

retreat but also, perhaps more importantly, transforms this limiting of Seleucid imperial space into an act of cultural self-identification. The *Indica's* urbanism is a valorizing affirmation of one of the central acts of early Seleucid monarchy—city foundation. The identity of city and king is a reflection of early Hellenistic practice: the Indian monarch was named after his capital, the Seleucid cities were named after their monarchs. As we will see in Chapter 7, Megasthenes' transformative, civilizing, territorializing, defensive, royal, administrative city is the Seleucid colony in its essence.

In addition to rewriting Indian history, Megasthenes reformulated Indian geography. His ethnography created the spatial field in which his account of India's historical, cultural, and political dynamics play out,⁹⁸ and this cartography differed strikingly from both classical-period Indographers and the Alexander Historians. Pre-Megasthenic Indian geography displays a broadly stable structure: the most civilized core of "India" is the Indus river basin, paradoxically frontier, center, and main artery of travel,⁹⁹ to the river's east and south one meets a progressively increasing strangeness, utopianism, or barbarism, as is to be expected from the edge of the world. For Herodotus, presumably using the report of Scylax of Caryanda, who had been commissioned by the Achaemenid king Darius I to explore the region,¹⁰⁰ the land beyond the Indus just fades away:¹⁰¹ black-skinned vegetarians to the south, nomads to the east, and eventually an impenetrable, waterless desert.¹⁰² For Ctesias of Cnidus, writing a generation later, India was still the territory watered by the river Indus¹⁰³ and enclosed by the great sand desert in the east¹⁰⁴ but was now a unified vassal kingdom of Persia.¹⁰⁵ Ctesias, in an important precedent for Megasthenes, linked the freakish margins to the ruler: the Pygmies, found deep in the heart of India, serve in the royal army,¹⁰⁶ and the Dogheads, who live between the Indus and the mountains, receive gifts from the royal court every five years.¹⁰⁷ Alexander's campaigning in India (326–325) had permitted, for the first time since Scylax' expedition, autopsy and firsthand investigation,¹⁰⁸ and therefore in the Alexander Historians the land's geography has a finer grain and wider horizons;¹⁰⁹ however, the Macedonian army's restriction to the Punjab maintained the primacy of the Indus valley in narrative and geography. In sum, then, Indian geography before Megasthenes reproduced the Indus-centered Achaemenid *dahayāuš*, or provincial district, of *Hīnduš*.¹¹⁰ Herodotus and Ctesias respond to Persian imperial structures, the Alexander Historians to the revitalization of Achaemenid territory and Herodotus' relevance in

the new world.¹¹¹ A classical worldview

Megasthenes characterized by reducing its size.¹¹³ The desert or an undetermined boundary to the southwest:¹¹⁴ where Alexander's world had failed, Megasthenes now circumnavigated the Mauryan capital, Pataliputra. The voyage of the Seleucid king, important of all, India, the first and third border city of Palimbothra, the inevitable geographical northern India around diplomatic residence gazes out from the Mauryan geography, the river Indus der. Megasthenes resided at the edge of the country on both sides.¹¹⁶ Palimbothra, main river, functions measured.¹¹⁷ Indeed, familiar from the neo-Babylonian-on-the-Tigris, with water characteristics,¹¹⁸ and Alexander's

The spatializing of the world but also delineates a world without its wonders. The world associated with normality, its boundaries are in part, through a Hellenistic lens. For example, the golden age of Alexander's general Neoptolemus to Megasthenes through Pandaea, where natural kingdom: women giving

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the new world.¹¹¹ As we will see elsewhere, the seismic rupture in the classical worldview occurs not with Alexander but after his death.¹¹²

