<number>8<title>Mediterranean goods in an Indian context: the use of transcultural theory for the study of the ancient Indian Ocean world[[1]](#endnote-1)\*

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<abstract>This chapter considers how our understanding of the long-distance movement of goods across the ancient Indian Ocean world can be better understood by thinking in both cultural and economic terms. That is to say, considering cultural demand alongside the economic forces that enabled these goods to reach their destinations (the networks of production and distribution). In particular, it is argued that by applying transcultural concepts (what I call here material transculturality) we can think in more complex ways about why certain goods reached the Indian Subcontinent and the manner in which they were utilized. Roman Imperial era coins discovered in the India are used as a case study.

Keywords: Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, Roman Empire, India, trade, transcultural theory

<head1>**Introduction**

<text\_fullout>The recent growth of interest in trade and interconnectivity across the ancient Afro-Eurasian world (*c*. 300 BCE – 700 CE) has been spurred on by a number of factors. One of these is evidential: new archaeological discoveries have been made at a range of sites across the globe, while more epigraphic, papyrological and numismatic studies have also been undertaken.[[2]](#endnote-2) A second major factor is the development of scholarly interest in global history and the history of globalization, which are both concerned with how things, people and ideas circulated, as well as how individuals and groups within different societies responded to these movements and exchanges (including socio-economic, political and cultural responses).[[3]](#endnote-3)

<text>These developments have spurred engagement with a whole range of issues, including the traditional concerns of long-distance trade, such as networks, nodes, organization, financing, sailing technology, the goods exchanged, and the merchants and sailors involved. There has also been an expanded interest into how this trade was integrated into wider socio-economic activity, such as the production, cultivation and reworking of items of exchange, and habits of consumption.[[4]](#endnote-4) Cultural responses have likewise received greater attention and can be analysed by utilizing concepts connected to globalization and glocalization, such as ‘standardization’ (groups sharing similar ideas, practices and technologies), ‘cultural homogenization’ (the transmission, mutation, adoption and adaptation of foreign concepts), ‘cultural heterogeneity’ (differences resulting from these exchanges of ideas, products, and practices), and the ‘re-embedding of local culture’ (reactions to external influences that reinforce the purportedly traditional).[[5]](#endnote-5)

It is the latter interest in cultural responses that forms the focus of this chapter. In particular, how goods produced in another society (often transported as a result of long-distance trade) became adopted, adapted, and re-interpreted in a different context. What I will call here, material transculturality. It is argued that this focus can offer a valuable complement to the wider study of the impact of the Indian Ocean trade in Antiquity. It not only allows us to consider concepts such as status display and the development of social stratification within a society, that can often be connected to the consumption of perceived exotic or foreign luxury goods;[[6]](#endnote-6) but also the practical, ideological, aesthetic, philosophical and religious value that might be ascribed to certain goods and their uses, regardless of what the original society (or social actor) that produced them may have understood or intended (proper function and system function).[[7]](#endnote-7) This has implications for our understanding of issues such as choice, demand, and the selection of items for export, as well as practices of imitation and adaptation of styles, and wider questions about identity.

As indicated, one concept that is of particular relevance to this approach is transculturality (the phenomenon) and transculturation (the process); that is to say, the ongoing processes involving the reception of ideas, habits and objects and their modification by recipients.[[8]](#endnote-8) The application of this concept to the study of material culture seems like a particularly fruitful avenue for analysis.[[9]](#endnote-9) That is to say, how new social, political and geographic contexts informed how objects were understood, appreciated and adapted to suit local practices. While few modern scholars would subscribe to the idea that ancient societies were hermetically sealed and rarely permeated by outside influences (though on the problem of container thinking, see below), discourses about cultural influences can (inadvertently) be read in terms where an influenced ‘culture’ or ‘civilization’ is seen as ‘weaker’ or as less sophisticated than the influencing peoples.[[10]](#endnote-10) The value of transculturality is its emphasis on modification and adaptation, a discourse that encourages us to think more in terms of the creative agency of the individuals and groups involved.[[11]](#endnote-11)

This chapter examines goods produced in the Mediterranean world that appear at sites in South Asia during the Early Historic period and how they might be interpreted in light of transcultural theory. The array and distribution of different types of finds is such that an exhaustive treatment is not possible. Instead, early Roman coins (aurei and denarii) discovered in India are examined as a case study. The aim is to look beyond the perception of these items as mere commodities, bullions (stores of value). Rather, I wish to consider the modified social and ritual significance of these items (and their imitations/adaptations) in their new contexts.

