

THE ART OF GANDHARA

IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



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Kurt A. Behrendt

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

This volume, drawing on the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, traces the complex and evolving artistic heritage of ancient Gandhara from the time of Alexander the Great's conquest of the region, in 330 B.C., to the eighth century A.D. Located in what is today northwest Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, Gandhara owed its prosperity and artistic vigor to its unique position as the entrepôt of trade routes linking the Mediterranean, South Asia, and China. As Gandhara flourished at the crossroads of Asia, the region's art took on a truly international character, which was transformed over successive centuries to reflect an ever-changing cultural milieu. After more than five hundred years of contact with Hellenistic and later Roman cultures, an indigenous, classicized Gandharan tradition emerged that lived on long after naturalism had declined in the West. It is possible to get a sense of Gandhara's artistic sophistication when one considers how local Gandharan sculptors progressively gave visual form to the highly complex and abstract Buddhist ideologies that came to the region from north India. It is this evident willingness to experiment and transform—to recontextualize foreign forms, styles, and beliefs—that makes Gandharan art one of the great artistic legacies of the ancient world.

Nearly seventy works of extraordinary refinement have been selected to highlight the Museum's collection of Gandharan art, notable among them a varied group of stone dishes that dates to the first centuries B.C. The foundation of the Metropolitan's Gandharan collection was established at the beginning of the

twentieth century, with the addition of such important Buddhist sculptures as the bodhisattva that appears on the cover of this publication. Recent gifts, including an inscribed reliquary of Indravarman and a unique early bronze image of the Buddha, have given the collection additional range and depth. A monumental torso of a bodhisattva, which as a complete statue would have stood more than ten feet tall, is one of the Museum's great Gandharan masterpieces. A head of a bodhisattva with inset garnet eyes, part of the now largely destroyed cultural heritage of Afghanistan, stands out as another work of exceptional artistic caliber.

I first want to thank the author of this volume, Kurt Behrendt, Assistant Curator in the Department of Asian Art, for his fine achievement. As always we are grateful to the friends of the Museum for their generosity in helping to form this outstanding collection. Particular thanks go to Samuel Eilenberg, who not only acquired works of great quality but also many significant objects that together are the tesserae vital to our understanding of the complex Gandharan mosaic. Our thanks also go to Florence and Herbert Irving, the Kronos Collections, Muneichi Nitta, and the Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust. The research project that resulted in this volume was funded by Cynthia Hazen Polsky and supplemented by Florence and Herbert Irving. The Metropolitan Museum is indebted to The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation for its generous support of the volume. Indeed, we remain grateful to the Wallach Foundation for its steadfast contributions toward the activities of the Department of Asian Art.

Philippe de Montebello
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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This publication would not have been possible without the support and help of many people, and it is wonderful to have the opportunity to thank them. In the Department of Asian Art, James C. Y. Watt, Brooke Russell Astor Chairman, and Denise Patry Leidy, Curator, contributed to the intellectual character of the volume by generously sharing their extensive knowledge and experience. I am especially grateful to Steven M. Kossak for his deep understanding of the collection and for his many conceptual insights. Judith G. Smith, the department's Administrator, coordinated the project with the help of Anne C. Boberski and Hwai-ling Yeh-Lewis, and Jillian Schultz oversaw the photography of works of art. For their long hours of devotion, special thanks go to Ellen Howe, Shinichi Doi, Donna Strahan, and Richard E.

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Kurt Behrendt

NOTE TO THE READER

All works of art are in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art unless otherwise noted. In object headings, dimensions are in inches followed by centimeters; in most cases height precedes width precedes depth.

For the sake of readability, many traditional spellings have been retained, and diacritics generally have been used only in references and quoted material.

Source references are cited in abbreviated form. Complete citations will be found in the Bibliography.

CHRONOLOGY OF GREATER GANDHARA

Region of Ancient Gandhara

331–327 B.C.	Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 B.C.) is in Gandhara, conquers Taxila, and arrives at the Indus River.
200 B.C.	The first Buddhist sites are founded in Gandhara, but no religious imagery is known from this period.
2nd century B.C. – 1st century A.D.	Carved stone dishes and secular luxury objects are produced.
1st century A.D.	First appearance of sculpture embellishing Buddhist sites.
1st–3rd century A.D.	Kushan dynasty controls much of Greater Gandhara and north India, reaching the zenith of its power under kings Kanishka (r. A.D. 129–155) and Huvishka (r. 155–193).
2nd century A.D.	Period when many Buddhist sites are founded and when most Gandharan Buddhist narrative sculpture is produced.
3rd century A.D.	Devotional icons of the Buddha and of bodhisattvas begin to be sculpted. Schist remains an important medium, but clay, stucco, and terracotta start to be widely used.
3rd–5th century A.D.	Period of greatest prosperity in Gandhara; new Buddhist sacred sites are founded and older ones are greatly expanded. Most Gandharan Buddhist iconic sculpture is produced during this period.
4th–5th century A.D.	Devotional icons become monumental, and the iconography of Buddha images becomes more complex.
5th–6th century A.D.	Various Hun peoples take control of Gandhara. There is a gradual decline in donor patronage to Gandharan Buddhist sacred areas; as they contract, Buddhist communities reuse older sculpture.

Region of Afghanistan (Ancient Regions of Nagarahara and Bactria)

4th–8th century A.D.	Period of greatest prosperity as trade routes shift to favor Afghan communities; Buddhism thrives.
ca. 550–600 A.D.	Monumental Buddhas are constructed at Bamiyan.
8th–9th century A.D.	End of Buddhist tradition in the region of Greater Gandhara.

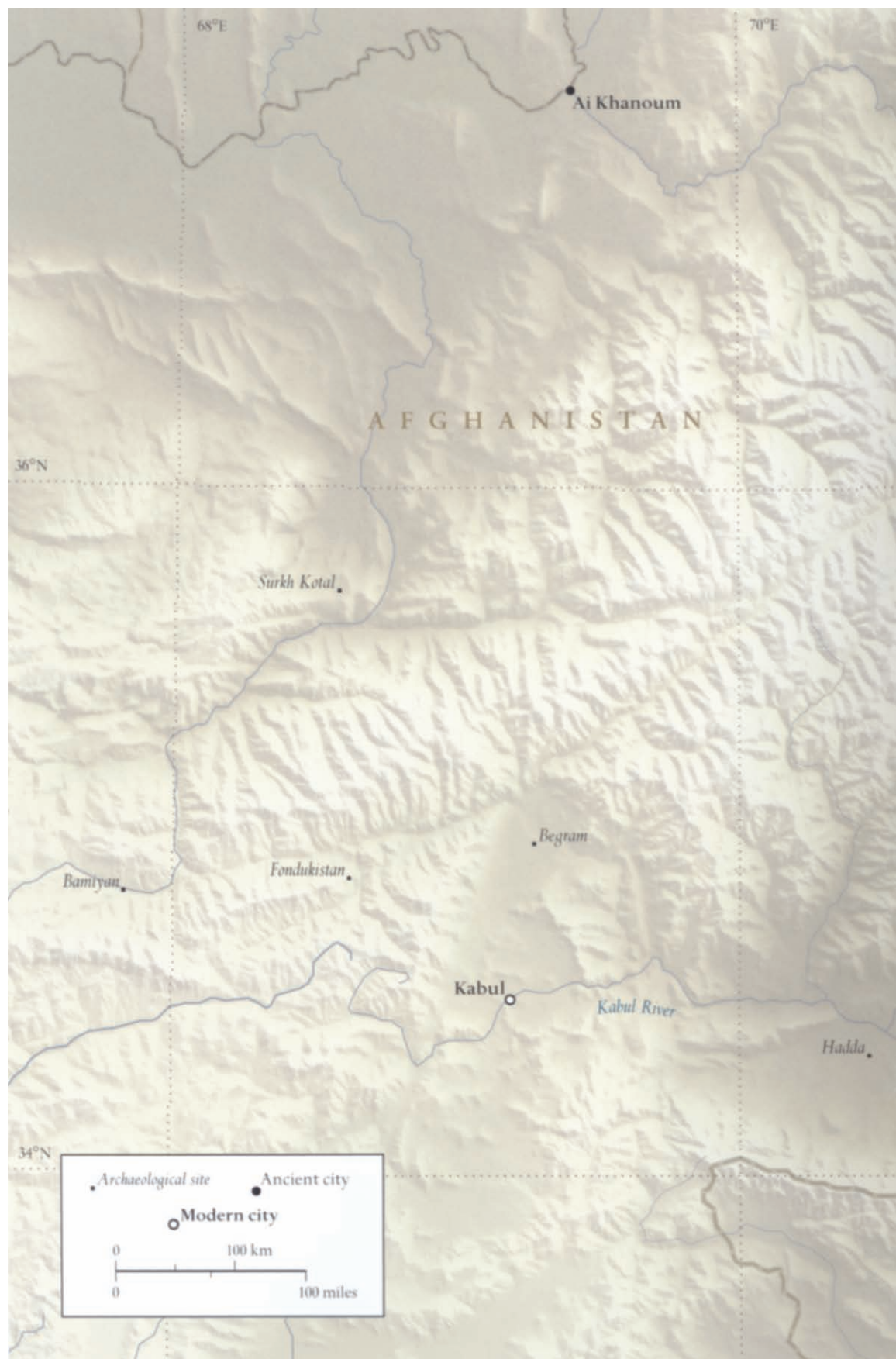
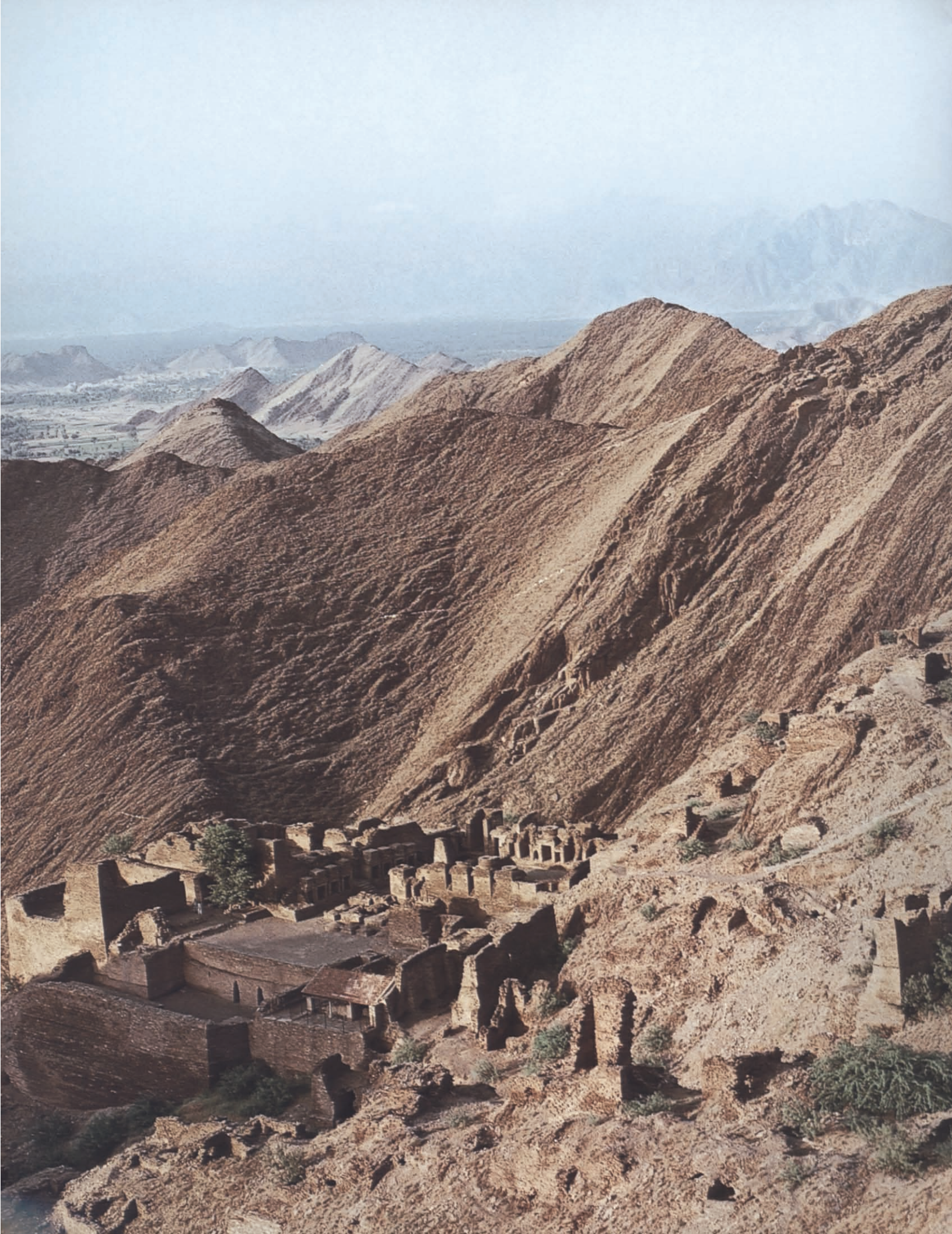


Figure 1. Map of Greater Gandhara



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GANDHARAN CULTURAL HISTORY: AN INTRODUCTION

The ancient region of Gandhara was located in the agricultural plains of the Peshawar basin, in the foothills of the Himalayas, in what is today northwest Pakistan (fig. 1). For centuries it was an incredibly wealthy area owing to its position along the Silk Road trade routes linking China, South Asia, and the Mediterranean. Known from vast archaeological remains (fig. 2), Gandhara is also mentioned in various early religious texts, a few ancient inscriptions, and the accounts of Chinese religious pilgrims.¹ The territory was defined by natural boundaries: the Hindu Kush mountain range to the west, high foothills to the north, and the Indus River to the east. To the south, the basin surrounding the modern city of Peshawar opens onto increasingly arid plains. Beyond the foothills north of Gandhara was the ancient region of Udayana, which had the high Swat Valley at its core. To the west, across the Hindu Kush in what is now Afghanistan, lay the ancient region of Nagarahara, with Bactria to its northwest.² Together with ancient Gandhara, these regions formed Greater Gandhara, an area whose cultural development was interrelated but, owing to the mountainous terrain, also somewhat independent. To reach the regions in Afghanistan, for example, travelers from Gandhara proper had to traverse the Khyber Pass through the peaks of the Hindu Kush; the Swat Valley, although in close geographic proximity to Gandhara, was similarly isolated. Artistic production

in Greater Gandhara can thus generally be divided into that coming from Gandhara proper (or ancient Gandhara), the Swat Valley, or Afghanistan.

The art of this region is a compelling fusion of foreign styles that ultimately gave visual form to Buddhist religious ideals in northwest Pakistan and Afghanistan. More sculpture and architecture made in the service of Buddhism has been found in Greater Gandhara than in any other part of ancient South Asia. Our understanding of the culture that produced this art is limited by the poor quality of early excavations, which left many questions unanswered, by a paucity of ancient written records and inscriptions on sculpture and architecture, and, most recently, by the deliberate destruction of large portions of Afghanistan's cultural heritage.³ Much of the known sculpture was found in the nineteenth century, when many Gandharan sites were cleared by colonial British military units and early archaeologists.⁴ More systematic excavations were carried out later, but the picture remains fragmentary. While Gandharan architecture can be dated to an extent by the coins excavated with it, considerable debate surrounds the chronological development of the sculpture.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gandharan imagery tended to be dated on the basis of a style or a motif on the assumption that a Gandharan example must have been created near the time similar art first appeared in the Mediterranean region. As a result, much of Gandharan sculpture was dated to the time of the Greeks according to its supposed Hellenistic affinities; essentially the more classical

Figure 2. View of the Gandharan site of Takht-i-bahi and outlying monasteries. Pakistan, 1st–6th-century remains

an object looked, the earlier the date assigned to it.⁵ By the mid-twentieth century, the Roman Empire was recognized as Gandhara's major Western trading partner, and the main phase of Gandharan sculptural production was thus attributed to the first through the third century A.D., about the time when the Kushans, a Central Asian nomadic group, ruled this region. Excavations undertaken in the late twentieth century have helped to clarify horizons of activity in Gandhara, and as a result recent scholarship is gradually accepting a revised chronology for the region that spans the second century B.C. through the eighth century A.D.

Gandhara's strategic location along the Silk Road, and the great wealth it derived from that commercial trade, attracted wave upon wave of foreign invaders, who occupied the area in turn. Between the fourth century B.C. and the seventh century A.D., Gandhara was controlled successively by the Greeks, Indo-Greeks, Shakas, Parthians, Scythians, Kushans, Sasanians, Huns, and other political entities, who introduced diverse religious traditions and artistic conventions. The earliest remains from Gandhara, dating from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D., are mostly luxury goods found in urban centers such as Sirkap, one of the cities that constituted the ancient site of Taxila. Significant among these are a number of stone dishes, which likely had a domestic ritual function, that provide strong evidence of Gandhara's contacts with its Hellenistic, Alexandrian, and Parthian trading partners. Although a few Buddhist sites were founded beginning in the second century B.C., the earliest Gandharan art associated with Buddhism dates to no earlier than the first century A.D., when reliefs embellishing Buddhist architecture first began to appear.

By the early first century A.D., the Kushans had taken control of most of north India, Gandhara proper, and the ancient Afghan regions of Bactria and Nagarhara, and for a time they brought political stability to these areas. This led to increased economic prosperity, as international trade flourished along the well-established land and sea routes, and the gradual settlement and growth of Gandharan Buddhist com-

munities.⁶ Buddhism, which had emerged from the Ganges basin, was embraced by the Gandharan people, whose control of the expanding Silk Road trade and resulting affluence gave them the means to invest vast sums of money in the construction of Buddhist monasteries and sacred areas. Indeed, the gradual but uninterrupted flow of patronage within Greater Gandhara allows us to trace certain changes in the development of Buddhist ideology from about the second through the eighth century A.D., as patrons chose to spend money on imagery that had immediate devotional significance; in other words, patronage can be seen as a direct reflection of belief. In this sense, the donation of sculpture provides a clearer picture of ideological interests than do texts, which can be neither easily dated nor placed within evolving regional traditions.

Under the Kushans, many new Buddhist sites were founded in Gandhara during the second century A.D., most of them organized around a monastery and a stupa: a solid, round masonry structure in which relics of the Buddha were embedded. These stupas were decorated with narrative reliefs recounting the Buddha's life and actions. Beginning in the third century A.D., devotional icons of the Buddha and bodhisattvas appeared; these were typically nonnarrative figures meant to be associated not with a biographical event but with major concepts in the religion, such as the Buddha's enlightenment. Gradually these devotional figures grew more complex in terms of iconography, and from the fourth to the seventh century A.D. some devotional icons also became truly monumental in size.

A sharp increase in the construction of Buddhist monasteries and in donations to sacred areas within Gandhara occurred from about the fourth to the early fifth century A.D. Most of the extant stupas, image shrines, and monasteries date to this late period, and consequently this is when the largest portion of sculpture must have been produced.⁷ In about the mid-fifth century, patronage within Gandhara proper declined dramatically, likely as a result of Hun incursions into the region and a shift in trade routes favoring the area of Nagarhara in

Afghanistan, which experienced a corresponding period of prosperity. An immense amount of new construction occurred at Afghan Buddhist sites between the fifth and the eighth century A.D., the period when the great Buddhas at Bamiyan were

erected. The rich Buddhist traditions of Greater Gandhara finally came to an end some time in the eighth or ninth century after a series of invasions introduced a new religion, Islam, that supplanted and eventually eclipsed Buddhist practice in the region.

1. See, e.g., the accounts of Faxian (ca. 400; Faxian 1884, pp. xxxi–xxxiv) and Xuanzang (ca. 630; Xuanzang 1884, vol. 1, pp. 97–114). See also Zwalf 1996, vol. 1, pp. 11–19.
2. For a discussion of the ancient geography, see Kuwayama 1982; Kuwayama 2006.
3. For comprehensive documentation of works originally in the Kabul Museum, see Tissot 2006.
4. Errington 1987, pp. 29–188. See also Zwalf 1996, vol. 1, p. 22; Behrendt 2004.

5. A dating strategy is perhaps best seen in Foucher 1905–18, and more recently in Nehru 1989.
6. The initial founding of many Gandharan Buddhist centers can be dated to this period on the basis of numismatic evidence; see Errington 2000. For a discussion of the gradual establishment of Buddhist sites, see Callieri 2006; Taddei 2006.
7. Errington 2000, pp. 196–99, 211–13; Behrendt 2004, pp. 262–66. We can also get a clear sense of Gandhara's importance about A.D. 400 from the account of Faxian; see Faxian 1884, pp. xxxi–xxxvii.



FOREIGN STYLES AND URBAN TASTES

In 327 B.C. the Macedonian king Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 B.C.) conquered the regions of Bactria, Gandhara, and Swat. After his death, these areas came under the control of his generals, and the Indo-Greek kingdoms thus formed were, at least initially, considered part of the larger Hellenistic world. Dating to this period is the Bactrian city of Ai Khanoum, in Afghanistan, occupied from the fourth century B.C. to about 145 B.C., which had many characteristics of a Greek colony.¹ Indeed, the art made in Ai Khanoum near the time of its founding is Hellenistic in character: the product not of foreign contact, but rather of Greek artisans working for a local audience.

Several prosperous urban centers were established in Gandhara proper; of these, the only one to have been fully excavated is the ancient city of Sirkap in Taxila,² which was occupied from the sixth century B.C. until early in the second century A.D. An Indo-Greek capital in the third and second centuries B.C.,³ Sirkap was conquered in the first century B.C. by a series of Central Asian invaders, including the Shakas, the Scythians, and the Persian Parthians. Ultimately, in the early part of the first century A.D., the city came under the control of the Kushans.⁴ Where Ai Khanoum was little more than a provincial Greek colony, Sirkap was a South Asian metropolis: a city inhabited by people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and one whose economy was driven by international commerce.

Gandhara's overland trade with Greece probably began in the late fourth century B.C., after Alexander's conquests, but it was the opening of sea routes in the first century B.C. that significantly increased the amount of goods being exported from the Mediterranean to China and South Asia (fig. 4). The *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, a manual of sea trade compiled by an Alexandrian merchant near the beginning of the Common Era, indicates that goods destined for Gandhara were transported from the Egyptian city of Alexandria south on the Red Sea and, with the advantage of monsoon winds, across the Arabian Sea to ports in Gujarat, India, notably to the coastal city of Barygaza.⁵ There they were sold to Gandharan merchants, who took them north across the high passes surrounding Gandhara to the Silk Road, whence they were carried on into China. Gandhara's prosperity can thus be directly linked to the burgeoning sea trade, as the overland routes could easily bypass the region.

The *Periplus* and other sources document the Roman importation of exotic spices such as black pepper, agate for intaglio, and cotton textiles from India and fine silk from China, but South Asians were apparently less interested in Western goods; as a consequence, great amounts of Roman gold flowed east. To offset this economic drain, the Western countries also exported raw materials, such as lead, copper, and glass, as well as food products, including garum (fermented fish paste) and large quantities of wine.⁶ While some luxury items, as we shall see, made their way to South Asia, they seem to have been of secondary importance.

