CHAPTER 3

Cosmopolitan Literature

In the middle of the first century AD, a Pharisee from Asia Minor, Paul the Apostle, writes in koinê Greek to the emergent Christian community in Rome, citing passages from the Psalms and Deuteronomy to do so. About a century later, a Chinese intellectual, known to us as Master Mou, living in exile in what is now Hanoi during the collapse of the Han Dynasty, is said to write a Treatise on Removing Doubts (牟子理惑論), which uses quotations from the by-then canonical Confucian classics to advance the Buddhist cause. Both men, in other words, are circulating in complex cultural worlds. Paul (or Saul, to give him his pre-conversion name) was by birth a Jew, a Pharisee of the Tribe of Benjamin, born in Tarsus in Asia Minor (near modern Adana and the Mediterranean coast of Turkey), though apparently raised in Jerusalem itself (Acts 26:4); while Hebrew still had liturgical functions within Judaism, and Aramaic was the spoken language of most Jews living in Judea, Paul/Saul was likely more comfortable in the koinê Greek in which he wrote his epistles. He was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37–8) and as such participated in multiple social, cultural, and political networks—Jewish, Christian, Hellenistic Greek, Roman. Master Mou (if he existed; there are reasons to doubt; see below) likewise inhabited multiple cultural worlds. A scholar-official trained in Ruist (i.e., Confucian) texts, Mou Rong was forced to flee the center during the Yellow Turban rebellion near the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty (184 AD) and is said to have ended up in Jiaozhou, then a peripheral province of the crumbling Han but today roughly northern Vietnam. Jiaozhou was, at the time, the leading Chinese port for trade with the West, and it may have been through maritime contacts here, rather than through more familiar terrestrial contacts along the Silk Road in the following centuries, that China first encountered Buddhism.¹

According to the preface to the text, Jiaozhou was also home to many Daoist practitioners, differing in their religious and philosophical convictions from Master Mou’s more orthodox Ruism but likewise refugees from the collapse of the Eastern Han. Master Mou, like most other Han Chinese of the pre-modern era, will likely have spoken a Sinitic language somewhat removed from the classical Chinese in which he wrote. The linguistic environment in Jiaozhou is somewhat more uncertain, but there is reason to think that the common language spoken there may have been the ancestor of what is now Vietnamese, though other languages, from other language families, may have been spoken as well.2

I have discussed Master Mou’s text in more detail elsewhere and offer only a sample of my findings here.3 Briefly, where other early Chinese Buddhist texts frequently make use of vernacular registers (used for the first time for literary purposes),4 Master Mou’s text is not only composed in the classical idiom, but also makes frequent use of allusions to major texts of the philosophical tradition, playfully quoting these texts against their own intentions as a rhetorical device to present Buddhist ideas in a favorable light. As a brief example, consider the following passage:

Someone asked: “You use the classics and the Commentaries to explain Buddha’s words. Your words are abundant and your meaning lucid, your prose vigorous and your speech beautiful. But it goes nowhere; these aren’t the Buddha’s truths, they’re your debating points.” Master Mou said: “They’re not my debating points; it’s just that I see broadly and am not confused.” He was asked: “What is your technique for seeing broadly?” Master Mou said, “It comes from the Buddhist canons. At the time when I did not yet understand the Buddhist canons, my confusion was deeper than yours. Though I recited the Five Classics, I treated them as flowers, and did not attain their fruits. Once I observed the Buddhist canons, and perused the essentials of Laozi, I was able to preserve a tranquil

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nature and gaze at the conduct of nonaction. When I turned to inspect worldly affairs, it was as if I looked down on the Heavenly Well Pass and stole a glance at mountainous ravines. I ascended Mounts Song and Tai and saw hillocks and anthills. The Five Classics are the Five Flavors; the Way of the Buddha is the Five Grains. After I heard the Way, it was as if the clouds parted and I saw the blazing sun, as if torches entered a gloomy room." (1:19b–20a)

I have elsewhere discussed this passage in some detail; for my purposes here it is sufficient to note that the three underlined passages are, respectively, citations of Confucius, the Zhuangzi and the Mencius—three very different, yet each highly influential, philosophical texts from the Chinese tradition, each already several hundred years old by Master Mou's time. Most suggestively for my purposes, note the final underlined passage, which is a reference to a passage in the Mencius where it is claimed that Confucius exceeds ordinary men in the way that Mounts Song and Tai (both sacred in traditional Chinese practices) exceed anthills and hillocks. This trope, of taking a referent or figure from the epichoric or panchoric tradition and universalizing it, is one of the key organizing tropes of cosmopolitan discourse. In Mencius, Mounts Song and Tai are seen as vastly exceeding hillocks in height but nonetheless as real places, locatable within a map of the Chinese politico-cultural world. In Master Mou's text, by contrast, they have become pure allegory, representing not themselves but sheer vastness—and the tenor of the simile here is the Buddhist tradition, outside the world of traditional Chinese religion and representing itself both through this trope and everywhere as more completely universal.

As a follower of Jesus, Paul likewise universalizes tropes found in more local contexts. I am not a scholar of religion, but I would like to draw attention in passing to a brief moment of the sort I am describing in Paul's letter to the Romans. The epistle as a whole is concerned, in part, with the roles of both Jews and Gentiles as potential followers of Jesus and famously reduces the commandments to the proscription to love one's neighbors as one does oneself, for love is the completion of the law (πληρώμα ὁν νόμον ἡ ἀγάπη, Romans 13:10). This is already interesting as a universalization of

5 問曰。吾子以經傳理佛說。其辭富而義顯。其文域而說美。得無非其誠是子之辦也。牟子曰。非吾辦也。見博故。不惑耳問曰。見博其有術乎。牟子曰。由佛經。吾未解佛經之時。惑甚於子。雖誦五經通以為書。未成實矣。既吾睹佛經之說。覽老子之要。守恬備之性。覩無為之行。還視世事。每臨天井而聞溪谷。登嵩岱而見丘埀矣。五經則五味。佛道則五穀矣。吾自開道以來。如聞雲見白日。矩火入冥室焉。
the more specific provisions of the ten commandments, but Paul goes further a little later in the epistle, arguing that Jesus appeared among the Jews not only to confirm the promises made to them earlier but also that the Gentiles might praise God. He cites from Deuteronomy to do so, specifically (of course) from the Hellenistic Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint. The very fact that the sacred scriptures of an ethnically based religious group who did not proselytize were translated into Greek in the first place is, of course, an index of the spread and influence of the Greek language in the centuries immediately preceding Paul. But the passage itself has further interest. I cite only one line, from Romans 15:10: “and again it says, ‘Rejoice, nations, with his people’” (“καὶ πάλιν λέγει ἐδφράνθητε, ἐθνῆ, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ.”). In the context of Paul’s argument, the “nations” (sometimes translated, as in the King James Version, as “ye Gentiles”), are the non-Jewish followers of the (Judaeo-) Christian God, rejoicing that that god has honored the Jews.

The relation to the source text in Deuteronomy (32:43) is complicated here. The Septuagint text for the passage is identical to that quoted by Paul, and the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible (that is, the text canonical in Judaism) contains a Hebrew original that, while somewhat convoluted, is consistent with the sense of its Greek translation. In the context of the text of Deuteronomy, however, the sense is focused on divine revenge. I quote from Robert Alter’s translation here:

I will make My shafts drunk with blood,
and My sword will eat up flesh,
from the blood of the fallen and captive,
from the flesh of the long-haired foe.
Nations, O gladden his people,
for His servants’ blood will He avenge,
and vengeance turn back on His foes,
and purge His soil, His people.

While the passage is hardly flattering to God’s own people, making clear that they require vengeance themselves, it is clear in context that the author of the passage in Deuteronomy does not imagine the “nations” (goyim in Hebrew) as rejoicing but rather that their own torments should be a delight

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to the chosen people, who will see their enemies vanquished even as they suffer themselves. In a manner rather like Master Mou, then, Paul quotes his tradition against itself, in the service of rendering it in some way universal: where Master Mou used the tropes of Confucian rhetoric to establish Buddhism as greater than its rivals, here Paul uses rhetoric from the Hebrew Bible, in which context suggests that “the nations” will be punished, to suggest instead that (should they follow Jesus) they will join in the glories to come. The matter is still more complicated: the Dead Sea Scroll text from Qumran of the Deuteronomy passage reads quite differently. As Robert Alter translates verse 43 in the Qumran version, “Gladden, O heavens, His people, / and let all divine beings bow before Him. // For his sons’ blood He will avenge / and vengeance turn back on His foes. // And His enemies He will requite /and purge His people’s soil.” 7 Alter suggests that this may be the earlier version; if he is correct, then the earlier passage will have been directed as much at rival deities as at rival nations, and our current text will have won out thanks to the support of the more rigorous monotheists of later eras. Monotheism will have gone hand in hand with a stronger sense of rivalry with other traditions and peoples, leading to the Masoretic and Septuagint text, which Paul then transforms to suit his own agenda.

Both Saul/Paul and Master Mou, then, participated in what the Sanskritist Sheldon Pollock would call a literary cosmopolis, a vast, transcultural, translingual, transpolitical space within which a single literary language predominates—Saul/Paul within a world of cosmopolitan Greek culture under Roman rule, Master Mou within a cosmopolitan order built on classical Chinese, in his era slowly being permeated by another cosmopolitan order built around Buddhism. Pollock develops his thinking around the case of Sanskrit in the first millennium A.D. Pollock defines the Sanskrit cosmopolis (for him, paradigmatic of the cosmopolitan system as a whole) as a region, stretching from Afghanistan to Java, in which written Sanskrit literary texts are used for the aesthetic self-representation of political power, especially over the course of the first millennium A.D. Much of the evidence Pollock uses comes from inscriptional evidence; in much of the Sanskrit cosmopolis during this period, what Pollock calls “documentary” inscriptions—those endowing land to a particular family, for instance—are frequently written in the vernacular, while Sanskrit is used for those inscriptions that are “workly,” the term Pollock (drawing on Heidegger) uses for texts in literary language whose goal is aesthetic self-representation.

7 Ibid., 1043.
Crucially for Pollock, the choice to use Sanskrit for these purposes arises not as a result of conquest, colonization, trade, or religious proselytizing. Rather it is a consequence of the charismatic power of the Sanskrit language and of the cultural products written in it.

