya the spouse of Nabû and

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for the *kusītu*-garment of Nanaya" (YOS 6 117:5; see Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period* [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 208); 700+x ro[settes of gold, y te-e]n-šī-[ia] of gold, their weight including the *mušīptu*-garment is 23 minas ša ana muḫḫi <sup>4</sup>N[a-n]a-a illū, i.e., which are (to be) mounted upon (the garment of the image of) Nanaya" (GCCl 2 69:1–5; see Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 204) (both Nabopolassar, 8th year) (cited by Oppenheim, "Golden Garments," 174). See discussion of similar texts NBC 4577 and 4504 in Ronald Sack, "Some Remarks on Jewelry Inventories from Sixth Century B.C. Erech," *ZA* 69 (1979): 41–46. Note that the appliquéés of the Lady of Uruk (Ištar) in the form of stars and *hašū*-ornaments are distinctive and differ from those of Nanaya. Cf. the Neo-Babylonian inventory published by Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "Un Inventaire de joaillerie sacrée de l'Eanna d'Uruk," *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 93 (1999): 141–155. (NBC 4894). On *tenšū*, see Beaulieu, "Inventaire de joaillerie," 154: "un paillette en or cousue à la tunique *kusītu* de la déesse Nanaya" and *Pantheon of Uruk*, 389: "a sequin (syll.). According to Matsushima 1995b, 175–176, *tenšū* possibly denotes a square ornament since rosettes and squares frequently alternate on iconographic representations of sacred and royal garments, just like *ayaru* and *tenšū* in the texts."



Nanaya Euršaba.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, it cannot be ruled out that these are images of two different statues pertaining to the two manifestations of Nanaya in Borsippa: Nanaya the consort of Nabû who was venerated in the Ezida temple and the powerful Nanaya Euršaba who, contrary to Nabû's consort Nanaya, had her own separate temple and priestly staff, and received offerings independent of Nabû. Consequently the two goddesses depicted may represent Nanaya as consort of Nabû behind the more powerful, independent Nanaya Euršaba.<sup>26</sup> A second interpretation of the figurative schema is to relate the three deities to the triad Nanaya Euršaba, Mār-bīti and Sutītu<sup>27</sup> which forms a special sub-unit in the local pantheon of Borsippa. In this interpretation, the second goddess, whose robe is decorated with crosses, would be Sutītu.

As stated above, the symbol of the cross proliferates in the visual spectrum of the second half of the second millennium in Mesopotamia. In association with a bearded god, it most probably designates the sun in association with the sun-god Šamaš.<sup>28</sup> However, it may well be related to other gods and goddesses.<sup>29</sup> In the written sources the cross is related to Nabû the paramour/spouse of Nanaya: *ispilurtu kizirtu ša* <sup>d</sup>*Nabu šī* "A cross is the emblem of the god Nabû" (Neo-Assyrian letter from an astrologer to the Assyrian king, SAA 10 30:3). If the cross is the emblem of Nabû, the first interpretation of the two goddesses is most probable: the Ištar-like goddess is Nanaya Euršaba, followed by Nanaya, spouse of Nabû, whose dress is adorned with crosses.

### 1.2.3 Textual Evidence

During the Neo-Babylonian period, administrative texts from Nanaya's temple in Uruk provide insights into her cult as Queen of Uruk, and record

<sup>25</sup> Caroline Waerzeggers, *The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult Archives* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010), 22, 26–27.

<sup>26</sup> Julia Asher-Greve and Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Goddesses in Context: On Divine Powers, Roles, Relationships and Gender in Mesopotamian Textual and Visual Sources* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> For Sutītu "the Sutean goddess," see Grant Frame, "MMA 56.81.53," *Cuneiform Texts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, forthcoming).

<sup>28</sup> Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, 123 (half of a preserved cross found in Assur, no. 475), 138–39 and 151 (hoard with crosses including famous cross from Assur no. 561, dedicatory inscription to the *kusarikku* (bull-man) son of Šamaš) On the hoard, see Evelyn Klengel-Brandt and Joachim Marzahn, "Ein Hortfund mit Kreuzen aus Assur (Taf. 16–27)," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 28 (1997).

<sup>29</sup> Herles, *Götterdarstellungen Mesopotamiens*, 69 (seal 235 from Assur, above astral symbols, before goddess), 257–259 (n. 1423 on suggestion cross symbol of Marduk).

her paraphernalia.<sup>30</sup> Astral symbols mentioned among her cultic accoutrements included a *šamšu* (AŠ.ME) ‘sun-disk ornament.’<sup>31</sup> Her attire is enumerated in many texts. Her feathered crown is described as similar to that depicted on the stele of Melišipak. Her garments were adorned with *šamšu ša zīmu* “sun disks as garment decoration”<sup>32</sup> and her jewelry included various types of breastplates. Regrettably, the breastplates of iconic interest are the crescent-shaped breastplate<sup>33</sup> and one with a representation of a lion.<sup>34</sup> However, both are listed in shared inventories, the first in one belonging to Ištar, Nanaya and Bēltu-ša-Rēš and the second in one belonging to the Lady-of-Uruk and Nanaya. The star is her brand: “Nanaya-hussinni was a slave girl whose hand was marked with a star as a sign that she belonged to the goddess Nanaya (identified as *zakītu ša Nanaya*).<sup>35</sup>

### 1.3 Hellenistic / Parthian Spheres

In the wake of Alexander’s conquest, Eurasia came into closer contact with the ancient Near East. In the Hellenistic period, the cult of Nanaya became firmly rooted in the northern Aramaean Parthian centres of Assur and Hatra, in Seleucid Susa, in the Parthian capital of Nisa, eastward in Bactria, and other transoxianic regions and westward in the caravan city of Palmyra in Syria, and perhaps, Anatolia. The kingdom of Characene in southern Mesopotamia engaged in prosperous trade with Palmyra and India. Parthia probably pioneered both land and sea routes to China from the Persian Gulf and Iran, followed by Indo-Scythians. China intensified trade with the Central Asian trade network after defeating the Xiongnu confederation, and by the end of the second century B.C.E. had extended Chinese military control over trade routes north-westerly as far as the Tarim Basin. The worship of Nanaya travelled along these routes. What was her appeal to these varied peoples? Did her lack of iconic imagery

<sup>30</sup> Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 189–208.

<sup>31</sup> Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 199 NBCT 410:5.

<sup>32</sup> Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 196–197 YBC 4175:23.

<sup>33</sup> Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 191 VAS 20 127, and see the discussion on 141.

<sup>34</sup> Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 191 NBC 4577:23, and see the discussion on 141. For other lion ornaments belonging solely to Ištar, see Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 156.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Arnaud, “Un document juridique concernant les oblates,” *Revue d’assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* 67 (1973): 147–156. Kakkabtu, the divine star-shaped branding iron was also an object of cultic worship in the Eana, see Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 353. Note that star ornaments appear solely on the clothing of Ištar, see Beaulieu, *Pantheon of Uruk*, 156–159.

have any impact on the ease of her adoption and adaptation into the various religious symbol systems?

### 1.3.1 *Northern Mesopotamia*

Parthian images of Nanaya are extremely varied, from Hellenizing to local. In northern Mesopotamia, the culture was not Assyrian but Aramean and Parthian. Painted on a jar excavated in the Parthian levels at Assur (fig. 8), she is shown in local style as a figure standing on a platform wearing a voluminous celestial robe covered with stars and crescents. The headdress she wears is made up of a solar rosette with a crescent. According to the Aramaic inscription, this painted image from Assur represents an offering to *nny mlk' mrtn brt bl mrlh'*: "Nanaya, the King, our Lady, daughter of Bel, Lord of the Gods."<sup>36</sup> An example of a possible Hellenized Nanaya is a Parthian statuette of a nude female figure (fig. 9) crowned with a crescent, which is generally believed to represent a goddess, possibly Nanaya.<sup>37</sup> Such statuettes in "Greco-Babylonian style" were deposited in tombs. This particular example comes from a necropolis on the outskirts of Babylon. The family tomb in which it was found was a funerary chamber containing five tombs. The statuette was found upright in one of these tombs, near the head of the body, laid in a wooden coffin.

From the first or second centuries C.E. a temple in Hatra was dedicated to Nanaya and a Parthian statue of Nanaya, in Hellenic costume, was recovered. In this free-standing sculpture, Nanaya is depicted as standing frontally on a round base. In her left hand, she holds a sceptre topped by a ball according to the excavator, while her right hand rests on her hip. Her

<sup>36</sup> Ass. 15843, Walter Andrae and Heinz Lenzen, *Die Partherstadt Assur* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1933), 109–111 fig. 46; Harald Ingholt, *Parthian Sculptures from Hatra* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954), 12 fig. 5 and n. 7. For further references and discussion, see Jürgen Tubach, *Im Schatten des Sonnengottes: Der Sonnenkult in Edessa, Harran und Hatra am Vorabend der christlichen Mission* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1986), 277–278. For further references to inscriptions, see Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien (datiert 44 v. Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 14 Text A15b.

<sup>37</sup> AO 20127 (note information on object s.v. AO 20127 on Louvre site), see Françoise Tallon, "Les rubis d'Ištar: étude archéologique," in *Cornaline et pierres précieuses: la Méditerranée, de l'Antiquité à l'Islam*, Actes du colloque organisé au musée du Louvre par le Service culturels 24 et 25 novembre 1995 et établis par Annie Caubet (Paris: La Documentation française, 1999), 229–243, who suggests that this image represents "the idealized image of the deceased seeking the protection of a fertility goddess." Previously, it was most commonly asserted that this was the image of Ištar. It seems that the modern scholar cannot see past the nudity of the image to the crescent that crowns her head—not exactly the symbol normally associated with mortal beings.



Fig. 8: Nanaya painted on a jar excavated in the Parthian levels at Assur, shown in local style as a figure standing on a platform wearing a voluminous celestial robe covered with stars and crescents. Courtesy of J. Hinrichs Verlag, Leipzig 1933.



Fig. 9: Parthian Statuette of a naked woman, possibly a Hellenized Nanaya crowned with a crescent. Photograph by Marie-Lan Nguyen. Source: Wikipedia.

hair is parted in the middle and combed back into a knot at the back of her head. A Hellenic cylindrical *polos* with a rounded top sits on her head. Remains of an iron object on top of the *polos*, could be the base of an astral symbol. The dedication of the statue is inscribed on the back. It reads:

glp nny  
 gdy  
 h[b]  
 br zrq'  
 'l hy'  
 nšryhb  
 brh  
 dkyr  
 [lṭ]b

*Translation:* Gadyahb son of Zorqa has sculpted Nanaya for the life of Neshryahb his son. May he (or: it) be remembered for good.<sup>38</sup>

These images and inscriptions testify to the adoption of the worship of Nanaya by the Parthians and the transference of her imagery from a Babylonian representation and its transformation into a Hellenic one. As to her symbols, the solar rosette with a crescent and the sceptre were both adopted. On their trade missions, the Parthians would have carried these images of Nanaya. Furthermore, Parthian coins may have been a means of disseminating her imagery. The reverse faces of the copper coins (in contrast to the silver coins) bear a rich and varied range of designs of which some plainly refer to investiture, for example, an eagle with a wreath, a ram, or the wreath of investiture alone. Also represented are deities, particularly Artemis who was conflated with Nanaya (see below) but she is not identified as such.

<sup>38</sup> Formerly Mosul Museum, MM 36, see Fuad Safar, "Inscriptions from Hatra [in Arabic]," *Sumer* 7 (1951) Pl. I no. 4 (Arabic section), and "Inscriptions of Hatra," *Sumer* 9 (1953) 9 no. 4; Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1964), no. 238; Shinji Fukai, "The Artifacts of Hatra and Parthian Art," *East and West* 11 (1960), 164–165, Pl. 24 (front of statue). For further references to the inscription, see Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra*, 28 Text H4, and also Francesco Vattioni, *Hatra* (Napoli: Istituto universitario orientale, 1994), 40, no. 4. For more material from the temple XIV dedicated to Nanaya in Hatra, see Jabir K. Ibrahim, "Unpublished Aramaic Texts from Nanaia Shrine at Hatra [in Arabic]," *Sumer* 51 (2001–2002), Arabic pages 200–216. See also forthcoming publication of all the statuary from Hatra by Lucida A. Dirven who kindly shared her information on this statue with the author.

## 2. WESTERN IRAN

Susa, the ancient capital of the Elamites, had its own unique pantheon of deities. In the third millennium, a goddess seated on a lion occurs on a seal from Susa (Sb 6680) but there is no written evidence to identify her.<sup>39</sup> She is said to have had a sanctuary in Elymais where tame lions were kept according to Aelian XII.23, who refers to it as the shrine of Anaïtis.<sup>40</sup> In this area, the worship of Nanaya was of long duration, probably beginning with the first Elamite king who godnapped the cult image of Nanaya and brought it to Susa.<sup>41</sup> When Susa was refounded by Seleucus as a Greek polis Seleucia-on-the-Eulaeus, the Hellenes paid homage to Nanaya as the local goddess. Greek legal manumissions refer to Nanaya and probably came from her temple, but they left no visual image of her. When the area fell to Parthian forces, Khuzistan became the semi-independent kingdom of Elymais under the Kamnaskirid Dynasty. One unique coin minted in Susa has the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΔΑΠΕΙΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΑΝΑΙΕΝΩ(N) "Of the king Darius, saviour of the Nanayans (worshippers of Nanaya)."<sup>42</sup> This king is said to be a usurper in Susa before the Arsacid conquest. The inscription on the reverse face ΝΑΝΑΙΕΝΩ(N) is said to indicate Susa with its famous sanctuary of Artemis-Nanaya. According to Le Rider, the Parthian king Mithradates II (123–88) was the first to mint coins in Susa with the images of Artemis as a representation of Nanaya, as a frontally facing bust adorned with rays emanating from her head or placing a *polos* head dress upon her head.<sup>43</sup> He also minted a coin with just a crescent on the reverse face.<sup>44</sup> The conflation of Nanaya with Artemis is known already

<sup>39</sup> For an image of this seal and a cognate from Margiana, see the article by Sylvia Winkelmann, "Trading Religions' from Bronze Age Iran to Bactria," in this volume, images 2 and 4.

<sup>40</sup> Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire* (London: Routledge, 2007), 567 n. 60. The classical authors refer to the goddess mainly as Artemis, although Appian of Alexandria's *History of Rome: The Syrian Wars* (Syriaca) XI 66 refers to the temple of Aphrodite of Elymais.

<sup>41</sup> The date for this event is controversial, see the recent discussions by Daniel T. Potts, "Nana in Bactria," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7 (2000/2001): 28–30; Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 196, 281:12, 283:21, 377–378. For the problems regarding the possible evidence for the worship of Nanaya in Susa, see François Vallat, "La Dame faite prisonnière à Babylone," *Akkadica* 123 (2002): 137–144.

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.parthia.com/coins/pdc\\_10492](http://www.parthia.com/coins/pdc_10492).

<sup>43</sup> Georges Le Rider, *Suse sous les Séleucides et les Parthes* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1965), 294–296. Examples of the radiant bust are Pl. XIII no. 129, 131, described on 88. Note also the coins of his successors on Pl. XV no. 151, and Pl. XVI no. 178.

<sup>44</sup> Le Rider, *Suse sous les Séleucides et les Parthes*, Pl. XIII no. 132 and 89.

from various sites in the Middle East (e.g. Dura Europos and Palmyra). This *interpretatio graeca* of Nanaya demonstrates the Greek agency in the adoption of the image of Artemis for her symbolic representation as a huntress. Unfortunately, this was during a period of syncretism so that when Strabo (16.1.7) identifies Nanaya as Artemis and we find representations of Nanaya with bow and arrows or with moon crescents, it is difficult to discern if the appellation or the depiction is secondary—whether she was depicted with bow and arrows because she was called Artemis, or whether she was called Artemis because she was depicted with bow and arrows. Questions which are at present unanswerable include: Did Nanaya take up the bow, arrow and quiver from the model of Ištar or from that of Artemis? Did the similarities between the goddesses, Ištar and Artemis cause alterations to the iconography of Nanaya? This Hellenic interpretation of Nanaya was spread eastward through coins and the imitations thereof by local dynasts. It was, however, a process of theocrasia, whereby the attributes of the Greek Artemis were conflated with those of Nanaya. Other coins from Susa issued in 110 B.C.E. have a full-body image of a standing goddess together with both sun and moon or with a radiant halo which might be associated with Nanaya.

### 3. CENTRAL ASIA

The routes crossing the Zagros mountains across the Iranian plateau into Bactria skirt the Caspian Sea and Elburz mountains. In the first millennium B.C.E. this region was settled by various groups of peoples, the Medes in the area around Ecbatana, the Mannaeans around the Caspian and, further afield, the Cimmerians and the Scythians. The syncretistic nature of the architecture and artefact assemblages at Mannean Hasanlu, for example, may be understood by recognizing its location on trade routes leading from the kingdom of Urartu in the north, from Assyria to the west, and from Media to the southeast. These trade routes facilitated the movement to this area of materials, objects, craftsmen, teachers, and officials from neighbouring cultures. However, any evidence for the establishment of the cult of Nanaya in this area is slender and gives no glimpse into the background of her reception in the Bactrian world during the first millennium B.C.E. The sporadic nature of the evidence makes the character of the Nanaya cult and the reasons for its attraction more difficult to access. Was there an economic motive or a religious reason for the lack of her cult centers in northern Iran? Neither the Achaemenid nor the Sassanid



dynasties of Iran showed any interest in the goddess but that may be due to their Zoroastrian faith.

Even in Bactria no epigraphic sources related to Nanaya have been recovered from the Greek city of Ai Khanum on the Oxus river, possibly the historical Alexandria-on-the-Oxus, founded in the fourth century B.C.E., following the conquests of Alexander the Great and one of the primary cities of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom. Consequently, an epigraphic images such as the famous silver plate cannot be definitively interpreted.<sup>45</sup> Although it is most commonly said to depict the Phrygian goddess Cybele, the Greek god Helios, and an Iranian fire altar, various scholars describe the scene as portraying the goddess Nanaya as the goddess who stands frontally in a chariot pulled across a plain by a pair of lions.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, from the Parthian capital of Nisa, we have texts but no images.

The most probable image of Nanaya in the Greco-Bactrian cultural sphere might be that of Artemis. For instance, on the coins of Demetrius I of Bactria (200–190 B.C.E.), a standing Artemis is depicted holding a bow and drawing an arrow from the quiver on her back. In addition, a cult statue of Artemis was discovered. The question arises as to the deity the Bactrians saw in this cult statue.

### 3.1 *Yuezhi Principalities and the Kushan (Kuṣāṇa) Kingdom*

The first iconic evidence of the goddess Nanaya in central Asia comes to light in the Yuezhi Bactrian Period on the coins of Sapadbizes (Σαπαδβιζης), a Yuezhi ruler of western Bactria.<sup>47</sup> On the reverse face of these coins, a standing quadruped, perhaps a lion, can be seen looking to the right, while in the field are a tamgha of hill and a crescent above it, flanked by the Greek legend right and left: NANAIA dating from c. 20 B.C.E. Rtveladze (“Coins of the Yuezhi rulers of northern Bactria,” 84) describes the reverse face of the coins as portraying an image of a beast of prey. On the assumption that Nanaya rides a lion, this scholar identifies the beast of prey as a lion. This aniconic image of Nanaya does not match any earlier data.

<sup>45</sup> Henri-Paul Francfort, *Fouilles d’Ai Khanoum III: Le sanctuaire du Temple à niches indentées, 2. Les trouvailles* (Paris: Boccard, 1964), 93–104 and Pl. XLI.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Carter, “China and the Mysterious Occident,” 116, and “Nanā with Crescent,” 143; Madhuvanti Ghose, “Nana: The ‘Original’ Goddess on the Lion,” *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 1 (2006): 98; Antonio Invernizzi, “Arte ellenistica in Asia centrale,” *Parthica* 11 (2009): 90.

<sup>47</sup> For a review of these coins, see Edward V. Rtveladze, “Coins of the Yuezhi Rulers of Northern Bactria,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 3 (1993/94): 81–96.

The identification of the animal as a lion seems to be based on subjective criteria and external evidence. This is the first indubitable indication of an association of Nanaya with an animal. But what is its significance? Was the image of Nanaya avoided or unknown? Did the Yuezhi who came from the east from the area of Gansu and the Tarim basin bring this image for the goddess with them?<sup>48</sup>

The Kushans, another branch of the Yuezhi confederation, established their kingdom in Bactria and extended their rule from what is now Afghanistan, Tajikistan, southern Uzbekistan to Pakistan and down into the Ganges river valley in northern India in the first three centuries C.E. The discovery of the Rabatak inscription of Kaniška I from the first year of his reign, most probably 127 C.E., sheds light on the position of Nanaya vis-à-vis the ruling dynasts that had already been seen on their coins. The inscription states that Kaniška derived his kingship from Nana and All-the-Gods. The power of the goddess as a dynastic patroness is indicated by her title on the reverse face of coin as ŠAONANA or NANAŠAO, “royal Nana / Nana the king”. Given the renown of the Kushan kings, in particular Kaniška, as legendary supporters of Buddhism, scholars had speculated that on their coins Kaniška and Huviška were attempting to accommodate the religious beliefs of their subjects through their choice of coin design or that they created designs to enable their coins to circulate in foreign territories where these gods were worshipped.<sup>49</sup> However, with the discovery of the Rabatak inscription in a dynastic shrine, the position of Nanaya within the Kushan royal ideology was defined. The Kushans employed her image as a symbol of the legitimacy of their dynasty—a political rather than an economic motive. “Kanishka I is shown in two distinct headdresses. One a royal bonnet topped by a rayed decoration seems to refer to Miiro/Helios and the other a crescent mounted on a diadem seems to refer to Nana/Nanaia.”<sup>50</sup> As to her image on coins minted in this period (see figs. 2–4), the anthropomorphic image of the goddess Nanaya prevails. Her name is written in Greek letters, in Greek as NANAIΑ and in Bactrian as NANA, and she bears a lunar crescent on her head. She is shown blessing the ruler on the exceptional coins of Huviška. On one

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<sup>48</sup> For a recent discussion of the route of their migration, see Kazim Abdullaev, “Nomad Migration in Central Asia,” in *After Alexander, Central Asia Before Islam*, eds. Joe Cribb and Georgina Herrmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73–98.

<sup>49</sup> For an overview of the Kushan religion in general, see the discussion in Sims-Williams and Cribb, “A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great,” 107–110.

<sup>50</sup> Sims-Williams and Cribb, “A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great,” 108.

Huviška coin, the king is shown as a kneeling suppliant before the goddess. In NANAŠAO, “royal Nana”, images she carries a sword at her side. The coin type showing Nana holding bow and arrow may be derived from the classical iconography of Artemis. Preceding Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins depicted on their reverse face an Artemis in a short chiton holding a bow and drawing an arrow from a quiver over her right shoulder. In Huviška coins, she sits side-saddle on a lion, frequently holding a *patēra* (bowl) in her left hand. While the symbolic representation of a deity standing on a lion is common in the ancient Near East, the sitting position is unknown until the Hellenistic period. A deity sitting sideways on a feline or fabulous animal was invented by Greek artists of the fifth to fourth centuries B.C.E.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, it has been suggested that “the characteristic feature of her iconography—being seated on a lion—is clearly derived from that of the Phrygian Cybele and demonstrates the syncretism that had taken place between the Cybele and Nana cults.”<sup>52</sup>

A multi-armed goddess appears suddenly and profusely in the Kushan period in India, principally in the art of Mathurā, but without any antecedents or any allusions in the literary sources.<sup>53</sup> She is rendered in two iconic types: either as standing straight without any adversary, commonly upon a lion crouched beneath her feet or as battling a buffalo. The first iconic type has been traced back to Nanaya representations. For example, Ghose sees the transformation of Nana on the lion into Durgā *siṃhavāhini* (Durgā on the Lion) in the city of Mathurā during the latter part of the second century.<sup>54</sup> The identity of the second iconic type of the goddess battling the buffalo is uncertain although it has been commonplace to equate her with Durgā *Mahiṣāsūramardinī* (“Destroyer of the great buffalo Asura”) and trace her also back to Nanaya.<sup>55</sup> Srinivasan prefers to refer to her as the ‘Warrior Goddess’ since she cannot establish a context for the adoption of indigenous modules into her iconography

<sup>51</sup> Katsumi Tanabe, “Nana on Lion: East and West in Sogdian Art,” *Oriens* 30/31 (1995): 319.

<sup>52</sup> Ghose, “Nana: The ‘Original’ Goddess on the Lion,” 99.

<sup>53</sup> Doris Meth Srinivasan, *Many Heads, Arms and Eyes: Origin, Meaning and Form of Multiplicity in Indian Art* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 282. Note also her discussions of the *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava* iconographies.

<sup>54</sup> Ghose, “Nana: The ‘Original’ Goddess on the Lion,” 102. See also Bratindra Nath Mukherjee, *Nanā on Lion: A Study in Kushāna Numismatic Art* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1969), 19; and Martha Carter, “An Indo-Iranian Silver Rhyton in the Cleveland Museum,” *Artibus Asiae* 41 (1979): 314.

<sup>55</sup> Potts, “Nana in Bactria,” 26–27; Carter, “An Indo-Iranian Silver Rhyton,” 314; Carter, “Nanā with Crescent in Kuṣāṇa Numismatic Imagery,” 144, 147.

or a reason for their adoption.<sup>56</sup> She also sees many of the aspects of the Warrior Goddess as deriving from Nana.<sup>57</sup> The earliest evidence for the goddess as holding the sun and moon in a pair of arms comes from two Mathuran reliefs.<sup>58</sup> Srinivasan conjectures that the sun and moon imagery derive from Nanaya's assimilation of Ištar's family relations, since in Mesopotamian theology Ištar was the daughter of the moon-god Šin and sister of the sun-god Šamaš. She suggests that the planetary disks held by a warrior goddess express her divine origin and her endurance while the lion expresses aggressiveness and combativeness. It is interesting to note that on Kushan coins Oēšo, perhaps her paramour/spouse, is portrayed with four arms and a trident, the symbols or the icon of the Warrior Goddess in India.

Thus, under the Kušāna kings, Nanaya assimilated many different components. In the words of Srinivasan: "A great synthesis took place and possibly her popularity is because she meant so many (and different?) things to so many (and different?) people."<sup>59</sup> Thus, the Kushans have a very eclectic image of Nanaya—they have adopted her traits as the Sumerian and Babylonian giver of kingship, as the Greek huntress Artemis, and as the Warrior Goddess of India (or perhaps, Assyria) and mixed it with the Greco-Bactrian local lion imagery.

### 3.2 *Sogdiana*

Her worship was carried farthest east by the Sogdian traders along the Silk Road. In Sogdiana (in modern Uzbekistan), Nanaya was the supreme goddess. Personal names containing Nanaya as the theophoric component predominate in the onomasticon. Inscriptions and letters of Sogdian merchants from the Upper Indus in Afghanistan<sup>60</sup> through Turfan and Dunhuang shed light on the veneration of the goddess. Temples and sanctuaries were erected for her worship. One such place was the Sogdian city of Pendjikent / Panjikent, in present-day Tajikistan, located about

<sup>56</sup> Srinivasan, *Many Heads, Arms and Eyes*, 282–304.

<sup>57</sup> Srinivasan, *Many Heads, Arms and Eyes*, 294–297, 300. However, certain derivations seem questionable, such as the wreath as a symbol of Nana.

<sup>58</sup> In particular, note the first is a sandstone image in the Los Angeles County Museum (Srinivasan, *Many Heads, Arms and Eyes*, 289, Pl. 20:16) which is six-armed and the second is eight-armed but stands on the backs of two recumbent lions, pp. 289–290, Pl. 20:18. Srinivasan noted the insignificance of these multiples of arms.

<sup>59</sup> Srinivasan, *Many Heads, Arms and Eyes*, 304.

<sup>60</sup> See the article "Localizing the Buddha's Presence at Wayside Shrines in Northern Pakistan," by Jason Neelis in this volume.

sixty km to the east of Samarkand whose heyday was in the fifth through eighth centuries C.E. The majority of the population observed a local form of Zoroastrianism in combination with cults of additional deities, most important of which was the cult of Nana / Nanaya. However, even in this city, the textual and visual evidence is not complementary. There are words without images and images without words. An example of the former is the Sogdian legend on coins, dated to 709–722 C.E., which reads *pncy nnšš'mpnh* “Nanaya, the Lady (of) Panč (Panjakent).”<sup>61</sup> The question has been raised as to why the coins are issued in the name of the goddess rather than in the name of the ruler.<sup>62</sup> Boris Marshak speculated that the last ruler Dêwâštich allowed the temple authorities to mint coins dedicated to Nana, the mistress of Panč, as a highly unusual gesture of compromise to some influential and potentially hostile faction of citizens associated with Temple II. Thus, the goddess Nanaya is being employed for political and economic reasons.

On the other hand, there are many images without words of a four-armed Nana, holding the sun and the moon, riding a lion or seated on a lion-shaped throne. Her four arms are borrowed from an Indian model adopted in Kuṣāṇa India, her attire is Greek inspired and her pose on her lion mount imitates Sasanian royal images.<sup>63</sup> Temple II contained a variety of mural pictorial scenes in the outer *aywān* and in the main sanctuary.<sup>64</sup> In the sanctuary was a scene of lamentation, probably to be

<sup>61</sup> Evgenii Vladislavovich Zeimal', “The Circulation of Coins in Central Asia during the Early Medieval Period [Fifth-Eighth Centuries A.D.],” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 8 (1994): 251. Although E.V. Zeimal' states that this type of coin was a local issue and did not circulate beyond the borders of Panč, one has definitely been found at Susa, see John Walker, “Monnaies orientales,” in *Numismatique Susienne, Monnaies trouvées à Suse de 1946 à 1956*, eds. Robert Göbl, Georges Le Rider, G.C. Miles and J. Walker (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1960), 65, Pl. 7, 22.

<sup>62</sup> On the question of the existence of a historical personality Nana, named so in honour of the goddess Nana, and whether she could have been a daughter of Čekin Čur Bilgä, whom she succeeded to the throne, and the wife of Dêwâštich, see Marshak's discussion in <http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Geography/panjikant.htm>. Source/Extracted From: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. However, as he points out, even if Nana the mistress of Panč were a real person, the fact that she was so named and that her name appeared on the coinage also suggests that the cult of the goddess was of special significance in the city.

<sup>63</sup> Judith Lerner, “The Merchant Empire of the Sogdians,” in *Monks and Merchants, Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China*, eds. Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner (New York: Harry N. Abrams with the Asia Society, 2001), 225 fig. 2; Boris I. Marshak, “The Sogdians in Their Homeland,” in *Monks and Merchants, Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China*, eds. Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner (New York: Harry N. Abrams with the Asia Society, 2001), 233.

<sup>64</sup> Valentin Shkoda, *The Temples of Pendjikent and the Problems of Sogdian Religion (5th to 8th centuries)* (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2009).

associated with a funerary cult.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, on the basis of the mural pictorial scenes of the sanctuary of the goddess, the excavators assigned Temple II, in Panjikent to Nanaya. Furthermore, fragments of at least two sculptures of the goddess Nana sitting on her lion were discovered in the outer gate area of the Temple.

The elaborate residential houses were decorated both outdoors and indoors with paintings. The entrance to such a house was often designed as a portico or an arched *aywān*, in which symbols of blessings and protection from evil were represented. Occasionally, Nana appears as an anthropomorphic four-armed goddess with the sun and the moon in her two raised hands but usually only her symbolic attributes are represented.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, indoors in the main hall, across from the entrance, there was an architecturally designed or painted niche up to 4.5 m wide, with images of the tutelary gods among which were various anthropomorphic images of Nanaya. In all their entrepot towns, the Sogdian traders established the worship of Nanaya and depicted her in the four-armed pose.<sup>67</sup> In Khwarezm (Chorasnia), Nana is also pictured as an anthropomorphic four-armed goddess holding the sun and the moon and seated on a lion in the Sasanian pose (fig. 10).<sup>68</sup>

Multiplicity of body parts is an Indian phenomenon, and Indian influences are unexpected in Sogdian and Chorasmian art. Its symbolism in the Sogdian iconography of Nanaya has no antecedents. Four-armed goddesses also appear in Vajrayana or “Tibetan” Buddhism, the school of Mahayana, which originated in India and later moved to Tibet and the other Himalayan countries. Thus, this image of Nanaya could also have

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of this scene, see Frantz Grenet and Boris I. Marshak. “Le mythe de Nana dans l’art de la Sogdiane,” *Arts Asiatiques* 53 (1998): 5–20; Frantz Grenet, “Démons iraniens et divinités grecques dans le Manichéisme: À propos de quelques passages de textes sogdiens de Turfan,” in *Pensée Grecque et Sagesse d’Orient: Hommage à Michel Tardieu*, eds. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Jean-Daniel Dubois, Christelle Jullien and Florence Jullien (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 285–289.

<sup>66</sup> Boris I. Marshak, *Legends, Tales, and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2002), 17.

<sup>67</sup> See, e.g. the series of paintings from the palace at Kala-i Kakhkaha (also written Kakhkahha) the capital of the Sogdian kingdom of Ustrushana, near Shahrstan township, Tajikistan 8th or early 9th century, see Vladimir Sokolovsky, *Monumental Painting in the Palace Complex of Bunjikat, The Capital of Medieval Ustrushana, 8th–Early 9th Centuries* (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2009), 172ff. no. 70, 71, 92, 95, 97, 108, 121, 122.

<sup>68</sup> Guitty Azarpay, “Nanâ, The Sumero-Akkadian Goddess of Transoxiana,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96 (1976): 539–540. Note that the sun and moon are depicted in Penjikent as unadorned astral symbols (a rayed disk and a crescent moon) but as two disks filled with human faces in the paintings from the palace at Kala-i Kakhkaha.



Fig. 10: Chorasmian bowl (dated to 658 C.E.) with a medallion representing the goddess Nana, as four-armed, holding a sun-disk, a moon crescent, a scepter and phiale seated on a lion adorned with crenellated crown, with a Chorasmian inscription. (AN 126680001, © Trustees of the British Museum).

been adopted from an Indian tradition. The trading agents, the Sogdians, who had reached India in the third to fifth centuries, could have carried this image.<sup>69</sup>

The significance of Nanaya holding the sun and the moon might reflect her aspect as guardian of the balance of day and night. Such an iconic image may also express her cosmic authority and everlasting power both day and night.<sup>70</sup> The synonymy of astral luminosity and divine radiance

<sup>69</sup> On Sims-Williams' decipherment of the inscriptions from Shatial on the Upper Indus revealed in the graffiti of the Sogdian merchants, see "The Iranian Inscriptions of Shatial," Prof. G.M. Bongard-Levin Felicitation Volume *Indologia Taurinensia* 23–24 (1997/8): 523–541.

<sup>70</sup> Marshak apud Frantz Grenet and Zhang Guangda, "The Last Refuge of the Sogdian Religion: Dunhuang in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 10 (1996): 179.

seen in the early second millennium might also have influenced the symbolic representation of Nanaya.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, do all roads lead to Nanaya?

From the above evidence, it is possible to posit the following model of exchange: The major patrons of the worship of Nanaya for the first three millennia were rulers, from the Neo-Sumerian king Šulgi at the end of the third millennium B.C.E. to Kušāna king Kaniška I of the first century C.E. The patronage network, however, included people from all levels of society, whose offerings supported the sacrificial cult, and thus, at this period, the attractors were internal and centripetal. Change came about under the Sogdians: while both the elite and the populace at large patronized her worship, the cult of Nanaya was promoted, in particular, by the itinerant merchants who travelled the Silk Road. The conditions were set for religious exchange to parallel economic exchange. The catalyst for change might have been the intensification of trade along the Central Eurasian trade network together with the Sogdian form of Zoroastrianism. The media of transmission were the trinkets and coins which through trade and commerce spread images of Nanaya, which was particularly influential in a mostly illiterate age.<sup>71</sup>

What place do her symbols play as attractors? Nanaya's symbols were flexible. She was not the embodiment of one sign. Her ability to absorb other symbols may be the factor that made her worship attractive. She underwent various transformations and was worshipped as a native deity by the local populace along the trade routes of the historical Silk Road that crisscrossed Eurasia from early first millennium C.E. through the middle of the second millennium C.E.

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<sup>71</sup> Mukherjee, *Nanā on Lion*, 36.



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# “TRADING RELIGIONS” FROM BRONZE AGE IRAN TO BACTRIA

Sylvia Winkelmann

## 1. INTRODUCTION

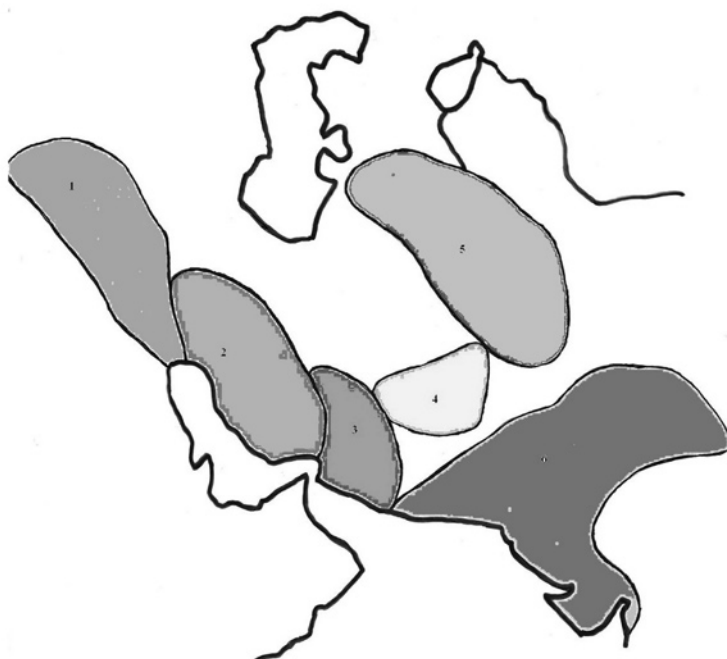
The central question this article seeks to answer is whether religious transfer took place between Iran and Central Asia in the Bronze Age, and if so, how, when and why did it come about and which models of transfer, transformation and change can be found. Regarding the question of “Trading religion” the objects, subjects and the different levels of religious trade have to be analyzed. The intention is therefore to diagnose: What was “traded” (symbols, gods, heroes, religious objects or a symbol system/religion as a whole), who was the trader (merchants, travelling craftsmen, a people) and what was the socio-economic background?

This research covers an area which formed a cultural *koiné* during the Bronze Age. It stretched from Iran over the whole Iranian plateau to the Indus valley in the east and Afghanistan, southern Turkmenistan and southern Uzbekistan in the north. Here, many highly developed Bronze Age cultures emerged one after the other during the 3rd millennium B.C.E. These include the Proto-Elamite culture in Southwest Iran (ca. 3000 and 2600 B.C.E.), the Kerman culture in Southeast Iran (ca. 2800 to 2000 B.C.E. which reached its peak between 2700 and 2300 B.C.E.), the Helmand culture in the Sistan and Kandahar areas of East Iran and South Afghanistan (3000 to 2000 B.C.E.), the Mature Harappan culture in the Indus valley (2600–1800 B.C.E.), and the Bactrian or Murgabo-Bactrian culture in Northern Afghanistan, Southern Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (Margiana),<sup>1</sup> which seems to have started after 2400 B.C.E. and lasted until 1700 B.C.E.

They formed a cultural region that developed parallel to and independently of the Mesopotamian world and shows a very high degree of homogeneity in terms of material culture and iconography. The two most important cultures in this *koiné* are the Kerman culture in Southeast Iran (cf. Map 1, area 3) and the Bactrian culture in Central Asia (cf. Map 1, area 5). They not only share very strong similarities in artefact groups and

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as BMAC or Oxus Civilization.



- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1: Mesopotamia    | 4: Hilmend- or Sistan Culture             |
| 2: Elam           | 5: Bactria and BMAC                       |
| 3: Kerman Culture | 6: Harappan Culture or Indus Civilization |

Map 1: Bronze age cultures.

in the typology of artefacts, but they also show strong affinities in their figurative art.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it would seem that the two cultures also share a similar religious symbol system. Inasmuch as the Kerman culture is older than the Bactrian one and both cultures only partly overlap chronologically, one may assume that the Iranian Kerman culture has also influenced the Bactrian culture in the field of religion.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Amiet, *L'âge des échanges inter-iraniens: 3500–1700 avant J.-C.* (Paris: Ministère de la culture et de la communication, ed. de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1986); Sylvia Winkelmann, "Southeast-Iranian Elements on the Bactrian Iconography," in *South Asian Archaeology 1995*, eds. B. and F.R. Allchin (Cambridge: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1997) 265–277; Sylvia Winkelmann, "Bemerkungen zum Grab 18 und den Silbernadeln von Gonur depe," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus dem Iran* 30 (1998): 1–16; Sylvia Winkelmann, "Ein baktrischer Edelmetallhortfund und noch einmal zur Frage der Quellen baktrischer Compartimentsiegel," in *Intercultural Relations between South and Southwest Asia: Studies in Commemoration of E.C.L. During Caspers (1934–1996)*, eds. E. Olijdam and R.H. Spoor (London: Archaeopress, 2008), 184–199.

Additionally both cultures were closely connected via long-distance trade in raw materials, semi-finished goods and finished products.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the investigation would be a good methodological example for the spreading of a religion by trade: archaeologically we have evidence of trade routes, sites of mercantile activity, commercial centres and craftsmen quarters along the routes and we have traders who are predestined to spread not only commodities and religious objects but also religious ideas from one region to the other.

To prove this theory we have to answer the following questions: 1. What are the characteristics of the symbol systems of Southeast Iran and Bactria? 2. Did religious transfer take place between the religious symbol systems of Iran and Bactria? In other words, do Iranian gods, heroes or mixed beings occur in Bactria? Do we find the same rituals or myths in both regions? Do we find the same symbols? 3. Did any form of adoption or transformation take place? For example, did these gods or beings acquire a new outer appearance or a new function? Did attributes of deities change? Did new gods or mixed beings appear? Did gods, mixed beings or motifs suffer a loss of importance, a decline or rise? Do we encounter other/new image carriers? Do we find other expressions of religious thinking? 4. Is there evidence of continuity or discontinuity with earlier periods?

To answer these questions we have to analyze the material culture of Southeast Iran and Bactria as there are no written sources for these regions. Therefore the source material consists mainly of those pictorial representations which portray deities, mixed beings, heroes in action, mythical animals, and scenes reflecting rituals. To a lesser extent an-iconic objects also play a role.

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<sup>3</sup> Carl C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, "Urban Interaction on the Iranian Plateau: Excavations at Tepe Yahya 1967-1973," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 59 (1973): 283-319; Carl C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, "Third Millennium Modes of Exchange and Modes of Production," in *Ancient Civilizations and Trade*, eds. J.A. Sabloff and Carl C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), 341-368; Carl C. Lamberg-Karlovsky and Maurizio Tosi, "Shahr-i Sokhta and Tepe Yahya: Tracks on the Earliest History of the Iranian Plateau," *East & West* 23 (1973): 21-53; Giuseppe Tucci, *La citta' bruciata* (Venezia: Erizzo, 1977); Philip Kohl, "The Archaeology of Trade," *Dialectic Anthropology* I (1975): 43-50; Philip Kohl, *Seeds of Upheaval: The Production of Chlorite at Tepe Yahya and an Analysis of Commodity Production and Trade in Southwest Asia in the Mid-Third Millennium* (Cambridge: Unpublished Dissertation, 1974); Philip Kohl, "The Balance of Trade in Southwestern Asia in the Third Millennium," *Current Anthropology* 19 (1978): 463-492; Shereen Ratnagar, *Encounters: The Westerly Trade of the Harappan Civilization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981).

## 2. THE SYMBOL SYSTEM OF THE KERMAN CULTURE

### 2.1 Sources

The religious symbol system of the Kerman culture is reflected in the form of carved chlorite vessels, plates, weights and gaming-boards<sup>4</sup> as well as of seals. To a lesser extent painted ceramic, figurative pin heads and small sculptures could also be used.<sup>5</sup> They show a rich ensemble of gods, heroes, mixed beings, depictions of myths and ritual actions which help to reconstruct the religious beliefs of the inhabitants in this region. Due to the relatively large surface of the carved chlorite objects we have a great number of multi-figured depictions which give us an insight into the religious perceptions of the Bronze Age people of Southeast Iran. Besides these groups we note the almost complete absence hitherto of terracotta figurines and statues of divinities.

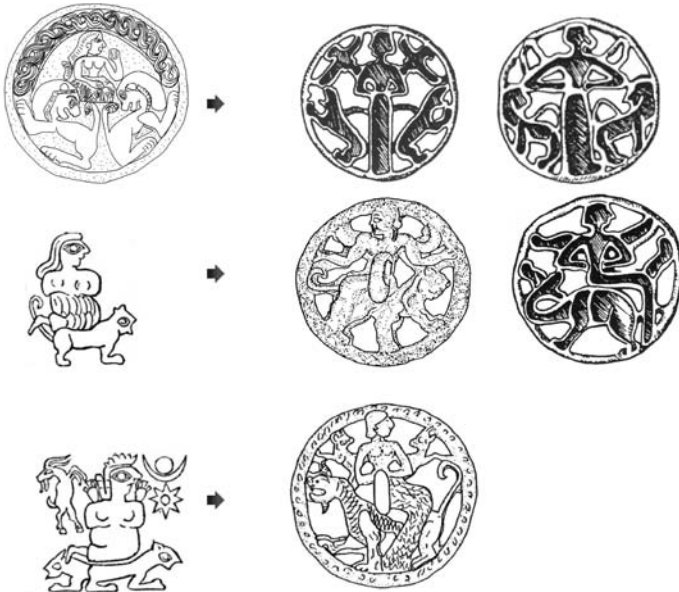
The most interesting general points that can be observed are three-fold: First, the motifs depicted here present the most developed form of multi-figured motifs which appeared in a more abbreviated form in Iran and Northern Mesopotamia in neolithic or chalcolithic art long before the Kerman culture. This is important for motif history as it allows us to trace back those abbreviated motifs to their fully developed form. Secondly, we have here for the first time fully developed representations of deities in anthropomorphic form, and thirdly, artistic production at the beginning of the third millennium B.C.E. is characterized by the presence of one or more feminine divinities depicted in a variety of ways. There has been, with maybe one exception, no clear evidence of any male divinity.

