Chandragupta Maurya, Kautilya and Kingship in the Mauryan Empire

Zila Jennings, s2928604

Date of Submission: 30th June 2021

Word Count: 17070

MA Thesis (Ancient) History

Dr Marike van Aerde

Table of Contents

Introduction

In this paper I will examine the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, the first of the Mauryas. I will be turning my gaze away from the Greco-Roman world towards the Indian subcontinent. Chandragupta's reign (c. 321-298 BCE) presided over a period of great change in the ancient world as the effects of Alexander's conquests reverberated around the globe. Taking advantage of this turmoil Chandragupta and his great aide and ally Kautilya were able to depose the incumbent Nanda dynasty, defeat the might of Seleucus I Nicator in 303 BCE, and establish their rule over Northern India. I will examine the ways in which Chandragupta was able to maintain his authority and ensure the obedience of his subjects so successfully when his more established predecessors had failed so miserably.[1]

Was the Mauryan empire an 'Empire'?

If I am going to explore how Chandragupta convinced his subjects of his right to rule as their king I must first establish that his Empire was worthy of the title. Dyson refers to Chandragupta's domain as 'the loose-knit Mauryan 'Empire' ',[2] implying that he is unsure if it deserved such a designation. Others have even referred to Maurya India as merely a kingdom as opposed to an Empire,[3] arguing that the Mauryas didn't fit into the traditional framework of Asian empires. This perception is only emphasised when comparing the relatively short lifespan of the Maurya Empire to their near contemporaries the Achaemenids, Han, and Romans.[4] Chandragupta's grandson, Aśoka Maurya, never took on the title of '*maharajadhiraja*' (great king of kings), instead referring to himself as '*raja Magadha*' (king of Magadha) or '*devanampriya*' (beloved of the gods).[5] Through this thesis I will refer to Chandragupta and Aśoka as 'kings' rather than 'emperors' as it stays truer to the way they described themselves, even if it is somewhat incongruous for Chandragupta to be the 'king' of the Mauryan 'Empire'.

In spite of these differing views regarding the validity of the Mauryan polity as an Empire, how can I be so confident in describing the Mauryas as empire-builders? Thapar relates that

---

[1] Mookerji, (1966), 5-7
[2] Dyson, (2018), 16-17
[3] Thapar, (1993), 3-4
[4] Goyal, (1995), 57
[5] Thapar, (1993), 1

historians have accepted two features which can be seen as the primary characteristics of an ancient empire: conquest and the domination of people of a foreign culture.[6] In her lecture on the Mauryas claim to empire Thapar asserted that the Mauryas did fulfil both of these criteria as 'the two features of extensive territorial control and the governance of peoples of a different culture – what used to be called euphemistically 'other nations' – remain valid'.[7]

Thapar is undoubtedly correct on the first characteristic as under Chandragupta the Mauryas expanded from their capital of Pataliputra across India to the extent that he could 'evince a capacity, never before witnessed in Indian history, to muster extraordinarily large material resources for maintaining an imperial hegemony in South Asia'.[8] The territory controlled by the Mauryas contained a vast population with figures of between 15 and 30 million being seen as the most reasonable estimates.[9] Davis has even suggested that the population was as high as 100 to 140 million, a conclusion that has since swayed a number of other scholars.[10] The Mauryan capital Pataliputra was one of the most populous cities in the world at the time, with Dyson estimating a population of anything from 100,000 to 300,000 people.[11] To have conquered a territory capable both of maintaining such a population and of such productive capacity surely fulfils the criterion of extensive conquest.

The proposal that Chandragupta conquered regions inhabited by 'peoples of a different culture'[12] is more problematic. Ray has said that Northern India was characterized by 'broad cultural unity',[13] a conclusion which implies that Thapar's 'other nations' were members of the same cultural unit. Such a broad and sweeping analysis of the cultural diversity of Northern India, and indeed of India as a whole, severely underestimates the cultural differentiation between regions. Bhattacharya asserts that 'territorial areas like Kuru, Panchala, Koshala, Magadha, Vanga, Kalinga, Chola, Chera etc were not mere geographical units: these areas retained their identities not so much in terms of geographical distinctiveness as in terms of cultural unities.[14] Such diversity of culture and regional identity meant that 'the

---

[6] Thapar, (1993), 1
[7] Thapar, (1987), 28-29
[8] Avari, (2007), 105
[9] Dyson, (2018), 23-24
[10] Davis, (1951), 24. Clark, (1967), 75
[11] Dyson, (2018), 22
[12] Thapar, (1987), 28-29
[13] Ray, (2008), 17
[14] Bhattacharya, (1993), 8

moment a state grew beyond the local, it had to confront a mass of heterogeneous cultures which it endeavoured to bind into a single polity'.[15] This view, rather than depicting ancient India as being split into a series of homogeneous regions and towns, suggests that each and every region the Mauryas conquered had its own unique regional geography, culture, and tradition. The Maurya Empire may not have been as far-ranging or diverse as that of Rome or the Achaemenids but it encompassed a territory filled with a rich tapestry of culturally differentiated peoples, fulfilling both criteria of an ancient empire.

Relevance of Thesis

The historiography of Maurya India is patchy to say the least, with Goyal's excellent summary of the historiography up to 1995 emphasising the focus on Aśoka and his policies to the detriment to Chandragupta Maurya.[16] The main cause of this is the lack of primary evidence pertaining to Chandragupta, especially when compared to his grandson whose rock edicts left a permanent mark on the Indian landscape.

There has been a tendency from scholars of the Mauryas to focus solely on the political chronology,[17] supplying readers with what happened without analysing the meaning and motivations behind these actions. Histories of Chandragupta and his rise to power often devolve into accounts of his relations with Seleucus I Nicator and the Hellenistic kingdoms to the west, with only a cursory look at how he was able to run his newly-found empire. A similar trend is also experienced in many studies of Chandragupta's aide Kautilya, who is repeatedly examined in the terms of his intellectual relationship to Machiavelli.[18] Such an approach to Kautilya's work has been in vogue since Weber's famous remark that 'a genuinely radical "Machiavellianism," in the popular sense of the word, received its classic formulation in Indian literature as early as Kautilya's *Arthaśastra*'.[19] This approach can be helpful but it has also led to misinterpretations of Kautilya by mostly Western scholars trying to place his work and theology into a Western context.[20]

---

[15] Bhattacharya, (1993), 8
[16] Goyal, (1995), 51-68
[17] Goyal, (1995), 51
[18] See Bhagat, (1990), Boesche, (2003), Prasad, (1978)
[19] Weber, (2004), 87-88
[20] Gray, (2014), 636

In short, historians seem to presuppose that Chandragupta Maurya rose to power and was instantly accepted as a legitimate ruler by his new subjects. This is a highly unlikely reconstruction of events, and this thesis will endeavour to fill in this gap in the historiography of Chandragupta's reign by tackling the subject of Chandraguptan Kingship. I will explore the ways in which Chandragupta and Kautilya administered the Mauryan Empire and maintained the support and obedience of the Indian people, arguing that the reality of Chandraguptan rule was a far cry from the picture painted by Kautilya in the *Arthaśāstra.*

Structure and Limitations

The thesis will be split into four chapters. Chapter One will outline the historical background and introduce the evidence that I will be using in the essay. There are some limitations to the evidence, especially when working within the parameters I have set myself. The majority of existing evidence for the Mauryas, such as their Buddhist-themed coins, architecture, and rock edicts, date to the reign of Aśoka Maurya. While some of the rock edicts propagate Kautilyan values, such as the desire for *artha* through the Empire,[21] they offer little insight into the mindset of Chandragupta and Kautilya, dating to some fifty years after Chandragupta's rule. Mauryan material culture is not useful when embarking on an examination of Chandragupta's kingship. Instead of concentrating on the material culture of the Mauryas I will focus on primary sources and secondary literature. The thesis will hinge on the two great works addressing Chandragupta's reign, Kautilya's *Arthaśastra,* and Megasthenes' *Indica.* Chapter Two will address the Brahmanical-political theology that was propagated in the *Arthaśastra*. Here I will argue against the traditional view that Kautilya was a strict Hindu moralist,[22] proposing that he created a theology grounded in the Brahmanical religious framework while still allowing for considerable internal moral flexibility. This theology was then projected by Chandragupta and Kautilya onto the Mauryan state and its people.

Chapter Three will look at individual policies and actions enacted by Chandragupta which were intended to further secure his grip on power. These actions include repressive laws which limited the civil freedoms of Chandragupta's citizens, the use of the military as a tool

---

[21] Aśoka, *Kalinga Rock Edict I*, tr. Dhammika (1993)
[22] Prasad, (1978), 245 'inherent orthodoxy' , Bhagat, (1990), 194 'though a conservative', Gray, (2014), 638, 'Kautilya is a traditional, conservative political thinker and not a radical one'

for controlling the populace, and the ways in which Chandragupta represented himself as a living embodiment of the *chakravarti* ideal through coinage and the oral tradition. Chapter Four will return to my main question of what exactly was Chandraguptan Kingship? Was it the based on a model of socialized monarchy, or did it exist to exploit less developed regions of the Empire for the benefit of the Magadhan elite?

Chapter 1: Context and Background to the kingship of Chandragupta Maurya

By the time of his abdication in 298 BCE Chandragupta Maurya had created the first pan-Indian authority,[23] one which succeeded in dominating the subcontinent for over a century. This chapter will offer some context to the rise of Chandragupta Maurya to his position as *maharajadhiraja*, before looking at the primary sources and secondary literature in some more detail.

It was during Chandragupta's reign that 'the imperial idea found expression',[24] in the Indian subcontinent as developments further to the West were unconsciously mimicked in the wake of Alexander's untimely death. Before Chandragupta Northern India had been split up between a number of small kingdoms, all of which followed a rigid and inflexible Brahmanical theology. This manifested itself in a social contract between ruler and ruled in which the king's duty was to enforce *dharma* (social obligations and duties of an individual) by utilising *danda* (coercion) if necessary.[25] This simple relationship between the king and his subjects remained commonplace in India until the reign of Chandragupta and the rise of Kautilya as his advisor. It took Kautilya's reinterpretation of the traditional relationship between the ruler and ruled, which was immortalised in the Kautilya *Arthaśastra*, to fundamentally change Indian kingship. Kautilya shifted the focus from the spiritual to the material by making the focus of his treatise not the enforcement of *dharma* but the flourishing of *artha* (material well-being). This realigning of the *purusarthas* is the biggest shift away from Vedic tradition that Kautilya makes, and is the starting point for his 'radicalism'.

Rise and Fall: Chandragupta and the Nandas

Little is known of Chandragupta's early life with Western sources neglecting to mention his origins in any great detail. The Jain tradition labels Chandragupta as coming from a family of peacock-rearers, offering the most concrete estimate of his family lineage.[26] This label is based largely on the similarity of the name 'Maurya' with the Sanskrit word for peacock,

---

[23] Avari, (2007), xvi-xvii
[24] Thapar, (2002), 156
[25] Thapar, (2006), 289-290
[26] Avari, (2007), 106

mayūra. Witzel has found that *mayūra* was a loan word from an unknown Austro-Asiatic language, giving it roots in the east of the Indian subcontinent.[27] This would fit in with the common assumption, rarely certified by any tangible evidence, that Chandragupta himself was from the Pataliputra region. Pataliputra was one of the easternmost cities in the Mauryan polity and stretched out towards the region whence Austro-Asiatic languages originated. These origins are also hinted at by Kosambi, who definitively states that the family name Maurya 'could not be Vedic-Aryan'.[28] Justin echoed the Jain tradition by emphasising Chandragupta's low status, describing Sandrocottus (Chandragupta) as being born '*in servitutum'*.[29] If this were the case Chandragupta was evidently of a relatively low *varna*, especially when the man to overthrow the Nandas was predicted to be a Brahman in the Puranas.[30]

The silence of Western sources on this matter is puzzling when compared to their treatment of the Nanda dynasty. Plutarch said that the Nandas' unpopularity was so great that Alexander would have been able to conquer India with ease.[31] Most Greco-Roman writers attributed this to the lowly origins of the Nanda dynasty, with Curtius and Diodorus emphasising their humble heritage as a family of barbers.[32] Another reason for their unpopularity, at least during the reign of Dhana Nanda, was his obsession with amassing wealth through his levels of taxation. This tendency was so strong that his very title, 'Dhana', is directly translated as 'wealth' in Sanskrit. Such a difference in the Western treatment of the Nanda dynasty, as opposed to the Mauryas, does suggest that these stories may been have somewhat inaccurate, resulting either from Alexander's propaganda against his erstwhile enemy or even from Chandragupta's regime itself as he and Kautilya attempted to legitimise their newly-won position. Contemporary Jain sources corroborate the Western assumptions that labelled the Mauryas as peacock-rearers and suggesting that the Nandas descended from barbers.[33] While the Puranas don't explicitly state the occupation of the Nanda's forebears, they do categorize them as members of the *śudra* caste. The *śudras* were the lowest of the castes that are laid out in the Rigveda, sitting below the *brahmins*, *kśatriyas*, and *vaiśyas*,[34]

---

[27] Witzel, (1999), 13

[28] Kosambi, (1970), 139

[29] Mookerji, (1966), 6

[30] Mookerji, (1966), 7-9

[31] Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 62.9

[32] Curtius, *History of Alexander*, 9.2.20, Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History,* XVII.93.2

[33] Mookerji, (1966), 14-15

[34] Rigveda, 10.90.11-12

symbolizing the low status of the Nandas. All of this seems to imply that at the least Chandragupta was of a higher social status and caste than his immediate predecessors, even if he himself wasn't of a particularly high caste himself.[35]

The known and certified facts of Chandragupta's early life are few and far between. His father was of the Moriya family, and following his death Chandragupta was brought up by his mother's family in the rural regions surrounding Pataliputra.[36] At some point Kautilya took the young boy under his wing and supposedly educated him at Taxila, a city known for its colleges and dedication to learning.[37] Following the death of Alexander in 323 BCE Chandragupta, with Kautilya at his side, emerged from obscurity to first free India of Greek influence and then to overthrow the Nanda's themselves. Kautilya had two governors, Nicanor and Philip, assassinated before he and Chandragupta assimilated the territory they had ruled into his own.[38] The fledgling Mauryan dynasty then went about building an army which reportedly numbered 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 8000 chariots, and 9000 elephants.[39] With this army Chandragupta was able to conquer Pataliputra, the capital of Dhana Nanda, in 321 BCE.[40]

The conquest of Pataliputra immediately gave the new administration control of the entire Nanda kingdom, and Chandragupta spent the next few years consolidating his rule. He broke the power of the small, independent kingdoms that had previously dominated India, bringing them under imperial control. In this Chandragupta was aided by the initial successes of Alexander's invasion, which had destroyed tribal independence and republican-city life.[41] The new dynasty then defeated Seleucus I Nicator, the former follower of Alexander who established the Seleucid Empire, and forced him to sue for peace. This victory introduced the Mauryas to the Western World and it is the account of Seleucus' ambassador, Megasthenes, that provided Greek and Roman historians with the bulk of their material relating to India.

