

PATRICK OLIVELLE is Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Religions at the University of Texas at Austin.

“For years unreadable and inaccurate translations have discouraged general readers and Sanskrit-less scholars of India from reading the *Arthaśāstra*, though this work is central to anyone’s understanding of Indian history, law, politics, economics, society, religion, and much more. At last we have a translation of extraordinary erudition and clarity that makes this fascinating and crucially important text truly accessible. The prose is transparent, clean, devoid of jargon or highly technical language; the meticulously detailed notes clarify the more abstruse points. All of Patrick Olivelle’s translations are first-rate, but this is his great masterpiece.”

—Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions, University of Chicago Divinity School

“Patrick Olivelle’s fluent and illuminatingly annotated translation will be a revelation to all those interested in ancient India and in the organization of ancient states more generally. By offering a powerful counter to the popular notion of an ancient India focused only on transcendent religious speculation, it significantly complicates and deepens our picture of that place and time.”

—Stephanie W. Jamison, Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures and of Indo-European Studies, the University of California, Los Angeles

“Patrick Olivelle crowns a distinguished career by translating one of the most difficult, and by many measures the most valuable, of Sanskrit texts, Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra*. A lifetime of scholarly translations from Sanskrit has prepared him to scale these daunting heights, and the result is magnificent. The work is informed by a strongly argued theory about the composition of the *Arthaśāstra*, and the translation is richly annotated. All scholars of ancient India will benefit from this splendid new translation.”

—Thomas R. Trautmann, Professor Emeritus of History and Anthropology, University of Michigan

“Patrick Olivelle, better qualified for the job than any other Indologist by decades of experience in translating ancient and medieval Indian texts, as well as by his long and highly productive engagement with Indian legal literature, has presented a new translation of the famous and in many regards unique *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, the only extant witness of the once much larger genre of texts dealing with the science of law and statecraft. By a rare combination of philological acumen, insightful recognition of textual and exegetical problems, an enviably vast erudition, and a developed feel for the language, Olivelle has succeeded in preparing a richly annotated translation that is both readable and utterly reliable. It not only outdoes all its predecessors but will also stand unchallenged the test of time.”

—Albrecht Wezler, Emeritus Professor of Sanskrit, University of Hamburg, Germany



OLIVELLE

King, Governance, and
Law in Ancient India



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KAUṬILYA’S *ARTHAŚĀSTRA*

King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India presents an English translation of Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* (*AS.*) along with detailed endnotes. When it was discovered in 1923, the *AS.* was described as perhaps the most precious work in the whole range of Sanskrit literature, an assessment that still rings true. Patrick Olivelle’s new translation of this significant text, the first in close to half a century, takes into account a number of important advances in our knowledge of the texts, inscriptions, and archeological and art historical remains from the period in Indian history to which the *AS.* belongs.

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Cover image: Gupta Empire, Samudra Gupta (c. 350–375 CE), Gold *Dinara* of the ‘Aśvamedha’ type, HCR6574. Obverse: caparisoned horse standing in front of the sacrificial post. Reverse: the Chief Queen (*mahīṣī*) standing holding a fly-whisk and water-pot. Ritual spear the left field and Brahmi inscription “*aśvamedhaparākramah*” to the right.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Cover image courtesy the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

ISBN 978-0-19-989182-5



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A New Annotated Translation by
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