Introduction

We are delighted to present this issue of *Studia Hercynia* which contains the proceedings of the conference 'Entangled Pasts and Presents: Temporal Interactions and Knowledge Production in the Study of Hellenistic Central Asia' which took place at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies at the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, Germany, on March 24–26, 2022.

This conference was the fourth meeting of the 'Hellenistic Central Asia Research Network' (HCARN), which followed three successful conferences organized at the University of Reading in 2016 (HCARN I, hosted by Rachel Mairs, the network's founder), at the Eurasia Department of the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin in 2017 (HCARN II, hosted by Gunvor Lindström), and at the Charles University Prague in 2018 (HCARN III, hosted by Ladislav Stančo) (see www.bactria.org). Originally planned for 2020, HCARN IV in Freiburg had to be postponed to 2022 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

While the previous conference theme and proceedings centred on ritual and religion (now published in Lindström ed. 2023, *Studia Hercynia* 27/1), this edition shifts attention to diverse temporal interactions and modes of knowledge production in and about Hellenistic Central Asia, highlighting the complex entanglements of various pasts and presents – both in antiquity and modernity. Concerns of the present profoundly shape human understandings of the past. And, inversely, our understandings of the past have profound implications for the present. Such temporal interactions are especially relevant for the study of Hellenistic Central Asia, which has attracted a broad range of scholars – archaeologists, historians, art historians, numismatists, and linguists – each contributing new ideas, perspectives, and varied sources and data to the expanding body of research in this field. The surge of scholarly and popular interest in Hellenistic Central Asia – reflected in the growing HCARN community since 2016 – is entangled with the rise of interdisciplinarity, the integration of new bodies of evidence, as well as with contemporary experiences of cultural interaction, global processes, and identity construction, all within shifting geopolitical landscapes. Indeed, knowledge production in and about Central Asia does not occur in a vacuum but is situated in a matrix of unusually diverse and complex contexts of the last centuries, shaped by various concerns, conflicting interests, and distinct historiographical traditions. These contexts range from Russian Turkestan and the British Raj, to Soviet Central Asia and the partition of India and Pakistan, and from post-Soviet Central Asia and modern Afghanistan, with its recent history of conflict, to Silk Road-inspired policy-making and development strategies. The complexities of past-present entanglements are not confined to modernity. In antiquity, people in their 'historical present' similarly engaged with and reimagined their past in different ways, using social and cultural memory for various purposes – interlinked with visions of the present and the future. As humans have diverse experiences of their world, ideas about the past and the (historical) present are likewise not uniform across society, highlighting the importance of considering multiple pasts and presents. The conference aimed to explore these entanglements by examining a range of temporal interactions and their impact on knowledge production, with the goal of gaining a clearer perspective on the shared objectives of this field, and its future direction.

The 28 papers and four posters presented addressed the theme from diverse perspectives. We would like to once again thank all of the presenters, who were (in the order of the programme): Rolf Strootman, Milinda Hoo, Fiona Kidd, Vito Messina, Ladislav Stančo, Martin Kovacs, Marc Mendoza, Kristina Junker, Aleksandr Naymark, Edward Ross, Jakub Havlík, Mariana Casto, David Fallon, Stefan Härtel, Razieh Taasob, Gunvor Lindström, Patryk Skupniewicz, Yue Minjing, Gunnar Dumke, Olga Kubica, Marike van Aerde, Rishika Dhumal, Chandreyi Basu, Michael Iliakis, Wu Xin, Tomas Larsen Høisæter, Viktor Humennyi, Claude Rapin, Maria Riep, Lauren Morris, Rachel Mairs, Hafiz Latify, Olivier Bordeaux, and Stefan Baums.

Six papers are presented in this issue. The first, Rolf Strootman's article entitled 'The Lost Valley of Iskandar', examines how the titular story by the 20th-century American pulp fiction author Robert E. Howard presents the idea of a lost Greek city or race in Central Asia. In doing so, it explores the manner in which Classical Greece was conflated with western Europe in literary fiction, and the entanglement between fiction, European scholarship, and travel writing.

