

# A Buddhist Incense Burner from Gandhara

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A UNIQUE BRONZE incense burner in the collection of Shelby White and Leon Levy (Figure 1, Colorplate 3) is now on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. While of extraordinary aesthetic merit, the burner also stands as a paradigm for the unique position ancient India occupied as an inheritor of classical art that arrived via the sea route through Alexandria, mingled with Near Eastern traditions through Parthian art in Gandhara, and was then transmitted, through the intermediary of Buddhism, to the Far East. Nevertheless, it is incontrovertibly Indian. Similar objects are known throughout the ancient world, but Indian examples were hitherto known only through illustrations on Buddhist narrative reliefs in Gandhara.

The bronze will be studied in relationship first to its predecessors in the Greco-Roman and Near Eastern worlds and then, briefly, to its successors in the Far East. But most importantly it will be studied for what it is: a unique and important extant example of Indian art made at the very beginnings of Buddhist art in Gandhara and bearing, in a formative version, much of the symbolism which was eventually used throughout the Buddhist world.

The Levy-White incense burner measures 82.6 centimeters high and is composed of numerous individual bronze elements which are mechanically joined to or suspended from the body. All of the individual parts were made using the lost-wax process, and there is no indication that any of the parts were made at another time, or in another place.<sup>1</sup> The incense burner rests on a square base (Figure 2) with four winged male figures as corner supports (Figure 3). The winged figures were cast separately and secured to the base by conspicuous rivets. From the back (Figure 4), one can clearly see the method of manufacture. For each of the bodies, wax was pressed into a shallow mold. The same press mold was used for all

four figures. They are nearly identical; the slight differences can be accounted for by minor touch-ups to the impressions. The same is the case for the wings. One mold was used for the right wing and another for the left. The wax models for the body and for the wings of each figure were then joined, and a mold suitable for the final casting was created from them.

Standing on the burner's base is a decorative fluted shaft (Figure 5) which supports the functional portion of the censer. Although the shaft and the base are aligned by a small lip, the bottom piece seems never to have been permanently attached and would fall off if one lifted the burner by the shaft alone. As we shall see below, similar smaller objects were carried and held by the shaft, but the Gandharan incense burner is far too heavy to be carried about and must have stood on the floor or on an altar. At the bottom of the shaft (Figure 6) is a torus-shaped wreath with two different decorative motifs, alternating so as to divide the torus into four sections.

The shaft supports the functional portion of the censer, which has three main parts. At the bottom is a round tray or disk (Figure 7) which may have served to catch embers. The central portion of the tray shows a lotus surrounded by a vine scroll, and several birds are shown as if perched upon the disk. The most remarkable feature of this burner is that five leaves (see Figure 8) hang from hooks on the disk. Four appear to be vine leaves, each with a human head at the spot where the leaf blade joins the stalk. The fifth leaf is of another type and has no human head. Although one might guess that the leaf which does not match the others is a later replacement, there is no evidence for this, as the technique of casting and the metal is no different from the others.<sup>2</sup> The leaves alternate with the remains of what once must have been bells.

The burner itself is a round bowl decorated with lotus leaves. It is surmounted by a conical pierced lid (Figure 9) whose function is to contain any flames and at the same time release the aromatic smoke of the burning incense. The middle band contains two

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The notes for this article begin on page 95.



Figure 1. Incense burner. Gandhara, 1st century A.D. Bronze, H. 82.6 cm. Collection of Shelby White and Leon Levy, on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art (L.1999.74.2)



Figure 2. Square base of the incense burner in Figure 1



Figure 3. Detail of a guardian figure on the base of the incense burner in Figure 1



Figure 5. Base and fluted shaft of the incense burner in Figure 1

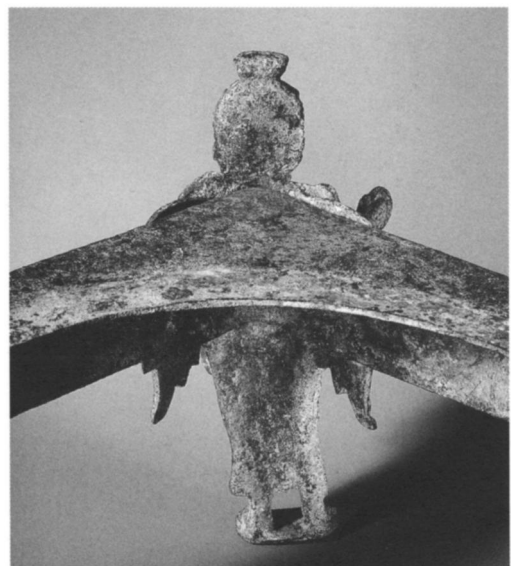


Figure 4. Detail of the back of a guardian figure on the base of the incense burner in Figure 1



Figure 6. Detail of the torus molding on the shaft of the incense burner in Figure 1



Figure 7. Detail of the disk on the incense burner in Figure 1



Figure 8. Two leaves from the incense burner in Figure 1

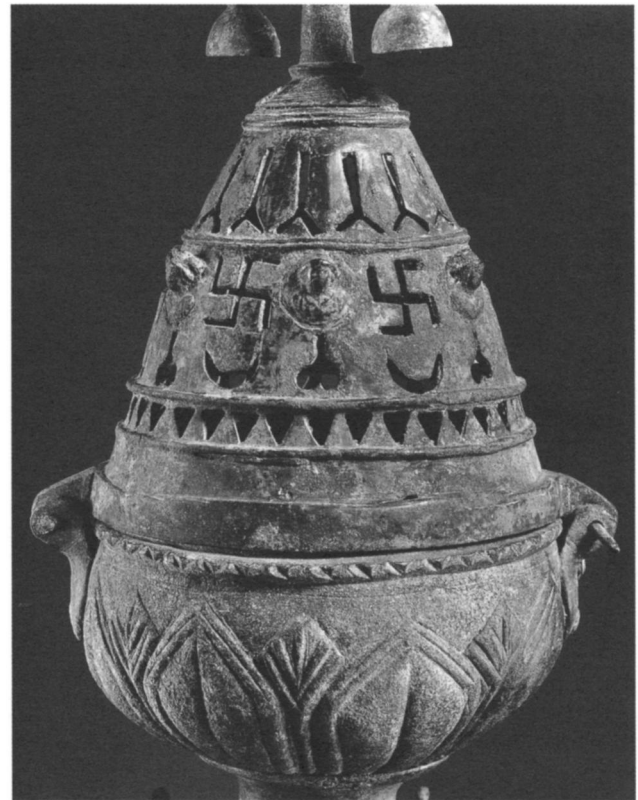


Figure 9. Detail of the bowl and lid of the incense burner in Figure 1

sets of alternating motifs probably meant to be read in vertical pairs. The first set is a human head in relief within a roundel above a pierced heartlike shape or pipal leaf. This paired motif alternates with a pierced swastika (an ancient sun symbol) surmounting a pierced crescent moon. The lid is topped by a shaft

and a finial surmounted by a cylindrical element with a floral motif on top (see Figure 1). A ropelike element surrounds the finial and two bells hang from it. This ropelike element could never actually have functioned as a handle to carry the incense burner, as the burner is too heavy and the loop too weak. However,





Figure 10. Detail of the incense burner in Figure 1 with its lid open

this long extension may have permitted one to open the burner when it was hot. The lid and the burner are joined by a hinge (Figure 10) which is so sturdy that the burner could be used as a brazier with the lid open. On the opposite side of the lid is a catch which is essentially identical to the hinge except that the joining pin which keeps the catch closed is easily removable and secured to the body of the burner by a chain, so that it cannot be lost when the lid is open.

There are only three previous bibliographic references to the Levy-White incense burner. It first appeared in the catalogue of an exhibition of Buddhist bronzes in the Tokyo-based Nitta Group Collection held in the National Palace Museum in Taipei in 1987.<sup>3</sup> Martha Carter published a preliminary study of it in 1994,<sup>4</sup> and it appeared in the auction catalogue when it was sold by the Nitta Group in 1998.<sup>5</sup> There are no further publications on this specific object, but there are publications which suggest a ritual function for similar ones.

## CONTACTS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE WEST

In order to comprehend why Gandharan art in general, and the Levy-White incense burner in particular, is a stylistic hybrid, it is important to understand the extensive sea trade between southern Italy, Egypt, and India. Our discussion will be based both on ancient literary sources and on modern studies of Western works of art imported into India. Our most important literary source is the *Periplus maris Erythraei* (Navigation of the Red Sea). The excellent translation of the *Periplus* by Lionel Casson, along with his detailed commentary, is basic to our study. The text is extremely brief for such a ramified subject: only eighty-nine pages suffice for both the original Greek and the English translation. The *Periplus* states:

Vessels moor at Barbarikon, but all the cargoes are taken up the river to the king at the metropolis. In this port of trade there is a market for: clothing, with no adornment in good quantity, of printed fabric in limited quantity; multicolored textiles; peridot(?); coral; storax; frankincense; glassware; silverware; money; wine, limited quantity. As return cargo it offers: costus; bdellium; *lykion*; nard; turquoise; lapis lazuli; Chinese pelts, cloth, and yarn; indigo. Those who sail with the Indian [sc. winds] leave around July, that is, Epeiph. The crossing with these is hard going but absolutely favorable and shorter.<sup>6</sup>

The *Periplus* was written in Greek in the mid-first century A.D. by a merchant of Greek descent living in Roman Egypt.<sup>7</sup> He seems to have personally made the voyage to the sites mentioned in the *Periplus*. As he was clearly conveying firsthand knowledge, he was probably himself a trader.<sup>8</sup> The main trading center for goods transported to and from India was Alexandria in Roman Egypt. From there goods were transported to the ports on the Red Sea to be shipped to India's west coast (see Figure 11). There had been a recent upsurge in trade between Rome and India when it was discovered that one could use the monsoon winds to sail from the mouth of the Red Sea to India's west coast in a relatively brief time.<sup>9</sup> The *Periplus*, along with Pliny's *Natural History* and Ptolemy's *Geography*, gives us abundant information about this East-West trade. The Romans coveted Indian spices and luxuries, for which the Indians received Western goods and money as well as frankincense, which hailed from Arabia. Although the *Periplus* is ostensibly about navigation, and the sea voyage was difficult, it is principally a trading manual for merchants, stating what goods were sent to what ports, and it also makes some comments about the political situation. While the *Periplus* is our

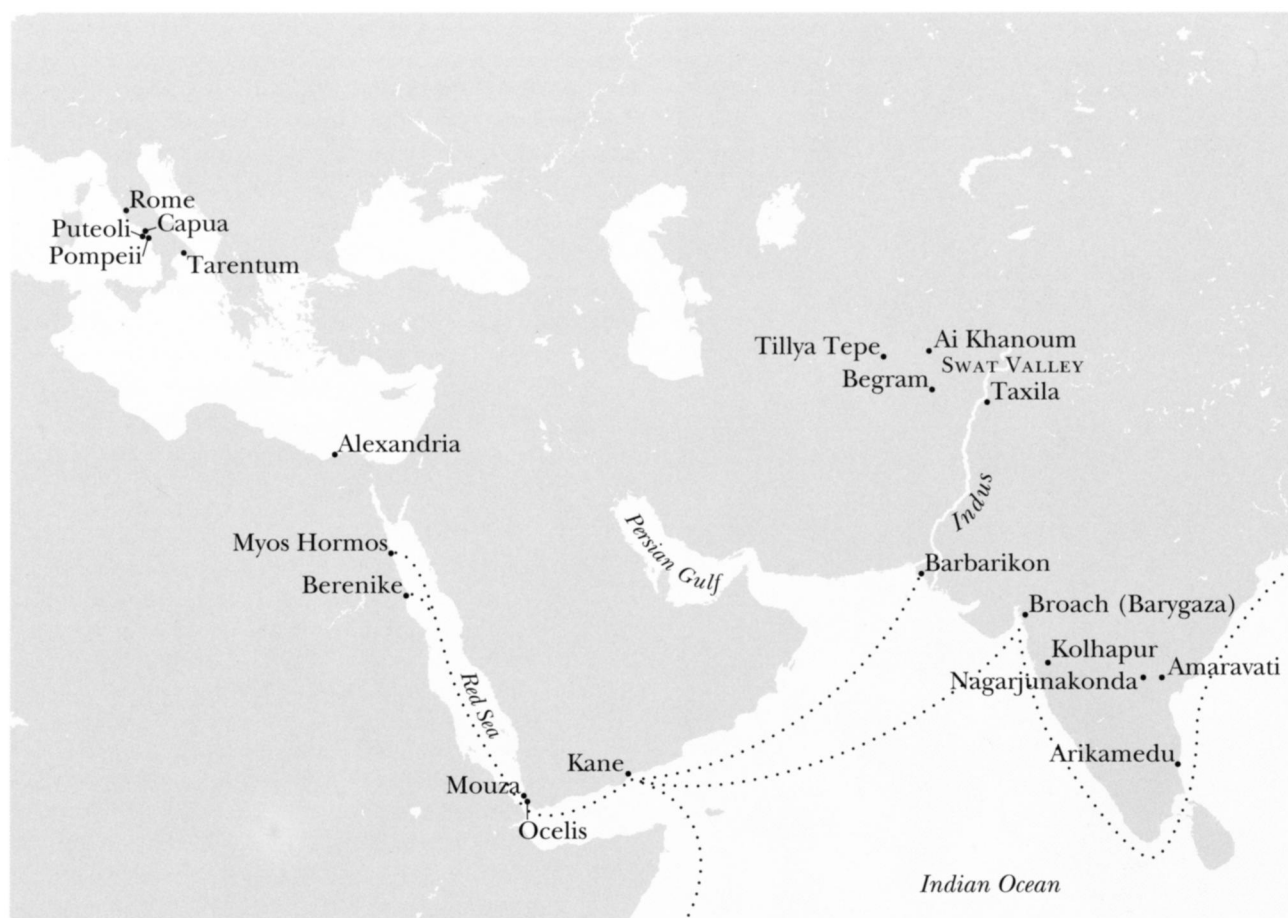


Figure 11. Sites and trade routes mentioned in the text

primary literary source on this subject, corroborative archaeology of the Egyptian ports of the Red Sea is as yet in its early stages.<sup>10</sup> However, much is known about the fruits of the Red Sea trade, for imported works of art greatly influenced the style of the Indian art.

