Encountering Buddhism and Islam in Premodern Central and South Asia

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Contents

Blain Auer and Ingo Strauch
Introduction: Situating the Encounter between Buddhist and Muslim Communities in South Asia — 1

Audrey Truschke
The Power of the Islamic Sword in Narrating the Death of Indian Buddhism — 14

Abhishek S. Amar
Reassessing the Muslim Attacks and the Decline of Buddhist Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century Magadha — 48

Minoru Inaba
The Narratives on the Bamiyan Buddhist Remains in the Islamic Period — 75

Tamara I. Sears
Ibn Ba‘ṭṭūta’s Buddhists: Monuments, Memory, and the Materiality of Travel — 97

Walter Slaje
Buddhism and Islam in Kashmir as Represented by Rājataraṅgiṇī Authors — 128

Sara Cappelletti
The Avatāra in Medieval South Asian Contexts: Dynamic Translation Across Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic Traditions in the Ghaznavid Period — 161

Bart Dessein
Buddhists, Hellenists, Muslims, and the Origin of Science — 177

Annette Schmiedchen
Medieval Endowment Cultures in Western India: Buddhist and Muslim Encounters – Some Preliminary Observations — 203

List of Contributors — 219

Index — 220
Bart Dessein

Buddhists, Hellenists, Muslims, and the Origin of Science

Abstract: In this paper, I discuss the likelihood that in fourth-century BCE Central Asia Buddhists and Hellenists may have met, and their philosophical systems and argumentative techniques may have influenced each other. In order to formulate an answer to this question, I outline the origins of Buddhism as a tradition of rational inquiry and discuss the possibility of a Buddho-Greek encounter against the background of accepted knowledge that Buddhism ventured into the Central Asian region only at a later date. Hereafter, I address the possible role that late eighth-century Muslim thinkers in Central Asia may have played in transmitting the Buddhist argumentative technique to Europe, where it became the standard instrument with which, from around 1200, scientific texts were drawn.

Keywords: Buddhism, Hellenism, Islam, Central Asia, rational inquiry

Introduction

The development of the natural sciences and especially physics as one of the outcomes of the Enlightenment had important implications for the field of philosophy. Before the Enlightenment, the natural sciences, i.e., the rational and systematic investigation of the natural world, were known as ‘natural philosophy’; with the development of physics as a separate scientific discipline philosophy turned toward the metaphysical. The same Enlightenment movement, however, also led to a secularization of society. As a result, philosophy became an academic discipline that focused on the mental realm, more precisely, the domain of epistemology; it came to be regarded as the successor to theology.1 The renewal of classical studies in the context of the apparent dominance of western science and technology – an outcome of the Enlightenment movement as well – also reintroduced the question Diogenes Laertius (c. beginning third century CE) posed: does Greek philosophy have Oriental roots, where ‘Oriental’ primarily referred to India.2 Illustrative of the nineteenth-century attitude that

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1 See King 1999: 2–4.
addressed this question, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831) judged India unable to teach the West; the Indian tradition was considered a matter of the past, one that never reached the level of philosophy and science, which was a genuinely and uniquely European achievement. According to Hegel, it was in Europe that ‘actual’, ‘real’ philosophy unfolded and committed to the spirit of free science, thus surpassing the Orient.

The importance of a possible philosophical connection between the Greek and the Oriental world relates to the issue of how many traditions of ‘rational inquiry’ developed in the history of mankind, and, hence, where did ‘western’ science originate. Scholarly opinion differs on this question. Frits Staal identified three such traditions: the West-European tradition, including the European and the Islamic scientific traditions; the Indian tradition; and the Chinese tradition. Of these three distinct traditions, according to Staal, only the Indian and the Greek traditions are characterized by the accentuation of formal logic, not the Chinese. While Jean Przyluski emphasized the Persian borrowings in both the Greek and the Indian tradition, Richard Garbe ascribed a definite Indian influence to Pythagoras (570–495 BCE) by way of Persia.

The publication of Christopher I. Beckwith’s Greek Buddha: Pyrrho’s Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia is illustrative of the continued occupation of western scholarship with the question of a possible philosophical connection between the Hellenic world and ‘the Orient.’ Beckwith focuses on the argumentative technique used in Greek and Buddhist texts. This technique is outlined below.

(1) Book VIII of Peri philosophias (On Philosophy), a work by Aristocles of Messene who probably lived in the first century CE, contains the following passage that purports to be of Pyrrho of Elis, a contemporary of Socrates:

He [Timon] says that he [Pyrrho] used to inquire and determine; for this reason, then, we sit without inclinations and without name is that in itself both as in name.

(2) In its discussion of how the nutritions (āṭhāra), i.e., contact (sparśa) to sustain consciousness, are designations, the Abhidharma following question and answer:

Question: [Should we consider] nutriment? Answer: Four (bīpa) things that are shaped like lumped in here; there are [thin nutriments...]

Although, at this point in date for the composition of the Abhidharma text, it is acknowledged to be the oldest of seven Abhidharma works, its stronghold in Gandhara. Gandhara is important because Hellenic culture most likely Sarvāstivādins’ self-identification of all things is tangible (sparśa), and it is mentioned that anything and everything that all mental intentions are tangible (Pratīyā). The same text is a new compilation, not compiled, see Dharmakīrti 1964: 71. On [pādaśāstra] vs. the [Abhidharma] Willemsen / Dessein / Cox 1998: 172.
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9 Greek Buddha: Pyrrho's illustrative of the continued of a possible philosophical tenant.' Beckwith focuses on idhist texts. This technique

), a work by Aristocles of CE,11 contains the following

passage that purports to be a summary of Timon's account on the thought of Pyrrho of Elis, a contemporary of Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE):

He [Timon] says that he [Pyrrho] reveals that things are equally indifferent and unstable and indeterminate; for this reason neither our sensations nor our opinions tell the truth or lie. For this reason, then, we should not trust them, but should be without opinions and without inclinations and without wavering, saying about each single thing that it no more is than is not or both is and is not or neither is nor is not.12

(2) In its discussion of how sentient beings (prthigjana) depend on four types of nutriments (āhāra), i.e., material food (kavaḍikāra) to sustain the body, contact (sparśa) to sustain conceptions, mental intention (manasāṃcetana) to sustain consciousness, and perceptual consciousness (vijñāna) to sustain designations, the [Abhidharma]Samgātiparīyāya[pādaśāstra] formulates the following question and answer structure:

Question: [Should we consider] everything that is [shaped like] a lump (= kavaḍikāra) to be nutriment? Answer: Four (hypothetical) propositions have to be formulated. There are [things that are shaped like] lumps that are not nutriments...; there are nutriments that are not [shaped like] lumps...; there are [things that are shaped like] lumps that are also nutriments...; there are [things that are not shaped like] lumps that neither are nutriments...13

