

SOME ASPECTS OF THE INDO-MEDITERRANEAN CONTACTS

Let me begin by defining my subject geographically and chronologically. For the purpose of this paper, by "Mediterranean World," I have understood, on the one hand, the Levant which included Asia Minor and the Fertile Crescent with Egypt at its western terminus, Syria-Palestine forming its western band, and Assyria-Babylonia constituting its eastern bow, and, on the other, Greece and Rome. By India I mean the Indian subcontinent. I shall deal with my subject roughly in four chronological periods, which, for the sake of convenience, I shall designate as Indo-Mesopotamian period, Indo-Anatolian period, Indo-Hellenistic period, and Indo-Roman period.

An important aspect of the proto-historic India is represented by the Indus valley civilization (now more popularly known as the Harappan civilization) which has been brought to light, in its several ramifications, during the course of the last forty years or so. On the basis of an examination of the craniological series of Mohenjodaro, a majority of anthropologists and ethnologists are now inclined to reject the theory that the Mohenjodaro people contained a mixture of the Negroid, the proto-Australoid, the Veddoid, etc., types and to suggest that the Indus valley people belonged to the Mediterranean branch of the europeoid race.¹ Mario Cappieri, for instance, says that "in the fourth millennium

¹ Cf. V. P. Alekseyev, in *Indiya v Drevnosti - Sbornik Statej*, Moscow 1964.

B.C. and probably before, North-West India seems to have been inhabited by a long-head race, which had a high vault, long face, and thin and prominent nose.”² Indeed, in the regions which include Anatolia, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Iran, and North-West India, one has to assume the existence of a very archaic racial type of extensive diffusion, relatively homogeneous, living in well defined and small independent groups in the various areas of the above regions. This type belongs to the great group of mankind, which Joseph Sergi has called Mediterranean race. Most of the anthropologists who have examined the human remains found in the excavations of the regions from the Aegean Sea to the Indus and who have minutely studied the prehistoric skulls and skeletons, admit that the long-head forms belong to the Mediterranean stock. The Mediterranean type of people is believed to have been the earliest contributor of agriculture and urban civilization in almost the whole extensive area stretching along the Mediterranean basin towards the east up to North-West India. It is suggested that the rise of the Indus cities was due to a kind of cultural explosion or revolution occasioned by the penetration into India of a new ethnic group, namely, one of the Mesopotamian peoples—presumably the Ubaidians—which was subjugated and forced out by the Sumerians.

However, in view of the fact that the skeletal remains excavated from the various sites of the Indus civilization are extremely meagre, it would perhaps be hazardous to assert that the authors of that civilization belonged to the eastern type of the Asiatic proto-Mediterraneans. There is, indeed, no evidence to suggest any wholesale migration of peoples from Mesopotamia to the Indus region. There is also reason to believe that the socio-political patterns of the Mesopotamian and the Indus civilizations were quite distinct from each other. It is further to be noted that, besides the Mediterranean type, the Indus skeletal remains were found to include stray brachycephalic Alpine or Armenoid types as well. Therefore, on the basis of the available evidence, it would be safer to assume that the Harappans originated in the local soil, that their civilization was essentially an indigenous development, but that they had very busy and active contacts with, among others, the Mesopotamians

² *Proceedings of the World Population Conference*, Vol. II, 761-782.

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belonging to the Mediterranean stock from whom they borrowed some techniques of urban life.

The contacts between the Indus and the Mesopotamian regions can be traced back to the Sargonide period of the Sumerian history (circa 2500 B.C.) and seem to have actively continued up to at least 1900 B.C. A mention may be made in this connection of actual finds of objects which were typical of one civilization in the archaeological sites representing the other civilization. Such are, for instance, the distinctive hut urns (pyxis) in the proto-historic cities of Mesopotamia and Elam, the bone inlays of the characteristic Indus kidney shape, segmented, etched and gold disc beads, bronze amulets of couchant bulls, Early Dynastic scarlet ware with the figure of humped bull, and pottery bearing knobs. The stylistic and typical details of these objects are such as would render improbable the assumption of coincidental similarities. The evidence of the discovery in the Royal Tombs of Sumer of the figure of squatting monkey, cornelian beads, and a peculiar type of hair-dressing as also of the discovery in Harappa of a distinctive type of terracotta figurines, fashioned in the round, depicting nude male body, perhaps ithyphallic, with extremely obese stomach, prominent buttocks, shoulder-holes for the attachment of movable arms and stubby tail, hundreds of specimens of which have also been excavated from the Mesopotamian sites, is certainly quite illuminating. A terracotta die of Indian origin discovered by Professor Speiser in his Tepe Gawra excavations again suggests a basic synchronism between the Mesopotamian Old Akkadian period and the "mature" Harappan period.³ A reference may be made here also to the figurines of the so-called Eyegoddesses, which have been discovered in the Indus as well as the West Asian archaeological sites. It is rightly pointed out that functional architecture is common to the Indus valley and Sumer. The similarity between the Indus region and Mesopotamia in the matter of corbelled arch (as attested in Tell Asmar and Mohenjodaro), circular wells of segmental bricks, and stone or baked clay lattice screens for windows cannot be regarded as being fortuitous. It may be incidentally added that the Indus civilization shows some improvement in some respects over the technique of Mesopotamia

³ George F. Dales, "Of Dice and Men," *JAOS*, 88, 14-23.

as is testified by the irregular streets of Ur and the planned ones of Mohenjodaro.

