

Classical Art Research Centre, University of Oxford



# The Global Connections of Gandharan Art

*The third workshop of the **CARC Gandhara Connections Project** generously supported by the Bagri Foundation and the Neil Kreitman Foundation*

The workshop will be held in the Lecture Theatre, Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies, 66 St Giles', Oxford, OX1 3LU.

## Abstracts

### DAY ONE

#### **Warwick Ball (Editor-in-Chief, *Afghanistan*)**

*Gandhara Perceptions: the Orbit of Gandharan Studies*

A general overview of how Gandharan art and its study has spread, been received and interpreted. This includes such issues as: the perceived connections of the Classical element with Alexander of Macedon and its consequent affect on the British in India; the question whether Gandharan art returned west to influence Roman art; Gandhara in the Islamic sources and its transformation into a poetic metaphor; the influence of Gandharan art in early Islamic architecture; Gandharan art in ancient China and Neo-Classical architecture in contemporary China; the question of cultural appropriation and identity.

#### **Dr Marike van Aerde (Leiden University)**

*The Buddha and the Silk Roads: Gandharan Connections through the Karakorum Mountains and Indian Ocean Ports*

This paper takes the Gandhara region as starting point to explore its wider connections within the early Afro-Eurasian trade networks (ca. 300 BCE-600 CE), often referred to separately as the ancient 'Silk Roads' and 'Maritime Routes'. Based on comparative studies of the archaeological record, the role and spread of Gandharan Buddhist material culture along these multiple connections and routes is the main focus point throughout the case studies presented. The two main connections explored are 1) routes through the Karakorum mountains from Gandhara to the Tarim Basin, with focus on the Buddhist rock carvings discovered in these regions; 2) evidence of Gandharan Buddhist material culture in various ports of Gujarat, Odisha and Sri Lanka, and their implications for the spread of Buddhism coinciding with the expansion of trade routes across the Indian subcontinent.

By considering Gandharan material culture in this wider context of trade connectivity, the research automatically touches upon questions concerning the Hellenistic *koine* in Gandhara, as well as Roman influences via evidence of maritime trade across the Indian Ocean. This paper will present several new

discoveries and interpretations of routes and rock carvings from the Karakorum mountains, and links specific excavation reports of lesser-known Indian ports in Gujarat, Odisha and Sri Lanka with the much better-known historical narratives, in order to gain a more complete understanding of the role of Gandhara within these wider networks – focused on the spread of its Buddhist material culture specifically.

**Martina Stoye (Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin)**

*On the Crossroads of Disciplines: A theory of Understanding Roman Art Images & Its Implications for the Study of Western Influence(s) in Gandharan Art*

The Buddhist art and culture of Gandhara unites Indian Buddhist, Iranian and Greek Roman elements in a seemingly indissoluble amalgam. In over 150 years of research history, in particular the ancient Western component in Gandhara's sculptures has fascinated researchers time and again. The academic study of Gandhara's Greco-Roman roots became a permanent (controversial) theme, which is gladly taken up by Gandhara scholars to this day. It is also true that the dominance of the question of Western influences in Gandhara has been criticized many times, especially in post-colonial times. And given many other possible issues (such as the Indian or Iranian components of Gandharan Buddhist art), there have been repeated calls and encouragement for, according equal rights to other auxiliary disciplines. Nevertheless, classical archaeology is and remains an indispensable resource for Gandharan studies. Surprisingly, however, there are still gaps today in the adherence to this long privileged discipline: important debates in more recent classical archeology about the fundamental nature of Roman art have not been taken up by and exploited for Gandharan studies, although they might greatly enrich our view of unresolved controversies in Gandhara research. In part, this may be because these debates have long been conducted outside the anglophone sphere. With the presentation of a German Classical archaeologist's reflections on the character of Roman imagery and an assessment of its potential for a reevaluation of the Western components of Gandharan art, this lecture aims to close one of these gaps.

