CHAPTER THREE
TRADE NETWORKS IN ANCIENT SOUTH ASIA

The survey of ancient and early medieval South Asian history in the preceding chapter amply demonstrates that establishing and maintaining control of trade networks and arteries of cross-cultural religious transmission was a significant impetus for political dynamics. Based on this diachronic foundation, our attention now shifts to a synchronic exploration of specific route systems in the Indian subcontinent. This treatment of transregional networks emphasizes religious and cultural geography more than economic patterns, since available literary, epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological sources do not permit a quantitative assessment of early trade.1 The aim of retracing routes and identifying nodes is to understand how trade networks shaped patterns of Buddhist transmission and how Buddhist ideologies provided an impetus to cross-cultural mobility and material exchanges. Trade can be broadly understood as a form of exchange involving the movement of commodities with fluctuating values conditioned by a wide range of economic, environmental, geographical, social, cultural, and religious factors. Combining Karl Polanyi’s general definition of trade as “the mutual appropriative movement of goods between hands” (1957: 266) with Neville Morley’s sense of trade as the “movement of goods across different sorts of boundaries” (2007: 11) as starting points, this examination is more concerned with exchanges across relatively long distances and interconnections between regional nodes than with local distribution and exchange networks.2 Rather than focusing on

2 Following Morley (2007: 11), it must be acknowledged that short and long distances are somewhat arbitrarily distinguished according to political and ecological considerations.
local contexts for the establishment and institutional growth of individual Buddhist stūpas and monasteries, this study of long-distance trade patterns seeks to clarify connections between clusters of sites within larger interregional frameworks. Since distance affects the value of both economic and religious goods, traders who acquire and carry goods between destinations can be compared with religious specialists, as they also:

...obtain materials from outside and bring them home under circumstances in which the act of moving from a locus outside to a cultural setting inside effects a symbolically significant transformation, sometimes of form, always of meaning. (Helms 1993: 105).3

The designations applied to routes used by merchants and religious travelers refer not only to their itineraries, but also to geographical regions with flexible boundaries and polyvalent socio-religious connotations. Encounters, contacts, and exchanges along these overland and maritime routes contributed to changing definitions of insiders and outsiders, demarcating norms of purity and pollution, and contrasting Buddhist and orthodox Brahminical xenologies. Patterns of religious mobility can be retraced by mapping trade networks and surveying commercial nodes.

The broad geographical and chronological scope of this chapter encompasses interregional networks that connected the overland arteries of South Asian with maritime routes across the Indian Ocean from the sixth/fifth century BCE to the end of first millennium CE. The journey commences on the Northern Route (Uttarāpatha) in the Buddhist heartland of Magadha in northeastern India and proceeds as far as the Indus River, pausing at Taxila, since regional networks of the northwestern frontiers of South Asia are examined in more detail in the following chapters. Links between the Ganga-Yamuna doāb in North India and the Deccan plateau in central and southern India are explored by following the Southern Route (Dakṣināpatha).

3 Mary Helms’ (1988, 1993) emphasis on relationships between distance and the valuation of knowledge and material commodities can be compared with observations by Karl Polanyi about trade as a “method of acquiring goods that are not available on the spot” (1975: 133) and Arjun Appadurai on the role of merchants who bridge gaps between consumers’ and producers’ knowledge of supply and demand (1986: 42). Building on Appadurai and Helms, Graham Parker refers to specific examples of ways in which Indian commodities imported to Rome belonged to “…a system of value where geographical distance brings social prestige…” (2008: 168).
with a focus on the distribution of Buddhist monasteries and shrines (caityas). In the final section, Seaports and Maritime Routes, connections are drawn between the overland networks of the Indian hinterland and long-distance trade and cultural exchanges across the Indian Ocean. While it is possible to show that these overland and maritime routes belonged to “a world of networks and connections” (Morley 2007: 96), there were limits to the success of Buddhist transmission.
Northern Route (Uttarāpatha)

The Uttarāpatha (literally the “Northern Route”) was the main artery of commercial and cultural exchange between the northwestern borderlands of South Asia and the Ganga-Yamuna doāb in northern India. Rather than a single road, the Uttarāpatha was a network of constantly shifting itineraries consisting of “multiple feeder routes… intertwined with the major axis” (Lahiri 1992: 401). Uttarāpatha commonly designates the “North Country” or “Northern Region,” encompassing territories from the Gangetic basin in northern India to Mathura, Taxila, and Bactria in northern Afghanistan and western Central Asia. Fluid literary and epigraphic references to the Uttarāpatha as a general geographical term for ‘The North’ overlap with its more specific and probably more original etymological meaning as the Northern Route. Textual associations of the Uttarāpatha with long-distance travel and trade in a northern or northwestern direction correspond fairly well with the “archaeological reality” (Lahiri 1992: 370) of transregional contact and intercultural relationships with inhabitants of the northwestern frontier. Archaeological evidence from the middle of the first millennium BCE amply demonstrates long-distance connections and continuities in material culture throughout the northern Indian subcontinent.

The development of arterial networks for the dissemination of material culture and commodities through interregional trade exchanges was closely linked with the growth of cities in the northern subcontinent. A characteristic feature of this cultural assemblage was Northern Black Polished (NBP) ware pottery beginning around 550–400 BCE and continuing until about 100 BCE. Nonlocal materials including lapis lazuli from Badakhshan (northeastern Afghanistan), sandstone from Mathura, and precious stones such as topaz and amethyst provide evidence for the transport of certain raw materials over long dis-

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5 Issues of urbanization and the dating and distribution of NBP are discussed in more detail in Initial Phases of the Establishment of Buddhist Communities in Early India (Chapter 2 p. 74). Sharma, Ram Sharan. 1983. Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India. New Delhi: Macmillan, proposes that the appearance of NBP was an outcome of the use of iron tools, which were responsible for creating an agricultural surplus and thus “prepared the ground for the rise of urban settlements in northeastern India around 600 B.C.” (1983: 123). However, Chakrabarti 1995: 169 argues against an overemphasis on the role of iron technology.
Trans-regional movement of materials via trade routes appears to have been related to interlinked processes of urbanization and consolidation of political power in early historic South Asia. According to Georg Erdösy, Kauśāmbī and Rājagrha were distinguished from smaller settlements by functioning as nodes for the “procurement, processing and exchange of raw materials absent in the alluvial plains” (1995: 82) before ca. 600 BCE. In the ensuing period from ca. 550 BCE to 250 BCE, the transition to urbanized city states (janapadas) was connected to population growth, cultivation of forest lands, long-distance trade, introduction of a monetary economy, and the development of writing systems. Archaeological evidence confirms “a broad but indistinct picture of a network of trade routes connecting sites in ancient South Asia” (Heitzman 1984: 122), which is mirrored in Buddhist and other literary references to the Uttarāpatha.

The network of roads called the “Northern Route” connotes a loosely defined northerly region with polyvalent associations depending on geographical contexts and orientation in Indian texts and inscriptions. The earliest literary reference to this term as a trade route is probably the grammarian Pāṇini’s brief allusion to goods which have been “brought via the Northern Route” (Uttarapathenāhṛtam) as an example in Aśṭādhyāyī 5.1.77, which probably belongs to the fifth century BCE. Although the Northern Route is not explicitly mentioned

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6 Lahiri 1992: 268–323 contrasts raw materials from within sub-regions of northern India with those imported from other sub-regions, in order to demonstrate that “certain artefacts of specifically non-local origin found in the archaeological repertoires of the sites along this axis also help in amplifying the nature of movement along this route” (1992: 371).


9 For this passage demonstrating the application of –ka suffixes, see Böhtlingk, Otto (editor and translator). 1886. Pāṇini’s Grammatik. Leipzig: Haessel (reprints,
in inscriptions of Aśoka, the distribution of his rock edicts at junctions of trade routes and in the border areas of the Mauryan empire demonstrate an extensive administrative system in the middle of the third century BCE [Map 2.2: Distribution of Aśokan inscriptions].

Passages in rock edicts and pillar inscriptions demonstrate that facilities for long-distance travelers were constructed on this imperial road network. In the second major rock edict, Aśoka ordered wells excavated and trees planted for both humans and animals on long-distance routes. An expanded version of this order is recorded in a version of his seventh pillar edict inscribed on a pillar brought to Delhi from Toprā in Haryana by Firūz Shāh Tughluq around 1368 CE:

On the roads I have had banyan trees planted, which will provide shade for animals and men. I have had mango groves planted and I have had wells dug and rest houses built every nine miles. And I have had many watering places made here and there for the use of beasts and men. (Thapar 1961 [1997]: 265)


12 Although Hultsch (135, n. 2) translates nīṃsi[d]hālyā as “flights of steps (for descending into the water)” Thapar’s translation as “rest houses” is supported by parallels noted by Bühler (cited by Hultsch) for nīśidiyā in the Nāgārjunī Hill cave
The epigraphic evidence of Aśoka’s inscriptions clearly indicates that roads were maintained in order to facilitate long-distance travel, both by his administrative agents and armies, but also probably by merchants and Buddhist monks who circulated between urban centers and religious sites associated with the Buddha’s life and significant early monasteries. This network was also used for military and political expansion by other northern Indian dynasties and by groups of foreign rulers from the Northwest such as the Indo-Greeks, Sakas, and Kuśāṇas.

Descriptions of a route from the northwestern frontier to the mouth of the Ganges in Western classical literature provide further evidence of a major route across ancient northern India. Megasthenes’ report of a royal road with pillars to mark distances and junctions is quoted by Strabo (Geography 15.1.11, 15.1.50) and probably served as a partial source for a detailed account by Pliny the Elder (23/4–79 CE) in Natural History (6.62.1–6.62.4).

Pliny the Elder seems to have followed Megasthenes in noting that markers along the route indicated distances and junctions with other routes and that officers were in charge of maintaining roads, but he also included contemporary first century CE sources of information about stations on the main artery from Puṣkalāvati to Pāṭaliputra:

1. Peucolatis (Sanskrit Puṣkalāvati, identified with modern Charsada)
2. Hydaspes (Jhelum) River
3. Hypasis (Beas) River
4. Sydrus (Sutlej) River
5. Yamuna River

inscriptions and nisidiyā in the Hāthigumphā inscription of Khāravela. See Falk 2006: 215–219 for traditions about Fīrūz Shāh’s installation of the pillar in the Firoz Shah Kotla after transporting it from Toprā (original location uncertain).


