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EMPIRES, MATERIALS AND ENTANGLEMENTS

*The Power of Material Entanglements in the Gupta Political
Formation*



DECEMBER 10, 2020

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MPhil IN
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Empires, Materials and Entanglements

The Power of Material Entanglements in the Gupta Political Formation

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Abstract

The Gupta Political Formation has been called “the golden-age” of India yet little archaeological study has been done on the period. Through the ideas of new materialism, in particular Hodder’s (2012) Theory of Entanglement, and Katchadurian’s (2016) Satrapal Conditions, this thesis aims to explore three powerful materials: textile clothing, metals and spices. These materials appear influential and integral to the inner workings of the Gupta Political Formation (GPF) and so provide the opportunity to investigate the political, social and economic movements made by the rulers of the GPF in pursuit of these materials.

It is the purpose of this thesis to shine a light on their influence in the movements of the political machine we know as the Gupta Political Formation and to explore the innerworkings of empire through material desires and dependencies.

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*For Ann and Donald:
You inspire me every day*

Chapter 1:

1.1: Why Material Entanglements in the Gupta Political Formation Matter?

Empires, or as they are known in this thesis, political formations, are a collection of entanglements of people and things that work in conjunction to create a state (Smith, 2015; Katchadurian, 2016). In this thesis, the innerworkings of political formations will be investigated through the idea of ‘powerful’ materials and their actions. This research sets out to examine how materials are powerful through the entanglements in which they have been found and what this means for the sovereignty and inner workings of political formations. The current body of literature on the early medieval period of the Indian Subcontinent often overlooks the material culture of the Gupta Political Formation (GPF) and the implications that this had for the trajectory of this particular imperial formation.

Through the investigation of the theories of New Materialism, specifically Lori Katchadurian (2016) and Ian Hodder (2011), this thesis examines the role and significance of three such ‘powerful’ materials – textiles, metals, and spices. These three materials have been chosen due to their prevalence in Gupta era literary and epigraphical evidence. By using textual evidence, such as the Allahabad Pillar to identify materials important to the Gupta elites, it is possible to investigate their entanglements and expressions through iconographic, archaeological and other textual sources.

The metaphor of material entanglement is one that attempts to capture the contradictory messiness of the heterogeneous flows and counter flows that ‘produce, enchain and encompass entities (humans, animals, things, ideas, social institutions)’ (Hodder 2018). The approach of material entanglement involves situating humans within complex and contradictory sets of dependencies between humans and things (Hodder, 2018). These ‘human-thing entanglements’ (Hodder, 2011; 2012) create networks that, in turn, can influence how the wider society grows and changes over the course of its life history. In this chapter, there will be a discussion on why it is important to, rather than continue to investigate the textual histories that dominate archaeology, focus on the ‘grass-roots’ archaeology (Chakrabarti, 2000) that will allow for an investigation into material culture and, perhaps, a less politicised history.

Focusing on this idea, this research aims to ask new questions of the available evidence outside of the historical narrative through focusing on materials as opposed to imperial or dynastic agency. Aligned with the recent ontological turn to help investigate the

importance of these powerful materials to the expansion of the Gupta Political Formation and, further to this, how materials affect the idea of political formations as a whole. The general populations of political formations are not monolithic entities but internally fractious and with a variety and sometimes contradictory wants and needs that are difficult to investigate. Choosing to focus more intently on an individual group within the wider population allows for a better understanding of the personal entanglements of a particular group and how their desires and dependencies forced the Gupta Political Formation (here after referred to as GPF) to move in particular directions. This highlighted a flaw with the approach used in this thesis: much of the academic research on the GPF has been characterised by its staunch reliance on textual evidence that has led to the rise of a singular narrative. This narrative has caused much of the archaeological interpretations of the period to be limited to the confines of the frameworks built by historians, leading to an interpretation of the period shrouded in dynastic terminology. This chapter will investigate the current textual narrative, its origins and impact, how this is changing and the impact it has on this research piece.

This idea will be explored in this thesis through the following main question:

Through a focus on powerful materials, as opposed to imperial or dynastic agency, how did the material desires and dependencies of the Gupta ruling elites shape and transform the political formation over the course of its life-history?

More specifically this dissertation asks:

How was clothing and the iconographic representations of clothing used as political strategy by the Gupta ruling elite?

How were the Gupta Ruling Elites and Merchants entangled into networks of dependency by metals?

How were spices entangled in the socio-political lives of the population of the Gupta Political Formation?

In order to reconsider the role of powerful materials in the re-production and negotiation of political relationships, the thesis' theoretical framework builds on relational and New Materialism approaches, in particular Ian Hodder's (2012) Entanglement theory and Lori Katchadurian's *satrapal condition* (2016).

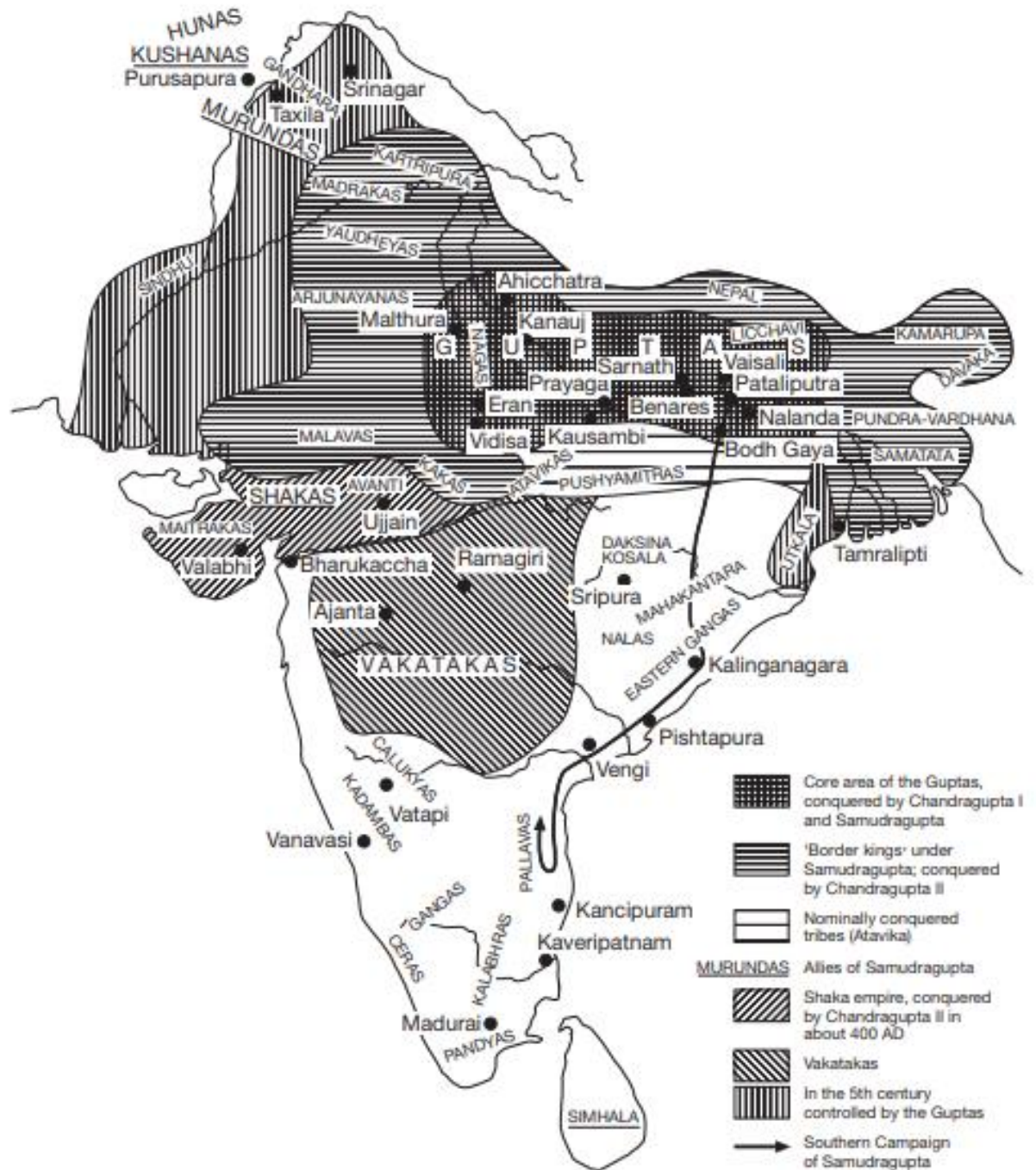
1.2: The Standard Narrative

Although this is now slowly changing, India, Indian history and archaeology, is still today often considered through a veil of mysticism and colonial perspectives. This is especially relevant in the case of the GPF and its cultural and social traditions. Indian histories are, for the most part, textual-based narratives which neglect the material culture and how materials and traditions from select historical episodes, such as the Gupta period, have been used to construct modern identities. In 2000, Dilip K. Chakrabarti described the way in which modern Indian identity is formed as ‘unacceptable’ due to its reliance on emphasising the ‘notion of Aryan invasions and the subjugation of, and interaction with, the native populations (Chakrabarti, 2000: 667). Chakrabarti believes that this is the key element that prevents a large swathe of modern Indian society from being able to engage positively with the country’s past (Chakrabarti, 2000: 667). He argues that the issues surrounding discussions on the topic of Indology are underpinned by the conceptual framework wherein the ‘key ingredient’ to this idea is Vedic literature.

The four Vedas are a large body of religious texts originating from between ~1500-900BCE and are the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest Hindu scriptures (Flood, 2003: 68; Bhattacharyya, 2006: 8-14; Williams, 2003: 285). These alongside the *Puranas*, informed everyday Vedic life (Witzel, 1997: 275-276). During the Gupta dynasty, the *Puranas*, syncretic texts of Hindu mythology, were set down as well as the codification of the *Mahabharata*, one of the two epic poems of ancient India, which details the Kurukshetra War and the fates of those involved (Flood, 2003: 205; Obrock, 2020). The importance of these texts can be found in the notion of the ‘fifth Veda’ (Obrock, 2020; Brodbeck and Black, 2007: 54). The ‘fifth Veda’ falls outside of the canonical Vedas but has the same status (Obrock, 2020). Being granted this status was an acknowledgement of the works importance to Hinduism and with the Gupta elites being orthodox Hindus (Thapar, 2003: 280), the finalisation of the *Mahabharata* and the writing of the *Puranas* are not an unexpected addition to the period.

The Gupta Dynasty (~305-550CE) created one of the largest political formations to be found in the history of the sub-continent, second only to that of the Mauryan Dynasty (~322-185BCE). Spanning over a course of ~300 years, the dynasty achieved its zenith under Chandragupta I (~305-350), Samudragupta (~330-375CE) and Chandragupta II (~380-415CE), with the period being named as one of the ‘Golden Ages’ of India during which there were extensive leaps made in sciences and the arts (Eraly, 2011: 46; Jayapalan, 2001: 130; Ingalls, 1976: 15; Agrawal, 1989: 86; Thapar, 2003: 33). At its height, the GPF

covered the north of India from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea (Maps, 1, 2 & 3); around 3,500,000 km² (1,400,000 sq. mi) (Map 1) (Eraly, 2011: 46; Jayapalan, 2001: 130; Ingalls, 1976: 15; Agrawal, 1989: 86).



Map 1: Map of the Gupta Empire (AD320-500) (Source: Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 90)

Traditionally, works on the GPF have based themselves on the inscription of the Allahabad Pillar (Fig. 1) (Mookerji, 1948; Kulke & Rothermund, 2010; Majumdar & Altekar, 1967: 136–155; Ganguly, 1963). This pillar, an Ashokan Stambha was originally erected by the Buddhist emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty (~268-232BCE) and details the

parentage of Samudragupta (4th century CE). Written by the poet Harishena in the Gupta script, the inscription of Samudragupta is widely considered the ‘most important historical document of the Gupta age’ (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010; Singh, 2017: 190). At 30 lines, the inscription provides a “unique snapshot” (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010; Majumdar & Altekar, 1967, 136-155; Chakrabarti, 2009, 2001: 263) into the relationships between the Gupta Dynasty and its neighbours and is the main source of information on the geo-political landscape of the period.

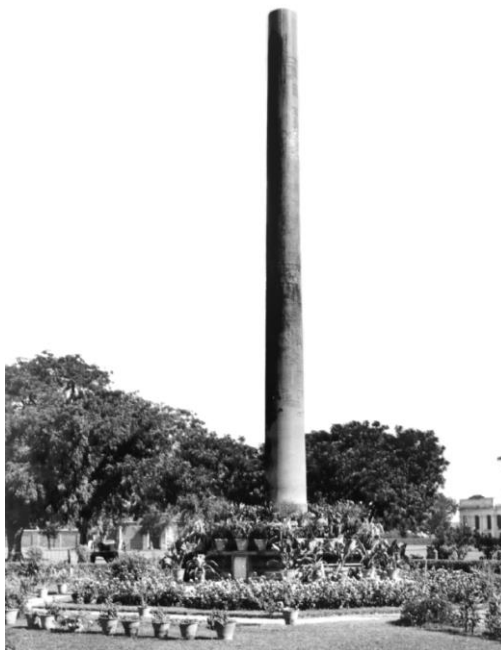


Figure 1: Allahabad Pillar circa.1900 (Source: [Http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/bce_299_200/ashoka/allahabad/allahabad.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/bce_299_200/ashoka/allahabad/allahabad.html))

The inscription gives details of Samudragupta’s military campaigns with a ‘great deal of energy’ devoted to the identification of the rulers and places mentioned in order to identify the nature of the GPF (Singh, 2017: 191; Thapar, 2003: 283-4; Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 87; Stein, 2010: 122). The details of the inscription suggest that Samudragupta conquered the ‘whole fertile plain’ west of Prayaga (Modern Allahabad) to Mathura and had launched a ‘spectacular raid’ through Kalinga into the south as far as the early Pallava capital at Kanchipuram (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 88; Stein, 2010: 91; Avari, 2007: 158; Thapar, 2003: 283). Specifically, the inscription states that Samudragupta ‘defeated, released and reinstated’ all of the kings he defeated during his southern campaign, showing his ‘royal mercy’ (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 88). Kulke & Rothermund suggest that this is most likely a euphemism indicative of the campaigns of early medieval Indian kings who were more interested in conquest than in the annexation of ‘distant realms they could not have controlled anyway’ (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 88). They go on to suggest that the southern kings ruled undisturbed after Samudragupta returned north where he

celebrated his imperial round of conquest (*digvijaya*) by performing the *Ashvamedha* (royal horse sacrifice), an important ritual associated with the claim to political paramountcy (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010; Singh, 2017: 339).

The *Ashvamedha* was a ‘complex and violent’ Vedic ritual performed to ensure the kings ‘undisputed sovereignty’ of which the main component was the free roaming of the sacrificial horse for a year accompanied by men of the *kshatriyas* (warrior) caste (Singh, 2017: 95). The horse itself was supposedly a representation of the *ksatra* (royal domain) and was believed to bestow victory upon the king and fertility and prosperity on his realm (Singh, 2017: 95; Kulke & Rothermund. 2010: 6). The best-known description of this sacrifice comes from the 14th book of the *Mahabharata*, the *Ashvaedhika Parva* (Book of the Horse Sacrifice), wherein Rama (the seventh avatar of Visnu) and Yudhisthira (the successful leader of the Pandavas) perform the sacrifice (Singh, 2017: 95). Later Vedic texts describe how the ritual had fallen out of fashion (*utsanna*) (Singh, 2017: 339) with Stein (2010: 98) stating that these royal rituals had long been denounced by the Buddhists. Through performing this sacrifice, it appears that Samudragupta was attempting to restore the Vedic royal rituals and, through doing so, associate himself with the traditional aspects of kingship in line with Darshini’s (2006) three tier system. The Poona plates of the Vakataka queen Prabhavatigupta, his granddaughter, describe Samudragupta as having performed several of these sacrifices (Singh, 2017: 339) with his grandson, Kumaragupta praising him as the ‘great renewer of the horse sacrifice’ (Thapar, 2003: 88).

The pillar details fourteen ‘border kings’ (*pratyanta-nripati*) who paid tribute (*kara*) to Samudragupta and were prepared to follow his orders (*ajna*) and attend court to show their obedience (*pramana*) as well as jungle rajahs (*atavikaraja*) whom Samudragupta supposedly made his servants (*paricaraka*) (Thapar, 2003: 88). Also listed are the independent rulers who lived beyond the realms of the border kingdoms who supposedly sent embassies to the court of Samudragupta, donated girls to his harem and asked him for charters with the imperial Garuda seal to certify their legitimacy (Thapar, 2003: 88-89).

The pillar, thus, presents a celebration of Gupta imperialism created by the Gupta court to further their political agenda. Lines 28-30 detail the lineage of Samudragupta back to the founder of the Gupta dynasty, Sri-Gupta, or as he is called on the pillar “the prosperous Gupta, the *Maharaja*”.

The lineage found on the pillar is also seen on the Poona plates of Prabhavatigupta (Prabhat, 2015: 124; Thapar, 2003: 196). Written in Gupta script as opposed to Vakataka

script, these copper plates celebrate the marriage between Prabhavatigupta, the daughter of Chandragupta II, and the Vakataka crown prince, Rudrasena II (Prabhat, 2015: 124). The plates indicate not only that Prabhavatigupta became regent of the Vakataka kingdom but that she was proud of her Gupta heritage, as they begin with Gupta genealogy rather than Vakataka (Prabhat, 2015: 125). The existence of these plates shows that the Gupta influence within the Vakataka kingdom was much stronger than that of the Vakatakas themselves (Prabhat, 2015: 125). The praises found within the Poona plates mirror those seen on the Allahabad Pillar, continuing the grandiose and celebratory nature of Gupta period inscriptions.

<u>King</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Chandragupta I	~305-350
Samudragupta	~330-375
Chandragupta II	~380-415
Kumaragupta I	~415-455
Skandagupta	~455-467
Purugupta	~467-473
Kumaragupta II	~473-476
Budhagupta	~476-495
Narasimhagupta	~495-530
Kumaragupta III	~530-540
Vishnugupta	~540-550

Table 1: Timeline of rulers of the Gupta Political Formation as found on the Allahabad Pillar and subsequent gold coinage (Source: Author)

Arguably one of the most comprehensive books on the Gupta period is Mookerji's 1948 work titled *The Gupta Empire*. With his book being one of the most quoted pieces of literature on this topic, Mookherji's use of the Allahabad Pillar has created a near singular narrative of Gupta history based on its text. This singular narrative has then influenced the works of Indian historians, such as Romila Thapar (2003), Burton Stein (2010) and Burjor Avari (2007).

1.3: The Standard Narrative and Indian Archaeology

This standard narrative issue is not unique to the Gupta Period; it is a problem that has plagued investigations into the sub-continent since the colonial era. Other significant periods and civilisations, including the Indus Valley civilisation (~3300-1300BCE), the Maurya Empire (~322-184BCE) and the Kushan Empire (~30-375CE), have also been affected by colonial archaeology. The theory which drove this single narrative idea is that

of the Indo-Aryan invasion (Avari, 2007: 61; Chakrabarti, 2000: 667; Thapar, 2003: 13, 2012: 38, 1996, 1989: 226). The Indo-Aryan invasion theory appears to be a pre-occupation of both Indian and European scholars wherein the Aryan ‘race’ is described as glorious or as a ‘superior race’ (Thapar, 2003: 14, 1996, 1989: 225; Avari, 2007: 61). Due to this preoccupation with the ideas of race, the history of India is ‘mainly that of the Aryans’ (Mookerji, 1956: 48) which has caused Indian history to be viewed through this lens with theories including the belief that iron working was brought to India from the West (Tewari, 2003; 2010), leading to a warp version of the history of metallurgy. Furthermore, the Aryan invasion theory raised some difficult questions regarding British colonial rule over the Indian Subcontinent due to the racial affinity of some Indians with the British posited by the idea could have rendered British rule over a ‘brother race’ unjustified (Mahmud, 1999: 1229). Mahmud (1999: 1229-30) states that the colonial response was to ‘modify’ the theory with ideas of India’s ‘historical inferiority’ to justify colonialism and to convince the natives not to reject it. This may have aided the ‘singular focus’ on the idea of the Indo-Aryan invasions as stated by Chakrabarti (2000: 667). This singular focus has seemingly ‘disconnected’ the Indian population from their own history due to only the textual narrative being readily available (Chakrabarti, 2000: 667). Arguably, due to a lack of interpretations in the textual history, archaeology was limited by the primary focus being on the Indo-Aryan invasion theory.

Pratap, more recently, discusses the development of Indian archaeology (table 2) and finds that the growth of Indian archaeological discussions has been hindered by the remnants of colonial ideology (Pratap, 2014).

Antiquarianism	18th century	Odds and ends
Indology	18 th -19 th centuries	Texts and interpretation, study of scripts, epigraphy and coins, survey of monuments, study of archaeological sites including occasional digging
Colonial archaeology	19 th and 20 th centuries	Systematic survey and excavation
Indian archaeology	20 th century mainly after 1947	Survey, excavation and dating
b) Processual or Positivist Phase	1960s to 1980s	Research designs and Hypothesis testing approach
c) Postprocessual, Post-positivist or Postmodern Phase	1980s onwards to the present and ongoing	Interpretation, alternate archaeological narratives, public archaeology, cultural resource management

Table 1: Development of Indian archaeology.

Table 2: Development of Indian Archaeology (Pratap, 2014)

Colonial Indian archaeology, the so-called ‘birth of modern Indian archaeology’ developed in the first half of the 20th century and was closely associated with the discoveries of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the 1920s (Pratap, 2014: 1). A key figure in this regard was

Sir John Marshall who carried out excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, using then state-of-the art archaeological techniques as well as laying down the principal foundations for the state-run administration of archaeological sites, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). As elsewhere in Europe at the time and other colonial contexts in which European archaeologists and anthropologists carried out their work, the prevalent conceptual framework through which archaeological findings were interpreted in India were based on *'racism and the premise of race-language-culture correlation'* (Chakrabarti, 1997; 2000).

Indian history and archaeology's racial issues are a significant hinderance to discussions on the subject. By preventing a proper investigation into Indian archaeology, the textual sources have been heavily relied upon and has created the standard narrative that we now see in Indian history. Additionally, due to the continued use of the Aryan invasion theory and its relationship to colonialism, a Euro-centric view of Indian archaeology has stunted the development of archaeology in India.

The best example of how the Euro-centric view of Indian archaeology has stunted its development is in the idea of the caste system.

The caste system is an important factor in how Indians today understand and contrstruct social identities. Chakrabarti (2000: 668) suggests that the modern caste system finds its roots in a primarily textual-based understanding of the Indian past, and in particular the Gupta era. The caste system and the legitimacy of the system garners from the apparent rootedness in deep-history is supported and perpetuated by the upper caste of Indian society.

The caste system has been defined by traditionalists as the hereditary, endogamous, hierarchiacally-ranked and, sometimes, occupationally specific groups to which all Hindus belong (Boivin, 2005: 227). Caste here is thought to be inherited and that the individual is entered into a pre-defined set of relationships that construct their place in society (Boivin, 2005: 228).

Caste is not merely restricted to those of Hindu faith; it is found in a variety of forms that preclude most generalisations about it (Boivin, 2005). The hierarchies of caste are much more fluid than initially supposed and the degree to which purity encompasses political, class and gender identities in South Asia has been vigorously discussed (Beteille, 2002; Chakravarti, 1975; Dirks, 1989; Lambert, 1997; Raheja, 1988; Srinivas, 1987; Wadley, 1980; Boivin, 2005). Archaeology with its focus on material culture offers a potential avenue to redress these issues. As Chakrabarti argues, by focusing on the 'grassroots

archaeology' of how communities have adapted themselves to the Indian landscape there is a possible avenue to escape 'the bondage of a textual, racist and casteist past and forge a broad-based Indian identity' (Chakrabarti, 2000).

However, there has been a lack of archaeological investigation into caste and other dimensions of social identity in South Asia. This has left a gap that has been exploited by 'extremist scholars and politicians' (Boivin, 2005: 227) to create pasts that, whilst inaccurate, are able to capture public imagination and build the so desired bridge to the past.

At the same time, these politically motivated arguments for a deep-time rootedness of castes and the singular text-based invasion narrative that it draws its justification from has created a disconnect between the Indian public and their history (Chakrabarti, 2000; Boivin, 2005; Thapar, 2002; Robb, 2011).

Most non-politically motivated archaeologists have largely left the subject of caste alone. When it is discussed, it is normally in the terms of the origins and development of caste in the archaeological past (Boivin, 2005: 227). The analyses of caste in the archaeological past have generally been in the context of the Indo-Aryans (Boivin, 2005; Chakrabarti, 2000; McEvelley, 2002: xxviii).

Chakrabarti (2000: 667) states that as long as this idea persists, the upper castes of Indian society will have no interest to seek out an archaeology-based past for themselves.

Chakrabarti (2000: 668) has argued that this has led to the lower castes, in particular the *dalits* (untouchables) searching for 'heroic personalities' within an individual's caste group which has led to further neglect of India's archaeological past.

By placing a focus on archaeology, as opposed to only focusing on the textual narrative, there is an opportunity to explore the material culture of the Indian Subcontinent and allow for the 'decolonisation' of Indian history and identity (Chakrabarti, 2000). That is not to say that we disregard the textual narrative; rather that we change how archaeological evidence is viewed.

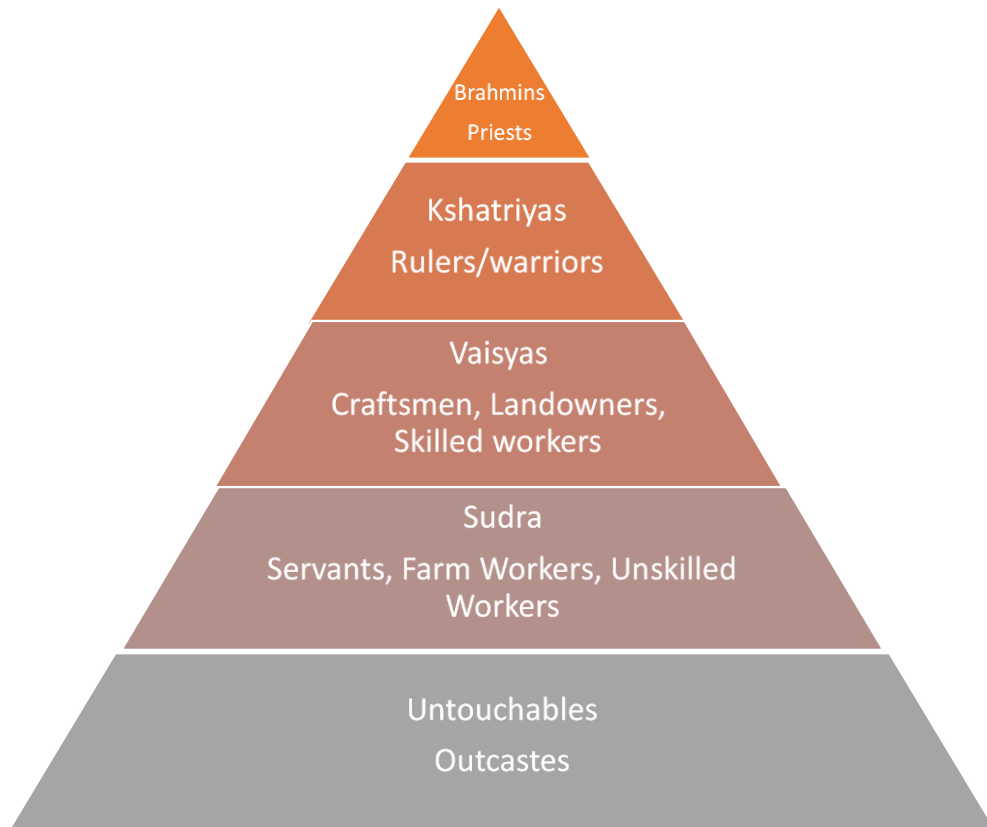


Figure 2: Diagram of the Caste System (Source: Author)

It is this historically contingent and socio-political motivated neglect of India's archaeological past that has repeatedly stalled debate of the GPF and made archaeology the handmaiden of textual historical narrative (Moreland, 2001: 10; 2006: 3; Hume, 1964). The traditional relationship between archaeology and history, specifically textual history, has seemingly been one of 'subservience' (Andren, 1998; Moreland, 2001: 11; 2006: 3) on the part of archaeology. Moreland (2006: 3) found that often Assyriologists, classicists and medievalists as well as New World historians have characterised the archaeological record as 'mute', as only able to shed light on particular aspects of the past (technology and subsistence) but never as being able to challenge 'the truth told in texts' (Bottero, 1992; 2002). Additionally, due to texts ability to 'communicate' directly with the researcher, archaeological finds were often assigned 'illuminat[ing]' the supposed truths found in the texts and add 'flavour' to the historical framework constructed on textual evidence (Moreland, 2006: 3; Arnold, 1986; Austin, 1990: 11-14).

The issue of primacy of textual accounts take over archaeological data in the construction of historical narratives is, of course, not restricted to the Indian case or the Gupta period. The use of inscriptions, such as the Allahabad Pillar, and other textual sources influences archaeological interpretation and encumbers them with dynasticism (Moreland, 2006: 136).

Often, textual sources, such as pillars, are written under dynastic authority or as a celebration of imperial achievements, leading to them have an entirely elitist view of the historical narrative. It is important to remember that epigraphs are often used for the creation of a public image (Fairclough, 2009: 514). In these textual sources, the language used is often that of power. These textual sources often show a power dynamic between people that may not be indicative of the archaeological record. The language used within epigraphs, such as the one on the Allahabad Pillar, indicates the power *over* people that the Guptas had (Fairclough, 2009: 154). By using language to create a public image that in turn has been used to create the current historical narrative, archaeology has been forced into the position of the ‘handmaiden of history’ (Moreland, 2006: 3). This has led to the archaeological evidence being placed into boxes that has aided the creation of the standard narrative that has stunted the growth of the archaeological record in India.

Ginzburg (1992, pp.103, 106) considers that all historical knowledge is ‘indirect, presumptive [and] conjectural’, with Moreland (2006) arguing that some historical knowledge is more indirect and more conjectural than others, because where both objects and texts are taken, the written word is generally taken as providing us with more direct access to the past (Moreland, 2006, p.136). Moreland (2006) considers that that this is because texts can be perceived to communicate directly with the researcher while objects have to be coaxed into revealing historical meaning (Schrire 1991, 78; 1995, 3; Schuyler 1988, 38).

It is not to be interpreted that archaeology has more to offer than textual history. In fact, there are many cases where archaeological finds have been textual objects, including the Vindolanda Tablets which have painted vivid images of Roman life in occupied Britain (see Moreland, 2006: 20-24). As is noted by Moreland (2006: 24) what is missing is material culture. Bennet (2001: 27) notes to truly study texts on early historic societies, there needs to be integration with analyses of the significance of material culture. Through recognising both of these as substantial resources that can be used to explore human projects, we can construct more fully rounded past which recognise both the ‘reality of oppression and the human desire for enlightenment’ (Moreland, 2006: 24).

In terms of the Indian past, by placing a focus on archaeology, a more unbiased version of history can be found. As has been discussed earlier in this section, the textual focus of Indian history has led to the idea of the Indo-Aryan invasion being upheld. By shifting the focus from textual sources to archaeological sources, specifically material culture, a fuller picture of Indian history may be achieved.

Furthermore, by studying the entanglements of the Gupta elites, a better idea of how empires were formed within the Subcontinent can be surmised. Textually, the GPF is an illustrious, undefeated and prosperous empire that swept its way across the north of India. Archaeologically, however, the Gupta's appear to be an empire driven by the desires and dependencies of the elites, which pushed the growth and changes of the political formation in the manner they so desired. The change in narrative from text to archaeology has been aided by the growing focus on material culture and the ideas of New Materialism. In this thesis, I will be using traditional sources, such as the Allahabad Pillar, to identify things clearly important to the Gupta elites and investigating their entanglements and expressions through iconographic, archaeological and other textual sources, using the ideas of New Materialism to help characterise the change in narrative.

1.3.1: Changing the Narrative

As stated earlier, the current narrative for the GPF is mostly based on the Allahabad Pillar and gives a glorified version of their history (fig 1). It is generally accepted that the Gupta dynasty was begun by Sri-Gupta but rose to prominence under Chandragupta I (~305-350) due to him taking advantage of 'accretion of local power' in 320 (Robb, 2011: 41; Eraly, 2011: 41; Thapar, 2002). Eraly (2011: 41) considers the turning point for the Gupta's rise to power to be Chandragupta I's marriage to Kumaradevi, a Lichchhavi princess, however what the Guptas gained from this marriage is unclear. It is possible that this marriage secured the rise of the Gupta dynasty as the Lichchhavis controlled much of northern Bihar (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010). This may have lifted the Guptas out of their non-ruling caste position of *vaishyas* (Ganguly, 1945, 1968; Eraly, 2011: 106) and allowed them to take control of the Lichchhavi land (Eraly, 2011: 41). Singh (2017: 189-190) states that the portrayal of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi on coinage produced by either Chandragupta himself or his son Samudragupta indicate the importance of this matrimonial alliance. This is then substantiated by Samudragupta's proclamation of his parentage on the Allahabad Pillar (Singh, 2017: 189-190; Eraly, 2011: 41). Pollock (2005: 422) takes Samudragupta's choice of placing his inscription on the Allahabad Pillar as an indication of his desire to be associated with the Mauryan emperor, Asoka. He describes this as 'another example' of how South Asian rulers associated themselves with the 'imperial charisma' of earlier rulers by the 'most material of communicative practices' (Pollock, 2005: 422). This style of association is central to the discussion of textiles (Chp. 2) in this thesis with the way in which the Guptas used textile clothing to identify themselves with their predecessors and their gods. Through comparing the iconographic representations of Brahmanical deities and previous significant rulers with that of the Gupta elites, it can be argued that the elites

were relying on ‘imperial charisma’ and, perhaps, deific charisma to further progress the imperial agenda.

One thing that is evident from the Allahabad Pillar is the Gupta’s Hindu faith. In lines 24-26, Samudragupta is said to be ‘equal to (the gods) Kubera, Varuna, Indra and Yama’ (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010). Eraly (2011: 106) states that Samudragupta is routinely described in the Gupta genealogical accounts as equal to the gods and that, following this, many dynasties invented, in collaboration with priests, genealogies connecting them to epic heroes or some god or the other. This idea can arguably be found at the Udayagiri Caves (further discussed in chpt.3).

The Udayagiri Caves is a ‘crucial site’ for the history of the Gupta kings and for the cultural and artistic distribution that can be found under their rule (Willis, 2001: 41). Many of the best-known inscriptions, in or beside the hill’s cave shrines, mention Chandragupta II (the son of Samudragupta) and members of his court as well as the well-known relief sculptures of Visnu’s incarnations and a number of other deities (Willis, 2001: 41). An inscription found on the north face of a pillar (fig 3) to the left as one enters Cave 19 from the year 1093 and shows that even six centuries after the death of Chandragupta II, there was a living tradition associating him with Udayagiri and the epithet of ‘Vikramaditya’ (Willis, 2001: 42).

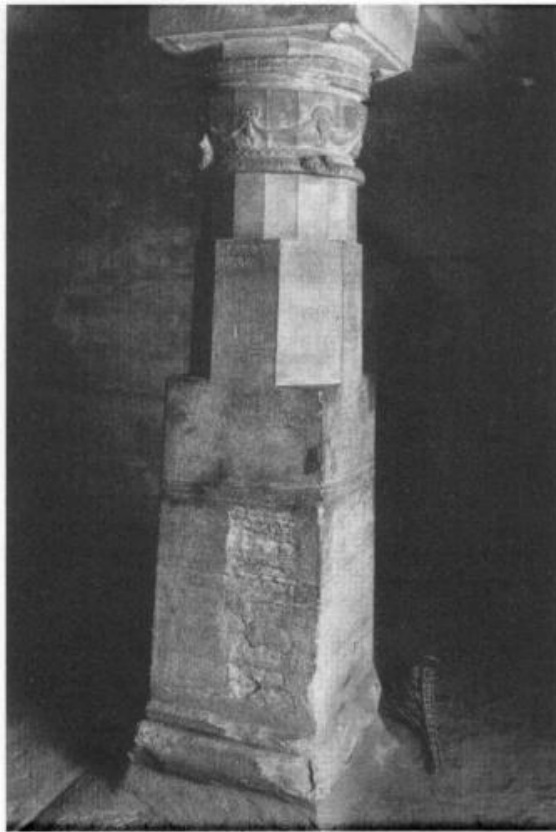


Figure 3: Pillar from Cave 19 with 11th century Inscription (Willis, 2001: 42)

This epithet can also be found on coins of Chandragupta, with one reading ‘Having conquered the earth with good conduct, Vikramaditya conquered heaven’ (Willis, 2001: 42). This epithet, Willis (2001: 42-43) has argued, indicates that the king was drawing on an analogy between his own acts as ruler and Visnu’s *Trivikrama*, the heroic three strides by which Visnu redeemed the world from evil. Willis (2001: 42-43) suggests that the link between *vikrama* and *Aditya* is provided by the association of Visnu’s three steps with the position of the sun at dawn, midday, and sunset. He then goes on to state that the use of Vaisnava imagery as political allegory was favoured by the Guptas with the most elaborate of them being the relief of Varaha found at Udayagiri (discussed further in chpt. 2). The ruling Guptas staunch faith is characterised by their continued association between themselves and their gods. Here it is important to consider Darshini’s (2006) three-tier power system.

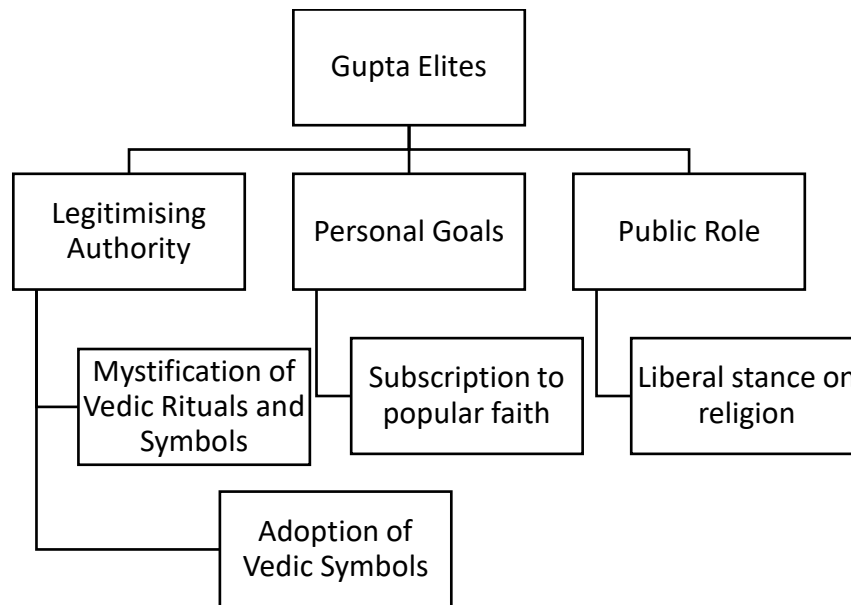


Table 3: Darshini's three tier system (Source: Author adapted from Darshini, 2006)

Darshini's (2006) system can be used to investigate how the Guptas may have used religion as a method of power and control. This was done through the mystification of the Vedic rituals, subscribing to faiths of Brahmanical origin and publicly ensuring the promotion of religions that were not their own in order to ingratiate those who did not prescribe to the Brahmanical faith. In doing this, the Gupta elites aligned themselves with the Vedic gods, which had, according to Darshini (2006) not been truly worshipped since the Vedic period, that is pre-the birth of Buddha, and by mystifying the rituals, the Vedic religion may have appeared to be something reserved for the upper echelons of society. This power system will be further investigated in chapter 3 wherein it will be discussed through the medium of textile clothing. In chapter 3, Darshini's (2006) power structure will be used in conjunction with Mohan's (2017) idea of 'gaze-glaze' (discussed further in chapter 3) to identify how the public may have viewed the iconographic representations of textile clothing and the social impact of these views to investigate the importance of this material to the production and re-production of the imperial message. Arguably, the power system here can also be seen through the Gupta's use of metals. By using copper, an important metal within Brahmanism, in the form of coinage and placing an image of the king in what is argued in chapter 3 to be religious garb, the Guptas further adopted and mystified Vedic symbols in an attempt to deepen their legitimacy.

Overall, the current view of the Gupta dynasty can be summarised in one word: glorified. Thanks to the single narrative that has held strong, the Guptas are still often characterised through their own political propaganda. Their use of the Hindu faith and association with deities and previous rulers to ensure their own positions is a tradition that has stayed strong

until the modern day, tainting the view of Indian identity. It is important to consider the issues of the sub-continent in their own manner, away from Western ideals and ideas, to ensure that Indian archaeology and history remains cultural. Although this thesis wishes to ensure that western ideals do not characterise the discussion, the main theories that will be used to investigate the material relationships of the GPF were not created for investigating South Asian archaeology and material culture, and so, may not fully encompass the uniqueness of the problems found within.

Furthermore, by presenting the current narrative on Gupta history, this thesis wishes to, rather than substantiate the textual evidence with the archaeological, re-evaluate the balance between the two and discuss the way in which post-modern archaeological theory can be used to bring new narratives to Indian archaeology.

1.4: Chapter Overview

The second chapter of this dissertation discusses the current theoretical positions on the ideas of new materialism, taking particular focus on the ideas of entanglement (Hodder, 2011; 2012) and more specifically Lori Katchadurian's *Satrapal Condition* (Katchadurian, 2016). This chapter will discuss these ideas and lay out the theoretical framework that encompasses the rest of this dissertation. By using the ideas of new materialism, this dissertation aims to discuss textiles, metals, and spices as actants within the political machine as opposed to being acted on.

The textiles chapter (3) will investigate the political intentions behind the modes of dress displayed iconographically by the Guptas and those who fell within their sphere of influence. Here, the Ajanta Cave Paintings will be used as the basis for the discussion due to the encyclopaedic nature of the clothing styles found within them. This will then be used to discuss the changes in dress found in statues of the region of the former Western Kshatrapas, on the coinage circulated throughout the GPF and the Lichchhavi of Nepal. These three separate forms of depiction will allow for a wider discussion surrounding the political nature of textiles and the power that this affords to them.

The fourth chapter will discuss the nature of the relationship and entanglements with metals for coinage systematically; from the extraction of the materials to the spending of the coinage made from them. The aim here is to identify and discuss the dependence that emerged due to the desires of the Gupta elites and what this meant for their relationships with neighbouring political formations and their own merchants.

The final case study chapter (5) of this thesis will cover spices. Here, spices will be discussed in their socio-political contexts due to their ability to entangle not only the lives and movements of the elites but the GPF's wider population and, additionally, those of their trading partners.

Finally, these three separate discussions will be brought together to bring an answer to the overarching question of how this change in focus can tell us more about political sovereignty and the movements of political formations (6).

<u>Period</u>	<u>Years</u>
Vedic Period (Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age)	c.1500-c.1100BCE
Mauryan Empire	c.322-c.185BCE
Achaemenid (Persian) Empire	c.550BCE-c.330BCE
Indo-Greek Kingdoms	c.180BCE-10CE
Kushana	c.1 st century BCE – c.375CE
Western Kshatrapas (Sakas/Indo-Scythians)	c.35-c.405CE
Gupta Political Formation	c.mid-3 rd century CE – 543CE
Gupta-Vakataka Age	c.200-550CE
Lichchhavi Kingdom of Nepal	c.400-750CE
Indo-Roman Period	c.30BCE – c. 4th century CE

Table 4: Time Period Table (Source: Author)

Each of these sections will take a primary focus on the GPF, however, it is important to note that there will be discussions of earlier periods (table 4) and the pre-established relationships that may have impacted the Guptas. Because of this, it must be noted that all dates, unless stated otherwise, are CE.

Chapter 2: Powerful Materials

This thesis takes advantage of the recent ontological turn to investigate the role of what are being termed powerful materials to the expansion of the GPF and, furthermore, how materials affect the idea of political formations as a whole. In this chapter, I will develop this theoretical position, building on recent conceptual advances within what has come to be referred to as New Materialism and its archaeological applications, in particular those relevant to the production and negotiation of socio-political power and legitimacy.

Powerful materials as they are understood in this study, acquire their power through their interaction with humans and other materials in the context of socio-political reproduction. Here, the materials create networks of desire and dependency by shaping socio-political actions and reactions through value which is both intrinsic and extrinsic to the material in question. Their value in turn emerges from the power relations and ontological presumptions that ultimately create the categories through which individuals define and, more importantly, value things and environments (Bauer & Kosiba, 2016:116).

The central theoretical pillars of the ‘powerful materials’ approach are Lori Katchadurian’s (2016) *satrapal condition* and Ian Hodder’s (2012) *theory of entanglement*. It is important to note that these theoretical approaches were developed for different locations and time periods, and, in Hodder’s case, not with political questions in mind. In his 2012 book, *Entangled*, Hodder his excavations at Çatalhöyük, a key site in the later Neolithic of Turkey and the wider Middle East (7400 - 6000 BCE) (Hodder, 2012: 60-63). Katchadurian’s (2016) *satrapal condition* was developed through her discussion of the Achaemenid Empire which politically unified a vast area from Iran to the Mediterranean between c.550-330BCE (Katchadurian, 2016: xiv).

2.1: New Materialism and Assemblages

Coined in the 1990s, the term ‘new materialism’ has been used to described cross-disciplinary turn away from the ‘persistent dualisms’ in modern and humanist traditions whose influences are still present in much of cultural theory (Sanzo, 2018; Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012: 48). These new material-centred theories have sought to reposition humans amongst nonhumans (animals, plants etc) and address the interconnected material realities for humans and nonhumans (Sanzo, 2018). In a basic definition, assemblages are ‘compositions that act’ and are made up of heterogenous components (Harris, 2017: 4). Harris (2017: 5) argues that assemblages, as part of the turn towards Deleuzian thought, offers archaeology a series of advantages. Firstly, Harris (2017: 5) states that assemblage is

‘rooted in flat ontology’; meaning that it does not take particular aspects of the world, such as human beings. Instead, assemblages can be presumed to occupy a different ontological level to the rest of existence, its embrace of the vibrancy of matter welcomes a host of actors onto the historical stage, rescuing them from the wilderness created by the traditions of human exceptionalism (Harris, 2017: 5). Harris goes on to state that this does not suppose that the world can be divided into simple categories; be they culture and nature, organic and inorganic, biological and geological, therefore continuing the progress away from the Cartesian dualisms (Harris, 2017: 5). The second advantage found through the Deleuzian turn is the emphasis on process means that history and its development must be attended to and is no longer merely an attempt to describe the past better (Harris, 2017: 5). Finally, Harris (2017: 5) finds that assemblage-based approaches are more-than-representational’ and resituates the elements of meaning, belief, desire and emotion into a more nuance and sophisticated ontology. In her book, *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett (2010) addresses this idea through her description of an assemblage of objects:

‘For had the sun had not glinted on the black glove, I might not have seen the rat; had the rat not been there, I might not have noted the bottle cap and so on. But they *were* all there just as they were, and so I caught a glimpse of an energetic vitality inside each of these things that I generally conceived as inert’ (Bennett, 2010: 5)

Within the described assemblage, the *objects* appeared as *things*; that is, as Bennett (2010: 5) states, seeing the *objects* as vivid entities, not entirely reducible to the contexts in which humans see them. Harris (2017) discusses the idea of scale within assemblages as ‘all assemblages are in themselves made up of other assemblages’ (Harris, 2017: 6; DeLanda, 2016). Harris (2017: 9) shows this multi-scalar approach through looking at a single Neolithic pot from the pot itself to the enclosure that it was found in

These multiple archaeological scales offer a chance to explore not only the material aspects of assemblages but also the sensorial.