Four major sites, as well as numerous minor ones, show us that Western goods reached India,<sup>11</sup> and South Indian archaeological, numismatic, and literary evidence certainly adds more to the picture.<sup>12</sup> Arikamedu is an actual trading port on the southeast coast of India,<sup>13</sup> while the sites in the west and northwest provide us with comparative material for our study.

The modern city of Kolhapur may be identical with ancient Hippokoura, the inland capital of King Baleokouros, mentioned in Ptolemy's *Geography*.<sup>14</sup> A group of bronzes which were discovered there at the mound of Brahmapuri were first published in 1960 by Karl Khandalavala, who dated many of the objects to the second century A.D.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, Richard Daniel

De Puma reexamined the bronzes and divided them into a Hellenistic group and a group dating to about the first century A.D.<sup>16</sup> Based on stylistic considerations, he suggested that the most superb object in the hoard, the well-known statue of Poseidon (Figure 12), was made during the third century B.C. and came to India at a later date.<sup>17</sup> The *Poseidon* was probably based on a Hellenistic original of about 340 B.C. by Lysippos. Although the original is no longer extant, it is known from numerous copies, including an example now in the Pella Museum which came from a house destroyed in 168 B.C. (Figure 13).<sup>18</sup> Thus, De Puma's study makes it clear that copies of works of art of major quality were imported into India and could have been seen throughout the Indian subcontinent as well as in the Western world.

The second group of bronzes is not of the same quality as the *Poseidon*. As a group, they have been compared to works found at Pompeii, Herculaneum, and related sites. The production of the bronzes is



Figure 12. *Poseidon*. Brahmapuri, Kolhapur, Hellenistic. Bronze, H. 12.8 cm. Kolhapur Museum, 932 (photo by Professor Richard De Puma, University of Iowa)

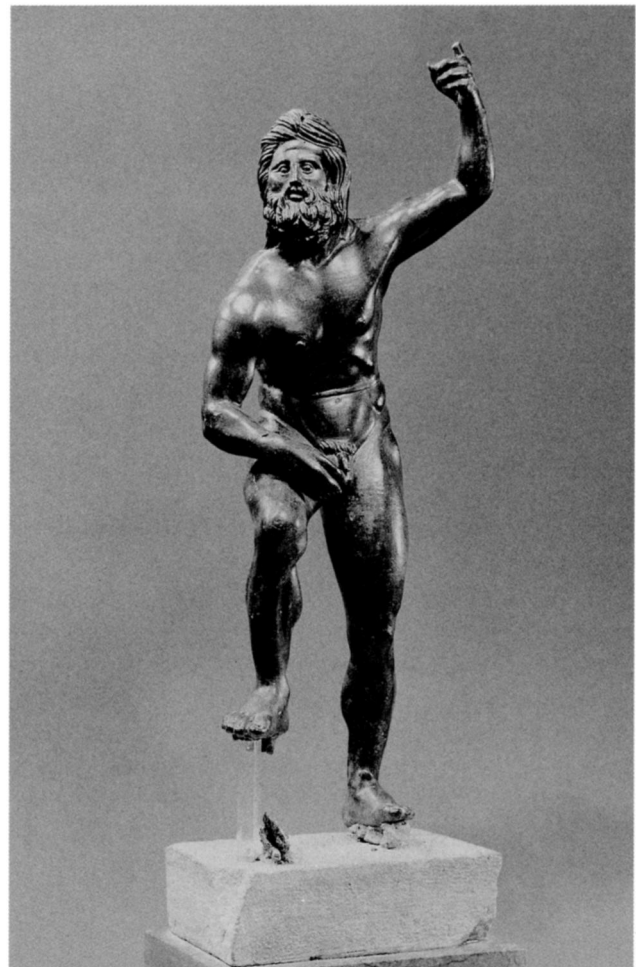


Figure 13. After Lysippos, *Poseidon*. Hellenistic. Bronze, H. 46 cm. Pella Museum, M383 (photo: TAP Service, Athens)

ascribed to the Campanian bronze manufacturing center of Capua, and they are datable to the first century A.D. Capua is only twenty miles north of Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli), the major Italian seaport for trade with Alexandria, making it a logical source for works traveling to the East. Capua was founded by the Etruscans and had a long tradition of metalworking. The conclusion of De Puma's study is that bronzes of different periods (i.e., Hellenistic and Roman) were imported into India at the same time. Thus, it is not ahistorical to seek prototypes for Indian works of art of the first and second centuries A.D. or even later in Hellenistic models as well as in Roman works of art.

De Puma noted that the Kolhapur bronzes were probably on their way to a neighboring foundry to be melted down for their metal value.<sup>19</sup> It is common practice in India to melt down all "used" metal, of whatever quality. The purpose is to ensure that any bad karma possessed by the original owner is melted down and a new object is "reborn," consistent with Indian

philosophy.<sup>20</sup> This practice did not preclude the possibility that objects, including Western ones, were copied before being melted down, and it explains why so few ancient bronzes, Indian or foreign, survive in India. However, in South India clay bullae were decorated with Roman-style portrait heads copied from imported coins.<sup>21</sup> A small Buddhist stone relief panel from Amaravati, in South India, which shows a woman in classical dress with Indian bangles on her ankles (Figure 14) was probably copied and modified from a Roman original. According to an inscription on the relief, it was donated to the Buddhist community by the wife of a goldsmith. I suspect that a Roman bronze in the goldsmith's possession was copied and then melted down for other purposes.<sup>22</sup>

Judith Lerner, in her 1996 article on horizontal-handled mirrors, confirmed the pattern of trade suggested by De Puma.<sup>23</sup> She stated that horizontal-handled mirrors appear first on Roman territory (and in Latium and Campania, the heart of the Roman Empire) and



Figure 14. Woman in classical dress with Indian bangles on her ankles, detail of a drum frieze of the Great Stupa. Amaravati, 3rd century A.D. Limestone, H. 40 cm. Government Museum, Madras (photo: Archaeological Survey of India)

soon afterward in India. She reminded us that an exquisite Indian ivory was found in Pompeii,<sup>24</sup> confirming the evidence for the export of ivory known through the *Periplus* and other classical literary sources.<sup>25</sup> Thus, we should not be surprised to find this region as a major source for exports to India. It is De Puma's assignment of the bronzes to Kolhapur, however, that is important for the study of the sources of the Levy-White incense burner.

One of the most important sites where Western material was found is Begram, in Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> Begram is commonly believed to have been the capital of Indo-Greek kings and of the first rulers of the Kushan dynasty.<sup>27</sup> It seems to have been the site of either an extraordinary inland emporium or a royal

collection of foreign goods. The Begram hoard comprises bronzes and plaster casts from the Greco-Roman world, glass, lacquerwork from China, and an exquisite collection of ivories that are Indian in style (but were in some cases made using the sunk relief technique associated with Egypt). This list of excavated material is reminiscent of our introductory quote from the *Periplus*, which mentions glass and metalwork from the West (although the silverware mentioned above was probably quickly melted down), as well as goods from China. Begram was excavated many times, beginning in 1937. The early publications by Joseph Hackin and studies by Philippe Stern and Otto Kurz, among others, form the basis for most future studies.<sup>28</sup>

An important study has been made on the Begram glass by David Whitehouse.<sup>29</sup> Through careful analysis and comparative study of glass found in the Begram hoard, Whitehouse has suggested that all the objects were buried within a generation of about A.D. 100.<sup>30</sup> Their method of manufacture implies that they came from the Roman Empire, some from Roman Egypt, via the sea route described in the *Periplus*. Whitehouse proposed that some of the anomalous pieces of glass from Begram, the well-known fish glass, may have arrived via the sea route from Alexandria but were actually manufactured in Arabia and picked up there, in the same way that frankincense was carried to India by ships coming from Egypt which stopped in Arabia. As part of his discussion, Whitehouse touched upon Taxila, one of the most important cities of ancient Gandhara. As Xinru Liu has pointed out, glass was often used in a Buddhist context, and, as we shall see in this paper, many objects which appear to be secular were also used in a religious context.<sup>31</sup> Particular instances include the glass tiles used to pave the path around the Dharmarajika stupa at Taxila and the glass objects buried along with reliquaries in Buddhist stupas at Charsadda, ancient Pushkalavati.

Important fragments of glass were found at Taxila, and numerous Western objects were discovered there at the site of Sirkap, which belongs to the Shaka- (or Scytho-) Parthian levels. Whitehouse believes the objects were imported into Gandhara from the Roman Empire in the early first century A.D. One object of significance which he singled out is a statuette of the god Harpocrates wearing the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt. Whitehouse raised the question as to whether the objects came to Taxila by land or by sea and concluded that they arrived by sea on ships from Egypt rather than on caravans from Syria and that Taxila was an active participant in the exchange network that brought products of central and eastern Asia to the Indian Ocean.<sup>32</sup> Even though I know of no



study which attempts to attribute the source of the Taxila finds to a particular geographic location, Taxila remains crucial to this study, for fragments of incense burners and other objects relating to the Levy-White incense burner have been found there. Some have actually been found at the Shaka-Parthian levels of Sirkap, and some date to Kushan times, beginning in the latter half of the first century A.D.<sup>33</sup> Thus, if Taxila was a trading post for goods which came and went to and from the sea route, we should not be surprised to find that many of the closest prototypes for the Gandharan incense burner came from southern Italy or Egypt.

We have mentioned three major sites affected by the Red Sea trade as outlined in the *Periplus*: Kolhapur, Begram, and Taxila. These are certainly not the only ones, as foreign imports have been found all over India. Trade with the West, along with internal trade and the rise of the mercantile community, was responsible for a rapid rise in the patronage of the Buddhist monastic community and of Buddhist art in the early centuries of the Christian era.<sup>34</sup> Actually, these sites were chosen for their specific application to the study of the Gandharan incense burner. The reader must understand that Taxila was a trading center of imports and exports as well as an artistic center in its own right, well known for its finds relating to the classical world, to Parthian art, and to the great Buddhist centers of the Kushan era. As we relate the Levy-White incense burner to Taxila, we note that the burner could have gone from there to anywhere, but it is only at Taxila that we have found such an abundance of concrete comparative material.

Let us return briefly to the *Periplus* and the implication of the text. Our first quotation from the *Periplus* is taken from paragraph 39. In paragraph 38, we are told by our trader that

next comes the seaboard of Skythia . . . ; it is very flat and through it flows the Sinthos River, mightiest of the rivers along the Erythraean Sea and emptying so great an amount of water into the sea that far off, before you reach land, its light-colored water meets you out at sea. An indication to those coming from the sea that they are already approaching land in the river's vicinity are the snakes that emerge from the depths to meet them. . . . The river has seven mouths, narrow and full of shallows; none are navigable except the one in the middle. At it, on the coast, stands the port of trade of Barbarikon. There is a small islet in front of it; and behind it, inland, is the metropolis of Skythia itself, Minnagar. The throne is in the hands of the Parthians, who are constantly chasing each other off it.<sup>35</sup>

To those familiar with India the passage evokes the image of ancient Gandhara (in modern-day Pakistan),

called Indo-Skythia by Ptolemy, as it had previously been ruled by the Shakas (called Scythians by the Greeks). The Sinthos is of course the mighty Indus River; Barbarikon has never been precisely identified, but it is clearly at the mouth of the Indus. The metropolis of Minnagar, obviously farther inland, also remains unidentified. At the time of the writing of the *Periplus*, the region was ruled by the Parthians, or Indo-Parthians, a term used to distinguish them from Parthians who reigned farther to the west. The most famous of the Indo-Parthians was Gondophares, who ruled A.D. 20–46, but it is not clear who held the throne in Minnagar. The Kushans, one of the more influential dynasties in Indian history, gradually took over most of northern India but were not yet ruling at the time the *Periplus* was written.<sup>36</sup>

We now return to paragraph 39 of the *Periplus*, quoted at the beginning of this article. In the first line, the *Periplus* states that “all the cargoes are taken up the river to the king at the metropolis.” Based on a comparative study of other portions of the text, Casson interpreted this as meaning that the king received all the goods which were unloaded, including those especially intended for him.<sup>37</sup> Obviously, Taxila and Begram are upstream from the mouth of the Indus. With regard to the imports into India, naturally most are things which India lacked and most are from the Red Sea or Mediterranean areas. It is interesting to see coral on the list, as Pliny mentioned that the Indians prized coral as highly as the Romans did pearls.<sup>38</sup> (Even today, Indians possessing the most magnificent jewels will seek out coral necklaces on trips abroad.) With regard to frankincense, this substance did not come from the Mediterranean or Egypt, but was imported from the site of Kane in southern Arabia, and from there ships entered the open sea to go directly to India.<sup>39</sup>

The topic of preparation and importation of incense is interesting in its own right,<sup>40</sup> but it shall be discussed here only as it pertains to the Levy-White incense burner and other comparative material. It is important to note that incense went directly to the king. We must therefore assume that this special king, using imported incense despite the fact that India produced its own aromatics, had a special incense burner. Throughout the ancient world, the use of incense was often a royal prerogative,<sup>41</sup> and, as we shall see below, there is much about this Gandharan incense burner which indicates royal symbolism. But the reader must be cautioned that in ancient India royal symbolism and Buddhist symbolism were often indistinguishable. The Buddha Shakyamuni was a prince of the *kshatriya* caste, and at his birth the astrologers predicted that he would become either a *Chakravartin*

(World Ruler) or a Buddha (Enlightened One). His biography includes his renunciation of worldly goods, including the luxuries of royalty. Thus, artists often indicated his presence by a throne or a royal umbrella, and his long, pendant ears remind us that he was once a prince wearing heavy gold earrings. As we will see below, incense burners very much like the Levy-White burner were associated with the presence of the Buddha.