McCrindle 1877: 50 (Megasthenes Fragment 4 referring to a royal road 10,000 stadia in length), 86 (Megasthenes Fragment 34 with details about roads constructed with pillars every 10 stadia to show “byways and distances”). Eggermont 1966: 277 argues that Megasthenes was used as a source by Pliny the Elder in combination with a longer list of cities similar to those found in Ptolemy’s Geography (7.1.42 ff.), a 2nd century CE Greek work. For Ptolemy’s list, see McCrindle, J.W. (translator). Ancient India as described by Ptolemy. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co. 1885: 152–155; Renou, Louis (editor and translator). 1925. La géographie de Ptolémée. L’Inde. (vii, 1–4). Paris: É. Champion; and Sircar 1967a: 121–143. Parker discusses the use of Megasthenes as a source by later western classical authors (2008: 42–48) and the account of India in Pliny’ s Natural History (2008: 78–80), which has a complicated history of excerpting and anthologizing in the process of textual transmission.
6. Ganges River
7. Rhodopa (identification uncertain)
8. Callinipaza (Kanyākubjā or Kanauj?)
9. Confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna
10. Palibothra (ancient Pātāliputra, modern Patna)
11. Mouth of the Ganges

In outlining these overland itineraries in South Asia, Megasthenes, Strabo, Ptolemy, and Pliny the Elder may have been influenced by the model of an Achaemenid Royal Road developed by earlier writers such as Ctesias and Herodotus. Nevertheless, descriptions of a main road through the northern Indian subcontinent in western classical sources provide some hints about the location of the Northern Route, although the arteries, places, and peoples broadly associated with the Uttarāpatha fluctuated considerably in Indian literary sources.

Sanskrit epics use Uttarāpatha (or Udīcyapatha) as a geographical term for the northwestern borderlands of the “Āryan heartland” (Āryāvarta). The Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana contain many episodes of travel, pilgrimage, and conquest in northern India, but do not refer to the Uttarāpatha as “a grand trunk route uniting diverse sections of the subcontinent” (Lahiri 1992: 369). The North is conventionally included in ‘conquests of directions’ (digvijaya) in which kings claim to have subjugated the borderlands of their realms by conquering adversaries in all cardinal directions. Such claims of conquest, symbolically re-enacted in the Vedic rājasūya ceremony of royal consecration, were necessary to justify applying the imperial title of cakravartin to rulers whose domains (cakravarti-ksetra) extended to the northern direction of the Uttarāpatha. Arjuna’s northern conquests before Yudhiṣṭhira’s consecration in the Mahābhārata (2.23ff.) incorporate mundane victories over various groups of northwestern inhabitants, including the Daradas and Kāmbojas (2.24.24), with encounters with otherworldly beings such as the Kimpuruṣas (2.25.1–5) before he was turned back by the gatekeepers of Uttarākuru (2.25.10–14). Thus, in the epic worldview, the Uttarāpatha encompasses both geographical locations inhabited by known groups and a mythical place with imagined beings.

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16 Buitenen 1973: 1.18. Sircar defines cakravartin as “a ruler, the wheels of whose chariot move everywhere without obstruction” (1971a: 4).
17 Buitenen 1975: 2.76–85.
Kālidāsa applies the model of directional conquest in his poetic eulogy of an expedition to the northern direction by Raghu, the legendary forefather of Rāma, in the *Raghuvaṃśa* (4.66 ff). Raghu’s *digvijaya* reached the banks of Sindhu (Indus River) (4.67), or the Vaṅkū/Vaṅkṣū (Oxus/Amu Darya) in important manuscript variants.\(^{18}\) In praising Raghu’s victory over the Hūnas, whose wives he taught to blush (4.68), and his defeat of the Kāmboja princes, which resulted in rewards of tremendous amounts of gold and many fine horses (4.69–70), Kālidāsa reflects challenges to Gupta hegemony posed by the Hūnas in the fifth century and alludes to cultural motifs of wealth and horses associated with the North (Kubera’s direction). The countries, rulers, and semi-mythical beings in the northwestern frontiers conquered by Arjuna in the *Mahābhārata* and by Raghu in the *Raghuvaṃśa* epitomize claims of universal conquest in epigraphic eulogies (*praśasti*).

The claim by the eastern Indian Mahāmeghavāhana ruler Khāravela to have “terrified the kings of the *Uttarāpatha*” in an inscription at Ḫāthigumphā, which probably belongs to the late first century BCE, indicates that the location of *Uttarāpatha* was understood in geographical relation to his own domain.\(^{19}\) Although the identity of the northern kings is unclear due to the poor condition of the inscription, the glorification of Khāravela’s campaigns against Magadha suggests that *Uttarāpatha* probably refers to the middle Ganges-Yamuna valley. In epigraphic eulogies of the Cālukyas and their feudatories, Pulakesin II (died 642 CE) is praised for defeating Harṣavardhana, the “master of all of *Uttarāpatha*” (*sakalottarāpathaśvara*).\(^{20}\) In the *Harṣacarita*, a long poetic composition about Harṣa’s deeds by his court poet Bāṇa,

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\(^{20}\) Sircar, Dineschandra. 1957. “Amudalapadu Plates of Vikramaditya I, Year 5.” *Epigraphia Indica* 32: 176, Sircar 1983: 451–456 (Vakkaleri Copper-plate inscription of Kirtivarman II, Śaka year 679, 757 A.D., line 9. Tripathi comments that the epithet *sakalottarāpathaśvara* in Cālukya inscriptions “…was often used in a vague and loose way, and did not necessarily connote the whole of the region from the Himalayas to the Vindhya ranges” (1942: 298).
his older brother Rājyavardhana campaigned against the Hūnas in Uttārapatha, which probably refers in this context to the Punjab or Kashmir.\textsuperscript{21} In the Rājatararāṅgiṇī (5.215–216), Kalhaṇa refers to an expedition to Uttarāpatha by Śaṅkaravarman, who died in 902 CE before returning to Kashmir:

Roused to anger by this [event], the king set out on an expedition himself, and after destroying Virānaka, proceeded full of lust [for conquest] towards the northern region (uttarāpatha).

When he had conquered numerous territories on the banks of the Indus (Sindhu), and had received the homage of [their] terror-stricken kings, he turned back from that [region].\textsuperscript{22}

This expedition by Śaṅkaravarman appears to foreshadow hostilities between the rulers of Kashmir and the Hindu Śāhis, whose capital at Udabhāṇaḍapura (modern Hund) was vanquished by his successor.\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, the reference to Uttarāpatha in the Rājatararāṅgiṇī is somewhat ambiguous, since it could refer to territories northwest of Kashmir in the Upper Indus region or to areas closer to the Hindu Śāhi capital located further south. Although Kashmir is often considered part of the Uttarāpatha along with Gandhāra and other northwest regions, the account of Śaṅkaravarman’s expedition in the Rājatararāṅgiṇī distinguishes Kashmir from its neighbors.

A ninth century inscription found near Nalanda records the life journey of a Buddhist monk from the Northwest to Buddhist shrines and monasteries in northeastern India.\textsuperscript{24} His birthplace in Nagarāhāra (modern Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan) is praised as “an ornament to Uttarāpatha” (Kielhorn 1888: 311–2). He traveled from the Kaniska monastery in modern Peshawar to Bodh Gaya and was appointed to supervise a monastery in Nalanda. The inscription commemorates the erection of an edifice for a vajrāsana during the reign of the Pāla ruler


\textsuperscript{22} Stein 1900: 1.214–15. Stein identifies Virānaka with the village of Viran on the Jhelum River at and points out that it was on the frontier between Kashmir and the Khaśa kingdom (perhaps identifiable with Khaśarājya in Brāhmī inscription no. 5:2–5 at Shatial).

\textsuperscript{23} The conflict between the Kashmir rulers and the Hindu Śāhis is briefly discussed in Chapter 2 pp. 178 ff.

Devapāla (ca. 821–860 CE). In this record, Uttarāpatha refers to the northwestern heartland of ancient Gandhāra, which remained a major Buddhist cultural center since monks like Vīradeva continued to travel from there to northeastern India as late as the ninth century CE.

The literary and epigraphic references discussed above show that the geographical position of the Northern Route fluctuated according to the viewpoints of particular sources. By excluding the borderlands of the Uttarāpatha from the “Heartland of the Āryas” (Āryāvarta) where proper Brahmans could best maintain their purity, orthodox Brahminical perspectives reflect a major shift in cultural topology away from the Northwest to the Ganga-Yamuna basin of northern India. In order to understand how this shift was related to normative processes of Brahmanical self-definition in contradistinction to impure outsiders, it is necessary to briefly recapitulate dynamic patterns of ideological marginalization in which the northwestern regions that once figured prominently in older worldviews came to be regarded as “outside of Dharma” (dharmabāhya). In earlier periods, the Punjab was evidently a central region of vedic culture, since the Rgvedic hymns (mantras) frequently refer to the Indus (Sindhu) and the ‘Seven Sindhus’ of the Punjab, whereas the Ganga and Yamuna rivers are mentioned only in the Nādī Sūkta (Rgveda 10.75.5), which is considered to be relatively late.25 Passages mentioning other rivers, including the Kabul (Kubhā) and Swat (Suvāstu) rivers, indicate that the geographical horizons of the Rgveda extended to areas now located in northwestern Pakistan and Afghanistan.26 The earlier Upaniṣads were probably composed in the

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25 Kāne, P.V. 1968 [1930–1962]. History of Dharmaśāstra (ancient and mediæval religious and civil law in India). Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, vol. 2, part 1, 12 compiles references to the Sindhu (Indus River) 2.15.6, 5.53.9, 4.30.12, 8.20.25; ‘Seven Sindhus’ 2.12.12, 4.28.1, 8.24.27, 10.43.3; Paruṣṇi (Ravi River) 4.22.2, 5.52.9; Vipâś (Beas River) 3.33.1, 4.30.12; Śūtudri (Sutlej River) 3.33.1, 10.75.5; Vitastā (Jhelum River) 10.75.5; Asikní (Chenab River) 7.20.25, 10.75.5. The Ganga (6.45.31, 10.75.5) and Yamuna (5.52.17, 10.75.5) rivers probably belonged to the eastern periphery, since they are mentioned infrequently outside of the the Nādī sūkta (Rgveda 10.75.5). Witzel, Michael. 1987. “On the Localisation of Vedic Texts and Schools (Materials on the Vedic Śakhas 7).” In Pollet, ed. 1987: 175–176 comments on the geographical horizons of the Rgveda based on environmental and hydrographic references.

26 Kubhā (Kabul River) 5.53.9, 10.76.6; Suvāstu (Swat River) 8.19.37. Falk, Harry. 1997. “The Purpose of Ṛgvedic Ritual.” In Witzel, Michael, ed. 1997. Inside the Texts, Beyond the Texts: New approaches to the study of the Vedas. Cambridge: Harvard University Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, suggests that the Helmand valley in Seistan (southeastern Afghanistan) may have been the home of the "proto-Rgvedic
kings of Kuru-Pañcāla and Kosala-Videha in the Ganga-Yamuna plains rather than in the Punjab or northwestern regions, while the geographical range of the later Upaniṣads extends from the upper Indus to the lower Ganges and from the Himalaya to the Vindhya mountain ranges. Thus, by the late Vedic period in the middle of the first millennium BCE, a shift from the Indus and the Punjab to the Ganga-Yamuna doāb is perceptible in the expanded geographical scope of the Upaniṣads, which included areas of northern India not mentioned in earlier Vedic saṁhitās.