Hamilakis (2017: 170) believes that a fundamental property of all assemblages is their ‘sensorial and affective import’ and that they are about material and sensorial memory as well as about the engendering of diverse temporalities. These material and sensorial memories help necessitate the deliberate agency and intervention of social actors and involve by implication the commingling and the contingent co-presence of diverse temporal moments (Hamilakis, 2017: 173). Furthermore, Hamilakis (2017: 180) suggests that all assemblages are, in fact, sensorial due to their unique configurations but with

variable affective intensity. Additionally, Hamilakis and Jones (2017: 83) suggest that the idea of sensorial assemblages has helped reinterpret archaeological contexts, including the communal and commingled burials of the tholos tombs of Early Bronze Age Crete. Here, the sensorial and affective contact of the living with the bones and objects from different times would have allowed for a distinctive mnemonic-historical understanding to emerge amongst the population, resulting in necro-political, effects (Hamilakis and Jones, 2017: 83).

Bennett's (2010: 5) tale of finding 'energetic vitality' in inert, everyday objects shows the idea of *thing-power*. This *thing-power* is a 'dynamic flow of energy' between and with the components of assemblages (Lupton, 2019). Bennett (2004: 349) argues that *thing-power* emphasises the intimacy between humans and non-humans, the ways that they are so closely intertwined in the moments when 'human being and thinghood overlap'. Going back to the assemblage of objects, Bennett (2010: 5) states that whilst being struck by what Stephen Jay Gould termed the 'excruciating complexity and intractability of nonhuman bodies', she came across the realisation that these objects were not restricted to a passive role but had the ability to make things happen, to produce effects. *Thing-power* materialism seeks to promote acknowledgement, respect and sometimes fear of materiality and to foster greater recognition of the agential powers of the natural and artificial things and the dense web of their connection with each other and with humans (Bennett, 2004: 349).

The Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 2005; Harman, 2009; McGee, 2014) focuses on the idea that nonhumans and their relationships with humans and each other. Nonhumans are defined as any entity displaying some, but not enough, characteristics to be considered human and include animals, plants, and non-organic entities (Latour, 2005; Harman, 2009; McGee, 2014). Within ANT, an 'actor' in the actor-network is not the source of an action but is, in fact, 'the moving target of a vast array of entities' coming towards it (Latour, 2005: 46). The term 'actor' was replaced by Latour with the term 'actant' as it removes the connotations with the profession, allowing an actant to be either human or nonhuman (Bennett, 2004: 355). An 'actant' is that which *does* something, has sufficient coherence to perform actions, produce effects and alter situations (Bennett, 2004: 355).

The desire for materials, fuelled by the relationships and entanglements created through the power given to objects, controls the way in which individuals act within the world. The *things*, through their involvement in these interconnected webs, thus have the ability to

influence the socio-political lives of the humans caught in these webs with them. In *Reassembling the Social* (2005: 72), Latour states that the idea of ANT is not to make ‘empty claim[s] that objects do things instead of humans: it says that no science of the social can begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored’. Bauer and Kosiba also make the suggestion that if there is an acceptance that things can participate and affect human social practice, there must first be an examination of the difference between the things in the terms of the properties that they hold and the perceptions that they elicit and how these differences condition the possibilities for these things to act (Bauer & Kosiba, 2016: 116).

2.2: Entanglements

Entanglements have been described by many as the complex networks, mixes and engagements that have resulted from the interdependence between humans and things (Hodder, 2011; 2012).

In his 2011 paper, *Human-Thing Entanglement: Towards an Integrated Archaeological Perspective*, Ian Hodder explores the relationship between humans and things through a direct focus on both things made by humans (artefacts/material culture) and things interfered with by humans (domesticated animals/plants) (Hodder, 2011: 154) .

A consequence of the human-centred approach is that things that have appeared to [humans] directly as separate bound entities (Hodder, 2012). This has led to many having the belief that things themselves are fixed whilst the meanings given to them swirl and change (Hodder, 2011: 160). Hodder (2011: 160) has found that this is merely in ‘the short term’ and in reality, things are always changing, transforming, falling apart.

Things can also be seen as both actants and networks. Hodder’s (2011) theory of entanglement can be broken down into three main sections:

- Human depending on Things
- Things depending on Things
- Things Depending on Humans

Hodder’s (2012: 154) explanation for the human dependence on things is that there is little consideration for the actual things themselves. Humans depend on things as technologies; there is a dependence on things as tools for forging social relationships and to worship amongst other things (Hodder, 2011). The forging of social relationships is an essential part of the human condition; allowing for the creation of human to human bonds that

would not have otherwise been created (Hodder 2011). In the GPF, this forming of human to human bonds through the medium of things can arguably be seen in all three of the materials chosen for this study. Textiles create a visual exchange between wearers to allow them to identify individuals who are or are not a part of their social group (Stone, 1981: 193). Metals in the form of coinage create both an economic exchange and a visual exchange through both their perceived economic value and their involvement in the imperial machine (discussed further below). Finally, spices arguably pushed the GPF's elites into inter-marriage with the Kadamba dynasty for the procurement of them, creating a human to human bond that would not have been there before.

However, this dependence is not merely one-way; things rely on humans and other things along chains of interdependence (Hodder, 2012). These chains and interactions, often characterised as *Chaîne opératoire* (Lemonnier, 1993; Leroi-Gourhan, 1964-5), link together the actions by which things are made dependent on other things, and fundamentally humans (fig 4). For as long as there have been cultural acts, such as making fire, assemblages of objects have been involved (fig 5).

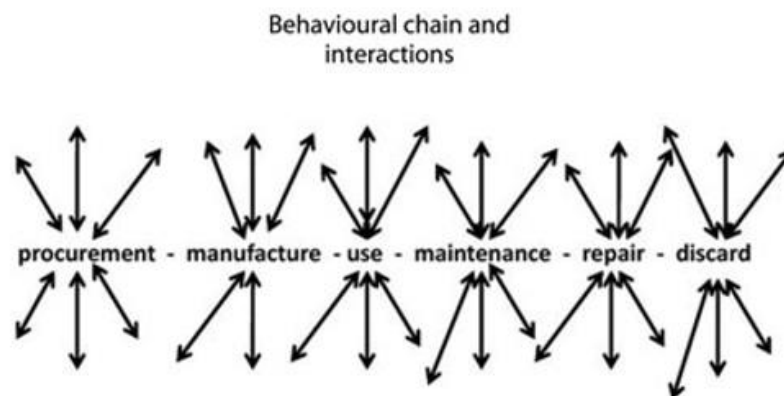


Figure 4: Interactions occur at all stages along behavioural chains (Source: Hodder, 2012, 159)

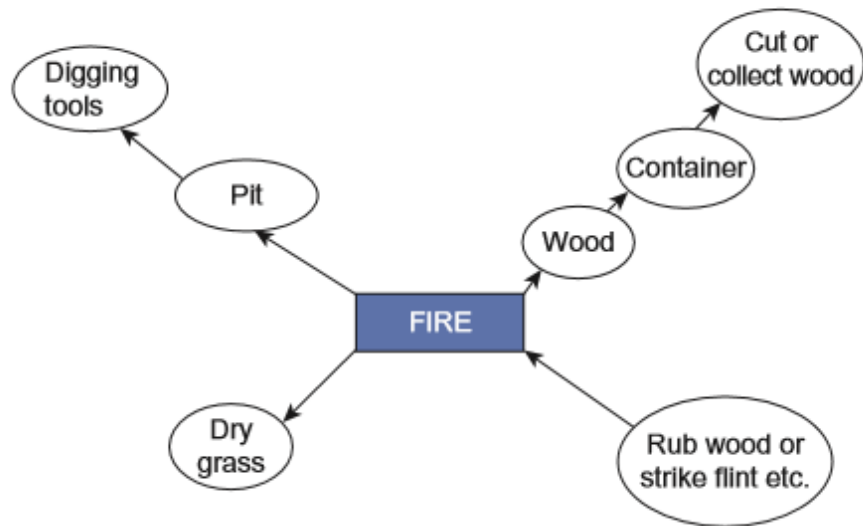


Figure 5: Some of the tools and processes involved in making a simple fire (Source: Hodder, 2012: 158)

Looking at figure 5, it shows the tools and processes needed to create merely a fire and the idea of things depending on other things can clearly be seen (Hodder, 2012: 158). All things are dependent on other things to make, repair and discard them and for those things to bear the marks of these other things (Hodder, 2012). Archaeologists have long been adept at studying of the traces on things to see how they were used and made and they [archaeologists] have been at pains to emphasise that the interactions between things also involves bodily engagement (Hodder, 2012: 158).

Overall, Hodder's (2012) ideas of entanglement give a framework on which to explore Katchadurian's (2016) *satrapal condition* and allows for the large ideas of imperial matter to be viewed at their object level. This framework will be used to look at the interdependencies of the Gupta Elites and create a basis on which to categorise these powerful materials.

2.3: The Political Dimensions of Assemblages

Looking at herd management, soil erosion and monument building, the social actions that characterised politics in the South Indian Iron Age (1200-300BCE), Bauer & Kosiba (2016: 116) aimed to offer an archaeological perspective to how things affect politics within long-term historical processes. This is done concentrating on a process of *entrapment*, that is the orientation and movement of people and things in unique cultural and historical contexts. By focusing on this process, the concept of how social agency is distributed across a network of people can be built upon by sharpening the focus on the fundamental differences and asymmetries in how people and things can affect social life

(Bauer & Kosiba, 2016: 135). Through attending to the politics of soil erosion, Bauer & Kosiba (2016: 135) were able to document the organisation of materials by people in specific ways and how these materials became *entrained* in a process of long-term collective action that had significant impacts on how people formulated social inequalities and community identities. This long-term investigation allows for an examination of *how* things can act to manifest social differences and become objects of political concern when they are entrained in particular, situated flow of action (Bauer & Kosiba, 2016: 135). By analysing *how* things act rather than only explaining *that things* act, Bauer and Kosiba (2016: 135) move beyond the theoretical suggestion about the mechanics of nature into an inquiry into how material actions are situated in various contexts. By reframing to focus on how things act, it is possible to have a deeper examination of how things interact and are interacted with in the networks in which they are found.

Here it is important to consider the idea of political sovereignty.

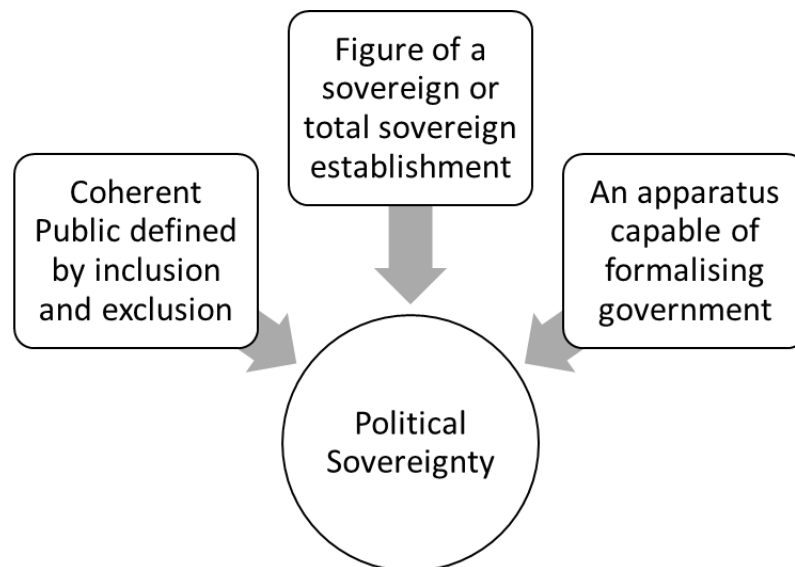


Figure 6: The three pre-existing conditions needed for political sovereignty (Source: Author adapted from Smith, 2015: 6)

In the Hobbesian sense (Hobbes, 1991; Smith 2015: 5), political sovereignty describes an ultimate authority, an apparatus of supremacy within a delimited territory that insinuates itself into all other domains of association. Foucault (2003: 35-36) believed that Hobbes's account of sovereignty could be applied to the pre-modern era. Smith (2015: 5) describes this form of political sovereignty as 'staked on a homology' between the body of the monarch and the body politic which contrasts modern forms of biopolitics that inscribe authority 'directly on the docile bodies of subjects'. Countering this Agamben (1998: 6; Smith 2015: 5) has indicated that modern techniques of authorisation and technologies of subjection that 'draw bare life' into the sphere of politics do not represent the historical.

Smith (2015: 5) finds that the study of sovereignty is not an investigation of a historically restricted type of political order, as suggested by Foucault (2003), but more of an inquiry into a ‘tentative and always emergent form of authority grounded in violence that is performed and designed to generate loyalty, fear, and legitimacy from the neighbourhood to the summit of the state’ (Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 297; Smith, 2015: 6).

Smith (2015: 6) suggests that the principle authority of state needs three pre-existing conditions for its continual reproduction (fig 6). Smith (2015: 6) suggests that each of these conditions are dependent upon the reproduction of specific material assemblages that ‘do critical political work’. Additionally, Smith (2015: 6) finds that sovereignty emerges in the historical coalescence of interdigitated assemblages. In this sense, sovereignty is a quintessentially archaeological category that is reproduced in the domain of things (Smith, 2015: 6). These three conditions, along with Hodder’s (2011) *entanglement theory*, provide a framework through which to study material culture.

Katchadurian’s *Satrapal condition* is a process of “ongoing, everyday making of acquiescent subjects who uphold the imperial project through [...] entanglements with things that, to varying degrees, transform habitats, persons, political, and social lives” (Katchadurian, 2016, 22). These entanglements can be imposed, encouraged, or even chosen by the society (Katchadurian, 2016, 22). Four different types of materials or ‘imperial matter’ can be distinguished through the efficacy in reproducing the satrapal condition:

- Delegates
- Proxies
- Captives
- Affiliates

Delegates are the things that take share in the preservation of the very terms of imperial sovereignty, through the force of both their material composition and the practical mediations they help afford (Katchadurian, 2016: 68). Katchadurian (2016: 68) uses the example of Rome’s dependence on marble, stating that imperial agents began to rely on its affective and practical contributions to the reproduction of Roman imperium as ideology and practice. To feed their dependence on marble, the Roman emperors expropriated and exploited marble quarries across their empire. Katchadurian states that this then set in motion the practices of patronage and emulation by the civic elites who wished to win Rome’s favour (2016: 69).

Delegates can be argued to be an apparatus capable of formalising government and being able to create a coherent public due to their production and reproduction of the imperial message (Smith, 2015: 6; Katchadurian, 2016: 68). In the GPF, textile clothing can be argued to be designated as a delegate due to their ability to create an association between the elites and either their gods or earlier rulers through similarities in their reproduction. Additionally, metals, specifically coinage, can also be argued to be delegates due to their direct reproduction of the imperial message through their iconography.

Paradoxically, due to their “allure” and “efficacy”, delegates lead to the erosion of their own power (Katchadurian, 2016, 70), causing what has been called the “mimetic faculty” (Taussig, 1993: 2). Here, delegates give rise to what have sometimes been called “copies” or “imitations”; that is things that have been taken as local emulations of the imperial “canons” in different materials and modified forms (Katchadurian, 2016, 70).

Proxies themselves are, as described by Katchadurian (2016, 71), occasionally “rascallion siblings” of the delegates whose political mischief exists out of (at least) two possible points for “slippage”. The first of these is the material which the delegates that are being imitated are made from. Here, the proxy matter does not entrap the privileged human agents of empire into relations of dependence and does not require the same level of care and attention that is given to delegates. The second opportunity for “unruliness” stems from the company that proxies keep; that is the immediate assemblage of humans and things that collaborate in the production of social life (Katchadurian, 2016, 72).

Katchadurian (2016, 72) states that human intention plays an important part in these emulations. They [proxies] are able to promote dilutions of the values and ways of doing as communicated by their “material masters” when the human users harness them to “unruly ends” (Katchadurian, 2016, 72). In situations where hierarchy is an important component, individuals of lower social standing may seek to improve their status through emulating behaviour that serves to assert authority and maintain the social structure (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 1). In imperial contexts, dominated elites may emulate the practices of those ruling them with a view to enhance their own prestige or prove their political affinity (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 1). In doing this, arguably, there is the creation of a coherent public (Smith, 2015: 6) through the dominated elites attempting to be included in the dominant culture through an emulation of behaviour. This can arguably be seen in action at the eastern edge of the Achaemenid Empire where non-local vessel forms were adopted in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Pakistan during the mid-late 1st millennium BCE (Petrie *et al*, 2008).

Both Classical and Achaemenid historical records indicate that the northwest of modern Pakistan was incorporated into the Achaemenid Empire sometime during the late 6th century BCE (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11; Vogelsang, 1992; Magee *et al*, 2005: 711-714). Nevertheless, there are no well-dated archaeological contexts that can be specifically related to the event or any clear indications of an Achaemenid presence in South Asian literature (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11). However, tulip bowls, the ‘quintessential’ Achaemenid vessel form appear at all major north western urban centres during the middle of the 1st millennium BCE – Akra, Taxila and Charsdda (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11). Their Iranian origin and appearance during a time of political engagement with the Achaemenid Empire give way to the suggestion that the tulip bowls are a ‘concrete manifestation’ of the influence of the Achaemenid Empire in north western South Asia (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11). The negotiation of this impact within the existing socio-political structures of South Asia is difficult to ascertain with previous discussions have suggested the presence of clay versions of the tulip bowl at sites at the western edge of the Achaemenid Empire may be an emulation of elite banqueting habits by non-elite individuals (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11). This emulation was not unique to individuals from outside of the Persian heartland with the clearest evidence for the emulation of elite behaviour by non-elites coming from either the Persian heartland or the region around Sardis, the westernmost Achaemenid royal capital (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11). These two contexts are where non-elites are likely to have come into contact with elites using such vessels (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11).

Due to the South Asian context of the vessels, Petrie *et al* (2008: 11) suggest a more ‘nuanced’ approach that decontextualises social behaviour from the ‘myriad’ of local and foreign input which is critical to fully understand how ancient empires worked. They suggest that the tulip bowl and a small number of other vessels provide strong indications of a pattern of interaction and emulation between the inhabitants of the South Asian provinces and the core of the Achaemenid Empire during the Late Achaemenid period and that once this pattern began, it appears to have continued into the post-Achaemenid Mauryan period, during which time the emulated vessels were subverted, absorbed and modified in line with local ceramic developmental trajectory (Petrie *et al*, 2008: 11-12). This emulation, as previously suggested, falls in line with Katchadurian’s (2016) concept of proxies. The tulip bowls introduction into South Asia arguably begins as a delegate; the non-local elites continuing the practices that ensured that the social dynamic known to them continues followed by the growth of emulative reproductions by local non-elites in an effort to ensure their participation in the new social life.

I will argue in the next chapter that this kind of emulation can be seen in the context of the GPF in the Vakataka produced Ajanta Caves. Here the dress style of the dominant Gupta elites is reproduced as well as in the Lichchhavi emulations of Visnu where the dress style appears to have been ‘subverted, absorbed and modified’ in line with the local styles (discussed further in ch.3).

Katchadurian’s (2016: 73) third category is ‘captives’. Captives are described as the displaced things moving in reverse along routes that lead directly to the imperial centres (Katchadurian, 2016: 73). They are political things that have been compelled to collaborate with the sovereign in the reproduction of authority and subjection with material captives being consequences of theft and can be consider the “ultimate imperial act” (MacKenzie, 1995: 53). They are the spoils marched through the city after war, curiosities from colonised lands and the provincial “things” that were targeted for replication and co-option into the imperial state (Katchadurian, 2016: 74).

The final of Katchadurian’s four categories are the affiliates. These are the things that became imperial through their mere existence as they are carried along by the movements of the human and non-human forces that bring them into the political formation. The forms of these affiliates and their affects are pervasive and varied but are always unified in how they maintained, deepened and impelled the affective and practical ties found in the community of human agents who collectively depend on them. Affiliates stand away from the human agents and centres of state power, residing out of the gaze of the sovereigns and are instead, bound in mutual dependencies with commoners in home, villages, towns and cities. Here, it is important to consider the things that entangled the commoners in the outer edges of the political sphere. Affiliates are the things that make it possible to preserve difference between groups of disparate individuals that imperial formations envelop into their folds (Katchadurian, 2016, 76).

Arguably, in this thesis, the only material that may be able to be placed into the category of ‘affiliates’ is spices however, as will be argued in chapter 5, this category is not open enough for the political importance of spices. Overall, throughout this thesis, it is reasonable to say that I will mostly be dealing with delegates and proxies in the discussions on the material case studies investigated throughout this thesis.

In this thesis, Katchadurian’s (2016) *satrapal condition* provides a basis for the exploration and categorisation of the material culture of the GPF. Through identifying the similar patterns between Katchadurian’s descriptions and the actions of, and actions on, the

materials investigated throughout this thesis. By identifying these patterns, the ways in which the GPF was shaped by and grew through the material desires and dependencies of the elites.

In sections 2.3 and 2.4, the main theoretical concepts for this this have been discussed. In the next section, 2.5, I will develop the previously discussed concepts into a framework applicable to my study.

2.4: Powerful Materials - An Approach

The main question of this thesis is ‘*Through a focus on powerful materials, as opposed to imperial or dynastic agency, how did the material desires and dependencies of the Gupta ruling elites shape and transform the political formation over the course of its life-history?*’ and thus it is important to develop the theoretical concepts discussed above into a framework to aid in the answering of this question.

The main focus of this thesis is the idea of powerful materials. Through these theories, this idea can be defined as:

A material that drives the political or socio-economic growth of a socio-political formation

This definition has been found through a discussion on the ideas of new materialism and imperial formations, specifically those of Hodder (2012) and Katchadurian (2016). These two theories will be used in conjunction with one another as the entanglement framework is merely thus, a framework. Without the categories created by Katchadurian, the entanglement framework is too small for the overall ideas of the imperial formation and the materials and networks found within them. However, the *satrapal condition* comes with its own issues. The categories defined by Katchadurian (2016) are still seemingly narrow and through the course of this dissertation, I will show that these categories are not so divided, and that imperial matter is a much more entangled and complicated concept.

Additionally, these two concepts as well as Smith’s (2015: 6) pre-conditions for political sovereignty will be combined with Darshini’s (2006) three-tier power structure (Table 3) to investigate how the chosen powerful materials impacted the growth and movements of the GPF through their politically charged uses. By combining these concepts, a framework can be constructed.

By placing the powerful materials into the power structure of Darshini (2006) it is possible to identify the categories of the *satrapal condition* that the materials may fit. Furthermore, this makes it possible to use the framework of entanglement created by Hodder (2011) to

find the dependencies created by the need for the materials to maintain the power structure. Additionally, Darshini's power structure can arguably be translated into Smith's (2015) pre-existing conditions for political sovereignty, allowing for a better discussion of how the material desires and dependencies of the Gupta elites.

Overall, the concepts and theoretical framework discussed throughout this chapter will be explored further throughout this thesis and will directly aid the investigation into the how powerful materials shaped the GPF.

Chapter 3: Textiles

3.1.1: Textiles as a Powerful Material

Textile clothing can be treated as a powerful material due to its influence in the social, religious and economic aspects of human lives through interwoven networks of dependency similar to that of their own fabric. In this chapter, textile clothing will be investigated in order to shed light on their perceived societal role and the significance given to them by individuals which allowed textile clothing to become influential in the shaping of Gupta imperial history.

Textile clothing can be found in an array of contexts, but this chapter is interested in three. These are the social, political, and religious contexts in which the iconographic representation of clothing can be found. The political and social roles of textiles within the GPF will be explored through how networks of desire and dependency were created and, furthermore, the religious significance of textile clothing will be examined in relation to these networks. These contexts will be used to explore the deeper political meanings and the agency of the textile clothing in the shaping of these meanings, and, furthermore, the power structures associated with them.

3.1.2: The significance of Textiles

In this chapter, and the thesis overall, the term ‘textile’ is defined as a ‘web of interlaced threads produced on a loom’ (Good, 2001: 211) with ‘clothing’ being defined as ‘garments worn on the body’ (Holman, 1980). These two defines are being combined to create the definition for textile clothing which is ‘garments created through making a web of interlaced threads that is worn on the body’. Often in this chapter, textile clothing will be shortened to just ‘textile[s]’ but will still be taking the definition created for textile clothing.

Textiles were significant in all aspects of life within the GPF, from their economic importance with the establishment of weavers’ guilds (Mankodi, 2015) to their religious and social significance as indicated by Sanskrit literature, such as the Mahābhārata, Ramayana and Kamasutra (González-Reimann, 2002). It can be argued that, due to literary and epigraphic indicators of their economic importance, textiles can denote the positions of individuals within society.

The political, societal, and religious roles of textile clothing differ from one another but not so vastly that they cannot be summarised.

The political use of textile clothing is thus: the state needs various ways in which to ingratiate themselves to the population that has been incorporated into the political landscape of the formation that they control and so begin to include elements of the clothing of their new populous into the state. Furthermore, the need for the elites of the society, especially those who are seen as royalty, to appear as both similar and different to the population which they are attempting to control, leading to the hybridisation of styles.

The societal role of textile clothing can be found in its ability to identify an individual by their appearance. It allows for us as humans to seek out those who are similar and act as a marker for the position which an individual holds within a certain society. The societal role of clothing is entirely dependent on the context to which an individual is exposed the idea.

The religious role of textile clothing is two-fold. There is the way in which textile clothing is worn by followers of the religion which extends to how the clothing is described in religious texts held sacred by them. There is, however, the second element which is oft found in non-secular societies, such as India, where the notions of the predominant religion surrounding textile clothing can be found within the laws of the society.

To understand how the Gupta Ruling Elites may have politicised clothing, it is important to first have an understanding of how the Gupta elites structured their power. Darshini (2006) created a three-tier power system to explain one of the possible ways in which the Gupta elites may have done this. Darshini's (2006) structure indicates that the Gupta's may have used religion as a specific method of power and control (Table 3):

- A. The first of the tiers was legitimising their authority, which Darshini believes was done through mystifying Vedic rituals and symbols, some of which the Gupta Elite adopted for themselves.
- B. Secondly, the Gupta had their personal goals for which they subscribed to one or the other of the popular faiths, usually of Brahmanical origins.
- C. Finally, they had their public role. In this, they took on a liberal stance to religion; allowing for the freedom and, at times, promotion of beliefs that were not their own.

The aforementioned roles of textiles fit neatly alongside the power structure suggested by Darshini (2006). Furthermore, this fit into Smith's (2015) pre-existing conditions for political sovereignty, it can be argued that Darshini's (2006) three tier-system complies with the system. Looking at the idea of a coherent public, it can be said that by taking a publicly liberal stance on religion and the patronage of non-Brahmanical monuments, the

Gupta elites ensured that those of non-Brahmanical faiths were included in the ideas of the wider empire, whilst at the same time excluding the public from the mystified Vedic rituals, thus ensuring that they [Gupta Elites] were able to legitimise their authority through establishing these rituals as those of the sovereign. In turn, the figure of a sovereign and the sovereign establishment is created due to the elites supposedly being those who were privy to the Vedic rituals. Furthermore, the use of faith for their own personal goals allows the Gupta elites to use the religion as an apparatus for the formalisation of their government.

This relationship will be explored throughout this chapter by identifying patterns in the iconographic representation of male and female dress and investigating the wider context of the iconography to discern what the intention behind the display. In the next section, the methodology used to help identify and discuss textile clothing is explored and the choices made for the case studies is justified.

3.2: Methodology

3.2.1: Theoretical Framework

As was mentioned in chapter 2, the overarching methodology and theoretical framework of the thesis is based in the ideas of new materialism with a particular focus on the ideas of Lori Katchadurian (2016) and Ian Hodder (2012). Furthermore, Smith's (2015: 6) three pre-existing conditions of sovereignty alongside Darshini's (2006) three-tier power system create a framework in which to investigate how textiles aided the legitimisation of the Guptas.

Looking at the idea of a coherent public (Smith, 2015: 6), it can be said that by taking a publicly liberal stance on religion and the patronage of non-Brahmanical monuments, the Gupta elites ensured that those of non-Brahmanical faiths were included in the ideas of the wider empire, whilst at the same time excluding the public from the mystified Vedic rituals, thus ensuring that they [Gupta Elites] were able to legitimise their authority through establishing these rituals as those of the sovereign. Furthermore, by mystifying the rituals they ensure an inherent link specifically to Brahmanical deities and the ruling class within the brahman populace; as well as compliance through leniency of the non-brahman populace. In turn, the figure of a sovereign and the sovereign establishment is created due to the elites supposedly being those who were privy to the Vedic rituals. Furthermore, the use of faith for their own personal goals allows the Gupta elites to use the religion as an apparatus for the formalisation of their government.

In terms of textile clothing, this was managed by seemingly associating their personal dress with both previously powerful dynasties and Vedic divinities to essentially emulate the power and prestige already associated with the textile clothing emulated. This observation is not entirely unique. It has been previously observed by many academics (Ayyar, 1987; Chandra, 1973; Alkazi, 1983 etc) that the Gupta elite copied the dress of the Kushan period on their coinage. However, this observation does not appear to have been fully extended to the emulation of divine dress in the period. In doing this, the aim of this chapter is to show that textile clothing achieved mass amounts of power as a material through association and whatever changes there are over time are to ensure that the elites are continued to be seen as inherently elite.

By associating themselves with the styles of the previous rulers or dressing like the divine, the Gupta elites entered themselves into a socio-political network in which they were beholden to the power that they granted, deliberately or not, to textile clothing. It appears that the association they gave themselves to certain forms of textile clothing, such as the wearing of what has been called a cylindrical *dhoti* for women (Section 3.4) becoming more popular as the GPF moved. It will inform how the textile clothing of the period will be discussed as it will be considered in the light that the Gupta elites were attempting to emulate or become the divinities that they worshipped.

In her paper, *Clothing as a Technology of Enchantment* (2017), Mohan discusses Gell's (1998) theory of the technology of enchantment in the realms of deity and devotee garments within the global Hindu group, Iskcon (The International Society for Krishna Consciousness) (Mohan, 2017: 225). Gell theorised that the transformative agency of artefacts and proposed that the term "enchantment" should be used to describe the dynamic network of intentionalities through which humans and artefactual agency are entangled (Mohan, 2017: 225; Gell, 1998: 6). Mohan goes on to state that "works of art are anthropologically like persons, forming a source of social agency and creating a distributed personhood" (Mohan, 2017: 225). Due to having personhood, artwork can cast a "spell" which Mohan asserts is the technology of enchantment and causes the real world to be seen in an enchanted form and there is acquiescence to social goals (Mohan, 2017: 225). This idea of 'personhood' harkens back to the discussion of Bennett's (2010: 5) tale of finding 'energetic vitality' in inert everyday objects from chapter 1. Here, the idea of *thing-power* appears to present itself in through the concept of the *murti*.

A *murti* serves as the central agent in the physical mediation between people and the divine, thus creating a social relationship between them (Mohan, 2017: 226) with the concept being traceable back to the *Upanishads* (part of the *Vedas*) which were composed in the 1st millennium BCE (Jacob, 1963: 750). By the time of the Guptas, the term *murti* had cemented itself to mean idols, image or statues in a variety of Sanskrit texts, including the *Bhavishya Purana* (132.5.7) and *Brihat Samhita* (1.8.29) (Acharya, 1927: 426). It can be argued that due to how *murtis* are granted this personhood due to the belief that the image is a physical connector between the worshipper and their deities that ‘human-being thinghood’ (Bennett, 2004: 349) overlap.

To understand this overlap and the creation of this social relationship, Mohan (2017: 226) uses Gell’s (1998) proposition that a combination of external and internal agency must be used (Mohan, 2017: 226). External agency is found through praxis, such as acts of feeding, bathing, and dressing with internal agency being induced by the belief that the deity possesses a mind and has intentionality (Mohan, 2017: 226). This suggests that in relation to Gupta textile clothing, and the supposed link between the Gupta and divinity, there is an intentionality in the delivery of the dress. Through the supposed link between the elite and the divine and using Darshini’s (2006) three-tier system of power, the Gupta elite were imitating the dress of the divine, or dressing the divine like them, thus indicating direct correlation between the textile clothing of the elite and their deities, suggesting that the population should associate them with the divine. This chapter supposes through the use of this perceived link that the Gupta elite intentionally dressed like the divine or the divine like them to secure their power position and control the wider population. Not only this, but the indication that they also dressed similarly to previous rulers shows that there was a need by the Gupta Political Formation’s rulers to display themselves in a continual position of power.

Furthermore, textiles are arguably influential due to the value ascribed to them. Value as a theoretical concept has three main veins: instrumental value, intrinsic value and extrinsic value (Ronnow-Rasmussen, 2011: 1). Ronnow-Rasmussen (2011: 2) states that, in the nineteenth century, values were organized into more or less important sets of subject matter; that is, they were ranked and placed along one scale or another. One instance of this is that higher values would be those which play, or ought to play, an important role in our lives, as opposed to those considered to be of lower value (Ronnow-Rasmussen, 2011: 2). Ronnow-Rasmussen states that the history of distinction between something’s value as a means to something, which is commonly referred to as “instrumental value”, and

something's being valuable for its own sake is impressive (Ronnow-Rasmussen, 2011: 2-3). Intrinsic value is something being valuable for the properties it has in itself (Ronnow-Rasmussen, 2011: 3). According to Ronnow-Rasmussen (2011):

To value something in virtue of its internal properties is to value it for its own sake and, vice versa, to value something intrinsically is to value it for its own sake, and not, say, for the sake of its consequences

The above quote suggests that intrinsic value is specifically for the simple fact that the item itself holds importance in society irrespective of if that item has consequences. Opposite to this, extrinsic value is where the item is only valuable in relation to properties to be considered as "valuable in itself" (Ronnow-Rasmussen, 2011: 5). Ronnow-Rasmussen (2011) states that "once things are able to carry extrinsic final value, i.e. be valuable for their own sake in virtue of at least some relational property that is not internal to the value bearer, matters become much more complicated".

Focusing specifically on the latter two forms, it can be argued that textile clothing has a natural intrinsic value, being needed for covering the body, warmth, weather resistance, as is dictated by the psychological level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Lambert *et al*, 2014: 39). The specific material of the textile clothing is arguably what has extrinsic value, i.e. the fine silks and muslins that the Gupta elites often wore became extremely valuable in relation to the exclusivity perpetuated by the wearing of these materials by the elites.

Additionally, Mohan (2017) discusses the concept of the 'gaze-glaze' through the idea of *darshan* (auspicious sight of a deity) (Flood, 2011: 194). Mohan (2017) poses the consideration that deific clothing can, through a combination of the ritual of *darshan* and the fabrication of deific garments (or textile clothing) working together as an assemblage to enchant and transfix the devotee, reinforce the belief in the sacred (Mohan, 2017: 226). Relating back to Darshini's (2006) first tier of power, the mystification of the Vedic rituals by the Gupta elite locks off the direct accessibility to the wider population the link between the gaze-glaze in immediate correlation to the divine. It instead causes an association between status and luminosity, causing the lower echelons of society to attribute desirable textile clothing with the upper echelons, increasing textile clothing's perceived power over religion, culture, status and class.

Discussing the link between deity and bridal textile clothing, Mohan states that although seemingly dissimilar, the shine of the bridal dress and the brilliance of the deific garments are directly associated through the manipulation of the gaze-glaze found within Hindu (Brahmanical) cosmology, creating effects and meaning to emphasise the difference of more and less sacred, the public and the private (Mohan, 2017: 226). Textile material has extrinsic value due to its use as a symbol of status but, here, textiles arguably gain a new level of intrinsic value as it fulfils an innate spiritual need amongst worshippers. Furthermore, due to the mystification of the Vedic practices, the Gupta ruling class caused a direct correlation between themselves and the divine, allowing for a wider societal belief that the ruling class could not be supplanted due to their more deific association. This gives the textile clothing involved in this network and social context an extraordinary amount of power on the grounds of clothing symbolising power and status. This is not only seen in relation to the divine, but in the wearing of the textile clothing similar to rulers of previous established empires, such as the Kushan.

3.2.2: Identification of Articles of Clothing

The methodology for the identification of textile clothing will use iconographic analysis as well as studying the diachronic differences between the Pre-Gupta and Gupta periods. Textile clothing will be examined through the visual identification of clothing articles (see table 1 for the clothing details). By using a combination of pre-existing works, such as Ayyar (1987) and Srivastava & Srivastava (2014) as well as literary evidence, I will use descriptions of clothing from traditional India texts, including the *Rigveda*, to create a base model for the identification of individual garments (Table 5).

By identifying individual garments, stylistic changes across a wide diachronic period (500BCE- 500CE) can be identified and investigated within the context they are found. Additionally, the wider cultural context of these changes contributes to the theoretical framework posed above that combines Darshini's (2006) power system and Mohan's (2017) theory of the *murti* and *darshan* to give the appearance of deification and association of previous dynasties by the Guptas through dress. These differences are similar to a previous finding by Alexandra Croom (2010: 12) wherein she found that the artistic record was misleading in some instances. The toga was an item where everyday use was in decline in urban settings in the 2nd century CE according to literary sources but was still actively depicted in artistic contexts, specifically in association with formal ceremonial occasions, until the 4th century CE despite wider social changes. This particular issue is highlighted in Gupta era iconography through the continued wearing of Vedic clothing

despite again wider changes in the populace's, specifically the upper caste, dress style. It has been suggested that the continued wearing of Vedic style dress by the Gupta royalty shows that through the reinstatement and mystification of Vedic ritual practices, Gupta royalty also aimed to associate themselves with the iconographic depiction of the deities themselves through dress.

To ensure that a full picture of Gupta era iconographic depictions of dress is achieved, the decision was made to investigate clothing diachronically across a time period of 500BCE – 500CE. This decision to investigate clothing diachronically was made to ensure that stylistic similarities and differences between pre-Gupta and Gupta era dress can be compared and contrasted against earlier periods to investigate if there are any patterns or uniquely Gupta styles of depiction.

Overall, the methodology of this chapter will combine iconographic and literary approaches with the ideas of new materialism, more specifically entanglement to understand how the Gupta Ruling Elite used textile clothing as a political tool and investigate how this affected the inner workings of the larger political formation.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
Dhoti	Rectangular piece of unstitched cloth, typically 4.5m (15ft) long, wrapped around the waist and legs, knotted between the legs. There are different styles for the <i>dhoti</i> (see table 2). Worn by both men and women
Antariya	Lower garment that is a long white or colour strip of cloth passed through the legs, tucked in at the back, covering the legs loosely and flowing into long pleats at the front of the legs. Usually made from cotton or silk. The <i>dhoti</i> evolved from this. Worn by both men and women
Uttariya	Scarf like piece of cloth. Similar to a shawl. Descends from the back of the neck to curl around both arms and can be used to drape top half of the body. Usually made of fine cotton or silk but occasionally leather. Is occasionally used to refer to the veil often worn by Hindu women to cover their hair. Worn by both men and women.
Ghaghra	Full ankle-length skirt (about 6ft long) with pleats and embroidery at the front. It is secured at the waist, leaving the lower back and midriff bare. Worn by women
Choli	Midriff-bearing blouse, traditionally worn with the <i>ghaghra</i> and <i>sari</i> . Worn by women
Kurpaska	No set definition but will be used to signify a bodice (Das,1980:150) Worn by women
Overcoat	Type of long coat worn as the outermost garment, usually extending below the knee. Worn by men
Tunic	Garment for the body, reaching from the shoulders to a length somewhere between the hips and knees. Worn by men
Fitted Trousers	Fitted trousers are those that are stitched to cling to the legs. Worn by men
Pyjama Trousers	Traditionally part of a jacket-trousers combination made of soft fabric. Extremely loose fitting and have no cuffs. Usually worn by men
Kayabandh	Embroidered flat cloth band – usually worn as a sash at the waist. Worn by men and women

Sari	A drape varying from 4.5 to 8m in length and 60 to 120cm in breadth. Typically wrapped around the waist with one end draped over the shoulder, bearing the midriff. Worn by women
Stanapatta	Breast Band from which the <i>choli</i> evolved. Worn by women
Boots	Footwear that covers the foot and ankle, occasionally rising to the knee. Usually worn by men

Table 5: Description of the Garments discussed in this chapter (Source: author)

3.2.3: Issues with Iconography

There are many issues that come with studying iconographic representations, such as paintings and statues, primarily who is represented. Often within iconography from the Gupta Empire, it is either the elite or divinities that are depicted, leading to no view of every-day life and a lack of the majority (Latour, 1992). These so-called “missing masses” (Latour, 1992) can be found through looking at the “non-humans”, that is an entity that displays some human characteristics but not enough to be considered human, that control this section of the population. Latour (1992) uses the example of an alarm sounding to describe how to the “hidden and despised social masses” (Latour, 1992: 153) morality is dictated. In the case of textile clothing within the GPF, this control can be seen through the depictions of deities and elite individuals, who in turn influenced the perceived value of textile goods by ensuring that they were viewed as rare and desirable. Furthermore, under the Guptas, morality appears to have become codified within Hindu law books, such as the *Smritis*, and texts, including the Mahābhārata, Ramayana and Kamasutra (González-Reimann, 2002). This will be further explored in the section of the chapter on clothing within the Gupta Homelands.

As well as social significance, the economic significance of textile clothing can be seen through things such as the creation of weavers’ guilds and trade relationships with Rome and China. By being both a major economic and social commodity, textile clothing was seemingly given the ability to denote the positions of individuals within society. This is seen through the adoption of socio-economic factors into what we know as the caste system, which gave what can be considered as moral guidelines to the lives of individuals out-with the elite of the Gupta Political Formation. The caste system was a hierarchal system that ensured the promotion of Brahmanical supremacy with the social structure being run on the basis of occupational hegemony and notions of purity (Blunt, 2010). The

caste system is discussed properly in the first chapter of this thesis but here it is important to understand the influence that the caste system had on the way that people dressed. The caste system did not restrict dress in a social manner, but it did ensure that individuals could not rise above their caste and, because of this, textile clothing of higher value, such as desirable Chinese silks, fine muslins and cottons, were unaffordable.

The influence given to textile clothing as an item of value and revealing of social identity lends itself greatly to the notion that it was a “powerful material”. It would have been able to influence the growth of the Gupta Political Formation in multiple ways, mainly economically, socially and politically, through the enforcing and reinforcing of hierarchy. In this chapter I will be discussing how, through the creation of networks of dependency, textile clothing was given a form of “power”, either intentionally or unintentionally, that allowed it to help shape the ways in which the GPF moved over the course of its life-history.

3.3: Chronological Overview

In this chapter, a chronology ranging from c.500BCE - 500CE is discussed in relation to the iconographic representation of textile clothing in various periods and dynasties and relating this back to the GPF. In this section, I will give an overview to the period and briefly explain the relationship between each period and the Guptas, with dynasties and periods of greater interest being discussed in more detail later on in this chapter. The need for such a wide chronological overview of the clothing of India is due to the way in which the Gupta elites and their contemporaries seemingly model their dress on that of older and, arguably, more powerful empires than the Guptas. Through the use of this wide chronology, a diachronic pattern of dress can be identified with similarities and differences becoming more apparent. This will allow for a discussion on the intentions of the depictions of the Gupta elites and provide a basis for which to apply the framework devised in Chapter 2. The dynasties chosen have direct links to the GPF through either locational links or direct interaction with the Gupta dynasty.

The chronology is split into two major periods: 500BCE – 0 and 1-500CE. The first of these chronological periods includes dynasties such as the Shunga (~322-180BCE) and Satavahana (~100BCE-2nd century CE) with the second period including the Kushan (30 – 375CE) and the Naga (~early 3rd – mid-4th century). Splitting the chronology into two distinct periods allows for a more in-depth discussion on the stylistic similarities and differences between clothing found on iconography and for the establishment of the influence of textile clothing on the growth and shaping of the GPF.

3.3.1: The First Chronological Period (500BCE-0)

As previously stated, the first chronological period is from 500BCE – 0 and includes early dynasties such as the Sunga and Satavahana. Here, I will be discussing the significance of each group and the iconographic representation of clothing that will be used to compare and contrast Gupta era clothing. The clothing noted in this section can arguably be identified with the ‘traditional’ clothing of India, albeit in a variety of styles.

3.3.1.1: Clothing in Vedic Times and the Haryanka Dynasty

Beginning with the Haryanka dynasty (~544-413BCE), a statue of one of the kings of the period, Udayin (~460-444) (fig 7) (Singh, 2017: 21; Trived, 1954) is of particular interest due to its clear wearing of an *antariya* or a *dhoti* (lower garment), *uttariya* (scarf) and *Kayabandh* (sash).

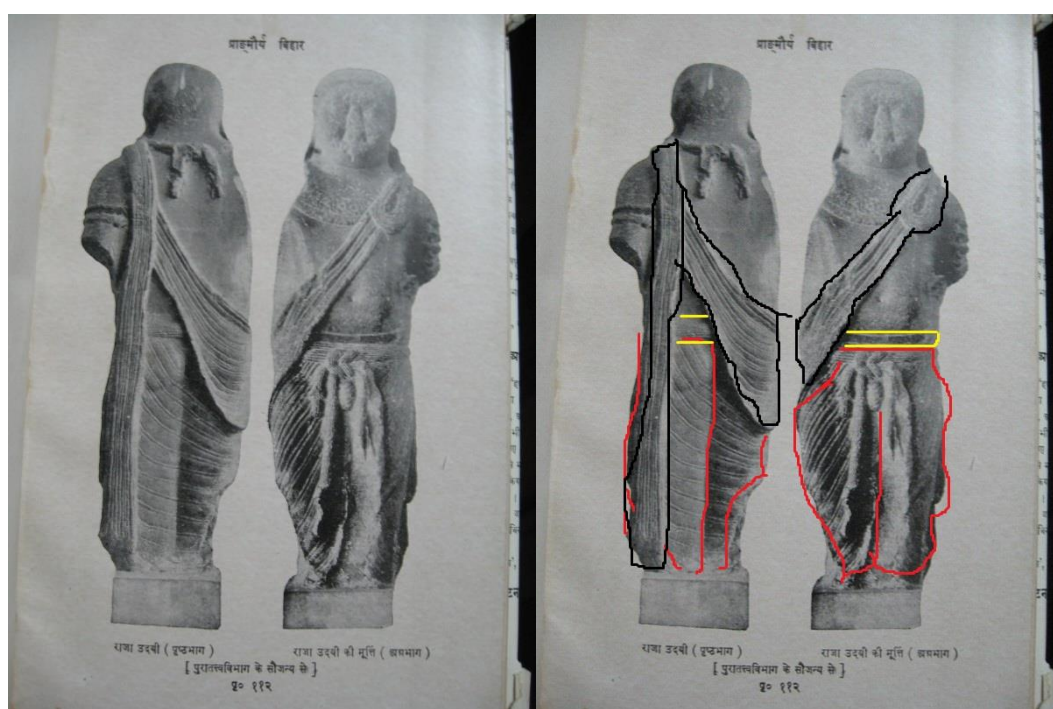


Figure 7: Male figure (Magadha King Udayin) from Pre-Mauryan Period (~460-444BCE) wearing an *antariya* or a *dhoti* (red), *uttariya* (black) and *kayabandh* (yellow) (Source: Trived, 1954)

The *dhoti* or *antariya* has been the most common lower garment found in India since Vedic times and was a sheet that was passed round the waist and fastened at the front (Ayyar, 1987: 30). Commonly but not uniquely worn by men, one of the ends of the *dhoti* would normally be gathered in pleats and tucked at the naval (Ayyar, 1987: 30, 35). On figure 7, the *dhoti* appears to reach the ankles of the figure and is tied at the front in the style detailed by Ayyar (1987: 30). The *dhoti* appears to have been a plain sheet of cotton with Megasthenes describes Hindus as ‘clothed in white cotton which was whiter than any other cotton’ (McCrindle, 2000: 219). Ayyar (1987: 30) states that although coloured

garments were also available and fashionable, high ranking men preferred white (*suklavastra*). In Hinduism, the colour ‘white’ symbolises peace and purity and during the Vedic period came to be associated with the Brahmins (Craft Revival Trust, 2010; Smith *et al*, 2012; Shokouhibidhendi *et al*, 2014: 20). Notably, although deities are often depicted wearing the colour white, such as the goddess Saravati (fig 8), they are never depicted wearing pure white as this is considered to be the colour of mourning and is often worn by widows, especially in northern India (Craft Revival Trust, 2010).