Although, at this point in our knowledge, it is impossible to give a definite date for the composition of the [Abhidharma]Samgātiparīyāya[pādaśāstra] – tradition maintains that the text was written during the lifetime of the historical Buddha,14 this text and the [Abhidharma][Dharmaskandhapādaśāstra] are acknowledged to be the oldest two of what we now know as the canonical set of seven Abhidharma works of the Sarvāstivādins, a Śrāvakayāna school with its stronghold in Gandhāra.15 This connection between the Sarvāstivādins and Gandhāra is important because this is the region where Buddhist culture and Hellenic culture most likely met. In this light, it is important to note that the Sarvāstivādins' self-identification as a distinct philosophical school most

13 T.26.1536: 368b5–10. The same fourfold subdivision is applied to the question of whether everything that is tangible (spṛṣṭavya) should be considered a nutriment (T.26.1536: 368b10–16), and it is mentioned that the same sub-questions should be posed when questioning whether all mental intentions and perceptual consciousness should also be considered nutriments (T.26.1536: 368b16).
14 See T.41.1821: 8b24–c13. For arguments that the [Abhidharma]Samgātiparīyāya[pādaśāstra] was composed, not compiled, see Dessein 2012.
15 See Frauwallner 1964: 71. On the relative dating of the [Abhidharma]Samgātiparīyāya[pādaśāstra] vs. the [Abhidharma][Dharmaskandhapādaśāstra], see Cox 1995: 47; and Willemen / Dessein / Cox 1998: 172, 176, 181. Also see n. 64.

10 See Garbe 1987: 36–39 and
likely should be dated to around the second to first centuries BCE, that is, posterior to the composition of these first Abhidharma texts, and that the [Abhidharma] Samgōtiparyāyā[pādaśāstra] must have been written in a pre-Sarvāstivāda (most likely non-Gandhāra) milieu.16

(3) Following a dedication, "the first stanza of Nāgārjuna’s (c. 150–250 CE) Mūlamadhyamakakūrikā (Fundamental verses of Madhyamaka) reads: "No existents whatsoever are evident anywhere that are arisen from themselves, from another, from both, or from a non-cause."17 From the juxtaposition of the above three texts, Book VIII of Peri philosophias, the [Abhidharma] Samgōtiparyāyā[pādaśāstra], and the Mūlamadhyamakakūrikā, it is immediately clear that they make use of a remarkably similar — albeit not identical — argumentative structure. While we can schematically render the argumentative structure of the first text as:

\[
\begin{align*}
X & = F, \\
X & = \text{not } - F, \\
X & = \text{both } F \text{ and not } - F, \\
X & = \text{neither } F \text{ nor not } - F;
\end{align*}
\]

the argument of the second text is structured according to the following tetralemma (catuṣkoṭi):

\[
\begin{align*}
some X & = \text{not } - F, \\
some F & = \text{not } - X, \\
some X & = F, \\
some \text{non } - X & = \text{not } - F;
\end{align*}
\]

and the argument of the third text is:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{no } X & = F, \\
\text{no } X & = \text{not } - F,
\end{align*}
\]

16 Hirakawa suggests a second century BCE date, see Hirakawa 1974:1: 143; Shizutani suggests a first century BCE date, see Shizutani 1978: 48–50. See also Willemen / Dessein / Cox 1998: 147.

the first centuries BCE, that is, idharma texts, and that the have been written in a pre-

 fundament question is whether the similarity of these three argumentative series is mere coincidence or, on the contrary, whether the argumentative technique that is attributed to the fourth-century BCE Pyrrho of Elis might be derived from the Buddhist technique, or vice versa. In the first case, Timon’s account given above would have to be seen as a testimony of the fact that (1) Pyrrho of Elis was, in the fourth century BCE, influenced by an already existing Buddhist argumentative technique that, at that early date, would have been present in Central Asia; that (2) this technique was, during the lifetime of the Buddha, used in the first Buddhist philosophical treatises composed in Central Asia and which were, around the second to first centuries BCE, claimed as orthodox by the Sarvastivadins; and that (3) Nagarjuna used the same argumentative technique in his critique against the Sarvastivadins. The second case would mean that (1) the Greeks, in the fourth century BCE, brought a specific argumentative technique to Central Asia in the person of Pyrrho of Elis; that (2) this technique was adopted by Buddhists in Central Asia and was developed by the Sarvastivadins and as such, was introduced in their philosophical texts (such as the [Abhidharma] Samgïtiparyaya[padasastm]) that were transmitted to Central Asia and further used in the texts they composed in Central Asia; and (3) that this technique was further employed by Buddhist philosophers such as Nagarjuna.

Beckwith suggests that the similarities between the Greek and the Hellenic argumentative series are the result of a connection between the European and the Buddhist tradition, through the Islamic tradition. His hypothesis is that the typical Buddhist argumentative technique, which originated in the Buddhist monasteries (vihāra) of Central Asia, was adopted by the Muslims of Central Asia, who translated works of Indian science into classical Arabic in the late eighth century.

Note that Saññiyà Belatthiputta/Saññiyà Vairajiputra, roughly a contemporary of the Buddha, is also credited with a skeptical philosophy and is associated with a tetralemma of argumentation. Rather than giving definite answers to questions, he relied on evasive statements. See Flintoff 1980: 101 and Hirakawa 1990: 17. Given that two of the Buddha’s most important disciples, Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana, came from his school and only later became followers of the Buddha, this would mean that Saññiyà Belatthiputta/Saññiyà Vairajiputra, Śāriputra, and Mahāmaudgalyāyana were somehow also connected to Central Asia.

For reflections on the Madhyamaka position as a critique on the Sarvastivādins, see Harvey 2013: 116–119; and Willemen / Dessein / Cox 1998: 122.

century. These works then, through mid twelfth-century translations in Latin done in Andalusia from Arabic originals, inspired new scientific compositions by Latin authors writing in the early thirteenth century. European science, or at least the way scientific texts are composed, were thus ultimately Buddhist innovations.

In the following pages I analyze the similarities between argumentative patterns of Greek and Buddhist texts, and the likelihood that the Islamic tradition may have been an intermediary.

The Origin of Buddhism as a Tradition of Rational Inquiry and the Possibility of an Early Buddho-Greek Encounter

The circulation of texts of the second-century Greek physician Sextus Empiricus in fifteenth-century Europe brought about a rediscovery of Pyrrhonism. Adrian Kuzminski explains, in line with the attitude of Pyrrho of Elis, that these late Pyrrhonists advocated suspending judgment about claims that are beyond present or immediate experiences, because

Once such judgments were suspended, they found that a certain liberation from anxiety followed ... Pyrrhonists called this liberation from anxiety ataraxia, originally a military term indicating calm by soldiers under attack. The term is negatively put since it is a freedom from distraction, confusion, ignorance, disorder, panic, etc., rather than the achievement of some kind of particular positive state.