---

[35] Mookerji, (1966), 5-14
[36] Mookerji, (1966), 16
[37] Modelski, (1964), 559
[38] Boesche, (2003), 10-11
[39] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History,* 6.22
[40] Trautmann, (1971), 14-15
[41] Bandhopadhya, (1980), 191

Primary Sources: The *Arthaśāstra* and the *Indica*

Any scholarship looking at the reign of Chandragupta Maurya will deal with two primary sources that both paint a detailed and intriguing, if slightly dissonant, picture of India under his rule. The more important is the Kautilya *Arthaśastra*.[42] Though the provenance of this text has been heavily debated most scholars concur that it was indeed compiled by the same Kautilya who advised Chandragupta.[43] With this in mind the *Arthaśastra* offers a compelling view from which to examine Mauryan policy. Its stated aim was to guide a king on how to rule, a process which included raising the levels of *artha* (material well-being) within the kingdom. Unsurprisingly this was not too dissimilar to Kautilya's role as Chandragupta's chief advisor in reality. The second major source is Megasthenes' *Indica,* a work that has come to us only in a fragmentary nature. Despite this it offers an unparalleled point to observe Maurya India from a somewhat neutral spectator who travelled through the Empire and even met Chandragupta himself.[44] The other main literary sources for the period are Vedic and Buddhist texts, which operate more as a philosophical backdrop to Vedic culture than as a history of mankind. Foremost amongst these are the Vedas and the Puranas.

Since the Kautilya *Arthaśastra* was published by Shamasastry in 1909 its provenance has been heavily debated. The prevailing view is that Kautilya, also described as Cānakya and Visnugupta in ancient texts, was an advisor to Chandragupta Maurya as he overthrew the Nanda dynasty and secured power over the Indian subcontinent. Thapar summarises this argument in her monograph *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* concluding that 'the *Arthaśāstra* was originally written by Kautilya, the minister of Candragupta'.[45] This conclusion draws heavily from the work itself, as the author of the *Arthaśāstra* writes in the first chapter that he is Kautilya.[46] To remove any confusion the final lines of the fifteenth chapter states that this *śāstra* was composed by the one who rescued the earth from the control of the Nanda kings.[47] Some scholars have argued against this conclusion by citing the lack of contemporary references in the work and the possibility that the allusions to Kautilya as author were added at a later date. Keith remarks that the *Arthaśāstra* 'never anywhere

---

[42] Kangle, *Kautilya Arthaśāstra,* (1963). Will be referred to as KA from here on
[43] Thapar, (1973), 225
[44] Arrian, *Anabasis,* 5.6.2, 'Megasthenes states that he met Sandrocottus, the greatest king of the Indians, one who was still greater than Porus'
[45] Thapar, (1973), 225
[46] KA 1.1.19
[47] KA 15.1.73

hints that its author had any knowledge of the overthrow of the Nandas and the wars which brought Candragupta his empire'.[48] It is important to remember that the *Arthaśāstra* is a political treatise, not a selection of Kautilya's memoirs. There is no reason to expect Kautilya to have peppered his work with contemporary references and anecdotes, especially as he evidently wrote the *Arthaśāstra* with a marked lack of historicity.[49] Kangle adds that in ancient Indian literature references to contemporary events of any kind are scarce,[50] further highlighting the redundancy of Keith's suggestion.

The Kautilya *Arthaśāstra* is a treatise on the acquisition of *artha*, which Kautilya himself describes as 'the sustenance or livelihood of men, in other words, the earth inhabited by men'.[51] Olivelle's translation of *Arthaśastra* as meaning the 'science of politics',[52] is perhaps the best way to summarise the range and depth of the work. As Kautilya himself states it is not a work created solely by him, but is in fact a compilation of work by previous teachers.[53] The political realism apparent throughout the work has earnt Kautilya the title of 'Machiavellian' from Weber and others.[54] Others claim that Kautilya was the first great political realist,[55] pointing to his ability to develop a political realism within the constraints of the Brahmanical framework in which he operated. Chapter Two will cover the *Arthaśāstra* in more detail as I will outline Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology and its application within the Mauryan state.

The remaining fragments of Megasthenes' *Indica* are the most important Graeco-Roman source concerning not just the life and times of Chandragupta Maurya but of Ancient India in its entirety. Nearly all later Graeco-Roman historians who mention India do so by quoting the *Indica*, which fortunately means that considerable portions of the work have been transmitted down to us. Jansari's analysis of the surviving fragments has found that Megasthenes is used in fourteen works from twelve ancient authors.[56] All of these authors wrote sometime after the events described by Megasthenes and are not necessarily reliable messengers of his

---

[48] Keith, (1928), 459
[49] Kumar, (2005), 468
[50] Kangle, (1965), 63
[51] KA 15.1.1
[52] Olivelle, (2013), 14
[53] KA 1.1.1
[54] Weber, (2004), 87-88. Boesche, (2002), 253-276
[55] Boesche, (2002) 253-276
[56] Jansari, (2020), 26-27

observations. This situation has led to a number of problems. Only those passages which Arrian, Strabo et al. found interesting have made their way down to us, potentially leaving huge gaps in our understanding of Megasthenes' account. What we do have is not the original text of Megasthenes but rather its rendering by subsequent authors. Arrian, in particular, is guilty of favouring rhetoric over accuracy when transmitting the *Indica.*[57] Nonetheless, as an eye-witness account of Maurya India, it is unsurpassed in the Western literary canon and is invaluable as a source on Chandragupta Maurya and his kingdom.

The account of Megasthenes' meeting with Chandragupta and his various observations of Indian society and its structure are of most interest for this thesis. Traditionally it is maintained that Megasthenes' meeting with Chandragupta took place in 304/3 BCE when the latter's power was at its peak. Bosworth has challenged this framework by arguing that Megasthenes' embassy arrived at Chandragupta Maurya's court in the period 320-318 BCE.[58] This argument suggests that Megasthenes travelled on a single mission to both Chandragupta and Porus in this period before publishing the *Indica* around 310 BCE.[59] Kosmin disputes this conclusion, stating that 'fragments of Megasthenes' *Indica* cannot support the revisionist thesis and requires the restoration of the traditional dating'.[60] He showed that Northern India, in Megasthenes' account, was not divided between the kingdoms of Chandragupta and Porus. Instead the region was unified under Chandragupta's banner and ruled from his capital of Pataliputra. Kosmin adds that Porus is not mentioned once in the extant fragments of Megasthenes,[61] an implausible situation if he was indeed in power when Megasthenes travelled through India. Consequently it is fair to accept the traditional thesis that Megasthenes visited India in 304/3 BCE when Chandragupta was the undisputed ruler of northern India. This means that Megasthenes was observing an India which had been under Maurya rule for nearly two decades, making the *Indica* far more valuable for an analysis of Chandraguptan rule and policy-making. As has been mentioned, the surviving fragments of Megasthenes have been passed down through the works of Greek writers, the most important of which are Strabo, Plutarch and Arrian. All three of these works have somewhat detailed discussions of India and use Megasthenes only as a source, albeit the most prominent and respected of their sources. Arrian's lesser known work, the *Indike,* draws upon Nearchus'

---

[57] Bosworth, (1996), 115
[58] Bosworth, (1996), 113
[59] Bosworth, (1996), 123
[60] Kosmin, (2014), 262
[61] Kosmin, (2014), 264

account of the expedition to India and is seen as the most authoritative Greek work on Ancient India despite it being written about 450 years after the events it recounts.[62]

Secondary Literature: State of Research on Chandragupta Maurya's India

The historiography of Maurya India in general has been greatly influenced by the political situation in India over the last century. The first histories of the period were released even before the publishing of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* and so can be dismissed for lacking this most important source for the Mauryan Empire. In the pre-independence era the tendency of historians was to determine a political chronology of Maurya India and to reconstruct the actions of the kings. Chandragupta and Aśoka were particularly put under the spotlight by this method, as it was they who had left the most evidence of their rule. Though this method led to a reconstruction of Mauryan political history the focus on the historical 'facts' left little room for studying the motivations of the Mauryan stakeholders, and completely ignored the actions and reactions of the common people to Mauryan rule. R. K. Mookerji's book, *Chandragupta Maurya and his Times*, is an example of this trend. Mookerji professes that his aim was to paint 'a picture of the civilisation of India in that early period of the 4th century B.C.',[63] but a scroll through the contents shows exactly where his interests lie with only one chapter concerning the 'social conditions' of Chandragupta's subjects. Dikshitar's book *The Mauryan Polity* holds excellent detail on the make-up of the imperial administration but offers little on the position of the Mauryan state in relation to its subjects.[64]

In the immediate aftermath of independence Indian historians 'followed the same approaches which they had been following before 1947',[65] focusing still on political chronology and the biographies of kings. In the 1960s this status began to change as new approaches were applied to Maurya history. D. D. Kosambi was the first and most influential of the historians to apply Marxist theory to Maurya India. His work *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* 'moved (Mauryan historiography) out of the confines of colonial and nationalist historical writing and made visible new dimensions of the past'.[66] Kosambi's ideas helped the focus of Mauryan historiography broaden from solely political chronology to include social

---

[62] Hammond, (2013),
[63] Mookerji, (1966), v
[64] Dikshitar, (1953)
[65] Goyal, (1995), 51
[66] Thapar, (2011), 552

and economic history. His emphasis on the economic trends of the period are shown by his unorthodox translation of the word *Arthaśāstra*, which he labels 'the science of material gain',[67] as opposed to the more typical 'science of politics'.[68]

More recently Thapar's work on Maurya India again 'raised Maurya historiography to a new level'.[69] Thapar attempts to distinguish between her subjects as monarchs and as men. This has allowed her to better question the underlying motivations of Chandragupta and Aśoka. According to Thapar imperial loyalty was directed towards the person of the king alone, rather than to the institution of the state. She has found that the Mauryas maintained public obedience in their core areas without a heavy military presence.[70] Such a strategy would have necessitated some sort of imperial ideology which compelled Chandragupta's subjects to obedience even without the threat of military intervention. The importance of the king in securing provincial obedience is shown by Aśoka's rallying cry of 'all men are my children'.[71] Such a slogan reveals that it was Aśoka himself who took on the responsibility of caring for his subjects, in a symbolic sense at least, and so it was from the person of Aśoka that authority derived. His subjects were bound to the king himself rather than an imperial apparatus which he represented.

In 2008 Ray re-examined the extent to which Mauryan control was centralized. She suggests that Mauryan society was characterized by multiples nodes of power.[72] This approach follows other recent discussions of the Mauryas in which it is held that to understand the impact of the Mauryan state it is necessary to consider 'the differential presence and impact of imperial authority in areas where the Mauryan presence is documented'.[73] By studying the Mauryan empire as an interconnected series of nodal points, rather than one conglomerated whole, it is easier to examine the relationships between regions within the Empire. This would naturally make it easier to examine the ways that Mauryan self-representation differed between the core and peripheries of his empire.

---

[67] Kosambi, (1970) 14
[68] Olivelle, (2013), 14. KA 1.1.1
[69] Goyal, (1995), 55
[70] Goyal, (1995), 58
[71] Thapar, (2002), 194
[72] Ray, (2008), 14
[73] Parker & Sinopoli, (2008), 4

Chapter Two: The *Arthaśāstra* and Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology

Kautilya: A Radical Realist or Conservative Moralizer?