It is important to notice here that the claim is not that the Sanskrit cosmopolis is somehow divorced from the political, a free-floating cultural public sphere unconstrained by kingly or imperial ambitions. Far from it; as the previous paragraph makes clear, the clearest evidence for the emergence of the cosmopolis comes from inscriptions erected by rulers—a political use of culture if ever there was one. Rather, the interesting phenomenon here is that the relationship between culture and power is very different in the case of the Sanskrit cosmopolis from that encountered in the modern world. Why do Javanese, Khmer, and South Indian courts go to such trouble to master the difficult and alien language of Sanskrit in order to represent their power to themselves and to the world, even after they have the means of doing so in their own languages? Why, for that matter, do kings in what is now Afghanistan continue to build Greek-style theaters centuries after Alexander’s conquests have come and gone? Why do successive ethnically Turkic dynasties in South Asia use Persian (native neither to themselves nor to their subjects) as their literary and administrative language? Why do Japanese rulers seeking to express their domination over the entire known world do so in terms obviously borrowed from Chinese (and thus from a people not subject to their power)? To imagine modern equivalents to these phenomena, it would be as if the British rulers of India in the nineteenth century had communicated with their colonial subjects in French, or as if American soldiers in the early twenty-first century in Iraq and Afghanistan had inspired the composition of poetry in Greek and Latin among the civilian officials they trained there.

I use these modern parallels advisedly. It is problematic to project modern notions of empire and imperialism onto regimes of the distant past, regimes as diverse as the conquest empires of Alexander and Genghis Khan, or the more settled and bureaucratic systems of Rome, the Islamic Caliphate, the Gupta Empire in India, and the Han and Tang Dynasties in China, which among them pursued radically different strategies for managing linguistic, cultural, and religious difference, not to mention holding radically different kinds of authority across the territories nominally or actually under their rule. That said, there is no question that all of these regimes exploited the populations subject to them, with varying degrees of efficiency and to varying extents, and that these regimes were built and
maintained through a level of violence that we rightly condemn when we see it in our own time.

Violent and exploitative as they undeniably were, political systems in and around Pollock's cosmopolitan millennium (very roughly, the first millennium AD, though with earlier beginnings in some cases, and continuing later, even to the present, in others) frequently saw fit to promote their own power in languages that were neither their own nor native among their subjects. As such, these regimes represented a relationship between culture and power quite distinct from that of the modern nation-state (where language and polity at least notionally coincide), or even the European empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or the global capitalism of the twenty-first, in which military and economic power is used to project dominant culture into dominated areas but under which the dominant culture is generally that of a nation-state. To pursue the Sanskrit case very briefly, it is not that there were no transregional political formations within the Sanskrit cosmopolis; indeed, the Gupta Dynasty ruled in some fashion over much of modern South Asia during the fourth through sixth centuries AD, and Pollock acknowledges that it was under the Guptas that Sanskrit cosmopolitan style "crystallized." Rather, the emergence of Sanskrit for the kinds of "workly" inscriptions (and of poetry) predates the Gupta period, long outlasts it, and circulates far more broadly than any notion of Gupta political power. Although in many of the regions of the cosmopolis writing and Sanskrit arrive simultaneously, and systems for writing the vernacular emerge only out of the cosmopolitan practice, this is not the case in the northern Indian heartlands of Sanskrit themselves (where so-called daughter languages of Sanskrit, including the Prakrits and Pali, were already in regular use), and, as Pollock notes, those polities that did employ vernaculars long tended to use them for more mundane functions.

Pollock takes great pains to distinguish his notion of the Sanskrit cosmopolis from two potentially similar constructs, those of the nation-state and the "civilization." That the Sanskrit cosmopolis is neither a nation-state nor even the precursor to one should be clear from the geographic and cultural breadth of the Sanskrit cosmopolis as Pollock

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9 Ibid., 538.
describes it. The distinction between Pollock's cosmopolis and notions of the civilization requires, perhaps, more unpacking. It is important first of all to understand that Pollock is here referring to the notion of a civilization as a constant and unchanging perception of the world, of the kind adopted by, for example, by Samuel Huntington, and not (to take a different model) that of the "smallest intelligible unit of study," favored by Toynbee, and which I discuss at greater length in the introduction. To some extent, indeed, Pollock's cosmopolis overlaps with Toynbee's civilization as a unit of study (though in practice the cosmopolitan millennium Pollock identifies cuts across Toynbee's civilizational divide between "Indic" and "Hindu" civilizations).10 Both categories, as I suggest in the introduction, fall victim to the same methodological flaw, which is that they of necessity impose chronological and geographic boundaries (however fluid) on phenomena qualitatively unsuited to them. As we shall see below, participating in more than one cosmopolis at a time is not only possible but perhaps even normal: India under the Mughals was fully part of both a Sanskrit and a Persian cosmopolis; Java, both a Sanskrit and an Arabic cosmopolis, without necessarily shifting from one to the other; many parts of the Middle East under Ottoman rule simultaneously inhabited the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish cosmopoleis. If Buddhism and Christianity can be said to constitute a different kind of cosmopolis, then even China and modern Europe have been bicosmopolitan, the former Buddhist and classical Chinese; the latter, Greco-Roman and Christian. Regions, and frequently individual authors, also participated in both panchoric and cosmopolitan, or both cosmopolitan and vernacular, ecologies, as we shall see in more detail in the chapter on vernacular ecologies. An ecological approach, which seeks typological similarities between different environments but does not need to draw strict boundaries between their geographically and chronologically bound expressions, may prove more methodologically fruitful here.

That said, the question remains of whether Pollock's notion of the literary cosmopolis is transferrable to other contexts. Pollock himself compares the Sanskrit cosmopolis to the world of Latin in the European West, arguing that the use of Latin as a language of culture and power is much more directly the result of conquest, exploitation, and the eradication of alternative languages, where Sanskrit seems to spread more peacefully. To varying degrees, this seems to be true of all of the languages that are suitable

candidates for cosmopolitan status. By its nature, the literary cosmopolis is destined to be a category with few members; only a small number of languages have ever had anything like the range of use over and beyond where they are natively spoken or spread solely by conquest or colonization. In the paragraphs that follow, I consider a small number of candidate cosmopolitan languages: Sumerian, Akkadian, Greek, Latin, Arabic, New Persian, and classical Chinese.

I believe that each of these languages bears enough ecological similarity to the patterns Pollock observes with Sanskrit to warrant consideration as a group, but several preliminary caveats are in order. First of all, if Pollock is correct that the Sanskrit cosmopolis was formed without significant assistance from conquest or colonization, it is the only such case I have uncovered. Each of the other candidate languages I discuss certainly spreads to at least some extent through these violent means; they earn their cosmopolitan status through the fact that their usage persists long after the empires that gave them rise had faded away or spread their influence in regions beyond their empire's farthest border. The literary status of Sumerian outlasts its population of native speakers, and Akkadian likewise remained (with Sumerian) the major literary language of the ancient Near East for nearly a millennium and a half after the fall of the Akkadian Empire around 2154 BC. Greek similarly maintained its status in the eastern Mediterranean long after the Roman conquests of the mid-second century BC and onwards, over the five hundred years or so before the division of the Roman Empire into Eastern and Western halves gave Greek again a firmer official footing in the East. Latin's status as the leading language of intellectual and cultural life in Western Europe continued after the fall of Rome in AD 476, arguably until the seventeenth century; during the so-called Dark Ages, peripheral regions, such as Ireland and the north of England, either never under Roman rule or far from its center, maintained the prestige of Latin. New Persian likewise was spread beyond the regions ruled by Persians, as when the Mughal emperors (originally speakers of Chagatay Turkish) spread the use of Persian as a literary language across India; New Persian's cosmopolitan status endured from its ninth-century origins through into the nineteenth century and encompassed regions, such as South Asia and the Ottoman Empire, not under the rule of native Persian speakers. Arabic (together with Islam) spread rapidly through the conquests of the early Islamic era, but, fourteen hundred years later, the language of Mohammed is still largely the literary language of a vast area. Classical Chinese spread throughout the territory
of the modern People's Republic of China and beyond in central Asia and in Vietnam as a result of conquest, but its use in Korea and (especially) in Japan was far more the result of emulation than of force.

A workable definition of a cosmopolitan literature, then, will be one for which the cultural resources acquired by the language may have been accumulated in part as the result of conquest, trade, or colonization, but that persists in the absence of those factors. If we think of cosmopolitan literatures in this way, we see perhaps that the contrasts Pollock draws between Sanskrit and Latin as model cosmopolitan languages are less sharp than his argument suggests. In its earliest stages, as I have already suggested and will argue further in the next chapter, Latin was a paradigmatic vernacular language, beginning its literary career through the translation of cosmopolitan texts (just as Pollock finds the vernaculars of South and Southeast Asia to have done). At the height of Roman imperial power, from the second century BC through the fifth century AD, Latin indeed became the dominant language of the Western Mediterranean, but in the East, Greek endured, both as a language of political power and as a language of cultural prestige (in this role sometimes with Roman imperial patronage).\(^\text{11}\) Latin spread at the point of a spear but was held back in the Greek East not by arms but by the charismatic force of the Greek language. Only after the fall of Rome and the emergence of vernacular polities in the early and high Middle Ages was the role of Latin clearly entrenched as cosmopolitan in Pollock's sense, serving as an essential medium for the aesthetic expression of rule by rival polities as the language of the church and as the language of written literature, culture, and education. To a significant extent, this cosmopolitan status was because of the role of the church as the predominant mechanism through which intellectual and cultural activity circulated in the period, but the status of Latin outlasted Catholic religious hegemony in Europe, and many Protestants, religious skeptics, and Jews relied on Latin as the most effective vehicle for their literary ambitions, secular as well as spiritual. As we shall see in the chapter on national literatures, intellectuals of the early modern period frequently found, in the Latinate "republic of letters," a space within which cultural production could, to at least some extent, escape the increasingly pervasive grasp of the emergent authoritarian state. The Latin cosmopolis, then, was neither as "demonic" as Pollock, with acknowledged polemical intent, suggests, even if

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11 Pace Pollock, who seems to suggest that Latin was the only language used for literature and inscriptions in the Roman empire. Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*, 270.
it was not exactly “angelic”; it can be understood neither as simply a vehicle of imperialist hegemony nor as a space innocently free of political domination. Rather, the Latin cosmopolis, like the other literary ecologies we have examined (and like all such ecologies, including the Sanskrit cosmopolis), featured a complex symbiosis between politics and culture, where the former frequently, but not always, drives the latter.