### 2.2 *Female Deities and their Attributes—Types of Divinities*

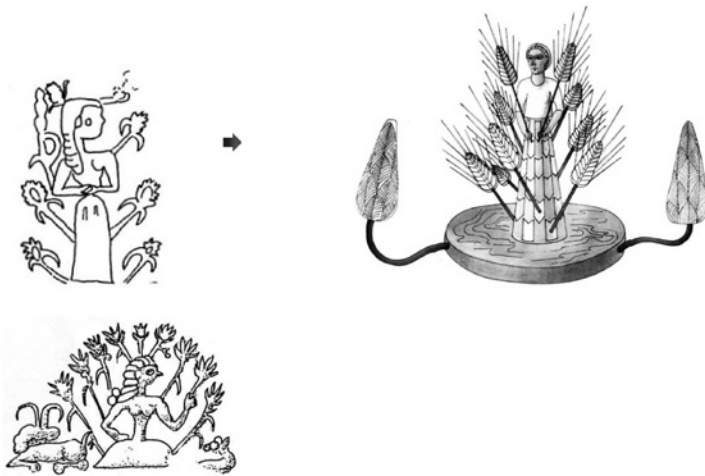
There are a great number of depictions of female deities with changing attributes and appearances in Southeast Iranian art. Thus, it is very difficult to define types of deities and their action spheres. The sacred animals attributed to the divinity or divinities are horned animals, mainly zebus as well as sheep, goats and gazelles, felines such as the lion and leopard, scorpions, a bird of prey (vulture) and serpents. (Figs. 1, 2). These animals are not only manifestations of the specific aspects or action spheres con-

<sup>4</sup> They are also known as intercultural style objects.

<sup>5</sup> A good overview is to be found in Youssuf Majidzadeh, *Jiroft: The Earliest Oriental Civilization* (Tehran: The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance/Cultural Heritage Publishing Organization, 2003).



Goddesses associated with felines (left: Kerman, right: Bactria)



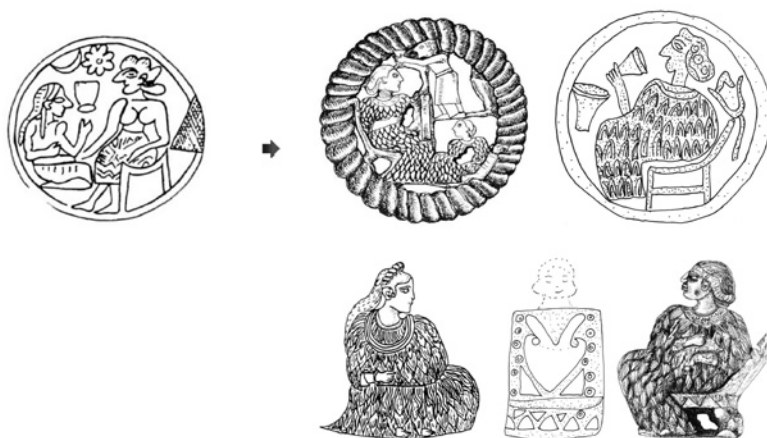
Goddess associated with wheat ears (left: Kerman, right: Bactria)

Fig. 1: Various examples of transfer and transformation of goddesses from Kerman to Bactria (1). I thank V.I. Sarianidi for the kind permission to use drawings from his publication for the compilation of all the illustrations in this chapter.





2.1. Goddesses associated with eagle, snake, bull and/or mountain (left: Kerman, right: Bactria)



2.2. Enthroned goddess associated with a vessel, mountain and plant or astral symbol (left: Kerman, right: Bactria)

Fig. 2: Various examples of transfer and transformation of goddesses from Kerman to Bactria (2).

nected with a goddess but can also appear as substitutes for the deity. The deity appears with all of them together or with only some of them; they surround the goddess, they stand at her side, she holds them up, she holds them tight or she embraces them. Sometimes they are fused with her, giving shape to fantastic mixed beings, for example, a lion-woman with the body of a lion from the waist down or with the paws of a lion,<sup>6</sup> a scorpion-woman and a scorpion-mountain-woman with scorpions instead of arms,<sup>7</sup> and a goat- or eagle-headed woman.<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes only parts of these animals come out from the body of the deity. This is the case with the goddess with snakes arising from her shoulder and with a bull's head or a lion's tail coming out of her head (cf. Fig. 2.1).<sup>9</sup> Another form of the merging of a goddess with the animals attributed to her seems to be the horned goddesses, wearing cattle horns, goat or sheep horns or a deity endowed with the wings of a bird of prey, with arms or instead of arms.<sup>10</sup> This kind of outer appearance evolves in Kerman art for the first time. As a supra-natural animal which is so far depicted without any relation to a deity we have the first unicorn in world history.<sup>11</sup>

A further series of attributes are plants like the date palm, the tulip and wheat ears (cf. Fig. 1.2).<sup>12</sup> Very often the goddess is also accompanied by a stylized hill in the shape of a triangle or a semicircle filled with scales (cf. Figs. 1, 2).<sup>13</sup> This applies to goddesses associated with animals as well as those associated with water streams. But the mountain does not only appear as an attribute but also as an-iconic appearance of a divinity!<sup>14</sup> This

<sup>6</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 15 and 169.

<sup>7</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 15, 112, 126, 135, 139.

<sup>8</sup> Sylvia Winkelmann, “Ein neues transelamisches Siegel,” *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus dem Iran* 28 (1997): 135–146, fig. 1, Viktor I. Sarianidi, *Margush: Drevnevostočnoe carstvo v staroj del'te reki Murgab* (Ašchabad: Türkmendöwlethabarlary, 2002), 278.

<sup>9</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 132.10, 12; 137.

<sup>10</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 132. 6–9. Amiet, “Un sceau trans-élamite à Suse,” *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 88 (1994): 1–4, fig. 3. Ali Hakemi, *Shahdad: Archaeological Excavations of a Bronze Age Center in Iran* (Rome: ISMEO, 1997), 661, Ib. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ali Hakemi, “Kerman: The Original Place of Production of Chlorite Stone Objects in the Third Millennium B.C.,” *East and West* 47 (1997): fig. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 132. 4, 8; Amiet, “Un sceau trans-élamite,” fig. 3; Hakemi, *Shahdad*, 355 n. 2263; Lamberger-Karlovsky, “Urban interaction,” pl. 31c; S. Winkelmann, “Ein neues transelamisches Siegel,” fig. 1; Sarianidi, *Margush*, 278.

<sup>13</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 170; Edith Porada, “Seals and Related Objects from Early Mesopotamia and Iran,” in *Early Mesopotamia and Iran. Contact and Conflict 3500–1600 B.C.*, ed. John Curtis (London: British Museum Press, 1993), fig. 19; Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 132.12, 13.

<sup>14</sup> See S. Winkelmann, “Heimkehr in den Berg: Paradiesvorstellungen im 3. Jt.v. Chr. in Iran und Baktrien,” in *Sehnsucht nach dem Paradies: Paradiesvorstellungen in Judentum,*

makes sense as water, essential for agriculture, comes from the melted snow in the mountains during the spring or from rivers, flowing down from the mountains. Therefore it seems logical that mountain and goddess are placed on the same ground in iconographic terms.<sup>15</sup> The divine aspect of the mountain could also be expressed by merging the human body with this an-iconic image of the goddess. The most widespread form of this fusion appears as an anthropomorphic figure which possesses the head and the upper part of the human body while the lower part of the body forms a mountain.

Another special attribute only appears together with depictions of a man who is kneeling before a goddess (cf. Fig. 2.2): In this case she is associated with a vessel and a flower or with astral symbols like a star, rosette and/or a crescent.<sup>16</sup> This goddess with astral symbols, the mountain and the vessel, often also accompanied by a scorpion, snake, lion, vultures and zebu, is the only one depicted as acting together with a man and seems to be very important for the mythological perceptions of the Bronze Age people.<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that precisely the an-iconic representations, the vessel, the date palm and the mountain appear as prayer objects, too.<sup>18</sup> Due to the abundance of attributes this goddess seems to be the most powerful divinity of the Bronze Age pantheon. But we also have many varieties or subtypes of this goddess, where only some of the attribute animals appear. Thus we also have a goddess associated only with lions or snakes as well as goddesses with wings and horns with and without snakes.

Thus, it is not clear if this is a single deity represented in different forms or if there are different deities which embody single aspects. The second hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that the different types appear

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*Christentum, Manichäismus und Islam. Beiträge des Leucorea-Kolloquiums zu Ehren von Walter Beltz*, eds. J. Tubach, A. Drost-Abgarjan and S. Vashalomidze (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 15–37, fig. 7 a–c, for substantially comparable an-iconic and iconic representations of a goddess.

<sup>15</sup> The idea of a deity in the form of a mountain is much propagated in all regions of Ancient Near East. Many gods received the epithet “mountain,” and, what is more, stones are venerated as deities in lieu of anthropomorphic representations.

<sup>16</sup> Porada, “Seals,” fig. 19; Amiet, *L’âge*, fig. 71,132. 10,12; Winkelmann, “Heimkehr,” fig. 3 a–c.

<sup>17</sup> Winkelmann, “Heimkehr,” fig. 3, 4 a.

<sup>18</sup> Winkelmann, “Heimkehr,” fig. 6; Hakemi, *Shahdad*, 284, Ib.1. Bearing in mind the vessel as symbol of a goddess we can possibly also explain the carved stone vessels deposited in the tombs and bearing the attributes of the divinity such as animals, plants or water streams: they embody the goddess who identifies herself with the stone container; in this case doubly an-iconic, as a vessel and as a stone (mountain).

contemporaneously on the seals. But since none of the various representations shows a rigid connection to a single attribute (particularly the animals attributed to them change), it cannot be ruled out that through such variability the different aspects of a single deity would be represented, which in a broad meaning would correspond to the image of a “Great Goddess.”

But it seems that we could possibly distinguish five further goddesses with some certainty beside this assumed hypothetical Great Goddess: The first one is the goddess associated with lions and changing further attributes (Fig. 1.1).<sup>19</sup> The second is a woman with ears of wheat growing out from her body and head, often accompanied by goats and rams, but sometimes also with a snake (Fig. 1.2).<sup>20</sup> She is the second most common type appearing in Southeast Iranian art and seems to be connected with agriculture and stock breeding. Given the dependence of Bronze Age people on rich harvests, the frequent appearance of this goddess is understandable. It is interesting to note that this type of divinity appears in Akkadian art in Mesopotamia in the form of so-called vegetation gods around 2300 B.C.E., but is verifiable in the same pictorial representation in Iran hundreds of years earlier.<sup>21</sup>

The third one is the type of the goddess with water streams. She appears in her most developed form as a goddess kneeling on two bulls holding water streams from which plants arise and is often connected with mountains and with astral symbols, but she can also appear only holding water streams or only having water coming out from her hands or body.<sup>22</sup> We can possibly connect this goddess with water and fertility as well. Given the significance of water in the arid highlands of Iran, this goddess would

<sup>19</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 71; Winkelmann, “Heimkehr,” fig. 3 d, e.

<sup>20</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 132. 7, 8, 9; Amiet, “Un sceau trans-élamite,” fig. 3; Winkelmann, “Transelamisches Siegel,” fig. 1; Sarianidi, *Margush*, 278.

<sup>21</sup> Akkadian examples: R.M. Boehmer, *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkadzeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1965), 94–97, fig. 527–554. A goddess of agriculture also appears in epigraphic sources from Mesopotamia from the late fourth millennium, but the iconographic appearance with arising plants seems to have been copied from Iran. Early forms of a goddess or priestess with plants arising from head and hips are to be found already in Susa A (early 4th millennium B.C.E. / Middle Uruk period) in Iran. See: Pierre Amiet, *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque* (Paris: CNRS, 1961), pl. 6, no. 121, 122. There is only one Uruk-period depiction of a female holding a branch in the upper register of the famous “Uruk vase,” but the character of this figurine is unclear. It could be a high-ranking woman as she also appears in banquet scenes of Early Dynastic art: “Amiet, Glyptique mésopotamienne,” pl. 88, no. 1155, 1157, pl. 93 n. 1222, 1223.

<sup>22</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 13, 45; Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 71, 132. 11, 12; Edith Porada, *Alt-Iran* (Baden-Baden: Holle, 1962), fig. 12.

have an important position, too. It is interesting to note that this goddess with water streams first appeared in the art of the late Uruk period in Iran and belongs to the oldest depictions of a deity in anthropomorphic form.<sup>23</sup>

As a fourth goddess we can possibly distinguish a winged and horned goddess with bull horns who appears alone or with a male associate who is adorned with ears of wheat.<sup>24</sup> Her outer appearance is very strongly reminiscent of the Inanna-Ishtar of Mesopotamian art, but in contrast to the first depiction in the Akkad period in Mesopotamia around 2300 B.C.E. this goddess appears in Southeast Iran already around 2700 B.C.E. in Shahr-i Sokhta and Shahdad.<sup>25</sup> This leads us to believe that this goddess and/or her outer appearance, if it really has any relation to the Mesopotamian Ishtar, is of Iranian origin.<sup>26</sup>

Another type is a goddess holding scorpions, which appears in naked and clothed forms, sometimes together with a vulture or with lion paws as well as merged with the attributes mountain and water whirl.<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 3, 2nd row left) It is worthy of note that the nude variety, a woman sitting with legs apart and presenting her vulva is by far the oldest anthropomorphic form of a goddess ever attested in the greater Near East: This type appears without scorpions (scorpions appear together with the naked woman only at the end of 4th millennium B.C.E.), already in Neolithic art of Turkey and Northern Mesopotamia and continues over the Chalcolithic art of Luristan into Iranian Bronze Age art.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Winkelmann, "Heimkehr," fig. 5.d, e, h, l, k.

<sup>24</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 132. 9; Amiet, "Un sceau trans-élamite," fig. 3; Daniel T. Potts, "Echoes of Mesopotamian Divinity on a Cylinder Seal from South-Eastern Iran," *Revue d'Assyriologie* LXXV (1981): 135–142, fig. 1 a. TY 32, fig. 2, TY 33.

<sup>25</sup> S. Winkelmann, "Ein ungewöhnliches figürliches Kompartmentsiegel aus Shahr-i Sokhta," in *Spurensuche in der Vorderasienarchäologie*, eds. W. Beltz and M. Mode (Halle: Halesche Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft, 1996), 153–172

<sup>26</sup> This corresponds very well with the picture arising from the Sumerian literature: In the epic "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta" the lord of Aratta, a kingdom lying behind the seven mountains in Iran, rejects the claim of the king of Uruk to send him precious metals and stones to construct a sanctuary of Inanna with the hint that the homeland of Inanna is Aratta in Iran itself.

<sup>27</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 15, 139; *Christies*, 25.1. 1997, 45 n. 178.

<sup>28</sup> Klaus Schmidt, *Sie bauten die ersten Tempel: Das rätselhafte Heiligtum der Steinzeitjäger* (Munich: Beck, 2006), fig. 9, 17, 25. 98, 104; Mahmoud Rashad, *Die Entwicklung der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Stempelsiegel in Iran* (Berlin, Reimer, 1990), no. 212, 341–345, 977; Yosef Garfinkel, *Dancing at the Dawn of Agriculture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), fig. 13.2 a–c, 13.3; Pinhas Delougaz and Helene J. Kantor, *Chogha Mish I. The First Five Seasons of Excavations 1961–1971*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1996), pl. 135, C; Pierre Amiet, *Glyptique susienne des origines à l'époque des Perses*

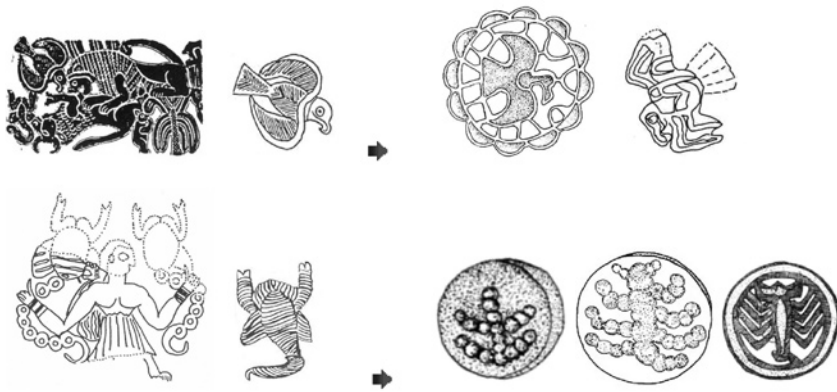


Fig. 3: Two examples of reduction of a complex motif to a symbol.

### 2.3 Male Gods and Heroes

Concerning possible male gods we have two depictions which may possibly represent gods. The first one is the male person who accompanies the horned winged goddess, appearing as a man adorned with ears of wheat.<sup>29</sup> This may be a god but could also be her human partner.<sup>30</sup>

The second one has only been known for two years from a recently discovered cylinder seal found in Fars and published by Ascalone (Fig. 4. 1st row, left.). It depicts a man whose arms end in snakes and from whose body snakes arise (Fig. 4.1 left).<sup>31</sup> This figure is shown together with humans who are bowing down before him. Such veneration is evidence of his high rank and might be taken as an indication of his divinity. We

*et Achéménides*, 2 vols. (Paris: Geuthner, 1972), no. 1382, 1422, 1424; Amiet, “Glyptique mésopotamienne,” no. 846, 847, pl. 72 bis H; Rainer-Michael Boehmer, *Uruk: Früheste Siegelabrollungen* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1999), fig. 65, 66 (erroneously described as a demon).

<sup>29</sup> Potts, “Echoes,” fig. 1a.

<sup>30</sup> There is a terracotta figurine, stylistically clearly to be dated to the Mehrgarh VII-level in Baluchistan, e.g. ca. 2700–2600 B.C.E., published in: *Dea Madre*, eds. Giancarlo Ligabue and Gabriele Rossi-Osmida (Milano: Electa, 2006), 187. It is one of the most important finds of recent years: it shows with certainty that the type of the god or man with plants arising from his body starts on the Iranian Plateau long before its first appearance in Akkadian art in Mesopotamia and points to another direction of religious transfer from Iran to Mesopotamia.

<sup>31</sup> Enrico Ascalone, “Cultural Interactions Among Mesopotamia, Elam, Transelam and the Indus Civilization: The Evidence of a Cylinder Stamp Seal from Jalalabad (Fars) and its Significance in the Historical Dynamics of Southeastern Iran,” in *Proceedings of the 4th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Vol. 1: The Reconstruction of Environment: Natural Resources and Human Interrelations through Time. Art History: Visual Communication*, ed. Hartmut Kühne, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 254–275, fig. 1.



Fig. 4: The man with snake arms as example of transfer and transformation of a mythological motif from Kerman to Bactria.

have another seal showing a similar male figure with snakes who is kneeling before a divinity in a circle (Fig. 4, 1st row right).<sup>32</sup> This hints at the possibility that this figure is not a god but probably a mythological person acting together with a deity. This problem remains unanswered based on our current knowledge.

Another person seems almost certainly to be a mythological figure. This a man who is depicted in varying actions of which three belong together with certainty, as they are depicted together: A cylinder seal shows a male figure flying into heaven (Fig. 5.2) and kneeling before a goddess: he is asking for a vessel associated with the deity. A lapis lazuli disc repeats exactly this action of the man asking for a vessel and shows on the reverse side the continuation of the story: the man, now enthroned, is drinking together with his wife (cf. Fig. 2.2).<sup>33</sup> We know this story from Mesopotamian sources: this flight to heaven to get a plant or a drink of fertility is a part of the so-called Etana myth, one of the most important Near Eastern epics we have.<sup>34</sup>

If we assume that a similar myth or the same myth was also known in Iran—a fact strongly underlined by the same depictions in Mesopotamia and Iran—we can attribute some of the other motifs of Iranian art to this corpus of reflections of mythological events in figurative art: this concerns a series of motifs in which animals act together and which belong to the first part of the myth: an eagle and a snake live together in a tree and make an agreement to be friends and to care for each other’s children. One day the eagle feeds his young with the snake’s children and the snake asks the god for retaliation. The god tells the snake to kill a wild bull and to wait in the craw until the eagle comes to eat. When the animals come to eat the eagle also dives onto the bull and the snake comes out and struggles with the bird, breaks his wings and puts it into a pit where the eagle has to wait until it is saved by the man who wants to fly into heaven.

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<sup>32</sup> Edith Porada, “Discussion of a Cylinder Seal probably from Southeast Iran,” *Iranica Antiqua* 23 (1988): 139–148; Sarianidi, *Margush*, 310. The definition of this seal as a South-east Iranian one is not certain as it also depicts a Bactrian dragon and a Bactrian goddess. It seems to me to be made in a mixed style of Iranian and Bactrian elements.

<sup>33</sup> Winkelmann, “Heimkehr,” fig. 1, 4; Porada, *Alt-Iran*, fig. 14; Porada, “Seals,” fig. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Boehmer, *Glyptik*, no. 693–703; Reinhard Bernbeck, “Siegel, Mythen, Riten: Etana und die Ideologie der Akkadzeit,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 27 (1996): 159–214; James V. Kinnier-Wilson, *The Legend of Etana: A New Edition* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1985).

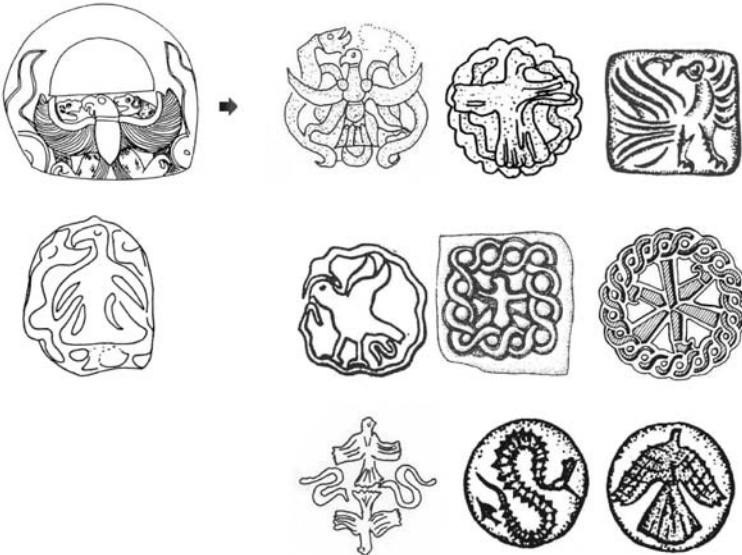




Snake-holder



Man flying with an eagle



Battle between bird of prey and snake  
Left: Kerman, right: Bactria

Fig. 5: Various mythological motifs transferred from Kerman to Bactria, and their modifications.

These events seem to be reflected in the motifs of a snake attacking a bull,<sup>35</sup> a dead bull lying on its back with a diving eagle and an eating lion (Fig. 3.1)<sup>36</sup> and especially in the motif of the struggle between eagle and snake (Fig. 5.3).<sup>37</sup> One could also assume that the well-known and age-old motif of the snake holder<sup>38</sup> could also have been used to present a part of these mythological images (Fig. 5.1, Fig. 4.3): It is clear that the snakes want to prevent the freeing of the eagle and that the man who needs the help of the bird of prey has first to defeat the snakes.<sup>39</sup> But this could be just one of many semantic meanings of this depiction.

There are a lot of further depictions which could have a mythological background, like the man killed and eaten by snakes or by lions, the feline holder or the man being sacrificed before a temple, but a discussion of all these motifs is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 101; Sylvia Winkelmann, "‘Berliner Schlangenbecken,’ Trichterbecher und ‘Cincinnati-Mann,’ verkannte Schlüssel-Objekte der altorientalischen Archäologie?" in *Alttertumswissenschaften im Dialog: Festschrift für Professor Nagel zur Vollendung seines 80. Geburtstags*, eds. Bruno Jacobs, Reinhard Dittmann and C. Eder (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003); Pierre Amiet, "Antiquités trans-élamites," *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 80 (1986): 97–104, fig. 2; Jay Gluck and Suri Hiramoto Gluck, eds., *A Survey of Persian Handicraft* (Tehran: Survey of Persian Art, 1977), 29.

<sup>36</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 37, 41, 62; Oscar White Muscarella, "Intercultural style ‘weights,’" *Bulletin of the Asian Institute* 7 (1993): 143–157, fig. 8; Porada, *Alt-Iran*, fig. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Porada, *Alt-Iran*, fig. 12; Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 92, 95, 97, 126; Muscarella, "Intercultural style ‘weights,’" fig. 5, 7; Hakemi, *Shahdad*, 238. The motifs of a "man, sitting on an eagle", "man killed by a snake," "battle between eagle and snake" and "snakes attacking a horned animal" are already to be found in the Pre-Pottery-Neolithic art of Southeast Turkey: They are depicted on the stone pillars of Nevali Cori and Göbökly depe and may point to Neolithic roots of the religious ideas lying behind these depictions. But we are not yet able to show an unbroken continuity of these motifs up to the 4th millennium B.C.E. See Schmidt, *Sie bauten*, fig. 45, 46, 83, 86, 88, 89. It is interesting to note that the motif battle between eagle and snake is one of the most long lasting motifs of Central Asian art, especially in the art of the steppe zone, and is spread worldwide, too. A comprehensive study of this motif is to be found in the article of Rudolf Wittkower "Eagle and serpent: a study in the migration of symbols" in *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, Vol. 2, no. 4 (Warburg, April 1939): 293–325.

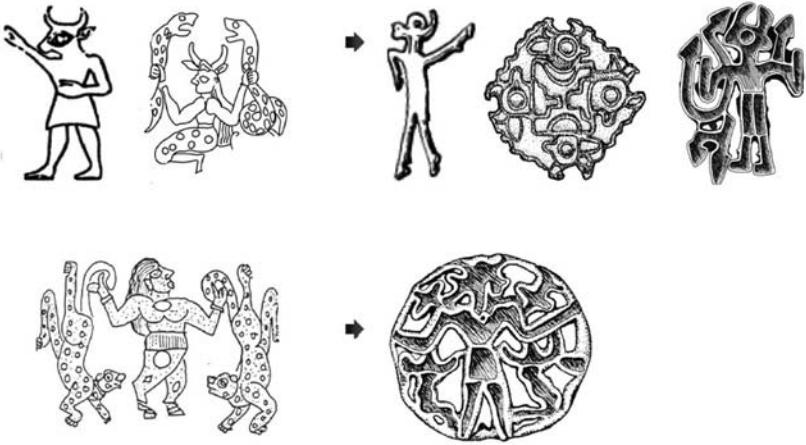
<sup>38</sup> It shows a man holding two snakes down and often standing on a lion, or flanked by two felines. This type is also known as 'Master of animals', but this title is also used for a man holding down two felines.

<sup>39</sup> Porada, *Altiran*, fig. 12; Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 15; Hakemi, *Shahdad*, Xf; *Christies* 25. n. 1997, n. 178; Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 73 c.

<sup>40</sup> Discussions of these motifs are to be found in Winkelmann, "Berliner Schlangenbecken."



6.1. Bird-man (left: Kerman, right: Bactria)



6.2. Bull-man (left: Kerman, right: Bactria)

Fig. 6: Two examples of transfer and modification of mixed beings from Kerman and Bactria.

2.4 *Animal-Human Mixed Beings*

Besides the mixed beings arising from a ligature of the goddesses with her attributes mentioned above, Iranian Bronze Age art shows some mythological figures combining a male and an animal: The most important ones

are the bird-man (Fig. 6.1) and the bull-man (Fig. 6.2). The mythological figure of the bird-man seems to belong to the aforementioned myth and is the product of one of the typical principles of ancient Near Eastern art: the principle of the ligature of figurines acting together or having acted together. In the case of the bird-man this mixed being is an expression of the fact that eagle and man had flown together into heaven. The man acquired characteristic features of the animal associated with him: the wings, the head and/or the talons.<sup>41</sup> This interpretation is supported by the fact that the bird-man acts in exactly the same semantic context as the man alone: he is kneeling before the goddess, he is carrying a vessel or twig, he is struggling with wild animals like lions and snakes, and is often also depicted as snake holder (Fig. 6.1).<sup>42</sup>

Iranian and Early Dynastic Mesopotamian art shows many stages in the merging of the bird and the man sitting on it. While in Mesopotamia the form of the human-headed bird-man became the dominant variety, in Southeast Iran we have both human-headed and animal-headed forms, but the latter is the more common form.

Also the second typical mixed being in Southeast Iranian art, the bull-man, seems to derive from specific mythological perceptions which could be traced back at least to chalcolithic times: Already in this period hybrid beings combining horned animals and man appear, mainly in the form of a goat-headed man, the so-called "dieu ibex,"<sup>43</sup> but also as a ram-headed creature, both typologically closely related equivalents of the bull-man.<sup>44</sup> The Southeast Iranian varieties appear as animal-headed bull-man, continuing in this long Iranian tradition, as well as in the new form of a bull-man with human head but horned and often having a bull's tail or legs.<sup>45</sup>

The question which idea is reflected in these mythological beings has not been answered definitively so far. However, we find one answer

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<sup>41</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 172; Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 71, 73; Porada, "Seals," fig. 18; Hakemi, *Shahdad*, fig. Ia.4; Lamberg-Karlovsky, *Tepe Yahya*, pl. 30b; Carl L. Lamberg-Karlovsky, "Intercultural Style Carved Vessels," *Iranica Antiqua* 23 (1988): pl. III; Sarianidi, *Margush*, 278.

<sup>42</sup> Compilation of motifs in: Winkelmann, "Berliner Schlangenbecken."

<sup>43</sup> Elisabeth von der Osten-Sacken, *Der Ziegedämon: Obed- und Uruk-zeitliche Götterdarstellungen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> The animal-headed mixed being of horned animal and man already appears as snake holder as well as lion holder and together with the naked goddess in the art of 4th millennium Luristan.

<sup>45</sup> Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 150, 151, 153; Porada, "Seals," fig. 31; Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 71, 73 (Human-bull-eagle-mixed being), fig. 132. 2, 138; Hakemi, *Shahdad*, Xf. The bull-man with human head also appears in Mesopotamian iconography starting there in Early Dynastic II times and maybe coming from Iran.

for the type of a man with elements of horned animals when we follow the historical development of many motifs up to the Proto-Elamite art of the early third millennium B.C.E. A characteristic feature of this art is the depiction of animals acting as humans. Animals wear human costumes and animals do all the things otherwise done by humans. And it became clear that whenever in a motif normally a man was acting, a horned animal acts in lieu of man in the Proto-Elamite art. This can be a bull or a goat, but it is always a horned animal which carries a bow, which bears a twig or a vessel, which venerates an object, which acts as feline holder or as snake holder and which was killed or sacrificed.<sup>46</sup>

In the light of these facts it seems to me very clear that the horned and hoofed animals can be semantically equated with a special man or male-hero, symbolizing his male power, virility and heroism. This means that these animals have a double semantic meaning, i.e. as a normal animal and as a zoomorphic substitute of a man, or vice versa the man can be equated with its zoomorphic substitute, the powerful bull or other horned animal.

Thus the key to understanding this type of composite mixed beings seems to be found in the merging of the zoomorphic and anthropomorphic appearances of a male hero. I feel my assumption justified if I compiled the motifs in which those mixed beings act: all these creatures generally act in the same manner and in the same motifs as horned animals act in Proto-Elamite art and bulls or men in Near Eastern art.

A third form of mixed being is that of a scorpion-human creature: it is represented as female and as male scorpion-human-mixed being, both having a human head and upper torso but the lower body and tail of a scorpion in the lower part of body. Here, I cannot give any interpretation of its meaning so far.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. THE SYMBOL SYSTEM OF BACTRIA

#### 3.1 Sources

The religious symbol system of Bactria is reflected in sources other than those found in Iran: Our main sources are compartment seals as well as,

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<sup>46</sup> Amiet, *Glyptique mésopotamienne*, no. 559–591, pl. 38bis. D; Amiet, *Glyptique susienne*, no. 1005–1017.

<sup>47</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 71; Majidzadeh, *Jiroft*, 15, 126, 135.

to a smaller extent, stamp and cylinder seals, which were used both in daily life and as grave goods. While the rare cylinder seals show scenic depictions, the overwhelming majority of compartment seals and stamp seals bear strongly reduced images, sometimes only one motif which has a high symbolic meaning. The same goes for pins with figurative heads. Beside these we have sculptures which appear both as miniature composite sculptures in graves and as cult images from temples and graves. Additionally, we find luxury silver and gold vessels, ceremonial weapons with figurative depictions, stone and plumb discs as well as figured weights, terracotta cult vessels with attached figurines, rare wall paintings and mosaics, small incised chlorite vessels and copper vials with pins with figured head, all of which come from temple deposits and graves. Also undecorated polished stone objects in different forms<sup>48</sup> and stone columns are among the grave goods. Most of these finds come from the Early and Middle Bronze Age periods in Afghanistan and Margiana and can be dated between 2400 and 1800 B.C.E.

If we analyze these sources we find a high number of both female deities and mixed beings that share many common features with the Iranian ones or are indeed identical in every way with the Iranian ones. This concerns both the outer appearance and the gestures as well as the position within a motif which hints at a similar or the same semantic meaning.

### 3.2 *The Divinities*

As in Iran, we again have a pantheon consisting overwhelmingly of goddesses who come mainly from compartment seals: They appear as a slender woman, standing or sitting, with a long skirt and narrow waist and hands clasped together, a form which closely corresponds to the Southeast Iranian goddesses. If we analyze their attributes we find the same animals and an-iconic objects that were associated with the Iranian deities: snakes, birds of prey, feline, tulip, mountain, and vessel. Additionally, many goddesses are adorned with wings. But they appear very rarely with more than two attributes. All these attributes also appeared in combination with the Iranian goddess we have tentatively labelled as Great Goddess. Here we can possibly define three groups of goddesses which seem to be modifications of their Iranian precursors.

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<sup>48</sup> They appear as cone, hemisphere or as an egg.

The first group comprises goddesses associated with felines (Fig. 1.1). They include, for example, an un-winged goddess flanked by lions and eagles and a winged goddess flanked by lions, showing her relation to the bird by being winged.<sup>49</sup> We also find the type of a winged goddess enthroned on a feline-like animal. But it is this animal that has undergone a remarkable modification: instead of a feline we have here a mixed being, often composed of a snake and a feline showing one or two snake heads or snake neck or only the scales of the snake body.<sup>50</sup> A special variety is a goddess with goats arising from her shoulders, sitting on a bearded and horned lion-dragon and surrounded by stylized snakes; she has a clear antecedent in a goddess from the Kerman area.<sup>51</sup> On a cylinder seal that has features of both Iranian and Bactrian art, a Bactrian horned goddess holding a twig sits on the tail of a winged lion dragon.<sup>52</sup> This winged, horned and bearded lion-dragon also appears in a wall mosaic of Gonur depe, but is elsewhere depicted as winged-lion, as winged lion-eagle-griffon, as winged lion with snake tail, which is sometimes also human headed, and as lion with scorpion tail and two snakes arising from its belly. These are new forms of zoomorphic mixed beings composed of the attribute animals of the goddesses in Bactria.<sup>53</sup>

The second group includes goddesses associated with eagle, snake and stylized mountain, a type appearing in Kerman as a winged goddess flanked by snakes and as a goddess with snakes arising from her body and associated with eagle and mountain.<sup>54</sup> Bactrian goddesses belonging to this group are a winged deity with snakes, a goddess with eagles or with eagles and stylized mountain, and a winged divinity with snakes and

<sup>49</sup> Viktor I. Sarianidi, "The Bactrian pantheon," *UNESCO Information Bulletin* 10 (1986): 5–20, fig. 1, 12, 14; Viktor I. Sarianidi, *Myths of Ancient Bactria and Margiana on its Seals and Amulets* (Moscow: Pentagraphics, 1998), no. 24, 34, 37, 40. Iranian antecedents: Winkelmann, "Heimkehr," fig. 3 d, e; Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 71, fig. 183.

<sup>50</sup> With lion: Winkelmann, *Seals*, no. 1.1–07; Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 14, 15, 17, 20, 24. With lion-dragon: Sarianidi, "Bactrian Pantheon," fig. 1. 7, 10; Sarianidi, *Margush*, 261.

<sup>51</sup> Kerman culture: Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 71. Bactria: Marie-Helene Pottier, "Un cachet en argent de Bactriane," *Iranica Antiqua* 15 (1980): 167–174, pl. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Sarianidi, *Margush*, 310; Porada, "Discussion of a Cylinder Seal," pl. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Sarianidi, *Margush*, 106 below, 266.1, 2, 4, 5, 270. 3, 273, 275.1; Viktor I. Sarianidi, *Necropolis of Gonur depe* (Athens: Kapon, 2007), 184–185, fig. 11, 15; Sarianidi, "Pantheon," fig. 3. 1, 26, 29, fig. 4. 31, 36, 45, 46, 54, 55, 61; Sarianidi, *Gonur depe, gorod tsarei i bogov = Gonur depe: salaryn we hudaylaryn saperi = Gonur-Depe, City of Kings and Gods* (Ašchchabad: Miras, 2005), 224.

<sup>54</sup> Amiet, *L'âge*, fig. 132. 7, 10, 12.

a mountain dress. Deities of this group appear so far only on seals (cf. Fig. 2.1).<sup>55</sup>

The third group comprises goddesses who can be traced back to the type of the enthroned goddess associated with a vessel, a stylized mountain and sometimes a holy plant or rosette (cf. Fig. 2.2).<sup>56</sup> This type appears in many forms on seals and metal vessels, as pin head and as sculpture: One miniature sculpture, for example, shows the vessel and the triangular mountain as inlay motifs on her body.<sup>57</sup> An elaborate compartment seal depicts the enthroned goddess with her characteristic clothing who has just given the vessel to a man, a scene well known from Kerman.<sup>58</sup> The characteristic long dress of this goddess decorated with a kind of scale pattern allows us to connect other depictions with this goddess that sometimes show the goddess only with the vessel and sometimes, further reduced, without any additional attributes. This applies, for instance, to an enthroned goddess with vessel and tulip in a very stylized dress, and also to a pin head showing the goddess without any other attributes, an image that recurs on a famous silver vase from Persepolis.<sup>59</sup> And it helps us to explain the most common type of a standing or kneeling goddess which has so far only been found as a miniature composite sculpture in graves.<sup>60</sup> She appears very stylized and seems to be on first sight without any attributes: But the well elaborated examples all show the characteristic clothing with scale pattern. It is strongly reminiscent of the flounced skirt of Mesopotamian and Elamite deities on first glance. But closer study of the elaborated sculptures shows that we have here decorations that are composed of different forms: we find scales and lozenges representing the mountain, curly waved and pointed ribbons evocative of water streams

<sup>55</sup> Sarianidi, "Pantheon," fig. 1, 11, fig. 2, 13, 15; Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 35, 38, 39, 41, 1; Sarianidi, *Necropolis*, 103, fig. 164; Sarianidi, *Gonur depe*, 129, fig. 33, 195, fig. 62.

<sup>56</sup> Kerman: Porada, "Seals," fig. 19; Winkelmann, "Heimkehr," fig. 3 a, b.

<sup>57</sup> Winkelmann, "Heimkehr," fig. 5 b.

<sup>58</sup> Sarianidi, *Necropolis*, 102, no. 160–162.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Calmeyer, "Betrachtungen an der Silbervase von Persepolis," *Iranica Antiqua* 24, (1989): 79–85; Winkelmann, "Bemerkungen." This vase, though bearing an Elamite inscription from the time of Puzur-Inshushinak, seems to be of Bactrian origin for stylistic and typological reasons. In this case, a Bactrian luxury good was traded to Elam and acquired here the additional inscription, which informed the reader that a sitting goddess is depicted on the vase.

<sup>60</sup> Sarianidi, *Necropolis*, 102 n. 159; Winkelmann, "Heimkehr," fig. 5 a. Sculptures: Sarianidi, *Margush*, 140–142; Sarianidi, "Necropolis," 73–75, 153; Marie-Helene Pottier, *Matériel funéraire de la Bactriane Méridionale de l'Âge du Bronze* (Paris: Ed. Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1984), no. 295–303.



and often stylized leaves or twigs that demonstrate that this goddess is associated with water, mountain and plants, too.

A further goddess from Southeast Iran was clearly taken over by the people of Bactria: the type of the goddess with plants arising from her body. In Kerman she appears on seals with wheat ears arising from her body and head and sometimes flanked by hooved animals. Russian archaeologists have recently found a statue of such a goddess in Gonur depe, Margiana (Fig. 1.2). This Bactrian variety also has wheat ears arising from her skirt, but she also holds wheat ears in her hands and wears a skirt covered with mountain scales.<sup>61</sup> Additionally she is flanked by two trees connected to the pedestal of the statue with curved lines. This could point to a greater action sphere and meaning as well as to a modification of the outer appearance.

A further form of an Iranian goddess which can be traced back to neolithic roots also appears in Bactria. This concerns the naked goddess giving birth or presenting her vulva, who is associated with scorpions. But this goddess now seems to be of minor importance as she only appears in a very stylized form and without scorpions on small and drilled bifacial amulets (cf. Fig. 3, 2nd row).<sup>62</sup> Otherwise the motif of the scorpion connected with this goddess as attribute animal is frequently depicted as a single motif on both compartmented and stamp seals in drilled style and may also be seen as a symbol of the goddess.

Only two types of Iranian goddesses are undocumented so far in Bactria, these are the winged and horned deity and the goddess holding water streams associated with horned animals. Whether this is attributable to a difference between the two pantheons or simply to our lack of knowledge remains open. But generally two points have become clear: First, the Bactrian goddesses have their antecedents in Southeast Iranian art and second, the Iranian goddesses and their attribute animals underwent transformations in both their outer appearance and in their function and importance.

### 3.3 *Man and Man-Animal-Mixed Beings*

Concerning the representations of man-animal-mixed beings we find a very similar picture: The type of the man with arms in the form of snakes

<sup>61</sup> Sarianidi, *Gonur depe*, 217, fig. 79.

<sup>62</sup> Sarianidi, "Pantheon," fig. 4. 37; Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 1042.2, 1065, 1075, 1078, 1087, 1088, 1119–1122, 1130, 1132–1137, 1152, 1154, 1163, 1175.

and snakes arising from his body—be it a hero or be it a god—that is known in Iran only from one proven example, appears in many varieties on stamp, compartmented and cylinder seals and seems to have become increasingly significant (cf. Fig. 4.2–3).<sup>63</sup> Also the scorpion-human-mixed being is depicted as identical in every way. Beyond that compartmented seals also very often display varieties of a man<sup>64</sup> or animal-headed mixed being fighting with snakes (Fig. 6). These could be both the bull-man<sup>65</sup> and the bird-man.<sup>66</sup> The bull-man is also depicted on a number of stamps and on one cylinder seal, and in some cases the human-headed but horned variety also occurs. Some seals also show another variety of a man-hoofed-animal mixed being, the goat- or ram-man.<sup>67</sup> But in the light of our present knowledge, it was the bird-man that rose considerably in importance: He is depicted on nearly all sources and in all styles from Bactria: on seals, as sculpture and as terracotta figurines as well as in the form of a ceremonial axe, showing a bird-man adopted unchanged from Iranian precursors and fighting with a lion-dragon, the winged version of the simple Iranian lion.<sup>68</sup> He also appears in almost all other motifs known from Iran and re-occurring in Bactria: as snake holder, as lion holder, as vessel bearer, kneeling before a mountain or a plant and, and this is new, as a person placed on a throne. Whether this means that the myth of the man flying with an eagle into heaven, the motif behind this composite creature, has an important place in the religious belief of the Bactrian people still remains open, but it seems to be obvious. This is not only underlined by depictions of a man feeding or riding an eagle,<sup>69</sup> but also by the fact that the most common motif on all forms and styles of seals is the battle between eagle and snakes in all its variations (cf. Fig. 5.3). This motif is

<sup>63</sup> Sarianidi, *Margush*, 272, 285, 310. Sarianidi, *Necropolis*, 176, 177, fig. 1–10.

<sup>64</sup> Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 23, 25, 30, 31, 904 (winged).

<sup>65</sup> Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 26, 32, 42, 50, 905, 912.4.

<sup>66</sup> Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 28, 29, 33, 57, 906, 917, 920, 1042, 1046.

<sup>67</sup> Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 54, 55, 56, 912.2. Although Southeast Iranian art has a goddess with goat-head we know so far of no male figure with a ram- or goat-head in Kerman. This could be a gap in our knowledge as we have goat-headed males in the Luristan and Mesopotamian art of 5/4th millennium B.C.E., but we cannot exclude the recreation of this variety by Bactrian artists.

<sup>68</sup> Sarianidi, *Myths*, no. 10, 11, 13, 22, 33, 57–61, 148, 159, 910, 916–924, 1427, 1501–1507, 1763, 1775, 1783. Sarianidi, “Pantheon,” fig. 3.1, Amiet, *L’âge*, fig. 173, Gabriele Rossi-Osmida, *Adj-i Kui Oasis III-II. Mill. B.C. Vol. 1: La Cittadella delle Statuette* (Venezia: Il Punto, 2008), 145, 174, 184/85, type 3/D-F, 189.

<sup>69</sup> Sarianidi, *Gonur depe*, 65, fig. 11, Sarianidi, “Pantheon,” fig. 7.7; Sylvia Winkelmann, “Le dee dell’ altopiano iranico e della Battriana,” in *Dea Madre*, ed. by G. Ligabue and G. Rossi-Osmida (Milano: Electa, 2006), 204–205.

depicted in full with two snakes attacking the eagle, taken over without any changes from Kerman, but also hidden: Thus, framed compartmented seals often show the eagle on the inside and the attacking snakes form the frame. On the other hand we find a lot of modifications of this motif, showing the eagle battling with one snake, sitting on the snake, embraced by one snake, or the eagle and the snake are depicted on the two faces of a seal. Finally, we find the attacking snake and the eagle in its characteristic position with outstretched wings and pinions bound upward also as single motifs.

