



Conflict and Cosmopolitanism in “Arab” Sind

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Introduction

In 1962, the historian A. B. L. Awasthi wrote, “the Turkish conquest of India began with the Arab conquest of Sind.”¹ The sentiment expresses a common teleology according to which Muslims, irregardless of their ethnicity, linguistic identities, or specific sectarian affiliations, acted in concert across more than five centuries to affect a “slow progress of Islamic power” in South Asia as D. R. Bhandarkar had put it three decades earlier.² Despite these attempts to invest Arab expansion into Sind in the early eighth century as the Ur-moment of “Muslim” conquest, the period of Arab dominion in Sind has commanded remarkably little serious attention by historians of art and architecture. Over the past decades several articles, dissertations, and at least one book have addressed the history of Arab rule in Sind or the religious identities of those who lived under it during the eighth through tenth centuries. By contrast, the material culture of the period has been neglected. Where it is mentioned, it is usually relegated to a footnote in historical surveys of Indo-Islamic art and architecture, an evolutionary dead end in a trajectory that leads inexorably towards the glories of Mughal art.

Sind is a region located at the southern end of the Indus valley in what is today Pakistan, extending roughly from the ancient city of Multan in the north to the Indus delta and Indian Ocean in the south (fig. 15-1). During the heyday of the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad in the ninth and tenth centuries, the region was connected by both land and sea to the mercantile and urban centers of

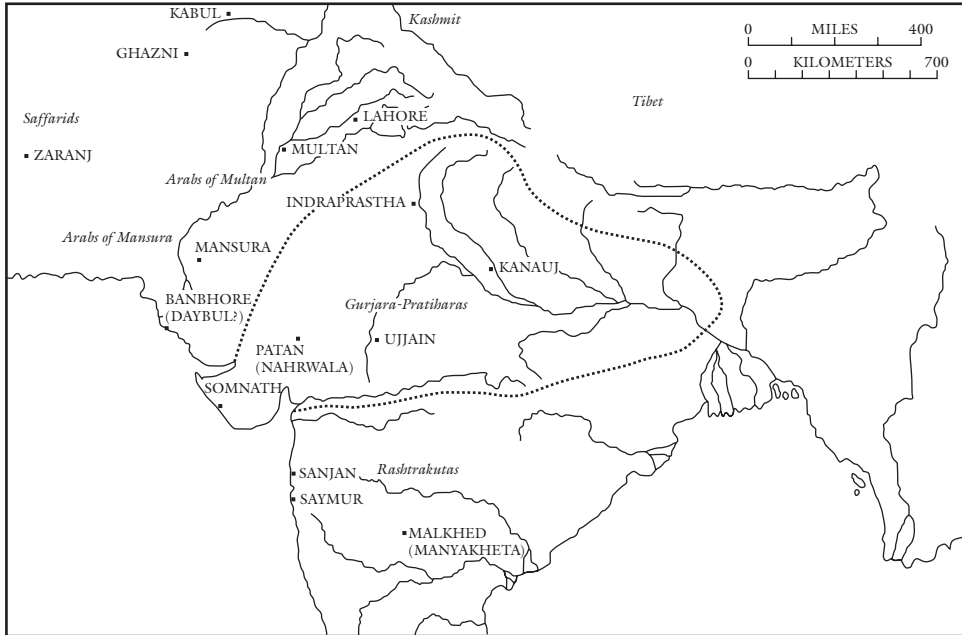


FIGURE 15-1 Map showing the major political formations of South Asia during the ninth and tenth centuries.

Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq in the west and peninsular India in the east. The neglect of early medieval Sind in modern scholarship belies its importance to the financial, moral, and political economies of the Abbasid caliphate. Between the eighth and tenth centuries, a vast array of materials, among them agricultural technologies, booty, gifts, loot, manufactured goods, raw materials, and taxes circulated westwards from Sind to the central Islamic lands along both maritime and terrestrial routes. In addition, I will argue below that Sind itself was a major center of artistic production during this period, producing some of the earliest and most important and spectacular examples of early Islamic ivory and metalwork to survive from any region of the Abbasid caliphate. Although fragmentary, the extant material attests to the role of Sind as a nexus between the heartlands of the caliphate and the Rajput polities that flourished during this period beyond its eastern frontiers.

The artifacts that attest to these connections have, however, largely been ignored by modern scholarship. The reasons for this neglect are various. The perception of the region as peripheral, remote from major artistic and cultural centers, is an enduring one, attested as early as the tenth century, when the Jerusalemite geographer al-Maqdisi wrote that although Sind was provided with elegant cities, it was reached only “after the dangers of the land and the terrors of the sea, after hardships and mental stress.”³ Since then, earthquakes and constant shifts in the course of the river Indus have obscured the architectural traces of the Arab period, known only through recent archaeological excavations and surveys,

many poorly published. In addition, the failure or inability to recognize the Sindi provenance of certain artifacts that survive in modern museum collections has further effaced the artistic history of Sind, a point to which I will return below.

Another reason for the neglect of Sind, I suggest, is that those few artifacts that may be confidently identified as of Sindi provenance straddle the divide between what modern scholars define as "Islamic" and "Indic" cultures, and are therefore not easily accommodated within the taxonomies that have ordered modern scholarship on South Asia since its inception under colonial rule in the nineteenth century. It is, however, precisely this elusive quality that lends the art and architecture of Sind its interest, not only as remnants or a "lost dimension" of Abbasid art, but also in their simultaneous claim to what are usually thought of as distinct cultural identities. In this sense, the material from early medieval Sind, however fragmentary, provides a convenient site from which to begin rethinking the categorical structures upon which modern understandings of the past are invariably based. In doing so, it not only poses a challenge to the canons and taxonomies of modern art history, but calls into question the logic of stasis and singularity that underlies contemporary notions of a medieval "clash of civilizations."

Historical Background

Despite sporadic incursions into Sind in the late seventh century, it was during the reign of the Umayyad caliph al-Walid I (r. 705–15) that an expedition under the general Muhammad ibn Qasim succeeded in bringing the major settlements of southern Sind under Arab control.⁴ Detailed accounts of the relevant campaigns are preserved by the Arab historian al-Baladhuri (ninth century) and in the *Chachnama*, a thirteenth-century Persian history of the campaigns in Sind apparently based on a lost Arabic original.⁵ Subsequently, governors administered the Indian territories in the name of the Umayyads and, after 750, the Abbasid caliphs who were to rule from their new capital of Baghdad. From around 850, a series of rebellious governors gave way to self-styled amirs who ruled two quasi-independent polities in the cities of Multan and Mansura in the upper and lower Indus delta. Although the amirs of Mansura claimed descent from the Prophet's contemporary Habbar ibn Aswad, and are consequently known to modern scholarship as the Habbarids, they dressed like Indian kings, and struck coins to an Indian rather than an Iraqi standard.⁶

The emergence of the Sindi amirs reflects a decline in the centrifugal authority of the Baghdad caliphate, especially in its eastern territories. Although they enjoyed de facto independence, the Sindi amirs courted caliphal favors and tokens that conferred legitimacy on their rule, often using gifts of Indian exotica to negotiate their fractious relationship with Baghdad.⁷ In the 960s, however, the amirs of Sind abandoned the fold of Sunni orthodoxy, realigning themselves with the Shiite dynasties then in the ascendant in Egypt and Iran rather than the beleaguered Abbasid caliphate.

In addition to chronicles and histories of these events, an unusual number of accounts of the cultural and economic life of Sind and al-Hind were left by tenth-century geographers, sailors, travelers, and by the sedentary scholars who derived vicarious benefit from their experiences. In fact, the ninth and tenth centuries saw the production of more Arabic geographical accounts of India than any subsequent period; the dependence of later writers on them attests to Sind's role as a transregional nexus before 1000. Many of these texts are highly entertaining compilations of sea-faring tales with an anecdotal flavor that weave together maritime lore, tales of the fabulous, ethnographic observation, and historical detail. In works such as the *Akhbar al-Sind wa'l-Hind* (*News of Sind and al-Hind*), compiled in 851 (237),⁸ and the *Kitab 'aja'ib al-Hind* (*The Book of the Wonders of al-Hind*, c. 955 [343–4]), India is depicted as a world of wonders (*'aja'ib*), much as it had been to western writers from the time of Herodotus onwards.⁹ Some texts offer first-hand accounts of Sind and peninsular India; the anecdotalist and geographer al-Mas'udi (d. 957 [346]) traveled to India, and his description of his voyage provides invaluable insights into the nature of the trade that underwrote the economies of Sind and al-Hind, and the cultures of the territories that it encompassed and traversed.¹⁰

Connecting regions as diverse as the Atlantic coast of Europe and the Indian Ocean littoral of India, what has been dubbed the “Arab Common Market” fostered the development of supralocal systems of exchange that cut across (while not necessarily transcending) ethnic, linguistic, political, and religious boundaries.¹¹ The circuits along which merchants, pilgrims, and travelers moved were of two kinds: maritime and terrestrial. Through the first, the ports of China, Sind, Gujarat and the western coast of India were linked with their counterparts in the Persian Gulf, Arabia, and the Red Sea in the west, Basra and Siraf being pre-eminent among them. The best-known of the Sindi ports, and the only port subject to excavation is the site of Banbhore, a walled city that many scholars identify with Daybul, the port of Mansura, a new eighth-century Arab foundation near the ancient city of Brahmanabad, and one of the two major centers of political authority in Sind.

