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der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig



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26th International Conference of the European Association for South Asian Archaeology and Art

16th–20th September 2024, Leipzig

Book of Abstracts



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26th International Conference
of South Asian Archaeology and Art
2024
Leipzig, Germany

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President

Prof. Monika Zin

Organisation

Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Leipzig, Germany

With the support of

Leipzig University

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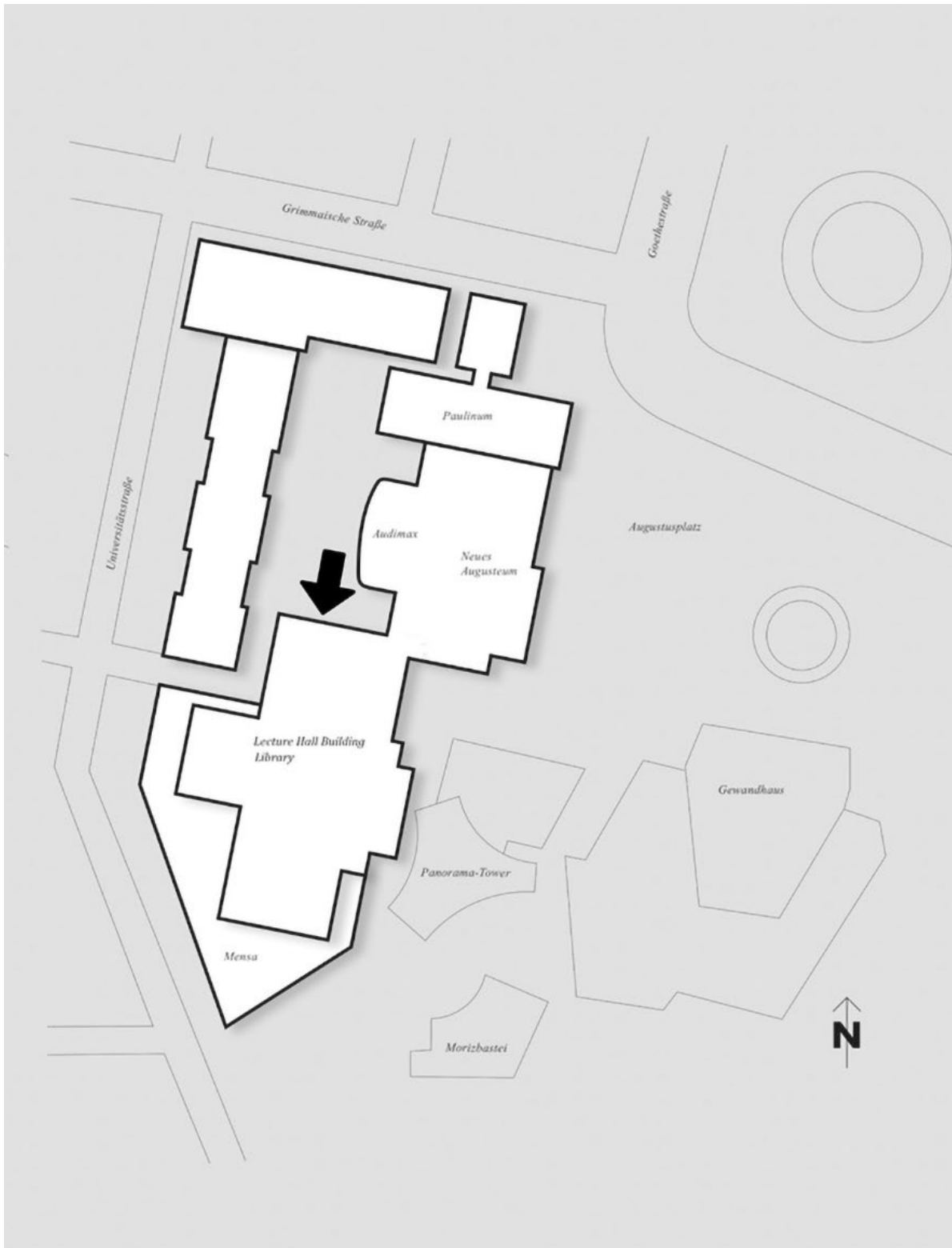
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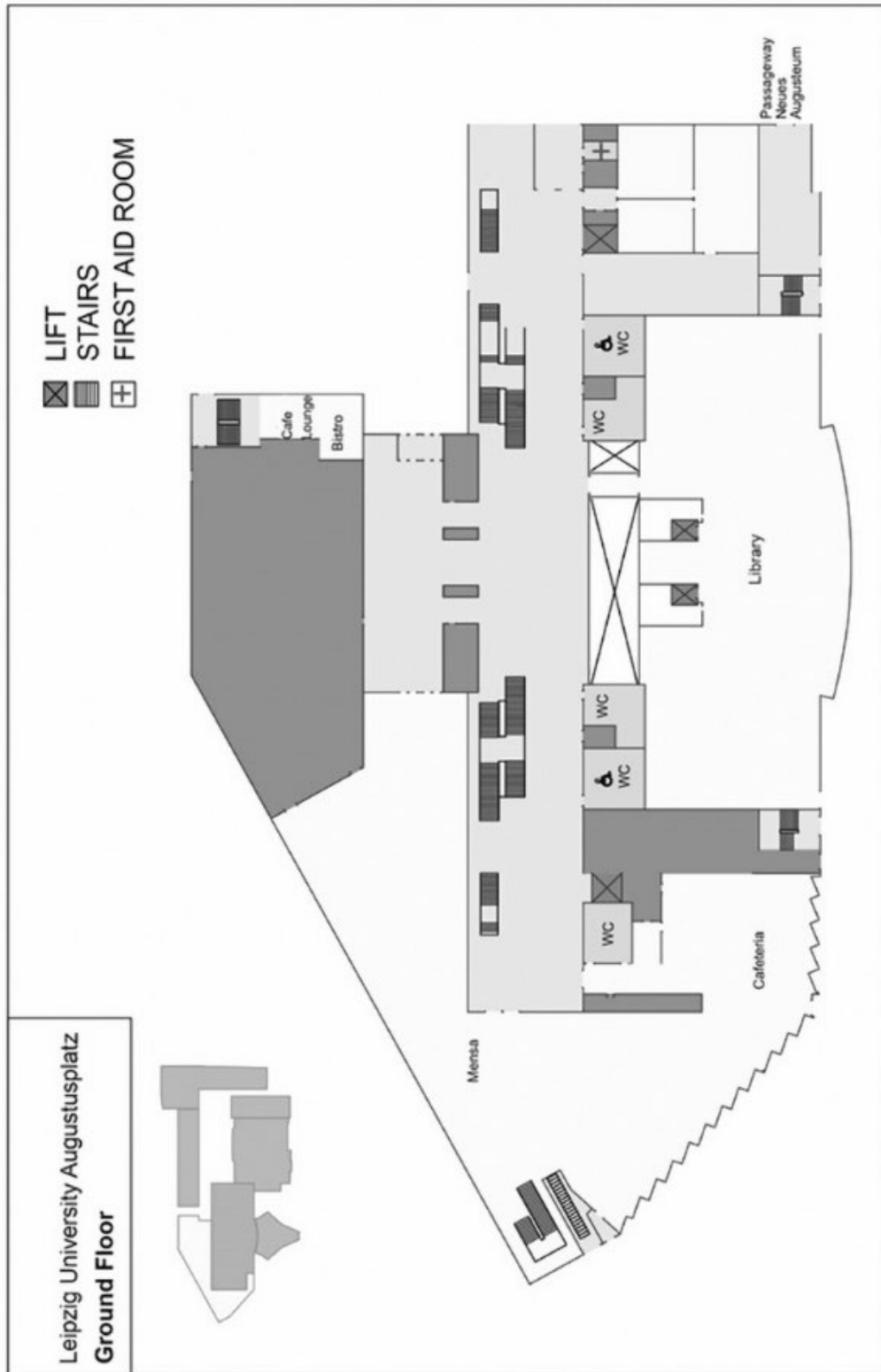
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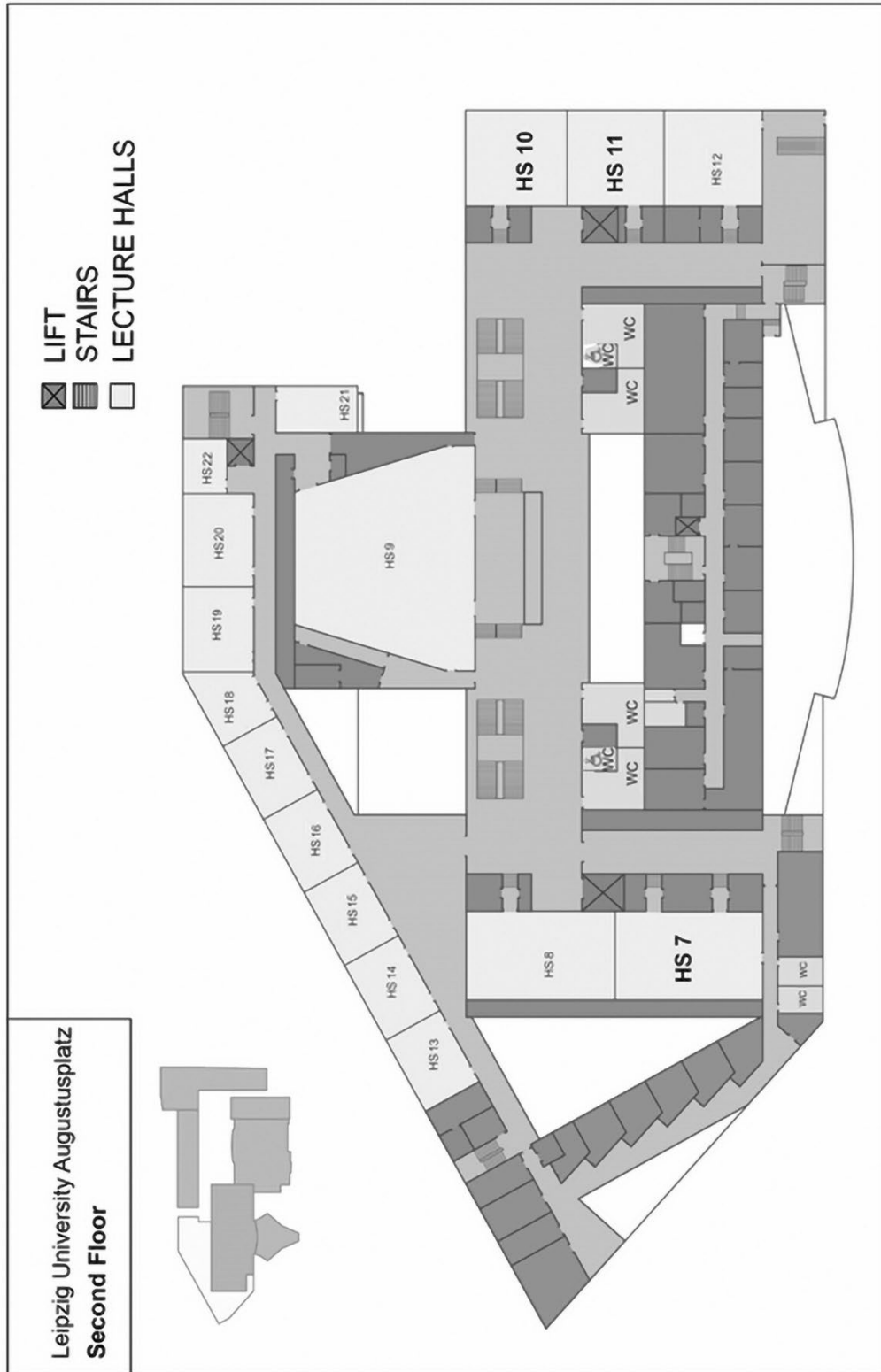
Marion Frenger



Main University Buildings



Ground Floor: Entrances



Second Floor: Lecture Halls, Registration, Posters

Keynote

Monday, 16th September 2024
9.40 – 10.40 a.m.
Lecture Hall 7

Professor Pierfrancesco Callieri

ETHICS OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND POST-COLONIAL ASIA

The tragic image of what was once one of the richest and most interesting archaeological sites in the entire region, now reduced to a field drilled by clandestine diggers working to supply the antiquities market which is always greedy for precious and rare objects, is only a means of inviting the participants of the Leipzig EASAA Congress to reflect on the urgent need not to forget the ethical dimension of actions taken on cultural heritage. A technical fact is undoubtedly the need to drastically reduce the volume of business of the illegal trade in antiquities, by activating an international mechanism that would oblige museum institutions worldwide to stop their purchases. But ethical aspects must also be brought to everyone's attention, which come into play when scholars have to decide whether it is admissible to study and publish illegally sourced archaeological artefacts: an action that, while offering relevant discoveries to the entire community, is also collusion with traffickers.

Faced with the increasing sponsorship by editorial potentates, especially Anglo-Saxon ones, of a collaborative relationship of the Academy with the antiquities market, which thus succeeds in making people forget the illegal nature of the finds, it seemed really necessary to take advantage of the presence in Leipzig of European and non-European scholars to stimulate new discussions on this and on other issues of an 'ethical' nature, which do not concern the scientific content of our research, but which have considerable implications for the sometimes difficult choices we make as researchers.

Prominent among these are issues relating to the extent to which cultural heritage has been fundamental in defining the national identities of West and Central Asian countries in the transition from the colonial to the post-colonial phase, and to the extent to which 'Orientalist' and even more so archaeological research is still influenced by its past. But at the same time, we should not forget the fundamental contribution of non-European artefacts to the identity of leading cultural centres in that Europe which, after having plundered the entire world, now builds walls: not only the hateful ones that prevent access to refugees, but also the bureaucratic ones that exclude projects on non-European topics from the use of abundant European research funds.

It will be an opportunity to share reflections that an old archaeologist, who had never considered such issues, finally felt in all their importance. As it could not be otherwise for a professor, the privileged recipients are the younger generations, to whom together with the technical wealth of knowledge we want to leave the precious reflections and invaluable doubts that characterise the human sciences.

Public Evening Lecture

Tuesday, 17th September 2024

6.00 – 7.30 p.m.

Lecture Hall 7

Professor Peter Skilling (Bhadra Rujirathat)

BUDDHISM AND THE SANSKRIT TURN

The linguistic history of Buddhism is anything but simple. From the start, Buddhists recruited a wide array of languages, starting with early Middle Indic dialects and developing to embrace most of Asia's language families. As a result, Buddhist literature is polyglot, a fascinating linguistic jumble. It is regrettable that for sectarian and curricular reasons, modern scholarship has tended to ignore the historical and literary evidence and to simplify and streamline Buddhism's linguistic diversity. Today the predominant narrative presents a 'two-track' Buddhism that transmitted Buddhist ideas in either Pali or Sanskrit. The ramifications of the mainstreamed accounts of linguistic history have been many, and they challenge us with intriguing questions. Should we meekly accept academia's received models? Or should we delve deeper to explore and to learn from Buddhism's rich linguistic heritage?

South Asian Buddhism began with and evolved through several centuries of orality, during which the Buddhist orders or schools and their scriptural collections were formed. This formative oral period is inaccessible to today's researchers except through the palimpsests of written texts and the flotsam and jetsam of ancient material culture. An assessment of the growing epigraphic and manuscript evidence from South Asia leads one to question the 'two-track' theory and the related idea that at a certain point Buddhism took a 'Sanskrit turn'. Language use has always been entangled, and Buddhism's shifting panoply of schools never followed linear monolingual or dual-track language practices. For at least two of the early schools—the Theriyas and the Sāṃmitīyas—the 'canonical' language of choice remained Middle Indic. Another school, the Mahāsāṃghikas, developed a deeply Prakritic canonical language that today's scholars call 'Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit'. Similar dialects were adopted by the composers of Vaipulya/Mahāyāna dharmaparyāyas. Recent epigraphic and manuscript discoveries contribute new perspectives to the complexity, and raise new questions like did Buddhists ever take a Sanskrit turn? And if so, what was it like?



Abhayan G. S., Rajesh S. V., Francesc C. Conesa, Juan Jose Garcia-Granero, Natalia Eguez, Arnau Garcia-Molsosa, Subhash Bhandari, Anil Chavan, Jaypalsinh M. Jadeja, Akinori Uesugi, Sheela Athreya, Harshita Jain, Brad Chase, Charusmita Gadekar, Veena Mushrif-Tripathy

HARAPPAN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AROUND THE PRE-URBAN HARAPPAN CEMETERY AT JUNA KHATIYA, GUJARAT, INDIA

Excavations of the Pre-Urban Harappan cemetery at Juna Khatiya in the Kachchh region of Gujarat have revealed burials showing an extensive range of variations in their architecture, orientation of skeletons, position of burial goods, and modes of burials. The Juna Khatiya cemetery spans approximately 400x400 metres in size, and during three seasons of excavation, 197 burials were discovered within a portion of this area. However, locating the habitation site(s) associated with these burials has proven to be a significant challenge. Recent surveys have identified three potential habitation sites with archaeological deposits, namely Padta Bet, Dhvajagadh, and Lakhapar, all within a 6 km radius of Juna Khatiya. Investigations at these settlements have yielded promising findings and insights into the architectural features. Interestingly, it was observed that the stones used to construct the burials at Juna Khatiya were not sourced locally from the immediate vicinity of the cemetery where stones are available in plenty. But the stones were quarried from locations within a 6 km radius and then transported to the cemetery. This paper delves into the connections between archaeological sites and the hinterland, and the role played by the landscape surrounding Juna Khatiya in shaping the cemetery complex.

Shinu Anna Abraham, Laure Dussubieux, Thomas Fenn, Alok Kanungo

RECONSTRUCTING GLASS MANUFACTURING PATTERNS IN INDIA THROUGH RAW MATERIALS SOURCING AND ETHNOARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Despite the widespread distribution of Indian-made glass beads around the Indian Ocean and beyond, not much is known about South Asia's early glass industries from the first centuries BCE through the second millennium CE. This paper will present an overview of an ongoing project designed to use elemental and isotopic characterizations of soil samples from selected regions around India to connect raw material sources to ancient glass artifacts. One of this survey project's goals was to examine localized production patterns in order to investigate

whether glass and bead making may have shifted within India regionally and temporally, in response to changing overseas demand. Another important byproduct of the survey, also to be presented here, is the recognition of local and regional variability in contemporary and recent historical glass making practices and organization, through the compilation of ethnographic accounts on these fast-disappearing village-based industries.

Shaashi Ahlawat

THE ISSUE OF CHRONOLOGY AT NALANDA

The Nalanda Mahavihara is widely known to have been operational between the sixth and twelfth century CE. This timeline had already been established long before the remains of the monastery were identified and excavated, primarily based on textual records, especially that of the Chinese traveller monk Xuanzang. The material and levels unearthed in the course of several seasons of excavation were understood through this lens and a neat chronology was drawn which continues to be used today. The typologies for brick sizes and sculptures were established along dynastic lines. Broad generalizations were made for different stages of structural activities at the site. This paper unravels the issues with this approach by digging into the excavation reports and archival photographs from the Archaeological Survey of India records. Through this investigation, the paper will argue that the timeline of Nalanda and dating of its various phases of construction remains to be carefully understood. It will also share the narratives which continue to thrive based on such chronology and hope to suggest a way forward in examining the archaeological corpus of Nalanda more carefully.

Ajithprasad P.

HARAPPAN GRAFFITI AND GUJARAT: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Graffiti on potsherds are reported from several Classical and Sorath Harappan sites in Gujarat. These were documented and analysed to assess their prevalence and site-specific cultural contexts. In general, they belonged to two broad categories: (1) script type having writings in the Harappan script, and (2) non-script type that includes a variety of random marks, such as simple lines, strokes or other geometric or abstract symbols. Most of these are either pre- or post-firing incisions or scratches on pottery vessels, although a few painted examples are also reported. The Harappan script graffiti, both incised and painted, are generally reported only from Classical Harappan sites. An exception to this is Rojdi, which is a Sorath Harappan site in located in central Saurashtra.

The random – non-script type – graffiti that constitute 90% of the overall samples is more popular among Sorath Harappan sites. The temporal distribution of this type ranges from the Urban to the Post-Urban contexts. A structural and formal categorization of the non-script graffiti shows that some of the marks and abstract signs are common, and they occur repeatedly

at several sites in Saurashtra. This would probably suggest a rudimentary system of regional semiotics shared by the Sorath Harappans that helped social communication. They existed along with the Harappan script graffiti during the Urban phase and survived into the Post-Urban phase suggesting the strong hold of regional forces in the evolution of the Sorath Harappan tradition. The proliferation of simple graffiti throughout the Saurashtra region could be seen as a reflection of the vitality of the regional forces in the overall cultural development of the Harappans in Gujarat. At the same time, the Harappan script graffiti, although relatively rare, can inform us about the role of script and language in interregional interactions and help us to have a peep into the composite structure of Harappan society. The paper discusses how diverse cultural contexts of the “script” and the “non-script” graffiti can help us to inform the evolution of Harappan regional traits in Gujarat.

Iqtedar Alam, Cameron A. Petrie

***SHAH NAHR* AS IMPERIAL OBJECT: FINDINGS FROM THE LANDSCAPE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MUGHAL CANAL OF SHAHJAHANABAD, DELHI (1639–1857)**

The 17th century walled city of Shahjahanabad (1639–1857), the last capital of the Mughal Empire, was witness to a major hydrological project undertaken by Shahjahan; the *Shah Nahr* or the Royal Canal. Also known as the Ali Mardan Khan Canal, this perennial canal was a prototype of the Lahore Canal and followed the same layout principle of drawing water from the river upstream, watering the agricultural hinterlands and garden suburbs before branching into the walled city to serve the fort and the elite quarters, eventually draining into the same river source. This paper will delve into the concept of ‘imperial object’ through a study of *Shah Nahr* as a unifying element incorporated in the process of imperial state formation, as introduced by T. Barfield. The analysis will be grounded in recent fieldwork conducted in the region and will also incorporate a GIS-based reconstruction of the 17th century hydrological landscape of Shahjahanabad.

A study of the archaeology of the *Shah Nahr* indicates broader understanding of the emergence and growth of settlements, societies, and urban centres, hydraulic techniques and technologies, and the role of socio-political powers in the use, access, and control of water. With *Shah Nahr* as the central design element of the Imperial layout, hydrology, and state economy, a philological study of the same will provide insights into the regional landform and its role as a ‘functioning machine’ thereby functioning as an imperial object.

Using water as a multi-scalar thinking tool, this study derives learning from a composite waterscape to evaluate the typological and technological aspects of Mughal hydrology responsive to landforms, landscape features, settlement orders, state practices, and religious inclinations. Overall, this study aims to build a comprehensive social and environmental approach to water conservation in medieval and early modern cities of South Asia, which can

further inform a resilience approach to watershed management and regulation of land resources. Shahjahanabad is a powerful iteration of the water architecture practices of the region and their continuities re-imagined in the context of the subcontinent.

Mitchell Allen

THE SYSTEM OF SASANIAN FORTRESSES IN AFGHAN SISTAN

Sasanian defensive fortresses are known from many corners of their empire, the wall-and-fort string in the Gorgan region being only the best known of many. A set of fortresses similar to those known from other regions was discovered by the Helmand Sistan Project along the lower Helmand River and in the adjoining Sar-o-Tar basin. While the sites were identified in the 1970s, they are only now being published. Over 50 sites show great similarities in size, architectural structure and decoration, and associated material culture.

The large quantity of these sites and their positioning on the Sistan landscape raises questions as to their age and function. This presentation will display the varieties of the many “qala” sites surveyed in Sistan and will attempt to answer these questions based on the material culture found there, an analysis of their architectural features, and their similarities to other fortress systems known from the Sasanian empire.

Rhutvij Apte, Divyansh Kumar Sinha, Sudhir Risbud

MEGAFANAL DEPICTIONS FOUND IN THE GEOGLYPHS OF KONKAN, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

Geoglyphs are the largest expression of human creative art, generally longer than 4 metres, created by removing part of the rock surface by incising, picking, carving or abrading. As an important form of rock art, it forms a base for later art traditions. Globally speaking, rock art is spread across all continents and has large time span from Palaeolithic to Medieval period. The Indian subcontinent has diverse evidence of rock art in the form of paintings and engravings in rock shelters, caves, on open boulders and rocks.

The Western coast of Maharashtra which is known as Konkan region, especially the southern part of Konkan, i.e. Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, was probably an important biogeographic zone for human and faunal adaptations in the prehistoric period. During the last 8 years, many geoglyphs' sites have been documented by the authors in this region. This documentation provided an idea about the environmental background of the early life of humans and animals in this region.

The main focus of this paper is to highlight the characteristic of the megafauna depictions carved in the form of geoglyphs. These megafauna depictions include carvings of elephant,

rhinoceros, tiger, deer family, wild boar, amphibians, aquatic animals and birds. The style of carving of these geoglyphs and their size are different and unique from the other rock art sites of India. Hence the documentation and compilation of all these different kinds of megafaunal depictions can help us to understand the past ecological system of the concerned region. Furthermore, the geoglyphs could be an authentic commentary on the man-land relationship during the so-called ‘Dark Age’ of Konkan and provide evidence of human dynamism on the western coast of India.

Robert Arlt

A TRIAD OF FEMALE FIGURES ON THE NORTHERN ĀYĀGA-PLATFORM OF THE KANAGANAHALLI STUPA IN NORTHERN KARNATAKA

Among the numerous meters-high drum panels adorning the Kanaganahalli stupa, one image stands out – a triad of standing female figures. This composition evokes parallels with sculptures from Chandraketugarh, Sanchi, and the renowned statuette known as the “statuette Indiana,” discovered amidst the ruins of Pompei. While these figures, like the central one in the Kanaganahalli relief, have often been identified as representations of the goddess Śrī or Lakṣmī, this prompts a critical question: is there substantial evidence to support this interpretation?

My comprehensive investigation into the art of the Kanaganahalli stupa during my doctoral studies has unveiled intricate details in the body ornaments of these figures. These details establish connections between this representation and those of other prominent female figures in the Kanaganahalli art, as well as contemporaneous carvings adorning the facades of Buddhist caves in the western Deccan.

In this paper, I will present the outcomes of my extensive examination of the bodily ornaments featured in Kanaganahalli’s art. This research forms an integral part of my long-term study concerning the drum panels of the Kanaganahalli stupa. I will delve into how this representation aligns with artistic conventions observed across South and Central Asia during the initial centuries of and before the common era. In addition, I will explore variations in the portrayal of bodily ornaments within the site itself and discuss the implications of these variations for dating specific carvings and sections of the stupa.

In conclusion, I will suggest a fresh interpretation of the triad of female figures depicted in Kanaganahalli and will discuss how this may change our understanding of analogous groups of sculptures discovered elsewhere.

Serena Autiero

THE RE-SEMANTIZATION OF ISIAC IMAGERY IN EARLY HISTORIC INDIA. NEW INSIGHTS AT THE CROSSROAD OF TRANSCULTURAL AND COROPLASTIC STUDIES

The interaction between the Satavahana Empire in South India (late 2nd century BCE–early 3rd century CE) and Western Indian Ocean (WIO) countries, including the Roman Empire, has been so far considered as the principal example of pre-modern Globalization in world history. By looking at Satavahana terracotta figurines from the heyday of Indo-Roman trade, we can answer wider questions on cultural globalization and transculturality as complex system of interaction, and to provide new perspectives on transregional interactions in the past. Cultural transference and interaction are the keys to better understand the formative phases and the consequences of globalization as we know it today.

Figurines are valuable cultural artifacts that provide insights into their socio-cultural context of origin. Terracotta figurines in archaeological contexts are usually interpreted as religious artefacts, however their association to religious practices is not always obvious. “Minor” cultural products (as opposed to text, monuments or elitist art) offer, indeed, an extremely fecund prism to understand ancient societies. Scholars have recognized iconographies derived from Egyptian religious imagery in the terracotta figurines produced in India in the Early Historic period. Does the circulation of portable objects functions as catalyst for change and innovation? How did figurative systems interact in antiquity?

This paper answers these questions by looking in particular at two case studies: 1) female figurines wrapped in a mantle, a typology often related to the Egyptian Isis, and as a precursor to the Indian Pattini; and 2) male childish figurines related to the iconography of Harpocrates. The extreme variety of Harpocrates and pseudo-Harpocrates in the Hellenistic-Roman world makes the latter example particularly interesting; the many differences and peculiarities make, indeed, impossible a straightforward tracking of iconographic transmission. We will look at modalities of reception and re-semantization of such religious imagery, attempting to identify a common denominator determining how religious traditions react to the impact of alien imagery. This paper, through the lenses of coroplastic studies, analyses how ancient Indian societies balanced the preservation of traditions and need for identity with the opportunities for innovation and hybridization.