The reorientation in religious and cultural topologies towards the Ganga-Yamuna doāb led Brahminical authorities on the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras to consider the Northwest, like Magadha in the Northeast, to be outside of Āryāvarta. Rather than locating Āryāvarta in a specific geographical region, some of these authorities considered the upholding of orthodoxy and orthopraxy to be most important criterion for defining Āryāvarta. However, according to the views of other authorities cited in Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra (1.2.9), Āryāvarta begins “east of where the Sarasvatī disappears” (Olivelle 1999: 134), thus effectively excluding the Punjab, the Indus River valley, and the northwestern borderlands. Opinions referred to in this passage and other Dharmasūtras either more narrowly restrict Āryāvarta to the region between the Ganges and Yamuna (1.2.10) or broaden its range to include any area between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas where the black antelope wanders (1.2.12). Later Dharma texts attempt to reconcile the flexible boundaries of Āryāvarta with notions of the ‘Middle Region’ (Madhyadeśa) where Brahmanical norms prevail. For example, Mānava Dharmaśāstra (2.21) adopts the definition of Āryāvarta as the country between the Himalayas and Vindhyas, which encompasses the Middle Region between the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers in the East to the place of disappearance (of the Sarasvatī River) in Aryans” (86), since economic and ecological conditions would have been suitable for sedentary pastoralism.

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28 The position of Magadha outside of Āryāvarta is discussed in Initial Phases of the Establishment of Buddhist Communities in Early India (in Chapter 2 pp. 76 ff.). Olivelle 1999: xxxiii dates discussion of Āryāvarta in the Dharmasūtras of Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha between the middle of the 2nd century BCE and the first century CE. Links between Patañjali’s definition of Āryāvarta in Mahābhāṣya 12.4.1 and the boundaries of Madhyadeśa in Manu’s Dharmaśāstra 2.21–22 are discussed by Bronkhorst 2007: 1–2.
the West. In cosmographic sections of Sanskrit purāṇas, Āryāvarta is divided into central (Madhyadeśa), western (Aparānta or Paścādideśa), eastern (Prācya or Pārvadeśa), and northern (Udīcya or Uttarāpatha) regions. Purānic “lists of peoples” inhabiting Uttarāpatha or Udīcya refer to the Kāmbojas and Daradas together with Gāndhārans, Kashmiris, and other groups which can be localized in a geographical range extending from Rajasthan and Punjab to Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia. These references suggest that the heterogenous population of the northwestern frontiers were suspected of not correctly maintaining traditional customs and practices.

Heterodox beliefs and practices attributed to regional inhabitants who were associated with ritually impure “foreigners” (mlecchas) contributed to the marginalization of the Uttarāpatha. Sanskrit passages often contrast the borderlands of the Uttarāpatha with the heartland of Āryāvarta. According to Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra 1.2.4, peculiar practices of northerners include “selling wool, drinking rum, trafficking in animals with teeth in both jaws, making a living as a soldier, and traveling by sea” (Olivelle 1999: 134). In the Mahābhārata, Karṇa rebukes Śalya, the leader of the Madras in the Punjab, whose subjects are criticized for being “devoid of virtue” (dharmabāhyā) since they engaged in antinomian practices:

8.30.15. They are devoid of virtue after drinking alcohol distilled from grain and molasses, eating beef with garlic, and pancakes, flesh, and figs.
8.30.16. Wearing garlands and smeared with ointment, intoxicated and banished outside the city walls, they laugh, sing and dance with women.
8.30.17. Excessively drunk, they call out to one another with various crude and crazy songs similar to the noises of monkeys. (8.30.15–17)

30 Sircar 1967: 16, n. 58 discusses references to the “disappearance” (vinaśana / adarśana) of the Sarasvati localized near Kurukṣetra in late vedic sources (Pañcavimśa Brāhmaṇa 15.10.6; Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa 4.26) and in the Mahābhārata (3.82.111). Sircar observes that Buddhist authors extended the boundaries of Madhyadeśa further eastwards to Kajangala (Rajmahal in eastern Bihar) and Pundravadhana (modern Mahasthan in West Bengal) “in their eagerness to include the land of the Buddha’s birth and activities” (1967a:17), while medieval authors such as Rājaśekhara refer to Vārāṇasī (Banares) as the eastern boundary of Madhyadeśa.
Such passages lead Klaus Karttunen to note “. . . the general unorthodox character of the Northwesterners, who practice an orgiastic religion, are barbarians with no Brahmans among them and are originally thought to be degraded Kṣatriyas” (1989: 202).\(^{32}\)

Indian and non-Indic literary sources share common topoi about a wonderland of marvelous but difficult-to-attain riches and fabulous people in the distant impenetrable mountains in the northern territories on the mysterious periphery of the Indian subcontinent. Stories of gold-digging ants reported by Herodotus (3.102) may have been adopted from Indian sources, since the Mahābhārata (2.48.4) and a Pāli commentary by Buddhaghosa (Manorathapūraṇī 2.239.21) also connect ants with gold.\(^{33}\) A “Kingdom of Women” (Strīrājya) located in the mythical land of Uttarakuru in other Sanskrit sources is associated with the production of gold in Xuanzang’s account and in Tibetan versions of the Inquiry of Vimalaprabhā the heroine was a descendant of the female progenitor of the “Gold Race” (suvarṇagotra).\(^{34}\) The fantastic legends set in the Northwest may have had some foundation, since Al-Bīrūnī (973–1048 CE) refers to gold mines in the Dardar country on the upper Indus River, where Soniwal prospectors still pan for gold, in his work on mineralogy.\(^{35}\) The Kūrmavibhāga (“Division of Globe”) in the fourteenth chapter of the Brhat Samhītā by

\(^{32}\) Fussman dismisses characterizations of the impure practices of the people of this region in normative Sanskrit texts, since on the basis of these texts the majority of the Indian population would be assigned degraded status, except for orthodox Brahmans living in Madhyadesa, “la seule Inde qui vaille” (1994a: 17, fn. 5).


Varāhamihira illustrates the topos of situating ‘fabulous peoples’ in all directions, including fantastic dog-headed people who live in the northern direction. However, Varāhamihira places other groups that can be reliably located in the northern and northwestern regions in the South and Southwest instead. Such motifs of immense material wealth located in a region populated by outsiders whose lifestyles deviated from the social and religious norms of the Middle Country of Āryāvarta may have provided additional incentives for commercial and religious mobility, especially perhaps for itinerant traders and other groups (such as Buddhist mendicants) who were not constrained by Brahmanical prohibitions against encounters with impure ‘others.’

Routes and Nodes of the Uttarāpatha

While the location and significance of the Northern Route shifts according to the geographical and cultural perspectives of literary and epigraphical sources, archaeological materials clearly demonstrate that a network of arterial routes through the northern Indian subcontinent was used for transregional interactions. An overview of major arteries and nodes belonging to this network illustrates connections between northeastern and northwestern nodes, with an emphasis on links between the cities of Mathura and Taxila. Since these arteries were interconnected, travelers were able to choose different itineraries depending on their purposes and conditions along the overland routes, which were probably linked with navigable rivers in earlier periods. The Uttarāpatha split into at least three branches along an axis from the northeastern to northwestern Indian subcontinent, with numerous North-South and East-West transversal connections:

1. The northernmost route followed the foothills of the Himalayas through ancient Hastināpura, Ahicchatra, Śrāvastī, and Vaiśālī to the ancient capital of Magadha at Rājagrha (modern Rajgir in south Bihar). This artery continued from Rajgir to Campā (5 km west of modern Bhagalpur) and through the lower Ganges to the port of

Tamralipti in the Bengal delta.\(^{39}\) According to Dilip Chakrabarti (1995: 212), Rajgir was a terminal point for trade routes linking the middle Ganges with the Chotanagpur plateau, which was rich in material resources, and routes to Paithan on the Godavari River. This itinerary seems to have been most widely used during the early historical period and during the lifetime of the historical Buddha.

2. A middle route in the Ganges-Yamuna doāb passed through Samkāsya (Pāli Samkassa), Kauśāmbī (near the confluence of the two rivers at Prayāga), Banaras (ancient Kāśi, modern Vārānasi), and Pāṭaliputra (modern Patna).\(^{40}\) Many nodes on this route were also popular destinations during the early historical period and continued to be prominent in post-Mauryan periods.

3. A more southerly route followed the Yamuna River through Mathura to Kauśāmbī, where it joined the middle route along the Ganges River.\(^{41}\) This route was probably more widely used during the first to third centuries CE than in earlier periods due to the growing importance of Mathura as a political and commercial center of the Sakas and Kuśānas.

**Mathura**

Mathura linked East-West itineraries of the Northern Route to North-South feeder routes of the Southern Route (*Dakṣiṇāpatha*). In an article on trade routes through Mathura from the post-Mauryan period to the Kuśāna period, Shiva G. Bajpai comments on the significance of Mathura’s geographical position:

> Situated at the western periphery of the Gaṅgā plain on the crossroads of the principal geo-political and cultural divisions of India, the city commanded the gateway to the rich alluvial Gaṅgā plain, to central and southern India, and to the flourishing ports on the western seaboard. It traditionally had served as the focus for the ethnic migrations from the north-west and as a conduit for their further movements to the south and west. (1989: 46)\(^{42}\)

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\(^{42}\) Bajpai, Shiva G. 1989. “Mathurā: Trade Routes, Commerce, and Communication Patterns, from the Post-Mauryan Period to the End of the Kuśāna Period.” In
Mathura was located at the nexus of routes between the Punjab and Yamuna River valley and was directly linked to the three branches of the Uttarāpatha. Another conjectural route from Mathura led to the western region of Aparânta, probably via Bairâṭ, and continued through modern Rajasthan southwards to the Saurâṣṭra peninsula in Gujarat, where Aśokan rock edicts and Sanskrit inscriptions of the Western Kṣatrapa ruler Rudradâman (ca. 150 CE) and the Gupta emperor Skandagupta are inscribed at Girnar.43 Feeder routes going directly south from Mathura via Vidiśā and Ujjayinī to the Southern Route and the port of Bharukaccha connected overland routes through northern and northwestern India with maritime routes to ports on the west coast.44 Since the area around Mathura was not optimal for agriculture, the prosperity of the city was due to its location at the crossroads of several trans-Indian trade routes, which enabled Mathura to become “a great clearing house of commodities” (Sharma 1989: 32).45

Long-distance trade contributed to the cosmopolitan environment of Mathura, where religious and artistic traditions flourished with the patronage of wealthy donors and powerful rulers. During the early historical period, Mathura and the neighboring city of Kṛṣṇapura (perhaps located downstream from Mathura at Bateshwar) were the centers of the Śūrasena janapada.46 During the Saka and Kuśāṇa periods, Mathura was one of the most important administrative, commercial, religious, and artistic urban centers in northern India.47 Mathura’s emergence as a major metropolis may also be attributed to military and political factors, including its role as a base for Indo-Greek expansion from the Northwest into the Ganga-Yamuna valleys and diplomatic and cultural ties between the Kṣatrapa rulers of Mathura and the Saka
Kṣatrapas of Punjab, Taxila, Gandhāra, and Bajaur. Mathura also played a significant role in the administration of the Kuśāṇa empire, which “further helped transform Mathura into a base for absorption of men and ideas from outside its orbit” (Chattopadhyaya 1989: 24). The devakula shrine at Māt across the Yamuna River from Mathura epitomizes the mixture of Central Asian, Hellenistic, and Iranian architectural and monumental statuary with Indian politico-religious conceptions of the emperor as a cakravartin who governs through the fortune of patron gods and goddesses. It is not surprising that the Kuśāṇas chose this location for such a shrine, since Mathura was also a significant center for many Indian religious traditions, including Jainism, Buddhism, Vaiśṇavism, and devotion to Nāgas, Yakṣas, and other local deities. The impact of Mathuran art on the development of iconographic, stylistic and technical conventions for a wide range of religious imagery extended throughout northern India and probably into the Northwest.

