

## AIPS Travel Grant Final Report

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Conference: Roots of Peristan: The Pre-Islamic Cultures of the Hindukush-Karakorum

Location: IsMEO: Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East, Rome Italy

Dates: October 5-7, 2022

1. Significance to Pakistan Studies: Three papers were presented to an international group of scholars, all of whom are interested in the Pre-Islamic Cultures of the Hindukush-Karakorum, a geographic designation that includes northern Pakistan and Afghanistan. The papers collectively open a window into a period of history (7th-11th centuries) of northern Pakistan that is comparatively little-known.

The papers presented:

1. "Tibetans in Gilgit and Wakhan – New Data, New Implications".

This paper presented new epigraphic data, discovered by the author, of Tibetan presence in the Gilgit region of northern Pakistan and linked it with Tibetan presence in Afghanistan and throughout the Pamir region in the 7th-9th centuries. Additional new epigraphic data discovered by the author indicates a previously unrecognized second period of Tibetan presence in the late 10th-early 11th centuries. The paper discussed how these new data fit into our existing perception of history of the region and the implications for our historical understanding of the political, social, economic and religious environment of those times.

2. "On the Title Tham of Hunza Rulers".

This paper discussed the various etymologies proposed for the Burushaski language title of "Tham" for the rulers of the Hunza & Nager states in what is now northern Pakistan. The paper expanded the geographic scope of this usage to include additional areas of northern Pakistan, drawing on local histories and genealogies. The paper concluded that although an Old Turkish etymology is plausible, a local indigenous etymology is equally possible, a conclusion which lends support to the concept of Burushaski as a pre-Indo-Aryan language substrate underlying the languages and culture of the region.

3. "Onomastics of Shri Badat, the Cannibal King of Gilgit".

This paper revised the author's previous hypothesis that the name "(Shri) Badat" might be derived from Brahmadata, the name of a king mentioned in Buddhist Jatakas. Instead, the paper proposed that it is linguistically more plausible to derive "Badat" from "Bhagadatta", thereby linking the name of this ancient king of Gilgit with the little-known Palola Shahi dynasty of Gilgit, whose kings bore the title (attested in epigraphy) of "Bhagadatta". Of additional interest is that "Shri Badat", as a king well-known in legend, is also recognized as one of the first to bear the title of "Tham".

2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables

In the context of three days of diverse presentations, the above three presentations led to many discussions and sharing of data. These exchanges add weight to the propositions put forward in the papers and will likely lead to collaboration with international and US scholars from diverse fields.

The three papers will be published in the conference proceedings. Additionally, several new topics that evolved from the presentations are very likely to form the basis for additional articles and publications. The author received general encouragement and agreement for a book concept. Several presenters expressed willingness to collaborate on an additional second book project.