B

Hans Bakker

TRIBUTE TO A FAMOUS SINGER. A STATUE FOUND AT NANDIVARDHANA (NAGARDHAN/ RĀMAGIRI)

In my book *The Vākātakas. An Essay in Hindu Iconology* (Bakker 1997) I have described and illustrated an image (pp. 124–27, Plate XXVI) that was shown to me at a visit to the Central Nagpur Museum in 1989. This small image (27 × 20 × 12 cm) was said to have been found in the Nagardhan area, the ancient Nandivardhana, at the foot of the Rāmagiri in 1987. The finders and museum curator had identified the sculpture as representing ‘Kālidāsa’. The image is connected to a pedestal of rough red sandstone, out of which the sculpture seems to have been carved. I designated the image as that of a kavi, a poet or singer, in the absence of any specific identifying marks.

Since the discovery of the image and its publication, excavations at the adjacent Mansar have uncovered dozens of sculptures which show great resemblances to the image at issue, in style and material. So much so that the hypothesis seems justified to attribute these images to one and the same workshop, which operated under the patronage of Prabhāvatī Guptā’s youngest son, King Pravarasena II. The sites excavated in Mansar are generally thought to be this king’s new residence: Pravarapura. In the proposed lecture the kavi’s image will be juxtaposed to some of the Mansar finds.

The poet represented in the image at issue holds a pothī, a book, in his left hand on which thirteen 5th-century characters are scribbled. A detailed photo of the inscription as such has been published (Bakker 1997, 125) but the text has not been understood until now. The size of the book is small, c. 5.4 × 1.8 cm, and the letters are worn off and damaged. If we could decipher it correctly, this might disclose some information on the identity of the poet and the patron who commissioned the sculpture.

In the lecture a fresh attempt will be made to make sense out of the inscription. A tentative reading will be presented and some clues will be discussed that might lead us to the kavi and the donor.

Dániel Balogh

ONE BHĪMA LESS? A POSSIBLE PHANTOM KING IN 10TH-CENTURY ĀNDHRA

The Eastern Cālukya dynasty of Veṅgī was established in coastal Āndhra in the second quarter of the seventh century and held sway over it until the last quarter of the eleventh. Their reign of almost half a millennium is documented by numerous copperplate

inscriptions, many of which I have re-edited in the ERC Project DHARMA. One interesting feature of these grants is that from the late 9th century CE onward they include a list of kings from the founding of the dynasty, complete with the duration of each ruler's reign, and including collaterals of the main line who held the throne.

John Faithfull Fleet was the first scholar to stake out a chronology of the Eastern Cālukyas in 1891, on the basis of the 24 grants known to him. This includes a son of King Amma I, named Bhīma III, who allegedly reigned for eight months in the troubled 920s. Curiously, the ostensible Bhīma III is mentioned in only a single source, the Diggubarru grant of his uncle Bhīma II (934–945 CE). Ever since Fleet, scholars have generally accepted the existence of this Bhīma III, but I have suspected for some time that he may be a phantom who emerged only from an emendation made by Fleet in the Diggubarru grant. Without this emendation, which is in my opinion unwarranted, the locus in question speaks of Bhīma II.

However, R. Subba Rao claimed in the 1940s to have discovered another reference to Bhīma III in a loose plate from a later grant, and then in the 1950s, to have studied a grant issued by Bhīma III himself. Unfortunately, his editions of these texts are of a questionable standard, are not accompanied by facsimiles, and the edition of the latter grant is only partial. In the course of recent fieldwork in museums of Andhra Pradesh, I have obtained good photographic documentation of both of these inscriptions. Armed with this new material, it is now time to revisit the evidence for the existence of Bhīma III.

J. Bates, V.K. Singh, R.N. Singh, S. Chakradhari, P. Kim, B. Mohan, M. Singh, A.P. Singh

EARLY TO ADVANCED FARMING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE GANGES PLAINS: NEOLITHIZATION PATHWAYS AND THE INTERSECTION OF ECOLOGY AND CULTURE

The Middle Gangetic Plains of South Asia represent one of the most complex and diverse ecologies and cultural trajectories in the subcontinent to study archaeologically. During the Early to Advanced Farming periods, we see a mosaic of land uses including hunter-gatherer-fisher-foraging, low level food production, incipient agricultural developments and introduced farming systems. Debates remain heated however as to how these different lifeways and food production/procurement systems interacted, and what the pathways of 'Neolithization' were across the region. As part of the *Indica* project, the site of Sakas has been explored as a pilot study to investigate how changing floral assemblages can provide insight into these aspects of Middle Gangetic lifeways during the 7th to 2nd millennium BC. Sakas captures a glimpse into an Early Farming development towards the end of this time frame (c.1800–1200 BC) in the foothills of Vindhyan-Kaimur ranges.

In this paper the initial results of the archaeobotanical work are presented. We outline how a mosaic landscape was exploited by the inhabitants at the site, taking advantage of wild and domesticated resources from multiple ecological niches. Native and non-native foods were a staple part of the diet, including locally growing small millets, sedges, rice and beans as well as introduced crops like lentils, vetch, wheat and barley. Stability in resource use was seen across the 600-year occupation of the site, with little change in the basic crop assemblage. However, some subtler patterns were noted within this, such as changes in the weed ecologies suggesting agricultural shifts, increased proportions of domesticated rice spikelet base, and two sizes of lentils that could imply either a feralization process or a secondary domestication. Such changes may relate to ecological adaptations, a discussion that has played a key role in rice domestication narratives, and/or cultural preferences, something that has not been discussed at length as yet. We are seeing suggestions of developing foodways technologies that may have influenced these patterns, and the intersections of ecology and culture are posited as an area for debate at Sakas and beyond to Gangetic Neolithization trajectories more broadly.

Seema Bawa

FASHIONING ŚIVALIṄGAS IN STONE AND CLAY IN EARLY NORTH INDIA: A STUDY OF THEIR ICONOGRAPHIC AND RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The paper seeks to recover the variations, similarities and differences between the stone and terracotta ekamukhaliṅgas and liṅgas, in terms of iconography as well as their symbolic and ritual meaning. Can a hierarchy of meaning or significance within the two mediums be discerned in terms of patronage or usage? Chronologically the liṅgas under study started being created in the early historic period of north India from the post Mauryan period onwards. Contextualizing these within the imperial/ tribal state formations and the geo-political inter-linkages with the larger religio-cultural formations may lead to further insights into the articulations of early Śaiva religio-cultural practices and their regional manifestations and variations.

A close study of epigraphic evidence from Reh and other sites may also be informative insofar as patronage, identity and sectarian leanings are concerned that marked Śaivism in early India. Liṅga worship need to be contextualized within beliefs and rituals prescribed in the textual tradition including Gṛhya sūtras and Śrauta sūtras that were read and circulated among ritual specialists during the time when North Indian ekamukhaliṅgas and liṅgas were being created.

The audience as well as purpose of liṅga worship can be gleaned from sculptured steles from Mathura and terracotta from Agroha et al., where the worship of the liṅga and ekamukhaliṅga has been illustrated. This is also the time when iconographic experiments were undertaken with reference to other sectarian deities in both mediums, but it is the liṅga that permeates the religious and ritual matrix.

Many of the terracotta figures are scantily documented and published, and are still at site/museums. By bringing together these and juxtaposing them with the stone specimens, this study will help in bringing to light the processes of practice, entrenchment and circulation of Śivaism in the early centers of art and of religious activity during the formative period. These include Khokrakot, Kausambi, Mathura, Agroha and cognate sites that were very important urban centers with substantial artifactual production, especially of terracotta sculptures.

Osmund Boppearachchi

DIGGING UP THE PAST IN SEARCH OF EIGHT SCULPTURES FROM MINNĒRIYA (SRI LANKA) CONSIDERED TO HAVE DISAPPEARED REPRESENTING GODS AND YAKṢAS OF WEALTH

A black-and-white photograph taken in 1883 depicts eight sculptures found on the bund of the Minnēriya reservoir in Sri Lanka, built by King Mahāsenā in the third century CE. The Minnēriya Vāḍainna Māligāva was designated as the place of their discovery. The sculptures have been misinterpreted as representing King Mahāsenā and his entourage. In reality, they depict a pot-bellied dwarf (gaṇa), two multi-hooded Nāgarājas, two single-hooded Nāgiṇī, a Kubera and a Śaṅkhanidhi. Thus, all the images found at the site are associated with wealth and prosperity. Our recent research has uncovered four sculptures previously thought to have disappeared. This article discusses the symbolism of these sculptures in the socio-economic history of the first four centuries of the Common Era, comparing them with their Andhra parallels, which inspired the early plastic arts of Sri Lanka.

Olivier Bordeaux, Arnaud Bertrand, Frédérique Brunet, Ani Danielyan, Corinne Debaine-Francfort, Ségolène de Pontbriand, David Sarmiento-Castillo

IMPERIAL BORDERLANDS IN CENTRAL ASIA: FIRST RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS AS PART OF THE ANR ‘FRONTIER’ PROJECT

The ANR ‘FRONTIER’ project, which starts in 2024, focuses on imperial borderlands between the 5th century BCE and the 5th century CE. In the context of Central Asia, which combines the steppe and the oasis world, the territorial cohesion of the great empires is based on a policy of intense and multi-scalar expansion, as well as on the emergence of large exchange networks. Nevertheless, the centre-periphery approach only partially accounts for the notion of frontier – here understood as a zone of contact with or without a specified boundary line – namely its manifestation, perception and permeability, culturally and materially as well as geographically. This project thus proposes to address this issue by focusing not on the centre, but on the borderlands of Central Asian empires from Sogdiana and Bactria to Northwest China and the ‘Hanging Passages’ of the Upper Indus valleys.

The focus put both by the written sources and field investigations on the cores of empires has considerably slowed our knowledge of marginal areas: in those, the imperial expansion strategies and its manifestations remain largely unexplored. A main part of the ‘FRONTIER’ project is to gather unique datasets based on fieldwork data so as to identify mobility patterns along circulation routes.

In order to tackle this problematic, two 4-weeks archaeological survey campaigns were scheduled in the Spring of 2024: the first one in Uzbekistan in the Zeravshan valley to complete the documentation of the remarkable and previously unknown rock art material (petroglyphs), the preliminary study of which attests to its links with other areas of Central Asia as well as the Upper Indus region from the Bronze Age onwards; the second one in Tajikistan in the Karategin (Rasht) valley, a hitherto poorly known area which yet served as a major circulation passageway between Central Asia and Northwest China *via* the Kyzylart Pass (4 280 m). These survey campaigns aim at recording and quantifying the available documentation, completed by data from the existing archaeological bibliography and a partly-inventoried corpus of petroglyphs. Our presentation will address the ‘FRONTIER’ project as a whole and present the latest results of the conducted surveys.

Pia Brancaccio

BUILDING KANHERI: STUPA AND TEMPLE STRUCTURES CONSTRUCTED AT THE KANHERI CAVES

The Buddhist site of Kanheri, ancient Krishnagiri, situated in the Palghar district of Konkan, Maharashtra, is one of the largest rock-cut monasteries in Western Deccan with over 100 caves including residential units, congregational halls, and an elaborate system of waterways and tanks to manage rainwater. Kanheri has also yielded impressive epigraphic records counting over one hundred inscriptions incised on rock and copper plates. The present paper will present some preliminary results of the MAK (Mapping Ancient Krishnagiri) project conducted in 2022–23 and will discuss the built structures documented at the caves. They include a temple and a large stupa erected on the north hill, and an imposing stupa built at the core of the so-called ‘cemetery’ area. The picture that emerges is that of a Buddhist site with incredible longevity, where the Tantric tradition dominated at the turn of the 10th century.

Samara Broglia de Moura, Marion Poux

NEW RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYAS: FRENCH-NEPALI ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION IN MUSTANG (NEPAL)

The Mustang District, located in north-west Nepal, is historically known as an important N-S corridor following the course of the Kali Gandaki River and linking the Tibetan plateau to the Indian plains. Historical sources describing the region are scarce or even non-existent for periods preceding the 7th century CE. Despite this lack of written sources and the

region's importance for understanding the different dynamics influencing regional trading routes and cultural exchanges, very little archaeological research has been carried out in Mustang. This is partly due to access restrictions as well as local beliefs, rendering archaeological excavations extremely difficult.

Recent investigations in Mustang conducted by Marion Poux over the last 5 years have, however, revealed the vast archaeological richness of the Kali Gandaki Valley. These investigations resulted in the identification of about 200 archaeological sites, 30 of which have been radiocarbon dated. In order to better understand the development of early settlement sites in Upper Mustang, but also to better characterize some of these newly identified sites, we have decided to develop a new research program. This paper will focus on the presentation of this project, and the initial results obtained during the 2023 fieldwork campaign. We will also present some of the solutions and methodologies we have put in place in order to elaborate a more detailed chronological framework, as well as developing a better understanding of cultural interactions between Mustang and neighboring regions.

Frédérique Brunet, Bobomullo Bobomulloev, Mathilde Cervel, Olivier Bordeaux, Gourguen Davtian, Odil Otoboev, David Sarmiento-Castillo, Jorge Vasquez, Antoine Zazzo

NEW DISCOVERIES AT THE NECROPOLIS OF SARAZM-2 IN THE ZERAVSHAN VALLEY, TAJIKISTAN. PRELIMINARY MAFAC FIELDWORK RESULTS OF THE 2023–2024 SEASONS

From the 5th mill. BC, Central Asia appears as both a cradle of original civilisations and a key crossroad of people, cultures, materials and objects between steppes and oases long before the Silk Roads. The proto-urban settlement of Sarazm in the Zeravshan River Valley in Tajikistan, dating from Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age (4th–3rd mill. BC), and inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 2010, is a prime example of this.

MAFAC's research in Sarazm carried out in close collaboration with the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography A. Donish of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, particularly A. Razzokov, has provided further insights into the genesis of this early urban phenomenon far away from the southern oases, as well as into this singular cultural mixing, which demonstrates links from Siberia to the Syro-Mesopotamian, Iranian and Baluchistan cultures. Besides trade exchanges, the mineral resources of the Upper Zeravshan Valley, especially gold, may have attracted people from various cultural backgrounds. The unexpected scale of this interconnection prefigures the Bronze Age developments of the Oxus Civilisation.

About 2 km to the south of Sarazm, the discovery in 2018 of several tombs and kurgans by S. Bobomulloev and B. Bobomulloev, followed by excavations from 2019, have raised the possibility of a contemporary necropolis. This burial complex – Sarazm-2 – echoes the famous “princess tomb” at Sarazm, attributed to the middle of the 4th millennium (excavation IV, A.

Isakov and A. Razzokov). Whereas the funerary architecture evokes the steppe kurgans (Afanas'ev culture), the burial furniture, for the most part made in Sarazm, is close to that found in the Bronze Age Oxus civilization burials, while also attesting to links with Southern Asia (gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, carnelian and heated steatite ornaments; shell bracelets from Indian Ocean; terracotta figurines). An in-depth evaluation of these finds in 2022 confirmed that Sarazm-2 can now be considered as the Sarazm necropolis, while demonstrating the importance of major interactions between Central and South Asia from the Chalcolithic period onwards.

Two seasons of excavations (2023 and 2024) of one of the largest kurgans (No. 4, diam. 60 m) have revealed the presence of a complex and monumental architecture in pakhsa (buildings, large perimeter wall...), completed by a well-preserved wooden superstructure, only partially destroyed despite several phases of looting. It contained several tombs located at great depth. More than five individuals have so far been identified and will be the subject of several analyses (anthropological, isotopic, ¹⁴C dating, palaeo-DNA...). An on-going study of the microstratigraphy also provides information on the phases of construction, using, and abandonment.

As expected, peripheral structures (concentrations of pebbles, pakhsa walls and pebble circles) have been identified and will be also excavated in autumn 2024. The potsherds and several other elements of material culture confirm the connection with the proto-urban settlement of Sarazm; on-going ¹⁴C dating will clarify this chronology. Further research on the kurgan No. 4, combined with geophysical survey, will provide a better understanding of the funerary and cultural traditions of the inhabitants of Sarazm, and their close links at this time with other regions of Central and Southern Asia.

Fiona Buckee

ALL THE SITE'S A STAGE? A REMARKABLE 'NEW' COLLECTION OF 6TH CENTURY MINIATURE SHRINES AND FRIEZES FROM SOUTHWEST BIHAR

This talk will introduce a largely unpublished set of *antarapatta* friezes and miniature, monolithic Valabhi shrines (a temple mode with a barrel-roof) from a village in Kaimur District, southwest Bihar, less than a mile from the celebrated hill-top temple site of Mundeshvari. My analysis suggests that the friezes come from the first half of the 6th century, and the shrines from the latter half. Together they comprise a small feast of new data for studies of late- and post-Gupta architecture, early Pashupata Shaivism and temple-based performing arts.

The Valabhis, each with differently designed 'multi-aedicular' upper storeys, are the earliest examples we have of substantively intact 'mainstream Nagara' temples, albeit with dolls-house proportions. They predate by about a century the mid-late 7th century Latina temples from Alampur and Pattadakal in the Deccan and Mahua in Madhya Pradesh that have previously

been considered the first surviving monuments from this tradition. Their complex iconographic programmes feature multiple Lakulishas, indicating that the temples were built for Pashupata communities, as well as a little *vidushaka* (a Brahmin-jester character from early Sanskrit dramas). This latter figure appears to link the Valabhis to the friezes, which contain a varied, animated cast of wrestlers, *gana* musicians, dancers, episodes from the Ramayana, and an unidentified theatrical scene containing an exquisite representation of a second little *vidushaka*.

I will argue that, although closely linked to Mundeshvari, the collection of fragments come from the village itself. They suggest that in the 6th century, this unassuming hamlet was a satellite site to its larger neighbour, fulfilling ancillary functions, and producing its own cutting-edge architecture and sculpture. Focussing on the antarapatta friezes, I will explore whether the theatrical and musical scenes could indicate that the site was once a renowned centre for the performing arts.

Arslan Butt

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY OF TAXILA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMPLEX

Taxila is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that was an important city during the 1st and 5th centuries CE, located on a branch of the Silk Road connecting China to the west. Industrial expansion, mining activities, and illegal excavations have led to environmental degradation and damage to archaeological remains. To protect the valley from further damage, the federal government has designated the central portion as a conservation zone. The study of community archaeology as a means of heritage preservation remains inadequate in Pakistan. This highlights a critical gap in understanding how the community can be involved in the conservation of their cultural heritage. Therefore, there is a need for concerted efforts to promote community involvement in archaeological preservation. Hence a study is proposed to conduct a social survey among the local communities of Pakistan with a case study of “Taxila” to understand their perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes towards preserving archaeological heritage. The overall purpose of this study is to gain insight on the local public’s views and understanding about the threats to archaeological heritage of Taxila Valley according to the perspective of locals and proposing a framework for the protection of archaeological heritage with involvement of local communities. Archaeological heritage is dependent on the humans, especially locals for its protection.



Irene Caldana

EARLY BEAD-MAKING IN PREHISTORIC BALUCHISTAN: A CHALCOLITHIC WORKSHOP AREA AT MEHRGARH (PAKISTAN) MID 4TH MILLENNIUM BCE

An important workshop area for the manufacturing of semiprecious beads (lapis lazuli, carnelian, turquoise and others) dating to the mid-4th millennium BCE was collected on the surface of the site of Mehrgarh by French and Italian archaeologists in the 80s. It is one of the few and earliest beadmaking manufacturing sites of the Indo-Pakistani Subcontinent. Although two articles have dealt with specific aspects of the palaeotechnological evidence, no systematic study was done, so far, on this important collection, which includes, besides beads and manufacturing waste, a set of well-preserved drill heads. This presentation will reconsider the whole assemblage in a unitary perspective, re- documenting the materials with updated methods and formats, and will apply archaeometric techniques such as X-ray Diffraction, Scanning Electron Microscopy of the silicone cast of the drilling hole, Raman spectroscopy and FTIR tests (these latter, for the remnants of glue on the hafting section of the drills).

Yohan Chabot, Damien Arhan, Vincent Lefèvre, Coline Lefrancq

EVOLUTION OF THE FLUVIAL LANDSCAPE IN THE MAHASTHANGARH REGION (BANGLADESH) OVER THE LAST 2000 YEARS: CONTRIBUTION OF SATELLITE IMAGES AND GEOMORPHOLOGICAL STUDIES TO THE HISTORY OF PALEOENVIRONMENT

In Bangladesh, paleoenvironmental studies with regard to human settlements remain unusual. For the site of Mahasthangarh located in northwestern Bangladesh, a pioneering work was conducted by Christine Jacqueminet and Jean-Paul Bravard in the 1990's. They carried out a first study on the geoenvironment of Mahasthangarh. This ancient city has been built on the eastern margin of the Barind Tract – a Pleistocene elevated alluvial terrace – along the Karatoya River. Nowadays, the Karatoya is a small river but in the historical times it was a tributary of the Tista River, a major river of North Bengal. According to written sources and ancient maps, the Karatoya has undergone many changes over the past 2000 years and especially over the last two centuries. In addition, some parts of the site appear to have been damaged by floods according to archaeological findings. After a gap of almost 25 years, the geomorphological studies have restarted to provide new data on the environmental changes recorded in the region of Mahasthangarh during the last 2000 years in relation to the human settlement.

This presentation will introduce the preliminary results of this second phase of research that is focusing (i) on the analysis of satellite images to identify the fluvial paleoforms and the ancient

drainage network in the current landscape; (ii) on geomorphological operations conducted in the field (with a sedimentary record) to define the processes, the causes and the chronology of the fluvial changes.

Kalyan Sekhar Chakraborty, Manjil Hazarika, Thomas Larsen, Patrick Roberts

ASSESSING SUBSISTENCE PRACTICE IN THE EARLY SETTLED VILLAGES OF NORTHEASTERN INDIA USING ABSORBED CERAMIC RESIDUE

Our understanding of the origin and development of Early Settled Villages (ESVs) in South Asia is limited and patchy, and the only region that received extensive importance has been the Indus Valley region. Other than the Indus Valley region, some early works carried out in Central and Southern India highlighted the importance of these two regions in understanding of prehistoric human-environmental interaction and the development of ESVs independent of the Indus Valley Region. However, unfortunately one region that was left out from such discussion on South Asian ESVs was Eastern and Northeastern India despite of its likelihood to be one of the earliest centres for indigenous rice domestication in South Asia.

While there are only a few absolute dates available, it is generally agreed that at least by 4th millennium BP, Northeastern India witnessed the emergence of ESVs. However, considering the potential for East Asian influence it is likely that the emergence of ESVs along with rice agriculture, celts and cord-marked handmade pottery should date much older, possibly going back to as early as between 10th and 8th millennium BP. Unfortunately, despite of extensive potential in providing unique evidence of prehistoric human-environment interaction, this region has never received the importance it should as far as archaeological research in India is concerned. In this paper, for the first time we discuss the results of absorbed lipid residue analysis from cord-marked and other potteries from the site of Sonai, in Tripura, India. While the limited excavation at this site has revealed no residential structures, a thick deposition of cord-marked as well as plain handmade pottery were found in primary context in association with tools made on fossil woods, a typical stone age raw material in Northeastern India. Using the evidence of absorbed residues from 44 ceramic vessels, in this presentation we will discuss the subsistence practice of ESVs in this region, the use of early pottery vessels and how these early settled villages interacted and influenced the regional physical environment.

Sudarshan Chakradhari, Vikas Kumar Singh, Manisha Singh, Brij Mohan, Sunil Kumar Singh, Anisha Singh, Ravindra Nath Singh

SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATIONS OF CERAMICS OF THE SAKAS (ROHTAS, INDIA)

The archaeological site of Sakas is located in the Bihar state of India, in the foothills of the Vindhyan-Kaimur ranges. Various types of pottery have been recovered in the excavation. Most of the pottery consists of Corded Ware, Black and Red Ware, Burnished Black and Red Ware,

Burnished Red Ware, Dull Red Ware, Dull Red Slipped Ware, Tan ware, and a few with Rusticated incised designs.

The problem associated with the pottery of Sakas is:

- (1) To understand the provenance of pottery, whether it is indigenous or come through trade and commerce
- (2) To understand the manufacturing technique of pottery
- (3) To understand the firing technique and temperature
- (4) To understand the chemical composition of minerals
- (5) To know the source of clay (Raw Material)
- (6) To understand the connection of this site with other sites through the pottery.
- (7) To get the dating of the pottery, when it was fired.

For these questions, various ways for the scientific studies of ceramics have been done to know the appropriate answers such as Petrography, μ -XRD, and Isotopic analysis of the ceramics, etc. Petrographic analysis is one of the major methods we use to distinguish the properties of ceramics in thin sections and to interpret the results. A combination of various petrography (sedimentary soil micromorphology and ceramic) methods and study of modern pottery production is required for such examinations. It can identify the patterns on the ceramic fabric which is a result of human activity. Other methods like μ -XRD provide information about the chemical and mineral composition of pottery. With the help of the above questions, the paper will examine the distinguished characteristics of potteries recovered from Sakas (Rohta, India). The scope of the paper will be extended to understand paleo-climatic conditions of the transitional area of the Ganges plain and Kaimur-Vindhyan ranges.

Arti Chowdhary, Ravindra Nath Singh, Satyen Saha, Krishanu Bandyopadhyay

UNVEILING THE CULTURE THROUGH SOIL SAMPLING: PHOSPHATE AND NITROGEN ANALYSIS AT MASUDPUR I, A HARAPPAN SITE IN HARYANA, INDIA

Archaeological science is a multidisciplinary field of study combining aspects of both science and humanities to reconstruct and interpret ancient people's lives, behaviours and environment. Masudpur I, the Harappan site is remarkable in this context. This site, colloquially referred to as Sampolia Khera, is located in the Hissar district of Haryana. The most recent excavations at the site were performed by Prof. Ravindra Nath Singh and Dr. Cameron A. Petrie in the year 2018. The excavation yielded a diverse array of cultural artefacts related to the Harappan Civilization. Furthermore, most importantly, this site is positioned within a 12 to 16 kilometer radius of the urban site of Rakhigarhi, suggesting its location in the hinterland. The cultural artefacts recovered from the site provide compelling evidence of its socio-economic interconnectedness with the urban centre of Rakhigarhi during the Mature Harappan period (c. 2500–2000 BCE). The topographic analysis and material recovered from the site suggested that it was a large village during the Mature and Late Harappan times. To identify particular activity areas on the mound, soil samples from different contexts have been collected for

phosphate and nitrogen analysis. it is now widely recognized that human activities in and around the area leave behind deposits that contain significant amounts of phosphorus, carbon and nitrogen. The distribution pattern of phosphorus can offer valuable insights into the types of activities that occurred in the past. Further, Nitrogen is found in larger quantities in animal excrement. Thorough qualitative and quantitative analysis of these contents can offer a precise understanding of human and animal activities during a specific period. This paper underscores the intense importance of incorporating these applied scientific methodologies to address archaeological quandaries. The XRF data of this site will be presented for the first time. This approach allows us to gain a profound understanding and decode the archaeological record at a highly detailed level.

Louis Copplestone

A PRELIMINARY TYPOLOGY AND CHRONOLOGY OF *STŪPA*-TEMPLES AND TEMPLE-MONASTERIES IN MEDIEVAL EASTERN INDIA

Towards the end of the eighth century, architects in eastern India began to build vast new ‘mega monasteries’ (Sanskrit, *mahāvihāra*) in brick with the support of royal patrons and their subordinates. In three cases — at Antichak in eastern Bihar, and Paharpur and Mainamati in Bangladesh — these new monasteries were organised around innovative and monumental ‘*stūpa*-temples’, integrating the spatial and ritual agenda of the ancient *stūpa*-site, the residential monastery and multiple image shrines into a single complex. This type of medieval monastery-complex challenges the established taxonomy of Buddhist architecture in India and, I argue, invites misidentification and problematic dating with significant implications for the history of Indian Buddhism. The challenge of this period of architectural activity is compounded by the complex physical history of each site: these monastery-complexes were built and occupied, rebuilt and reoccupied over many centuries such that can only be understood today in the *longue durée*.

In this paper, I present the results of recent fieldwork to track the physical history of each site, produce a comparative architectural typology, and propose a relative sequence of architectural activity. Based on my analysis of epigraphy and archaeological finds of all kinds, I tentatively suggest a new chronology of Buddhist architecture in medieval eastern India and briefly consider this in relation to a range of social, political and religious developments and events in the region.