To explore the ecological situation of the literary cosmopolis further, the available evidence suggests three environments within which cosmopolitan literatures tended to flourish: panchoric environments, which for political or cultural reasons expanded to include large non-native-speaker communities; regions previously illiterate or with limited use of writing, which acquired literacy through contact with a cosmopolitan literary language; and regions where one cosmopolitan language was already in use and where a new cosmopolitan language either replaced or supplemented the first. Combinations of these scenarios are, of course, possible. Examples of the first model, as I argued in my previous book and as I will discuss in more detail later, include Greek and Chinese; if Sheldon Pollock is right about Sanskrit as always-already a transregional sacred language never spoken as a mother tongue by any community, then it, too, might fit this paradigm. Many of the regions into which these three languages expanded may fit the second model, as with Japan, Vietnam, and Korea from Chinese, and Java and the Khmer from Sanskrit. More complex is the third model, in which one cosmopolitan language supplants or supplements another; examples here may include Akkadian’s coexistence with, then supplanting of, Sumerian in the ancient Near East (not to mention Akkadian’s gradual replacement with Aramaic and/or Greek) as well as the emergence of New Persian as a cosmopolitan literary language alongside Arabic within the Muslim world beginning in the tenth century AD; the emergence of French as what Pollock would call a “cosmopolitan vernacular” in early modern Europe might provide a further example of this third model, which I will discuss further in the following chapter.

What all three models have in common is that in each case the region adopting a cosmopolitan literary language either lacks a strong written vernacular, or has a long history of diglossia (or rather digraphia) between cosmopolitan and vernacular literary languages. Since even today the range of spoken languages is much broader than the number of written languages, the choice of literary language in which to write has always been a trade-off between using a written language that circulates over a broad area but will as a result be harder for many people to learn, as it will deviate more from their spoken language, and using a written language that circulates over a narrower area but, because it more closely approximates the spoken language for more people, can be understood by a deeper cross-section of that regional population. In the pre-modern context, cosmopolitan languages represented the most extreme version of the first of these options; texts produced in these languages could be read across thousands of miles and often for thousands of years, although inequities in the systems of circulation, as we have seen, may have prevented this from happening in practice. The cost of so doing was always that the cosmopolitan literary language was remote from spoken language almost everywhere (and in many cases highly complex to learn) so that a relatively small percentage of the population in any given region would be able to read texts written in it. In modern times, this is of course an ecological disadvantage for a literature; however, in an era of generally low literacy and in a region where vernaculars generally were not used for literary purposes, cosmopolitan languages would in fact be the most ideally suited medium for ensuring the most successful transmission and circulation of literary texts. In an era of low literacy and high costs of textual production, breadth trumps depth.

Even when vernaculars emerged, of course, the accumulated cultural resources of the cosmopolitan literary language often remained impressive enough to ensure that the vernacular was long only a supplement to the cosmopolitan, not a replacement. Thus written literature in vernacular Latin begins in the third century BC with Livius Andronicus's *Odusia* (as we shall discuss further in Chapter 4), yet for centuries to come knowledge of cosmopolitan Greek remained an essential prerequisite of refinement and sophistication in the Roman world, and Roman writers continued to find Greek literature at least as influential as Latin until after Virgil. Moreover, in the eastern Mediterranean, Greek literature continued to be lively and productive throughout the era of Roman rule; while Latin was used for some administrative and epigraphical purposes, Greek writers of the period
demonstrated little if any sense of Latin literature as holding a cultural prestige commensurate with its political position. The vernacular literatures of modern Europe likewise remained peripheral to Latin (now elevated to cosmopolitan status) until the seventeenth century; writing in classical Chinese long remained a strong alternative to vernacular Japanese in that nation; and the use of Sanskrit in the seventeenth century in India rivaled or surpassed that of the by then well-entrenched vernaculars for many purposes. Even in the face of direct competition with vernacular literatures, then, cosmopolitan languages frequently remained vital. In part, this was because of continuing low levels of literacy and because of elite education systems, which, for the most part, continued to emphasize the learning of cosmopolitan literary languages into the early twentieth century, whether in university study at Heidelberg, Bologna, Oxford, or the Sorbonne, or in preparation for the civil service examinations in China. Beyond this, of course, vernacular languages (as we shall see in more detail in the next chapter) were frequently themselves quite far removed from the spoken languages of everyday people, as they are still today in many places, so that the relative advantage of ease of learning to be gained from using a vernacular rather than a cosmopolitan language was often smaller than a modern reader might suppose.

In what follows, I trace first the general outlines of the literary cosmopolis I have identified—Akkadian/Sumerian, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Persian, and Classical Chinese—in order to provide a general context for understanding the above observations. I then move on to consider a series of issues relevant to all cosmopolitan ecologies, with specific reference to a few in each case. The issues I explore are questions of literary circulation and polycentricity, the trope by which questions of literary style are projected onto the geography of the cosmopolis, and the use of explicitly cosmopolitan vocabulary and thinking within a cosmopolitan tradition, incipient or fully formed. Each of these issues illustrates something important about the structure and function of the literary cosmopolis, which can range from highly monocentric and hierarchical in circulation to highly polycentric and egalitarian in circulation and from highly self-conscious to rather more implicit in nature. These differences, as I suggest in the

16 I omit here a discussion of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, already much more ably documented in Pollock, The Language of the Gods.
conclusion, say something about the durability of each cosmopolis and about the changes it may have undergone over time.

CASE STUDIES IN THE LITERARY COSMOPOLIS

The earliest languages that could be described as cosmopolitan are Sumerian and Akkadian, both languages of the ancient Near East. These two languages, genetically unrelated to each other (Akkadian is a Semitic language; Sumerian has no certain linguistic relatives), successively emerged as literary and workly languages in Mesopotamia, though for long periods they performed this role jointly, even as neither was a major spoken language.17 Writing itself was invented in southern Mesopotamia in the mid-fourth millennium BC; by around 2600 BC (about a thousand years later), we find the first literary texts, which archaeological evidence shows to have spread already beyond political boundaries and beyond Sumerian city-states to non-Sumerophone regions, such as Syria. Very shortly thereafter (at least on the timescales of the ancient Near East), we find evidence for the use of other regional languages, Akkadian and Eblaite, for literary purposes. Though these uses seem indebted to prior developments in Sumerian, it should be noted that the latter language did not function at this time as a medium for interregional discourse.

The rise of the dynasty of Akkad around 2500 BC and its spread into Syria and Elam (i.e., what is now southern Iran) led to the spread of written Akkadian for administrative purposes across the empire—probably the first instance of the spread of a language as an instrument of empire, although Sumerian is thought to have remained the principal subject of education. When Akkad fell around 2100 BC, the king and lawgiver Ur-Namma established the so-called third dynasty of Ur, whose center was in the region formerly associated with Sumerian; although there is reason to believe Sumerian was no longer a spoken vernacular, it did become the major administrative and literary language of the empire. By the seventeenth century BC, roughly a thousand years after the earliest uses of the language for literary purposes and two thousand years after it was first

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17 This discussion of the history of Sumerian and Akkadian follows, as it greatly simplifies, Piotr Michalowski, “The Lives of the Sumerian Language,” in Margins of Writing, Origins of Culture, edited by S. L. Sanders. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2006. Michalowski notes that his own thinking on these issues derives in part from Pollock’s work.
committed to writing, Sumerian was no longer used for accounting, having been replaced by Akkadian, though Sumerian was still what was taught in school. No longer the mother tongue of any population, Sumerian remained the basis of the education system and (along with other languages such as Akkadian and Elamite) was in daily use for ritual purposes, though increasingly Akkadian was used for all other purposes. The ensuing few centuries saw a further decline in the role of Sumerian; school texts in Sumerian were now bilingual in Akkadian or, on the periphery of the Akkadian world, in local vernaculars; nonetheless, Sumerian persisted as a scholarly and liturgical language into the first couple of centuries AD. By this time, Akkadian itself was no longer the everyday spoken vernacular of Mesopotamia (having been replaced in that role by Aramaic), though it too persisted as a literary language; consequently two “dead” languages coexisted as cosmopolitan literary languages, even as Aramaic and Greek began to be used for everyday purposes.\(^\text{18}\) The exact date Sumerian ceased to be a spoken vernacular is strongly contested, and the question becomes as much a matter of terminology and theory as of evidence. Some have argued that Sumerian died out as a spoken language during the third dynasty of Ur (2100–2000 BC), precisely as it was being revived as a literary language;\(^\text{19}\) others believe that the spoken language became extinct much earlier, during the social turmoil of the middle Uruk period (i.e., in the mid-fourth millennium BC, at the very time it was committed to writing); according to some, it was never really a spoken language. Others think it continued as a spoken language much later.\(^\text{20}\) Whatever the case, it is clear that the lives of both Sumerian and Akkadian as written and cosmopolitan languages across broad swathes of territory not only long outlasted the states that propagated them but also likely operated quite independently of their lives as spoken vernaculars. If Sumerian and Akkadian were the first cosmopolitan languages, they exhibited the features of that ecology spectacularly.

I offer here only a brief introduction to the Greek cosmopolis, which features prominently in the later sections of this chapter and on which I have of course written before.\(^\text{21}\) After the conquests of Alexander the Great, kingdoms ruled by his Macedonian compatriots controlled the entire former

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18 Ibid., 172–3.
19 Ibid., 176.
21 Beecroft, Authorship and Cultural Identity.
Persian Empire, from Egypt to Bactria (modern Afghanistan), and the use of Greek as an official language spread across this vast region. The cultural role played by Greek in the Hellenistic era is highly complex, and it is necessary to examine several kinds of evidence. There is considerable evidence that the day-to-day use of Greek in many parts of the Hellenistic world, particularly Persia, was relatively limited and largely confined to Greek émigré communities. We know of the building of theaters and other typically Greek structures as far afield as Bactria (modern Afghanistan) and also of the erection of "workly" inscriptions in Greek there—there are edicts of Asoka (304–232 BC) transcribed into Greek in Gandhara (near modern Peshawar in Pakistan); although again we should probably think of a narrow urban elite speaking Greek and of the use of Greek as a prestige literary vehicle rather than as a language of daily use by a large population. Closer to the traditional centers of Greek culture, the inscriptive record shows that Greek became almost the exclusive language of inscriptions in Asia Minor after the conquests of Alexander, and most of the other languages of that region seem to have become extinct or extirpated during the Hellenistic era. Tellingly, in Asia Minor under Roman rule, Latin was used for a number of "workly" inscriptive purposes, but the use of Greek remained intact for most private purposes and remained, in many ways, the "language of power." This fact is one of the most telling in support of the cosmopolitan status of Greek in Pollock's sense; the language may have entered the heart of Asia Minor only as the result of conquest, but it became the dominant regional language and remained dominant even in the face of a very similar politico-military incursion by the Romans less than two centuries later. Similarly, and in spite of Pollock's seeming claims to the contrary that "if one wrote literature at all in the Roman Empire, one wrote in Latin," Greek literature in fact thrived during the centuries of Roman rule.

