

INDIRAN

The newsletter of the Ancient India and Iran Trust

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Photo Credit: Anna Collar



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Editor's Letter

News from the Ancient India & Iran Trust

WELCOME to the seventh edition of the Ancient India and Iran Trust's newsletter, *INDIRAN*.

2012 has seen a few changes at the Trust: I returned from maternity leave in June, and we are delighted that Jo Salisbury, who did a marvellous job in my absence, has joined the Trust as Assistant Librarian. She works Mon-Thurs, 9-1. Our long-standing Assistant Librarian Jose John now works on Friday, 9.30-1.30, and is available to open the library by appointment in the afternoons. Cathy Pickett continues to do a fantastic job cataloguing - thank you very much Cathy! We have also appointed another new Trustee, Professor Julius Lipner (Divinity, Cambridge), who we hope to interview for the next issue of *INDIRAN*. This issue, you can find the **interview with new Trustee Dr Cameron Petrie** (Archaeology, Cambridge) on **pages 4-5**.

We've also held some exciting events: on the 12th October we celebrated the publication of **Raymond and Bridget Allchin's memoirs, *From the Oxus to Mysore in 1951***. Trustees Almut Hintze and Sir Nicholas Barrington have overseen the production of the book, and it is a beautifully illustrated and often thrilling account of an extraordinary year. The launch event was marked by a talk from Trustee Richard Blurton, keeper of the Indian Collection at the British Museum, one of Raymond's former students. You can find a review on **page 6** and can buy a copy from the Trust, or from Amazon.com.

In November we hosted another travelling photographic exhibition, on loan from the British Library, *Islam, Trade and Politics Across the Indian Ocean*; we have been part of Cambridge's annual *Festival of Ideas* (see **report on page 7**); we have had many fascinating lectures; we have seen the Omar Khayyám rose in the garden blossom; and we have seen the blooming of Marti Wilson's project to digitise her late husband's Sri Lankan photographic archive (see **right**).

Finally, **page 8** has pictures of the 2012 garden party, information about the beautiful new chairs in the India Room, and details of upcoming events. Enjoy this issue - and please get in touch if you have a story or information you'd like to share.

Anna Collar, Editor

Sri Lanka: Photo Archive of the Resplendent Land Online!

MANY OF YOU will recall the wonderful project that Mrs Marti Wilson has been undertaking - sorting through and digitising the slides of Sri Lankan art, artefacts and landscapes taken by her late husband, Professor Howard Wilson. Marti presented her work in progress at the 2009 Sri Lanka Study Day held at the Trust; the event and Marti's project were reported in Issue 4 of *Indiran* (summer 2010). All her hard work has now come to fruition - we are delighted to announce that the Howard Wilson Archive is live online and accessible via the Trust's website - <http://www.indiran.org/HW/>!

The Archive comprises photographs taken by Professor Wilson during the family's stay in Sri Lanka in the 1980s and 1990s. There are extraordinary shots of religious art pieces, such as sculptures of the Buddha from Aukana; shrines, including details of the Moonstone at the entrance to the Queen's monastery in Anuradhapura; social documentation, such as the pilgrimage to Adam's Peak; as well as valuable photographs of museum pieces from around the world, such as the great statue of Tara in the British Museum, or the intricately carved ivory chests, often held out of public view in museum storage, because of a lack of display space. However, possibly the greatest achievement of the Archive is the fact that it makes available the many photographs of cave paintings: many of these have been destroyed in the intervening years, whether by vandalism or atmospheric conditions.



-Photo Credit: Howard Wilson

Marti has worked tirelessly (or as she modestly suggests, in spurts between tea and biscuits!) at the project and produced a fitting testimony to Howard's vision in the 1970s of a digital future: "The day will most certainly come when all archives and museums have their collections photographically catalogued using video

THE TRUST'S GARDEN has a new addition: the beautiful Rose of Omar Khayyám, given by the joint Chairs of the Friends, Bill Martin and Sandra Mason, to commemorate the celebration events that marked the 150th anniversary of Edward FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubáiyát* in 2009. Two books on Edward FitzGerald and the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám, resulting from these celebrations, have just been published: one of which was edited by Bill and Sandra and featured in the last edition of *Indiran* (Spring 2012). This June, their Omar Khayyám rose was in full bloom: it is a delicate pink, with a heady scent - and features on our front cover.