Megasthenes changed the shape of India, rotating it ninety degrees and reducing its size.¹¹³ The country no longer fades off toward an impenetrable desert or an undetermined margin. India now has a terminal, Oceanic boundary to the south and east as well as the long-recognized one to the west:¹¹⁴ where Alexander's unrelenting quest for the eastern edge of the world had failed, Megasthenes' diplomatic mission succeeds. That one can now circumnavigate India and sail from the ocean up the Ganges to the Mauryan capital, Palimbothra,¹¹⁵ will prove important for the imaginary voyage of the Seleucid geographer Patrocles, discussed in Chapter 2. Most important of all, India is now centered on the Ganges, not Indus, valley: the first and third books in particular privilege the *ethnos* of the Prasii, the city of Palimbothra, and the royal administration located there. This is the inevitable geographical consequence of Chandragupta's unification of northern India around the Gangetic core of Maghada and Megasthenes' diplomatic residence in Pataliputra, the imperial capital: Megasthenes' eye gazes out from the Mauryan heartland. We have seen that in earlier Indog-raphy, the river Indus was made to function, oddly, as both center and border. Megasthenes resolves this awkwardness. Whereas the Indus flowed at the edge of the country, the Ganges meandered through its core, with India on both sides.¹¹⁶ Palimbothra, stretching along the northern bank of India's main river, functions as the point from which geographical distance is now measured.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the notion of a capital city abutting a central river is familiar from the new urban foundations of the Seleucid empire: Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, with which Palimbothra suggestively shares some basic characteristics,¹¹⁸ and Antioch-by-Daphne.

The spatializing operation of the *Indica* not only focalizes a new center but also delineates a periphery. No *Indica* would be complete, or believable, without its wonders. Just as the Gangetic core of the Mauryan state is associated with normative humanity in its recognizable form, so the kingdom's boundaries are the site of various freakish phenomena. This is achieved, in part, through a Herodotean zoning of information by autopsy or report. For example, the gold-digging ants, whose skins had been observed by Alexander's general Nearchus in the Macedonian camp on the Indus are known to Megasthenes through ἀκοή, "oral report," alone.¹¹⁹ The gynocracy of Pandaea, where nature is accelerated, is found to the south of the Mauryan kingdom: women give birth at age six or seven, men die before their fortieth

year, fruits mature and decay more quickly.¹²⁰ The gold and pearls of Taprobane (Sri Lanka) are larger and more abundant than elsewhere in India.¹²¹ Megasthenes populates the mountains of India's northwestern frontier with peoples freakish in *nomos* (human custom), such as having sex in public or eating their dead relatives, and bizarre in *physis* (nature), such as having no mouths or noses, sleeping in their giant ears, or walking on inverted feet.¹²²

Megasthenes links the core and peripheries of his Indian kingdom through a deliberate centripetal policy. The spatial dynamics of Sandrocottus' court reverse the more standard royal procession from center to edge (see Chapter 6); in India, the borders are transported to the king. For example, the Astomoi, the mouthless people who live at the source of the Ganges in the northwest¹²³ and nourish themselves with smells, "were brought" (*ἀχθῆναι*) to the royal camp, where they could barely survive the bad odors of military life;¹²⁴ the Wild Men, with their feet back to front, "could not be conveyed" (*μὴ κομισθῆναι*) to the king because they would starve themselves to death.¹²⁵ Similarly, Aelian reports that beasts and birds of all kinds were gathered and presented to the Indian monarch.¹²⁶ We may even see an echo of the Mauryan king's magnetic pull, as well as Megasthenes' career at court, in a fragment of the almost entirely lost utopian novel of Iambulus:¹²⁷ the Odyssean hero, shipwrecked upon a sandy and marshy coast of India, "was brought by the natives into the presence of the king at Palimbothra, many days' journey from the sea" (*ὑπὸ τῶν ἐγχωρίων ἀναχθῆναι πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα εἰς πόλιν Παλίβοθρα, πολλῶν ἡμερῶν ὁδὸν ἀπέχουσιν τῆς θαλάττης*), from where he was granted safe conduct back to Greece.¹²⁸ If this is a parody of the *Indica*, Iambulus, the normative Greek man, functions as one of the marginal oddities to be brought to court from the kingdom's far periphery.¹²⁹

Megasthenes' restructuring of Indian space transforms the nature of the land. It is no longer the eastern margin of an imperial structure whose capital district lies far to the west or the bizarre, hypertrophic fringe of a Greece-centered *oikoumenē*. Rather, India is now an organized space, a territorialized kingdom with its own center and its own peripheries. The classical and Alexandrian ethnographers and historians had located India within a geographical model of the world, which, in its fundamental Oceanic structure, was organized as a smoothly graded circle around a single center, from which increasing distance correlated with increasing weirdness: the farther from Greece, the more peripheral the region.¹³⁰ In this light, Alexander's expedition was a journey outward, into margin and

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sthenes has fragmented this model and reproduced it in miniature. India
has its center at Palimbothra and its peripheral circumference. The key
point is that one of India's peripheries now lies *between* its center and the
Greek world. The Seleucid and Mauryan empires have different centers but
a shared periphery in the mountains of northwestern India. In short, Meg-
asthenes has made India its own continent. In part, as we will see, this
must represent a shift from the imperial discourse of the Achaemenids and
Alexander to that of the Mauryas.¹³¹ But more importantly, it is a sensitive
geographical response to the fragmentation of the Achaemenid-Alexandrian
empire in the Successor period and the consequent multiplication of king,
state, and capital.

