DAVID JONGEWARD

KUSHAN MYSTIQUE

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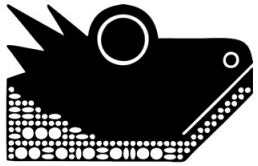

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To Carolyn

Foreword

It's been a long time since I began to suffer from a condition I call *Kushanitis*. It's highly contagious for a certain sort of person. I always feel a little guilty when I pass on the condition. I am relieved to learn from what follows that I wasn't responsible for David's catching it, but I suppose I have to bear some of the responsibility for helping to incubate the condition in him. As you will discover from this delightful memoir, this condition, often known as Cunningham's syndrome, is chronic, and both David and I have suffered from it for over 40 years. There is no cure, but fortunately it's not fatal, and support groups are available in many parts of the world.

So what is the nature of this mysterious affliction? I think of it as an advanced form of the common condition known as *jigsaw-puzzlitis*. You see a problem and itch to solve it, but the itching only makes it worse. It can be alleviated, and sometimes even cured, by the completion of the puzzle that brought on the attack, but *Kushanitis* has no such resolution. Once you've got it, it won't go away. It affects your everyday routine and disturbs your sleep. It's like trying to solve a jigsaw with only 0.1 per cent of the pieces and no picture on the box. For the jigsaw-puzzler that would be a disaster, but for sufferers of *Kushanitis* such frustration is another part of the pleasure, the joy of being on a never-ending journey of discovery.

So what causes it? For me it was the discovery of some coins that had been sitting in the British Museum since the nineteenth century with a Bactrian camel on one side and an Indian bull on the other. They were written in Greek on one side and in a strange, unfamiliar script on the other. Though I had 'small Latin and less Greek' (as Ben Jonson said), I quickly realised that the Greek was gibberish. At that point, the script on the other side had as little meaning for me as the blundered Greek. I looked in books to see what people had said about them and found a table of inscriptions that transcribed them into the Latin alphabet in the article 'Coins of the Indo-Scythians' written by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1888 and published in the *Numismatic Chronicle*. The script, I learned, was Kharoshthi, used to write Gandhari, the language of ancient Gandhara (now northern Pakistan), and on one of the coins I discovered the word kushana, Gandhari for Kushan, part of the name of the first Kushan king, Kujula Kadphises. Cunningham's syndrome must have lain dormant in the British Museum coin trays for almost a century. Its latent potency meant that I was immediately affected and have had to live with it ever since. In David's case, as you will discover, it happened when he was handed a coin by, and subsequently caught the condition from, the coin's owner, Craig Burns.

So why is it so easily spread? Well, in both our cases it had to do with coming into direct

contact with the puzzle of the Kushan kings. These kings ruled in Afghanistan and the surrounding regions many centuries ago. In the early nineteenth century, scholars and coin collectors began to encounter puzzling coins in Afghanistan and Pakistan (I have documented these early encounters elsewhere[1]). At first these mysterious coins were assembled in large numbers by English and French travellers to the region and then shipped back to Calcutta or to Europe. Initially no one knew who had issued them, but gradually it was realised that they were the coins of an obscure state that was mentioned in passing in the *Hou Han Shu*, a Chinese chronicle covering the early first millennium AD. Because the coins were inscribed in Greek and the classical sources recorded that the Greek kingdoms in this part of the world were overthrown by Scythians, the coins were labelled 'Indo-Scythian'. By the time of Cunningham's 1888 article, he had worked out that the kings issuing them were called Kushan. This provided the first jigsaw piece, and since then those affected by his syndrome have continued to struggle with the unquenchable thirst to find more pieces of evidence and the overwhelming urge to construct a framework for understanding this dynasty.

There is no written history of this kingdom and virtually no information about them in textual sources apart from the Chinese chronicle. Gradually, inscriptions relating to the dynasty are being found and a few sites they ruled over have been excavated. More coins have been found, giving us a better understanding of their monetary system. For more than a century a debate raged about how to date the dynasty, with start dates ranging from the first century BC to the third century AD. Although there are some sufferers who continue to itch at this, some relief has been achieved due to international collaboration, and the current consensus places the start of the dynasty in the mid-first century AD and its end in the mid-fourth century.[2] Although the date issue is gradually improving, there remain so many questions that the problems are unlikely to ever be eradicated. We can look forward to continuing help from the various support groups set up to help those affected deal with *Kushanitis*. The syndrome's symptoms include the need to know the extent of the Kushan empire, the nature of their religious beliefs, their relationships with their subject peoples, their interactions with Buddhism and the development of Buddhist art, their everyday political structures, etc., but there is unlikely to ever be enough surviving evidence for a complete cure to be developed. And anyway, who wants to be cured of being stuck into such an exciting adventure?

Reading David's account of his developing symptoms and continuing engagement with the problems of the Kushans has delighted me, particularly discovering my own part in his quest to unravel the Kushan mysteries. As a historian it amuses and intrigues me to see a historical account of my own activities. I ask myself, did I really say that? David's training as an anthropologist has made him an assiduous recorder of conversations and events, so I have to believe him. Yes, I still remember Craig Burns and his delightful wife, Eleanor, and their

curious house by the lake in northern California. I remember his wonderful coin collection and how much it revealed about the Kushan kings in the dynasty's final phase. I also remember thinking that Craig was very eccentric. I remember meeting Hakim Hamidi a couple of times, when he visited the British Museum, but most of his dealings were with my former colleague, the late, lamented Nicholas Lowick. I correspond with, but have never met, Mobin Ahmed. I never had the pleasure of meeting Robert Göbl, but I exchanged letters with him. I was always amused by his remarks about my lack of German and my unwillingness to be persuaded by his views on Kushan chronology. As Isaac Newton put it, we stand on the shoulders of giants, and I am happy to acknowledge that in my own research I have always seen Robert Göbl as a giant of great stature in Kushan studies and have happily climbed up to place my feet on his shoulders, even if I'm often tempted to kick him in the ear while there.

It's been a real pleasure for me to discover David's description of the work of my former colleague Liz Errington. Her work on Charles Masson's discoveries and collections has been an inspiration for much of my research since the 1990s. She is without doubt one of the most learned scholars working on the Buddhist art of Gandhara today, a rightful heir to the French curator Francine Tissot's title of 'Mother of Gandhara'. When David and I published the catalogue of the Kushan coins for the American Numismatic Society, we readily concurred in dedicating the volume to her in recognition of the inspiration she has been to us both.

I am also delighted to see the mentions in David's narrative of the support Neil Kreitman and his Foundation have bestowed on the study of the art and history of the Kushan period. Like David, my research and my publications have benefitted from his generous support over several decades. Without his support I am sure David, Liz and I would not have been able to achieve so much in addressing the problems of the Kushans.

Kushanitis brings many benefits to its sufferers. The itch can entertain and inspire. It can forge great long-standing friendships. As you, reader, venture into this volume, be prepared to feel compelled to join us. The symptoms will gradually come to you, and take you on an exciting journey of discovery beyond your imagining, following the lure of the Kushan mystique. You can be guaranteed that it will entrance you and seduce you. You will meet people who will become firm friends and learn of historical characters who will continue to intrigue you into the years to come.

— Joe Cribb

— 1 —

Lakehouse

Craig and Eleanor Burns waited for us to settle into the attic silence. The steeply pitched ceiling meant I could not stand up straight even in the centre of the space. The room, illuminated by a single floor lamp, was furnished with a fine Persian carpet, a few cushions with Peruvian textile covers, and an antique desk with unusually shallow drawers. After adjusting the lamp's cone of pale light, Craig took out a key and unlocked the desk. I could not understand why the drawers were only about two inches thick, until he pulled out one of them and carefully placed it in my hands. The drawer contained several rows of recessed circles, all lined with green velvet. Each circle held a gold coin. I was stunned. I missed most of what Craig said, but heard enough to register that the 50 or so gold coins on my lap were all nearly 2,000 years old.

In that moment, I saw the heart and soul of a seriously possessed collector. Craig's face radiated with childlike fascination. His handling of the coins expressed equal parts sensitivity and pride. I could sense his love for the feel of the round gold form in his fingertips. He clearly attributed unimaginable value to the object in hand, a value having little to do with purchase price. If I had seen the coins in a museum case, I doubt I would have given them a second glance. But in the hands of a passionate collector, the coins came alive. It was clear the coins were much more than money, more than an ancient means of exchange, more than a valuable window into history. For Craig, the coins served as an emissary from ancient kings, a special form of communication sent from an ancient source of esoteric knowledge.

Craig inserted the drawer back into the desk, then placed one of the gold coins in the palm of my hand. It was about the diameter of a quarter. I liked its weight, its slippery feel, the altogether tangible sense of connection with antiquity. On one side of the coin, the full figure of a standing king facing to his right is portrayed. There is nothing imperious or idealised in the image, quite the contrary. He is portrayed with a big nose, an untidy beard, a funny peaked hat and baggy trousers partially covered by a belted tunic. He holds a spear in one hand and is armed with a sword. The other hand is poised above a tiny form I could not identify.

'A fire altar,' Craig explained. 'The king is making an offering at a small fire altar.'

'What are the little marks above the shoulder?' I asked.

'You are looking at the great Kushan king Kanishka. He is portrayed with flames emanating from his shoulder.'

'Flaming shoulders? What on earth is that all about?' I asked.

Craig only smiled. I wonder if he foresaw how often I would return to that question in years to come. He showed a second coin, calling attention to the image of a goddess seated on a high-backed throne, dressed in a loosely fitting robe and holding a cornucopia. ‘Ardochsho,’ Craig said. ‘A goddess of abundance and good fortune. Unknown anywhere else in all art history or history of religions. She only appears on Kushan coins.’

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Several months earlier

A five-hour drive north from San Francisco in our Ford camper landed us in Chester, California, a lumber milling town catering to summer tourists and cottagers by Lake Almanor. We were on the southern edge of the Cascade Range, not all that far from the volcanic cone of Mount Lassen. My wife Carolyn and I had met a couple in Berkeley who suggested that we could likely rent one of Lake Almanor’s lakeside summer cottages for a reasonable winter rate.

Our 1977 West Coast wander commenced in British Columbia in late summer with a series of three- or four-day stays in a string of campsites down Highway 1. By October, we were ready to move out of the back of Ginger, our gas-guzzler pickup truck. Crystal, our three-year-old daughter, already an experienced camper, shared our fondness for campsites and small towns. In Chester, we passed a few gas stations, some touristy shops and cafés. A small sign pointed down a narrow road to the local airfield. In the one and only grocery store, empty aisles were evidence enough that the summer vacation crowd had packed up and headed back to the big city. Population? ‘Don’t know,’ said the store clerk, ‘Somewhere south of 2,000.’ On first impression, Lake Almanor did not strike me as the sort of area where something might happen to strangely twist my attention to the other side of the planet.

We asked the clerk if she knew of cabins for rent on the lake. She didn’t, but she suggested we drive ten miles along a lakeshore road and look for a sign on a fence post that said ‘Dr Craig Burns, physician and surgeon’. Not far from town, we took a right-hand turn off the main highway and down a road curving through pine forest with occasional enticing glimpses of the lake. We not only found the doctor’s sign without difficulty but were warmly greeted at the front gate by a soft-spoken woman with a cloud of snow-white hair. Eleanor Burns gently asked a few questions: How long do you intend to stay? What can you afford? Do you know how to take care of an open fireplace? She was gracious, but this was a woman with a commanding presence. After a few moments of what we interpreted as careful scrutiny, she broke into a smile and suggested we take a look at the cabin on the adjacent property. ‘The door’s unlocked. If you want it, come back for the keys. We’ll work out a rental agreement.’

A brilliant sunny day was touched with October coolness from a westerly breeze off the lake. We appreciated the mysterious quietness of a freshly resurfaced road with no cars. Set back from the lake's southern shore, surrounded by towering, pitch-fragrant ponderosas, the cabin offered a view of the lake backed by deeply shadowed slopes skirting Mount Lassen. We introduced ourselves to the area's long-term residents — inquisitive squirrels and rabbits, a pileated woodpecker, a few raucous jays and noisy ravens. A deer watched as we unpacked the truck. The greeting party included a bald eagle that circled and settled on a dead branch observation post of a lofty ponderosa pine.

The cabin was home for six months. Savouring the prospect of a winter of relative isolation, we decided to limit our town visits to one trip a week. Rental arrangements were quickly made, with Eleanor Burns acting as agent for the cabin's owners. As we unloaded the box for Carolyn's loom perched on Ginger's carrying rack, a young woman from a house down the road stopped by and introduced herself as the local grade school teacher.

'How did you find the cabin?' she asked.

'Eleanor Burns.'

'Have you met her husband?'

'Not yet. She said she would invite us over soon.'

'Dr Burns is a serious eccentric,' she said.

'What's eccentric about a general practitioner with a specialty in pediatrics?'

'It won't be long before he'll invite you to one of his esoteric reading groups. He'll analyze your dreams if you give him half a chance. Hypnosis? He's been teaching himself all about it. He says it will help him take you into your past lives. Let's just say he's a good man, no doubt ahead of his time, but maybe a little weird for a country doctor.'

In a tiny cabin loft reached by ladder, I arranged a desk under a small window that looked out to a patch of forest floor. After a few tries, Crystal mastered the seven-step ladder to the loft opposite. By the end of the day, Carolyn's tapestry loom occupied a kitchen alcove. Within a week, my clickety-clack typing was accompanied by the incantatory rhythms of a hundred-year-old Navajo weaving comb moving confidently across rows of threads.

Our woodpile, which required three or four hours a day of exploring nearby logging roads to maintain, soon commanded local respect. But one night the temperature plunged. We discovered that the cabin was not insulated. The open stone fireplace, the cabin's primary attraction, was inefficient, sucking a substantial quantity of fireplace heat up the chimney. The baseboard heaters were essentially useless. In sunny California, with November just beginning to sneak through wall cracks and cranky sliding doors, Carolyn was at the loom

wearing a sweater and gloves.

I was on sabbatical leave from a British Columbia community college, inspired by the long-held grand idea of writing a novel. In fact, I was in the midst of a crisis of conscience. I no longer felt genuinely committed to teaching cultural anthropology, not even the comparative religions course I had carefully nurtured into existence as one of my first endeavours as a faculty member. A decade earlier, in the 1960s, anthropology impressed me as the queen of social sciences, boasting the quintessential view of humanity and espousing cultural diversity and cultural relativity. I found social science classrooms reasonably satisfying, certainly safer than my early experiments in the Haight-Ashbury. But anti-war activism penetrated my attention along with a taste of rock and roll lifestyle. Then, in 1965, I accompanied Dr Donald Sandner,[3] a Jungian analyst, for my first of four trips to the Navajo in Arizona.

After a few years successfully avoiding the draft, followed mercifully by a scholarship, I moved north of the border in the autumn of 1968. Unfortunately, PhD level anthropology at the University of British Columbia, with the exception of a graduate seminar on shamanism, struck me as totally out of touch, and I welcomed a faculty job offer as instructor of anthropology at a new community college. During the first two years, the job was about equal parts administration and teaching as I put together a cultural anthropology curriculum that had to be approved by the province as well as British Columbia's university anthropology departments. After seven years at Douglas College, I found it difficult to relate to a new crop of increasingly conservative students who took anthropology courses merely to add three units of credit to their programmes. In marked contrast to 1960s activism in San Francisco, 1970s British Columbia students did not seem to have much interest in questioning what they wanted to do with their lives.

Wanting change, I opted for a one-year sabbatical to work on a novel. My intention was to systematically strip away the heavy cloaks of academia accumulated during my university education and years of teaching, to ask, in so far as I was able, what am I beyond all this stuff I think I know about myself. As a start, I intended to revisit diary notes and memories of a Navajo medicine man and his family, whom Carolyn and I lived with in Arizona for several months in 1969 and 1970.

All right, we thought, a plan for the winter, a marvelously quiet place with an amazingly insufficient fireplace. Let's weave. Let's write.

What actually happened is quite another story.

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Craig and Eleanor Burns lived a five-minute walk away. Their house was always warm. During our first visit we followed Eleanor through a perfectly circular, lustrously oiled redwood doorway leading to a sitting room next to the kitchen. An enormous rock crystal cluster occupied pride of place in the passageway between rooms, with a stone mortar and pestle of local aboriginal manufacture on a shelf opposite.

Eleanor served hot apple cider and fresh home-made doughnuts. She told us the doctor would arrive shortly; he was with a patient. Eleanor explained that rooms built into a wing of the house were used for the doctor's private practice. She showed us dozens of stone arrowheads they had found in the lower part of their garden near natural springs where they had also uncovered the magnificent stone mortar and pestle. Unfortunately, the lake reservoir was not named after aboriginal sites in the area. Instead, the director of the dam and hydro project in 1914 put together the name 'Almanor' from the initials of his three daughters.

Craig and their oldest son built the house themselves in the early 1960s. The living room's west wall of windows overlooked the lake and a stand of pines. We made ourselves comfortable on a couch covered with a thick, Peruvian llama-wool blanket. With Eleanor's blessing, Crystal had the run of the place, disappearing for a while, then showing up precisely in time for another round of warm doughnuts.

I had never seen anything like the fireplace, which filled the house with welcome, enveloping heat. It was made of black obsidian boulders, with quartz crystal clusters embedded on either side of the hearth. As a kid, I collected obsidian chips from Montana riverbanks, but never anything much larger than an arrowhead. The fireplace stone was gathered from a large outcropping of obsidian on property belonging to friends of the Burnses near Glass Mountain about 200 miles north of Lake Almanor. 'A very slow drive,' Eleanor said. 'Mountain roads, twisting along. We drove up there several times just for the fireplace.'

Behind the couch, floor-to-ceiling bookshelves boasted long rows of history volumes, a collection on world religions, especially Buddhism and Taoism, several editions of the Bible and several New Age titles. Copies of books I used in my anthropology of religion classes were there: *Black Elk Speaks*, *Book of the Hopi*, *Tales of Power*. While scanning book titles and a series of small Eastern Orthodox icon paintings, I noticed movement in heavy brocade curtains that partially covered a door at the end of the living room. The redwood doorway matched its twin at the opposite end of the living room. I wondered if Crystal was playing with the curtains, or if perhaps a window was open. But Crystal bounced back to the couch from the opposite direction. All eyes turned. We sank into silence, the agitated heavy fabric creating an atmosphere not unlike that of an imminent curtain rise in a theatrical event.

The curtain parted, and a live wire of a man walked in, face flushed from the freezing cold

outside. His handshake was vigorous, his greeting full of generosity. His unbrushed shock of hair was as radiantly white as Eleanor's. He had just accompanied a patient to her car.

The name Burns suited him perfectly. The evening revealed him to be a human firestorm, a voracious reader, a consummate man of action, a grand dreamer. He took great pride in a philosophy of healing well outside the parameters of Western medicine. He emphasised doctor-attended home birth, preventative medicine focused on diet and exercise, and less reliance on hospital emergency rooms. And, as our neighbour had said, he found dream analysis useful for patients open to an expanded doctor–patient relationship.

His medical mind was fused deeply with a bedrock conviction that life was to be lived passionately. He loved order. He hated chaos. He hated what he called the walking dead (this was 1977), a quality he attributed to about 98% of the population. I doubted Dr Burns was capable of sleeping more than four hours a night. When we left the house that night, he handed me a book by Jane Roberts called *Seth Speaks*. He wanted my full assessment next time we met.

A week later, Craig and Eleanor invited us over for a house tour. Behind the curtains covering the second circular doorway, a corridor branched to the right, leading to the office where the doctor saw his patients and a reception room with a couch and chair, Eleanor's desk and a filing cabinet. The reception room had a separate entrance from outside. Backtracking to the circular door, we took a left turn and were shown a small triangular-shaped library room furnished with a small reading desk and lamp. On two sides of the triangle, floor-to-ceiling redwood shelves were stacked with literature, art, art history and more world history volumes, including leather-bound special editions with gold inlay lettering, ribbed spines and marbled endpapers, many of them obviously old and worn.

'Libraries like this show up in Victorian novels,' I commented. 'Where is the hidden door?'

With great delight, Craig moved books aside on one of the shelves. He reached in and turned a concealed door handle. To our astonishment, a section of bookshelves pivoted soundlessly open. With a gracious bow, Craig ushered us into a large, cool, windowless, completely equipped chemistry laboratory with stainless steel sinks, metal cabinets, counters and tables, beakers, test tubes, Bunsen burners and shelves of labelled jars arranged in glass cabinets in alphabetical order.

'My childhood hobby,' Craig explained. 'I started this lab when I was 11 years old. By the time I was 14, it looked more or less like you see it now. By the time I was 15, I had figured out how to clean the emulsifier off an X-ray film, cut the abdomen skin out of lab rats, sew in a window of X-ray film, then watch the organs respond to experiments using different chemicals.'

The lab was not the only hidden room in the house. Craig Burns was a survivalist. He chose not to show us what he was talking about, but described a basement room with sink and toilet, shelves full of canned foods, dry goods, bottled water. The room could serve as a bomb shelter. He showed us a food guide, published in the 1950s by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with lists he followed for stocking the room. There was also a 1970s survivalist publication, with plenty of commentary about concerns over a possible nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union, the implications of US monetary devaluation and the vulnerability of urban centres to supply shortages and systems failures in emergencies.

Near the end of his first year in university, Craig was called into the dean's office and told he faced expulsion unless he explained how he had achieved perfect scores on his chemistry exams. 'I told him I could walk into any lab on campus and describe the properties of every chemical on the shelf.' Craig's conceit was immediately challenged, and after an hour, the dean was convinced. He asked Craig if he planned a career in chemistry, but Craig had already made up his mind to enter the medical profession.

Craig received his MD from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1944, the same year Eleanor graduated with a nursing degree, the same year they were married. After graduating, Craig joined the army to pay back his loans, then trained in psychiatry at Columbia University in New York. Then, he suddenly decided to have two new influences in his life: travel and books. The Modern Library series caught his eye, but he couldn't decide which title to choose, so he bought the entire series for $6.96 a book. From that day on, in New York and throughout his army career, Dr Burns made hospital rounds with a stethoscope in one pocket and a Modern Library book in the other. When his mother saw him after a year in the service, she said, 'You cannot believe how delighted I am that you are finally getting some sunshine. I thought you would die living in a chemistry lab all those years.'

Craig and Eleanor began a medical practice at Lake Almanor in 1948 for five years, including a period in Edinburgh, Scotland, for studies in internal medicine. They lived in Peru for three years, 1953–56, while Craig worked as a doctor for a mining company. They returned to California where he and Eleanor both worked in public health in Berkeley until 1962. They frequently visited Lake Almanor during family holidays with their growing family, two sons and daughter, and then decided to purchase lakeshore property with the intention of building a home.

In 1963, the entire family embarked on a bicycle tour of Wales. Eleanor spoke of the trip as a highlight of family history. For Craig, it was a book-buying expedition. Most of the books in the triangular library were purchased from village antique shops and bookshops in Wales. By the end of the bicycle tour he had shipped 50 boxes to California, the cost of

postage often exceeding the cost of the contents.

In 1964, the family moved permanently from Berkeley to Lake Almanor, choosing to live full-time in their new lakeside house and to establish a practice away from cities and city pollution. ‘Craig figured out a financial plan,’ Eleanor told us. ‘He calculated that we could scrape by at Lake Almanor with one-and-a-half patients a day. This meant working out of an office in our own home rather than a clinic in town.’ Eleanor became a housekeeper mother of three, the doctor’s nurse, secretary and receptionist. That’s what they both wanted. Finding patients was not a problem. The practice was not large by city standards, but within a year they were often seeing 15 to 20 people a day. Nevertheless, in 1965, Craig joined the relief agency CARE because he wanted to see conditions in Vietnam himself. He was adamantly opposed to the war but recognised that tens of thousands of American boys were being blasted to bits, and he wanted to help. He stayed for a month, treating American soldiers as well as Vietcong, and patients from both North and South Vietnam. He had never seen so much blood and carnage and sacrifice, all for a meaningless losing cause. The experience profoundly saddened Craig and deepened his anti-war convictions.

For me, when the call for the draft hit university students, I immediately changed my address and did not report the change to the draft board. I changed addresses again several months later, but they caught up with me, and I received notice to report for a physical examination. In preparation, I lost thirty pounds in three months. Fortunately, the medical officer was not impressed with my appearance. I was told to go home, eat lots of meat and potatoes, and report back in a year. I avoided a 1967 follow-up physical thanks to a letter from a psychoanalyst with a message that I was under his care due to psychological issues and unlikely to be sufficiently ready to adjust to the basic training requirements necessary for effective military service. In 1968, master’s degree in hand, I accepted a scholarship from the University of British Columbia. Although not strictly a draft dodger, I was among thousands of students and other draft-eligible men who made their escape to Canada. I arrived in Vancouver during Pierre Trudeau’s first year as Canada’s prime minister, greeted by an impressive banner stretched across Fourth Avenue: ‘Welcome US Draft Dodgers.’

The house of the warm fireplace became our local library; every week we left with an armload. It was the perfect alternative to our cold cabin, with the promise of enjoyable evenings of conversation and reading out loud. I informed Craig that the first book he had asked me to read, *Seth Speaks*, was not my cup of tea. I suggested that Jane Roberts was in no way a channel for an autonomous spiritual voice speaking through her. I proposed that her ego was on a spiritual bender under the name of Seth, and that however well-intentioned, Seth desperately needed an editor so as not to repeat the same simplistic messages so frequently.

According to Craig, he was interested in why Roberts had taken the New Age movement by storm. It took some rather lengthy exchanges for me to persuade Craig that I was not interested in continuing a Seth discussion. I was no fan of the occult. Paranormal powers, telepathy, reincarnation, New Age Aquarian essence oils? I'll pass, Craig. Not that I'm a non-believer, but please do put Seth back on the shelf.

Craig accepted my diatribe with good grace, probably thinking I would grow up some day and see the light. But the book disappeared from sight, and my reaction may have influenced the choice of authors we pursued during the following months.

We read out loud from William Blake's *Poetical Sketches* and *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. We took occasional dips into Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*. I found the theosophical worldview intriguing, especially the idea that hidden knowledge and wisdom are to be found in the teachings of ancient cultures, and also, that the mysteries of life and the natural world are most profoundly realised through direct experience.

One of Craig's favourite stories was Goethe's *The Tale*. The theme, a prince in search of his soul, appealed to him enormously, as did Goethe's density of images and symbols: the snake, will-o'-the-wisps, the bridge, the river, the lamp of illumination, a new marriage, a new kingdom, four kings, a horrible monster. Personalising what he read in the story, Craig readily found parallels between Goethe's complex themes of alchemy and spiritual longing and his own passionate search for meaning in ancient and contemporary history alike.

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For several years, Craig gradually refined what he called a 'Wheel of History'. His idea was to determine the ten most influential civilisations in each century. He composed a wheel chart with 26 spokes representing 26 centuries, beginning with the seventh century BC and continuing through the nineteenth century AD. Ten civilisations listed along each spoke from the rim of the wheel to the hub reflected relative dominance in their respective centuries. Craig made no claim to historical accuracy — he had no intention of writing a book based on his Wheel scheme — but he took great pleasure in revising the chart according to his findings from continual reading. He was interested in patterns he found in the rise and fall of civilisations.

After several years, Craig's research took a dramatic turn. 'It struck me like hot coals suddenly bursting into flame,' he said. 'When the idea hit, I was a man on fire. I really had no choice but to go with it.' The plan? Collect an object produced by each of the ten civilisations identified for each of the twenty-six centuries.

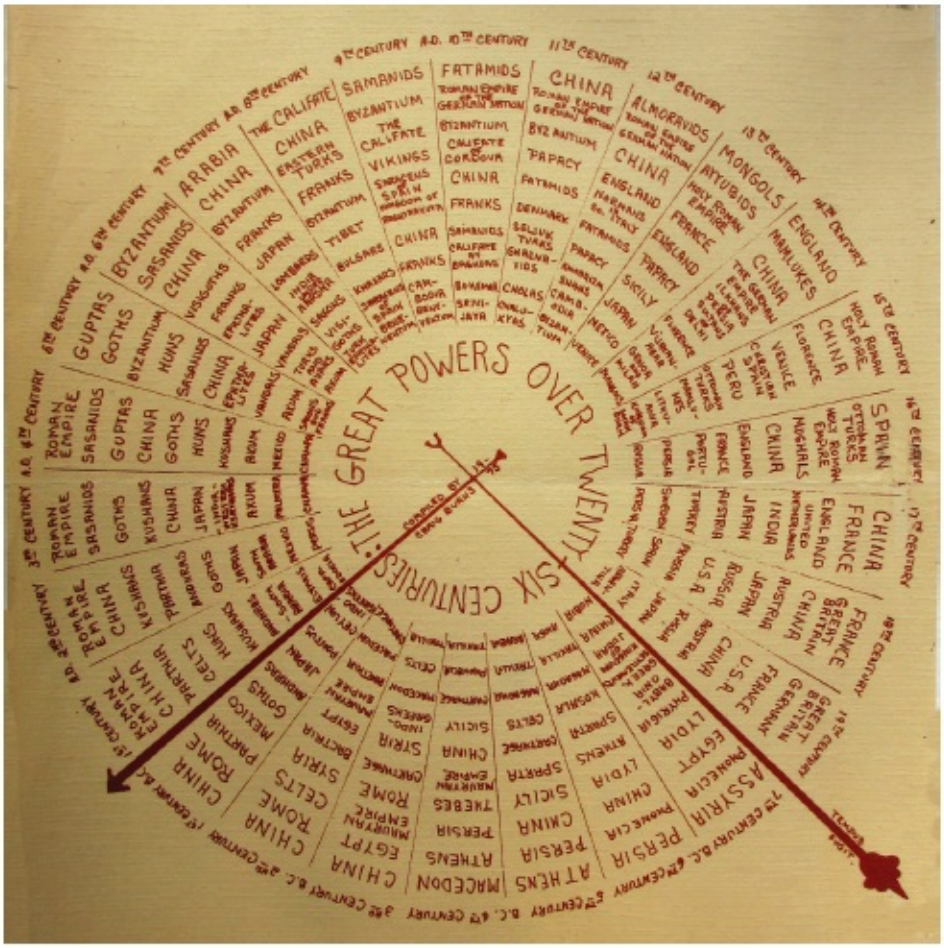

Figure 1. Craig Burns Wheel of History
Image courtesy of David Jongeward

Craig's sudden collecting impulse quickly became a life-changing passion. Craig and Eleanor's travel plans, previously organised around medical conferences, book buying and family holidays were cancelled or expanded to include markets, bazaars, auctions, and antiquities shops in countries around the world. Craig subscribed to Sotheby's and Christie's catalogues. He initiated correspondence with antiquities dealers, collectors, curators and scholars. Beginning in 1968, the Burnses set aside $1,000 a month to build the collection. Eleanor controlled the finances. They agreed to never take out a loan or spend a cent beyond their budget. A shrewd bargainer, Craig rarely accepted catalogue or shopkeeper prices at face value. He often covered travel expenses by purchasing more items than required for his collection, then reselling objects to museums or other collectors.

Eleanor accompanied Craig on every trip abroad. 'She's very skilful dealing with customs officials,' Craig said. 'And a great tailor.' Eleanor showed us her travel coat. A series of expertly stitched small pockets were sewn into the lining. I could readily imagine Eleanor in front of custom officers. This woman with a cloud of white hair was in firm command, completely capable of manifesting an air of aristocratic authority. Without saying a word, her directive was clear, 'Don't you dare touch my necklace,' which very likely often passed

through customs with a few ancient coins attached. In those first collecting years, X-ray machines were not yet permanent fixtures in many airports, and after frequent tests, they learned that many machines were not of particularly good quality.

Craig soon found that coins were the most collectable item for his purposes because only a few major civilisations had not minted a coinage. In Peru, for example, Craig purchased a small Inca gold mask, and in Mexico, a fragment of Aztec statuary. They took two trips a year. They never revealed travel plans to anyone at Lake Almanor, except to say they were on vacation, or that Craig was reading a paper at a medical conference.

Although careful in considering the quality of objects he purchased, Craig rarely knew the provenance of a coin or a particular object. He chose not to question how a particular item found its way to the marketplace. He was driven by a sense of personal mission, convinced that the coins and objects he purchased were intrinsically valuable as contributions to his primary purpose, furthering a survey of history as documented by his Wheel of History. ‘Objects have value in more ways than one,’ he said. ‘Any collector likes to think that at least some of his objects are rare or even unique, but I believe in a higher meaning. Every object I collect represents a movement of ideas and values during a particular time in history. And somehow, these objects find a way into my house. It is up to me to understand why.’

One night, Craig showed off a beautiful handcrafted chest. It was a domed Florentine leather jewellery chest with red velvet lining, bossed brass straps and clasps. He had purchased a matching pair. During the same Florence shopping excursion, he purchased two sets of handcrafted leather purses, one set for each chest. There were 26 purses in each set, one for every century on his Wheel. ‘I have never trusted insurance companies,’ Craig explained. ‘I never declare my collections in any way.’ He opted instead for twin treasure chests, one for a fake collection, another for the real thing. He lined the bottom of the fake chest with a quarter inch of lead plate covered with red velvet. The fake chest, filled with purses containing coins and pendants of relatively low value, was placed in an inconspicuous part of the house, yet not so well hidden as to be missed by a thief or whoever else might be looking. We were shown the fake chest; the real chest was securely concealed in one of Craig’s secret vaults.

Initially, Craig intended for each of the twenty-six leather purses to contain ten coins. Objects that either substituted for coins or were purchased in addition to coins were hidden elsewhere in the house. But Craig often purchased more than one coin per civilisation per century, so after a few years, the Florentine purses were bulging beyond their limits.

They tracked down coin dealers and antiquities shops in Istanbul, Baghdad and Tehran, but Craig preferred the bazaars of Delhi, Kabul and Peshawar. He was especially keen to find coins that filled out the sizeable sections of his Wheel of History that represented ancient

Central Asia and India. Parthians and Scythians. Bactrian Greeks. Sasanians. When Craig talked about these kingdoms or civilisations, they meant next to nothing to me, although I recalled mention of Parthians and Scythians from childhood Sunday school lessons. One night, Craig mentioned a Central Asian empire known as the Kushan. He waited for my reaction. I just shrugged my shoulders, drawing a complete blank.

The story he told, however, was not about the Kushan. He vividly recalled a late, cold December night in Peshawar, Pakistan. Called to the hotel lobby, he greeted a coin dealer he knew well from previous trips. The dealer was accompanied by an old man dressed in rags. Only the old man's wrinkled face and bare feet were visible. He appeared half-frozen as he brushed snow out of his hair. Craig and Eleanor generally did not invite visitors to their hotel, but they trusted the Peshawar dealer because they had often bought good coins from him at reasonable prices. Eleanor asked the hotel's desk clerk to supply the old man with a blanket and hot tea. The dealer explained that the man had been employed as a labourer for an archaeological excavation in central India. One day, so the story went, he accidentally dropped a small excavated clay pot. The pot burst open and coins spilled to the ground. Since no one seemed to be watching, the old man wrapped up the coins, left the site, left the job and returned to Pakistan.

The old man dug into his torn cotton covering and pulled out an oil-stained rag. He untied a knot and tossed the coins across the table. Craig quickly counted 20 gold coins in near-perfect condition. 'I recognised them immediately,' Craig said. 'Gupta coins, another Indian civilisation on my Wheel of History.' Craig had not seen some of the coin types, so he negotiated a cash price for the entire hoard. The dealer kept half the money for himself and gave the remainder to the labourer. 'I tell you, that man ran away whooping and shouting. It was something to see. But I told the dealer it was too bad the old man had not kept the pot. Even if it was broken, it may have been as valuable as the coins.'

Craig treated this 'lost pot' story far too casually. The coins, and especially the specific location they were found, would have provided crucial evidence for identifying and dating the site and associated artefacts. I asked Craig why he had not tried to obtain more information about the site and the find spot. Craig acknowledged that he should have done so, but assured me nevertheless that he did call the hoard to the attention of a curator of coins at the British Museum. This satisfied me to a certain extent, but by purchasing the coins in a Peshawar hotel lobby, Craig was encouraging practices that drive archaeologists mad and give private collecting a bad name. There is nothing new in what he did. For generations, in countless ways, artefacts have walked away from actual as well as potential archaeological sites, lost to careful archaeological and art-historical analysis and documentation.

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After a few months, I grew impatient with Craig's determination to convince me of the veracity of past life regressions. He repeatedly related experiences of patients enticed into a semi-trance state to uncover past lives. Craig was influenced by the Scientology of L. Ron Hubbard, and especially ideas about Dianetics that supposedly assist people in recognising and overcoming the content of the reactive mind, which Hubbard believed to be a storehouse for everything painful or negative in a person's present life as well as their past lives. Craig was comfortable with the idea that whatever people expressed as an experience generated during hypnosis could be interpreted as literal stories derived from literal past lives. I argued that the mind has a fathomless capacity for imagination and production of symbols in all states of consciousness, whether in waking states, dreams, trances, or LSD-induced states. Craig appreciated Carl Jung's psychology, the idea of archetypes and the collective unconscious. Nevertheless, he adamantly believed experiences from past life regressions delivered more vividly recalled detail than dreams and were more emotionally engaging.

After hearing of a lengthy past life regression that transported a patient to ancient Egypt, a surprisingly popular destination for Craig's Lake Almanor subjects, I steered the conversation to personal diary notes I had been rereading that day. I told Craig and Eleanor about tending sheep with a Navajo medicine man in Arizona desert country near Canyon de Chelly National Monument.

I was a 23-year-old graduate student when I travelled to Navajo land for the first time. After three subsequent visits, two with Carolyn, I lived with Navajo families for nearly a year, including the six months Carolyn and I lived with a medicine man and his family. I was invited to participate in 12 Navajo ceremonials. The ceremonials (chants or sings, as they are also called), were usually three or five all-day, all-night events, entirely oriented to the diagnosis and treatment of illness for individuals seeking assistance. Always conducted in the context of family gatherings, the sings combined prayers and song cycles often lasting hours. Every morning, the medicine man and his assistant created extraordinarily beautiful, complex sand paintings, slowly and carefully laid out with coloured sands on a prepared, hard-packed dirt surface. An important part of the proceedings involved preparation of a variety of herbal mixtures, some for tea, some to be smoked. The patient also received massage treatments. I entirely agree with master ethnologist Gladys Reichard, who in her wonderful book characterises Navajo chants as 'symphonies of the arts'.[4]

During all-night sings, even with only sporadic translations, it was clear that the patient was being treated as a whole person — body and mind and soul. Sometimes the ceremonials exposed serious family conflicts or misunderstandings, but always for a singular purpose: to celebrate, maintain, and restore *hozho*.

One day, I walked with the medicine man and his son through rocky sage hills and arroyos.

The medicine man did not speak English, but when prompted, his son reluctantly volunteered to translate. I was told of healing properties in roots, leaves and stems of particular plants. Late in the afternoon, after scrambling to turn 20 or so sheep and goats back towards the home corral, we stopped for a rest out of the sun in the shade of oak trees near a rock outcropping. The medicine man spoke for a long time with his son, but then we walked in silence.

Eventually, the son explained. 'It's hard for me to tell you what he says. He says the white man does not really want to understand these things.' He struggled to find words. 'See the rocks over there? The oak trees? Do you see how the hills look just now? The light, the shadows? What my father talks about is a way of seeing. Seeing that all of it is just right, it's just the way it's supposed to be, everything is part of everything else. We are a part of it too. It is our way to give names to things, but talking like that makes us see rocks, trees, hills as separate things, and separate from us. But they are not. My father says much more, but it's hard for me, I don't know what else to say, he's talking about *hozho*.'

The word *hozho*, I told Craig and Eleanor, is fundamental to Navajo healing practice and philosophy of life. *Hozho* is translated as 'beautiful', 'harmonious', 'good', 'blessed', 'pleasant', 'satisfying', 'balance,' 'harmonious balance'. That's just a partial list, which also reflects a poverty in the English translation of something that simultaneously expresses an explicit morality as well as a profound aesthetic. I have often wondered why most religious traditions do not refer to beauty — especially not a sense of beauty as typically expressed in terms of the beauty of a person but rather beauty itself. For the Navajo, their concept of beauty is fundamental; beauty is essence.[5]

Gary Witherspoon, a professor of Native American studies, has written extensively about Navajo language and culture, providing the most thorough understanding of profound Navajo contributions to world culture and philosophy.

> '*Hozho*,' he writes, 'refers to the holistic environment and to the universal dimension of beauty, harmony, and well-being. Each culture projects a particular construction of meaning and purpose on the universe, and each particular metaphorical construction colors and molds all experience within it. The Navajo metaphor envisions a universe where the primary orientation is directed toward the maintenance or the restoration of *hozho*. *Hozho* means 'beauty' or 'beautiful conditions.' But this is a term that means much more than beauty. For the Navajo, *hozho* expresses the intellectual notion of order, the emotional state of happiness, the physical state of health, the moral condition of good, the aesthetic dimension of harmony.
>
> The Navajo do not look for beauty; they normally find themselves engulfed in it. When

it is disrupted, they restore it; when it is lost or diminished, they renew it; when it is present, they celebrate it. The Navajo say in their own vernacular: *shil hozho*, 'with me there is beauty'; *shii' hozho*, 'in me there is beauty'; *shaa hozho*, 'from me beauty radiates.'[6]

Another Navajo word, *hochxo*, is separated in sound from *hozho* by just the slightest interruption of breath, a slight constriction in the back of the throat. Nearly identical sounding words, but *hochxo* refers to all that is imperfect, ugly, disharmonious and disease-causing — the vast, violent, ridiculous, insane turmoil we live with daily, inner and outer, personal and public. *Hochxo* acknowledges inappropriate thoughts and actions, misfortune and bad dreams. It refers to the consequences of natural disasters brought about by drought, earthquakes, illness or premature death. *Hochxo* describes the constantly arising conditions in the world that tend towards disharmony and chaos. The two words imply duality, but Navajo healing practice is about unity, not duality. I do not pretend to possess an insider's understanding, either linguistically or culturally, but my sense was that the intention of healing ceremonials is to absorb and overcome *hochxo*, to return to and re-establish our essential unified original nature, *hozho*. Living in *hozho* requires mindful, disciplined attention applied in our daily lives, augmented by healing and renewal provided by the ceremonials.

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I reminded Craig that he had agreed to talk about a particular empire he had mentioned more than once. 'Who are the Kushan?' I asked. If I had tried for five lifetimes, I could not have dreamed up a better question for Craig Burns.

During his Wheel of History investigations, Craig came across a coinage that few other collectors seemed to know about. 'I had been collecting for years before I realised how enormously important coins are as a source of historical information,' he said. 'Fortunately, I stumbled onto coin evidence of kings who controlled the Central Asian Silk Road for nearly four centuries. I could not find much about them in history books. A few paragraphs here and there. Eventually I found a book by John Rosenfield. After reading that book, I knew the Kushan empire had to be included on my Wheel of History.'

The Kushan appear on Craig's chart in the first century AD as the sixth most important civilisation. In the second century, Craig elevated the Kushan into third place, trailing only the Roman Empire and China. In Craig's reckoning, the Kushan Empire dropped to fourth place in the third century, seventh place in the fourth century, and disappeared from his chart in the fifth.

‘The more I learned,’ Craig said, ‘the more I was convinced I had to have a Kushan coin. Not just one coin. Four. Four coins would do it, one for each of the four centuries that the Kushan appear on my chart.’

During a trip to Frankfurt, Craig picked up his first Kushan coin that he had purchased from a dealer’s catalogue. ‘I could hold it in my hand, turn it over, feel its weight,’ Craig said. ‘I was ecstatic. A gold Kushan coin for $110. Not long after, I purchased another, then another.’

One night, our invitation to dinner was accompanied by a hint of secrets to be revealed. For the first time, Eleanor advised we find a babysitter for Crystal. We never knew what to expect at the Burnses’ house, but on this particular night the tone of talk at the dinner table smacked of mystery. After dessert and coffee, instead of the usual routine of moving from the dinner table to the fireplace for one of our evenings of reading, Craig asked us to accompany him through the kitchen into the pantry. He moved aside cans and jars. Using the pantry shelves as a ladder, he climbed up and pushed back a square ceiling panel.

Disappearing through the ceiling, he switched on a light and called for us to follow. Carolyn and I carefully climbed the pantry shelves and pulled ourselves through the opening. Eleanor followed. We crawled on hands and knees over plank flooring through a small door as if Craig was leading us into his own version of CS Lewis’s wardrobe. It was in this private Narnia that Craig placed the gold coin depicting the king with flaming shoulders in my hand.

My first coherent comment was rather abrupt. ‘Why do you have so many?’ I asked. ‘You said you only wanted four.’

‘I realised I had acquired something truly unusual,’ Craig said. ‘These coins raise all kinds of questions. Many Kushan kings are known to history only because their names appear on coins. And both sides of the coins are equally enticing. Unknown kings on one side, unknown gods and goddesses on the other side.’

Craig found Kushan coins too compelling to let pass. After his initial purchases, he was confronted by an entirely new set of challenges. He realised that if he decided to specialise, for all intents and purposes he would have the field to himself. Craig was in touch with numerous collectors and dealers, but no one seemed to be aware of private collections of any consequence that specialised in Kushan coins.

‘I saw an opportunity,’ Craig said, ‘Here was a chance to contribute to the study of history, to collect and organise evidence of an important Central Asian dynasty. But I had to make up my mind. Did I really want to concentrate my time and energies on a single coinage?’

I asked Craig how he could possibly let go of his grand idea, the years of travel and expense in an effort to collect 260 objects representing 10 great powers in 26 centuries.

‘Well, there you have it. Your question was my question. But I knew what I had to do.’ He began selling. First to go was the Aztec statue. Then the Inca mask. Persian carpets, Tibetan bells, Macedonian stonework, Japanese porcelain, Chinese silks and bronzes. Traded, sold, auctioned.

‘Thousands of people collect Greek and Roman coins; you cannot possibly comprehend how delighted I was to get rid of them. There was no choice, really. Once I made up my mind, every cent of our collection budget had to go into Kushan coins.’

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A week later, Craig and Eleanor announced they were preparing a travel itinerary to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Their travel plans always included visiting Peshawar and Kabul every February. This was their tenth trip, and Craig intended to test a new point of view.

‘I’m hoping to find a particular coin,’ Craig said. ‘You are partly responsible. I have learned from our talks that you have a very different approach to the study of culture than I have, so I intend to make adjustments to my collecting because of something you said.’

‘What was that?’ I asked.

‘You told us what it was like to live with the Navajo,’ he said. ‘I don’t think anthropology was your priority. You were there to learn about yourself, to discover another way of thinking and living. It is my impression that you are distancing yourself from academia; you want to understand something about *hozho*. Well, I need to shift my priorities also.’

A woman had come to his clinic recently with a long list of minor ailments. ‘After twenty minutes, I interrupted and told her to focus on something useful. A new relationship, a goal, something satisfying. I told her to commit to some new objective, because if she was willing to do that, something positive would enter her life and she’d be less inclined to bicker and complain.’

This was vintage Craig Burns. He believed Great Nature was the greatest healer of all. He could not comprehend how people living in a relatively remote stretch of northern California, surrounded by forests and mountains, with wildlife everywhere, continued to indulge in endless whining, depressing themselves into annual rounds of headaches and colds. ‘But I need to change my focus also, redefine my goals. I like to think of my life as oriented towards a higher purpose, a higher reality, but at times I wonder if collecting is not just materialistic indulgence.’

When Craig and Eleanor returned after two weeks, they invited us over. Before I could sit down, Craig showed me a Kushan coin. ‘I especially wanted this one,’ he said triumphantly.

‘I have only seen one other like it, in the British Museum.’

I examined the coin with no understanding. But there was no doubting Craig’s sense of achievement. He had found more fuel to feed his passion for teasing history out of obscure coin images and inscriptions.

‘How do you feel after your trip?’ I asked. ‘Are you satisfied that something other than materialistic motives accounts for why you now possess this coin?’

Craig smiled. ‘I shall decide the answer to your question by a coin toss, a Kushan coin toss. Coins minted these days convey little more than state propaganda. But in antiquity? Well, my friend, I challenge you to study Kushan coins. You will learn remarkable things. You see, David, most coins have two sides. But not Kushan coins. The two sides are really just one. Two sides conveying one idea.’

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My decision to leave an anthropology career was not easy, but Carolyn and I shared a diminished desire for returning to our life as it had been in British Columbia. I had thrived in the classroom for seven years, but it was time to move on. I wanted seven years as a freelance whatever-came-my-way. After several trial drafts, my letter of resignation boiled down to two paragraphs mailed to the dean of education and the director of the Department of Social Sciences.

One evening shortly after, I was outside watching the sunset. Deep shadows from the thick ponderosas spread over the rocky lakeshore. I stood up to stretch and head back to the cabin when a large bird suddenly swooped down from behind and perched on my shoulder. Shocked by the impact and thrown off balance, I fell forward onto my knees. The bird vigorously flapped its wings, but did not fly away as I attempted to recover. I was trembling somewhat from the pressure of talons digging through my jacket, but it was not hurting. It was like both of us were struggling to stand upright and regain our balance. It stayed perched for several moments, then screeched into my ear with the unmistakable call of a bald eagle. Just as suddenly as it had arrived, the powerful bird pushed off my shoulder and flew up with a great flapping of wings and another screech.

The bird had been so close to my head that I was afraid to turn and face it eye to eye. It was almost dark, but I could have sworn the bird was not a bald eagle. Sufficiently recovered, I headed inside and told Carolyn. She examined my torn jacket. My shoulder was sore; there were minor puncture cuts from the talons, but nothing problematic.

The next morning, a pickup pulled into our driveway. A Native American man from the

Feather River branch of the Maidu tribe stopped by. He was a friend of our neighbour; we had met once before, shortly after moving in. He extended an invitation to attend a Bear Dance, giving us detailed directions to the mountain meadow where the dance would occur. The dance coincided with our planned day of departure from Lakehouse, and we enthusiastically accepted.

A second visitor showed up in the afternoon. He introduced himself as Tom and said he was asking around to see if anyone had seen his pet owl. Nearly a year previously, Tom had rescued a baby great horned owl from a nest after a hunter killed its mother. He raised the bird to adulthood, keeping it in a large backyard cage. During the last few weeks, he had let the bird out of the cage to let it flap around and strengthen its wings. He was teaching it to hunt. The previous evening, for the first time, he had forgotten to latch the cage door, and, for the first time, the owl left the cage and did not return.

I could see Tom's struggle. It was not easy for him to accept that the owl he had cared for since it was a chick had grown up and apparently gone wild. I sympathised with him, expressed my regrets, but said nothing more. I felt reluctant to tell him what had happened the night before. Everyone knows crows and ravens can be trained like parrots to mimic human and other animal sounds, but I did not ask Tom what he had done to make his bird screech like an eagle rather than hoot like an owl.

Ginger the pickup was packed, the loom back in its box and perched on top of the truck. We were prepared for several weeks living on the road and camping, accompanied by a cassette tape given to us by our neighbour, *The Eagles — Their Greatest Hits*. The Bear Dance was a perfect ending for our six months at Lake Almanor. Towards the end of the dance, Carolyn, Crystal and I, along with at least a hundred Maidu people, were all given sprigs of wormwood and instructed to carefully brush the bear as he passed by, remembering that bear was a sacred animal, as was the man inside the bear skin. Dancing rings of people slowly circled the sacred grounds as the singers filled the meadow with song, everyone moving slowly towards the creek. We continued to hold the sprigs during a prayer, offered in two languages, very much in the tradition of Navajo prayer with everything included, nothing forgotten, every living being, current world event, memory of those who came before, anticipation of those who will come after, until finally we all stood quietly while the sprigs were gently tossed into the stream and carried away by the current. In this manner, we released the year's accumulation of bad thoughts, improper actions and troubling dreams; we were restored to harmony and well-being.

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Night-time. I am in a boat on a river. The water is dark, rippled by a light breeze. The boat

slowly drifts downstream and close to shore where cliffs rise to a great height. Deep overhangs in the cliffs remind me of Anasazi ruin sites in the Southwest. But the immense caves contain great sculptures like nothing I have ever seen before and that I can only just make out in the dark. The sculptures are in human form with upper bodies visible because of firelight emanating from behind, giving the figures a partial silhouette. Smoke and flickers of flame rise from the statues' heads, arms and shoulders.

The dream reminded me of the coins of Kushan kings with flaming shoulders, but our thoughts and plans were nowhere near Central Asia; we were on our way to New Mexico. 'Your dream needs more light,' Carolyn said.

— 2 —

The British Museum

For seven years we lived in a century-old adobe house on ten acres a few miles outside Taos, New Mexico, at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. During our Taos years, Craig Burns kept us updated about his trips to Pakistan and the progress of his coin-collecting efforts. Included with his letters were copies of Craig's articles dealing with various Kushan coin questions, published in Bombay by the *Numismatic Digest*. After the fifth or sixth article, I gave Craig a call, apologising for my lack of informed comment about what he had written. I trusted he was not offended. 'Far from it,' he said. 'Listen: if you ever go to London, I want you to meet a curator of coins at the British Museum.' The statement struck me as utterly bizarre. I reminded Craig that I was not a coin enthusiast, nor particularly fond of gold, and that Central Asia was several continents outside my radar, and coin symbolism not much closer. Furthermore, we had no plans to cross the Atlantic any time soon.

But you never know. During our seventh summer in Taos, we attended a lecture on the theme of sacred geometry offered by Keith Critchlow, a visiting arts and architecture professor from London. The theme appealed to Carolyn because she explored geometric principles for tapestry design, especially the golden section, as well as mathematical sequences such as the Fibonacci series. Seeing Carolyn's work, Critchlow invited Carolyn to consider a Master of Arts programme at the Royal College of Art in London. Intrigued, she decided to follow up with a trip to England in the summer of 1984. Upon returning, she asked if I could imagine living in London for two years.

I called Craig Burns to tell him the news. He insisted he was not surprised; a letter of introduction to a certain curator of coins written on my behalf would be in the mail by the end of the day.

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After scraping by in rural northern New Mexico for seven years, the move to the heart of London was challenging to say the least. While searching for affordable housing, we enjoyed the hospitality offered by a cousin of Carolyn's. Several days later we finally settled into Jerome House, an international house managed by the Zebra Trust that provided accommodation for Commonwealth country postgraduate students and their families. Our tiny flat in South Kensington boasted a temperamental coin-operated heater and enough space for a tiny table and wobbly chairs. Crystal and her new friends had the run of the six-storey building with its multiple Victorian stairwells, long corridors, secret rooms and cranky,

clanky steel-cage lift. The location was ideal: just around the corner from Gloucester Road tube station, a fifteen-minute Circle Line commute to Crystal's school, a ten-minute walk to Carolyn's classrooms at the Royal College of Art. My plan in London? Continue work on two manuscripts.

