In search of Bhīmādevī: Exploring the archaeological site of Kashmir Smast, Pakistan, and the surrounding landscape

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Cover Image: Bronze Seal from Kashmir Smast (Nasim Khan, 2002b, p. 86)

1. Introduction

In Northern Pakistan lies a cave temple with vast untapped research potential. Kashmir Smast is a religious cave and settlement site in the Mardan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This site is currently dated from at least the 2nd century CE and may be one of the earliest dated sites associated with Hinduism in Pakistan. Researchers have identified Kashmir Smast as the earliest Śaivite site in the northwest based on material culture including *liṅga* statues and a wide range of religious motifs found on seals (Nasim Khan, 2003). However, there is also evidence of Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist, Islamic and Zoroastrian connections through the archaeological and textual evidence associated with the site. Based on a range of seals, sealings, and inscriptions found at the site, alongside textual references, the principal deity is believed to be the goddess Bhīmā. However very few studies have explored Bhīmā in detail with most studies offering her a cursory mention within the iconography found on the seals and coinage. This is a clear opportunity to contribute a new perspective to the understanding of this site and develop wider research around this goddess.

1.1. Previous Research

Kashmir Smast was first recorded in English language publication following a visit by A. Court (1839) who was succeeded by other colonial period visitors including Raverty (1852), Lowenthal (1863, p. 4), Bellew (1864, p. 118) and Garrick (1885). Excavations were first conducted in the 1960s by a Japanese Mission (Mizuno, 1962) and since 1999 Kashmir Smast has been documented and excavated by Nasim Khan (2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2006, 2018). Unfortunately, the site has been subjected to heavy looting with many key artefacts now located in private collections and lacking contextual information.

The profile of Kashmir Smast has grown in recent decades owing to the prevalence of unique coins and seals from the site on the international antiquities market. These seals and coins have enabled scholars including Ziad (2016, 2022), Errington (2010), Nasim Khan (2006, 2010, 2018) and Falk (2003, 2008) to establish new insights into an under researched region including developing chronologies and identifying dynasties, exploring cultural connections, and expanding the understanding of religious systems associated with the site. Simultaneously increased efforts to understand the landscape and connections between sites and regions have been undertaken including Shahi's (2019) study of Gandhāra's cultural geography, Filil genzi's (2015) exploration of Buddhist rock sculptures, and Ali's (2001) survey of Mardan's archaeological sites. Samad's (2010) study exploring the emergence of Hinduism in Gandhāra is also a useful starting point. However, evidence remains limited and therefore requires a creative approach to its interpretation.

1.2. Methodology

This thesis employs a multidisciplinary approach to study South Asian religion within the context of religious change to explore the significance of Bhīmā at Kashmir Smast. From early European research in Northwest Pakistan, Tucci (1977) advocated for the need of a multidisciplinary approach to research in order to reconstruct past contexts in the region, integrating research from disciplines including historical, archaeological, ethnographic and art historical data. However, traditionally the study of South Asian religions has focused on the often-isolated analysis of texts, art, and architecture. As highlighted throughout this thesis, the variety of experiences within religious networks and sacred landscapes, from the spiritual, to the financial and practical, require a multi-disciplinary approach to fully encompass these facets, from micro to macro spatial scales.

Ideally a field survey of Kashmir Smast and the surrounding region would provide a valuable approach to spatially contextualise interdisciplinary data. However, the scope of this thesis does not support this undertaking, so instead the approach will be to combine and reinterpret existing studies and methodologies to create a more cohesive understanding of this spatial context and the roles of Bhīmā's within it. This builds on research methodologies developed by scholars including, but not limited to, Bakker (1996), Fleming (2009) and Shaw (2007) who combined archaeology, art history, textual studies, epigraphy and the physical and social sciences to understand specific spatial contexts and associated cultural phenomena. Into these frameworks I will introduce Frankfurter's (2017) reinterpretation of syncretism as an ongoing experimental assemblage of symbols and discourses. This multidimensional approach integrates the roles of agency, gesture, and landscape, serving as a guiding analytical reference throughout the thesis.

In addition to relevant publications and theoretical frameworks from disciplines including archaeology, anthropology, philology, geography, and art history I will incorporate primary sources including excavation and survey reports, artefact records and historical literature including *Tantra* and *Purāna* sources as well as the *Mahābhārata*, and the travel accounts of Chinese monk Xuanzang. A key limitation within this approach is my lack of understanding of local languages, limiting me to English language sources and therefore a strong likelihood that key sources may be missed. A key recommendation for any further research building on this topic would be the integration of non-English language sources.

1.3. Reading Guide

This thesis begins by examining different theoretical frameworks used in the analysis of religious change with special emphasis on Frankfurter's reinterpretation of syncretism. A

regional focus is then undertaken, exploring the role of sacred geographies and the need for interdisciplinarity in the specific context of South Asian female deities. The discussion will then concern the limited textual references to Bhīmā to highlight the challenges of relying on a text-based study to understand a minor goddess. The thesis will then turn to the core case study of Kashmir Smast, tracing some of Bhīmā's roles and manifestations throughout the site's known occupation from the 2nd century CE to the present day. The core material used in this thesis will be archaeological, but recontextualised through a holistic multidisciplinary approach, with a critical awareness of the paradigms within which this research has been constructed.

2. Religious Change

Just as the concepts of culture and community can never be perceived as static or homogeneous, neither can the idea of religion. However, scholarship has historically viewed religion as an unchanging or slowly changing framework as reflected in codified textual sources, punctuated by instances of top-down religious conversion. This has been combined with the application of Western perspectives in the analysis of non-Western religions, for example the idea of clear division between the domains of sacred and profane alongside other binary constructs of religious practice, including formal/ informal, common/ elite, authentic/ superstitious, and orthodox/ heterodox (Scribner, 1984).

However, scholars have called for a shift in perspective, instead viewing religion as an active and dynamic social construct infused with ideology. Shaw (2013) emphasises understanding religion and ritual contextually, while Jaffe (2015) advocates considering religion as an aspect of social identity, rather than its core, making it susceptible to both rapid and gradual changes influenced by internal social processes and external factors. Postcolonial critiques of earlier binary theories offer valuable insights, emphasising ideas of cultural contact, local agency, hybridity, and transculturation as essential aspects of the dynamics of religious change (Carrasco, 1990; Knapp, 2008; Meskell, 2001). These critiques challenge essentialist views and highlight the importance of contextual understanding when studying ritual practices.

This can also be viewed within the ontological turn in anthropology and related disciplines that challenged traditional ideas of a singular reality to encompass concepts including performativity (Law & Lien, 2013), rhizomes (Deleuze & Guttari, 2005), and actor networks (Latour, 2005), highlighting the multiplicity and diversity of truth-claims and perspectives, with increasing emphasis on indigenous and non-human agency (Schaflechner, 2018). This enables understanding of religions and their manifestations in shrines and traditions as shaped by multiple practices and expressions, relating to multiple versions of a deity. Derrida's (1978, p. 365) argument regarding the impossibility of fully mastering empirical richness and the inability to establish a conclusive and static center of meaning, further supports the idea that no single element can serve as an undisputable *axis mundi*.

Various terms are used to describe this multiplicity including hybridity (blending of distinct elements), heterogeneity (diversity and variation with a group/society), globalisation (increased interconnectedness and interdependence) and acculturation (cultural exchange and mutual influence between cultures). The term syncretism has been widely used since the classical period to describe the combination of or contact between multiple belief systems. However, the concept of syncretism has been heavily criticised owing to its essentialist use in

describing the combination of two mutually exclusive religious systems that were previously perceived as pure and clearly defined, assuming the dominance of monolithic institutionalised religious perspectives as opposed to considering local religious self-determination. As a result, syncretism became heavily associated with colonial missionary discourses, developing problematic associations and damaging legacies. It also presents risks in ambiguity, oversimplification, and the neglection of nuances within these syncretic processes.

However, Frankfurter (2017) proposes reinterpreting syncretism to offer an alternative approach to understanding these processes of religious change. He advocates moving away from the colonial notion of syncretism as a combination of two distinct religious systems or institutions towards viewing religion as an ongoing and inevitable experimental assemblage of symbols and discourses. Drawing from Levi Strauss' concept of *bricolage*, Frankfurter (2017, p. 15) views religious systems as creative processes involving a diverse range of materials and symbols to convey mythic truths. This multi-dimensional approach acknowledges the coexistence of simultaneously embracing and rejection of religious idioms, the invention of an idea of authentic tradition, and the appropriation of new ideas to endorse old ones.

At the core of Frankfurter's argument lies the concept that religious change is not merely a process of borrowing or blending beliefs, but it is a dynamic phenomenon achieved through the active roles of agency, gesture, and landscape. Frankfurter argues that this approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how religious traditions and practices evolve and adapt within specific social and geographical settings. Agency refers to the role played by individuals, communities, and other social actors in shaping religious change, emphasising their choices, actions, and negotiations within specific contexts, and challenging notions external missionary coercion and passive native absorption in favour of indigenous agency (Frankfurter, 2017, p. 20). The role of gesture builds on Mauss and Bourdieu's *habitus*, encompassing embodied practises, rituals, and symbolic actions that express and enact religious beliefs including rituals, prayers, and offerings alongside habits, dispositions, and learned behaviours that shape how individuals and communities interact with these beliefs and practises (Frankfurter, 2017, p. 22). Finally, the concept of landscape incorporates physical spaces alongside social and cultural contexts, illustrating how the landscape influences, and is influenced, by agency and gesture, to provide the context in which religious change occurs and is expressed (Frankfurter, 2017, p. 23).

However, applying Frankfurter's concept of syncretism to the case study of Bhīmā at Kashmir Smast raises several critical considerations. Firstly, this involves applying a theory developed

in a completely different context, Late Antique Egypt, to Historic South Asia. This raises questions about this theory's validity and relevance for understanding religious interactions in a different cultural and historical setting with different sources and contextual considerations. Secondly, the limited availability of information for this region, in comparison to the Egyptian context, and potential biases in interpretation pose significant challenges in reconstructing and analysing the nuances of religious interactions and identifying potentially syncretic processes during this time. The dominance of material and textual evidence reflecting elite practices may further restrict our understanding of the roles of more diverse agents within the broader religious landscape and the participation of marginalised or less-documented religious traditions. Thirdly, the risk of anachronism is high when dealing with limited data spanning a significant period. The challenges of accurately dating textual sources and material evidence can lead to misinterpretations or misalignments of historical events and religious practices. Lastly, there is a concern that if everything can be classified as syncretism, the concept itself might become obsolete, and the risk of obscuring the nuances of the processes in these contexts. Therefore, establishing clear and precise criteria for identifying syncretic processes are essential to avoid diluting the concept's analytical value. Through careful consideration of critiques and risks, using Frankfurter's reinterpretation of syncretism to explore a multi-dimensional approach provides a useful provocation and framework for studying religious change, the complexities of belief systems, and individual expressions of religion within broader social and cultural contexts.

3. South Asian Goddesses and Spatiality

Moving into the regional context of this thesis it is pertinent to touch on approaches to exploring the development and multiple manifestations of South Asian goddesses. Increasing interest in the study of South Asian female divinities has been evident since the 1970s accompanying a new emphasis on feminist scholarship within area studies (McDermott, 2005). However, many of these studies have focused exploring either well known pan-Indian (McDermott & Kripal, 2003) or pan-regional (Erndl, 1993; Sax, 1991) female deities while the study of more minor goddesses remains far less developed.

When dealing with Hindu contexts it is important to highlight the perceived interconnectedness of female deities through the principle of *Śakti* (divine energy) which unites contrasting deities like Lakṣmī and Kālī as connected manifestations of the Mahādevī (R. P. Singh, 2010). This concept is particularly relevant when examining female Hindu associated deities within a globalising context, where elements from previous or contemporary religious traditions like tantric Buddhism, alongside other local or foreign traditions could became easily incorporated with pre-existing Hindu goddesses via this concept (N. Singh, 2006). This can also be viewed within the widespread tradition in South Asia of the pacification of local 'fierce' or wild deities through conversion into a religious framework perceived to be more dominant as exemplified by the ideas of Brahmanisation and Sanskritisation (Srinivas, 1952). Sanskritisation encompasses much more than language imposition, including issues of religion, culture, and society. Its usefulness has been debated especially between Shah (2005) and Nimral Singh (2006). However, it cannot be denied that Hinduism, like many other religions' absorbed rituals of other cults, assimilating and adapting with them as 'Hinduism has not been made, but has been grown' (Tiwari, 2002, p. 89).

Many female Hindu deities are strongly connected to specific locations where their power becomes physically manifested to render them accessible to mortal devotees. These locations often reflect their origins as village goddesses (*grāmadevatā*), where they were (and continue to be) represented in *svayambhū* (self-manifested) form such as rock formations or bodies of water, or on larger scales as mountains and caves. Cave temples associated with South Asian religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism are found throughout the sub-continent, with these natural sacred spaces attributed to creation by supreme beings, and therefore facilitating the integration of people, nature, and spirituality. Rock cut additions to sacred caves began to appear around 5th century CE at Ajanta followed by other famous examples including Ellora, Elephanta, Badami, Mamallapuram (Filigenzi, 2015, p. 29). Several significant cave temples devoted to female deities exist in Northwest India and Pakistan, notably the Hinglaj

Devi cave in Baluchistan (Schaflechner, 2018) and the Vaishno Devi Temple in Jammu and Kashmir (R. Singh, 2021).