Figure 3. Detail of *Wrestler's Weight* (no. 8)

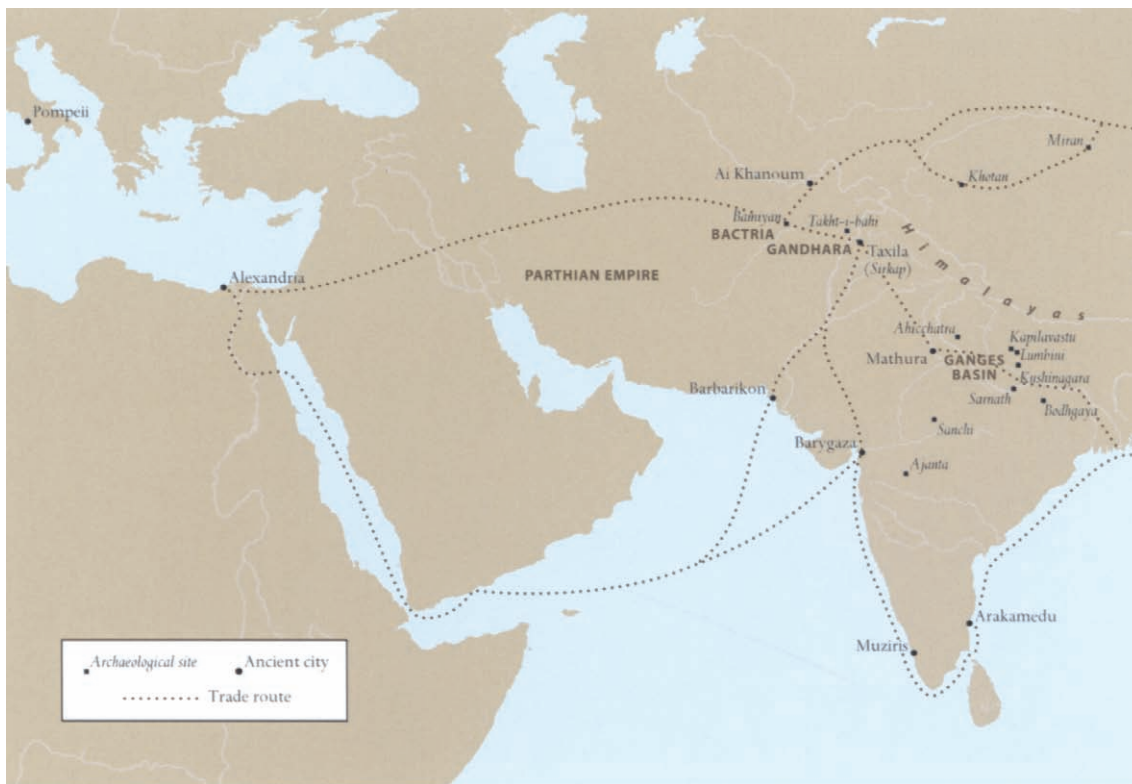


Figure 4. Map of Silk Road and South Asia

HELLENISTIC, PARTHIAN, AND SOUTH ASIAN CONTACTS

By the late second century B.C., Gandhara's urban elite had developed a refined taste for foreign goods, which provided many of the styles, motifs, and forms that Gandharan artists would selectively recast to create an identifiably Gandharan art. Some of the earliest Gandharan sculptural finds include numerous small stone dishes (nos. 1–6) whose artistic styles reflect contact with the Hellenistic world as well as with the Parthian and Shaka traditions.⁷ During excavations of Sirkap in the early twentieth century, dishes comparable to those in the Metropolitan Museum's collection were found in domestic residences, in contexts stratigraphically datable to the late second century B.C. through the first century A.D., a dating that can be further refined by considering the varying styles, motifs, and media of such dishes.⁸ Most are carved in schist, phyllite, and steatite⁹ and are small enough to fit in the palm of the hand. That the dishes were found

in domestic contexts rather than in sacred areas, unlike nearly all of the subsequent Buddhist sculpture from Gandhara, suggests that they were likely used in domestic rituals, and that the sculpted scenes decorating them related to that purpose.

These shallow, bowl-shaped dishes have ornamented rims, and typically a finely carved scene fills most of the interior, with the remaining space subdivided into compartments (nos. 3, 5). Some of the figures in the scenes hold wine cups (nos. 2, 5); others are perhaps portrayed as too drunk to stand without support (nos. 1, 3). Often the dishes show figures riding hybrid, dragonlike creatures that typically have the tails of marine animals (nos. 2, 4); winged lions also appear. The riders commonly hold drinking cups, possibly indicating the idea of travel to a heavenly realm made accessible through Dionysian practices that stressed intoxication.¹⁰ Grape cultivation and wine drinking were documented in Gandhara at the time of Alexander the Great's invasion, and it is likely that, in Gandhara, Dionysian traditions from



1. *Dish with Apollo and Daphne*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
Hellenistic style, ca. 1st century B.C.
Schist, Diam. $4\frac{3}{16}$ in. (10.6 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.307)



2. *Dish with a Marine Creature and a Couple*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
Hellenistic style, ca. 1st century B.C.
Schist, Diam. $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. (11.4 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.41)



3. *Dish with the Drunken Heracles Supported by Two Women, with a Lion at Left*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
Hellenistic style, ca. 1st century B.C.
Schist, Diam. $4\frac{7}{8}$ in. (12.4 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.105)



4. *Dish with a Woman Riding a Marine Creature*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
Parthian style, ca. 1st century B.C.
Schist, Diam. $5\frac{5}{16}$ in. (13.5 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.107)



5. *Dish with the Drunken Heracles Embracing Two Women*
 Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
 north Indian style, 1st century A.D.
 Schist, Diam. 6 7/8 in. (15.6 cm)
 Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
 Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.40)

the West were associated with agricultural prosperity.¹¹ The iconography of drinking and the lack of wear in the compartments of the dishes¹² suggest that such vessels may have been used for ritual offerings of wine, possibly to ensure a blissful afterlife for the dead.¹³

On one of the dishes (no. 1), we see Daphne twisting to look back at the approaching figure of Apollo, a composition that reveals the artist's familiarity with Hellenistic motifs and narrative structures. At the same time, the artist chose to give Apollo the pointed hat of a Parthian, effectively situating this event in the Greater Gandharan sphere to appeal to a local audience. The figures of Greek gods represented or alluded to in some Gandharan works raise an important question: were Gandharans interested in these deities from a foreign land, or did the figures assume entirely new or different meanings? Given the apparent importance of Dionysian ritual in Gandhara, the figure of Daphne, for example, could instead be viewed as a woman in an ecstatic state who, having had too much wine, is in need of support. In the



6. *Dish with Apollo and Daphne*
 Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
 Hellenistic style, ca. 1st century B.C.
 Schist, Diam. 4 3/16 in. (10.6 cm)
 Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
 Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.307)



Reverse of Dish (no. 6)



Figure 5. *Dish with Isis and Falcon-Headed Horus.* Egypt, Alexandria, 2nd century A.D. Steatite, Diam. 3½ in. (9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund, 1911 (II.150.48)



Reverse of Dish (fig. 5)

depiction of the drunken Heracles being held up by two women (no. 3), wine and its euphoric effects are again stressed. It would seem, then, that these reliefs could be read in light of a Gandharan incorporation of Dionysian ritual rather than as purely classical mythological vignettes.

That Gandharan artists did not simply copy foreign objects, iconography, and stylistic idioms but reworked them to suit local needs is demonstrated by comparing a steatite dish produced in Alexandria (fig. 5) with Gandharan examples. In the Alexandrian dish, the figures occupy the upper part of the composition and are framed by floral motifs on the outside of the rim and lotus petals within; the back is embellished with concentric bands of petals, grape vines, and a floral wreath. The Gandharan dishes

(particularly nos. 1, 2, 4, and 6) are remarkably similar to the Alexandrian example in terms of their material, size, placement of figures, and the use of decorative floral motifs (nos. 4–6), especially the lotus petals on the inside and a wreath on the back (no. 6). The function of such Alexandrian dishes is not known, but the appearance of Egyptian gods (here, Isis and Horus) suggests the vessels had a religious function.¹⁴ Although Gandharans evidently were not interested in these Egyptian gods (who do not appear in Gandharan iconography), they did incorporate the dish format into their own ritual practices. Moreover, the style of carving on the Alexandrian dishes, notably the linear treatment of the drapery, is also found in Gandharan art (see no. 4).¹⁵

A Roman or Alexandrian plaster emblema containing a scene with Aphrodite and Eros (fig. 6) provides a good example of how complex Western mythological scenes and classical styles, once they reached Gandhara, were received and adapted. We know that similar plaster emblemata moved east along the trade routes because they were among the objects found in a hoard of trade goods excavated at the ancient city of Begram, in Afghanistan, dating from about the first to the third century A.D.¹⁶ It seems plausible to



Figure 6. *Emblema with Aphrodite and Eros.* Mediterranean region, ca. 1st–2nd century A.D. Plaster, max. Diam. 4 in. (10.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Alexander Goetz, in honor of Samuel Eilenberg, 1996 (1996.472)

imagine a Gandharan artist reinterpreting such a scene in one of the schist dishes, especially if the incident depicted could be understood in terms of local religious iconography. This type of object is important because it helps us to understand how Gandharan artists incorporated Hellenistic methods of organizing narrative figures in space; note, for example, the parallels between the emblema and the dish depicting Apollo's pursuit of Daphne (no. 1), particularly how the figures in the dish are given a corresponding three-dimensionality. Yet relating styles and influences to the chronological development of Gandharan art is often problematic because artists did borrow so freely from other traditions. For instance, in a dish that depicts a woman riding a marine creature (no. 4), the linear treatment of the drapery and the rigid presentation of the woman's figure, shown almost in profile, exhibit close affinities to Parthian and Near Eastern reliefs, such as a grave stele from Palmyra (fig. 7). It is tempting to think that the Parthian incursion into Gandhara in the first century B.C. introduced this hierarchic and frontal stylistic type, which differs markedly from the more naturalistic and spatially complex Hellenistic format (see, for example, no. 2), thus possibly giving us a means to date the relief. But Gandhara was trading simultaneously with the Mediterranean West and with Parthia, so the similarities could simply be a case of different workshops producing different styles of dishes at the same time to appeal to patrons in an ethnically diverse community.

On another dish (no. 5), a man dressed in a turban and shawl and wearing elaborate jewelry is flanked by two elegantly adorned women holding wine cups, an imported style that can be broadly related to the early north Indian Buddhist site of Bharhut. We find similarly dressed figures in first-century-A.D. reliefs from the Swat Valley, which can help us date the dish to the same period because the style was popular in Swat only at that time.¹⁷ Although the scenes on this dish employ a different artistic vocabulary from those influenced by Hellenistic and Parthian traditions, especially the treatment of the figures and their dress, the overall format of the dish, including the rim and lotus deco-



Figure 7. *Grave Stele with Bust of a Woman*. Syria, Palmyra, A.D. 146. Limestone, 20 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 17 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (51.8 x 44.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, 1902 (02.29.3)

ration on the interior, is consistent with the other Gandharan examples as well as with the dish from Alexandria, suggesting that it had a similar function.

A silver rondel depicting the goddess Hariti (no. 7) can generally be related to the stone dishes in terms of its size, circular format, and lotus border. The rondel probably did not have a ritual function, as the dishes are believed to have had, but the comparable size and the auspicious border motif suggest that it, too, was part of an artistic convention of sacredness. Hariti is a Buddhist goddess; initially she brought disease and devoured children, but after the Buddha's intervention she came to protect them. She is shown here sitting on a throne nursing a baby. The owner of the rondel may have hoped to appease the goddess in an attempt to control forces that affected the daily life of a family. In this way Hariti can be linked to north Indian goddesses such as the *yakshis*—who in a fickle way brought or withheld fertility and agricultural prosperity—or to the more generally auspicious Sri, goddess of good fortune. Hariti was also related to



7. *Rondel with the Goddess Hariti*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century A.D.
Silver with gold foil, Diam. 3 ½ in. (8.9 cm)
Gift of The Kronos Collections, 1981 (1981.460.2)

foreign goddesses known in Gandhara, among them the Near Eastern Ardoksho—who holds a cornucopia and is associated with abundance and desirable things—or the Hellenistic goddess Tyche.¹⁸ The Indo-Parthian style of the drapery on the rondel is comparable to that seen in first-century-A.D. objects excavated at Sirkap and at the adjacent early Buddhist Dharmarajika complex (see no. 24).¹⁹ The Hariti rondel may not actually have been venerated, since residents of Sirkap used images of gods and goddesses, along with various auspicious symbols, in the jewelry they wore. This silver relief and others like it now in the British Museum²⁰ were probably used for personal adornment, possibly on the cockade of a turban, although they could also have been attached to a box or a piece of furniture.

CLASSICAL STYLES AND CHRONOLOGY

The dishes and other luxury wares such as those found at Sirkap are part of a relatively small body of material that mostly predates the main period of Gandharan contact with the Roman Empire, in the

first centuries of the Common Era. This later interaction was more significant and sustained than that with the Hellenistic Greeks,²¹ and most of Gandhara's artistic production occurred at this time. By the second century A.D., Gandharan artists were incorporating classical motifs with considerable experience—classical forms had been in circulation for more than four hundred years—and these styles had become part of Gandhara's cultural identity.

Although many of the objects discussed thus far demonstrate how it is possible to trace evidence of contacts with the West in Gandharan art, it is difficult to establish a precise chronology of Gandharan artistic production based on a supposed correlation of those influences in Gandhara and on analogous changes in classical styles. Part of the problem is that artists in the Roman Empire combined and elaborated artistic styles from different time periods in order to vaunt the sophisticated tastes of their patrons. In luxury goods, it was common to incorporate old motifs and sculptural elements into new contexts. This stylistically hybrid art reached Gandhara, where local artists selectively recontextualized and potentially archaized Roman elements that appealed to Gandharan tastes. Moreover, some Roman motifs that became popular in Gandhara enjoyed much longer life spans there than they did in the West; it is not surprising, for example, to find a late Gandharan sculpture embellished with motifs from a much earlier period in the Mediterranean region.

For a good example of how difficult it is to determine the chronological context for a decidedly hybrid classical object of Gandharan manufacture, let us examine a wrestler's weight that shows a naturalistic Heracles, who holds a lion skin and leans on a club, twisting to look at the approaching Nemean lion (no. 8).²² The Greek myth tells of Heracles going to the Nemean plains to fight a terrible lion, and when his arrows failed to pierce its skin, he was obliged to strangle it. Heracles took the lion's skin and wore it as a form of armor. In the weight, the Gandharan artist depicted Heracles, with his club, holding the lion skin, as the scene is known from numerous coins and other objects.²³ Yet the juxtaposition of a



8. *Wrestler's Weight with Heracles Holding a Lion Skin and Being Approached by the Nemean Lion*
 Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara, ca. 1st century A.D.
 Schist, 10¼ x 13¾ in. (26 x 34.9 cm)
 Purchase, Florence and Herbert Irving Gift, 1994
 (1994.112)

victorious Heracles, skin in hand, confronting a living Nemean lion is unique: a combination of iconographic elements that has no classical precedent. As with the stone dishes with Hellenistic mythological scenes, one wonders whether the Gandharan audience knew the myth, or whether a powerful figure confronting a huge, stylized Gandharan lion had a different local meaning. The back of the relief has sockets for lifting the weight and a scene depicting a wrestling competition, which reflects strong classical connections. One wrestler lifts the other off the ground, and both twist: a spatial organization of figures seldom seen in Gandharan art. Dating this object solely on the basis of style is difficult. The pronounced naturalism could indicate the first and second centuries B.C., when Hellenistic contacts led to the limited production of the classical dishes discussed above; it could also reflect an isolated appearance of naturalistic figure types resulting from ongoing Roman trade; or it could be part of a reemergence of classical forms that occurred in Gandhara and Afghanistan in the fourth to fifth century A.D. (see, for example, nos. 50, 67, 68, and fig. 35). Indeed, it appears that what had been an established Gandharan naturalistic style continued long after such styles had declined in the West. In the case of the wrestler's weight, it seems likely that the piece does probably date to near the beginning of the Common Era, because only during that period did



Reverse of *Wrestler's Weight* (no. 8), depicting a wrestling competition



9. *Mirror Handle with a Standing Woman*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century B.C.
Stone, H. $4\frac{3}{4}$ in. (12.1 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.37)

figures in Gandharan art interact to such a degree and move convincingly in three-dimensional space. More significant than the date is the fact that Heracles and the Nemean lion, a complete narrative scene from Western mythology, is illustrated on the weight in much the same way as the mythological episodes are on some of the dishes. As Buddhism became more established in Gandhara in the late first century A.D., such interest in Western narrative faded, eventually to be replaced by a sophisticated tradition of illustrating the biography and actions of the Buddha.

10. *Mirror Handle with Two Standing Women*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century B.C.
Stone, H. $4\frac{3}{8}$ in. (11.1 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.38)

URBAN LUXURY ITEMS

From the first century B.C. through the first century A.D., various luxury objects were produced in Gandhara that must have been admired more for their beauty than for any religious significance. Of particular interest are two mirror handles in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (nos. 9, 10) that can be dated approximately to the first century B.C. because their distinctive hairstyles are similar to first-century-B.C. examples from north India.²⁴ (We know the figures are handles because of holes that run from the tops of the heads through the lengths of the bodies.) It is possible these two handles portray goddesses, yet the people who commissioned them appear to have been interested primarily in the women's dress, as suggested by the great care with which the artist depicted their clothing, jewelry, and hair. One of the handles (no. 10) juxtaposes a figure in a shawl, appropriate for the cool Gandharan climate, with a woman wearing the lighter, more revealing clothing of north India.²⁵ Mirror handles in the form of elegant women are also known from Sirkap, Begram, and a variety of trading centers in west India, and at all of these centers depictions of women have been found whose

attire indicates that they came from other places, raising the intriguing question of whether trade was well enough established that the people of Gandhara cultivated an appreciation for foreign fashions.

The city dwellers of ancient Gandhara seem to have been particularly eager to display their wealth in the form of elegant jewelry, such as the hinged gold armlet in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (no. 11). Such





II. *Hinged Armlet*

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
1st century A.D.

Gold with remains of a core of lac (resin) or
mastic, Diam. 3 in. (7.6 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.291)

jewelry presumably made a strong statement about the wearer's social standing, as gold was not readily available and appears to have come to Gandhara via trade with the Mediterranean. Similar armlets were found in stratigraphic contexts in the Sirkap excavations, establishing a date for them of about the first century A.D.²⁶ More difficult to date is a pair of small-scale repoussé gold earplugs with *hamsas*, or wild geese (nos. 12a, b). According to their appearance in Gandharan sculpture, earplugs were most often worn by men. As on many Gandharan luxury items, here the *hamsa* was an auspicious symbol, one that carried ideas of transcendence and rebirth.

For the lower strata of society, jewelry forms were equally sophisticated but were made with less expensive materials. A stone mold for a circular pendant with two figures (no. 13) could have been used to shape gold-foil jewelry, like the *hamsa* earplugs; it could also have served to make cheaper and more durable terracotta jewelry, numerous examples of which are known from the Sirkap excavations.²⁷ Stone as well as terracotta molds were traded freely and have been found throughout north and west India as well as in northwest Pakistan.²⁸ These small jewelry molds, such as one from west India in the Metropolitan's collection (no. 14), are particularly



12a, b. *Pair of Earplugs with Hamsas (Wild Geese)*

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
1st century A.D.

Gold, Diam. $1\frac{1}{16}$ in. (2.7 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.290a, b)



13. *Jewelry Mold with Two Figures*

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century A.D.

Stone, H. $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. (4.1 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of
Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.97)



14. Jewelry Mold with Triratna

India, Deccan plateau, ca. 1st century A.D.

Steatite, $2\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{3}{16}$ in. (5.7 x 11.4 x 2.1 cm)

Gift of Terence McNerney, 2006 (2006.312)

important because their trade made them ideal vehicles for transmitting foreign styles.²⁹ In many examples, all of the surfaces of the mold block bear carved impressions; number 13 has a floral design on the back. Seals with intaglio scenes were also widely dispersed—foreign and locally produced examples have been found in Gandhara and across peninsular India in large numbers—and were thus likely sources for the dissemination of artistic imagery as well. Unlike stone molds, intaglio scenes were often incorporated into jewelry, such as a ring in the Metropolitan's collection that bears an intaglio scene on the face (no. 15).

Objects carved of bone and ivory, like jewelry molds and seals, moved easily along the established trade routes. An ivory female figure, which may have been a mirror handle or possibly a table leg (fig. 8), was found in excavations of Pompeii, indicating that ivory was included in trade that reached the West before A.D. 79, when Pompeii was destroyed.³⁰ Similarly, long ivory gaming dice from South Asia (no. 16) have been found at various sites in western and central India, in Gandhara, and at Pompeii. Significant numbers of bone and ivory objects are known today, suggesting

that ancient production must have been extensive, for these materials survive only under the most favorable conditions. Workshops near the ancient cities of Ter and Bhokardan, in western India, turned out objects remarkably similar to the ivory figure found at Pompeii and to those excavated at Sirkap.³¹ A fragment of an ivory comb showing two women (no. 17) probably came from these workshops, as did a large group of ivories recovered in the hoard of trade goods from Begram.³² Bone objects produced in



15. Intaglio Ring with Two Figures

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara, ca. 1st century B.C.

Bronze, W. $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. (2.9 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Bequest of Samuel Eilenberg, 1998 (2000.284.22)



16. Gaming Die

Pakistan or Afghanistan (possibly of western Indian manufacture), 1st–3rd century A.D.

Ivory, H. $2\frac{3}{16}$ in. (5.6 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Bequest of Samuel Eilenberg, 1998 (2000.284.19)



Figure 8. *Mirror Handle or Table Leg with Female Figure (Yakshi)*. Manufactured in western India; found in Pompeii, before A.D. 79. Ivory. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (inv. 149425)



17. Fragment of an Ivory Comb

Afghanistan (possibly of western Indian manufacture), 1st–3rd century A.D.

Ivory, $2\frac{3}{16} \times 3\frac{1}{8}$ in. (5.6 x 7.9 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Bequest of Samuel Eilenberg, 1998 (2000.284.8)



18. Plaque with Loving Couple (Mithuna)

Afghanistan (possibly of western Indian manufacture), 1st–3rd century A.D.

Bone, $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{3}{8}$ in. (4.4 x 3.5 cm)

Purchase, Dr. Kurt Berliner Gift, 1998 (1998.348)

western India, such as a plaque with a loving couple, or *mithuna* (no. 18), while appealing to Gandharans in cities such as Sirkap and Begram, do not appear to have penetrated farther west along the trade routes.

That the earliest period of Gandharan artistic activity is represented largely by objects known from urban contexts (ritual dishes, luxury objects, and trade goods) as opposed to the mostly Buddhist works from later periods contributes to a frequent misunderstanding about later Gandharan art: namely, that Buddhism was its sole subject. Although Gandharan patrons undoubtedly commissioned large quantities

of art in the service of Buddhism—especially after the establishment of numerous Buddhist centers in the first and second centuries A.D. in conjunction with the Kushan invasions—the seeming preponderance of Buddhist works from Gandhara from that period is actually a result of archaeological circumstance. Almost all of the excavations of sites from the second through the eighth century A.D. have been of Buddhist centers, not cities, leaving contemporary viewers with a skewed perspective. Thus, while Buddhism was certainly a dominant subject in later Gandharan art, it should not be presumed to have been the exclusive one.

1. Mac Dowall and Taddei 1978a, pp. 198–99, 218–32. For a full discussion of the site, see Bernard 1973.
2. Marshall 1951, vol. 1, pp. 112–217; Callieri 1995. Other, unexcavated settlements have also been identified; see Ali 1994.
3. The presence of Indo-Greeks is known primarily from the coins minted there; Bopearachchi and Rahman 1995, pp. 21–55.
4. Marshall 1951, vol. 1, pp. 11–78; Mac Dowall and Taddei 1978a, pp. 189–90; Erdosy 1990. See also Rosenfield 1967, pp. 7–26.
5. Casson 1989, pp. 5–7.
6. H. P. Ray 1986, pp. 57–80, 109–10; Liu 1988, pp. 25–52; Begley and De Puma 1991, pp. 1–41.
7. For a discussion of dishes in the Metropolitan Museum's collection, see Kossak 1991; Lerner and Kossak 1991, pp. 61–66, nos. 17–26.
8. Marshall 1951, vol. 2, pp. 493–98.
9. The earliest examples are in a yellow clay stone; see *ibid.*, pp. 692–93. For a general discussion of these dishes, see Francfort 1979.
10. Tanabe 2002, p. 73. Tanabe also asserts that they may be related to depictions of Sukhavati paradise (see Glossary). The Sukhavati paradise was important in Mahayana Buddhism later in China, but there is no conclusive evidence for it from Gandhara from this period.
11. See Carter 1992.
12. Hugo Buchthal (1945, pp. 152–55) suggested that the trays were used for applying cosmetics and that the reliefs were simply intended to appeal to Sirkap urbanites' taste for luxury, but the compartments show no indication of the wear that would have been caused by grinding pigments. In fact, the compartments of many of the dishes are embellished with sculptural elements (no. 5), and some dishes have no compartments at all (no. 1).
13. Dar 1979, p. 149; Kossak 1991.
14. Evans 1909; Marshall 1951, vol. 2, p. 494.
15. Petrie 1927, pp. 38–39; Marshall 1951, vol. 2, p. 494.
16. Richter 1958. For a general discussion of the excavations at Begram, see Hackin 1954.
17. Fabrègues 1987; Khan 1993; Faccenna 1995; Faccenna 2002.
18. See Zwalf 1996, vol. 1, p. 44; Quagliotti 2000.
19. Fabrègues 1987.
20. Errington and Cribb 1992, pp. 141–42, no. 142, pp. 160–61, nos. 161, 162.
21. Rowland 1965, pp. 9–19, 41–44.
22. Similar weights, including one that depicts wrestlers, have been found in Gandhara, Afghanistan, and Mathura; see Shakur 1954, p. 106; Lyons and Ingholt 1957, no. 445. The Metropolitan's weight can also be compared to a group of reliefs showing figures riding lions (Lyons and Ingholt 1957, no. 458) and to a matching pair of lions from Mian Khan (Archaeological Survey of India, Northwest Frontier Province, British Library, London, photograph no. 1088).
23. Göbl 1984, p. 165, no. 269/1.
24. The north Indian example, a small handle made of metal and now in a private collection, can be dated to the first century B.C. on the basis of certain weapons in the hair.
25. The woman dressed in north Indian clothing can be compared to a small bronze from Sirkap; see Marshall 1951, vol. 3, pl. 186, d.
26. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 634, vol. 3, pl. 195, c, k.
27. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pl. 135, nos. 128–36, pl. 136, nos. 138, 139.
28. Brancaccio forthcoming.
29. Brancaccio 2007.
30. During Caspers 1981.
31. For long gaming dice, see Marshall 1951, vol. 3, pl. 200, nos. 92, 93, 97, 98, and for bone figures of *yakshis* and a *mithuna* couple, pl. 203, nos. 43–47.
32. Rosen 1975; Mehendale 1996; Nehru 2004.