### 3.4 *Animal and An-Iconic Motifs*

We also find in Bactrian art all other motifs of acting animals or animals acting with man that are so typical of Iranian art, but they have undergone changes in terms of frequency, outer appearance and arrangement. Concerning the arrangement it is striking that motifs are often divided into their single elements, which are separately depicted on the two faces of Bactrian stamp seals (cf. Fig. 5.3, bottom row). This partition applies especially to the motifs: snakes attacking a horned animal, snakes attacking a lion, lion attacking a horned animal, snakes attacking a man, or eagle and snake. The iconography of compartmented seals shows a further stage of reduction, often presenting only one picture element out of a more developed motif. In many cases it is possible to trace these depictions back to the original motif on the basis of the specific attitude of the animal: An eagle with outstretched wings and turned head whose pinions face upwards derives from the motif "eagle fighting with two snakes." If the pinions face downwards the eagle is taken from the motif of the eagle diving over the back of a hoofed animal (cf. Figs. 3.1. and 5.2). These single pictorial elements often assume an independent existence and adorn objects of minor arts such as cosmetic vials, beads, or pin heads.

Concerning the outer appearance we can observe three indicators of transformation or adoption. First, the acting animals have often been given wings—this applies to horned animals as well as to lions and snakes giving birth to the lion-dragon or the snake-dragon and the winged snake, respectively. Second, some motifs with acting animals in fixed combinations can vary the specific genus of the animal according to the changed fauna in Bactria. The animals in question can be replaced by another species of the same genus. Thus, the typical motif of a hoofed animal being attacked by a snake, depicted in Iran in the form of a goat or a zebu,

appears in Bactria in the form of a camel being attacked by a snake.<sup>70</sup> The bird of prey fighting with snakes, which was a bearded vulture in Iran, is now depicted as an eagle. Thirdly, some new pictorial elements appear which seem to be new zoomorphic manifestations of the male hero who was equated with a hooved animal in Iran: These are above all the monkey and the camel which are depicted instead of the man or bull-man, be it as enthroned figure, as praying figure, as vessel bearer or as figure attacked by a snake.<sup>71</sup> These are the only elements which have no Iranian forerunners but seem to be local varieties as in the case of the camel or intrusive elements in the case of the monkey, coming from Northwest India to Bactria.

Concerning frequency all motifs connected with eagle and snake as well as with the bird-man show an increase in number (cf. Fig. 5) while there is a slight decrease in the motifs of animals flanking a tree, of feline-snake combat and of the man killed by a lion.

A striking number of compartmented seals show inanimate motifs consisting of all forms of rosette or star, stepped crosses or a tulip, while cosmetic containers often have triangles with scales or cross hatching as motifs. Behind these depictions the an-iconic attributes and appearances of the goddesses are hidden. It seems highly possible that the numerous unusual stone columns that are so often found in graves and make no sense at first glance also symbolize the goddess in the form of a stone. Columns that show traces of affixed mountain scales point to this fact.<sup>72</sup>

Bearing in mind this remarkably large number of motifs that only consist of a single pictorial element and such grave goods as the columns which very probably served as symbols, we may conclude that the religious symbol system of Bactria is eminently a system of symbols.

Thus, the art of Bactria seems to be characterized to a high degree by goddesses, mixed beings and mythological motifs which can be traced back to Iranian forerunners that themselves have older roots in periods of Iranian prehistory. The motifs found here verify that both cultures are united by the same canon of motifs which is to be found over the whole area from Iran to Middle Asia during the 3rd and early 2nd millennium B.C.E.

<sup>70</sup> Sarianidi, *Margush*, 271, right, Sarianidi, “Pantheon,” fig. 7.9.

<sup>71</sup> Sarianidi, *Margush*, 110, 266. 3. Sarianidi. *Myths*, no. 68–73. Giancarlo Ligabue and Sandro Saluatori, eds., *Bactria: An Ancient Oasis Civilization from the Sands of Afghanistan* (Venice: Erizzo, 1988), 239.

<sup>72</sup> Sarianidi, *Margush*, 166, 167, pure: 132, 133.

## 4. TRADING RELIGION BY TRADING

This remarkable concurrence of the religious symbol systems of Bactria and Iran is attributable to economic and political developments in the 3rd millennium B.C.E. During this period of the Early and Middle Bronze Age great political entities emerged on the Iranian Plateau and in Middle Asia that were connected by a vast network of medium and long-distance overland trade, by the common exploitation and processing of natural resources and by specialized craftsmanship in increasing measure. Especially the exploitation of basic metals like copper and lead, of wood and charcoal, and of mineral resources as well as the rising demand for materials for luxury goods like gold, silver and precious and semiprecious stones led to a continuous intensification of contacts between Iran and Mesopotamia on the one hand and between Iran and Middle Asia on the other one. Especially the growing need for gold, silver and lapis lazuli from mines in Afghanistan led to the development and flowering of the Bactrian culture around 2400 B.C.E., whose products were traded as far afield as Mesopotamia and Egypt. The huge slag heaps covering the whole Gardan Reg desert in Sistan and in the Kerman area of Iran as well as the huge mines of alabaster, marble and chlorite in the Kerman area bear witness to the production of metals and stone objects in response to a supra-regional demand which covered the needs of Bactria and Mesopotamia as well. This trade network is attested by many finds in key sites which present themselves as hubs of interregional contact. They include, for example, Gonur depe in Margiana, where three Southeast Iranian cylinder seals and one Akkadian seals have been found,<sup>73</sup> Fullol in Badakshan where gold vessels in Mesopotamian ED III-style have been discovered,<sup>74</sup> Shahr-i Sokhta in the Sistan region presenting Central Asian, Iranian, Mesopotamian and Indian artefacts together,<sup>75</sup> Shahdad in Kerman, where Central Asian seals were found of locally produced Iranian ceramics and Jiroft, the centre of the Kerman culture, which yielded over 280 seals and impressions mixing Early Dynastic Mesopotamian styles with those of Southeast Iran, not to mention Susa, the gateway between Iran and Mesopotamia. These connections resulted in a trans-cultural system on the Iranian Plateau and in Central Asia that is characterized not only by high material culture

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<sup>73</sup> Sarianidi, *Margush*, 278, 326, Sarianidi, *Gonur depe*, 258, fig. 115, 238, fig. 137.

<sup>74</sup> Maurizio Tosi and Rauf Wardak, "The Fullol Hoard: A New Find from Bronze Age Afghanistan," *East and West* 22 (1972): 9–17.

<sup>75</sup> Guiseppe Tucci, *La città bruciata* (Venezia: Erizzo 1977).

conformity but also by a high propensity in Central Asia to absorb and assimilate religious and mythological perceptions coming from Iran.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Coming back to our starting questions, we can summarize our findings as follows:

1. Both regions have a similar symbol system consisting of the same or similar deities, mixed beings and mythological motifs.
2. We find in both regions a pantheon consisting of overwhelmingly female deities with the same or similar attributes. Many Bactrian goddesses have their direct antecedents in Southeast Iran. But some forms of Iranian goddesses have not been found in Bactria so far.
3. Again in both regions we find the same animal-headed human-animal-mixed beings (bird-man, bull-man) acting in the same semantic contexts as well as the same mythological motifs with acting animals.
4. There is clear continuity with earlier periods as many deities as well as the tradition of animal-headed mixed beings can be traced back to chalcolithic, sometimes also to neolithic roots.
5. We have reason to believe that the same myth of a man flying into heaven existed in both regions.
6. Differences are found in the form of image carriers (compartmented seals, composite grave figurines, cult images, luxury vessels, pin-heads) which lead in Bactria to the general tendency to abbreviate motifs and to depict single pictorial elements as well as an-iconic attributes or appearances of the goddesses instead of the full form. This makes Bactrian art highly symbolic.
7. We find new animals depicted in old motifs, whereby regional species of the same genus are used.
8. Acting animals are modified by endowing them with wings and new forms of zoomorphic mixed beings are created as substitutes both of the goddesses and their attribute animals.
9. Goddesses as well as their attribute animals have undergone transformation in their outer appearance as well as in their function and importance.
10. Some mixed beings and motifs have lost in importance (e.g., naked woman) and others acquire greater importance (e.g., the bird-man). And we have newly created mixed beings acting instead of or parallel to the older ones (monkey-man).

Thus we can observe the following dynamics in the process of change:

1. There was a clear transfer of divinities, acting heroes, mixed beings and mythological motifs with acting animals from Iran to Bactria in the second half of the 3rd millennium B.C.E., facilitating the survival of neolithic and chalcolithic motif traditions into Bactrian Bronze Age art.
2. Deities and their attribute animals were transformed and modified, resulting in new appearances.
3. The relevancy of deities and mixed beings changed and new mixed beings were created.
4. A motif canon with fully developed pictures was transformed into a system of symbols.

These dynamics took place in a period of intensifying interregional trade between Iran and Bactria, as stated at the beginning. Thus, we can consider long-distance trading to be a decisive factor in the observed processes: a realization that allows us to confirm the theory that religious symbols are indeed traded through trade.

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PART THREE

TRADE AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE



FROM WORLD RELIGION TO WORLD DOMINION:  
TRADING, TRANSLATION AND INSTITUTION-BUILDING IN TIBET

Michael Willis

To speak of religions as “trading” is daunting for historians. The idea raises the prospect of religions crossing linguistic and cultural barriers for economic reasons and suggests that we should treat religion as some sort of commodity. We are not, traditionally, very comfortable with associations of this kind. Christ drove the money-changers from the temple and his declaration: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s” (Ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ, Matthew 22:21), has encouraged scholars to maintain a tidy division between theology and economics. Historical realities, of course, are seldom so neat. Religions that move from place to place have to find an economic and social basis. That much is obvious. And religions, in their new homes, have to establish a relationship with the powers-that-be if they are to be anything more than secret cults. All this makes demands on us as historians. We have to develop a command of the relevant source languages, a familiarity with different countries and their sacred places, an awareness of theological issues in several faiths, and an appreciation of the cultural environment in which imported religions have found themselves. More theoretically, religions that move challenge those who study them to develop a multi-disciplinary framework that explains not only the economic and social basis for religions and religious actors in new situations, but also the adaptations needed for a religion to survive and flourish. Other concerns, of which there are many, have been articulated in the introduction to this volume by Peter Wick and Volker Rabens. The issues they raise could be used to interrogate many religious or historical situations. Among many possible examples, the most telling, at least in terms of the Asian material I have studied, is the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Wylie system for transcription of Tibetan is used in this article. Thanks are due to many colleagues for their comments, especially Lewis Doney, Sam van Schaik, Ulrich Pagel, Kurt Tropper and Tsering Gonkastang. I am also grateful to Peter Wick and Volker Rabens for inviting me to contribute a paper to the conference that led to this publication

The basics of the Tibetan story are well known. According to traditional narratives developed in the post-dynastic period, the Yarlung rulers developed an interest in Buddhism from the seventh century and decided to support its establishment in Tibet. This was opposed by some of the ancient clansmen, powerful lords at court who had to be won over to Buddhism. This took some doing. The introduction of Buddhism also involved an internal religious conflict between followers of the “gradualist” path and the “simultaneous” path.<sup>2</sup> The clash is represented in the later Tibetan sources as one based on differences that had emerged over time between Indian and Chinese Buddhism. The conflict was resolved by a great debate in central Tibet.<sup>3</sup> The Indian side won decisively and, according to some post-dynastic histories, the followers of the “simultaneous” path were banished. There followed a campaign of scriptural translation and the development of monasteries. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* became the monastic rule of the Tibetan tradition.

These events draw our attention, and are relevant to the present volume, because the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism is one of the most dramatic historical developments in Asia before modern times. To put the matter another way, if we are looking for an example that might shed light on the question of inter-religious dynamics and trading religion, early Tibet appears to be an important test case. The establishment of Buddhism led to wide-ranging cultural changes, the production of a substantial corpus of Buddhist literature and to institution-building on a large scale. How and why all this was achieved is a key historical question. The topicality of the subject also needs little apology, touching as it does on the way lesser powers deal with their greater neighbours in both political and religious terms.

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and the care they have taken in bringing the book into print. Thanks are also due to the readers who offered valuable suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> The terms are explored in R.A. Stein, “Sudden Illumination or Simultaneous Comprehension: Remarks on Chinese and Tibetan Terminology,” in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1987), 41–66.

<sup>3</sup> The key work is David S. Ruegg, *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989). The literalist tradition of scholarship has been much concerned about whether this debate took place or not. This is, however, beside the point: the debate is integral to the historical narratives developed in Tibet from *circa* 1000 and for the present purpose that is all we really need to know.

## 1. SOURCES

While the basic events surrounding the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet are not disputed, at least from the traditional perspective, just how it happened and how it was recorded presents an intriguing set of problems. Examining the nature and date of the key sources helps us understand what we can expect from them and how we can use them. This provides a critical basis for extracting points relevant to trade and inter-religious dynamics.

Early Tibetan history is known from a number of stone inscriptions and histories. The inscriptions are relatively few in number and consist of edicts engraved on stone tablets, some set up at Buddhist monasteries in central Tibet.<sup>4</sup> We will return to one of these records in due course. In terms of texts, one of the oldest post-dynastic sources for events in the eighth century is a work called the *dBa' bzhed* or *Testimony of dBa'*. The title, spelt in slightly different ways in the surviving versions of the text, comes from the dBa' clan, one of the elite families of the time.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of the *dBa' bzhed* is to chronicle the arrival and establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, but it also records, as the title indicates and the text soon reveals, how members of the dBa' clan played a vital role in the process. In particular, the narrative centres on the actions of an individual called dBa' gsaṅ snang, who took the name Ye shes dbang po when he entered the Buddhist order and became the emperor's preceptor. He was also the first abbot of bSam yas, the main monastery and temple in central Tibet.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kazushi Iwao, Nathan Hill and Tsuguhito Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Inscriptions* (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2009) supersedes earlier editions.

<sup>5</sup> The various spellings of the name is a Tibetological preoccupation, but only *dba's* is known in the old Tibetan sources; the unresolved post-dynastic variants of the name show that the post-dynastic sources stand at some remove from the eighth century. A number of early Tibetologists regard the text as a late work, see R.A. Stein, *Une chronique ancienne de bSam-yas* (Paris: Institut des hautes études chinoises, 1961), v–vi, for a summary of opinions. The text anyway is post-dynastic even if it is earlier than some of Stein's contemporaries thought.

<sup>6</sup> For the sequences of *kalyāṇamitra*-s, see Brandon Dotson, "Emperor' Mu rug btsan and the 'Phang thang ma Catalogue," *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 3 (2007), 5.



1.1 *Excursus: Understanding the Source Materials*

But before going further with the actual contents, I will pause to briefly outline the available versions and editions of the chronicle.

1. The text made its scholarly debut with the version published by Rolf A. Stein in 1961.<sup>7</sup> This consisted of a facsimile of a hand-copy of an old manuscript made for Hugh Richardson, the well-known pioneer of Tibetan studies in the middle of the twentieth century. Stein collated this with a second manuscript in the possession of G. Tucci. The care of the copy and the provenance of the manuscripts are cause for confidence, but caution is warranted until the source materials can be studied.
2. The second version was published in 1980 by mGon po rGyal mtshan under the title *sBa bzhed*.<sup>8</sup> The text in this publication is a collation of three manuscripts that were held in libraries in Beijing and Lhasa. All the MSS are now in Lhasa. Although a useful indication of the contents of the three manuscripts (the text is fairly close to 1 without supplements), rGyal mtshan's publication gives no account of the source manuscripts, no critical apparatus and no indication of the editorial principles used.
3. A version of the text, or at least parts of it, is known from quotations in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, a work dating from the mid-sixteenth century. This was published in printed form from Beijing in 1986. At the present time, the text is being studied by Kazushi Iwao to determine what sort of *dBa' bzhed* was available to the author in the sixteenth century. The publication of Iwao's findings is awaited.
4. The version known as the *dBa' bzhed* and published by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger from Vienna in 2000.<sup>9</sup> This includes facsimiles of all the folios of the original manuscript. This version of the text is the most archaic in terms of language, but close study shows that it is a wide-ranging compilation based on older materials. We will return to these problems shortly. Wangdu and Diemberger provided a translation with detailed notes and an informed summary of extant scholarship. A transcription of the text itself, however, was not included. This

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<sup>7</sup> Stein, *Une chronique ancienne de bSam-yas*.

<sup>8</sup> mGon po rGyal mtshan, *sBa bzhed* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1980).

<sup>9</sup> Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000).

inspired the present author to transcribe, read and re-translate the text under the guidance of Tsering Gonkastang. The present article springs from this work. For the sake of convenience I will refer to this *dBa' bzhed* as the "Vienna version" or "Vienna MS," although the location of the original is unknown to me. Wangdu and Diemberger reported that it was in Lhasa.

5. The versions published from Beijing in 2009 by Diji Zhougar under the title *rBa bzhed phyogs bsgrigs*. This republishes version (2) verbatim and transcribes version (4). A third version is also included but the manuscript source is not detailed. Although this compilation has its uses, the publication does not collate the versions or come to analytical conclusions about their relationship. It will not, as a consequence, be considered here.

This summary should make clear that while the importance of the *dBa' bzhed* is generally recognized, the source materials are not in a sound critical state. The need for further study is perhaps self-evident, but this has not stopped modern historians using the *dBa' bzhed* for general histories, the most recent and provocative being that by Matthew T. Kapstein.<sup>10</sup> I will leave aside an assessment of Kapstein's history and focus instead on a point he has acknowledged but sidestepped, namely "a relatively complete analysis of the *Testament of Ba*."<sup>11</sup> It hardly needs saying that a complete analysis would take us too far afield and exceed the scope of an essay designed for the present book. Nonetheless, I think that a preliminary understanding of the text is possible and, based on this, that we are in a position to use some of the statements in the *dBa' bzhed* to assess events in the eighth century.

As a result of my own reading of the text, I have come to a number of working conclusions. These are set out below in summary form. I hardly need to add that these may be refined by further study.<sup>12</sup>

1. The Vienna MS (number 4 above) appears to be the oldest version. All the other versions are redacted in various ways: archaic syntax in them is modified, difficult words are modified and problematic phrases sometimes

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Kapstein, *Assimilation of Buddhism*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> The discussion here refers to the folios published in facsimile by Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*.

disappear completely. I have not made a comprehensive comparison, but every time I looked at the other versions to clarify a difficult word or phrase in the Vienna version, none was forthcoming. In other words, the other versions do not help explain the Vienna version. This suggests that the other versions have been reworked and are subsequent in time.

2. The Vienna version actually consists of two texts which have been transmitted together. This is shown in folio 25v where it states: “This is the end” (*rdzogs so*). Nevertheless, the text continues with supplementary material to folio 31. The supplement deals with a debate between the Buddhists and the proponents of Bon about the emperor’s funeral arrangements. The emperor in question was Khri srong lde btsan (742–c. 800).<sup>13</sup> As he was responsible for establishing Buddhism in Tibet, it is not unreasonable for this to be added, but it is additional to the main narrative, especially as the protagonist, Ye shes dbang po, predeceased the emperor. This later portion of the text, from folio 25v, has not found its way into other versions of the chronicle.

3. The core narrative and wording is close in all the available versions. There are some differences nonetheless. The Vienna version is unique in having the debate about the emperor’s funeral, as just noted, and the other versions have extra passages and stories not found in the Vienna MS. These additional parts give the appearance of extrapolations or insertions and none of this material seems essential to the narrative. Keeping an open mind on the subject, I suppose the extra stories might represent ancient source materials that were not available to the person who compiled the Vienna version or were rejected by him.

4. The Vienna version itself is redacted, at least in part. This is shown in folio 25v. As already noted in point 2, the text tells us that “this is the end.” Two lines after this, the comment “edited” or “redacted” (*zhus dag*) is written at the end of the sentence. This means that the text up to this point has been smoothed out with the spelling checked and the language “modernized” to the standard current at the time. The remainder of the text after folio 25v is written in the same hand but in a more hurried fashion. This later portion also has few annotations or corrections compared to the earlier part. There are also more inconsistencies in spelling. This shows (a) that the person who copied the Vienna version had two texts before him which he combined because of their common themes and

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<sup>13</sup> For a reassessment of the dates, Dotson, “Catalogue.” Here we spell the emperor’s name as given in the *dBa’ bzhed*.

(b) that the person who copied the Vienna MS may have studied and partially redacted the first part, up to folio 25v. The material from folio 25v to folio 31v was anyway copied with little intervention.

5. The Vienna version is drawn together from a variety of sources and fragments. This is proven by the insertion in folio 17r. Here the running text is broken by a long two-line insertion in miniscule script. This addition, giving a description of the monastery at bSam yas, does not fit neatly or flow with the rest of the text, even though the subject matter is relevant to what appears at this point. This is, therefore, a text fragment that the author has found and inserted. The “patch-work quilt” effect can be seen elsewhere. A few examples can be given. In folio 25r, this statement is made: “Where the *dharma* did not get established during the reign of the five previous emperors, the *devaputra* Khri srong lde btsan, *ācārya* Bodhisattva, dBa’ Ye shes dbang po and Ba’ sang shi—those four—established seats for the triple gem (and) the noble holy *dharma* was proclaimed widely in the region of Tibet.” This is the logical end to the whole narrative and I have no doubt that the original ended at this point. This really is a logical and natural conclusion. But the text continues with an account of Ye shes dbang po’s death and other material, showing that this has been added from elsewhere. The same is shown by the inter-linear annotation “furthermore” (*kyang*) which is used here and there to patch in sentences with immediately preceding text. Equally telling is the account of the great debate where the emperor asks the two sides to summarize their arguments. This appears in folio 23r. What follows are not arguments from each side, however. Rather we have two extended but different accounts of the “gradualist” position. The emperor’s introduction, therefore, makes little sense. We can conclude that the two statements of the “gradualist” position come from two manuscript sources. Finally, to give one last example, there is a description of how the images were made for the bSam yas temple in folio 15v. In a nutshell, these were made by “a Chinese vermilion seller” and then consecrated. The text continues on the same theme in folio 16v and records that the images were seen in the emperor’s dream, that these forms were recognized in some rocks on a hill above bSam yas and that a Nepālī craftsman was summoned to make the images from these rocks. Although the origin of different images for different parts of the complex is being recorded, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that these are two accounts about the images that have been cobbled together from different sources. The source materials have, of course, long vanished as independent pieces of text. Nonetheless, an example of the kind of fragment used to make the *dBa’ bzhed* has been

found in the British Library and published by Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao.<sup>14</sup>

6. The British Library fragment is from Dunhuang and cannot post-date *circa* 1000 C.E., the time when the cave where it was found was closed.<sup>15</sup> This brings us to the problem of the date of the *dBa' bzhed*. The British Library fragment was part of a wrapper, so re-used and already old when it was placed in the cave. It probably belongs to the ninth or tenth century. This provides a reasonably firm date for the oldest source materials that were used to make the *dBa' bzhed*. A starting point for determining the time of the actual compilation is found in folio 15v where the exploration of the site of bSam yas is described. This has a parallel in the *Kriyāsaṃgraha*, a ritual text from Nepāl describing the construction and consecration of religious buildings.<sup>16</sup> In one place the *Kriyāsaṃgraha* mentions the inauspicious items that might be encountered in a building site such as bones, chaff, ashes and charcoal, iron, broken clay pots, pebbles and lead. The *dBa' bzhed* notes that “Pebbles, bone, pot shards and the like were not found.” The emperor’s digging with a golden hoe, and the subsequent discovery of barley and rice also finds a parallel in the *Kriyāsaṃgraha* which recounts how the earth should be turned with a golden plough and the ground ritually struck.<sup>17</sup> That this parallel should be found in the *dBa' bzhed* is not surprising because the text itself reports that a divination expert came from Nepāl to examine the site (folio 14v). Now the oldest manuscript of the *Kriyāsaṃgraha* is dated C.E. 1277 with a translation made into Tibetan in the same century. If we understand the Vienna *dBa' bzhed* as drawing on the milieu and practices in the *Kriyāsaṃgraha* rather than quoting it directly, we can conclude that this demonstrates that the *dBa' bzhed* was compiled in the second half of the 1200s or sometime later. Citations in other texts show, in fact, that the *dBa' bzhed* is rather older than this. The author Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, who lived between 1124 and about 1192, quotes the *dBa' bzhed* in his *Chos*

<sup>14</sup> Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, “Fragments of the *Testament of Ba* from Dunhuang,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128 (2008), 477–488.

<sup>15</sup> The date of the closure of the Dunhuang cave is not recorded and debated, as might be expected, but the newest document is generally accepted to belong to 1002. The cave was therefore closed after that time, probably some time in the first half of the eleventh century.

<sup>16</sup> Tadeuz Skorupski, *Kriyāsaṃgraha: Compendium of Buddhist Rituals, an Abridged Version* (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2002), 31.

<sup>17</sup> Skorupski, *Kriyāsaṃgraha*, 38–39. Michael L. Walter, *Buddhism and Empire: The Political and Religious Culture of Early Tibet* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 186–189 for a wider context. Note also Walter, *Buddhism and Empire*, 243; Tibetan *sa zhag* appears to refer to a pliable grey clay which would be used to fashion the faces of the images.

*'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'I bcud*.<sup>18</sup> Thus our text, rather obviously, existed in his time, so it must date between 1000 (approximate date of the closing of the Dunhuang cave) and about 1150 (approximate date when Nyang ral could have started his career as a writer). While a systematic analysis is still needed, it is at least clear that Nyang ral does not quote the Vienna version of the text. Rather, he appears to have had a slightly later version to hand, so it seems reasonable to suppose that the Vienna *dBa' bzhed* can be placed before *circa* 1150. A date-range of 1000 to 1100 can be proposed as a working hypothesis. This agrees with the observations of Ruegg who noted that the references to Madhyamaka in the *dBa' bzhed* cannot pre-date the eleventh or twelfth century.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, I should note the chronological implications of the reference to the fire at Nālandā, found in folio 25r. The most celebrated fire at the monastery occurred sometime between 1197 and 1206 when the place was destroyed.<sup>20</sup> This anachronism does not date the *dBa' bzhed* per se because the section in which this appears is an interpolation, inserted after the concluding statement noted above in point 5. This is, nonetheless, historically valuable because it tells us that the core of the *dBa' bzhed* was composed before *circa* 1200, the earliest possible date for the extrapolation. More historical pointers may be discovered with further study, but the examples given here are enough to show that the *dBa' bzhed* was first compiled sometime between 1000 and 1100 and, with some certainty, before 1200. The compiler drew on a range of material, some of it going back to as early as the tenth century, perhaps before. Palaeographically, the Vienna MS seems to be from the fourteenth or fifteenth century, although such an estimate is, I admit, subjective. Anyway, the Vienna MS seems but one or two steps removed from the original compilation. Hints about the relationship of the Vienna MS to the absolute original are provided by the annotations, the final point I would like to address.

7. The annotations inserted at the tops and bottoms of the folios, and between the lines of the running text as well, are one of the most intriguing features of the Vienna MS.<sup>21</sup> Most are in the same hand as the main text. Others are in an educated cursive hand that seems to belong to the sixteenth or seventeenth century. An example appears in folio 25v. Still

<sup>18</sup> Dan Martin, *Tibetan Histories* (London: Serinda, 1997) 18; Ruegg, *Buddha-nature*, 76. The implication, in the reverse direction as is often the case, is that the material in the *Kriyāsaṃgraha* is at least a century older than the oldest dated MS.

<sup>19</sup> Ruegg, cited and endorsed in Wangdu, *dBa' bzhed*, 84 n. 322.

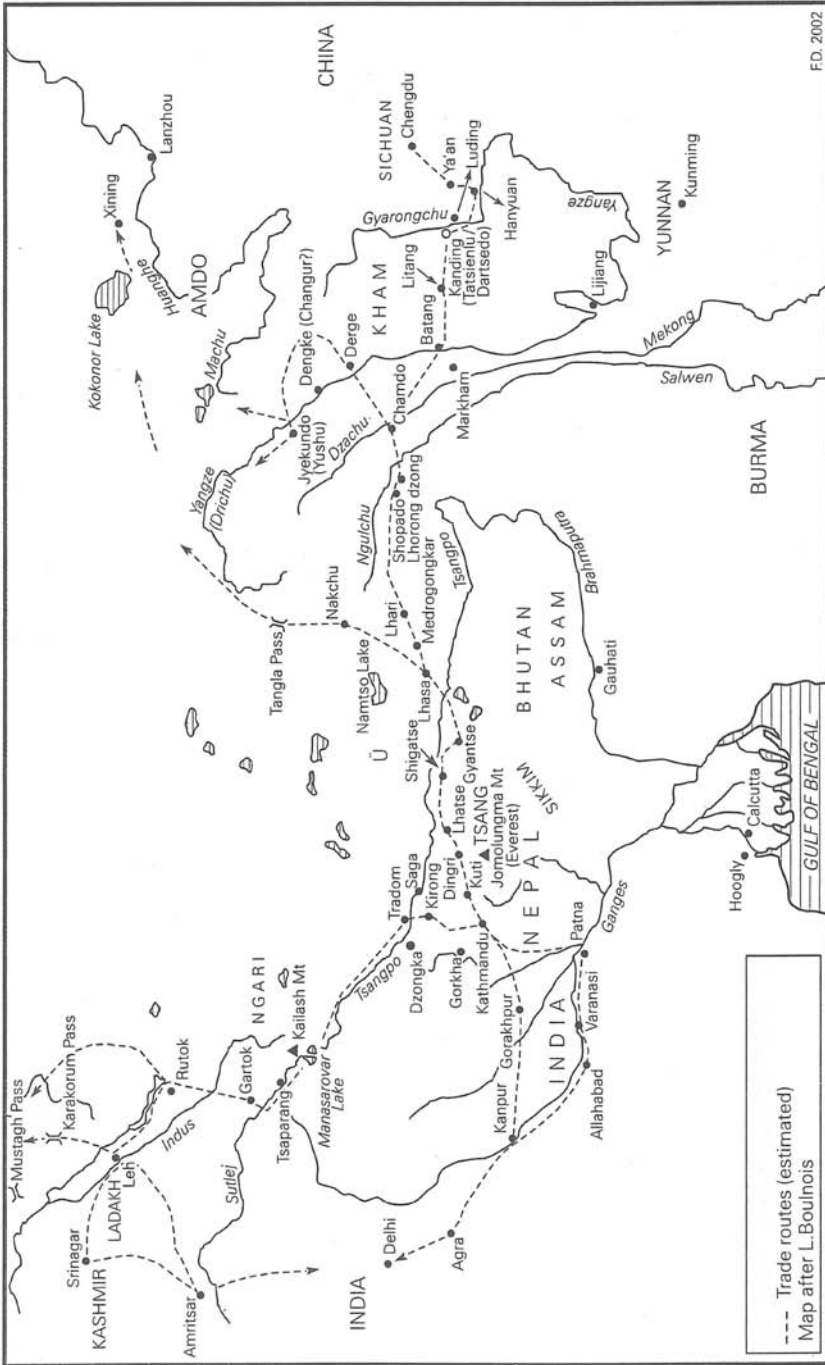
<sup>20</sup> Scharfe, *Education in Ancient India* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 150.

<sup>21</sup> Wangdu, *dBa' bzhed*, 8 and 11 for preliminary discussion.

others are written in headed letters (*dbu can*) by several different hands. Examples appear in folio 23v, folio 29r and elsewhere. These additions are sometimes not for the best, as in folio 25r (line 4) where the insertion of the letter “ma” is simply wrong. Taken together, the annotations show that a series of readers of the Vienna MS made additions to the text over time and attempted to clarify and correct the meaning. The key issue for the moment concerns the annotations written by the same person who wrote the main text. These annotations are of two basic types: (a) quotations collected from written sources and (b) short comments, clarifications and corrections. In many cases the annotations add what we might expect to complete a word or phrase grammatically; sometimes they explain an obscure term. But in one instance, at least, they reveal something about the date of the annotations. The Vienna *dBa' bzhed* refers to Khri gtsug lde brtsan (reg. 815–838) in two places, folios 1v and 25v. In both places, the post-dynastic title *Ral pa can* has been added as an annotation. *Ral pa can* is not used anywhere in the main running text. Now the author Nyang ral, who cites the *dBa' bzhed* as noted above, used the title in his writing.<sup>22</sup> This means the title *Ral pa can* was already current when he was active in the late 1100s. So the core text of the *dBa' bzhed* must belong to a time before the title was current, that is, before the time of Nyang ral, while the annotations must be coeval with Nyang ral or later. To put the matter in concrete chronological terms and to summarize, if the core text of the *dBa' bzhed* was compiled between 1000 and 1100, as noted above, and received interpolations after 1200, as also noted above, then the annotations must be later still, that is, in the late 1200s or early 1300s. The latest possible date will be the time of the actual physical copy of the Vienna MS. This should be prior to the 1500s, the likely date of the later annotations in a learned cursive hand. One final point on the early annotations can be made. It is difficult to decide if they were added as the Vienna copy was being made or if they have been taken over from the exemplar. In folio 17r, as already noted, there is a lengthy insertion in the running text. Whether this was added at the time or copied from the original is, I think, difficult to decide. On the other hand, there are scrubbed and corrected passages in certain places, for example, on folio 1v. It is well known that the opening folios of manuscripts are often the most worn: they are turned and looked at frequently, while the material deeper in the text is not. What is clear from folio 1v is that the original behind the present copy was damaged and not

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<sup>22</sup> Wangdu, *dBa' bzhed*, 24 n. 5.



Map 1: The Tibetan world with main routes through central and western Tibet. Map designed by Javier Fernandez-Vina. Source: Wikipedia.



entirely clear. So the scribe has corrected the copy and, most probably, restored a few words and added annotations. Further along, he may have redacted the text as he proceeded and seems to have added at least a few annotations. I think that this two-level system of annotation, one in the exemplar and one belonging to the actual time of the Vienna copy, is the only way to explain the annotations we see in the Vienna MS.

## 2. TRADING, RELIGION AND LANGUAGES OF COMMUNICATION

The foregoing discussion helps us understand the nature and date of the *dBa' bzhed*. To summarize, it is probably a work of the eleventh century, redacted and added to in the 1200s or 1300s. It draws on a range of material, some going back to the ninth or tenth century, but other parts are close to the time of the composition and its copy. In other words, this is a "history" in that it records events that were already some three or four centuries past. The *dBa' bzhed* shows that already in the 1000s there was a desire to assemble information about the seminal events of the eighth century and to show, more particularly, the role of the *dBa'* family in them. The *dBa' bzhed* can be regarded as an attempt to capture memories of the *ancien régime* at the moment it was fading from the scene. More precisely, the text shows how post-dynastic Tibetans began to construct a vision of Tibet and of Buddhism in a period when the political coherence of the country and the doctrinal sources of the faith in Tibet were problematic. Although this leads us to approach the *dBa' bzhed* with caution as a source for the dynastic period, there is no reason to question it as an authentic account of how Tibetans in the eleventh century, or at least a particular group of Tibetans with an interest in the *dBa'* clan, attempted to remember and record an important turning point in their history.

There is a great deal in the *dBa' bzhed* that informs us about the interaction between the Tibetans and people from India, Nepāl and China. One of the most telling is when Śāntarakṣita first comes to Tibet and there are fears that he might be up to some kind of mischief. The appearance of Śāntarakṣita prompts the emperor to take care before meeting him personally (folio 71r). This episode is an appropriate starting point because it is based on the oldest layer of the narrative known from the Dunhuang fragment in the British Library.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, "Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128 (2008), 477–488.

The emperor commanded: “You three ministers go to Ra sa pe har [the Jo khang temple in Lhasa], and after meeting and paying your respects to *ācārya* Bodhisattva, investigate whether or not there is black magic of Lho bal, sorcery and so forth and whether I need to be concerned or not.” The trio went to Ra sa pe har. Not having a translator, the traders in each of the six main markets were asked: “Is there a competent translator from Yang le and Kashmir?” As a result, three were found: two Devadatta brothers and Ananta the Kashmiri. Among them, the Devadatta brothers were not competent apart from commercial translation. As for Ananta, he was the son of a certain brāhmaṇa named Janitabhadra who, in the land of Kashmir, had committed a heinous crime but since the system of law in Kashmir and Lho bal makes it improper to put brāhmaṇas to death, he was banished to the land of Tibet. Because he had studied Brahmanical scripture, grammar and medicine, he was found competent to translate the *dharma*.

Although Śāntarakṣita had a Nepālī attendant and translator with him (folio 7r), the ministers interrogated Śāntarakṣita for two months with the help of their own translator Ananta. Eventually they ascertained that there was nothing to fear. Ananta then translated and presented a text called the *Ten Virtues* to the emperor for six months.

This interaction is important because it shows that while there were markets and bi-lingual traders in Tibet, these people did not have the skills needed to deal with the finer points of Buddhist doctrine. This is at least how the *dBa' bzhed* sees the situation. The Tibetans needed a traditionally educated Brahmin from Kashmir to deal with the material. What we find in this depiction of the linguistic environment is a deliberate attempt to disconnect Buddhism from trade and traders. The invitation to Śāntarakṣita, a leading teacher of the time, is extended by the emperor, and the teacher's interaction with the Tibetans is regulated by him. Traders were present, and their activities no doubt established the routes on which Śāntarakṣita and others passed. That they penetrated the Himālayas at an early date is shown by the petroglyphs and inscriptions explored by Jason Neelis elsewhere in this volume.<sup>24</sup> Some traders may have been Buddhist personally, but they were not the ones that carried Buddhism into Tibet. The agenda of the *dBa' bzhed* is to show that the whole matter was a royal concern, supported by members of the *dBa'* family. We will see the same pattern in the systems developed to support monasteries. Before turning to that in the next section, a few additional points regarding language can be mentioned.

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<sup>24</sup> See Jason Neelis, “Localizing the Buddha's Presence at Wayside Shrines in Northern Pakistan,” in this volume.

Slightly later in the narrative, after Śāntarakṣita's arrival, translation becomes an issue when Padmasambhava comes to Tibet to subdue the demons that were interfering with the establishment of Buddhism. The story culminates in folio 12v:

Padmasambhava summoned the demons into his presence and, changing them into human form, castigated and punished them. As for establishing the truth and explaining the doctrine of cause and effect, Bodhisattva [Śāntarakṣita] counseled them, explaining the *dharma* in the Tibetan language with the help of a translator. Then the preceptor Bodhisattva reported to his majesty: "Henceforth practice the holy *dharma* in the land of Tibet as you please!"

As before, it is clear that Śāntarakṣita was dependent on translators to communicate his message and that few Tibetans were proficient in Indian language. Attempts were made to remedy this situation once Buddhism was secure and the building of the temple of bSam yas was underway (folios 17r–v):

The main temple was completed (and) just before the consecration was carried out, [dBa'] gsang snang was given the name Ye shes dbang po with his ordination. Whereas many sons of the ministers, such as mChims legs gzigs and others were taught the language of India, only Śākyaprabha (son of mChims a nu) and Vairocana (son of Pa 'or na 'dod) and Rad na (son of dBa' rma gzigs) and Lha bu (son of Zhang nya bzang) and bSe bstan and Shud po khong slebs became proficient in the language, while the others ran off. After he became proficient in the language, the son of dBa' rma gzigs was given the name Rad na with his ordination.

Those who were linguistically gifted, the text later tells us, came to play a role in the subsequent debate at bSam yas and in the translation of scripture. What the *dBa' bzhed* is doing with this account is establishing the historical figures who were officially responsible for transmission and translation, and noting those who were not up to the task. Other possible lines of transmission are eliminated through silence. Anyway, a school for translation was established and the *dBa' bzhed* lists the texts that were rendered into Tibetan (folios 24v–25r):

(The emperor), deciding to allow the implementation of the previous recommendations of Bodhisattva and Ye shes dbang po, established a translation school. The *sūtra*-s and *Abhidharma* teachings of the Mahāyāna (tradition) were translated in full. From the Tantra corpus, the *Mahāyoga*, taught without differentiating between pure and impure and meant for guiding non-Buddhists to virtue, was not translated suspecting that an erroneous understanding would arise from an improper comprehension of the basic

elements of the *dharma* (*dharmadhātu*). Additionally, it was not translated for lack of a competent person in Tibet to serve (in the understanding and use of) the *mantra*-s. The teaching of the *Kriyā* (*Tantra*) meant to lead Brahmins to virtue, and the *Ubhaya* (*Tantra*), being deemed appropriate for Tibet, were translated. Of the Śrāvakas, the *Lung ring po sūtra* (*Dirghāgama*) and a small part of the *Gang po rtogs pa* were translated. The *Abhidharmakośa* of the Śrāvakas was translated. Everywhere, in the centre and at the borders, all the subjects engaged in studying the holy *dharma* and *ācārya*-s were (individually) appointed in each and every place so they would not give up practicing virtue. The ministers and all the queens too, each carrying a book between boards, were encouraged to study the *dharma*.

Not surprisingly, the list of texts translated is subject to variation in the sources. The point is that translations had to be those texts deemed by later tradition to be the mainstay of orthodoxy. These concerns need not delay us, the textual categories having been taken up by Stephen Hodge.<sup>25</sup>

Before leaving the issue of markets and language, it is worth touching on further issues of language competence. Within the narrative it is Ye shes dbang po who, as a trusted confidant of the emperor, was sent to India, Nepāl and Mang yul, a border region. He visited Nālandā and the Mahābodhi temple and performed worship of the Bodhi tree (folio 5v). He then received instruction in the *dharma* from Śāntarakṣita (folios 5v–6r). This interaction, often given with direct quotes, takes place without mediation or translation. We can conclude from this that he was proficient in Indian language and that this, in addition to his profound dedication to Buddhism, propelled him to prominence. His command of Chinese does not seem to have been as strong. The Tibetan emperor sent ‘Ba’ sang shi and dBa’ gsaṅ snang (i.e. Ye shes dbang po) to China as envoys (folio 9r–v) where they are recognized as Bodhisattvas and are the recipients of positive prophecies. In all this, ‘Ba’ sang shi is the main character, interacting directly with Hva shangs without translators. So it appears he was fluent in some form of Chinese language. There also appear to have been Chinese people in Tibet fluent in Tibetan. In folio 15r we find this statement:

To begin, the *caitya* of Arya pa lo was built. The emperor announced: “There is no image-maker.” The preceptor said: “My Lord and Emperor! Just arrange the necessities—the image-maker will come!” He then summoned a certain Chinese vermilion seller who had been proclaiming in various markets: “If the emperor of Tibet decides to build a temple, I am an expert in statues.”

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen Hodge, *The Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra, With Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003). All of his introduction is relevant.

This curious remark shows that there were itinerant Chinese craftsmen moving round Tibet from an early time. It suggests an economy below the elite level of which we have no further knowledge. Much of this economy seems to have rested on gold, for gold played an important part in the offerings made to Śāntarakṣita (folio 5v and 8v). The gold is even said to be from dPyang lag, a known source of high-quality gold in eastern Tibet. In the offerings made to the *ācārya*, cosmetic ointment, brocades, cloth, gold and silver and woollens are specifically mentioned (folio 5v). Padmasambhava, too, was offered gold on his departure from the country. He was, however, thoroughly unimpressed with attempts to placate him in this manner. Taking a sleeve full of sand from his cloak and turning it into gold dust, he disparagingly remarked: "If I were to desire gold dust, here it is!" (folio 13v). So various metals and woollen cloth appear to have formed a mainstay of the Tibetan economy. But the text is entirely silent about the people who extracted, processed and traded in these materials. We have, as a result, no direct data about their relationship with Buddhism.

One final point can be made about language. In the encounters with China recorded in the *dBa' bzhed*, one gains the impression that learning Chinese and having translators was not seen as a problem needing special attention. Knowledge of China was current and particular, with emperors and princes named, unlike the rulers of India. There was also a clear understanding that Buddhism existed in China and that Buddhist scriptures could be found there. Enough Tibetans, it seems, could manage Chinese. When it came to Buddhism, however, the Tibetans opted, at least officially, to reach back to India and the original sources. This is indeed the main purpose of the historical representation we find in the *dBa' bzhed*. Translations were made from Indic originals, firstly by a Brahmin and then by sons of royal ministers who contributed to the official translation bureau.

The question of original sources and China brings us to the unofficial infiltration of Buddhism into Tibet from China. Our text throughout is interested in documenting royal contacts and invitations, but it cannot avoid acknowledging unofficial activity because this stood at the center of the great debate at bSam yas between the followers of the "gradualist" and "simultaneous" paths. In folios 18v–19r we find a short account of how a large number of monks started following the "simultaneous" path taught by a Hva shang from China. This began to happen after Ye shes dbang po went into retreat and refused to interact with the authorities and his companions:

At that time, because a Hva (shang) called Mahāyāna had come from China and was present in Tibet, most of the Tibetan monks studied (with him). Due to incompatible views, conflicts arose and the bTsan po, despite his efforts, did not know what to do.

Aside from the main thread of the narrative—the conflict between the two schools—this statement shows that the Hva shang who came from China advocating the “simultaneous” path was able to teach in Tibetan, as indeed is clear later when he participates in the bSam yas debate. How he and his followers were supported is not something the *dBa' bzhed* cares to document, but a manuscript from Dunhuang (Pelliot chinois 4646) records that Hva Shang Mahāyāna was invited to Tibet by one of the queens of Khri srong lde btsan.<sup>26</sup> Although enjoying this patronage, and that of the Bro clan, support for the Chinese strand of Buddhism was not regularized, at least according to post-dynastic sources.

