

Wine Culture: Gandharan Crossroads

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Booklet of Abstracts

Keynote Lecture

JAMES MCHUGH – *Intoxicating Nectars of Plenty: Reflections on Wine and Other Drinks in Ancient South Asia*

Ancient South Asia had access to a large number of alcoholic drinks, based on an equally impressive variety of raw materials, from honey and grapes, to millets, jackfruit, and palm saps. In this talk I present reflections on this remarkably complex and changing world of drinks, and also on what we know about the various drinking cultures of the region. How did factors of geography, climate, economics, and inherited cultural patterns affect choices to produce, trade, and consume drinks in particular contexts? Given all these variables, I consider what is distinctive about the alcohol cultures of South Asia when compared to other regions—for example, places where grape wine dominates? And, against this background: how did alcohol and drinking cultures in Gandhāra differ from or resemble other parts of South Asia and, indeed, other regions?

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FRANCESCA GRASSO – *The “Emergence” of Gandhara between Aristotle’s Meteorology and the Historians of Alexander the Great*

The paper aims to analyse the first occurrences of a geographical knowledge on Gandhara in Greek culture. The first evidence of a real geography - that is no longer entrusted to the poets’ narrative - can be found, in my opinion, by the historians of Alexander the Great and in the map of the world described by Aristotle in Meteorology. My paper will be focused on some of the geographical aspects that seem related to local toponymy, and it will offer an overview on the geographical space that seem to emerge through these sources, in particular in the γῆς περίοδος handed down in Aristotle’s Meteorology. On its authorship I will make a few observations.

ANDREA DROCCO – *Wine in Prakrit Literature*

Sanskrit and Pali literature testify that alcoholic drinks have not been foreign to the Indian culture. This is also true for the presence of wine, even if this drink seems to be imported. Despite the textual attestation of the use (or the ban on the use) of these drinks, the Sanskrit and Pali terminology offer an incomplete history of the alcoholic drinks in South-Asia. The aim of the present talk will therefore be to identify the terms relating to these beverages, and possibly to wine, present in Prakrits, some of the most important South Asian literary languages of the first millenium CE. However, talking about these languages, I will not take into examination the Prakrit terms derived from Sanskrit and/or linked to this language. Instead, the terms related to alcoholic drinks mentioned in the Deśināmamālā of the Jaina polymath Hemacandra (XI-XII century CE) will be presented. In order to achieve the goal of the talk, this

text is particularly important, because it is the only lexicographical work in which the terms not derived from Sanskrit and/or linked to this language but still used in Prakrit literature are attested.

STEFAN BAUMS – *Wine in the Gāndhārī Epigraphic Record*

The rapidly expanding epigraphic record of Gāndhārī, the local language of ancient Gandhāra, contains several items inscribed on wine-making utensils. These have most recently been collected and discussed in Falk 2009, and this presentation will start with an overview and reevaluation of these inscriptions. Much more richly than in Gandhāra itself, however, wine-making is documented in the Gāndhārī documents found in Central Asia, in particular in the kingdoms of Krorayina and Kucha. Wine-drinking scenes from Gandhāra contain Central Asian figures, so that mutual influence in wine culture has to be reckoned with. The second part of this presentation will therefore collect the information on wine-making from the Central Asian documents as well as their find contexts, and put it in dialog with the practices known from Gandhāra itself.

MARIA FRANCESCA MELLONI – *Wine and Vine on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Coins*

The contribution aims to examine the evidences of iconographic subjects related to wine on Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins. In particular, will be taken into account Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins which show the presence of images connected with vines and grapes. In fact, the imagery of wine is found on coins of the kings Agathocles and Pantaleon, where we find it together with the image of the panther and of Dionysus. At first, the coins will be collected and their links with the Greek world, in particular with the god Dionysus, will be analysed. Secondly, these coins will be examined in the context of the other coin type of the kings. Finally, the coinage will be analysed in connection with the kings' politics in the region, which stands as a crossroad of people and cultures and has been a meeting place between cultures and population of different origin.

ELENA ROVA – *The Archaeology of Wine in the Southern Caucasus. New Methods for an Old Tradition*

The Southern Caucasus belongs to the core area where viticulture and wine production first developed in the Neolithic period (6th millennium cal BC). Since then wine occupied, and it still continues to occupy, a central role in the local cultures, both as a part of the subsistence economy, and as focus of ritualised consumption, as well as a source of visual symbols. Archaeology provides ample and multiple material evidence of this tradition and of its continuity/development in the course of time, in particular but not only from the territory of present-day Georgia: wine production installations, storage and ritual consumption/deposition areas, specialised tools and vessels, wine-related iconography, etc., a selection of which will be presented in detail. The paper will also focus on the new results obtained in recent years by

applying to the “Archaeology of Wine” a multidisciplinary approach which exploits the new methods provided by bioarchaeology and “archaeological science”.

DANIELE MORANDI BONACOSSO, FRANCESCA SIMI, COSTANZA COPPINI – *An Assyrian Winery in Khinis, Ancient Khanusa (Kurdistan Region of Iraq). The Production of Wine for the Assyrian Imperial Elite*

Wine production and consumption played a relevant role at the imperial Assyrian court as attested both by written and iconographic sources. However, archaeological data concerning wine production in the empire’s heartland were lacking up to now. Since 2021, a project of the University of Udine in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is investigating a large wine production area in the hinterland of the last two capitals of the Assyrian Empire: Khorsabad and Nineveh. The site, consisting of over 15 wine presses, is located close to the monumental and celebratory Khinis Archaeological Complex, where a massive irrigation canal was built by Sennacherib in the early seventh century BCE and commemorated through the carving of impressive rock-reliefs, and in the immediate vicinity of Tell Khinis (Assyrian Khanusa). The investigation results not only show the intensive agricultural exploitation of the area and the installation of a winery at the site during the Neo-Assyrian period but also emphasize the longue durée exploitation of an agricultural landscape that was devoted to vine cultivation also later, from the Early Islamic period onwards.