In A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, George Berkeley (1685–1753), the Anglo-Irish Bishop of Cloyne, similarly maintained that ‘esse’ was equal to ‘percepi.’ This state that disregards everything that is beyond what is immediately visible, renders futile all rational inquiry into what lies beyond the realm of appearance. These two examples show that the development from European medieval thinking to rational scientific thinking that started when the fifteenth-century return to ‘antiquity’ gradually began to replace Augustinian thinking that had dominated the European intellectual endeavor from the fifth century, did not encompass all members of the European cultural sphere

simultaneously, and was not a ment of a tradition of rational i

Christoph Harbsmeier ar when a thinker seriously cont he may be wrong, that he nee of his views. Thus, for rati the legitimacy of questions an vicions that are sanctioned t than accepting and supportin that Augustinus (354–430) als ing truth. It is precisely bexi on, or revealed truth, t network of the biotope in w thinking leads us to wonder teed Buddhist thinkers whe 325 BC. Further, what were th cal development.

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21 Kuzminski 2008: 2.
22 Berkeley 1964: 2: 42.
23 See Göller / Mittag 2008: 38.

26 See Bronkhorst 2001: 34.
27 For some reflections on the Bu the various religious groups who see Hiraakawa 1990: 16–18.
28 According to Reit 1996: 6, the gious traditions in India which clai the Jainas and the Ājīvakas,” impl a gradual merging of Vedic and y was assembled in the Upāniṣās, a Brahmanical influence in the Bu see Bronkhorst 2011: 165–167.
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physician Sextus Empiricus over Pyrrhonism. Adrian Pyrrho of Elis, that these late claims that are beyond presence a certain liberation from anxiety lety ataraxia, originally a military term is negatively put since it is order, panic, etc., rather than the Knowledge, George Berkeley clearly maintained that ‘esse’ everything that is beyond what isry into what lies beyond the that the development from inking that started when the began to replace Augustinian actual endeavor from the fifth European cultural sphere simultaneously, and was not an uninterrupted phenomenon. Thus, the development of a tradition of rational inquiry does not appear to be self-evident.

Christoph Harbsmeier argues that rationality and argumentation “arise when a thinker seriously contemplates the pervasiveness of the possibility that he may be wrong, that he needs reasons and arguments to support the validity of his views.”28 Thus, for rational inquiry to develop, thinkers have to accept the legitimacy of questions and critique, even if these are directed against convictions that are sanctioned by intuition, tradition, or revealed truth. Rather than accepting and supporting ‘revealed truth’ – a typical ‘theological attitude’ that Augustinus (354–430) also witnesses – rational inquiry is aimed at ‘reveling truth.’

It is precisely because rational inquiry goes beyond intuition, tradition, or revealed truth, that ‘systems of rational thinking’ are able to cross the borders of the biotope in which they developed. This peculiarity of rational thinking leads us to wonder about the possibility that Pyrrho of Elis encountered Buddhist thinkers when in Bactria, Gandhāra, and Sind from 330 to 325 BC. Further, what were the consequences of this encounter on philosophical development.

In this respect, it is important to note that Buddhism is generally thought to have arisen in a diverse religious and philosophical context. It is likely that, contrary to what is generally accepted, Buddhism was not a reaction against Brahmanism, but arose within the yogic tradition to which the Jaina and Ājīvaka traditions also belong. This is suggested by the absence of yogic doctrines in the Rgveda, a text that belongs to the tradition from which Brahmanism developed. This is significant because it indicates that the early Buddhists were confronted with religious adherents of similar faiths. These circumstances likely compelled them to convince their opponents of the Buddhist ‘truth’ – and from that point,
their argumentative techniques (at first transmitted orally) and texts must have developed.29

Taking into account that Timon stood in direct contact with Pyrrho and that Timon was philosophically astute, Richard Bett argues that the passage from Aristocles of Messene’s *Peri philosophias* given above “gives the strong impression of being uncontaminated by any later phase of Pyrrhonism,” and that it is therefore “clearly the single most important text for anyone hoping to reconstruct the thought of Pyrrho.”30 From this passage, we see that the Greek Pyrrhonists refused to make judgments about anything that is beyond direct perception because, according to them, such judgments could neither be affirmed nor denied. Therefore, they were of the opinion that judgment about what is beyond direct perception was to be suspended. They thought any judgment about the nonevident would be a misuse of language in an attempt to represent in words what cannot be represented.31 This is important for the following: if, indeed, the passage here represents the original philosophical position of Pyrrho, this position, initially at least, makes a connection with Buddhism possible. Also, in Buddhist *sūtras*, the Buddha, like Pyrrho, often prefers to keep silent, and, as with Pyrrho, keeping silent is a deliberate rhetoric device. The difference lies in the final aim of this silence. Note that the Buddha particularly preferred to keep silent on questions concerning metaphysical issues.32 Silence on such questions was a deliberate rhetorical device to avoid misleading those people who erroneously think that providing an answer to them can lead to true wisdom. That is, keeping silent shows the very nature of Buddhist ‘metaphysics’: the Buddhist doctrine of

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29 Vedic texts are aimed at the realm of the Vedic pantheon and therefore are not designed to persuade the audience of a Vedic ‘truth.’ In this sense, they represent revealed truth. The audience of a Vedic text recitation are merely passive spectators. Such a recitation therefore does not need to be explanatory in nature. Brahmanic and Upanisadic texts also concern revealed truth, and they only differ with Vedic texts in that they explain to the passive audience the Brahmanic rituals that are performed. Buddhist texts, on the other hand, do not concern revealed truth, but aim to reveal the Buddhist ‘truth’ to people of different religious beliefs. Therefore, they are highly explanatory. See von Simson 1965: 139–141 and Dessein 2012: 121–122.

30 Bett 2000: 15.

31 See Kuzminski 2008: 134.

32 The questions that remain unanswered by the Buddha are questions of whether or not the world is eternal, whether or not the world is (spatially) finite, whether or not the Tathāgata overcomes death, and whether or not the self and the body are identical. These questions are the so-called *avyākṛta* (indeterminate) questions. See Bett 2000: 172–173, 158 n.175. See also Wood 1994: 15–16 and Oetke 1994: 89–95.

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33 On the silence of the Buddha might divert from the right path whether or not the Buddha prese the impossibility of giving stam then silence, see Dessein (2017).

34 The attitude by which judi a construction of such questions i in Sūtra Literature. See e.g., MN ii Hornes 1957: 97–101); and DN i: 1 Rhys Davids 1899: 36–55).