In this chapter I will discuss Kautilya and the Brahmanical-political theology he sets out in the *Arthaśāstra*. This theology combined the two aspects of Vedic thought that Kautilya is most often identified with, *artha* and *dharma.* Historians have traditionally placed Kautilya's thought as being either politically-oriented (*artha*) or religious (*dharma*) labelling him on the one hand a traditional Hindu moralist who works to 'establish (the necessity of) the Vedas' over all else',[74] or on the other a non-traditional and radical political realist in the vein of Machiavelli.[75] Others have emphasized Kautilya's ruthless brand of political realism, labelling him 'depraved at heart' for his methods.[76]

Kumar's conclusion that Kautilya 'disentangled politics from the clutches of religion and morality in early India',[77] is typical of this trend in its dismissal of the Brahmanical framework in which the *Arthaśāstra* operated. Unfortunately there has long been a reluctance to combine the two opposing views of Kautilya to find a middle ground that may better represent his views in both the political and religious spheres. Gray addressed this problem terming it as an 'inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to reconcile Kautilya's religion and politics in any systematic manner' in 2014.[78] Gray brings together these two aspects of Kautilya into a coherent Brahmanical political theology which he argues is 'grounded in the Vedic tradition that expresses a unique, realist-oriented focus on *artha's* importance to the other central aspects of human life'.[79] He stresses that this theology was internally flexible even as it remained constrained by the rigidity of the Brahmanical framework in which it operated.[80] While this change in approach is to be welcomed, as it allows for a more nuanced analysis of Kautilya, I disagree with Gray's ultimate conclusion that 'Kautilya is a traditional conservative political thinker and not a radical one'.[81] The suggestion that Kautilya's religious commitments overshadow his political ones, resulting in a conservative and

---

[74] AŚ 1.3 (Rig Veda Samhita)
[75] Boesche, (2002). Kumar, (2005)
[76] Rhys Davids, (1993), 270
[77] Kumar, (2005), 466
[78] Gray, (2014), 639
[79] Gray, (2014), 641
[80] Gray, (2014), 637
[81] Gray, (2014), 638

moralising theology, seems to be the product of Gray's belief that Kautilya holds *artha* and politics in general, to be subsidiary to *dharma* and the spiritual sphere.

I will oppose this argument, reiterating the fact that Kautilya composed an *Arthaśāstra* rather than a *Dharmaśāstra*, by putting forward an alternative theory that Kautilya was a radical and non-traditional thinker who happened to be operating within a broader Brahmanical framework. I will therefore be closer to Sil who describes Kautilya as 'a politician who was a realist, though essentially a moralist',[82] in that I see his religious leanings as being complementary to his political realism.

Kautilya himself underlines the *Arthaśāstra's* emphasis on the acquisition of *artha*, saying that 'material well-being alone is supreme for spiritual good and sensual pleasures depend on material well-being''.[83] Though he acknowledges the importance of *dharma* and *kāma*, this does show that primacy is given to *artha* over the other two *puruṣārthas*, effectively privileging the political over the spiritual. The fourth *puruṣārtha, moksha*, was added to the original three at a later date and is less important when analysing Kautilya's theology.[84] In his notes Kangle writes that Kautilya was the first thinker to place *artha* on an equal footing to the other *puruṣārthas*, let alone above them, showcasing his willingness to break from tradition in the *Arthaśāstra*.[85]

Kautilya breaks free from the restrictions of Vedic thought by placing the *kśatriya* king above the rule of Brahmanical law, effectively making an exemption within the *varna* system for the monarch. He says that 'a matter of dispute has four feet – law, transaction, custom and royal edict; the later one supersedes the earlier one'.[86] This indicates that the king's own decisions would supersede Brahmanical law, again privileging the political sphere. Gray disagrees, arguing that as a king would have to act according to his *svadharma* (personal dharma) he would of course have to follow the *svadharma* of a *kśatriya* king. Consequently, following Gray's self-defeating argument, the king as a follower of *kśatriya-varna* dharma would have to yield to Brahmanical law.[87] This proposition is unhelpful as it conveniently

---

[82] Sil, (1985), 101
[83] KA 1.7.6-7
[84] Prasad, (1981), 50
[85] Kangle, (1960), 15
[86] KA 3.1.39
[87] Gray, (2014), 640-641

ignores Kautilya's words which say that the king has the right to supersede Brahmanical law by edict if he so wishes. My interpretation also fits in with Kautilya's introduction to Edicts in Book 2, saying that 'they declare that as *śāsana* (edict) which is used for giving orders'.[88] Kautilya makes no reference to edicts being subservient to Brahmanical law suggesting that he believes that a *rājadharma,* for whom the *Arthaśāstra* is composed, would be well-capable of making just and correct decisions himself. This is not to say that his Brahmanical background didn't influence Kautilya, as he repeatedly emphasises the privileged position of *brahmins* in society.[89] In the *Arthaśāstra* Kautilya created a mostly coherent political theology which combined a decisive brand of political realism with traditional Brahmanical values.

Vedic Brahmanism and Kingship

The people of the Indus Valley and its surrounding regions in the 4th century BCE were followers of the Vedic religion, often referred to as a predecessor to Hinduism.[90] It is difficult to trace the chronological beginning of the period, as much of our evidence for the Vedic period is based on literature: the four Vedas (Rg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva), the works which derive from the Vedas, which include the Brahmānas, Śrauta Śūtras, and Upanishads, and also the Grhya Śūtras, which focus on domestic ritual.

These texts do not offer a holistic understanding of Vedism. They were all written by the *brahmin* class on matters regarding religion, meaning that there is no coverage of political, economic or social developments in India during the Vedic period. The restriction to literature means that we have little to no understanding of Vedic imagery or iconography, an issue that is unlikely to be solved by archaeology because the majority of physical objects used in Vedic ritual were replaced on every occasion.[91] When looked at as a collective they offer a 'reasonably unified' outline of Vedism,[92] one which remained more or less constant over the entire Vedic period and into the Classical period.

---

[88] KA 2.10.1
[89] KA 1.9.11, 2.1.7, 2.12.33
[90] Jamison & Witzel, (1992), 2-4
[91] Jamison & Witzel, (1992), 33
[92] Jamison & Witzel, (1992), 4

The two great epics of Vedic literature, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, also offer an insight into Vedic thought.[93] They both delve into the intricacies of *dharma,* with the eponymous Rama representing the embodiment of *Dharma.* The Ramayana follows Vedic tradition in maintaining that the three *puruśārthas* hold equal importance, differing from Kautilya's own interpretation that 'material well-being alone is supreme'.[94] In contrast the Bhagavad Gita, possibly the most important text in the Mahabharata, stresses the importance of following one's *varna-dharma* above all else in the pivotal discussion between Krishna and Arjuna. The former advises the latter to carry out his duties despite Arjuna's own moral dilemma.[95] Kautilya contradicts these views in the *Arthaśāstra* to some extent, maintaining *artha* as the most prominent of the *purusarthas*,[96] though notably he does maintain the importance of *varna-dharma* in a wider context, especially in the reinforcement of a rigid social hierarchy governed by the *varna* system.

I will compare Kautilya's personal theology with that which is put forward in Vedic literature, showing the ways in which his practical realism led to circumvention of Vedic norms and customs. Equally I will show that his occasionally radical reforms still remained within the broader Brahmanical theological framework, just as Gray argued in 'Re-examining Kautilya and Machiavelli'.[97]

Kautilya's Subversion of Ritual Activity

One of the most radical breaks from Vedic tradition that Kautilya made in the *Arthaśāstra* was his side-lining of ritual activity. According to Witzel and Jamison the importance of ritualistic actions in Vedism 'cannot be overemphasized',[98] with the vast majority of Vedic literature pertaining to ritual actions in some form. Bronkhorst agrees; 'there is no such thing as bad ritual activity in the Vedas'.[99]

---

[93] There is a long interpretative tradition of these epics that goes back for thousands of years. Both the Mahabharata and Ramayana have been interpreted in countless ways, and to summarise all the arguments and interpretations would take up the entire wordcount of this thesis and more. See Brockington (1998),

[94] KA 1.7.6

[95] See the following for further discussion of ethics in the Bhagavad Gita: Gupta, (2006), Minor, (1982)

[96] KA 1.7.6

[97] Gray, 635-657

[98] Jamison & Witzel, (1992), 29

[99] Bronkhorst, (2007), 139

From the evidence given in the *Arthaśāstra* it would be safe to say that Kautilya disagrees with Witzel, Jamison and Bronkhorst. In the section that spells out the daily routine of the king there is little time allowed for the performance of ritual activity. Only a sixteenth of the day, or ninety minutes, is given over to religious actions. Kautilya writes that 'during the eighth (portion of the night) he should receive blessings from priests, preceptors and chaplain, and see his physician, chief cook and astrologer'.[100] That the entire part is not given over to rituals suggests that the king did not carry out those ritualistic actions that are mandated in the Vedas. There is no way that Kautilya's king would have performed the Agnihotra, the twice-daily offerings to the sacrificial fire, seeing as interactions with priests only take place in that one part of the night. Therefore, at best, the king would have taken part in the Agnihotra once a day. This fifteen minute ritual would have been fit into the king's schedule among his meetings with royal functionaries such as the physician, chef, and astrologer. As the Agnihotra is one of the 'most plain and unembellished Vedic rituals',[101] it is unlikely that he would have been able to partake in any further rituals.

Kautilya mentions some other ritual activities in passing, saying that 'those learned in the Vedas and ascetics may take flowers and fruits that have fallen on the ground for worship of the gods, rice and barley for the *āgrayana* sacrifice'.[102] This sacrifice was offered at harvest-time, and Kautilya's mentioning of it shows his knowledge of Vedic ritual. That the *Arthaśāstra* mentions so mundane a task as gathering grain for the *āgrayana,* yet refrains from mentioned the *Agnihotra* by name, show how Kautilya views ritual activity as something to be practiced by the masses and not the king, whose time is better served in aspiring towards *artha.*

A second way in which Kautilya's approach to the practice of Vedism differs from the literature is regarding the location of ritual activity. Jamison and Witzel assert that 'there were no temples or permanent structures devoted to Vedic ritual',[103] instead agreeing with Caland's suggestion that a new sacrificial area was chosen for each performance according to its suitability for said ritual.[104] Kautilya's advice goes directly against this tradition, again showing a more realistic and practical approach to governance. He alludes to 'the places for

---

[100] KA 1.19.23
[101] Jamison & Witzel, (1992), 38
[102] KA 2.24.30
[103] Jamison & Witzel, (1992), 33
[104] Caland, (1990), 450

sacrifices' being located in the north-eastern region of the royal residence,[105] implying that Vedic rituals and sacrifices were all made in a pre-set location. Nowhere does Kautilya go on to spell out the features necessary for ritual activity even though, in numerous other areas, he lays out orders in precise and painstaking detail.[106] The *Arthaśāstra* goes on to suggest that the king 'should cause to be built in the centre of the city shrines… as well as temples'.[107] Placing these religious sites in the centre of the city is an evident sign of respect, showing the important role religion has in Kautilya's theology, yet it again disregards the teachings from the Vedas which Kautilya himself labelled as being 'beneficial'.[108]

Though Vedic religion was relatively static it may be that in the 1000 years between the composition of the Vedas and the *Arthaśāstra* customs had changed, and the use of fixed temples as the loci for rituals had become normalised in Vedic society. The dating of all Vedic literature is contended, with Staal suggesting that the *Śrauta Sūtras* were composed between the eighth and fourth centuries BCE. [109] This would make the *sutras* near contemporaneous to Kautilya and Chandragupta.

Even if there was some measure of change in the centrality of ritual actions to Vedic religion, I still believe that Kautilya showed an unusual lack of interest in ritual actions. The performance of such actions are central to fulfilling ones' individual *dharma*. Kautilya writes that the duties (or *dharma*) of the kśatriya include 'performing sacrifices for self',[110] showing that he does understand the importance of ritual actions to a king's *varna-dharma.* In spite of this knowledge he diminishes the importance of ritual to the point where a king following a 'Kautilyan' routine would be unable to perform even the Agnihotra twice-daily.

Why then does Kautilya choose to diminish the importance of such an integral facet of Vedic religion? When I ask this question Staal's assertion on the 'meaninglessness' of ritual comes to mind.[111] By this Staal meant that ritual actions had no practical application and that the benefits of ritual were more superficial than concrete. He suggested that ritual 'creates a bond

---

[105] KA 2.4.8
[106] One such example is Kautilya's description of Jewels and gems (KA 2.11)
[107] KA 2.4.17
[108] KA 1.3.4
[109] Staal, (1979), 2
[110] KA 1.3.6
[111] Staal, (1979), 2-22

between the participants, reinforces solidarity, boosts morale and constitutes a link with the ancestors', yet were still devoid of any tangible meaning.[112] Kautilya's apparent dismissal of ritual was simply the most radical form of his political realism. This realism saw little need for the meaninglessness repetition of rituals in lieu of more important tasks such as running the economy, assigning tasks to ministers and reviewing the military.[113] All of this is to emphasise that Kautilya was willing for a king to fall short in his spiritual duties in order to focus on the practicalities of running the kingdom, clearly showing Kautilya's predilection for *artha* over, or even at the cost of, *dharma.* This trend is a central tenet of Kautilya's political theology as he pushed at the borders of what was acceptable in a Vedic setting in order to concentrate on the economic and military health of his kingdom.