But what of the exports described in paragraph 39 of the *Periplus*? For our purposes, the most important are the goods from China. We include this in our discussion as a way to understand further the situation in the seaport of Barbarikon and in the trading center in the metropolis. Additionally, the Gandharan incense burner looks “Greek” to some and “Chinese” to others.<sup>42</sup> Its Greek appearance is explainable through its prototypes on the sea route to India. Its Chinese aspect is more complex. But goods from Greece and China did mix in Gandhara. The chief export from China was clearly silk cloth,<sup>43</sup> and we know that other Chinese goods were in the region, as a Chinese lacquer bowl was excavated at Begram.<sup>44</sup> Nonperishable Chinese goods were relatively rare in Gandhara, however, and no examples of Chinese incense burners have been found there.

Our discussion of the ancient sea route to India and of the sources of some of the Western goods found at different trading centers is essential to an understanding of the unique visual appearance of the Levy-White incense burner.

#### INCENSE BURNERS: TYPES AND PROTOTYPES

Before we discuss the immediate predecessors of the Gandharan incense burner, it is important to stress that this burner, like any other, is a functional object, and there are certain constraints upon its design. Sometime early in history the problem of making a functional incense burner was solved, and all incense burners fall into only a few groups.<sup>45</sup> Irrespective of national or regional styles, they are still recognizable by their functional elements. It was important to have a burner that could contain the incense and that was made of an appropriate material to withstand the heat of the embers. The burner had to have something to support it if it was placed on the ground or an altar. If it was to be carried, the container had to be able to be safely held so as not to endanger the bearer. If it was covered, the cover had to be pierced so that the aromatic smoke could be emitted through the holes.

The monograph-length article on incense burners published by Karl Wigand in 1912 remains the standard



Figure 15. Incense burner, detail of a relief from a mastaba near the pyramid of Cheops. Egypt, Fifth Dynasty, ca. 2680–2450 B.C. Egyptian Museum of Leipzig University (photo: Karl Wigand, “Thymiateria,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 122 [1912], fig. 1)



Figure 16. Incense burner. Megiddo, Israel, 7th century B.C. Clay (photo: Karl Wigand, “Thymiateria,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 122 [1912], fig. 3)

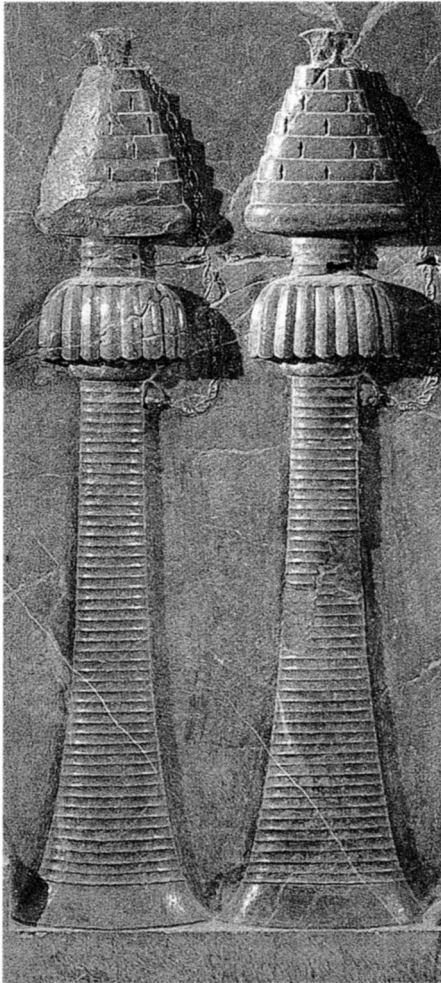


Figure 17. Two incense burners, detail of a relief of a royal audience of Darius and the crown prince Xerxes. Persepolis, 522–486 B.C. Tehran Museum (photo: Wilfried Seipel, ed., *7000 Jahre persische Kunst: Meisterwerke aus dem Iranischen Nationalmuseum in Teheran* [Milan and Vienna, 2000], pl. 7)

reference on the subject.<sup>46</sup> Wigand began his study in Egypt's Fourth Dynasty (2840–2680 B.C.) and carried it through Roman Egypt, before going on to look at other areas. The long tradition of the use of incense in Egypt was maintained even under the Greeks and Romans, so it is logical that Egypt would have been the main source of incense burners that came down the Red Sea on their way to India. Wigand illustrated a relief from a mastaba near the pyramid of Cheops and now in the Egyptian Museum of Leipzig University (Figure 15) which shows that by the Fifth Dynasty a functional shape had already taken form.<sup>47</sup> The bottom part of the incense burner in the relief looks like a wine glass without its base. A figure holds the burner by the stem in his left hand, and in his

right hand he holds a knob which opens the domed lid to expose the flaming embers. The lid is pierced with numerous holes to release the aromatics when it is closed. By the Eleventh Dynasty in Egypt a base had been added so that the burner could stand on its own without being held, a basic shape which endures today.<sup>48</sup> I call this shape the “egg in an egg cup.” This shape is the basis for the Levy-White incense burner, many of its Hellenistic prototypes, and its Far Eastern successors. A variant of the Egyptian incense burner was excavated at Megiddo in Israel and is dated to about the seventh century B.C. (Figure 16).<sup>49</sup> It is made of clay, and the bowl is painted to look like a lotus bowl, an enduring form that became almost universal many centuries later. Below the bowl are two sets of leaves that are perhaps ancestors of the leaves hanging from the tray on the Gandharan incense burner. Earlier variations of this type are known to have been produced in Cyprus.<sup>50</sup> The artists of Gandhara did not see these early examples. Nevertheless, the ancient examples point out how universal these forms and their variants became in the West. Except for the lotus bowl, however, Indian incense burners of this type survive only in fragments; they are illustrated intact only in the highly classicizing art of Gandhara and are not found elsewhere on the subcontinent.<sup>51</sup>

There are two forms of incense burners, closer in time, which are unlike each other and yet elements of their style appear in the Gandharan incense burner: Achaemenid and, perhaps rather a curiosity to most of us, Etruscan. The traditions are disparate and aesthetically antithetical. Nevertheless, the Gandharan incense burner compels me to present both. The two traditions occur side by side. In the sixth century B.C. northwest India briefly became part of the Persian empire. The first stone works of art produced in India, effectively the beginnings of Indian art as we know it today, are said to have been based on Achaemenid models.<sup>52</sup> Although Persian presence was brief, the first few centuries of Indian art display many characteristics commonly referred to as Persepolitan or Western Asiatic.<sup>53</sup> The fact that Parthians, the inheritors of the Near Eastern tradition, were ruling in Gandhara at the time of the *Periplus* makes this association natural.

Achaemenid or Achaemenid-type incense burners are generally tall and stand on the floor. Bernard Goldman has traced their predecessors back to the second millennium B.C., to Anatolian seal impressions.<sup>54</sup> Their generally conservative forms can be noted. The most common examples are illustrated at Persepolis (see Figure 17), with regal figures standing beside them.<sup>55</sup> This type of burner rests on a stand, and a band of leaves caps its segmented base. The lid

Figure 18 (right). Incense burner. Etruscan, 4th–3rd century B.C. Bronze, H. 39.5 cm. Johns Hopkins University Archaeological Collection, Baltimore (photo: David G. Mitten and Suzannah F. Doeringer, *Master Bronzes from the Classical World* [Mainz on Rhine, 1967], no. 220)

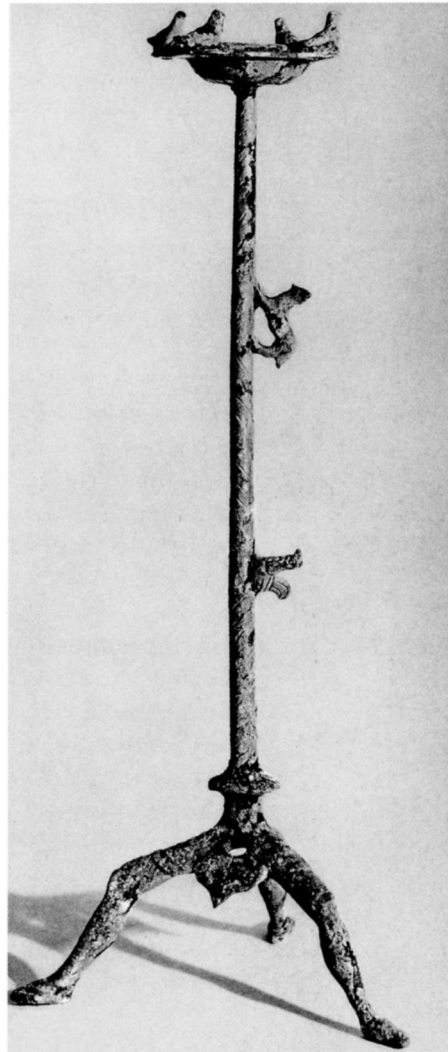


Figure 19 (far right). Base of an incense burner. Etruscan, 470–450 B.C. Bronze. British Museum, London (photo: Larissa Bonfante, ed., *Etruscan Life and Afterlife* [Detroit, 1986], pl. 474)

is stepped and conical, and a chain connects the top of the lid to the stem of the burner. In a variant of the type, the lid is hinged so that it does not fall off when it is opened.<sup>56</sup> Small hand-carried versions have also coexisted. These burners and the Gandharan example have several points in common. The most obvious is their unusual size. The Gandharan incense burner is simply too heavy to be carried. The best way to use it would be to place it on the floor or on a low platform. (Greek and Roman floor burners or altars are of a different type. Those that relate to the Gandharan example are usually tiny and meant to be carried or placed on a table.) The lid of the Gandharan burner is somewhat conical, reflecting a Persian (and not a Greek) shape. As on the Persian examples, the lid is attached to the burner by a chain. But on the Persian burners the chain extends from the top of the lid to the stem, while on the Gandharan example the chain is attached to a pin which is used to close the lid. Overall,

while Persian elements are there, the Gandharan piece does not look Persian.

Related to the problem of the Persian connection is the question of vocabulary. Goldman, in his article “Persian Domed Turibula,” argued that the domed incense burners should be called *turibula* and the opened ones *thymiateria*. He considers the *turibula* to be of a humbler, more secular type than the *thymiateria*.<sup>57</sup> Martha Carter accepted these distinctions and applied the term *turibulum* to the Gandharan incense burner, because it is covered and has no Buddhist symbolism, at least according to her.<sup>58</sup> As I will demonstrate below, the Levy-White incense burner was probably used with the lid open and is therefore, in Goldman’s terms, a *thymiaterion*. As we shall see, the burner has Buddhist symbolism and becomes a Buddhist symbol par excellence. I will therefore simply use the term “incense burner.”