26 For a recent discussion of the Greek literature of this period, see Tim
This brings us to the Latin cosmopolis, which began rather differently. Whereas Classical Chinese and Greek emerged as cosmopolitan languages out of a panchoric past (and Sanskrit and even Arabic seem to have done the same), Latin began very much as a vernacular literature, formed around a local polity and very much in competition from the beginning with an existing cosmopolitan literature, Greek; only later, and after Rome's military might had passed its peak, did Latin take on a fully cosmopolitan role. I discuss the early Latin tradition in more detail in the following chapter; for the moment, I draw attention only to the fact that many of the earliest works of Latin literature—Livius Andronicus's *Odusia*, Ennius's *Annales*, the dramas of Naevius and Plautus—are either direct translations of works of Greek literature or else (as with some of Naevius's tragedies and with Ennius's epic) adaptations of existing Greek genres to themes from Roman history—very much, in other words, the kinds of works that Pollock finds at the origins of vernacular literatures in South and Southeast Asia.

As Pollock himself notes, the Latin language spread with conquest and quickly grew to supplant all other languages in the inscriptive record in the Western Mediterranean. Given that almost all of the spoken languages of the region today are either derived from Latin (as with the Romance languages) or descend from the vernaculars of peoples who arrived after the Romans (as with Arabic and the Germanic and Slavic languages), Latin seems to have supplanted the spoken languages of its Western Empire as well, with a few exceptions in more remote regions, such as the Celtic languages, Basque, and Berber. The latter of these was in fact used for some inscriptive purposes during the Roman era, while evidence from the jurist Ulpian (170–228) and the church father Irenaeus (died c. 202), bishop of Lugdunum, suggest that in the later second century AD, languages such as Punic, Syriac, and the Celtic languages of Gaul enjoyed at least limited use in legal matters and in sermons, while literature in Syriac began to emerge in the second and third centuries. The picture is thus more complex than Pollock represents it, as non-Latin languages certainly persisted in many domains throughout the history of the Western Roman Empire (and, in fact, it is arguably the Germanic languages, rather than


Latin, that are responsible for the disappearance of many Celtic languages and the marginalization of those that remain. Still, it is clear that Latin remained the almost exclusive linguistic vehicle for workly and aesthetic expression in the Western Empire, at least until the emergence of vernacular languages during the Middle Ages, while in the East, Greek maintained its cosmopolitan function throughout this period.

While it is certainly true that Latin spread in this function as a result of Roman conquest, and the continued vitality of Latin literary culture during the middle ages had much to do with the support of both the Church and the state (beginning at least with Charlemagne’s reforms), this later medieval and early modern phase of the history of Latin literature certainly resembles more closely the literary cosmopolis as modeled by Pollock. Relevant here are the notions of *translatio imperii* and *translation studii*, or the “transfer of rule” and the “transfer of learning,” by which medieval Europeans like Otto of Freising (1114–58) and Chretien of Troyes (fl. late twelfth century), 28 accounted for the historical shift of political power and (from their perspective) cultural knowledge, from the Greek world to Rome to northern Europe. 29 Connected to some extent to the Crusades, these notions of “translation” linked political and cultural authority, but they did so in a reproducible way, since the process of translation was always open to repetition and to multiple pathways of reception such that, for example, England, France, and the Holy Roman Empire could each consider themselves in some way the legitimate heir to Rome and to Roman learning. Only after the discovery of the Americas radically transformed the scale and scope of *imperium* for Europeans did this universalizing yet reproducible rhetoric lose its power. 30 This reproducibility of cultural and political legitimation is conceptually similar to the patterns observed by Pollock in the Sanskrit cosmopolis, by which emblems of royal authority, such as features of sacred geography, could be mapped onto new physical locations such that many kingdoms throughout South and Southeast Asia found themselves along Ganges rivers and

in the shadows of Mounts Meru.\textsuperscript{31} As in the case of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, cultural and political power proceeded hand-in-hand in medieval Europe, but in both cases the culture in question was transregional in scope, deriving its own legitimacy as much from its long history and charismatic authority as from its association with contemporary political power. The notion that political power should seek legitimation chiefly in the vernacular language of its subjects would have to wait for the emergence of the nation-state.

Arabic, like Latin, becomes cosmopolitan through conquest and remains cosmopolitan (to this day) in no small part because of its association with Islam. In its origins, as I suggested in the previous chapter, however, it may have begun as something more like an epichoric/panchoric system, on the lines of Greek, Sanskrit, and Classical Chinese, during the pre-Islamic era, when the tradition of the \textit{qasida}, or ode, circulated as a medium through which tribal relations could be understood. First emerging as a world-language in the seventh century as a result of the Islamic conquests and quickly spread by those conquests from Spain to Central Asia (and later further still, from Timbuktu to the Moluccas). Arabic poetry certainly always had a strong affiliation with court culture, originally at the Umayyad Caliphate, centered in Damascus. With the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty in 750, the flight of its remnants to Cordoba, and the subsequent move of the successor Abbasid court to Baghdad in 762, the Arab-Islamic cosmopolis gained new centers of cultural prestige and recognition. Over the next two centuries, as \textit{de facto} Abbasid power waned and regional emirates emerged, still more centers of Arabic court culture became possible in Fez and Kairouan, in Cairo, in Shiraz, and elsewhere. Although Arabic literature went into something of a decline after the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century (at least according to traditional literary-historical narratives) and found itself in competition both with Ottoman Turkish and with Persian, the literary language has of course persisted to this day and continues to function as a cosmopolitan medium and as a national one.

The history of Persian as a cosmopolitan literary language has complex origins. Zoroastrian and other texts have their origins in Old Persian traditions dating back well into the first millennium BC but were for the most part not written down until much later. The great Persian empire of the sixth and fifth centuries BC did use the Old Persian language in writing, notably in inscriptions, but for most purposes the empire made use at first

\textsuperscript{31} Pollock, \textit{The Language of the Gods}, 246.
of Elamite (a language indigenous to the region of the capital, Susa) and then of Aramaic, which served as a cosmopolitan language of sorts in the Near East at the time. Thus, the great inscription erected at Behistun by the emperor Darius in the 480s BC was written in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (i.e., in a version of Akkadian). Old Persian was thus used within the Achaemenid Empire for the "workly" purposes described by Pollock, but less as a cosmopolitan language than as a vernacular, with Babylonian serving the cosmopolitan role. After the Greek conquest, as we have seen, the Greek language increasingly took on the roles previously occupied by Aramaic. Of the next dynasty to rule the region, the Parthians (247 BC–AD 224), few directly transmitted written records remain; literature appears mostly to have been oral in nature, although we know also that various regional Persian dialects were written using a modified version of the Aramaic script. A much more significant body of literature exists in Middle Persian texts from the Sassanid era (224–651), and Middle Persian seems likewise to have been the major language of administration, though many other languages were spoken across the vast and diverse empire of the Sassanids. Although clearly a major language of culture and of power, the Middle Persian of the Sassanids is not truly a cosmopolitan language in Pollock's sense, tied as it was to the ethnicity of the ruling dynasty of this multiethnic empire and used, therefore, to aesthetically represent their power and theirs alone.

In a pattern that would seem odd, were it not now familiar from the traditions discussed earlier, the New Persian language seems to have become truly cosmopolitan only in an era when it was not tied directly to power. After the fall of the Sassanid Empire to Muslim conquerors in 651, Arabic became the official language of the territories formerly under Sassanian rule (and Arabic began its own cosmopolitan career). The Persian language was temporarily marginalized only to reappear as a major literary force a few centuries later.

When New Persian began this career, it did so on the eastern edges of the Persian world; the tradition reports the first poetry in New Persian as coming from Sistan and Heart, in what is now Afghanistan and the eastern regions of Iran, in the mid-ninth century. Traditionally, therefore, the


33 G. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," in The Period from the
New Persian language is seen as having emerged from the court cultures of the kingdoms of that region. It has recently been argued instead that New Persian evolved from a lingua franca amalgam of earlier Persian dialects used on the Silk Road, as attested in Manichaean manuscripts from Turfan, deep inside what is now Xinjiang province in China, dating to the late ninth/early tenth centuries.\(^\text{34}\) This latter view, if correct, would provide an interesting parallel to Sanskrit as understood by Pollock as always already a transregional formation (and would contrast with Pollock’s own thoughts on Persian, which he identifies as always, and in contrast to Sanskrit, retaining a sort of “tribal authenticity”).\(^\text{35}\)

As Pollock himself notes, perhaps the closest approximation to the Sanskrit paradigm of the literary cosmopolis is classical Chinese.\(^\text{16}\) The literary language used in the ancient classics and Eastern Zhou (770–256 BC) philosophical texts became standardized (especially with respect to script) under the Qin (221–206 BC) and Han (206 BC–AD 220) Dynasties. Even under the Eastern Zhou, the language was used for cultural purposes at the courts of states that were not ethnically Huaxia, or what is today called Han Chinese; in particular, southern states, such as Chu and Wu, used the literary languages for interstate communication and (at least in the case of Chu) to create poetry, such as in the Chu Ci 楚辭, parts of which anthology date to the Warring States era. Although the actual ethnic composition of Chu was likely complex and certainly not homogeneously Huaxia; the use of classical Chinese as a literary language for ritual inscriptions and for the production of poetry in these contexts is thus ambiguously cosmopolitan in Pollock’s sense.\(^\text{37}\) Although both Wu and Chu were hegemons of the Huaxia world for periods of time, they used classical Chinese as their vehicle for literary expression, partly as a result of the political, economic, and military power of the ethnically Huaxia states prior to their own rise and also

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\(^\text{36}\) Ibid., 259.

perhaps as a consequence of clan and ethnic ties between elites in those states and the Zhou clans.

The Han Dynasty quickly expanded its sway over non-Huaxia territories, in the northeast onto the Korean peninsula and across modern Manchuria, bringing Huaxia rule for the first time to all of what is now southern China (and into northern Vietnam) and moving westward along the Silk Road. Since these expansions were the consequence of military and diplomatic campaigns, the expansion of the classical Chinese language into these regions does not fit the spirit of Pollock’s Sanskrit cosmopolis. More aptly, the classical Chinese language began its use outside the territory of the Han for purposes similar to those identified by Pollock, with one of the earliest examples being the erection of steles in classical Chinese by the Paekche Dynasty on the Korean peninsula in the 470s AD. Likewise, and even more impressively, by the eighth century, Japan (outside the range of Chinese military ambitions and of relatively minor diplomatic or commercial interest to the Chinese at the time) began to make use of classical Chinese for the writing of historical texts, official documents, and poetry in the classical Chinese style (although poetry was also written in Japanese, using Japanese verse forms). Likewise, the earliest writing in Vietnam was in classical Chinese, beginning in the first few centuries AD; the conquest of what is now northern Vietnam by the Han Dynasty was certainly a factor there, although the persistence of classical Chinese as the only literary language of Vietnam until the thirteenth century, in spite of the loss of Han Chinese political control centuries earlier and the development of the indigenous chữ Nôm writing system, is a testimony to the power of classical Chinese in something like the sense of Pollock’s Sanskrit cosmopolis. Further testimony to this power is found with the use of classical Chinese by many of the ethnic groupings of the northern steppe, whose political sphere of influence frequently included all or part of northern China, from the conquests of the Jin Dynasty by northern tribes in 316 AD through the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), ethnically Manchu. The latter example is especially telling in some ways; a Manchu dynasty and aristocracy controlled China for nearly three hundred years, by the end of which time their own language was nearly extinct.