<head1>**Methodological issues**

<text\_fullout>Before considering how transcultural theory might be used to interpret goods deriving from the Mediterranean world that found their way to the Indian Subcontinent, it is first necessary to consider the methodological challenges involved. These principally centre on the issues of ‘boundaries’ and representational approaches to the study of material culture.[[12]](#endnote-12) It is important to obtain as much clarity as possible over what is the ‘new’ context in which such items might be adopted, adapted and reconceptualized. It is also vital to emphasize that the idea that clearly distinguishable, delimited cultural entities exist or existed is problematic.[[13]](#endnote-13) A transcultural perspective takes it as a given that culture is permeable, transitory and open to disruptive influences.[[14]](#endnote-14) We certainly need to avoid ‘container thinking’, where bounded cultural ‘chunks’ are examined in isolation.[[15]](#endnote-15)

<text>Dealing first with the former issue, there are a number of ways in which past societies (and social actors from these societies) conceived of themselves and others, including in political, cultural, and ethnic terms. These concepts do not necessarily overlap, as is apparent when considering Early Historic India. This region was made up of a range of polities whose fortunes waxed and waned. These encompassed peoples speaking various languages, holding numerous beliefs, and deriving from diverse (ancestral or ‘ethnic’) backgrounds (this is especially true of the northwest subcontinent). While the terms India, Indian Subcontinent or South Asia can be convenient shorthands (frequently employed in this chapter), this should only really be understood in broad terms.[[16]](#endnote-16) When analysing individual objects or a class of material at a range of different sites, it is important to remain cognizant of the specific political (and geographic and societal) circumstances.[[17]](#endnote-17)

In the case of ethnicity and culture, the former is often assumed to relate to features such as a person’s descent, connections to a territory (though note diaspora communities) and notions of common history (fictive and real); though language, religion, ritual and customs are sometimes ascribed to this concept as well.[[18]](#endnote-18) Many definitions of culture would include some of these latter elements, notably customs and ritual practices, as well as related facets such as art, laws, culinary habits and social organization.[[19]](#endnote-19) However, it is important to note that these are both distinct concepts. Ethnicity often centres on definition or identity (ascribed to oneself, or by others) and culture around patterns of interaction, practices and behaviour; although in the case of the latter there is no single list of behaviours or products (material culture) that defines a group. This is not least because, as a transcultural perspective makes clear, peoples ‘shape and create’ their reality through their interactions with others, their environment, different concepts (which they may accept, reject or modify) and the physical objects they utilize).[[20]](#endnote-20) In the context of the present discussion, a transcultural concept of culture (rather than cultures) is utilized, since we are concerned with the adaptation, usage and imbuing of new meaning to particular, originally ‘foreign’ material objects.

It is important to bear in mind that we certainly cannot speak of a homogenous Indian culture any more than we can for the Mediterranean world (not least, since we wish to avoid container thinking). This is not to say that prevailing features within specific geographic areas cannot be identified. For example, epigraphic, notably in Tamil-Brahmi script, and literary evidence (particularly the Sangam corpus) is often utilized to argue for the appearance of a distinct Tamil identity (which was used as a means of self-identification by social actors) in the so-called Tamilakam region (this includes modern Kerala, Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) during the Early Historic period.[[21]](#endnote-21) The salient point is that we should be careful about being too absolutist in our ascription of cultural habits to individuals and groups, and what this may mean in terms of their identity.[[22]](#endnote-22)

To come to the second, interrelated issue, of representational approaches to the material culture, it is important to note that the idea that distinct cultural groups can be uncomplicatedly identified from material culture has long been questioned. In part, because a sense of identity often revolves around perception, and is not merely based on the ownership or use of physical objects.[[23]](#endnote-23) Moreover, there is always the potential that pre-existing assumptions or expectations may delimit the patterns interpreted from the material culture and attributions of ownership.[[24]](#endnote-24) The latter problem is discussed below in relation to the so-called Eros of Junnar.