I arrived early for my first appointment at the British Museum to meet the curator of coins Craig Burns applauded as the most reliable source of information regarding his Kushan collection. Museum staff helped me locate the Department of Coins and Medals on the first floor in an alcove off one of the Roman galleries. I gave my name to the receptionist who appeared behind a tiny sliding window. A grandly imposing, curved, stainless steel security door slowly opened. Once inside I felt incredibly uncomfortable. I was behind the scenes in a British Museum department specialising in research and artefacts that I knew nothing about.

I signed a registration book and was escorted past a sliding glass security door to a reading room where two researchers with notebooks and magnifying eyepieces were seated at a long table, heads bent over trays of coins. The windows were barred, the tables targeted by video cameras. A staff invigilator, perched behind a raised table at the head of the room, kept one eye on the video monitors and the other on the researchers. I sat down and waited in a room that that could readily substitute for an interrogation room in a BBC crime drama.

Joe Cribb welcomed me warmly, quickly easing my sense of foreboding. He showed me Craig Burns's letter of recommendation. We shared stories and a laugh or two about the eccentric California country doctor. 'He has a great collection,' Joe agreed, 'but the man is crazy.'

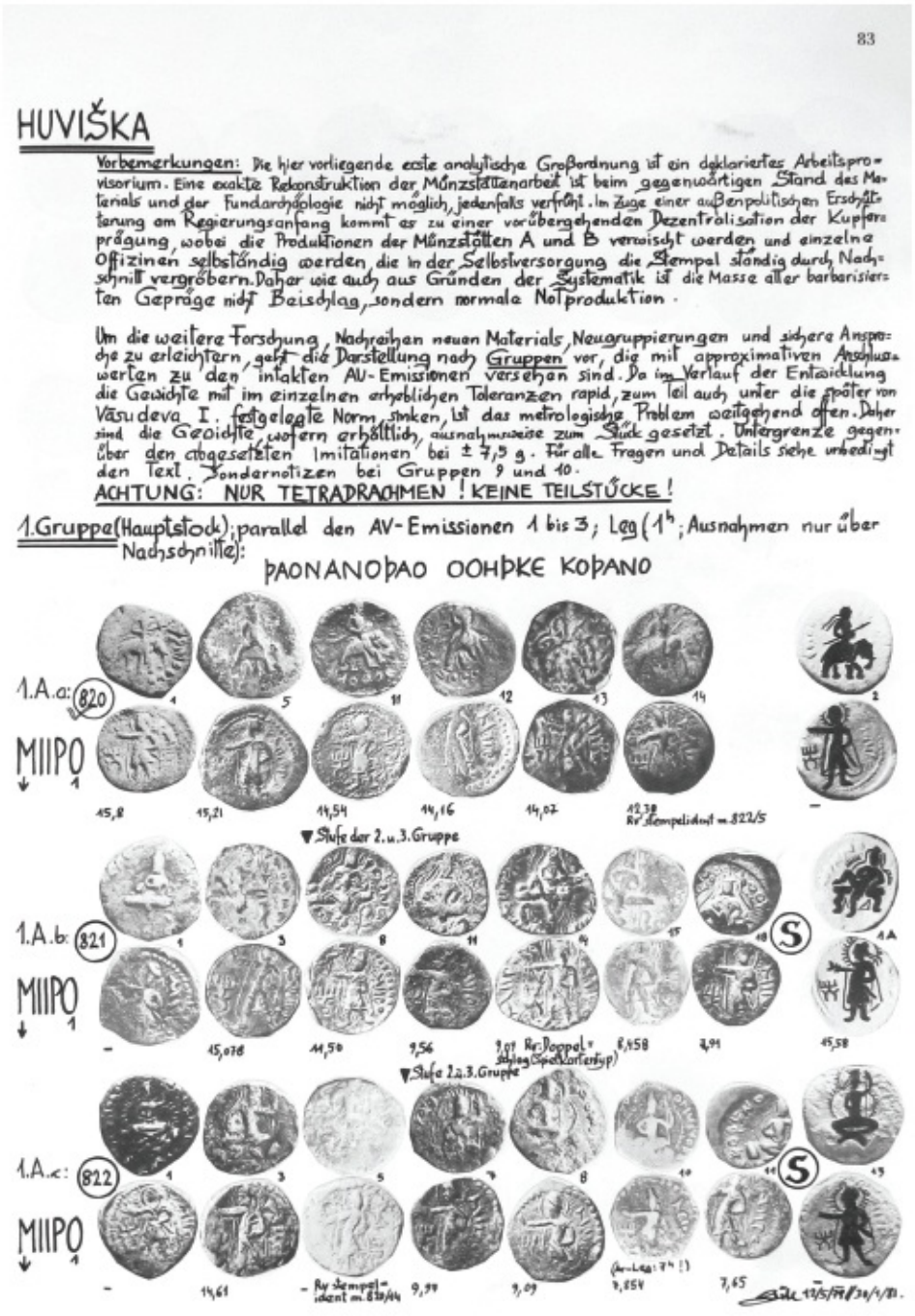
It turned out Joe had met Craig in California three years earlier. He was given a house tour and heard the Craig Burns survivalist lecture, but had not climbed the pantry shelves to the room in the attic. For the occasion, Craig had transferred the coins to the main floor. As much as Joe admired the collection, the trip did not turn out to be a good idea. Always reluctant to fly, but not necessarily suspecting he suffered from aviophobia, Joe became violently ill both coming and going during the long flights. He hasn't flown since, even to nearby European destinations. He continued to travel and vacation all over Europe, attending conferences and museum exhibitions accessible by bus or train.

Joe invited me to take a seat at the table and presented me with two books. I found Joe's introductory comments about Kushan history engaging, but he knew I was a novice with unclear intentions. As far as he was concerned, my first visit might be my last. I opened an atlas of Kushan coins by Robert Göbl, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung des Kušānreiches*. Joe had received the museum copy only a couple of weeks earlier. He said Craig Burns had provided Robert Göbl with dozens of the book's coin photographs.

I had never looked into a numismatics book before. After a few pages into the large

format, hardback catalogue, any interest I might have entertained already seemed a fantasy. My education did not include learning German, which meant that the book's introductory sections were inaccessible. Feeling sheepishly inept, I turned to Joe. 'Don't worry,' he said with a wry smile, 'I can't read it either.' Joe informed me that Robert Göbl's book presented serious problems he would tell me about in due course. Apparently the two scholars disagreed on several points of Kushan history, a professional rivalry that had amplified considerably the moment Göbl's incredible book hit Joe Cribb's desk.

Joe excused himself and left me leafing through pages of coin plates. If not the text, I could at least relate to images. My attention was caught by the back pages of supplementary material. A variety of portraits in photo enlargements feature the king side of Kushan coins. On other pages, coin deities are shown along with wildly obscure names: Athsho, Pharro, Miiro, Manaobago, and many others. The goddess Craig Burns had shown me, Ardochsho, was represented both seated and standing, always holding a cornucopia. On one plate, under the heading *Kronen*, drawings done by Göbl himself present an impressive series of weird caps, bonnets and crowns. Several other plates follow an incomprehensible heading, *Beizeichenfolge in der Münstätte,* referring to coin symbols, mint marks and inscriptions. In his own handwriting, Göbl lists 137 coin inscriptions, all with distinctive letter styles in three different languages, only one of which I could recognise — Greek. This was truly a unique book. Plate after plate of Göbl drawings and handwriting, his signature on every plate written in a bold hand. I had never seen anything remotely similar.



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HUVIŠKA

Vorbemerkungen: Die hier vorliegende erste analytische Großordnung ist ein deklariertes Arbeitsprovisorium. Eine exakte Rekonstruktion der Münzstättenarbeit ist beim gegenwärtigen Stand des Materials und der Fundarchäologie nicht möglich, jedenfalls verfrüht. Im Zuge einer außenpolitischen Erschütterung am Regierungsanfang kommt es zu einer vorübergehenden Dezentralisation der Kupferprägung, wobei die Produktionen der Münzstätten A und B verwischt werden und einzelne Offizinen selbständig werden, die in der Selbstversorgung die Stempel ständig durch Nachschnitt vergröbern. Daher wie auch aus Gründen der Systematik ist die Masse aller barbarisierten Gepräge nicht Beischlag, sondern normale Notproduktion.

Um die weitere Forschung, Nachreihen neuen Materials, Neugruppierungen und sichere Ansprache zu erleichtern, geht die Darstellung nach Gruppen vor, die mit approximativen Anschlußwerten zu den intakten AV-Emissionen versehen sind. Da im Verlauf der Entwicklung die Gewichte mit im einzelnen erheblichen Toleranzen rapid, zum Teil auch unter die später von Vāsudeva I. festgelegte Norm, sinken, ist das metrologische Problem weitgehend offen. Daher sind die Gewichte, wofern erhältlich, ausnahmsweise zum Stück gesetzt. Untergrenze gegenüber den abgesetzten Imitationen bei ± 7,5 g. Für alle Fragen und Details siehe unbedingt den Text. Sondernotizen bei Gruppen 9 und 10.

ACHTUNG: NUR TETRADRACHMEN ! KEINE TEILSTÜCKE !

1.Gruppe (Hauptstock); parallel den AV-Emissionen 1 bis 3; Lgg (1h; Ausnahmen nur über Nachschnitte):

ΡΑΟΝΑΝΟΡΑΟ ΟΟΗΡΚΕ ΚΟΡΑΝΟ

1.A.a: 820 MIIPO 1

▼Stufe der 2. u. 3. Gruppe

1.A.b: 821 MIIPO 1

▼Stufe 2.u.3.Gruppe

1.A.c: 822 MIIPO 1

Figure 2. Plate 83 in Robert Göbl, 1984, *System und Chronologie der Münzprägung des Kušānreiches*, Vienna
Permission by Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien

Fortunately, the second book Joe recommended was in English, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, published in 1967 by art historian John Rosenfield. This was precisely the book that had prompted Craig to add the Kushan to his Wheel of History and inspired him to purchase his first Kushan coin. The four-hundred-page volume discusses Kushan history for the first three centuries of the Christian era based on evidence derived from archaeology, numismatics, art history, inscriptions and textual references. Rosenfield's book, with its

extensive discussion of the coins and 16 plates of Kushan coin types, predates Göbl's atlas by nearly 20 years. Many additional plates illustrate surviving Kushan-era stone sculpture, including royal portraits, panel reliefs and deities.

With its detailed history and fascinating collection of images, the Rosenfield book was clearly a start-up volume I could digest. When Joe returned to the reading room, I asked if we could arrange further meetings. He agreed and offered instructions on how to obtain a British Museum identification card for a visiting researcher.

About two weeks later, I walked to the British Museum from South Kensington by way of Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, Oxford Street and Great Russell Street. At just over an hour, the walk became a pleasurable routine, weather permitting. British Museum ID card in hand, the imposing stainless steel door seemed to open more invitingly, the invigilator-monitored reading room felt less intimidating. For just over a year, I felt enormously privileged to be visiting the Coins and Medals Department once a week for several hours a session. In addition to the two books, Joe provided copies of his own articles on Kushan-related themes, as well as books and articles written by colleagues. Fortunately, during most visits, Joe made a point of being available to respond to a few questions.

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Thanks to an outstanding 1985 British Museum exhibition *Buddhism: Art and Faith*, my growing interest in Kushan coins coincided with an introduction to Gandharan sculpture. The exhibition featured many examples of Buddhist arts dating from the first to sixth centuries AD and included Gandharan reliquaries, miniature stupas, narrative relief stone panels and stone and stucco iconic images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas.[7]

Gandhara is the name of a location as well as the name of a Buddhist arts tradition. Gandhara in ancient times was a kingdom located primarily in Pakistan's Peshawar valley, extending north into Swat Valley and into the Jalalabad and Kabul regions of eastern Afghanistan.

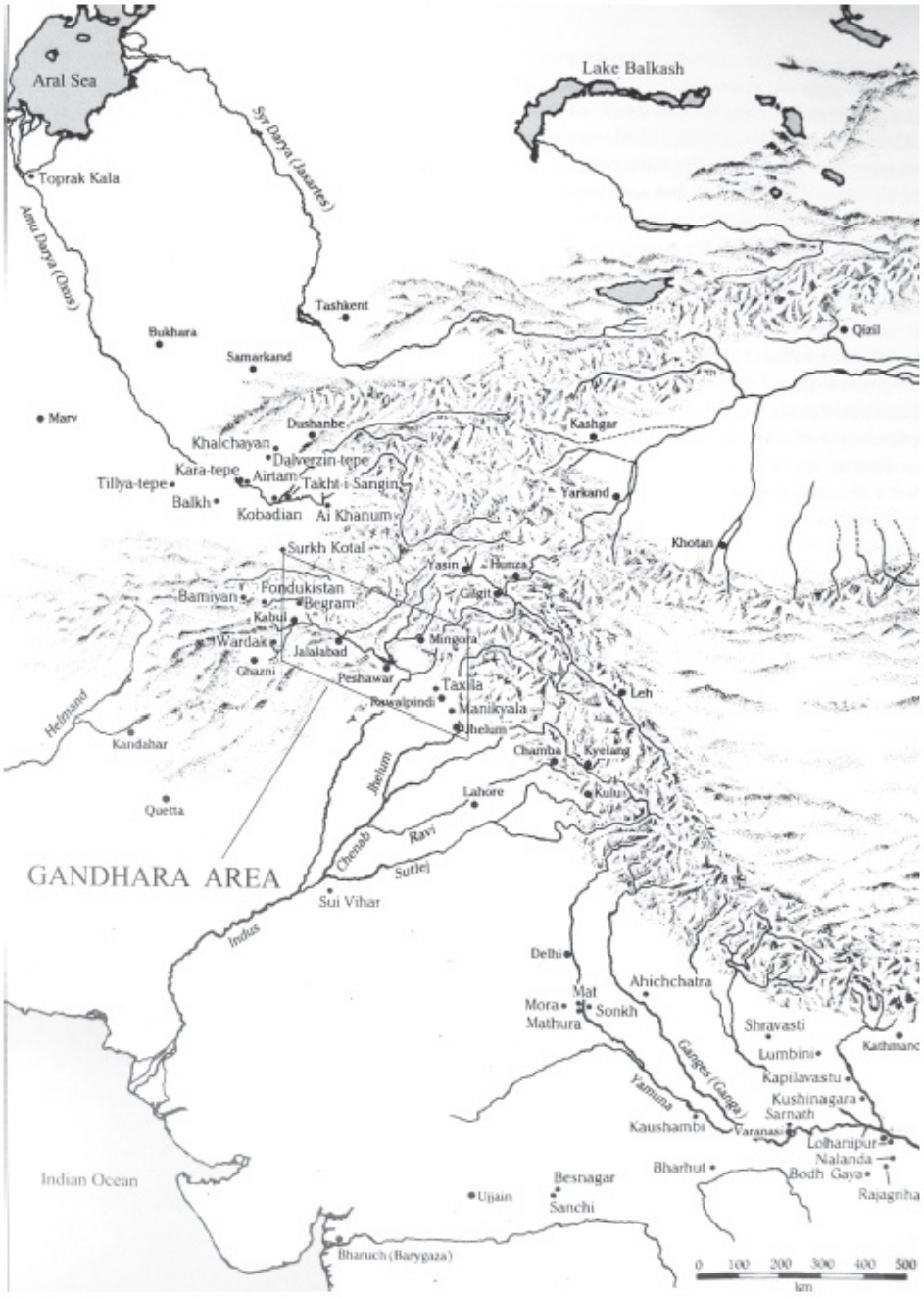

Figure 3. Gandhara in the Kushan World
Modified map: Drawing by Elizabeth Errington

The Gandharan kingdom thrived during the Vedic period (c. 1500–500 BC), but after then the region was occupied by a series of other kingdoms. ‘Gandharan’ is the term now commonly applied to the Buddhist artistic tradition that thrived in Kushan times.

Gandharan art was created to embellish stupa complexes in hundreds of monasteries, especially in the form of horizontally arranged tiers of panel reliefs for the stupa base and dome, full-figure icons for temples and chapels, as well as reliefs for arches, gateways, stair risers and other architectural settings.

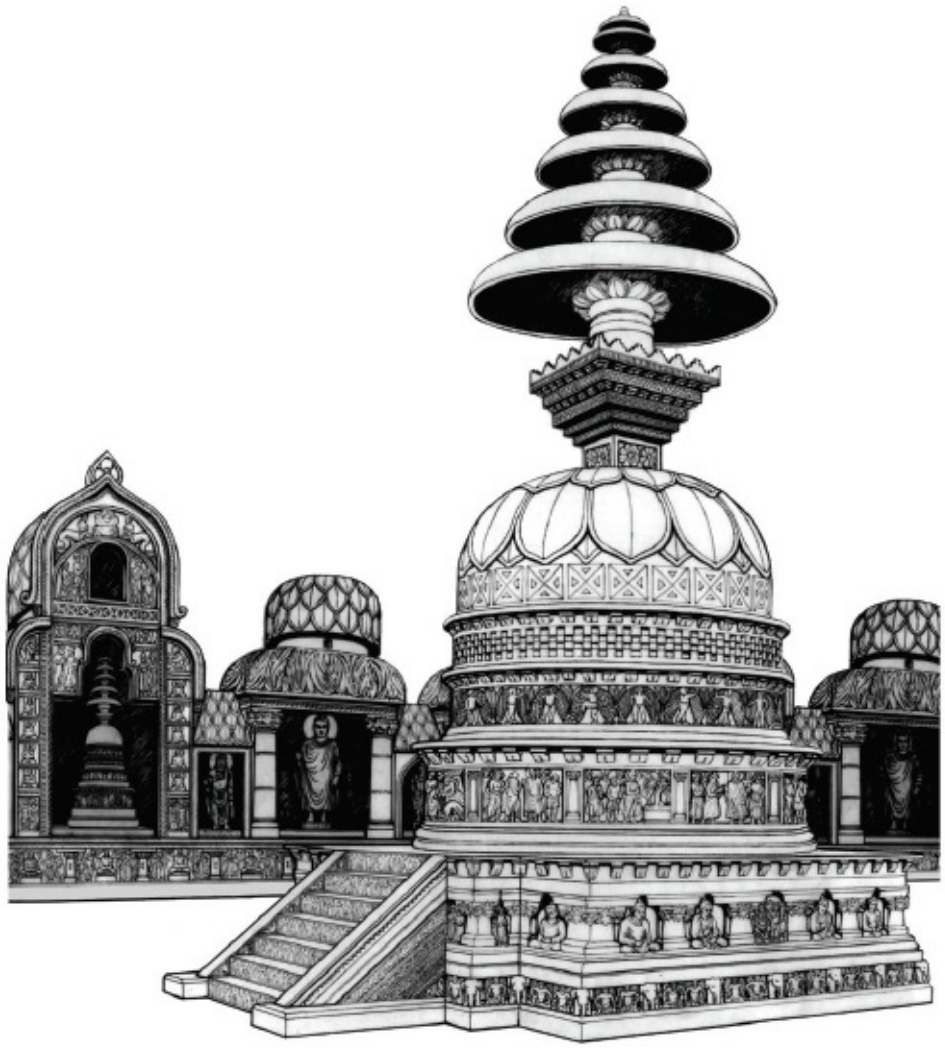

Figure 4. Gandharan Stupa
Drawing courtesy of Elizabeth Errington

The Gandharan Buddhist sculpture tradition prevailed for at least six centuries in Central Asia and northern India, pre- and post-dating the Kushan era. All of this production in coins, art and architecture clearly thrived in prosperous times, thanks to active support communities and a culture of generous patronage.

The Kushan story begins in the first century AD, although Kushan ancestry can be traced back to tribal nomads who had occupied Central Asia for centuries. It's a vast area of deserts, fertile valleys, powerful rivers and massive mountain ranges: the Pamirs of Tajikistan, the Karakoram range in Pakistan and Kashmir, the Hindu Kush in border regions of northeastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Thousands of miles of trade routes winding through the mountains and valleys came under Kushan control, facilitating the empire's expanding prosperity. Growth of empire was accompanied by an extensive Buddhist monastic culture that thrived throughout the three centuries of Kushan rule, accompanied by a spectacular proliferation of Buddhist arts and architecture.

Geologically speaking, Central Asian mountains grow as much as 20 centimetres a year. The Indian tectonic plate moves northward as it collides with, and slides under, the southward-moving Asian plate. Fifty million years of unceasing geological force has created the Himalayas and all Central Asian ranges, accounting for why these mountains make up the most active earthquake zone on the planet.

In these mountains, river valleys and deserts, the Kushan empire expanded across Central and South Asia from the first to fourth centuries AD. As Craig Burns discovered, the Kushan's emergence as a superpower coincided with empires in China, Persia and Rome. Evidence for the reigns of early Kushan kings has been gleaned from cryptic references in Chinese and Kashmiri annals, supported by a handful of contemporary inscriptions on stone and metal. Determining a chronology of Kushan kings has depended to a far greater extent on numismatics, the study of coinage and epigraphy, the study and interpretation of ancient inscriptions, than on the archaeological record. Kushan-era archaeological sites are documented from many sites in northern India, Pakistan, north Afghanistan, southern Uzbekistan and western Tajikistan. In all these sites, the dating of artefacts and remains from urban structures and monastic complexes alike have largely relied on *in situ* coin finds.

The roots of the Kushan empire are traceable to large and powerful nomadic tribes known as the Da Yuezhi. Information about the Da Yuezhi's origins and migrations is far from abundant but surviving Chinese Han dynasty annals portray the Da Yuezhi as a confederation of tribes spread over ancient Central Asia. They were probably originally Indo-European–speaking pastoral nomads who sometime in the Bronze Age migrated with flocks of sheep and herds of horses eastward into the Tarim Basin in northwestern China. There, the Da Yuezhi suffered devastating losses to another powerful confederation of nomads, the Xiongnu, commonly known as Huns, traditional rivals and enemies of China. The Huns were the principal threat behind China's building of the Great Wall. The history proposes, according to Chinese annals, that, defeated by the Huns in the late second century BC, the Da Yuezhi commenced a migration westward that lasted three decades, a journey through the Gobi and Taklamakan deserts, across the Pamir Mountains, and into the Oxus River valley.

An ancient scribe from China who travelled widely in ancient Central Asia was Zhang Qian, a Chinese Han dynasty envoy. He is believed to have arrived in the Oxus River area in about 126 BC. He reported that Da Yuezhi tribes maintained a force of well over 100,000 mounted archer warriors, facilitating their expansion by overcoming the local resistance of Scythians and Parthians in Bactria, an area north of the Hindu Kush and south of the Amu Darya (Oxus) River in what is now northern Afghanistan and parts of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan.

A century after Alexander the Great's conquest of Central Asia in about 330 BC, Bactria

was home to a sophisticated, urbanised Greek society that became extremely rich and prosperous. The Bactrian Greeks flourished not only in commercial enterprise but also in artistic productivity well into the second century BC. Then a period of diminished centralised authority commenced after the death of their great king Eucratides I (reigned c. 174–150 BC). When Zhang Qian visited Bactria in 126 BC, he found a demoralised country, its political system all but collapsed, although with urban infrastructure relatively intact.

The Da Yuezhi settled into the rich and fertile river valleys of northern Bactria, following a pattern of mixed economies tending towards village-centred agriculture and trade, but with some groups retaining the ways of pastoral nomads. Bactra, the Greek kingdom’s massively fortified capital city, initially remained intact and self-governing until the Da Yuezhi occupied all of Bactria and gained control of the capital. The Da Yuezhi seemed to have absorbed much of the culture and lifestyle of their Greek predecessors, including Bactrian trade networks and commerce, as well as their monetary system.

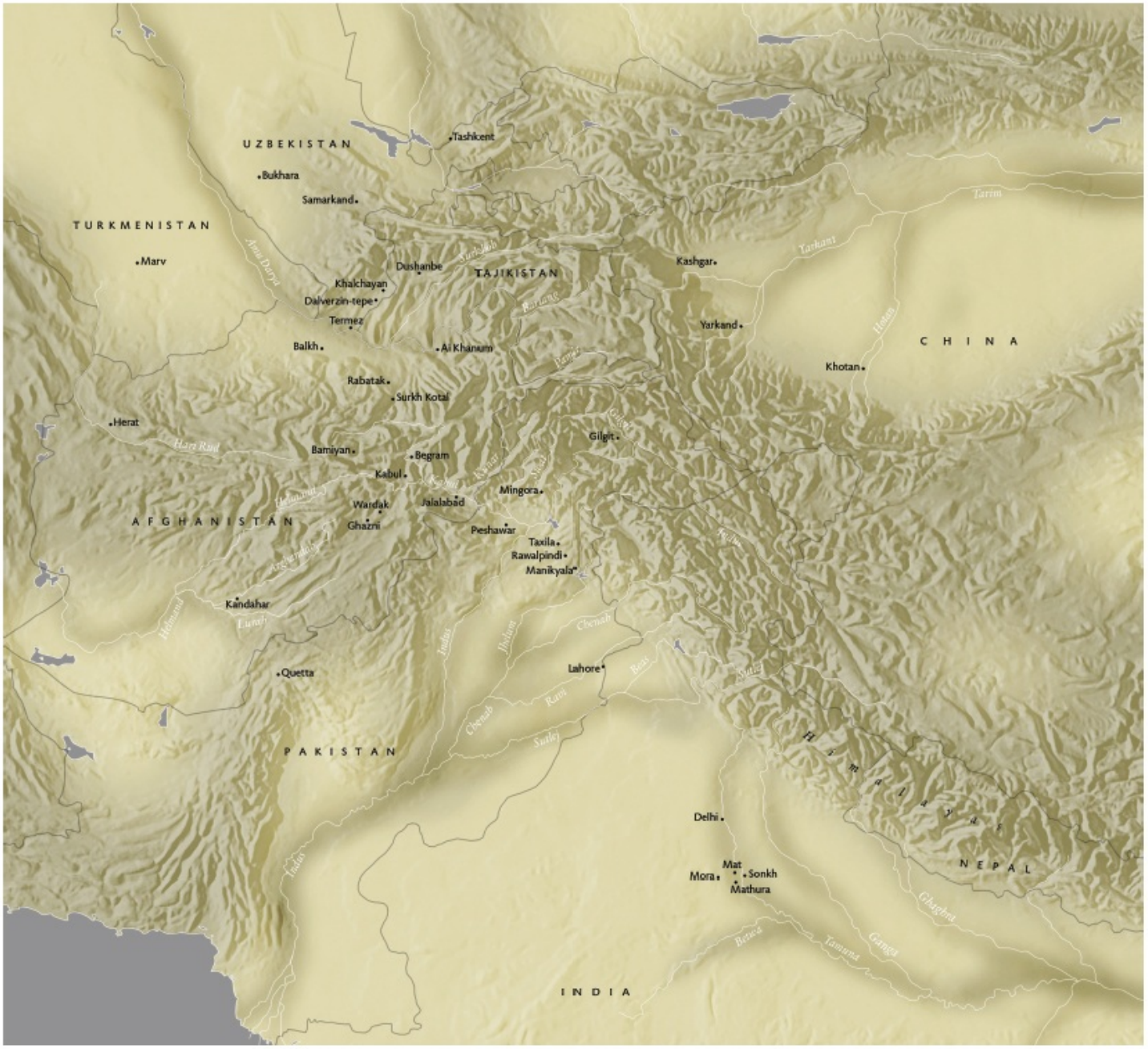

Figure 5. The Kushan World © *Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford*

Zhang Qian attempted to broker a Da Yeuzhi alliance with Chinese forces to counter repeated confrontations with the Huns. In this effort he failed, and after 12 years of travel he returned home. His reports to the Han emperor created a sensation. Zhang Qian's accounts of his explorations are detailed in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, compiled in the first century BC. Even today in China, Zhang Qian is considered a national hero for his role in opening up Han dynasty China to the many kingdoms and commercially valuable products of Central Asia previously unknown to them.

Later Han dynasty records suggest that the Da Yuezhi were organised under five local tribal chiefs; one of these chiefs' family name was Kushan (*Guishuang*). Early in the first

century of the current era, one Kushan chief dominated the other four and established himself as king of the Da Yuezhi. His name was Kujula Kadphises Kushan.

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The impact of new coins showing up in the marketplace for the first time was probably little different in antiquity from today. When the newly minted Canadian one-dollar coin arrived in 1987, famously known ever since as the ‘loonie’, it was greeted with everything from indifference to cynicism to national pride to resentment about the design choice. What matters, of course, is a coin’s relative value when accepted into local economies, including the rate at which it is trading against other currencies. In the time of Kujula, some merchants and tribal groups may have cursed his coins as representing the introduction of yet another ruler sweeping through the country and claiming authority, with yet another coin type circulating in competition with the already complicated transactions involving Greek, Roman, Parthian and Scythian coinages.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, coins in all these traditions continue to be unearthed to this day by farmers, villagers, plunderers and archaeologists alike. Thanks to the age-old practice of burying coins in gardens, under foundation stones, in storage jars or in any number of other long-since abandoned hiding places, coins are always being found, and they eventually end up in the hands of collectors and specialists. Today, Kushan coins and coin hoards still find their way into Kabul, Peshawar, Taxila, Delhi and scores of other markets, where they are exchanged for rupees or rubles or dollars, which in turn are exchanged for goods and services.

One can readily imagine that once upon a time, a merchant in Bactria showed a shopkeeper a handful of sparkling new copper coins that portrayed the bust of a king facing right, wearing a Greek helmet, a cloak draped over his shoulder. No doubt, after enthusiastic greetings and an exchange of family news, a lengthy debate ensued about why the copper coin portrayed an image of a Bactrian Greek king Eucratides but was inscribed in Greek with the name Kujula Kadphises Kushan. Nevertheless, after due consideration, including friendly banter mixed with skilful bargaining, the shopkeeper accepted the coins, and the merchant went on his way with a fresh supply of cinnamon from China.

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It must have been during my third or fourth visit to the Coins and Medals Department reading room that I found a one-page discussion of flaming shoulders about halfway through John Rosenfield’s book. He traces the iconography to an Iranian Avestan concept, *khvareno*,

a term variously translated as ‘glory’ or ‘fortune’, a supernatural boon that may take the form of fire or an all-illuminating heavenly light commonly associated with deities but also with a great prince. He suggests the concept may take visual form on Kushan coins where kings as well as deities are represented with flaming shoulders. But Rosenfield qualifies his discussion by cautioning that the *khvareno* concept can readily be overemphasised in the context of Kushan coin iconography. *Khvareno* is an abstraction, referring to material good fortune associated with royalty, not necessarily lending itself to iconic representation in coin design or sculpture.[8] He does allude, however, to Buddhist esoteric tradition as a possible source of flaming shoulder symbolism. This was an intriguing comment. Rosenfield had done me a favour by dropping a clue worth following.

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After several months in London, feeling a little out of pocket, I discussed our diminishing savings account with Carolyn. She came up with a nicely phrased, beautifully nuanced suggestion: ‘Why don’t you look for a job?’

So much for my manuscript aspirations. My life as a creative writer was temporarily put on hold in lieu of part-time employment as a London carpenter. The job search was remarkably easy. I entered South Kensington buildings surrounded top to bottom by scaffolding, then asked the first person I met where I could find the boss.

‘You’re wanting the governor?’

‘Yeah,’ I said, ‘the governor.’

On my third try, I was told a ‘chippy’ was needed. The governor advised I show up the next morning with hammer, tape measure, crowbar, carpenter’s square and hand saw. Power tools would be supplied on-site. The jobs tended to last a month or six weeks with lengthy breaks in between, just about the right arrangement for part-time carpentry. I enjoyed my mates, the cacophony of competing accents, the Irish plumber with an excellent baritone who entertained by the hour with pub songs, ballads and movie hits. Maybe he became famous, I have no idea; I never knew him by name. In one building, I was assigned the job of spark’s chippy — electrician’s carpenter — the lowest of the low in the on-site labour hierarchy. I worked in a dark basement room drilling holes for wiring through rock-hard Victorian-era oak beams. Three holes each in twenty-two beams. A few days and several broken drill bits later, the job was done, and I moved upstairs to work on doorframes.

One worksite was not so relaxed. During the Friday of my first week it turned violent. The governor had his work cut out keeping apart two electricians who hated each other, an East Ender and a guy known as Kiwi; he had them stationed at opposite ends of the building. That

day, the London electrician found his car door scratched and forced open. A pile of dog shit on the floor on the driver's side supported a miniature New Zealand flag. The inevitable fight drew a crowd and lasted about three minutes. After a single fist to the head, Kiwi was flat on his back. Then, multiple kicks with steel-toe boots coupled with untranslatable obscenities were stopped thanks to crowd interference. Kiwi went to the hospital with a broken jaw, the East Ender lost his job.

A mood of dark agitation settled into the site. Two days later, while I was working with a circular saw, a bright blue flash lit up the corridor outside the basement room where I was measuring and cutting. This was not the first time the lights had blown out; we often overloaded the circuits. I waited for someone near the electrical box upstairs to throw the breaker switch, but when nothing happened, I felt my way along the walls of a black corridor and upstairs to the street.

Several people stood around looking paralyzed. An ugly smell of burning flesh permeated the air. Within minutes, an ambulance arrived, sirens blaring. As a stretcher was prepared, a hairless man with a scorched face walked down the street in a trance, wearing a white hospital blanket wrapped around him mantle like, clasped at the chest. He was oblivious to calls from the paramedics, so they gave chase. Through all of this I stood transfixed by the sight of a mantle-wrapped, very badly burned man with smoke emanating from his head and shoulders.

He was a brick mason with a thick moustache and a mop of brown hair. He never had much to say to anybody. We had rubbed shoulders in the changing room, where he often drank his lunch from a brown paper bag. He and a co-worker had been working on a wall with power grinders, digging into loose brick below the entrance stairs. He sliced through a main line electrical cable thick as his wrist. It was lights out for the entire street. Every hair on his face and head was burned off. He wore goggles but suffered eye damage regardless (we never learned how severe). I decided I had had enough of that worksite. Before leaving, I heard that the guy was still in a coma, his wife at bedside.

The large Victorian building where we lived in South Kensington was served by multiple stairways and an unreliable steel-cage lift. I preferred climbing the stairs to our third-floor flat. One afternoon, a week after the burn accident, I mistakenly took a different stairway. On the third floor, I opened a door to an unfamiliar corridor.

Preparing to backtrack, I was suddenly greeted by a man with whom I had previously exchanged greetings once or twice. I heard that he was from Bombay, in London as a guest lecturer at one of the universities. He specialised in medieval Indian history. He held my attention simply by standing still with a look of warm amusement.

'I'm a little lost,' I admitted.

‘Yes, isn’t it wonderful that we meet like this?’ he said. ‘Apparently by chance, and yet from time to time something happens that makes us know we have been touched by something unusual.’

He was full of smiles, but my mind went blank. I couldn’t think of a way to respond. We slowly walked together downstairs.

‘The human being is really two beings in one,’ he said. ‘We have a dual nature. We have a material existence in our physical body, but we also have a divine soul. We are two in one, but unfortunately, most people ignore their essential nature; they have no way to touch their innermost self, and most people refuse to believe in it at all.’

I managed to ask how he had come to see this duality.

‘These things were often discussed in my family in India,’ he said. ‘But as I was growing up, I realised that in order to get a clearer understanding, I needed a discipline that would provide a way of constantly reminding myself about who I really am.’

I wondered what kind of discipline he referred to. We stopped — the pause seemed eternal. He spoke very quietly in such a way as to demand every fibre of my attention.

‘The Sufi say the cosmos pours through each of us by way of our divine soul,’ he said. ‘Through our practice, we learn how to find the moon and sun pouring through us; the planets and stars, pouring through us. This is what makes the Sufi strong. I do not need mosques or churches. I do not worship any one God. Sufis do not become monks or nuns or follow a particular guru.’

We stopped again, this time in the lobby, and shared a few moments of hilarity when I pointed to the stairway I would normally take to our third-floor apartment but had somehow bypassed on this occasion. He seemed in no rush to leave, regardless of crowded lobby activity.

‘The Sufi lives in the world,’ he continued. ‘Travels, marries, has children, lives in the country, lives in the city, works at a profession, lives a normal life. But Sufi discipline teaches about being completely involved in the world without being involved. The real discipline for me is to always try, wherever I go, to see how the spark of the divine is working through whomever I happen to meet.’

I ventured to suggest that sometimes our world turns upside down, something completely unexpected throws us for a complete loop with such impact that for a while nothing seems to make sense. I told him about the job site where I worked as a carpenter, and the tragic accident.

‘Terrible things happen in the world’, he said. ‘I don’t choose to read the newspapers, but I

ride the Tube, I walk London streets: I see things every day I'd rather not see, I can't help it. Sometimes, like you say, something in the nature of a particular incident affects me personally. A lot of emotion is aroused, the mind fills with thoughts.'

'How does your practice assist with these incidents?' I asked.

'I find that I become very grateful. Grateful not because something terrible happened, of course, but grateful because I was able to see something in myself as a result of what I witnessed. Anything that arouses questions and inner conflict wakes me up a little more, it makes me see my life more completely.'

He paused for a moment. 'There's a Sufi teaching,' he said, but then paused, as if searching for words. 'Oh yes, I remember. It goes like this. "I found myself in the heart of the war, then I found myself in the war of the heart." It's a good saying. You can see it many ways. There is always a chance, in the most terrible of circumstances anywhere, anytime, whether an outer situation or an inner situation, that we are able to receive something special, a true spark.'

We remained in the lobby. I struggled for words of thanks. 'I must apologise,' he said. 'We've not had an opportunity to meet properly, and I hope you don't think of me as intruding. But I must admit I have asked about you here. I have been told that you have an interest in the ancient history of the Kushan empire. Is that true?'

I attempted to absorb this completely unexpected comment backed by such an abundance of warmth. He told me his specialty was Indian Islamic history but the Kushan were of interest to him. 'You must be intrigued by all the mysteries hidden in those strange Kushan signs and symbols.'

We met again numerous times, but during our two-year friendship in Jerome House no other conversation resembled our first meeting. He deeply impressed me as a man who had intentionally taken steps in his personal life to perfect a way of participating in his external life while inwardly remaining free. On that day, with each step taken down an alternative stairway in a South Kensington international house, I was lifted one step further up by a man steadfast in his own true law.

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In our last few weeks in London, I returned to the British Museum for several reading sessions. The famous Silk Road fascinated me. I wanted to look more fully into the extent of trade routes crossing Central Asia during the time of the Kushan. The term 'Silk Road' is misleading on several fronts. Much of the Silk Road's current popularity attracts tourists to

China and Central Asia by conjuring up a romantic image of ancient opulence, desert caravanserais, the mystery of the far away. On the other hand, to argue that the Silk Road has little to do with modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan is misleading. China's 'Belt and Road' initiative — a trillion-dollar trade and infrastructure project intended as an economic corridor — closely parallels ancient Central Asian trade routes and includes massive military projects that will deepen China–Pakistan cooperation.

The ancient Silk Road was never just one road, and silk was by no means the only cargo carried by caravans across the deserts and mountains. Even in the first century AD, when Kujula Kadphises launched the Kushan dynasty, movement of large varieties of goods and services occurred along a web of routes that linked China, Central Asia, India, Persia and the Mediterranean. Trade goods that proceeded northwest from China into the Gobi Desert moved along routes at the northern and southern perimeters of the Gobi and Taklamakan deserts. The two routes rejoined at Kashgar, then split again, one branch crossing the Pamir Mountains on route to Samarkand, Bukhara, Persia and the Mediterranean. Other branches twisted south through the mountains into Afghanistan and Pakistan and continued deep into the Indian subcontinent.

The Kushan also inherited a major north–south highway system constructed during the Mauryan period under Ashoka (c. 273–232 BC). Over 2,000 miles long, the highway linked the northern centres of Balkh, Kapisa, Kabul, Peshawar and Taxila with Lahore, Delhi, Mathura and other centres of the Ganges plain and the Deccan. Kushan kings made good use of it; the highway and its linked trade route network facilitated Kushan city-building and empire expansion. The same highway was improved as the Grand Trunk Road under the Mughals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and remains a key artery of transportation and trade today.

Chinese silk is without doubt the most famous and coveted of goods that passed through the ancient system of trade routes. The Romans could not get enough of it and spent fabulously to possess it. Silk was literally worth its weight in gold. By the first century AD, quantities of Chinese silk reached the Mediterranean by way of Central Asia and Persia, but also by way of routes that branched south into Indian cities. Routes bypassing conflicts between Romans and Parthians worked to the advantage of Indian middlemen at seaports on India's west coast. They retained some silk products for themselves and learned the secrets of silk production, stimulating India's own silk industry.

Silk became fashionable in Indian cities, king's palaces and Buddhist monasteries. In early Buddhist stone sculpture, silk provides the model for the ultra-fine folds of fabric in robes and scarves worn by bodhisattvas, that in contrast to the heavy-looking garments, probably of cotton or wool, that appear in images of the Buddha. Buddhist sources reveal that

misbehaving monks were expected to pay fines in silk — five bolts of silk for lightly striking another monk, a ten-bolt fine for a moderate strike, fifteen for an excessive blow.

As the Kushan empire prospered, so too did Buddhism. During the Kushan period, Buddhism became a missionary movement with great popular appeal, significantly affecting the demand and pricing of luxury goods. Decorating monuments with silk banners, jewels and precious stones became an accepted form of worship. Love of silk dominated Kushan-era trade, but caravans out of China also carried furs, ceramics, lacquer, bronze, weapons and mirrors. But Central Asian and Indian luxury items contributed enormously to the trade. India produced coveted spices; pepper attracted prices rivalling silk's. Many rare medicinal herbs and plant products for perfumes and cosmetics came out of India. Ebony, teak, pearls, opals, diamonds, sapphires, rubies and lapis lazuli were all products from India and Central Asia coveted by Rome. Warhorses bred in Central Asia were traded in Chinese markets as well as Roman.

Moving in the opposite direction, caravans and ships heading east from the Mediterranean carried glassware, silverware, gold, copper, wine and wine vessels, terracotta and bronze, as well as highly valued amber cut from tree fossils. Nevertheless, the balance of trade greatly favoured the East. The wealth of Kushan kings and the Indian merchant class derived from Rome's willingness to pay exorbitant prices for luxury goods. In spite of harsh and often impossible transportation conditions imposed by mountain ranges, deserts and bands of nomadic raiders, Kushan cities and towns prospered because of active, ongoing trade.

After meeting Craig Burns, and years later reading John Rosenfield, I found myself asking the same question Craig had asked: why had I never heard of the Kushan? This rich and powerful dynastic empire that lasted for over 300 years in the vast expanse of Central Asia was rarely if ever mentioned in classical studies curricula of Western universities. Rosenfield's landmark treatise earns a footnote here and there in history books, but Western scholarship tends to insist it has enough on its plate already. Apparently, this is justification enough for sweeping out of sight entire continents and centuries of world history. The Kushan empire reached its peak of power about the same time as the Romans achieved their easternmost expansion by defeating Iranian Parthians in AD 115. But Roman writers and historians were largely ignorant of the vast and enormously wealthy empires existing east of Parthian territory in Central Asia and China.

In territories occupied by the Kushan, Roman gold coinage is rarely found and was most likely melted down as soon as it appeared. Perhaps the Romans did not bother to document the Kushan because their armies never confronted each other. The Kushans expanded primarily south and east from the valleys and mountains of the Oxus River area. Tribal groups in Iran, especially Parthians, Scythians and Sasanians, situated between Kushan

territory and the Mediterranean, in effect shielded the Kushan from Roman armies and Roman historians. The Kushan's out-of-sight, out-of-mind location no doubt also accounts for the lack of their presence in Holy Land history.

This was not my first experience regarding serious gaps in my education. I grew up in the Gallatin Valley in western Montana with no idea until my second year of anthropology in San Francisco that my home valley was traditionally known by several Native American peoples as the 'Valley of Flowers'. The valley, named for the great variety of wild flowers found on the mountains and in the river valleys, was hunting grounds for the Sioux, Blackfoot, Nez Perce and Shoshone. The story goes that a band of Sioux and a band of Nez Perce spent two days fighting in a canyon located just outside my hometown of Bozeman (Bridger Canyon). On the third day, the warriors heard strange noises in the sky. They stopped fighting, spellbound by sudden dark skies, sweet singing and a white flame emanating from the mountain summit. The flame slowly descended and settled on a rock, where appeared the figure of a maiden who spoke in a language they all understood. She told the warriors to put down their hatchets, unstring their bows; there must be no war in the valley of flowers. The truce established that day was maintained as sacred and observed ever since by all Native American camps who came to the valley for their summer hunts.

In London, acknowledging the Central Asian gap in my knowledge of history, I recalled acclaimed anthropologist Eric Wolf's critique of 'the lazy history of civilisation'.[9] Greece begets Rome begets Christian Europe begets the Renaissance, etc., eventually yielding the United States, supposedly the political, cultural and moral triumph of the West. Absence of attention to India and China in classical studies unapologetically pushes a Eurocentrism that utterly fails to recognise huge swathes of human history outside the European and American paradigm. But if largely absent in western classical studies, there is certainly no lack of interest within India and China for their own history. Fortunately, times change. A dramatic ascendancy of historical studies generated in part by scholarship from within India, China and Japan has found its way into European, American and Canadian university programmes in the last few decades. Furthermore, a recent international bestseller, Peter Frankopan's *The Silk Roads*, offers a completely reoriented view of world history in a grandly sweeping focus on the economic, social and religious history of Central Asia and the Near East.[10]

Factors other than Eurocentrism account for a Western lack of attention to Central Asian history. The first to fourth century AD period of Kushan activity yields substantial archaeological evidence, but not in comparison to the scope of material unearthed from Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Mayan or Incan sources. In Central Asia, successive waves of invasions, conquests and natural disasters, especially earthquakes, either levelled Kushan cities or provided the foundation stones for new cities built by new emperors.

Alexander the Great led his army into northern Afghanistan and Pakistan's Swat Valley in the fourth century BC. Possessed by a sense of history, he had hired chroniclers to travel with him every step of the way during his Persian and Indian campaigns. Kushan kings did not produce records — at least none that we know of so far — that ensured a historical record for posterity. No chronicles have been unearthed that provide details of their origins, or the political, military, economic or religious activities of their kings. Furthermore, no documents survive that describe relationships between the Kushan royal house and the society as a whole.

Scholarship with a Kushan focus did not exist until the 1830s when a few individuals in British India initiated archaeological surveys and excavations in areas of the subcontinent under British control.[11] One of the first was Charles Masson, a deserter from the British Indian army in Calcutta, who ended up conducting major archaeological digs in Afghanistan in the 1830s (see Chapter 9). James Prinsep joined the British East India Company as an Assay Master in 1819 and later became secretary of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. Prinsep's great achievement was to decipher the Brahmi script incised on rock and columns for the edicts of Ashoka, one of India's most famous ancient kings and who converted to Buddhism. Friendship with Prinsep prompted Major-General Alexander Cunningham's interest in Indian antiquities; he became renowned for his major archaeological excavations in the 1880s, including many northern Indian monastery complexes richly endowed with Buddhist arts. He also discovered ruins in Taxila, an extensive urban area dating to at least the fourth century BC. Cunningham's work was followed by John Marshall, Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, who conducted excavations throughout India, including five years of archaeology in Taxila from 1913 to 1918.

In addition to the books and articles Joe Cribb left with me in the Department of Coins and Medals reading room, I examined artefacts on display derived from Cunningham, Marshall and other British-initiated excavations. Gradually, all this new information and the enticing exposure to exhibition artefacts were having an impact. There was no 'eureka' moment, but at some point I recognised I was committed to Kushan studies. This was a huge change for me, a paradigm shift from Native American studies with which I had been engaged since the early 1960s. But even if I was to continue with the Kushan, the question remained: why? Not only why, but what? What would be my focus? Joe Cribb's career was in part defined by reconstructing chronologies of kings from coin evidence. For me, if the Kushan story was to continue beyond London, I suspected it would have something to do with my particular enthusiasm for strange signs and symbols.

— 3 —

Kushan Kings

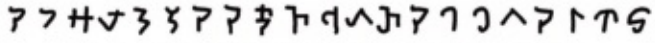
The first Kushan king is known primarily because his name appears on copper coins. That's it. Copper coins. It will have to do. Archaeological evidence is sparse. A paragraph in an ancient Chinese source, translated in about ten different versions, sketchily describes a king's rise to power, conquests, death at 80 years of age, and succession by his son. His name appears in an inscription,[12] an important bonus, but precise dates of rule are impossible to determine. Based solely on numismatic evidence, Joe Cribb believes the reign of Kujula Kadphises extended for about 40 years, beginning midway through the first century (c. AD 50–90).[13] Kujula's kingship appears to have started with an invasion of Parthian territory in the Termez area of northern Afghanistan and southwestern Uzbekistan. Sometime during his reign, Kujula Kadphises crossed the Hindu Kush and conquered extensive areas around Kabul, Afghanistan. It is primarily coin evidence that suggests he continued his conquest into the urbanised Taxila area and further east into Kashmir.

Fortunately for historians, the first Kushan king was no different from other kings, ancient or modern: he minted coins bearing his names and titles. Kujula announced his ascendancy by inaugurating a bronze coinage minted in the Greek tradition: a king's portrait on one side, a deity on the other.

In the jargon of coin collectors and numismatists, the 'heads' side of a coin is typically referred to as the *obverse*, and the 'tails' side as the *reverse*. Obverse and reverse is standard terminology for coin people, just as 'heads or tails' is great for children's games, gambling tables and the coin toss in a sports event. In this book, I refer to the *king side* and the *deity side* of Kushan and other ancient coins.

Kujula's coins reveal a variety of inscriptions depending on when and where they were minted during his reign. On standard copper tetradrachms that circulated in the Begram and Taxila areas, for example, his name appears on the king side in Greek: ΚΟΖΟΥΛΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΖΥ ΚΟΡΣΝΟΥ (of Kujula Kadphises Kushan). On the deity side, the inscription is in a version of Sanskrit used on the coins, written in a script known as *Kharoshthi*: Kujula Kasasa Kushana *yavugasa dhamathidasa* (of Kujula Kadphises, Kushan *yabgu*, steadfast in the true law).

Kujula Kadphises

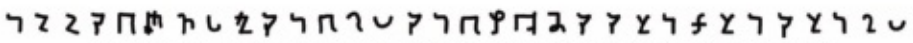


khushanasa ya′u′asa kuyulakaphsasa sacadharmathitasa
Kujula Kadphises Kushan *yabgu*, steadfast in the true law

Wima Takto

maharajasa rajatirajasa devaputrasa wematakho
of great king, king of kings, son of gods, Wima Takto

Wima Kadphises



maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvalogaśvarasa mahaśvarasa vrimakathpiśasa tratrara
of great king, king of kings, lord of the world, great lord, Wima Kadphises, saviour

Figure 6. Kharoshthi inscriptions on Kushan coins
Inscription drawings courtesy of Joe Cribb

Yabgu is a title that can be roughly translated as ‘tribal chief’. Some coin series give Kujula different political titles, such as *maharaja rajatiraja* (king, king of kings) or *maharaja mahada* (great king), together with a religious title, *devaputra* (son of god).

Kharoshthi is the name of a script that was used for about six centuries in Central Asia and northwest India for Sanskrit and also for the language of ancient Gandhara, which scholars refer to as Gandhari. The Kharoshthi script was used from the third century BC until it was replaced by Brahmi from the third century AD.

With one possible exception, Kujula did not follow coin design traditions of contemporary Roman or Parthian examples, where kings favoured head-and-shoulders portraits. Instead, Kujula used a variety of portraits, imitating existing coin designs in circulation at the time: Bactrian Greek, Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian and Roman.

Figure 7. Copper tetradrachm: Heracles type in the name of Kujula Kadphises
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.28129

Figure 8. Copper coin of Kujula Kadphsises: Roman Emperor type
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.29797

In addition to the imitated portraits, Kujula appears on horseback, standing or sitting on the ground, or seated on a Roman curule chair (see Figure 8), almost always with a big sword on his belt.

When I first noted Kujula's inscription, 'steadfast in the true law', I assumed the 'true law' referred to Buddhist dharma. But this interpretation is doubtful. The coin title most likely refers to dharma in the broadest sense of the word. Greek kings used the title *dikaios*, translated as 'just' in the Greek, or 'dharma-like' in Gandhari. Kujula's time and location places him at the crossroads of Central Asian, Bactrian Greek, and Indian influences. Whatever the meaning of the intriguing inscription, Kujula was clearly an effective ruler with strong convictions. He launched an imperial dynasty and an empire that survived for three centuries.

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Figure 9. Copper didrachm of Soter Megas/Wima Takto
American Numismatics Society 1973.56.326

The second Kushan king, Kujula Kadphises' son, is famous for his anonymity, a nameless king known only by way of a Greek title on the coins: ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ (Soter Megas, or great saviour). Like the other early Kushans, the dates of his reign are conjectural, but he probably ruled for about 20 years (c. AD 90–113). Rosenfield refers to a 'vast and mysterious coinage which carries no royal name but only the epithet.'[14] Mysterious because of the anonymity, vast because Soter Megas coinage circulated in very large numbers from north of the Oxus River in current day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan through northern and central Afghanistan into Pakistan, Kashmir and northern India.

Examples of the coinage were published as early as 1827, followed by a century and a half of speculation about their attribution. There was never any doubt that this widely distributed coinage was Kushan, but the coins could not conclusively be associated with either Kujula Kadphises or the next ruler, Wima Kadphises. Perhaps an unknown ruler rose to power between the two, perhaps even a usurper. Scholars organised conferences, wrote articles, threw up confused multidisciplinary hands, characteristically insisting on the correctness of their own opinions. The dust settled somewhat when it seemed the mystery was finally solved in 1993 due to an inscription discovery that revealed the name of the second Kushan king as Wima Takto (see Chapter 4).