Evidence suggests that many local sites slowly grew and became incorporated into wider spatial networks, contributing to the development of sacred geographies with vast pilgrimage networks connecting each *tīrtha* (pilgrimage center). The *Śakti Pīṭhas* are a famous example of these pan-Indian networks where each *pīṭha* represents a body part of the goddess Satī manifested in geographical and architectural features within the surrounding landscapes. These networks were gradually codified and mapped to record the locations, associated deities and ritual processes through texts including the *Mahābhārata*, and the medieval *Purāṇas*. This practice of codification can either be viewed as the manifestation of Brahmanical efforts to expand its influence, or as evidence of an increasing awareness of 'India' as a unified cultural and religious entity (Fleming, 2009, p. 52). However, many texts likely existed in earlier oral forms prior to codification, demonstrating older traditions. Additionally, as demonstrated through Fleming's (2009) study of the twelve *jyotirliṅga* Śaiva sites, the literary accounts misrepresented their function in local spheres and lived practice, highlighting the challenges of relying on textual evidence to study lived religious practice and experience. Furthermore, these textual accounts generally represent elite and mostly male experiences and perspectives, so to begin to understand the variety of experiences and meanings within these sacred networks and spaces and their intersection with social, financial, political, and spiritual contexts an interdisciplinary approach is required.

A relevant study is Halperin's (2019) exploration of the Himalayan goddess Haḍimbā through expanding spatial analysis outward to reveal her multifaceted nature. Through this multi-perspective and context dependent approach Haḍimbā emerges as a compound entity comprising various ritual, narrative, and conceptual elements, which are constantly reshaped and reconstructed. Understanding her as a dynamic platform for reflection and action, rather than a fixed theology, allows for flexibility and adaptation in response to contextual changes (Halperin, 2019). This shows the potential value of integrating the concepts of 'landscape', 'agents' and 'gesture' within the interpretation of South Asian goddesses and provides a strong justification for proceeding with this approach in the following discussion. Applying Frankfurter's concept of syncretism alongside the theories and perspectives developed within the ontological turn can highlight these multiplicities without claiming to represent all elements of the site or deity, potentially allowing for multiple and different manifestations within multiple and different worlds (Law & Lien, 2013, p. 4).

4. A Textual Understanding of Bhīmādevī

The goddess Bhīmā (भीमा) is a deity known primarily through various Hindu and Buddhist textual sources, with many of these passages listed in Appendix 5. However, dating these texts is challenging due to their multiple versions and contested historical timelines. Additionally, establishing direct connections between the places mentioned in the texts and their real-world locations often presents difficulties. This section will interrogate the textual representations of Bhīmā to provide a starting point for locating her roles within spaces and highlight the limitations of a purely textual approach.

Throughout the texts, Bhīmā is commonly located within a mountainous environment in the northern regions. For example, the *Padma Purāṇa* (1.17.180-215) (Deshpande, 1951) places her in the Himalaya mountains, while the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (7.30.53.102) (Vijñānananda, 1921) locates her at the *śaktīpīṭha* on Himādri mountain, often identified as the Himalayas. Moreover, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (ch. 91, vv.45-46) (Coburn, 1991, p. 78) mentions Bhīmādevī of the Himācala, demonstrating a consistent association with mountains.

The association of Bhīmā as *Śakti* is echoed through other texts including the *Skanda Purāṇa* (2.72.3) (Tagare, 1950) and the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (50.9.46-100) (Vijñānananda, 1921). The longest description of Bhīmā comes from the *Mahābhārata* (13.54-59) (Agravāla, 1970, p. 84) where Satī states that through hearing or reading the names of the goddesses or bathing in their *tīrthas* and worshiping her there, a pilgrim will be liberated from all sins. Several texts including the *Śiva Purāṇa* (5.50.49-50) (Shastri, 1950) recount a tale of Bhīmā assuming a ‘terrible form’ to devour the Rākṣasas, and similarly in the *Matsya Purāṇa* (179.35) (Maheshwari, 2009, p. 30) where she is listed as a *mātṛ* created by Rudra to drink the blood of the Andhaka demons. The ‘terrible’ aspect of her name is also used to describe the different realms of hell (*Naraka*) in the *Śiva Purāṇa* (5.8.20-21) (Shastri, 1950) and *Agni Purāṇa* (371.14b-18) (Gangadharan, 1954).

More detailed descriptions of Bhīmā ’s appearance seem to associate her with the colour blue. Blue is significant in *tantric*/ *śakta* traditions as it symbolises auspiciousness, energy, and transcendence, connecting Bhīmā to these aspects. In the *Devī Māhātmaya* (11.43) Bhīmā is described in more detail as ‘blue of colour, with shining tusks and teeth. A woman with wide eyes and round plump breasts. She carries a glittering sword, a drum, and a bowl fashioned from a human skull’ (Coburn, 1991, p. 78). This again alludes to the ferocious form alluded to in her role as a *mātṛ.* In Tibetan Buddhism Bhīmā is seen as a fierce and protective manifestation of Tārā as Mahcinatārā or the ‘blue she-wolf’ with the specific function to protect

of those who practice her rituals and guard the books in which they are recorded (Beyer, 1978, p. 292).

Bhīmādevī can also linked to the generative elements of water and the lunar state. The *Mahābhārata* (13.54-59) clearly states that by bathing in the *yonyāṁ* (womb) of the goddess, wealth and fortune will be acquired. This connection to water is also evident in several tantric texts including the *Kubjikāmata-Tantra* and the *Ṣaṭsāhasrasaṃhitā* where Bhīmā appears as one of the nine *Dūtī* (attendant goddesses) of the *Dūtīcakra* (one of the five internal mystic centres or *pañcacakra*), which is associated with water and the lunar cycle (Schoterman, 1982)**.** Bhīmā is also the name of a major river which flows through the states of Maharastra, Karnataka, and Telangana, and is listed as a holy river in texts including the *Mahābhārata* (VI.10.21) (Agravāla, 1970, p. 84), *Skanda Purāṇa* (33.4.4-27) (Tagare, 1950), and the *Padma Purāṇa* (128.6.130-145) (Deshpande, 1951). This may further emphasise her connection to water and its life-giving properties, but the river is referred to as both Bhīmā (भीमा) (fem.) and Bhīma (भीम) (masc.).

It is important to note the occurrences of Bhīma (भीम) in its masculine form, most prominently as one of the Pandava heroes of the *Mahābhārata*. Bhīma is described as the son of Kuntī and the wind god Vayu, inheriting extraordinary physical strength from his father and carrying a club. Bhīma generally appears as a prince/ son of a king/ or noble man in Purāṇa and parva texts (eg. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 9.15.2, *Ādi Parva* 94) (Duijker, 2010). Bhīmā may also be used as the female form of Bhīma, similar to the names of the *Saptamātṛkās* (Srinivasan & Sander, 1997, p. 153).

This section demonstrates that some themes can be established from the limited textual sources available, including Bhīmā's association with *Śakti*, location in northern mountains, possessing a terrible/ferocious side, and a connection to life and water. However, these themes are common across Hindu goddesses, and do not signify any particularly unique positions. The challenges of attributing dates to these texts means that the first mentions of Bhīmā cannot be conclusively dated. This is where datable evidence linked to sites is needed to provide a comparison to these textual references. Just as Halperin (2019, p. 7) found it was impossible to construct one coherent narrative around Haḍimbā Devī, the same is likely to be true of Bhīmā since it is unlikely a coherent narrative existed in lived practise, and to enforce coherence would ignore her multifacetedness. Therefore, finding different sources and

perspectives to uncover her diverse manifestations and roles in different contexts is essential, and to do this focusing on a physical location will provide the starting point.

5. Kashmir Smast

Bhīmā has been identified as the principal deity at the site of Kashmir Smast in North Pakistan through corroborating historical texts, the pilgrimage accounts of Xuanzang, and inscriptions found at the site (Nasim Khan, 2006). The site is centered around the Great Cave (*Maha Guha*) as the abode of the goddess and consists of three large chambers. Immediately below the cave is an area locally known as Bakhai with many buildings, temples, and tanks associated with the *Maha Guha* (Appendix 3). Despite the challenges of looting, diverse material culture recovered from or linked to the site allows for dating to the 2nd century CE up to at least the 12th century (Ziad, 2022, p. 3). This section will explore the site in more detail to begin to locate Bhīmā within this physical and contextual space.

Figure 1. View of Kashmir Smast from the South (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 37)

5.1. Environment

Kashmir Smast sits within the Sakra Mountain range, which are also known as the Shamozai or Babozai mountains within the Sinawar range. The landscape below the mountains predominantly consists of plains with streams (*khwaroona)* originating from the nearby mountains, with the Indus River to the east and south and the Swāt River to the north. Owing to the rough terrain there are only two routes which can be used to reach the site (Nasim Khan, 2002, p. 219). The first starts from the southeast at Pirsai village and takes

approximately 3 hours on foot offering the easiest access. The second is via a more challenging but scenic 12 km route from Babuzai village to the southwest, which is suitable for donkeys or other pack animals. Archaeological remains are found along both routes suggesting they have remained consistent from much earlier periods.

The area's geology consists of low grade (green schist facies) metamorphic rocks including Kahsala formation (schist, calcareous schist, minor marble) and Nikani Ghar marbles (white) and along with recent deposits (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 8). Additionally, veins of high-quality topaz have been found in the hills near Kashmir Smast (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 215). Historical accounts, like the *Rig Veda* and observations of Megasthenes, mention the presence of gold in the upper Indus valley, with Megasthenes likening the local people to 'gold digging ants' (MacCrindle, 1926, pp. 94–96). Possible evidence of environmental change at the site may be supported by the presence of a drainage system, suggesting that water was once abundant and necessitating management, although they are now mostly dry.

A large variety of plants are currently found at the site including medicinal plants like goṭhi, pamankai, kamela, and sheela (Nasim Khan, 2018, p. 27). Today, most agricultural activity is concentrated on the plains below mountain ranges however cultivation on the plains only began after the construction of the Upper Swāt Canal in 1914 and prior to this agricultural activities occurred within the mountain valleys on artificial terraces close to water sources like springs or snow melt streams (Ali, 2001, p. 58).

5.2. The Great Cave

The Great Cave, or *Maha Guha,* is located in the northern area of Kashmir Smast. At an elevation of 1,100 meters above sea level, the *Maha Guha's* entrance measures 180 meters long and 20 meters wide (Mizuno, 1962, p. 97). Composed of limestone and dolomite, it consists of three main chambers (Appendix 4). The first chamber, located 30m into the cave, once held an octagonal room in its centre, as noted in the accounts of Garrick (1885) and Mizuno (Mizuno, 1962, p. 97). Unfortunately, this structure no longer exists above ground owing to extensive looting. In this chamber Deane discovered two wooden panels of dancing ascetics (Deane, 1896, p. 669) (Figure 2). V. Smith dated these panels to the 8th century, as the style is similar to contemporary figures carved in bricks at Mirpur Khas (Kahu Jo Daro) and on the wall at Nalanda (Smith, 1911, p. 365). Allegedly locals also found and removed a sheeshum-wood coffin from this chamber, although without further evidence it is impossible to suggest this room contained a tomb (Deane, 1896, p. 669).

The second chamber is situated 40 meters from the entrance and contains remains of another structure, believed by Mizuno to be constructed from burnt red 'Kushan' bricks (Mizuno, 1962, p. 97). There is also evidence of a water tank measuring 5.25 meters long, 3.40 meters wide and 2.30 meters deep, featuring a flight of steps leading to the tank, similar in construction to the tank at the Dharmarājikā *Stūpa* at Taxila (Mizuno, 1962, p. 98) (Figure 3). In this area are a number of large stalagmites that are proposed by Nasim Khan to have been viewed as *svayambhū Śivaliṅga* (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 25). Viewing stalagmites as *Śivaliṅga* is common in South Asia, including the Borra caves in Andhra Pradesh and the famous ice *liṅga* at Amarnath in Jammu and Kashmir.

The third chamber is accessed by a flight of stairs, and a narrow corridor with small cells lining the sides in which small earthen lamps and grains were discovered (Mizuno, 1962, p. 98) alongside a birch bark manuscript. This chamber is the largest, reaching 30 meters high (Appendix 4). At its center is a square structure which may have served as a shrine owing to its structural resemblance to shrines at Takht-i-Bahi (Mizuno, 1962, p. 97). This structure is large, measuring 3.8 meters square, but currently shows no traces of *stūpa* or statues (Figure 4). A small window in the western area of the roof provides a limited amount of light which illuminates the shrine (Mizuno, 1962, p. 97). The structures and finds associated with *Maha Guha* demonstrate Its significance, and the investment made by inhabitants and devotees in its enhancement and management.

Figure 2. Object 1889,0703.9. Wooden panel from Kashmir Smast (British Museum https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1889-0703-9)

Figure 3. Water tank in the second chamber (Mizuno, 1962, p. 193)

Figure 4. Structure in the third chamber of the Maha Guha (Mizuno, 1962, p. 194)

5.3. Bakhai

As demonstrated in Appendix 3 the site of Kashmir Smast expands beyond the *Maha Guha*. The area below the cave is known locally as Bakhai, and features a range of buildings, including at least four temples, alongside other smaller caves, and rock shelters. Despite extensive looting that has damaged and destroyed many foundations, some structures are still partially visible above ground. Nasim Khan's survey (2018, p. 79) revealed the presence of several structures buried beneath the topsoil which require further investigation. At least four different temples have been identified (Ziad, 2022, p. 17).

In the Eastern Complex is a small cave locally referred to as the 'Smail cave', where a large *liṅga* over 5 feet high was allegedly discovered and removed by locals (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 28). The Northern Complex includes large building and a spring fed water tank. Below this, the Central Complex spans a plateau of 225 x 200 meters that was probably levelled during the Kuṣāno-Sassanian period based on coins found in the earliest excavation layers (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 41). Multiple buildings in this area are believed to have functioned as temples, including a double storied structure and temple to the south where a another *liṅga* was found. This *liṅga* temple consists of a main square hall and two rectangular adjacent rooms, leading Nasim Khan to refer to it as the 'most important' at Bakhai (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 29). The site then continues down the slope to the Southern Complex, which includes a rock cut tank and a small temple. An abundance of ashes found in the west of this area and three bronze ewers in the tank indicate a religious function (Nasim Khan, 2018, p. 97). Bakhai also features a complex and unique drainage system consisting of terracotta pipelines and stone channels (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 41). Additionally, several other small shrines have been identified on the slopes above Kashmir Smast (Mizuno, 1962, p. 100). The complex nature of this site with multiple areas of construction representing expansion over a significant length of time.

