Exploring Gandhāran Relic Rituals and Veneration II: Ritual Vignettes on Gandhāran Pedestal Reliefs

Ashwini Lakshminarayanan

Abstract: It has long been recognised that the pedestals of Buddha and Bodhisattva statues from the ancient region of Gandhāra depict, to some extent, scenes that echo ritual practices that were normative for the region. While they have been the focus of assessments in recent years, this paper presents some of the results of an ongoing systematic analysis of 326 statue pedestals within the wider context of Gāndhārī donative inscriptions and Chinese travelogues. Dating broadly from the second century CE onwards, this paper argues that the pedestals were a new venue to visually reinforce ritual efficacy and normative practices. The paper sheds light on the conventions used on this visual frame and the actions of figures represented within them. By doing so, it demonstrates that the image corpus reflects patterns in the epigraphic corpus that lays emphasis on the individual as well as communal ritual practices of donors with both familial and non-kinship networks.

Keywords: Pedestals, relics, rituals, Gandhāra, Buddhism, gender, community

Ashwini Lakshminarayanan, Marie Curie Research Fellow, School of History, Archaeology and Religion, Cardiff, United Kingdom; ⓘD 0000-0003-4077-5110

1. Introduction

Ancient Gandhāra, encompassing parts of present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan, has been the focus of both systematic and illicit excavations for over two centuries. The investigations have yielded a substantial corpus of material related to its visual culture. Collectively referred to as Gandhāran art, this corpus includes stone and stucco statues and reliefs depicting scenes from the Buddha's life, ritual praxis, and decorative motifs. Based on diverse research traditions, Gandhāran art has attracted and sustained scholarly attention since the early nineteenth century.

In recent decades, scholarship has made significant progress in understanding the socio-political functions of Gandhāran art within its Buddhist context. These advances have occurred alongside the discovery of textual materials, including donative inscriptions and manuscripts in the Gāndhārī language.[1] The data relevant to our present discussion is limited to donative inscriptions,[2] which can be found on a variety of objects including metal objects, stone reliquaries, architectural and sculptural material in schist, and terracotta pots and lamps. Gandhāran manuscripts attest to the rich literary tradition of the region. However, the fragments edited so far do not preserve any accounts that may be useful in studying how ritual and veneration practices were conducted, or at least conceptualised, in Gandhāra.[3] For rituals, we should turn to the inscriptions, although a vast majority of these inscribed objects originate from poorly documented or unknown contexts. Many were acquired through the antiquities market, complicating efforts to correlate the places mentioned in inscriptions with known archaeological sites in Gandhāra. Nonetheless, dating formulas and palaeographic features provide a basis for estimating the period in which donations were recorded. When fully preserved, the inscriptions offer a combination of information regarding donors and their socio-cultural milieu. Typically formulaic in structure, they state the date of the donation, the principal donor(s), any accompanying co-donors, the nature of the donated object(s), aspirations, and the beneficiaries with whom the donor(s) shared

---

[1]   Gāndhārī – a local Middle Indo-Aryan language written in the Kharoṣṭhī script – was widely used in Central Asia from the third century BCE to the fifth century CE.

[2]   This article does not deal with birch bark manuscripts, dating as early as the end of the first millennium BCE, but this body of evidence has made a significant impact on our understanding of Buddhism in the region, see SALOMON (1999).

[3]   This is because conserving and reading birch bark manuscripts preserved as scrolls is an arduous process that involves patching fragile pieces together. Based on the scrolls found in a clay pot presumably from Haḍḍa, Salomon argues that some of them were presumably *dharma* relics (SALOMON 2009: 28–29). Ritual and veneration are examined together as the gestures of veneration are placed within the ritual context. A discussion of the relationship between the two within Buddhism can be found in TRAINOR (1997: 159–165).

merit.[4] Using an interdisciplinary methodology that combines texts and images, this paper sheds light on the visual presentation of ritual activities. It is an exercise in studying how ritual performance, and donor and devotee groups were presented on Gandhāran pedestals by interpreting them alongside texts with phenomenological questions in mind.[5]

In order to make sense of Gandhāran art, it is customary to turn to the travelogues of the seventh century Chinese monk Xuanzang (玄奘, c. 602–664 CE) and to some extent Faxian (法顯, 337–422 CE), which are particularly valuable for studying the continuity of Buddhist religious praxis. Chinese monks travelled to places outside of the Chinese Empire, such as parts of Central and South Asia, to study Buddhist doctrines and visit sites associated with the Buddha *vita*.[6] Their preserved accounts offer valuable insights into the religious landscapes, monastic institutions, rituals, and doctrinal developments of the regions they traversed.[7] Since the nineteenth century, these records have played a critical role in identifying Buddhist sites and interpreting archaeological remains. In the context of Gandhāra, they have proven especially useful for tracing the development of Buddhism,[8] such as the strategies used to implant the religion through localising narratives that translocate places associated with the Buddha's biography from the Gangetic plains to the Swat Valley.[9]

Among these travelogues, Xuanzang's *Da Tang Xiyu Ji* (大唐西域記, *Record of the Western Regions of the Great Tang*) describes some of the rituals observed in Gandhāra during his visit.[10] However, the level of detail concerning specific rituals varies across the text. As such, a combined approach – drawing on literary,

---

[4]   While the complete examination of the inscriptions addressed here is beyond the scope of this paper, I provide their Corpus of Kharoṣṭhī Inscription (CKI numbers) in this section to facilitate their retrieval. The most recent editions of the inscriptions and their associated bibliography can be found on https://gandhari.org/ created by Stefan Baums and Andrew Glass.

[5]   The basis of this paper derives from a work published seven years ago by Oskar von Hinüber, which presented an overview of inscriptions related to joint donations made by kinship groups (von HINÜBER 2018). Using a handful of inscriptions, von Hinüber studied the composition of average families in an attempt to estimate their approximate size in early India. He further analysed the relationship between image and inscriptions representing family groups. The present article revisits von Hinüber's central theme while simultaneously expanding the methodology to visual and epigraphic data from Gandhāra.

[6]   For an overview of the Chinese travellers as well as the impact of the records on history and archaeology in the 19th century, see DEEG (2018, 2019).

[7]   Although questions remain on the veracity of the records. For example, DEEG (2007) has questioned whether Xuanzang has really been in Mathura.

[8]   KUWAYAMA (2006). On the question of relics, see BEHRENDT (2003) amongst others.

[9]   Broadly on literary strategies in Gandhāra, see DEEG (2011, 2021) and NEELIS (2014, 2019).

[10]   The act of seeing the relics and the relic's response is highlighted in LAKSHMINARAYANAN (2024: 101–115).

visual, and archaeological sources – is essential to enhancing the interpretive value of all available data. Before delving into the epigraphic and visual data from Gandhāra, let us turn to the Chinese travelogues for a brief overview. We will see how, despite the lack of specific details, the texts provide a strong basis for studying ritual practices in Gandhāra. Moreover, the subsequent paragraphs offer clarifications on certain behavioural elements evident in our visual corpus and, based on the Chinese texts, we can speculate on their meaning within the ritual context.

Xuanzang's observations include a discussion of nine physical expressions of reverence common in South Asian religious practice, several of which are archetypal and are reflected in the Gandhāran visual record.[11] For instance, two expressions of reverence such as the act of bringing the palms together in *añjalimudrā* and kneeling down on one knee are the most common attitudes of figures in contact with the Buddha and his relics. According to Xuanzang, such expressions were not limited to reverence for the Buddha but were also used to convey hierarchical relationships, such as those between senior and junior monastics. This hierarchy is mirrored in Gandhāran reliefs, particularly pedestals, where the central figure (the Buddha or a Bodhisattva) and objects (relics such as bowl, turban, reliquary) are rendered on a larger scale and surrounded by smaller, reverent figures.

The Chinese sources also indicate that both monastics and lay devotees[12] commonly venerated the Buddha and his relics through donations, flowers, and incense.[13] According to the *Da Tang Xiyu Ji*, flowers were said to rain from the sky as crowds competed to make offerings on ritual days (T.2087. 878c.5). While the act of using flowers and incense in veneration seems straightforward, the texts often lack details about the nature of the donations themselves.[14] Donations are referenced, sometimes across centuries, without specifying the objects or practices involved.[15] This textual ambiguity echoes a recurring

---

[11] T.2087. 877c.12. According to Deeg (unpublished manuscript), some of the gestures are difficult to interpret even within the Chinese context.

[12] In the case of *Youfang jichao* 遊方記抄 by Huichao (慧超), the lay people are composed of the king, the officials and other common people (Fuchs 1938: 448).

[13] The importance of perfumes, from both flowers and incense, in veneration practices despite being forbidden for use by renunciated and pious Buddhist devotees is underlined by Ching (2014).

[14] *Luoyang qielan ji* (洛陽伽藍記, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*) mentions events from the Buddha's previous lives as a Bodhisattva that took place in the Swat Valley such as his generosity as Viśvantara who donated his children and as Mahāsattva, who donated his body to a starving tigress (T.2092.1019c.18). In this text, the region is said to produce a variety of flowers during winter and summer and the monks and lay offered the flowers to the Buddha.

[15] For instance, the bowl of the Buddha passed through different kingdoms, received donations for centuries and arrived in the kingdom of Persia (*Da Tang Xiyu ji* T.2087. 879c.5). It was

interpretive challenge in visual analysis: determining what constitutes an act of donation.

For the purposes of this study, two methodological concessions have to be made based on the nature of our source. Firstly, the categories of "devotees" and "donors" are treated as functionally equivalent. Whether figures are depicted offering incense or flowers or simply paying respect, they are collectively analysed as "donors".[16] Secondly, the lack of inscriptions on the vast majority of the pedestals means that we must consider figures as ahistorical generic donor figures. Where inscriptions are present, we can identify specific historical donors and sometimes situate them within broader networks of Buddhist patronage. In contrast, as we will see in the subsequent section, ambiguity is not part of our epigraphic data. Wherever fully preserved, Gāndhārī inscriptions explicitly state the name of the donor, the object donation, and in some cases, donors' network within the Buddhist religious landscape.