The empire-wide general coinage of Wima Takto is decidedly odd. No one knows why this king broke with tradition by placing himself on the deity side of the coin and the deity on the king side. The king appears as a mounted horseman. He wears an Iranian cap, nomad jacket and trousers, and holds what appears to be a pickaxe in his raised right hand. On the side of the coin usually reserved for the king, the bust of a deity appears facing right, wearing a diadem, a cloak over his shoulder. He holds an arrow vertically in a raised right hand. The deity is the Kushan sun god Miiro, and the arrow suggests a link to the archer attributes of the Greek sun god Apollo. Strangely, rays emanating from the deity's head constitute another

unexplainable element. The number of rays varies considerably from coin to coin. There are as few as four rays, up to thirteen, and every number in between. No one knows why.

In addition to the empire-wide coinage, Wima Takto also minted a few localised issues. A locally minted coin that circulated in Kashmir followed an Indo-Scythian design featuring a bull on one side, a Bactrian camel on the other. The coin bears a Kharoshthi inscription (see Figure 6): *maharajasa rajatirajasa devaputrasa* (of the great king, king of kings, son of gods).

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The Kushan's third king, Wima Kadphises (c. AD 113–127), is portrayed on a gold double dinar as a bearded and heavy-set older man seated cross-legged. Long fluttering diadem ribbons accentuate the sense of a king lifting off as if about to fly off the mountaintop. He wears a heavy mantle clasped at the chest and a tall cap with upturned peak. He has flames emanating from his shoulders. In a vastly expanding empire, the coins of Wima Kadphises do more than project a burgeoning royal self-confidence. Perhaps this is a king attributing to himself qualities of semi-divinity.

The portrayal of the king as emerging from a mountaintop may be a reference to Oesho, a Kushan god of the sky and mountains who appears on the deity side of the coin. If so, this is an early example in Kushan coinage in which king and god share iconography.

On his inaugural copper tetradrachm, the king is portrayed as a standing figure dressed in a heavy, knee-length tunic worn over baggy trousers bunched at the ankles. His head is turned to the left, his feet splayed out in padded boots. He has a big nose, heavy beard and moustache, a tall cap with an upturned brim and diadem ribbons fluttering behind. He clasps the hilt of a sword with his left hand. An upright trident stands to the left of a small fire altar, and a knobby club stands to the right of the king's leg. The coarse facial features and heavy tunic lend a sense that this is a man accustomed to the rugged outdoors. The copper coin portrait gives quite a different impression from that of the gold coin. This looks more like a Central Asian nomadic tribesman king who has just stepped inside after a bitterly cold day in the Hindu Kush.

Figure 10. Gold double dinara of Wima Kadphises

Figure 11. Copper tetradrachm of Wima Kadphises
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.30165

The rugged strength is subdued by a surprising gesture: the king extends his right hand to make an offering at a small fire altar. A powerful man portrayed in a quiet moment. Nothing quiet is expressed in the bilingual inscription, however, written on the king side in Greek: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΦΙΣΗΣ (King of kings, great saviour, Wima Kadphises). On the deity side, the Gandhari inscription appears in the Kharoshthi script (see Figure 6): *maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvaloga'iśvarasa mahisvarasa v´ima kathpiśasa tradara* (of great king, king of kings, lord of the world, great lord, Wima Kadphises, saviour). His rule was short-lived, lasting only 14 years.

Wima Kadphises' coin portraits marked a conceptual leap from the Greek, Roman and Parthian coin portraiture circulating at the time. He proclaimed Kushan empire-building in no uncertain terms by introducing a spectacular gold coinage to India and Central Asia. Minted in four denominations and designed with great flair and imagination, the gold coins of Wima Kadphises are without equal for sheer innovation, craftsmanship and aesthetics of coin

imagery as a whole.

He is portrayed in several distinct types: mounted on an elephant, sitting on a throne, flying off a mountaintop, or riding in a chariot.

Figure 12. Gold dinara of Wima Kadphises
American Numismatics Society 2009.2.1

An additional feature that appears on the coins is not directly attributable to either imperial or spiritual significance. A distinctive symbol that shows up on Wima Kadphises' coinage is referred to as a *tamga* (to the left of the king in Figure 10; to the right of the deity in Figure 12). The term derives from Turkic language sources in reference to clan emblems for marking property, but the purpose of the tamga on Kushan coins is unclear. Most Kushan kings use the tamga, but the symbols are inconsistently rendered and often blundered on coins of the late Kushan kings. Tamga designs include a composite of arcs, crescents, circles, verticals, horizontals and other geometric variations.

A tamga-like symbol appears on the flank of a horse on a Wima Takto coin that may be the strongest clue available in regard to the tamga's meaning. No direct archaeological evidence exists from Central Asia to show that ancient nomadic tribes branded domestic animals for purposes of identification. However, tamga-like family crests branded on cattle and horses are known from north Caucasian herdsmen early in the Christian era. Furthermore, Scythian horseman just west of Kushan-held territory engraved tamga-like symbols on their swords and spears. The Kushan may very well have adopted weapon marks or horse brands to use for their own purposes in coin design.

The coins were minted during the rise of Buddhism in Kushan-held territory. In early Buddhist texts such as the Pali Canon, magical feats of great monks, holy men and the Buddha are frequently cited: 'He directs his attention to the various kinds of magical powers … He goes across walls and hills without obstruction … goes over water as if on dry land, passes through the air sitting cross-legged, and even touches the mighty moon and sun with

his hand, and reaches to the world of Brahma.'[15] It is tempting to interpret Wima Kadphises' coin iconography as drawing inspiration from Buddhist sources, but, to date, no corroborating evidence that I know of has surfaced from Buddhist sources.

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Of all Kushan kings, the fourth king, Kanishka I (c. AD 127–150) has generated the widest attention across the spectrum of cultural, political and religious history. John Rosenfield gives more attention to the reign of Kanishka than to all the other Kushan kings combined. He portrays Kanishka as a figure of primary importance in Asian history, exceptional in his ability to consolidate a great empire while also encouraging the release of his peoples' creative energies. Kanishka's reign is considered a pivotal era in the history of Central Asia and India, with major contributions in both the economic and religious spheres of urban development, arts and architecture. His ascension to the throne was honoured as the beginning of a calendrical system, attested by dated inscriptions covering nearly 200 years. Strangely, determining just when Year One occurred in the Kanishka calendar has proved elusive.

Figure 13. Gold dinara of Kanishka
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.15491

The Kushan empire achieved its greatest expanse during Kanishka's reign, with control over vast territories from north of the Oxus River in southern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to as far south as the Gangetic plains in India, and east to west from eastern Iran through Afghanistan and Pakistan into Kashmir. One legend portrays Kanishka as a ruthless warlord responsible for a massive slaughter of Parthians. On the other hand, Kanishka is described as a deeply pious king who frequently consulted Buddhist priests and invited them to enter the palace to preach.

Xuanzang, a seventh-century AD Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, kept detailed records for 17 years of travels and experiences in India and Central Asia. He contributed considerably to establishing Kanishka's legacy of royal patronage for Buddhist monastic culture. A legend recorded by Xuanzang tells how Kanishka emitted smoke and flames from his shoulders in order to subdue an evil serpent king. Xuanzang credits Kanishka for convening the Buddhist council in Kashmir that met for 12 years and produced an encyclopedic corpus of Buddhist doctrine. This attribution is not without controversy, however, and may have been an effort on the part of Xuanzang to equate Kanishka with the Mauryan king Ashoka, who is said to have convened the first great Buddhist council.

A legend tells of Kanishka hunting wild hare and meeting a shepherd boy. The boy was building a small mud stupa while reciting a Buddhist prophecy. According to the prophecy, 400 years after Buddha's death, a king in Gandhara would erect a stupa to contain relics of the Buddha's bones and flesh. Kanishka, realising that he had ascended the throne at the right time and was the king foretold, ordered a stupa to be built surrounding the boy's small stupa. But the boy was the king of the gods, Indra, in disguise. While Kanishka's stupa was being built, he was astonished to find the boy's smaller stupa growing magically, exceeding the height of his own stupa. Kanishka continued building, only to find the boy's mud stupa growing higher still. This process continued until Kanishka's stupa reached 750 feet high. Finally, when it seemed the boy's work was covered, Kanishka raised the superstructure's mast, which supported 25 umbrellas of gilded copper. Nevertheless, the interior stupa broke through halfway up and Kanishka ordered his great stupa to be torn down to its second storey. Magically, the smaller stupa also diminished. It was then that Kanishka awakened. Upon understanding that divine power was greater than his own, he completed the stupa in a satisfactory manner.

The story of a magnificent stupa enhanced a Kanishka mystique in antiquity. It also fired the imagination of nineteenth-century archaeologists. In about 1875, Sir Alexander Cunningham decided after an extensive search that mounds near Peshawar were remains of Kanishka's great stupa. He provided enough evidence to support the legend as having historical validity, but it was not until 35 years later that members of a poorly financed British archaeological mission succeeded in drawing a plan of the structure. The stupa was excavated in 1908–09 and led to the discovery of a bronze casket with a Kharoshthi inscription that includes Kanishka's name. The casket contained a rock crystal reliquary and three small fragments of bone relics. The stupa remains measured 286 feet in diameter — by far the largest stupa found on the Indian mainland — constructed on a high square plinth with stairways in the four directions.

Kanishka refined the standing full-figure coin portrait introduced by his father Wima Kadphises, an image conveying kingly dignity combined with quiet composure. He stands

frontally with head turned, right hand poised over a fire altar, as if dropping pellets of incense onto coals. He has a long beard and wears a jewelled cap with a crest ornament. His mantle is double-clasped at the chest and worn over a long tunic and leggings. He holds a spear in his left hand and is armed with a sword. Flames emanate from his right shoulder.

Kanishka dropped the use of Kharoshthi inscriptions. His first coins are simply inscribed in Greek: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΚΑΝΗÞΚΟΥ (Basileus Basileōn Kanēshkou, [King of kings, of Kanishka]). Kanishka then changed the coin language from Greek to an Iranian language known to modern scholars as Bactrian, but retained the use of the Greek script. Kanishka used an extra character in the Greek alphabet, Þ for the Bactrian 'sh'. The new Bactrian inscription on his gold coins reads ÞAONANOÞAO KANHÞKI KOÞANO, (King of kings, Kanishka Kushan).

If the inscription is relatively modest, Kanishka's choice of deities is anything but. His coinage features 15 deities, many of which were unknown in religious studies (See Chapter 11).

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Figure 14. Gold dinara of Huvishka
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.15497

Huvishka (reigned c. AD 151–190) was king of the Kushans for nearly 40 years, producing more gold coin types than all the other Kushan kings combined. It's as if a river of gold flowed through his mints. Huvishka's coins reveal the contents of a royal wardrobe. He abandoned the coin portrait favoured by his father — a standing king making an offering at a small fire altar. Instead, Huvishka returned to his grandfather Wima Kadphises' style, a half-length bust portrait. Unlike his grandfather, however, Huvishka, wears elaborately jewelled coats and mantles, topped by an abundance of jewelled bonnets and helmets, caps with earflaps, crests, ornaments or horns. He is the only Kushan king to pose with an Indian regal

turban. His headgear includes diadem ribbons fluttering out behind. He wears jewels on his arms and fingers, and jewels on his mace, sword and pommel.

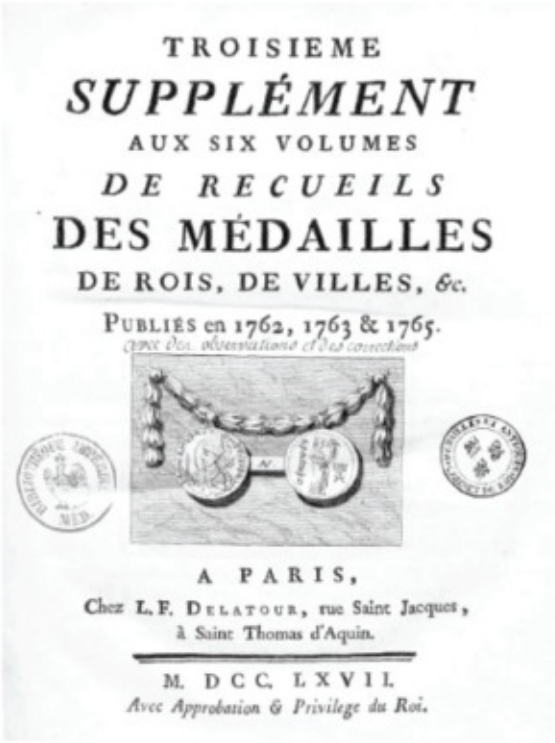
TROISIEME
SUPPLÉMENT
AUX SIX VOLUMES
DE RECUEILS
DES MÉDAILLES
DE ROIS, DE VILLES, &c.
PUBLIÉS en 1762, 1763 & 1765.
A PARIS,
Chez L. F. DELATOUR, rue Saint Jacques,
à Saint Thomas d'Aquin.
M. DCC. LXVII.
Avec Approbation & Privilege du Roi.

Figure 15. Joseph Pellerin's unidentified Kushan coin
Image courtesy of Joe Cribb

The first Kushan relic brought to the attention of western scholarship was a gold coin of Huvishka published by the French numismatist Joseph Pellerin (1684–1782). Pellerin was unable to identify the coin. To avoid the problem of classifying it, he published his drawing on the title page of the third volume of his six-volume catalogue of ancient coins. In his preface, he explained what he had deduced about the coin:

'I have inserted into this ornament the singular gold coin which is represented there, because I do not know into which series I should otherwise place it,' Pellerin states in his preface. 'The portrait to be seen on it is unknown to me, just as its inscriptions are unintelligible to me. This head should be of some king, or some great pope, as can be judged by the magnificence of his dress and the richness of his mitre … As to the inscriptions, I recognise that the letters with which it has been written have the shape of ancient Greek letters, but without being able to draw any meaning for the words which are written there…'.

Pellerin's questions about the coin were not answered until about two centuries later.[16]

Huvishka's gold coins range in quality from extraordinarily crude to highly refined and detailed. Interestingly, numismatic evidence reveals that disruptive events occurred during

Huvishka's reign. Gold coin die analysis undertaken in the British Museum reveals gold coin designs being repeatedly recut and reissued. New dies were cut by obviously inexperienced hands. The mint crisis apparently lasted a few years. Why the disruption? Was it internal conflict or possibly external attack? It may have been a physical disaster such as an earthquake, or it may have been the spread of the plague into Central Asia that caused epidemics in Roman and Chinese armies during years (c. AD 165–180) that correspond with Huvishka's reign.[17]

On many coins, Huvishka is portrayed not only with flaming shoulders but also with a halo. He was the most determined of royal Kushans to present himself in a combined Indian, Kushan and Iranian context as a divine or semi-divine ruler, while also broadcasting a message of imperial wealth and glory of empire. Huvishka chose 30 deities for his coins.

The difference between Huvishka's gold and copper coin designs is incomprehensible. The copper coinage reveals three image types: the king rides an elephant; he reclines casually on a couch; he sits cross-legged on boulder-like forms that probably represent mountaintops. Produced in massive numbers, the copper coins generally display poor-quality designing and minting, especially compared to the copper coinage of his immediate predecessors.

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Figure 16. Gold dinara of Vasudeva I
American Numismatics Society 1944.100. 63823

Vasudeva I (c. AD 190–230) is an Indian name deeply imbued with connotations predominant in ancient Hindu tradition. The name represents a dramatic departure from the Kushan names of his predecessors, and no evidence presently known suggests that Vasudeva was a son of Huvishka or a direct descendent within the Kushan family. There is also no evidence of disruption in continuity between Huvishka and Vasudeva's reign. Vasudeva is another name of Krishna, and is particularly important in Mathura, India, where an ancient

Krishna cult continues today as a dominant religious force. But a Buddhist connection came to the attention of scholars in 2017 in the form of a silver pyxis, possibly an incense container, that shows two pairs of figures, each framing the central figure of a seated Buddha. One of the framing figures bears the inscription ‘King of kings, Vasudeva the Kushan’.[18]

Vasudeva’s coin designs departed from the Huvishka imperial bust portraits to reintroduce the image of the standing king making an offering at a fire altar, but with a significant difference: Vasudeva coins portray an armoured, militaristic king. He holds a spear or trident. His armoured tunic appears to be made of plate mail. He wears a tall, conical helmet with a crescent and edged with jewels. On some coins the king has flames emanating from his shoulders, and on some a banner is attached to the back of his tunic. With very rare exceptions, only one deity appears.

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Beginning with the reign of Kanishka II, the last seven Kushan kings ruled for about 120 years (AD 230–350). Limited evidence available from this period makes a reconstruction of the history a matter of speculation. The only certainties that emerge from the coins is that the designs changed and were often poorly realised. The quality of gold fell, and the coins show diminished weight standards. A few inscriptions have survived that include the names of Kanishka II, Vasishka and Kanishka III, providing a limited framework for dates. Their successors, Vasudeva II, Mahi, Shaka and Kipunadha are known only from coins and are only approximately datable. Craig Burns and Robert Göbl believed coin evidence suggests internal conflict, possibly even civil war, midway through this period of the Kushan’s last seven kings. Joe Cribb agrees that internal struggle may have occurred between Vasudeva II and Kanishka III.

Starting in about AD 220, northern parts of the Kushan empire were overtaken by Sasanian incursions into Bactria. The Sasanians then pushed south over the Hindu Kush and into Gandhara. At that point, the considerably diminished Kushan presence was restricted to Taxila and parts of northern India. This was followed by a further invasion, this time by Kidarite Huns from Central Asia. They claimed territory from the Sasanians as well as from Kushans. The Huns would have pushed further south if they had not encountered the Gupta empire from India, which was expanding northward. By about AD 350, the Kushan empire no longer existed. Nevertheless, many coin types of the late Kushans were overstruck or imitated by the invading groups: Kushano-Sasanians, Kidarite Huns, and Guptas.

— 4 —

Curator of Coins

One April day, about the time our two-year stay in London was coming to a close, Joe Cribb invited me to his office. I was delighted. I took the invitation as a step up in my mercurial pursuit of Kushan studies. Joe led the way into an area adjacent to the reading room where multiple offices, work tables, coin cabinets and bookshelves served a hive of curators and research assistants. We descended a flight of stairs and turned right. Joe unlocked a door, turned right, then doubled back, passing coin cabinets on the way to his desk. A wall curved around the staircase. Joe was clearly at home in this environment, but I remained uncomfortable, not only with my doubts about what I was doing there, but also with the British Museum's barred windows.

Joe's desk looked like a friendly experiment in chaos. Searching for an article print-out he thought I would find useful, Joe engaged in an exercise that required a highly refined ability to hold down a two-feet-deep stack of papers, articles and notepads with one hand while nimbly fingering downward with the other. Message notes fluttered around and a string of Chinese good luck coins dropped to the floor, but within seconds he extracted precisely the article he was looking for. We shared a good laugh over this feat of magic.

The article could wait. This visit promised an opportunity to see real coins, as well as to ask questions that I did not want to ask in a study room shared with an invigilator, video monitors and fellow researchers. After many hours spread over several months looking through books and articles, I watched Joe unlock a cabinet and select a tray of coins.

I learned that the magnificent mahogany coin cabinets dated to approximately 1870, and that an identical cabinet style was still being manufactured. There are about 25 trays per cabinet, each of which can hold 50 or 60 coins, depending on coin sizes. Originally, the trays were lined with green felt, but at some time in the museum's history, the felt was discarded to prevent carpet moth infestation, which, if it had ever happened and spread outside the department, would be devastating to museum textiles and other collections. Each coin is placed on a white, round ticket that notes provenance and a museum registration number. Coloured tickets at the head of each row identify a particular coin series, such as the name of a king or a mint. Red plastic tickets indicate empty places in a row for coins on display, on loan, or moved for research purposes.

Kushan gold coins occupy just over half a cabinet: one tray for Wima Kadphises, two for Kanishka, eight for Huvishka, two for Vasudeva and eight trays for the late Kushans. I stood dazzled by one tray after another of lustrous gold coins. Joe shook off my hesitation to look

but not touch by placing a Wima Kadphises double dinar in my hand. There he was, a king portrayed with flaming shoulders. I held a two-thousand-year-old piece of history immeasurably more satisfying to experience than viewing the same coin in a book.

Joe slipped the trays back into place and motioned for me to pull up a chair next to his desk. He was especially keen to share thoughts about Dr Craig Burns. His traumatic trip to California notwithstanding, Joe admired Craig deeply as a collector and a contributor to Kushan studies. Joe and I both knew that at some point within the next few years Craig's extremely valuable collection would be donated somewhere, but neither of us knew where. Strangely, Craig had already informed Joe that the British Museum would not be the recipient institution. For Joe, this disclosure was not only painful, but impossible to understand. Craig's decision was delivered with no explanation. They had known each other for 15 years. They had worked on several Kushan problems together. Joe had included images of Craig's rare coins in his articles.

'Madness!' Joe exclaimed. 'He's afraid that if his coins are in London they will be melted by a nuclear bomb.' I pondered this surprising revelation. Craig had never communicated such a fear to me. But I determined that if I ever had an opportunity to speak with Craig again personally, I would press him for an explanation. There was no good reason I could think of for why Craig's collection should not be where it was most appreciated.

While I was in London in 1985 and 1986, Joe was primarily a curator of Asian and Oriental coins, with a side specialisation in the Kushan. Joe worked with a wide array of currencies. One of these was known as *sycee*, Chinese silver ingots produced between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. The silver ingots were roughly boat-shaped. Joe handed me an ingot to hold; it was heavier than a brick. For several years, Joe puzzled over questions raised by 200 ingots in the British Museum collection that had never been systematically examined. Sycee were not made by a central bank or mint but were used for local exchange and produced by merchants and local silversmiths. The ingot shapes, weights and amount of inscribed design detail were highly variable. Joe tracked down similar ingots from many other museums as well as private collections. Eventually, he organised more than 1,300 pieces and published the first conclusive classification system of the ingot currency. His catalogue of the *sycee* currency in the British Museum collection was published in 1992.[19]

Joe inherited a family tradition of scholarly collecting. His father collected butterflies and possessed a lifelong passion for natural history. His grandfather, Herbert Joseph Cribb, in addition to collecting beetles, was apprenticed in the early 1900s to Eric Gill, an avant-garde sculptor, typeface designer, stonecutter and printmaker associated with Britain's famous Arts and Crafts Movement. After WWI, Joe's grandfather became a founding member of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, an association of Catholic artists and craftworkers. For

many years he was in charge of the stone carver's shop, taking over Gill's workshop on Ditchling Common in 1924 and establishing his own practice. Committed to preserving his grandfather and Eric Gill's legacy, Joe and his daughter Ruth wrote a tribute to Eric Gill in a book published by the British Museum.[20]

After a university degree in Latin and classical studies, Joe did not know what he wanted as a career, only that he wanted something challenging. He was prepared to take his time looking. As he searched through job listings, he eventually found something intriguing: Research Assistant, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum. He applied, waited, and got the job in 1970. Shortly after starting, he realised the department was hoping for someone who could assume curatorial responsibilities. Within a year Joe was promoted from research assistant to curator. Within two years he was given responsibility for new acquisitions.

Joe credits his older brother Steve as the most important influence that led to a career in numismatics. 'Steve was a painter, a fine artist. He was also an extremely enthusiastic collector. Especially coins, tokens, medals, also paper money.' Since childhood, when he had polio, Steve had used a wheelchair. During the late 1950s, Joe assisted his brother while going around to his favourite London coin shops. Joe enjoyed looking over his brother's shoulder, picking up on the excitement of surprise discoveries. Steve's collecting began with Chinese coins, but he later specialised in British devotional medals dating from as early as the fifteenth century. Joe smiles as he remembers. 'Steve collected 21,000 medals. The British Museum purchased 7,000. It took three years to house and document the acquisition. We decided not to purchase the rest; they're in a box at home.'

When Joe began working for the Department of Coins and Medals, he first gravitated towards Chinese coinages, but soon his interest grew to include all the department's Oriental material. The museum's coin collections were in reasonably good order, but nothing had been added for 20 years. Given authority to make acquisitions, Joe found he shared his brother's enthusiasm for hunting down and collecting good material.

A turning point in Cribb's career came when Professor AK Narain from the University of Wisconsin approached him with a proposal. Narain, author of one of the first scholarly studies of the Indo-Greeks, was fascinated by a group of British Museum coins from Khotan, Chinese Central Asia (Xinjiang), collected by Sir Aurel Stein early in the twentieth century. The coins had Chinese inscriptions on one side and Kharoshthi inscriptions on the other. This was the same script found on early Kushan coins, an ancient script used in northwest India and surrounding areas for writing a local dialect, Gandhari, that is part of a group of languages known as Prakrit, a popular version of Sanskrit. Narain suggested that Joe research and write up what he learned from the Chinese side and Narain himself would tackle the

Kharoshthi, with a plan to present a co-authored report at a 1972 Orientalists' conference. However, Joe found that he was dissatisfied with Narain's interpretation of the inscriptions. Joe initiated his own study, came up with very different results and eventually published the study under his own name. It was the Khotan coins that led Joe to his first examination of the British Museum's extensive Kushan collection. He says, cryptically, 'I was introduced to Kushan coinage by being dragged over the Karakoram mountains from China to India by way of Khotan.'

Joe describes his research as 'self-driven' and 'coin-centred'. Self-driven in the sense that he chooses his own projects, then lets research lead him from project to project; coin-centred in the sense that research is generated by the coins themselves. For over 20 years Joe worked with Martin Price, deputy keeper in the Department of Coins and Medals until 1978. Martin was a mentor and colleague, and Joe credits him especially for developing a coin-centred research methodology. 'The coins speak first,' Joe says. 'Only then, after satisfying myself that I have learned as much as possible from the coins themselves, do I go to the books, the archaeological and art history reports. I might even pay attention to the opinion of other numismatists.'

Joe admits his methodology is possible primarily because he works at the British Museum, where he can devote weeks of research to a particular group of coins. Few academics or historians have the luxury of such time and resources. A coin-centred approach to numismatics has won him considerable praise, but Joe has his detractors. Some archaeologists criticise not only Joe but numismatists in general for wasting time on attempts to establish chronologies and dates of kings and meanwhile overlooking the importance of coins in their archaeological context. Joe argues that coins create their own context and raise their own questions. He stresses that the Department of Coins and Medals's particular strength is its broad chronological and geographical emphasis. A core object-centred discipline underpins all the research activities and is foremost in the department's subsequent engagement with other historical research. Archaeology, Joe agrees, raises its own set of questions in relation to coin finds, especially when coins are associated with other objects in carefully conducted excavations.

Like other scholars with specialised research goals, Joe has a competitive edge. 'I thoroughly enjoy contradicting my colleagues,' he says. 'Proving someone wrong gets me into trouble, but I rarely have to rescue my point of view.'

The primary controversy in Kushan studies is the century-old debate over the start date of the Kushan's most important king, Kanishka. During one of my first visits to the reading room, Joe Cribb informed me that Robert Göbl's AD 232 start date for Kanishka's reign was ridiculous. Joe favoured a date a century earlier. I was in no position to offer an opinion and

not knowledgeable enough to be concerned about precise dates. Joe also expressed serious reservations with Göbl's organisation of Kushan coinage. Göbl was convinced that the Kushan followed Roman models to organise their mints. Joe, on the other hand, is convinced the Kushan developed their own strategy for minting with no reliance whatever on a Roman model for organising coin workshops.

Scholars from former British colonies sometimes see the British Museum as a symbol of British imperialism, not without reason, but this perception often generates unfounded suspicion. Joe has his critics. I challenged Joe with the point that some of his colleagues, whether Indian or European, think he is too dogmatic at times, too averse to criticism. Joe just smiled. 'Don't they say the same about Robert Göbl?'

Coins provide tangible clues to the past. Coins preserve well, exist in large numbers and are especially abundant in Silk Road areas, where diverse civilisations emerged, flourished and declined over a period of 3,000 years. For a pure researcher, coins are ideal. They provide the most reliable record available for otherwise virtually unknown kings and empires.

Joe is often diverted by questions raised by other Asian coinages, but he always likes to return to Kushan material. 'Kushan coinage provokes more questions than answers, great challenges for problem solving,' he says. 'Unique minting practices, complex symbolism and inscriptions. You think you have finally solved a puzzle, only to be led to another. Just what I like. Massively divergent coin designs and craftsmanship. A great history, and with a bonus — Kushan artists created some of the most aesthetically pleasing coins in the history of coinage.'

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I arrived at the Department of Coins and Medals in the fall of 1993 to incredible news: a new Kushan king was sitting on Joe Cribb's desk. This king was destined to dramatically impact all Central Asian scholars, especially anyone remotely aware of Kushan history. A chance discovery in Afghanistan produced the shock, but I could not help but wonder why Wima Takto landed on Joe's desk rather than someone else's. Joe Cribb and the British Museum's reputation surely was a factor, but I was inclined to attribute it to Ardochsho, the Kushan's own Lady Fortuna, in company with Nana, the Kushan's supreme patron goddess. Whether by reputation, lady luck or the full moon, Joe Cribb was in the right place at the right time to unravel an ancient history mystery, thanks to a rather poor quality 7-by-10-inch photograph of an inscription on a rock.

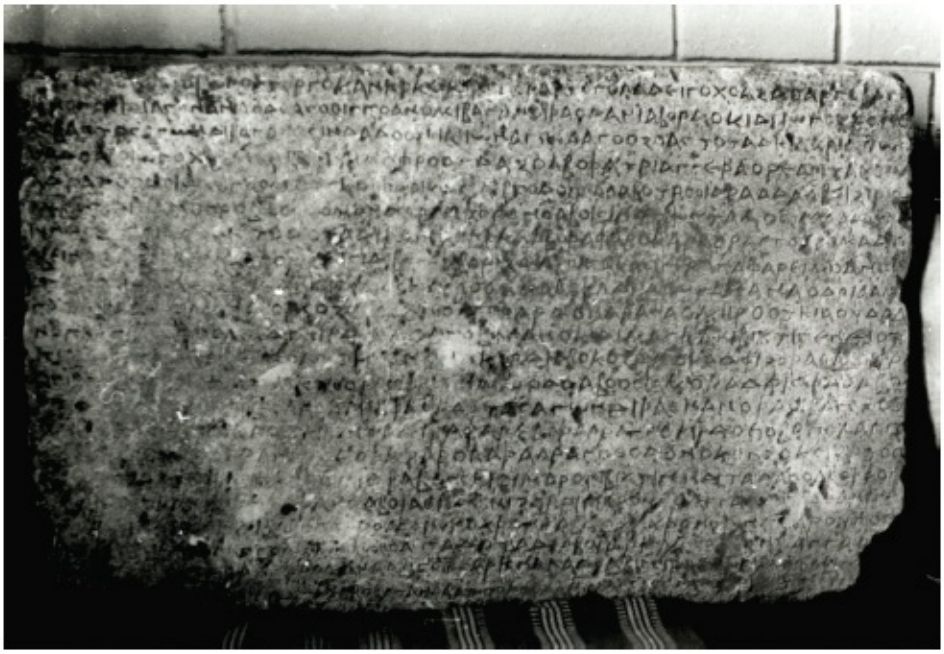

Figure 17. The Rabatak inscription
Photo courtesy of Joe Cribb

The Bactrian language inscription was written in Greek script. Bactrian is a language Joe could transcribe, not translate, but he could recognise the names Kujula, then Kanishka, followed by a Wima something or other. The presence of the name Kanishka alone was reason enough to know the inscription was an extremely rare and important find. Joe immediately arranged to show the photograph to Nicholas Sims-Williams, a professor in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and one of a handful of scholars who can read Bactrian. It fell to Nicholas Sims-Williams and Joe Cribb to decide how to manage the appearance of a king named in an inscription who had previously never been heard of in the Western world. The inscription and translation, published two years later in 1995, announced the discovery of the third Kushan king, Wima Takto.

The photograph had been taken by a British charity worker with the Halo Trust, an organisation involved in the removal of landmines in northern Afghanistan. Not long after the Soviet army had given up their military and political occupation of Afghanistan, villagers from the province of Baghlan reported to the governor that they had found unusual engravings while looking for building stones in the hills. The governor arranged for the stones and other artefacts to be retrieved by his officials. He asked the charity worker to take photographs and then decided to send the images to the British Museum for analysis.

Villagers discovered the inscription stone on a hill in a region called Rabatak. The area is well known for Kushan-era remains; the Rabatak site is located on an ancient road that once linked Rabatak to Surkh Kotal, a Kushan-era archaeological site in northern Afghanistan with monumental construction ruins. Prior to the Rabatak discovery, Surkh Kotal yielded one

of very few inscriptions on stone that mention the Kushan king Kanishka by name.

The photograph shows a whitish, rectangular piece of limestone covered by an inscription that uses Greek letters for the Bactrian language. The inscription is 23 lines long, with about 50 letters a line. After preliminary work, and to be more certain of what they were seeing, Cribb and Sims-Williams requested additional photographs from Afghanistan. They eventually received a series of six black-and-white shots with left and right close-up views of the top, middle and bottom of the stone. This allowed a more complete and careful reading of the inscription word by word, letter by letter. Some letters were blurred, others lost entirely, but most of the inscription was readable. Cribb and Sims-Williams were convinced the inscription was genuine.

The inscription is a temple dedication engraved in the sixth year of Kanishka's reign. The temple was dedicated to the goddess Nana but the inscription includes names of other Iranian deities apparently also represented by temple images. The most startling revelation was a line in the inscription honouring Kanishka's lineage, beginning with his great-grandfather Kujula Kadphises, followed by his grandfather Wima Takto, and his father Wima Kadphises.

For the first time, the Rabatak inscription revealed the name of the previously unknown king, Wima Takto. This king was the probable producer of the Kushan's mysterious anonymous coinage that had challenged John Rosenfield, Robert Göbl, Joe Cribb and many other scholars for decades. For the first time, the Kushan dynastic lineage, up to and including Kanishka, was verified from other than numismatic sources.

Joe felt the shock of discovery particularly keenly. Years earlier, Robert Göbl had written that evidence from Chinese sources indicated the presence of an intervening ruler between Kujula and Wima Kadphises. Not convinced, Joe Cribb dismissed Göbl's reasoning. In 1992, just a year before the Rabatak photograph arrived on his desk, he wrote:

> There has been much dispute about the 'Soter Megas' coinage, some attributing it to Kujula, some to Wima and some to an intervening ruler, but there appears to be little evidence to contradict the theory that this coinage was issued during the late stages of the reign of Kujula; except, that is, for part of the 'Soter Megas' issue at Taxila, from which two coins are known with the name of Wima added to the end of the regular … inscription. It would not seriously alter the chronology if evidence were to arise which associated all the 'Soter Megas' coins with Wima Kadphises's reign. It is, however, certain that there is no third ruler involved.[21]

Just as Joe Cribb had refused to accept Robert Göbl's contention of an intervening king, Robert Göbl refused to accept the Rabatak inscription as genuine. Göbl questioned the

authenticity of the stone itself, let alone the Sims-Williams–Cribb translation. Göbl was not the only loud critic. Widely known Indian historian and numismatist BN Mukherjee wrote a long article about the inscription, coming up with a completely different reading for the name Wima Takto. This was soon countered by Sims-Williams and Berlin scholar Harry Falk who declared that Mukherjee's edition of the Rabatak inscription was essentially worthless from an epigraphic point of view. French scholar Gérard Fussman stepped into the conflict by treating the Sims-Williams and Cribb readings as unduly speculative. This was countered by statements suggesting Fussman's attitude was excessively sceptical. So it goes in academic circles.

In spite of the kerfuffle, the Rabatak inscription was widely celebrated in South Asian scholarship. A year after the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, Sims-Williams travelled to Kabul, where the inscribed stone is held in the National Museum of Afghanistan. He examined the stone directly, and after additional cleaning by a museum conservator, he focused on several letters that are indistinct in the photographs. The Kabul visit allowed for an improved reading and publication of a refined translation.

The inscription elevated Wima Takto to star status in Central Asian antiquities studies. Previously doubtful inscriptions in coinage as well as in stone statuary had to be reconsidered. Unfortunately, the inscription does not explain why Wima Takto used his name only sporadically on a few local, relatively rare coin issues, but not on his empire-wide general issue coinage.

Joe Cribb's career in numismatics is marked by many remarkable discoveries accompanied by a long list of publications, but none so consequential as an inscription on a 7-by-10-inch black-and-white photograph. It is difficult to imagine an opportunity more professionally influential as well as personally satisfying than to have participated in the discovery, translation and publication of a two-thousand-year-old inscription found by chance on a rock in northern Afghanistan.

— 5 —

Return

We moved from London to Toronto in the fall of 1987 with no job prospects. During our two years in London, Carolyn completed an MA at the Royal College of Art, and my first book was accepted for publication. Since no one earns a living in Toronto researching Kushan coins, I pondered the prospect of a doctoral programme in religious studies or art history, but decided against it. In the meantime, we moved into a small apartment in a six-storey, art deco–era building with 65 apartments, where I settled into a job as resident manager.

I imagined the job would pay the bills and allow time for periodic writing and research. Instead, the job came with an inaugural shock: a hand-written duties list suggesting I was on call 24/7. Within a few weeks, I boiled the job description down to a simple rule: Expect the unexpected. Be on call. Be here now. I decided that if Toronto was destined to be the place where the malfunctioning of wires, pipes, switches and taps, the likes of which had previously baffled me completely, would lose some of their mystery, I couldn't imagine anything better. Fortunately, I also inherited an extensive list of service people along with a competent cleaning staff.

Increasingly satisfied with the part I played in a community of about 100 people, I found I could also periodically browse through my British Museum notes. Certain symbols continued to arouse a pesky itching in the vicinity of my shoulders. Little flickers of light begged for attention. Nevertheless, the Kushan story remained on hold until a telephone call five years after taking the job. One evening I received an urgent message asking if I would come to California as soon as possible. 'I have much to confess and not much time left for doing it,' the message said.

I arrived in Lake Almanor in September 1992 a few days after Craig Burns returned home from hospital. The news was grim. His mouth and neck were extremely sore. 'I might be dying from an advanced case of squamous cell carcinoma,' he said. He was waiting for a report to learn if surgery had stopped the spread of a throat cancer.

We took our tea and biscuits into the backyard, a Tibetan-style garden temple that we had enjoyed periodically when living next door. Long, bright ribbons fluttering from the temple roof had faded with age and were ripped by the wind. Craig looked pale and exhausted. He seemed permeated with hospital smells. I knew from a handful of letters and phone calls spread over several years that Craig's fireball personality had undergone a steep decline. I imagined the fallout most likely related to his collection; there was no shortage of rumours of serious disagreements with his closest associates, Joe Cribb and Robert Göbl.

‘You were here twelve years ago,’ he said quietly, holding his jaw while talking in an effort to reduce the pain. ‘I still remember a special word you told me about. A Navajo word. For years, I felt that the real purpose and meaning of my collecting was somehow expressed in that extraordinary word.’

Craig grew silent for a few moments. ‘Most of my medical practice involves chasing away ill health, disease, disharmony, or at least attempting to do so by medical means, or past life regressions, psychoanalysis, diet, anything available to help healing. You said the Navajo consider *hozho* to be our natural endowment. We are born with it. So why do we go to such lengths to obscure or even deny its existence?’

I was surprised Craig recalled the word, but he did not mention the related word, *hochxo*, that recognises ever-present forces of disharmony, confusion and disease that more often than not characterise the state of our existence. *Hozho* cannot be pursued merely as an idea or an objective to strive for. *Hozho* may be glimpsed, difficult to hold, covered over by countless thoughts and actions, but the Navajo know it as our essence, entirely recoverable by direct experience and healing practices.

With *hozho* surrounding on all sides may I walk.

In long life and in every returning, according to *hozho*, may I live on.[22]

‘I thought I had a clear vision,’ Craig said, ‘A passion for history, important discoveries involving a virtually unknown empire. But what do I have now? Serious ill health. The Big C.’

Craig asked to be left alone. Later that afternoon, we met again in the garden. We talked about my time with Joe Cribb in the British Museum. Later, clearly preoccupied, he became quiet again, but then started talking about a relationship with a psychic friend. He never referred to her by name. The affair had precipitated a separation and the near collapse of his marriage. Eleanor had moved into an apartment in town.

The friend shared Craig’s passion for past life regressions. Early in the relationship she offered to act as a channel. Craig agreed and by means of her own experiments with hypnosis she induced in Craig a semi-trance state, supposedly arousing a Kushan-era past life regression.

‘Initially, I found the experience enthralling,’ Craig said. ‘Imagine. I saw my oldest son as my father. It was so vivid. My son was my father. We were not of Kushan origin but had been brought from Iran to Peshawar because of our metalworking skills. We were employed in Huvishka’s gold coin mint. I saw myself as one of the strikers, working with a hammer I

prized because I had made it myself. Over the years I scraped together flakes of gold that fell to the floor from the anvil. One day, when the workshop guards were occupied by a street festival, I fired up the forge, melted down my gold slivers and produced blanks for eight coins. I struck my Huvishka coins without assistance and then hid them away. But next thing I knew, I was an old man. I had spent two of the gold coins but saved the other six to be buried with me when I died.'

Craig waited for my response. I managed to stay relatively calm.

'Many years have passed since the session with your friend. What do you think of this story now?' I asked.

He did not immediately respond. But finally, almost painfully, he said, 'It is not as important to me now as it was then.'

'What changed your mind?'

The relationship with his psychic friend had ended. In addition to channelling past lives, she claimed a capacity for automatic writing. After a particular session, Craig discovered by chance that the material she was writing derived entirely from a prominently displayed book in the local library. That ended the infatuation. Craig found himself in an extremely humbling position of persuading Eleanor to move back into the house. Eleanor was not at all surprised the affair ended. The real shock for her was that Craig had clung to the relationship for nearly four years. But Eleanor agreed to move back home and attempt to restore something of their former life.

He said he had changed his mind, but he also had previously made it very clear that he took these past life episodes seriously. I pressed the point. 'Craig, did you ever travel to Pakistan with a conviction that you would find a hoard of six Huvishka gold coins?'

His hesitant response was answer enough. 'I suppose, in the back of my mind for a year or two, but I never actually expected to find the coins.'

That evening, during dinner, while Craig sipped a cup of warm vegetable broth, Eleanor initiated a story about their final visit to Afghanistan in 1979, just days before the country closed its borders to outsiders. Russian tanks were approaching Kabul. In the Kabul bazaar, Craig argued with a German shopkeeper about the value of three coins. Craig had purchased coins from him before, but during this visit, the shopkeeper alerted them to the increasing difficulty of taking coins out of the country. The news frightened Craig because he was also carrying gold coins purchased in Peshawar. He prepared to leave the shop with no purchase, but almost as an afterthought, turned over one of the three coins. It was a type he had never seen.

'I turned beet red,' Craig said, 'I tried to hide my interest, but it was a unique coin.' Craig

bargained hard and bought the coin. Not certain he could trust the shopkeeper, Craig created a ruse by saying he would return the next day to discuss the purchase of the other two coins. He did not want the shopkeeper to know of their imminent departure. Craig also purchased a beautiful gold Buddha statue, about an inch and half tall, excellent Kushan-era work, very expensive. He justified the purchase knowing they would not return to Kabul for many years, possibly ever. He attached a string to the gold piece so that Eleanor could wear it as a necklace. He always counted on her aura of authority to ensure safe passage out of the country. Not once in all their years of travel had the contents of her coat-of-many-pockets been discovered. Nor had either of them ever experienced a luggage check or a body search.

For the Kabul departure, however, Craig took additional precautions. ‘I always carried a roll of black electrician’s tape,’ he said. ‘We had cotton gauze in our first aid kit. Just before going to the airport, I wrapped my coins and made a nice little cylinder that I inserted up my backside.’

Craig and Eleanor were among the last tourists out of Kabul; they passed security without a problem. Craig worried he might hurt himself but found that he had no difficulty sitting down. ‘How glad I was when we checked into our hotel in Delhi. Everything came out fine. No broken veins. And a safe treasure!’

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The next morning, Craig and I resumed our conversation. I asked why he decided to donate his collection to the museum in Berne, Switzerland. Craig said he began to search for a place to donate his coins in the early 1980s when he was actively collecting but also visiting museums to document Kushan coins that he did not have in his own collection. Craig’s idea was to photograph all known issues of Kushan coinage, not only for his own records but also for Robert Göbl.

Museums in Europe made the process easy for him, but Craig also wanted to obtain documentation from the countries where the coins originated. This proved more difficult. Afghanistan was no longer under consideration but Craig wrote to every museum with coin collections in India and Pakistan. He received only one response.

In Pakistan, a sign on a museum door read ‘Closed for Repairs’. The same sign was still there a year later. At another museum, an official informed him, ‘The curator of coins is not available today.’

‘What about tomorrow?’

‘He won’t be available tomorrow either.’

Nor was he available the following year. Later Craig learned from an English collector with considerable experience in India and Pakistan that many of the coins in a previously excellent collection in that museum had been replaced with tinfoil fakes.

Craig had met a few individuals in Pakistan who were serious collectors, but no one could suggest a museum that might consider taking his collection. Attempts in India did not turn out much better. In one museum, a curator refused to give him permission to see anything, so Craig returned the following day to meet the museum director. The director cordially offered assistance, quickly arranged for a desk and lamp and began to open coin drawers just as the curator of coins arrived. 'All hell broke loose,' Craig said. 'This was quite a sight, the curator yelling at the director, then the curator yelling at me for going behind her back.' Regardless of what her superior said, she refused to let Craig examine the coins. Curious, Craig made inquiries and learned she came from a powerful family who had engineered her appointment. She did have an art history degree but knew next to nothing about the museum's coin collections.

After listening to innumerable excuses for two days at the National Museum in New Delhi, Craig gave up and went to Bombay. He looked forward to meeting the one and only curator who had responded to his letters. A graciously polite and considerate curator displayed a genuine interest in Craig's inquiry. He said the museum had a good collection of Kushan coins, but the coins were kept in a vault with five locks. Sometime in the past, a number of coins had disappeared. The curator at the time was dismissed, the remaining collection transferred to a vault. Five different men held keys to the five locks. Prominent men. A banker, a government minister, a lawyer … The curator was sympathetic to Craig's request, but admitted that bringing the five men together at one time was highly unlikely; none of them would wait around for an hour or two while Craig examined coins.

'The poor man bent over backwards apologising,' Craig said, 'I was about to leave when he invited me to see his own modest collection of Kushan coins.'

The curator explained that his circumstances were unusual, not what Craig might expect; but that evening, Craig found the address he had been given. There was no elevator, but Craig had instructions to look for a certain door on the fifth floor. He climbed the stairs, and found families occupying rented stairwell landings all the way up. No one on the fifth-floor landing spoke English, so he descended through the stairwell families back to ground level where he found someone who knew the curator. Climbing back up, a fifth-floor door was unlocked. Craig climbed narrow steps nearly as steep as a ladder. His host and family lived in two rooms built on the roof. They had lived there 15 years and considered their circumstances very fortunate. Craig enjoyed a meal served in the polite and gracious manner of Hindu tradition. The curator showed Craig his collection of Kushan copper coins and a

few gold dinars of modest quality. They parted in friendship.

The rooftop dinner brought to a close Craig's efforts to take photographs or make plaster casts of coins not in his own collection. After three years of repeated visits to several museums, Craig concluded that there was no way he was going to find a home for his collection in India or Pakistan. And he refused to donate to museums in the United States or England.

'Why not donate to the British Museum?' I persisted. 'Joe Cribb values your collection enormously.' Craig said that he felt the two collections overlapped in too many areas. He was worried that nothing could prevent the British Museum from keeping what they needed and sending the rest to auction. Craig wanted absolute certainty that the coins stay together as a collection and never be separated for any reason. I knew Joe Cribb had repeatedly told Craig directly that it was absurd to think the collection would be broken up.

If objecting to the British Museum, why not consider the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford or the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge? The chances of students, scholars or other collectors seeing the collection seemed much greater in England than in Switzerland.

In 1988, Craig donated his collection to the Bernisches Historisches Museum in Berne. The decision was based on a recommendation by Robert Göbl, who maintained relations with the museum and had donated coins there himself. The museum, built in the late nineteenth century and modelled after Swiss castles, is a national heritage site. The museum's collections primarily feature the history of Berne but also display artefacts from Egypt, Asia and America. The museum suited Craig precisely because it seemed a relatively low-profile location, away from any other major European coin collections. The museum director assured the integrity of collection in writing and promised to lay out a red-carpet treatment if the donation came their way. The clincher was that Robert Göbl offered to write a complete catalogue. Despite misgivings, Craig found the offer impossible to turn down.

The final decision was delayed by a Japanese collector's offer of one million US dollars for Craig's collection. Tempted, Craig pondered the offer for about a week, but it was never his intention to sell.

Berne museum personnel offered to pick up the collection at Lake Almanor, guaranteeing safe transportation with complete insurance coverage, as well as an armed guard travelling with full authority from both the US and Swiss governments. But Craig had never paid taxes on anything related to his collections. The coins had never been officially registered or insured. Craig told the museum director he didn't want the armed guard or security guarantees; he intended to deliver the coins himself.

The airport nearest Lake Almanor is located in Reno, Nevada, one of the gambling capitals

of the world. ‘To test airport security in Reno, I tried a dry run,’ Craig said. ‘I packed several rolls of US coins into a briefcase, then went through the airport machines to learn what the guards would do. There was no problem at all. I made a quick trip to San Francisco and back, and then we prepared the real load.’

A week later, Craig and Eleanor arrived at the Reno airport with two heavy textile bags. Because of the weight, they carried no additional luggage. ‘Changes of underwear,’ Craig said. ‘All my uninsured gold dinars, all the coppers and silver coins, neatly wrapped and packed, ready for transport.’ At security, Craig confidently approached the same security guard he had talked to before. ‘We’re on our way to a coin conference,’ he said. ‘You may remember me from the other day.’ The guard said, ‘Yes, I see your rolls of coins in the X-rays.’

Boarding the flight without further incident, they changed planes in San Francisco without having to pass through security again. In Frankfurt, they headed for the exit that said ‘Nothing to Declare’. An hour later, they were on a train to Berne.

In their hotel room, the bags were within easy reach beside the bed. The bags went with them to dinner. The bags went to breakfast. During breakfast, arms aching so badly he could barely lift his knife and fork, Craig and Eleanor welcomed museum officials and were soon transported across town. ‘Four days of sheer joy,’ Craig said. ‘The most pleasurable site-seeing and celebrating we have ever experienced.’

Although eager to praise the Berne Museum, during the course of our conversation Craig admitted he was never entirely convinced he had made the right decision. A collection that was the object of more than 20 years of research and investment had ended up in a museum with no substantial numismatic credentials and had little chance of public exhibition, except in limited numbers for brief periods.

Craig launched into a series of criticisms of Robert Göbl. The two men disagreed on virtually all substantive issues related to Kushan history and numismatics. During a trip to meet Göbl in Vienna, they ended up in a shouting match. Göbl hustled Craig out of his office, literally slamming the door in his face. Craig knew Göbl would repeat several contentious points put forward in his 1984 book, but nevertheless, Craig conceded that a Göbl catalogue of his collection was better than no catalogue at all.

A particular point of contention was that Craig had commissioned and paid for an English translation of the text portion of Göbl’s 1984 volume. The translation was packaged into half a dozen unbound xeroxed copies that Craig gave to interested parties, including Joe Cribb and myself. But Craig had not asked Göbl’s publisher for permission to commission the translation. Inevitably, one of the copies in England was recopied several times and sold by coin dealers without Craig knowing.

‘After all the work and hours I contributed to his atlas, Göbl shut me off,’ Craig said. ‘This is the same man who persuaded me to donate my collection to the Berne Museum.’

Craig deeply resented Göbl’s tendency to present himself as the only qualified scholar in the field. Göbl frequently complained about the lack of good science in Kushan numismatics. Completely fed up with Göbl’s presumptuous ranting, Craig asked his Lake Almanor psychic friend for advice about how to deal with a man suffering from unbridled arrogance.

‘Talk to him about cats,’ she said. ‘When he carries on and refuses to listen, change the subject to cats.’ Deciding to test her advice, Craig sent off a letter. After two years of no communication, Göbl responded with a long letter about a favourite cat that had died the year before. The letter was full of tenderness. ‘I was completely taken aback by the tone of the letter,’ Craig said. ‘We had some reasonable communication after that, and I had my friend to thank.’

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With the collection safely moved, Craig intended to take a break from collecting and add a little more substance to his bank account. But the break did not last long. Retired from medical practice, with fewer trips abroad, Craig needed a project on which to focus his energy. Still consumed by history and literature, he found the Kushan would not allow him a moment’s peace. Less than a year later, the passion not only resurfaced, it took over the last years of Craig’s life.

The elusive *unica*, the coveted *rarissima*: the missing links that solve mysteries. He purchased another coin, wrote analytical notes, sent the coin to Switzerland. Eleanor told me that Craig paid thousands of dollars he could not afford for this rare coin. The extravagant purchase did not prove to be his last. In spite of himself, in spite of Eleanor’s objections, Craig bought and sold aggressively, emptying their savings account. He sold books and other collections to support additional Kushan coin purchases. In two years, he mailed more than 60 coins to Berne. Once the last coin arrived, the collection numbered close to 700 coins, nearly 400 of them gold.

According to Eleanor, among their diminishing circle of friends, many recognised that Craig was increasingly obsessive-compulsive. Only one thing could slow down a man friends believed would live for a century.

Cancer hit Craig doubly hard. He despised everything about the disease and initially denied his symptoms. Craig’s professional and personal life had centred on a conviction that a healthy body was inherently linked to sound mind and active spirit. Now, painkillers controlling pain in his jaw and neck represented precisely the type of treatment he had

always resisted prescribing for patients.

Craig attempted to control his illness with his own version of laser therapy. Leading me into his laboratory, he showed me a tabletop arrangement consisting of a dentist's drill with a diamond bit, held by clamps on a stand. He taught himself how to drill tiny holes in quartz crystals. He accidentally split several, but after many attempts, he figured out how to use the drill. He inserted fibre-optic cable through the drill holes and wrapped the cables around the crystal until it was coated. The wrapped crystal was then mounted onto a small motor-driven spindle that turned at a high speed. Craig demonstrated how an infrared laser beam directed onto the spinning crystal gave it a ruby-red glow.

'I'm interested in dynamos,' Craig said. 'Not for producing electricity, but because of their capacity to create energy fields.' Craig believed he could use lasers as an energy source for healing purposes. He held his hand a few inches from the spinning crystal to demonstrate the extent of the field of glowing red light. He had treated a relatively small skin cancer on his hand, which he said was cured after four exposures. A larger area was reduced to a small dark scar on the back of his hand. 'The energy field is most effective in the immediate vicinity of the crystal,' he said. 'But I'm convinced my entire laboratory is slowly accumulating a healing force.' He wanted to create an atmosphere charged with healing energy, abundant enough to treat his throat cancer in the same way he had treated his hand.