Aside from being a thing of great beauty and subtlety in itself, the rose has an extraordinary, legendary history. The rather improbable story goes that the flower we have today was propagated from a rose



Photo Credit: Bill Martin & Sandra Mason

that had been planted by the Omar Khayyám Club in 1893, on Edward FitzGerald's grave in the churchyard of St Michael and All Angels (above), a church

technology". The Trust is very pleased with the result, and we are grateful too to Bryce Mildenhall for all his work delivering the digital aspects of the project. In her usual way, Marti has also expressed the desire for this archive not to be a static space - there is room for additional slides, notes, comments, and information - so, have a look and let us know what you think.

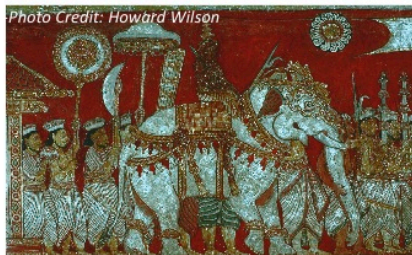


Photo Credit: Howard Wilson

The Rose of Yesterday

A Short History of the Rose of Omar Khayyam

already in 950, and of which parts date to the 1300s, in Boulge in Suffolk. More than that, the seeds of the same rose had been gathered by William Simpson, 'artist-traveller', from a plant at Omar Khayyám's tomb in Nishapur, Khorasan, brought back and raised at Kew Gardens in London. It's a hypnotic tale, linking mediaeval Persia and Victorian England, creating a poetic thread between a rose gracing a modern garden and the ancient deserts of north-east Iran. But how strong is the connection between the rose in our garden and the tomb in Nishapur?

In FitzGerald's Preface to his first version of the Rubáiyát, he recounts a tale told by Nizami Aruzi, a pupil of Khayyám's: "I often used to hold conversations with my teacher, Omar Khayyám, in a garden; and one day he said to me, 'My tomb shall be in a spot where the north wind may scatter roses over it.' I wondered at the words he spake, but I knew that his were no idle words. Years after, when I had chanced to reach Nishapur, I went to his final resting-place, and lo! It was just outside a garden, and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall, and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so that the stone was hidden under them."

Fruit trees then, but a rose? Perhaps, perhaps not - and could a rose plant survive the thousand years or so between the death of Omar Khayyám and that of Edward FitzGerald? The historical Omar Khayyám lived between 1048-1131. He

was an astronomer, philosopher, and mathematician. There are also many verses collected under the name of Omar Khayyám, though experts doubt whether the historical Khayyám actually wrote most or indeed, any of them. The Rubáiyát is a set of two-line verses (four half-lines) rather mistakenly called "Quatrains", attributed to Omar Khayyám, which provide an exposition on themes of mortality, temporality, fame, and

wine. Edward FitzGerald is widely credited with bringing the beauty of verse and thought in the Rubáiyát to a western audience with his interpretations, which first appeared in 1859. The illustrated versions published subsequently are full of elegant pre-Raphaelite ladies, skeletal reminders of man's temporal nature, mystical symbols, and, of course, roses (see left).

This reflects the fact that the rose is a regularly used visual device and metaphor in both the Persian and the English versions of the poem. The nightingale cries to the rose in quatrain VI (FitzGerald's First Edition), both reminders of the fleeting song of summer, youth, and life itself - and the image of the blowing petals of the rose appears again and again:

*'Look to the Rose that blows about us -
"Lo, / Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow: / At once the silken Tassel of my Purse / Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."' (quatrain XIII);
'Oh, come with old Khayyám, and leave the Wise / To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies; / one thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies; / The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.'* (quatrain XXVI); and *'While the Rose blows along the River Brink, / With old Khayyám the Ruby Vintage drink: / And when the Angel with his darker Draught / Draws up to thee - take that, and do not shrink.'* (quatrain XLVIII).

