The Geography of Gandhāran Art


Edited by
Wannaporn Rienjang
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Acknowledgements

The editors are grateful to all the international speakers and audience members who participated in the Gandhāra Connections workshop of March 2018. The workshop placed a particular emphasis on dialogue, and we hope that the open discussions that occurred during and since the event have influenced some of the contributions published in these proceedings.

We should like to thank David Davison and his colleagues at Archaeopress, as always, for their consistent flexibility and efficiency in bringing the volume to publication, both in print and online, on an extremely tight schedule. Our anonymous peer-reviewers made wise and helpful comments within an even more pressured timetable and the authors did not baulk at our ambitious demands for a very fast turnaround. We are grateful to them and to all who helped us to meet our aim of bringing the workshop papers to fruition within a year.

Finally, and fundamentally, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the Bagri Foundation and to Neil Kreitman, whose generous support has underpinned the Gandhāra Connections project from the outset.

Editors’ note

Orthography

The editors have aimed for broad, but not dogmatic, consistency in orthography and use of diacritics, as well as some other conventions, throughout this book. We have endeavoured to apply a reasonable compromise between widely varying practices, embracing inconsistency where appropriate.

Provenance

The Classical Art Research Centre does not normally publish previously unpublished ancient artefacts which have no recorded provenance and have become known since 1970. We seek to avoid adding value and legitimacy to objects whose origins have not been properly documented. We have chosen to make an exception in the case of the heart-shaped lamp reported to have been found in Malakand District, which Stefan Baums interprets in his paper on the basis of a photograph and information provided to him. There are two reasons for this exception. Firstly, the challenges posed by the loss of provenance information are an explicit focus of the paper, which demonstrates how epigraphic evidence may be used to try and mitigate the problem and partially to re-contextualize unprovenanced objects. Secondly, the historical value of the inscription on this object makes it imperative that it should become available to scholarly discussion.
Contributors

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Pia Brancaccio is a member of the Art and Art History Department at Drexel University, Philadelphia. She teaches courses widely across Asian art. Her research focuses on Buddhist art from South Asia. Her work has addressed various aspects of art and multiculturalism in the ancient world. She is co-editor, with Kurt Behrendt, of Gandharan Buddhism: Archaeology, Art and Text (2006).

Muhammad Ashraf Khan is Director of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and Chief Editor of the Journal of Asian Civilizations. He was formerly Director of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, and former Deputy Director of Taxila Museum. He has conducted extensive excavations and preservation of the Buddhist sites in Taxila, particularly Bādalpur monastery complex and Jinnan Wali Dheri monastery. He is a co-author of A Catalogue of the Gandhara Stone Sculptures in the Taxila Museum (2005).

Zarawar Khan is an Assistant Professor of Archaeology at the University of Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, of Pakistan. He has participated in excavations at Chitral, Hund, and Sampur Dheri, Baja Swabi under the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. His area of specialization is Buddhist Art, Architecture and Archaeology of Gandhāra. He has published research papers dealing with different aspects of Gandhāran art.

Muhammad Habibullah Khan Khattak is former Director of Archaeology, Department of Archaeology and Museums, and former Director (Heritage), Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Pakistan. He is currently Chief Editor of the journal Frontier Archaeology. His most recent excavation and conservation project includes the Buddhist site of Takht-i-Bāhī. He is also involved in a research collaboration between Leicester University and Hazara University on the origin of the Kalash people (Black Kafirs) of Chitral.

Abdul Ghafoor Lone He has carried out excavations at Jinnan Wali Dheri, Badla Pur Taxila, Harappa and Ban Faqirna-Islamabad. His main research interests includes Gandhāran art and history. He is currently working on the documentation of antiquities of the Department of Archaeology and Museums. He is also a co-author of A Catalogue of the Gandhara Stone Sculptures in the Taxila Museum (2005), Taxila, Home of Stucco Art (2005) and Gandhara: History, Antiquity, Art and Personalities (2004).

Satoshi Naiki is Assistant Professor at the Center for Cultural Heritage Studies, Kyoto University. His research focuses on the artistic traditions and carving techniques of Gandhāran sculptures, particularly those from the sites of Thareli and Ranigat in the Peshawar valley. His publications include Gandhāran Sculptures and Buddhism (2016), which is based on his PhD dissertation at Kyoto University.