SYSTEMS OF COSMOPOLITAN CIRCULATION

When discussing cosmopolitan literary traditions, it is important to be sensitive to the different dynamics at work regulating literary circulation in each context. Circulations are rarely even and generally reflect differentials of cultural power (linked or not to political or economic power). In what follows, I survey briefly what we know about the situation in the various cosmopolitan literary languages. This question of the circulation of texts in cosmopolitan languages beyond modern national borders has everywhere been much under-studied as an inadvertent consequence of the increasingly national orientation of literary scholarship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some cosmopolitan languages, notably Latin, found themselves stateless in this process; others, such as classical Chinese, found themselves marginalized within national literary histories that emphasized the vernacular tradition. Wherever nation-states emerged, their scholars tended to valorize texts in the national vernacular over those in a cosmopolitan language so that, for example, literature written in Chinese in Japan or in Persian in what is now Turkey or India found less space within emergent national accounts of literature, both in the nation that claimed the cosmopolitan language as its own and in the other nations that now privileged their vernacular literary histories. What follows is thus patchy and anecdotal, rather than comprehensive, but nonetheless allows us to make some observations about the different distributions of power and circulation across different cosmopolitan landscapes.

I begin with the case of the ecology built around classical Chinese, or wenyan, as a cosmopolitan language. As already discussed, wenyan was not only the exclusive literary language of the empires that reigned across modern China from the Han (220 BC–AD 206) to the Qing (1644–1911) and of the regional states that occupied the interregna between dynasties but also that of the various polities that existed in Korea, Japan, the Ryukyu islands to Japan’s south, Vietnam, and the Mongolian and Manchurian steppe. Many of these regions, of course, also have early and lengthy vernacular literary traditions of their own, making terminology complex. “Japanese,” “Korean,” and “Vietnamese” literatures, as conventionally constructed today, do not necessarily include texts produced in wenyan; the terms used indigenously in these languages to refer to such texts, kanbun, hanmun, and hán văn (respectively, the Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese pronunciations of the Chinese characters hanwen 漢文, meaning in context “literature in Han Chinese”; i.e., in wenyan), are unable to
distinguish between texts written in wenyan in China itself and those produced in other countries. The convention in English is to refer to these literary traditions as Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, and Sino-Vietnamese, although due caution must be taken to avoid assimilating and reifying what are in fact complex continua of texts, ranging from flawless wenyan that would have met with approval from the most demanding of Chinese critics, to strongly hybrid texts bearing significant markers of the substrate vernacular. Wenyan poetry was produced in quantities in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, and those regions continued throughout their pre-modern histories to consume newly produced wenyan poetry produced in China, although these nations were far from representing a unified market for such literary production. At the same time, the consumption of wenyan poetry from Japan, Korea, and Vietnam within China itself was all but nonexistent, as was the circulation of wenyan texts from one peripheral nation to another. There are exceptions, here and there; the Korean scholar Hong Taeyong (1731–83) is known, for example, to have maintained a correspondence with Chinese scholars after a diplomatic visit in 1765–6, while Pak Chega (1750–1805) not only corresponded with the Chinese scholar Li Tiaoyuan (1734–1803) in 1777 but as a result of that correspondence was able to get the latter to publish in China a collection of Sino-Korean poetry, The Collection of the Small Bookcase. Vietnamese envoys likewise exchanged Sino-Vietnamese poetry with their Chinese counterparts. In the eighth and ninth centuries, Buddhist writers from Japan and Korea were read in China, as well as in each other's regions, and in later times, Confucian scholars from both regions, notably the Korean Yi T'oegye (1501–70), likewise circulated more broadly. Returning to the poetic tradition, poets from Korea, Japan, and the Ryukyu islands had their works included in wenyan collections compiled in China from the ninth-century Silla Dynasty poet Wang Koin, included in the Complete Tang Poetry

詩（compiled in 1705），through the various more contemporary poets from these regions included in the Huangqing shi xuan皇清詩選，an anthology of Qing Dynasty poetry likewise compiled in the same year under the auspices of the Kangxi emperor.45

Further study of this under-explored field has the potential to reveal many more examples of authors from the wenyan periphery who gained acceptance in the core (i.e., in China itself), or whose works circulated along the periphery, and even the brief data cited above make clear that there were enough contacts among literati in the different wenyan-using nations, at least in the eighteenth century, to justify comparison, albeit a disadvantageous comparison, with the circulation of cosmopolitan texts in Latin among scholars and authors in early Modern Europe.46 Nonetheless, it is clear that this wenyan cosmopolis has a clearly structured core (China itself) and periphery (the other nations of the cosmopolis), with the core of the core being the Chinese capital of the day and with very unequal flows of literature between core and periphery. Writers from the periphery may occasionally have achieved forms of recognition in the core, but achieving that recognition cannot have been a reliable goal, given the rarity with which it happened. Instead, most writers in Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, and Sino-Vietnamese sought recognition within their own nations, among other writers in their tradition and in the vernacular, and, a fortiori, few writers from China itself were invested in their reception on the periphery.

The evidence available for literary circulation within the Sanskrit cosmopolis is still scantier, especially for the non-specialist. Pollock himself spends little time on the question. Certainly, many of the Sanskrit literary texts Pollock discusses from Southeast Asia are inscriptional in nature; the inscriptional format is by definition one that is not designed to facilitate circulation; although inscriptional texts can and do circulate in transcribed form or in oral performance, their physical situation is also constitutive of their meaning in significant ways, and so inscribed texts are unlikely to be texts written with the expectation of circulation or with breadth of circulation as a criterion of their success. Further, of course, the purpose of many of these inscriptions was to represent in a universally accessible form the royal authority of the inscriber; while this purpose was certainly reproducible across the cosmopolis, its content was not so welcome. The ruler of a

45 Ibid., 36.
46 Kornicki, “A Note on Sino-Japanese,” makes the comparison explicit.
kingdom might have emulated his neighbor's expression of authority, but he would have been unlikely to circulate it. We do hear isolated cases of literary circulation; for example, Buddhist scholars from late Srivijaya (a Malay kingdom located on the island of Sumatra and active in the seventh-thirteenth centuries AD) are said to have attracted students from India itself, and their works were to have been translated into Tibetan.\(^47\) It is striking that, as with wényan, the instances of literary circulation in the Sanskrit cosmopolis that we know of seem to involve religious texts; it is unclear whether this means that it was easier for religious texts to circulate across the cosmopolis or between peripheries than it was for poetic texts to do so, or whether our awareness of such phenomena is merely an artifact of the transregional focus of Buddhology as a Western academic discipline. In any event, in the cases of both classical Chinese and Sanskrit, we are aware of a prodigious volume of verbal art produced across the cosmopolis and certainly of the profound influence works from the center had on the periphery; evidence for the literary influence of peripheral texts on the core or on other peripheries is much more fragmentary. Patterns of circulation within the cosmopolis, in other words, are likely to have been highly uneven.

The Arabic cosmopolis, which grew very rapidly in the second half of the first millennium AD and whose major centers were removed from the homelands of the language, has always been highly polycentric and has promoted a broad circulation across regions. Even within the heartlands of the Abbasids, centered around the great cities of Baghdad, Aleppo, and Damascus, a survey of a few of the major poets of the era demonstrates the polycentricity of the tradition. Abu Nuwas (756–814), one of the greatest poets of the tradition, had a Persian mother and was raised in Basra. Most of his literary career was spent at the Abbasid court in Baghdad, except for a brief period of exile in Egypt. Bashar bin Burd (714–84), also part Persian, moved from Basra to Baghdad. Abu l-‘Atahiyya (828–748), was originally from the Iraqi desert but made his name in Baghdad. Al-Mutanabbi (915–65) was born in Kufah in Iraq but educated in Damascus; much of his poetry was written at the courts of the Hamanids in Aleppo and at the ethnically Ethiopian Ikhshidid court in Egypt. Abu Firas al-Hamdani (932–68) was one of the Hamanid rulers in Aleppo. Abul ‘Ala Al-Ma’arri

(973–1058), born in Ma’arra in Syria, spent time at court in both Aleppo and Baghdad but returned to his hometown for much of his career. Abu Tammam (788–845), a noted poet and anthologist, was born in Syria but enjoyed patronage at various times in Egypt, Damascus, Baghdad, Mosul, Armenia, and Khorasan. Al-Bûsîrî (1211–94) was a Sufi poet, originally born in the Maghreb, mostly active in Egypt, but also living for significant periods of time in Jerusalem and Medina. Abu-l-Farid (897–967), poet and anthologist of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, was born in Isfahan and raised in Baghdad; a descendant of the Umayyads, he remained in correspondence with their descendants in Cordoba, and his literary life was spent largely in Aleppo. The great mystic poet Ibn al-Farid (1181–1235), from a Syrian family, was raised in Cairo and spent most of his career there, but also lived for fifteen years in Mecca. Ibn Duraid (837–934), born in Basra, fled to Oman and then to Persia, where he produced his greatest work, before finishing his career in Baghdad. Beyond these figures, there lie considerable literary traditions of the period centered in what is now Spain and in Egypt to say nothing of the lesser-known traditions of the Yemen. In the centuries after the final defeat of the remnant Abbasids by the Mongols in 1258, Arabic literature becomes still more cosmopolitan, with poets across the cosmopolis continuing to write poetry on the same universal themes (albeit work mostly now disparaged in the literary tradition). In the Ottoman period, the tradition continues, although the Maghreb, less directly under Ottoman influence and thus less subject to the competitive pressures of Persian and Ottoman Turkish as literary languages,


may have generated a disproportionate number of well-known poets.\textsuperscript{55} Beyond the regions traditionally thought of as Arabic (or even, sometimes, Muslim), the influence of the Arabic literary cosmopolis was deeply felt, as far afield as the Tamil lands and Java.\textsuperscript{56}

The Hellenistic cultural world was also highly polycentric, with most of the major centers located outside what had been the Greek world prior to Alexander's conquests. The most obvious case in point was Alexandria, the Hellenistic capital of Egypt and home to the greatest library of the ancient Greek world, as well as to a great tradition of textual scholarship on Homer and other early texts and to a lively poetic culture (whose membership overlapped with that of the scholarly community) as well. But there were other centers; Pergamon likewise had a great library and its own coterie of scholars and poets, as did Antioch and the Macedonian capital of Pella.\textsuperscript{57}

The libraries themselves were often the product of royal acquisitions from the Greek mainland; thus, Alexandria claimed to derive the core of its collection from Aristotle's own library, including his own text of Homer;\textsuperscript{58} while Pergamon claimed Euripides' text of Homer as one of its own treasures.\textsuperscript{59} Scholars and poets likewise migrated from place to place, as attested in the names by which they are known to posterity: Ptolemy II of Egypt founded the Library of Alexandria on the advice of his first tutor, Philetas of Cos, and installed Zenodotus of Ephesus as the first head of the library; Zenodotus's successors included Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus of Samothrace, all of them influential editors of the text of Homer. The work of Callimachus of Cyrene, the Sicilian Greek Theocritus, and Apollonius of Rhodes added further to Alexandria's cultural glory. At Pergamon, the philosopher Crates of Mallos offered his own rival Homeric


\textsuperscript{56} Ronit Ricci, Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia, Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2011.


text, while at Pella the poets Alexander Aetolus and Aratus added their own cultural capital.

