

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS OF BUDDHISM



CONTACTS WITH ANCIENT EGYPT AND ANCIENT GREECE

WITH PHRA MANA VIRIYARAMPO

**Abbot of Sunnataram Forest Monastery
Bundanoon New South Wales Australia**

Text and original photography by Jim McSweeney and friends

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Venerable Phra Mana Viriyarampo
Abbot of Sunnataram Forest Monastery
traces the little known contacts of Buddhism
with the ancient civilizations of
Pharaonic Egypt and Hellenist Greece

Publication of Sunnataram Forest Monastery © 2009

FRONT COVER
Phra Mana at Luxor Temple

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PHRA MANA VIRIYARAMPO

Abbot of Sunnataram Forest Monastery
Bundanoon New South Wales Australia



Venerable Phra Mana Viriyarampo was born in Bangkok, Thailand and has over 20 years experience as a monk. He has travelled to over 30 countries to spread the teachings of Buddhism and meditation, based on the practice and training he has undertaken with highly respected teachers in Thailand and abroad.

Phra Mana was chosen for the prestigious position of Buddhist Chaplin to the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Phra Mana is a prominent figure in the Buddhist community, and continues to inspire and teach the Australian community through Dhamma and meditation.

SUNNATARAM FOREST MONASTERY



Looking east from the Shrine Room



Gratitude Pagoda in the early morning mist

SUNNATARAM FOREST MONASTERY

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Sunnataram Forest Monastery is a Theravadan Buddhist monastery in the Thai forest monastery tradition.

The monastery was established in July 1990. It is situated on the outskirts of the town of Bundanoon in the Southern Highlands, and covers an area of about 100 acres of bushland, hills and cliffs. The monastery faces east and the breathtaking view of the mountainous Kangaroo Valley, with the beautiful coastline of Jervis Bay on the horizon, and welcomes the sunrise emerging from the ocean and a sea of clouds. Because of its panoramic exposure, the site of the monastery is considered by many Feng Shui masters to have one of the best Feng Shui aspects in Australia. With its famous clean mountain air and immense energy from Mother Nature, the monastery is the perfect place for meditation.

Weekend retreats are held on one weekend of each month, and longer retreats are held at other times each year, usually during the normal holiday seasons.

In 2003 Phra Mana commenced construction of the Gratitude Pagoda at the monastery. The pagoda is 20 metres high and is in the style of the ancient pagodas of northern Thailand. It is constructed of sandstone, with much of the sandstone coming from the local Bundanoon quarry. Construction work on the pagoda itself is nearing completion, but will continue for some time on the surrounding cloisters and pavilions.

Following a pilgrimage to India in 2007, Phra Mana decided to establish a permanent exhibition, including a topographical map illustrating the early history and spread of Buddhism, and a small scale copy of the Ashoka Pillar with the Four Lion Capital. During a pilgrimage to Egypt, Greece and India in 2008, further items for the exhibition were collected. The topographical map has been completed, and the Ashoka Pillar has been erected and was dedicated on 16 November 2008.

These projects were all inspired by Phra Mana's desire to spread the knowledge of Buddhist history and the teachings of the Buddha, and to express his gratitude for the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.

SUNNATARAM FOREST MONASTERY



Dedication of the Ashoka Pillar at Sunnataram – 16 November 2008

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SUNNATARAM FOREST MONASTERY



Ashoka Pillar, topographical map and sculpture garden with the walking meditation pathway under construction – May 2009

v

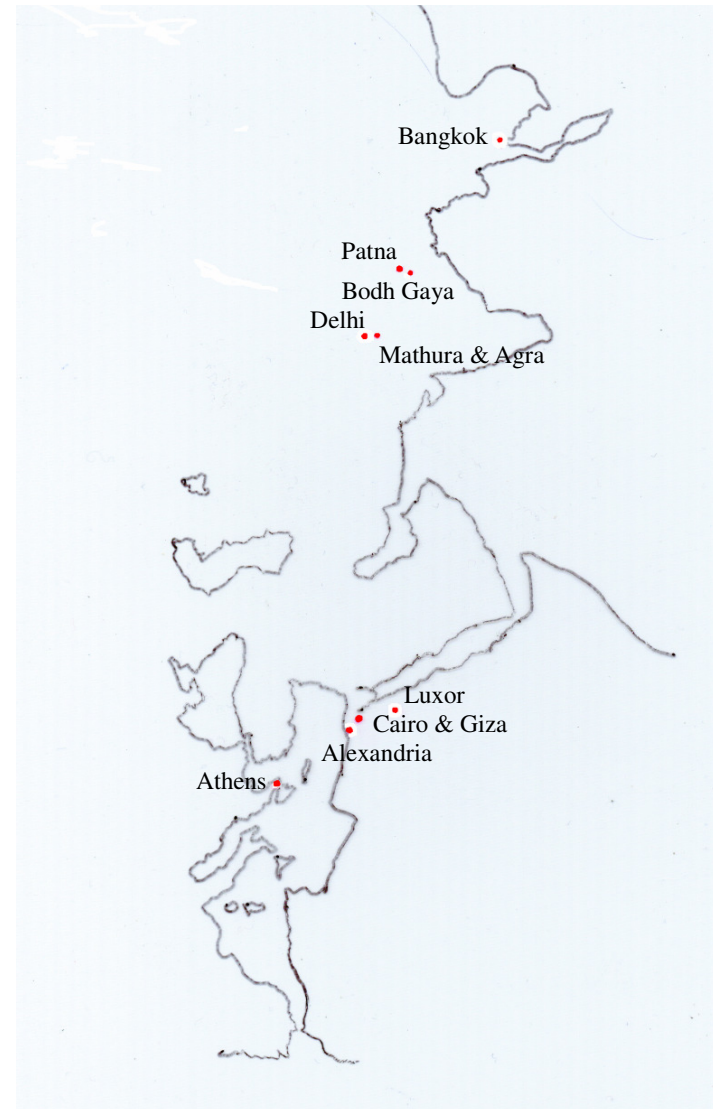
FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS OF BUDDHISM

ITINERARY

Day	Date	During the day	At night
1	13/2/08	Pyramids	Giza
2	14/2/08	Egyptian Museum Cairo	Giza
3	15/2/08	Egyptian Museum Cairo, Saqqara	Giza
4	16/2/08	Sphinx, pyramids, Luxor Museum	Luxor
5	17/2/08	Luxor Temple, Valley of the Queens, Ramesses II and III, Workers Village	Luxor
6	18/2/08	Temple of Hapshepsut, Valley of the Kings	Luxor
7	19/2/08	Denderah and Karnak	Luxor
8	20/2/08	Balloon and boat	Luxor
9	21/2/08	Library of Alexandria, Dr Sahar Humoda and Dr Jean-Yves Empereur	Alexandria
10	22/2/08	Catacombs, Pompey's Pillar, lighthouse and Alexandria National Museum	Cairo
11	23/2/08	Flight to Athens	Athens
12	24/2/08	Acropolis and Agora	Athens
13	25/2/08	National Museum	Athens
14	26/2/08	Flight to Cairo and bus trip to Giza	Bangkok
15	27/2/08	Funeral for senior monk	Bangkok
16	28/2/08	Flight to Gaya and Meditation Centre	Bodh Gaya
17	29/2/08	Visit old friends and Mahabodhi Temple	Bodh Gaya
18	1/3/08	Bodh Gaya Museum and Mahabodhi Temple	Bodh Gaya
19	2/3/08	Nalanda and site museum, ancient chaitya or shrine, Vulture Peak	Bodh Gaya
20	3/3/08	Big Buddha, temples of other traditions	Bodh Gaya
21	4/3/08	Patna Museum, Ashoka Pillar	Patna
22	5/3/08	Delhi Museum, book shops	Delhi
23	6/3/08	Mathura, Agra, Taj Mahal	Bangkok

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS OF BUDDHISM

TRAVEL MAP



FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

INTRODUCTION

This is the second book recording the pilgrimages of Phra Mana Viriyarampo, tracing the footsteps of the Buddha and the early history of Buddhism.

The first book, A Buddhist Pilgrimage to Northern India, concerned travel in India in February 2007 to places central to the life of the Buddha, including the four pilgrimage sites nominated by the Buddha, other significant Buddhist sites from later times, such as the Great Stupa at Sanchi and the caves of Ajanta and Ellora, and several museums which displayed Buddhist art and early coins.

This second book concerns travel in Egypt, Greece and India in February and March 2008, examining contacts of Buddhism with the Mediterranean world and two of the great powers of the early Buddhist era, Pharaonic Egypt and Hellenistic Greece. These contacts were greatly facilitated and enhanced by the arrival of the armies of Alexander the Great on the north western borders of India in 327 BCE, which opened up the trade routes to allow unprecedented freedom, safety and ease of movement of goods and people between India and the Mediterranean.

So far as practical, I have attempted to avoid repeating in this second book material contained in the first book. However a certain amount of repetition is unavoidable, particularly in regard to Alexander, Ashoka and Gandharan Buddhist art.

PILGRIMAGE SITES

The Buddha nominated four sites that would be appropriate destinations for those who wished to undertake pilgrimages. Those sites were :-

Lumbini, in present day southern Nepal, where he was born;
Uruvela, present day Bodh Gaya, where he attained enlightenment;
Sarnath, where he delivered his first discourse after his enlightenment; and
Kushinagar, where he died.

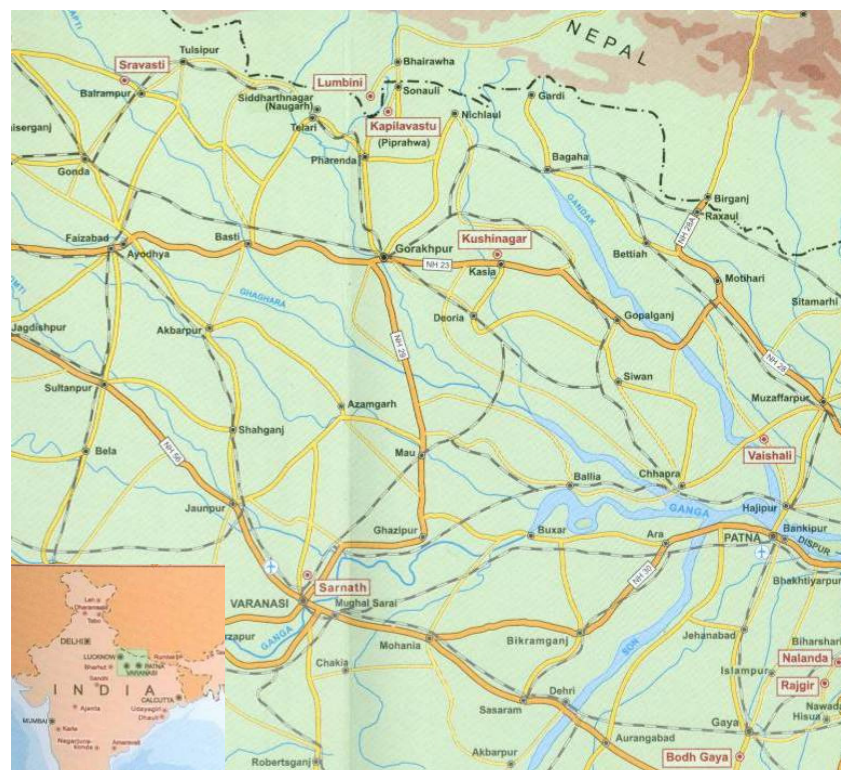
The events which took place at those sites were at first represented symbolically, as depicted on page 13, and later featuring the Buddha image, as depicted on page 15.

THE BUDDHA IMAGE

For many years, there was considerable debate amongst historians as to when and where the Buddha image first appeared, with a time frame mooted at around the beginning of the common era, and the location as between Gandhara and Mathura, although the weight of evidence favoured Gandhara.

As a result, the compromise or consensus view adopted by most commentators was

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Major Buddhist sites of Northern India (top)
The Great Stupa at Sanchi – 2007 (above)

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that the Buddha image appeared at roughly the same time during the first century CE in both Gandhara and Mathura. It has now been established beyond reasonable doubt that the Buddha image first appeared in Gandhara early in the first century BCE and was not taken up in Mathura until mid to late in the first century CE.

ANCIENT DATES

It is widely acknowledged that ancient dates are only approximations. The further back you go, the more problems you encounter. Many of the sources we consulted give different dates for events including battles, births and deaths and the reigns of local rulers. Whilst there appears to be broad agreement in general terms, the variations can be quite large. For example, Menander, a Greek ruler of a large Indian empire including Gandhara, is considered to have reigned for some 20 to 25 years, but the commencement of his reign is given as early as 166 BCE and his death as late as 125 BCE, a period of 41 years. In addition, more recent field work, the translation of previously indecipherable scripts and undeciphered texts and advances in science and technology continue to challenge what was once the accepted view. Our knowledge and understanding of the past is a work in progress.

PREPARATIONS

Our group consisted of Phra Mana Viriyarampo, Abbot of Sunnataram Forest Monastery, Phra Mick Ratanarape, Sayadaw U Adicca, Kim McSweeney, Secretary of the Monastery, and myself, Jim McSweeney, Kim's husband. With the addition of Sayadaw, it was the same group as had travelled to India in 2007.

Sunnataram is a Theravadan Buddhist monastery of the Thai forest monastery tradition, located in Bundanoon in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, in the south east of Australia. Phra Mana and Phra Mick were both originally from Thailand, and Sayadaw was originally from Myanmar.

We experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining visas for Sayadaw, who was travelling on a Myanmar passport. This caused many changes in our plans and thus caused complications with airline and hotel bookings. Phra Mick was already in Bangkok, so four of us were flying out of Sydney to meet Phra Mick at Bangkok airport and fly on to Cairo. The decision to go to India was made late. Phra Mick was unable to obtain a visa in time, so Phra Mick did not accompany us to India. All of these complications caused problems which were never fully resolved in advance, and resulted in a few hair-raising close calls at check in times.

Through his network of contacts, Phra Mana was able to arrange for the infamous Omar of Egypt to assist us with our travel and accommodation in Egypt, and for Phra Sirichai, a Thai monk living and studying in Bodh Gaya, to join us and travel with us in India, as he had done in 2007.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

EGYPT

Egypt has an area of about 1 million square kilometres, less than 15% of the size of Australia, or about the same area as New South Wales and Victoria combined. Only about 6% of the country is populated. 99% of the population live in the 40,000 square kilometres of the Nile Valley, which is for most of its length only 20 km to 50 km wide – the rest of the country is desert. 45% of the population live in urban areas. The total population is about 80 million, with 18 million in Cairo and a further 6 million in Alexandria, more than the entire population of Australia in the two major cities.

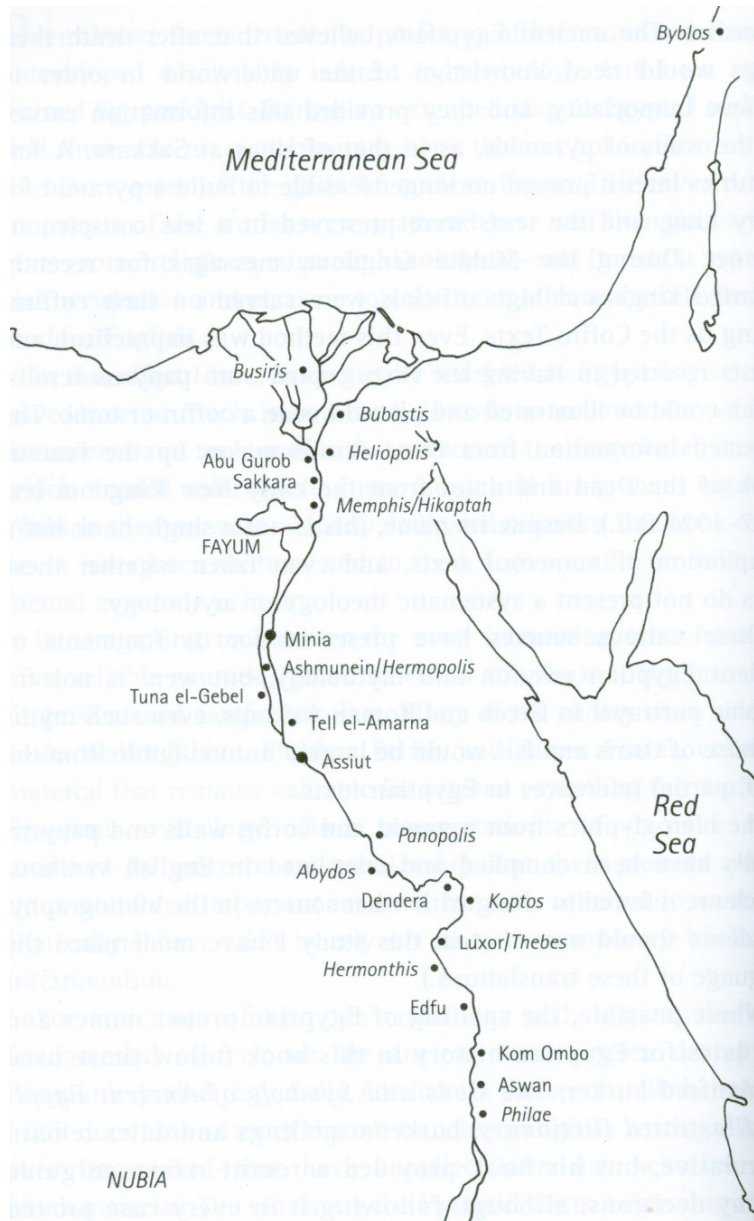
The nation is predominately Muslim, over 80%, mostly of the Sunni denomination but with a significant number of Sufis and a smaller number of Shia. The other major faith is the indigenous Christian denomination, the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Egypt is not a wealthy country. It had an unemployment rate in 2007 of 10% to 11% with about 40% of the workforce employed in farming. Many of the rural poor live on less than US\$5 per day. However, at least in the areas where we travelled, there was not the same depth of absolute destitution that was so common in India. People at least appeared to have houses to live in and food to eat.

Tourism is a major sector of the economy.

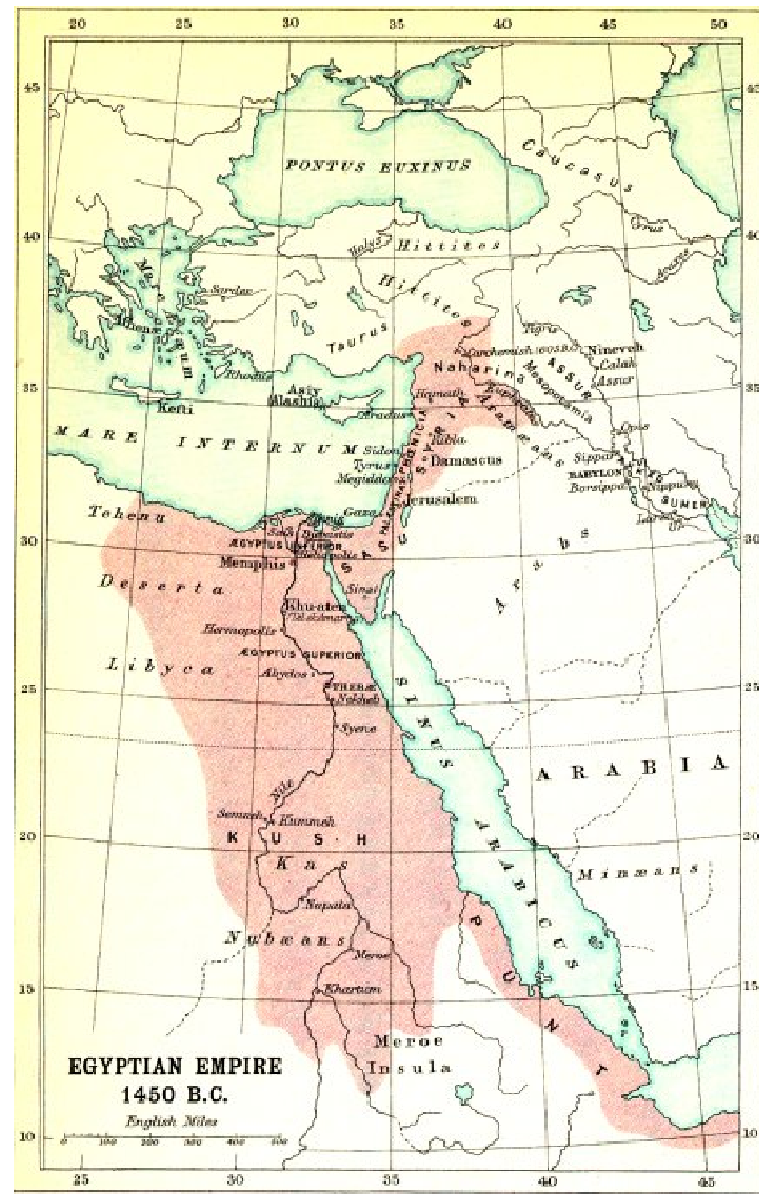
The most striking aspect of Egypt was the desert. The Nile Valley was lush-green, rich and fertile, but all the water came from the river – there was NO rain. There were huge quantities of very fine dust blown across everything in just the slightest breeze with no rain to wash any of it away. Consequently, sweeping and shovelling away the dust was a perpetual activity.

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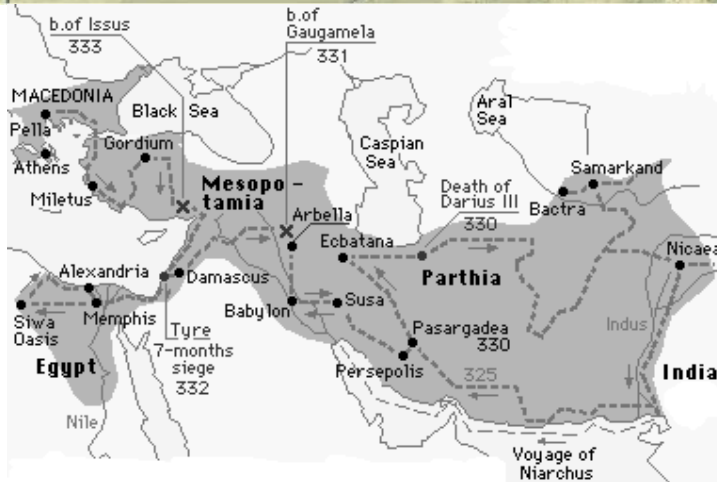
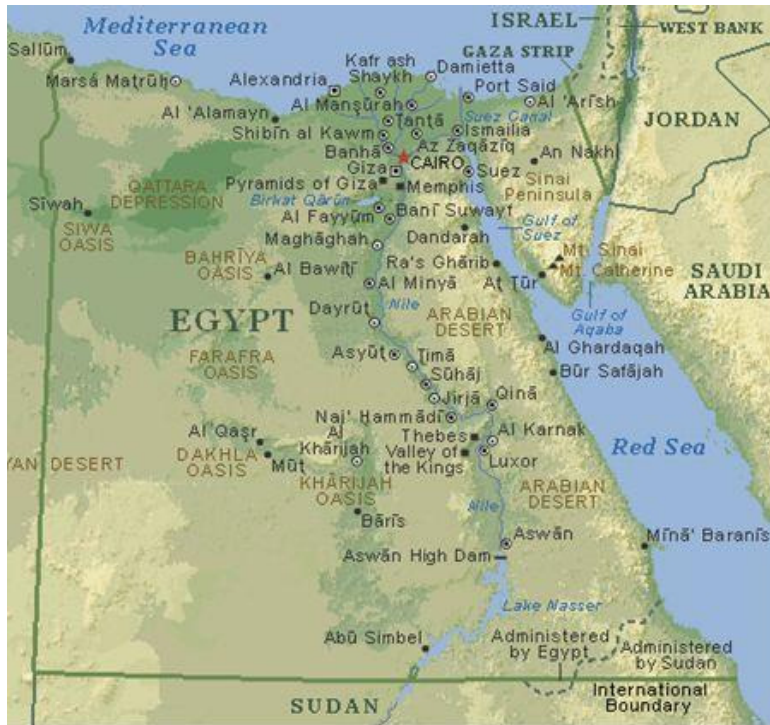
Egypt 2500 BCE – from the delta to the first cataract just south of Aswan

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The glory days of empire – conquered and vassal states north into Palestine, Lebanon and Syria and south into Nubia, Sudan and Eritrea

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Egypt 2009 (top)
Empire of Alexander the Great (above)

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GREECE

We were in Athens for only three nights, and saw nothing of the rest of the country, except from the window of an aircraft. Athens is a major international city much like Sydney or Melbourne, and much the same size, but with the addition of its historic precincts and multitude of museums.

Greece is a small country, with an area of only 132,000 square kilometres, or a little over half the size of Victoria. Only about 25% of the country is populated, the remainder being mountainous. The total population is about 11 million, with about 3.8 million living in Athens. The next largest city of Thessalonica has a population of 750,000. Over 98% of the population belong to the indigenous Christian denomination, the Greek Orthodox Church.

INDIA

Background information regarding India is contained in the previous book, *A Buddhist Pilgrimage to Northern India*.

RESEARCH

OUR OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the pilgrimage were to research the early contacts of Buddhism with the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Greece. We were also intending to acquire further books on these and related matters for the Sunnataram library and objects for the planned permanent exhibition of early Buddhist history. The exhibition will be housed in one of the halls yet to be built as part of the cloister surrounding the Gratitude Pagoda, currently under construction at Sunnataram.

Part of this process involved examining symbolism and iconography, attempting to determine what may have been common, what may have been unique, and what may have been the connections or influences.

Buddhist symbols were, and still are, mostly traditional. At least some Buddhist symbols and motifs seem to have extremely ancient origins and to have been common to almost every known civilization. The meanings ascribed to the symbols may have varied from civilization to civilization, and even from time to time within any given civilization. In particular, religious symbols which may once have had great meaning and power revealed only to the innermost circle of initiates often became more widely used by the community of the faithful and thereby lost their secret exclusiveness, whilst others simply faded into disuse.

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The library at Sunnataram contains a number of books describing and analysing Buddhist symbols, and we acquired several more on this trip. There are variations between the authors as to what symbols were specifically Buddhist, as opposed to more broadly cultural, and as to the meanings ascribed to the symbols. The following is a short compendium of the more frequently cited Buddhist symbols:-

lotus (birth) bodhi tree (enlightenment) dhamma wheel (first discourse)
stupa (parinirvana or death) footprints throne pillar of fire umbrella

triratina (triple gem) lidded bowl or power box (vardhamana or srivatsa)
bowl and plant brimming pot lamp fan flag drum club mirror
conch shell fly whisk sun moon water vajra (thunderbolt)

svastika, arms bent to the right, and suavastika, arms bent to the left
(literally translated 'let good things happen' or 'of good fortune')

gold pearl(s) gem stone(s) sandalwood

torana (gateway) moonstone (semi-circular paving at an entry door or gate)

naga (snake, dragon) lion bull cow fish twin fish rooster
elephant makara (dragon head – mythological animal with a head resembling
that of a dragon, crocodile or hippopotamus and either a terrestrial or aquatic
body and tail)

There were, and still are, two types of Buddhist symbols: the sacred and the auspicious. The sacred symbols, in the first group above, represent the person of the Buddha, with the first four symbols having specific association with four major events in the life of the Buddha. The Buddha was represented only symbolically for about five hundred years. Various explanations have been advanced for this, most of which are probably at least partly correct but not the full or only reason. The explanation which seems to carry most weight is that it was thought that as the Buddha had attained nirvana, he would not be reborn, he would not return to this life, and therefore it would be inappropriate to produce human images of him in this life.

In addition to symbols, deities, spirits and humans were also represented, in relief and in the round in stone and in metal. They included Bodhisattvas; devas (deities) and devatas (minor deities or guardian spirits); yaksas and yaksis (male and female spirits of power and security, wealth and productivity); dryads (forest deities and wood nymphs); gangas (dwarf deities usually representing strength); gate or entry or door keepers or guardians and chowry bearers (either deities, spirits or humans). Deities or spirits were often represented as flying, or with wings or with a halo to distinguish them from human figures.

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Indian School – reliefs with symbolic representations of the Buddha – Sanchi
Queen Maya on a Lotus (Birth) Bodhi Tree (Enlightenment)
Dhamma Wheel and Deer (First Discourse) Stupa (Parinirvana)

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However, Buddhist iconography was fundamentally changed for ever by contact with the Greek-based Gandharan school of stone work and metallurgy. The Indo-Greek descendants of the armies of Alexander the Great had become Buddhist or had at least absorbed the Buddha into their pantheon of gods over the course of several centuries. The Greeks had humanised their gods to such an extent that they thought of their gods as divine beings in human form. They expected to see their gods in human form and therefore represented their gods as idealised humans. Looking at it from their perspective, it may be more accurate to say that the Greeks considered their gods to have perfect immortal bodies, and that human bodies were but poor or imperfect mortal imitations of the gods. For the Greeks, it was quite natural to represent the Buddha in the same way as they represented their gods.

The first human images of the Buddha appeared in Gandhara in the first century BCE in both stone and metal, and included images on coins. Early Indo-Greek Gandharan Buddha images were modelled on the Greek god Apollo, and looked identifiably Greek in facial characteristics, and in both hair and clothing styles.