Jason Neelis is Associate Professor and Chair at the Department of Religion and Culture, Wilfrid Laurier University. His areas of expertise cover South Asian religions, history, literature and languages, Buddhist transmission across Asia, and Gandhāran manuscripts, epigraphy, and archaeology. He is currently directing a project on the Upper Indus petroglyphs and inscriptions in northern Pakistan, and has been working on projects involving avadānas in the first century AD Gāndhārī manuscripts and the Buddhist rebirth narratives in the literary and visual cultures of Gandhāra.
Luca M. Olivieri is director of the ISMEO Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan. He has been working in Swat for more than thirty years. His main long-lasting project is the ongoing excavations at the urban site of Bazira/Barikot. His principal interests include excavation and heritage management methodologies. In 2017 he was awarded with the Sitara-i-Imtiaz of Pakistan for his three decades of archaeological work in Swat.

Jessie Pons is Junior Professor in South Asian History of Religion, KHK Research Associate and Project Leader of Digitalization of Gandharan Artefacts (DiGA) at Centre for the Study of Religions (CERES) at Ruhr University Bochum. Her research focuses on Buddhist art with special attention to the representation of Buddhist narratives in Gandhāra, in oases of the Silk Road, and in the Indian Subcontinent. Her DiGA project aims to identify workshops producing Buddhist sculptures, the geographical and chronological logic of the school, and the history of Buddhism in Gandhāra.

Wannaporn Rienjang is Project Assistant of the Gandhāra Connections Project at the Classical Art Research Centre, Oxford. She completed her doctoral degree in Archaeology at the University of Cambridge on Buddhist relic cult in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Before starting her PhD, she worked as a research assistant for the Masson Project at the Department of Coins and Medals, the British Museum. Her research interests include the art and archaeology of Greater Gandhāra, Buddhist studies, and working technologies of stone containers and beads.

Peter Stewart is Director of the Classical Art Research Centre and Associate Professor of Classical Art and Archaeology at the University of Oxford. He has worked widely in the field of ancient sculpture. His publications include Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response (2003) and The Social History of Roman Art (2008). Much of his research concerns the relationship between Gandhāran art and Roman sculpture.

Alexandra Vanleene is an independent scholar specializing in Gandhāran Buddhist art and archaeology. Her research focuses on the artistic tradition of Gandhāran sculptures in Afghanistan, particularly Hadda, the geographic expansion of Gandhāran art, and the development of regional characteristics. She worked in Afghanistan for eight years with the French Archaeological Mission for the prospection and excavation of Bamiyan.
Map of the Greater Gandhāra
Map of the Greater Gandhāra region (copyright: Jessie Pons).
Introduction

Gandhāran scribes and artists imagined places for Buddhism (Monius 2001) by emplacing narratives of the Buddha’s past births in ritualized landscapes of Gandhāra and surrounding regions of the north-western borderlands. They used visual and written media to make Gandhāra a 'second holy land' (Foucher 1905, II: 416-7 'la seconde terre sainte'). While other South Asian Buddhist communities left traces of either literary production (in Pāli and Sanskrit texts redacted and transmitted in manuscripts belonging to later periods) or material culture of archaeological remains, images, coins, and inscriptions, scholars of ‘Greater’ Gandhāran Buddhism now have access to both types of sources from periods extending from the first century BC to third century AD (and later). Only a relatively small selection of narratives drawn from a much broader tradition of oral storytelling has been preserved, and localizing past lives of the Buddha and previous Buddhas in the Northwest was not the only narrative strategy for translocating Buddhist sacred places outside of the ‘greater Māghadhan’ homeland of Śākyamuni (Shinohara 2003).

Artisans and scribes selected stories from separate repertoires of rebirth narrative genres and developed different techniques of localization (Neelis 2014). Two scribes composed over fifty terse summary stories labelled as Avadānas and Pūrvayogas as secondary texts in the British Library Gāndhārī manuscripts collection, with Avadānas focusing mostly on the present lives of characters with few ‘karmic tales’ about ripening of karma (karmavipāka), while Pūrvayogas explicitly connect previous-birth stories to the present lifetimes of Śākyamuni Buddha and to other figures who were his contemporary followers, such as Ānanda and Ājñāta Kuṇḍinya (Lenz 2003; 2010). Jātakas, a loosely defined term for birth stories often used interchangeably with Avadānas in Sanskrit and Pāli literature, have been identified in Gandhāran art by Foucher (1905, I: 270-285; 1919) and other art historians primarily on the basis of iconographic comparisons with other examples in Indian Buddhist art and the Pāli canonical compilation of 547 Jātakas.