D

Daniela De Simone, Davit Naskidashvili, Udayakumar Sankaralingam, Sharada Srinivasan, Letizia Trinco

A REPORT ON THE FIRST SEASON OF EXPLORATIONS IN THE NILGIRI MOUNTAINS, TAMIL NADU

This paper summarises the results of the first season of explorations in the Nilgiri Mountains, Tamil Nadu (March–May 2023) carried out by the team of the Nilgiri Archaeological Project, a five-year research programme funded by the Research Foundation–Flanders (FWO), based at Ghent University in collaboration with the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, the French Institute of Pondicherry, and the Central University of Karnataka. The Nilgiri Mountains, a massif connecting the Western and Eastern Ghats, is a region of montane subtropical forests with peaks over 2500 m in the north-western corner of Tamil Nadu at the junction with southern Karnataka and eastern Kerala.

The project's study area extends from the town of Udthagamandalam to that of Kotagiri, ca. 60 km², in the Upper Nilgiris, where the highest peaks are located. Mountainous regions and forested areas are generally considered as marginal spaces inhabited by marginalised communities, where archaeological investigations are rare and limited in scope. However, the communities inhabiting the forests of the Nilgiri Mountains were not isolated but they were in fact connected to short- and long-distance exchange networks from (at least) the beginning of the second millennium CE (possibly earlier), as shown by our study of the grave goods unearthed from the megalithic burials dotting the tops and ridges of the Upper Nilgiris, which were excavated in the 19th century by British colonial administrators. In this paper, we will present the preliminary observations of this first season of explorations, during which we surveyed the western part of the study area. Remote sensing datasets enhanced by relevant information available in historical maps, allowed us to map and survey megalithic sites excavated by the British and identify new ones, and document the re-use or destruction of a number of sites. A key result of this first season is the identification of sites that might reveal habitation levels given that past settlements were never identified before.

Parul Pandya Dhar

BUILDING BUDDHIST LANDSCAPES: ARTISTS AND AESTHETIC PRACTICES IN THE EARLY DECCAN

The Deccan's topography and strategic geographical location made it a melting point of cultures since ancient times. As a consequence, the region attracted artists and art styles from the North and the South, as well as from beyond the subcontinent's borders. This paper is an

attempt to understand the nature of artistic activities and aesthetic practices that gave form to the Buddhist built heritage of the Deccan during c. 2nd century BCE to 4th century CE. The focus here will be on the ‘makers’ of the early Buddhist structures of the Deccan—the artist-artisans, builders, planners and patrons.

To approach the central concerns of this paper, a few representative early Buddhist structures, sculptures and epigraphs from the western and eastern Deccan will be analysed for possible clues to questions such as: What were the motivations and limitations of the makers and patrons of the early Buddhist landscapes in the Deccan? How did they experiment and innovate to create fresh art vocabularies? What records have they left behind to help us to better understand their organization, methods, concerns and aspirations? What were the narrative and aesthetic strategies that they adopted in assimilating different transregional influences to create fresh artistic expressions? The paper addresses such questions relating to art and architectural activity in the Deccan during the Sātavāhana and Ikṣvāku periods.

Aurore Didier, Alexandre Houdas, Zakir Khan, Zafar Iqbal, Ali K. Lashari, Pascal Mongne, David Sarmiento-Castillo

REVISITING THE CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE OF CHANHU-DARO (INDUS PERIODS 1 TO 3) AND NEW DATA ON THE FIRST CENTURIES OF THIS INDUS SETTLEMENT FROM EXCAVATIONS AT MOUND I

Chanhu-daro (Sindh, Pakistan) was undoubtedly one of the major urban and craft centres for the production and distribution of stone beads and ornaments during the period of the Indus Valley Civilisation (2600/2500–1900 BCE). It is also one of the most important sites for better understanding the internal development of this civilisation in the Middle/Lower Indus Valley. Since 2015, the site is being extensively excavated by the French Archaeological Mission in the Indus Basin (MAFBI) in cooperation with the Culture, Tourism, Antiquities and Archives Department, Government of Sindh. Between 2015 and 2022, the MAFBI team excavated a total area of 6,500 m² in Mound II and Mound III with the aim of better documenting the architectural and craft developments during the first centuries of the Indus Civilisation (1st Indus period, 2500–2300 BCE). The results significantly renewed our knowledge of the planned urbanism of the first Indus cities, marked, at Chanhu-daro, by a functional specialization of the different sectors of the settlement. They also revealed the extent and exceptional character of the “lapidary quarters” located within the urban complex.

During the 2023 field-season, the MAFBI team opened new excavation trenches in another part of the site: Mound I. Mound I was little-investigated in the 1930s. The objectives of the new field work are: 1) to better understand the functioning and extension of the 1st Indus period settlement and determine its stratigraphic thickness; 2) to study the complete occupation sequence of the site and, in particular, to establish the stratigraphic connection between Mound I and Mounds II–III and determine the nature of the 3rd Indus period/Jhukar settlements; and

3) if possible, to check for the existence of pre-Indus levels. This paper will focus on the results of Trench 5 opened in 2023 on the eastern slope of Mound I. Its stratigraphy extends from the 1st Indus period to the end of the Indus civilisation, and probably to the post-Indus period.

E

Nicolas Engel, Ajmal Maiwandi

THE UNBAKED CLAY SCULPTURES FROM MES AYNAK, AFGHANISTAN, STYLISTIC AND TECHNICAL ANALYSES IN LIGHT OF AKTC'S 2023–2024 OPERATION

The archaeological site of Mes Aynak, located about 35km south of Kabul in the Logar province, has been one of the major topics the previous and current Afghan administration is facing in both terms of Cultural Heritage preservation and economic development since 2009, when excavation started there. Archaeological remains, including Buddhist monasteries, living quarters and mining workshops dated to the 3rd to the 8th c., are strongly associated with a huge copper deposit to be exploited again in a large scale by a Chinese company.

AKTC, whose operations have been resumed in Afghanistan since the Taliban took over Kabul on August 15, 2021, is currently implementing the consolidation of the unbaked clay sculptures uncovered by the 2009–2018 excavations within the Buddhist monasteries, as a preliminary phase to the removal of these artefacts from the site. Experts have been gathered during two field missions in 2023. Other missions are planned in 2024, allowing a presentation of the first results of analyses and tests in a very short future. The whole project is founded by ALIPH Foundation.

Documentation and first studies of the impressive corpus of unbaked clay sculptures, some of them monumental in size, were launched during the excavations with the strong support of the French archaeological delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA) and, but for a shorter time, by UNESCO – Kabul.

Given the numerous and aesthetic importance of that unbaked clay corpus, and the various parallels already drawn between Mes Aynak and other archaeological sites like Hadda near Jelalabad, Tepe Narenj in Kabul or Tepe Sardar in Ghazni, the confrontation of the stylistic analyse and the current technical analyse may definitely put some new light on the unbaked clay sculptures from Mes Aynak. Hence on the whole artistic production as well as on the anonymous artists and artisans working from one site to another according to orders, in the eastern region of current-day Afghanistan.

F

Harry Falk

THE SO-CALLED HARPOON OF THE COPPER HOARD CULTURE: ITS USE AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND

The object called harpoon has been assumed to serve to spear aquatic animals or, on account of its blunt point, to have had only a prestige-related or cultic background. The paper demonstrates its use as a hunting tool instead. The procedure followed is first attested in a paleolithic culture in western Europe, is found in Classical Greece and also in India from Chalcolithic times up to the Guptas. With its highly specialized nature, the so-called harpoon came out of use when it had helped to remove big game from prospective settling grounds.

We seem to deal with two sections of possibly related people, one in the woods specializing in high-end metal casting, producing only mediocre earthenware (OCP), while those following and settling down turned to sophisticated pottery (PGW) and could live with comparatively simple metal artifacts. OCP and PGW are thus only two sides of the same medal.

Literary evidence and cultural traditions suggest linking both parties to linguistic groups speaking Indo-European.

Anna Filigenzi

VAISRAVANA/KUBERA/PANCIKA/PHARRO: SYMBOLISM AND REAL LIFE-MATTERS IN BUDDHIST SACRED SPACES

The Gandharan iconographic repertoire includes several characters and scenes that at first look do not exhibit any explicit connection to Buddhist doctrine and praxis. However, it is exactly in this apparently stranger and heterogeneous universe that we may find the imprints of the worldly dimension of Buddhism, unless we simply attribute such “alien” presences to casual overflows into the Buddhist imagery of tenacious beliefs from other systems.

This seems to be the case with Vaisravana/Kubera/Pancika/Pharro, portrayed either individually or paired with their respective consorts. They undoubtedly share common ground, variously related to the concepts of wellness, wealth, and fecundity, and yet they are clearly individualised by means of specific iconographic traits. To what extent common aspects predominate on identity, or to what extent identity expresses significant differences (either functional or regional) is not clear, especially in the lack of sufficient archaeological data, which is to say, a sufficiently precise mapping of their original provenance and position.

Available material evidence on this subject, though meagre, allows some hypotheses to be developed. Of particular interest in this regard is the recent discovery, at the Buddhist site of Khum Zargar (Kapisa province, Northern Afghanistan), of a relief panel decorating the front face of a rectangular platform supported by two projecting crouching lions. The relief depicts an animated scene of homage to Pharro. The god, seated at the centre of the figured field, is receiving a huge donation of coins through the hands of two attendants represented at his side: the one on the right carries the coins in a big sack over his shoulder, the one on the left in a large pot, and both spill the coins at the god's feet. Armed guards and lay people (among which, we may infer, the donors, represented at either end of the scene, and two kneeling characters interacting with the latter) complete this narratively (and unusually) expanded theme.

The identity of Pharro is unquestionably attested by the winged cap, and by the purse which the god holds in his right hand, while his left hand bears a ribboned sceptre with globular top. Not only the relief contains elements of utmost interest (namely, the richness of the iconographic details, which precisely individualise the god, his retinue, and the different "ethnic" identities of the donors), but the platform itself – to which the relief panel is attached – offers clues about ritual practices and connected functional spaces that might have had in real life a meaningful impact on the economic assets of the Buddhist monastic communities as well as on the social status of the donor, by making public recognition of both the "intrinsic effect" and "prestige effect" the donation generates.

The close similarity of this architectural element to the so called "lion throne" brought to light at Shotorak, a site lying within the same province, suggests similar scenarios of ceremonial use of ancient sacred spaces. This circumstance invites us not only to carefully re-examine the available archaeological documentation of both sites, but also to sift the evidence from others, in search of comparable occurrences that may have passed unnoticed.

Digging into old archaeological documentation is an imperative praxis that must be paired with – and even put ahead of – field archaeology, especially in the case of Afghanistan, where archaeological research is heavily affected by past and present setbacks, which drastically reduce the likelihood of standards of collection, description and interpretation being adopted. Khum Zargar, as many other sites in Afghanistan, was excavated in haste to stop the ongoing looting, under the severe threat of insecurity and against a backdrop of deepening political and economic instability. However, despite the lacunae of the archaeological investigation, the site still has the potential to yield significant information: whether this potential will be activated or dispersed depends on the efforts of the scientific community.

Giulia Forgone

CULTURAL MEANINGS AND PERCEPTION OF THE MATERIALS USED IN THE BUDDHIST CLAY-BASED SCULPTURES

This presentation focuses on the Buddhist clay-based sculpture, an important artistic phenomenon that spread across Central Asia between the 3rd and 8th centuries CE.

This vast tradition, now represented by very fragmentary remains, mostly separated and removed from their original setting, were part of large polychrome decorative apparatuses. Among the pieces today housed in several museums throughout the world, different styles can be detected, as well as specific materials and techniques, but many aspects are still to be investigated.

Depending on geographical areas of provenance and chronology, different workshops may possibly be identified based on the use of different types of clays (e.g. grey, yellow, red), sometimes in combination with lime or gypsum-based “stucco”, the latter often used only for the external layers of the sculpture. Faint traces – often not visible to the naked eye - testify to the original polychromy, suggesting how the colour palette offered a variety of possibilities.

However, in spite of the increasing number of chemical-physical analyses conducted on samples available from museum exhibits and, at best, from excavated finds to understand the composition of the materials, little is known about their qualities and symbolic significance. The aim is to trace possible research paths for a more holistic approach to the study of this tradition, exploring not only physical features but also the cultural dimension created by and/or derived from the perception and feelings (conscious or unconscious) that the clay sculpture with its vivid polychromy might have evoked within the cultural framework in which it was produced.

Erika Forte

BOOTS, MONKS, AND KINGS. A BUDDHIST DONOR REPRESENTATION IN KHOTAN

This paper presents a painting found at the base of an oversized Buddha statue at the site known as Tārishlak, near Mayalik in the Khotan oasis (Southern Tarim basin). The painting has been documented in situ by Aurel Stein (1921). It depicts six kneeling figures that can be fairly identified as donors (both male and female). While all the figures are wearing secular garments, one of them is dressed in a monk’s robe, has closely shaved hair, and is wearing black boots, which in Khotanese art typically represent leather boots. According to Stein’s estimation, the latest occupation of the site of Tarishlak, where once a large monastery stood, should date to the 5th century.

Representations of monks wearing boots, although uncommon, are not a novelty within the art of Central Asia and Northwestern India. Known examples, such as a sculpture from Shorchuk

(5th century) and a group of paintings from Dunhuang (the so-called “Itinerant Monk” paintings, 7th–10th century), suggest that monks depicted with boots are meant to represent wandering monks (Yaldiz 2005). However, in certain instances within the Gandhāra region (Haḍḍa; Sahr-i Bahlol), a distinct concept emerges. In these cases, the depiction of monks with unshaved heads and wearing boots alongside donors hints at the representation of a ceremony where a king, dressed as a monk, performs practices aimed at obtaining mokṣa, the final liberation from all mundane conditions (Tarzi 2009, Filigenzi 2018).

Within the context of our Tarishlak painting, an important question arises: does the depicted figure represent a monk wearing boots for wandering, or does it portray a layperson dressed as a monk for ceremonial purposes? The implications of this inquiry extend to its potential connections with ritual practices and the ideological stance of donors, which seem to have held particular relevance in the context of Gandharan Buddhism in Northwestern India.

Ute Franke, Elisa Cortesi

THE NAL POTTERY COMPLEX FROM SOHR DAMB/NAL – NEW PERSPECTIVES BASED ON ARCHAEOMETRIC AND CONTEXTUAL STUDIES

Sohr Damb/Nal is the type site of the ‘Nal pottery complex’. This widespread pottery type, characterised by specific technological and stylistic features, is an important chronological marker of the late 4th and early 3rd millennium BC in the Indo-Iranian borderlands and the lower Indus valley. Excavations carried out by the German-Pakistani Mission at Kalat between 2001 and 2007 brought to light a substantial quantity of Nal pottery from well-stratified Period II contexts. This material, supplemented by a large number of seized vessels, has been analysed by E. Cortesi in her doctoral thesis (presented in January 2023).

In addition to typological and stylistic features, her work focuses on the “chaîne opératoire”, based on macroscopic observations and archaeometric studies. Re-firing, WD-XRF, petrographic XR diffraction, PIXE-PIGE and Raman analyses were carried out on pastes, painted surfaces and pigments of more than 90 samples to study the chemical fingerprint of Nal pottery. This ‘local’ view is complemented by a trans-regional perspective.

The inclusion of samples from Periods I and III provides a diachronic view of technological development at a single site, revealing technological changes in the processing of ceramics over time. As the transition from Period I to II is a crucial aspect in the chronology of the site, these results need to be analysed in their stratigraphic and functional contexts.

Our presentation summarises the main results of the archaeometric analyses, addressing issues such as production sites, material provenance, and evidence for the migration of objects and copying of styles. In addition, the chronological relevance of distinctive features will be tested in one exemplary trench.

Marion Frenger

CANDRA REVISITED – THE MOON GOD AND HIS CHANGING ICONOGRAPHY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

The moon god, Candra or Candrama, is one of the lesser-noted deities. While he was usually represented together with his counterpart, the sun god Surya or Aditya, in the early centuries CE and both deities were, in fact, sometimes almost indistinguishable, the situation gradually changed as the sun god, in the northern half of the subcontinent, became a popular god with a religious cult centring around him.

Judging from the corpus of images representing the moon god, it seems that at a certain point it was no longer acceptable – or desirable? – to show him more or less identical in appearance with the sun god; a number of tentative modifications of his iconography can be observed, probably in an attempt to define a new conclusive type of representation. As he continued to be represented, often as part of larger groups of deities, his representations continue to be adapted to the changes of relevance and meaning. This resulted in the removal and addition of attributes as well as of other elements of his representation.

The paper will follow the different strands of Candra iconography, focussing particularly on the correlations and divergences of representations in Northern India and different parts of Central Asia. It will further suggest possible reasons behind their emergence and development against the backdrop of religious and cultural changes in South and Central Asia.

Andreas Fuls

THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF INSCRIBED INDUS ARTEFACTS AND THE REGIONAL HETEROGENEITY OF BOSS TYPES OF SQUARE SEALS

From the Indus culture (ca. 2600 to 1700 BC), about 4665 inscribed artefacts have been excavated to date, about 40% of which are square seals and 14% bas-relief tablets. The sites in present-day Pakistan and northern India are spread over an area of about 700,000 square kilometres, with most of the artefacts found coming from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. A spatial distribution analysis based on distance diagrams and the shortest path within a network of Indus sites shows that boss types of square seals are concentrated in one region at a time and thus differ regionally. Identical copies of bas-relief tablets excavated at different sites also offer the possibility to investigate their geographical distribution. Overall, there is evidence of a regional exchange of seals and tablets that were distributed over great distances, suggesting a flourishing exchange between the ancient cities of the Indus culture.

Rvosuke Furui, Arlo Griffiths

BETWEEN BENGAL AND ARAKAN: THE EARLY MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF HARIKELA RECONSIDERED FROM INSCRIPTIONS

Harikela denotes a historical sub-region corresponding to the area around present Chittagong, Bangladesh. Located at the southeastern end of Bengal adjacent to Arakan, Burma, its history shows traits not witnessed in the other sub-regions of Bengal. The archive which sheds light on the early history of Harikela is a series of inscriptions with distinctive characteristics. In this study, we will present the contents of these inscriptions and discuss some aspects of the early medieval history of Harikela that they allow to sketch.

The archive consists of 1) a newly discovered copper plate grant of Devātideva, a king who ruled Harikela in the early eighth century, 2) a metal vase inscription mentioning his reign, 3) an incomplete copper plate grant of King Kāntideva assignable to the first half of the ninth century, and 4) a metal vase inscription of Attākaradeva, the ruler of the early tenth century. The contents of these inscriptions suggest that the connection between Harikela and Arakan was closer than the previous studies assumed: both areas may have been ruled by the same king, at least for some time, and shared the monetary system based on the common currency unit. They also attest to the presence of a Buddhist saṅgha belonging to the Sthāvīrīya-nikāya in this area, a phenomenon not encountered in the inscriptions from the other parts of Bengal. Thus, the information provided by those inscriptions requires us to reconsider the historical character of this area straddling the boundary between the Bengal and Arakan regions.

G

Aniruddha Ghatak

TEMPLE PATRONAGE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL MALWA: A STUDY OF THE UDAYEŚVARA TEMPLE BASED ON ITS INSCRIPTIONS

The aim of this study is to analyse the patronage of temple sites under the Paramāra dynasty in the region of Malwa, with specific focus on one of the most prominent surviving Bhūmija temples – the Udayeśvara or Nīlakantheśvara temple of Udaypur in the Vidisha district of Madhya Pradesh, visited by me in September 2021. The development of the Bhūmija style in Malwa and the establishment of temples built in this style in this period are generally attributed to the patronage of the Paramāra dynasty. The Udayeśvara temple contains epigraphic evidence of royal patronage and initiative behind its establishment and was clearly part of a legitimizing project by the Paramāra king Udayāditya. Subsequent inscriptions in the temple indicate continued patronage by local elites and pilgrims but limited royal patronage. An assessment of these inscriptions delineates the social, political, and cultural aspects of religious patronage in the region and period under study.

Patrons from prominent social groups and their ritualistic practices at the site are noted in the study of the temple inscriptions. Certain questions and issues are sought to be raised by this study. For instance, a change of political power in the region apparently caused a reversal of the language of legitimation used by the earlier power. This is indicated by the grants inscribed during a Caulukya interregnum that briefly removed the Paramāras from power in the region. Another issue is that of the continuity of patronage and ritual practices at the temple well into the sixteenth century as indicated by the inscriptions, a phenomenon not observed in case of the other temple remains across Malwa. This leads to the question of whether the temple can be studied within a rigid time frame of the early medieval or pre-Islamic period. Finally, the study aims to locate the patronage and flourishing of the Udayeśvara temple within a larger geographical context and draw references to the other temple sites in the region visited by me, wherever relevant.

Suchandra Ghosh

DHAMNAR: AN UNSUNG AND LITTLE-KNOWN BUDDHIST CAVE SITE IN WESTERN MADHYA PRADESH

This presentation is prompted by a field trip to Mandsaur district, Madhyapradesh. During the trip we visited the rock cut Buddhist cave site called Dhamnar there. Though there are many caves (about 51), around fourteen are accessible and credit for this should go to ASI, Bhopal Circle. These are laterite rocks and thus prone to decay. Unfortunately, it did not catch the

attention of scholars and very little is known about them. Apart from brief references, not much has been written on this very important Buddhist site, which perhaps could be placed in the broad time frame of 5th to 7th century CE.

The basic attempt in this presentation would be to bring this magnificent site to the attention of scholars. In one of the caves, colossal figures are present including Buddha in the Mahaparinirvāna posture. This particular cave gives us an impression of a statue gallery. Moreover, there are chaitya halls, stupas and images of Buddha, both sitting and standing, pillared verandah throughout the site. The facade in most of the caves is beautifully decorated with miniature stupa or chaitya window.

Here my focus would be on the general design and structure of the cave with a special attention to the 'statue gallery' and on the landscape and location of this site. This was located within the Malwa corridor, a vibrant route for merchants and could be related to another laterite Buddhist cave site (almost of the same period) in Jhalwar called Kolvi in Eastern Rajasthan bordering Western Madhyapradesh. Thus, the site could have received large footfall from Buddhist monks, pilgrims and merchants. That caves could be halting stations for merchants is evident from inscriptions in the Bandhogarh caves located in eastern Madhyapradesh. The issue of patronage would also be discussed in this context.

Laura Giuliano, Danilo Rosati, Giuseppe Salemi

RECOMPOSING COLLECTIONS: STUDY AND VIRTUAL RESTORATION OF SAIDU SHARIF'S STŪPA 38

In view of the forthcoming new permanent exhibition of Asian art and archaeology at the Museo delle Civiltà in Rome, with funds from the L & L Dallapiccola Foundation and with the support of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, a project has been launched to realise, in the hall dedicated to Gandharan art, the 1:1 reconstruction together with a virtual rendering of stūpa 38, one of the minor monuments of the sacred area of Saidu Sharif I (period I, phase c of the sanctuary, late first century CE).

The structure, the remains of which are still in situ on the north-east side of the Stūpa Terrace, was decorated along the drum with a frieze consisting of two figured registers separated by a rectilinear festoon, six fragments of which are preserved at the Museo delle Civiltà. Here, in the lower section we see 12 scenes from the life of the Buddha, interspersed with Indo-Corinthian semi-columns, and in the upper section a continuous representation with 'ceremonial scenes', variously identified (Filigenzi 2019, Olivieri 2022).

A very high resolution (fractions of millimetre) 3D acquisition and modelling is performed on these fragments to enhance very small features in terms of morphology and iconography, using 3D scanners with different led and laser sources. Also, a photogrammetric 3D data with tilt&shift macro lens were acquired to produce 3D photorealistic models (50 Mpx).

The 3D relief of the frieze fragments made it possible to read in greater detail heavily damaged parts, facilitating the identification of some scenes previously difficult to decipher. Furthermore, the measurements and detailed study of the sequence of the various fragments have revealed that the iconographic programme of this stūpa was probably dedicated to the Cycles of Siddhārtha's birth and youth, many of which show striking similarities with other examples from the Swat production.

The possible presence of other fragments belonging to the monument at the Swat Museum, currently under investigation, will later allow the project to be extended so that both the physical and virtual reconstructions will ideally bring together the reliefs preserved in the 'twin' museums of Rome and Saidu Sharif.

Sirat Gohar

A HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MOHENJODARO STUDIES IN THE SINDHI LANGUAGE, COLONIAL PERIOD (1922–1947)

Archaeologists and scholars have been active in debates on Mohenjodaro from the time of its discovery in the early years of the 1920s. In addition, educated Sindhi writers have also been associated with Mohenjodaro studies and they have published a lot on this protohistoric culture. In this respect, a question comes to mind when for the first time such writings appeared. It would not be easy to answer this question. However, we can trace with certainty some earliest works in Sindhi on Mohenjodaro culture and archaeology. And it may take us, according to this research, back to 1929. After that, we have a number of texts which make the object of analysis in this study. This paper also attempts to know who were the authors of these works, archaeologists, historians or general literati. It is further aimed to show how they have represented this ancient city of the newly discovered Bronze Age civilization of South Asia in the early decades of its discovery. At last critical reflections would be presented on the production of such texts for the purpose of archaeological knowledge circulation.

Divyanshi Gupta

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF 'DAPPU DRUM' IN THE ICONOGRAPHY OF INDIAN ART

Music has a profound and enduring role in Indian culture, especially in the context of special events, ritual ceremonies, and in religious processions. Indian art including paintings and sculptures, often depicts musical instruments used in various ceremony-related contexts. Moreover, there is a long continuity in musical instruments that are native to India. One example is a 'Dappu drum' in Andhra Pradesh. This drum is primarily used in religious ceremonies like oblation to the deities, ritual processions, and funerary rituals. There is a

common belief that this drum is closely associated with the connection of the spirits. However, the music it produces during the religious event varies significantly from funerals. Interestingly, we encountered a relatively similar type of drum depicted in ancient Indian art from Buddhist sites. Around the 1st century BCE, evidence of such type of drum was found from sites like Ajanta and Sanchi, followed by Chandavaram and Phanigiri from the 2nd century CE onwards. In Sanchi, it was depicted in the context of the stūpa ceremony and religious procession while in Ajanta, it was depicted only in the context of stūpa ceremony. In the other two sites of Southern India, it became incorporated into ritual-related ceremonies. It is to be noted that we have not found any depiction of this drum among the flourishing themes of entertainment and celebration of Indian art in the 5th century. The depiction of this drum again appears in the Hindu temple between the 9th and 16th centuries, belonging to the Chola, Vijayanagar, and Nayaka empires. This study attempts to explore the historical significance of the ‘Dappu drum’ in Indian art and its contextual meaning presented in corresponding artwork.

John Guy

TRACING THE BEGINNINGS OF BUDDHIST SCULPTURE IN ĀNDHRADEŚĀ

Āndhradeśa was a nodal center of commerce in early India, connected to the north by the Dakshinapatha (‘roads leading south’), and with its littoral region engaged with the Arabian Sea to the west and to the east, the Bay of Bengal trade connecting Southeast Asia (Suvarṇabhūmi). It supported a concentrated network of Buddhist monasteries, sited at strategic trade nexuses. Whilst the monastic architectural legacy is fragmentary at best, the sculptural elements that embellished the stupas and enclosure railings (vedika) bear witness to a strategic approach to stupa adornment. This is the heartland of the ancient region referred to in contemporary sources as Āndhradeśa. Today’s Andhra Pradesh and Telangana preserve some of the richest and yet lesser-known legacies of early Buddhist devotional art. The density of monastery sites in this region, marked today largely only by the traces of stupas and monastic foundations, attracted passing antiquarian interest in the later 19th century but has been largely relegated to the margins of 20th century Indian art history.

Whilst the monastic remains are largely attributable to the early centuries of the Common Era, there is a small corpus of stupa-associated sculptures that point to the region being engaged in a vigorous pursued regional style by the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. This paper presents a corpus of works, assigned on the basis of recent advances in Indian dynastic dating, to the early centuries BCE, and argues that it constitutes a discrete style that deserves recognition alongside the widely celebrated early phases of Buddhist art represented by Bharhut, Sarnath, Bodhgaya and Sanchi. These Andhra works display a remarkable stylistic unity, in all probability the product of shared workshop practices, aided by the mobility of skilled stone masons and sculptors along the roads and waterways of the lower Krishna River system. In defining this corpus of early southern Buddhist art, this paper argues for Āndhradeśa’s admission as a key participant in the earliest phase of Buddhist art production in India.