Apaddharma **and Kautilya's use of** *Danda*

Book Eight of the *Arthaśāstra* is 'Concerned with the Topic of Calamities'. It spells out both potential calamities that might arise within a kingdom (*vyasanas*) and the means of defeating them with *danda* (coercion). Kautilya was ready and willing to subvert Vedic norms in the political and economic spheres when doing so aided him in his search for *artha.* His preference was for using material incentives to encourage production, such as when he suggests that the king should 'grant to them (farmers) favours and exemptions which would cause an increase to the treasury'.[114] When this was not possible, or did not succeed as hoped for, Kautilya was willing to use more extreme measures. These will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, where I will look at the ways in which the Mauryas maintained control over their burgeoning Empire. Regarding Kautilya's political theology the important point is that material incentives were preferable to the use of *danda* when dealing with the kings' subjects, even if underhand methods were more acceptable when dealing with foreign threats. Though with a modern outlook these measures may be viewed as unnecessarily harsh, in the aftermath of Alexander's invasion and the decline of Nanda power there was a 'need of arresting forces of disintegration',[115] which Kautilya did in part through the wielding of *danda.* Repressive policies were necessary if the Mauryas wished to exert their authority

---

[112] Staal, (1979), 11
[113] KA 1.19.9, 1.19.12, 1.19.15
[114] KA 2.1.15
[115] Krishna Rao, (1979), 18

across the Empire, and Kautilya was willing to wield the 'Rod' to preserve 'the orderly maintenance of worldly life'.[116]

Here I will discuss Kautilya's decision to propose the use of *danda* without discussing the moral implications of *danda's* use by the state against its citizens'. Such an omission is commonplace in the *Arthaśāstra* and can occasionally be explained by a lack of material as Kautilya based much of the *Arthaśāstra* on the work of 'ancient teachers'.[117] It is puzzling that there was plenty of Vedic material relating to the right of a king to act immorally in certain situations including the famous Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata. The twelfth book of the epic is set after the great Kurukshetra war and concerns a discussion of the duties of the king between Bhishma, Yudhishthira and a number of Rishis. Kautilya chose to neglect and omit this evidence. Bhishma directly addressed many of the concepts that Kautilya was later to write about in Book Eight, such as what must be done to counter internal and external rebellion. He places the actions of a king within a theoretical framework that is itself a departure from the Vedas. Bhishma introduces the idea of *apaddharma,* the *dharma* that a king should follow in emergencies. He states that '*dharma* sometimes takes the shape of *apaddharma'*,[118] giving legitimacy to those 'Machiavellian' tactics put forward by Kautilya. Bhishma understands that in times of emergency a king cannot always follow the most moral route and so suggests that the king follow *Vijyanabala,* the knowledge gleaned from human experience, to overcome the calamities that have befallen his kingdom.[119] Bhishma then went on to argue that one's own conscience was the final authority of *dharma,* not the Vedas,[120] essentially predating Kautilya in arguing for the predominance of intelligence (i.e. political realism) over doctrine.[121]

The Shanti Parva puts forward a new type of rulership which gives the king a broad remit to act decisively in times of calamity according not to an inflexible *dharma* but to a far more flexible *apaddharma.* This is what Kautilya consistently argues through the *Arthaśāstra* and is a fairly accurate rendering of Chandragupta's form of kingship. For Kautilya the result matters more than the means, which conveniently allows him to disregard the moral qualms

---

[116] KA 1.4.5
[117] KA 1.1.1
[118] Mahabharata, 12.142
[119] Chousalkar, (2005), 117
[120] Mahabharata, 12.130
[121] Chousalkar, (2005), 117-118

with his policies. He chooses not to mention *apaddharma*, or Bhishma's dialogue from the Shanti Parva, yet his advice mirrors that of the Kuru prince by allowing the use of *danda* (coercion) when faced with crisis. The Kautilyan king would differ greatly from Yudhishthira, who was renowned for his honesty and morality. These traits made it difficult for Yudhishthira to act in a politically expedient way. He was still able to tell Drona that Ashwatthama the elephant was dead on the fifteenth day of the battle of Kurukshetra, thereby allowing Dhrishtadyumna to kill him.[122] Accordingly even Yudhishthira, often described as the embodiment of *rajadharma*, bowed to the use of immoral, *apaddharma*, actions in the face of emergency.

Kautilya's willingness to use *danda* has led to some damning conclusions from historians with David labelling Kautilya 'depraved at heart' and Kosambi concluding that in the *Arthaśāstra* 'there is not the least pretence at morality' in the *Arthaśāstra*.[123] These critics would draw on Kautilya's willingness to dismiss the sanctity of life, which is apparent in his coda to Book Ten; 'an arrow, discharged by an archer, may kill one person or may not kill (even one); but intellect operated by a wise man would kill even children in the womb'.[124] Weber, the first Western thinker to comment on Kautilya, no doubt had this particularly ruthless brand of realism in mind when he drew comparisons between him and Machiavelli, implying that the former was even more 'Machiavellian' in his Kautilya than the latter.[125] This is not the case as Kautilya simply followed the teachings of the Shanti Parva in prioritizing the health of the kingdom over *dharma* and encouraging his king to follow *apaddharma* in times of calamity, even if he chooses not to cite Bhishma's words in his text.

Chandragupta's 'socialized monarchy'
The most radical and forward-thinking aspect of Kautilya's political theology was his belief in what Wolpert termed a 'socialized monarchy'.[126] The first book of the *Arthaśāstra* states that the king should be 'devoted to the welfare of all beings'.[127] To Kautilya this was a central tenet of *artha,* that it referred not only to the king and his familiars but to the entire

---

[122] Mahabharata, 7.191
[123] Rhys Davids, (1993), 270, Kosambi, (1965), 142
[124] KA 10.6.51
[125] Weber, (2004), 87-88
[126] Wolpert, (1982), 60
[127] KA 1.5.17

kingdom and all of his subjects within it. Kautilya's aim of creating a welfare-state, to use the modern term, was unprecedented in the Ancient world. While the Romans occasionally made allowances for orphaned children, and famously handed out grain to its citizens, it was not until Trajan's *alimenta* scheme that the state directly intervened to provide for its citizens.[128]

The centrepiece of Kautilya's welfare-state was the principle that the king and his administration should 'maintain children, aged persons, and persons in distress when these are helpless', while the judiciary should look after 'women, minors, old persons, sick persons'.[129] Megasthenes describes a municipal board whose duties included paying a 'fair wage to a fair worker',[130] which seems to imply that those who worked efficiently were not taken advantage of by their employers. Even in this incipient form it is clear that Kautilya went far beyond the measures made by Roman administrators in the first century CE. Megasthenes' account concurs, noting the moral responsibility felt by Chandragupta towards his subjects.[131] This sense of responsibility manifested itself in what Bandhopadhya describes as a 'contractual relationship between the king and the people',[132] as Chandragupta strove to not repeat the mistakes of the Nandas in creating distrust and tension. One great success of Kautilya's policy in general was the emphasis placed on creating a dialogue between ruler and ruled, which made the relationship between the king and his subjects less antagonistic than it had been under the Nandas.

The relationship between king and subject that Kautilya promotes in the *Arthaśāstra* was more like that of a father and his children. Aśoka's rock edicts spell out this relationship, stating that; 'all men are my children. What I desire for my own children, and I desire their welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, that I desire for all men'.[133] The Kautilyan king's *dharma* was not dissimilar from that of the father but with a far greater responsibility and remit. There are plenty of examples of Kautilya's paternal attitude in the *Arthaśāstra*. These include the policy of unrestricted access to the king, the giving of land to tenant-farmers for one generation only, ensuring total reliance on the king and the statement

---

[128] Duncan-Jones, (1964), 123-124
[129] KA 2.1.26, 3.20.22
[130] Kalota, (1978), 79
[131] Kalota, (1978), 74
[132] Bandhopadhya, (1980), 228
[133] Aśoka, *Kalinga Rock Edict I*, tr. Dhammika (1993)

that the king should 'maintain children, aged persons, and persons in distress when these are helpless'.[134]

One might argue that in many ways these policies were simply an extension of what already took place regarding the welfare of the old or infirm. Vedic society traditionally placed a premium on the family unit, and the obligation of male adults to provide for their extended family.[135] As such introducing policies to support the needy could be seen more as window-dressing than as a meaningful way of improving the lot of Chandragupta's subjects seeing as children, women and the elderly were supported by their male relations. Kautilya's dedication to supporting the poorest of society through the kingdom's extensive administration and wealth shows a kinder and more paternal side than he is commonly attributed. That Megasthenes confirms the existence of some level of support for the kings' subjects shows that these measures were actually carried out in practice, though the extent of them is unknown.

Kautilya and the Vedic Tradition

Kautilya's outlook on society and hierarchy was heavily influenced by his Brahmanical background and can be seen as the area in which he stuck most rigidly to Vedic tradition.[136] In Book One Kautilya lists the roles and occupations of the four *varnas*,[137] consciously echoing the words of the Purusha Sūkta.[138] Bandhopadhya suggested that the Vedas were 'objects of veneration for him',[139] and it is certain that he refers to the 'ancient teachers' repeatedly through the *Arthaśāstra*. The adherence to Vedic tradition is clear from the first page of the work, as Kautilya invoked the sacred syllable *om* before making a salutation to Śukra and Brhaspati the two great counsellors to kings of the Indian tradition. The repeated references to previous sages and thinkers firmly locate Kautilya within the broader Vedic tradition of political thinking and indicate that he himself didn't intend to be seen as breaking totally from this past.[140]

---

[134] KA 1.19.26, 2.1.8, 2.1.26
[135] KA 1.3.9-14
[136] For context on the Vedic Corpus see Thapar, (2002), 104-117, Jamison & Witzel, (1992)
[137] KA 1.3.5-8
[138] Rig Veda, 10.90.11-12
[139] Bandhopadhya, (1980), 227
[140] As with the scholarship on the Mahabharata and Ramayana, the scholarship of the Vedas and Hindu literature is enormous and interpretations of pivotal texts can often be contradictory in the extreme.

The importance of social hierarchy, or *varna*, is evident in the *Arthaśāstra* and closely follows the Vedic tradition. While Nadkarni has rejected the notion that *varna* was integral to Vedism,[141] the stratified societal structure that the *Arthaśāstra* describes accurately reflects Indian society in the Mauryan era. Kautilya pointedly states that rural villagers ought to be of the *śudra* caste,[142] suggesting that members of higher *varnas* were not seen as suitable for agricultural work. Megasthenes' description of the caste structure, though confusing on the surface, does in many ways support the suggestion that the *varna* system was fully developed by the time of Chandragupta's rule. Megasthenes lists seven castes; the philosophers, husbandmen, herdsmen and hunters, traders, soldiers, overseers, and the councillors. The castes of philosophers, soldiers, traders, and husbandmen fit easily with those of the brahman, *kśatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*. The roles Megasthenes gives to the overseer and councilmen seem to correspond with those typically held by brahmans. Though Megasthenes depicts them as being different classes it is more likely that he made the mistake of categorizing brahmans, the social group with which he had most contact, into smaller sub-groups based on profession. Finally, the caste of herdsmen and hunters has no direct correlation in Vedic literature. This caste included those people who lived a secluded or wandering life and so who Megasthenes would have come into little contact with. The mystery about their lifestyle may have led the Greek ambassador into mistakenly thinking of them as a separate caste. Megasthenes' seven castes reflect the four *varnas,* with only the amorphous group of herders and huntsmen not fitting into Kautilya's designation of the castes. It is clear that Kautilya succeeded in organizing, or at least maintaining, Mauryan society along traditional Vedic lines with regards to adherence to the *varna* structure.

Conclusion: What was Kautilya's Brahmanical-political Theology?
The *Arthaśāstra* lays out Kautilya's vision of an ideal kingdom, and so is both ambitious and unrealistic in its aims for the progression of society. It is nonetheless as close to a manifesto setting out the intentions of the Maurya administration under Chandragupta a exists. Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology was based on an 'amoral, dispassionate, and realist

Hiltebeitel (2010) offers a history of the interpretation and role of *dharma.* Jamison & Witzel (1992) look at Vedic Hinduism with an emphasis on Vedic literature.
[141] Nadkarni, (2003), 4783-4793
[142] KA 2.1.2

understanding of the need to preserve and expand the power of the state',[143] yet, importantly, was rooted in the context of Vedic Brahmanism. Kautilya was able to propagate a relatively advanced welfare state, creating a 'socialized monarchy',[144] while simultaneously reiterating the rigidity of the *varna* system, preventing upward social mobility across the Maurya Empire. This welfare state was most prominent in Magadha. In more peripheral regions of the Empire these policies had less of a positive impact as the reality of kingship prompted a more pragmatic stance towards imperial spending.

The *Arthaśāstra* perfects the use of what I will term the 'carrot and stick' style of administration, with great material incentives being backed up by formidable punishments for wrongdoing. Megasthenes says that the death sentence was seen as ordinary and that 'whenever or wherever the crime was said to have occurred, it was repressed with terrible severity',[145] as Kautilya wielded *danda* in order to strive for *artha.*

Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology does indeed follow Gray's outline, as it 'demonstrates tremendous internal flexibility within external religious constraints'.[146] The extent of these 'external religious constraints' were far less restrictive than Gray implies and their boundaries were set not by Brahmanical tradition or Vedic literature but by Kautilya's own views and beliefs. Where Kautilya felt it was appropriate to push against tradition in order to maximise the acquisition of *artha,* such as in his dismissal of ritual activity, he did so without a second thought. Kautilya's theology is defined by the flexibility it affords a king, both internally and externally. This flexibility is achieved by Kautilya's decision to place the word of the king above that even of a Brahman law-maker,[147] while utilising the emphasis of Vedic religion of obedience to authority to secure Chandragupta's position as *maharajadhiraja*.