2. Communal and Individual Donors in Gāndhārī Inscriptions

In his study of family units, Oskar von HINÜBER (2018) discussed a well-known Gāndhārī inscription of the donor Helagupta. This inscription, written on a copper plate in the latter half of the first century CE, presents a detailed cross-section of his family.[17] It mentions three generations of Helagupta's family, some of them alive, and others deceased at the time of the donation. According to the text, the donor Helagupta was the son of Demetrios and Sudarśanā who also had a daughter named Rāmadattā. Helagupta was married to Sumāgadhā and had several children (sons: Adura, Arazanda, Adramitra, Adravharna, Demetrios, and Mahāsammata; daughters: Kāśīkā, Supraguptā, Sudarśanā, and Suprajñā). The family had a mix of Indic, Greek, and Iranian personal names. Based on their names alone, it is difficult to deduce the ethnic composition of this family. This is generally the case within the corpus of Gāndhārī inscriptions. Donors, regardless of their ethnicity, seem to have had a rich pool of names available to choose. In the case of Helagupta's family, "if the succession of names mirrors

---

venerated and given donations for centuries before it was passed through different kingdoms. In *Luoyang qielan ji*, these donations seem to have been nets of pearls. After the *stūpa* was built, king Kaniṣka gave it a net made of pearls, however, he is said to have buried the net in a cauldron so that it may be protected from theft by *nāga*s (*Luoyang qielan ji* T.2092.1021). In contrast, Xuanzang only mentions donations regarding the Kaniṣka *stūpa* (*Da Tang Xiyu ji* T.2087.879c.15; DEEG 2004).

[16] Distinctions made between donor and devotee in the visual context is highly debatable. Needless to say, donors are certainly devotees. However, using donors as an analytical category is consistent with current practices in Buddhist studies, see KIM (2020), LAKSHMINARAYANAN (2023).

[17] CKI 564. This inscription has been expertly discussed in FALK (2014) and for the latest edition and translation, see SALOMON (2020).

the succession of births, then we can deduce that the first born all have Iranian names, while the 'foreign' languages come last" (Falk 2014: 11). Moreover, the naming convention also aligns with practices on the subcontinent, where children are often named after their ancestors, resulting in the repetition of names across successive generations. For instance, two of Helagupta's children are named after his parents, Demetrios and Sudarśanā.

Such elaborate inscriptions naming multiple generations are not commonly featured in the Gāndhārī epigraphic corpus. In contrast to Helagupta's inscription, smaller family units appear in our corpus. These units consist of the donor's immediate relatives, even if their names are not mentioned. This is the case of the Ramaka inscription found on a stone relic chamber from an unidentified site in Bajaur, Pakistan, dating to 16/17 CE. The inscription states that Ramaka, son of Mahāśrava, established a relic in the honour of his unnamed parents, wife and two sons, Mahavarma and Mahiṃdra.[18] It is not clear why the two sons are named while the other family members remain unnamed. It is possible that these unnamed individuals were not physically present during the donation ritual, perhaps even deceased by the time Ramaka established the donation.
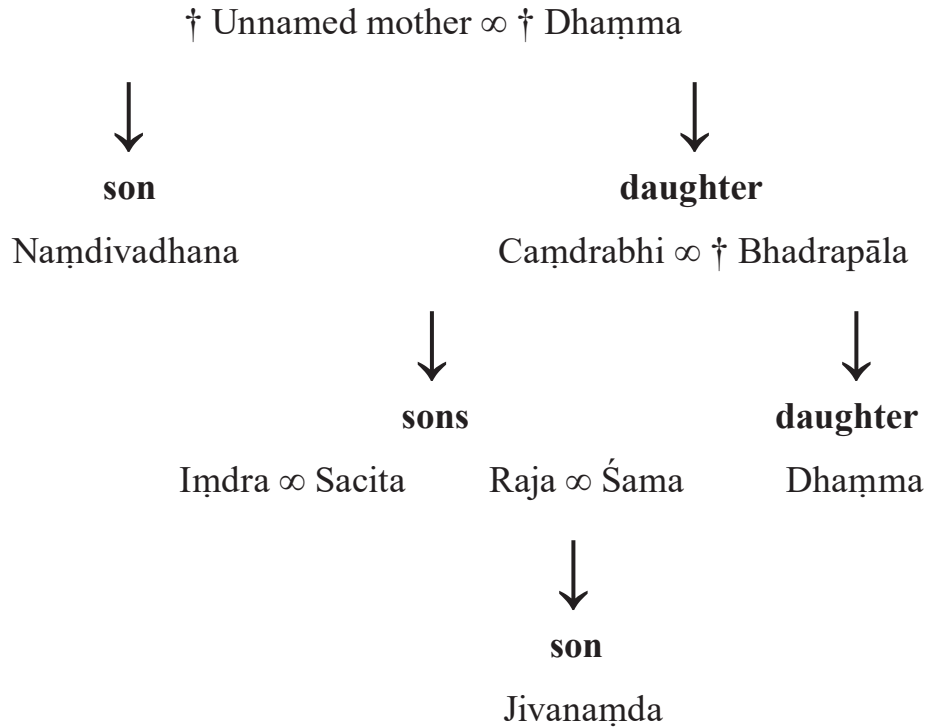
Unnamed, but mentioned individuals are also part of other inscriptions, such as the Ariaśrava inscription dating to 40/41 CE.[19] Carved on a deep schist spherical reliquary, the text states that Ariaśrava, wife of Siaseṇa, established the relic donation with her sons Dhramaruya and Dhamaüta (Skt. Dharmagupta) and other unnamed sons along with her daughter, Aruprava, wife of Labu, and other unnamed daughters. The inscription mentions the names of three of her offsprings, Dhramaruya, Dharmagupta, and Aruprava, and it is clear that she had more children based on the references to them, albeit without names. One reason for not mentioning their names could simply be related to the spatial constraints of the medium on which the inscription occurs. The inscription was carved inside of the lid and the base, exhausting the space available on the spherical reliquary. However, we can also suggest a pragmatic reason, perhaps the unnamed members were not present during the donation ritual.

We may be able to evaluate this suggestion based on the Caṃdrabhi inscription, which details the names of some of her family members and allows us to ascertain the composition of the family unit at the time of the donation ritual (CKI 172). In this inscription, dating to 76/77 CE, the donor Caṃdrabhi, the wife of Bhadrapāla and daughter of Dhaṃma, established a relic donation in Kalawan, Taxila, with her brother, Naṃdivadhana, her sons Śama and Sacita, her daughter Dhaṃma, her two daughters-in-law Raja and Iṃdra, as well as

---

[18]   CKI 251. The donor also honours the governor and other officials; however, this part of the text is not legible.

[19]   CKI 358. For female donors such as Ariaśrava and Caṃdrabhi, and their role as Buddhist donors, see Lakshminarayanan (2023).

her grandson Jivanaṃda, son of Śama. While it is not explicitly mentioned, we may infer that the donation was not performed with members of her family who were deceased (although the possibility that they simply were absent for the donation ritual cannot be completely discarded). Thus, the names of her father and husband only serve as identity markers, and her mother's name is entirely omitted. Instead, the donor shares her merit with all beings (*savasatva*), a formula found in a number of inscriptions.[20] Based on the available information, we can reconstruct some parts of Caṃdrabhi's immediate family as follows:

† Unnamed mother ∞ † Dhaṃma

↓   ↓

son   **daughter**

Naṃdivadhana   Caṃdrabhi ∞ † Bhadrapāla

↓   ↓

sons   **daughter**

Iṃdra ∞ Sacita   Raja ∞ Śama   Dhaṃma

↓

son

Jivanaṃda

This suggestion brings up some questions related to the temporality of the inscriptions vis-à-vis the donation ritual in Gandhāra, principally, when were the inscriptions composed and carved? We will return to this question in the next section in relation to images, but for the moment, let us turn to the *vinaya* texts that detail some of the rules governing inscriptions. Based on some *vinaya*s, one may deduce that the donation ritual, for example, the ritual act of pouring water in the hands of the recipient, ended with the carving of a donative inscription.[21] Such practices are reflected by the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* and have already been discussed at length by Gregory SCHOPEN (2004: 19–44). According to this *vinaya*, when Ajātaśatru donated his father Bimbisāra's furnishings to a monastery, several issues related to their possession and display by the monastic community arose. The Buddha addressed each of these issues by formulating specific regulations, including one that required the objects to be labelled as donations from King Bimbisāra. The practice of recording donations

---

20   For instance, CKI 251, 358, 564, 147, 245, 158 to name a few.

21   WEZLER (1987). For the use of ewers in the donation context, see FALK (2012: 49–53).

in this narrative "carries the seed of what will grow into full-blown formulae for the *transfer of merit*" (Schopen 2004: 25; italics by author). The formulaic nature of the rule corresponds to what we know regarding donative inscriptions prevalent across the Indian subcontinent. Over time, this practice may have further evolved to include a variety of information beyond the donor's name. By reading our inscriptions in light of such rules in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*, we can only hypothesise that inscriptions were recorded after the donation was complete and could therefore reflect, more sincerely, aspects of the ritual including the presence of various participants.

Let us also consider other groups of donors that are not always linked by familial ties. The earliest inscription of this type dates roughly to 10/9 BCE (CKI 455). The text, written on a gold sheet, states that a company (*sahayara*; Skt. *sahacara*) of men named Kuḍiyas established a *stūpa* in Haḍḍa.[22] The benefit of the donation is shared amongst the mothers, fathers and daughters of the Kuḍiya companions. The inscription provides a list of 22 individuals, amongst whom there are two sets of brothers (Buddhagiri and Saṅghamitra, sons of Buddhadeva; and Mahālabdha, Supaṇḍita, Mahāzanda and Mahādeva, sons of Mahādeva).[23] On the whole, the disparate individuals are united by their affiliation with the Kuḍiya *sahacara* and subsequently, the act of establishing this donation. The list of names of the 22 individuals and their parents reflects the trend already highlighted by the Helagupta inscription. The diversity in their names has led Falk to astutely remark that "the Kuḍiya group is composed of families with a rather different religious and social background, which, however, does not exclude an ethnic unity" (Falk 2020–2021: 119).