From the ports of Sind, both riverine and terrestrial routes led into the interior of the Indus valley, to the land-locked urban centers of Mansura, and Multan, an ancient foundation renowned for its Sun Temple (fig. 15-1). These cities and their satellites were among the most ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse cities of the Abbasid caliphate, polyglot centers containing ethnically and religiously heterogeneous populations, in which not only currencies and languages but also religious practices and elite traditions intermingled.

From either city, merchants, travelers, and goods could connect to the terrestrial corridors that led west, to the desert region of Makran and on to Iran, or by the slower but more hospitable routes that led via mountain passes and valleys to Sistan and Zamindawar in southern Afghanistan or to the emporia and political centers of Ghazni and Kabul further to the northeast. From here, the journey could be continued to Khurasan, the wealthy and culturally dynamic region of eastern Iran, or north into Transoxiana and Central Asia.

Alternatively, travelers might take south-easterly routes that led along the coast towards the coastal emporia in the domains of the two major political formations that dominated peninsular India to the east: the Rashtrakuta rajas of the Deccan, who claimed overlordship of peninsular India as a whole, and the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kanauj who ruled over large areas of north India, including areas of Gujarat and Rajasthan that abutted the eastern edges of Sind (fig. 15-1). The relationship of the Sindi amirs with the latter was marked by hostility and periodic conflict, but the Arabs of Sind had excellent relations with the Rashtrakuta rajas, whose coastal cities were home to communities of Arab and Persian Muslims, some of whom ruled as governors in the name of the Rashtrakutas.¹² Excavation of these port cities over the past decade has produced material evidence for trade with the Persian Gulf; at Sanjan north of Mumbai, these finds include a cluster of Abbasid luster bowls and *dirhams* that evidently made the journey by the maritime routes from Basra or other Iraqi ports.¹³ The presence of Indian merchants and sailors in these Gulf ports (in which they worshiped at their own shrines) is hardly surprising, since an Indian mercantile diaspora existed in the emporia of the Red Sea as early as the first centuries of the Christian era.¹⁴ During the ninth and tenth centuries, the activities and renown of the Sindi merchants evidently stretched to East Africa, an association attested not only by the production there of coins similar to those being minted in the amirates of Sind, but also by the persistence of Swahili traditions concerning the denizens of Daybul, the port of Mansura, whose role as a "place of mythic origins" reflects its importance to the Indian Ocean trade before its decline around the eleventh or twelfth century.¹⁵ Conversely, sizable communities of Muslim Arabs and Persians from Basra, Baghdad, Oman, Siraf, and Yemen existed in the territories of the Rashtrakutas and Gurjara-Pratiharas. Their presence is well documented epigraphically and textually, and through the survival of a *mibrab* (prayer niche) of this period, now embedded in the exterior walls of Gwalior fort in north central India.¹⁶

Monuments and Objects

The relationship between the circulation of commodities, concepts, forms, and languages in the cities of Sind is exemplified by the monetized tokens through which long-distance trade was enabled. Silver coins were struck by the Arab rulers of Mansura and Multan from the mid-ninth century, when the amirs of both cities assumed de facto autonomy and flows of Abbasid coins seem to have ceased. The tiny coins known as *dammās* or *dramas* (from the Greek *drachm*) weigh around 0.5 of a gram. Coins of similar size and weight produced in neighboring Gujarat and elsewhere in north India during the seventh and eighth centuries are likely to have provided the models for the Sindi *dammās*. In addition to their use of an Indian denomination standard, the coins of the Sindi amirs lack dates, as is typical of contemporary north Indian coinage, but make use of Arabic text like contemporary Abbasid coins. These Sindi coins may in their turn have inspired coins of similar type that are found in the Islamic emporia of southern Arabia



FIGURE 15-2 Obverse and reverse of eight bilingual dammas from Multan, private collection. Not to scale.

and East Africa during the ninth and tenth centuries, a reminder of the way in which these transregional trade contacts inflected the material culture of the Indian Ocean littoral.¹⁷ It is worth pointing out that during this period, the Abbasid caliph of Baghdad was striking gold and silver commemorative coins based on Afghan silver tokens that circulated westwards as far as the Baltic, their circulation and imitation in no way impeded by the image that they bore of Nandi, the mount of the Hindu deity Shiva.¹⁸

The complex imbrications of “Indic” and “Islamic” cultures in Arab Sind are underlined by variant issues of these silver dammas produced in Multan (fig. 15-2). These coins await detailed study, but even a preliminary examination indicates their ability to provide significant insights into the economic, political, and religious life of Multan.¹⁹ On their obverse, the Multani coins all bear Arabic inscriptions that include religious phrases and the proper names of the Multani amirs, whose names are otherwise unknown.²⁰ By contrast, the reverse inscriptions of many these coins are inscribed with Sanskrit texts, which invoke a wide array of Hindu deities. On one of the Multani coins, the Prophet Muhammad is implicitly presented as the avatar of Allah, a notion made more explicit a century or two later in two bilingual (Arabic and Sanskrit) *tankas* struck at Mahmudpur (Lahore) in 1026–7 (419) in the name of Mahmud of Ghazni, the “idol-breaker.”²¹

The Sanskrit invocation of the primal boar (*Adivaraha*) on some of the Multani coins was probably inspired by a series of alloyed silver coins issued by the Gurjara-Pratihara ruler Bhoja (c. CE 836–82), coins that a tenth-century Rashtrakuta inscription refers to as the *shrimadadivaraha damma*. The Rashtrakuta coins differ from the Multani dramas in their metrology, but both bear the inscription *shrimad adivaraha* (the *biruda* or epithet of Bhoja) on one side with an anthropomorphic depiction of the boar incarnation of Vishnu on the other, replaced by Arabic text on the Multani dammas.²² These parallels with the coinage of the Gurjara-Pratihara of Kanauj suggest that the amirs of Multan were constructing their numismatic self-representations with one eye on their powerful eastern neighbors. Moreover, although the precise chronology of the series has yet to be established, the relationship to Gurjara-Pratihara coinage enables the dates of the Multani bilingual dammas to be bracketed between roughly 840 (225) (when the Bhoja coins appear) and 965 (354), when the amirs of Multan began minting coins of a different type, inscribed with Arabic texts that advertised their new-found allegiance to the Fatimid Ismailis of North Africa.²³ They are thus the earliest bilingual (Arabic–Sanskrit) Islamic coins produced in South Asia.

The numismatic evidence from Multan supports the impression of differences in the ethnic and linguistic composition of Mansura and Multan conveyed in the Arabic geographies, differences that preclude any attempt to define a unitary Sindi “Arab” culture. It is, for example, reported that the loincloth (*izar* or *mi'zar*) that was favored by the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of Gujarat also prevailed among the male population of Multan, but not among that of Mansura, where Iraqi fashions were dominant.²⁴ Reported differences in linguistic usage point in the same direction. The use of Arabic, Sindi, and comprehensible Persian

(*farsiyyat mafhumat*) is indicated at Multan, reflecting its position as a terminal for the Khurasan trade.²⁵ The presence of Sanskrit on Multani coins attests to further dimensions of elite literacy that lay outside the interest or knowledge of the Arab writers upon whom we depend for most of our information. By contrast, Arabic and Sindi were the languages of Mansura, hinting at differences in the ethnic composition of the merchants who came to trade in both cities, and the patterns of circulation specific to each sphere.