The evidence of seals is perhaps more convincing. As many as thirty Indus seals are said to have been actually excavated from Sumer. They can be understood as being indicative of trade-contacts between the two regions. Such trade-link between India and West Asia is confirmed by the discovery of Indus-like seals in the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf.⁴ It has now been shown that the Indus civilization was a maritime civilization and not merely a land-locked one. Lothal which represented a southern extension of the Harappan civilization was undoubtedly a port with an impressive dockyard and served as an important centre of sea-faring activity between the Harappan and the Mesopotamian regions.⁵ It is even suggested that the presence of mature Harappan civilization can be attested along the coast as far west as the Dasht valley and that Sutkagen-dor in the Dasht valley and Sotka-koh in the Shadi-kaur valley north of Pasni played key-role as Harappan ports.⁶ It is further suggested that the enterprising merchants of Kulli civilization may have served as middlemen between Mesopotamian and Indus regions. A specimen of the so-called Persian Gulf seal, which, as indicated above, is a variant of the Indus pattern, is discovered at Lothal,⁷ while Briggs Buchanan speaks of "a dated seal impression connecting Babylonia and ancient India."⁸ Mesopotamian records mention specific goods and materials which used to be imported from foreign lands, and at least some of these must have been imported from the Harappan regions. It is, however, interesting to note that there are no traces of wares imported by the

⁴ G. Bibby, "The 'Ancient Indian Style' Seals from Bahrain," *Antiquity*, 32, 243-46. Also see: W. F. Leemans, *Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period*, Leyden, 1960.

⁵ Cf. S. R. Rao, "Shipping and Maritime Trade of the Indus people," *Expedition*, 7, 30-37; Hartmut Schmökel, "Zwischen Ur und Lothal, Die Seehandelsroute von Altmesopotamien zur Induskultur," *Forschungen und Fortschritte*, 40 (5), 143-147. Incidentally, it is suggested that "when the Indo-Aryans already inhabited a great part of India, the peninsula of Gujarat was perhaps a last bulwark of the Indus civilization" (Leemans, *JESHO*, 11, 223).

⁶ G. F. Dales, "Harappan Outposts on the Makran Coast," *Antiquity*, 36, 86-92.

⁷ S. R. Rao, "A 'Persian Gulf' Seal from Lothal," *Antiquity*, 37, 96-99.

⁸ *Archaeology*, 20, 104-107. Also see: C. J. Gadd, "Seals of Ancient Indian Style found at Ur," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1932, 191-210.

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Harappans. Presumably they were "soft" and "consumable," such as garments, wool, leather products, and perfumed oil. Indeed, the viability of the Mesopotamian and Indus civilizations depended largely on mutual active trade, and it is not without significance that the end of the international trade of the Lارسa period in Mesopotamia coincided with the end of the "mature" Harappan period.

A reference has already been made to the skeletal remains in the Indus valley which are suggestive of Mesopotamian Mediterranean stock. The Mesopotamian records mention several distant places, some of which may be identified with Indus localities. For instance, the inscriptions of the kings of Akkad and certain lexical texts originating in that region mention Magan or Makkān, which scholars identify with Makran in Baluchistan, and Meluhha, from which place carnelian and special kinds of wood were imported by sea by the Babylonians and which is identified with Lothal and its environs.⁹ Dilmun is frequently mentioned in Sumerian texts and glorified in Sumerian mythology. It is described as a place where the sun rises (that is, which is towards the east) and as a prosperous land dotted with great dwellings. Samuel Kramer is inclined to identify Dilmun with the Indus region. He further points to the significance of the facts that the great Sumerian water-god Enki was most intimately connected with Dilmun, and that the Indus civilization was characterized by the cult of a water-deity and sea-faring ships.¹⁰ A reference may be made in this context also to words like *taimāta*, *urugūlā*, and *āligī-viligī* occurring in the *Atharvaveda* (V. 13), which are obviously non-Aryan and which are supposed to have been derived from Mesopotamian Tiamut (the dragon),

⁹ Cf. "The identification of Meluhha with India is well established and is corroborated by its etymological derivative in Sanskrit *mlecchā*, a word which occurs first in the *Śatapathabrāhmana* to denote barbarians ('demons') of unintelligible speech" (Asko Parpola and others, *Decipherment of the Proto-Dravidian Inscriptions of the Indus Civilization*, A first announcement, Copenhagen, 1969, p. 4). Pentti Aalto first suggested the connection of *Meluhha* with Pali *milakkha*, Sanskrit *mlecchā* (*ibid.*, p. 50). Also see: W. F. Leemans, "Additional Evidence for the Persian Gulf Trade and Meluhha," *JESHO*, 11 (2), 215-226.

¹⁰ Samuel Noah Kramer, "The Indus Civilization and Dilmun, the Sumerian Paradise Lost," *Expedition*, 6, 44-52. Parpola and others identify Tilmun (Dilmun) with the Bahrein island (*op. cit.*, p. 4) Also see: K. Jaritz, "Tilmun-Makan-Meluhha," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 27 (3), 209-213.

urugala (the underworld), and Bilgi (an ancient Assyrian god). Thus, though it is not possible to ascertain at this stage the exact nature and extent of the interdependence between Indus India on the one hand and Mesopotamia which was a part of the Mediterranean world on the other, the fact that active contacts had developed between the two regions early in the third millennium B.C. and had continued for nearly 800 years can be proved beyond doubt.