Figure 8: Painting of the Goddess Saravati by Raja Ravi Varma, 1896 (Maharaja Fateh Singh Museum)

Figure 8 also wears an *uttariya* (scarf), a single piece of cloth of considerable length that was used as an upper garment (Ayyar, 1987: 34). During the Shunga Period (discussed further down), men often took great interest in wearing the *uttariya* in fashionable styles (Ayyar, 1987: 34) with the most common being one end of the garment thrown over the left shoulder to the back side with the remaining length drawn to the right, where it is turned back and drawn across the back diagonally to the left shoulder with the end thrown over to the front (Ayyar, 1987: 34). In this style, both ends dangle on the left side, one on the front, one on the back (Ayyar, 1987: 34). In figure 8, the *uttariya* appears to be slung across the upper body over the left shoulder with majority of the fabric dangling down the left-hand side.

The final item the figure appears to be wearing is a *Kayabandh* (waistband), an ‘indispensable’ item of male attire (Ayyar, 1987: 37). The *Kayabandh* was used to hold up the *dhoti*, allowing for the item to be worn freely.

Like the Guptas, the Haryanka dynasty held their power in Magadha and were possibly the first dynasty to fortify the village of Pataliputra, turning it into their capital city (Sastri, 1988: 11; Thapar, 2003: 154). The city of Pataliputra became the capital for the Mauryan, Sunga and Gupta dynasties with Thapar (2003: 155) suggesting that the prominence of the city and the wider area of Magadha as a whole is due to its control of nodal points in the Ganges system, allowing access for river trade. Furthermore, Magadha’s abundance of natural resources: fertile soil, forests providing timber for building, elephants for the military and ivory, and local deposits of iron and copper, all adding to the wealth and activity in the area (Thapar, 2003: 155).

The dress seen on figure 7 is also seen on the Parkham Yaksa (3rd – 2nd BCE) of the Mauryan Period (fig 9) and wears a *dhoti* with an elaborate frill (Chandra, 1973: 17) hanging in front and held between the legs by a girdle tied in a knot at the pelvis. There is a scarf (*uttariya*) tied round the figure’s chest with a loop hanging down onto the figures stomach. There is little change here in the range of garments between the Haryanka Period and that of the Mauryan however the style of dress differs. Where figure 7 wears the *uttariya* as free flowing down the left-hand side, figure 9 appears to have theirs looped around the front of the neck and then tied around the base of the chest, the loop hanging on to the stomach. The *dhotis* also differ. The *dhoti* on figure 7 is detailed as pleated (most visible on the left-hand side of the figure) whereas figure 9 does not appear to have any pleating visible; however, this may be an artistic choice. Furthermore, the *dhoti* of figure 8 reaches down to the base of the figure whereas the *dhoti* of figure 9 appears to only reach the knees. Overall, the change in dress between figures 7 & 9 is mostly stylistic with the types of garments remaining the same between the Haryanka and Mauryan dynasties.

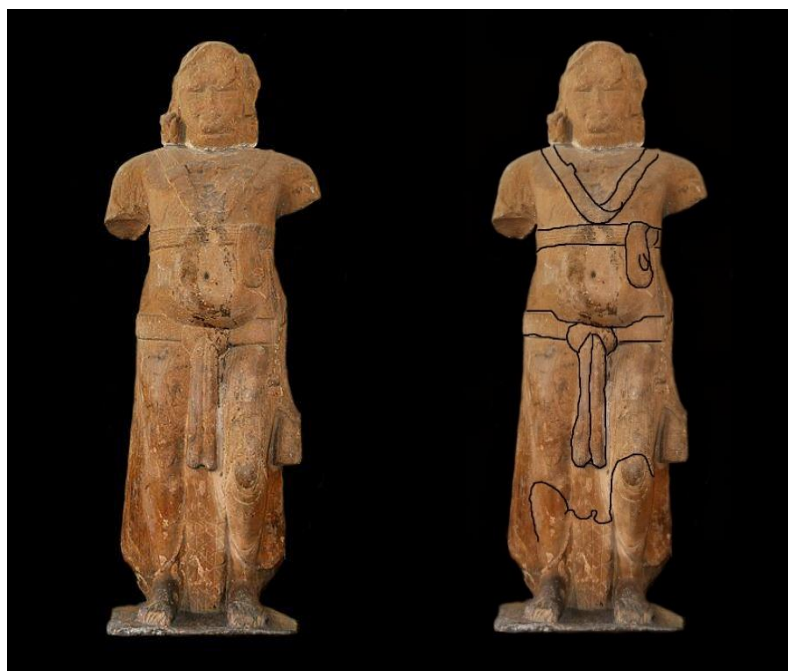


Figure 9: The Parkham Yaksha (3rd -2nd century BCE) from Mathura. The figure on the right has the *uttariya* and *dhoti* detailed in black. (Ganguly, 2013)

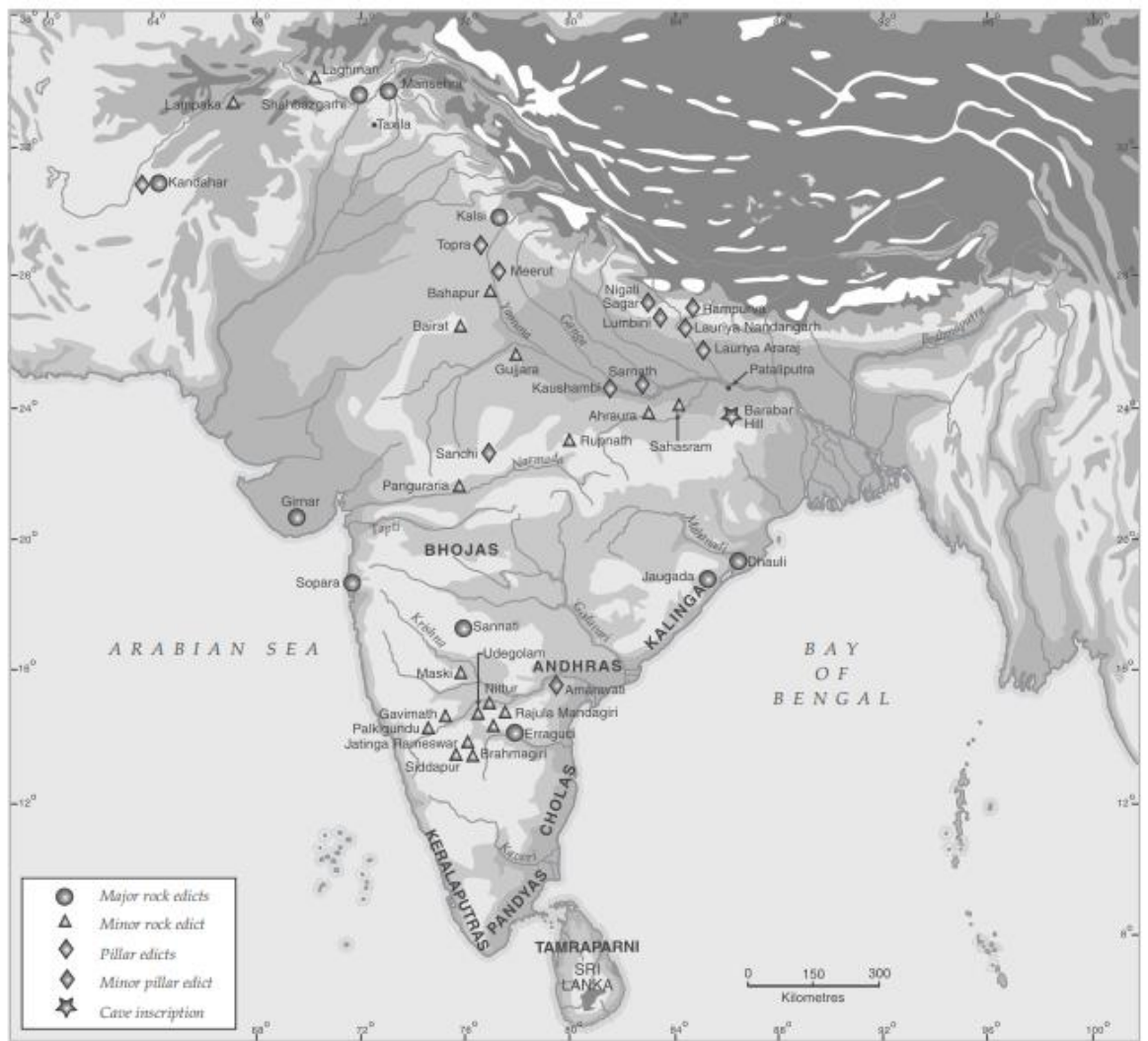
This figure of a Yaksha can be associated with the Mauryan period due to the inscription on the base of the figure being in Maurya Brahmi letters (Singh, 2008: 363). Before discussing the image further as it is essential to discuss the importance of Yaksas as deities, the Mauryan dynasty and their wider empire must be placed in context with the GPF.

3.3.1.2: Clothing of the Mauryan Empire (324-187BCE)

The Mauryan Empire (~324-187BCE) is the largest empire in the history of the Indian sub-continent with major sources for the period including Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Megasthenes' *Indica* and the inscriptions of Ashoka, including the Allahabad Pillar mentioned previously in Chapter 1 (Singh, 2008; 2017: 41). The Mauryas took over almost the entire sub-continent with focus being control by a single power (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 59-60; Thapar, 2003: 175; Singh, 2008; 2017: 40-41). The two most important emperors of the Mauryan dynasty are Chandragupta Maurya (~324/1-297BCE) and the Buddhist emperor Ashoka (~268-232BCE) (Singh, 2017: 40-41; Thapar, 2003: 175, 178; Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 61, 65). The first of these two, Chandragupta Maurya founded the dynasty through his apparent usurping of the throne of Magadha in 320BCE and spent much of his reign consolidating his hold on the army and administration of the empire (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 61). Furthermore, under Chandragupta Maurya, the *Arthashastra* was written.

Often attributed to Kautilya, the *Arthashastra*¹ provides a coherent picture of a centrally administered empire in which public life and economy are controlled by the ruler (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 63; Thapar, 2003: 184; Singh, 2017: 99). It is generally accepted that the text was written during Kautilya's lifetime (around 300BCE) but it is also accepted that parts of the text are later additions and revisions, with some being as late as the 3rd century CE under Vishnugupta (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 63; Thapar, 2003: 184-185). By revising the text, Vishnugupta indicates that it was still a part of the political consciousness even in the time of the Guptas, over 800 years later. This, along with the inclusion of Gupta epigraphs on Ashokan edicts and pillars, gives an indication that the Gupta's wished to be viewed in the same light as the powerful predecessors. Furthermore, by choosing to inscribe on the edicts of Ashoka, the Guptas have aligned themselves alongside an individual of a non-Brahmanical faith (Buddhism) in an extremely public fashion as many of Ashoka's edicts can be found in or near major settlements (Map 2).

¹ For an in-depth discussion of the contents of the *Arthashastra*, Singh, 2017: 96-129 is a robust starting point



Map 2: Ashokan Edicts (Source: Singh, 2017: 43)

Additionally, Ashoka is frequently known in his edicts by his epithets *devanampiya* (Dear to the gods) and *piyadasa* (He who looks affectionately or amiably) indicating his favour with the gods; a trait also found in the inscriptions and artwork of the Gupta period.

When looking at the expansionist nature of Ashoka's early reign and then the economic success after his conversion to Buddhism, it is not surprising that the Gupta's wished to associate themselves with the successful nature of the Mauryan Empire. Further to this, by specifically choosing the Ashokan edicts, the Gupta's feed further into Smith's (2015: 6) pre-existing for political sovereignty (fig 6). Through choosing the Ashokan edicts, the Gupta's ensured that they have included the Buddhist population within their political sphere, beginning to create a coherent public, and furthermore, chose a pre-existing apparatus of formalising government that was already known by local populations. This pre-existing apparatus feeds into the creation of total sovereign establishment as it appears to have been a widely known and accepted form of formalising government. Further to

this, the actions here perfectly reflect Darshini's (2006) three-tier power system (Table 3) by legitimising their authority and taking a publicly liberal stance on religion. These actions, alongside their actions at Udayagiri (section 3.5.2) and their iconographic representations on coinage, helped ensure that the Gupta's were seen as the rightful authority over the north of the Indian sub-continent.

Returning to the Parkham Yaksa (fig 9), it is important to understand what the figure represents. The *Yaksas* are deities connected with water, fertility, trees, the forest and the wilderness with *Yakshis* being their benign female counterparts connected with fertility (Singh, 2008: 362). Many *Yaksa* images have been found in the Mathura area with the most celebrated one of these being the colossal grey sandstone figure (2.95m) known as the Parkham Yaksa. As previously mentioned, this figure is associated with the Mauryan period due to the inscription written in Maurya Brahmi script (Singh, 2008: 363). The inscription states that the image was made by Gomitaka, a pupil of Kunika and that it was set up by eight brothers who were members of the Manibhadra *puga* (Congregation) (Singh, 2008: 264). Singh (2008: 264) states that this inscription indicates that this is an image of the *Yaksa* Manibhadra who is mentioned in various texts and inscriptions as a tutelary deity of merchants and travellers and was especially worshipped in important trading centres.

A plaque with a *Yakshi* or a mother goddess from around this same period (200-101BCE) found at Tamluk (West Bengal) (Ashmolean Museum, 2013) displays what has been argued as the female traditional dress of the Indian sub-continent (fig 10). Figure 10, known as the 'Oxford Plaque', is one of the best-preserved examples of Indian terracotta plaques found at many sites across northern India (Ashmolean, 2013). The Ashmolean Museum (2013), where the plaque is displayed, states that female figures are distinguished by certain common features of dress: a huge bi- or tri-cornate headdress, the large bolster-like earrings and the massive tubular bracelets. Interestingly, the museum has not made any attempt to identify the textile clothing that the figure is dressed in. The figure appears to be wearing a *sari* covered in a variety of details including a breast band (*Stanapatta*) and a belt.



Figure 10: Plaque with Yaksini draped in a sari, 200-100BCE. On the right, the sari is indicated in pink. It is covered in various details including a breast band and belt around the waist. (Source: Ashmolean Museum, 2013: <http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/object/EAX.201>)

The *sari* itself evolved from a three-piece ensemble of the *Antariya* (lower garment), *Uttariya* (scarf or veil worn over the shoulder or head) and the *Stanapatta* (chest band) or *Kurpaska* (bodice) (Ayyar, 1987: 89). The ensemble is mentioned in Sanskrit and Buddhist Pali literature during the 6th century BCE (Mohapatra, 1992: 35; Srivastava & Srivastava, 2014: 3). The *sari* is a long stretch of cloth around 6 to 9 yards in length and is to be draped on the body in a specific manner (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2014: 3). Srivastava & Srivastava (2014: 3) states that though many of the initial styles were basic, they were later altered on a regional basis but the most common manner of draping the *sari* was wrapping one end of the cloth around the waist and throwing the other end over the shoulder, covering the bust area. The *Stanapatta* (chest band) evolved into a *choli* (blouse) with sleeves and a neck (Srivastava, 2014: 3). Srivastava & Srivastava (2014: 3) identifies another piece of clothing similar to the *sari*, the *dupatta*, which is the smaller version of the *sari*. Like the *dhoti*, the *sari* and its associated items remained as a staple of female dress throughout the history of the sub-continent with the distinction being found in the style that piece is worn in.

Thapar (2002: 268-269) has suggested that the figures of the *Yaksa* and *Yakshi* encouraged an increase in the worship of images with donations of these images being becoming increasingly common amongst religious sects. However, at the turn of the century in

Mathura, the colossal images of the *Yaksa* began to disappear but smaller statues have been found in large numbers, showing that they were still important objects of worship (Singh, 2008).

The iconographic representation of the clothing as mentioned above consists of a *dhoti* and an *uttariya* tied round the chest with a loop hanging down onto the figures stomach. This style of textile clothing and mode of dress appears to persist into the Shunga Period, with the bas-reliefs at Bharhut.

3.3.1.3: Clothing of the Shunga Dynasty (185-75BCE)

The Shunga dynasty (~185BCE-75BCE) were the final offshoot of the collapsed Mauryan Empire, ruling the north-east of India and placed their capital at Pataliputra (Map 3) (Thapar, 2002: 110; Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 73; Singh, 2017: 16). The founder of the dynasty, Pushyamitra Shunga, performed the *Ashvamedha* ritual (previously discussed in chapter 1) to ensure his dominion over the former Mauryan Empire (Singh, 2017: 95; Thapar, 2002: 110). Supposedly, Pushyamitra Shunga's rise to power came in the form of a coup against the failing Mauryan dynasty and is said to mark a Brahmin reaction to Buddhism (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 73; Thapar, 2002: 110; Singh, 2017: 95). Furthermore, the *Ashvamedha* sacrifice was banned under the rule of the emperor Ashoka, and by choosing to perform this particular sacrifice alongside legends of his persecution of Buddhist monks, Pushyamitra Shunga perhaps reflected a wider Brahmanical reaction against the Maurya's patronage of both Jainism and Buddhism (Singh, 2017: 95). As was previously discussed in chapter 1, the *Ashvamedha* was performed by Samudragupta after returning north to again restore the Vedic royal rituals and associate himself with traditional kingship.



Map 3: Dynasties of India and Central Asia, c.200BCE-300CE (Source: Singh, 2008)

A significant difference, however, between the Shunga and Gupta restorations of the Vedic rituals is that where the Shunga restoration was a reactionary move against persecution, the Gupta movement was to reinstate the importance of Vedic kingship in an attempt to legitimise their authority through the mystification of the Vedic rituals (Smith, 2015: 6; Darshini, 2006). Furthermore, the parallels that can be drawn here between the Gupta and the Shunga go beyond Vedic restoration. Although they began with persecuting Buddhist, a new Indian style of art emerged under the Shungas and their successors and the Buddhist *stupas* of Bharhut and Sanchi, particularly a new type of relief sculpture (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 86). Like the Guptas, it appears that the Shungas following Pushyamitra Shunga took a more liberal stance on religion, allowing for the growth and development of both art and literature.

The Bharhut sculptures are some of the earliest examples of Indian and Buddhist art and gives us a good picture of Indian dress and its mode of wearing from the period (Chandra,

1973: 18; Alkazi, 1983: 21-22). Taken from *Traditional Indian Costumes and Textiles* (Bhatnagar, 2004: 88), the below images show the difference in the ways that the *uttariya* and *antariya* were worn in the period before the Guptas. The first of these sketches shows the figure wearing an *uttariya* draped over their shoulders in an almost identical fashion to that of the above figure of the Parkham Yaksa (fig 9). This style, over both shoulders, does not appear to be worn in the Gupta Period or at the very least is not depicted in the Ajanta Caves (see the Ajanta Caves section for a fuller discussion).



Figure 11: The figure of wearing uttariya in Shunga Period (Source: Bhatnagar, 2004: 88)



Figure 12: Yavana from Bharhut, 2nd century BCE, Shunga Period (Source: Kumar, 2014)

The *uttariya* is worn across the back and looped over each arm, different to how it is worn by the previous two figures. This is not an over discernible difference but arguably, it could be the Shunga attempting to differentiate themselves from either what would be considered to be someone of a lower class than themselves (fig 11). In doing this, the Shunga ensured that they were seen as the dominant dynasty in the area previous to the Gupta elites. Furthermore, the wearing of the *uttariya* here differs from that of the previous two periods. Although more free-flowing like that of figure 9, the *uttariya* seen on both the sketch (fig 11) and figure 12 (detailed in black) falls over both shoulders as opposed to being pulled round or tied as in previous periods. The wearing of the *antariya* is in what is called the *kachha* style, that is the shorter end passed between the legs and tucked in at the back. The longer end is picked up by its long and short bordered edges and pleated and tucked in front like a fish-tail, in *macchavalka* style. The *macchavalka* style is not one that is seen in the Gupta period, however, the *kachha* style remained in vogue (Ayyar, 1983: 81). This style of *antariya* is different again from the previous two periods, with both its pleated details and fish-tail style.

It is not only the male dress that is different during this time period. Female dress, as seen on figure 13, also appears to differ from the previous period.



Figure 13: Plaque with Female Figure 1st century BCE c.100-1BCE (Ashmolean Museum, <http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/object/EA1999.47>)

Figure 13 appears less adorned than figure 10, lacking the elaborate headdress, earrings and bracelets. The jewellery (green) is much subtler on this figure and the figure also appears to be lacking a *sari*. Furthermore, figure 13 has an elaborate waistband (red) and the *dhoti* appears to be tied in the *macchavalka* (fish-tail) style identified on the male figure (12) of this same period. Figure 13 also appears to be lacking any discernible upper garments which is markedly different from figure 10 which is detailed wearing a *Stanapatta*. Figure 13 appears very similar to the figure of the Didarganj *Yaksi* found in the Bihar Museum (fig 14).



Figure 14: Didarganj Yaksi, Date debated (Bihar Museum)

Figure 13 and figure 14 both have a similar low waisted *dhoti* with an elaborate belt, subtle jewellery with markedly similar three-stack earrings and a distinct lack of upper garment.

There is a debate around the dating of the Didargani *yaksi* which J.N. Banerjea classifying the statue as Mauryan due to the type of lustre on the statue, placing it in the 1st century BCE or earlier (Singh and Mahajan, 2012). However, Nihar Rajan Ray suggests that the figure may well belong to the Mathura Yakshis of the 2nd century CE (Singh and Mahajan, 2012). Nevertheless, due to the figures regal bearing being similar to that of other Mauryan figures at the crown of monolithic capital columns, the figure is generally accepted as being from the Mauryan period (Singh and Mahajan, 2012). The similarity between the two figures suggests that figure 13 is most likely a *yaksi*.

The Shunga dynasty is the last pre-CE dynasty of textile significance for this chapter and brings us to the next section of this chapter: The Second Chronological Period.

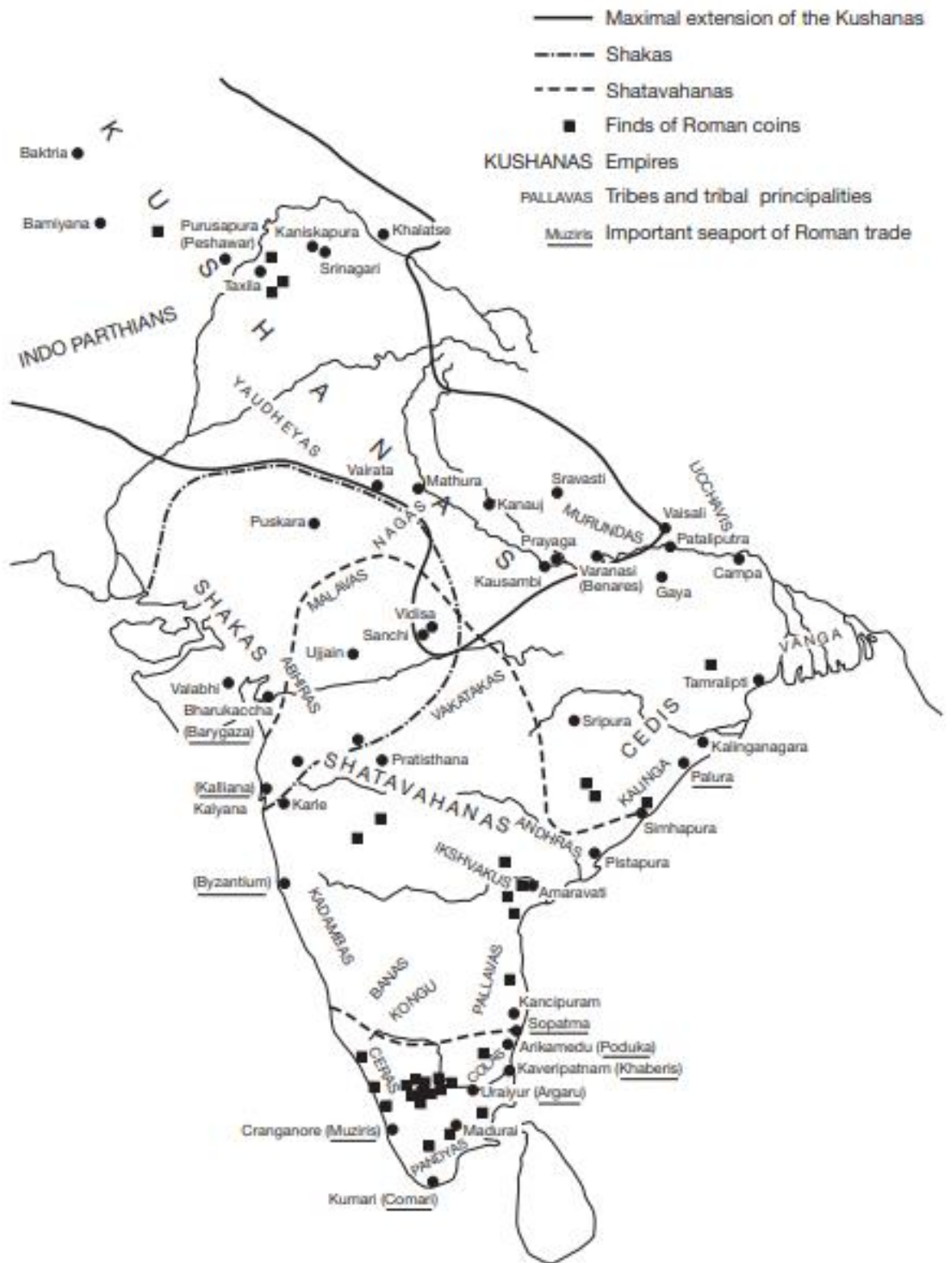
Before moving on, it is important to summarise what has been discussed in this section. There has been an identification of a recurring set of clothing for both male and female iconographic depictions. For males, it has been the *uttariya*, *dhoti* and *Kayabandh*. For females, it has been a *sari*, *dhoti*, and a *Kayabandh*. These items have therefore been described as the ‘traditional’ textile clothing of India. Furthermore, it has been identified that, whilst the textile items in question remain consistent, the style in which they are worn does not. Additionally, I have given brief summaries of the periods and their connections with the GPF. Each of these things will be further discussed in section 3.8, where they will be compared and contrasted against Gupta and Gupta era clothing to bring light to the question of textiles being a powerful material.

3.3.2: The Second Chronological Period (1-500CE)

As noted at the beginning of this section, the second chronological period will cover from 1 – 500CE but will not cover the dynasties that are being discussed in more detail later on in the chapter (sections 3.5, 6 & 7). Like the previous section, there will be a discussion regarding the stylistic changes in the iconographic depictions of clothing and clothing styles. Furthermore, there will be brief details relating the discussed dynasty with the Guptas.

3.3.2.1: Clothing of the Kushan Dynasty

Continuing on from the Shunga dynasty, the next dynasty being discussed is the Kushan (Map 4) (30-375CE). The Kushan Empire was a syncretic empire emerging from the Bactrian territories, an area that straddles modern-day Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Rawlinson, 2002; Leriche, 1998). The empire grew to encompass most of Afghanistan and then areas of north-western India, managing to reach as far as Mathura, and a small section of Nepal as is noted by the presence of artefacts and coinage (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 6, 79-80, 85; Singh, 2017: 96, 166; Thapar, 2003: 221). However, as is noted by Thapar (2003: 221), the presence of limited material culture does not necessarily indicate conquest of an area by the Kushan. Though it may not mean conquest, the presence of Kushan artefacts in an area indicates that there was at the very least a trade network linking the empire with the wider world.



Map 4: India c.0-300CE (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 84)

The Kushans appear to have been safe from Samudragupta's conquests in the north-west of India, Gandhara and Afghanistan however it appears that they had at least cordial diplomatic relations (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 89).

The Kushan dress was that of tailored tunic and stitched trousers for men (figure 15) (Ayyar, 1987: 171; Chandra, 1973: 46) and bodices and skirts (*ghaghra*) for women (figure 16) (Ayyar, 1987: 171).



Figure 15: Copper Coin detailing the Kushan King Kanishka (127-150CE) showing the figure in what appears to be coat, trousers and boots (Source: British Museum)



Figure 16: Kushan Copper coin showing the King Kanishka (on the left) and the Kushan Goddess Nana (right). Kanishka is dressed like the above figure with Nana appearing to be dressed in a sheer fabric that is similar to that found on the later Gupta coinage (Source: Coins India)



Figure 17: Kanishka statue from Mathura (c. 127–150 CE). The figure wears a long coat (green) and a tunic (black). It is however difficult to determine how far up the legs the boots or shoes go so the red outline for trousers and the yellow outline for shoes overlap (The Mathura Museum, 2020)

Figure 15 is a copper coin of the Kushan king Kanishka I (127-150CE) from India. This coin would have most likely originally been circulated northern and central India due to the location of the Kushan Empire however due to trade may have travelled. Unfortunately, a more succinct location cannot be discerned for the coin's origins as the British Museum (2020) only lists the coins place of production as 'India'. Looking at the coin, although extremely faded, what appears to be an overcoat (outlined in black), fitted trousers (outlined in red) and boots (outlined in yellow). This clothing was typical of the Kushan period and of Kanishka as evidenced by the famous statue of the king from Mathura (fig 17). According to the statue of Kanishka (figure 17), it can be noted that the king is wearing an embroidered calf-length tunic with braiding, a coat that was longer than the tunic (also braided), a belt that seems to be made of metal and a pair of boots that appear to be padded with straps around the ankles. It is very difficult on both the coin and statue to see how far up the leg the boots go.

Looking at the middle image, that is figure 16, the male figure on the left-hand image, identified as Kanishka, the iconography is significantly clearer than either figure 15 or 17. Using this image, the outer coat of the figure can be identified as a *chugha*, a men's overcoat commonly found in Central and South Asia (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2014: 5).



Figure 18: Close-up of the male figure from figure *

Outlined in black, the *chugha* is a cold weather coat that was often adorned with intricate threading and a variety of colours and patterns. The coat appears to be worn with fastenings in the centre with an open front (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2014: 5).

Looking at two of Gupta coins, a Chandragupta I and Samudragupta type, both gold (figs 19 & 20), there is a distinct similarity between the dress of the Gupta kings and the dress of the previous Kushan ruling elite.



Figure 19: Gold coin of Chandragupta I (~320-335CE) (archer type) depicting the King on the left in what appears to be a tunic, trousers, and boots combination with the goddess Lakshmi on the right. Lakshmi's outfit is much more difficult to make out on this coin (Source: CNG LLC.)



Figure 20: Gold Coin of Samudragupta (~335-350/375CE) depicting the king along with a queen figure on the left and the goddess Lakshmi on the right. The king is wearing similar dress to the previous Gupta coin with both the queen and Lakshmi wearing similar outfits to each other and the previous Lakshmi type (Source: CNG LLC.)

Bhatnagar (2004: 21) states that it is easy to trace the influences of specifically the male costume of the Gupta period as it came mainly through traders and invaders. Taking the same line as Chandra (1973) and Ayyar (1987), Bhatnagar (2004) also claims that the male dress of the Gupta period directly reflects that of the Kushan, giving the statement that this is due to the Gupta's realising the value of adopting the dress that had become associated with royalty (20). Looking at the two Gupta coins, the style of the tunics appears to indicate that they were made of a much finer material due to the way in which they are fitted into the body. Comparing the Gupta era tunics to the ones seen on the Kanishka coin and statue, the Gupta era ones appear to be much less bulky and, arguably, much shorter than the Kushan era representations. So, if the Guptas were imitating Kushan era textile clothing, it appears to only be in the stylistic sense as the materials, at least in the iconographic representation of the textile clothing appear to be different. This aspect of the iconographic representation of textile clothing will be discussed in further detail in the coinage section of this chapter. Nonetheless, it is apparent that this style, that is tunic, trousers and boots, appears to have been important enough within the Gupta elite to be represented on coinage that would have been widely distributed amongst the population of the political formation. Gupta coinage is discussed in more detail in section 3.4.

The Kushan dynasty is discussed further in the section on the Lichchavi dynasty of Nepal (section 3.7) however this will be in connection with the Pre-Gupta dress of Nepal as opposed to their relationship with the Guptas. The relationship between Gupta and Kushan iconography will be further discussed in the Comparisons section of this chapter (3.8).

3.3.2.2: Clothing of the Naga Dynasty

Before moving onto discussing the iconographic depictions of dress on Gupta coinage, the final dynasty to be discussed is the Nagas of Padmavati. The Naga dynasty ruled parts of north-central India during the 3rd and 4th centuries CE following the decline of the Kushan dynasty in those areas and before the rise of the Guptas. According to Puranic texts as well as numismatic evidence, the Nagas appear to have had their capital located at Padmavati in Madhya Pradesh and ruled at Vidisha, Kantipuri and Mathura (Sharma, 2001: 141; Singh, 2008). The Nagas were related to both the Vakataka dynasty and the Guptas through marriage with (Singh, 2008; Majumdar, 2016: 1, 2). The marriage with the Guptas appears to have taken place following Samudragupta's defeat of two Naga kings of Aryavatra, Nagadatta and Nagasena, as noted on the Allahabad Pillar (Sharma, 2001: 157). Sharma (2001: 157) states that there is no available information of who the first of the two kings is but the second, Nagasena is referred to in the *Harsha-Charita* which informs us that he was a Naga ruler of Padmavati. Chandragupta II married Kubernaga of Padmavati, a Naga princess, and from this marriage had Prabhavatigupta (Prabhat, 2015: 124). In the Poona copper plate inscriptions, Prabhavatigupta mentioned her mother Kubernaga as Nagakulasambhuta (born of the Naga family), indicating the close connection between not only the Guptas and the Nagas but the Nagas and the Vakatakas as Prabhavatigupta was regent Vakataka queen after losing her husband, Pravarsena I (Prabhat, 2015: 124).

The Nagas of Padmavati appear to have been of Brahmanical faith as is indicated by the existence of both Saivism (Siva worship) and Vaisnavism (Visnu worship) cults as well as several sects and subsects who were responsible for the erection of images including cult deities such as Skanda, Ganesa and Saptamtrka amongst others (Ayyar, 1987: 61).

The lower garments of males continue to be the same *antariya* as in the Shunga period however the trend of differing styles continues. Ayyar (1987: 62) notes that there is a general tendency towards simplicity for both male and female dress during the Naga period.

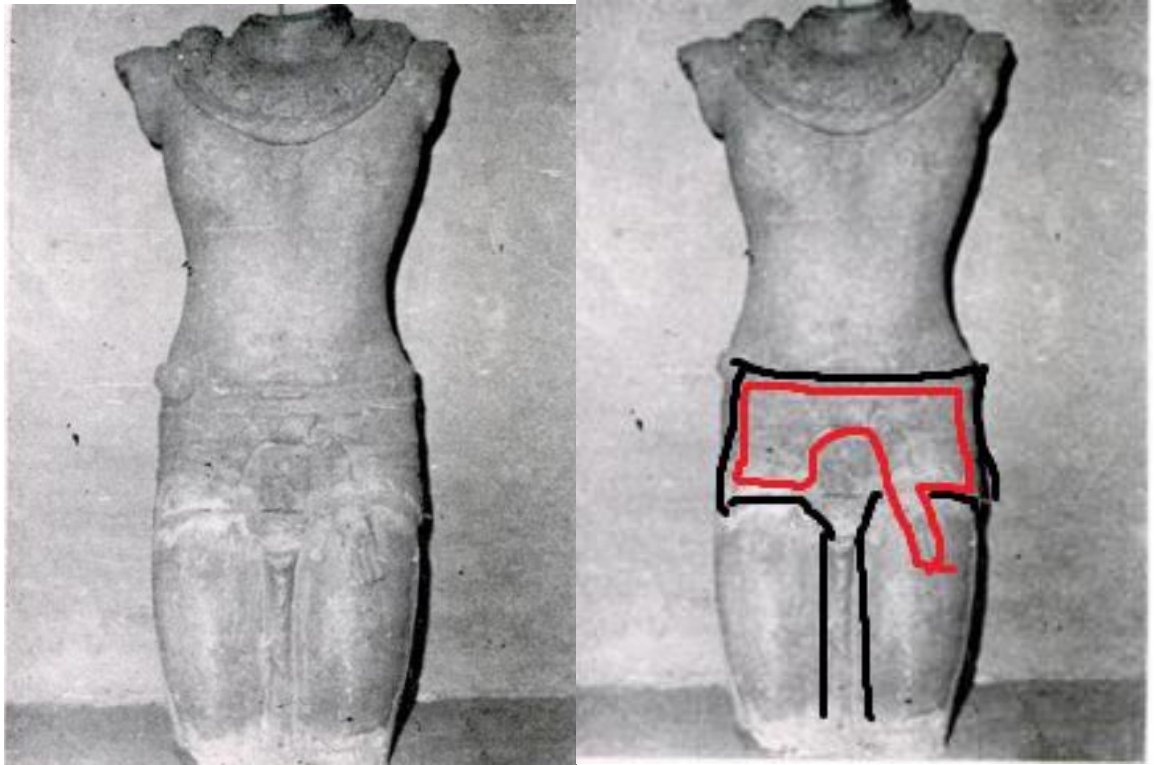


Figure 21: Torso (Perhaps a Bodhisattva) from Besnagar (Ayyar, 1987: Pl. VII.1)

Unlike Shunga era *dhotis*, the lower garment of the Naga, as seen in fig 21, consisted of a very narrow *dhoti* with very little excess after being tucked at the naval (Ayyar, 1987: 62).

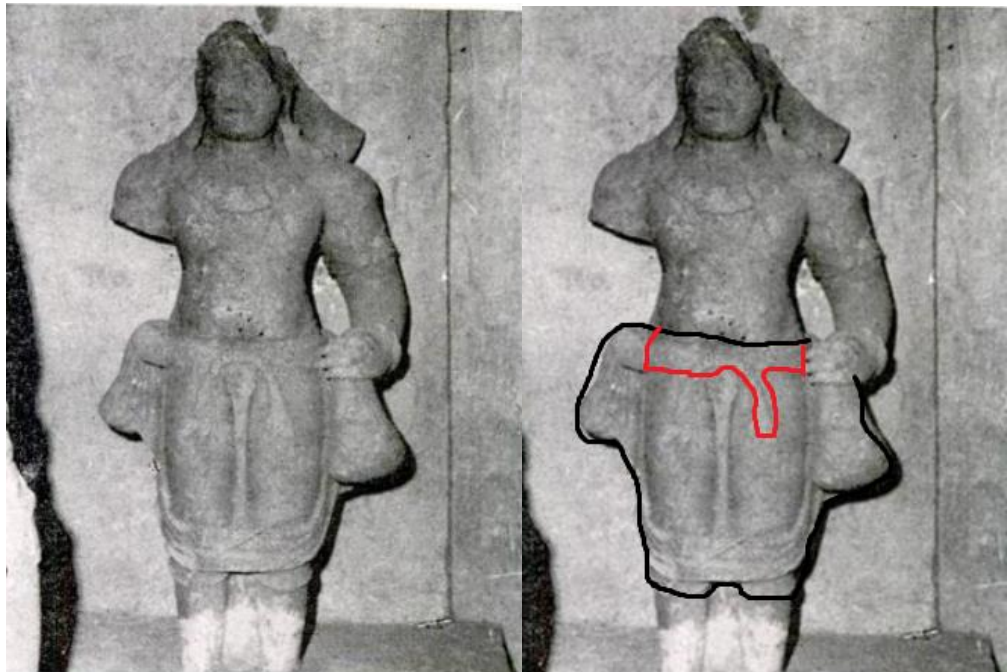


Figure 22: Kubera from Besnagar (Ayyar, 1987: Pl.VII.2)

The elaborate pleating seen on fig 12 is now absent with these figures having extremely narrow *dhotis* with little to no excess. Further to this, the lower garments of the Naga period appear to only reach the knees with the figures of this period being depicted with

extremely close-fitting *dhotis* clutching to the body revealing the contours of the thighs and legs (Ayyar, 1987: 62). The *Amarakosa* mentions four kinds of cloth this garment was made with during the period: *valkala* (bark), *phala* (flax), *Kauseya* (silk) and *rankaya* (a kind of wool) (Ayyar, 1987: 62). Ayyar (1987: 62) notes that there was a tendency amongst men in this period to wear clothes of a finer material, like thin cotton or silk for their lower garments, which may explain the artistic choice to depict the lower garments clinging to the body in such a manner.

Like previous periods, the lower garments were held in place by a *Kayabandh* however the richly decorated waistbands of the Shunga period were no longer fashionable with a much simpler, narrow belt being popular (Ayyar, 1987: 63). The *uttariya* also appears to have been altered in its usage, with some men taking a fancy to wearing it around their thighs (fig 23).

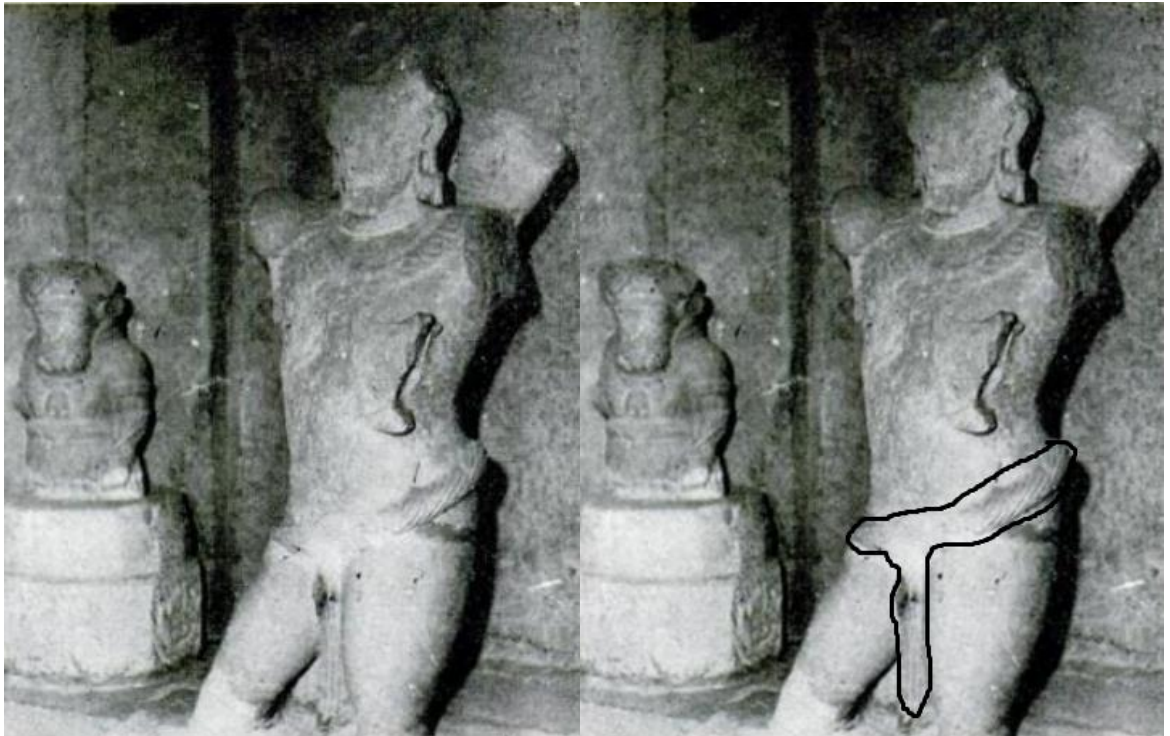


Figure 23: Nagaraja of Pawaya (Ayyar, 1987: Pl. VIII.1)

This fashion gained much popularity during the Gupta period, with many male figures showing their scarves tied round their thighs (Ayyar, 1987: 64). Notably, none of the male figures from the Naga period appear to have any other form of upper garment (Ayyar, 1987: 64).

The female dress of the Naga period was again much less bulky than the Shunga period but was notably much longer, reaching the ankles (fig 24) (Ayyar, 1987: 64). This allowed for a wider scope of fanciful styles without the excess fabric found in the early period.

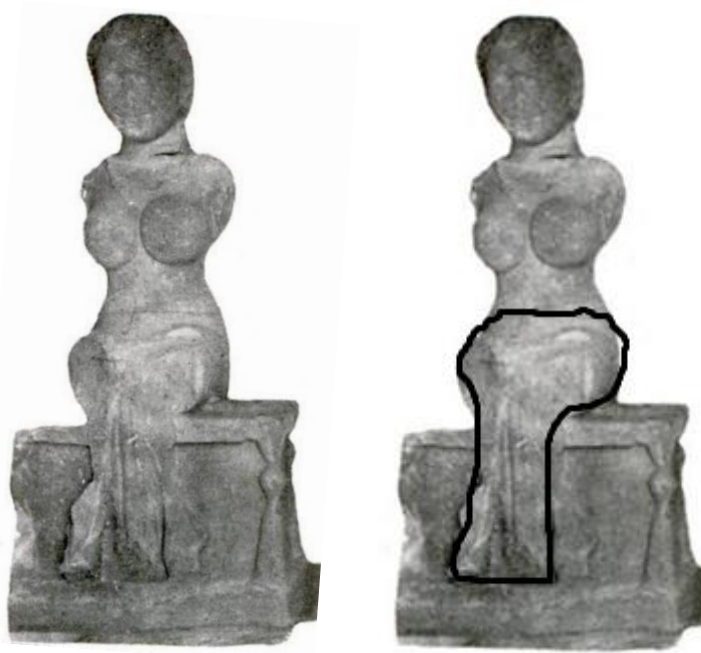


Figure 24: A figure of a Matrakas (Ayyar, 1987: pl.IX.2)

Women also favoured much finer garments which fitted closely to the body and revealed the contour of the thighs and legs (Ayyar, 1987: 64).