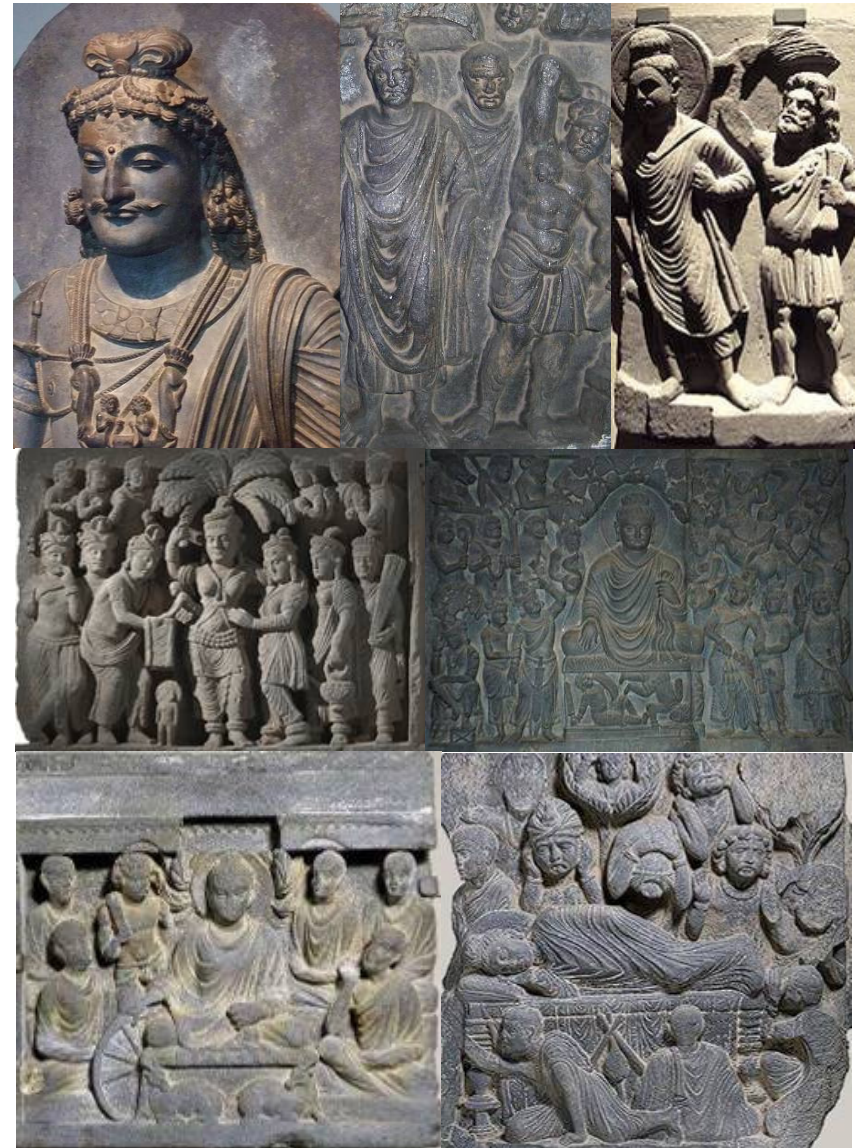
One of the earliest datable Buddha image appeared on a coin issued by Maues (reigned 80-58 BCE). Rulers of the Gandharan region both before and after Maues minted bi-lingual coins with their portrait or royal symbol on the obverse and any one of a variety of gods or religious symbols on the reverse, to demonstrate religious tolerance and to appeal to as many of their ethnically and religiously diverse subjects as possible, but Maues was the first to include the Buddha image amongst his selection of gods and symbols. Menander (reigned 150-125 BCE) used Buddhist symbols. Some historians consider Kanishka (reigned 78-120 CE) was the first to mint a Buddha image coin, because he appeared to have been the first to name the image (BOΔΔO in Greek) thus putting its identity beyond doubt.

The Gandharan school also produced images of Bodhisattvas and devas. Many exquisitely executed Bodhisattvas images have survived in near perfect condition. Bodhisattva images were more flamboyant, more ornate than Buddha images, and are considered to be the absolute epitome of the Gandharan school. There were also panel carvings of scenes from the life of the Buddha, often featuring the Greek legendary hero Hercules as the personal guardian of the Buddha.

Once the practice of representing the Buddha in human form began, it spread rapidly and widely. By the mid to late first century CE, similar images but with more Indian facial characteristics and clothing were being produced in Mathura, about 150 km south of Delhi, and slightly later at Sarnath.

But there is an older and even more intriguing link. It is thought that it was the Egyptians who taught the Greeks to work the human form in stone on both the life sized and monumental scale. In about 660 BCE, a large contingent of Greek mercenaries travelled to Egypt. With the aid of the Greeks, Psamtek I (reigned 664-610 BCE) overcame his opposition and founded the 26th Dynasty. Prior to this

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Gandharan School – Bodhisattva and reliefs featuring the Buddha image
Bodhisattva (top left) Buddha with Hercules as guardian (top centre and right)
Birth (mid left) Enlightenment (mid right)
First Discourse (above left) Parinirvana (above right)

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Coin of Maues (reigned 80-58 BCE)

Obverse rejoicing elephant holding a wreath, a symbol of victory
Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΜΑΥΟΥ
(Great King of Kings Maues)

Reverse seated Buddha Kharoshthi legend
RAJATIRAJASA MAHATASA MOASA (Great King of Kings Maues)

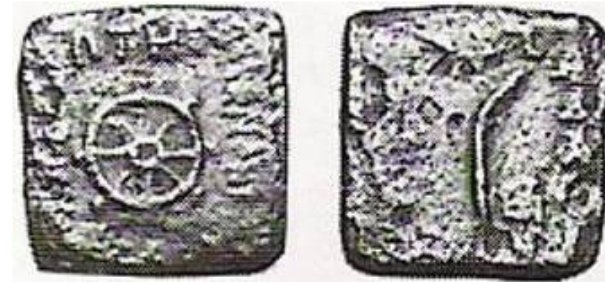


Coin of Maues (reigned 80-58 BCE)

Obverse the protector deity Hercules with a club
Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΜΑΥΟΥ
(Great King of Kings Maues)

Reverse Buddhist lion Kharoshthi legend

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Coin of Menander (reigned 150-125 BCE) Bronze

Obverse Buddhist eight-spoked wheel Greek legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ
ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΥ (Saviour King Menander)

Reverse palm of victory Kharosthi legend MAHARAJA TRATASA
MENADRASA (Saviour King Menander)



Coins of Kanishka (reigned 78-120 CE) Copper Tetradrachm Weight 16 gm

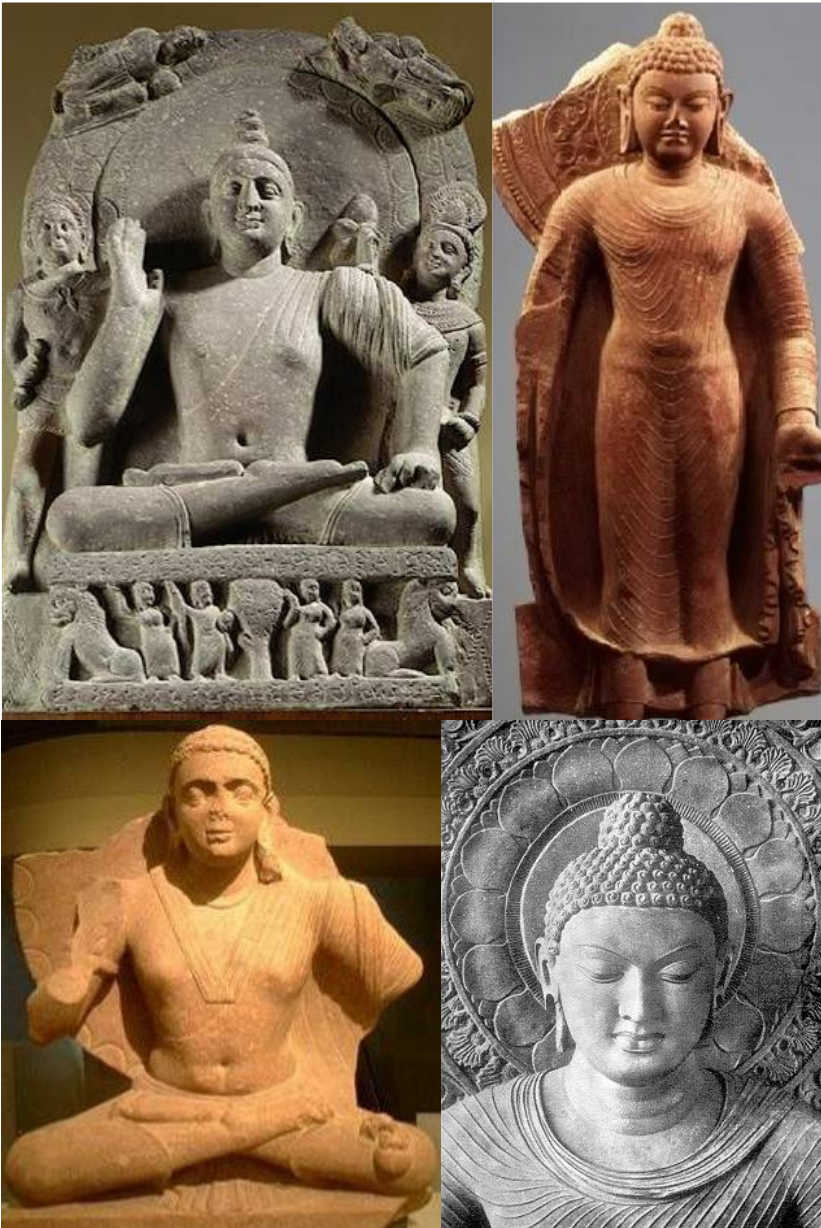
1 **Obverse** Kanishka sacrificing at an altar 2 **Reverse** Buddha *Maitraya* seated
3 **Obverse** (not shown) same as 1 above **Reverse** Buddha *Goutam* standing



Coin of Kanishka (reigned 78-120 CE) Gold Dinar Weight 7.93 gm

Obverse same as 1 above **Reverse** Buddha *Goutam* standing

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Mathuran Buddha images

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time, for a period of about 500 years, the Greeks and Egyptians had almost no contact. Greece was just emerging from a Dark Age which commenced around 1200 BCE with the collapse of the Mycenaean culture, followed by a period of widespread poverty and population decline. Now, Greece was re-emerging as an economic and military power and about to enter its golden age. With the encouragement of the grateful pharaoh, trade flourished, and so did the exchange of knowledge, technologies and skills. The Greeks were permitted to establish a trading settlement in the area which later became Alexandria. Greek scholars, teachers and philosophers visited Egypt, often for lengthy periods. The Roman historian Plutarch (46-119 CE) mentions that Solon, Thales and Plato visited Egypt and that Pythagoras studied the pyramids in great detail. Plutarch visited Egypt and wrote extensively on all aspects of Egyptian life, especially the religion and religious myths.

Some time before 600 BCE, the Greeks suddenly and for the first time, began producing life sized and slightly later monumental human statues in marble of near perfect anatomical correctness (page 101). They were distinctly Egyptian in influence, being formally and rigidly posed, eyes straight ahead and the arms by the side with the left foot forward. These kouri figures were soon followed by life sized and monumental marble and bronze statues of the stunning grace and realism for which the Greeks became renowned.

Alexander the Great (reigned 336-323 BCE) learned of the wonders of Egypt from his tutor Aristotle. He defeated the Persians in 333 BCE at Issus, which was close to the coast on the Turkish side of the Turkish-Syrian border. He then diverted from his pursuit of Darius III across Asia Minor and advanced on Egypt. He was greeted by the Egyptians as the liberator of Egypt from the Persians, who had invaded Egypt in 343 BCE. In 331 BCE Alexander became the first Greek pharaoh, to be followed on his death by the Ptolemies.

THE ANCIENT TRADE ROUTES

There were well established trade routes and extensive trade over great distances from the very earliest of times. These routes crossed deserts, mountains, forests, jungles, grasslands, farmlands, swamplands, rivers, lakes and oceans. In other words, no physical barrier was daunting enough to stand in the way of trade. Trade was subject to all of the natural risks – sand storms and dry wells in the deserts; altitude sickness, rock falls, avalanches, snow blindness and frostbite in the high mountain passes; attacks by wild animals and snakes; and storms and shipwreck at sea. Trade also faced the human risks of banditry on land and piracy at sea. Then there were the taxes extracted along the way in the forms of customs and exercise duties, tolls and tariffs. Despite all the obstacles and risks, trade thrived in times of peace and stability and never quite ceased no matter how turbulent things were temporarily, because the profits to be made were immense.

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The Silk Road – around first century BCE to first century CE

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Many wars were fought in the ancient world. There were wars of succession between rival claimants to a throne. There were border wars to protect against raiding by marauding savages. There were wars of conquest, where somebody set out to create or expand an empire, and the constant cycle of rebellions and reprisals within empires. However, many of the major conflicts between adjoining empires were fought for the control of trade, the trade routes, and the revenue that trade generated. Power was essential and power came first, but then wealth came from trade. Rulers knew or soon realised that trade generated wealth with less effort, less cost and less risk of insurrection than despotic exploitation of their own people. Egypt invaded Nubia to gain control of the Nubian gold mines and the trade routes to sub-Saharan Africa (gold, ivory and leopard skins), Punt (Eritrea) to gain direct access to myrrh and frankincense, and Lebanon to gain direct access to timber.

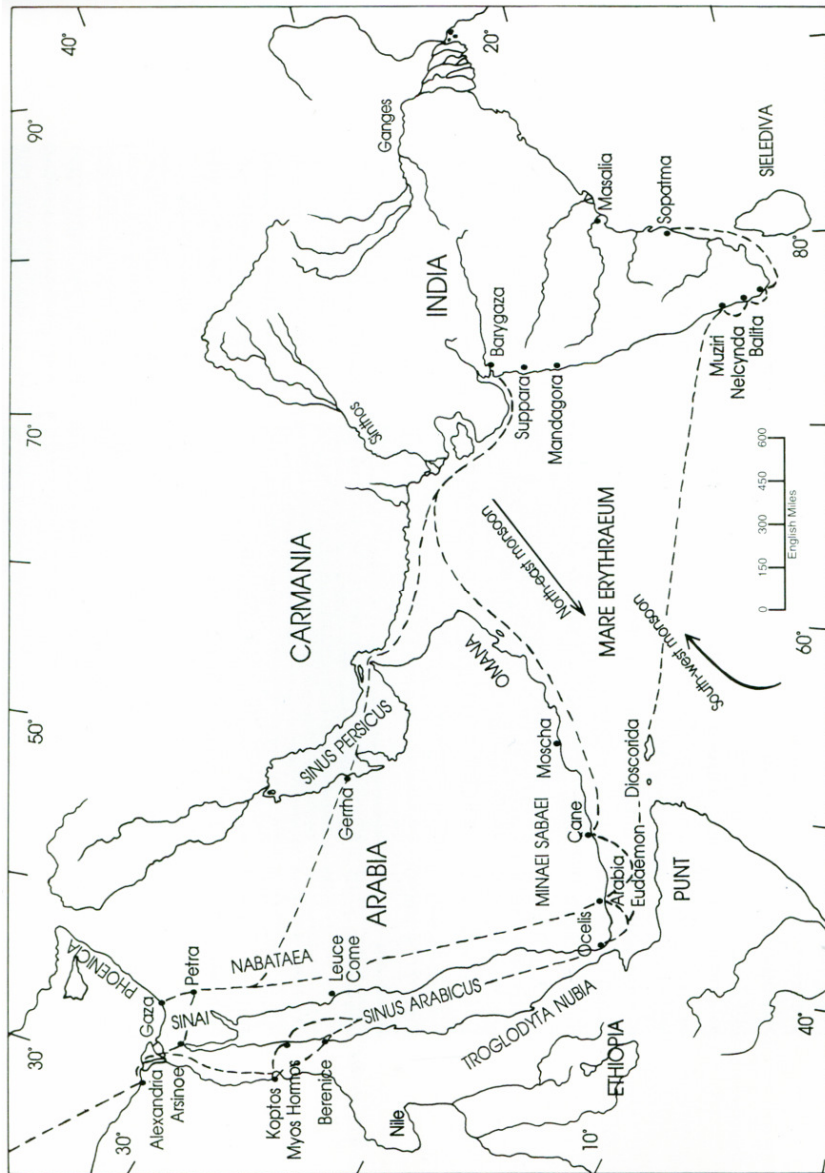
By the fourth century BCE there was a vast network of trade routes, with major trunks linking Japan and China in the east with Britain and Ireland in the west, with lateral branches reaching north into Siberia, Russia, Europe and Scandinavia, and south into the Philippines, Indo China, Malaysia and Indonesia (the Spice Islands), India, Arabia, Egypt and the east coast of Africa.

The fabulous and legendary Silk Road was itself a series of routes from China to the Mediterranean, extending some 8,000 km overland both north and south of the Himalayas (crossing high mountain passes and inhospitable deserts) and by sea via Java, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The Incense Route ran from Arabia by land and by sea both west to Egypt and east to India. The Kings Highway ran from Egypt to Damascus and on to the upper Euphrates River. The Royal Road ran 2,700 km across Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan to Pakistan. The Amber Road and the Haerjejen were European routes to the Mediterranean. In India, there were two major trade routes. The Kamboja-Dvarati Route ran from Gujarat (Ahmadabad) on the coast of north western India to north eastern Afghanistan and southern Tajikistan. It was the second most important caravan route of the ancient world after the Silk Road. The Great Trunk Road ran from Bengal (Kolkata) in the east across northern India to Afghanistan.

Most traders operated over relatively short distances, usually allowing no more than a 12 month cycle for the journey out and return. Hence there were numerous staging posts, cities and ports, along the trade routes where goods were exchanged.

A camel train, each camel carrying about 200 kg, covered between 15 km and 40 km a day, depending on weather and terrain, with a one or two day watering and rest stop every four or five days. This allowed for a typical journey of about 3,000 km to 5,000 km out and back, requiring about eight to nine months, after which the camels were rested for at least two to three months before the next trip. Almost none of the traders from the east ventured further west than the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan line, and similarly few from the west went further east.

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Egyptian-Indian trade routes in the Hellenist period

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From the earliest times right through to today, camel trains from the east employed the two humped Bactrian camel whereas those from the west employed the single humped Arabian camel or dromedary.

Trading ships relied on seasonal wind patterns, with the monsoons blowing north east from December to March then south west from June to September. Trading ships very rarely crossed more than one ocean.

The catalogue of trade goods which moved across this network was as remarkable for its ordinariness as it was for its exotica.

One of the most commonly traded commodities was salt. Rock salt was mined in China, Russia, Germany, Austria, Poland and Taudenni in the western Sahara, 800 km north of Timbuktu. Egypt, Spain and China produced salt from sea water in solar evaporation pans. All types of foods were traded, including grains, nuts, olive oil, palm oil, palm sugar, honey, wine, salted and dried fish and meats and dried grapes, figs, peaches, apricots and dates. Livestock on the hoof, especially camels, horses and cattle, often travelled long distances, as did iron, copper, bronze, tin (Britain), zinc, woollen, linen and cotton fabrics, dyes, domesticated animal furs, skins and leather, lacquer work, glass and ceramics, timber and quarried stone.

The exotics included silk (China), spices (India and the Spice Islands), gold (Spain, Egypt, Africa and Siberia), silver, ivory (India, Egypt and Africa), red coral, pearls and mother of pearl (Sri Lanka), conch and other shells, amber, jade (Yarkand and Khotan near Badakshan), other precious and semi-precious stones, ebony, fired clay and glass beads, myrrh and frankincense (Arabia and Punt), musk, sandalwood and other aromatics. Badakshan in north east Afghanistan was the only known source of lapis lazuli in the ancient world (page 157). Lapis found its way to Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley and India. China imported jade and literally tens of thousands of what they called the Heavenly Horses from the Soghdians and Dayuans – the Chinese cavalry alone had over 100,000 horses. Exotic animal products (rhinoceros horn, tiger penis, all manner of furs, skins, claws, teeth and feathers) and live animals such as peacocks, lions and bears were popular.

At that time, perhaps as much as 50% of total known world annual gold production was alluvial gold from Siberia. One of the reasons for the intense interest in India in the Hellenist and Roman periods was the mistaken belief that the Siberian gold which moved to the west via India and the Silk Road was in fact sourced in India.

Cedar from Lebanon was legendary for the height of the trees and therefore the lengths of the timbers that could be produced. It found its way to just about every corner of the known world, especially to Egypt where timber was scarce. Weapons of the highest quality and finest workmanship were always in demand. Rhinoceros, hippopotamus and elephant leathers were in demand for military use.

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Apart from the more obvious exotics, there was also a thriving and truly massive trade in what today would be cosmetics (especially perfumes) and pharmaceuticals. Medical knowledge was limited, so products known to be efficacious were in huge demand at any price, especially liquids, unguent and powders with basic antiseptic properties for treatment of wounds, burns, ulcers, boils and snake or scorpion bites.

There was also a trade in live plants. China exported mulberry, peach, orange and apricot trees, rhubarb, roses, peonies, camellias, azaleas and chrysanthemums, and imported fig, olive and palm trees, jasmine, pomegranates, flax and a wide variety of herbs and vegetables.

There were two previously unprecedented surges in trade across the ancient trade routes. The first occurred as a result of Alexander the Great establishing one single and powerful authority controlling the trade routes from Greece to India in 327 BCE and the second occurred following the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE, both of which achieved much the same outcome – namely the active promotion of trade at the highest political levels, and the elimination of many of the middle-men, taxes, bandits and pirates. But the true significance of the trade routes was not the movement of goods or wealth, it was the movement of people. Personal and diplomatic travel surged along with trade, and scholars, musicians, artists and craftsmen were free to travel as never before. With them they took their ideas, cultures, skills – and religions.

THE ATTRACTIONS OF INDIA

India was hugely attractive to the Greeks of Alexander's time and subsequently to Ptolemaic Egypt, Hellenistic Asia Minor and eventually Rome. It is estimated that in the fourth century BCE, Egypt had a total population in the order of 7 million, the greater Greek areas of mainland, islands and colonies 3 million, whilst India had a population in excess of 100 million. The size, wealth and sophistication of India was extraordinary to foreigners encountering it at first hand for the first time.

India had the further attraction of being the major point of contact and staging post by land or by sea between China and the spice islands to the east and Asia Minor, Egypt and the Mediterranean to the west.

There are two well documented examples which give some indication of what was involved. The Romans developed obsessions for Indian pepper and Chinese silk. Pepper became an essential food item for the rich, and was consumed in vast quantities. The sheerest most transparent gossamer silk allowed courtesans to appear virtually naked whilst still conventionally fully dressed. The Roman historian Pliny the Younger (61-113 CE) calculated that, at the lowest estimate, the Indian trade was costing the Roman Empire 10 tons of gold per annum. This was equal to the entire annual production of the Roman gold mines in Spain. Economic

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comparisons so far back in time are so difficult as to be virtually impossible – strictly 10 tons of gold would be valued at about AU\$500 million today, but would no doubt have amounted to many billions of dollars in inflation adjusted historical equivalent purchasing power. Pepper was literally worth its weight in gold. The China trade in silk must have been even more costly, because repeated attempts were made in the Roman Senate to ban silk.

THE BEGINNINGS OF BUDDHISM

The Buddha was born between 623 BCE and 563 BCE, with the latter date most often quoted. He lived for 80 years and spent the last 45 years of his life teaching in the central region of northern India along the Gangetic plain. The ruler of this area then was Bimbisara. Bimbisara became a Buddhist and was a friend and protector of the Buddha. His support was of great assistance in the establishment of Buddhism.

This was a time of religious ferment in India. The Aryans invaded (or perhaps infiltrated) India from the north west in several waves from about 2000 BCE to 1500 BCE, gradually moving south east along the Ganges. They brought their Vedic religion and their Brahmin priests with them. There were not enough Aryans to displace or even swamp the native populations, but they were militarily powerful and established themselves as regional rulers and the upper classes of society.

The Aryans or more specifically the Brahmin priests introduced the concept of "colours" (which became the basis of the caste system), the Vedic pantheon of gods and complex ceremonies requiring the services of the priests, especially blood sacrifices. However, the native Indians were not exactly enthusiastic about the new gods and many resented the antics of a priesthood widely perceived as being impious and self-serving, and especially the high prices charged for the conduct of blood sacrifices. The Vedic religion was in decline amongst the common folk and being challenged by a revival of the old gods and folk traditions of the pre-Aryan times, and by new movements. Many spiritual or religious movements arose at that time, such as The Hermits and The Wanderers, but only Buddhism and Jainism inspired large numbers of followers and became firmly established.

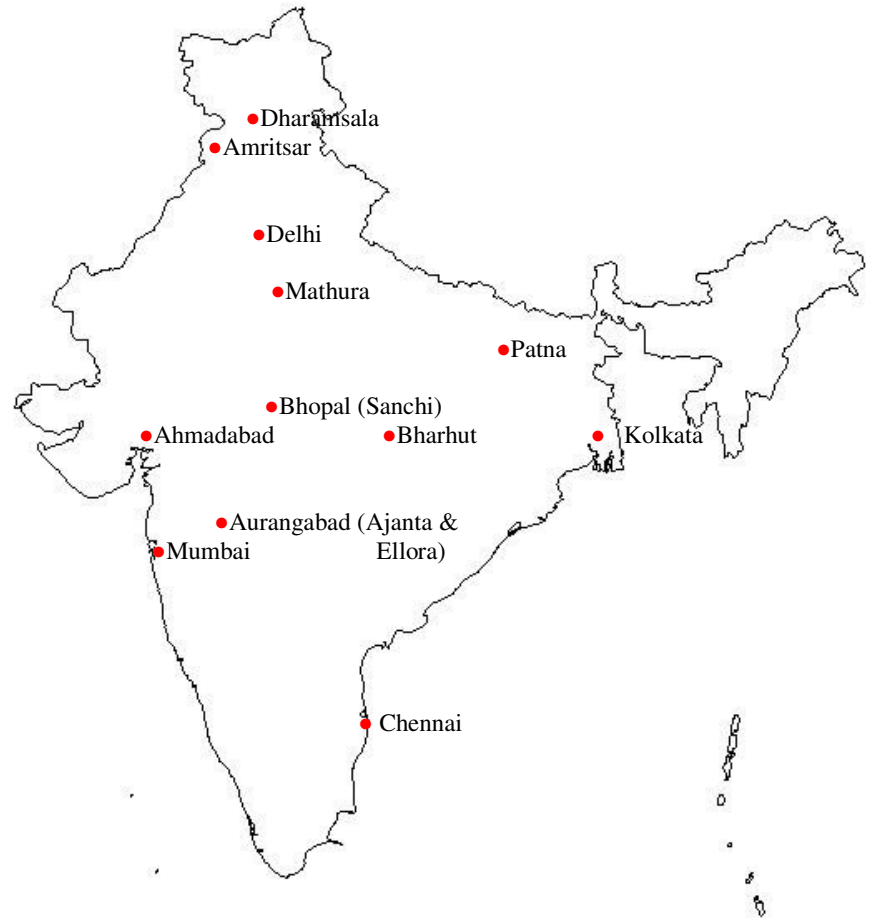
It was also a time of significant social and economic change. The first genuine cities were developing along the Gangetic plain, so work, family life and society were changing from farming and village life to the crafts and industries, merchants and traders and the masses of people in the new urban centres. The Vedic religion was impeding progress. The higher castes were not supposed to pursue wealth and were prohibited from trade and travel, especially foreign travel. The lower castes did not then include places for the new occupations that were being created. Yet trade and commerce, domestic and foreign, was precisely what was developing and causing so much social change, and generating tremendous wealth.

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Place names of the north of India
Pakistan and Afghanistan
at the time of Ashoka

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India 2009

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The Buddha expounded a simple but profound philosophy and rejected both the caste system and blood sacrifices. This gave Buddhism wide appeal. In particular, the rejection of the caste system made Buddhism popular with the merchants and traders and the artisans and craftsmen – in other words, the ‘middle classes’ of the more literate, educated, independently-minded and well-off if not exactly wealthy people, who were disadvantaged and repressed by the caste system.

The merchants and traders took Buddhism with them as they travelled and had sufficient wealth to build temples and monasteries and to support the monks who served in them. By the fourth century BCE, the famous university of Taxila, to the west of present day Rawalpindi in Pakistan, included Buddhist philosophy and studies amongst its courses, and Buddhism had become well established in Gandhara and Bactria (Pakistan and Afghanistan) before the arrival of Alexander.

The Brahmin priests set about rebuilding popular support. In effect they appropriated popular folk traditions, re-named or rearranged the gods, gave them powers and functions that had popular appeal, and re-emerged with what gradually evolved into Hinduism as we know it today. It was perhaps the most successful revival of a religion (or maybe a priesthood) in all history. Hinduism gained royal patronage under the Gupta dynasty of the fourth to sixth centuries CE, including a major triumph for the priests with the restoration of the horse sacrifice.

BUDDHIST CONTACT WITH THE WEST

Alexander conquered the areas then known as Gandhara and Bactria in 327 BCE. He and his army spent some time in the region, and fought several battles in northern Indian, advancing through the Punjab as far east as the Beas River outside Amritsar. Alexander wanted to extend his conquests further into India, but his troops prevailed upon him to return to the west.

Military garrisons and civil administrations were established all the way along Alexander’s route. Many hundreds of thousands of Greek colonists, soldiers of fortune and other opportunists poured into Asia Minor following Alexander and throughout the Hellenist period. The flat fertile farmlands of Asia Minor held much greater appeal to the colonists than the mountainous areas of Greece.

Following the death of Alexander in 323 BCE, the eastern part of his empire came under the control of one of his generals, Seleucus Nicator (reigned 331-281 BCE). In India, Chandragupta Maurya (reigned 340-293 BCE) defeated the heirs of Bimbisara to take control of north eastern India, and then moved rapidly west, conquering some 16 of the small kingdoms of northern India, until he came into conflict with Seleucus, who was expanding his empire further east into India. Alexander had faced a number of small independent kingdoms. Seleucus found himself up against a united empire with an army greater than his own. Apparently,

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India and Asia Minor – 200 BCE to 100 CE

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both Seleucus and Chandragupta considered that conflict was counterproductive. A truce was negotiated. Seleucus ceded Gandhara to Chandragupta and in return received 300 (some sources state 500) war elephants. Seleucus also gave a Greek princess (some sources state his own daughter) in marriage to Chandragupta and sent an ambassador to the Mauryan capital city at Pataliputra, present day Patna. The ambassador was Megasthenes, and his account of his time in India was one of the best historical records of the period, even though the original work has been lost, and only references to it remain. The Mauryan and Seleucid Empires remained on good terms for many years – in fact for so long as they both existed.