**Dr Peter Stewart (CARC, Oxford)**

*Roman Sarcophagi and Gandharan Sculpture*

The classical aspects of Gandharan sculpture have motivated much of their study in the last 150 years. Although the diverse global connections of Gandharan art have been recognized increasingly in recent years, the Graeco-Roman components in its repertoire of styles and iconography remain unavoidable and puzzling. There has always been debate about the extent to which this is a legacy of the Hellenistic world (even though Gandharan figural sculpture seems to have emerged some generations after the end of 'Indo-Greek' rule in the region) and how much may be due to some kind of contemporary contact with the Roman Empire. While the role of Roman culture as part of the story of Gandharan art is generally acknowledged, the language we use about classical 'influence' in Gandhara is often strongly hellenocentric. To talk of elements of Gandharan imagery being 'Greek' or 'Hellenistic' may be technically accurate, inasmuch as the Greek/Hellenistic tradition endured through the Roman imperial period and beyond, but it is misleading if we actually think that contemporary contacts between Rome and Gandhara in the globally connected early centuries of our era are an important part of the explanation.

Against that background, this paper seeks to contribute to our awareness and understanding of Roman connections in the development of Gandharan art by re-examining the resonances between Roman sarcophagi and Gandharan decorative and narrative sculptures from stupas. This link, first discussed

decades ago by Buchthal, Soper and others, can now be illustrated with a range of uncanny echoes between Gandharan art and sarcophagus-carving – resemblances particularly in iconography, compositional tendencies, gestures and expressions of figures. The link with sarcophagi cannot explain the classicism of Gandharan art – it can only be part of the picture. But it is an intriguing and counter-intuitive part. The fact that the links are so close, that the Gandharan artists appropriated and adapted with complete understanding of the tradition, and indeed the fact that the closest connections are with metropolitan Roman production rather than the eastern areas of the empire, all suggest that this phenomenon cannot simply be explained in general terms by trade or globalization, but suggest more specific and concrete connections, most probably the movement of artists themselves, as Soper had proposed.

**Dr Tadashi Tanabe (Soka University, Tokyo/ LMU, Munich)**

*The Transmission of Dionysiac Imagery to Gandharan Buddhist Art*

Amongst the corpus of Gandharan sculpture, there are relief panels depicting Dionysiac or Bacchanalian scenes. This kind of imagery shows banquet scenes, male and female fraternizing or amorous couples, scenes of musical performance, and wine-making scenes. These images were influenced by Greek and Roman art. However, it is not clear how the artistic ideas of these scenes were transmitted to Gandhara and which factors played an important role in the transmission, whether the movement of subjects or immigration of people? Therefore, in my paper I will address such Gandharan Dionysiac imagery and attempt to investigate how it was transmitted from the Roman empire to Gandhara.

First, I will show typical Dionysiac images depicted on Gandharan relief panels which emphasize secular and sensual pleasure rather than faith in the god. Second, I will show a variety of Dionysiac images in Greek and Roman art that seem to involve a profound religious significance and also diverse aspects of Dionysian imagery. Third, I will compare the Dionysiac imagery depicted on Gandharan relief panels and that of Greek and Roman art, and show that the repertory of Dionysiac imagery transmitted to Gandhara is extremely limited and the cultic or ritualistic and mythological images were not adopted by Gandharan Buddhists and artisans. Lastly, I attempt to answer the two questions. How were artistic ideas transmitted? Through movement of objects or people? I conclude that it is appropriate for us to admit both possibilities.

**Prof Ian Haynes (Newcastle University), Iwan Peverett, and Dr Wannaporn Rienjang (CARC)**

*3D-Modelling of the Main Stupa at Saidu Sharif: A Provocation*

This paper examines an array of Digital Humanities approaches to the study of Gandhara sites and monuments. It begins with a discussion of recent work on the imaging of Gandhara sculpture held by the Ashmolean Museum using Structure From Motion and White light/Video Scanning Techniques. Thereafter it explores the potential of digital visualisations / provocations and presents work in progress on the development of a new model of the first phase of Saidu Sharif, Swat, Pakistan.