35 Note that those Buddhist ins favor of one of the four propositi 344–347. See also Kuzminski 2001.

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voidness (śūnyatā). Thus, the Buddha’s silence is a deliberate response that leads to the attainment of enlightenment (nirvāṇa), which is an altogether diff-
reality. By contrast, Pyrrho’s choice to remain silent concerns everything – not just metaphysical issues – that is present in or is related to our ordinary world of experience. Like Sextus Empiricus, this attitude is a ‘temporal’ one. Pyrrho does not exclude the possibility that, at some point, a this-worldly reality may be revealed – there is no point in finding the truth at a different level as things are accepted to have a real nature, but it is only the present state of our knowledge that does not allow us to see this real nature. As Richard Bett says, with Pyrrho, silence “leads to ataraxia, but it is not replaced by ataraxia.” With regard to the three texts mentioned in the introduction to this contribution, it is therefore no coincidence that the tetralemma that, according to Timon, was used by Pyrrho of Elis, that is:

X = F, or:

X = not − F, or:

X = F and not − F, or:

X = neither F nor not − F;

accepts the ‘existence’ of X, while the tetralemma that figures in Nāgārjuna’s Mālamadhyamakakārikā, that is:

no X = F,

no X = not − F,

and therefore are not designed to present revealed truth. The audi-
such a recitation therefore does not concern revealed truth. The audi-
other hand, do not concern reve-
ple of different religious beliefs. 965: 139–141 and Dessein 2012:

questions of whether or not the Tathāgata are identical. These questions are 300: 172–173, 158 n.175. See also

33 On the silence of the Buddha based on the fear that answering metaphysical questions might divert from the right path or confuse a disciple, see Oetke 1994: 96. On the question of whether or not the Buddha presented a metaphysical system, see Bronkhorst 2000: 27–32. On the impossibility of giving statements concerning the unconditioned and the Buddha’s resulting silence, see Dessein (2017).

34 The attitude by which judgment regarding metaphysical or speculative beliefs and a construction of such questions in the form of a tetralemma are suspended, is already present in Sūtra literature. See e.g., MN sutta 63: Cūla-Māleśavasutta (Trenckner 1948: 426–432; Horner 1957: 97–101); and DN 1: Brahmajīvāsutta (Rhys Davids / Carpenter 1978: 12–46; Rhys Davids 1899: 26–55).

35 Note that those Buddhist issues in which a tetralemma is used to answer a question in favor of one of the four propositions do not concern metaphysical issues. See Jayatilleke 1963: 344–347. See also Kuzminki 2008: 134.

no X = both F and not – F;
no X = neither F nor not – F;

starts off from the ‘non-existence’ of X, that is, from the intrinsic voidness (sūnyatā) of phenomena. I return to the construction of the tetralemma that is used in the [Abhidharma]Sāṃgītīparyāya[pādaśāstra] later.

In order to sustain the claim that Greek thinking was influenced by Buddhist thinking, we must assume that the Buddhist argumentative technique influenced Greek thinking in the person of Pyrrho of Elis, and that this transmission took place in Central Asia. The generally accepted chronology, that Buddhism entered Central Asia in the centuries just before the beginning of the Common Era, excludes this possibility. Therefore, according to Beckwith, we must reconsider the accepted knowledge that Buddhism originated in the Indian cultural sphere. He hypothesizes that the historical Buddha was not a member of the Indian cultural tradition, but that he was a Central Asian Scyth – whence the name ‘Śākyamuni’ (‘wise men of the Śākyas [= Scyths]’), by which he is referred to in the Indian tradition, that is, as a ‘foreigner.’ From Central Asia, Buddhism would then have entered the Indian cultural sphere where it, along with its contacts with the different religious and philosophical groups mentioned above – would have developed into what we now know as the ‘normative Buddhism’ of the Pāli and Sanskrit traditions. In such a case, elements of an early rational Buddhist tradition would not be the result of a Buddhist confrontation with different Indian thought systems, but of Buddhists’ opposition to Central Asian Zoroastrianism.

Even if we were to accept that Śākyamuni was of Central Asian descent, that a primitive form of Buddhism was therefore present in Central Asia when Pyrrho of Elis arrived in the region, and that early Buddhist thinking influenced Greek thinking, there is, apart from the fundamentally different doctrinal aims of the argumentative practice of the Buddha and Pyrrho (mentioned above), yet another issue that casts doubt on the Buddhist tetralemma. As noted in this text, that is,

\[ \text{some X} = \text{some F} = \text{some non-X} = \text{some non-plus-F} \]

...
another issue that casts doubt on Pyrrho of Elis's possible adoption of the Buddhist tetralemma. As noted, the \([\text{Abhidharma}]\text{Samgïtiparyāya[pādaśāstra]}\) was likely written in a pre-Sarvāstivādin milieu. The type of tetralemma used in this text, that is,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{some } X &= \text{not } F, \\
\text{some } F &= \text{not } X, \\
\text{some } X &= F, \\
\text{some non } X &= \text{not } F,
\end{align*}
\]

can in this sense be seen as a ‘primitive’ form of argumentative structure, that is, elements X and F are discussed with respect to each other, whereas the work of Pyrrho of Elis (with each of the four elements of the tetralemma starting off from the ‘existence’ of X) or the work of Nāgārjuna (with each of the four elements of the tetralemma starting off from the ‘nonexistence’ of X), is not done in the same consequent manner. As mentioned in the introduction to this contribution, the \([\text{Abhidharma}]\text{Samgïtiparyāya[pādaśāstra]}\) is an early Abhidharma work that was later acknowledged as canonical by the Sarvāstivādins. These Sarvāstivādins are known for their atomic vision of reality. For the Sarvāstivādin Abhidhārmikas, all constituents of the world are composed of elements \((\text{dharmas})\). This position that the dharmas are the only ultimate constituents of the sensible world, most likely originates with the classical Buddhist concept of a ‘person’ \((\text{pudgala})\). Already in Sūtra literature, we read that a person is nothing more than a combination of five aggregates \((\text{skandhas})\), that is, of five dharmas; therefore, a person has no absolute nature. By analogy, all other objects of the world that are, equally, nothing more than assemblies of dharmas, should be devoid of absolute nature as well. Therefore, the tetralemma used by Nāgārjuna may be interpreted as a technical development with respect to the type of tetralemma we find in the \([\text{Abhidharma}]\text{Samgïtiparyāya[pādaśāstra]}\) that is in line with his philosophical development of earlier Abhidharma thinking: when the objects of our perception are compositions of dharmas, these dharmas, being ‘objects’ in their own right, have to be compositions of dharmas as well, and so on. This logical reasoning leads to eventual voidness as expressed in the element ‘no X’ in his tetralemma.\(^{41}\) We know that Nāgārjuna spent the first part of his life in northern India and the last part of his life in southern India, but that he never ventured into Central Asia.\(^{42}\) therefore, he

\(^{41}\) See n. 37.