I wanted out of that lab. The story, as well as the laser apparatus, made me squirm with discomfort. This was a doctor who had completely bypassed other doctors' opinions by postponing diagnosis and refusing treatment. He had not discussed his condition with Eleanor. Even after the lump in his throat was too big to be hidden by a beard, he postponed surgery for several months. I wondered if the laboratory itself contributed to Craig's illness. I recalled his mother had said to him when he was a teen that she was afraid he would die in the lab from lack of sun. I intensely disliked the room's sterility, the metal tables, the beakers and burners, the weird laser set-up, the same stink of chemicals that had repelled me years earlier.

Eleanor called us for dinner. Craig was barely able to swallow. He could hardly open his mouth and looked completely exhausted. 'They didn't cut it all out,' he said. 'I just know it. Two weeks from now they'll tell me I need chemotherapy. But I've got a better plan.'

Craig pulled himself away from the table and returned in a few minutes with a dark blue bottle and a small square of waxed paper. The bottle, with a skull-and-crossbones symbol, was labelled 'potassium cyanide'.

'Here's my solution if its incurable,' he said. Removing the jar's glass stopper, he poured a short line of the chemical down the centre of the waxed paper. He fished a gelatin capsule out of his shirt pocket. With a twist, the capsule divided in two. He folded the waxed paper to

make a crease, then tilted the paper until potassium cyanide granules trickled into the capsule. When half full, he put down the wax paper, twisted the two parts of the capsule together and held it up between two fingers. ‘One is more than enough,’ he said. ‘But I’ll take two capsules to make sure.’ He undid his work, emptying the granules back into the bottle. He carefully washed his hands in the kitchen sink.

I excused myself from the table and went outside for a long walk in the dark. I felt embarrassed and hurt, a desperate sense of not knowing how to respond or how to behave, and even that I might have nothing more to say to Craig. I thought he had made some poor decisions in his last years, but what could I say or do? The story told during these days at Lake Almanor was no longer a story of passion, but rather of obsession. The donated collection continued to hold him in its grip; the severity of the cancer seemed directly related to the uncertainties he expressed about the fate of his collection. A deep sadness moved through him in waves. So out of character, so unlike anything I had seen in him previously.

Before leaving Lake Almanor the following morning, Craig gave me his thoroughly annotated copy of John Rosenfield’s *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, as well as two books on the Kushan by Indian scholar BN Mukherjee. He gave me a dozen or more Kushan copper coin duplicates he had not forwarded to Berne, neatly inserted into individually labelled coin slips, and all, as I discovered later, in very fine condition.

‘I’ll keep Göbl’s atlas for now; it’s my Bible, I still might need it. But when a certain package of a certain size is delivered to your door in Toronto, you’ll know I’m gone.’

He and Eleanor accompanied me to the car. ‘You don’t know how much it means to me that you and Joe Cribb have worked together,’ he said. ‘And now I have a new challenge for you. Two other men you must meet. Polar opposites, a gentleman’s gentleman and an arrogant academic, but you must see them both if you can. Hakim Hamidi in Los Angeles, Robert Göbl in Vienna. If you do write Göbl, never forget to include the double dot umlaut ö in his name, otherwise he’ll not respond. If you do meet and he gets upset for some reason, just change the subject to cats. You’ll get along fine.’

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A certain package of a certain size arrived in Toronto on 10th November, carefully wrapped in brown paper and twine. I could not bear to open it for days, expecting a note I did not want to read. The brief note, dated 22nd October, was written in a shaky hand. ‘Obviously I am still here, but I have my space capsules ready at last.’

Craig Burns died 30th October 1992. He was 72 years old. He did not live to see the publication of Robert Göbl’s *Donum Burns*. It was released in 1993, just months after he

died. At the time of the Berne Museum donation and publication, no other known private holding of Kushan coins matched the breadth and depth of Craig's collection. In his introduction, Göbl states, 'The title DONUM BURNS was given to the bequest by the author, friend of the donator over more than two decades … the collection BURNS being surely the most important gift of this field to a public collection in this century.'[23]

— 6 —

The Arrogant Academic

I gave Eleanor Burns a call to thank her for an incredible gift that had arrived in the mail and to tell her of my plan to visit Robert Göbl. She was living in an apartment in the town of Chester, near the lake and mountains she loved. She was keeping herself involved with several local community organisations, where she continued to exercise her considerable leadership skills. Friends fondly referred to her as Lake Almanor's great-grandmother.

The house Eleanor and Craig had lived in for so many years and all of Craig's remaining collections had been sold. Eleanor said she had always recognised Craig's vulnerabilities, and despite painful memories she spoke of Craig and his complications with great respect. A woman of extraordinary patience and forgiveness, she expressed no regrets.

The gift she had sent me was her copy of *Donum Burns*, personally autographed by Robert Göbl. A letter accompanied the book.

Figure 18a. Letterhead included in the Robert Göbl letter to Eleanor Burns
Photo courtesy of David Jongeward

Dear Mrs. Burns,

With separate mail I send you the long-promised sample of the DONUM BURNS, which finally has arrived this day. You may imagine how I had wished your husband had seen the work yet alive. I did my best but all was going to hurry on his side and too slowly on ours.

Please understand that I am sending this work with the intention you would retain it for memory, since Craig had spent all his thoughts how to secure the final stay of his collection and to see it published one day.

I very well remember that you said I should send the book to Mr. David Jongeward instead of you, but I feel it is my duty to see that the volume should remain in your

hands. Mr. Jongeward surely will be able to acquire the book, of which I add here a prospect. I have too few items for free distribution.

You will find on p. 111 (about) an English summary – it is mentioned in the dedication to you. Perhaps this will tell you the main content of the whole.

With best wishes and kindest regards,

Figure 18b. Robert Göbl's signature included in his letter to Eleanor Burns
Photo courtesy of David Jongeward

A few months after Eleanor Burns sent me the book and letter, I wrote to Robert Göbl.

April 12, 1994

Dear Professor Göbl,

Shortly before he very sadly passed away Dr. Craig Burns urged me to contact you. I am planning a trip to Europe this year and would like to interview you in regards to your remarkable career. I first met Dr. Burns in 1977. He was a great friend, we corresponded for many years. I was with Craig for several days about a month before he died. To my great surprise, he sent me his copy of your extraordinary Kushan catalogue published in 1984. I know how much he used your atlas because the book was falling apart when it arrived. More recently, Eleanor Burns gave me your autographed copy of *Donum Burns*. Now I hope one day for an English translation!

Due in part to Craig's influence I initiated a modest research project regarding Kushan coinage under the guidance of Joe Cribb at the British Museum. It is my intention to eventually write a book-length manuscript oriented to a general audience for the purpose of introducing the ancient Silk Road during Kushan times, while also including personal profiles of scholars, collectors and others who have made ancient Central Asia a special focus of their interests. Of course, Craig and his Kushan collection will figure prominently in my story, and you are at the top of my list of specialists I wish to interview.

It would be possible for me to visit Vienna in May or June. The best alternative time would be September or October. I look forward to hearing from you and trust we will be meeting soon.

Sincerely,

David Jongeward

24 April 1994

Dear Mr. Jongeward,

Many thanks for your kind letter of April 12. It is a little difficult to give you a convenient answer, since we both start from different views. Thus, let me speak openly on a rather difficult matter.

On the one side, Craig, who I met a year or two earlier than you, was a humane and loveable fellow. He was twice with me in Vienna, once when I was just honoured with my chair at the University. He received all my works and articles at the beginning and was a fervent admirer of my research. It was me who gave him the advice to give his magnificent collection to the Berne Museum to be sure that it will be preserved in its state and not dispersed after his death. Also in this connection, we had good relations all the time, except his endeavour to have my work of 1984 translated without giving notice of it before, and therefore without the necessary permission from my Academy.

But much more astonishing and surprising was the fact that Craig never took over the results of my work, but developed his own theories without taking into account my reasons and scientific argumentation. To be concrete: he did not accept my proposals and never embraced my results. Instead, he did adhere to fanciful opinions derived from non-scientific correspondence that he had; in this way he sided with enemies of my research. He let me tell him really nothing.

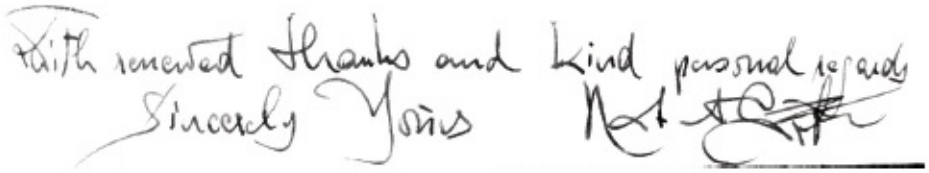
Thus you can imagine, I was heavily deceived. On the other side, I took over the difficult task to publish his collection, and this on my own efforts and expense, since the Swiss were not able to manage the edition. Finally, I found a printer in Vienna (and hitherto I have not seen any money.) As Craig had told me of his illness, I did all I could to win the running match, but Craig died hearing only that the book will go to the printer — two days before his exit.

I never have told any of this to Eleanor, his widow, of all this I now tell you. She is a patient fellow and not without real merits on supporting Craig's passions.

Regarding your own intentions, I feel I cannot be of any real help to you. To speak openly: you have my last work DONUM BURNS, where I did erect a monument to Craig's activities and his material merits on Kushan research, but this does not put the matter to good account. It would be advisable to not let the book be translated, but to read it yourself in German. I myself, besides German, have at least to be able to read English, French and Italian to be aware of progress (and its contrary) in the field. Even with a pure translation nothing is done — I have seen this in the case of Craig. To form a personal impression leading to well founded opinion which can stand up to scientific arguments, much more is needed than to have read certain other opinions, not to speak of others' lack of experience in this very difficult material.

Thus, I will be, of course, at your disposition if you will come to Vienna, but it would only make sense for you to have things to do in Vienna other than speaking with me. I can only propose October, since I am going to Venice in June, and during the summer we are in the country.

To summarize: I see your correct mind and intentions, but if meeting you I will not be able to tell you really more than I have here. I will be at your disposition for one or two hours; also I am hard of hearing but I will do my best. On the other side, the time will be too short to explain the real situation of Kushan numismatics. I will get 75 this year and I am looking back to about 40 years experience with all Kushan problems, my first fundamental work did appear in 1957, followed by my central work in 1984 (not simply an 'atlas') and now in 1993 by the DONUM BURNS, where all can be read on the subject that is of importance not only regarding numismatics, but also all other historical sources. I never would trade all of what Craig Burns has to do with my life, but perhaps you will understand, by reading it, that the DONUM BURNS is also my last will and testament, 40 years being enough.



Figures 18c and d. Robert Göbl's letterhead and signature taken from his letter to David Jongeward
Photo courtesy of David Jongeward

In subsequent letters, Professor Göbl and I arranged a time and location to meet — Café

Griensteidl at Michaelerplatz, Vienna, 8th October 1994. I approached the meeting with considerable trepidation. I do not read German and would be meeting him without having read the text of his *magnum opus*. I treasured his book even if I could not read the text, and I wanted Göbl to know that I recognised his mammoth contribution to Kushan studies.

I arrived precisely at noon. Every table was occupied. The café commanded a grand view of the plaza fountains and statuary near the entrance to what was the palace of Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, until his death in 1916. An elderly man sitting at a table by the windows caught my attention by vigorously waving a book's red dust jacket. When I saw the title, *Donum Burns,* I joined him at his window table. I had heard a multitude of complaints from Burns and Cribb about Göbl's intense criticism of their work, so I anticipated a stern and formal man who would think nothing of throwing a novice like me to the wolves.

Instead, his inquiries regarding Craig and Eleanor Burns were genuinely warm and heartfelt. He praised Craig's achievements as a collector. To my great surprise, he expressed considerable interest when I told him of my intention to write a book mixing history, numismatics, Kushan-era coins and sculpture as well as a personal narrative that included musings about Kushan symbolism. After fifteen minutes I felt surprisingly at ease.

The Austrian beer, served in a lock-top crock bottle, lightened the atmosphere considerably. Göbl finished a tall aperitif and ordered a second. He adjusted his hearing aid and leaned forward to listen, speaking against a background of café chatter and dish-rattling. He spoke English slowly and apologised for his lack of fluency. When he learned that I did not speak or read German, he patiently advised me that to properly learn Kushan history, it was essential that I study all his books and articles in their original form. I was politely advised not to rely on haphazardly translated English-language versions available for only a small portion of his work.

Shortly after sandwiches arrived, Göbl produced a handful of blank 3-by-5-inch index cards. He carefully wrote down titles of articles and books he thought most important for me to read in preparation for writing my book. I expressed appreciation and made use of his index cards to write down a few questions. With index card assistance, I did not have to raise my voice above the restaurant noise. For the remainder of our time together, we exchanged index cards or conversed during quieter moments.

I praised Göbl for the impressive calligraphy and drawings he created for his Kushan volume. He responded that he was very proud of drawing skills he had developed since childhood. I remarked also on a drawing that occupies the entire left column of his letterhead. It shows a five-storey foundation of Greek columns that support a turreted Austrian castle tower. An inscription on the tower reads: 'EX LIBRIS, PROFESSOR R. GÖBL, WIEN'. A

figure in the castle window looks over his domain. Each of the tower's five storeys contain an image representing coinages Göbl has published during his career — Roman, Sasanian, Kushan, Iranian Hun, and Celtic.

Robert Göbl was born in Vienna in 1919. He completed high school in 1938, the same year Hitler annexed Austria. He entered the military for what he thought would be two years, but after the start of World War II, Göbl had to remain in the service for six years, until 1944. He was a prisoner of war for nearly a year in France. Released after the war, he took various jobs and then completed a doctorate at the University of Vienna in 1950 that combined classical studies, archaeology and numismatics. He wrote his thesis on the coinage of the Romans Valerianus I (253–60 CE) and Gallienus (253–68 CE), the publication of which began his long career of research, resulting in numerous numismatic books and articles.

He collected coins all his life. 'As a child I asked almost everyone if they had old coins,' he said. 'The barrister who conducted our marriage service gave me Roman coins. This is how I was introduced to the coinage that I analyzed for my doctorate.'

Göbl worked in a Viennese auction house in the 1950s, where he founded a numismatics department and became familiar with Sasanian, Kushan and Hun coinage. In 1962, the French archaeologist Roman Ghirshman brought Göbl to Afghanistan as a UNESCO specialist in order to organise coin collections in the Kabul Museum. The assignment proved to be a highlight of Göbl's career. 'I was handed three baskets full of coins — one of copper and bronze coins, one of silver, a third of gold. My job was to properly arrange all of them.'

He found the work enormously stimulating, especially the large numbers of Kushan and Sasanian coins. He frequented the Kabul bazaar to begin building his own collection. This was a time when it was still possible to find coins of 'unknown' origin in the hands of a dealer who would sell them for next to nothing. Göbl recalled a pile of coins he purchased for 25 Austrian schillings, about $3 US at the time. They were all excellent-quality Sasanian coins.

Göbl applied the same structural analysis principles to Sasanian coinage that he had used for Roman numismatics. The effort earned him a lecturer position at the University of Vienna. He later expanded the Sasanian volume, which was published in both German and English. He then turned his attention to coinages in Bactria and India minted by Iranian Huns, culminating in a massive four-volume set that remains a milestone in Oriental numismatics.

When we met in 1994, Göbl had already retired as a professor at the University of Vienna, but continued to hold the Chair of Numismatics. 'This was the world's first scientific Chair of Numismatics,' he said. 'Established by Empress Maria Theresia in 1774.' Although the position had been discontinued in 1863, the Austrian government renewed it in Göbl's

honour in 1965, as part of the 600th anniversary of the University of Vienna. In his role as Chair of Numismatics, Göbl's focus was to build up the Department of Ancient Numismatics and Pre-Islamic History of Central Asia with the aim of turning it into 'a major research institution that can justifiably be considered as the most prestigious of its kind throughout the world.' Göbl was also a member of the Austrian Academy of Science and Chair of the Academy's Numismatic Commission, which he had founded in 1970. Göbl gave me a copy of a booklet outlining the history and achievements of various Academy departments.

Turning the conversation to problems with colleagues, Göbl took a rather hard line. 'Craig Burns lacked the discipline of a scholar,' he said. 'He wrote articles, some useful, some fanciful. He went his own way, not the way of a dedicated scientist.'

Craig had disappointed Göbl in other ways as well. 'I made a present to Craig of a Kanishka Buddha coin. This was no small thing as these coins are quite rare. Craig sent it back. He told me the coin was in poor condition, he could find a better one.'

Göbl threw up a hand to express his disbelief. 'Another time I offered to sell a unique coin, a Wima Kadphises half dinar. Craig turned it down. Sometime later, I gave him a gold quarter dinar, given to me by a dear friend. The coin was badly preserved, but it was another unique coin. Years later I asked Craig why he had never referred to it in his articles. Craig told me the coin was of no interest; he had melted it down. This was hurtful, something I cannot understand.'

On one of his 3-by-5 index cards I wrote a lengthy note: 'Craig Burns consulted your book constantly. I know, because he gave me your book, complete with his margin notes, pasted-in photos, arrows, question marks. The book was falling apart, I spent $175 to have it restored! Craig told me often your book was his Bible.'

Göbl responded without hesitation. 'Maybe his Bible, but not his prayer. His prayers lay in another direction that I do not understand.' Göbl made a similar comment in one of his letters. 'Regarding that well-known "Bible" of Craig's — his prayers at least were spoken in another language and faith.'

I agreed with Göbl that Craig Burns should have abided by copyright laws and notified the publisher of the Kushan volume before commissioning an English translation of the text. Craig had given me a copy of the English translation well before I knew anything of the controversy, and of course I found it a very useful and informative guide to the coinage. But the translation revealed Göbl's blistering criticism of colleagues I had not previously known about. Without naming names, he writes, 'An abundance of literature, pseudo-numismatic or dependent upon numismatics, appears by authors with very faulty, if any, numismatic skill, who have made names for themselves using techniques which simply have no scientific basis.' Göbl does not stop there. He writes of 'chaos' in views presented in journal articles,

‘insufficiency of proof’, ‘the wildest of methods’, and ‘pseudo-democratic attempts to achieve a consensus using adjusted data’.

Göbl was particularly scathing about certain colleagues’ ‘remarkable laxity in methodology’. He was clearly targeting his rival at the British Museum when he said, ‘There are no numismatists of rank who do not have solid historical credentials.’ He was deeply disappointed by Joe Cribb and other colleagues who published articles without properly acknowledging his work. ‘In good scholarship, an author will write, “Göbl says this, Göbl says that, but in my view, it should be seen another way”. This I can accept, but it is very difficult when my work is not mentioned at all. My books are fundamental in specific fields of numismatics and always will be.’[24]

I heard similar comments during our conversation in Vienna. He mentioned a ‘British fellow’ who had written twice in a period of ten years admitting he suffered from a lack of German. ‘Joe Cribb’s inability to read the text of my books and articles is completely unacceptable,’ Göbl said. He added that in the last millennium, and in the millennium to come, the English language alone is *not* enough for anyone pretending to be a scientist.

The language issue is a touchy one in numismatic and many other academic circles. Often scholars cannot keep pace with the latest available information because they are not entirely fluent in the language of certain publications. Some numismatics scholars, for example, periodically discuss whether or not to declare English the language of choice for books and articles. The reasoning in favour is that English increasingly dominates the world of science so that publication in English enables the widest possible dissemination and guarantees the largest number of readers. Those against the idea argue that the move to publish in English smacks of cultural imperialism. It is true that the learning of languages is not always a curriculum requirement in North American universities. That said, publishing in English need not diminish the importance of a scholar’s contribution in a language other than English.

In the field of numismatics, countless articles and books, including those of Göbl, are virtually unknown outside a very limited audience. Some say this is not a way to advance the study of coins and history. To this argument Göbl says, ‘Nonsense. You pretend to be a scholar? Learn German.’

There was another contentious question I hoped to discuss, but fortunately I had raised the issue in a letter prior to our meeting. ‘There is of course a major question of interest we might touch upon, the dating of Kanishka’s reign.’

His response was immediate. This being in the long-gone days of written correspondence, his letter came complete with underlining, quotation marks and parentheses:

> ‘I must also say that the “date of Kanishka” is for me (after more than 40 years of scientific research) a settled one, and I find no real possibility to ‘discuss’ (a loved and preferred word of our friend Dr. Burns) the matter. I would suggest that you would have read my book *Donum Burns*, in its historical essence (i.e., also all other sources, on which I have quoted in there) before we meet, since eventual questions from your side could be answered better from my side. Please, realise that I have not more ‘opinion,’ but at least from 1960 (the Kanishka conference at London, where I did participate with an important contribution) onwards, I made research in this field with the scope to finish the question. And she is finished. Maybe I cannot convince you, but this will or would be “not my coffee” (as we say).’[25]

We did not continue the conversation on Kanishka dates at the Café Griensteidl, except to agree that without a doubt the dates of the reign of the Kushan’s most famous king had generated a hundred academic headaches for nearly a century. Göbl participated in a major conference in 1960 hosted by the British Museum that tried to settle the issue of Kanishka’s dates. The question? Why were there no clear historical references from any source that could help decide the years of reign of one of the most influential kings of ancient times? In spite of Göbl’s insistence otherwise, the 1960 conference proved inconclusive. In fact, it contributed additional confusion. Joe Cribb had proposed an early second-century date, about AD 110–120, while Göbl settled on his date of more than a century later, at AD 232. Other scholars had proposed a date as early as AD 78, others as late as AD 278. The conference resulted in a two-hundred-year spread of proposed dates for the first year of Kanishka’s reign.[26]

Reckoning the date for the first year of Kanishka’s reign, Göbl relied on two pieces of evidence. When working in Afghanistan and Pakistan, he had retranslated inscriptions on a stone from Tochi Valley in Pakistan held in the Peshawar Museum that he and two colleagues published in 1964. Their reading of the inscriptions was generally accepted, but Kushan scholars did not accept Göbl’s interpretation. He believed that dates included in the inscriptions marked parallel beginnings of the Sasanian state in Bactria and Kanishka’s reign in AD 232.

The second piece of evidence came about because of Göbl’s discovery of a gold pendant in the British Museum that he believed linked Rome and India. There is an image on one side of a Roman emperor that Göbl identified as Constantine the Great, and an image on the other side of Ardochsho, which he believed was copied from a coin of the Kushan’s fifth king, Huvishka. Göbl treated the pendent as an officially produced ornament and used this evidence together with his interpretation of the Peshawar Museum inscription to settle on a date of AD 232 for the beginning of Kanishka’s reign.[27]

When the book containing the 1960 conference papers was published, including Gobl's article, Craig Burns's response was characteristically emotional. He found Göbl's dates incomprehensible. He summarily dismissed the pendant's historical value — 'something produced by a fanciful jeweller, who knows, maybe a century after Kushan times.' Joe Cribb was equally dismissive. He noted that the Roman portrait could have been copied from coins of Constantine's sons; the Ardochsho image could just have readily been copied from a Kanishka coin. Agreeing with Göbl that the gold pendant was probably produced in the fourth century, Cribb stated unequivocally that there was no justification whatever for using it as evidence for determining dates for the reign of Kanishka.

Near the close of our conversation, Göbl emphasised the point that the importance of the Kushan empire in late antiquity remained largely overlooked by classical historians. He said the Kushan's fundamental importance was in their power to occupy and control the middle ground of trade between Rome, China and India. It had always struck him as extraordinary that coinage was the primary source of information about such an important empire. That is why Craig's efforts as a collector were invaluable, he said, not only because of the depth and finesse of his collecting but also because of Craig's decision to donate rather than sell.

'The better the quality of coins and the more such a collection is held together in one location, the more history is revealed,' Göbl said. 'But with *Donum Burns*, I retire from Kushan study. I have nothing more to say on the subject; in fact, I've already returned to Roman numismatics, which is where I began many years ago.'

Regardless of his numerous disagreements with colleagues, Göbl was not a bitter man. Quite spontaneously, with great charm and sparkle, he said, 'I'm thankful to God for this life I lead. I would gladly do it all over again the same way.'

As we prepared to leave the café, I commented on Göbl's ring. He had designed it himself: griffins on the sides inspired by sixth-century Avarian designs; stones in a gold setting honouring the first man to hold the Chair of Numismatics in Vienna; etched into one of the stones, the letters 'EYT YXI'.

I assisted Göbl with his ankle-length camel-hair coat, his cane and his cap. He advised I visit the Albrecht Dürer room in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and I decided immediately to respond to the recommendation. He walked slowly up the Michaelerplatz, then stopped and turned to wave in a manner expressing friendship and best wishes. Just then, a cat crossed the street behind Göbl. It must have been Craig Burns in a parallel life as a tortoiseshell cat. I was grateful that in the Café Griensteidl of Vienna, it had not been necessary to discuss Robert Göbl's favourite animal.

Six years after our 1994 conversation in Vienna, three years after Robert Göbl passed away in 1997, a long-awaited authoritative analysis of Kanishka's dates of reign was published in

2001. German scholar Harry Falk placed the first year of Kanishka at AD 127.[28] The date was based on Falk's reinterpretation of a previously unclear portion of a third-century AD astrological text.[29] Joe Cribb and many numismatists and historians have accepted Harry Falk's analysis. But not all. Some scholars remain convinced that AD 78 is Kanishka's first year because that date links Kanishka with a known era from southern India, the Saka Era that also dates from AD 78.

Göbl insisted that he would never return to Kushan coin studies. 'I have already returned to Roman numismatics,' he had said. But he couldn't resist a parting shot. In his last article, published posthumously in 1998, he critiques 'efforts made by Cribb to continue his ways and means to save his assumption of as early a date as possible for Kanishka.'[30]

A week after our Vienna lunch, I dropped into Spink London, one of the few locations outside Germany and Austria that carried Göbl's books. I paged through copies of his Kushan and Sasanian volumes — not with an intention to purchase. A Spink bookseller surprised me by openly characterising Göbl's work as 'pedantic and unreadable, useful only for a handful of specialists'. I suppose it's no wonder the books cost a small fortune. Numismatics books are unique, and no other scholars have attempted anything remotely close to the exhaustive approach that Göbl insisted upon. Few such books are accompanied by skilfully accomplished drawings and calligraphy. His books are the most quoted in specific fields of research. In numerous catalogues, articles and books, coin dealers, and scholars, as well as museum curators including Joe Cribb, invariably use Göbl's classification systems to organise and identify Sasanian and Kushan coinage.

I came away from our meeting in Vienna somewhat humbled but in no way intimidated. A senior professor, renowned in his field, steadfast in his own law, had offered helpful words of advice to an interested student. I was deeply impressed by Göbl's cordiality and grateful for the time he had given me.

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The Gentleman's Gentleman

We met at Los Angeles International Airport in October 1993. During the drive down Highway 101, Hakim Hamidi asked about my previous visits to southern California. Thirteen years earlier I had been commissioned to write a film script, but after a few months the project came to a sudden halt when the film producer's favourite horse bolted while she was riding familiar trails in the Santa Barbara hills. She fell and broke her back.

'A horse will do that,' Hakim responded. 'It happened to the great king Kanishka. Do you know the story?'

With this wondrous leap, a California memory transmogrified into ancient Central Asian history. I recalled the story from Chinese sources, retold by John Rosenfield. The story goes that three of the four regions of the world had submitted to Kanishka's authority and lived in peace. The eastern region, however, had neither submitted nor asked for protection, so Kanishka led a military campaign in an attempt to expand the Kushan empire into China. He set off on a conquest with a vanguard of warriors on white elephants, but the army came to an abrupt stop when Kanishka's horse refused to cross a dangerous mountain pass in the Pamir mountains. Kanishka regarded his horse as his most faithful companion, and he tried to inspire courage by confiding his thoughts to it. But in speaking out loud to his horse, Kanishka inadvertently revealed plans of the conquest to his men. In so doing he betrayed the trust of a chief minister who had warned that if the king spoke openly of their plans, Kanishka might soon die. Kanishka then realised that he was destined to suffer punishment in future lives because of the many men he had already killed in wars. He arranged for a Buddhist monastery to be built on the spot and gave food to the monks. But because the king had committed all sorts of errors in the past, having killed thousands in many battles, his courtiers argued that little if any good could come of good deeds performed now. Kanishka instructed his men to boil a pot full of water, into which he threw his ring. He demanded that one of them bring him the ring. They said it was impossible without injuring their hands, unless cold water was added. The king replied that just as he had committed wrongs in the past — the pot of boiling water — making amends with good deeds was like adding cold water. The courtiers rejoiced at this explanation.[31]

'Something similar may have happened to the film producer,' Hakim said. 'Perhaps her horse knew her better than she knew herself. Maybe she needed a strong warning, to change something about her life.' It was true that after the producer recovered from her fall, she dropped making feature films to concentrate on documentaries, eventually winning an Academy Award.

Hakim asked what had persuaded me to pursue Kushan studies. I offered a brief chronology of events: sabbatical leave from cultural anthropology, a winter at Lake Almanor, Craig Burns and his attic hideaway, Joe Cribb.

‘Yes, but why Central Asia?’ Hakim asked. ‘Why the Kushan?’

This was a challenge. Hakim was not satisfied with my chronology of circumstances, nor did he accept that I was visiting him merely as a response to Craig Burns’s request. Did I have an interest that was more than academic? I was still unclear about this myself, but as we talked I suddenly recalled a dream I recorded the night we left Lake Almanor: myself in a boat in the dark, drifting down a river, trying to comprehend shapes and forms of monumental sculptures set into a cliff face, the sculptures silhouetted by smoke and fire. ‘I remember thinking I was passing something of great size and importance. I wanted to see it more clearly, but then I woke up.’

‘I know the river well,’ Hakim said without hesitation. ‘You dreamed about a famous place in Afghanistan.’

When Hakim was a kid, he and his family and friends often drove up to Bamiyan from Kabul. This was the first I had ever heard about the Buddhas of Bamiyan. The monumental sculptures were located in a valley west of Kabul. Buddhist monks had cut caverns and caves out of the cliff sides. ‘Truly immense caverns. Meditation cells, carved into the cliffs, just large enough for individual monks.’

There were two giant sandstone Buddhas carved into the cliffs. Hakim said he and his friends discovered a cave that was actually a tunnel leading deep into a cavern. From there, they found a way to climb the Buddhas. ‘Dangerous, but we knew how to do it,’ he said. ‘We were just a bunch of kids scrambling around; we climbed up and played on top of the Buddha’s head.’

That evening, Hakim’s wife Homaira prepared one of her favourite Afghan recipes, a splendid cinnamon and apricot lamb dinner. After the meal, Hakim and I moved into the living room for tea and cake. He told me about Kabul, how he missed their house and gardens. Such a pleasure, he said. Peach, apple, sweet cherry, apricot, pomegranate, and pear trees, a vineyard with many varieties of grapes.

Before the Soviet period in Afghanistan, when colleagues talked about retirement, they meant retirement to their gardens. ‘We loved our gardens. Kabul was a garden city. You would go to your gardens to freshen the mind, to feel solidarity with your neighbours, solidarity with your life. Gardens are places of peace.’

Hakim spoke of the great tragedy in Kabul when the famous Gardens of Babur were virtually destroyed during Afghanistan’s civil wars. This was especially true of civil wars

between 1992 and 1996 that led to the takeover of Kabul and most of Afghanistan by the Taliban.

Babur was the first Mughal emperor to enter Central Asia and India. He built his paradise garden in Kabul in the early sixteenth century. During the early 1990s, the gardens turned into a front line in the battle for control of the Afghan capital. Rockets fired from both sides exploded in the gardens. Local people looted the stonework to patch damaged houses. Trees were cut down for firewood. The whole area was heavily mined; boys who climbed over the old walls to collect wood were often killed.[32]

He continued to talk about the city he loved. Then I asked Hakim how he first met Craig Burns.

'The story begins in Afghanistan, in Kapisa, about an hour's drive north of Kabul,' he said. 'A beautiful river valley surrounded by mountains. A famous valley, important for the Kushan too. Kapisa was the summer residence of several Kushan kings.'

Hakim and his family often went fishing there, hiked in the mountains, jumped in for a cold swim at a place where two rivers meet.

In Peshawar, Hakim purchased four copper coins from a shopkeeper originally from the Kapisa area. Hakim did not need the coins but wanted to buy something to support a man who had been forced to leave his home to escape the Soviet invasion. Back home, Hakim put the corroded coins in a cleaning solution and cleaned them enough for identification. One coin was of interest: a small silver coin of Wima Kadphises, the Kushan's third king. He showed the coin to a collector friend who had extensive knowledge of the Kushan.

'A fake,' he said. 'Wima Kadphises never issued silver coins. I sent photos to Robert Göbl. He dismissed the coin outright. So I took the silver coin with me when I went to Lake Almanor in 1985.'

They had not met previously before Craig invited Hakim to see his collection. Hakim told Craig the story about the silver coin's unsuccessful journey through the hands of specialists. Craig puzzled over the coin for some time, but he became convinced of its authenticity. They arranged a purchase.

At the time, Hakim and Craig's opinion ran counter to the generally accepted understanding that Wima Kadphises had issued no silver coins. In the following years, however, more examples of the same coin were found, seemingly confirming the opinion that the coin type was genuine. Hakim and Craig met and became friends because of this coin and then a few months later bumped into each other in the Peshawar bazaar. They corresponded for years; Göbl, meanwhile, never changed his mind about the silver coin, and he published it in *Donum Burns* as an ancient forgery.

I asked Hakim why he collected coins and not other artefacts. Hakim's response was very direct and forceful: 'On this question, I always say emphatically that no one should ever deal in any item stolen from museums or archaeological sites. Perpetrators should be brought to justice.'

Hakim was especially sensitive to the tragedy of the Kabul Museum, which was ransacked repeatedly during the Soviet period and later by the Taliban. Hakim was involved in worldwide efforts to alert museums, collectors and auction houses to avoid illicit sales from Kabul Museum collections.

'Compared to one-of-a-kind antiquities, coins are a different matter altogether. The history is extraordinary, there's so much to learn. That's just part of it. Collecting is an enjoyable pastime. For me, it's the stories you hear while buying and selling and trading. It's a way of keeping in touch with friends. Coins and stamps are perfect for collectors young and old. A great way for children to learn history.'

Hakim argued that even ancient coins were struck by the thousands, easily enough to satisfy the needs of collectors as well as museums. He believed serious collectors were in a better position than museum curators to assemble good collections and to further knowledge about specific coinages. Many of the finest coin collections in the world were put together by private collectors and then donated to museums — Dr Craig Burns's collection being a prime example.

Many thousands of Kushan coins have been found in association with archaeological excavations, but equal numbers that show up in Kabul and Peshawar are unearthed by a farmer's plow or found under trees, rocks and foundations, or in cave hoards, water wells and many other long-forgotten storage sites. Hakim rightly said that ancient coins cannot be considered as the patrimony of any one modern nation. Today's borders and nationalistic politics are meaningless in the context of ancient history.

'What nation can lay sole claim to Kushan material?' he said. 'Tajikistan? Afghanistan? Uzbekistan? Pakistan? India? They once were all part of the Kushan empire.'

Coins do not work well in museum settings. Safeguarding the coins, and monitoring students who study coins, is expensive and difficult. The British Museum is one of a few major museums that have designed a permanent exhibition featuring the history of money. Its coin gallery is a major exhibition that attracts large numbers of viewers, but many museums have sold coin collections and used the funds to purchase other objects that visitors can view more readily. During the last 20 or 30 years, museums have very rarely replaced retiring numismatists.

A moment arrived when I decided to advance a question I wanted to ask but hardly dared.

‘Hakim,’ I said. ‘What is your opinion about coin images that portray kings with flaming shoulders.’

The response was a smile. ‘You are asking this question,’ he said. ‘Tell me what you see.’

I responded hesitatingly. ‘Some scholars suggest that Kushan kings appear to be claiming supernatural attributes,’ I said. ‘Rosenfield talks about *khvareno*, the flames as a sign of royal fortune, royal glory. I’m not entirely satisfied with what they say. I’m not sure. I am looking for something more, perhaps a symbol for something within human experience, something higher, or something deeper than what we take to be our ordinary existence.’

Hakim sat very still, a careful smile accompanied by a slight nodding of the head. He seemed to be studying me as well as what I said.

‘Some Kushan coins show the king rising above clouds or mountains,’ he said. ‘John Rosenfield and other scholars don’t express it quite right. They say the king is ‘emerging from clouds’ or ‘sitting on mountains’. I see the king rising above mountains in a spiritual sense. Fire issuing from the body is a very positive sign. In Zoroastrian tradition and especially in Buddhism, fire is equated with light. Fire is the ultimate good, a source of great purity.’

Hakim watched my reaction. I waited for him to continue.

‘We see this image of Kanishka standing beside a small fire altar,’ he said. ‘So, I ask myself, what is the king experiencing in himself at that moment? By making this gesture, making an offering, what is he saying? He is wanting to express something and he knows that what he wants to express is being communicated through the distribution of coins. Remember, coins meant so much more in ancient times than they do now. Coins were much more than pocket change. Most of the population did not read or write. But they could see the images. And the coin message was not just an expression of imperial might, not just a political message. This particular king chose images that convey much more.

‘This is a king with special powers. He’s a warrior chief, clearly, capable of conquering vast territories, yet he recognises the importance of communicating inner quiet and devotional respect. Yes, this is just a coin image, but it raises these questions. What kind of king is this? What kind of person is this? What kind of mind is this?’

‘Powerful individuals like this can still be found,’ Hakim continued. ‘They may be anywhere, walking down a street in any city in the world, you never know. Such people appear by surprise. Many times in Afghanistan I have been very well acquainted with men who suddenly disappear for a year. They come back completely changed; it’s hard to recognise them. Even their hands look different. They have filled themselves with something very high and bright.’

This manner of speaking held me spellbound. Hakim seemed unusually energised. He told me that to this day in Pakistan and in Afghanistan, boys on street corners put incense into small charcoal fires. The charcoal burns in small containers that look something like the altars on Kushan coins.

‘When they drop in a bit of incense, three things happen: a flame, a sound, a smell. The flame is light. The sound clears the air. From the smoke, a strong, purifying odour rises, which acts as protection from bad eyes around. The boys make this smoke for anyone who wants it. They receive a few rupees as payment.’

It’s an ancient practice, but just how ancient, no one knows. Perhaps it was learned from the image on Kushan coins. Or more likely, as Hakim said, the kings learned from the people. ‘My feeling is that the kings saw the people making incense offerings and honoured the practice in their coin designs.’

The following morning, during a walk in the neighborhood, Hakim told me more about himself. He was educated at Cornell and the University of Southern California, where he completed a degree in industrial management. He returned to Afghanistan in 1957 and was invited into government after a year in corporate work. He continued in a variety of government postings until three years after the 1979 Soviet invasion.

Daoud Khan had been prime minister of Afghanistan from 1953 to 1963 but was forced to resign by his cousin and brother-in-law, King Zahir Shah. Afghanistan became a republic a decade later in 1973 when Daoud Khan returned to power by staging a non-violent coup d’état, deposing the king while he was having surgery in Europe. Hakim described Daoud as a progressive nationalist but also pro-Russian. I learned some years later that Hakim was born and raised in one of Kabul’s most prominent families, with ties both political and hereditary to the royal household. Members of Hamidi’s family had served Afghanistan for several generations as industrialists, bankers, and businessmen.

Hakim worked for many years as Head of Customs but was appointed Director of Budget prior to the coup d’état. After the coup, almost everyone in the government was fired. Hakim was retained but demoted and put in charge of a mismanaged civilian and military pension fund. He proceeded to clean up the fund and, to his surprise, was allowed to continue working. Just before the Communist takeover, and continuing for nearly three years after, Hakim was appointed president of the Afghanistan Commercial Bank, a jointly private- and government-held institution.

Daoud and many other government officials were killed during the 1978 Saur Revolution, an internal coup d’état led by the Afghan Communist party. The Soviet invasion came a year later in 1979.

“The Communist invasion transformed Kabul and made a terrible mess out of the country,” Hakim said. “Many of our friends and colleagues escaped and left the country. We lived in a large house in Kabul with wonderful gardens, but we had to leave. We lost almost everything.’

Prior to the 1979 invasion, Hakim was anti-Russian, but not overtly anti-socialist. While he was president of the Bank, a position became available for a bank lawyer. Ten men submitted applications. Hakim found one applicant that stood out, and he hired the man even though the lawyer was a Communist.

‘I told him he was the most qualified man for the position, that what he did with his time after bank hours was entirely up to him, but that during working hours he must represent the bank and work for its objectives. Shortly after the Communist takeover, this lawyer I hired was offered a high position in the new government.’

The contact proved valuable to Hakim later, when after three years of Communist rule, he was arrested and jailed for ten days, in part because of the activities of a friend. The friend was a professor of Islamic studies, specialising in Islamic art and history, but he was also an authority on Kushan studies. The Communists had him followed, taking note of every meeting he attended. They were convinced he was anti-Russian.

‘He was with me one evening when I was meeting with a carpet salesman. I had dealt with this carpet salesman often and thought he was completely trustworthy, but apparently a microphone was concealed in one of the carpets. During the bargaining, my friend and I were discussing the death of an important Soviet consultant to the Ministry of Metals and Mines, a death which neither of us were particularly unhappy about. A few days later, my friend was arrested, along with many people he associated with. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. They came for me about three weeks later.’

Hakim recalls many things from his time in prison, but one day he saw his friend. He hardly recognised him. ‘They were making him work very hard. He wasn’t at all accustomed to such harsh surroundings. At the moment of seeing him, a prayer poured through my body that this man be released soon. Fortunately, it worked out that he was released a few days after my own release.’

After being released, Hakim was determined to leave Afghanistan. He left the country primarily because of the state of his health. A few years before the Communist takeover, Hakim suffered a stroke and had to go to London for a bypass surgery. After being released from prison, Hakim discussed his health with a Russian doctor, who agreed to assist him by convincing his superiors that Hakim had to return to London for follow-up treatment and additional medication.

Hakim waited for weeks in the summer of 1982 before finally being allowed medical leave. Part of his family had already left the country, but Hakim's youngest son, his wife Homaira and Homaira's mother fled the country by way of Delhi on the pretext of visiting Hakim in London. They had to cover their tracks, so they travelled with a minimum of luggage and many possessions were left behind. Hakim and Homaira never returned to Afghanistan.

Members of Homaira's father's family were also civil servants and ministers in government. Her brother wrote a book documenting much of the political history leading to the Communist takeover. Homaira studied Persian literature in university. She became principal of a girl's high school in Kabul, in charge of 250 teachers and 2,500 students. She taught courses on the life and work of Jalaluddin Rumi, the thirteenth-century mystic poet born in Balkh, Afghanistan, who lived most of his life in Konya, Turkey, and founded the branch of Sufism associated with the whirling dervishes.

'Homaira knows at least a hundred Rumi poems by heart. You know, to this day, especially in Iran, there are experts in spontaneous verse-making. They have competitions where poet-speakers test their skills. The themes are almost always religious. They begin by repeating traditional lines, then create new lines spontaneously. The new line must relate to the line the opponent has just come up with. This same process is found in Rumi; his verses have spontaneity and freedom.'

Growing up in Afghanistan with evidence all around of its fabulously rich history, Hakim made a point early in his life to learn about the rise and fall of Asian civilisations. Coins provided fascinating historical clues and were readily available in the Kabul bazaar and in markets throughout Afghanistan. He wrote a book on modern coins of Afghanistan[33] as well as several articles about ancient coins.

In Los Angeles, Hakim opened an international grocery business with his younger brother but sold his share a year later. Hakim and Homaira chose instead to devote much of their time to raising funds for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. 'More than two million Afghans escaped Russian tyranny by moving into Pakistan,' Hakim said. 'We collected donations from friends, and also funds from the International Medical Corps (IMC) for Afghan refugees. Someone had to take these funds to Pakistan, and many people tried to persuade me, so I agreed. The IMC funds were easy to deal with; I handed them over to responsible officials in Peshawar. Funds raised from family and friends were donated to hospitals that were caring for Afghans.'

During frequent trips to Pakistan, Hakim often found that after seeing to the distribution of donated funds he had time on his hands. He naturally gravitated to the Peshawar bazaar, where Kabul shopkeepers had relocated. He purchased carpets, modern jewellery, a few coins

for his collection. He had gone into business in Los Angles by opening a shop managed by his son specialising in jewellery made by Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. He also kept an eye out for coins to keep or to resell. In this way, Hakim not only continued to pursue his fascination for Afghanistan's history, but also did what he could to assist his country and people.

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During the evening prior to my departure, we walked quietly on the beach for some time. Eventually, Hakim stopped for a long look at the water. 'Do you watch the ocean?' he asked. 'Do you see how it changes in sunlight? The ocean sometimes shimmers so bright you almost can't look at it.' He said that when he walks, he looks for those moments when the ocean is one great expanse of light with no bands of shadow. 'What we want is to open our minds like that,' he said. 'To experience that same spread of light pouring through us. That is why the ocean is such a wonderful example for us. It reminds us of what we can become ourselves.'

Driving back to the airport, Hakim asked if I would be interested in accompanying him to Pakistan on one of his trips.

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The Pakistan Coin Trip

Delayed in Los Angeles. If he had been five minutes later at Gatwick, Hakim Hamidi would have missed our flight to Islamabad and I would have had to travel solo. Instead, somewhere over Germany, without objections from flight attendants, we moved from our seats in economy class to the nearly empty upper deck of the 747. Hakim briefed me on what to expect during the next few days.

At the airport in Islamabad we encountered a frenzied crowd of men dressed in grey, beige or white shalwar kameezes mixing with heavily armed soldiers, impeccably turbaned Saudis, suit-and-tie Europeans and a trio of crewcut Americans in matching shades who were about as subtle as apple pie. Chaotic queues required elbow shoves to claim space at the counter, but we managed somehow to reserve seats for an 8.15 a.m. flight to Peshawar.

From the air, long stretches of cultivated land appeared dusty and dry, the orchards and fields waiting for the monsoon. This was the famed northern Punjab, saturated with the history of empires, armies, wars, Silk Road commerce, along with Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian pilgrimage sites, visited from antiquity to the present day.

In Peshawar, we climbed into one of the infamous rolling works of Pakistani transportation art, a blue-smoke-belching three-wheeled auto rickshaw decorated with tassels, bangles, metal bands, reflectors, studs, abstract geometrics and Urdu script and paintings of mythological birds and animals. I clung to a pipe post, legs cramped behind the driver’s seat as we snaked through crowds of bicycles and horn-blaring trucks. After registering at the Greens Hotel, Hakim and I agreed to meet in the lobby following an hour-and-a-half rest.

No one knows the actual origins of Peshawar. The city is layered with millennia of history. It’s the take-off point for the legendary Khyber Pass road that links Pakistan and Afghanistan, Peshawar to Kabul. The Persian Achaemenids annexed the area approximately 500 years before the time of Christ. Alexander the Great passed through Afghanistan without much opposition in the fourth century BC, but then nearly lost his life in the Malakand district northwest of Peshawar thanks to an arrow in his leg. The first Kushan king, Kujula Kadphises, crossed the Hindu Kush from Bactria in the mid-first century AD.

A taxi dropped us off at Chowk-e-Yadgar, the heart of the Old City bazaar. Peshawar’s crowded streets combined incomprehensible industry with a singular lack of traffic control. Men crossed the streets in groups or gathered for street-corner conversations. Only a few women were out, heavily veiled and accompanied by men. My first lesson in Peshawar bazaar economics occurred on a street lined with moneychangers’ tables that displayed paper

money in rubles, francs, marks, pounds, rupees and dollars, all openly stacked in tall piles. A man carried neatly twined bundles of paper money up the street with the ease of someone carrying an oversized shopping bag. I asked Hakim what would happen if the man stumbled.

‘Everyone will stop and help him pick up his money.’

‘What about thieves?’

‘Not a chance, not here.’

I asked about this phenomenon again later during dinner. Hakim said that with a Muslim code of ethics in force, anyone daring to interfere with the many hundreds of thousands of dollars in market business occurring daily would probably not live a very long life.

We slowly walked up a street Hakim referred to as Fifth Avenue, the gold street of the Sarafa Bazaar. Narrow alleys branched in both directions. Shops commonly supplied a bench or chairs at the entrance, often occupied by the shopkeeper or his assistant in lively conversation with customers. Window displays featured gold jewellery in glass cases. Shop interiors combined small rooms with a counter out front and a curtained-off backroom. Hakim stopped for courteous exchanges with one man after another, the warm greetings invariably laced with good humour. We passed through an arched gateway for a brief look at the seventeenth-century Mahabat Khan Mosque, its spacious courtyard, tall multi-tiered minarets, arched windows and geometrically rich decorative tile mosaics.

Further up the street, we were followed by several curious young men, apparently joking about my height, although the presence of tall men on the street was not uncommon. No doubt they wanted to know about the stranger in their midst.

We entered a market quadrangle, four floors of shops overlooking an open square. Shop after shop offered window displays of countless varieties of contemporary jewellery in silver, gold, brass and lapis lazuli, often with semi-precious stones such as tourmaline, topaz, aquamarine, carnelian and many varieties of quartz. We passed shops specialising in scarves and block-printed textiles and hand-knotted carpets.

Many shopkeepers originally from Afghanistan greeted Hakim with great respect and warm familiarity, a gentle handshake followed by a slight bow, arm across the chest. We slipped off our shoes. Hakim was better prepared than I; he wore a pair of sandals. For the remainder of the day, from shop to shop, I endlessly tied and untied my shoelaces, a spectacle that slowed Hakim down and proved to be a source of local amusement.

In every shop, the shopkeeper offered tea or a choice of soft drinks. No one was in a hurry. Hakim spoke Dari with family and friends in Los Angeles, but for business in the Peshawar bazaar and for catching up on local news, he conversed in Pashto, the most commonly spoken language of the Pathan shopkeepers from Afghanistan.

Hakim knew many Peshawar shopkeepers from when they were previously located in Kabul; he had known many of their fathers. He understood what it meant for so many families to give up homes and businesses, everything they knew, in Kabul to start all over in Peshawar. Shopkeepers faced incredible obstacles as refugees, but many had become successful in their new homes. One man who spoke English told me that Pakistani landlords often charged exorbitant rents for tiny shops. Shopkeepers had to pay ten to fifty thousand dollars up front just to secure a good location, then faced high monthly rents. If they did not pay the rent, they could be kicked out on a day's notice.

In one shop, a window display included a bowl of copper coins. A shop assistant retrieved the bowl. I hoped to find something Kushan, but did not recognise a single coin. After tea, the shopkeeper retrieved a small cloth bundle from a vault. He untied a knot, gestured for me to hold out my hand.

Less than five hours in Peshawar and I held in my palm a two-thousand-year-old gold coin. Craig Burns told stories about Kushan gold coins showing up in Kabul and Peshawar bazaars, but seeing is believing — it was a gold dinar of the famous Kanishka, a standing full-figure portrait, hand poised over a small fire altar. On the deity side was the ancient great goddess Nana, shown in profile holding her strange bent object. To my inexperienced eye, the coin appeared beautifully crafted, virtually in mint condition. I was suddenly extremely covetous. Fortunately, Hakim explained that I was a researcher, not a collector. I was given a price regardless, $950 US. The shopkeeper, in no rush to have me return the coin, let me examine it while Hakim conducted business in his own language.

Later, I could not help but ask, 'Was it a fake?'

'I would never take you to a shop where there is a chance of a fake coin being sold,' Hakim said. 'That man knows Central Asian coins as well as anyone on the planet. He'll spot a fake before it leaves a seller's pocket.'

In another shop Hakim asked for a foreign exchange dealer. The shopkeeper whispered to an assistant, who slipped on sandals and raced down the steps. Half an hour later, a man arrived whom Hakim and the shopkeeper clearly knew well, prompting a round of enthusiastic greetings. This roving banker was on call for service to shopkeepers in his trust. Hakim handed him a personal cheque from his Los Angeles bank account. I asked if I could exchange $200 in US American Express traveller's cheques. The man disappeared for a while, but what seemed to me an extended absence did not concern Hakim in the least. When the banker returned, he pulled up folds of his kameez to retrieve a pouch containing six-inch-thick bundles of notes in 500 and 1,000 rupee denominations. Hakim asked for some funds in US dollars. No problem: the banker carried a couple of big bundles of US twenties and fifties bound with rubber bands. Who knows how many thousands of dollars this razor-sharp,

quick-witted market banker carried in his pouches during his rounds.

In the early evening, we caught an auto rickshaw to Peshawar's Pearl Continental Hotel for an all-you-can-eat buffet: 225 rupees, about $7.50. Although exhausted from the shops and the labyrinth of chaotic streets, I relaxed with good food and the chance to share impressions of my first day in Pakistan. Two musicians played traditional music using a variety of percussion, wind and string instruments: a two-string *yaktaro* fashioned from a spherical gourd; an earthen jar percussion instrument called a *dilo*; a pair of *naghara* drums, struck with a short stick bent at the end; and also the *narr*, a wind instrument made from a reed plant. The gentle accompaniment continued throughout the evening, accentuating our leisurely enjoyment of excellently spiced meats and fresh vegetables.

The following morning, back in the Old City bazaar, our first stop of the day was the shop of a long-time friend of Hakim's, an elderly man with a neatly trimmed snow-white beard. After lengthy greetings, I watched this deliberate man retrieve a cloth bundle from under a pile of rugs. Suddenly, four gold Kushan coins rolled across the glass counter. I must have turned several shades of red. Hakim informed his friend that I was not a collector, but the shopkeeper invited me to hold each coin and take a good long look. Meanwhile, he and Hakim had their own business to attend to. Once again, I experienced the feel of the coins in my fingertips, recognising images even though two of the coins were quite worn. In due course the coins were retrieved and placed back in the cloth bag. Then another coin appeared, a copper tetradrachm of the Kushan's third king, Wima Kadphises, in good condition, with clear images and inscriptions and a deep patina. A nearly two-thousand-year-old copper coin for 800 rupees, less than $18 US. I gave in. Suddenly, I was pocketing a Kushan coin as if it were spare change.

Outside the shop, Hakim asked why I had not bargained for a better price, suggesting I might have got it for less. 'Bargaining is part of the conversation,' he said. 'Consider the conversation more valuable than the coin.'