Uttarāpatha in the Punjab
From Mathura the Northern Route continued through the Punjab via several possible itineraries. Excavations at Sanghol in Indian Punjab between Chandigarh and Ludhiana have revealed an impressive Buddhist sacred complex with Kuśāṇa period sculptures and architectural elements from Mathura. Another significant node on the Uttarāpatha was the city of Śākala, the capital of King Milinda (Menander) in the Milindapañha and later Mihirakula, according to Xuanzang. Śākala (Pali Sāgala) may be identified either with modern Sangla near Faisalabad or with Sialkot across the border from Jammu in Pakistani Punjab. Although Sialkot is now a larger city than Sangla, Fussman 1993a: 83 supports the localization of Śākala/Sāgala in modern Sangla because the modern name Sangla is more likely to have been derived from Sāgala than Siāl(koṭ). In the Mahābhārata (2.32.14) and Pali jātakas,
immense *stūpa* at Mānikyāla, which is clearly visible from the Grand Trunk Road southeast of Rawalpindi, probably marked an important stage on the *Uttarāpatha* close to Taxila. At a place about two days journey away from Taxila, Faxian describes a large *stūpa* commemorating Prince Mahāsattva’s sacrifice of his own body in the Vyāghrījātaka, which may be identified with the Mānikyāla *stūpa*.

Deposits of coins in reliquaries excavated by General Ventura in 1830 indicate that the *stūpa* continued to be venerated from the time of its initial establishment during the reign of Huviṣka in the second century CE until at least the early eighth century when it was substantially renovated.

**Taxila**

The metropolis of Taxila was a major destination for military invaders, merchant caravans, students, teachers, and pilgrims coming to and from India on the Northern Route. Taxila emerged as the main center for political control and military administration in the northern Punjab beginning in the Achaemenid period due to its strategic location at the hub of routes from Gandhāra and Central Asia, northern India and the Punjab, and the upper Indus and Kashmir, but the

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Śākala is the capital of the Madra country (Chakraborti 1966: 167–9; Law 1932: 53–4). In Xuanzang’s account (Taishō 51, no. 2087, 888–889), Śākala is located in the Ṭakka country (Beal 1884: 1.172; Li 1996: 113–118).


54 Legge 1886: 32 and Li 2002: 170 translate Faxian’s account of his visit to the “place where the Buddha once gave his body to feed a starving tigress” (Taishō 51, no. 2085, 858b). Xuanzang (Taishō 51, no. 2087, 885c, translated by Beal 1884: 1.145–6 and Li 1996: 99–100) also describes a massive stone *stūpa* associated with the story of Prince Mahāsattva’s bodily sacrifice but his localization of this narrative at “a great rocky pass” (Li 1996: 99) can not be reconciled with the topography of the area around Mānikyāla. Since Xuanzang continues his journey to Uraśā (Hazara) and Kashmir, the location of this shrine may be located elsewhere in northern Pakistan, but the geographical information seems to be confused.


growth of Taxila during subsequent periods can be attributed to a wide variety of factors.  

Literary references to merchants who traveled in caravans between northern India and Taxila underscore the role of Taxila as a commercial entrepot for long-distance trade between India and Central Asia. The concentration of wealth in the city was likely to have attracted teachers and students, since Taxila is identified as a center for learning in Buddhist jātakas. Buddhist stories about the decapitation of the head of a bodhisattva and the blinding of Aśoka’s son Kunāla encouraged pilgrims such as Faxian and Xuanzang to visit stūpas in and around Taxila where these narratives were localized. Archaeological and literary sources confirm Taxila’s eminence as the most important political, economic, cultural, and religious center in the Northwest.

Several routes converged with the Uttarāpatha at Taxila, according to John Marshall, who led the excavations of sites around Taxila from 1913–1934. He identified three main routes coming from western Asia through Bactria, from northeastern India, and from Kashmir. Since the hills to the North and the Salt Range to the South are more difficult to traverse than the Potwar plateau, Gérard Fussman observes that “Taxila is located on the shortest possible way from the Doab to Central Asia if you want to travel on a flat and well-watered road” (1993c: 84). Other routes branching off from the Uttarāpatha at Taxila lead north towards Mansehra, where another set of Aśokan rock edicts in Kharoṣṭhī marked an important junction of routes to Kashmir (following the Jhelum valley), Chilas (via the Kagan valley and Babusar Pass, which is only open during the summer months), and through the Indus River gorge (following the same path as the Karakorum Highway). The location of Taxila at the “main gate to India” (Chakraborti 1966: 159) on a network of routes connected to Central Asia, Iran and the western China was largely responsible for its development into a political, economic and cultural hub of the Uttarāpatha.

57 Fussman 1993c: 87.
59 Law 1932: 53.
60 Marshall 1951: 1, 1.
The concentration of urban settlements and monasteries at Taxila demonstrates close relations between residents of the city and the Buddhist institutions which flourished on the outskirts. Excavations at Taxila have revealed that several sites were occupied during various stages:

1. Hathial ridge: early settlements from about 2500–500 BCE.62
2. Bhir mound: Taxila’s “oldest townlike settlement” (Fussman 1993c: 88), during Achaemenid, Mauryan and early Indo-Greek periods from ca. 425 BCE—mid-second century BCE.63
3. Sirkap: between Hathial and Kacchā Kot, an urban center laid out in a grid pattern and fortified in the last decades of the first century BCE, which declined during the second century CE.64
4. Sirsukh: a mostly unexcavated rectangular area of settlement north of Sirkap established during the Kuśāṇa period.

Buddhist stūpas and monasteries are clustered around the urban settlements of Taxila, including Dharmarājikā (the core of the stūpa was probably constructed during the reign of Aśoka in the third century BCE), Kālawān (the largest Buddhist sacred complex at Taxila after Dharmarājikā), and Jauliñ (constructed between the second to fifth centuries CE).65 As the most significant regional center of administration, trade, and Buddhist monasticism in the northwestern Indian subcontinent, Taxila’s sphere of influence extended across the Indus

River to Gandhāra. Extensions of the Northern Route westward to Gandhāra and northward to the upper Indus are treated in the following chapters, which demonstrate that Taxila was a major hub rather than a terminus of the Uttarāpatha.

Map 3.2: Routes and Nodes of Daksināpatha (Sources: Chakrabarti 2005; Dehejia 1972; Lahiri 1992; Ray 1986; Schwartzberg 1992)
The *Dakṣināpatha* (literally “Southern Route”) connecting the Ganges-Yamuna valley with the west coast via the Deccan plateau was the southern Indian counterpart to the *Uttarāpatha*. The Southern Route encompasses a transregional network of interconnected routes in southern India, but also refers generally to areas of the Deccan peninsula ostensibly separated from Āryāvarta by the Vindhya range of hills and the Narmada River. Numerous feeder routes branching off from “nodal points” (Chakrabarti 2005: 21) at Mathura, Etawah, Kausāmbi, Vārānasī, and Rajgir connected the Southern Route with the Northern Route. This transregional network allowed raw materials such as iron, copper, and precious stones from the Deccan peninsula to be transported overland to the Ganges valley and provided an outlet for products from northern and northwestern India to seaports on the Indian Ocean. The Southern Route integrated the interior of the Indian subcontinent into broader patterns of long-distance commercial and cultural exchanges, as indicated by discoveries of Roman coin hoards and Egyptian and Mediterranean artifacts in western and southern India after the first century CE.

Archaeological and epigraphic sources expose significant material connections, long-distance trade contacts, and patterns of Buddhist transmission between northern and southern India. The distribution of NBP, Black and Red Ware, and other characteristic northern Indian pottery types in central India at Vidiśā and Ujjayinī and in the Deccan plateau indicates pervasive links in the last centuries of the first millennium BCE. The expansion of Red Polished Ware (RPW), which originated in Gujarat, and northwestern types of elite pottery to the Deccan peninsula provides a general guideline for assessing the relative strength of interregional commercial and religious exchanges in subsequent periods. The distribution of third century BCE Aśokan

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69 According to Liu (1988: 29–30, maps 3–4, appendices II-IV) ceramic distribution indicates basic exchange patterns, the movement of commodities, and the economic framework for the use of money. Heitzman observed that “[Buddhist] Monastic site
inscriptions indicates that the Mauryan network extended from administrative centers in northern and central India to key areas of the Deccan peninsula. A Minor Pillar Edict at Sāñcī and Minor Rock Edicts at Rupnath and Panguraria in the Narmada valley belong to the intermediate zone between the Northern and Southern Routes, while Major Rock Edicts at the seaport of Sopara on the West coast, and Dhauli and Jaugaḍa in ancient Kaliṅga (modern Orissa) on the East coast show that the Mauryan empire stretched from coast to coast across the Deccan peninsula. Major Rock Edicts at Sannati and Erragudi and Minor Rock Edicts in neighboring districts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka were clustered around Suvarṇagiri (‘gold mountain’) in areas with ancient gold and diamond mines.