Theorists of cultural borderlands see them as “pregnant with possibilities” that find expression in the emergence of new cultural practices characterized by improvisation and recombination, by juxtaposition, syncretism, and translation.²⁶ This is true of the coinage issued by the amirs of Multan, which combines elements of syncretism (a constellation or juxtaposition of elements belonging to different linguistic systems and systems of belief) and translation (an attempt to represent the beliefs of one tradition in terms of another). Both phenomena raise interesting questions about the religious life of Sind, which at the time of the conquest in the early eighth century contained a religiously heterogeneous population consisting of Buddhists, Brahmans, Pashupata Shaivites, and some Vaishnavites.²⁷ Brick stupas (monumental Buddhist reliquaries) still dot the landscape of southern Sind, some of them showing signs of ritual use as late as the tenth century. Similarly, a tenth-century bronze image of Surya, the sun god, found at Brahmanabad near Mansura, attests to continuity in the cult whose temple at Multan was one of the most important pilgrimage sites of north India until its destruction by Ismaili missionaries in 965 (354). This was the most celebrated of a number of Hindu temples that stood within the territories of Arab amirates.²⁸ The continued existence of certain temples is in line with the reported policy of Muhammad ibn Qasim, the conqueror of Sind, who built mosques in the conquered cities, but afforded their non-Muslim populations the de facto status of *dhimmis* (protected subjects) similar to that enjoyed by the Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and other “people of the book,” who paid *jizya* (poll-tax).²⁹

The window opened by these coins onto the complex cultural affiliations and religious affinities of the Arab elite of Multan conforms with what little is known from textual sources, which contain hints of a rather agglomerative and pragmatic attitude to idolatry, identity, and religious practice among both the Sindi elites and the general population.³⁰ For example, al-Maqqisi (tenth century) mentions a merchant from Khurasan who, being captivated by two idols in Sind, gave himself over to idol worship only to rejoin the fold of Islam once he returned to Nishapur in Iran.³¹ Conversely, there are reports of Indic and Turkic rulers in western Afghanistan, the Kabul valley and Sind converting to Islam and adopting Arabic names during the eighth and ninth centuries only to apostasize when the appeal or power of the Arab center waned.³² Both phenomena suggest that neither social nor religious identity was immutable but was culturally constructed according to considerations of piety, power, utility, and so forth that reflect both established cultural values and the choices made by human agents. There

are, in addition, hints that those who identified as Muslims were by no means averse to paying their respects at Hindu temples, raising interesting questions about the relationship between *doxis* and *praxis* in the construction and articulation of religious identity. Materialized in the Multani coins, this pietistic cosmopolitanism is a *limitrophe* phenomenon characteristic of other Islamic frontier societies.³³

The dialectic between the contemporary cultural conventions of both Baghdad and Kanauj to which the Multani coins bear witness is no less apparent in the congregational mosques that formed the centers of Islamic religious life in the cities of Sind. These were large hypostyle mosques, consisting of a pillared prayer-hall preceded by a courtyard, surrounded by an irregular two-bay colonnade in the case of the congregational mosque at Bhanbhore/Daybul, the principal port of Mansura.³⁴ Measuring 150 by 250 feet, the Mansura mosque itself was almost double the size of the Friday mosques of Banbhore and Siraf, the major trading emporium in the Persian Gulf from whence many traders sailed to the Indian ports, and was distinguished from the wood and clay structures in the city by its construction from baked brick and stone.³⁵

In addition to these large congregational mosques (*jawami*), smaller neighborhood mosques (*masajid*) constructed from brick and wood, and with two to four columns supporting their flat roofs, were excavated at Mansura.³⁶ Recent surveys of the Indus delta have brought to light a number of these small oratories, built from stone, square in plan, and with four interior pillars creating a nine-fold division of interior space. The best preserved example, that at Thambo Wari or Thuman Jo near Thatta in southern Sind, has been dated to the tenth or eleventh century, although it may be slightly later.³⁷ The mosque was raised on a plinth (a feature associated with the temple architecture of western India), with exterior walls about 25 feet in length and four internal pillars that once supported a flat roof composed of stone slabs. Its nine-fold internal division represents a regional variant on a type of small nine-bayed mosque found throughout the Islamic world at this date. Its appearance in Sind points to the maritime connections of the region, for contemporary mosques of similar form are found in the coastal emporia of Egypt. In regions of the eastern Islamic world where brick was the dominant structural medium, these nine-bayed mosques are usually domed. Here, the basic form is executed in the local stone medium and *trabeate* (post and lintel) idiom of the Indus delta. The decoration of the mosque is also redolent of negotiations between the local and translocal, for while the multi-sectional pillars that supported the roof and the carved creeper ornament that frames the entrance to the mosque are entirely Indic in form and decoration (the former initially being identified, erroneously, as *spolia*), it had a concave stone *mihrab* carved with Arabic texts.

A particularly noteworthy feature of both major congregational mosques and the smaller oratory at Thambo Wari is that the evocation or execution of arch forms was clearly a *desideratum*, regardless of plan, although arch forms are not generally included in the regional idioms of Sind and neighboring Gujarat.

The mihrab of the Banbhore mosque was, for example, provided with a stone frame cut to approximate an arch form. Similarly, at Thambo Wari (and in some of the earliest mosques in neighboring Gujarat), the arch comprising the mihrab was carved from monolithic blocks of stone, transforming a structural feature into a sign.³⁸ The endeavor suggests an association between specific forms and cultural identity; the deployment of Arabic script and a strictly aniconic decorative vocabulary in the Sindi mosques (in contrast to the stupas and temples of the region) points in the same direction.

The aniconic decoration of Sindi coins and mosques should not, however, be taken as evidence for the abjuration of the richly figural traditions of north Indian art on the part of Arab patrons. Among the objects recovered from Mansura are four spectacular cast bronze door handles or knockers which shed further light on the kinds of mediations and negotiations manifest in both the coins and mosques of Sind. The four bronzes each measure about 20 inches in diameter, weigh around 70 pounds, and consist of three distinct sections soldered or bolted together: a central three-dimensional boss featuring an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic head; an inscribed silver plate, and a hexafoil knocker that hangs from the lower jaw of the face (fig. 15-3).³⁹ The rim of each bears an inscription incised in angular Kufic script. The bronzes were recovered from the *dar al-imara* (gubernatorial palace) of Mansura, and are believed to have adorned its entrance. The marginal inscriptions on the bronzes all bear the name of amir Abd Allah ibn Umar, the Habbarid ruler of Sind. Abd Allah was the second of the Habbarid amirs, is named on some of the copper and silver coinage of Mansura, and is known from travelers' accounts to have been ruling around 883 (270).⁴⁰ The bronzes can thus be dated to the early 880s at the latest.

This dating is particularly remarkable, since in both quality and scale, there is nothing from the contemporary Islamic world with which to compare the Mansura bronzes. At present, the early history of Islamic metalwork is represented by a generally unimpressive array of bronze ewers and incense burners from the eastern Mediterranean and Near East. The Mansura bronzes have the potential to rewrite this history. As products of a geographically peripheral region of the caliphate, it has been assumed that some or all of the Mansura bronzes were imported from Iraq.⁴¹ The devastation wrought by the Mongol conquest of Iraq in the thirteenth century means that in both quality and scale, there is, however, little to compare with the Mansura bronzes from the contemporary Islamic world, and nothing from Abbasid Iraq, so that the "high" cultural forms taken as a given are being intuited from the very bronzes that apparently show their diffusion.

There is no a priori reason to assume that some or all of the components of the bronzes were imported from the central Islamic lands. The existence of a major metalworking industry in early medieval Sind is indicated by finds such as a three-foot brass Brahma image from Mirpur Khas, and references to the copper-smiths' bazaar in tenth-century Multan suggest that Sind was a major metalworking center before and after the Arab conquest.⁴² In addition, the appearance of the



FIGURE 15-3 Four bronze door-knockers excavated at Mansura, from Khan 1999. Department of Archaeology and Museums, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Habbarid amir's name on the bronzes, and parallels between the style of their zoomorphic and anthropomorphic faces and the terracotta figural ornaments found on Sindi stupas and temples (specifically the ubiquitous lion-faced *kirtimukha* or *simha*) suggests that some or all of their components were manufactured locally.⁴³