### 3. INSTITUTION BUILDING AND STATE FORMATION

The question of patronage and economic support brings us to what the Tibetans call “seats for the triple gem,” that is, places for the Buddha, the teachings and the monastic community. From at least the fifth century, the Buddha in this triad was represented by Buddha images, the teachings by written texts and the monastic community by lineages of monks ordained according to the accepted monastic rule. It is a truism in Buddhist studies that lay-followers have a part to play in the financial well-being of the triple gem. Buddhist monasticism thus follows and enables banking, trade and exchange. Of course Buddhists have a special interest in developing language skills to access and transmit scriptures and these abilities are bound to enhance exchange across regions and cultures. Moving from generalities to specifics, the *dBa' bzhed* records a discussion at court about how Buddhism was going to be financially supported in Tibet. I judge this to be important testimony because it seems to agree with what actually happened in the dynastic period. This passage is worth giving in full, in part because those who have studied it so far have not rendered the text precisely (folio 18r–v):

After he was appointed the Bhagavān's Principal, Ye shes dbang po suggested to his majesty: “For the sake of the stability of the seats for the triple gem

<sup>26</sup> Paul Demiéville, *Le Concile de Lhasa* (Paris: Nationale de France, 1952), 29.

and the eternal continuity of the triple gem, instead of the triple gem and the *saṃgha* relying on the division of alms, it will be good in the long term if an endowment is set aside." His lordship proposed that seven subject households be set aside for each monk as an endowment, [while] the ministers (proposed) five subject households each. When this was put to the Principal (he said): "Compared to the disappearance of a few paternal lineages, the crumbling of a few communities in the upper gorges that arose from the assignation of serfs to a privileged few or the granting of nine hundred serf households to the estate of one person, the noble *dharma* of the Buddha will not merely be medicine for the emperor's person and (his) polity but will usher in a lasting tradition for the emperor and his subjects. The door to the three lower births will be closed and such other indescribable merits will be produced. Nevertheless, if everyone were to follow (this) proposal, it could cause repeated long-term harm in future, give rise to great epidemics among the people and their livestock or bring an enemy to the frontier as well as harm to the emperor and his subjects, give rise to the destruction of the (royal) lineage or many other undesirable consequences. Therefore, to each (monastery for) the triple gem, two hundred subjects should be assigned (and) to each monk three households." After control (in accord with this plan) was conferred on the *saṃgha*, subjects making up the endowment were selected from the best (properties) of four (officers of state): the *rGod*, the *Rang rje'u*, the *Khab so gnang che can* and the *Thugs gnyen*.

What we see here is an exchange in which the emperor proposes seven households for each monk, the ministers five and Ye shes dbang po three. Each monastic establishment as a whole was also assigned two hundred subjects to maintain the premises. The peasant or village households assigned to each monk would have remained on the land to provide, from their surplus, the agricultural products that were needed. Prior to this arrangement donations were collected and distributed on an *ad hoc* basis (folio 17v). What Ye shes dbang po was proposing, therefore, was a permanent endowment, in the form of village households, the basic unit of production. These were to be made over to the *saṃgha* to create an institution that would function as an autonomous economic entity. This is confirmed by the pillar edict at bSam yas.<sup>27</sup> This is a well-known record, but a fresh translation will not be out of place in this article. The record is in many lines, but here I give the line numbers, in square brackets, at key points in sentence structure.

[1] The seats for the Triple Gem established in the temples of Rasa and Brag mar and other places and the practice of the Buddha *dharma* shall never be rejected and never be destroyed.

<sup>27</sup> Iwao, Hill and Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Inscriptions*, 11.

[7] And whatever necessities were provided (for the Triple Gem in these temples), from that nothing shall be deducted or abrogated.

[9] From this time forward, a resolution will be made in accord with this by the sovereign father and (his) son in every succeeding generation of the dynasty whatsoever.

[12] Pursuant to that, so that subversions of spoken vows shall neither arise nor be acted on, everyone—sovereign father, son and noble ministers—swore solemn oaths and made pledges, invoking as witnesses the gods of this world and beyond this world, and also all non-human spirits.

[20] A detailed text of the proclamation exists separately.

This proclamation centres on the “necessities” (*yo byad*) granted to the Triple Gem for their maintenance, i.e. the number of assigned households and servants described in the *dBa’ bzhed*. The purpose of the inscription is to record that binding guarantees had been made and that nothing would or could be taken away. The same concerns, in a more extended form, are found in the Skar cung inscription.<sup>28</sup> The oaths sworn to defend the endowments have a parallel in the imprecations found in Indian copper-plate charters beginning in the fifth century. In the Indian case, the *Mahābhārata* as a fifth Veda was quoted to defend gifts against encroachment.<sup>29</sup> Basically, threats of an evil rebirth were made against those who might confiscate or encumber endowments or otherwise allow such actions. The respect for scripture in India was so well entrenched that appeals to religious authority were enough to defend the holdings of religious institutions. There was no such tradition in Tibet, so free-standing endowments were supported by a process of collective oath taking.

Ye shes dbang po was responsible, as we have seen, for suggesting a system of permanent endowments to the Tibetan emperor. He was also the one who visited Buddhist sites in India and was personally instructed in Buddhism by Śāntarakṣita. In my view, his suggestion about endowments came from these experiences. He would have witnessed the great center of Nālandā in its formative heyday, with all its temples and monastic systems in operation. And as he travelled across Bihār he would have seen the smaller monastic houses that infiltrated teachers of the law, as

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<sup>28</sup> Iwao, Hill and Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Inscriptions*, 22. Michael L. Walter and Christopher I. Beckwith, “The Dating and Interpretation of Old Tibetan Inscriptions,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 54 (2010), 291–319, show the derivative and later nature of the Skar Cung record. The redaction and extrapolation are related to the processes visible in *dBa’ bzhed*.

<sup>29</sup> See Michael Willis, *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009), 84–88.



agents of both Buddhism and the state, into every corner of the countryside. The successful adaptation and transplantation of this system into Tibet, as documented by dynastic inscriptions and the post-dynastic *dBa' bzhed*, shows that the whole process was a “top-down” affair. For Ye shes dbang po and Khri srong lde btsan, faith and truth were communal and institutional matters. Buddhism could not be left to private intuition or informal personal networks. This seems to be one of the main concerns lurking behind the theological debate at bSam yas. Ostensibly the encounter was between the “gradualists” of the Indian tradition and the Chinese followers of the “simultaneous” path. But what is revealed by the whole approach of the *dBa' bzhed* is a profound concern with authority in matters of religion. The emperor is represented as an enthusiastic advocate of Buddhism but it is clear that Buddhism was going to be advanced by the emperor’s initiatives and nothing else. Informal networks were not going to be tolerated. Although the *dBa' bzhed* does not deign to mention or criticize the women at court who supported Hva Shang, an indirect reference to the problem is made in folio 25r. There, after the “gradualists” had won the debate and teachers were stationed throughout the realm to encourage conformity to Buddhism, the text informs us that “the ministers and all the queens too, each carrying a book between boards, were encouraged to study the *dharmā*.” What is implied, of course, is that they studied the “gradualist” understanding of the *dharmā*.

The early Tibetan emperors are represented, moreover, as being entirely impatient with the idea that royal policy might be swayed by popular opinion. This is shown by the somewhat sarcastic comments made by Khri srong btsan sgam po (d. 649, see *dBa' bzhed*, folios 2r–v):

Then, one day, all the subjects were assembled and (Khri srong btsan sgam po) pointedly declared: “While I remained in one bed without moving palaces, leaving aside the affairs of state, you subjects were able to be relaxed and happy, and yet you allege: ‘The emperor doesn’t even come to the palace gate and nobody knows anything, but the minister is the wise and capable one.’ Now, the minister that you describe as wise and capable—did I appoint him or did you appoint him? If you subjects are discontent with this situation, then here is a decree which I have prepared over four months—follow it! If you do not follow it exactly, then even the political system of the twelve principalities will disintegrate from lawlessness and, as a consequence, many troubles will follow. Moreover, my (royal) lineage and the rule of law between subject and lord will disintegrate, so follow the edict exactly!”

This and the other passages cited here show that the Tibetan rulers were remembered as active monarchs who issued edicts, sent envoys to China, extended invitations to well-known Buddhist figures in India and Nepāl, created endowments from their lands to support Buddhist institutions and sanctioned schools for the translation of texts. All this has implications for the historical theories that have been put forward to explain how the countries neighbouring South Asia have been subject to varying degrees of “Indianization.”<sup>30</sup> Although partly beyond the scope of this essay and book, I feel obliged to note that the theories about the cultural history of Southeast Asia are untouched by the Tibetan example which, with its detailed account of key players and clear direction of events, removes the need for unwarranted speculation about agency and networks of historical change. From Tibet we have an account of the people who came and went, of the ways Indians interacted with the indigenous people and their cults and of the methods used by the kings to neutralize local opposition and advance their interests and those of Buddhism. The effective disappearance of Sanskrit, rather than its use in tandem with Tibetan, as we find with Tamil and Khmer, is also important for testing Sheldon Pollock’s theory about the “Sanskrit cosmopolis.”<sup>31</sup> I will not argue the case here in detail, but Tibet is bound to cause problems for Pollock’s model because it shows that an “Indic cultural packet” could be transmitted *en bloc* without the parent linguistic apparatus. In the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, a lexicon providing almost 10,000 Tibetan equivalents for Sanskrit terms, we even have one of the tools used to regularize methods of translation and so the actual means through which Sanskrit and the Sanskrit-owning Elites were consciously subordinated to Tibetan speakers.<sup>32</sup> Tibetan studies, furthermore, might leaven the historiography of Southeast Asia which has tended to fall into “externalist” and “autonomous” camps. The first finds the catalyst for change in India, while the second seeks to emphasize local uniqueness based on a deeply entrenched cultural matrix. Whatever may have

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<sup>30</sup> Daud Ali, “Connected Histories? Regional Historiography and Theories of Cultural Contact between Early South and Southeast Asia,” in *Islamic Connections*, eds. R. Michael Feener and Terenjit Sevea (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 1–24.

<sup>31</sup> Summarized Ali, “Connected Histories?,” 16, and most recently Ali, “The Early Inscriptions of Indonesia and the Problem of the Sanskrit Cosmopolis,” in *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, eds. P.Y. Manguin and A. Mami (New Delhi, Manohar and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 277–295.

<sup>32</sup> See Ulrich Pagel, “The Dhāraṇīs of Mahāvvyutpatti no. 748: Origin and Formation,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 24 (2007), 151–191.

happened in Southeast Asia, from the Tibetan perspective we know that either position, if held rigidly, will not account for how the Tibetans, Indians and Chinese are documented to have interacted.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This brings us back to our main problem of “trading religion.” While there can be little doubt that traders and merchants were present in dynastic-period Tibet, and blazed trails into the region at an early time, they are not represented in our sources as playing a role in the transmission, establishment and maintenance of Buddhism in the seventh and eighth centuries. Buddhism in early Tibet was a religion of the ruling elite in every respect.

This conclusion seems to contradict the scope and purpose of the present volume and raises questions about my use of Tibet as an example. The reason I have invoked Tibet is that it highlights a key change in the pattern of Buddhist patronage. This change involved, in essence, a shift from trading and commercial groups to kings and nobles. The political classes cultivated by Buddhism from about the sixth century were those aspiring to build an “imperial formation” based on Buddhist principles. Here I employ the terminology developed by Ron Inden for Hindu India in the eighth and ninth centuries but not applied hitherto to kingdoms with a Mahāyāna Buddhist orientation.<sup>33</sup> This system of statecraft developed into a pan-Asian phenomenon, deployed in Tibet, Japan and Southeast Asia, a point that has been noted but not yet explored in its particulars.<sup>34</sup> The origins, anyway, can be traced to eastern India and a cluster of newly formed scriptures, most notably the *Mahāvairocanasūtra*. This text, which took its current shape in the mid-seventh century, focuses on Vairocana, one of the five wisdom Buddhas.<sup>35</sup> Śubhakarasiṃha travelled to Nālandā and translated the *sūtra* into Chinese in 724; a Tibetan version was prepared before 812 by Śilendrabodhi and dPal brtsegs. These literary activities

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). All of his chapter 6 is relevant. See, however, Willis, *Hindu Ritual*, 254 n. 14, for some limitations of the model.

<sup>34</sup> Hugh Richardson, “The Cult of Vairocana in Early Tibet,” in *High Peaks, Pure Earth*, ed. Michael Aris (London: Serinda, 1998), 179; Kapstein, *Assimilation of Buddhism*, 62.

<sup>35</sup> Hodge, *Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra*, 11–14. Buddhaguhya, who prepared the commentary, met a delegation from Tibet, see Hodge, *Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra*, 17; later versions of *dBa' bzhed* recount how he sent texts in lieu of attending the court of Khri lde gtsugs btsan (704–754/55). Kapstein, *Assimilation of Buddhism*, 62 and Wangdu, *dBa' bzhed*, 34 n. 55. The story does not appear in the oldest *dBa' bzhed*.

are close to Ye shes dbang po's time in eastern India and shed light on the kind of Buddhism advanced in Tibet. It was, at heart, a royal power cult centered on Vairocana.

Although the dedication of bSam yas is not taken up in the *dBa' bzhed*, the Buddha established in the main temple was Vairocana. Four shrines, each painted a different colour and so associated with the other four wisdom Buddhas, were placed at the four cardinal points in the complex (folio 17r). Beyond bSam yas, four further temples were built in the four divisions of the Yarlung kingdom (folio 1r).<sup>36</sup> In each there was a central image of Vairocana surrounded by Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi.<sup>37</sup> This network of temples created a circle of royal power, stamping, as it were, a Buddhist *maṇḍala* on the landscape of central Tibet. That a comprehensive cosmology and ritual system was being imposed in the land, and Yarlung power consolidated over it as a result, is shown by the later story of the recumbent ogress (*srin mo*) who is reputed to have been pinned down by five temples built on her heart, shoulders and hips.<sup>38</sup> In this ritual subjugation of Tibet, the emperors played a role as incarnations of the three protector Bodhisattvas. In the textual and ritual cycles brought from India, Vajrapāṇi was especially important as the forceful converter of recalcitrant forces.<sup>39</sup> That these arrangements prevailed is illustrated in the *dBa' bzhed* by a wandering sage, tellingly named Vairocana, who appears at court and addresses emperor Mu ne, son of Khri srong lde btsan, as follows (folio 28r):

Your grace! King of great compassion, who belongs to the lineage of the Bodhisattvas, an emanation of the three protectors [i.e. Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi], (you are) the precious descendent of the

<sup>36</sup> The text reads: "Furthermore the temples of the four administrative divisions were constructed at the king's behest." The annotation increases the number of temples to accord with later tradition.

<sup>37</sup> Richardson, "Cult of Vairocana," 177. Kapstein, *Assimilation of Buddhism*. All of his chapter 4 is relevant. Guntram Hazod, "The Royal Residence Pho brang byams pa mi 'gur gling and the Story of Srong btsan sgam po's Birth in Rgya ma," in *Tibet, Past and Present*, ed. Henk Blezer (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 28.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Aris, *Bhutan* (Warminster: Aris and Philips, 1979), 12–20; more recently Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, *Thundering Falcon: An Inquiry into the History and Cult of Khra-brug, Tibet's First Buddhist Temple* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005). The temple at the centre, and so on the goddess's heart, was at Lhasa. This displaces bSam yas in the scheme because the Jo Khang, containing Śākyamuni, was a foundation of Khri srong btsan sgam po and stood in the capital. The problem is taken up below.

<sup>39</sup> Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 148. Also *dBa' bzhed* folio 29r.

sublime forefathers and the lord of men who presides over our affairs like the proverbial golden yoke.

Khri srong lde btsan's ritual and political role as a Bodhisattva and his special relationship with Vairocana is elaborated with particular clarity at a slightly earlier point in the *dBa' bzhed* where the emperor's funeral arrangements are discussed. Here Mu ne reports a dream (folio 26r):

The (emperor's) son Mu ne btsan po sent (this) communiqué to the assembly of great ministers: "In my dream last night I dreamt that lord Śrī Vairocana, in a palace called Aḍakavatī in the Akaniṣṭha realm, was residing together with Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrīkumāra and my father Khri srong lde btsan, and they were speaking extensively about the authentic transmission of the *sūtra*-s and accounts of the *śāstra*-s. When this prophetic dream is connected with the funeral feast of my father the *devaputra*, I find that it is unsuitable for it to be done in accord with Bon because it must be done in accord with the white *dharma* (of Buddhism)."

So the emperor who built bSam yas and the network of royal temples at the four corners of the realm is perceived as having entered the heavenly realm of Vairocana after death. And in that heavenly realm he sits in the company of Vajrapāṇi and Mañjuśrī.<sup>40</sup> The visualization of the kingdom as a *maṇḍala* of Vairocana and the emperors as protector Bodhisattvas was integral to the Yarlung project of political consolidation and territorial expansion. Kapstein has neatly summarized the situation with his remark that "... the Tibetan imperial state itself came to be constituted, through a principle of homology, as the body and maṇḍala of the Buddha Vairocana," and further that "Buddhism interested the Tibetans... through its successful promotion of a particular, well-ordered, cosmological framework, which implied the ethical and ritual mastery of the cosmos it promoted, and through its institutional mastery of techniques, which conformed to the bureaucratic requirements of empire."<sup>41</sup> Any doubt in the matter is removed by the *dBa' bzhed* (folio 29v) which describes Vairocana as the Buddha "who controls all conditioned existence."

<sup>40</sup> This vision conforms to the post-mortem destiny of the soul prevalent in India from the fourth century, see Willis, *Hindu Ritual*, 136–139. The network of temples at the center and at the corners of the realm is given to Khri srong lde btsan in the Skar cung inscription (lines 12–15) and to Khri srong btsan sgam po in *dBa' bzhed* folio iv. The problem is introduced in Wangdu, *dBa' bzhed*, 24 n. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Kapstein, *Assimilation of Buddhism*, 59–60. Walter, *Buddhism and Empire*, 241–245, sees it as the bTsan po being brought forth into kingship as a Cakravartin.

In advancing a system that would create a great kingdom, individual Hwa shangs from China with an intuitive and informal version of Buddhism would not serve. The old Bon religion, retroactively envisioned in the *dBa' bzhed* as parochial and misguided (folios 28v–29r), was even less useful. What was needed was an imperial machine, drawn from the best and latest empire-building technologies in India. Buddhism had not, of course, always advanced itself in this way. Early Buddhist texts represent merchants, land-owners and petty aristocrats as paradigmatic supporters of the faith.<sup>42</sup> With the advent of Aśoka, Buddhism entered into a relationship with imperial power, an experiment that collapsed with the Mauryan dynasty. By the mid-second century B.C.E., Buddhism had rebuilt its position and, judging from the numerous inscriptions at Sānchī and neighbouring sites in central India, the main patrons at this time were merchants, bankers and local land-owners.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, there is not a single prince or king mentioned in a corpus of over 800 donation records, a clear indication that Buddhism had returned to the “grass-roots.” The next encounter with royal power in north India appeared under Kaṇiṣka, the well-known Kuṣāṇa king who issued a coin with a standing Buddha image. These instances seem to point to a fundamental tension in Buddhism between mendicancy, supported by ordinary lay-followers, and institution-based monasticism, supported by the state. The problem was an old one and is personified by the lives of the Buddha’s chief disciples Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāna. Śāriputra is known for his command of learning and for preaching, the reason he was awarded the title ‘General of the Dharma’ (Pāli: Dhammasenāpati). He is, in other words, the archetypal man of textual study and monastic organization. Mahāmaudgalyāna, in contrast, is an adept in meditation with supernormal powers. He is, in other words, the paradigmatic yogin and forest recluse. These differences do not come and go, pendulum-like, in the history of Buddhism. Rather, they represent an ever-present tension in the faith itself, as once noted by Stanley Tambiah.<sup>44</sup> So quite apart from the exact content of the bSam yas debate, it can be read as part of the conundrum embedded in the very fabric of Buddhism. Tibet is not, therefore, some kind of unfortunate imperial

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<sup>42</sup> Uma Chakravarty, *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Upinder Singh, “Sanchi: The History of the Patronage of an Ancient Buddhist Establishment,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 33 (1996), 1–35.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (Cambridge: University Press, 1984), 15–16 and passim.

exception that proves the rule, i.e. that “true Buddhism” is a religion of ascetics supported by lay-followers. Instead, Tibet shows us that there are two sides to the Buddhist coin and that we need both sides of that coin to understand the full story.

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# RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST: HANUKKAH IN THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD AND ZOROASTRIANISM<sup>1</sup>

Geoffrey Herman

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When religious traditions travel they tend to adapt to their new surroundings. Like new products seeking to penetrate a foreign market, they often undergo a process of modification and re-packaging that makes them comprehensible and inviting to their potential clientele. This can often be a subconscious process whereby the elements in the imported tradition that evoke more familiar local practices rise to prominence and develop further, whereas others sink into the background. This article seeks to account for the development of the ritual observance of the festival of Hanukkah, a festival that was brought from Judaea to Babylonia. It pinpoints the holiday's evolution upon its reception in Babylonia. Observing similarities in ritual between the receiving community—Babylonian Jewry—and the prevalent practices found among the Zoroastrians of the region, it suggests a connection between the two. This connection intimates that the ritual celebration of Hanukkah was radically and fundamentally transformed in its new religious environment as a result of its encounter with local religious custom.

The Jewish festival of Hanukkah is today one of the more widely observed and popular festivals in the Jewish calendar. It is celebrated for eight days starting on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev (November–December). Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the altar of the

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<sup>1</sup> This study was written while I was a member of Käte Hamburger Kolleg at the Center for Religious Studies, Ruhr University in Bochum, and funded by the *Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*. I would like to thank its director, Volkhard Krech, and the Scientific Manager, Marion Steinicke, for both inviting me to join the Käte Hamburger Kolleg and for their warm support and outstanding hospitality throughout my stay in Bochum. I would also like to thank the participants in the conference, Trading Religions, for their comments on this paper. I have deliberated on the issues here with a number of people, including Aaron Amit, Reuven Kiperwasser, Jason Leib and the late Joan Westenholtz. I thank them and absolve them of any culpability for my conclusions. Shamma Friedman kindly sent me an unpublished book chapter by Stephen Wald of direct relevance to the issues considered here.

Jerusalem temple after the Maccabean victory over the Seleucids in the 2nd century B.C.E., as related by the chief historical sources, *1 Maccabees* and *2 Maccabees*. It is marked by special liturgical additions and selections read from the Bible and the suspension of practices associated with mourning. The central ritual activity is the lighting of candles in the home after dark during the eight days of the holiday.

The evolution of the custom of lighting candles on Hanukkah is the focus of this paper. I wish to trace *how* the *ritual* lighting of candles acquired such a central role in the celebration of this festival. I shall make two arguments: the second also a partial explanation of the first. I wish to propose, firstly, that this custom in all its ritual detail is primarily a development that took place in Babylonia. The second argument is that this shift may have been stimulated by the encounter between Babylonian Judaism and Zoroastrian fire veneration. This festival, I will suggest, became for the Jews a way of celebration that subtly and perhaps subconsciously evoked Zoroastrian ritual practices.

Interest in the Jewish-Zoroastrian interface goes back to the earliest Study of Religions and has more typically embraced the Second Temple era.<sup>2</sup> The topic addressed here, however, relates to *Babylonian* Judaism in the Sasanian era, the prime Jewish source for which is the Babylonian Talmud. Studies have suggested a degree of religious contact between Zoroastrianism and Babylonian Judaism as might be expected in view of the presence of the Jews within this Persian Empire, although the extent of this interaction remains unclear.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Scholarship on the historical development of Hanukkah has pondered its relationship with the customs of other religious traditions that occur at about the same time of year, particularly in the Roman world, such as the celebration of the winter solstice and themes relating to a celebration

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<sup>2</sup> For references see Geoffrey Herman, "Ahasuerus, the Former Stable-Master of Belsazzar and the Wicked Alexander of Macedon: Two Parallels between the Babylonian Talmud and Persian Sources," *AJS Review* 29:2 (2005): 284 n. 5.

<sup>3</sup> For a maximalist approach see Y. Elman, "Middle Persian Culture and Babylonian Sages: Accommodation and Resistance in the Shaping of Rabbinic Legal Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, eds. C.E. Fonrobert and M.S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 165–197; and for a minimalist one, cf. Jacob Neusner, "How Much Iranian in Jewish Babylonia?," in *Talmudic Judaism in Sasanian Babylonia*, ed. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 139–149.

of light.<sup>4</sup> The connection of the ritual kindling of light on Hanukkah and the pervasive symbolism of light in the winter solstice celebrations such as the festivals of Saturnalia, and Kalends, has, in particular, been recognized as meaningful.<sup>5</sup> Josephus names the Jewish festival *phōta*—lights.<sup>6</sup> An alternative explanation for the timing of the festival, appearing in *2 Maccabees* 1:18–36, connects a fire-based miracle from the era of biblical Nehemiah and the Persian rulers to the festival, itself an overt example of Jewish-Zoroastrian syncretism.<sup>7</sup>

An additional focus of scholarship has been the depiction of Hanukkah in the early rabbinic sources. These consist of a spattering of ritual stipulations in the legal codices (that is the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Palestinian Talmud); a reference in a work known as the *Scroll of Fasts*,<sup>8</sup> elaborated upon in its ancient *scholia*; and more detailed treatment in the Babylonian

<sup>4</sup> On associations with the celebration of a festival of Dionysus, cf. E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums II* (Stuttgart, J.G. Cotta, 1921), 209–210; J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1958), 244–245. On evocative Semitic religious festivals, cf. Julian Morgenstern, “The Chanukkah Festival and the Calendar of Ancient Israel”, *HUCA* 20 (1947): 40–75.

<sup>5</sup> See *y. ‘Avodah Zarah* 1:2 (39c); *b. ‘Avodah Zarah* 8a. On the correlation between Kalends and Hanukkah see also in the Toledot Yeshu literature. See, for example, Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “An Ancient List of Christian Festivals in Toledot Yeshu: Polemics as Indication for Interaction,” *HTR* 102:4 (2009): 487, 491. This list indicates the elevation of Hanukkah in the Jewish calendar—perhaps in response to the importance of Kalends in the Roman world. On Kalends and Saturnalia in connection with the Jewish sources cf. Emmanuel Friedheim, *Rabbinisme et Paganisme en Palestine romaine, Étude historique des Realia talmudiques (Ier–IV<sup>ème</sup> siècles)* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 332–337. On Saturnalia see, especially Moshe Benovitz, “Until the Feet of the Tarmoda’i are Gone: The Hanukkah light in Palestine during the Tannaitic and Amoraic Periods,” in *Torah Lishma, Essays in Jewish Studies in Honor of Professor Shamma Friedman*, ed. David Golinkin, et al. (Jerusalem: Schechter Institute, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007), 20–24. Saturnalia tends to be rendered in the Babylonian tradition as סטרנורא (Vilna edition); סטרנוריא (MS NY JTS Rab 15, MS Munich 95); סטרנריא (MS Paris 1337). Also the reading of Tosefta, MS Erfurt: סטרנורא. The Babylonian Talmud seems to employ a word play based on סתר—נורא “concealing the fire.”

<sup>6</sup> His explanation for this name, however, is not attested elsewhere. Rabbinic sources and the Gospel of John (10:22) call the festival ‘Dedication’ [= Hanukkah].

<sup>7</sup> This fire, one should recall, was for the sacrificial altar, and not the temple menorah. On the impact of this legend on the identification of Jeremiah with Zoroaster, see Joseph Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés* (Paris: Société d’éditions “les Belles lettres,” 1938), 50; Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 438. On scholarly comparison between this tradition in *2Macc* and Pausanias’ account of the temple of the “Persian goddess” see the discussion in Boyce and Grenet, *History of Zoroastrianism*, 235–237. The biblically inspired explanation in *2Macc* is not alluded to in the rabbinic sources.

<sup>8</sup> The *Scroll of Fasts* is a short Aramaic list considered to date from the Second Temple era that enumerates days of celebration.

Talmud.<sup>9</sup> Together, these outline many of the laws and offer an etiological myth accounting for the practice of kindling lights—a miracle involving a cruse of pure oil that burned for eight days though with only enough oil to last for one.

Earlier generations of scholars were struck by the relatively minor place Hanukkah fills in the rabbinic sources, particularly those originating in Palestine. Some reasoned that the rabbis, disappointed with the Hasmonean dynasty's subsequent sectarian and political choices, had deliberately downplayed the festival; or alternatively that they had advanced the miracle of the cruse of oil story as a spiritualized substitute for the celebration of the military victory.<sup>10</sup> An alternative approach has posited the candle lighting as a clandestine domestic and subversive way to continue to observe the holiday after the de-legitimization of the Hasmoneans under Herod.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, some scholars have imagined the deliberate co-option of the holiday by Herod himself, and reinterpretation of the holiday observance, alongside the prevalence of similar (non-Jewish) light-inspired festivals of antiquity.<sup>12</sup> Such theories, as shall become apparent, tend to bypass the distance, both chronological and geographical, between the key rabbinic sources and the period in which these developments are believed to have occurred.

More recently, however, these rabbinic sources themselves have been submitted to close critical scrutiny. Studies have availed the rabbinic sources to philological and redactional analysis. These studies have produced important results that confirm the transformation of the religious tradition upon its reception in Babylonia, and I shall refer to them below. It would seem profitable, then, to first offer an overview of the rabbinic sources that deal with Hanukkah, and in particular, those which deal with

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<sup>9</sup> Later rabbinic works that consider Hanukkah (e.g. *Pesiqta Rabbati* chs. 2–4, 6, 8; *Midrash Tanhuma* Naso, *Tractate Soferim* 20:6; *She'iltot of Ahai Gaon*, 26–28) are not relevant to the time frame of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> See Samson Hochfeld, "Die Entstehung des Hanukkafestes," *ZAW* 22 (1902): 264–284; and the literature cited in Vered Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil: The Metamorphosis of a Legend," *HUCA* 73 (2002): 194 n. 21. Cf. also Yaakov Blidstein, "Did the rabbis cause the Hellenizers to be Forgotten?," *Jewish Culture in the Eye of the Storm: A Jubilee Book in Honor of Yosef Ahituv*, eds. Avi Sagi and Nahem Ilan (Ein Zurim: Hakibbutz hameuhad, Yaakov Herzog Center for Jewish Studies, 2002), 321–325.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Krauss, "La fête de Hanoucca," *REJ* 30 (1895): 24–43, 204–219.

<sup>12</sup> Thus, Benovitz, "Herod and Hanukkah," *Zion* 68 (2003): 5–40. Cf., too, Samuel Rocca, *Herod's Judaea: A Mediterranean State in the Classical World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 289–290.

the ritual kindling of lights, focusing on their distribution in the rabbinic corpora.

### 3. THE RABBINIC SOURCES ON HANUKKAH

The rabbinic sources on Hanukkah, which are not numerous, are unevenly dispersed among the classical legal compendia. The earliest rabbinic legal works, the Mishna and Tosefta, that contain tractates on many of the festivals lack any concerted discussion on Hanukkah. Furthermore, the few curt appearances relate almost exclusively to calendrical or liturgical matters<sup>13</sup> and only in one place, and there peripherally, does the Mishna (and its precise Tosefta parallel) refer to kindling a light for Hanukkah.<sup>14</sup> This pattern is also the rule for the Palestinian Talmud where we find only six isolated traditions that refer to kindling lights for Hanukkah.<sup>15</sup>

It is the Babylonian Talmud that collects the traditions on Hanukkah and creates a lengthy, detailed and coherent discourse on the holiday, elaborating on the laws and rituals, and particularly on the lighting of candles. Laws there discuss, for instance, the materials best for lighting, where and when to light, the benedictions to recite upon lighting, and the sanctity of the candles. It also alludes to repressive measures taken by Zoroastrian priests against the observance of the festival. It tells of Zoroastrian priests stealing the lit candles.<sup>16</sup> The principle locus is in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Shabbat*, folios 21a–24a [see appendix].<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *M. Megillah* 3:4, 3:6; *m. Rosh Hashanah* 1:3; *m. Bikkurim* 1:6; *t. Sukkah* 3:1 (Lieberman edition, 266); *t. Berakhot* 3:10 (Lieberman edition, 14); *t. Megillah* 3:4, 3:9 (Lieberman edition, 354–355); *m. Ta'anit* 2:10; *t. Ta'anit* 2:5 (Lieberman edition, 331); *m. Mo'ed Qatan* 3:9. Also it is mentioned in *Sifrei Deut* 109 (Finkelstein edition, 169); 297 (317); 302 (320).

<sup>14</sup> *M. Bava Qamma* 6:6: "If a spark which flies from the anvil goes forth and causes damage, he [the smith] is liable. If a camel laden with flax passes through a street, and the flax overflows into a shop, catches fire at the shopkeeper's lamp, and sets the building alight, the camel owner is liable; but if the shopkeeper placed the light outside, the shopkeeper is liable. R. Judah said: In the case of a Hanukkah lamp he is exempt." It is tagged onto the end of the chapter. Cf. *t. Bava Qamma* 6:28 (Lieberman edition, 27).

<sup>15</sup> *Y. Terumot* 11:10 (48b); *y. Orlah* 1:1 (60d); *y. Shabbat* 2:1 (4c); *y. Sukkah* 3:4 (53d); *y. Sukkah* 5:1 (55b) [= *Lam. Rabba* (Buber edition, 42a); *y. Bava Qamma* 6:6 (5c)]. The number of references to Hanukkah unrelated to kindling lights is not considerable.

<sup>16</sup> *B. Shabbat* 45a. Cf. *b. Gittin* 16b. See the discussion in Eliezer S. Rosenthal, "For the Talmudic Dictionary—Talmudica Iranica," *Irano-Judaica, Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982), 39–42.

<sup>17</sup> See Noah Aminoah, "The Arrangement of the Laws of Hanukka in Tractate Shabbat," *Sidra* 14 (1998): 59–76. He lists 14 redactional units there devoted to Hanukkah. See also *b. Arakhin* 10b.

Most of the material found there is not repeated elsewhere in the rabbinic corpora.

This uneven distribution of the rabbinic material calls for an explanation. Louis Ginzberg, some eighty years ago, would conclude that the holiday was almost forgotten in *Palestine*, and it was only in Babylonia, where he argued, observance of the holiday had been strengthened by the force of foreign oppression that it had continued to be observed.<sup>18</sup> It would seem, however, that the data lends itself to a different manner of interpretation. The imbalance does not embrace all aspects of the holiday equally and some scholars have indeed pointed out the signs for the continued observance of the holiday in Palestine.<sup>19</sup> The significance is not to be sought, then, in the question of the actual memory of the holiday,<sup>20</sup> but rather in the *manner* in which it was observed.

#### 4. THE BABYLONIAN RE-INVENTION OF HANUKKAH

Judging from the volume and innovative quality of source material in the Babylonian Talmud in contrast with the rest of the rabbinic corpora, the Babylonian contribution would appear to have been quite decisive in shaping the holiday observances in the direction of emphasizing the kindling of light(s). We see this right away from a couple of factors.

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<sup>18</sup> Louis Ginzberg, *Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter. I Midrash and Haggadah* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1928), 476: "It bears note that in the Talmud of the Land of Israel the laws of Hanukkah are almost not mentioned at all—neither in the words of the Tannaim nor in the words of the Amoraim, and only in Babylonia, where 'fireworshippers' decreed persecutory decrees against this precept, and as with every commandment upon which the Jews risked personal sacrifice, it was considerably strengthened for them and they were particularly scrupulous concerning it." Much of the question revolved around the statement in the Babylonian Talmud *baraita*: "and in times of danger one places [the lamp] on the table that is sufficient for him." While Ginzberg regarded this phrase, "in times of danger" as a reference to the Zoroastrian seizure of lamps referred to elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud, some other scholars saw it as a term for the Hadrianic persecution that followed the Bar-Kokhba revolt in Palestine. See Saul Lieberman, "The Martyrs of Caesarea," *Annuaire d'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 7 (1939–1940): 424; Gedalyahu Alon, "Did the Jewish People and its Sages cause the Hasmoneans to be forgotten?," in *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World translated by Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem*, ed. G. Alon (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977), 1–17; and Benovitz, "In Times of Danger in Eretz Israel and Babylonia," *Tarbiz* 74 (2005): 5–20 for a detailed review of the sources.

<sup>19</sup> See Alon, "Jewish People."

<sup>20</sup> This was the parameter through which Noam framed her analysis of the textual traditions on the "miracle of the cruse of oil," see Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil," 193–194.

Firstly, the Babylonian Talmud chose to place its detailed discourse on Hanukkah in tractate *Shabbat*, as a digression within a chapter that discusses the suitable oils and wicks for lighting Sabbath candles. This very location, instead of one of the *loci* where Hanukkah is already discussed in the tannaitic corpora, as one might have expected, emphasizes the candle(s) as the central aspect of the holiday.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, although six traditions in the Jerusalem Talmud (henceforth: PT) refer to kindling lights on Hanukkah, a closer look suggests that there, too, the Babylonian input was predominant. Three of the six are based explicitly on cited Babylonian traditions.<sup>22</sup> The remaining Palestinian traditions are not early—two of the three involve fourth century Palestinian rabbis.<sup>23</sup> However, the quantity of such PT traditions is minute in relation to the Bavli's treatment, and their content is also strikingly odd and lacking a broader contextual framework. Since the dated PT traditions that do not cite Babylonian rabbis are in fact chronologically later than those that do, this raises the possibility that even this PT material is ultimately an outgrowth of Babylonian deliberations.

Scholarship has, however, tended to regard the practice of lighting candles for Hanukkah as ancient and firmly rooted in the Palestinian

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<sup>21</sup> The one Palestinian Talmud source from this chapter of tractate *Shabbat* is, in fact, a Babylonian teaching. The tradition from *y. Terumat*, which discusses the use of 'oil of defilement' for the Hanukkah lamp, suggests a contextual relationship with the second chapter of tractate *Shabbat*. Two of the Palestinian Talmud references to kindling appear in tractate *Sukkah*, maintaining the ancient connection between Hanukkah and the feast of Tabernacles (*2Macc* 1:9, 18; 10:6–8). A third, in tractate *Bava Qamma*, also draws an analogy between the laws of Hanukkah and the feast of Tabernacles. The relationship between these two festivals, explicit in the earliest historical sources, continues in the rabbinic sources. See, for example, Liber, "Hanoucca et Soucot," *REJ* 63 (1912): 20–29.

<sup>22</sup> *Y. Shabbat* 2:1 (4c); *y. Sukkah* 3:4 (53d); *y. Orlah* 1:1 (60d). Two of these three sources involve statements by the Babylonian rabbis, Rav Hisda and Rav Huna, and one cites the opinions of other Babylonian rabbis with regard to the appropriate benedictions to be recited when kindling the candelabrum. The possibility that we have here original Palestinian traditions presented as Babylonian seems uncharacteristic of the Palestinian Talmud in general and of the evidence for this specific topic in particular. More significantly, the Palestinian discussions on candle lighting are themselves heavily indebted to the cited traditions of first generation Babylonian rabbis. In *y. Sukkah* 3:4 (53d), for instance, the discussion on the benediction to be recited begins with the ruling by the first generation Babylonian rabbi, Rav. Although the Talmud seeks the legal opinion of the key Palestinian rabbis, R. Yohanan and R. Joshua b. Levi, ultimately the Talmud does not cite actual rulings by these Palestinian rabbis but only infers how they might have thought through deduction. This entire discussion is Babylonian.

<sup>23</sup> *Y. Terumat* refers to a fourth generation Palestinian amora, R. Nasa. *Y. Orlah* has late fourth century Yosi b. Bun (who has Babylonian origins). The third source, which is from *y. Sukkah*, is unattributed.



rabbinic tradition. This assumption has been undoubtedly based both on the two early non-rabbinic Jewish sources that link Hanukkah with fire/lights (2*Macc* and Josephus)<sup>24</sup> and those rabbinic sources traditionally viewed as being of Palestinian provenance which we shall address shortly. And yet, even recognizing some ancient and vague connection to light/fire in the non-rabbinic (and pre-rabbinic!) sources does not account for the highly ritualized construction in the rabbinic sources. The latter needs to be examined on its own terms.

The rabbinic sources traditionally viewed as being of Palestinian provenance are, however, with the exception of the one Mishna/Tosefta statement mentioned above, all found exclusively in the Babylonian Talmud. This has been confirmed for one of these sources—the account of the miracle of the cruse of oil—only recently. It had long been noted that this account, the foundation story for the lighting of candles according to the Babylonian Talmud, is not found in the historical accounts of the holiday, 1*Macc*, 2*Macc*, or in the works of Josephus. Now, however, a recent study by Vered Noam has established after a careful textual examination that while it was thought to have belonged to a Palestinian source (the *scholia* of the Scroll of Fasts), it is only attested in the Babylonian Talmud's citation from this composition.<sup>25</sup> However, rather than *quoting* from the *scholia* the Babylonian Talmud has, in fact, revised its account of Hanukkah, introducing a miracle of a cruse of oil where the original (Palestinian) version referred to different (non-miraculous) activity—the

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<sup>24</sup> It has also been suggested that a remark by first century C.E. Persius [*Satires*, V, 179–184] refers to Hanukkah lights. See J. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine* (Paris: imprimerie impériale, 1867), 165 n. 1; Krauss, “La fête de Hanoucca;” Benovitz, “Herod and Hanukkah.” This seems unlikely in view of the passage's explicit reference to the Sabbath. See, e.g., T.F. Brunner, “A Note on Persius 5.179ff,” *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* I (1968): 63–64; Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976), 436–437. Similarly, a passage by Seneca concerning lamps refers explicitly to the Sabbath (contra Benovitz, “Herod and Hannukkah,” 33–34). See Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 433. Benovitz also interprets Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2:118, 282, as referring to Hanukkah. See Benovitz, “Herod and Hanukkah,” 32–33. One of these references, however, also explicitly mentions the Sabbath. While kindling lamps for the Sabbath is a well attested rabbinic custom in incontrovertible Palestinian tannaitic literature, reading such classical sources as references to Hanukkah lamps is only feasible against the sources appearing in the Babylonian Talmud.

<sup>25</sup> This Babylonian Talmud version appears to have subsequently contaminated a branch of the *scholia*. This source is not, as had been believed before, in the *scholia* to the *Scroll of Fasts*—a Palestinian source. See Noam, “The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil” for a detailed textual analysis and explanation; Shamma Friedman, “Hanukkah in the Scholion of Megillat Ta'anit,” *Zion* 71 (2006): 5–40.

repair of the sacrificial altar or the establishment of a makeshift temple menorah. Other studies have confirmed that this miracle account continued to be completely unknown to the Palestinian Jewish tradition, being absent from the liturgical poems (*piyyut*) that were composed there until the Muslim conquest.<sup>26</sup>

Another of these sources is a lengthy anonymous tradition introduced as of early Palestinian provenance (i.e. a *baraita*). It contains one attributed tannaitic tradition that is, in fact, ascribed to one of the earliest rabbinic pairs available—the schools of Hillel and Shammai! The likelihood that not only a substantial *baraita*, but also an authentic tradition ascribed to the schools of Hillel and Shammai have escaped the regular channels and only showed up in the Babylonian Talmud is highly suspect, albeit not impossible.

But here, too, there are problems with accepting all this as Palestinian. Most scholars have concluded that at least some parts of this *baraita* are not Palestinian at all, but are of Babylonian provenance,<sup>27</sup> even as many have insisted that it nevertheless preserves an authentic Palestinian kernel. They have focused on expressions and word usage that reflect Babylonian Aramaic.<sup>28</sup> Yet the philological evidence that has been offered for the fabrication of the *baraita* in a Babylonian milieu can serve to strengthen the impression that we are dealing with Babylonian sources, even for the parts that do not give away their Babylonian authorship so obviously. Furthermore, a recent still-unpublished study by Stephen Wald has argued for the Babylonian origins, not only of this *baraita*,<sup>29</sup> but of much of the material on Hanukkah found in the Babylonian Talmud, including many

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<sup>26</sup> Elizur, “The Hanukkah Piyuytim: Symbol vs. Reality,” in *The Hasmonean Era*, eds. D. Amit and H. Eshel (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1996), 303–310. The Byzantine Palestinian liturgical poetry knows only of lighting candles in honour of the rekindling of the Temple menorah.

<sup>27</sup> Ginzberg, *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1941), 279 n. 33; Joseph Tabory, *Jewish Festivals in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000), 377; Friedman, “Uncovering Literary Dependencies in the Talmudic Corpus,” in *The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature*, ed. S.J.D. Cohen (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 53–55; Benovitz, “Times of Danger.” See, too, Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 146.

<sup>28</sup> See especially the recent Friedman, “Uncovering Literary Dependencies,” 53–55; Benovitz, “Times of Danger.”

<sup>29</sup> Depictions of this *baraita* as a “Babylonian *baraita*” go back to Ginzberg, Rosenthal, “For the Talmudic Dictionary,” 61.

of the amoraic sources for which a Palestinian provenance is claimed in the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>30</sup>

Given the situation described above, it is hard to imagine that the single tannaitic source for kindling that *is* attested outside of the Babylonian Talmud, the Mishna/Tosefta reference, is the source or catalyst for all the other laws.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, it cannot be seen as evidence that the tradition of lighting was so well established in Palestine. It would appear, and this can only be a conjecture, that the Mishna/Tosefta tradition does not go back to the period of mishnaic redaction. It might have been appended in the early amoraic era in the wake of the evolving customs of candle lighting.

Even as Josephus knows of some light-related aspect of Hanukkah, it would appear that in the *rabbinic* sources the focus on candle lighting is fundamentally a Babylonian innovation. Thus the accepted way of observance of the festival in Palestine is reappraised and reinterpreted in its new Babylonian surroundings. We are called upon to seek an explanation for this religious dynamic. The motivation for this transformation, I suspect, was provided by the predominance of fire veneration in the Sasanian Empire.

##### 5. ZOROASTRIANS, FIRE, AND HANUKKAH

A characteristic aspect of Zoroastrian religion is the veneration of fire. Zoroastrians have often been described as “fire worshippers.”<sup>32</sup> Their elaborate cult of fire has been one of the most distinctive and striking aspects of their faith, and belongs to the earliest strata of their religious writings.<sup>33</sup> Fire altars are the most visible Zoroastrian icon, featuring on Parthian and Sasanian coins, seals, rock inscriptions, images, objects, and graffiti. Their fire temples were ubiquitous.<sup>34</sup> Priests recite sacred liturgy in the

<sup>30</sup> S.Y. Wald, *Talmud ha-Iggud Shabbat, Chapter 2; Ha-Iggud leparshanut haTalmud* (forthcoming). Within the limits of this article it is not possible to elaborate on this point.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Wald (previous note), who sees many of the Babylonian Talmud rulings as expansions and elaborations derived from this mishnaic tradition.