Other inscriptions also paint a similar picture of donors coming together through non-kinship affiliations. For instance, an inscription on a short cylindrical stone dating roughly 25/26 CE states that a relic donation was established by three men: a donor whose name is not preserved but identified as the son of Dhramila, Sabhakaa, son of Kumuka, Saareṇa, the son of Dasadija (CKI 266). The inscription does not state if the donors had any familial or entrepreneurial connection.[24] Another inscription on a stone relic-chamber dating to 144/145 CE,

---

[22]   For the Kuḍiyas companions, see also CKI 61. Other *sahacara*s (companions) are mentioned in CKI 47 (name not preserved; CKI 829 (Asparakṣida); CKI 156 (Dronivaḍra); CKI 51 (Pipalakhaa); CKI 45 (Vadhitira).

[23]   A complete analysis of the inscription as well as a discussion on the name Kuḍiya can be found in Falk (2022). On questions surrounding the authenticity of the inscription, see Salomon (1999: 144), Baums (2012: 201; 2018: 58).

[24]   It should be noted that the last line of the inscription states that the relics were also established the great king Kopśakasa in Tramaṇa. Other inscriptions from the unknown site of Tramanosa are CKI 255 (Relic Inscription of Utara) and CKI 327 (Relic Inscription of Mahazada, Krini and Śamasabaha). According to Salomon, Trama and its variants refer to a capital city or an administrative centre of the Apracas (2007: 274–275). This suggestion cannot be confirmed

the Lala inscription, mentions a number of male participants involved in the donation without explicitly stating their relationship (CKI 149). This inscription from Manikyala, Pakistan, states the names of four male individuals: Lala established several relics along with Veśpaśia, Khudacia, and Burita. Some other individuals are mentioned as part of the retinue of the donor but are not named.

Another inscription in which no familial relationships are mentioned is the Budhapriya inscription dating to 171/172 CE (CKI 511). Written on a spherical earthenware container from Jalalabad, Afghanistan, the text states that a monastery was established by Budhapriya, Budadeva, Zadasara, the monastery master Sagila, Bhatamuḍaya, and Budhavarma. The short inscription does not state the relationship between the male donors and based on the aforementioned inscriptions; they need not belong to the same family.

Similar donative inscriptions consisting of individuals without kinship links are also attested outside of Gandhāra, particularly in earlier periods from Sanchi and Bharhut in Northern India. These inscriptions, written in Brāhmī and referring to lay men, women, monks and nuns without explicit kinship connections, have been viewed by Thapar as a consequence of "a deliberate act of choice [that] can be seen when a community decides to donate wealth and labour towards the building of a monument that encapsulates its religious beliefs and social values [and] where the patron is not a single person but a recognisable group" (THAPAR 1992: 19). The relationship between the individuals is generally framed as *goṣṭhī*s (*goṭhī*) or "corporate bodies" that are understood to be assemblies "possessing some sort of power, probably social and economic at its heart".[25] In comparison, the extant Gāndhārī epigraphic corpus do not speak of *goṣṭhī*s, only of *sahacara*s (companions), which could be interpreted in the same vein as corporations. Given the lack of direct references to the relationship between some individuals in our inscriptions, we can only hypothesise that these individuals, despite the lack of familial ties, pooled their resources together to establish their donations.

In contrast, the most common inscriptions in the corpus are short and they mention the name of a single donor.[26] For example, a donative inscription of unknown date and preserved *in situ* at Jaulian, Pakistan, states that the donation was made by only one donor, a monk named Dhaṃmamitra, who was also

---

based on the available evidence. Moreover, the last line could also be associated with a previous dedication associated with the same relics.

[25]   For an overview of the term in different periods, see MILLIGAN (2019: 4).

[26]   Even with a single donor, a longer inscription can provide the conditions associated with the donation as well as the donor's motivations. On an inscription referring to a re-establishment of relics which were first established around 150 BCE, only the Apraca king Vijayamitra (II) is mentioned as a donor (CKI 176).

a city-dweller (Skt. *nāgaraka*).[27] On the Indian subcontinent, the appearance of such relatively short inscriptions are known from as early as the third century BCE. These short inscriptions generally state the name of the donor as well as other socially relevant information such as their gender, status or their place of origin.[28] According to Matthew Milligan, short inscriptions preserve a different intentionality of the record keeper, in contrast to the longer inscriptions that predominantly date to the later periods. Milligan further hypothesises that these inscriptions may have been the precursors to more elaborate inscriptions recording complex ritual characteristics. In Gandhāra, there appears to be no clear chronological distinctions between short and long donative inscriptions. The coexistence of both types within the epigraphic corpus suggests a closer relationship between the text and the object on which it was inscribed, rather than an evolution in the way ritual activities were recorded.[29]

Besides individual donors, couples such as Prince Iṃdravarma from the Apraca royal family and his wife were present in the ritual landscape as early as the first century CE. A silver sheet inscription found within a schist container in an unknown site from Bajaur, Pakistan, states that Utara, the wife of Iṃdravarma I, together with her husband established the relics of the Buddha.[30] In a later inscription of unknown date and written in pointillé style on two silver goblets in the first century CE, the text states that a relic donation was established by Prince Iṃdravarma (II) of the Apraca family along with his wife (CKI 241). In this text, the donors honour a number of beneficiaries from the royal family with their donation such as *stratega* (Apraca heir) Iṃdravarma (I) and his wife Utara, the former king Vijayamitra and his wife. More generally, the text also refers to the whole community of relatives of the Apracas and all beings with whom the donors shared their merit.

The Gāndhārī epigraphic corpus is replete with donor groups, familial and corporate, that are linked together by their donative capacity and agency. The active participation of such groups is not limited to the textual material.

---

[27] CKI 78. For the translation, see KONOW (1929: 95). To this list we can add several donor monks from Jaulian inscriptions, such as CKI 74. 75, 77, 79, 80, 81 as well as other from Termez in CKI 663, 664, 748, 749, 897 in which monks appear as donors alone.

[28] For an analysis of the ritual significance of inscriptions, regardless of their length, in the early period, see MILLIGAN (2013).

[29] Spatial constraints seem to be a significant factor contributing to the length of the inscriptions. For instance, inscriptions on metal plates such as those of the Oḍi king Seṇavarma (CKI 249), Patika (CKI 46); Balanaṃdi (CKI 147), Helagupta (CKI 564) and Caṃdrabhi (CKI 172) are considerably longer. In comparison, inscriptions on objects with constraints on space due to their smaller surface areas tend to be short, for example, on lamps such as CKI 68 (Dharmarajika Lamp inscription), CKI 175 (Utmanzai Lamp inscription) amongst others.

[30] CKI 265. The text mentions the name of Utaraüta, Pupidria, Uṣaṃvea as well as Śreṭha, mother of the meridarch. It is not clear what relationship these individuals had with the donors. The donors also honour Viṣuvarma, the king of the Apraca as well as Rukhuṇaka, his wife.

Indeed, innumerable stone and stucco images representing figures in the act of donating and venerating are ubiquitously recovered from Gandhāran Buddhist sites. However, such images are classified as representing "generic" scenes and grouped together with other themes, thus escaping a more systematic analysis (Pons 2019: 15). This subsequent section lays the groundwork for such an analysis by focusing on one group of images: the pedestals of statues.

The following section of this article provides a broad outline of the pedestals classified within my UK Research and Innovation Horizon Europe Guarantee Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship project titled *Gandhāran Relic Rituals and Veneration Explored* (GRAVE) at Cardiff University.[31] Pedestals are a specific visual frame located below the statues of seated and standing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.[32] Generally, they are rectangular in shape and are delimited on both sides by decorative motifs such as Gandhāran-Corinthian pilasters or decorative furniture legs. Within this visual frame, relics such as the Buddha's bowl, turban, fire altars, incense burners, as well as seated Bodhisattvas, are centrally placed. Lay and renunciate figures flank these central entities on either side and perform a variety of actions. Based on 326 pedestals studied within GRAVE,[33] this section presents how male and female figures are arranged on these pedestals and how their interactions with relics and other objects are visually communicated. Subsequently, it also highlights the small group of nine pedestals with inscriptions that provide further insight into not only the visual compositions, but also the production of Gandhāran statues.

3. Visualising Donors on Gandhāran Pedestals

Our examination of ritual praxis in this section is deeply rooted in visual culture. Showing rituals on a static medium obliged sculptors to synthesise the actions, and pedestal reliefs privilege a specific moment that may have meaningfully appealed to the viewer. Thus, discerning the subject of the pedestal reliefs requires attention to their content, ritual setting, iconography, and their broader context. To do so, GRAVE's visual approach focuses on three elements: figuration, configuration, and presentation (Hölscher 2014). Figuration focuses on the physical characteristics of the figures, their clothing, attributes, gestures,

---

[31] The objectives of GRAVE can be found in Lakshminarayanan (2024: 87). The classification of the data, as well as the relationship between the pedestals and their statues is part of a forthcoming article.

[32] The relationship between the pedestals and statues also warrants a systematic study. This lacuna has also been identified in Rhi (2023). However, this topic deserves to be explored at length but doing so would take us outside of the scope of the present paper. An analysis of the pedestals and their relationship to the statues is part of a forthcoming article.

[33] This number continues to expand, however, the patterns observed and enumerated in this article remain constant.

and actions. Configuration deals with types of relics (primary and secondary), and the constellation of objects used in relic veneration. Presentation deals with how the ritual is presented to the viewer with careful consideration of its content and context. Using this approach, GRAVE explores rituals such as circumambulation, donations, processions, and festivals including dance and music to understand how images express behaviour and types of ritual accoutrements to promote communal and individual veneration. In this section, we are concerned with figuration, mainly the way in which figures are presented and grouped together.