\(^{42}\) See Barea 1951: 268; Ruegg 1962: 507, 516.
could not have learned the Sarvāstivāda philosophy and its argumentative technique in Central Asia. Thus, it is more likely that he was inspired by some current of thought that flourished in India.43

Thomas McEvilley further observes that the essentials of Pyrrhonism were already present among the followers of Socrates (c. 469–399 BCE) and Democritus (c. 460–380/370 BCE), that is, well before Alexander’s visit to India. In addition, Plato (428–347 BCE) and Aristotle (384–322 BCE) quote the use of a tetralemma.45 Knowledge and the use of a tetralemma thus predate the time of Pyrrho. In his comment on Arcesilaus (318–242 BCE), a younger contemporary of Pyrrho of Elis, Diogenes Laertius informs us as follows:

[H]e (= Arcesilaus) was the first to suspend his judgment owing to the contradictions of opposing arguments. He was also the first to argue on both sides of a question, and the first to meddle with the system handed down by Plato and, by means of question and answer, to make it more closely resemble eristic .... He would seem to have held Plato in admiration, and he possessed a copy of his works. Some represent him as emulous of Pyrrho as well. He was devoted to dialectic and adopted the methods of argument introduced by the Eretrian school.47

Diogenes Laertius’s statements thus suggest that Platonic thinking was reshaped under the influence of Indian argumentative techniques. This ‘Indian’ influence is not necessarily ‘Buddhist.’ Also Pythagoras (570–495 BCE) and Democritus are reported to have met ‘Indians’ in Persia,48 and we may also recall here that Megasthenes (350–290 BCE), an older contemporary of Pyrrho’s who, between 302 and 291 BCE, served under Seleucus I as ambassador at the court of Candragupta (founder of the Mauryan empire) spoke about Brahmins.49 Further, if ‘early Buddhism’ was a Central Asian phenomenon and traveled from Central Asia to India, it is very likely that adherents of this early form of Buddhism defined the to which they newly entered does not mention ‘Buddhism, ent-day Patna), this might be phase in its original Indian literary and philosophical tr does not refer to ‘Buddhists’ Buddha, under the name ‘B Stromateis of Clement of Alex follow the precept of ‘Boutta,’

Thus, we can agree with that: “If Pyrrhon encounters reminded him of doctrines t and fifty years and which his tween the Pyrrhonists and a matter of transmission of a reinvention.53

43 That the tetralemma used by Pyrrho of Elis starts from the ‘existence’ of X does not even align with the earliest Buddhist concept of the nature of a ‘person.’
44 McEvilley 2002: 495.
47 Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, IV, 33, 409–410, quoted in Kuzminski 2008: 9. The Eretrian school of philosophy was originally the school of Elis, founded by Phaedo of Elis, a pupil of Socrates. It was later transferred to Eretria, and died out after the time of Menedemus (third century BCE).
48 See Flintoff 1980: 89. See also n. 10 and n. 18.
49 Strabo, Geography XV (1: 59, 101) quoted in Kuzminski 2008: 46–47.
50 Personal communication, Bau.
52 McEvilley 2002: 495, emphasis reduced.
53 See also Kuzminski 2008: 5.
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form of Buddhism defined themselves as ‘Buddhists’ in the Indian environment
to which they newly entered. Therefore, when Megasthenes (350–290 BCE)
does not mention ‘Buddhism,’ despite the fact that he visited Pāṭaliputra (pres-
ent-day Patna), this might be because the Buddhist community was in its early
phase in its original Indian environment. To this we may add that the Greek
literary and philosophical tradition, though it refers to the Indian tradition,
does not refer to ‘Buddhists’ in direct terms.50 The first direct mention of the
Buddha, under the name ‘Boutta,’ in a western source is a reference in the
Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria (150–215). This text mentions Indians who
follow the precept of ‘Boutta,’ and venerate him as a god.51

Thus, we can agree with Thomas McEvilley that it indeed is very likely
that: “If Pyrrho encountered such doctrines in India, they must simply have
reminded him of doctrines that had been common in Greece for a hundred
and fifty years and which his own teachers had taught him.”52 Similarities be-
tween the Pyrrhonists and the Buddhists may therefore not necessarily be
a matter of transmission of ‘Buddhism’ to the Hellenist tradition, but of
a reinvention.53

50 Personal communication, Baudoin Decharmeux, 29 January 2015. For the absence of
a direct reference to Buddhism in earlier sources, Beckwith (2015: 91) argues that, at the time
of Pyrrho and Megasthenes, Buddhism existed, but was not called “Buddhism,” and that it
does not seem likely that the Buddha himself was worshipped personally, though he was ven-
erated. Dihle (1964: 63) states that Buddhists might have been too insignificant for
Megasthenes to mention them. Bronkhorst (2011: 2–4 and 8–11) argues that Buddhist self-
affirmation is likely to have been closely related to the rise of Brahmanism in Indian society;
the result being that Brahmins became the major opponents of the Buddhists. This event can
be dated to the Asokan period (third century BCE). Judging from the Eighth Rock Edict of
Devānāṃpirya Priyadarśī that informs us that the king went to Sambodhi (Bodhgaya) and that
he started preaching the dharma after his visit there, Buddhists must have been accepted as
a separate group by the mid-third century BCE.
Beckwith (2012: 87–88) points to the absence of direct references to Buddhists when stating
that the first Arabic works to use the ‘recursive argument method’ (on this method, see further)
are those by the twelfth-century Ibn Sinā (known in the West as Avicenna) who does not seem
to “refer explicitly to Buddhist or ‘Indian’ ideas.” For the importance of Ibn Sinā to European
science, see Beckwith 2012: 103. On the scarce references to the indirect contacts between
Europe and the Buddhist world prior to the thirteenth century CE, see Dahlquist 1962; de Jong
1987: 5–6; and Batchelor 1994: 7–8, 28–30. Also see Beckwith 2015: 100.
52 McEvilley 2002: 695, emphasis mine.
53 See also Kuzminski 2008: 46–47.
A Buddho-Greek Encounter After All

According to generally accepted knowledge, the territorial expansion under King Asoka (third century BCE) enabled Buddhists to venture to the island of Sri Lanka and the region of Gandhāra. The latter region had come under Hellenistic influence following the expansion under Alexander the Great, and Hellenistic culture began to flourish in Central Asia around 185 BCE. The *Mūlindapañha* (Questions of King Milinda), a record of a discussion between the Greek king Menandros (known as Milinda in Pāli sources) and the Buddhist monk Nāgasena, is an important textual witness of an alleged encounter between Buddhists and Hellenists in the region of Gandhāra. Although the date suggested by Édith Nolot of the second century BCE for the earliest version of such a text might be too early – committing Buddhist texts to writing likely only started in the second century BCE, and although it is possible that there was not even a debate between Menandros and Nāgasena – both might even by fictitious persons – it is important because the Buddhist author of the text shows an awareness and recognition of a Hellenic presence in Central Asia. While we do not accept that Greek philosophy was shaped on the basis of early Buddhist philosophy that originated in Central Asia, the *Mūlindapañha* might show the opposite, that Buddhist philosophy was inspired by Greek philosophy, long before the advent of Islam. In this respect, it may be important that Menandros appears to convert to Buddhism at the hand of Nāgasena only in the second part of the book, that is an addition to the original text. That is to say, the earlier version of the work does not lead us to conclude that the Hellenists were converted to Buddhism. In this respect, Joséph F. Roccasalvo remarks that: “[F]rom the rather limited contributions of the Greek king to the dialogical exchange with the monk, Nāgasena, there seems to be textual evidence of certain constants which relate the king’s questions to the framework of Greek *sophia* to which Nāgasena responds from within the viewpoint of Buddhist *pañña*.” The fact that the argumentation of Nāgasena is placed in a Greek framework may indicate that the encounter with Hellenism inspired the Buddhists of Gandhāra to their philosophical system. They defend their faith against the techniques that were pre such as the [Ābhīdhamma]San.