<sup>32</sup> See A. De-Jong, *Traditions of the Magi. Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 433 n. 1.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., *Yasna* Y36; *GBd.* 1:44; *Widēwdād* 8.81–96. See De-Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 343–350, who focuses on the Greek and Roman classical sources; Mary Boyce, “On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire,” *JAOS* 95 (1975): 454–465; Boyce, “On Mithra, Lord of Fire,” *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 69–76.

<sup>34</sup> See S. Wikander, *Feuerpriester in Kleinasien und Iran* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1946); Klaus Schippmann, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971); J.P. de

presence of fire. The careful and meticulous preparation and tending of fires, maintenance of their purity, and prayer before fire, are basic to their religious practice—certainly in post-Achaemenid times, and particularly during the Sasanian era.<sup>35</sup>

The Jews of the Sasanian Empire were aware of the fire cult, and it finds explicit mention in the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>36</sup> An example of the degree to which the Babylonian rabbis might have been attune to the prominence of fire in the Zoroastrian cult is suggested by a precise parallel found in the Babylonian Talmud to a Zoroastrian tradition that delineates the various types of (spiritual) fires.<sup>37</sup> This parallel—that would require a detailed treatment in its own right—offers valuable evidence of the rabbinic adoption of fundamental Zoroastrian taxonomy for its essential icon—fire veneration.<sup>38</sup>

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Menasce, *Feux et fondations pieuses dans le droit sassanide* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1964). For a discussion on the terminology for such fire temples/ precincts, cf. Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Reassessing the Material Contexts of Ritual Fires in Ancient Iran," *Iranica Antiqua* 42 (2007): 240.

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., the stipulation in the Pahlavi work, *Mēnōg-ī Xrad*, 53:3–5; J.J. Modi, *The Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay: J.B. Karani Sons, 1937), 300: "No Zoroastrian ritual or religious ceremony can be complete without the presence of fire."

<sup>36</sup> See *b. Sanhedrin* 74a–b; *b. Gittin* 16b–17a; *b. Shabbat* 45a; *b. Nedarim* 62b. See Rosenthal, "For the Talmudic Dictionary," 39–40; Robert Brody, "Judaism in the Sasanian Empire: A Case Study in Religious Coexistence," in *Irano-Judaica, Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, eds. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1990), 54, 57; Maria Macuch, "The Talmudic Expression 'Servant of Fire' in the Light of Pahlavi Legal Sources," in *Studies in Honour of Shaul Shaked* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 109–129; Macuch, "Allusions to Sasanian Law in the Babylonian Talmud," in *The Talmud in its Iranian Context*, eds. Carol Bakhos and M.R. Shayegan (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 108–111; Eli Ahdut, "Jewish-Zoroastrian Polemics in the Babylonian Talmud," in *Irano-Judaica IV: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, eds. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1999), 37–38.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid* 39: 20; *b. Yoma* 21b. The rabbinic source is introduced as a *baraita*.

<sup>38</sup> On this tradition see James Darmesteter, "Les six feux dans le Talmud et dans le Bundeshesh," *REJ* 1 (1880): 186–196. He was preceded by Joshua H. Schorr, "Hatorot," *Hehalutz* 70 (1865): 48–49. Following the scholarly assumptions of his times, Darmesteter understood the Babylonian Talmud *baraita* to be a Palestinian tannaitic tradition, regarding it as evidence for the existence of this Bundahishn tradition in the second or third centuries and also for its transmission to Palestine. The capacity of the Babylonian Talmud to ascribe Babylonian traditions to Palestinian tannaitic provenance is, however, as we have seen, well attested. I am currently preparing a separate study on this intriguing parallel. Another case of such adaptation is the icon appearing on Jewish Sasanian seals, usually referred to as an image of the binding of Isaac. The image itself, however, is almost completely identical to the figure of a Zoroastrian priest standing before a fire-stand, a common feature of Sasanian seals owned by Zoroastrians, and indeed Sasanian coinage. Evidently, the Jewish owners have utilized an existing iconic image for their biblical theme. Christians also appear to have adopted this image on their seals. See Judith A. Lerner, *Christian Seals*

The practical ways in which Zoroastrians used fire in their rituals were varied. Much interest has been devoted to the more monumental examples, the fire temples and accompanying rituals.<sup>39</sup> There was also a more humble level of practice. Whether on a domestic or a local plane, there was fire veneration on a more modest standard than the officially sponsored fire temples often discussed in the national and legal Persian sources. The fire containers may have been simpler.<sup>40</sup> The fires, themselves were perhaps set on a low stand or slab, an image that is often depicted in the visual evidence. Zoroastrians may even have used mere oil lamps<sup>41</sup> as attested in later times. Likewise, perceptions of fire and its prophylactic capacity may have been pervasive.<sup>42</sup> It is particularly this manner of observance that may have contributed towards fashioning Jewish observance in the way it is attested in the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>43</sup> There were also Persian fire festivals that took place in the middle of winter. They appear to have been highly elaborate and visible but we cannot be certain of their precise nature. They may have impacted on the Jewish practice.<sup>44</sup>

The original Babylonian Jewish practice for Hanukkah also appears to have been less elaborate. The Babylonian tradition involved only one light. The tradition of gradually increasing or decreasing the number of candles lit in the course of the eight days of Hanukkah, ascribed to the schools of

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of the Sasanian Period (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 18–22. For an explicit Manichaean reference to Zoroastrian fire liturgy, see Boyce, “Ātaš-zōhr and Āb-zōhr,” *JRAS* (1966): 100–101.

<sup>39</sup> See Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires of the Zoroastrians.”

<sup>40</sup> See the description in Modi, *The Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, 301.

<sup>41</sup> See Choksy, “Reassessing the Material Contexts of Ritual Fires in Ancient Iran.” On kindling a lamp to burn for a number of days on the birth of a child, see Modi, *The Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, 5; at a betrothal (*ibid.*, 18); in the house of the deceased (*ibid.*, 59). Cf. Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires of the Zoroastrians,” *BSOAS* 31 (1968): 54.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *b. Shabbat* 24a, where the Sabbath lamp is compared to the pillar of fire which protected the Israelites in the wilderness.

<sup>43</sup> For instance, the extensive deliberations of the Babylonian Talmud on whether one may light from one lamp to another recalls the detailed process of preparation and purification of fires by Zoroastrians. In this process Zoroastrians transfer the flame through many sources of fire.

<sup>44</sup> Rosenthal discusses the festival of Sadeh in the context of the geonic explanation of Zoroastrian priests stealing lamps from Jews and religious persecution. See Eliezer S. Rosenthal, “For the Talmudic Dictionary—Talmudica Iranica,” in *Irano-Judaica, Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982), 39–42. The festival of fire in the Zoroastrian month of Adur, falling in November would be another candidate. Most of the evidence for the practices associated with Sadeh comes from the Muslim era.

Hillel and Shammai, is a custom foreign to the Babylonian Talmud. The latter integrates it by portraying it as an act of exceptional piety.<sup>45</sup>

The sources do not reveal the motivation behind the evolution in Jewish practice, and we would not expect them to, but it is nevertheless illustrative to recall the manner in which the Babylonian rabbis have moulded the Palestinian Hanukkah tradition, and how the result has brought their praxis closer to the Zoroastrian customs. In the Babylonian tradition, with its “miracle of the cruse of oil” we see a shift from the repair of a sacrificial altar or, alternatively, a tool for illumination to a focus on the illumination. The impurity of the receptacle has been replaced by concern for the impurity of the fuel. The detailed ritualization of the kindling of the light—one light—elevated, sanctified, guarded, evokes the Zoroastrian fire cult. In sum, the focus of the holiday celebration has shifted from the synagogue to the domestic candle.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Religious tradition is adept at adaptation. The Babylonian Talmud, in particular, through analogy, and succinct comparison,<sup>46</sup> draws the newcomer in and naturalizes it. The transformation of Hanukkah, as attested in the Babylonian Talmud, serves as an example of a religious dynamic stimulated by the arrival of new “religious knowledge.” This “religious knowledge” is negotiated through the prism of existing perceptions and rituals. The Babylonian Talmud’s reading of Hanukkah is not self-evident, natural, or inevitable. The seeds for this transformation were, indeed, embedded somewhere in the Palestinian tradition, but it was only in Babylonia where the environment was amenable to this growth that Hanukkah could evolve thus. It was here that the religious market facilitated exchange in the religious notions that impacted upon the way the festival was re-interpreted. The “miracle of the cruse of oil” tradition, the foundational basis for the centrality of candle lighting, perhaps best epitomizes the transformation that occurred in the image of the holiday. As it travelled from West to East, from Judaea to Babylonia, it changed from a festival of the rededication of the *temple altar* to a festival of the rededication of the temple candelabrum—an altar of fire.

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<sup>45</sup> The origin of the custom attributed to the schools of Hillel and Shammai remains, however, unknown, but in view of the time gap it would seem unlikely that it goes back to an authentic rabbinic custom from the time of the Herodians.

<sup>46</sup> The prime themes of comparison are the laws of the sukkah and the Sabbath lamps.

APPENDIX: BABYLONIAN TALMUD, TRACTATE SHABBAT 21A–24A<sup>47</sup>

[21a] Rav Huna said: With regard to the wicks and oils which the Sages said: One must not light therewith on the Sabbath; one may not light therewith on Hanukkah, either on the Sabbath or on weekdays. Rava observed: What is R. Huna's reason? He holds that if it [the Hanukkah lamp] goes out, one must attend thereto, and one may make use of its light. Rav Hisda maintained: One may light therewith on weekdays, but not on the Sabbath. He holds: If it goes out, [21b] it does not require attention, and one may make use of its light. Rav Zera said in Rav Mattenah's name—others state, R. Zera said in Rav's name: Regarding the wicks and oils which the Sages said, One must not light therewith on the Sabbath, one may light therewith on Hanukkah, either on weekdays or on the Sabbath. Said R. Jeremiah, What is Rav's reason? He holds: If it goes out, it does not require attention, and one may not make use of its light. The Rabbis stated this before Abaye in R. Jeremiah's name, but he did not accept it. [But] when Rabin came, the Rabbis stated it before Abaye in R. Yohanan's name, whereupon he accepted it. Had I, he observed, merited the great fortune, I would have learnt this dictum originally. But he learnt it [now]?—The difference is in respect of the studies of one's youth.

Now, if it goes out, does it not require attention? But the following contradicts it: Its observance is from sunset until there is no wayfarer in the street. Does that not mean that if it goes out [within that period] it must be relit?—No: if one has not yet lit, he must light it; or, in respect of the statutory period.

“Until there is no wayfarer in the street.” Until when [is that]?—Rabbah b. Bar Hanah said in R. Yohanan's name: Until the Palmyreans<sup>48</sup> have departed.

Our Rabbis taught: The precept of Hanukkah [demands] one light for a man and his household; the zealous [kindle] a light for each member [of the household]; and the extremely zealous,—the school of Shammai maintain: On the first day eight lights are lit and thereafter they are gradually reduced; but the school of Hillel say: On the first day one is lit and thereafter they are progressively increased. “Ulla said: In the West [that is Palestine] two amoraim, R. Yose b. Abin and R. Yose b. Zebida, differ therein: one maintains, The reason of the school of Shammai is that it shall correspond to the days still to come, and that of the school of Hillel is that it shall correspond to the days that are gone; but another maintains: the school of Shammai's reason is that it shall correspond to the bulls of the Festival;<sup>49</sup> whilst the school of Hillel's reason is that we promote in [matters of] sanctity but do not reduce.

<sup>47</sup> The translation is based on the Soncino edition with minor changes, following the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

<sup>48</sup> See Benovitz, “‘Until the Feet of the Tarmoda'i are Gone.’”

<sup>49</sup> That is the festival of Tabernacles.

Rabbah b. Bar Hana said: There were two elders in Sidon: one did as the school of Shammai and the other as the school of Hillel: the former gave the reason of his action that it should correspond to the bullocks of the Festival, while the latter stated his reason because we promote in [matters of] sanctity but do not reduce.

Our Rabbis taught: It is incumbent to place the Hanukkah lamp by the door of one's house on the outside; if one dwells in an upper chamber, he places it at the window nearest the street. But in times of danger it is sufficient to place it on the table. Rava said: Another lamp is required for its light to be used; yet if there is a blazing fire it is unnecessary. But in the case of an important person, even if there is a blazing fire another lamp is required.

What is Hanukkah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Hanukkah, which are eight on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.

We learnt elsewhere:<sup>50</sup> If a spark which flies from the anvil goes forth and causes damage, he [the smith] is liable. If a camel laden with flax passes through a street, and the flax overflows into a shop, catches fire at the shopkeeper's lamp, and sets the building alight, the camel owner is liable; but if the shopkeeper placed the light outside, the shopkeeper is liable. R. Judah said: In the case of a Hanukkah lamp he is exempt. Rabina said in Rav's name: This proves that the Hanukkah lamp should [in the first instance] be placed within ten [cubits]. For should you think, above ten, let him say to him, "You ought to have placed it higher than a camel and his rider." "Yet perhaps if he is put to too much trouble, he may refrain from the [observance of the] precept."

R. Kahana said, R. Nathan b. Minyomi expounded in R. Tanhum's name: [22a] If a Hanukkah lamp is placed above twenty cubits [from the ground] it is unfit, like sukkah and a cross-beam over [the entrance of] an alley....

Rabbah said: The Hanukkah lamp should be placed within the handbreadth nearest the door. And where is it placed?—Rav Aha son of Rava said: On the right hand side: Rav Samuel of Difti said: On the left hand side. And the law is, on the left, so that the Hanukkah lamp shall be on the left and the mezuzah on the right.

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<sup>50</sup> *M. Bava Qamma* 6:6.



Rav Judah said in R. Assi's name: One must not count money by the Hanukkah light. When I stated this before Samuel, he observed to me: Has then the lamp sanctity? Rav Joseph demurred: Does blood possess sanctity? For it was taught: he shall pour out [the blood thereof], and cover it [with dust]: wherewith he pours out, he must cover, that is, he must not cover it with his foot, so that precepts may not appear contemptible to him. So here too it is that precepts may not appear contemptible to him.

R. Joshua b. Levi was asked: Is it permitted to make use of the booth decorations during the whole of the seven days? He answered him, Behold! It was said: One must not count money by the Hanukkah light. God of Abraham! Exclaimed R. Joseph, he makes that which was taught dependent upon what was not taught: [of] booths it was taught, whereas of Hanukkah it was not. For it was taught: If one roofs it [the booth] in accordance with its requirements, beautifies it with hangings and sheets, and suspends therein nuts, peaches, almonds, pomegranates, grape clusters, garlands of ears of corn, wines, oils and flours; he may not use them until the conclusion of the last day of the Feast; yet if he stipulates concerning them, it is all according to his stipulation.—Rather, said Rav Joseph: The basis of all is [the law relating to] blood.

It was stated: Rav said: One must not light from lamp to lamp; but Samuel maintained: You may light from lamp to lamp. Rav said: Fringes may not be detached from one garment for [insertion in] another, but Samuel ruled, Fringes may be detached from garment to garment. Rav said: The law is not as R. Simeon in respect to dragging; but Samuel maintained: The law is as R. Simeon in respect to dragging. Abaye said: In all matters the Master [Rabbah] acted in accordance with Rav, except in these three, where he did as Samuel: one may light from lamp to lamp . . .

One of the Rabbis sat before R. Adda b. Ahavah and sat and said: Rav's reason is on account of the cheapening of the precept. Said he to them, do not heed him: Rav's reason is because he impairs the precept. Wherein do they differ?—They differ where he lights from lamp to lamp: on the view that it is because of the cheapening of the precept, one may light from lamp to lamp; but on the view that it is because he impairs the precept, even from lamp to lamp is forbidden. [22b] second tithe, one may not weigh by it gold denarii, even to redeem therewith other second tithe. Now, it is well if you say that Rav and Samuel differ [over direct lighting] from lamp to lamp, yet with a chip Samuel admits that it is forbidden: then this is not a refutation. But if you [on Samuel's view] say that it is permitted even with a chip, then this is a refutation?—Rabbah answered: It is a preventive measure, lest he does not find his weights exact and leaves them hulling.

R. Sheshet objected: Without the veil of testimony . . . shall [Aaron] order it: does He then require its light: surely, during the entire forty years that the Israelites travelled in the wilderness they travelled only by His light! But it is a testimony to mankind that the Divine Presence rests in Israel. What is the testimony?—Said

Rav: That was the western branch [of the candelabrum] in which the same quantity of oil was poured as into the rest, and yet he kindled [the others] from it and ended therewith. Now here, since the branches are immovable, it is impossible other than that he take [a chip] and kindle [it]; which is a difficulty both on the view that it is because of the cheapening of the precept and on the view that it is because of the impairing of the precept?—Rav Papa reconciled it [thus: it is lit] by long wicks. Yet after all, on the view that it is because of the impairing of precepts there is a difficulty? That is [indeed] a difficulty.

What is our decision thereon?—Rav Huna, the son of Rav Joshua, said: We consider: if the lighting fulfils the precept, one may light from lamp to lamp: but if the placing [of the lamp] fulfils the precept, one may not light from lamp to lamp. For the scholars propounded: Does the kindling or the placing constitute the precept?—Come and hear: For Rava said, If one was holding the Hanukkah lamp and thus standing, he does nothing: this proves that the placing constitutes the precept!—[No:] There a spectator may think that he is holding it for his own purposes. Come and hear: For Rava said: if one lights it within and then takes it outside, he does nothing. Now, it is well if you say that the kindling constitutes the precept; [for this reason] we require the kindling to be [done] in its proper place, [and] therefore he does nothing. But if you say that the placing constitutes the precept, why has he done nothing?—There too an observer may think that he lit it for his own purposes.

Come and hear: For R. Joshua b. Levi said [23a] With regard to a lantern which was burning the whole day [of the Sabbath], at the conclusion of the Sabbath it is extinguished and then [re-]lit. Now, it is well if you say that the kindling constitutes the precept: then it is correct. But if you say that the placing constitutes the precept, is this [merely] extinguished and [re-]lit: surely it should [have stated], It must be extinguished, lifted up, replaced and then relit? Moreover, since we pronounce a benediction, “Who sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the lamp of Hanukkah,” it proves that the kindling constitutes the precept. This proves it.

And now that we say that the kindling constitutes the precept, if a deaf-mute, idiot, or minor lights it, he does nothing. But a woman may certainly light [it], for R. Joshua b. Levi said: The [precept of the] Hanukkah lamp is obligatory upon women, for they too were concerned in that miracle.

R. Sheshet said: The [precept of the] Hanukkah lamp is incumbent upon a guest. R. Zera said: Originally, when I was at the academy, I shared the cost with my host; but after I took a wife I said, Now I certainly do not need it, because they kindle [the lamp] on my behalf at my home.

R. Joshua b. Levi said: All oils are fit for the Hanukkah lamp, but olive oil is of the best. Abaye observed: At first the Master [Rabbah] used to seek poppy-seed oil, saying, The light of this is more lasting; but when he heard this [dictum]

of R. Joshua b. Levi, he was particular for olive oil, saying, This yields a clearer light. . . .

R. Hiyya b. Ashi said: He who lights the Hanukkah lamp must pronounce a blessing; while R. Jeremiah said He who sees the Hanukkah lamp must pronounce a blessing. Rav Judah said: On the first day, he who sees must pronounce two [separate benedictions], and he who lights must pronounce three blessings; thereafter, he who lights pronounces two, and he who sees pronounces one. What is omitted?—The “season” is omitted. Yet let the ‘miracle’ be omitted? The miracle holds good for every day.

What benediction is uttered?—This: Who sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Hanukkah. And where did He command us?—R. Avia said: [It follows] from, “you shall not turn aside” (Deut. 17:11). R. Nehemiah quoted: “Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you” (Deut. 32:7). . . .

R. Huna said: If a courtyard has two doors, it requires two [Hanukkah] lamps. Said Rava: That was said only [if they are situated] at two [different] sides; but [if] on the same side, it is unnecessary. What is the reason? Shall we say, because of suspicion? Whose suspicion? Shall we say, that of strangers: then let it be necessary even on the same side? Whilst if the suspicion of townspeople, then even [if] on two different sides it is still unnecessary?—After all, it is on account of the suspicion of the townspeople, yet perchance they may pass one [door] and not the other, and say, “just as it [the lamp] has not been lit at this door, so has it not been lit at the other.” . . .

Rav Isaac b. Redifah said in R. Huna’s name: A lamp with two spouts is credited to two people. Rava said: If one fills a dish with oil and surrounds it with wicks, and places a vessel over it, it is credited to many people; if he does not place a vessel over it, he turns it into a kind of fire, and is not credited even to one.

Rava said: It is obvious to me [that if one must choose between] the house light and the Hanukkah light, the former is preferable, on account [of the importance] of the peace of the home; [between] the house light and [wine for] the Sanctification of the Day, the house light is preferable, on account of the peace of the home. Rava propounded: What [if the choice lies between] the Hanukkah lamp and the Sanctification of the Day: is the latter more important, because it is permanent; or perhaps the Hanukkah lamp is preferable, on account of advertising the miracle? After propounding, he himself solved it: The Hanukkah lamp is preferable, on account of advertising the miracle.

The scholars propounded: Is Hanukkah to be mentioned in grace after meals? Since it is a Rabbinical [institution], we do not mention it; or perhaps it is mentioned to give publicity to the miracle?—Said Rava in R. Sehora’s name in R. Huna’s name: It need not be mentioned; yet if one comes to mention it, he does so in the “Thanks” [benediction]. Rav Huna b. Judah chanced to visit Rava’s

academy [and] thought to mention it [Hanukkah] in [the benediction] “he will rebuild Jerusalem.” Said R. Sheshet to them [the scholars], It is as the Prayer: Just as [it is inserted in] the Prayer in the [benediction of] “Thanks,” so [is it inserted in] grace after meals in the [benediction of] “Thanks.”

The scholars propounded: Is New Moon to be mentioned in grace after meals? Should you say that it is unnecessary in the case of Hanukkah, which is only Rabbinical, then on New Moon, which is Biblical, it is necessary; or perhaps since the performance of work is not forbidden, it is not mentioned? Rav said: It is mentioned; R. Hanina said: It is not mentioned. R. Zeriqa said: Hold fast to Rav’s [ruling], because R. Oshaia supports him. . . .

The scholars propounded: Should one refer to Hanukkah in the Additional Services? Since there is no Additional Service for [Hanukkah] itself, we do not refer to it; or perhaps it [the Sabbath and New Moon] is a day which requires four services?—Rav Huna and Rav Judah both maintain: It is not referred to; Rav Nahman and R. Yohanan both maintain: It is referred to. Abaye observed to Rav Joseph. This [ruling] of Rav Huna and Rav Judah is [synonymous with] Rav’s. For Rav Gidal said in Rav’s name: If New Moon falls on the Sabbath, he who reads the Haftarah in the prophetic lesson need not mention New Moon, since but for the Sabbath there is no prophetic lesson on New Moon. How compare! There, there is no prophetic lesson on New Moon at all; whereas here it [the reference to Hanukkah] is found in the Evening, Morning and Afternoon Services. Rather it is similar to the following . . .

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SHARING THE CONCEPT OF GOD AMONG TRADING PROPHETS:  
READING THE POEMS ATTRIBUTED TO Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt<sup>1</sup>

Al Makin

1. INTRODUCTION

Trade is a prominent feature in any account of the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, during which many figures from various tribes claimed prophethood. Before claiming prophethood, Muhammad—like most of the Qurayshite Meccans in the seventh century traveling across the Arabian peninsula in camel caravans transporting goods (Q. 106.1–6)—was a trader, who married the successful businesswoman Khadīja. Trade also appears in the story of Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt, a claimant to prophethood from the tribe Thāqif in Ṭāʿif, who, in the company of Abū Sufyān (the father of the founder of Umayyad dynasty Muʿāwiya), once travelled to Syria (Dimashq).<sup>2</sup> Trading was a vital occupation of the Meccans, dwelling as they did in infertile desert with rocky hills. The town depended for its food supply on others, such as Ṭāʿif (the home town of Umayya) and Yamāma (the home town of yet another prophet, Musaylima). The caravan route connecting the towns was busy due mainly to the exchange of goods. Indeed, trade was a critical factor in linking not only the people living in different towns but also prophets, who not surprisingly, therefore, shared many important religious concepts. It is therefore not surprising that the two prophets Muḥammad and Umayya shared the same concept of God, which will be discussed in this paper.

This paper does not specifically aim at addressing the link between Muḥammad and Umayya in trade. However, it will show that the two prophets share a vital concept of God in their revelations. It is worth

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<sup>2</sup> See Al Makin, *Representing the Enemy Musaylima in Muslim Literature* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), 148–150.



noting that many claimants to prophethood in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, such as Umayya, Muḥammad, and Musaylima, revealed *qur'āns* (readings)—all of which show strong similarities in terms of content and style. Umayya's readings which are available to us are written in the form of poetry (*shi'r*) and rhyming prose (*saj'*)—a style employed in the Meccan verses of the Qur'ān. This paper will read the poems—dealing with the concept of God—attributed to Umayya. Specifically, it will begin by problematizing the domination of a single narrative about Islam on the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, revealed by Muḥammad declaring himself—and often regarded by Muslims and many non-Muslim scholars—to be the only prophet. The paper goes on to consider the question of the authenticity of the sources reporting the birth of Islam. After touching upon the town of Ṭā'if and its relation to Mecca, the poems attributed to Umayya about God are addressed. I submit that the Qur'ān (reading) revealed by Muḥammad was not the only Qur'ān. Umayya, like Musaylima and perhaps other Arabian prophets, revealed another Qur'ān in which the concept of God is very similar to that revealed by Muḥammad. Although there is no satisfactory procedure to prove the authenticity of the poems, it does not mean that we should debunk the materials. In fact, the ways in which we both interpret the poems and compare them with the verses of the Qur'ān remain open.

## 2. THE DOMINATION OF A SINGLE NARRATIVE

Whether Islam arose in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century as a continuation of local Arab pagan traditions or as a departure from them depends on one's perspective. Many Islamicists<sup>3</sup> seem to conclude that Islam reformed pre-Islamic Paganism in the peninsula or even eradicated some of the pagan practices. Accordingly, Muḥammad—claimed as the final Prophet and seal of all Biblical and Arabian prophets—has often been seen as a reformer offering new values different from those of the indigenous Arab tradition. In this vein, there was a fundamental change in the Arab religious tradition from the *Jāhili* to the Islamic era.

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 28. See also his, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1966), 16, 29, 30, and elsewhere; M. Zwettler, "A Mantic Manifesto" in *Poetry and Prophecy*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 106 and 107; W.M. Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 16–29.

Thus, the antagonism between early Muslims under the leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad in Medina and the Meccan unbelievers was mainly motivated by opposing theological stances. According to those who held to “Islamic orthodoxy,” the pre-Islamic Meccans were simply either infidels (*kāfir*) or polytheists (*mushrik*), whereas Islam offered the true concept of monotheism. Early and later Muslim Qur’ānic exegetes, theologians, and jurists have all stressed the differences between Islamic teachings and pre-Islamic traditions. This common narrative has been repeatedly reiterated in many genres of Muslim literature. Consequently, the contrast between the *Jāhili* and the Islamic periods is maintained.<sup>4</sup>

However, the debate never ceases over the issues of differences and similarities between the newly emerging Islam in Mecca and the Meccan *Jāhili* religious values. Kister, in his many articles, often highlights the continuity between the pre- and post-Islamic period. Some Islamic religious practices, such as certain forms of prayer, rituals, and tribal traditions, have parallels in the old Arab religious customs.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the rise of Islam cannot be detached from what preceded it. Islam did not suddenly emerge out of thin air. As a rule, a new religious tradition is born from previous complex religious traditions. No matter how far a new tradition departs from its predecessors, the link between them cannot be ignored.

What is at our disposal, seen from the Islamic perspective, and often echoed by many Islamicists, is a single narrative stressing the novelty of Islam. The story goes that in the midst of Paganism—and the moral decadence among Meccan religious and political leaders—Muḥammad claimed prophethood and called upon his local community to follow the God’s true teachings as revealed to him. He came to restore the old

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<sup>4</sup> See Al Makin, “Rethinking other Claimants to Prophethood, the Case of Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt,” *Al-Jamiah* 48 (2010): 169–190. According to Günther Lüling, however, the disputes which often occurred between Muḥammad and the Meccans in the early period of his prophethood shows that the two factions had a different interpretation of ‘Judeo-Christianity’ from each other—the religious tradition which dominated the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century. Muḥammad seems to stress the local Meccan content, whereas his opponents embraced a more Hellenistic tone. See, Günter Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muḥammad: Eine Kritik am “christlichen” Abendland* (Erlangen: Lüling, 1981), 221, 250–251; Lüling, *Der Christliche Kult an der Vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und Christlichen Theologie* (Erlangen: Verlagsbuchhandlung H. Lüling, 1977), 10; see also Al Makin, *Representing the Enemy*, 230 n. 29.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Kister, “Al-Taḥānut, an Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term,” *BSOAS* 31 (1968): 223–236; Kister, “A Bag of Meat: A Study of an Early *Ḥadīth*,” *BSOAS* 33 (1970): 267–275.

forgotten religious tradition. However, the local tradition as the background against which a new teaching emerged, is often neglected.<sup>6</sup>

From an Islamic theological perspective, the above assumption gives legitimacy to the truth of Islam, seen as the only true religion which guides humankind. Anyone who wishes to reveal a different account and to present it from the historical perspective is, however, often faced with methodological issues.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. SOURCES OF EARLY ISLAM

What sources we can rely on to unearth the account of the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, during which Islam emerged, is a question that always challenges us. No archaeological excavation has so far been attempted in the two main towns—Mecca and Medina—in which Islam was revealed and the early Muslim community developed. Nor are there any manuscripts or other physical evidence from the seventh century that have been passed down to us. What we have are many genres of Islamic literature—such as *sīra* (biography of the Prophet Muḥammad), *ḥadīth* (tradition), and *ṭabaqāt* (biographies of early Muslim figures)—written by Muslim scholars two or more centuries after the birth of Islam. The Qurʾān, whose complete manuscript from the seventh century has not survived, does not tell us much about the birth of Islam. On the other hand, many Islamicists are sceptical about the authenticity of these Muslim sources. Their reliability has been the subject of serious debates among both Western and Muslim scholars. In this regard, some try to present

<sup>6</sup> See n. 4 above.

<sup>7</sup> For the debate on this matters, see e.g. H. Motzki, "Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey," *Arabica* 52 (2005): 204–253; Motzki, "The Collection of the Qurʾān, A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Development," *Der Islam* 78 (2001): 1–34; Motzki, "The Murder of Ibn Abī Ḥuqayq: On the Origin and Reliability of Some Maghazi-reports," in his *The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Gregor Schoeler and Andreas Görke, "Reconstructing the Earliest *Sīra* Texts: the *Ḥiḡra* in the Corpus of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr" *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 210–220; Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996); F. McGraw Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: the Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1998); Sebastian Günther, "Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations: The Issue of Categories and Methodologies," *BJMES* 32 (2005): 75–98; Günther, "Modern Literary Theory Applied to Classical Arabic Texts, *Ḥadīth* Revisited." in *Understanding Near Eastern Literature: A Spectrum of Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Verena Klemm and Beatrice Gruendler (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2000), 171–176.

sources penned by non-Muslim writers. However, this attempt also fails to provide a comprehensive account of the emergence of Islam, because the sources about early Islam written by non-Muslims give us a certain perspective which reflects a certain cultural position.<sup>8</sup>

For those who cast doubt on the early Muslim sources preserving the account of Muḥammad's prophethood, his biography, his revelation (namely the Qur'ān), and the sayings and deeds attributed to him (*hadīths*), all were the products of later Muslim scholarship. In this regard, Muslim scholars from the tenth century onward penned their imaginings of the ideal past in accordance with their own social, political, and religious contexts. Accordingly, the figure of Muḥammad is shrouded in myth.<sup>9</sup> Some scholars also challenge the authenticity of the Qur'ān. For these sceptical scholars, a huge amount of *hadīth* materials are simply inventions by much later Muslim scholars. From this standpoint, it is difficult to present a true representation of the narrative of the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century.

Nevertheless, a critical attitude toward the sources written by Muslim scholars two or more centuries after the birth of Islam is indeed needed to study the emergence of the religion.<sup>10</sup> In glorifying the past, later Muslim scholars often show clear signs of bias in their works in which they narrate that their prophet Muḥammad faced the Meccan opponents and built the early Muslim community in Medina. Notwithstanding the huge amount of Islamic literature, one should always be critical in reading these materials. Interestingly, the more recent the sources, the more detailed are the accounts they provide. An expansive tendency is also evident in many genres of later Muslim literature.<sup>11</sup>

However, not all Islamic sources should be debunked. There are certain ways to appreciate these sources, no matter how little they can tell us "what really happened" in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g. Patricia Crone and Michael A. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (New Jersey: Darwin Press, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g. John E. Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies, Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Wansbrough, *Sectarian Millieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Sebastian Günther, "Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations."

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Joseph Schacht, *The Origin of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 163; Gautier H.A. Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society, as Reflected in Its Use of Isnāds," in his *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Hadīth* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), 166.

century.<sup>12</sup> I would like to propose that it is possible to appreciate the later Muslim sources that provide an account of early Islam. At least we can perhaps detect a skeleton or core message preserved in them for two or three centuries.

So far, my reading of Islamic literature has led me to the following thesis, as formulated in my previous work,<sup>13</sup> that in the Arabian peninsula there was more than one prophet, one reading (Qur'ān), one mosque (*maṣjīd*), and one monotheistic Judeo-Christian religious movement (*ḥānīf*), of which only Islam has survived. Indeed, during the Prophet Muḥammad's lifetime there were many claimants to prophethood, the most notable of whom was Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt, a poet of the tribe Thaḳīf from Ṭā'if, who is said to have claimed prophethood earlier than Muḥammad. In Yamāma, Musaylima also served as a prophet for his people of Ḥanīfa. Other claimants during the lifetime of Muḥammad, such as Abū 'Āmir,<sup>14</sup> Sajāḥ,<sup>15</sup> Aswad,<sup>16</sup> and Ṭulayḥa,<sup>17</sup> also deserve serious attention. Furthermore, after the death of the Prophet, claimants to prophethood were innumerable in the Arabian peninsula and beyond. Musaylima continued his prophetic mission even after the death of Muḥammad, before his movement was defeated by a military force under the command of Khālīd b. Wālid during Abū Bakr's caliphate. Given this, the notion that Muḥammad was the only prophet in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century can thus be challenged. In fact, many claimed prophethood in the period. Research in this direction is of course needed in order shed new light on the issue—to what extent was the notion of prophethood, claimed by these people, prevalent in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century and beyond.

Nonetheless, it could also be argued that there was a “survival of the fittest” among the prophetic traditions. The most successful Arabian prophet, with an expansion of religious and political sovereignty and an increasing number of followers over time, is Muḥammad, who revealed the reading (Qur'ān) which still survives and is recited to this day. In terms of

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Motzki, “Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey;” Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie*.

<sup>13</sup> Al Makin, *Representing the Enemy*, 262–263.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Moshe Gil, “The Medinan Opposition to the Prophet,” *JSAI* 10 (1987): 87–92; “The Creed of Abū 'Āmir,” *IOS* 12 (1992): 9–57.

<sup>15</sup> V. Vacca, “Sajāḥ,” in *EI*<sup>2</sup>; al-'Asqalānī, Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1992), vol. 7, 723.

<sup>16</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, “Aswad,” in *EI*<sup>2</sup>; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1962), vol. 3, 236–239.

<sup>17</sup> Ella Landau-Tasseron, “Ṭulayḥah,” in *EI*<sup>2</sup>; al-'Asqalānī, *Iṣāba*, vol. 3, 542–543.

its survival, Islam seems to be the most superior of all Arabian religious movements founded by Arabian prophets in the seventh century. Looking at the literature at our disposal, however, the prophethood of Muḥammad alone dominated the narrative of the seventh century Arabian peninsula. Other claimants are simply neglected. In fact, other cults, religious movements, prophets, Qurʾāns, and *maṣjīds* (mosques), evidently failed to survive. Once again, Islam—sustained by political and cultural prowess over centuries—is the one which still survives today.

#### 4. A PROPHET FROM ṬĀʾIF

In order to understand the figure of Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt and his prophethood, a study of his poems will contribute to the construction of a new perspective on the man and his prophethood. Imagine that in Ṭāʾif, a neighbouring town just south east of Mecca, there was another claimant to prophethood older than Muḥammad. Although there is not yet sufficient evidence for us to conclude that all the people of Ṭāʾif followed their own prophet, namely Umayya, it is reasonable to speculate that these people had their own religious tradition different from that of the Meccans. In fact, during the rapid expansion of Islam in Medina, during which various Arab tribes embraced Islam, the people of Ṭāʾif converted relatively late to Islam. In a story of the conquest of the town, the Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have suffered serious wounds, due to the resistance of the town's inhabitants against the call to the new faith.<sup>18</sup> One may perhaps guess that before their conversion to Islam, the people of Ṭāʾif upheld their own religious tradition.

To describe the faith propagated by the Ṭāʾifi prophet Umayya and compare it to those of other Arab prophets, he—like other Arab prophets in the seventh century, such as Muḥammad and Abū ʿĀmir in Medina<sup>19</sup>—is said to have embraced *ḥānīf*,<sup>20</sup> a local Arabian religious movement with

<sup>18</sup> See Al Makin "Rethinking other Claimants." For more complete stories of Umayya and Ṭāʾif, see the introductions to the *Diwāns* by Ḥadīthī and Ṣatī (n. 25 below).

<sup>19</sup> Aloys Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammeds nach bisher grōßtenteils unbenutzten Quellen* (Berlin: Nicolai'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1861), vol. 1, 119–124; Meir. J. Kister, "A Bag of Meat: A Study of an Early Ḥadīth," 267–275; See Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, ed. Tharwat ʿUkāsha (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1960), 59; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (Beirut: Maktaba al-Maʿārif, 1966), vol. 2, 238–43.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g. Uri Rubin, "Ḥānīf," in *EQ*; F. Buhl, "Ḥānīf," *EP*; Lyall, C.J. "The words *ḥānīf* and Muslim," *JRAS* (1903): 771–84; David S. Margoliouth, "The Origin and Import of the Names Muslim and Ḥānīf," *JRAS* 35 (1903); Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabularies of the*

various elements of Judeo-Christianity which preceded Islam. It seems that many figures claimed to be adherents of *ḥānīf*, on which the Qurʾān claims that Islam reformed this religious movement. Amidst the debate among Muslim and non-Muslim scholars with regard to its meanings, *ḥānīf* may be interpreted here as hermeneutical efforts attempted by some Arab figures to blend the values of local Arab pagan traditions with the elements of Judaism and Christianity. From various stories preserved in the later Muslim literature, one may also conjecture that in various *ḥānīf* movements there were perhaps some seeds of monotheism, maintaining that God (Allah) is the one whom human beings should worship. However, it seems that there were many different versions of *ḥānīf* promoted by many Arabian prophets, none of which, with the exception of Islam, has survived.

Ṭāʾif, the town in which Umayya was raised, was, unlike Mecca, reportedly fertile. Wheat, dates, vines, and other cereals grew there, some of which was exported to Mecca. As indicated earlier, the Meccans depended for their goods on neighboring regions; corn and wheat were imported, for example, from Yamāma, the center of Musaylima's prophetic and political activities. During the siege of Mecca, the Medinan Muslims under the direct leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad collaborated with Thumāma, a political rival of Musaylima, to cut the food supply from Yamāma to Mecca. As a result, the Meccans suffered from hunger—a critical factor which contributed to their defeat.<sup>21</sup>

The inhabitants of many towns in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, such as Mecca, Medina, Ṭāʾif, and Yamāma, were involved

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*Qurʾān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 131–132; Yvonne Haddad, “The Conception of the Term *Dīn* in the Qurʾān,” *MW* 64, Nov. 2, 1974; Haddad, “An Exegesis of Sura Ninety-Eight,” *JAOS* 97 (1977): 520; M.J. Kister, “Al-Taḥannuth: An Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term,” *BSOAS* 31 (1968), 266 and 232; Uri Rubin, “Hanafiyya and Kaʿba: An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of *Dīn* Ibrāhīm,” in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. F.E. Peters, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); Gabriel S. Reynolds, “A Reflection on Two Qurʾānic Words (Iblis and Jūdī), with Attention to the Theories of A. Mingana,” *JAOS* 124 (2004): 685; François de Blois, “Naṣrānī (Ναζωραῖος) and ḥanīf (ἑθνητικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam,” *BSOAS* 65 (2002): 1–30. It is also important, in this regard, to consider the word *fatra*, see e.g. Ch. Pellat, “Fatra,” in *EI*<sup>2</sup>; Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Maʿārif*, ed. Tharwa ʿUkāsha (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1960), 58; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādan al-Jawhar*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥy al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriya al-Kubrā, 1377/1958), vol. 1, 65–75.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g. F. McGraw Donner, “Mecca's Food Supplies and Muḥammad's Boycott,” *JESHO* 20 (1977): 249–266.

in trade. Some vocabularies in the Qurʾān testify this.<sup>22</sup> The Meccans travelled from one town to another.<sup>23</sup> The vocabulary of market and trading activities was also used to describe important concepts of the hereafter. For example, the Scripture uses the word *mīzan* (measurement) to indicate the evil or good deeds of human beings in the world to come.

The exchange of goods occurred among those who lived in different towns. Each town practiced its own religious traditions, which were influenced by the common elements of Judaism and Christianity. The issues surrounding prophethood, and the birth of a new prophet to reform existing common religious traditions, were probably prevalent in many towns. It is not surprising, therefore, that in each town a local prophet attracted local followers.

The Prophet Muḥammad, who claimed prophethood in Mecca and then moved to Medina, where he successfully built the early Muslim community. Islam, one version of *ḥanīf*, expanded rapidly. Not only did many Arab tribes convert to Islam, they also paid allegiance to the Medinan power. Other prophets living in various towns in the peninsula perceived the fast expansion of the new Medinan domination over many Arab tribes as a serious threat. They had no choice but to defend their sovereignty against the Medinan invasion. Musaylima, for example, fought the Medinan force with forty thousand men. To reinforce his political stance, he entered a treaty with Sajāḥ, the prophetess of the Tamīm tribe. The rest of the prophets, including Aswad and Ṭulayḥa, were defeated by the Medinan troops, and therefore were unable to defend their territory and faith.<sup>24</sup> In various invasions on neighboring tribes and towns, Islam triumphed, and is the only Arab religion which exists to this day.

The above accounts can be drawn from the sources penned by later Muslim scholars. However, while there is so far no physical evidence from archeological excavation to support the existence of many prophets in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century, poems attributed to Umayya, a prophet from Ṭāʾif—whose interpretation remains open—are at our

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<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qurʾān* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973). For more debate on this issue, see e.g. Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); R.B. Serjeant, "Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics Review of Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam," *JAOS* 3 (1990): 472–486.

<sup>23</sup> Q. 106.

<sup>24</sup> Al Makin, *Representing the Enemy*, 154–156.



disposal.<sup>25</sup> It should be borne in mind that poetry and poets played a vital role in many towns in the peninsula and that lines, sentences, and words of known poets were transmitted orally through generations. Here, selected poems ascribed to Umayya on the concept of God will be at the center of our discussion.

With regard to the authenticity of the poems attributed to Umayya, there are at present three stances: 1) Sprenger and Huart suspect that the poems—which preceded the Qurʾān, as indicated by various Muslim sources—may have served as sources of the Qurʾān. 2) Tor Andrae, on the other hand, adopts a sceptical attitude, suggesting that the poems were fabricated by Muslim scholars in the later flowering period of Islamic literature. However, Kamentzky, al-Saṭlī, and Ḥadīthī believe that some lines can perhaps be attributed to Umayya. 3) Hirsberg argues, on the other hand, that the Qurʾān and the poems came from the same religious and literary tradition, so much so that the two contain substantial similarities in style and content. Hirsberg also compares the poems attributed to Umayya to pre-Islamic Haggada materials.<sup>26</sup>

In this article we will read some lines ascribed to Umayya taken from *Diwān* compiled by al-Saṭlī, Ḥadīthī, and Schulthess, from which the concept of God will be extracted. At the end of the article, some citations of more complete lines will be presented.

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<sup>25</sup> There are many *Diwāns* (collections) of poems attributed to Umayya, see L. Cheikho, *Wuzarāʾ al-Naṣrānīya wa-Kuttābuhā fi al-Islām* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1987); Cheikho, *al-Naṣrānīya wa-ādābuhā bayna ʿArab al-Jāhiliya* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Mashriq, 1989); F. Schulthess, *Umajja ibn Abi ṣ Ṣalt: Die unter seinem Namen überlieferten Gedichtfragmente gesammelt und übersetzt von Friedrich Schulthess* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1911); Cl. Huart, *Une nouvelle source du Qoran*, in *JA* (1904): 125–167; al-Saṭlī, *Diwān Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt* (Dimashq, 1974); al-Ḥadīthī, *Umayya b. Abī Ṣalt* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿa al-Ainī, 1975); J. Frank-Kamenetzky, *Untersuchungen über das Verhältnis der dem Umajja b. Abi ṣ Ṣalt zugeschriebenen Gedichte zum Qoran* (Kirchhain: Max Schmarsow, 1911). For more comments on the poems attributed to Umayya, see Tor Andrae, *Mohammed: Sein Leben und sein Glaube* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932); *Les origines de l'Islam et le Christianisme* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955); T. Seidensticker, "The authenticity of the poems ascribed to Umayya Ibn Abi al-Ṣalt," in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. J.R. Smart (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996); J.W. Hirschberg, *Jüdische und christliche Lehren im vor- und frühislamischen Arabien* (Cracow: Nakl. Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności, 1939).

<sup>26</sup> See n. 25 above.