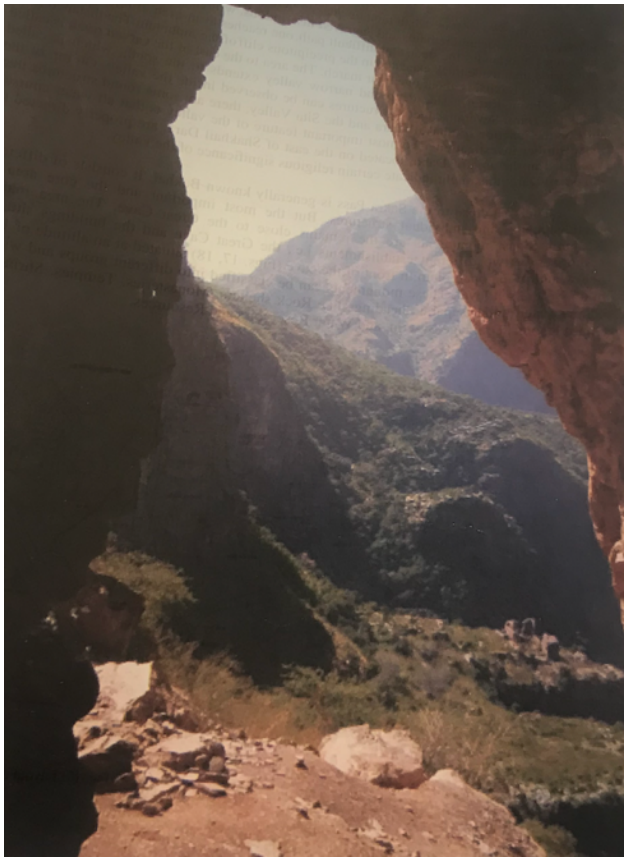

Figure 5. View of Bakhai from the entrance of the Maha Guha (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 24)

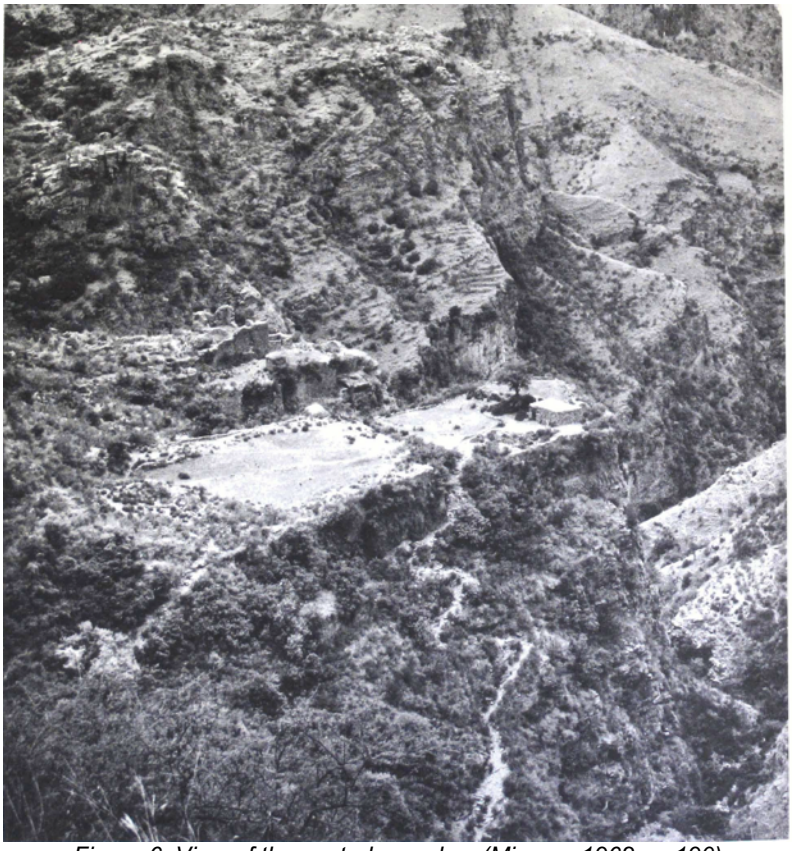

Figure 6. View of the central complex (Mizuno, 1962, p. 190)

5.4. The Sakra Sites

Kashmir Smast has been identified as the principal site in a network of at least seven sacred spaces across the Sakra Peaks (Ziad, 2022, p. 2). Despite some sites being briefly documented by Nasim Khan, comprehensive information remains limited, presenting challenges in understanding the area's spatial layout as no map has been published of these locations potentially owing to concerns of looting, lack of resources, and safety risks. However, a rough spatial layout can be inferred from the descriptions and images of Nasim Khan which helps to outline the extent of development in this region and draw some connections between the Sakra sites and Kashmir Smast.

South of Bakhai, along the Sita river valley leading to Babuzai, are numerous reservoirs, shrines, and terraced fields (Nasim Khan, 2018). In this valley lies Barĕ Uba, meaning 'upper water,' denoting the presence of a spring. Adjacent to it are the Gaṭano Ruins, featuring numerous painted rocks with rock inscriptions in Brāhmī dating from the 4th to 6th centuries CE (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 90). A substantial complex was discovered on Pajjā Peak, located three to four hours north of Kashmir Smast, exhibiting characteristics of a monastic establishment with multiple rooms surrounding an open courtyard, a tank, and abundant surface finds of pottery sherds (Nasim Khan, 2018, p. 182). Northeast of Kashmir Smast lies the Safari Khanḍaray Complex, overlooking Babuzai on the plains below, and is believed to be another settlement or monastic site dating from the 1st to 8th centuries CE (Nasim Khan, 2018, p. 183). At several sites, native copper coins have been discovered, similar in fabric and design to those found at Kashmir Smast, further indicating connections between them (Ziad, 2016, p. 18). These sites demonstrate the existence of a complex network of settlements in this mountainous region, with large structures constructed on remote mountaintops, many of which exhibit evidence of religious significance or function.

5.5. Associated Material Culture

A diverse range of material culture has been connected to Kashmir Smast and the Sakra Sites, although unfortunately many objects lack context having been looted or identified on the private antiquities market. This lack of information means object analysis is based on stylistic comparison with other artefacts to establish a rough time period, which is useful but does not provide specific information about the potential functions of different areas of these sites. Notable objects include an inscribed sandstone statue of Viṣṇu (Figure 7)an inscribed bronze Buddha (Figure 8) and several *liṅga* statues, which begins to indicate direct or indirect contact between multiple cultural spheres at the site. Several other inscribed objects include a 5th century copper plate inscription (Appendix 6) (analysed in section 7.2), an undeciphered birch bark manuscript, and three inscribed ewers, contribute to a deeper understanding of religious

and ceremonial activities associated with the site. The inscriptions on the three bronze ewers from the Southern Complex of Bakhai area (Appendix 6) indicate that they were offered as religious donations to Bhīmā providing further evidence of her significance at this site.

The most famous objects are the substantial quantities of coins and seals. Some coins are associated with foreign territories, representing ‘Sasanian’, ‘Bactrian’, Hunnic’ or ‘Gandhāran’ styles or production. However, it is important not to assume that the owners or creators necessarily identified with these cultural or ethnic labels. Instead, these coins reflect a region where people, materials, and ideas could have converged through complex

Figure 7. Inscribed Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa from Kashmir Smast (Falk, 2008, p. 140)

Figure 8. Bronze Buddha from Kashmir Smast (Falk, 2008, p. 141)

interactions. The coins also aid the establishment of political chronology and provide a *terminus post quem* for the site, but again this is limited by the lack of context and provenance data. the rough chronology of the site covers the Kuṣāṇa (1st-3rd centuries), Kuṣāno-Sasanian (3rd-4th centuries), Kidarite (4th-5th centuries), Alkhan (5th-6th centuries), Nezak Shahi (6th-7th centuries), Turk Shahi (7th-9th centuries), Hindu Shahi (9th-11th centuries), and Ghaznavid (11th-12th centuries) periods. However, many items appear to be unique to this region, leading Ziad (2016) to suggest that the Sakra sites had independent mints. This would indicate a degree of independent power and autonomy, with the area potentially functioning as a small principality. The native currency from the Sakra sites begins with 3rd century Kuṣāṇa imitations up to Ghaznavid derivatives in the 12th century providing a clear minimum occupation period (Ziad, 2022, pp. 5–6). These coins are not found outside the Sakra region so were either not intended for export, or were not recognised currency outside this region, suggesting they primarily served a votive function (Ziad, 2022, p. 20).). This could be comparable to the role that Roman *tesserae frumentaria* or medieval European ecclesiastical tokens used in pilgrimage activity**.** The use of coins as votive offerings also occurs within South Asian traditions, including the *ramatanka,* and offerings to Lakṣmī due to her association with wealth and prosperity. Within these locally produced coins and seals comes further evidence of an association with Bhīmā, through multiple references to the goddess and the development of an iconography. As the coins and seals form a key source of evidence for this region they will be heavily drawn upon throughout the following discussion.

5.6. Wider geography

In the wider spatial context of Kashmir Smast, the site is strategically located between the historic kingdoms of Oḍḍiyāna and Gandhāra in the Peshawar Valley, at the convergence of multiple trade and travel routes. This location near major routes including the ancient road from Varṣa to Oḍḍiyāna and meeting point route Kabul valley-Taxila road met northern route into Swāt at Shahbaz Garhi, may have influenced the site's emergence and establishment as a significant cultural and religious centre (Ziad, 2022, p. 20). Many routes are still used today owing to the limitations of the landscape.

There are several other notable archaeological sites contemporary to Kashmir Smast in its vicinity (Appendix 2). These include the 1st century Buddhist monastery of Takht-i-Bahi, and the 2nd/ 3rd century fortified town of Sahr-i-Bahlol to the south of Kashmir Smast. These sites received joint UNESCO World Heritage listing owing to their archaeological significance. Several significant sculptures have been identified from these sites, including numerous terracotta figurines which are believed to have been found in contexts associated with religious functions (Zahir, 2016a). Other local sites include Jamal Garhi, another Buddhist monastic site

which was active from the first to the 5th century CE, Sawal Dher and Shahbaz Garhi where an Ashokan edict is located. This reflects the strong roots of the Buddhist monastic institution in this region and the establishment of large Buddhist monastic settlements contemporary to the development of Kashmir Smast. Although representing a different religious perspective these sites can still be seen as the continuation complex religious networks and relationships within this region.

However, despite Xuanzang's description of over one hundred Hindu temples in this region in the 7th century, very few Hindu temples have been identified (Beal, 1981, p. 98). Only a few have been formally identified and researched, including a large 7th-10th century Hindu temple, possibly associated with Vaiṣṇava practises at Barikot, north of Kashmir Smast on the Swāt River (Filigenzi, 2015, p. 36). Epigraphic and archaeological evidence suggests that the Hindu Shahis were responsible for the construction of numerous Hindu temples (Rehman, 1979), yet more research is needed to explore potential numbered list sites and practises in the region. Re-evaluation and reinterpretation of existing data may also reveal more diverse religious contexts than previously assumed such as the suggestion that some Buddhist *vihāras* were converted into Hindu temples including the site of Sahr-i-Bahlol (I. Shah, 2008, p. 119).

5.7. Conclusion

This section highlights the complexity Kashmir Smast's development spanning a large time period, and its connections to multiple other local sites. The range of evidence demonstrating connections multiple religious and cultural perspectives, alongside its location within wider networks of routes and cultural/ religious centres, means that this site offers significant potential to explore the interactions between cultural elements and diverse agents in developing the sites significance focused on the goddess Bhīmā .

6. Emergence

This thesis will now turn to a chronological exploration Bhīmā within this spatial context, from her potential origins to the dissemination and wider establishment of her cult and finally its role in the modern period. The first evidence found at Kashmir Smast is dated to the Kuṣāṇa period. However, by this point the site appears to be well established and is likely to have had earlier origins than are currently evidenced. As already highlighted throughout this thesis many South Asian female deities emerged through connections with natural sacred spaces and gradually became incorporated into codified religion. Many sacred places in the nearby Swāt valley emerged from natural spaces regardless of religious affiliations, associated with the presence life-giving waters or the majesty of a mountain landscape (Filigenzi, 2015, p. 26).

6.1. Origins

The region around Kashmir Smast includes numerous other caves with long evidence of occupation. For example, Sanghao cave (roughly 6km northeast of Kashmir Smast) was occupied from at least the Middle Palaeolithic period (Allchin, 1992, p. 79). Dani (1964, p. 46) highlights similar quartz tools to those from Sanghao have been identified throughout the Sakra mountains and down to Jamal Garhi and Takht-i-Bahi in the south. Many of these sites are either abandoned Buddhist settlements or modern settlements. Kashmir Smast is located within this region and although excavations within the *Maha Guha* have not yet reached the lower contexts of soil deposits, as a large natural shelter situated in an area rich in resources in both past and present, including a significant water source, it is likely that this cave experienced either temporary or permanent use in the prehistoric period.

Many prehistoric cave settlements across South Asia then transitioned into cave temples as societies increased in size and complexity. As discussed previously, in South Asia cave temples are common, with notable examples including the rock cut cave temples of Ajanta and Ellora in Maharastra. In Pakistan, the Hinglaj Devi Mandir, a small cave temple in Baluchistan, is believed to be a *Śakti Pīṭha* where Satī's head fell. At this site, the goddess is not represented anthropomorphically but is manifested as the site itself, with the cave perceived by some pilgrims to represent goddess' womb as *garvaguphā* (Kamphorst, 2008, p. 237). This is one of the few remaining major active Hindu sites in Pakistan, with Hinglaj also venerated in Muslim traditions as *pīr* Bibi Nani (Schaflechner, 2018). Another example closer to Kashmir Smast is the Amarnath cave temple in Jammu and Kashmir, which is a significant pilgrimage location where a naturally formed ice *Śivaliṅga* is worshipped.