Recent reimaginings of the relationships between centers and peripheries acknowledge the cultural and political power of artistic or political centers (the two are not necessarily coincident), but see peripheries as potentially more productive by virtue of their role as a nexus between different artistic and cultural networks, and the consequent availability of potential models that may not circulate in the center.⁴⁴ The material from Sind presented here is a case in point. Despite the likelihood that some or all of their components were of local manufacture, the content and form of the texts inscribed on the Mansura bronzes point to a relationship with Abbasid “tradition” that is surprisingly complex. For example, the inscriptions on the anthropomorphic bronzes terminate with a quotation from Koran 2:137: “God will suffice you against them, for God hears and knows everything.” This was a contemporary slogan of the Abbasid caliphs, inscribed on the iron pole that held their banner.⁴⁵ To understand why this slogan might have been chosen, it is necessary to consider the way in which the Habbarid amirs came to power in Mansura. Abd Allah, the amir named on the Mansura bronzes, was only the second of the Habbarid amirs to have ruled at Mansura. Habbarid rule had been secured by his father, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Habbari, in 854 (240) when he rebelled and seized Mansura, deposing the Abbasid governor during one of the many disputes between Arab tribes of Hijazi and Yemeni origin that wracked the province.⁴⁶ In these circumstances, the use of Abbasid slogans on the doors of the amir’s palace may have been intended as an attempt to obscure the distinction between the *de facto* autonomy wielded by the Habbarids and the *de jure* authority of the Abbasid caliph. Highlighting the ambiguities of their position, for example, the Sindi amirs continued to give the Friday sermon (*khutba*) in the name of the Abbasid caliph, a traditional sign of communal allegiance, although the amirs of Multan are said to have submitted to the sovereignty of no one.⁴⁷ It is also worth noting that the rise of the Habbarids was part of a broader ninth-century phenomenon of fragmentation; during the same period the rebellious governor of Egypt, Ahmad ibn Tulun (d. 884 [270]) also modeled the court culture of his breakaway capital on that of the Abbasid caliphs.

A further indicator of a relationship to the wider Islamic world lies in the script used to execute the Arabic legends on the Mansura bronzes. This comprises a foliated variant of angular Kufic script that became common in the Islamic world only in the tenth century. The precocious use of this script in the official texts of the amirs of Mansura is confirmed by its use in an incised stone foundation (or restoration) text dated 906–7 (294) recovered from the congregational mosque at Daybul/Banbhore, which mentions the son of amir Abd Allah named on the Mansura bronzes.⁴⁸ In contrast to most contemporary inscriptions in the wider Islamic world, which are carved in relief, the Banbhore texts are (like those on the Mansura bronzes) incised, following the standard practice for north Indian inscriptions. We can thus be confident that they were executed locally.

The early appearance of foliated script in Sind is undoubtedly related to the circulation of artisans and/or artifacts by the maritime routes. Foliated scripts are employed in Egypt as early as the 820s, and also make an early appearance

in the Hijaz, the site of the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina,⁴⁹ suggesting that the hajj may have been a factor in their dissemination. The appearance of foliated Kufic script in a series of ninth-century funerary inscriptions found on the route between the royal city of Anuradhapura and the coast of Sri Lanka confirms the early dissemination of foliated script around the Indian Ocean littoral.⁵⁰ One of these is dated 817–18 (202), preceding the Sindi examples by several decades. In addition, the epigraphic formulae used on the Sri Lankan stele are identical to those found on contemporary Arabian and Egyptian tombstones, pointing once again to maritime connections with these regions. As far as I am aware, the Sindi and Sri Lankan bronzes and stele provide the only examples of foliated Kufic found at this date outside of the eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea regions, a very concrete illustration of the effects of circulation and mobility across and around the Indian Ocean.

In addition to being a center for metalworking, there is abundant evidence that Sind was also a major center of ivory production both before and after the Arab conquest. The Jerusalemite geographer al-Maqdisi lists ivory among the manufactured goods and raw materials exported from Mansura, and al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal both mention that the Sun Temple of Multan was located in an enclosure situated between the bazaar of the ivory-carvers and the shops of the coppersmiths.⁵¹ A series of ivory plaques depicting *apsaras* (celestial females) and *makararas* (hybrid creatures) excavated at Brahmanabad near Mansura have been tentatively dated to this period and identified as imports from the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom of central India.⁵² However, it is just as likely that they were produced locally.

A major interpretive problem, one directly related to the neglect of Sind in contemporary scholarship, concerns the ability to identify products of the Sindi ivory-carving workshops that may survive in contemporary museum collections. Among the most likely candidates is an ivory dubbed the "Chessman of Charlemagne," now housed in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (fig. 15-4). Tradition identifies the ivory as a gift sent by the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809) to the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne, but since the earliest recorded reference to the object is in a sixteenth-century inventory, this is unlikely. It has been suggested instead that the ivory was brought to Baghdad along with other Indian exotica in the ninth and tenth centuries.⁵³ This is very probable, but its origin has never been satisfactorily ascertained. On stylistic grounds, it has been ascribed dates ranging from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries, and attributed to regions ranging from northwest India to Gujarat and the Deccan.⁵⁴ However, a number of factors suggest that it was in fact produced in either Mansura or Multan during the ninth or tenth century.

The ivory is substantial, standing just over 6 inches high, and is designed to be seen in the round. It depicts a long-haired mustachioed figure seated in a howdah atop a richly caparisoned elephant and wearing a *kurta* (a long fitted shirt) and prominent earrings, his head adorned with a narrow fillet. The elaborate dress of the mounted figure as well as his pre-eminent position and scale



FIGURE 15-4 Carved ivory elephant. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des médailles, No. Chabouillet 3271.

identify him as a royal rider. The semi-circular exterior of the howdah is ringed by eight advancing foot soldiers set within the inter-columnations of an arcade. The base of the elephant is ringed by five horse-riders, who are either bare-chested or wearing a kurta with baggy trousers and boots. The details of their costume and accoutrements, including stirrups and horse trappings, are carefully delineated.

Some of the details of the Paris ivory suggest affinities with the sculpture of Kashmir (known to have been a center for ivory carving during the eighth and ninth centuries) or other regions of the western Himalayas.⁵⁵ Despite these affinities, it seems unlikely that the elephant was carved in Kashmir, since extant Kashmiri ivories generally depict religious (primarily Buddhist) scenes and are not executed in the round, but are clearly designed to be approached from a single, frontal, viewpoint. Its strong Himalayan affinities might instead attest to contacts between Kashmir, the Indus valley, and Gujarat between the eighth and tenth centuries. These are reflected not only in cultural and economic exchange, but in the more tangible realm of artistic production, ranging from imports of Kashmiri sculpture to the adoption of characteristic Kashmiri forms (including trefoil arches and pyramidal roofs) in some of the Hindu temples of the Salt range in the northern Indus valley.⁵⁶

There is little "Islamic" about the Paris ivory in the sense that this adjective is usually employed, were it not for an Arabic inscription on the base of the piece. Written in a Kufic script that has been dated to the ninth or tenth century on paleographic grounds, the inscription reads *min amala Yusuf al-Bahili* (from [among] the work of Yusuf al-Bahili).⁵⁷ The *nisba* or toponymic of the individual named in the inscription indicates that he was a member of the celebrated Bahila tribe of Arabs, many of whom participated in the early conquests of the eastern frontier.⁵⁸ During the reign of the caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 720 [101]), for example, an individual named Amr ibn Muslim al-Bahili oversaw the recently acquired territories in Sind. It is likely that his descendants settled in the region, as did many of those involved in the conquest, including the ancestors of the Habbarid amirs of Mansura.⁵⁹

As for the likely subject of the carving, a metaphysical reading might see in it a representation of dharmic order: the vassals (*samantas*) surrounding a maharaja or the ideal polity described by Kautilya, central to which is the "circle of kings" comprised of the alternating rings of adversaries and allies that form around a *chakravartin* or universal ruler.⁶⁰ The concept has something in common with the "family of kings" depicted in early Islamic images and texts, where the kings of the earth (often reduced to the four or five kings of the Turks and/or Persians, China, India, and Rome) frame the throne of a superordinate ruler.⁶¹ The sculpture might equally be read as an idealized representation of a contemporary Sindi amir. Arab admiration for the elephant is rooted in the military advantage that pachyderm power conferred; by the ninth and tenth centuries the iconographic association between elephants and authority was acknowledged as far west as al-Andalus. In medieval Arabic geographies, the king of al-Hind is also referred to by the homonym "king of the elephants" (*malik al-fila*).⁶² The Habbarid ruler

of Mansura possessed 80 war-elephants, two of which are named and were celebrated for their size and strength, while the Arab amirs of Multan also made use of elephants in processions.⁶³ Paradoxically, the Indic dress of the royal figure on the Bibliothèque nationale ivory only strengthens the likely association with the amirs of Sind, for it is reported that the Habbarid rulers of Mansura (whom the sources refer to as both amirs and maharajas) dressed in the style of contemporary Indian kings, wearing earrings, long hair (a practice associated with Indians), and a tunic known as a kurta.⁶⁴ The sources emphasize that these modes of dress were peculiar to the amirs and were not general in Mansura, whose inhabitants wore instead the Iraqi fashions that held sway as far away as Andalusia at this time, reflecting the cultural hegemony of the Baghdad caliphate.⁶⁵ Just as the kings of neighboring Kashmir distinguished themselves from their subjects by their mode of hairstyle,⁶⁶ the amir and his subjects evidently participated in distinct sartorial ecumenes, underlining once again the complex transregional orientations and transcultural affiliations of the Mansura elite.