PRABHJEET JOHAL – *Wine in Arachosia? Revising the Literary and Archaeological Evidence*

The Augustan travel author Strabo writes that Arachosia was a land exceedingly productive of wine, but is there truth to this statement or is it a fantastic retelling of a traveller’s account? Interrogating Strabo’s declarative statements, this paper aims to address the topic of wine in Arachosia as an initial presentation of evidence. This paper will piece together the many strands of evidence that will allow a better understanding of wine culture in Arachosia, an otherwise understudied topic, as well as highlight broader implications for the field of ancient viniculture studies that may arise from the evidence presented.

OMAR COLORU, ELISA IORI, LUCA MARIA OLIVIERI – *Wine in Gandhara: Notes on a Mythical and Economical Geography*

The contribution first focuses on the geography of spaces associated by the Greeks in the retinue of Alexander with wine and the myth of Dionysus in Gandhara, specifically the city of Nysa in the Kunar/Chitral valley. The study then analyzes the economic spaces of wine production in the region until late antiquity. The existence of an actual “Wine Belt” has been hypothesized in the past on the basis of archaeological data. This encompasses both Swat and the Kunar/Chitral area and roughly corresponds to the cultural region today called Greater Kafiristan or Peristan.

STEFANO BEGGIORA – *The Production of Alcohol and Its Ritual Use in Indigenous India: A Comparative Perspective*

This paper proposes an analysis of the traditional production techniques of fermented alcohol among some indigenous populations of South Asia, with particular reference to their use in sacred rituals and local shamanism. The study aims to emphasize a reflection on the indigenous knowledge on plants and natural ingredients and their use in the social context among those communities that have not yet had access to modern technology. Well beyond a mere comparative analogy we will try to highlight possible lines of investigation also applicable to the study of Gandhara such as the approach to the sacred, the use of psychotropic substances, the ancient knowledge of natural fermentation starters.

ANNA FILIGENZI, CRISTIANO MOSCATELLI – *Wine in Gandharan Imagery. Religious Identity and Cultural Negotiation*

It is a fact that the Gandharan non-Buddhist visual repertoire—a conspicuous part in the decorative programs of the Buddhist monuments—stands as a source for potentially tracing back patterns of social structure, secular values, customs and traditions. This is the case, for instance, of the scenes depicting characters in the act of drinking wine, dancing and pursuing sexual intercourse, which are traditionally known as “Dionysiac” for being formally derived from Classical models. In the light of new critical approaches to the rich corpus of archaeological and literary evidence, such scenes can no longer be considered a mere borrowing of Western traditions and related imagery, but rather a vivid picture of local ceremonies and practices that were already performed in the North-West of the Subcontinent well-prior to Alexander’s campaign.

Following recent discoveries and research in the field, this contribution aims to provide an iconological interpretation of a non-Buddhist leitmotiv in Gandharan visual culture, namely wine and related imagery. From local deities to revelry scenes, wine symbolism appears to have conveyed an elaborate set of local concepts on cyclic regeneration at different levels, with which Buddhism and the monastic communities had to negotiate mutual recognition.

CLAUDIA ANTONETTI – *Wine, Women and Royalty in Gandhara*

Curtius Rufus (VIII. 10.33-34) narrates that when Alexander had conquered the city of Massaga, which was the capital of the kingdom of the Assaceni, the inhabitants asked the king for clemency by sending ambassadors. When they had obtained it, the queen presented herself to the conqueror with a numerous retinue of high-born women who libated wine from golden cups: in this way she managed to maintain her high role. Beyond the episode that can reproduce a *topos* relating to the relationship between Alexander and women, the paper will investigate the plausibility of the ritual act that the text reports, i.e., the libation of wine, in the historical context of ancient Gandhara and, more in general, of North/West India in connection with royalty and the presence of women of rank.

BRYAN DE NOTARIIS – *At the Roots of the Indian Symposium: How Indians Mingled with Greeks in Ancient Gandhara*

Starting from a recent work by Kenneth Zysk “From *Symposion* to *Goṣṭhī*: The Adaptation of a Greek Social Custom in Ancient India”, the contribution aims to analyse evidence about the three sympotic elements (alcohol, sex, and intellectual pursuits) in Gandhara region. Gandhara is, indeed, the ideal area in which a *métissage* of cultures could occur, and an ideal place in which the Greek symposium could at first have been accommodated and from which, in later times, it spread. Furthermore, modalities through which the symposium broke into the Indian culture will be analysed, especially through literary sources. In particular, mythological accounts involving gods, deities, divine beings and paradises will receive special attention.

MARCO ENRICO – *Strabo on Wine in Ancient India*

In the XV book of his *Geography*, Strabo offers a representation of Central Asia and India strongly informed by the accounts provided by Megasthenes and historians of Alexander the Great such as Nearchus and Onesicritus. On several occasions, Strabo inserts notations about winemaking and consumption in India as well as about the association of those regions with Dionysus and his civilising action. The contribution aims to analyse the evidence provided by Strabo on the presence of vines and wine in India, taking as starting points from the terminology used by the author and the utopian framework in which wine-related information is placed.