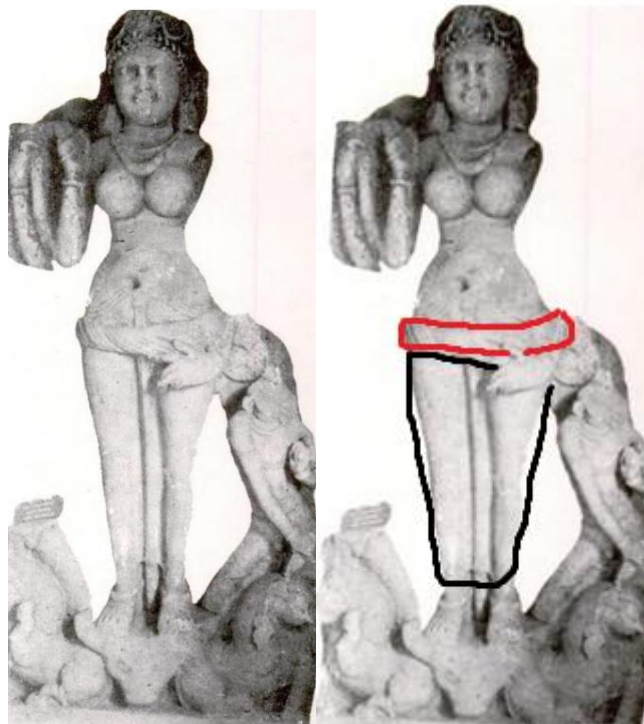


Figure 25: Figure of Mashisamardani from Telin (Ayyar, 1987: Pl.X.2)

The surplus of fabric on fig 25 is dealt with strangely: it is twisted like a rope and then tied around the waist, creating a thick roll (red) (Ayyar, 1987: 65). This style was not uncommon as the female worshippers of a Bodhi tree at Sanchi are dressed in a similar style (Ayyar, 1987: 65).

On some female figures of the period, the *uttariya* is worn tossed over both shoulders in a manner that covers the breasts and leaves the hands free (fig 26).

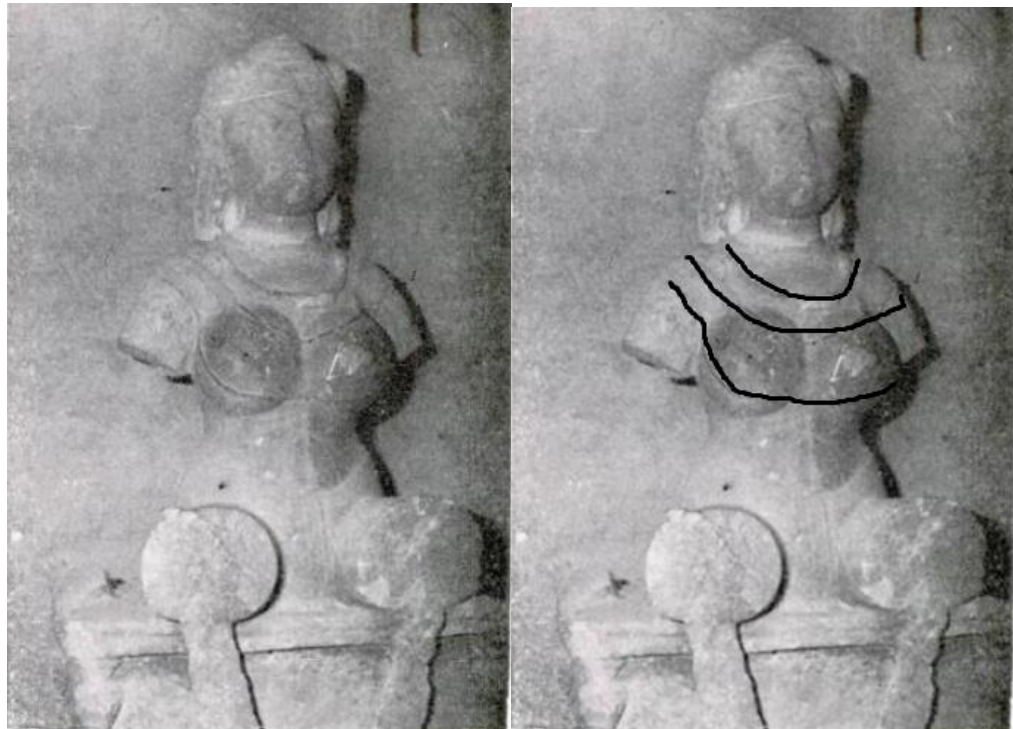


Figure 26: *Matrka Maheswari* (Ayyar, 1987 : Pl.IX.1)

There is also a distinct lack of a *Kayabandh* on any of the female figures of the Naga period, indicating that they perhaps dispensed of it entirely since their *dhotis* were so closely fitted to their bodies that a simple girdle would have been sufficient to hold the garment in place (Ayyar, 1987: 65).

In this second part of the Chronological overview (1-500CE), there has been a discussion on periods and parallel to the Guptas. Here, there has been discussion of a completely different set of clothing items for men from in the first chronological period (500BCE-0); a coat, trousers, and boots, whereas dress for women has remained largely the same with only stylistic differences being vastly significant. The importance of creating a chronological overview for this chapter is to allow for a more diachronic investigation of the clothing of the Indian sub-continent so to be able to investigate how the Guptas' employed textiles to help further ensure their positions as rulers and how this contributed to the growth and shaping of the GPF.

3.4: The Coinage of the Gupta Political Formation

The coinage of the Gupta Political Formation emulated the style of previous political formations, such as the Kushan and the Saka dynasties, whom the Gupta emulated by specifically wearing stitched clothing (Ayyar, 1987: 171; Chandra, 1973: 46). The value of the iconographic representations of textile clothing on coinage goes further than the intrinsic and extrinsic value that textile clothing itself holds and branches into the value of the coinage itself. The gold coinage appears to often depict the king and, occasionally, queen on the coinage with the king in a tunic, stitched trousers and boots and the queen in the more traditional garb of the *sari*. At the opposite end of the coin scale, there is the copper coinage that often depicts just the king in what seems to be the traditional garb of a *dhoti* and *uttariya*. The coinage of the Gupta period emulated that of earlier periods, specifically the Kushan of Northern India and Afghanistan (Ayyar, 1987: 171; Chandra, 1973: 46). In this section, 23 gold coins and 9 copper coins are being discussed, an admittedly limited discussion. The reason for the limited number of coins is to give an overview of the general stylistic patterns that can be identified on the artwork of the coinage in as concise a manner as possible. The choice of gold and copper coinage is to show the distinct difference between the highest value coinage, which appears to have the most clothing, and the lowest value coinage, which appears to have the least clothing.

3.4.1: The Socio-Political context of Coinage

Coinage is the first case study discussed due to its immediate and far-reaching connection to the ideas of the central political doctrine. The importance of money goes beyond the economic power and value that is granted by its existence (Deville & Burns, 2003: 4). Money as a *medium of exchange* can not only refer to the *commodity money* (Anything that has intrinsic value which is generally accepted for payment or exchange) but the exchange of ideas. This idea exchange can arguably be found through the iconography seen on the coinage.

The iconography of coinage in imperial contexts is often for the upholding of the imperial project. This public image is created by an association between the iconography found on the coinage and the real-world individual through stylistic similarities. Often, the stylistic similarities between the individual and the iconography on the coinage can be found through clothing. This stylistic association arguably created the figure of a sovereign that would have been seen almost daily by the wider population, serving as a reminder of imperial doctrine. Furthermore, there is evidence for the stylistic copying of the coinage of

earlier empires. This copying perhaps made it easier to both formalise and legitimise the government.

The main currency of the Gupta era was the gold *dināra* with the term frequently being used in Gupta era inscriptions recording gifts made by kings for supporting various religious activities and land transactions (Kumar, 2017: 67). The Kushan also referred to their gold coins as *dināra* with Rapson (1905) suggesting that the term was derived from the *Denarius Aureus* of the Romans (Kumar, 2017: 67). The *Angvijja* (4th century CE) uses the terms *Dinaramasaka* and *Dinari* with the 2nd – 3rd century *Bakshali* manuscript referring to the *dināra* and its various forms as *dināra*, *dinaraka*, *di*, etc (Kumar, 2017: 67). The Sanchi stone inscription of Chandragupta II details the donation of 25 *dināra*, stating that the interest of these dinaras would be sufficient to feed five *bhikshus* (Buddhist Monk) and let a lamp burn at the Jewel House (Kumar, 2017: 67).

The gold dinaras issued by each of the successive Gupta kings had a variety of weights, not just from king to king but from coin to coin (Kumar, 2017: 67). The gold coins issued by the earliest Gupta kings, starting with Chandragupta I and Samudragupta were relatively high in gold purity (Kumar, 2017: 76). There is a solid belief amongst scholars that the value of Gupta currency continued to go down over time, implying that it was continually debased (Kumar, 2017: 67). Furthermore, there is no evidence from Gupta era inscriptions for the debased coinage being treated any differently from the high purity coinage (Kumar, 2017: 67). This indicates that it is possible that the Gupta viewed the value of the *dināra* was based on its implied value rather than an economic value based on either weight or gold purity.

There is evidence to show that the peoples of the Indian sub-continent, between 2nd and 7th century CE, due to the artistic nature of the coinage, viewed it as not only having a monetary function but used in a signatory like fashion, much akin to artwork.

Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2003) state that due to the fine details of the coinage, they are works of art rather than mere coins used for monetary transactions. The variety and number of gold coins of the period show the prosperity and the metallurgical skill that was involved in the manufacture of these coins (Balasubramanian and Mahajan 2003: 331-332). Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2003: 331) have noted that most Gupta gold coins carry an image of the goddess *Lakshmi* (goddess of wealth) on the reverse side of the coin (fig 27: a-d).



Figure 27: Four Coins of the Gupta. A: Chandragupta I, B: Samudragupta, C: Samudragupta with Queen, D: Chandragupta II. All four coins show Lakshmi on the right-hand image. (Source for all images: CNG LLC)

The inclusion of the goddess can be interpreted as a furthering of the Gupta elites' personal goals in relation to Darshini's (2006) power system. The adoption of Lakshmi was the goddess of wealth, fortune, and prosperity as well as the wife of Visnu (Pappu & Rao, 2004: 167; Parthasarathy, 1983: 91-2, 160-2) thus deepening the association between the Gupta elites and the deity. The association between the Guptas and Visnu is discussed

further in the Udayagiri Caves section but here it is important to note that the Guptas wish to be seen as the foremost devotee of the god. Furthermore, it can be argued that the idea of the *murti* (Mohan, 2017) can be seen here. Mohan (2017) does not detail what a *murti* is beyond that it is an idol, image or statue and so it is reasonable to assume that the depiction of the goddess of wealth upon gold coinage is an extension of this. Additionally, if coinage can be considered as a *murti*, then this is an example, alongside the great image of Varaha discussed in section 3.5.2, of the Gupta elites creating an almost deific portrait for themselves. As will be discussed in the next section, the Gupta queens found on the king-queen type gold coinage appear to be dressed in what can be argued as ‘traditional’ clothing as was identified in section 3.2. The image of Lakshmi also appears to be dressed in such a fashion and as was discussed in the theoretical framework of this chapter; the ‘gaze-glaze’ technology created through deific association grants the textile clothing worn by Lakshmi value and desirability and, through this, power.

Firstly, looking at the gold coinage, 21 out of the 23 gold coins selected had the Gupta king in a tunic, stitched trousers and boots, with the two anomalies having the king in just a *dhoti*. Out of these gold coins, four are from the reign of Chandragupta I (319-335CE), seven are from the reign of Samudragupta (335-380CE) and twelve are from the reign of Chandragupta II (380-415CE).

On the 21 coins that had the figure of the king completely clothed, four of them, four from Chandragupta I and one from Samudragupta, have both a king and queen depicted on them. On this coinage, the queen is shown, in both cases, wearing traditional garb of a *sari* and an *uttariya* in a similar manner to female figures of earlier periods, and even more similar to the figures of Lakshmi found on the back of most of the coinage.

Gupta iconography puts an emphasis on the term *subhaga* (fortunate) with both sexes being represented virtually nude but really draped with the covering material being extremely delicate and diaphanous (Ayyar, 1987: 89). This extremely delicate cloth is most likely either fine cotton or silk as in the *Sisupalavadha* it is noted that women would wear different *saris* throughout the year. For example, in the summer, women would wear a fine cotton *sari* and a saffron coloured *sari* and a *stanapatta* during the spring (Ayyar, 1987: 89). Female figures are often seen wearing *dhotis* where the ends “hang down in graceful and wavy curves between the two legs” (see figs. 28 & 29) (Ayyar, 1987: 89).

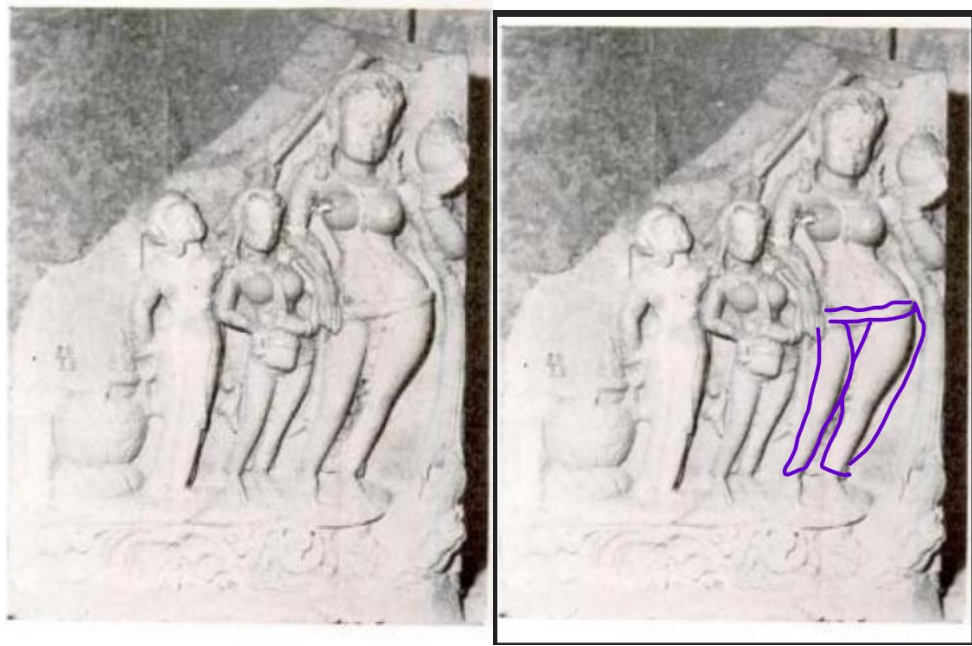


Figure 28: Ganga and her attendants from Simhavahini with Ganga wearing a cylindrical dhoti (Purple) (Source: Ayyar, 1989, plate XVI.4)

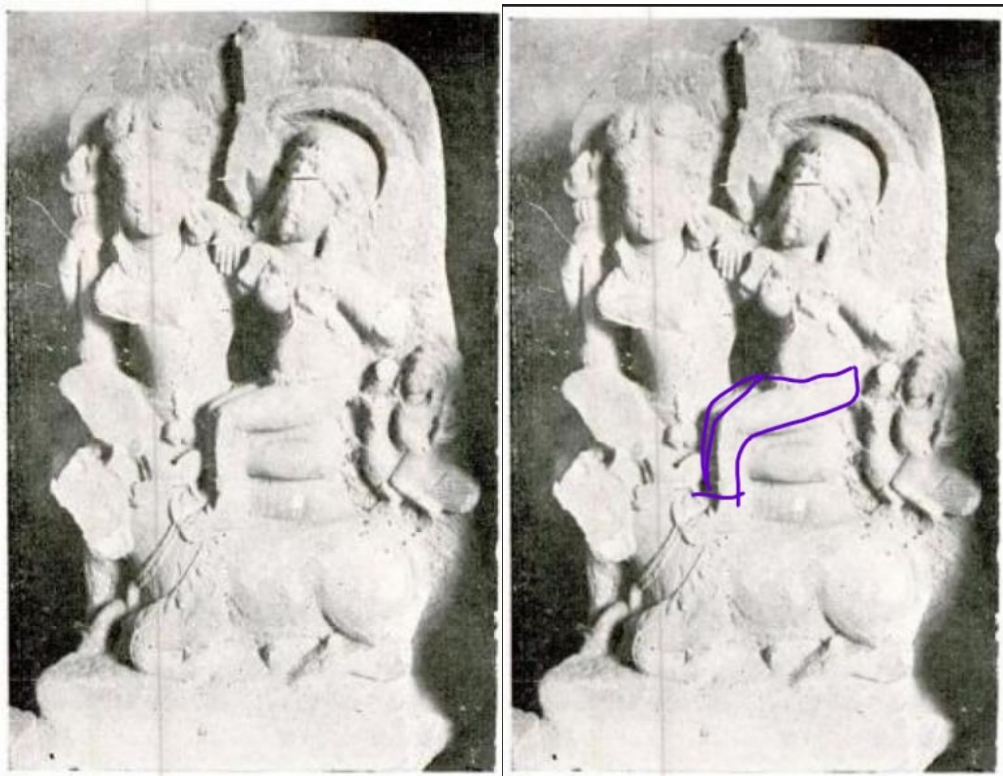


Figure 29: Parvati from Tumain wearing a cylindrical dhoti (Purple) (Source) Ayyar, 1987, plate XV.1)

Ayyar (1987: 89-90) states that this cylindrical-shaped *dhoti* was already “in vogue” within the Gangetic region with Chandragupta I’s wife, Kumaradevi wearing this in the earliest representation of the style (figs 30: A-D).



Figure 30: Four King-Queen Types from Chandragupta I with Kumaradevi stood to the left of the figure (Source: British Museum)



Figure 31: Samudragupta King-Queen Coin Type (Source: CNG LLC)



Figure 32: Closer View of the Lakshmi Coin that the Queens are similar to (Source: CNG LLC)

This style of *dhoti* differs from previous periods, such as the Naga period, as in the cylindrical shaped lower garment the front excess is made into lengthwise pleats, and unlike the Naga *dhoti* does not end in a fork (fig 24). Looking at how Kumaradevi is dressed on these coins and the images of Ganga, it can be argued that by dressing in such a manner, the Gupta queen is trying to evoke the goddess (figs. 31 & 32).

One of the biggest similarities that the queen has a halo at the back of her head identical to the one behind Lakshmi thus indicating that, before looking at the similarities in textile clothing, the Guptas possibly wished to be viewed as gods on earth. This halo is also visible behind the head of the king. Additionally, looking at the style of the textile clothing on the coins, all of the queen's garments appear to imitate the way in which Lakshmi's garb clings to her.

Here, an argument may be made that this is a form of 'gaze-glaze' (Mohan, 2017). If the coinage can be viewed as a *murti*, then the articles of clothing on the coinage must be able to be viewed in with the idea of Mohan's (2017) 'gaze-glaze'. The inclusion of a halo on the coinage may indicate a form of *darshan* (auspicious sight of the deity) through a monochromatic image. Furthermore, due to the association between a halo and light, the presence of the halo may create a form of luminosity without the presence of fabric, creating a deeper association between the depiction of the queen and the deities.

Another marker of the association between the Gupta elites and their desire to be seen as the highest devotees of Visnu, is the inclusion of Garuda, the *vahana* of Visnu (Balasubramanian and Mahajan 2003: 339). Looking at figure 33, the Garuda standard can be seen in the left field, just above the altar (Balasubramanian and Mahajan 2003: 339).

Although describing a gold coin of Samudragupta, Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2003: 339) description of the Garuda is apt here.



Figure 33: The image of Garuda (outlined in black) (CNG LLC 2020)

The depiction of Garuda has short wings hang down along his body, with the feet pointing sideways (Balasubramanian and Mahajan 2003: 339). The figure of the Garuda is not only found on the gold coinage of the period but also the copper.

The copper coinage has the Garuda on the reverse (figure 34) with the figure of the king on the obverse. Copper coinage will be further discussed later on in this section.



Figure 34: Copper coin of Chandragupta II with an image of Garuda on the reverse (right side) (British Museum, 2020)

Unlike this Vedic association, the male clothing on these coins is more akin to that of previous rulers, such as the Kushan and the Saka. As previously stated in the section on the Ajanta Caves, the King Sudasa is seen wearing a tunic, stitched trousers and boots into battle thus associating this form of dress with war.

Looking at the coinage, there appears to be the wearing of a finer tunic than that seen on earlier Kushan coinage (figure 15).



Figure 35: Gold Coin featuring Kumara Devi (right) and Chandragupta I (left). Kumaradevi is wearing traditional Indian clothing (Ghaghara, Uttariya and breast band). Chandragupta I is wearing a tunic (green) with brocade and finery (yellow) stitched trousers (red) [Photograph courtesy of the British Museum]

The detailed example (fig. 35) above allows for a conversation on the style of textile clothing that is seen on the coinage. The use of a finer stitched tunic indicates that the kings wished to be seen as wealthy and combining this with the inclusion of the goddess Lakshmi on the back of the coinage, this is not too far of a stretch. Furthermore, if the gold coinage was seen as more than just money, as is suggested by Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2003), it is highly likely that the Gupta elite would place textile clothing upon them that would be considered highly valuable.

The coinage retained uniformity in design from Chandragupta I to the end of Chandragupta II's reign. (fig. 36: A-C). This indicates that there was a society wide standard for what was considered to be elite clothing during what was called the "golden-age" of the Indian sub-continent.



Figure 36: Coins indicating the presumed society standard from Chandragupta I to Chandragupta II. A: Chandragupta I, B: Samudragupta, C: Chandragupta II (Source for all: CNG LLC)

Looking at a coin of Samudragupta (fig 38), Raven (1994) describe the dress of the figure in some detail.

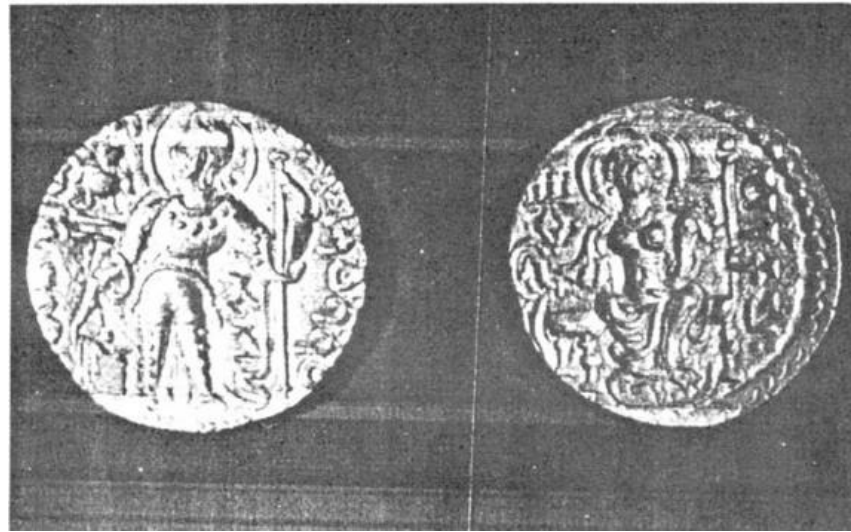


Figure 37: Coin of Samudragupta (Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2003: 333)

The image that they give in their paper is blurry (fig 37), making it difficult to identify the individual pieces of clothing described by Raven (1994). Nevertheless, the coin is stylistically similar to figure 36C.



Figure 38: A close view of figure 37C

Raven (1994; Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2003: 333, 339) describes the image as show a ‘tall Samudragupta’ with a small head, facing left in a rigid posture. He holds a standard or sceptre in his left hand and offers oblation on an altar with his right (Raven, 1994, Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2003: 333). Raven (1994; Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2003: 333, 339) describes the figure as wearing a cap, belt with a dagger, a short tailed coat decorated with a row of beads, beaded trousers, and boots. Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2003: 339) state that coat has beading along the collar and the sleeves, coming down to the waist. This identification is similar to my own, apart from what they have called a ‘short tailed coat’ I have identified as a tunic. The beaded nature of the trousers and the

upper garment is mirrored by the pearly boarder of the reverse of the coin, where the goddess Lakshmi sits.

The figure of Lakshmi here is described by Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2003: 339) as seated on a throne, holding a curving fillet in her right hand and a *cornucopia* in her left. They have suggested that she is depicted as wearing earrings, necklace and armlets with her feet resting on a circular mat (Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2003: 339). There is no description given for the actually dress of the Lakshmi figure however it does appear to be similar to what has been previously discussed.

In comparison the copper coins of Chandragupta II show the king in what appears to be traditional dress (fig 39: a-d) there is no signs of the figure depicted wearing a tunic, adornments or other finery but more traditional and seemingly religious textile clothing.





Figure 39: Copper Coinage of Chandragupta II. Each coin has Garuda with his wings spread (Right hand side) and the figure of the king appears dressed in the dhoti (Source for all: British Museum)

The copper coins appear to depict a king in what is arguably a *dhoti* and occasionally an *uttariya*, similar to those found in earlier periods (see Chronological overview). In his 1889 study of Gupta Coinage, V.A. Smith found that the copper coins he catalogued all exhibited the same reverse; ‘a rude bird-like figure with expanded wings facing front’ (Smith, 1889: 16). As was previously stated, this is the figure of Garuda, the vehicle of Visnu and was likely placed on the coins to deepen the association between the king and the deity.

It is possible copper coinage would have been more widely distributed across the GPF as internal trade was not as highly valued as external trade however majority of copper coinage finds have been contained to western and central India (Kumar, 2017: 68). However, the limited amount of copper coinage does not usurp the suggestion that the copper was used for internal rather than external trade.

The value of differently metaled coins is evidenced even in their design and handling. Where the gold coinage had centralised iconography and little weathering or fade, the copper coinage used by those much lower in the political and wealth structure of the GPF are seen to be of much poorer quality (Smith, 1889: 21), much wider internal distribution and much more immediately apparent wreathing, aging and fading (fig 39: a-d). This confirms previously established theories of Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2003) that gold coinage was considered more valuable, either from an artistic or monetary point of view, due to the care, detail and preservation evident in (fig 36: a-c).

This again relates to the idea of a coherent public (Smith, 2015: 6), showing the notable difference between the two currencies, those who would more commonly use the copper coinage associated the rulers with the divine, whereas those who more commonly had access to gold coinage, specifically merchants, guilds and the upper class associated the rulers with power, through the attributions that came from the represented clothing on the

coinage and the clothing associated with the ruling class. As was noted at the start of this section, gold coinage is often mentioned in relation to high value purchases, such a land, giving further credence to the notion that gold coinage was almost exclusively used by those in the upper echelons of society. Furthermore, due to guilds often having their own internal laws and ruling system (Rao, 1950), by displaying themselves on such a manner on gold coinage largely circulated within these social circles, particularly in the area of Gujarat, it ensures the establishment of Gupta power and influence even in areas, small or large, with their own political systems and laws.

Taking king-queen types as an extension of the imperial project, specifically the depiction of the queen as a traditional figure in stark contrast to the king wearing markedly more foreign influenced clothing mentioned above, aligns the coinage with Darshini's (2006) first and second tiers of power as the continued correlation between royalty and could be argued that the divine not only ensures the continued mystification of Vedic worship and furthers their own political goals as followers of Brahminic practice, specifically wanting to spread their influence and appearance to cement power. Here, it can be argued that the coinage fits into the category of 'delegate' (Katchadurian, 2016: 68). By aiding the association between the Gupta elites and the gods, the coinage has taken share in the preservation of imperial sovereignty through the iconography placed upon them.

To close, in this section, coinage has shown how the Gupta ruling elite wished to be viewed both internally and externally. The power and prestige shown by the gold coinage is in direct contrast to the holy and divine depiction on the copper coinage. This indicates that the different ways in which both coinages were used to manipulate and control, or at the very least influence, how local populations viewed the textile clothing, an example of this is actually the contrast between the two.

The finery, textile clothing and adornments are vastly different in quality and as such seem unattainable to the peasantry. An example of this could be how the lower classes were essentially locked off from attaining the desirable textile clothing depicted and usually traded for from external sources such as china, for silks (however) to a more affluent individual external to the court of the Guptas it can be supposed that due to the more divine and politically powerful depictions of such textiles they would more likely them, thus entangling them within a vast supply and demand network operating from the highest members of society all the way down to the lowliest individual cementing both the power of the textile and the power of the Gupta elite.

In the next section, the Western Territories, will explore an area of the GPF that was conquered and how the Gupta elites used clothing to display their 'rightful' kingship over the area.

3.5: The Textile Clothing of the Western Territories in Pre-Gupta and Gupta Times

The Western Territories being discussed in this section are the former Indo-Scythian (Saka) Kshatrapas wiped out by the GPF in c.4th century CE under Chandragupta II (Willis, 2009: 54; Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 78; Singh, 2008). Because of this conquest, Von Stieteneron has presented an argument for the giant Varaha at Udayagiri being a political metaphor inspired by the victory over the Western Kshatrapas (Willis, 2009: 54).

In this section of the chapter, the relationship between the Guptas and the Udayagiri Cave complex will take central focus in the interpretation of textile clothing in an area directly conquered by the Guptas as opposed to complexes such as the Ajanta Caves where Gupta influence was much more indirect. Furthermore, the Udayagiri Caves present another opportunity to further explore the intricate relationship between the Guptas and the Vedic rituals as the complex seemingly embodies the complicated nature of this relationship.

Before discussing the Udayagiri Caves, it is imperative to explore the nature of textile clothing in the Western Territories in the Pre-Gupta period.

3.5.1: Pre-Gupta Textile Clothing of the Western Territories

The Saka or Shaka (150BCE-400CE) tribe appear to have emerged from Central Asia sometime in the 1st millennium BCE (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 77). According to Chinese reports, the Saka tribe migrated down into India and, along with the Scythians, became a major threat to the Parthian Empire (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 77). However, by the reign of Mithridates II (123-88BCE), the Sakas appear to have recognised Parthian suzerainty with some of the Sakas appearing to settle down in Sakastan (Sistan) in what is now southern Afghanistan (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 77). It is during this time that the Saka seemingly inter-married with the Scythians and local Parthian nobility (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 77). At the height of their power, the Saka dynasty controlled much of the north-west of the Indian Sub-continent and Afghanistan (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 84).

The make-up of the Saka political system appears to be one of a confederation of chieftains, all of whom help the Persian title *Shahi*; a later Jaina text, the *Kalakacharyakathanaka*, reporting that there were ninety-five chieftans (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 78). The Saka kings appear to have translated their Iranian title 'King of Kings' into Greek (*baliseus basileon*), used Greek names for the months and issued coinage in the Indo-Greek style (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 77). The Saka political system appears to be one that was made of a confederation of chieftains (*shanu shahi* or, in

Sanskrit *rajatiraja*) who seemingly appointed *Kshatrapas* or *Mahakshtrapas* (similar to the Persian *satraps*) as regional governors, however it is not quite clear how they fitted into the pattern of tribal confederation (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 77). Kulke & Rothermund (2010: 77) suggest that they may have been members of royalty but there is also the possibility that they were local Indian rulers among them who were accommodated.

Following the collapse of the main Saka dynasty in the last decades of the 1st millennium BCE, the local rulers of the Western Kshatrapas appear to have held on to power in the eastern area near Mathura until the conquest of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 78).

Looking at the dress of the period, it appears to reflect the pattern identified in section 3.3; that is the identified traditional dress of India in slightly differing styles. Looking at figure 40, a Mathuran red sandstone sculpture of the Western Kshatrapa ruler Chastana (~78-130CE), displays what appears to be a *dhoti* (outlined in black) with a *Kayabandh* (waist band) or belt (yellow) with what may be an *uttariya* tied diagonally across the front of the figure, resting on the left-hand side of the belt and tied just below the right hip (green).



Figure 40: Figure of King Chastana (Mathura Museum)

The most notable difference in between figures is the appearance of what may be a long tunic covering the chest and reaching the knees (red) (figure 40). The belief that this covers upper body is tentative as I am unable to view the figure in person, however, there appears to be a diagonal line across the figures chest from left to right, stopping at the waist.

Although this may not be a full tunic, the reappearance of a much more elaborate form of lower garment is noticeable due to what seems to be embroidery at the base of the figures lower garment on the left (fig 40).

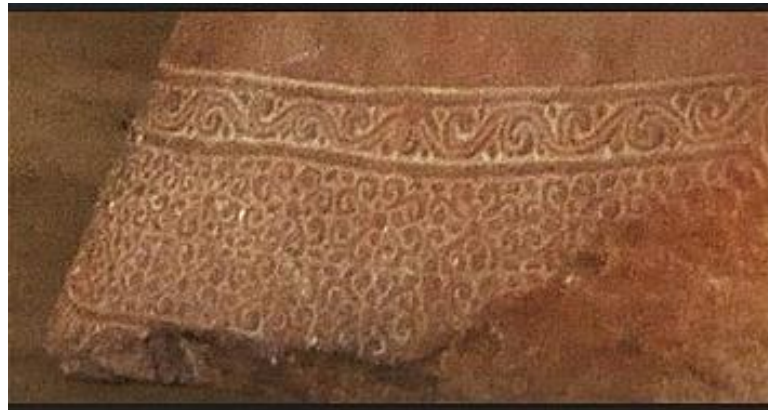


Figure 41: Close-up of the elaborate border on the left-hand corner of the figure

The elaborate finish on the lower garment is noticeably something that is not seen in earlier periods. In figure 41, *dhoti* is finished in an elaborate border but there is no embroidery. Unfortunately, not much other information is available about the figure so the interpretation here is limited but it can be discerned that it would have been erected in a public area, such as a temple, due to the elaborate nature of elements of the figures dress.

On coinage, the Western Kshatrapas are depicted as merely a side-profile of the head (fig 42: A-C).



Figure 42a-c: Silver Coins of the Western Kshatrapas (Source: The British Museum)

The three coins all show the king wearing what appears to be a flat hat, which seems to be a unique element of the Western Kshatrapas as it does not appear elsewhere.

The dress of the Western Kshatrapas in the time before the Guptas (150BCE – 400CE) does not differ vastly from the traditional dress seen in the dress in the first chronological period (500BCE – 0). The styling is different, but this is reflective of the pattern that has been seen throughout the chapter so far. In the next section, the Udayagiri Cave complex will be considered. The Guptas made significant changes to the site following the conquest of Central India by Samudragupta in the mid-4th century CE (Willis, 2009: 2-3).

3.5.2: The Udayagiri Caves

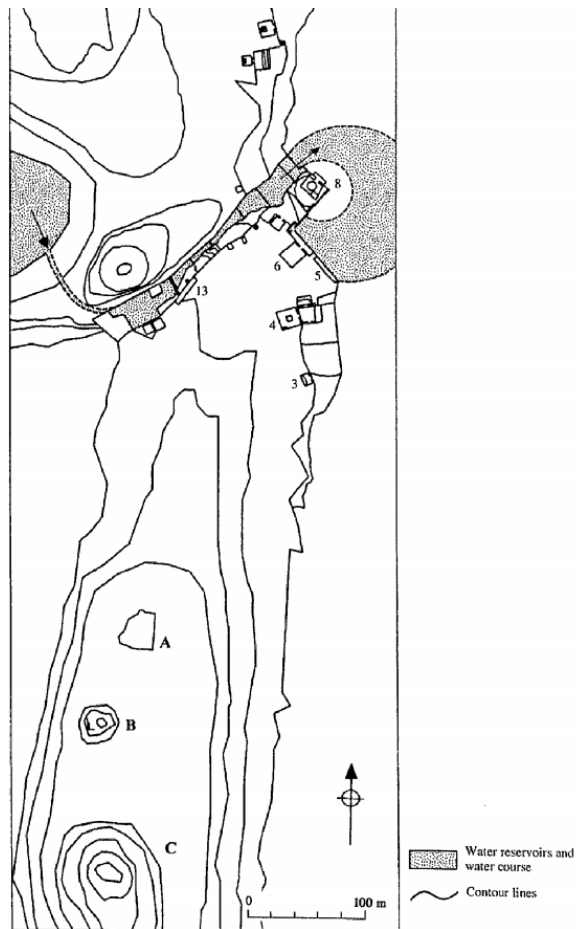
Originally studied by Alexander Cunningham in the 1870s, the Udayagiri Caves are twenty rock-cut caves found close to the ancient cities of Vidisa and Besnagar and is one of the only sites that can verifiably be associated with the Guptas (Dass *et al*, 2018; Willis, 2001; 2009). The caves were a religious site from around the 2nd century BCE as identified by the pre-Gupta Sun temple in the area (Willis, 2001; Dass *et al*, 2018).



Map 5: Location of the Udayagiri Cave Complex (Source: Google Maps, 2020)

This sun temple alludes to Udayagiri's long history as a centre of astronomy and calendrical activity with solar observations being suggested by the name of the site, literally meaning 'Sunrise-Mountain' (Willis, 2009: 2). Following Samudragupta's conquest of central India in the mid-4th century CE, Udayagiri was modified in significant ways with Willis (2009: 2-3) arguing that majority of the reworks were undertaken during the reign of Chandragupta II to articulate a revitalised form of early Hindu kingship. In this early kingship, the king is envisaged as 'paramount sovereign' (*cakravartin*) and is the supreme devotee of Visnu (*paramabhagavata*) with the latter of these being demonstrated by the existence of a giant statue of Varaha (one of the Avatars of Visnu) in cave 5 with an image of Chandragupta knelt to the figures right when facing the image straight on (fig 43). The performance of the *rajasuya* (royal consecration), an ancient Soma sacrifice, and its subsequent memorialisation at Udayagiri was how Chandragupta II was 'transformed'

into a king worthy of the name *vikramaditya* (he who is the sun of prowess) (Willis, 2009: 3).



Map 6: Udayagiri. Map of the central ridge. Important caves are shown with their standard numbers; Cave 5 contains Varaha, Cave 13 contains Visnu Narayana. A= Rock-cut astronomical dais; B= foundations of platform; C= Bhaillavamin temple mound. (Source: Willis, 2009: 15)

By transforming Udayagiri (map 6) from a place of simple celestial observation into an astro-political node, Chandragupta II laid the foundations for the self-validating campaign of conquest celebrated in inscriptions. With the Gupta centre of power being located in Pataliputra in the north-east of the country, it is not an overreach to suggest that the influence of the Guptas was not as strongly felt in a location over 850kms away (map 7). The purpose of the transformation of the Udayagiri Cave complex clearly goes beyond the Gupta elites need to associate themselves with the gods.



Map 7: Distance between Pataliputra (Modern day Patna) and the Udayagiri Cave Complex (Google Maps, 2020)

As was previously mentioned in the Chapter 1.1.3, an inscription found on the north face of a pillar to the left as one enters Cave 19 from the year 1093 and shows that even six centuries after the death of Chandragupta II, there was a living tradition associating him with Udayagiri and the epithet of ‘Vikramaditya’ (Willis, 2009: 42). Willis (2009: 42-3) has stated that the use of Vainaya imagery as a political allegory was heavily favoured by the Guptas with the most elaborate being the giant relief of Varaha found at Udayagiri (fig 43).



Figure 43: Panel with Vahara holding the Earth Goddess as Prithvi with either Samudragupta or Chandragupta II kneeling (2nd figure) on his right. (Source: Asitjain, 2009)

This elaborate display of subscribing to Brahmanism ensured that the Vedic style of worship and kingship was uncontested within the eyes of the wider population. Bringing in Darshini's (2006) system of power, looking the textile clothing of the deities and those of royalty, there is a pattern of similarity between them. This similarity shows a correlation between the three tiers of the Gupta power structure, with the mystification of Vedic worship allowing for the appropriation of some the aspects of divinity. The aforementioned significance of the Guptas relationship with Visnu and their use of Vainaya imagery as political allegory is embodied by the relief panel of figure 43. This avatar of Visnu is connected with the 'salvation of the earth' and by demonstrating his position as *paramabhagavata*, Chandragupta II claimed a special relationship with the god who had saved the earth, allowing him to take on, among other things, the title 'Lord of the Earth' (*bhupati*) and further advance the belief that the whole earth belonged to the crown (Willis, 2009: 3). Furthermore, Singh (2017: 117) makes the suggestion that the image of Varaha himself may in fact represent the king or due to there being seemingly deliberate ambiguity, the figure may represent both the deity and the king.

The statue of Vahara has either Samudragupta or Chandragupta II kneeling to his right whilst holding the Earth Goddess as Prithvi in his mouth. What is interesting about this panel is that the two figures are wearing a similar style of clothing (Fig 44). The similarity between the textile clothing of these iconographic depictions indicates that the Gupta elites wished to be seen as, not only worshipers, but similar or the same as the deities which they

worshipped. By emulating these deities, the Guptas seemingly created an air of exclusivity surrounding the textile clothing that they shared. Here, the idea of the *murti* can arguably be seen.

Both figures appear to be wearing the traditional *dhoti* (fig 44) with Varaha's hanging between his legs in the *sakachha* style of tying the *dhoti*. How Chandragupta is wearing the *dhoti* is not extremely clear due to the figure kneeling. Nevertheless, it can be discerned that he is wearing a *dhoti* due to belt that can be seen just above the hips (fig 44).

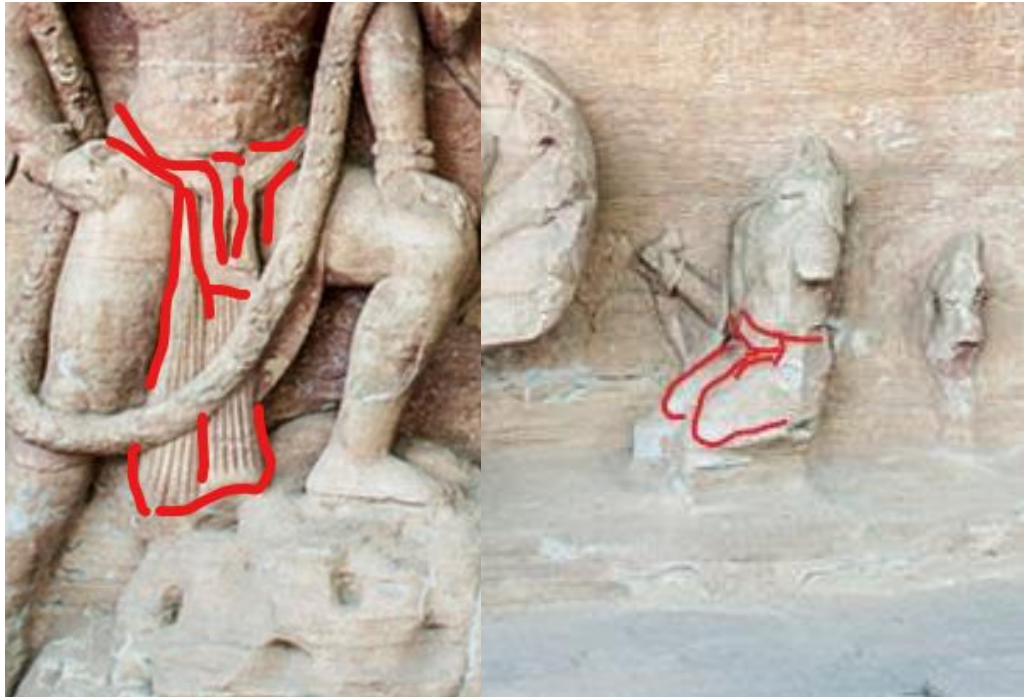


Figure 44: Close up of Vahara (left) and Chandragupta II (right). The dhoti is indicated in red on each figure (Source: Asitjain, 2009)

The style in which Vahara is wearing the *dhoti* is one that was beginning to fall out of popularity during the Gupta times. The style was extremely popular amongst the elite males during the Shunga Period (fig 12). There is a possibility that the figure of Vahara may actually be wearing an *uttariya* around his waist similar to how the Naga males (fig 23) can be seen wearing theirs. As is noted by Ayyar (1987: 64), this fashion gained popularity throughout the Gupta period.

A *murti*, as mentioned above, is an idol, image or statue serving as the central agent in the physical mediation between people and the divine, arguably creating a social relationship between them (Mohan, 2017: 226). External agency is found through praxis, such as acts of feeding, bathing, and dressing with internal agency being induced by the belief that the deity possesses a mind and has intentionality (Mohan, 2017: 226). This suggests that in relation to Gupta textile clothing, and the supposed link between the Gupta and divinity,

there is an intentionality in the delivery of the dress. Looking at figure 44, if these figures are both wearing the same outfit, it can be argued that an individual worshipper viewing the image is not only seeing the figure of the king kneeling at the side of the image of Varaha as the supreme devotee of Visnu but would have noted the similarities in dress between the royal figure and the image of Varaha. Furthermore, there is the additional association of the title *bhupati* (Lord of the Earth) (Willis, 2009: 3). As the Udayagiri Caves were remodelled following Chandragupta II's conquest of the Western Kshatrapas, it can be argued that the choice of specifically Varaha, the Visnu avatar associated with the salvation of the earth, Chandragupta was looking to advance the idea that the whole earth belonged to the crown (Willis, 2009: 3).

Additionally, Mohan's (2017: 226) suggestion that a *mutri* creates a social relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped brings up the social function of textile clothing. As has previously been identified, clothing can symbolically help identify others of the ilk of the wearer or, in turn, show a differentiation or distinction between individuals (Stone, 1981: 193). Further to this, the reciprocity of textile clothing can be found in the creation of a social identity (Mills *et al*, 2004: 4). By socialising an individual with such an identity, the identified are expected to act or be treated in a certain way thus creating a social reciprocity for the wearer.

Arguably this socialisation may come from the use of coinage. In the previous section (3.4), the male figure on copper coins of Chandragupta II (figs 36: a-c) is identified as wearing the much more traditional clothing of the *dhoti*. As is noted in the section, this form of coinage would most likely have been used by those much lower down in the political and wealth structure of the GPF as is seen by the poorer quality of the coinage (fig 39: a-d). Here, it is also important to note that there is an image of Visnu's *vahana*, Garuda on the opposite side of the coin. This shows that the association between the Gupta elites and Visnu is one that they wished to be seen, not only at Udayagiri, but across the entire political formation, again displaying all areas of Darshini's (2006) three-tier power system. Furthermore, due to the distance between the GPF's power centre at Pataliputra and the Udayagiri Cave system, it can be said that the textile clothing here is being used as a delegate (Katchadurian, 2016: 68).