We know far less about the amirs of Multan than about their counterparts in Mansura, but there are hints that they may also have adopted Indic modes of self-fashioning. Arab travelers report that on the occasion of Friday prayers, the amir of Multan processed to the congregational mosque of Multan from his palace at Jandrawar (Chandravar) outside of the city, mounted on an elephant.⁶⁷ The ritualized nature of the event recalls descriptions of the ruler of Nahrwara (medieval Anhilavada or Patan), the capital of the Solanki or Chalukya rajas of neighboring Gujarat, vassals of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, riding out in procession every Friday, richly clad in a golden crown and robe, surrounded by female courtiers wearing the kurta, the garment also favored by the amirs of Mansura.⁶⁸

The adoption of Indic dress (and perhaps ceremonial) by the Sindi amirs runs counter to both the spirit and the letter of *ahadith* (Traditions of the Prophet) that proscribe the imitation of sartorial practices associated with unbelievers.⁶⁹ Rather than a religious reorientation, it should be understood as a pragmatic “orientation to power,” an exercise in self-fashioning that highlights the agentive appropriation of specific cultural forms and practices.⁷⁰ Geographically isolated from a Baghdad to which they were nominally subservient, the Sindi amirs evidently modeled their dress and public appearances on those of their powerful Indic neighbors, projecting their authority in a manner determined by the dominant political culture of the region, regardless of any ethnic or religious associations.

Given the likelihood that the Bibliothèque nationale ivory is the product of a Sindi workshop, the possibility that other products of Sindi ivory workshops have survived and not been recognized as such must be considered. The former is unique in bearing an inscription, but there are analogous ivory elephants that may be of similar provenance. Among them is a smaller elephant found in the northwestern Indian subcontinent and now in the collections of the Museum für Indische Kunst in Berlin (fig. 15-5). Standing 3.8 inches high, the Berlin elephant is considerably smaller than that in Paris, poorly preserved and of much cruder workmanship.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the iconography of the piece is almost identical to that of the larger and more sophisticated Bibliothèque nationale ivory.



FIGURE 15-5 Ivory elephant, Sind (?), courtesy of Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin.

Closer parallels are offered by a spectacular Buddhist diptych in the form of an elephant carrying a seated figure bearing a stupa shrine and surrounded by armed infantrymen. The ivory was found at Gansu in northwestern China, but the scenes from the life of the Buddha depicted in its interior are closely related to the Buddhist stone sculptures found in the Gandhara region of the northern Indus valley. Although different in detail, at 6.25 inches high, the Gansu piece is almost identical in size to the Paris ivory. A study in 2006 of the Gansu ivory concluded that it was produced in a frontier region of northwest India during the seventh or eighth century under strong Kashmiri influence, but showing characteristics quite distinct from those of medieval Kashmiri ivories.⁷² All of this is also true of the Paris ivory. Taken together, the Paris and Gansu elephants may therefore offer evidence for continuity between pre- and post-conquest traditions of ivory carving in Sind.

It is of course possible that the Arabic inscription post-dates the creation of the Bibliothèque nationale ivory, but the sole reason to assume this is an a priori assumption about the nature of “Islamic” art and the fact that the presence of an Arabic name is somehow at odds with the Indic style of the piece. In his analysis of the carving, Moti Chandra gives voice to these ontological and taxonomic aporias:

As a matter of fact, the purpose of an Arabic inscription on a purely Indian piece is also far from clear. It is difficult to say whether some Arab ivory-carver working in Indian style put his name on the ivory or whether its Arab owner got his name inscribed there.⁷³

Similarly, a recent study of the ivory dismisses the idea that such a richly figural tableau could be the work of a Muslim sculptor, concluding that it was carved by an anonymous (Hindu) artisan within the workshop of Yusuf al-Bahili.⁷⁴

The “problem” is common to the bronzes from Mansura (fig. 15-3), which scholars have struggled to locate both geographically and taxonomically. On stylistic grounds they have been divided into an “Indic” anthropomorphic pair and “Islamic” zoomorphic pair, the latter on the basis of comparison with much later leonine door-knockers from as far as afield as Spain. The hegemony of a model in which culture percolates from the center to the periphery is reflected in the failure to consider the possibility that, chronologically and iconographically, these “provincial” works might stand at the beginning of this series rather than on its margins. Moreover, explanations for this juxtaposition of Indic and Islamic iconography in a single group of artifacts range from literally diffusionist (the “Islamic” bronzes were dispatched from Iraq) to absurdly intentionalist:

two different workshops (or two artisans in the same workshop) [may have been] responsible. One worked in a traditional Indian mode, continuing to use the local style connected with the production of Hindu and Buddhist sculpture; the other employed a deliberately Islamic idiom and was well aware of stylistic developments in the central Islamic lands, possibly having emigrated from there.⁷⁵

Once again, it should be emphasized that there is nothing comparable to these bronzes from the central Islamic lands at this date, so that the “stylistic developments” there are being read backwards from the very bronzes that are taken to show their diffusion.

The juxtapositions and imbrications that necessitate these interpretive acrobatics only appear anomalous by virtue of an attempt to accommodate the artifacts in question within taxonomies that conflate ethnic, territorial, iconographic, and stylistic terms of analysis, privileging categories of “Hindu” or “Muslim” identity that are assumed to be distinct and incommensurate.⁷⁶ The categorical approach to identity that underlies these distinctions is apparent, for example, in David Wasserstein’s insistence that,

The very recognition of a coin as Islamic . . . implies the recognition of boundaries dividing Muslim from non-Muslim, Islamic from non-Islamic as well. Such a coin refers unmistakably to Islamic, as distinct from non-Islamic, territory, in every sense of that word.⁷⁷

An understanding of the fabric, script, and scale of coins as constituting a numismatic metalanguage that asserts intercultural difference cannot, however, account for the bilingual dammas from Multan (fig. 15-2), whose spirit is perfectly in keeping with the intermingling of Arabic text and Indic style on a single object, or the combination of lion masks and Abbasid religious slogans on the doors of the *dar al-imara* at Mansura. In a world in which descendants of the Prophet’s tribe could issue coins with Sanskrit texts representing him as an avatar and invoking

Hindu deities, a world in which for some temple and mosque seem to have been equally integral to quotidian rituals of devotion, neither "Islamic" nor "Indic" characteristics can be taken as predictive of ethnicity or religious affinity, if in fact such characteristics can be clearly distinguished at all.

Conclusion

Posing significant challenges to a principle of reading difference intrinsic to modern categories of thought that structure our understanding of the past, the flotsam from premodern Sind that are so marginal to canonical tellings of history (and art history) are immensely productive sites from which to interrogate the categorical structures upon which canons themselves depend. They also provide a timely reminder not only of the fact that people, things, and the practices associated with both have been mixed up together for a very long time, but also of the violence done to all cultural forms by attempts to purify and stratify them, to bring them into conformity with our culturally specific modes of ordering the universe. In this sense, rather than attesting to the narratives of conquest and conflict favored in colonial and nationalist historiographies, the material from Sind might equally be read against the background of a current interest in cosmopolitanism.