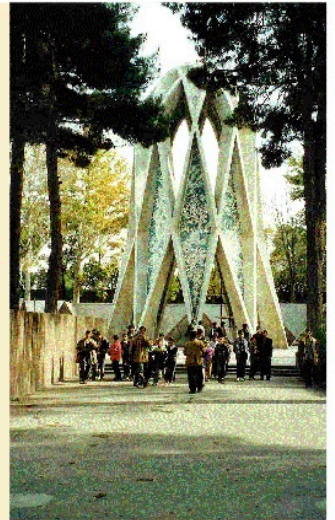
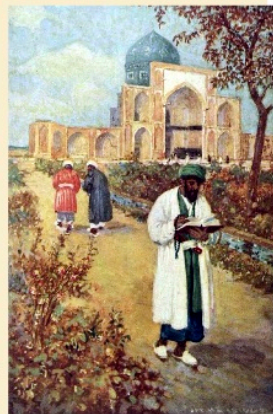
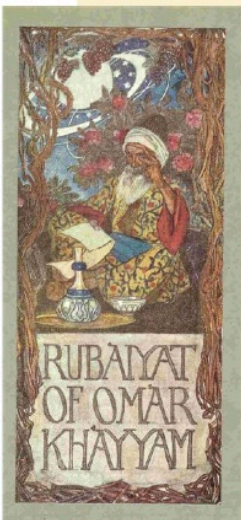
It is only right, then, that Khayyám should have a rose named for him. Roses can live for a century or so - and famously, the rose on the apse of the cathedral of St Mary in Hildersheim, Germany, is reputed to be a thousand years old - so we have a tantalising possibility that the rose of Omar Khayyám in our garden could be a descendant of the original rose on his tomb. However, the tomb of Khayyám

itself is rather changed from the description by Nizami. American artist Jay Hambridge painted the tomb at some point prior to 1911; he shows a grand turquoise-domed mausoleum

with frontispiece, and scholarly men walking through a low garden full of roses (see illustration, left). A contemporary account of a visit by Professor A V Williams Jackson indicates that Khayyám's tomb was actually in one of the side arches of the mausoleum, dedicated to Imamzade Mohammad Mahruk. Omar Khayyám's tomb has since been moved and it is today a national monument to his all-round genius, a 1963 mausoleum in an Islamic style, an angular arch of geometric forms and blue-glazed tiles, with a star-studded dome and a very plain tomb below (see photograph above). Although there are roses and other flowers in the formal garden that surrounds the tomb, no thousand-year old rose tree, caught by the north wind, scatters its petals across his grave.

The north wind blows across East Anglia, however, and, even if the roses at FitzGerald's grave are more recent additions, perhaps it is, after all, the symbol that matters. The rose petals from Omar Khayyám's tomb blow down through the centuries, carried by the wind of scholarship across thousands of miles: here, in the depths of quintessential English countryside and in an ancient English church, lies a man who stepped through the years and brought the flowers of Omar Khayyám to the West. Glorious, exotic, distant Persia, united with quiet, rural Suffolk. This is the somewhat inconclusive tale of the Rose of Omar Khayyám.

Anna Collar



Man, River and Climate Change: how new scientific data is changing our view of the Indus Civilisation

Cameron Petrie, lecturer in South Asian and Iranian Archaeology at the University of Cambridge and New Trustee, talks to Anna Collar

CAMERON PETRIE, NEW Trustee of the Ancient India & Iran Trust, took up a lectureship in South Asian and Iranian Archaeology at the University of Cambridge in 2010, after completing a 5-year term as a research fellow at the Department of Archaeology. Prior to this, he was Katherine and Leonard Woolley Junior Research Fellow at Somerville

suggested for the Indus decline include climate, invaders, and crisis - but by bringing together geologists, climatologists, hydrologists, sedimentologists, and ethnographers, as well as archaeologists, Cameron and his colleagues intended to produce a more joined-up picture of the changing world of the Indus between 2000 and 300 BC.

variation in the location of sites and the behaviour that the inhabitants would have engaged in (such as subsistence practices, settlement systems and production of material culture) are effectively masked when they are 'lumped-together' under the heading of the 'Indus Civilisation'. Moreover, there has been a predominant focus on 'big city' sites, leaving a substantial gap in knowledge about the rest of the population and the transition from Indus Civilisation to Early Historic settlement patterns.

One of the key elements in the classification of the Indus Civilisation as 'riverine' is the mythology and history that surrounds the dried-up 'lost' Sarasvati River, a palaeochannel visible on satellite imagery but not on the ground, which cuts through the area

"The time for generalisation about the Indus Civilisation is over: it is much more complex and interesting than generalisation allows"

College in Oxford, before which he studied at the University of Sydney, where he received his BA in 1997 and his PhD in 2002. He is technically involved in four ongoing fieldwork projects: including work in the Bannu Basin, NWFP, Pakistan; the Mamasani Archaeological Project in Fars, Iran; at Bala Hisar at Charsadda, also in NWFP Pakistan; and in his most recent project, investigating land, water and settlement in northwest India. However, political circumstances mean that the first three of these projects are currently 'on hold': the events of September 11th in 2001 made his fieldwork at Bannu impossible, Iran was opening up to foreign archaeologists in the early 2000s - until the change in the presidency in 2006 started to make things difficult, and although an attempt was made to start work at Bala Hisar in 2006, a series of disturbances in what was then the NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) meant that another fieldwork option became necessary.