There is evidence that Bhīmā at Kashmir Smast, like the deities at Amarnath and Hinglaj Devi, was believed to be manifested in natural features. The Mahābhārata passage (Appendix 5)

advises pilgrims to bathe in the *yonyāṃ* (womb), which suggests that the site itself was considered a manifestation of Bhīmā. This can be corroborated with the many tanks at Kashmir Smast but particularly tank with stepped access in the *Maha Guha's* second chamber. Nasim Khan (2018) proposes that the entire mountain was conceived as the goddess with the *Maha Guha* representing her womb and the wider landscape reflecting other elements of her body. This idea parallels the conceptualisation of mountains as goddesses is in the Himalayan region, including Parvarti and Nanda Devi. The Chinese monk Xuanzang, who visited Kashmir Smast in the 7th century, recorded that the manifestation of Bhīmā was 'self-wrought' and 'carved out of green/ bluish stone' (Appendix 5). This could be connected to the abundance of green minerals typically found in green schist facies, or a gemstone variety from the region like topaz. This perception of Bhīmā as *svayambhū* at Kashmir Smast, alongside the idea of the site itself representing her *yonyāṃ,* suggests the possibility of earlier spiritual significance attributed to the site before the establishment of other structures and the onset of religious donations in the Kuṣāṇa period. Falk (2003) additionally notes that the third chamber's entrance is extremely narrow and highly polished, possibly suggesting large numbers of people moved through this passageway to access the third chamber replicating practises in other parts of India moving through confined spaces to access in a sacred space within temples. This practise is also present at Hinglaj Devi where devotees enter and exit the cave temple through narrow openings symbolising their rebirth (Kamphorst, 2008, p. 237).

Alongside the significance of the cave, water, as a vital natural element, has also played an important role at Kashmir Smast. Throughout South Asia, both within Hinduism and other religious contexts, and the association of water with life and rebirth has led to practises including ritual bathing (*snāna*). However, many practises are linked to earlier folk traditions which became incorporated into wider codified religious practise. For example, the during the monsoon at the *Śakti Pīṭha* of Kāmākhyā in Assam where the rising water table during monsoon leads to groundwater mixed with the local red earth exits a natural cleft in the rock representing the goddess' menustration, symbolising fertility and prosperity for the coming year. At Kashmir Smast the abundant presence of water, indicated by the multiple tanks and complex drainage system, reinforces this connection. The streams that begin in the Sakra hills are vital for life and livelihood on the plains below. More locally ritual expressions linked fertility are evident in the creation of terracotta (potentially female) figurines, with many found at the nearby sites of Sar Dheri and Sahr-i-Bahlol in temples and shrine contexts (Zahir, 2016b). The continuing fundamental need to for human agents to develop mechanisms associated with ensuring both survival and thriving can lead to a continuity of gestures, including rituals, protections, and folktales, associated with these sites which ensure the survival of the communities which depend on them. These gestures must not be assumed to be consistent

or ignore the nuances within them, but these gestures could then become reinterpreted by agents within their unique contexts and needs.

6.2. Establishment

Building upon a potentially earlier context, the first datable evidence from the site comes from the Kuṣāṇa period (2nd century CE) (Ziad, 2022, p. 3). By this period the region had already experienced significant changes in its dominant power and culture. First mentioned in the Rigveda (c.1500-1000 BCE) and developing into an important power, Gandhāra then came under Persian control from the 6th century BCE. Between the 4th century BCE to 1st century CE the region experienced successive changes in ruling powers from Hellenistic, Mauryan, Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, and Indo-Parthian backgrounds. The Kuṣāṇa ruled Gandhāra between the 1st- 3rd centuries CE and were descended from Central Asian Yuezhi Chinese pastoralists (Samad, 2010, p. 31). By the 2nd century CE Kuṣāṇa society reflected elements of these previous ruling powers as coinage depicted not only Iranian or Zoroastrian figures dressed in Greek clothing, but also Indian Hellenistic and Roman figures (Rosenfield, 1967, p. 72). Samad (2010, p. 29) states that Kuṣāṇa support for Indian, Greek, Roman and Iranian religious ideas, combined with Gandhāra's location at the crossroads of cultural spheres in India, Iran and Hellenised Bactria and Central Asia from the 1st century CE onwards made the region a 'centre of multicultural activities'. Lerner and Sims-Williams (2011, p. 19) further emphasise that the area's historical and political background, coupled with its location, fostered a 'pervasive syncretism', nurturing multiple religions and beliefs. This demonstrates that understanding the history of occupation and legacy of interaction is important when considering issues of globalisation. The Kuṣāno-Sasanian period from the 3rd to the 4th centuries CE continued this multi-religious representation was coinage frequently featured the depictions of Śiva alongside Zoroastrian symbols reflecting the Persian influence.

6.3. Representations of Bhīmā

Into this context appear the first mentions and iconographic representations of Bhīmā at the Sakra sites. Ziad (2022, p. 1) states that the iconography found on the seals and coinage at the Sakra sites blurs between the boundaries of folk art and the political or confessional purposes served by monetary imagery. The discussion of Kuṣāṇa coinage often focuses on whether the iconography can be attributed to local or imported developments. However, it appears that some iconography found on Kuṣāṇa coinage reflects regional sculptural traditions, illustrating what Ziad refers to as a 'dynamic dialectical relationship' between numismatic and sculptural art in Gandhāra from the Indo Greek period onwards (Ziad, 2022, p. 33). Samad (2010) refers to this as Gandhāra's characteristic 'iconographic syncretism'.

Throughout the site's duration Bhīmā's iconography consistently includes a *triśūla* (trident), pot, the *swastika*, a solar symbol/ wheel, and a male figure. Nasim Khan (2002b) proposes the pot is a *pūrṇaghaṭa* or vase of plenty, similar to the Greco-Roman *cornucopia*, symbolising fertility and abundance. The first seals dedicated to Bhīmā (including Figure 9) depict the goddess either standing or seated, apparently fully clothed. These depictions of Bhīmā have been used to connect her to Ardokṣo (also Ardoxsho, Ardochsho and Ardokhsho), the Iranian originating goddess of wealth and fortune, who was popular during the Kuṣāṇa and Kidārite periods. Ardokṣo was typically portrayed either standing or sitting on a throne holding a royal fillet in her right hand and a *cornucopia* in her left (Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 24). The female figure in Figure 9 could therefore be viewed as Ardokṣo, however the *Brāhmī* inscription clearly identifies her as Bhīmā reading *śrī-bimayya* or 'Of *śrī*- Bhīmā'. Both deities connection to wealth and prosperity could be a clear reason for this representation of Bhīmā, placing her within an existing iconographic context. This could represent the preferences and perceived connections of the artisans involved in their creation at the independent mints. However, it could also represent the desires of an authority (temple or otherwise) to emphasise Bhīmā's connection to fortune to a wider audience, through iconography recognisable to new visitors passing through the region.

Figure 9. Object 07.04.13 from the Raḥmān collection: a bronze hoop-handled seal from Kashmir Smast depicting a female deity and a dancing figure (Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 102)

6.4. Yakṣiṇī

Ardokṣo has also been linked to the Buddhist goddess Hārītī (goddess of motherhood and protection) and this comparison has also been extended to Bhīmā. Hārītī was a popular goddess in Gandhāran Buddhism, as a former child eating demoness converted by the Buddha into a benevolent deity who protected children from illnesses including smallpox and granted fertility. Evidence of Hārītī's veneration has been identified at many Buddhist sites around Kashmir Smast, notably in the form of a life-sized sculpture of four-armed female deity with tusks found Sahr-i-Bahlol and dated to the Kuṣāṇa period (Figure 10). This figure has generally been identified as Hārītī by based on the statue holding a wine cup and a child

(Maheshwari, 2009, p. 159). However, a four-armed deity holding a *triśūla* and a *pūrṇaghaṭa* could represent Śaiva iconography (M. E. Shaw, 2006). Falk (2019, p. 47) goes further to suggest that instead of Hārītī, the identity of Bhīmā would be more appropriate as her *raudri* aspect is too obvious, and the proximity to Kashmir Smast could mean that mean that Sahr-i-Bahlol functioned as lowlands site for devotees unable to climb to the mountain site. This could be corroborated with the description of Bhīmā in the *Devī Māhātmaya* (11.43, 11.46) (Coburn, 1991, p. 193) as having 'tusks' and being terrible in form. Agravāla (1970, p. 84) suggests that Bhīmā represents the terrible form of Hārītī before her conversion by Buddha.

Figure 10. Female figure from Sahr-i-Bahlol (Maheshwari, 2009, p. 160)

However, Bhīmā could also be viewed as contemporary to Hārītī, as Ahuja (2016, p. 248) similarly suggests that Bhīmā may have also had a similar through a similar association with

deities who protect or steal children. This could be supported by a 6th century Gilgit manuscript called *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna-satvāvalokana-buddhakṣetra-sandarśana-vyūha-sūtr,* where a *yakṣiṇī* named Bhīmā is a key character alongside two *yakṣiṇīs* called Śaṅkhinī and Anopamā (Cohen, 2012). These *yakṣiṇīs* are associated with material well-being, providing mundane rather than transcendental benefits. The line between their perception as benevolent or malevolent remains thin, and they are possibly still viewed as creatures to be revered but never fully trusted (Cohen, 2012). Similarities between the form, duration, and intent of Bhīmā's ritual described by Xuanzang and in the Gilgit manuscript possibly suggest a continuity between Buddhist and Hindu practices. Therefore, a form of Bhīmā existing either in parallel to, or as an aspect of, Hārītī appears likely given the cultural context in which Kashmir Smast developed. This provides further evidence of the need to continue archaeological excavation and interpret this data with consideration of a less monolithic view of Uḍḍiyāna's religious culture, where Buddhism, while playing a prominent role, should be seen in an interactive relationship with other religious systems (Filigenzi, 2015, p. 31).

6.5. Zoroastrianism

Significantly the second bronze ewer (Appendix 6) names the town connected to Kashmir Smast as the town of Ahura Mazda, the Zoroastrian creator deity, possibly suggesting a connection to Zoroastrianism, either contemporary with or preceding Bhīmā's cult (Falk, 2008, p. 139). A Bactrian manuscript found in the walls of the *Maha Guha*'s third chamber also suggests a connection (Nasim Khan, 2018). It is noteworthy that Iranian communities in the area around Kashmir Smast still come to the site to celebrate the New Year (Falk, 2003). The Persian goddess Anāhitā (Goddess of rivers and fertility) has also been connected to Ardokṣo and Hārītī, through representing similar values, however further research would be needed understand if there could have been a perceived relationship between Bhīmā and Anāhitā.

6.6. Associated Male Figure

Briefly turning to the male figure on the Bhīmā seals who depicted with one leg raised as if in movement and carrying a stick or club. Figure 11 featuring this figure bears the inscription *ḍāmama* meaning 'dancer' in Pashto and in Sanskrit terms beginning with *ḍa/ḍā* can be linked to drumming (Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 25). Therefore, the *pūrṇaghaṭa* also could represent a drum like the *māṅgi* still used by Pashto people today (Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 25). A Śaiva/ Vaiṣṇava affiliation could be inferred from the *triśūla* and *cakra* iconography particularly if Kashmir Smast is associated with the rise of the *Śākta* tradition as *Śākta* sites could simultaneously mobilise Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava symbols (Ziad, 2022, p. 34). Bhīmā's inclusion in the *Devī Māhātmya*, the Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa statue dated to between 360-460 CE, and the numerous *liṅga* found at the site support this interpretation (Falk, 2004, p. 145). However, the

cakra/ wheel can also be a Scythian symbol and is often associated with the trident bearing local wind god Wēś. Wēś has variously been linked to Poseidon, the Iranian wind god Vāyuš, and also to Gandhāran Śiva, with Wēś as a potential intermediary deity in the development of Śiva iconography (Samad, 2010, p. 56). Seal 07.04.03 from the Raḥmān collection reads *[ś(r)ī]vāto Bhīmā* or 'the *śrī*-wind god (and) Bhīmā' which reinforces the likelihood of this interpretation (Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 25,100). However, other connections could also be valid. Taddei (1969) refers to a similar figure on a contemporary coin from Mohṛā Morādu (Taxila) depicting an Iranian *Sēnmurw* and a lion, with a dancing figure on the reverse with one leg raised which Taddei refers to as a 'Dionysian thiasos', with the figures stick potentially connected to the *thyrsos* carried by Dionysus. According to Strabo (15.1.58) in Gandhāra Dionysus was worshiped in the mountains, while Heracles was worshiped on the northwestern plains so this could provide some connection (Samad, 2010, p. 9). Additionally, Pāñcika, Hārīti's husband, is also depicted in a similar form and could be another interpretation if Bhīmā is viewed as connected to Hārīti {Citation}

Figure 11. Object 07.04.16 from the Raḥmān collection. A bronze square hoop-handled stamp seal from Kashmir Smast (Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 105).

6.7. Conclusion

Ardokṣo and Hārītī share connections with Greek Tyche, Roman Fortuna, Persian Anāhitā, and Hindu Śrī / Lakṣmī, all embodying themes of fortune and fertility. These goddesses' attributes could align together while retaining their individuality, as they reflect intrinsic human experiences of that era. Bhīmā's development cannot be attributed to a single pre-existing goddess, but rather she exhibits similar attributes of multiple contemporary or preceding female deities. Interpretations tend to focus on widespread religious practices or texts, leading to assumptions like attributing Hariti to every female deity at a 'Buddhist' site associated with children or depicted ferociously. However, the example *yakṣiṇī* Bhīmā being regarded with similar significance shows the importance of reconsidering multiple perspectives and roles of these representations. This discussion highlights the importance of these deities and their values to various communities during that era, especially regarding fertility and fortune, which are likely to have held universal appeal across social strata. These values and deities then

manifest in ways unique to the needs of individual agents in response to the landscapes physical and social contexts. Through further research an increased data set of materials could provide insights into the different agents involved in this region and in the development at Kashmir Smast. Until this information is available Frankfurter's methodology is limited, but still provides a valuable lens to understand the processes and elements contributing to Bhīmā's development, as it allows for the incorporation of diverse elements in conversation, reflecting parallel manifestations and borrowing from different sources, alongside increased emphasis on local agency.

