

# INDIRAN

*The newsletter of the Ancient India and Iran Trust*

**Issue 10: Summer 2015**



**Above: Bashkardi landscape.** Photo: Behrooz Barjasteh Delforooz

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## Editor's Letter: *News from the Ancient India & Iran Trust*

Welcome to the tenth edition of **Indiran**, the newsletter of the Ancient India and Iran Trust.

In this issue we report on some of our recent events, including the second Allchin Symposium on South Asian Archaeology, our workshop on 'Bactria and the Transition to Islam' and visits from the Uzbek Ambassador, curators from the British Museum's International Training Programme and a film crew from Malaysia.

We are delighted to have in this edition a special interview with Anna Dallapiccola, one of our distinguished Honorary Fellows. She is in conversation with Richard Blurton of the British Museum. Also, Agnes Korn writes about her attempts to interpret and reconstruct Bashkardi dialects using the unique material held at the Trust. And Charles Li (opposite) writes about making his film 'Bodhisatta and the Big Stick' (part of which was filmed at the Trust) with Margaret Cone.

This year's series of lectures have focused on Iran in Late Antiquity, Central Asia and most recently, India. The Friends of the Trust continue to be active and have enjoyed a screening of Eszther Spät's film on the Yazidi (Ezidi), 'Following the Peacock', and special lectures by AIIT Chair Nicholas Sims-Williams on his research into Sogdian language and literature and by Trustee Sam Lieu, who used archaeological findings from last century to tell the stories of Palmyra and Dura Europos, two so-called 'caravan cities' now in war-torn Syria. We are planning some improvements to our lecture room (see opposite for details).



photo: Paula Allchin

Our annual Garden Party (photos below) did not enjoy last year's excellent weather but attendance was good and we are most grateful to friends old and new who braved



photo: Paula Allchin

the uncertain weather conditions to attend. Earlier this year, work began on improvements to the garden and restoration of the lawn and shrubbery, thanks to last year's generous donation from the Neil Kreitman Foundation.

This year, for the first time the Trust supported the Symposia Iranica (held at Downing College, Cambridge in April) by awarding a prize for the best paper on pre-Islamic Iran. It was won by Aleksander Engeskaug from Bergen for his paper on Villages and Rural Settlements in the Imperial Economy of Sasanian Persia.

We are delighted to announce that this year's Harold Bailey Memorial Lecture will be held on 11th December at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Cambridge. The distinguished historian and specialist in the history of the ancient Near East, Professor Amelie Kuhrt, has kindly accepted our invitation to deliver the lecture, the title of which will be confirmed shortly.

Finally, we are very pleased to report that the Royal Asiatic Society have recently announced that the Denis Sinor Gold Medal for Inner Asian Studies will be presented to our Chair Professor Nicholas Sims-Williams in 2016, in recognition of the contribution he has made to Inner Asian Studies. We offer him our heartfelt congratulations!

We are pleased to announce that we are planning improvements to our lecture room at the Ancient India and Iran Trust, in order to make the facilities more comfortable and to minimise the inconvenience of outdated equipment which we feel can sometimes detract from the experience of attending our events.

Our plan is to install a new, bright, powerful and flexible projector, which will be wall-mounted and will work in conjunction with a new screen. The audio for the room will be via remotely controlled, mounted speakers. Cabling will be hidden as far as possible, which we feel will preserve the character of the room while freeing it from potentially hazardous cabling on the floor. We also plan to improve our seating, replacing most of the current chairs with interlocking padded (and stackable) seating.

The costs of these improvements are in the region of £5000, which we will raise from various sources including, we hope, private individuals. Any contribution, no matter how small, or any suggestions or comments from you, our visitors, on the current proposal (or any suggestions for further improvements you would like to see carried out), would be most welcome.

For further information, please contact the Administrator by e-mail on [info@indiran.org](mailto:info@indiran.org) or by 'phone on 01223 356841.



# Bodhisatta vs the Big Stick

Charles Li

*One day, the monks, gathered in the meeting hall, sat describing the perfect wisdom of the Buddha: 'Friend, the great wisdom of the Buddha is vast wisdom, deep wisdom, swift wisdom, ready wisdom, sharp wisdom; he crushes other doctrines. By the very power of his own wisdom he tamed brahmanas like Kutadanta, mendicants like Sabhiya, thieves like Angulimala, demons like Alavaka, gods like Sakka, and brahmas like Baka, and made them meek. He turned throngs of people to asceticism and established them in the path and its attainments. Thus is the great wisdom of the Teacher, friend'. When the Teacher arrived and asked, 'Bhikkhus, what are you gathered here talking about?', they told him, and he said, 'Bhikkhus, not only is the Buddha wise now - even in the past, when he was acting for the sake of enlightened knowledge, though his knowledge was not yet mature, even then he was wise', and then he told them a story from the past.*

And so begins the Maha-ummagga Jataka, a story about one of the past lives of the Buddha as a bodhisatta, named Mahosadha. As the introduction suggests, this story is meant to exemplify the quality of paññā - 'wisdom' in the Pali language - possessed by Mahosadha. This is one of the longest and most popular of the Jataka tales, retold time and time again across Southeast Asia in various ways, including as a Burmese comic book. But unlike the

Vessantara Jataka, which forms a long, coherent narrative leading up to a heart-wrenching climax, the Maha-ummagga Jataka is more like an interconnected series of vignettes, with each episode designed to show off Mahosadha's paññā. These episodes are often taught in Buddhist temples as self-contained short stories, independent of the larger frame narrative; in fact, this Jataka is more commonly known as the Mahosadha Jataka, putting greater emphasis on the aspiring bodhisatta's character rather than on the main plot device, the Maha-ummagga, or giant tunnel, that he builds near the end of the story. In fact, it is common for a Buddhist lay-person to be very familiar with this or that feat that Mahosadha performs, but be completely unaware of the story of the tunnel, or of the broader arc of the plot.