It so happened that, in 2007, the Blair government in its twilight moments set up an initiative to encourage interaction between scholars in the UK and India - so, with funding for four years from the British Council via the UK India Education Research Initiative programme (UKIERI), Cameron and his Indian colleagues set out to ask and answer some Big Questions about the decline of the 'Indus Civilisation' and the rise of the Early Historic States in the Indus and Ganges regions. Reasons

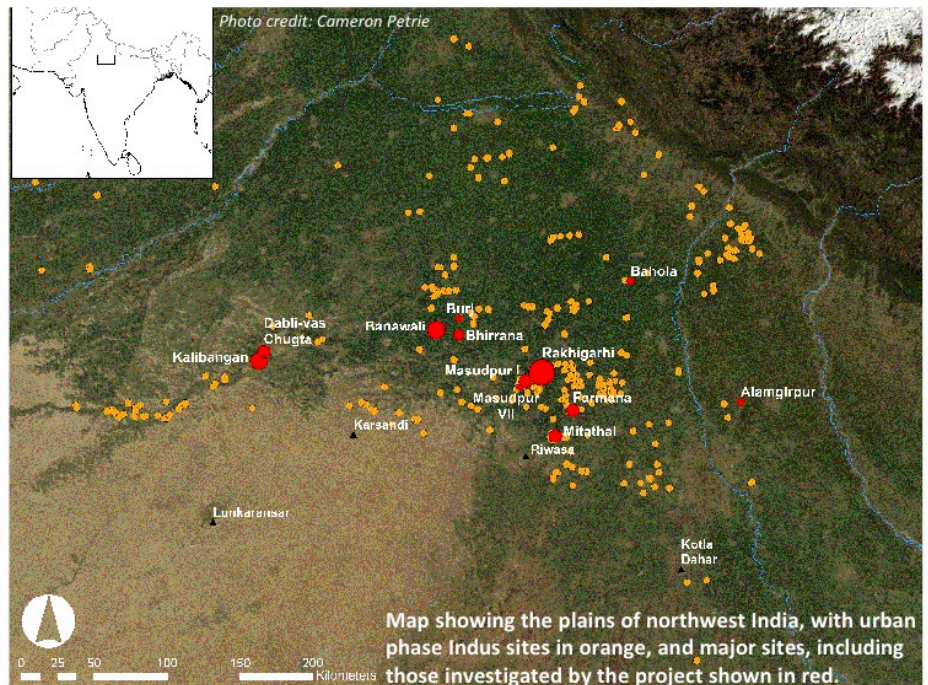
The area they chose to study was a part of northwest India that saw both intensive Indus Civilisation settlement and the development of Early Historic period cities. The 'Indus Civilisation' covers an enormous area - most of modern Pakistan and northwest India - and scholars have suggested that, because the famous cities of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro are situated on the Indus, that the civilisation was 'riverine'. However, the area occupied by Indus settlements sits close to the border of two different rainfall systems: the Mediterranean system, which covers most of Europe and the Middle East and sees most rainfall in winter; and the Indian Summer Monsoon system, which dominates peninsular India and experiences high summer rainfall in the form of monsoon storms. The environment of this area, then, is complex and diverse, with much regional variation in ecology - a point that has been underemphasised in scholarship. Importantly, a large number of sites, that, because of their material culture are considered to belong to the 'Indus Civilisation', are not located on rivers but are found in areas that receive water from various sources, suggesting that the local populations would have had to understand and adapt to distinctive local ecologies. The subtleties and



under investigation. This ancient channel follows the course of a modern ephemeral river known as the Ghaggar. It has been claimed that archaeological sites line the palaeochannel, and the occupation at these sites has long been considered to relate to an active river, and their decline to its cessation. However, the key question is when did the river flow? Cameron's project is collaborating with specialists from the Earth Sciences department at Imperial College London who have taken sediment cores from the palaeochannel, to examine the date of the river's activity. The project is also collaborating with scholars from the Department of Earth Sciences here in Cambridge to analyse cores from nearby dried up lakes in Haryana and Rajasthan (a topic investigated by founding Trustee Bridget Allchin) in order to reconstruct the local palaeoclimate for the last 10,000 years.