H

Adam Hardy

RECONSTRUCTING THE ORIGINS OF NĀGARA TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

The emergence of the Nāgara language of temple architecture, and of its classic Latina mode with curved spire and crowning āmalaka, took place in the heartlands of the Gupta empire between the 4th and 6th centuries CE, a pivotal period for Indian civilization. While the Nāgara tradition flourished for centuries across northern India, the formative process of its architecture, observable only from fragmentary evidence, has barely been understood. Few serious attempts have been made to examine it. A notable exception is Michael Meister's interpretation, according to which an idealised image of a divine palace was transformed through a process of 'symbolic substitution', whereby corner pavilions conceived originally in timber were replaced by masonry elements representing altars. I have proposed an analysis (simpler, in my view) in terms of evolving combinations of shrine images. This paper aims to substantiate that analysis by scrutinizing the available remains at temple sites and in museums. Surprisingly, many relevant stone fragments have not been published.

A key monument for understanding this formative phase of north Indian temple architecture is the famous Gupta temple at Deogarh (c. 500 CE), but its superstructure has not survived. I shall attempt an informed reconstruction of this superstructure on the basis of a measured survey of temple fragments on the site and in the site store of the Archaeological Survey of India. From stone pieces in the Mathura and Lucknow Museums, and the Musée Guimet, Paris, I shall also illustrate temple compositions in the florid Proto-Nāgara style prevalent in the 5th–6th centuries around Mathura.

Satomi Hiyama

REPRODUCING BUDDHIST GEOGRAPHY IN CENTRAL ASIA? A STUDY ON THE LINGUISTIC THEORY OF THE KUCHA-KUŚINAGARA LINK IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF KUCHA

Despite of its location, distanced from the Indian Subcontinent for ca. 2,000 km, a highly Indianized form of Buddhist culture once flourished in the Kucha Kingdom, one of the major oasis kingdoms on the northern Silk Road from around the 2nd to the 10th centuries. The rock-cut monasteries of Kucha bear witness to various attempts by local Buddhists to reproduce the time and space of Ancient India, where Gautama lived and spread his teaching, into the interior of the cave space.

In this context, P. Pelliot's linguistic remark on the toponym Kucha is worth careful examination, even though it has not drawn much attention by art-historians to date. In his paper published in 1923, Pelliot argued that the phonetic similarity between "Kucha (*Kuśi)" and Kuśinagara might have encouraged locals to create an imaginative association of their history to this sacred place of India, where Gautama Buddha entered into the parinirvāṇa. In fact, the later Sarvāstivāda cave group of Kucha is characterized by its great emphasis on the representation of the Buddha's parinirvāṇa episode. It is possible, to at least some extent, to trace the idea of this *géographie fantaisiste* in Kuchean archaeological remains?

The present paper aims to examine whether it is possible to interpret Buddhist sites of Kucha in terms of the reproduction of Indian pilgrimage place in Central Asia by cross-referencing the archaeological and art-historical features of the cave temples and the textual sources.

Athanaric Huard

THE KIZIL "COSMIC BUDDHAS" AND THE TRANSMISSION OF BUDDHAHOOD

The depiction of various figures and cosmic components on the body of a Buddha has been the subject of much debate in the field of art history. Among these depictions, the paintings in Kizil Caves 17 and 123, which show standing Buddhas adorned with a variety of divine and demonic figures, stand out for also including small Buddhas, either on their bodies or in their mandorlas.

Building on a forthcoming collaborative paper with Bai Yu, where Indian texts are utilized to demonstrate that this imagery is not specifically associated with any Buddha or doctrine, and should be considered as a "narrative motif" derived from Brahmanical literature, this paper aims to provide a unified analysis of the occurrences of this motif in both Tocharian literature and Kizil paintings.

In fact, this motif is included in the Tocharian A version of the *Bṛhaddyuti-jātaka* (Zin 2023). This fits perfectly with a painting in Cave 123 that has been newly identified as depicting the same story (Zhu 2019). Both the Tocharian account and the painting locate this imagery in the *praṇidhi* scene of this story. Further instances of this motif can be found in Tocharian literature in the same narrative setting. The interplay between textual sources and artistic depictions reveals that this motif embodies the same conception of Buddhahood, with Iranian roots and symbolism, as a royal dignity passed down from one Buddha to another. Finally, these Tocharian textual counterparts also allow us to determine the identities of the smaller Buddhas that surround the standing Buddhas in Kizil, which in turn facilitates a clearer understanding of this type of depiction in Buddhist art.

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Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber, Wenhua Luo

**ON THE EIGHT JĀTAKA SCENES AS DEPICTED ON THE BUDDHA SCULPTURE
DONATED BY KING SURENDRĀDITYA**

The paper aims to examine the Jātaka scenes which are depicted on a brass image of the Buddha Śākyamuni (see fig. left). The respective sculpture, which is enshrined above the gate of the Jokhang in Lhasa today has been newly rediscovered in connection with a survey project carried out by the Research Institute of Tibetan Buddhist Heritage of the Palace Museum (Peking). According to the Sanskrit inscription engraved on three sides of the pedestal (published by W. Luo & O. von Hinüber, “News from Palola”, in: *Śāntamatih*, Tokyo 2023: 207f.), this impressive bronze image (69 x 41,5 cm) was donated by the 4th king of the Palola dynasty, Surendrādityanandin, who ruled the area around Gilgit and Chilas during the first half of the 7th century.

Altogether eight medallion-like roundels showing various Jātakas are engraved on the rectangular seating cushion (āsana) of the Buddha. Of particular interest is, first of all, the unique selection of the Jātakas by the royal artists; it seems that a series of “self-sacrificing” stories from Buddha’s former life are intentionally presented here, such as the Śibi-, Vyāghrī-, Sudāna-, Kāñcanasāra-, Mahāprabhāsa-, Mṛga-Jātaka and more. Thus, the question arises as to whether this particular combination of the eight Jātakas is documented elsewhere in post-Gandhāra art. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that certain Jātakas are also depicted in the petroglyphs along the Upper Indus; therefore, it might be worth asking whether there was a Jātaka tradition in the region of historical Northwest of India. In addition, another example among the Palola bronzes, which maybe serves to glorify the Buddha’s Āsana as well can be also discussed in this context.

J

Anchit Jain

ART, RELIGION AND RITUAL: CONTEXTUALISING JAIN VISUAL NARRATIVES AT OSIAN

The narrative reliefs on the Jain sub-shrines (*devakulikā*) of Osian, Rajasthan, are a rare and perhaps the earliest surviving instance of carved episodes of Jain devotion on the exteriors of a structural temple (tenth–eleventh centuries). In contrast to the wealth of narrative tradition in Jain textual accounts, visual representations of such narratives are notably scarce, with only a few fragmentary remains from the Jain stupa at Kankali Tila in Mathura and a handful of other sites. The lauded legends of Tirthankaras, depicted in these panels at Osian in the synoptic, sequential and other ways of narrations, at times, depict scenes which predate the popular medieval textual accounts, providing important linkage points in understanding the process of early medieval expansion of the canonical legends. It is indeed surprising that there has been a shortage of scholarly attention on these panels. For an art historian, these visual panels hold significance beyond their role in the evolution of narrative tradition, both visually and textually. They also offer a fascinating example of ‘art-rhetoric,’ where art is used as a persuasive tool to convey ideas related to lay devotion and ideal monastic behaviour. Notably, the panels on one of the sub-shrines depict a strikingly contrasting representation of a stereotypical ideal monk (*su-sadhu*) and a corrupt monk (*ku-sadhu*). This visual theme, freshly interpreted here, has no known visual parallels across the subcontinent, but the theme was well exploited in early medieval didactic and polemical Jain monastic literature of Western India, at a time when the monastic discipline began to emerge as an important polemical concern in the region. Interestingly, the visual rhetoric employed to convey these ideas here remained much independent to text, bearing marks of deep creative ingenuity. The beautifully rendered scenes from the life of Jina not only enhance lay devotion but also resonate with their ritual obligations of daily reenacting the act of lustration of Jina, something first performed by the gods. This subtle reminder is conveyed through visual metaphors within these artistic depictions.

Jutta Jain-Neubauer

ENACTING AURANGZEB’S DARBAR IN SAXONY IN 1700 CE

In my paper I am tracing the remarkable and widespread artistic, economic, and intellectual exchanges between India and Europe during the early modern era. This fascination with the Orient and especially, India and the reign of Aurangzeb (1657–1707 CE), became a model for August the Strong of Saxony (1670–1733) to create and project his and Saxony’s image as a global imperial player. This trajectory was especially important in the artistic emulation of the Court festivities to celebrate Aurangzeb’s birthday (*darbar*) by the Dinglinger brothers, by

creating a miniature stage of more than 100 enamelled and gold-gilt mobile figures paying homage to the Indian Emperor. This out-of-the world precious object demonstrates the notable transcultural intersection of art and political affirmation between India and Germany during the early modern era.

Sushma Jansari

CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA: FROM OBSCURE RULER TO NATIONAL ICON

In contemporary Indian popular culture, Chandragupta Maurya is presented as an idealised national hero who vanquished the foreign invader Seleucus. But he did not always hold this elevated position. Two aspects are key to this eventual interpretation in India. 1) The uncertainty in Graeco-Roman sources, and silence in South Asian sources, surrounding his encounter with the Macedonian ruler on the banks of the River Indus in c. 305–3 BC. 2) This ambiguity combined with the colonial relationship between Britain and India enabled British and Indian historians of the 19th and 20th centuries to interpret the sources in radically different ways.

Chandragupta's transformation from obscure ruler to national icon by the time of Indian independence can be seen through the art selected for the Indian parliament complex. While the first painting to be installed in the seat of government was a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, the first sculpture was a representation of Chandragupta.

This talk traces the evolution in Chandragupta's standing using examples from film, historical novels, comics and artworks commissioned for the Lakshminarayan Birla Mandir in New Delhi, to show how the writing and reception of history fundamentally influences how we engage with the past.

Dev Kumar Jhanjh

CONNECTING BRAHMAPURA-KĀRTTIKEYAPURA AND PŪRAVADEŚA (PRESENT UTTARAKHAND) THROUGH THE LENS OF EPIGRAPHY (C. SIXTH – TENTH CENTURIES CE)

The present study focuses on the long-term linkages between Brahmapura-Kārttikeyapura (present day Uttarakhand, India) and Pūravadeśa (present day eastern India) through the lens of epigraphy. We are not sure whether Samudragupta's mention of the ruler of Samataṭa, Davāka, Kāmarūpa (located in eastern India) Nepāla, Kartṭipura (synonymous with Kārttikeyapura) as frontier chief (*pratyanta nṛpati*) in the same line of the Allahabad praśasti indicates any connections among these areas. However, the definite linkage between the present two study areas is discernible for the first time from c. sixth century CE, when a new kind of political set up began to appear in different regions of the Indian subcontinent. The

copper plate charters of the Pauravas of Brahmapura and a sub-regional power of Samatāṭa (in early Bengal) have been used for the study of the period between c. sixth–seventh centuries CE. For the following centuries (c. ninth–tenth centuries CE), we shall use the records of the kingdoms of Kārttikeyapura and the charters of the Pālas of early Bengal and Bihar. The pilgrims’ records, belonging to the same period (engraved on the temple walls in Kārttikeyapura) will also be consulted for the present study. We shall delve into the style of epigraphic writing and will find the commonalities of paleography of these inscriptions of two different geographical locations. The similarities of administrative offices, tiers depicted in these records also support the connectivity between these two regions. The idea of proxy pilgrimage will also be evident in the light of pilgrims’ records, which further enhanced these linkages through the movement of the people. We shall examine how these linkages help to travel the ideas, culture and so on. It will also address the role of this connectivity in the formation of ‘state society’ particularly in Brahmapura-Kārttikeyapura realm.

K

Brigitte Khan Majlis

TRACING THE POMEGRANATE MOTIF IN INDIA

The term ‘pomegranate motif’ refers to a series of pointed lobate palmettes housing diverse vegetal patterns like pinecone, artichoke, thistle, lotus, or pomegranate.

The pomegranate pattern played an important part in the textile decoration in Italy, Spain, and the Ottoman empire especially in the 15th and 16th centuries. It graced the most sumptuous and costly textiles reserved for clergy and aristocracy.

In India its presence is much less obvious and when encountered reveals its roots in European and Ottoman prototypes. This long detour is astonishing since those far-away workshops had evolved this pattern from Middle Eastern textile decoration and Persian influence had already penetrated Indian art since quite some time. It seems, the pomegranate motif came into a rather short-lived fashion in India around the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century via imported brocades and velvets. Several extant textiles from Gujarat and the Deccan display this motif following more or less closely their European and Near Eastern models but using different textile techniques and material. The pomegranate pattern also occurs as fabric decoration in a group of Mandu paintings and as part of a South Indian statue of the early 16th century. Its use in India appears to end latest by the beginning of the 17th century.

Rafiullah Khan

THE REGIME OF PRESERVATION: DISPOSSESSING KALASH, CHITRAL, OF ITS RELICS

Anything of the nature of scholarly exploration in Chitral, during the colonial period, seems to be the results of Aurel Stein’s transit through Chitral during his second visit to Central Asia. Almost everything else can either be secret missions in a geostrategic context or antiquarian episodes paramountly performed by colonial agents. The departure point for our investigation here are the activities of antiquarians and collectors. The data is scanty but still crucial. The narrative starts with the author of the above-quoted passage, although told on the basis of unpublished documents, and builds on colonial performances.

Did the acts of seizers, and other sorts of collecting, happen owing to the interplay between the concept of science, museum and colonial preservation? This question has been treated with evidence provided by empirical data at the Malakand archive and the record of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. What would have been the Kalash people’s response to the enactments of dispossession which involved depriving them of their ancestral-cum-divine

effigies? The process seems to have entailed coercion, causing a definite subaltern grief. This frontier sorrow can be understood with a touch of objective evidence and a parallel highhandedness native Indians experienced elsewhere. All this better explains what is called here the regime of preservation.

The colonial regime of preservation may be defined as a multi-faceted activity. Both the ASI's stewardship of Indian archaeology and monuments and the antiquities laws are widely known. The frontier areas sporadically experienced a unique form of this disciplinarian practice which was sometimes in line with Indian legal-institutional injunctions and sometimes as the situation was deemed to require. In the former case, it was entirely dictated by the ASI's interests and vigilance. In the latter, political and practical expediencies surrounding British officials, local aristocracy and archaeological workers would be taken into account. All this makes the colonial regime of preservation a complex idea, which took the shape of an elusive process in the frontier. With respect to the Kalash sacred relics and other cultural material, housed in museums both within Pakistan and elsewhere, the recent concerns of museum anthropology become more pertinent.

Sarfaraz Khan

GANDHARA AS KNOWN TO PAKHTUN LITERATI: A CRITICAL STUDY OF GANDHARA CIVILIZATION IN THE LIGHT OF PAKHTO FOLK LITERATURE

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is home to the world-wide famous Gandhara Civilization. Being the cultural recipient of a cherished and long gone but still influential civilization of ancient Gandhara, the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has a rich history in terms of art, architecture, belief system, and literature because the ancient town of Sâlatura (the birth place of world first linguist and celebrated grammarian of Sanskrit, Pânini), Pushkalavati (the first capital of Gandhara) and Hund (the last capital of Gandhara) are located in the said province. Being heir to the Gandhara Civilization that flourished on this land, people of the province (known as Pashtuns/Pakhtuns) are the custodians of the art, architecture, belief system, and history of Gandhara Civilization which has been abundantly expressed in their literary traditions especially in folk literature of Pakhto language. Based on that available literature and personal observation of the scholar (being a member of the present Pakhtoon society), an attempt has been made in this paper to trace the legends and myths attributed to Gandhara in Pashto literature especially in folk literature.

Deborah Klimburg-Salter

REFLECTIONS ON A SILVER CEREMONIAL OBJECT ATTRIBUTED TO THE SHAHI KINGDOMS

The study of a silver and gilded rhyton in the Cleveland Museum of Art provides a unique perspective from which to consider two questions which are central to an understanding of the Shahi Kingdoms;

- 1) the importance of the exploitation, processing, and distribution of silver in the Shahi kingdoms and
- 2) the increasing importance of Brahmanical iconographic themes within the extensive Buddhist visual culture.

A comparative analysis of the techniques of manufacture and decoration shows that the rhyton can be closely associated with the metal production of the Shahi Kingdoms from the 7th to the 9th century.

The exploitation, production and distribution of the extensive mineral resources was a key factor in the long prosperity of the Shahi Kingdoms and can best be understood through a study of the history of science and technology, social and economic history and artistic innovation. Other studies have already established that this was a period of extraordinary technological innovation in other areas of the material culture as well.

This justifiably famous rhyton has been studied many times. But, recent archaeological activities in Afghanistan now allow us to definitely identify the iconography as depicting Durgā Mahiśāsūramardīnī; and to attribute the rhyton to a local workshop during the period of the Turk Shahi Kingdom.

Finally, I will discuss the function of the syncretic Durga image and its importance within Shahi ritual and state ceremony.

Gerald Kozicz

THE RUINED SACRED COMPOUND OF SWAI

The hamlet of Swai near Himgiri has not yet made it to the global digital maps and has almost completely escaped scholarly attention. It is located in the north-western part of Chamba (Himachal Pradesh, India), a region dominated by deep gorges and densely forested slopes. The compound as it exists today centres on two single chamber temples on platforms with pyramidal roofs of the vernacular type. So far, the foundation of Swai has been dated to the 9th century based on inscriptional evidence and stylistic analysis of the surviving stone sculptures which makes it one of the oldest monuments of the Western Himalayan region. In the course of reconstruction, members of the original stone temple that once was the central sanctum of the site, were widely re-used. These components include the major structural lintel of the portal,

the river goddesses who are almost life-size, and the central part of the *śukanasa*. These artefacts have never been studied although they provide clear hints for a more precise dating and a broader historical context.

The paper will present a detailed study of these components regarding their style and their structural significant within a nagara typology. It thereby attempts to reconstruct the original size and structure of the temple through comparison to the major architectural benchmarks of the regions: the Śiva sanctum of Masrur in Kangra and the Basheshvara Mahadeva Temple of Bajaura in Kulu. The approach is through analysing and comparing the architectural components in detail. As these temples follow strict geometric and compositional rules, this process recalls an architectural DNA comparison. The comparison will be visualised through exact plans and 3D-models of the respective architectural components. The paper will thereby attempt to present a tentative reconstruction of the original architectural shape of the temple.

The result will provide insight into the development of sculptural art in the mountainous region where the influences from the north-western planes merged with the art of Kashmir.

L

Ashwini Lakshminarayanan

VIEWING FROM BALCONIES: FEMALE FIGURES AND THE URBAN IN GANDHĀRAN ART

Besides a handful of biographical narratives related to the Buddha Śākyamuni's life that are yet to be fully understood, decorative motifs in Gandhāran art have also remained a mystery to modern scholars. One such decorative motif that is commonly present in Gandhāran art is the motif of female figures standing within architectural spaces, particularly balconies. This motif can be found attached to narrative biographical scenes but can also occur independently as part of stair-raiser reliefs. It has often been interpreted as the audiences of theatrical performances or the generic images of local elite women who supported the development of Buddhism in Gandhāra. However, this paper will demonstrate that this motif, also part of Indian art, has a long history in the subcontinent. In doing so, it will trace the development of this motif in Indian art and literature and propose a new interpretation based on its Buddhist context.

Vincent Lefèvre, Coline Lefrancq, Naheed Sultana

MODELLING URBAN SETTLEMENT IN EARLY HISTORICAL AND EARLY MEDIEVAL SOUTH ASIA: THE CASE OF MAHASTHANGARH, BANGLADESH

The urban character of Mahasthangarh—the ancient Pundranagara, north of the modern city of Bogra in Bangladesh—is attested since its foundation around the 4th century BCE and it is still vivid today. However, the characterization of its urban traits at the different periods of occupation is still unclear despite the fact that archaeological research conducted on the site and its surroundings has started in the 19th century and has been carried out continuously since then.

How was the layout organised within the citadel through time? Was it in accordance with the prescriptive texts? How were the different kinds of human activity (agriculture, craftwork, mobility) set up within the citadel and in the surroundings? What was the place of Mahasthangarh in the local, regional and maritime trade and in the political framework?

Through this presentation, we will try to confront and to combine the written and archaeological sources to trace this development. In doing so, we will present and put in context the last results of the excavation campaigns conducted on the site.

Giovanna Lombardo, Natalia Vinogradova

CULTURAL CONTACTS OF THE ANCIENT POPULATION OF SOUTHERN TAJIKISTAN IN THE III – EARLY II MILLENNIUM BC

1. New materials in the south of Tajikistan indicate the existence here already in the Early – Middle Bronze Age of the local ancient agricultural Panj-Farkhor culture, closely related to the monuments of the ancient population of Central Asia, Iran and Northern Afghanistan.
2. In ancient times, a trade route passed near the burial ground of the early – middle Bronze Age Farkhor, where there is a convenient crossing over the Panj river, opening the way to the mountain mineral wealth of Afghanistan and Tajikistan.
3. The population of the Panj-Farkhor culture could participate in interregional contacts and raw materials trade in minerals (lapis lazuli) with neighbouring southern territories: Altyn-depe in Southern Turkmenistan; Hissar IIIC, Shahdad-necropolis A in Iran; Shortugai in Northern Afghanistan and in the northern direction with the Zerafshan Valley – Zamanbaba burial ground, Sarazm IV.
4. These conclusions are supported by anthropological data. The skeletal remains of individuals from the burials of Farkhor are characterized by the general gracefulness and indisputable Europeoid appearance of the Mediterranean type.
5. Of particular interest at the Farkhor burial ground are the burials of men from burials 20 and 31 and a child from burial 54(2). They are characterized by alveolar prognathism and large tooth sizes, which indicates the presence of contacts with the ancient population of the Indian subcontinent. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that opposite the Farkhor burial ground, on the opposite bank of the Panj river in Northern Afghanistan, there is a famous monument Shortugai – a trading post of the Indian civilization.
6. In the Late Bronze Age, intensive contacts between the population of the Namazga culture V in Southern Turkmenistan and the Indian civilization are traced – finds of Harappan seals, ivory objects, etched carnelian beads, and faience jewellery on the monuments Altyn Depe and Gonur.

M

Sonya Rhie Mace

YAKṢA KINGS AND MISSIONARY MONKS AT KANAGANAHALLI

Among the stone encasement slabs from the Buddhist stupa at Kanaganahalli is a group of five that forms a coherent sequence. Below two of the double relief panels depicting royal travellers are inscriptions identifying them as missionary monks known from textual and epigraphic sources. This paper examines the disjunction between the images and inscriptions by proposing an interpretation of the reliefs independent of the captions.

The sculptures of the royal figures appear to depict a group of yakṣa-rājas who travel in vehicles drawn by a variety of animals or figural bearers. The commentary to the Hemavatasutta of the Suttanipāta states that yakṣa-rājas make these kinds of chariots for themselves. Working together, Phyllis Granoff and I have identified the figure holding an infant as the yakṣa Ālavaka, whose story and palatial aerial vehicle occur in Pāli sources. Ālavaka was about to eat a newborn prince when the Buddha inspires his conversion. The story specifies that Ālavaka holds the child and then gives him to the Buddha. The adjacent panels probably depict other yakṣa kings, some of whom are mentioned in the Ālavakasutta, and who, in the related Hemavatasutta, promise to go from mountain to mountain to worship the Buddha. Visitors to the stupa at Kanaganahalli may have recognized the underlying message of this series as a statement that the Buddha should be venerated, since he converted powerful yakṣas from killers to guardians of children, the protection of whom is a recurring theme at the site.

When inscriptions naming missionary monks to the Himalayas were engraved on the panels with five royal riders in the mountains—probably as part of a pan-Indian trend to update imagery at Buddhist sites during the 2nd century CE—the new identification could be justified by explaining that, as Monika Zin has demonstrated, these monks had the power to fly. Possibly, like Utpalavarṇā, they were also able to transform themselves into cakravartins. Nevertheless, the reliefs of royal riders, I argue, were not initially intended to depict monks; rather, they were made to be as they appear: yakṣa kings as devotees of the Buddha and protectors of children.

Marco Madella, Tasleem Alam Abro, Amin Chandio, Carolina Jiménez-Arteaga, Charusmita Gadekar, Carla Lancelotti, Takehiro Miki, Óscar Parque, Akshyeta Suryanarayan, Akinori Uesugi, Alessandra Varalli, Ghulam Mohiuddin Veesar

FARMING THE URBANIZATION: THE EVOLUTION OF URBANISM IN THE CORE REGION OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC), which emerged as the first urban society in South Asia, thrived approximately between 3200–1900 BCE in what are now modern-day Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan. Recent research has primarily centred on understanding the decline of the IVC, exploring factors such as climatic shifts (notably the 4.2k aridification event) and socio-cultural dynamics. Also, much of this research has concentrated on the ancient settlements in Punjab, in Pakistan, and the regions of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat in India. However, the heartland of the Indus River plains, including the area around key sites like Mohenjo-daro, has received relatively limited attention in comparison. Moreover, the precise chronology of the Early and Mature Harappan phases in this core region has remained inadequately developed.

The ModAgrO project represents a crucial endeavour aimed at bridging this knowledge gap. Through excavations at a set of diverse sites, this initiative seeks to uncover comprehensive depositional sequences while retrieving valuable data encompassing cultural, sedimentological, and biological aspects. Importantly, all these findings are firmly anchored within a meticulously crafted, absolute chronology framework.

This presentation will delve into the wealth of data resulting from the ongoing excavation efforts at three distinct IVC settlements:

Bhando Qubo: Situated in the heart of the plains, approximately 60 kilometres away from Mohenjo-daro, this excavation revealed insights into the heart of the river plains.

Taloor Jee Bhatt: Located on the eastern fringes of the plains and extending into the initial dunes of the Thar Desert, this site offers a unique perspective on how the IVC may have interacted with more arid regions.

Mugli: Positioned on the western periphery of the plains, nestled on the foothills of the Kirthar Range, brings into focus the influence of the alluvial deposits and river terraces of the western reliefs. The data, including a comprehensive set of radiocarbon dates, sheds new light on the chronology, environmental context, resource exploitation and potential interactions of the IVC settlements during the urban trajectory.

Susmita Basu Majumdar

EXPLORING THE EPIGRAPHIC RECORDS FROM BANDHAVGARH: A SOJOURN IN THE FORESTED TRACT (MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA)

The ancient caves of Bandhavgarh (circa 2nd c. CE onwards) in the forested tract of Madhya Pradesh, which are more than 70, are quite well known. Fresh exploration by our team has brought to light several new caves and the total number is now 81 out of which 26 bear epigraphic evidences. N.P. Chakravarti's work on the records of Bandhavgarh is a landmark. A team led by Professor Nayanjot Lahiri has recently explored these caves in 2022 and 2023 and the present author is a part of this team for interpreting epigraphic sources. Besides our team, the Archaeological Survey of India is also working at the site. Located inside the Bandhavgarh reserve forest, the caves do not have an easy access to visitors. The recent explorations have brought to light several new inscriptions, here we shall attempt to integrate the archaeological findings with the epigraphic evidence. Juxtaposing both allows fresh insights.

We shall look at the region of Bandhavgarh as a place of sojourning while undertaking a long-distance journey from north to south of the Indian subcontinent or vice versa. The present paper attempts to explore the creation of this hub, routes and networks which connected Bandhavgarh to the rest of the localities. We shall also look at the sculptural art in these caves which are unique in several ways and try fresh identification. The present paper also attempts to explore how the network of caves did expand over time. This region was quite inhospitable yet the caves in the forested zone reflect human activity and the use of these caves especially by those who were engaged in crossovers. These were transit houses made with a long-term vision and mainly community patronage from corporate and itinerant traders and also some small-scale merchants and artisans. Royal patronage was limited though the records often mention the names of reigning kings and eras. Hunting activities, gymnasium and other special features make this an interesting transit zone.

Gudrun Melzer

THE VAJRĀSANA TRIAD FROM HASRA KOL / VISHNUPUR (GAYA DISTRICT, BIHAR): REFLECTIONS ON ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS PĀLA SCULPTURES AND ITS CONTEXT

The triad consisting of a central Buddha showing bhūmisparśamudrā and the two Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya from Hasra Kol or Vishnupur has often been published and belongs to the most well-known sculptures of the Pāla period in Bihar. However, apart from its fame and frequent mention, this group of images has not received much scholarly attention, especially in the context of the inscriptions and other images found nearby.