None of the above mentioned caveats means that we cannot think of coherent groups of peoples who often chose to define themselves by aspects such as shared habits and political affiliations. Indeed, it has to be recognized that many ancient authors employed a discourse which we might consider a form of proto-ethnography. This was used to try and help develop a sense of identity (often in distinction to others); although we would now tend to see the hard distinction between Self and Other as unhelpful and conceptually problematic.[[25]](#endnote-25) Even if the notion of ‘cultures’ (in the plural), as distinct, bounded and static entities is problematic, the term culture can still be valuable for analysing and tying together a series of habits, patterns of consumption and social phenomena that seem to connect to particular groups; albeit that these would have been fluid, non-homogenous and were responded to differently by social actors within a society. The key point is to avoid ‘container thinking’. Similarly, while many archaeologists and historians would be reticent to abandon the notion that material culture plays a role in helping to identify ‘groups’ and manifestations of identity, we should be cautious about our approaches to representational archaeology.[[26]](#endnote-26)

Ultimately, in applying transcultural theory to the study of ‘Indian’ responses to, and uses of, goods deriving from the Mediterranean world, we must acknowledge the nature and limitations of the evidence. Likewise, careful thought needs to be given to the challenges of identifying ownership and the factors contributing to these objects’ adaptation and re-interpretation within new social contexts.

<head1>**Applying transcultural theory**

<text\_fullout>Despite the challenges outlined above, a transcultural approach to the study of Mediterranean objects found in the Indian Subcontinent can allow us to examine these items in more complex ways. There are several ways in which such items can be re-contextualized and given new meaning, relating both to practical uses and repurposing, artistic adoption and adaptation, and the attribution of new symbolic and religious meanings. A number of recent studies demonstrating these points are discussed here.

<text>One of the most obvious areas where scholars have been able to identify the repurposing of ideas and aesthetic forms is with artistic adaptation. The borrowing of styles and forms from terracotta figurines produced in the Mediterranean world is a good example of how commercial exchange can lead to what might be termed transcultural developments.[[27]](#endnote-27) In particular, Autiero has noted how Bes figurines (Hellenistic to Roman) produced in Egypt and conveyed to India, particularly the Deccan region, had an impact on the development of Satavahana *yaksha* figurines. She suggests that the figure of Bes with its grotesque form presented suitable imagery that could be adapted to the representation of *ganas* or *yakshas* (ambivalent nature spirits who guarded treasures under the earth). Bes and other representations of foreigners (notably representations of what is assumed to be Yavana soldiers, with unusual physical features – curly hair style, prominent nose, etc. – and weaponry) were potentially ideal as, coming from another world, they shared a typological similarity with the liminal *yakshas*.[[28]](#endnote-28)

Autiero suggests that the basis for the spread and subsequent adaptation of this imagery was that these Bes figurines had been brought by resident ‘Romans’ in India, with those living in the region then adapting the imagery to suit their own cultural language.[[29]](#endnote-29) This is certainly a possible scenario, at least with the initial encountering of these objects. However, we do have evidence elsewhere to suggest that terracotta objects could be deliberately carried as items of exchange, no doubt in response to local demand. Notably, the large terracotta figures and plaster medallions of gods (Aphrodite, Cupid and Psyche) and people (warriors, ephebes) used as artistic models for imitation and adaption; these were transported via the Indian Ocean, through riverine networks up to the site of Begram.[[30]](#endnote-30) Additionally, small steatite (soapstone) molds have been found in the Deccan which relate to the production of pendants and other objects; these clearly show adaptations of artistic forms from the Kushana and Mediterranean worlds.[[31]](#endnote-31) It is thus entirely possible that some of the Bes figurines that reached the Deccan were taken there as deliberate responses to demand, rather than incidentally as personal possessions.

Either way, the salient point is that these terracottas, which may have had a comparatively more limited ‘monetary’ value (leaving aside the issue of whether they were directly gifted, bartered, or exchanged via currency transactions), nevertheless had a distinct social impact. An important reminder that cultural and economic dynamics are intertwined, especially in relation to long-distance exchange. Moreover, this emphasizes the point that ancient Indian Ocean networks of exchange should not be characterized and dismissed as mere ‘luxury’ trade.

A different artistic object that was clearly produced in the Mediterranean world, and which can also be productively analysed within a transcultural framework, is an alabaster figure of a young male child laying inside half an egg (cut longitudinally). It has traditionally been assumed to represent the birth of the god Eros from an egg, although this interpretation, while plausible, is far from certain.[[32]](#endnote-32) Found at the Lenyardi caves, close to present day Junnar, it is an object that raises a number of questions about identity, ownership and the manner in which it was brought to the Deccan region. Dhavalikar speculated that this item was bought as the personal possession of a trader setting out from Alexandria.[[33]](#endnote-33) However, we cannot know for sure who possessed this object prior to its final disposition. It is equally as likely that it had been acquired by someone indigenous to the region. Cobb and Mitchell note that this object could easily have invoked cosmological associations with the creation of the universe from an egg which existed widely in Indian oral and (subsequently) literary traditions by the Early Historic period.[[34]](#endnote-34)