In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Avadāna, Pūrvayoga, and Jātaka narratives in extant Gandhāran literary and visual media, textualists and art historians have collaborated in an interdisciplinary effort to study the corpora of stories written in Gāndhārī manuscripts and depicted in Gandhāran images. A global survey of birth stories identifiable in Gandhāran imagery by a team

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1 Alfred Foucher, called the ‘grandfather of Gandhāra Studies’ (Zwalf 1996: 74), theorized that Buddhism in Gandhāra was ‘… véritablement mêlé à la vie et comme enraciné au sol’ (Foucher 1905; II: 416) before Faxian’s arrival, so that by the fifth century AD, Gandhāra had become ‘la seconde terre sainte du Bouddhisme indien’ (Foucher 1905, II: 417). The theme of ‘acclimatization of legends’ introduced by Foucher (1901/1915: 28) is further elaborated by Lamotte (1958: 365-369; 1988: 332-337, n. 145). Fussman (1994a) discusses localization of narratives, including the Buddha’s previous lives (1994a: 43ff.) in the context of the ‘implantation’ of Buddhism in Gandhāra. Neelis (2011: 253-256) discusses processes of ‘domestication’ whereby Buddhist relics and events in the previous and present lives of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were adopted to local settings in the north-western borderlands.

2 As coined by Richard Salomon, ‘Greater Gandhāra can be understood as a primarily linguistic rather than a political term, that is, as comprising the regions where Gandhāri was the indigenous or adopted language’ (2018: 11). The terminology of ‘Greater Gandhāra’ is useful for geographically extending the boundaries of Gandhāran art beyond the heartland of the Peshawar Basin, but philologists and art historians understand that the extent of materials with writing in the Gandhāri language and Kharoṣṭhī script and provenanced and unprovenanced images with distinctive characteristics of Gandhāran art overlap, but are not necessarily coterminous.

3 A collaborative research project with David Jongeward (Royal Ontario Museum) and Timothy Lenz (University of Washington)
of art historians found over 180 stone sculptures and paintings with fifteen recognizable stories (Figure 1). Although the list is not yet final, this contribution to the proceedings of the 2018 Gandharan Connections workshop on ‘The Geography of Gandhāran Art’ is intended to share provisional results with the purpose of drawing scholarly attention to the significance of this relatively understudied visual and written repertoire of Buddhist narratives. While visual narratives of previous births are not as prominent in Gandhāran art as hagiographical episodes from the present lifetime of Śākyamuni Buddha, scribes and artisans purposefully appropriated different sets of Avadāna, Pūrvayoga and Jātaka stories to generate connections between multiple lives of the Buddha and the geography of Gandhāra.

### Narratives of past births in Gandhāran visual culture

Approximately 130 images of the so-called Dīpaṅkara Jātaka depicting a meeting between the previous Buddha Dīpaṅkara and a young Brahmin named Megha (Mahāvastu Dīpaṅkaravastu), Sumati (Divyāvadāna Dharmaruci Avadāna), or Sumedhā (Pāli Nidānakathā) dominate the visual repertoire of rebirth narratives in Gandhāran art. This episode of the Bodhisattva’s encounter with Dīpaṅkara is not included in the Pāli Jātaka collection, so that the term ‘Dīpaṅkara Jātaka’ tends to be restricted to the conventions of Gandhāran art history. In Gandhāran for 'Buddhist Rebirth Narratives in Literary and Visual Cultures of Ancient Gandhāra’ was supported by the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation for Buddhist Studies through the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) in 2014-2017. A conference on ‘Where the Buddha was Previously Born, Seen and Heard’ at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in August 2017 supported by a Connection grant from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) concluded the project. I wish to acknowledge the generous support of both sources for carrying out research for the survey and disseminating initial results.