One of the most well-known of these feats involves a wooden stick. When Mahosadha is only 7 years old, he is already famous throughout the land of Videha for his paññā. Accordingly, the king sends him a number of tasks to test him. In this particular test, Mahosadha is given a 9-inch long piece of khadira wood and asked to determine which end comes from the root and which from the top of the tree. The villagers all gather around him. He asks for a bowl of water to be brought, ties a rope around the middle of the stick, and then slowly lowers it into the water. Remarkably, one end sinks lower than the



other; he triumphantly declares that the heavier end must be from the lower part of the tree, and sends it back to the king.

With funding from the Cambridge Shorts program at the University, I set out to make a short film about this episode, examining it both from a philological and scientific point of view. We were very lucky to be able to film at the Ancient India and Iran Trust Library, where I interviewed Margaret Cone, who has been writing a Pali-English dictionary for over 30 years. The film not only features the Library itself, but also the Library's collections, which we consult on camera as we debate the meaning and the context of the story. Specifically, one of the main questions we ask in the film is the meaning of paññā: If the story of the wooden stick is meant to exemplify paññā, then what is the character of this 'wisdom', and does it even make sense to translate it that way? Moreover, does the experiment with the bowl of water actually work? To find out, we went to the experimental glasshouses at the Cambridge Botanic Garden, where I met with Andrés Plaza, a plant scientist, to re-enact the bodhisatta's experiment. Along the way, we learned a great deal about how a tree grows and how its wood is a history of the environmental stresses it experiences over a lifetime.

So how does it all work out? Bodhisatta vs. the Big Stick premiered at the Cambridge Arts Picturehouse on March 9th, 2015, and is now available on the University YouTube channel under a Creative Commons license. We are also preparing a longer cut of the film which we hope to present at a special screening at the Ancient India and Iran Trust. See you there!



**Above right: preparations for filming at the Trust. Above: Charles Li in conversation with Margaret Cone in the Trust's library. Photos by Shayne Fergusson.**

# Voices from far away: Bashkardi material at the AIIT

*Agnes Korn*

The treasures kept by the Ancient India and Iran Trust include precious data on the Bashkardi language. This material, collected by the late Ilya Gershevitch in 1956 in Iran, consists of tapes of recordings and notebooks, complemented by folders with grammatical notes and boxes with vocabulary cards that Gershevitch produced when he worked on his materials after his return. His attention then rather turned to other Iranian languages, though, and the Bashkardi collection, which Gershevitch left to the Trust along with other materials, has so far remained an unexplored treasure.

Much the same can be said about Bashkardi in general. 'Bashkardi' is the name for a group of dialects spoken in Bashakerd, a region in the south of Iran, inland from the strait of Hormuz [see map below]. Bashakerd was, and still is, a particularly remote region of Iran. When Ilya Gershevitch and his wife Lisbeth spent three months there in 1956, there were no paved roads -- nor any other infrastructure, and travel was on camel, donkey or mule, as Lisbeth Gershevitch recalls, smiling at the memory of travel companions who gave up and returned to the coast when faced with the difficulties

of the terrain.

Some infrastructure has reached Bashakerd in the meantime, including a paved main road and electricity, but the region remains remote in many senses, and at times it is difficult to go there even for Iranian citizens. Accordingly, Bashkardi is very little-studied even when compared with other minority languages of Iran.

During the first month of his stay in



Above: a Bashkardi woman interviewed at home.  
Photo: Behrooz Barjasteh/PHO files.

Bashakerd, Gershevitch made recordings with a tape recorder (after that, the machine broke down, according to Lisbeth Gershevitch). These recordings were in the meantime transferred onto CD and are thus available as

audio files. Disregarding tapes containing re-arrangements of the initial recordings, the recordings are roughly eight hours (in widely varying sound quality). Not all of this is Bashkardi language

material: some is music (with or without singing), some is in Persian or Balochi, but still there is quite a substantial amount of Bashkardi data.

Linguistically, Bashkardi is not easy to lay hands on either. Though often presented as one language, Bashkardi is in fact a group of dialects that differ considerably. 'South' and 'North' Bashkardi refer to the main dialect division, which corresponds to a distinction made by the speakers themselves, and to major differences on all levels of grammar.

But North and South Bashkardi are by no means dialectally homogenous. Indeed, a look at the data reveals that every village or town needs to be treated separately at least for a start. It even seems that Bashkardi may represent the result of a convergence of Iranian varieties of different origins which formed a linguistic area and assimilated to each other while preserving some traces of the heterogenous history.

It is perhaps these difficulties that have contributed to Bashkardi being so little-studied. While some work has been done in more recent years on the somewhat more accessible varieties spoken on or close to the coast, the dialects spoken



Above: Bashkardi interviewees. Photo: Behrooz Barjasteh/PHO files.

there are rather different from the inland varieties. So far as Bashkardi proper is concerned, words and sentences have been quoted in scholarly articles by Ilya Gershevitch himself and others after him, but no text has ever been published in a

Below: a Bashkardi village. Photo: Behrooz Barjasteh/PHO files.