Therefore, operating within Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology, Chandragupta had a great deal of autonomy in his actions. He had the authority, both physical and moral, to overrule religious rulings and to truly stamp his authority on his Empire. While there were certain rules and traditions that even Kautilya was not willing to subvert, they did not restrict

---

[143] Kumar, (2005), 466
[144] Wolpert, (1982), 60
[145] Kolata, (1978), 75
[146] Gray, (2014), 637
[147] KA 2.10.1

Chandragupta's ability to rule with pragmatism and ruthlessness. As I will show in Chapter Three this freedom manifested itself in Chandragupta and Kautilya turning away from many of the more pronounced aspects of the latter's Brahmanical-political theology, the emphasis on universal *artha* and the creation of a 'socialized monarchy' when pragmatism dictated.

Chapter 3: Political and Economic Actions

There is a common assumption that the Maurya Empire was a centralized, culturally homogenous, state with economic development and politically authority being spread evenly across the Empire. This assumption stems from the early historiography of the Mauryas and is the picture painted first by Kautilya in the *Arthaśāstra* and then by Aśoka Maurya in his famous rock edicts. [148]

In practice the Empire was made up of varying component units that were administered in very different ways. The Mauryan model was based on the expansion and exploitation of less-developed peripheral regions by the highly developed urban centre. Thapar introduces the three main components as the metropolitan state, core regions, and the periphery.[149] The strategy of expansion and exploitation was undoubtedly successful in the short term as it took away the organisational ability of peripheral regions to rebel against Mauryan rule while turning Pataliputra into one of the great cities of the ancient world. Megasthenes observed that the royal palace of Pataliputra was greater than those of Susa and Ektabana.[150] Over next two centuries this model was to show its flaws as it created an unsustainable demand for resources in Pataliputra without developing the economic base of peripheral regions. Thapar suggests this overarching policy as the leading cause of the decline of the Maurya Empire after the rule of Aśoka, saying that the decline 'may well have had to do with what seems to have been a limited economic restructuring of the area under its control'.[151] Without investment into their economies peripheral regions became overly reliant on the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

Chandragupta focused on the development of his capital, Pataliputra, over that of more peripheral regions of the Empire. The general economic policy of his reign can be summed up as one of 'expansion and exploitation' as he utilized the natural resources of India to build up the core of his Empire. There is a reason why the Mauryan emperors often referred to themselves as '*raja Magadha*' and that is because their chief concern was with the betterment of this single state rather than that of the whole Empire. This explicit focus on the core

---

[148] Ray, (2008), 13-14
[149] Thapar, (1993), 4
[150] Kalota, (1978), 62
[151] Thapar, (1993), 6-7

regions of the Empire manifested itself in regional autonomy for peripheral regions, especially rural ones, as villages were set up to run as 'self-sufficient units both in economic and political fields'.[152] The one area in which all regions of the Mauryan Empire were treated equally was in matters of security. Kautilya built a formidable security apparatus, which is described in excellent detail in the *Arthaśāstra*, that inserted itself into all sections of society.

In this chapter I will look at how Chandragupta and Kautilya administered the Mauryan Empire throughout the former's reign. I will show that Chandragupta's rule was perhaps not as successful, or universally beneficial, as many historians and indeed Kautilya's own Brahmanical-political theology would suggest. Whereas Chapter Two looked at the theology and world-view put forward by Kautilya, Chapter Three will instead focus on the political and economic policies that Kautilya implemented within the Maurya Empire. The *Arthaśāstra* is of course the main source of these policies as it is safe to assume that the tax-rates, levels of fines and the choosing of ministers in Maurya India followed the *Arthaśāstra* closely. I will also use Megasthenes' account of India and Aśoka's famous Rock Edicts to illustrate the ways in which a Mauryan king interacted with his subjects.

This chapter will be split into two parts, with the former tackling Chandragupta's political policies, and the latter his economic policies. I will show that there were two overriding objectives of Chandraguptan policy, neither of which matched up to Kautilya's statement that '*artha* alone is supreme'.[153] These objectives were the prevention of dissent across the Empire, on both a localised and a national scale, and the active policy of 'expansion and exploitation' which characterised the ways in which the Mauryan economy worked under Chandragupta Maurya.

---

[152] Kalota, (1978), 95
[153] KA 1.7.6

Political Actions

Chandragupta defeated Dhana Nanda in 321 BCE and won the kingdom of Magadha as his prize. The situation at this time was not ideal for a new ruler, especially one who couldn't claim an important family or exalted lineage to bolster his reputability.[154] The invasion of India by Alexander had left northern India split into a number of kingdoms and satrapies controlled by Greek governors. Chandragupta and Kautilya were able to remove some of these enemies through assassination but the Greek states still controlled considerable territories to the west and north of Pataliputra. To add to Chandragupta's worries from 312 BCE the burgeoning Seleucid Empire began to take an interest in India with its emperor hoping to take these rich and prosperous lands under his control. Consequently Chandragupta was forced to defend his lands against foreign threats for the majority of his reign.

These external threats may well have aided the new king in securing the loyalty and support of his subjects as Chandragupta could use his shared Vedic origins and Kautilya's carefully curated Brahmanical-political theology to unite internal dissidents. When contrasted to the undisguised economic exploitation of Dhana Nanda it is easy to see why contemporary historians assume that Chandragupta was instantly given the full support of his subjects upon his ascension to the throne. The belief that Chandragupta was seen as a saviour by his new subjects, or at least as a more desirable king than Dhana Nanda, is incorrect. The majority of his new citizens were barely affected by the war against the Greeks and those people in new territories often held more loyalty to their erstwhile rulers than the new regime.

Chandragupta and Kautilya utilized a number of methods to ensure the obedience of their subjects. Book One of the *Arthaśāstra* contains a discussion of the protection of the person of the king before slowly broadening its remit to embrace Empire-wide issues of security. Kautilya moves forward in his remit from a discussion on the protection of the king himself to the more insidious plotting of the elites. The *Arthaśāstra* also looks at security in a more societal manner, instructing the reader on how to prevent dissidents from uniting to form a rival power bloc within the Empire. Tying all of their political actions together is the idea of reward and punishment, the 'carrot and stick' approach. Kautilya's use of *danda*, the proverbial 'stick', will be discussed in the first part of the chapter while the rewards given to loyal followers will be looked at in the second part.

---

[154] Mookerji, (1966), 5-14

Protection of the King from Plots

Book One covers many of the ways in which Kautilya ensures the protection of the king. These range from the sensible to the extreme, showing the care taken to preserving Chandragupta's life. Of course it is understandable that this would be such an important focus of the kings' most influential advisor as Kautilya's own manoeuvrings with regards to the Greek governors Nicator and Philip had shown.[155] One of the more unusual precautions taken is the placement of peacocks and parrots within the royal residence to counter the risk of poisonous snakes.[156] This attention to detail is repeated through 1.20-21 as Kautilya spells out the rules for visiting the queen, the taking of food, and the treatment of entertainers. This advice is marked by a deep distrust of absolutely everyone who is not tied to the king in some way. Interestingly the suggestion that the king should 'keep near him persons descended hereditarily from his father and grand-father',[157] would not have been followed by Chandragupta who was adopted by a cowherd following his father's death.[158] Without a trusted group of family retainers to protect him the king was protected by an all-female guard.[159] This wasn't without its drawbacks as there was an Indian custom which dictated that the woman who succeeded in killing the king would become the queen of his successor.[160] The detailed plans laid out for the protection of the king shows Kautilya's realistic outlook on the popularity of the king and on the dangers of kingship.

Of more severity was the threat posed by the kings' sons; 'princes devour their begetters, being of the same nature as crabs',[161] says Kautilya, showing his dispassionate outlook on family ties. His mentioning of the risk of a son planning to overthrow his father does contradict Kautilya's earlier advice about family, in which he writes that the king should surround himself with family members precisely because of their natural loyalty to their kin. Kautilya also shows his pragmatism when describing the process of creating a treasure hoard in case of calamity, stating that the hoard should be laid by persons condemned to death.[162] While this seems to be yet another instance of his wanton cruelty it is explicitly stated that

---

[155] Boesche, (2003), 10-11
[156] KA 1.20.5-7
[157] KA 1.21.2
[158] Mookerji, (1966), 16
[159] Kalota, (1978), 76
[160] Kalota (1978), 78
[161] KA 1.17.5
[162] KA 2.5.4

these people have already been condemned to death. Kautilya isn't advocating the murder of innocent men, he is simply making use of their situation to benefit the king.

Interestingly Kautilya's treatment of the king's ministers fly in the face of those who have labelled him 'depraved' and 'harsh',[163] as he was noticeably lenient even with those who didn't repay the king with unerring loyalty. The secret tests, or *upadhā*, tested ministers in a number of areas; piety, material gain, lust, and fear in an attempt to ascertain both the loyalty and the suitability of ministers to particular roles. Rather than killing, or even imprisoning, those who failed the tests of loyalty Kautilya suggested that they be sent to run less important regions such as the mines, forests, and factories.[164] Kautilya also dangled a 'carrot' to gain the obedience of elites and high-level administrators, offering salaries of exceptional value to those who carried out their roles effectively and loyally.[165]

The intrigue around these tests depicts the Mauryan regime as overly zealous, if not paranoid, and reinforces the importance of having capable and loyal ministers in place. The number of these ministers is not known, as Kautilya suggests that the size of the king's council should be 'according to capacity'.[166] Whether this 'capacity' refers to the ability of individual ministers or the size of the kingdom is not clear, but their collective role within the administration of the empire was undoubtedly great. Kautilya states that 'all undertakings should be preceded by consultation (with the king's ministers)',[167] nullifying the argument made by Durant that Chandragupta ruled alone and 'made no pretence at democracy'.[168] The *Arthaśāstra* depicts the Kautilyan king not as a tyrannical autocrat but a compromising delegator who would willingly consult his ministers. Kautilya even writes that the king ought to appoint a *Brahmin* chaplain and 'follow him as a pupil does his teacher'.[169] This would suggest that Kautilya ruled over the Empire by proxy, but the subsequent chapters of the *Arthaśāstra* indicate that the role of ministers in relation to the king's decision-making was limited to giving advice.[170] Megasthenes' observations echoed this, with the ambassador observing that while it was an absolute monarchy in the legal sense the king was obligated to

---

[163] Rhys Davids, (1993), 270, Kosambi, (1970), 141
[164] KA 1.10.15
[165] KA 5.3
[166] KA 1.15.50
[167] KA 1.15.2
[168] Durant, (1954), 443
[169] KA 1.9.10
[170] KA 1.15

maintain goodwill from his subjects by working in tandem with his council of advisors and ministers.[171]

Internal Security within the Mauryan Empire

The maintenance of internal security was one of the leading aims of Chandragupta's administration. He achieved this through the isolating of dissident elements of the population within the Empire. This policy was carried out on both localised and Empire-wide levels. Kosambi praises the willingness of Kautilya to cause localised conflagrations within what he terms 'tribes that had not yet degenerated into absolute kingdoms',[172] in order to provide an excuse for the king's forces to move in and subdue the potential threat. The tactic of sowing discord through spies and agents could be used either to weaken foreign kingdoms before conquest or to break up powerful oligarchies within the Empire itself. Once the enemy group had been subdued, Kautilya proposed that portions of its population be transferred to farm peripheral regions, a policy he described as 'shifting the overflow'.[173] This had the dual benefits of splintering anti-state groups and expanding the Empire's agricultural base.

I will focus more, however, on Chandragupta's broader approach to internal security. Romila Thapar interprets the Maurya Empire as being made up of three component units. She lists these as 'firstly, a metropolitan state which initiates conquest and control, secondly core areas, and thirdly a large number of variegated, peripheral areas'.[174] The state of Magadha, with Pataliputra as its capital, is the metropolitan region, as shown by Aśoka's chosen title of *raja Magadha.*[175] The core regions were typically pre-existing states with flourishing urban centres. They would have included Gandhara, Saurāṣtra, and Avanti, within which were located the 'large and prosperous' city of Taxila,[176] the port of Barygaza and Ujjain. It was at Ujjain that Aśoka served as viceroy in his youth.[177] Core regions did not hold decision-making power within the Empire, but were functionally similar in economic development and in their political systems to the metropolitan state. The peripheral regions were spread across the Empire and consisted of agricultural areas between the core states and those regions on

---

[171] Kalota, (1978), 73-74
[172] Kosambi, (1970), 145
[173] KA 2.1.1
[174] Thapar, (1993), 4
[175] Thapar, (1993), 1
[176] Arrian, *Anabasis,* 5.8
[177] Tarn, (2010), 152

the outer limits of the Empire. The south of the Empire, and the Deccan Plateau in particular, was home to many so-called peripheral regions.