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4 The survey was supervised by David Jongeward in consultation with Jessie Pons and the assistance of collaborators in the UK, Pakistan, and India, including Wannaporn Kay Rienjang who worked with Susmita Basu Majumdar in November 2015 in India. Abdul Samad generously provided valuable access to collections of the Peshawar Museum and Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, during my research visit to Pakistan in May 2016. During the Gandhāra Connections workshop in March 2018, Zarawar Khan drew our attention to additional images in the SRO collection in Peshawar.
### Śyāma jātaka (nos. 130-140)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Museum/Provenience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Jamālgaṛhī</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>Takht-i-Bāhī</td>
<td>Peshawar Museum</td>
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<td>132</td>
<td>Aziz Dheri</td>
<td>DOAM Peshawar (SRO)</td>
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<td>133</td>
<td>Taxila - Dharmarājikā</td>
<td>Taxila Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Swat Valley - Gumbat</td>
<td>V &amp; A Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Mian Khan</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>Thareli</td>
<td>DOAM Peshawar (SRO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Possibly Swat Valley - Marghazar</td>
<td>Jimmy Bastian Pinto collection (Brazil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Naprstkovo Museum, Prague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>Haḍḍa wall painting (fragment)</td>
<td>Ryukoku Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Japan private collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Viśvantara/Sudaṣṇa (nos. 141-152)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Museum/Provenience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Jamālgaṛhī</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142-3</td>
<td>Sahr-i Bahlol</td>
<td>Peshawar Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Thareli</td>
<td>Taxila Museum</td>
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<td>145-6</td>
<td>Shotorak</td>
<td>Kabul Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Haḍḍa wall painting (fragment)</td>
<td>Ryukoku Museum</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
art, this episode commonly prefaces the events of Śākyamuni’s present birth as Siddhārtha, making its position in the iconographic programme of Gandhāran stūpas extraordinary. Since the Bodhisattva makes an aspirational vow (praṇidhāna) to be reborn as one who seeks to attain Buddhahood and Dīpaṅkara gives a prediction (vyākaraṇa) of his future birth, the extended lifestory of Śākyamuni Buddha essentially begins with this encounter. While other Gandhāran jātakas are typically featured in small panels on architectural
elements such as stair risers leading up to the stūpa, the meeting with Dipāṅkara is often (but not always) integrated into the present lifestory of Śākyamuni. Depending on how narrative elements in ‘false gables’ are counted, the Dipāṅkara episode is among the five most widely depicted narratives in Gandhāran art along with Śākyamuni’s birth, departure from Kapilavastu, and Parinirvāṇa, easily exceeding representations of Śākyamuni’s awakening under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, first teaching in the deer park at Sarnath, and other pivotal events in Śākyamuni’s hagiography. Despite numerous depictions of this episode in the visual corpus of Gandhāran rebirth narratives, the encounter with Dipāṅkara is not summarized in extant Avadānas or Pūrvayogas in the British Library collection. However, Dipāṅkara (Divakara) is listed first in a list of the characteristics of fifteen previous Buddhas in a Gāndhāri version of the *Bahubuddhaka-sūtra in a scroll in the US Library of Congress (Salomon 2018: 265-93), which Vincent Tournier (2017: 129ff.) identifies as the earliest version of Bahubuddhaka-sūtras incorporated into the Mahāvastu and other Buddhist texts. Thus, the genealogy of previous Buddhas essentially begins with Dipāṅkara, whose meeting with the Bodhisattva was localized in ancient Nagarāhāra (modern Nangarhar in eastern Afghanistan), where there was also a shrine for the relic of the Buddha’s begging bowl, according to the accounts of Chinese visitors beginning with Faxian in the early fifth century. By associating this place with Dipāṅkara, the first in the lineage of the previous Buddhas, and the encounter with the Bodhisatta who aspires and is predicted to be reborn as Śākyamuni, Gandhāran Buddhists stake a strong claim that the extended life-story of the Buddha of the present age begins in their own land.

A version of the Viśvantara (Pāli Vessantara) story is the only ‘Jātaka’ identified in Gandhāran art which is also tersely summarized as the story of Sudaṣṇa in a set of Gāndhāri Pūrvayogas (Lenz 2003: 157-65; Salomon 2018: 240-45). Visual narrative sequences with a dozen images of the Viśvantara /Sudaṣṇa story in stair-risers from Jamālgarhī (in the British Museum), Sahri-Bahlol (in the Peshawar Museum), and other sites place this story a distant second after the Dipāṅkara episode in Gandhāran art. It is not at all surprising that this is the only previous-birth story identifiable in Gandhāran imagery which is also preserved in summary form in extant summaries of Pūrvayogas or Avadānas in the British Library collection, since this narrative is so generally widespread in South and South-East Asian art and literature and is a special case as the last human birth of the Bodhisattva before his rebirth as Siddhārtha in the Pāli Jātaka collection (Appleton and Shaw 2015: II, 507-639). The protagonist’s name in the Gāndhāri version, Sudaṣṇa, does not correspond with Sanskrit Viśvantara or Pāli Vessantara, but aligns more closely with Sogdian and other Central Asian versions, as well as with early Chinese transcriptions (Lenz 2003: 158-9), perhaps adding to growing support for the ‘Gāndhāri hypothesis’ that the most likely source for early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts were Gāndhāri versions rather than Sanskrit, Pāli, or other Middle Indic languages. According to Xuanzang, events connected with this narrative were commemorated at shrines around Pa-lu-sha in the Peshawar basin also visited by Song Yun a century earlier. Between the visits of Faxian and Xuanzang, embedding of this widespread rebirth narrative probably aided in the consolidation of Buddhist sacred geography in Gandhāra, which overlaps with the growth of monasteries and shrines in the Peshawar basin. The localization of famous episodes in this narrative attracted local devotees and long-distance pilgrims. Étienne Lamotte ruefully dismissed this process of generating…