In the post-Mauryan period during the last two centuries BCE, Brāhmī inscriptions from Vidiśā, Bharhut, and Sāñcī in central India provide further epigraphical evidence for the development of networks for transregional movement. Antialkidas, an Indo-Greek Mahārāja in the late second century BCE, sent Heliodōros as his ambassador from Taxila to the court of Kāśiputra Bhāgabhadra, who probably controlled access to the Southern Route from Vidiśā (Fig. 2.1: Heliodoros Pillar). Buddhist donative inscriptions from Bharhut show that donors came from Pāṭalipura, Kauśāmbi, Vidiśā, Nāsik, Karhāḍ, and other cities in northern and central India. Among over 800 inscriptions at Sāñcī, toponyms indicate that many donors came from the nearby city of distribution intersected completely that of Red Polished Ware, and overlapped the distribution of Rouletted Ware in Andhra Pradesh” (1984: 131).

71 The Brahmagiri and Siddapura inscriptions begin by addressing the Mahāmātras “from Suvarṇagiri” (suvaṃṇagirite), which may be identified with Kanakagiri south of Maski in an area which “abounds in ancient gold-workings” according to H. Krishna Sastri (Hultsch 1925: 177, fn. 5). It is probably not coincidental that the minor rock edict at Maski was found by a British gold-mining engineer (Falk 2006: 81; Hultsch 1925: xxv). Lahiri comments, “That Andhra Pradesh was extremely strategic in the administration of the Mauryan empire is clearly suggested not only by the presence of Aśokan edicts in the Kurnool district… but also by the archaeological evidence at Veerapuram, in the same district, of a mint with the authority to issue Mauryan currency” (1992: 388).
Vidiśā and adjacent regions of central India, but other toponyms and personal names show that visitors also traveled from locations on the Southern Route and from Gandhāra and Kāmboja in the Northwest.74 Thus, toponyms in Buddhist donative inscriptions illustrate of long-distance travel and religious mobility between northwestern and central India and the Deccan plateau in the first-second centuries BCE.

Construction of Buddhist monasteries clustered on trade routes from the West coast to the interior of the Deccan peninsula in modern Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh drastically accelerated during the Sātavāhana period from the end of the first century BCE until about the middle of the second century CE.75 Pratiṣṭhāna (modern Paithan in Maharashtra) was the major inland center of the Southern Route and the capital of the Sātavāhana dynasty, which struggled with the Western Kṣatrapas and other regional powers to control routes across the Deccan plateau between seaports on the western coast and the Krishna-Godavari river valleys.76 The Sātavāhanas, Western Kṣatrapas, and other regional rulers, as well as merchants and other donors (including monks and nuns) donated the resources to excavate and maintain over 900 rock-cut caves which mostly functioned as Buddhist shrines (caityas) at Ajanṭā, Nāsik, Junnar, Bhājā, Kārle, Kānheri, Kolhāpur, etc.77 Many Brāhmī donative inscriptions which explicitly refer to merchants and artisans who belonged to guilds record mercantile patronage of shrines located on capillary routes connecting the Southern Route to seaports across the Western Ghats.78 Rulers frequently

74 N.G. Majumdar (in Marshall, Foucher, and Majumdar 1940) 1940: 1.299–300, xxx–xxxii reads inscriptions of donors from Gandhāra (no. 702), and Kāmboja (nos. 169 and 601).


76 Conflicts between the Sātavāhanas and Western Kṣatrapas are treated in more detail in the subchapter on Kṣaharāta and Kārdamaka Kṣatrapas in Western India in Chapter 2 pp. 126–131.


78 Lüders 1912: 101–139, nos. 984–1199 lists over 200 Brāhmī inscriptions from caves in western India from periods before 400 CE, but many inscriptions from later periods are not included in the list. Burgess, James, and Bhagvanlal Indraji. 1881. Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India. Bombay: Government Central Press, 27–38 and Senart, Émil. 1902. “Inscriptions in the Caves at Karle.” Epigraphia Indica 7, 47–74.
distributed their patronage broadly to Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu establishments by endowing shrines, temples and caves with revenue from taxes on villages and land grants.79 For example, an inscription from a cave at Nānāghāt with labeled images of members of the Sātavāhana dynasty commemorated the performance of vedic sacrifices sponsored by Queen Nāganikā and praised the king (who was probably deceased, and whose name is lost in the inscription) with the epithet of “lord of Dakṣiṇāpatha.”80 Claims by the Western Kṣatrapas and the Guptas to have conquered the “Kings of Dakṣiṇāpatha” underscore the value of dominating the Southern Route.81

In Indian literature Dakṣiṇāpatha not only designated the network of trade and travel routes between the Ganges-Yamuna valley and the Deccan plateau, but more generally refers to the “southern region” separated from northern India by the Narmada River, just as Uttarāpatha refers to the “northern region.” The Arthaśāstra attributed to Kautilya contrasts the Northern Route (referred to as Haimavatamārga rather


80 Although the inscription is damaged, the reading of this epithet is fairly certain since Burgess and Bühler 1883: 60 reads Dakhī[nāpat]ha[patino] and Sircar 1965: 193, no. 82, l. 2 reads Dakhī<nāpa* >hapati- (also see Lüders 1912: 121, no. 1112). The layout of the cave with images of Sātavāhana rulers and their family members has been compared to the Kuṣaṇa devakula at Maț near Mathurā (Rosenfield 1967: 152–3; Verardi 1983: 244–50), but Fynes points out that “the Nānāghāt cave was not a shrine to the dead, since the inscription suggests that several members of the Sātavāhana dynasty, including the queen who sponsored the sacrifices commemorated in the inscription, were still alive at the time it was engraved” (1995: 45). The conclusion by Verardi 1983: 149 and Fynes 1995: 45 that this site served as a rest house for travelers crossing the pass corresponds well with other evidence for transregional mobility along these capillary routes that connected the Deccan hinterland with the western coast. The date of the inscriptions is discussed by Fynes 1995: 44 (between ca. 25 BCE and 10 CE), Dehejia 1972: 19 and Ray 1986: 36–7 (70–60 BCE).

81 The epithet of “Master of the Southern Route” belongs to a Sātavāhana ruler who was defeated twice by the Western Kṣatrapa ruler Rudradāman, according to his Sanskrit inscription at Junagadh in 150 CE (Kielhorn 1905: 44, 47; Sircar 1965: 178), which also indicates a marriage alliance between the two regional powers. For Samudragupta’s claim to have captured and liberated twelve “kings of Dakṣiṇāpatha” (Bhandarkar 1981: 12–25, 217; Fleet 1888: 12–13, Sircar 1965: 265), see Gupta ’Golden Age’ Reappraised in Chapter 2 pp. 149–157.
than *Uttarāpatha*) used for trade in horses, hides, and furs, with the more profitable Southern Route:

[T]he commodities of conch-shells, diamonds, rubies, pearls and gold are more plentiful on the southern route (*dakṣināpate*). Even in the case of the route to the south, the trade-route (*vaṇikpatha*) with many mines, with commodities of high value, with well-secured movements, or requiring little expenditure an exertion, is preferable, or one with commodities of small value, with an extensive scope (for sale). (7.12.24–5, translated by Kangle 1969: 2.360)

This passage indicates that the *Dakṣināpatha* was used as a trade route for lucrative commodities. A likely itinerary is outlined in the Pārāyana-vagga of the *Sutta-nipāta*, which refers to the northward journey of Bāvari’s sixteen Brahmin disciples from his retreat on the Godavari River:

...[1010] they all set out towards the North, [1011] firstly to Pātiṭhāna of Alaka, then to Māhissati, and to Ujjeni, Gonaddhā, Vedisā, (the place) called Vanasa, [1012] and to Kosambi too, to Sāketa, and Sāvatthī, best of cities... (Norman, trans. 1985: 161).

On the basis of this episode, G.P. Malalasekera suggests that “[i]t is possible that *Dakkhiṇāpatha* was originally the name of the road which led southwards...and that later the road lent its name to the whole region through which it passed” (1937–8: 1.1050–1051). A reference to “the Southern Route in the south” (*daksine dakṣināpatham*) in the Nala episode of the *Mahābhārata* (3.58.22) seems to reflect literary perceptions of *Dakṣināpatha* as both an actual “southern route” and the southern region. In the *Rāmāyana*, the exile of Rāma, Sītā and Laksmana from the north (Ayodhyā) to the south (Daṇḍakāranya, Kiṣkindha and Laṅkā) has been interpreted as a reflection of Brahmanical expansion to the Deccan plateau, although identifying the

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82 Lahiri’s comment that “our analysis of the archaeological evidence, in this regard, does not show any significant movement of raw materials from the Deccan towards north India” (1992: 384) needs clarification. Discrepancies between literary sources and archaeological evidence are not surprising, but the absence of items referred to in the *Arthaśāstra* in northern Indian excavations in levels before 200 BCE (the terminus of Lahiri’s investigation) does not invalidate general patterns of exchange between northern and southern India. Moreover, despite the traditional attribution of the authorship of the text to the Mauryan minister Kauṭilya, the *Arthaśāstra* primarily belongs to the third century CE, although some passages like the one quoted here may preserve earlier textual strata (the issue of its date is discussed in Legacy of the Mauryans: Aśoka as Dharmarāja pp. 78–80, fn. 42). This passage is also discussed by Chakrabarti 2005: 7, Chakraborti 1966: 30 and Chandra [1966] 1977: 78.
imagined literary landscape with geographical locations is problematic. Kālidāsa’s vivid description in the *Meghadūta* of the cloud-messenger’s

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83 Schwartzberg 1978: 13, pl. III.A.1 (“India as revealed in the Rāmāyaṇa”) gives two itineraries for the path of Rāma’s exile “according to modern reinterpretation of the epic” in which Kiṣkindha and Lāṅka are located in the upper Narmada valley, and
journey from Rāmagiri (Ramtek, north of modern Nagpur) in the Deccan plateau across the Vindhya range (v. 19) through Vidiśā (v. 24) and Ujjayinī (v. 27) to the Yakṣa’s home at Alakā near Kailāsa in the Himalayas represents an idealized journey from southern to northern India. Purānic lists of inhabitants of Dakṣināpatha or Dāksinātya include the Pulindas of the Vindhya region, the Kaliṅgas of modern Orissa, Mahārāstras in the West, and Pāṇḍyas, Keralas, and Colas in the far South.\(^8\) The use of Dakṣināpatha as a geographical term for the southern region of India is reflected in the Periplus Maris Erythraei: “Thus the region is called Dachinabades, for the word for south in their language is dachanos” (Casson 1989: 83, §51). Lahiri’s conclusion that Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions depict the Dakṣināpatha as a “vehicle of cultural symbiosis involving the Gangetic plains and central India” (1992: 401) may stretch the literary evidence too far, but there is little doubt that this transregional network facilitated cross-cultural contact between the inland routes of the Deccan plateau and maritime routes across the Indian Ocean.