The presentation examines the triad stylistically and in relation to inscriptions and other finds, including architectural fragments from the same site. The finds were already published more than a hundred years ago and could now for the most part be found again in several museum collections to which they were dispersed. In the process, the information about the original place of discovery was not always preserved.

Gerd J.R. Mevissen

FOUR WOODEN TYMPANONS DEPICTING RAKṢĀ GODDESSES AT THE CAITYA TEMPLE OF VAJRAYOGINI NEAR SANKHU, NEPAL: AN INCOMPLETE PAÑCARAKṢĀ PENTAD?

The Caitya Temple is located in the temple complex of Vajrayogini, on a hill north of Sankhu in the north-eastern corner of the Kathmandu Valley. The Licchavi-*caitya* chiselled from the living rock that fills the interior of the temple dates back to the 5th/6th century CE and once formed part of the ancient monastery Gum-vihāra. The temple complex is dominated by the larger Vajrayoginī Temple and reached its present form in the 17th century. The Caitya Temple enclosing the formerly free-standing Licchavi-*caitya* was probably erected slightly earlier than the neighbouring Vajrayoginī Temple.

The four wooden tympanons above the four entrances of the Caitya Temple are carved with representations of four Buddhist goddesses belonging to the Pañcarakṣā group: The six-armed Mahāśītavatī is found in the north; the eight-armed Mahāsāhasrapramardanī in the east; the eight-armed Mahāmāyūrī in the south; and the main entrance in the west, now covered with gilded copper and oriented towards the Vajrayoginī Temple, depicts the twelve-armed Mahāmantrānusāriṇī.

Whereas painted images of the Pañcarakṣās are known from hundreds of manuscript illuminations and scroll paintings, three-dimensional representations are quite rare. They occur either as separate metal images, or as wood carvings on roof struts in some monastery temples at Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Patan. Further, the Hāratī Temple at Svayambhunath/Kathmandu has tympanons with the whole group of Pañcarakṣās, and the Stupa at Bodhnath has five small stone sculptures each depicting one of the goddesses. Thus, the Caitya Temple of Vajrayogini is the only temple known so far that depicts independent images of Rakṣā goddesses on its tympanons.

An important question remains: Where is the main Rakṣā goddess Mahāpratisarā, who usually occupies the centre of a Pañcarakṣā *maṇḍala*? Obviously, she has not been depicted here, since the centre of the temple is filled with the Licchavi-*caitya*. Apart from presenting the hitherto unpublished Rakṣā tympanons, the paper will also determine the different possibilities to answer this question.

Ignazio Minervini, Marco Madella, Girolamo Fiorentino, Milena Primavera

EXPLOITATION OF WOOD AS A FUEL BETWEEN SISTAN (IRAN SE), THE INDUS VALLEY (PAKISTAN) AND GUJARAT (INDIA) DURING THE IV–II MILLENNIUM BC

This contribution presents the results of anthracological analyses carried out on four different protohistoric settlements located between West and South Asia: Shahr-i Sokhta (Sistan – Iran, 3900–2000 BC), Bhando Qubo (Sindh – Pakistan, 2800–1900 BC), Taloor Jee Bhatt (Sindh – Pakistan, 2600–1900 BC) and Loteshwar (Gujarat – India, 3600–3300 BC). For each site the charcoal assemblages were recovered by flotation from deep trenches samples in order to reconstruct: 1) the wood catchment basins, 2) possible economic choices for wood selection, and 3) and possible chronological variability of the assemblages in connection to local climatic settings.

Although the sites are chronologically comparable, they show differences from several points of view. In the western part of the study area, the site of Shahr-i Sokhta represents an urban and industrial settlement of the so-called Helmand Civilization. It is located in the centre of an extensive trade network and was influenced by the seasonal dynamics of the Helmand River. In the central part of the study area, the sites of Bhando Qubo and Taloor Jee Bhatt, urban settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization, were also integrated into productive and commercial networks. One settlement is located in the central Indus Valley while the other sits on the edge of the Thar Desert, and both were influenced by the seasonal dynamics of the river. The easternmost site, Loteshwar, is a seasonal settlement on a stabilised dune on the eastern edges of the IVC zone of influence. The site is located in an area of brief but periodic high humidity due to the summer monsoon.

Examining the differences between anthracological data originating from different archaeological contexts and located in areas with different environmental features has provided the current study to assess the woody vegetation at the settlements and to investigate changes in terms of climatic and social pressures.

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Mishra, Divvyā H.

THE MAKING OF A BHAIRAVA TYPE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL TEMPLE ART OF ODISHA: A REASSESSMENT OF EKAPĀDA IMAGES

This paper problematizes the identification of a deity known as “Ekapāda” (“One Foot”) as a form of Bhairava. Images identified as Ekapāda Bhairava are found in early medieval Śaivite temples of Odisha, that range in date from the eighth to fifteenth centuries A.D. These images were phased out of temples after the fifteenth century.

I combine an iconological analysis of the stone sculptures with ethnographic research to trace layers of meaning in Ekapāda images. The early form of Ekapāda appears to be closely related to an autochthonous pillar deity known as Stambheśvarī (Odia Khambeśvarī). Stambheśvarī worship originated in the Baudh-Sonepur (Suvarnapur) region of Western Odisha in 500 A.D. The pillar goddess continues to be worshipped in Suvarnapur and Aska (South Odisha). I argue that the body of Ekapāda Bhairava represents a complex process in which anthropomorphic features are added to the image of a pillar god to accommodate him within the pantheon of early-medieval Śaivism.

The paper studies elements that effected the transformation of the pillar god into a Śaivite deity. Examples of these elements include Purāṇic myths associated with Bhairava and the location of Ekapāda images that suggest an interaction with other iconographic types represented in the Śākta-Śaivite milieu such as Cāmuṇḍā, Lakulīśa and Śiva as ascetic (“Bhikṣāṭana”). These findings are based on field work conducted in select temples of coastal and Western Odisha.

Mousumi Mitra

NEW RESEARCH TRENDS IN UNDERSTANDING THE TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE OF SANKHYADEVI ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE, ASSAM, INDIA

In India, temple architecture is mainly divided into Nagara and Dravida styles. Other than these, variations are also seen based on regional diversity or foreign influences. Assam forming the northeastern part of India was introduced to the construction of temples in a much later phase, it was the Guptas who influenced temple architecture in this region. Most commonly used materials for construction were perishable materials like wood, bamboo etc. In later times stone and bricks were also used as building material.

This paper will deal with remains of stone temple located at Hojai, Assam known as Sankhyadevi Archaeological Site. The site has three mounds among which only one was salvaged which yielded remains of a Durga temple. The site has stone relics and stairways which connects the temple to a river. The main aim of the paper is to explore the remaining mounds and collect new information related to the history of temple architecture in the region,

to study the architectural features of the site and understands its closest connections in art. The theory of the stairways connecting to the river also needs close reviewing to understand the purpose of the steps.

Temples play a crucial role in human society, and there are numerous instances of them that demonstrate exquisite works of art that are tied to the epics, social life, economic life, cultural life, and the exotic nature of people.

Marco Moderato, Dinesan Vadakkiniyil, David Hill, Veerasamy Selvakumar, Jan Petřík, Abdulla Anchillath, Luca Papa and Vasco La Salvia

TRADE CONNECTIONS AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF AN INDIAN OCEAN MEDIEVAL PORT

The site of Madayi (Malabar coast, Kerala) is located on a laterite plateau overlooking the Kuppam river delta and the Indian Ocean. These features would have allowed easy access for ships during the Middle Ages. Non-systematic archaeological surveys of the site have yielded evidence of human activity from the Early Medieval period to the colonial age in three different areas of the plateau: the so-called Jewish Pond, the Fort and the Mosque.

In the recent fieldwork campaigns, the focus was on remote sensing and surveying of the Jewish Pond and fortified structure known as Madayi Fort. The isolated structure in the southern part of the laterite plateau had not been properly surveyed until now, although some restoration work had affected the northern front. It was decided to survey the fort using a drone and total station, and at the same time to carry out a surface reconnaissance in the areas of the fort that had to be cleared, which made it possible to collect a substantial amount of ceramic material. Ceramic sherds represent different types of Mesopotamian and Chinese productions and include TGP originating from present day Basra area, Chinese Celadon from the Southern and Northern Song Dynasties and, possibly, few glazed pieces from the Red Sea area. These data, together with the architectural surveys of the buildings and written evidence from the Arabo-Persian sources, allow us to frame the harbour of Madayi within the economic trade routes of South Asia during the Medieval period.

Rabindra Kumar Mohanty

A SMALL ENCLOSURE SURROUNDING A CAVERN OPENING, LATER TURNING INTO A SHRINE OR TEMPLE, BECOMING A PILGRIMAGE CENTRE AT BALATHAL, AN AHAR CULTURE SITE DURING MIDDLE OF FOURTH MILLENNIUM BCE

Balathal, a small Ahar Culture site located in Vallabhanagar Tehsil, District Udaipur, Rajasthan, was excavated for seven seasons from 1994 to 2000 exposing an area approximately 2850 sq. meter uncovering fully and partially 147 trenches. A large number of structures of different

categories were identified according to their location, architecture and findings within the complexes forming into three major categories. They are domestic architecture, community houses with large multi-roomed public architecture and a non-residential, ritualistic or temple structure.

At the centre of the site was an impressive fortified enclosure of irregular rectangular shape of 380 sq. meter having heights at different levels between 2 to 3.15 m. This impressive structure surrounded by other structures, was constructed using locally available stones and used saddle querns. This enigmatic structure was filled with highly burnt vitrified cow dung, bereft of cultural artifact. During excavation, there appeared several enclosures underneath. When the Neolithic-Chalcolithic people initially occupied the low-lying rocky top, there was a small, deep opening around 0.75 m in diameter to a cavern at the centre. A small stone wall was built around it probably with the fear of things falling into it. The objects kept on falling into the hole and the enclosure kept on enlarging, becoming bigger till the impressive public monumental architecture came up.

By then, the cavern opening was not visible but the retold belief of objects disappearing underneath probably continued. Around latter part of 4th millennium BCE the process of massive cow dung burning had become intense, turning it into a shrine for ritual activity. Devotees visiting this place brought objects for veneration. Dormitories, cooking and serving places came up for pilgrims. The findings suggest, it being the earliest veneration place and temple of South East Asia. Around 1800–1500 BCE, during the last phase, four skeletal remains belonging to one ascetic and three deformed diseased persons were recovered. Presumably buried in a religious place with a belief of liberation of the soul. It still continues in some religious centers in India.

Sara Mondini

THE MOSQUES OF KERALA: ARTISTIC VOCABULARIES IN THE IDENTITY-BUILDING OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

The paper aims to introduce the new project *The Mosques of Kerala: Artistic Vocabularies in the Identity-Building of Muslim Communities*, started in October 2023 and founded by the FWO (The Research Foundation – Flanders), and presents the results of the preliminary field researches. The project intends to study the mosques on the Malabar coast of India, particularly those erected along the coastline of the modern state of Kerala and southern Karnataka, in southern India, from the initial spread of Islam in the 7th century to the 19th century, their recent transformation and their role in the processes of identity building of the local Muslim communities. The project promises to make new contributions to the study of Islamic architecture and Islamic communities in South Asia: the study of the most ancient mosques of the region could change the timeline of Indo-Islamic architecture, contribute to re-define the process of penetration of Islam in South Asia and it could shed light on the dynamics of artistic patronage and on the main actors in the formation of the Indo-Islamic artistic vocabularies.

Generally, art-historical studies on Islamic South Asia continue to focus on northern India and this kind of approach tends to overlook the fact that Kerala, like other understudied areas of South Asia, has maintained relations with both the ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ Islamic world that were of great importance for the transmission of artistic models, and which pre-date the fruitful Mughal exchanges with Central Asia. A better understanding of the Kerala mosques would shed light on the importance of local models and on the close and ancient link between South Asia and the Arab lands, a link which is alive even today and contributes to the development and redefinition of the local communities, and hence to their artistic vocabularies. The proposed study would also outline the latest trends within Muslim communities in Kerala, throwing light on their cultural connections and reference models, within the context of the increasing negotiation between the local and global dimensions.

Benjamin Mutin, Antoine Zazzo, Luca Bondioli, Alfredo Coppa, Lisa Garbe, Wolfgang Müller, Alessia Nava, Gonzague Quivron, Olivier Tombrat, Massimo Vidale, Aurore Didier

A REEVALUATION OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD AT MEHRGARH, PAKISTAN, AND ITS MULTIPLE IMPLICATIONS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY FARMING LIFE IN NORTHWEST SOUTH ASIA

Mehrgarh in Pakistan has been a key archaeological site to understand and date the beginning of farming life in northwest South Asia. It is the only site in this region where Neolithic occupation deposits have been extensively excavated and radiocarbon dated, yielding most important data about incipient agriculture economy, crafts, architecture, and funerary practices during this period. Yet, the dating of these deposits, which extend upon a six- to nine-meters thick stratigraphic sequence, has been the topic of an important debate, with scholars, including J.-F. Jarrige and his team who directed fieldwork at Mehrgarh, estimating that the Neolithic occupation at this site began around 8000 BCE, and other researchers suggesting it was later. This conundrum has had important consequences on the most critical question and current understanding of the development of farming life between the Fertile Crescent in the west and the Indus Valley in South Asia in the east, including in the regions in between on the Iranian Plateau.

In this paper, we present results from 21 new radiocarbon analyses. In contrast to most previously available radiocarbon dates from Mehrgarh, which were run on charcoal samples, these new analyses were run on human remains from 21 graves in Mehrgarh Period I graveyard. Not only the archaeological contexts of these analyzed samples are much more secure than those of the previously dated charcoals, which, as a general rule, may be easily displaced across a stratigraphic sequence, but they also were run on bioapatite using the latest, state-of-the-art methodological advances. These new dates are all consistent and are here examined together with a review of the arguments J.-F. Jarrige put forth to date Mehrgarh Neolithic occupation. This reevaluation brings important new implications about

the chronology of the Neolithic period at Mehrgarh, the timing and processes involved in the emergence of agriculture in northwest South Asia, the dating of the emergence of pottery in this region, and the amount of time involved in the formation of an archaeological site.

N

Satoshi Naiki

THE ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE RELIEFS FOUND IN RANIGAT IN THE GANDHĀRA REGION

Since the study by A. Foucher, Gandharan narrative reliefs have been analyzed mainly from iconographic perspective (Foucher 1905). Scholars have considered which scene from Gautama Buddha's life or his previous life (Jataka) is depicted on each relief. The result of the series of study is fundamental for understanding the Buddhism in the north-western Indian subcontinent, but there is a problem that we cannot see overall picture of reliefs by analyzing iconography of reliefs separately. A relief was originally used to decorate a stupa not solely but together with other reliefs of similar sizes. We need to have an attitude to reassemble them and analyze them together if we want to study Buddhist culture from this type of sculptures appropriately.

Recent studies by D. Faccenna, K. Behrendt and A. Miyaji are profitable in that sense, for they have tried to reassemble original sets of reliefs and analyzed them together (Faccenna et al. 2003; Behrendt 2005; Miyaji 1994). However, the total number of sets of reliefs introduced by them was too few and not enough. In order to get more beneficial information, we need much more examples of relief sets.

For this purpose, the present author has picked up narrative reliefs found in two Buddhist monastic sites in the Gandhara region, Thareli and Mekhasanda (Conference in Naples 2018 and Barcelona 2022). In these sites, almost all reliefs including tiny pieces were recorded in their excavation reports (Mizuno 1968, Mizuno and Higuchi 1978). By reassembling sets of reliefs in these sites, we got a result that there were two different tendencies in the choice of scenes among different sites and among different stupa courts.

As the last analysis of this series of study, narrative reliefs found in Ranigat, one of the biggest monastic sites in the region (Nishikawa 1996/2011), will be looked into this time. Curiously, the date for the establishment of Ranigat monastery was much earlier than those of Thareli and Mekhasanda. By analyzing reliefs from the site, we may find relatively old traits of Gandharan narrative reliefs.

Sabarni Pramanik Nayak

PATTERNED TEXTILE ON SCULPTURE: THE UNEXPLORED SCENARIO IN BENGAL AND BIHAR (7TH–13TH CENTURY CE)

Bengal and Bihar are part of Eastern India which was well-known for its textiles since early times. Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra has referred to the types of cloths produced in different parts of Bengal. Though the textiles have not survived archaeologically here, the patterns on the sculptures of Bengal (Chandraketugarh can be an example of early period) indicate the existence of a vibrant textile culture and the production of patterned textiles – both dyed and embroidered. Though textile designs on the images from Bengal and Bihar do not give any clue to the color-combination, yet they indeed display the motifs, which are very much connected with landscape, memory, taste, religion and auspiciousness. The patterns on figurative sculptures might not be the exact replica of early medieval cloth patterns, but they reflect the aptitude as well as monotony of expression on the part of the carvers and artists. In some cases, the pattern shows the commonality with or difference from that of the other areas of India. This paper aims at: 1) exploring patterned cloths from the sculptural impressions found from Bengal and Bihar from the 7th to the 13th century CE; 2) comparing those patterns and motifs with the designs carved on the images found from other areas of Eastern India like Odisha, the hilly tract of Nepal, and also a few areas of south-east Asia; 3) and tracing the connectivity and flow of ideas.

Jason Neelis, Murtaza Taj, Ani Danielyan

UPPER INDUS EPIGRAPHIC AND PETROGLYPHIC COMPLEXES IN NORTHERN PAKISTAN: DIGITAL SURVEY PROGRESS REPORT (2022–2024) AND NEW TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS OF INSCRIPTIONS AND PETROGLYPHS

Since the previous presentation at the 25th EASAA meeting in Barcelona, a project team of digital imaging specialists based in the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) has made considerable progress in collecting and processing data from sites in the flood zones of Diامر-Basha dam under construction on the Upper Indus River in Chilas-Diامر district, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. This work builds upon and enhances previous European and South Asian research published to date in volumes of Antiquities of Northern Pakistan, detailed catalogs of selected sites in *Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans*, and an online database of the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. In addition to Hodar and Thalpan sites on the Indus right bank, surveys of Chilas sites (Chilas Bridge, Chilas 7–15), Oshibat, Turril Nala, Thor sites, and Minar Gah on the Indus left bank have been completed, with the aim of generating comprehensive 3D models of individual rocks using photogrammetry (2000+ models posted to Sketchfab collections), panoramas for virtual tours, and point clouds from terrestrial laser scanning from which various digital assets can be generated (examples are available at <http://heritage360.pk/Diامر/Diامر.html>).

In tandem with providing a progress report on field survey activities, this presentation will also aim to introduce tools for analysis of the written and visual materials developed through international collaboration with European, Australian, and Canadian researchers and institutions. A repository of images hosted on HeidICON (Heidelberg University Library) enables IIF tagging. A controlled vocabulary with interoperable terms specifically relevant for analysis of Upper Indus petroglyphs and inscriptions developed by Ani Danielyan and Jason Neelis is posted to Research Vocabularies Australia. An Image Annotation Workbench (part of READ Workbench) allows researchers to apply the terms to 2D images, which can also be linked to the 3D photogrammetry models. By sharing these new tools with archaeologists and art historians, we seek further input on methodological approaches that may be usefully applied not only to the research field of Upper Indus inscriptions and petroglyphs in northern Pakistan, but to other fields as well. Our goal is to stimulate productive discussions about the scope for using these tools for analysing valuable epigraphical and visual data that is under imminent threat.

Sayantani Pal

**RE-READING THE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE KHAYĀRAVĀLA DYNASTY OF
WESTERN BIHAR (12TH CENTURY CE)**

State formation is a continuous process in the history of any country and in early medieval India this process got intensity and reached a new dimension through the spread of state society in local and regional levels. Many of such states had a tribal background and the Khayaravāla kingdom of western Bihar offers one such example. In such cases often the prominent powers of north India served as model. The Khayāravālas, believed to have originated from the Kharwar tribe, were also inspired by the activities of their overlord, the Gāhaḍvālas of Kanauj. Inscriptions of the Khayāravālas are mostly found in the Rohtas districts of present Bihar. The area being far away from the main centers of attraction like Patna, Gaya, Nalanda etc., the inscriptions are less frequently discussed in major scholarly works. However, their inscriptions were discovered as early as the 1st half of the 19th century when Francis Buchanan provided the facsimiles of the Tarachandi rock inscription of the dynasty later published by H.T. Colebrooke in 1824–26.

The earliest Sanskrit inscriptions of the dynasty are located on a rock at the Tutrahi Falls and in a forest at the Phulwaria village which is situated in the Tilothu block at a height of 1500 feet from sea level. The former place today is a tourist spot housing the shrine of Tutla Bhavani. The rock cut older image of Tutrahi is likely to have been the tutelary deity of the Kharwar tribe. The issuer of the inscription is Pratāpadhavalā who again was responsible for constructing road in the hill of Phulwari. Such acts as inscribing inscription in Sanskrit, framing genealogy, claim for ksatriya status are all familiar patterns of claiming legitimation by the contemporary early medieval dynasties. A later inscription of this family has been traced at the fort of Rohtasgarh which also yielded the seal of Śaśāṅka.

The paper aims to study the inscriptions of the Khayāravāla dynasty by situating them within their geo-historical context on the basis of a field work in the area and thereby understanding the process of tribal state formation in early medieval India.

Óscar Parque, Alessandra Varalli, Carolina Jiménez-Arteaga, Ghulam Mohiuddin Veesar, Muhammad Amin Chandio, Tasleem Alam Abro, Carla Lancelotti, Marco Madella

ANIMAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE SETTLEMENTS OF THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION CORE AREA DURING THE TRANSITIONAL AND MATURE HARAPPAN PERIODS

The Indus Valley Civilization (ca. 3200–1900 BCE) was the first urban society in South Asia. It was primarily located in what is now the territory of Pakistan and Northwest India, with the “core” population centre placed in the alluvial plain of the Indus River. The subsistence of these communities relied on agriculture and livestock (e.g., buffalo, cattle, sheep, and goats). The archaeological and zooarchaeological records recovered from archaeological sites allow making inferences about the management of animal resources by these human communities. The aim of the study presented here was to determine whether the small bovids from two recently excavated sites in the central alluvial plain of the Indus River (Bhando Qubo and Taloor Jee Bhatt, Sindh, Pakistan) were fed with crop surpluses/by-products or if their diet predominantly relied on plant resources available in the surrounding landscape. To achieve this, intra-tooth sequential sampling was conducted on a cohort of goats and sheep (Individuals=9, Teeth sampled=18) recovered from both archaeological sites. Furthermore, the information derived from this isotopic analysis is correlated with the macro- and micro-botanical datasets recovered from the same sites. Our results support an almost exclusive consumption by goats and sheep of C3 plants, which in this area are mostly bush/tress and some herbs. These findings support that the C4 plants (of which macro and micro-remains were recovered from these sites) are largely associated to human consumption and possibly to the sustenance of larger bovids such as cattle and buffalo.

Alka Patel

BUILDING THE INDO-PERSIAN WORLD

This paper avails of the gathering of South Asia experts to test arguments concerning the styles, iconographies and chronologies of reused architectural fragments, which originated in Indic temple and other architectural contexts, subsequently harvested and re-deployed.

Specifically, these fragments were utilized as structural components and important iconographic markers in the seven proposed architectural complexes of the Afghan Shansabānīs (c. 1145–1215 CE) – commonly known as the Ghurids – upon their successful campaigns of conquest in the north Indian duab during the 1190s: the Qutb Mosque, Delhi; the congregational mosque, Ajmer; congregational mosque, Bayana; mosque at Kaman; mosque, Khattu; smaller mosque at Khattu; mosque at Sadadi (the last two having been proposed in publications by this author). Previous scholarship, since the colonial period into the present

day, has generally treated the fragments en masse, mainly seeking possible reasons for the Shansabānīs' large-scale and persistent reuse of fragments, e.g. Islamic iconoclasm. However, it must be admitted that the full range of motivations – both of the patrons and the skilled laborers on whom they relied – can never be fully recovered. By adopting a “ground-up” approach of first analyzing the styles and iconographies of the fragments dispersed throughout the aforementioned complexes, this paper hopes to propose new conclusions regarding the origins and chronologies of the reused components, thereby possibly coming upon more grounded hypotheses of origins and intentions.

Cameron A. Petrie, J. Durcan, A. Garcia-Molossa, N. Kaur, H.A. Orengo, M. Suarez Moreno, D. Thomas, J. Tomaney, V. Vidyarthi

HYDROLOGY AND WATER SUPPLY: RECONSTRUCTING WATER COURSES AND UNDERSTANDING THEIR IMPACT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LANDSCAPES AND SETTLEMENT IN THE INDUS RIVER BASIN AND ITS NEIGHBOURING AREAS

The Indus River Basin and the surrounding regions of Pakistan and western India are extremely rich in archaeological and cultural heritage sites, spanning from the earliest villages up to the colonial and modern periods. Throughout that extended history of occupation in this “Heartland of Villages”, the availability of water has been a critical factor.

The hydrology and morphodynamics of the rivers of the Indus Basin have been much studied and much discussed, but many debates and questions relating to the course and significance of individual rivers over time, and the impact that those water courses had on human settlement and the preservation of ancient sites, are unresolved. This paper will review the state of research on this fundamentally significant, but in many ways contentious topic. It will outline an approach to analysing and understanding this complex fluvial landscape that will (hopefully) offer a way forward for archaeologists and also heritage managers, who are the custodians of a heritage resource that is under threat from a range of natural and human-made processes.

This paper brings together collaborative research carried out by all of the co-authors, and represents a component of an ongoing research endeavour being carried out by the lead author entitled: Heartland of Villages: the archaeology of landscapes and settlement in the Indus River Basin and its neighbouring areas.

Jessie Pons, Serena Autiero, Cristiano Moscatelli, Abdul Samad

BUDDHIST ART FROM GANDHARA: NEW INSIGHTS FROM THE COLLECTION IN THE DIR MUSEUM, CHAKDARA

Since 2021, the DiGA project (“Digitization of Gandharan Artefacts: A project for the preservation and study of Buddhist art from Gandhara”) has documented the collection of ca. 1500 Buddhist sculptures preserved in the Dir Museum in Chakdara, Province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. These come from a dozen of archaeological sites in the Shahkot/Talash zone (around modern-day Chakdara) which were excavated by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museum, KP and the Department of Archaeology of the Peshawar University in the 1960s and 1970s. Being one of the few Gandharan sculptural corpus with archaeological provenance, this collection provides a solid ground for reassessing crucial questions in the field of Gandhara studies.

In this paper, the DiGA team will give an overview of the collection now available on heidICON, the multimedia database of Heidelberg University Library. It will delineate how this important art historical record available in digital form can inform us on the history of Buddhist art in the region of Gandhara. It will first consider the stylistic variations which the corpus represents and examine how these sculptural languages relate to the production of other Buddhist sites in Gandhara. It will then focus on unique iconographic motifs and modes of depiction of episodes in the life of the Buddha and try to situate them in the broader context of Gandharan imageries and literally narrative traditions. Finally, it will show how some of the features of the digital platform such as the DiGA Thesaurus for the description of Gandharan Buddhist art can facilitate its comparison to other corpora of images and texts and, ultimately, shed further light on the history of Buddhism in the region of Gandhara.

R

Mubariz Ahmed Rabbani

THE BEADS AND PENDANTS FROM THE KUSHAN PERIODS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF BARIKOT, SWAT VALLEY, NORTHERN PAKISTAN (CA. 70 – 250 CE): A TYPOLOGICAL STUDY

Considered to be a ‘superpower’ in the early centuries of the Common Era, the Kushan Empire stretched over a large geographic territory, being dominantly represented in what is now eastern Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, Kashmir, Punjab, and parts of the Gangetic region of northern India. Kushan control over a network of routes contributed to a favourable environment for both long-distance travel and trade. It was during this time that Buddhism flourished like never before, witnessing not only an increase in the construction of stupas and monastic settlements, but also the production of distinct art sculptures associated with the Gandharan Buddhist tradition. Although excavations of Kushan-period sites in Gandhara have revealed various types of architectural units, artefacts, art assemblages, and inscriptions, our understanding of the local and regional archaeology remains limited owing to chronological uncertainties, a lack of high-resolution excavations, and limited publications.