Location of Bashakerd in south-eastern Iran



Map by Christian Bammer



Behrooz Barjasteh Delforooz.



scholarly journal or book to this day, nor is there any grammar beyond short handbook overviews.

In a research project funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), Behrooz Barjasteh Delforooz and I aim at a documentation and description of Bashkardi. He also had a close look on the chosen texts with

Bakhtiar Seddiqi-Nezhad, a student of Zahedan University, who is a speaker of a variety on the border of the Bashkardi area. They arrived at a preliminary transcription of a certain amount of text along with a translation into Persian (some of it written, some as sound file). From these parts, Behrooz made a choice of texts suitable for being studied in terms of sufficient sound quality and in terms of contents (for instance, there are linguistically somewhat

less interesting lengthy Moharram mournings).

While Behrooz is collecting and studying Bashkardi varieties of today, I have started working on Gershevitch's recordings in the Trust's collection, selecting first those of

sufficiently good sound quality. Using up-to-date language documentation software, I am transcribing these texts, translating them, and adding a grammatical analysis to the transcription, with numerous rounds of doublechecking the latter against the sound file, etc. Doing so, I am also making use of a preliminary transcription and translation into Persian of some texts by Bakhtiar Seddiqi-Nezhad, as well of Gershevitch's vocabulary cards.

The study of these texts already permits some insights into Bashkardi grammar. For instance, the nominal system, hitherto noted as more or less unknown, now seems reasonably clear, presenting, as does later Middle Persian, Parthian and Bactrian, a system without case distinction, but with various particles and adpositions that have not yet been grammaticalised for the syntactic functions in which they are found, for instance, in Balochi or New Persian.

It is very fortunate that the Trust holds these interesting language data on varieties so little studied as Bashkardi, and which are all the more precious because they date from a time before the advent of mass media in remote regions [see photos] -- a situation which has had dramatic effects on all minority languages of Iran. We are thus able to compare two stages of Bashkardi spoken today.

Work on this material is both a treasure and a challenge, as anyone will know who has tried to analyse recordings that are not their own and the circumstances of the recordings are likewise unknown (e.g. whom is an informant addressing when he seeks a confirmation or comment from the others present). At the same time, by comparing contemporary Bashkardi, we hope to be able to arrive at a comprehensive description



**Above: an elderly Bashkardi at Darkaah.**

Photo: Mrs L. Gershevitch, 1956

of the language.

In the course of this year, I will concentrate further on the Bashkardi project by way of a prolonged stay in Cambridge where I am currently a Visiting Fellow of Clare Hall.



Behrooz Barjasteh Delforooz.



**Above: Ancient fortress in Bashakerd.** Photo: Behrooz Barjasteh Delforooz.

# Meet our Honorary Fellow

*Professor Anna Dallapiccola in conversation with Richard Blurton*

Anna Dallapiccola recalls how a childhood encounter with measles, resulting in confinement to bed and long sessions of being read distracting stories by her mother, was the original impetus for her life-long interest in India. Confined to bed, Anna was read a number of stories, not least the thrilling 'Mysteries of the Black Jungle' by Emilio Salgari. This exercise in the fantastic was set on the banks of the Hughli in Bengal and was the location for the exploits of the hero Tremalnaik (presumably a version of the name Tirumala Nayak, transferred from the Tamil country to Bengal in a manner entirely allowed in children's fiction by an author who probably never ventured there!) These narratives were brought to life by Anna's mother, who delighted her daughter with entrancing scenes which included mysterious shrines to Kali, banyan trees and of course, Darma, the hero's inseparable tiger.

Anna Dallapiccola was born and brought up in Florence where her father, Luigi Dallapiccola became, in the post-War years one of Italy's most renowned and cosmopolitan composers, working in the fields of opera, and choral and orchestral music (his most famous opera is *Il Prigioniero*, which the present writer has seen in recent years in London in both the opera house and the concert hall). Growing up surrounded by evidence of the artistic achievements of the Renaissance, Anna felt that if she was going to pursue her interest in things Indian she would have to leave Italy, and so it was that following school in Florence, she left for Germany, and specifically Heidelberg, to continue her studies, ignited so many years previously by the stories of Tremalnaik on the banks of the Hughli. Here, under Professor Hermann Goetz, who had returned to Germany in 1962 following some thirty years in India (he was latterly the Director of the Baroda Museum and Art Gallery), she studied Indian art at undergraduate, doctoral (1970) and habilitation (1978) levels. This period saw her important research work completed on ragamala paintings and also on the then little-known story-telling paintings, known - probably incorrectly - as Paithan paintings. These studies were published for her doctoral and habilitation

theses and, after all these years, are still subjects that concern her - for instance, the degree to which the ragamala paintings are governed by prescriptive or descriptive texts. Her first of many visits to India took place at this time, at the end of her second undergraduate year in 1967. This tour, undertaken only twenty years after Indian Independence, was not limited to India proper, but also included Nepal and Sri Lanka, and proved to be a great success, opening her eyes to the extraordinary beauty and wild energy of Indian art. The die was cast ...

Throughout and indeed even before this long period of study in Germany, Anna was a frequent visitor to England. On one of those early visits (1964), she met Robert Skelton at the V&A who, although she was still at school, advised her to head for Heidelberg if she wanted to study Indian painting, a subject on which she has since written extensively. Even earlier, in 1961 an exchange visit - which, in retrospect has



an AIIT resonance - was with Sue Bird, the cousin of Sir Nicholas Barrington, later to be a Trustee of the AIIT; she recalls a brief meeting with him then, unaware, of course, that their lives would later interconnect at the Trust.