To study figuration, pedestals are an important source for two main reasons. Firstly, they provide a large data set to study the way in which donor figures are represented. Secondly, the importance of pedestals as a visual frame is well established, particularly in the study of medieval Buddhist art. Claudine BAUTZE-PICRON (1995, 2014) has persuasive highlighted how human characters were consistently relegated to the periphery of images, notably on the pedestals of Pāla period sculptures (circa 8th–12th CE). Studying statues from Eastern India, Bautze-Picron demonstrated that both lay and monastic figures, including families, in smaller proportions, ornamented pedestals in devotional gestures. On some pedestals, inscriptions identify them as donors, associating them with historical individuals. Moreover, statues and their pedestals can be studied in the framework of hierarchical scaling (KIM 2016: 206). Based on the repetitive structure of the pedestals, Jinah Kim suggested that they delineate the human realm and distinguish it from the realm of the statue, the Buddha realm. Providing distinct places for the two realms may have allowed artists to visually augment the activities of the contemporary "real" time in which the donors' actions take place. The pedestals have the ability to render the statue as "a place of exchange between two spheres, divine and human" (BAUTZE-PICRON 2014). Thus, the actions on the pedestals are centred on rituals that mediate between the human and Buddha realms.

Amongst the statues with rectangular pedestals in Gandhāra, two types of imagery can be identified.[34] The first type consists of bases with decorative motifs, and the second type consists of bases with a central figure or object surrounded by figures. 83 pedestal reliefs were grouped together within the first type, and they depict floral and geometric motifs such as upside-down lotuses,[35]

---

[34] The classification of bases follows established practices within the field of Buddhist art, mainly apparent in medieval Buddhist art such as in BAUTZE-PICRON (1985).

[35] 1902,1002.47, 1913,1108.18 (British Museum, London); 75–1024 (National Museum, New Delhi); 939.17.8 (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto); 5856 (Bihar Museum, Patna); G.132/A23188, N.S.3925/A23233 (Indian Museum, Kolkata); I 418 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin) amongst others. The lotus seat, according to some textual material, particularly those considered to be Mahāyāna, such as the *Da zhidu lun* (大智度論 Skt.*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*; *Treatise on the Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*) T. 1509. 25:

a row of rosettes,[36] and leonine legs with pleated fabric[37] amongst others (**Figs 1** and **2**).

The second type of pedestals are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.[38] This discussion is not without significant caveats. Some of these are inevitably part of any study on Gandhāran art; and relate to questions of provenance and chronology. Amongst the pedestals studied within GRAVE, only a small fraction can be associated with an excavated site. Many come from the Peshawar Valley, particularly sites that were part of the early excavations such as Sahri-Bahlol, Loriyan Tangai, Charsadda, Jamalgarhi and Takht-i-Bahi. In these cases, exact location of the statues within the site is not always easy to ascertain.[39] Due to the complex nature of our data, only a general context is provided for them. That is to say, the statues decorated chapels, niches or placed around the circumambulation area and were visible to the devotees (**Fig. 3**).[40] However, a large part of the data consists of pedestals whose provenance is not known.

Hand-in-hand with provenance, conclusions based on chronology are also difficult to make at this stage. Many of the early excavations were conducted without much regard for stratigraphy and other relative dating methodologies. Since an estimation of chronology based on style and iconography is challenging to make outside of the Swat Valley, GRAVE's corpus is simply dated as belonging

---

115c-16a, was considered to be a tender, pure and fragrant and so, superior to a mat, which was for ordinary people ("Question. – Il pourrait s'asseoir sur une natte (manca, khatvâ) ; qu'a-t-il besoin de ces lotus ? Réponse. – 1. La natte est le siège habituel des gens du monde (*loka*) et des laïcs (*avaddtavasana*) [mais non pas du Buddha]. De plus, les lotus sont tendres (*slaksna*) et le Buddha veut manifester sa force miraculeuse (*rddhibala*) en s'asseyant dessus sans les froisser" in Lᴀᴍᴏᴛᴛᴇ 1944: 464–465).

[36] I 449 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin); 13.96.17 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); 1880.218 (British Museum, London); 1969.61 (Clevland Museum of Art, Clevland); 29-68-1 (Penn Museum); 48-3-55 (National Museum, New Delhi); 939.17.13 (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto); AO 2908 (Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris); B60S132+ (Asian Art Museum, Los Angeles) amongst others.

[37] I 446, I 4893, I 497 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin); 1880.105, 1880.186, 1886,0319.2, 1899,0715.4, 1902,0520.2, 1904,1217.5 (British Museum, London); 1887.08.6327 (Östasiatiska Museet, Stockholm); 25.267 (The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore); 340-1907, IM.4-1911, IPN.2603, IS.83-1960, IS.112-1961 (Victoria & Albert Museum, London); 4857/A23211, 4871/A23462, GD133 (Indian Museum, Kolkata); 543 (Swat Museum, Mingora); 939.17.10 (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto); 1127 (Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh); Inv.-Nr. RVI 3 (Rietberg Museum, Zurich) amongst others.

[38] Amongst them 83 pedestals are damaged. Damaged pedestals could present a partially preserved scene (for example, PM 1533, BM 1892,0801.11, MET 2014.188, Indian Museum 5005/A23185) or could be completely effaced (for example, BM 1880.73, Walters Art Museum 25.123, Government Museum and Art Gallery Acc. no. 19).

[39] For instance, the majority of statues with pedestal reliefs come from Stūpa 1 and Chapel 16 from Jamalgarhi.

[40] For the general typology of these statues based on stylistic features, see Rʜɪ (1994, 2008).

Fig. 1.   Statue of standing Bodhisattva Maitreya with a decorated pedestal, Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, France © Musée national des Arts asiatiques, A. Lakshminarayanan. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

Fig. 2.   Statue of seated Bodhisattva Maitreya with a decorated pedestal, Indian Museum, India © Indian Museum, Kolkata. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

to a broad period falling between the second and the fourth centuries CE. This chronological period is substantiated on the results from excavations recording early examples of Buddhist art in the Swat Valley. The early artistic evidence from Swat Valley sites, such as Butkara I, Saidu Sharif I and Panr I, do not consist of statues with decorated pedestals. Whenever preserved, the pedestals of statues in the earliest dated Gandhāran artistic style, also known as drawing

Fig. 3.   Shrines surrounding the main *stūpa*, Takht-i-Bahi, Pakistan © A. Martin.
            The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

style, are plain and undecorated.[41] For this reason, we can safely advance that

---

[41]   The corpus from Swat Valley, mainly Butkara I and Saidu Sharif I, has been divided by
       Faccenna into three groups based on the styles. Amongst the three, the first group is called
       "stile disegnativo" and is associated with the earliest phase of images due to "its fine parallel
       grooves showing a feeling for line prevailing over the somewhat summary, fattened rendering
       of the volumes of the bodies, the figures displaying a certain angularity" (Filigenzi et al.

elaborately decorated pedestals did not appear in Gandhāran art around the first century CE and can only be attributed to subsequent periods.

Overall, the reliefs follow a repetitive presentation structure with figures executing similar actions towards the central zone. The figures are generic; meaning their physiognomy is not varied within the composition (**Fig. 4**). Their clothing can only be described as Indic comprising of an *uttarīya* and *parīdhāna* (upper and lower body garments respectively), with the exception of a handful of pedestals depicting groups of figures in Kuṣāṇa attire (wearing a tunic and trousers).[42] The abstract facial character of the figures suggests that they are not portraits in the western sense but may be visual types that identify them as specific types of donors and devotees. When there are differences between the figures, even subtle, we can ascertain information that is not provided by our textual sources.[43]

Fig. 4. Pedestal of a missing statue comprising a large family group of donors, unknown provenance © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin. CC BY-SA 4.0.

The majority of the figures on the pedestals are human, and both renunciate and lay are equally represented. When monks and lay figures appear together, the composition does not differentiate between them. They are depicted in the same

---

2003: 290). This style not only displays some affinity to Indian art in the Śuṅga periods, but the group belonging to this style do not depict the Buddha in the human form (Taddei 2006: 44–45). The base with a ritual scene from Butkara I belongs to the later period and can be found in Faccenna (1962–1964: PL. CCCX Inv. no. 2465).

[42] For example, BB20-K-1 (The National Museum of Afghanistan, Kabul) and GRS/B-B/SL.17 (Indian Museum, Kolkata).

[43] Rhi (2023: 14–15), based on relief panels and statue bases, identifies typological dissimilarities between the figures and presents their order. He states that the differences between them are due to the fact that "monotonousness in the appearance of Buddha images overall would have made them indistinguishable from one another" (Rhi 2023: 18).

Fig. 5.   Statue of standing Bodhisattva with pedestal comprising six donors, unknown provenance, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. CC0 1.0 Public Domain.

size, with equal attention to detail, and perform the same actions, suggesting a lack of hierarchical arrangement. The renunciate figures, many of them monks, perform their actions alongside the lay and do not always mediate or facilitate them. For instance, the pedestal of a standing Bodhisattva image from the Metropolitan Museum depicts six figures venerating an enthroned reliquary (**Fig. 5**).[44] The three figures on the right of the reliquary are monks, as suggested by their *saṃghāṭi* (outer robe of Buddhist monastic attire). One of them extends a thick garland towards the reliquary, echoing the offering of flowers that is repeatedly featured in literary sources. The three figures on the left are a monk, a female figure and possibly a nun.[45] The mixed categories of figures on the left (male/female, lay/renunciate), already present a panorama of the vignettes on the pedestals.

In comparison, the pedestal of a standing Bodhisattva image from the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh depicts four figures venerating the bowl (**Fig. 6**).[46] There are two female figures who are similarly dressed standing to the right of the bowl. However, their figuration conveys subtle differences (**Fig. 7**). The figure on the right, next to the pilaster, is considerably smaller compared to the female figure immediately next to the relic. They also perform different actions, for instance, the larger female figure offers a flower to the relic, and the smaller figure is depicted in *añjalimudrā* as she holds her offering in her hand. To the left of the bowl, two male figures, lay and monastic, are depicted in *añjalimudrā* and facing the relic. The four figures appear in equal standing, suggesting that the monk is not the officiant of the ritual but a participant at the same level as the other figures.

---

[44] The reliquary resembles some schist relic caskets unearthed in Gandhāra. Similar reliquaries also appear on the pedestals in G-375, G-381 (Lahore Museum); 81.193 (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts).

[45] This is a hypothetical identification that I make based on the attire of the figures. Note that the monks bare one of their shoulders and the figure, identified as a nun, wears a robe that covers both her shoulders. For the attire of nuns and the difficulty in identifying them in visual material, see Lakshminarayanan (2024).