The Gandharan key-site of Barikot has, unlike other regional sites, been excavated with modern stratigraphic excavation methods and is supported by a comprehensive series of radiocarbon dates. Excavations at Barikot have revealed a great range of material culture items from different areas and all chronological periods of the site. This paper will focus on the discoveries of beads and pendants from the Kushan phases of the site, which were manufactured from various raw materials and occur in many different shapes, providing evidence of the economic, religio-cultural, and artistic blooming of the Swat Valley at the time. The raw materials were obtained not only from local resource areas, but also through trade networks that linked Barikot with Afghanistan, the Arabian Sea coast, the Taxila Valley, the Gujarat region, and other parts of the subcontinent. By presenting a series of selected but representative examples, this study provides new insight into the daily life of the people living during Kushan rule.

Teresa P. Raczek

WHEN IS ENOUGH ENOUGH? ASSESSING RADIOCARBON DENSITIES ACROSS SOUTH ASIA

Radiocarbon dating has long been an effective tool for developing and refining South Asian chronologies and contextualizing finds within archaeological sites. Recent advances in radiocarbon dating have allowed for increased reliance on the technology and for more widespread applications of dating results. However, as powerful as the technology may be, it has been applied unevenly across South Asia, leading to some regions and time periods being better dated than others. This paper presents the latest results of an ongoing and expanding

project that examines patterns in radiocarbon dating in South Asia over the past 70 years with respect to geographic region and time period.

South Asian radiocarbon dates are often dispersed across site reports, felicitation volumes, and journals from various countries, making it difficult for researchers to track down legacy dates from older excavations. While radiocarbon date lists published in venues like *Indian Archaeology, a Review* and the journal *Radiocarbon* offer concentrated outlets for retrieving this data, they only offer a portion of the radiocarbon dates that are available. This paper will assess the compendium of dates in these publications and contrast them with dates found in other sources. The analysis will present geographical and chronological date densities and also assess the contextual information provided alongside radiocarbon dates. The results will show which regions and time periods in South Asia may need more attention from archaeologists interested in radiocarbon dating. The analysis will also enumerate the limits of the data and demonstrate why legacy radiocarbon data must be used carefully.

Babak Rafiei-Alavi, Ali Shojaee-Esfahani, Ali-Akbar Vahdati, Arash Boostani, Sarvar Hedayat, Hussein-Ali Sadeghi, Mohammad Sayaf Amiri, Hafizullah Hazim, Rahim-Allah Amani

NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD RESEARCH AT BALA HISSAR KABUL, 2022 AND 2023

From 2022 to 2023, the Agha Khan Cultural Service Afghanistan (AKCS-A) led a comprehensive excavation program at Bala Hissar Kabul. The archaeological field research was part of a broader reconstruction initiative that commenced in 2019, aiming to create an archaeological park in Kabul. The present article discusses the most significant findings of the field research.

The archaeological team strategically focused on different areas of the vast 45-hectare site and, in total, excavated five different locations. Their objectives were multifaceted, including establishing a chronological framework for the site, gaining insights into its primary function during each occupational period, and preparing the site for the archaeological park.

Archaeological excavations revealed that Bala Hissar had been inhabited since the Kushan Period and remained occupied during the Islamic era. The evidence suggests that during the Kushan period, at least part of the site had been surrounded by defensive walls and probably served as a primary residential area for the ancient people of Kabul before the Islamic Period. However, due to the extensive layering of Islamic occupation, it is still challenging to determine the exact nature and extent of the Kushan Period on the site.

In the Islamic period, Bala Hissar Kabul experienced extended periods of occupation, accumulating distinct archaeological remains that form a complex layering of different structural phases. These layers are approximately 7 meters thick, indicating that the site was

continuously and densely populated. Based on the discovery of dense housing remains on the south slope and proximity to Gole Heshmat Khan, it seems that Bala Hissar served as the residential area for the inhabitants of Kabul before the Mughal era. Under Mughal rule, the site underwent a significant transformation and became a hub for military and administrative activities. This shift was accompanied by the renewing and construction of extensive fortifications, a small Palace at the site's highest point, and the northward displacement of the old Kabul to its present location.

Rajesh S. V., Abhayan G. S., Francesc C. Conesa, Juan Jose Garcia-Granero, Natalia Eguez, Arnau Garcia-Molsosa, Subhash Bhandari, Anil Chavan, Jaypalsinh M. Jadeja, Akinori Uesugi, Sheela Athreya, Harshita Jain, Brad Chase, Charusmita Gadekar, Veena Mushrif-Tripathy

UNVEILING JUNA KHATIYA: INDIA'S LARGEST CEMETERY FROM THE REGIONALIZATION ERA OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

Juna Khatiya was discovered in 2016 by a team of archaeologists from the University of Kerala in Lakhpat taluka in Kachchh district, Gujarat, India. It is the largest cemetery identified in India from the Regionalization Era (c. 3200–2600 BCE) of the Indus Civilization. The site spans approximately 16 hectares and holds over 500 burials. Archaeological excavations across three seasons have unveiled 197 burials, represented by stone structures, pits, and clusters of ceramics and stones, burials devoid of indicators and clusters of shell bangles. Even though the acidic soil resulted in the decomposition of most of the skeletons, fragments of bones, teeth, and a complete skeleton were unearthed from the graves. A few charred human bones displaying warping marks, signifying cremation, were also discovered. A remarkable find was a complete cattle burial within a stone structure. The burial structures, unique in their varying sizes, are distinct from any reported sites from the Regionalization Era of the Indus Civilization. Burial goods at the site comprise vessels, occasionally accompanied by shell bangles, shell beads, and stone beads. Notably, some shell bangles displayed pecking and grinding marks instead of saw cutting. The number of vessels interred in burials ranged from 1 to 60, resembling the ceramic tradition of southern Baluchistan of the Regionalization Era. Reserved Slip Ware, a regional ceramic type prevalent in the Kachchh region, was found in a few burials in various shapes. Intriguingly, vessels were sometimes nested within others. The size and shapes of vessels used in various parts of the cemetery exhibited variations. The size of burial vessels and bangles was diminutive in smaller burial structures, which are probably intended for children. Although from the surface of the site, stone blades, cores, and lithic debitage of Chalcedony were discovered, none of the burials revealed their presence. Although a habitation site comparable in size to the cemetery was not discovered, a few smaller sites within a six-kilometre radius were identified. This paper encapsulates the results of the multidisciplinary research conducted at Juna Khatiya.

Juhyung Rhi

THE LOTUS SEAT WITH TWO NĀGAS: ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN EARLY INDIAN BUDDHIST ART

The lotus seat with two nāgas is a motif prevalently found in early Indian Buddhist art, especially in such regions as Gandhāra and western Deccan. This motif is commonly understood in relation to the Buddha's miracle at Śrāvastī, while it is sometimes linked to Amitābha Buddha. This paper will examine its significance in early Indian Buddhist iconography and its enduring presence in other parts of the Buddhist world.

Uzma Z. Rizvi, J. Gregory Smith, Adam Green, Sara Eichner

A PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM THE 2023–2024 FIELD SEASON AT MOHENJODARO

This paper presents preliminary results from the collaborative 2023–2024 field season at MohenjoDaro. This season was coordinated by the Laboratory of Integrated Archaeological Visualization and Heritage (LIAVH.org) at the Pratt Institute, bringing together LIAVH, the University of York and Northwest College in Wyoming to initiate a new programme of non-invasive mapping, knowledge-exchange and capacity building. The aim of the season is to develop new avenues for the equitable production and distribution of new insights into the long-term dynamics of urbanism, a goal that we believe requires a resolutely participatory approach. Toward that end, our initial field season brought together a new international and transdisciplinary community that includes local and regional specialists and students of archaeology. Together, we co-produce new low-cost and non-invasive digital mapping techniques, fostered initial cooperative efforts to aggregate settlement data in the region, and strengthened contacts between the archaeology and agricultural communities living in Sindh today. These meetings have helped us produce collaborative benchmarks for future research that we will carry forward into coming seasons, and contribute to a new programme for research that will help us learn from one of the world's most important early cities, and use those lessons to shape the future.

R. Roberts, Abhayan, G.S., A. Alam, I. Berganzo Besga, R. Campbell, A. Garcia-Molsosa, P. Gerrits, A.S. Green, M. Hameed, J.A. Jabbar, A.S. Khan, M. Madella, H.A. Orengo, V.N. Prabhakar, Rajesh, S.V., D.I. Redhouse, A. Samad, M. Sarmah, P.S. Singh, R.N. Singh, V.K. Singh, M. Suarez Moreno, K. Suganya, J. Tomaney, A. Vafadari, C.A. Petrie

MAPS, MOUNDS AND MACHINE-LEARNING: THE PROGRESS OF THE MAHSA PROJECT IN THE LARGE-SCALE MAPPING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE INDUS RIVER BASIN AND ITS SURROUNDING AREAS

The Mapping Archaeological Heritage in South Asia (MAHSA) project is documenting the endangered archaeological heritage of the Indus River Basin and the surrounding areas of Pakistan and India through use of a multi-method and multi-scalar workflow incorporating: a) historical maps; b) publicly available satellite and remote sensing imagery; c) high-resolution digital elevation models; and d) machine-learning based automatic site detection algorithms. This multi-method approach will make it possible to identify sites that have not previously been documented, highlight sites that are in danger, and monitor the impact of both urban and agricultural development.

Existing data on archaeological site location has been used to build hypotheses about the origins and collapse of early urbanism, and the subsequent rise and trajectory of early states and empires in South Asia. Research has shown, however, that thousands of archaeological sites are not recorded, throwing many existing interpretations into question. Pakistan and India both have active practitioners engaged in the documentation and management of archaeological heritage, and legislation designed to protect that heritage. Problems arise because substantial numbers of ancient sites remain undocumented, or extant data is not in an accessible and usable format. The absence of comprehensive and systematically acquired information on archaeological heritage create challenges for both research into and management of archaeological heritage. MAHSA has been working to address these challenges through collaborative endeavour and focused action since 2020.

This paper will provide an update on the methods and progress of the MAHSA project, and in doing so highlight the research questions and research findings that are being addressed through its documentation efforts.

Louise Roche

THE GOD SEATED ON THE NĀGA: QUESTIONING BUDDHISM AND VAISHNAVISM FROM ICONOGRAPHY IN ANGKORIAN CAMBODIA

From the 10th century onwards, the Buddha seated on the nāga became the major icon of Khmer Angkorian Buddhism. The very success of this iconography in Cambodia suggests that it does not refer solely to the episode of Mucilinda protecting the Buddha from rising waters. According to the French historian G. Cœdès, the Cambodian images of the Buddha seated on

the nāga constitute “one of the most delicate problems in Khmer iconography”; a problem which is at the heart of my recent doctoral research. G. Cœdès relates that in the 19th century the numerous Khmer images of this type were first identified as Viṣṇu: it is likely that early observers of the Cambodian terrain were aware of Indian images of Viṣṇu seated on the nāga.

While there is a parallel between the two iconographies and the myths to which they refer (in the entire Indianised world), we note that Khmer representations of Viṣṇu on the snake always show the god in a reclining position, and there is not a single image of the god seated. Furthermore, as the iconography of the Buddha seated on the nāga takes on greater importance in Cambodian cultural practices (from the late 11th century and during the 12th century), the iconography of Ananta on which Viṣṇu lies evolves until it became a veritable gajasīh (a kind of Khmer makara). While Shaivism was the largely dominant religion of the Angkor kings throughout the kingdom’s history, we note that the success of the iconography of the Buddha seated on the nāga and the iconographic shift in the representation of Viṣṇu Anantaśāyin took place at a time when a Buddhist kingship was emerging, while Vaishnavism was also experiencing a revival of interest.

Starting with the Indian images of Viṣṇu seated on the nāga—and their production context—that influenced the first observers, this conference proposes to examine, through the study of iconographies of the god seated on the nāga, the specific nature of Khmer images and, more, the links between Buddhism and Vaishnavism in the kingdom of Angkor between the 10th and 12th centuries.

Elke Rogersdotter

THE DILEMMA OF COMPARISON: (CONCEPTIONS OF) GAMES AND GAMING IN THE CULTURAL FABRIC OF INDUS SOCIETY

Recently, the field of games history has received a renewed interest, including with a focus on South Asia. In addition to archaeologists, games historians, Indologists and various stakeholders in popular culture have also shown a commitment to the issue. Occasionally, however, works appear where far-reaching conclusions are drawn on the basis of a single category of find and supposed similarities between such, sometimes over large spatial or temporal distances. In this connection, a series of more or less imaginative notions and setups arise, something we also find examples of if we look specifically at the research area concerning the Indus Civilisation. Cases include statements such as that the Indus peoples were fond of gambling, that they were passionate dice players, or enjoyed a game of proto-chess. Claims such as these may in turn be illustrated with a few ‘gaming pieces’ of various colours and shapes and perhaps some cube-shaped dice, preferably arranged in a way which seems to strive to imitate the almost complete board games that have emerged in tombs in, for example, Ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia.

These and similar notions risk leading to a simplistic, scanty, and marginalized history of something that de facto tends to form a central part of the cultural fabric; something characterized not only by a remarkable continuity, but also of continuous ingenuity, propensity for variation, and capacity for local adaptation. Paradoxically, the problem with these far-reaching comparisons is that they do not take into account the relational aspects so central to archaeology, whereby the find material in question could have been both anchored contextually and subjected to more close comparisons with data from other related assemblages. The purpose of this paper is to analyse, with the help of some illustrative examples, the material that forms the framework of some of these game-related conceptions via comparative close-up studies with a focus on such archaeologically elementary aspects as, for example, morphology, prevalence, and context. This may contribute to a more diversified, and to some extent more adequate, picture of potential game material than the dominant notions give at hand.

S

Sandra Sattler

CĀMUṄḌĀ

The skeletal, fierce goddess Cāmuṅḍā was among the most popular Hindu goddesses in medieval India. While her cult and depictions have received substantial attention and are well-documented in East India through an abundance of sculptural art and dedicated temples, the study of Cāmuṅḍā in North India has been much more limited despite her proliferation in this region of the subcontinent.

Cāmuṅḍā, who in her earliest depictions is part of a set of seven mother goddesses, entered the popular Hindu pantheon as an individual goddess from the 10th century onward. She appears both as a core deity in Śaiva and Śākta temples all over North India, where she was often enshrined in the cardinal north niche of these temples. One area where her worship was particularly widespread is the Śaiva hub of Ujjain in current-day Madhya Pradesh. Previously, the inferred prominence of Cāmuṅḍā and related fierce goddesses in the region relied mainly on textual and epigraphic sources as well as the many scattered sculptures housed in Ujjain's and neighbouring museums. A hitherto unpublished 10th-century Cāmuṅḍā temple near the city now provides material evidence on a larger scale and actualises the Sanskrit imaginaire of those ferocious goddess temples from literary works such as the *Mālatīmādhava* and *Kādambarī*.

This paper will focus on one of the few surviving medieval Cāmuṅḍā temples of North India that features an intact sculptural programme. Set remotely on the outskirts of Gajnikhedi, near a cremation ground, the temple has a particularly tantric pictorial programme embedded in a larger purāṇic frame, visualising the narratives and theology of the *Devīmāhātmya*. Dedicated to the skeletal cremation-ground goddess, the temple is a testament to her worship at the time. It also unveils her evolving, negotiated identity that propelled her ascent from one of the seven mother goddesses to the fiercest emanation of the Great Goddess in medieval India.

Kanika Kishore Saxena

KANKALI TILA: UNDERSTANDING A JAINA SITE THROUGH ARCHAEOLOGY

The site of Kankali Tila is important in any analysis of Jainism in Mathura as nearly all Jaina sculptures and donative inscriptions found in the Mathura area were discovered here. Excavations at Kankali Tila also yielded the remains of two temples and a *stūpa* of Jaina affiliation. The archaeological evidence from this site reveals that Jainism existed here from the second century BCE till the eleventh century CE.

This paper considers the explorations and excavations conducted at Kankali Tila and discusses the questions raised about the supposed discoveries at this site by A. Führer. The evidence of Jaina *stūpa* worship at Kankali Tila is examined carefully, through a critical reading of the archaeological reports, dismantling certain widely held assumptions. Several important but neglected themes are explored here, namely the Jaina *stūpa*, the innumerable number of Jina images, and the origin of the Jina image. Jaina inscriptions also reveal immense details about the monastic order and indicate the influential role they played in the life of the laity. Evidence indicates that various *tīrthāṅkaras* were worshipped simultaneously in the two temples at Kankali Tila. This also indicates that the religious structures at Kankali Tila were functional over a very long stretch of time.

This paper highlights that the site of Kankali Tila unearthed 86 donative inscriptions recording donations of various kinds of gifts. It reflected varied forms of Jaina worship in the form of *āyāgapaṭas*, *tīrthāṅkara* images, *stūpas* and temples respectively. Our analysis reveals that images formed the most popular Jaina donations in Mathura. The *āyāgapaṭas* constituted another type of gift which was popularly donated for some centuries. Significantly, the earliest gifts donated at Kankali Tila were associated with temples.

Finally, it attempts to answer the long-pending question of whether the Jainas at Mathura were Śvetāmbaras or Digambaras. It also analyses the continued presence of the Jainas at the site of Kankali Tila for several centuries from the early historical to the early medieval period. Thus, all the archaeological evidence found at Kankali Tila establishes it as a predominant Jaina establishment in Mathura.

Carolyn Woodford Schmidt

THE MISSING BUDDHA-IN-MEDITATION ATTRIBUTE

How astounding it was to discover that an A.S.I., Frontier Circle, in situ image of a large Mahāyāna stele, which was recovered from Mound D at Sahri-Bahlol in the spring of 1912 by Sir Aurel Stein, does not accord iconographically with this panel as seen today in the Peshawar Museum (no. 1554). Of circa the late-second or third century C.E., this unique Gandhāran sculpture represents one of a very narrowly focused corpus of twelve Buddha-field (*buddhakṣetra*) stelae that are unified by the type of lotus dais, “lotus-with-elephants dais,” on which the primary Buddha image is seated.

In each stele, a fully open-lotus is supported by a set of four elephants, representing the *diggajas*, guardian elephants of the four quarters. Various, in their upturned trunks, these directional elephants-sets, when originally sculpted, displayed three different attributes: lotus buds; open lotuses, each supporting a devotee; or open lotuses, each supporting an image of a meditating Buddha. It is the critically significant, elephant attribute of a Buddha-in-meditation that is now missing. Given that there were originally four-directional Buddhas along with the

primary Buddha, it is reasonable to consider this sculpture a candidate for the earliest extant imagery of the developing Pañca-jina Buddhas concept.

It is also essential to consider, in this context, the Gandhāran bejeweled turban tradition with two examples suggesting precursors to the pañca-jina mukuṭa (Five Victor Buddhas crown), their maṇḍala-like iconographic programs with diminutive Buddha crests and side medallions recalling later crowned Buddha sculptures from Gilgit, and headdresses from Tibet and Nepal, which function as support for meditation and ritual.

This effort highlights important early aspects of what came to be known as pan-Asian Pure Land and esoteric traditions, in which liberation from saṃsāra was conceptualized as magical realms. Had this attribute not been lost, scholarly discourse would have dramatically changed.

Annette Schmiedchen

ARCHAEOLOGY AND EPIGRAPHY: WHAT CAN THE FINDSPOTS OF COPPER-PLATE INSCRIPTIONS TELL US?

Unlike the majority of stone inscriptions, copper-plate charters, a very common epigraphic medium of premodern South Asia, are usually portable and were also meant to be transported from their place of production to their destination. Publications on copper-plate inscriptions regularly contain data on their provenance if these were available to the editors. Apparently, hundreds of such copper plates have been held in private hands for many decades or perhaps even centuries, without any information on their original places of preservation. But the reports on the circumstances of discovery also reveal that copper-plate charters are very often accidental finds from the soil, made while ploughing a field or digging the foundation for a building. We also know of some prominent hoard finds of copper plates. However, only relatively few copper plates have been discovered in archaeological excavations.

This paper will focus on a selection of such copper-plate charters which were unearthed from the soil, either as chance discoveries or during archaeological excavations. The epigraphic findspots very often provide important external evidence, supplementary to the complex spatial or topographical reference system recorded in the texts of the inscriptions. The majority of Indian copper-plate charters constitute royal title-deeds on endowments of villages and land in favour of religious recipients. They contain information on the permanent or temporary residence of the donor king and of the beneficiary of the grant as well as on the location of founded and fostered religious institutions and of donated assets. Frequently, the knowledge about the modern places of discovery of copper-plate charters facilitates the identification of premodern toponyms mentioned in the endowment records.

Whereas, strictly speaking, copper-plate charters usually only record the intention of the royal donor, or the initiation of a foundation or endowment, we are in most cases lacking documentary evidence for the implementation and further development of these grants.

Therefore, this presentation seeks to highlight that the information on the circumstances of discovery can contribute substantially to our understanding of the history of individual endowments.

Robert Schulz

‘PSEUDO MĀKANDIKA’ AND YAŚODHARA BETWEEN THE GREAT DEPARTURE AND THE RETURN TO KAPILAVASTU – A NEW ASSESSMENT

The most common narrative scenes depicted in Gandhara were already identified in the late 19th/early 20th century and show well known episodes of the Buddha’s biography. In this regard Alfred Foucher is probably the most quoted author providing us until today with the “canonical understanding” of what we call Gandharan art. This, however, is in some cases problematic as Foucher’s interpretations were only suggestions, but were later cited as certain, ignoring the doubts expressed by Foucher himself. One case might be illustrated by the so-called Marriage of Siddhārtha to Yaśodhara. In more complex representations additional acting figures appear which cannot be explained by the story. Even more discomfort is caused by the presence of Vajrapāṇi who as a common rule in iconography is not shown before the Great Departure.

A second scene reveals a comparable composition identified by Foucher as the story of The Brahmin Mākandika offering his daughter for marriage to the Buddha. Here again the iconography contradicts the story as a Brahmin is libating water to seal a vow; a practice that, for example, is applied when concluding a contract. However, nothing like that is part of the story. The same applies to the presence of the Brahmin, who is described in all written sources as a member of a particular sect (*parivrājaka*); a well-established iconography existed for this group in Gandhara, but their characteristic feature are not reflected in the so-called “Mākandika scenes”.

In this contribution I will try to re-approach both compositions by showing their connection to the moment when Siddhārtha abandons his life in the palace to become a Buddha. Part of the narrative cycle is that Yaśodhara takes a vow to lead an ascetic life until her husband returns. The story is bracketed by a later episode in which she approaches the Buddha to confirm her moral behaviour during his absence. In a second step I will try to relate both scenes to a motive in Buddhist literature which emphasises the transmission of the physical and spiritual inheritance within the Buddhas family.

Ibrahim Shah

HINDU CULT IMAGES IN THE PESHAWAR MUSEUM: AN ICONOGRAPHIC SURVEY

The Peshawar Museum is known globally for housing one of the best collections of relief sculptures representing the Gandhāra School of Buddhist Art. The Museum also accommodates on display and in the reserve, although few but very interesting, Hindu cult images dating from the late Gandhāra and the Śāhi periods. Some of them have attracted the attention of scholars for their artistic and iconographic peculiarities. Still there remain a few more to be included in the same list because they are no way less important than the others. Most of the Hindu sculptures, like the corpus of Buddhist relief panels, were collected by some treasure hunters and amateur individuals without keeping care of any secure archaeological context. The main problems that still cling to these art objects are that of their provenance and stratigraphy that hinders in putting them in a proper framework contributing towards the development of Hindu art and iconography in this part of the Indian subcontinent. Therefore, it is not an easy job to date them precisely, which problem is resolved to a certain extent by comparing them on stylistic grounds with their almost parallels in the other collections within the country and abroad.

The present work is meant to put all Hindu cult images together to give a coherent picture of their existence in the Peshawar Museum with the main objective of discussing their iconography and to a certain extent artistic perfection. We understand that some of these images were subjected to study in the past; still they need to be revisited and a few more to be studied afresh. The present work, it is hoped, will prove to be beneficial for and liked by students of the history of art.

Ifqut Shaheen

THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: EXPLORING TAXILA IN URDU AND PUNJABI LANGUAGES

We are familiar with infrequent instances of archaeological writings in various local languages of South Asia. Some works can be traced back to the later nineteenth century. The twentieth century, however, saw a sheer realization of communicating archaeological contents to native people. The results were tremendous. This study focuses on vernacular literature concerning the archaeology of Taxila.

A number of books, both in translation and in original, have been explored by this author. These include Gandhara by Muhammad Waliullah Khan, Taxila (Punjabi) by Saifur Rahman Dar, Taxila in verse by Pandit Devi Dayal, Taxila ka tehzibi safar naama by Agha Abdul Ghafoor, Taxila Albiladul Urus by Jaleel Quraishi, Punjab ke aasar-i-qadeemah by Muhammad Iqbal Bhutta and so on.

The paper first gives an out summary of the various published works in these languages. It is followed by some important content analysis, especially demonstrating what publications in the Punjabi have aimed at, namely giving information to which types of receivers through engaging them and educating them. To what extent indigenization of archaeology and its epistemological decolonization have been addressed? Lastly, the study situates through critical reflections the uses of vernacularization of archaeology against the socio-political situation in current South Asia (majoritarian, nationalist, monolithic philosophies and activities).

Shakirullah, Abdul Samad, Ruth L. Young, Paul Neuson

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AT THE SITE OF OLD FORT MANSEHRA, PAKISTAN

Archaeological excavations often yield valuable insights into the history and heritage of a region. Recently an archaeological excavation has been carried out on the Old Fort Mansehra by the Department of Archaeology, Hazara University Mansehra, Pakistan as a joint venture with the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Leicester University UK under the Pak-UK Education Gateway program funding of British Council and Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. The objective of the excavation was to explore the architectural features, cultural artifacts, and historical contexts of the fort, shedding light on its role in the socio-political landscape of the region during its occupation by the Sikhs and the British. The major findings revealed during the excavation process include potsherds, charcoals, bones, iron pieces and nails, copper coins, etc. On the basis of the material and stratigraphic study after digging up to 4m in depth into the virgin soil, five occupational levels/phases are clearly identified i.e. Kushan, late Kushan, Sikh, British, and Post-independence periods. A detailed report of the excavation is presented in this paper.

Manash Pratim Sharma, Ritwij Bhowmik

TUGHLUQ RULE AND BEYOND: THE MAKING OF THE KHUSH MAHAL IN WARANGAL

The Tughluq conquest of Warangal in 1323 CE marked a significant moment in the history of the Deccan, as it unlocked an era of cultural transformation and architectural innovation. The existing Kakatiya architecture was partly destroyed, a mosque was erected on the plinth of the *Svayambhusiva* temple, and an audience hall, today known as the Khush Mahal, was built near the temple complex that exemplifies the interplay of politics, religion, and culture in the fourteenth century Deccan. This paper discusses the history of the Khush Mahal, the only distinguished relic of the Tughluq architecture of Warangal. By exploring the existing historical records, both pre-modern and contemporary scholarship, the study seeks to elucidate its construction methods, particularly the use of rubble sourced, potentially, from the demolished *Svayambhusiva* temple complex, the probable functions of its interior space, and the way the courtly hierarchies within the Tughluq administration were maintained inside the Khush Mahal. Another objective of this study is to determine the precise dating of the Khush Mahal's construction, probing whether it emerged during the Tughluq invasion of the city or after their rule in Warangal. By using historiography as the primary research method, the study also tries to analyse the political significance of the hall to Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq and the subsequent dynasties that governed Warangal following the Tughluq occupation until the late medieval era.

Manisha Singh, Vikas Kumar Singh, Sudarshan Chakradhari, Brij Mohan, Abhay Pratap Singh, Jennifer Bates, R N Singh

RECENT INVESTIGATIONS IN LOWER SON VALLEY: IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF SAKAS AND RAMDIHRA, SASARAM (ROHTAS), BIHAR, INDIA

The present paper is primarily based on the archaeological excavation of the site Sakas (Long. 83° 56' 45.00" E and Lat. 24° 54' 10.46" N) and exploration at the site Ramdihra (Long. 84° 02' 12.92" E & lat. 24° 46' 22.27" N), both located in Sasaram (Rohtas) district, Bihar (India) in the foothills of Vindhya-Kaimur ranges and in the lower Son Valley. The excavation and explorations were aimed at understanding the archaeological potential of the area along with tracing out its significance in terms of its location as it lies between three important ancient cities of Middle Ganga Plain i.e., Kashi (Varanasi), Pataliputra (Patna) and Bodhgaya. The Kaimur hill ranges are nearly situated 2–3 km away from these two settlements. The site of Sakas and Ramdihra are extended in an area of 2 acres.