Etruscan objects have never been discussed in the context of Indian art, but the Gandharan incense



Figure 20 (right). Incense burner. Mid-6th to mid-5th century B.C. Bronze, H. 32.4 cm. Collection of Lewis M. Dubroff, on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art (L.1998.26)



Figure 21 (far right). Detail of a red-figure lekythos showing a winged Nike carrying an incense burner. Attributed to the Dutuit Painter, Greece, Attica, ca. 490 B.C. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.227.16)



Figure 22 (left). Drawing of a red-figure vase the whereabouts of which are unknown (after a drawing by Siegfried Loeschcke published in Karl Wigand, "Thymiateria," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 122 [1912], fig. 9)

burner demands examination of the subject. As De Puma has stated, Capua was a bronze-casting center during Etruscan times, and older works of art occasionally went into the boats to India. Etruscan incense burners are usually in the form of a candelabrum with a shallow dish on top to hold the incense. A fine example is in the Johns Hopkins University Archaeological Collection, Baltimore (Figure 18). The Baltimore burner has three human legs, a feature common to

many Etruscan burners. Between the legs is a pointed ivy leaf with a vertical incision down the center, reminiscent of the heart-shaped motif or pointed leaf (probably a pipal) on the lid of the Gandharan incense burner. On top of the Baltimore burner are small birds facing counterclockwise; on the rim of the Gandharan incense burner all the birds are facing outward. As we will see below, a single bird is frequently placed on top of the incense burner lid. But the Etruscan culture is known for its use of lots of little birds. Ellen Reeder Williams, in her catalogue of the Johns Hopkins collection, said that the birds on the corners of the bowl "allude to the birds used in augury and the haruspices, rituals of divination in which incense would have been used."<sup>59</sup> (I have as yet avoided introducing the symbolism of any burners discussed, because when objects of trade entered India artisans borrowed their visual imagery, not their symbolism.) While I have not yet solved the problem of



Figure 23. Incense burner (right), with detail of a winged figure on the base (above). Greece, 4th century B.C. Silver with gilding, H. 14 cm. Collection of Shelby White and Leon Levy, on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art (L.1999.52.1)

the birds, in an Indian context they were most probably decorative or Buddhist. Other aspects of Etruscan decorative motifs are also pertinent. On other Etruscan incense burners, rings or chains may dangle from the corners of the bowl, and on a fine example in the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, birds dangle from the dish.<sup>60</sup> On ancient incense burners dangling objects are indeed rare, except on the Etruscan examples and in Gandhara, as seen in the Levy-White example and in Buddhist narrative reliefs. An Etruscan burner now in the British Museum, London (Figure 19), has lotus disks on its stem that are not too dissimilar from the disk on the Levy-White Gandharan burner.<sup>61</sup> There are in fact too many similarities between the Gandharan incense burner and the Etruscan examples to dismiss them. Granted, one must think hard to figure out the mechanism of contact or exchange, but it is not impossible that Etruscan items were shipped to Gandhara in the same fashion that a Hellenistic copy of a statue of Poseidon by Lysippos got to Kolhapur.

In the Greek world incense burners abound, and almost every publication of Greek terracotta illustrates

fragments of them. Actual burners are rare. The best-known intact example is a clay burner in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens which was illustrated and discussed by Wigand.<sup>62</sup> This tall, elegant burner with extremely simple decoration derives from both ancient Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern types. The few perforations on the lid are tapering horizontal slits. A rare bronze example of the same type dating from the mid-sixth to the mid-fifth century B.C. (Figure 20) is in the collection of Lewis Dubroff and is currently on loan to the Metropolitan Museum. The proportions of the stem of the burner are very elongated, so it was clearly meant to be held in one's hand. Right next to it in the same exhibition case is an exquisite lekythos of about 490 B.C. belonging to the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 21) on which a winged Nike gracefully carries a burner of a slightly later style. This is interesting for our study of the Gandharan incense burner, for we often see winged figures associated with incense burners in the Western world.<sup>63</sup> In a sketch of a red-figure vase included in Wigand's study (Figure 22),<sup>64</sup> a tall, slender incense burner is held in the hand of a female figure. Issuing from the holes



Figures 24 and 25. Base of an incense burner (left) and its lid (right). Tuch el-Karamus, Egypt, late 4th century B.C. Silver. Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 38089, JE 38090 (photos: Michael Pfrommer, *Studien zu alexandrinischer und grossgriechischer Toreutik frühhellenistischer Zeit* [Berlin, 1987], pls. 2, 3)

in the closed burner are streams of smoke. Although the burner in the sketch is of an early date and from a different country, this illustration is the only one I have seen that shows what the Levy-White incense burner would look like if it were used closed. Comparing the Dubroff incense burner with painted depictions of incense burners is helpful in understanding its function. While we have been unable to provide such a comparison for the Gandharan incense burner, illustrations of contemporary and later Gandharan narrative reliefs will likewise help to explain the Gandharan burner. What we will see then is that it was apparently used not closed but open.

Hellenistic incense burners are in fact closer in form to the Gandharan example. An exquisite jewel-like gilt silver burner also in the Levy-White collection and also on loan to the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 23) provides a fine comparison.<sup>65</sup> The Greek burner has no top or lid, and we do not know if it ever had one. It was made of precious metal, rather than bronze, with exquisite craftsmanship. However, the two objects have several features in common. Four winged figures support the square base on both (see Figures 23 and 38).<sup>66</sup> On each base is the same type of fluted shaft. There is no disk for embers on the Greek example, but the top of the bowl has an egg-and-dart motif, which the Gandharan artist adapted into a lotuslike form. On the tray of the Greek burner is an incised row of smilax or ivy leaves, a

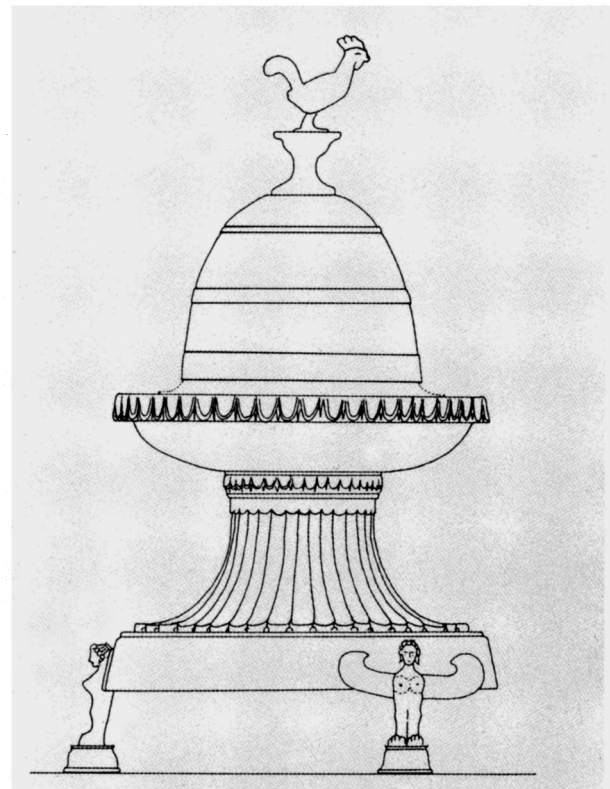


Figure 26. Reconstruction of the incense burner in Figures 24 and 25, with a chicken on the lid. Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 38092 (after Michael Pfrommer, *Studien zu alexandrinischer und grossgriechischer Toreutik frühhellenistischer Zeit* [Berlin, 1987], pl. 2)



Figure 27. Incense burner. Egypt, 1st century A.D. Bronze, H. 24.8 cm. Collection of Lewis M. Dubroff (photo: courtesy Sotheby's)



Figure 29. Relief on the interior of the lid of a shell-shaped box. Tarentum, Italy, Hellenistic. Silver, diam. 4 cm. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Taranto (photo: Henri-Paul Francfort, *Les palettes du Gandhara* [Paris, 1979], pl. 19a)



Figure 28. Incense burner. Tarentum, Italy, 3rd century B.C. Silver. Collection of Edmond de Rothschild (photo: Michael Pfrommer, *Studien zu alexandrinischer und grossgriechischer Toreutik frühhellenistischer Zeit* [Berlin, 1987], pl. 32)

form easily understood as the Indian pipal, which appears on the lid of the Gandharan burner (see Figure 9). We shall show other, similar Greek-style burners which have been discovered in or are believed to have come from places in proximity to the sea route to India.

As one would expect from reading the *Periplus*, Egypt was the best source for objects which were sent to India. Two incense burners from Tuch el-Karamus in Egypt are related to the Gandharan burner in that they have fluted stems, albeit much heavier in form. The first of the two (Figure 24) is of the same type as the Levy-White Greek example (Figure 23), with four winged figures on the base.<sup>67</sup> The major difference is that the base of the Egyptian burner is rounded rather than square, and a lid pierced to look like basketry has been found to go with it (Figure 25). On the flat top of the handle of the Tuch el-Karamus lid sat a hen (or rooster?) which is no longer attached but can be seen in the reconstruction (Figure 26). A late Gandharan version of this vessel that looks like an inverted Chinese bowl was excavated at Taxila.<sup>68</sup> The lid is similar, but the basketry has become an inverted lotus, and the four winged figures which support the base have been transformed into elephants. Another incense burner, from the collection of Lewis Dubroff (Figure 27), is said to be from Egypt and was produced in Roman times. Here one can see, at a later date, the tenacity of the tapering fluted column with a torus base on a square plinth.





Figures 30 and 31. Left: dish with a Triton bearing a Nereid. Right: dish with Eros on a lion-headed sea monster. Gandhara, Shaka-Parthian, 1st century B.C. Schist, left: diam. 11.4 cm, right: diam. 15.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.41, 1987.142.42)

Another important Hellenistic incense burner, from Tarentum in southern Italy (Figure 28), is a variation of the types we have been looking at, with the same type of fluted shaft.<sup>69</sup> It has no feet, however, and its lid is unique in appearance, consisting of many small, featherlike leaves whose ends point slightly upward to create a shape that is a cross between an artichoke and a pinecone. There are no holes for the emission of incense fumes between the leaves of the artichoke, but the top is open and covered with a mesh to isolate the flaming embers. In an article published nearly twenty years ago, I compared a mirror from Tarentum to a stone relief from South India.<sup>70</sup> I believed it to be a random example of classical art, but clearly it was not, for it seems that items from Tarentum were imported into Gandhara as well as into the south.

A group of small, shallow stone plates decorated with mainly classical imagery have been found in Gandhara, many on Shaka-Parthian levels. The plates are generally referred to as palettes or cosmetic dishes, but Steven Kossak has questioned that function and pointed out that they are similar to *phialai* in that both are shallow vessels, often with raised motifs in their interiors.<sup>71</sup> Based on the number of drinking scenes portrayed on the Gandharan dishes, Kossak suggested that they had a similar function to that of *phialai*, which was to offer wine to the spirits of the dead. Far too little attention has been given to these stone dishes, despite the fact that they were produced in Gandhara. Scholars have cited similar dishes in

Palmyra and Roman Egypt, but the Western Asiatic examples bear little relation to Gandharan style.<sup>72</sup> The sources of these dishes are clearly classical. A relief from the interior of the lid of a hinged, shell-shaped Hellenistic box from Tarentum (Figure 29)<sup>73</sup> shows a female on a *ketos* in a graceful pose who is a



Figure 32. Dish with Eros on a swan. Gandhara, Greco-Bactrian, ca. 2nd century B.C. Schist, diam. 7.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.212)



Figure 33. Lid of a vessel. Taxila. Copper (photo: John Marshall, *Taxila* [Cambridge, 1951], vol. 2, pl. 80h)



Figure 34. Queen Maya/Gaja Lakshmi on a lotus, detail of a railing from Stupa 2. Sanchi, 2nd century B.C. Stone (photo by John C. Huntington, courtesy of the Huntington Archive)

clear parallel of the Nereid supported by the aquatic tail of a Triton on a fine Gandharan dish in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 30). The Nereid's face is in profile, and she touches the chignon at the back of her head. The subject is alien in the Indian context, and the forms are uncomfortable. (The image is also in reverse, as is common in copies or adaptations.) The Gandharan artist clearly misunderstood the meaning of the motif, for instead of bathing in water, the woman's feet are dangling in midair, with no indication of water below. Thus it seems that Italy proper

(and not only Romanized Egypt) was a source for Western motifs. Two Gandharan dishes in the Metropolitan Museum show winged Erotes, one borne on a lion-headed sea monster (Figure 31) and the other riding a swan (Figure 32). These figures strike us as strange because they look like stunted adults. The standard classical figures of Erotes, short pudgy babies, were available to be seen in Gandhara.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, babies are rare in all of Indian art, even in the most classicizing compositions.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the figure of Eros riding a swan is holding a wreath with



Figure 35. Reliquary in the form of a miniature stupa. Gandhara, Kushan, 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Schist, H. 19.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.4a-c)



Figure 36. Model of a stupa. Gandhara, Kushan, 4th century A.D. Bronze, H. 57.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald J. Bruckmann, 1985 (1985.387a,b)

ribbons hanging down. The winged figures on the base of the Levy-White incense burner are also holding wreaths, and their identification is ambiguous. The use of wreaths is common in Gandhara and quite often seen on the stone dishes.<sup>76</sup>

Elements of the Gandharan burner are similar to many objects from Taxila, some of them imports and others of indigenous manufacture. According to John Marshall, the excavator of Taxila, there are numerous bowls which appear to be offering bowls but which are in fact too small to be used in that manner and seem

to have been used for incense. All of these were found at Greek and Shaka-Parthian levels of Taxila. One very important burner has a column on a base supported by four winged birds.<sup>77</sup> A slight protrusion under the bowl that slants downward seems to prefigure the broader disk on the Levy-White burner. Another variant has a round bowl without the protrusion.<sup>78</sup> Design elements found in the Levy-White burner also appear on objects other than incense burners: a stone lotus bowl on a stemmed base,<sup>79</sup> an embossed copper vine leaf similar to one found at Begram,<sup>80</sup> bells (which

served a ritual function in Gandhara),<sup>81</sup> torus-wreath motifs, especially those subdivided into sections,<sup>82</sup> and birds of bronze and copper used as stoppers.<sup>83</sup> Other examples are swastikas<sup>84</sup> and swastikas combined with pipals.<sup>85</sup> A jewel casket with a chain fastened to the lid was excavated at Taxila, as was a vessel with human heads enclosed in swags that was clearly based on Hellenistic prototypes.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps the most important of all is a copper lid of a vessel from Taxila (Figure 33) which bears similar cutouts of a crescent moon and heart-shaped motif.<sup>87</sup> Marshall was uncertain of its function, but it clearly resembles the lid of the Levy-White incense burner. The long shaft on top would have helped to open the vessel when it contained hot embers. Marshall illustrated the lid next to a stupa casket on a square base covered with gold leaf.<sup>88</sup> The visual association between votive stupas, stupa caskets, and the Levy-White incense burner is more than coincidental.