Chandragupta has succeeded in uniting all of northern India for the first time, and the benefits to trade were enormous. The Mauryan Empire continued to expand, and reached its peak under Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka (reigned 269-232 BCE). It is thought that Seleucus' daughter may have been Ashoka's grandmother, and that Ashoka may have spoken at least some Greek. Ashoka expanded his empire to the south and east. His conquest of the region of Kalinga, present day Orissa, was savage, even by the brutal standards of that time. Over 100,000 were killed, a similar number subsequently died of their wounds, and some 150,000 men, women and children were sold into slavery. Ashoka was shocked and sickened at the extent of the carnage, and vowed never again to engage in armed conquest.

In Ashoka's times, a ruler would lead his army into battle, or at least be present on the battlefield. If a ruler were killed or captured, his army would stop fighting – there would no longer be any reason to fight or any one to fight for. The surviving soldiers of the defeated army would scramble to escape, to avoid being killed or captured and sold into slavery.

Also in those times, although cities were growing rapidly, for most people, life still revolved around the village. The villagers paid tribute (in cash or in kind, including providing recruits for the army) to the head man, who paid tribute to the mayor of the nearest town, who paid tribute to the district governor, who paid tribute to the regional ruler. In the smallest kingdoms there may not have been as many levels of authority, but so long as everybody paid, life went on as usual. If a ruler was displaced by a palace coup or an invading enemy, life might well continue at village level without most people even being aware of the change, unless the village happened to be in the path of the invading army. In the event of invasion, mayors or governors might sue for peace and agree to pay tribute to the invader rather than fight. Alexander 'conquered' huge areas by the acquiescence of the local political leaders. Similarly, a district governor might change loyalty and pay tribute to a more powerful or more threatening regional ruler. If mayors or governors decided to fight the invader, or to rebel against their ruler, then there would be no quarter. The invader or ruler needed to pay his army, and one of the cheapest and most effective ways to do that was to allow the army to rape, pillage and plunder. Mayors or governors who decided to fight knew the price of failure.

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The reason Ashoka is regarded as perhaps the greatest of the early Indian rulers and is still revered in India today is that he devoted the remainder of his reign to the welfare of his subjects.

Ashoka became a Buddhist and actively promoted Buddhism within his empire, but did not attempt to convert his subjects to Buddhism by force. He ordered the construction of literally thousands of stupas and monasteries, and lavished huge sums of money on the running and maintenance of the monasteries. Ashoka also ordered the erection of a large number of tall stone pillars throughout his empire. The pillars were twelve to fifteen metres high and weighed up to fifty tonnes. They were surmounted by a capital, generally in the form of an animal. On the pillars and other large slabs of rock, he had engraved edicts for the orderly and peaceful governance of his empire on Buddhist principles. Ashoka's edicts are the first authentic records to be left by an Indian ruler. The most famous Ashoka Pillar carried the Four Lion and Dhamma Chakra Capital. The capital had four roaring lions seated back to back, surmounted by a dhamma wheel, representing the setting of the wheel of dhamma in motion and the spread of the dhamma to the four corners of the world. The remains of the pillar and capital were unearthed at the Deer Park in Sarnath in 1904 CE (page 176). The four lions were remarkably well preserved, but the dhamma wheel had been lost. The remaining four lions of the capital were adopted as the official emblem of the nation of India.

Ashoka was keen to promote trade and to maintain good diplomatic relations with the surrounding empires and then world powers. He was also very active in spreading Buddhism outside of his own empire. He dispatched large numbers of ambassadors and trade emissaries at regular intervals, and sent Buddhist monks as missionaries along with them. Ashoka's edicts list the names of some of the rulers to whom he sent representatives, and the regions that they controlled. Included were Sri Lanka and Burma to the east, and the kingdoms to the west as far as the Mediterranean. Ashoka sent Dhamaraksita, who was described as being Greek himself, as his ambassador to the Greeks, who were identified as the Yonas. He also sent ambassadors to the Greek rulers of Egypt, Syria, Anatolia (Turkey), Cyrene (Libya), Epirus (Albania and north west Greece) and Macedonia. It is thought that many of these rulers sent ambassadors to Ashoka. Ptolemaic Egypt sent Dionysius to Pataliputra, who like Megasthenes before him, stayed for some years in India and was also known to have written an account of his experiences, although once again, the original work has been lost, and only references to it remain.

SOME SPECULATIONS

It is known that there were Indian trading communities in many of the major trading ports and cities in many locations throughout Asia Minor and the Mediterranean. These communities would have contained Buddhists, in all probability they would have been predominantly or even exclusively Buddhist. The

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larger communities would have been ministered to by Buddhist monks. There are references to a monastic community located on the shores of Lake Mariout just south of Alexandria in Egypt in the period from the second century BCE through to the beginnings of the common era. It is thought that this community may have originated from the Buddhist monks sent by Ashoka to Ptolemaic Egypt.

The Ptolemies wanted to make Alexandria not just the most important trading port of the Mediterranean, they also wanted Alexandria to be the cultural capital of the known world. Vast amounts of money were invested in the Library of Alexandria, founded in the third century BCE by Ptolemy II (reigned 285-246 BCE), which did become the largest, most extensive and most famous library of its time, and a truly legendary place of learning. Partial and incomplete excavations in 2004 unearthed a number of lecture halls estimated to have seating for over 5,000 students, with indications of further structures yet to be uncovered. The library attracted scholars from all parts of the known world. Given the extent of diplomatic contact and volume of trade between Egypt and India, it would be reasonable to assume that, like the university at Taxila, the library would have contained Buddhist texts and that these texts would have been widely studied.

So, there is evidence of both Buddhists and Buddhism as far west as Egypt and Greece from the time of Ashoka through to the beginning of the common era.

However, in regard to Buddhism in the west, there are so few relevant historical records available from that time, and so little relevant archaeological evidence remains, that it is difficult to say more than that.

The spread of Buddhism to the east to Sri Lanka and Burma and to the north to Tibet then east to China, Korea and Japan is well documented, not least because Buddhism has a continuous history as the major tradition, or at least an active tradition, in those countries.

In comparison, the spread of Buddhism to the west is at best a controversial area of the early history of Buddhism, generally not mentioned by main stream historians or even Buddhist historians. Some historians have hypothesised that the rise of Christianity and subsequent rise of Islam may have obliterated whatever traces of Buddhism there may have been. Amongst those historians who have attempted to examine this issue, there is speculation that there were subtle yet detectable Buddhist influences, or more broadly Indian mystical and philosophical influences, in the development of Greek philosophy. In particular, the Greek Stoics have been sited as being heavily influenced by Indian traditions.

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DIARY

This section records our day to day travels and activities, without lots of the boring bits. The following section IMPRESSIONS FROM OUR TRAVELS covers other matters that didn't seem to fit into the diary.

CAIRO

DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2008

We arrived at Cairo airport early in the morning. Omar our man in Egypt was in Luxor, but had made arrangements for us. We were met inside the terminal by our first Ahmed, Ahmed of Cairo or Ahmed I to distinguish him from subsequent Ahmeds. He was shortish, 30'ish, spoke perfect English and looked resplendent in a suit and tie, thick black rimmed glasses and a helmet of close-cropped black hair. Whilst we waited in the queue, Kim attempted to explain to Ahmed the problem of the Greek visas. Essentially, Sayadaw's entry date to Greece was two days later than the other four of us. We needed to change Sayadaw's visa or all five of our airline tickets and hotel bookings. The terminal was modern and clean, spacious and not overly crowded, with plenty of well-armed security types in evidence, and we proceeded through passport control and customs smoothly and efficiently.

You very quickly became aware of security in Egypt. There were a lot of men in black berets and black woollen military uniforms with automatic weapons and they were a highly visible presence wherever we went. One or more of these men were permanently on duty at the entry to hotels and public buildings. To enter, you passed through a metal detector and body search, and sometimes baggage x-ray. A huge number of Egyptians spend their entire working lives sitting behind a metal detector, waving through the tourists, especially pretty young women, and harassing those they disliked, mostly Egyptian taxi drivers and delivery men. Most of those in black were tourist police, but there sometimes appeared to be regular police or army or security people in black, although they usually wore different uniforms. It was difficult to tell, because they became agitated and vocal if you seemed to be looking too closely or paying too much attention.

Ahmed had a van and driver waiting. It was so early in the morning there was almost no traffic – apparently not the usual Cairo gridlock. Traffic was an intriguing mix of ultra-modern expensive luxury European and Japanese cars that had been polished and preened to perfection alongside cars, vans, trucks and buses that seemed to have just escaped the wrecking yard, and in the outside lane there were donkey carts. The trip to Giza took about 40 minutes, during which time Kim, Phra Mana and Ahmed continued to discuss the visa problem. The pyramids were visible from quite some distance, bobbing in and out of sight between the buildings. We booked in to our hotel, there was further discussion on visas, tickets and

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bookings, then Ahmed departed and we went to breakfast.

Ahmed had described the pyramids as being an easy 20 minute walk from our hotel. Kim and I could see them from our bedroom window. We set off on foot to have a bit of a look at the town on the way as we needed to attack an ATM and we needed to purchase phone cards.

At the last bend in the road and with the entry to the pyramid compound in sight, we were ambushed by a taxi driver. Did we want a camel ride round the pyramids? A certain member of our party just couldn't get into the taxi fast enough. "Take me to the camels!" she cried. It was a small car designed for a driver and three passengers. With six of us, it was a tight squeeze. So we drove from the entry some number of kilometres round the back of the enclosure to the animal staging area. There were some pretty basic stable-like structures with lots of horses tethered to anything that didn't move – guard rails, fences, posts or just nails hammered into the walls. The taxi driver obviously had an arrangement with one of the animal operators. We were delivered up to our operator, and commenced negotiations. We wanted camels – five of us so five camels. Aaah, but there was a problem. We were late, many people had been equipped already, and they had run out of camels. There were three camels and two horses. Of course, it was all a charade – they only had three camels no matter what time of day you arrived. Phra Mick and I settled for horses. How much? Oh, don't worry, we give you a good price. Yes, but how much? Ok Ok – your guide will tell you. That decided, clambered aboard our animals, and proceeded some 200m down the road and round the corner.

It was at this point that we were told the price we would have to pay for either the short trip or the long trip. It was a trick we encountered often in Egypt – wait till the fish has well and truly swallowed the bait before you jag the hook.

We opted for the long trip, haggled just enough to show how tough we were, handed over our money, then set off under the guidance of Nasser on horseback, maybe on the right side of 40 but not by much, and two young boys on foot. The horse Nasser was riding was in much better health and condition than our mounts, and his saddle looked like it still had a full covering of leather, without the frame and the metal bits poking out, and into the rider, as mine did. The camels were in better shape than the horses, but they would still have raised an eyebrow or two at the RSPCA. The camel saddles actually looked well padded and quite comfortable. The camels were roped together head to tail and were lead by one of the boys. The horses were lead one in each hand by the other boy, until Nasser discovered that I could ride well enough to be left to my own devices.

On one side of the wall or fence of the pyramid enclosure, there was the town. On the other side, there was the desert. We entered the desert and approached the pyramids from the rear – the south. We were on a ridge (the Maddi Formation)

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some distance from the pyramids with a gully (wadi) in front of us between us and the pyramids on the next ridge (the Mokkatam Formation). We moved sedately from the eastern end of the ridge to the west, stopping for Nasser to take our photos with our own cameras at each of the famous vantage points for each of the famous views of each of the famous aspects. It was surprising just how different the pyramids in their various groupings looked when viewed from the different vantage points. The combination of distance and perspective created optical illusions as to their relative sizes and positions. From the last vantage point, the relative sizes of the three major pyramids appeared exactly the opposite of their actual sizes.

It was time to cross the plateau for the close up encounter. We moved down into the wadi and stopped to examine some of the tombs of the officials, then up the slope to the base of Pyramid 3 (Menkaure reigned 2494-2472 BCE, 65m high with 3 satellite pyramids). We stopped to examine the remains of the mortuary temple, including the largest blocks of stone that were visible in the Giza pyramid complex, some weighing over 200 tons. We examined the capping stones at the base of the pyramid and clamber up a few courses of stonework to the next famous vantage point for the next round of photos. We proceeded around the tourist trail, stopping at each of the viewing points and photo points, ending with the last photo stop at the Sphinx. There were a large number of the black uniformed armed men around, including quite a few mounted on camels. At Pyramid 2 (Khafre reigned 2520-2494 BCE, 144m high with one satellite pyramid, now almost completely demolished) we purchased extra tickets and ventured inside to the burial chamber. There was a long narrow passage of just crouching height, which first sloped down at about 20 degrees, then flattened out and then rose at again about 20 degrees before another flat section entering the chamber – a space 14.5m by 5m by 6.8m in height. The walls, floor and ceiling were unadorned dressed stone. The room contained the bottom half of a large unadorned stone sarcophagus – and nothing else.

We mounted up for the final time for the ride back to the staging area. On the way Nasser and the boys demanded further payments. Our other payments had been for the boss – the extra was for them and hadn't they earned it and hadn't we enjoyed our ride? We were stopped in an alleyway with not much prospect of getting out of there unless we dismounted and walked. Dismounting from a horse is easy, but dismounting from a standing camel is not. We paid, but we were learning fast.

Back at the staging area, as each of us dismounted we were escorted indoors. Would we like to use the bathroom? Would we care for a drink? When the five of us were assembled, we were ushered through to what turned out to be the sales room of a perfumery. We were seated around the walls on long café type padded benches, above which on all four walls were display cabinets containing dozens of bottles of perfume samples and hundreds of empty glass perfume bottles in a staggering variety of styles, shapes and sizes. The salesman of the day delivered a long-winded spiel on the traditional ancient products (hadn't changed since

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Nefertiti), the manufacturing process (the lotus buds were crushed by hand by virgins on the night of the full moon), the health benefits (cures everything from head aches to heart attacks) and the sweetness of the fragrances (one whiff and your lover will go wild!). It was a spiel he had obviously delivered so often he was able to do so in his sleep, and indeed appeared to be doing so. The flatness of the delivery and lack of enthusiasm was putting us to sleep – and not assisted by our jetlag and lack of sleep in the last 48 hours.

We purchased a small quantity of lotus oil, just to get out of there without creating a fuss. Lotus oil is actually an excellent product with an appealing fragrance, and relevant to our research. We might have bought a wider selection of the range of products on offer if the approach had been more subtle and the salesman had known when to stop talking.

Our taxi driver was waiting for us. A short time later we found ourselves at a papyrus shop – obviously another of our taxi driver’s business arrangements. The head honcho on duty at the time delivered a spiel on how papyrus sheets were produced and demonstrated the process as he went. He stood behind a bench with a sink full of soaking papyrus stems, a sharp knife, a cutting board, a rolling pin and a small screw-down press. There were another two such benches in other parts of the shop, maybe for simultaneous demonstrations when the bus-loads of tourists arrived. Again, it was a performance that had been repeated so often that it was mechanical and there was complete indifference in the delivery. We wandered around the shop and were swamped by the younger sales staff who displayed persistence if nothing else. One of the younger men latched onto Kim and tried to steer her to the back of the shop with tender words and beseechments. We haggled a bit and purchased a bit. We were warned not to buy cheap stuff from the street stalls. They were not genuine papyrus – they were banana leaf and fell apart as soon as you bought them.

It was late afternoon and we were tired. We told our taxi driver that we didn’t want any more diversions, just straight back to the hotel. On the way, he quizzed us about our plans for tomorrow and our requirements for transport. We declined. “I have a wife and family to feed. I will drive you. I will bring two cars – my son will drive one. I will wait for you here under these trees. I will be here. Look for me.”

Back at the hotel, there was a courtyard with a number of shops. Those with that propensity went shopping while the rest of us retired to our rooms.

DAY 2 – THURSDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2008

We were up early for the trip into Cairo to the Egyptian Museum. Transport had been arranged by Abdullah, an affable young man from one of the shops in the courtyard who spoke English reasonably fluently. There were two modern

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European cars and two drivers, each named Mohamed – young Mohamed (mid 20’s and enough English to sustain a conversation) and old Mohamed. (late 30’s and no English beyond the “Good morning – how are you?” sort of thing). Abdullah, Kim and I travelled with young Mohamed and the monks with old Mohamed.

The trip took about an hour. Egyptians drove on the right – or at least most of them did most of the time. Donkey carts and taxis in particular ignored this rule when it suited. Left hand turns were restricted with right turns and u-turns and roundabouts. Egyptian drivers were not afraid to use the horn, but its use was less prevalent than in India. Speed humps were liberally scattered about in the more congested areas. There were a lot of freeways in Cairo, the older more narrow ones with two marked traffic lanes and three lanes of moving traffic – often a tight squeeze, with plenty of evidence of bumps and home repair jobs on the older vehicles. At the side of the road, even some freeways, there was a sort-of integration zone between the traffic and the footpath or shops or apartment blocks or whatever else happened to be there. This was where the busses stopped, where the donkey carts were parked whilst the drivers sold their produce off the carts to the locals, and where the flocks of sheep and goats congregated.

The outer suburbs of Cairo looked like one huge construction site. There were literally hundreds of ten to fifteen story residential apartment buildings with the top floor still under construction and all the lower floors fully occupied. Every building had literally dozens of TV dishes poking out of the roof or top floor. Some of the shops were draped with red curtains and bunting for St Valentine’s Day, but it didn’t seem to be a hugely popular event.

We arrived at the museum at about 8.30am. Abdullah and young Mohamed drove Sayadaw and Kim to the Greek Consulate. Phra Mana, Phra Mick and I joined the large queue outside the gates to the museum courtyard awaiting opening time at 9.00am. Inside the gates there were ten or more of the men in black who put us through a full airport screening – metal detector, baggage x-ray, body search. We then had to check in our cameras (not allowed into the museum) and buy our tickets. At the entry to the museum, we went through the procedure a second time.

In the museum at about 10.30am Phra Mana was approached by a lady who identified herself as a Buddhist, and a volunteer worker at the museum. Phra Mana mentioned that we were seeking evidence of a settlement that may have been a Buddhist monastery located near Alexandria and dating from the second century BCE. The lady said that there was nothing like that in the museum itself, and offered to take us to the library, which was located in the same building. The library staff were very helpful, and suggested a number of books which might shed light on the matter. We examined several books they retrieved for us, and noted the publication details of a number of books that might be useful.

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We returned to the museum. I'm not entirely sure why, but we now had a guide named Abdul, who took it upon himself to drag us from exhibit to exhibit and lecture us in far from fluent English, telling us not much more than was written on the display cases, if that – and sometimes something entirely different.

“This is Rosetta Stone. Most important stone in whole of Egypt. Why? Because now can read hieroglyphics.” Actually, it was a replica, the original was in the British Museum. The stone was recovered by Napoleon's troops in 1799 CE in the town of Rosetta, about 50 km east of Alexandria on the delta coast. It was inscribed with a decree issued in 196 BCE intended to legitimise the role of Ptolemy V as pharaoh at a time when parts of the country were in revolt. The decree was repeated three times, each time in a different script – Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egyptian demotic and Greek. This was the key to deciphering hieroglyphics.

Sayadaw and Kim returned. They had not been able to change the visa, so we had little choice other than to stay in Egypt an extra two days and change the airline tickets and hotel bookings. We escaped the awful Abdul for lunch at the museum restaurant, where we met a family group of Singaporeans, one of whom had been on retreat at Sunnataram.

After lunch, Abdullah took Phra Mana and Kim to the Egypt Air office while Sayadaw, Phra Mick and I attempted to enjoy the museum despite Abdul's worst efforts. Mercifully, Abdul decided to take us to the Tutankhamen section and leave us to wander at our leisure. Phra Mana and Kim returned and we continued to wander till closing time.

Outside the museum, Abdullah and the two Mohameds were waiting for us. We drove back to Giza. We declined the offer of attending the light show at the Sphinx and opted to retire early.

DAY 3 – FRIDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2008

We were returning to the museum in Cairo, so it was another early start. Kim and I were subtly manoeuvred towards the car driven by old Mohamed. Unbeknownst to us, old Mohamed had taken a fancy to Kim and had insisted on the swap. We were starting to realise that Egyptian men were hugely attracted to western women, especially if they were slim, attractive and did not wear a burka. As it was Friday, the Muslim holy day, there was light traffic and the trip took only half an hour. We arrived around 8.00am. We were able to see more of the things we particularly wanted to see without Abdul. In particular, Phra Mana found many symbols and representations that resembled their Buddhist equivalents, especially amongst the exhibits from the Greco-Roman period. We purchased a number of books in the museum shop and in a shop opposite the main gate to the museum, including an excellent 631 page guide to the museum.

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At about 12.30pm we drove south to Saqqara (Sakkara). There was an entry gate with a number of well-armed men in black on guard, then a kilometre or so beyond that to the right was the visitor reception centre. We purchased our tickets, watched a short film giving an introduction to and overview of the site, and wandered around the site museum – a small museum but worth visiting. We had coffee at the restaurant, and visited the rest rooms. The complex was modern and spacious with simple crisp square lines, rendered in a pale brown desert colour, and scrupulously clean and tidy.

We drove from the reception centre up onto the plateau to the next gate with more men in black. A guide somehow managed to attach himself to us. He was shortish, plumpish, late 30'ish and casually but smartly dressed in European clothing. We set off on foot to explore some of the early tombs of the nobles and wealthy. Our guide took us to two types of tombs. There were mastabas, which started as a simple mud brick structures above the burial and which over time gradually became more elaborate, with the construction of rooms with decorated walls, till eventually the pharaohs had imitation palaces and the nobles imitation houses. The other type of tomb we visited was entirely underground, consisting of several rooms, again with carvings and relief work and paintings on the walls.

Each of the tombs was guarded by a weather-beaten middle to older aged Egyptian man in a galabia and turban-like headgear. The galabia was a traditional neck-to-floor long-sleeved nightshirt-like garment. The turban was small and tight-fitting, almost always of simple white cotton, unlike the more flamboyant and much larger turbans of India. The attendants didn't seem too happy to see us or to allow us access, but none the less expected to be paid a pound or two for doing so.

The dominant feature of the site was the first pyramid and mortuary complex built in stone – the Step Pyramid of Djoser (reigned 2630-2611 BCE, 62m high). We entered the rectangular complex at the south east corner via the original narrow doorway set into a restored section of the 10m high stone wall which originally surrounded the whole complex. Beyond the doorway there was a partially restored colonnade which lead to an open area with one wall running directly ahead (west) and another to the right (north), with the pyramid some distance off to the right. There were a number of smaller ruined structures along the two walls.

We spent some time wandering around and ended up at a small bazaar beside the pyramid. We bought enough stuff to bring a smile to the face of the stallholder. It was time to leave. Our guide announced that he would charge us X number of Egyptian pounds, which sounded reasonable until he added – each! As we had not been expecting to pay him anything at all, except perhaps a tip, this came as a rude shock, and Kim told him so in no uncertain terms. If he had expected to be paid he should have said so up front, not waited till after the event. Kim gave him X number of Egyptian pounds in total. He was not happy, and walked with us all the

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way back to the car park, maybe hoping for a change of heart from Kim, or maybe because that was where he would lie in wait for his next victim.

We drove back to Giza, and somehow managed to find ourselves in the sales room of another perfumery. The layout was almost identical to the previous one, and the spiel too was almost identical and equally poorly delivered, this time by the owner of the shop, a morbidly obese man in a short galabia, somewhat less than 1.6m in height but somewhat more than 160kg in weight – he had reached that stage where he had flab on his flab. Again, we purchased just enough to escape without causing a fuss. We returned to our hotel and again declined the offer of the light show.

DAY 4 – SATURDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2008

We returned to the pyramids, this time by car and to the normal entry gate. We purchased our tickets and went through security. Only 100m to 150m inside the security gate and down a slight slope there was the well preserved valley temple of Khafre just below the right paw of the Sphinx, with the Temple of the Sphinx next to it and directly in front of the Sphinx. The valley temple included massive blocks of stone, some estimated to weigh 75 to 100 tons. The Sphinx was cordoned off within a separate enclosure, but we got a close side view of it from the causeway at the rear of the valley temple which once led up the slope to Pyramid 2. The road ran on the other side of the Sphinx, up the hill to the top of the plateau and the pyramids. We walked to Pyramid 1 (Khufu 2551-2528 BCE, 147m high with 4 satellite pyramids) and the Museum of the Solar Barque alongside it. It was necessary to purchase additional tickets to enter the museum. Inside there was more security, the usual baggage x-ray and body search. We had to put on cloth overshoes. We moved from security to the gift shop then to the lower level of the museum where there were photographs of the discovery and reassembly of the barque and a number of models and artefacts. The museum was built over the trench in which the barque was found, and a section of the trench formed part of the base of the museum. There was a spiral arrangement of galleries which allowed you to view the barque from above, the sides and below.

We wandered around the other parts of the site we had not seen on our camel ride. We would have purchased the extra tickets required to enter Pyramid 1 and clamber up the Grand Gallery to the King's Chamber, but the pyramid was 'Closed for Lunch' or at least the entry booth was. In a country so dependant on the tourist industry, you would think it would be economically viable to run two shifts of ticket sellers and ticket collectors at the nation's major tourist attraction and the one most easily accessible to the largest number of tourists.

We checked out of our hotel and drove to the airport for the flight to Luxor. We said goodbye to Abdullah and the two Mohameds, and gave each a small token of our gratitude – more for Abdullah and young Mohamed than dirty old Mohamed.

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Bobbing in and out of sight between the buildings – Giza



First photo stop – long distance view of the pyramids – Giza

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From left to right – Pyramid 3 (3 satellites, all visible) Pyramid 2 (1 satellite, not visible) Pyramid 1 (4 satellites, 2 just barely visible) – Giza

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Tombs in the wadi with Pyramid 3 and one of its satellite above – Giza

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Pyramid 3 – Giza

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Last photo stop – the Sphinx – Giza



Phra Mick, Sayadaw and Phra Mana
Jim and Kim – outside the Egyptian Museum – Cairo

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Site museum – Saqqara



Panel of four uraei – inside the museum – Saqqara

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PROPORTIONS IN THE ART OF THE OLD KINGDOM

In Old Kingdom art, figures are laid out according to a system of guidelines. A vertical line runs from the ear, dividing the body into two parts. Seven horizontal lines pass through the key points of the body: the hairline, the junction of neck and shoulders, the armpits, the bottom of the ribcage and elbow, the lower edge of the buttocks, the knee, and the bottom of the feet. It is only in the Middle Kingdom that additional vertical lines are added, creating a grid.

LES PROPORTIONS DANS L'ART DE L'ANCIEN EMPIRE

À l'Ancien Empire, les représentations humaines sont établies à l'aide d'un système de tracés directeurs. Un axe vertical disposé le long de l'oreille divise le corps en deux parties. Sept lignes horizontales passent par les points clefs du corps : la ligne des cheveux, la jonction du cou et épaules, les aisselles, la base de la cage thoracique et le coude, la base des fesses, le genou et la base. Ce n'est qu'au Moyen Empire que des verticales, compléteront des lignes horizontales pour constituer un quadrillage.

الخطوط الإرشادية المستخدمة خلال العولة القديمة (من ليدسيس)

Inside the museum – Saqqara

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Mastaba tomb - Saqqara



Inside a tomb – Saqqara

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Entry to the Step Pyramid compound – Saqqara



Step Pyramid – with our guide – Saqqara

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Valley Temple – Pyramid 2 – Giza



The Great Sphinx with Pyramid 1 in the background – Giza

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Museum of the Solar Barque and a small temple below Pyramid 1 – Giza



**Pyramid 1 – Giza
(above and following page)**

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Museum of the Solar Barque – Giza

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LUXOR

DAY 4 – SATURDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2008 (Continued)

Flying over Egypt in the daylight was amazing, because it was just desert – desert as far as you could see. There was a thin strip of blue, the Nile, with a thin strip of green on each side, and then just ... desert ... off to the horizon in every direction.

Luxor airport was modern and clean. Because there were five of us, the head honcho of the taxi rank insisted that we take two taxis, even though over half the taxis in the rank were seven seat Peugeot 504 station wagons. We argued for a while, but eventually we capitulated – we had a lot of luggage and it was a long walk into town.

Omar met us at our hotel. He was originally from Lebanon, was of medium height, medium build, mid 30'ish, spoke with a soft American accent and was wearing thongs, jeans, glasses and a baseball cap. He introduced us to Ahmed of Luxor or Ahmed II, who would be our driver and guide during our stay in Luxor. Ahmed II was unaffectedly gracious and charming, and spoke English fluently. He was a well preserved 60'ish, tall, white haired Egyptian dressed in a galabia, but no turban. He walked with a slight limp and whatever his actual age was still better than ordinary-looking or unattractive, despite missing his left front tooth and the one next to the left, which had the unfortunate effect of making the remaining right front tooth appear more like a fang.

Kim explained to Omar the problem of the Greek visas and that we had attempted to change our flights and hotel bookings. Omar inspected our flight documents and decided that the bookings had in fact not been changed. There was also a problem with our rooms – the monks had been jammed into a small twin room with a temporary third bed on the floor, and the temporary bed broke when Phra Mick sat on it for the first time. We were given to understand that was because our original booking had been cancelled, no rooms had been re-booked, and our original rooms had been reallocated. Well done, Ahmed I. Omar said he would ensure our flights back to Cairo and then Athens would be rebooked. Omar also arranged for new rooms, but they would not be available until the current occupants checked out.