Contemporary interest in the theme of cosmopolitanism is closely linked to the phenomena of globalization, diaspora, and modernity, but the blend of imperial and mercantile cosmopolitanism that characterizes late capitalism is hardly unique. As the Romans, the Hapsburgs, the Ottomans, and numerous others have discovered, cosmopolitanisms of all sorts can be a useful asset to the state. This is in fact reflected in the Arabic name for Multan: *Faraj Bayt al-Dhahab* (Frontier of the House of Gold), reflecting the economic importance of the Sun Temple that stood in the city to its Arab rulers, who claimed up to 30 percent of its revenues.⁷⁸ The pragmatic dimension of elite cosmopolitanism in Umayyad Spain, a frontier region at the opposite end of the Abbasid caliphate, which came under Arab dominion at the same time as Sind, has also been noted.⁷⁹ The heterogeneous nature of the Sindi populations may therefore have led those attempting to consolidate their authority to foster aspects of pietistic cosmopolitanism to which the Multani coins attest. If the empires of imperial Rome and Ottoman Istanbul were marked by what Antonio Gramsci referred to as "imperial cosmopolitanism," the range of phenomena outlined here is indicative of what might be dubbed mercantile cosmopolitanism. The two are by no means incompatible: they often went together.⁸⁰

In a provocative if somewhat reductive hypothesis, Bruno Latour has suggested that a fundamental distinction between modern and premodern societies lies in the contrast between what he calls translation (broadly understood as a process of mixing and hybridization) and purification (broadly understood as the assertion or imposition of taxonomic difference) as dominant cultural paradigms.⁸¹

The authors of a volume of essays on cosmopolitanism reach a similar conclusion, noting that:

In fact, modernity itself is just this contradictory, even duplicitous, attempt to separate and purify realms – the natural, social and empyrean realms, with their things and peoples and gods – that have never been separate and pure, and still are not.⁸²

However, while the purifying or stratifying impulses of modernity may say much about the contemporary situation, we should be wary of casting premodernity as the utopian inverse of a dystopian present. Flattening the topography of highly contoured landscapes, notions of a lost heterogeneous, hybrid, or “multicultural” past are romantic fantasies that, no less than sectarian historiographies, deny the agency of premodern subjects and the consequently protean nature of their identities.⁸³ They also obscure the complex and dynamic dialectic between accommodation and alterity, confrontation and cooption that structured ethnically or religiously heterogeneous spaces like those found in early medieval Sind.

The transformation of Abbasid cultural forms (from coins to script) in “Arab” Sind under the impact of Indic artistic and numismatic conventions reminds us that localism and particularism are by no means opposed to cosmopolitanism, both being implicit in the term itself.⁸⁴ In addition, the material remains from Sind remind us that cosmopolitanism does not preclude more aggressive assertions of particularism. Excavations of the congregational mosque at Banbhore/Daybul, the port city of Mansura, revealed that a *linga* (an aniconic sign of the Hindu deity Shiva) was set at its main entrance, to be trampled by those entering, a common practice of monotheist polemicists.⁸⁵ Yet, in another sector of the city, a Shiva temple was found with its *linga* and *yoni* still intact. The manner in which Banbhore was excavated precludes any certainty about the chronology of the temple, but it appears that the only reason for attributing it to the pre-Islamic period is an assumption that temple and mosque inhabit distinct space-time continua: the “Hindu” and “Muslim” periods.⁸⁶ Fragments of tenth-century sculptures of Shiva and the sun god Surya were recovered from nearby Brahmanabad, however, and the Buddhist stupas of Sind show signs of continued use after the Arab conquest, perhaps even as late as the tenth century.⁸⁷ It is, therefore, quite likely that temple and mosque thrived in close proximity. That those entering the main mosque of Banbhore trampled a *linga* similar to that on display in the nearby temple suggests that freedom of polytheistic practice was by no means incompatible with freedom to indulge monotheistic propaganda: practices of denigration and veneration could and did inhabit proximate spaces, undermining any suggestion that medieval encounters along the shifting frontier between what the Arabic and Persian sources refer to as the *dar al-Islam* (“house of Islam,” the lands under the control of Muslim rulers) and the *dar al-harb* (“house of war”) led to the embrace or emergence of a medieval “multiculturalism.”

The end of the Arab amirates of Sind reinforces this point, while also indicating the limits of the essentialist paradigm of “Muslim” conquest with which

I began. As I have mentioned previously, around 965 (354), the amirs of Multan abandoned the fold of Sunni orthodoxy, aligning themselves with the Fatimids of North Africa. These espoused the Ismaili denomination of Shia Islam, laid claim to the title of caliph, and installed themselves in Egypt, which seceded from Abbasid control in 969 (358). The (ultimately successful) promotion of Ismaili Shiism in Sind by the Fatimids of North Africa highlights once again the role of maritime connections between Sind and Egypt in facilitating the transmission of potentially seditious ideas and the human agents who propagated them. This was a period of resurgent Shia political activity even in the Iraqi heartlands of the caliphate, which from 955 (344) were under the control of the Buyids, Iranian Shias based in the Gulf province of Fars, who retained the caliph as little more than a figurehead. Around the same time that Multan came under Ismaili control, the amirs of Mansura (connected to Fars by the maritime routes) aligned themselves with the Buyids, bringing the two Arab polities of Sind within the Shia fold.⁸⁸

This shift in alignment had a significant impact on the cultural and political life of Sind. In Multan, for example, the Sunni Friday Mosque was abandoned and an alternative congregational mosque built for the newly converted amirs.⁸⁹ The conversion of the amirs also seems to have signaled the death-knell of the pietistic cosmopolitanism that had characterized the religious life of the city for the previous quarter of a millennium, with bilingual coins bearing names of Hindu deities replaced by those bearing Shia slogans.⁹⁰ One of the first acts of the Ismaili amir was to demolish the Sun Temple that had thrived at the heart of the city since before the Arab conquest, appropriating its site for his new congregational mosque. A letter written in North Africa by the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz and addressed to his agent Jalam ibn Shayban after the latter had succeeded in establishing an Ismaili Shia government in Multan around 965 (354) reveals the fate of the Surya icon that had previously stood within it.⁹¹ Lauding the victory of Ibn Shayban, al-Mu'izz mentions the destruction of the idol temple and the construction of the mosque on its site, making the following request:

We would be very much pleased if you could send us the head of that idol (*sanam*); it would accrue to your lasting glory and would inspire your brethren at our end to increase their zeal and their desire to unite with you in a common effort in the cause of God.⁹²

Ultimately, the pietistic realignments that augured these dramatic changes were to lead to the demise of the Arab amirates of Sind just decades later. At the same time that Ismaili Shiism was making significant inroads in Sind, the rise of the sultans of Ghazni in eastern Afghanistan was about to radically reconfigure the political landscape of the eastern Islamic world. The Ismaili affinities of the Sindi amirs attracted the attentions of sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 997–1030), known to South Asian historiography as the scourge of unbelieving Hindus, and to Islamic historiography as an unrelenting enemy of heterodox Muslims. In 1006 (396)

and 1010 (401), Mahmud invaded Sind and chastised its Shia amirs en route to pillaging the temples of India.⁹³ As part of the re-establishment or reinforcement of orthodoxy, the Ismaili congregational mosque built on the site of the Sun Temple was destroyed, and the earlier Sunni congregational mosque of the city re-established.⁹⁴ After this date we hear little of Sind in the Arabic sources; later writers who deal with the region show a clear dependence on those written during the heyday of the Arab amirates in the ninth and tenth centuries. The demise of Arab Sind, the fractures, fragmentations, and pietistic shifts (even within the same ruling house) that defined its final decades do little to support the notion of a unified “Islamic” front necessitated by the “slow progress” paradigm of South Asian historiography with which I began.

Notes

- 1 Awasthi, “*Garuda Purāna*,” 139.
- 2 Bhandarkar, “Indian Studies No. 1.” For similar evaluations see Srivastava, “A Survey of India’s Resistance to Medieval Invaders from the North-West,” and Richards, “The Islamic Frontier in the East.” As the editors of a volume of essays that sought to reconceptualize essentialist notions of Muslim and Hindu identity noted, “Not local Indian rulers but Hindu norms were defeated in the period from the Ghaznavids to the Mughals, and they were defeated not by certain Muslim rulers but by Islam itself.” Gilmartin and Lawrence, “Introduction,” 3.
- 3 Collins and al-Tai, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge*, 417. For the Arabic original see al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb Aḥsan*, 474.
- 4 Fatimi, “First Muslim Invasions of the NW Frontier”; Gabrieli, “Muhammad ibn Qasim ath-Thaqafa”; Pathan, *Arab Kingdom of al-Mansurah*, 33–64; Wink, *Al-Hind*, 201–9.
- 5 Al-Kufi, *Fathnāma-yi Sind*; Friedmann, “The Origins and Significance of the Chach Nāma.”
- 6 The amirs of neighboring Multan claimed descent from the tribe of Usama ibn Lu’ayy ibn Ghalib a branch of the Quraysh, the Prophet’s tribe: al-Mas’udi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 1, 207, 376–7; Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol. 1, 11.
- 7 For a full discussion see Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 26–37.
- 8 While I am using Common Era dates throughout, the dates that sometimes follow after a solidus are *hijri* dates given according to the Islamic lunar calendar, which is used in Arabic and Persian inscriptions and texts.
- 9 Ramhurmuzi, *Kitāb ‘ajā’ib al-Hind*; Sauvaget *Aḥbār aṣ-Ṣīn wa l-Hind*. For a full discussion of the sources see Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, 116–32. Among other important works that do not survive are the *Kitāb ‘ummāl al hind* (*The Book of the Governors of India*) and the *Kitāb thaghr al-hind* (*The Book of the Indian Frontier*) by the Iraqi writer al-Mada’ini (d. 839 [225]): Friedmann, “The Origins and Significance of the Chach Nāma,” 27.
- 10 Pellat, “Al-Mas’ūdī.”
- 11 The term was coined by Glick, “Science in Medieval Spain,” 103.
- 12 Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 19–20.
- 13 Gupta *et al.*, “On the Footsteps of Zoroastrian Parsis in India.”