The apologetic function we have observed in the *Indica's* prehistory can
be detected here as well. The spatial operation performed by the *Indica* en-
codes in ethnographic discourse the terms of the Seleucus-Chandragupta
peace. Just as Indian territory is unconquerable, so Indian space is self-
contained and relatively isolated. This plays itself out in the *Indica's* insis-
tence on economic autarky and the absence of adventures into the out-
side world.¹³² Megasthenes draws India more fully into the *oikoumenē* in
order to exclude it from Seleucid space. The sovereign, mutually recognized
Mauryan and Seleucid political landscapes that followed the Treaty of the
Indus, with their shared mountainous border, are refashioned by Mega-
sthenes into natural geographical units. Moreover, the new geography rein-
terprets Alexander's Indian conquests: like Seleucus, he crossed the Indus
but never conquered the heartland; like Seleucus, he turned back in the
face of the Gangetic kingdom, a state which subsequently had expanded
westward.¹³³ India is as much a separate spatial entity as Ptolemaic Egypt or
mainland Greece. In between them all lies the Seleucid empire.

This new geography changed the function of Indian ethnography. Mega-
sthenes transformed India from a site of freakish difference and symmetri-
cal opposition, to be wondered at or assimilated by imperial expansion, into
a space of similarity and submerged cultural identity. India is now good to
think with. The land has become an analogue of the Seleucid state and the
Indica a text for working through issues of Seleucid state formation.

While Chandragupta Maurya's multiethnic, polyglot, expansionist king-
dom certainly resembled the Seleucid state in outline¹³⁴ and probably gen-
erated parallel mechanisms of territorial control, Megasthenes' ethnography
went beyond this to emphasize consonance with the Seleucid world:¹³⁵

certain of India's characteristics, appearing for the first time in ethnography, resemble Seleucid state structures too closely to be anything but observations or fabrications of similarity. The strongest case is the existence of autonomous, democratically governed cities within Megasthenes' Indian kingdom.¹³⁶ The coexistence of independent and dependent cities within the same realm is one of the most striking characteristics of the Seleucid empire; it is unattested for the Mauryan kingdom.¹³⁷ Megasthenes seems to have deliberately constructed a parallel system of irregular political sovereignty to better support the analogy between the two states. Other parallels include royal land ownership, the capital-on-the-river, the construction of roads and milestones, and various duties of the monarch.

More fundamentally, a new and central characteristic of the Megasthenic India, consequent on the spatializing operation described earlier, is the normalization of the land. In contrast to the timeless, idealized, edge-of-the-earth qualities that had characterized India in earlier ethnographies, the key to the land's new analogous function is that it is *not* utopian.¹³⁸ The idealized utopias of the Greek imagination were a function of distance, temporal or geographical, and thereby inaccessibility.¹³⁹ The tendency to correlate peripheral geography with a flattening of historical time fashioned the most distant, enormous kingdoms of ethnography—including India—into static and unchanging moral *paradeigmata*.¹⁴⁰ For example, Ctesias contrasts a visitable, historical Persia, where Achaemenid monarchs suffer treason and defections, with an eternal India of perfect justice, devoted subjects, and natural abundance.¹⁴¹ Megasthenes' ethnography contains certain well-paralleled utopian tropes: India's gentle climate and fertile superabundance guarantees a double harvest, removing all danger of famine;¹⁴² the earth is well veined with precious metals;¹⁴³ the land's inhabitants are beautiful, skilled, and autochthonous;¹⁴⁴ none is a slave;¹⁴⁵ a seven-tiered "caste system" institutionalizes hierarchy, endogamy, occupational fixity and exclusivity, with philosophers on top;¹⁴⁶ the Indians honor truth and virtue and so trust to leave their houses unguarded, rely on unwritten law, and avoid unnecessary litigation.¹⁴⁷ However, the new Indian geography prevents a mere flight into fantasy. India is now an accessible land¹⁴⁸ with chronological depth, historical development,¹⁴⁹ and some negative social forms. The land's great productivity is the result of, not spontaneous or toilless production of food, but the developed state structure of the Mauryan kingdom, in which irrigation is widespread, agriculture is an exclusive and unavoidable social function for part of the population, and, in times of war, farmers are invio-

late and agricultural and are kept in checkments.¹⁵¹ More striking network of overseers at the military camp;¹⁵² plots.¹⁵³ The sense of achieved—what an ir law. The land resembles. Simply put, India is no