It was just on dusk outside. We stepped out of our hotel into the streets of Luxor where for the first time we encountered the horse drawn calabashes in addition to the normal traffic, including the ubiquitous donkey carts. We walked one block west to the river, then two or three blocks north to the Luxor Museum. The museum was opened in 1975, built on a walk-thru design, and had a small but excellent collection, including a stunning virtually undamaged slightly less than life sized statue of Thutmosis III in black granite with a mat finish – absolutely astonishing. Statues of Amenhotep III, Iwnit and Horemheb were also incredible.

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DAY 5 – SUNDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2008

Ahmed II had agreed to meet us by the river at 10.00am – he considered tourists did not get out of bed any earlier than that, or perhaps he didn't want to get out of bed any earlier – but we were out and about by 8.00am, so we walked about two blocks south to Luxor Temple, Temple of Amun-Ra, and spent two hours there.

Various parts of the temple have been usurped by later religions. The outer sanctuary was converted into a Christian church in the Roman period. The Egyptian reliefs were plastered over and replaced with paintings or frescos of Christian scenes. There were structural alterations, including Roman pillars and an arched alcove. Neither the Egyptians nor the Greeks used the arch in their temples or other buildings, although the Egyptians did carve barrel vaulted ceilings in some rock-cut tombs, and the tomb of Phillip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, had a block-built barrel vaulted ceiling, considered to be the first such structure in the Greek world. The Romans employed the arch and the dome, perhaps most famously in their aqueducts and the Parthenon. The Egyptian hypostyle halls with their forest of massive stone pillars were in stark contrast to the Parthenon and later Christian cathedrals with their slender columns, soaring gothic arches and vast open spaces. The Mosque of Abu el-Haggag occupied the north east quarter of the Courtyard of Ramesses II, butting up along the whole of the eastern half of the First Pylon. The mosque was built in the thirteenth century CE and is still in use today.

We found Ahmed having a smoke, as he frequently did. Egyptians smoke. Shops do not sell cigarettes by the packet – they sell them by the carton, and the water pipe, known as a shisha or goza in Egypt, a narghile in Turkey and Syria, or a hookah in India, was on sale in almost every shop in town and in the bazaar. Restaurants and cafes had water pipes lined up and ready, and in use, with individuals, including women, groups of three or four around a table, and large groups lined up along the walls puffing away contentedly and sipping their coffee.

We were to catch a ferry across to the west bank, because apparently the nearest bridge was 15 km up river. It turned out to be a small boat owned by Ahmed or his family or his business connections – we were the only passengers on board. Ahmed had his taxi parked on the west bank. It was a seven seat Peugeot 504 station wagons, so we had plenty of room and could travel in comfort. We drove through the small town and out into the irrigated farm land. There were rice paddies and crops of sugar cane, wheat, mustard, tomatoes, carrots, and lucerne for feed for the horses and donkeys in town, plus date palms, banana, lemon, orange and other fruit trees. At the edge of the farm land, you could stand with one foot ankle deep in water in a rice paddy and the other foot in the desert. Where the water stopped, the desert started. We arrived at the Valley of the Queens where we entered three of the tombs. Despite sun glasses, my eyes were becoming mildly but noticeably irritated and strained. The dry desert air dehydrated your eyes, the light seemed intensely

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bright, there was glare off the desert landscape, and the slightest puff of wind stirred up the fine dust.

Ahmed selected a highly authentic highly reputed highly local restaurant which he highly recommended to us for lunch – undoubtedly another business connection. There seemed some reluctance to take our order. When that hurdle was eventually overcome, drinks began to arrive, one at a time, and served from a tray. We then waited for over an hour before the staff began cooking, because a tour bus was arriving and the staff did not want to stress themselves by cooking twice. I guess the food was authentic and local, but it was certainly not worth waiting for.

In the afternoon we drove to two of the largest temple complexes, Ramesseum and Medinet Habu, or the mortuary temples of Ramesses II and III respectively, then to Deir el-Madina, the Village of the Workers, containing the remnants of the houses and tombs of the people who worked on the royal tombs. We entered two very small tombs, considered to be the best preserved and most ornate tombs of the senior craftsmen of the village. The same boat was waiting to take us back across the river. At the hotel, the new rooms were available. The monk's room was a considerable improvement in terms of space, and Phra Mick had a real bed. We declined the offer of a light show at Karnak. Apparently, light shows were popular with the tourists, and the Egyptians obliged by putting them on at every suitable venue.

DAY 6 – MONDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2008

We were up early and spent some time looking around the town and shopping before we joined Ahmed for the boat trip to the west bank. Ahmed drove us first to Deir el-Bahari, the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut, then to an alabaster factory and gift shop – no doubt another business connection. Ahmed had done all he could to discourage us from spending money elsewhere, with the promise that he would take us to where we could buy quality merchandise at the right price, and this was it. We watched demonstrations of carving and drilling out the interior of pots, and did our bit for the local economy by purchasing some pots and an assorted collection of gods, pharaohs, mummies and animal statues. We chose our own restaurant for lunch, where we found the food and the service were both excellent. This did not amuse Ahmed, but he no doubt knew the owner and would expect the customary form of recognition for the delivery of tourists in any case.

It was then on to the Valley of the Kings. A single ticket allowed entry to three tombs – if you wanted to see more tombs, presumably you needed to buy more tickets. It would have been handy to have known this in advance, because it was a long walk back to the ticket office. In the tomb of Ramesses III we got into a shouting match and near fight with a tomb attendant, a lowly paid local in a galabia, who accused Phra Mick of taking photos inside the tomb. We were

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required to check in our movie cameras, but were allowed to retain our still cameras. You were permitted to take still photos outside the tombs, but not inside, which was one of the reasons why there were lots of attendants keeping an eye on us tourists. Most of the attendants we encountered were friendly, and those that spoke at least some English were helpful – this one for what ever reason was obnoxious and officious. In hindsight, perhaps the crux of the problem was that when first approached, Phra Mick had not offered the anticipated bribe.

Next, we purchased extra tickets to see the tomb of Tutankhamen. As an entity in itself, it was magnificent, but it suffered in comparison to other tombs. It was one of the least impressive tombs we saw, hugely underwhelming and vastly overpriced by comparison – but then, many tourists go mad for anything remotely connected to Tutankhamen, so you can't really blame the Egyptian tourist authorities for pricing the attraction in accordance with the demand.

Next day, we planned to visit Dendera, which involved joining a convoy run by the Egyptian Army, which involved an early start. Ahmed said that he would be at our hotel at 7.30am and could we please make an effort to be up in time because if we missed the convoy, we would have to wait another day for the next convoy – he just didn't think tourists could get out of bed that early.

Once again, we boarded the boat for the return to the east bank, and spent the evening walking round the town, shopping for souvenirs and items for the planned permanent exhibition on the early history of Buddhism at Sunnataram.

DAY 7 – TUESDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2008

Ahmed was wearing European cloths. He seemed relieved and happy that we were ready on time. We drove to the assembly point, where there were lots of men in the black uniforms with automatic weapons, even more regular army types in khaki with automatic weapons, and a number of men in galabias and turbans, most with shot guns but a few with automatic weapons. There were a lot of cars, taxis and buses – it was a big convoy. We set out and travelled at quite a good speed, often up to 100kph, on roads that had been cleared of all other traffic. There were more police and army personnel and armed men in galabias holding back the traffic at every intersection we drove through. We were travelling north along the river through irrigated farm land.

As we drove, Ahmed told us odd bits about the people, the countryside, and Egypt and answered our questions. The armed men in galabias were village guardians. The convoy was a response to the 1997 killing of 58 foreign tourists by Islamic extremists. Following the attack, there had been no tourists for two years, and then only a slow and gradual recovery. The country simply couldn't afford another two years without tourists. The reason there were so many unfinished buildings, with

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the second or third story only half started with reo rods poking out everywhere was because of a shortage of builders and building materials. Apparently, there had been a severe flood three or four years ago, the first in perhaps 60 years since the dams had been controlling the water flow. Virtually all the mud brick houses had been destroyed or badly damaged. Now, people were rebuilding in fired brick – they no longer felt safe in mud brick. As soon as a family had a roof and a few rooms, the builders moved on to the next family. The priority was to get as many people housed as possible as soon as possible. The dams had bought cheap electricity to the poor, which was important because of the lack of other fuel for cooking, but there was no longer an annual flood, and there were no longer any crocodiles in the river below the dams.

As we drove along, minding our own business, an army vehicle charged up from behind with the passenger window open and a soldier leaning out. The vehicle drew level and the soldier shouted to Ahmed “Have you got a pencil?” Phra Mick, sitting behind Ahmed, passed the soldier a biro. The army vehicle slowed and we continued on. Phra Mick asked Ahmed “Will he give it back?” Ahmed laughed heartily and we all joined in – as if !!! Well, maybe 15 or 20 minutes later, the army vehicle again charged up behind us, with the soldier leaning out the window holding out our pen! Ahmed was flabbergasted. Kim rummaged around in the bag of Australian souvenirs we carried to present to people on appropriate occasions, and this was one if ever there was one. Kim found a biro with Australian bush scenes and motifs on it. As the soldier drew alongside, Phra Mick took back our old pen and handed over the souvenir pen. The soldier initially hesitated but almost immediately caught on, laughed and waved – all whilst travelling at about 80kph. Ahmed was in shock – he still couldn’t believe it.

The trip to Dendera took about an hour, and we had two and a half hours to look around before the convoy departed for the return trip. The massive Temple of Hathor was one of the best preserved ancient buildings in Egypt – architecturally, or perhaps structurally, complete, with full roof, full walls, full floors. On the ceiling of the portico of a chapel dedicated to Osiris was the famous Dendera Zodiac. The temple was so perfectly complete that you do not need to use your imagination – you could actually BE there 5,000 years ago. It was truly remarkable.

However, the entire site and the temple in particular had been systematically and comprehensively desecrated in what must have been a carefully planned operation which required a lot of time and effort, and labour and equipment on a large scale.

The overwhelming majority of the largest and most prominent of the faces of the pillars, statues, carvings, reliefs and paintings had been attacked to remove the nose and often the eyes as well. Entire faces had been completely smashed. Many of the faces were pitted with holes that looked as if they had been used for target practice by archers and spear throwers. To reach and smash the faces of the Hathor Pillars

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some 20 metres above the floor would have required something in the nature of scaffolding or perhaps a Roman army type mobile siege tower.

Both Alexander the Great and then the Romans used the temple complex as an army camp. Both the Ptolemies and then the Romans carried out major building and restoration works. Later, the Coptic Christians plundered the lesser buildings to construct a church, now in ruins. The original Egyptian reliefs were visible on the inside faces of the blocks used to build the church walls. Although Alexander and the Romans may have inflicted some damage, they were not considered to have been responsible for the desecration. That has been attributed to the early Christians and Muslims. However, the issue of desecration is both complex and controversial.

Hacking off the nose (and ears) of a captured enemy or criminal was a form of humiliation and degradation widely practised from Greece across Turkey and Asia Minor and down into Arabia. It became a Muslim form of desecration of the idols of the infidels, along with decapitation and complete pulverization.

Muslims were considered the most likely to have removed the nose of the Great Sphinx of Giza. Historical accounts of the appearance of the Sphinx are conflicting, so it is not known exactly when the nose was removed, which would assist in establishing who carried out the work. However, there is clear evidence of how the damage was inflicted. Long metal rods were hammered into the nose, one from the bridge downwards and another upwards from under the nostrils. This was a carefully planned and well organised activity which would have taken some time to complete. It is reminiscent of the recent destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas of Afghanistan. If the explosive power that destroyed the Buddhas had been available at the time of the desecration of the Sphinx, there might not be a Sphinx today.

We had lunch in Luxor at a restaurant recommended by Omar. The food was excellent, the service was quick and efficient, the amenities were clean and the view was interesting, facing east into town from the third floor, overlooking the ongoing excavation of the avenue of sphinxes that once extended from the Luxor Temple to Karnak. We had asked Omar about another restaurant that had caught someone’s eye, but he told us “I would not recommend that restaurant to anyone – no matter how much I disliked them.”

Ahmed reappeared in his galabia and drove us just north of Luxor to Karnak, the largest temple complex of the ancient world. The 100 hectare site had three precincts, but only the main precinct, which contained the main temple, the massive Great Temple of Amun, was open to the public. The Festival Hall of Thutmose III in the rear of the temple had been used as a Coptic church, with Christian artwork still visible. The precinct also contained smaller temples and related buildings, a sacred lake, huge pylons, pillars, statues and obelisks, walls covered in reliefs, and more evidence of desecration. The damaged condition of much of what we had

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seen up until Dendera and Karnak might have been old age, fair wear and tear, or even plundering of stone for reuse in other building projects, ancient or more recent – but Dendera and Karnak had been desecrated.

We spent some time in a book shop near the Luxor Museum and nearby shops before returning to the hotel.

Kim and I ventured out just on dusk to purchase long johns, which Omar had recommended for tomorrow morning. At first, we tried a few regular clothing shops and failed completely, perhaps due to language difficulties as much as anything else. The thought of buying lj's in a desert country with searing hot summer temperatures might seem like a joke, however, when we got to the bazaar, we happened upon a trader who told us, and in fact showed us “You mean like this ?” that lj's were exactly what men wore under their galabias.

We bargained hard for over half an hour, and eventually purchased four sets – I had packed my own, because I had vivid memories of the cold nights in India on the last trip. After all that work, we were disappointed when Ahmed informed us that as a local, he paid exactly half of what we had paid. We had been warned that, in the bazaar especially, if you pay any more than 10% of the first asking price, you have paid a tourist price, not the local price.

DAY 8 – WEDNESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2008

Secure and comfortably warm in our lj's, we set off at about 4.30am in the pre-dawn darkness for a boat trip across the river and a bus trip out to a field right beside Ramesseum, where we had been a few days before. There were already a number of balloons aloft and another three being prepared for launching as we arrived. We waited in our assigned groups of about eight or ten people. As each balloon was filled, a group was boarded and the balloon launched. When our balloon was ready, we clambered aboard and up we went.

It was fascinating to see all the areas and monuments we had previously visited from the air and to gain a perspective of how they fitted into the landscape and related to each other. It was also interesting to view the farms from above. The farmland was very flat. The fields were small and regular with networks of irrigation channels and ditches and a variety of crops. There were a number of fires burning off crop residue, most identifiably sugar cane waste. We came down in the desert on the opposite side of the river maybe 20 km to the south.

Omar had arranged this excursion, and seemed to have some standing with the operators, because they took care to keep the five of us together, and I don't really know if Omar arranged this, but our balloon went highest by a huge margin, and also travelled furthest from the launch point, again, by a huge margin.

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We went back to the hotel for breakfast, then set off on foot for the bazaar. Those possessed of the shopping affliction had a terrific time, whilst the rest of us tried to entertain ourselves as best we could. Maybe it was because we were in the bazaar, but we were approached by more beggars that morning than in the rest of our time in Egypt.

In an upmarket jewellery shop, we met an English man who had spent many years living and working in Alexandria, sort of semi-attached to the library. We spoke to him about the monastic community at Lake Mariout. He gave us the name and contact details of an old friend from the library, Dr Sahar Humoda, and suggested we contact her when we went to Alexandria.

We had lunch at an excellent restaurant in the bazaar, dumped our shopping at the hotel, then met Ahmed by the river for a boat trip on the Nile. The Nile is one of the great rivers of the world. At Luxor, it had clear water, was 3 km to 5 km wide and about 10m deep. Despite, or perhaps because of the dams, it was relatively swift flowing with a strong current, somewhat like the Chao Phraya at Bangkok.

Apparently, one of the more popular tourist outings was to sail the Nile the way the ancients did. The prevailing wind blows south, so the ancients would sail up river. The current flows north, so the ancients would drift down river. There were always a number of the ancient style sailing boats out on the river, however, it transpired that we did not have a sailing boat – it was the same small ferry. We motored about 10 km upstream close to the west bank, then crossed over to the east bank, stopped the engine and drifted downstream. It was peaceful but boring – not exactly what we had come to Egypt to do. It seemed odd that there were no children playing by the river or swimming, as they do in India and especially in Thailand. We drifted past a swank new riverside resort, right next door to which was our destination and the supposed first highlight of the afternoon, Banana Island.

We clambered out of the boat, up a steep embankment, along a winding path through fields and trees, including some banana trees, and after about 350 metres arrived at a ramshackled shed. The shed was full of benches covered in the statues of gods and pharaohs and bric-a-brac of the cheap and nasty low end variety, many of which appeared to be already broken, and everything was covered in a thick layer of dust. In Australia, it would take some number of years to accumulate that much dust, but in Egypt, it might actually have been only weeks. On one side of the shed was a veranda with a table and a few chairs. Ahmed said we could have coffee, relax, and then buy up all the souvenirs and gifts we needed – obviously another business connection. We sat, we ordered coffee – no coffee, only bottled soft drinks. I think that was when Phra Mana decided he wanted to go back to the hotel – right now, no coffee, no soft drinks, no souvenirs – NOW!

This upset Ahmed's plans because the second highlight of the afternoon was to

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have been afternoon tea at Ahmed's home with his wife and family. Ahmed was disappointed, but we had tried to let him know from the beginning that we were not the average tourist group that got up around lunch time, took in a site or two, then hit the bars and partied till dawn. We were on a mission, we had places to go and things to see.

When we got back to the wharf, we gave Ahmed a generous gratuity – he had looked after us well in his own way. Then we found a clean, stylish café and had a coffee.

DAY 9 – THURSDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2008

We were up early again, at 4.00am, to pack all the books and statues. Each statue was carefully wrapped in paper or bubble-wrap and carefully placed in a bag or box. Our taxi arrived. There seemed to be some confusion as to whether it was the authorised taxi or an interloper or how much the bride would be or something or another else which seemed to require an awful lot of very guttural shouting and grunting between the taxi driver and the hotel staff and the unloading of the half of our luggage which and just been loaded. Eventually, a deal must have been struck, because the luggage was reloaded and we set off for the airport.

The taxi stopped far enough away from the terminal to allow the waiting crowd of would-be porters to swarm all over us, despite the fact that the driveway continued on under an awning reaching along the entire length of the terminal to the doors at the entrance. By now we had become hardened – we got our own trolleys and shifted our own luggage.

At the first x-ray station, we were asked to unwrap every statue because we might have been smuggling antiques. When we objected, we were asked could we prove they were not antiques, did we have an invoice. An invoice? we asked. From the bazaar? But that was not the end of it. We were asked to unpack it all again at the second x-ray station. We went back to the first station and dragged the guy who did the first inspection up to the second station to get us off the hook.

We arrived at Cairo domestic terminal to find Ahmed I in the same suit and glasses, with another van and driver. Kim and Phra Mana discussed with Ahmed our flights to Athens, and return to Cairo in transit to Bangkok – the direct flights were fully booked. It had been our intention to fly to Alexandria, but with so many changes of plan, our original bookings had been cancelled, and now the flights were fully booked. The current plan was to stay overnight in Cairo and arrange a day trip to Alexandria. We discussed trains and hire cars, and eventually hit upon the idea of taking the van we were currently travelling in direct to Alexandria rather than to the Cairo hotel. After a few phone calls, it was arranged. We dropped Ahmed in the integration zone and continued on to Alexandria.

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Avenue of Sphinxes – Luxor Temple



First Pylon – Luxor Temple

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

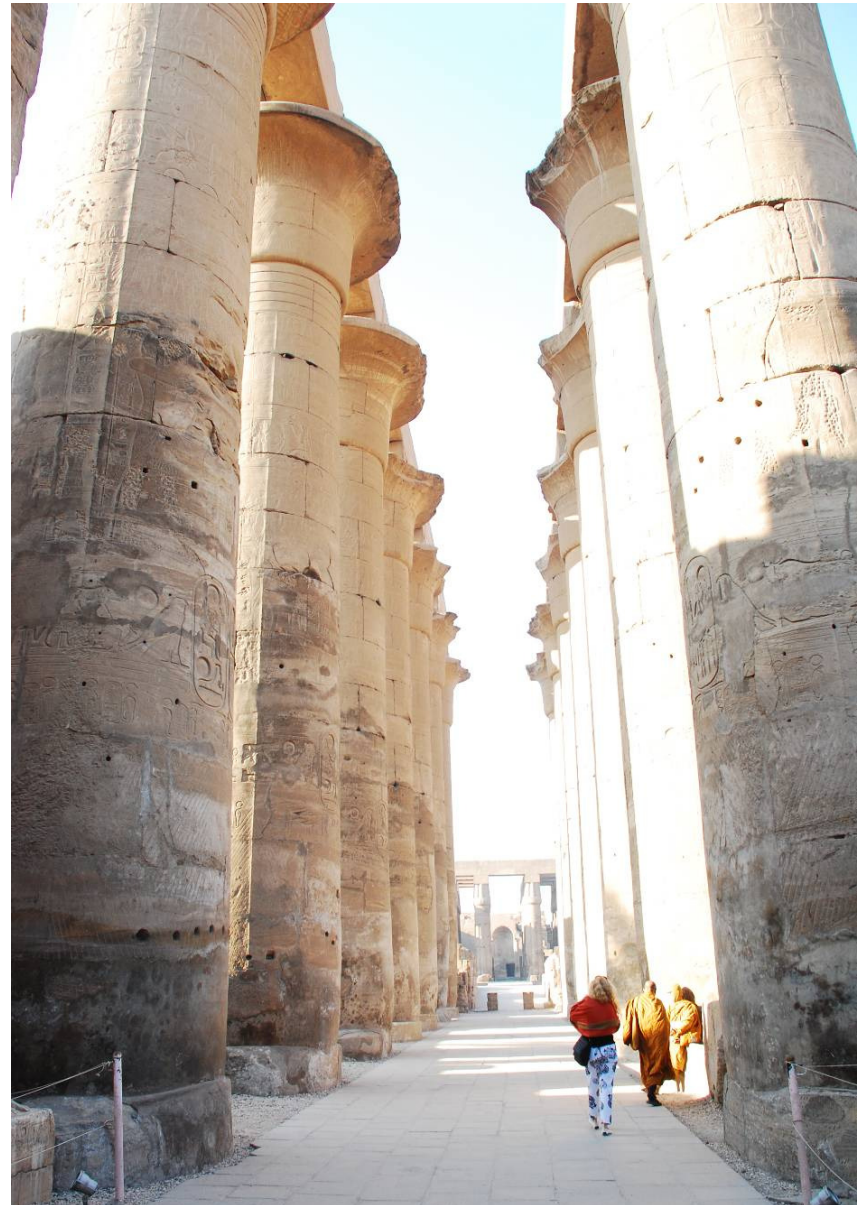


Courtyard of Ramesses II – Luxor Temple



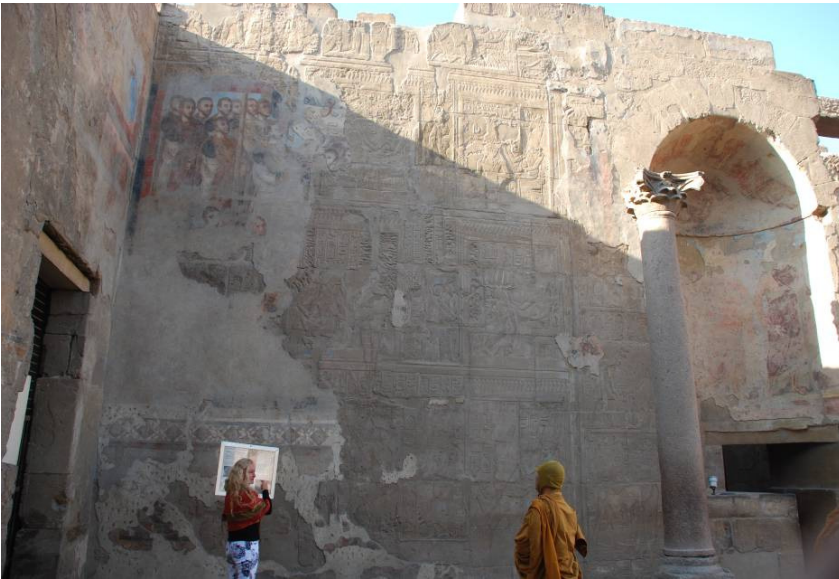
Courtyard of Amenhotep III – Luxor Temple

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Colonnade of Amenhotep III linking the two courtyards – Luxor Temple

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



The Sanctuary of Luxor Temple converted into a Christian church
original reliefs plastered over and structural alterations (pillar and alcove)



Reliefs – Luxor Temple

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Hapi the God of the Nile depicted as uniting the two kingdoms
Lower Kingdom with papyrus and the red crown (left)
Upper Kingdom with lotus and the white crown (right)

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

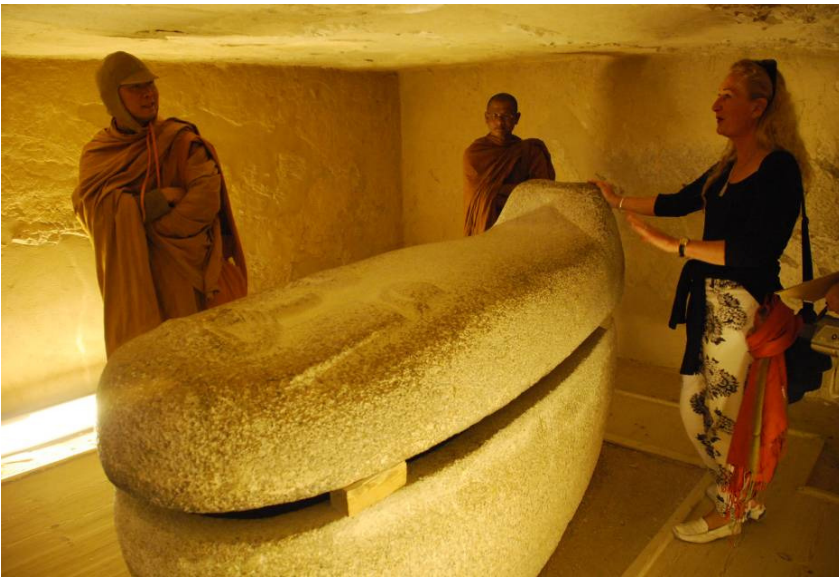


The Valley of the Queens – Luxor

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Approaching the entry to Ramesseum – Luxor



Inside a tomb in the Valley of the Queens – Luxor



Ramesseum – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

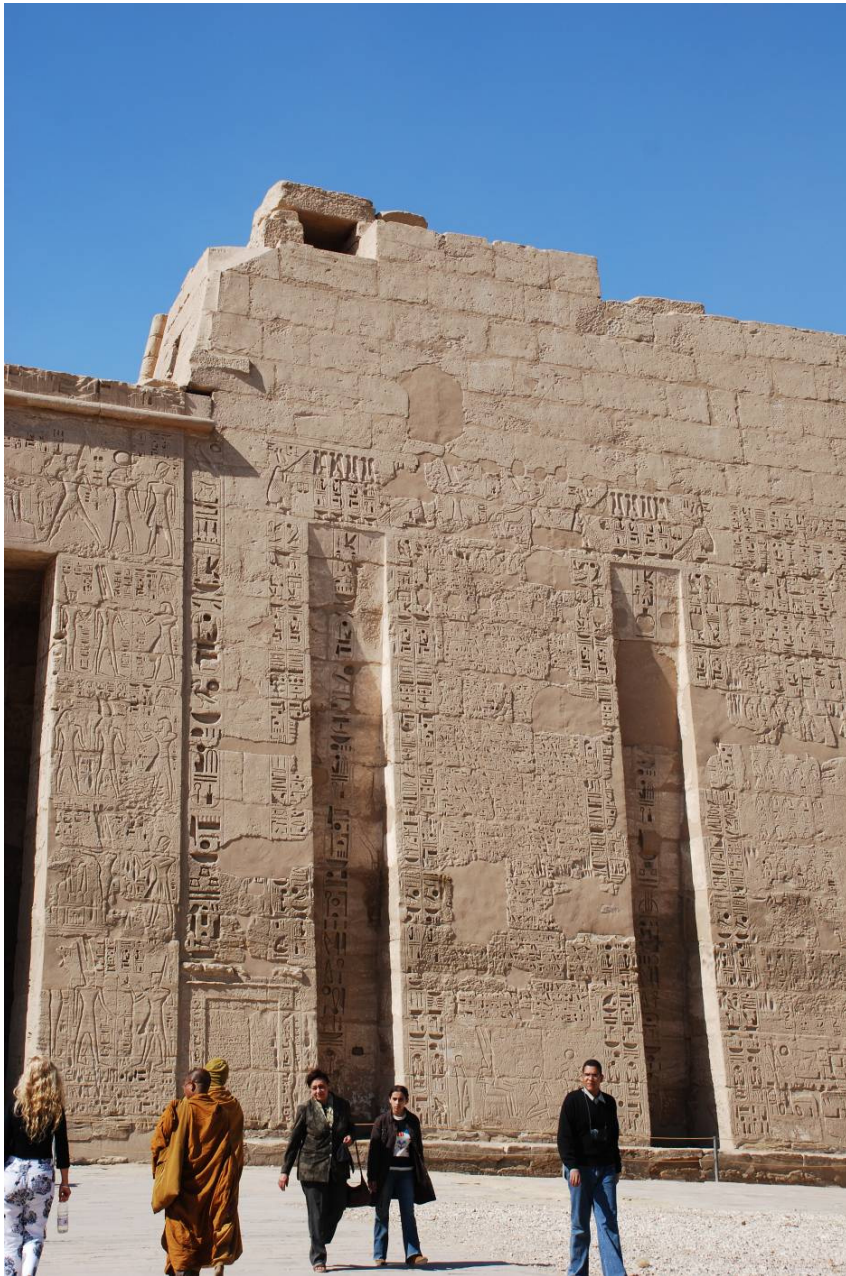


FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Hypostyle Hall (previous page) colonnade (top) and reliefs (above)
Ramesseum – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