EARLY BUDDHISM IN GANDHARA: RELIQUARIES AND NARRATIVE RELIEF PANELS

The historical Buddha—known as *Shakyamuni*, Siddharta Gautama, and Tatagatha, among other names—was raised as a prince in the Ganges basin of north India. About the end of the sixth century B.C.,¹ he renounced the worldly life to search for a solution to human suffering, and through spiritual discipline, he reached a state of enlightenment: broadly defined as the cessation of desire and, thus, of the suffering caused by desire. The Buddha went on to explain the dharma (path or way) for others to attain enlightenment, which entailed breaking free from *samsara* (the cycle of rebirth) dictated by *karma* (actions). The Buddha's earliest doctrines expounded on themes of personal responsibility; although he did not deny the existence of the various gods venerated by the lay community, or their heavens, he viewed these deities as similarly caught in the cycle of rebirth and thus ultimately irrelevant to the goals of breaking free from attachment and coming to a realization of the nature of existence.

When the Buddha died, having already reached enlightenment, he achieved a state of nonexistence known as *nirvana*; in this regard, he is sometimes likened to a flame that was extinguished. He was then cremated, according to religious texts, and his ashes were divided and placed into eight reliquaries, which in turn were buried at the center of eight large, solid, hemispheric mounds known as *stupas*. The relics of the Buddha were believed by his followers to be the

pure, material stuff of enlightenment, and being in proximity to them was to be in the presence of an enlightened force, part of the reason why veneration of the Buddha's relics became a central component of early Buddhist practice. The monumental *stupas* built to house the Buddha's relics were thus understood not as symbols, but as true foci of power.

In the third century B.C., King Ashoka (r. 272–232 B.C.) of the north Indian Mauryan dynasty opened the eight original *stupas* (according to legend), further divided the Buddha's remains, and enshrined them in eighty-four thousand *stupas* (or an infinite number), thereby making the Buddha's presence accessible to the people of his realm.² The act of subdividing the relics and founding these new sacred precincts generated tremendous positive *karma* for Ashoka and established a paradigm for the ideal Buddhist king. Although Ashoka's *stupas* are difficult to identify in the archaeological record, they were likely built at many of the important Buddhist centers in the Ganges basin. It has been suggested that Buddhist sites such as Sanchi³ or Sarnath in central India have Mauryan origins because of the presence of columns there inscribed with Ashokan edicts, but similar early attributions cannot be made at Buddhist sites in Gandhara. The few Ashokan rock-cut edicts that remain in Afghanistan and Pakistan do not directly address the introduction of Buddhism into Gandhara; many scholars have nonetheless considered them evidence of the beginning of Buddhism in the region. Not until the early second century B.C., however, was the earliest datable Buddhist site, Butkara I in the

Figure 9. Reliquary of *Indravarma* (no. 19)



Figure 10. Aerial view of the main stupa at the Dharmarajika complex. Pakistan, Taxila, site founded in 2nd century B.C. and abandoned ca. mid-6th century A.D.

Swat Valley, founded in Greater Gandhara.⁴ The only other Buddhist site in Gandhara that can be attributed to the second century B.C. is the Dharmarajika complex in Taxila, near Sirkap (fig. 10).⁵

Entering the monastic order was the easiest way for people to walk on the path of the dharma set out by the Buddha, but most followers chose to raise families and become lay practitioners; their goal was probably a positive rebirth rather than pursuit of the elusive state of enlightenment. The most effective way for the lay community to influence their next rebirth was to generate good karma by earning merit, such as supporting the monastic order or donating structures and sculpted images in Buddhist sacred areas. To that end, noble Gandharans emulated King Ashoka by further dividing the Buddha's relics and building new stupas and monasteries to generate merit for themselves, their families, and the people of their kingdom. The dated inscription incised on a Gandharan reliquary in the Metropolitan's collection (no. 19; fig. 9) describes the motivations of a

local prince, Indravarma, for enshrining relics of the Buddha:

In the sixty-third (63) year of the late Great King Aya [Azes], on the sixteenth day of the month Kartia [Kārttika]; at this auspicious (?) time, Prince Indravarma [Indravarma], son of the King of Apraca, establishes these body relics of Lord Śākyamuni in a secure, deep, previously unestablished place; he produces brahma-merit together with his mother Rukhṇakā, a daughter of Ājī (and) wife of the King of Apraca, with (his) maternal uncle Ramaka, with (his) maternal uncle's wife Daṣakā, with (his) sisters and wife—Vasavadatta (Vāsavadattā), Mahaveda (?; = Mahāvedā?), and Nikā, and (his) wife Utara (Uttarā). And (this is done) in honor of (his) father Viṣṇuvarma. The King of Avaca (=Apraca)'s brother, the Commander Vaga is honored, and Viyayamitra (=Vijayamitra), [former] King of Avaca. (His) mother's sister, Bhaidatta (Bhagīdattā?) is honored. And these bodily relics, having been brought in procession from the Muryaka cave stūpa, were established in a secure (?), safe, deep (?) depository, (in) the year twenty-five.⁶



19. Reliquary of Indravarman

Pakistan, Bajaur region, A.D. 5–6

Schist, H. $4\frac{3}{16}$ in. (10.6 cm), Diam. $3\frac{5}{8}$ in. (9.2 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.71a, b)



20. Reliquary of Ramaka

Pakistan, Bajaur region, 1st century A.D.

Schist, H. $2\frac{13}{16}$ in. (7.1 cm), Diam. $3\frac{5}{8}$ in. (9.2 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.70a, b)

This reliquary and another example in the Museum's collection (no. 20), which has a carved inscription that lists the donor Ramaka,⁷ likely the maternal uncle of Indravarman, have proved crucial to determining the genealogy of the rulers of the small kingdom of Avaca in the region of Bajaur, just northwest of ancient Gandhara. Moreover, Indravarman's inscription specifies the era of King Azes, giving it an absolute date of A.D. 5–6 and making the reliquary one of the rare securely dated objects in all of Gandharan art.⁸

Indravarman was careful to state in the inscription that he was placing body relics of the Buddha Shakyamuni in a new, "previously unestablished" location, an action that generated great merit. In this sense he, like Ashoka, created a new sacred center by dividing the relics and then taking a portion of them "in procession" for deposit in a place described as being secure, safe, and deep: most likely the core of a large stupa. The inscription then tells us that this produced "brahma-merit,"⁹ meaning happi-

ness in heaven equivalent to a day in the life of the Hindu god Brahma (a *kalpa*, or 4,320 million years). In other words, it is not enlightenment but rebirth in heaven that was the intended result of this donation. Indravarman was also able to transfer this merit, and hence a propitious rebirth, to his extended family; most of the inscription is a list of these relations. The establishment of a stupa seems always to have occurred in conjunction with the construction of a sacred enclosure (to contain the donations of others) as well as a monastery. The monastic establishment was essential because the patron gained merit only if his donation was used; the monks would thus venerate the relics and make it possible for the lay community to venerate them as well.

Many extant Gandharan reliquaries contain a variety of objects—including glass beads and pieces of crystal, gold foil with repoussé designs (usually flowers), and coins—that were donated to the relic and placed with it inside the reliquary (no. 21).¹⁰ Remains from the royal burials at Tillya Tepe (50 B.C.–A.D. 50)



21. Reliquary with Its Contents

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara, ca. 1st century A.D.

Schist with objects of copper, gold, rock crystal, and pearl; H. 2 1/16 in. (6.9 cm), Diam. 2 in. (5.1 cm)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Uzi Zucker, 1987

(1987.258.2a–q)

in Afghanistan contain silver and gold jewelry and gold repoussée ornaments similar to items found in Buddhist reliquaries. Perfume jars and cosmetic cases have also been found in such royal burials, many comparable in shape and size to Buddhist reliquaries.¹¹ This similarity is likely not a coincidence; the Buddha's remains are described in early sources as being "saturated," "pervaded," "infused," and "imbued" with virtues such as wisdom, kindness, and morality,¹² much the way oils are infused with the scent of perfume. The shape of the perfume container was thus considered appropriate for a Buddhist reliquary, and the "residence" of the Buddha—meaning his monastic residence—is described in early Buddhist texts as a *gandhakuti* (perfumed chamber) because it was imbued with his presence. In the same way, the reliquary itself was understood to be saturated with Shakyamuni's enlightened essence.¹³ Buddhist texts prescribe the use of flowers, perfume, and incense to make the absent Buddha present,¹⁴ and today fragrant offerings remain an important component of Buddhist ritual practice (see, for example, the first-century-A.D.

Gandharan incense burner in figure 25, which was likely used at a stupa to venerate the Buddha's relics).

Reliquaries, because they were considered saturated with the power of the Buddha's relics, were regularly reused and reinterred within stupas. A squat reliquary with a flared base (no. 22) was repaired with metal pins and brackets after it was broken in two. Cut from schist on a lathe, it would not have been used if the damage had occurred while it was being made, so the repair must have been carried out after the vessel had become sacred by virtue of extended contact with relics of the Buddha. The repair might have been done when the stupa was opened, so the relics could be divided, or, as inscriptions tell us, when the stupa was rebuilt because it was no longer receiving proper veneration, had collapsed, or was burned (struck by lightning).¹⁵ Coins were sometimes interred with relic deposits, and many reliquaries have been dated according to numismatic evidence. It should be noted, however, that while patrons probably put current coins into relic deposits,¹⁶ coins from earlier deposits were occasionally reinterred¹⁷ because of their sustained contact with the relic, sometimes contributing to faulty date attributions.

Some Gandharan reliquaries were designed as miniature stupas (no. 23). The form of the stupa can be conceived as a three-dimensional diagram of the cosmos: the base being associated with the profane world, the dome being the pure realm of the



22. Reliquary

Pakistan, Bajaur region, ca. 1st century A.D.
Schist, H. $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. (7 cm), Diam. $5\frac{1}{8}$ in. (13 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.137a–c)



23. Reliquary in the Form of a Stupa

Pakistan, ancient region of
Gandhara, ca. 1st century A.D.
Schist, H. $4\frac{11}{16}$ in. (11.9 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection,
Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987
(1987.142.96a–c)

relic, and the stacked “umbrellas” on top (see fig. 15, zone D) relating to the heavens above. The *yasti*, the pole supporting the umbrellas, can be understood as the cosmic axis connecting these planes of existence and relating the Buddha (and his relics) to the center of the cosmos. This model derives from legends of Shakyamuni’s life, which tell that when he was finally ready to reach enlightenment, he traveled to the city of Bodhgaya (in Bihar, north India) and sat at the cosmic axis of the universe under the *bodhi* tree. When a patron built a stupa, the monument thus became a diagram of the universe (tree = column = cosmic axis), and the relic of the Buddha at the stupa’s axis transformed the structure into a seat of enlightenment; at the same time, the stupa itself also connoted the Buddha’s death and the formless state of nirvana.

In the Ganges basin in north India, where the Buddha Shakyamuni lived, the sacred sites associated with his life took on an importance that exceeded even that of his bodily relics. Particularly important sites include Lumbini, where he was born; Bodhgaya, where he reached enlightenment; Sarnath, the site of his first sermon and the conversion of five ascetics who became the first Buddhist monks; and Kushinagara, the place of his death and passage to nirvana. Since Gandhara was far from these places, there the Buddha’s physical remains took precedence for worshippers and pilgrims. Chinese pilgrims, for example, considered the relics at sites in Afghanistan and Gandhara, rather than the sacred sites of north India, the culmination of their travels through Central Asia. Faxian (writing about A.D. 400) and Xuanzang (writing about A.D. 630) described relics in Gandhara that could be seen and touched. Their accounts stress the importance of the Buddha’s alms bowl (see fig. 22) and the top part of his skull (*ushnisha*), both apparently central objects of veneration for pilgrims and local people alike. Other significant relics that could be seen included the Buddha’s eyeball, staff, and robe.¹⁸ Xuanzang’s account, notably, indicates that veneration of the Buddha Shakyamuni’s relics was a dominant part of Greater Gandharan Buddhist practice in the seventh century A.D., long



24. *Garland Holder (possibly with a figure of Dionysus)*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century A.D.
Schist, H. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (27 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Arts Gifts, in honor of
Douglas Dillon, 2001 (2001.736)



25. *Garland Holder with a Winged Celestial*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
mid-1st century A.D.
Schist, H. 9 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (24.9 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.213)

after devotional imagery had become more significant in religious practice elsewhere.

EARLY BUDDHIST SCULPTURE

The earliest sculpture from Buddhist contexts in Gandhara dates to no earlier than the first century A.D., and not surprisingly the first donated sculptures embellished relic stupas. In the Metropolitan's collection are two garland holders (nos. 24, 25), volutes

that would have been affixed to the drum of a stupa to support strings of flowers.¹⁹ We know from sculptural representations that stupas were often bedecked with floral garlands (see fig. 14). A garland holder comparable to the two here, excavated in Sirkap, bears an inscription implying that only the garland holder itself had been paid for by the donor,²⁰ suggesting that this early Gandharan stupa was embellished through donations from several patrons: a pattern seen at early north Indian sites such as Bharhut and Sanchi.

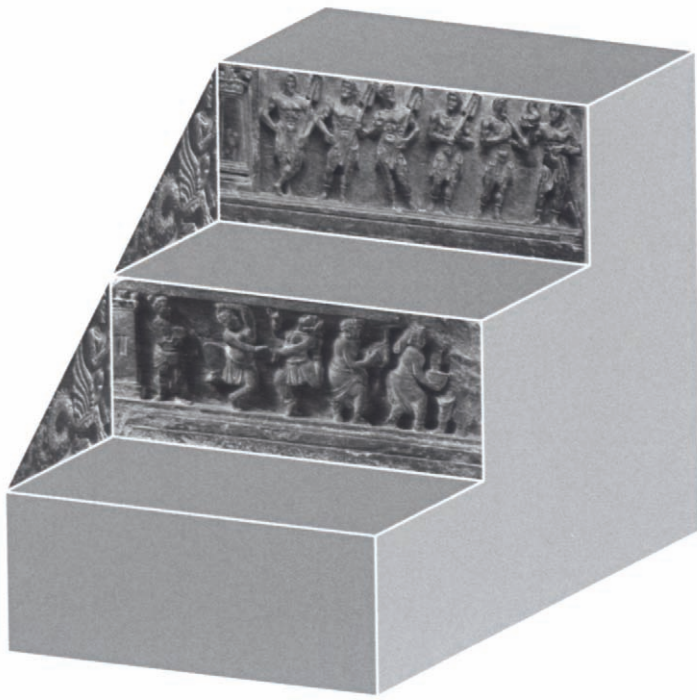


Figure 11. Diagram of stupa stairs, showing relative placement of risers (nos. 26, 28) and a triangular side panel (no. 27)

One of the Museum's garland holders (no. 24) is executed in a distinctly Indo-Parthian style, especially the wide-open, bulging eyes and the close parallel lines used to indicate the fine pleating of drapery. These stylistic details (also present in the Hariti rondel) provide a solid basis for relating this garland holder to the inscribed example from Sirkap, and thus for dating it to the mid-first century A.D.²¹ Such formal elements can also be linked to stylistic elaborations from the early north Indian Buddhist site of Bharhut,²² reflecting the increasing significance of ideas and art forms coming into Gandhara from the region where the Buddha had lived.

Another category of sculpture known from early Gandharan Buddhist sites includes carved stone reliefs that embellished the steps leading to the top of stupa bases: rectangular panels on the risers (vertical faces) between the treads, and triangular panels on the sides of the stairs (fig. 11). At Jamal Garhi, for example, a set of sixteen stair risers was found leading up to the main stupa court.²³ That this sculpture was placed in a polluted context—where devotees, presumably barefoot, would have walked—perhaps explains why the panels were carved with nondevotional subject matter. The Metropolitan's reliefs are part of a set of

fifteen stair risers and at least six triangular elements probably from a site near the western end of the Swat Valley.²⁴ One of the risers (no. 26) shows six bearded and mustached men, thought to be marine deities, each holding a paddle; the figure at far right also holds a dolphin, which is slightly damaged. The men wear boots with rolled tops and are dressed in acanthus-like skirts that appear to grow from their waists, enhancing the marine connotations of the relief; some scholars have suggested the figures are actually donors who were boatmen.²⁵ The triangular side panels (no. 27) depict composite creatures that have the bodies of centaurs along with wings and coiled tails, similar in concept to the marine creatures seen on some of the stone dishes (see, for example, no. 2).

The anatomy of the figures in number 26 ranges from the reasonably accurate (far left) to the approximate (note the exaggeratedly lumpy abdominal muscles of the second figure from the left). Although it is reasonable to date these reliefs to the first century A.D. on the basis of the classical treatment of the figures and similarities to the stone dishes as well as their pseudoclassical subject matter, it is curious that the Gandharan artist so clearly modified the artistic



26. *Stair Riser with Marine Deities or Boatmen*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century A.D.
Schist, 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 17 in. (16.8 x 43.2 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.21)



27. *Side Panel for a Stair Riser, with a Marine Deity (Triton or Ichthyocentaur)*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century A.D.
Schist, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 10 in. (19.7 x 25.4 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.19)



28. *Stair Riser with Dionysian Scene of Musicians and Dancers*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century A.D.
Schist, 6¾ x 16 in. (17.2 x 40.6 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.23)

conventions of the West, especially given that some of the first-century-B.C. dishes (see nos. 1, 2) reveal an awareness of refined Hellenistic artistic modes. In the stair reliefs, the anatomical modifications make it seem as though Gandharan artists, by the first century A.D., were less interested in, or perhaps less constrained by, an accurate depiction of nature.²⁶

Relatively few of these long, narrow reliefs, with their distinctive lower molding and bracketing pillars, are known, suggesting that this format was popular for only a short time. Other risers in the set show additional marine deities, drinking scenes, musicians, and donors offering flowers: iconography likely meant to provide protection and auspiciousness for the sacred area of the stupa. Another riser (no. 28) depicts musicians and dancers in a style quite different from that of the pseudoclassical marine deities in number 26. Here the women wear Indian garments and jewelry, whereas the drapery follows classical conventions. The subject matter is undoubtedly Dionysian, and yet the organization of the figures and the scene

depicted cannot be directly related to known classical precedents.

Drinking wine, dancing, and music making were apparently popular subjects for the embellishment of early Buddhist religious centers. The Buddha condemned intoxicants, and music and dance were considered unfit for the monastic community, although they were tolerated in lay contexts. We may wonder, therefore, why such themes as drunkenness and the loss of control manifested in wild dance would be found in Buddhist contexts. At the root of this could be the earlier, pre-Buddhist practices celebrating abundance and agricultural prosperity, which involved wine drinking. It has also been suggested that Dionysus was transformed and understood in the Gandharan context as the South Asian god Indra, whom lay followers would have known as the deity who rules over the paradise on top of the world known as the Trayastrimsa heaven. As the lay Buddhist community was probably more concerned with having a positive rebirth—enlightenment being out of reach for all but the most learned monks—the idea of being reborn in a heaven associated with Indra would no doubt have been attractive, as attested by the inscription on the Indravarman reliquary. At least in this instance, then, there seems to be a correlation between altered states of consciousness associated



29. *Fragment of a Vessel with a Dionysian Scene*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 1st century A.D.
Schist, H. 5 in. (12.7 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Bequest of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1998 (2000.284.15)

with the loss of control brought on by wine and dance and the concept of heavens in which one could be reborn.²⁷ Although it is difficult to know exactly how Dionysian concepts and practices functioned in early Buddhist contexts, the appearance of Dionysian imagery in later centuries indicates that such ideas remained an important part of Gandharan religious identity.

The figure on one of the garland holders (no. 26) can possibly be identified as Dionysus because of his wreathlike crown and what appears to be handfuls of grapes. In Gandharan sculpture, such wreaths crown male heads only in representations of the drunken Dionysus;²⁸ they also encircle the miter headdress worn by the god Indra, bolstering the argument that in Gandhara the two figures were associated. On a fragment of a lathe-turned schist bowl (no. 29), the central figure is probably Dionysus, identified by the

animal skin he wears. To the left is a maenad also wearing an animal skin, her head framed by a blowing scarf similar to ones seen in Parthian-style stone dishes (see no. 4); she offers Dionysus wine, and to the right is a partially clad woman who embraces him.²⁹ This delicately carved scene is set before a type of curtain that in the West would be associated with theater; here it could have been used to convey the idea of revealing that which is hidden. The prevalence at Buddhist sites of Dionysian iconography and other non-Buddhist figures probably reflects the values of the newly converted lay community, the patrons for such images, since in Gandhara and many other places where Buddhism spread, local religious traditions were commonly incorporated into Buddhist practice. Given this context, one question that arises is whether the later Buddhist concept of rebirth in a paradise or in a heaven filled with living Buddhas and bodhisattvas has its roots in pre-Buddhist Dionysian traditions that centered on a blissful existence for the dead.

THE KUSHANS

The founding of many of the major Gandharan Buddhist centers can be dated on the basis of numismatic evidence to about the second century A.D.,³⁰ by which time the Kushans, a Central Asian nomadic group, had conquered and unified much of Greater Gandhara and north India. Although there is no evidence that Kushan kings patronized Buddhist establishments, the climate of stability and prosperity within their realm allowed Buddhist communities to flourish and expand in north India and Gandhara. The Kushan dynasty reached the zenith of its power under the great monarchs Kanishka (r. A.D. 129–155), whose reign provides a cornerstone for the chronology of the period, and Huvishka (r. A.D. 155–193).³¹ The center of Kushan power is not known, but shrines glorifying multiple generations of this royal family were established at Surkh Kotal in Afghanistan and at Mat, just outside the north Indian site of Mathura.



30. Coin of Kanishka
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. A.D. 130
Gold, Diam. $\frac{9}{16}$ in. (1.4 cm)
Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.3024)



Reverse of Coin (no. 30)

The Kushans also minted large numbers of coins, which have been found primarily over wide areas in northwest Pakistan and Afghanistan, indicating that this area was likely the locus of their power.³²

A coin of Kanishka in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (no. 30) depicts, on the obverse, the king standing and facing left; he has a full beard and wears a pointed hat and heavy felt coat, a mode of dressing similar to that of Parthian kings, which marks him

as coming from a land outside South Asia. Kanishka reaches out with his right hand to make a sacrifice at a low altar; in his left hand he carries a spear. Flames issue from his right shoulder, indicating his supernatural powers. Kanishka's god-king status is more directly set out in an inscription labeling his image at the dynastic shrine of Mat: "Great King, the King of Kings, the Son of God Kanishka."³³ The reverse of the coin shows a four-armed Shiva, a Hindu god (known

as Oesho in Bactria), who is wearing a *dhoti* (loincloth) and holding a *vajra* (a weapon understood as a thunderbolt), an *ankusa* (elephant goad), a trident, and an antelope by the horns. No aspect of this coin's iconography makes reference to the Buddhist faith, which is especially significant since later Buddhist text sources refer to Kanishka as a great Buddhist king, equal only to Ashoka. Further, even though numerous Buddhist



Figure 12. General view of the main stupa and monastery at Mohra Moradu. Pakistan, Taxila, site founded in late 2nd–3rd century A.D. and abandoned ca. mid-6th century A.D.

images from Mathura are inscribed as being from the era of Kanishka, none was donated by him or others of the Kushan line. Kanishka did mint coins with images of the Buddha on the reverse,³⁴ but he also had coins produced showing a range of other South Asian (Hindu) and Near Eastern deities, associating his portrait with various gods venerated by the people of his realm and by his Near Eastern trading partners.

NARRATIVE RELIEF PANELS

During the reigns of Kanishka and Huvishka, Buddhist sites in Gandhara were gradually developing a more definable architectural identity.³⁵ Beginning in the first and early second centuries A.D., tall columnar stupas on high square bases (fig. 12) had begun to replace the early massive round examples of the second century B.C., such as the main stupa at the Dharmarajika complex (see fig. 10), which were related to north Indian prototypes. In addition,



Figure 13. Stupa shrine at Butkara III. Pakistan, Swat Valley, ca. 2nd–3rd century A.D.

U-shaped apsidal halls, again similar to north Indian examples, were constructed to house much smaller stupas, and over time these, too, took on a rectangular, distinctly Gandharan format: typically with an antechamber leading through a set of doors to a rear cell containing the stupa (fig. 13; the top of the enclosed stupa is just visible beyond the doorway leading in from the antechamber in the foreground). Shrines like these were likely where relics such as the Buddha's alms bowl or skull, as described by the Chinese pilgrims, would have been openly displayed.³⁶

The shift in the architectural character of Gandharan sacred areas indicates that ritual practices within the region were becoming increasingly sophisticated by about the second century A.D. This is the period when the majority of extant Gandharan narrative sculpture was likely produced, as pious Gandharans commissioned thousands of carved-stone reliefs to embellish stupas. Most of these carvings illustrate the life of Shakyamuni with narrative episodes clearly related to the biography of the Buddha known from canonical textual sources. One possible reason for this close reliance on texts is that Gandharan Buddhists did not have direct access to the north Indian oral traditions.³⁷ Scholars have looked to various texts to understand the early Buddhist biographical sculpture of Gandhara;³⁸ a systematic study of the scene order of the reliefs suggests that the source for most of them was the *Abhiniskramana* sutra, which was probably written in mixed Sanskrit but now exists only in a Chinese translation.³⁹ This correlation is intriguing because the *Abhiniskramana* sutra places great emphasis on Buddhas of the past and future, an aspect of Buddhist ideology not nearly as prominent in the other biographical texts and one that becomes, as we shall see, increasingly important to Gandhara Buddhists in later centuries.