Bringing together new archaeological surveys, climate data, and palaeochannel coring, the project is now at the end of the first phase, with some provocative and exciting results. The cores taken from the dried-up lakes support the identification of a series of significant climatic changes that saw the Indian summer monsoon weaken, causing the location of the rainfall front to shift dramatically and permanently at several points in the Holocene. Although this was roughly the date that the Indus Civilisation was at its maximum extent and also the point at which it began to change - described by previous scholars as a 'collapse' or 'transformation' - the relationship between the decline in Indus urbanism and climatic shift probably incorporates a range of factors. It is likely that change in climate contributed to the reduction, around 2000 BC, in the populations of large urban settlements such as Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, as these urban populations appear to have moved to settle the countryside. Furthermore, the presence of distinctive material culture and evidence for increased interactions with Inner Asia may also represent cultural dynamics that played a part in the shift in settlement patterns.

It looks likely that the palaeochannel ceased to flow before the end of the



Pleistocene, far earlier than expected. Begging the question, of course, as to why settlements some millennia later would still follow the line of the river. As mentioned above, the dry river is not visible on the ground, and Cameron's team has shown that it had gradually filled with alluvial silts and sands, suggestive of slow-flowing waters, possibly coming from the summer monsoon. Significantly, new archaeological survey carried out by the project has shown there were very few settlements along the course of the palaeochannel in some areas, implying that the channel was less important than previously thought, and that other areas with more reliable water resources were perhaps more intensively occupied at this time.

There are other assumptions that are also being challenged: for instance, it had long been thought that at the time of the Indus Civilisation the dominant crops in use in northwest India were winter ones, such as wheat and barley. However, Cameron's team have found new evidence that the people of the 'Indus Civilisation' were in fact using monsoon summer crops intensively, particularly rice and millet. Moreover, these crops were being used before, during and after the occupation of the Indus cities, suggesting that they were

not adopted in response to climate change. Rather, the local populations appear to have always made use of a range of crops, in what was almost certainly a very variable environment, even without climate change taking place. It is these details that are the most interesting element of this project - the time for generalisation about this enormous region (it has been claimed that it encompassed up to 1m² km) inhabited by Indus Civilisation populations is over.

India is stable for fieldwork, and although Pakistan is currently too problematic, the team hope to employ map and satellite data to reflect on the situation over the border. In India, the team are looking to build on their successes. They hope to be able to run new excavations, to obtain more precise chronological data, and to put together more pieces of the climatic/archaeological/hydrological jigsaw to try to ask more nuanced questions of this massive, diverse landscape, as it changes and transforms from the rural settlements that mark the end of the Indus civilisation into the Early Historic period, when once again, populations coalesce into the city.

Anna Collar

Focus On: Zoroastrianism - body & soul

Corpse-bearers (nasusalars) in the Zoroastrian Communities of India and Iran

Report by Trust bursary holder, Anton Zykov (Oxford)

THANKS to a bursary from the Ancient India and Iran Trust and Professor Almut Hintze in particular, I spent a very fruitful two weeks at the Trust library in June 2011 working on my Oxford MPhil thesis on *Nasusalars (corpse-bearers) in the Zoroastrian Communities of Iran and India*. The Trust was ideal for my research as it focuses on both regions. Studying at the Ancient India & Iran Trust was not only academically exciting but also very pleasant: the charming atmosphere and the friendly, welcoming environment created by Jose John and James Cormick made me truly feel at home. I am deeply grateful to the Ancient India & Iran Trust for their academic generosity and the opportunity to work at the Institution.

European travellers to Gujarat in late 15th-early 18th centuries, who, having witnessed 'strange' Parsi funeral rituals, i.e. the *dakhma* disposals (sky-burials through exposure, that take place in circular, raised structures that a 19th century British journalist Robert Murphy once called 'towers of silence'), described the corpse-bearers as members of the outcaste group,

generally known as *halalkhors*. The sources showed that these were the untouchables in charge of funeral ceremonies for several communities, including Parsis, Banias, Muslims, and others. By contrast, later accounts, written in the 19th-20th centuries both by foreigners and Parsis themselves, particularly emphasised that all corpse-bearers were exclusively *Behdins*, i.e. that they belonged to the Zoroastrian community. The most popular *Persian Rivayats* (15th-18th centuries), or correspondence exchange between the *dasturs* (High Priests) of India requesting the advice of religious matters from the *mobeds* (clerics) of Iran, stressed the same.