First Pylon (previous page) First Courtyard (top) and Second Pylon (above)
Medinet Habu – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Second Courtyard or Courtyard of Ramesses III (top) and internal view of the Great Southern Gate (above) Medinet Habu – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Reception area (top) and remnants of the village (above) Deir el-Madina – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Deir el-Bahari (top) and the Valley of the Kings (above) – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Roman ruins with the massive Temple of Hathor in the far distance – Dendera



The Birth House – Dendera

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Ruins of a Christian church beside the Birth House – Dendera



Tiny chapel on the roof of the Temple of Hathor (above) and (next page) inside the Temple of Hathor – Dendera

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FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Damaged faces on the Hathor Pillars – Temple of Hathor – Dendera

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Damaged faces on the Hathor Pillars – Temple of Hathor – Dendera

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



First Pylon – Karnak

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Reconstruction works on outer pylons – Karnak



Massive surviving roof structures – Karnak

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First Courtyard – Karnak



Excavation of the Avenue of Sphinxes between Luxor Temple and Karnak

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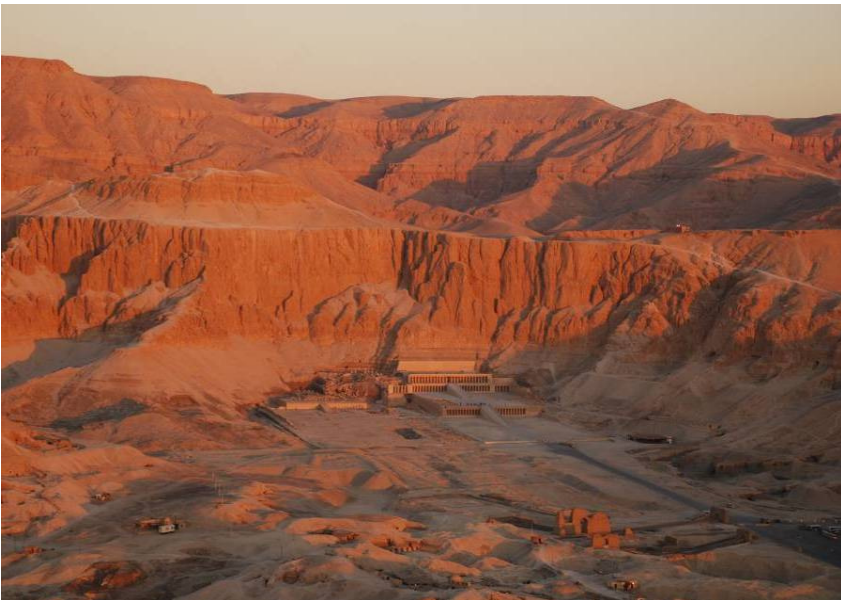


Irrigated fields with the Nile mid-left and the desert mid-right – Luxor



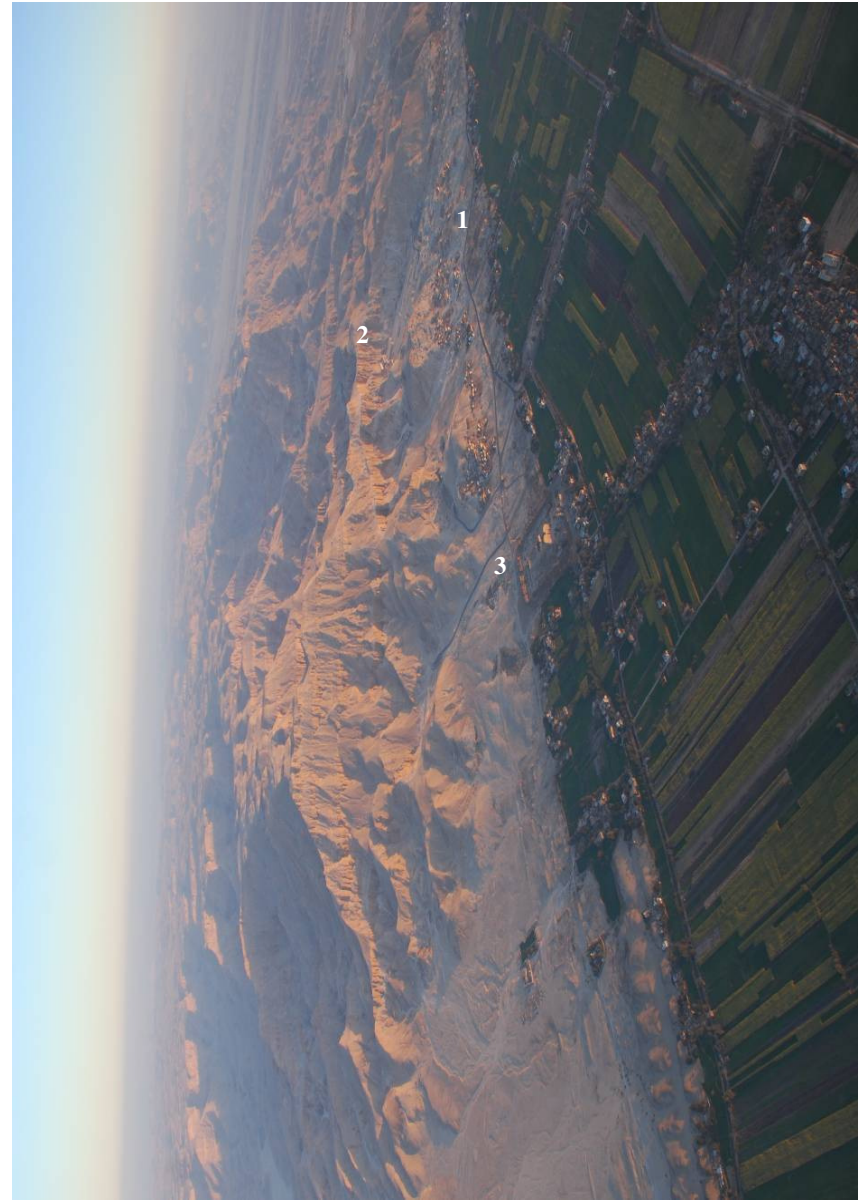
Ramesseum – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Medinet Habu (top) and Deir el-Bahari (above) – Luxor

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



1 Ramesseum 2 Deir el-Bahari 3 Medinet Habu

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ALEXANDRIA

DAY 9 – THURSDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2008 (Continued)

There was an eight lane freeway heading out of Cairo with several toll booths along the way. After the last toll booth, it was four lanes through to Alexandria. The countryside was flat desert until we reached the delta area, where there were palm, olive, banana, lemon and orange trees, grapes, melons, berries, sugar cane, wheat and all sorts of vegetables. When we reached Alexandria, we headed straight for the library.

The new library building was opened in 2002. It was an inspiring modern architectural design intended to maximise natural light inside the reading rooms, which were arranged in terrace style with vast areas of glass providing sweeping views out into the Mediterranean. When we asked to see Dr Sahar Humoda, we were shown to the staff entry where we waited for a few minutes for a secretary, who escorted us to Dr Sahar's office. Dr Sahar was a gracious and charming Egyptian lady who was interested in our research. She did not know about the Lake Mariout community herself, but was happy to help us if she could. She called in several other members of the staff to discuss what might be done and made a number of phone calls to people who may have known more. There was a French underwater archaeologist working in the harbour area, but he had no knowledge of any Lake Mariout community. There was another prominent French archaeologist researching locally and yes, he knew of the community – if we were able to call round to his offices he would be happy to talk to us and allow us access to his books, maps and other records.

Shortly thereafter, we arrived with Dr Sahar at the offices of Dr Jean-Yves Empereur, a Director of Research at the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Founder and a Director of the French Centre d'Etudes Alexandrines. We spoke with Dr Jean-Yves for over two hours, while he produced a number of books and maps, often referring to and reading from various books which contained information on the Lake Mariout community. We photographed the title and publication details of a lot of books, although we realised that it would be almost impossible to obtain copies of many of them as they would have had small print runs and had been out of print for decades.

The meetings with Dr Sahar and Dr Jean-Yves were the highlight of our trip in terms of our research. Without any prior arrangements, they had been more than willing to help us and extremely generous with their time. We now had probable although not positive confirmation of a Buddhist monastic community in Egypt in the pre-Christian era. We expressed our gratitude and thanks and gave each a memento from Kim's collection of Australian souvenirs, to Dr Jean-Yves as we departed from his offices and to Dr Sahar when we dropped her back at the library.

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It was late, we did not have a hotel booking, we were not in the mood to drive all over town, so we asked our driver to take us to a hotel, and that's how we found ourselves spending the night at the Windsor Palace Hotel on the waterfront. It was a grand hotel in the old style, but it was only for one night and in fact, it was not really all that much more expensive than a normal hotel.

DAY 10 – FRIDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2008

Those with excessive energy went for a walk along the promenade at 6.00am. We set off early to see as much as we could before we drove back to Cairo. Alexandria was a cosmopolitan city with trams and the calabash for the tourists, but at least in the part of it that we saw, no donkey carts. We saw the Catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa, Pompey's Pillar (shaft 25m high, diameter 2.7m at the base and 2.3m at the top and weighing about 400 tonnes), Qaitbay Fort at the site of the Lighthouse of Alexandria (built by the Ptolemies and destroyed by earthquakes in the fourteenth century CE), and the National Museum of Alexandria housed in the truly splendid old Al-Saad Bassili Pasha Palace, which had a small but interesting and varied collection from three periods on separate floors – ancient in the basement, Greco-Roman on the ground floor, and Coptic and Islamic upstairs.

On the way back to Cairo, we stopped by the southern shore of Lake Mariout. The city of Alexandria had grown to the northern shore, and the freeway ran along the southern shore. There was nothing to be seen but the lake itself.

Back in Cairo, we arrived at our hotel to be told that as we did not turn up last night, our booking had been cancelled and our rooms reallocated. Ahmed I had certainly excelled himself this time. Well done, Ahmed I. Omar was back in Cairo and arrived with remarkable haste – he must have been close by. We were stuffed into the managers room and the staff rest room at the back of the hotel. They were considerably less salubrious than the normal guest rooms, but better than nothing.

DAY 11 – SATURDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2008

We were up at about 5.00am for the drive to the airport. Ahmed I arrived in the same suit and tie with the van and driver. At the airport, we gave the driver a respectable tip, he had been considerate and helpful and had put himself out at short notice for our benefit. Ahmed I clearly expected a gratuity, but we did not offer one. The check in area was full to capacity and bursting at the seams. It took a long time to reach the head of the queue, and then there was a problem. Phra Mick had not been booked on the flight to Athens. Somebody made a phone call and somebody senior arrived and played with the computer. "Only that the plane is not full I can get him on. Otherwise, no flight."

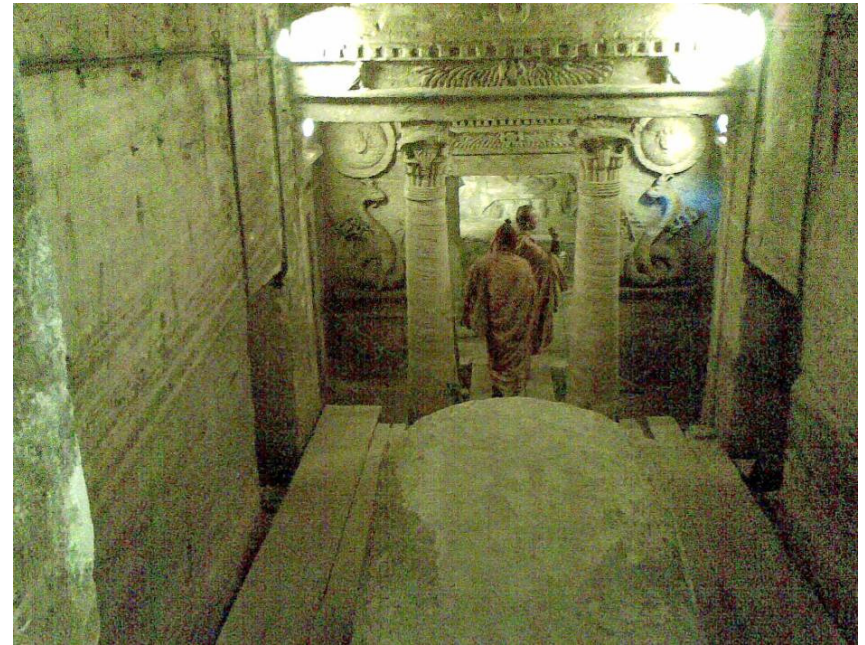
Well done, Ahmed I – just as well we had not given him a tip.

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



**Dr Sahar Humoda in her office at the library (top)
and Dr Jean-Yves Empeur in his main library (above) – Alexandria**

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



The Catacombs (top) and Pompey's Pillar (above) – Alexandria

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Greco-Roman Floor – National Museum of Alexandria

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Two views of Lake Mariout – Alexandria

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

ATHENS

DAY 11 – SATURDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2008 (Continued)

The flight was delayed for a few hours, but we eventually arrived at the new Athens international airport, built for the Olympic Games. We hired two taxis and drove into the city on the new expressway, also built for the games. Our driver told us it had been snowing last week, most unusual, with temperatures as low as -7°C , and that it was still cold for this time of year. We conferred with the drivers regarding hotels. Several had been recommended to us, but the drivers said they would take us to a reasonably priced hotel in a good location, close to the Acropolis. We checked in, stashed our luggage, then caught the metro three stations along to the Parliament Building and Acropolis station. We walked towards the Acropolis and stopped at an al fresco restaurant for lunch.

After being in Egypt, you could feel the wealth in Athens. The taxis were current model European cars and had GPS navigation, the streets were fully paved, curbed and guttered, the shops had large plate glass windows and lots of light, women wore high heel boots and spray-on jeans with lots of leather and fur, everybody smoked like there was no tomorrow and they all had lungs of steel – it was a return to civilization. I know that may sound unkind, but that's what it felt like. And the food was superb.

We spent the afternoon walking around the shops and pricing Greek statues and trinkets. It transpired that this area was an old and exclusive part of the city, now catering mostly for wealthy locals and tourists, with narrow often cobbled streets with flights of steps and pedestrian only traffic. We also found a hotel at the foot of the Acropolis hill which we liked the look of. Towards dusk, we walked half way up the hill and admired the view across Athens, spotting the groups of ruins and historic sites, as the daylight faded and the lights of the city came on.

DAY 12 – SUNDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2008

We checked out of our old hotel and hired two taxis to our new hotel. The room rates of all the hotels in the area were much the same, so why not be in the hotel closest to the Acropolis. We walked up to the Acropolis and discovered that entry was free on Sundays in winter – marvellous how a simple little thing like that can brighten the day and raise the spirits, especially after Egypt where nothing was free.

We spent the morning wandering round the ruins on the Acropolis hill, then in the afternoon, we visited the Agora, featuring markets, temples and a museum in the Stoa of Attalos, an ancient building which was fully reconstructed in 1956. All of these attractions were not much more than a few hundred metres from our hotel.

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DAY 13 – MONDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2008

We spent some time finalising purchases of statues of gods and heroes and other items and organising their packing. After that, we travelled across the city to a vastly different area of office blocks and heavy traffic, to visit the National Archaeological Museum.

Of tremendous interest to us was the collection of kouri statues of life sized and monumental naked youths from mid seventh to sixth century BCE (page 101). These statues were clearly derived from Egyptian models, being rigidly and formally posed, the arms by the sides of the body and the head and eyes looking straight ahead, almost always having the left foot forward. These statues were in marked contrast to later works in marble and bronze which showed the spectacular developments made by the Greeks in representing the human form with a realism and a dynamics that conveyed a sense of movement.

DAY 14 – TUESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2008

We spent the morning collecting our purchases from several shops, and took the opportunity to view buildings and monuments in the vicinity, including Mitropoli (Athens Greek Orthodox Cathedral) and Panagia Gorgoepikoos (a tiny church).

We checked out of our hotel and took two taxis to the airport. By this stage we had so many bags and boxes we needed every bit of space in the two taxis. Yet again we had trouble at check in with Sayadaw's passport and ticket.

How much of the drama was due to Ahemd I we did not know, but we cursed him anyway – and, of course, felt very much better for having done so.

Also, the airline wanted to charge us €700 (or about \$1,400) excess baggage. They told us the alternative was that we needed to lose 20kg of luggage. We jettisoned two small obelisks and a box of Greek gods. Somebody senior arrived and sorted out the problems with the tickets and the excess baggage, so now we went to the duty free area and purchased replacement Greek gods to carry on as cabin baggage.

Because we were all carrying so much, our group was a little slow going through baggage x-ray. Two early 40'ish attractive, smartly dressed and obviously wealthy Greek women were behind us. One of them had a panic attack. "Move your things! Give us some room! We're going to miss our flight at this rate!" She rushed around the machine, grabbed up her bag and ran down the corridor at full pelt.

We walked down the corridor to the departure lounge and found the woman sitting chatting to her friend. We waited about 45 minutes before our flight was called. We got up to board and so did the woman. At least she didn't run to the door.

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We flew to Cairo where we had a six hour stopover before flying on to Bangkok. Again, because of all the changes, we were not able to get a direct flight. There was another group flying on somewhere other than Bangkok also in transit, about twelve of us in total, so the airline generously arranged a free trip to Giza to keep us entertained.

Unfortunately it turned into an absolute disaster because the traffic was the heaviest the driver had ever seen. By the time we got to Giza, it was time to turn around and go back again. The driver did manage to squeeze in a visit to a papyrus shop, a business connection disguised as a toilet stop. The setup and the spiel were exactly the same as previously, and once again, Kim and at least one of the more attractive women from the other group were in demand.

DAY 15 – WEDNESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2008

We landed in Bangkok around 1.00pm local time and were taken back to Wat Awut. We barely had time to settle in before attending the funeral of a senior monk of the wat who had passed away very suddenly the previous day.

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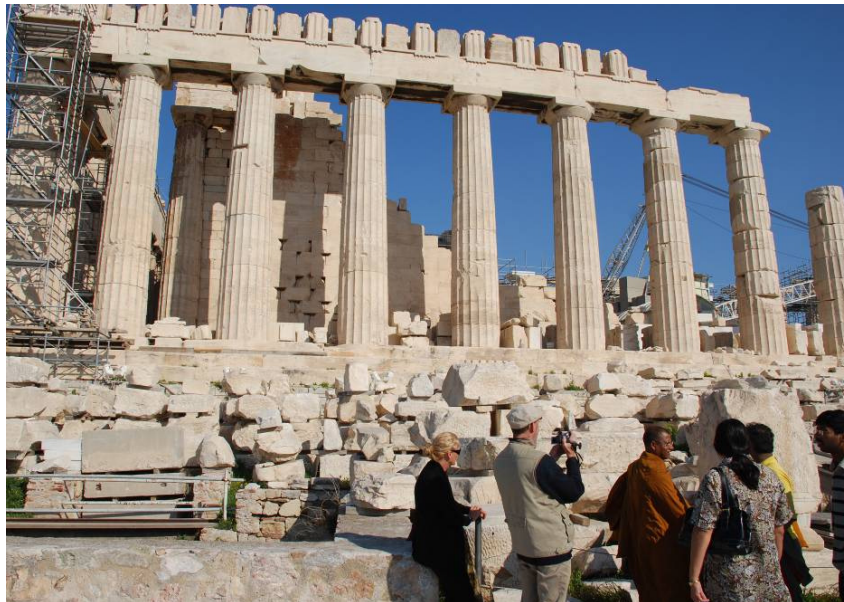


Parliament House – Athens



Tower of the Winds and Acropolis – Athens

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Theatre of Herodes Atticus (top) and the Parthenon (above) – Athens

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Porch of the Caryatids (left) on the Erechtheion – Athens



Doorway in the wall below the Parthenon – Athens

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Hephaisteion Temple – Agora – Athens



Stoa of Attalos (left) at the Agora and the Acropolis (right) – Athens

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



National Archaeological Museum – Athens (top) and kouri statues (above)

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

INDIA

DAY 16 – THURSDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2008

We left Wat Awut at 6.30am to travel to the airport, four hours before our scheduled departure, because the former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, was returning from exile in London at an unspecified time later that day, and the airport and all roads to and from were expected to be choked with police, army and security amid fears of assassination attempts and riots. Yet again, with an uncanny ability to find ourselves in the right/wrong place at the right/wrong time, we were on the spot when history was in the making. It all turned out to be a massive anticlimax, with almost no fuss except for all the security. We said farewell to Phra Mick at the airport, as only four of us were flying on to India.

We arrived at Gaya airport in the early afternoon. It was hot. Amongst the security contingent, there was a woman in an army uniform sari – first time I had seen one. We had left our excess luggage at Wat Awut, but three out of our five bags were searched – the customs officers must have been bored and looking for something to entertain themselves. The terminal had a reasonable number of mosquitoes. Phra Sirichai was waiting for us with a van and driver. We did not get far down the road before we encountered our first rubbish pile or something similar, releasing its distinctive pungent odour.

So – there were the three elements that confirmed we were back in India – heat, mosquitoes and the gut wrenching stench of the rubbish piles. Try as you might, you never forget the smell of Mother India.

We checked into a hotel in front of the Burmese Holyland Monastery, the monastery where we had stayed during our visit last year, and next door to the Bangladesh monastery. The hotel was under construction last year and had only been open for three months. The Bangladesh monastery was still under construction, but much further advanced. Phra Sirichai left us to return to his own activities. Although we saw Phra Sirichai usually several times each day, most of our time in Bodh Gaya was spent at the Mahabodhi Temple, the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. We had been travelling at a fairly hectic pace, and this was a time to rest and refresh and restore mind and body.

Sayadaw took us to the Buddhagaya Tai Temple and Meditation Centre, where he had spent some time before travelling to Australia. Sayadaw was well known to the abbot and had many friends amongst the monks at the centre. We were shown around the centre, then had tea and a chat with the abbot. We then went to the Mahabodhi Temple, and stayed till closing time at 9.00pm. When we arrived back at our hotel, our room was full of mosquitoes and there was a wedding procession moving down the street towards us. It took over half an hour to reach the hotel and

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

another half an hour to move on to the intersection with the main road, where it stopped and disbursed. It was typically noisy, with music, dancing, crackers exploding, and the obligatory portable generator to provide power for the amplification of the noise and lots of lights.

DAY 17 – FRIDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2008

Most of the group were up before 5.00am to visit the Mahabodhi Temple. Later, we joined Phra Sirichai at Wat Khuva Boonchum where he was staying whilst studying in Bodh Gaya. The monastery had been in the relatively early stages of construction when we visited last year, but was now almost complete. We spent some time meeting the abbot and other monks, there were seven resident monks including Phra Sirichai. We had lunch at the monastery then spent the afternoon and evening at the Mahabodhi Temple.

That night, without the distraction of the wedding procession, we discovered that we had a rat living behind the cupboard in our hotel room. I moved the cupboard and it ran under the lounge. I moved the lounge and it ran under the bed. I moved the bed and it ran out of the room via the gap under the door. Yes, our room had truly excellent natural ventilation. We turned the lights off and went to bed, but the rat was back before we were asleep. We saw or heard it every day and night thereafter. Our major concern was what would happen if it decided it preferred living in our luggage to living behind the cupboard.

DAY 18 – SATURDAY 1 MARCH 2008

Another early visit to the Mahabodhi Temple. After lunch at the only Thai restaurant in town, we visited the Bodh Gaya Museum. It was a small museum with a collection of mostly Buddhist items from the local area, including some very fine pieces. There were sections from the railings of the Mahabodhi Temple with scenes and motifs we had not seen or perhaps not noticed before. We returned to the hotel for a rest, then to the Mahabodhi Temple where we stayed till closing time.

DAY 19 – SUNDAY 2 MARCH 2008

A 4.00am visit to the Mahabodhi Temple. At about 7.30am we clambered into the van with Phra Sirichai and drove to Nalanda, less than an hours drive north of Bodh Gaya. We visited the site museum, again a small museum although larger than Bodh Gaya, with again mostly Buddhist items from the university and the local area, some fine pieces, and well worth the visit. Next, we visited the ruins of Nalanda University. On our visit to that site last year, it had been blowing a gale and raining heavily, so those of us who had braved the elements did not actually spend a lot of time exploring. On this occasion, we had bright sunshine and plenty of time.

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In the afternoon, we drove through Rajgir and stopped briefly at the ruins of an ancient structure we had not visited last year, thought to have been either a Buddhist cathedral, the Manimala Chaitya, or the Shrine of Mina-Naga and thus perhaps originally associated with snake worship. We then drove on to Griddhakuta Hill. We had been there last year, and as we did last year, we visited the meditation caves frequented by the Buddha and some of his closest disciples on the sides of the hill and the remains of the temple on Vulture Peak at the top of the hill.

DAY 20 – MONDAY 3 MARCH 2008

A 4.00am visit to the Mahabodhi Temple. Early morning and late evening were the best times to be at the temple for quieter conditions and lesser numbers of pilgrims. However, we needed to rest at some time during the day, so we rested for most of the morning. Later, we visited the Big Buddha and many of the temples of the other Buddhist traditions, before returning to the Mahabodhi Temple that evening.

DAY 21 – TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2008

One last early morning at the Mahabodhi Temple, then we checked out of the hotel. Phra Sirichai, the driver and van were waiting and we drove to Patna. The roads we travelled were not too bad, really, but did have a number of rough sections, one in particular with potholes big enough to take the sump out of a Humvee. The approach road to Patna from about the beginning of the urban area and the main street right the way through into the centre of the city were under repair. There was a slow moving traffic jam of three lanes packed so tight that bikes were not able to squeeze through. The tarmac had been stripped, so it was rough going and there was lots of dust.

Fortunately, our hotel was beyond the area of road works, and so was the Patna Museum. We booked in to the hotel then set off for the museum. The museum was medium sized, much bigger than Bodh Gaya or Nalanda, and with a natural history section of taxidermied bulls and buffalos, tigers and other big cats, birds and assorted small animals, and other sections including antique costumes and armaments. Pride of place in the collection was the life sized female chowry bearer in polished stone from the third century BCE, the Mauryan period. This statue is universally acknowledged as one of the masterpieces of Indian sculpture. However, there were two other exhibits of greater interest to us. The first was a portion of the relics of the Buddha which had been retrieved from a Relic Stupa in the area. The second was the capital from a Greek Ionian column recovered from the remnants of ancient Pataliputra and dated to the reign of Ashoka. It was evidence that suggested that Greek artisans had been employed by Ashoka at his capital city for the construction of major royal buildings. After we left the museum, we drove to a park which enclosed the remnants of an ancient temple complex, a tiny site museum, and the remnants of a badly shattered Ashoka Pillar.

FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS

DAY 22 – WEDNESDAY 5 MARCH 2008

We checked out of the hotel early in the morning and drove to the airport. The driver and van were heading back to Bodh Gaya, and Phra Sirichai was flying with us to Delhi. In addition to the usual palaver at the airport, our bags were sealed with a plastic strap, a trick that used to be popular a few years ago, but which seemed to have died out in recent times. Maybe it was because we were flying into Delhi or maybe the Indians had a lot of left over plastic strap they needed to use up, or perhaps it was just the old jobs creation scenario.

We were met at Delhi airport by Nung, a Thai student studying economics at the university. Nung had a van and driver waiting, and as our flight had been delayed, we drove directly to the Indian Museum. It was an impressive three story circular building, and had an extensive collection, from the Indus Civilization up to the present. We had our bags x-rayed and bodies searched both on the way in and out. There was a book shop at the museum. We purchased some books, but many titles were out of print. We left at closing time at 5.00pm and drove to an area of the city where there were a number of speciality book shops. We spent several hours browsing in two shops, one an old style book shop crammed with books from floor to ceiling and the other an ultra modern and very chic social club cum café cum restaurant cum reading room – with book shelves somewhere in the middle.

The van pulled up in a sort of gully outside what looked like a breach in a tall and partly collapsed wall. Bearing in mind that it was dark, you could easily mistake it for another archaeological site where we were going to view the ruins. From there we stepped into an area of narrow lanes with four and five story buildings, and a few taller buildings, jammed together right on the street alignment. There was no way a car could enter the complex. Many of the street fronts were tiny, poky little shops and there were stalls in what little space there was in the lanes. The one concession to town planning was that the lanes were straight and parallel and intersected at right angles. From the hole in the wall, our hotel was two blocks straight ahead, two blocks to the left then three blocks to the right. How far the complex extended in any given direction, I have no idea. Our hotel was basic, to put it euphemistically, and our room about as basic as any four bare walls, bare wooden floorboards, single bare light bulb and two single iron beds could be. We did not have a rat in this hotel room because there was no cupboard for it to live behind, but we did have our own bathroom with flush toilet, bare concrete shower and plenty of mosquitoes, so we were not deprived of all amenities. It was only for one night – but, boy, what an eye-opener. India never ceases to surprise.

DAY 23 – THURSDAY 6 MARCH 2008

The van arrived at 7.00am. As we drove through Delhi, we passed bullock carts, camel carts, cows and pigs. We joined the Delhi-Agra freeway, a four lane divided

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carriageway, and travelled at a steady 100kph. We drove through typical Indian farming land, with a variety of crops. It was cotton harvesting time. There were camel carts and trucks with huge balloon-like hessian sacks, high up above the tray and sticking out wide on the sides, transporting raw cotton. It was also a major oil producing area, with refineries by the side of the freeway and lots of oil tankers on the freeway.

When we arrived at our planned destination of Mathura, we were unable to see many of the things we had planned to see, so we had time to drive on to Agra and the Taj Mahal.