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Shopkeepers knew Hakim's purchasing habits: he bought contemporary jewellery and he bought ancient coins. They also knew that the very visible police presence in the market was in part due to the probability that some shopkeepers sold antiquities. When I asked Hakim about the market police, he speculated, half seriously, that they were on high alert because of a never-before-seen North American following him around. The police presence did not bother Hakim. Everyone knew of his history in government in Afghanistan. He visited the market twice annually, he never dealt in one-of-a-kind antiquities and he knew all the Afghan shopkeepers by name.

Hakim commented that coins did not arouse police attention because they were available in the market in large numbers. Greek, Roman, Bactrian, Scythian, Parthian, Kushan, Sasanian, Hun, Gupta; all types of ancient coins of Central Asia entered into the Peshawar market. And the numbers of ancient coins in the market were negligible when compared to the abundance of Islamic coins dating from the seventh century to the present. I learned during our rounds that early Islamic coins were Hakim's specialty.

Shops we visited in the Sarafa Bazaar not only attracted window shoppers and tourists, but provided a meeting place for big-time buyers from Europe and elsewhere. The shops themselves represented only a part of the business: shopkeepers maintained workshops located elsewhere in the market that produced the jewellery they sold. Hakim took me to a market area where a series of adjoining workshops lined both sides of a narrow passageway. Each workshop was equipped with jewellers' tables and materials, assortments of jewellers' tools, chaotic collections of plate silver, wire thread, trays of lapis, amber, carnelian and other semi-precious stones. Workers cut, tooled and assembled necklaces, bracelets, broaches, rings, earrings, pendants and medallions.

In addition to workshops, some shopkeepers managed warehouses that were off limits to casual shoppers but open to buyers the shopkeepers knew would predictably spend $2,000 or more. Fifty-thousand-dollar transactions were not uncommon, especially from buyers sent by major importing houses in Germany, England or the United States. Even the maintenance of a Peshawar market enterprise did not always constitute the entire business. Some shopkeepers periodically travelled to London or New York, or sent a brother or cousin, to ensure that branch shops operated by relatives were well supplied.

Shopping was a pleasure. For gifts to bring home, I selected from countless strands of lapis lazuli in various lengths and beads in various sizes, silver and lapis earrings and small silk embroidery textiles from Afghanistan. After purchases in one shop, the shopkeeper gestured for me to hold out my hand. He placed two gold Kushan coins in my hand. One was particularly fine, a beautiful Kanishka coin. In less than 24 hours, I had held seven Kushan gold coins in my hand, four in very fine condition. If I were a collector, the seven coins could have been mine for about four to five thousand US dollars.

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A young man walked into a shop, asked for tea and made himself comfortable sitting cross-legged on the carpet. With his tall, angular features and thick beard, he could readily have claimed Kushan ancestry. He was from northern Afghanistan. He engaged the shopkeeper in a manner indicating long friendship, probably through family connections. After a while, the

visitor produced a few coins from a small purse. I was privately delighted that our departure was delayed if only to witness the exemplary ethics of local shopkeeper behaviour. Hakim deferred to the lengthy negotiations without question or interference. Even though the visitor would surely have been informed of who was currently in the shop, the deal was brought to completion as if we were invisible. Only after the shopkeeper and visitor parted company, and only after the shopkeeper asked if he was interested, did Hakim agree to have a look.

There seemed no end of shops to visit. Outside the shop door, off with the shoes. Inside, make yourself comfortable on a pile of Afghan rugs, sip the hot tea, appreciate a wall covered with chains of lapis and silver, chunky amber and coral necklaces. There was no point attempting to understand the exuberant exchanges. The humour was contagious, the gestures and expressive faces riveting; I felt entirely comfortable without the benefit of translation.

Five young men burst into one shop brimming with ego and energy. In due course, one of them produced a metal container about the size of a small matchbox. Undoing a clasp and opening the lid, he casually tossed a stunning gold Kushano-Sasanian coin onto the carpet. This was a coin produced by a Zoroastrian Sasanian prince who occupied Kushan territory in Afghanistan in the fourth century AD and thereafter minted coins adopting Kushan designs. The shopkeeper carefully examined the coin under magnification and could not conceal his excitement. Hakim, as I had seen him do before, became invisible, showing no sign of interest until the transaction was completed. When the shopkeeper handed him the coin, Hakim examined it briefly, but said nothing and handed it back. The five men were still in the shop when we left.

I commented, ‘So these guys come to the city, one of them has a gold coin, they know where to go to land a good price.’

‘Pocket change,’ Hakim responded. ‘They’ll have a good time tonight. The coin was not what they were excited about. They say they smuggled in a truckload of guns from Kabul. Afghans are famous for exaggerating. Who knows, maybe they smuggled a gun or two. They are young men feeling good about themselves.’

The shopkeeper had made a mistake. He purchased the coin assuming he could turn a great profit. ‘He’s an assistant,’ Hakim said. ‘The shop owner is in Tehran for a few days. This assistant is not so knowledgeable: he paid too much, more than twice what he should have. He was very surprised by this coin that came into the shop today, so he was overexcited. He will have to hope someone comes who doesn’t know what they are buying. Too bad if it doesn’t sell, he’ll have to explain his mistake when the owner returns.’

Hakim later told a related story about another mistake in the sale of a coin. While he was still a government minister in Kabul, a young man contacted him who wanted to learn about

Afghanistan's history. This greatly pleased Hakim because so very few young people in Kabul expressed real interest in their extraordinary history. After some time, Hakim outlined the next steps for his ambitious student, setting up a modest dealership for buying and selling coins. His student made rapid progress, but then they lost contact.

Two years later, Hakim learned that the young man had moved to Peshawar and was running a successful business. Hakim took great pleasure in visiting his protégé in the new Peshawar shop. Out of a sense of courtesy and best wishes, Hakim decided to purchase a fine silver Bactrian Greek coin. Negotiations complete, the young shopkeeper suddenly stated that the coin had to be purchased as one of a pair. Shocked, Hakim responded, 'We negotiated for one coin and we agreed on a price. There was no mention of a second coin.' Hakim returned the coin and demanded his money back. He told his trainee never to do that again, not to him, not to anyone: it was bad business practice. After that, every time he saw Hakim in the market, the man apologised. Hakim told him he need not apologise any more, but because of the mistake, he would not return to his shop. Eventually, Hakim eased off his displeasure by agreeing to periodic negotiations conducted elsewhere in the market.

'Every business deal is conducted in three parts,' Hakim said. 'Discussion. Negotiation. Sale. That's it. No changing your mind, no turning back, no tricks. If I make a mistake, too bad, I have made a mistake, and normally I will return something only if I discover I've been sold a forgery. If I know the shopkeeper was truly not aware, I negotiate to make up for the shopkeeper's loss by purchasing something else.'

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We hired a taxi and driver to take us to Islamabad. The Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Islamabad follows a section of a road first built in the fourth century BC by the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta. Lengthened and improved by the Mughals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the highway linked the cities of Kabul, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Delhi (see Figures 3 and 5, Chapter 2). Today, the highway remains a major artery for truck drivers, travellers, walkers and pilgrims alike. We drove through miles of industrial sprawl in the Peshawar suburbs before entering countryside and a series of villages.

River crossings offered scenic highlights during the drive, especially the bridge over the Kabul River and a spectacular gorge where the Kabul joins the Indus River at Attock. Akbar's Fort, built in 1580, dominates the gorge, its crenellations easily visible from the highway. The fort itself is now occupied by the Pakistani military and is closed to the public. Several sensationally painted and decorated Pakistani trucks were parked in the river shallows where drivers were busy giving them a good scrubbing. We passed through the town of Hasan Abdal, an important spiritual centre not only for Buddhists but for Hindus,

Sikhs and Muslims. Its Sikh temple is particularly important because it contains a distinct handprint in stone, believed to have been miraculously impressed into the rock by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

Every mile or so, two or three heavily armed military policemen stopped cars and trucks to engage in random car searches. The last hour's drive into Islamabad was nerve-jangling, horn-honking, maniacal highway madness, our car crowded by trucks belching black diesel fumes. As the dusk air turned stifling hot and brown, I began to panic. Thankfully, Hakim remained entirely calm. On two lanes of the highway the traffic was four cars wide due to trucks forcing wide extensions of the road shoulders. To counter the standstill, drivers came up with the novel idea of jumping the central curbing, ploughing through shrubbery that divided the road, and with horns blaring madly, occupying the inside lane of oncoming traffic. Our driver chose this adventurous route for 20 minutes or more, gaining considerable headway before returning to the appropriate side of the highway.

From highway madness we entered into a local version of sanitised Americana, materialising in the form of a Holiday Inn, which somehow managed to eradicate from its architecture and interior design even the slightest trace of its Asian location. 'My god, Kansas City, Pakistan,' I mumbled. The first hot water I experienced in Pakistan exploded out of the taps scalding hot. Finding a measure of solace in the comfort and cleanliness after a shower and rest, I met up with Hakim in the dining room for a sumptuously laid-out Pakistani buffet. Hakim gave me something to settle a slight hacking cough I had developed.

The weekly Thursday exodus from Peshawar accounted for the traffic snarl. Peshawar merchants closed their shops, packed their trucks, and headed for Islamabad to set up overnight for the Friday Afghan market at the Juma Bazaar. The market opened early in a large public park only a short walk from the hotel. Shade trees lined Islamabad streets that were wonderfully wide and clean, laid out in a classic grid plan. We arrived in an extensive market area with shaded stalls neatly organised into distinct areas: woodwork, brass crafts, clothing, farmers' goods. A large area featured fish, meat and vegetables. Tables in the handcrafts area were heaped with jewellery, woodcarvings, paintings, pottery and other crafts. In one section, Afghan rugs carpeted the ground and were draped over ropes between trees to form walls for individual stalls. Customers revealing the slightest sign of interest became engaged with vendors, who confidently and aggressively turned on their centuries-old sales strategies of show and tell.

I noticed a tray with a modest pile of interesting-looking coins. I took the plunge and acted like a seasoned collector. I selected four Kushan coppers of reasonable quality and practised negotiating, talking down the $15 to $20 asking price to about $8 each.

With Hakim bargaining and interpreting on my behalf, I purchased a fine Turkmen carpet

from northern Afghanistan featuring a rich madder-red background with deep-indigo guls. Hakim paid in US dollars from his own pocket; I paid him back later. A woven beauty, the carpet was packaged and ready to travel by the time we returned to the hotel for a break.

Back in the market, I noticed an elderly Pakistani man in European dress examining coins with a careful eye at the same table where I had earlier purchased Kushan coppers. Hakim was nearby, and the two greeted each other in a manner that struck me as unusually formal. It was obvious that the man was expressing interest in me, but we were not introduced. A little later, I asked Hakim if the man was a coin collector. 'No, no, not a coin collector,' he said. 'A former high-ranking secret service agent for the government of Pakistan. Supposedly retired now, buys and sells coins for a hobby, but he doesn't miss much.'

That evening, Hakim and I discussed the remarkable availability of ancient coins. Hakim recalled a time in government in Afghanistan when one of his colleagues made a big issue of attempting to legislate on limiting coin dealing in bazaars, arguing that coins were antiques and therefore should not be allowed out of the country. Hakim expressed a contrary view, that ancient coins were no different than modern coins, minted by the tens of thousands. 'While I was in government in Kabul, no legislation was ever tabled declaring ancient coins a rare national treasure. Yes, there are rare ancient coins, and museums should continue to have numismatists that curate major coin collections. But coin collecting is good fun and a great way for people of all ages to learn history. Adult professional collectors and dealers should never forget the fun. Collecting taken too seriously is very foolish. This is something Craig Burns knew well and then forgot. Near the end of his life he stripped the house bare so that he could buy another coin.'

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Coins have been traded and collected ever since coinage was invented in about 600 BC.

Even ancient coins were minted in huge numbers. Today, hundreds of thousands, if not millions of coins, with or without specific provenance, circulate annually in the coin trade to enter into public and private collections. Ancient coins are so common that archaeologists themselves often fail to properly record the circumstances of their discovery or take the necessary steps to process and conserve coin finds. Roman and Greek coins are the most famous and widely collected coins of antiquity. But any coin cannot, by any reasonable interpretation of laws governing antiquities, be restricted for sale solely on the basis of the length of time a coin has been removed from its country of origin. A Roman or Greek or Kushan coin may have been removed from its source country 10 days ago, or 2,000 years ago.

Coins should be treated differently from one-of-a-kind objects. Unfortunately, the issue of whether or not coins should be considered ‘significant cultural property’ is ignored in legislation passed in the United Nations, Europe and the United States. In Article 1 of the 1971 *United Nations Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, ‘cultural property’ refers to antiquities more than 100 years old and includes inscriptions, coins and engraved seals. Some countries, including the United States and Britain, were not originally signatories to the convention. Many other countries, including Pakistan and India, did not generally recognise the UN convention as it applied to coins, but passed their own laws regulating antiquities.

In 2003, widespread media coverage after the US invasion of Iraq called attention to the looting of archaeological sites in that country. The American Institute of Archaeology promoted legislation to criminalise private collecting of anything historic of Iraqi origin, coins included. In spite of massive lobbying against the legislation by coin collectors and the Ancient Coin Collectors Guild, the bill was passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Similar legislation was passed in regard to collecting antiquities, including coins, from Afghanistan.

The legislation was predicated on the assumption that all objects from museums and archaeological sites in both countries were stolen or vandalised during the wars. The presumption that property was stolen because it looks like something appearing on a list of cultural properties extends well beyond basic tenets of legal systems that protect against false accusations.

Archaeological sites have been severely impacted throughout Central Asia from centuries of wars and illicit digging. There have been tragic losses of museum artefacts due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Fortunately, it is also true that many objects thought to be lost from both countries were in fact transferred into safe storage thanks to the tireless efforts of perceptive curators and staff. Many other artefacts have been recovered over the years due to international searches and global communication efforts between auction houses, museums and cooperative private collectors. The National Geographic Society reported in 2005, for example, that tens of thousands of artefacts in near perfect condition and mysteriously overlooked by the Taliban in Kabul remained locked in vaults.

The archaeological community has been tireless in its attempts to stop illegal imports and exports of antiquities. But neither legislation nor archaeology has prevented antiquities from circling the globe. Illegal dealing occurs in dozens of countries, often with government knowledge, and in some countries, government support. Even if legislation were to succeed in some measure in slowing down illegal trade in antiquities, the question would remain as to whether the legislation should apply to coins.

The desire of museum curators to build a full research collection is now frustrated by the development of international codes relating to the illegal trade in antiquities. Many countries have built such codes into legislation with a desire to protect their heritage.[34] In 1970, UNESCO introduced a convention that was intended to support this approach to protecting cultural heritage. Museum institutions, such as the International Council of Museums, have developed their own codes on the same principles. This approach works well for works of art and major archaeological finds but is problematic for small antiquities like coins. The provenances of small objects are rarely documented, and small transportable objects have often travelled great distances. Roman coins are frequently found in southern India, for example. The adoption of the UNESCO convention as a framework for guiding museum acquisition generally means that only objects with a known provenance before 1970 can be acquired. This affects the acquisition of coins in particular, as very few coins come on the market with a provenance. This limits the ability of museums to continue building their collections.

The trade in coins continues, but many important items now disappear into private hands and are no longer available as public research resources in museum collections. Museums rightfully argue that adherence to the convention often fails to protect heritage, especially when information derived from coins and coin finds is lost. Many periods of history can be written based only on coin information and other small finds. But while research on museum collections is inhibited by national and international conventions, the illegal trade and illegal digging continue unabated.

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During a sleepless night in Pakistan, I was haunted by an often-told Sufi story. I could not recall when I had first heard it, but I knew the story was attributed to Mullah Nasruddin, a legendary thirteenth-century Middle Eastern philosopher/wise fool/storyteller. The story begins with Nasruddin on his hands and knees searching for something in the dust of the village square. People gather around and ask what he's doing. 'Keys,' he says, 'I've lost the keys to my house.' Villagers join in the search, down on hands and knees. But after being burned by the hot sun, one of the villagers asks, 'We've looked all around, are you sure you lost your keys on this street?' 'Oh no,' is the response. 'I lost them in my house.' They all look at him aghast. 'In your house? Then what are we doing out here?' Nasruddin answered simply, 'There is more light out here.'

I kept asking myself what I was doing in Pakistan. I missed my wife and daughter. I had managed to get a call through to Toronto during my first night in Peshawar, but the phone connection worked for about two minutes. I had not made contact since. I could always cut

the trip short and return home. Whatever key I was looking for was probably waiting for me in plain sight back there.

Breakfast did not help. Hakim announced he would be busy with meetings for most of the day. He offered to organise an outing for me, but I declined. I preferred a lazy day catching up on writing my travel diary and going for a walk.

Late in the afternoon I met with Hakim and his friends at a bookshop near the hotel. After introductions our group of civil servants and coin enthusiasts left the bookstore and headed out in two cars to a Chinese restaurant on Jinnah Avenue. For dinner conversation, this group had one topic in mind — a real showstopper, a gold coin minted by the Bactrian Greek king Euthydemus in about 230 BC. The coin was passed around. We all expressed our admiration, but everyone awaited the universally acknowledged expert's opinion. Hakim gave the coin a long look with the aid of a four-power eyepiece he kept in his jacket pocket. 'Lightly struck,' he said, 'but very impressive.' Hakim had seen the coin in silver, never in gold. He suggested it could be a unique coin, in near-perfect condition.

The restaurant manager stood patiently by, eventually pointing to his watch well over an hour after closing time. With considerable graciousness he escorted the laughter-prone coin connoisseurs out to their cars. These were star patrons he expected to see again.

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Hakim introduced me to an Afghan friend who joined us for a buffet lunch the next day in the hotel cafeteria. He managed a shop specialising in carpets and jewellery. This was the person Hakim would have asked to meet me at the Islamabad airport in the event he missed his flight from Gatwick. It was a pleasure to meet this man, and I felt drawn to him immediately. He was perhaps 50 years old, with a strong, thoughtful personality. He struggled in English, but it didn't matter; his manner of speaking was entirely captivating.

Hakim turned his attention to his friend. A lengthy conversation ensued in Pashto. The tone was serious; Hakim confirmed later that the conversation was political. I was offered only a brief summary, a hint that no love was lost between the government of Pakistan and the government in power in Kabul. Pakistan, with CIA assistance, was supporting a Muslim student movement known as the Taliban for the purpose of launching a full-fledged attack in Afghanistan, with the aim of overthrowing the Soviet-backed government. According to Afghan sources, the Taliban were not succeeding. This was contradicted by Pakistani reports that suggested the Taliban were making significant headway. Hakim and his friend clearly did not sympathise with the US- and Pakistani-backed Taliban movement.[35]

When Hakim's friend excused himself and departed, Hakim metamorphised from an

experienced spokesperson for serious politics to a humourist fond of light-hearted banter. We enjoyed a summary of favourite sales techniques that Afghan coin dealers had used on Hakim.

‘I’ve not shown this coin to anyone else, you’re the first to see it.’

‘I’ve been saving this coin for two years just to show you, no one else.’

‘For a tourist it’s 10,000 rupees, for you only 7,500.’

‘It’s a small shop, I don’t make much profit, but for you the price is reduced.’

‘Another man wants this coin, but I told him I’m holding it for you to see first, we’ve known each other a long time.’

‘You have bought coins from me before, you bought coins from my father, I have no choice, I have to give this one for a special price.’

While looking at Kushan coppers I heard this: ‘Hakim and I have known each other for many years. You are his friend, I’ll give you these two coins for practically nothing. But I do have to make a small profit of course.’

Hakim laughed. ‘Shopkeepers say these things to anyone. And if you buy even one relatively expensive coin, an Afghan dealer will never forget you as long as he lives.’

In the afternoon, Hakim and I attended a folk festival held in one of Islamabad’s expansive park areas. We purchased block-printed cotton and linen fabrics to bring home. I found an unusually fine triangular Afghan door hanging, probably 50 years old, a textile that combined weaving, embroidery and beading. I loved it immediately, and Hakim helped negotiate a reasonable price. We strolled around for a couple of hours enjoying musicians from the Punjab, Sindh, Gilgit and Baluchistan, all performing traditional songs in traditional dress.

During dinner, again in a storytelling mood, Hakim recounted memories of Afghanistan while he was still in government service.

‘I had a wonderful barber,’ he said. ‘Everybody loved this man; he was so warm and gracious. He was a learned man, a highly respected Sufi with a deep and lively intelligence. He memorised entire Islamic epics; he memorised hundreds of pages of Jalaluddin Rumi. During certain evenings, a group of us often met in the barbershop to listen to him recite poetry and tell stories. When word got around that poetry and stories were on for the evening, people travelled many miles out of their way to be at the barbershop: two or three of us from government, a professor of history, a well-known Kabul musician. A poet laureate always arrived at the barbershop on his white horse. If young people were there, we enjoyed a game that many children first learned in school. The elders act as judges. *Bait bazi* is a form of battle, a battle of poems. You recite a verse, your opponent has a minute to reply with a verse

that begins with the same letter that ended yours. This can be an extremely difficult challenge, but that was precisely the point, to sharpen the quickness of mind and memory. These were good times. Everyone was there to enjoy each other's company and listen to the barber. He was a real treasure of Kabul.'

Hakim paused for several moments, gazing to one side. 'I had worked in government in Kabul for about two or three years. This was in the late 1950s. I always went with my colleague to the same café for afternoon tea. It was a good place to relax, tell a few jokes, express our thoughts. He had been to Mecca so I referred to him as "the Hadji". He called me "Senator".

'One day we noticed a beggar outside the café. On an impulse, we invited the man to join us for tea. He turned out not to be a beggar at all. It's better to think of him as a man who did not refuse a courtesy if offered. He talked openly, and we enjoyed a lengthy conversation. I've never forgotten something he said. He told us there are three qualities he looks for in people. First of all, he sees whether a person, regardless of circumstances, tends towards a generally optimistic or a generally pessimistic view, not only of the world in general, but of himself especially. Secondly, he looks for power of mind, whether the person shows in any way that he tries to expand his mental functioning. And thirdly, are there signs this person knows a higher reality? Is he engaged in spiritual practice as part of his daily life?

'This man was a teacher,' Hakim said, 'but not from any of the usual schools. Here was a man that my colleague and I had never met before. We invited him to share tea with us. He left. We never saw him again. These men can still be found in Central Asia. Wandering teachers, storytellers, in the mountains and villages, accepting shelter, food, something to drink, getting by with little more than their devotion.'

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We caught a flight to Lahore. Near our hotel, concrete and wire barriers prevented our taxi driver from entering a major boulevard. I had become accustomed to a ubiquitous military police presence, but the contingent here was especially heavy. Our hotel was only a few blocks away from street barriers, and we were allowed to pass without difficulty.

Hakim made plans of his own; my intention to visit the Lahore Museum was delayed when hotel staff advised that we stay in our rooms. A demonstration was expected in the museum region, a protest against high taxes and low wages. Apparently the day before, when the demonstration started, police had fired shots to control the crowds. One man was reported dead, several others wounded.

Late in the afternoon I learned that the demonstration was over and the crowds had

dispersed, so I could catch an auto rickshaw with no problem. The streets were ominously empty and littered with garbage. Police detachments remained on street corners, many armed with machine guns. Glass and steel shields were propped against trees, surrounded by an array of steel face masks, megaphones and electric prods. Fortunately, the museum gates were open. The Lahore Museum is a palace of rooms with spectacular collections. Galleries of Gandharan Buddhist sculpture surpassed anything I had expected. But time was limited; I was in the museum for only an hour.

I returned to the hotel through stifling humidity, heat and smog. Military men occupied all major intersections, ten or more to a group. Nevertheless, wanting a feel of the city, I explored side streets similar to the narrow, crowded passageways of the Peshawar bazaar. But I was a stranger, and with thousands of eyes turning in my direction, I retreated back to the main street, walking at a fast clip to the hotel.

The air remained thick as Hakim and I taxied after dark from our hotel to the comfort of another air-conditioned hotel for supper. It was a pleasure to see that the architects for the Lahore Holiday Inn had made an effort to include South Asian-inspired columns with lotus blossom capitals, Islamic geometric tile design, and finely done marble and woodwork. We started with a delicious cold fruit drink and fruit salad, followed by an excellent Pakistani buffet. I was now familiar with some dishes: the richly spiced lentils in *moong dal*, the spicy potato and mutton stew known as *aloo gosht*. I relished the cheese cubes with peas and spices, *matar paneer*. One of my favourites was *rogan josh*, a rich dish made with beef chunks in a creamy red sauce.

While I was visiting the museum earlier in the day, Hakim visited a shop he had not been to for many years. The shopkeeper recognised him immediately. ‘I have six coins for you,’ he said. It turned out that Hakim had bought the coins during a previous visit, and to Hakim’s amazement, he had completely forgotten to take the coins with him. Hakim credited the shopkeeper’s Muslim faith for this show of goodwill. ‘This must have been six or seven years ago. That day was very hot. Worse than today. The sweat dripped off me; I was impatient to return to my hotel. The shopkeeper took too much time wrapping the coins, so I said I’d be back later: a friend was waiting for me at the hotel. Later, I went out for dinner. I left Lahore the next day and completely forgot the coins.’

Hakim decided to keep one coin but told the shopkeeper to keep the others. He could sell them again if he wanted.

We regretted not staying in Lahore’s Holiday Inn; we were not pleased with the seedy state of the place where we were staying. Hundreds of near-translucent lizards clung to the walls. They appeared in the evening as if by magic, stayed the night, then vanished at daybreak. The TV did not work, and many areas of blistering paint decorated the dull-grey walls. There

was no soap for the shower or sink. A noisy fan remained on all night. Expressing his feelings to a desk attendant, Hakim received a shrug of the shoulders. The explanation was that the hotel was now government run. Apparently, nothing more needed saying.

The following day I was a tourist, my escort a 22-year-old son of a hotel shopkeeper. He was supremely cordial, a fun-loving guide who prodded me for any information I could offer on the subject of Canadian women. His second interest, not quite so vigorously pursued, was Canadian universities. I welcomed our long walk through the magnificent Lahore Fort, dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one of the greatest Mughal creations of South Asia, all red sandstone buildings beautifully embellished with elaborate frescoes, marble work and brilliantly coloured glazed tiles. It's another of Pakistan's fantastic underappreciated heritage treasures. Only a handful of other visitors were exploring Lahore Fort that day.

Regretfully, it turned out that I could not take time to go back to the Lahore Museum. Hakim and I returned to Islamabad that evening. Back in my room by 8 p.m., I appreciated a spotless bathroom, the absence of lizards, and clean sheets. The cool shower felt like heaven. A short rainstorm accompanied by soft rumblings of thunder cleared the air. I swallowed a pill but I could not shake my light hacking cough. My Canadian lungs simply could not comprehend what had hit them.

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The discordant sound of security checks and line-ups at the airport somehow reminded me of passages from Sergei Prokofiev's youthful, cacophonous, brilliant orchestral composition, *The Scythian Suite*. Our British Airways plane was parked a mile away from the terminal. From that distance it looked like a ghostly monster wearing a mist mantle. Finally, herded into a bus and taken for a ride, we were in our seats by 8.30 a.m. and in the air an hour after the scheduled departure time.

'If my health were better,' Hakim said during the flight, 'if conditions in Afghanistan had stabilised satisfactorily, I would have welcomed the opportunity to move my family back to Kabul. I could return to government service or continue my career in banking. But this has proved impossible.'

I felt fortunate to be in this man's company. As Craig Burns had said, he was a gentleman's gentleman, completely comfortable in multiple circles, clearly steadfast in his own true law. I accepted without hesitation Hakim's invitation to return with him to Pakistan another time. But that night, after two weeks in Pakistan, exhilarated and exhausted, I recalled my dream dreamed at Lake Almanor of immense caves and great sculptures in human form with smoke

and flickers of flame rising from the statues' heads, arms and shoulders. I felt my dream still needed more light.

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Elizabeth and the Masson Project

Coincident with the analysis of the Rabatak inscription, the British Museum Department of Coins and Medals began an enomrous separate effort that proved to be just as groundbreaking. During one of my visits, I followed Joe Cribb down a narrow corridor and through a strangely small doorway that opened into a sizeable office where Joe introduced me to Elizabeth Errington. A massive collection of artefacts had appeared, assembled in the 1830s by Charles Masson. The collection included diaries, maps, drawings and thousands of artefacts, in addition to thousands of coins. Elizabeth had no idea what she was taking on when confronting several piles of boxes that had lain unattended in closets and cupboards in various institutions for 160 years. However, Elizabeth was precisely the right person to take it on.

Elizabeth was literally born and raised on a gold mine, one of the original Johannesburg, South Africa, mines dating from the 1880s. Her father was the chief resident engineer. He did not commute to work; the mine offices were across the road. Set on eight acres of land with vegetable gardens and peach, apricot, fig, quince and gum trees, their home was within walking distance of the city centre but was also overshadowed by white, sand-like piles and the mine's headframe, and was skirted by a rail line for transporting ore to the processing plant. In strong winds, sand up to four inches deep covered their verandah. They always knew from quakes when some kind of accident had happened underground.

Elizabeth came out of art school to work as a graphic artist in Johannesburg in 1968, but moved to London the following year to work freelance in the advertising industry. In 1972, with an overwhelming urge to see more of the world, Elizabeth and an art school friend from South Africa hitchhiked around Europe for five months — initially in France, Spain, Italy and Greece — concentrating on seeing all the art and sites they had read about in books. Later, in Turkey, her friend wanted to visit the Hittite city of Hattusa in Anatolia. Elizabeth was happy to go along, although she had never heard of the place. They caught a series of buses from Istanbul to reach the nearest village, where they hired a jeep and driver to take them to the site.

A former site director happened to be showing friends around and invited Elizabeth and her friend to join them. They ended up sitting on the hillside of the acropolis at sunset near the Lion's Gate, overlooking the ancient city below. The director spoke enthusiastically about the city's discovery and excavation and its importance in Anatolia and northern Syria in the second millennium BC. A few days later, in the Ankara Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Elizabeth marvelled over amazing artefacts from cultures she had never heard of. Back in

London, she resolved to learn more.

Three years later, Elizabeth recognised two things: she still knew nothing about the Hittites, and she did not find her work in advertising particularly satisfying. University offered the most promising answer, with an outdoor career objective in either horticulture or archaeology, but the first option required science A levels, so she settled on the second. Her graphic arts diploma was accepted as an A level, and she added two more at evening classes in English literature and ancient history.

Starting in September 1977, the School of Oriental and African Studies in London offered Elizabeth a programme in the history and archaeology of the Near and Middle East, but it was only after enrolling that she discovered the courses were primarily oriented to Islamic studies. A pre-Islamic option was available in A. D. H. Bivar's seminar on Iran, with other courses on the ancie.t Near East available at the Institute of Archaeology. Elizabeth felt drawn to Bivar's Gandharan studies related to Iran, and Elizabeth ended up doing Gandhara-related research for one of her BA units. She planned to go to Iran and Afghanistan, but was prevented by the overthrow of the Shah in Iran on the one hand and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on the other. Instead, she worked on summer archaeology digs in Greece, Cyprus and Jordan. Her drawing skills were put to work for recording artefacts, but this was not exactly the outdoor job Elizabeth had anticipated.

Bivar suggested that Elizabeth advance to a PhD programme working on nineteenth-century British archaeological records of Gandhara. She often quotes Bivar's reasoning: 'Personal experience informed him that you couldn't hiccup in British India without having to write a report in triplicate, so there must be records.' He was right! Elizabeth did a part-time PhD programme (1980–87), while working three days a week in her old job as a graphic artist. In 1983 she travelled to Pakistan and India for three months, initially to attend the International Conference on Archaeology in Gilgit, held to celebrate the opening of the Karakoram highway between Pakistan and China. She visited major archaeological sites featuring Gandharan-era material in Taxila and Swat Valley. She also visited the Peshawar Valley sites of Jamalgarhi and Takht-i-Bahi in the company of Francine Tissot, then curator and author from the Musée Guimet in Paris, who was often referred to as the 'Mother of Gandhara'. Elizabeth researched nineteenth-century archaeological records in government archives in Peshawar, the Lahore Museum and Civil Secretariat, as well as the Indian museums in Calcutta and Chandigarh. After completing her doctorate and receiving a publication offer for her thesis, Elizabeth was awarded another grant to return to Pakistan and India for two months of postdoctoral research. She concentrated especially on a site that had become her primary focus: Jamalgarhi, the ruins of a Buddhist monastery near Mardan in the Peshawar Valley, discovered in 1847 by British explorer and archaeologist Sir Alexander Cunningham.

From the 1850s onwards it was official British government policy to insist on annual surveys to record all known ancient sites of each region and increasingly to collect artefacts and sculptures for the newly created regional museums. This led in the 1870s to the first official excavations of Gandharan sites, which were undertaken by the Sappers and Miners (i.e., the engineering division of the army) during the cold season. They produced reports and plans of the excavations, and were advised by Alexander Cunningham, the director of the newly created Archaeological Survey of India that wrote detailed annual reports. Elizabeth found that during the period of the 1850s to the 1880s, in unsettled districts of the Peshawar Valley and northern Punjab, collecting and excavating occurred in the immediate vicinity of British hill stations or elsewhere in British India during tax revenue assessments (supported by troops), as well as during military actions in border regions. Strict laws to protect the sites from unofficial digging and the clandestine collection of antiquities were first introduced in the 1860s, but these proved impossible to enforce in remote regions. Collecting on a grand scale began after the official Punjab Government excavations of the 1870s, with most artefacts going to the Lahore Museum. Excavation material from Jamalgarhi, Takht-i-Bahi, Sahri Bahlol and other sites were also sent to Calcutta, where they were divided between the Indian and British Museums.[36] In 1896 Harold Deane, Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province of British India, published his concerns regarding the need for archaeology and respect for sites. Deane was also responsible for a considerable number of objects that entered the British Museum, including artefacts confiscated from British officers, many of whom had been involved in irresponsible digging and site destruction during the Malakand campaign in Swat. Since partition from India, and in deference to antiquities laws passed in the new state of Pakistan, the British Museum has not knowingly acquired any antiquities exported since 1947.

A job offer in 1990 that Elizabeth could not refuse interrupted her plans to prepare her thesis for publication. She describes the job as ‘assistant dogsbody’ for the *Crossroads of Asia* exhibition organised by the Ancient India and Iran Trust at the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge in 1992 and funded by the Neil Kreitman Foundation. In the end, Elizabeth was a contributing author and co-editor with Joe Cribb for the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, a book immediately recognised as the most comprehensive and advanced contribution to Kushan and Gandharan studies published to date.[37]

After completing the *Crossroads* project, Elizabeth returned to work on her thesis, especially the research regarding the discoveries of Charles Masson in Afghanistan. Preliminary investigations of the extensive British Library archives revealed that the former India Office holdings of Masson’s records were precise enough to enable a comprehensive evaluation and reconstruction of his Afghanistan archaeological excavations and his collections in the British Museum. After discussions regarding her interest in the Masson

material, Joe Cribb successfully proposed and arranged for funding from the Neil Kreitman Foundation for a part-time British Museum research assistant post in the Department of Coins and Medals so she could work with about 300 coins from the Masson collection. The funding also allowed her to work in the Asia Department investigating Buddhist relic deposits unearthed by Masson, including his finds from the urban site of Begram, Afghanistan. But even with responsibilities in two British Museum departments, Elizabeth also worked for Macmillan Publishers as an editor for Central Asia for the *Grove Dictionary of Art*.

Rumours constantly circulated about bags of coins from the Masson collection still in storage in the India Office Library, but the archivist in charge refused to admit to their existence. He challenged Elizabeth to prove it. She traced all relevant documents and found clear indications that Masson coin collections could be traced back to the India Office. When Neil Kreitman heard the story, he spoke to Graham Shaw, head of the Indian Office collections at the time. It did not take long before Shaw's inquiries brought to light over 10,000 coins that had been squirrelled away in the reserves of the Indian Office.

In agreement with Joe Cribb, Graham Shaw arranged a transfer of the coins on a long-term loan to the British Museum for research purposes. Elizabeth readily recalls calling for the taxi that she and Joe used to transport a heavy box full of coins and a heavier box of uncatalogued manuscripts from the old India Office Library at Waterloo to the British Museum. It turned out that not all the India Office coins were collected by Charles Masson. There were numerous South Indian and Javanese coins, which subsequent research by Sushma Jansari, one of the workers on the Masson Project, revealed were probably inherited in the early nineteenth century from Colin Mackenzie, a British surveyor general for the Madras Presidency, who was also an inveterate coin collector.

In 1996 Elizabeth was appointed as a curator of Asian coins in the first of a series of externally funded contracts that kept her as a full-time employee of the British Museum until her retirement in November 2011. As leader of the Masson Project, Elizabeth Errington was solely responsible for resurrecting from the grave the amazing story of Charles Masson and his extraordinary contributions to the study of world history. Elizabeth has always considered herself extremely fortunate to have had the support of numerous like-minded researchers, assistants and volunteers in the British Museum Department of Coins and Medals, all of whom wanted to work under her supervision.

In the midst of all the years mastering Masson material, Elizabeth always made sure she had plenty of outdoor time. Elizabeth and her husband, Nigel, are environmental activists, involved with many conservation and wildlife organisations both locally and nationally. Their back garden has multiple bird feeders, replenished daily, a pond, two apple trees and a

greenhouse. The garden backs onto a large private park, open only to occasional noisy Boy Scouts. The house is a few minutes' walk from their garden allotment where they plant and prune and harvest an abundance of apple, plum and cherry trees, red and black current bushes, rhubarb, raspberries, strawberries, onions, potatoes, beans and other veg for fresh food pleasures. They always have freshly picked food for three meals a day, with more than enough left over for neighbours and friends.

Back at the house after assisting in the allotment, I have often accompanied Elizabeth to her home office and library, and looked over her shoulder as she ponders close-ups of Masson objects projected on her big computer screen. The following profile of Charles Masson is derived from Elizabeth's articles and books with her permission.[38]

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Charles Masson was a traveller, pioneering archaeologist and numismatist, who, during a period of six years (1832–38), produced the first archaeological records of eastern Afghanistan based on multiple surveys and excavations of Buddhist sites and the urban site of Begram. His real name was James Lewis. He was born in the City of London in 1800 in a cosmopolitan neighbourhood within a stone's throw of the Bank of England. The large French-speaking Huguenot community on his doorstep must have given Masson ample opportunity to learn and speak French from an early age. A long-established Italian enclave was also nearby, so it is possible that he learned Italian at the same time. His education included Latin and Greek. This flair for languages he put to good use, later learning Hindustani and Farsi as well as some Pashto in Afghanistan.

It seems a quarrel with his father spurred James into enlisting — initially as an infantryman, subsequently as an artilleryman — in the British East India Company's army in 1821. He sailed for Bengal in 1822. Five years later, in 1827, James Lewis deserted the British army. He changed his name to Charles Masson, and he headed for areas of Central Asia outside British control, often on foot, sometimes accompanying caravans, disguising himself with apparent ease as an American. At least one report claimed Masson was French; another indicates he was also mistaken for an Italian.

During many months of extensive travels in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Masson hobnobbed with a number of European and British East India Company army officers and officials without betraying his origins. While with British officers in Iran in 1830, Masson established and sustained a story of being a US citizen and a Kentucky gentleman. In 1832, the British envoy to Iran, John Campbell, convinced of Masson's integrity, provided funding out of his own pocket for Masson to begin the exploration of ancient sites in Afghanistan. He encouraged Masson to send an account of his travels to the British authorities in Bombay. In

1833, Masson wrote to Henry Pottinger requesting funds to explore ancient remains in the Kabul area. Pottinger was the British political resident in Kutch, India, an official post held by appointed representatives of the East India Company in independent Indian states on the frontier of British India. On the strength of reports from Iran, Pottinger submitted a research proposal on behalf of a man he had never met, and then provided funds for Masson to begin antiquarian research in Afghanistan.

In the early years of his Central Asian adventures, Masson could not always travel long distances by foot. Diary notes reveal that he suffered from severe blisters, dysentery, as well as a cold weather–induced attack of lockjaw. He was robbed more than once. On one occasion he was left with nothing more than a ragged pair of pyjamas and shoes. The intensity of the cold assailed him with what was probably a recurring form of rheumatoid arthritis. He also suffered intermittently from malaria, but treated it effectively with a supply of quinine he had obtained in Iran.

He cared little for his own appearance and gave his old worsted socks to someone in need, as well as a sarong he had used as a head covering. He seldom travelled with a weapon and considered the solitary traveller much better off without one. He was devastated when a book was stolen, although he does not say which book it was. For Masson, perhaps his most essential possession was a nineteenth-century medical bestseller in its 1822 tenth reprint, Andrew Duncan's *Edinburgh New Dispensatory*. As a foreigner and constant traveller, Masson was expected to know how to treat a variety of ailments, not just his own.

In December 1832, a few days after Masson inspected sites in Bamiyan, he received a visit in Kabul from a British agent representing 'the Supreme Government of India'. The agent immediately alerted Claude Wade, the British political agent in the Punjab, to the presence of an Englishman by the name of Charles Masson who understood Persian, was shabbily dressed with no servant, horse or mule, and who possessed two or three books, a compass, a map and an astrolabe. The same year, an unattributed source described Masson as having grey eyes, red beard, close-cut hair, no stockings or shoes, and a green cap, with a dervish drinking cup slung over his shoulder.

Masson continued to research sites and assemble notes, drawings and artefacts from stupas and other monuments in several east Afghanistan locations. In the meantime, Wade gathered evidence to determine Masson's true identity. In March 1835 Masson received a letter informing him that the Supreme Government of India was pleased to appoint him as their agent for communicating intelligence on a salary of 250 rupees a month, anticipating that the result of his employment would be useful to government as well as honourable to himself. The 'honourable' carrot hinted at a possible royal pardon for his being a deserter from the British army, a crime that at the time was punishable by death.

Masson received a royal pardon in 1835 in return for becoming the British newswriter in Kabul, reporting via Wade to the Bengal Presidency. Masson was less than pleased by the political role he was obligated to play, but he could not refuse the job, especially after his alias had been discovered and he was known as a deserter. He served until October 1837, when a mission in Kabul he was associated with, planned by Alexander Burnes, failed. Burnes and Masson were both forced to withdraw to Peshawar. But when Masson did not receive a new appointment in Kabul, he resigned from his job as newswriter.

Burnes, who famously dressed as a turbaned native Central Asian, wrote an account of his adventures, *Travels into Bokhara*, published in 1834, that was an instant bestseller in London. He was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1838 and re-established as a regular political agent in Kabul the same year. He remained there until November 1841 when the Afghans' growing resentment of British occupation finally erupted. Burnes, his brother and his servants were hacked to death in a frenzied attack. During the infamous 1842 British withdrawal from Kabul, 4,500 British and Indian soldiers were killed along with 12,000 of their camp followers. This was the first confrontation in what was to become known as The Great Game, a decades-long competition between Russia and Britain for Central Asian resources and political control.

Masson managed to keep his antiquarian research, funded by the Bombay Presidency via Pottinger, separate from his political position as newswriter. But even after leaving that position, his travel and archaeological explorations were increasingly restricted. Masson was largely reduced to buying from the Kabul bazaar and paying local people for coins and artefacts collected at Begram.

While in Karachi in early 1840, Masson intended to return to Kabul as a private citizen. In Kalat, he found himself in a highly volatile situation between an inexperienced, arrogant British political agent and local chiefs who had rebelled and laid siege to the citadel. After six days, with no relief force in sight, resistance to the insurgents petered out. Both the British agent and Masson were taken prisoner, and Masson was sent by the rebels to deliver their demands to the British at Quetta. He was arrested on arrival by the British officer in charge and imprisoned without evidence for four months on suspicion of being a spy. British soldiers finally suppressed the uprising, but not before the rebels had killed the agent. Fully exonerated, but deeply embittered, Masson was eventually released by the British in January 1841.

Masson petitioned authorities in India for compensation for wrongful imprisonment but failed. He decided to seek redress when he returned to London in 1842. The East India Company gave Masson a small pension of £100 a year but never compensated him for his wrongful arrest. On 19th February 1844, Masson married Mary Anne Kilby, an eighteen-

year-old farmer’s daughter. They had two children. He spent the few remaining years of his life searching for employment as well as writing and working on his archaeological records and coin collection. Masson died a poor man suddenly on 5th November 1853 from an ‘uncertain disease of the brain’, most likely a stroke. He was buried at All Saints Church in London, less than half a mile from the British Museum. No tombstone survives. After his wife’s death a few years later, the East Indian Company Library gave his children a meager £100 for Masson’s voluminous collection of manuscript records, sketches and coins.

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During 1833–36, as per an agreement with Bombay authorities via Pottinger, all of Masson’s archaeological finds were forwarded to London. The material was sent in two batches to the India Museum, each spending several years in transit. After their arrival in London, the objects remained in the India Museum until 1878 when that museum closed. The collection was initially stored at the South Kensington Museum, subsequently renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum. From 1880–82, the British Museum received all the archaeological collections and a share of the coins, including the now-famous gold relic casket from Bimaran.

Some items were apparently dispersed before the India Museum closed, as the artefacts in the British Museum collection did not match the complete set of finds as listed by Horace Wilson in an 1841 publication in *Ariana Antiqua*.[39] This publication remains today an important source for early scholarly treatment of ancient coins and other antiquities discovered in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For the most part, the book focuses on the Charles Masson’s discoveries while in the service of the East India Company. In the India Museum, Masson’s relic deposits and other artefacts were placed in trays, each with a numbered ticket label. The British Museum inventory of the transfer of artefacts in 1880 records that documentation for 73 trays had survived. Some objects were accompanied by Masson’s handwritten labels, but not all of these labels were in the right trays.

Augustus W. Franks, Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum, was involved in the transfer of the Masson objects. He documented the contents of each tray and traced missing objects by working through Horace Wilson’s incomplete record of Masson’s material. In 1881, Franks wrote:

> Among the antiquities transferred … are a number of card trays which evidently [contain] the bulk of the Masson Collection from the Topes of Afghanistan. These trays have in them loose tickets with numbers in pencil from 1 to 73 with, however, numerous gaps and in some cases more than one ticket in a tray. There are also written labels

> probably by Mr. Masson but they seem [to be] rarely in the trays to which they belong. The value of these objects depends … on their exact history and I am very anxious to separate the objects only discovered in the topes from the miscellaneous things found casually in the plains which seem to be mixed up with them.

One hundred and two years later, Elizabeth Errington took on the challenge. She commenced work with the Masson material in 1993, picking up where Franks had left off in his late nineteenth-century report. She traced objects based on Masson's original notes and sketches. By cross-referencing, she positively identified hundreds of objects and established their provenance.

In addition to all the India Museum material transferred between 1880 and 1882, Elizabeth examined eight volumes of Masson manuscripts in the India Office collections of the British Library, which included reports, drawings, descriptions of archaeological sites and finds. There were also two bundles of uncatalogued papers, first located in the India Office Newspaper Room in 1958. The papers include detailed lists of finds from each stupa deposit, coins and beads, and objects collected from Begram or bought in the Kabul bazaar. During all this process, Elizabeth was particularly intrigued not only by the detail in Masson's materials but also by his artistic skill, evident in a wealth of detailed drawings.

One hundred and sixty years after his work in Afghanistan, Elizabeth's published report reveals that Charles Masson had excavated more than 50 Buddhist stupas and collected some 80,000 coins and thousands of other artefacts. The volume of material is testament to the thousands of hours that Masson devoted to careful documentation and analysis. Elizabeth's research shows that Masson's detailed approach to site-surveying and data analysis was far ahead of its time, and largely unacknowledged by Masson's contemporaries. Masson brought to light for the first time the names of kings and previously unknown Central Asian empires. He also was the first to realise that the names and titles in Greek on the king side of many coins were directly translated in an unknown script on the deity side. This led to the decipherment of the Kharoshthi script. After a century and a half of being ignored, Masson is now recognised as a gifted historian and archaeologist, and especially regarded as the first methodical analyst of the ancient coinages and artefacts of Afghanistan.

Masson's most famous find is a Buddhist relic deposit from a stupa in Bimaran in eastern Afghanistan. The deposit included an exquisitely crafted gold casket, on permanent display in the British Museum's South Asian galleries. The 6.5cm cylindrical casket has bands around the base and rim, with petal motifs originally inset with turquoise alternating with garnets. Between the bands are eight arches supported by plain pilasters with eagles with outstretched wings in the spandrels. Under each arch stands a haloed figure; each figure is represented twice. The most significant is an image of a standing Buddha, right hand raised

in the gesture of reassurance, the *abhaya mudra*. The Buddha is flanked on either side by the Indian gods Indra and Brahma.

Figure 19a. Bimaran casket and reliquary

Figure 19b. Detail, Bimaran casket

In addition to the gold casket, the stupa deposit included small gold ornaments, burnt pearls, sapphires, crystal beads and a ring, all found inside an inscribed spherical stone reliquary, along with four base silver coins issued in the name of an Indo-Scythian king, Azes II, and datable to about AD 60–90. The coin evidence leads Elizabeth and Joe Cribb to argue in favour of a late first-century date for the interment of the reliquary and associated gold casket. Every feature of the Bimaran deposit has raised discussion and controversy. The gold casket fascinates art historians, numismatists and archaeologists alike. One of Joe Cribb's recent articles provides a detailed historiography of the casket, along with a new analysis of

associated coin finds.[40] In September 2015, a group of 20 specialists, including Joe and Elizabeth, met in Cambridge for a two-day workshop. The workshop was organised around a single object: the Bimaran casket discovered by Charles Masson.

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No one knew at the outset, least of all Elizabeth, that the Masson Project would extend beyond the original five-year programme to become a career-long effort. Organisation and reconstruction of the material for purposes of cross-referencing and analysis required indefatigable persistence, along with Elizabeth's sixth sense for detail, a gift shared with her colleague Joe Cribb. That two such talents with parallel and often overlapping interests should end up in the same department in the British Museum, devoted to each other as friends and colleagues, is truly special.

Elizabeth still intends to return to a project that was foremost in her mind before she became involved with the Masson Project: completing revisions and rewriting her PhD thesis for publication. The subject? British colonial-period excavations and discoveries of Gandharan art, especially in the monastery complex of Jamalgarhi.

The mysterious king Soter Megas, known now thanks to the Rabatak inscription as Wima Takto, has left behind no fewer than 1,056 coins that have ended up in the mahogany coin drawers of the Department of Coins and Medals, 914 of which derive from the Charles Masson collection. Elizabeth has placed all the Masson objects online on the British Museum website, including the coins.[41] Volumes I and II were published in 2017. The third volume — on Masson's collections from Begram and the Kabul bazaar — is due to be published in 2020.

Charles Masson can rest easy in his unmarked pauper's grave. Attention has been paid.

— 10 —

Pakistan Archaeology

In 1997 my primary interest in Pakistan was to see Kushan-era archaeological sites, especially Buddhist monastery ruins. But I also wanted to take more time with museum collections, and so the day after our arrival I arranged for a two-day trip on my own to revisit the Lahore Museum Gandharan collections. I looked forward to seeing once again the extraordinary sculpture that commemorates Siddhartha's physical deprivation resulting from years of penance and fasting.

> When the doctrines of his spiritual masters failed to lead him to enlightenment, the Bodhisattva Siddhartha devised his own methods for achieving salvation. For six or seven years, he subjected himself to the most rigorous mental concentration, penance and self-torture in order to attain truly noble, superhuman knowledge and insight.[42]

Siddhartha is seated in meditation on a grass-covered throne. His torso is skeletal, with wrinkled skin clinging to the ribs and bones around an empty body cavity. He has deep-sunken eye sockets. His legs are partially covered by the undulating folds of a robe that has fallen off bony shoulders. He is bearded; his hair falls from a topknot in disorderly locks. Pronounced veins run from his forehead down his neck and chest.

Images of the tortured and crucified Christ are familiar from Christian art, but prior to my visits to the Lahore Museum, I had never seen or heard of images portraying such a powerful representation of the suffering Buddha. The sculpture, clearly an inspired masterwork, shocks with its intensity and presence. Although carved in stone, the excruciatingly emaciated figure is vividly alive, impervious to the passing of centuries, meditating through countless generations of riots and wars.

Figure 20. Emaciated Siddhartha
Lahore Museum G 45

Extreme austerities, including starvation, did not lead to Siddhartha's attainment of spiritual salvation. When Siddhartha achieved Buddhahood to become Shakyamuni Buddha, he taught his disciples a Middle Way that rejects extremes. The Middle Way is a view of life that teaches an ongoing, dynamic and mindful application of Buddhist wisdom to all actions and challenges in life and society. It accords greatest value to human existence that relieves suffering in the world and finds happiness.

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In Islamabad, Hakim Hamidi put me in touch with Mobin Ahmed. Mobin had assisted Craig and Eleanor Burns during many of their visits to Pakistan's bazaars and markets. He was a knowledgeable guide and consultant for many European and American visitors — primarily collectors and scholars — throughout the 1980s and 90s. A tall, gracious man, Mobin possessed an enormous appreciation of his country's heritage. He was a civil servant with the government's Capital Development Authority, and one of the founding members of the Pakistan Numismatic Society.

Mobin arranged for a hired car and driver to take me to Manikyala. Accompanying us was a man I had noted with interest two years previously at the coin tables in Islamabad's Friday Afghan bazaar. No explanation was offered as to why this spry elderly gentleman, ostensibly a former Pakistani secret service agent, decided to become our companion for the trip. During the drive, I was politely and thoroughly quizzed. He learned I was born and raised in a Dutch community in western Montana and that our family attended a Baptist church. He inquired about my anthropology degrees from California and British Columbia universities. He knew Craig Burns well and asked if it was because of Craig that I had become interested in travelling to Pakistan. He asked if Craig had introduced me to Hakim. He tested my knowledge of Pakistan's ancient history, offering his point of view regarding the chronology and dating of Kushan kings. Under the circumstances, I could find no good reason to avoid the questions but found myself worrying about whether I was responding appropriately. During our walkabout in the Manikyala stupa area, he seemed reasonably relaxed, but discreetly avoided my questions, presenting himself as a history enthusiast and coin collector. He succeeded in making a strong impression, facilitated by articulate, British-accented English and a firm, well-schooled interviewing style.