The association of the Gandharan incense burner with Sirkap, the Shaka-Parthian city at Taxila (theoretically pre-Buddhist), as well as with many other objects belonging to the Kushan and pre-Kushan period, may seem to present a problem, especially as we are about to demonstrate that the burner is a Buddhist object. The Kushans succeeded the Parthians shortly after the middle of the first century A.D. The most well-known Kushan king, Kanishka, who began his rule in about A.D. 100, was a patron of Buddhism.<sup>89</sup> We know from numerous inscribed sculptures that many images of the Buddha were made in monumental form throughout Kanishka's territories, including Gandhara and Mathura (near modern Delhi). It was traditionally believed that there was no Buddhist art in Gandhara before Kanishka's time. Therefore objects that appeared stylistically to be of the first century certainly could not be Buddhist and objects that were clearly Buddhist could not be of the first century. Nevertheless, new Buddhist manuscripts from Gandhara and epigraphical and archaeological evidence, especially in Swat,<sup>90</sup> indicate that there was indeed patronage of Buddhism in Shaka-Parthian times.<sup>91</sup> While the reign of Kanishka was important for vastly increasing Buddhist artistic production throughout northern India, we now believe Gandharan Buddhism began in the first century. Thus we are in the process of defining a style for the first century A.D., and in that process an object as famous as the Bimaran reliquary, traditionally dated to the third century A.D., is now considered pre-Kushan.<sup>92</sup> This is extremely important because the reliquary is unquestionably Buddhist. The incense burner is less conspicuously Buddhist, but these circumstances do not exclude it from being Buddhist or from the first century.

## THE INCENSE BURNER AS A BUDDHIST OBJECT

What, in fact, makes the Gandharan incense burner Buddhist? The first response is admittedly less than scholarly. As stated above, the bronze was included in a catalogue of Buddhist bronzes in the Nitta Group collection.<sup>93</sup> Long before the catalogue entry was written, incense burners had already been included in Japanese Buddhist ritual. The various symbols that Martha Carter, in her article on the incense burner, pointed out as having royal and secular implications are by no means antithetical to Buddhist art.<sup>94</sup> Previously, we have discussed the elements of the burner as if they were Western. We must now reread them in Indian terms, as we would describe any other Indian religious object regardless of its apparent style.

A magnificent incense burner in the shape of an egg and topped by two bells rests upon a lotus that issues forth from the deep. The sacred object is guarded by the guardians of the four directions. These features have quite explicit significance in Indian art. One of the most common and potent of symbols is the lotus. The lotus and its stalk (above referred to as the shaft and disk) are in fact the defining element of the burner. A lotus, by nature, is pure, despite the fact that it arises from muddy waters. Thus it became the symbol of the birth of Buddha. As Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha was a member of a *kshatriya* caste, which is lower than the caste of the Brahmins. Buddhists believe that all men, from whatever caste or state of birth, can arise from the muddy waters of life, just like the lotus, to attain Enlightenment, or Nirvana, just as the Buddha did. While the lotus is a symbol of birth (i.e., life), in Buddhist narrative reliefs incense burners of this type are often associated with the death of the Buddha. In India it was not contradictory to juxtapose the Buddha's birth and death. In order to attain Nirvana one must free oneself from birth and death, which are part of one continuous process called the cycle of transmigration. This concept is illustrated on a lintel from the South Gate of Sanchi Stupa 1.<sup>95</sup> One side of the panel shows Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of fortune, issuing forth from the center of the lotus, a symbol of the birth of the Buddha, while on the other side of the lintel is a stupa, a funerary mound referring to his death. After passing through the narrative reliefs on the gate, the worshiper approaches the great stupa, the ultimate symbol of the Buddha's final release, or Parinirvana.

But the fact that the incense burner itself is issuing forth from the lotus (regardless of its functional aspects) may indicate that it is in some way symbolic of the Buddha's presence or of his life. While Buddhist art was only taking shape in Gandhara, it had already





Figure 37. Reliquary. Gandhara, 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Diam. 5.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.45a,b)



Figure 38. Detail of a guardian figure on the base of the incense burner in Figure 1

been flourishing for four hundred years on the remainder of the Indian subcontinent. By the second century B.C. a vocabulary for the representation of episodes in the life of the Buddha and other Buddhist themes was already established. On the railing of Stupa 2 at Sanchi, which dates to the second century B.C., the lotus is represented in its manifold variations.<sup>96</sup> The symbols which represent the major episodes in the life of the Buddha are illustrated as if they are coming out of a lotus tree of life. The birth of the Buddha is represented by the Hindu goddess Lakshmi on a lotus issuing forth from the branches of a lotus tree (Figure 34).<sup>97</sup> The Enlightenment is represented by the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment;<sup>98</sup> it issues forth from a lotus tree of life. In a similar fashion, the Sarnath pillar, presumably built upon the spot where the Buddha preached his first sermon,<sup>99</sup> and the stupa, both a memorial mound and the symbol of his Parinirvana, or final Enlightenment,<sup>100</sup> come forth from a lotus.

The two bells on top of the burner are enigmatic. Bells are used in Indian religious contexts to remind the deity that one has come to invoke his presence. However, Gustave Roth translated two important Buddhist passages intended to accompany and elucidate the earliest images of the Buddha. One reference states, "The two bells [represent] the two stanzas, this noble jewel, that reach [all] beings belonging to their

spheres." Roth explained further that the two stanzas "convey a universal message of the Buddha which is to be carried by the two bells on top of the *stūpa* when blowing winds produce their sound: 'Make a beginning of your efforts, set aside the follies of the world, devote yourself to the teachings of the Buddha, because he who is going to dwell in the Discipline of the Buddha's Law, will effect an end to suffering, abandoning the cycle of transmigration through rebirth!'"<sup>101</sup>

The burner also reminds us of a stupa. The lotus bowl looks like an inverted dome of a stupa, as on a stone reliquary in the shape of a stupa in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 35). The tray or dish to catch embers is in the form of a standard umbrella on the shaft of a stupa. This form has numerous variations in Buddhist art and architecture.<sup>102</sup> The burner stands on a square base, and four figures support the base, thereby emphasizing its corners. Around stupas there are often four pillars, again emphasizing the square. A miniature bronze stupa in the Metropolitan Museum and its four columns also issue forth from foliage, while rearing animals are used to support the corners of the platform (Figure 36). The top of the finial of the burner is capped by a lotus and looks like one of the many small reliquary boxes we know from the Buddhist world, among them a stone example in the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 37) and a fine gold example in the British Museum, London.<sup>103</sup>



Figure 39. Two roundels with heads. Gandhara, Charsadda, ca. 1st century A.D. Bronze, each diam. 4.1 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.280a,b)



Figure 40. Two roundels with heads. Gandhara, ca. 1st or 2nd century A.D. Copper-nickel alloy, diam. 7 cm (left), 6.7 cm (right). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Chinese Porcelain Corporation Gift, 2003 (2003.16.1) (left); Purchase, Funds from various donors and Gifts of friends of Jim Thompson, in his memory, 2003 (2003.16.2)

The stupa is one of the most enduring forms in Buddhist art, while this type of incense burner is a local feature, in India at least. In all of Buddhist India, workshops were established to produce reliquaries and other objects for Buddhist worship. The Gandharan incense burner is a unique object and appears to be an experimental form, drawing aesthetically on both foreign imports and objects already in use. When it was decided to create a burner for Buddhist ritual, the patrons wanted it to look Buddhist. The easiest way was to draw on the most popular of all Buddhist forms, the stupa. As we know from narrative reliefs, later burners lost their visual dependence not only on the stupa but also on classical forms, which were absorbed as a new burner was created.

The winged figures at the base of the burner (see Figure 38) are the Guardians of the Four Quarters, an important theme in Buddhist art. Their visual form and placement certainly derive from the sphinxes and various other winged beings in the Hellenistic tradition (see Figure 23). None of the Hellenistic prototypes, however, are adult male winged figures, and certainly not ones that look very Indian. Adult male winged figures are known in the southern Italian and Etruscan traditions,<sup>104</sup> and we have seen them holding wreaths on the dishes from the Taxila region (see Figure 32). But their closest conceptual parallels are in the Buddhist narrative reliefs of the Great Stupa at Sanchi (late first century B.C.–early first century A.D.).<sup>105</sup> There, celestial beings, with and without wings, are placing garlands not only on stupas but also on other Buddhist sacred places such as trees and pillars. These figures thus have a double function of guardian and

worshiper, but in groups of four they are specifically interpreted as the Four Guardian Kings.<sup>106</sup> Although the theme of the Guardian Kings took on greater significance in Buddhist art of the Far East, it was already present in the art and literature of ancient India. At Sanchi the Guardian Kings are placed in a narrative context, not as corner supports as on the burner.<sup>107</sup>

The guardian figures look like bodhisattvas, but in fact bodhisattvas had not yet taken form in the first century A.D. A bodhisattva is a potential Buddha. The term refers both to Shakyamuni, the current Buddha before his Enlightenment, and to other saintlike figures in later Buddhism who have postponed their Nirvana in order to help the laity attain Enlightenment. In ancient Indian art a bodhisattva is represented as a prince with a mustache and heavy jewelry, a reference to the fact that Siddhartha was a prince who gave away the trappings of royalty in order to seek Enlightenment. An *ushnisha* (a cranial protrusion, which looks like a chignon in Gandharan art) is sometimes on the top of his head. The *urna*, a small dot on the forehead between the eyes, belongs to the iconography of the Buddha but is also seen on non-Indian figures.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the attributes of the bodhisattva are not specific to Buddhist art. In other contexts such marks may have dynastic connotations, but during the first century A.D. they were used too broadly to have a specific context. Certainly, then, we cannot call these figures bodhisattvas, but we can point out that this is the form which bodhisattvas eventually took, only without the wings. Many figures of princes or ordinary people of means wearing the same costume, with the upper garment draped in the same fashion, were

found in Swat Valley.<sup>109</sup> Note that there is an extra flap of cloth on the left shoulder of both the guardian figures and the figures from Swat. As we have mentioned above, the wings and the bodies of the figures on the burner were cast separately and joined in the wax. By joining them the artist paid heed to three different forms: classical winged figures, Indian winged figures, and Indian princes. Placed on the four corners of the burner, these figures are naturally meant to be considered directional. The whole creates the effect of a mandala, with a circular object on a square base. Significantly, the winged beings do not appear in later illustrations of burners. They apparently were an experimental form which had died out.

There certainly are many elements which appear Iranian in the burner. Historically, Buddhism was a proselytizing religion, and its art was used to propagate the faith. Therefore, Gandharan Buddhist art should include symbolism drawn from various contemporary cultures as well as from the past. Thus the Hindu deities Indra and Brahma were incorporated into the pantheon, but, of course, as subservient to the Buddha.<sup>110</sup> The swastika and the moon on the lid of the incense burner (see Figure 9) may be a reference to the sun and moon gods, an Iranian concept which has its roots in the ancient Near East. In India, swastikas were used as auspicious forms on pottery in Kushan and pre-Kushan times.<sup>111</sup> In later times they were used as sun symbols on the hands and feet of the Buddha. It is difficult to tell in what sense they are used here, but having Buddhist and Iranian implications simultaneously is consistent with the Buddhist tradition.