Although it was not our original intention to visit the Taj, it was an incredible experience. No matter how much the Taj is hyped, it still lives up to expectations, at least in part because the approach and the layout of the complex and the sight-lines had been so carefully planned. You entered the paradise gardens through the monumental gateway and there it was in front of you, off in the distance, but with clearly calibrated stages, marked by intersecting hedges and garden beds and paths and ornamental pools to indicate your distance and allow you to judge the scale of the building. The more traditional building shape with identifiable floor levels also helped to indicate scale. The pyramids by comparison were in the middle of the desert, with no setting to create a sense of anticipation or arrival or to indicate scale – they were always there and they just kept getting bigger as you got closer until eventually you bumped into one of them.

From the Taj we drove back to Delhi and the airport. We entered the departure terminal while Nung and Phra Sirichai waited outside in case we had problems with excess baggage or unconfirmed bookings or any other of the usual problems. Indeed, we did seem to be having our usual round of problems at baggage check in, but this time we were flying Thai Airways, and Thai Airways do their best to accommodate Buddhist monks. A senior person appeared and all obstacles were overcome. Further inside, the terminal was undergoing major renovations. Most of the interior, including the ceiling, had been ripped out and as yet nothing had been replaced. At the cabin baggage x-ray and passport control, there was a monumental queue stretching for miles back and forth between those post-&-tape barriers they torture you with at airports and other queuing points these days. It took the best part of 45 minutes to reach the head of the queue, but then everything seemed to proceed normally.

* * * * *

So – it was farewell to India and the end of our pilgrimage.

We flew to Bangkok, where we stayed for a few days before returning to Australia.

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**Mahabodhi Temple – Bodh Gaya
with the Bodhi Tree on the left**

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Under the Bodhi Tree – Mahabodhi Temple – Bodh Gaya



Remains of an Ashoka Pillar – Mahabodhi Temple – Bodh Gaya

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Ruins of Nalanda University



Manimala Chaitya or Shrine of Mina-Naga – Rajgir

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Sayadaw and the Big Buddha – Bodhi Gaya

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Visiting the Temples of the Other Traditions – Bodhi Gaya

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Relics Shrine – Patna Museum

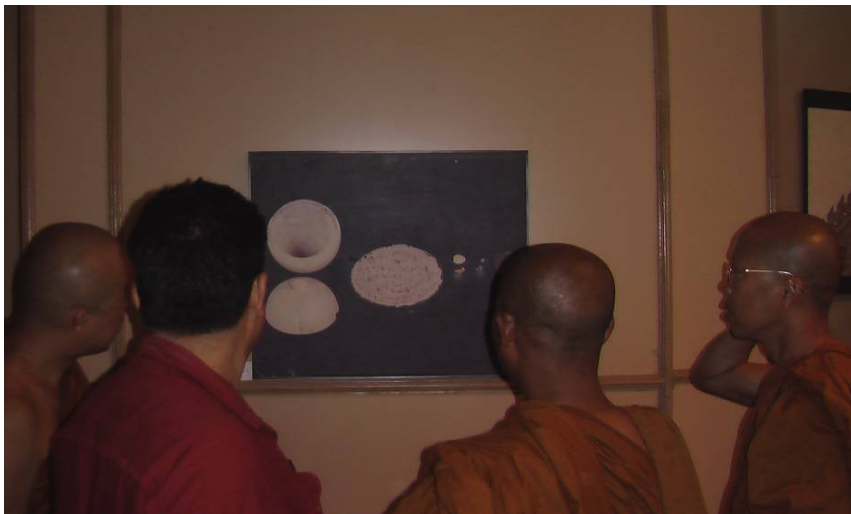


Photo of relics as discovered – Patna Museum

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The magnificent Chowry Bearer – Patna Museum



Highly polished lion head – Patna Museum

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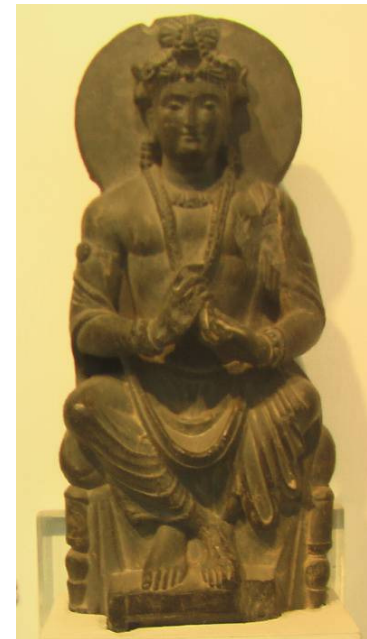


Capital from a Greek Ionian Column – Patna Museum

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Badly shattered Ashoka Pillar – Patna



Gandharan Bodhisattva – Indian Museum – Delhi

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Relics Shrine – Indian Museum – Delhi

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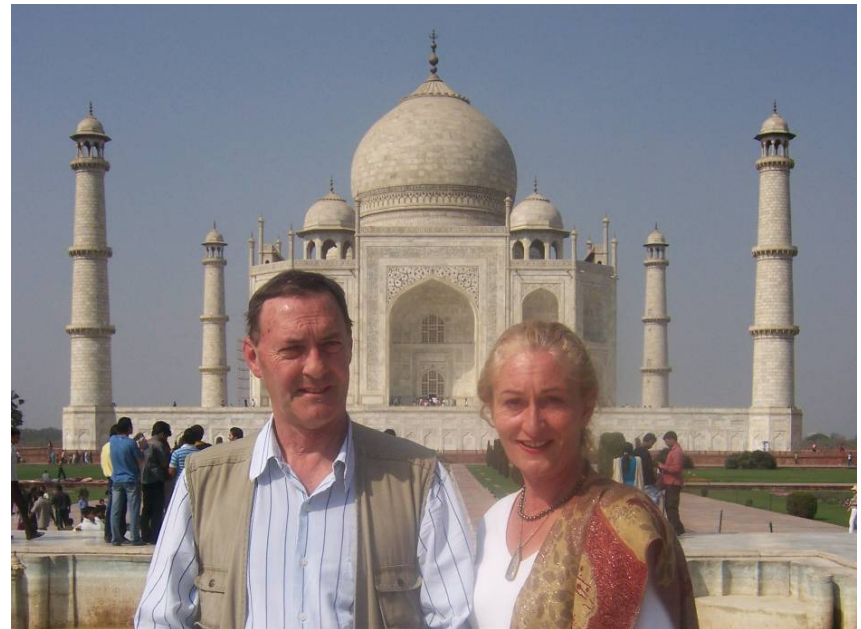
**Gandharan panel carving (top)
and Buddha figure (above) – Indian Museum – Delhi**

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Gandharan figures (top) and decorative Indian school panel carving (above)
Indian Museum – Delhi

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Sayadaw, Phra Mana and Phra Sirichai (top)
Jim and Kim (above) at the Taj Mahal – Agra

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IMPRESSIONS FROM OUR TRAVELS

EGYPT – THE VALLEY OF ...

Egypt may have The Valley of the Nile, The Valley of the Kings, The Valley of the Queens and The Valley of the Nobles, but the most formidable of all was The Valley of the Cash Register. It was difficult to escape the impression that Egyptians viewed a tourist as a life support system for a wallet, a wallet filled with money and just waiting to be prised open.

The thing that irritated most was that after you paid the entry fee, there were a number of things that cost extra, and any number of people who had their hand out. It was usually tiny amounts of money, but massive amounts of hassle and annoyance. Some, but not all, tomb attendants and temple attendants would show you things “This is Horus” “This is Pharaoh” sort of thing, things that any tourist picked up in about the first half hour, and then expect a little something for their trouble. Inside some tombs, it was hot and stuffy. A kindly tomb attendant might offer a piece of cardboard for you to fan yourself. It was not a kindly gesture, it was a sale. Even the man behind the counter where we were required to check in our cameras let it be known that he would appreciate some appreciation. To use most public toilets, the attendants expected a tip which was disguised in the form of providing you with toilet paper. If you didn’t want paper or didn’t need paper or had your own, often a damn good idea anyway, especially if you needed more than the few sheets that were offered, you were made to feel uncomfortable – not abuse as such, but subtle scorn. The Egyptians had a way of saying “Your welcome” or “Welcome” or “No problem” or of just looking at you which you knew meant that they wish you a slow and painful death, and preferably very soon.

The perfume shops and papyrus shops seemed to operate on the assumption that the sole purpose for which tourists travelled to Egypt was to purchase gallons of lotus oil and hundreds of square metres of papyrus. They seemed to think that there was nothing else in the world that tourists would rather do than to listen to them rattle on with their mind-numbing spiel and then to buy up big. Maybe it was an approach that worked well with the organized tour groups that arrived by the bus-load and were herded through like a mob of cattle.

There was also the frustration of getting ripped off in the bazaar, but then some people like to and expect to bargain – haggling is part of the experience, part of the fun. For those who prefer not to bargain, there were shops that had cottoned onto the idea of fixed prices. The King Mina Bazaar in Luxor described itself as a fixed price hassle free zone, with prices that were ridiculously cheap in comparison to the first asking prices of the identical items in the real bazaar. King Mina was located between our hotel and the museum and conveniently close to our favourite ATM. We purchased rather a lot from King Mina.

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It was easy to feel ripped off in Egypt. In fact, it was sometimes hard not to. But no matter how much it irritated or how much it cost, we consoled ourselves with these two thoughts:-

- 1) it was cheaper than Australia, and
- 2) it was worth every cent.

EGYPT – KEEP YOUR TICKET HANDY

In Alexandria, we must have done something to offend someone at Pompey’s Pillar, because we were asked to produce our tickets on four separate occasions in less than an hour, despite the fact that we were the only paying customers in the enclosure at the time, and that each of the police or attendants who demanded the inspections had been standing at or near the gate when we entered, saw us purchase our tickets and saw the ticket checker punch our tickets. Something similar happened at the Museum of the Solar Barque. We purchased our tickets from an outside window, then had to show our tickets to get inside the door, again to proceed through baggage x-ray, again to get our overshoes and again to proceed through to the gift shop, despite the fact that all these functions were performed in one room in sight of each other. Also, it can save a lot of time, hassles and explanations in broken English if you keep your own ticket in your own hand or pocket or purse rather than have one person in the party responsible for custody of all the tickets. It’s just easier to go native – one person one ticket – why fight it?

EGYPT – BEGGARS AND TOUTS

We did encounter beggars in Egypt, but in comparison to India they were few and far between and seemed almost timid and were easily discouraged. They tended to operate alone rather than to hunt in packs as in India.

There were also touts in Egypt, especially around the pyramids. A favourite approach was to tempt you to try on an Arab headdress or accept the gift of a scarab. “It’s for free! No money!” but if you fell for that, then you got the full sales pitch. At Pyramid 1, I reluctantly accepted a cheap and nasty but ‘free’ scarab. When I declined the opportunity to proceed with a transaction involving money, the tout became quite indignant and demanded the return of the scarab. The colourfully dressed weather-beaten desert veteran with his equally colourfully presented and equally weather-beaten camel would pose for a photo, but then expect to be paid – it might well be his sole occupation and sole source of income.

Outside the shops and in the bazaar, a favourite line was “Do you know how much? Do you know how much?” You were supposed to ask or guess how much and once the conversation was started, you would need to fight hard to get away and avoid being drawn into the transaction.

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EGYPT – PEOPLE

Apart from the surly non-English speaking variety of ticket checker or tomb or temple attendant, most of the locals were genuinely friendly and interested to chat to us about where we were from, what we had seen, where we were going next – all the usual small talk, and in fluent English.

It was mostly men we spoke to, because there were very few women in the shops and bazaars. Most women on the streets wore burkas and avoided us. A number of men took great delight in telling us that Muslim men could have four wives. When Kim countered by asking if a woman could have four husbands, they either laughed uproariously at the very idea, or those who understood the implicit challenge were not amused.

Most people had not seen a Buddhist monk before and were interested in who they were and what they did. They were especially interested in the monk's robes, because so many of them wore galabias. They would comment "Nice dress" and feel the material "Oh, very good quality cloth. Very nice." However, they didn't really seem to understand that Buddhism was a spiritual movement and that the monks were not ordinary tourists. They thought it was funny that Kim and I sat at a separate table to the monks in cafés and restaurants and that we waited on the monks.

EGYPT – CULTURAL CONFUSION

Ahmed II and several other people told us of the Egyptian love-hate relationship with tourists and tourism and the benefit-burden of the Egyptian archaeological heritage. Tourists provided employment but a lot of the jobs were menial and the condescending and overbearing tourists were a pain in the neck. It was not possible for anybody to dig a garden, let alone try and build a house, without hitting something that some official somewhere would declare to be of national heritage value. People who did find things often hid them for fear that their house would be demolished for an archaeological survey. Trying to sell such items on the black market was even more risky in this age of cultural protection. As for putting in a new sewer line or putting up a new shop or office block, well ... a project that size would require a whole field team of archaeologists.

There may have been some elements of exaggeration, but there were no doubt some heartfelt truths as well.

By the fifth century CE, Egypt was virtually 100% Coptic Christian. By the ninth century CE, Egypt was about 80% Muslim. Other factors such as foreign rule from 343 BCE to 1922 CE have added to a separation from the ancient culture to the point where, apparently, many present day Egyptians simply don't regard it as

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being their culture. There was also the culturally sensitive and ongoing problem of the Muslim distaste for (or outright intolerance of) idolatry. It's a great pity really, and in stark contrast to the long continuity of the cultural experience of India and Thailand and the great pride and respect Indians and Thais have for their ancient monuments and artefacts.

EGYPT – TEMPERATURE

It was cold in the mornings and evenings, but did not seem oppressively hot during the day. With almost zero humidity, it was a very different experience of heat to what we were accustomed to. The warm clothing we usually wore throughout the day probably provided insulation against the heat. However, if you did anything strenuous, you soon noticed how hot it really was, especially out in the open desert.

EGYPT – THE DONKEY

Donkey carts were an essential part of the local scenery. They trotted about with loads of almost anything. They were parked by the sides of the roads with the owner selling his produce with the aid of the old balance scales held up in one hand. Produce included all manner of fruit and veg, bread and fish.

Donkeys were apparently one of the first animals to be domesticated by the Egyptians. Donkey trains formed the first Egyptian trading caravans before the domestication of the camel. But donkeys were not just a beast of burden. Their dressed carcasses could be seen hanging in butcher shops, with the undressed tail intact so that customers knew the source of their meat. Any donkey that became as stubborn as a mule knew the fate that awaited it.

THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM – CAIRO

At the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, I returned several times to the Tutankhamen section. The first time I had seen it, I was ... desensitised ... having been bombarded with images of Tutankhamen from my earliest school text books to coffee-table picture books to tens of movies to hundreds or maybe thousands of TV documentaries. Also, there was just too much to take in at one viewing – there was so much to see that it was overwhelming. It was not until about the third time that I viewed the exhibits that I was able to look at them more objectively and really appreciate just how incredible they were.

However, one of the museum treasure rooms contained two exhibits that, for me, had that immediate jaw-dropping WOW factor. In Room 2, there was the sarcophagus of Psusennes I (reigned 1045-994 BCE) in silver with a gold headband and uraeus and inlaid eyes made up with black lines, and the falcon-headed sarcophagus and four pharaoh-headed miniature sarcophagi shaped canopic jars of

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Sheshonq II (reigned 890 BCE circa) also in silver. I had never seen anything like them before. I had no idea they existed. They were astonishingly beautiful, but it was as much the discovery of something so completely unexpected and new as the undeniable magnificence of the items themselves that made such a powerful impact.

The other items on display that really made an impact were the chariots. They were so flimsy. Sure, they were meant to be fast and manoeuvrable, but standing in the tiny space of the cockpit behind two horses charging across the rough and stony desert at full gallop would have been death defying enough and would have required an enormous amount of effort just to hang on, let alone to fire arrows or throw spears at the enemy or to hack at them with a sword.

EGYPT – PAPYRUS

The basic process of producing papyrus sheets is relatively simple. The papyrus stem is roughly triangular. The outer green sheath is cut off, leaving a white pulpy interior. The pulp is cut into thin strips then flattened with a rolling pin or similar device. The strips are laid out slightly overlapping each other in both a horizontal and a vertical layer, then compressed and allowed to dry. Because the pulp is fibrous and has the capacity to bind, even a relatively small hand press with skilful manipulation can be used to produce, in successive pressings, a sheet of almost any required length and width. In ancient times, this technique was used to produce scrolls, generally 30cm to 50cm in width and often over 40 metres (yes, metres) in length. The British Museum has a papyrus manuscript of the Book of the Dead known as the Papyrus of Any which has an average width of 42cm and is 23.5 metres in length, and the Great Harris Papyrus relating to the reign of Ramesses III which has an average width of 45.8cm and is 42 metres in length.

Until the Chinese invented paper in the second century CE, papyrus was the best and most sought after writing material throughout the known world, in huge demand and obviously very expensive.

EGYPT – PYRAMIDS

There is still considerable debate as to the mechanical aspects of how the pyramids were built. Since the decoding of the Rosetta Stone by Jean-Francois Champollion in 1824, and the subsequent translation of many papyrus texts, temple reliefs and other records and inscriptions, we now have a much better understanding of why they were built and the labour aspects of how they were built.

From a very early stage of the agricultural development of the society, the Egyptians needed to organise labour and to work co-operatively on large scale projects – creating irrigation channels, levee banks, storage pondages and so on.

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The typical annual cycle would involve getting ready for the inundation, directing the flow of waters once they arrived, then a break before draining the fields, ploughing, sowing, then another break before reaping and threshing, after which everybody could relax till the start of the next cycle. So there were times when farmers were fully occupied and times when many farmers were underemployed. As agricultural production improved and increased, so did the population. Soon there were more people than were needed for, or indeed could actually be employed in, farming activities.

The building and maintenance of irrigation works, waterways, roads, temples, royal palaces and other civil construction works were scheduled to absorb the excess labour, firstly to keep people occupied (idle hands and minds might turn to crimes such as tomb raiding or possibly even insurrection), and secondly and perhaps more importantly, as a form of social bonding and social welfare. People were entitled to receive food, beer and clothing in return for their labour. Those not exempted were rostered into crews which comprised two gangs which each had five phyles (tribes or watches) always with the same names – Great (Starboard) Asiatic (Port) Green (Prow) Little (Stern) and Last (Good). The nautical association clearly indicated the importance of river traffic and transport in Egyptian life.

Pyramid 1 of Khufu at Giza, like all other pyramids, eventually ended up as a tomb and temple complex, but it was also a work creation project over a 20 year period. In fact, it was the driving force of the entire national economy. Some 25,000 people were employed at any one time, including a permanent management team and skilled craftsmen, plus drafted labourers from every corner of the kingdom, men for the heavy work and women for the kitchens and bakeries. Each draft served out its tour of duty, generally 3 months, and was replaced by the next. There are records of the various phyles competing – for example, which phyle could shift the largest number of stone blocks in a month. For many people, it was an adventure – a trip away from home and a chance to see new things and meet new people. Maybe it was not exactly a holiday camp, but it was not slave labour, nor press-gang labour. It was certainly nothing like the horrendous slave labour of the building of the Great Wall of China with its staggeringly high casualty and mortality rates.

A similar but rotating roster system applied to service in the temples. People not exempted would be rostered, apparently especially those without other means of support, although the larger temples (with their own estates, livestock, crops, fruit trees, vines, vegetable and flower gardens, plus slaughterhouses, bakeries, kitchens, breweries, storehouses and workshops) also had many full-time employees. Service involved working in the public areas of the temple – only the priests and pharaohs were permitted to enter the sanctuary and related areas. The Egyptian religion did not involve preaching as such. Public feasts and celebrations featured processions in which the gods in their ceremonial barques were carried on the shoulders of the priests along the defined route, which was lined by the public who would then join

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in and follow the procession back to the temple. Otherwise, the religion focused on honouring and caring for the temple god or gods. The daily routine included waking the gods, bathing and dressing them, serving them 2 or 3 meals during the day, presenting them with the offerings brought to the temple, and returning them to repose in the evening. There would be salutations and prayers, incense would be burned and the floors swept. After the gods had 'enjoyed' their meals and other offerings, the 'remnants' would be distributed. The people who served in the temples thereby became entitled to a small share in the endowments of the temple, not just for the few months of service each year, but throughout the entire year.

The Egyptian economy operated on a barter system. Even when coins were introduced in the Greek and Roman periods, most ordinary folk continued to barter.

EGYPT – RAIN IN THE DESERT

There are frequent and violent sand storms in the desert, some of which continue for days and even weeks. The winds can shift massive quantities of sand over considerable distances. The airborne sand may sometimes be travelling with sufficient speed and force to strip exposed flesh from the bone.

At intervals of maybe 200 to 500 years, there will be rain. Typically, there will be fierce winds, thunder and lightning, and huge amounts of water literally bucketing down, causing flash flooding with surge fronts cascading down the ancient wadies. On the rare occasions when these freak storms do eventuate, people and animals taking shelter from the wind and sand in the wadies are often caught by the flash floods and drowned. Surely the cruellest of fates – to be drowned in the desert.

It is known that the Valley of the Kings (a wadi) has been flooded on at least three occasions since the first pharaoh was entombed there.

INDIAN TRANSPORT

We had seen overloaded passenger vehicles before, but on this trip we saw some extreme examples. Apparently, a Toyota 4WD may be licensed to carry as many as 30 people, with the people sitting on the roof paying half fare.

INDIANS CHEW

Despite the huge numbers of discarded cigarette butts and empty cigarette packets which litter the country, it was unusual to see an Indian person smoking a cigarette. It was much more common to see them chew – and spit.

They chewed either straight tobacco or betelnut or a mixture of both plus various spices called supari or gutkha. There were street stalls which sold shavings of plug

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tobacco, betelnut and all the necessary accoutrements to either smoke or chew. There were also prepared packets of gutkha in plastic foil about 5cm by 4cm which went under a variety of brand names. The list of ingredients from the popular 'Sirs' brand was: betelnut, catechu, tobacco, lime, cardamom, saffron, permitted spices and flavours. There were many times more discarded gutkha packets than all forms of cigarette litter combined.

On our walk to the book shops in Delhi, we passed a right angled inside corner between two arches at the end of a portico or veranda. The walls were painted white. The corner was splattered with red streaks that at first glance looked as if somebody had been severely bashed or as if bloody murder had been committed there, until I realised that the splatters were facing IN and DOWN. It was a spitting corner, and the red was betelnut stain.

Indians who smoked or chewed were not opposed to a good hard long and loud lung shattering cough, a good hard long and loud throat rasping hack, and a damned good hard high velocity and noisy spit.

Our driver to Agra was wont to chew, but was decorous in front of the paying customers. Every so often, he would pull over to the side of the road, stop the van, open the drivers door, lean outwards and spit very quietly and very delicately.

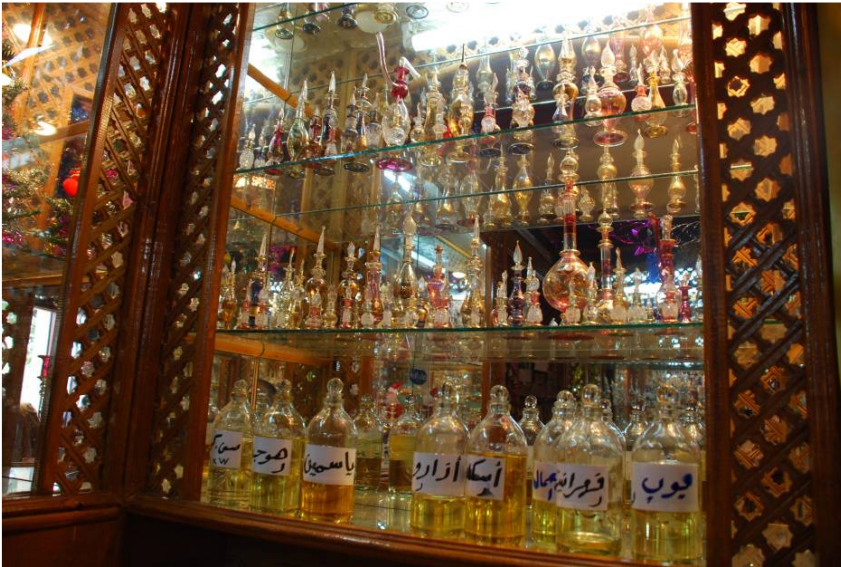
INDIAN BANK NOTES

Indian commercial banks and the Indian Reserve Bank on behalf of the Indian Government, will reject dirty or damaged bank notes. There is a thriving industry of money laundering in India, but of the legal kind. Old bank notes are scrubbed up, literally washed and ironed, for a fee, so that they will be acceptable for deposit into a bank account. At a toll gate, our driver had a 20R note rejected, because it was held together by sticky tape. About the only thing you could do with such a note would be to give it to a beggar – and even a beggar might reject it.

INDIAN MEAT CONSUMPTION

Many Indians, especially Jains, are vegetarian, but a large majority eat fish, beef and buffalo, lamb and mutton, poultry, goat, donkey, camel, pig (in quantity in roughly that order) and just about anything else, including (more so in the past than now) snake, monkey, tiger and elephant. Cattle are sacred to Hindus, and pigs are proscribed for Muslims, but as in all societies, food taboos are observed only by the devout. Meat consumption per capita in India is still low by comparison with western countries, but as living standards improve, it is increasing quite rapidly.

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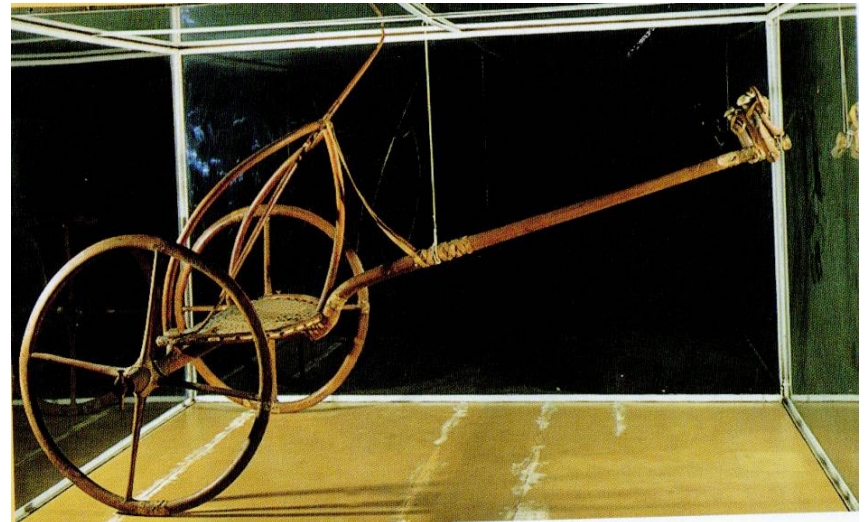


Perfumery display case – Giza



Papyrus shop – Giza

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Tutankhamen chariots
Egyptian Museum – Cairo

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Sarcophagus and canopic jars of Psusennes I – Egyptian Museum – Cairo

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Sarcophagus and canopic jars of Sheshonq II – Egyptian Museum – Cairo

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Ahmed II and his crew on board his ferry – Luxor



Calabash – Luxor
Buildings being demolished to unearth more of the Avenue of Sphinxes
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King Mina Bazaar and the real bazaar – Luxor

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Donkey carts in Egypt
carting sugar cane with irrigated farm land in the background (top)
and typical street vendor with fruit and veg (above)

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Cobbled stairways near the Acropolis hill – Athens



Traditional book store – Delhi

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Half fare (top) and full fare (above) – at least for half fare you get a seat

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Indian art of loading

Oops – maybe one too many (internet image – top) and straw bales on the Delhi-Agra freeway (above)

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Camel cart (top) and transporting raw cotton (above) – Delhi-Agra Freeway

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The most fun you can have on four wheels

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THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

After so many days of such intense contact and involvement with the ancient Egyptian religion, the obvious question was “What did it all mean?” Despite the wealth of archaeological evidence, there were no definitive answers, only conflicting theories and speculation. The more research we undertook and the more sources we consulted, the more theories we encountered.

BELIEF

It is almost impossible to know what the ancients believed about their gods or the sense in which they believed.

The earliest known indications of human spirituality related to reverential treatment of the bodies of the deceased, usually burial or cremation, and respect for the forces of nature – the climate, landscape, plants, birds, animals and fish of the local environment. Birds and animals were often adopted as totems by families or tribes. There was a spirit world, which the shaman or tribal elders could visit in a trance state, generally induced by ritual such as dance, or by drugs, or both.

As hunter-gatherer tribes settled down into farming communities, animist spirituality gradually gave way to organised religion. Out of the void, a creator god would emerge, and create the primary gods – typically the gods of earth, air, water and fire, gods as the personification of the forces of nature. The creator god would then, either alone or with the help of the primary gods, create plants, birds, animals, fish and humans. Other gods would emerge as and when required – gods of war, fertility and childbirth, death and the underworld, knowledge, healing, pleasure, music, feasting and drinking. However, in the folk memory, the totems and spirit world were not forgotten – rather the new gods were grafted onto the old ways.

Fertility was a fundamental concern of all ancient peoples. They were concerned with the fertility of the soil and thus its ability to produce crops – so that there would be food. They were concerned with the fertility of their seeds (rice, wheat, barley, millet), that they would sprout to produce crops – so that there would be food. They were concerned with the fertility of their domesticated animals so that they would produce offspring and provide wool and hides for clothing and milk and meat – so that there would be food. They were concerned with the fertility of game animals and birds and fish – so that there would be food. In other words, fertility meant food, which in turn meant survival. Fertility also related to human sexuality, conception, pregnancy and childbirth, but these matters were somewhat different to the food concepts of fertility and usually covered by separate gods or cults.