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late and agricultural lands unravaged.¹⁵⁰ Crime and misdemeanor exist and are kept in check by a harsh sanctioning system of somatic punishments.¹⁵¹ More strikingly, the monarch's lot is not a happy one: a spying network of overseers and courtesans informs in secret from the capital and the military camp;¹⁵² the king is forced to change beds at night because of plots.¹⁵³ The sense of reality and recognizability in Megasthenes' India is achieved—what an indictment!—through war, violence, corruption, and law. The land resembles Ctesias' Persia much more closely than his India. Simply put, India is no longer too good to be true.¹⁵⁴

The Indian analogy is about recognition, not aspiration. In this light, recalling that the text was written soon after Seleucus' adoption of the royal diadem and self-transformation from satrap to king, the *Indica's* unproblematic and casually assumed monarchism is noteworthy. The monarchic thread runs right through the ethnography: in the *Kulturgeschichte*, culture arrives with kingship; in the description of contemporary India, every aspect of Indian society is structured for and by Sandrocottus: he is the source of all administrative and military employment, the node around which society articulates itself, and the purpose for which all activity is undertaken. In classical-period Greek ethnography, kingship was a fundamental element in the construction of ethnic alterity: "all barbarian power, without further specification of its exact nature or the manner in which it is exercised, simply because it is power, tends to appear as royalty."¹⁵⁵ Kingship is otherness. The basic political development of the early Hellenistic period was the creation of large territorial states under Graeco-Macedonian kings. To most Near Eastern populations this could be seen as an exchange of one foreign dynasty for another, but to the Greek world it was revolutionary. Monarchy, formerly of ethnographic interest as foreign and exotic, is now the court author's own environment and must be naturalized. A key element of the Megasthenic analogy is that monarchy is described in a rhetoric of likeness, not difference. This is, of course, most apparent in Megasthenes' description of Sandrocottus and the world he visits.¹⁵⁶ But it is also found in India's earlier history and in nature. One of the most important of Megasthenes' fragments, preserved by Strabo and Arrian in parallel passages, lists a catalogue of unsuccessful royal expeditions against India:

Megasthenes, moreover, agrees with this point of view when he urges disbelief in the ancient accounts of India, for no army was ever sent outside by the Indians, nor did any from outside invade and conquer them, except

that with Heracles and Dionysus and now with the Macedonians. But Sesostris the Egyptian, and Tearcon the Ethiopian advanced as far as Europe, and Nebuchadnezzar, esteemed more among the Chaldeans than Heracles, went as far as the Pillars and Tearcon also went that far and led an army from Iberia into Thrace and to Pontus. Idanthysus the Scythian overran Asia as far as Egypt, but none of these touched India, and Semiramis died before her attempt. The Persians sent for the Hydracae from India as mercenaries, but did not take an expedition there, only coming near it when Cyrus attacked the Massagetae.¹⁵⁷

The chronicle of never undertaken or failed invasions, even effacing Darius I's actual conquest, repeatedly confirms the *Indica's* ethnographic principle of post-Dionysus unconquerability. The apologetic force is evident: by inventing precedents for Seleucus' territorial withdrawal, Megasthenes normalizes and vindicates the Treaty of the Indus.¹⁵⁸ The new careers of Semiramis, Sesostris, and Idanthysus demonstrate the *Indica's* creative engagement with its literary environment;¹⁵⁹ Tearcon and Nebuchadnezzar are Megasthenes' own discovery, perhaps from Babylonian or Jewish sources.¹⁶⁰ Megasthenes' chronicle of invasions generates a historical rhythm of power and its limits in Asia, in which monarchy is figured as the entirely standard, unquestionable form of government. Seleucus can be slipped unproblematically into the catalogue.