Routes and Nodes of the Dakṣināpatha

**Bharhut**

Although very little remains at its original site in the Tons River valley in northeastern Madhya Pradesh, Bharhut was a major Buddhist stūpa complex with Brāhmī inscriptions and sculptures from the late second and first century BCE (figs. 1.3 and 3.1).\(^8\) The location of Bharhut on an intermediate route between the Uttarāpatha and the Dakṣināpatha across the Vindhya Hills on the Rewa-Panna plateau leads Jason Hawkes...
(2009: 161) to suggest that the site was consciously selected by the monastic community due to its proximity to an important route for interregional travel, since there are no significant urban centers nearby. Hawkes’ observation that “…trade was probably one of the main causative factors in the development of the area” (2009: 168) of Bharhut is quite plausible, considering its nodal position in a network of regional routes between Kauśāmbī, Vārānasi and other cities in the Ganges-Yamuna plains and the Narmada valley.86 Travelers coming from the northeast could reach Bharhut after ascending the Vindhya escarpment either at Deur Kothar, where stūpas and rock shelters have recently been excavated downstream the Tons River from Bharhut, or at Baldaha Ghat near the waterfalls of Keonti (Kevatikund), where caves with rock carvings of Buddhist stūpas were described by Alexander Cunningham in 1885.87 Different feeder routes from Bharhut to the Deccan led southeast to Bandogarh, where about twenty Prakrit and Sanskrit cave inscriptions record donations by merchants, traders, and other donors from as far away as Mathura (without noting the recipients of their gifts) and to the southwest through Rupnath, the site of an Aśokan Minor Rock Edict.88 Thus, archaeological and epigraphical sources demonstrate that ancient travelers could cross the Vindhyas by using several possible intra- and interregional itineraries.

Vidiśā and Sāñcī

Vidiśā, one of the largest urban centers outside of the Ganges basin in the Mauryan and post-Mauryan periods, supported adjacent Buddhist stūpa and monastic complexes in the hills around Sāñcī, as well as numerous non-Buddhist shrines and monuments, including impe-

86 Chakrabarti 2005: 77–89 discusses Bharhut’s importance in the early historic period as a connecting point in alignments of routes between the Yamuna and Narmada valleys and via the Balaghat gap in the Satpara range to the Wainganga valley routes in ancient Vidarbha in central India to Orissa and Andhra.
rial Gupta temples at Udayagiri. Vidiśā’s importance as the primary religious, commercial, and administrative node can be attributed to its “central position” (Rapson 1922: 471) on long-distance east-west routes between the Ganga-Yamuna basin, the Narmada valley, and ports on the west coast and on north-south routes between the Uttarāpatha and Dakṣināpatha. As noted in lists of Indian rivers, cities and people in Ptolemy’s Geography, Kognabanda, likely to be a Greek equivalent to Kākanādabotā (as Sāñcī is called in Brāhmī inscriptions), is located on a trade route which branched off from the Yamuna valley to follow the Betwa River. As at Bharhut, donors names and toponyms in more than 800 Brāhmī inscriptions indicate that the ‘catchment area’ of potential patrons extended far beyond Vidiśā to Ujjayinī in the Chambal valley of western India, Māhiṃatī on the Narmada River, and Pratiṣṭhāna in the Deccan plateau. Other important epigraphic records from Sāñcī include an Aśokan pillar inscription and reliquary inscriptions commemorating prominent early Buddhist saints such as Mahāmaudgalyāyana and Śāriputra. The monumental architecture of stūpas, gateways, railings, and sculptures at Sāñcī and nearby sites of Sonārī, Satdhāra, Bhojpur, and Andher show that these Buddhist com-


90 According to Kālidāsa’s Mālavikāgnimitra composed many centuries later during the Gupta period, the Śunatīgas shifted their capital from Pātaliputra to Vidiśā, where the family had previously served as feudatories of the Mauryas.


92 Majumdar 1940 (in Marshall, et al. 1940) identifies toponyms corresponding to Mahīṣatī (Mahāsiṭī: nos. 213, 251–6, 274–6, 413), Pratiṣṭhāna (Paṭīṭhāṇa: nos. 214, 229, 546, 608, 717), and Ujjayinī (Ujeni: 59 occurrences). See note 74 for references to long-distance travelers from Gandhāra and Kāmboja in Sāñcī Brāhmī inscriptions. Shaw 2007: 51 refers to an overemphasis on the local patronage networks, since Vidiśā (Vidisā) appears in only 16 inscriptions.

plexes were important residential monasteries and pilgrimage places. Recent studies of a broad range of religious sites around Sāñcī, Vidiśa, and Udayagiri have shown that the development of rudimentary rock-shelters from prehistoric to medieval periods, Buddhist hilltop stūpas and monasteries, Nāga and Yakṣa shrines, and Viṣṇava temples were linked to complex local and interregional patronage networks, which connected religious institutions and ritual centers with the construction of irrigation systems, dams, and other waterworks.⁹⁴

**Ujjayinī**

Another major node of intraregional and long-distance trade was the city of Ujjayinī (modern Ujjain), the administrative capital of the central Indian janapada of Avanti. Ujjayinī was surrounded by a moat with a mud rampart that was probably constructed between the sixth to fourth centuries BCE.⁹⁵ According to some Buddhist literary traditions, Aśoka served as the Mauryan “viceroys” in Ujjayinī during the first quarter of the third century BCE before his consecration as emperor, and separate Aśokan rock edicts at Dhauli and Jaugada specify that officers (mahāmātras) were to be despatched from Ujjayinī and Taxila every three years in order to monitor other administrators.⁹⁶ Like Taxila, Ujjayinī earned a formidable reputation in Indian literature as a prosperous regional metropolis famous for learned scholars who benefited from the generous patronage of wealthy merchants and powerful rulers.⁹⁷ In the *Meghadūta* (v. 27), Kālidāsa has the cloud-messenger make a detour from his northward route in order to view “the roofs of Ujjayinī’s white mansions” (Nathan 1976: 33).⁹⁸ The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* explicitly refers to the role of Ujjayinī in long-distance trade between the port of Bharukaccha and the Indian hinterland:

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⁹⁴ Shaw 2007 and Willis 2009 exemplify different approaches to interpreting Buddhist and Hindu archaeological remains in this region, since Shaw decries “...the narrow framework of reference through which archaeological material has been used by text-based scholars of Buddhist history” (without specific reference to the scholarship being criticized), while Willis attempts to integrate the art historical, architectural, and epigraphical evidence from a specific site (Udayagiri) with broader patterns of Gupta period literature, numismatics, and political and religious history.

⁹⁵ Allchin 1995: 134–6, fig. 8.7.


There is in this region towards the east a city called Ozéné [Ujjayini], the former seat of the royal court, from which everything that contributes to the region’s prosperity, including what contributes to trade with us, is brought down to Barygaza [Bharukaccha]. (§48, Casson 1989: 81)

The same passage also indicates that “nard that comes by way of Proklais” (Puṣkalāvati) and “nard that comes through the adjacent part of Skythia, and costus and bdellium” were transported from the Northwest through Ujjayinī to Bharukaccha. Routes from Ujjayinī led north towards Mathurā and crossed the Narmada River to the south at Māhiṣmati before continuing to Pratiṣṭhāna or west to the port city of Bharukaccha (modern Broach) near the river’s mouth.

**Pratiṣṭhāna and other Cities of Daksināpatha**

The Daksināpatha proper began south of Ujjayinī at the traditional crossing point (tīrtha) of the Narmada River at Māhiṣmati, identified with modern Māndhātā in Madhya Pradesh. Routes between Māhiṣmati and Pratiṣṭhāna passed Buddhist, Jain and Hindu cave sites at Ajanṭā, Pitalkhorā and Ellora, where early caitya caves were excavated in the first century BCE and continued throughout the middle to late first millennium CE, including a heightened phase with support from Western Vākātaka feudatories in the late fifth century CE. From the Sātavāhana capital at Pratiṣṭhāna (modern Paithan in Maharashtra), routes through passes of the Western Ghats lined with rock-cut shrines connected the Deccan plateau to ports on the west coast. Other routes to the southeast via the Godavari valley and Tagara (identified with modern Ter) linked the western Deccan with Buddhist centers such as Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Amarāvatī in the Krishna River valley in Andhra Pradesh.

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100 Law, Bimala Churn 1955. “Māhiṣmati in Ancient India.” Journal of Indian History 33, 313 ff. cites epigraphic and literary references to Māhiṣmati, which was associated with the Haihaya dynasty of the Mahābhārata and became the center of the Kalacuri dynasty in the post-Gupta period. Schwartzberg 1978: 26, pl. III.D.2b provides a map of the extent of the Kalacuri territory with a core area centered around Māhiṣmati.
emphasizes the importance of Pratiṣṭhāna (Paithana) and Tagara on inland trade networks of the Dakṣināpatha (Dachinabades):

Of the trading centers in the region of Dachinabades, two are the most outstanding: Paithana, twenty days’ travel to the south from Barygaza; and, from Paithana, about ten days to the east, another very large city, Tagara. From these there is brought to Barygaza, by conveyance in wagons over very great roadless stretches, from Paithana large quantities of onyx, and from Tagara large quantities of cloth of ordinary quality, all kinds of garments, garments of molochinon, and certain other merchandise from the coastal parts that finds a market locally there. (§51, Casson 1989: 83)

Long-distance trade in the types of items outlined in the Periplus Maris Erythraei allowed the Sātavāhanas, Western Kṣatrapas and subsequent local and regional rulers of the Southern Route to patronize religious establishments clustered on routes through the Western Ghats.

Buddhist Caityas in Western India
The location of Buddhist caityas (rock-cut caves with cells for monks and nuns, sculptures, and stūpas) in the Western Ghats and near seaports on the west coast testifies to interconnections between long-distance trade, patronage by various groups (including merchants), and religious transmission. As D.D. Kosambi observed, “Their sites were chosen at the junction of primitive tracks, which became crossroads on the major trade routes” (1960: 137). Selective links between cave sites (caityas), passes (ghāṭs) and seaports are summarized in the accompanying Table:105

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caityas</th>
<th>Ghāṭs</th>
<th>Seaports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nāsik</td>
<td>Pimpri, Thalghāṭ</td>
<td>Sopāra, Kalyāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junnar</td>
<td>Nānāghāṭ</td>
<td>Sopāra, Kalyāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kārle, Bheḍśā, Bhājā</td>
<td>Bhorgāṭ</td>
<td>Chaul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karhaḍ</td>
<td>Ambāghāṭ, Kumbārlighāṭ</td>
<td>Dabhol, Jaigarh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Most of these caityas were excavated during the peak of long-distance maritime trade between western India and Egypt and Rome during the first to fourth centuries CE, when the Sātavāhanas and Western Kṣatrapas vied for control of the inland routes. However, merchants, artisans, male householders, female donors, and monks and nuns made significantly more donations than royal patrons to residential Buddhist monasteries. While most donations were made by local inhabitants, inscriptions record many gifts by donors who had traveled long distances across the western Deccan to caityas located on the coast (such as Kānherī) or near passes through the Western Ghats. According to D.D. Kosambi, the fortunes of the Buddhist monasteries clustered on trade routes fluctuated with changing economic patterns:

…the monasteries remained tied to the specialized and concentrated “luxury” trade of which we read in the Periplus. This trade died out, to be replaced by general and simpler barter with settled villages. The monasteries, having fulfilled their economic and religious function, disappeared too. (1960: 138)

Kosambi also proposed that many Buddhist monasteries may have established near junctions of trade routes in order to supplant blood sacrifices to local mother goddesses at important crossroads. After long-distance trade declined and the Buddhist monks and nuns who benefited from donations of economic surpluses abandoned the caves, the worship of mother goddesses such as Yamāī, Veher-āī and Mānamaodi (or Ambikā) re-emerged at sites like Bheḍṣā, Kārle and Junnar, where they are still venerated by local communities.