When the Sarvāstivādin with a unique philosophical event that may have been Central Asia, it is likely the works (that is, philosophica [pādaśāstra]) into their cano *Nāxian biqiu jīng* (Milindapa period from Sūtra to Ābhidh came a Sarvāstivāda strong an overarching text – the Āś their philosophy. According written at the end of the 3 Buddha, that is, around the this new text as the ‘body’ (*Aṣṭāgrantha* that I turn my at

56 In its Chinese rendering, the *Mūlindapañha* (*Nāxian biqiu jīng* T.32.1670) belongs to the Sarvāstivāda school of Buddhism and is likely from the beginning of the common era. See Willemen / Dessein / Cox 1998: 104–105. The final version of this record was rendered into Pāli in the fifth century CE. See Finot 1992: 7–9.
57 See Bopearachchi 1990: 47.

59 Such a Greek on Buddhist influ the typically Buddhist *stūpa*, the Buddha, probably originated in Ce imply that the Buddha was a Cer "there is little in the text (i.e. Milin 60 See Lamotte 1958: 290–291.
61 See Bronkhorst 2016.
62 T.26.1543.
63 See T.41.1821: 8c6–7. For an as and 98.
64 The *Aṣṭāgrantha* was thus see Abhidharma texts: the [Ābhīdha: T.26.1536], the [Ābhīdhamma]Dhar: the Prajñaptiśāstra (Śāhe lu (Āpida mo śīhien zu lu; T.26.1359 zu lu; T.26.1540), and the [Ab T.26.1541]; Āpīdoma pīne lu zu lu, to as the ‘Sātpādābhīdharma’; Willemen / Dessein / Cox 1998: 221.
Buddhists, Hellenists, Muslims, and the Origin of Science —— 191

Buddhists of Gandhāra to systematize the words of the Buddha into a sound philosophical system. They may have seen this undertaking as the only way to defend their faith against the well-developed Greek tradition of rational debate that flourished in Central Asia.59 To do so, they built on the basic argumentative techniques that were present in the sūtras and the early Abhidharma texts, such as the [Abhidharma]Sāngītīpyāyapādasāstra] quoted earlier.

When the Sarvāstivādins started to define themselves as a distinct group with a unique philosophical position around the second to first centuries BCE – an event that may have been instigated by their encounter with Hellenists in Central Asia, it is likely that they then incorporated the early Abhidharma works (that is, philosophical texts such as the [Abhidharma]Sāngītīpyāyapādasāstra] into their canon. Therefore, it is also important to note that the Nāxian biqiu jīng (Milindapānha) shows Buddhist doctrine in the transitional period from Sūtra to Abhidharma literature,60 and that greater Gandhāra became a Sarvāstivāda stronghold.61 In Gandhāra, the Sarvāstivādins composed an overarching text – the Asāgranthā (Apitān ba jiandu hm)62 – to summarize their philosophy. According to Buddhist historiography, the Asāgranthā was written at the end of the 300 years following the demise of the historical Buddha, that is, around the first century BCE.63 The Sarvāstivādins considered this new text as the 'body' (sārīra) of their Abhidharma collection.64 It is to the Asāgranthā that I turn my attention now.

59 Such a Greek on Buddhist influence might also be derived from the appearance of the first Buddhist statues that depict the Buddha as a Greek monarch. See Lamotte 1958: 483–484. Also the typically Buddhist stūpa, the origin of which dates back to the time of the historical Buddha, probably originated in Central Asia. See Beckwith 2015: 165. This does not necessarily imply that the Buddha was a Central Asian figure. Note that Halbfass (1988: 19) states that “there is little in the text (i.e. Milindapānha) which is Greek, aside from the name of the king.”


61 See Bronkhorst 2016.

62 T.26.1543.

63 See T.41.1821: 8c6–7. For an assessment of this traditional dating, see Frawallner 1964: 71 and 98.

64 The Asāgranthā was thus seen as the body (sārīra) that has six feet (pāda): six earlier Abhidharma texts: the [Abhidharma]Sāngītīpyāyapādasāstra] (Apidamo jiymen zu lun; T.26.1536), the [Abhidharma]Dharmaskandhāpādasāstra] (Apidamo fayun zu lun; T.26.1537), the Pratīyaptiṣṭāstra (Shishe lun; T.26.1538), the [Abhidharma]Vijñānakāyapādasāstra] (Apidamo shishhen zu lun; T.26.1539), the [Abhidharma]Dharmakāyapādasāstra] (Apidamo shishen zu lun; T.26.1540), and the [Abhidharma]Prakāravāpakāsāstra] (Zhongshifen apitan lun, T.26.1541; Apidamo pinlei zu lun, T.26.1542, T.26.1542). This set of seven texts was then referred to as the ‘Ṣatpādabhādharma’; ‘Abhidharma with six feet.’ See T.41.1821c10–11. Also see Willemen / Dessein / Cox 1998: 221.
A Buddho-Brahmin Encounter

With respect to a possible connection between early Buddhism and the development of European science, in the introduction to this contribution, I mentioned the hypothesis that the Central Asian madrasas may have played a decisive role in the transmission of a Buddhist argumentative technique to the European Middle Ages. If, as I argue above, the use of a tetralemma in Buddhist and in Greek philosophical texts is not self-evident proof of such an influence, then it also does not exclude it as yet another element of Buddhist thinking that influenced European thought. This element is related to the existence of Buddhism in a broader Brahmin society.

In Buddhist texts, apart from the use of the tetralemma, we also find the use of the so-called ‘recursive argument method’. The ‘recursive argument method’ can be interpreted as a developed argumentation method with respect to a hypothesis. It goes without saying that such a hypothesis can be one of four alternatives listed in a tetralemma. Basically, the ‘recursive argument method’ is constructed as follows:

I. Argument (the Main Argument, Question, or Topic)
II. Subarguments₁ about the Argument
III. Subarguments₂ about the Subarguments₁
IV. Author’s view

The method, as Beckwith explains, is meant

to break each topic down into analyzable parts and exhaustively debate each one from every possible direction. Its practical importance is in the fact that, in using the method, many views, very often including hypothetical ones, are presented and examined on each point, the irrelevant or wrong views are disproved, and the author’s view is established firmly.65

Indeed, this argumentative technique has a ‘modern’ scientific tone to it, and Beckwith claims that it was first seen in the above-mentioned Astagrantha and in the Vibhaṣā[śāstra],67 an extensive commentary on the Astagrantha attributed to

65 This term was coined by Beckwith 2012.
66 Beckwith 2012: 24, my emphasis. See also Beckwith 2012: 16.
While the *Aṣṭagranṭha* used “a primitive form of the method” and does not number the subarguments, the *Piposha lun* would then be the earliest Abhidharma text to number the subarguments. It may be that the tetralemma was this ‘recursive argument method’ that, through its use in philosophical texts that were composed and compiled in monasteries (vihāra) in Gandhāra, eventually, after Islam had entered Central Asia, influenced European philosophy and science.