While completing her post-graduate work at Heidelberg Anna began her teaching career at the same Südasien-Institut where she had been a student under Goetz. This began in 1971 and continued for twenty years before she finally moved to Britain in 1991. The Heidelberg years saw a rich harvest in terms of research

projects, working initially with B.N. Goswamy. First, in 1976 came a commentary and an English translation (from the German) of the important medieval Sanskrit text on aesthetics by Nagnajit, the Chitralakshana. At the beginning of the 20th century, the German scholar Berthold Laufer had translated this text into German from the Tibetan (it survives only in the Tanjur; there is no Sanskrit original), but was otherwise unavailable to scholars; an English version was urgently needed for researchers in India where English was so much more highly used than German. Next came, *A Place Apart* (1983) that presented research on an area of study not previously addressed, the painting of Kutch in western Gujarat. However, perhaps the most important aspect of her scholarly life in Heidelberg was the development of a sequence of international conferences of great substance on a variety of topics in the study of Indian art history. This sequence

started with a conference on the stupa (1978), on Vijayanagara (1983), on the Sastra texts (1986; a continuation of her interest in Indian aesthetics evident in the earlier work on ragamala and on the Chitralakshana) and on Islam and the Indian regions (1989). All of these conferences

resulted in substantial publications, a consistent feature of Anna's scholarly work. These four conferences along with their publications put Heidelberg's South Asia Institute on the map as far as the study of Indian art and architecture were concerned.

The second of these conferences, on the great medieval city and empire of Vijayanagara in modern Karnataka, was the beginning of a new aspect in Anna's academic life. Working there on the site (1984-2001), as part of the Vijayanagara Research Project with George Michell



## *A word from Majid Sheikh, writer and research scholar specialising in the history of Lahore and the Punjab.....*

**right: Prof. Dallapiccola at home**

**photo: L.M. Melissari.**

**below left: Prof. Dallapiccola with Dr. Anila Verghese on the steps to the Tamraparni at the temple at Tiruppudaimarudur.**

**photo: C. Ganesan.**



(architectural historian) and John Fritz (archaeologist), she began a series of ground-breaking studies into the cultural history of medieval South India, the effects of which are still being assimilated. Her concern with identification and documentation has meant that information she has published will provide fundamental data for the study of southern India for many decades to come. Volumes such as the multi-author work, the Ramachandra Temple at Vijayanagara (1992) and the later volumes with Anila Verghese on sculpture at Vijayanagara (1998), have been of immense importance in directing the attention of scholars to the continuity of ancient traditions in the South, an area too often ignored until her important work. Collaboration with Sister Anila and Sophia College in Bombay has continued to be a fruitful area of activity for her. In 1989 Anna purchased a flat in London and from then onwards, not least on account of her marriage soon afterwards to Dr. Duncan Shaw in Edinburgh, the focus of her European life became centred on Britain (her connection with Heidelberg ended in 1995). From this later period has come a series of volumes, both popular and scholarly in tone for the British Museum, culminating in the magisterial South Indian Paintings: a Catalogue of the British Museum Collection (BM Press, 2010). In this volume over a thousand paintings from the southern states are presented and the range of painting traditions is indicated using the collections held in Bloomsbury. These collections are not solely confined to Company paintings, though there are indeed a considerable

number of them, but also story-telling scrolls and paintings used for disseminating myths and doctrine (these traditions - ultimately - go back to the late centuries BC). Also listed and discussed are kalamkari paintings from Andhra Pradesh and also a handful of court and pilgrimage paintings from centres such as Mysore, Macchilipatnam, Tirupati and Thanjavur.

The kalamkari at the BM has led to her most recent area of study and publication, a volume presenting the South Indian cloth-paintings in the V&A of not only Andhra (those usually thought of as kalamkari) but also from Tamil Nadu (the latter are much less well known and have never previously been studied). This volume is now at press and a study on reverse glass-paintings is now begun. The quantity of publications in areas previously little studied and the quality of them makes it clear that India still has much to offer to a scholar such as Anna.

Professor Dallapiccola first visited the AIIT in 2008 when she spoke at a Study Day, appropriately on recent research in art history. She remembers though, first meeting Raymond Allchin in 1964 and then working with him on the Stupa Conference in 1978 (he spoke on the 'Asoka' stupas of Patan in the Kathmandu valley). When in Heidelberg she also had cordial relations with Joan van Lohuizen-de Leeuw (like Raymond Allchin, one of the Founder-Trustees of the AIIT). On several occasions Joan spoke at the Heidelberg conferences. So, the links with Cambridge and with the AIIT go back a long way and we hope that Anna will continue to be involved with the Trust for many years still to come.

For the last 15 years my work has centred on exploring the history of the city of Lahore in all its aspects, and on promoting the conservation of this great city. Lahore happens to be among the oldest in the world and came about when the Harappa Civilisation had declined and the Ganges Civilisation was rising. After the publication of my first three books on Lahore, my research on ancient Punjab resulted in me realising that this was an area very little explored. That this gap exists came as a surprise.

For the last three years having read as much as was possibly available on ancient Punjab, I decided to plan and undertake research on 'a history of ancient Punjab'. This was a way of contributing to an understanding of the subject. By the middle of 2014 my broad outline had been completed, and by the end of the year the first drafts of two chapters had been completed. Being permanently settled in Cambridge for the last three years, with frequent visits to Lahore in search of relevant archives, I have worked at the Centre for South Asian Studies, at the library of the Department of Archaeology, and also the Ancient India and Iran Trust Library. My research starts from the time when the ice melted 500,000 years ago till the year 1,000 AD before the Muslims reached the Punjab.