Many of these scholar-poets were born in the Greek heartlands or in regions long since colonized by the Greeks, but each of them pursued their work in cities on the periphery of the older Greek world—and at the center of the new cosmopolitan world. There was a certain amount of exchange and circulation among these centers as well—Pergamon is said to have attempted to take Aristophanes of Byzantium from Alexandria, while Aratus moved from Pella to Antioch and then back.\(^60\) Although Athens had been a major influence on the emergence of the koinē standard for Greek and had been enormously influential in the earlier codification of Homeric epic, that city is conspicuous for its comparative absence from these Hellenistic networks. In greatly expanding the horizons of the Hellenic world and in creating new centers of cultural prestige and recognition, Alexander and his successors had the perhaps inadvertent effect of making the original centers of the Greek world peripheral. Since these regional centers were only politically united by the Romans, and since the Romans, while valuing and even promoting Greek culture, did not impose a centralizing authority on it, the Greek cosmopolis remained strikingly polycentric. Although some emperors, notably Hadrian (r. 117–38 AD), actively promoted Greek culture as part of their political program, and although Rome quickly became a key source of patronage and therefore recognition for intellectuals writing in Greek, this polycentric nature of the Greek cosmopolis under Roman rule likewise kept Greek culture and Roman power in a relatively loose relationship, a situation that was only to change after the splitting of the Roman empire into Eastern and Western halves in the early fourth century, the consequent change to sole official status for Greek in the East, and the emergence of Constantinople as the final court of authority for Greek cultural matters as for political ones—the first era in which the Greek cultural world had had a single common cultural center. The role played by imperial Constantinople in the regulation and transmission of early Christian texts in Greek is well attested; Margalit Finkelberg has argued that the city may have played a similar role in producing and transmitting the text of Homeric epic known to us today.\(^61\)


The emergence of the koinê standard for the Greek language is somewhat unclear, although most scholars agree with the ancient Greeks themselves, who saw koinê (literally, “common” Greek) as evolving from the Athenian dialect. The Athenian empire seems to have played a role in the emergence of this standard, as even in the fifth century BC inscriptions show that the Greek poleis with whom Athens negotiated treaties recorded their terms in the Attic dialect, even when they themselves spoke a quite divergent form of the language. A further empire, that of Macedon, played an even greater role not only in ensuring that the Greek language spread across the eastern Mediterranean and Near East (and beyond) but in determining which form of the Greek language was to be spread. It is unclear what the native language of the Macedonians themselves was—it may have been, for example, a relatively remote dialect of Greek or a non-Greek language within the Indo-European family, related to some degree to the Greek dialects. Whatever the case, the evidence is fairly clear that early on the Macedonians adopted the Athenian dialect for political and diplomatic purposes; this choice presumably depended on the previous Athenian decision to use their own dialect as a standard across their own empire and had significant implications for the emergence of the koinê across the territories conquered by Alexander.

The koinê was thus an imperial language on multiple levels, developed out of the standard dialect used in the Athenian empire and disseminated over much wider areas by the Macedonian empires. And yet, with the exception of the New Testament and, to a lesser extent, of historiographic writing, the koinê was not much used for literary purposes. Most prose authors of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods used some form of Attic or Atticising dialect (maintaining the prestige of that earlier cosmopolitan form). In the case of poetry, the Greeks already had, by this date, a long and complex history connecting dialect, genre, and author. As I noted in the previous chapter, the variety of Greek used in Homeric and Hesiodic epic is traditionally understood as a Kunstsprache, or “art language,” never a spoken language anywhere and integrating forms from a variety of dialects. Epic, in other words, is Panhellenic on the level of linguistic register as

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much as on the levels of plot and circulation. Lyric genres developed along a different pattern, with specific genres associated with specific dialects, usually involving some measure of Doric dialect, regardless of the native dialects of the poets working in that genre.\textsuperscript{64} A comparison may be made here with the use of the Prakrits, the languages descended from Sanskrit, within specific literary genres, rather than as markers of regional identity (though they do seem to have regional origins). A comparison may also be made with the tendencies to identify literary "styles" with regional names, which I discuss below for Sanskrit and New Persian, as well as for Greek.\textsuperscript{65} Rather than work in the koinê, poets of the Hellenistic era (many of them also leading scholars of the earlier tradition) not only continue the Archaic and Classical tendency to deploy distinctive dialects for distinctive genres, but they in fact intensify this practice, regularly going out of their way to employ the most obscure, archaic, and difficult of words in what has been seen as an overt reaction to the simplifying and standardizing tendencies of the koinê, perhaps seen as too much associated with the bureaucratic and the commercial to function as a poetic art-language.\textsuperscript{66} I will tentatively suggest here a parallel from the early cosmopolitan period in China (beyond the Mouzi, which I discussed briefly at the beginning of this chapter), in the genre known as the fu 赋, generally translated as "rhyme-prose" or "rhapsody." This genre generally takes the form of an address to the emperor, counseling him on some issue (typically, whether or not to move the capital, or to urge economic restraint), but using elaborate and exotic language to do so. As Tamara Chin has argued,\textsuperscript{67} this language represents a kind of


\textsuperscript{65} Pollock, The Language of the Gods, 98.


\textsuperscript{67} Tamara T. Chin, Savage Exchange: Historical Imaginations of Han Trade and Expansion, East Asian Monographs, Harvard University Asia Center, 2014.
“lavish expenditure,” stimulating the imagination as certain economic theorists of the era felt that lavish expenditure on goods stimulated the economy. There are arguably affinities as well to the conflicts in our own time between Global English as a simplified lingua franca for the globalized economic system and literary English (whether in its American or Anglo-postcolonial forms), as fully committed as ever to exuberance and variety in its diction. Contemporary English-language writers are perhaps not so different from Hellenistic or Han Dynasty poets in their desire to exploit every register of their linguistic and literary heritage as a means of marking their language as proper to them, rather than merely universal.

In its turn, Latin was a thriving cosmopolitan literary language in Europe well into the seventeenth century, and for much of that time it remained the dominant literary language, a fact now largely obscured by the effects of national literary history, which privileges texts in national languages and their vernacular precursors at the expense of (among other things) the Latin tradition. As a result of developments I discuss in the chapter on national literatures, this nationalization of European literary space had the consequence of both converting Latin and Greek literary studies into quasi-national fields of inquiry and of bounding those nations chronologically (as part of Europe’s distant past), further marginalizing Neo-Latin literary studies even within the emergent discipline of Classics. The volume of texts published in Latin before roughly 1800 is quite staggering, and bears repeating: until around 1575 in France (and later in Italy), a majority of books published were written in Latin; while this percentage dropped rapidly thereafter, for works of a scholarly or scientific nature, the numbers were higher, so that of the books published by Oxford’s university press between 1690 and 1710, a majority were still in Latin. Nor should we imagine that these were works of a purely antiquarian nature; as Hans Helander convincingly shows, many of the most “modern” developments of Early Modernity were transacted in Latin texts, from new, more rigorous forms of historical inquiry, to the scientific works of Newton and Bacon, to

68 For a discussion of the methodological challenges around the field of Neo-Latin studies (i.e., the study of Latin literature written after c. 1300), see Hans Helander, “Neo-Latin Studies: Significance and Prospects,” Symbolae Osloenses 76 (1), 2001: 5-102.
inflammatory political polemics.\textsuperscript{71} Major works of the vernacular tradition, such as those of Descartes and Pascal, were translated into Latin and circulated widely in that form.\textsuperscript{72} Nor was Neo-Latin exclusively a language of science and learning; Latin epic celebrated military and political heroes from Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden (1594–1632) to Elizabeth I of England and events from the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 to John III Sobieski’s defeat of the Turks at the gates of Vienna in 1683, while lyric poets such as Sarbievius ("the Horace of Poland," 1595–1640) and John Milton expressed their divergent views on the Reformation in Latin verse.\textsuperscript{73} The works of these writers circulated widely across the Latin cosmopolis, highly polycentric as a result of the political fragmentation of early modern Europe and the many centers of learning and of publishing that proliferated in the era. Earlier medieval Latin literature continued to be read as well, for all of the Renaissance disdain of medieval learning and culture,\textsuperscript{74} generating a fairly continuous literary tradition in Latin over two millennia (with periods of greater and lesser richness), covering most of the European world at one time or another. The loss of continuity with this vast and complex tradition, multiply marginalized within the modern academy despite its once-hegemonic status in the heartlands of the West, is one of the regrettable consequences of the national-literature ecology, one which, as we shall see in Chapter 5, has been replicated to some extent elsewhere.

Most of the literary cosmopoleis I have discussed, then, feature relatively high degrees of polycentricity with relatively free circulation of texts among centers. Classical Chinese, in particular, was rather less polycentric (though certainly at least partly open to circulation) thanks to the continued patronage of a world-empire throughout its history and to the preponderance of Sinophones within that cosmopolis (although within China, literary production and circulation was quite complex and polycentric); other cosmopolitan ecologies were likewise more monocentric and less free in their literary circulation during periods of empire (as during the Roman Empire and the Umayyad Caliphate, for example). When a literary cosmopolis and a universal empire coincide, the former naturally becomes


something of an instrument of the latter; it is only in other phases, wherein the language is the cultural vehicle of states that do not or cannot claim to rule the world, that more egalitarian forms of circulation emerge.