As a matter of fact it does not seem unlikely that the Indus people had established trade-links even with the Minoan Crete. In this connection, a reference may be made to the correspondence between the Mother Goddess cults of Harappa and Syria-Crete. Syrio-Cretan type of doves, snakes, and treeworship was prevalent also in Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Further, the segmental variety of faience beads from Harappa resemble not those of Ur but those discovered in Crete.

If the evidence for the Indo-Mesopotamian contacts is mainly archaeological, that for the Indo-Anatolian contacts is essentially linguistic. It also needs to be pointed out that the relationship between India and Anatolia was not of the nature of direct and continuing contacts. As a matter of fact, neither of the two regions seems to have been at all conscious of this relationship. A clay tablet discovered at Bogazkoi (about 80 miles to the south-west of Ankara)—presumably, the ancient name of the place was Hattuša—by Hugo Winckler in 1906 represented a treaty concluded between the Mitannian ruler Mattiwaza (son of Tušratta) and the Hittite king Suppiluliuma, in the fourteenth century B.C. As witnesses to the treaty are invoked, among many other gods, four gods whose names are clearly akin to those of the Vedic gods, Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, and Nāsatyā. About twenty years before this discovery, that is in 1887, there was discovered at El-Amarna in central Egypt a large number of tablets with writings in cuneiform characters. This collection constituted a part of an ancient archive containing the correspondence of Pharaoh Amenophis IV (circa 1364-1347 B.C.) and his father Pharaoh Amenophis III (circa 1402-1364 B.C.) with the eastern states—particularly with the city-states in Syria-Palestine and with Mitanni in eastern Anatolia whose rulers were matrimonially related to the Pharaohs. The names of the Mitanni rulers mentioned in this correspondence, such as Artā-

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tama and Artassumara, also show linguistic affinities with Aryan names. Three years earlier, that is, in 1884, Friedrich Delitzsch had drawn the attention of scholars to the Aryan influence on the language of the Kassites who seem to have had their principality to the south-east of the Mitannian realm, just to the north of the Persian Gulf. For instance, the word for the sun-god in that language was Šurriaš, and both in form and meaning, it corresponded with the Vedic word *sūrya*. Further, in the course of the archaeological expedition of 1906-12 itself, there was brought to light at Bogazkoi a text dealing with the breeding and training of horses, which belonged to the 14th century B.C. and whose authorship was attributed to one Kikkuli, described as *aššuššani* (which word is obviously related to *aśva*—"horse" and *śam*—"to tame") from the land of Mitanni. This text contains some numerals like *aika*, *tēra*, *panza*, *šatta*, etc., which are unmistakably reminiscent of Sanskrit *eka*, *tri*, *pañca*, *sapta*, etc. These numerals occur as the first members of compounds formed with *-uartanna*, which form is clearly connected with Vedic *vartani*—its *i*-ending having been changed to *a*-ending as is to be seen in such Vedic compounds with numerals as *daśāṅgula* (from *daśa* + *āṅguli*) and *tryanjala* (from *tri* + *añjali*).^{10a} Finally, between 1925 and 1931, there were unearthed important documents from the city of Nuzi which was situated at the south-eastern end of the Mitannian realm. These documents again contained words like *babru-nnu* (*babbru*), *parita-nnu* (*palita*), and *pinkara-nnu* (*piṅgala*) to denote the colours of horses.

This Aryan linguistic material gleaned from different sources, which, however, were directly or indirectly connected with the Mitanni state in ancient Anatolia and which generally belonged to the second millennium B.C., is classified under three main heads, namely, (a) names of four Vedic gods, (b) thirteen appellatives—among them four substantives, three adjectives, five numerals, and one verb—seven of which are derived from Kikkuli's work, three from Nuzi, and three from the Hurrian records, and (c) a number of personal names.¹¹ About the Aryan

^{10a} M. Mayrhofer, "Zahlwortkomposita des Kikkuli-Textes," *IF*, 70, 11-13.

¹¹ For a fuller discussion, see: R. Hauschild, *Über die frühesten Arier im alten Orient*, Berlin 1962; M. Mayrhofer, *Die Indo-Arier im alten Vorderasien mit einer analytischen Bibliographie*, Wiesbaden 1966; A. Kammenhuber, *Die Arier im Vorderen Orient*, Heidelberg, 1968.

character of the first two of these classes there can hardly be any doubt, while the third class contains words which seem to be local variations of the original Aryan forms. In the context of this last class, it may be incidentally pointed out that the mutual influence of the Near Eastern speech and the Aryan speech may be discovered in such phenomena as the peculiar development of the Indo-European vocalism in Aryan,¹² the participles in *-ma-* of Luwian with a middle or passive meaning corresponding with the formations like Sanskrit *ḷśāma*, *stīma*, *bhīma*, *ḍasma*, *nigma*, *ūma*, etc.,¹³ and the Aryan words with Hurrian suffix like *mutunni* and *aššuššani*.¹⁴ As regards a more precise linguistic characterization of these Aryan linguistic remains in Anatolia, one may think of three alternatives: they represent either the proto-Aryan stage or the Irano-Aryan stage or the Indo-Aryan stage. A critical and comparative study of all this material, in the details of which it is neither possible nor necessary to enter here, has led to the conclusion that the language presupposed by the various forms is nearest to the Vedic Sanskrit.