[46] The veneration of the bowl relic commonly appears on the pedestals An inexhaustive list is PM 1014, 1046, 1120, 1373, 1491, 2790 (Peshawar Museum, Peshawar); 13.96.16 (Metropolitan Museum, New York); 3699/A23192, 4896/A23209, 4453/GRS/NW/SL1, G.125A/A23214, GRS/B-C/H-7/SL.5, GRS239 (Indian Museum, Kolkatta); 37.99 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); 87.1153 (National Museum); 939.18.1 (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto); AO 2907 (Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris); 1192, 1218, 1844, 2225 (Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh); G-123, G-450, S-236, S-30, S-394, S-489 (Lahore Museum, Lahore).

Fig. 6. Statue of standing Bodhisattva with pedestal comprising four donors, Sikrai, Pakistan © Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, A. Lakshminarayanan. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

Fig. 7.　Detail of pedestal in Fig. 6, Sikrai, Pakistan, Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, India © Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, A. Lakshminarayanan. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

As with the previous illustration, the figures are not always depicted in equal size on the pedestals. In some cases, the size of the figures is impacted by the architectural frame. For example, on Fig. 5, the figures are of varying scale. However, the size of the last figures on either side of the reliquary is clearly impacted by the elongated cornice emerging above the Gandhāran-Corinthian pilasters. In contrast, we can identify pedestal images in which scale was deliberately manipulated to convey internal relationships between figures. In the case of the partially damaged pedestal currently at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, there are four figures venerating a seated Bodhisattva (**Fig. 8**). To the right of the Bodhisattva are three figures, two female figures in Indic attire and one small figure standing between them, a child.[47] The presence of a child amongst donor groups is significant. The two figures closest to the Bodhisattva hold offerings in their hand, the child and the second female figure venerate in *añjalimudrā*. Similarly, a pedestal of unknown provenance from the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh depicts a group of lay men and women venerating the seated Buddha in *abhayamudrā* (**Fig. 9**). On either side of the Buddha are three female figures and three male figures of whom the last figures

---

[47]　Other pedestals with children that are not illustrated in this article are Acc. No. 066 (Museo della Civiltà Romana); I 435 (Staatliche Museen, Berlin); Hargreaves (1921: 20, no. 51); Fussman (1980: PL. VI).

Fig. 8.   Pedestal of a missing statue comprising adult and child donors, unknown provenance © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin. CC BY-SA 4.0

Fig. 9.   Pedestal of a missing statue comprising adult and child donors, unknown provenance © Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, A. Lakshminarayanan. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

closest to the architectural frame are children. The donors are organised based on their genders, so the child on the right is male and the one on the left is female.

Unfortunately, the poor condition of the pedestals does not always allow us to identify the gender of the children. Nevertheless, their visual presence enlarges our understanding of the epigraphic evidence. We have already seen how Helagupta, Ariaśrava and Caṃdrabhi established their donations with their family members, sometimes indicating multiple generations. The age of their family members is not mentioned, and it is difficult to deduce them based on the formulaic nature of the inscriptions. The pedestal reliefs with children as part of donor groups suggests that at least some of the family units in Gāndhārī inscriptions could have included children.

It is easy to dismiss the role of children within Buddhist institutions due to the latter's focus on renunciation. However, it is well established that safe childbirth and the health and wellbeing of children were significant preoccupations of lay devotees.[48] The successful integration of the *yakṣiṇī* Hārītī as a protector of children within Buddhist sites all over the subcontinent attests to the strategies exercised by the *saṅgha* to allay these preoccupations.[49] Several images of Hārītī have been found in Gandhāra and the most notable statue of the *yakṣiṇī* is from Skarah Dheri and includes an inscription (**Fig. 10**). This statue and inscription have been the subject of a lengthy analysis by Anna Maria Quagliotti (CKI 133, 1999–2000). Based on its style, Quagliotti assigned the statue to the first century CE and deftly argued that the goddess was likely venerated for her powers of fertility and ability to heal.

Schopen has further argued that children were given to the *saṅgha* as part of a protection ritual, imitating Hārītī as an anxious mother who gave her children to be protected after being converted by the Buddha (Schopen 2014: 131–156). Analysing passages from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*, Schopen identified how children were given to monks and nuns for protection, especially if they were ill. When they recovered from their illness, their parents exchanged donations to recover their children, akin to a ransom. This cast the monks and nuns as protectors of the children of lay devotees including that of Hārītī.[50] Whether the

---

[48] Several inscriptions mention the gift of good health (*arogadakṣina*) as an important motivation for establishing donations. A few examples are CKI 60, 509, 369 (for the donor's own health), 830, 159, 367, (health for all beings), and 161 (health of the father).

[49] The textual references of Hārītī are documented in Peri (1917). For the images and their iconography, see Ahuja (2019). This includes the shrines found in Kauśāmbī and Ajaṇṭa, see Sharma (1958: xxxvi– xlv), Cohen (1998: 8) respectively.

[50] Similarly, in Yijing's *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* (南海寄歸內法傳, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago*, c. 635–713 CE), offerings were made to the goddess to cure diseases and pray for fertility.

Fig. 10. Statue of Standing Hārītī statue with inscription, Skarah Dheri, Pakistan
© Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, A. Lakshminarayanan.
The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

presence of children in our pedestals allude to circumstances described in the *vinaya* is impossible to confirm at this stage. All that we can conclude based on the available evidence is that our reconstruction of the ritual landscape should include not only adult donors but also their children, who seem to be active participants in the artistic conceptualisation of rituals.

In some of the aforementioned pedestals, the central zone is occupied by the seated Buddha or Bodhisattva. In some cases, the seated Bodhisattva also holds a *kamaṇḍalu* (water pot), an attribute associated with Maitreya.[51] When the seated Bodhisattva without *kamaṇḍalu* is present, the figure is interpreted as Siddhartha Gautama prior to his enlightenment (RHI 2003: 165). Other pedestals depicting the ploughing episode, a prominent episode in the biography, further support this interpretation (**Fig. 11**).[52]

How can we explain the presence of donor figures in the context of the first meditation of Siddhartha? Some "floating" episodes from the Buddha Śākyamuni's life story became popular and were celebrated as festivals. For each of these festivals, new rules had to be instituted to organise them efficiently and manage the resulting donations. One of the festivals for Siddhartha's enlightenment called the "the Great Worship of the Bodhisattva" was "naturally associated with an image of the seated Buddha in the meditation posture".[53] In the rules related to the "Great Worship of the Bodhisattva", we come across the way in which this image of the Bodhisattva was venerated by donors (SCHOPEN 2014: 390–403). In this text, the lay donor *par excellence*, Anāthapiṇḍada, is said to have created an image of the Bodhisattva after the Buddha authorised it. Subsequently, Anāthapiṇḍada created a processional circuit for the image and provided ornaments to decorate it. This image is explicitly described as the "Bodhisattva Sitting in the Shade of the *Jambu* Tree", connecting it with moments prior to the enlightenment. After several regulations, the image was further adorned with flags, banners and palanquins, and even retinues of monks and nuns, and music was supplied to the procession. Such extravagance attracted, in typical *vinaya* fashion, a great many people who assembled to see it in

---

[51] LUCZANITS (2005). On the role of Maitreya as a healer, see FALK (2023). Moreover, Maitreya also appears on pedestals with other Buddhas (BEHRENDT 2014). Furthermore, there are indications that the Bodhisattva with *kamaṇḍalu* can also represent Siddhārtha in some cases, see LOBO (1991).

[52] They are a seated Siddhārtha statue with a pedestal depicting the ploughing episode in PM_02750 from Sahri Bahlol and a fasting Buddha statue with the pedestal of Siddhārtha meditating near farmers ploughing a field in PM_02756 from Takht-i-Bahi. For the earliest studies including textual parallels, see HORSCH (1964), DURT (1982).

[53] SCHOPEN (2005: 132–133). Quote in 133. In contrast, the *Sarvāstivāda vinaya* has often been used to suggest that the Buddha rejected the use of images of his likeness in veneration. To circumvent this rule, Anāthapiṇḍada requested the Buddha if he could make an image of the Bodhisattva, the Buddha prior to his enlightenment (for the discussion of this text, see RHI 1994: 209). This request was accepted by the Buddha.

Fig. 11. Seated Siddhārtha in meditation, Lahore Museum, Pakistan © The Warburg Institute Iconographic Database. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

Fig. 12. Seated Bodhisattva in meditation, Sanchi, India © American Institute of Indian Studies. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

procession. With much pomp and circumstance, the image was successful in obtaining an abundance of donations, including flowers and cloth (SCHOPEN 2014: 306–309). Art historical and epigraphic evidence suggest that donating Bodhisattva images was common in the Kuṣāṇa period, both Gandhāra and Mathura.[54] Notably, the inscription on the pedestal of a seated Bodhisattva statue from Sanchi states that a shrine (*gṛha*) was made for the image of the Bodhisattva under the *Jambu*-shade (**Fig. 12**). The shrine for the statue of the type

---

[54] Notably, the bi-script inscription in Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī states that the Bodhisattva image (*paṭimā*) was the donation (CKI 440 in FALK 2002–2003: 35–36).

Fig. 13. Pedestal relief depicting an open incense burner, unknown provenance
© Musée national des Arts asiatiques, A. Lakshminarayanan.
The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

jambuchhāyā (the shade of the *jambu* tree) was installed in the Dharmadeva vihāra (the name of the monastery) by Madurikā, daughter of Khara, sometime in 255 CE (WILLIS 1999–2000). It is hard to imagine the statue being paraded, needless to say that stone images are significantly heavier than bronze statues that were typically used for processions in the later periods. Nevertheless, the Sanchi statue along with the inscription attest to the persistence of the image type "Bodhisattva Sitting in the Shade of the *Jambu* Tree" in the Kuṣāṇa period. Even when stationary within a niche or a chapel, the statue was likely the focus of ritual activities in the manner echoed by our Gandhāran pedestals.