Geographies of Style

An interesting index of the nature of literary circulation within the literary cosmopolis is the representation of literary style using the trope of geography. Just as we have seen that within a panchoric ecology the local can become little more than a device to mark the triumph of the translocal, so in many cosmopolitan literary ecologies the names of geographic regions are used as a means of identifying distinct literary styles. While these style designations may initially have derived from the actual practices of writers or groups of writers from a region, they function more as a cosmology of style, a mapping of literary difference onto broader thinking about a region. As an example, late nineteenth-century intellectuals divided the history of Persian literature into three stylistic periods identified through geographic referents: first, a “style of Khorasan” (sabk-e-Khorâsâni), that is, of the eastern regions of the Persophone world, prevalent in the mid-ninth through mid-eleventh centuries AD when the major centers of New Persian literature were the regional courts of what are now Afghanistan, eastern Iran, and the former Soviet Central Asian republics; these were regions, as we have noted, on the periphery but where weaker knowledge of Arabic may have promoted the use of Persian as a literary language. As the Saljuq Turks conquered most of the Persian world in the mid-eleventh century, the use of Persian for literary purposes spread further west, to the traditional Persian heartlands, and a second style, the “Iraqi style” (sabk-e-Erâqi), emerged. Finally, as the Mughal Dynasty (its rulers ethnically Turkic and Mongol) conquered India in the sixteenth century, a new style emerged in their courts, the so-called Indian style (sabk-e-Hendi).  

Despite the geographic origins of these names, however, the styles so described were not limited to the regions indicated; rather, all three styles circulated in varying ways across the entire cosmopolis, even though the historical origins of each style can be found, to some extent, in that region. As further proof of the rootless nature of these regional stylistic categories, we find

alternative names for some of them: the sabk-e-Khorâsâni is also known as the sabk-e-Torkestâni, or “Turkestan Style,” a designation loosely indicating the Turkic-speaking regions of Central Asia, overlapping with, yet not identical to, those areas known as Khorasan. Likewise, the sabk-e-Hendi is sometimes referred to today as the sabk-e-Esfahâni, after the city of Esfahan, capital of the Iranian Safavid Dynasty in the sixteenth century, in large part because of a contemporary reluctance to recognize stylistic features of Safavid poetry as originating in Mughal India despite evidence to the contrary.26 The simultaneous use of Persian as a cosmopolitan literary language at three great imperial courts—the Ottoman court in Istanbul, the Safavid court in Esfahan, and the Mughal court in Delhi—necessarily complicates any model of core-periphery literary interactions; rather, a polycentric system, with perhaps uneven circulation among centers, seems the most useful model here. The identification of distinct, historically emergent styles with specific regions acts as a further index of circulation, reminding us that poets from one region were read in another.

The penchant for naming styles after geographic regions, while those styles were then used by writers across the cosmopolis, is a phenomenon also found in the case of Sanskrit. As Pollock demonstrates, with reference to the Śṛṅgāraprakāśa of Bhoja, an early eleventh-century AD king of Malwa in central India, Sanskrit poetics featured a quadripartite regionalization of literary style into the Pāncāla, Gauḍiya, Vaidarbha, and Lāṭiya styles, representing, respectively, the western plains of the Ganges, west Bengal, eastern Maharashtra, and southern Gujarat (thus, roughly, northern, eastern, southern, and western), and differing from each other in phonology, syntax, lexicon and figuration.27 It is worth noting that Bhoja’s own kingdom of Malwa, located in what is now the western part of Madhya Pradesh, was at the center of the four cardinal directions represented by these styles (two of which, the Gauḍiya and Vaidarbha, are also found in earlier texts). Bhoja’s stylistic inventory, then, may have political connotations, not because he has made the style of his own kingdom dominant in literary terms but because he has positioned the styles around his kingdom in such a way as to make of himself a kind of golden mean of them. Similar also is the distinction in Greco-Roman rhetorical theory between the more austere “Attic” and more florid “Asiatic” styles. To be sure, the origin of each is


traced to orators from those respective regions, but by the Roman era (and it is the Roman writers Cicero and Quintilian who provide our best sources for these terms), it is clear that both styles were understood as points on a continuum of options open to contemporary orators.

The generic quality of these regional attributes in New Persian, Sanskrit and Greco-Roman poetics, then, serves as an index of the cosmopolitan character of each of these literary ecologies. It also, of course, parallels the kinds of generic localism I find in the Greek and Chinese panchoric traditions and which I identified in the previous chapter as "Olympic" panchorisms, that is, as panchoric cultures that build a translocal culture not by assembling bits and pieces of local tradition but rather by transforming that local tradition into a new and unified tradition and then making room for the "local" within that tradition as a standardized component, stripped of local specificity. As I already suggested in my first book, this capacity to evacuate the local of its content and then represent the local through a new panchoric formation may have been the technique that made Greek and Chinese particularly effective languages at repeating that feat in a cosmopolitan context.

**Self-Conscious Cosmopolitanism**

In that previous book, I also argued for an understanding of literary cosmopolitanism that includes, at least in an incipient form, thinking that stretches the region of applicability to a culture's ideas to the world as a whole (or at least the world as it is known).\(^7\) Since my interest in literary ecology focuses around these ecologies as practices of reading, I contend that such incipient thinking about the universality or otherwise of culture constitute a dimension of the cosmopolitan literary ecology, even before a given language actually circulates in that context. Such an elaboration of the notion of the literary cosmopolis, I argue, allows us to identify continuities in reading and thinking about literature and the world that transcend historical moments of conquest and exchange. In what follows, I trace this phenomenon in the Greek and Chinese contexts, as those most familiar to me; readers more knowledgeable about other cosmopolitan contexts may well find parallels in the traditions they know.

The term "cosmopolitan" is itself, of course, a Greek formation, whose first use is supposed to be that by the fourth-century BC philosopher

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Diogenes the Cynic, who is said to have responded to the question of where he was from (i.e., what his polis was) by proclaiming that he was a κοσμοπολίτης (Diogenes Laertius 6.63); that the city of his birth, and the community to which he owed his political allegiance, was the entire world. This notion of cosmopolitanism, which in a Cynic context may have been more a negative rejection of local allegiances than a positive declaration of responsibilities on a larger scale, will be developed more explicitly and rigorously by Stoic philosophy, in texts poorly transmitted but known to us from other sources. Cicero, for example, explains the Stoic notion of the cosmopolis as follows:

For the world is as a common home for gods and men, or as a city for both of them; for they alone, since they employ reason, live according to justice and law.\(^79\)

Expanding this rather concise description, the Stoics believed that any polis of their time, organized as it was by rather fallible humans, was not in fact governed by justice, law, and reason, and accordingly was not a true polis; the world as a whole, by contrast (and here we should remember that the Greek kosmos means not only “world” but also “order”), is under the authority of the gods and is thus just and rational and more truly deserves the status of polis than does any individual city-state. It is worth noting in passing that the cosmopolitanism thus imagined is in fact very deeply rooted in the thoroughly Greek notion of the polis, or city-state; as we have seen, the basic device of the cosmopolitan ecology is the universalizing of local culture. The cosmopolitan as such does not require the invention of new concepts of the political but rather their projection onto the largest possible scale.

Stoic philosophy will not emerge until the third century BC, by which time of course new political formations have in fact emerged—first the conquest empire of Alexander the Great, then its successor states, the Hellenistic kingdoms that ruled over the Eastern Mediterranean (and beyond, as far, at times, as Afghanistan) for the next three centuries. But we can find, I have argued, hints of an incipiently cosmopolitan worldview as early as Herodotus and Socrates. In Herodotus, for example, I have discussed a famous episode in the Histories, which claims to recount a visit

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\(^79\) Est enim mundus quasi communis deorum atque hominum domus aut urbs utrorumque; soli enim ratione utentes iure ac lege vivunt (Cicero, Nat D 2.154).
by Herodotus's predecessor Hecataeus to Egypt. Hecataeus's text, the *Genealogies*, is said to have presented a history based on a rationalizing of the genealogies in Greek mythology (which formed, of course, one of the subjects of the previous chapter). Herodotus recounts (at 2.143) that Hecataeus himself boasted to the priests at a temple of Amun in Egypt to be the sixteenth-generation descendant of a god; the priests rebut his claim by showing him a series of 345 statues representing the continuous generations of priests of the temple—all, according to them, descended from other mortals, not from gods. Herodotus tells this story, I argue, for several reasons: most straightforwardly, to demonstrate to his reader the great antiquity of Egypt but also as part of his rhetorical campaign against Hecataeus. Beyond these objectives, the passage amply demonstrates an awareness of one of the key conceptual aspects of modern cosmopolitanism, the notion that people in different places understand the same situation in different ways, a point Herodotus makes explicit elsewhere (3.38).

Socrates' views lead less straightforwardly toward cosmopolitanism. For example, while the kinds of reflection on ideal political arrangements found in Plato's *Republic* have, at least implicitly, a universal applicability, within the text of the *Republic* itself, Plato has Socrates suggest that Greeks and non-Greeks should be treated differently. He argues that the people of his imagined polis should behave with mercy towards their fellow Greeks (5.469b–71b), not enslaving them, despoiling their corpses, or burning their crops, even in victory (while such procedures are explicitly not prohibited when at war with "barbarians"), and in the process has his interlocutors agree that the polis he describes must necessarily be both Hellenic and philhellenic. That notwithstanding, the polis Plato has Socrates construct, while Greek in name and in many details (its gods, for example, remain Greek, and the "noble lie" of the birth of the men of the polis from different metals clearly owes much to Hesiod), is unlike any Greek polis yet known in many of its social and cultural practices, from the sharing of women and children in common to the promotion of the wisest and most thoroughly educated to rule rather than the most nobly born. By imagining his polis as both Greek and unlike any other known, Plato is in a sense imagining a new formation altogether, one that, as (notionally) an ideal state, does not replicate the customs of his people but transforms them utterly. Further, Socrates' concern with stripping away merely phenomenal differences to arrive at the

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universal, unchanging truths of the Forms is necessarily in tension with his Hellenocentrism expressed in the Republic and elsewhere.