Again, the main point to consider is that regardless of the original representation or meaning (proper function) that the artisan may have intended (such as the birth of Eros), the object could have been invested with a new meaning within the framework of a different geographical and social context, that is, the Deccan region (system function). While there is no certainty as to how this object should be interpreted, the employment of a transcultural perspective allows us to rethink assumptions about whether the object’s presence in India must be attributed to a resident foreign who had travelled from the Mediterranean world (i.e. it being carried as a personal possession), or in fact can be understood as an item desired in India (or more specifically the Deccan region which was largely controlled by the Satavahanas, but periodically contested by the Western Kshatrapas) for its aesthetic qualities. In the case of the latter, this object would have been appreciated and potentially invested with a new symbolic meaning to suits its new context.

<head1>**Case study: re-using Roman coins in India**

<text\_fullout>The enriched perspective provided by a transcultural approach can be explored in further detail through an examination of Roman aurei and denarii (gold and silver coins) found in South Asia. A considerable degree of controversy surrounds when these coins were exported (if they were exported over a consistent period, or in concentrated periods due to peculiar circumstances) and how they were treated by their recipients (i.e. peoples in the Indian Subcontinent).[[35]](#endnote-35) There is not scope to go into either issue in extensive depth here, but to summarize, with the former debate, one school of thought holds that these coins were treated as a normal export commodity as suggested by the literary tradition (see, in particular, the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*) and an interpretation of wear patterns seen in coin hoards. The other view regards their export as resulting from Nero’s (64 CE) currency reforms (intensifying with Trajan’s policy of removing old coins from circulation, 107 CE). This meant that pre-64 CE denarii with higher silver contents became valuable to export (as their precious metal content was higher than post-64 CE denarii. However, they would have retained the same notional value within the Roman Empire, whereas in India they were valued as bullion). This view is also based on a particular interpretation of the wear patterns found in coin hoards in India.[[36]](#endnote-36) The second debate concerns whether these coins were treated as bullion or if other factors influenced demand.[[37]](#endnote-37)

<text>Rather than re-examining all the finer points of these opposing views, a more specific look at how gold and silver coins were repurposed for decoration or jewellery will be used to demonstrate the value that a transcultural perspective might contribute to this debate. One particular feature that we see on some early Roman coins (primarily aurei) found in India is their piercing (sometimes with loops for suspension).[[38]](#endnote-38) This practice was (and still is) quite common in various parts of India (often referred to as *kasumala*), in which coins could be suspended on necklaces, and was certainly not uniquely done with Roman coins.[[39]](#endnote-39) For example, the Lohardaga hoard has revealed pierced Kushan coins.[[40]](#endnote-40) There are a fair number of examples of pierced genuine and imitation Roman coins across the Indian Subcontinent (notably in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana).[[41]](#endnote-41)

It might be speculated that these piercings happened at a much later date, consequently allowing for the maintenance of the view that they were initially exported to India for nothing more than their metallic content. However, there are reasons to suspect that at least in some cases there was not a long lag between the initial import of these coins and their subsequent conversion into jewellery/objects for decoration. One such reason is that some of the piercing occurs on reasonably unworn issues, such as on coins from the Vinukonda, Kaliyampattur and possibly Nellore.[[42]](#endnote-42) A second reason is that, as Darley suggests, excavation data at a few sites hints at the likelihood that Roman/Byzantine coins reached South Asia within a generation of their minting, and circulated for a generation or two within India prior to their final disposition.[[43]](#endnote-43) A third reason is that we see imitations (which represent a quite considerable portion of the finds), both of distinct artistic quality and of high precious metal content (i.e. they should not simply be dismissed as mere attempts at fraud), as well as of base metals (sometime washed with silver).[[44]](#endnote-44) It can also be noted that Roman coins sometimes appear in connection to gift-giving rituals and donations to Buddhist sanctuaries, in a few instances even being valued above their metallic content.[[45]](#endnote-45) Moreover, Indian silver was potentially used in the production of some Tiberian denarii, as analysis of one such coin at Woodham Mortimer, Essex indicates, complicating the notion that the flow of ‘bullion’ was one-way.[[46]](#endnote-46) All this seems to underline the point that assuming these coins were only desired for their bullion content is reductive and potentially misleading.