Besides normative practices, pedestals depicting donor figures alongside the Buddha, Maitreya and other Bodhisattvas could also be interpreted as part of a strategy to collapse different temporalities. According to Jinah Kim, this strategy involves embedding donors within the past, literally placing them within a historical timeline and collapsing the temporal gap between donors and the Buddha (KIM 2020: 209–210). Donor figures were seamlessly placed in auspicious events, including those that would have already occurred and those

Fig. 14. Detail of a pedestal depicting an open fire burner, unknown provenance © Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, A. Lakshminarayanan. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

which were celebrated such as the First Meditation. In the presence of these auspicious events, donor figures perform various activities, namely offering garlands, flowers and clothing and using contemporary accoutrements, namely incense burners (**Fig. 13**) and fire stands (**Fig. 14**). When incense burners and fire stands appear on pedestals, it is not hard to imagine that statues may have been venerated similarly with these objects.[55] They are generally placed on the ground as donor figures symmetrically stand around them in various attitudes. The use of these accoutrements could also be dynamic, for instance, pedestals depict figures holding the incense burner and fire stand in their hands,[56] or

---

[55] According to Falk (2008: 74–77), fire stands were also used in consecration rites during which some donations such as pearls and gemstones alongside other objects were burnt.

[56] G-254 (Lahore Museum, Lahore) depicts a monk holding a fire stand as a female figure venerates the missing statue. S-225 from the same museum depicts a male figure holding an incense burner as two female figures face the missing statue. The incense burner, unlike the others that are more commonly depicted on pedestals. The metallic incense burners from Gandhāra are the focus of Stone (2004).

Fig. 15. Statue of a standing male figure carrying a fire burner, Butkara I, Pakistan
© Z. Zhong. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

Fig. 16. Statue of standing Buddha with pedestal comprising one monastic donor, Indian Museum, India © Indian Museum, Kolkata. The CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence does not apply to this picture.

even on top of their heads, communicating a more realistic dimension for these objects.[57] Such activities are also consistent with the earliest images from Swat Valley that depict donor figures carrying lamps (**Fig. 15**).[58] The exaggerated proportions of the fire stands and incense burners could only be interpreted as visual prompts. Rather than conveying their actual dimensions, the objects are prioritised in the visual conceptualisation to amplify the ritual activity.

The veneration of the statues themselves, similar to the "Great Worship of the Bodhisattva" festival, is supported by at least 14 pedestals.[59] On these pedestals, the figures directly face the statue above in *añjalimudrā*. More than half of the pedestals only comprise of one figure, while the others comprise two figures, mainly couples. The individual donors are commonly monks (**Fig. 16**), and one exception is a female figure venerating the seated Bodhisattva statue.[60] They echo numerous Gāndhārī inscriptions in which individuals establish donations and, in their donative text, do not mention their kinship or corporate networks. One of the statues, currently in the Lahore Museum, is a seated Buddha with a figured pedestal and an inscription. The latter was carved on the halo that is currently missing. The pedestal depicts a kneeling monk with an incense burner in his hand as he venerates the statue.[61] The inscription was only partially preserved when the statue was found, and it states that the statue was donated by Bosavaṃma. Does the monastic figure on the pedestal represent the donor of this quintessential image? The iconographic characteristic of this monk is also nothing new in Gandhāran art. He wears a pleated *saṃghāṭī* that leaves one of his shoulders bare. It would be impossible to differentiate this figure from the other monastic figures we have so far encountered. The dimensions and physical characteristics in no way allow us to determine if the figure makes allusions to a historically specific donor. Nevertheless, the inscription preserves the name of a single individual, and it is difficult to ignore the possibility that the name could correspond to the depicted figure. Even though the inscription does not state that the donor was a monk, the image may have played a role in communicating

---

[57] GRS/B-C/H-2/SL-10 (Indian Museum, Kolkata) and TC-80 (Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo).

[58] The portability of these fire stands is further emphasised by BM 1902,1002.29 in which two lay donors seemingly circumambulate a *stūpa* along with two monks. One can certainly wonder if this relief captures a more dynamic representation of the same actions we see on the pedestals.

[59] 23937 (CSMVS, Mumbai), 49-24 (National Museum, New Delhi), 4915/A23213, GRS191, GRS/NW/SL8, GRS/B-A/H-15/SL.10, 4911/GRS/AR1&3/SL.27 (Indian Museum, Kolkata), G-152 (Lahore Museum, Lahore), I 407 (Staatliche Museum, Berlin), S-225, G-254 (Lahore Museum, Lahore), CHPT 178 (Dir Museum, Chakdara), Hargreaves (1921: no. 202), Acc. no. 848 (Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh).

[60] GRS191 (Indian Museum, Kolkata).

[61] G-152 (Lahore Museum).

this status.[62] In this way, the visual and textual information may have played complementary yet diverging functions in order to communicate different aspects of the donor. In order to test this hypothesis, the following section deals with eight other inscribed statues from Gandhāra. It will demonstrate that the inscriptions are not entirely disconnected from the visual composition on the pedestal, even if this connection remains elusive.

4. Inscribed Pedestals

Within the corpus, a handful of statues with an inscription are only preserved as pedestals. The text can be found either on the bottom fillet of the pedestal or on the halo, as in the case of Bosavaṃma's statue. Some inscribed images only consist of a few *akṣara*s and do not always lend themselves to a complete analysis. For a full list of inscriptions, see **Table 1**.

Table 1. List of Pedestals with inscriptions

No.	Museum	Provenance	Image	Inscription
1	Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, Hokuto, Acc. No. 100083	Unknown	Standing Buddha	CKI 256
2	British Museum, London Acc. No. 1890,1116.1	Hastnagar	Pedestal	CKI 124
3	Lahore Museum, Lahore G-152	Unknown	Seated Buddha	CKI 120
4	Lahore Museum, Lahore G-277	Shahr-i-Napursan	Pedestal	CKI 131
5	Private Collection	Unknown	Pedestal	CKI 229
6	Private Collection	Unknown	Pedestal	CKI 192
7	Peshawar Museum, Peshawar Acc. No. 626	Palatu Dheri	Pedestal	CKI 125
8	Indian Museum, Kolkata No. A23482/4908	Loriyan Tangai	Standing Buddha	CKI 111
9	Peshawar Museum, Peshawar Acc. 501	Jamalgarhi	Seated Buddha	CKI 117

The figures on the pedestals only correspond to the information provided by their inscriptions to some extent. For example, let us take the pedestal from an unknown site in Peshawar. On this pedestal, a seated Bodhisattva Maitreya is

---

[62] Max Deeg argues that there is a high probability that this was a monk: the element *-varman* is frequently found in monastic names in Chinese monk biographies of the 4th/5th century CE from the region, and *bosa* is certainly related to a word derived from *budh* (personal communication, 31.10.2025).

flanked by three figures on either side. On each side are two monks accompanied by two lay male figures. Based on their iconographical features, the lay figures can be interpreted as Indra and Brahma, respectively. Moreover, the three figures are not arranged in a symmetrical manner: the figures on the left are tightly squeezed together with one monk standing behind the other two figures. The metrical inscription on the bottom fillet of the pedestal only provides us a vague reference to the donors.[63] In a poetic manner, the inscription states that the donors had the statue of the great seer (*maharṣi*), referring to the statue that is now missing, made as a donation. Fussman, when trying to interpret the scene on the pedestal, wondered "whether it is not merely an iconographic convention: the figures depicted on the pedestal would, in this case, not be representing any particular story, but serve to render homage to the statue of the Buddha, either sitting or standing, placed above the pedestal" (Fussman 1985: 146). Fussman's suggestion that the inscription is related to the image rather than the base is observable from other inscribed statues.

The Aśoraya Buddha statue, currently in the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, offers an interpretive space to examine Fussman's remark. The inscription on the halo of the statue states that the donation, referring to the statue, was made by the female donor Momadatta.[64] Bearing in mind that donative inscriptions and images, due to the nature of the sources, preserve different types of information, let us compare them. The four figures participating in this ritual include an elaborately dressed woman standing on the right, holding a bunch of long stems of flowers in her right hand and an unidentified object in her left hand.[65] Next to her stands a small sized figure, potentially a male child in *añjalimudrā*. On the left side of the incense burner is a relatively smaller sized female figure accompanied by a bearded male figure carrying a bunch of flowers. The pedestal, in effect, could depict a couple on the left side and a female figure, perhaps a mother, and a child on the right. If we consider that the donor, Momadatta, may be the most important figure in the composition, the female figure in larger proportions to the right of the incense burner likely represents the donor.

Who are the other figures? The inscription states that Momadatta, the wife of Balasoma established the donation in the Dharmarājikā [*stūpa*] of Aśoka at the city of Trama. The inscription does not mention any other individuals who may be part of the donation ritual. Even Balasoma is mentioned due to his relationship

---

[63]   CKI 229 translated in Fussman (1985: 147).

[64]   Salomon (2007: 283). The inscription was first read by Bailey (1982: 150–151) and he identified two donor names in the text: Moma, the wife of Balasoma and the unnamed wife of Aṇakara. The latter has been adjusted by Salomon to be read as the *suaṇakarabhayae* (wife of the goldsmith) rather than with the *sa* + name construction of co-donors as *aṇakara bhayae* (wife of Aṇakara).

[65]   Verardi (1994) interpreted them as leaves used for *homa* rituals.

with the donor rather than as a ritual participant. However, Momadatta is given two identity markers, wife of Balasoma and wife of a goldsmith. The latter has been commonly interpreted as referring to the profession of Balasoma. Conversely, in comparison, the pedestal depicts two women. Stefan Baums in personal communication with this author suggested that the inscription may refer to two women rather than one. If there were two female donors, the image on the pedestal would confirm, at least partially, the information supplied by the inscription.

The complex relationship between the pedestals and the associated inscriptions is borne out by the other examples. Take the Shahr-i-Napursan pedestal currently in the Lahore Museum.[66] The inscription is not complete and Konow suggests that the engraver likely did not have adequate space to insert the last three *akṣara*s (Konow 1929: 124). Nevertheless, it mentions the name of the donor and the beneficiary of the donation. According to the inscription, the donor was Saṃghamitra, a *śramaṇa* (monk) and he shared merit for his own health and the health of another beneficiary named Budhavaṃma (possibly also a monk).