In China, as I have argued, we find incipient cosmopolitan tendencies in portions of the Confucian Analects and of the historical text the Zuo zhuan, in layers in both cases likely dating to the fourth century BC. An important index of that thinking is the appearance of the term tianxia 天下. Meaning literally “beneath the sky” or “[all] under heaven,” the term performs much of the work of the term “empire” within European thinking about large-scale cosmopolitan political orders. Yuri Pines has traced the history of the term, which is poorly attested in the inscriptive record or in the textual tradition, to before the late Spring and Autumn era (i.e., roughly the sixth century BC). The earliest uses of the term emphasize tianxia as a region of shared moral and cultural values and thus refers mostly to the territory of the states accepting the rituals of the Zhou, for the most part, those that were ethnically Huaxia.81 In the Warring States era (c. 475–221 BC), the Huaxia world changed in a number of ways: the authority of the Zhou royal court lost even the purely nominal and ritual role it had previously enjoyed; peripheral states, many of them incompletely assimilated to the Huaxia world, assumed a greater role in that world’s politics; ritual practices diverged increasingly, but there was also an increasing sense of a shared textual culture.82 During this era, the political dimensions of tianxia, as a territory ruled (or to be ruled) by a single power, began to emerge, as did a sense that this world might extend beyond the ethnically and culturally Huaxia populations of the so-called Central States, (zhongguo 中囯, the name later used as an autonym for “China”). The matter is not, however, a simple one; the Western state of Qin (which conquered tianxia in the mid-third century BC) was increasingly represented as outside tianxia,83 while the erstwhile “barbarians” of the south and east, in the states of Chu, Wu, and Yue, were increasingly represented as inside tianxia. Where tianxia is described in terms suggesting the ideal of political unification of those states, it is always in the Zuo zhuan the rulers of Chu who express such desires.84 In later texts of the Warring States era

82 I discuss many of these phenomena in the previous chapter. For further discussion, see the Pines article cited in the above footnote, as well as chapters 5–7 of Beecroft, Authorship and Cultural Identity.
84 Yuri Pines, “Imagining the Empire? Concepts of ‘Primeval Unity’ in Pre-imperial Historiographic Tradition,” in Conceiving the Empire: China and
(notably Mozi but also others), Pines finds increasing evidence for both the political dimension of tianxia as a concept and for at least a textual desire for the genuinely universal application of the concept. It is only when Qin succeeded in unifying the Huaxia world under its rule in 221 BC that we begin to see the term tianxia used to describe an (actual and ideal) cosmopolitan state of affairs in which everything under heaven, or at least everything under heaven visible from the Han court, was either under direct Han control or paid some sort of notional or real homage to the Han. The First Emperor of the Qin (Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝; r. 221–210 BC), in the workly inscriptions he erected, never mentions his former regional state of Qin but talks instead frequently of tianxia, saying that, for example, he has pacified it, united it, made it one family（平天下；闢并天下；壹家天下）. The territories over which Qin Shi Huangdi claimed to have achieved such successes included both Huaxia and non-Huaxia regions, reinforcing the sense that the term was increasingly an index of a claim to cosmopolitan rule, using, of course, the trope we have already discussed, by which cosmopolitan ecologies appropriate and universalize originally local or panchoric terms. Over the Han Dynasty and its successors, the list of territories submitting, notionally or in fact, to Chinese imperial authority expanded to include much of the known world; the claim that tianxia, in fact, equaled the entire world, was one that would only face significant challenge in Chinese thinking during the nineteenth century.

Just as the historical evolution of tianxia as a concept in China itself acts as something of an index of the emergence of cosmopolitan thinking out of an originally local, then panchoric, worldview, so too the appropriation of the concept in other East Asian cultures allows us to map the uneven terrain of the cosmopolis the term at once constructs and embodies. In Japan, long open to Chinese influence but geographically isolated enough never to have been under direct Chinese threat, the term, pronounced tenka in Japanese, had a long history, dating back at least to the early eighth century. The early historical text the Chronicles of Japan (Nihon Shoki, 日本書紀), compiled in AD 720, traces the history of Japan from its mythical origins to about twenty years prior to the present of its authors. Written in classical Chinese, its account of the origins of the world (i.e., of Japan) contain a

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mixture of traditional Japanese myth and imported Chinese cosmology. As part of the narrative, the sun goddess Amaterasu is born from the god Izanagi after he ritually cleanses himself from his journey to the underworld to recover his sister and wife goddess, Izanami:

Then Izanagi and Izanami spoke together, saying "We have now given birth to the Great Land of Eight Islands [Japan], and to mountains, streams, grasses and trees. Why not create someone to rule over tenka [tianxia, 天下]. After this, they gave birth to the sun goddess, and named her Ohirume-no-muchi [i.e., Amaterasu].

The sun goddess is the notional ancestor of the Japanese imperial dynasty, which reigns to this day, while tenka remained in use as a term for the territory of Japan throughout pre-modern times. As late as the Edo period (1603–1868), the territory of the Japanese archipelago was conventionally referred to as tenka, with the term koku (i.e., guo 國; the same term used in Warring States China for the regional states) used principally to refer to regional feudal territories. Although the term koku was occasionally used in the eighteenth century to describe Japan in its diplomatic relations with Korea and China, it was only with the Meiji restoration in 1868, when Japan underwent a decisive transformation in the direction of the West, that Japan began to refer to itself principally by this term, appropriating what was once an epichoric term for the new status of the modern nation-state, and abandoning the notion that Japan was, like China, tenka, or "All Under Heaven."87

In the territory of what is now Korea, the term tianxia, or as it is pronounced in Korean cheonha 천하, was used somewhat less frequently than in Japan, in part, perhaps, because the various kingdoms that ruled Korea over its history were always much more vulnerable to Chinese attack than Japan could be and, as a result, all the more aware that their rule was meaningfully non-universal. Still, we find its use from the earliest stages of Korean history; one of the earliest inscriptions in classical Chinese found in Korea uses the expression tianxia. The tomb is that specifically of Modoru, an aristocrat and local administrator of the reign of the King Jangsu (r. 413–91) of the Goguryeo Dynasty, which ruled much of what is now northern Korea and eastern Manchuria during the third through seventh

86 既而伊奘諾尊・伊奘冉尊・共議曰・吾已生大八洲國及山川草木。何不生天下之主者哉。於是、共生日神。號大日童貴。(日本書紀・卷第一神代 上)
centuries AD. The inscription praises the king, saying, “All the world [天下] and four regions knew of the sageliness of this kingdom and this village”.

This praise of Jangsu, then, describes him in terms very specifically derived from the kinds of universalist claims first made by the Qin and Han Dynasties; in so doing, he may have been aided to some extent by the fact that the Chinese heartlands were in disarray during this period. In the early fifth century, the Jin Dynasty, which was the ethnically Huaxia successor state to the Han (and its immediate successor, the Wei), was confined to southern China, with its capital in the lower Yangtze. Northern China was under the rule of what are referred to as the “Sixteen Kingdoms,” a shifting series of mostly non-Huaxia states. In the years prior to Jangsu’s erection of the stele to his father in 414, the ethnically Qiang Later Qin Dynasty was in a hegemonic position in northern China, but from around 408 onwards, a series of military defeats and internecine conflicts within the royal family greatly weakened the Later Qin, which did not long outlast the death of the dynasty’s second ruler, Emperor Wenhuan, in 416. Wenhuan himself only sporadically used the title huangdi 皇帝, the term invented by the First Emperor of the Qin and conventionally translated as “emperor”; the ruler of the Later Qin preferred for the most part to refer to himself as a “heavenly king,” tianwang 天王, a term roughly parallel to the “Great King, “tai wang 太王 title used by Jangsu of Goguryeo to describe his father. Certainly, the early fourth century was a time in which the rulers of what is now China were hardly in a position to enforce their own monopoly on cosmopolitan terminology, something they may have done to some extent in later periods in Korean history.

As these two examples make clear, one of the features of cosmopolitan rhetoric is that it is very easily appropriated by new regimes and spreads readily from one state to another. Even terms whose internal logic makes


89 Note that the “Later Qin” (AD 384–417) has nothing other than its name in common with the Qin dynasty established by the First Emperor in 221 BC.
them inherently universal, like tianxia, are terms that can be borrowed from one polity to another and even, potentially, used by more than one state at a time. There is, however, a particular consequence to such cosmopolitan terminology, which is that in its very universality and erasure of local distinctions it renders difficult the possibility of converting the cosmopolitan identity to a national one. For many modern nations whose traditional rulers had made cosmopolitan claims, of course, this presented only a minor challenge; nations like Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, for example, were able to use their already existing vernacular language and literature as one basis for a modern national identity (and Japan and Korea in particular, being comparatively ethnically homogeneous, lent themselves unusually well in certain ways to the model of the modern nation-state). Arabic-speaking regions made the opposite choice, to preserve a unified written language, based on the cosmopolitan language, valuing transnational solidarity over particularist nationalism; I discuss this choice briefly in the national literatures chapter.

THE FATES OF LITERARY COSMOPOLIES

This distinction between the fates of the Chinese and Arabic cosmopoleis illustrates some of the possible transitions made over time by cosmopolitan literary ecologies. Arabic, perhaps uniquely, remains extant as a literary cosmopolis today, with native speakers of dozens of Arabic dialects across many nations, from Mauritania to Oman, using Modern Standard Arabic (itself relatively little changed from the classical language) as their medium of literary expression and the language playing a significant auxiliary role across the larger Islamic world, from West Africa to Indonesia and beyond. Other cosmopoleis of the past simply shifted their cosmopolitan language of choice. The region around the modern city of Baghdad, for example, has used, in succession, Sumerian, Akkadian, Aramaic, Greek, Arabic, Persian, and Arabic again as its chief vehicles for literary expression; none of these languages (with the exception of Akkadian) originate in the region, but the local populations over time adapted to different (and frequently overlapping) cosmopolitan idioms. Some regions have been part of more than one cosmopolis at a time, as in the case of much of South Asia, where, in the centuries prior to British colonization, both Persian and Sanskrit served cosmopolitan functions, linking different individuals in the region to distinct, if sometimes overlapping, large-scale networks, while some vernacular languages, including Urdu, various dialects of what would
become Hindi, and Marathi, served transregional functions alongside the larger cosmopolitan languages.

In the case of China, as I showed briefly earlier, the cosmopolitan register of the language gave way to a vernacular register, understood now as a "national" language, with the consequent construction of a vernacular literary history along European lines, as I will show in the chapter on national literatures. Across Eurasia and Africa, it was the advent of European colonialism that dealt the harshest blows to many cosmopolitan languages, whether in the South Asian development of Hindi and Urdu as "national" languages for India and Pakistan, with dozens of other languages acting as national at regional levels, or in the emergence of "national" languages as the sole media of literary expression in southeast Asia. With the arguable exception of Arabic, no cosmopolitan language has survived the transition to the model of the nation-state unscathed; the particular kind of elite universalism fostered by these languages having seemed unsuited to the modern era of competition among nations.

Many cosmopolitan languages, however, (and most notably Latin and Sanskrit) began their declines long before modernity, nationalism, and colonialism. Instead, they were supplanted by regional vernacular language sat first only as supplements to the cosmopolitan, often directed towards particular functions, but gradually, in each case, taking over more and more of the functions of the cosmopolitan language, until eventually they had replaced it altogether. Lost in the process, of course, was the immense geographic and chronological breadth of audience opened up by cosmopolitan languages, as well as the capacity to make one's claims about the political world on a notionally universal stage; what was gained will be the subject of the next chapter.