7. Consolidation and Dissemination

The majority of material recovered from Kashmir Smast is associated with the period between the 6th to 9th centuries CE. This period as yielded the highest numbers of coinage, seals, and inscriptions, alongside other written sources. This period comprises the rule of the Alkhan Huns, Nezak Shahi, Turk Shahi, and Hindu Shahi, and again demonstrates increasing connectivity and globalisation in this region.

7.1. A New Form

Within this context a new depiction of Bhīmā emerges on the seals. By the 7th century the goddess is now depicted naked either squatting upright (*bhadrāsana* or *pralambapādāsana)* or lying on her back (*uttānapad*) (Bolon, 1992, p. 6). Her form becomes more abstract form often without arms, clearly defined torso, or a head, although sometimes her head is replaced by another shape like a rectangle or triangle. She remains accompanied the same iconography including *triśūla*, *pūrṇaghaṭa*, *swastika*, a solar symbol/ wheel, and male figure. Several seals of this type bear inscriptions which clearly connect them to Bhīmā including Figure 12 (*bhīmāya* or 'of Bhīmā'), Figure 13 (*bhamaya deva* or 'Of goddess Bhīmā') and particularly Figure 14 which identifies Bhīmā even more clearly as *śrī-bhīmāya / guhava* or 'of *śrī*- Bhīmā; li<ving> in the cave'. Numerous other seals have been documented depicting Bhīmā in this form, demonstrating the clear evolution of her iconographic representation. Her abstract or headless shape may have originated in the late Kuṣāṇa depiction of Ardokṣo with a row of dots or horizontal line above her head (Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 24).

Figure 12. Clay sealing, object 07.04.01 from the Raman Collection depicting a nude seated goddess with a trident.

Figure 13. Bronze square hoop handled seal, object 07.04.04 from the Raman collection depicting a female deity with a trident.

Figure 14. Clay token, object 07.04.07 from the Raman collection, depicting a seated nude deity, alongside a trident, pot, and male figure.

If Bhīmā's position in these seals is taken as *uttānapad*, it can be connected to the *Lajjā Gaurī* iconography which commonly appears in South India but not previously found further north than Rajasthan (Bolon, 1992). Different forms of *Lajjā Gaurī* emerge at various times but some of the earliest evidence from the 2nd century CE at Mathura (Bolon, 1992). *Lajjā Gaurī* is typically associated birth and fertility through representation in a birthing position, occasionally with a noticeable vulva, and breasts, and is often depicted headless or with another symbol replacing her head. The posture, apparent nakedness, and lack of head of this form of Bhīmā could connect her to *Lajjā Guarī* type iconography, leading to the proposal that Bhīmā, as depicted in these seals, was an early manifestation of this *Lajjā Guarī* type ((Falk & Raḥmān, 2011, p. 24). This interpretation would give Gandhāra new significance in the development of Hinduism, challenging the previous belief that Hinduism only emerged in the region during the Hindu Shahi period (8th century CE) (Lerner & Sims-Williams, 2011). Such early forms of what was previously believed to be a predominantly South Indian goddess tradition place more significance on the flows of ideas out of this region.

Interestingly another name for Hinglaj Devi, who has already been discussed, is 'Koṭarī' meaning 'the naked woman', which again presents some parallels with the iconographic representation of Bhīmā. Hinglaj also appears in Buddhist worship in Afghanistan and Punjab, alongside being worshipped in the form of a demon in Rajasthan (Kamphorst, 2008, p. 240). These similarities would make an excellent basis for further comparative research between these two deities.

Bolon also states that the pot imagery associated with *Lajjā Gaurī*, either alongside the goddess or as an aniconic representation in the earlier phases of her iconography, could reflect the origins of this goddess as a *grāmadevatā* (village goddess) (Bolon, 1992, p. 64). Through the pot iconography associated with her this function could also apply to Bhīmā, supporting the idea of a local goddess that possibly became absorbed into a Śaiva/Hindu context. The *Lajjā Gaurī* iconography develops from a pot-like form into a more anthropomorphic image (Bolon, 1992, p. 64). If Bhīmā is viewed as continuous from the early seals linked to Ardokṣo as clothed and seated/standing, moving into a more abstract

representation, this process is at odds with the proposed development of *Lajjā Gaurī* iconography. There is simply not enough information either from Kashmir Smast or the surrounding region to speculate on the reasons behind this iconographic change which occurred within a period of around 200 years or less. To fully explore this development additional survey and excavation across the Sakra sites is needed.

7.2. Fortunes and Donations

Within this period additional information adds clarity to some ritual processes undertaken at the site during its height of popularity and influence. The first source comes from the travelogues of Xuanzang, a Chinese pilgrim who visited the site in 7th century (Appendix 5). This account can then be combined with the 5th century copper plate inscription found in the tank in the Maha *Guha* as shown in Appendix 6. Both sources reinforce that Bhīmā's primary centre remained the *Maha Guha* and that she was represented as a self-manifested natural feature, which may have experienced additional carving. By this point the role of the male deity venerated alongside Bhīmā appears more developed, as shown through the temple of Mahêśvara Dêva mentioned Xuanzang, which could be one of the central or southern complexes temples (Appendix 3). The Mahābhārata (Appendix 5) suggests that after bathing in the place of the goddess and pilgrims continued to the grandfather which can either be an epithet for Brahma, Buddha, or Śaiva (Falk, 2003). Xuanzang further states Bhīmā is worshipped by a wide variety of devotees, from upper and lower classes, and both local and distant locations. Distant locations could either be pilgrims travelling specifically to visit this site, as part of a pilgrimage route or network connected with other sites in this area or owing to its position close to several significant trading routes. Additionally, it could also signify the presence of material culture connected to these regions making its way into the local area of Kashmir Smast, to then be taken by local devotees as offerings or donations.

At the site devotees could undertake different ritual activities including fasting for seven days (Xuanzang), bathing (Mahābhārata), and offering donations of currency, statues, or possibly other items like grain which was found in large quantities within the *Maha Guha*. The copper plate inscription's text alongside the recovered sandstone statue of Nārāyaṇa (Appendix 6 and Figure 7) and Bronze statue of Buddha (Figure 8) indicates that devotees could deposit idols of deities significant to them which would then be looked after by the site's inhabitants in exchange for a donation (Falk, 2003, p. 18). Both sources contain information about the other buildings at the site, as copper plate inscription references a *maṭh* with several businesses providing services to devotees in designated shops called *kuṭivyāpāra.* This practice of donations of statues and currency appears to be continuous throughout the site's occupation, as evidenced by the coin and seal deposits which are particularly concentrated in the *Maha*

Guha. In this context Bhīmā differs to previous goddesses associated with her in section 6, as her function does not concern the needs of women but specifically becomes associated with money. Falk notes that the regulating of gifts and benefits began in Buddhist monasteries in central India with the ideas of *deyadharma* (a donation resulting in automatic production of positive energy/ *puṇya)* and *akṣayaṇīvi* (a donation lasting in perpetuity) (Falk, 2008, p. 138). Falk (2008, p. 145) suggests that through harnessing the idea of *akṣayaṇīvi* Kashmir Smast provided space for deities from multiple creeds to be donated to by individuals, with the guarantee that their donation would continue to benefit the donor into the other world. These donations could then have funded the large building projects at the site and aided its expansion across Bakhai and possibly throughout the Sakra Sites. One seal in particular reads *ṇīva-śrī-bhīmayā* which could either mean "for śrī-Bhīmā with the dress' or *nīvi* meaning 'capital deposit' (Falk, 2008, p. 147). This combined with the independent mints proposed by Ziad adds a new emphasis and function to the site, and as a result to Bhīmā. The act of depositing coins or donations at the shrine could also be an example of 'gesture' as through the repetition of these gestural codes or habitus these actions gain meaning. Votive gestures associated with luck and fortune commonly survive as shown in the European practice of throwing coins into fountains for good luck.

7.3. Other Bhīmā Temples

Moving into a wider spatial perspective Kashmir Smast is not the only site that is known to be affiliated with the goddess Bhīmā (Appendix 1). The modern name Kashmir Smast means 'the Kashmir cave' in Pashto, reflecting a local tale that Kashmir, as a mystical Holy Land, could be reached through the Great Cave (Mizuno, 1962, p. 96). There are other examples of caves conceived as pathways to other lands in this region including the Basawal caves near Daka in Afghanistan (Simpson, 1885, p. 319). The connection between Bhīmā and Kashmir has been largely neglected with the name mainly explored to highlight a modern myth, however there are much older associations of Bhīmā with Kashmir. For example, the Rājatarangiṇī (II.135) states King Saṁdhimat Aryarāja erected *maṭhas*, statues of gods, and *liṅgas* honouring *Bhīmādevī* at sites like the Ḍal lake (Stein, 1900, p. 68). Cunningham (1848, pp. 251–252) describes another cave temple to Bhīmā within the larger Bhaumajo/ Bumzuva cave on the Liddar river, with fissures devoted to different deities including 'Bhimá-Devi'. Bhīmā's cave contains two smaller chambers each with a 'shapeless waterworn stone' that is 'considered holy by the Hindus' (Cunningham, 1848, p. 252). A temple built in the largest cave has been dated to c.12th century CE (Joshi & Deva, 1998, p. 4), however the site was probably in use before this.

In Himachal Pradesh, is a large five storey wooden temple to Bhīmākālī at Sarahan, (known as Shonitpur in the Purāṇas) built in a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist styles, with Bhīmā regarded as the Bushahr state rulers (15th-20th centuries) family deity through her role in granting the regency to the Raja of Bushahr (M. R. Thakur, 1997). McKay elaborates that Bhīmākālī was considered the supreme deity of Bushahr with the Raja as her earthly agent, and other local deities ranked in hierarchy under her, acting as landowners and moneylenders through other human agents (McKay, 2015, pp. 184–185). Hāṇḍā (1988, p. 55) dates some stone images from the temple to the Kuṣāṇa period (1st-3rd centuries CE) and therefore contemporary to Kashmir Smast.

Moving further east, the Nepalese Newar community currently worship Bhīma (male)/ Bhīmsen as the God of trade, love, and prosperity. Duijker (2010, p. 33) states this is a rare example of Bhīma/ Bhīmsen's association with trade and prosperity, highlighting an example from Kathmandu where women rub their bodies on a wooden pole representing Bhīma's club in front of a Bhīma temple to increase fertility. Bhīma temples occur along the old trade routes in the Kathmandu valley including Pokhara, Sankhu, and Dolkha, reinforcing a further connection to trade and prosperity. This is more comparable to Bhīmādevī's attributes as opposed to Princely Bhīma. The potential relationship between feminine and masculine manifestations of this name and their association with prosperity would be worth to following further, as multi-gendered manifestations of deities are a common phenomenon within Hinduism.

Another Bhīmā temple is in Pinjore, dated to the 9th-11th centuries CE under the Gurjara-Partiharas rule. Alberuni's *Tahqiq-ul-Hind* states that Pinjore was part of a road network connecting Kannauj to Kashmir as well as other mentions of contact between the rulers of Kashmir and the Gujara Pratiharas in the Rājatarangiṇī (68) and further similarities in the Shaivite art at Krimchi Temples in Udhampur and Bilvakeshwar temple in Kathua, in Jammu and Kashmir (D. Thakur & Mehta, 2020). Although excellent excavations have already been undertaken by Speaking Archaeologically, they have not yet focused on the connection to Bhīmā at this temple, despite it bearing her name. Through identifying more potential agents represented at this site, some of these relationships may be illuminated.

Finally further afield in West Bengal, at the Bargabhima temple in Tamluk a legend tells that if brass objects dipped into a *sarovar* next to the temple they would be turned into gold (Nandi & Roy, 2011, p. 38). This temple is also known as the temple of Bhīmākālī and is viewed by Singh as the Kapālinī *Śaktipīṭha* (S. K. Singh, 2020). This farthest manifestation of Bhīmā's

associated with material wealth presents a compelling connection to the forms of Bhīmā at Kashmir Smast.

7.4. Conclusion

This section demonstrates that during this period, Bhīmā's iconographic representation undergoes a significant change to become distinct in form from her earlier representations. As this form is unique in this region it has clear similarities to depictions of *Lajjā Gaurī* in other regions. While this may be evidence of a conversation and connection between these representations this site remains an outlier in this region and therefore an independent manifestation should not be discounted. That this form emerges as the fiscal role of Kashmir Smast increases is interesting and may point to a different function than *Lajjā Gaurī* and could represent the incorporation of another local aspect. The fiscal role of Kashmir Smast is also interesting through emphasising Bhīmā's connection to wealth and material wellbeing, as this connection is replicated in several other manifestations of Bhīmā outside of Kashmir Smast. This discussion highlights the need to further explore the complex interplay of religious, economic, and social factors that shaped the evolution and spread of Bhīmā's cult in Gandhāra. Deeper engagement with these connections would provide valuable insights into the region's multifaceted religious landscape, from as yet under researched perspectives.

8. Decline

From the 12th century there is reduced evidence of occupation at Kashmir Smast. However, this is significantly after the ascent of Islamic power following the 11th century invasion of Maḥmūd of Ghaza (Nasim Khan, 2018, p. 317). Traditionally, the narrative of religious change in the region has focused on the Ghaznavid iconoclasm towards non-Islamic practices and spaces, but recent scholarship increasingly challenges this assumption, emphasising broader economic and administrative considerations (Ziad, 2022).