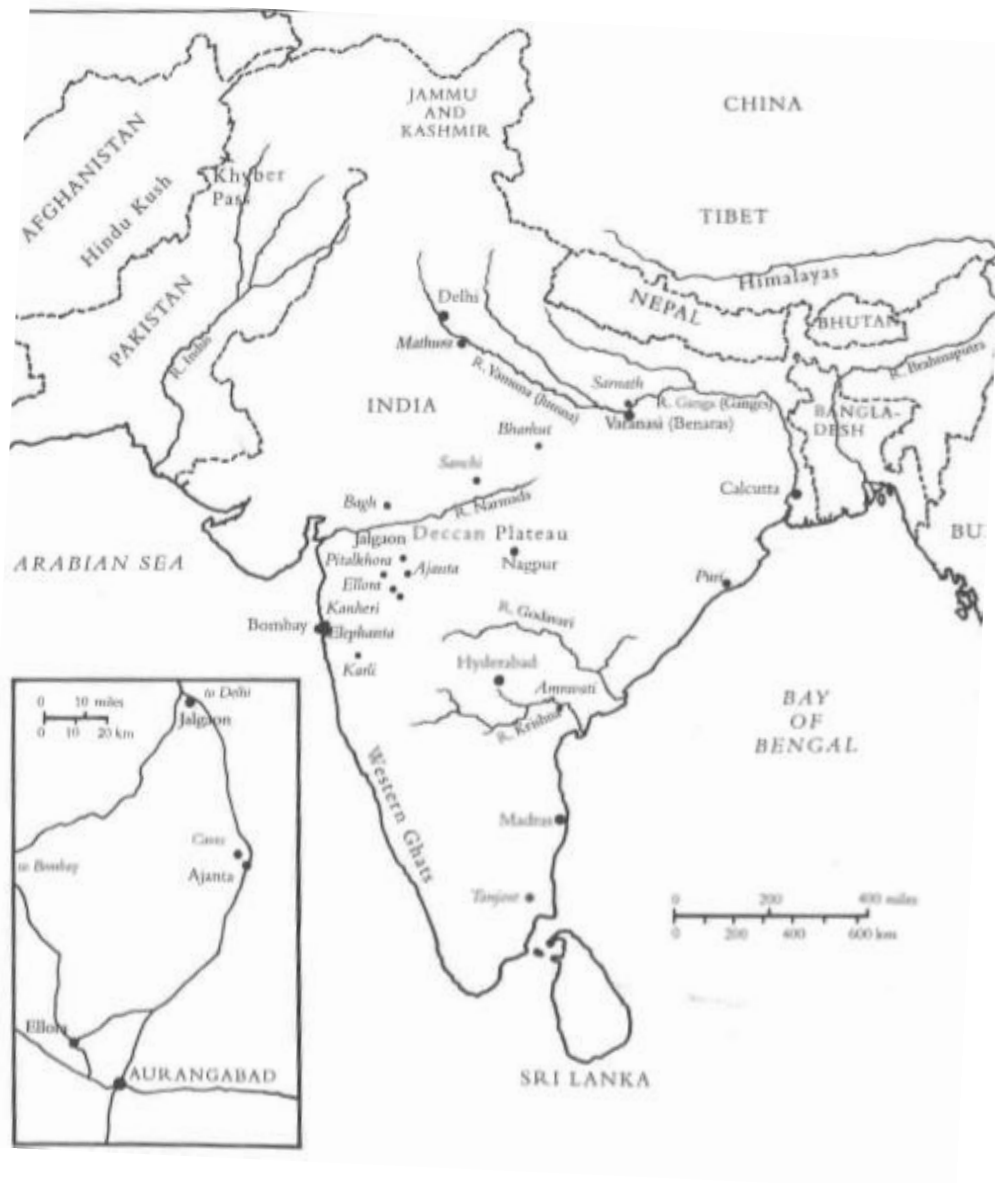
Here, the Gupta elites are relying on the continued association between themselves and, in this instance, Visnu seemingly through the similarities in dress. Delegates are, in themselves, the preservation of the very terms of imperial sovereignty (Katchadurian, 2016: 68) and are able to be placed into the ideas of a coherent public and the formalisation

of government (Smith, 2015). In terms of Gupta dress, and in particular the mimetic nature of the dress seen on the Varaha panel, as well as the widely distributed copper coinage, it can be said that the dress on these played an important role in the legitimisation of Gupta authority. Furthermore, it can be argued that the style of the clothing worn in figure 44 may be primarily religious, feeding further into Darshini's (2006) system as it not only aids the Gupta elites' personal goals of being the primary devotee of Visnu but ensures that the clothing becomes symbolically associated with the ideas of Vedic kingship. This will be further explored in the comparisons section where case studies of this chapter will be discussed in connection with one-another.

Differing from the direct influence of the Gupta elites, the Ajanta Caves were arguably indirectly influenced by the association between the main Vakataka dynasty and the Guptas, wherein similar stylistic elements of dress can be seen.

3.6: The Ajanta Cave Paintings

The Ajanta Caves (2nd century BCE – circa.480CE) (map 8) are a series of approximately 30 rock-cut cave monuments of the Buddhist faith and have been called an “encyclopaedia” of Gupta age costumes (Khandalavala, 1991; Fisher, 1993; Chandra, 1973; Ayyar, 1987; Coomaraswamy *et al*, 1969). The paintings in the caves show an array of clothing from the Gupta age, from the servants to the Buddha himself, rightly earning the status of an encyclopaedia of the era’s costumes. The caves themselves are located the modern district of Maharashtra in central India, just south of the GPF’s borders in the Vakataka dynasty’s region, however, not out of the Gupta sphere of influence.

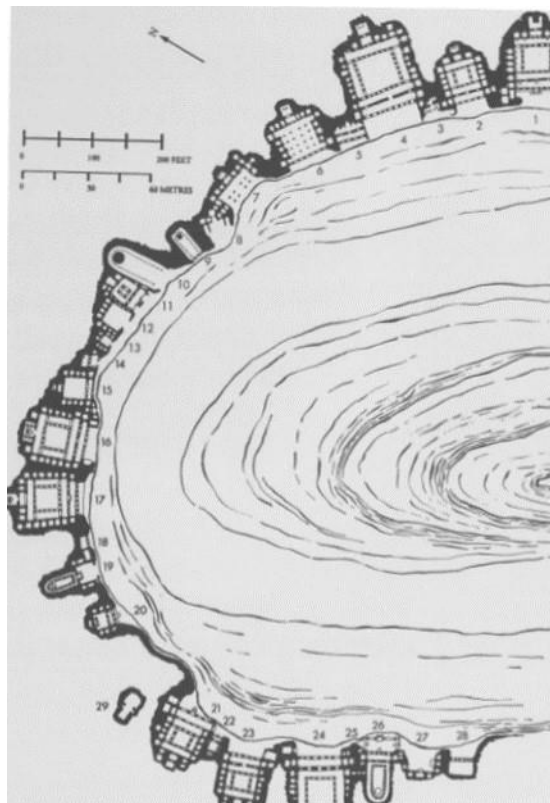


Map 8: Location of the Ajanta Caves (Behl, 2006)

Willis (2009: 52) states that the political position of the Vakataka can safely be judged as being in a subordinate alliance to the Guptas. Furthermore, the ‘cultural apparatus’ of the

Deccan during the time of the Vakataka is judged by Willis to be ‘resting’ on northern precedent (Willis, 2009: 52).

The caves are split into two periods: the first being the *Satavhana* period (100BCE – 2nd century CE) and the second is the *Gupta-Vakataka* period (circa.380-415CE) (Map 9) (Behl, 2005: 26). The first period of the caves, the *Satavhana* period, consists of caves 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15a, with the *Gupta-Vakataka* period being caves 1-8, 11, 14-29 (Behl, 2005: 26-7; Spink, 2008: 2-3; Cohen, 2006: 81-2). The *Satavhana* period of the caves were created by Hinayana Buddhist and were primarily *chaityas* (prayer halls) (9 & 10) and *viharas* (monasteries) (12, 13 & 15a). These caves would have been decorated from floor to ceiling with aniconic representations of the Buddha, yet very few of these murals survive today (Behl, 2005: 26-7).



Map 9: Map of the Ajanta Caves (Behl, 2006: 15)

Though still widely considered as purely Gupta iconography, recent arguments have suggested that the paintings should be directly connected with the Vakataka Dynasty, a second Brahmanical dynasty that ruled over the Deccan (Central India) and related to the Guptas through marriage (Kulke & Rothermund, 2004: 91; Spink, 2008). The marriage between the Guptas and the Vakatakas led to the emergence of the culturally cohesive period that is the *Gupta-Vakataka* period during which many of the murals of the Ajanta Caves were created (Behl, 2005: 29). The *Gupta-Vakataka* period of the caves gave Ajanta

a fresh burst of creative activity (Behl, 2005: 27) with many of the exquisite murals surviving.

3.6.1: The Gupta-Vakataka Period

Often referred to as the ‘poor cousins’ of the Guptas, the Vakatakas are regarded as the final sponsors and ‘guardians of the Golden Age’ (Spink, 2008: 3). Much of the history of the Vakatakas comes from inscriptions and texts, such as the Puranas, which has led to debate surrounding the original home of the dynasty (Singh, 2008; Bakker, 1997: 10). Some scholars have suggested South India based on a fragmentary inscription found at Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh and similarities in terms used between Vakataka inscriptions and grants of the Pallava king Shivaskandavarman (Singh, 2008). Counter to this, Ajay Mitra Shastri (1997) has suggested that the inscriptions and the Puranas indicate that the Vakatakas were initially established in the Vindhyan region, north of the Narmada River. Singh (2008) uses the Puranas reference to the dynasty as the Vindhyakas and reference to the town of Kanchanaka, identified as Nachna or Nachna-ki-talai village in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh, in connection with one of the early kings, Pravarasena I as well as several early Vakataka inscriptions and structural remains found in that area to conclude that the Vakatakas first established themselves in the Vindhyan region, including a large area of the Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand tracts. From here, the Vakatakas extended their influence southwards, eventually becoming a major political power in the Deccan (Singh, 2008). The dynasty ruled from the mid-3rd century to the late 5th/6th centuries CE and had matrimonial ties with the Guptas, Nagas of Padmavati, Kadambas of Karnataka and the Vishnukundins of Andhra (Singh, 2008; Majumdar, 2016: 1).

An important thing to note is that the successors of the second king, Pravarasena I, were divided into at least two branches (the Puranas suggest four) (Singh, 2008). Based on the political centres they can be referred to as the Padmapura-Nandivardhana-Pravaraputa line and the Vatsagulma line (Singh, 2008). The Padmapura-Nandivardhana-Pravaraputa line was represented by Rudrasena I and it was his grandson, Rudrasena II that married Prabhavatigupta, the daughter of Chandragupta II in around 380CE (Singh, 2008; Ali, 2006: 34; Bakker, 1997: 12; Prabhat, 2015: 124). When Rudrasena II died, his sons, Divakarasena, Damodarasena and Pravarasena were minors and so Prabhavatigupta was declared regent for around twenty years (c.405-419CE) (Singh, 2008; 2017: xvi; Prabhat, 2015: 125). Thanks to this alliance with the Vakatakas, Chandragupta II gained control of a large part of central India (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 92). The matrimonial alliance allowed the Guptas direct access to the eastern and western ports and ‘greatly augmented

trade' in northern and central India (Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 92). Further to the marriage between the two, it has been argued that the Gupta court poet, Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra* presents a wholesale transportation of courtly Gupta-Vakataka relationship onto Mauryan-Sunga times (Ali, 2006: 228). If there is any truth in this, it would appear that Kalidasa's intentions were to tantalise his audience with veiled references to events they would have probably been familiar with and allowed for them to draw parallels between these relationships (Ali, 2006: 228). This drawing of parallels is something that is not uncommon in the GPF with the coinage of the dynasty reflecting the styles of previously powerful kingdoms and the drawing of parallels between the Gupta elites and the gods whom the worshipped.

Following the death of Prabhavatigupta, the alliance appears to be replaced with rivalry and conflict (Singh, 2015: 181; Bakker, 1997: 13). This is countered by Kulke and Rothermund (2010: 91-2) who state that under Pravarasena II (c.419-455CE) whose reign is well documented in inscriptions, the eastern Vakatakas reasserted their independence but the relationship between the Guptas and the Vakatakas remained close and friendly. Kulke and Rothermund (2010: 92) go on to say that the eastern Vakatakas propagated the idea of Hindu kingship by building a veritable state sanctuary at Ramagiri, adorned by monumental temples, whereas the western Vakatakas created the Buddhist marvels at Ajanta with both of these dynasties contributing to the spread of Gupta culture in central and southern India.

Although the marriage of Prabhavatigupta into the Vakataka family vastly increased the Gupta influence within the territory, this branch of the Vakataka family was not responsible for the second phase of the Ajanta Caves. The Vatsagulma branch of the dynasty under the king, Harisena (c.475-500CE) were responsible for the further development of the cave complex however, Singh (2018: 184) notes that there is no epigraphic evidence of direct Vakataka patronage. Nevertheless, Singh (2018: 184) goes on to note that there is evidence at Ajanta and in the nearby Ghatotkacha cave (around 18kms west of Ajanta), there are inscriptions speaking of lavish religious endowments made by wealthy and powerful ministers such as Varahadeva (Cave 16). Although Singh (2018: 184) notes that there is a lack of epigraphical evidence for direct Vakataka sponsorship of the caves, Spink (2008: 17) finds that Cave 1's 'prestigious patronage' is proclaimed by the quality and quantity of its unique façade decoration whose lavish ornamentation is 'but a small piece of evidence' supporting the hypothesis that the cave was excavated during the time of Harisena. Furthermore, Cave 1's paintings has an

insistent emphasis on the theme of kingship with Spink (2008: 31) stating that such a 'striking narrative program' is different from what is seen in any other cave. Spink (2008: 31) suggests that this allows for us to assume that the cave was developed through royal donation, going as far as to note the presence of Naga (cobra/snake) kings on many of the pillar capitals and the shrine doorway as a further signifier for this being Harisena's own cave, as the nagas may have been totems of the Naga dynasty from which the Vakataka's sprang (Bakker, 1997: 9).

According to Spink (2008: 180) the connection between the Vakataka prime minister, Varahadeva, and Buddhism was 'surely instrumental' in the inauguration of the site. What is of even more interest is that in the Ghatotkacha vihara, there is an epigraph in which Varahadeva proudly proclaims his high-born Hindu heritage (Spink, 2008: 180). That one could worship both the Buddha and Hindu gods at the same time most likely accounts for Varahadeva's patronage at Ajanta and, furthermore, explain the king Harisena's sponsorship of Cave 1, even though many scholars agree that he was most certainly a Hindu king like the earlier Vakataka dynasty (Spink, 2008: 180; Bakker, 1997: 58). Following Harisena's death in c.477 (Spink, 2006: 3), the Vakataka dynasty appears to have collapsed during the reign of Sarvasena III. Following this the patronage of Ajanta ended, making it immediately evident that the site relied wholly upon courtly patronage (Spink, 2008: 3).

3.6.2: The Paintings

Although not directly a Gupta site, the caves show a heavy Gupta influence in the style of dress with Ayyar (1983), Alkazi (1983) and Chandra (1973) deeming the paintings to be an accurate representation of the clothing of the Gupta era (figs 45 & 46). In addition to these catalogues, full colour images taken from Behl's (2005) photographic ensemble of the caves. By using both line drawings and full colour photographs, a better understanding of the textile clothing found within the caves can be explored.



Figure 45: Example of Chandra's catalogue of Dress within the Ajanta Caves (Source: Chandra, 1973)

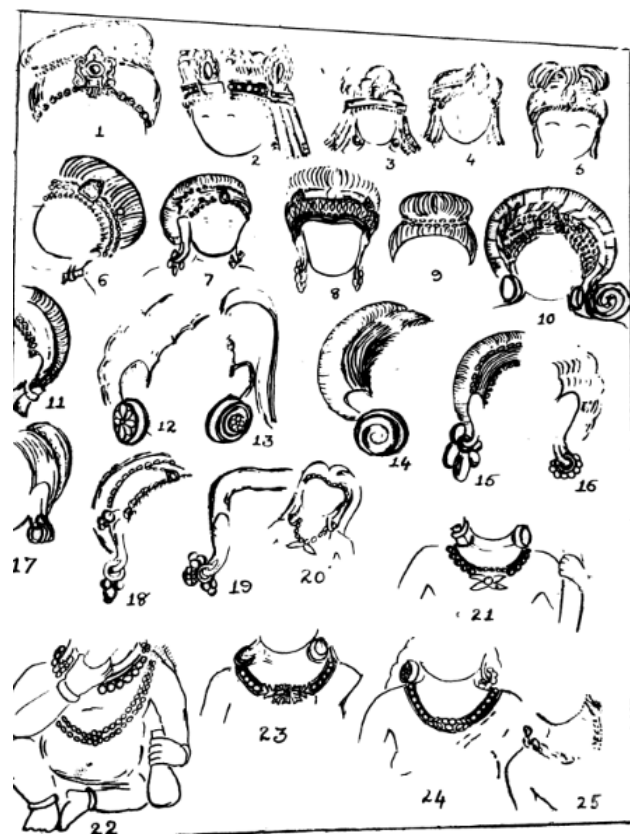


Figure 46: An example of Ayyar's sketches of the Ajanta Caves (Ayyar, 1983)

The textile clothing found within the Ajanta Cave Paintings has been identified to be in line with the 'traditional clothing' of India as discussed in section 3.3.

The depictions seen in the Ajanta Caves point towards something similar to Croom's (2010) finding of the Roman artistic record being misleading due to the differentiation between the literary and the iconographic. Croom's (2010) supposition was that the 4th century CE depictions of the toga, that had gone out of fashion in the 2nd century CE, were symbolic and its use continued on ceremonial occasions that were often depicted due to their importance within the historic calendar of the Roman Empire. With the importance of the promotion of Brahmanism and the Brahmanical calendar, it is possible that the depictions from the ACP are, in fact, of more historical clothing that is being depicted in, what are known to be depictions of a literary nature, the Jataka Tales. These tales are concerning the previous lives of the Buddha prior to him being Gautama Buddha and are of significant importance to the Buddhist community (Behl, 2005).

As previously noted, neither the Vakataka or Gupta kings were followers of Buddhism and were staunch in their support and promotion of the Brahmanical faith, so for the Vakataka dynasty to sponsor the creation of Buddhist religious centres is interesting. This harkens back to Darshini's (2006) three-tier power system for the Guptas and, furthermore, can be placed within Smith's (2015: 6) pre-existing conditions for political sovereignty, both previously discussed in chapter 2. Within Darshini's (2006) system, the sponsoring of the caves can be placed into the public role of the elites as Harisena's patronage shows a clearly liberal stance on religion and, furthermore, allows for the creation of a somewhat coherent public (Smith, 2015: 6). Additionally, although the Ajanta Caves were created towards the end of the Gupta dynasty's lifetime, it is important to note that the political structure of the Guptas and the social identity of the elites built through this structure would have still existed heavily in the public consciousness. It can therefore be argued that, as is suggested by Willis (2009: 52), the culture of the Deccan was resting heavily on northern precedent.

In this section, the primary focus will be on Cave 1, most commonly associated with Harisena, and a single image from Cave 17.

Even though Cave 1's excavations did not appear to begin until 466CE, it seemed to have the advantage of being an imperial benefaction and would seem to explain why its excavation and decoration proceeded with such efficacy (Spink, 2008: 73). The particular scene of artwork that is being focused on from this cave is the Mahajanaka Jataka (Behl, 2006: 84; Spink, 2006: 84). It is found in the centre of the left wall of Cave 1 and is made of a series of 4 frescos (Singh, 2012: 85; Behl, 2006: 85, 90-1, 95, 99).

The Mahajanaka Jataka is the tale of Mahajanaka, a banished prince who returns to claim his kingdom, but he lost attraction for the pomp and luxuries of royalty and ultimately left the royal life (Behl, 2006: 84; Singh, 2012: 85). Two of the four panels are of the most interest to this thesis: the two central pieces (figs 47, 48 & 49).



Figure 47: King Mahajanka informing Queen Sivali that he is leaving the palace (Behl, 1998: 87)



Figure 48: A Palace Scene from the Mahajanaka Jataka: the King and queen are shown seated in a pavillion watching a dance performance organised by the queen (Behl, 2006: 90)



Figure 49: A close up of the dance troupe from the bottom right corner of the larger scene shown in figure 47 (Spink, 2008: figure 28)

The final image, the one from Cave 17, is a figure of king Saudasa on a horse (fig 50). Cave 17 depicts the Sautamosa Jataka, the story of the King Saudasa and his insatiable cannibal appetite (Behl, 2006: 194). In the mural, Saudasa's father takes a nap in the forest and whilst he is sleeping, a lioness licks his feet, becoming pregnant with Saudasa (Behl, 2006: 194). Saudasa lived a normal life until one day he got a taste of human flesh and then as king, fed this appetite by eating his subjects (Behl, 2006: 194). He was driven into the forest by his army where he lived, preying on travellers and accidentally kidnapped the Buddha, who helped turn Saudasa away from cannibalism (Behl, 2006: 194).



Figure 50: King Saudasa from the Ajanta Caves (Belh, 2006: 198)

The dress on these figures will be discussed in the sections focusing on male and female dress (3.6.3&4).

3.6.3: Female Dress of the Ajanta Caves

In the Ajanta Caves, the costumes of the queens and the other exalted ladies differ from what we have seen previously on the coinage of the Guptas. The clothing of the women in the ACP has often been described as consisting of a striped *dhoti* or *ghaghra* (Skirt) with the king's consort or *Rani* (Hindu queen) usually wearing a *sari* or *ghaghra* reaching the ankles with a variety of patterns (Chandra, 1973: 92). These depictions contradict descriptions of clothing widely found within contemporary literature and the iconographic representations found on coinage and statues (Chandra, 1973: 92). Chandra (1973: 92) believes that these the representation of clothing seen within the caves was most likely a local touch by painters.

Occasionally, ladies in high positions are depicted wearing sewn garments, usually bodices of transparent gauze (Chandra, 1973: 93). Chandra identifies one particular woman found

in Cave 1 on the extreme right side between pillars who is wearing a skirt made of striped silk (Behl, 2006: 93) (Fig 51). The colour image from Behl (2006: 93) has been chosen to represent this image as opposed to the sketch from Chandra (1973: 93) due to the lines of the image being clearer in the coloured image.



Figure 51: Image of the maid lent against the pillar wearing a ghaghra (Source: Behl, 2006, 93)

The skirt of this figure is unlike any of the previously mentioned lower garments of women.



Figure 52: Close up of the ghaghra of the maid (red) (Source: Author adapted from Behl, 2006, 93)

There is an argument to be made for the skirt being stitched is that there is no belt holding the skirt up and there is no discernible way in which the skirt is held up. The skirt appears to sit on the figures hips as opposed to the waist and does not appear to have any form of belt to hold the material up. This indicates the possibility that the skirt may have some stitching to keep it in place. However, this figure may be more reminiscent of the Naga dynasty's female figures, where there is a distinct lack of a *Kayabandh*. Looking at the skirt, it is difficult to discern the level of fittedness. Nevertheless, the close relationship between the Naga and the Vakataka dynasties may mean that there was some level of stylistic cross-over between the two, with the painters of Ajanta adding their own stylistic interpretations.

This also appears evident on the figure of the Queen Sivali (fig 53). The image shows the queen appearing perplexed by her husband's decision to leave the palace and her (Behl, 2006: 89). She is shown wearing a *ghaghra* woven in the *ikhat* form and an upper garment of muslin (fig 54) (Behl, 2006: 89).

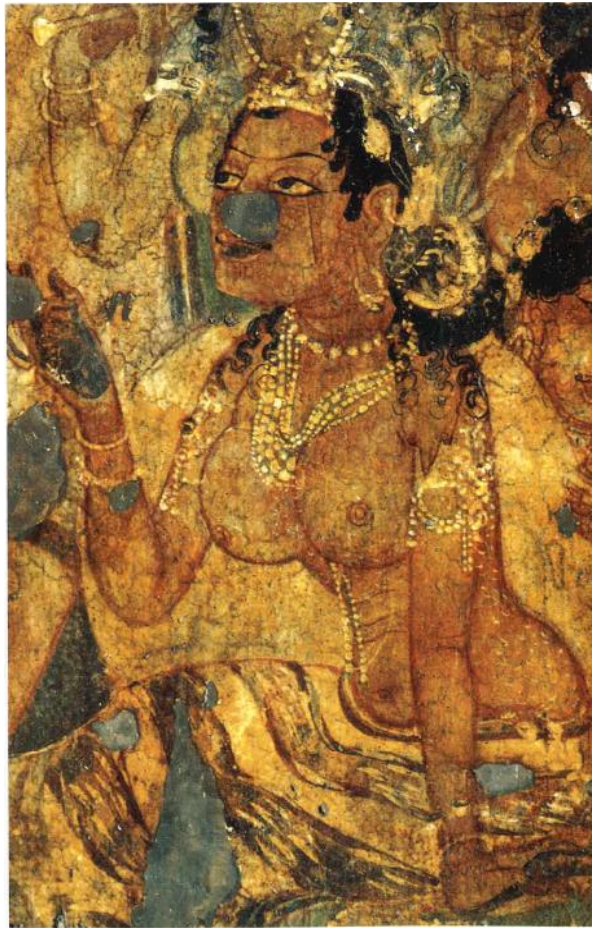


Figure 53: Figure of Queen Sivali from the Ajanta Caves (Source: Behl, 2006, 89)



Figure 54: Close up of the Queen's waist (Source: Behl, 2006, 89)

The *ghaghra* seen here is similar to that of the previous lady in that there is no discernible belt or tie for the skirt to be held up with. There is one main noticeable difference between the two figures: the length of the two skirts. The lady, or maid as she has been called by Chandra (1973) and Behl (2006), has a skirt that seemingly reaches her knees whereas Queen Sivali's skirt appears to reach her ankles, however it is difficult to discern as the figure is seated. There is a possibility that the queen is wearing a longer skirt due to the concept of morality. Previous to the GPF, very few of either Brahmanical or non-

Brahmanical religious tenants were written down so it is difficult to discern if the moral feelings contemporaneous to the Gupta era were reflected by earlier periods.

Contradicting the morality argument for the lengths of the skirt are the diaphanous top (Behl, 2005: 89). On the first image, the maid, has a minuscule detail that indicates that she is wearing some form of upper garment (fig 55).



Figure 55: Close up of the torso of the maid detailing the minuscule detail of a possible upper garment (black) (Source: Behl, 2006, 93)

This is also backed by the image of Queen Sivali (fig 56) which is a much clearer example of the thin upper garment worn in these images.



Figure 56: Close up of the torso of Queen Sivali showing the details of a possible upper garment in a sheer fabric (black)
(Source: Behl, 2006, 93)

The wearing of this textile clothing is further supported by the light gold flecking on the back of the queen, indicating the inclusion of gold into the fabric.

With the information that this is muslin, it can be discerned that this was viewed as an expensive or “elite” material. Ayyar states that India was the home of fine muslins and the fineness of Indian textiles has been praised by contemporary authors (Ayyar, 1987: 62). The trade of muslins with the Roman Empire has given academics an indication of where certain types of muslins come from. Within India, Chandra identifies two prominent areas from which muslins are produced: Gujarat and Dhaka (Chandra, 1973, 29-30). The muslins from Gujarat are described as coarse cotton (called *samatongene*) with the finest muslin being called “Gangetic” and manufactured in Dhaka (Chandra, 1973, 29-30). With the textile cloth from Gujarat being coarser than that from Dhaka, it is safe to believe that the

muslin in the images at Ajanta is closer to that produced in Dhaka than that which is produced in Gujarat. If the cloth in the image is in fact muslin, then it shows that the Guptas were wearing muslin from Dhaka. The Guptas wearing muslins from the Dhaka area is the most understandable due to there being very little distance between the Dhaka area and Pataliputra, the Gupta Capital.

If this is silk, then it is probable that it is Chinese silk, known as *cinamsuka*, due to this being viewed as finer than India's own silk production (Gopal, 1961). Chinese silk was first imported during the Mauryan Period (322-183BCE) and is referred to in early Buddhist texts, more specifically the *Arthashastra* (2nd century CE) (Dale, 2009: 81). Until the 15th century CE, Indian silk was made from wild cocoons and according to Dale (2009: 81) not knowing how to use mulberry silk cocoons or how to unravel the thread from these boiled cocoons. The Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan T'sang described the silk by its indigenous name *Kauseya* and in many of the Sanskrit texts it is described as "rough spun" (Chandra, 1973: 30). Due to this, again, it is not a far reach to consider that the textile being depicted is one of a finer quality than that produced within India itself. Both of these textiles would need to be imported into the Gupta Empire, indicating that there would be a value added to these. Not only this, but in the display of both the maid and the queen as wearing stitched garments, there is a clear attempt by the Gupta elite, regardless of if they commonly wore traditional dress, to associate themselves with historical figures of importance and then in turn use this often-seen monument as a base for how textile clothing was presented to the rest of the political formation.

Furthermore, there can be an argument made here again for Mohan's (2017) 'gaze-glaze'. As was stated in the previous two sections, in particular the coinage section, the luminosity presented here by the possibility of silk being present allows for there to be a relationship between the image, the viewer and the deific associations presented. In this context, it can be argued that the textile here is acting in the role of a delegate as it is furthering the ideas of the imperial polity. Additionally, the textile clothing is granted power as the elites would have been relying on the receiver's interpretation of the dress based on their wider social interactions, which may have included seeing the gold coinage of the period. Moreover, the idea of a coherent public can arguably be seen here. Although not Gupta in origin, it is possible that the patrons of the ACP may have been relying on or unintentionally furthering pre-existing imperial ideals. Furthermore, with the ACP being Buddhist in design, there is an association between the Brahmanical and the non-Brahmanical faiths through the medium of clothing, perhaps creating a more coherent public.

3.6.4: Male Dress of the Ajanta Caves

Moving on from the female clothing to the male clothing, again like the female clothing, cover all those involved within court life and a variety of those who are found within wider society. Due to this, again like the female clothing, the male textile clothing that will be discussed is specifically related to the kings and chiefs found within the paintings. This is because the iconographic depictions of textile clothing found in a wider context are often either deities or royalty, leading to issues with comparing the clothes of the lower echelons of society with those found outside of the Ajanta Caves.

The iconographic depictions of kings or high-ranking dignitaries was often a very simple costume consisting of an *antariya* and an *uttariya* (Chandra, 1973: 78). This is seen in the figure of the Nagaraja and of the seated Mahajanaka.



Figure 57: The Mahajanaka from the Ajanta Caves. The only textile clothing that the figure is wearing is a striped dhoti (red and yellow). (Behl, 2006)



Figure 58: Nagaraja wearing a striped or pleated dhoti (Chandra, 1973)

The Nagaraja (fig 58) is seen wearing a simple striped or pleated *dhoti*, that, unlike the female lower garment, is held up by a belt tied in several rounds on the right of the figure. The *dhoti* sits rather high on the legs of the figure, appearing to be just above the knees. The Mahajanaka appears to wear a *dhoti* that sits at a similar height as the Nagaraja, however, it is difficult to see if the king's *dhoti* is tied with a belt or if it is a stitched item. At the waist of the king, there is a knife in what appears to be a belt. Yet, this appears to be above where it could be used to hold up the *dhoti*. Nevertheless, this can be said to be evidence that the *dhoti* could be stitched, yet it is not possible for this to be conclusive.

The simplicity of the textile clothing is aptly compensated for by jewellery or adornment, typically a diadem of “exquisite” and design (Chandra, 1973: 78). It is doubtful whether diadems of such complicated design existed in actual use as contemporary literature does not describe. Unfortunately, in this area of discussion, Chandra, on this occasion, neglects to mention adequate sources for this assertion despite appearing seemingly confident. However, when viewing contemporary coinage iconography, there is a seemingly distinct lack of diadems in practical use, indicating that whilst this may be unreferenced, it is understandable why Chandra takes this position. Alternatively, if these mentioned fine

adornments were of religious or formal usage, they would not come within the scope of practical use. The usage of these adornments is supported by the gaze-glaze argument (Mohan,2017) which indicates that the wearing of luminous textile clothing likens the wearer to the divine and by extension the accompanying ornamental jewellery would follow the same supposition.

Looking at this, the image of the Nagaraja from the previous figure (58), it is aptly seen that he is wearing a crown of seemingly intricate craftsmanship, which is in direct contrast to the simplistic clothing. Here, it may be argued that the simplistic textile clothing combined with the elaborate headdress further showed the relationship between the textile clothing of the elite and the historic figures, yet it still allowed for enough differentiation through the usage of the headdress to ensure that the Guptas were seen as possibly more modern leaders.

Because of this, it could be argued that the king's *dhoti* is one of fine muslin due to being woven in the form of *ikhat* (Behl, 2005: 89-90). As previously discussed *ikhat* is one of the finest forms of weave and with Queen Silvia's upper garment likely being of Dhakan make is not unreasonable to suppose that the kings garments are of similarly fine quality, traded for outside of the Gupta sphere of control, if not better.

In a marked difference from these previously established kings the textile clothing of kings, nobles and others of prestige on the battlefield did often consist of a tight half sleeved tunic and seemingly stitched trousers (Behl, 2005: 198). An image of specific interest is that of King Sudasa of Uttar Pradesh, a region directly at the centre of the GPF and previously residing within the Kushan sphere of control, is depicted in this manner (fig 59).

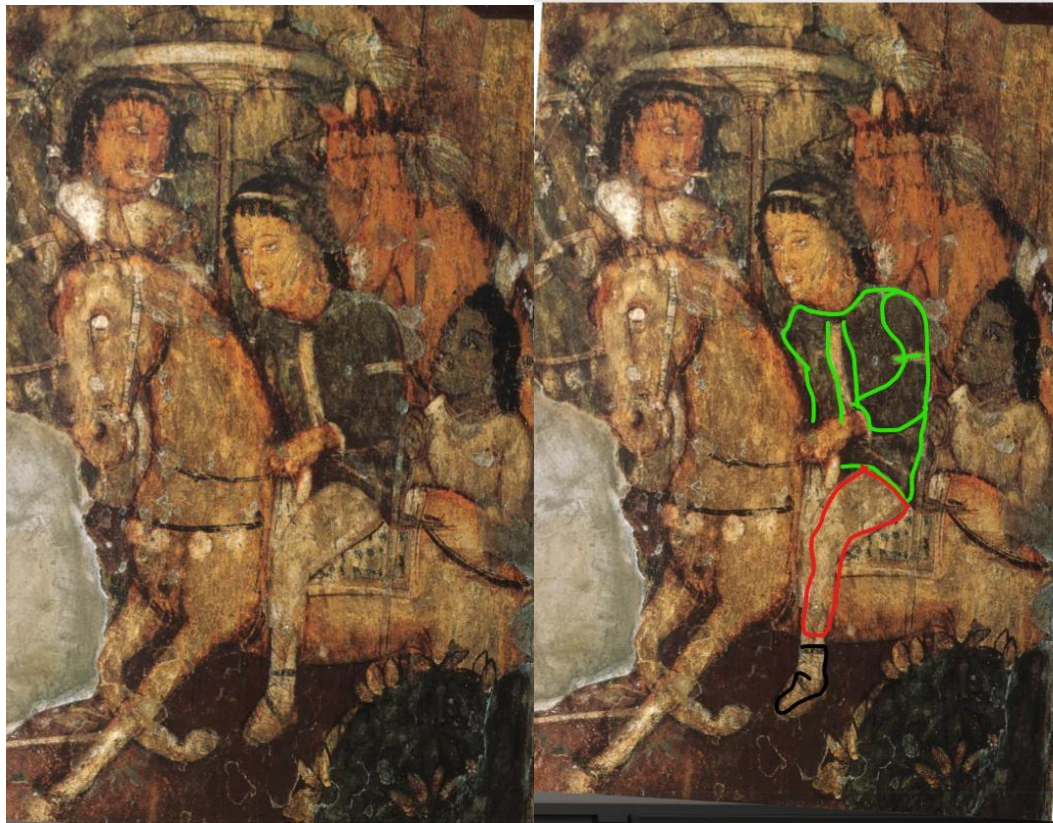


Figure 59: King Sudasa from the Ajanta Cave Paintings. He is wearing a blue battle tunic or overcoat and what appears to be close fitting stitched trousers. There is also evidence of boots similar to that of the Kushan period (Behl, 2006, 198)

The figure of King Sudasa (fig 59) is wearing a blue upper garment that is either a tunic or an overcoat but is clearly influenced by either the Gupta elites dress on coinage or it is a direct copy of Kushan imagery.

It is more likely that the iconographic depiction of textile clothing here is based on that of the Gupta coinage and, if this is the case, the iconographic dress of the kings on the Gupta coinage is that of war dress. This, in turn, informs the idea of soft power, in that the Guptas used their modes of dress to aid them in ensuring that the population viewed them as the rulers through the use of what is perceived as valuable textile clothing.

Specifically, the tight-fitting upper tunic directly resembles those found on coinage of Chandragupta I, II and Samudragupta. This signifies a correlation between what appears to be considered battle dress and the textile clothing of Gupta kings specifically used on direct iconographic representations of themselves on coinage, continuing to show themselves as the inimitable, unopposed rulers (Behl,2005: 198; Alkazi, 1983: 174-175). Alternatively, Ayyar 1987 states that the textile clothing indicated on coinage was not every day dress for the Gupta elite and thus by depicting themselves in such a powerful manner on their coinage to those outside the Brahmanical religious understanding it correlates the understanding of fierce warriors to the Gupta high echelons and relations to

foreign powers in place of deific associations. Alongside this, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the tunic trousers and boots have had become synonymous with the ruling class thanks to the Kushan and the Shaka dynasties having previously ruled vast swathes of the area later controlled by the GPF. This soft power influence using religion within the territory and war prowess external to the controlled territory highlighted and reinforced the standing of the Gupta political elite, be it religious or economical figure.

In the Ajanta Caves, an array of images detailing different forms of textile clothing have been documented here. Firstly, the encyclopaedic nature of these caves as a main source of knowledge for the dress of the Gupta era is undeniable. Nevertheless, it appears that the dress depicted in these caves is either that of religious or 'traditional' dress. This argument emerges due to the dress found on the Gupta gold coinage (discussed further in 3.4). The dress of the Gupta kings on these is not reflective of that found within the ACP which leads to the belief that the clothing here is, as previously stated, for the purpose of ritual. Additionally, the differences in dress may be due to the caves being external to the main body of the GPF and is merely indirectly influenced by the dress of the GPF, if at all. However, due to the direct association between the Vakataka and the Gupta dynasties, it is probable that there was some form of cultural exchange between the two.

This argument is furthered by the Udayagiri Caves (3.5) in which Chandragupta II displays himself in the dress of a *dhoti* which does not appear on the gold coinage of the period. Furthermore, female dress found in the cave paintings is reflected on the coinage which indicates that the Gupta idea of the traditional must still be reflected alongside the ideas encompassed by the absorption of new areas.

The final case study of this chapter is the Lichchhavi of Nepal, a dynasty that, like the Vakataka is associated with the Guptas through marriage.

3.7: The Textile Clothing of the Lichchhavis of Nepal in Pre-Gupta and Gupta Times

The Lichchavi dynasty of Nepal (400-800CE) were contemporaries of the Guptas who laid the foundations of Nepalese art as can be seen through the surviving coinage, monuments and inscriptions (Khandalavala, 1991). Originating in the Bihar region of India, the Lichchavi dynasty travelled to Nepal where they took much of the land from the Kirata Kingdom that was there. Chandragupta I married the Lichchavi princess, Kumaradevi, with his famous son, Samudragupta calling himself *Licchavidauhitra* or the “grandson of the Lichchavi” (Lahiri, 1974: 74). Nepal is referred to as a border kingdom of the GPF on the Allahabad Pillar inscribed under Samudragupta. This relationship gave the Guptas a foothold in the kingdom of Nepal, allowing them access to China and Europe through the Kathmandu Valley (Malla *et al*, 1996: 1-9). Notably the relationship between the Gupta and the Lichchavi brought Hinduism and Buddhism to the area, inspiring much of the art of the period. As stated in the previous sections, how clothing is depicted within iconography creates an air of exclusivity. Looking at the Gupta elite dress in the above section on the Ajanta Cave Paintings in conjunction with the widely distributed coinage, it can be concluded that the Gupta elite attempted to use textile clothing as a method of control over its internal population, but what about feudal territories? This case study will investigate the Gupta elites influence on the iconographic depictions of clothing within an unconquered territory. By comparing Pre-Gupta and Gupta iconography, this section aims to discover whether the influence of the Gupta’s choices of textile clothing, and through this the materials used to make this clothing, had an impact in the uncontrolled area. Before the Lichchavi people brought Indian influence into the area, the Kathmandu Valley region was under the influence of a different foreign power, the Kushan Empire. Many academics consider Nepal to be one of the edges of the Kushan Empire however by the time of the Guptas, the Kushan Empire had fragmented into semi-independent kingdoms in the north-western regions of India and Afghanistan (Tharpar, 2004: 221; Stein, 2010: 86; Robb, 2011: 55). With there being very little sculptural depictions of clothing in Nepal until the early Lichchavi period when the area had begun to come under Gupta influence, the iconographic depiction of clothing that will be relied on here is coinage. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, studying coinage comes with a variety of issues, chiefly amongst them who is being depicted. Like most coinage, Kushan coinage runs into the issue of only royalty being depicted on them.

As previously stated, this chapter is having to take an art-historical approach to studying the textile clothing of the GPF and its surrounding territories, so much of the language used in discussing the will be artistic in nature but will ultimately aid the overall investigation into textile clothing as a powerful material and what impact this had on the Gupta Political Formation.

3.7.1: Nepalese Clothing before the Guptas

As stated above, this section on pre-Gupta clothing will focus on the iconographic depictions found on Kushan coinage from Nepal. There are issues that come with studying the iconography of coinage, such as there only being royalty or deities depicted as discussed previously in this chapter. Yet, despite these difficulties, coinage is one of the best indicators of dress, however the numismatics in question must be contextualised for them to be of any use to a discussion. Unfortunately, due to a lack of primary source material directly relating to Nepalese textile clothing in the pre-Gupta period, this section of the chapter will be relying more on secondary sources to be able to further the discussion in a meaningful manner.

The two coins available for use from the British Museum are extremely worn coins of the Kushan king, Kanishka (fig. 60 a&b) causing issues with identifying the clothing from them. As Kushan dress on coinage has been previously discussed in the section on Clothing in the Gupta Homelands, the descriptions here will be brief.



Figure 60 a&b: Two coins depicting the Kushan King, Kanishka found in Nepal. The coins show Kanishka wearing an overcoat or tunic. The rest of the details are difficult to identify. (Source: British Museum)

Looking at the top coin, that is fig 60a, the base of the outline of the figure can be seen and begin to be identified as wearing a fitted overcoat or tunic. Due to the damage on the coin, not further identification to the nature of the textile clothing on this figure can be made.

The second figure, that is fig 50b, is slightly more intact than the coin in fig 50a. On this coin, the figure can be determined to be wearing an overcoat or tunic, as well as being able to identify that the figure is wearing trousers.

However, to be able to further the discussion, I have elected to look again at the Kanishka coin (fig 61) used earlier in this chapter as it gives better detail on the clothing of the coin.



Figure 61: Copper Coin of Kanishka I (127-150CE) from India. (Source: British Museum)

The clothing on the coinage is vastly different to that seen on the later sculptural iconography that appears in Nepal. This is, in part, due to the wider societal changes seen in Nepal with the take-over by the Lichchavi and their relationship with the Gupta elites. Later Nepalese iconographic representations of textile clothing are closer to the Gupta representations of traditional Indian garments, rather than the clothing that would have been worn in Nepal at the time.

On the subject of the textiles of India, in the *Hou Hanshu* it is quoted that expensive items from the Roman Empire could be found in *Tianzhu* (North-Western India) as well as “fine cotton cloths” (Hill, 2009: 31). It has been argued that in North-Western India during this period, much of the clothing was made from cotton or wool, despite one of the many silk routes running through the area.

The Kushan would import this Indian cotton (Mukhamedjanov, 1994: 286; Pigulevskaya, 1951) and with Nepal being on the border with India, it would not be unwise to assume that cotton would have been a staple clothing item of the area. However, it can be discerned from the *Rajatarangini*, that the common dress of the people would have been woollen clothing as opposed to cotton due to the cold weather (5.201.171).

Although it is about the area of Kashmir, the *Rajatarangini*'s discussion on woollen clothing focuses on the weather. Both Kashmir and Nepal have a similar climate due to their mountainous terrain (Apollo, 2017: 143-15). Wool would have been the main material for these areas, not only due the warmth it provides but because of the difficulty of growing cotton or cultivating silk in these areas (see Yang *et al.* 2008 for conditions of cotton growth & Hirasaka *et al.* 1970 for silk cultivation). The apparent rarity of cotton being grown within the area apart from what was traded leads to the conclusion that cotton became a textile of the elite during this period. If Nepal was treated like the rest of the Kushan Empire, it is safe to believe that the local understanding of elite dress was the same across the empire. Now taking elite dress as fitted fine cotton tunics and trousers, similar to those seen on the coinage in figures 60 and 61, the locals of Nepal would have viewed this as the clothing of royalty before the arrival of the Lichchavis and the Guptas.

However, with the arrival of the Lichchavis came the arrival of a new religion, syncretic of that with the Guptas, Brahmanism. With this, the view on what textile clothing was elite changed.

3.7.2: Nepalese clothing during the Gupta Period

The Lichchavi dynasty originated in Bihar (Singh, 2008: 437) and took over the Kathmandu Valley in around 400CE. The relationship between the Guptas and the Lichchavi goes back to the marriage between Chandragupta I and Princess Kumaradevi early on in his reign. There is much debate around when they married but there is a general consensus that it was around the year 305CE (Smith in Agrawal, 1989: 87; Chakrabarti: 1996: 185).

With the end of Chandragupta I's reign coming in around the mid-4th century (either c.335 or 350CE), it is less than 100 years before the Lichchavi took full control of the Kathmandu Valley. Deva (1991) argues that the Lichchavi, due to their Indian origins, had a "common artistic interest" (45) and that from the 5th century CE onwards, they had close contact with India but retained their own personality. In comparison to the textile clothing of Kushan period, the iconographic depictions of clothing after the arrival of the Guptas is arguably more like that of traditional India. Arguably, this is due to the close relationship between the Guptas and the Lichchavis, with the kingdom not only sharing a similar script but have similar iconographic depictions of clothing. However, it can also be argued that the Lichchavi were using it to their own benefit as a way to still have some discernible control in the relationship with the dominant Gupta Political Formation.

The Trivikrama, or Tribikram, from Lajimpat, Kathmandu (fig 62) is believed to be the oldest sculpture in Nepal (Deva, 1991: 45). Erected by the Lichchavi king Mandev[a], the statue is of one of the avatars of the Lord Vishnu (Visnu).



Figure 62: Trivikrama from Lajimpat, 467CE. The figure is wearing a *dhoti* that wraps round both the legs and is held with a belt (Source: Khandalavala, 1991).

The figure of the Trivikrama seems to be wearing a *dhoti* along with a belt at the waist, arm cuffs and a necklace. Unfortunately, the figure's head has been broken off, leaving only the impression of where it was. From this, it can be discerned that, like the kings in the Ajanta Caves, the figure is wearing a crown of delicate craftsmanship alongside his seemingly plain textile clothing. However, upon closer inspection, the textile clothing on the Trivikrama, that is the *dhoti* appears to be heavily embroidered along its bottom edge (fig 63).



Figure 63: Close up of the dhoti of the Trivikrama (Source: Khandalavala, 1991)

The heavy embroidery along with the stripes is again reminiscent of the dress of the kings at the Ajanta caves, specifically that of the Nagaraja (fig 58) that has been previously discussed. Interestingly, there is very little similarities between this representation of textile clothing and the representation found in the Udayagiri caves. Although reminiscent of the Nagaraja at Ajanta, the *dhoti* here appears to have its own particular style. The heavy embroidery is found only at the base of the garment, which is unlike the kings at the Ajanta caves, indicating that the Lichchhavi, although similar to the Guptas, kept their own independent identity from them.

Keeping with the relief of the Trivikrama, two of the three figures at the base of the image will be examined. The reason for only two of the figures being examined is that the third has no visible clothing that can be analysed.

The two figures (fig 64) will be called a (left) and b (right). The two figures appear to be giving votive offerings to the Visnu avatar and appear to be, like the Trivikrama, wearing just a *dhoti*.