This is a time period ignored by researchers, both Pakistani and Indian, as well as by recent westerners, though they did some very useful work in the colonial period. As I continue with my work I am finding that working at the AIIT library is proving to be invaluable. For this reason I am a daily visitor to the library. My estimate is that I will have completed my work by the end of 2017 and, hopefully, published it. During my visit to Lahore in November 2014, it was delightful to present the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) an outline of my research. They wanted me to try to bring LUMS and AIIT to co-operate in future research projects. Once they provide specific details, work on this can be undertaken. In the same way it is my endeavour to promote the training of young archaeologists to work on small projects inside the walled city of Lahore. This will supplement other research work I am committed to.

The invaluable materials available at the AIIT library surely need to be better known to researchers from not only the region it caters for, but also from within Cambridge and from all over the world.

# Recent visitors and events

On Wednesday 20th August, we welcomed curators from the **British Museum's international training programme**, together with Sascha Priewe, Curator of the Chinese and Korean Collections at the BM. Due to their busy schedule of visits and talks in Cambridge that day, they only managed a quick tour of the trust, followed by refreshments on the lawn before they had to return to London. However, the visitors (who included curators and managers from museums and galleries in China, India and Pakistan) were very enthusiastic about the trust and its library and promised to spread the word to their colleagues, when they returned to their own institutions!

In October, the trust received an informal visit from the **Uzbek Ambassador**, Otabek Akbarov, and his father, Professor Khamidulla Akbarov, author and professor at the National University of Uzbekistan, where he currently leads the course on audio-visual culture. Our chairman Professor Nicholas Sims-Williams welcomed the guests, who were accompanied by Dr Montu Saxena, chairman of the Cambridge Central Asia Forum, and gave a brief overview of the trust's history, main areas of interest and current activities, as well as highlighting specialist books that the trust holds on Sogdian studies. Our guests also had an opportunity to view the trust's magnificent copy of the *Shahnama* of Firdawsi, a particularly impressive Persian illuminated manuscript from Sir Harold Bailey's collection, transcribed in Samarkand in the early 17th century.

Last November, the trust welcomed the cast and crew from **Layar Consult**, an independent film production house based in Malaysia. With the cooperation of the **National Film Development Corporation of Malaysia (FINAS)**, they were producing a documentary entitled 'The Malay Cosmology' and wanted to include footage of at least one of six Malay manuscripts, bought and bequeathed to the trust by founding trustee Professor Harold Bailey. The aim of the documentary is to feature Malay manuscripts held at various repositories in the UK, including those at AIIT. The delightful crew were keen to film all of our Malay collection, as well as some shots of the trust library and grounds! The main manuscript of interest to them was our manuscript Malay 4, which contains four texts: A: pp. 1-42. Undang-undang Sultan Mahmud Shah (which includes a condensed version of the early chapters of *Sejarah Melayu*); B: pp. 43-48. Silsilah keturunan sultan negeri Sumenep [i.e. Sumenep]; C: pp. 49-85. Risalat hukum kanun. A version of the Undang-undang Melaka (dated 23

December, 1834) and D: pp. 86-134. Silsilah Yang Dipertuan yang mangkat di Teluk Ketapang Melaka adanya (a complete copy of Hikayat Negeri Johor).

**Jo Salisbury**

A workshop on '**Bactria and the Transition to Islam**' was held at 23 Brooklands Avenue on the weekend of 10th-11th May 2014. The aim of the workshop was to bring together some of the researchers associated with two recent projects: the Bactrian Chronology project, which was based at the Trust from 2004 to 2008, which focused on the recently discovered Bactrian documents from pre-Islamic and early Islamic Bactria, and the Balkh Art and Cultural Heritage project at Oxford University (2011-2014), where scholars have been researching the history of early Islamic Balkh on the basis of archaeological, numismatic and textual sources. Over the two days of the meeting, scholars from France, Germany, Israel and the UK

presented their results to a full house of almost forty participants, and the success of the workshop was demonstrated by the lively discussion which followed each of the nine papers.

**Nicholas Sims-Williams**

On Friday 5th and Saturday 6th of December 2014, the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research and the Ancient India and Iran Trust hosted the second **Annual Allchin Symposium on South Asian Archaeology**. As with the 2013 event, the aim of the symposium was to bring together researchers from across the UK working on South Asian archaeology (interpreted broadly to include all areas of study that touch on South Asia's ancient past); and, in doing so, to commemorate the work of Raymond and Bridget Allchin,



*Above (l. to r.): Sholeh Quinn (UCMerced) and Sunil Sharma (Univ. Boston) with AIIT Trustee Christine Van Ruymbeke on the 115th anniversary of Sir Harold Bailey's birthday. Photo: Ursula Sims-Williams*

who did so much to foster the study and teaching of South Asian archaeology in the United Kingdom.

On Friday evening Prof. Mike Petraglia gave a stimulating keynote lecture at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research. Formerly of the Department of Biological Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and now co-Director of the Centre for Asian Archaeology, Art & Culture at the University of Oxford and a member of the Allchin Symposium steering committee, Prof. Petraglia treated us to a comprehensive review of the place of South Asia in current debates about the Palaeolithic. This was a real tour de force, highlighting a substantial body of current and ongoing research that was well received by an

audience of symposium attendees, friends of the Ancient India and Iran Trust and members of the public. After the lecture, the keynote speaker and the symposium presenters were generously hosted at a dinner supported by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

On Saturday sessions devoted to a series of very interesting presentations by young PhD students from across the UK were held at the Ancient India and Iran Trust. The reach of the symposium increased this year, and nearly all of the centres of South Asian archaeology in Britain were represented, with individual papers



*Above: Ambassador Akbarov (centre) with Jo Salisbury and Prof. K. Akbarov. Photo: Montu Saxena*



presenting the highlights of current research that is being carried out at the universities of Cambridge, Cardiff, Durham, Exeter, Leicester and Oxford. The accommodation arrangements for these speakers were generously supported by the McDonald Institute, while their travel and subsistence was supported by funding from the Ancient India and Iran Trust.