It is important to make the contextual point that other objects like figurines, ceramics and jewellery (pendants, rings, etc.) also indicate the (loose) adaptation of imagery and forms deriving from the Mediterranean world, as we have already seen with the influence of Bes figurines.[[47]](#endnote-47) Importantly, we see clay/terracotta bullae in India that are made in imitation of Roman coins; some of these had a welded loop across the top for suspension. The fact that such a practice was not simply restricted to genuine precious metal Roman coins indicates the potential for a wider appreciation for such imagery and styles.[[48]](#endnote-48)

The imitations and clay bullae indicate, if nothing else, that the use of Roman coins for artistic repurposing was quite popular in parts of India and may have encouraged emulation by those lower down the socio-economic scale.[[49]](#endnote-49) The variation in imagery and style seen on Indian imitations need not be dismissed as some sort of artistic failing or miscomprehension, but may be credited to the specific choices made by those designing the coins (again for reasons we cannot precisely recover) and may reflect a demand not solely enmeshed in the precise replication of ‘genuine’ Roman imagery.[[50]](#endnote-50)

A useful point of comparison is Darley’s valuable study of Late Roman/Byzantine coins found in South Asia (particularly peninsular India and Sri Lanka).[[51]](#endnote-51) She notes a topographical pattern whereby a fair number of Late Roman coin find-spots in south India seem to overlap with sites of Buddhist significance (it is also worth noting that the majority of Early (Imperial) and Late Roman coins so far found in India are at inland rather than maritime sites).[[52]](#endnote-52) There is a high incidence of double-piercing on these Late Roman coins making them suitable for attaching to fabric.[[53]](#endnote-53) Darley suggests, quite plausibly, that the use of some of these coins (on clothing and as offerings) may tie into ritual practice, as suggested by evidence from later historical periods relating to marriage rites and temple treasuries.[[54]](#endnote-54)

To return to our main focus, ultimately it is difficult to be sure exactly when such aurei and denarii (and their imitations) were converted for use as jewellery, especially for *kasumala*-stylenecklaces. But there is no reason to preclude the idea that in many cases they were, at least partially, desired for their aesthetic qualities or for other non-economic motives that we are not in a position to fully appreciate (possibly the ‘foreign’ facial features on the obverse of these coins imbued them with apotropaic functions).[[55]](#endnote-55) This necessarily impacts on questions of chronology of export and nature of demand. It is suggested here that some level of demand for these coins as artistic objects in their own right existed. They were not exclusively regarded as bullion. The implication of this is that any explanation for their export that is primarily or solely based on factors with the Roman Empire (i.e., currency reform) is inadequate. This is not to say that these coins could not be appreciated for their bullion content. There is no reason to assume a mutually exclusive interpretation on this matter. These coins could be appreciated for their aesthetic qualities, be converted into jewellery and also be prized as a store of value (Pliny, in fact, comments on the use of jewellery in this way within the Roman Empire).[[56]](#endnote-56) Moreover, they were useful objects for a powerful individual to redistribute to their followers or subordinates as a means of reinforcing relationships and social hierarchies, as is indicated by their appearance in association with Buddhist stupas and Sangha communities (who themselves potentially gave out/lent out these coins in their own networks).[[57]](#endnote-57)

<head1>**Conclusion**

<text\_fullout>Issues such as trade routes, schedules and emporia (often discussed in relation to concepts of networks and nodes), shipping technology, finance, organization and the identities of the merchants and sailors involved, have long been the ‘bread and butter’ of studies of long-distance trade. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. Indeed, such questions are extremely valuable to explore. It is, however, suggested in this chapter that the movement of goods over long distances can be better understood by thinking in both cultural and economic terms; cultural demand alongside the economic forces enabling these goods to reach their destinations (the networks of production and distribution). By applying transcultural concepts (what I call here material transculturality) – going beyond simple references to wealth, consumption and status competition – we can think in more complex ways about why certain goods reached the Indian Subcontinent and the manner in which they were utilized.

<text>As shown in this paper, precious metal Roman coins need not be exclusively interpreted in the vein of demand for bullion, but in relation to more multifaceted aesthetic choices (creation of jewellery) that adapted to existing local practices. The reasoning behind the selection and amalgamation of certain imagery in these coin imitations – both precious and base – also raises interesting questions about transcultural adaption that cannot be answered here. This transcultural perspective also impacts on related debates, such as the question of the continuous versus sporadic export of Roman coins to the Subcontinent (i.e., whether internal Roman monetary reforms sparked a short, intense period for their export or whether external Indian demand encouraged fairly consistent export over the early centuries CE). A transcultural perspective can usefully be applied to other regions as well. As can be seen, for example, with studies by Autiero on the adaptation of Indian artistic elements in South Arabian art, Asher on use of Indian small figural and temple images as templates for Southeast Asian religious structures, and Evers on the adaption of Indian carved ivories for Roman furnishings.[[58]](#endnote-58)

Ultimately, it is hoped that this short paper has been able to demonstrate how examining the Indian Ocean trade in Antiquity from a transcultural perspective can offer new insights into this activity, and give greater emphasis to both economic and cultural dimensions.