8.1. Ghaznavid Rule

Kashmir Smast appears to support this alternative scholarship, as instead of destruction the site yields numerous coins featuring Arabic legends which can be attributed to the Ghaznavid period between 977-1186 CE (Ziad, 2022, p. 189). Many of these Arabic coins match the fabric of the other native Sakra issues suggesting they were also manufactured in the Sakra region (Ziad, 2022, p. 192). This suggests continued activity under Ghaznavid rule, and possibly a continuation of previous religious practises. However the coins presence and circulation in these religious sites does not necessarily indicate a change in the site's fundamental religious identity, as South and Central Asian coinage was often not as a mark of confessional identity (Ziad, 2022, p. 203). The Arabic legends on the native Sakra coins are clear and legible suggesting the engravers had a good understanding of Arabic (Ziad, 2022, p. 203). Additionally, it appears likely that these Arabic issues were also supplemented by coinage from previous periods like Hindu Sahi varieties, perhaps implying that Ghaznavid authorities did not enforce strict control over the temple minting administration or require these coins to reflect Ghaznavid authority. Mohammad Nazim (1931) suggested that Mahmud's destruction of temples was limited to the period of warfare and noted that according to the *Risālat al-Ghufrān* of al-Ma'arri the Hindus of Ghazna were free to perform public religious ceremonies. This leads to the argument that within this hinterland region the Ghaznavids policy was far more flexible when previously believed, with priority placed on establishing long term objectives and consolidation of power as opposed to violent destruction of economic and social life, as this site could have supported existing trade and fiscal relationships. This continued significance of this site may also be attributed provision of space for multiple deities of multiple sects and religious backgrounds, overseen by a deity which reflects universal human desires for prosperity and wealth.

8.2. Goddesses and Saints

The continuation and reinvention of previous religious traditions, either Buddhist, Hindu, or otherwise is being increasingly noted in this region, with Islamic characters often reflecting aspects of older female deities and facilitating continuity of certain practices. For example, on

Mount Karamar, south of Kashmir Smast, Hindu Durgā was assimilated with a local mountain goddess, and the cult continued to survive under Islam as female ascetic called Shehr Banu which corresponds to Siṃhavāhinī, an epithet of Durgā (Filigenzi, 2015, p. 142). Mount Karamar was mistakenly identified as the place of Bhīmādevī by Foucher (1901) and Tucci (1977, p. 28). Similarly Mount Ilam, a significant Buddhist site, also viewed as a *svayambhū Rāma takht* (throne of Rāma) by Hindus, is now sacred amongst the local Muslim population as a martyrs shrine (Filigenzi, 2015, p. 26).

As discussed previously some conceptual connections can be made between Hārītī and Bhīmā. The strength of meaning surrounding Hārītī is evidenced by the continuation and re-imagination of her cult in the present, as exemplified by a mound at Umarzai village in Charsadda (west of Kashmir Smast). This mound was previously known as Sare-Makhe-Dheri and is recorded by Xuanzang as a place of Hārītī's conversion by the Buddha (Rowan, 2002, p. 51). Zahir (2016a, p. 11) notes that 'Sare-Makha' means 'red face' in Pashto, reinforcing the connection Hārītī's ability to cure to smallpox and other illnesses. Zahir provides a first-hand account of being taken to this shrine by his mother as a child to be cured of illnesses, demonstrating the continuation of the fundamental values associated with Hārītī reimagined in Bibi Saida (Zahir, 2016a, p. 12).

In the 1870s visitors from Afghanistan come to a nearby spring known as Chinay Abu for its healing properties (Das, 1878, p. 58). Even in the late 20th century, the people of Babuzai and Shamozai continued to visit the area near Kashmir Smast, believing the waters to have healing properties, particularly for tuberculosis (Khan, 1989, pp. 272–277). Similar continuity is not explicitly known at Kashmir Smast with Bhīmā , possibly owing to its remote location so that one was never established, or the sites unique financial function not requiring additional legitimisation. Alternatively, it might be because we simply do not have enough information about local associations with the site from the beginning of the Islamic period to the present. Further study into folk and oral tales in the area would help illuminate these stories building on the work begun by Tucci's commissioning of Inayat-ur-Rahman (1968) to collect folk tales from Swāt.

8.3. Folktales

However, some information about local associations with Kashmir Smast is known. The association the site with water still holds a powerful significance for local communities as the population at Babuzai believes that the springs in the Kashmir Smast valley, which acts as their main source of water, continued flow is intrinsically connected to the power of these 'Hindu buildings' in Barĕ Uba. This led to the spring's protection by the local *Jirga* (leaders) of

the three *Hujras* (houses) of Babuzai through prohibiting looting and excavation in this space, enforcing strict punishment for those who defy this order (Nasim Khan, 2006, p. 19). This continued local superstition in the modern period is interesting to note and shows the value in using modern ethnographic research alongside other sources. The site still exists features in local oral folktales including a myth describing *Maha Guha* as the seat of a tyrannical ruler who hoarded the wealth from his victories within but eventually experienced divine retribution in punishment for his greed and cruelty, leading to his Kingdom being wiped out, and only *jinns* and other spirits inhabiting his now empty treasure chamber (Ziad, 2022, p. 2).

8.4. Conclusion

This demonstrates that even though contexts and functions changed, local agents found some connection to the essence of the site, and possibly in turn to Bhīmā. This can tie into another idea of Frankfurter's of to move away from the 'death' of a religious site, to consider it instead as a 'haunting' of landscapes, where something of the previous religious significance lives on despite wider changes (Frankfurter, 2022). 'Haunting' may not be the correct analogy but this could act as a provocation to explore ideas of religions presence in their sensory worlds and infrastructures to think about their material vitality and consider the continued non-human agency of these seemingly abandoned sites.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of Bhīmā's development at Kashmir Smast has provided valuable insights into the multifaceted religion in this region. The site showcases a rich tapestry of religious and cultural influences spanning a large period. The complexity of Kashmir Smast, influenced by multiple agents and networks, further underlines the site's significance in exploring the interactions between cultural elements and diverse agents, with the goddess Bhīmā at the center.

Like many other South Asian goddesses, Bhīmā emerges as a compound entity, embodying attributes that align with multiple contemporary or preceding female deities such as fortune and prosperity, but also developing unique functions and representations in the site's later periods. This plurality of manifestations and roles highlights the importance of reconsidering multiple perspectives in understanding Bhīmā's development, reflecting parallel manifestations and interactions with different sources while emphasising local agency.

From the site's initial connection to natural resources and features to its later financial function, new meanings appear to develop in association with Bhīmā and her attributes seemingly appeal to a wide range of agents across different social strata. The later association of Bhīmā with wealth and material wellbeing is particularly interesting through its replication at several other locations outside of this region, suggesting wider and perhaps more complex external relationships. Despite changes in contexts and functions, something of the site's essence and its role in the imagination and lived gestures of local agents has endured. The continued significance of Kashmir Smast and its goddess Bhīmā highlights the adaptability and vitality of religious beliefs and practices, reflecting the dynamic nature of human experiences and desires.

By utilizing Frankfurter's reinterpretation of syncretism, incorporating the concepts of landscapes, agents, and gestures, this study endeavoured to explore a multi-dimensional approach to understanding religious change, belief systems, and individual expressions of religion within contexts. A significant limitation of fully applying this methodology was the lack of information and sources available in comparison to his research context in Egypt. Therefore, elements of this approach have been alluded to, but require additional information to move them beyond speculation. There is still value in this approach when used critically, even if it is mainly used as a provocation for challenging and reinterpreting existing data.

Overall, this thesis has shed light on the manifestations of Bhīmā's in this region, offering a nuanced understanding of religious syncretism and its implications for the study of ancient

religious traditions. By embracing a multi-dimensional approach and acknowledging the diverse manifestations of deities, this research opens new avenues for future exploration and explores different frameworks for studying religious change and cultural interactions. The exploration of Bhīmā at Kashmir Smast serves as a stepping stone for further research into the regions rich religious and cultural heritage, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complex tapestry of beliefs and practices that have shaped the historical and cultural landscape of Northern Pakistan.

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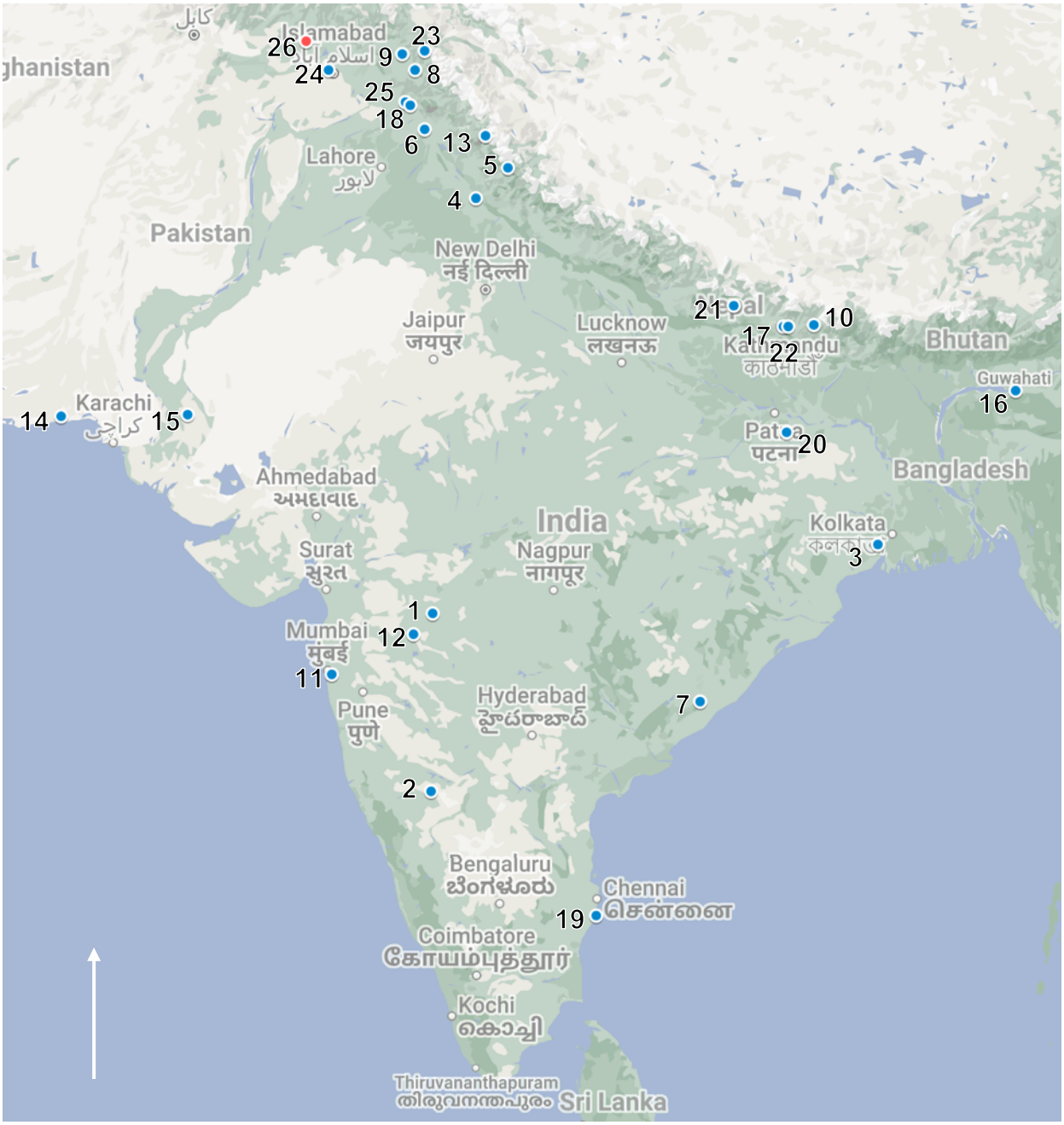
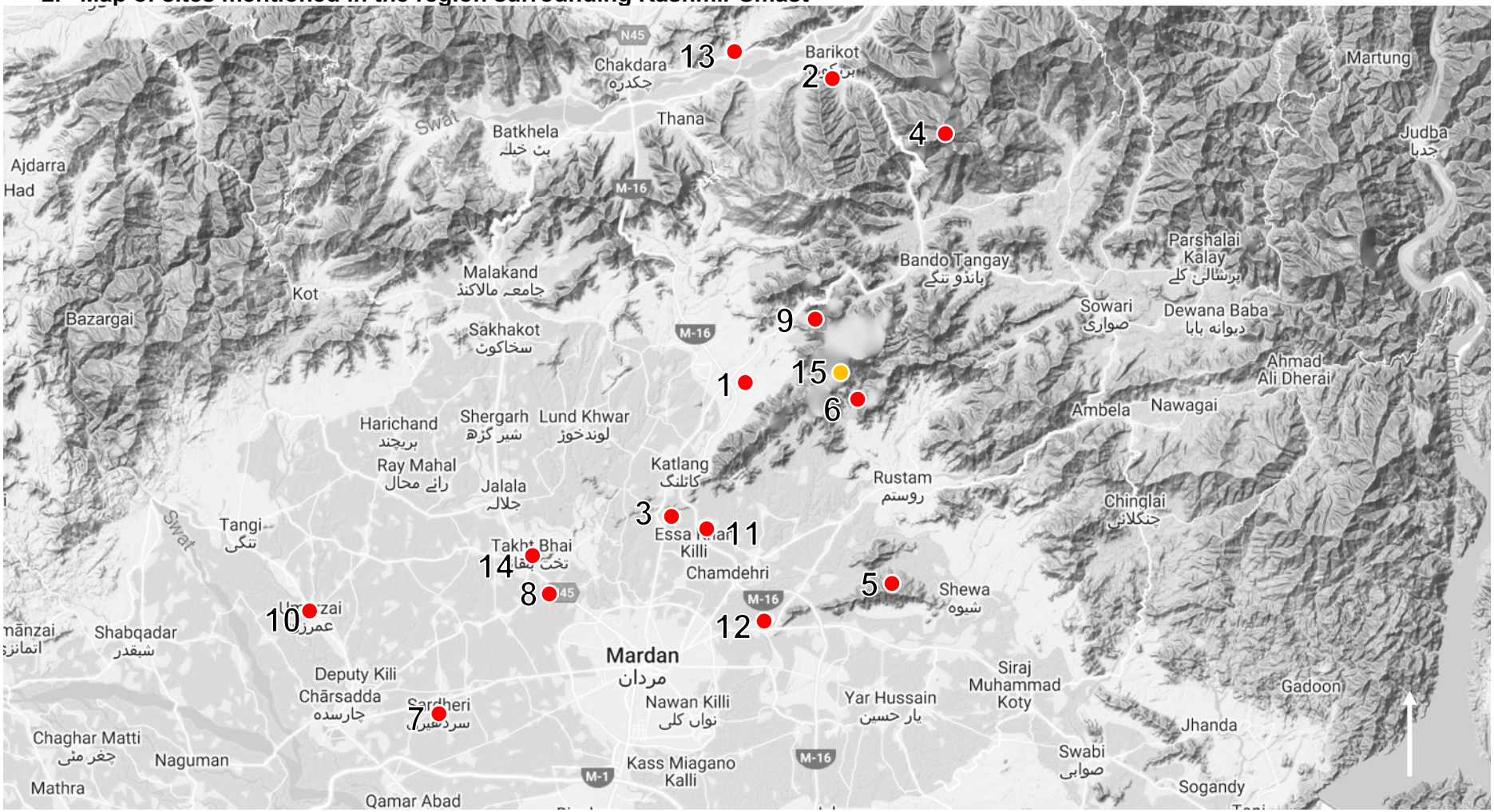
Appendices