The Empire was run by the king and his ministers from the imperial centre of Pataliputra but a great deal of independence was given to certain regions and peoples. Kautilya says that forest tribes operated independently, owning their 'own territory', provided that they guarded their regions from robbers and enemies of the state.[178] Thapar suggests that as long as resources could be effectively appropriated from peripheral areas they 'would be left relatively untampered with'.[179] The only groups that were allowed this level of autonomy within the Empire were non-landed groups that didn't have the technological or productive support of a city or agricultural centre. If such groups were to take advantage of their independence to disrupt Chandragupta's Empire they would be ill-suited to challenge his physical or economic power. Megasthenes indicates that other groups were allowed to self-govern. Through Arrian he describes self-governing cities in the mould of the Greek *polis*, which would certainly fit Thapar's model of 'untampered' regions.[180] It is likely that this was more a case of the two Greeks projecting their hopes of an idyllic society onto India and basing its social structures, in their mind, on the structure of contemporary Seleucid society. Megasthenes' reference to fully independent and self-governing cities can therefore be discarded as his attempt to describe what he was observing in a Hellenistic context.

Thapar's summary of Chandragupta's aims follow her theory of domination and exploitation. She holds these two policies up as the principal aims of the Mauryas under Chandragupta's kingship. These aims were undoubtedly correct but Kautilya, in the *Arthaśāstra* at least, exerted a far greater level of control over the provinces than Thapar suggests. The *Arthaśāstra* states that the king should 'cause settlement of the country… by bringing in people from foreign lands or by shifting the overflow from his own country'.[181] This statement reveals that Chandragupta forcibly transported farmers, mainly of the *śudra varna*, around the country in order to cultivate land, broadening the Empire's agricultural base. Peasant migration was seen by Kautilya as a form of political protest or a sign of economic decline.[182] The choice to proactively relocate peasants to new climes nipped this problem in

---

[178] KA 2.1.6, 8.4.43
[179] Thapar, (1993), 5
[180] Thapar, (1993), 47-48
[181] KA 2.1.1
[182] KA 13.1.20-21

the bud. Kautilya's insistence that these peasants be of the *śudra varna* is interesting as it shows a preference to control social structures within these new villages. By reinforcing the idea that *śudras* were farmers Kautilya hoped to maintain a large agricultural workforce within the Empire that was wedded to its profession. This was evidently successful as in 304 BCE Megasthenes observed that the caste of the cultivators was the most populous group in Maurya India.[183] The movement of potentially problematic citizens, combined with the emphasis of Kautilya's theology on *varna-dharma*, led to one of the most disruptive groups in Indian society being largely pacified. By preventing the movement of people and information within the Empire's borders Chandragupta kept control without the need for an inflated army. This consideration is important as by minimizing the expenditure on the imperial army following the successful wars against Seleucus I Nicator the Mauryas were able to focus on the acquisition of *artha*.

Chandragupta's Spy Network

Chandragupta and Kautilya maintained close control over both core and peripheral regions, ensuring they had correct and up to date information on events occurring through the Empire. Their success in this department was indicative of the investment put into the spy network conceived by Kautilya. Kautilya states that the king's agents should spy on everyone within the kingdom, from the top to the bottom, 'when he has set spies on the high officials, he should set spies on the citizens and the country people'.[184] The main aim of this was preventing the 'enemy', whether that be internal dissidents of rival foreign powers, from succeeding in their own 'secret instigations'.[185]

One way in which the king in Pataliputra exerted his control over the Empire without even having to leave his palace was through a census. The kings officials were ordered to record the number, size and wealth of villages, along with the status of the people who lived in them.[186] A census can be an invaluable aid to an administration, as it shows exactly where investment and resources are needed within an Empire. Kautilya unfortunately does not seem to see it in this way. Though his welfare policies could have used this information, the census is used solely as a further means of spying on the populace. Utilising the Empire's resources

---

[183] Kalota, (1978), 101
[184] KA 1.13.1
[185] KA 1.13.26
[186] KA 2.35

to protect himself against dissent was more important to Chandragupta than using them to improve the lot of his subjects.

The *Arthaśāstra* suggests that the king and his ministers in Pataliputra would have had an excellent idea of what was happening across the Empire. The people who lived in peripheral regions would have known very little about neighbouring regions and were in many cases not even allowed to travel outside of their localities. The *Arthaśāstra* mentions that a ministerial level post existed for the 'management of passports'. Passes were necessary even for the small matter of entering or leaving the countryside.[187] Such policies were intended to isolate communities, making them easier to control and rule over. This was a centrepiece of Mauryan policy regarding provincial obedience as without clear lines of communication between regions, or even information of circumstances within provinces other than their own, there was little chance of dissidents being able to successfully stage a civil revolt.

Thapar agrees on the importance of isolating disparate regions of the Empire, saying that the segregation of core and peripheral regions was 'in the interests of imperial policy', before adding that doing so lightened the burden of the administration and the army.[188] By running his Empire from the top-down, without allowing individual regions or cities any level of practical autonomy, Chandragupta insulated himself from localised disturbances. Whereas under the Nandas these could easily flare up into major crises, they were easily containable in Maurya India. Chandragupta was in fact very successful in learning from the mistakes of the Nandas. He concentrated power and wealth in the urban centre of the Empire, exploiting only those isolated regions which had neither the strength nor influence to fight back. The Mauryas under his rule also aimed to control the movement of foreigners. There were various reasons for it, from preventing foreign powers from causing dissent in core and peripheral regions to stemming the flow of information about the Mauryan polity. A consequence of this was the standing order that 'outsiders' should not be allowed into cities unless they were taxpayers.[189] The people who made up this undefined group of 'outsiders' would no doubt have included social outcasts like beggars, gamblers and the maimed, but would also have encompassed travellers and traders from foreign states. By keeping foreign elements out of cities Kautilya removed the risk of subterfuge and ensured the safety of the king.

---

[187] KA 2.34.2
[188] Thapar, (1993), 7
[189] KA 2.4.32

Conclusion: Political Actions

The recurrent theme that runs through all of Kautilya's political actions is that of prevention. Kautilya aims to prevent Chandragupta from being harmed. He aims to prevent unsatisfied elements of the population from banding together to challenge Chandragupta's rule. He aims to prevent foreign powers from gaining any sort of foothold within the Empire. These policies met with success due to their proactive approach to combating potential crises but did little to earn the support of the Indian people, nor create an environment in which people were incentivised to act altruistically towards their fellow citizens. In many ways Chandragupta's political actions followed Kautilya's theology in that they emphasise obedience to the king and absolute loyalty at every step, with strict punishments for those who falter. When looking at his Brahmanical-political theology it was Kautilya's economic policy; the tentative steps towards a welfare state, the control of the means of production and above all the commitment towards *artha*, that would encourage the support and loyalty of the Indian people.

Economic Actions

Expansion and Exploitation

Kautilya's economic policies, as set out in the *Arthaśāstra*, can be summed up in one statement; '*artha* alone is supreme'.[190] The Mauryas aspired to acquiring as much material wealth as was possible for the benefit of the imperial administration. An impressive amount of care was given to looking after people of lower status through the establishment of a primitive welfare state, which was discussed in Chapter Two, but it is noticeable that the majority of wealth was funnelled to the Mauryan elites based in Pataliputra. Furthermore the lack of archaeological evidence or first-person accounts of Chandragupta's Empire makes it difficult to ascertain that the welfare-state alluded to in the *Arthaśāstra* affected the wellbeing of people outside of Pataliputra, a city that Megasthenes notes for the privileges and benefits it was allowed from the government.[191]

The metropolitan state, Magadha, exploited the resources of peripheral regions without investing in their economic development. Ultimately this short-term policy of expansion and

---

[190] KA 1.7.6
[191] Thapar, (1993), 38-39

exploitation was to prove the Mauryas undoing, but this did not occur until many decades after Chandragupta gave up his kingship to his son Bindasura.[192]

Under Chandragupta very little was done to reform industry or agriculture outside of Pataliputra, with existing structures being utilized in order to extract resources.[193] The *Arthaśāstra* lists a number of regions which were rich in certain desirable resources, directing ministers to obtain these resources at all costs. The Mauryan state was 'primarily concerned with the extraction of revenue from all kinds of activities',[194] with little regard given to maintaining a resource base or developing the economy in peripheral regions. The references to double-cropping, an agricultural technique that yields more crops but leads to a deterioration in soil quality, in the *Arthaśāstra* are a reflection of Kautilya's short-termism as he prioritised immediate rewards over long-term sustainability.[195] The Marxist historian Kosambi disagrees with this interpretation. In his seminal work *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* he argues that the Mauryan period led to great economic and cultural development through India, developing the peninsula from an 'underdeveloped' landmass in the early 4th century BCE.[196]

The case of elephants is typical, as Kautilya says that the best elephants come from the regions of Kalinga and Angaras. Those of Cedi, Karūsa, Daśarna and the Aparantas were of medium quality, while elephants harking from the regions of Surāstra and Pancadana were of the lowest quality.[197] The implicit direction is that elephants be plundered from those regions which produced elephants of the highest quality either for use in the Mauryan army which Pliny, citing Megasthenes, estimated had a corps of some 9000 elephants,[198] or to be sold and gifted to foreign powers. Nowhere does Kautilya state that the numbers of elephants in these regions be maintained so that the resource would survive for future generations. There is no suggestion of trying to improve the quality of elephants from Surāstra and Pancadana through breeding programmes, or the transfer of so-called higher quality elephants to these areas.

[192] Roy, (2012), 61-62
[193] Thapar, (1993), 5
[194] Thapar, (1993), 8
[195] Thapar, 2011, 563, KA 2.24
[196] Kosambi, (1970), 139
[197] KA 2.2.15-16
[198] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History,* 6.22

Kautilya proposed that 'high-quality' elephants be captured at all costs, setting no limits as to the extent of state sponsored poaching.

There were two main consequences of the emphasis on exploitation over development in the outer regions of the Empire. The first was that the economic make-up of India changed little over the course of Chandragupta's reign, as he shunned the idea of a uniform economic system in favour of allowing individual regions to continue to operate as they had under the Nandas, or as independent states. One of this lack of central oversight is the lack of advanced irrigation techniques being used across India under Mauryan rule. Such technology existed and was utilized in some areas by the Mauryas. Kautilya even mentioned the use of state-led projects in this area, saying that the king 'should cause irrigation works to be built',[199] but the reality is that the only archaeological evidence for a large-scale irrigation project in Maurya India is the Sudarshan lake at Girnar.[200] Further away from the core of the Empire the irrigation projects were small in scale and organized at the village level without support or funding from the Mauryan administration.[201] At this level of organisation small reservoirs and water channels were relatively common to the extent that Kautilya instigated a fine for their improper use.[202] The lack of investment in peripheral territories would come back to haunt Chandragupta's successors. As natural resources diminished over time these regions became less and less profitable, unable to produce similar levels of income through agriculture or industry.

The second outcome of Chandragupta's choice to not invest in the economic development of peripheral regions concerns the longer-term decline of the Mauryan Empire after the rule of Aśoka. There are many factors behind the decline of the Mauryas,[203] but one pertinent argument is that the 'limited economic restructuring of the area under its control',[204] led to a sharp decline in the total wealth of the Empire as it began to use up the natural resources that lay within its borders. These problems didn't manifest themselves in Chandragupta's reign, but their eventual impact suggests an inherently short-term focus to Chandragupta and Kautilya's policy-making. Kosambi, despite arguing that the Mauryan period brought great

---

[199] KA 2.1.20
[200] Kumar, (1979), 211
[201] Thapar, (1993), 10
[202] KA 3.9.27
[203] See Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* (1961), for further discussion of Mauryan decline
[204] Thapar, (1993), 6-7

economic development to India, also surmised that an economic crisis of some sort was the key reason for Mauryan decline post-Aśoka.[205]

Chandragupta's short-termism may have been appropriate as he and Kautilya solidified their control over India in the early years of Chandragupta's reign. However, it went against the stated aims of Kautilya that the king should be 'devoted to the welfare of all beings'.[206] This is one area where Kautilya's political realism may have usurped his somewhat ambitious aims of a 'socialized monarchy' as he realised that uplifting the *artha* of everyone within the Empire was an impossible task.

Conversely one could argue that Kautilya stayed true to his word, to a limited extent at least. As the peripheral regions of the Empire were pillaged and exploited the state of Magadha, and Pataliputra in particular, were subject to investment and development. Those subjects who lived in Magadha and other core regions such as Taxila benefited greatly from Chandragupta's exploitative measures, and in turn supported his rule.

The Centrality of Pataliputra to Chandragupta's Kingship

A major theme of Chandragupta's kingship, and one which differentiates him from his grandson Aśoka, is the emphasis given to the administration and improvement of Pataliputra above all else in his reign. The wealth taken from peripheral regions of the Empire was funnelled back to the centre, either to go into the coffers of the king and his allies or to be invested in the king's capital city. Megasthenes was so impressed by Chandragupta's royal palace that he compared it favourably to the great Persian royal palaces of Susa and Ektabana.[207] Most state-led construction and investment within the Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta's rule was based in the state of Magadha. The ways in which the Mauryas expanded through the Indian peninsula supports the theory that their sole intention was the economic exploitation of peripheral regions for the benefit of Magadha. Resource-poor regions in the south, which had 'nothing worth conquering',[208] were left untouched and unconquered. Looking at the evidence left from his reign it is obvious that while

---

[205] Thapar, (2011), 563, Kosambi, (1981)
[206] KA 1.5.17
[207] Kalota, (1978), 62
[208] Kosambi, (1970), 139-140

Chandragupta was willing to use only basic methods to maintain obedience in the periphery, making use of Kautilya's 'carrot and stick' approach, the energy given to maintaining the support of Magadha was far more sophisticated.