**Seaports and Maritime Routes across the Indian Ocean**

By linking South Asian overland networks with maritime routes across the Indian Ocean, coastal seaports offered outlets for commodities

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106 Kosambi’s assertion that “royal support was comparatively slight” (1975 [1956]: 271) is supported by Dehejia 1992: 35–45.
107 Dehejia 1972: 142 compiles a list of cave sites with donations by inhabitants of distant places and observes that “…the architects and sculptors of the western caves, along with the merchants and traders, traveled widely” (1972: 140).
108 Kosambi supports this hypothesis with Sanskrit and Pali literary references to sacrifices at crossroads, contemporary field research on the popular worship of mother goddesses in Maharashtra, and concentrations of microliths at sites associated with the cult and Buddhist monasteries, but admits “in all these places it is difficult to prove the existence of the cult before the monasteries were carved out” (1960: 136).
Map 3.3: Indian Ocean Maritime Network (adopted from Foucher 1942: 5, fig. 2; Jetmar and Thewalt 1985: 6)
from the Indian subcontinent and opened up possibilities for long-distance cross-cultural contact. Recent archaeological excavations of seaports on the Red Sea and Indian coastline, inscriptions of Indian merchants in Egypt and Socotra, Greek papyri records of commercial transactions involving Indian goods, and Roman coin hoards in India and Sri Lanka show that information from western classical literary sources about maritime trade between India and the western world had significant material basis. According to Strabo and other classical authors, Eudoxus of Cyzicus was the first Greek sailor to cross the Arabian Sea from Egypt to India using the monsoon winds guided by a shipwrecked Indian pilot during the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (ca. 120 BCE). Other accounts, such as the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (§57), credit a sailor named Hippalos with the discovery of the monsoon winds, but such “foundation myths” (Parker 2008: 194) raise suspicions due to literary parallels with stories about low-prestige merchants and other wayward adventurers (like Odysseus) in Greek novels. It was only after the Ptolemaic period (ending in 31 BCE) that direct long-distance maritime trade between Egyptian seaports on the Red Sea and western Indian seaports accelerated. The *koinē* Greek text of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* preserves many specific details about maritime itineraries, seaports and inland emporia, and commodities traded between India, Egypt and the Mediterranean during the first century CE. 

Material evidence from archaeological excavations in Egypt and India and discoveries of imported items from India in the Mediterranean and from the Roman world in India attest long-distance trade contacts in the early centuries CE. Excavations in Egypt at Quseir al-Qadim (perhaps the port of Myos Hormos) and ruins of watering-places (hydræumata) on ancient roads to Koptos on the Nile River have demonstrated that goods were transported across the desert from coastal seaports to the Nile River. Luxury items from India, China, Persia, and Arabia were then shipped on to Rome and other

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110 Casson 1989 is an accessible translation and commentary. Parker 2008: 98–100 refers to the *periplus* genre in western classical literary contexts as a “paradigm for chorography” and discusses its date (40–70 CE) and value for understanding Roman long-distance trade and Indian trade (172 ff.). Its value as a source for Indian history is discussed in *Kṣaharāta and Kārdamaka Kṣatrapas in Western India* in Chapter 2 pp. 126 ff. fn. 181.  
parts of the Mediterranean from Alexandria. An ivory statuette of an Indian female figure manufactured in the Deccan plateau and found at Pompeii is an example of the type of artifact that reached the Mediterranean through long-distance trade, although other perishable imports are not preserved.\textsuperscript{112} Items imported from the Red Sea and Mediterranean to Indian coastal and inland trade centers included rouletted ware, Megarian or Samian ware, amphorae, bronze statuettes, terracotta lamps, glass beads, and other objects which were also manufactured in imitation of foreign prototypes between the first and fourth centuries CE.\textsuperscript{113} In exchange for luxury items such as beryl and other precious stones, imported Roman gold and silver coins, which are found mostly in southern Indian hoards, were often melted for their metal content, but terracotta bullae imitations of coin images of Roman emperors found at Ter suggest that flourishing maritime trade stimulated Indian interest in foreign items.\textsuperscript{114}

Epigraphic records of Indian traders in Egypt and Socotra and a maritime loan written on the so-called Muziris papyrus provide further documentation of long-distance commercial interactions described in the \textit{Periplus}. Prakrit and Tamil inscriptions found in Egypt and Tamil literary sources referring to \textit{yavana} ships, bodyguards, and artisans demonstrate the involvement of South Indian sailors and merchants in maritime trade.\textsuperscript{115} A second century CE papyrus fragment recording an agreement between a South Indian merchant and an Egyptian agent gives a detailed account of arrangements to transport large quantities


of nard, ivory, and textiles from Muziris to the port of Myos Hormos on the Red Sea and across the desert to Koptos and then down the Nile River to Alexandria. Merchants from other areas of the western and northwestern Indian subcontinent also wrote Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī graffiti in caves on the island of Socotra, near the coast of Yemen, which was an important node in the maritime network.

A partial list of the major ancient Indian seaports described in the Periplus Maris Erythraei includes:

1. Barbaricon (§38–9) was a port at the mouth of the Indus River near the “metropolis of Scythia” named Minnagara, where “all the cargoes are taken up the river to the king” (Casson 1989: 75). Barbaricon imported clothing, multicolored textiles, peridot or topaz (chrysolithon, “golden stone”), coral, storax, frankincense, glassware, silverware, money, and a limited amount of wine; in return, it exported costus, lykion, bdellium, nard, 119 120 121 122


118 Neither Barbaricon nor Minnagara have been conclusively identified due to the shifting delta of the lower Indus River, but Barbaricon can probably be localized at or near Barbhore in Sindh in southern Pakistan. The statement that “the throne is in the hands of the Parthians, who are constantly chasing each other off it” (Casson 1989: 75) may refer to the political situation in this region during the middle to late first century CE, perhaps following the reign of Gondophares. See Chapter 2, subchapter: Indo-Parthians: Mahārāja Gondophares of the Gondopharids? (pp. 123–125) for a brief overview of chronological and historical issues.

119 Costus corresponds to Sanskrit kusṭha, a medicinal herb from the Kashmir valley (Casson 1989: 191; Rawlinson 1916: 124–5; Warmington 1928: 197–8).

120 According to Rawlinson 1916: 125 and Warmington 1928: 205, lykion (or lycium) was a medicine (a yellowish dye used as an astringent) and cosmetic extracted from the western Himalayan barberry. Casson (1989: 192–3) seems to prefer an identification of lykion with extract from the wood of Acacia catechu grown throughout India and Burma.

121 Bdellium is gum resin from the gugul tree (Balsamodendron mukul) grown in western India and Pakistan which is very closely related to myrrh (Balsamodendron myrrha) (Casson 1989: 185; Warmington 1928: 201).

122 Nard corresponds to Sanskrit nalada (Nardostachys jatamansi), a plant belonging to the Valerian class used for making expensive fragrant oils (Rawlinson 1916: 126; Warmington 1928: 195). Despite some problems with the reading of the text (Casson 1989: 262–3), a northwestern origin for these items is clear.
turquoise,\textsuperscript{123} lapis lazuli,\textsuperscript{124} indigo,\textsuperscript{125} and Chinese pelts, cloth, and yarn (silk). Since most of the exported commodities were brought down the Indus River from or through the mountain areas of northern Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir, Barbaricon functioned as a major outlet for long-distance trade items from the Northwest.

2. Barygaza (§41–51) is identified with Bharukaccha (Sanskrit Bhṛgu-kaccha), modern Broach in Gujarat, near the mouth of the Narmada River. Casson points out that “Barygaza is far and away the most important of the foreign ports mentioned in the \textit{Periplus Maris Erythraei}, occurring in nineteen of the sixty-six chapters” (1989: 200). Literary references to Bharukaccha in Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist literature also indicate that it was an important seaport with links to cities in northern India.\textsuperscript{126} According to \textit{Periplus Maris Erythraei} §41, the coastal region around the gulf of Barygaza (Gulf of Khambat/Cambay) was “the beginning both of Manbanos’s realm and of all India” (Casson 1989: 77). Since Manbanos may be identified with Nahapāna, the \textit{Periplus Maris Erythraei} shows that the Kṣaharāta line of Western Kṣatrapas controlled the region around Barygaza in the middle of the first century CE.\textsuperscript{127} In contrast to Barbaricon, Barygaza was not only an important port, but also functioned as an industrial center for the manufacture and distribution of a wider variety of commodities.\textsuperscript{128} Imports to Barygaza listed in the \textit{Periplus Maris Erythraei} (§49) included wine, coral, copper, tin, lead, peridot or topaz, many types of clothing, storax, yellow sweet clover, raw glass, realgar, sulphide of antimony, gold and silver Roman coins, silverware, musicians, and “beautiful girls for concubinage” (Casson 1989: 81). The items listed for export were very similar to those traded in Barbaricon: nard, cos-

\textsuperscript{123} Turquoise (“blue-green stone”) may have come from mines near Nishapur in northeastern Iran (Casson 1989: 194).

\textsuperscript{124} Lapis lazuli probably came from Badakhshan in northeastern Afghanistan (Casson 1989: 194), although other sources of lapis lazuli have been found in Baluchistan near the borders of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

\textsuperscript{125} Indigo (“Indian black”) was used in Roman paintings and as a pharmaceutical (Casson 1989: 194–5; Warmington 1928: 204–5).


\textsuperscript{127} The issue of dates and identification of Nahapāna with Manbanos is treated in \textit{Kṣaharāta and Kārdamaka Kṣatrapas in Western India}, pp. 126 ff.

\textsuperscript{128} Casson 1989: 22; Chakraborti 1966: 95–6.
tus, bdellium, lykion, and Chinese cloth (silk), but in addition ivory, onyx, agate, cotton cloth, *molochinon* cloth, and long pepper.