The site of Sakas was excavated by the team of the authors for three field seasons 2018–2019, 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 to unfold the nature and cultural sequence of the site and to understand the significance of the site in terms of its location.

During our excavations, a total of four trenches, numbered XA-15, AA-15, AB-15 and XA-16 were taken for excavations. These trenches were situated on the top of the mound. All trenches were quite productive having materials from early farming communities to the Chalcolithic Periods along with a transition phase between two periods. An appreciable range of cultural materials were recovered. The most common material recovered was fragments of fired ceramic vessels of various types including Corded Ware, BRW, Burnished BRW, Burnished Red, Dull Red Ware, Dull Red Slipped Ware, Tan ware, Burnished Grey Ware, Black Ware and a few with Rusticated incised design. Amongst the shapes mention can be made of vase, spouted vessel, bowl, lip basin, perforated bowl, etc. Bone points, beads of different materials including steatite, agate, carnelian and other semi-precious stones, hop-scotches; terracotta beads & wheels and an ear-ring made of copper are among the few remarkable antiquities found from different levels.

The most remarkable finding was the discovery of burial practices with evidence of eight skeletons belonging to the Transition Phase and Chalcolithic phase. In the early stage of study, out of eight skeletons, six were examined, of which two were male, two female and two children with orientations North-South and head slightly tilted towards the east.

Further, Ramdihra, also located in the foothills of the Kaimur hills and very near to river Son was explored to understand the nature of site in comparison with Sakas, as the distance between both sites is merely 10 km. The exploration team recovered neolithic artifacts and pottery from the surface, like Sakas and marked it as a Neolithic site. We intend to conduct excavations at Ramdihra shortly and hope to present data during the presentation.

The present paper aims to synthesize the results of the author's own research concerned with the excavations and explorations on both sites, with the objective of strengthening our understanding of the archaeology of Lower Son Valley, its importance in the contexts of ancient route, trade and its chronology.

Nikita Singh

A MEDLEY OF FAITHS: UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF EARLY MEDIEVAL CHHOTANAGPUR (C. 7TH– 13TH CENTURY CE)

Religious texts often marginalize popular practices, regional variations, and some pervasive practices find no mention whatsoever. However, art and archaeology can present the roots of such popular practices, cults, and devotional worship of images in religious shrines. The present paper aims to look into the history of the Chhotanagpur region in the early medieval period by investigating the available material culture. This less-studied region of eastern India

forms a highland backdrop to the middle and lower sections of the Gangetic valley in Bihar and West Bengal. It covers much of Jharkhand state and some parts of Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh. The archaeological relics in the form of dilapidated temple complexes and architectural-sculptural remains are the best signifiers of the plateau's early medieval socio-cultural milieu. A thorough study of these material remains will give an insight into the iconographic landscape, creative expressions, regional idiom, and how art objects integrated individuals and communities into a social fabric. Stylistically, one may observe the emergence of a regional style, having elements of both central India and the post-Gupta developments of south Bihar. The multireligious character of the region, the interconnections and interactions between different religious traditions, and the sculptural motifs reveal the existence of a shared pool of auspicious symbols. This region also epitomes how the past lives on in the present. A few early medieval temples are still in active worship and are spots of annual gatherings and festivities. Sculptures are still revered by locals, thus making such 'community antiquarianism' as a conservation practice as viable as museums. This study will also contribute to a better understanding of regions as part of the whole and not the whole itself with a hope of further explorations in this forest land of Eastern India.

Pushp Lata Singh

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ALONG THE RIVER TAMSA (TONS) IN AYODHYA AND AMBEDKAR NAGAR DISTRICTS, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

This paper is primarily based on recent archaeological explorations and excavations along the river Tamsa in Ayodhya and Ambedkar Nagar Districts Uttar Pradesh, India. Tamsa river is a tributary of river Ganga originates from a lake in village Lakhnipur, tehsil Rudauli in District Ayodhya. River Tamsa flowing through Ayodhya, Ambedkar Nagar, Azamgarh, Mau and Ballia where it joins River Ganga. The Ramayana mentioned River Tamsa several times. According to tradition that lord Rama spent the first night on its banks after his exile from Ayodhya.

Recent explorations have brought to light approximately forty settlements in District Ambedkar Nagar and thirty-four settlements in district Ayodhya along the River Tamsa ranging from Pre-Northern Black Polished Ware Culture to Early Medieval / Medieval period. The ancient settlements lie in the tehsils of Ayodhya Sadar, Bikapur, Milipur and Sohawal along the river Tamsa/ Marha / Tons in district Ayodhya. They are also distributed in Jalalpur and Akbarpur tehsils in the district Ambedkar Nagar. It is pertinent to point out here that Khapura is the only one excavated site on the bank of Tamsa River in district Ambedkar Nagar. But in district Ayodhya the archaeological investigations are only confined to the explorations. The site of Khapura was excavated under my direction from 2017–18 to 2020–2021. The excavation revealed fourfold cultural sequence – Pd I: Pre-Northern Black Polished Ware with

iron (c. 1100 BCE–600 CE), Pd II: Northern Black Polished Ware Culture (c. 600 BCE–200 BCE), Pd III: Shunga – Kushan Culture (c. 200 BCE–300 CE) and Pd IV: Gupta Period (c. 300 CE–c. 500 CE). The Pre NBPW with iron phase was recorded for the first time in this area from the excavations at Khapura. The ceramics and other material remains indicate that on one hand ancient settlers had cultural contacts with the inhabitants of trans Saryu / Ghaghara region and on the other hand with middle Gangetic-Vindhyan region. It is significant that the site of Khapura is located on the ancient route from Kashi to Ayodhya.

Ravindra N. Singh, Cameron A. Petrie, Vikas K. Singh, Manisha Singh, Sudarshan Chakradhari

LIVING AND MINING ON THE MARGINS: INVESTIGATIONS AT THE INDUS SETTLEMENT OF KHANAK, BHIWANI, INDIA

The populations of South Asia's Indus Civilisation occupied a diverse range of environments across large parts of modern Pakistan and India. Indus populations made use of a wide range of raw material resources, and although there is much known about the sourcing and exploitation of stone (Law 2011), there are outstanding questions about the sources of Indus metals. The Aravalli hills, which lie in the desert margins of southern Haryana and northern Rajasthan in west India contain a wide variety of ores and minerals, but the degree to which Indus populations exploited this material has not been clear.

Recent discoveries of Bronze Age artefacts, tin slag, fragments of furnaces and crucibles, together with new geological evidence on tin deposits in Tosham area of Bhiwani district in Haryana provide the opportunity to survey the evidence for possible sources of tin and the use of bronze in the Harappan sites of north western India. The Harappan settlement of Khanak is located in Bhiwani, Haryana, India. Khanak has been excavated by the first author in collaboration with Prof. Cameron Petrie, University of Cambridge. From amongst the cultural materials recovered from two seasons of fieldwork at Khanak several samples related to metal production were selected for scientific studies. This included five fragments of crucible, four slag, two samples of copper celt and one sample of melt adhering to a potsherd. These were examined using SEM-EDS, EDAX & Petrological techniques. Thin-section petrography technique has played a crucial role in the provenance studies of the ancient ceramics and slag. First, when the non-plastic inclusions derive from distinctive igneous and metamorphic rocks, thin-section petrography of slag provides a predictive method for identifying the source of the raw materials used in metallurgy. Very occasionally, a particular 'key' inclusion allows one to identify the precise source of the raw materials, ores and minerals. Electron microscopy was used to study the surface and internal structure of the slag samples. The information acquired provides more detailed information than that obtained from the petrological analysis. The data that has emerged so far from the present and earlier analysis will be presented.

Vikas Kumar Singh, Manisha Singh, Sudarshan Chakradhari, Brij Mohan, Abhay P. Singh & R. N. Singh

EXCAVATIONS AT NINDAUR 2021–22, DISTRICT KAIMUR (BHABHUA), BIHAR, INDIA: RECENT INVESTIGATIONS

The ancient site of Nindaur (Lat. 25003'33" N, Long. 83021'49" E and Elev. 265 ft) is located on the Chakia-Hata-Bhabhua road in the Kaimur district of Bihar, about 14 km east of the Chakia town of Chandauli district in Uttar Pradesh. The mound of Nindaur is spread over an area of approx. 400x500 m and the height of the mound is about 15 m from the surface level. The site was excavated under the direction of Dr. Vikas Kumar Singh (Assistant Professor, Department of AIHC & Archaeology, BHU, Varanasi) in the session 2021–2022 with the objectives of establishing the cultural sequence, chronology and understanding the importance of the site.

A total of three trenches and a trial trench were excavated in different parts of the mound, which revealed the cultural sequence as follows:

Period I: Pre-NBP Period

Period II: NBPW Period

Period III: Shunga-Kushana Period

Period IV: Gupta Period

Period V: Medieval Period

Two of these trenches were excavated up to natural soil and one was exposed only to the brick wall. From the excavation, an appreciable range of cultural materials were recovered from these trenches. The most common material recovered were fragments of fired ceramic vessels of various types including Burnished Red Ware, Dull Red Ware, Red Slipped Ware, Black Slipped Ware, Northern Black Polished Ware and a few with incised designs. Amongst the shapes mentioned can be made of Vase, Spouted vessel, bowl, lip basin, perforated bowl, etc. Apart from these ceramics, fragments of stone sculptures, terracotta figurines, terracotta balls, an antimony rod, a copper mirror, several bone points, beads of different materials including agate and other semi-precious stones, terracotta hopscotches; terracotta beads and wheels are among the few remarkable antiquities found from different levels. Further, the significance of Nindaur also lies in the point that there is no such massive site like it, located on the route connecting three major historical cities of Middle Ganga Plain – Kashi (modern Varanasi), Pataliputra (modern Patna) and Bodhgaya.

This paper will present the new findings and the recent results of the excavation. The details will be discussed with material remains of these periods with a comparative study of other contemporary sites.

Ishani Sinha

PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE CONCEPT OF ORIGIN, INSPIRATION AND CHRONOLOGY OF BUDDHIST STUPAS: INSIGHTS FROM RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN EASTERN INDIA

Buddhist Scriptures prominently feature Buddha's references to Stupas in his religious discourses. However, the physical presence of Stupas in the Buddhist context is believed to have come into existence only after his Mahāparinirvāṇa in the 5th century BCE. This belief was substantiated by the retrieval of caskets with Buddha's relics from Stupas during excavations at Vaishali (Bihar) and Piprahwa (U.P.), regarded as the earliest Buddhist Stupas.

Recent excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India in 2006–07 at Juafardih (Bihar, eastern India) unearthed a Stupa believed to be associated with Maudgalyayana, a disciple of Buddha. As Maudgalyayana had died before Buddha, the Juafardih Stupa logically predates Buddha's relic Stupas. Furthermore, the absence of relics in this Stupa implies that the earliest Buddhist Stupa served a commemorative purpose rather than housing relics. Notably, the Juafardih Stupa was constructed over habitational deposits, contrasting relic Stupas, traditionally erected away from habitation areas, as seen at Vaishali or Piprahwa. The findings challenge prevailing concepts about Stupas in three significant ways: firstly, that the construction of Buddhist Stupas commenced during the lifetime of Buddha; secondly, that the earliest Stupa did not contain relics but was built in memory of a monk; and thirdly, that the earliest Stupa was located within a habitation area, not away from it.

Excavations of non-Buddhist Vedic burial mounds at Lauriya Nandangarh (Bihar, eastern India) in 1904–07 and 1935–36 revealed funerary materials and activities. These mounds exhibit contours similar to the earliest hemispherical mud Stupas associated with Buddhism and they date to 1000–600 BCE, immediately preceding Buddha's era. The period, morphology, material of construction, and purpose of these Vedic burial mounds at Lauriya Nandangarh strongly indicate that Buddhist Stupas may have drawn inspiration from them.

Based on the insights provided by these excavations, the proposed paper calls for a comprehensive reevaluation of prevailing concepts about the origin, inspiration, and chronology of Buddhist Stupas. It advocates a critical review of established narratives, offering a fresh perspective on the historical and cultural evolution of Stupas within the Buddhist tradition.

Natchapol Sirisawad

THE ŚRĀVASTĪ MIRACLES AS DEPICTED ON THE PAINTINGS IN INDIA AND THAILAND

The Great and Twin miracles in Śrāvastī are among the Buddha's principal miracles and could even be an important episode of his career. The episode is preserved in multiple textual sources

in a variety of languages and is represented in the visual art of ancient India, Central Asia, as well as Southeast Asia. The objective of this research is to examine these textual sources linked to their visual representations.

The focus is on the artistic expression of these Śrāvastī miracles found on mural paintings at Buddhist sites in India and Thailand. This study reveals that the miracles were widely depicted in the Buddhist caves of Ajañtā in western India during the late fifth through the sixth centuries. There the Great Miracle was illustrated with the exponential creation and projection of multiple Buddha images upwards through space which followed the Mūlasarvāstivāda textual tradition. However, this is in contrast to the paintings of the Śrāvastī miracles in Thailand depicted from the late 18th to early 20th centuries. On the wall panels in the Uposadha Vihāra, together with the wooden panels of Central Thailand, as well as on gilded lacquer cabinets, the emphasis is not on the Great Miracle but of the Twin Miracle. Furthermore, it comes together with other narrative elements such as the story of Arhat Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja obtaining a sandalwood bowl; the Buddha's prohibition in exhibiting supernatural power; the gardener Gaṇḍa (or Gaṇḍaka) offering a ripe mango; the instantaneous growth of a (mango) tree and the destruction of the tīrthikas' pavilion.

The rich corpus of illustrations implies that the artists might have clearly drawn their inspiration from the Theravāda textual sources. Moreover, in some paintings, the Thai artists reproduce other characters such as foreign figures wearing textile patterns and costumes to reflect the makeup of the Siam society at that time. These findings demonstrate that the key elements of a narrative from literary sources have been transformed into visual representations as evidenced by these paintings.

Monica L. Smith, Shantanu Vaidya, Rabindra Kumar Mohanty

KANKAIKUDA (KESHPUR), ODISHA: A MULTIPERIOD COASTAL SETTLEMENT AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN URBAN NETWORK

Kankaikuda (19°37'11" N, 85°08'45" E) is a multiperiod site located on the shore of Chilka Lake 100 km southwest of ancient Sisupalgarh (modern Bhubaneswar). Excavations were carried out in five different areas in 2019 to evaluate the site's cultural sequence and human-environmental dynamics. Ceramics include materials from the Chalcolithic period (cordmarked wares, very coarse ware) identical to that of Golbai Sasan and Ostapur; pottery of the Early Historic period (knobbed ware, red-slipped wares, string-cut cups) identical to that of Sisupalgarh, Talapada and Gauranga Patana; and pottery of the medieval period (gray wares with everted grooved rims) identical to Manikapatana and the uppermost levels of Sisupalgarh and Talapada. Kankaikuda is thus the only site investigated thus far by our team that contains the entire chronological sequence of Chalcolithic to medieval. However, it should be noted that no single trench at Kankaikuda contained the entirety of the sequence, most likely due to discontinuous episodes of occupation.

Given the frequency of cyclonic storms in the region in both the past and in the present (e.g. the supercyclone of 1999, Phailin in 2013, and Fani in 2019), the convenient shoreline location of Kankaikuda was sometimes a liability. We suggest that the settlement was of relatively long duration within any given time period but that the site was frequently abandoned and then reinhabited. Kankaikuda is located in a cove that is easily spotted from Chilka Lake due to distinctive rocks near the shore; the site also is in clear sight of the pass that leads to Berhampur and is still today the pass over which the modern road crosses the hills. The site has potable water and likely would have been a favorable spot from the perspective of both trade and local production. The site's frequent re-occupation as a habitation area is marked not only by the presence of grinding stones associated with food preparation but also the frequent occurrence of slag on the surface of the site and in the excavations.

Virag Sontakke, Shantanu Vaidya, Varad Sabnis

INTERACTION, EXCHANGE AND RISE OF COMPLEXITY IN CENTRAL INDIA DURING THE EARLY IRON AGE

The region of Central India, especially known as Vidarbha is widely identified for the Early Iron Age-Megalithic culture. This culture is well studied from numerous excavations and explorations conducted so far, including sites like Mahurjhari, Bhagimohari, Naikund, Adam, etc. The peculiar characteristic of the culture is the presence of impressive megalithic burials along with the settlements. Excavations of the megalithic burials yielded a variety of artefacts that have helped to derive socio-economic observations about the culture. It is also observed that the appearance of artefacts changes according to the size of the burial and the nature of the site which conclusively sheds considerable light on the interaction and exchange network. Moreover, the presence of variation between the types of megaliths, the settlement pattern and resource utilization also offer some valuable insights into the craft specialization and socio-economic complexity. In addition, recent excavations and explorations by the authors have brought forth many unknown facts about the lifestyle and cultural continuity of the early Iron Age community of central India. The paper attempts to address the issue of this interaction on social, ritual and economic aspects and the rise of cultural complexity in the region.

Namita Sugandhi

FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OF OCCUPATION AND COUNTING: RECENT RESEARCH AT TEKKALAKOTE

This paper presents the results of field research at Tekkalakote from 2023–24. Tekkalakote is a well-known archaeological site in Ballari district, Northern Karnataka, that has long been associated with the Southern Neolithic (c. 3000–1200 BCE). Research around the hills of Tekkalakote has also highlighted a very rich sequence of material culture that continues up

through modern times. An archaeological inquiry into different strategies of subsistence, technology, and ritual practice seen across the landscape of Tekkalakote suggests that this place, like many other settlements in the region, has a deep history of local innovation and development that cannot be linked to any larger urban center or political entity. Recent scholarship has suggested that the dispersed and small-scale nature of settlement across Ballari district was not an indication of a lack of complexity, but rather a sustainable strategy of settlement that was well-suited to the semi-arid environment. The last five years of research have focused on excavation, exploration, and experimental research at Tekkalakote, and is beginning to consider the implications of this very long-durée of habitation when it comes to examining issues of complexity, sustainability, and micro-history.

Akshyeta Suryanarayan, Carolina Jimenez, Óscar Parque, Carla Lancelotti, Tasleem Abro, Muhiuddin Veesar, Amin Chandio, Marco Madella

FOOD CHOICE AND FOODWAYS IN THE INDUS CIVILISATION: MULTI-PROXY EVIDENCE FROM TWO INDUS SETTLEMENTS IN THE LOWER INDUS VALLEY

Investigating food archaeologically provides a powerful lens to investigate the relationship between humans and the environment, plants, and animals, as well as gain insight into social dynamics. Food choice, which implies the selection of ingredients and their consumption, has an important role in the social, economic and symbolic aspects of life, and encompasses what is eaten, why, where and how. Taking a broader approach, foodways incorporates the whole interrelated system of food conceptualization, procurement, preservation, preparation, distribution, and consumption.

The study of food practices in the archaeology of South Asia, particularly of settlements of the Indus Civilisation, are becoming more common and opening a means to investigate agricultural dynamics underlying the supply of plant and animal ingredients available for consumption. The lower Indus alluvial plain was one of core regions where early agro-pastoral groups created the basis for the agricultural economy that fuelled the urbanisation process of the Indus Civilisation. However, despite large-scale excavations of sites in the region in the early twentieth century, such as Mohenjo-daro, very little is understood about agricultural practices, animal management and foodways during the development of urbanism in the region, as well as the social driving forces behind the choice of ingredients and cooking processes.

This talk will present the results of archaeobotanical, zooarchaeological, starch-grain and ceramic residue analyses from two Indus Valley Civilisation settlements (Bhando Qubo and Taloor je Bhatt) located in the central riverplains of the Indus to highlight food choice and culinary practices in the early phase of urbanism in Sindh. The sites are located in unique environmental zones in Sindh: one in the main Indus River plain, and the other at the edge of the Thar desert. The use of multiple proxies to study food remains reveal the relationship

between the environment and different food strategies adopted by ancient populations. Pulling the evidence together also opens up new means to understand the choice of plant and animal ingredients; how they came together as food prepared in ceramic vessels; and how foodways developed during urbanism in the lower Indus Valley.

T

Francesca Tagliatesta

THE SACRED TREE IN INDIAN ART AND THE PROBABLE ANALOGIES WITH THE RACEMES AND THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE ICONOGRAPHIC TRADITION OF THE ITALIAN MIDDLE AGES

This research is inspired by a study undertaken by Professor Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in 1929, entitled “The Tree of Jesse and Indian Parallels or Sources”, which suggested to analyze any parallels between the aforementioned motif – frequently, and not only, attested in Buddhist depictions – and the tree of life, visible in Medieval Italian art (Modena Cathedral, Otranto Cathedral and so on).

This study approaches a hermeneutic analysis of the meaning of the representations, elaborated by different cultural traditions, without losing sight of the Indian reference model, and the peculiarity of this image with its symbolic and religious meanings. So, it will be taking into consideration those processes that may have favoured a diachronic transmission, and those dynamics of cultural interaction between East and West. Naturally, this iconographic motif, both in India and in the West, may have undergone changes, alterations and evolutions of its use in different contexts, by changing the original symbolic and religious value.

What is the link between Bodhi Tree and Tree of Life in Otranto mosaic?

There is abundant literature on the religious significance of trees and vegetation in Buddhism: the most important events in the life of the Buddha took place under trees, in particular, under the bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Similarly, in the mosaic of the Otranto Cathedral there are scenes of religious and mythological subjects represented amid the branches of the fig tree. In India, this cosmic tree often bears deities or other human beings among its branches, exactly as happens in Western medieval iconography. The Arab *Wāq wāq* tree, the fabulous tree capable of producing human-shaped fruit, could have mediated this transmission, precisely, from India to the medieval West. In the book of wonders of India (*Kitāb ‘ajā’yib al Hind* by Buzurg Shahriyār) it is told of a tree which produces fruits similar to a pumpkin with human features.

Therefore, on an iconographic level, the motif is intertwined and contaminated: it is assumed that the Indian tree of life can be recognizable in the legend of the *Wāq wāq* tree and its variants, such as the decoration of shoots and vegetal spirals in metalwork and Islamic ceramics – especially of Iranian and Syriac-Mesopotamian style, from 13th century – which display human and animal heads (Baltrušaitis, 1955 *Le Moyen Age fantastique. Antiquités et Exotisme dans l’Art Gothique*) up to the representations of the human and animal figures generated by the large axial tree present in the floor mosaic of the Cathedral of Otranto.

Margareta Tengberg, Marjan Mashkour, Ferréol Salomon, Nathalie Schneider, Morteza Djamali, Aurore Didier

DOWN BY THE RIVER – FLUVIAL DYNAMICS AND RESOURCE EXPLOITATION AT 3RD MILLENNIUM BCE CHANHU-DARO, SINDH, PAKISTAN

Like corridors of life in barren lands, the Indus River and its tributaries created the conditions for the eponymous civilization that flourished over a vast geographical space in the 3rd and early 2nd millennia BCE. Still, the archaeological investigations of the first cities of the Indian subcontinent have mainly concentrated on material culture and long-distance trade and less on the Indus River itself despite its decisive role in a region marked by aridity. This paper aims at putting the Indus, its environment and its resources into focus and explore how the 3rd millennium BCE inhabitants of Chanhu-daro (Sindh, Pakistan), a nascent urban society, interacted with the river on a daily as well as on a long-term basis. We will present the first results of an interdisciplinary project including fluvial geoarchaeology, bio-archaeology and archaeology. The coring across and around the site in winter 2024 have produced the first data on the ancient course of the river and the physiognomy of the immediate surroundings of the settlement in regards to the floodplain, secondary streams and wetlands. The analysis of faunal and botanical remains collected during several years of excavation have revealed the importance of biotic resources from the waters and the riverside, such as fish, turtles, shells and wood. New data on the nature and exploitation modes of these aquatic and riparian resources will be exposed.

Mercedes Tortorici

BLUE IN THE AJANTA PAINTINGS

Blue pigments, less easily available and more expensive than other colors, have played an important role in global art history. In my research I examined how the blue color – confirmed to be lapis lazuli – was used in the paintings of Ajanta. Blue is completely absent in the paintings of the 1st century BCE, located in the caves at the center of this Buddhist site. Among the paintings of the 5th century, blue is used only for minor details in the centrally located caves (cave XVI and XVII), while it is applied in larger quantities in the peripheral caves of Ajanta (cave I, II and XXVI).

In order to explain the sudden appearance of lapis lazuli in the Ajanta paintings, my paper will take into account historical aspects, such as wars and possible trading routes. To put the results of these consideration into a wider perspective, it will also provide a comparison with the use of lapis lazuli in the Buddhist cave paintings in Kucha.

Vincent Tournier

SANNATI AND KANAGANAHALLI: NEW INSIGHTS FROM A REVISED EPIGRAPHIC CORPUS

The 2014 publication of Kanaganahalli Inscriptions by Maiko Nakanishi and Oskar von Hinüber marked a major step towards the study of one of the largest known epigraphic troves related to a single Buddhist site in the Deccan. Their research considerably improved upon preliminary editions published a year before, in the volume of the Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India dedicated to the stūpa site, edited by K.P. Poonacha. However, Nakanishi and von Hinüber relied on a partial and, in several respects, unsatisfactory documentation of the epigraphic corpus under consideration. More recent documentation campaigns carried out by myself and other colleagues have improved the available data, which allows now not only to revise the edition of the 229 inscriptions published in 2014, but also to provide new editions and translations of a further 97 epigraphs from the Kanaganahalli stūpa. Furthermore, to better understand the Buddhist site in its immediate context, a revised epigraphic corpus must include all other coeval inscriptions stemming from the territory of ancient Sannati. This corpus of over 440 inscriptions from Sannati/Kanaganahalli—including nearly a hundred inscriptions found on memorial stones at non-Buddhist sites—is forthcoming as an online publication on the epigraphic database of the ERC project DHARMA. In this paper, I will present this revised and more comprehensive corpus, and show how it sheds new light on key issues, such as the chronology and patronage of the major stūpa site, the agency of other religious milieux in the region, and the importance of Sannati as a seat of Sātavāhana power.

Elora Tribedy

EXILED STELES AND FORGOTTEN MEMORIES: BUDDHIST PRACTICES AT DEVĀRAMA SAṂGHA (BIHAR IN UTTAR PRADESH), INDIA

The entangled history of Sankissa (Kapitha) and Bihar or Pakna-Bihar (Devārāma Saṁgha) in the Ganga-Yamuna doab has been understudied concerning its clouded and heterogeneous past, involving hostilities and negotiations. There has not been any proper excavation or separate publication on the monastic site of Bihar, located at a distance of 10 km from the celebrated site of Sankissa in Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh, India. The monastery at the site most likely came into existence during the Kuṣāṇa occupation and was active till the Gupta and the Gurjara-Pratihāra rule in this area. Although the name of the village, Bihar, still stands as reminiscent of the historical Buddhist establishment at this location, it appears that the Buddhist memories of the site are slowly nearing oblivion.

The present paper discovers and establishes a connection, for the first time, between the two exiled steles hailing from this lesser-known monastic site, housed in two different corners of

the world, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, U.S.A. and State Museum of Lucknow, India. The discussion will rejoin these connected steles, presently physically apart, for a careful analysis of the visual program, consisting of the iconography of the four deities (Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Tārā, and Cundā) and minor elements. It will elaborate on how mirroring and visual regulations were employed in these depictions. The paper finally navigates through the subtle references to the miracle, Bodhisattvahood, and the prospect of pilgrimage, embedded within these steles.

These steles bear the shadow and testimonies of Sankissa as an important pilgrimage destination as the rise, splendor, and fall of Buddhism at Sankissa had impacted this nearby small monastic site. The discussion is corroborated by the author's observation and detailed exploration of the site and its vicinity. The paper calls for the need for academic attention to 'small-scale histories' and smaller sites, such as the satellite monastic site of Bihar, of its heydays and the days beyond glory.

Letizia Trinco

THE NEW LIFE OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS: CASES OF RECENT ADAPTATION AND REUSE OF MEGALITHIC STRUCTURES ON THE NILGIRI MOUNTAINS OF TAMIL NADU

The archaeological landscape of the Nilgiri Mountains of Tamil Nadu encompasses a variety of stone assemblages which fall under the category traditionally defined as "megaliths". Their chronology and cultural affiliation have been long debated. The peculiarity of the grave goods found in the stone circles and the presence of carvings on many of the dolmens of the region led scholars to advance the hypothesis that at least some of these structures might have been reused over time. This is one of the aspects under scrutiny of the five-year Nilgiri Archaeological Project (NAP 2021–2026).