The massive Manikyala stupa dome and ruins site is approached by a turnoff from the Rawalpindi highway onto a dirt track that leads to a farmer's field near a small village. The two elderly caretakers relaxing in the shade of trees next to a shed could not contain their surprise when they saw they had visitors. No on-site printed information was available. The caretakers remained in the shade while we slowly circled the stupa and examined surface shards in the surrounding ploughed fields. A group of village boys were our constant companions, seemingly delighted by every move we made.

The stupa dome is over 150 feet tall, although most of what remains today is reduced to an impressive grass-covered rubble mound. A partially restored low wall surrounding the entire structure shows fine stone masonry, including pillars with sculpted cobra and lotus capitals. Manikyala is one of many impressive monument sites in Pakistan desperately in need of renewed archaeological attention as well as government protection.

Figure 21. Manikyala stupa
Photo courtesy of Christian Luczanits

The site was first excavated in 1830 by a French officer, General Jean-Baptiste Ventura, who dug a shaft from the top of the stupa down through the central core, uncovering 12 separate deposits spaced at regular intervals. James Prinsep published the stupa deposits in 1834, about ten years before the deposits made their way into the British Museum by way of Sir Alexander Cunningham.

A large copper canister wrapped in a silk cloth, sealed with wax and filled with liquid is one of the important artefacts excavated at Manikyala. Immersed in the liquid was a cast bronze reliquary with a tight-fitting lid and a moulded pinnacle encircled by a Kharoshthi inscription that names and acknowledges the reliquary's donor. Inside the reliquary were five bronze coins of Kanishka and Huvishka, as well as a small, gold cylindrical casket immersed in brown paste. The coin finds strongly suggest that Manikyala was already thriving by the second century AD.[43]

Figure 22. Manikyala reliquary deposit

Mobin arrived at my guest house the following day at precisely 10.30 a.m. with a different car and driver. Neither the car nor the driver inspired much confidence; we jerked along the highway, apparently without shock absorbers. At a police checkpoint, Mobin talked about his government position to one policeman while another examined the trunk. They briefly looked me over before waving us on. We passed a sprawling military manufacturing complex surrounded by high walls, barbed wire and a heavy police presence. By contrast, we soon arrived at the Taxila Museum, a modest stone building picturesquely set behind a tree-lined driveway that curved through tended gardens and greens.

The museum's collections derive entirely from several major sites in the Taxila valley, with Kushan-era artefacts prominently represented. The Taxila region is particularly known for Gandharan sculpture in stucco and terra cotta, but the museum also has fine Gandharan Buddhist stone work. In addition to Buddhist arts, the museum displays collections of Kushan-era household furnishings and hardware; carved brick flooring; copper and bronze goblets, bowls and saucers; terra cotta flasks, spouted jars and double handled jugs; glass and shell bangles and beads; stone weights from jewellers' shops; blacksmith and goldsmiths' tools; gardening tools; surgical instruments; and soldiers' daggers and swords. Mobin said

that the children's terra cotta toys — whistles, bulls, camels and whimsical birds on wheels — are today still similarly made in local villages.

A curator offered to accompany us to Sirkap, one of the major archaeological sites in the Taxila area. We followed a narrow, partially paved single-lane road just outside the museum grounds shared with villagers, goats, donkeys, cows and bull-drawn carts loaded with grass cuttings or straw. The road led through lush fields being tended and harvested by villagers. We took a right turn down a poorly marked lane that came to an end in a small parking area at the Sirkap entrance gates.

Taxila is a vast UNESCO World Heritage area with multiple sites. The origin of Taxila as a city goes back to 1000 BC. Taxila-area ruins sites date to the time of the Achaemenid empire in the sixth century BC, followed successively by the Mauryan empire, Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians and the Kushan empire.[44] UNESCO lists Taxila as one of the most important archaeological areas in Asia and designates the site as one of Outstanding Universal Value. UNESCO also states:

> Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property over time will require completing, approving, and implementing a Master Plan for the property and strengthening the Comprehensive Management Plan in terms of international standards as well as scientific approaches; carrying out the required scientific studies on vegetation control to minimize the damage to the masonry and structure of the monuments; undertaking an impact assessment of the heavy industries, military compounds, and stone quarrying in the area, and redefining, if necessary, the boundaries of the property in the context of this assessment; managing the existing boundaries and buffer zones to protect the setting; applying to Taxila the national programme to prevent illegal excavation and trafficking in artefacts; and strengthening co-operation between planning, development, and cultural heritage agencies.[45]

The archaeological remains of Sirkap are beautifully situated on a flat plain backed by low hills. We entered by way of the north gate and walked for about half a mile on freshly mowed grass down a wide central avenue. Several workers trimmed the grass while others swept the stone curbing. Mobin said that villagers were preparing the site for a Christian festival that honours St Thomas the Apostle, who is believed to have visited Sirkap when the city was ruled by the Parthians.

Sirkap was first occupied as early as the second century BC by Indo-Greeks who had been displaced from Bactria. Within a century (c. 90 BC), the last Greek king of Taxila was overthrown by an Indo-Scythian chief, who in turn was overthrown in about 20 BC by the first Indo-Parthian king. Only a small portion of Sirkap has been archaeologically excavated;

this was done initially under the supervision of Sir John Marshall from 1912 to 1930,[46] followed in 1944 and 1945 by Mortimer Wheeler and his colleagues.[47] Most of the excavated foundation's structural remains date to the Parthian period of the first century AD, including a grid system of streets in an urban plan. The periphery of the city was three miles long, the entire length protected by a wall up to 20 feet thick that closely follows the lay of the land.

Remains of what were probably market shops line both sides of the surprisingly straight central avenue. Narrow side streets lead to clusters of private dwellings, small stupas and two temples. Many of the houses are large, up to 1,400 square metres, no doubt representing the wealthiest part of the city. Extensive and magnificent antiquities were recovered during excavations, including hoards of jewellery and silverware. In most areas, a few courses of foundation stone remain, some with partial walls and doorways. Remains of a royal palace overlook the main avenue. The excavations also revealed a large Buddhist stupa complex.

Today's Taxila archaeological zone is a quiet, rural area with small villages, fields and orchards. Archaeological sites such as Sirkap, Dharmarajika and the Bhir Mound would draw far more attention from tourists and history enthusiasts if the roads and trail systems were improved and a guidebook were published with good maps and the story of the sites' history.

In the late first century, the Kushan under Wima Kadphises established a new city at Sirsukh, about half a mile northeast of Sirkap. Not much of that ancient city remains to be seen except for portions of a roughly rectangular stone fortification wall and a few partially excavated buildings. I decided not to visit Sirsukh after my guides said that most of the site was buried deep beneath irrigated and cultivated farmers' fields.

Figure 23. Sirkap, Taxila
Alchetron encyclopedia online

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A few miles north of Sirkap, along a narrow road that passes through cornfields, a partially restored monastery sits on a hilltop overlooking a village. The monastery goes by the same name as the village: Jaulian. Mobin introduced the on-site caretaker as ‘our Kushan guide’ because of his height, beard and angular facial features. The guide did not know the origin of the town name but suggested it might derive from the name of a member of Alexander the Great’s campaign, which came through the area in 326 BC. The way the caretaker talked, it seemed the passing of time had done little to mellow local opinion. The ‘beardless homosexual Greek tyrant’ was apparently not appreciated in Jaulian. If such ancient sentiments were still festering, surely the possibility of a name change must have been discussed at some point during 2,300 years of successive occupations.

Jaulian monastery is well maintained, with several monuments, buildings and stupa courts, some of which have been partially restored. The original foundations date to the Kushan period of the second century AD.

Archaeological evidence reveals that Jaulian monastery thrived as a centre of Buddhist learning for at least three centuries. The monastery complex is made up of three stupa courts,

all with extensive stucco embellishment. Very fine stone wall construction is evident throughout.

Figure 24. Jaulian monastery stucco relief
Photo courtesy of David Jongeward

A number of impressive stucco and terra cotta images remain in niches and panels, along with a Kharoshthi inscription engraved in stucco relief. In the lowest-level court, stupas that have lost their original domes are protected by a modern roof.

The square-based stupas are elaborately adorned with well-preserved stucco reliefs in horizontal tiers. Jaulian stucco artwork displays a clear Gandharan statement about the relationship between Buddhism and the Hellenistic world. In the lowest tier of reliefs, elephants, lions and Heracles figures crouch in classical stooped and contorted postures, as if nearly crushed by the weight of the world on their shoulders. In marked contrast, the figures in the tier above are composed of Buddha and bodhisattvas seated fully upright under protective arches, their hands shown in teaching and meditating *mudras*, the symbolic gestures that represent states of mind and transcendence in the Buddhist world.

Figure 25. Stone wall construction, Jaulian monastery
Photo courtesy of David Jongeward

We climbed a few steps to the large main stupa in the upper court. A seated Buddha on the northern face of this structure has a hole at the navel into which a suppliant can place a finger while offering prayers. A Kharoshthi inscription records the name of a donor who ‘delighted in the law’.

Returning to the lower court, we made our way between high stone walls to enter a monastery quadrangle. The walls are composed of grey stone, constructed using larger, partially cut stone alternating with layers of small slate chinking. The spacious open court is built below ground level, bordered by flagstone and surrounded by rows of monks’ cells. Rooms grouped on the eastern side include remains of an assembly hall, a kitchen and a storeroom. On the northern side, a doorway allows entrance to a small chapel next to a stairway that leads to a second level of cells. The second level is missing in the reconstruction, but walls of many first-level cells are intact, including alcoves holding groups of Buddha figures, some in clay, others in stucco.

The caretaker said that a fire swept through the monastery in the fifth century AD, consuming most of the monastery’s woodwork. An unexpected consequence, however, was that the intense heat converted clay figures to terra cotta, thus preserving them.

Outside the monastery complex, the hill dropped sharply down into the valley below. A

bearded old man sat cross-legged in the shade of trees tending a few cattle, occupying himself by drawing figures in the dirt. I asked the site caretaker about a faint but distinctive sound, a repeated tapping.

‘Stoneworking in the village,’ he said. ‘Maybe someone is building a wall.’

‘The wall of a house?’

‘Just like these walls here,’ he responded, gesturing towards the nearest monastery walls. ‘We still do it the same way.’

Tok-tok. Tok-tok. The sound was rhythmically persistent, like a distant drumming maintained by a solitary practitioner.

My companions showed no signs of preparing to leave the site. As they conversed in their own language, I excused myself and returned alone to the monastery quadrangle. The empty courtyard ruins felt compellingly inviting. I thought of monks reading texts, discussing dharma questions, practising centuries-old sacred exercises.

What did they learn? What was their daily experience? North Indian Buddhism had been nourished here at Jaulian and in hundreds of neighbouring monasteries. Although it is difficult to prove conclusively, Gandhara is believed to be the birthplace of Mahayana Buddhism, often called ‘the Great Vehicle’ because of its appeal to a broad group of practitioners, especially lay people, with a practice that supported a belief that anyone could achieve enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhism represented a massive change from the Hinayana tradition that required monks and nuns to renounce the conditions of their normal life in exchange for a solitary, lifelong pursuit of liberation. In Mahayana, the historical Buddha Shakyamuni was seen in the new context of a bodhisattva ideal — the human being fully capable of achieving enlightenment but devoted to life in the world for the service of others, manifesting Buddhist compassion, insight and the dharma of emptiness.

Standing quietly in the monastery quadrangle, I tried to imagine a time when people arrived here with an intention to experience an alternative to the routines of everyday life, a monastic life that encouraged movement along a path that opened up at least the possibility of liberation. The sound of a stonemason, somewhat lonely, somewhat melancholic, punctuated the silence. The old man at the foot of a hill tending a few head of cattle rested in the shade of a solitary tree. Villagers unloaded a bull-drawn cart heaped with cut grass. A boy jumped into a canal to cool off. His dog barked.

It is not entirely unusual to experience a sense of timelessness — a sudden clarity when the distance between ancient and modern utterly vanishes. The dog has barked for centuries. An October midday moment, the sun breaking through feathery clouds, soft breezes suffused with subdued blue light. I was no longer a stranger in a strange country, nor simply a visiting

researcher; I was one with an old man taking shade under a tree, a swimming boy, a villager unloading his cart, all accompanied by the rhythmic percussion of a stonemason at work.

Such heightened moments do not last long; the mind returns to its usual associative and automatic functioning. Someone called my name. I turned around to find Mobin and his companions greatly amused about something. Mobin suggested we head back to the car. On the way down the hill, we took a detour down a trail that led to the edge of the village and past a newly constructed stone wall. A man was sitting in the sun surrounded by a pile of building stones, his hammer rising and falling steadily as he chipped away shards of rock. He was engaged in a desperately hot, strenuous job, persisting in a sharp, percussive clanging of steel hammer against stone. He took no notice of our passing, and I wondered if his hearing might be impaired. Instead, I was told that he was blind, that he had worked for hours every day for as long as anyone could remember. I wanted to thank the man somehow, but we kept walking. That's when I noticed I was limping.

As I climbed into the car, I struggled to get back on track, so to speak, concerned with how long I had kept my companions waiting. Already out of touch with that rarefied sense of clarity I had felt in the quadrangle, I was back in touch with worry, pondered plans and an unaccountably sore left foot. That night, I recalled a Buddhist teaching I had recorded some years earlier.

> The climber on the Direct Road, the Road of Seeing, has not hesitated to lean over the abyss on which the path borders, he has not hesitated sometimes to descend into them so as to inspect the depths, he has known how to climb out, and then, suddenly, one day as a result of something apparently without any importance, the colour of a flower, the form of a branch of a tree, a cloud, a bird's song, the yapping of a jackal, the howling of a distant wolf, or even a simple pebble against which he struck his foot in passing, there arises a vision in his mind; transcendent insight is born.[48]

Back in my room, I peeled off a sticky sock and examined my foot. It was bleeding around my big toenail. I vaguely recalled an awkward step on the rocky trail down from the monastery. But what had happened at Jaulian was already something etched in memory.

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In Peshawar I returned with Hakim to the Sarafa Bazaar during his morning rounds of visiting shopkeeper friends. One afternoon, I asked our auto rickshaw driver to drop me off at the Peshawar Museum. The museum is a rather stodgy edifice of British colonial vintage, built in 1905 as the Victoria Memorial Hall, complete with misplaced-looking Islamic turrets.

In the 1970s, two wings were added when the building became an archaeology museum. Two floors of galleries surround an atrium. The museum's ground floor displays a spectacular array of Gandharan stone sculpture, the largest collection in the world, all from excavations of Buddhist monasteries in the Peshawar and Charsadda districts. The lighting was poor so I could not read the labels, but dozens of iconic images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas generated an incredibly strong atmosphere. I was particularly drawn to a stunning selection of narrative panel reliefs that depict scenes from the life story of the Buddha: Queen Maya's dream, Siddhartha's birth, his palace life and marriage, his great departure, his enlightenment. There are particularly powerful depictions of the Buddha's death, often referred to as his great decease or *mahaparinirvana*.

On display were fine, lathe-turned, spherical and cylindrical stone Gandharan Buddhist relic containers as well as miniature stupa reliquaries. And of course, the displays include innumerable coins: the earliest coinage of India, the punch-marked silver bars; coins of the Indo-Greeks, Parthians, Scythians, Kushans and Huns; and an extensive selection of Islamic coins. The museum's Islamic gallery features wooden façades of mosques, Arabic and Persian inscriptions, Mughal and later period paintings and metalwork in bronze and silver. Ten scrolls of the Quran were on display, dating to as early as AD 1224.

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On our way to Swat Valley I persuaded Hakim to ask our driver to detour slightly for a visit to the Buddhist monastery ruins of Takht-i-Bahi. The site is best approached by way of the Charsadda-Mardan road that runs northeast from Peshawar towards the Malakand Pass and Swat Valley. Although Takht-i-Bahi is by far the best-preserved archaeological site in the area, the Mardan district in Peshawar Valley is extraordinarily rich in excavations of major Kushan-era Buddhist monasteries — Jamalgarhi, Sahri Bahlol, Shahbaz Garhi, Tareli, Mekha Sanda, Sanghao and many others. The Peshawar Museum collection includes objects from all these sites.

About 8.5 miles northeast of Mardan, we found a hand-painted sign indicating our turnoff from the Malakand Pass road. We crossed a railroad track, passed an old sugar mill and followed a narrow road full of potholes and caved-in shoulders. The road wound uphill past houses and fields. It was a cloudy day, and a light rainfall contributed to a sense of isolation as we passed the last cultivated fields. We parked at the end of the road. We could just make out monastery walls, partially obscured by cloud, high on a hill near the crest of a ridge.

Takht-i-Bahi, founded in the first century AD, thrived for at least six centuries. Due to its location on high hills away from large towns and cities, the monastery escaped the waves of successive invasions and remains in exceptionally good condition. Sir Alexander

Cunningham visited the site in the late nineteenth century, noting its beauty and remarkable state of preservation. Systematic scientific excavation and conservation efforts commenced in 1907 by Dr D Brainerd Spooner, curator of the Peshawar Museum and superintendent of the Archaeological Survey of India. His work continued until 1911, followed for three years by excavations led by Dr Harold Hargreaves, also of the Peshawar Museum. Many excavations have commenced since. The site has yielded innumerable pieces of high-quality Gandharan stone sculpture now in Peshawar, Lahore and London museum collections.

Many rural settings for Gandharan monastic life are well documented. Large, complex monastic organisations were also integral to urban life, especially in Peshawar and Taxila, but a greater number of monasteries flourished outside the cities, often on hilltops or mountainsides near villages and towns. The choice of location was practical; hillside monasteries did not interfere with village life or the cultivated fields in the valleys. High in the hills, monks could live in a comparatively cool and clean environment. Monks maintained networks of trails between neighbouring monasteries and villages. An early account describes the ideal Buddhist retreat: ‘A spot not too far from the town and not too near; suitable for going and coming; easily accessible to all people; by day not too crowded; at night not exposed to noise and alarm; clean of the smell of the people; secluded from men; well fitted for a retired life.’[49]

Early Buddhist records show that monks were often homeless wanderers with hundreds of places to stay. They walked where they wished, taking sanctuary at the end of the day. Monasteries served both as centres of learning and ritual activity and also as retreats for study, meditation and sleep.

We took our time ascending the wide stone steps for a five-hundred-foot climb to the first walls. Rain turned the rock ridges a deep reddish orange mixed with shades of yellows and mauve. As the rain eased up and the mist cleared away, Takht-i-Bahi revealed its commanding view of Peshawar Valley’s green fields as well as the stark, bare rock of surrounding ridges. A caretaker told us that unexcavated mounds are scattered for at least half a mile in either direction along the summits and foothills. The well-maintained central ruins employ caretakers and guides thanks in large part to having been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980.

The source of the name ‘Takht-i-Bahi’ is unclear. Scholars used to attribute the name to hilltop, hand-built water tanks, but recent archaeology has determined that the ‘water tanks’ are in fact remains of a pair of hilltop stupas. There is no evidence of springs or a well-water source at the summit. The original name is apparently lost, and Takht-i-Bahi may be a name given to the site after Muslim communities settled into the area.

A right-hand turn and another long flight of stone stairs led to the central monastery courts.

We entered the Court of Many Stupas. A series of small votive stupas around the court were originally embellished with panel reliefs. The stupas are surrounded on three sides by tall, partially restored chapels with domed roofs. From the court, a short flight of steps led us to a monastic quadrangle with monks' cells on three sides. The monastery compound was originally two storeys high and had accommodation for about 30 monks, a dining hall and a kitchen area.

Just being there was exhilarating, climbing the steep stone steps, looking around at remains. The place had thrived for centuries and sustained a prolific artistic tradition during the peak period of the Kushan period. A surviving monastic record from northern India that dates to the second century AD reveals that monasteries served as the intellectual and cultural centres of the time, patronised by lay devotees from the wealthy merchant class, Indian nobility and Kushan kings.[50] Takht-i-Bahi was without doubt an extraordinarily prosperous monastery.

Figure 26. Takht-i-Bahi, Peshawar Valley
Photo courtesy of Luca Olivieri

The Sanskrit monastic record, or *Vinaya*, is essentially a form of rulebook or regulatory framework for Buddhist monastic communities, but it also speaks of beautiful monasteries in beautiful settings, paintings on monastery walls, impressive sculpture and how architecture and art served to attract visitors and potential donors. The *Vinaya* includes rules governing the monks' response to wealthy visiting merchants who were known to make endowments on a lavish scale, enough to support 60 or possibly as many as 100 monks. The monks would be responsible for welcoming the visitors, providing guided tours of the monastery's art and architecture, anticipating that the visitors would be moved by what they saw and hopefully make a large donation. Other rules governed monastic auctions, which turned gifts and offerings into cash. Much of the raw data for Kushan coin studies derives from the Buddhist enterprise of record-keeping related to the business of monastic art and architecture.

A primary motivation underlying the proliferation of Gandhara's artistic activity derived

from the Buddhist ideal of accumulating merit by way of meritorious deeds. The building of a stupa or temple or the installation of an iconic image was considered a supreme act of piety, one that assured the donor happiness in this world and also promised future release from the chain of rebirth.

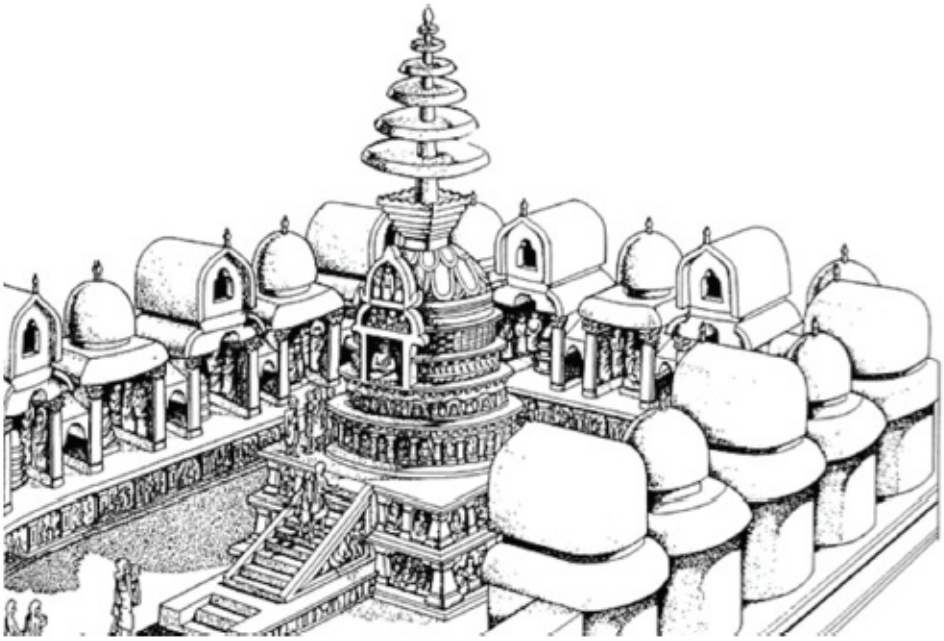

Figure 27. Takht-i-Bahi main stupa court
Drawing by Francine Tissot

Hakim and I followed a narrow passage bordered by massively thick thirty-foot-high walls that led to a large courtyard identified as an assembly hall. From there, another flight of steps led to the main stupa, Takht-i-Bahi's largest. Only a square base of the stupa remains, situated in the middle of a long court surrounded by large and small chapels, all constructed as separate buildings. Each of these structures would originally have housed shrines and statuary. Early archaeologists found this part of Takht-i-Bahi heavily damaged. After a series of excavations cleared the debris, archaeologists found large numbers of sculpture fragments in stone and stucco, including seated and standing figures of the Buddha.

Our guide took us to vaulted underground chambers. These chambers are not truly subterranean, as several open doorways overlook a lower-level courtyard. A central passage with high corbelled arches provides access to a series of cells on both sides. Cells on the west side have small doors opening to the courtyard. Cells to the east of the passage are smaller and darker; only a little light would have entered at midday.

Hakim and I stood quietly for some time. Speaking of it later, we agreed that the secluded courtyard and cells seemed to be a place we had searched for unknowingly, an ideal place to do nothing but ponder the silence.

A steep path led uphill south of the monastery complex, a climb that offered the comfort of cool mist. Under a blazing sun, the rocky ridge would have been very hot, even in October. The ridge summit offered an eagle-eye view of the valley and surrounding hills, and the entire monastery labyrinth of stone walls, passageways and courtyards. We saw evidence of many unexcavated remains rising from surrounding hill slopes and mountain ridges. In fact, five years after Hakim and I visited the site, a productive new period of archaeology commenced at Takht-i-Bahi. Excavations from 2002 to 2005 by the Department of Archaeology and Museums of the Government of Pakistan revealed extensive remains of secular structures on surrounding mountain ridges and terraces. Quite apart from meeting the spiritual needs of monks, the monastic complex relied on the support of teachers, students, administrators, various service providers and occasional travellers. The archaeological remains clearly contain evidence of the presence of a support community living on the monastery campus with their families in their own places of residence. Children's games and toys have been found among the excavated finds. There were facilities for cooking and serving food.[51]

Neither Hakim or myself had previously known of such an impressive ruins site in Pakistan. 'We have come to a special place,' Hakim said. 'Touching these walls, it's good for me, it lifts me up. In the city, it's easy to forget important things. I get caught in my routines. I'm too busy. Here, I can't help it: I return to real questions. What would we discover if we stayed here a few days, sitting in the meditation cells, walking quietly in the courtyard, exploring the hills, just listening to the valley?'

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We returned to the highway heading north and entered Swat Valley by way of the Malakand Pass. Cloud cover and periodic drizzle restricted our view but did not diminish the pleasure of a tree-lined road that descends into Swat Valley's green and fertile countryside. Swat benefits from being the northernmost region in the subcontinent's monsoon belt. The valley was first made famous by Alexander the Great, who passed through in 327 BC and praised its fertile river valleys, favourable climate and spectacular mountains.

We arrived in Mingora late in the afternoon and stopped for a light supper. Mingora is an old bazaar town suffering from a recent plague of cheap hotels and tourist shops. October is not peak tourist season, however, so we did not experience the extreme crowds of the summer. After supper, we headed out of town several miles to our hotel. We stayed at the White Palace, a summer residence of the former Wali (ruler) of Swat, Miangul Abdul Wadood, grandson of a famous Sufi ascetic and teacher. Swat Valley became an independent state in 1926 under his leadership. He was succeeded by his son Miangul Jahan Zeb in 1949,

who remained in power until Swat was integrated into Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province in 1969.

The hotel is set at the end of the Saidu Valley road near the mouth of a canyon, surrounded by gardens, ponds and shade trees. Rooms are situated on three levels of hillside terraces. Our rooms were located below the main house, overlooking the gardens.

I opened the double doors early the next morning to listen to a river cascading down the canyon. Rain at daybreak gave way to patches of blue sky and glimpses of the mountains, followed soon by brilliant sunlight, the first I'd seen in three days. Herders on a nearby mountainside tended goats. Two men shouldered planks down a trail next to the stream. Others led pack donkeys loaded with lumber. One of the hotel gardeners pointed to the hills and told us he had walked to work for 30 years. His house was two hills and two valleys away, accessible only by trail.

Before breakfast, we visited three small handcraft shops at the end of the hotel car park. I purchased a long, fine wool shawl, a type the men on the trail wrapped around their heads and shoulders in cool weather and wore with a traditional shalwar kameez and an embroidered cap. Several women wearing colourfully embroidered shirts enhanced my impression that Swat Valley was more openly diverse than Peshawar. Nevertheless, the people of Swat are from the Yusufzai Pathans, a relatively conservative Islamic tribal society, but they are tolerant of tourism as a source of income. One shopkeeper showed us a few coins. I bought a Kushan copper that was not in great condition, but the one-dollar price was impossible to pass up.

Butkara is an extensive monastery complex in Swat Valley, located in hill country not far from Mingora. Butkara was excavated by Italian archaeologist Domenico Faccenna starting in 1956, with the intention of documenting various phases of construction and expansion that occurred over the course of many centuries. The main stupa complex reveals Hellenistic architectural decorations, possibly dating to as early as the second century BC, suggesting involvement of the Indo-Greeks, followed by uninterrupted growth and construction throughout the entire Kushan period.

In 1963, a more formalised Italian Archaeology Mission arrived in Swat Valley under its founder, Giuseppe Tucci, and since then has managed over 60 years of digging, site restoration and preservation, as well as publishing. Excavations continue to at a major hillside site, Barikot, under the direction of Luca Oliviera, with no let-up even during the two years when Swat Valley fell into Taliban hands. The Italian Archaeological Mission has persisted through countless difficulties, primarily by nurturing a high degree of trust with local people, employing and training hundreds of workers over many years.

The Swat Museum in Mingora houses an abundance of choice artefacts derived from Swat

Valley archaeology. The museum was badly damaged by an earthquake in 2005 and also by Taliban attacks in 2009. Most of the collection was transported to Taxila for safekeeping. The museum reopened in 2016. Additional Swat artefacts are preserved in the National Museum of Oriental Art in Rome and in the City Museum of Ancient Art in Turin.

Figure 28. Barikot, Swat Valley
Photo courtesy of ACT-Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan (ISMEO)

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I like wiggly lines on a map: mountain roads. One such wiggly line indicated an intriguing alternative route back to Islamabad. Instead of returning from Swat Valley by way of Mardan over the Malakand Pass, we could take the Swat River road north up the valley past Charbagh to Khwazakhela, then climb the mountains on what appeared to be a relatively short stretch of road by way of Shangla Pass to Besham City. From Besham we would follow the Indus River down the Karakoram highway to Taxila and Islamabad. The trip looked to be about 220 miles, not an impossible distance for a day's drive.

Our driver was not pleased. The Shangla Pass route had not been included in negotiations when we hired him in Peshawar. 'Dangerous territory,' he argued, 'the road is probably washed out. What happens if the car breaks down?'

He was determined to avoid the trip. But I grew up loving mountain roads. Fortunately, Hakim responded to my persistence by asking around in Mingora about road conditions. Admitting he was tempted, we agreed to offer the driver an extra day's wages and a night's

stay in Islamabad. The negotiations proved persuasive, but our driver was clearly unhappy about testing a relatively new Toyota Camry on mountain dirt roads.

For long stretches, the rutted, rocky road was barely a car-width wide. We often stopped in our tracks to negotiate right-of-passage with drivers of oncoming vehicles. Although we met no buses or trucks, at one blind corner we met two vans packed with passengers. For a car without four-wheel drive, the conditions were miserable: steep grades and horseshoe turns, rock and mud washouts and, worst of all, falling rock. Near a roadside waterfall, a small avalanche of rocks bounced off the mountainside about 50 feet in front of us. There was no way of advancing until we cleared the road, helped by a carload of men coming the other way. Further along, a basketball-size boulder crashed to the road 20 yards behind us. We were extremely fortunate that washouts and rockslides from recent rainstorms had already been mostly cleared from the road, although in two areas clearing was in process and we were obliged to wait. With multiple stops and variable wait times, our climb to the summit advanced very slowly.

I loved it. Nearly every swing around a horseshoe curve offered a dazzling view of glacier-crested peaks in the Hindu Kush. Tribal people occupied every mountainside and valley. There were a few horses and camels, but walking was clearly the best way to get around for people living on the hills. Small clusters of mountainside houses and shelters, constructed of timber and stone or adobe brick, were linked by trails. Women tended tiny hillside gardens. Compared to the lush Swat Valley, its powerful river, green fields and acres of orchards, the mountainsides were rocky and relatively bare, probably grazed for a few thousand years by sheep and goats. The hills became more heavily forested as we gained elevation. After crossing Shigara Pass, we left north-facing views of the Hindu Kush and soon caught our first glimpses of a towering range to the east, the Karakoram mountains.

Near the pass an old man stood in the middle of the road, wrapped in a lightweight ankle-length dusty garment and supporting himself with a cane. He was heavily bearded, his sandals held together with string. Mountain villagers, including several children, stood in a tightly packed group listening to the old man.

‘You don’t have to understand a word this man says,’ Hakim said. ‘Just seeing him is a great blessing. Such a man is never predictable. Sometimes he’ll talk nonsense, he’s capable of outrageous things, yet people feel honoured just to watch him spit.’

I wondered if this man was like the beggar–philosopher that Hakim and his government colleague had invited to tea in Kabul. As we continued our descent, Hakim spoke again of the ancient tradition of wandering teachers and mystics in the Central Asian mountains, such as Shams of Tabriz in the Jalaluddin Rumi poems. I was reminded of traditional travelling teacher/storytellers a Cheyenne man once told me about in Montana. Twisted Hairs, named

after a distinguishing knot of hair on the forehead, were multilingual travelling storytellers. According to the old-time stories, Twisted Hairs were known to walk from Montana to Mexico and back, telling as well as learning stories, accepting hospitality even from traditional enemies.

These days, Hakim told me, the wanderers in Central Asian mountains are Muslim. In Kushan times they were Buddhist. Hakim believed Buddhist monks, Hindu ascetics and even Christian pilgrims had in their respective times all walked these mountain trails. ‘There are men in this part of the world who walk in the mountains their entire lives. Just like this man we saw, saints and holy men come out of these mountains. They still do. We just don’t know about them. This man tells his stories countless times. The people give him food and shelter, then he disappears for a couple of years.’

Hakim seemed inspired. At a turnoff offering a view of densely forested mountains and snow-capped peaks, he repeated questions he had asked at Takht-i-Bahi. ‘What does it mean to be in this place just now? Why do I not ask this question every day, wherever I am?’

‘Exactly,’ I said. ‘We and our busy lives. When am I ever quiet enough or awake enough to remember the essential questions?’

The 55-mile crossing from Mingora to Besham City took five hours. Exhausted, we stopped for a dinner break, then turned south onto the Karakoram highway to Islamabad. This was another wiggly line on the map. The north–south Karakoram highway connects Pakistan with western China by way of the highest paved international road in the world and the highest border crossing, at nearly 16,000 feet (4,800 metres). One of the very few routes that crosses the Himalayas, the highway climbs to the border summit, then descends and crosses part of China’s Xinjiang province to Kashgar. Along with the Grand Trunk Road, the Karakoram route was once a branch of the ancient Silk Road. If we had planned in advance, we could have stayed in Besham City for the night, then headed north the next day with the prospect of more mountain views, raging rivers, steep-sloped canyons, archaeological sites, petroglyphs and the ancient towns of Chilas, Gilgit and Nagar.

It was getting dark when we turned south. For another five hours and 170 miles we wound down the Indus River Valley, passing through Mansehra, Abbottabad, and Haripur before meeting up with the Grand Trunk Road outside Taxila. We arrived in Islamabad in the care of our very tired and tense driver. He received a generous bonus and strong words of appreciation delivered by Hakim at length in his own language. In spite of the ten-hour trip, he decided not to stay in Islamabad for the night. He said he’d take a break, then drive all the way back to Peshawar.

— 11 —

Kushan Gods

My resistance to coin collecting collapsed during an Afghan market day in Islamabad. Prompted by a big bowl of ancient coins on a small table, I purchased five Kushan coppers, each with a different god, setting me back 2,200 rupees, about $50 US. Among these coins were three Kanishka coins featuring the sun god Miiro, the moon god Mao, and the wind god Oado. Of the two poor-condition Huvishka coppers, one had a barely recognisable image of the fire god Athsho. The other coin presented a usual depiction of the goddess of royal good fortune, Ardochsho, but was inscribed with the name of the moon god Mao. It turns out the strange coin appears in Göbl's catalogue as one among several Huvishka coppers that bear wrong inscriptions — perhaps an example of what happens when the mint master does not show up for work, the die engraver uses the wrong coin inscription, and the coin is struck regardless, destined to circulate widely and show up 2,000 years later in an Afghan market.

Having the idea of collecting some Kushan coins, I decided on a special focus: one coin for each of the 30 gods. A collection of 30 coins seemed a manageable objective, but this idea lasted about as long as the walk back to the hotel. Many gods in the Kushan pantheon exist only on rare gold coins. I amended my aspiration to purchasing only copper coins.

After a few years of accumulating just over 100 coins, I had managed to collect just 11 gods, many with multiple variations — 16 Wima Takto coins, for example, the variations due to the number of rays emanating from Miiro's head ranging from 5 rays to 12. Other Wima Takto coins show variations in the style of the inscriptions and the tamgas; some inscriptions have square lettering, others are cursive; some coins have three-prong tamgas, other have four. Among the coins I had collected were several variants of the god Oesho. On one coin the god has three heads. On another the god leans against a bull. On another he stands alone. On another he has four arms and holds a diadem, a thunderbolt, a trident and a water pot. On another he has a halo, holds a trident and has an animal skin draped over his arm.

A collection of 100 coins felt like enough, and I wasn't inclined to continue. Instead, I decided to donate two good-quality Kushan coppers to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, and these are on display in the Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery. A couple of poor-quality Kushan coins went to interactive areas in the ROM's Discovery Gallery, which features touchable artefacts for kids. For the rest of the collection, my inclination was this: return the coins to the market tables, countertops, coin bowls, window displays and shop dealer's hands from where they came. I would record the outcome in memory of Hakim Hamidi, who often said that negotiation conversations are as valuable as the coins. Unfortunately, the plan presented a formidable problem: I would have to become

fluent in at least one of the languages spoken in Pakistan’s markets. The coins were eventually sold at auction.

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Pre-Kushan coinages generally depict a single god. This is true for the coinages of most Kushan kings as well. The most important deity that appears on the coins of Kujula Kadphises is Heracles (see Chapter 3, Figure 7). The favoured deity for Wima Takto was Miiro. Wima Kadphises and some late Kushan kings favoured Oesho, but other late Kushan kings chose Ardochsho.

An amazingly diverse assembly of gods appears on the coins of two Kushan kings: Kanishka and his successor, Huvishka. As mentioned earlier, evidence about Kushan kings from non-numismatic sources is sketchy at best. Solid information about the society in Kushan times outside monastic life is virtually non-existent. What is known about the assembly of Kushan gods is equally obscure. There are so many gods, but so few are remotely familiar. This lack, however, translates into a treasure of material available for students and scholars who are prepared to embark on multidisciplinary research that combines art history, comparative religions, archaeology and numismatics.

Kanishka is famous as a patron of Buddhism. He may have converted to Buddhism following military campaigns, just as Ashoka did three centuries earlier. Kanishka founded and supported monasteries, and he convened a Buddhist council in Kashmir to reaffirm the dharma. His connection with Buddhism is directly evident in the coinage: late in his reign, he minted gold and copper coins with Buddhist images.

Figure 29. Kanishka gold dinara of Shakyamuni Buddha

The god depicted on Kushan coins that has attracted by far the most scholarly attention is

Kanishka's representation of the Buddha. Extremely rare gold coin representations feature a standing portrayal of Shakyamuni Buddha, inscribed with the Bactrian name ΒΟΔΔΟ.[52] Copper coins with images of the Buddha appear in two distinct types. One features a standing representation of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, dressed in a simple monastic robe, with his right hand raised in the gesture of reassurance (*abhaya mudra*), and with a Bactrian inscription, ΣΑΚΑΜΑΝΟ ΒΟΥΔΟ. The other type shows a seated figure, the future Buddha Maitreya, in princely dress, inscribed as ΜΗΤΡΑΓΟ ΒΟΓΔΟ. He holds a water pot in his left hand and has his right hand raised in the gesture of reassurance.

Figure 30a. Kanishka's copper coin of Shakyamuni Buddha

Figure 30b. Kanishka's copper coin of Maitreya Buddha
Münzkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

The production of the Buddha coins appears to have taken place close to the end of Kanishka's reign. Perhaps the coins mark an event, such as Kanishka's conversion or his convening of a special Buddhist council. Kanishka's Buddha coin images are unique in the history of Central Asian and Indian coinage, but it is clear from coin designs for the pantheon as a whole that the Buddha and Maitreya share the same status as the other gods.[53]

Buddhism profoundly changed during the Kushan era. An early form of Mahayana Buddhism that emphasised the Buddha's godlike omniscience likely evolved during Kanishka's reign. The first images of the Buddha in human form derive from both Gandharan sculpture and Kanishka's coin images. It is very likely that the Buddha coin designers selected models that prevailed at the time in Gandharan sculpture. This is in marked contrast to many other gods that had no previous artistic representation prior to their appearance on Kushan coins.

However prominent Buddhism may have become during the Kushan era, Buddhism is not the dominating influence in Kanishka's coin design and cannot be said to represent a state religion. It is difficult to understand Kanishka's inclusion of Buddha on his coins. If he converted to Buddhism, why do so many non-Buddhist gods also appear on his coinage? Is this a rare kingly statement of religious tolerance? Or multicultural altruism? Scholars continue to test numerous approaches for weighing in on Kanishka's remarkable pantheon.

Prior to Kushan times, the religious art of Iranian and Indian cultures reveals aniconic tendencies; rather than images in human form, deities were represented by symbols. Iconic representation of the gods was often forbidden. The early sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Buddhism make no mention of statuary or cult images and do not provide anthropomorphic descriptions of deities. In early Buddhist art, the presence of the Buddha is represented by the tree under which he received enlightenment, or a stupa, or even a turban or conch shell, but not a figure of the Buddha himself. In a stone panel relief from Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, dating to the second century AD, the Buddha is represented by an oval of empty space that rests on a cushion on an otherwise empty throne. 'Sacred emptiness' is a prominent feature of Buddhist aniconic arts. In ancient Iranian art, gods are sometimes depicted in the form of empty chariots.[54]

Figure 31. Buddha's first sermon; Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, India

Depicting gods in human form became acceptable during the Kushan era. Among the most extraordinary contributions to art history and the history of religions is the Kushan creation of iconography for gods and goddesses that had never appeared in iconic form before. The Kushan-era response to popular interest in devotional images is exceptional. Clearly inspired by a new freedom of expression, artisans of the time accessed multiple sources of ideas for representing gods in human form.

Kanishka's coin art borrows basic figure forms from Greek and Roman sculpture traditions and then progressively dresses the figures with attributes drawn from cultural traditions of the peoples whose territory they occupied. Hellenistic robes, crowns, diadems, cornucopias, thunderbolts and Herculean imagery all appear in depictions of the gods. As the Kushans

pushed south into the Indian subcontinent, artisans expanded their repertoire by drawing from the abundance of imagery in Indian arts. Traditional Indian garments, including dhotis, mantles, caps and jackets, a wide assortment of jewellery types, swords and spears and sacred animals such as bulls and camels are all present in Kushan coin design.

Kushan designers created iconography that mixed together elements from very distinct religious traditions — Hindu, Zoroastrian and Buddhist art, as well as imagery from local cults. This sounds like an ancient multiculturalism in full flower, but whatever you call it, the artisans and designers of the time succeeded in absorbing everything in sight from the crossroads of Asia to produce sculpture and coin art with an extraordinarily unique character.

An essential source of information regarding Kushan religion derives from sources other than Buddhist texts and imagery. For example, the Rabatak inscription is a dedication for a temple complex commissioned by Kanishka in honour of divine patrons. Several gods are named as the source of the king's authority. First on the list is a goddess — Nana. 'Kanishka … who has obtained kingship from Nana and from all the gods … may they keep the king of kings, Kanishka the Kushan, forever healthy, secure and victorious.'[55] Until discovery of the Rabatak inscription, Nana's presence in the Kushan pantheon was enigmatic.

Nana serves the Kanishka pantheon as an astral goddess closely associated with royal power. In her Kushan context, she has often been traced to the Mesopotamian goddesses Innana and Ishtar, but a Mesopotamian association seems unnecessary. The earliest indisputable evidence of a Nana cult in Central Asia derives from coins issued by Bactrian rulers in the first century AD. The images are aniconic; Nana is represented by her zoomorphic attribute, a standing lion, with the inscription NANAIA. The first images of Nana in human form occur about a century later, on the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka.

Nana appears in several varieties on both gold and copper coins. One of her most important attributes is a crescent on top of her head. This lunar symbol, along with the lion, are attributes shared with other Central Asian deities closely associated with the goddess Venus. Nana holds a strange object in her right hand, often described as a 'lion-forepart wand'.[56] She often holds a bowl in her left hand. She has a halo and diadem and wears a loosely fitting long robe. On a very rare gold coin of Huvishka, she is mounted on a snarling lion and wears a helmet topped by a lunar crescent. On another Huvishka coin, she is dressed in a long, voluminous robe that covers her feet and has a long scarf wrapped around her shoulders, waist and hips. The inscription appears in a rather blundered cursive writing style but reads NΩNEITO. This may be a Bactrian version of the name Anahita, an ancient Iranian goddess of the waters who is associated with fertility and wisdom.

Figure 32a and b. Kushan goddess Nana
(a) American Numismatics Society 1944.100.30743
(b) American Numismatics Society 1944.100.63667

Considered in either an Indian or an Iranian context, the presence of great goddess worship among the Kushan is surprising. Starting in about 1300 BC, Indic people called themselves Aryans, or Noble Ones. Their Sanskritic sacred literature, the Vedas, reflect a predominantly masculine worldview. Post-Vedic literature from the fourth century BC onward, especially as found in the Upanishads, continued to express a male-dominated worldview.

Nevertheless, goddess worship was deeply established in ancient India, known from mother goddess terra cotta figurines in Harappan cities of the Indus Valley that date to as early as the third millennium BC. Similar mother goddess figurines are known from pre-Mauryan times (c. sixth century BC), and continued to be produced into the Kushan era (first to fourth centuries AD). Another important form of goddess worship emerged in Kushan time: the worship of a goddess of children, also a goddess of abundance and fertility. On Kushan coins, she is represented as Ardochsho. In Gandharan Buddhist sculpture she is known as Hariti.[57]

Nana's lead role in the Rabatak inscription and prominence in the coinage strongly suggests that Nana was the supreme patron god in Kanishka's royal pantheon.[58] But perhaps not. A recently discovered inscribed silver plate records that Kanishka presented the plate to a shrine dedicated to Oesho, acknowledging the god's part in bestowing kingship.[59] The presence of a second royal shrine suggests that the Nana temple may have honoured one of the gods in a royal cult that honoured different gods in different locations.

The most complex iconography for a Kushan god is found in portrayals of a god named Oesho. Like most deities in the Kushan pantheon, Oesho is a god with no known previous cultural or artistic representation before his appearance on Kushan coins. The coin iconography clearly associates Oesho with Shiva, the Hindu god of creation and destruction, but also with Greek gods Zeus and Heracles. It may be that the Kushan kings intended for

their Hindu population to recognise the coin god as Shiva. Nevertheless, an animal skin draped over Oesho's arm clearly relates to Heracles, and the presence of a thunderbolt and trident suggests reference to Zeus and Poseidon.

Oesho images first appear on the coinage of Wima Kadphises and continue in a dominant role throughout the entire Kushan era. On Wima Kadphises' coins, Oesho is portrayed leaning against a bull, virtually naked with an erection, a diaphanous scarf looped over his lower legs (see Chapter 3, Figures 10, 11, 16). Elsewhere in the coinage, Oesho appears alone (see Chapter 3, Figure 12). He is sometimes portrayed with four arms, and in a late king example, the bull bends down to lick the god's feet.

Figure 33a and b. Kushan god of high places Oesho
(a) American Numismatics Society 1986.149.4
(b) American Numismatics Society 1967.154.22

Oesho sometimes has three heads: a mustached youth facing frontally, a horned animal facing left, a bearded man facing right. He appears with a trident, and sometimes with a diadem, water pot, thunderbolt, elephant goad and an antelope skin. On some coins Oesho has a halo, sometimes flaming shoulders. Sometimes his erection is visible under a flimsy dhoti or projects above a waist cord. All these elements are combined in different ways.

Despite iconography that suggests otherwise, the coin inscription clearly reveals the god is not Shiva. The Bactrian name is Oesho, an obscure moniker that probably traces to an ancient Iranian wind god associated with mountain tops and the sky, but who is also a war god. Joe Cribb refers to Oesho as the Kushan 'god of high places'.[60]

Nana and Oesho appear on coins along with four other nature gods, all with Greek names, in the first year of Kanishka's reign, but they are later renamed for the subsequent coinage as Iranian gods. Miiro (Helios) is a sun god, associated with Mithra, a god with deep roots in the Persian Achaemenid empire (sixth to fourth centuries BC). No images of Miiro in human form are known in pre-Kushan Iran or India; the first appear on coins of Kushan kings.

Beginning with Soter Megas/Wima Takto, Miiro, in a head-and-shoulders portrait, wears a diadem with a radiate halo and rays emanating from the head. He holds an arrow upright in his raised right hand. On the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka, Miiro stands in full profile in a cloak worn over a belted tunic and boots. He clasps the hilt of a sword with his left hand. On many coins he is depicted with his right hand extended to make a two-finger gesture commonly referred to as a gesture of blessing or benediction.

A moon god, Mao (Selene), is portrayed with a lunar crescent emerging from his shoulders. Like Miiro, Mao makes the two-finger gesture of blessing or benediction. The god of fire, Athsho (Hephaistos), holds a pair of tongs in his left hand, offers a diadem with his right and has flames emanating from his shoulders. A wind god, Oado (Anemos), is portrayed running with both hands raised, a diaphanous cape billowing out behind.

Figure 34a, b, c, d. Kushan nature deities
(a) Sun god Miiro
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.63643
(b) Moon god Mao
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.30714
(c) Fire god Athsho
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.30749
(d) Wind god Oado
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.63548

Figure 35a and b. Kushan god and goddess of royal good fortune
(a) Ardochsho
American Numismatics Society 1986.149.12
(b) Pharro
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.63656

In addition to Nana and the nature deities, a god and goddess of royal good fortune appear prominently. The goddess is Ardochsho, and her name is known only from Kushan coinage. On the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka she stands in profile. On the coinage of the late Kushan kings she sits on a high-backed throne. Whether standing or seated, her most distinctive iconography is a cornucopia, the archetypal horn of plenty, held upright with both hands. The god of good fortune is Pharro, who appears on Kanishka's coins as a youthful figure with a halo and a winged diadem. He often holds a bowl in his right hand, a staff in his left. On Huvishka's coins, Pharro holds a staff, a diadem, a bowl of fire or a bag of money. On one coin, he wears a winged headdress in the manner of the Greek Hermes. On another he has flaming shoulders.

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The coin image of Kanishka I in an act of worship seems to reveal a clearly conceived intention to express a royal relationship with the gods represented on the other side of his coins. The two sides represent worshipper and worshipped in acts of reciprocity. The king displays his reverence for the gods, demonstrated by his making an offering at a fire altar; the gods in turn bestow blessings and kingship, signified by gestures or proffered objects. Miiro and Mao raise their hands in a gesture of blessing. Nana holds up her lion-forepart wand. Athsho offers a diadem of kingship. Buddha makes a gesture of reassurance, the *abhaya mudra*. Often, king and god share the same attributes. Both hold tridents or other symbols of authority. Sometimes, both have flaming shoulders and halos. Craig Burns's intriguing comment is not so far-fetched as it seems: 'Most coins have two sides, but not Kushan coins. The two sides are really one.'

The gods discussed so far constitute the core of the Kanishka and Huvishka pantheon as represented on coins. However, many more gods appear on extremely rare gold coins. Even if the inclusion suggests a depth of relationship between kings and gods, it is unclear how or even if these gods relate in any way to the religious life of the Kushan royal house. One very rarely depicted god is Mozdooano, for example, whose name also appears in the Rabatak inscription. The name most likely refers to the Zoroastrian supreme god, Ahura Mazda, but the origin of the mysterious coin iconography is unknown. He is shown as a bearded horseman, armed with a sword and carrying a trident. He rides a two-headed horse. (see Chapter three, Figure 13).

Another extremely rare gold coin depicts a standing figure of an Indian war god, Maaseno (Kartikeya). His hair is in a topknot, he wears a mantle over a dhoti, he clasps the hilt of a sword in his left hand and holds a standard with a bird finial. Another intriguing god is Manaobago, referred to as a ‘god of good mind’. The name is similar to an Avestan name that implies spirit of mind, wisdom and understanding. The god’s coin iconography, however, suggests Hindu roots. The god sits on a cushioned throne and has four arms. He holds a wheel, a plough, a money bag and a diadem. One other god is Serapo, the Kushan name for Serapis, a Greco-Egyptian divinity who figures prominently in the Alexandrian pantheon as lord of sea, land, sky and underworld. The god appears on the gold coinage of Huvishka as a Zeus-like figure, in both a standing and a seated version. And there are many other gods on the coins.

Figure 36. Kushan god of good mind Monaobago
American Numismatics Society 1944.100.30712

Whether a god is commonly represented, such as Nana, Oesho, Miiro and Mao, or very rarely depicted, such as Buddha, Mazdooano or Monaobago, Kanishka and Huvisha must have chosen each god specifically to represent a particular spiritual force or attribute. Honouring the gods was like a prayer for their kingship to be honoured in return. Many of the

Kushan coin gods derive from Iranian sources, but whether Kushan religion was a form of Iranian Zoroastrianism is unclear. Other religions flourished, but inscriptions, pilgrim reports, monastic remains and coin imagery all suggest that Buddhism was most likely the predominant religion during the time of Kanishka.

‘We see this image of Kanishka standing beside a small fire altar,’ Hakim Hamidi said. ‘So what is the king experiencing in himself at that moment? What kind of person is this? What kind of mind is this?’

— 12 —

Gandhara in Toronto

When I visited the Royal Ontario Museum for the first time, I made it as far as the first gallery. I was immediately absorbed by magnificent twelfth-to-fifteenth century Chinese Buddhist temple murals and the full-figure wood sculptures beautifully displayed in subdued lighting. But later that afternoon, on my way out of the museum, I suddenly encountered Gandharan sculptures displayed in another area on the main floor: four schist sculptures elevated on tall pedestals — three bodhisattvas and one Buddha. I had experienced outstanding Gandharan sculpture in Lahore, Peshawar and London; I had no idea that Gandhara had also come to Toronto.

The ROM's Buddha and bodhisattva images display Gandharan stone sculpting at its best. I simply could not believe what I was seeing. The Buddha's sensitive half-closed eyes convey absolute inner calm. The head is given a high polish and is surrounded by a large halo. He stands with one knee slightly bent, as if taking a small careful step, visible only because of a subtle arrangement of garment folds. Carved from high-quality, fine-grained stone, the image struck me as perfectly conceived from top to bottom. The Buddha appeared to shine.

