

**“WAS KING MILINDA INDO-GREEK MENANDER?”:
RE-EXAMINATION OF MILINDAPAÑHA IN THE LIGHT OF THE
NUMISMATIC, EPIGRAPHIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE**

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The Buddhist literary text, the *Milindapañha*, where a philosophical discussion takes place between a *Yavana* monarch named *Milinda* and a Buddhist monk named *Nagasena*, has impelled modern scholars to raise debates about whether to identify the Indo-Greek King Menander with King *Milinda* mentioned in the text. In a whirl of controversies, the literary, numismatic, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence -the extensive successful studies on Indo-Greek coins led by Osmund Bopearachchi have contributed to a greater understanding of the existence of the Indo-Greek King Menander and how he established his reign within the middle of the second century BCE (165-130) and indicated glimpses of such a conversation. However, the same evidence leaves the matter of identifying King Menander with *Milinda* in obscurity. Textual evidence from sources such as the *Milindapañha* and the *Monk Nagasena Sutra*, which in modern scholarship are considered the most prominent Eastern literary sources to mention a Western King, remains controversial. Thus, it raises several questions regarding the King who is depicted in these literary sources. This study provides new pedagogical information to current studies to resolve the conflict that exists in previous studies regarding the *Milindapañha* and King *Milinda*-King Menander by identifying new verifiable textual evidence about King *Milinda*. Incorporating new evidence, the study argues that a considerable amount of the portrayal of King *Milinda* of the *Milindapañha* is compiled based on speculation and conjecture, for *Milindu Raja Katha* from the *Saddharmarathnakaraya* corresponds to the Chinese version of the *Monk Nagasena Sutra*. While answering several other questions, such as when and why the existing Pāli text extended and why the scholars have not incorporated the *Milindu Raja Katha* from the *Saddharmarathnakaraya* in their studies about King *Milinda* and dialogue between him and sage *Nagasena*, this study identifies King *Milinda* as King Menander but contests the arguments in modern scholarship, particularly regarding the last phase of the life of King Menander. This qualitative historical analysis is nursed by two major research methodologies: record-keeping, where existing reliable documents and similar sources of information are used as data sources and secondary research method, where data is collected in the form of notes. In the textual analysis, the similarities and differences are identified by examining the content and structure of the literary sources, following a comparative mode. This examined data is further compared and contrasted with, and parallels are drawn from, numismatic, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence.

Keywords: King Menander, King *Milinda*, *Milindapañha*, *Monk Nagasena Sutra*, *Milindu Raja Katha*