Figure 64: Two donors on the base of the Trivikrama (Source: Khandalavala, 1991)

Looking closely at these two figures, they both appear to be wearing *dhotis* reaching past knee length. This is consistent with the depictions of priests from the Ajanta Caves. Although not previously discussed, the dress of the priestly class is that of a *dhoti* of ankle length and an *uttariya* draped over both shoulders (fig 65).



Figure 65: Prince Nanda as a monk in the Ajanta Caves (Source: Behl, 2006, 152)

The consistency in the priestly class gives an indication that although keeping their own style, the Lichchhavi elite fully shared the Brahmanical faith with the Guptas.

Interestingly, it has been noted that the Lichchhavi were close followers of Siva. However, the available artwork for looking at the iconographic depictions of clothing is mostly of Visnu. The most famous images to come out of Nepal have been noted as those of the deity favoured by the Gupta elites. Therefore, it can be supposed that the Lichchhavi may have been using depictions of Visnu to secure continued Gupta support and by mirroring their direct textile clothing style, the Lichchhavi acknowledge the importance of this material to the Gupta elites. By doing this, the Lichchhavi entered into a socio-political network between themselves and the Gupta elites in which textile clothing was given even more extrinsic value, granting the textile clothing power. With this power, the textile clothing was able to influence the interaction between the Gupta and the Lichchhavi elites. It may be argued that the adoption of Siva and the majority portrayal of Visnu in the traditional

textile clothing of India may have been a calculated political move to ensure the Guptas did not see them as a threat and ensuring that there would be continued trade between China and India directly through the Kathmandu valley without the GPF feeling the need to invade the territory.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Lichchhavi dynasty ensured their continued control of Nepal through employing the Gupta elite's own tactic of politicising textile clothing. This is seen through the *dhotis* of the figures on the relief of the Trivikrama. The textile clothing of these figures is similar but not identical to those found in the ACP. By mirroring the iconography of the Guptas, the Lichchhavis ensure that the local population within their kingdom are aware of the importance of the GPF, and by copying the clothing of the Gupta elite, either in the iconographic depictions of deities or if the Lichchhavi rulers themselves copied them, shows that these clothing styles were desirable. Through the iconographic depictions of textile clothing reflecting that of the Gupta elite and that of the Gupta elite mirroring, as previously stated, that of the main deities of the Hindu religion. In doing this, textile clothing has been granted, through association, power in the form of extrinsic value.

3.8: Comparisons and Conclusions

The question posed at the start of this chapter was:

How was clothing and the iconographic representations of clothing used as political strategy by the Gupta ruling elite?

In this chapter I have discussed four main case studies for the purpose of answering this question: Gupta Coinage, the Udayagiri Caves, the Ajanta Caves and the artwork of the Lichchhavi dynasty of Nepal.

These four case studies were introduced by a two-period chronological overview of the clothing of the sub-continent from 500BCE-500CE. This diachronic investigation of the changes in dress styles provided a basis for what has been called the ‘traditional dress’ of India for both male and female figures. This was then used to view Gupta era iconographic depictions of dress to establish what similarities and differences exist in them.

This was all interpreted through the application of two theories: Darhini’s (2006) Three-Tier power structure and Mohan’s (2017) ‘gaze-glaze theory’.

On the basis of the evidence discussed, I have found that textiles were employed as a political strategy in an attempt to pacify the population that was encompassed within their borders through dressing in manners that were seen as both regal and religious to convince the population of their political authority. This political ideology was then spread through the patronage of temples wherein the ruling elites displayed themselves in similar dress to the gods and on the coinage where they placed themselves alongside the symbols of the deities they worshipped, dressed like the former rulers of the areas or like the gods themselves. This reproduction of the political message would have served to an extent to unify the public by including those who understood the message and othering those who did not, creating the social hierarchy that we know as the caste system.

Using Darshini’s (2006) three-tier power structure alongside Smith’s proposal of pre-existing conditions for political sovereignty, I have shown that the Gupta elites relied on the mystification of the Vedic religious practices and symbols as evidenced by the iconographic depictions of textile clothing found in the ACP, Udayagiri Caves and on coinage. Furthermore, I have found that the belief that the Gupta’s were *vaishyas* can be argued to be true due to their need to continually reinforce their political authority through iconography that was most directly found on the coinage of the period. The adoption of the dress of previous rulers from areas recently encompassed into the political formation due

to the desirable resources available indicate that the elite's material needs were reflected in the political messages communicated through dress. This perspective shows that textile clothing has a much stronger political use than previously established and furthers the psychological and anthropological ideas of othering and discrimination.

Through representing themselves in this way, the ruling elite created an air of desirability by taking advantage of the seemingly 'mystic' nature of Vedic worship and symbols (Darshini, 2006), not only adopting the Vedic symbols but also dressing like their gods. Furthermore, on their gold coinage, the Gupta kings dressed in a similar fashion to the previous rulers of the area; that is fitted tunic, trousers and boots. However, it can be said that this is similar to the battle dress of King Sudasa, as seen in the Ajanta Cave Paintings (fig 39), and thus can be argued to represent the battle prowess of the Gupta dynasty. Nevertheless, it is an important factor to note that the men on the gold coinage of the Guptas reflected the previous local powers. In comparison to this, the queens found on the coinage mirrors the dress of goddesses, including Lakshmi (the goddess of luck and wife of Visnu) and Ganga (the goddess of the Ganges). This is often reflective of the traditional female dress of the period with them wearing a *sari* and *uttariya* and is the stark opposite of the males on the gold coinage.

However, as seen on the copper coinage, the male figure can be seen wearing the Indian *dhoti* and *uttariya* similar to those seen in the Ajanta Caves. As discussed in this chapter, these coins would have been seen by the lower castes of the population and, arguably, the kings were dressed as such to imitate the gods they worshipped. This dressing like the divine can also be found in the Udayagiri Caves in which Chandragupta II displayed himself in similar dress to the avatar of Visnu, Varaha. Here, the power of textile clothing is found in the way they are depicted and how they are viewed. This entangles the individual engaging with the iconography into the elite's ideas of exclusivity and creates an air of desirability surrounding the textile clothing. By entangling the individual viewing the iconography into these ideas, the textile clothing has been given value beyond its inherent intrinsic value of warmth and shelter; it has become a social status and can therefore be used to further agendas, which in the case of the Gupta elites was that of hierarchy and through this power. Here, it can be seen that clothing is only seen as powerful when found in the context of the social dynamic in which certain fabrics and styles were seen as more desirable, marking an individual's position within the now established clothing hierarchy.

In this chapter, I have found that textile clothing, alongside coinage, seemingly appears to be the biggest drivers behind the shaping and transforming of the Gupta Political Formation due to their ability to be delegates, captives, and proxies.

Textile clothing as depicted on coinage can be used as an example where the courtiers that were close to the Gupta monarchs would wear fitted trousers and tunics, reflective of those found depicted on the coinage. Through this reliance, the delegates, in this case the metals that are relied upon for coinage, became empowered. This is due to their ability to hold sway over those individuals and objects that became embroiled in the Gupta elites need for the metal for coinage. Beyond this, the coinage was used for the purchase of spices, many of which were not grown within the borders of the GPF. By using the coinage provided to them by the Gupta elites to purchase the spices outside of the political formation, the *satavahanas* ensured that the imperial message that was placed upon the coinage by the iconographic representations of the textile clothing. According to Katchadurian (2016), delegates gain “efficacy” in imperial reproduction, not through their singular operation but in confederation with an extensive assemblage with other delegates (Katchadurian, 2016, 69). Furthermore, the changes of the textile clothing on the iconography of Nepal can arguably be placed into the category of proxies due to their imitative nature. The local emulation of the dress of the figure of Visnu as the Trivikrama can be said to have been used to impress upon the Gupta Elites the willingness of the Lichchavi to be a satellite kingdom but may also be taken as the imposing of the Gupta political message through an attempt to institute the ideas of Brahmanical religion and, through this, the ideas of the caste system which the Gupta elites seemingly relied upon for their continued power.

These entanglements of power and desire extend into the next powerful material, metals.

Chapter 4: Metals

4.1: Introduction

In her 1995 *World Archaeology* paper, Nanyanjot Lahiri notes that ‘One would argued that the history of metal use in the Indian archaeological record is much more than a catalogue of artefact types and their technological makeup: it also denotes a cultural situation which seems to be very specifically Indian’ (Lahiri, 1995: 117).

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the interdependent relationship between humans and metals within the Indian Subcontinent during the time of the Guptas. The aim is to explore how metals exerted power and acquired agency through the material desires of the elites within the Gupta Political Formation, and how this entangled both Gupta elites and merchant guilds into networks of dependency based on the production and circulation of coinage.

Coinage provides a particularly promising avenue to investigate both the socio-political as well as economic implications of metals as powerful materials. Coinage is also the most abundantly available metal-based material culture from the Gupta period and has been covered extensively in relevant literature, especially in Sanjeev Kumar’s 2017 book *Treasures of the Gupta Empire*.

4.2: Methodology

In order to approach questions of Gupta elite entanglements with coinage, this chapter takes a broadly biographic approach, attempting to reconstruct the life of a piece of metal currency from the mining process to the spending or exchange of the coin. The following sections will also provide an historic overview of coinage in the Indian sub-continent, investigate the function of coinage as a socio-political tool and its use in the production and re-production of the imperial message (see 3.4.1), and final explored in terms of the interpretive framework of the *satrapal condition* (Katchadurian 2016).

4.3: Metal Use in India

In this section, there will be an investigation into the varied uses of metal in an effort to indicate the importance of metals in the general everyday lives of individuals.

Additionally, it is to identify how metals gained power and were able to entangle the individuals whose lives were impacted by them. This section will cover the literary and archaeological evidence of the use of metals, including mining and the metallurgical process.

4.3.1: Literary Evidence

References to the Sanskrit term *ayas* (metal, specifically bronze, copper and iron) appear earliest in the *Rig Veda* (c.1700-1100BCE) (2.20.8, 4.2.17), the *Arthashastra* (3rd century BCE) explains various roles of individuals surrounding the practice of mining (Chakrabarti, 1992) and the *Atharva Veda* (~1000-900BCE) and *Satapatha Brahmana* (8th to 6th century BCE) refer to *krsna ayas* (black metal) which is possibly iron (or iron ore or items not made from smelted iron) or blackened copper (Chakrabarti, 1992; 1996).

There is also documentary evidence from Vedic texts and the Buddhist Jatakas suggesting that cattle and gold necklaces (*niksha*) constituted the most frequent means of payment before the emergence of coinage. There is no evidence of silver being used in payments earlier than the grammar of Panini (~7th century BCE) (Cribb, 2003: 18). Dates for the use of silver coinage have been based on the date of the grammar (Cribb, 2003: 18; Falk, 1991: 117; Luders, 1940: 475). However, scholars have argued that the date of the grammar should be based on the coinage, with Cribb (1985: 542) suggesting a date before 350BCE (Cribb, 2003: 18; Falk, 1991: 117; Luders, 1940: 475).

These Brahmanical texts underline the religious position of copper as the purest of the base metals (Lahiri, 1995: 118). Contrastingly, canonical Buddhist and Jaina literature did not consider the religiosity of metals due to their lack of significance in either order (Lahiri, 1995: 118). None of the texts give reference to the everyday use of metal objects. Taken together, such references suggest that the Brahmanical preference for copper likely had ramification outside of the religious context.

In fact, ancient textual data suggest that this superiority of copper over alloys goes back to the earliest expositions of rituals contained in the *Vedas* (1500-600BCE). In the extensive descriptions of public rituals in Vedic literature, one is struck by the singular sparseness of alloyed artefacts.

Reference to *ayas* (translated in this instance to copper alloy) in the *Yajurveda* (*Taittiriya Samhita* 4.7.5) is one of the rare allusions where a term is used specifically for an alloy (Lahiri, 1995a). *The Brahmanas* are similarly silent on alloys in their treatment of such rituals. Incidentally, this is contrasted by the use of pure copper articles in Vedic ritual and the ritual prestige accorded to them: for instance, the *Satapatha Brahmana* (700BCE) notes the use of a copper razor in the *Vaisvadeva*, *Varuna praghosa* and the *Sakhamedha* offerings (2.6.5.4-7) and copper needles and a slaughtering knife in the *Ashvamedha Yajna* (13.2.10.3; 13.2.2.16). Moreover, 2.6.4.5 of the *Satapatha Brahmana* compares a copper razor with a Brahmin, ritually the dominant caste group in India, for '*Brahman is fire, and*

fire is of reddish (lohita) colour; hence a copper razor is used’; the position of privilege that copper enjoyed is obvious from this association (Lahiri, 1995: 120).

In simple domestic sacrifices, there are abundant references to alloyed vessels in the *Sutras* (800-500BCE) which treated the technicalities of domestic rituals in detail (Lahiri, 1995: 120). However, even there, knives, razors and needles continue to be of copper as, for instance, the knives to be used in the *Caturmasyas* or seasonal sacrifice and the razors in the tonsure ceremony (Lahiri, 1995: 120).

This cultural preference is also suggested by the passage in the *Balakanda* section of the *Ramayana* (3.36.17-19; Core sections: 3rd c.BCE) that describes the origins of different metals in a metaphorical vein (Lahiri, 1995: 121). With the casting off by Ganga of the ‘unbearably brilliant embryo’ turned into gold and silver, the acrid quality produced copper and iron, while the impure elements became tin and lead. That tin and lead were metals extensively used for alloying copper is not without significance (Lahiri, 1995: 121).

This propensity for regarding copper as ritually superior to alloys is evident in the *Puranas* as well (date: 4th – 5th centuries CE onwards) (Lahiri 1995a). It is reflected among other things, in the traditional practice of using copper vessels in propitiating different deities, and this continued into the 19th century, where such articles were extensively linked with polluting elements like excreta (Lahiri, 1995: 122). Finally, the ritual significance of copper articles is suggested by the Classical Sources (Lahiri, 1995: 123). In the 4th century BCE, Nearchus noted the practice of carrying copper vessels in festival processions (McCrinkle, 1901: 73, 192; Lahiri, 1995: 123). In the early centuries CE Philostratos, the biographer of Apollonius of Tyana, also mentioned what were apparently copper tablets or sculptures in a shrine at Taxila (McCrinkle, 1901: 73, 192; Lahiri, 1995: 123).

It is important to note that the seemingly lowest denomination of Gupta coinage, identified as copper due to the faded nature of the images, has the image of the king in what are arguably religious articles of clothing (see section 3.4 for analysis). This could be argued to be a deliberate move on the part of the Gupta elites to deepen their personal connection between themselves and the gods that they worship and, moreover, further entrench the public perception of the Gupta elites as directly connected to the gods. This use of copper coinage allowed for the reproduction of the imperial message, as well as ensuring that the Gupta elites were associated with Vedic ritual (Smith, 2015: 6; Darshini, 2006). This arguably makes the copper itself into a delegate as it, albeit unintentionally, carries the imperial message stamped on it.

4.3.2: Archaeological Evidence

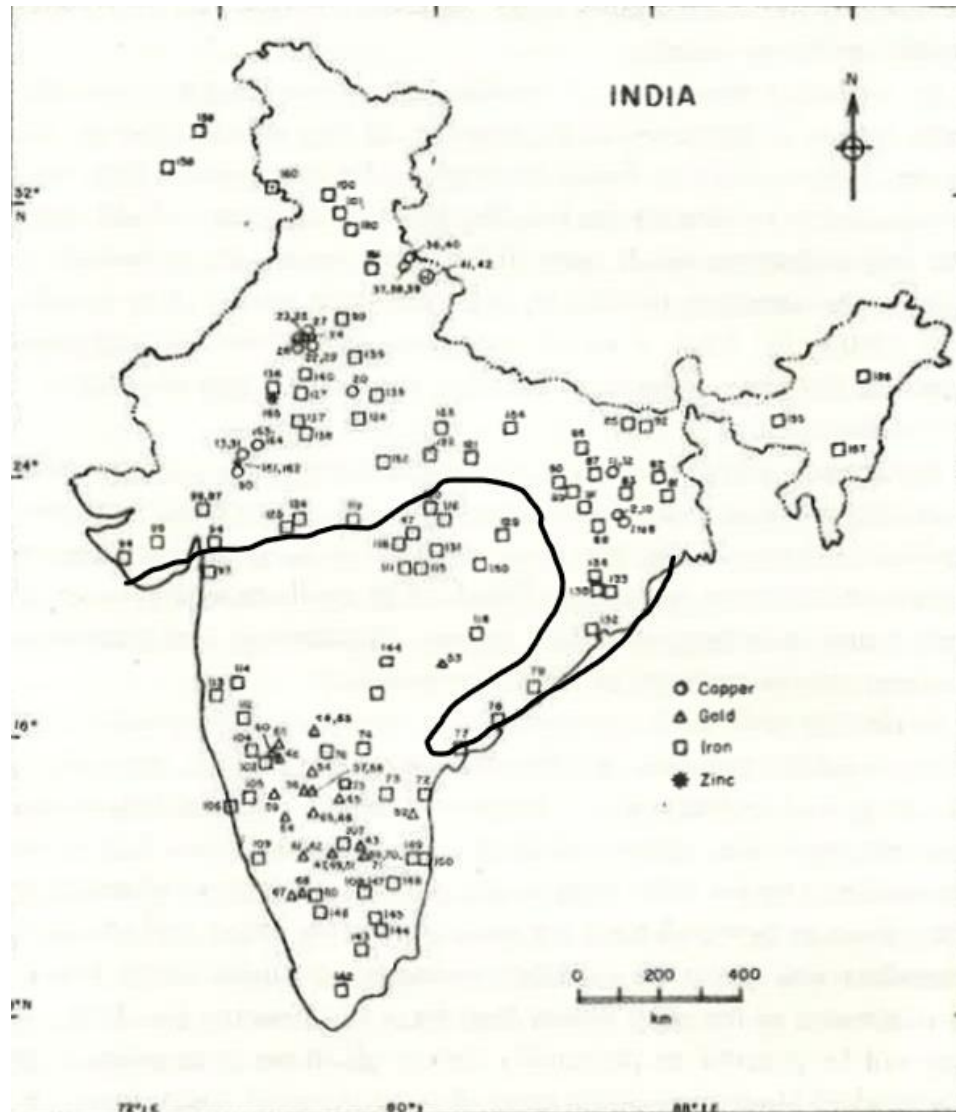
The archaeological record for metal use in India begins prior to the 3rd millennium BCE (Tewari, 2003). In this section, archaeological evidence for metal use will be discussed, with the most prominent being that of gold, silver, and copper. This is due to these metals use as currency during the Gupta period.

Lahiri (1995: 117) states that working with high purity copper is an element that runs through the entire spectrum of Indian archaeological data. Archaeometallurgical perspectives on ancient copper and alloy tech in India have often worked within a simplified evolutionary picture in which working in copper of high purity is (mis)taken as marking an elementary stage which is then rendered technologically superfluous once alloying with arsenic, tin lead, zinc etc, which makes copper more easily usable is mastered (Lahiri, 1995: 118). Within such frameworks, what is considered early Indian metallurgical tradition – continued presence of copper artefact at sites which were producing alloys – is considered as being related to a scarcity of alloying resources (Agrawal, 1971: 168). This perceived ‘scarcity’ is questionable due to the presence of alloying metals within or in the immediate peripheries of distribution zones of early cultures (Lahiri, 1992; 1995: 118).

Iron artefacts have been found in Copper/Bronze Age contexts at the Harappan (~3300-1300BCE) levels at sites including Mundigak, Chanhudaro, Lothal and Allahdino amongst others. Chakrabarti and Lahiri (1994: 14-15) expressed the notion that the technological basis for the production of iron was present at various sites which have Mature Harappan (~2600-1900BCE) and Late Harappan (~1900-1300BCE) affinities (Tewari, 2010: 81). Tewari (2010: 90) found that this early date for iron in South Asia has disturbed existing ‘models’ that postulated iron’s introduction into the subcontinent from elsewhere in c.1000BCE. This theory has been heavily disputed with Chakrabarti (1974: 354) stating that ‘there is no logical basis to connect the beginning of iron in India with any diffusion from the west, from Iran and beyond’ and further (1976: 122) ‘that India was a separate and possibly independent centre of manufacture of early iron’. Tewari (2003; 2010) gives a variety of archaeological evidence from sites across India (2003: 538-543).

Alongside the evidence presented here for the use of both copper and iron, it is important to consider the sources for these two metals as well as that of silver and gold.

Shrivastava’s (2006: 4) map (10) detailing the pre-industrial mining and smelting sites of India present an opportunity to identify potential resource areas for Gupta mining.



Map 10: Pre-Industrial (pre-19th century) Mining and Smelting Sites of Copper, Gold, Iron and Zinc with the black line indicating the southern reach of the GPF (Source: Shrivastava, 2006, 4; Edited by Author)

Looking at the map, there are only copper and iron mining and smelting sites located in the GPF's supposed homeland of Bihar (Map 10). This is of course a map showing modern mining and smelting sites. However, the distribution of modern mining and smelting locales provides a reasonable basis, alongside the archaeological evidence of Tewari (2003; 2010), to suggest a lack of gold or silver in northern India.

Today, much of the gold comes from the south of the country – more specifically the south-west. During the Gupta period, this region was ruled by the Kadamba dynasty of Karnataka (~345-525CE). The relationship between the Guptas and the Kadambas is seen through the Talagunda Pillar, which indicates the marriage of one of the Kadamba princesses to Kumaragupta's son, Skandagupta (Majumdar, 1986: 240; Moraes: 1990: 27).

Much of this dynastic relationship appears to have been one based on trade, with one of the primary materials being gold, and another being spices (discussed further in chapter 5).

The Kolar Gold Fields and the Hutti Gold Mines are two of the oldest mines in the country and both fall within the remit of the Kadamba dynasty.

As the Gupta state was relying on trade relations to procure gold, its elites had to rely on traders and merchant guilds to ensure the continual supply.

One thing to note is that the map 10 does not show silver mining or smelting sites. This is because silver does not occur in India as a primary mineral source. However, Kuppuram (1989) suggests that there are two secondary sources:

1. Silver of light colour in combination with gold from the Kolar mines
2. Silver associated with galena (argentiferous)

Shrivastava (2006: 108) gives four possible sources for silver:

1. Native silver – rare and almost never found
2. Electrum – a natural gold silver alloy which Shrivastava believes supplied a “sizeable amount” of silver in antiquity (Shrivastava, 2006: 108).
3. Sulphide ores of lead, copper and zinc. In antiquity, the production of silver ores was mainly based on smelting lead ores and refining of lead (Shrivastava, 2006: 108).
4. Silver sulphide, associated with sulphides of arsenic, antimony and silver chloride (Bhardwaj, 1979; Shrivastava, 2006: 108).

Both agree that silver is mostly associated with gold at the Kolar mines in Mysore.

Shrivastava (2006: 108) also suggested Anantapur in Madras. As well as the association with gold ore, silver was also associated with lead ores found in Bihar and Orissa (modern day Odisha) from the districts of Bhagalpur, Manbhum, Monghyr and Singhbhum (Brown and Dey, 1955; Marshall, 1951; Spate, 1964). Silver has also been associated with zinc as reported from Zawar in Rajasthan (Craddock *et al*, 2017). Therefore, it can be argued that the smelting sites for silver were often found with those for gold, zinc, copper and lead. In the style of the Kshatrapas before them, much of the Gupta silver currency was primarily circulated in the western territories of India, indicating that the main sources of silver were to be found in that area of the empire. Nevertheless, there is the distinct possibility that the Guptas were trading for silver from the Kolar gold fields as well as gold.

The archaeological evidence for smelting includes the following sites. Craddock *et al* (2017) excavated at the zinc mines at Zawar, focusing specifically on ‘site 30’ where the function has been described as zinc production and small retorts with a date range of 530CE+50 (Craddock *et al*, 2017: 86). The zinc mines at Zawar are where Kumar (2017) suggests that the Guptas received most of the silver from that was used for minting silver currency.

According to Craddock *et al*. (2017: 53), it was not an uncommon feature for mines to have smelting sites attached to them (fig 66). The excavations carried out by Craddock *et al* yielded the presence of furnaces at the main mining site.

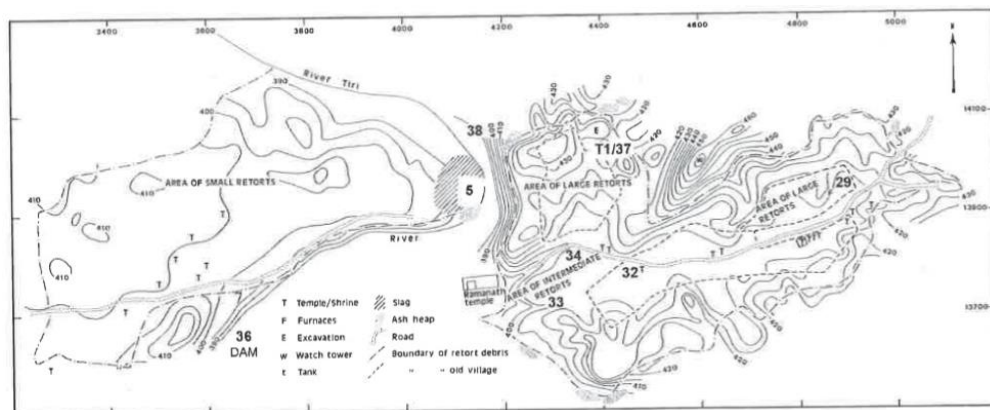


Figure 66: Zawar: Location of the sites excavated in the Old Zawar area (Source: Craddock *et al*, 2017, 86)

Craddock *et al* (2017:86-7) found that the mines were worked principally over two thousand years ago, well over a thousand years earlier than the zinc smelting site. The furnaces were built of rough, fired bricks, heavily mortared with mud, and originally stood eight courses high, yet the coursing was very irregular and often bricks were replaced by pieces of refractory (Craddock *et al*, 2017: 92).

Craddock *et al* (2017) states that the essential equipment for forging is as follows:

1. A furnace to extract the bloom
2. A second hearth for heating during forging
3. An anvil
4. A pair of tongs

At the Zawar site, the furnaces indicate the presence of a state sanctioned smelting area which can lead to the belief that the pre-smelted metals would not be travelling far to be forged. This indicates that the Gupta elites directly influenced when and where smelting happened. Additionally, the elites may have controlled the laws surrounding the process itself (discussed further below).

Smithing was given such prominence in the mercantile community that individuals who practiced the profession were highly specialised (Table 6) (Kuppuram, 1989: 9).

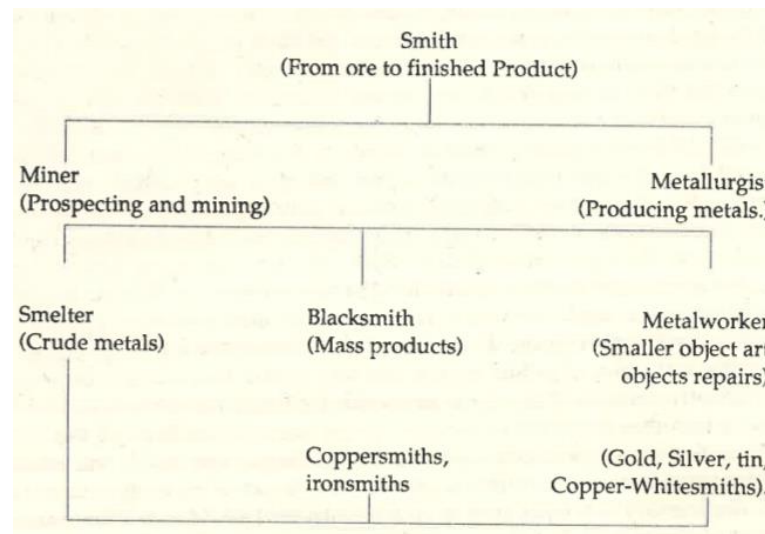


Table 6: Sub-Division of Smithing (Kuppuram, 1989, 9)

There is little known about the actual process of smithing during the Gupta Period, but it is known that there were a number of guilds dedicated to the practice of metallurgy. There were *suvarnakāra* (goldsmith), *kansakara* (metal utensil makers) mentioned in the *Jambudvīpa-prajñapti* and *sauvarnika* (gold dealers) and *hairanyika* (dealers in coins – perhaps bankers or money changers) named in the *Mahāvastu* (c.2nd c. BCE-4th c. CE).

4.4: The use of Coinage in the Indian Subcontinent

4.4.1: An Indian Coinage Tradition

The history of coin use in the Indian Subcontinent has been argued to have begun with the Greeks (Goyal, 1999; Singh, 2008a; 2017: 165; Kulke & Rothermund, 2010: 76).

However, in his 2003 study, Cribb found that, based on evidence from the Chaman Hazouri hoard, the origins of the Indian coinage tradition may in fact be an adoption of a local Afghan imitation of Greek coinage (Cribb, 2003: 18).

Cribb states that the ‘down-dating’ for the origin of the Indian coinage tradition is somewhere in the late 5th or 4th century BCE, which makes the Greek origins possible. P.L. Gupta’s chronology, by contrast, places the origins of Indian coinage earlier than the invention of coinage in the West (before 600BCE) (Cribb, 2003: 18; Gupta, 1979).

Additionally, as mentioned above, there is no evidence of silver used in payments earlier than the grammar of Panini which is dated to around the mid-4th century BCE by Cribb (1985: 542; Falk, 1991: 117).

Contrastingly, there is plenty of evidence from the Achaemenid Empire for silver, both as bullion by weight and in the form of coinage, a tradition reaching back to the earlier Mesopotamian practice of making payments of weighed out silver (Cribb, 2003: 18; Van De Mierop, 2014: 21). The Chaman Hazouri hoard may suggest that the Achaemenid monetary practice was brought into the eastern provinces of the Achaemenid Empire (Cribb, 2003: 18). Adoption of Achaemenid practices in the eastern provinces is something that has already been briefly discussed in chapter 2 with the adoption of non-local vessel forms in NWFP, Pakistan in the 1st millennium BCE (Petrie *et al*, 2008). Petrie *et al* (2008: 11) suggested that the emulation was an attempt by the local non-elites to ensure their participation in the new socio-political sphere created by the presence of the non-local elites.

The emulation of silver coinage by Afghan locals may be a similar attempt to participate in the new social dynamic presented by the Achaemenids. Additionally, the use of silver coinage in India appears to be a break in India's earlier monetary traditions of using cattle and gold ornaments (Cribb, 2003: 18). Therefore, Cribb (2003: 18) concludes that India's coinage tradition was imported from the Greek world via Achaemenid Afghanistan.

The circulation of coins in the Greek tradition in the Indo-Greek kingdoms of modern Afghanistan and Pakistan continued into the 3rd to 1st centuries BCE, increasing the influence of Greek coinage designs, technologies and denominations on the Indian tradition (Cribb, 2003: 5). Due to this, Indian copper issues in the north-west of the Indian Subcontinent during the 2nd century BCE were struck between dies in the Greek manner and had realistic animal representations included in their designs (Cribb, 2003: 5). The technology of die striking gradually became the norm in India, replacing the punch-marked coinage (Cribb, 2003: 5).

Die striking remained the norm for coin minting into the Gupta period, with Kumar (2017) noting that the real Gupta gold currency was die struck and not cast (as opposed to forgeries, see also below). Additionally, Balasubramaniam and Mahajan (2003: 332) note that, even though there are no extant texts detailing the technical method by which gold coins were minted, it is possible to obtain insights into coin making by studying the available coins at higher magnifications and resolutions. Balasubramaniam and Mahajan (2003: 332) analysed the surface topological features through the use of scanning electron microscope (SEM) to identify imprints and typical surface characteristic of coin-making technology. The coin chosen by Balasubramaniam and Mahajan (2003: 332) is a standard-

type gold *Dinara* of Samudragupta (fig 67) which weighed 7.63 grams (118 grains) with the standard for Samudragupta's coins coming in between 114-121 grains (See also ch. 3)

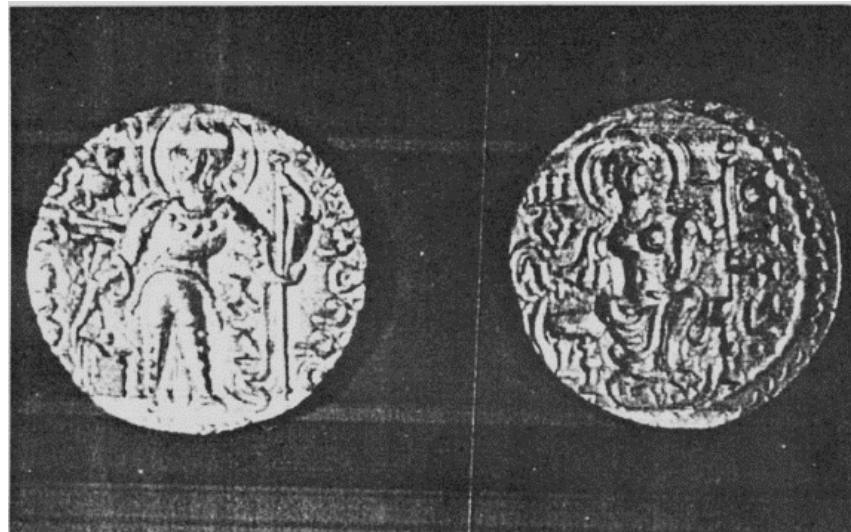


Figure 67: Coin of Samudragupta (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 333)

Balasubramaniam and Mahajan (2003: 340-1) state that on this coin the monarch's face appears to be blurred in the left field of the obverse due to multiple die marks (fig 68). The higher magnification reveals 'river-like patterns' with three distinct striations (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 341),

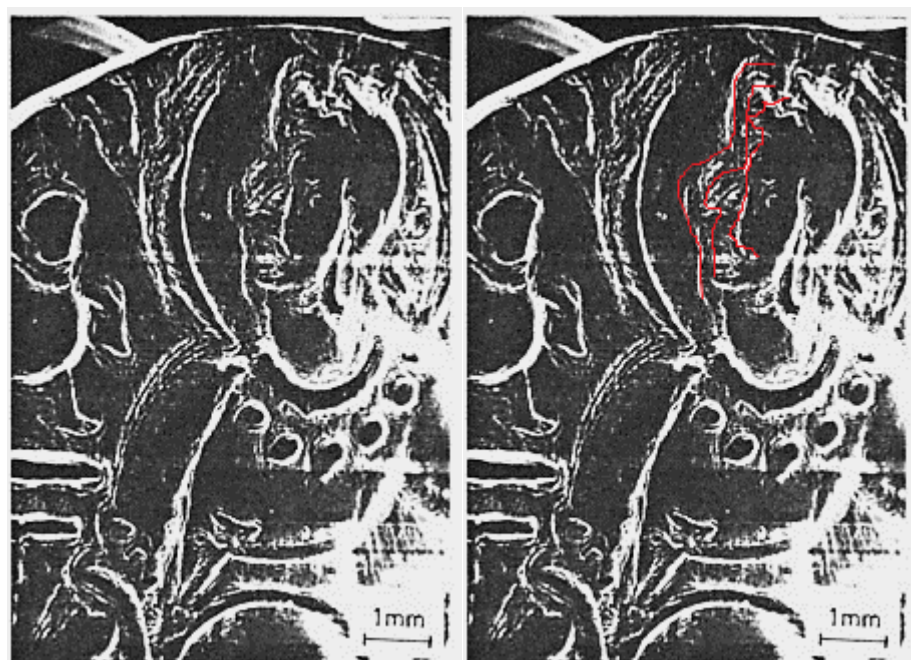


Figure 68: Close up of the face of Samudragupta. Image on the right indicates the blur with red lines (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 334)

This is because the left side of the reverse corresponds to the right side of the obverse (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 341). Balasubramaniam and Mahajan (2003: 341) go on to note that these observations are wholly indicative of the coin being struck three

times. Additionally, the river-like pattern was created during the three times the die was struck due to the small relative motion of the coin blank (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 341). This suggests that the coin was not held rigidly between dies during striking (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 341).

Another interesting observation is that there are cracks visible near the monarch's head (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 341). It is worth noting that similar cracking features can be observed in several other Gupta gold coins indicating that this cracking must be related to the stresses created in the coin blanks during the striking (Balasubramaniam and Mahajan, 2003: 341). Balasubramaniam and Mahajan (2003: 341) believe that the presence of these cracks indicates that the coin blanks were in the cold condition during minting and that the metallurgical operation can be termed as cold working rather than hot working.

In western India, the circulation of Greek coins into Indian territory led to close copying which persisted for several centuries (Cribb, 2003: 5). Local rulers in Western India issued their own imitation of the Greeks coins, retaining their own adaption of the typical Greek portrait head, surrounded by a Greek inscription on the front, and replacing the image of Athena surrounded by Kharosthi script on the back with a group of Indian symbols surrounded by Brahmi, initially together with Kharosthi (Cribb, 2003: 5). The local adaptations were issued for around 300 years until their issue was taken over by the Guptas and spread further east into central India (Cribb, 2003: 5).

Here, it is important to mention how the Gupta coinage reflected earlier styles not only in iconography but in names and weights as well. As was discussed in chapter 3, the main currency during the Gupta era was the gold *dinara*. The Kushana kings also referred to their gold coins as *dinara*. Rapson (1905) proposed that the term was derived from the *Denarius Aureus* which is worth 25 silver *denari* (Kumar, 2017: 67). The Kushana gold coins were struck to a weight standard based on the Roman *aureus* of 120 grains (1 = 0.06479 grams) (Kumar, 2017: 67).

Successive Gupta kings issued gold *dinara* and over time, the weight and gold purity of these coins varied widely, not just from king to king, but even within the coins issued by the same king (Kumar, 2017: 67). Due to this wide variety in weights and purity, it is not clear if the value of a *dinara* was based on the actual economic value of the coin based on weight and purity or if the value was implied (Kumar, 2017: 67).

There is evidence that firmly suggests that the value of Gupta currency continued to go down over time and, thus, that it continued to be debased over by successive kings (table 7) (Kumar, 2017: 67).

Weight Range and Total Quantities by King for Gupta gold Dināras

KING	TYPE	Low Wt.	High Wt.	Database Avg Weight	No. of coins	
Chandragupta I	Archer- Goddess on Throne	7.34	7.98	7.72	130	
	Couch Type Group 1- Goddess seated facing front	7.44	7.81	7.65	7	
	King & Queen Type	7.06	8.03	7.59	155	
	King & Queen on Couch Type	7.34	7.62	7.54	5	
	Rajadanda Type	7.34	8.03	7.66	13	
Samudragupta	Archer	7.02	7.80	7.53	72	
	Asvamedha	7.19	7.95	7.52	143	
	Battle-Axe	7.20	7.99	7.53	86	
	Javelin	6.50	7.77	7.56	723	
	Lyrist	7.06	7.99	7.62	93	
	Lyrist - Variety A (broad flan)	7.06	7.88		73	
	Lyrist - Variety B (small flan)	7.56	7.86		10	
	Rajadanda (Regional -Punjab issue)	7.55	7.77	7.67	19	
	Tiger-Slayer	7.19	7.84	7.57	17	
	Kachagupta	Chakradhvaja Type Class I	6.90	7.80	7.48	126
Chakradhvaja Type Class II with Garudadhvaja		7.64	7.80	7.77	4	
Chandragupta II	Archer - Lotus - Half dinara	3.30	3.68	3.53	3	
Chandragupta II	Archer - Goddess on Lotus	7.28	8.40	7.90	1450	
	Archer - Lotus - Sun symbol on obverse	7.87	8.38	8.02	5	
	Archer - Lotus - Crescent symbol on obverse	7.87	8.56	8.33	38	
	Archer - Lotus - Chakra symbol on obverse	8.30	8.60	8.46	24	
	Archer - Lotus - Fire Altar symbol on obverse	8.56	9.19	8.65	12	
	Archer - Lotus - Srivatsa symbol on obverse	9.10	9.10	9.10	1	
	Chhatra Type	7.48	8.30	7.78	255	
	Chakravikrama Type	7.45	7.56	7.51	3	
	Couch Type Group 2 - Goddess seated sideways	7.68	7.79	7.71	2	
	Horseman Type	6.76	8.30	7.78	292	
	King & Queen Type	8.03	8.03	8.03	1	
	Lion-Slayer Type with Cornucopia	7.21	7.84	7.68	9	
	Lion-Slayer Type with Lotus	7.21	8.27	7.78	241	
	Kumaragupta I	Archer Type	7.80	8.22	7.99	507
		Apratigha	7.46	7.97	7.81	17
Asvamedha Type (Right: 6pc) (Left: 6pc)		7.92	8.50	8.20	12	
Chhatra Type		7.78	8.04	8.24	5	
Elephant-Rider		7.88	8.37	8.15	11	
Elephant-Rider Lion Slayer		7.50	8.59	8.10	15	
Garuda Type		1.29	1.34	1.30	86	
Horseman		7.79	8.34	8.14	697	
Karttikeya Type		8.04	8.33	8.20	96	
King & Queen Type		8.21	8.21	8.21	1	
Lion-Slayer Type		7.34	8.24	8.14	145	
Lyrist Type		7.74	8.17	8.03	4	
Swordsman		7.89	8.16	8.06	23	
Tiger-Slayer Type		8.09	8.30	8.17	76	
Rhinoceros-Slayer Type		7.96	8.30	8.15	11	
Ghatokachagupta		Archer	8.78	9.51	8.97	2
		Skandagupta	Archer - Variety A - Skandagupta Reverse	7.85	9.40	8.74
Archer - Variety B - Kramaditya Reverse			7.11	9.50	9.02	183
Chhatra Type			8.39	8.42	8.40	4
Horseman Type			8.34	9.10	8.72	2
Garuda Type			1.30	1.33	1.31	3
King & Lakshmi Type			8.16	9.55	8.49	36
Lion-Slayer Type			9.12	9.12	9.12	6

Chandragupta III	Archer	7.87	8.56	8.40	38
	Horseman	8.39	8.40	8.40	2
Jayagupta	Archer	8.35	8.35	8.35	1
Narasimhagupta I	Archer	8.54	10.44	9.44	123
Samudragupta II	Archer	9.30*	9.40*	9.40	1
Kumaragupta II	Archer	8.93	9.40	9.21	31
Budhagupta	Archer	9.21	9.45	9.33	10
Nameless: Vikramaditya	Archer Type. Name in Legend Vikramaditya	8.99	9.53	9.33	49
Prakasaditya	Horseman Lion Slayer Type	8.81	9.47	9.32	62
Nameless: Prakramaditya	Archer Type. Name in Legend Prakramaditya	9.39	9.46	9.22	2
Chandragupta IV	Archer Type with Altar Symbol	8.56	9.30	8.60	16
Vainyagupta	Archer	9.37	9.59	9.44	4
Narasimhagupta II	Archer	9.20	10.40	9.50	52
Kumaragupta III	Archer	9.37	9.80	9.59	38
Vishnugupta	Archer	9.10	9.86	9.61	42

Table 7: Summary of the Data from the Database on Gupta Gold Coins (Source: Kumar, 2017: 79-80)

Kumar (2017) notes that although the weights of coins varied between Gupta kings, the actual gold content of the coins themselves did not fall dramatically until the reign of Vishnugupta (~540-550CE). Maity specific gravity analysis showed a gold percentage value of 69.65% which then drops drastically to only 20.63%, suggesting that the royal treasury was struggling to produce coins of an acceptable value (Kumar, 2017).

Despite fluctuations in weights and purity (table 7), gold coins appear to be given intrinsic value, as evidenced by land purchases (Kumar, 2017). In the copper plates from these purchases, there is no mention of what type of issued coin could be used for the purchase nor is there a statement on the colour the coins should be, merely that the purchaser should bring a certain number of *dinaras*, which were widely accepted as gold (Kumar, 2017). Due to the intrinsic value given to gold coinage, Kumar (2017) has suggested that the gold *dinaras* were not every-day currency and were mostly used for high value transactions, such as the purchase of land or the building of a temple.

With this in mind, it can be assumed that the *dinaras* were not weighed daily in order to check their economic value, but they were actually seen as a fixed unit of currency. When investigating this, Kumar (2017) looked at a variety of inscriptions from land purchase to royal gifts, and found that the issue, weight and currency of the coin was of no consequence. The price for the purchase of one kulyvapa (roughly 0.4 hectares of land) (Maity and Basham, 1957: 102) of barren land remained consistent at three *dinaras* (Kumar, 2017). Despite the inconsistency in the coinage, it has been suggested that the mints were given target weights (Altekar, 1957; Kumar, 2017). However, as found by Kumar (2017), this is not the case for the actual coins.

Previous studies conducted on the amount of gold found in the coins of the Gupta kings were based purely on colouration and this led to scholars (Altekar, 1957; Gupta, 1952; Shrivastava 1996; Kumar 2017) being quick to declare the debasement of gold currency based on the declining fortunes of the Gupta state. However, as stated above, land purchases and royal grants do not denote the colour, weight, or issue of the *dinaras* used and thus indicate a fixed unit of value. Furthermore, the XRF data collected from 6,200 coins by Kumar (2017) actually indicates that the gold percentage of the coins remained fairly stable, with Kumar (2017: 83) even suggesting that the actual gold yielded from a coin of the later kings would have been higher than Chandragupta I's purer coins which generally sat in the range of high 80s/mid-90s percentages.

Previous scholars have suggested that beginning with Skandagupta, there was a debasement of the gold currency (Kumar, 2017; Jayaswal, 1934: 34). Rejected by Kumar (2017), the theory supposes that the debasement was caused by invasions of foreign powers, including the Sassanians, later Kushans, Shakas and the Huna (Jayaswal, 1934: 34; Kumar, 2017). In fact, contrary to the established belief, there was a gold increase in the coins struck by Skandagupta up until the reign of Vainyagupta (Kumar, 2017). This may explain why it seems that *dinaras* were taken at face value as opposed to their economic value. Nevertheless, Kumar (2017) does acknowledge that there is a debasement through the alloy within the coins.

Additional to this debasement, there is the presence of forgeries.

With temples acting as banks due to the presence of guilds (see below), it is important to note that some temple facilities, such as Nalanda, may have been used as illegal coin mints (Kumar, 2017). This is indicated by the presence of clay moulds with the impression of Gupta coins (Kumar, 2017). Kumar (2017) states that it is clear that these are not official production sites, a position backed by the presence of furnaces at the mining location, and that these moulds were being used to produce fake coins with a much lower gold percentage; that is, melt down the higher percentage gold currency to produce a much larger number of coins with a lower gold percentage for a quick profit.

One distinct difference noted by Kumar (2017) is that the real Gupta gold currency was, in fact, die struck and not cast. However, this difference may not have been obvious to those taking money from Nalanda due to the casted coins being mixed in with die struck coinage, leading to many illegal coins circulating within the Gupta Political Formation. Arguably, the ease of being able to create forgeries of the state issued currency is a fault of the

intrinsic value placed upon the gold itself. This presents the opportunity to discuss the *satrapal condition* of metal coinage.

Arguably, metal coinage falls into the category of delegate, as identified in chapter 3, due to its distinct and important ability to reproduce the imperial message. However, further to this, the presence of fake or illegal coinage may be an attempt to create proxies. As is noted by Katchadurian (2016: 71) there is the opportunity for ‘slippage’ in reproduction of imperial delegates. In the context of the illegal Gupta coinage, this can arguably be found in the difference in the minting of the coinage as the legal gold coinage was die struck whilst the illegal gold coinage was cast, leading to a difference in the appearance of the gold coinage. Additionally, Kumar’s (2017) assertion that the coinage here is lighter in weight leads into Katchadurian’s (2016: 72) second idea on proxies: that they have an opportunity for ‘unruliness’. This stems from the immediate assemblage of humans and things that collaborate in the production of social life (Katchadurian 2016: 72). Here it may be argued that those involved in the illegal minting process were looking for a way to make a quick profit whilst ensuring that they were able to participate in the creation of a social life within the GPF.