Under Chandragupta the Mauryas consolidated their power by expending resources on the metropolitan centre of the Empire rather than the less economically developed regions of India. The reasoning behind this use of resources is unknown. It runs contrary to suggestions made by Kautilya in the *Arthaśāstra*, but one factor that was no doubt considered is the potential risk offered by the citizens of Pataliputra as opposed to those hailing from peripheral regions. Any resistance to Chandragupta's rule stemming from the city had a far more direct route to threatening the body of the king. As we have seen, restraining the ability of the people to pose any sort of threat to the king's rule was a major tenet of Kautilya's theology, an example of his political realism outweighing his idealism.

This manifested itself in an overt emphasis on ensuring that Chandragupta's popularity in Magadha never wavered. The 'carrot and stick' approach balanced a primitive welfare state with harsh fines for anybody committing 'violence', whether that be of the physical, economic or social kind. In order to further incentivise the Magadhan elites, the Mauryas devised an elaborate and stratified pay structure which aimed to make the elite class impervious to treachery. Kautilya says of the ministers, 'with this much remuneration, they become insusceptible to instigations and disinclined to revolt'.[209] It is striking that Kautilya mentions salaries only in relation to how they benefit the state and not to the individual needs of citizens. There is no recognition of individuals' own monetary needs, only of the effectiveness of certain pay grades to the state. As a result the second tier of salary was formulated so that 'they become efficient in their work',[210] and the third was intended to make its recipients 'help in strengthening the entourage of the master'.[211] Kautilya deliberately made the gaps between tiers large enough to encourage tireless work, with the ratio of a clerk's salary to that of a minister being 1:96.[212] Soldier's received the same salary as clerks, which Kautilya fixes at 500 *panas*.[213] If Megasthenes' observation that soldiers lived well on their salaries can be taken at face value, the bloated salaries of the urban elite, at

---

[209] KA 5.3.4
[210] KA 5.3.6
[211] KA 5.3.8
[212] Thapar, (1993), 18
[213] KA 5.3.14

nearly one hundred times those of soldiers, would have allowed them to live like kings themselves. There was little economic sense in giving such high salaries to members of the imperial administration, showing the importance given to maintaining the support of the urban elites by Chandragupta and Kautilya.

(Lack of) Imperial Imagery

Chandragupta was not interested in developing a cohesive imperial structure based around shared imperial values. The closest he had to an imperial charter was Kautilya's very loosely defined Brahmanical-political theology. This theology wasn't publicly defined and was instead used more as a guide for the king's policies than as a form of representing Chandragupta's voice and outlook to his subjects.

Empires contemporary to Chandragupta aimed to foster a sense of brotherhood and patriotism by emphasising uniformity and shared values. Aśoka did this through his rock edicts, which very publicly proclaimed his newfound Buddhist beliefs and exhorted his subjects to join him in following them. Chandragupta and Kautilya neglected to use a shared culture or ideology to win support in any meaningful way. Thapar says that 'the emphasis on uniformity in empires is sometimes reflected in symbols and at ideational levels… there is a conspicuous absence of these in the Mauryan Empire other than at the capital Pataliputra'.[214] One would expect the Mauryas to project their power within the Empire through the use of visual and textual imagery taking the form of statues, coins and monumental architecture.

Aśoka was able to project his authority with public edicts and the construction of Buddhist stupas but there is no evidence of Chandragupta doing so outside of Pataliputra, where his grip on power was already most secure.[215] Even core cities, such as Taxila and Ujjain, didn't hold any structures which can be defined as distinctly 'Mauryan'. Whether Mauryan architecture was destroyed or built over in subsequent years is unknown, but if this was the case I would still expect to find some tangible archaeological evidence for their presence. Therefore I must ask why Chandragupta decided to divert so much wealth to Pataliputra at the expense of the rest of his budding Empire?

---

[214] Thapar, (1993), 20
[215] Thapar, (1993), 18-22

Thapar hints at the suggestion that the Mauryas were simply not as wealthy as is commonly imagined. She asks 'do we have to concede that the amount of wealth generated during the Mauryan period was less than what the idea of empire conveys?'.[216] Though she doesn't expand on this idea, it has merit when one considers the economic make-up of the Empire. As I have already shown, Chandragupta was more concerned with exploiting the periphery of the Empire for its resources than in building up its economic base. Modern historians have argued that the decline of the Mauryan Empire post-Aśoka was in large part caused by economic crisis.[217] Of course, the bloated salaries given to those employed in the imperial administration would have contributed to this crisis,[218] but it seems that the imperial treasury was able to shoulder this burden as long as the Mauryas continued to expand, bringing new, and exploitable, territories under their control. When conquests dried up the lack of sustainable sources of income that may have been realised with longer-term planning by Chandragupta and Kautilya, instead resulted in economic crisis. The decisions made by Chandragupta and Kautilya throughout the former's reign seem to have set the Empire on a path in which it could only maintain itself through conquest and the subsequent exploitation of peripheral regions. Without expansion the long-term potential for economic sustainability did not exist. As Thapar summarises, the 'growth required for sustaining an empire or even the reproduction of existing resources appears to have been limited'.[219]

Fines and Trade

I have already mentioned the importance of fines in maintaining obedience among all social strata and *varna* in the Mauryan Empire. The Mauryas were notable for their use of fines as a punishment for many offenses, perhaps showing why the administrators of Pataliputra were valued so highly. Avari counted a total of 336 finable offences in the *Arthaśāstra*, a tally that omits transgressions worthy of more severe punishment.[220] Many of these fines are aimed at people or groups for whom Kautilya has a natural distrust, with merchants foremost among this group. Merchants are treated with suspicion in the *Arthaśāstra,* possibly a consequence of Kautilya's Brahmanical background, which viewed trading as a low-status occupation.[221]

---

[216] Thapar, (1993), 22
[217] Kosambi, (1981), Thapar, (1993)
[218] KA 5.3
[219] Thapar, (1993), 28
[220] Avari, (2007), 107
[221] Thapar, (1993), 13

Kautilya states that merchants should be housed in 'enclosures in the non-residential areas (of the city)'.[222] Some translators have interpreted this as meaning either that merchants were quite literally 'enclosed', and not allowed to leave their quarters when visiting Mauryan cities, while others have suggested that these 'enclosures' were situated outside of the city walls.[223] Both interpretations suggest that merchants were treated with suspicion and were not allowed to freely explore cities they visited. Kautilya's distrust is also shown by the number of regulations and punishments relating to trading. The section of the *Arthaśāstra* that spells out the duties of the 'Collector of Customs and Tolls' is almost entirely focused on restricting the freedom of merchants, setting limits on prices, trading hours, and even on the goods that will be allowed into the city.[224]

At first glance these measures seem to be counterproductive as disincentivising trade would in the long-run lead to less income from tariffs and taxes for the state. They are yet another case of the preference for security over *artha* that runs through the *Arthaśāstra*, contradicting Kautilya's supposed emphasis on the acquisition of *artha*. A major theme of Chandraguptan policy was the emphasis on removing potential threats to his hegemony and ensuring that all power rested in the hands of the state. If trade were allowed to flourish without restriction trading guilds or blocs would have sprung up around the Empire, particularly in urban centres. Such groups would represent alternative power structures which lay outside the reach of the king, and more importantly would have had differing priorities from the king. In disincentivising trade, Kautilya ensured that the profession would not become so profitable, and that merchants would not become so rich, that they would pose a threat to Chandragupta's authority.

---

[222] KA 2.4.16
[223] Kangle, (1963), 80. The former interpretation is put forward in Grantha mss and Malayalam mss, the latter interpretation by the commentary of *Bhāsāvyākyānam* (in Malayalam) on Books 1 to 7 and the *Cānakyatikā* of Bhiksy Prabhamati
[224] KA 2.21-22

Conclusion: Economic Actions

Kautilya sets out a clear economic aim in the *Arthaśāstra*; 'artha alone is supreme'.[225] This rather simple statement suggests that the chief concern of the king is the material well-being of his subjects. In practice this statement would be more accurately put as 'the *artha* of the king and his associates alone is supreme'. Under Chandragupta's rule the Mauryas exploited the peripheral regions of the Empire in order to invest in and beautify his capital, Pataliputra, and pay exorbitant salaries to those who resided in the upper echelons of the Mauryan hierarchy. Though there were undoubtedly positive and altruistic aspects to Mauryan economic policy, aspects which combined to create a burgeoning welfare state, Chandragupta always prioritized internal security over the *artha* of his subjects. As a result trade was disincentivised and little effort was put into economic development outside of Magadha.

There is an obvious point of similarity between Chandragupta and his predecessor, Dhana Nanda, whose unpopularity with the Indian people stemmed from his undisguised economic exploitation of Magadha and its surrounding regions. Chandragupta was no less exploitative but was able to hide his economic rapaciousness behind the façade of 'socialized monarchy', and made a point of only exploiting regions on the periphery of the Empire who were, following Chandragupta's decision to not investment in their technological development, incapable of offering resistance to the imperial taxman.

The short-term policies of Chandragupta and Kautilya served them and their interests well, as they were able to centralize wealth and power while preventing the establishment of alternative power sources within the Empire. Over time, as Chandragupta's economic policies were largely followed by his successors, the Mauryan Empire effectively entered a period of economic stasis, totally reliant on the twin doctrines of expansion and exploitation as resources and revenues began to dwindle within the Empire.

---

[225] KA 1.7.6

Chapter Four: Discussion

The final chapter of this paper will sum up the arguments made in the previous chapters, offering a more cohesive and interwoven answer to the question I posed in the introduction; what was 'Chandraguptan' kingship, and how did Chandragupta Maurya and Kautilya choose to administer the Mauryan Empire from 321 to 298 BCE?

It is somewhat difficult to find a prevailing view of Chandragupta's kingship in Mauryan historiography in large part because of the overriding focus on the reign of Aśoka. The lack of direct evidence from the king himself also works against Chandragupta, just as it does for his successor Bindasura. When the former is compared to Kautilya and Aśoka, both of whom left written legacies in the form of the *Arthaśāstra* and the Rock Edicts, it is even easier to see why historians have so often passed over Chandragupta Maurya. The achievements of Chandragupta's reign are attributed to Kautilya and the greatest achievements of the Empire he founded are universally credited to the reign of Aśoka, with an emphasis on his more humanist outlook.[226] Chattopadhyaya credits Aśoka for his benevolent 'paternalism',[227] completely ignoring the fact that the primitive welfare-state which he so praises was introduced in the reign of Chandragupta, showing a form of tunnel-vision that is typical in the study of Maurya India.

Of course it is difficult to disassociate Chandragupta from Kautilya, and vice versa, which is why through this paper (and particularly Chapter Three) I have spoken of them in tandem, crediting both for the actions carried out by the Mauryan state during the former's reign. It is easier to credit the Brahmanical-political theology that is developed and put forward in the *Arthaśāstra* to Kautilya alone while being mindful that he also resides within a broader tradition of Indian thinkers.[228] Studying the reign of Chandragupta Maurya in isolation, without comparing Chandraguptan kingship to Aśoka's form of ruling, makes it easier to dispel the notion that Chandragupta is not worthy of study, nor that his form of kingship was any less worthwhile that Aśoka's. With all of this in mind, how can I offer an explanation for what 'Chandraguptan kingship' was?

---

[226] Goyal, (1995), 56
[227] Chattopadhyaya, (1977), 159-166
[228] KA 1.1.1

To start with, it is necessary to separate the ideological aims of the *Arthaśāstra*, which I describe as Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology, and the realities of ruling an Empire made up of differing and often opposed components. The *Arthaśāstra* is not an entirely realistic text, instead operating as a manual for an undefined king ruling a kingdom of undefined size, wealth and power. As a result Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology, although important in understanding the aims of Chandragupta's regime, often differs from the reality of rule.

Kautilya professes that '*artha* alone is supreme'.[229] This statement places *artha* above the other *purusarthas* of *dharma* and *karma*, suggesting that the first aim of Chandraguta's administration would be the acquisition of wealth. He goes on to imply that *artha* was not only desirable for the king and a small group of elites but that the king should be devoted to the welfare of all beings'.[230] Kautilya accepts the use of *danda* when necessary and he puts forward a vision of a state which, while not being in any way egalitarian, had at its heart a duty of care towards its law-abiding subjects.

In Chapter Three I hope to have shown that the reality of rule led to a change in policy. Chandraguptan policy was at every juncture turned towards internal security. Some of his political measures fit into Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology, the use of *danda* against anyone who dared to challenge Mauryan hegemony was one way in which Chandragupta followed his advisor's teachings. Chandragupta and Kautilya were active in their quest for security, pre-emptively preventing the establishment of institutions or groups, such as trading guilds, that could conceivably become alternative sources of wealth and power in the future. The extent of these preventative actions, coupled with the fact that they become so enmeshed in Mauryan imperial policy, resulted in the benevolent and forward-thinking welfare-state described by Kautilya vanishing into dust, at least outside of Magadha. It is important to note that one of the hallmarks of Kautilya's theology was the internal flexibility it allowed a king, even when externally restricted by Brahmanical tradition. Chandragupta and Kautilya did move away from many of the positive policies outlined in the *Arthaśāstra* but they stayed true to the latter's moral realism in approaching the threat of revolt with pragmatism and ruthlessness. Chandragupta therefore followed the teachings of Bhishma in the Shanti Parva,

---

[229] KA 1.7.6
[230] KA 1.5.17

following not the rigid *dharma* of a *kśatriya,* but a more flexible *apaddharma* that allowed him to follow his own conscience within the wider Brahmanical setting of Mauryan India.