Kingship, existing throughout the world and in the past, is also found below the waves. A passage in Arrian's *Indica*, directly attributed to Megasthenes, gives the natural history of the Indian pearl:

There is also a king or queen among the pearls, just like bees. Should anyone happen to catch him, a net can easily be thrown over the rest of the pearls, but if the king escapes, the others can no longer be caught.¹⁶¹

This account appears in the context of early Indian monarchy. Having discovered pearls in the sea, the autochthonous culture-hero Heracles considers them a suitable adornment for Pandaea, his daughter-wife and queen of the south.¹⁶² The single attestation of pearls in all extant earlier Greek literature, a short description in the *de lapidibus* of Theophrastus,¹⁶³ merely locates their point of origin in India and the islands of the Persian Gulf. So, the *Indica's* natural history of the pearl is most likely Megasthenes' own creation. Megasthenes' pearls inhabit a social structure of absolute, total monarchy: the fate of the swarm depends in its entirety on the indepen-

dence of the king or queen like bees,¹⁶⁴ which have kingship.¹⁶⁵ Such naturalistically appropriate appropriation of early Hellenism justly boast, "L'état, c'est

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To assert that ethnographic Other has become a Seleucid and Mauryan graphic textuality, works enacts analogy, not an inheritance with the Seleucid ethnography of writings on Sparta: both capable of peer relation, and whose external treatment of India as a vice for thinking through was the inescapable immanence about by the Treaty of and marriage alliance in and separate territory. in an important sense, brought about Megasthenes the very condition of it

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dence of the king or queen. As Megasthenes observed, the pearls behave like bees,¹⁶⁴ which have a well-established function as a metaphor for good kingship.¹⁶⁵ Such natural monarchy is transferred in the *Indica* to a geographically appropriate species. It is difficult to imagine a stronger idealization of early Hellenism's philosophy of monarchy;¹⁶⁶ the pearl king could justly boast, "L'état, c'est moi."

Kings in Egypt, Ethiopia, Assyria, Scythia, and Babylonia; king Seleucus and king Chandragupta; kings under the sea. By asserting the geographical and historical ubiquity of monarchy, the *Indica* denies its ethnic salience; by finding kingship in the animal world, the *Indica* naturalizes it. Megasthenes conventionalizes royal power.

To assert that ethnography speaks to ourselves while describing The Other has become a banality. Nonetheless, the relationship between the Seleucid and Mauryan kingdoms, as between historical reality and ethnographic textuality, works here in a specific and novel way. Megasthenes enacts analogy, not allegory, tempering the utopian fables of his generic inheritance with the realistic tones of the Hellenistic world. The early Seleucid ethnography of India is in many ways similar to classical Athenian writings on Sparta: both describe a legitimate, parallel, and equivalent state, capable of peer relations, whose territorial independence is beyond question, and whose externality turns it into a site of political theorizing. Such treatment of India as an analogous kingdom is not merely a narrative device for thinking through Seleucid state formation. In very real terms, this was the inescapable implication of the transformed political spaces brought about by the Treaty of the Indus. The meeting of kings, acts of exchange, and marriage alliance in themselves established India as an equivalent state and separate territory. So, India's ethnographic function as an analogue is, in an important sense, an epiphenomenon of the high-level diplomacy that brought about Megasthenes' mission. The *Indica* is a textual reproduction of the very condition of its own creation.

The Reproduction of the Boundary

To an *engagé* and influential hermeneutic, the (European) investigation and categorization of foreign peoples is implicated in the broader project of western colonial oppression, in which space is to be possessed and consumed by an imperial cartography of illegitimate seizure.¹⁶⁷ But Megasthenes could not be further from this profile. The historical context and

biographical condition of the *Indica*'s very creation is Seleucid withdrawal, not expansion. Megasthenes is an envoy of renunciation, and this is both a historical fact and a rhetorical choice. The fragments give no hint of Megasthenes' renaming the landscape, populations, or cities of India; they entirely lack the linguistic baptisms found in, say, Seleucid Syria, where Macedonian or dynastic names were superimposed on indigenous ones (see Chapter 4). Megasthenes never registers the problem of cross-cultural communication.¹⁶⁸ Nor was the *Indica*'s spatializing operation unidirectional, for the new south-eastern border of the Seleucid kingdom was recognized, acknowledged, and reperformed by the Mauryan state.