In the next section of the chapter, the socio-economic position and importance of guilds, merchants and temples will be considered in relation to coinage and the Gupta elites.

4.5: The importance of Guilds

Apart from the upper echelons of society, who is affected more by coinage than the merchants who trade in it? With society becoming more dependent on metals year on year due as they [metals] become “closely allied to society owing to the new invention of testing tools and innovating research” (Kuppuram, 1989: 2), it is no surprise that the use of this material was so closely linked with the economic survival of the merchant class. Furthermore, with the merchants being so entangled with the lives of the elites due to the reliance on trade to further their [the elites] material desires. As stated earlier in this chapter, there will be a specific focus on the coinage of the Gupta Political Formation, looking at the mining, minting and use of various metal currency in operation during the Gupta era. The guilds were the traders and creators of products within the Gupta Political Formation, allowing them a unique societal position that transcended the caste system (Patra, 2008).

The study of the relationship between the Gupta elites, merchants and metals allows for the opportunity to investigate how different groups used metals to ensure their own participation in the social life presented by the elites of the time.

4.5.1: History of Guilds

Individuals who were members of the same occupations and crafts, residing together in one place, cooperated with each other and formed guilds (Thaplyal, 2001: 995). The Harappan civilisation had developed arts and crafts, trade and commerce but there is a lack of documentary evidence for the existence of guild organizations during that period (Thaplyal, 2001: 995). There is division amongst scholars on the issue of the guild systems existence in the early Vedic period with some consider Vedic society advanced enough to warrant the existence of economic organisations and view terms such as *sreni*, *puga*, *gana* and *vrata* in contemporary literature as evidence for guild organisation and *shreshthi* therein as president of the guild (Thaplyal, 2001: 995; Mookerji, 1919: 40). Other scholars have suggested that the Vedic period was rural with nomadism still popular, and ‘opine that the Aryans, preoccupied with war as they were, could not produce surplus food-grains, so vital for enabling craftsman to devote their whole time in the pursuit of crafts’ (Thaplyal, 2001: 995). Additionally, they do not view terms like *sreni* and *puga* in literature to denote guild or *sreshthi* as ‘guild president’ (Thaplyal, 2001: 995). This view has arguably been disproven in chapter 1, wherein I have discussed the issues surrounding the Aryan Invasion Theory.

Thaplyal (2001: 995) views the division of labour under the *varna* caste system as ‘conducive’ to the emergence of guilds noting the different occupations of the castes. He states that the three occupations of the *vaishyas*, that is agriculture, cattle farming and trade, developed overtime into separate groups (Thaplyal, 2001: 995). Thapar (1978: 36) suggests it is a key factor of the Hindu tradition to function as part of a group as the Hindu pattern did not see ‘man and society as antagonistic to each other’. Thapar (1978: 36) notes that these two entities had ‘mutual obligation’ and this would ensure welfare for all.

Thaplyal (2001: 995-6) additionally notes that there would have been differences in the style and growth of Brahmanical guilds and those of Buddhists and Jains. This is due to the sacrifice of material wealth and animals in the Brahmanical *yajnas* that were not performed by the Buddhist or Jains, perhaps leading to more conducive environments for guild growth (Thaplyal, 2001: 996). Furthermore, Thaplyal (2001: 996) states that Buddhists and Jains would not have had the same social limitations in mixing with people of different castes and that it is possible that they would not have felt the same inconveniences in conducting long distance trade.

Evidence from Satavahana period Buddhist sites on the Western Deccan provide evidence for agricultural expansion as well as craft production and exchange (Morrison, 1995: 211-

213). Morrison (1995: 212) noted the historical and archaeological evidence points to a high degree of specialisation and active trade network with the greater Deccan. There is evidence for the city of Ter being a centre for the production of terracotta (Chapekar, 1969; Morrison, 1995: 212) with vats for dyeing cloth also found in excavations (Ray, 1986: 69; Morrison, 1995: 212). Lahiri (1992: 341) notes that the western Deccan was almost entirely self-sufficient in raw materials. The Satavahana role in both production and intraregional exchange seems to have been limited (Morrison, 1995: 213) with Ray (1986) and Thapar (1966; 1978) suggesting that there were different guilds of traders and producers who appeared to regulate at least some aspects of production and distribution without significant state interference. Additionally, long-distance trade indisputably existed and was well-established by the 1st century CE with textual sources including the *Periplus*, describing a thriving commercial nexus along the west coast and in the major west Deccan cities (Morrison, 1995: 213; Ray, 1986: 61). The extent to which the Satavahana polity was involved in the promotion, direction or participation of this trade is unknown (Morrison, 1995: 213).

Literary evidence appears to suggest that the elites had little to do with the running and organisation of these guilds. In the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, there appears to be the suggestion that the kings and the high government were largely limited to the statutory confirmation of principles that were already accepted into common parlance and it was merely the king's role to write laws, not create them (Rao, 1950). Additionally, the *Gautama Dharmasutra* (5th century BCE) states that 'cultivators, traders, herdsmen, moneylenders, and artisans have the authority to lay down rules for their respective classes' and the king was to consult their representatives when dealing with matters related to them (Thaplyal, 2001: 996). This appears to indicate some cohesion between the Buddhist and Brahmanical literature in that the guilds exercise their own authority over laws relating to their class. Following the decline of the Mauryan dynasty (~200BCE), there is epigraphical evidence for increased guild activity at Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Mathura (Thaplyal, 2001: 997). Guilds of flour-makers, weavers, oil-millers, potters, corn-dealers and more find mention in epigraphs (Thaplyal, 2001: 997). Additionally, the increase in coin finds indicates the progress of the coinage tradition, discussed in 4.4.1, a vital element for the development of trade and industry (Thaplyal, 2001: 997).

As guilds grew and expanded, they appear to have grown in both social and economic powers. Generally, they trained workers and procured raw materials for manufacturing, controlled the quality and price of goods and located markets for their sale (Thaplyal,

2001: 1001). More specifically, epigraphic evidence indicates that guilds were expected to use part of their profits to upkeep of assembly halls, watersheds, shrines as well as helping widows, the poor and destitute in performing religious rights or reliving their economic hardships (Thaplyal, 2001: 1001; Darshini, 2007: 118). An example from the Gupta period is the Mandasor Silk Weavers inscription (~473CE) wherein the silk weavers guild appears to have donated money to the building and upkeep of a Sun Temple (Mandoki, 2015: 307; Darshini, 2007: 118).

4.5.2: Guilds in the Gupta Period

In her 2007 paper, *Corporate Sustainability during the Gupta period*, Priya Darshini notes that the 'guild-life led to much economic progress in ancient India' as individuals could find scope in which to develop of their skills whilst guild laws and regulations ensured that their interests against internal or external dangers were safeguarded (Darshini, 2007: 116). Additionally, Darshini (2007: 123) states that during the Gupta period, there is evidence for the Gupta elites donating money to the guild banks. Chandragupta II, for instance, permanently depositing 20 dinaras in two instalments, apparently with a corporate body and out of their interest endowed two alms-houses. Kumaragupta I on one occasion depositing 13 dinaras and on another 12, apparently with one or two guilds and from this interest, two alms-houses were perpetually maintained (Darshini, 2007: 119). Additionally, the creation of a number of laws and regulations indicate that there was progress in the development of corporate organisations (Darshini, 2007: 117).

Darshini (2007: 117) has suggested that the laws and regulations covered all aspects of corporate life, including origin, development, and function. In a new guild or corporation, before they were allowed to undertake any work, mutual confidence between members had to be established through the means of a monetary deposit, stipulation in writing and by the guarantee of the umpires. Furthermore, the guild constitution was written in a document which was considered a valid agreement and pact of guild-laws (Darshini, 2007: 117).

The existence of written laws surrounding the economic activities of guilds shows an increase their power and activity. In the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, there is the mention of guilds serving as local banks with their own rules and regulations, including a loan structure (Patra, 2008; Rao, 1950). Patra (2008) suggests that the *srenis* obtained money at a low interest rate and then advanced it on to traders at an increased rate; thus, the merchants had to depend on guilds for investment and the guilds had to rely on the merchants to return. P.L. Gupta (Patra, 2008) states that it is possible that the *srenis* acted as trustees for endowments and accepted money; money thus obtained was invested

perhaps in loans to trades- and crafts- men and, as such, acted as a bank. As has been previously mentioned, the temples ability to act as a bank may have allowed for the creation of much lighter and less pure coin forgeries (discussed above).

Additionally, the changes in weights and purity of gold coinage as was mentioned in the previous section as well as the existence of the forgeries leave the guilds in the precarious position of having to lose out on money.

However, it can be argued that due to the state appearing to rely on guilds and merchants to be able to quench their material desires, it is possible that the state gave them more money to ensure that they were able to continue to meet demand. Yet, the guilds may have not been able to meet the demand. It is possible that this was due to the loss of a trade route thanks to the growing threat of invasions (Kumar, 2017) or, theoretically, the loss of a trading partner on their refusal to trade due to the lighter currency made at places like Nalanda (Kumar, 2017). The guilds would have been making a loss, thus being unable to pay back the state.

As well as this, there was growing tensions in the south of the GPF, where local governors were declaring themselves rulers (Singh, 2017). These local rulers may have cut off the main Gupta power centre from the supply of gold, perhaps leading to the royal treasury being unable to mint gold *dinaras* of acceptable value. This perhaps led to more local governors declaring themselves independent of the main empire due to a lack of currency of an acceptable value due to there being much less gold in the coins, lending itself to the breakdown of the Gupta Political Formation. Furthermore, this reproduction of political sovereignty through the combination of the iconographic representation of clothing that was delivering the political message through the coinage that created wide and varied networks of dependence. If it were not for the exploitation of the mines found in the Western Kshatrapas and the trade relationship established for gold with political formation of the Kadamba dynasty, the Gupta elites would not have been able to establish themselves to the same extent that they did. Here, it is important to consider Hodder's (2012) idea of the sequence of entanglements.

4.6: Conclusion

To sum up and place the above observations into an entanglement framework, the trade of the metals itself relied on the exploitation of the mines at the source, either in the Kadamba Political Formation or in the former Western Kshatrapas. This then depended on the mines themselves to be stable and functioning with smithing areas close by. Furthermore, there is

then the reliance on the merchant's guilds for ensuring the facilitation of this trade. These entanglements forced the Gupta elites to rely on the things to allow for them to have access to the materials on which they rely for the minting of coinage. The minting and circulation of coinage imbues these metals, and the things associated with them, with socio-political and economic power.

There is the coinage acting as a delegate for the reproduction of the political message and ensuring the continued mystification of Vedic rituals and symbols. Although not as prominent in this chapter, proxies can be found in the reproduction of Gupta gold coinage and in the production of Gupta silver coinage.

Firstly, the reproduction of coinage in lighter forms by either non-Gupta elites, merchants or locals at sites such as the Buddhist University of Nalanda. Proxies have sometimes been called "copies" or "imitations"; local emulations of the imperial "canons" (Katchadurian, 2016: 70). Here, the lighter coinage has been made by melting down the pre-existing coinage to create lighter, and therefore less extrinsically valuable coinage. This lighter coinage would not have been accepted by non-Gupta traders. However, within the GPF, it is probable that these coins were accepted due to the seemingly inherent value that the coinage held, regardless of weight (Kumar, 2017).

These proxies exist, as stated by Katchadurian (2016: 70) because of the erosion of delegates by their own "allure" and "efficacy" which caused what has been called the "mimetic faculty" (Taussig, 1993: 2). These local emulations are in different materials and modified forms through which the imperial values and ways of doing as "diluted" due to their human users "harness them to unruly ends" (Katchadurian, 2016: 72). This "unruliness" can arguably be found in the reproduction of the imperial coinage in lighter, and through this, lower value coinage. However, due to the intrinsically valuable nature of the coinage to the Gupta population, a pre-existing driver from the previously established rulers that the Gupta elites continued to use, the lighter coinage was accepted at face value. Furthermore, because of this acceptance of the lighter coinage, more of these coins were then able to exist, leading to issues with external trade where metal currency was used. This may be part of the reason for the imperially issued lighter coinage of the later imperial Gupta rulers, which in turn may have led to the weakening of the political formation as a whole due to the lessening of the imperial message.

Secondly, there is the production of the Gupta's own silver coinage, of which the majority have been found in the area of the former Western Kshatrapas. The most common type of

coinage in the Western Kshatrapas was silver (fig 42: a-c in chapter 3) and this is perhaps due to the accessibility of silver in the region. The silver coinage of the Guptas appears to begin following the conquest of the former Western Kshatrapas and, stylistically, they appear to be similar. Arguably, this could be seen as a combination of proxies and delegates, as it is a stylistic copy of the coinage of the Western Kshatrapas, whilst reproducing the political message of the Gupta elites.

Overall, in this chapter there has been a discussion on the uses of metal in Ancient India, from literary and archaeological evidence and, more specifically, the entanglements created through metal currency. In this chapter, the dependence of the Gupta elites on metals has been seen through their intermarriage with the Kadamba dynasty and, additionally, their use of guild banks. Furthermore, coinage can be argued to be both delegates and proxies, however, neither of these categories appear to be broad enough to categorise coinage. This same issue can be found in the next chapter, Spices.

Chapter 5: Spices

5.1: Introduction

Spices have been used in medicine for thousands of years. The ancient Egyptians, for instance, are credited with developing an elaborate and effective pharmacological collection obtained from natural resources (Halberstein, 2005). In the case of India, the oldest written mention of spices can be found in Vedic (1500-1200BCE) texts where they are often referred to as *harida* and *pippali* (Prakash 2005: 38).

Spices have been an Indian trade staple for thousands of years. One of the earliest examples of Indo-Mediterranean trade are the black peppercorns (*piper nigrum*) found with the mummy of Ramesses II (~1279-1213BCE) (Gilboa and Namdar, 2015: 272). Pepper of various types also appear to be the most common item traded between the Indian Subcontinent and the Mediterranean in later periods (Cobb, 2018; Pollard, 2013; Tomber, 2008; Cappers, 1998; Kajale, 1990). Black pepper has been found in ritual and military contexts and it is the most common type of archaeobotanical evidence of interaction between India and the Mediterranean (Cobb, 2018). A variety of archaeological finds including coins and Samian ware provide evidence of Roman period connections with India (Subbarao, 1953: 32; Schenk, 2015).

This chapter investigates the impact of spices, pepper, and cinnamon, on how the shape and history of the GPF. More specifically, this chapter will focus on the internal and external spice trade and how this influenced the growth and inner workings of the GPF. The chapter's central research questing is '*How spices were able to entangle not only the socio-political lives of the population of the GPF but those external trading partners?*'.

This question will investigate the north-south trade of spices on the Subcontinent as well as external trade and the entanglements created through these. Furthermore, archaeological and archaeobotanical evidence will be used to identify ports, growing regions and possible internal and external trade routes that were used for the trade of spices.

The internal spice trade will explore the north-south divide in what spices were grown, where they were grown and how the trade was conducted for them. With the fall of the Roman Empire, it appears that maritime trade from the Malabar coast in the south of India to the Mediterranean slowed down whereas the trade from Gujarat (N-W India) seemingly appears to remain consistent. This may indicate that the spices, much like the metals, were traded along the coast from the Kadamba dynasty to the Guptas, and then traded out from Gujarat. This would have insured that the spice trade, primarily pepper, continued to prosper despite slowing external trade for the south of India.

Furthermore, contemporary literature will be used to identify the various uses of spices. By identifying these uses, it is possible that the internal relationships that the Gupta's formed within the Indian sub-continent can be identified as more than a political power play.

Looking at external trade, the relationship with Rome and then later Byzantium were, arguably, the most important external relations that India had during the Early and Late Historic Periods due to the abundance of archaeological evidence.

The external trade relationship established with Rome and then later Byzantium was perhaps the most important during the Early and Late Historic Periods. An abundance of archaeological evidence, including Roman coinage bearing the image of Augustus as well as a myriad of pottery sherds, provide a strong basis for the extent of this trade (discussed further below). The Indo-Chinese relationship is an interesting one – it is older than the Indo- Roman relationship, but the archaeological evidence is much scarcer, however, literary evidence is in abundance.

The *Hou Hanshu* (88.15) states that:

Tianzhu (northwest India) produces elephants, rhinoceroses, turtle shell, gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin. To the west, it communicates with the Roman Empire. Precious things from Rome can be found there, as well as fine cotton cloths, excellent wool carpets, perfumes of all sorts, sugar loaves, pepper, ginger, and black salt. (McLaughlin, 2010: 44)

This may indicate that the trade between Rome and China was not direct. McLaughlin (2010: 43-44) suggests that this indicates that Roman goods were 'trafficked' from Indian ports north into Central Asia. This caused the Roman exports to not only supply market demand in Central Asia but also enrich the northwest Indian bazaars (McLaughlin, 2010: 44).

Despite this, there is little to no direct archaeological evidence on the trade of spices between India and China. However, it is highly possible that medical knowledge was transmitted through Buddhist monks and there were drugs and procedures obtained that used Indian spices (Yung-Ho, 1982: 221).

Bringing together these external trade partners allows for an investigation into how spices were traded through India. This will be explored through a mixture of archaeological and literary evidence.

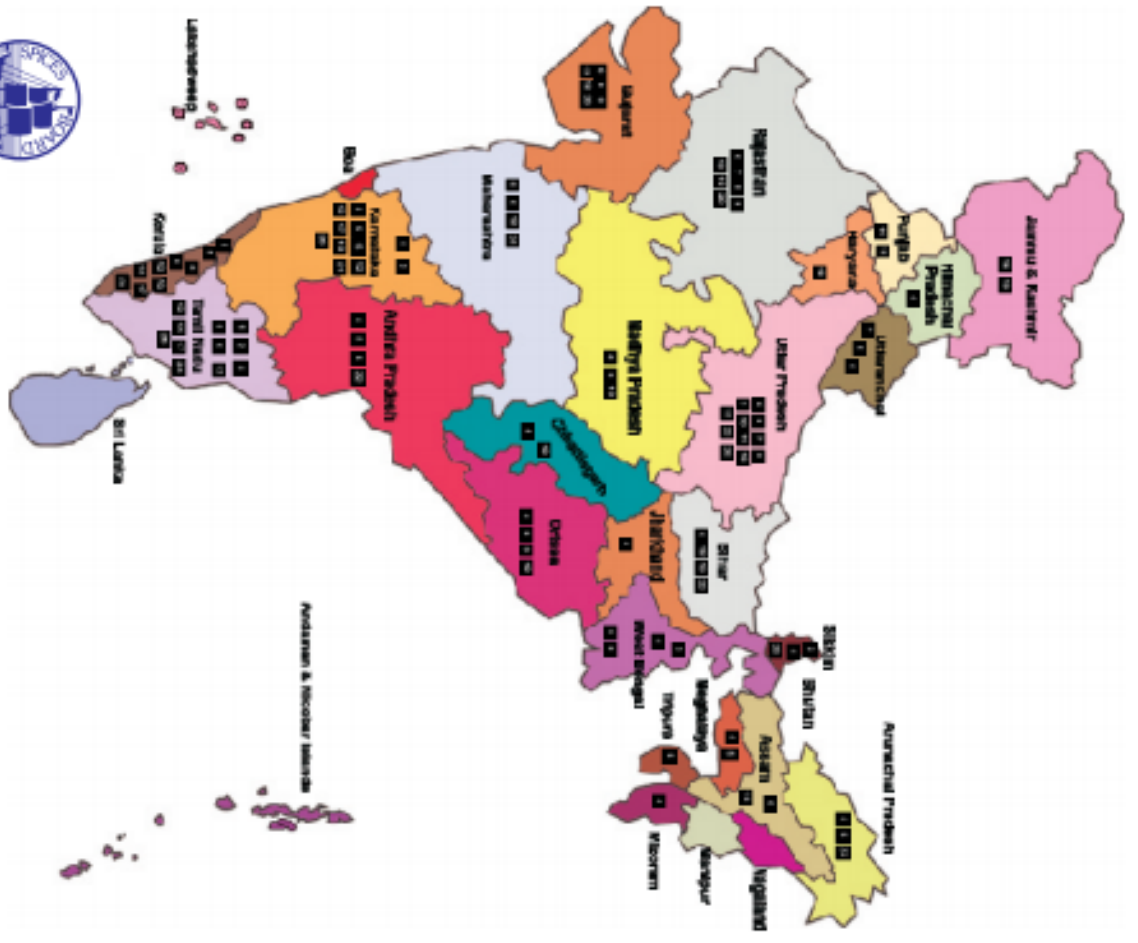
5.2: Methodology

Due to a lack of archaeobotanical evidence relating to the Gupta period, there is a need to use supplementary archaeological and archaeobotanical evidence from surrounding periods. Additionally, contemporary literature will be used to identify the uses of spices. Furthermore, there will be a discussion on the growing conditions of certain spices (table 8).

<u>Spice</u>	<u>Modern Growing Region</u>
Black Pepper	Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
Long Pepper	
Ginger	Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Meghalaya, West Bengal (see map 12 for the rest)
Turmeric	Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal (see map 12 for the rest)
Cloves	Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu
Cinnamon	Kerala, Tamil Nadu
Saffron	Jammu and Kashmir
Mustard	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh

Table 8: Spices and modern growing regions (Source: Author adapted from Indian Spices Board, 2011)

To do this, modern climatic conditions will be used in conjunction with ancient literature identify where these growing areas are. The modern climatic conditions will be identified in conjunction with the modern growing areas as identified by the Spice Board of India (Map 11). The need to combine modern climatic conditions and ancient literature is due to a lack of pre-industrial climatic information on India. By combing these two areas of evidence, it may be possible for the investigation into where these spices would have been grown during the Gupta period. In turn, this will be used to inform how trade relationships were established internally between north and south India. By identifying these relationships, the deeper entanglements created through the trade and use of spices can be discussed.



1	Pepper	Kerala	6	Chilli	Andhra Pradesh	14	Cinnamon & Cassia	Kerala	21	Tejpai	Arunachal Pradesh
		Karnataka			Gujarat			Tamil Nadu			Sikkim
2	Cardamom (Small)	Tamil Nadu	7	Kannada	Kannada	15	Saffron	Jammu & Kashmir	24	Pomegranate seed	Maharashtra
		Kerala			Maharashtra			Tamil Nadu			
		Karnataka			Orissa	16	Amis seed	Punjab	25	Herbal & Exotic Spices	Tamil Nadu
		Tamil Nadu			Rajasthan			Uttar Pradesh	26	Cambridge	Kerala
3	Cardamom (Large)	Sikkim	8	Uttar Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	17	Vanilla	Uttaranchal			
		West Bengal			West Bengal						
4	Ginger	Andhra Pradesh	9	Madhya Pradesh	Madhya Pradesh	18					
		Karnataka			Uttaranchal						
		Kerala			Coriander	7					
		Madhya Pradesh			Rajasthan						
		Meghalaya			Uttar Pradesh						
		Orissa			Uttaranchal						
		Arunachal Pradesh			Cumin	8					
		West Bengal			Rajasthan						
		Mizoram			Gujarat						
		Sikkim			Fennel	9					
		Himachal Pradesh			Gujarat						
		Tamil Nadu			Rajasthan						
		Uttaranchal			Uttar Pradesh						
		Chattisgarh			Fenugreek	10					
		Jharkhand			Rajasthan						
5	Turneric	Andhra Pradesh	11	Celery	Gujarat	20	Dill Seed	Jammu & Kashmir			
		Karnataka			Punjab			Gujarat			
		Orissa			Uttar Pradesh			Rajasthan			
		Tamil Nadu			West Bengal			Kokim			
		West Bengal			Kerala			Kannada			
		Maharashtra			Tamil Nadu			Musard			
		Kerala			Kannada			Uttar Pradesh			
		Assam			Nutmeg & Mace	13		Bihar			
		Bihar			Kerala			Andhra Pradesh			
		Meghalaya			Tamil Nadu						
		Tripura			Kannada						
		Uttar Pradesh									
		Arunachal Pradesh									

Map 11: Map of Modern Spice Growing States of India (Source: Spices Board India, 2011)



एनस्पिसेस बोर्ड
भारत
SPICES BOARD INDIA



एनस्पिसेस बोर्ड
भारत
SPICES BOARD INDIA

These trade relationships will be investigated in the framework established in chapter 2. Through using this framework, the networks that spices were involved in can be explored to a deeper level. For example, black peppercorns found in religious contexts in Roman Alexandria can be traced back to the Malabar coast for growing, with the clay jar they were discovered in identified as Indian. There is additional evidence the pepper itself was burnt as an offering in both Alexandria and Berenike (Cobb, 2018: 23; Cappers, 2006: 111). Here, it can be argued that peppercorns have been, at a glance, entangled into four human relationships – the priest, the trader, the potter, and the grower. However, upon closer inspection, the peppercorns are involved in many different levels of relationships.

The relationship between the pepper plant and the soil, between the peppercorns and the basket, the clay jar and the boat or cart that is used for transport. Each of these things rely on the pepper to continue to be valuable enough for trade for their continued existence, their upkeep, and their eventual destruction. Furthermore, the grower, the potter, the trader, and the priest all relied on the pepper for their own continued livelihood. Further to this, elements of this trade can be classified by Katchdurian's (2016) *satrapal condition*. Taking the four categories of the *satrapal condition*, the entanglements that spices are found in can be placed through each of the categories.

The idea of delegates can be seen through the jar that the pepper was found in Berenike as it brought Indian identity and ideas into Egypt and furthermore, into the Roman Empire.

The material dependencies of the Gupta elites are shown through their move into Gujarat, as they appeared to become more invested in the external trade that brought more gold into the country. This meant that the Gupta elites had to rely on both the north-south trade as well as external trade. North-south trade was relied upon for filling the demands for both black pepper and cinnamon by the population of the GPF and their trade partners, such as China where the demand for spices increased with the introduction of Buddhism and Indian medicine.

To understand the entanglements that spices acted in, it is important to consider contemporary literature.

5.3: Spices in Literature

The earliest mentions of spices in Indian literature can be found in the Vedic (1500-1200BCE) texts. They are often referred to as *harida* and *pippali* (Prakash 2005: 38).

The *Dharmasutras* (~1st millennium BCE) mention other spices such as *marica* and *hingu* (Prakash, 2005: 38). *Arthasastra* (~3rd century BCE) refers to spices including *srngibera*, *ajaji*, *kritatikta*, *gaura*, *sarsapa*, *kustumaburu*, *coraka*, *damanaka*, *maruvaka*, *sigru*, *haritaki* and *mesasrnga* (Prakash 2005: 38). Some of these have been translated to long pepper, black pepper, ginger, cumin, mustard and coriander (Trautmann, 2012: 54). However, *coraka*, *damnaka*, *marruvaka* and *shigra* stalk have not been identified (Trautmann, 2012: 54).

During the Gupta era, it is probable that the *Dharmasutras* would have been a central part of religious practice due to the Gupta elite's staunch Brahmanism. The uses of spices in the *Dharmasutras* often referred to the preparation of foods and the ritual usage. The *Arthasastra* also remarks on spices and their usage, including referring to turmeric as a way to treat jaundice and leprosy (Prakash 2005).

According to *Vayupurana* (~1st millennium CE) and *Kamasutra* (~400BCE), ascetics and newly married couples were advised to avoid the saline preparations. The medical text *Susruta Samhita* (~1st millennium BCE) states that the spices long pepper and dry ginger were regarded the best. The *Mrcchaktika* (~5th century CE), a play attributed to Sudraka, gives a list of spices used for seasoning:

- Dry ginger
- Cumin
- Mustard
- Coriander
- Myrobalan
- Long pepper
- Black pepper
- Cloves
- Cardamom
- Turmeric
- Asafoetida

Out of the above list of spices, 7 are found to grow in the within the modern regions that made up the GPF (map 11). Spices that were not grown in the GPF include black pepper and mustard, both of which are grown in the south of the country.

Panini (4th century BCE) mentions the term *upadamsa* which indicates a dish prepared with edible roots such as radish and ginger (Prakash 2005: 31). *Naisadhiyacarita* mentions a special preparation of curds with black mustard (Prakash 2005: 20). Black mustard was also used to make a sweet liquid made from the juice of sour fruits more pungent and sugar candy to sweeten it (Prakash 2005: 30). Caraka states that *ragasadava* should be fumigated with oil and dry ginger, as well as salt and spices to be added before its use. Mustard is mentioned in the *Chandogyopanisat* and safflower, linseed and mustard are the important oilseeds referred to in *Arthasastra*.

Traditional medicine, that is medicine often described in Sanskrit texts, was placed under the umbrella term of *Ayurveda*. It is made of 8 components as found in the *Mahabharata* (4th century BCE onwards) (see table 9 for components) and, according to modern Ayurvedic sources, the practices may be traceable back to as early as 6,000BCE where they originated as an oral tradition (Gupta, Sharma and Sharma, 2014: 23). There are three main early texts on the *Ayurveda*: *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita* and *Bheda Samhita*.

<i>Kāyachikitsā</i>	general medicine, medicine of the body
<i>Kaumāra- bhṛtya</i> (Pediatrics)	Discussions about prenatal and postnatal care of baby and mother, methods of conception; choosing the child's gender, intelligence, and constitution; and childhood diseases and midwifery.
<i>Śalyatantra</i>	surgical techniques and the extraction of foreign objects
<i>Śhālākyaatantra</i>	treatment of ailments affecting ears, eyes, nose, mouth, etc. ("ENT")
<i>Bhūtavidyā</i>	pacification of possessing spirits, and the people whose minds are affected by such possession
<i>Agadatantra/Vishagara- vairodh Tantra</i> (Toxicology)	It includes subjects about epidemics, toxins in animals, vegetables and minerals. It as well contains

	keys for recognizing those anomalies and their antidotes.
<i>Rasāyantantra</i>	rejuvenation and tonics for increasing lifespan, intellect and strength
<i>Vājīkaraṇatantra</i>	aphrodisiacs and treatments for increasing the volume and viability of semen and sexual pleasure. It also deals with infertility problems (for those hoping to conceive) and spiritual development (transmutation of sexual energy into spiritual energy)

Table 9: The 8 components of Ayurvedic Medicine (Source: Author)

The *Sushruta Samhita* (Sanskrit medical text) states that flesh, that is meat, can be cooked with fats, curds and sour gruel mixed with aromatic spices, such as long pepper, black pepper and ginger (Prakash 2005: 27). The use of long pepper and dry ginger are also mentioned in the preparations of soups (Prakash 2005: 13). The oldest surviving version of the *Sushruta Samhita* comes from Nepal and is dated 878CE, some 200 years after the fall of the main GPF. However, the origin date of the *Sushruta Samhita* is of debate to scholars with Hoemle proposing that the author of the *Satapatha Brahmana* (6th century BCE text) was aware of the *Sushruta* doctrines so suggests that the origins of the text are pre-6th century BCE (Prakash 2005). Both Walton (1994) and Rao & Pappu (2004) date the text to the mid-1st millennium BCE. Tipton (2008) states that uncertainty remains in dating the text with the date being estimated somewhere between 1000BCE-500CE. Taking these dates into account, the *Sushruta Samhita* existed during the time of the Guptas and therefore would have been used in the medical procedures at the time.

The *Charaka Samhita* is a pre-2nd century CE medical text made of eight books and 120 chapters which focuses on the human body, etiology, symptomology and therapeutics for many diseases (Glucklich, 2008: 141-2). Further to this, it discusses the identification of seeds, roots, mountain herbs and more along with recipes for the preparation of medicines.

Between the *Sushruta Samhita* and the *Charaka Samhita*, there are approximately 500 herbal drugs mentioned (Craker and Simon, 1992: 2). This includes the use of long pepper, black pepper and ginger for easing digestion and turmeric as an anti-inflammatory and anticarcinogenic properties (Kumar, Dobos and Rampp, 2016) (see table 10 for further properties).

<i>Curcuma/turmeric</i>	Anti-inflammatory and anticarcinogenic actions Pungent and bitter in taste (<i>katu, tikta</i>), dry in quality (<i>guna</i>), hot in potency (<i>veerya</i>), and pungent in its postdigestive taste (<i>vipaka</i>). It is used in vitiated states of <i>kapha</i> and <i>pitta</i>
Ginger	Pungent taste, be light and unctuous in quality, hot in potency and sweet postdigestion; help reduce patients' <i>kapha</i> and <i>vata</i> and increases their <i>pitta</i> .
<i>Aloe vera</i>	Bitter and a sweet taste, a heavy, unctuous and slimy quality, a cold potency, and a pungent postdigestive taste. It is good in vitiated conditions of <i>pitta</i> and <i>vata</i> . Used in various inflammatory diseases, as well as in skin and liver disease.
Tulsi (<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>),	Taste both pungent and bitter Light and dry in quality, hot in potency, and pungent in its postdigestive taste. Increases <i>pitta</i> and decreases both <i>kapha</i> and <i>vata</i> . Administered against worms and parasites, insect poisoning, and in cases of toxicity
Moringa (<i>Moringa oleifera</i>)	Moringa is mostly grown in the south of India, where its fruits and leaves are used as a vegetable. Ayurveda uses the plants' roots and bark for medicinal purposes. It is sweet and bitter in taste, sharp and light in quality, hot in potency, and pungent in postdigestion. It is seen to pacify <i>kapha</i> .
Guduchi/Amrut (<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>),	It has a bitter taste, is heavy in quality, hot in potency, and sweet in postdigestion. It pacifies all 3 of the body's <i>doshas</i>
Pippali (<i>Piper longum</i>)	Bioavailability enhancer It is seen to be sweet and pungent in taste, unctuous in quality, hot in potency, and sweet in postdigestive action. It pacifies <i>vata</i> and <i>kapha</i> , increases <i>pitta</i> , and is slightly laxative. An immune modulatory plant
Aswagandha (<i>Withania somnifera</i>)	Bitter and astringent in taste, light and unctuous in quality, hot in potency, and sweet in postdigestive action. It pacifies <i>vata</i> and <i>kapha</i> and increases <i>pitta</i> . Its actions on the central nervous system mean that it is mostly used in patients with mental health conditions.
Triphala: <i>Terminalia chebula</i> (Haritaki), <i>Terminalia bellirica</i> (Bibhitaki), <i>Emblica officinalis</i> (Amalaki)	A combination from 3 plants fruit. It drives out body toxins by unblocking the body's channels (<i>srothas</i>).

Table 10: Ayurvedic properties of some herbs found in the Sushruta and Charaka Samhitas (Source: Author adapted from Kumar, Dobos and Rampp, 2016)

As well as these two *Ayurvedic* texts, there is the Bower Manuscript (dated between the 4th-6th centuries CE) and includes excerpts from the *Bheda Samhita* (Vedam,2018; Hoernle, 1910). The Bower Manuscripts are a collection of seven fragmentary Sanskrit texts found buried in a memorial stupa near Kucha, N.W. China (Hoernle, 1910). These pieces are written in early Gupta script (late Brahmi) on birch bark that contain the oldest

dated fragments of the *Navanitaka* and two other medical texts, including the aforementioned *Bheda Samhita* (Vedam,2018; Hoernle, 1910). The first part of the manuscripts is made of five leaves but is incomplete, ending rather abruptly. It is a fragment of a treatise on garlic, its medicinal properties and recipes.

The continual and prominent mentions of herbs and spices in both cooking and traditional Indian medicine shows that these plants were viewed as an important part of the human existence in the Indian sub-continent. These Sanskrit texts, especially the medical ones, were actively used during the Gupta period as is indicated by the preservation of texts such as the *Bheda Samhita* in the Bower Manuscripts from the 4th-6th centuries CE (Vedam,2018; Hoernle, 1910). With the Bower Manuscripts being found in North Western China, it gives a clear indication that these texts were important enough to the Gupta was of life that they were copied and kept by, most likely, Chinese Buddhist monks (Vedam,2018; Hoernle, 1910).

Furthermore, the texts themselves would have played an important role within Gupta society due to the elites being staunch followers of the Brahmanical faith. The texts would have been used by the elites to influence laws surrounding medical practices and these texts would have further informed the value of spices. With value being a social construct (Myers, 2001), it is important to note that the inclusion of these spices within texts gives a wider societal meaning to the usage of spices, and with many of them having medicinal properties, their value goes beyond economic. However, this does not mean that the economic value of spices is to be undersold.

5.4: Growing Conditions of Spices

Before discussing the use and trade of spices in the pre-Gupta and Gupta times, it is important to understand the growing conditions of spices. The Spices Board of India (SBI) (2011) have documented the descriptions, origins, modern distributions (map 11) and uses of spices.

Black pepper (*piper nigrum*) is the dried mature berry of the *piper nigrum* plant (SBI, 2011). It is a climbing perennial shrub mostly found in southern India, specifically the regions of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, all found along the Malabar Coast (SBI, 2011). Black pepper requires a hot and humid climate and grows between 20 degrees North and South latitudes and from sea level to up to 1500 meters above modern sea level (SBI, 2011). The crop tolerates between 10 and 40°C and an annual rainfall of 1250 to 2000 mm is considered to be ideal for pepper (SBI, 2011). The climate of West Bengal, believed to be the original home of the Guptas, has an average annual temperature of

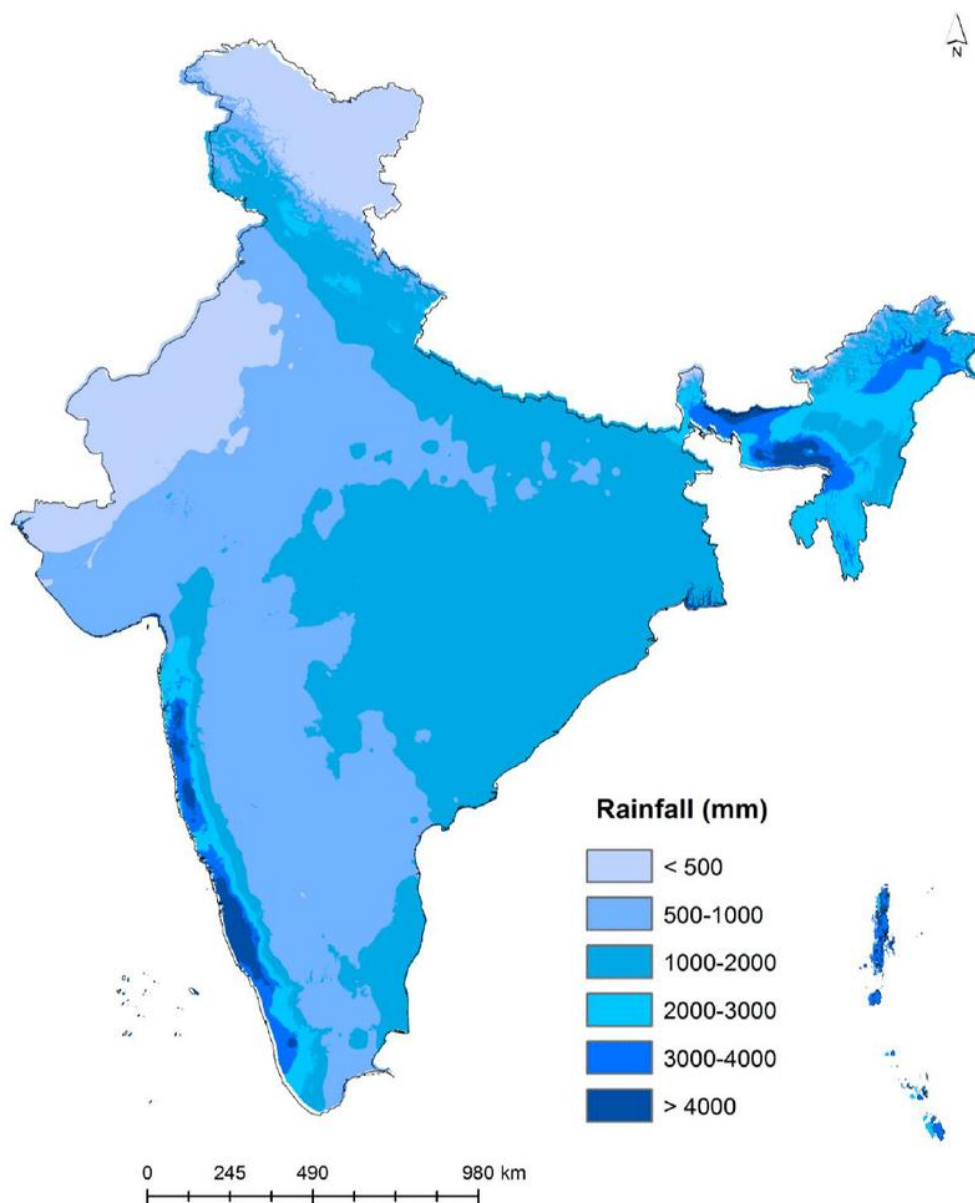
around 26 to 43°C in the summer months and 10 to 19°C in the winter months. This places the region within the correct temperature for the growth of a black pepper crop.

Cinnamon is the dried inner stem bark of *cinnamon verum*. The plant is grown today in one or two locations in Kerala (southern India) and needs a temperature somewhere between 20-30°C. *Cinnamon verum* needs an annual rainfall of somewhere between 1250-2500mm to flourish.

Cinnamon and black pepper plants are both grown in the regions of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. These regions received between 500-2500mm on average in the year 2015 (Sudhakar et al, 2015). Due to there being little to no data available on the pre-industrial climate of the Indian sub-continent, the modern data will be taken with an element of doubt to its accuracy due to the world's average temperature having raised by roughly 2°C since 1900 (Yaduvanshi et al, 2019).

According to Yaduvanshi et al (2019), the temperature raise has caused an extreme increase in river discharge (12) because of snow and glacial melting, which has caused flooding in the lower Ganges plains. This temperature increase has caused farmers over the northern and central Indian states to become more vulnerable due to having low adaptive capabilities (Yaduvanshi et al, 2019: 13). The biggest issues caused by temperature increases include the ground water decline, pest attacks and frequently occurring heatwaves (Yaduvanshi et al, 2019: 13).

These problems are not unique to the modern world and so would have affected the Gupta farmers. Taking away the modern temperature increase in India reveals that possibly during the time of the Guptas, there was a higher amount of ground water, less heat waves and less pest attacks, however they would not be negated entirely. With this in mind, it is important to note that these factors would have affected the crop yield and through this, the trade that was so integral to the Indian Subcontinent.



Map 12: Rainfall Map of India (Sudhakar et al, 2015)

In the north of the country, long pepper (*piper longum*) is grown from the central Himalayas to Assam and is cultivated on a large scale in limestone soil and in heavy rainfall where the relative humidity is high (SBI, 2011). Looking at the rainfall map, the heavy rainfall of the north of the country can be seen. It is important to note that the snow runoff from the Himalayas will give the northern states a higher level of ground water (Yaduvanshi et al, 2019: 13). Bearing this in mind, it will be difficult for black pepper and cinnamon to grow in the region due to the higher level of ground water all year round.

Long pepper, cinnamon and black pepper are, as previously stated, the spices that will be discussed in the most depth in this chapter due to their prevalence in external trade and Sanskrit literature.

It can be seen from the evidence presented in this section that the soil in north India cannot support the growth of either black pepper or cinnamon due to the increased year-round ground water. Additionally, the soil makeup of the southern states does not allow for the cultivation of long pepper. Both of these indicate that there would have been a need for north-south trade for these spices for them to be given the value status seen in Sanskrit literature. Furthermore, the finding of the Bower Manuscript in north-west China that mentions *Ayurveda* (traditional Indian medicine) gives further indication that there was a north-south land trade route across the Indian sub-continent.

5.5: Trading West

Spices and aromatics from South Asia may have journeyed westwards long before their mention by writers such as Herodotus (3.107-11) from the mid-5th century BCE. In this section, Indo-Roman trade will be investigated with the intention to explore the entanglements of the external trade networks that existed pre-Gupta. Additionally, this section will identify how spices created not only internal but also external entanglements for the elites and traders within the GPF.

The earliest evidence of the spice trade in the Mediterranean can be found in the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses II (~1279-1213BCE) in which there were grains of black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) found in the nasal cavity and abdomen (Gilboa & Namdar, 2015: 272). Gilboa and Namdar (2015: 265-83) also identified traces of cinnamaldehyde from 10 Phoenician flasks (dated to the early Iron Age) found in Israel. Cinnamaldehyde is an organic compound which occurs naturally in the *Cinnamomum* plant group (Gilboa & Namdar, 2015: 265-83). This genus of the Lauraceae tree only occurs naturally in Southeast Asia (Ravindran *et al*, 2003), indicating clear evidence of trade between the two. The cinnamon grown in India is not to be confused with *cassia* which is also called Chinese cinnamon.

The spice trade with Rome created an air of mystery surrounding the spices themselves as the tangible connection faded; some would call this magic (Pollard, 2013). Potter (2002; Pollard, 2013) has discussed the relationship between odour and power. Here, Potter argues that the foreign source of all scent ingredients meant they were good for rhetoric connecting the decline of Roman morality with foreign ways. Archaeologically, it appears that the Indo-Roman trade reached its height in the 1st-2nd century CE, with much of the trade taking place overland as documented by Isidore of Charax's *Parthian Stations* (Pollard, 2013).

During the Indo-Roman period, the main trade routes between India and the Mediterranean were maritime. The three main Roman ports involved with eastern trade were Arsinoe, Myos Hormos and Berenike. Arsinoe was eventually overshadowed by the other two ports due to them being more easily accessible (Cobb, 2018). In India, trade appears to have been split north to south with the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (~40-70CE) identifying Muziris (in modern Kerala) and Barygaza (in modern Gujarat) as important ports. Gilboa and Namdar (2015: 275) speculate that much of the exchange may have happened in the north-western Indian state of Gujarat. Archaeologically, Roman trade is identified by a variety of objects, including amphorae fragments, a bronze handle from Akota (50-100CE) (Schenk, 2015). Additionally, the presence of red polished wares considered as either imported or imitations of Roman Samian Ware (Subbarao, 1953: 32; Schenk, 2015). These objects indicate that much of the Indo-Roman trade in the north of the country was taking place in Gujarat.

The most notable port for maritime trade with Rome from Gujarat was the town of Barygaza (can also be spelt as Barigaza; now the modern city of Bharuch) located on the river Narmada. The site has been broken down into four periods with the most important to this discussion being Periods III and IV. Period III has been categorised as Early Historic-RPW phase covering from 1st C BCE-5th C CE with Period IV being assigned to Late Historical and Medieval, covering from the 7th to 13th centuries CE. The site has been identified as being active during these periods through Indian Archaeology Review (IAR) excavations during the 1958-9 and 1959-60 seasons. Red Polished Ware associated with Red and Grey wares and lead (probably Satavahana) and copper Kshatrapa coins of the 3rd century CE and brick structures that have been attributed to the 3rd-7th centuries CE characterise the Early Historic Period (1st century BCE – 5th century CE) with the Late Historical and Medieval (7th to 13th century CE) being marked by the presence of glazed pottery. The author of the *Periplus* infers that some “Roman” merchants did travel to north-west Indian ports as he notes that long pepper (*Piper Longum*) could be acquired at Barygaza while Roman gold and silver money could be exchanged for a profit against local currency (Cobb, 2018: 557).