The problem we encounter here is that the texts of the *Aṣṭagranṭha* and the *Vibhāṣā[śāstra]* are not, as a whole, constructed according to the ‘recursive argument method,’ or the method is not systematically used for all the topics under discussion. Moreover, Erich Frauwallner convincingly argues that the section that uses this method of argumentation (a section that discusses four interpretations of the reason *dharmas* exist in the three time periods, the main philosophical tenet that gave the Sarvastivādins their name) must be identified as a ‘doxographical appendix,’ a piece of text that belongs to a phase of Buddhist philosophical development that is older than the texts that contain this fragment-themselves. That is to say, the passages of the *Apitan ba jian du lun* and of the *Piposha lun* that use the ‘recursive argument method’ appear to have been inserted in these already existing texts at a later date—undoubtedly as a result of the Sarvāstivādins’ self-identification as a distinct philosophical group.

Furthermore, while the *Aṣṭagranṭha / Apitan ba jian du lun* uses the ‘recursive argument method,’ the *AbhidharmaṞāṇanapraṣṭhāṇa[śāstra]*, a later reworking of the *Aṣṭagranṭha* that was most likely done in Kaśmīr, a part of Greater Gandhāra, does not. Rather, the *Ṛṇānapraṣṭhāna* follows the question-and-answer format we know from earlier *Abhidharma* and even *Śūtra* texts, suggesting that the ‘recursive argument method’ was not a ‘genuine’ Sarvāstivāda technique and that the introduction of the passage that contains the technique into the *Apitan ba jian du lun* and the *Piposha lun* might have

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68 At present, three Vibhāṣā commentaries are extant: the [Abhidharma]Mahāvibhāṣā[śāstra] (Apidamo da piposha lun; T.27.1545), the *Abhidharmavibhāṣā[śāstra] (Apitan piposha lun; T.28.1546), and the Vibhāṣā[śāstra] (Piposha lun; T.28.1547).


70 Frauwallner 1973: 100.

71 The same fragment is also found in T.27.1545: 396a10–b23 and in T.28.1546: 295c6–296a2. This passage is also included in the additional chapters of the *Sāmyuktābhidharmaṇḍa[śāstra]: T.28.1552: 961c27–962a18. Also see Dessein 2007.

72 Apidamo fashi lun; T.28.1544.

73 The map given by Salomon (1999: 2) suggests that he includes Kashmir in “Greater Gandhāra”; Behrendt (2004: 16, 22) does so explicitly.
been for reasons of identification vis-à-vis other philosophical groups. This hypothesis seems to be corroborated by the fact that Kāśmīra was uniformly Vaibhāṣīka. The Posoupdou fashi zhuān, Paramārtha’s biography of Vasubandhu that contains our oldest account of a synod that was held in Kashmir, testifies to this when claiming that, on this synod, all the sayings of the Buddha concerning Abhidharma were compiled into the [Abhidharma] Jñānapрастhāna[ṣṭra], that a commentary – the Mahāvibhāṣā – was written on this work, and that Kaniska who ruled over the region during the Kuśāna era and who is credited with having convened this synod, prohibited the Mahāvibhāṣā from being removed from the country. This prohibition seems absurd if it were meant to serve as an identification of the Kāśmīri Vaibhāṣīkas vis-à-vis other Buddhist or non-Buddhist groups.

The following further corroborates a non-Sarvāstivāda and even a non-Buddhist origin for the ‘recursive argument technique’. During the Asokan period, Buddhists not only came into contact with descendants of Hellenist culture, but the Brahmins became their major opponents too. Therefore, it is very likely that Buddhists were influenced by these Brahmins as much as they were by the Hellenists. An important example of this has been given by Johannes Bronkhorst, who points to the fact that the Mahābhāṣya (Great commentary) of Patañjali uses this method. The Mahābhāṣya was written during the decades following the middle of the second century BCE, that is, prior to the Aṣṭagrantha and the Vībhāṣā (the two earliest Sarvāstivāda texts that are claimed to use the ‘recursive argument method’). At some point, this Patañjali was in the service of the Brahmanical ruler Puṣyamitra in the region of Kashmir, a region with a substantial Buddhist presence. Here again, we can refer to Megasthenes who served under Seleucus I as ambassador at the court of Candragupta and who spoke about Brahmins.

The Mahābhāṣya is constructed as a dialog between a teacher and a student and concerns the purpose of rules and their formulations, the right interpretation of which is disputed to this day. With great stylistic art Patañjali greasing debate with new possibilities of an interpretation.

Further, it is reasonable to assume that this ‘recursive method’ was used in written already existing oral traditions. Magadha, where the historic Jainas and the Ājīvakas were until early Buddhists had – if their truth. This oral tradition develop this method in written

A Buddhist-Islamic Connection

For an Islamic connection have to accept that, having Asia, the ‘recursive argument’ or philosophical tenAsia and used in their m after the vihāras. After worical Arabic in the late eigthen became the structure in Europe. As the natural o tween Europe and the Islarturity, this method then in the century, in translations to:

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74 In this respect, Frauwallner (1973: 105) suggests that the influence of the Vaiśeṣika concept of time gave rise to the discussion on the three time periods in Sarvāstivāda Buddhism. Regardless of whether or not the Buddha used numbered lists to organize his teachings, these lists certainly came into being after his lifetime as part of the oral transmission of his doctrine. These lists, however, are not recursive. See Beckwith 2015: 52–53.
76 See Bronkhorst 2011, 8–11; and n. 50.
77 Bronkhorst 2016: 32–34.
78 Strabo, Geography XV, 1, 59, 101, quoted in Kuzminski 2008: 46–47.
interpretation of which is decided by the teacher.79 Hartmut Scharfe states: “With great stylistic art Patañjali has created the impression of a freely progressing debate with new disputants butting in now and then in which all possibilities of an interpretation are scrutinized.”80

Further, it is reasonable to accept that, before the ‘recursive argument method’ was used in written treatises, it must have been known as part of an already existing oral tradition. Here we may reiterate that in the region of Magadha, where the historical Buddha is generally accepted to have lived, the Jainas and the Ājīvakas were important religious rivals of the Buddhists, and that early Buddhists had – from the outset – to convince their opponents of their truth. This oral tradition of argumentation may have made it possible to develop this method in written format.81

A Buddho-Islamic Encounter

For an Islamic connection between Buddhism and European science, we have to accept that, having originated in the Buddhist vihāras of Central Asia, the ‘recursive argument method’ – or any other argumentative technique or philosophical tenet – was adopted by the Muslims of Central Asia and used in their madrasas, which were architecturally modeled after the vihāras. After works of Indian science were translated into classical Arabic in the late eighth century, the ‘recursive argument method’ then became the structure according to which scientific texts were drawn in Europe. As the natural outcome of ongoing, long-standing contacts between Europe and the Islamic world that began in the late eleventh century, this method then made its first appearance in the mid-twelfth century, in translations to Latin done in Andalusia from Arabic originals