Milinda Hoo's article, entitled 'Baktrians as Self, Parthians as Other? The entanglements of North-Eastern inbetweenness in the study of Hellenistic Central Asia', introduces the concept of inbetweenness to examine entanglements in ancient and modern perceptions of the North-East (Central Asia). Analysing geographical imaginations of this space, the article explores how meaning and identity was ascribed to the Bactrians and Parthians in ancient historiography – respectively, as part of the western Self and north-eastern Other – and how these ideas reverberate in interpretations of material culture typologised as Greek at Ai Khanoum and Nisa.

Marc Mendoza's article, 'To Sogdiana and Back: Demodamas, the Branchidae, and Apollo Didymeus', concentrates more on perceptions of the past in antiquity, evaluating how the massacre of the Branchidae was perceived by both contemporary writers and citizens of Miletus. Arguing that Demodamas probably wrote his own version of the event, Mendoza considers how it might have been conveyed in Miletus. He concludes that Alexander's destruction of the 'copycat shrine' in Sogdiana was perceived as appropriate religious punishment, and that the construction of altars of Apollo Didymeus at the edge of the *oikoumene* enhanced the reputation of Miletus.

Aleksandr Naymark's article, 'The End of Greek Rule in Soghd. Early Euthydemus Imitations from Bukhara', also addresses the use of the past in antiquity. It reconsiders the date of the loss of Greek control over Sogdiana (usually thought to date around the period of the siege of Bactra, ca. 206 BCE) through a detailed study of the earliest Bukharan imitation coinages of the Graeco-Bactrian king Euthydemus – variations of which were produced in the region for some four and a half centuries. An in-depth historiographic review and new analysis of these imitations indicate that Greek rule ended in the region during ca. 230–226 BCE, around the revolt of Euthydemus.

Stefan Härtel's article, 'Greeks, Iranians, and Kušān in Tokharistān. Bactrian Identities and the Kušān Empire', investigates how Kushan imperial representatives engaged with past Iranian and Greek imperial legacies in Bactria, primarily through epigraphic and numismatic material. In doing this, he observes that both Iranian and Greek elements were perceived as 'indigenous' to the region despite an awareness of cultural heterogeneity, and that both traditions (along with a 'Kushan' one) were utilised to shape Kushan imperial identity.

Finally, Claude Rapin's article, 'Redrawing a Map of Alexander the Great's Empire: Correcting Old Historical Geographical Errors', is centered on the modern historiographic reconstruction of the geography of Alexander's campaigns, particularly in Central Asia. The article presents new maps and an accompanying synthesis of the author's ongoing research into the identification of the routes and toponyms involved. First highlighting the evolution of – and

difficulties in – the presentation of these campaigns in a diversity of available maps and atlases since the 16th century, the article then summarises and visualises Rapin's standpoint and its divergences from that of other scholars.

Several individuals and institutions made this conference possible in the first place. We would like to warmly thank Sitta von Reden for co-organising the conference with us and her great support during this process. We are also indebted to the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies for providing a wonderful venue and excellent logistical support – with particular thanks on this note to Andrea Nordlander and Attilio Ferrarese. We are also deeply appreciative to our student assistants, Caterina Schorer and Marius Rositzka, for effectively ensuring that everything ran smoothly. We are deeply grateful for the generous financial support that facilitated the conference, including a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft which enabled the participation of several speakers, grants from Humanismus Heute and the Freiburg Insitute for Advanced Studies, and resources from the BaSaR Project, 'Beyond the Silk Road: Economic Development, Frontier-Zones, and Inter-Imperiality in the Afro--Eurasian World Region (300 BCE to 300 CE)' (PI: Sitta von Reden), which received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 742645).

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