The present paper aims to offer a contribution on the theme of the reuse of megalithic structures on the Nilgiris by presenting cases of recent appropriation and transformation of former megalithic burials into worship places at three sites – as observed during the NAP fieldwork season 2023: Pykara Hill, One Tree Hill and Staircase Hill. At each of these sites, former stone circles have been altered or integrated within new shrines responding to the cult needs of the communities residing or working in the proximity of the megalithic assemblages. These communities are either traditional inhabitants of the region, like the Todas, or newcomers from Sri Lanka or other areas of Tamil Nadu. Notably, the original meaning of the megaliths has already been lost well before these recent reappropriations, for already in the 19th century none of the communities settled on the Nilgiris would claim the authorship of the stone circles.

Attention will be given to the morphological features of the new structures with relation to the pre-existing ones, but also on the social effects of these spatial reinterpretations. As suggested

by most recent studies on megaliths in Karnataka, the establishment of new cultural/religious spots through the revival of places whose original significance has been lost, but whose presence has remained vivid in the landscape, might have served already back in the Iron Age (1200–300 BCE) to reinforce social networks or create new ones. Our ethnoarchaeological observations seem consistent with this hypothesis and might help shed new light on the past of the Nilgiri megaliths, too.

S. Udayakumar

AN ETHNOARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF KOTA POTTERY PRODUCTION, NILGIRI MOUNTAINS (TAMIL NADU)

The highest peaks of the Nilgiri Mountains, Tamil Nadu are dotted with megalithic tombs that were excavated by colonial administrators in the 19th century. These burials yielded assemblages of grave goods which included a large quantity of ceramic artefacts including tiered vessels and urns, currently dated between the 12th and 16th century. These ceramics find no stylistic or typological comparison in neighbouring areas but they show a number of similarities with the contemporary pottery production of the Kotas. The Kota “tribe” is an indigenous community of about 3000 people (according to the 2011 Indian census) inhabiting the upper elevations of the Nilgiri Mountains. Traditionally, they are occupied as potters, blacksmiths, and musicians. Kota pottery is sold for ritualistic purposes to the Todas and the Badagas, the other two indigenous communities inhabiting the upper elevations of the Nilgiri Mountains. Indigenous oral histories, which might date to the 17th century, refer to the Kotas as the potters of the region. At present, Kota women are the ones who are exclusively occupied with the production and exchange of pottery. This paper presents an ethnoarchaeological study of Kota pottery-making that establishes stylistic and typological affinities with the ceramic production excavated from local megalithic burials. We will first illustrate pre-wheel activities (selection, collection, and processing of raw materials), wheel throwing, and post-wheel activities (beating and trimming), as well as burnishing and painting techniques, and kiln preparation and firing methods. This ethnoarchaeological study was carried out as part of the ongoing research of the Nilgiri Archaeological Project.

Akinori Uesugi, Takehiro Miki, Marco Madella, Carla Lancelotti, Ghulam Mohiuddin Veesar, Tasleem Abro, Amin Chandio

CERAMICS OF THE TRANSITIONAL PHASE FROM PRE-URBAN TO URBAN PHASES OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION FOCUSING ON THE EVIDENCE FROM BHANDO QUBO, SINDH, PAKISTAN

Our understanding of the ceramics of the Pre-urban (c. 3000–2600 BCE) and Urban Indus period (c. 2600–1900 BCE) in Sindh, which is regarded as one of the key regions for the emergence of the Indus Civilization, has depended on a few sites, such as Mohenjo-daro, Chanhudaro, Amri and Kot Diji, for a long time. Due to the limitation of the evidence available to date, the ceramic sequence from the pre-urban period to the Urban period, especially the

stylistic change from the Kot Diji-style pottery to the Harappa-style pottery, has not been fully reconstructed.

The recently established project “Modeling the Agricultural Origins of the Urbanism in South Asia” by a joint team from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and the Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, which is conducting excavations at several sites in Sindh, has been revealing a long-term ceramic sequence in the region from the Pre-Urban to Urban periods with a series of C14 dates. Especially, the excavation at Bhandu Qubo, which is known for the co-occurrence of the Kot Diji-style pottery and the Mehrgarh Period VII pottery, has yielded good evidence for our understanding of the transition from the Kot Diji-style pottery of the pre-urban period to the Harappa-style pottery of the Urban period. The close examination of the evidence from this site is expected to reveal not only the ceramic sequence in Sindh but also the complex interregional interaction in the emergence of the urban society around 2600 BCE.

This paper will discuss the evidence from Bhandu Qubo to understand the stylistic and technological changes from the Pre-urban to the Urban period of the Indus Civilization in Sindh.



Shantanu Vaidya, Saumyashree Moharana, Rahul Kumar Verma, Rabindra Kumar Mohanty, Pankaj Goyal

EXCAVATIONS AT ASURADHIPA, KANCHILO AND RECENT INVESTIGATIONS ON NEOLITHIC-CHALCOLITHIC CULTURE OF COASTAL ODISHA, BHARAT

The Neolithic-Chalcolithic culture of Odisha has been investigated since the 1960's. However, it was only after the excavations at Golbai Sasan the real momentum of research in this field began. Along with these, a series of sites were excavated and explored including Banga-Harirajpur, Ostapur and a few other sites. Recent explorations have brought to light around 35 sites spread over an area of 50 sq. km surrounding Golbai Sasan. In this context, the first author excavated, in association with other scholars, a similar cultural site known as "Asuradhipa" in close proximity of Golbai Sasan in the District of Khurda, Odisha. These first farmers seem to have moved to this part of the country finding congenial environment around the beginning of second millennium BCE. They introduced paddy cultivation in this part of the country. Besides this, collection of wild rice, exploiting local fauna, fishing and collecting forest products also formed a part of their subsistence. They too seem to have introduced a few wild legumes, which probably spread to other parts of the country. They constructed circular wattle-daub huts in clusters, probably to have close association and probably for protection from carnivores living in the nearby jungles. Some of the sites are often located 3–4 km from each other making a close culturally and materially-knit society. At Asuradhipa the excavator came across much evidence which has shed new light on the unknown aspects of the culture. The excavation has contributed in understanding the local network within the sites of the period. The present paper deals with the present picture of the studies carried out so far in the light of this recent excavation.

Alexandra Vanleene, Chai Yee Leow

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM HARVARD FAS CAMLAB'S PILOT PROJECT: DIGITAL RECONSTRUCTION OF TAPA-E SHOTOR MONASTERY IN HAḌḌA, AFGHANISTAN – A STEP FORWARD IN DIGITAL GANDHARA

The subject of digitization is gaining momentum within scholarly circles, enhancing the clarity and richness of archival representations and documentation. Our focus of interest is Haḍḍa – a significant site in the Gandhāra area.

Haḍḍa is a contemporary village situated in Afghanistan, approximately 12 kilometers south of the current city of Jellālābād. Haḍḍa site was built atop the remnants of a small pre-Islamic town, and served as a pivotal Buddhist monastic complex from the early Christian era. The

samgharamas of Haḍḍa were renowned religious centers along the Silk Road that accommodated pilgrims traveling between India and China via Gandhāra.

Situated at the threshold of India and enriched by legends and relics related to the Buddha Śakyamuni, these prosperous monasteries welcomed generations of monks and numerous Buddhist devotees until the ninth century CE. The decoration of Haḍḍa reflected a blend of diverse artistic influences – Indian, Iranian, Graeco-Roman, and Central Asian, a fusion of artistry whose influence stretches from Kapiśā to Xinjiang. Although the sites were extensively excavated, they were sadly destroyed in 1992, and currently, no visible vestige remain.

The Digital Gandhara project, spearheaded by Harvard FAS CAMLab, has selected the Haḍḍa reconstruction project as its initial endeavor. Our objective is to digitally reconstruct the stupa-monastery site. This preliminary effort necessitates an in-depth examination of each aspect of the site to gather comprehensive expertise and insights.

However, the challenge lies in the global dispersion of Haḍḍa's art pieces. Despite this, our E-Scholar team is assiduously working to attribute these pieces more accurately to their original location. The technologies available for archaeological practices a few decades ago were comparatively basic, leading to the preservation of low-resolution photographs. This has left us with limited resources. Nonetheless, we are dedicated to optimizing these scarce resources to produce top-tier scholarly work.



Fang Wang

NEW INVESTIGATION INTO PICTORIAL NARRATIVES FEATURING THE BUDDHA'S FIRST ILLNESS IN GANDHĀRAN RELIEFS

The legends of the Buddha's life recount an episode in which the Buddha fell ill under the Bodhi tree shortly after attaining enlightenment but was healed by a medicine fruit brought by a tree goddess. While this narrative is extensively documented in Buddhist literature in ancient Indian languages and translated into Chinese and Tibetan, visual representations have not been recognised; this study provides a new identification of the artistic motif from Gandhāran reliefs that have been misinterpreted or overlooked in previous research.

Five examples of Gandhāran reliefs, including frieze scenes and miniature panels, are identified here as representing the Buddha's first illness in the narrative cycle of his enlightenment. These depictions all portray the Buddha seated under a tree with his right arm raised diagonally in front of his chest and in conversation with a tree goddess who holds a votive fruit in hand. The illness incident is further integrated with narrative elements related to preceding and subsequent events, including the preparation of the Bodhi Seat, the temptation of Māra, the contemplation under the Bodhi Tree, the adoration of heavenly deities and the entreaty of Brahma, which have not been fully distinguished from each other in previous studies.

The analysis therefore reveals a correlative narrative logic within these Gandhāran reliefs, which deviates from the conventional linear narrative in the same school of art. In this case, individual figures within the same relief scene are associated with sequential episodes and are linked to form a coherent narrative.

Simone Wille

SOUTH ASIA IN CENTRAL EUROPE

In connection with my research project *South Asia in Central Europe: The Mobility of Artists and Art Works between 1947 and 1989*, which is funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF (V880-G), I would like to present a paper from this long-term research on artistic routes from South Asia to Central Europe. In particular, I would like to present a case study of one artist, namely Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2022), and his long-standing relations with the city of Prague and a selected number of individuals. Husain is considered the most important postcolonial modern artist in India. There is hardly an account of Indian modernism in which his contribution is not duly acknowledged. Throughout his career, he traveled extensively. Mobility thus informs his work. His travels can be read in direct relation to the international

postwar situation. Decolonisation and a general shift in power made possible new cultural and political connections and alliances in all directions.

Hussain's travels to Prague have only been mentioned in passing, and no serious discussion has been undertaken. In this paper, I will discuss some of the works that Husain made during his travels to Prague and I will relate them to works that he created elsewhere outside of India. This way, the aesthetic dimension of his work can be re-considered in the context of post-partition India. One of the main concerns, therefore, will be to evaluate the extent to which that cultural mobility has helped artists to establish complex relationships between their respective nations and the global art world, as reflected in their artistic practice.

Y

Ujjwal Yadav

THE URBAN MONKS AND THEIR MONEY: RE-EXAMINING THE KANHERI INSCRIPTIONS

The rock-cut Kanheri caves, located on the outskirts of Mumbai, dated back roughly to 1st century CE – 10th century CE, form an integral part of the cluster of ancient Buddhist sites situated along the Western Deccan. On site excavations were initially conducted by J. Bird (1841) and later by E. West (1856–61), yielding a wealth of archaeological material such as inscriptions, coin hoards, and sculptures (Leese 1983). These caves, including Kanheri, have been studied by scholars to ascertain chronological, architectural developments (Dehejia 1972), involvement in trade (Ray 1994), patronage base, etc. However, this paper aims to shift the focus by contextualising Buddhist monks in their urban landscape and highlighting the economic and ideological underpinnings of the everyday functioning of this monastic settlement. This is to suggest an active involvement of the monks at Kanheri in handling money transactions, evident from references to coined money such as Drammas and Kāhāpāṇas as the currency of the permanent endowments (Visvanathan 2018, Strauch 2020). The study relies on a critical examination of roughly a hundred and four inscriptions recovered primarily in Brahmi (Gokhale 1991). The inscriptional data suggest a strong possibility of the engagement of the monks at Kanheri in diverse economic enterprises such as receiving and lending money on interests, investment, and banking. This is contrary to the prescriptions laid down in the normative Pāli literature that bans the use of money, gold, silver, etc for the monks. Further, the practice of recording financial deeds suggests possibilities of conflict and even misappropriation of funds by the parties involved. More importantly, how was this economic endeavour justified in the eyes of the laity that viewed the monks as pious mendicants? The paper also analyses the socio-economic base of the donors, including royalty such as the Sātavāhanas. These questions are posed in the backdrop of Kanheri being a sprawling urban centre well connected to coastal port towns such as Kalyan as well as inland towns such as Nasik that could have influenced the flow of capital with traders and merchants forming the most important supporter group.

Ji Ho Yi

THE MONK COULD HAVE BEEN A NUN: RE-EXAMINATION OF THE GANDHARAN SCULPTURE (I 127) IN THE HUMBOLDT FORUM

The presentation explores how the Gandharan torso, now kept in the Humboldt Forum, could be redefined as a nun, as it was depicted differently from the monks and laywomen in the Gandharan art. The new identification of the piece may also point to the possible re-examination of other monastic images formerly designated as monks.

The small torso, about 20.5 cm tall, now in Berlin's Humboldt Forum, is the image of a person wearing a monastic robe with hands gathered in front of the chest. The Gandharan piece was bought by Ernst Waldschmidt in 1930 from the art salesman Ram Dass of Rawalpindi. Based on the visual characteristics and iconography, the author would like to propose that the piece may depict a nun. As the monastic persons of both sexes are represented with shaved heads and covered with monastic robes, it is difficult to identify whether a clergyperson is a nun or a monk. Nevertheless, the study by Oskar von Hinüber about the additional inner clothing worn only by the nuns to cover the breasts may support the identification of the torso in Humboldt Forum as a nun, as the person's upper body is thoroughly covered.

Although there has not been profound research on the nun sculptures found in the Gandhara, the example of the nun painting from Ajanta clearly shows that the nuns covered their torso with care while the monks freely exposed their shoulders. Such custom seems to have also survived in ancient Kucha on the western border of China, supporting that the covering of the chest or even shoulders by the nuns was likely practiced widely.

Moreover, the raised bosom, the feminine features of eyes and nose, and the lack of facial hair may also support that the monastic person of the Gandharan torso in Humboldt Forum may be a female. This presentation will propose to throw a new look at the sculptures of the monastic persons defined as monks, as they also could have been nuns.

Posters

Abdul Azeem

ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE SITES IN AND AROUND THE CAPITAL TERRITORY OF ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

The area comprising present Islamabad Capital territory is the extension of the Pothohar plateau, situated at the foot of Margalla Hills. Due to its congenial environment with myriads of springs, natural caves and abound in flora and fauna the area attracted the earliest hunting and gathering communities since prehistoric times who used the natural caves and shelters of Margalla and Muree Hills as their abode until the dawn of civilization in 3rd Millennium B.C. when the cavemen of the area started animal husbandry and small-scale cultivation which resulted in emergence of small villages in plain area. Remains of such early settlement sites are frequently found here and there where ample water was available in the small valleys in Pothohar Region.

Being a transitional zone between Margalla hills and alluvium plains of Punjab, situated on the ancient trade route connecting Sub-Continent with the Central Asia and Western World, the area frequently crossed by the invaders and traders from 6th century B.C. to 20th century A.D. Historical Monuments and archaeological sites of those bygone eras situated in the Capital Territory of Islamabad is the priceless cultural heritage of our nation. During recent survey over forty archaeological sites and historical monuments ranging from prehistoric times to the British Period.

Six major historical monuments and sites of the area i.e., Rawat Fort, Pharwala Fort, Kos Minars near Golra, Buddhist site of Ban Faqurian and Shah Allah Ditta caves have been protected under the Antiquities Act, 1975 for the purpose of further research and conservation.

Brij Mohan, Manisha Singh, Sunil Kumar Singh, Sudarshan Chakradhari, Abhay P. Singh, Vikas Kumar Singh, Ravindra N. Singh

AN ETHNOARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ADHAURA BLOCK, KAIMUR DISTRICT, BIHAR TO UNDERSTAND THE MICRO-WEAR PATTERN OF PREHISTORIC STONE TOOLS

Adhaura is a block of district Kaimur (Bhabhua) in Bihar. The whole region of the Adhaura is represented by the Kaimur ranges covered with dense forests and full of archaeological activities. The area was used for habitation from the Lower Palaeolithic Period by prehistoric human beings which has been easily marked by the availability of stone tools and rock paintings. At present, several tribal communities like Agaria, Kharwar, Uraon, Toriya, etc. have

been living in this region since the early period with their continued traditions. These tribes are mostly dependent on nature and perform several activities for their livelihood. Since the area is very fertile for archaeological works, hence, to know more about this region several archaeological explorations have been conducted by authors, and from these surveys, several stone artifacts have been collected ranging from the Palaeolithic to the Early Historical Period. To know the use of prehistoric stone tools, the Micro-Wear (Usewear) technique is very helpful in modern days. Micro-wear analysis helps to understand the scars and striations pattern of stone artifacts and with the help of this method, some ideas could be derived about prehistoric hominin behavior. This paper aims to develop some knowledge about the living traditions of tribal communities for preparing an ethnoarchaeological catalog by doing some experiments to trace the activities of these stone tools. As these communities are very close to nature, so, an ethnoarchaeological approach has been applied to understand the functions of archaeological stone tools recovered from Adhaura Region with the help of Micro-Wear analysis.

Snigdha Konar, Niraj Rai

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF NATURAL AND HUMAN FACTORS IN DEGRADATION OF ISKO ROCK ART OF HAZARIBAGH DISTRICT, JHARKHAND, INDIA

One of the most fundamental ways that the early humans have expressed themselves since the dawn of time, whether consciously or unconsciously, has been through rock art. This study had looked into the underlying causes of rock art deterioration at the Isko Rock Art Site in Barkagaon Block, Hazaribagh District, Jharkhand. Geomorphology, for example, has a strong influence on the persistence of rock art. Phenomena such as persistent vandalism frequently jeopardize the conservation of rock art. Previously, methods like documentation and digitalization had been used to record this rock art lying under the cloak of degradation, but interestingly, no comprehensive studies were undertaken to understand the key factors behind the slow degradation process. In this research, factors like the presence of pH in the soil, the amount of precipitation, temperature fluctuations, bioindicators, and the nature of the rock surface have been studied for understanding the slow degradation process of the site. This research also questions the increasing effect of human activity and its contribution to the degradation process of the site. So, with time, the process of conserving and protecting the site is becoming more challenging. This study of the role of natural and human factors responsible for the degradation of a rock art site also opens a new arena for more vast scientific research in this field.

Maé Laurent-Godard

CHANHU-DARO'S TERRACOTTA ZOOMORPHIC FIGURINES: STUDY AND RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF AN UNPUBLISHED CORPUS FROM THE FIRST PERIOD OF THE INDUS CIVILISATION (2600/2500–1900 BCE)

Terracotta animal figurines are present at many sites of the Indus Civilization (2600/2500–1900 BCE) and constitute an important part of the material discovered. They mainly represent domestic animals but also wild animals. Some can be used as whistles or mounted on wheels. These objects testify to the importance of the animal in Indusian society, already underlined by the numerous animal representations on ceramics and seals. They also help to reconstruct part of the daily life of local populations and to support archeozoological research on the fauna of the Indus Basin at the time of the Indus civilization. Yet they are rarely studied in themselves.

This poster will present the results of the study I carried out for my Master 2 in Archaeology at University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. This study was completed and supported by Dr. Aurore Didier (CNRS, MAFBI director), who gave me access to the data from the MAFBI excavations in Chanhu-daro (Sindh, Pakistan), and Dr. Pascal Butterlin (University Paris 1, UMR 7041 ArScAn). This work focused on a corpus of 401 zoomorphic terracotta figurines from Chanhu-daro. They mostly come from the excavations of the MAFBI, but also from the survey of N. G. Majumdar and the excavations of E. J. H. Mackay.

This work had multiple objectives: to establish typologies specific to Chanhu-daro and to identify possible similarities between the figurines of Chanhu-daro and those of other Indus sites. Another objective was to detect any link between zoomorphic figurines and their characteristics, on the one hand, and their distribution on the site and their context of discovery, on the other. The last aim was to study the manufacturing traces on the figurines, their decorations and morphology to understand the modalities of their production.

The results of this study provided information on the first period of the Indus Civilization, but also on the importance attached to animals through their representations. A topic which deserves to be deepened to better understand the meaning to be given to zoomorphic motifs of ceramic and seals and therefore to a still misunderstood part of the cultural and mental landscape of the Indusians.

Takehiro Miki, Akinori Uesugi, Brandi L. McDonald, Ghulam Mohiuddin Veesar, Tasleem Abro, Amin Chandio, Carla Lancerotti, Marco Madella

POTTERY PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION IN SINDH AT SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES BEFORE AND DURING THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

The Indus Civilization existed in South Asia from 2600 to 1900 BC. This civilization had two aspects: “cultural uniformity throughout the extensive area of South Asia and limited number

of large-scale urban sites” and “numbers of small- to middle-scale communities with high regional diversity”. The production and distribution of pottery is a subject of research to explore these two aspects, which are significant for understanding the urbanization dynamism in South Asia. The pottery production and distribution in rural communities in the Indus Civilization have been paid less attention than those in large urban sites.

In order to elucidate the diachronic changes of pottery production and distribution networks in suburban communities of the Indus Civilization in Sindh, this study conducted geochemical and petrographic analyses of pottery excavated from Bhando Qubo and Taloor Je Bhatt, Sindh, Pakistan. The Bhando Qubo site has the long sequence ranging from the Kot Dijian (c. 3000 – 2600 BCE) to the Urban Indus period. The site of Taloor Je Bhatt has the long deposit of the Urban Indus period. Both sites were excavated by the recently established project “Modelling the Agricultural Origins of the Urbanism in South Asia” by the team from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and the Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur in 2019 and 2021.

We used methods of thin-section petrography and instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) to understand the petrographic and geochemical characteristics of the pottery. Based on these preliminary results, we will discuss whether these characteristics changed before and after the emergence of the Indus Civilization, the possibility of pottery exchange, and the detail of local networks of pottery production and distribution in the hinterland of Mohenjo-daro.

Saumyashree Moharana, Sushama G. Deo, Shantanu Vaidya

THE EARLY AGRO-PASTORAL SETTLEMENTS OF THE COASTAL REGIONS OF GANJAM DISTRICT, ODISHA, BHARAT: A FRESH LIGHT FROM THE RECENT FIELD INVESTIGATION

Research on the Neolithic culture of Odisha began in the 1960s with P. Acharya’s discovery of polished stone tool from the Mayurbhanj district, Odisha. The excavation at Golbai Sasan marked the beginning of research on Neolithic-Chalcolithic and Chalcolithic culture in the coastal regions of Odisha. Subsequently, a number of sites located in the lower deltaic regions of the Mahanadi River and in its adjoining regions have also been excavated and studied, some of which are worth mentioning: Banga-Harirajpur, Gopalpur, Ostapur, Suabarei, Bharatihuda, Deltihuda, and Asuradhipa. Further, numerous contemporary Early Agro-pastoral settlements are known from field investigations.

The time period of these Early Agro-pastoral settlements extends between the second half of 3rd millennium BC to second half of 1st millennium BC, corresponding to the available C14 dates obtained from few excavated sites located both in the lower Mahanadi delta and in its surrounding regions. However, the presence of Early Agro-pastoral settlements in the region lies to the south of the Mahanadi delta; specifically, the coastal regions of southern Odisha are yet to be extensively investigated. Furthermore, the ceramic assemblage of these Early Agro-

pastoral populations in the present study area is comparable to that of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic and Chalcolithic periods known from the lower Mahanadi delta and its surrounding areas. The Cord-Imprinted specimens found in the current study area and those from Neolithic sites in the Visakhapatnam region of Andhra Pradesh share an intriguing relationship, which emphasises the importance of present study area. The presence of Early Agro-pastoral settlements has earlier been brought to light at few locations in the alluvial plain of lower Rushikulya river by Behera, followed by Vaidya and Smith at Kankaikuda. However, until the recent field investigation conducted by the author, their presence other than the previously known locations in the study area were unknown.

A number of sites was documented through an extensive field survey that provides insights over their lifestyle, the settlement distribution pattern, cultural components, and regional identity across different geomorphic contexts and ecological niches. This poster primarily deals with the result of the recent field investigation carried out in the coastal regions of Ganjam district.

Sheetal Rana

ĀDI BRAHMA TEMPLE, KULLU, HIMACHAL PRADESH: A SELECT STUDY ON SUSTENANCE OF WOODCARVINGS

Art acting as an interface gives an exoteric visual form to the esoteric knowledge and makes it intelligible to the masses. The varied combination of retained and inventive elements is of notable interest, as observable in the eighteenth-century wooden pagoda style temple of Ādi Brahma, which was built over the earlier remains of the stone temple in the medieval period. The temple underwent continuous changes and modifications, exhibiting the element of preservation of traditional motifs and patterns in the decorative structural elements and carvings. The time interval is of great significance, the snake motifs have survived till date in the carvings and reveal its present relevance with environment, certain motifs despite falling into disuse provide a repertory of stylized symbols to meet the decorative demands. There is a stylized version of theme and the content which is closely related immediate to human concern. The depiction of flora and fauna reveals man's grave concern for natural environment and their respect for nature and natural species. The auspicious medium of wood, especially Devdar bearing the quality of tremendous durability, transformed into rich heritage by the hands of natives and help us search for aesthetic and human values of their respective times, their place in the ancestry of art of carving and decoding their inherent meaning and symbolism in the process.

Anisha Singh, Vikas Kumar Singh

ETHNOMEDICINAL PLANTS AND THEIR THERAPEUTIC APPLICATION BY THE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES OF ROHTAS DISTRICT (BIHAR), INDIA WITH RESPECT TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The dependence of human on plants traces its root to the very beginning of human existence on this planet. India has its glorious past of traditional medicinal system and use pattern. Throughout history and the time before recorded history, medicinal plant has held a significant place in human society. Rohtas district of Bihar, India covers rich and diverse forest, where resides the different tribal communities like the Agarias, Bayars, Chero, Dhakars, Ho, Kharwars, Oraon, Toriya etc. These tribal people utilize many plants in their day-to-day life for food, medicine, fodder, fuel and other purposes.

The present poster deals with ethnomedicinal plants and their therapeutic uses by these tribal people like the uses of *Cassia fistula*, *Terminalia cordifolia*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Terminalia arjuna* etc. It is a first-hand data collected directly from the field survey conducted in the tribal villages and forest area of the district by the author.

Further, the collected data is corroborated with the findings from the excavated site in the region like Senuwar, Sakas, Malhar, Raja Nal Ka Tila etc. as they are in similar topographical zone. It indicates that the ecological niche that were used by the prehistoric people, still managed to support the modern communities, relying on the similar subsistence strategies.

On the occasion of this important event, I would like to summarize, through the poster presentation, the ethno-archaeology of the Rohtas district with special emphasis on the ethno-medicinal practices of the tribal communities in the region in order for better understanding of the “Life-ways” of the prehistoric people in an archaeological context by comparing the data recovered from the excavated archaeological sites in the region, especially the recent excavated site of Sakas and Nindaur.

Filippo Maria Valente

LITHIC INDUSTRY OF TRENCHES BKG11,12 OF BIR-KOT-GHWANDAI, KHYBER PAKHTUNKWA

Bir-kot ghwandai is an extended pluristratified site on the left bank of the Swat river, in the vicinity of the modern day village of Barikot (lat. 34°41' north; Long. 72°12' east) in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Since 1978, the site has been the focus of multiple campaigns, first lead by P. Callieri and G. Stacul, and later by L.M. Olivieri, the present Director for iSMEO of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Pakistan. The lithics from the protohistoric and early historic periods of Barikot and nearby areas have been only preliminarily studied and reported (after digs at Ghalegay, Loebanr, Aligrama, studies by G. Stacul and R. Micheli). The poster presents a collection of lithic tools coming from the trenches BKG11 (4 seasons of excavation between 2011 and 2013) and BKG 12 (excavated in 2014 and 2020, by M. Vidale and R. Micheli); it will present and discuss the strategic adaptation of distinct kinds of tools and cores to the variability of natural litho-types available in the beds of the Swat and Kandak rivers, and further discuss some distinctive, apparent archaic technological traits in lithics' production and use emerging from the ongoing analysis, in the broader light of the evidence of early lithic industries of the region.

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The abstracts have not been comprehensively edited.
Inconsistencies in the spelling of names, sites and the use of
diacritics reflect the individual preferences of the authors.



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