The mention of the four Vedic gods in the Mitanni-Hittite treaty is particularly significant in this connection. It has been shown that these four gods are mentioned together also in the *Rgveda* (X.125.1) and the *Atharvaveda* (III.4.4) and that in the *Rgveda* they are not unoften celebrated as protectors of treaties or contracts.¹⁵

How can this superimposition of the Vedic Aryan element on Mitanni be historically explained? It would seem that, after the dark period following the fall of Babylon in about 1650 B.C., the Hurrians spread over a major part of Syria and Mesopotamia and established in that region the kingdom of Mitanni. In this adventure of theirs, the Hurrians were led by Aryan warriors, often referred to as *maria-nnu* (= Vedic *marya*), who, though comparatively few in number, eventually emerged as rulers and noblemen. Five or six generations of Aryan rulers of

¹² Cf. O. Szemerényi, "Structuralism and Substratum: Indo-Europeans and Semites in the Ancient Near East," *Lingua*, 13, 1-29.

¹³ E. Benveniste, "La forme du participe en Luwi," *Festschrift Johannes Friedrich*, 1959, 53-59.

¹⁴ M. Mayrhofer, "Über einige arische Wörter mit hurrischem Suffix," *Annali Ist. Univ. Or. Napoli*, Sez. Ling., 1, p. 1-11.

¹⁵ P. Thieme, "The 'Aryan' Gods of Mitanni Treaties," *JAOS*, 80, 301-317.

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Mitanni can be attested from the available records. Two facts need to be emphasized at this stage: 1) The names of the Mitanni prince involved in the treaty recorded on the Bogazkoi tablet and his father—Mattiwaza and Tušratta—are unmistakably Indo-Aryan.¹⁶ 2) Besides the four Indo-Aryan gods, quite a large number of other gods—presumably Hurrian—are mentioned on the Bogazkoi tablet. It would, therefore, not be wrong to suppose that the Indo-Aryan gods belonged to the Indo-Aryan ruling family and noblemen, while the other gods belonged to the large Hurrian population. It is rightly suggested by Herzfeld that it could have been only “a group of Aryan *condottieri* and their troops”¹⁷ who were involved in the establishment of the kingdom of Mitanni.

I visualise the entire course of history in this connection roughly as follows.¹⁸ The earliest common habitat of the speakers of proto-IE (who, however, did not necessarily belong to the same racial stock), which can be attested on the strength of the available linguistic, archaeological, anthropological, and culture-historical evidence, is the North Kirghis steppes between the Urals and Altai. In view of the facts that the proto-Hellenes can be shown to have entered Greece in about 2200 B.C., that the Hittites, as will be soon pointed out, started on their isolated migration in about 2800 B.C., and that the proto-Aryans must be assumed to have separated from the main stock in about 2600 B.C., the proto-IE unity can be, with reasonable certainty, dated from 3500 B.C.. It has now been shown that the Hittite language is the oldest offshoot of the proto-IE family. It shows considerable affinity with proto-IE, but it cannot be assigned to any specific IE branch. We may, therefore, assume that there occurred an isolated migration of the Hittites from the common proto-IE habitat even before the IE speech had assumed its specific form. The Hittites proceeded towards the south-west and occupied the region between the Caucasus mountain and the

¹⁶ The names may be rendered in Vedic Sanskrit as *mathivāja* and *tveṣaratha*.

¹⁷ E. Herzfeld, *Iran in the Ancient East*, 1941, p. 192.

¹⁸ For a fuller statement on the subject, see: R. N. Dandekar, “The Antecedents and the Early Beginnings of the Vedic Period,” *Proceedings of the Tenth Indian History Congress*, 1947, 24-55. It will be seen that I have slightly modified my earlier view regarding the migration of the Proto-Aryans towards Anatolia.

Caspian sea. This may have happened about 2800 B.C.. After a few centuries of comparative oblivion, the Hittites are known to have pushed forth further towards the south-west through the Cilician gates and to have established their sovereignty over the highlands in the great bend of the Halys river. In the course of their further expansion, they seem, on the one hand, to have reached the Mediterranean sea towards the south-west, and, on the other, to have established some kind of suzerainty over the Mitannian kingdom towards the south-east. So far as the former event is concerned, it has been pointed out that the contact with the sea had great significance for the land-locked people like the Hittites, and the sea (*aruna* in Hittite¹⁹) was, therefore, much glorified in their texts. As for the latter event, it has been pointed out that, in spite of the fairly long period of proximity of the Hittites and the Hurrians, there do not seem to have occurred any significant political-cultural contacts between them until the middle of the 14th century B.C., when, through a treaty recorded on the Bogazkoi clay tablet, a political and matrimonial alliance came to be established between king Mattiwaza of Mitanni and his suzerain king Suppiluliuma of the Hittites.

But we have anticipated a little. Let us go back to the migrations of the proto-IE-speaking peoples. Even after the isolated migration of the Hittites in the initial stage of the development of proto-IE, the remaining proto-IE-speakers, who may now be designated as IE-speakers, continued to live in the North Kirghis region for some time. The next landmark in the history of these people is represented by two major migrations. The earlier major migration was in the south-eastern direction. Some of the tribes of the IE-speakers separated from the main body of the IE-speakers and migrated to a locality not very different from their Urheimat, namely, to the region round about Balkh. The other major migration was towards the Pripet region from where there later occurred further secondary migrations towards, among others, the Aegean world, Italy, and Germanic lands. We are, however, here more concerned with the tribes which migrated to and eventually settled down in the Balkh region. Here, between 2500 B.C. and 2300 B.C., the proto-Aryan language, which, on the one hand, had evolved out of IE and, on the

¹⁹ Perhaps comparable with OIA *arnas*, *arnava*.