Most of the narrative relief panels were affixed to the drums of large and small stupas in sacred areas; the more intact examples are smaller and were likely housed inside rectangular, Gandharan relic shrines. These reliefs were “read” sequentially in a ritual process of walking clockwise around the stupa. A nar-



Figure 14. *Relief Panel with Monks and Lay People*. Pakistan, ca. 2nd century A.D. Schist, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (15 x 19.3 cm). British Museum, London (Asia 1902.10-2.29)

rative panel in the British Museum (fig. 14) shows monks (at left) and a lay couple holding a flaming lamp (at right) circumambulating a stupa. On the stupa it embellished, this panel would have been part of the band of narrative reliefs encircling the drum (fig. 15, zone A). Reliefs were also placed in false gables on the front (zone E) and on the *harmika* (zone C), a square block above the dome that was adorned with four reliefs, each facing one of the cardinal directions. To encircle the drum of a small stupa required about eight to twenty life scenes, which were selected by the patron commissioning the work. Although texts describe the Buddha's life in great detail, only about fifty episodes from the sacred biography are known to have been represented on Gandharan reliefs. From this evidence it would appear that patrons selectively grouped key events in the Buddha's life to lend the monument a specific ideological emphasis. For example, in some stupas the Buddha's birth, childhood, and departure from the palace were stressed, while in other instances patrons

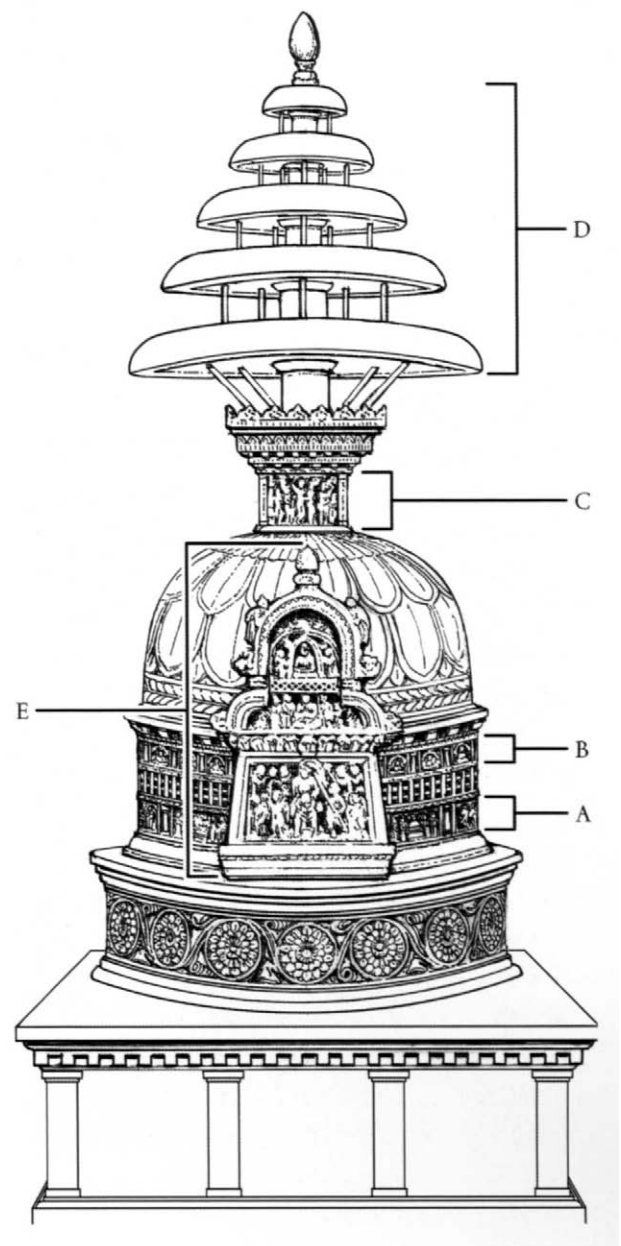


Figure 15. Diagram of a small Gandharan stupa from about the 2nd century A.D., showing typical distribution of sculpture (drawing: Anandaroop Roy, after Behrendt 2004, fig. 8)



31. Relief Panel with the Dipankara Jataka (Megha and the Buddha Dipankara)

Pakistan, Swat Valley, ca. 2nd century A.D.

Schist with gold leaf, $8\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$ in. (22.2 x 21.3 cm)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alan D. Wolfe, in memory of Samuel Eilenberg, 1998 (1998.491)

chose to group together events from after his enlightenment, such as his conversions and miracles.⁴⁰

The narrative of the Buddha's life often begins before the coming of Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, during the life of Dipankara, a past Buddha. At that time, the story relates, there lived a Brahman ascetic named Megha (the Buddha Shakyamuni in a past life), who was perfectly versed in the Vedas and other religious texts. Megha heard that the Buddha Dipankara would be visiting the city of Dipavati and traveled there to meet him. On arriving, Megha went in search of flowers to offer Dipankara, but none were

to be had. Eventually he met a Brahman girl, Prakrti, who had a pitcher of water with seven lotuses. On the condition that Megha would marry her in all future lifetimes, she gave him five of the lotuses. When the Buddha Dipankara approached, Megha threw the five flowers, which hung suspended in the air around the Buddha's halo. This episode, called the Dipankara *jataka*, is clearly visible in a relief in the Metropolitan's collection (no. 31). To the left of the Buddha Dipankara we can see the ascetic Megha holding up a bunch of lotuses; next to him stands Prakrti with her two remaining flowers. The relief conflates three different moments when Megha venerated the Buddha Dipankara. First, as Buddhist texts tell us, as Dipankara approached, the people of the city spread priceless garments on the ground for him to walk on, but Megha had only his deerskin garment. Megha knelt down to spread the deerskin over a muddy spot,

then, as visible in the relief, untied his long hair (the matted locks of an ascetic) so Dipankara could walk without dirtying his feet.⁴¹ Second, some texts say that Megha wiped the soles of the Buddha Dipankara's feet with his hair, which may be indicated in the relief because Megha is grasping the Buddha's ankle. At this climactic moment, Megha said, "And then I prayed that I might in future ages become a Buddha. . . . Then the earth quaked six times, and Dipaṅkara predicted that I should be born as Shākya Muni."⁴² Third, the story ends with Megha rising into the air—the figure in the top left of the relief—where he clasps his hands in *anjali mudra*, the gesture of respect and reverence, and venerates the Buddha for the third time. Long after Dipankara and his teaching of the dharma had been forgotten and the ascetic Megha had gone through countless rebirths, Megha was finally reborn as Shakyamuni. The Dipankara story can thus be understood as the first action of Shakyamuni in his quest for enlightenment. The other panels around the stupa would have recounted the final lifetime of the Buddha Shakyamuni that led to his enlightenment, his conversion of others, and, ultimately, his death.

The greenish schist of the Metropolitan's Dipankara relief and certain aspects of its style and sculptural technique indicate that it was made in the Swat Valley. Only Swat reliefs were made with a bracketing system that involved the undercutting of figures—in the Museum's panel, the leftmost figure—to accommodate the tongue of the next piece. This gives the reliefs the appearance of having a figure hanging off the edge of the panel. The reliefs from Swat show affinities with north Indian sculpture and with the Indo-Parthian style. Dipankara appears in many reliefs from Gandhara, but only in those made in Swat is Megha shown actually touching this past Buddha; indeed, this is one of the rare instances in South Asian art in which physical contact with a Buddha is depicted. If it were not for specific narrative details, especially the flowers in the halo, there would be no way to distinguish the Buddha as Dipankara, since he looks like any other Buddha. In the upper right of the relief is the figure of Vajrapani holding his hourglass-shaped *vajra*. Vajrapani is consistently

shown attending the Buddha (whether Dipankara or Shakyamuni); he was probably understood as a protective deity because in some instances he has a muscle-bound body like that of Heracles. His presence is enigmatic, however, because he does not appear in text accounts; he is known only from reliefs, where he never participates in the narrative story.⁴³

The story of Megha's meeting the Buddha Dipankara was particularly important to Greater Gandharan Buddhists because the event was thought to have occurred near the Buddhist site of Hadda, in Afghanistan. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang visited the site in the seventh century A.D. and described seeing there a small stupa of great antiquity that marked the spot where Megha prostrated himself before Dipankara and received the prediction of Buddhahood. Xuanzang told of miraculous showers of flowers that descended on the muddy spot on fasting days. He also chronicled a three-hundred-foot-high stone stupa embellished with marvelous sculpture, built at the behest of Ashoka to commemorate Megha meeting Dipankara. Not far away, another stupa marked the place where the five lotuses were acquired.⁴⁴ Because Greater Gandhara was so far from the Ganges basin, where the Buddha actually lived, the importance of having a site made sacred by the actions of the past Buddha, Dipankara, and the Buddha-to-be, Megha, cannot be underestimated. The multiple monuments described by Xuanzang might even indicate that this site was favored for local pilgrimage. The significance of Dipankara for the Greater Gandharan community is well attested in the many narrative sculptural depictions of this event and in later large-scale devotional icons of Dipankara.

The story of the Buddha's life continues with Shakyamuni residing in Tushita heaven—following many lifetimes of meritorious actions—preparing for his final birth. After much consideration, he chose to "descend, and in a spiritual manner enter the womb of Queen Māya."⁴⁵ This moment is the subject of a relief in the Metropolitan's collection (no. 32), where Maya is depicted sleeping on her left side on a wood bed with turned legs, and covered with an elegant floral textile.⁴⁶ She is surrounded by female attendants;



32. *Relief Panel with the Dream of Queen Maya*
(The Buddha's Conception)
 Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
 ca. 2nd century A.D.
 Schist, 6½ x 7⅞ in. (16.5 x 19.4 cm)
 Gift of Marie-Hélène and Guy Weill, 1976 (1976.402)

even the guard holding a sword is a woman, judging by the garments and jewelry. Above Maya is a broken disk that originally would have shown an elephant framed in a circular halo: a reference to the text of the *Abhiniskramana* sutra, which tells us that in Maya's dream "she thought she saw a six tusked white elephant . . . descend thro' space and enter her right side."⁴⁷ The fact that Shakyamuni entered Maya's womb in a miraculous way fits well with the understanding that he is a being who was not conceived normally. This scene is one of the most popular stories of Shakyamuni's life to be depicted. As it shows Shakyamuni's physical entrance into the world—in

essence, the origins of the body that remained behind after the Buddha, perfect and enlightened, had died—it is also key to understanding why relics were central to early devotional practice. Indeed, this relief was attached to a stupa that likely contained a portion of these physical relics.

The relief of Maya's dream is carved from a type of black schist used in the Peshawar basin in ancient Gandhara. In terms of style, it is markedly different from that seen in the *Dipankara* panel from Swat. Here the figures and garments are similar to Roman styles, not north Indian or Indo-Parthian, as in the Swat panel. This is especially evident in the naturalistic treatment of Maya and her attendants as well as in the classical treatment of the drapery. Yet the Gandharan artist was careful to indicate the north Indian setting for this event through the specific types of garments and jewelry worn. In other words, here we see north Indian forms executed in a "classical"



33. *Relief Panel with the Birth of the Buddha Shakyamuni*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 2nd century A.D.
Schist, 6¹⁵/₁₆ x 7³/₄ in. (16 x 19.7 cm)
Gift of The Kronos Collections, 1987 (1987.417.1)

Gandharan style. Such a relief would have been framed by architectural moldings (note the tenons visible at the top) and likely separated from the next panel by some variant of a Corinthian column (see no. 37).

At the end of her pregnancy, Maya went to visit her father, who had prepared a reception for her in the gardens of Lumbini. She stopped to rest under a tree, often said to be a *sala* (texts do not agree on the type), which of its own accord bent down so that Maya could grasp a branch with her right hand. Then Shakyamuni, in the womb, “perceiving his mother, Māya, standing thus with the branch in her hand, then with conscious mind arose from his seat and was

born.” Like his conception, the Buddha’s birth takes on miraculous qualities, for Shakyamuni was delivered from Maya’s right side and immediately spoke: “I have arrived at my last birth; no more shall I enter into the womb to be born; now shall I accomplish the end of my being, and become Buddha.”⁴⁸ The depiction of this event in a relief in the Metropolitan’s collection (no. 33) corresponds remarkably to the textual accounts. Maya stands, holding the tree branch, and the baby Shakyamuni emerges from her side. The carving of the infant is damaged, but the form of his body and his halo are visible at Maya’s elbow. Ready to receive the baby with a fine piece of cloth is a turbaned figure who in other reliefs can be identified as the god Indra. Two female figures attend Maya; one holds a water pot.

In Gandhara the figure of Maya was conflated with the north Indian *yakshis*, female goddesses who were venerated to ensure agricultural abundance



Figure 16. *Yakshi*. North India, Sanchi, from the east gateway of stupa 1, ca. 25 B.C.—A.D. 25. Stone

and, as a result, were important to the lay community.⁴⁹ Note how Maya's pose in the relief—she is holding the tree branch and crossing her ankles—is similar to that of a *yakshi* on a gateway to stupa I at Sanchi (fig. 16), who reaches up and grabs a branch, causing the tree to flower with the kick of her foot. In this sense, Maya, as mother of the Buddha, is presented as the bringer of agricultural prosperity, a role not easily attributed to the Buddha himself. This panel is from the same set of reliefs as the one of Maya's dream (no. 32); they are carved from the same type of stone, they share a common scale, and they have similar tenons and identical bases. Moreover, they are stylistically akin, visible especially in the way the female attendants are depicted and in the close similarities of Maya's face.

The narrative cycles that embellish Gandharan stupa drums often document Shakyamuni's youth, placing great emphasis on his life in the palace and his departure into the world. His enlightenment

is rarely included, however, possibly because the stupa itself intrinsically conveyed that meaning. (It does appear in the false gables of the stupa—the large trilobed panels on the face [see fig. 15, zone E]—and in the *harmika* reliefs.) After the enlightenment, the next pivotal event in the life of the Buddha Shakyamuni was his first sermon, delivered at a deer park in Sarnath, where he set the wheel of the law (dharma) in motion. The Buddha is said to have considered the question of who, among all living beings, was in a condition to first hear the principles of the dharma. According to the *Abhiniskramana* sutra, the Buddha approached the five ascetics with whom he had lived and practiced yoga and self-mortification before realizing that it was, instead, a middle path of neither indulgence nor renunciation that would lead him to enlightenment. The five were initially scornful, but Shakyamuni, defending his abandonment of ascetic practices, told them that they should “Mock not . . . saying that he [Shakyamuni] became weary of his bodily discipline, or that he has lost his power of meditation; whereas, in fact, he has attained a condition of Supreme Enlightenment, and is ready to instruct you in the way of life.”⁵⁰ At this point the ascetics donned Buddhist robes and cut their long hair so as to be fit monastic followers of the Buddha.

The selection and conversion of the ascetics as the first monks was particularly significant, because ascetic religious groups were in competition with the Buddhists for followers. In another relief panel from a stupa (no. 34), we see the five ascetics, dressed as monks, flanking the Buddha, who sits on a throne with two deer on its base, indicating the deer park where the teachings were revealed. To the Buddha's right, balancing the composition, stands a sixth figure, which may represent the donor. The Buddha reaches down with his right hand and turns a wheel, familiar symbol of the teachings, or dharma. After the Buddha sets the wheel in motion, it continues to spin, and the teachings radiate in all directions, like spokes, from Sarnath at the hub. These first converts and the Buddha himself traveled out from the deer park spreading the dharma and, in the case of the Buddha, performing miracles.



34. *Relief Panel with the Buddha's First Sermon*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 2nd century A.D.
Schist, 11¼ x 12¾ in. (28.6 x 32.4 cm)
Gift of Daniel Slott, 1980 (1980.527.4)

In various versions of the Mahaparinirvana sutra, the texts tell us that when the Buddha was eighty he ate a bad meal near the city of Kushinagara, fell ill, lay down between two trees with his head pointed north, and died. The death of the Buddha, or *parinirvana*, was extremely important to Gandharan Buddhists because, although the Buddha had reached a state of enlightenment in the middle of his life, at the moment of his death he ceased to exist and entered nirvana. At this point his body—the relics—became available for veneration. Gandharan narrative sculpture often depicts the Buddha's cremation, the divi-

sion of the relics, and their transport to the stupas where they were ultimately enshrined and venerated (see fig. 14). The stupa itself probably always symbolized the Buddha's death, but the concept of representing the moment of ultimate transcendence (nirvana) through a narrative image became increasingly important beginning in the second century A.D.⁵¹

The death of the Buddha is the subject of one of the schist panels in the Museum's collection (no. 35). The Buddha Shakyamuni lies on his right side, his haloed head rests on a cushion, and his body and feet are enveloped in his robe. His bedcover is an elegant textile similar to the one on which Maya lies in number 32. The monk on his hands and knees in front of the bed is usually identified as Ananda, a disciple who always traveled with the Buddha and who is credited as the only follower to have heard the complete



35. *Harmika Relief Panel with the Death of the Buddha (Parinirvana)*
 Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara, ca. 2nd–4th century A.D.
 Schist, 26 x 26 in. (66 x 66 cm)
 Lent by Florence and Herbert Irving (L.1993.69.4)



36. Relief with Two Buddhas

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
2nd–3rd century A.D.
Schist, 9 x 15¾ in. (22.9 x 40 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.24)

doctrine. Behind the bed is a group of lay mourners reacting with visible emotion to the Buddha's death; one holds his hands to the sides of his face, one clasps his hands over his bowed head, and one holds his shoulders. Such displays of emotion are absent in Gandharan art except in representations of the *parinirvana*. The reaction of these mourners contrasts with that of the Buddha's last convert, Subhadra, seen at the lower right; he sits with his back toward us, looking on at Shakyamuni without demonstration of grief, since he realizes that the Buddha has reached nirvana. Subhadra was an ascetic, like the initial converts at the first sermon, as indicated by his tripod with a suspended water sack.³² At the feet of Shakyamuni is another monk, sometimes identified as Anuruddha, who holds his hands up in *anjali mudra*; in other reliefs this monk is shown touching the feet of the Buddha. It may be significant that, at the beginning of the narrative cycle, the Buddha Dipankara is touched in much the same way as the Buddha Shakyamuni is at his death. This possibly relates to

Shakyamuni's physical presence (his relics) or, in the case of Dipankara, to his former presence in this world.

Although depictions of the death of the Buddha are common elements of the narrative cycle encircling stupa drums, the Metropolitan's *paranirvana* relief was originally positioned above the stupa dome, in the *harmika* (see fig. 15, zone C). Note how the figures were foreshortened to accommodate their being seen from below; the Buddha's body leans forward, and the oversize mourning figures come into proper alignment only when seen from this angle, suggesting it was placed high on a main stupa. In depictions of stupas flowers typically embellish the four sides of the *harmika*, but considerable sculptural evidence indicates that a set of four narrative scenes—usually the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death—occupied this location. Narrative depictions were placed in *harmika* panels from about the second to the fourth century A.D., a considerably longer time span than the hundred years or so (in about the second century A.D.) when narrative panels were being produced to encircle stupa drums. Number 35 is nearly twice the size of even the largest narrative drum panels; it also has the characteristic square, or nearly square, format typical of *harmika* reliefs (the



37. *Relief with the Buddha Sitting under the Bodhi Tree, Flanked by Worshippers*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
2nd–3rd century A.D.
Schist, $7\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in. (18.4 x 19.1 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.28)

left side is partially broken away), whereas those that encircled drums are rectangular. In some cases *harmika* scenes were carved on the four faces of a single block of stone; in others, four interlocking square slabs were used. On the latter, the corner pilasters bracketing the reliefs were sculpted on two sides to accommodate the right-angle transition to the next slab. These characteristics, together with their interlocking attachments, make these panels easy to identify.

Often small stupas were embellished around the upper part of the drum (see fig. 15, zone B) with non-narrative rows of Buddhas sitting under arches. In these reliefs, multiple representations of the Buddha Shakyamuni are frequently shown seated on low thrones in a state of meditation (no. 36). Occasionally such rows of Buddhas were subdivided into individual

panels, leading some scholars to misinterpret them as being part of the narrative cycle. Instead, these images were likely commenting on the meaning of the stupa as a whole, in a sense giving a manifest form to the radiating power of the enshrined relic at the stupa's core.⁵³ The Buddha in number 37, one of a group that would have encircled the upper drum, has a more specific iconography than do the two shown in number 36; he holds his hand in *abhaya mudra*, a gesture of approachability, and sits under the *bodhi* tree, characteristics suggesting that this is a representation of his enlightenment.⁵⁴ It is possible to interpret this relief as showing gods entreating the Buddha to preach, but the worshippers flanking him have neither halos nor other attributes of divine beings, and thus the scene is not part of the traditional enlightenment narrative. Rather, the group to which this relief belonged expressed a generalized idea of the Buddha's enlightenment, as did the meditating Buddhas under arches in number 36. As such, these images are undoubtedly related to—and anticipate—the later, large-scale devotional icons in which the Buddha, presented



38. *Garuda Vanquishing the Naga Clan*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 2nd–3rd century A.D.
Schist, H. 13 1/8 in. (33.3 cm)
Purchase, Bernice Richard Gift, 1980 (1980.325)

hierarchically, faces the viewer from within a symmetrical composition. Here, however, the viewer was confronted with a row of Buddhas of equal size, and thus no single icon was emphasized for purposes of personal devotion; the stupa as a whole served that function.

Some Gandharan sculptures from this period are difficult to place in an architectural context, but they would undoubtedly have embellished the sacred area in some way. In number 38, a large, eagle-like bird bears down on a woman and two men. This representation can likely be identified as a *garuda*, vanquisher of serpents, attacking a clan of *nagas*, or serpent deities.

In the *garuda*'s beak is the hooded head of a *naga* (depicted here as a cobra); the figures below can possibly be understood as personified *nagas*. The voluptuous woman, who wears north Indian garments and jewelry, turns her head to look up, while the male figure to her right prepares to throw a rope. Both of the men are clad in acanthus-leaf skirts that grow from their waists, similar to those worn by the marine deities in the stair riser (no. 26), perhaps indicating that they are water-dwelling *nagas*. Many *nagas* are mythically credited with living in the region of Gandhara, so this iconography is not surprising, even if it cannot be related to a specific Buddhist context.⁵⁵

1. The dates for the Buddha's life have recently been debated; see Bechert 1995.
2. He is credited with doing so in the legends of his life, recorded later in the Ashokavadana. Versions of the Ashokavadana date to the fifth to sixteenth century A.D., the fifth-century Sri Lankan Mahavamsa providing crucial evidence; see Strong 1983, pp. 18–21, 109. For a discussion of relic traditions in India, see Strong 2004.
3. An inscribed Ashokan pillar stands true south of Sanchi stupa I; see Marshall, Foucher, and Majumdar 1940, pp. 25–29; also Willis 2000.
4. Butkara II is a prehistoric site; Butkara III is a small adjacent Buddhist site probably founded in the first or second century A.D. Butkara I can be dated on the basis of coin finds at the site; Faccenna 1980–81, pt. 1, pp. 32–45, 57, 115–18. See also Errington 2000, p. 192; Behrendt 2004, p. 49.
5. Dating of the Dharmarajika complex is also based on coin finds; see Marshall 1951, vol. 1, p. 277; Errington 2000, p. 192.
6. Translation from Salomon and Schopen 1984, pp. 108–9.
7. "Donation of Ramaka, son of Mahasrava. (Donation) of Ramaka, son of Mahasrava, inhabitant of the village of Kamti. From him (come) the relics. The relics are abundantly deposited. All those who are worthy to be honored are honored." English translation by Steven Kossak (in Lerner and Kossak 1991, p. 76), from the French translation by Gérard Fussman (1980, p. 5). As noted by Steven Kossak (in Lerner and Kossak 1991, p. 77, n. 1), Fussman's use of the word "abundantly (*avec abondance*)" makes little sense here; it is translated by Bailey (1978, p. 4) as "reverently(?)." For an analysis of the scholarship on this inscription, see Salomon and Schopen 1984.
8. Salomon 1982, p. 67.
9. Salomon and Schopen 1984, pp. 116–17.
10. Some scholars have suggested that the relics of the Buddha were buried within a stupa much like the bodies of some

- ancient kings. In the Mahaparinirvana sutra, the Buddha says that he should be cremated and that his remains should be placed in a stupa-mound at a crossroads like those of a *chakravartin* king (universal monarch). Roth 1980, p. 183.
11. Brown 2006.
12. Schopen 1987 (1997 ed.), pp. 125–28.
13. Strong 1977.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 394–99.
15. Salomon 1997, p. 366.
16. Mac Dowall 1990.
17. Salomon 1997, p. 365.
18. Faxian 1884, p. xxxiii; Xuanzang 1884, vol. 1, pp. 95–97; Kuwayama 1990, p. 946; Behrendt 2003, pp. 78–79.
19. A set of garland holders can be seen attached to the dome of a round stupa from near the fort of Chakdara in Swat. Unfortunately, this stupa is known only from photographs taken in 1880 and a published plan; for these, see Foucher 1905–18, vol. 1, pp. 67–69, figs. 10–12.
20. The inscription reads: "Presented by Sarvatrāta in the Vihāra, in honour of his mother and father, Devadatta." Translation from Marshall 1951, vol. 2, p. 702, no. 11. The garland holder can be dated to about A.D. 30–40 based on the paleography of the inscription, the garland holder's recovery in stratum II, and its style; see Marshall 1951, vol. 2, p. 702, no. 11, vol. 3, pl. 213, no. 11.
21. Fabrègues 1987.
22. Taddei 1999b.
23. For a discussion of how these stair risers can be reconstructed and the scenes identified, see Errington 1987, pp. 246–51; Behrendt 2004, p. 199.
24. The other components of the set are scattered among museums in North America, Europe, and Pakistan. The stair risers and triangular panels are stylistically similar to reliefs from the Swat site of Andandheri; see Errington 1987, p. 125.