1. Map of South Asian sites discussed



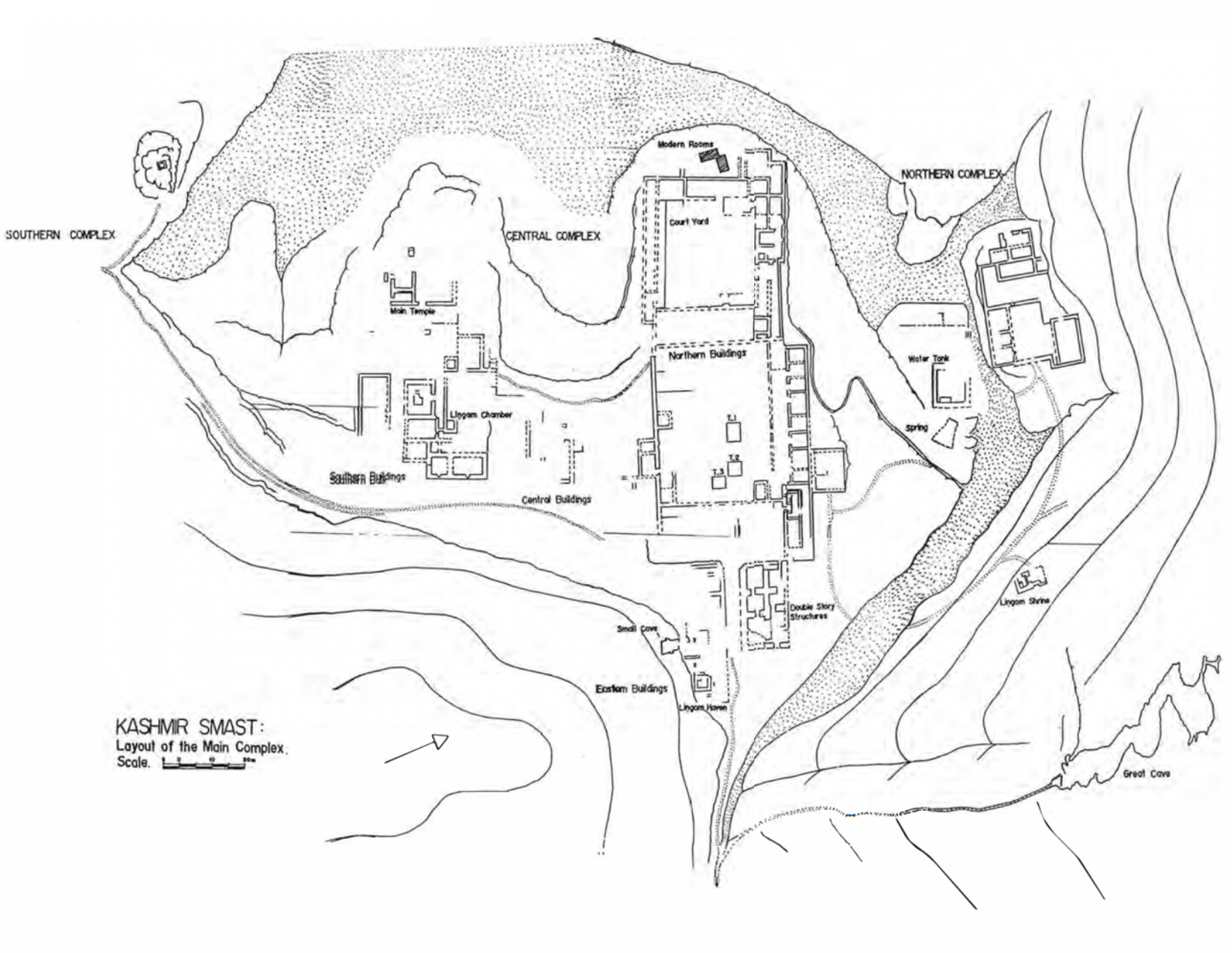
1	Ajanta Caves	10	Dolakha	19	Mahabalipuram Caves
2	Badami Cave Temples	11	Elephanta Caves	20	Nalanda
3	Bargabhima Tamluk	12	Ellora Caves	21	Pokhara
4	Bhima Devi Temple Pinjore	13	Hadimba Devi Temple	22	Sankhu
5	Bhimakali Temple Sarahan	14	Hinglaj Devi Mandir	23	Amarnath Cave Temple
6	Bilvakeshwar temple- Kathua	15	Kahu Jo Daro	24	Taxila
7	Borra Caves	16	Kamakhya Temple	25	Vaishno Devi Temple
8	Bumzuva Cave and Temple	17	Kathmandu	26	Kashmir Smast
9	Dal Lake	18	Krimchi Temples		

2. Map of sites mentioned in the region surrounding Kashmir Smast

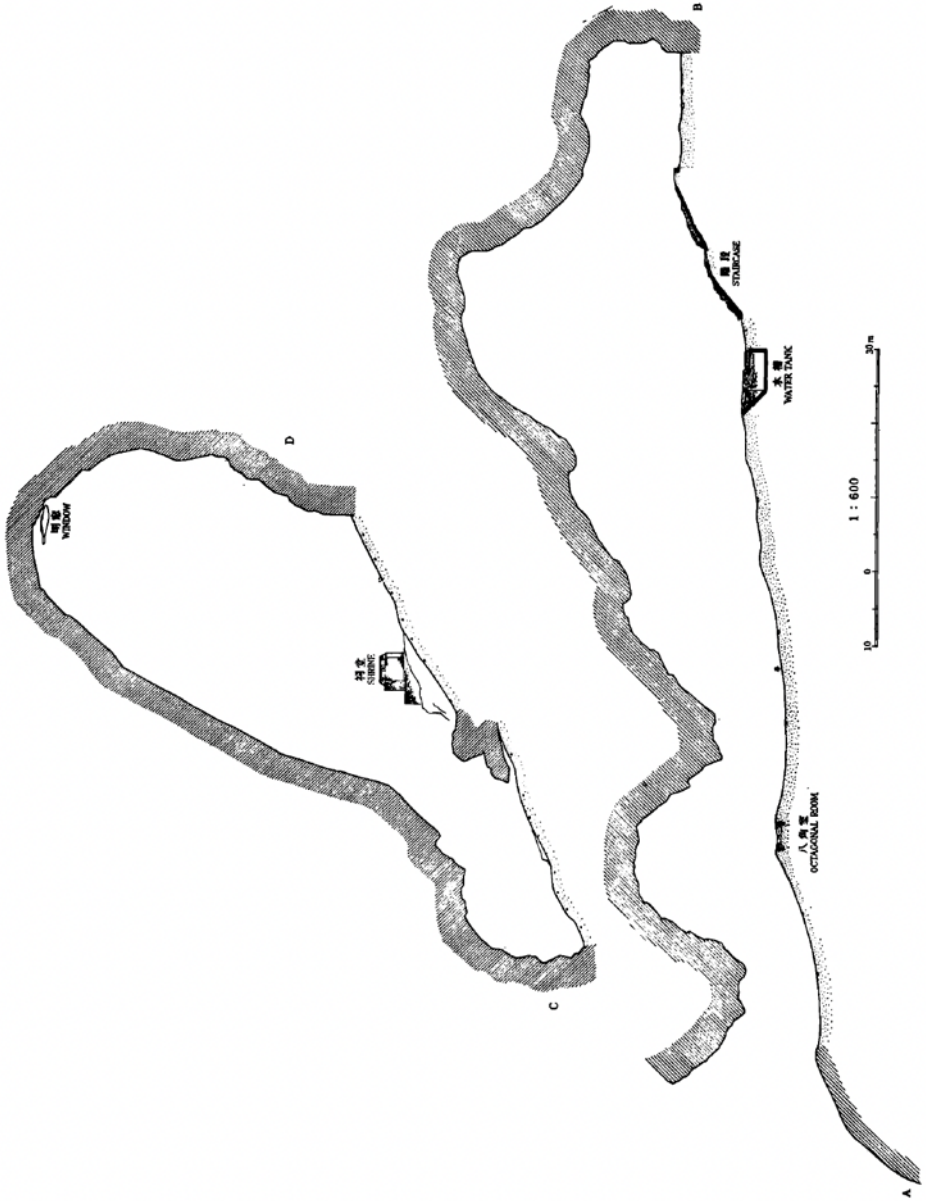


1	Babuzai	4	Mount Ilam	7	Sar Dheri	10	Sare-Makhe-Dheri	13	Shamozai
2	Barikot	5	Mount Karamar	8	Sahr-i-Bahlol	11	Sawal Dher	14	Takht Bhai
3	Jamal Garhi	6	Pirsai	9	Sanghao Cave	12	Shahbaz Garhi	15	Kashmir Smast

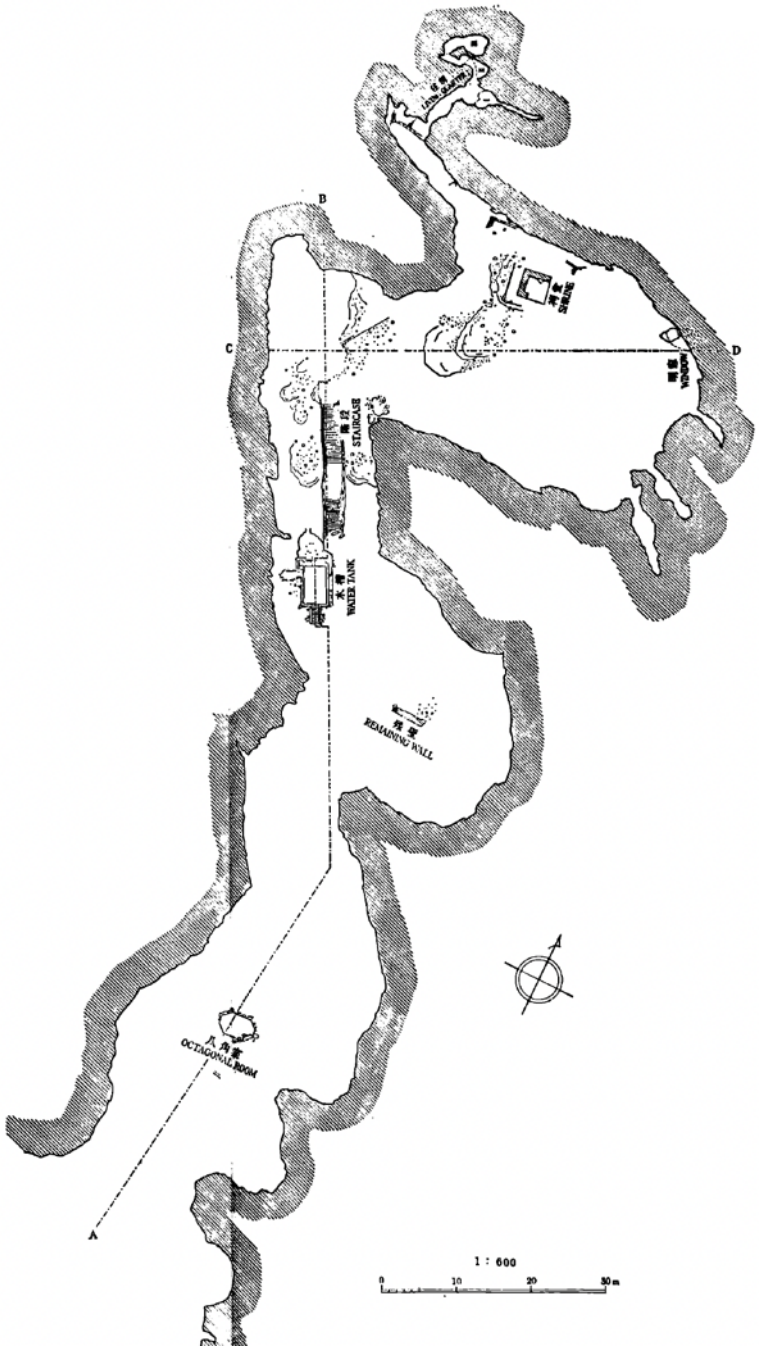
3. Plan of Kashmir Smast (Nasim Khan, 2002a, p. 248)



4. Plan of the Great Cave (Mizuno, 1962, p. 224)



Great Cave, Section 洞窟 断面図



5. Texts

a. Mahābhārata

i. 3.80.99-100 (Vanaparva) (Agravāla, 1970, p. 84)

Atha pañchanadaṁ gatvā niyato niyatāśanaḥ |
Pañchayajñānavāpnoti karmaśo ye'nukīrtitaḥ ||
Tato gachchhet dharmajña Bhīmāyāḥ sthānamuttamam |
Tatra snātvā tu yonyāṁ vai naro Bharatasattama || .