Talks themselves were arranged in a roughly chronological order, and over the course of the day, the audience were treated to topics that spanned almost the full chronological and geographical range of ancient South Asia - from the Palaeolithic in Sri Lanka, to the mapping of Mediaeval fortifications in NW Pakistan. The whole event benefitted enormously from the hard work, support and hospitality of the Trust and its staff.

The next symposium will be held in Durham, 4-6 December 2015.

**Cameron Petrie and Jason Hawkes**

On Sat. 18th April, the Trust hosted the annual Council meeting of the Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, an international but UK-based organisation devoted to the publication of inscriptions and documents in Iranian languages. On the following day, we took advantage of the occasion to hold a small symposium on Iranian studies at which members of the CII Council and other scholars from England, France and Germany presented seven papers on topics ranging from Old Persian phonology to the Bactrian origins of the Tibetan hero Gesar.

**Nicholas Sims-Williams**

16th December marked the 115th anniversary of the birth of AIIT founding Trustee Sir Harold Bailey. Appropriately we played host to a special reception for 'From Timur to Nadir Shah: Imperial Connections between India, Iran and Central Asia', a conference organized jointly by the Faculty of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies and the Shahnama Centre for Persian Studies at the University of Cambridge. The conference brought together scholars working on different aspects of Persian, Indian and Central Asian history and culture in a stimulating exchange of knowledge and ideas. Some 40 delegates braved the cold weather to walk down from Pembroke College. For many it was their first opportunity to see the Trust collections firsthand, including our early 17th century Shahnama from Samarkand.

**Ursula Sims-Williams**

## *Meet our Trustees and Honorary Fellows*

The following are currently Trustees:

**Bridget Allchin**, PhD, FSA  
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The Trust's founding Trustees (pictured below) were Sir Harold Bailey (centre), Prof. Joan Van Lohuizen, Dr Jan Van Lohuizen and Bridget and Raymond Allchin.



\*\*\*\*\*

The Ancient India & Iran Trust also appoints distinguished scholars who operate in the fields that the Trust covers, and who have built up a close connection with the Trust.

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The late **Professor Werner Sundermann**  
**Professor Gherardo Gnoli**, **Professor**  
**Mary Boyce** and **Ralph Pinder-Wilson**  
were also Honorary Fellows of the Trust.

# Two of our recent bursary recipients report on their time at the Trust.....

*Anton Zykov and Remo Reginold*

Thanks to the Trust, I was again granted a unique chance to spend a couple of weeks in late spring working in the Trust library and in particular on the Mary Boyce book collection, a treasure trove of sources on Zoroastrian Studies, the field of my research interests. Some of the items possessed by the library, such as, for instance, the Persian Revayat 'Ithoter' <sup>1</sup>, as well as numerous other volumes, are rarely found in other libraries, whereas the Trust ensures not only their availability but a friendly and flexible access to these precious materials.

My PhD at EPHE and EHESS, Paris, on the theme of **linguistic anthropology in modern Zoroastrian studies**, focuses on the historic transition in the conduct of Zoroastrian purity and pollution rituals (and funeral rituals in particular) and the way this change was reflected in the lexicon of colloquial languages used by the Zoroastrian communities in Iran and the Parsis in India, Gavruni (Zoroastrian Dari) and Parsi Gujarati respectively.

The Trust's exhaustive library collection allowed me to work on several volumes essential to my subject, such as works by Jamsheed Choksy, Margarita Mertachiyani and Ramyar Karanjia who have written extensively on purity and pollution as encapsulated in the normative literature, such as the Videvdad or Persian Rivayats. These sources, accompanied by translations and commentaries, were at hand on the bookshelves at Brooklands Avenue. Thanks to the Trust's convenient digital catalogue, I was able to research to what extent textual prescriptions (including existing sources in Pahlavi, as well as in New Persian, Gavruni and Gujarati, all available at the AIIT) are related to actual practices in Iran, where I'm planning a long-term research field trip in 2015. The Trust's vast academic resources proved to be very useful in my preparations for my planned field work, as it provided me with materials based on similar research conducted in the past (notably, a famous work by Mary Boyce entitled *Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*).

The linguistic side of my work centred on Dari Zartushti (Gavruni) and its adaptation

to ritual change. Gavruni, belonging to the Central group of Western Iranian languages (Hassandoust), represents a sort of lingua franca among the Zoroastrians of Iran, especially in the province of Yazd.

Thanks to the opportunity to access the Cambridge University library, facilitated by the Trust, I managed to go through the available Gavruni language studies by various scholars from the XX century (Keshavarz, Ivanow, Sorushian) to today (Mazdapour, Vahman). In the course of my stay at the Trust I started a preliminary comparative analysis of these sources with support from predominately ethnographic sources in order to examine the evolution of the Gavruni lexicon and the way it was influenced by the change in funeral practices in modern Iran. Access to the University library allowed me to read the otherwise barely available volume of Parsi Gujarati (Gajendragadkar).