5 According to Pons (2011: Appendix 2, 57) the illustration of the Dipāṅkara Jātaka is the third most widely depicted narrative in Gandhāran art.

6 Deeg (2005: 247-54) provides a German translation of Faxian’s account with commentary on the localization of the meeting with Dipāṅkara Buddha (§15) and references to further Indian and Chinese textual sources. He points out that Faxian’s account emphasizes the gift of lotus flowers rather than the spreading of the hair by the prostrating Bodhisattva, which is the most recognizable iconographic feature of Gandhāran depictions of the episode. Li (2002: 173) provides an English translations of the passage in Faxian (T51, number 2085). Li (1996: 66) gives an English translation of the relevant passage in the account of Xuanzang (T51, number 2087, Fascicle II, 878c). Shinohara (2003) focuses on the localization of the ‘contact relic’ of Śākyamuni’s bowl.

7 Song Yun’s account is translated by Beal (1884: xcvi-xcix, 111-13) and Chavannes (1903: 413ff.); Beal (1884: 111-13) and Li (1996: 79 [T51, number 2087, Fascicle II, 881b]) translate Xuanzang’s account. Foucher (1901/1915: 33-38) discussed the omission of these sites from the account of Faxian, although it was visited by Song Yun and relied on Alexander Cunningham’s identification of Pa-lu-sha with modern Shahbazgarhi. Elizabeth Errington (1993) proposes to identify this location with Sahri-Bahlol (the provenance of many Gandhāran sculptures very close to Takht-i Bāhī).
sacred geography by writing: ‘Gandhāra was the only one to play the game - somewhat puerile, but profitable to the places of pilgrimage - of the acclimatization of the legends’ (1988: 335 [1958: 367]). Nevertheless, the efforts of Gandhāran Buddhists to map the sacralized topography of their own region as the home for many of the Buddha’s previous births obviously succeeded.

The survey results confirm that the Śyāma Jātaka is relatively well represented in Gandhāran art, with over ten identifiable depictions. Multiple pieces belong to narrative sequences from Jamālgarhī, Taxila-Dharmarājikā, and recent excavations at Aziz Dheri. The story of Śyāma, the son of blind ascetic parents who was mortally wounded by a king while hunting but revived by Indra, is one of the longer Pāli Jātakas in the Mahānīpāta (Appleton and Shaw 2015: I, 117-144). Narrative elements of the Śyāma Jātaka story overlap with Daśaratha’s accidental killing of a young ascetic in the Rāmāyana and Rāghuvaṁśa, but in Buddhist versions the king is not cursed by the ascetic parents or by Śyāma, but instead Śyāma’s virtues of loving-kindness, forbearance, and filial piety are extolled by his parents, who call upon the gods to revive him. Although there is no extant Gāndhārī Avadāna or Pūrvayoga of the Śyāma story, based on iconographical analysis Dieter Schlingloff (1987: 70) argues that the content of Gandhāran reliefs is more closely connected to a version in the Mulasarvāstivādin Vinaya than to those transmitted in the Pāli Jātaka or Buddhist Sanskrit Jātakas and Avadānas in the Mahāvastu, Jātakamālā, or the Bodhisattvāvadāna-Kalpalatā. According to Xuanzang’s account, there was:

… a stūpa built at the spot where Śyāmaka Bodhisattva (formerly transcribed as Shanmo Bodhisattva) gathered fruits to offer to his blind parents in fulfilment of his filial duty and met the king who was hunting and who accidentally hit him with a poisoned arrow. His mind of sincerity moved Indra, who dressed his wound with medicine, and his virtuous deed inspired the gods, who restored him to life very soon (Li 1996: 78).