Then, having gone to the giver of knowledge, having observed the fixed knowledge of the five elements, by the actions mentioned above, one who knows the Dharma should go to the best place of **Bhima**, and after bathing there in the womb, O best of the Bharatas.

ii. 3.80,100-102 (van Buitenen, 1975, p. 376)

tato gaccheta dharmajña bhīmāyāḥ sthānam uttamam,
Tatra snātvā tu yonyāṃ vai naro bharatasattama.
Devyāḥ putro bhaved rājaṃs taptakuṇḍalavigrahaḥ,
Gavāṃ śatasahasrasya phalaṃ caivāpnuyān mahat.
Girimuñjaṃ samāsādya triṣu lokeṣu viśrutam, pitāmahaṃ namaskṛtya
gosahasraphalaṃlabhet

"From there one should travel to the prominent site-of **bhīmā** (sic); by bathing there in the Womb, a man will become a Goddess' son, wearing a body with earrings of regined gold, and obtain the great reward of a gift of a hundred cows. Proceeding to Girimuñja, famed in the three worlds, one obtains the reward of a thousand cows."

b. Agni Purāṇa (Gangadharan, 1954)

371.14b-18
Ghorā is the name of the first hell. Sughorā is below that. The others are Atighorā, Mahāghorā, Ghorarūpā, the fifth, the sixth known as Taralatārā, the seventh one Bhayānakā, Bhayotkaṭā, Kālarātrī, Mahācaṇḍā, Caṇḍā, Kolāhalā, the one known as Pracaṇḍā, Padmā, Narakanāyikā, Padmāvatī, Bhīṣaṇā, **Bhīmā**, Karālikā, Vikarālā, Mahāvajrā, Trikoṇā, Pañcakoṇikā, Sudīrghā, Vartulā, Saptabhūmā, Subhūmikā and Dīptamāyā. The wicked suffer in these.

c. Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa (7.20.53.102) (Vijñānananda, 1921)

i. 7.30.53-102

53-102. Vyāsa said :-- O King! I will now describe those Pīthas (Sacred places), the mere hearing of which destroys all the sins of men. Hear. I describe duly those places where the persons desiring to get lordly powers and to attain success ought to worship and meditate on the Devī. O Mahārāja! The face of Gaurī fell in Kāśī; She is well known there by the name Viśālāksī; [….] **as Bhīmā in Himādri;** [….] Thus I have mentioned to you the one hundred and eight pīthas (sacred places or seats of the Deity) and as many Devīs.

ii. 7.38.3-10 The Vows and the Sacred Places of the Devī

3-10. The Devī spoke :-- "O Himavan! All the places that are on this earth are all Mine and all should be visited. And every moment is fit for taking vows and utsabs. For I am of the nature pervading every moment; so whatever actions are performed at any moment are all

equal to taking My vows and utsabs. O King of Mountains! Still I am now telling something out of My affection to My Bhaktaṣ. Hear. There is a great place of pilgrimage named Kolhāpura in the southern country. Here the Devī Lakṣmi always dwells. The second place is Mātripura in the Sahyādrī mountain; here the Devī Reṇukā dwells. The third place is Tulajāpur; next is the place Saptaśriṅga, the great places of Hingulā and Jvālā Mukhī. Then the great places of Sākambharī, Bhrāmāri, Śrīraktadantikā and Dūrgā. The best of all places is that of Vindhyācala Vāsinī, the great places of Annapurnā and the excellent Kāñcipur (Conjiverum). Next come the places of **Bhīmā Devī**, Vimalā Devī, Śrī Caṇdralā Devī of Karṇāṭ, and the place of Kauśikī. Then the great place of Nīlāmbā on the top of the Nīlāparvata, the place of Jāmbūnadeśvarī, and the beautiful Śrīnagara.

iii. 9.50.46-100 Durgā Mantra

O Nārada! Now I am saying the principal nine lettered Durgā Mantra, the best of all the Mantras. “Aim Hrīm Klīm Cāmuṇḍāyai Vicce” is the nine lettered Vīja mantra of Śrī Durgā; it is like a Kalpa Vrikṣa yielding all desires. One should worship this mantra by all means. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśa are the Ṛṣis of this mantra; Gāyatrī, Uṣṇik and Anuṣṭhubha are the chandas; Mahākālī, Mahā Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are the Devatās; Rakta Dantikā, Durgā, and Bhrāmarī are the Vījas. Nandā, Sākambharī, and **Bhīmā** are the Śaktis and Dharma (Virtue), Artha (wealth) and Kāma (desires), are the places of application (Viniyoga).

[….]

Then worship the attendant deities called Āvaraṇa Pūjā :-- Brahmā with Sarasvatī on the east, Nārāyaṇa with Lakṣmī on the Nairirit corner, Śaṅkara with Pārvatī on the Vāyu corner, the Lion on the north of the Devī, and Mahāsura on the left side of the Devī; finally worship Mahiṣa (buffalo). Next worship Nandajā, Raktadantā, Śakambharī, Śivā, Durgā**, Bhīmā,** and Bhrāmarī. Then on the eight petals worship Brahmā, Maheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nāra Simhī, Aindrī, and Cāmuṇḍā.

iv. 12.6.108-149 The thousand and eight names of the Gāyatrī

108-149. Phalinī, Phaladā, Phalgu, [….] Bhujangavalayā, **Bhīmā**, Bheruṇḍā, Bhāgadheyinī; Thou art Mātā, Māyā, Madhumatī, Madhujihavā, Manupriyā, Mahādevī, Mahābhāgīā

d. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa/ Devī Māhātmaya

i. Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa Canto 91 (Pargiter, 1904)

And again when taking a terrible form on mount Himavat I shall destroy Rākṣasas for the sake of delivering the munis, all the munis bowing their bodies reverently shall laud me then; hence my name “The terrible goddess” [Bhima] shall become celebrated.

ii. Devī Māhātmya 11.48 (Coburn, 1991, p. 78)

My name will become famous as **'the fearsome goddess' (bhimadevi**). When a demon named Aruna* shall do a lot of killing in the three worlds,
11.49 Then I, taking on bee form, consisting of innumerable bees, Will slay the great demon for the wellbeing of the triple world.

iii. Devī Māhātmya- Murti Rahasya: "The Secret Pertaining to Forms" (Coburn, 1991, p. 193)

18. The fearsome (**bhima***) goddess is of blue color, with shining tusks and teeth, A woman with wide eyes, and round, plump breasts.
19. She carries a glittering sword, a drum, and a bowl fashioned from a human skull. She is called the solitary warrior, Kalaratri*, hymned as the one who grants desires.

e. Padma Purāṇa (Deshpande, 1951)

1.17.180-215
…. (*Viṣṇu said*:) You, all wonderful, are everywhere, and are to be seen in all beings. Whatever is good or bad, is not to be seen without you; yet, I shall hereafter tell you in which places you should be seen by those who are desirous of success and remembered by those desirous of (having) land. You will be remembered (or called) Sāvitrī at the sacred place called Puṣkara, the preeminent and auspicious (sacred place) among all the sacred places.[1]
(You will be known as)
[…..]
83. Goddess Bhīmā on the Himālaya mountain;
[…]
I have enumerated these one hundred and eight of the names (of Sāvitrī); I have also told the names of the hundred and eight sacred places. He who mutters or hears these will be free from all sins. He, the best of men, who bathes in these sacred places and sees (Sāvitrī), will, being freed from all sins, live in the city of Brahmā for a Kalpa. A man who recites these hundred and eight names in the vicinity of Brahmā, on the full-moon or the new-moon day will have many sons. He, who listens to it at the time of offering a cow or a *śrāddha* or everyday at the time of offering worship to god(s), reaches supreme Brahman.

f. Śiva Purāṇa (Shastri, 1950)

a. Section 5. Umā-Saṃhitā. Ch 8- Description of Hell (Naraka) (5.8.20-21)
17. At the end of the seventh nether-world Tala, there are twenty-eight Narakakotis situated in terrible darkness.
18. The first cell is called Ghorā. Sughorā is situated beneath it. Atighorā and Mahāghorā come next and Ghorarūpā is the fifth.
19. The sixth is named Talātalā. The seventh is Bhayānakā. The eighth is Kālarātri and the ninth is Bhayotkaṭā.
20-21. The tenth beneath the previous is Caṇḍā. Mahācaṇḍā is lower still. Caṇḍakolāhalā is another. Pracaṇḍā, Caṇḍanāyikā, Padmā, Padmāvatī, Bhītā, **Bhīmā**, Bhīṣaṇanāyikā and Vajrā are terrible, very terrible.
22. The next eight cells are Trikoṇā, Pañcakoṇā, Sūdīrghā, Akhilārtidā, Samā, Bhīmabalā, Atyugrā and the eighth Dīptaprāyā.
23. Thus the cells of Naraka have been mentioned to you by their names. Each of these is meant for the torture for a particular sin. Thus the twenty-eight cells for twenty-eight type of sins.

b. Section 5. Umā-Saṃhitā. Ch 50- The incarnation of Śatākṣī (5.50.49-50)
49. Again I shall take a terrible form and devour the Rākṣasas. I shall then be as famous as **Bhīmā Devī**
50. Whenever there is harassment caused by the Asuras I shall surely incarnate and work for your welfare.

g. Skanda Purāṇa (Tagare, 1950)

Section 2- Uttarārdha, Chapter 72- Victory of Durgā (2.72.3)
2. O Pot-born Sage, I shall tell the names of those great Śaktis born of the limbs of Umā. Listen to them factually:
3. Trailokyavijayā, Tārā, Kṣamā, Trailokyasundarī, Tripurā,
Trijaganmātā, Bhīmā, Tripurabhairavī,

h. Travelougues of Xuanzang (Beal, 1981, pp. 112–114)

‘To the north-east of the city of Po-lu-sha 50 li or so we come to a high mountain, on which is a figure of the wife of Īśvara Dêva, carved out of green (bluish) stone. This is Bhîmâ Devî. All the people of the better class, and the lower orders too, declare that this figure was self-wrought. It has the reputation of working numerous miracles, and therefore is venerated (worshiped) by all, so that from every part of India men come to pay their vows and seek prosperity thereby. Both poor and rich assemble here from every part, near and distant. Those who wish to see the form of the divine spirit, being filled with faith and free from doubt, after fasting seven days are privileged to behold it, and obtain for the most par their prayers. Below the mountain is the temple of Mahêśvara Dêva; the heretics who cover themselves with ashes, come here to offer sacrifice’.

6. Inscriptions from Kashmir Smast

a. Bronze Ewer 1(Falk, 2008, p. 138)
śrī-bhīmaya panīkavāhīkāna maṭhā devadharma
"(this is) a religious donation for śrī-Bhīmā in the math of the water-carriers'.

b. **Bronze Ewer 2** (Falk, 2008, p. 139)
<triśūla> bhīmyā pānīamaṭhe devadharma rakṣitasya | horamaysanagara
"This is the religious donation by Rakṣita for Bhīmā, in the Maṭha of the water at the town of Ahura Mazda"

c. Bronze Ewer 3 (Falk, 2008, p. 139)
ṣrī-bhīmaya guhavāsīnīya pāṇīavahīaṇā maṭhā [m]āgalasya rītīghaṭakasya dīvadharma nagara
"This is the religious donation of a pot for auspicious occasions (made) from bell-metal for ṣrī-Bhīmā, who lives in the cave, in the Maṭh of the water-carriers, in the town'.

d. Copper plate inscription (Falk, 2003, p. 5)
*1: Siddam svasti bhagavataḥ sura-varanara-siddha-gandharvva-vidyādhara-daṇā*dy(ā)
2: *sita-mahākandara-śikhare śrī-miñja-parvva-mahāguhā-nivasiny<ā> bhī*
3: māyāḥ pādamūle prayacchaty akṣayaṇīyaṃ suvarṇā satera pañca
4: svassa 5 viṣṇ,u.śirir (u)ttara-śālīyakaḥ asya suvarṇasya vardhamā
5: Neśvarasya tṛbhiś ca paṭṭakaiḥ snāpanaṃ kartavyaṃ puṣpahārika-dvayena ca kuṭivy *<ā> p(ā)*
7: taṇḍulārdhāḍhaka-bhktasy <ā> pūpaka-dvayaṃ caikekasya deyaṃ tathaiva kṛṣṇacatu
8: rddaśyāṃ kuṭivy<ā>pāra-maṭhakena puṣ-pahārika-dvayena bhoktavyaṃ snāapanañ ca deva
9: sya kbharttavyaṃ yāvad āpo gāvaś candrādit-yau tāvad bhoktavyam asya suvarṇasyāgrahā(r)o
*10: gañ(j)avaram apada-kom*āpa ekaduśam adhiṣṭaṃ na*yade*vanyoṇyaya -trama…
11: … ratakata.. y*amādo*vave*cched ekudata sa* bha *3 marga ś…*

1-4: "Siddham Svasti. On the mountain-top of the Lord, which is the abode of gods, perfect men, ascetics, gandharvas, vidyādharas, gaṇas etc. with its great glen, at the feet of (goddess) Bhīmā, who lives in the great cave on the Śrī-Miñja mountain, Viṣṇuśiri, who has (had) access to the higher hall, offers as a permanent endowment 5 golden staters.
4-5: His golden Varhamāneśvara is to be given a bath (ornated?) with three girdles (?).
5-6: And two garland sellers (and) the inhabitant of the Maṭh in charge of the chop business shall eat on (every) eighth (night) of the waxing moon in front of the Varhamāneśvara
6-7: After Saktu has been offered, to each and every one (present) rice (made from) half an *āḍhaka* of rice grains (= ca.2kg) and two cakes (*apūpaka)* should be given
7-9: in the same way the inhabitant of the Maṭh in charge of the shop business and the two garland sellers shall eat on (every) fourteenth (night) of the waning moon, and the god is to be given a bath.
9: (They) shall eat as long as the waters, cows, moon and sun (will exist)
9-10: This donation of gold of his, the Gañjavara ……
10: Year x3 Mārgaśirṣa…."

e. Inscribed Sandstone statue of Viṣṇu (Falk, 2008, p. 140)
Savacchare trayo-tṛś(e) variṣāyā
Aṣāḍhamāsa-divase pañca-
Mi[atra di] vase nārāyaṇapratimā pratitthāvita
Bhīmāsthāne gharaṭṭamaṭhe śrī vaïlikā-
Yā devadharma

“In the year thirty-three, in the rainy season, on the fifth day of the month of Āṣāḍha, on this day this statue of Nārāyaṇa was installed at the holy place of Bhīmā in the Mill-maṭha by the honourable (lady named) Vaïlikā as a religious gift”.