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other, was the ancestor of ancient Iranian and Vedic Sanskrit, as also the proto-Aryan religious ideology, which represented the anterior stage of the Avestan and the Vedic religious ideology, attained characterization.

As from the Pripet region, so too from Balkh there occurred, in course of time, secondary migrations—first of the proto-Indo-Aryans towards the land of seven rivers in the south-east, and presumably much later of the ancient Iranians towards Iran in the west. There is reason to believe that, while the proto-Indo-Aryans were fighting out their way towards India, their language and religious ideology gradually developed the specifically Vedic character. It was also during the course of this their onward march, under the leadership of Vṛtrahā Indra, that some adventurers from among them, instead of proceeding towards Saptasindhu with their comrades, turned back and wended their perilous and protracted way towards the north-west. It was the descendants, by several generations, of these valiant proto-Indo-Aryan defectors who ultimately reached the central bend of the Fertile Crescent, insinuated themselves among the local Hurrians as their leaders, and eventually established the Mitanni kingdom under their sovereignty.²⁰ The Mitannian kings were neither the ancestors of the Indo-Aryans, nor were they, strictly speaking, the Indo-Aryans who had migrated from India to East Anatolia. Their ancestors had, however, been closely related to the ancestors of the Indo-Aryans as members of one and the same linguistic and religious fraternity. But they had separated themselves from the latter even before the latter had entered India and had thus become proper Indo-Aryans. One branch of the proto-Indo-Aryans entered Saptasindhu by the end of the third millennium B.C. and soon succeeded in firmly laying the foundation of Vedic religion and culture. The other branch of the proto-Indo-Aryans made its appearance, a few generations later, in Asia Minor²¹ as the group of *condottieri* who established the kingdom of Mitanni by the middle of the second century B.C.. The fates of these two branches of the proto-Indo-Aryan community proved to be quite distinct from each other. The proto-

²⁰ Though usually referred to as Eastern Anatolia, the Mitanni kingdom geographically coincided with a major part of ancient Mesopotamia

²¹ See the preceding foot-note.

Indo-Aryans migrating into North-western India were comparatively few in number, but they seem to have possessed tremendous power to diffuse their language and culture so that, instead of being absorbed by the indigenous population, they could superimpose their own language and culture on that population. The Vedic language and culture soon became deeply and permanently rooted in the Indian soil. As against this, the proto-Indo-Aryans, who had made a detour in the direction of the Near East and who must have lost many of the features of their proto-Indo-Aryan language and religious ideology already in the long process of that detour, could influence the indigenous Hurrian population of that region, through their language and religion, only superficially—and that too because they had manoeuvred to establish themselves as a ruling class within that population. Unlike their brethren in India, they disappeared from the scene of history, politically and culturally, within less than 200 years. It is only on the hypothesis as stated above that the stray Indo-Aryan elements in the Mitannian and allied records of about the middle of the second millennium B.C. can be adequately accounted for.

An important aspect of the Indo-Mediterranean contacts was represented by the contacts between the Phoenicians and the Indians. But very little archaeological, linguistic, or historical evidence is available for it being possible to make any adequate statement about those contacts. A suggestion is often made that the Paṇis mentioned in the *Rgveda* must have been Phoenician merchants. The Paṇis are no doubt described in the *Rgveda* as rich traders and usurers, but the *Rgveda* also gives the impression that the Paṇis were not mere casual traders. They seem to have become more or less permanently settled in India, and, in the course of their colonization, the Vedic Aryans continually encountered them and that too in a hostile manner. This would certainly go against their identification with the Phoenicians. The Paṇis seem to have been connected, in a special way, with Divodāsa, the river Sarasvatī, and the family of the Bhāradvājas. Then there is the legend that Saramā discovered the place where the Paṇis had kept the kine of the Vedic Aryans in captivity. All this does not conform with the general character of the Phoenicians as known from their history. The Phoenicians were famous throughout antiquity for their maritime prowess which

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feature is hardly ever attributed to the Panis in the *Rgveda*.²² It was only after the end of the old Babylonian civilization that the region of Syria-Palestine began to assume importance, and it was only as the result of the conflict between Egypt on the one hand and the Hittite-Mitanni kingdoms on the other that the Phoenicians, who had established themselves between Lebanon to the north and Palestine to the south, enjoyed a period of independence. The earliest evidence of trade contacts between Phoenicia and Western India goes back only to 975 B.C.. In that year, Hiram, king of Tyre, sent his fleet of "ships of Tarshish" from Egipt Geber, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba in the Red Sea, to fetch "ivory, apes, and peacocks" from the port of Ophir (which is identified with Sopara) to decorate the palaces and the Temple of King Solomon.²³ But this commerce in merchandise between India and Phoenicia does not seem to have been accompanied by commerce in other aspects of culture and civilization.

This, however, happened in a distinctive manner—but, perhaps, in the reverse order—in the case of the contacts between the Greeks and the Indians. It may be pointed out, at the outset, that as members of the collateral branches of the IE linguistic family, the Indians and the Greeks were, in a sense, closely related to each other. When, however, they met again many centuries later, it was as complete strangers. In the 6th century B.C. Persia served as a link between the Greeks and the Indians. Indian troops are known to have served under the Persians when they invaded the Greek possessions, while Greek officials and mercenaries are known to have served in the Persian administrative set-up even in India. When, for instance, Darius had advanced as far as the head-waters of the Indus in 510 B.C., he is reported to have sent a Greek mercenary, named Skylax, to sail down the Indus and make his way home via the Red Sea. Skylax took the old route followed by Phoenician traders and arrived at Arsinoe (which is identified with modern

²² A. S. Altekar (*Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Indian History Congress*, 1959, p. 20) is inclined to identify the Panis with 'the Harappans or with a section of them.'