## 5. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

In Umayya's poems, God appears with the same names as those occurring in the Qur'ān and other Muslim sources.<sup>27</sup> He is called *Allah*,<sup>28</sup> *ilāh*,<sup>29</sup> *rahmān* and *rahīm* (the merciful),<sup>30</sup> *rabb* (Lord),<sup>31</sup> *muhaymin* (the importance),<sup>32</sup> *dhū al-jalāl* (those who have greatness), *dhū faḍl* (those who possess excellence).<sup>33</sup> God is also referred to as the *mālik* (king),<sup>34</sup> *bāri* (originator), *khāliq* (creator),<sup>35</sup> *ḥayyi* (life-giver), *qāhīr* (powerful),<sup>36</sup> and *qayyūm* (standing). All names have a familiar ring to readers of the Qur'ān. However, the poems also mention certain attributes of God, e.g., *ṣaltit* (the sovereign)<sup>37</sup> and *rabb al-ḥanīfa* (the Lord of ḥanīfa),<sup>38</sup> which do not occur in the Muslim Scripture.

According to Umayya's poems, God's knowledge and wisdom, as mentioned by the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, are infinite. His knowledge is far above that of all human beings. He knows what is seen and unseen. In some lines it is explained that God controls what is put in darkness, or hidden

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<sup>27</sup> For more on the concept of God according to the Qur'ān, see e.g. L. Gardet, "Allāh," in *EI<sup>2</sup>*; Mustansir Mir, "Glorification of God," in *EQ*; Gerhard Böwering "God and his Attributes," in *EQ*. Ref. cited. For more discussion on the concept of God in Islam, see e.g. Andrew Rippin, "Desiring the Face of God: The Qur'anic symbolism of Personal responsibility," in *Literary Structures of religious meaning in the Qur'an*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 117–124; Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), ch. 1; Montgomery Watt, *Created in His Image: A Study in Islamic Theology in Early Islam* (Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 94–100; Watt, "Economic and Social Aspects of the origin of Islam," *IQ* 1 (1954): 90–103; Andrew Rippin, "Rahman and the Hanifs' in The Qur'an and its Interpretative Tradition," in *Islamic Studies presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds. Wael Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden, Brill 1991), 153–168; Alfred F.L. Beeston, "Himyarite Monotheism," in *Studies in the History of Arabia II: Pre-Islamic Arabia*, eds. A.M. Abdallah et al. (Riyad: King Saud University Press, 1984), 149–154; Beeston, "The Religions of pre-Islamic Yemen," and "Judaism and Christianity in pre-Islamic Yemen," in *L'Arabie du Sud: Histoire et civilization I: Le peuple Yemenite et ses racines*, ed. Joseph Chelhod (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1984), 259–269, 271–278. For a preliminary comparison between the concept of God in some lines attributed to Umayya's and that of the Qur'ān, see Tilman Nagel, *Der Koran: Einführung—Texte—Erläuterungen* (Munich: Beck, 1983), 172–181.

<sup>28</sup> Ḥadīthī 5; 1; 6; 7; 24.1; 25.1; 26. Saṭli 3.1, 16; 8.26; 9.5; 10.1, 30; 22.3.

<sup>29</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.12. Schulthess 25.10, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ḥadīthī 54.14; 140.2. Saṭli 24.3.

<sup>31</sup> Ḥadīthī 26; 140.2. Saṭli 4.1; 11.1; 24.1.

<sup>32</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.2; 111.2. Schulthess 24.2. Saṭli 11.2; 74.3.

<sup>33</sup> Ḥadīthī 86.1. Saṭli 62.1.

<sup>34</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.1, 21. Saṭli 11.1.

<sup>35</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.22, 23. Saṭli 28.

<sup>36</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.25.

<sup>37</sup> Ḥadīthī 54.15. Saṭli 22.5.

<sup>38</sup> Ḥadīthī 125.2.

in the cupboard.<sup>39</sup> Everything is under God's absolute control. God listens to human prayers, such as those of Noah. God is close to human beings, as described in the lines dealing with Moses.<sup>40</sup>

God is also described as eternal, whereas everything else is subject to destruction.<sup>41</sup> God is sovereign of this world and all creatures. Nothing is comparable to God.<sup>42</sup> God is portrayed as the highest being, whom no one surpasses, and who is not seen by human eyes.<sup>43</sup> God is surrounded by light.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, God is entirely different from his creatures. However, man can meet God in the hereafter. God has the supreme language (*lisān*) by which He understands the language of animals.<sup>45</sup> God owns the kingdom, which is this universe in which everything belonging to Him resides.

From the lines attributed to him, Umayya, like Muḥammad, taught monotheism. God, as famously stated in the early Meccan verses of the Qur'ān, begets no child.<sup>46</sup> He sits on the throne (*'arash*), which is located in the highest heaven.<sup>47</sup> Below him, there are angels (*malā'ikat*, *talāmīdh*) obeying His commands.<sup>48</sup> These angels reside in heaven. Their feet are swinging among the stars, above the earth.<sup>49</sup> Like Qur'ānic teaching, heaven, according to some lines ascribed to Umayya, consists of seven levels. Each level bears its own name.<sup>50</sup> Beneath the earth, there are seventy valleys.

In some lines attributed to Umayya, this universe is God's kingdom. God is described as sitting on the throne with His two feet dangling. Angels are said to have wings and surround Him. Other lines also mention many kinds of angels serving God obediently. A pair of angels, Gabriel and Michael, obey all God's commands. There are more angels, most of whom dwell in the stars (*thurayya*). Jibrīl, an important angel who is also called *rūhul quddūs* (holy spirit),<sup>51</sup> appears in the accounts of Mary and Jesus.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ḥadīthī 24.2–4.140.1. Schulthess 25.3; 46.1. Saṭlī 10.1–2; 99.1.

<sup>40</sup> Ḥadīthī 90.

<sup>41</sup> Ḥadīthī 144.1. Schulthess 32.1. Saṭlī 10.1.

<sup>42</sup> Ḥadīthī 24.1. Schulthess 25.1. Saṭlī 10.1.

<sup>43</sup> Ḥadīthī 144.4.

<sup>44</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.3; 144.8.

<sup>45</sup> Ḥadīthī 25.1–2.

<sup>46</sup> Q. 112.

<sup>47</sup> Ḥadīthī 14.1; 21.2, 19; 39.1–4; 46.3; 139.1. Saṭlī 11.2; 99.1.

<sup>48</sup> Ḥadīthī 23.3, 8, 21, 26; 6.1; 7.1. Saṭlī 10.12.

<sup>49</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.5.

<sup>50</sup> Saṭlī 10.15–20. Schulthess 25.19–21.

<sup>51</sup> Saṭlī 11.8.

<sup>52</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.9.

It is worth mentioning that Jibrīl plays a vital role in the prophethood of Muḥammad, serving as the mediator between Muḥammad and God in receiving revelation. This angel also appears in the accounts of Musaylima. It may be concluded from this that the three prophets—Muḥammad, Umayya, and Musaylima—shared the same notion of the importance of Jibrīl in their revelations.

Equally important is the fact that God, according to some lines attributed to Umayya, also prescribes a religion (*dīn or sibghat*) to mankind.<sup>53</sup> To illustrate this, the religion embraced by Maryam is that of God. In addition, Umayya also swears by the name of God, e.g. *lillāh* (by God).

#### 6. GOD AS THE CREATOR

To compare Umayya's readings to those of two other Arab prophets—Musaylima and Muḥammad, in the revelations attributed to Musaylima, God is said to have created human beings since they were in the womb of their mother (*ḥublā*). The early Meccan verses of the Qur'ān, on the other hand, stress that God gives life to human beings in the form of sperm (*mā'dāfiq*). Umayya's poems at our disposal present the concept of creation differently. That is, life, according to Umayya, came from a chamber (*ḥujr*) of God. The story goes that a long time ago, God called each creature by name into the chamber. There, God granted life to each of them.<sup>54</sup>

God in Umayya's poems, as in the Qur'ān, also created this universe, consisting of earth, sky, stars, sun, and moon. God also gave life to all kinds of living being on earth—various plants and animals (donkey, horse, bird, bees, flies, pig, cock, raven, cow, horse, man, etc.). God is also the Creator of the world to come, namely paradise and hell.<sup>55</sup>

#### 7. GOD'S INTERVENTION

Some lines attributed to Umayya mention that God is present in the life of mankind. God is portrayed as the One who helped prophets and virtuous people and punished the sinful.

<sup>53</sup> Ḥadithī 66.1; 93.1–2; 94.1; 95.9; 125.9. Saḥīḥ 24.8; 103.3; 79.1. Schulthess 23.1–2; 88.2.

<sup>54</sup> Ḥadithī 109.1–2.

<sup>55</sup> Ḥadithī 101.1–25. Schulthess 24.4.

Some lines ascribed to the Tāʿifi prophet, describe the role of God as the Helper who grants victory to the protagonists and virtuous people—such as Noah,<sup>56</sup> Abraham,<sup>57</sup> Moses,<sup>58</sup> Mary, and Jesus.<sup>59</sup> In the story of Noah, God blesses this virtuous man, as he caused his ark to sail, by blowing the wind. In the story of Abraham, he replaced his son, whom Abraham intended to sacrifice, with an animal. The name of the son—either Ishmael or Isaac—is not mentioned.

As in the Qurʾān, some lines attributed to Umayya explain that God also tormented sinful people. The story goes that once God expelled Iblis (devil) from the paradise, in which Adam and his wife used to live. God then sent Adam to earth, but gave him the task of *khalifa* (leader) on earth.

As in the Qurʾān, poems ascribed to Umayya also describe how God sent a cauldron (causing deluge) to punish the wrongdoers who opposed Noah. In another story of punishment, God destroyed Pharaoh, the enemy of Moses.<sup>60</sup> On another occasion, God turned the earth upside down, when he sent torment to the people of Lot. Interestingly, the account of God sending calamities to Tihāma,<sup>61</sup> a shore located on the west of the Arabian peninsula<sup>62</sup>—is not found in the Qurʾān. As God's punishment, Tihāma was once attacked by grasshoppers and other insects.

## 8. PRAISES TO GOD

One can imagine how pious Umayya was—often chanting God's names, a practice known as *dhikr* in Islamic tradition. In some lines attributed to him, God's names are often glorified not only by human beings but also by angels and animals. Angels prostrate to and praise God.

Birds, bees, and trees all sing God's greatness.<sup>63</sup> Whales, and even the ocean, glorify God. In many lines, readers are called upon to contemplate God's creatures in order to recall their Creator. A similar appeal can also be found in the lines attributed to the Yamāmi prophet, Musaylima,

<sup>56</sup> Ḥadīthī 5.1–15; 86.1–7; 187.1–4; 142.7–10; 145.10–29. Schulthess 29.1–8; 30.9–11; 31.8–11. Saṭṭī 3.1–6; 62.1–8. James E. Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qasidah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gib Memorial Trust, 1997), 197–198.

<sup>57</sup> Ḥadīthī 85.1–13. Saṭṭī 62.9–22. Schulthess 29.9–21.

<sup>58</sup> Ḥadīthī 90.

<sup>59</sup> Ḥadīthī 119.1–17. Saṭṭī 89.1–17.

<sup>60</sup> See n. 54–57 above.

<sup>61</sup> Ḥadīthī 41.1–3.

<sup>62</sup> Mecca was part of Tihāma. See Saṭṭī, *Diwān*, 467 n. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Ḥadīthī 21.26–27.

who asked his followers to observe wolves, frogs, elephants, and rabbits, which are all created by God. Umayya's message sounds similar to that of Musaylima—both prophets instruct their people to think of the stars, the night, and other surrounding in order to call to mind the greatness of the Creator. In other words, God's greatness is manifested in the greatness of God's own creatures in the sky and on the earth<sup>64</sup>—a call for contemplation often found in many Meccan verses of the Qur'ān. It is worth noting that the messages delivered by the three Arabian prophets—Muḥammad, Musaylima, and Umayya—all used the same method in reminding their followers of God's power.

#### 9. HUMAN REPENTANCE

Umayya's religious piety can be felt in the lines attributed to him when he asks God for forgiveness. Some lines evoke the poet's confession as a sinner, or sometimes as *kufṛ* (unbeliever): *lā taj'al kufṛan abadan* ("God, do not make me an unbeliever forever").<sup>65</sup>

On another occasion, the poet states that when the truth of God is imminent, human beings should not run away from the truth—a quotation preserved in the *Sīra* of Ibn Iṣḥāq, famously presented in much later Muslim literature. Muslim authors, on the other hand, understand this as Umayya almost embracing Islam and acknowledging the prophethood of Muḥammad. However, the poet then abandoned Islam. It appears that the Islamic apologetic stance prevails in this understanding. Indeed, Umayya claimed himself to be a prophet. The Medinan and Ṭā'ifi prophets were in fact in competition for their religious claim, and political rivals. During the battle of Badr—between the Meccan unbelievers and the Medinan Muslims—Umayya sided with the former.

It can perhaps be argued that Umayya revealed his own *shi'r* (which may also be called another "Qur'ān," literally referring to "reading," according to Richard Bell's theory). Bell argues that the Qur'ān in the early phase of revelation referred to any general reading and not specifically to the collection of Muhammad's revelation.<sup>66</sup> Be that as it may, the style, pattern, and messages contained in Umayya's revelation sound similar to many

<sup>64</sup> Ḥadīthī 103.1–4. Schulthess 41.24–26. Saṭlī 73.5–8.

<sup>65</sup> Ḥadīthī 125.7; 46.8; 102.1–5; 96. Schulthess 29.22–23. Saṭlī 85.

<sup>66</sup> See e.g. Richard Bell, *A Commentary on the Qur'ān*, eds. C. Edmund Bosworth and M.E.J. Richardson (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991), vol. 2, 329.

verses of the Qur'ān. It is reasonable to speculate that Umayya was an independent advocate of *ḥānīf*—a version which was perhaps different from that of Muḥammad. It is worth noting that there were many other versions of *ḥānīfs*, such as those of Abū 'Āmir, Zayd b. Nufayl, and Umayya. The *ḥānīf* promoted by Muḥammad, which was later called Islam, prevails in the Arabian peninsula, whereas the others have not survived.

#### 10. CONCLUSION

So far, we have no single procedure to satisfactorily determine the authenticity of the poems attributed to Umayya. Nor can we be convinced by a particular analysis explaining that certain lines were delivered by Umayya and other lines were fabricated by much later poets or scholars. What is clear is that the transmission of the poems attributed to him did not cease on the death of the poet who claimed this poem-cum-prophet. Rather, the transmission continued for many centuries from different motives. Because he was recognized as a great poet, many were tempted to attribute their own words and lines to him to impress their audience. Sentences and lines ascribed to Umayya appear in the Qur'ānic exegesis. Exegetes cited lines ascribed to Umayya to seek for more explanation when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary in the Scripture. They did so to defend the truth of the Scripture, which contains words that were also uttered by the prominent poet, who came earlier than, or at the same time as, Muḥammad. If there are any authentic words delivered by Umayya, it remains unclear to what extent the later transmitters, who at the same time played the role of authors, changed them, in line with their own linguistic taste and social and religious interests. Words, lines, and sentences are in fact subject to change from generation to generation. This paper is not the place to examine the above issues at adequate length.

However, if certain words can be established to come from the seventh century, this would support our argument that ideas, concepts, sentences, and vocabulary of the Qur'ān have parallels in other sources. Thus, the Qur'ān was not the only Qur'ān (reading) revealed during Muḥammad's lifetime. Qur'āns, other than the Islamic Qur'ān, must have existed in the Arabian peninsula, given the number of prophets living in many regions and affiliated with various tribes in the different provinces.

Umayya's Qur'ān contains the concept of God which sounds familiar to readers of the Qur'ān revealed by Muḥammad. The concept of God shared by the two prophets can perhaps lead us to imagine the close relation between the Meccans and the people of Ṭā'if in the seventh century, dur-

ing which Umayya and Muḥammad claimed prophethood. The relation between the two towns can be explained in the following way. Whereas the Meccans depended for their food supplies on their neighboring town, the inhabitants of Ṭāʾif visited the Kaʿba (a pre-Islamic shrine which has later become the direction of Muslims' prayers) for religious reasons. In fact, the Meccan shrine attracted people from different cities in the Arabian peninsula, although many, such as Musaylima and the tribe of Ghaṭafān, attempted to build their own holy places, which, however, have not survived.<sup>67</sup> The inhabitants of the two towns visited each other. In this regard, Umayya was not exceptional, as indicated earlier, because he had an affinity with Abū Sufyān.

It is possible to speculate that the Meccans and the people of Ṭāʾif were linked through trade. In addition to the exchange of goods, there was also an exchange of ideas, as attested by the similarities between the poems attributed to Ummayya—if they are authentic—and the Qurʾān which are testimony to the exchange of ideas between the Meccan and the Ṭāʾifite prophets.

#### APPENDIX: MORE COMPLETE LINES ATTRIBUTED TO UMAYYA

##### 11.1. *God on the Throne*

Upon You oh our Lord, praise, bless, and kingdom  
 Nothing is higher than You earnestly [nothing is comparable to you]  
 The mighty King (God) (sits) on the throne of the sky  
 For His greatness, all faces direct to him, before whom all prostrate  
 Light surrounds God—and light is all over Him  
 The river of blazing lights mantles Him  
 No man can be elevated to (God's high) place  
 mere creatures [on earth] have no light  
 The angels' feet [on the other hand] dangle over the earth  
 But their necks reach skies  
 And among them (angels) hold the pillars (supporting) His throne  
 with (mighty) power, without which all (sky and throne) are weak  
 All (angels) stand on their feet, with loaded muscle  
 (They are) fearing and submissive (to God)  
 They obey their Lord  
 always obedient listening to the revelation  
 The pair: Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, and Michael—  
 whose spirit is mighty and powerful—(always) obey Him (God)

<sup>67</sup> For more discussion on the theme see, e.g. Makin, *Representing the Enemy*, 118–119.



Angels never abandon prayers  
 Some of them bow and prostrate  
 Their prostration (to God) endures forever without raising their heads,  
 glorifying the Lord above them and chanting Him  
 They (angels) bend humbly when bowing,  
 chanting the divinity of God and praising Him  
 Among them (angels) fold their wings hiding their heads  
 memorizing their Lord solemnly  
 Because of fear they take refuge by praying (to God)  
 It is a long solemn worship  
 The doors of the skies are guarded by none other than those (angels)  
 who stand vigilantly  
 The best servants are the chosen (angels) for fulfilling His command  
 Among them (angels) are like huge army in service  
 [There is] angel, who ascends to the stars  
 through the thick water between them (stars)  
 [There is] angel, who roams between the plates  
 in earth's belly  
 Praise upon God, no one is [able to measure] His greatness  
 Nothing can [reach] the throne, (where) He is alone  
 None of the creatures [is able to] dispute his kingdom  
 He (God) is the only subject of worship  
 (God) the great King of skies and earth  
 Nothing above us (sky) fluxes  
 He is God, the Creator of (all) creatures; and all living beings come from Him;  
 all obey Him, whom I (myself) worship  
 And, indeed, [un]like the Creator who is eternal and everlasting;  
 Human beings—with their task as leaders (on earth)—are subject to  
 destruction  
 There is no similarity between the Creator and creatures  
 (The former) is eternal who [is] superior to the temporary ones  
 I am temporary and not (at all) eternal, (whereas) God is the great one  
 who makes and resurrects death; God—who never rests—is eternal  
 Birds on hills praise Him invisibly  
 They do so during flying in the air of the sky  
 Due to the fear of God, thunder above us also praises God  
 So do the trees and beasts forever  
 So do the whales and the ocean relentlessly  
 Everything joins and follows (to praise God).<sup>68</sup>

### 11.2. *Praises to God*

They (all creatures) glorify God, who is glorious  
 Our Lord the great in the evening sky

<sup>68</sup> Ḥadīthī 21; Saṭḥī 11; Schulthess 55.

That He (God) who makes stone and death,  
 to which He (is able to) give life appropriately  
 He who builds the high sky which preceded man  
 [and] where the throne lies  
 (The throne) is so high that no human eye can see  
 What (the human) eye can see is only the image of angels.<sup>69</sup>

Praise to God in our soothing evening and awakening morning  
 God grants us righteousness in our morning and evening  
 God of *ḥanīfā*, whose wealth is immeasurable  
 [the wealth is] abundantly sufficient [to supply the needs of all] his kingdom  
 If a messenger [of God] were sent to us  
 There would be no reason to abandon (the messenger)  
 What our forefathers have taught us has faded away  
 But what we are passing to our children has [already] waned.<sup>70</sup>

### 11.3. *God's power in human life*

Those whose sight God erased have no more light to see the clear sun and moon.<sup>71</sup>

### 11.4. *Creation*

And bear in mind that life is a gift [of God],  
 which came from a chamber, (with) its divisions, (where you were placed) due  
 to the benevolence of God  
 (The story goes that) when human being was called with [her/his] name,  
 Or (God) was mentioned (to her/him), she/he appeared by walking slowly  
 Poisonous [evil] is [always] behind her/him,  
 (Remember that) if (her/his name) were not mentioned, she/he would have  
 remained [dead being] in the hollow chamber  
 [Various] sharp teeth, harsh claw(s), voices, and (special) characteristics (indi-  
 cate) the variety of creatures  
 Whenever their names are mentioned to us, we are astonished  
 (But) the [unbelieving] mockers [still] insult God with word(s)  
 Whoever neglects the Lord,  
 the consequence is pain, which will torture [her/him] like [cruel] canines with  
 cry (biting)  
 That (account of creation) is told (but how human being could) turn away from  
 truth after (his/her) confirmation  
 (because ) no deafening alarm [is put] in his/her ears

<sup>69</sup> Ḥadīthī 39; Saṭlī 31.1–4; Schulthess 34.1–4.

<sup>70</sup> Ḥadīthī 125; Saṭlī 96.1–4; Schulthess 35.1–9.

<sup>71</sup> Ḥadīthī 52.

Whether she/he believes in or ignores it (the truth)  
 And no friend and bless (no compromise occur) between the two (different  
 stances—believer and ignorant).<sup>72</sup>

#### 11.5. *Praises to God*

They (human beings) praise God, to whom [all] praises belong  
 Our Lord (of) the evening sky, the Powerful  
 He, the Planter of tree(s), makes death life  
 He is the Potent  
 [Who built] the high sky which has preceded men  
 He thrones on the chair above the sky  
 (which is) so high, [so much so that] no eyes of human being can see  
 What you can see is only angels' picture, not His  
 He is the most magnificent, compared to what human being can see,  
 such as uncovered pictures.<sup>73</sup>

#### 11.6. *Nature, Man, and God*

We wear the cotton, which we have planted on (earth)  
 We have sheared off the wool (of sheep), which the farmers have reared  
 We were created from it (the earth), and so were indeed our mothers  
 We are her (the earth's) children, if we are gratitude enough  
 This (earth) is the settled place, which we thus do not want to change  
 What the earth has blessed us, but we are still ungrateful  
 The defamation to God with enmity is ailment,  
 which the doctors know that no examination (can possibly) cure.<sup>74</sup>

#### 11.7. *Repentance*

Oh God, do not make me ungrateful forever  
 And set faith in the throne of my heart in the course of time.<sup>75</sup>  
 Oh God do not prevent me from [entering] the khuldi (eternal) paradise; and oh  
 our Lord make me a humble (and) compassionate (person).<sup>76</sup>  
 Oh God forgive me, [forgive] all my sins, I will humbly come to your service in  
 the day (that you have promised).<sup>77</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Ḥadīthī 109.1–8.

<sup>73</sup> Ḥadīthī 39.1–4; Saṭlī 31.1–5.

<sup>74</sup> Saṭlī 22.104; Schulthess 49.1–4.

<sup>75</sup> Ḥadīthī 125.7; Saṭlī 96.7; Schulthess 35.7.

<sup>76</sup> Ḥadīthī 142.

<sup>77</sup> Ḥadīthī 36.8.

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<i>BJMES</i>	<i>British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>EI</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Encyclopedia of Islam</i> (new edition/Brill)
<i>EQ</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān</i> (ed. J. McAuliffe/Brill)
<i>IOS</i>	<i>Israel Oriental Studies</i>
<i>IQ</i>	<i>The Islamic Quarterly, A review of Islamic Culture</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of Economy and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JSAI</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
<i>MW</i>	<i>The Muslim World</i>



PART FOUR

TRADE AND RELIGIOUS-ETHICAL WAYS OF LIFE





## TRADING INSTITUTIONS: THE DESIGN OF DAOIST MONASTICISM

Livia Kohn

### 1. EARLY INSTITUTIONS

#### 1.1. *The Celestial Masters*

Daoism is originally very much a non-monastic religion. Its first organization, the school of the Celestial Masters (Tianshi) or Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi), was founded in 142 C.E. by the alchemist Zhang Daoling. Obtaining a secret recipe in a trance, he tried to procure the necessary (but costly) ingredients, failed, then moved to Sichuan where things appeared to be easier. There, in 142, allegedly on the summer solstice, on a mountain known as Crane Cry (Heming shan), which has been located variously to the west of Chengdu, he entered another deep trance and had a major vision of a deity who introduced himself as Lord Lao, the personified Dao and also the deified philosopher Laozi, whose cult had spread throughout the country by this time. The god told Zhang that the end of the world was at hand. He was to instruct the people to repent and prepare themselves for the momentous changes by becoming morally pure so they could serve as the “seed people” of the new age. Closing the “Covenant of Orthodox Unity” with Zhang, the god then appointed him as his representative on earth with the title “celestial master,” and gave him healing powers as a sign of his empowerment.<sup>1</sup>

Zhang followed the god’s orders and proceeded to wake up the people and heal the sick. As a token for his efforts, he took five pecks of rice or the equivalent in taxes from his followers, who included large numbers of local people and ethnic non-Chinese. Over the years Zhang assembled a sizable following, then “transformed himself into an immortal in broad daylight,” passing the organization on to his son Zhang Heng and his grandson Zhang Lu. Zhang’s organization was particularly successful because under the rule of the Later Han dynasty (23–220 C.E.), times were

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<sup>1</sup> A good overview of the early Daoist organizations and their history is found in Barbara Hendrichske, “Early Daoist Movements,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 134–164.

truly disastrous. A succession of floods, droughts, locust plagues, famines, and epidemics combined with an ever more corrupt government had led to a great deal of poverty and social instability, people being forced into vagrancy in large numbers.<sup>2</sup> Seizing the political vacuum in Sichuan, Zhang established a millenarian colony and set up an organization that was closely patterned on Han administration but also a religious system along the lines of Victor Turner's *communitas*.

Daoists at the time saw themselves as different and separate from society, dedicated to otherworldly goals and going far beyond the petty pursuits of ordinary people. In their personal and organizational identity, they lived in a feeling of liminality—of being betwixt and between, neither here nor there—no longer fully members of normative society but also not yet realized in their goal of the perfect society of the new age. Their organization eschewed status, property, insignia, clothing of rank, or position in a kinship system—all the values and symbols of ordinary society. Their behaviour was passive and humble, they obeyed instructions implicitly and accepted arbitrary punishment without complaint. As Turner puts it: "It is as though they [members of *communitas*] are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life."<sup>3</sup>

### 1.2. *Social Organization*

To this end, the Celestial Masters set up an organization which ranked followers hierarchically on the basis of ritual attainments, with the so-called libationers at the top. They served as leaders of twenty-four districts and reported directly to the Celestial Master himself. Beneath them were the demon soldiers, meritorious leaders of households who represented smaller units in the organization.

Members were ordinary peasants in search of social and economic stability. They came from all walks of life and included many ethnic non-

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<sup>2</sup> On early Daoist millenarianism, see Anna Seidel, "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism," *History of Religions* 9 (1969): 216–247.

<sup>3</sup> Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), 95. The principles of *communitas* also apply to various other liminal groups and institutions such as utopian communities, boot camps, prisons, asylums, and Communist states. For a discussion, see Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situations of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961).

Chinese.<sup>4</sup> Leadership positions could be filled by either men or women, Han Chinese or minorities. At the bottom were the common followers, organized and counted according to households. Ranks were attained through ritual initiations, at which followers received lists of spirit generals for protection against demons. The earliest initiations were given to children at the age of seven, then continued at regular intervals, depending on the follower's devotion and community service. The list of spirit generals was called a register and was carried, together with protective talismans, in a piece of silk around the waist.<sup>5</sup>

Each household paid the "five pecks of rice" tax or its equivalent in silk, paper, brushes, ceramics, or handicrafts. The exact amount varied according to the number of productive members in each family. It was assigned and collected on the three major festival days of the year, the fifteenth day of the first, seventh, and tenth months. These days were called the Three Primes and were celebrated in honour of the celestial administration which kept records of life and death, and consisted of the Three Bureaus of Heaven, Earth, and Water. Festivities involved large community assemblies and major banquets known as kitchen-feasts. Unlike on regular days when the consumption of meat and alcohol was prohibited, on these occasions wine would flow freely, animals were slaughtered, and everyone celebrated with enthusiasm, leading some critics of the movement to condemn their practices as "orgiastic." In addition, each smaller unit or village had a community or parish hall, where members would assemble weekly to perform rituals, confess sins, and discuss local affairs.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3. *Community Rules*

Everybody had to participate in these events and perform community service on a regular basis, repairing roads and bridges and maintaining so-called lodges of righteousness where travellers could stay on their journeys.<sup>7</sup> In addition, life was regulated through sets of community rules.

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<sup>4</sup> The social organization of the early groups is especially discussed in Terry Kleeman, *Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millenarian Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> See Kristofer M. Schipper, "Le monachisme taoïste," in *Incontro di religioni in Asia tra il terzo e il decimo secolo d. C.*, ed. L. Lanciotti (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1984), 205; Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, 68–69; Rolf A. Stein, "Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au II<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.," *T'oung-pao* 50 (1963): 50–55.

<sup>6</sup> See Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, 72; Stein, "Remarques," 70–71; Schipper, "Le monachisme," 206.

<sup>7</sup> Stein, "Remarques," 56.

The earliest such set is associated with the *Xianger* commentary to the *Daode jing*, a text ascribed to Zhang Lu, the grandson of the founder, and dated to around 215 C.E. It guides followers to behave with obedience to the leaders and with reticence to their fellow members. They should not strive for positions beyond their status and abstain from sacrifices to popular gods. They must not do evil, engage in warfare, accumulate riches, or praise themselves as great sages.

On a more positive note, followers should develop a helpful and positive attitude within the community, controlling their senses and showing humility toward others. Advancing further, they should give active service to the Dao, preserve living things, and live in accordance with the patterns of the universe—never cutting down plants unnecessarily and especially not in spring time.<sup>8</sup> The rewards are commensurate. Those who obey the highest rules become immortals, all others will extend their years and live happily ever after—surviving even the cataclysmic changes to come as the world ends.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the fourth-century collection *Laojun shuo yibai bashi jie* (180 Precepts Spoken by Lord Lao, in DZ 786)<sup>10</sup> provides rules on practical living and emphasizes personal honesty and community life. The text prohibits theft, adultery, killing, abortion, intoxication, destruction of natural resources, and waste of food, and regulates the proper behaviour toward community members and outsiders. It prohibits fraternization with brigands and soldiers, punishes cruelty to slaves and animals, and insists upon polite distance when encountering outsiders and officials. Many details of daily life are regulated, and pettiness and rudeness are discouraged as is the accumulation of personal wealth.<sup>11</sup>

#### 1.4. *Bodily Control*

While the precepts demand humility and obedience and generally encourage submission of the senses, sexual control among the Celestial Masters

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<sup>8</sup> Livia Kohn, *Cosmos and Community: The Ethical Dimension of Daoism* (Cambridge: Three Pines Press, 2004), 58–61.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 50–51.

<sup>10</sup> 'DZ' stands for the Daoist Canon. The numbers are cited after *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, eds. Kristopher Schipper and Franciscus Verellen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion and translation of this text, see Barbara Hendrischke and Benjamin Penny, "The 180 Precepts Spoken by Lord Lao: A Translation and Textual Study," *Taoist Resources* 6 (1996): 17–29.

was exerted in an initiatory practice known as the “harmonization of vital energies.” This involved formally choreographed intercourse between selected non-married couples in an elaborate ritual. Practitioners underwent this rite when they were promoted from one level of ritual standing to the next, enacting the matching of yin and yang in their bodies and thus contributing to greater cosmic harmony.<sup>12</sup> From the viewpoint of religious organization, this rite which goes against common social values and is counterintuitive to people’s sense of shame, requiring that a “man assist in the violation of his wife,” enhances cult cohesion and binds followers strongly to the leader.<sup>13</sup>

The acceptance of suffering and pain, moreover, appears in the Celestial Masters’ understanding of sickness and sin. Sickness was seen strictly in supernatural terms as the attack of a demon, who could only gain entry into a person’s body if the latter was weakened by sin. As a result, all healing of the early Celestial Masters was undertaken through ritual and magic; acupuncture, herbs, and other medical treatments were expressly prohibited. First the sick person was isolated in a so-called oratory, an adaptation of a Han institution for punishing wayward officials involving solitary confinement. There they had to think of their sins going all the way back to their birth to try and find an explanation for the illness.

Once certain sins had been identified, a senior master would come to write them down—in triplicate and together with a formal petition for their eradication from the person’s divine record. Next, the three copies would be transmitted ceremonially to the Bureaus of Heaven (by burning), Earth (by burying), and Water (by casting into a river). The divine officials would then set the record straight, expel the demons, and restore the person’s good health. Additional measures of purification involved the ingestion of “talismán water” (the ashes of a talismán dissolved in water), healing exercises patterned on cosmic energy movements, and meditations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> On the sexual practices, see Masayoshi Kobayashi “The Celestial Masters under the Eastern Jin and Liu-Song Dynasties,” *Taoist Resources* 3.2 (1992): 27–31; Gil Raz, “The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the Sexual Initiation Rite of Celestial Master Daoism,” *Nannü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 10 (2008): 86–120.

<sup>13</sup> Stein, “Remarques,” 57–68.

<sup>14</sup> Details of these rituals are described in Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, 70–71; Kobayashi, “The Celestial Masters,” 22–25; Masaaki Tsuchiya, “Confession of Sins and Awareness of Self in the Taiping jing,” in *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual*, eds. Livia Kohn and Harold D. Roth (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002).

These various activities of the Celestial Masters closely echo the doctrines and practices of other millenarian and utopian communities. The sense of being different from, and marginal to, normative society, the tight community cohesion and strict obedience, the newly found freedom in the equality of the sexes and among different social and ethnic groups, the total orientation of life toward the divine, the expectation of momentous change heralded by the group's own purification practices, the sexual control, and the understanding of sickness as sin—these are all present in liminal communities and signify a particular form of communal religious consciousness that sets believers apart and makes them special. The very same characteristics, moreover, apparent in organizational structures and community rules, are present in Daoist monasticism as it unfolded in the centuries to come—yet was shaped decisively by outside influences, notably political demands and Buddhist models.

## 2. PRIEST-ADMINISTRATORS

### 2.1. *The Theocracy*

The first Daoists living in a quasi-monastic institution and maintaining celibate service to god and country were the priests of the so-called Daoist theocracy. It began with Kou Qianzhi (365–448), the well-educated son of a Celestial Masters family, who elected to practice Dao and became a hermit on Mount Song in Henan. There, in 415, he received a revelation from Lord Lao which the official history of the dynasty describes as follows:

In the second year of the reign period Shenrui, on the *yimao* day of the tenth month [22 November 415], Kou Qianzhi unexpectedly encountered a great divinity, riding on a cloud and mounted upon a dragon. Accompanied by an entourage of hundreds of numinous spirits, he was waited upon by immortals and jade maidens. The entire host assembled on the top of the mountain.

Lord Lao said to Kou: A few years ago, in the *xinhai* year [411], the god of Mount Song, chief of the palace of the assembled immortals, submitted a memorial to the celestial officials [to recommend you].

This is why I have come to see you today. I now bestow upon you the position of Celestial Master and herewith transmit to you the 'Precepts of the New Code, to Be Recited after [the tune] *In the Clouds*' in twenty scrolls. . . . Go, then, and proclaim my new code and with its help purify and rectify the Daoist teaching, abolishing the perverted ideas of the Three Zhangs [traditional Celestial Masters].

Rice levies and taxes in coin or the techniques of harmonizing the male and female energies—how can the great Dao in its purity and emptiness ever make use of such things? Begin, therefore, by setting up specific formal procedures, then supplement them with methods of diet and physical refinement.<sup>15</sup>

Kou, therefore, was empowered to take the place of the Zhang lineage as Celestial Master and abolish some of their characteristic practices such as the rice tax and the sexual initiation rituals. Instead, he was to set up a system of religious activity based on longevity techniques and bolstered by a set of thirty-six community rules, handed down by the divinity. Before he could do this, however, he had to perfect his own Dao and train in various ascetic practices, which he did until a second major revelation in 423 told him that he was ready to begin his big task.

In the following year, 424, Kou took his divine information to court and found the support of the prime minister Cui Hao (381–450). In due course, he became the head of a state-sponsored Daoism, geared to bringing peace and harmony to the northern empire. This involved setting himself up in a palace-cum-monastery in the capital together with followers and administrators said to have numbered 120, and establishing Daoist institutions throughout the country. The high point of Kou's power was reached when, in 440, the emperor himself accepted Daoist initiation and claimed to be the messianic new ruler of Great Peace. Kou's influence and that of Cui Hao continued to grow until the former's death in 448. Cui tried to hold it all together but became rather too overbearing and megalomaniac in the process, and the theocracy ended after his execution in 450.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2. *The New Code*

At the height of Kou's power, all people in the northern empire were subject to Daoist rules as specified in the revealed text, still partially extant in the Daoist canon as the *Laojun yinsong xinke jiejing* (Scripture of Lord Lao's New Code of Precepts Chanted to the *Clouds Melody* (DZ 785), the

<sup>15</sup> This account follows the *Weishu* (History of the Wei Dynasty), ch. 114. It is translated in James R. Ware, "The *Wei-shu* and the *Sui-shu* on Taoism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 53 (1933): 215–50.

<sup>16</sup> More details on the theocracy are outlined in Richard Mather, "K'ou Ch'ien-chih and the Taoist Theocracy at the Northern Wei Court 425–451," in *Facets of Taoism*, eds. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 103–122; Kohn, "The Northern Celestial Masters," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 283–308.



“New Code.”<sup>17</sup> It specified that people had to be loyal to the ruler, obedient to their parents and elders, and subservient to Dao. To express their proper attitude, they had to observe daily, monthly, and special festival rites throughout the year. Such festivals could last three, five, or seven days and, as in the Celestial Masters of old, involved community assemblies and kitchen-feasts. Daily and monthly rites were performed through a series of bows and prostrations as well as by the burning of incense and offering of a prayer or petition. Strictly forbidden were popular practices such as shamanic séances, blood sacrifices, and sexual initiations.

The “New Code” consists of thirty-six rules that each end with the ritual formula: “Be very clear and careful about them [the precepts], honour and practice them in accordance with the statutes and ordinances,” an adaptation of the traditional Celestial Masters spell “Swiftly, swiftly, in accordance with the statutes and ordinances.” The rules begin with conditions for membership in the ranks of the Dao and ordination procedures (no. 1–3), recount Kou’s original revelation and place it in the Celestial Masters’ history (no. 4–5), and outline the evils of the time in terms of political and social disharmony (no. 6).

Following this, the rules become more concrete, specifying libationers’ methods of offerings, community banquets, and assemblies (no. 7–14), providing guidance for relating to official authority (nos. 15–17), and giving details on how to present petitions to the gods (no. 18–20, 26). For example:

When entering a parish hall to present a petition, in all cases be of upright posture and quickened gait, take your place on the right and left according to rank and exhibit seriousness and devotion. Do not allow men and women to intermingle or stand in the wrong place. Do not let them look around idly, chatter noisily, push and shove, or advance and retreat either too quickly or too slowly. Offenders in positions of authority will be demoted by one rank. If they are not demoted, they will be fined three ounces of jade and punished by a two-period reduction in reckoning.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike earlier Daoist guidelines, the “New Code” does not contain moral injunctions and community regulations, but instead provides a glimpse of the ritual concerns and specific organizational patterns of the theocracy. It also contains the earliest descriptions of a ceremony attached to

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<sup>17</sup> The best edition of this text, punctuated if slightly erroneously numbered, is found in Yang Liansheng, “Laojun yinsong jiejing jiaoshi,” *Zhongyang yanjiu suo lishi yuyen yanjiusuo jikan* 28 (1956): 17–54.

<sup>18</sup> Kohn, *Cosmos and Community*, 78.

the transmission of Daoist scriptures, spelling out the rudiments of Daoist ordination.<sup>19</sup> The rite involved the presence of a group of masters and recipients, formal bows and obeisances, and the ritual chanting of the precepts as presented in the scripture. The precepts are at the center of the ceremony, and the text explains that they “must always be venerated and treated with great diligence” and should not be transmitted except with the prescribed methods.

### 2.3. *Political Structures*

Both the overall organization of the theocracy and the specific guidelines of the “New Code” received major impact from outside agencies, notably the imperial government and the competing religion of Buddhism. The rulers at the time in North China were of Xiongnu origin, inheriting an empire that had co-existed and heavily intermarried with that of the Han. After the latter’s downfall in 220, the Xiongnu first went through a period of disunity but soon consolidated and moved to conquer China. Claiming descent from the Han emperors through the female line, they adopted the family name Liu and founded their own dynasty, the Liu-Han, in 304.<sup>20</sup> For the first time in history, a foreign ruler was making claims to the Chinese throne. Expanding rapidly, the Xiongnu struck terror into the Chinese court, but themselves fell victim to dissipation and indecision after a few victories had been won.

Two major generals of the Liu-Han, Shi Le and Liu Yao, rose in rebellion and defeated the Xiongnu emperor in 318. Turning against each other, they each founded an independent dynasty, the Western and Eastern Zhao. Eventually Shi Le, member of the Jie nation, emerged victorious and, in 330, styled himself the new emperor of northern China. His rule and that of his nephew and successor Shi Hu did not prosper. They lacked resources, were highly military in orientation, and suffered from ongoing conflicts. Chinese sources, obviously biased, describe their rule as full of terror.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, they made decisive changes in the role Buddhism—and its wake, Daoism—played on Chinese soil.

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<sup>19</sup> For an extensive and detailed discussion of these issues, see Kohn, “Medieval Daoist Ordination: Origins, Structure, and Practices,” *Acta Orientalia* 56 (2003): 379–398.

<sup>20</sup> William M. McGovern, *The Early Empires of Central Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 320; Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959).

<sup>21</sup> McGovern, *Early Empires*, 337; Arthur F. Wright, “Fo-t’u-teng, a Biography,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 11 (1948): 324.

Both Shi Le and Shi Hu used Fotudeng as their adviser. The first politically influential Buddhist in Chinese history, he established his authority by making rain, foretelling the future, and healing—all activities the Xiongnu were accustomed to from their native shamans. Once in power, Fotudeng managed to stay on the winning side in whatever conflict arose at court, thus exerting a strong influence on the politics of the day. Because of his efforts, Buddhism was for the first time accepted as a favoured and official religion in China. He involved Buddhist monks in all activities of the court, created a popular Buddhist religion among the people with the support of the state, and acquired government sponsorship for translations, temples, and Buddhist art.<sup>22</sup> In doing so, he developed the kind of state-centered Buddhism typical for the north. His style of advising was duly inherited by the Toba who expanded their rule and ascended to imperial power in 386, holding North China for almost two centuries.

When Kou Qianzhi came along with his new revelation of the Dao, they were ready for an indigenous version of their traditional shamano-Buddhist style of advisorship. They installed Kou in the Monastery of Penetrating Emptiness (Chongxu si), calling it by the technical term *si*, under the Han the word for “Office of Foreigners,” which to the present day is the term for Buddhist monastery. They required him and his assistants (as many as 120 during the height of his power) to wear formal robes and live in celibacy. They expected his priests to control the populace on their behalf, make sure everybody prayed for peace and harmony in the empire, and observe the proper ethics and decorous behaviour expected from Buddhist monks. While gaining considerable power and influence, Daoists therefore had to succumb to monastic-style requirements that came, so to speak, with the job. Their first monastic institution was thus adopted by trade. In exchange, they offered the ruler the vision of the “Lord of Great Peace,” the millenarian vision of a reign of universal harmony.

#### 2.4. *Buddhist Precepts*

Buddhism entered China in the first century C.E. and was soon identified vaguely as a strange version of Daoism. The first method of translating Buddhist texts relied heavily on the transliteration of Sanskrit terms, making only few connections to indigenous Chinese concepts and keeping the

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<sup>22</sup> See Wright, “Fo-t’u-teng,” 338, 327.

teaching rather alien.<sup>23</sup> A second wave of translation, notably in the fourth century, used philosophical Daoist terms in a system called “matching the meanings” (*geyi*),<sup>24</sup> making them highly familiar and creating the sense that Buddhism was a foreign version of Daoism. A standardized form of Buddhist terminology, and with it a major impact of Buddhism on Chinese culture, only began after the major translation project under Kumārajīva (d. 406), sponsored by the northern rulers of the Toba-Wei dynasty right before the Daoist theocracy.<sup>25</sup>

Buddhist behavioural guidelines are no exception to this overall pattern. The most ancient list of Buddhist rules in India was the *Pratimokṣa*.<sup>26</sup> It consisted of approximately 250 rules for monks and was recited twice every month at the new and full moon as a formal declaration of intent and communal commitment, offering the opportunity for self-awareness and the confession of transgressions. Arranged according to the severity of the offense, it began with four of the five major precepts: against killing, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct, then moved on to increasingly detailed and technical regulations.

With the exception of the early Celestial Masters rules based on the *Daode jing*, medieval Daoists adopted their entire system of precepts from Buddhists. It is not clear how exactly they picked them up, which specific sources they used, and what connections they had with the Buddhist community. However, there is strong evidence for the pervasiveness of the five precepts in the oral and lay Buddhist traditions throughout China and some indication that Daoists were familiar with the *Pratimokṣa*.<sup>27</sup> The latter was translated by Dharmakāla in 251 and very likely was known to Zhi Qian, the translator of numerous texts in the third century who had

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<sup>23</sup> For more on the early mode of translation, see Jan Nattier, *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations: Texts from the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms Period* (Tokyo: Soka University, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> A recent re-evaluation of this concept appears in Victor H. Mair, “What is *Geyi*, After All?,” in *Philosophy and Religion in Medieval China*, eds. Alan Chan and Y.K. Lo (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> On the role and importance of Kumārajīva in Chinese Buddhist history, see Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*; Kenneth Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973); Zenryū Tsukamoto and Leon Hurvitz, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> On the early Buddhist community rule, see Charles Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Pratimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāsamghikas and Mulasarvastivādins* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975).