People revered a wide variety of animals. It was not only or exactly the animal itself that was important – it was the human virtue or characteristic that the animal

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represented. The lion was seen as the personification of power and courage. The bull personified strength and endurance. The horse personified speed and freedom. In Egypt, the crocodile personified long life and was greatly feared as a stealthful ambush hunter, known to attack humans – as a god, it guarded the threshold between life and death. In Egypt, the hippopotamus, as the largest known animal (before war elephants were introduced in the Greek and Roman times) personified abundance but its aggression, especially the females in protecting their young, led to its role as the goddess of childbirth. In India, the elephant, as the largest known animal, personified abundance, enormous physical strength, intelligence and long life and was trusted to perform tasks faithfully, but when provoked was known to be “as dangerous as a thunderbolt.”

It was considered that by appropriate veneration and worship of the animal, the human supplicant could acquire the virtues that the animal represented.

The primary Egyptian creator god was the sun, one of the earliest incarnations of which was Ra (Re) from the Heliopolis region. The god appeared every morning and disappeared each night. The god was there and clearly visible for all to see, so in what sense did they believe in the god?

Worshipping the god of the sun could take many forms. It could be simple thanks for rising in the morning and providing light and heat. There could be a lament at dusk for the death or disappearance. Typically in sun worship there were festivals to commemorate the summer and winter solstice and the spring and autumn equinox.

The Egyptians had a god of the Nile, Hapi (Hapy). Unlike the sun which rose and set each day, the cycle of the Nile was not so reliable or predictable. The flood or inundation might be early or late, and there might be famine. If there were too much water, there could be massive destruction of homes, irrigation channels and levees, the fields would be ruined and there would be famine. If there were too little water, not all the fields could be planted and there would be famine.

Worshipping the god of the Nile would be quite a different prospect to worshipping the god of the sun. The emphasis might be on attempting to persuade the god to behave in ways that were beneficial and not to behave in ways that were detrimental to humans. There would be offerings and sacrifices to reward or placate or bribe the god. But again, in what sense did they believe in the god?

Anthropologists, theologians, philosophers, psychologists and others interested in these matters consider that in the ancient world, there was no separation between the sacred and the secular. People did not need to believe in a god or gods that they could see. The Egyptians simply accepted that the sun and the Nile were gods. Given their state of scientific knowledge, it was their understanding of the world and the cosmos and the way it all worked. Apparently, it was not until the invisible

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gods of the Zoroastrian, Gnostic and Judo-Christian-Islamic religions arrived that belief became central to religion – or at least to those and other similar religions.

The Egyptians did believe in, or hope and trust in, Words of Power – written or spoken words, but particularly the sound of the spoken word. Many ancient peoples considered that certain words, such as the secret name of the god, or the correct form of invocation of the god, would favourably dispose (or perhaps even compel) the god to assist the supplicant in a particular way. For example, the Egyptians had prayers, chants and incantations for the cure of snake and scorpion bites, which might have had no direct medical efficacy, but which were probably a good and often effective placebo.

THE NATURE OF THE GODS

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Egyptian religion was the form of representation of the gods. They were usually depicted with human bodies, and with animal, bird or even insect heads. Most gods also had both fully human and fully animal forms of representation.

There are many theories, with perhaps the most common hypothesis being that the combination of the human and animal aspects of the gods was an attempt at social and religious unity. It is thought that many different tribes or peoples or races found their way into the Nile Valley at least three thousand and probably as much as five thousand years prior to the dynastic or pharaonic period, which itself commenced around 3500 BCE (recent estimate) to 3100 BCE (previous consensus estimate), and that they brought many different gods with them. Some (perhaps those still adhering to their old tribal totems) represented their gods as animals and others represented their gods as human – so, combine them. The human god was combined with the animal which was considered to most closely reflect the same attributes. This was probably a gradual and organic process in the early stages, but it later became a carefully orchestrated and well organised political process.

Much like India, the early period of settlement in the Nile Valley was marked by a number of small independent kingdoms. Gradually, two major population centres emerged. These centres eventually became the Lower Kingdom in the delta region and the Upper Kingdom from around Luxor (Thebes) to Aswan (Elephantine). Uniting the two kingdoms and keeping them united was not an easy task. The uniting was first achieved at the start of the pharaonic period, but breakdowns in the central authority are known to have occurred at times of social instability, perhaps caused by severe and prolonged famine, and at times of foreign invasion.

Egypt was invaded a number of times with at least some parts of the country under foreign control for lengthy periods. It had periods of empire when it conquered large territories to the north and south. It also had extensive if less direct contacts

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with more distant cultures via trade and diplomacy. Thus Egypt was often exposed to foreign gods, some of which became popular and joined the Egyptian pantheon.

To further complicate matters, the names and characteristics and mythologies of the gods, whilst broadly similar, none the less varied quite dramatically between regions, notable the regions based on the formerly independent small kingdoms. By the beginning of the pharaonic period, as well as numerous minor variations, there were three major traditions or sects – Ra the creator sun god of Heliopolis, Montu the creator sun and war god of Thebes, and Ptah the creator god of Memphis. Ptah was once a sun god, but then became even more potent as the father of the sun god Atum. He was one of the few gods with no animal form of representation.

Also, the religion evolved over time, reflecting especially changes in political power. When a pharaoh was deposed or replaced by one from a different region, or indeed by a foreign invader, so the priests (and therefore the gods) of the new region, or indeed of the invading army, gained influence and increased their power. In this way, Montu became Amun (Amon), and was then combined with Ra to become Amun-Ra, Herakhty and Khepri became gods of the morning sun, Aten became the physical manifestation of the sun disk, and Atum became the god of the evening sun, thus assigning each of these regional variations of the sun god a share of the glory (and their priests a share of the power).

The various processes of syncretism and evolution were mostly successful but did not completely resolve or remove the regional inconsistencies and variations.

The religion envisaged an after-life which seemed to be essentially the same as this life. The pharaoh, as a god, joined the other gods, and the ordinary people went about their ordinary activities – ploughing fields, harvesting grain, tending farm animals. There seems to have been very little in the way of rigorous intellectual analysis of just what eternal life in the nether-world would involve. For example, most after-life scenes represented an idealised man and wife together and in the prime of life (regardless of when each of them actually died) with an abundance of farmlands, animals and all manner of worldly goods, but it was incredibly simplistic. Most of the emphasis was on the complex process of prayers, offerings and rituals required to get to the other side rather than on what happened when you got there. In this respect, not much has changed.

The departed were thought to retain contact with this world, although not in any direct physical sense. For so long as offerings were made to the departed, they would offer good fortune and protection to the living. Despite the representations of the sun god being ‘reborn’ every morning, and the expectation of ‘rebirth’ into the after-life, the Egyptians did not seem to have a concept of reincarnation, or transmigration of the soul, although the concept apparently became quite popular when it was introduced from India, most probably by the Persians. The Persians

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invaded Egypt in 525 BCE, were expelled in 404 BCE, invaded again in 343 BCE and were expelled by Alexander the Great in 331 BCE.

Much of the archaeological evidence which has come down to us concerns funerary practises, especially of the rich and powerful. It might have been that those people were genuinely pious, or it might just have been that they could easily afford not to take any chances.

What we do know is that the ordinary Egyptians were basically a happy, well fed and well adjusted people who enjoyed and celebrated life. There were numerous public holidays and festivals throughout the year, featuring music, singing, dancing, feasting and drinking – especially drinking. The Egyptians were not given to deep philosophical exploration or personal introspection, and did not at any stage in their long history approach the philosophical levels of the Indians or Greeks, or the intense mysticism and spirituality of the Indians.

In Egypt, there was either joy and happiness at the simple pleasures of life when all went well, or despair and hopelessness and feelings of powerlessness in the face of adversity, such as famine or plague or foreign invasion. Religion provided a focus and an organisational structure, and the temples provided the settings, for celebrations to give thanks to the gods for the good times, and to pray, plead for help, invoke, partition, offer and sacrifice to avert or redress disasters.

Apart from reincarnation as mentioned above, there were many points of similarity between the Egyptian religion and the Hindu-Brahmin religion of India. The Egyptians had many cults, and sought to combine similar gods who represented essentially the same cults. In the Indian tradition, there were literally thousands of gods and cults, but these apparently separate gods were seen as different aspects or manifestations or avatars (including both male and female or god and consort) of the three principal gods – Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. In addition, the three principal gods (and many of their important separate aspects) each had a ‘vehicle’ – a bird or animal on which they were transported, and as in Egypt, the characteristics or attributes of the vehicle were matched to those of the god.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

Apart from providing the physical manifestations of the god or gods and the conducting of ceremonies, especially those marking the Rights of Passage, and the comfort, solace and reassurance of rituals, religions seek to provide answers to three fundamental and related questions that humans have asked through the ages:-

- 1) where did we come from?
- 2) what is the meaning of life? and
- 3) what happens when we die?

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The first question gives rise to creation myths. Today, the scientific creation myth is The Big Bang, but it comes no closer to an intellectually convincing or emotionally satisfying explanation than any other creation myth. We are still left to ponder “What caused it?” or “What was there before?” For people of the ancient world, creation myths addressed the questions “Is there somebody out there? Can that somebody be reached? Will that somebody respond?” It was reassuring for people to believe that there was a god or pantheon of gods who created them, watched over them, listened to their prayers and enjoyed the worship and adulation they offered, and who responded in positive and protective ways. People felt that they were not alone in the universe – the gods were there before them, had created them and would protect them.

The second question may also be expressed as “Why are we here?” or “Now that we are here, what are we supposed to do?” In this form, the question is answered by religions in terms of living a good life, being a good person. But people consider there must be something more, a deeper hidden meaning, an ultimate truth. This leads directly to the third question. The second and third questions are so intimately related that it is virtually impossible to address them as entirely separate questions. Religions regard an essential part of the meaning of this life as being preparation for the next life. People generally cannot accept that they have learned so much, done so much, experienced life’s complexities, successes and failures, joys and sorrows ... for nothing.

The third question is often called The Eternal Question, and raises many others. “Is there life after death? If so, is it universal, available to all living things or is it restricted to only humans? Is it for all humans or only those who qualify, as in the Christian version of heaven and salvation being available only to the true believers? Is it avoidable, as in the Buddhist concept of achieving nirvana and escaping from the wheel of life and death and the endless cycle of reincarnation?”

Most religions are external to the individual and involve pleas for help to, worship of and belief in a god or gods, who confer an after-life as a reward – either eternal life in the spirit world with the god or gods, or a better life of a higher status in this world in the next reincarnation.

Buddhism looks within.

Buddhism encourages the individual to practise meditation and contemplation, seeking personal peace and harmony from within – seeking Enlightenment. Buddhism encourages the individual to end their own suffering by living mindfully and by giving up clinging and attachment. Don’t torture yourself by lusting after things you do not have and probably never will have. Try to live now in the present moment without being weighed down by the past and without worrying about the future.

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It was the aspect of looking within and being responsible for yourself that appealed to the philosophers and citizens of ancient Greece, and to the Romans.

Buddhism is a spiritual path, not a sectarian religious tradition. In Buddhism, belief is not necessary, only personal practice can achieve the ultimate spiritual attainment of enlightenment.

FINDINGS FROM OUR RESEARCH

Phra Mana has observed that there were many similarities between Buddhist and ancient Egyptian art and a number of symbols that were common to Buddhist and ancient Egyptian iconography. Sometimes the meanings ascribed to various images were the same or substantially similar. However, it was not until the Persian, Ptolemaic and Roman periods in Egypt that it could rightly be said that there was a direct Buddhist influence and a direct one on one correspondence of image and meaning between Buddhist and Egyptian (or Greek or Roman) art.

LOTUS

The most obvious and most frequently occurring symbol common to Buddhism and ancient Egypt was the lotus. It was a symbol of purity and perfection, admired for its beauty and perfume. As a water symbol, it had resonances of life, health and prosperity. The lotus petals were like the points of the compass, indicative of endless expansion in all directions.

In India and Egypt, it was a symbol of birth, especially royal birth. For this reason, gods, kings, pharaohs and the Buddha have all been represented as emerging from a lotus flower or throned upon a lotus flower or seed pod.

Indian water cosmology had the lotus as born in the water of the Ocean of Infinity, being a seat, a pedestal, a base, a platform – even the earth itself. It signified purity and spiritual detachment. In Buddhism the lotus had all the above associations, and in addition, the lotus represented spiritual attainment – or enlightenment. The dhamma or teachings of the Buddha were referred to as the Lotus of the Good Law. It also became a symbol of the Tree of Life (see TREES).

The Egyptian sun god Ra was considered to have emerged from a lotus flower floating on the Primeval Waters, being born from a floral womb. This concept shaped the funerary belief that the deceased person would be reborn into the after-life from a lotus flower, just like Ra.

In Egypt, the blue lotus was thought to follow a daily cycle of rising out of the water, opening into full bloom with petals like the rays of the sun and radiating its perfume, then closing and sinking back deep into the water at night. This was

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considered highly significant as it followed the cycle of the sun god Ra, and like the sun represented rebirth. It was also a political symbol of the Upper Kingdom, as the papyrus was a political symbol of the Lower Kingdom.

In fact, Egypt did not have a 'lotus' prior to about sixth century BCE when it was introduced by the Persians. Prior to that, Egypt had both the blue and white water lily. There are many varieties of lotus and water lily, with lotus ranging in colour from pure white to yellow to pale pink. The blue water lily ranges from sky blue to pale blue to blue changing to pale yellow towards the centre of the flower. The white water lily is sometimes tinged with pink.

TREES

Trees or at least some specific trees have been regarded as sacred by virtually every ancient society. The Tree of Life is thought to have been of Babylonian origin. It was represented as having its roots in the soil (reaching down into the underworld and the realm of the dead) its trunk in this world and its branches in the sky (reaching up into the heavens and the realm of the gods). The concept was widely adopted and expanded into the Tree of Life and Fortune or the Wishing Tree, which showered its fruits on humans and granted their wishes.

In India, every village had its sacred tree with its tree spirit. For Buddhists, the bodhi tree became sacred because it was whilst sitting under such a tree that the Buddha became enlightened. When pressed by his followers, the Buddha gave his approval for the use of the bodhi tree to represent him in person. An interesting aspect of Buddhist iconography is that because the bodhi tree was used as an approved or authorised symbol of the person of the Buddha, the lotus took on the role of the Tree of Life and the Wishing Tree, with the elongated twisting stem of the lotus represented as bringing forth all of the gifts of the Wishing Tree to humanity, similar to the cornucopia disgorging its bounty.

The Egyptians regarded the sycamore tree as their most sacred tree. It featured prominently in the mythology of Isis and Osiris, and was often represented with a tree spirit amongst the branches as a female human torso or arm pouring from a jug or presenting a platter of cakes and fruits to provide sustenance to the departed, the pharaohs or the gods. The palm tree was also sacred and the tree spirit of the palm tree was often represented in the form of a young woman standing beneath and between two palm trees.

MOUNTAIN OR MOUND (MYTHICAL MOUNTAINS OF THE MIND)

Indians had extreme reverence for the Himalayan Mountains and the sacred rivers, especially the Ganges. From this evolved the idealised cosmology of Mount Meru, the sacred mountain, as the centre of the universe, with concentric rings of oceans

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and continents surrounding it. In the Hindu version, there were six continents. In the Buddhist version, there were seven continents plus four symmetrically located islands in the ocean beyond the outer-most continent, marking each of the cardinal directions. In both versions, beyond the land was the Ocean of Infinity.

The Egyptians had a Primeval Hill, on which the creator god, the sun god Ra, arose out of the lotus flower on the Primeval Waters at the time of creation. Early temples had as the focus of devotion an artificial mound, representing the Hill. Slightly later temples had a Ben Ben Stone erected on the mound. This was a crude, short, squat obelisk, positioned to catch the sun's rays each morning to glow and show that the god was in residence in his temple. Sometimes the point section of the structure was covered in copper or gold to enhance the glow. It is generally thought that the Ben Ben Stone evolved into the pyramid, although not all archaeologists accept this view.

The Greeks had Mount Olympus as the home of the gods and the physical centre of their religion.

STUPA AND PYRAMID

The body of the Buddha was cremated, and the ashes from the fire (the relics of the Buddha) were collected and divided into eight portions to satisfy the demands of the various competing claimants. Each portion was encased within a stupa. The Relic Stupas became objects of veneration. Stupas of this era in India were typically a semi-spherical mound constructed mostly of fired brick. It is thought they would originally have been about 15m to 20m in height, not including any railing and umbrella superstructure, somewhat similar to the Great Stupa at Sanchi. They were enlarged and repaired over the years, however, all the original Relic Stupas are now in ruins, and the relics have long since been removed.

Other stupas were constructed to contain the relics of Buddhist saints or Buddhist kings, and still others were built simply as objects of veneration. There are now many hundreds of thousands of stupas, chedis, prangs and pagodas throughout the Buddhist world in many different shapes and sizes, and stupas, chedis, prangs and pagodas are still being constructed today, including the Gratitude Pagoda at Sunnataram.

The pyramids of Egypt are thought to have evolved from the semi-spherical mound (similar in shape to a stupa) of the early graves and the Primeval Hill and Ben Ben Stone, and like many stupas they were royal tombs. The usual idea of Egyptian pyramids is of structures the size of those at Giza, Pyramid 1 at 147m, Pyramid 2 at 144m and Pyramid 3 at 65m. In fact, of the 90 odd pyramids so far identified in Egypt proper (Aswan and north to the Mediterranean) and the 180 or more in Nubia and areas to the south of Aswan, very few (perhaps as few as 40) would have

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been over 20m in height when completed. The pyramids of Giza were of stone, but many were of brick or rubble fill, with only an outer casing of stone. Once the outer casing was plundered for other purposes, the soft inner structure weathered rapidly.

ASHOKA PILLAR AND OBELISK

Stone columns were a common feature of ancient times, but Egyptian obelisks and Ashoka Pillars took the familiar out of its structural context and gave it a monumental and ceremonial function. They were stunning visual objects, with inscriptions and edicts conveying sacred texts and other political or administrative information.

PILLAR OF FIRE AND DJED PILLAR

The pillar of fire was one of the symbols used to represent the person of the Buddha. It was one of several representations of the person of the Buddha to be depicted in a pillar format. The djed pillar in Egypt was a symbol of strength and stability, often associated with the god Osiris, sometimes described as being the backbone or spine of Osiris.

STYLE

A feature of both Buddhist and ancient Egyptian art was the use of scale, luxurious clothing and jewellery to depict rank or seniority or importance. The Buddha or pharaoh may be shown as larger than their attendants, who in turn were larger than ordinary people, with servants, slaves or children smallest of all. In Egyptian depictions, the gods, pharaohs and other members of the royal family were presented in lavish vestments, splendid robes and jewellery. In Buddhist depictions, it was the Bodhisattvas that as were luxuriantly presented. The Buddha was depicted less ostentatiously, in plain monastic robes.

Certain body features were exaggerated or stylised. The earlobes of the Buddha were distended or elongated, indication the weight of jewellery which he had worn in his days as a prince living in luxury. The ears of the pharaoh were often depicted as larger than life size, an indication that the pharaoh would listen to his people.

Many depictions of the Buddha or the gods and pharaohs were not simple images – they were intended to tell a story, to convey a specific meaning – narrative art. For people to identify the story, and understand the meaning, the scenes needed to be clear and widely recognised. Buddhist scenes often referred to episodes in the life of the Buddha. To identify any one episode, there needed to be key elements or indicators that distinguished it from all the others. Each of the popular episodes developed a standardised format or layout, with certain symbols and certain people in particular groupings and settings. The Egyptians also had their standards, the

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pharaoh smiting enemies or offering to the gods and The Weighing Of The Heart. Christianity had The Last Supper, The Crucifixion and The Last Judgement.

Standard scenes became, in a sense, mass produced – replicated time and time again. The seated Buddha image in particular was presented as serene and peaceful, eyes closed or almost closed, and a faint smile (the archaic smile, first encountered on the Greek kouri statues of the Archaic Period – from about 600 to 480 BCE).

Egyptian paintings and statues were often brightly, vibrantly coloured, with standard depictions such as a man and wife sitting side-by-side, or a pharaoh being greeted or embraced by a god or by two gods, one on either side. Many such depictions appear joyous, affectionate and deeply human. Husband and wife touch, hold hands or have an arm around one another. The gods and pharaohs touch, embrace, clasp one another and possibly kiss – perhaps on each cheek as is still common or customary in many parts of the world today.

WEAPONS AND POWER

Buddhist iconography includes a number of formidable weapons including spears, swords, knives and daggers. These weapons were intended to convey a particular sense of power – the power of knowledge and truth to defeat ignorance, myth and superstition. Images depicted the defeat of demons who personified the dark forces of ignorance by Bodhisattvas and devas who personified the triumphant forces of the light of knowledge and truth.

The ancient Egyptians also represented their gods and pharaohs as powerful figures armed with a variety of weapons, often a mace with which they were depicted as personally smiting their enemies, often symbolically the traditional enemies of Egypt – the Nubians, Libyans, Asiatics (Hyksos, Hittites, Matanni, Assyrians and Persians) and the Sea People. Some of the scenes depicted real battles in which the Egyptian army won significant victories, but many were in effect propaganda, intended to reassure the populace that their gods and their pharaohs would protect them. The ordinary people craved peace and stability – they wanted to believe their gods and pharaohs would deliver peace, stability and prosperity.

A pharaoh was sometimes depicted as a lion or a bull attacking and defeating enemies with the courage and power of a lion and the strength and endurance of a bull. Human body images of pharaohs and gods were often depicted with the tail of a lion or bull (sometimes apparently real, more often stylised) attached at the waist.

GANGA AND BES

Gangas in Buddhism were lesser deities in dwarf form, almost exclusively male, very rarely female. They were associated with strength and physical power. There

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were two aspects of the ganga – a malignant and a benign or benevolent. In the malignant aspect, gangas were represented as being crushed beneath the feet of yaksas (see WEAPONS AND POWER). In the benevolent aspect, they were commonly represented as supporting pillars, arches, thrones or seats and bearing the palanquin of the Buddha. They were also guardians or entry or door keepers, often armed with large, heavy clubs.

The Egyptian dwarf (male) god Bes was associated with family, fertility and childbirth, although fertility and childbirth was primarily the function of the goddess Hathor and several other lesser goddesses. Bes was also associated with happiness and joy in general and music and dance in particular, sometimes being represented dancing and playing a tambourine. Bes was thought to be a foreign god introduced to Egypt from central Africa, with no animal form of representation. About 1500 BCE, Bes became popular with ordinary people as a household god.

NAGA AND URAEUS

Snakes have been incredibly popular in virtually every culture, even in countries that don't have snakes. They have also been reviled, usually to a lesser extent but with equal intensity. The Indians and Egyptians both worshiped and feared snakes. Many houses had a 'pet' snake which controlled rats and mice, but snakes killed many people in India as did both snakes and scorpions in Egypt. It was mainly the nocturnal habits of the snakes and people moving about in the night without lamps and with bare feet and treading on the snakes that accounted for most of the deaths.

It was usually not the common snake that Buddhists and Egyptians depicted.

In Indian mythology, nagas and nagninis, male and female, were anthropomorphic persons of considerable grace and beauty who, when provoked, assumed cobra form with flared hood to strike at lightning speed and deliver a bite causing instant death. Nagninis had only one hood, but nagas had multiple hoods and heads, donating seniority, starting with male children with three hoods up to the naga king with (usually) nine hoods (sometimes more or less but always odd numbers, allowing for one central head, often represented as larger than the others). In human form, they were devotees of the Buddha. In cobra form, and usually depicted as the naga king, they protected the Buddha by rearing up behind him with hoods flared and acting as a living umbrella. Often in such depictions, the coils of the snake-body of the naga formed the throne on which the Buddha sat.

Perhaps the most common representation of nagas in South East Asia, Thailand for example, has not been the traditional Indian cobra image, but a more marine dragon form of creature, usually with a single head, sometimes with three heads but occasionally with more. They are most often represented in pairs on either side of a set of stairs, with the heads rearing at the base of the stairs and the bodies forming

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the balustrade to the top of the stairs. They may also feature on the roof finials of temples and monastery buildings.

In Egypt, the uraeus (plural uraei) was depicted in the form of a cobra with flared hood. It was a divine protector of the pharaoh and the gods. It would spit fire and venom and strike with all the speed and lethal power of a cobra. The uraeus on the headdress or crown of the pharaoh and a number of the gods was intended to intimidate and overawe the beholder – it was a representation of the majestic power and potency residing within the pharaoh and the massive power and potency residing within the gods.

The other important mythological snake in Egypt was Apophis, the enemy of the sun god Ra, who did battle with Ra each night, and was defeated each night as part of the journey of Ra through the underworld to the next dawn.

DHAMMA AND MAAT

Buddhism emerged during a time of religious and social change in India. The Brahmin priests of the Vedic religion who had introduced the caste system and blood sacrifices, were declining in power and influence. Cities were developing along with increasing economic activity, particularly early forms of manufacturing and foreign trade. Yet the caste system placed severe (in theory at least) restrictions on the pursuit of wealth and foreign travel, especially for the higher castes who were the people most capable and able of undertaking such activities.

In very basic terms, the dhamma or the teachings of the Buddha contain two distinct elements – a moral and ethical code for living and a spiritual guide to the attainment of enlightenment.

The Buddha rejected both blood sacrifices and the caste system, calling for respect for all life and stating that there were only two classes of people, householders and sanga – the lay people and those who had renounced lay status to become monks or nuns. Householders were not discouraged from trade or travel nor was wealth in and of itself considered evil or inappropriate. The dhamma emphasised moral and ethical behaviour regardless of wealth, social status or occupation.

Maat (Maot) was the Egyptian goddess of truth and justice. She was present at the trial of the soul of the deceased, when the heart of the deceased would be weighed against a feather. If the heart was too heavy or too light to balance against the feather of truth, the soul of the deceased would be consumed by the crocodile-lion-hippopotamus monster goddess, Ammit (Ammut), The Devourer, and thereby cease to exist – the soul of the deceased would be denied eternal life in the nether-world. The Egyptians used the word maat to describe the highest conception of physical and moral law, of ethical behaviour, of the right order in nature and society, as

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established by the act of creation – they considered that the presence of maat imposed order on chaos at the moment of creation. The concept of maat reflected an attitude that the law needed to be based on truth and justice, and that respect for order, truth and justice was required of those in positions of authority.

The Greeks and Romans had great respect for the Rule of Law. The Greeks developed democracy, and Roman law was the basis of the British legal system, which was inherited by the former British colonies, including USA, Canada, India and Australia. However, the Greeks and Romans had large slave and peasant populations to whom the laws for their citizens did not apply. The Egyptians did have slaves, mainly captured enemy soldiers, but they were a small and at times non-existent portion of the population. Egyptian concepts of human rights were more equitably based, including the concept that all persons (including peasants) were equal before the law. Women had equal rights with men of the same social status – class was more defining than gender. The Egyptians appear to have had an incredibly strong sense of natural justice and a determination to ensure that their rulers respected this and behaved ethically. This must have been a significant factor in the longevity and vitality of their culture. It was remarkable and, so far as we know, unique in the ancient world, with the possible exception of the Indus Civilisation, about which we still know so very little.

THE INDUS CIVILISATION

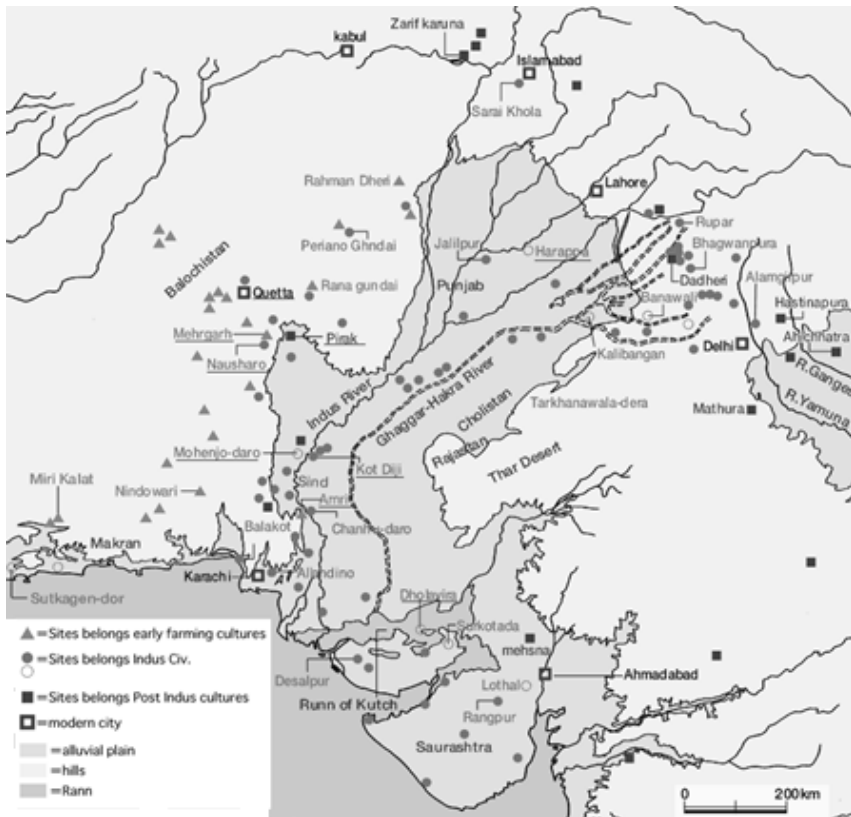
In the ancient world there were four advanced agrarian riverine civilisations. They were based on the Yellow River in China, the Indus in India (Pakistan), the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, and the Nile in Egypt.