²³ H. G. Rawlinson, "India in European Literature and Thought," in *The Legacy of India*, Oxford 1962, p. 1.

Suez) after a voyage of two and a half years.²⁴ For whatever he tells us about India, Herodotus (born in 484 B.C.) has apparently depended largely on the account of Skylax. Pāṇini (6th-5th centuries B.C.) shows acquaintance with the Yavanas or the Ionian Greeks. In this connection it may be pointed out that the true classical Hellenic thought and culture originated and developed in Ionia in West Anatolia rather than on the mainland of Greece. It is, indeed, surprising that, even after having come into sufficiently close contact with the Ionian Greeks, the Indians, who were generally endowed with a sharp linguistic sense, had not noticed the similarities between their own language and the language of the Yavanas. Ctesias, another Greek, who lived at the Persian court at Susa for a fairly long time, has also written about India, but his account has tended to be more romantic than realistic.

It seems that, before the times of Alexander the Great, thought travelled from the east towards the west. Thales (6th century B.C.), who is called the Father of Greek philosophy and who belonged to Miletus in Ionia, postulated a physical-naturalistic principle, namely, water, as the one basic substance from which all else in the universe was composed. The Eleatic School aimed at discovering the one reality underlying the material phenomena, and the Orphic movement emphasized that the soul, which was immortal and which was distinct from the body, sought release from the latter. According to Heraclitus (540-475 B.C.), life was change and the entire universe was ever in flux, while Democritus (460-370 B.C.) believed that the reality was the mechanical motion of atoms. No direct evidence is available which might help us to ascertain whether the Indian philosophical thought had exercised any significant influence on these and similar Greek speculations. But the facts such as that these and allied philosophical doctrines had already been known in India, that many of these doctrines had originated among the Ionian Greeks (or the Yavanas) who had close contacts with Persia and through Persia with India, that, according to his biographer Iamblichus, Pythagoras (born in 580 B.C.) had studied the esoteric teachings of, among others, the Brāhmaṇas, and that there is the traditional account of the meeting in Athens between Socrates and some

²⁴ Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

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learned Brāhmaṇas, point to the high probability of the influence of Indian thought on Greek philosophical speculations.

Alexander's momentous campaigns in the East brought the Greeks in closer and more direct contact with the Indians than theretofore. Alexander, educated under the tutorship of Aristotle, set out on his victorious march in 334 B.C. and conquered in quick succession Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt where he founded the city of Alexandria. Then he turned eastward, marched over the Fertile Crescent and defeated the large Persian forces of Darius III at the battle of Arbela in 331 B.C. Five years later he reached Panjab. Alexander was not only a conqueror, he was also an explorer. During his military expeditions he was always accompanied by trained historians, scientists, and philosophers. Indeed, he was the pioneer of the Hellenistic (as against Hellenic) movement, which had for its aim the extension of Hellenic culture among the non-Greeks. His dream of bringing about "the marriage of Europe and Asia" did not materialise, but, in the course of his attempts in that direction, the centre of gravity of Greek culture came to be shifted from Greece to Asia. Alexandria developed into the biggest city of the realm—a great cosmopolitan centre of academic and commercial activities. Alexander's conquests gave rise to a new movement of colonial expansion in the East, which implied the establishment of a number of new cities and kingdoms with Greek rulers and Greek advisers and the diffusion of Greek culture. It must, however, be noted that the vast mass of the people, on whom the Greek rule had been clamped, did not become hellenized.

Alexander's Indian conquests proved almost ephemeral, so much so that they have been rarely mentioned in contemporary literature. But their general impact was unmistakable. For one thing, it is not unlikely that Kauṭilya's exaltation of the king's absolute authority and his emphasis on the vast bureaucratic governmental machinery with centralised control, which did not fit in well into the pattern of India's traditional polity, were the result of the influence which the Hellenistic model in that regard must have exercised on that sagacious political teacher and administrator. It was again through Greek (and Persian) contacts with India in the 5th-4th centuries B.C. that iron is said to have

been brought to India.²⁵ Those contacts also resulted in a kind of "second urbanisation,"²⁶ and cities like Charsada and Taxila came to be built. It is suggested that the builders of megaliths in South India were a people of Mediterranean stock who probably came to the West coast by sea, entered South India in about 500 B.C., and then spread northwards.²⁷ Trade between India and the Hellenistic world received great impetus. There were several trade-routes—the two more common having been: 1) overland: Pāṭaliputra - Taxila - Bactra (the capital of Bactria) - then west by south across the long stretches of the Persian and the Median territory to Seleucia - and from there either up the Euphrates reaching Antioch, or via Edessa to the Mediterranean; and 2) by sea: From India's west coast - to ports of the Persian Gulf - then up the Tigris to Seleucia - and then onwards by either of the two routes mentioned above. A large number of merchants from India could be seen on the streets of Alexandria, and Strabo (the Greek historian) was told that 120 vessels sailed to India every year from the Egyptian ports.