80 Scharfe 1977: 156. See also Bronkhorst 2016: 42. This contradicts the following claim by Beckwith (2012: 75): “It seems to be generally believed by most Indologists that the Indian form of the recursive argument is very ancient, in which case the Central Asian recursive argument method would presumably derive from it. However, as shown above, this chronological argument is unsupported, since no actual or arguably earlier Indian texts (that is, earlier than the Aṣṭagrantha and the Vībhāṣaṇa) that use such an argument structure are attested.”
81 See Bronkhorst 2016. Beckwith (2012: 77) points to the importance of orality when stating: “Indian cultural influence, though evidently mostly oral, may have been significant in the formation of Arab Islamic intellectual culture.”
written a century earlier. In this respect, starting from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, the model of the Central Asian madrasa, itself inspired by the earlier Buddhist vihāra, was also the model for European colleges.

A first issue to discuss is the likelihood that vihāras existed at the moment the ‘recursive argument method’ was first used, that is, around the first century BCE, the time the Aṣṭaṅgrana was written. The earliest evidence for the existence of residences of the vihāra type “does not appear in the archaeological record until around the beginning of the Common Era.”

For this early period, we cannot even be certain that the term ‘vihāra’ had any Buddhist sense, as its meaning in the Asokan Eighth Rock Edict is “diversion, enjoyment,” and what has been taken to refer to monastic complexes were little more than natural caves or rock shelters with slight improvements. The earliest examples of the classic “vihāra plan” that have been excavated are situated in Taxila in eastern Gandhāra and date to the first or second century CE. Gregory Schopen even claims that it was only during the Gupta Empire (c. 320–550 CE) that vihāras appeared as an established feature, and that therefore it was most probably “in the period between the Mauryan and Gupta empires … that Buddhist communities came to be fully monasticized, permanently housed, landed, propertied, and – to judge by almost any standpoint in the sense that Bud rules of conduct; this obvi house the monastics. S vihāras may have been a re writing philosophical text Abhidharma works). Also in Asia as a possible region of gument method. It thus a brought to Central Asia alor community to this region. that Muslim thinkers might and indirectly brought it to.

Conclusion

The above pages reveal that intriguing as it is complex the rationality arising in contestation – it is highly p was not a mono-cultural phe nous and foreign cultural co had – through, among oth er. The question of whether Buddhism remains difficult swer to this question, it a

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82 Beckwith 2012: 3–4. Finally, Beckwith (2012: 6) suggests that a scientific tradition did not develop in the Islamic world because in Islam the recursive argument method and the madrasas were used almost exclusively for religious purposes, in western Europe, where the Church did not suppress science, the method was used in the pursuit of science. Robert of Curzon’s De usura (‘On usury’) would then be the earliest known example (i.e., in the earth thirteenth century) of the recursive argument method in an original authored (i.e., not translated) text composed in Latin. See Beckwith 2012: 108.


84 Clarke 2014: 20. Dutt 1962: 211: “[N]o trace of monastic ruins of the BC centuries has been discovered so far.”


86 Beckwith (2012: 41) states: “The earliest examples of vihāras … have been found in the ruins of the great city of Taxila, dating to the period of the Kushan Empire (ca. 50 BC – AD 225). … No pre-Kushan-period vihāras have been found, and the plan of the vihāra is strikingly different from that of the saṅghārāma, the typical earlier, strictly Indian, Buddhist monastic design. The vihāra design is thus a specifically Central Asian innovation developed under the Kushans and spread by them.”

87 Schopen 2007: 60.
judge by almost any standard – very wealthy.” They were fully monasticized in the sense that Buddhist groups lived together according to shared rules of conduct; this obviously predates the establishment of vihāras to house the monastics. Such ‘fully monasticized’ and ‘very wealthy’ vihāras may have been a requisite for such highly intellectual activities as writing philosophical texts (such as the Āṣṭāgrānta or even earlier Abhidharma works). Also material conditions thus shed doubt on Central Asia as a possible region of origin of the Āṣṭāgrānta and the ‘recursive argument method.’ It thus appears to be more likely that the method was brought to Central Asia along with the spread of the Sarvastivadin monastic community to this region. This does not exclude the possibility, of course, that Muslim thinkers might have come to know this method in Central Asia and indirectly brought it to Europe.

Conclusion

The above pages reveal that the question of the origin of western science is as intriguing as it is complex to answer. Given the nature of ‘rational inquiry’ – rationality arising in conditions of philosophical/religious confrontation and contestation – it is highly probable that the development of western science was not a mono-cultural phenomenon, but the outcome of a diversity of indigenous and foreign cultural contacts. It is generally accepted that Arabic Science had – through, among others, Ibn Sinā – a decisive impact on European science. The question of whether or not Arabic science was itself influenced by Buddhism remains difficult to answer definitely. In order to formulate an answer to this question, it appears that we first need decisive proof that (1)
Buddhist (not only ‘Indian’) knowledge influenced Greek culture; that (2) while the Buddhist argumentative technique did not originate in Central Asia, it at least further developed in a pre-monasticized Central Asian environment; that (3) this technique was maintained in this region until it was later utilized in the fully developed vihāras; and that (4) when the Muslims transformed these vihāras into their madrasas, they also adopted the Buddhist argumentative technique.

Until definite answers to these questions are given, we are bound, at least temporarily, to remain with the following statement by the second-century CE Greek physician and Pyrrhonist Sextus Empiricus: "What we investigate is not what is apparent but what is said about what is apparent."90

Abbreviations


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90 Sextus Empiricus 2000, 1: 19, line 8; emphasis mine.

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Annette Schmiedchen

**Medieval Endowments: India: Buddhist Some Preliminary**

**Abstract:** Endowment cults flourished in China, and were often associated with the construction of temples or monasteries, which were used as centers for the study and dissemination of Buddhist teachings. The practice of endowments allowed monks and laity to participate in the support of monastic communities and the propagation of Buddhist principles. This study examines the historical development of Buddhist endowment practices in India, with a focus on the establishment of endowments by prominent monastics and patrons. The analysis includes an examination of the texts and inscriptions related to these endowments, as well as an exploration of the religious and social contexts in which they were enacted. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of endowments in the development of Buddhist practices in India and their significance for the study of Buddhist history and culture.

**Keywords:** Western India, Medieval, Buddhist, Endowments, Temples, Monasteries, Monasticism, Buddhist Literature, Inscriptions, Historical Sources.

In this paper, I focus on Budh, the subcontinent, where, fo the earliest evidence for intenous Indian communities. T of Arab armies into Sind (in century. I address the subje source material for early mu. Medieval endowment: same time, are a complex p. religion and politics, social s

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