The major motifs on the lid, the sun and moon alternating with a pipal leaf and a head in a disk, can be considered as vertical pairs.<sup>112</sup> Even though similar leaves appear in classical art, in India the pipal is invariably sacred. The Bodhi tree under which the Buddha Shakyamuni received his Enlightenment at

Bodhgaya is a pipal (*Ficus religiosa*). Leaves that have fallen from this tree are sacred and are collected by worshippers even today. The heads bear no relationship to those on the Hellenistic vessel with swags already noted at Taxila.<sup>113</sup> However, similar heads in the form of theatrical masks were found at Tarentum,<sup>114</sup> and several small bronze disks with portrait heads were found in Gandhara.<sup>115</sup> Two interesting pairs of disks which presumably had some specific function are in the Metropolitan Museum (Figures 39, 40). On the lid of the burner the heads are paired with pipal leaves. In a much earlier context at Bharhut heads appear inside lotus medallions. As the lotus is a symbol of transcendent birth, the form may indicate that the figures have attained a transcendent state.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, we can speculate that a head near a pipal leaf may signify an enlightened mind.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the burner to interpret are the five hanging leaves of two different types (see Figures 1, 8). Four of them are vine leaves while the other is a type of *Ficus*, but not the pipal leaf.<sup>117</sup> Neither of the two types of leaves is commonly used in Buddhist art to identify present and former Buddhas. The foliage illustrated in Gandharan narrative art is not always the same as that in art from the subcontinent, perhaps because different foliage grows in the colder region. We have found no comparative material for the placement of heads on vine leaves but suggest that the leaves used on the burner symbolize the more traditional leaves. We thus revert to the same distant comparison we have used above, the art of Bharhut. We can interpret heads emerging from the plant as being minds in a transcendent state. The fifth leaf, which is blank and of a different genus, represents a higher state, that of Nirvana.<sup>118</sup>

Regardless of its monumental complexity, this type of incense burner did not endure in India. Most of the decorative or symbolic details were not to appear



Figure 41. Figures paying homage to an incense burner, detail of the base of a seated Buddha image. Gandhara, 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Gray schist. Peshawar Museum (photo: Isao Kurita, *Gandara bijutsu* [Tokyo, 1988–90], vol. 2, no. 205)



Figure 42. Four figures around a lamp, detail of a base of a Buddha image. Swat, 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, 2465 (photo: Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale, Rome)

again, except in isolated cases.<sup>119</sup> We have looked at numerous burners represented throughout the art of Gandhara and most of them have no lids, even though their flames often rise up in the conical shape of a lid. But incense burners of this type are illustrated on Buddhist narrative reliefs, frequently below the image of a Buddha. The lids of the burners are open, and they are supported securely by their hinges. In other words, burners of this type, though fashioned after incense burners from the West, were used as lamps or torches. The most important example in Buddhist art of an incense burner possibly being used as a lamp is on the base of a relief of a Buddha dated to the second or third century A.D. and now in Peshawar (Figure 41).<sup>120</sup> Except that the stem is less tapered, distancing it somewhat from the classical prototypes, it is the closest parallel to the bronze burner. The lid is open and hanging securely on its hinge, while flames burst forth from the burner.<sup>121</sup> The dish to catch the embers no longer has this function and is turned downward, and several bells hang from it. In a relief from Swat (Figure 42) that is probably close in time to the Levy-White bronze burner, the disk has become a double lotus (with no bells), and a long, tapering flame comes out of the upper bowl. In this case, the illustrated burner is about the same size as the bronze burner. These burners come in several variations, some short with four legs,<sup>122</sup> some short with a round base,<sup>123</sup> some tall and slender. In most cases the flames of the lamp take on a conelike shape reminiscent of the lid of the Levy-White burner. A burner is illustrated on the base of the famous Fasting Buddha in Lahore (Figure 43). The burner has two hanging

bells, reminding us of the two significant Buddhist verses relating bells to the Buddhist faith. I have referred above to early Buddhist passages which are intended to accompany and elucidate the earliest images of the Buddha and which speak of the bells as representing two stanzas of the Buddha's teaching.<sup>124</sup> About the time this burner was made, Buddha images were beginning to be produced, and it was important to give them a high degree of authority by providing appropriate textual justification.

Excavations at the site of Kara Tepe in Old Termez in southern Uzbekistan have revealed a Buddhist complex containing fireplaces or altars which can be interpreted as having both a utilitarian and a cultic function. Despite the fact that there are no textual sources for Buddhist ritual of the time, Tigran Mkrtichev has interpreted them as stone votive altars on which incense was kindled in front of a sculptural or pictorial image of the Buddha.<sup>125</sup> He tied this concept in with the images we have shown above. Consistent with this idea is a passage from an early Buddhist text meant to accompany a Buddha image: "He, who is in charge of the lamp and who is going to light the lamp, should first of all light the lamp in the abode of the Lord's Body, when

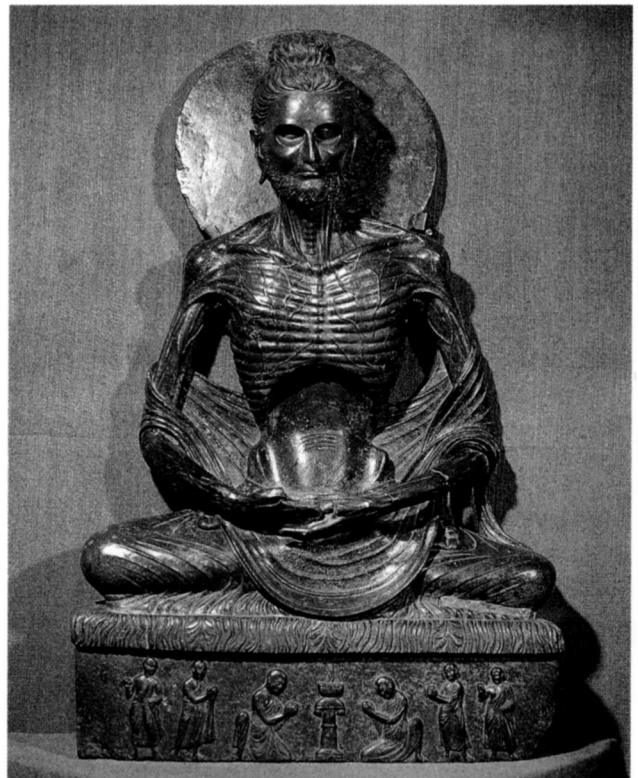


Figure 43. Siddhartha Fasting. Gandhara, Sikri, Kushan, 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Gray schist, H. 84 cm. Lahore Museum, 2099 (photo by John C. Huntington, courtesy of the Huntington Archive)



Figure 44. Maitreya altarpiece. China, Hebei Province, Northern Wei dynasty, dated A.D. 524. Bronze with gilding, H. 76.9 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1938 (38.158.1a-n)



Figure 45. *Boshanlu* (mountain censer). China, Eastern Han dynasty, A.D. 25–220. Earthenware with relief decoration, remains of pigments, H. 22.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Florence Waterbury, 1965 (65.74.2)

the shrine is being worshipped. There, (the light) is to be settled, when one has let it go out, so that no evil may turn up, when, at the time of mental concentration, (the light), fading away, is destroyed.”<sup>126</sup>

Early Theravada Buddhism was a renunciant religion. Without financial support, largely from the mercantile community, it would have died out. In order to keep the community alive there gradually developed a series of functions for the lay community, who were ultimately supposed to provide sustenance for the monks. As we use the term “lamp,” we certainly mean fire. Fire rituals go back to ancient Indian times, and even today they are part of the marriage ceremony. That these burners are shown in Gandharan art being used in worship at the base of Buddhist images often indicates that a lay practice was being performed.<sup>127</sup> The first of these many rituals was that of pilgrimage and the worship of the stupa, which was in fact sanctioned by the Buddha before his death.<sup>128</sup> As time passed many Hindu and popular rituals were included, even the use of fire, though it had

been previously frowned upon. For we know that on the point of their conversion to Buddhism the followers of Kasyapa at Uruvilva threw their ritual objects for the *agnihotra* (fire ritual) into the river.<sup>129</sup>

One of the most important lessons we have learned in this study is how very accurate Gandharan reliefs are, for the open incense burner shown in Figure 41 certainly illustrates a burner very close to the Levy-White bronze example. Such burners must have been extremely precious, as they were included in the reliefs despite the fact that they were made as incense burners, not lamps. Their prototypes arrived via the sea route through Egypt, and we are certainly not surprised that Hellenistic prototypes were copied in the very cosmopolitan environment of Taxila. The form of the burner became Indianized, and then died out. But in using the Hellenized burners in their reliefs, the monastic community was demonstrating their appreciation for the great mercantile community, who imported incense burners and adapted them in a





Figure 46. Pongnae-san incense burner. Buyeo, South Korea, 6th century A.D. Gilt bronze, H. 64 cm. Buyeo National Museum

Gandharan style. This particular burner may, in fact, have been a well-known one which belonged to a king who patronized Buddhism during the first century A.D. and who lived “up the river from Barbarikon.”

While Buddhism was relatively short-lived in India, it traveled to the Far East, where it had a much longer history, and Buddhist religious art went with it. Although the Gandharan incense burner was used as a lamp in India, the type frequently appeared as a burner, stylistically almost intact, in China. One of the finest examples is on the magnificent gilt bronze Maitreya altar group dated to A.D. 524 in the Metropolitan Museum, on which a very similar burner issues forth from a lotus (Figure 44). Its slightly conical lid is secured with a hinge, reminding us that even in miniature the burner

could be used as a lamp. We recall that Chinese goods were found at Begram, and Chinese pelts were imported into India, confirming the fact that there was contact with India. But how can one suggest that this burner was derived from the Gandharan type, when China had its own long tradition of incense burners dating back to the Han dynasty and even before?

The *boshanlu*, or mountain censer (see Figure 45),<sup>130</sup> appeared in China in its mature form in the mid-second century B.C., during the reign of Emperor Wudi of the Han dynasty. This was artistically contemporary with the Hellenistic period in the West, and the time when the Chinese maintained contacts with the Parthians. Aesthetically, the mountain censer appears to be purely Chinese, and the form certainly could not have come from India.<sup>131</sup> However, many parallels may be drawn between the *boshanlu* and Western works. First of all, from the Achaemenid period and later in the West, a bird appears on top of the censer (see Figure 26), and the base of the censer is connected to the lid (see, for example, Figure 17). In a similar manner, the bird and the chain appear on the *boshanlu*.<sup>132</sup> But equally interesting are the ways in which the mountain peaks are rendered in China. They are reminiscent of the lid of the Hellenistic burner from Tarentum (Figure 28). It has been pointed out that the Chinese stemmed vessels known as *dou* may have been the predecessors of the *boshanlu*. *Dou* have pierced openings, their lids can be turned over and used as bowls, and some from the Han dynasty even have birds on top.<sup>133</sup> With the great expansion of the Han empire it is more than likely that Western burners were used to elaborate on ideas that were already known. In a similar fashion, when the Chinese Buddhists used the incense burner they combined the concept of the *boshanlu* with presumably canonical images coming from Gandhara.

The traditional *boshanlu* is turned into a truly Buddhist mountain paradise in a burner excavated from a royal tomb of the sixth century A.D. in Buyeo, South Korea (Figure 46).<sup>134</sup> The burner, called the Pongnae-san, is said to protrude from the center of the sea. Its form ultimately derives from the West but was modified in Gandhara and China. The image includes seventy-four mountain peaks and thirty-nine imaginary birds and animals. Among numerous lotus-flower designs are twenty-eight figures of humans and fish and other forms of marine life. While it is a complex composite of both Chinese and Buddhist philosophy, the Pongnae-san expresses the fundamental Buddhist idea that we have learned from the Gandharan incense burner: “All life originates from the lotus flower.”<sup>135</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Shelby White, who graciously sent the Gandharan incense burner to The Metropolitan Museum of Art where it could be examined and photographed in the Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation. I also thank Richard E. Stone, who examined the bronze and continuously shared my enthusiasm for this unique synthesis of East and West. I am especially grateful to Joan Mertens for her continuous support and encouragement. She has provided numerous references and stimulating ideas. As always, Martin Lerner and Steven Kossak were there for me to discuss the South Asian aspects of this problem, and they, along with Denise Leidy, have been unfailingly helpful. My discussions with Judith Lerner about the incense burner were also very fruitful. I sincerely thank Pierfrancesco Callieri, Osmund Bopearachchi, and Antonio Invernizzi for their rapid replies to my questions. I wish to thank James C. Y. Watt for his support of the project, part of which was completed while I was an Andrew W. Mellon Senior Fellow in Art History in the Department of Asian Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## NOTES