3. Ports enumerated in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (§52–3) south of Barygaza in the vicinity of modern Bombay include Suppara, corresponding to Sopāra (Sanskrit Śurpāraka), Kalliena (Sanskrit Kalyāṇa), and Semylla, identified with Chaul. The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* provides specific information about political dynamics in Kalliena, where:

> …in the time of the elder Saraganos was a port of trade where everything went according to law. [Sc. It is no longer] for, after Sandanes occupied it, there has been much hindrance [sc. to trade]. For the Greek ships that by chance come into these places are brought under guard to Barygaza.” (Casson 1989: 83)

The “elder Saraganos” may refer to Sātakarni, perhaps the father of Gautamiputra Sātakarni, and Sandanes may have been a local Western Kṣatrapa official under Nahapāna who disrupted Sātavāhana control of Kalliena and other ports in this area of the coast by re-routing foreign ships which were bound for Barygaza. Apparently, the Western Kṣatrapas and Sātavāhanas, as well as the dynasties which followed them in western India, continued to struggle for control of seaports used in the lucrative maritime trade described in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*.

4. Muziris, probably located at Pattanam near the mouth of the Periyar River in Kerala, was the most significant port south of modern Mumbai described in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (§53–4). According to the text, “Muziris, in the same kingdom [of Keprobotos, Sanskrit Keralaputra], owes its prosperity to the shipping from Ariake [region around Barygaza] that comes there as well as to Greek shipping” (Casson 1989: 84–5). The primary export of this region was pepper, but pearls, ivory, Chinese cloth (silk), Gangetic nard, malabothron (cinnamon), transparent gems, diamonds, sapphires, and tortoise shell also appear in the list of items in *Periplus Maris Erythraei* §56. The testimony of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* agrees with Indian archaeological and literary evidence which associates southern India with jewel mining and maritime trade.

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5. Podukê, briefly mentioned in *Periplus Maris Erythraei* §60, is identified with Pondicherry, the former French colony south of Chennai on the southeast coast of Tamil Nadu. Excavations at Arikamedu, the site of the ancient port about two miles south of Pondicherry, have resulted in discoveries of imported Roman Arretine ware, amphorae, glass, and other archaeological materials which demonstrate sustained economic and cultural contact with western trade from the first century CE to ca. 200 CE. According to the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, local boats sailed up and down the eastern coast and around Cape Comorin to the western coast to carry out indirect maritime trade, which was probably more common than direct trade with foreign merchants at these ports. Since the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* provides much less information about the east coast than the west coast, western seafaring merchants seem to have circumnavigated India very rarely.

Overland routes between India and the West were not as popular as maritime routes for long-distance trade. Isidore of Charax described overland trade routes from Mesopotamia to Kandahar in the “Parthian Stations” (*Stathmoi Parthikoi*) written in Greek around the beginning of the first century CE. The account of the itinerary begins at the crossing of the Euphrates River at Zeugma, which was directly connected with Antioch, and lists stages and distances of the journey to Seleucia on the Tigris River (§1), near the Parthian winter capital at Ctesiphon. From Seleucia or Ctesiphon, travelers proceeded across the Iranian plateau to the Parthian summer capital at Ecbatana (§6), and onward to the city of Rhaga in Media (near modern Tehran) and the Caspian Gates (§7). The route continued eastward to Antiochia in Margiana (§14, modern Merv in Turkmenistan), where it was linked with routes to Sogdia, Bactria and the Oxus valley. However, the route described by Isidore of Charax branched off southwards from Margiana to Alexandria of the Arii (§15, modern Herat in western Afghanistan), Sacastana (§18, Seistan), and the metropolis of Arachosia at Alexandropolis (§19, modern Kandahar in southeastern Afghanistan), where the account ends with the state-

130 Casson 1989: 89, 228.
ment: “As far as this place the land is under the rule of the Parthians” (Schoff 1914: 9). From Kandahar, which was a significant urban center and node for long-distance trade between South Asia and Iran since pre-Achaemenid times, routes to the northeast led to Gandhāra and Taxila, while a southeastern route led to the lower Indus.134 Rather than following the route to Kandahar described in the Parthian Stations, at least one Macedonian merchant (who may have lived in Syria) named Maes Titianus traveled from Bactria through the mountain countries of the Comedi and Sakas (Sacea) to a place called the “Stone Tower” (probably modern Tashkurgan in Xinjiang) in order to meet Chinese silk traders.135 Although Strabo (2.1.15, 17; 11.5.8, 11.7.3) and Pliny (6.19.52) refer to another route for Indian merchandise from Bactria through the Oxus valley to the Caspian Sea, these reports are suspect due to western authors’ lack of familiarity with the geography of Central Asia. Compared with the knowledge of maritime routes in classical sources, “much less is known of land-trade, though occasional glimpses of evidence show that caravans were traveling and dogs barking, even if only a few echoes reach us” (Karttunen 1997a: 348).

From this broad survey of links between transregional South Asian networks and maritime and overland routes to the West, it is tempting to suggest that the Indian subcontinent played a major role in the ‘world system’ of international commerce with the Roman empire during the early centuries CE. The maritime network detailed in the Periplus Maris Erythraei, excavations of ancient ports such as Arikamedu in southern India and Leukos Limen in Egypt, and literary and epigraphic references outlined in this section seem to validate Pliny the Elder’s moral outrage over the cost of long-distance trade in luxury items from India, China and Arabia:

And by the lowest reckoning India, China and that peninsula [Arabia] take from our empire 100 million sestertii each year. That is the sum which our luxuries and our own women cost us. For what fraction of these imports, I ask, gets to the gods or to the lower world? (Natural History 12.84; Sidebotham 1986: 36)136

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135 Charlesworth, Martin Percival. 1926. Trade-Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 103.
136 Morley 2007: 39 and Parker 2008: 184 translate and discuss the significance of Pliny the Elder’s statement. Morley uses this passage to question misleading
Steven Sidebotham warns that “we must use these citations cautiously” (1986: 36) since the volume of long-distance trade cannot be reliably determined on the basis of this passage. Nevertheless, Lionel Casson calculated that the aggregate value of the cargo of a fully loaded large ship capable of carrying 500 tons of the types of Indian commodities described in the second century Muziris papyrus (P. Vindob G 40822) would have been about 20,000 talents.137 This estimate would support the contention by E.H. Warmington, H.G. Rawlinson and other scholars that an “adverse balance” of trade favored India. According to Warmington:

…the Empire taken as one unit was often unable to offer to foreign regions in general and to oriental nations in particular sufficient products of its own to balance the articles imported from them in large quantities, and the result of this was the draining away from the Empire of precious metals in the form of coined money without any adequate return. (1928: 273)

Warmington’s observation that “The ‘drain’ to the East has continued therefore for nearly 2000 years” (ibid., 312) has recently been echoed by Andre Gunder Frank, who emphasizes the dominance of Asia in the global economy between 1400–1800, when gold and silver imported from American colonies enabled Europe, “which remained a marginal player in the world economy with a perpetual deficit” (1998: 75), to import commodities from Asia without offering much in return besides specie. Judging from the items described in the _Periplus Maris Erythraei_, it is likely that similar exports of gold and silver coinage were necessary to balance imports from India.

distinctions between “luxuries” and staples in the ancient economy (2007: 40–43) and provides other examples of “elite disdain for ‘trade’” (2007: 83). Parker comments that “Moral rectitude again emerges as the all-important lens through which Pliny visualizes the issues at hand” (2008: 184) and acknowledges that the “suspiciously rounded” figures justify suspicions that “Pliny himself may have been lying with statistics, using them to reinforce points motivated by concerns with morality” (189), but still finds the estimate “within the limits of credibility” (186).

137 Casson, Lionel. 1988. “Rome’s Maritime Trade with the Far East.” _American Neptune_ 48.3, 152. Parker observes that the goods in the Muziris papyrus valued at 1,145 talents and 2,852 drachmae would have amounted to 7 million _sestertii_, suggesting that Pliny’s estimates of an annual drain of between 50–100 million _sestertii_ “…are still within the bounds of the possible” (2008: 186).
Conclusions

The exploration of arterial networks known as the Northern Route (Uttarāpatha) and Southern Route (Daksināpatha) in this chapter has established guidelines for investigating paths for transregional movement within and beyond the Indian subcontinent. Archaeological patterns, inscriptions, and literary references show that these constantly shifting routes were used for intra- and interregional travel by various classes of merchants, rulers, administrators, armies, and monks, nuns and pilgrims. Evidence of trade and other economic activities involving the transportation of material commodities frequently indicates broader patterns of cultural exchange and social transformation, including interrelationships between urbanization and religious expansion. Long-distance networks certainly incorporated regional and local networks of individual macro-regions (janapadas), cities, and shrines. While it is useful to identify distinctive features of local cultures through analysis of small-scale exchanges of ordinary goods and catchment zones for religious patronage, this study has drawn attention to interactions between nodes, regions, and micro-networks in order to highlight mobility between distant regions and contacts between ancient South Asia and the outside world.

References to Uttarāpatha and Dakināpatha in texts and inscriptions apparently indicate that the names of these arterial networks of transregional routes were appropriated as geographical/cultural terms for distinguishing the 'Middle Country' of Āryāvarta or Madhyadesa from the northwestern and southern regions of the Indian subcontinent. Orthodox Brahmanical tendencies to view the inhabitants of peripheral borderlands as impure are related to the presence of foreigners who migrated to and ruled the Northwest and coastal seaports (including Barbaricon and Barygaza in the Periplus Maris Erythraei). The qualitative impact of transcultural exchanges resulting from the movement of people and materials via overland and maritime networks varies enormously depending on conditions for selective appropriation and re-contextualization.138 Aside from ephemeral adoption of figurines of exotic animals and some devotional items, mutual impacts

138 These terms are adopted from Pia Brancaccio, who observes that “Foreign models were selectively appropriated and recontextualized when they seemed familiar to the indigenous background” (2007: 392).
of maritime trade across the Indian Ocean are difficult to discern in western and southern India. In contrast, longstanding patterns of interaction between the Ganges basin and the Northwest contributed to a major shift in cultural geography from the Punjab to the Ganges-Yamuna doāb by the mid-late centuries BCE and provided pathways for the transmission of Buddhism and other śramaṇa movements that originated in Magadha to Mathura and Taxila beginning in the Mauryan period. Networks of exchange between the plains of North India and the Deccan plateau likewise facilitated the establishment of stūpas, caityas, and residential monasteries at significant transit points and hubs of the Southern Route at Bharhut, Vidiśā, Ujjayinī, the Western Ghats, and the Krishna-Godavari river valleys. The successful transplantation of Buddhism was not simply an outcome of long-distance trade, but required other conditions for the sangha to flourish. By looking more carefully at the Indo-Iranian borderlands of Gandhāra in the next chapter, such conditions for the regional proliferation of Buddhist material and literary culture in the fertile environment of the northwestern frontier will be clarified.