## **DAY TWO**

### **Ken Ishikawa (Wolfson College, Oxford)**

*More Gandhara than Mathura: Substantial and Persistent Gandharan Influence Provincialised in the Buddhist Material Culture of Gujarat ca. 400–550 AD*

This paper investigates a newly emerged provincial Buddhist material culture in Gujarat in ca. 400 AD out of cultural influences from Gandhāra and Mathura, which anticipated the pan-Indian spread of the Gupta material culture soon thereafter. In Gujarat, the process of the major pan-Indian transition from ‘aniconic’ to anthropomorphic Buddha images took place 200–300 years later than at Mathura, Gandhāra and South India, in ca. 400 AD, when locally produced anthropomorphic Buddha images first appeared at Devnimori. I argue that Devnimori Buddhas came into existence under the influence of the two important cultural centres of Gandhāra and Mathura. Substantial Gandhāran influence is also evident from a monumental terraced square-platform brick *stūpa* at Devnimori, whose architectural style is of Gandhāran origin - the Devnimori *stūpa* is also regarded as the prototype of later Gupta terraced brick temples, following the same pattern as Devnimori Buddha images in relation to pan-Indian Gupta material culture. The paper then explores how the case study of Devnimori informs us of the process of the emergence of a new regional material culture achieved through complex inter-regional interactions and discusses it further in the context of the ongoing debate over the origin/s of the Buddha image. Furthermore, the paper also traces the wave of Gandhāran influence observed at Devnimori, which within or after a century or so eventually reached the Western Ghats, most notably Ajantā, and locally persisted in Gujarat at Shamlaji near Devnimori or at Dhank in Saurashtra or even at Mirpur Khas in Sindh. The case-study of Dhank discusses the image of a Gandhāran-style Buddhist triad discovered during my fieldwork, revisiting key problems with the identifications of buddhas and bodhisattvas in the study of Gandharan Buddhist art with reference to the archaeological visibility of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

### **Shumpei Iwai (Ryukoku Museum, Kyoto)**

*Buddhist Temples in Tokharistan and their Relationships with Gandharan Traditions*

This paper focuses on the relationships in Buddhist cultures between Tokharistan and Gandhara. Tokharistan, a historical region including the north-eastern part of Afghanistan and the southern parts of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, had accepted Buddhism from Gandhara around the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Many Buddhist sites have been excavated from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onward and various aspects of Buddhist cultures of Tokharistan have come to light. Among those, this paper introduces the following Buddhist sites: Kara Tapa, Fayaz Tapa, Airtam, Ushtur mullo, two Buddhist temples at Dal'verzin Tapa, and several Buddhist temples probably located around Kunduz.

When we investigate the plan of structures and excavated Buddhist sculptures of these sites, it becomes clear that Tokharistan Buddhism had been formed basically under the influence of Gandharan Buddhism. For example, such characteristics as a rectangular base of stupa, Gandharan style of Buddhist art and use of Kharoshti characters in temples would specifically show the strong influence from Gandhara. On the other hand, we can find some unique features of Tokharistan temples. The rectangular shrine with double enclosure wall, which is said to have originated from a Zoroastrian fire

temple in Iran, is especially important. The frequent existence of this type of shrine in Tokharistan might suggest that Buddhists in Tokharistan had adopted a local religious tradition into Buddhist architectures.

These Buddhist temples in Tokharistan had tentatively declined at the latter half of the 4th century. This phenomenon used to be regarded as a result of a “social crisis” in whole Tokharistan region vaguely. Many researchers, however, have indicated recently that the crisis was not continuous, and not so critical. Although there must be a combination of reasons for the decline, we would like to emphasize the following two factors: Sasanian intervention and the disappearance of a political group which connects the north and the south of Hindukush. If Tokharistan Buddhism basically depended on Gandharan Buddhism, the latter factor might be critical for Tokharistan monks because it meant that new information of Gandharan Buddhism did not reach Tokharistan.