1. The technical examination of the incense burner was made by Richard E. Stone. The less than technical descriptions are my own.
2. Again, I cite Richard Stone's observation.
3. *The Crucible of Compassion and Wisdom: Special Exhibition Catalog of the Buddhist Bronzes from the Nitta Group Collection at the National Palace Museum* (Taipei, 1987), p. 403, pl. 2.
4. Martha L. Carter, "A Preliminary Study of Two Indo-Scythian Bronzes in the Nitta Group Collection," in *South Asian Archaeology: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists Held in Helsinki University, 5-9 July 1993*, ed. Asko Parpola and Petteri Koskikallio (Helsinki, 1994), pp. 125-35.
5. *Towards Enlightenment: Indian and Southeast Asian Art*, sale, Christie's, New York, September 17, 1998, lot 11.
6. Lionel Casson, ed., *The Periplus maris Erythraei* (Princeton, 1989), para. 39, p. 75.
7. The date of the text has been a source of great debate, with dates ranging from A.D. 30 to 230. However, in his introduction to the *Periplus* Lionel Casson gave a convincing argument for the first-century date, which is currently accepted by most scholars.
8. Casson, *Periplus*, pp. 7-10, 32.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
10. The best compendium of articles on this subject is Vimala Begley and Richard Daniel De Puma, eds., *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade* (Madison, Wis., 1991; reprint, Delhi, 1992).
11. Numerous objects of Western manufacture, as well as works influenced by the West, are published in the groundbreaking *Crossroads of Asia: Transformation in Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan*, ed. Elizabeth Errington and Joe Cribb, exh. cat., Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Cambridge, 1992).
12. See R. Nagaswamy, "Roman Sites in Tamil Nad: Recent Discoveries," in *Madhu: Recent Researches in Indian Archaeology and Art History*, ed. M. S. Nagaraja Rao (Delhi, 1981), pp. 337-39; and K. V. Raman, "Further Evidence of Roman Trade from Coastal Sites in Tamil Nadu," in Begley and De Puma, *Rome and India*, p. 125. According to Raman (p. 133 n. 2), the bibliography on *yavanas* in Tamil literature is vast; he cites Kamil Zvelebil, "The Yavanas in Old Tamil Literature," in *Charisteria orientalia praecipue ad Persiam pertinentia*, ed. Jan Rypka et al. (Prague, 1956), pp. 401-9.
13. The basic study of the site is Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler, A. Ghosh, and Krishna Deva, "Arikamedu: An Indo-Roman Trading-Station on the East Coast of India," *Ancient India* 2 (1946), pp. 17-124.
14. Ptolemy, *Geography* 7.1.6, 83, cited in Richard Daniel De Puma, "The Roman Bronzes from Kolhapur," in Begley and De Puma, *Rome and India*, p. 82. Kolhapur is not mentioned in the *Periplus*, as the text is quite sketchy with regard to inland sites.
15. Karl Khandalavala, "Brahmapuri: A Consideration of the Metal Objects Found in the Kundangar Hoard," *Lalit Kala* 8 (1960), pp. 29-75.
16. De Puma, "Roman Bronzes from Kolhapur," pp. 82-112. De Puma acknowledges the difficulty of dating the Kolhapur *Poseidon*, as copies of the Lysippos original were made from Hellenistic times to the second century A.D.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 105 n. 8.
18. *The Search for Alexander: An Exhibition*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and other cities, 1980-83 (Boston, 1980), no. 154, colorpl. 25. The exhibition was shown at the Metropolitan Museum in 1983.
19. De Puma, "Roman Bronzes from Kolhapur," p. 101.
20. If one is given a metal object, even by a beloved relative, it is given only for bullion value, and the object is subsequently taken to be melted down and fashioned into a modern style. This ancient practice survives even today in modern India. Only in recent times have more educated (and internationalized) women worn antique jewelry rather than melting it down to create new objects.
21. For example, see Elizabeth Rosen Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda* (Delhi, 1984), p. 30, fig. 46.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42, figs. 74, 77, 78. Western bronze objects were copied not only on stone but also in bronze and clay, and clay objects became the prototype for a particular sculptural style in clay in South India; see Khandalavala, "Brahmapuri"; and M. N. Deshpande, "Classical Influence on Indian Terracotta Art," in *Huitième congrès international d'archéologie classique* (Paris, 1965), pp. 603-10.
23. Judith Lerner, "Horizontal-Handled Mirrors: East and West," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 31 (1996), pp. 30, 40 n. 107.
24. Rosa Maria Cimino, ed., *Ancient Rome and India* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 119-22, colorpl. 5.
25. Casson, *Periplus*, pp. 16-18, 101-2. A late reference to the emperor Aurelian said that he owned two ten-foot elephant tusks from India which were to be made into a throne (Cimino, *Ancient Rome and India*, p. 23).
26. Begram is near the village of Kapisha, twenty-five miles north-east of Kabul and just south of the Hindu Kush. Kapisha was still in existence in the seventh century during the time of the Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zhang, who wrote that merchandise "from

- all parts" could be found there (Xuan Zhang, *Su-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World, Translated from the Chinese of Hsien-tsang (A.D. 629), by Samuel Beal* (London, 1884; reprint, Delhi, 1969), p. 57; and see Elizabeth Rosen [Stone], "The Begram Ivories," *Marsyas* 17 (1974-75), p. 40.
27. Xuan Zhang (*Su-yu-ki*) recorded that the Kushan king Kanishka housed Chinese hostages at Kapisha during the hot weather and sent them to India during the winter. Sanjyot Mehendale ("Begram: Along Ancient Central Asian and Indian Trade Routes," in *Inde-Asie centrale: Routes du commerce et des idées, Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 1-2 [Tashkent and Aix-en-Provence, 1996]), challenged the long-held idea that Begram is ancient Kapisha. For our purposes, even if it was not Kapisha, it was important in the Kushan realm.
  28. Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram: Chantier no. 2* (1937), *Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan* 9 (Paris, 1939); Joseph Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram, ancienne Kāpīcī, 1939-1940: Rencontre de trois civilisations: Inde, Grèce, Chine. Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan* 11 (Paris, 1954).
  29. David Whitehouse, "Begram, the *Periplus* and Gandharan Art," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 2 (1989), pp. 93-100. I accept Whitehouse's study of the Begram glass, but he also attempted to deal with the broader topics of the Begram hoard and the stylistic sources of Gandharan art in general. He introduced (p. 94) the debate as to whether the sources of the Gandharan style are from Greek art or Roman, taking the Roman side of the argument and citing the major articles on the subject written in the 1940s and 1950s by Hugo Buchthal, Mortimer Wheeler, and Alexander Soper. While these are still basic studies in the field of Gandharan art, recent studies and archaeological evidence have changed the questions we ask. For instance, John Boardman ("Classical Figures in an Indian Landscape," in *Gandharan Art in Context: East-West Exchanges at the Crossroads of Asia*, ed. Raymond Allchin et al. [New Delhi, 1997], p. 1) has decided to dismiss the "long battle" as to whether the influence upon Gandharan art was essentially Greek or Roman: "It does not take long to see that the distinction is meaningless; that for centuries B.C., inevitably only Greece is in question; and that for the centuries A.D. it is the classical or classical inspired world of the Roman Empire, from Italy to Persia, that is the source, and that although much of the commercial motivation was Roman, the most direct source remained that of the Hellenistic Greek East."
  30. Whitehouse ("Begram, the *Periplus* and Gandharan Art," p. 96) stated that "the earliest objects [in the Begram hoard] appear to be the [Indian] ivories," of about 75-25 B.C. His source, an article by J. Leroy Davidson ("Begram Ivories and Early Indian Sculpture: A Reconsideration of Dates," in *Aspects of Indian Art*, ed. Pratapaditya Pal [Leiden, 1972], pp. 1-14), has never been accepted by scholars of Indian art. (Consider for instance my own article "Begram Ivories" and a variation of it in my book *Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, chap. 4.) The discourse continues with dates ranging from the first to the third century A.D. In a more recent study, published in 1996 ("Begram"), Mehendale argued for a first-century date for the ivories. She believes that the Begram hoard was first-century merchants' stock awaiting further distribution. She implied that Whitehouse's work on the Begram glass is corroborative, thereby indicating that the different categories of works were of one date. This is similar to the group method used in Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches*, in 1954, but at that time the second century A.D. was the chosen period. In a new article that has just appeared ("Begram: The Glass," *Topoi Orient-Occident* 11 [2001 (2003)], pp. 444-45), Whitehouse admits to the possibility that some of the glass may be later. This supports the idea that some of the ivories may also be later but does not affect the date of the majority of the imported glass.
  31. See Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges, AD 1-600* (Delhi, 1994), p. 63, citing John Marshall, *Taxila* (Cambridge, 1951), vol. 1, p. 238, and Moreshwar Dikshit, *History of Indian Glass* (Bombay, 1969), p. 36.
  32. Whitehouse, "Begram, the *Periplus* and Gandharan Art," p. 95. For the Harpocrates, see Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. 2, p. 605, no. 414, vol. 3, pl. 186c, and John Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila* (Cambridge, 1960), pl. 5.
  33. The absolute chronology of the Kushans and their predecessors in the region is an ongoing topic of debate. A provisional chart of the chronology of the eastern regions discussed in this article is provided by Joe Cribb and Osmund Bopearachchi in Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia* (p. 15). For a more thorough study of the subject, see Joe Cribb, "The Early Kushan Kings: New Evidence for Chronology," in *Coins, Art, and Chronology: Essays on the Pre-Islamic History of the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*, ed. Michael Alram and Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter (Vienna, 1999), pp. 177-205.
  34. We warmly welcome the publication of Romila Thapar's *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley, 2002), a rewritten version of her 1965 classic *A History of India* 1. Chapter 7 gives an excellent overview of foreign trade as it affected India.
  35. Casson, *Periplus*, pp. 74-75.
  36. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-89.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
  38. Pliny, *Natural History* 32.23, cited in Casson, *Periplus*, p. 191.
  39. Casson, *Periplus*, p. 191.
  40. See Nigel Groom, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade* (London and New York, 1981), which seems to be the only available general book on the ancient use of incense. Despite the fact that Groom's discussion of the *Periplus* is out of date, his book remains useful.
  41. For example, in ancient Egypt incense was presented to the gods by the king himself (see *ibid.*, p. 3).
  42. I have been struck by the number of colleagues in fields extending from Greece to the Far East who have taken the time to express their interest in the Gandharan incense burner, and each of them has been able to see their own field of interest reflected in it.
  43. Casson, *Periplus*, p. 22.
  44. Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches*, figs. 243-49.
  45. A cursory search for "incense burners" on the Internet demonstrates that the basic forms have changed very little, even in the twenty-first century.
  46. Karl Wigand, "Thymiateria," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 122 (1912), pp. 1-97, plus six plates folded in the back of the volume.
  47. *Ibid.*, p. 3, fig. 1.
  48. *Ibid.*, pl. 1, no. 6. While the basic form appeared in ancient Egypt, it was not the most common type used during Pharaonic times. The most common type, as represented in paintings and reliefs, was a bowl placed on a large horizontal handle that provided the utmost safety for the hands (see *ibid.*, pl. 1, nos. 24-36).
  49. *Ibid.*, p. 26, fig. 3.
  50. See Vassos Karageorghis, "The Greeks in Cyprus," in *The Greeks beyond the Aegean: From Marseilles to Bactria*, ed. Vassos Karageorghis (New York, [2002]), pp. 14-15, fig. 12.