Foucher (1901/1915: 46; 1905: 279-83, fig. 143) proposed to identify this stūpa with archaeological remains located at Periaṇo Dheri north of Chārsada on an important route between the Gandhāran capitol of Puṣkalāvatī and the Swat valley.

The jātaka of Ekaśṛṅga (‘one-horn/unicorn’)/Ṛśyaśṛṅga (‘deer-horn’), the offspring of a female antelope which accidentally consumed the semen of an ascetic living in a forest hermitage in the mountains, is also depicted in Gandhāran imagery and localized by Xuanzang in the mountain passes between the Peshawar basin and the Swat valley (Foucher 1919: 20-23). While this visual narrative is not as widely depicted in Gandhāran art as the stories of Dīpaṅkara’s encounter, Viśvantara, or Śyāma, interesting images from Koï Tangi (in the Indian Museum) and in private collections, as well as a seal (Falk 2008; 2013) demonstrate transmission of various motifs in the story. There is not an extant Gāndhārī version of the story, but accounts and references in Sanskrit, Pāli, Chinese, Tibetan, Tocharian, and even an early Christian bestiary have been the subject of extensive literary studies (Lüders 1940; Schlingloff 1973; 1987). The motif of the boy with one horn suckling from his antelope mother which appears in Gandhāran images is included in the version of this narrative in the Mahāvastu, while other versions elaborate upon the seduction of the young ascetic by either a courtesan or king’s daughter, which is depicted in Buddhist art at Bharhut and Mathura. According to Xuanzang, this story of the Ṛṣi Unicorn was localized to the north-west of where episodes connected with the Viśvantara previous-birth narrative were believed to have taken place:

On the south side of the mountain there was a monastery, in which lived a few monks who studied Mahāyāna teachings. The stūpa beside it was built by King Aśoka at the place where the Ṛṣi Unicorn once lived. This Ṛṣi was ensnared by a lustful woman and lost his supernatural powers. The lustful woman then rode on his shoulders and returned to the city (Li 1996: 79).

According to Foucher (1901/1915: 45-6), this monastery and stūpa may be located near Shahkot Pass between Peshawar basin and Swat valley. Perhaps artisan storytellers and their patrons drew upon a ‘logic of locality’
by linking jātakas with ascetic characters to hilltop shrines on mountainous passageways between Peshawar plains and Swat valley (Foucher’s ‘septentrionale’ monasteries). Their selective appropriation of previous-birth stories probably helped to consolidate a ritualized topography as Buddhist institutional presence expanded from the Peshawar basin to the range of hills surrounding Gandhāra with interregional linkages to Swat (Neelis 2011: 235-9).

Other previous-birth narratives of bodily self-sacrifice (dehadāna) are depicted in Gandhāran visual culture and emplaced in the sacralized landscape of the north-western frontiers. King Śibi’s bodily offerings of a piece of his own flesh to save a pigeon (kapota) from a hawk is depicted in Gandhāran sculptures, Upper Indus petroglyphs at Shatial and Thalpan (Fussman 1994b; Fussman & König 1997: 178-9; Bandini-König 2003: 118-122, pl. XXIib; Thewalt 1983: 625-8), and a rare painting from Hadda (Zin 2013: fig. 3), while the gift of his eyes can be identified in a stucco relief on stair-risers at Chakhil-i Ghoundi in Haḍḍa. Fifth and sixth century accounts of Faxian and Song Yun link the story of King Śibi’s flesh offering to the region between Swat and Gandhāra (Beal 1884: cvi-cvii; Deeg 2005: 120-1, 226-8; Li 2002: 169-70). In the sixth and seventh century, Song Yun and Xuanzang tie the jātaka of King Śibi’s gift of his eyes to a blind Brahmin to stūpas near the Gandhāra capital of Puṣkalāvatī (Beal 1884: ci, 110; Deeg 2005: 123, 228-9; Li 1996: 78). The Vyāghrī Jātaka, in which a Bodhisattva (an ascetic in Āryaśūra’s Jātakamāla; a prince in the Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra) sacrifices himself to feed a hungry tigress and her cubs, is only found in a few fragments of Gandhāran sculptures (including the pedestal of a Dīpaṅkara Jātaka image from Shotorak in eastern Afghanistan) and in a petroglyph at Chilas Bridge (Bandini-König 2003: 118-122; Thewalt 1983). Based on the itineraries of Faxian and Song Yun (Beal 1884: xcii, xcvi-xcvii; Chavannes 1903: 411-2; Deeg 2005: 230-1; Li 2002: 170), various localizations in the Swat valley and at Manikyala Stūpa to the east of modern Islamabad have been proposed (Foucher 1901/1915: 25, n. 3; Zwalf 1996: 55). The Avadāna of Candraprabha’s head offering localized in Taxila in Faxian’s account (Li 2002: 170) may also be identified in Gandhāran art, although the interpretation of other scenes with decapitated heads have previously been interpreted as the Amarādevī episode of the Mahoṣadha Jātaka story cycle. As Max Deeg (2005: 121-2) observes that Chinese accounts of ‘Four Great Stūpas’ associated with the two jātakas of King Śibi’s gifts of his flesh and eyes, the Vyāghrī Jātaka, and the Avadāna of Candraprabha’s head offering reflect an effort to transpose a parallel sacred geography to the four great events of Śākyamuni Buddha’s birth, awakening, first teaching, and parinirvāṇa in the Buddhist heartland of northern India.