As Chandragupta experienced the reality of kingship, the emphasis of the king and his advisor switched from the universal acquisition of *artha* to the acquisition of *artha* for themselves and a select few. In other words, the *artha* of the king and his associates alone was supreme. To these ends, the state of Magadha was encased in wealth and importance, while peripheral regions across the Empire were isolated and exploited of their natural resources as their economic development was allowed to stagnate by the state. Rather than acting as guardians of a pan-Indian Empire, Chandragupta and Kautilya acted in the interests of Magadha and the Pataliputran elite. Within Magadha the most lofty goals of Kautilya's theology were carried out with an organised bureaucracy overseeing the welfare of the capital.[231] Megasthenes offers proof that Chandragupta's 'socialized monarchy' did in fact exist in some way and that in order to 'exact goodwill from his subjects' the poorest members of society were treated.[232]

Kautilya wrote that *danda* was necessary because a ruler who refuses to use *danda* 'gives rise to the law of the fishes. For the stronger swallows the weak in the absence of the wielder of the Rod. Protected by him he survives'.[233] Across the edges of the Mauryan Empire the law of the fishes was upheld as the king, backed up by Magadha's wealth and army, dominated and exploited less developed regions for his own gain. Chandragupta initially followed this course of action out of necessity. The first half of his reign was spent fighting wars on multiple fronts as he attempted to secure his rule over first Magadha and then the wider Indian subcontinent. Over time, as the familiar pattern of expansion and exploitation continued to pay dividends, decisions made out of expedience crystallised into quasi-official imperial policy. By concentrating power and wealth in the highly-developed urban core of the Empire Chandragupta created a loyal and well-paid support base.

Ultimately Chandragupta's twin policies of preventative action and 'expansion and exploitation' succeeded in their primary aim of keeping the king in power. Chandragupta's grip on power was so absolute that he was able to abdicate in 298 BCE, peacefully passing on

---

[231] Kalota, (1978), 75
[232] Kalota, (1978), 74
[233] KA 1.4.13--15

the mantle to his son Bindasura.[234] The long-term effects of his policies were to be more negative. The economic crisis that engulfed the Empire following the reign of Aśoka can in part be attributed to the Chandraguptan legacy of rampant economic exploitation without investment in the development of peripheral regions.

---

[234] Roy, (2012), 61-62

Conclusion

The historiography of Maurya India has for years been focused on the reign of Aśoka Maurya, his military conquests, and his conversion to Buddhism. Chandragupta has been cast as a less significant ruler who simply followed the teachings and advice of Kautilya, riding his advisors coattails as they strove for greatness. This thesis has attempted to overturn this outlook, arguing that a core feature of Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology was the independence it gave to Chandragupta to rule without being restrained by religious or social norms. Chandragupta consequently put his effort into building up the state of Magadha, using the rest of the Empire as the provider of resources and labour. The short-term policy of 'expansion and exploitation' helped to secure Mauryan dominance by gaining the support of the Magadhan elite and taking away the ability of less developed peripheral regions to stand up against the imperial administration. This broke from the teachings of the *Arthaśāstra* but crucially enabled Chandragupta to develop Pataliputra into a highly developed and loyal urban centre from which Mauryan armies could dominate the Indian subcontinent.

Looking forward there are of course many avenues open for future research into Maurya India and the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. As archaeological excavations across the Indian subcontinent continue on apace, evidence dating to Chandragupta's reign will hopefully become more visible, allowing for a more thorough evaluation of levels of investment and development across the Mauryan Empire. In any case studying Chandragupta and his kingship through comparisons to supposed Western equivalents like Machiavelli, though interesting, is of little use. To compare Maurya India with Renaissance Europe necessitates such a huge leap of time, space and social context to make any sensible comparison near impossible. A more viable course of action would be to compare Chandraguptan and Aśokan kingship, looking at how the latter developed the former's policies regarding internal security. Aśoka's conversion to Buddhism and the plethora of physical evidence dating to his reign gives any historian a strong base to start from. Regardless, recent times have happily seen Mauryan India begin to be studied from a primarily Indian perspective, rather than a Western one, while bypassing nationalistic and colonial narratives in order to 'make visible new dimensions of the past'.[235]

---

[235] Thapar, (2011), 552

To conclude I will refer back to my original research aim, one that looked to explore how Chandragupta and Kautilya administered the Mauryan Empire and maintained the support and obedience of the Indian people despite exploiting their subjects to a similar extent as the universally despised Dhana Nanda.[236] Kautilya's Brahmanical-political theology depicted an unrealistic portrayal of a paternalistic king, albeit one who was more than willing to revert to the use of *danda* than his subjects would hope. Its influence on Mauryan policy was felt more in the autonomy it gave Chandragupta to act amorally, utilising *apaddharma* whenever he felt it necessary. The emphasis on universal *artha* gave way, as Chandragupta based his actions around the idea that the 'the *artha* of the king and his associates alone is supreme'. Chandragupta prioritized internal security to the extent that peripheral regions of the Empire were isolated and their economic development stunted while Pataliputra and its citizens benefitted from the policy of expansion and exploitation.

---

[236] Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, 62.9

Thesis Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Arrian, *Alexander the Great: The Anabasis and the Indica,* tr. Hammond, M., (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013)

- Aśoka, *The Edicts of King Ashoka,* tr. Dhammika, V. S., (Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1993)

- Cassius Dio, *Roman History*

- Curtius, *History of Alexander*

- Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*

- *Hymns of the Rig Veda: with a popular commentary*, tr. Griffin, R., (Benares, 1896), Date Accessed: 13/05/2021, https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/index.htm

- Justin, *Apologia*

- Kautilya, *The Kautilya Arthasastra,* tr. Kangle, R. P., (Bombay, Bombay University Press, 1965)

- *Mahabharata*, tr. Ganguli, K. M., (1883-1896), Date Accessed: 25/06/2021, https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/maha/index.htm

- Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*

- Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*

- Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo,* tr. Falconer, W. & Hamilton, H., (London, G. Bell & Sons, 1903-1906)

Secondary Sources

- Allan, J., *Catalogue of Indian Coins,* (London, British Museum, 1936)

- Ando, C., *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire,* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000)

- Avari, B., *India: The Ancient Past, A history of the Indian sub-continent from c. 7000 BC to AD 1200,* (London, Routledge, 2007)

- Bandhopadhya, N., *Development of Hindu Polity and Political Theories,* (New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1980)

- Bhagat, G., 'Kautilya Revisited and Re-visioned', *The Indian Journal of Political Science,* 51.2, (1990), 186-212

- Bhattacharya, S., 'Pluralism and Visible Path (Pratyaksha Marga) and Early Indian Idea of Polity', *Social Scientist*, 21.12, (1993), 3-24

- Boesche, R., 'Kautilya's "Arthaśāstra" on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India', *The Journal of Military History*, 67.1, (2003), 9-37

- Boesche, R., 'Moderate Machiavelli? Contrasting *The Prince* with the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya', *Critical Horizons,* 3.2, (2002), 253-276

- Bosworth, A., The Historical Setting of Megasthenes' Indica', *Classical Philology,* 91.2, (1996), 113-127

- Brockington, J., *The Sanskrit Epics,* (Leiden, Brill, 1998)

- Bronkhorst, J., 'Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Ancient India', *Handbook of Oriental Studies,* 19, (Brill, 2007)

- Bryant, E., *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture; The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001)

- Caland, W., *Kleine Schriften,* ed. Witzel, M., (Wiesbaden, 1990)

- Chakrabarti, D., *The Oxford Companion to Indian Archaeology; The Archaeological Foundations of Ancient India, Stone Age to AD 13th Century*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006)

- Chattopadhyaya, S., *Bimbisāra to Aśoka,* (Calcutta, Roy & Chowdhury, 1997)

- Chousalkar, A., 'The Concept of Apaddharma and the Moral Dilemma of Politics', *Indian Literature,* 49.1, (2005), 115-127

- Clark, C., *Population Growth and Land Use,* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1967)

- Davis, K., *The Population of India and Pakistan,* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1951)

- Dikshitar, V. R., *The Mauryan Polity,* 2nd ed., (Madras, G. S. Press, 1953)

- Duncan-Jones, R., 'The Purpose and Organisation of the Alimenta', *Papers of the British School at Rome,* 32, (1964), 123-146

- Durant, W., *Our Oriental Heritage,* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1954)

- Dyson, T., *A Population History of India: From the First Modern People to the Present Day,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018)

- Elphinstone, M., *History of India,* ed. Cowell, E., 5th ed., (London, John Murray, 1866)

- Goyal, S., 'Main Trends in the Historiography of the Early Maurya Empire Since Independence', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute,* 76.1, (1995), 51-68

- Gray, S., 'Re-examining Kautilya and Machiavelli: Flexibility and the Problem of Legitimacy in Brahmanical and Secular Realism', *Political Theory,* 42.6, (2014), 635-657

- Gupta, B., '"Bhagavad Gita" as Duty and Virtue Ethics: Some Reflections', *The Journal of Religious Ethics,* 34.3, (2006), 373-395

- Hiltebeitel, A., *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion and Narrative,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010)

- Jamison, S., & Witzel, M., *Vedic Hinduism*, (Harvard University Press, 1992)

- Jansari, S., 'From Geography to Paradoxography: the use, transmission and survival of Megasthenes' *Indica*', *Journal of Ancient History,* 8.1, (2020), 26-49

- Kalota, N., *India as Described by Megasthenes,* (Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1978)

- Kangle, R. P., *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part II: An English Translation,* (Bombay, University of Bombay Studies, 1963)

- Kangle, R. P., *The Kautilya Arthaśāstra Part III; A Study,* (Bombay, University of Bombay Studies, 1965)

- Keith, A., *A History of Sanskrit Literature,* (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1928)

- Kosambi, D. D., *Combined Methods in Indology and Other Writings,* ed. Chattopadhyaya, B., (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002)

- Kosambi, D. D., *Indian Numismatics,* ed. Chattopadhyaya, D., (New Delhi, Orient Blackman, 1981)

- Kosambi, D. D., *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline,* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1970)

- Kosmin, P., *The Land of the Elephants Kings,* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014)

- Krishna Rao, M. V., *Studies in Kautilya*, (New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1979)

- Kulke H. & Rothermund, D., *A History of India,* 4th ed., (London, Routledge, 2004)

- Kumar, A., 'The Structure and Principles of Public Organization in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 66.3, (2005), 463-488

- Kumar, N., 'Hydraulic Agriculture in Peninsular India (C. 300 B.C. – 1300 A.D.)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress,* (1979), 211-214

- McClish, M., *The History of the Arthasastra; Sovereignty and Sacred Law in Ancient India,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019)

- Minor, R., *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavad Gita,* (New York, University of New York Press, 1986)

- Modelski, G., 'Kautilya: Foreign Policy and International System in the Hindu World', *The American Political Science Review,* 58.3, (1964), 549-560

- Mookerji, R. K., *Chandragupta Maurya and his Times,* 4th ed., (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1966)

- Nadkarni, M. V., 'Is Caste System Integral to Hinduism? Demolishing a Myth', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 38.45, (2003), 4783-4793

- Olivelle, P., *King, Governance, and Law,* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2013)

- Parker G., & Sinopoli, C., *Ancient India in Its Wider World,* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2008)

- Ray, H. P., 'Interpreting the Mauryan Empire: Centralized State of Multiple Centres of Control', *Ancient India in Its Wider World,* eds. Parker, G., & Sinopoli, C., (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2008), 13-51

- Rhys Davids, T., *Buddhist India,* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1993)

- Roy, K., *Hinduism and the Ethics of Warfare in South Asia: From Antiquity to the Present,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012)

- Smith, V. A., *The Early History of India,* 2nd ed., (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1908)

- Staal, F., 'The Meaninglessness of Ritual', *Numen*, 26.1, (1979), 2-22

- Stoneman, R., *The Greek Experience of India,* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019)

- Tarn, W., *The Greeks in Bactria and India,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010)

- Thapar, R., 'Early Indian History and the Legacy of DD Kosambi', *Resonance,* (2011), 551-573

- Thapar, R., 'The Mauryan Empire in early India', *Institute of Historical Research,* 79.205, (2006), 287-305

- Thapar, R., *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* 2nd ed., (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1973)

- Thapar, R., *Early India From the Origins to AD 1300,* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002)

- Thapar, R., *The Mauryas Revisited,* (Calcutta, K P Bagchi & Company, 1993)

- Trautmann, T., *Kautilya and the Arthaśāstra: a statistical investigation of the authorship and evolution of the text,* (Ann Arbor, Brill, 1971)

- Weber, M., *Economy and Society,* eds. Roth, G. & Wittich, C., (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978)

- Weber, M., *The Vocation Lectures,* eds. Owen, D. & Strong, T., trs. Livingstone, R., (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 2004)

- Witzel, M., 'Substrate Languages in Old Indo-Aryan (Rgvedic, Middle and Late Vedic)'*, Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies,* 5.1, (1999), 1-67

- Wolpert, S., *A New History of India,* 2nd ed., (New York, Oxford University Press, 1982)

- Zanker, P., *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus,* tr. Shapiro, A., (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1988)