25. See Rowland 1956, p. 9.
26. Numbers of scholars have commented on these reliefs; for bibliographies, see Czuma 1985, pp. 172–77; Errington and Cribb 1992, pp. 125–27.
27. Carter 1992; Tanabe 2003.
28. Faccenna 1962–64, pt. 3, pl. CCCXCV, a, inv. no. 4350.
29. Steven Kossak, in Lerner and Kossak 1991, pp. 66–67, no. 27.
30. See Errington 2000, pp. 194–96.
31. Falk 2001. For a discussion of Kushan dynastic history, see Rosenfield 1967.
32. The recently discovered Rabatak inscription from Afghanistan, which provides a list of Kushan rulers, has contributed greatly to our understanding of the dynastic chronology of the Kushans; see Cribb 1999.
33. See Lüders 1961, p. 134.
34. Cribb 1984.
35. As noted earlier, our knowledge of the urban architecture of this and later periods is unfortunately limited because archaeological excavations have been carried out only at Buddhist centers.
36. Behrendt 2004, chaps. 3–5.
37. The inscription on Indravarman's A.D. 5–6 reliquary (no. 19), for example, quotes a Buddhist text, an indication that a canon of Gandharan Buddhist writings had been forming at that time. Salomon and Schopen 1984, p. 120.
38. These include texts such as the *Lalitavistara* of the Sarvastivadin school, the *Mahavastu* text of the Mahasanghikas school, and the *Buddhacarita*, composed by the poet Asvaghosa.
39. The *Abhiniskramana* sutra was compiled by the Dharmaguptakas, a sect of Buddhism in Gandhara. The Buddha's death and the subsequent enshrinement of his relics appear to follow some version of the *Mahaparinirvana* sutra; see Miyaji 1992.
40. Behrendt 2004, chap. 5. Excavation of Saidu, in Swat, uncovered a set of late-first-century-A.D. narratives that encircled the drum of the main stupa; Faccenna 2001, pp. 27–30. This evidence, along with a reassessment of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century photographs, has provided guidance for ordering and grouping many loose panels; these discoveries have, in turn, shed light on the nature of second-century Gandharan Buddhism; see Behrendt 2005.
41. On this relief from the Swat Valley, only Dipankara's hair is represented, but another Swat relief, from Butkara I, shows the deerskin; see Faccenna 1962–64, pt. 2, pl. XLIII, a, inv. no. 2533.
42. Beal 1875, p. 11.
43. Dehejia 1997, app. 4, pp. 287–89.
44. Watters 1904–5, vol. 1, pp. 183–84.
45. Beal 1875, p. 36.
46. Srinivasan 2006.
47. Beal 1875, p. 37.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44; see also Zwalf 1996, vol. 1, pp. 148–49.
49. Coomaraswamy 1993, pp. 85–86.
50. Beal 1875, p. 250.
51. By the late fifth century A.D., monumental devotional sculptures of the *parinirvana* were appearing in sacred areas in Greater Gandhara, in Central Asia, in western China, in the Ganges basin in north India, and in the western Indian cave temples.
52. For a discussion of asceticism in Gandhara, see Brancaccio 1994; Brancaccio 1999.
53. Brancaccio 2006.
54. The panel in number 37 can be related to a specific workshop that produced many narrative sculptures that share certain motifs as well as a distinct style, especially the form of the Corinthian columns and the projecting serrated upper molding. See Archaeological Survey of India, Northwest Frontier Province, British Library, London, photograph nos. 221, 337, 427, 1183; Lyons and Ingholt 1957, nos. 80, 90, 114; Zwalf 1996, nos. 131, 183, 190, 214, 272, 273, 275.
55. Czuma 1985, p. 182, no. 95.



THE EMERGENCE OF DEVOTIONAL BUDDHA AND BODHISATTVA SCULPTURES

The production of devotional images of the Buddha—nonnarrative icons that were venerated by both the lay and the monastic communities as part of religious practice—probably began sometime in the late second century A.D., but certainly by the beginning of the third century. The appearance of these icons appears to have occurred in conjunction with a decline in the popularity of narrative depictions, almost all of which illustrate the sacred biography of the Buddha. This shift has often been seen as marking a transition in Buddhist ideology from the earlier Nikaya (or “Hinayana”) schools, which emphasized the veneration of relics, to later Mahayana practices centered on the veneration of images of bodhisattvas and cosmic Buddhas. The origin and meaning of the earliest iconic images of the Buddha Shakyamuni have thus been the subjects of much debate, complicating our understanding of how such images arose.¹

We can deduce from the organization of Gandharan Buddhist sacred areas, and especially from the distribution of donor-commissioned sacred structures, that the relics were the primary focus of veneration, not the embellishing sculpture.² Early Gandharan imagery, whether narrative or iconic, was commissioned to glorify the Buddha’s perceived physical presence at these sacred centers—the relics housed in the stupas—and thus equating the earliest iconic imagery with the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism, in which the iconic images themselves are often ven-

erated, is probably not possible. Moreover, the first representations of the Buddha were likely understood differently from region to region, with the lay and monastic communities having a range of views about how to use and understand such imagery.

Some of the coins minted by the Kushan king Kanishka, who came to power in A.D. 129, include images of the Buddha,³ suggesting that anthropomorphic representations of Shakyamuni existed before Kanishka’s time. In fact, such coins have been seen as an indication that, by Kanishka’s reign, anthropomorphic images of the Buddha must have been dispersed throughout the Kushan kingdom, including in Gandhara. In north India, in and around the city of Mathura, a significant number of devotional icons of the Buddha Shakyamuni were sculpted in a red mottled sandstone in the mid-second century A.D. (their chronology can be established on the basis of inscriptions dated to Kanishka’s era). The Buddha Shakyamuni in figure 18, for example, which is dated A.D. 161 and is from the site of Ahicchatra in Uttar Pradesh, sits in a posture of meditation, holding his hand in *abhaya mudra*; his head is framed by a halo ringed by the *bodhi* tree, an indication that the scene represents the moment of enlightenment. Although the tree signifies a specific moment within the Buddha’s biography, this is not a narrative image; instead, the iconic status of the Buddha as an enlightened being is emphasized by the symmetry of the composition and the larger scale of the figure of the Buddha compared with those of the smaller attendants (Vajrapani, at left, and a figure holding flowers,

Figure 17. Detail of *Bust of the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni* (no. 41)



Figure 18. *Seated Buddha Shakyamuni*. North India, from the site of Ahicchatra, inscription specifies the year 32 of Kanishka (A.D. 161). Red mottled sandstone, H. 28¾ in. (73 cm). National Museum, New Delhi (L55.25)

at right) and the two gods flying above the halo.⁴ Since no Buddhist sites were excavated in Mathura, we lack an architectural context for the dated images found there. In contrast, more sculptural and architectural material survives from Gandhara, but we have no means of assigning the imagery an absolute date, and so its chronological development can only be inferred. We also know little about the relationship between Mathuran devotional icons and those produced in Gandhara. Mathuran and Gandharan sculptural styles were different, but there was undoubtedly interaction between these Kushan Buddhist centers, and works from one region have been found at the other.⁵

A sculpture in the Metropolitan's collection that is particularly important to the debate surrounding the development of devotional imagery in Gandhara is a bronze representation of the Buddha Shakyamuni (no. 39). This relatively small statue has traces of gild-

ing in the halo and robes, so it would originally have looked quite different from the way it does now. The Buddha is shown seated in a yogic posture, holding his hand in *abhaya mudra*, and the halo surrounding his head has serrations that indicate radiating light. His robe falls in gentle folds and covers both shoulders, unlike the Mathuran image, in which the fabric covers only one shoulder. The Mathuran seated Buddha exposes and calls attention to Shakyamuni's perfect and enlightened body, whereas the Gandharan sculpture emphasizes the drapery.

It is possible that the Gandharan statuette of Shakyamuni dates to as early as the first century A.D., judging by what some scholars have described as its "raw and unassimilated" Greco-Roman influence; indeed, the figure shows numerous connections with Roman imperial portraits of the first century A.D., especially those of Nero, in its close-set eyes, prominent ears, and forward-combed hair that falls in a C shape of curls across the forehead.⁶ By the first century A.D. Gandharan artists had been working in classical styles for more than three hundred years, however, so it is problematic to date the sculpture solely on this basis. Moreover, the portrait form that evidently influenced the creation of this statue might have been centuries old by the time it reached Gandhara. Yet there are other aspects of the image that do suggest that it was made in the first or second century A.D. First, the serrated halo is found on coins minted from about the first century B.C. to the third century A.D., but it is not seen in other Gandharan images of the Buddha, indicating that it was made in an earlier period, during what was perhaps a time of experimentation.⁷ Second, the Gandharan Buddha and the dated Mathuran Buddha have some specific features in common; for example, the lotuses on the hands and feet of the Gandharan Buddha correspond

39. *Seated Buddha*

Pakistan or Afghanistan, ancient region of Gandhara, 1st–2nd century A.D.

Bronze with traces of gold leaf, H. 6⅝ in. (11.4 cm)

Gift of Muneichi Nitta, 2003 (2003.593.1)





Back of *Seated Buddha* (no. 39)

to the wheels and *triratna* (three jewels) on the hands and feet of the Mathuran image, something rarely seen in other Gandharan images. The artist who created the bronze Gandharan Buddha also reversed the feet, a mistake unlikely to have been made in a period when the production of Buddha images was well established and widespread. For these reasons, it seems likely that this sculpture is an example of Gandharan production that probably dates to no later than the mid-second century A.D., or to about the same time as the Mathuran example.⁸ It should be noted, however, that the stylistic origins of the Gandharan Buddha appear to be very different from that of the devotional icons produced in the Mathura region, where images of *yakshas* (male protective deities) laid the groundwork for the emergence of iconic Buddha images.⁹

Comparing the Metropolitan's seated bronze Buddha with those depicted in Gandharan narrative reliefs—such as the Buddha delivering the first sermon in number 34, which shows a developed notion of the Buddha image—raises the question of whether the earliest anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha made in Gandhara were iconic or narrative. If Gandharan anthropomorphic images of the Buddha first developed in narrative contexts, and the idea of iconic imagery emerged from that core, then this small seated bronze, which seems to have been



Figure 19. View of interlocking shrines at the site of Takht-i-bahi, Pakistan. Schist masonry. The smallest shrine (left) dates to ca. 3rd century A.D.; the largest shrine (far right) probably dates to the 4th or early 5th century A.D.

produced at about this crucial moment, may be one of the earliest surviving Gandharan devotional icons.

One approach to tracing the chronology of Gandharan devotional imagery is to consider their architectural context. Although almost no Gandharan sculpture has been found in its original position, hundreds of image shrines in sacred areas can be dated broadly on the basis of archaeological and numismatic evidence (see fig. 27).¹⁰ Image shrines were usually added one at a time to sacred areas—apparently by different donors, since they are heterogeneous—and at many sites it is still possible to reconstruct their building sequence either because one shrine overlaps the foundation of the next or an existing wall was used for part of its superstructure (fig. 19). Most image shrines appear to have been oriented facing the main stupa, defining the boundaries of the public sacred area; image shrines were also placed along passageways leading into the sacred area and at other prominent locations to create a dramatic effect for the worshipper approaching the main stupa, suggesting that their primary role was to glorify or give manifest form to the enlightened remains of the Buddha.¹¹ The distribution of the image shrines helps us to understand how a devotee would have moved through the site, and their chronological development can generally be observed in Greater Gandhara, where small image shrines (such as those at left in fig. 19), gradually gave way to larger shrines (visible at right in fig. 19) and, ultimately, to massive chapels (see fig. 30).

A twenty-inch standing Buddha at the Metropolitan Museum (no. 40) could date to about the third century A.D., to the same period as some of the smallest image shrines in Gandhara. Aside from the figure's size, the best argument for a third-century date is the simplicity of its iconography and presentation. The Buddha has a plain halo, a small *urna* (the third eye, which looks inward) on his forehead, and wavy hair that covers his low *ushnisha* (cranial protuberance associated with his enlightenment). This Buddha's arms are broken off, but his right hand would have been in *abhaya mudra*, a gesture common in the early narrative reliefs but also popular throughout Gandharan



40. *Standing Buddha Shakyamuni*
Pakistan, ca. 3rd century A.D.
Schist, 20 in. (50.8 cm)
Bequest of Adra M. Newell, 1966 (67.154.5)



41. *Bust of the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 3rd–4th century A.D.
Schist, H. 18¼ in. (46.4 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Ex Coll.: Columbia
University, Anonymous Gift and Rogers Fund, 1987
(1987.218.10)

production. The left hand likely held the edge of his robe, which covers his body fully. The underskirt that would have wrapped around his waist is visible at the lower edge and around his right leg. The monastic robes indicate a representation of the Buddha Shakyamuni in the period following his enlightenment, but no specific narrative moment is signaled.

The next four works we shall examine are all representations of bodhisattvas. In later Buddhism, a bodhisattva is conceptualized as one who reaches enlightenment but, forsaking nirvana, chooses to remain in this realm of existence to help others achieve enlightenment. Yet in early Buddhist texts, the term *bodhisattva* is used more generally to refer to Shakyamuni in the period before he reached enlightenment. Accordingly, in narrative reliefs the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni is depicted as living in a palace and wearing the jewelry, turban, and garments of a prince. Gandharan narrative reliefs showing Shakyamuni's life in the palace and his departure from it are more numerous than those from any other portion of the Buddha's biography, implying the importance of this subject to worshippers. Devotional images of the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni are the iconic version of this moment: when he broke free from material attachments to the world. In the *Abhiniskramana* sutra, Shakyamuni, considering leaving the palace, says, "It is only the fool who is deceived by the outward show of beauty; for where is the beauty when the decorations of the person are taken away, the jewels removed, the gaudy dress laid aside, the flowers and chaplets withered and dead? The wise man, seeing the vanity of all such fictitious charms, regards them as a dream, a mirage, a phantasy."¹² Devotional icons of Shakyamuni as a bodhisattva thus appear to refer to life's transient nature and to the need to break free from attachment to material things. Such images present Shakyamuni as the ultimate prince (the highest possible rebirth), and he is depicted in his full glory prior to the act of renunciation.

A mustached bust most likely of the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni (no. 41) shows him wearing the sumptuous textiles of a north Indian prince, clearly distin-

guishing him from the monastic conception of the enlightened Buddha. That he is probably Shakyamuni is further emphasized by his jeweled turban embellished with lions, *makaras* (auspicious water creatures), and ropes of gems (fig. 17), iconography also seen in narrative reliefs in which his identity is certain. He wears lion earrings, a wide torque, elaborate necklaces, a string of amulets, and jeweled armlets, the outline of the one on his left arm visible through the cloth of his garment. A centerpiece for the turban, now missing, would have been attached to the flange above the turban's main gem. The large, plain halo refers to Shakyamuni's forthcoming enlightenment and marks him as a godlike being, or at least as one who inhabited the heavens prior to his final rebirth. Although this kind of a depiction relates to the earlier narrative tradition, techniques such as undercutting—which separates the earlobes and a section of the rope of gems under Shakyamuni's right arm from the underlying stone—indicate that this image likely dates to the fourth century A.D., since undercutting is not observed in the narrative reliefs or in the earliest devotional icons.

The other bodhisattva often depicted among the early devotional icons is Maitreya, the last in the line of historical Buddhas, who, it is believed, will be reborn in the future. Many Buddhist texts, including the *Abhiniskramana* sutra, tell us that in past ages Buddhas such as Dipankara revealed the dharma, and that gradually their teachings were forgotten and their relics lost. Subsequent historical Buddhas were born, leading ultimately to Shakyamuni, the Buddha of the current age. In some future time, when Shakyamuni is no longer remembered, Maitreya will be born, and, like Shakyamuni and the previous Buddhas, Maitreya will have a miraculous birth, live in a palace, reach enlightenment, reveal the dharma, and die, leaving a trace of his enlightenment in the form of relics. Unlike the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni, Maitreya was thought of as a living presence residing in Tushita heaven, waiting for his final rebirth. Thus the veneration of Maitreya's image provides access to a Buddhist deity without reliance on bodily relics: an important insight into the evolution of a Buddhist



42. *Standing Bodhisattva Maitreya*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 3rd century A.D.
Schist, H. 31¾ in. (80.6 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.17)



43. *Standing Bodhisattva Maitreya*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 3rd century A.D.
Schist, H. 23¼ in. (59.1 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.16)



44. *Standing Bodhisattva Maitreya*

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,

ca. 3rd century A.D.

Schist, H. 64¼ in. (163.2 cm)

Purchase, Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust
Gift, 1991 (1991.75)

tradition that focused on the veneration of devotional icons. (The base of number 40, for example [see fig. 23], shows two figures, likely the donors of the piece, in perpetual veneration of an image of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.) Nevertheless, the earliest bodhisattvas found in Gandharan contexts derived their legitimacy from the Buddha Shakyamuni, either by representing him as a bodhisattva prior to his enlightenment or, in the case of Maitreya, as his conceptual successor.¹³

The identification of certain images as Maitreya is largely based on a flask that he can be seen holding in his left hand, although this correlation is somewhat controversial.¹⁴ In an image base from Takht-i-bahi dating to the third to fifth century A.D. (fig. 20), we see a row of the seven past Buddhas, the seventh from the left being Shakyamuni; the eighth figure, a bodhisattva, is shown holding a flask. In this context, the bodhisattva can unquestionably be identified as Maitreya because of his position in the sequence of the past Buddhas, strongly suggesting that earlier representations of a flask-holding bodhisattva are also depictions of Maitreya. The precise meaning of the flask is unclear, but it is significant that when Megha (Shakyamuni in a past life) meets the Buddha Dipankara (see no. 31), he too holds a flask, perhaps a portent of his future enlightenment.¹⁵

Two standing figures of the Bodhisattva Maitreya in the Museum's collection (nos. 42, 43) are both similar to the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni in number 41, except that Maitreya, whose elegant attire and jewelry mark his status as one residing in heaven, does not wear a turban. In number 42, Maitreya holds a jeweled flask in his left hand; the left arm is broken off of number 43, but the forearm is clearly bending downward, as though extended to grasp the water flask, and the remains of a stone support for the flask

emerge from the left thigh. Both images can be dated to about the third century A.D. on the basis of their relatively small size and, in the case of number 43, the depiction on the base of the Buddha's alms bowl (see fig. 22), which is not seen in later images.¹⁶ The bowl was given to Shakyamuni by the Lokapala (gods of the four directions) immediately after his enlightenment, when he broke his fast and accepted food from lay followers. It was prophesized that as long as Shakyamuni's teachings were remembered, his alms bowl would be available for veneration, and thus the presence of the bowl in conjunction with an image of Maitreya might refer to the latter's future enlightenment, when the Lokapala would again bring the bowl and make it available to the Buddhist community. The choice of the alms bowl for the base of the sculpture underscores the significance of this relic, which we know was housed in Gandhara, to the greater Buddhist world; as noted earlier, many Chinese pilgrims wrote about traveling to Gandhara specifically to see the bowl and to make offerings to it.¹⁷

Another, nearly lifesize figure of Maitreya in the Museum's collection (no. 44) is markedly different in style from number 43. Although much of the flask has broken away, its lip is visible in Maitreya's lowered left hand. The right hand—made of a separate piece of stone, for the attachment socket is plainly visible—was likely in *abhaya mudra*. The distinctive style of drapery, characterized by the sawtooth folds in front of Maitreya's left leg, is also seen in number 42, so it is possible these two works were produced by a common workshop.¹⁸ Numbers of lifesize image shrines are found at Gandharan sacred sites, and many images of



45. *Head of a Fasting Buddha*
Pakistan, ancient region of
Gandhara, ca. 3rd–5th century A.D.
Schist, H. 5⅞ in. (13.7 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of
Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.73)

a comparable scale have been recovered, suggesting that for a time this image size was a standard. On the base of the image are five monks and a female lay follower shown venerating a reliquary that sits on a low throne under a canopy (see fig. 24). Base reliefs such as this one, depicting reliquaries, indicate a date consistent with the third-century attribution of the sculpture, as relics are essentially never shown on



Figure 20. Devotional icon base with the seven historical Buddhas and the future Buddha Maitreya (far right). Found in situ at Takht-i-bahi, shrine c in court xiv, 3rd–5th century A.D. Schist, H. 10⅝ in. (27 cm)



46. Fasting Buddha Shakyamuni

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 3rd–5th century A.D.

Schist, H. 10¹⁵/₁₆ in. (27.8 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Ex Coll.: Columbia
University, Purchase, Rogers, Dodge, Harris Brisbane
Dick and Fletcher Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest,
and Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1987 (1987.218.5)

the bases of the later stucco and clay images that became popular in the following centuries.¹⁹ Such reliefs also suggest that venerating openly displayed relics, as distinct from those housed in stupas, was part of Gandharan ritual practice.

A few devotional icons from the region of Greater Gandhara depict the Buddha Shakyamuni as an emaciated renouncer of worldly things. Only three such images are known from excavations, however, which

suggests that very few were ever made in Gandhara.²⁰ The extant examples reveal Shakyamuni's bone structure, tendons, and veins, aspects of the human body generally considered by the Buddhist world as ugly and unsuited to an image of enlightened transcendence (nos. 45, 46). These depictions were long thought to reflect the six-year period of Shakyamuni's extreme asceticism and fasting after he left the palace in search of enlightenment.²¹ As the *Abhiniskramana* sutra relates, "[The] Bôdhisatwa [Shakyamuni] composed himself to contemplation—his mouth closed, his teeth joined, and his tongue pressed upwards against the palate. . . . His skin became wrinkled, and his body attenuated and his eyes hollow as an old man's . . . and all who beheld him were filled with a strange feeling of awe and reverence at the sight of the penance he was thus enduring."²² It has also been

suggested that these images are not iconic representations of this six-year fast—considered a mistaken path—but rather that they relate to Shakyamuni’s actual enlightenment.²³ According to the texts, at Bodhgaya the Buddha Shakyamuni sat on cut grass under the *bodhi* tree, where he reached enlightenment and subsequently remained in a state of meditation for forty-nine days; during this whole period he fasted. The Metropolitan’s seated figure of the starving Shakyamuni (no. 46) thus shows the Buddha on a bed of grass in a state of meditation, iconography that is consistent with the other known examples. On the base of the sculpture is a representation of the Buddha teaching the first sermon to the five former ascetics, soon to become the first monastic followers. Three monks are seated at the Buddha’s right, and two more at his left; a sixth monk, who stands venerating the Buddha with his hands in *anjali mudra*, is likely the patron who donated the sculpture. This image seems to reinforce the idea that Shakyamuni’s enlightenment involved extreme asceticism, and that this resulted directly in the first sermon and the conversion of the other ascetics.

Although texts tell us how Shakyamuni realized that self-mortification was fruitless, it is significant that he adopted and fully mastered various non-Buddhist ascetic practices. Given that the Gandharan Buddhists competed with a range of Brahmanical groups for followers,²⁴ it is perhaps not surprising that Shakyamuni was portrayed as being first among the ascetics. These images undoubtedly were meant to appeal to a lay community that respected religious figures who had full control of ascetic disciplines, part of an effort to bring these groups into the Buddhist fold. Texts also

mention forest monks²⁵—Buddhist adherents who advocated a much more austere path than those who lived in the monasteries attached to sacred areas—who likewise may have related to this conception of Shakyamuni. An emphasis on asceticism is reflected in some of the narrative sculpture, too, as seen, for example, in representations of Shakyamuni in a past life as the ascetic Megha (see no. 31).