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<head1>**Notes**

1. <notes>\*My thanks to Dr. Rebecca Darley and Dr. Serena Autiero for kindly looks through drafts of this chapter. Of course, all opinions and errors remain my own. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For a justification of delimiting a period of 300 BCE to 700 CE for the study of the Indian Ocean in Antiquity see Cobb (2019b): 3–4. For important recent archaeological, epigraphic and papyrological scholarship see Salles and Sedov (2010); Cuvigny (2011) and (2012); Sidebotham (2011); Autiero (2012); Seland (2014); Cherian (2015); De Saxcé (2015); Ast and Bagnall (2016); Boussac, Salles and Yon (2016); Sidebotham and Zych (2016); Zych et al. (2016); Kotarba-Morley (2019). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For an overview of global history and developments in this field see Conrad (2016). On the political, social and economic impacts of the Indian Ocean trade in Antiquity see Cobb (2019a). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. On these issues see, for example, Tomber (2008); Evers (2017); Cobb (2013); Cobb (2018); De Saxcé (2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. These are four out of eight ‘hallmarks’ identified by Jennings. For a discussion of concepts connected to globalization and their application to ancient societies see Jennings (2011); Hodos (2017); Pitts (forthcoming). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. It is important to note that no good has the inherent quality (or lack thereof) of being luxurious, decadent, exotic, of value for social display, etc., outside of the social context in which it is consumed. That is to say, the (subjective) tastes, judgements, and ascription of values expressed by those involved in its consumption and those observing/responding to this consumption is context dependent. On this see Cobb (2013); and Parker (2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. On definitions of proper function (using objects in the manner for which they were originally intended) and system function (discrepant use of an object), see Swift (2017): 154–155. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. The term transculturation was first employed by the Cuban writer Fernando Ortiz in his book *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*. For a discussion on transcultural adaptation see Maran and Stockhammer (2012): 1–2; and Huteheon (2006): 145–148; Abu-Er-Rub et al. (2019b); Michaels (2019): 3–14. See also the introductory chapter for more details on the terms evolution since Ortiz’s publication. For the term’s meaning in cultural studies see Lewis (2002): 24–25. For methodological discussions relating to cultural heritage see Falser and Juneja (2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. A transcultural approach is increasingly being adopted by pre-modern archaeologists and historians. Among others, see Vandkilde (2014); Autiero (2017; 2018); Maran (2019). See, among others, Maran (2019). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Potentially this can be seen with earlier, less nuanced applications of concepts like Hellenization and Romanization. For a strong critique of Hellenization, see Hodos (2014). For an overview of critiques made on the concept of Romanization and some recent attempts to nuance it, see Sommer (2012); Versluys (2014); and more sceptically Stek (2014). On the problem of ‘influence’ being reductive with regards to agency in a Mediterranean-South Asian context, see De Saxcé (2018): 88. See also Autiero (2017): 86. The term acculturation can assume a dominant and subordinate culture, with the latter society changing more dramatically as a result of interaction and exchange – Ferraro (2004): 388. Also, on the problems of acculturation see Versluys (2015): 144–146. Similarly, the term ‘hybridity’ can allude to new cultural formations that results from ‘cultural contact in conditions of unequal power’ – Barclay (2005): 317. It is clear that the ‘acculturation’ model should definitely be avoided, and ‘hybridity’ model is also problematic and potentially imprecise, especially in the context of long-distance exchange (on the problems of the latter, see Versluys (2014): 8; Roudometof (2016): 13–14). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. As cultural anthropologists note, the spread of ideas and things is selective in nature. What is selected will often depend upon the item’s utility and suitability to existing cultural traits. These ideas or objects can then become modified in terms of form or usage to suit local practices (on this see Ferraro (2004): 386–388). The concepts of globalization and glocalization have been increasingly adopted by scholars as a means of analysing such phenomena. These concepts are certainly preferable to the notion that ‘diffusion’ leads to cultural homogenization. As Roudometof notes, this notion often fails ‘to capture the reality’ of how ‘local’ communities respond to ‘global’ influences (2016): 63. The notion of transculturality also seems preferable to interculturality. The latter can suggest that cultures are closed, static and unproblematically distinguishable from others. For a definition of interculturality see Liddicoat (2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. For a critique of the way in which these concepts have traditionally be employed by archaeologists and historians, see Pitts and Versluys (2015b); Pitts (forthcoming): 162. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Maran (2019). For further discussion, see the introductory chapter. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Lewis (2002): 24. Indeed, it is noted in cultural studies that while the transmission of ideas from generation to generation is significant, the sense of static-ness that this may suggest is unfounded. There is ‘nothing as constant as change’ – Ferraro (2004): 33. More traditional archaeological studies often assumed that internal cultural change was slow and incremental, and when rapid change was seen it tended to be explained as the result of migration, invasion of populations or the diffusion of ‘radically new and powerful ideas’, though this view has tended to become more nuanced in recent scholarship. – Shanks and Tilly (1987): 82. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. On the problems of container thinking, see Versluys (2014): 12–13; Versluys (2015): 145–146; Maran (2019): 52–53; Pitts (forthcoming): 158–161. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. The labels Indian Subcontinent and South Asia both tend to encompass the modern nation-states of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. On this issue, with regards to coins, see Darley (2019): 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Knapp (2014): 35–36; McInerney (2014b): 2–4. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. As noted by Ferraro, numerous definitions of culture exist, though at its most basic it essentially relates to peoples’ way of life or more generally ‘*everything that people have, think, and do as members of a society*.’ [italics original] – Ferraro (2004): 24. The concept of culture has also been abstractly described as ‘an assemblage of imaginings and meanings’ expressed through discourse, language, symbols, signs – Lewis (2002): 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Thomas (1986): 372. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. See Abraham (2013): 207, 210–211, 216–218. He notes the difficulty of identify such cultural developments from the archaeological record. More generally, see Mahadevan (2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Mairs discusses two pertinent examples of the complications that relate to ascribing identity and cultural habits in contexts where individuals of different backgrounds might mix. The first example is the individual Sōphytos, a person with a seemingly ‘Indian’ name (transcribed) who left a Greek inscription at Kandahar and appears to have embraced a number of linguistic and educational facets of Hellenic culture. The second example relates to Heliodorus, son of Dion, an ambassador of the Indo-Greek king Antialkidas of Taxila, who left a pillar inscription from Besnagar celebrating his devotion to Vasudeva (in a form of Prakrits language, written in Brahmi script). See Mairs (2014): 102–145, 183. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Knapp (2014): 36; Shanks and Tilly (1987): 86–87; Versluys (2015): 144–146. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Shanks and Tilly (1987): 83–84. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. McInerney (2014b): 6. For Graeco-Roman concepts of ‘otherness’ and ethnographic literature, see Romm (1992); and Parker (2008). For Indian literature that makes periodic reference to ‘Yavanas’ (foreigners from the West) in the early-mid-centuries CE, see the Sangam corpus – Meile (1940–41); Zvelebil (1956); and Tieken (2003). More generally on ancient ethnography, see Almagor and Skinner (2013). On the issue of Self and Other, see Versluys (2015): 145. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Van Oyen and Pitts (2017b): 7–9; Pitts (forthcoming): 162–163. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. For a discussion see Margabandhu (2005): 178–179; Brancaccio (2005): 56–69, and (2014); Suresh (2004): 81; Autiero (2017): 80–81. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Autiero (2017): 82–86. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., 82–83. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. For a discussion of these objects and their context, see Mehendale (2011); and Cambon (2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. See Brancaccio (2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. For an introduction to this object, see Dhavalikar (1992); and Cimino (1994a). [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Dhavalikar (1992): 326–327. See also Cimino (1992b): 176–179; and Cimino (1994a): 183–184, who notes the possibility that this object could be interpreted in this way. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. See Cobb and Mitchell (2019). *Laws of Manu* 1.5–13; *Vishnu Purana* 1.2.10–56; *Matsya Purana* 2.28–36; *Śatapatha-Brāmaṇa* 11.1.6.1; *Mahābhārata* 1.1.27. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. For an overview of these issues see Cobb (2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. On the former view see De Romanis (2012), who also points to comments in Pliny’s *Natural History* and Tacitus’ *Annals* (also De Romanis (2020): 127–132); and Cobb (2015). On the latter view see MacDowall (1991; 1996; 2004); and Burnett (1998). [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. On the issue of traditional narratives about the presence of Roman coins in India and Sri Lanka privileging economic explanations, see Darley (2015): 61, 68–75. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. On this see Darley (2015): 78; Darley (forthcoming); and Majumdar (2015): 421–422. Other features, such as countermarks and slashes also appear on some of these coins (see Suresh (2004): 40–52). However, the notion that slashes were done to test purity, for example, does not hold up to security. Especially in the light of multiple slash marks (which would be unnecessary for this purpose). In fact, it is entirely possible that this was done for ritual purposes – see Darley (2019): 73–78. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. On this see Dwivedi (2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Suresh (2004): 78. Such piercing also occurs on Kushan coins as far north as Bactria, as suggested by a gold coin of Kanishka I – British Museum IOC.287 (acquired in Kabul). See also an early Kushan coin-type pendant that has been pierced – British Museum IOLC.7749. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. For pierced/looped aurei and imitations, see the following hoards: Akki Alur, Bhagavanpavum, Chakherbedha, Dharpul, Kaliyampattur, Kondapur, (possibly) Nellore, Upparipeta, Vinukonda. Details in Turner (1989): 48–49, 51, 53, 58, 61, 71, 79, 84–85. See also Suresh (2004): 77–78, 163, 166–169, 173–175, who adds Soriyapattu, Gootiparti, Gopalapuram, Gumada, Nosagere, and Uppavahr, Nagarjunakonda, Peddabankur (genuine aurei, lead imitations), Junagadh and Chakherbedha to the list. For a general outline on such pierced (genuine and imitation) coins see Darley (forthcoming). [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Turner (1989): 58, 71, 84–85. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Darley (2019): 69–79, 72. As seems to be suggested, for example, at the sites of Kudavelli and Peddabonkur. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. IOC fluorescence analysis on Roman and imitation coins in the British Museum has revealed that the genuine coin was of pure silver, at 99.08 per cent, while the imitation was slightly less pure at 96.28 per cent. That is in fact higher in purity than the genuine post-64 CE reformed denarius, especially if Ponting (2009) is correct in his analysis that the reformed denarii may have actually been in the 80–90 per cent purity range. The imitation, however, weighed only 2.91 grams, which is lower than the weight of genuine *denarius* of the period. Additionally, Turner notes that the average weight of the coins in the Akkanpalle hoard were around 3.5 grams, while most of the imitation Augustan coins from this hoard weigh between 3.10–3.92 grams (excluding a fragmentary imitation of 1.64 grams). See Turner (1989): 38–40. Also Darley (1999): 69. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. See De Romanis (2006); Darley (forthcoming). [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. De Romanis (2020): 131–132. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. For a wider ranging discussion, see De Saxcé (2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Turner (1989): 37, 61; Suresh (2004): 79–81, 138–139; Vickers (1994): 243; Tripati, Patnaik and Pradhan (2015): 219–224; Darley (2019): 72. See also De Saxcé (2018): 88, who notes the historically long-term nature of this type of practice in South Asia. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. De Saxcé (2018): 88; Darley (2019): 72. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Imitations of silver denarii tended to be quite precise and near the intrinsic value of the genuine issues; although we do also see some ‘forgeries’ (with use of (core) of debased metals). See Darley (forthcoming). [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. See Darley (2015); also Darley (2019): 64. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Darley (2015): 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Day [see under Darley] (2012); Darley (forthcoming). [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Darley (2015): 78–80. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Apotropaic functions are possible, as might be suggested by the presence on other bullae of figures like Yakshas, lotuses or Gaja Lakṣmī – De Saxcé (2018): 89–90. On parallels with the representation of Yavana soldier figures, and the import of Bes figurines, see Autiero (2017): 86. On the potential for coins to be social instruments (and not exclusively as political and economic markers), see Darley (2019): 74–75. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Plin. *HN* 13.4.20. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. We see, for example, large finds of Roman coins in hoards at Akkanalle and Nasthullapur, which are near to Buddhist temple complexes at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda – Turner (1989): 43–44, 119. For a more general discussion of this redistribution / prestige-goods economy model see Frankenstein and Rowlands (1978); and Gilissen (2003). On the operation of some Buddhist sangha as ‘lending institutions’ see Kulke and Rothermund (1986): 93, 99, 102; Morrison (1997): 95; Thapar (1978): 64; Ray (1987): 98. Also De Romanis (2006); and Darley (forthcoming). [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Autiero (2018); Asher (2019): 160–161; Evers (2017): 15–47. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)