<sup>27</sup> For more details, see Benjamin Penny, “Buddhism and Daoism in ‘The 180 Precepts Spoken by Lord Lao,’” *Taoist Resources* 6.2 (1996): 1–16.

connections to established Daoist families and whose writings contain a set of five precepts, possibly inspiring Daoists.<sup>28</sup>

Penny identifies a number of Buddhist-style rules in the “180 Precepts,” notably those prohibiting urination while standing and over plants as well as aggressive begging. All these appear in the *Sengqi jieben* (Precepts for Monks), translated by Buddhahadra in 416. In addition, he suggests that the overall arrangement of the text into prohibitions and admonitions, as well as several rules against killing, eating meat, taking pungent vegetables, eating alone, picking the best morsels, and engaging in close interaction with women, are taken from the Buddhist text.<sup>29</sup>

Even more obviously, the “New Code” has Buddhist rules written all over it, especially with regard to priestly conduct. As officers among the celestials (and representatives of the state), all priests had to behave with particular propriety and be models for the community. Copying the *Pratimokṣa* almost verbatim, the text admonishes all priests to move about “with a straight body and straight face, . . . without turning to look either left or right.” They should always be impeccably polite, never showing anger or aggression or commenting on the hospitality they receive.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.5. Ceremonies and Cosmology

The fundamental structure of the ordination ceremony, too, follows Buddhist membership rites as outlined in the *Sifen lü* (Four Part Vinaya). According to this, the ceremony involves the presence of three masters—the ordination master, the confessor, and the examiner—plus seven witnesses, usually monks of good standing. It begins with the ordinand announcing his name and bowing to all ten senior monks, then answering ten questions about his name, his master’s name, his age (over 20), the acquisition of his robes and bowl, his parents’ approval, his freedom from debt, his status as free man, his status as civilian, his sex as male, and his freedom from diseases and criminal record. Following this, the candidate formally requests ordination and receives the approval of the three masters and seven witnesses. This leads to a sermon of instruction and warning against abuses and the breaking of the precepts. Then the

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<sup>28</sup> On Zhi Qian, his work and possible Daoist connections, see Tsukamoto and Hurvitz, *A History*, 145–151; Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies*, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1983), 469–470.

<sup>29</sup> Penny, “Buddhism and Daoism,” 11–12.

<sup>30</sup> Mather, “K’ou Ch’ien-chih,” 113.

precepts are given, either fully recited by the ordinand or simply agreed to. The ordinand has his head shaved—or, in the Daoist system, tied into a topknot—and dons his robes, receives a new religious name and various documents of empowerment, and is pronounced a member of the community.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, Buddhist doctrines of karma and reincarnation are clearly visible. All abuse and disobedience were punished not only on earth (no. 30) but also by a sojourn in hell and rebirth as an animal (no. 31). As described in the fifth-century *Jieye benxing jing* (Scripture of Controlling Karma and Original Conduct, DZ 345), Daoists adapted Buddhist notions such as the “five realms of suffering,” “eight difficult conditions,” and “ten situations of intense suffering.” The five are rebirth as hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, or gods. The eight include things like life among non-Chinese people, as slaves, in poverty, in sickness, as well as in situations of trouble or in a Dao-less country. The ten, finally, are specific punishments in the hells: the mountain of knives, the lake of blood, and the bed of nails.

To sum up, the quasi-monastic institution of the Daoist theocracy in its outside structure was determined by political models and requirements of the imperial government and in its inner organization was adapted to a large extent from Buddhist models. This tendency continues further in the development of advanced monasticism under the Tang.

### 3. DAOIST MONASTERIES

#### 3.1. *Louquan and Beyond*

After the theocracy ended, the Toba rulers looked to their Buddhist subjects to fill the administrative vacuum—which they did admirably by establishing the so-called sangha-households.<sup>32</sup> Many Daoists retired to a place called Louquan or the “Lookout Tower” in the foothills of the Zhongnan mountains (near modern Xi’an).

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<sup>31</sup> A. Matsunaga and D. Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism* (Los Angeles: Kodansha Books International, 1976), vol. 1, 56–57.

<sup>32</sup> On this form of Buddhist interaction with the state, see Galen E. Sargent, “T’an-yao and His Time,” *Monumenta Serica* 16 (1957): 363–396; Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

According to legend, Louguan was originally the old home of Yin Xi, the Guardian of the Pass and first recipient of the *Daode jing*, built on land that was deeded to him as a reward for official service by King Kang of the Zhou (r. 1078–1052 B.C.E.). Having espied the tell-tale energies of the emigrating Laozi, Yin Xi left this place—which served as his astronomical observatory, hence the name—and had himself stationed at the Hangu Pass, traditionally located in Taolin, east of Mount Hua. There he became Laozi's disciple and then invited the sage to his home where the *Daode jing* was finally transmitted.

Historically more likely is that the place was the home of a local landowner by the name of Yin Tong (398–499?), who claimed to be a descendant of Yin Xi. As far as we know, he received the Dao in 424, then embarked on a course in dietetics and other ascetic endeavours, became an accomplished Daoist, and assembled a number of disciples. Settling them in his home at Louguan, he eventually established the claim that this was the place where the *Daode jing* had been first transmitted and thus made it into one of the most holy places of the religion.<sup>33</sup>

After the end of the theocracy, many Daoists flocked to this new center, so that by the late 470s, Louguan had grown considerably and had about forty recluses in residence. At this time, Wang Daoyi moved there and apparently brought some serious financial backing along, since with his arrival a new phase commenced. Not only were the buildings repaired and greatly expanded, but a major collection of Daoist scriptures and ritual manuals was undertaken, including not only northern but also southern materials of the Shangqing and Lingbao schools. Louguan thus became a center of Daoist knowledge and important location of religious development. It was also the first *bona fide* monastery, with proper rules, schedules, and guided practices, which also gave the institution its official name, *guan*.

Following in its wake, a number of other monasteries were founded—both financed by local landowners and aristocrats and sponsored by the imperial court—the latter, not unlike Kou Qianzhi's center, serving to establish legitimacy and support imperial worship and prayers for national peace. By the early Tang dynasty (618–907), as part of the political unification of the country (in 589 under the Sui) and the overall tendency

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<sup>33</sup> On the role of Louguan in Daoist history, see Qing Xitai, *Zhongguo daojiao shi* (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin, 1988), 434. For a detailed discussion of the school and its history, see Kohn, "Yin Xi: The Master at the Beginning of the Scripture," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 25 (1997): 83–139.

toward integration and systematization, Daoist monasteries had evolved into major institutions. Many of their particular aspects, though, were once again adopted in a process of trade, by copying and transforming Buddhist elements. Also, in repetition of the earlier pattern, state policies dictated to a large extent who could be a recluse and how one should behave as such. Daoist monasticism was thus designed deliberately to satisfy particular social and political needs. This was supported by integrating a variety of factors from a foreign religion that had originally nothing whatsoever to do with its ideals or common practices.

### 3.2. *Official Codes*

In 739, China had 1687 officially registered Daoist institutions (including 550 nunneries), most of which consisted of small hermitages. Located both in the cities and on mountains, they housed individual recluses or small groups of monks or nuns. These monastics were, for the most part, supported by their own families or by aristocratic sponsors on whose land they erected their huts. Since the rule of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756), however, even the smallest temple required special permission by the court and had to be officially acknowledged. In addition, all clerics, whether Buddhist or Daoist, had to carry a proper ordination certificate and to comply with specific state regulations.<sup>34</sup> The legal codes appear in the *Daoseng ke* (Rules for Daoists and Buddhists) of the year 637, as well as in general Tang codes, such as the *Tang liudian* (Six Departments of the Tang) and the *Tanglü shuyi* (Supplementary Interpretations of Tang Laws). The former, unfortunately, is lost but can be recovered partially from its Japanese counterpart, the *Sōni ryō* (Regulations for Monks and Nuns), written soon after its first conception and representing the same basic outlook.

According to these sources, monastics were not supposed to ride horses, possess military books, form cliques, solicit donors, or stay for more than three days with the same lay family—unlike earlier practitioners who were known to leave the mountain for extended periods. They must not participate in musical or other entertainments, or behave in any

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<sup>34</sup> On the standing and situation of recluses in medieval China, see Gernet, *Buddhism*, 40; Victor Xiong, *Sui Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies, 2000), 246; T. Griffith Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism," in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, eds. P.B. Ebrey and P.N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 164.



way rudely or abusively to elders or those of higher rank. Punishments for transgressions were harsh, and offenders had to be handed over to the secular authorities for all serious crimes. For example, if recluses partook of improper foods or liquor they could be condemned to hard labour; if they wore clothes of silk or aristocratic colours, they could be defrocked and sent to hard labour. Similarly, if they stole or desecrated sacred objects, they could be punished with imprisonment, hard labour, or exile. If they engaged in fortune telling and faith healing they faced a return to lay status and, if they still continued their charlatanry, they were threatened with strangulation.<sup>35</sup>

Chinese state codes tended to punish offenses more severely than religious statutes. Where the *Vinaya*, for example, demanded expulsion from the order, the state insisted on handover to secular justice and the death penalty; where Buddhist codes considered confessions, expiations, or rites of repentance sufficient, the state imposed imprisonment and hard labour. More than that, the sources are quite explicit about the fact that the same offense is punished much more harshly in the case of a recluse than a layman, because he should know what he was doing and, even worse, “was stealing an object of his own religion.”<sup>36</sup>

Daoist sources closely match the state guidelines as well as the Buddhist codes. The *Qianzhen ke* (Rules for a Thousand Perfected, DZ 1410) states that if a disciple committed a major transgression, such as engaging in various forms of commerce or committing sexual indiscretions, he should be reprimanded with increasing sharpness, culminating in: “While still in the world of the Three Rebirths and Five Realms, I will never speak to you again!” If even this does not work, the offender should be punished by flogging and expulsion (8b). Then again, the text asserts that:

Some trouble-makers do not follow the divine law, but drink alcohol and get intoxicated, then make trouble by ridiculing and insulting those above and below. People like these should be punished by having to pay a fine in money or rice.

Some may also accumulate excess goods or wealth, which initially seems to support communal harmony but later entices them to go against the rules. This must not be tolerated, and the goods should be removed, while offenders should be punished with flogging.

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<sup>35</sup> The codes are discussed and partially translated in Ch'en, *Chinese Transformation*, 96–102.

<sup>36</sup> Ch'en, *Chinese Transformation*, 97–100.

Then again, some may steal money or silk from the presented offerings, while others take control of the land, cut down trees, destroy plants, hoe through plantations, and mow down grass.

If one such offender cannot be controlled, punish the whole group collectively. If even that does not take care of the problem, have them handed over to the worldly authorities for punishment according to state law (4a).<sup>37</sup>

Although lengthy and detailed penal codes have not survived from medieval Daoism, it is obvious from the sources that the guidelines of what constituted proper behaviour for the clergy followed the models of the state as well as those of Buddhism. The eccentric master who drinks and writes graffiti on the walls of taverns, the lady of pleasure who sets up a quiet hut and calls it a convent, the divorcee who escapes social stigma by getting “ordained”—all those are marginal and ultimately unwanted realities of a religion that tries hard to design itself along the lines of established models.

### 3.3. *Architecture and Nomenclature*

Just as the codes follow state guidelines, so do the layout and architecture of monastic institutions. Thus, the compound is typically laid out on a north-south axis, with the approach from the south and the more sacred halls being further to the north. This goes back to the imperial tradition of the emperor facing south, the direction of yang, as he governs the world.<sup>38</sup> The halls, too, whether for entry, worship, meditation, or more practical uses, follow a standard model: divided by courtyards that often have ponds and greenery, they sit on a raised platform, sport wooden (often orange-red) pillars, and are covered by curved roofs. Without a written sign that designates the place as belonging to a particular sect or imperial function, they are not unique or specifically identifiable.<sup>39</sup>

The medieval Daoist monastery is no exception to this rule. The same also holds true for the names of the various halls and residences. Thus, as outlined in the seventh-century *Fengdao kejie* (Rules and Precepts for

<sup>37</sup> For this citation and more details on the text and Tang regulations, see Kohn, *Monastic Life in Medieval Daoism: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> For this aspect of traditional Chinese city planning, see Laurence Liu, *Chinese Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 28; Andrew Boyd, *Chinese Architecture and Town Planning* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1962), 70.

<sup>39</sup> See Nancy S. Steinhardt, “Taoist Architecture,” in *Taoism and the Arts of China*, eds. Stephen Little and Shawn Eichman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 57–76; Kohn, *Monastic Life*.

Worshipping the Dao, DZ 1125),<sup>40</sup> a “sanctuary” [*dian*] is what we call a residence of the sagely personages, while ‘hall’ [*tang*] refers to a place lived in and used by people” (14a). Both terms come from ancestor worship and are equally used in the mainstream, Confucian tradition. *Yuan*, on the other hand, is more of a garden in civil use and has acquired the sense of “hermitage” in a Buddhist context. In Daoism, it designates various separate structures for specific purposes, some of which are more secluded than others, such as, for example, the “Transformation Building,” where recluses get ready to die.

The central axis in a medieval Daoist compound is not complete without the Main Gate, the Scripture Tower, and the Bell Pavilion which, in imitation of the arrangement in Chinese Buddhist institutions, are placed to the left and right before the main sanctuary. They can be high or low but have to have a fair amount of open space and rather thin walls. In the former this is to allow air to circulate around the scriptures, in the latter it serves to make sure that the sound of the bell can pass without hindrance.<sup>41</sup>

Beyond the central axis and ideally on its right (east) the kitchen is found together with the refectory, which is described as follows:

Wide doors and open windows should allow easy access, but the main entrance should be covered with a curtain and give to a statue of the Heavenly Worthies. To their right and left, benches and seats, rugs and thick mats should be laid out in accordance with the divine law. Immediately in front of the Heavenly Worthies, moreover, incense burners, flowery pendants, and clean cloths should be placed; to their right and left there should be refectory benches, tables, and mats in proper accordance with the divine law (15b).

Next, along the same stream of running water used for the kitchen, are the bath house and the scriptorium. Baths, as the text insists, must be taken after hard physical labour as well as before any major ceremony. Only when Daoists are “engulfed in the fragrance of a good, clean smell can they perform the services of worship” (16b). The scriptorium, too, uses water, because here the paper for copying the sacred texts is prepared. For this purpose, there have to be “cloth-beating stones with appropriate clubs, sharp cutting knives, clean benches, tree stumps, and whetting

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<sup>40</sup> This text is translated in Kohn, *The Daoist Monastic Manual: A Translation of the Fengdao kejie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>41</sup> J. Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries* (Hongkong: Hongkong University Press, 1967), 9.

stones” as well as “a rack and a hut to fumigate and spread the scriptures” (3.16a). All utensils have to be kept clean with cloths and fabrics rinsed in the wash house and must never be allowed to come into contact with ordinary people.

On the other side of the sanctuary and relatively close to it, there should be the Masters’ Chambers or residence halls of the monks. According to the *Fengdao kejie*, their size and number vary, but in general they were cells rather than dormitories and should be kept “empty and clean, stark and simple” (3.8b). Permitted furnishings included “a slanted bench, a knee-support, a ritual tablet, a broom, an incense burner, an incense holder, a scripture stand, a kerchief, a chest of wood or bamboo, a seat coverlet, a rope bed, a scripture repository, a lamp stand, various plates and bowls for food, and a water pitcher” (3.9a). This again reflects Buddhist usage, according to which monks were originally permitted to have only a bed, seat, and spittoon in their cells, but later acquired more furniture, including various types of beds and chairs, sitting mats, cushions, rugs, and other elements of comfort. The same also holds true in Chinese Buddhism, where monks’ cells contained a rope bed, a towel, a clothes box, a writing knife, and a water pitcher. In addition, the ritual tablet, scripture stand, and incense utensils were part of the standard equipment of Daoist oratories, the classic meditation place among the Celestial Masters.<sup>42</sup>

All in all, therefore, both the layout and architecture as well as the material culture and nomenclature of the medieval Daoist institution are closely adapted from Buddhist models which in turn take their cue from palaces, offices, and other state institutions. To be acceptable as religious specialists in the Chinese context, Daoists had to comply with the overall image of the recluse and present themselves as worthy of the great state, following its concepts, visions, and arrangements in all aspects of their lives.

### 3.4. *Schedule and Ceremonies*

Not surprisingly, the same also applies to the daily schedule and liturgical practices in the Daoist institution. The liturgical day was divided into six

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<sup>42</sup> For furnishings of Buddhist monks’ cells in India, see Charles Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* 5; Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 24–27. For China, see Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 73. On the Daoist oratory and its equipment, see Tadao Yoshikawa, “Seishitsu kō,” *Tōhō gakuhō* 59 (1987): 125–162.

periods of worship: cockcrow, dawn, noon, dusk, early evening, and midnight. These six periods were adapted from Buddhism, where they served to schedule hymns chanted to the buddhas.<sup>43</sup> In Daoist communities, as described in the eighth-century *Daoxue keyi* (Rules and Observances for Students of the Dao, DZ 1126), at each period the bell was rung twelve times for several sequences, each beginning slowly and sonorously and gradually increasing in speed and intensity (1.16b). Thereby the community was called to the holy offices to manifest their purity, express their collective good intentions, and receive encouragement to practice diligently (17a).

The day began with a minor rite at cockcrow to move on to the morning service at dawn (3–5 am). Breakfast was served afterwards, around 6 am, then there was unscheduled time for work or self-cultivation. Around 11 am, as described earlier, the noon purification was held, followed by more time for work or meditation. At dusk, the evening audience was held, followed by lesser rites in mid-evening and at midnight (19a).

The daily services or “regular audiences,” celebrated at dawn and dusk, were most important. Unlike the other four, they involved the formal assembly of all recluses in the main sanctuary, the presentation of offerings, and the extensive recitation of prayers and scriptures. They can be traced back to the morning and evening audiences with the parents, prescribed for filial children in the ancient *Liji* (Book of Rites). According to this, a devoted son and daughter-in-law had to purify themselves, don formal dress, and then:

They go to their parents and parents-in-law. On getting to where they are, with bated breath and gentle voice, they should ask if their clothes are (too) warm or (too) cold, whether they are ill or pained, or uncomfortable in any part; and if they be so, they should proceed reverently to stroke and scratch the place. . . .

They will ask whether they want anything, and then respectfully bring it. All this they will do with an appearance of pleasure to make their parents feel at ease. They should bring gruel, thick or thin, spirits or must, soup with vegetables, beans, wheat, spinach, rice, millet, maize, and glutinous millet—whatever they wish, in fact (10/1.4).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Julian F. Pas, “Six Daily Periods of Worship: Symbolic Meaning in Buddhist Liturgy and Eschatology,” *Monumenta Serica* 37 (1987): 49–82.

<sup>44</sup> See James Legge, “The Li Ki—Book of Rites,” in *The Sacred Books of China* (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 1968), vol. 1, 450–451; Keith Knapp, “Reverent Caring: The Parent-son Relationship in Early Medieval Tales of Filial Offspring,” in *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought*

This inquiry of the parents' health and the offering of food and comfort is echoed in the Daoist ceremony especially in the "presentation of offerings" (*gongyang*), a term also prominent in Buddhism and here used to translate *pūja*, the ceremony of hosting the deity. Daoists, who had left their native families for the Dao, regarded the gods of the Dao as their true father and mother, and venerated them accordingly—at the same time also recognizing their high standing in the celestial administration and paying political homage, as suggested in the term "audience" (*chao*) for the rites. The services thus join traditional rules of filial piety with ancient court ritual and the veneration of the gods as practiced in Buddhism.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Daoist organizational institutions began with the Celestial Masters in the second century C.E. They incorporated the structures classically associated with liminal groups or "communitas," being closed and egalitarian in nature, utopian and millenarian in outlook, and consciously setting themselves apart from ordinary society. Yet, however much they created distance to the world, their institutions and organization followed to a large extent civil models, imitating—and to a certain degree reformulating—patterns dominant in the Han empire.

Daoist monasticism inherited both these characteristics. Monastic communities, too, have all the hallmarks of liminal groups; in their Chinese organization, moreover, they depended to a large extent on imperial favours and were subject to state regulation. In addition, Daoist monasticism also widely imitated Buddhist patterns—as did the lay-centered Daoist organizations in South China during the fifth century—especially in the areas of worldview (karma, rebirth, and hell), ethics (precepts and monastic vows), and philosophical speculation (emptiness and logic), as well as in their pantheon (universal deities and saviour figures), art (statues, steles, votive tablets), and ritual (repentance, offerings, requiems).<sup>45</sup>

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*and History*, eds. Alan K.L. Chan and Sor-hoon Tan (London: Routledge Curzon Press, 2004), 44–70.

<sup>45</sup> For comprehensive discussions of the adaptation of Buddhist concepts and practices into Daoism in the fifth century, see Zürcher, "Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism," *T'oung Pao* 66 (1980): 84–147; Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

On the other hand, this does not mean that Daoists were just Buddhists with long hair. They very much retained their unique approach to life and the world, the main distinguishing characteristics of their monastic endeavour being (1) their close relation to the Dao as the underlying power that creates and supports everything in the best possible way and to which one can relate through intuition and by cultivating nonaction; (2) their understanding of the divine world as consisting of multiple layers of heaven that were created from the original Dao and are occupied by pure, cosmic deities and transcendent bureaucrats, in their turn aided by human priests who transform into celestial officers in the course of formal rituals; and (3) their continuous endeavour to transform the *qi*-based human body-mind into an immortal spirit entity through the systematic and persistent application of longevity techniques and advanced meditations. The trappings and external institutional setting were thus taken over—the internal convictions and subjective practices remained unique.

Trade comes into this on several levels as Daoist monasticism was actively and consciously designed. First, Daoists exchanged obedience to imperial role models and submission to state-controlled structures for vast amounts of power and influence, not to mention social status and material well-being. This exchange is most obvious under the theocracy, but later rulers too used Daoist institutions as mainstays of law and order in the land and even created Daoist degrees for entering the imperial bureaucracy. Second, Daoists traded well-proven organizational structures and successful fund-raising and community-building strategies that Buddhists had developed over many centuries for a heightened degree of acceptance of monastic and reclusive patterns within Chinese society, the understanding of organized religion as state-supporting and peace-enhancing, and the millenarian vision of a reign of universal harmony which Buddhists in turn adopted as the myth of Maitreya.<sup>46</sup> In all cases, though, the times had to be right and the patterns present in rudimentary form: without the early Celestial Masters, without the Xiongnu rulers' need for indigenous administrators, and without the shamano-Buddhist adviser of Fotudeng, the theocracy would never have happened—forestalling a

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<sup>46</sup> On the Buddhist adaptation of the ruler and bringer of Great Peace in the Maitreya myth, see Jan Nattier, "The Meanings of the Maitreya Myth: A Typological Analysis," in *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, eds. Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 23–47; Hiroshi Myōjin, "Bukkyō no shumatsukan to kyusai shinkō," in *Dōkyō bunka e no tembō*, ed. Dōkyō bunka kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Hirakawa, 1994), 294–319.

major trading of religions and the opening of yet unchartered territories of institutional organization.

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## PHILO'S ATTRACTIVE ETHICS ON THE "RELIGIOUS MARKET" OF ANCIENT ALEXANDRIA

Volker Rabens

Trade is one of the catalysts of religious formation, transformation and cross-cultural exchange. Economic trade builds on and builds up contacts and interaction between individuals and/or groups. Such interaction, for example, along ancient trade routes, also forms the basis of metaphorical trade as we can see when we look at various processes of intra- and inter-religious dynamics between East and West: religious "commodities" are exchanged—"offered," "negotiated" and "bought"—when they are perceived as attractive.<sup>1</sup> In this article we will look at one aspect of religious attraction: the Jewish religious-ethical way of life as it is presented by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15 B.C.E.–45 C.E.). In a situation of religious destabilization (in the Diaspora), Philo writes for Jews who may feel tempted to leave the Jewish faith and for non-Jews who may feel tempted to embrace the Jewish faith. In this context, Philo presents Jewish moral teaching as well as its practice as an attractor for "staying in" as well as "getting in."

### 1. JUDAISM AS AN ATTRACTIVE WAY OF LIFE

In order to approach Philo's apologetic of the Jewish way of life we first of all need to take a brief look at the religious dynamics in Philo's time. Jews residing in Palestine as well as those who lived in the Diaspora were in constant contact with Hellenism. It is clear that neither Judaism

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to the Käte Hamburger Kolleg "Dynamics in the History of Religions" (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) for the helpful discussions of notions of attractiveness in the focus group "Attraction" (2009–2011) as well as for financing my attendance at the Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting 2011 (King's College London) where I presented a short version of this "Trading Religions" conference paper in the "Hellenistic Judaism" Section. Some of the results of the work of our focus group on theories of religious attraction are published in Volkhard Krech, "Dynamics in the History of Religions: Preliminary Considerations on Aspects of a Research Programme," in *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe: Encounters, Notions and Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Volkhard Krech and Marion Steinicke (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 15–70, esp. 32–38.

nor Hellenism was a monolithic entity, and they were not perpetually set in an antagonistic relationship.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, there was uncertainty how much assimilation to Hellenism was acceptable for Jewish believers, and some literature was specifically written in order to address this question. For example, the Jewish novel *Joseph and Aseneth* focused on the issue of inter-religious marriage. However, instead of indiscriminate antagonism, interaction between Judaism and Hellenism was more varied and included elements of assimilation, creative re-elaboration, and reaction. For many Jews like Philo, Hellenism did not constitute a threat to be rebuffed or something alien. Greek was their mother tongue, and Hellenistic categories of thought, as components of the dominant culture, provided ideas and models that allowed for creative interpretation of the Jewish tradition.<sup>3</sup>

However, this dynamic of attraction was not a one-way street. Rather, there was a strong element of reciprocity. People of non-Jewish background became interested in Judaism. While literary and epigraphic evidence indicates that some Gentiles underwent the full conversion process and became Jews, others expressed their adherence to Judaism by adopting certain Jewish customs or by supporting the Jewish community through benefactions or political support.<sup>4</sup> This dynamic is striking, because Judaism was a national religion and not a cult like the mysteries of Demeter, of Dionysus or of Isis, oriented as they were much more to the change of the seasons than to any particular *ethnos*.<sup>5</sup>

Gentiles were attracted by Judaism for a wide range of reasons. Its refined concept of God,<sup>6</sup> its moral standards, its practice of a regular one day in seven as a day of rest, and its festivals—these are some of the attrac-

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<sup>2</sup> On this, see particularly Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM Press, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cristina Termini, "Philo's Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 96.

<sup>4</sup> See Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), ch. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making 2* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 560–561.

<sup>6</sup> Thus Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Antiochien: Die unbekanntesten Jahre des Apostels* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 130: "Man betrieb zwar kaum eine offen werbende oder gar aggressive Propaganda, war aber im besten Sinne des Wortes 'attraktiv', d. h. anziehend für interessierte Nichtjuden, und an denen fehlte es nicht. Denn man vertrat ja den *Wahrheitsanspruch des einen Gottes*. Das machte im vielfältigen religiösen und ethnischen 'Pluralismus' der Spätantike das Judentum (und dann das frühe Christentum) so interessant."

tors that have been singled out. Some scholars speculate that Gentiles may have considered the long history of the Jews and their possession of an ancient text to be particularly attractive qualities. In contrast to the modern appeal of what is "new and improved," the Greco-Roman world valued older things as more trustworthy and desirable—"since ancient times were closest to the gods" (Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.1.5–4.10). According to Murray, the possibility of associating with a close-knit community with a clear set of ethical guidelines appealed to a number of Gentiles. The Jewish reputation among certain Greek writers as a wise and philosophical people—in part probably because of their emphasis on the study of their ancient texts—likewise would have attracted certain individuals to Judaism.<sup>7</sup>

Gentile conversion to Judaism is attested by various Roman and Christian writers.<sup>8</sup> For example, Cassius Dio records that in 19 C.E. the emperor Tiberius banished most Jews from Rome because "the Jews had flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways" (Roman History 57.18.5a; also Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.85; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.83–84). Evidence also suggests that Jews made room in their synagogues for Gentiles who had a curiosity and interest in their ways and worship.<sup>9</sup> Josephus proudly states that Jews "were constantly attracting to their religious ceremonies multitudes of Greeks, and these they had in

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<sup>7</sup> Michele Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries C.E.* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 95.47; Persius, *Sat.* 5.176–84; Epictetus 2.9.19–20; Plutarch, *Cic.* 7.6; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96–106; Suetonius, *Dom.* 12.2; Cassius Dio 67.14.1–3. The New Testament provides multiple references to "God-fearers" or "God-worshippers" (θεοσεβής), no matter whether this was already a *terminus technicus* at that time or not. For instance, Luke's account of Cornelius (Acts 10:2), of Paul addressing Gentiles in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch as "those who fear God" (13:16, 26) and winning followers among "devout proselytes" and "devout women" (13:43, 50), and of Paul likewise in Philippi winning Lydia, "a worshipper of God" (16:14), in Thessalonica "a great many devout Greeks" (17:4), and in Corinth Titius Justus, "a worshipper of God" (18:7), is credible and hardly to be discounted in substance. Cf. Dunn, *Beginning*, 562–563, 473 n. 255.

<sup>9</sup> This is also supported by the fact that the Apostle Paul seems to presuppose knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures when he writes to Gentile audiences. Since the Septuagint was not widely known in the Greco-Roman world, such knowledge could only have been gained if the Gentile readership had already been familiar with and in some cases quite well schooled in these Scriptures, which could only be because they had attended many readings and expositions of these Scriptures in the synagogue on Sabbath days (cf. Acts 15:21). Cf. Dunn, *Beginning*, 563. The Jews also opened their Temple in Jerusalem where, until its destruction in 70 C.E., the largest court on the premises was for Gentile participants in the Temple cult. Cf. Murray, *Game*, 14.

some measure incorporated with themselves" (B.J. 7.45). More specifically with regard to ethics, Josephus writes (with some exaggeration):<sup>10</sup>

Not only have our laws stood the test of our own use, but they have to an ever increasing extent excited the emulation of the world at large. . . . The masses have long since shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread, and where the fasts and the lighting of lamps, and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed (Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.280, 282; cf. 2.123, 209–210).

These statements indicate that Gentiles were attracted by the religious-ethical lifestyle maintained by the Jews living in their midst. They do not convey whether this attraction was the consequence of "mere" personal contact and social interaction between Jews and Gentiles as neighbours<sup>11</sup> or of organized pursuit of converts by Jews. Scot McKnight maintains that the "most effective and probably unconscious method Jews 'used' to attract Gentiles was the compelling force of a good life."<sup>12</sup> John Dickson, however, shows convincingly in a recent monograph that both elements played a role: "Mission-commitment . . . found two-fold expression amongst Jews in the period leading up to the rise of Christianity. On the one hand, some Jewish teachers engaged in explicit (albeit occasional) Torah instruction of Gentiles and, on the other, Jewish adherents more generally were expected to promote the Torah through a range of more subtle, though apparently no less effective, forms of missionary partnership."<sup>13</sup> For the purpose of our study it is only of secondary importance whether active proselytizing was important for the "expansion" of the Jewish faith. However, it is clear that non-Jews were attracted to Judaism, and that its religious-ethical practice (which followed from Jewish teaching, e.g., on the Sabbath) played a key role in this process.

<sup>10</sup> On some hesitance on the part of Romans to observe Jewish customs (in post-Philonic times), see the discussion in John Nolland, "Do Romans Observe Jewish Customs? (Tertullian, *Ad Nat.* 1.13; *Apol.* 16)," *VC* 33 (1979): 1–11.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stark's analysis of the growth of conversionist movements through a structure of direct and intimate interpersonal merits: Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 20, 56.

<sup>12</sup> Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 67.

<sup>13</sup> John P. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities: The Shape, Extent and Background of Early Christian Mission* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 85.

## 2. PHILO'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF JEWISH ETHICS

What is Philo's perspective on Judaism in the context of the "religious pluralism" of his time? Philo is the most significant thinker of Hellenistic Judaism that we know of. Together with the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, Philo's works provide the largest corpus of Jewish-Hellenistic literature.<sup>14</sup> He seems to express the viewpoints of a cultured elite at the turn of the ages, and his writings may reflect the pinnacle of a Jewish Hellenistic tradition, in which exegesis and philosophy were deeply influenced both in form and in content by Greek models.<sup>15</sup> While Philo writes at a time of outward stability, there were significant elements that induced religious destabilization for the Jews in Alexandria, where Philo lived.<sup>16</sup> In a situation of constant exposure and contact, not only Judaism but also Hellenism held a special attraction for the citizens of Alexandria. Accordingly, Philo and his interlocutors were faced with the situation of intra- and inter-religious "trade." And so it happened that Philo had to debate with his apostate nephew Alexander (as in *Anim.* and *Prov.*) and with other similarly-minded Jews (such as those addressed in *Migr.* 89–93) about the path they chose and why or why not a Jew should adopt such approaches to life in the Roman world.

In response to this situation, Philo seeks to show that Judaism and Hellenism are more compatible than many of his conversation partners think. In the course of his philosophical reasoning, Philo makes Judaism his starting point to which he stays loyal. Consequently, the way in which he adopts Hellenistic philosophy leads to an inherent ambiguity that permeates his commentary on the Jewish Scriptures, which makes up a large part of his writings. The roots of this ambivalence lie in the fact that Philo intends to retain the terminology and idiom of his biblical text in the very process of transposing its teaching into a philosophical key. However, in a number of important instances the Jewish component in the Philonic mix resists total integration. In such cases, Philo usually gives priority to his Jewish faith, or he presents his readers with a rough amalgam of ideas

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<sup>14</sup> However, works of other Jewish-Hellenistic thinkers may not have survived at all, so we cannot be absolutely certain that Philo was the most important theologian of early Judaism.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Termini, "Philo's Thought," 96.

<sup>16</sup> For details on the situation of the Jews in Alexandria, see Daniel R. Schwartz, "Philo, His Family, and His Time," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14–31.

which clearly evidences the seams joining the disparate conceptions as they have emerged from Philo's multi-layered thinking.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, despite the primacy that he gives to Judaism, Philo's philosophy always leads away from Jewish particularity. The God of the Bible hence turns into the somewhat abstract "Existent One" (τὸ ὄν) and "the Cause" (τὸ αἴτιον). God has universal attributes—he is Father of all, Ruler of all and Saviour of all humanity (e.g. *Opif.* 72, 78, 169). The goodness and generosity of God, which are among Philo's favourite themes, are always universal in scope: God loves to give his gifts to all, including the imperfect (e.g. *Leg.* 1.34). Accordingly, Philo is concerned about human piety in general, not just Jewish religion. In Philonic allegory there is neither Jew nor Greek. In principle, anyone could read the Pentateuch as their "story," anyone could identify with Abraham in his progression from "encyclical studies" to philosophy, anyone could learn to escape the pleasures of the body and cultivate the fruits of the soul.<sup>18</sup> In accordance with this universalist tendency, it is immensely important to Philo that his sacred text and its laws are of global significance. As the law-book opens with an account of creation, anyone who lives by the law is living according to nature and can count himself a "citizen of the world", a κοσμοπολίτης (*Opif.* 3; cf. *Mos.* 2.45–52). The biblical commands are equal to the laws of nature, and—most significantly—are their perfect expression. The Torah thus provides direct access to the laws of nature in written form.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. David Winston, "Judaism and Hellenism: Hidden Tensions in Philo's Thought," *SPA* 2 (1990): 3.

<sup>18</sup> Thus John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan* (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.) (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1996), 171–172.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Opif.* 3: "His exordium, as I have said, is one that excites our admiration in the highest degree. It consists of an account of the creation of the world, implying that the world is in harmony with the Law, and the Law with the world, and that the man who observes the law is constituted thereby a loyal citizen of the world, regulating his doings by the purpose and will of Nature, in accordance with which the entire world itself also is administered." (All citations from Philo in this article are taken from the *Loeb Classical Library*.) Cf. Barclay, *Jews*, 172; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Vol. 2: Structure and Growth of Philosophic Systems from Plato to Spinoza* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 165–200; Erwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 161–162; Samuel Sandmel, "The Confrontation of Greek and Jewish Ethics: Philo *De Decalogo*," in *Judaism and Ethics*, ed. Daniel Jeremy Silver (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970), 170–173; Gregory E. Sterling, "Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism," *SPA* 5 (1993): 99–103; John W. Martens, *One God, One Law: Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law* (Boston: Brill, 2003); Hindy Najman, "A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?," *SPA* 15 (2003): 54–63; Gudrun Holtz, *Damit Gott sei alles in allem: Studien zum paulinischen und frühjüdischen Universalismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), ch. 8.

Philo's equation of the Mosaic law with natural law is well illustrated by his view of Sabbath rest, which becomes for Philo a "festival of the universe" and belongs to "all people as the birthday of the world" (*Opif.* 89). Accordingly, Philo, like Josephus and the author of *4 Maccabees*, presents Judaism as a form of moral philosophy. Observance of the Sabbath is explained as moral training: "Jews every seventh day occupy themselves with the philosophy of their fathers, dedicating that time to the acquiring of knowledge and the study of the truths of nature." Why? "For what are our places of prayer throughout the cities but schools of prudence and courage and temperance and justice and also of piety, holiness and every virtue by which duties to God and men are discerned and rightly performed?" (*Mos.* 2.216). Gregory Sterling points out that Philo's comparison of Judaism to Hellenistic philosophy on the basis of ethics was both natural and at the same time problematic. It was natural because Judaism and Hellenistic philosophy were both serious about ethics. As Philo's understanding of Judaism was profoundly influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, it was natural for him to think of Judaism in philosophical terms. On the other hand, it was problematic because it led him to use categories that were foreign to Judaism as a means to reflect on it and articulate it as a system of thought.<sup>20</sup> Philo's striving to build bridges between Moses and the moral values which reason had established as the peak of human excellence hence runs the risk of suppressing Jewish distinctiveness and subverting its particular social identity. As John Barclay rightly remarks, bridges can carry traffic in two directions, and as many as might be attracted to the Jewish community might leave in order to attain its ideals without its restrictive customs.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, Philo considers Jewish theology equal to "the best philosophy" and is proud to see it embodied in *Jewish laws and customs*, not just in philosophical treatises. For Philo, Israel stands out as a model for all other peoples, "not for its own glory, but rather for the benefit of the

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<sup>20</sup> Gregory E. Sterling, "The Queen of the Virtues': Piety in Philo of Alexandria," *SPA* 18 (2006): 104. To speak of the *ethics* of Philo of Alexandria is not to presuppose that his works should be structured according to the tripartite division of philosophy (i.e. logic, physics, ethics) inherited from Hellenistic literature. While Philo is aware of this division, his way of thinking is far too fluid and too dominated by the requirements of his biblical exegesis to bear such a rigid framework. His interest in ethics is nonetheless fundamental in his works, although it finds expression in a complex manner as "implicit ethics." Cf. Carlos Lévy, "Philo's Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 146.

<sup>21</sup> Barclay, *Jews*, 173.



beholders. For to gaze continuously upon noble models imprints their likeness in souls which are not entirely hardened and stony" (*Praem.* 114; cf. *Virt.* 119–120). Because of this positive effect of Jewish ethics on people of other faiths, Philo emphasizes in *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.320–323 that the teachings of the Torah must not be hidden but, instead, ought to be promoted widely amongst the pagans of Alexandria. The sense of obligation implied in this passage by the frequent use of imperative verbs can be explained by Philo's belief that the teachings of Moses are not merely individually "beneficial" but "urgent" or "necessary" (ἀναγκαῖος), serving the common good (κοινωφελία).<sup>22</sup>

More important than the obligation of proclamation, however, is the inherent attraction of the Jewish religious-ethical way of life itself. Philo notes that "throughout the world of Greeks and barbarians, there is practically no state which honours the institutions of any other" (*Mos.* 2.18) and then goes on proudly to boast,

It is not so with ours. They attract and win the attention of all, of barbarians, of Greeks, of dwellers on the mainland and islands, of nations of the east and the west, of Europe and Asia, of the whole inhabited world from end to end. For, who has not shown his high respect for that sacred seventh day, by giving rest and relaxation from labour to himself and his neighbours, freemen and slaves alike, and beyond these to his beasts?... Again, who does not every year show awe and reverence for the fast, as it is called [the Day of Atonement], which is kept more strictly and solemnly than the "holy month" of the Greeks? (*Mos.* 2.20–23).

Philo is well aware that not only the Jewish ethical teaching is attractive for outsiders but also its manifestation in the Jewish religious-ethical way of life. This can easily be illustrated by Philo's interpretation of the biblical Joseph narrative. Philo recounts that Joseph, having been given charge of the jail in which he was imprisoned, began to promote his "philosophy" among his fellow inmates:

They [the prisoners] were rebuked by his wise words and doctrines of philosophy, while the conduct of their teacher effected more than any words. For by setting before them his life of temperance and every virtue, like an original picture of skilled workmanship, he converted even those who seemed to be quite incurable, who as the long-standing distempers of their soul abated reproached themselves for their past and repented (*Ios.* 86–87).

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Dickson, *Mission-Commitment*, 38.

It seems, then, that for Philo both the moral teaching of Judaism *and its practice* are key to the attractiveness of the Jewish faith. While not every aspect of the "material ethics" (ethical teaching) of Judaism is unique (due to its compatibility with the law of nature), the way in which this moral code is enacted truly is. Pagans are persuaded by the authentic ethical lifestyle of Jewish people. The realization of an ethical life, however, has its source in a close relationship to God. We will look at this foundational dimension of Philo's ethics in the next section.

### 3. THE MERITS OF PHILO'S ETHICS: PIETY AND EMPOWERING

We have seen that Philo perceived Judaism, and particularly its religious customs and ethical practice, to be attractive for people outside the Jewish community. One of the strengths of Jewish ethics is, according to Philo, its compatibility with natural law. However, it seems that Philo values some ethical "goods" particularly highly. For example, he emphasizes that to enter into the presence of God, to rid oneself of all the impurities of one's soul, is an experience that transcends the doctrines and systematic constructions of philosophy. This is what Philo means when, in *De Abrahamo* 268, he says that "the one sure and infallible good is faith in God." This faith in God (ἡ πρὸς θεὸν πίστις) can entail certain aspects of philosophy, but it can never be reduced to a self-sufficient human reason.<sup>23</sup> In this section we will look at the centrality of this relationship to the divine for Philo's ethics, because both the importance that Philo gives to it (i.e. to εὐσέβεια, piety), as well as its empowering nature, are unique in comparison with Hellenistic philosophy.<sup>24</sup> They were hence "commodities" that Philo had to offer for the non-Jewish world around him.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lévy, "Ethics," 167.

<sup>24</sup> This is not to deny that piety played a role in Greco-Roman literature. Indeed, as the word did not play a significant role in the Septuagint, Philo had most probably adopted the term from Hellenistic philosophy. However, it was he who assigned central importance to the concept (cf. Sterling, "Queen," 104–105; Naomi G. Cohen, "The Greek Virtues and the Mosaic Laws in Philo: An Elucidation of *De Specialibus Legibus* IV 133–135," *SPA* (1993): 17–19). For an example from Hellenistic literature, see, e.g., Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, which displays an intimate relationship to the divine that has a potentially empowering character. See the brief discussion in Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 167–169, and the detailed treatment in Johan C. Thom, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). However, while piety receives attention both in Plato and the Stoics, neither of them gives it the primary place among the virtues. See Wolfson, *Philo. II*, 214–216.

Philo adopted from Hellenistic philosophy the twofold division of duties to God and to humans as a way of setting out the requirements of the law. According to Philo, “among the vast number of particular truths and principles . . . studied, there stand out practically high above the others two main heads: one of duty to God as shewn by piety and holiness, one of duty to men as shewn by humanity and justice” (*Spec.* 2.63). Philo divides the Decalogue on the basis of these two headings (cf. *Decal.* 50–51, 121). He thus uses the structure of one system to organize the ethics of another system. But he does not leave it at that. Like other philosophers, he organizes the virtues into a hierarchy. Unlike his Hellenistic counterparts, however, he subsumes all of them under “piety” (εὐσέβεια). He calls εὐσέβεια “the queen of the virtues,” “the greatest,” “the leading and greatest virtue,” and “the source of the virtues,” and θεοσέβεια “the greatest virtue” and “the perfect good.”<sup>25</sup> Conversely, he calls ἀσέβεια “the greatest evil” (*Congr.* 160) and “the endless evil” (*Fug.* 61).<sup>26</sup>

Why does Philo give such prominence to piety? In his important essay “The Queen of the Virtues’: Piety in Philo of Alexandria,” Gregory Sterling argues that it was Philo’s theism that inspired him to do so. God is the ultimate cause and the ultimate source. Philo explains that “the transcendent source of all that exists is God, as piety is the source of the virtues” (*Decal.* 52). Sterling points out that the rationale for the analogy between God as source and piety as source is more than the fact that they share a common function: they are inextricably related in Philo’s thought. “The physical and moral worlds are both the creations of God: piety towards God governs both our concept of the creation and the ordering of our lives. Everything, including ethics, begins with a proper belief in the existence of God and the divine governance of the cosmos . . . Our actions are therefore actions for God.”<sup>27</sup> Piety is about God,<sup>28</sup> and as God is at the

<sup>25</sup> See *Decal.* 119; *Spec.* 4.135; *Virt.* 95; *QG* 2.38; *Spec.* 4.147; 4.97; *Abr.* 60; *Decal.* 52; *Opif.* 154 (θεοσέβεια is parallel to εὐσέβεια in 155); *Abr.* 114; *Congr.* 130.

<sup>26</sup> Sterling, “Queen,” 120.

<sup>27</sup> Sterling, “Queen,” 121.