When we compare the details in the inscriptions to the pedestal, several differences emerge. On the pedestal, the central figure is a seated Bodhisattva in *abhayamudrā*. He is surrounded by two renunciate figures on either side. Three of the figures are depicted in *añjalimudrā* and the fourth figure, on the left side, offers garlands. On the one hand, the text provides us the name of two male donors, one of whom is a *śramaṇa*. On the other hand, the image provides us four renunciate figures.[67] Unlike the standing Aśoraya base, where one figure is larger than the others, the Shahr-i-Napursan figures are all the same size. We cannot detect any scale-oriented hierarchy that visually distinguishes the donor from other figures. If we assume that two of the figures are the individuals mentioned in the inscription, the names of the other two members may have been omitted by the engraver of the inscription due to spatial constraints. Similarly, a pedestal of unknown provenance depicts six figures venerating an enthroned turban relic (Fussman 1980: Pl. VI). To the right are three figures, a male figure and two female figures making offerings. On the left, a male and female figure are accompanied by a boy. The inscription states that Śivarakṣida, son of Damarakṣida made the donation in honour of his parents (CKI 192). If one of the male figures on the pedestal is the donor, the other members could be the family members who participated in the ritual.

---

[66] G-277 (Lahore Museum, Lahore) and CKI 131.

[67] Amongst them, the figure to the right may be a nun. For the general ambiguity in the attire of nuns in Gandhāran art, see Lakshminarayanan (2024). Similarly, in the case of the standing Buddha statue from Loriyan Tangai, the image depicts four figures (two monastic and two lay male figures) and the inscription mentions two male names, Budhaghoṣa and Saṃghavarma, both likely monks. If the two monastic figures on the base were the donors, the two others may be beneficiaries or other members who participated in the ritual.

The nine pedestals provide us limited meaningful insights. Whether the pedestal figures are portraits of donors or not cannot be settled based on the aforementioned evidence. Scholars such as Robert DeCaroli have argued that the small human figures in early Buddhist art cannot be definitively identified as specific donors (DeCaroli 2015: 78–93). According to DeCaroli, the figures "may simply serve to highlight the importance of the narrative events, sacred sites, or scenes of worship that they typically adorn" (DeCaroli 2015: 80). He identified over 24 inscribed images belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period in Mathura to highlight important developments in the emergence of donor images. He concludes that "there is no direct correlation between named donors and the numbers or types (male or female, monastic or layperson) of 'donor figures' displayed in the sculpture. Even if we extend our comparison beyond the donors and include named beneficiaries, relatives, teachers, or recipients of merit, they still do not match neatly with the figures represented in the artwork. These observations militate against the possibility of an intentional correlation between actual donors and the devotees depicted in stone".[68]

We face similar constraints when studying inscribed pedestals from Gandhāra. Our criteria for associating the inscription with the reliefs are too flexible to be scientific, at least in this author's opinion, and some level of uncertainty is present even when correlations can be identified. To explain the dissonance between the inscriptions and the images, Padma Kaimal suggested "that formulaic donor images were carved before actual donors were found, and thus before inscriptions were added" (Kaimal 1999: 79). This may very well be the case with images being largely generic, and they remained so until donors commissioned an inscription. This would explain why the pedestal reliefs present figures that were not mentioned by the inscription. If the inscription reflected, albeit within a standard formula, the elements of the donation ritual, the reliefs could only be an idealised version that were prepared in advance. Moreover, seamlessly inserting donor figures alongside figures such as the meditating Siddhārtha, Maitreya, Indra and Brahma suggest that the pedestal reliefs were in no way attempting to capture the reality of donative rituals, but the contemporary nature of devotional practices.

4. Summary Conclusions and Further Considerations

This analysis of pedestals of Gandhāran statues revealed that representations of donors and devotee figures were both dynamic and operational. Despite their reliance on standard visual formulas, pedestal images exhibit internal variations, i.e., presenting diverse combinations of figures and objects. The appearance of multiple permutations – monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen employing fire

---

[68]   DeCaroli (2015: 82–89). Quote starts in page 82 and finishes in 89 with the list of pedestals and images occupying pages 83–88.

stands, incense burners, flowers, and garlands – not only in the veneration of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and relics but also of the statues themselves, reflects a considerable degree of visual and ritual flexibility. Although we are unable to determine precisely how the *chaîne opératoire* accommodated these permutations and how donors may have perceived the statues, the themes presented in this article provide a fruitful venue for interpreting the pedestal images as ritual vignettes.

The growing number of donors in Gāndhārī inscriptions is not only matched but is also surpassed by the visual evidence. Any interpretation of the visual material is substantially enriched through comparative analysis with the epigraphic corpus. Gāndhārī inscriptions provide valuable insights into donors and their socio-religious networks, without which our understanding of the visual data would remain incomplete. This is not to suggest that visual sources are secondary or derivative; rather, they are integral components of a complex religious mosaic that operated within the same cultural sphere.

Whereas epigraphic sources explicitly identify the actors involved in ritual activities, images only allude to them. This has led scholars to argue that images "offer guidance to devotees by recommending or approving practices designed to facilitate veneration, and they do this by providing a focus for devotion. This suggests an interest in promoting or supporting devotional forms of worship" (DeCaroli 2015: 34). While this may well be the case, it is important to acknowledge that images could – and often did – perform multiple functions. As compelling ritual vignettes, they would have appealed to devotees in ways that texts could not. On one hand, they may have conveyed behavioural prescriptions; on the other, they may have served to amplify ongoing ritual performances. Understanding how such dynamics played out *in situ* requires a careful consideration of the archaeological contexts in which statues with pedestals were installed at Gandhāran Buddhist sites. This type of contextual analysis remains a scholarly *desideratum*, one that promises to deepen our comprehension of the interplay between visual, textual, and performative dimensions of Gandhāran Buddhism.

Author's note

Abbreviations

CKI   Corpus of Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions, see Catalog of Gāndhārī Texts, by Stefan Baums and Andrew Glass at https://gandhari.org/catalog (accessed 6 February 2025).

GRAVE   Gandhāran Relic Rituals and Veneration Explored (UK Research and Innovation Horizon Europe Guarantee Project, Cardiff University, Reference: EP/Y031008/1).

Skt.   Sanskrit.

T.   Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō. Ed.: Takakusu and Watanabe (1924–1934).

References

Ahuja, Naman 2019. "One Mother, Many Mother Tongues". *Marg* 70(4): 28–46.

Bailey, Harold Walter 1982. "Two Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions". *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1982(1): 149–160. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00159192

Baums, Stefan 2012. "Catalog and Revised Texts and Translations of Gandharan Reliquary Inscriptions". [In:] Jongeward, David, Elizabeth Errington, Richard Salomon and Stefan Baums, eds, *Gandharan Buddhist Reliquaries*. Gandharan Studies 1. Seattle: Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project, pp. 200–309.

Baums, Stefan 2018. "A framework for Gandhāran chronology based on relic inscriptions". [In:] Rienjang, Wannaporn and Peter Stewart, eds, *Problems of Chronology in Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the First International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 23rd–24th March, 2017*. Oxford: Archaeopress, pp. 53–70. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.15135994.9.

Bautze-Picron, Claudine 1985. "Représentation du/des dévot/s dans la statuaire bouddhique en pierre du Bihar à l'époque "Pâla-Sena". *Berliner Indologische Studien* 1: 124–134.

Bautze-Picron, Claudine 1995. "Between men and gods: small motifs in the Buddhist art of Eastern India, an interpretation". [In:] van der Kooij, Karel R. and Hendrik van der Veere, eds, *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art: Proceedings of a seminar held at Leiden University, 21–24 October 1991*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, pp. 59–79. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004658646_009

Bautze-Picron, Claudine 2014. "Images of donors in the Buddhist art of Eastern India". *Hal*.

Behrendt, Kurt 2003. "Relics and their Representation in Gandhara". *Mārg* 54(4): 76–85.

Behrendt, Kurt 2014. "Maitreya and the Past Buddhas: Interactions between Gandhara and Northern India". [In:] Klimburg-Salter, Deborah and Linda Lojda, eds, *Changing Forms and Cultural Identity: Religious and Secular Iconographies*. Turhout: Brepols, pp. 29–40.

Ching, Chao-jung 2014. "Perfumes in Ancient Kucha: On the word Tuñe attested in Kuchean monastic accounts". *Tocharian and Indo-European Studies* 15: 39–52.

Cohen, Richard 1998. "Nāga, Yakṣiṇī, Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta". *History of Religions* 37(4): 360–400. https://doi.org/10.1086/463514

DeCaroli, Robert 2015. *Image Problems: The Origin and Development of the Buddha's Image in Early South Asia*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780295805795

Deeg, Max 2004. "Legend and Cult – Contributions to the History of Indian Buddhist Stūpas. Part 1: The 'Stūpa of Kaniṣka'". *Buddhist Studies Review* 21(1): 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1558/bsrv.v21i1.14240

Deeg, Max 2007. "Has Xuanzang really been in Mathura? Interpretatio Sinica or Interpretatio Occidentalia – How to Critically Read the Records of the Chinese Pilgrim". [In:] Wittern, Christian and Shi Lishan, eds, *Essays on East Asian Religion and Culture. Festschrift in honour of Nishiwaki Tsuneki on the occasion of his 65th birthday*. Kyoto: Editorial committee for the Festschrift in honour of Nishiwaki Tsuneki, pp. 35–73.

Deeg, Max 2011. "Secular Buddhist Lineages: The Śākyas and Their Royal Descendants in Local Buddhist Legitimation Strategies". *Religions of South Asia* 5(1/2): 189–207. https://doi.org/10.1558/rosa.v5i1/2.189

Deeg, Max 2018. "The Historical Turn: How Chinese Buddhist Travelogues Changed Western Perception of Buddhism". *Hualin International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 1(1): 43–75. https://doi.org/10.15239/hijbs.01.01.02

Deeg, Max 2019. "Chinese Buddhist Travelers: Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing". *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.217

Deeg, Max 2021. "Indian Regional *nāga* Cults and Individual *nāga* Stories in Chinese Buddhist Travelogues". *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* 34: 51–78. https://doi.org/10.60018/AcAsVa.tmrw6380

Deeg, Max (unpublished manuscript). "Record of the Western Regions of the Great Tang".