Depictions of the starving Buddha following the Gandharan model have been found in other regions, suggesting that this image type was ideologically important within the greater Buddhist world. Multiple examples of paintings of starving Buddhas dating to the fifth century A.D. are known from the Central Asian site of Kizil, and a handful of portable representations have been found in Kashmir. This iconography evidently had less appeal in India proper, where they are not known aside from one Gandharan schist relief found at Mathura and another mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang as being at Bodhgaya.²⁶ The brief appearance of Gandharan emaciated Buddhas across the Buddhist world probably attests to the movement of Gandharan monks during the fifth century A.D.

Although very little is known about how devotional imagery was actually used and understood within Gandhara, scenes on the bases of iconic images seem to provide some clues regarding the actions of the Gandharan lay and monastic community. Such scenes typically show donor figures in perpetual acts of veneration, whether it is to the alms bowl of the Buddha (fig. 22), the future Buddha Maitreya (fig. 23), or a reliquary (fig. 24). In many instances donors are also shown in postures of veneration flanking what



Figure 21. Devotional icon base with figures flanking an incense burner. Pakistan, ca. 3rd–5th century A.D. Schist. Peshawar Museum, Pakistan



Figure 22. Detail of base of *Standing Bodhisattva Maitreya* (no. 43), depicting figures venerating the Buddha's alms bowl



Figure 23. Detail of base of *Standing Buddha Shakyamuni* (no. 40), depicting figures venerating the future Buddha Maitreya, who holds a water flask



Figure 24. Detail of base of *Standing Bodhisattva Maitreya* (no. 44), depicting figures venerating a reliquary on a throne beneath a canopy

appears to be a tall lamp or incense burner (fig. 21), items that we know were used ritually; occasionally patrons are shown carrying similar lamps when circumambulating stupas (see fig. 14). In this sense, the sculptural depiction of the incense burner on the base might have been understood metaphorically to be “standing before” the icon above it—the statue being venerated by donors—in which case the scene is a

reflection of actual worship practice. A unique, large bronze incense burner or lamp from the first century A.D., currently on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, gives us a glimpse into this aspect of Buddhist ritual and hints at its theatrical nature (fig. 25).²⁷ This multipiece bronze stands on a base supported by four winged figures that are Indo-Parthian in style; above them is a wreath that supports a fluted



47. Ritual Incense Burner

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 6th century A.D.

Bronze, H. 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (43.5 cm)

Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Ex Coll.: Columbia
University, Purchase, Mrs. Arthur Hays Sulzberger
Gift, 1987 (1987.218.8a–c)

shaft. Crowning the shaft is a disk, embellished with a lotus design, and hanging from it are leaves and brackets belonging to some now-lost element, all cast as separate pieces. Rising above the disk is the lamp bowl, also in the form of a lotus, which has a hinged lid that can be opened. Taken together, this is an iconography of transcendence, with the lotus rising above and supporting the budlike bowl. The lid was designed so that smoke from burning incense could escape through pierced openings in a variety of shapes, including crescents, *swastikas* (ancient rotational radiate symbols), and the serrated band at bottom. Most likely this object was used as a lamp, with the lid open, as can be seen in figure 21. In sculpted depictions of such objects they are often shown without lids, giving us an idea of their more typical form; as suggested above, they seem to have been placed in front of devotional images to produce light and probably fragrant smoke that was in some way connected to ritual. It has been proposed, in fact, that Buddhists



Figure 25. Ritual incense burner. Pakistan, 1st century A.D.
Bronze, H. 32 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (82.6 cm). Lent by Shelby White and Leon
Levy (L.1999.74.2a–c)

practiced *homa* rituals, in which sacrificial offerings of grains and other substances were placed in the fires that burned in these lamps.²⁸

Another burner in the Metropolitan's collection (no. 47) must have been used for incense because the lid could not have been opened sufficiently for use as a lamp. It was cast in three pieces and decorated with bands of lotus petals, cross-hatching, and a vine scroll

motif. The faceted handle, which functions as a locking mechanism for the lid, is embellished with the head of a *makara*, an auspicious water creature that has crocodile teeth and an elephant's trunk. A similar, though undecorated, incense burner was found in a monastic cell at Kushinagara, in north India,²⁹ providing us with an archaeological means of dating the burner to about the sixth century A.D.

1. Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1981. For a summary of this debate, see Krishan 1996, pp. 28–49.
2. Behrendt 2003; Behrendt 2004, chaps. 6, 7, app. B.
3. Cribb 1984.
4. For a more complete discussion of this image, see Czuma 1985, p. 71, no. 15.
5. Ideas, ideological developments, and iconography were also exchanged, although these are sometimes difficult to trace; see Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1972; Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1989.
6. Carter 1988.
7. Bautze-Picron 1990.
8. For further discussion of this Buddha image, see Pal et al. 1984, p. 193; Czuma 1985, pp. 212–13, no. 118.
9. Coomaraswamy 1927.
10. Behrendt 2004, p. 158, apps. A, B, figs. 2, 44.
11. Behrendt 2003.
12. Beal 1875, p. 130.
13. Considerable debate surrounds the identification and interpretation of Gandharan bodhisattvas; see Schmidt 1990; Lobo 1991; Rhi 2006; Luczanits 2007.
14. See Rhi 2006.
15. Similar ceramic flasks have been found in excavations across South Asia and Gandhara, suggesting they may have been used in ritual practices.
16. Behrendt 2004, app. B.
17. See Kuwayama 1990.
18. Other bodhisattvas possibly from this workshop include a Bodhisattva Shakyamuni from Mekhasanda (Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, Paris) and a Maitreya found in cell 8 of the Mohra Moradu monastery (National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi); see, respectively, Foucher 1905–18, vol. 1, frontis.; Behrendt 2004, fig. 38.
19. Behrendt 2004, pp. 238, 280.
20. A starving Buddha now in the Lahore Museum, Pakistan, was found in situ at the site of Sikri (see Dar 2000); another example, now in the Peshawar Museum, Pakistan, was recovered at Takht-i-bahi (see Lyons and Ingholt 1957, no. 53); and one, which had been in the Kabul Museum (now missing), was found in Afghanistan at the site of Shotorak (see Meunié 1942, pl. XVI, no. 53).
21. For a discussion of ascetic practices that can be directly related to the fasting Buddha images, see Klimburg-Salter and Taddei 1991.
22. Beal 1875, p. 187.
23. Brown 1997.
24. For a general discussion of asceticism in ancient India, see Thapar 1981; Heesterman 1982.
25. Considerable textual evidence attests to the importance of ascetic practices in the Buddhist traditions of ancient Gandhara and indicates that some monks were living in the forest. One of the earliest Gandharan Buddhist texts to survive, a first-century-A.D. version of the Rhinoceros sutra, written on a piece of birch bark in Gandhari, advocates the value of living in the wilderness; see Salomon 2000, p. 23. Texts associated with the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvastivadins, two early Nikaya Buddhist schools that we know were active in the Gandharan region (see Salomon 2006, p. 139), present various rules associated with forest practices in the form of a discourse between the Buddha and five monks who likely were the five ascetics he converted at Sarnath; see R. A. Ray 1994, pp. 294–95. For a discussion of modern forest monk practices in Thailand, see Tiyanich 1997.
26. Brown 1997, pp. 112–13.
27. For a complete discussion of this object, see Carter 1994; Stone 2004.
28. Verardi 1994. While this hypothesis is intriguing, we have no way of knowing about the specific nature of these early rituals.
29. Vogel 1909, p. 79, pl. XXVIII, a; Marshall 1951, vol. 3, pl. 65, b.



LATE BUDDHIST ART IN GREATER GANDHARA

From about the fourth to the fifth century A.D., the Buddhist traditions of Gandhara underwent a period of ideological change, reflected in increasingly complex iconography and the advent of monumental images. This shift occurred in conjunction with ever greater economic prosperity and a dramatic upsurge in the construction of Buddhist monasteries and donations to sacred areas that left clear traces in the archaeological record.¹ The site of Takht-i-bahi (fig. 27) gives us a sense of the scope of such patronage; excavations there have uncovered more than 270 sculptures, and of these, 220 date to the third to mid-fifth century.² Founded probably in the first or second century A.D., Takht-i-bahi was built on the flanks of a low mountain along four connected ridges (see fig. 2). The main sacred area was atop the central ridge; the remains of about 60 two- and three-story monasteries occupy adjacent ridges. On the basis of the extant structures, we can estimate that at its height, Takht-i-bahi was home to a monastic population of some 250 to 350 residents.³ Within a fifty mile radius were at least seven other, equally extensive Buddhist complexes flourishing at the same time, testament to Gandhara's prosperity.

The earliest sacred area at Takht-i-bahi followed a conventional pattern: a modest main stupa surrounded by small, heterogeneous stupas that were embellished with narrative sculpture. In about the third century A.D., a large, multistoried quadran-

gular monastery was built, and medium- to lifesize devotional images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, along with shrines to house them, became significant components of the sacred area. Also built at this time were twenty-one small stupas and four large relic shrines. What is apparent from these remains is that at Takht-i-bahi, even as devotional imagery was becoming increasingly important, relics were still being venerated.

In the fourth and early fifth centuries, multiple monumental image shrines were added at Takht-i-bahi, and massive foundation structures were built to extend the sacred area. The site evidently was thriving at the beginning of the fifth century A.D.; the many monasteries surrounding it were probably all occupied, and the main sacred area was undergoing expansion. This activity makes the collapse of patronage there in about the mid- to late fifth century A.D. all the more apparent in the archaeological record, particularly the absence of donated structures in the new western extensions of the sacred area (see fig. 27, which indicates the western extension in red).⁴ Considerable evidence also shows that, by the late fifth to sixth century A.D., sculptures were being reused at Takht-i-bahi and at many other sites in ancient Gandhara. This pattern of reuse suggests that these sacred areas were not abandoned following the decline in patronage, but rather that, as a result of an inexorable contraction of the Buddhist community, imagery was simply being moved into those sections of the sacred area that were still being venerated.⁵

Figure 26. Detail of *Guardian Figure (Dvarapala)* (no. 56)



Figure 27. Site plan of Takht-i-bahi main sacred areas and outlying monasteries showing chronology of construction. Pakistan, 1st–6th-century remains (drawing: Anandaroop Roy, after Behrendt 2004, fig. 44)

CLAY, STUCCO, AND TERRACOTTA

During the period that witnessed Takht-i-bahi's extraordinary florescence, much of Gandharan sculptural production was in unfired clay, stucco, and, sometimes, terracotta. Architectural evidence from the nearby site of Taxila points toward a strong correlation between the masonry image shrines and stupas built there from about the third to the fifth century A.D. and the large devotional sculptures in clay and stucco that were attached to such structures, helping us to date the images to the time the buildings were constructed or soon thereafter.⁶ If clay and stucco had been in widespread use earlier, we would expect to find narrative depictions of events in the Buddha's life modeled in those media, especially

since clay and stucco are easier and cheaper to work with than schist. Considering the apparently fast pace at which sacred areas were expanding, it is not surprising that images were being made in stucco and clay, since they could also be made quickly. Although thousands of clay and stucco images exist, nearly all of these are icons; only about a dozen Gandharan stucco narrative reliefs are known, compared to thousands of stone examples, suggesting there was little overlap. Other characteristics that help us date the stucco devotional icons include the use of hand gestures (*mudras*) to refer to major events in the life of the Buddha. In iconic stucco images of the first sermon, for example, the Buddha holds his hands in the interlocking *dharmachakra mudra*, or teaching gesture, but the storytelling elements present in earlier

narrative panels are omitted.⁷ Another factor is the trend toward larger images. Lifesize or smaller icons in clay, stucco, and terracotta were produced in all periods, many in the third century A.D., but monumental imagery appeared in Gandhara only in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. (see, for example, no. 55), and it continued to appear in Afghanistan until the eclipse of Buddhist practice in the region in about the eighth century (see fig. 33).

Because clay, stucco, and terracotta are fragile and susceptible to water damage, such sculpture often does not survive. However, many image shrines contain small sockets for affixing and supporting the bodies and heads of clay and stucco images, giving us some idea of where such sculptures were used and how many were produced. In Gandhara, the bodies of sculpted pieces were commonly made of clay, whereas stucco was used for the heads and, on some large images, for the hands and feet. This practice may explain the thousands of disembodied stucco heads that survive from Greater Gandhara (fig. 28), the missing bodies presumably having been made of fragile, unfired clay.⁸ Terracotta heads have only sporadically

been recovered, so it is possible that they were originally made of clay that was effectively fired when the surrounding structure burned.⁹ In contrast, the schist sculpture found at Gandharan sites has survived even under the worst conditions, which gives the impression that schist was the more important material for images when, in fact, it was just more durable.

The sensitive modeling of a head of a Buddha in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (no. 48) was achieved by working the stucco as it set up, giving the piece a more expressive quality compared to the formal, hard images done in stone (see no. 40). In later Gandharan art, a row of stucco Buddha figures with heads such as this one would typically have embellished the base of a stupa, replacing the narrative biographical scenes of earlier centuries. Thus, a worshipper would be confronted with a stupa surrounded by multiple Buddhas, none singled out as the focal image.¹⁰ A patron earned merit for commissioning a Buddha, but even more for multiple images, leading to a kind of mass production that was sometimes facilitated by the use of molds (no. 49), although faces mostly appear to have been executed freehand.



Figure 28. Heads and in situ feet of four monumental Buddha images against the south wall of court xx, Takht-i-bahi, Pakistan, ca. 5th century A.D.



48. *Head of a Buddha*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 4th century A.D.
Stucco with traces of paint, H. 7¾ in.
(19.7 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.96.4)

Both terracotta and stucco sculptures included depictions of lay followers. A head of a female figure (no. 50), for example, was probably part of a multi-figure composition in an image shrine. With her fashionable hairstyle and jewelry, she was likely a donor who wished herself represented in a position of perpetual veneration. The naturalistic treatment of her eyes and mouth suggest her age, details that would never be seen in an idealized depiction of a Buddha or bodhisattva; indeed, the main devotional icon was often almost abstract compared to the flanking attendant figures. Another terracotta head (no. 51) shows a mature bearded and mustached man who has grape leaves in his hair, an iconography that suggests Dionysus. Although this image is more idealized than that of the female patron, the man's furrowed brow, indications of age, and piercing gaze are additional signs of a taste for naturalism in this type of subsidiary religious imagery. The head also implies that Dionysian ideas of wine drinking and altered consciousness remained significant to the Gandharan lay community long after Buddhism had become the dominant religious tradition.

In a schist relief found in the village of Mohammed Nari (fig. 29), we get a potential glimpse of some of the changes in the doctrinal character of Gandharan Buddhism that were occurring in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. (the ideology of such reliefs continues



49. *Mold for the Face of a Buddha, with an Impression*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 4th–5th century A.D.
Terracotta, 5 x 3½ in. (12.7 x 9 cm)
Seymour Fund, 1989 (1989.112)



50. *Head of a Female Figure*

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 4th–5th century A.D.
Terracotta, H. 8 in. (20.3 cm)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Roger Stoll, 1980 (1980.524)



51. *Head of Dionysus*

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 4th–5th century A.D.
Terracotta, H. 9 7/8 in. (25.1 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Uzi Zucker, 1979 (1979.507.2)

to be debated). The trapezoidal shape of the relief indicates that it was probably affixed to the drum of a stupa.¹¹ We see the Buddha, at center, sitting on a lotus teaching the dharma; his hands are in *dhar-machakra mudra*, and he is attended by two flanking bodhisattvas, both holding garlands of flowers. In a row beneath them are six past Buddhas, the Buddha Shakyamuni, and the future Buddha Maitreya, who holds a flask, as well as seven slightly shorter figures that are probably the donors of the relief (see also fig. 20). Above the primary Buddha, set within a tri-lobed frame, are two narrative scenes: in the lower register, we see Shakyamuni in his father's palace preparing to leave his sleeping wife, and above that a damaged depiction of his great departure to seek

enlightenment. This juxtaposition of past Buddhas with the narrative showing Shakyamuni leaving the palace would likely have been interpreted by the devotee as a commentary on the nature of the central Buddha, who appears linked to the Buddhas of the past and future as well as to Shakyamuni's quest for enlightenment. Some scholars have proposed that complex reliefs like this one are related to the Buddha Shakyamuni's performing miracles at the site of Shravasti; others suggest the scenes may depict a Buddha residing in paradise, such as the Buddha Amitabha, an important deity in the Mahayana Buddhist traditions of Central Asia and China who resides in Sukhavati heaven (the western paradise). In that tradition, devotees hoped to be

reborn into Sukhavati, where the living Buddha Amitabha would teach them the dharma and reveal a direct path to enlightenment.¹²

Even as complex new iconography was being integrated into Gandharan sacred areas, the relics of the Buddha Shakyamuni continued to be the focus of veneration. Take, for example, a bronze reliquary from about the fourth to fifth century A.D. (no. 52), which is fashioned as a model of a stupa. The round drum of the stupa is surmounted by six umbrellas, and the four cardinal directions are indicated by *harmika* plaques and pillars topped by miniature stupas. This assemblage sits on a Corinthian capital, with gryphon brackets at the four corners. The foliage of the Corinthian capital emerges from the center of a lotus on top of the square base.¹³ As with the relief from Mohammed Nari, the specifics of the reliquary's iconography are not easily interpreted. In the sculpted relief, which was attached to a stupa, the Buddha is shown sitting on a lotus, while in the case of the reliquary the remains of the Buddha are housed within a stupa supported by a floral capital that emerges from a lotus. Thus the depiction of the teaching Buddha on the lotus throne is in some way analogous to the relics supported on a lotus base, but the reliquary is less ambiguous in this respect, since it is clear there that it is the relics of Shakyamuni that are being venerated.

LATE DEVOTIONAL IMAGERY AND THE EMERGENCE OF MONUMENTAL SCULPTURE

In the Metropolitan Museum's collection is a bust of a bodhisattva (no. 53) representative of certain schist images sculpted in the fourth and fifth centuries that, while iconographically related to those produced in previous centuries, illustrate a dramatic increase in scale. The bust has the torque, necklaces, and strings of amulets characteristic of earlier works, but before



Figure 29. *Seated Buddha with Flanking Bodhisattvas, Historical Buddhas, and Narrative Elements*. Pakistan, found in the village of Mohammed Nari, ca. 4th–5th century A.D. Schist, H. 40 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (103.8 cm). Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, Pakistan (Inv. no. II34)

it was broken it belonged to a figure that would have been more than six and a half feet tall. Compared to the smaller, more classical third-century images of Maitreya (see nos. 42, 43), this bodhisattva is more idealized in its physiognomic structure and in such details as the stylized mustache and hair; note the crisp repeated pattern of curls falling behind the shoulders. The face, which is not naturalistic and registers no emotion, reflects the north Indian conception of an enlightened being, with abstract intersecting planes combining to define the forehead,

52. *Reliquary in the Form of a Stupa*

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 4th–5th century A.D.

Bronze, $22\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in. (57.8 x 19.1 x
19.1 cm)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald J. Bruckmann,
1985 (1985.387a, b)





53. *Bust of a Bodhisattva*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 4th–5th century A.D.
Schist, H. 30 in. (76.2 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1942 (42.25.15)

54. *Torso of a Monumental Bodhisattva (Maitreya or possibly Avalokiteshvara)*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara, possibly Sahri-Bahlol, ca. 5th century A.D.
Schist, H. 64½ in. (163.8 cm)
Purchase, Lila Acheson
Wallace Gift, 1995 (1995.419)



nose, and eyes. As such it is radically different from the portraitlike terracotta depiction of the female patron (no. 50), which dates to about the same period.

An even larger bodhisattva (no. 54), which in its original condition would have stood about ten feet tall, provides an ideal example of the latest phase of Gandharan schist production. Judging from the massive scale of the torso, the figure was probably sculpted in the early fifth century A.D. Because flawless blocks of schist this large were difficult to obtain, over-lifesize stone sculptures are rare; only three monumental schist Buddhas are known from excavations. The large size of the image allowed the sculptor to carve in fine detail the torque,¹⁴ necklaces, and an amulet strand as well as the cord tied around the waist; the musculature of the torso is anatomically correct and sensitively modeled. The drapery, in accordance with long-established Gandharan precedent, is classical, although here it is rendered in a precise, crisp manner analogous to the style of the three known monumental schist Buddhas, two of which were found at Sahri-Bahlol B,¹⁵ near Takht-i-bahi. Many large schist bodhisattvas that are

stylistically comparable to the Metropolitan's torso were also found at Sahri-Bahlol B, suggesting that the Museum's bodhisattva may have been produced by the same workshop.

Often on large stone carvings, projecting elements were sculpted from separate pieces of stone and then attached; in some instances, small elements, perhaps done in metal, were also attached.¹⁶ The hole in the middle of the bodhisattva's chest may be for the attachment of the centerpiece of his necklace, or it might be the trace of an ancient repair. Although only the torso and parts of the legs survive, evidently this bodhisattva's left arm was angled down, and the remains of a stone support survive to which a flask might have been affixed; thus the figure could be the Bodhisattva Maitreya. The downward-reaching hand could also have held a twisted garland, possibly an attribute of Avalokiteshvara: a bodhisattva of compassion and protection who was part of the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon.¹⁷

Structural evidence from Gandharan sacred areas such as Takht-i-bahi shows that near the end of the period of active building at the site, in the early fifth century A.D., patrons were commissioning truly



Figure 30. Monumental image shrines at Takht-i-bahi. Height of the interior wall of the largest shrine is 37 ft. (11.3 m). Pakistan, ca. 5th century A.D.



55. *Head of a Monumental Bodhisattva*
 Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
 ca. 4th or 5th century A.D.
 Stucco, H. 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (60 cm)
 Gift of Christian Humann, 1977 (1977.191)

monumental image shrines; fourteen massive shrines at Takht-i-bahi date to this period, one of which contained an image more than thirty-five feet tall (fig. 30).¹⁸ With the advent of such massive structures, the preferred medium for imagery generally had

shifted to stucco and clay because it was technically impossible to execute schist images at this scale. Based on surviving heads, the great majority of monumental images seem to have been Buddha figures, but in rare instances bodhisattvas have been found.¹⁹ A good example of the latter is the two-foot-tall stucco head of a bodhisattva in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (no. 55). Although the head lacks iconography that might allow a definitive identification, the turban and jewelry, which clearly indicate bodhisattva status, are consistent with representations



56. *Door Guardian (Dvarapala) with a Bow*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 4th–5th century A.D.
Stucco, H. 18 in. (45.7 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1991 (1991.132)

of the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni.²⁰ The appearance of monumental bodhisattvas raises the question of whether they were venerated as independent devotional images. At the site of Abba Sahib China, in the Swat Valley, stands perhaps the largest image

shrine outside Afghanistan; the extant walls, though eroded, are still more than forty feet tall. Socket holes for the attachment of monumental images indicate that this shrine originally contained a triad: likely a central Buddha and flanking bodhisattvas. This kind of triad iconography is consistent with the complex, late Gandharan schist reliefs such as that from Mohammed Nari (see fig. 29), so it seems feasible that the monumental stucco bodhisattva head was part of a figure that attended a Buddha. One could also hypothesize, however, that this bodhisattva relates to



57. *Mold for a Seated Buddha, with an Impression*
 Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
 4th–5th century A.D.
 Terracotta, H. 4¾ in. (12.1 cm)
 Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
 Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.387a, b)

the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon, in which case it could represent a range of bodhisattvas, the foremost being Avalokiteshvara.

LATE MONASTIC IMAGERY AND PORTABLE SHRINES

In Gandhara both the lay and monastic communities used the main sacred areas, where the most significant donated structures—small stupas, stupa shrines, image shrines, and various forms of sculpture—were built. Yet there seems to have been some demarcation of space, since sculpted imagery has been found in monastic spaces that differs from that in public sacred areas, implying that there were areas to which the public probably had only limited access. At the site of Thareli, the main entrance to a multistoried monastery was once flanked by a pair of fourth-century stucco guardian figures (*dvarapalas*) that are quite similar to a guardian in the Metropolitan's

collection (no. 56; see also fig. 26).²¹ This figure wears a bow across his chest, short-sleeved scaled armor on his torso, an armored skirt, and heavy boots. The excellent state of preservation of the figure, coupled with its sensitive modeling, gives us an idea of the high artistic level achieved by some Gandharan workshops producing stucco images. In particular, the sculpture is animated by the hand-on-hip position and the naturalistic twist of the head. Although the figure was part of a Buddhist site, its status as a warrior suggests that he was likely understood not as a Buddhist deity but as a protector deity or a god of war, such as Skanda, images of whom have been found at several Buddhist complexes.

Within even the earliest monasteries in Gandhara there were small devotional areas for the private use of monks and nuns. Initially these took the form of stupa shrines within the monastic enclosure, but by the third to fifth century A.D. such relic shrines were giving way to small, iconographically complex image shrines, and it is about this time that images intended for personal veneration appeared. Most of the excavated small images that have been found in monasteries are inexpensive, simple sculptures.²² The Metropolitan's collection includes a mold for a small seated Buddha (no. 57) that could have been used to produce inexpensive images for personal veneration.