- 14 Bosworth, “The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan,” 7; Salomon, “Epigraphic Remains of Indian Traders in Egypt.”
- 15 Horton, “Artisans, Communities, and Commodities,” 68–9.
- 16 Al-Mas‘udi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 1, 382; Ramhurmuzi, *Kitāb ‘ajā’ib al-Hind*, 142–4; al-Istakhri, *Kitāb masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 173, 176; al-Muqaddasi *Kitāb Aḥsan*, 480; Anon., *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 66; Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 313; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 320; Minorsky, *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 88; Pingree, “Sanskrit Evidence,” 175–7; Willis, “An Eighth Century Mihrab in Gwalior”; Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 71; Chakravarti, “Monarchs, Merchants and a Maṭha,” 265–9. For a full discussion of these communities see Lambourn, “India from Aden.”
- 17 Deyell, *Living without Silver*, 46–8; Tye, “Dammās, Daniqs and ‘Abd al-Malik.” 7–10; Horton, “Islam, Archaeology, and Swahili Identity,” 76, 81, fig. 4.6. The term *drama* is used in a Rashtrakuta inscription of VS 1005/947–8: Burgess, *Epigraphia Indica* 1 168, l. 21.
- 18 Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 38–44.
- 19 Goron and Goenka, *Coins of the Indian Sultanates*, xxii. I am extremely grateful to Dr Joe Cribb, Dr Shailendra Bhandare and Dr Stan Goron for sharing their insights on these coins with me.
- 20 The sole name known is Abu’l-Luhāb al-Munabbih ibn Asad al-Qurayshi, a descendant of Usama ibn Lu‘ayy ibn Ghalib (for whom see Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, vol. 1, 11), who was ruling in 912 (300) when al-Mas‘udi visited Sind: al-Mas‘udi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 1, 207, 376–7.
- 21 Goron and Goenka, *Coins of the Indian Sultanates*, xxvi–xxvii. The coins exist in four variant types. The fine quality of the engraving on both issues has led to suggestions that the coins were intended as fiduciary dirhams. A tanka is a type of coin found in southern Asia during this period.
- 22 Burgess, *Epigraphia Indica* 1, 167, l. 11; Deyell, *Living without Silver*, 28–9.
- 23 Lowick, “Fātimid coins of Multan.”
- 24 Anon., *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 66; Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 318; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 325; Minorsky, *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 88.
- 25 Al-Mas‘udi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 1, 207; Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 318; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 325; al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb Aḥsan*, 479–80; Collins and al-Tai, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge*, 420–1. Epigraphic and textual evidence suggests that bilingualism and/or polyglossia may in fact have been relatively common phenomena of the South Asian borderlands, including Sind. A foundation text dated 857 (243) from the Tochi valley in Waziristan, one of the passes that led from Afghanistan to the Indus valley that was known for its communities of heterodox Muslims, is inscribed in both Arabic and Sanskrit, attesting to an overlap between the dominant Islamic and Indic linguistic ecumenes of the period: Habibi, “The Oldest Muslim Inscription in Middle Asia.”
- 26 Lugo, “Reflections on Border Theory, Culture, and the Nation,” 51, 57; McMaster, “Border Zones,” 82; Hay, “Toward a Theory of the Intercultural,” 7. See also Abulafia, “Introduction: Seven Types of Ambiguity,” 5.
- 27 Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 1–21.
- 28 Lohuizen de Leeuw, “The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sind,” 51. Other temples stood in the town of Ramiyan or Ramayan near Multan, at the entrance to which stood a

- temple containing a gold-inlaid copper idol that was the object of rites of veneration similar to those reported at Multan. Similarly, the town of Biruza or Biruda, an emporium within the amirate of Multan, is said to have possessed a number of Hindu temples: Minorsky, *Sharaf al-Zamān*, 49, 52; Minorsky, *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 90.
- 29 Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, part 2, 221; Friedmann, "The Temple of Multān," 181; Friedmann, "A Contribution to the Early History of Islam in India," 328–9; Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 40–9; Wink, *Al-Hind*, 192.
- 30 Stern, "Heterodox Ismā'īlism," 11, 14–16; Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi*, 389; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 42–3.
- 31 Al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb Aḥsan*, 483; Collins and al-Tai, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge*, 424.
- 32 Yaqut, *Kitāb mu'jam al-buldān*, vol. 1, 348; Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, part 2, 225; al-Baladhuri, *Kitāb futuḥ al-buldān*, 441; Friedmann, "A Contribution to the Early History of Islam in India," 314–15, 323; Rehman, *The Last Two Dynasties*, 149–50. Similarly, in the exchanges between Byzantium and Baghdad during the ninth and tenth centuries, we encounter particularly mobile individuals who move between languages as easily as they oscillate between religious affinities: Dagon, "Formes et fonctions," 232.
- 33 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 73, 76, 82.
- 34 Anon, "Excavations at Banbhore," 52; Ashfaque, "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore"; Pathan, *Arab Kingdom of al-Mansurah*, 65–79. For an unconvincing attempt to date the mosque to the tenth century see Khan, "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore." For a useful survey of the published material see Patel, "The Mosque in South Asia – Beginnings."
- 35 Al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb Aḥsan*, 479; al-Istakhri, *Kitāb masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 173, 176.
- 36 Cousens, "Brāhmanābād-Manṣūra in Sind," 133–4; Khan, *Al-Mansurah*, 26.
- 37 Kervran, "Le port multiple des bouches de l'Indus," 46–7, figs. 9–12; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 45–6. For other early mosques of the Indus delta see Ibrahim and Lashari, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries."
- 38 Ashfaque, "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore," 193; Shokoohy, *Bhadresvar*, 39–40.
- 39 Khan, *Al-Mansurah*, 42–55.
- 40 Ramhurmuzi, *Kitāb 'ajā'ib al-Hind*, 2–3.
- 41 Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India*, 30–1; Meyer and Northover, "A Newly Acquired Islamic Lion Door Knocker."
- 42 Al-Istakhri, *Kitāb masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 174; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-ard*, 321; Lohuizen de Leeuw, "The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sind," 51, pl. XIII; Joshi, "Introduction à l'art Gupta," 53, fig. 16.
- 43 Cousens, "Excavations at Brāhmanābād-Manṣūra, Sind," pl. XXI; Chandra, "A Study in the Terracotta from Mirpurkhas," 18, figs. 7b, 11a, 11c, 12c, 13a.
- 44 Bialostocki, "Some Values of Artistic Periphery"; DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, 233–4.
- 45 Al-Sabi', *Rusūm dār al-Khilāfah*, 95; Salem, *Hilāl al-Ṣābi'*, 76–7.
- 46 Anon., *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 67; Pathan, *Arab Kingdom of al-Mansurah*, 83–99; Minorsky, *Hudūd al-Ālam*, 88. With the result he is referred to as *mutaghalliba* (having seized power): Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. 1, 212. Al-Ya'qubi, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 2, 599; al-Baladhuri, *Kitāb futuḥ al-buldān*, 446; Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, part 2, 232. According to al-Ya'qubi, the governor in question was Harun ibn Muhammad, who is named in a foundation text from Banbhore dated 853–4 (239):