It is thought that various peoples had moved into the Indus valley region by 8000 BCE or before and that the Indus Civilisation dated from about 4500 BCE. There were over 2,000 major settlements along the Indus and a second approximately parallel river to the east, the now extinct Saraswati (or Chaggar-Hakra), and their many tributaries, with a population perhaps as high as 5 million people.

The people of this civilisation were skilled architects and builders, town planners and water managers. There were large dams to collect and store the spring snow melt and the summer monsoons, and substantial irrigation works. They were also skilled in many technologies, especially jewellery manufacture. They developed techniques for producing small beads with holes through the centre and for drilling holes through small semi-precious and precious gems and pearls.

Much like Egypt and India, they were a major trading power. Apart from the overland trade routes, and again much like Egypt and India, they were skilled boat builders able to navigate both by river and by sea. They had extensive contacts with regional trading partners and with Egypt and India, in particular importing

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The four first civilisations (top)
and the Indus Civilisation showing the ancient river courses (above)

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Indus Civilisation jewellery (top)
and two of the best known images from the Indus Civilisation
unidentified statue possibly of a god, ruler, priest or other official (above left)
and the dancing girl (above centre and right)

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Indus Civilisation clay seals with the undeciphered script

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turquoise, lapis lazuli, ivory, pearls and shells and exporting their manufactured jewellery and farm produce. It is thought that they knew of a second source of lapis in the Chagai Hills of Baluchistan (page 23), but kept this knowledge to themselves.

The most remarkable aspect of the civilisation is that there is no evidence of an authoritarian leadership or any evidence of or depictions of warfare. It seems that they were a non-violent people who were able to sustain an advanced culture and complex trading relationships without ostentatious and status-conscious rulers.

It has been postulated that the collapse of the Indus Civilisation around 2000 to 1800 BCE was the result of tectonic activity in the Himalayas. The effect of this activity was the formation of a massive natural dam, perhaps caused by a tilting of the flood plane, with a southern edge some 100 km to 200km from the coast rising up and/or a northern edge near the mountains sinking. The flow of the rivers was completely stopped, causing a bank-up of waters in what became a vast inland sea, which left the settlements below the dam without water, and gradually over perhaps several years flooded all of the farmlands above the dam. When the waters eventually broke through, just one new river emerged, probably somewhere to the west of the previous two rivers. Cities, towns and villages that had once been on river banks were left covered in a layer of mud (sometimes many metres thick) and stranded in what rapidly became desert. Regardless of the actual causes and course of events, what is clear from the geological evidence is that the rivers did shift, that one of the rivers disappeared completely, and that much of the area is now desert.

Many of the survivors of the civilisation are thought to have made their way west as far as Egypt and east as far as the Ganges. It is thought that the refugees would have been welcomed into other communities because of their well-known non-violent customs and their equally well-known technical skills. The dispersal of such a large population of skilled and cultured peoples to the Nile and the Ganges at around 2000 to 1800 BCE could help to explain many of the long standing common cultural and religious customs and practices of Egypt and India.

THE DEFINITIVE SYMBOL

Every tradition or religion has a symbol that is quintessentially its own, that is uniquely identified with and by that tradition or religion.

In Buddhism, in the earliest times, it would have been the bodhi tree (see TREES), but with the advent of the Buddha image, which replaced the bodhi tree as the primary symbol of the person of the Buddha, it has become the dhamma wheel. In Christianity, in the early days of persecution, the secret sign by which Christians identified each other was the fish drawn as two arcs (the first as the question or inquiry, the second as the answer) but with the end of persecution, it became the

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cross or crucifix. In the ancient Egyptian religion, it was the ankh, which was similar to a cross but with the top vertical piece replaced by a loop in the shape of an inverted tear, or drop of water. It has been referred to as a cross with a handle, because the gods and pharaohs were often depicted holding the ankh by the loop, although sometimes by the shaft. The gods usually held the ankh by the shaft to touch the mouth and nose of the deceased to give life. Another popular Egyptian symbol was the shen, a circle of rope with no beginning and no end, signifying eternity. It sat on a base of the same length as the diameter, and often had a sun disk in the centre.

The ankh was specifically a sign of life in both this world and the nether-world and of immortality. Whilst the dhamma wheel and the crucifix are not specifically signs of life in the same way that the ankh was, both represent the vitality and life of their respective traditions and faiths.

DHAMMA WHEEL AND SUN DISK

In Buddhism, the dhamma wheel represents the setting in motion of the teachings of the Buddha by the delivery of his first discourse in the Deer Park at Sarnath. The usual representation of the dhamma wheel has eight spokes, eight being an auspicious number. Other representations refer to a range of numbers of spokes up to a thousand spokes. In that format, the dhamma wheel tends to merge with a representation of the sun, with the hub or centre of the wheel being the body of the sun, the sun disk, and the thousand spokes being the rays of the sun. Even without the transformation of the dhamma wheel into the sun, the sun itself was an auspicious Buddhist symbol.

The swastika was a sun symbol, but it also had a variety of other meanings. In perhaps the most basic application it alluded to the expansion of the cosmos from First Principle – in other words, from creation, which in today's terms would make it the symbol of The Big Bang. It also represented birth and rebirth, the four cardinal points, the four winds or the four elements – earth, air, water and fire. In the svastika form (arms bent to the right) it represented the sun and the male principle, and in the suavastika form (arms bent to the left) it represented the moon and the female principle. In the Buddhist context, it was an auspicious sign generally meaning good luck or good fortune. However the connection with the four cardinal points also indicated the spread of the dhamma to the four corners of the earth. The swastika often appeared on the chest of Buddha images.

In Egypt, the sun was the primary creator god, one of the earliest manifestations of which was Ra, represented with a human male body and a falcon head surmounted by a sun disk. There were many symbols of the sun and the various manifestations of the sun god over the centuries, but the sun disk was always one of the most prevalent. The heretic pharaoh Akhenaten promoted the sun god Aten, represented

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by the sun disk, as the only god, with the rays of the sun depicted as reaching down to earth with a hand at the end of each ray, bearing gifts to humans, especially life, signified by the hand holding an ankh. The hand gestures of the rays have been compared to the hand gestures or mudras of the Buddha images.

In a great many ancient religions and traditions, it was considered that all deities ultimately merged in the sun.

The sun was considered to be THE most potent and powerful force in the universe. It was the sovereign ruler of the universe and the lord of time. The light of the sun penetrated the most secret hidden spaces – nothing could be hidden from the eye of the sun. The sun was a symbol of birth and death (dawn and dusk), light and darkness (day and night), good and evil. The number of rays of the sun depicted time – four rays for the four seasons, 12 for the months of the year, 24 for the hours in the day, 90 for the days of the quarter and 365 for the days of the year – endless rays, endless time.

If there is an ultimate truth, it has to be time. Ultimately, everything is measured against time.

AND THE PURELY DECORATIVE

Many authorities have commented on the horror vacui (fear of empty space) aspect of Indian art in general and of Buddhist art of the Indian school. Scene reliefs were crowded with row upon row of figures with a distorted overhead perspective – a 'standing on each others shoulders' effect as one authority described it. Obvious efforts were made to cover every surface, with devas, yakshas and yakshis, humans, mythological and actual animals (especially elephants, lions, makaras and nagas), vegetative forms and geometric patterns appearing as space-filling motif, often as mirror-image pairs on either side of a central image or doorway or gate.

The ancient Egyptians produced exquisite decorative pieces in context, but did not appear to have the same need to fill every available space – they were more inclined to present a scene with the essential elements, then to move on to the next scene.

The most spacious of all were the Gandharans. Again, they were capable of exquisite decorative work, and provided it where appropriate, but felt no qualms about vacant space, and made no attempt to fill the backgrounds of their reliefs.

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Lotus motifs – Sanchi



Buddha on a lotus throne – Chinese image (left) and Thai lotus image typical of monastery artwork right up to modern times (right)

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Greeting a righteous man on the way to Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha – China

This type of icon served as an aid to meditation
It could be hung before a sick or dying person who hoped to enter the Pure Land
The deceased was shown as reborn into the Pure Land via the lotus flower held by the two bodhisattvas standing before Amitabha

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The Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha – China

Amitabha (centre) bodhisattvas Mahasthamaprapta (left) Avalokiteshvara (right) on lotus thrones facing a pool in which eight small lotus blossoms have opened to reveal eight deceased righteous men who have been reborn into the Pure Land

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Ra emerging from a lotus on the Primeval Waters at the creation (left) and Tutankhamen being reborn from a lotus into the after-life (right)



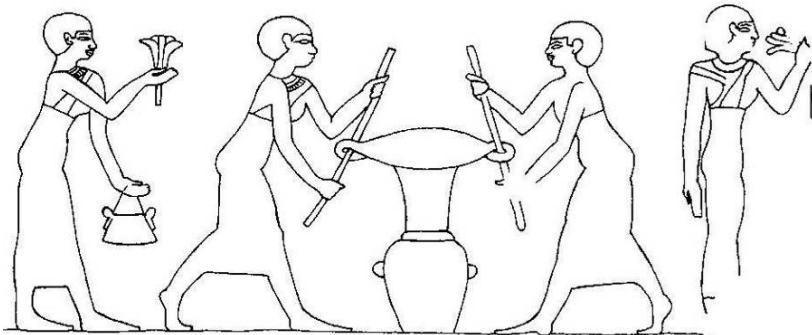
Bracelets of Nimlot

The god Horus depicted as a royal child seated on a lotus with a moon disk on his head flanked by two uraei with sun disks on their heads

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The god Nefertem Lord of Perfumes with a blue lotus on his head (left) and lady carrying grapes and a floral offering featuring lotus (right)

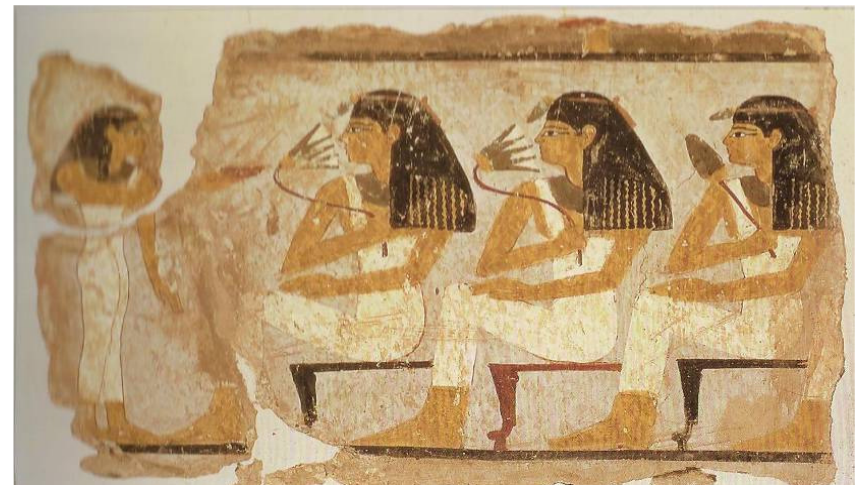


Extracting the essence of the lotus

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Botanical representation of the lotus with a young lady



Typical banqueting scene of non-royal Theban tombs of the New Kingdom

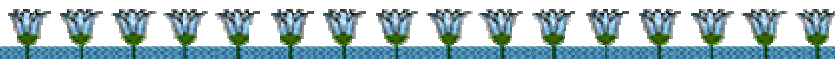
FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS



Botanical representations of the lotus and papyrus



Man and wife with lotus (left) and lady with lotus (right)



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Four deer with one head – from Cave 1 at Ajanta (top)
and Egyptian bowl featuring blue lotus and three fish with one head (above)
Artistic devices of this type were well known in the ancient world

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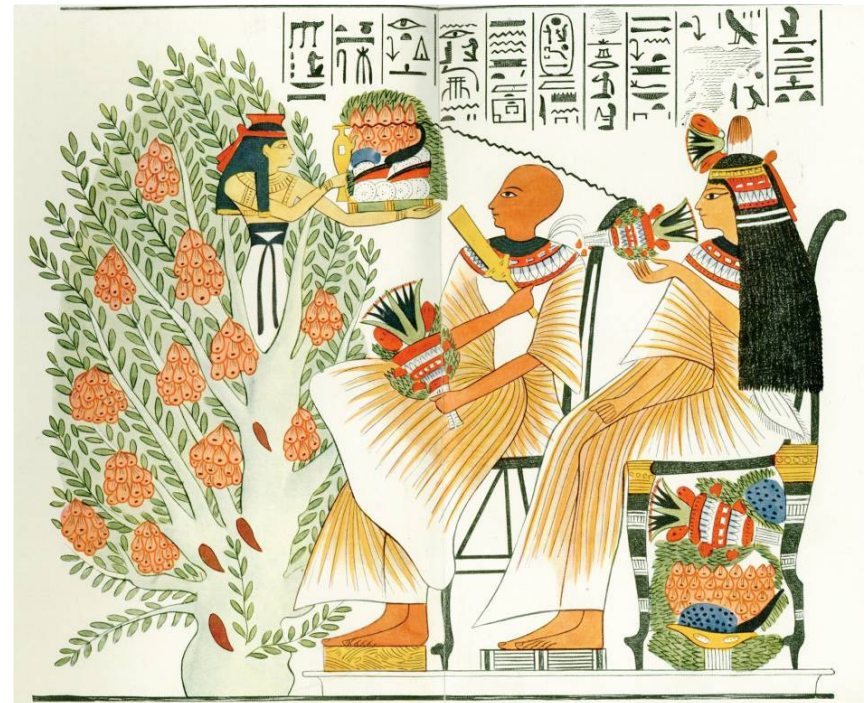


Tree spirit offering water (from the stone railing from the Bharhut Stupa Sunga period second century BCE now in the Indian Museum Kolkata)

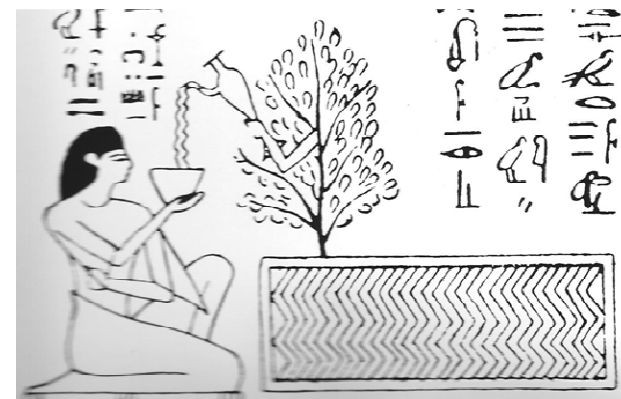


Tree spirit offering food and water Northern India

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Tomb painting depicting a tree goddess in a sycamore tree loaded with figs She offers cakes and fruits to the deceased and is pouring from a jug



Deceased person being offered water by a tree goddess – Papyrus of Nu

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(1) Ra in his solar barque (2) Sennedjem and his wife greeting the gods (3 & 4) farming in the after-life and (5) their after-life farmlands from the tomb of Sennedjem in the Village of the Workers



Three representations of Horemheb with the gods – greeting Osiris, offering to Hathor, and being embraced by Isis and Horus from the tomb of Horemheb in the Valley of the Kings

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Son, daughter, father, mother – with arms around each other



Sennefer Mayor of Thebes and wife Senay with arms around each other and daughter Mutnofret shown in smaller scale between them (left) and priest Tenti and wife Imeretef holding hands (right)

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Goddess Hathor gives life with an ankh (sign of life) touching the mouth and nose (top)
 Goddess Nekhbet with a shen (sign of eternity) in both sets of talons (above)



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Akhenaten and Nefertiti with three of their six daughters below a sun disk and rays with hands bestowing life (ankh) and other gifts



Thutmose III offering to Horus (pharaoh and god with tails) – Deir el-Bahari

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The Buddha depicted as
Supernal Sun (left) – India Museum Kolkata
Pillar of Fire (centre) – Chennai Museum
Tree of Life (right) – Sanchi

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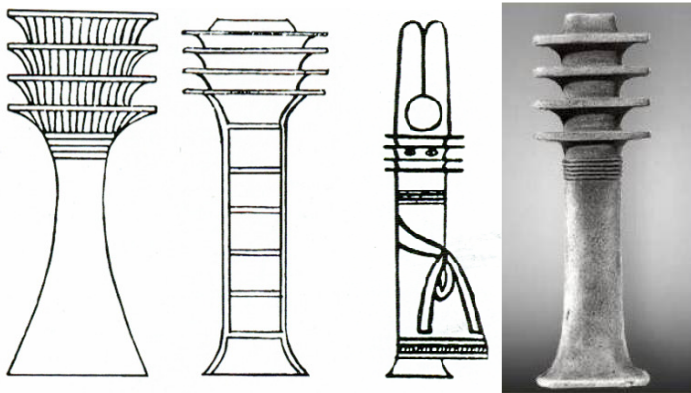
Narmer Palette – 64cm high

- Reverse (left) Narmer in the white crown of the Upper Kingdom smiting an enemy (traditional pose)
- Obverse (right) (i) Narmer in the red crown of the Lower Kingdom proceeded by a priest and standard bearers inspects decapitated enemies (heads placed between their feet)
- (ii) Unknown – generally considered a symbolic unifying of the two kingdoms
- (iii) Narmer as a bull goring and crushing enemies

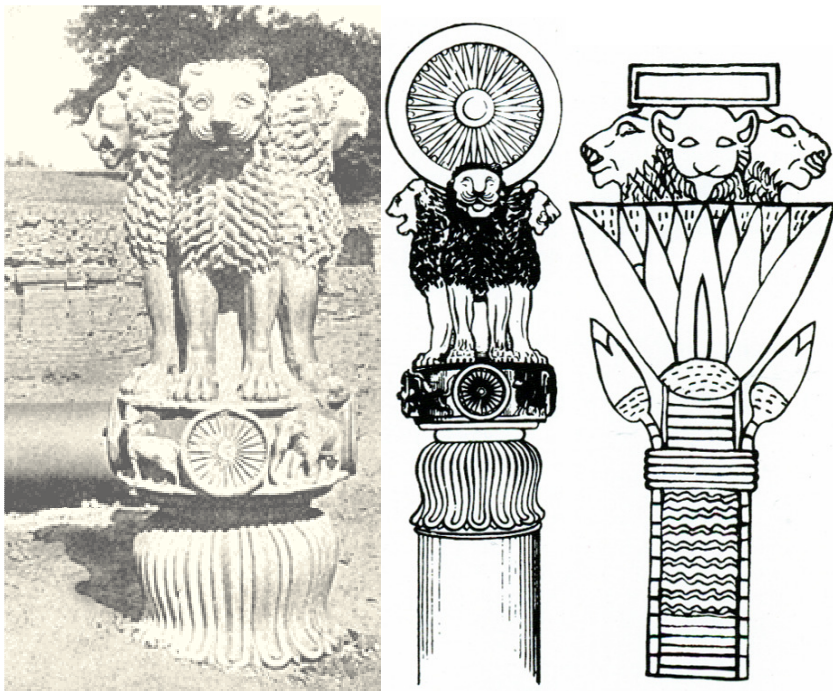


Battlefield Palette (left) and Bull Palette (right)
Unidentified pharaohs depicted as a lion (left) and a bull (right) defeating enemies

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Three graphic representations of the djed pillar and an amulet



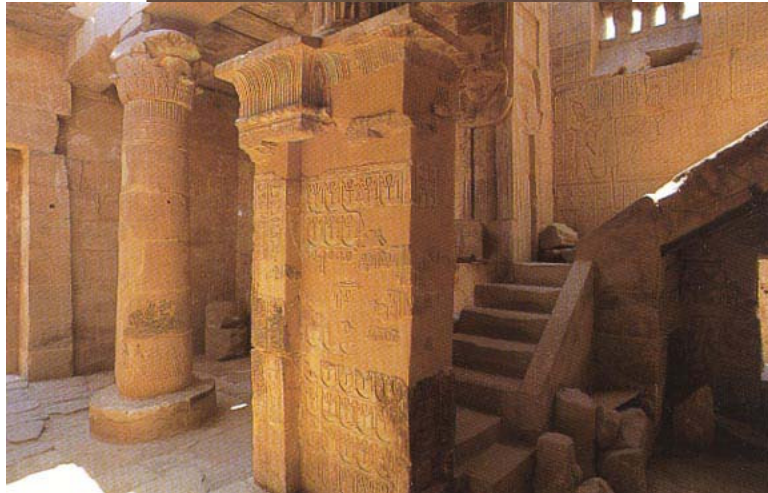
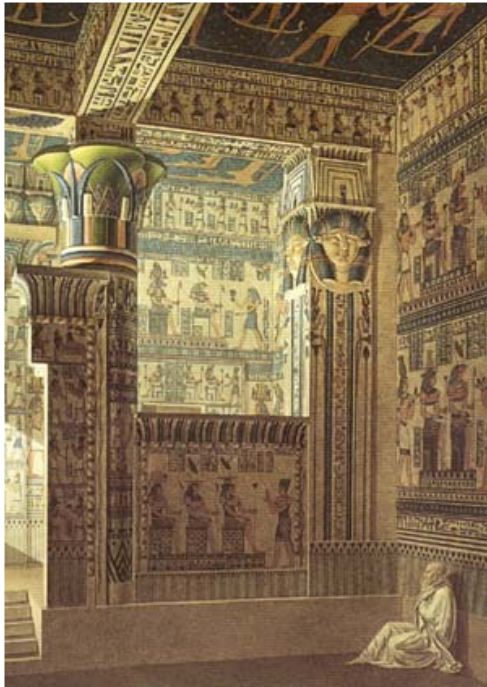
Ashoka Pillar with the Four Lion and Dhamma Chakra Capital as recovered in the Deer Park in 1904 CE (left) as it might have been (centre) and an Egyptian pillar with a lotus and lion capital (right)

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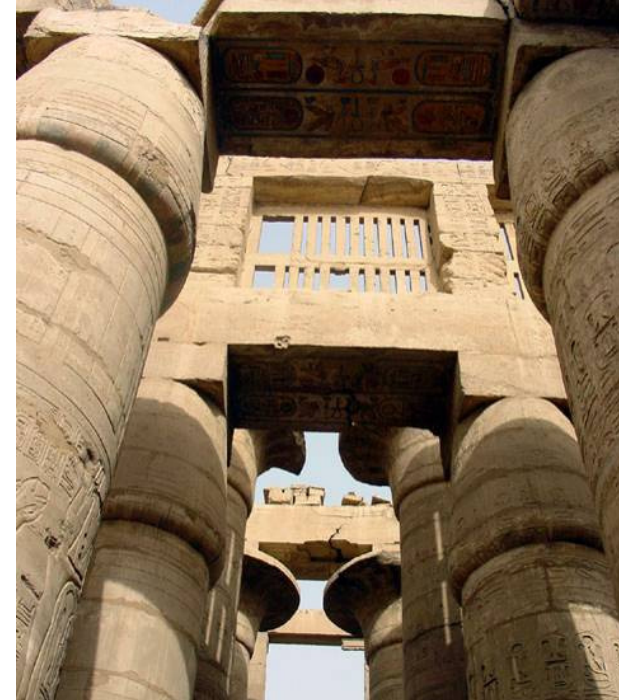
Papyrus pillars – Medinet Habu (top left) lotus pillars – Karnak (top right)
Ashoka Pillar – Vaishali (above left) and obelisks – Karnak (above right)

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Recreation of the interior of the Temple of Het-Hert – Deir el-Madina (top)
with campaniform or floral pillar (left) and Hathor pillar (right)
and recent view (above)

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Stylised hypostyle hall of the New Kingdom era (top)
with lotus pillars in the side isles and papyrus pillars in the central colonnade
and recent view of Karnak (above)

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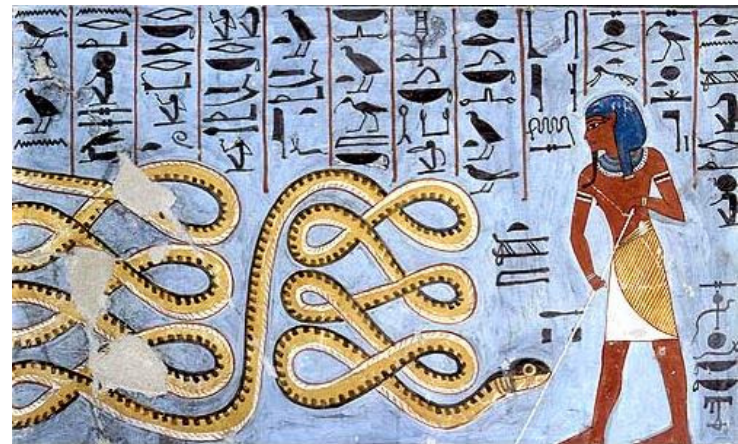
Cobra nagas (top – Sanchi relief left, Buddha image right)
Thai marine dragon nagas (above – Buddha image left,
stairs and roof finials right)

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Golden Uraeus of Senusret II

6.7cm in height of solid gold inlaid with black eyes of granite
head of ultramarine lapis lazuli and hood of carnelian and turquoise



Apophis

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Narrative art – four depictions of the Birth of the Buddha
Standard elements – Queen Maya standing beneath a bodhi tree
the baby emerging from her side and the gods in attendance

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Narrative art – four depictions of the First Discourse
Standard elements – the Buddha, five disciples, deer and dhamma wheel



Narrative art – Weighing of the Heart (uraei on roof and uraei pillars)



Narrative art – Weighing of the Heart

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Narrative art – four depictions of pharaoh smiting enemies



Some of the major Egyptian gods and brief descriptions

- (1) **Horus** son of Osiris, a sky god closely connected with the pharaoh
- (2) **Set** enemy of Horus and Osiris, god of the desert, storms, chaos and evil
- (3) **Thoth** a moon god and god of writing, wisdom, science and medicine
- (4) **Khnum** a water god and potter who moulded humans from clay (5) **Hathor** goddess of joy, love, birth and protector of women (6) **Sobek** protector of the dead
- (7) **Ra** creator and sun god (8) **Amun** creator and sun god (9) **Ptah** creator god and the patron of craftsmen (10) **Anubis** god of mummification and weigher of hearts
- (11) **Osiris** god of agriculture and lord of the dead and the underworld
- (12) **Isis** archetypal wife and mother and goddess of healing

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Isis (mother of Horus
sister/wife of Osiris)
with sister Nephthys

Osiris

The four sons of
Horus on a lotus
Imsety, Duanutef
Hapi and
Qebehsenuef

4. Having passed the
test, the deceased is
presented to Osiris
by Horus

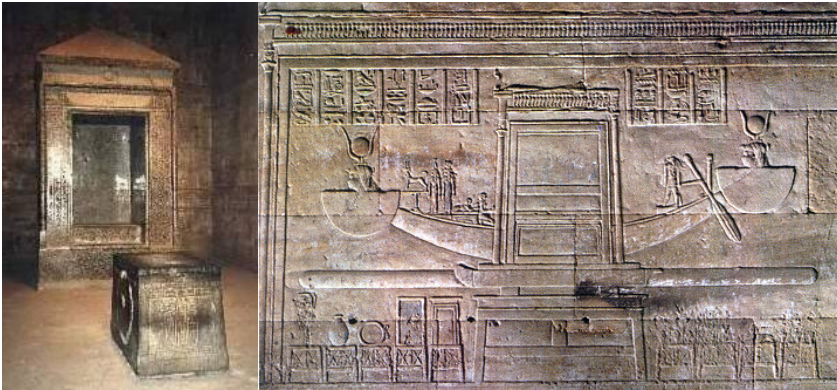
3. Thoth records
the result

2. The heart is
weighed against
the feather of truth
Anubis, Maat (sitting
on top of the scales)
and Ammit

1. The deceased is
escorted into the
hall of judgement
by Anubis
with a tribunal
of 43 deities

Narrative art – Weighing of the Heart

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Temple Sanctuary

a shrine which contained the cult statue of the god or goddess and a table on which the ceremonial barque rested (left) and a relief showing a barque (which was actually a mobile shrine) resting on a table in the sanctuary (right)



Ceremonial Barque of Amun-Ra

being carried in procession on the shoulders of the priests celebrating the Beautiful Feast of the Valley in Thebes with the cult statue of Amun-Ra in the shrine of the ceremonial barque which was decorated with the rams head of Amun wearing a broad collar and sun disk on the bow and stern

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Makara – Sanchi (left)

Ammit the Devourer at the Weighing of the Heart (right)



Ganga supporting an arch – Sanchi (left)

Bes playing a tambourine and dancing with left foot on a lotus flower (right)



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This book is basically a travelogue, but particular care has been taken to ensure that the historical and factual information is based on current, well respected and authoritative sources. Literally dozens of books were consulted, some of which were of the general reader or picture book category. There are many such books, and new titles are published regularly. These books typically contain excellent high quality large format colour photographs and colour illustrations, but the text tends to be lacking in detail and depth of analysis.

Of the many books consulted, this bibliography lists only those that were considered to be of serious academic interest. Although some of these books were first published many years ago, and some of their findings have since been disputed, they remain benchmarks of study and enquiry in their respective fields.

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BACK COVER

Hypostyle Hall – Ramesseum – Luxor

A photograph of an ancient Egyptian temple interior, featuring a series of large, papyrus-bundle columns. The columns are covered in hieroglyphs and reliefs. The perspective is from a low angle, looking down a long, narrow corridor. Sunlight filters through the openings, creating strong shadows on the floor and walls. In the distance, two people are visible walking away from the camera.

**FORGOTTEN PATHWAYS
OF BUDDHISM**

**THE MOVEMENT OF
PEOPLE AND IDEAS
BETWEEN INDIA AND
THE MEDITERRANEAN
600 BCE TO 300 CE**

**Venerable Phra Mana Viriyarampo
Abbot of Sunnataram Forest Monastery
traces the little known contacts of Buddhism
with the ancient civilizations of
Pharaonic Egypt and Hellenist Greece**

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