Durt, Hubert 1982. "La "Visite aux laboureurs" et la "Méditation sous l'arbre *jambu*" dans les biographies sanskrites et chinoises du Buddha: Tentative de classement des épisodes narratifs". [In:] Hercus, L. A., F. B. J. Kuiper, T. Rajapatirana and E. R. Skrzypczak, eds, *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Professor J. W. de Jong on His Sixtieth Birthday*. Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, pp. 95–120.

Faccenna, Domenico 1962–1964. *Sculpture from the sacred area of Butkara I (Swāt, Pakistan)*. 3 vols. Rome: IsMEO.

Falk, Harry 2002–2003. "Some inscribed images from Mathurā revisited". *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift* 6/7: 31–47.

Falk, Harry 2008. "Another reliquary vase from Wardak and consecrating fire rites in Gandhara". [In:] Bautze-Picron, Claudine, ed., *Religion and Art: New Issues in Indian Iconography and Iconology*. Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, pp. 63–79.

Falk, Harry 2012. ""Buddhist' Metalware from Gandhara". *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 26: 33–60.

Falk, Harry 2014. "The first-century Copper-plates of Helagupta from Gandhāra hailing Maitreya". *Sōka daigaku kokusai bukkyōgaku kōtō kenkyūjo nenpō* 創価大学国際 仏教学高等研究所年報 / *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University* 17: 3–26.

Falk Harry 2020–2021. "Revision of Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions in the Light of New Material". *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 30: 113–142.

Falk Harry 2023. "Maitreya the healer". [In:] Kudo, Noriyuki, ed., *Śāntamatiḥ Manuscripts for Life – Essays in Memory of Seishi KARASHIMA*. Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology Soka University, pp. 95–112.

Filigenzi, Anna, Domenico Faccenna and Pierfrancesco Callieri 2003. "At the Origin of Gandharan Art. The Contribution of the Isiao Italian Archaeological Mission in the Swat Valley Pakistan". *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 9(3–4): 277–380. https://doi.org/10.1163/157005703770961787

Fuchs, Walter 1938. "Huei-ch'ao's Pilgerreise durch Nordwest-Indien und Zentral-Asien um 726". *Sitzungsbericht der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Philosophisch-Historische Klasse)* 22: 426–469.

Fussman, Gérard 1980. "Documents épigraphiques kouchans (II)". *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 67: 45–58. https://doi.org/10.3406/befeo.1980.3339

Fussman, Gérard 1985. "A Pedestal Inscription from the Peshawar District". *East and West* 35 (1/3): 143–152.

Hargreaves, Harold 1921. "Appendix V: List of antiquities recovered during operations at Jamalgarhi 1920–21". *Archaeological Survey of India Frontier Circle Report 1920–21*: 20–28.

Hinüber, Oskar von 2018. "Some Buddhist Donors and Their Families". *Indo-Iranian Journal* 61(4): 353–368. https://doi.org/10.1163/15728536-06104003

Hölscher, Tonio 2014. "Semiotics to Agency". [In:] Marconi, Clemente, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Art and Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 662–686. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199783304.013.030

Horsch, Paul 1964. "Buddhas erste Meditation". *Asiatische Studien* 17: 100–154.

Kaimal, Padma 1999. "The Problem of Portraiture in South India, circa 870–970 A.D.". *Artibus Asiae* 59(1/2): 59–133. https://doi.org/10.2307/3249862

Kim, Jinah 2016. "Faceless Gazes, Silent Texts: Images of Devotees and Practices of Vision in Medieval South Asia". *Ars Orientalis* 46: 198–229. https://doi.org/10.3998/ars.13441566.0046.008

Kim, Jinah 2020. "Reading Time: the Sarnath Buddha and the Historical Significance of Donor Portraits in Early Medieval South Asia". *South Asian Studies* 36(2): 190–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.2020.1821517

Konow, Sten 1929. *Kharoshṭhi inscriptions with the exception of those of Aśoka*. Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch.

Kuwayama, Shoshin 2006. "Pilgrimage Route Changes and the Decline of Gandhāra". [In:] Brancaccio, Pia and Kurt Behrendt, eds, *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, pp. 107–134. https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774855037-008

Lakshminarayanan, Ashwini 2023. "Towards Investigating the Representation of Gandhāran Female Donors". *Arts Asiatiques* 78: 5–26. https://doi.org/10.3406/arasi.2023.2227

Lakshminarayanan, Ashwini 2024. "Exploring Gandhāran Relic Rituals and Veneration I: Visualising Relics". *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* 37: 85–122. https://doi.org/10.60018/AcAsVa.roao7752

Lamotte, Etienne 1944. *Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*. Tome 1 : Chapitres I–XV. Première Partie (Traduction annotée). Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon.

Lobo, Wibke 1991. "The Bodhisattva with the Flask: Siddhārtha or Maitreya". [In:] Bhattacharya, Gouriswar, ed., *Akṣayanīvī: Essays Presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in Admiration of her Scholarly Contributions*. Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica Series 88. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, pp. 95–104.

Luczanits, Christian 2005. "The Bodhisattva with the Flask in Gandharan Narrative Scenes: In memoriam Maurizio Taddei". *East and West* 55: 163–188.

Milligan Matthew 2013. "The Development and Representation of Ritual in Early Indian Buddhist Donative Epigraphy". *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies* 15: 171–186.

Milligan Matthew 2019. "Corporate Bodies in Early South Asian Buddhism: Some Relics and Their Sponsors According to Epigraphy". *Religions* 2019, 10(1), 4. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10010004

Neelis, Jason 2014. "Literary and Visual Narratives in Gandhāran Buddhist Manuscripts and Material Cultures: Localizations of Jātakas, Avadānas, and Previous-Birth Stories". [In:] Fleming, Benjamin J. and Richard D. Mann, eds, *Material Culture and Asian Religions: Text, Image, Object*. New York-Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 252–264.

Neelis, Jason 2019. "Making places for Buddhism in Gandhāra: stories of previous births in image and text". [In:] Rienjang, Wannaporn and Peter Stewart, eds, *The Geography of Gandhāran Art. Proceedings of the Second International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 22nd–23rd March, 2018*. Oxford: Archaeopress, pp. 175–185. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.15136005.17

Pons, Jessie 2019. "Gandhāran art(s): methodologies and preliminary results of a stylistic analysis". [In:] Rienjang, Wannaporn and Peter Stewart, eds, *The Geography of Gandhāran Art. Proceedings of the Second International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 22nd–23rd March, 2018*. Oxford: Archaeopress, pp. 3–40. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.15136005.8

Peri, Noël 1917. "Hārītī, La Mère-de-démons". *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 17 : 1–102. https://doi.org/10.3406/befeo.1917.5319

QUAGLIOTTI, Anna Maria 1999–2000. "An Inscribed Image of Hārītī in the Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery". *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6: 51–60.

RHI, Juhyung 1994. "From Bodhisattva to Buddha: The Beginning of Iconic Representation in Buddhist Art". *Artibus Asiae* 54(3/4): 207–225. https://doi.org/10.2307/3250056

RHI, Juhyung 2003. "Early Mahāyāna and Gandhāran Buddhism: An Assessment of the Visual Evidence". *The Eastern Buddhist* 35(1/2): 152–202.

RHI, Juhyung 2008. "Identifying Several Visual Types in Gandhāran Buddha Images". *Archives of Asian Art* 58: 43–85. https://doi.org/10.1353/aaa.0.0001

RHI, Juhyung 2023. "Does iconography really matter? Iconographical specification of Buddha images in pre-esoteric Buddhist art". [In:] Rienjang, Wannaporn and Peter Stewart, eds, *Gandhāran Art in Its Buddhist Context Papers from the Fifth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 21st–23rd March, 2022*. Oxford: Archaeopress, pp. 12–41. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.15135946.8

SALOMON, Richard 1999. *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhāra. The British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments*. Washington: University of Washington Press.

SALOMON, Richard 2007. "Dynastic and Institutional Connections in the Pre- and Early Kuṣāṇa Period: New Manuscript and Epigraphic Evidence". [In:] Srinivasan, Doris Meth, ed., *On the Cusp of an Era: Art in the Pre-Kuṣāṇa World*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 267–286. https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004154513.i-548.90

SALOMON, Richard 2009. "Why Did the Gandhāran Buddhists bury their manuscripts?". [In:] Berkwitz, Stephen, Juliane Schober and Claudia Brown, eds, *Buddhist Manuscript Cultures: Knowledge, ritual, and art*. London: Routledge, pp. 19–34.

SALOMON, Richard 2020. "The Copper Plates of Helagupta: A New Edition and Study". *Indo-Iranian Journal* 63(1): 3–69. https://doi.org/10.1163/15728536-06301006

SCHOPEN, Gregory 2004. *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press.

SCHOPEN, Gregory 2005. *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers*. Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press.

SCHOPEN, Gregory 2014. *Buddhist Nuns, Monks, and Other Worldly Matters: Recent Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press.

SHARMA, Govardhan Rai 1958. "Excavations at Kauśāmbī, 1949–1955". *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology* 16: xxxvi-xxxvii.

Stone, Elizabeth Rosen 2004. "A Buddhist Incense Burner from Gandhara". *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 39: 69–99. https://doi.org/10.1086/met.39.40034602

Taddei, Maurizio 2006. "Recent Archaeological Research in Gandhāra: The New Evidence". [In:] Brancaccio, Pia and Kurt Behrendt, eds, *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, pp. 41–59. https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774855037-005

Thapar, Romila 1992. "Patronage and the Community". [In:] Stoler Miller, Barbara, ed., *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 19–34.

Trainor, Kevin 1997. *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravāda tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Verardi, Giovanni 1994. *Homa and Other Fire Rituals in Gandhāra*. Supplemento no. 79 agli Annali 54, Fasc. 2. Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale.

Wezler, Albrecht 1987. *Bhṛṅgāra in Sanskrit Literature*. Aligarh Oriental Series 8. Aligarh: Viveka Publications.

Willis, Michael 1999–2000. "The Sānchī Bodhisattva dated Kuṣāṇa year 28". *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6: 269–273.