I really had no choice: it was essential that I find someone at the ROM who knew about these sculptures. Where did they come from, how long had they been in the museum? And, unable to contain my interest, I decided that since the ROM had Gandharan sculpture, they might conceivably also have Kushan coins. After numerous inquiries, I eventually arranged for an appointment with the ROM's Greek and Roman collections technician, Elizabeth Knox. I followed instructions for meeting her at the staff entrance to register and obtain a visitor's pass. We took a staff elevator to a sixth-floor library. Beth laid out a series of three-ring binders bulging with plastic-sheet coin holders. She explained that the coins had been donated recently and were not yet accessioned into ROM collections.

Figure 37. Standing Buddha
Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM 939.17.13

One binder held a collection of ancient Indian punch-marked coins. Joe Cribb had shown me a few examples in the British Museum. Punch-marked coins are one of the earliest coinages in world history, some of which date to as early as the fourth century BC. They continued to be made until about the second century BC, and they circulated until the first century AD. The silver coins are made by cutting up silver plate into bars or irregularly shaped pieces of desired weights. Some were struck with a single punch, thus carrying a

single symbol. Others were struck with as many as five punches, producing five symbols.

This extensive coin collection donated to the ROM included silver and copper coins from various periods in India: coins of the Sultanates and Mughals, colonial coins of the Indian Princely States and British India, and modern coins of the republics of India and Pakistan. I did not know much about any of them. But then Beth Knox showed me a small ROM collection of other Central Asian and Indian coins donated decades earlier. And yes, of course! There were Kushan coins in a museum collection about a fifteen-minute bicycle ride from home.

Beth asked if I could verify ROM records about identification. It was relatively easy to pick out numerous inaccuracies, and I identified several Kushan coppers of Wima Kadphises, Wima Takto and Huvishka. The two very fine gold coins in the collection included a Wima Kadphises bust portrait of the king with flaming shoulders, and a Vasudeva I coin with the king dressed in armour and holding a trident. Both gold coins bore 1924 ROM accession numbers.

A few weeks later, Beth Knox gave me a call. She asked if I would be willing to come down to the ROM and try to identify some other coins. A Toronto doctor with Médecins Sans Frontières had returned home after a one-year assignment in Afghanistan and had come back with about 20 ancient coins. I identified several Kushan coppers. A few coins were probably Sasanian, but I could not identify them positively, and two other coins were probably Hunnish. The doctor had clearly enjoyed a good day in the markets of Mazar-i-Sharif.

After a coffee break, I was invited to browse in the library. The sixth-floor library contains an extensive collection of South and East Asian art history and archaeology books, and an astonishing number of journals. A little later, Beth found me looking through Harald Ingholt's *Gandhara Art in Pakistan*. Familiar with the book herself, she told me of her own considerable interest in Gandharan sculpture. She asked if I wanted to see the ROM's collection.

'I've seen the pieces on display,' I said. 'They're wonderful.'

'We have more in storage,' she said.

That did it. By the end of the day, I knew two things: the ROM's Gandharan sculptures had never been published as a collection, and my self-imposed twenty-year separation from the world of academia was over. The research project involved acceptance into a master's degree programme in South Asian studies with the University of Toronto's History Department. The degree programme allowed full access to ROM collections as well as curatorial support. Dr Narendra Wagle, professor of ancient and medieval Indian history, supervised my South Asian studies programme. Dr Edward Keele, who at the time was head of the ROM's Near

Eastern and Asian Civilizations Department and associate professor of archeology at the university, arranged for me to have museum access and technical support.

Both professors seemed as intrigued as I about what the research would yield. They generously assisted throughout the two-year programme. Largely through their support, the project resulted in the publication of my book about the collection, thanks also to my visiting scholar status at the Asian Institute in the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs, as well as department associate status in the Royal Ontario Museum's World Cultures Department. Meanwhile, back at my real job, I managed to maintain a schedule of supervising electricians, carpenters, painters, plumbers and cleaning staff until retirement a few years later.

Research at the ROM began with several hours of fingering through a truly antique index card cabinet. As a result, I concluded that, according to the card index, the ROM had 33 pieces of Gandharan sculpture, 6 of which were on display in the main floor gallery. Studying and describing 33 sculptures seemed to me a formidable task involving original research, but doable, and certainly more than enough to fulfil the requirements of a master's thesis. I arranged for appointments twice a week in one of the sixth-floor storage rooms with Jeannie Parker, the collections technician for Far Eastern and South Asian materials. She cleared a work area on a large table. We transferred three or four objects at a time from storage shelves and drawers to a four-wheeler carrying cart and then transferred each piece onto the work table.

Ancient objects tend to generate a sense of awe tinged with mystery. I value each and every opportunity to hold an object in hand and examine it closely with minimal constraints other than my own awareness that the object must be handled with the utmost care. The research procedure was straightforward: I would take measurements, write a preliminary description and make diary notes of questions concerning iconography and identification. The task? Try to find out why this two-thousand-year-old object was created in the first place. What role did it play in a Central Asian Buddhist monastery temple complex? What was the nature of the community it served? What can we possibly find out about the carvers and their workshops? And how did these Buddhas and bodhisattvas and panel reliefs find their way into the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum?

After an initial round of examining objects, I shifted my attention to the origins of the collection. I received permission to research ROM archives for correspondence and purchase orders related to the ROM's Gandharan collection. Within a few days I found that the ROM acquired their first Gandharan sculptures from Spink of London in 1924 and 1930. Three panels came by way of a Toronto Waddington's auction in 1985. The most recent addition was a 1997 donation. The ROM acquired by far the most of their Gandharan collection in the

late 1930s from a dealer in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Charles Currelly, a professor of archaeology at the University of Toronto, was the ROM's first director and curator when the ROM opened its doors in 1914. He travelled the world in search of objects for the new museum's collections. His selection of Asian artefacts was initially influenced by European trends of the day that favoured decorative arts inspired by Chinese aesthetics. Ancient Chinese ceramics, paintings and bronzes are among Currelly's early outstanding acquisitions.

In his lively memoir, *I Brought the Ages Home*, Currelly recounts his early years of building the museum's collections. His story focuses primarily on Chinese material but also relates how he developed interest in developing an Indian collection. Occasionally, he took advantage of opportunities that arrived out of the blue. On one occasion, he received a photograph of an excellent Chola bronze — a dancing Shiva Nataraja sculpture dating to about AD 1000. The asking price was too high, but the dealer kept writing to him, so Currelly finally made an offer he thought would end the story. To his amazement, he received word the offer was accepted: 'Statue shipped.' Some years later, the *Illustrated London News* published a photo and full-page description of the Chola bronze. An Indian dealer named Ram Dass saw the article and contacted the ROM with photographs of other sculptures, accompanied by an offer Currelly could not refuse. Currelly writes:

> The pieces were mainly of Gandhara sculpture at prices I was able to meet. These were things I had never dreamed that Canada might possess, as anything of this type I had seen in London was held at fantastic prices. This work had always interested me very much, as it was Indian, but derived from the Greek tradition which followed Alexander's conquest.[61]

The ROM replied to Ram Dass during very troubled times: the early years of World War II, the end of British rule in India, the partition and creation of Pakistan. Somehow, Gandharan sculptures were transported by truck from Rawalpindi to Calcutta and shipped through war zones from Calcutta to Halifax. Crates arrived in Toronto by truck from Halifax. Currelly's decision to collect Gandharan sculpture followed a popular trend of the time. Gandharan art, especially sculpture with Greco-Roman features, was the most accessible style of Asian art available to westerners. During the British colonial period, European collectors and scholars, constrained by Victorian-era ethics and aesthetics, abhorred India's Hindu temple architecture and sculpture, especially gods with multiple heads and arms, human figures with elephant heads, or naked and voluptuous goddesses.

The British colonial response to Gandharan art was entirely different. Early British archaeologists and art historians perceived Gandharan Buddhist sculpture as an

understandable reflection of the Western classical tradition that had reached Central Asia by way of Alexander's conquest in the fourth century BC. Unfortunately, this accessibility in Western terms prompted British colonialists, as well as nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century scholars to relate to Gandhara on imperialistic terms. Gandhara was seen as an arts centre in British India derived from Greek and Roman traditions.

A number of scholars have been outspoken critics of this Eurocentric point of view in the treatment of Indian arts.

> Since it was never in doubt to European art historians that classical art was the epitome of perfection, the art of Gandhara produced under that influence had of necessity to be superior to the rest of Indian art. Therefore, a descending scale of values could be formulated with Gandhara at the apex, which could make the task of judging different Indian styles easier.[62]

Even today, some scholarly literature retains a lingering paternalism and imperialistic mindset in its treatment of Gandharan art. However, scholarly as well as popular views of Indian art have changed dramatically. The majority of art historians now appreciate Gandhara as a unique, independent artistic tradition that fuses Western classical tradition with ancient Iranian and Indian arts into forms and functions that served Indian Buddhism.

To establish ROM collections, Currelly trusted his instincts, his experience in archaeology and museum management for collecting, and his knowledge of conserving and displaying artefacts. Neither his memoir nor ROM records indicate that Currelly had any doubt about the authenticity of the Indian objects he personally selected. A particularly important consequence of Currelly's purchasing policy is that the core of the ROM's Gandharan collection is consistently high-quality work obtained in a relatively short period of time from a single dealer.

The dealer's letterhead declares: Ram Dass & Company. Art Experts, Bankers & Old Coins Exporters. Established 1880. Early in my research I learned that a grandson of Ram Dass lived in Toronto. We met on three occasions in 2002. He preferred not to have his name published but was very proud and willing to share stories about his grandfather's career. Ram Dass was the only boy in his village who graduated from high school and also spoke English. Fascinated by history, he understood from a young age that he lived in one of the most historically rich crossroads of the ancient world. His interest in history was soon accompanied by a passion for collecting. He met a British officer stationed in Rawalpindi who said he would buy whatever coins or antiquities Ram Dass brought him. Ram Dass agreed, and so his career was launched; but he kept the best pieces for himself. His uncle had been in business since 1880, the date on the letterhead, but in the early 1900s Ram Dass

organised his uncle's business into a company in his own name. Assisted by his officer friend, Ram Dass built up an extensive collection of coins, stone and stucco sculpture, full-figure Buddhas and bodhisattvas, heads, and panel reliefs. He sold to the ROM and many other museums in Europe and North America.

The Ram Dass dealership in Rawalpindi flourished during a period of feverish British interest in Buddhist sites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The ROM, insisting on its own purchase procedure, forwarded a copy of its acquisition policy and forms. After agreeing in writing, Ram Dass sent annotated photographs. Then, Currelly and F St George Spendlove, curator from the museum's Far Eastern Department, selected the pieces they wanted to purchase. In early 1939, they sent Ram Das detailed instructions on how objects should be packed for shipping. No payment would be forwarded until objects had arrived and were examined.

Ram Dass responded rather tersely, declaring total confidence in these matters and that Spendlove need not have bothered with the advice. To prepare sculptures for shipping, Ram Dass rolled each object individually in wheat straw and packed it in burlap sacks. Custom-designed wooden crates fastened with screws were constructed to allow sufficient space around each sack to fill with sawdust. The boxes were closed and secured by iron straps, ready for the long journey from Rawalpindi to Toronto via Calcutta and Halifax.

The boxes, eight in total, arrived at the ROM in August 1939. Most, but not all, of the objects Currelly and Spendlove had ordered were in the boxes, including two standing bodhisattvas, a seated bodhisattva and a number of 'terra cotta heads'. Currelly was especially impressed with a large stucco bodhisattva head that arrived with this first shipment. He decided to pay for the stucco head personally and give it to the museum in honour of his mother.

Immediately upon receipt of the eight boxes, Spendlove sent a cable to Ram Dass on August 28: 'Toys arrived today perfect condition money letter follows.' In the letter, written the same day, Spendlove sounds exuberant: 'Your shipment came perfectly packed, not one single bit of damage. I congratulate you. We have never seen more wonderful packing.' Spendlove added, 'Please ship the big Buddha as soon as you can, provided there is no war. If there should be, we must see what chances there would be of its arriving.'

The ROM's dealings with Ram Dass were not without incident. Included in the eight-box shipment were several small sculptures that had not been ordered. In fact, Ram Dass sent a letter a few weeks before the shipment arrived alerting the ROM to the inclusion of additional pieces. The ROM response was immediate: 'We were very much surprised and grieved to hear that you had sent a selection of objects to us on approval, as it was only additional photographs we asked for. Send nothing more without definite instructions from

us.’ When the shipment arrived, the museum immediately returned all objects that Ram Dass listed under the heading ‘Extras in Box No. 7’.

Despite the ‘stop shipment’ notice, more boxes of sculpture arrived with extras. Irritated by the problem, Currelly nevertheless received further shipments. In October of the same year, he wrote to Ram Dass:

> We asked you to cable us whether our orders have been shipped. If not, please send them as soon as a suitable opportunity offers, preferably by a neutral ship, with full insurance covering war risks and all other risks. We are keeping three small terra cottas for the time being. The other extras that were sent at various times are being returned to you fully insured and prepaid. We require the standing Bodhisattva in particular and will not accept other pieces unless this one is sent.[63]

In February 1940, Spendlove circulated an internal ROM memo announcing the arrival of another box from Calcutta. ‘We are immensely relieved to know that our shipment from Ram Dass has arrived. One case, containing the full figure standing Buddha, and a stone head.’ The stone head was another extra. Ram Dass explained the shipment with all the enthusiasm and guile of an experienced dealer.

> We received your orders to the effect that no extras should be sent. But this head is most fine and in perfect condition. We are of the opinion that your goodself will feel the necessity of having many heads of different types and sizes of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, etc. when you will display other articles in this Indian gallery as other curators of other museums of the different countries have felt. We again say it with authority that such beautiful head with fine art and in perfect condition can be had only by chance as these beautiful pieces are not always available for sale. Therefore, the Museum should not miss this chance, but should have it on our strong request and experience of opinion.[64]

The ROM purchased the head. A third standing bodhisattva figure that Currelly considered especially significant was also received in 1940. But not long after, correspondence between the ROM and Ram Dass ended abruptly because of the rapidly deteriorating conditions in India. Spendlove did not try to contact Ram Dass again until 1946. Ram Dass responded three years later in a letter dated October 1949.

> Due to partition of the country and existence of Pakistan, we have with great difficulty reached Delhi … I very much regret that I could not write to you earlier but this is due

> to my being in distress. I could only bring moveable property … I now have for sale Indo-Greek, Parthian, Scythian coins, which are all rare and very fine and you will want them for your Indian collections.

The ROM did not purchase the coins and arranged for no further sculpture purchases of Gandharan material from Ram Dass. However, during the series of Ram Dass acquisitions from the late 1930s to the early 1940s, the ROM did add several artefacts from other areas of India, especially objects from the Indus Valley, Mathura and the Gupta periods.

For Hindus living in Pakistan, circumstances became very difficult around the time of partition. Nonetheless, the Ram Dass family postponed their departure from Rawalpindi for as long as possible. Many objects were held in hidden basement rooms accessible only by removing floor tiles on the ground floor. To store or move artefacts into or out of the basement, Ram Dass engineered a moveable crane system for lifting and lowering heavy objects. When forced to leave the family home, Ram Dass received help from his best friend and neighbour, a Muslim man, who arranged for a truck and driver. The driver was hired with all expenses paid and told to do whatever was necessary to get the truck with its load of family belongings and sculptures to New Delhi within two weeks. Ram Dass had no choice but to leave most of his collection behind. The family flew to New Delhi. The driver and truck arrived days later safe and sound. A few Gandharan pieces were eventually placed in the National Museum in New Delhi. The several hundred objects that Ram Dass left behind in his Rawalpindi home now form a considerable part of the Taxila Museum collection.

Letters and purchase orders that I read in the ROM archives alerted me to the possibility that I had not seen certain purchased objects referred to in the correspondence. I had not seen any terra cotta heads, for example, nor the stucco head that Currelly bought himself and gave to the museum in honour of his mother. Where were they? Jeannie Parker and I undertook our own version of a storage-room archaeology expedition. We scoured storage cases and cabinets and finally found the 74-centimetre-tall stucco head in a closet, covered with a sheet. The magnificent bodhisattva head is in near pristine condition. Surviving Gandharan stucco art accomplished on such a scale is extremely rare. A famous, considerably smaller Gandharan stucco head is on permanent display in the Galleries of Buddhist Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It appears in countless books and articles. By contrast, the ROM sculpture was only on display for a short time after it was purchased. It is briefly mentioned in a couple of obscure articles, and appears in a short paragraph and an image in Currelly’s memoir.

Jeannie Parker and I found a series of nine heads in the drawer of a storage cabinet. Modelled with a stucco slip over fired clay and all in relatively good condition, they include the heads of an ascetic, a demon, a child, a female, and a well-preserved Buddha head. But

one last piece from my list continued to elude us. It was not until I had completed my master's degree programme and prepared my thesis for publication that I finally found the sculpture. The lovely, small Gandharan stucco sculpture portrays a worshipful young woman. It was on display in one of the ROM galleries, improperly labelled. Fortunately, the discovery occurred just in time for the sculpture to be photographed and published in the catalogue.

Figure 38. Head of bodhisattva
Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM 939.19.1

As a result of our search for Gandharan objects in storage, my initial projection of 33 objects in the ROM's Gandharan collection turned out to be a little on the short side. There were 44 pieces: 8 donated, 5 purchased from Spink of London, 3 from a Toronto auction house and 25 sculptures from Ram Dass.

Twelve of the 44 sculptures in the collection are panel reliefs, most of excellent quality. One of the panels that I particularly appreciate is a narrative relief that portrays a group of dancers and musicians and an enthroned turban. The jewelled turban has an elaborate crest ornament. The group of seven includes four male musicians, a female dancer, and two other figures — one male, and one female — who appear to be keeping time to the rhythm with their hands. The panel depicts an episode in the life story of the Buddha. The story goes that when Prince Siddhartha left behind his family, palace and secular life, he cut off his hair and turban with a stroke of his sword. He tossed the turban into the air, but Indra, the highest god in the Vedic pantheon, seized it and carried it to his heavenly paradise. The turban was enshrined in the gods' assembly hall and joyfully celebrated with dance and music to honour Siddhartha's decision to go into the world and seek enlightenment.

Figure 39. Panel relief: Siddhartha's enthroned turban
Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM 939.17.15

In another panel relief, six Kushan soldiers casually stand together, as if waiting for some event to begin. The deep relief, accomplished with masterful planning and care, composes the soldiers into three pairs, distinctively overlapping and touching each other. The pair on the left appear to be sharing the latest news. In the central pair, the soldier to the right leans slightly forward, chin on hand and elbow supported by the hilt of his sword. He seems amused by his pontificating companion. The pair on the right is also in good spirits, smiling and touching hands. The six display a variety of hairstyles; five of them have heavy beards and thick moustaches. They have massive sheathed swords. Their padded boots, heavy tunics and baggy trousers seem appropriate Central Asian winter wear. John Rosenfield chose this panel as the jacket cover image for his book *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*.

Figure 40. Panel relief: Kushan soldiers
Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM 939.17.19

Less than a year before the 2003 publication of my ROM book,[65] Dr Deepali Dewan came to the ROM as the new associate curator of South Asian arts. One of Deepali's first tasks was to curate a selection of pieces and groupings for a South Asian gallery to be installed in the new Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, a $270 million expansion project then under construction. The presence at last of a ROM South Asian arts specialist, and an expanded space to work with, proved extremely beneficial as far as my own project was concerned. To my great surprise and delight, Deepali decided to place on permanent display 42 of the ROM's 44-piece collection of Gandharan sculpture. The opening of the Crystal took place in June 2007; the new South Asian gallery opened on the Crystal's third floor a year later.

The architectural style of the ROM's original 1914 building is listed as Italianate Neo-Romanesque. An eastern wing opened in 1933 with a grand main entrance, accomplished in a Byzantine style with rusticated stone, triple windows within recessed arches, varied coloured stones and a warm, inviting rotunda.

The massive Crystal addition works spectacularly — if appreciated as architectural sculpture. I often watched the progress of the construction from across the street. It was a fascinating process, requiring the difficult placement of hundreds of canted steel beams, no two of them angled the same. Fascinating it might be, but I could readily imagine the concept taken elsewhere, such as an open field outside the city, a ROM II in the country, so to speak. A country crystal structure would have allowed the architects complete freedom of expression to toss up their wild, sharp-angled peaks and valleys in any direction they wanted, independent of any other building. The crashing of new against old in a central city location aroused considerable controversy. The original building houses a museum that is unquestionably one of the best in North America. The new building is 'starchitecture', a collision of massive iceberg-like forms that are outwardly exciting, but often a curator's

nightmare on the inside.

Visitors enter through sliding glass doors at the base of the Crystal, then make their way through confusing entrance halls. In Ontario, we have lots of wood. We have lots of stone. There is not a trace of either in the entrance halls, only acres of drywall. I often wondered how long it would take before the museum decided that something had to change; the new entrance hall was not doing the museum any favour. Fortunately, in 2018, the museum reopened its original grand entrance that leads immediately into the warm glow of the Byzantine-inspired rotunda. Construction completed in 2020 created an entirely new outdoor area with greenery and an event space adjacent to the Crystal.

On display in the Crystal, in the third-floor South Asian gallery, is a very rare Gandharan sculpture of exceptional quality. Prince Siddhartha is portrayed as a youthful bodhisattva, representing the pre-enlightenment part of his life before he became Shakyamuni Buddha, founder of Buddhism. In his bodhisattva form, he stands confidently with left hand on hip, right hand raised in abhaya. His left leg is slightly flexed as if taking a small step forward. The fineness in the multiple folds of his upper and lower garments clearly suggest silk fabric, in contrast to the heavier cotton or wool monastic garment worn by the Buddha. Siddhartha’s incredibly impressive ensemble of jewellery is modelled after choice gold and precious-stone pieces from Indian nobility. He wears winged-lion ear ornaments, a wide collar necklace set with teardrop-shaped stones, a long chain necklace with fantastical figure finials and a thin amulet string across the chest, as well as armbands, bracelets and rings.

An elaborate turban, crisscrossed with ornamented bands and jewels, culminates in a forehead gemstone and features a crest that honours the Brahman sun god, Surya. Similar depictions of the sun god were reproduced in Indian Hindu art for several centuries but are rarely known in a Buddhist context. As far as I can determine, the ROM’s Prince Siddhartha sculpture is a unique Gandharan creation.

Figure 41. Siddhartha with Surya headdress
Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM 939.17.8

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The Kushan in New York

In 1999, I attended a conference of numismatists and collectors in New York City. One of the conference participants, Michael Bates, a curator at the American Numismatic Society and a specialist in Islamic coinage, got wind of my interest in Kushan coins and invited me to ANS headquarters in New York to see their collection. He regularly browsed coin trays with contents other than Islamic and knew the Kushan collection to be quite extensive. Don't expect a thoroughly organised collection, he warned. I was intrigued but a bit slow in responding. I followed up on the invitation seven years later in 2006.

The American Numismatic Society has assembled a massive collection of coins and medals, well over 800,000 objects dating from 650 BC to the present, a collection rivalled only by the British Museum Department of Coins and Medals. According to the website, the ANS numismatic library houses nearly 100,000 books, documents and artefacts, all managed by a full-time librarian. ANS was founded in 1858, and their publication programme began in 1866. The library's books, periodicals, conference papers, printed versions of lecture series, specialised academic monographs and reference works and colour-illustrated magazine articles all promote the study and public appreciation of coins, currencies, medals and related objects. Since 2015, all publications have been produced in both print and digital editions. MANTIS is the search tool that serves as the online home for the ANS image collection; coin images, records and other contextual data are constantly uploaded and updated.

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The downtown ANS Fulton Street address turned out to be a rather dark, cramped building badly in need of renovation. The Kushan collection itself, however, was spectacular. In the first tray I examined stunning gold coins of Wima Kadphises and Huvishka, including a few coins not even in the British Museum, only in Robert Göbl's catalogue. A large collection of Kushan coppers occupied the better part of three big metal trays.

There are more than a hundred trays per cabinet, and as many as 180 coins per tray arranged in rows separated by magnetic strips. In trays with mixed contents I found Kushan coppers alongside Scythian, Parthian, Kushano-Sasanian and other coinages. I had been forewarned about disorganised mixes. The ANS had never employed a curator specialising in pre-Islamic Indian or Central Asian coinages. I arranged for appointments over two days, but after several hours it was obvious that for even a preliminary survey I would have to return, possibly several times.

I reported to the executive director, Ute Wartenberg. ‘There are a lot of Kushan coins,’ I said. ‘I don’t know how many yet, but it’s worth a comprehensive survey.’ She was very accommodating, and invited me to return anytime I wanted.

I did not try to fool anyone into thinking I was a numismatist, much less a serious collector. Nor did I explain my fascination with Kushan coin iconography. But a year later I arranged for a series of visits over three days. I followed the same procedure as before, going through coins tray by tray. After this second visit, I departed ANS with a plan. The plan, however, required a collaborator, without whom I could not, and would not, continue.

In London in 2008, I said to Joe Cribb, ‘The ANS has close to 600 Kushan coins. About 120 gold. Would you be interested in co-authoring a book?’ I expected a firm and immediate negative, knowing Joe was up to his neck in British Museum responsibilities. In 2003, after more than 30 years, he had been promoted to Keeper of the Department of Coins and Medals. The responsibility placed him in charge of department policy positions and budgets. He provided supervision for all research objectives and publications put forward by 12 curators. As if that was not enough, Joe had been chosen as honorary medalist by the prestigious Royal Numismatics Society in 1999, and was elected its president in 2004.

Joe had also changed offices. The beautiful mahogany cabinets containing all the Kushan and Oriental coins had moved up a floor to a spacious and impressive office. I did notice some continuity between the lower and upper offices. The two-foot-deep stack of articles, magazines and notebooks still occupied the same corner of Joe’s (now much larger) desk.

‘The ANS idea has advantages and disadvantages,’ he said. The disadvantage, he pointed out, is that the ANS collection derives from a random history of private donations, no doubt leaving gaps in some areas, duplication in others. What was really needed, he argued, was a corpus approach to document the entire three centuries of Kushan minting practice and production. Such a highly complex coinage, so incompletely understood by Robert Göbl, demanded comprehensive analysis possible only at the British Museum. This was not the first time he had mentioned his intention to catalogue the British Museum Kushan collection, but his intention had not yet transformed into a plan of action.

‘Okay,’ I agreed. ‘What about advantages?’

‘Six hundred coins is a manageable number.’

And not an inconsequential number. Idiosyncrasies, gaps and duplicates notwithstanding, Joe agreed a catalogue of the ANS collection would be a valuable contribution to Kushan studies. He reminded me that if we were to consider a collaboration, he would not be travelling to New York. He obviously could not give an ANS project top priority. But neither could I. I would have to find a few days now and then for continuing on location in New

York. Given that both of us could commit only on a part-time basis, the project would progress slowly, probably in brief spurts followed by long periods of inactivity. Not a recipe for success, but let's be optimistic, we said. Consider it a five-year plan. I was delighted that Joe and I could come to an agreement of sorts. I could not imagine anyone else I would rather work with on such a project. This was an opportunity to collaborate with the foremost authority on Kushan coinage, and the opportunity came with a bonus: Joe said he would assist in my applications for Royal Numismatic Society funding to support trips to work with him in London.

Delays? We signed a publication contract three years later in December 2011, with exclusive publication and distribution rights held by ANS. The book was published four years later in 2015, ten years after my preliminary survey, seven years after Joe and I first discussed the project in London.

We decided early on that our catalogue would follow both the sylloge approach conventionally used in ANS publications, and also a catalogue approach. Originally, the term 'sylloge' referred to the publishing of single collections of ancient Greek coins. ANS extended the use of the term for the publication of Greek and Roman collections as well as other coinages. In many sylloges, only coin images appear, organised chronologically, accompanied by brief descriptions, inscriptions and supplementary material such as mint marks. A catalogue approach adds considerably more text. In a lengthy general introduction, we would discuss the origins and spread of the Kushan empire, its coinage, monetary system and mints. Catalogue sections would include detailed essays for each king and also complete listings and detailed coin descriptions organised according to the latest analysis and research. We would classify the coins by ruler, mint, metal, denomination, type and variety. Our combined sylloge and catalogue differs from a third approach, a corpus catalogue, such as Joe had proposed for a British Museum publication that would list each and every known Kushan coin type.

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Shortly after one of my trips to New York late in 2007, our Kushan project was put on hold. Planning was underway for an ANS move to a new location, their second move in four years. Ute Wartenberg became executive director in 1999 during a period of financial crisis for the Society. At the time, ANS had purchased the Fulton Street building near Wall Street where it planned to move from its nearly century-long residence in northern Manhattan. But it had to undertake a formidable renovation project while simultaneously dealing with an annual deficit and the necessity of cutting its staff by half. The 2004 move to Fulton Street had been long awaited and delayed, in part because of September 11, 2001. ANS was the first cultural

institution to open in Lower Manhattan following 9/11, but everyone at ANS knew it was just a matter of time before another move.

Practice makes perfect, as an ANS report proclaims. The architects did their work for the next move to new offices on the 11th floor of One Hudson Square at Varick and Canal. Contractors and ANS staff prepared for months. In 2008, ANS staff moved 12,000 trays of coins and over 100,000 volumes of books, plus the furniture, computers, supplies and ancillary hardware that keep the Society up and running. Thanks to the earlier move, ANS possessed 450 specially designed shipping cases that held stacks of coin trays. The bright orange containers on wheels are readily handled by two careful people. The move was accomplished in one day with a New York Police Department escort. You can walk between Fulton Street and One Hudson Square in about 20 minutes. One Hudson Square is an eighteen-storey 1930s-era industrial building that served the printing trade through much of its early life. The building was designated a New York City landmark in 2013.

Both the Fulton Street and Varick Street moves were orchestrated by Ute Wartenberg. A seven-member board of trustees provided financial and administrative support. The move was completed with incredible efficiency, but with limited time for people to settle into the newly refurbished offices. The problems were far from over. Following the 2008 financial crisis, ANS funding sources virtually dried up. With further cuts, the staff included only one full-time curator and two part-time curatorial associates, with library and publication services reduced to a minimum. Recovery was slow, but the director and trustees launched several seasons of dedicated networking and fundraising that allowed ANS to survive. The effort paid off. Within three years, the ANS publishing programme was thriving again, the library was fully functional, new curatorial staff had arrived, major new research projects were launched and other projects were underway again, including ours.

I arrived at One Hudson Square from the Canal Street subway station on a clear, windy day. Thanks to extensive renovation, the triple bay entrance and spacious marble lobby presents itself as elegantly formal and professional. At the lobby security desk, I presented photo ID and my appointment note to obtain a visitor’s pass and to advance as far as a guard posted at the elevators. On the 11th floor, an ANS security guard stationed behind bulletproof glass in a room with monitors and phones carefully checked my ID again. With my appointment time confirmed, a staff member was called.

I was taken inside by Peter Donovan, a retired United Nations geologist who worked at ANS as a part-time curatorial associate. He gave me a tour. I checked out a display cabinet for coin and medal exhibitions in the entrance hallway. The impressive library, under the care of a new librarian, had large reading tables and displays of recent publications, including journals. We dropped by the administrative offices, where I was greeted by Ute Wartenberg

and the associate director, Andrew Meadows. Peter and I helped ourselves at the coffee machine in a common area with a small kitchen. Coffee in hand, we moved down a corridor of offices, through three security doors that required Peter's pass card, and arrived at an open work area with big tables. Assigned a desk in a vacant office, I signed my name in a registry and was invited into the vault. Peter asked my assistance in briefly looking through a few trays. I chose a single tray and carried it out of the vault to a table set up with a camera mount. Peter photographed the tray's contents, then we discussed research plans for the day. He showed me his desk around the corner from my temporary office.

Peter volunteered to assist with the Kushan project, and it was not long before I realised that he was not only genuinely interested but extremely helpful. He organised files of existing coin images. He arranged for new photography, double-checked all coin weights and measurements, updated the in-house database and, most importantly, continuously tracked down misplaced or misidentified coins.

Joe Cribb, 3,470 miles away in London, devised a method for tracking down misplaced coins at ANS in New York. He and I regularly reviewed groups of coin images Peter sent to us that were identified by ANS accession numbers. Joe assumed that gaps in a continuous series of accession numbers for Huvishka coppers, for example, must also be Huvishka coins. But where were they? Inevitably, a search by Peter Donovan turned up the missing coins. Sometimes gaps in the lists numbered as many as 20 coins. More often than not, a search revealed that the gap-filling coins were indeed Kushan. After several such discoveries, we acknowledged the implications of adding significant numbers of coins to my original estimate; this collection contained far more than 600 coins.

Joe Cribb's procedure was especially effective in tracking down large numbers of poor quality coppers that were part of a major 1997 donation. The Kushan portion of this donation turned out to be no less than 1,500 copper coins. Several of the better coins from this group had been included in my original count of 600, but most were not, primarily because they were barely identifiable. Most were not laid out in trays but distributed between various small boxes of unidentified coins. My inclination was to leave them out of the survey, an idea that was quickly overruled. Joe reminded me that we had agreed to catalogue the collection as a whole, leaving nothing out. I disputed the need to include bad-looking coins, but we agreed to give catalogue numbers to every coin, including poor quality, barely recognisable ones. Only the better coins would be included in our catalogue coin plates.

I arrived at a point of being totally fed up with Kushan coppers. The 1,500 newly discovered coins were about 1,400 too many as far as I was concerned. Joe, on the other hand, was not bothered in the least. He was intrigued by the new finds. A lousy coin was no less interesting to him than a stunning gold Huvishka. He urged me to keep going. He added,

quite correctly, that poor-condition coins require considerably less catalogue attention compared to descriptions necessary for gold coins and high-quality coppers. He also suggested that heavily worn coins have their own story to tell; they are of immense significance in understanding post-production circulation. This is particularly true of copper coins of Kanishka and Huvishka, which continued to circulate in large numbers in India into the fourth and fifth centuries AD, over two centuries after the end of the Kushan era. Nevertheless, because I was working on other projects, I took time off from Kushan coppers. Months passed before I ventured again into ANS territory.

During my leave of absence, Joe decided that another 600 coins should be included in the catalogue. The decision struck me as crazy. But Joe, my co-author, colleague and friend, succeeded in relaxing my objections to the point where I agreed to a return trip to New York. He said it was without question appropriate, even essential. I took the trip promising myself two bonuses: a visit to the Strand just below Union Square, my second favourite bookshop on the planet, and from there, a short walk to the ticket office for the off-Broadway performance arts company Blue Man Group. Over at ANS, Peter escorted me into the vault to locate the appropriate coin trays, and within an hour my interest in the Kushan project was back on track.

While double-checking their website, Joe had noticed that the ANS had a substantial collection of Kushano-Sasanian coins that we had not examined. In the early third century, the first Sasanian emperor of Iran, Ardashir I (AD 224–41), captured territory of the Kushan empire and placed it under the control of Sasanian princes, who adopted the title Kushanshah, or King of Kushan. The princes minted coins mixing Kushan and Sasanian designs, and these circulated primarily in Bactria. These Sasanian princes are referred to in modern scholarship as Kushano-Sasanians. Their rule lasted for just over 100 years (AD 230–340). We found the Kushano-Sasanian coins mixed in with trays of Bactrian Greek, Sasanian and other Central Asian coins. Peter Donovan and I sorted them and identified 268 coins in total, 18 of gold.

Another group of Kushan-like coins were more problematic, imitations of the coins of a late Kushan king, Vasudeva I (AD 190–230), issued by a Kushano-Sasanian mint. A surprising number of these imitations are in the ANS collection, including 15 gold coins and a whopping 430 badly made, badly worn coppers. Joe organised the 430 coppers into nine types. For example, in Type 1C (Standing King with Triangle) a bloated-looking king stands with bowed arms. A small triangle appears to his right. On the other side of the coin, Oesho, looking just as awkward as the king, leans against a bull represented by a couple of blobs. The coins have no clear inscriptions. For this type, we catalogued 148 copper coins, 33 of which made the cut and appear in the coin plates.

Enough? Not quite. We added a set of coins minted by Kidarite Huns (AD 340–390). The Kidarite rulers emerged at the close of the Kushan period. An inscription on a seal reveals that the Kidarites considered themselves kings of the Huns as well as kings of the Kushan.[66] Kidarite coin designs copy late Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian kings. We found 35 Kidarite coins, 5 of which were gold. We suspected there might be more, as some types are difficult to identify. They probably evaded us and are hiding somewhere in the cabinets unidentified, but we had to stop somewhere.

What with all the previously misplaced and neglected coppers, plus the Kushano-Sasanian and Kidarite coins, and including a late but important ANS purchase of 12 coins in 2012 from our ever-vigilant curatorial associate Peter Donovan, we arrived at a final count, quite a few more than 600: our catalogue documents 2,612 coins.

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During one of my early visits to ANS, a tall man with greying hair stepped into the office and asked if I minded him peering over my shoulder. He introduced himself as Larry Adams and expressed interest in a tray on my desk filled with mixed gold and copper Kushan coins. He said he was a collector, knew something about Kushan coinage and expressed delight that I had initiated a project to catalogue the ANS Kushan collection. Later, I learned that Larry Adams had been an ANS trustee since 2001. After our brief visit he contacted the director to state his intention to support the Kushan project in any way possible. This news added to my first impression of Larry as a very professional and friendly man. Everyone at ANS referred to him as Larry. He was a dermatologist, specialising in skin cancer and Mohs micrographic surgery. He worked his entire career for the Kaiser Permanente hospital in Los Angeles. He never retired and was a practising surgeon until only months before he died in March 2015, not long before his 80th birthday.

I was in Los Angeles for several days late in 2008. Prior to the trip, Larry had proposed that Joe and I include his gold Kushan collection in the ANS catalogue. He had at least 50 gold coins. This was important news, but the offer raised a complicated question. Larry was an ANS trustee and had offered financial support to help with expenses for the Kushan coin project. If we responded to his request in the negative, the consequences could be problematic. However, Joe and I were obligated by contractual agreement with ANS to document only coins currently in the ANS collection. We knew of several other excellent private collections that were tempting to draw from for purposes of including coin types missing in the ANS collection or to add substance and variation in some areas where the collection was weak. But in regards to Larry’s offer, our decision was unanimous. Ute Wartenberg, Andrew Meadows, Joe Cribb and I said yes, we would be more than delighted to

include his collection, but only on condition that the coins were destined for donation to ANS at some time in the future. Much to our surprise, Larry agreed.

Larry and I met for dinner at Cliff's Edge café in Los Angeles, a popular restaurant on Sunset Boulevard in the Silver Lake area built around a magnificent ancient tree. He recommended that our catalogue include only gold coins, not poor-condition coppers that held no general appeal. He was open to the discussion of why I disagreed on this point, but after a while I asked his impression about unusual Kushan-coin symbolism: flaming shoulders, for example. He preferred to talk about tamgas, the unexplained Kushan dynastic symbols that appear throughout the coinage in various forms. He was further intrigued by Huvishka's extraordinary wardrobe, the elaborately jewelled jackets, helmets, ear flaps and crest ornaments, all of which show up so well in gold.

He loved to talk gold coins. He loved red wine. And his interest in our manuscript was clearly genuine. He repeated that he understood our decision regarding inclusion of his coins in the catalogue and assured me that ANS was in for a major donation some time in the near future.

That night, settled into my room, I tried to understand why I had found the dinner discussion disquieting. I felt uncomfortable when considering the extraordinary wealth implied by a gold coin collection so extensive that some 50 Kushan coins constituted a few gold drops in a big gold bucket. Something sad lurks behind a collector's mentality that is never satisfied, always demanding more. Years later I came across a Charles Dickens line: 'Gold conjures up a mist about a man, more destructive of all his old senses and lulling to his feelings than the fumes of charcoal.'[67]

There was no way of knowing that the ANS catalogue would not be published until just months after Larry's death in 2015, seven years after I met with him in Los Angles. Joe and I learned of Larry's death by way of an email message from Ute Wartenberg. Included in her email message was another shocking piece of news. She asked if either of us had ever received a statement in writing in regard to Larry's intention to donate to ANS the coins from his collection that appear in the catalogue. The executor of Larry's estate asked for proof to substantiate the ANS claim. Neither Joe nor myself had received such a statement in writing, and neither had ANS. There was no record on file confirming Larry's intentions.

The Larry Adams collection of 3,021 gold coins was sold by the Classical Numismatic Group in a series of four auction sales in late 2015 and January 2016. CNG published *The Adams Collection*,[68] a hardback edition limited to 100 copies with an introduction, index, pre-sale estimates, and prices realised for the entire collection.

Presale estimates for the collection came to $7,998,100; prices realised amounted to $21,753,841. Among the most valuable was a coin issued by the Egyptian king Ptolemy III in

the third century BC, featuring his wife Berenike II. The coin, one of only fifteen known, sold for $300,000. A coin struck under the Jahangir Shah of India's Mughal empire dating to the early seventeenth century sold for $400,000.

Prices realised for the 54 gold coins from the Adams collection that appear in the ANS catalogue amounted to $247,650, an average of $4,585 per coin. The most valuable was a coin that portrays Huvishka, mounted on an elephant, wearing a crown and diadem, holding a spear in his right hand and an elephant goad in his left. An extremely rare coin, only the second of its kind to ever appear in auction, it sold for $37,500. A second coin sold for the same price, a Wima Kadphises coin featuring the king seated in a canopied chariot drawn by a team of horses. On this coin, the design elements are oddly disproportionate, with the king portrayed much larger than the horse and a miniaturised charioteer depicted holding a whip. Another extremely rare coin, possibly unique, a quarter-weight coin of Kanishka with an estimated value of $2,000, sold for $30,000. Only two coins realised less than their estimated value, both Kushano-Sasanian coins valued at $750 that each sold for $650. Not one of the 54 coins entered into the ANS collection.

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After seven years of stops and starts, long delays and half a dozen times when Joe and I came within an inch of calling it quits, ANS published the book in 2015. We were incredibly grateful for their patience throughout the lengthy process. We were also deeply appreciative of the support given by the Neil Kreitman Foundation for the ANS publication and also for the support and encouragement the Foundation had provided for Kushan and Gandharan studies over three decades.

The jacket cover for the hardback book features a British Museum Gandharan sculpture of Panchika and Hariti, Buddhist gods closely associated with the Kushan gods Pharro and Ardochsho. Numismatics books are not what you expect to find on the *New York Times* Best Seller list. They are typically expensive, which is unfortunate because high prices exclude an unknown number of students, collectors and amateur history enthusiasts. Print runs rarely exceed 300 copies and rarely sell out. ANS decided to risk a print run of 500 copies for the Kushan coin book, and to date more than 450 have sold.

The catalogue can be used in a variety of ways for the identification and placement of Kushan, Kushano-Sasanian and Kidarite coins in their historical context. The book presents the coins chronologically, based in part on long-term research developed by the Department of Coins and Medals in the British Museum for their own forthcoming corpus-style catalogue. All the gold coins are illustrated. The book assigns catalogue numbers to all the copper coins, and a large selection are illustrated, particularly those of sufficient quality and

condition to document examples of specific coin designs and types.

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After 40 years at the British Museum, Joe Cribb retired in 2010. Much of our work on the ANS project became a post-retirement project for both of us. I retired in 2007. As is often true, retirement proved to be anything but. As father of four and grandfather of ten, Joe's family commitments accelerated dramatically, yet he still responds frequently to calls for conference presentations, lectures, articles and books. He remains a steadfast advocate of the value of coin-based research — letting coins speak directly for themselves, followed by analysis and write-up, and only then scouring existing literature to see if something might have been missed. He continues his numismatic research as honorary research associate with the Heberden Coin Room at the Ashmolean Museum.

— 14 —

Gandhara Goes to Oxford

The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England, holds a collection of 181 objects that represent a full spectrum of seven centuries of Gandharan artistic production. Iconic Buddha, bodhisattva and deity images prevail, but there are also narrative reliefs that highlight episodes from the life story of the Buddha, as well as a number of unusual objects that served domestic functions in Gandharan households. Stonework is by far the largest single type of material found in the collection, along with objects created in stucco, terra cotta, bronze, gold, silver, bone and ivory.

Early in 2012, I received a phone call from Neil Kreitman. He asked if I would be available to go to Oxford to have a look at the Gandharan sculpture collection in the Ashmolean Museum. I arrived in Oxford that spring. After a preliminary examination I expressed considerable interest, and contract negotiations commenced for a two-year programme of research and writing with a primary objective of producing and publishing a comprehensive catalogue.

Some years previously, with the generous support of the Neil Kreitman Foundation, a project was initiated to catalogue the Ashmolean Museum's entire collections of early Indian art up to AD 600. The plan was to produce a two-volume series, the first of which was to cover the Museum's holdings of early Indian art and archaeology. I was commissioned to catalogue the Gandharan collection and write introductory discussions of ancient Gandhara, the Kushan era, the Buddha image, Gandharan monastery culture and the origins of the Ashmolean Gandharan collection.

Founded in 1683, the Ashmolean Museum acquired a few Indian artefacts in its earliest years. At the time, these objects were considered exotic curiosities rather than works of art. Also, during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford gradually acquired a rich collection of Indian manuscripts and paintings. There was no explicit policy concerning the building of a systematic collection of Indian art in Oxford until 1897, when a new Indian Institute was established within the university through the efforts of Sir Monier Monier-Williams, a professor of Sanskrit. The Indian Institute had its own library and a museum containing a wide range of artefacts. Monier-Williams, however, was not interested in Indian sculpture. He reveals a common prejudice of the time conditioned by Greco-Roman aesthetic standards: 'Not a single fine large painting nor beautiful statue is to be seen throughout India. Even the images of gods are only remarkable for their utter hideousness.'[69]

Nonetheless, by the early twentieth century the Indian Institute Museum had received a succession of important gifts and bequests of Gandharan and other Indian sculptures. The most extensive was a collection of 23 Gandharan stone pieces donated by the Revd Murray-Aynsley in 1911 (see Figure 47) Many other donations and bequests entered the collection before Oxford University closed down the Indian Institute in 1962, including objects from the estates of archaeologists Sir Aurel Stein and Sir Leonard Woolley, and gifts from collectors who had formerly served as army or civil officers in the North-West Frontier and other regions of the subcontinent.

In 1949 the Indian Institute collections were amalgamated with the Ashmolean's ceramics holdings and redisplayed as a Museum of Eastern Art. Twelve years later, the rapidly growing Asian collection was then transferred to form a newly established Ashmolean Department of Eastern Art. Since that transfer, the Gandharan collection has continued to grow, in part from purchases of objects but mainly through the generosity of donors and benefactors.

From 2006 to 2009, the Ashmolean undertook major reconstruction in large parts of the museum. When it reopened in 2009, new galleries displayed reorganised collections to emphasise the strong historical connections between major world cultures. The new Kreitman Gallery (India to AD 600) explores the early development of Indian art from the Indus Valley civilisation to the early Hindu and Buddhist sculpture of northern India, which includes Gandharan sculpture as well as Kushan and other early Indian coinages. The Kreitman Gallery's location between two other major galleries — Rome from 400 BC to AD 300 and China to AD 800 — is designed to suggest historical and cultural connections between these three superpowers of ancient times.

In Oxford, I stayed at the University Club on Mansfield Road. The streets and lanes and spires and colleges of the world's oldest English-speaking university were within easy reach. I treasured my twenty-minute walk to the Ashmolean. The narrow Holywell Street with New College on its south side; Broad Street, with the Bodleian Library to my left, Trinity College and Balliol College to my right; then around the corner on Magdalen Street to the Ashmolean. Arriving at the museum at 10 a.m. I was met at the staff entrance by Andrew Topsfield, Keeper of Eastern Art with curatorial responsibility for the Indian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian collections. After registering and being given a visitor's pass, I followed Andrew to find the Eastern Art collections manager, Alessandra Cereda, who, in turn, took us to a storage and study room where she and her colleagues had prepared a workspace.

We agreed as our first priority to examine all the Gandharan stone objects in storage. Many of these objects are relatively small and easily handled, so the process was straightforward. The Department of Eastern Art's inorganic storage is organised in hand-operated rolling

stacks, a system consisting of multi-level shelving mounted on wheeled carriages that are attached to a rail system anchored to the floor. After tracing the location of objects organised according to museum accession numbers, Alessandra isolated the appropriate shelving unit, opened the cabinet, then transferred about ten objects at a time to a cart, which we wheeled over to a work table. Thus began my deliberations, the highly gratifying and challenging process of handling objects one at a time. I recorded accession numbers and descriptive notes into my laptop, and measured and photographed the objects with my handy little Canon PowerShot and its 8x zoom. Sometimes, objects were difficult to process. Some had unexplained markings, the presence of pigment, or signs of repair. Was it Ashmolean conservation department repair, or the work of a previous owner? Occasionally, the question was, 'Just what is this?' Alessandra checked records on the museum database. Often, questions were referred to Andrew.

Periodically, Andrew and I had lunch together in the elegant Ashmolean Rooftop Restaurant, but we were more inclined to go out for a walk and take our pick of small cafés north of the museum on St Giles' or Little Clarendon Street. We would discuss objects and issues that I had dealt with during the morning. After lunch, when necessary, Andrew would look into museum files and archival records. We were interested in purchase information and notes recorded when the object in question was first assessed. Andrew's task was far from easy. As he was the first to admit, the records in the Department of Eastern Art for pre-1960 acquisitions were not in great shape; much documentation had been lost during the 1962 transfer of collections. I saw evidence of this one day in Andrew's office when I caught a glimpse of century-old bound registers with century-old handwritten notes. Thankfully, Andrew did not encourage me to explore these old registers; he did not want to risk anyone dislodging a file or a letter or an inserted note. Fortunately, Andrew always managed to find the answer we were looking for.

Back for an afternoon session in the study room, I would find that Alessandra had already laid out ten more objects to be examined. After a few days we moved on to bigger and heavier objects. Alessandra and I carefully lifted them one at a time from shelves to the cart. There were two Buddha and two bodhisattva sculptures too heavy to move. For a preliminary examination, we had to be content with opening up a shelf as much as possible, then giving the object additional light so I could proceed with measurements and descriptions. After finishing all the stone objects in storage, we shifted to stucco, bronze and other materials, many pieces of which were held in a separate storage area.

The day arrived when it was time to examine the Gandharan objects on permanent display in the Kreitman Gallery. This could only be done on Mondays when the museum was closed to visitors. Alessandra and Andrew worked together to unlock the large plate-glass cabinet, slide the front panel aside far enough that we could reach inside and transfer objects to our

cart. Examination took place in the gallery. This was a tense time, as these were the pieces chosen by Andrew and the curators before him to best represent the museum's South Asian collections. Every object in the collection demands attention, whether in storage or on display, but objects on display hold enhanced meaning and require even more diligence. I was aware of how the three of us were relaxed, yet wary, sharing our quiet concentration in a softly lit gallery.

I visited Oxford for two-week research periods in 2012 and 2013, followed by an early 2014 trip for double-checking and re-evaluating specific objects. The catalogue manuscript was completed and submitted in the autumn of 2014.

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Early on in this project, I looked forward with great interest to the opportunity I would have to examine an inscribed stone reliquary. I knew about the Ashmolean reliquary because it is published as one of 58 known inscribed Buddhist reliquaries from Gandhara.[70] It's a rare two-piece, lathe-turned, spherical reliquary, embellished with lightly incised concentric grooves. The two pieces are joined in the middle, with a vertical flange from the base that allows for a tight-fitting lid. The flat lid knob is slightly undercut with a small boss on top.

Figure 42. Spherical reliquary

Kharoshthi inscriptions appear on both sides of the lid. The inscriptions are of unusual

importance because of two dates, one on the outside and one on the inside of the lid. The presence of two dates suggests that the reliquary was interred twice, sixteen years apart, by different donors. Unfortunately, the inscriptions do not reveal why the reliquary was dug up, reinscribed and then reinterred. Although reliquary inscriptions vary considerably in length and content, the character of a Gandharan reliquary inscription is quite formulaic. It generally includes the name of the donor, the intention of the donor (to permanently establish a stupa, for example), a date, location, the name of person or persons to be honoured and expressions of devotion to the Buddha.

The inscription on the outside of the lid reads in translation (words in parentheses are translator's insertions): 'Donation. In the 156th year, in the month Aira, on the 23rd day, Saṯaṣaka, son of Hermaios, and Muṃji, son of Saṯaṣaka, establish a stupa in a previously unestablished (place) in honour of all Buddhas, in honour of mother and father. (May) we attain the enlightenment of the Buddhas, not highest pain.'

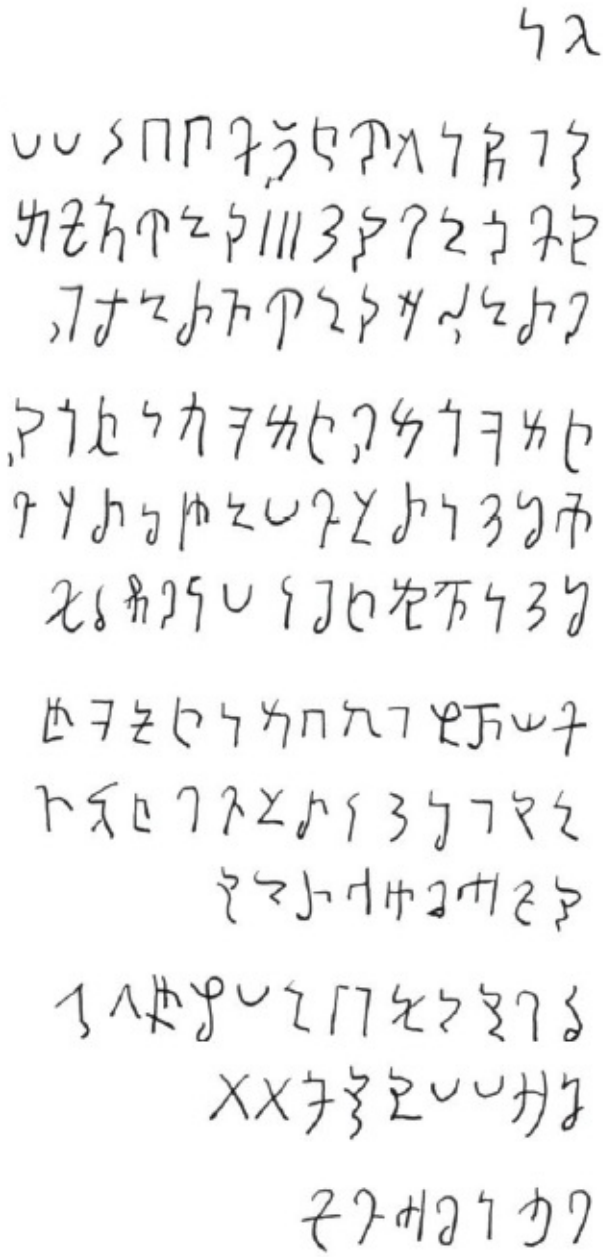

Figure 43. Kharoshthi reliquary inscription
Inscription drawing courtesy of Joe Cribb

The inscription on the inside of the lid reads in translation: ‘These relics of the Lord are established in honour of all Buddhas by Aprakhaka, son of Heliophilos, in the 172nd (year), in the intercalary month Gorpiaios, after 8 days.’ The reliquary dates refer to one of three eras used at the time for dating inscriptions and coins. In this inscription it is the Azes era, which is believed to have commenced in 57 BC, although Joe Cribb finds that 46 BC may be a more accurate date. The Kanishka era begins in AD 127, succeeding the Azes era by 180 years.[71]

In addition to the inscribed reliquary, four other Gandharan Buddhist reliquaries are in the Ashmolean collection, including a fine example of a miniature stupa reliquary. It consists of three parts: a round base hollowed out to serve as a relic container, a combined dome and cylindrical drum, and a superstructure made up of a small cubical form that supports an axial pole and three umbrellas of diminishing size. A two-piece cylindrical silver casket fits into the stupa base, which in turn holds two nested gold caskets. A tiny bone fragment is in the innermost casket.[72]

The Ashmolean has a number of objects that originally served a variety of domestic household functions. Trays, stone lamps, pendants, brooches, roundels, hairpins and charms represent a spectrum of Gandharan social life outside the milieu of the Buddhist monasteries. A particularly fine example is an elegantly carved stone tray of a type most likely commissioned for use in the households of relatively wealthy families, merchants or traders. Such trays have been variously published as toilet trays, cosmetic trays, libation trays, palettes or dishes. In Gandhara, as anywhere, luxury items were prized for their rarity and quality of manufacture. The artisans who made the trays readily adapted foreign prototypes and iconography to suit their creative impulses, while also satisfying the demands of their rich customers. Scenes depicted on the trays reveal a wide range of iconographic sources from Greek, Roman, Parthian and Indian traditions.