58. Standing Buddha

Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara, probably Sahri-Bahlol, ca. late 6th century A.D.

Brass, H. 11 1/2 in. (29.2 cm)

Edith Perry Chapman Fund, 1948 (48.66a, b)

Although it is difficult to ascertain if these impressions were used by monks, the mold itself—which would have made a small Buddha seated on a lotus throne with his hands in the *dharmachakra mudra* gesture—is consistent in terms of size with sculptures intended for personal use.²³

Related to these inexpensive images is a small group of brass standing Buddha figures that



59. Standing Buddha

Pakistan or Afghanistan, ca. late 6th century A.D.

Brass, H. 13 1/4 in. (33.7 cm)

Purchase, Rogers, Fletcher, Pfeiffer and Harris

Brisbane Dick Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1981 (1981.188a, b)

would likely have belonged to more elite monks (nos. 58–60). In the first of these (no. 58), reportedly found at the Gandharan site of Sahri-Bahlol,²⁴ the Buddha displays *abhaya mudra*, and his head and body are enclosed in a separately attached, combined halo (one that surrounds both head and body). The second brass figure (no. 59) is very similar, although in this instance the base has survived. Again the radiate halo



60. *Standing Buddha*

Pakistan or Afghanistan, ca. late 6th century A.D.
 Brass, H. 13 in. (33 cm)
 Gift of Muneichi Nitta, 2003 (2003.593.2)

encircles the Buddha's head and body; this combined halo is embellished with an elaborate floral pattern enclosed by a border of pearls. The floral border and the style of the Buddha figure exhibit strong affiliations with sixth-century Gupta-period Buddhas of north India (fig. 31), in which the subtle contours of the Buddha's enlightened body are stressed rather than emphasis being placed on covering robes, as is

the case with earlier Gandharan Buddhas. Late stucco devotional icons, too, were deeply influenced by the Gupta style, evident in an Afghan head of a Buddha that must date to about the fifth century A.D. (no. 61); note the similarities in the hard, abstracted treatment of the forehead, nose, and eyes that contrasts with the more naturalistic mouth. This stylistic connection to the Gupta sculptural tradition suggests that artistic exchange with north India must have been increasingly significant in this period.

The pronounced contrapposto of the third brass figure (no. 60), which originally had a halo, links it



Figure 31. *Standing Buddha*. North India, probably Bihar, Gupta period, late 6th century A.D. Bronze, H. 18½ in. (47 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Florance Waterbury Bequest, 1969 (69.222)



Figure 32. Radiate halo in cave 626, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, 7th century A.D. Stucco

even more closely to the Gupta style than the other two brass sculptures in the Metropolitan's collection. It is possible to date these images, or at least to place them securely into a relative chronology, based on a few stucco halos found in a cave at the site of Bamiyan, in Afghanistan (fig. 32). These halos—whose rays are in the form of heart-shaped lozenges that terminate in three small balls—once framed images in niches; they are nearly identical to the halos in the first two brass standing Buddhas, particularly number 59.²⁵ The cave at Bamiyan in which they were found dates to roughly the same time as the construction of the massive 175-foot-tall Buddha there (see fig. 33)—about the late sixth century A.D.—so the same date can be assigned to the brass figures.²⁶ These small monastic images thus were made after the peak in sculptural production in ancient Gandhara, evidence that isolated patronage still occurred there even at this late date.²⁷

Portable monastic images, no doubt treasured personal possessions, would have been carried around by monks and thus were ideal vehicles for the transmission of artistic styles. They also help shed some light on the dynamics of the cultural exchange

between Gandhara and the surrounding regions of north India, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and the oasis monasteries of Central Asia, as it appears that monks, following the decline of patronage in Gandhara proper, likely took advantage of the established trade routes and moved on to prosperous Buddhist centers in those regions. Indeed, that the small Gandharan brass images relate stylistically to Gupta-period images from north India but also incorporate a rarely seen, isolated halo motif from Afghanistan suggests that Gandharan monks were in direct contact with these other Buddhist communities. The accounts of Chinese pilgrims document that many Buddhist texts were being translated by Gandharan monks working in Central Asia, making it clear that by the fifth century A.D. Gandharan monks were an important link between Buddhist communities in China and India.²⁸

The late Gandharan Buddhist community also commissioned the production of hinged “pocket” shrines that illustrate devotionally significant episodes of the Buddha's biography. The iconography of these works often differs from that seen in monastic image shrines and surviving monastic personal images, which typically are devotional icons, not



61. Head of a Buddha

Afghanistan, ca. 5th century A.D.

Stucco with gesso and traces of paint, H. 7¼ in.
(18.4 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.32.5)

narratives. Monks may have used these tiny shrines, but they could just as easily have been carried by lay followers or by merchants moving along the Silk Road. In a fragment of a schist shrine that probably illustrated the first sermon (no. 62), we see a seated Buddha, his hands held in *dharmachakra mudra*, with two monks at right; the left side is broken away, but

presumably it, too, contained flanking monks. A shrine with the same iconography and atypical style was found at the late-period Buddhist site of Ali Masjid, on the Khyber Pass leading to Afghanistan.²⁹ The exact dates of this site are unknown, but the stupas and embellishing stucco imagery there are related to those of sites in Afghanistan active in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., giving us an approximate date for the Museum's small shrine. Another small schist shrine in the Metropolitan's collection (no. 63) comprises two separate registers, each of which contains a narrative event; only half of this hinged shrine survives (note the remains of the hinge attachment,



62. *Fragment of a Portable Shrine with the Buddha Preaching the First Sermon and Two Monks*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
5th or 6th century A.D.
Phyllitic schist, H. 2⁹/₁₆ in. (6.5 cm)
Gift of Bette-Ann and William Spielman, 1991
(1991.407.1)

visible at right), thus presumably a matching section with two scenes would have completed the composition. In terms of its style, register format, and configuration as a hinged shrine, the piece can be generally related to other portable shrines produced in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., and to a group of portable shrines from Kashmir generally dated to the fifth to seventh century (see fig. 34).³⁰ The event in the upper register is easily recognized as the first sermon because the Buddha is shown with a wheel in front of him and five small monks are present (see no. 34). Above the monks is a crowd of figures surrounding the Buddha, presumably the gods coming to hear him preach; although these figures function to aggrandize the Buddha, they have no narrative significance. The lower register shows the Buddha looking and gesturing to a tree at his left while a crowd of smaller figures looks on. This scene has no clear correspondence in the biographical narrative



63. *Section of a Portable Shrine with the Buddha Preaching the First Sermon and an Unidentified Scene*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
ca. 5th–6th century A.D.
Phyllitic schist, H. 6 in. (15.2 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.51)

reliefs of the second century A.D. and cannot be readily identified.³¹ It could represent Amarapali's gift of the mango grove (Amarapali, a prostitute, gave the grove to the Buddhist community in conjunction with her conversion to Buddhism); it could also represent Shakyamuni approaching the *bodhi* tree prior to his enlightenment; or it might be some version of the miracles the Buddha performed at Shravasti. That



64. *Three-Sided Section of a Portable Shrine with Scenes from the Life of the Buddha and a Standing Bodhisattva Maitreya*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
5th–6th century A.D.
Phyllitic schist, H. 4½ in. (11.4 cm)
Gift of The Kronos Collections, in honor of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1994 (1994.489)

Exterior of Portable Shrine (no. 64)

an obscure event was chosen for the shrine is surprising, since the devotional imagery of the period usually focused on major events of the Buddha's life. The scene was possibly intended as a nonnarrative, iconic representation of the Buddha, perhaps containing some special meaning for the patron.

Also in the Metropolitan's collection is a three-sided, wedge-shaped quarter-section of a portable

shrine (no. 64). Opening the original small shrine, which would have been circular when closed, would have revealed four wings comprising a complete, twenty-four scene narrative of the Buddha's biography. Holes on the edges of the piece, possibly for hinges, support this interpretation. Like number 63, this shrine can be compared stylistically to a group of Kashmiri shrines dating to about the fifth to seventh century A.D., giving us an approximate date for this piece. On the exterior face (above, right) is an image of a standing Bodhisattva Maitreya in the middle register, with a seated Buddha above him and a damaged scene below that includes a Buddha and a bodhisattva. In contrast to these iconic representa-



65. *Section of a Portable Shrine with the Birth of the Buddha and the Death of the Buddha (Parinirvana)*
Pakistan, ancient region of Gandhara,
5th–6th century A.D.
Phyllitic schist, H. $3\frac{7}{16}$ in. (8.7 cm)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel
Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.53)

tions on the exterior, the two inner faces have stacked narrative scenes that presumably were meant to be read in conjunction with scenes contained in the three other, now-lost wedge-shaped elements. At the top of one interior face (p. 81, left) is Shakyamuni's conception (see no. 32), and at the top of the other is a scene that is difficult to identify, but which may show Shakyamuni's great departure from the palace. The two interior middle registers illustrate, respectively, the story of Devadatta killing the elephant (a pre-enlightenment episode in Shakyamuni's biography in which his cousin, Devadatta, kills the state elephant, thereby compelling Shakyamuni to dispose of it by hurling it over seven city walls and thus demonstrating his superhuman strength)³² and the wrestling



Exterior of Portable Shrine (no. 65)

competition that Shakyamuni undertook to show himself worthy of marriage. On the bottom are representations of a fasting Buddha (part of the enlightenment cycle) and the first sermon. Although the biography is disjointed, it is reasonable to conclude that the other three wedge sections would have related the missing parts of the story: one that seems to end with the first sermon rather than the Buddha's death. In Mahayana Buddhism, the enlightenment and teaching were considered the most important aspects of the Buddha's life, and so Shakyamuni's later life and his death (*parinirvana*) were commonly truncated, as seen here, perhaps another reflection of gradual changes within Gandharan Buddhism.

On the interior of number 65, which is one half of a portable shrine—note again the remains of a hinge, at the left edge—we see Shakyamuni's birth and his miraculous first steps in the top register, and his death (*parinirvana*) in the lower register. The other half of the shrine, now lost, almost certainly would have depicted the enlightenment and the first sermon, as it was common to present the four great life events together.³³ The exterior of the shrine is more enigmatic. It shows a squatting man reaching back to support a wicker basket; his hair is held in place by a headband decorated with pearls, and he wears heavy, Kushan-type boots, a mode of dress worn by elite lay donors in many Gandharan reliefs. He supports a child, now headless, on his shoulders.³⁴ A similar Gandharan shrine, embellished with a figure sitting on a low stool on the exterior and scenes of the Buddha's enlightenment and first sermon on the interior, was found at the Central Asian site of Khotan.³⁵ Yet another shrine, made of ivory and dating to the seventh century A.D., was made in India but found in the Yulin cave in Gansu, China.³⁶ The discovery of such shrines along the Silk Road trading routes confirms that portable sculptures of this type, like the small monastic devotional images, were moving great distances. Thus not only were portable shrines ideal vehicles for the dissemination of Gandharan artistic forms, since they were used by individuals as personal religious objects, such works also afford us some sense of how late Gandharan Buddhist ideology might have been transmitted.

BUDDHIST ARTISTIC TRADITIONS OF AFGHANISTAN

From the time of Alexander the Great's invasion in 331 B.C. and the subsequent establishment of the Greek colony of Ai Khanoum, Afghanistan had been a vital link in the Silk Road international trade circuit, as is well documented by the hoard of commercial trade goods found in the ancient city of Begram. By the first century A.D., this area was part of the Kushan Empire, and the dynastic shrine of Surkh Kotal shows that, for a time, it was probably even

their seat of power. The Gandharan and Afghan Buddhist communities were clearly interrelated in the broadest sense, and no doubt parallel traditions developed, but because of the disruption of excavations in Afghanistan, the emergence of early Buddhist communities there is not as well understood. We are learning increasingly more about Buddhist activity in Afghanistan beginning in the third and fourth centuries A.D. from a number of sites that can be dated to this period or later. Between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D., at the same time the economy of ancient Gandhara was collapsing, Afghanistan experienced great economic prosperity, possibly because of

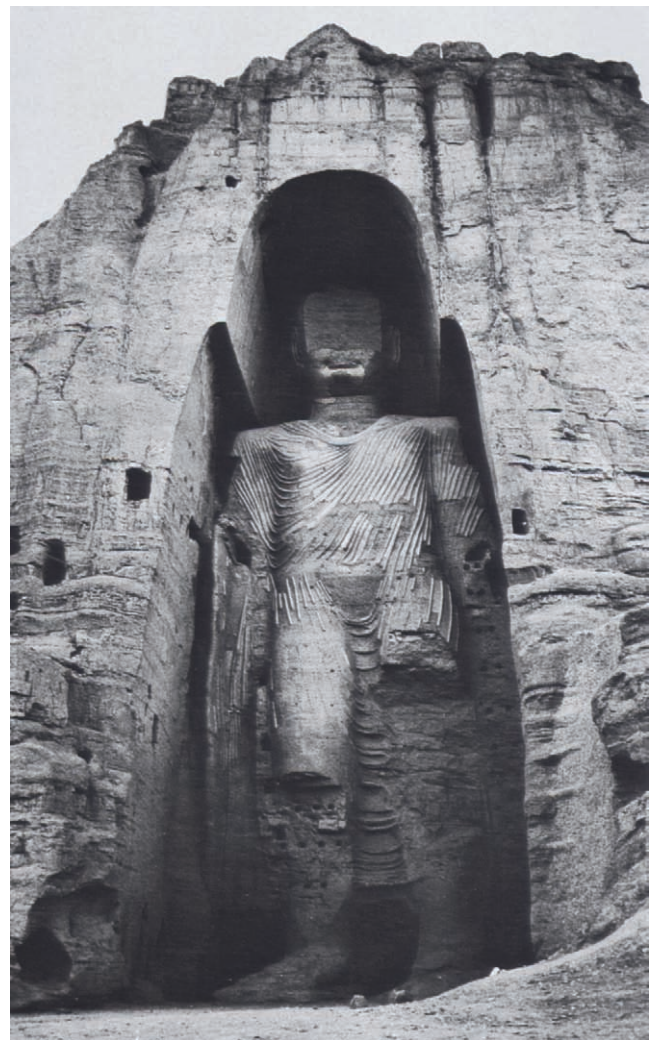


Figure 33. *Monumental Standing Buddha*. Afghanistan, Bamiyan, cave 620, ca. A.D. 600 (destroyed 2001). Stucco over stone core, H. 175 ft. (53 m)

a beneficial shift in trade routes.³⁷ Many new Buddhist sites were constructed during this period, and older ones were expanded. This strong economic base likely is what allowed for the construction of the monumental Buddhas at Bamiyan (fig. 33). Sculptural production continued in Afghanistan probably until the ninth century A.D., when it ended abruptly as a result of the Saffarid conquest of A.D. 869–70.³⁸

In Afghanistan, as in Gandhara proper, clay, stucco, and terracotta become important media for sculpture; this happened in Afghanistan by about the fourth century A.D., and there they remained the primary media for at least the next four hundred years. It appears that clay and stucco sculptures were originally painted, but often only traces of this decoration remain today (see no. 61). Some imagery was also carved in schist and made of metal, and, as in Gandhara, these works were sometimes gilded. Stupas, image shrines, and monasteries in both Afghanistan and Gandhara were likewise embellished with elaborate murals, suggesting that the tradition

of painting sculpture, though poorly preserved, originally must have been quite extensive.³⁹

A set of four painted terracotta panels from Bactria (north Afghanistan) in the Metropolitan Museum's collection provides a rare example of this nearly lost tradition.⁴⁰ In one of the panels (no. 66), a male worshipper approaches a non-Buddhist deity, who can be interpreted as Shiva but also as the Near Eastern god Oesho. This deity is found in the Greater Gandharan context primarily on Indo-Greek and Kushan coins, which provide a well-established precedent for such images and possibly a means of dating the terracotta panels to about the second to mid-fourth century A.D.⁴¹ Yet only in the sixth century did related sculptural icons of Hindu deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, and Skanda begin to appear at Gandharan Buddhist sites.⁴² Supporting a later date for the panels is a small but significant group of portable shrines from Kashmir, dating to about the fifth to seventh century A.D., that are stylistically and iconographically similar to the painted terracotta panels and, as



Figure 34. *Section of a Portable Linga with Shiva and Parvati*. India, Kashmir, 7th century A.D. Chlorite, H. 3 in. (7.6 cm). Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Gift of Samuel Eilenberg, 1987 (1987.142.66)



Exterior of *Portable Linga* (fig. 34)



66. Panel with a Four-Armed, Three-Headed Shiva
 North Afghanistan, ca. 6th century A.D. (?)
 Terracotta with gouache, H. 22½ in. (57.2 cm)
 Gift of Isao Kurita, 2000 (2000.42.4)

discussed earlier, to a few portable shrines excavated at Gandharan Buddhist sites. One Kashmiri example (fig. 34), a seventh-century⁴³ hinged shrine with a linga (stylized phallic representation of Shiva) on the exterior, has on the interior a scene showing a four-armed, three-headed, ithyphallic Shiva; to the left is

Parvati, a small figure of Skanda is at bottom right, and peering from behind them is the bull Nandi, the *vahana* (or “vehicle”) associated with Shiva. Here Shiva has two subsidiary heads that twist to look at the viewer; the one to his right is a fierce male, while the one to his left, covered by cloth, is that of a woman. These iconographic characteristics suggest a unity of male and female forces (the concept of *shakti*),⁴⁴ and thus a possible identification of the figure as Shiva Maheshvara: a form of the god that emphasizes his five powers, or aspects, as well as the five elements



67. Head of a Bodhisattva

Afghanistan, possibly from the Hadda site of Tapa Shotor, ca. 4th–5th century A.D.

Clay or terracotta with garnet eyes, H. 12¼ in. (31.1 cm)

Purchase, 1986 (1986.2)

of the universe.⁴⁵ A religious text from Kapisha (Afghanistan) ascribes the same configuration of heads to Shiva; the text also relates that the deity holds in his four hands a flask, a rosary (*mala*), a trident (*trishula*), and a flower.⁴⁶ The attributes of the Shiva figure in the Kashmiri shrine accord with that description, except that instead of a flower Shiva holds a club. Other Kashmiri shrines with this specific

iconography exist, indicating that by the seventh century A.D. this format—with a flask, *mala*, trident, and club—had become fairly standardized.⁴⁷ As in the Kashmiri shrine, the deity on the Museum's terracotta panel holds a trident and a flask; the attributes held in the other two arms do not survive, but in one of the other panels in the group a Shiva/Oesho figure grasps a club with his lower right arm. The cloth-covered, forward-looking female head to Shiva's right likewise finds a direct correspondence in the Kashmiri shrine, suggesting that the same form of the god is represented.

The presence of large donor figures in some of the terracotta panels indicates that these works likely embellished a shrine wall and were not themselves



68. *Niche with the Seated Bodhisattva Shakyamuni*

Afghanistan, possibly from the Hadda site of Tapa-i-Kafariha, stupa K43, ca. 4th–5th century A.D.

Stucco, 16⁹/₁₆ x 18¹/₄ in. (42 x 46.4 cm)

Purchase, Walter Burke Gift, and Anonymous Gift, Rogers Fund, and Gift of George D. Pratt, by exchange, 2005 (2005.314)

objects of veneration; if they had been icons meant for devotional practices, the donors, if present at all, would have been represented at a much smaller scale. In addition, Shiva's main head twists and he looks off to the right, subtly implying his participation in some action outside of the picture frame, a characteristic typical of attendant figures but not seen in icons intended for veneration. Compositionally,

the Shiva figure is less formal than the frontal representations of him seen on coins or those done in three-dimensional sculpture. The use of subtle highlights, visible on the crest of the nose and chin, gives the figure a sense of volume,⁴⁸ as does the foreshortening of his lower right arm. Practically no comparable painting survives from Greater Gandhara, but similar highlighting techniques were employed in murals at the late-fifth-century western Indian site of Ajanta.⁴⁹ Comparisons can also be made to a stupa shrine (ca. 3rd–4th century A.D.) excavated at the Central Asian Buddhist complex of Miran, which had extensive wall paintings on the interior that were stylistically similar to the Metropolitan's terracotta panels.⁵⁰ The Miran murals show compelling



Figure 35. *Image Shrine with a Seated Buddha Flanked by Vajrapani and a Woman Holding a Cornucopia*. Afghanistan, Hadda site of Tapa Shotor (V2), ca. 4th–5th century A.D. (destroyed late 1980s). Clay and stucco

connections to Gandharan production in terms of the use of garland motifs and the so-called Greco-Roman style of the figures,⁵¹ which is remarkable considering that Miran is located on the eastern end of the Tarim basin, nearly a thousand miles from Greater Gandhara.

A bodhisattva head worked in clay or terracotta (no. 67), possibly from Tapa Shotor (part of the Hadda site group), gives us a sense of the high level of refinement that Afghan artists achieved in these media. Thin layers of clay were added one at a time over a core to build up the face; traces of the final coat are visible on the cheek and forehead. The hair curls at the top were likewise applied separately to a substructure, part of which is visible. The figure can be identified as a bodhisattva on the basis of his hairstyle and the *urna* (dot on the forehead), which is now missing. The inset garnet eyes, an extremely rare embellishment, give the figure a grand presence one might expect of a devotional icon. The face is naturalistic or classical in appearance, especially the area around the mouth, a characteristic that in other works has

led scholars to attribute such images to the second or third century A.D. Yet this head, assuming it was once part of a standing figure, would have belonged to a statue some five-and-a-half feet tall, and devotional icons of that scale generally do not date to before the beginning of the fourth century A.D. Additionally, the treatment of the head, especially the bunched hair-style, accords with other sculptures from about the fourth to the fifth century A.D. that have been found at Tapa Shotor (see fig. 35).⁵²

Stylistically related to this head is a small, quasi-narrative stucco niche containing a bodhisattva sitting beneath a tree (no. 68); he is flanked by six smaller figures and an elephant. The bodhisattva can probably be identified as Shakyamuni, shown before his enlightenment meditating under a tree; note that he wears a turban like that of other images of the Bodhisattva Shakyamuni (see, for example, no. 41). The presence of an elephant is unusual in stucco production; the story of the Buddha's evil cousin, Devadatta, is the only pre-enlightenment episode involving an elephant. Here the animal and an adjacent, downward-looking worshipper (possibly Devadatta) might indicate the narrative event, yet the large, hierarchically presented bodhisattva is clearly the focus of the niche. At Shakyamuni's left are the prominent figures of a woman and the fragmentary remains of a man, possibly donors. The large halo that fully encircles the meditating figure of Shakyamuni never occurs in Gandharan art, but it is common at sites in Afghanistan, especially in the paintings at Bamiyan, which date to the fifth to sixth century A.D., suggesting a possible date for the relief.⁵³ The scale of the relief, the molding of the niche, the motifs (including the tree), the types of clothing, and the style of the figures correspond almost exactly to a fragmentary sculpture excavated at Hadda in the 1930s and now in the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, Paris.⁵⁴ That fragment possibly was part of an upper row of niches on a stupa at the site of Tapa-i-Kafariha,⁵⁵ and it is quite conceivable that the Metropolitan's niche is from the same stupa. Note how the sculptor took into account the niche's placement, high on a stupa base, by having the figures

look down at worshippers, who would have viewed it from below while circumambulating the monument. Rather than recount the complete biography of the Buddha, these late narratives functioned like *harmika* panels, presenting devotionally significant moments with the limited narrative components providing only biographical context.

The niche, like the bodhisattva head possibly from Hadda, is the product of a workshop that was familiar with the Western classical tradition, as evidenced by the sophisticated understanding of anatomy revealed in Shakyamuni's torso (note especially the lower edge of the rib cage). An image shrine from Tapa Shotor⁵⁶ containing a group of figures surrounding a seated Buddha (fig. 35) provides an interesting point of comparison. Some scholars have dated this shrine to the second to third century A.D. based on the classical style of the figures, seen most clearly in the anatomy of the Vajrapani figure to the Buddha's right. Yet this type of complex grouping around a monumental, central Buddha—with flanking figures that include Vajrapani and a woman holding a cornucopia, and with multiple secondary Buddhas and bodhisattvas⁵⁷—is undoubtedly related to iconography found in fourth- and fifth-century-A.D. monastic image shrines at Gandharan Buddhist sites such as Mohra Moradu, in Taxila.⁵⁸ A highly classical style thus seems to have reemerged in Afghanistan in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., roughly the same period when a similar degree of naturalism and anatomical realism can be observed in Gandharan works such as the female patron depicted with portraitlike accuracy (no. 50) and the monumental schist bodhisattva (no. 54); in the latter, note the comparable treatment of the lower edge of the rib cage.⁵⁹ This late trend toward highly naturalistic, classical forms did not occur as the result of some outside influence, as naturalistic imagery was no longer being produced in the West at this time; rather, it reflects what was a long-standing, well-established naturalistic tradition within Greater Gandharan art that grew out of a much earlier period of international trade and the subsequent transmission of forms.