It was in the Trust's library collection that I finally managed to find the missing link that helped me to resolve this puzzle. On the shelves of the Mary Boyce collection, I came across (almost accidentally) a rare copy of one of the late *Persian Rivayats* dated to 1778, hitherto overlooked by most scholars in the field, but reproduced in S. D. Bharucha's article, "Is Zoroastrianism preached to all mankind or to one particular race?" in the *Dastur Hoshang Memorial*

Volume, from 1918. The text states the following:

"Here the *Behdins* of Hindustan having purchased mostly sons and daughters of Hindus as slaves and slave-girls, keep them in their own service and household work, and having taught Avesta to them, and having invested them with the Sudra and Kusti according to the rules of the Zoroastrian religion, employ them to prepare the Daruns of Gahambar and other holy festivals to consecrate those things, and also all priests and laymen of India eat and drink food and water touched by them. [...]"

On the basis of this source I formulated the hypothesis that at a certain point of time the *nasusalars* belonged to a lower caste, probably regarded as untouchables, that were basically hired to conduct the *dakhma* services, and that later, presumably after Iranian clergy outspokenly objected against the use of *Juddins*, i.e. non-Zoroastrians, for that purpose, were converted into the religion, so becoming a hereditary group within the Parsi community.

Anton Zykov

BOOK REVIEW: *From the Oxus to Mysore in 1951*, by Raymond & Bridget Allchin

BRIDGET AND RAYMOND Allchin's account of a year of archaeology and travel in the Indian subcontinent is an unusual combination of history, anecdote, memories and observation, switching between the voices of the authors. It opens with some extraordinary recollections of their early lives: Raymond throwing an (unopened) tin of tomato soup at his sister; dancing naked on the windowsills of their Ealing home on a hot summer evening; his first experiences of India as a serviceman in WWII; and watching an excruciating fire-walking ceremony in Singapore; Bridget falling headfirst into a stream at their Scottish farm while hunting for caddis-worms; teaching their South African cook to make drop-scones; witnessing the rise of Apartheid; and flying planes in the Orange Free State - including lessons in pulling out of a spin, and the shopping trip with her instructor that required her to fly the plane back to his home, so laden down with food and drink that he had to sit outside, behind the wing. They go on to describe their respective degrees, and their meeting at a lecture by

Frederick Zeuner at the Institute of Archaeology, and the ex-serviceman's grant that would cover Raymond's year of leave to study the South Indian Neolithic: a grant that would also cover the fare of his wife, should he have one. Thus, Bridget and Raymond married after knowing each other for six months, and left for India together not three months later - after finding out, to their surprise, that they were expecting a baby. Episodes such as this and many others, recounted with understatement, make it a funny book, revealing much about the personalities of the pair, as well as making a serious contribution to the historiography of archaeology in India. Raymond's gentle humour comes across as he describes reciting parts of the Rig Veda while saying grace at a Churchill College dinner; and Bridget's tenacity is apparent throughout - the aplomb with which she copes with becoming a mother while in India is considerable; as is her determination, when rather unceremoniously left alone in Kabul, to photograph the entire contents of the Kabul Museum. The main body of the book describes their

adventures in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, many of which involve their trusty Austin pickup and rivers in flood. Of the many friends and colleagues they make and meet along the way, most prominent is the somewhat suspicious figure of Raymond's PhD supervisor, K. de B. Codrington, who refuses to allow Bridget to accompany him and Raymond to northern Afghanistan; makes injudicious radio broadcasts about the Pashtun desire for independence; commandeers their car for mysterious purposes in Calcutta; and is at one point described as 'a man with an unrivalled ability to discover and create problems!' What is clear throughout, however, is that these two (very) young postgraduate students were of the highest intellectual calibre, and many of their observations, records and discoveries were ground-breaking - and continue to have a profound impact on our knowledge of the archaeology of India today. Their passion for the people, food, landscapes and archaeology of the Indian subcontinent is abundantly clear: Bridget comments, upon their arrival in Bombay, that 'India was taking us over'. And how.

Anna Collar

“To Which Land Shall I Go For Pasture?”