The evidence for this is in fact rather exciting. Following the death in 273/2 of Chandragupta's successor, Bindusara (Greek Amitrochates), and a subsequent struggle for succession among his sons,¹⁶⁹ king Ashoka acceded to his father's throne in 269/8 as the third king of the Mauryan dynasty. Ashoka is one of the more outstanding figures of the ancient world. In brief, his conquest of the east Indian state of Kalinga in his eighth regnal year so horrified the king that henceforth he forsook all wars of aggression, converted to a pacifist form of Buddhism, and pursued, with obsessive and missionary zeal, *dhamma*—a broad social ethic and practice including abstinence from killing, considerate family relations, and welfare programs.¹⁷⁰ Importantly, the king's devotion to the propagation of *dhamma* generated an unprecedented epigraphic habit—fourteen Major Rock Edicts, numerous Minor Rock Edicts, and seven Pillar Edicts survive from his reign—that demonstrates, among other things, the Mauryan empire's own spatial ideology.¹⁷¹ We see this in two ways: the findspots of the inscriptions and their content.

The locations of Ashoka's Major Rock Edicts (see Map 2) beat the boundaries of Mauryan imperial territory: the eastern seaboard of conquered Kalinga, the southern Deccan, the western coast, and the northwestern periphery of the Mauryan state, where it bordered the Seleucid empire. At Alexandria-in-Arachosia (mod. Kandahar) a bilingual Greek-Aramaic text, urging vegetarianism and filial piety, was cut into the cliff face by the side of the main trade road. The inscription demonstrates a keen awareness of the culturally specific traditions and languages of the region's "Yona and Kamboja" (Greek and Persian) populations: the Greek version combines vocabulary appropriate to oracular pronouncement and contemporary philosophy,¹⁷² while the Aramaic version, heavily influenced by Old Persian, assimilates *dhamma* to Zoroastrian truth.¹⁷³ Another inscription, found on a stone block at Kandahar, freely translates into Greek parts of Ashoka's