After the death of Alexander at Babylon in 323 B.C., his vast empire broke up into four parts—the Ptolemaic empire in Egypt, the Seleucid empire in Syria and Persia, Antigonos' empire in Macedonia and Greece, and the Oriental Greek and Bactrian kingdoms to the north-west of India. Seleucos Nicator of the Syrian-Persian Greek empire, who tried to emulate Alexander by invading Pāṭaliputra, was defeated by Candragupta Maurya (322-298 B.C.), and a matrimonial alliance is reported to have been concluded between the two. Seleucos also appointed Megasthenes as his ambassador in the court of Pāṭaliputra. The cultural contacts between the Maurya and the Seleucid realms continued even after Candragupta's death, and an amusing episode is narrated that Bindusāra, Candragupta's successor, wrote to his contemporary Antiochus I of Syria asking for a sample of Greek wine and some raisins and a sophist who would teach him how to argue and that Antiochus, while sending the wine and raisins with great pleasure, informed him that it was not good form among the Greeks to trade in philosophers.

²⁵ Mortimer Wheeler, *Early India and Pakistan*, 24 and 171.

²⁶ H. D. Sankalia, *Indian Archaeology Today*, 124. The first 'urbanisation' was encouraged by the Indo-Mesopotamian contacts described above.

²⁷ This is the view of C. von Fürer-Haimendorf.

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After Aśoka (273-232 B.C.) became converted to the religion of the Buddha, he, as mentioned in his thirteenth rock-edict, dispatched missionaries to Antiochus and four other Greek kings, namely, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas de Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus,²⁸ with a view to winning them over to the Law of Piety and World Peace. It is also noteworthy that a special board in charge of foreigners in India had been set up in the Maurya administrative system.²⁹

After Aśoka's death in 232 B.C., the direct Indo-Greek contacts were broken off. But India and Greece continued to influence each other through the Indo-Bactrians on the one hand and, to a certain extent, also through the Indo-Roman contacts on the other. Rome entered into Hellenistic affairs in 212 B.C., but the acme of the Graeco-Roman civilization, which was characterized by the assimilation of the Hellenic elements and the preservation of Hellenistic culture in the East, was reached during *Pax Romana* (that is from Augustus, 30 B.C., to Marcus Aurelius, 170 A.D.).

During this period, the Gāndhāra region had become the main centre where the Indian culture and the Graeco-Roman culture encountered each other and often fused together. Trade was perhaps the most essential link of this cultural contact. Indeed, the Kuṣāṇa prosperity seems to have depended largely on foreign trade. It is not unlikely that the advent of the Kuṣāṇas in Shen-tu (that is, the lower Indus region) was primarily motivated by the prospects of rich gains from its thriving Indo-Roman commerce.³⁰ During the Kuṣāṇa rule, the Graeco-Roman trade with the East was at its height. A sea-captain from Alexandria who had then visited India has reported that spices and silks left Indian ports to be exchanged for Roman gold coins, Greek wines, and choice girls for the royal harems. The *Milindapañha* (1st century A.D.) also contains references to brisk maritime trade between India and Alexandria. The two great cities of Gāndhāra,

²⁸ The names as mentioned in the rock-edict read: Arītiyoga; Tulamaya, Arītekinā; Maka; Alikyaśudala.

²⁹ Bela Lahiri, "Impact of Foreign Trade on Coins of Ancient India," *QRHS*, 5, 194.

³⁰ B.N. Mukherjee, "Impact of Foreign Trade on Political History—An Illustration," *QRHS*, 5, 183.

namely, Begram and Taxila, had developed into veritable trade-centres on the Balkh-Gāndhāra route. There have been found at Begram ruins of a "palace" (assignable to the 2nd-3rd centuries A.D.), two rooms of which have yielded a hoard of Mediterranean and oriental wares, such as glass vessels from Syria and Egypt, Indian ivories, bronze bowls from Western factories, steelyard-weights in the form of busts of Minerva and Mars, and a good deal of specimens of Roman art like figures of Harpocrates, Hercules, and the grotesque "philosopher" of the Alexandrian type.³¹ According to Mortimer Wheeler, this must have been a customs depot.

Evidence is available to show that equally active and rich trade was carried on between the Tamil region in South India and the Roman empire, in the early centuries A.D.. As a matter of fact, even before the Romans had come on the scene, the Tamil country was engaged in prosperous trade and commerce with Egypt and the Greek kingdoms. In this connection it is noteworthy that the Hebrew word for peacock and Greek words for ginger, cinnamon, and rice have been derived from Tamil. *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* by an Alexandrian sea-farer, of about the time of Nero, describes the journey from the Red Sea along the Indian coast from the mouth of the Indus to that of the Gaṅgā. But the most frequently followed trade-route seems to have been: Alexandria - Aden - Indian Ocean - Muziris (= Cranganore) in Malabar. The discovery of the Monsoon in about 50 A.D. must have given added fillip to the sea-journey from the Gulf of Aden to India between May and October and the return journey between November and March. According to Pliny, who complained of the drain of Eastern luxuries upon Rome, Rome used to pay fifty million *sesterces* annually for balance of trade with India. The large hordes of Roman coins found in South India would also bear ample testimony to the magnitude of trade between India and the Roman world. The exports from India consisted mainly of pepper, cinnamon, spices, drugs, pearls, silks, and muslins, while among the merchandise imported into India were precious metals, pottery, glassware, wine, silverware, and human cargo (constituted of craftsmen and masons). It is

³¹ Kalyan Kumar Das Gupta, "Foreign Trade and Gandhara Art," *QRHS*, 5, 201.