With the coast of Gujarat being a major trade hub, it is no wonder that the Gupta elites saw it as a necessary addition to their growing political formation. Combine Gujarat’s westward maritime trade network with its fine muslins and cottons and its vast silver mines, it is clear why the Gupta elites were interested in the coastal state. However, it is important to note that many of the most sought-after spices, namely black pepper and

cinnamon were not grown in the provinces under Gupta influence. The Gupta Political Formation was mostly confined to the north of India whereas black pepper and cinnamon are grown in the south of the country, namely in the state of Kerala (map 13).



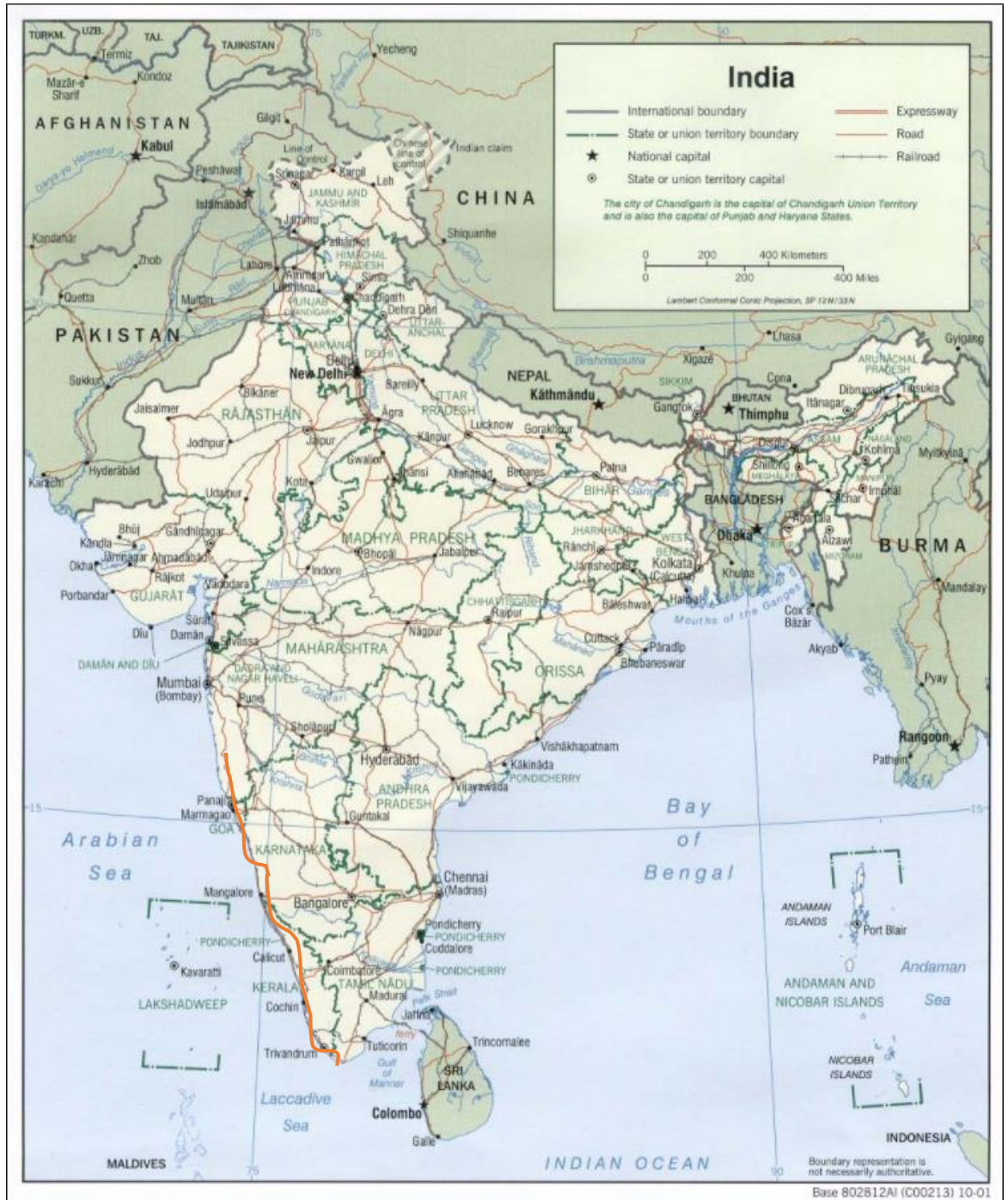
Map 13: Location of the state of Kerala (red) in comparison to the GPF (rough border is black line) (Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerala#/media/File:IN-KL.sv>)

Pliny refers to growing anxiety in the Roman senate about the drain of gold due to the regular import of pepper and other spices. This is back by the influx of gold in bullion and as coins to the Indian West coast. Much of the Roman gold appears to be concentrated in the south of India along the Malabar coast. Numerous hordes of Roman gold coins from the time of Augustus and emperors of the 1st and 2nd centuries CE have been found predominantly in the south. Large numbers of *Aureii* and *Denarii* of Augustus to Nero have been found along the route from Mangalore through the Muziris area, where there was supposedly a temple built in honour of Augustus (Chandra, 1977: 111). The total number of coins of the emperor Tiberius that have been found in the south of India number approximately 1007 with those of August numbering at around 453 (Warmington, 1928: 41).

It is not surprising that many of the Roman coins have been found in southern India as the most common archaeobotanical spice finds outside of India are either black or white pepper that is only grown in the south of the country.

Additionally, the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (~40-75CE) is perhaps the richest literary source of the classical period for Indo-Roman trade (Hall, 1985: 31; Tripathi, 2011: 1076; Thapar, 1992: 8). It is an anonymously authored text providing a ‘detailed practical account of the ports in [...] the western Indian Ocean for traders in Roman Egypt’ (Tomber, 2000: 624). The *Periplus* refers to villages and marts along the Malabar coast (map 14) rather than urban commercial centres, with the exception of Muziris and Nelkynda (Thapar, 1992: 15-16).

According to Hall (1985: 31), Roman trade interest focused on two main commodities that India offered: Malabar pepper and cloth. Furthermore, Hall (1985: 32) indicates that spices were carried north from Malabar by Indian coastal fleets where they were exchanged for commodities from the West. According to the *Periplus*, Barygaza in present-day Gujarat was the most important destination of the coastal galleys (Hall, 1985: 32-3). Additionally, the overland caravan route between India and China also terminated in Barygaza in that period, further heightening this port’s significance as an international centre of trade (Hall, 1985: 33).



Map 14: Map of India with the Malabar Coast Indicated in Orange (Source: https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/india_pol01.jpg)

The north-western expansion of the Roman Empire introduced a large number of new food plants introduced (Livarda, 2011). Archaeobotanical data (carried out in 2007) from N.W. Europe, including Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, etc found that the ‘true imports’ that were present in the archaeobotanical data included black pepper, cardamom and cumin (Livarda, 2011). Half of Roman black pepper is found at military sites. Pepper in N.W. Europe has been largely uncommon outside of these military finds but it is difficult to determine if this is due to there being no demand or due to there being insufficient conditions for the pepper to survive in (Livarda, 2011).

Large quantities of pepper imported from Malabar (India) for large quantities of gold and silver (Dalby, 2002: 88-94). Botanical remains from Berenike reinforce the relationship between there and southern India. At Berenike, there is an abundance of black pepper originating from Malabar and a distinct absence of long pepper from the Barygaza region (Tomber, 2008: 630).

It is known from Indian pottery found at Berenike that spices were transported in large ceramic containers. One particular jar found at Berenike, found *in situ* in a first century CE courtyard immediately north of the Serapis Temple, was found to have contained around 7.5kg of black pepper from southern India. Due to the position of the jar, it has been presumed that the pepper was intended for ritual purposes (Tomber, 2008: 76) (fig 69).

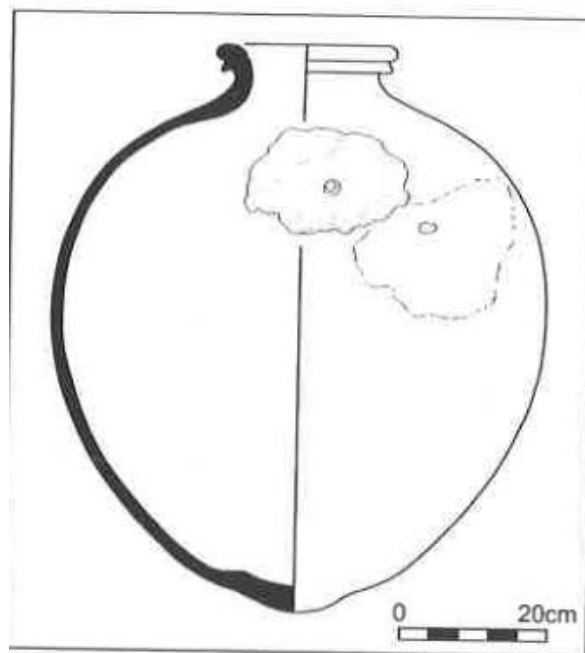
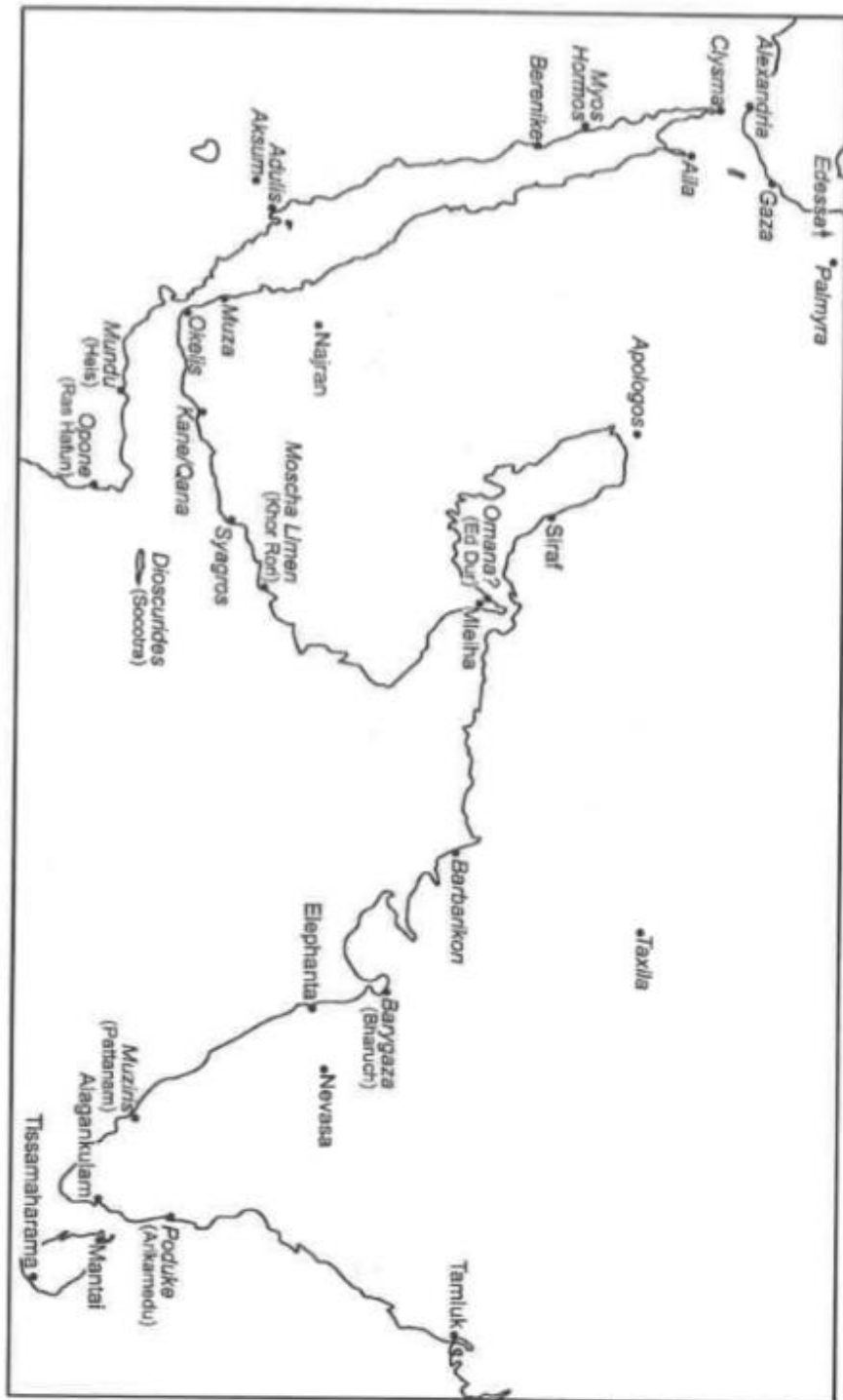


Figure 69: Spice Jar found at the Serapis Temple in Berenike (Tomber, 2008, 76)

In addition to this, *c.*3,000 loose black peppercorns were found, with around 80% of them charred from ritual usage (Cappers, 2006: 114). The usage of pepper as a ritual offering to the gods gives an indication of how valued this particular spice was in the Roman Mediterranean. Furthermore, the jar itself is of Indian origin, however the exact source is still unknown, and suggests that the pepper arrived in Berenike in this container.



Map 15: Map of key sites within the Indian Ocean (Source: Tomber, 2000, 12)

Pepper is the best way to see India's north-south divide as there were two species of pepper: *Piper Longum* (long pepper) and *Piper Nigrum* (black pepper). Long pepper was, and is, grown in the north of India. According to the *Periplus* (49), long pepper was exported from the port town of Barygaza (Modern Bharuch) in Gujarat (see map 15) and cost around 15 *Denarii* per Roman pound (Tomber, 2008: 55). Black pepper is found in the south-west of India in the region of Kerala which Pliny (*N.H.* 6.105) and the writer of the *Periplus* (PME 56) referred to as Kottanarike/Conttonara respectively. Furthermore, a third

type of pepper is mentioned in the documents used by Tomber (2008: 55), white pepper; that is ripe black pepper with the outer skin removed. Pliny (*N.H.* 12.26-9) gives the price of black pepper as 4D and white pepper as 7D per Roman pound, however, her assumed that these were all parts of the same plant (Cappers, 2006: 112).

It has been noted that black pepper is found to be exempt from the Alexandrian tariff may imply, by modern standards, that it was considered a staple (Cappers, 2006: 114-119). At present times, black pepper is the only pepper to be found in an archaeological context, although white pepper is difficult to identify due to preservation (Cappers, 2006: 114-119).

Because of the exceptional preservation conditions, over 95% of the pepper recovered from archaeological contexts in the Roman world comes from the Eastern Desert of Egypt; in Europe only odd grains of black pepper have been recovered (Cappers, 2006: 114-119). There is indirect evidence from the *Horrea Piperataria*, north of the *Sacra Via* in Rome, for the storage and possible sale of South Asian spices and peppers (Rickman, 1971: 105-6,170; Tomber, 2008: 55) and the 4th century CE silver pepper pots from Hoxne, Suffolk (Tomber, 2008: 55).

Combining all of these factors, it can be said that the different kinds of pepper were viewed with different levels of value and created different spheres of influence. For example, due to the price of black pepper being so low per pound, it was able to have a wider sphere of influence and would have most likely been in higher demand. Cobb (2018) found black pepper to be the dominant import at the Red Sea ports yet there was a distinct lack of long pepper in the archaeobotanical record (526). Cobb (2018: 526) amongst others (Cappers, 1998: 311; Cappers, 2006: 116-117; Van der Veen, 2011: 41) rejects the suggestion that there was a lack of a seaborne route in this item and suggests that the long pepper was not transported via the Red Sea route due to its susceptibility to mould and spoilage. Similar to this at Myos Hormos, 71 peppercorns have been identified from Roman deposits (Cobb, 2018: 526). The peppercorns here all seem to be black, mostly with the characteristic wrinkled skin and are the most common of the recovered spices (Van der Veen, 2011: 41-4).

Identifying plant remains in the archaeological record poses a number of hurdles, with the first of them being the underrepresentation of organic matter due to natural decay (Cobb, 2018: 256). Often, this material survives in hyper-arid or anaerobic (oxygen starved) conditions. An example of a hyper-arid condition can be found at the Red Sea ports of Myos Hormos and Berenike. Here the extremely dry conditions have allowed for the

survival of extensive organic material, including charred or desiccated plant remains, papyri, rope and textiles (Cobb, 2018: 256). Cobb (2018: 256) also gives the example of peppercorn finds in north-western Europe (Germany, Britain and France) being found in waterlogged, that is anaerobic, conditions. The consistency of the recovery of black pepper in the archaeological record gives more levity to Pliny's indication that the spice was sold at such a low-price mark. There was a greater chance of 'spillage' in the transportation of black pepper and so, due to the lower price mark, not as much anxiety surrounding the small losses (Van der Veen and Morales, 2015: 57).

Black pepper in Rome was used in a variety of contexts from ritual to military payment, indicating that black pepper was a staple of everyday life in the Roman Empire. This dependence on pepper from multiple classes of those who lived within the borders of the empire would not have disappeared with the collapse of the central power structure. Black pepper was so intrinsically valuable in the Roman world that during his first siege of Rome, Alaric, King of the Goths (370/375-410CE), supposedly asked for "3,000 pounds" of pepper amongst his ransom for the city (Norwich, 1988: 134).

The demand for spices, especially black pepper in the European and Egyptian communities gives an indication that the trade for them would not have stopped with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. This is indicated by the continued trade between India and the Eastern Roman Empire, primarily the city of Byzantium.

The Indo-Byzantine trade stemmed from the ends of the Indo-Roman trade however there is not as much archaeobotanical data surrounding this later trade. Nevertheless, there is evidence of the trade continuing from the daily cuisine of the Byzantine Empire (Soroachan, 2017: 34). According to Soroachan (2017), the Byzantines carried on the lifestyle of the Roman Empire, and in that, trade was included. Pepper was used in everything from drinks or being using as a digestant, indicating that the idea of *Ayurveda* could be found in Byzantium. Furthermore, there was also the trade of cardamom and cinnamon (Soroachan, 2017: 37). The *Digesta* call types of cinnamon (*cinnamomum*, *cassia turiana*, *xylocassia*) that are subject to customs duties with the Book of the Perfect also indicates three types and gives indication that its trade was for its flavour and scent (Soroachan, 2017: 37). More so, there is also the trade of cloves, caraway and sandalwood (Soroachan, 2017: 37); all of which were used in perfumery and medicine. With the trade between Byzantium and India began in around the 5th/6th century CE, that is during the Gupta Period. With the trade continuing during the Gupta Period gives further indication that there was north-south trade.

The Indo-Roman and Indo-Byzantine trade give indicate that there was a large amount of value placed on the trade of spices.

Furthermore, the entanglements created by the trade of these spices entangled not only those who directly interacted, but also those who indirectly interacted with spices. The external spice trade further informed the socio-political value of spices. It allowed for not only the Gupta elites and merchants to place value upon the spices but also external parties such as the Romans. The value that was placed on these spices created various levels of dependency, from the need for the spices to be correctly stored to the need for recipes to be written out and maintained. The dynamic that was made and maintained by the Byzantines following the fall of the Roman Empire by embodying the continued desires of the elites and wider population. By entangling the wider world, spices created networks of ever-growing dependency. For example, the Gupta elites were relying on the Kadambas to be able to trade for the spices. Specifically, the Gupta elites were relying on traders being able to travel to the region. Furthermore, the traders were relying on the weather, the boats or caravans they were travelling with to be in the condition to travel. Additionally, the caravan or boat would be relying on the trade of the spices for their own continued existence. If the spices lost value, ultimately, they would lose their value and be destroyed as they were not needed. If the north-south spice trade was non-existent, the Indo-Byzantine trade would be non-existent as would Indo-Chinese trade, and, ultimately, spices would be worthless.

5.6: Gupta-Kadamba Spice Trade

There is little to no evidence directly related to the Gupta spice trade itself, so the above information is going to be used to inform the argument. By looking at the previously existing maritime trade between Gujarat and Rome, it is important to note that this would not have disappeared with the collapse of the city of Rome.

With the external demand in the maritime trade of spices and the gold that was being brought into the country because of it, it is unsurprising that the Gupta elites were interested in the area. This relationship was characterised by spices being moved north by coastal fleets and a clear desire for spices from individuals in the West (Hall, 1985: 32). Furthermore, the areas of Karnataka and Kerala were more easily accessible from Gujarat than the rest of the GPF. With many of the most tradable spices coming from the aforementioned areas, it was imperative to establish a trade relationship with the ruling elites of the areas. For example, the Gupta's established a relationship with the Kadamba's of Karnataka which can be seen through the Talagunda pillar which indicates the marriage

between a Kadamba princess and Kumaragupta (Moraes, 1990: 27). Furthermore, the establishment of Hindu temples dedicated to Visnu happened during the time of the Gupta-Kadamba relationship.

The Kadamba family believed themselves to be descended from Siva as identified in the Talagunda pillar (Moraes, 1990). However, the Halmuli and Banavasi engravings begin with a conjuring of Lord Visnu (Moraes, 1990). The inclusion of Visnu in these engraving may indicate that Gupta merchants brought their own ideas surrounding the most important of the Vedic deities to the Kadamba dynasty. However, there is no evidence in the Gupta Political Formation of any change towards accommodating the Kadamba beliefs. The poet, Kalidasa confirms the growing importance of the Kadamba kings in the beginning of the 5th century CE with Fr. Heras (quoted in Moraes, 1990: 20) saying that the embassy appears to be one of the most “suggestive” events in the history of the Gupta Empire. This is because of the Gupta’s were not sent an embassy from the Kadambas, showing that they had no interest in becoming beholden to the larger power. The aforementioned poet, Kalidasa, was sent by the Gupta king, Chandragupta II as the ambassador for the Gupta court to the Kadamba dynasty.

Kalidasa suggests that the Kadamba’s did not offer him a “place befitting the king he represented” (Moraes, 1990: 20). This action suggests that the Gupta elites had a desire for whatever the Kadamba dynasty had to offer. With the Indian Ocean trade taking place mostly in the south of the sub-continent (Cobb, 2018; Tomber, 2008; Cappers, 1998) and black pepper and cinnamon growing naturally in that region (SBI, 2011), the Kadamba’s had little to gain from a relationship with the Guptas. However, with the Guptas being staunch Hindus following Sanskrit texts and with the relationship with China becoming more prevalent as well as overland routes with Byzantium, the Gupta elites had much more to gain from the establishment of the relationship.

Overall, the internal north-south spice trade between the Kadambas and the Guptas further indicates the importance of spices to the Gupta elites. With the Gupta’s having sent their own ambassador to the Kadamba dynasty without the expectation of one being sent back to them indicates that there was more to gain for the Gupta elite. Here, the value placed on the spices that were being traded even superseded the treatment that the Gupta’s expected their ambassadors to be shown by the hosting courts. This further indicates that the desire for the spices, primarily black pepper and cinnamon, was so important to the elites that they were willing to invade a neighbouring area, that is Gujarat, to ensure that they were closer to the source of the spices that they desired.

5.7: Conclusion

To conclude, due to there being a lack of information available on the direct spice trade of the Gupta Political Formation has meant that this chapter has had to use information from surrounding periods and evidence. By using information on modern growing regions, there has been an attempt to show that it would have been impossible for the Guptas to have not needed to have a relationship with their southern counterparts and combining this with the Bower Manuscripts found in north-western China further cements the need for the relationship to exist. Furthermore, by looking at the information given on the Kadamba court by Kalidasa and the fact that the Gupta would circumvent tradition for the younger, less prestigious court, again shows how important the access to the spices was to the elites. By ignoring their own traditions, the Guptas show how entangled they were to their relationship with the Kadamba, the external trade and the spices themselves.

Spices were an important part of external trade for both the Pre-Gupta and Gupta period due to the external demand for the product. When the Guptas invaded Gujarat, they were able to take over the trading posts, such as those mentioned in the *Periplus*. This would have meant that the Guptas were relying on the continued procurement of spices, entangling them in a relationship with the Kadamba dynasty (Moraes, 1990). Here, spices themselves may be considered as ‘affiliates’ (Katchadurian, 2016: 76). This is due to their ability to ensnare the individual towns where spices were grown and the traders who brought them north to the ports of Gujarat. Katchadurian (2016) states that affiliates stayed away from the human agents and centres of state power however that is not entirely true for spices. Therefore, I suggest that the category of affiliates is too narrow for spices, however the category of delegates is too wide, as spices themselves do not further the imperial message. This leaves us with the question of what can spices be considered as and are they a powerful material? I argue that spices are powerful in that they may have influenced the Guptas move south and their intermarriage with the Kadamba dynasty however, what we can consider spices to be is a topic that needs further research.

Chapter 6: Powerful Materials, Entanglements, and the Gupta Political Formation

This dissertation set out to investigate how materials are powerful through the entanglements in which they have been found. The aim of this was to explore what this means for the sovereignty and innerworkings of political formations. The exploration of this concept through the Gupta Political Formation has begun to shed some light on these entanglements away from imperial or dynastic decisions. By using the entanglement framework (Hodder, 2012) and the idea of the *satrapal condition* (Katchadurian, 2016), I have endeavoured to find a middle ground between the extremes of object and human centric points of view.

This thesis has explored three different powerful materials and their impact on the relationships between the elites of the GPF. Textiles, metals, and spices have been used in an attempt to answer the question of how the material desires and dependencies of the Gupta elites shaped the political formation over its life history.

6.1: Powerful Materials

The three powerful materials – textiles, metals and spices – chosen for this work have been discussed individually through the ideas of new materialism. Here, I bring them all together to answer the question posed at the start of this thesis:

Through a focus on powerful materials, as opposed to imperial or dynastic agency, how did the material desires and dependencies of the Gupta Ruling Elites shape and transform the political formation over the course of its life-history?

To further this point, the power of the materials is found in how they are valued, and this value can only be found in the contexts in which the materials have been placed. Materials that are needed for basic human existence are intrinsically valued and therefore are able to control the movements of or controlled by individuals through the need for these materials. However, the materials discussed throughout this thesis are not those that are innately or inherently valued by society, but those that are desired by them. Once a population's basic needs are filled, their desires manifest. These desires then become dependencies, creating networks of entanglement that ensure these desires are fulfilled.

Throughout dissertation, three materials have been investigated through how the desires for them ended up influencing the ways in which the GPF was shaped throughout the course of its life history. In this chapter, the effects of these desires will be summarised and discussed in relation to each other rather than as individual materials. These will then be used to finish investigating the ways that powerful materials affect political formations.

6.2: Satrapal Entanglements

To summarise Katchadurian (2016), delegates are the things that take share in the preservation of the very terms of imperial sovereignty through the force of both their material composition and the practical mediations they help afford (Katchadurian, 2016, 68).

Looking at the Roman dependence on marble, Katchadurian (2016: 68) states that imperial agents began to rely on its 'affective and practical contributions' to the reproduction of Roman imperium as ideology and practice. Using this example, it can be argued that coinage can be placed in a similar category. The Gupta elites' dependence on metals for the minting of coinage that was then used to reproduce the political message. This included the reinforcement of hierarchy through iconographic representations of clothing.

Further to this, the expropriation and exploitation of the silver mines of the Western Kshatrapas set in motion a similar motion of patronage and emulation by civic elites to that found in Rome for marble. The iconographic representation of textiles as found on coinage can be used as an example. Courtiers that were close to the Gupta monarchs would often wear fitted trousers and tunics, reflective of those found depicted on the coinage. Through this reliance, the delegates, in this case the metals that are relied upon for coinage, became empowered. This is due to their ability to hold sway over those individuals and objects that became embroiled in the Gupta elites need for the metal for coinage.

This was everyone from the miners who were extracting the metals to the merchants who were spending the coinage. Beyond this, the coinage was used for the purchase of spices, many of which were not grown within the borders of the GPF. By using the coinage provided to them by the Gupta elites to purchase the spices outside of the political formation, the *satavahanas* ensured the spread of the imperial message that was placed upon the coinage.

Delegates gain "efficacy" in imperial reproduction, not through their singular operation but in confederation with an extensive assemblage with other delegates (Katchadurian, 2016, 69). This efficacy is found in both textiles and metals (chapters 3&4) and how the Gupta elites used them in conjunction with each other. The use of different denotations of coinage to supply a different message to the user. In chapter 3, the dress of the male figures on the gold coinage can be said to be similar to that of the previous rulers of the Western Kshatrapas. In turn, this makes the Gupta's own imperial desires wholly reliant on the population continuing to view the style of textile clothing as one of value and desire. In comparison to this, the copper coinage shows the male figure in the similar dress to the

gods found in temples and on road-side shrines. Here, the importance of the religious beliefs of the population are relied upon to view the elites as similar to the deities that they worship. Here, Smith's (2015: 6) three pre-existing conditions for political sovereignty can be viewed.

Firstly, the need for a coherent public as defined by inclusion and exclusion is seen through the choice of the clothing worn by the Gupta elites. It defined them [the elites] as similar to either the previous rulers, as seen through older coinage, or emulating deities as found in the Ajanta Cave Paintings and the Udayagiri Caves. Furthermore, the establishment of the figure of a sovereign is seen through the use of coinage to reproduce the political ideology of the Gupta elites as unopposed rulers (fig 70).

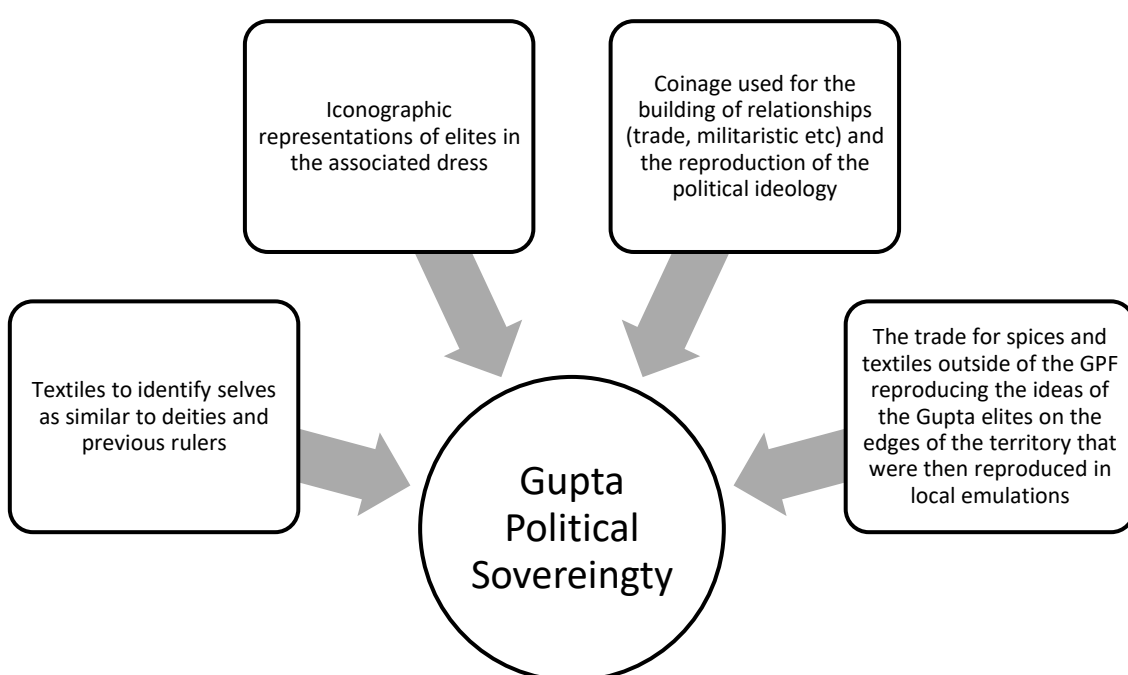


Figure 70: The four pre-existing conditions for political sovereignty in the GPF (Source: Author)

Furthermore, this reproduction of political sovereignty through the combination of the iconographic representation of clothing that was delivering the political message through the coinage that created wide and varied networks of dependence. If it were not for the exploitation of the mines found in the Western Kshatrapas and the trade relationship established for gold with political formation of the Kadamba dynasty, the Gupta elites would not have been able to establish themselves to the same extent that they did. Here, it is important to consider Hodder's (2012) idea of the sequence of entanglements.

The trade of the metals itself relied on the exploitation of the mines at the source, either in the Kadamba Political Formation or in the mines in the former Western Kshatrapas. This then depended on the mines themselves to be stable and functioning with smithing areas

close by. These entanglements forced the Gupta elites to rely on the things to allow for them to have access to the materials on which they rely for the minting of coinage. The minting and circulation of coinage imbues the metals used in the process, and the things associated, with a certain amount of power.

Although not as prominent in this thesis, the idea of proxies can also be found in specifically through the reproduction of coinage in lighter forms by either the elites or locals at sites such as the Buddhist University of Nalanda (Chapter 3). Proxies have sometimes been called “copies” or “imitations”; that is things that have been called local emulations of the imperial “canons” (Katchadurian, 2016, 70). Here, the lighter coinage has been made by melting down the pre-existing coinage and melting it down to create lighter, and therefore less extrinsically valuable, coinage. This lighter coinage would not have been accepted by non-Gupta traders due to the coinage being of less value due to the seeming decrease in gold due to the weight change. However, within the Gupta Political Formation due to the gold coinage of the Guptas was seemingly adopted due to the intrinsic value of the gold coinage.

These proxies exist, as stated by Katchadurian (2016: 70) because of the erosion of delegates by their own “allure” and “efficacy” which caused what has been called the “mimetic faculty” (Taussig, 1993: 2). These local emulations are in different materials and modified forms through which the imperial values and ways of doing as “diluted” due to their human users “harness them to unruly ends” (Katchadurian, 2016: 72). This “unruliness” can arguably be found in the reproduction of the imperial coinage in lighter, and through this, lower value coinage. However, due to the intrinsically valuable nature of the coinage to the Gupta population, a pre-existing driver from the previously established rulers that the Gupta elites continued to use, the lighter coinage was accepted at face value. Furthermore, because of this acceptance of the lighter coinage, more of these coins were then able to exist, leading to issues with external trade where metal currency was used. This may be part of the reason for the imperially issued lighter coinage of the later imperial Gupta rulers, which in turn may have led to the weakening of the political formation as a whole due to the lessening of the imperial message.

Captives are described as the displaced things moving in reverse along routes that lead directly to the imperial centres (Katchadurian, 2016: 73). They are political things that have been compelled to collaborate with the sovereign in the reproduction of authority and subjection with material captives being consequences of theft and can be consider the “ultimate imperial act” (MacKenzie, 1995: 53). They are the spoils marched through the

city after war, curiosities from colonised lands and the provincial “things” that were targeted for replication and co-option into the imperial state (Katchadurian, 2016: 74).

Based on the evidence found in chapters 3 & 4, I argue that the Gupta elites captured the textile clothing of the previous rulers of the Western Kshatrapas and those of the Kushana and slowly turned them into delegates for themselves. Katchadurian (2016) says that it is possible for the captive materials to become delegates themselves. Here, the way in which the clothing of the former rulers became delegates for the Gupta elites as opposed to remaining captives was their ability to be used to pacify the public and create a political message of unity. Furthermore, these ideas were communicated through the gold coinage whereas the copper coinage continued to communicate the ideas of the Brahmanical faith. Through these two separate messages, the Gupta elites harnessed the power of the materials to ensure that the political hierarchy which they relied upon, that is the caste system, was continually communicated through every aspect of the populations relationship with them.

Further to this, it can be said that the spices used within the religious and medical practices of the time period may be considered captives due to their movement from the edge of the political sphere of influence directly to the centre. They then became delegates through their movement from the Gupta Political Formation north into China as indicated by the Bower Manuscripts (chapter 5).

The idea of affiliates is found in all other things that are not associated with the political machine. This may be able to be characterised by the types of elite practices found in provinces after the Gupta incorporation or ways of constructing architecture, such as temples, houses, and palaces. However, this thesis has not analysed the political formation from this perspective yet the breadth and depth of the available material for further discussion of Katchadurian’s (2016) model for investigating imperial matter cannot be left. This is an idea that I wish to pursue further in later academic research.

Although Katchadurian’s (2016) model for the *satrapal condition* is useful for the establishment of what can be considered as imperial matter, it is not an inclusive enough form for the full study of multiple different and distinct materials. Here, I have used both Katchadurian’s (2016) and Hodder’s (2012) models for the discussion of powerful materials in conjunction with one another and have found that neither model is sufficient enough to gain a true grasp of the inner workings of the political formation. However,

together they have allowed for the answer to the question that was posed at the start of the dissertation and at the start of the chapter.

6.3: Powerful Materials in the Gupta Political Formation

At the start of this thesis, I laid out a plan to investigate the inner workings of the political formation that we know as the Gupta Empire. The question posed was:

Through a focus on powerful materials, as opposed to imperial or dynastic agency, how did the material desires and dependencies of the Gupta Ruling Elites shape and transform the political formation over the course of its life-history?

I believe that through the above discussions on textile clothing, metals and spices, there has been some headway made into answering this question.

The material desires and dependencies of the Gupta Ruling Elite stemmed from a need to ensure that they were seen as the unopposed rulers of the land in which they settled themselves. Textiles were employed as a political strategy in an attempt to pacify the population that was encompassed within their borders through dressing in manners that were seen as both regal and religious to convince the population of their political authority. This political ideology was then spread through the patronage of temples wherein they displayed themselves in similar dress to the gods (Udayagiri Caves) and on the coinage where they placed themselves alongside the symbols of the deities they worshipped, dressed like the former rulers of the areas or like the gods themselves. This reproduction of the political message would have served to an extent to unify the public by including those who understood the message and othering those who did not, creating the social hierarchy that we know as the caste system.

Metals, specifically coinage allowed for the production and re-production of the political sovereignty of the Gupta elites. This was through the iconographic representations found upon them that were able to enforce and re-enforce the hierarchy of the caste system upon which the Gupta elite relied for their wealth and power.

In this thesis, I have found that textile clothing, alongside coinage, seemingly appears to be the biggest drivers behind the shaping and transforming of the Gupta Political Formation due to their ability to be delegates, captives, and proxies. I have shown that spices, although important within the socio-political lives of the Gupta population, do not drive the political machine in the same manner that metals and textile clothing does. However, although they do not drive the political machine to the same degree as metals and textiles, spices were a fundamental part of the socio-political lives of the Gupta population. Spices

were necessary in everything from medicine to food. Furthermore, spices had the ability to entangle those outside of the immediate Gupta sphere of influence.

Arguably, it can be said that spices fit into Katchadurian's idea of affiliates as they are seemingly swept along in the movements of the political formation with no real option. However, I believe that this is not the case and that Katchadurian's categories give a much too narrow view on how to classify imperial matter. This is because, as evidenced by chapter 5, spices were traded for heavily by external parties such as Rome and Byzantium as well as being involved in the medical practices of the local populations. This has led me to reconsider the ideas of Katchadurian (2016) which is not possible to reproduce in the current thesis and is something that will be investigated in future research.

Overall, I believe I have shown that textile clothing, at least within the framework of the Gupta Political Formation, was used as a political tool for the reinforcement of hierarchy. In the GPF, this hierarchy is found in the form of the pre-existing caste system. Using Darshini's (2006) three-tier power structure alongside Smith's pre-existing conditions for political sovereignty, I have shown that the Gupta elites relied on the mystification of the Vedic religious practices and symbols as evidenced by the iconographic depictions of textile clothing found in the ACP, Udayagiri Caves and on coinage. Furthermore, I have found that the belief that the Gupta's were *vaishyas* can be argued to be true due to their need to continually reinforce their political authority through iconography that was most directly found on the coinage of the period. The adoption of the dress of previous rulers from areas recently encompassed into the political formation due to the desirable resources available indicate that the elite's material needs were reflected in the political messages communicated through dress. This perspective shows that textile clothing has a much stronger political use than previously established and furthers the psychological and anthropological ideas of othering and discrimination.

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Maps

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Coinage

Copper Coins of Chandragupta II:

A:

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B:

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C:

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D:

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Appendix

Appendix 1

The following is from the translation of the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta by D. R. Bhandarkar (1981):

- **(Verse 3)** Whose mind is surcharged with happiness in consequence of his association with the wise, who is thus accustomed to retain the truth and purpose of (any) science fixed upraised who, removing impediments to the grace of good poetry through the very injunction (*ājñā*) of (poetic) excellence (*guṇa*) clustered together (*guṇita*) by the experts, enjoys, in the literate world, in an attractive fashion, sovereignty, in consequence of fame for copious lucid poetry.
- **(Verse 4)** (Exclaiming) "Come, oh worthy (one)", and embracing (him) with hair standing on end and indicating (his) feeling, (his) father, perceiving (him) with the eye, overcome with affection, (and) laden with tears (of joy), (but) discerning the true state (of things) said to him "so protect (thou) the whole earth", while he was being looked up with sad faces by others of equal birth, (but) while the courtiers were breathing cheerfully.
- **(Verse 5)** Beholding whose many super-human actions, some felt the thrill of marvel and burst into horripilation, some relishing with feeling, some afflicted with his prowess sought (whose) protection after performing obeisance;.
- **(Verse 6)** (Whose enemies), whose offence was always great, being conquered by his arm in battles day by day pride (develop) repentance with their minds filled with delight and expanding with much and evident pleasure and affection.
- **(Verse 7)** By whom, with the impetuosity of the prowess of (his) arm, which grew to overflowing, having singly and in a moment uprooted Achyuta and Nāgāsēna and [Gaṇapati] come together in a battle (against him) thereafter, causing, indeed, the scion of the Kōta family to be captured by (his) forces, (while) amusing himself at (the city) named Pushpa, while the sun the banks
- **(Verse 8)** (Being) the enclosing structure of Dharma (Sacred Law), (his) multifarious sprouting fame is as bright as the rays of the moon; (his) erudition pierces down to Truth quiescence, the course of (his) wise utterances is worthy of study; (his) again is poetry which outdistances the greatness of the genius of (other) poets. What excellence is there which does not belong to him ? So has he alone become a fit subject of contemplation with the learned.?
- **(Lines 17–18)** Of him (who) was skilful in engaging in hundreds of battles of various kinds, whose only ally was valour (*parākrama*) through the might of his own arm, and who (has thus) the epithet *Parākrama*, whose body was most charming, being covered over with the plenteous beauty of the marks of hundreds of promiscuous scars, caused by battle-axes, arrows, spikes (*śaṅku*), spears (*śakti*), barbed darts (*prāsa*), swords, iron clubs (*tōmara*), javelins for throwing (*bhindipāla*), barbed arrows (*nārācha*), span-long arrows (*vaitastika*) and many other weapons.
- **(Lines 19–20)** Whose magnanimity blended with valour was caused by (his) first capturing, and thereafter showing the favour of releasing, all the kings of Dakṣiṇāpatha such as Mahēndra of Kōsala, Vyāghrarāja of *Mahākāntāra*, Maṅṭarāja of Kurāḷa, Mahēndragiri of Piṣṭapura, Svāmidatta of Kōṭṭūra, Damana of Ēraṇḍapalla, Viṣṇugōpa of Kāñchī, Nīlarāja of Avamukta, Hastivarman of Vēṅgī, Ugrasēna of Pālakka, Kubēra of *Dēvarāshṭra*, and Dhanañjaya of Kusthalapura.
- **(Line 21)** (Who) is great through the extraordinary valour, namely, the forcible extermination of many kings of Āryāvarta such as Rudradēva, Matila, Nāgadatta, Chandravarman, Gaṇapatināga, Nāgasēna, Āchyuta-Nandin and Balavarman; who has made all the kings of the forest regions to become his servants.

- **(Lines 22–23)** (Whose) formidable rule was propitiated with the payment of all tributes, execution of orders and visits (to his court) for obeisance by such frontier rulers as those of Samataṭa, Ḍavāka, Kāmarūpa, Nēpāla, and Karṭripura, and, by the Mālavas, Ārjunāyanas, Yaudhēyas, Mādrakas, Ābhīras, Prārjunas, Sanakānīkas, Kākas, Kharaparikas and other (*tribes*)."
- **(Line 23)** (Whose) fame has tired itself with a journey over the whole world caused by the restoration of many fallen kingdoms and overthrown royal families.
- **(Lines 23–24)** The unimpeded flow (*prasara*) of the prowess of (whose) arm (was arrested) by an earth embankment (*dharāṇi-bandha*) put up by means of service through such measures as self-surrender, offering (their own) daughters in marriage and a request for the administration of their own districts and provinces through the Garuḍa badge, by the Dēvaputra-Shāhi-Shāhānushāhi and the Śaka lords and by (rulers) occupying all Island countries, such as Simhala and others.
- **(Lines 24–26)** He was without an antagonist on earth; he, by the overflowing of the multitude of (his) many good qualities adorned by hundreds of good actions, has wiped off the fame of other kings with the soles of (his) feet; (he is) Purusha (Supreme Being), being the cause of the prosperity of the good and the destruction of the bad (he is) incomprehensible; (he is) one whose tender heart can be captured only by devotion and humility; (he is) possessed of compassion; (he is) the giver of many hundred-thousands of cows; (his) mind has received ceremonial initiation for the uplift of the miserable, the poor, the forlorn and the suffering; (he is) resplendent and embodied kindness to mankind; (he is) equal to (the gods) Kubēra, Varuṇa, Indra and Yama; (his) Āyukta officers are always engaged upon restoring wealth (titles, territories, etc.) to the many kings conquered by the might of his arms.
- **(Lines 27–28)** (He) has put to shame Brīhaspati by (his) sharp and polished intellect, as also Tumburu, Nārada and others by the graces of his musical performances; (his) title of "King of Poets" has been established through (his) many compositions in poetry which were a means of subsistence to the learned people; (his) many wonderful and noble deeds are fit to be praised for a very long time; (he is) a human being, only as far as he performs the rites and conventions of the world, (otherwise he is) God whose residence is (this) world.
- **(Lines 28–30)** This lofty column, (is) the raised arm of the earth, proclaiming as it were, that the fame having pervaded the entire surface of the world with (its) rise caused by the conquest of the whole earth, has acquired an easy and graceful movement in that it has repaired from here (*i.e.* from this world) to the abode of (Indra) the lord of the gods—(the fame) of that prosperous Samudragupta the *Mahārājādhirāja*, son of the prosperous Chandragupta (I), the *Mahārājādhirāja*, born of the Mahādēvī Kumāradēvī, (and) daughter's son of the Lichchhavi, son's son of the prosperous Ghaṭōtkacha, the *Mahārāja* and the son of the son's son of the prosperous Gupta, the *Mahārāja*. Whose
- **(Verse 9)** fame, ever ascending higher and higher masses, and travelling by many paths, (namely) by liberality, prowess of arm, sobriety and utterance of scriptural texts, purifies the three worlds, like the white water of the (holy river) Gaṅgā, dashing forth rapidly when liberated from the confinement in the inner hollow of the matted hair of Paśupati, (which rises up in ever higher and higher masses and flows through many paths).
- **(Lines 31–32)** And may this poetic composition (*kāvya*) of Harishēṇa, the servant of the very same venerable *Bhaṭṭāraka*, whose mind has been enlightened through the favour of dwelling near (him), who is the *Sāndhivigrahika*, *Kumārāmātya* (and) *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka*, (and who is) a native of Khādyāṭapāka, and son of the *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* Dhruvabhūti, lead to the welfare and happiness of all beings!
- **(Lines 33)** and (it) was executed by the *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* Tilabhāṭṭaka who meditates on the feet of the *Paramabhāṭṭāraka*.