- Ghafur, “Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions of Banbhore,” 77, 81. Al-Baladhuri erroneously identifies the governor as Imran ibn Musa al-Barmaki, who held the office two decades earlier: Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 47.
- 47 Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, 322; Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, vol. 2, 315.
- 48 Ghafur, “Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions of Banbhore,” 81–4. In 913 (300), al-Muqaddasi reports that the ruler of Mansura was Abu’l-Mundhir ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Allah: al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb Aḥsan*, vol. 1, 377.
- 49 Grohmann, “The Origin and Early Development of Floriated Kufic,” 197, 203.
- 50 Kalus and Guillot, “Réinterprétation des plus anciennes stèles funéraires islamiques,” 18–24, nos. 1 and 2. I am grateful to Elizabeth Lambourn for drawing my attention to the existence of these inscriptions.
- 51 *Bayn sūq al-‘ājiyyīn wa ṣaff al-ṣaffārīn*: al-Istakhri, *Kitāb masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 174; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, 321; al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb Aḥsan*, 481; Collins and al-Tai, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge*, 422.
- 52 Barrett, “A Group of Medieval Indian Ivories,” 50. See also Cousens, “Excavations at Brāhmanābād-Manṣūra, Sind,” 85–6; Chandra, “Ancient Indian Ivories,” 49; Khan, *Al-Mansurah*, 86–8, pls. 68–9.
- 53 Ettinghausen *et al.*, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, 327.
- 54 Anon., *Arts de l’Islam*, no. 267; Welch, *India: Art and Culture*, no. 72; Alcouffé and Louvre, *Trésor de Saint-Denis*, no. 18; Burjakov, “Zur Bestimmung und Datierung,” 70.
- 55 Czuma, “Ivory Sculpture.”
- 56 Ramhurmuzi, *Kitāb ‘ajā’ib al-Hind*, 2–3, 103; Goetz, “Late Gupta Sculpture in Afghanistan,” 19; al-Mas‘udi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 1, 150; Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir*, 97; Pal, *Indian Sculpture*, 52; Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 103–4, 113–14, 122–3; Meister, “Temples along the Indus,” 43, figs. 4–5. For artistic contacts between Kashmir and Gujarat during the same period see Klimburg-Salter, “The Buddhist Art of Gujarat,” 259–60.
- 57 Kühnel, *Die islamischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 31; Pinder-Wilson, “Ivory Working in the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods,” 19. Although the formula *min ‘amala* is unusual by comparison with the simpler and more common *‘amal* used by Islamic artisans of the seventh through tenth centuries, the cognate formula *min ṣan‘at* is recorded as early as 686–6 (67) or 688–9 (69) on a bronze ewer from Basra: Mayer, *Islamic Metalworkers and Their Works*, 22, 44, 48, 65, 85.
- 58 Al-Mas‘udi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, 6: 140; Caskel, “Bāhila.” Among these were Qutayba ibn Muslim al-Bahili who conquered Samarkand in the first decades of the eighth century.
- 59 Zambaur, *Manuel de généalogie*, table 259; al-Baladhuri, *Kitāb futuḥ al-buldān*, 442; al-Ya‘qubi, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, 389; Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, part 2, 225, 232; Hinds, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 194.
- 60 Kautilya, *The Arthashastra*, 547, 559; Wink, “Sovereignty and Universal Dominion in South Asia,” 268–9. To some extent this identification depends on whether the mahout leaning from the head of the elephant is in the process of assisting the figure curled within the elephant’s trunk or attacking him. The mutual enmity of the Arabs and Rashtrakutas towards the Gurjara-Pratihara rajas is congruent with the ideals of the *Arthashastra*, which identifies an immediate neighbor as an enemy and a neighbor’s neighbor as a potential ally: Kautilya, *The Arthashastra*, 555, 6.2.15.

- 61 Ibn al-Faqih, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 429; Massé, *Abrégé du livre des pays*, 262.
- 62 Wink, *Al-Hind*, 104.
- 63 Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 315; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb šūrat al-arḍ*, 322; al-Istakhri, *Kitāb masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 175.
- 64 Al-Biruni, *Kitāb fī taḥqīq-i-ma li'l-Hind*, 145; Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 314; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb šūrat al-arḍ*, 321; Al-Istakhri, *Kitāb masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 173; Sachau, *Al-Beruni's India*, vol. 1, 180.
- 65 Chandra, "Indian Costumes and Textiles," 29–30. According to the geographers, the adoption of Iraqi and Persian modes of dress was the norm in the mercantile emporia of Sind and Makran, which lay to the west, en route to Iran: Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 318; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb šūrat al-arḍ*, 325.
- 66 Stein, *Kalḥaṇa's Rājataranḡiṇī* vol. 1, 339, Book 7: 922.
- 67 Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 315; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb šūrat al-arḍ*, 315; al-Istakhri, *Kitāb masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 175.
- 68 Al-Idrisi, *Wasf al-Hind*, 59; Ahmad, *India and the Neighbouring Territories*, 59. Although writing in the twelfth century, al-Idrisi refers to the Chalukyas as feudatories of the Rashtrakutas, indicating that his information refers to ninth- or tenth-century conditions, when the ritualized appearances of the Multani amirs and their Solanki neighbors were evidently marked by striking similarities.
- 69 *Man tashabbaha bi-qawm fahuwa minhum*: Noth, "Problems of Differentiation," 119. For a full discussion see Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 61–3.
- 70 Gilmartin and Lawrence, "Introduction," 6.
- 71 Eder, "Ist der 'Elefanten-König'"; Eder, "Bagdad-Bergkristall-Benediktinerzum," 53, no. 1; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 55–6, pl. 29. The ivory was acquired in 1967 from an Indian or Pakistani dealer. I am grateful to Dr Rafael Gadebusch and Dr Corinna Wessels-Mevissen for supplying information about it. See also the fragmentary figure of a rider in the Hermitage Museum about 4.5 centimeters high, and thus comparable in scale to the rider on the Paris elephant with which it shares a common pose and dress: Burjakov, "Zur Bestimmung und Datierung," 68, fig. 15.
- 72 Rowan, "Reconsideration"; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 56, pls. 30–1.
- 73 Chandra, "Ancient Indian Ivories," 51.
- 74 Pinder-Wilson, "Ivory Working in the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods," 19.
- 75 Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India*, 31. Similarly, the tin content of the heads and the plates to which they are attached differs, leading to the suggestion "that at least two hands, technologies and two traditions – local and foreign – were involved in their manufacture": Khan, *Al-Mansurah*, 51.
- 76 For an excellent treatment of an analogous problem in a very different context see Elsner, "Archaeologies and Agendas."
- 77 Wasserstein, "Coins as Agents of Cultural Definition in Islam," 318.
- 78 Friedmann, "The Temple of Multān," 178; Friedmann, "Multān. 1. History." In addition, when threatened by "Hindu" armies from the east or north, the amirs wielded the threat of destruction to the revered icon of Surya until the aggressor receded.
- 79 Gallois, "Andalusi Cosmopolitanism in World History."
- 80 For a critical discussion of Antonio Gramsci's idea of imperial cosmopolitanism see Brennan "Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism," 79–80; Brennan, "Cosmo-Theory," 667–8.

- 81 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 10–11.
- 82 Pollock *et al.*, "Cosmopolitanism," 12. The volume for which this essay serves as an introduction is unusual in considering contemporary cosmopolitanisms in relation to those of premodernity. On the question of premodern globalization see Armitage, "Is there a Pre-History of Globalization?"
- 83 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 84; Viswanathan, "Beyond Orientalism."
- 84 Pollock, "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis," 246.
- 85 Anon., "Excavations at Banbhore," 53, pls. XVIB, XVIIIA; Ashfaque, "The Grand Mosque of Banbhore," 198–9. Recent research has suggested that the decline and disappearance of the Buddhist communities of Sind was due to voluntary conversion to Islam by a community that had traditionally been involved in long-distance trade seeking to maximize the commercial opportunities afforded by incorporation into the Abbasid caliphate: Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 155. In light of this research, it is worth noting that elsewhere in the Islamic world, the trampling of religious icons was sometimes associated with the testing of converts to Islam for signs of apostasy.
- 86 Khan, "Bhambore," 23.
- 87 Lohuizen de Leeuw, "The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sind," 51–4.
- 88 Al-Muqaddasi, *Kitāb Aḥṣan*, 485; Hamdani, "The Fāṭimid–Abbāsīd Conflict in India"; Collins and al-Tai, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge*, 425.
- 89 Sachau, *Al-Beruni's India*, vol. 1, 117.
- 90 Lowick, "Fāṭimid Coins of Multan." Minting of the characteristic *dammās* introduced by the amirs of Sind continued for a few decades, but they are not found later than the reign of the Ghaznavid sultan Ibrahim (1055–99): Deyell, *Living without Silver*, 73.
- 91 Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdī*, 389.
- 92 Stern, "Ismaili Propaganda," 301–2; Stern, "Heterodox Isma'ilism," 23–4. See also Sachau, *Al-Beruni's India*, vol. 1, 116; Said, *Al-Beruni's Book on Mineralogy*, 42.
- 93 Nazim, *The Life and Times of Sultān Maḥmūd*, 96–9.
- 94 Sachau, *Al-Beruni's India*, vol. 1, 117.

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