My short-term stay at the Trust laid a serious foundation to the beginning of my practical PhD work and allowed me to familiarise myself with nearly all important scholarship on the subject of my research as well assisting me in my field work preparations. Several events held at the Ancient India & Iran Trust during my stay also made a significant contribution to my understanding of the Zoroastrian Studies field. And of course, the unique atmosphere of the Trust deserves special mention. No other academic institution can generate that sense of emotional attachment and make a scholar truly miss it on departure.....

Anton Zykov, *Paris*

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<sup>1</sup>. *Zoroastrian rituals in the eighteenth century* / Mario Vitalone. Naples: Istituto universitario orientale, Dipartimento di studi asiatici, 1996 ( in particular, question 13) , AIIT reference B8H 20

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The bursary offered by the Ancient India and Iran Trust (AIIT) enabled me to conduct, in spring 2014, a survey on the question of **how knowledge and practices circulated between South India / Ceylon and Western countries** prior to colonial times . Due to the rambling nature of this research, its enormous span of time and

its intuitively formulated (research) question, I never had the time to devote myself to a systematic analysis in order to formulate a more precise question or questions!

As a philosopher and comparative literary theorist, my research interests are led by the question of how systems of thoughts discipline our life world and thus produce knowledge. I am neither a classicist, archaeologist nor a historian of antiquity but a humanities scholar, who is persuaded that an understanding of today's intellectual presence and our daily practices cannot be grasped without tracing their different reception strategies back in time. The library at the AIIT is a treasure chest for exploring how the antique geopolitics of knowledge projects the so-called 'project of modernity'. By referring to the framework of geopolitics of knowledge I am implying that the exchange of knowledge and practices is an act of neither deliberative and freely motivated undertaking nor of irenic communication but of strategic purpose: the implantation of knowledge is the logical consequence of moving from West to East by conquering land - possession but also history - and therefore denying other locations of knowledge production. This is how a postcolonial critique analyses the colonial period: the socio-historical reality is Eurocentric and the conquest of Latin America and Asia are the consequence of ego cogito = ego conquiro (Enrique Dussel).

Bearing this in mind, I firstly tried to categorise the framework of time dating back from antiquity up to the colonial era. Considering a starting point is indeed difficult due to the lack of sources! Nevertheless, by general consent starting Western contact with the Greeks and e.g. not with the Assyrians and their Neo-Babylonian Empire is also the result of a strategic politicised narrative. However, the general tenor highlights three periods: 1) from Alexander the Great to Pliny the Elder, 2) from Ptolemy to Cosmas Indicopleustes and 3) the Arab period from the invasion in North India in the 8th century to the special accounts from Ibn Battuta. In a second step, I observed that the places of research are primarily focused on the northern part of India (e.g.



## Contributors to this issue.....

via the Bactrian Empire): as far as I can surmise, the southern part of India and Ceylon had been of minor interest. Hence, differentiating space and time are a hint to look closer at its mode of triage: e.g. most of the literature has been conducted by German classicists, indologists and historians of antiquity, influenced by the humanistic tradition, sitting in Berlin, Heidelberg or Tübingen and by English scholars, officers and travellers educated in Anglican Oxbridge at the beginning of the 20th century. I have hardly found any sources from South Indian / Ceylonese authors.

Nevertheless, by focusing my survey on the first period and by trying to sort out how the entourage of Alexander penetrated land and thought, it was very quickly clear that the general assumption emphasises economic exchanges as the main effect of Alexander's invasion (cf. coinage). It is difficult to assert that an intellectual conquest was a logical consequence of military invasion and economic circulation: it is presumptive to say that the South Asian Brahmins did know Plato but nevertheless the stories of Achilles and Oedipus, of Perseus and Theseus are similar to the stories of Rama and Ravana (Gauranga Nath Banerjee). In addition, it seems that most Greek worship practices have similarities with South Asian traditions and the parallels between Platonism and Vendatism are intriguing. Indeed, these examples indicate that Alexander's invasion was most probably not of a purely economic nature and it seems that there might have already been a migration from South Asia to Greece prior to Alexander's arrival. Unfortunately the time spent at the Trust was not enough to find sufficient information to formulate a more precise question on how the difference between Alexander's Greek and South India / Ceylon in space and time produces the absent location of thinking. However, the survey confirms that the theorem knowledge requires serious research which includes historical studies of grammar, mathematics, arts, mythology, language, literature, customary practices and theology. So I hope to come back very soon and continue this adventure....

Remo Reginold, *Lucerne*

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**Charles Li** is a graduate student in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Cambridge. He is researching Mediaeval Indian debates on *dravya*, or the substance of reality.

**Cameron Petrie** is Senior Lecturer in South Asian and Iranian Archaeology in the Division of Archaeology, Cambridge University and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. He is a Trustee of the Ancient India & Iran Trust.

**Remo Reginold** is a Fellow of the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH) in Paris. His research interests are the sociology of knowledge, intellectual history and translation studies, as well as South Asia.

**Joanna Salisbury** is Assistant Librarian at the Ancient India & Iran Trust. She has an MA in Museums Studies from the Institute of Archaeology, UCL.

**Majid Sheikh** is a research scholar specialising in the study of the history of Lahore and the Punjab. His published books on the subject include 'Lahore: Tales Without End', '101 Tales of a Fabled City', and 'Kissay Lahore Kay' (in Urdu), as well as three books on entrepreneurship and market research methodology.