Anna Collar reports on ‘A Zoroastrian Vision’, lecture given by Professor Almut Hintze (SOAS) as part of the Cambridge Festival of Ideas 2012

TWO BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS sit, facing each other, skilfully drawn and painted onto a piece of coarse, thousand year-old paper from the manuscript cave in Dunhuang, northwest China (see image below). The girl on the left has wide eyes, four flowers in her hair, wearing a floaty tunic and scarf, with three soft belts tied round her waist. She sits on a throne, holding a foliate cup in one hand, a plate with a small dog in the other. The eyes of her mirror image, however, are half-closed, and although her clothes are similar, her belts are untied leather ones with buckles, hanging down almost to the ground. She sits not on a throne, but on a fierce wolf; and holds in her hands a scorpion and snake. Moreover, she has a second pair of arms extending from her back - holding solar and lunar discs, showing a crow, and a cinnamon tree. Haloes behind the heads of both indicate their supernatural quality.



Photo Credit: Frantz Grenet

These extraordinary figures are unaccompanied by texts to explain their meaning, but, as Professor Almut Hintze made clear in her lecture, these are the *daena* of Zoroastrianism: the vision, either good, or evil, that a person encounters upon their death. The word *daena* encompasses vision, but also perception, belief, religion - even 'life purpose'. The person of *hu-daena*, 'good belief', has spent their life in worship of Ahura Mazda, the Lord Wisdom of Zoroastrianism, and all that emanates from his goodness; the person of *duz-daena*, 'bad belief', has scorned Ahura Mazda, and worshipped instead the *daivas*, the destructive forces, derived from the old religion of the Indo-Iranians (*deva* in Sanskrit simply means 'god', originally connected with the sky, 'celestial', 'shining'). The *daena* one encounters

when one's soul reaches the 'account-keeper's bridge' is individual, personal - the reflection of how one has lived one's life: and they have become either good or bad through life choices and actions.

In Zoroastrianism, everything can be split into these two groups, the good, and the evil. On the side of good, is all that comes from the creative force of Ahura Mazda - truth and order (*asha*), good thought, right-mindedness, even the pre-Zoroastrian deities Mithra, Anahita and Haoma have been incorporated; materially, humans, fire, water, animals, plants, earth, sky and the heavenly bodies are all good and, as part of Ahura Mazda's world, 'worthy of worship', *yazata*. On the bad side, are the destructive forces of *Angra Mainyu* ('destructive force') and the *daiva* - anger, arrogance, bad thoughts, deceit, and certain other pre-Zoroastrian deities, including Indra, all of which are 'unworthy of worship'. The world is a spiritual battleground - the more people who can be brought to the worship of Ahura Mazda, the more the evil in the world is diminished. This was especially the case prior to the coming of Islam, when the religion was spread widely across the Near and Middle East, and into western China. Humans, however, are free to make their own choices: and in *Yasna* 30.2, part of the

oldest Avestan (the ancient Iranian language) texts, people are urged to '*listen with your ears to the best things, look with a clear mind at the choices of design, man by man for him - self*'. In other words, each is master of his own salvation, and should enact it, through good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

The religion is very ancient: the oldest Avestan texts (*Gathas*) were not written down until the c. 5th-6th centuries C.E., but the oral composition and tradition dates back to c. 1500-1000 BCE and belongs to a pastoral, semi-nomadic culture, and some of the prescribed rituals and punishments documented in the *Gathas* clearly link to the values of this kind of society. For example, hospitality is an essential element, and the

soul of the person who has lived a life as a *duz-daena* is offered bad food and poisons as it enters the abyss of the house of deceit. The soul of a person who has lived as *hu-daena*, by contrast, is offered heavenly food, including spring butter. Before it arrives, either in paradise or in hell, the soul must leave the immediate area of the body, where it has spent three days: if the person was truthful, the soul has spent these days sitting near the head, experiencing as much joy as it ever did in life; if deceitful, it has scuttled around reciting *Gathic* verses incorrectly, invoking Ahura Mazda in the wrong places, and experiencing much anxiety. It then travels to the bridge of the account-keeper: if truthful, passing through flowers, with pleasant smells carried on a southern breeze (the direction of paradise); if deceitful, through frosts and barren lands, with a stinking wind from the north (the direction of the false gods and demons, the *daivas*). One's *daena* is met at the bridge: and although a description of the bad *daena* does not survive in Avestan, the good *daena* is described thus: a beautiful, majestic maiden, strong, with white arms, high breasts, noble, of about 15 years.