51. Although I know of no incense burners illustrated in southern or central Indian art, a lit lamp appears in the scene of the conception of the Buddha at Bharhut (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *La sculpture de Bharhut* [Paris, 1956], pl. 24, fig. 61), and an object which seems to be a fire altar is in a miniature Roman-style temple illustrated at Amaravati (Robert Knox, *Amaravati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stupa* [London, 1992], p. 143).
52. Although Persian influence is apparent in India, I have argued that other sources also played an important role (see Elizabeth Rosen Stone, "Greece and India: The Ashokan Pillars Revisited," in Karageorghis, *Greeks beyond the Aegean*, pp. 167–88).
53. These idcas need to be reviewed and carefully spelled out.
54. Bernard Goldman, "Persian Domed Turibula," *Studia Iranica* 20 (1991), pp. 179–88. For Anatolian examples, see pl. 19AA, BB.
55. For variants of these burners, see A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "The International Achaemenid Style," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s. 7 (1993), pp. 111–30.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 116, fig. 4.5.
57. Goldman, "Persian Domed Turibula," pp. 180–82.
58. Carter, "Two Indo-Scythian Bronzes," pp. 125, 129.
59. Ellen Reeder Williams, *The Archaeological Collection of the Johns Hopkins University* (Baltimore, 1984), pp. 63–64.
60. David Gordon Mitten and Susan F. Doeringer, *Master Bronzes from the Classical World* (Cambridge, 1967), no. 22.
61. Larissa Bonfante, ed., *Etruscan Life and Afterlife: A Handbook of Etruscan Studies* (Detroit, 1986), pp. 140, 148, fig. 4.74.
62. Wigand, "Thymiateria," p. 41, fig. 5.
63. *Ibid.*, pl. 5, no. 1, pl. 6, no. 1.
64. Wigand (*ibid.*, p. 47) said that this sketch by Siegfried Loeschke was based upon a vase which was in the Antikensammlung, Akademisches Kunstmuseum der Universität Bonn. As I had been unable to obtain a photograph of the original, Joan Mertens kindly offered to help pursue the matter. In a letter to Dr. Mertens dated July 31, 2004, Dr. Nikolai Himmelman confirmed that the vase was not in Bonn, but that the sketch was made in Athens. I thank both Dr. Mertens and Dr. Himmelman for their efforts.
65. The burner bears an inscription which indicates that it was dedicated to "holy Aphrodite." Clearly the Indians use these burners for their own purposes.
66. According to Joan R. Mertens ("An Early Greek Bronze Sphinx Support," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 37 [2002], pp. 23–33), the animation of utilitarian objects through the use of figural motifs is one of the hallmarks of Greek art. This particular motif, the sphinx with one foot in the shape of a lion's paw, is one of the most enduring in the West.
67. Michael Pfrommer, *Studien zu alexandrinischer und grossgriechischer Toreutik frühhellenistischer Zeit*, Archäologische Forschungen 16 (Berlin, 1987), pp. 29–35, pls. 2, 3.
68. Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. 3, pl. 65f. According to Marshall, this incense burner was excavated in the Dharmarajika area. It post-dated the major construction of the stupa and probably belongs to the fourth or fifth century A.D. It is an excellent example of the complete Indianization of a classical form. The Levy-White incense burner clearly stays closer to the classical prototype.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–40, pl. 32. See also Pierre Willeumier, *Le trésor de Tarente (Collection Edmond de Rothschild)* (Paris, 1930), pp. 48–52, pl. 7.
70. Elizabeth Rosen [Stone], "A Dated Memorial Pillar from Nagarjunakonda," in *Indian Epigraphy: Its Bearing on the History of Art*, ed. Frederick M. Asher and G. S. Gai (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 36–37, fig. 46; and see also D. E. Strong, *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate* (London, 1966), pl. 29B. In a paper that has been in press for some time ("The Amaravati Master": Spatial Conventions in the Art of Amaravati," in a commemorative volume for Dr. H. Sarkar [New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India]), I suggested that South Indian artists may have seen classical painting as represented in Pompeii. At the time, the association seemed to me to be visually analogous but historically questionable. As information on the specifically Italian contribution to India accumulates, these ideas are more plausible.
71. Kossak in Martin Lerner and Steven Kossak, *The Lotus Transcendent: Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection* (New York, 1991), pp. 60–65, nos. 17–25. John Boardman (in Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, p. 152) referred to them as palettes or small stone trays, stating that some are meant to contain pigment or perfume. However, he cited Kossak and said, "that this was their only function is open to question."
72. For a negative comparison, see Henri-Paul Francfort, *Les palettes du Gandhara*, Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 23 (Paris, 1979), pls. 50–52. Boardman (in Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, p. 152) also referred to examples in Egypt and Asia Minor.
73. For an illustration of this piece in its original context, see Ettore M. De Juliis, *Gli ori di Taranto in età ellenistica* (Milan, 1985), frontis. and pp. 58–61. It opens in the same manner as a woman's compact, except that the image is where a mirror would be.
74. See, for example, Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, no. 98, color ill. p. 21.
75. See Islay Lyons and Harald Ingholt, *Gandharan Art in Pakistan* (New York, 1957), figs. 340, 341.
76. See, for example, a dish from Sirkap (*ibid.*, fig. 48; Francfort, *Les palettes du Gandhara*, pl. 14).
77. Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. 2, p. 596, no. 323, vol. 3, pl. 184m; Pfrommer, *Alexandrinischer und grossgriechischer Toreutik*, no. 14.
78. Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. 2, p. 596, no. 326, vol. 3, pl. 176.
79. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 492, no. 60, vol. 3, pl. 141.
80. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 603, no. 399, vol. 3, pl. 185j; Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques*, vol. 2, pl. 20, fig. 46.
81. Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. 2, pp. 598–99, nos. 344–52, vol. 3, pl. 176.
82. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 605, no. 420, vol. 3, pl. 172u. Marshall stated that the technique is rough but the treatment of the wreath in different patterns is typically Greco-Roman, implying that this is a local copy of a Western work.
83. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 387, nos. 245–50, vol. 3, pl. 182g–m.
84. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 498, no. 92, vol. 3, pl. 146.
85. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 631, no. 85, vol. 3, pl. 191v.
86. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 257–58, no. 252a, b, vol. 3, pls. 36d, 182o.
87. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 340, vol. 3, pl. 80h. From the context of this find, it is possible to suggest that this example is a later variant of the Levy-White burner.
88. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 327, vol. 3, pl. 80g.
89. Using Cribb and Bopearachchi's chronology (see note 33, above).
90. See Domenico Faccenna and Maurizio Taddei, *Sculptures from the Sacred Area of Butkara I, Swat, W. Pakistan*, Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Reports and Memoirs 2, pts. 2, 3 (Rome, 1962–64); and Pierfrancesco Callieri et al., *Saidu Sharif I (Swat, Pakistan)*, Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Reports and Memoirs 23 (Rome, 1989).

91. For a good recent summary of the evidence, see Pierfrancesco Callieri, "Il periodo dei Saka e dei Parti: Le dinastie di Apraca e di Odi ed il loro supporto al Buddhismo," in *Il maestro di Saidu Sharif: Alle origini dell'arte del Gandhara*, ed. Pierfrancesco Callieri and Anna Filigenzi, exh. cat., Palazzo Brancaccio, Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale, Rome (Rome, 2002), pp. 57–61. See also Chantal Fabrègues, "The Indo-Parthian Beginnings of Gandhara Sculpture," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s. 1 (1987), pp. 33–43.
92. See, for example, Neil Kreitman in Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, pp. 191–92; and Martha L. Carter, "A Reappraisal of the Bimaran Reliquary," in Allchin et al., *Gandharan Art in Context*, pp. 71–93. Although opinions may vary as to the absolute date of the burner, the fact that scholars could consider a first-century date for the reliquary indicates a major change in our understanding of first-century Gandhara.
93. See note 3, above.
94. Carter, "Two Indo-Scythian Bronzes," pp. 129–31.
95. John Marshall and Alfred Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi* (London, 1940; reprint, Delhi, 1982), vol. 2, pl. 11 (top) for the birth, pl. 15 (top) for the death.
96. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pls. 24–99. This tradition reached its height at Amaravati in the second century A.D., when the lotus began to lose its symbolic form and became a decorative motif. For excellent plates, see Knox, *Amaravati*.
97. Marshall and Foucher, *Sanchi*, vol. 3, pl. 73, no. 49a, pl. 87, no. 71a.
98. *Ibid.*, pl. 75, no. 5b.
99. *Ibid.*, pl. 24, no. 3a, pl. 82, no. 44b.
100. *Ibid.*, pl. 83, no. 44c. Not only are stupas represented as coming from a lotus, but actual stupas are made with lotus leaves sculpted at their bases, and some are believed to be rising from water. For a summary of these ideas, see Stone, *Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, p. 49.
101. Gustave Roth, "The Physical Presence of the Buddha and Its Representation in Buddhist Literature," in *Investigating Indian Art: Proceedings of a Symposium . . . Held at the Museum for Indian Art Berlin in May 1986*, ed. Marianne Yaldiz and Wibke Lobo (Berlin, 1987), p. 297.
102. See, for example, Wladimir Zwalf, *A Catalogue of the Gandhara Sculpture in the British Museum* (London, 1996), vol. 2, p. 263, no. 476.
103. Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, colorpl. 29.
104. For examples, see Nancy Thomson de Grummond, *A Guide to Etruscan Mirrors* (Tallahassee, Fla., 1982), figs. 39, 83, 89.
105. Marshall and Foucher, *Sanchi*, vol. 2, pls. 11 (middle architrave), 15 (top architrave), 17 (west end of upper and middle architrave), 46 (top architrave), 47 (back of Eastern gateway), and others.
106. *Ibid.*, pl. 58.
107. In one tale of the conception of the Buddha, Four Guardian Kings carry his mother's bed to the top of the Himalayas (Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky, *The Life of the Buddha: Ancient Scriptural and Pictorial Traditions* [Lanham, Md., 1992], p. 10). In another tale, the guardian deities receive the child after he is born. This form was illustrated in South India during the second and third centuries A.D. (*ibid.*, p. 17; Knox, *Amaravati*, pl. 121; Stone, *Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, figs. 42, 108 [middle]). After the Buddha attained Enlightenment, deities of the four quarters presented him with four begging bowls, which immediately became one, so that he might spread the dharma (Asvaghosa, *The Buddhacarita; or, Acts of the Buddha*, ed. and trans. E. H. Johnston [reprint, Delhi, 1972], p. 9).
108. The *urna* can be seen on two non-Indian figures found at Tillya Tepe: a royal figure on a pendant and a winged figurine of Aphrodite (Victor Sarianidi, *The Golden Hoard of Bactria: From the Tillya-tepe Excavations in Northern Afghanistan* [New York and Leningrad, 1985], nos. 2.7, 6.3, colorpls. 44, 99). The *urna* can be seen as well on the head of a satyr discussed by Boardman (in Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, p. 118; see also Chantal Fabrègues in *ibid.*, p. 145; and Carter, "Two Indo-Scythian Bronzes," p. 129).
109. Callieri et al., *Saidu Sharif I*, pp. 88, 285, figs. 22, 75, where the various topknots could easily be mistaken for *ushnishas*. For a variation on the garments, see pls. 80b, 81a and b, 82a and b.
110. The Kanishka casket, a Buddhist reliquary from Shah-jī-kī-Dheri in Gandhara, defines some important features of Gandharan Buddhism. On top of the casket are Indra and Brahma, and it has a representation of King Kanishka flanked by the sun and moon gods (John Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans* [Berkeley, 1967], p. 262; Neil Kreitman in Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, p. 195).
111. Herbert Härtel, *Excavations at Sonkh* (Berlin, 1993), p. 338, nos. 47, 48 (pre-Kushan), p. 344, no. 107 (Kushan).
112. In the later lid from Taxila (Figure 33) the crescent moon is paired with the pipal. There it looks merely decorative.
113. See note 86, above.
114. De Juliis, *Gli ori di Taranto*, p. 40.
115. Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, p. 118.
116. Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York and Tokyo, 1985), p. 74.
117. Dr. Dennis W. Stevenson (letter to the author, July 2004) of the New York Botanical Gardens says that this leaf is "a highly accurate representation of a leaf of the genus *Ficus*," and it certainly comes from tropical Asia.
118. The five leaves on the burner are highly suggestive of another pentad which appeared during the second and third centuries A.D. in Indian stupa architecture. In southern India four groups of five *ayaka* pillars are placed in the four directions. The pillars are frequently the same, but sometimes the central one is different (Stone, *Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, figs. 94, 148; Knox, *Amaravati*, pl. 140). These pillars have been interpreted in the context of later Buddhism; Mireille Bénisti ("Les stupa aux cinq piliers," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* 58 [1971], pp. 151–53) believed them to represent the five Buddhas of the *kalpa*: Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kasyapa, Shakyamuni (indicated without preeminence), and Maitreya (who symbolizes the coming). Thus, according to Bénisti, the outer pillars would be the Buddha's teaching and the differentiated pillar would be his law (see also Stone, *Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, p. 54). One cannot necessarily impose such an iconography on the five leaves, for the pillars are much later and occur in a different context. Maitreya, a Mahayana figure, surely seems out of place in the earlier context of the incense burner. While we are not aware of a pentad grouping at Sanchi, the Tree of Enlightenment of Maitreya may have been tentatively identified at Sanchi (Marshall and Foucher, *Sanchi*, vol. 2, pl. 56).
119. See Carter, "Two Indo-Scythian Bronzes," p. 131. For a Panjikent example, see Boris Marshak and Valentina Ivanova Raspopova,



- "Wall Paintings, Panjikent," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 2 (1990), p. 138. For a more Chinese type, see Albert Grünwedel, *Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten in Idikutschari und Umgebung im winter 1902–1903* (Munich, 1906), pl. 6.
120. Carter, "Two Indo-Scythian Bronzes," p. 130, citing Isao Kurita, *Gandara bijutsu* (Tokyo, 1988–90), vol. 2, p. 80, no. 205.
121. Another burner with a lid is known, but it too is open (Kurita, *Gandara bijutsu*, p. 175, no. 509). We know of no examples where the burner is used closed in the manner of an incense burner.
122. Alfred Foucher, *L'art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhara* (Paris, 1905–), vol. 1, figs. 137, 294; Lyons and Ingholt, *Gandharan Art*, fig. 284.
123. Foucher, *L'art gréco-bouddhique*, vol. 1, fig. 293.
124. Roth, "Physical Presence of the Buddha," p. 297: "Make an effort, go forth leaving behind the evils of the world, engage yourself in the teaching of the Buddha; crush the army of death, as an elephant crushes a reed-hut. / Because, he who will walk in the discipline of the Law as a vigilant follower, by leaving the cycle of transmigration of rebirths, he will bring about an end to suffering." See also note 101, above.
125. Tigran K. Mkrtichev, "Buddhist Ritual Practice of Kara-Tepe Based on Materials of Complex E," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 3 (1993–94), pp. 97–112.
126. Quoted and translated in Roth, "Physical Presence of the Buddha," p. 291.
127. Foucher, *L'art gréco-bouddhique*, vol. 2, pp. 86–87. Giovanni Verardi (*Homa and Other Fire Rituals in Gandhara*, Istituto Universitario Orientale, suppl. 79 [Naples, 1994], p. 16) uses the term *populace*.
128. Akira Hirakawa, "The Rise of Mahayana Buddhism and Its Relationship to the Worship of Stupas," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 22 (1963), pp. 57–106; Stone, *Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, pp. 12–20.
129. *Mahavagga* 1.20.19, cited by Verardi, *Homa and Other Fire Rituals*, p. 7.
130. Suzanne G. Valenstein, *A Handbook of Chinese Ceramics*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1989), ill. p. 38.
131. Carter ("Two Indo-Scythian Bronzes," p. 125) noted that there is a similarity between the Gandharan incense burner under discussion and the *boshanlu*. Neither stylistic, literary, nor archaeological evidence supports the idea of Chinese incense burners in India.
132. Susan N. Erickson, "Boshanlu—Mountain Censers of the Western Han Period: A Typological and Critical Analysis," *Archives of Asian Art* 45 (1992), p. 12, fig. 8A. See also Melikian-Chirvani, "International Achaemenid Style," fig. 1 (an Achaemenid-type burner).
133. Erickson, "Boshanlu," p. 12, fig. 9c.
134. Chongju National Museum, *Gilt-bronze Incense Burner and Stone Sarira Reliquary with Inscription of Paekche Dynasty* (Chongju, 1996).
135. *Ibid.*, p. 33.