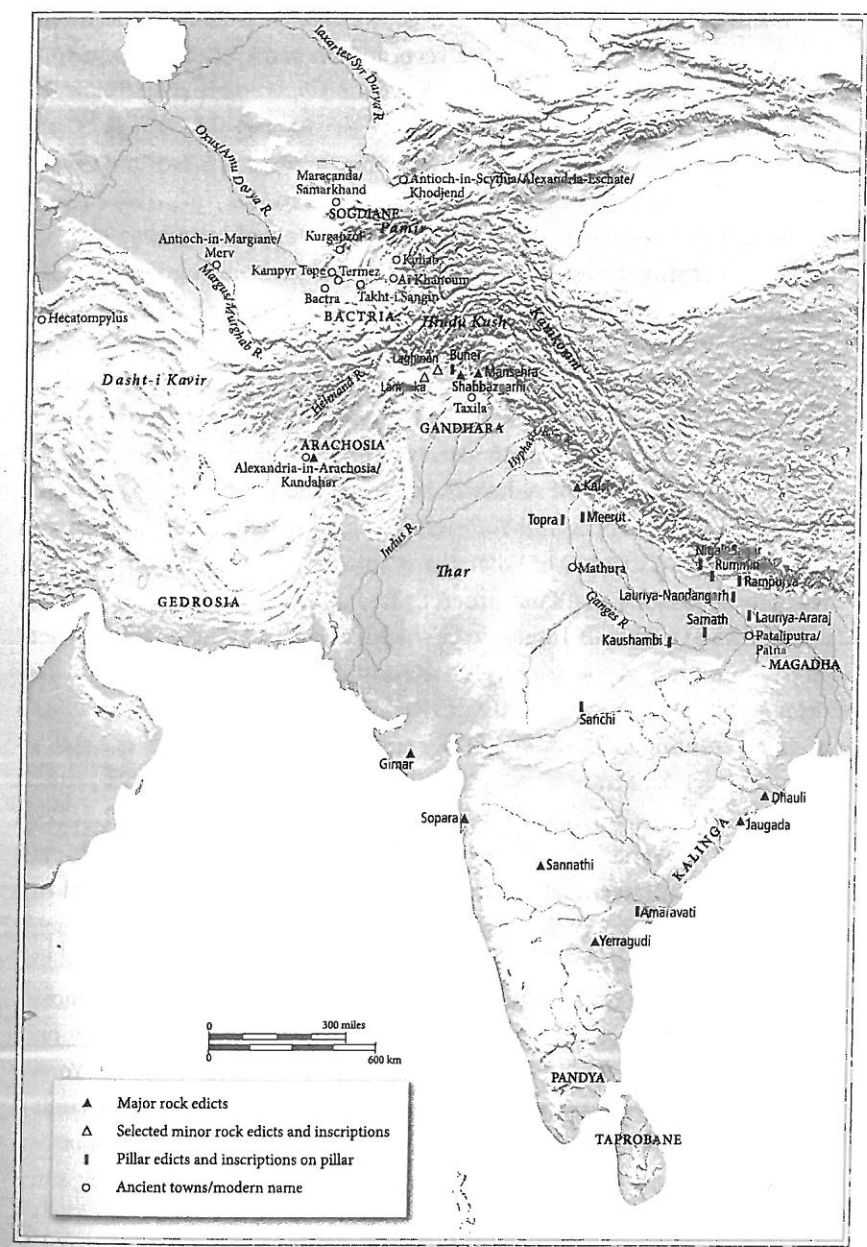


Map 2 Central

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Map 2 Central Asia and India, with Ashoka's inscriptions.

Twelfth and Thirteenth Rock Edicts: it is probable that all fourteen Major Rock Edicts of the Indian king were recorded on some kind of stone construction, perhaps with a full Aramaic version.¹⁷⁴ Aramaic inscriptions of Ashoka's edicts have been found at Taxila (in Pakistan), Lampaka, and Laghman (both in Afghanistan). Two more inscriptions, in Karoshti (a script derived from Imperial Aramaic), have been found in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan (at Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra). These inscriptions, while constituting direct evidence for Mauryan control of this region by the reign of Ashoka, indicate through their use of local languages its frontier status within the Mauryan polity, as Megasthenes' ethnography had implied: all other Ashokan inscriptions from the subcontinent, including those of the southern Deccan, are in the Prakrit language and the Brahmi script.¹⁷⁵

The region's marginality within Mauryan political geography is confirmed by the content of several of Ashoka's edicts. In the king's own speech-act, the Gandharas, Kambojas, and Yonas are explicitly identified as his empire's "borderers." The Thirteenth Edict, in a quasi-ethnographic observation, states: "Except among the Yonas, there is no land where the religious orders of *brahmanas* and *śramaṇas* are not to be found, and there is no land anywhere where men do not support one sect or another."¹⁷⁶ Similarly, the *Majjhima Nikaya*, a composition most likely of the Mauryan period, has the Buddha expound in ethnographic mode on the strangely fluid and simple social order of the Greek and Iranian world: "In Yona-Kamboja and adjacent regions (*jānapada*) there are only two *varṇas*: masters and slaves. One who has been a master may become a slave, and one who has been a slave may become a master."¹⁷⁷ The Thirteenth Edict continues, in a passage of exceptional historical importance:

The Beloved of the Gods considered victory by *dhamma* to be the foremost victory. And moreover the Beloved of the Gods has gained this victory on all his frontiers to a distance of six hundred *yojanas*, where reigns the Yona king named Antiyoko, and beyond the realm of that Antiyoko in the lands of the four kings (*a śaṣu pi yojanaśateṣu yatra Am̐tiyoko nama Yonaraja param ca tena Atiyokena chature 4 rajani*) named Turumaye, Antikini, Maka, and Alikasudaro; and in the south over the Cholas and Pandyas as far as Tamraparni. Likewise here in the imperial territories among the Yonas and the Kambojas, Nabhakas and Nabhapanktis, Bhojas and Pitinikas, Andhras and Parindas, everywhere the people follow the Beloved of the Gods' instructions in *dhamma*.¹⁷⁸

The king of India lists of the Seleucid empire natas of Macedon, Ma The overlap of kings c for Ashoka's entire rei The universalist noti with simple *vijaya*, (te western and southern ereignty. The passage Ashoka expounds on ("on all his frontiers to his kingdom ("here in the Seleucid, was bo kingdom performs ar which distance is me 6,000 miles.¹⁷⁹ Accor large kingdom, severi Hindu Kush to his di spatializing operation position of centrality, four other Hellenistic nean, and Epirote kir arch ("to a distance named Antiyoko, and the four kings"). The cupies the same plac Ashoka's welfare prog pears both in his owi lenistic powers:

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The king of India lists five peers in the Hellenistic west: Antiochus II Theos of the Seleucid empire, Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus II Gonatas of Macedon, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus (or Corinth). The overlap of kings determines the chronology for this inscription and so for Ashoka's entire reign: the only possible dates are between 260 and 258. The universalist notion of *dhammavijaya*, *dhamma*-conquest, contrasting with simple *vijaya*, (territorial) conquest, generated this description of the western and southern worlds beyond the horizon of Mauryan political sovereignty. The passage pivots on the opposition of exterior and interior: Ashoka expounds on the total victory of *dhamma* first outside his kingdom ("on all his frontiers to a distance of six hundred *yojanas*") and then within his kingdom ("here in the imperial territories"). The Mauryan empire, like the Seleucid, was bounded to the west by peer kingdoms. The Seleucid kingdom performs an important spatial function here. It is the point to which distance is measured: 600 *yojanas* translate to between 4,800 and 6,000 miles.¹⁷⁹ Accordingly, Antiochus II is held to rule an astonishingly large kingdom, several thousand miles from the Mauryan frontier in the Hindu Kush to his distant residence. It is significant that, paralleling the spatializing operation of Megasthenes' *Indica*, the Seleucid empire holds a position of centrality, situated between Mauryan India to the east and the four other Hellenistic states to the west. The Ptolemaic, Antigonid, Cyrenean, and Epirote kingdoms are located by reference to the Seleucid monarch ("to a distance of six hundred *yojanas*, where reigns the Yona king named Antiyoko, and beyond the realm of that Antiyoko in the lands of the four kings"). The Seleucid kingdom, bounded to the east and west, occupies the same place in the Second Major Rock Edict, which describes Ashoka's welfare programs throughout the world. Here, too, Antiochus appears both in his own right and as place marker for the more distant Hellenistic powers:

Everywhere in the dominions of king Priyadarshin, Beloved of the Gods, and likewise in the bordering territories (*aritā*) of the Cholas, Pandyas, the Satika-putra, Tamraparni, the Yona king named Antiyoka and also the kings who are the neighbors of the said Antiyoka (*Ar̥ṁtiyoge nāma Yonalājā ye cā ar̥ṁne tasā Ar̥ṁtiyogasā sāmāntā lājāno*)—everywhere king Priyadarshin, Beloved of the Gods, has arranged for two kinds of medical treatment, medical treatment for men and medical treatment for animals.¹⁸⁰

In both the Second and Thirteenth Edicts, Antiochus, alone of the Hellenistic kings, is termed the *Yonaraja*, the "Greek king."¹⁸¹ The inscriptions, therefore, present Greek populations living both within and outside the Mauryan kingdom: the political frontier between the Mauryan and Seleucid sovereignties divides an ethnic community, a result of the Treaty of the Indus and the westward retreat of Macedonian sovereignty. Finally, by recognizing the distant Antiochus II as his direct neighbor Ashoka acknowledges the legitimacy of Seleucid sovereignty in the Upper Satrapies. The powerful, nearby satraps—soon to revolt from the kingdom—are not even mentioned.

The Indian evidence, supporting the Greek, points to a cooperative and mutual process of delineation. Each kingdom recognized the territorial independence and legitimate sovereignty of the other. In the spatial ideology of Ashoka, as in that of Antiochus III, the Treaty of the Indus retained practical effect and ideological salience. Seleucid diplomacy and Megasthenes' ethnography had closed an imperial boundary at the kingdom's southeast and opened a dialogue with Mauryan India of profound historical significance.

CHAPTER 2

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We have seen how the border between the Seleucid and Mauryan kingdoms was closed off by diplomatic interaction. But the border between the Seleucid and Sogdiana, Aria, Marg, Afghanistan, Tajikistan (see Map 2)—present-day Central Asia—remained open. Whereas in India (as in the Hellenistic world) kings had partners with whom they exchanged gifts, ambassadors, and envoys, in Central Asia, how was Seleucid sovereignty to be marked? The interaction of religious ritual and historical precedent in Central Asia resulted in a system that imposed an ideological interaction.

There were two periods of interaction in Central Asia: the first, between the Seleucids and the Mauryans of the Indus (307–301 BCE and 294–281 BCE).

Of the first almost nothing is known. Seleucus and Seleucus Nicator turned their backs on the eastern interests: why