Which brings us back to the image from Dunhuang. Looking at the maidens again, it is clear who they are: we notice the wolf, scorpion and snake, scourges of the desert and of herdsmen; and the dog, the faithful guardian, and the creature most highly regarded in Zoroastrianism. The four arms of the bad *daena* recall false, foreign gods; and her half-closed eyes show that the soul has not looked to the best things with a clear mind. The solar and lunar discs, however, are more localised attributes: symbols of the Babylonian goddess Nana, chief deity of the Sogdians (the culture in which this image was embedded), and the association of her symbols with the bad *daena* may imply a rejection of her cult among some expatriate Sogdians. Finally, we must observe their belts: the *kusti* that Zoroastrians still wear today. The *kusti* is untied and re-tied during prayer, and offers protection against the destructive forces to the wearer: at the moment it is untied, the wearer recites *Gathic* verses - verses from the same hymn, in fact, that the deceitful soul recites incorrectly at death. Although similar at first glance, in all probability, these girls manifest the diametrically opposed good and bad visions of Zoroastrianism.

People at the Trust

& upcoming events

VISITORS to the India Room recently will have noticed four beautiful new chairs. They are made of cherry wood and designed by Adrian Parfitt to go with the large cherry wood table he made for us twenty years ago.

Since being asked by Sir Harold to find a replacement for the beautiful but small Victorian table (now in the Iran Room) all those years ago it had always been my intention to replace the Victorian open-back chairs too. The chairs as well as the original table were given to the Trust by the Allchins not long after we bought the house, and have served us well. But apart from the fact that they do not go with the new table, they have always been uncomfortable, and are now in need of serious repair. The backs of some of them have broken, the seats of others have collapsed, and still others have become wobbly.

The new chairs are not cheap. They cost £625 each. But one must bear in mind that they are hand crafted by a local expert furniture-maker. The graceful curved backs of the chairs are achieved by lamination, a very time-consuming and delicate process. Adrian has done this beautifully with no fewer than six laminae, as well as carving the seats of the chairs, and

applying decorative joints to the whole structure. The result is very stylish modern chairs which are extremely comfortable and which will last forever. I paid for the first two chairs, and Jose John has very generously paid for the second two. I am hoping that others will also be tempted to contribute one or two. The aim is to have ten chairs around the big table (that is, six more) and as many others as possible (to be used for lectures, etc.). Each contributor's name will be printed on a label and stuck to the bottom of the seat of the chair.

James Cormick

The Trustees are delighted with the new chairs, generously donated by James Cormick and Jose John, and offer them both their sincere thanks.



Photo credit: Anna Collar



Photo credit: Paula Alchin



Photo credit: Paula Alchin

2012'S GARDEN PARTY saw fewer numbers than in previous years, but those who joined us were in fine spirits. One of the only dry-ish days in June, we enjoyed strawberries and cream and a glass of pink fizz in the chilly summer air. Above we see Sir Haroon Ahmed and his wife Anne with our own Sir Nicholas Barrington; right are Sandra Mason (joint chair of the Friends of the Trust) with Dr James Lin, Senior Assistant Keeper of Applied Art at the Fitzwilliam Museum, with Yann Gandriaud and Lt. Col. Gerry Birch, chairman of the Britain-Nepal Society; and left we see Trustee Dr Christine van Ruymbeke with Dr Eugenio Biagini.

Photo credit: Paula Alchin

Upcoming Events

January 11: Badshah SARDAR (Pakistan Visiting Fellow, Ancient India and Iran Trust/Allama Iqbal Open University) - *The Buddhist Collection of Nimogram, Swat, Pakistan: Its History, Classification, Analysis and Chronology*

January 28: John MACGINNIS (Cambridge) - *Excavating a provincial capital of the Assyrian Empire: The Ziyaret Tepe Archaeological Project*

March 1: Jeevan DEOL (Cambridge) - *The Sikhs of Afghanistan: some notes toward a cultural, social and literary history ca. 1600-2012*

March 15: Arezou AZAD (Oriental Institute, Oxford) - *The Balkh Art and Cultural Heritage Project: exploration, maps and silk road history from Balkh, Northern Afghanistan*

Keep up to date with events at the Trust at:

<http://www.indiran.org> or at <http://indiairantrust.wordpress.com>



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