### **Dr Joy Lidu Yi (Florida International University, Miami)**

*Cross-Cultural Buddhist Cave-Monasteries: Yungang, the Silk Road and Beyond*

This innovative research project will investigate the manner by which Buddhism was disseminated from the Gandhara area of Northwest India, through the Western Regions beyond the Yumen Pass to Central Plain China, based on new archaeological finds, previous scholarship and earlier excavations of monastery remains, from the perspective of devotional practices and rituals performed in Buddhist monasteries on the Silk Road between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. It ultimately explores the functions of Buddhist monasteries in the course of Buddhist permeation from Gandhara all the way to China.

In recent years, the archaeological excavations of Buddhist monastery ruins in Xinjiang revealed important findings, for example, the Tuyuq cave monastery complex remains in Shanshan County, and the Huyangdun Buddhist monastery ruins in Yutian County. At the former were excavated *chaitya* caves, containing material that dates from about the 5<sup>th</sup> century and sets of Buddhist monasteries from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The subject matter and style of the surviving mural paintings display close connections with Gandhara, Khotan and Kucha. At the latter site were found a large Buddha hall structure in the shape of two concentric squares one inside the other (回), and mural paintings of naked celestial youths and standing Buddhas in the Gandhara style. To the east in Central Plain China, in Yungang, a fifth-century rock-cut cave-temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and one of the greatest Buddhist monuments of all time, Buddhist monastery ruins were found *above* the rock-cut caves in recent years.

These new materials have great research value and greatly enrich our appreciation of the content of Buddhist monasteries in the Western Regions and Central Plain China. Combined with archaeological materials excavated and found by previous scholars in Buddhist monasteries in Gandhara and Xinjiang during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as in Yungang in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all of these now allow one to examine anew such monastery remains and in a new light explore the devotional practices and rituals at Buddhist monasteries in Xinjiang and Central Plain China, and their relations with those in Gandhara.

### **Professor Yang Juping (Nankai University, Tianjin)**

*The Sinicization and Secularization of Gandhara Art in China, With Some Greco-Buddhist Gods as Examples*

Regardless of how many different origins for Gandhara Art can be proposed, when it was born and formed in ancient India, and when it spread into China, one fact is undeniable: that it began to become sinicized gradually, and even secularized, as soon as it came into China with Buddhism. For example, the Apollo-like Buddha evolved into images of Chinese Emperors of the North Wei Dynasty, and even became the personification of Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty. The Atlas-figures of Gandhara art appeared in the tombs of Chinese lay-men. The Nike-Apsara became first of all Feitian (flying deities in Heaven) in China, and was eventually assimilated by the foreign Nestorian Christians in Yuan Dynasty. However, the most typical example is Heracles-Vajrapani who lost his vajra (thunderbolt) and the position of bodyguard of the Buddha, and degenerated into a warrior figure protecting the tombs of common Chinese people in the Tang Dynasty. Those motifs in Gandhara art were also absorbed early on by Chinese folk art. In this paper I shall only take Heracles-Vajrapani, Atlas figures, the Nike-Apsara figures, and Helios-Surya as case-studies to show how Gandhara art connected with the Chinese cultural tradition.

**Dr Christian Luczanits (SOAS, London)**

*Gandharan Art and the Himalayas*

As is well known, Gandharan art had a substantial impact on the subsequent art of northern India. Specifically, the Gandharan Buddha image had tremendous influence on later depictions of the Buddha. Closer to home, it has left a considerable legacy in the adjoining north-western Himalayan regions, in particular Swat and Kashmir, and through those artistic traditions also on Tibetan Buddhist art. In my contribution I will review the legacy of Gandharan art in the Himalayas, especially the diverse regions of the Western Himalayas but also beyond, and reflect on the question why this art style had such a long lasting influence. I will specifically focus on the Gandharan elements in the art of Kashmir and its legacy across the Himalayas.