**Nicholas Sims-Williams** is Research Professor of Iranian and Central Asian Studies at the Department of the Languages and Cultures of Near and Middle East, SOAS and Chair of the Ancient India & Iran Trust.

**Ursula Sims-Williams** is Curator of Iranian Collections at the British Library and Honorary Librarian of the Ancient India & Iran Trust.

**Anton Zykov** is currently pursuing a PhD at Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris. His is researching the languages and dialects spoken by Zoroastrians in Iran and India.

## Are you a Friend?

The Trust receives no public money and relies entirely on its own resources. Our work has attracted a number of volunteers, donors and close associates, but plans for future expansion have led us to establish a more organised network of contacts and supporters through an association of Friends. We hope that those who are interested in the academic work promoted by the Trust, or more generally in the history and culture of the countries covered, will become Friends, whether they live in the UK or overseas. The contributions made by our Friends are invaluable.

Friends receive newsletters and advance information about lectures and seminars and other activities. Special Friends' events are organised each term and, as part of the Trust 'family', Friends are invited to our traditional Summer Garden Party and other social functions, and are always welcome to visit the Trust. We also highly value help from our Friends in providing ideas, contacts and advice, as well as financial support.

To become a Friend costs £30 for annual membership, or £400 for a life membership. For details: [info@indiran.org](mailto:info@indiran.org)



Above: a corner of the Iran Room. Photo: AIIT

Past Friends' events have included an illustrated talk by Professor Sam Lieu on Palmyra and Dura Europos, a presentation by Sarah Stewart, the curator of the acclaimed SOAS exhibition *The Everlasting Flame*, a talk by Professor Janice Stargardt on the Ancient Kingdoms of Burma and a special talk by AIIT Chair Nicholas Sims-Williams explaining his research on Sogdian language and literature. Our most recent Friends' event was a warmly received illustrated lecture by Sir Michael Oliver on the Isma'ili Castles in the Alamut Valley in Iran and our next event will be a talk by Professor Almut Hintze in our 'Meet the Trustee' series, on Friday 20th November.

# The Minorsky Pictures

James Cormick

Below: unidentified portrait by Sayyid Muhsin,  
right: Nadir Shah (r. 1736-47). Photo: AIIT.



The two watercolours in the Iran Room were given to Sir Harold Bailey by Mrs Minorsky. They seem to be from the late Qajar period (late 19th Century or early 20th Century) and appear to be copies made to order by the artist.

The first of them is oval in shape and is of a richly dressed man wearing the contemporary Persian rather mitre-like crown. The inscription on the bottom left of the painting identifies him as 'Shahinshah-i Iran Nadir', and the inscription on the right tells us it is Number 7, presumably its copy number. Nadir Shah was, of course, the famous 'Alexander' or 'Napoleon' of Persia who invaded the Mughal Empire and looted the Peacock Throne and the Koh-i-Noor Diamond.

The other watercolour is rectangular in shape and appears stylistically to be by a different artist. It is of an older man, probably a tribal leader, wearing a warm jacket and a karakul hat more typical of North-Eastern Iran. The inscription in the bottom left corner indicates that it is painted by ('raqam') Sayyid Mohsin, and the opposite corner gives us the rather surprising copy number as Number 311.

They make a very attractive and appropriate addition to the décor of the Iran Room, but they are not being promoted here as great works of art. Their interest to us lies perhaps more in their unusual provenance.

The Minorskys took up residence in Cambridge when SOAS evacuated to Cambridge during the Second World War. Vladimir Minorsky had by then become Reader in Persian Literature & History at SOAS, but was nearing the age of retirement. So when he finally did retire in 1944 at the age of 67, he and his wife Tatiana decided to stay on in Cambridge in their house in Bateman Street, where they continued to live happily until their deaths in 1966 and 1987 respectively.

Minorsky had had an extremely interesting life before that, being born in Russia in 1877, and after graduation from university joining the Russian diplomatic service. His 20 years as a diplomat from 1903 to 1923 were largely spent in Persia or on assignments concerned with Persia and Central Asia. And it is probably while he was there that he acquired the two Qajar watercolours.

He became a world expert on the Persians and Kurds and after a number of years in Paris was appointed lecturer in Persian at SOAS (then only called SOS) in 1932, where he became a friend and colleague of Harold Bailey's. Bailey was appointed to the post of Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge in 1936, and his friendship with the Minorskys continued and prospered when they joined him in Cambridge four years later, largely due to the generous Russian hospitality of Tatiana Minorsky and the proximity of Bateman Street to Queens' College.

Sir Harold told me that when he was knighted in 1960 he took two 'special friends' as guests with him to Buckingham Palace: Tatiana Minorsky and Alan Ross. Ross had been an undergraduate at

Oxford with him, and had then just become famous for his essay distinguishing between U and Non-U English in 'Noblesse Oblige', the book edited by Nancy Mitford that was to become a terror to the socially insecure in the 50s and 60s. - I often wondered if Sir Harold hadn't invited Ross along to provide a witty commentary on the Royal Family's English as they took the train back to Cambridge.

Undoing the frames of the watercolours to see if any further information could be found there, I made an interesting discovery. The original pictures had been pasted onto cardboard and mounted rather cheaply with thin paper by the framer: H.C. Payne of 2 Emmanuel Street, Cambridge. He had also re-used a large Edwardian photograph of a young couple with five children as backing for one of them.

The general war-time austerity of the framing led me to the conclusion that the Minorskys hadn't had the pictures framed until they came up to Cambridge in the 40s, perhaps to supplement the meagre furnishings of their new house. My intention now is to reframe them more suitably.



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