These were not the only places where these jātakas were localized, and there are other rebirth narratives reported to have been localized in Gandhāra, Swat, Taxila, and neighbouring areas of the north-western borderlands by Chinese pilgrims which are apparently not included in the repertoire of Gandhāran art. Seven jātakas identified in the visual culture of Gandhāra are not known to have been localized in north-western geographical settings, according to Chinese accounts:

- Maitrakanyaka
- Candrakinnara
- Ruru
- Hastin/Nāga (Pāli: Indasamānagotta)
- Naḷapāna (Mahāvastu: Vānara)
- Saḍdanta
- Śaśa (uncertain)

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8 Foucher (1901/1915: 25, n. 3) refers to the following localizations proposed by Aurel Stein: Śibi’s gift of flesh at Girarai; Śibi’s gift of eyes at Puṣkalāvatī. Deeg points out that the phonetic correspondence of Chinese Suheduo with Sanskrit Suvastu is problematic.

9 Lamotte 1958: 356-7/1988: 334-5 and Zwalf 1996: 54-55 refer to the following stories reported by Xuanzang, which are not attested in Gandhāran art although they are localized in the Northwest: Kṣāntivādin in Maṅgalapura (Mingora) in Swat, Sarvada or Sarvamādada further to the south, a young Brahmin falls from a tree to learn a Dharma verse near Mt. Ilam in Swat, Dharmaratna/Dharmanātaka transcribes texts with his own ink as blood at Gumbatani in Buner, King Maitribala feeds five yakṣas at Rohitaka, and the story of a Bodhisattva Nāga near Bamiyan.
Among these seven without attested geographical associations in ‘Greater Gandhāra’, with the exception of four narrative sequences of the Maitrakanyaka Jātaka, the others do not seem to have been widely represented, with only one or two images each. Five of the seven are narratives about previous births as animals (deer, monkey, six-tusked elephant, and perhaps rabbit) or involve an animal as the main figure (a young elephant which destroys an ascetic’s hut in the Hastin/Nāga jātaka). Patterns of localization and geographical emplacement of previous-birth stories belonging to the Gandhāran visual repertoire and attested in Chinese visitors’ accounts raise more questions about selection and domestication of Avadānas and Pūrvayogas in Gandhārī manuscripts.

Narratives of past and present births in Gandhāri literary culture

Publications of recently-discovered Gandhāri manuscript collections over the last two decades provide insights into an early period of regional literary production in Gandhāra between the first century BC and third century AD. Among the texts written on birch-bark scrolls of the British Library collection, original compositions of terse Avadāna and Pūrvayoga narrative summaries written as secondary texts by two specialist scribal storytellers deviate from the ‘standard avadāna package’ (Lenz 2010) of other Buddhist literary compilations of rebirth narratives, and seem to belong to an early formative stage in the development of these genres. References to local and regional toponyms, such as Taxila and Puṣkalāvati, as well as personal names, titles, and ethnonyms of historically attested figures from first century Gandhāra reflect emplacement of these stories in the hybrid cultural milieu of the borderland environment (Neelis 2008; 2011: 253-5). Avadānas and pūrvayoga narratives localized in north-western geographical, political, settings belong to what might be considered a ‘homegrown strand’ of storytelling, which is definitely more distinctive to these narrative genres than other types of extant Gandhāri literature. On the other hand, stories about well-known characters from the time of Śākyamuni Buddha or Aśoka imported or ‘transplanted’ from the Māghadhan Buddhist heartland tend to be more likely identifiable with other Buddhist literary versions of the narratives. In innovating and adapting Avadānas, Pūrvayogas, and other narratives to the distinctive Gandhāran cultural milieu, scribes and artisans had to resolve tensions between localization and maintaining fidelity to recognizable versions of the stories. Hagiographic stories of Śākyamuni’s present birth were certainly more widespread in Gandhāran visual and literary cultures, but translocating the events of his own lifetime outside of his homeland in ancient Magadha and Kosala was difficult due to chronological and geographical constraints. Koichi Shinohara (2003: 90ff.) identifies three narrative strategies for constructing Buddhist sacred places outside of the hagiographic homeland of Śākyamuni:

1. Linking previous Buddhas and past lives of the Buddha, as in some Gandhāran jātakas, including the encounter with the previous Buddha Dipaṅkara, to particular locations;
2. Worshipping at shrines for moveable objects used by the Buddha, such as the ‘contact relic’ (paribhogika dhātu) of his begging bowl (Shinohara’s specific focus);
3. Converting local autochthonous Nāga and Yakṣa deities whose stories are embedded in the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya (Lamotte 1958: 752-3 / 1988: 679, n. 67; Przyluski 1914).\(^{10}\)

While this contribution to the Gandhāran Connections workshop on the Geography of Gandhāran Art has focused on the first of these strategies, the scope for examining the connection between other types of Gandhāran visual and literary narratives and the populating of the landscape with stories that connect the ‘Second Holy Land’ to the hagiographic homeland of the present lifetime of Śākyamuni Buddha can be broadened.

\(^{10}\) The expansion of sacred geography to include sites of the Buddha’s apocryphal Dharma conquest of the Northwest with Vajrapāṇi is very well attested in the accounts of Chinese visitors to shrines in Gandhāra and Uḍḍiyāna (Swat).
Provisional concluding points

A comprehensive publication of results of collaborative research between Gandhāran art historians and Gāndhārī textualists will elaborate upon the provisional findings presented at the Gandhāra Connections workshop on the Geography of Gandhāran Art in March 2018. The presentation at the workshop was intended to bring renewed attention to the significance of Buddhist rebirth narratives in Gandhāran Buddhist images and texts. In addition to expanding the corpus by proposing new identifications of jātakas not previously known in Gandhāran art, such as the Nalapāna and Indasamānagotta (hastin/nāga story of the young elephant who destroys the ascetic’s hut), the research reveals diverging patterns of selection and localization of rebirth narratives in visual and literary media. Among more than 180 images of around fifteen jātakas depicted in Gandhāran art, only the ubiquitous Viśvantara (Pāli Vessantara) Jātaka is summarized as the story of Sudaṣṇa in a series of Pūrvayogas which belong to the corpus of 58 Avadānas and Pūrvayogas in the British Library collection of Gāndhārī manuscripts. Artisans and scribes employed various techniques to ‘domesticate’ narratives in local and regional Gandhāran contexts.

The focus on emplacement of stories in the sacralized geography of Greater Gandhāra is a useful lens for examining the significance of Buddhist birth stories for regional practices and pan-Buddhist pilgrimages attested in Chinese travel records. However, by taking another look at the localization or ‘acclimatization’ of legends in written and visual media, I am not arguing that narrative locativization is necessarily the only or most important interpretive framework. The aim of this very brief and provisional contribution to the proceedings of the workshop is merely to suggest that asking questions about where narrative episodes were believed to have taken place opens up other interesting questions about why these particular rebirth stories were selectively appropriated for representation and elaboration by artisans and scribes, how they may have circulated in storytelling networks, and what Gandhāran Buddhists did to enact and perform their own stories.

References


\[1\] Identifications by David Jongeward in consultation with Jessie Pons and Monika Zin are not discussed here, but will be elaborated upon in a catalogue publication. Other identifications proposed by Nakao Odani (2008) will be discussed in that publication.

\[2\] The concept of literary domestication defined by Todd Lewis as ‘the dialectical process by which a religious tradition is adapted to a region’s or ethnic group’s socio-economic and cultural life’ (2015: 233) for application to Newar Buddhist Avadānas and jātakas in the Kathmandu Valley does not entail a pejorative sense of compromising narrative integrity by obscuring an original meaning or true location of episodes in the Buddha’s past and present lives.