DECLINE OF BUDDHISM IN GREATER GANDHARA

By the time the Chinese pilgrims Sung-yun and Xuanzang visited Gandhara in the sixth and seventh centuries, respectively, the region had already been invaded and subjugated by a group of foreign invaders often referred to as the Huns.⁶⁰ As Xuanzang wrote, "The royal family is extinct, and the kingdom is governed by deputies from Kapiśa [Kapisha, a city in Afghanistan]. The towns and villages are deserted. . . . There are about 1000 *saṅghârâmas* [Buddhist sites], which are deserted and in ruins. They are filled with wild shrubs, and solitary to the last degree. The *stûpas* are mostly decayed."⁶¹ For many years scholars accepted such accounts at face value, assuming that sometime in the middle of the fifth century A.D. the Buddhist community of ancient Gandhara was persecuted and the sites methodically pillaged and destroyed. The reuse of sculpture, especially of broken images, was seen as reflecting this iconoclasm.⁶² Moreover, few coins dating after A.D. 500 have been found at Buddhist sites in Gandhara, and the archaeological record clearly indicates—as it does at Takht-i-bahi—a moment when patronage seems to have collapsed.

Evidence of a similar cycle of expansion and abandonment is seen at many fifth-century Gandharan sites, indicating that a reduction in patronage occurred across the region. Nevertheless, there is also considerable evidence that Buddhists continued to occupy religious centers under Hun rule, and even that a limited amount of new construction occurred.⁶³ In addition to the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims who we know continued to visit Gandharan sites into the early sixth century A.D., many to see the shrine of the Buddha's alms bowl,⁶⁴ late Sasanian and Hun coins from the mid-fifth century to the early sixth century have been found at a variety of Buddhist sites within Gandhara.⁶⁵ Coins from late periods have also been found in relic deposits at the Dharmarajika complex and in the nearby Manikyala stupa,⁶⁶ leaving no doubt that isolated sites were still receiving patronage. Gandharan Buddhism was unquestionably in



69. *Seated Bodhisattva Maitreya*
Afghanistan, near Kabul, ca. 7th–8th century A.D.
Schist, H. 30 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (77.8 cm)
Rogers Fund, 1920 (20.58.15)



Figure 36. *Seated Bodhisattva Maitreya*. Pakistan, Sahri-Bahlol, ca. 6th century A.D. Schist, H. 42 1/2 in. (108 cm). Peshawar Museum, Pakistan

decline, but the process appears to have occurred gradually.⁶⁷

Between the fourth and eighth centuries A.D., Buddhism was still thriving in Afghanistan at sites such as Bamiyan, Tapa Sardar, and Fondukistan, and we know from the existence of relief sculpture cut into boulders in the Swat Valley that the religion persevered there, yet our understanding

of this period of activity is incomplete.⁶⁸ What can be said is that, by the eighth century A.D., even the Buddhist communities of Afghanistan were declining, although provincial sites continued to produce small quantities of idiosyncratic sculpture related to the earlier Gandharan tradition. A good example of this is a seated Bodhisattva Maitreya reportedly from the Kabul region, which entered the Metropolitan Museum's collection in 1920 (no. 69). Although stylistically this bodhisattva is quite different from earlier images made in Greater Gandhara—especially the artist's stiff and awkward conception of the drapery—it does share many characteristics with earlier Maitreya images, particularly in the torque, necklace, amulet string, and armlets (see nos. 53, 54). The hairstyle, especially the top section, compares very closely to that of white marble Hindu lingas made during the Shahi dynastic period of Afghanistan (8th century A.D.).⁶⁹ The bodhisattva also relates to some of the last Buddhist sculpture from Gandhara, such as a Maitreya from Sahri-Bahlol (fig. 36). Both figures have the same rigid posture, treatment of the chest (especially the rendering of the pectoral muscles), and distribution of drapery; their faces also have a similar representation of the eyes and a formal, mask-like demeanor.⁷⁰ These various characteristics suggest that this Maitreya was probably produced after the major workshops in Afghanistan had lost patronage or disappeared, in about the seventh or eighth century A.D., a period when Buddhism in Greater Gandhara was beginning to be supplanted by the arrival of Islam.

1. Errington 2000, pp. 196–99, 211–13; Behrendt 2004, pp. 262–66. We get a clear sense of Gandhara's importance in about the fourth century A.D. from the accounts of Faxian (1884, pp. xxxi–xxxvii) and, in the early seventh century, from those of Xuanzang (1884, vol. 1, pp. 97–114).
2. Behrendt 2004, pp. 297–300.
3. This is a conservative estimate that assumes one monk per cell; the count could actually have been much higher. Many of the monasteries at Takht-i-bahi have collapsed, but we know that they were originally multistoried structures.

4. The pattern seen at Takht-i-bahi of expanding the sacred area at great expense to accommodate new but never realized donations is also found at Jamal Garhi and the Taxila site of Jaulian. See Behrendt 2004, pp. 205–6.
5. For a detailed discussion of Takht-i-bahi, see *ibid.*, pp. 181–89, 215–20; Behrendt forthcoming.
6. For a summary of the major issues, see Foucher 1921; Barthoux 1930–33 (2001 ed.), pp. 58–59; Marshall 1951, vol. 1, pp. 257, 266, 366–67, vol. 2, pp. 468–72, 520–26; Faccenna 1980–81, pt. 3, p. 701; Taddei 1993; Zwalf 1996, vol. 1, pp. 70–71; Taddei 1999a; Behrendt 2004, pp. 277–81.

7. Behrendt 2004, pp. 274–81.
8. Marshall 1951, vol. 2, pp. 516–17.
9. Terracotta appears in a few finds from the third to the fifth century, and it is also known from the first century A.D. at Sirkap; see *ibid.*, pp. 468–72. Yet if terracotta images were being made systematically, we would expect to see consistent patterns of production linked to specific regions and time periods, and this is not the case; see Taddei 1996.
10. Behrendt 2004, fig. 48.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 284–87.
12. A sculpture from Gandhara bears an inscription that seemingly identifies a Buddha sitting on a similar lotus throne as Amitabha (Fussman 1999, p. 542), but this interpretation of the inscription is incorrect (Salomon and Schopen 2002, pp. 27–28). For a more general discussion of these iconographically complex stelae, see Huntington 1980; Brown 1984; Rhi 1991; Quagliotti 1996; Rhi 2003, pp. 171–79.
13. Although this format is unusual for a reliquary, a small masonry stupa of a similar configuration was found in a monastery at Kalawan in Taxila; Marshall 1951, vol. 1, p. 335, vol. 3, pls. 73, a, and 79, a.
14. The figure in the torque could be a Near Eastern god such as Zeus-Serapis or Ahuramazda; see Carter 2000, pp. 11–12.
15. Spooner 1914, pl. xxii, b–d. The third monumental image probably came from Takht-i-bahi; see Lyons and Ingholt 1957, no. 213.
16. Holes for attaching the metal components of a jeweled headdress are also found in number 53.
17. Rhi 2006, p. 163.
18. Behrendt 2004, p. 180.
19. A monumental stucco bodhisattva head was found at Sahri-Bahlol D; see Stein 1915, pl. xivi, fig. 28.
20. Rhi 2006, p. 152.
21. The Thareli figures are similar to the Metropolitan's guardian in terms of their scale, seated posture, form of the skirt, and the armor covering the torso; see Mizuno and Higuchi 1978, pl. 78, no. 4; Behrendt 2004, pp. 194–95.
22. Behrendt 2004, pp. 167–69.
23. It should be noted, however, that similarly diminutive images also appear as components of larger compositions placed in the public sacred area.
24. Two other related bronzes were found at Sahri-Bahlol; one is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (i.s. 12-1948). See Barrett 1960, fig. 33; Errington and Cribb 1992, pp. 218–22, nos. 210–12.
25. Barrett 1960, p. 362; see also the interior decoration of Bamiyan cave 626, in Higuchi 1983–84, vol. 2, pl. 160, no. 4. The combined halo around head and body is a characteristic also found at Hadda; see Barthoux 1930–33 (2001 ed.), figs. 108, 146; Czuma 1985, pp. 210–11.
26. Klimburg-Salter 1989, pp. 90–91.
27. Late Buddhist activity at Sahri-Bahlol has been determined on the basis of the reuse of imagery; coins of the Hindu Shahi dynasty; and the recovery of white marble Hindu sculptures characteristic of the sixth to tenth centuries A.D. (Barrett 1960, p. 362). Also, a stupa with four directional stairways was built there about the sixth century or later (Behrendt 2004, p. 208).
28. Kuwayama 2006.
29. In this instance, the wheel and deer of the first sermon are shown and the sculpture is not broken; see Zwalf 1985, p. 101, no. 133.
30. See Lerner and Kossak 1991, pp. 112–14, nos. 81–83.
31. See *ibid.*, 110–11, no. 79.
32. See Lyons and Ingholt 1957, no. 30.
33. This type of iconography has an established history in Gandhara, where depictions of the four great life events were often placed on the *harmikas* of stupas from the second to the fourth century A.D. Behrendt 2004, pp. 133–34.
34. It is possible that the basket is filled with grapes, thus relating the figure to the Dionysian tradition that remained important within Gandhara, but this interpretation is hypothetical.
35. See Stein 1907, vol. 2, pl. xlviii, Kh. 003.G; Lerner 1984, pp. 40–41; Zwalf 1985, p. 101, no. 134.
36. Tucker 2003, p. 124. It shows a king transporting relics of the Buddha on an elephant; the interior contains narrative scenes showing major events from the life of Shakyamuni as well as episodes from his past lives (*jatakas*).
37. Kuwayama 2006.
38. For a more complete discussion of Afghanistan's early cultural heritage, see Mac Dowall and Taddei 1978b. We know of Afghan tradition primarily from Italian, Japanese, and French excavations. Unfortunately, this data has yet to be compiled effectively; the sites themselves are largely destroyed.
39. In Swat, a small section of a painted garland was found encircling the GSt. 4 encasement of the main stupa at Butkara I (Faccenna 1980–81, pt. 3, p. 704), and fragmentary figural wall paintings dating to the fourth to fifth century were recently discovered in a monastic cell at Jinan Wali Dheri, a Taxila site near Jaulian; see Khan and Mahmood-ul-Hasan 2004. Wall painting is also known from Afghanistan; see Silvi Antonini and Taddei 1981; Chakrabarti 1989. In addition, the Chinese pilgrims described elaborately painted monasteries; see Xuanzang 1884, vol. 1, p. 74.
40. The accession numbers of the others are 2000.42.1–3. For a full discussion of these panels, see Carter 1997.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 585. Curatorial opinion in the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art agrees with this interpretation and suggests the panels date to the third century A.D.
42. In the course of excavations at Dharmarajika, a four-armed Vishnu was found among the remains of a structure (ca. 6th century A.D.) built in the courtyard of monastery G; Siddiqi 1938, p. 35, pl. xi, a. In addition, a small figure of

- Skanda was found in the debris overlying the court a monastery; Marshall 1951, vol. 1, p. 278, vol. 3, pl. 65, h. Stylistically, both of these figures can be directly related to sixth-century Kashmiri imagery, especially Vishnu's tripartite, crosshatched crown and the jewelry and garments of both figures; Paul 1986, pp. 120–22. Closely related to these Dharmarajika finds is a Shiva image that was found in a mound on the outskirts of the Peshawar basin village Akhun Dheri; Aiyar 1917, p. 276, pl. LXXII, a. The Akhun Dheri Shiva has six arms and is ithyphallic; he holds a water flask, the remains of what was likely a trident (his upraised right hand probably held a *mala*), and the wedge-shaped Gandharan interpretation of a *vajra*. He has three heads; the one to his right appears to be that of a boar, while the one to his left is clearly male.
43. Taddei 1965.
 44. Lerner and Kossak 1991, pp. 112–13.
 45. The Maheshvara nomenclature is somewhat problematic, but it is a useful art historical categorization of this specific iconographic format. For a discussion of Shiva Maheshvara, see Granoff 1979, pp. 75–76, n. 11.
 46. The text, translated into Chinese by the Kashmiri monk Prajñabala, is called the *Karoragyūshotenmitsugonkyō*. See Granoff 1979, p. 79.
 47. See Paul 1986, pp. 44, 59, 60; Lerner and Kossak 1991, pp. 112–13, nos. 81, 82. The iconography also occurs in conjunction with a Buddhist Maheshvara/Mahakala from Fategarh, Kashmir; see Granoff 1979, figs. 1–7.
 48. The paintings have a white ground of gypsum, with the figures executed in red ocher, carbon black, and ultramarine blue containing lapis lazuli; see Carter 1997, pp. 585–86.
 49. For a broad discussion of Ajanta, see Spink 2005. For an example of highlighting, see Behl 1998, p. 66.
 50. Carter 1997, p. 584. Stein (1921, pp. 492–95) attributed this structure to the third to fourth century A.D. Others, wanting to link these paintings stylistically to Gandharan sculpture, have pointed to the third century, but this is a difficult argument because of inherent differences between painted media and stone sculpture and the lack of geographic proximity; see Rhie 1999, pp. 377, 385.
 51. Bussagli 1963, p. 18.
 52. The Metropolitan's head is related to what Tarzi (1976, pp. 382, 386–404) referred to as fourth-century A.D. phase IV production. Equally compelling are the similarities between the hairstyles of the Metropolitan's bodhisattva head and a monumental schist bodhisattva head found at Sahri-Bahlol C that likely dates to the mid-fifth century A.D.; Stein 1915, pl. XLII, fig. 19.
 53. For example, see Klimburg-Salter 1989, pl. 61, fig. 79.
 54. Bussagli 1984, p. 266.
 55. Stupa K43; Barthoux 1930–33 (2001 ed.), pp. 135–36, fig. 113, plan A.
 56. Image shrine V2; see Tarzi 1976, p. 394, figs. 1, 9.
 57. The presentation of a central Buddha in conjunction with secondary Buddhas and bodhisattvas may reflect an emerging Mahayana ideology associated with Buddhist paradises.
 58. Tarzi 1976, pp. 386–404; Behrendt 2004, pp. 169–74.
 59. The complexity of late classical influence is addressed in Taddei 1997.
 60. The various names for these invaders include the Ephthalites, White Huns, Red Huns, Alcon Huns, and Hunas; see Rahman 1979; Kuwayama 1992.
 61. Xuanzang 1884, vol. 1, p. 98.
 62. Marshall 1951, vol. 1, p. 76.
 63. Xuanzang mentions various Gandharan Buddhist communities that were still active when he visited Gandhara in A.D. 630, including the city of Po-lu-sha—likely Sahri-Bahlol (Errington 1993)—where he describes a monastery housing fifty priests studying the “Great Vehicle” (Mahayana Buddhism); Xuanzang 1884, vol. 1, p. 112. He also recorded an ongoing restoration project at the site of what he called Kanishka's stupa, likely the cruciform stupa at Shah-ji-ki-dheri; Xuanzang 1884, vol. 1, p. 103. Archaeological evidence supports Xuanzang's observations, as cruciform stupas were indeed built at the sites of Shah-ji-ki-dheri, Sahri-Bahlol site G, and the Taxila site of Bhamala. Similar cruciform stupas dating to the sixth to eighth century can be found in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Kashmir.
 64. These ideas were first published in Kuwayama 1990, p. 968. See also Kuwayama 1997, pp. 96–97; Kuwayama 2006.
 65. Late coins have been found at the Dharmarajika complex, Kunala, Giri, Bhamala, Lalchak, Takht-i-bahi, Ranigat, Sahri-Bahlol, Jamal Garhi, and Shah-ji-ki-dheri, and in Swat at Butkara I and Shnaisha; see Errington 2000, pp. 211–13.
 66. *Ibid.*, pp. 211–12.
 67. Behrendt 2004, pp. 175–210.
 68. Filigenzi 1997; Filigenzi 2000.
 69. Taddei 1962, pp. 290–92.
 70. Behrendt forthcoming.

GLOSSARY

<i>abhaya mudra</i>	gesture made with an upraised right hand that indicates reassurance, absence of fear, and protection; the gesture most commonly displayed by a devotional image of the Buddha
Amitabha	in Mahayana Buddhism, a Buddha who lives in and presides over Sukhavati heaven
<i>anjali mudra</i>	gesture made by pressing the palms of the hands together, indicating respect and salutation
Ashoka	king of the north Indian Mauryan dynasty (r. 272–232 B.C.) credited with dividing the Buddha's relics and enshrining them in stupas throughout his realm; known from numerous epigraphs he had inscribed on boulders and columns across the Mauryan empire
Avalokiteshvara	bodhisattva of compassion and protection
Bactria	ancient name for a region in northern Afghanistan
Bodhgaya	site in north India where Shakyamuni reached enlightenment under the <i>bodhi</i> tree
<i>bodhi</i> tree	tree under which the Buddha reached enlightenment; considered the cosmic axis of the universe
bodhisattva	in early Buddhism, a term used to refer to Shakyamuni in the period before his enlightenment; in later Buddhism, one who has reached enlightenment but, forsaking nirvana, chooses to remain in this realm to help others achieve enlightenment
Buddha	an enlightened being; the historic Buddha is known by many names, including Shakyamuni
dharma	“way” or “practice”; in the Buddhist tradition, it refers to the Buddha's teachings
<i>dharmachakra mudra</i>	gesture made with both hands in front of the chest to indicate symbolically the Buddha's first sermon, when he set in motion the wheel of the law (revealed the dharma); used more generally to indicate a teaching Buddha
Dipankara	past Buddha who met the ascetic Megha and predicted his rebirth as the Buddha Shakyamuni

donors	lay men and women, monks, nobles, and merchants (and sometimes collectively whole villages) who contributed money to Buddhist establishments and commissioned structures, such as stupas, shrines, monasteries, and imagery
<i>dvarapala</i>	deity that acts as a door guardian
false gable	trilobate panel on the front of a stupa drum that typically contains stacked narrative compositions
Faxian (Fa-hian)	Buddhist pilgrim from China who visited Gandhara and South Asia about A.D. 400 and left an account of his travels
Gandhara	ancient region in northwest Pakistan bounded to the north by Swat (ancient Udayana), to the west by Afghanistan (ancient Nagarahara and Bactria), and to the east by the Indus River and, ultimately, Kashmir
Ganges basin	river basin in north India where Shakyamuni lived; important archaeological sites there associated with the Buddha include Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagara
<i>garuda</i>	mythical bird who is the destroyer of serpents; can also refer to the deity Garuda, who was the vehicle (<i>vahana</i>) associated with Vishnu
Greater Gandhara	cultural region that includes the Peshawar basin, Swat Valley, Taxila, Afghanistan, and Kashmir
<i>hamsa</i>	wild goose; an auspicious animal that conveyed concepts of transcendence, rebirth, and heavenly paradises
Hariti	goddess who protects children, especially from disease
<i>harmika</i>	square block at the top of a stupa whose four faces indicate the cardinal directions; often the four sides are filled with narrative reliefs showing the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death (<i>parinirvana</i>)
iconic devotional image	in Gandhara, a sculpture, usually a large-scale Buddha or bodhisattva, that may contain some narrative elements, such as a teaching gesture, but that does not have a narrative function
image shrine	enclosure for an iconic image of the Buddha, a bodhisattva, or some other Buddhist deity
Indra	originally a god of thunder in the Vedic tradition, but in the later Buddhist tradition a deity understood to be the lord of the Trayastrimsa heaven
<i>jatakas</i>	stories of the past lives of the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni), each of which typically addresses a moral or virtue; upon reaching enlightenment, Shakyamuni was able to remember these past lives

<i>karma</i>	actions, either good or bad, that determine rebirth
Kushinagara	city in north India where Shakyamuni died and reached nirvana
linga	in Hinduism, a phallic representation that serves as a sign of the god Shiva; a linga, usually in stone or metal, is the primary object of veneration in temples dedicated to Shiva
Lokapala	gods of the four directions; they protected the Buddha and, following his enlightenment, furnished his alms bowl
Lumbini	gardens in the Ganges basin, near the southern edge of Nepal, where Shakyamuni was born
Mahayana Buddhism	school of Buddhism (literally, “Great Vehicle”) that involves a wide range of religious practices; it stresses the importance of bodhisattvas and includes an expanded pantheon of cosmic Buddhas who reside in various heavens
<i>makara</i>	auspicious water creature that has the teeth of a crocodile and the trunk of an elephant
main stupa	large, central stupa characteristic of Greater Gandharan sacred areas; together with a monastery, it was one of the first structures built when a new Buddhist site was founded
Maitreya	bodhisattva, considered a future Buddha, who resides in Tushita heaven waiting for his final rebirth, when he will reach enlightenment; usually depicted holding a water flask in his left hand
Maya	mother of the Buddha Shakyamuni; the word <i>maya</i> also refers to the illusionary nature of the phenomenal world
Megha	ascetic who went to see the Buddha Dipankara and who was later reborn as Shakyamuni
monastery	residential structure for monks
monastic area	part of a sacred site used primarily by monks for housing and private worship; it included monasteries as well as adjacent small sacred areas and terraces reserved for monks
<i>mudra</i>	hand gesture that has symbolic meaning (see <i>abhaya mudra</i> , <i>anjali mudra</i> , and <i>dharmachakra mudra</i>)
<i>naga</i>	serpent deity often depicted as a human figure with a cobra hood
Nagarahara	ancient name for a region in the eastern part of central Afghanistan
narrative sculpture	relief sculpture that usually depicts scenes from the life of the Buddha; <i>jatakas</i> are sometimes also shown

Nikaya Buddhism	collective term for early Buddhist sects preceding Mahayana Buddhism (only the Theravada school remains today) that stressed the importance of the Buddha Shakyamuni and the veneration of his relics; sometimes referred to as Hinayana Buddhism, but this term (literally, “Little Vehicle”), coined by the Mahayana school, is considered pejorative
nirvana	state of nonexistence; when the Buddha died, having already reached enlightenment, he broke free from the cycle of rebirth and ceased to exist (attained nirvana)
Peshawar basin	modern name for area in northwest Pakistan that was the ancient region of Gandhara
relic shrine	shrine displaying a relic that could be viewed and, sometimes, handled; the shrine of the Buddha’s alms bowl was one of the most important relic shrines in ancient Gandhara
sacred area	central part of a Buddhist site, open to both lay and monastic worshippers, that included the main stupa, various small stupas, relic shrines, and image shrines; this was the most important area for devotees and the place where the most expensive donations were made
samsara	endless cycle of rebirth
Sarnath	place where Shakyamuni taught the first sermon, setting in motion the wheel of law (dharma); the five ascetics who heard this sermon became the first Buddhist monks
schist	metamorphic stone ranging in color from green to black that was used in Gandhara for masonry and sculpture
Shakyamuni	name given to the historical Buddha; also known as Siddhartha Gautama and Tatagatha, among other names
Skanda	deity depicted in Gandhara as a war god
Sri	goddess of auspiciousness and good fortune
stupa	solid, hemispheric mound used to encase relics; the focal religious structure at all Gandharan Buddhist sites
stupa court	part of the public sacred area consisting of the main stupa, surrounding small stupas, relic shrines, stupa shrines, and (in later construction) image shrines
stupa shrine	architectural relic temple housing a stupa
Sukhavati heaven	in Mahayana Buddhism, the western paradise (one of four, each associated with a cardinal direction); presided over by the Buddha Amitabha

<i>swastika</i>	in the ancient world, an auspicious symbol indicating rotation and solar radiation
Swat	high river valley north of the Peshawar basin; known in ancient times as Udayana
Taxila	urban and religious center in ancient Gandhara known through inscriptions and texts and identified through archaeological excavation; included the cities of Sirkap and Sirsukh as well as more than a dozen important Buddhist sites, among them the Dharmarajika complex, Mohra Moradu, and Jaulian
<i>triratna</i>	the “three jewels,” referring to the Buddha, the monastic order, and the Buddhist teachings (dharma)
Trayastrimsa heaven	home to the thirty-three Vedic gods and presided over by the god Indra; an important heaven for the early Buddhist community
Tushita heaven	heaven presided over by the Bodhisattva Maitreya
Udayana	ancient name for the Swat Valley
<i>urna</i>	auspicious mark (“third eye”) between the eyebrows of exalted beings such as Buddhas and bodhisattvas as well as other South Asian deities; usually in the form of a protuberance or whorl of hair
<i>ushmisha</i>	protrusion on the top of the Buddha’s head associated with his enlightenment; this piece of his skull was an important relic that could be seen and touched at the Afghan site of Hadda
Vajrapani	attendant of the Buddha and a protective figure, commonly shown holding an hourglass-shaped <i>vajra</i> (thunderbolt); depicted sometimes with the muscular body of Heracles and other times with a high crown like that of the god Indra
Vedic tradition	religious system introduced into South Asia by the Aryans (a nomadic group from Central Asia) that is recorded in a group of texts referred to as the Vedas, written ca. 1500 B.C.
Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang)	Buddhist pilgrim from China who visited Gandhara and South Asia ca. A.D. 630 and wrote an account of his travels
<i>yaksha</i>	male nature spirit associated with wealth and protection of the dead
<i>yakshi</i>	female nature spirit associated with agricultural growth and fertility and, often, with trees
<i>yasti</i>	pole supporting the umbrellas of a stupa that marks the axis of the stupa and the location of the relics in the center of the dome

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