The tray depicts two young female figures mounted on sea dragons. They appear excited, with wide open, alert eyes. Their arms and legs are covered by fish-like scales. Each has one arm around the neck of her mount, and each holds a bowl or cup in her other hand. The sea dragons confront each other with entwined forelegs, upturned heads, eyes bulging and jaws open, revealing rows of tiny teeth. The dragons’ fleshy and scaly bodies have horny spines and are twisted into coiled loops. The tails, by contrast, are fish-like.

Figure 44. Miniature stupa reliquary

Figure 45. Luxury household tray
© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford EA1996.82

Female figures as depicted on this tray are generally interpreted as a Gandharan version of the Nereids — the sea nymph attendants to the god Poseidon. Their dragon mounts are most likely a version of the Greek *ketos*, a sea monster associated with the afterlife, which also appears in the myths of Heracles and Perseus. A Nereid riding a *ketos* is one of the most frequent themes displayed on these Gandharan trays. The Ashmolean tray may be unique in that it portrays two mounted figures in near-symmetrical balance. This tray and many similar ones show little sign of use, which suggests they were prized primarily as a household luxury item.[73]

Many centuries removed, and yet still within the Gandharan milieu, a remarkable solid-cast bronze image from Swat Valley portrays the Buddha meditating in full lotus posture. The bronze is an outstanding example of small, portable shrines that became popular in Swat Valley late in the Gandharan period. The Buddha's slender body is well proportioned, with subtle body contours showing beneath garment folds. Finely detailed feet and hands include pinwheel-like etched circles on the soles of both feet. The facial features strike me as rather severe, quite a departure from more naturalistic Gandharan Buddha images, but the bronze figure conveys great strength and solidity.[74]

The schist tray and bronze shrine image are notable not only for their uniqueness individually but also because they bookend the entire span of Gandharan art history. On the one hand, a secular household tray shows design influence from Bactrian Greek culture in northern Afghanistan and may date to as early as the first century BC. On the other hand, a portable Buddha shrine that dates possibly as late as the sixth or seventh century AD reveals influences from the arts of the Indian Gupta empire. The Gupta artistic style moved north from the Gangetic plain into Kashmir and Swat Valley in about the fifth or sixth century.

The Ashmolean collection contains several fine narrative reliefs that feature scenes from the life of the Buddha. Stupas in Gandharan monastic complexes were often embellished with a series of panels arranged horizontally in chronological sequence so that individual episodes in the life story could be ‘read’ one after another during circumambulation of a stupa. Well over 50 episodes in the Buddha’s life story are documented in Gandharan narrative reliefs. The most frequently found include the birth of Siddhartha, palace scenes of Siddhartha’s childhood and marriage, his great departure, enlightenment, the gods entreating the Buddha to preach and his *mahaparinirvana* or ‘great decease’.

One of the fine panel reliefs that came into the museum from the 1911 Murray-Aynsley donation is a scene depicting the birth of the Buddha.[75] The mother of the Buddha-to-be, Queen Maya, stands grasping a tree branch while giving birth from her right side to the infant Siddhartha. Maya is supported by her sister, Mahaprajapati. A second attendant to the right cradles a palm branch and also has a water pot, ostensibly to use for the infant’s first wash. The child emerges from Maya’s right side with his lifted head surrounded by a small halo. Indra, Hindu god of the skies and storms, prepares to receive the infant in a swaddling cloth. A second Hindu creator god, Brahma, also attends to the birth. Other haloed deities raise their hands reverently to acknowledge the miraculous birth.

Figure 46. Meditating figure of the Buddha

Figure 47. Birth of the Buddha
© *Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford EAOS.3*

It’s no surprise that the Buddha’s birth is one of the most commonly found episodes depicted in Gandharan life story narratives. According to the story, at the end of Maya’s pregnancy, her father prepared a reception on her behalf in the Lumbini Gardens. When her time was fulfilled, Maya stopped in the gardens to rest. The branch of a *shala* tree bent down towards her of its own accord and she reached up to grasp it, supported by her sister. The infant emerged from Maya’s right side without pain. He was born mindful, conscious and undefiled, and was received by Indra, lord of the Trayastrimsha heaven. In one version of the story, the infant immediately spoke, announcing that this would be his last birth; he would never again enter the womb to be born, and that he would attain enlightenment and Buddhahood in this lifetime.[76]

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Whether working in study rooms or the gallery, I could always count on support from Andrew and Alessandra. The days passed quickly. When four o’clock would suddenly roll around, I would turn in my visitor’s pass, head back to the University Club, shed my back

pack and then often watch from my window whatever was happening on the expansive recreational greens: football practice, cricketers in their whites, archery contests or various glass-clinking celebratory functions. I would then proceed to nearby Turf Tavern, a thirteenth-century pub where I would try, sometimes successfully, not to bang my head on the ceiling beams while carrying a pint to the courtyard.

Lunch with Andrew Topsfield was not always about museum business. Andrew struck me as a cautious person, soft-spoken and serious-minded, a persona complemented by a wonderfully spontaneous light-hearted humour. From time to time, I picked up bits and pieces of his personal history. Andrew is a specialist in Mughal-period Indian painting, especially Rajasthani court paintings. He has curated numerous exhibitions and published several books, especially catalogues of important museum and private collections, including the collection of the artist Howard Hodgkin. After Andrew retired from the Ashmolean in 2016, I continued to visit Oxford annually for updates and deal with further editorial questions in regard to the Ashmolean catalogue manuscript. That's when I discovered that Andrew and I shared a profound insight — retirement allows one to shed a mask or two.

Andrew's connection with India commenced in 1967. The summer of love, Sgt. Pepper, smoky substances; all of it, including a new awareness of Indian arts and culture, penetrated the halls of Winchester College, Andrew's public school. The College was established in the 1380s as a sister foundation and feeder for New College at the University of Oxford. By the mid-1960s, drenched in the revolutionary pop and folk music of those days, a small band of Winchester College students viewed themselves as a subversive sort, participating remotely in what they knew was happening in California. There was a buzz, but apart from the buzz, there was also the 'gap'. You finish college in December, you've got a university place that starts in autumn: that leaves a nine-month gap for adventure and travel.

Andrew knew people from school who had, the year before, obtained temporary teaching jobs at Edwardes College, an English-style public school in Peshawar, Pakistan. Andrew and his friend Julian applied to do the same thing. When they learned they got the jobs, they decided to travel overland to Peshawar, and later to India. However, delighting in freedom at last, they did not feel a sense of urgency for getting on the road immediately after school was out. They were having quite a good time around Oxford, where Julian and also Andrew's girlfriend lived.

They eventually left England in early March, too late for overland travel because of the heat in Asia. To start work in Peshawar they flew by way of the cheapest flight to Kabul. He travelled with a selection of suitable reading in his rucksack. Andrew had started reading about Buddhism and Sufism from early 1968 onward, influenced by a friend who had firsthand experience of Buddhist meditation practice and another who had joined a Sufi

order. Andrew found himself particularly drawn to Jalaluddin Rumi's poetry and also to GI Gurdjieff's *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. For the trip to Afghanistan, Andrew carried with him the Penguin Classics collection of *Buddhist Scriptures*, two books on Sufism, and one of Alan Watts's books on Zen Buddhism. Curiously, Andrew and I found that our late sixties to early seventies reading priorities were almost identical.

The Gatwick-to-Amritsar Ariana Afghan Airlines flight, in an ageing Dakota aircraft, was mainly used by Sikhs heading for the Punjab, but Afghan travellers also took advantage of the stopover in Kabul. Andrew and Julian were the only westerners on board. In the middle of the night the plane stopped to refuel in Beirut. The flight through Afghanistan was between mountains rather than over them, and they reached Kabul overwhelmed, only to become immersed in the deep culture shock that accompanies a teenager's first arrival in Central Asia. But they were quickly befriended by Afghans who recommended a modest hotel and accompanied them to tea houses and to the bazaar to change money at black market rates.

Overdue at Edwardes College, after two or three days in Kabul they caught a dawn bus to Peshawar. The ride over the Khyber Pass on a speeding, crowded bus was spectacular — with only one collision shortly after departure, and many near misses. Along the way, they stopped to drink tea among turbaned local tribesmen in the main street of Jalalabad. 'For me it was like the Arabian Nights,' Andrew recalls. 'An ancient Afghan frontier town … A great place, but we had to move on.'

In Peshawar, Andrew and Julian settled into their teaching roles. The headmaster was an Australian missionary; other teachers were also Christian missionaries. It was the principal English-language school in the region. Its students included sons of prominent Pathan tribal chiefs. In his free time, Andrew took advantage of the school's proximity to the Peshawar Museum. He visited frequently, developing an appreciation of Gandharan schist sculpture. Another visiting teacher, an English schoolmaster, had driven to Peshawar overland in a Land Rover. The three teachers made numerous trips to explore the northwestern Pakistan frontier region. They visited a tribal gun factory; they attended a wild evening festivity in an Afridi village following a circumcision ceremony; they drove through Swat Valley and visited many Buddhist remains. But after a few weeks at the school, the students realised that Andrew and Julian were not strict disciplinarians. Many stopped coming to classes. Teaching was then carried on more informally over tea in the school tea shop. When other pupils reported that their absence was to take part in a tribal feud, Andrew and Julian realised it was time to move on.

From Peshawar, they spent a week in a cheap hotel in Lahore, where they got sick after eating a bad curry. But they saw something of the city, including the great Badshahi Mosque.

By this point in the journey, as Andrew acknowledges, they were full participants in the well-known ‘hippy trail’ scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the overland journey experienced by thousands of Europeans through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal. The mode of travel was definitely alternative tourism, the key idea being to travel as cheaply as possible so as to extend the length of time away from home. In every major stop on the hippy trail, hotels, restaurants and cafés catered almost exclusively to westerners, who networked with one another as they travelled east and west.

Continuing east, they crossed the Pakistan border into India and caught a train to Delhi. They stayed at the Crown Hotel, a popular hippy hotel at the far end of Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi. The cheapest rooms were the *barsati* or ‘rainy-season rooms’ built on the roof. The charge was four rupees a night. For this you got a basic charpoy bed and a propeller fan in the ceiling. This came with on-the-road camaraderie, fellow-travellers telling stories, guitar-playing and circulating chillums. Life on the trail was, as Andrew says, ‘by no means the real India. But for a callow eighteen-year-old ex-public schoolboy, it was an adventure. In Delhi and elsewhere, India and its cultures — Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Sikh — were all around and readily absorbed by impressionable young *firangis* [foreigners].’ India, as many western visitors come to realise, either repels you or gets under your skin and never goes away.

They moved on from Delhi to Agra to see the Taj Mahal and then took an interminably slow train to holy Benares, where they stayed on a hippy boat moored on the river at Mir Ghat. This small Ganges riverboat resembled the larger budgerow vessels of early colonial days, in which the British travelled upriver from Calcutta. It had a cabin with a small deck on top where the resident travellers slept until the sun got too hot. One rupee a night. For water, you filled the boat’s communal clay pot at a public tap near Dasashwamedh Ghat. That’s where you also went for the nearest chai and lassi stalls. Other regulars at the waterfront were numerous morning bathers, wandering religious ascestics, Brahmin priests, weight-swinging wrestlers and vendors of coloured beads and necklaces.

It was now late May and overpoweringly hot. Andrew headed for the hills, taking the train up to the India–Nepal border. From there, he and several other travellers took an overnight ride on the back of a truck carrying goods up through the mountains to Kathmandu. He stayed for a month. The predominant culture of Nepal was Hindu, but contained strong elements of Buddhism. Andrew was attracted by the presence of active Buddhist temples and of Tibetans who had fled their country after the Chinese invasion a few years before. Kathmandu was still a small, ancient city where you could walk out to climb the hill to Swayambhunath temple or bicycle through valley fields to the Boudhanath Stupa.

Andrew and Julian then made the long haul back across the hot Indian plains. They were both robbed in Benares and lost their money, so hitched a ride on top of a truck travelling

along the Grand Trunk Road all the way to Delhi, where American Express refunded the lost travellers' cheques. Andrew, by now in poor physical shape, then decided to set out on his own. By July he was back in Kabul again. At that point his increasingly worried parents wisely intervened and cabled him a British Airways ticket to London. Andrew returned from India far too thin, with very long hair and wearing an Afghan sheepskin coat entirely covered in red embroidery, purchased in the Kabul bazaar with his few remaining dollars. His father picked him up from Heathrow and nobly took it all in his stride. Andrew's travels lasted only four months.

Arriving for his first term at Oxford in October 1968, Andrew, in good health again, wondered what to do next. He decided on Oriental Studies. He wasn't alone. The now-historic counterculture period of the sixties and seventies inspired European and North American scholarship in a host of disciplines, including Indian and Central Asian studies. I have met several travellers who returned home from the infamous hippy trail to establish careers in archaeology, art history, numismatics, language studies, epigraphy, history of religions, Buddhist religion and history. This generation of professors, many of whom are now retiring, succeeded in opening up new classroom curricula, curating museum exhibitions and writing books and articles that generated conversations about a part of the world previously largely ignored in the West.

Andrew faced a difficult choice between Sanskrit, India's main classical language, or Persian, which attracted him after reading the mystical poems of Jalaluddin Rumi in translation. The Oxford Persian syllabus included Rumi's shorter lyric poems and part of his great *Mathnawi*, as well as works by Sa'di, Hafiz, Firdausi, al-Ghazali and others. In the end he studied Persian and Arabic, but also continued to read widely about Indian and Himalayan Buddhism. He became secretary of the University Buddhist Society and organised meditation classes led by a Thai monk from a London *vihara* (buddhist community). He visited the Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre in Scotland, founded in March 1967, led by a youthful and highly charismatic teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Andrew found Trungpa's teaching inspired, lucid and often unconventional. In 1970 Trungpa moved to the United States, where he founded the Shambhala Center in Boulder, Colorado, in 1973. In later years, until his death in 1987, Trungpa drank excessively, and his teaching activities attracted considerable controversy.

After completing his undergraduate degree at Oxford in 1971, Andrew hesitated about his next step, but eventually resumed his studies, centred this time at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London on a MA programme of Indian arts and religion. He attributes his interest in Mughal period painting to Indian art postcards that he first collected as a schoolboy from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. While at Oxford, Andrew enjoyed researching Indian painting. 'The Bodleian in

those days had a brilliant, comprehensive Indian library — the Indian Institute Library,' he recalls. 'You could browse through shelf after shelf of books on Indian art, history, religion, literature, all kept together in one space. It's since been dissolved and dispersed; you can't do that anymore.'

Andrew did post-graduate research at New College, Oxford, where he began work on a DPhil thesis on the Mewar school of Rajasthani court painting, a subject he chose after hearing a stimulating talk by Robert Skelton, then Assistant Keeper in the Indian section of the Victoria and Albert Museum. 'After that,' Andrew said, 'Robert became my unofficial Indian painting guru. He has been the same for many students of Indian painting over the last 50 years.' His other guru was Simon Digby, a leading historian of the Islamic period in India, a knowledgeable collector of Indian art, and 'a colourful, loquacious figure who liked a good party'. An independent scholar for most of his life, Simon Digby was working at the Ashmolean Museum in the mid-1970s. Upon meeting at a party in London, Simon, 'already in an elevated party mood', invited Andrew to come to Oxford and be his student. This Andrew did in 1975.

That winter, seven years after his first trip, Andrew returned to India with very different intentions than before. In the first of several winter study tours in Rajasthan and other regions, he viewed paintings in museum and private collections and, above all, carried out research at Udaipur, where Andrew and his wife stayed as palace guests of the Maharana of Mewar. 'I finished my thesis 20 years later,'[77] Andrew says — the long delay because in 1978 Andrew was appointed to an assistant keepership position at the Victoria and Albert Museum. 'I was really extremely fortunate, since there were very few such museum jobs available in the area of Indian art.'

Andrew remained at the V&A for six years. In 1984 he returned to Oxford as Assistant Keeper in the Ashmolean's Department of Eastern Art, with responsibility for the Indian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian collections. He was promoted to Keeper of Eastern Art in 2009, just before the Museum reopened following its major renovation. He retired in 2016.

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One of my favourite stone sculptures in the Ashmolean Museum Gandharan collection is a very fine depiction of Padmapani. The bodhisattva sits with one leg drawn up and resting on a cushioned bench. He touches his forehead with a pointed finger and holds a lotus bud by its stalk. At only 25cm in height, the schist bodhisattva reveals a beautifully composed portrait of the lotus-bearing form of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of supreme and infinite compassion. The sculpture portrays what is commonly referred to as the bodhisattva's 'pensive' mood. A sense of relaxed and thoughtful contemplation is poignantly conveyed.

The sculpture is presented beautifully in our book *Buddhist Art of Gandhara in the Ashmolean Museum*,[78] but is even better seen close up in the gallery.

Figure 48. Bodhisattva Padmapani

— 15 —

Flaming Shoulders

A thinker collects and links up proofs.
A mystic does the opposite.
He lays his head on a person's chest
and sinks into the answer.

Thinking gives off smoke
to prove the existence of fire.
The mystic sits within the burning.

Imagination loves to discover shapes
in rising smoke, but it's a great mistake
to leave the fire for that filmy sight.[79]

In a hidden attic room in northern California, a coin was placed in my hand. 'Flaming shoulders?' I asked. 'What's that all about?'

What is so compelling about this tiny coin image? Something embedded in my childhood? My favourite Sunday school song, sung so many hundreds of times: 'This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine, let it shine till Jesus comes, I'm going to let it shine…' I recall singing this tender chorus during summer nights while gazing into a campfire, crackling logs blazing, big people telling stories. Our summer Bible camp in the mountains overlooked a lake. In a cabin perched on a top bunk, in the pitch dark of night, accompanied by a group of my eight-year-old friends, I listened to our camp counsellor tell us to imagine the lake as a lake of all-consuming fire. Goodnight kids, sleep tight, and remember the message from the Gospel of St John:

> This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.[80]

The preachers who came and went from our Baptist church preached the gospels, they preached that God is love, but their sermons invariably wound up with two repeated themes: the imminence of the Second Coming, and the prospect of hellfire for the unconverted. By age five I was made aware of the absolute necessity of making my decision for Christ. If I postponed yet another week, I might not make the cut, I'd be on my way down.

I did not want to go to hell. I made my decision, tearfully, gratefully, on my knees at my mother's side. A few years later I was a champion memoriser of Bible verses. Exodus, Chapter 3: Moses and the burning bush. Daniel, Chapter 3: Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who refused to bow down to an image of gold set up by King Nebuchadnezzar and were thrown into the furnace of fire, but came out untouched.

After another few years, I unknowingly followed an American pattern that often occurs in Christian households that encourage, if not pressure, childhood salvation experiences. By my early teens, my faith had seriously slipped. After all those years, the Second Coming had not yet materialised, a fact that readily mixed into the usual teenage angst and contributed to the angry young man phase of my life. The message that had seemed so vital early on had transformed into something that seemed nothing more than a forced fable. Suddenly, anyone associated with the church seemed complicit in a massive deceit. By age 14 the childhood true-believer in this little light of mine was born again into a teenage doubter. Consequently, I became intensely motivated to do well in school, because school seemed the most likely avenue for getting myself out of town.

I left small-town Montana in 1960 and within a year was immersed in a San Francisco university programme of cultural anthropology and world literature. Seven years later, 1967, midway through a master's degree programme, I welcomed the rock and roll summer of love with rather awkward open arms, one around Bob Dylan, Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead, the other around Carl Jung, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mircea Eliade.

The same year, I decided to take all steps necessary to avoid what appeared to me as the senseless suffering and chaos brought about by the Vietnam War. While reading *Brighter than a Thousand Suns* by Robert Jungk, I learned that in 1945, when I was three years old, Robert Oppenheimer clung to uprights in the control room at Alamogordo, transfixed by the power of the first explosion of an atomic bomb. It was not St John and the Book of Revelations that came to Oppenheimer's mind, but rather a passage from the Bhagavad-Gita, the sacred epic of the Hindus:

If the radiance of a thousand suns

were to burst into the sky,

that would be like

the splendor of the Mighty One.

When a sinister, gigantic cloud rose over Point Zero, Oppenheimer recalled another line, uttered by Sri Krishna, the central figure of the Bhagavad-Gita:

I am become Death, the shatterer of worlds.[81]

The life of Sri Krishna, a Hindu god who is both man and god, is regarded in India as a supreme spiritual teaching, accessible to everyone. A seeker need not emulate the adepts who renounce the world and establish isolated hermitages in the Himalayas. In the great Kurukshetra War, Krishna instructs his disciple Arjuna how to follow a spiritual path and find union with God in daily living, even while fighting a war.

Among the Hindu gods, Agni is a god of fire and one of the most important gods in the Vedas, the oldest Sanskrit scriptures and texts of Hinduism. Agni is fire; the term equates fire as god, the primordial power to consume and transform. In some Vedic contexts, Agni represents all gods, all concepts of a spiritual energy that permeates everything in the universe. In the Upanishads and post-Vedic literature, Agni additionally becomes a metaphor for energy or knowledge that consumes and dispels a state of darkness, and transforms into an enlightened state of existence.

The earliest known artwork representing Agni dates from the first century BC, found in an archaeological site near Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. Elsewhere in India, in a small northern kingdom that existed during the early Kushan period, Panchala kings minted coins featuring a god with a halo of flames. Centuries later, well after Kushan times, in Gupta sculpture, Agni is represented with a halo of flames around his body.

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During my years in academia, there was an unspoken, unscripted expectation, not only in anthropology but in the social sciences and humanities generally, that anyone serious about an academic profession would most likely give up whatever religion they may have had previously. Perhaps this observation applies only to liberal arts colleges, perhaps only to the growing counterculture milieu of social science departments in the 1960s and 1970s. No one in my academic circle would have insisted openly that anyone should stifle his or her religious inclinations, but it was nevertheless assumed that if you were an emerging professional, you were no longer a believer, if you ever were one. Most of my colleagues in the social sciences and humanities avoided any mention of God or spirituality.

This prevailing atmosphere did not curb my personal interest in religious ideas and experience. As an anthropology of religions student, I accepted that gods exist within a context of culture, language and religious experience. Humankind from the beginning has stood in awe of the universe and searched for meaning and truth. I find I am appreciative and challenged by the vast richness of spiritual experience expressed in cultures and artistic traditions throughout human history. The universe is boundless, our planet is a speck of dust in the boundlessness, I am a microbe in the dust, not inclined to consider either a previous life or an afterlife above or below, but rather to live with questions arising from a brief earthly experience given to me here and now, not attached to any one doctrine or belief, open to learning from them all.

ONE SONG

What is praised is One
So the praise is One, too,
Many jugs being emptied
Into a huge basin.

All religions, all this singing,
Is one song.

The differences are just
Illusion and vanity.

The sun’s light looks a little different
On this wall than it does on that wall,
And a lot different on this other one,
But it’s still one light.

We have borrowed these clothes,
These time and place personalities,
From a light, and when we praise,
We’re just pouring them back in.[82]

I lived in the Haight-Ashbury for two years in the early 1960s, just as the scene was about to evolve into its famous hippy phase. My world at the time was anthropology, world literature, myth, magic, mysticism, shamanism, rites of passage, ceremonials, rites of healing. I found Native American cultures of the Southwest particularly appealing.

I discovered Changing Woman, mother goddess of the Navajo, source and sustenance of life, goddess of seasonal cycles of Earth and life cycles of people, from birth (spring), to maturity (summer), old age (autumn), dying (winter) and rebirth (the new spring). She grows old or young as she desires. She is the power of creation and personifies the beauty and wholeness of creation. She is wholly benevolent and of such extraordinary beauty that she cannot be represented in any visual form. She gave birth to twins: Child-of-the-Waters and Monster Slayer, brought into the world to dispel evil, disease and disharmony.

She gave the people the songs, prayers and teachings, instructing them how to take responsibility for maintaining the world in its state of perfect beauty by never forgetting what she taught.[83] The Navajo name for a ceremonial based on these teachings is *Hozhooji*, a term with no precise English translation. *Hozhooji* expresses the Navajo ideals of essential goodness, harmony, beauty and well-being.

A book called *Blessingway* was published in 1970. It was nearly 40 years in the making and includes three versions of the ceremonial's origin story as first told by Navajo medicine men in the early 1930s to the late Father Berard Haile, a Franciscan priest who served at Navajo missions for nearly 50 years. Haile worked on translations until his death in 1961. The unfinished manuscript was then turned over to Leland Wyman, a physiologist and student of Asian arts who began his research on Navajo ethnology after retiring from teaching. His research included extensive fieldwork in the Navajo Nation reservation, where he was invited to live with different families and attend their ceremonies. Together with his assistants, both Navajo and non-Navajo, he completed the Berard Haile translations and prepared the text for publication.[84]

> First Man and First Woman, when they arrived in this present world, wanted light. This was because they saw that the present world was much larger than it had been in the previous world. Many places existed beyond mountains which in the previous world had provided the only source of illumination. After due consideration, First Man and First Woman made the sun out of a large turquoise disk, surrounding it with red rain, lightning and various kinds of snakes. It was heated with fire kindled by Black God's fire drill. After the sun, they made the moon, bordering it with whiteshell, forked lightning and sacred waters. The moon was warmed slightly by means of rock crystal light.[85]

I was 23 years old when I first visited the Navajo, only a few years removed from my Christian upbringing. On later visits, accompanied by Carolyn, we were made to feel at home within a family setting and were welcomed to their ceremonials. The contrast in message and tone to what I had experienced in my hometown church could not have been greater. It's impossible to fully express my gratitude to the Navajo for experiences that established in me a need to further question how I think and feel and see, and to hold the question of who I am and why.

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Carl Jung describes archetypes as inherited, universal, archaic patterns that arise from the collective unconscious. They are especially evident in myths and rituals and within the context of arts and literature, but also in the form of individuals' dreams.[86] As the idea is expressed in Eastern philosophy, our predispositions and inherent tendencies are embodied in each of us at birth on the basis of our own accumulated prehistory of causal effects, or *karma*. To express it in Jungian terms, we carry not only an individual karma but also a karma that includes all the past of humanity, which lies stored in the collective unconscious.

Consider the archetype of fire. Jung primarily views fire, psychologically speaking, as emotion: passion. 'On the one hand, emotion is the alchemical fire whose warmth brings everything into existence and whose heat burns all superfluities to ashes. But on the other hand, emotion is the moment when steel meets flint and a spark is struck forth, for emotion is the chief source of consciousness. There is no change from darkness to light or from inertia to movement without emotion.'[87]

Passion is a fire within. Can this passion be symbolised outwardly, in the form of flaming shoulders, for example? Do these flames also convey symbolically the change from inner darkness to outer light? What about the passion of a king, for example, Kanishka? Consider the king archetype. Jung reveals a fundamental paradox. The king in his positive aspect represents the most mature and complete masculine archetype, integrating but also superseding what he refers to as the warrior and lover archetypes. In its positive aspect, the king archetype represents the centre of the universe, the source of practical wisdom, a mountain of solidity in times of crisis, an immovable presence in the face of the superficial. The king is decisive, protective; he knows how to do the right thing at the right time for the right reason. The king in his positive aspect leaves a positive legacy, not just in the form of pyramids but also in the form of ideas, values and traditions that to some extent change the world and are passed on to future generations.[88]

The king archetype in its negative aspect is tyrannical; this king seeks to destroy rather than create, is plagued by narcissism, and acts and reacts as if he were the centre of the

universe. The archetypal negative king is deeply insecure, fundamentally weak, unable to rule decisively and knowledgably, incapable of handling power and responsibility, uncontrollably abusive to any threat to his authority, easily enraged, ultimately paranoid and convinced the world is out to get him.

Where do the Kushan stand in relation to these positive and negative aspects of the king archetype? In so many respects, the Kushan story is incomplete. I mentioned in earlier chapters the chronicles of fifth- and seventh-century Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, the Rabatak inscription and a wealth of archaeological, numismatic and art-historical evidence, all of which provide crucial clues to the life and times of the Kushan era. Enough evidence has survived for us to know that the Kushan kings built an extensive, relatively stable empire that lasted for three centuries. Kushan wars were likely as brutal as wars anywhere, but the Kushan era included centuries of peace that fostered a thriving merchant class, prosperous cities, highly creative arts and architecture, and a widespread Buddhist monastic culture that benefitted from royal patronage.

Kanishka's flaming shoulders seem to convey a positive archetype: this is not a symbol for smouldering dark shadows of kingly tyranny, oppression, ignorance or complete disregard for the common good. On the contrary, Kushan flaming shoulders may represent kingly passion for self-knowledge and growth that promotes health and well-being. In this sense, the king is an intermediary between the people and the gods. He stands on the ground but reaches up to the gods. By acknowledging the gods; the gods in turn bestow a deified kingship.

Coinages minted by the first three Kushan kings evoke three different possibilities for interpreting the flaming shoulders motif. Wima Kadphises' spectacular gold coinage is all about power and authority. He is portrayed as something of a miracle worker, with flaming shoulders, and emerging from mountaintops. His coin inscription is a grandiose string of epithets proclaiming himself as 'king of kings' and 'great saviour'.

Kanishka's coin image conveys devotional acceptance of all the gods in his pantheon. On the coinage, his royal title is simply stated, devoid of divinity-related epithets. In the Rabatak inscription, however, Kanishka's titles include 'son of god', 'worthy of worship' and 'great saviour'. He projects an image of a king at one with the gods. He's a warrior chief capable of conquering vast territories, yet one who recognises the importance of communicating inner quiet and devotional respect. This is a king with special powers, his flaming shoulders seemingly a deliberate attempt to symbolise a godly inner state outwardly.

Kanishka's successor, Huvishka, produced coin iconography with an equal effort to communicate, but with an entirely different message. He broadcast to the Kushan empire at its height displays of royal wealth and imperial power by means of his royal bust portrait. The worshipful image is gone; instead, Huvishka's flaming shoulders symbolise little more

than self-attributed supernatural gifts.

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The story goes that six leading sages of the ancient Hindu philosophical schools, deeply resentful and jealous of the Buddha, challenged him to a contest of performing miracles, anticipating that they could expose his inferiority by performing miracles of their own. The Buddha agreed, but stipulated that he would set the time. He moved from city to city, and each time the Buddha preached, he attracted a large crowd of followers. In every city, the sages challenged him to a miracles contest; the Buddha always agreed but then moved on to the next city. The sages took this as an admission of defeat. After arriving in the city of Shravasti, the Buddha determined the time was right, the conditions auspicious for accepting the challenge. A hall was built especially for the event, and seven thrones were brought in. On the new moon of the first month of spring, the six sages took their seats. Shakyamuni Buddha arrived to his seat by flying through the air. After receiving many offerings from his followers, he stood up and performed the so-called twin miracle: flames emanated from his shoulders and water flowed from his feet. The Buddha continued to perform miracles, and, as told in one version of the story, he transformed himself into a floating being that ascended to heaven. The six sages, utterly defeated, converted to Buddhism and later became *arhats*, Buddhist perfected beings.

The Miracle of Shravasti is celebrated in Gandharan arts, especially in the Kapisa region of Afghanistan where sculptures have survived from the remains of monastery complexes that served Kushan kings. Several spectacular sculptures depict the Buddha levitating, with water flowing from his feet and flames emanating from his shoulders. Particularly powerful schist steles, originally discovered near Begram, Afghanistan, are on display in the Musée Guimet in Paris and also in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin. The miracle worker is depicted in monumental proportions, with small Buddha figures on either side sitting in meditation, flames emanating from their shoulders.

The Miracle of Shravasti sculptures date from the third to fifth centuries AD. But flaming shoulders appear in Kushan coin portraits at least a century earlier, introduced by Wima Kadphises (AD 113–127) and retained by his successors. No pre-Kushan coinage in circulation in Central Asia, whether Scythian, Parthian or Roman, adopted such symbolism in coin portraits. It’s tempting to suggest that the flaming shoulder iconography coincided with, or perhaps celebrated, Kanishka’s Buddhist council in Kashmir. The council was presided over by Kanishka’s close associate and spiritual advisor Ashvaghosha, a Buddhist philosopher and writer who tells the life story of the Buddha in an epic poem written in Sanskrit, the *Buddhacarita*.[89]

Buddhism was introduced into Tibet during the seventh to ninth centuries AD, along with Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures from both northern and southern India that were first translated into Tibetan in the eighth century. Tibetan Buddhism may offer further clues to Kushan iconography derived from Buddhist sources.

The Buddhism of India and Tibet defines and describes the functions of seven *chakras* in the body.[90] Carl Jung believed the seven chakras are centres of consciousness that control psychological and spiritual development from the lowest level to the highest, symbolised by the thousand-petalled lotus, the seat of universal consciousness.

Figure 49. Miracle of Shravasti
bpk-Bildagentur / Museum für Asiatische Kunst Berlin / Iris Papadopoulas / Art Resource, NY

Frank Waters finds similar teachings in Native American worldview.[91] The Mayan, Hopi and Zuni road of life, and the Navajo *Blessingway*, all speak of humanity's long journey through successive underworlds. Each successive emergence into a higher realm reveals an expanded world with greater light. Each world is designated a corresponding location in the body, from the lowest, in the solar plexus, to the highest, a soft spot in the crown of the head, the 'open door' to the Creator. Whether Tibetan, Hopi or Navajo, the teachings assert that

each human being is capable of experiencing in their lifetime a movement from lower centres of consciousness into the highest light of illumination.

It is reasonable to assume that yogic practice and chakra teachings were known in Gandhara. Chakra symbols frequently appear in Gandharan Buddhist arts, for example, especially in the form of a dharma wheel engraved as a circle on the palm of the Buddha's hand. The ancient city of Taxila, located in the heart of Kushan territory, was a centre of learning and higher education from at least several centuries BC until the destruction of the city in the fifth century AD. Taxila offered specialised programmes in law, medicine, military training, arts and crafts, and was especially renowned for the teaching of ancient and revered scriptures from both Brahmanical and Buddhist sources. Students came to Taxila from all over India and Central Asia because of the reputation of the teachers there, who were recognised as authorities in their respective subjects. If, as Hakim Hamidi and other writers suggest, Central Asian mountains and valleys were alive with esoteric teachings, it is likely that these teachings were familiar to the royal house as well as teachers and students at Taxila.

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Buddhist ideology and arts thrived in Kushan times, but the Zoroastrian tradition in Iran also provided a source of iconography and inspiration for Kushan kings. Soon after I began research at the British Museum, I discovered the intriguing Iranian word *khvareno* in John Rosenfield's book. Rosenfield translates *khvareno* as 'royal good fortune' and suggests that many elements of Kushan coin iconography, including flaming shoulders, may represent special properties of *khvareno*. He interprets this attribute as 'a supernatural boon which may take the form of fire, a part of the all-illuminating heavenly light which is common to all divinities and which lights a great prince.'[92] Art historian Martha Carter developed the idea further, referring to *khvareno* as a heavenly source of *soma*, a supernatural, life-giving, luminous substance or solar fluid emanating from solar fire, communicated from Heaven to a legitimate sovereign.[93]

More recently, Michael Shenkar, an archaeologist and art historian specialising in pre-Islamic religions in Iran, has furthered the research of John Rosenfield by tracing the etymology of the term *khvareno* (Shenkar's phonetic spelling is *xᵛarənah*) to an abstract concept found in the Avesta, the Zoroastrian scriptural texts of eastern Iran. The Avestan term conveys the idea of luminosity, sovereignty and abundance, but the basic semantics of the word imply 'glory' or 'fortune'. The concept is never described in Avestan literature in anthropomorphic form, but rather in terms of light, fire or warmth.[94]

Possibly the only indisputably anthropomorphic form of *khvareno/xᵛarənah* appears in

Kushan coin art as Pharro, the god of royal good fortune, sometimes represented with flames emanating from his shoulders.[95] As bestower of fire, Pharro is portrayed with an extended hand holding a pan of fire or, as bestower of wealth, holding a bag of coins. He is sometimes paired on Kushan coins, as well as in Gandharan sculpture, with Ardochsho, goddess of royal good fortune and abundance, identified especially by the cornucopia she holds.[96]

A *khvareno*-like blessing in the form of a flame appears in early Christian art. From the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2, verses 1–4:

> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.[97]

Pentecost celebrates the creation of the Christian church seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit poured down upon his first followers, filling them with the mission of gathering together as a church. In early Christian art, the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost often takes the form of a dove descending, but it is also represented as tongues of flame alighting on the heads of the apostles. One of earliest examples appears in the Rabbula Gospels, an illuminated manuscript produced in Syria in the late sixth century.[98] The text is framed by elaborate floral motifs and set within arcades ornamented with flowers and birds.[99] In the sixth century, Syrian miniaturists synthesised Hellenistic iconography with the iconographic tradition in Persia, reminiscent of the process that had already occurred in Gandharan arts.

An entirely contrary perspective regarding *khvareno* appears in the writing of GI Gurdjieff, an influential early-twentieth-century spiritual guide and teacher. Using his own spelling, he discusses *tzvarnoharno*, recognising the concept's importance in Avestan literature. But contrary to the sense of supernatural attributes communicated to a sovereign, Gurdjieff emphasises the potentially negative impressions produced in people who live under those who assume royal divinity. He established a special oath for himself, pursued for many years, regarding the necessity of preventing in himself, 'the outward, to a certain degree unnatural, manifestation', noted from ancient times as a certain something, '*tzvarnoharno*'. He vowed to counteract this manifestation embedded in the psyche of any person in positions of power, including himself. He believed that kingly *tzvarnoharno* instilled in a people a feeling of enslavement, paralyzing their capacity for personal initiative. Gurdjieff offers a powerful warning for anyone under the influence of royal personages, cult leaders or anyone claiming supernatural gifts. He writes: 'a mark of the perfected man is his ability to play to perfection

any desired role in his external life while inwardly remaining free.'[100]

Gandharan arts served a much greater purpose than simply embellishing monastic monuments; they were an essential means of communicating the life and teachings of the Buddha. Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) — metaphysician, philosopher, art historian, still regarded as one of the foremost interpreters of Indian culture to the West — believed works of devotional art in India were capable of producing *samvega*, an aesthetic shock and sense of urgency that accompanies a realisation of the futility and meaninglessness of life as normally lived. He compared the experience of seeing a sacred work of art to being struck 'as a horse might be struck by a whip'. Coomaraswamy understood this seeing as being linked to the Indian idea of *darshan*, wherein a devotee sees an image of a god, is simultaneously seen by that god, and, being seen, receives a blessing. *Darshan* is an expression of the transformative nature of reciprocal exchange.

Does *darshan* apply to sacred imagery on coins as well as painting or sculpture? Perhaps a sacred image approached in a receptive and attentive manner, not only seen but felt, not only appreciated objectively but experienced personally, creates moments of *samvega*. I often wonder just what I experienced the moment Craig Burns placed a Kushan coin in my hand for the first time. An inner shock, certainly, leading in time to the opening of a new world for me.

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The ninth-century Chinese Zen Master Gutei is famous for showing the Buddha Way by simply pointing one finger upward. How does one reconcile the terrible duality of a silent inner world — experienced just as it is, perfect just the way it is supposed to be — with a world of wars, natural disasters, political chaos, extreme social ills? Gutei responds with a forcefully thrust finger in the air, an all-encompassing gesture representing the entire universe. Nothing more, nothing less. One is everything, everything is one. Is it possible to comprehend Gutei's gesture? How can I see clearly, if only for a moment, what is happening right now? The wind howls. The rain is suddenly torrential. And now? Sudden calm.

I arrived one evening at the door of a community centre in Toronto for the first of a seven-session orientation for the Zen practice of meditation, a move I had contemplated for some time. I hoped to experience something of the Buddha Way. I wanted to just sit still, nothing more, nothing less. Jalaluddin Rumi said: 'Silence is the language of God, all else is poor translation.'[101] Silence is not easy. Not only is the physical demand on the body formidable, but the mind also persists in its relentless, interminable, automatic functioning.

A friend asked if I meditated in the belief that a greater number of people meditating

translates into an ever-greater contribution to world peace. But how can I possibly contribute to conceptual ideals such as world peace when I am just trying to understand something about my own inner wars? Through meditation, it becomes possible to not get lost in thought. To just watch. Just listen. Breathe in, breathe out. Even with a koan to ponder, the most trivial of thoughts breaks concentration. They arise unprompted. Let them go, the teacher says, let them pass, as clouds passing a mountain. Just melt into your koan. Be present to the moment.

Zen sesshins are intensive periods of meditation that include a daily *teisho*, a Zen talk given by the teacher, often based on one of the koans used to enhance understanding of oneself and the world we live in. I was particularly impressed by a *teisho* that seemed precisely tuned to my mind-rattling academic perturbations. The *teisho* was based on Case 13 and 28 in the *Mumonkan*, the story of Zen Master Tokusan.[102]

Tokusan was born around AD 782 and died in 865 at the age of 83. As a young man, he became a Buddhist sutra scholar renowned especially for his interpretation of the Diamond Sutra. Tokusan held Zen Buddhism in great contempt: ‘his mind was full of resentment, his mouth speechless with anger’. He did not accept the contention that anyone can discover one’s essential nature and become a fully realised Buddha-being at any moment within one’s personal experience. Tokusan believed enlightenment, if achievable at all, was gained only by lifelong rigorous meditation and mastery of the sutras. But during Tokusan’s lifetime, Zen Buddhism spread throughout China. He decided to travel and to personally confront all the Zen teachers he could meet for the purpose of refuting their claims.

He walked from town to town pulling a cart down the road containing all his Diamond Sutra notebooks and manuscripts. One day, he stopped to ask an old woman at a roadside stall if he could purchase a snack (*tenjin*) to ease his hunger. *Tenjin* has a double meaning, referring not only to a kind of food but also to a state of mind. The old woman asked Tokusan about the books in his cart. Tokusan told her they were his notebooks and commentaries on the Diamond Sutra, implying that he was an authority. The old woman said, ‘In that sutra, it says the past mind cannot be caught, the present mind cannot be caught, the future mind cannot be caught. With which mind are you going to take the *tenjin*?’

This question, coming from an old woman in a roadside stall, shocked Tokusan, until he finally had the presence of mind to ask if a Zen master lived nearby. She gave him directions and he went on his way. The story does not reveal if Tokusan got his snack.

The Zen master’s name was Ryûtan. He welcomed Tokusan, and they talked and argued for hours. As expressed in the commentaries, ‘Ryûtan took pity, but seeing a live charcoal in Tokusan, threw muddy water over him to extinguish it.’ Tokusan kept arguing and asking Ryûtan for instruction until nightfall, when Ryûtan finally said, ‘The night is late. Why don’t

you go to bed?’

Tokusan thanked him, made his bows, raised the door curtain, but seeing how dark it was, turned back and said, ‘It’s pitch black outside.’

Ryûtan lit a lantern and handed it to Tokusan. Just as Tokusan reached for the lantern, Ryûtan blew it out. At that moment, Tokusan came to a sudden realisation and made a deep bow.

The following day, Tokusan brought his sutra notebooks and commentaries to the front of the hall, held up a torch and said, ‘However deep our understanding of abstruse ideas may be, it is like placing a hair in the immensity of space. Even if we have learned the vital points of all the truths in the world, it is like a drop of water thrown into a deep ravine.’ Tokusan then set fire to his cart full of books and notes, made his bows and left. He established a small monastery in the mountains, where for the rest of his life he was a Zen master for hundreds of students.

I am always deeply touched by Tokusan’s story. A life of solitary retreat in the mountains tempts me, but what I learn from Tokusan is to try to be present to what I do. The academic impulse is present; so too is the inner questioning. They are two sides of the same coin, they are one and the same.

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I have Craig Burns to thank for igniting a spark that set me on a journey. Carolyn also climbed the pantry shelves to the attic where Craig awakened my interest in Kushan coins and iconography. She has accompanied me along the way and through numerous drafts of this manuscript, challenging me to clarify what I want to say in this story about Kushan-era kings, gods and goddesses and the people who have studied them. She reminds me to continue asking, ‘Can you sit within the burning, can you sink into the answer?’

This story began in Lake Almanor, California, and took me to London, Vienna, Los Angeles, Peshawar, New York, Oxford and Toronto. The journey allowed me to become part of a small community who share a passion about an obscure piece of ancient history. We have experienced in some measure a Kushan mystique that would disappear unless passed on by means of words, images, stories and inscriptions.

Right now, at our lakeside cottage in Ontario, I’m ready to chop some wood. The loons, mergansers and ospreys have already left the lake and headed south. Birch and maple leaves fall perfectly; an evening glow softly flickers just behind the hills, welcoming a season of white silence.

Endnotes

1. Cribb, J. 2007: 179–210.

2. Cribb, J. 2018b: 7–34.

3. Sandner, D. 1991.

4. Reichard, G. 1950.

5. Krishnamurti discusses the question of beauty in a talk he gave in Delhi in 1981. Krishnamurti, J. 1984: 23–24.

6. Witherspoon, G. 1977: 26.

7. Zwalf, W., ed. 1985.

8. Rosenfield, J. 1967: 198–99.

9. Wolf, E. R. 1982.

10. Frankopan, P. 2017.

11. For a detailed account of early British archaeology in India, see Cribb 2007: 179–210.

12. The Rabatak inscription is discussed in Chapter 4.

13. Cf. Jongeward and Cribb 2015: 4, 30.

14. Rosenfield 1967: 18.

15. Thomas, E. J. 1927: 182, quoting the *Digha-Nikaya* from the Pali Canon.

16. Cribb, J. 2007: 179, quoting Pellerin 1767.

17. Cribb, J. and R. Bracey, forthcoming 2020.

18. Falk, H. and N. Sims-Williams 2017.

19. Cribb, J. 1992.

20. Cribb, R. and J. Cribb 2011.

21. Errington, E. and J. Cribb, eds. 1992: 17. Joe Cribb has revisited Soter Megas questions in a number of publications, including most recently Cribb, J. 2015.

22. From a Navajo prayer. Link, M. S. and J. L. Henderson 1998.

23. Göbl, R. 1993: 111.

24. From an unauthorised translation of Göbl's *System and Chronology of the Coinage of the Kushan Empire*: 8.

25. Personal correspondence, August 26, 1994.

26. The School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London, convened a conference on the question of Kanishka's dates at the British Museum in 1960. Cf. Basham A. L., ed. 1968. Among scholars important to Kushan studies, Stan Czuma favoured AD 78, John Rosenfield AD 110–15, Joe Cribb AD 110–20, Martha Carter AD 120, Robert Göbl AD 232.

27. Errington, E. and J. Cribb, eds. 1992: 146.

28. Falk, H. 2001.

29. The 'Shaka' or Scythian era is known to have begun in AD 78. It has long been contended by some that the beginnings of the Shaka and Kanishka eras coincide, but Falk contends that the *Yavanajataka* distinguishes between the two and provides a formula for determining the beginning of both eras based on *yuga* (astrological) cycles. Falk, H. 2001.

30. Göbl, R. 1999.

31. Rosenfield, J. 1967: 38–39.

32. After the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, a major restoration project was commenced in Kabul to restore the Gardens of Babur, funded by aid agencies under the leadership and initiative of the Aga Khan Foundation's Trust for Culture network.

33. Hamidi, H. 1967.

34. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1970-convention/.

35. Hakim was one of many leading Afghan academics, historians and officials who openly expressed outrage and disgust at the Taliban's destruction of the Buddha statues of Bamiyan. After the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, tens of thousands of Afghan refugees, including shopkeepers and their families, left Pakistan and returned home. Refugees who chose not to return to Afghanistan left the country to establish new lives elsewhere, especially in the United States, Europe and Canada.

36. For history of British archaeology in Gandhara, see Errington, E. and V. S. Curtis, eds. 2007: 211–26.

37. Errington, E. and J. Cribb, eds. 1992.

38. Errington, E. 1999; 2017. Also, Errington 1997 and Errington and Curtis, eds. 2007.

39. Wilson. H. H. (1841) 1971.

40. Cribb, J. 2018a.

41. Available at: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx?searchText=Charles+Masson.

42. Snellgrove, D. L., ed. 1978: 106.

43. On display in the British Museum Gallery of Asian Arts. See Zwalf, W. 1996: cat. nos 666–67. Also: Errington, E. 2012: 121–25.

44. Allchin, R. and B. Allchin 1982.

45. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/139.

46. Marshall, J. 1951.

47. Wheeler, M. 1968.

48. Alexandra, D-N. and Lama Yongden 1964.

49. Quoted in Sehrai, F. 1986: 34.

50. *Especially the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. See Schopen, G. 2004.

51. From copy of report courtesy of M. H. Khan Khattak, former Director of Archaeology in the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, on new archaeology at Takht-i-Bahi, presented at the University of Oxford in March 2018 for the Gandhara Connections project.

52. See Cribb, J. 1985; 2000. Only three gold Boddo dinars were known to Joe Cribb at the time of his 1985 article. One is in the British Museum, another was stolen from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the third is held in a private collection. Three more gold coins had come to Cribb's attention by the time he published a revised study in 2000. There also five known gold Boddo quarter dinars.

53. Cribb, J. and R. Bracey, forthcoming 2020.

54. Shenkar, M. 2014: 9–11 and Chapter 4.

55. Sims-Williams, N. and J. Cribb 1996.

56. For a detailed discussion of Nana iconography in Kushan coinage, especially possible relationships of Nana's crescent with Venus, the lion-forepart wand with the constellation Leo, see Falk, H. 2015.

57. Rienjang, W. 2011; Allchin, F. R. and G. Erdosy 1995.

58. Shenkar, M. 2014: 119–20.

59. Sims-Williams, N. 2015.

60. For discussions of Oesho, see Cribb, J. 1997; Shenkar, M. 2014: 154–58.

61. Currelly, C. 1956: 257–58.

62. Mitter 1977: 258.

63. Letter from Spendlove, October 1939.

64. Letter from Ram Dass, February 1940.

65. Jongeward, D. 2003.

66. ur Rahman, A., F. Grenet, and N. Sims-Williams 2006

67. Dickens, C. (1839) 1968: 12.

68. *The Adams Collection*, Classical Numismatics Group, 2016.

69. For an account of the Indian Institute and the Ashmolean's Indian collections, see Harle, J. C. and A. Topsfield 1987: ix–xiv.

70. Baums, S. 2012: Chapter 6 cat. no. 33.

71. Baums, S. 2012: 238–39; Jongeward, D. 2018: cat. no. 4. Also see Cribb, J. 2018b.

72. Jongeward, D. 2018: cat. no. 3.

73. Jongeward, D. 2018: cat. no. 154.

74. Jongeward, D. 2018: cat. no. 129.

75. Jongeward, D. 2018: cat. no. 13.

76. Cf. Ingholt, H. 1957: cat. nos.13–15; Zwalf, W. 1996: cat. nos.145, 148–49.

77. Topsfield, A. 2002.

78. Jongeward, D. 2018: frontispiece and cat. no. 79.

79. Barks, C., trans. Rumi 1987: 18.

80. John 3:19 (King James Version).

81. Jungk, R. 1958: 201.

82. Barks, C., trans. Rumi 1991: 30.

83. Cf. Wyman, L. C. 1970; Reichard, G. 1950; Klah, H. and M. Wheelright 1942.

84. Wyman, L. C. 1970.

85. Reichard, G. 1950: 17.

86. Jung, C. 1968.

87. Jung, C. 1968: 96.

88. Jung, C. 1968.

89. Cf. Rosenfield, J. 1967: 30–39.

90. Govinda, A. 1969: 134, 170; Cf. Yeshe, T. 1998.

91. For Native American reference, see Waters, F. 1963; 1969. Re Tibetan Buddhism, see Govinda, A. 1969; Re centres of consciousness, Jung, C. 1968.

92. Rosenfield, J. 1967: 198–99.

93. Carter, M. L. 1986: 95.

94. Shenkar, M. 2014: 131–40.

95. See Chapter 11, page 224

96. See Chapter 11, page 224; Rosenfield, J. 1967: 199.

97. King James Version.

98. The Rabbula Gospels are of particular interest especially in the light of the Second Commandment by God to Moses that forbids the making of graven images “of any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above....” (Exodus 20 verse 4). For history of early Christian image making and use of symbols, see Manguel, A. 1996: 95-107.

99. Weitzmann, K., ed. 1979.

100. Gurdjieff, G. 1988.

101. Rumi as quoted by Kononenko, I. and I. R. Kononenko 2010: 134.

102. Abridged from Case 13 and Case 28 in Yamada, K. 2004: 66–69, 137–42.

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