<sup>28</sup> Philo uses the standard definition of εὐσέβεια as “service of God” (*Det.* 55; cf. *Abr.* 129). A profound knowledge of God—both intellectual and existential—is characteristic of εὐσέβεια (cf. *Mut.* 76). See Sterling, “Queen,” 112–113, 117–118. Εὐσέβεια is thus a truly relational virtue, as is also apparent from its intimate relation to πίστις. As Wolfson explains, “the term faith means with Philo two things: (1) belief in the unity and providence of God as well as in all the truths revealed directly by God, (2) trust in God. Both these meanings are logically interrelated, and it is faith in both these meanings that he has in mind when he says that ‘faith in God is one sure and infallible good’ or when he describes ‘faith in the Existent’ as ‘the queen of virtues’ [*Abr.* 46, 268]” (Wolfson, *Philo.* II, 218).

center of Philo's theology, piety becomes the central virtue. God is the center and the source of piety, and piety is the center and the source of all other virtues. Because of this theocentric nature of his thought, it was Philo's aspiration to encounter God directly. While a human cannot experience the being of God, it is possible to experience God's presence directly. Sterling comments that "this experience, even the desire for the experience, affected the moral life. It is not that we imitate God to experience God, but that our understanding and experience of God shape our virtue or impiety."<sup>29</sup>

We can see that the concept of God as the source of morality is intimately linked to the question how ethical action is empowered. Our discussion above has highlighted the centrality of piety in this context. However, does Philo give any indication how piety and the other moral virtues can become a reality in the lives of his readers? This question is seldom asked in academic research on Philo. Nonetheless, this aspect of our inquiry into Philo's ethics has the potential to shed further light on the potential religious "commodities" that Philo had to offer in his interaction with those who followed or felt attracted to Hellenistic philosophy. Although Philo does not provide us with an explicit and extensive discussion of how God helps people to attain piety and virtue, he nevertheless does provide answers to this question.<sup>30</sup> In the following investigation I will single out a central feature of his answer(s) which one can call a relational empowering for religious-ethical life. This will point us further towards the uniqueness and attractiveness of Philo's vision of Jewish ethics.

Philo notes the importance of human effort in attaining virtue. Nevertheless, at the fundamental level he attributes everything to God as we have seen<sup>31</sup> and as the following quotation from Philo reiterates:

So long as the mind supposes itself to be the author of anything, it is far away from making room for God and from confessing or making acknowledgment

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<sup>29</sup> Sterling, "Queen," 123.

<sup>30</sup> In *Fug.* 94–105, Philo offers an allegory on the cities of refuge, and notes that different people require different motivations for ethical living (and do so at different times in life). Some people need the threat of punishment to act virtuously; others need an awareness of God's mercy to do so; and still others—those purest of heart—do so because of their desire for union with God. It is this "union with God" that plays the central role in my model of relational empowering for ethical living in Philo.

<sup>31</sup> See above, and see further, with specific attention to the correlation of divine grace and human agency: John M.G. Barclay, "By the Grace of God I am what I am': Grace and Agency in Philo and Paul," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment*, eds. John M.G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London: Continuum, 2006), 140–148.

to him. For we must take note that the very confession of praise itself is the work not of the soul but of God who gives it thankfulness (*Leg.* 1.82).

However, does Philo provide any clues as to how God works these virtues in the human soul? One potential answer to this question is that Philo draws on Stoic philosophy in order to explain this dynamic. And indeed, the following words of Philo unmistakably have a Stoic ring to them: “For we are the instruments, now tensed now slackened, through which particular actions take place, and it is the Artificer who effects the percussion of both our bodily and psychic powers, he by whom all things are moved” (*Cher.* 128). Nonetheless, besides the obvious parallels to Stoicism in this text, on the whole there are fundamental differences between Philo and the Stoics in this regard. The Stoics believed that a physical tension is at the basis of all human emotion and virtue. It is clear that this tension is related to the spirit ( $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ ) that indwells the entire universe.  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  plays an important role in Stoic cosmology. No other ancient philosophic school has written as much about  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  as Stoicism. Interestingly, no other early Jewish writer has written as much about  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  as Philo. However, in contrast to Philo,  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  plays an important role in Stoic physics but not in their ethics.<sup>32</sup> With regard to Stoic ethics, it seems that it is mainly human effort that brings about moral change (with a potential change also in the “tension” of the soul). Cognitive transformation through philosophy and active reasoning played a central role in Stoic ethics.<sup>33</sup> Philosophy’s ethical function is understood as that of toning up

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<sup>32</sup> On  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  and Stoic ethics, see more fully Friedrich Büchsel, *Der Geist Gottes im Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1926), 47; Craig S. Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 7; Julia Annas, “Ethics in Stoic Philosophy,” *Phronesis* 52 (2007): 58–87, esp. 67; Volker Rabens, “Johannine Perspectives on Ethical Enabling in the Context of Stoic and Philonic Ethics,” in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: “Implicit Ethics” in the Johannine Writings*, eds. Jan van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 114–139.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 6.1–2; 73.15–16; 110.1, 10; Marcus Aurelius 8.14 [LS 61P]. Cf. A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers. Vol. 1: Translation of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 346–354, 359–368, 381–386; Maximilian Forschner, *Die Stoische Ethik: Über den Zusammenhang von Natur-, Sprach- und Moralphilosophie im altstoischen System* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 151; Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), esp. ch. 9; Christoph Horn, *Antike Lebenskunst: Glück und Moral von Sokrates bis zu den Neuplatonikern*; BsR 1271 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1998), chs. 1 and 4; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2000), ch. 3; James Ware, “Moral Progress and Divine Power in Seneca and Paul,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (London: Routledge, 2008), 267–83; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009), 70–71.

the soul—developing its muscles, enhancing its use of its own capabilities (Seneca, *Ep.* 15).<sup>34</sup> While cognitive exercise was also important for moral transformation according to Philo, in his theology-and-ethics (which is dominated by a personal, theistic concept of God) it is the relationship to this God (cf. "piety") that plays a paramount and empowering role. And the Spirit of God (πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ) has an active part in this, as we will see in the remainder of this section in which I intend to fill some gaps left by previous scholars by showing one avenue of ethical empowering that has thus far been generally overlooked.<sup>35</sup>

Philo is at heart a theologian for whom the intimate experience of "the One who Is" is of central importance. Noack rightly remarks, "As an exegete Philo is doing a theology of experience in which he searches for pathways to the transforming experience of the presence of God."<sup>36</sup> For example, when he interprets Deuteronomy 30:20, Philo emphasizes the love of God and the effects of what we may call a mystical union<sup>37</sup> with God in the following way:

Moses . . . bids them [i.e. the Israelites] "cleave to Him," bringing out by the use of this word how constant and continuous and unbroken is the concord

<sup>34</sup> This is not a metaphor but a physical idea, as Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 317–318, points out. On Stoic physics of the mind, see further Long and Sedley, *Philosophers. I*, 313–323, 368, 385–386.

<sup>35</sup> The following discussion is based on Rabens, *Spirit*, ch. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Christian Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein: Exegetische Studien zur Soteriologie und Mystik bei Philo von Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 247. Cf. Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (New York: Abingdon, 1970), 226; David Winston, "Philo's Ethical Theory," in *Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1984), 372–377; John R. Levison, "Philo's Personal Experience and the Persistence of Prophecy," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*, eds. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak (New York/London: T.&T. Clark, 2006), 196–209. Cf. David M. Hay, "Philo of Alexandria," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, eds. D.A. Carson, Peter O'Brien and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 366: "The 'psychology' that matters to Philo is an understanding of the soul of the individual in relation to God."

<sup>37</sup> "Mysticism" is here broadly defined as "a form of religiosity which has the immediate experience of divine reality as its center. This experience, which transcends everyday consciousness and cognition based on reason, is at the same time the *experience of an intimate closeness to the divine reality*" (Hans-Christoph Meier, *Mystik bei Paulus: Zur Phänomenologie religiöser Erfahrung im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Francke, 1998), 20, italics added). On Philo's mysticism, see more specifically David Winston, "Philo's Mysticism," *SPA* 8 (1996): 74–82. This notion of mysticism should not be confused with that of the mystery religions which Pascher anachronistically ascribes to Philo (Joseph Pascher, *Η ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΟΔΟΣ: Der Königsweg zu Wiedergeburt und Vergottung bei Philon von Alexandria* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1931), 164–167, 177, 183).

and union that comes through making God our own. [...] But so unceasingly does he [i.e. Moses] himself yearn to see God and to be seen by Him, that he implores Him to reveal clearly His own nature (Exod. xxxiii. 13), which is so hard to divine, hoping thus to obtain at length a view free from all falsehood, and to exchange doubt and uncertainty for a most assured confidence (*Post.* 12–13).<sup>38</sup>

Philo explains here that Moses wants to truly “partake in the glory,” and that a firm faith will be the result of this intimate encounter of “seeing God and being seen by Him.”

The religious-ethical effects of this mystical relationship come more clearly to the fore in *De Legatione ad Gaium* 4–5. Philo expresses here that seeing God

seems to me of all possessions, public or private, the most precious. For if the sight of seniors or instructors or rulers or parents stirs the beholders to respect for them and decent behaviour and the desire to live a life of self-control, how firmly based is the virtue and nobility of conduct which we may expect to find in souls whose vision has soared above all created things and schooled itself to behold the uncreated and divine, the primal good, the excellent, the happy, the blessed, which may truly be called better than the good, more excellent than the excellent, more blessed than blessedness, more happy than happiness itself (*Legat.* 4–5).

The impact of an intimate encounter with God is thus attested as “firmly based . . . virtue and nobility of conduct.” Philo does not unravel whether the ethical life of those who have “beheld the uncreated and divine” results from a feeling of duty (as, e.g., in *Gig.* 47) or a sense of empowering, although the latter seems more likely. Perhaps the best way of categorizing the effect is that it furthers the *motivation* for ethical life. More specifically, however, in *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum* 2.7 Philo finds a way to describe figuratively how such a religious-ethical transformation happens: “just as one who comes near the light is straightaway illumined, so also is filled the entire soul of him to whom God has appeared” (cf. *Gig.* 49; *QG* 4.25). Philo here speaks of God’s empowering presence as the motor of change in a person and not so much of moral obligation. Knowledge and wisdom are central agents in this process,<sup>39</sup> aiming at the person’s being “full of every good” (*QE* 2.7).

<sup>38</sup> On the human longing for an intimate relationship with God, see further *Op. Mund.* 70–71; *Ebr.* 152; et al.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Cornelis Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002),

This transforming and empowering effect of an intimate encounter and relationship with God is still more clearly expressed by Philo in *De Migratione Abrahami* 34–36. When speaking about his state of divine inspiration during which he is “filled with amazement at the might of Him that is,” he explains that “Now the thing shewn is the thing worthy to be seen, contemplated, loved, the perfect good, *whose nature it is to change all that is bitter in the soul and make it sweet*, fairest seasoning of all spices, turning into salutary nourishment even foods that do not nourish . . . (Ex. xv. 25)” (*Migr.* 36; cf. 37 on the explicitly ethical aspect of the transformation). Numerous further passages could be discussed as evidence of the sometimes overlooked fact that for Philo an intimate relationship with the divine empowers religious-ethical life (see, e.g., *Gig.* 49; *QG* 4.4, 29, 140; *Contempl.* 90; *Migr.* 132; *Plant.* 64–66; *Deus.* 3–4; *Her.* 70–71; *Praem.* 41–48; *Abr.* 58–59; *Leg.* 3.71; 3.130; *Cher.* 24, 50; *Somn.* 1.149; 2.232; *Fug.* 82; *Virt.* 119–120, 163–164, 181, 215–216, 218; cf. *Mos.* 1.156).<sup>40</sup> We will now, however, turn to the place of the Spirit in this dynamic of ethical enabling.

As mentioned above, the Spirit of God plays an important role in the enabling of human virtues. First of all, the Spirit relates humans to God. Likewise, Philo clearly relates the Spirit to the furtherance of virtuous life (e.g. *Mos.* 2.265; *Gig.* 23, 28, 47; *Mut.* 123–124; *Leg.* 1.33–34; *QG* 4.140).<sup>41</sup> More specifically, however, Philo provides evidence that two major aspects of

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75, 81–83; André Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits: Theological and Ethical Hermeneutics in Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 109–110, cf. more generally, 111–121.

<sup>40</sup> Noack comments on *Mos.* 1.156 that “Angelpunkt des gesamten Lebensstils ist . . . die Gottesbeziehung. Wer mit Gott als Quelle der Tugend verbunden ist, erhält folglich Anteil an allen anderen Tugenden” (Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein*, 71, cf. 73). Cf. David Winston, “Philo of Alexandria on the Rational and Irrational Emotions,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (London: Routledge, 2008), 212–213. Hellemann points out that the change that results from the close relationship to God is conceptualized by Philo as a *process* (Wendy E. Hellemann, “Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God,” *SPA* 2 (1990): 62–63, 70–71). Accordingly, Schweitzer believes that one should rather speak of the product of this transformation as a new relationship and not of a new creation (Wolfgang Schweitzer, “Gotteskindschaft, Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung im Neuen Testament und in seiner Umwelt” (Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 1944), 108). It should be noted that some of the passages in the list above imply that ethical life can also be a presupposition for seeing God. However, Philo generally portrays God as the initiator of moral life. Cf. Walther Völker, *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandria: Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit* (Leipzig, 1938), 302–303; Barclay, “‘By the Grace’,” 141–148.

<sup>41</sup> Cf., e.g., Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 124–125; Bennema, *Power*, 74–83. On the work of the Spirit as originator and consequence of virtue, see Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 92–93, and the critique by Bennema, *Power*, 79 n. 151.



the Spirit's work—the creation of intimacy with God and the empowering for ethics—are interconnected in his thinking. In order to demonstrate this, we will first look at a passage in which Philo mentions the divine *πνεῦμα* as the rational aspect of the human soul breathed into humankind at creation, and then at Moses' endowment with the prophetic Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

In his exegesis of Genesis 2:7, Philo explains that God inbreathes his Spirit into the mind of man. He says that a union of God, *πνεῦμα* and mind comes about as “God projects the power that proceeds from Himself through the mediant breath till it reaches the subject” (*Leg.* 1.37). The reason for this endowment with *πνεῦμα* is that “we may obtain a conception of Him,” for this is possible only by the Spirit.

For the mind of man would never have ventured to soar so high as to grasp the nature of God, had not God Himself drawn it up to Himself, so far as it was possible that the mind of man should be drawn up, and stamped it with the impress of the powers that are within the scope of its understanding. The breathing “into the face” is to be understood both physically and ethically (*ἡθικῶς*) (*Leg.* 1.38–39).

Philo continues that this divine inbreathing is “ethical” because the Spirit-transformed mind is the master of all other parts of the body (§§39–41). We can see from this text that the divine Spirit creates a close relationship with God and that it is related to ethics. The reason why this close encounter with God is comprehended by Philo as ethically empowering comes more clearly to the fore when one looks at the paragraphs preceding our quotation. In 1.34–35 Philo answers his first question regarding Genesis 2:7, namely, why God considered the human mind worthy of receiving the divine Spirit at all (1.33). The first reason that he gives is that the inbreathing of *πνεῦμα* demonstrates the exceeding greatness of God's own wealth and goodness. The second, related reason is that the human soul needs an experience of this divine goodness and virtue in order to live a virtuous life. This experience of the overflowing goodness of God is conveyed through the impartation of *πνεῦμα*. In this way the Spirit empowers virtuous life through providing an encounter with and profound comprehension of God in his overflowing goodness.

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<sup>42</sup> On the (difficulty of) distinction between these two notions of the divine *πνεῦμα*, see Turner, *Power*, 124, and Bennema, *Power*, 72–74. For the justification of employing both impartations of the Spirit for a study of Spirit and ethics in Philo, see further Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, “Wandel im Geist: Zur pneumatologischen Begründung der Ethik bei Paulus,” *KD* 38 (1992): 158–159.

We turn to the ethical influence of the prophetic Spirit on Moses. When Philo interprets Exodus 24:2 in *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum* 2.29, he writes

For when the prophetic mind becomes divinely inspired and filled with God, it becomes like the monad, not being at all mixed with any of those things associated with duality. But he who is resolved into the nature of unity, is said to come near God in a kind of family relation, "for having given up and left behind all mortal kinds," he is changed into the divine, so that such men become kin to God and truly divine (*QE* 2.29).

That "divine inspiration and becoming filled with God" (ἐνθουσιᾷ καὶ θεοφορεῖται) implies the presence and work of the Spirit is suggested by Philo's interpretation of the same experience of Moses in *De Vita Mosis* 1.175: Moses "became possessed (ἐνθους)...and...filled with the spirit which was wont to visit him" (cf. *Virt.* 217; et al.). Philo elucidates in *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum* 2.29 how such a possession leads to ethical life (becoming like the monad),<sup>43</sup> intimacy and closeness to God (coming near God in a kind of family relation),<sup>44</sup> and how this results in a person's further (religious-ethical) transformation (becoming kin to God and truly divine).

Here is a final text of Philo's interpretation of Moses' endowment with the ethical Spirit: When Moses begins to worship God (with the aid of the Spirit, cf. §53), he enters the darkness, the invisible region, and he abides there

while he learns the secrets of the most holy mysteries. There he becomes not only one of the congregation of the initiated, but also the hierophant and teacher of divine rites, which he will impart to those whose ears are purified. He then has ever the divine spirit at his side, taking the lead in every journey of righteousness (*Gig.* 54–55).

This passage suggests that it is in close proximity to God that the divine Spirit is active and experienced as a guide "in every journey of righteousness." In this connection, it appears that the intimacy of worship not only leads (by means of the Spirit) to ethics in a narrow sense, but also encompasses an empowering for ministry (teaching divine truths).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> On the term "monad" in Philo, see Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein*, 132–141.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. A.J.M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against its Graeco-Roman Background* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987), 283; Noack, *Gottesbewußtsein*, 147.

<sup>45</sup> Regarding the Spirit's religious-ethical influence through the communication of deeper understanding of God, see *Somn.* 2.252–253: Philo hears "the voice of the invisible

We conclude that divine enabling of religious-ethical life is closely linked to Philo's concept of piety. For Philo, piety and empowering are two sides of the same coin of being related to the One who Is. In contrast to Stoicism, these virtues are not fully inherent in human nature or in an all-surpassing divine nature. Nor can moral transformation be achieved purely through philosophy and active reasoning.<sup>46</sup> Rather, Philo stresses that God bridges the gap that exists between him and humans, and human beings are urged to accept this divine initiative.<sup>47</sup> Piety and empowering (by the Spirit) were thus the driving forces behind the Jewish religious-ethical way of life which made Judaism attractive for outsiders (as we have seen). For Philo this Spirit-inspired "relational empowering" actively enhanced the attractiveness of the Jewish religion by enabling Jewish morality to be authentically practiced.

#### 4. PHILO'S CUSTOMERS: THE *WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE* OF PHILO'S ETHICS

We return to our initial observation: Judaism was attractive to its Hellenistic contemporaries. However, what commodities of religious-ethical life does Judaism offer according to Philo? In *De Virtutibus* 65, Philo says that "What disciples of the best philosophy learn from its teaching, the Jews gain from their laws and customs, that is, knowledge of the highest and most original Cause of all, while they reject the deceit of created Gods." The best philosophy that Philo can think of is thus the law and its customs, that is, the ethical teaching and practice of Judaism. This is

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spirit, the familiar secret tenant," saying "Know then, good friend, that God alone is the real veritable peace, free from all illusion, but the whole substance of things created only to perish is one constant war." The Spirit continues to give further insight into the nature of God, and then implies that this should lead people to forsake war and cross over to the camp of those whose character echoes that of God. We can see in this passage that the Spirit (of God: see John R. Levison, "Inspiration and the Divine Spirit in the Writings of Philo Judaeus," *JSJ* 26 (1995): 299–300) enables a deeper understanding of God and his designs (i.e. peace). Although the passage is not very explicit in ascribing the "the strength to forsake war and Fatality" to this deepening of the cognitive aspect of people's relationship to the divine, it is most likely that this is exactly what Philo wants to say here (cf. *QE* 2.7 and *Leg.* 1.37–38, as above). On the communal experience of the empowering work of the Spirit, see esp. *Gig.* 26–28.

<sup>46</sup> *Per contra*, see the nuanced discussion of moral transformation in Epictetus by Johnson, *Gentiles*, 64–78 (cf. 123–125).

<sup>47</sup> On Philo's appreciation of "repentance," Lévy notes that in contradiction to Stoic teaching, in which *metanoia* is considered "an unhappy and seditious passion," Philonic *metanoia* is inseparably theological and moral: "As in the sunshine the shadow follows the body, participation in the whole company of the other virtues follows the honour of the true God" (*Virt.* 181) (Lévy, "Ethics," 152).

a major attractor that he can bring into play when entering the religious market of Alexandria and beyond. But it is not only that. For Philo both have a relational or personal dimension in that they convey knowledge of the Most High, the Maker and Father of all, as he says in the preceding verse (*Virt.* 64). This is why he values piety so highly, for it connects him with God. Philo is explicit about these goods on the market of religious plurality. Moreover, we have seen that piety (which is an expression of an intimate relationship with God) also empowers religious-ethical life. This is worked by the agency of the Spirit.

Does this make Philo an agent of religious formation and transformation? Yes, in as far as Philo has given new emphasis to a number of "Jewish goods" in the context of the Alexandrian Diaspora. He has given weight to the law and to piety. Both of these are entities that members of the Greco-Roman world could easily relate to. At least this was Philo's desire as he interpreted the assets of Judaism for those tempted to leave the Jewish faith and those attracted to embrace the Jewish faith. Moreover, Philo was also led to think through aspects of Judaism afresh in the context of his dialogue with Hellenism. His emphasis on the Spirit may be a result of this engagement. However, he does not copy the Stoic concept of *πνεῦμα*, but he assigns a dynamic role to it in his theology and ethics in that the Spirit relates people to God (piety) and thus enables them to live a virtuous life according to the law.

Finally, whether a person has managed to persuade others to buy her "commodities" can be seen by the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of her writings. Unfortunately, there appears to be no immediate, strong *Wirkung* of Philo's writings in the years after he had completed his works. At least we do not have Greco-Roman or Jewish sources that would testify explicitly to such a reception. Several reasons are being discussed as to why Rabbinic Judaism did not apprehend more of Philo (e.g. his writing in Greek and his utter reliance on the Septuagint and lack of recourse to the Hebrew original), a discussion of which would go beyond the scope of this article. In any case, it is a paradox that Philo was neglected by his own people, to whose cause he had shown such strong devotion, and he was rescued from oblivion through the attentions of a group of people of whom he had most likely never heard, and who would later to a certain extent oppose his own Jewish religion, namely, the Christian church.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See David Winston, "Philo and Rabbinic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 231; David T. Runia, "Philo and the Early Christian Fathers," in *The Cambridge Companion to*

Nevertheless, I want to close on a positive note and demonstrate from one text from the apostle Paul that Philo's notion of ethical empowering already influenced his contemporaries—or at least, that he was part of the same tradition that Paul draws on.<sup>49</sup> In the climactic verse at the end of Paul's treatment of Moses and the Law in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul says: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). Against the background of our discussion in the last section, it seems that Philo is part of the ancient tradition of "transformation through contemplation" that we find here in 2 Corinthians 3.<sup>50</sup> This is suggested, for example, on the basis of Philo's explanation that "just as one who comes near the light is straightaway illumined, so also is filled the entire soul of him to whom God has appeared" (*QE* 2.7). One of the clearest parallels to 2 Corinthians 3:18, however, is *De Migratione Abrahami* 34–36. There Philo speaks about his state of divine inspiration during which he is "filled with amazement at the might of Him that is to Whom is due the opening and closing of the soul-wombs." He says that "Now the thing shewn is the thing *worthy to be seen* [or: *beheld*], *contemplated, loved, the perfect good, whose nature it is to change all that is bitter in the soul and make it sweet, fairest seasoning of all spices, turning into salutary nourishment even foods that do not nourish . . .* (Ex. xv. 25)" (*Migr.* 36). Here we see the concept of beholding and contemplating God in a loving relationship which leads to a (religious-ethical [cf. *Migr.* 37]) transformation ("change") and empowering ("nourishment") of the soul. This is further expressed in *De Legatione ad Gaium* 4–5: "how firmly based is *the virtue and nobility of conduct* which we may expect to find in souls whose vision has soared above all created things and schooled itself to *behold the uncreated and divine.*"

What is more, Philo presents the divine Spirit as playing a central role in stimulating a transforming relationship with God. The Spirit provides both cognitive-noetic as well as existential-mystical knowledge of God that transforms and empowers the recipient for religious-ethical life (e.g. in

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*Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 210. Cf. Sterling, "Queen," 123; Anton Hilhorst, "Was Philo Read by Pagans? The Statement on Heliodorus in Socrates *Hist. Eccl.* 5.22," *SPA* (1994): 75–77.

<sup>49</sup> On the relation of Philo and Paul, see John M.G. Barclay, "Grace Within and Beyond Reason: Philo and Paul in Dialogue," in *Paul, Grace and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches*, eds. Paul Middleton and John Kenneth Riches (London: T.&T. Clark, 2009), 17–21; Barclay, "By the Grace," 156–157.

<sup>50</sup> On 2 Corinthians 3:18, see more fully Rabens, *Spirit*, 174–203.

QE 2.29, Moses is enabled by the Spirit to "come near God in a kind of family relation" and is consequently "changed into the divine;" cf. *Gig.* 54–55). It is this tradition—alongside the pentateuchal narrative of Moses' transformation—that is most prominently in the background of the concept of "transformation through contemplation" in 2 Corinthians 3:18 because it not only describes transformation as a consequence of encountering God and receiving divine revelation, but it also attributes an important role of the Spirit in this process (attributed to κυρίου πνεύματος in 3:18).

This example shows that Philo was engaged in an ethical discourse that was not only relevant in his Diaspora community in Alexandria, but also in a "parallel world" in the Christian church in Corinth and elsewhere. Philo had precious "goods" to offer, and perhaps more people bought them in antiquity than we are aware of.

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TRAVELING ETHICS: THE CASE OF THE HOUSEHOLD CODES  
IN EPHESIANS 5:21–6:9 IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Loren T. Stuckenbruck

“No culture is an island unto itself.” This well-worn phrase has recently been picked up and applied to Paul by Daniel R. Langton to emphasize the degree to which the apostle’s thought was an intersection between cultures.<sup>1</sup> While this notion of cultural hybridity in Paul may seem little more than a truism, it remains curious that some aspects of Pauline tradition have by default been explained reductionistically on “this or that” background, without taking into account the very real possibility that the worlds inhabited by those for whom the (in this case, Pauline) texts were composed were far more complex. Of course, it is one thing to claim this in principle and another to be able to observe this in the texts that are before us. The brief discussion that follows identifies one area which, previously and frequently explained solely on the basis of a widespread tradition in the Greco-Roman world, may be re-examined from the vantage point of sources that have emerged in recent years from the Dead Sea Scrolls: the so-called “household codes” (*Haustafeln*), especially as they appear in the disputed Pauline epistle to the Ephesians.

The term *Haustafeln* is, within New Testament studies, applied to those ethical instructions on relationships within the household. These relationships are distilled into several pairs: husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves. The instructions that attempt to regulate behaviour between the members of such pairs can be found in several New Testament epistles: Colossians 3:18–4:1 (husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves), Ephesians 5:21–6:9 (same as Colossians), 1 Peter 2:18–3:7 (masters and slaves, wives and husbands only), and Titus 2:1–10 (older men and women, husbands and wives, masters and slaves). The view that these concisely formulated teachings have adapted a tradition whose real background can be assigned to a Greco-Roman environment has found almost unanimous acceptance among New Testament

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel R. Langton, “Jewish Readings of Paul,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. Stephen Westerholm (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 455–469 (here 469).

specialists.<sup>2</sup> The tradition to which reference is made ultimately derives from the Greek philosophers. The classical writers, Philo and Aristotle, devoted some discussion to husband-wife, father-child and master-slave relations in order to underline the importance of the household as a smaller social unit upon which the stability of the ideal political state depends; as such, these relations are defined by authority on the one side of a pair and on subordination on the other.<sup>3</sup> Each of these relationships continued to be the focus of discussion well into the later Roman period by interpreters of the classical tradition, which was picked up and adapted by Jewish Greek writers such as Philo (cf. *Apol.* 7.1, 3; *Hyp.* 7.1–14) and Josephus (c. *Ap.* 190–210) who incorporated the Aristotelian framework into their overarching explications of the Mosaic Torah.<sup>4</sup> Characteristic of the discussions by ancient writers is the notion that the male head of the household is intended by nature to rule over or be in charge in his roles as husband, as father, and as master. Not to adhere to such a hierarchy

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Household Code and Wisdom Mode of Colossians," *JSNT* 74 (1999), 93–112, refers to this understanding of the origins of the codes as "the consensus view" (10), while James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of St. Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 666, declares that, "The lengthy debate... has been recently resolved" (cf. bibl. in the following note).

<sup>3</sup> See Plato, *Laws* 3.690A-D; 6.771E–7.824C and Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1253b, 1259a.

<sup>4</sup> This was argued early on by Martin Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1912), who emphasized that the most immediate background of the *Haustafeln* is Stoic. This thesis was criticized by James E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafeln* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), for whom the more immediate mediators of household traditions that shaped the instructional codes of Colossians were none other than Hellenistic Jewish writers such as Philo and Josephus. However, perhaps the most influential treatment of the socio-historical structures behind the household codes has been the study by David E. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 21–62. Balch has highlighted evidence for the reception and adaptation of Aristotle's discussion of domestic life around pairs (master-slave, husband-wife, father-children) among several groups which existed at the turn of the Common Era: the pseudo-Aristotelian Peripatetics (in several works entitled *Oeconomicus*, i.e. "Concerning Household Management"; cf. the *Great Ethics*, 2nd cent. B.C.E.); the Stoics Chrysippus (*Concerning the Ends of Goods and Evils* 3.50; 4.43, 68) and Arius Didymus (*Epitome* of Aristotle's ideas, 1st B.C.E.); later Stoic authors (e.g. Ariston, Hecaton, Seneca and Hierocles); Hellenistic Jews (Josephus and Philo); and Neopythagoreans such as Callicratidas (*On the Happiness of Households* 103.21–23; 103.28–104.3; 105.8–15; 106.17–19 par. Ocellus, *On the Nature of the Universe* 106.17–19). Balch also draws attention to household management traditions in the Mediterranean world; on these, see further the collection of essays in eds. David Balch and Carolyn Osieck, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

not only damages the household itself, but also undermines the wellbeing of the state.

Today, there is hardly a commentary on Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and Titus that does not assert or even assume the evidence just noted. In the form in which they are preserved in these works, the codes provide instructions addressed to household members (husbands; wives; fathers; mothers—only Tit. 2:4; children; masters; slaves). Beyond the occasional observation by scholars that biblical texts such as Genesis 18:12 (e.g. for 1 Pet. 3:6) or Genesis 2:24 (which is cited in Eph. 5:31) have been picked up or that the Jewish Greek authors had already placed the regulations in conversation with Mosaic Law, there is little else in play from extra-Christian Jewish tradition. Essentially the shape given to these rules is determined by the cultural sentiments about what Stoics would have deemed “fitting” (Col. 3:18) and “pleasing” (Col. 3:20), by the Stoic idea of mutuality in marriage (Musonius, Frag. 13A; cf. Eph. 5:21), and by the qualifying Christian emphasis on “the Lord” (so Col. 3:18, 20, 22, 23–24 *bis*; 4:1; Eph. 5:22; 6:1, 7, 9) or on “Christ” (cf. Col. 3:24; Eph. 5:21, 23–25, 29; 6:5–6).<sup>5</sup> Given the seemingly overwhelming evidence, the possibility that a Hebrew or Aramaic Jewish tradition might illuminate any aspect of the household codes has, with very few exceptions, simply not been countenanced.

Now, however, a non-Qumranic document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls has the potential to widen the lens through which to evaluate the codes. We refer here to the *Musar le-Mevin* (lit. “Instruction to an Understanding One”), a Hebrew composition preserved in fragments from seven manuscripts (1Q26, 4Q415, 4Q416, 4Q417, 4Q418, 4Q418a, 4Q423) which did not become available for study until the early 1990s and were officially published in the Discoveries in the Judean Desert series in 1999.<sup>6</sup> The significance of this composition was not lost on scholarship,

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. James D.G. Dunn, “The Household Rules in the New Testament,” in *The Family in Theological Perspective*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1996), 43–63.

<sup>6</sup> John Strugnell and Daniel Harrington, eds., *Qumran Cave 4, XXIV: Sapiential Texts, Part 2, 4QInstruction (Musar le Mevin), 4Q415ff. with a Re-edition of 1Q26* (DJD 34; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

especially since its publication,<sup>7</sup> and this is true not least with regard to New Testament study.<sup>8</sup>

In this connection, however, Jean-Sébastien Rey and Benjamin G. Wold have been working out the way in which *Musar le Mevin* might function as a new conversation partner for the interpretation of the New Testament household codes, especially those in Colossians and Ephesians.<sup>9</sup> Since the better overall case can be made in relation to Ephesians, I would like to direct my comments there, taking Rey and Wold's contributions into account.

In focusing on Ephesians 5:21–6:9, Rey's discussion centres on how the changes and additions to material from Colossians are illumined by the *Musar*.<sup>10</sup> Although earlier studies had drawn attention to a surprising number of words, expressions, short phrases and themes in Ephesians

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<sup>7</sup> *Musar le Mevin* has figured prominently in several collections of essays, for example, Charlotte Hempel, Armin Lange and Hermann Lichtenberger, eds., *Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought* (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2002); Florentino García Martínez, ed., *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition* (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2003); and John J. Collins, Gregory E. Sterling and Ruth A. Clements, eds., *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). In addition, it has been the focus of sustained study in several monographs: Daryl F. Jeffries, *Wisdom at Qumran: A Form-Critical Analysis of the Admonitions in 4QInstruction* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2001); Eiberg J. C. Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning for the Understanding Ones: Reading and Reconstructing the Fragmentary Early Jewish Sapiential Text 4QInstruction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom in 4QInstruction* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Matthew J. Goff, *Discerning Wisdom: The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Benjamin G. Wold, *Women, Men, and Angels: The Qumran Wisdom Document Musar leMevin and Its Allusions to Genesis Creation Traditions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); and Jean-Sébastien Rey, *4QInstruction: Sagesse et eschatologie* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> There is insufficient space here to discuss the blending of sapiential and apocalyptic traditions in *Musar le Mevin* and its implications on distinctions that could not be reconciled at any given level; see Matthew J. Goff, "Discerning Trajectories: 4QInstruction and the Sapiential Background of the Sayings Source Q," *JBL* 124 (2005): 657–673.

<sup>9</sup> See Rey, "Family Relationships in 4QInstruction and in Eph 5:21–6:4," in *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament*, ed. Florentino García Martínez (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 231–255. Rey's study explores some of the ideas already suggested by Wold in *Women, Men, and Angels*, 237–239 and esp. Benjamin G. Wold, "Family Ethics in 4QInstruction and the New Testament," *NovTest* 50 (2008): 286–300.

<sup>10</sup> Despite the positive parallels adduced, e.g., for Col. 1:12–14 on the basis of material from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the relationship between Colossians and the Scrolls may be examined along different lines: most attention has focused instead on the extent to which the so-called heretics attacked in the epistle espoused ideas that are explicable on the basis of Jewish traditions extant in the Scrolls (or, alternatively, a form of proto-Gnostic thought). For a summary of the problem, see Robert McLachlan Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2005), 35–37.

that are exclusively shared with the Qumran sectarian texts preserved in Hebrew,<sup>11</sup> no such connections had as yet been adduced for the household codes in the epistle.<sup>12</sup> The comparison, in particular, centres around instructions on the husband and wife relationship (Eph. 5:21–33) and on honouring one's parents (6:1–4).

According to Rey, *Musar* at 4Q416 2 iii 2–iv 13 (par. 4Q418 10.5–10) treats husband-wife relations in at least four ways that resonate with Ephesians. First, the text stresses the unity within the marriage through repeated allusions to Genesis 2:24 (so in 4Q418 2 iii 21; iv 1, 3–4, 5). In fact, Ephesians 5:31 quotes the same passage and with a similar emphasis: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” Of course, none of the household codes—not even their adaptations among Jewish writers in Greek—draw a connection between these relations and the Genesis tradition. Significantly, in both the *Musar* and Ephesians, the terms “flesh” (*basar*; σάρξ) and “be joined” (*ba-hithabberkah* lit. “when you are joined”; κολληθήσεται), taken from Genesis 2:24, are brought to bear on the relationship between the husband and wife in the home as a whole and cannot, therefore, be reduced to being a reference to the sexual bond between them.

Second, there is the emphasis on understanding the wife as her husband's flesh (4Q416 2 iv 5–6: “you will be one with the wife of your bosom, for she is the flesh of [your] na[kedness]”; cf. Gen. 2:23, Adam's words that she is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”). The force of this is that the husband is being enjoined to be active in being together with his wife because she is, after all, “the wife of your bosom,” that is, a part of his own being (cf. Deut. 28:54, 56). A similar idea comes into play in Ephesians

<sup>11</sup> In the volume edited by J. Murphy O'Connor, reprinted with a foreword by James H. Charlesworth, *Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Crossroad, 1990, orig. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), several contributions, originally published elsewhere, highlighted the indebtedness of the language of Ephesians to Qumran traditions and ideas nowhere found in the Hebrew Bible: Pierre Benoit, “Qumran and the New Testament,” 1–30; Karl Georg Kuhn, “The Epistle to the Ephesians in the Light of the Qumran Texts,” 115–131; Joseph Coppens, “‘Mystery’ in the Theology of Saint Paul and Its Parallels at Qumran,” 132–158 (134.146–156); and Franz Mussner, “Contributions Made by Qumran to the Understanding of the Epistle to the Ephesians,” 159–178.

<sup>12</sup> As illustrated in Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament* (2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), vol. 1, 215–225. Until *Musar le Mevin* became available for study, this state of comparison and analysis did not progress substantially further.

5:28–30 (cf. 5:23, 25): “husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies” (5:28).<sup>13</sup>

Third, the instructing sage of the *Musar* defines the husband’s relationship to his wife in terms of domination: “over her spirit he [God] has given you dominion” (4Q416 2 iv 6–7; cf. Gen. 3:16), while the father no longer has dominion over her (4Q416 2 iv 6). Drawing on different language, Ephesians does not mention “rule” or “having dominion,” but exhorts wives, within a framework of mutual submission (*contra* Col. 3:17–18, which applies the imperative “submit” to women alone), to place themselves under their husbands’ superiority. This instruction is grounded in the context of the strong bonds of unity (i.e. which are not confined to sexual relations). The author of Ephesians, of course, draws out the implications of the unity between husband and wife further than the *Musar* by exhorting husbands to “love” their wives (5:25, 28, 33; cf. Col. 3:19).

Fourth, the instruction to the husband is further grounded in what the *Musar* calls “the mystery of existence” (*raz nihyeh*; 4Q416 2 iii 21). Here there is some basis for comparison with Ephesians. The writer of Ephesians, having quoted Genesis 2:24, declares, “This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31–32). The “mystery” in the *Musar* is not personified, but it does function in the document as a fundamental principle—a God-given structure in the universe—in which the cosmic order and human social actions should be grounded. Although this mystery has in some sense been disclosed to the one addressed (4Q416 2 iii 17–18) and although there are some who already have some understanding of it (4Q418 123 ii 4), the addressee is nevertheless exhorted throughout the work to investigate, observe, meditate on and understand this “mystery” (4Q416 2 i 5; 2 iii 14; 4Q417 2 i 2, 18, 25; 4Q418 43–45 i 4—“your mysteries”). For both Ephesians and the *Musar*, it is a “mystery” that provides the cosmological point of departure for reflections on everything else. In Ephesians the mystery is correlated with the divine will, whether this will is equated with Christ himself or with those relationships for which Christology provides a warrant (see Eph. 1:8–9—“with all wisdom and insight he has made known the mystery of his

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Wold, “Family Ethics,” 298–299. The exhortation that husbands love their wives is also linked to the example of Christ who “loved the church and gave himself up for it” (Eph. 5:25) since it is his body (5:23, 29–30). The close correlation between Christological activity and that of the husband—if we allow that the analogy breaks down if “gave himself up” alludes to Christ’s death (5:25)—does not, in effect, mean that husbands are less altruistically (than in the example of Christ) being asked to love themselves; *contra* Balch and Osieck, *Families in the New Testament World*, 121.

will”; and 3:3–5, 5:32, and 6:19—“the mystery of this gospel”). Moreover, while the instructions in 4Q416 iii 20–iv 13 are, unlike Ephesians 5:21–33, all directed at the husband, it should be noted that in one passage, only preserved in a fragmentary text, the writer of *Musar* also offers instruction about husband-wife relationships to a wife (4Q415 2 ii 1, “honour him [fem. sg.] as a father . . .”); this is the only instance in all of ancient Jewish literature, including the Hebrew Bible, in which such formal instruction is directed at a woman.

In the passage immediately preceding the text mentioned above that relates the husband’s behaviour to “the mystery of existence,” the *Musar* offers instructions on parent-child relationships (4Q416 2 iii 15–19 par. 4Q418 9+9a–c 17–18 + 10a–b 1–2) that elaborate on the text traditions in Exodus 20:12 (“honour your father and mother so that your days may be long . . .” NRSV; cf. Deut. 5:16). As in Ephesians 6:1–4, the writer not only quotes the fifth commandment to “honour your father and your mother” from the Decalogue, but also refers to the function of parents as teachers for their children “for they are the crucible which taught you” (4Q416 2 iii 17). This may be compared with Ephesians 6:4b, the instruction to fathers: “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”<sup>14</sup> (NSRV). Here, the motivation for honouring one’s parents in the *Musar* comes close to Aristotle’s statement that “children (feel affection) for parents as being something that has come from them” (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII 1161b 19–20), though this is perhaps a coincidental convergence. Again, as in the passage on husband-wife relations that follows (see the previous paragraph), the *Musar* correlates obedience to parents and its favourable consequences with “the mystery of existence” that has been revealed (4Q416 2 iii 17–18). The importance of this is underscored by the functional analogy between Christ as “mystery” in Ephesians and “the mystery of existence” in *Musar*.

The juxtaposition in both *Musar* and Ephesians of the instructions to husbands and wives on the one hand and to children in relation to parents on the other, cannot be explained by a dependence of Ephesians on *Musar*. In the *Musar*, the instruction about honouring parents *precedes* the instruction about the husband-wife relationship, while the structure of Ephesians adheres to that of its predecessor in Colossians 3:18–21 (which, in turn, may follow the sequence of the Aristotelian pairings). While more

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<sup>14</sup> The corresponding passage in Col. 3:20–21 has neither a quotation from the Decalogue, nor does it say anything about the parental instruction of children.



analysis that also takes the Greco-Roman context into account is needed, Rey's conclusion that "the differences between Eph 5:21–6:4 and Col 3:18–21 have parallels in the text of *4QInstruction*"<sup>15</sup> offers a thesis that puts the study of household codes in Ephesians, and perhaps even the New Testament, on a new footing. The sapiential tradition of the *Musar* does not preserve any clear identifiers of Qumran authorship or, indeed, of any sectarian group. However, if there is anything to be made of other parallels noted between the language of Ephesians and sectarian *Yahad* texts, not too much should be inferred from the *Musar's* non-Qumranic and apparently non-sectarian origin that the *Musar's* ideas would have enjoyed a wider circulation than those held by the Qumran group. Whatever the actual dissemination of traditions found in the Dead Sea texts, the existence of reports about Essenes living in relative isolation (e.g., by Pliny the Elder *Hist. nat.* 5.15 and Josephus, *War* 2.119, 158, 160 and *Ant.* 13.171–172) at least indicates that peculiarity and separatism could, ironically, result in the preservation and, indeed, the circulation of their ideas.

What have we learned here? In his adaptation of the household codes whose origin as such can be traced back to classical philosophy (esp. Aristotle), the writer of Ephesians has drawn on Jewish tradition which is only preserved for us in manuscripts inscribed in Hebrew from the Dead Sea. The writer's indebtedness to Jewish tradition is not limited to biblical tradition in itself, but draws on a tradition of interpretation that circulated in Hebrew. While the other household codes require further investigation and analysis, we may propose that, at least in Ephesians, we encounter a blending of cultural mores, socio-religious and socio-political, which not only illuminate what becomes a complex background for the household exhortations, but also contribute to our understanding of the religious framework within which the writer of Ephesians introduced a Christological component to his ethics. To the extent that biblical interpretation played a role in early Christian ethical instruction, we have to reckon with the possibility that biblical interpretation, even in the Mediterranean Greek-speaking setting, was not merely a matter of "inner-biblical" intertextuality, but also involved the take-up of reading strategies of that sacred tradition that are reflected in the literature which engages in that very activity. Since the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided us with an abundance of such material, not least those documents that have been published during the last twenty years, it is likely that here, in

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<sup>15</sup> Rey, "Family Relationships in *4QInstruction* and in Eph 5:21–6:4," 254.

the Hebrew and Aramaic traditions, we may continue to find a diversity within Jewish tradition that informs our interpretations of Greek Jewish and Greek Christian literature as well, even if these were produced a very long way from Judea. The Ephesian household codes, then, offer us a window into a complex world in which regulatory and normativizing ideas (i.e. in the form of instructions) “travelled” through a process of dissemination that could not only reflect Greek-speaking Mediterranean culture but also pick up and draw on distinctive elements known only through Hebrew tradition outside the Hebrew Bible. Geographical divides do not always obstruct the flow of ideas, especially over time. The Pauline voice behind Ephesians, though written in Greek, remained embedded in sacred tradition (the Jewish scriptures, Hebrew and Greek) and in its interpretation (known to us through Hebrew texts). This voice reached beyond the language of Colossians and beyond Mediterranean household regulations into an arena of tradition that could anchor the instructions within a web of ideas that would have been at once remote to the audience yet sufficiently intriguing to reconstruct recognizable sacred ideas that could not be contained within the porous boundaries that divided the Eastern from the Middle and Western Mediterranean world.

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