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certainly not without significance that several specimens of Roman glass have been discovered in the excavations at Dhanikota (Dhanakatakā) in Andhra.³² Attention may further be drawn to the fact that Tamil authors have referred in their writings to Roman colonies in South India at places like Muziris, Madura, and Pukar—the colonists having mainly been the natives of Syria and Egypt with Roman officers in charge. Incidentally, it may also be mentioned that, in the course of excavations at Pompeii in 1939, there has been discovered a fine ivory statuette of Indian workmanship supposedly portraying the Hindu goddess Lakṣmī. Some merchant must have brought it home after his Indian adventure, before 79 A.D. when Pompeii was overwhelmed.³³

So far as political relations are concerned it may be mentioned that the Kuṣāna king Kadphises III had sent an embassy to Rome in 99 A.D. to congratulate Trajan on his accession. Actually, more than a century earlier, a Pāṇḍya embassy, under the leadership of Zarmanocheḡas (Śramaṇācārya), had left Bṛḡukaccha in 25 B.C. and waited upon Augustus at Samos in 21 B.C. with presents for the Emperor which are said to have consisted, among other things, of gigantic python, huge tortoises, and an armless boy who could shoot arrows with his feet. Indeed, at least nine embassies from India are known to have visited Roman emperors up to the times of Constantine. The purpose of these embassies must have been both diplomatic and commercial.

Indian philosophy seems to have made a tremendous impression upon the thinkers of the Graeco-Roman world. We are told that Apollonius of Tyana (50 A.D.) had gone to Taxila to study under the Brāhmaṇa teachers there, while the gnostic Baroksanēs had learnt many curious facts about India from the Indian embassy in Syria (218-222 A.D.). Indeed, gnosticism came to be described as "orientalism in a Hellenic garb." Clement of Alexandria (150-218 A.D.), who, incidentally, was the first Greek writer to mention the Buddha by name, even went to the extent of asserting that the Greeks had stolen their philosophy from the barbarians (by which term he must have meant the Indians).

³² B. B. Lal, *Indian Archaeology since Independence*, 34.

³³ Mortimer Wheeler, *Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, 135. Sankalia (*op. cit.*, 120 f.n. 81) does not think that the statuette portrays Lakṣmī.

As if to counterbalance this, the Indian astronomer Varāhamihira admonished his readers, a couple of centuries later, that the science of astronomy was well-established among the Yavanas and that, therefore, though they were barbarians, they must be respected like India's own ancient sages. It is, therefore, not surprising that two of the five principal schools of Indian astronomy came to be named Romaka (after Rome) and Pauliśa (after Paul of Alexandria, 378 A.D.). The assumption of some kind of Hellenistic influence on the growth of Sanskrit drama during the Kuṣāṇa period would not be altogether unwarranted. Similarly the type of coinage introduced by the Indo-Bactrian kings was essentially Hellenistic in character. For one thing, those coins either had the names and portraits of the rulers inscribed on them³⁴ or they showed figures of divinities belonging to the Greek pantheon. Secondly, the names given to some of those coins, such as Dīnāra and Drama, are obviously Indian forms of Greek Dinarius and Drachma. The standardization of this coinage in respect of form and weight was also something which had been unknown in India in the earlier periods.³⁵

But perhaps the most enduring monument of the Indo-Hellenistic cultural fusion is to be seen in the Gāndhāra art, which is also significantly called the Graeco-Buddhist art. This school of art was actually inaugurated only after the direct Greek domination in the North-Western region of India had ended, and was patronised mainly by the Sakas and the Kuṣāṇās who had continued the tradition of their Hellenistic predecessors. The themes of the Gāndhāra art are essentially Buddhistic, while the style of execution is undeniably Hellenistic. The Gāndhāra Buddha, for instance, looks like an Apollo wearing costumes whose "wet" drapery is derived from the classical art. Indian sages and priests are clearly reminiscent of bearded philosophers and sages of the Hellenistic world, and the Yakṣas, the Garuḍas, the Nāgas, and other semi-mythical beings appear to be mere

³⁴ R. N. Dandekar ("East and West," *Journal of the University of Poona: Humanistic Section*, No. 17, p. 79) sees in this the influence of the anthropocentric West. See also foot-note 36.

³⁵ It has been pointed out by Lallanji Gopal (*QRHS*, 5, 188) that "the literally golden period of Indian coinage system was the period which witnessed India's trade activity at its peak."

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eastern versions of the genii of the Hellenistic pantheon. The influence of the Hellenistic art-forms is unmistakably reflected in physiognomy, drapery, the wavy treatment of the hair, the use of Corinthian colonette as a space-divider in relief compositions, etc., adopted by the Gāndhāra artists.³⁶ Verily, the religious penchant of Indian culture, united with the aesthetic penchant of Greek culture, has produced this sublime and creative school of art.

³⁶ According to K. K. Das Gupta (*op. cit.*, 201-202), the art of Gāndhāra was "but an integral part of Hellenistic art" and it "derived its sustenance from Buddhism and capitalism, the latter being an outgrowth of Indo-Roman commerce." In connection with the Gāndhāra art, R. N. Dandekar says ("East and West," 78): "The traditional cosmic non-individualistic outlook of the Indians did not encourage the sculptures of individual, isolated figures. It must have been the contact with the anthropocentric West which had inspired the sculpture of the figures of the Buddha."