

On the crossroads of disciplines: Tonio Hölscher's theory of understanding Roman art images and its implications for the study of western influence(s) in Gandhāran art

Martina Stoye



The Global Connections of Gandhāran Art

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Gandhāran 'Atlas' figure in schist; c. second century AD. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. M.71.73.136 (Photo: LACMA Public Domain image.)



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The most striking characteristic of Gandhāran art and one of the main reasons motivating the study by European archaeologists of this Indian style of art has been, since the first major explorations of its archaeological sites in the nineteenth century, the clear presence of western, classical antique components. These can be seen in both narrative and decorative images, in terms of style as well as motif (Figures 1-4). They are so conspicuous, in fact, that they are even observable to a layperson.¹ Attempts on the parts of archaeologists and historians to identify a clearly defined origin of Gandhāran art and credibly to date its products beyond doubt have, however, proven challenging: especially when it came to developing a coherent overall account, universally valid when applied to all phenomena of Gandhāran art.

Early approaches tried to derive the traits of Gandhāran art so familiar to a European exclusively from one narrowly defined segment of western antique art, soon leading to fierce controversies: some saw Hellenistic art (that is, that of the pre-Imperial, non-Roman period) as Gandhāran art's sole originator (Burgess, Grünwedel, Foucher),² whereas followers of a 'Roman School' recognized predominant Roman sources (that is, of the Imperial and early Christian period) (Fergusson, Smith, Rowland, Buchthal, Wheeler, Soper, Ingholt, Ahrens, Seckel, Ackermann).³ Even though current research, owing to numerous excavations and individual studies, has been able to differentiate further, much controversy remains to this day (see further Stewart's contribution to the present volume). But at least research has been able to work out reasons behind these irritations. That is to say, in Gandhāran art, ambiguities abound; the Graeco-Roman influences in Gandhāran art have not only been blended into a predominantly native Indian frame, but Iranian and further Central Asian components have also found their way in.⁴ Because each individual

¹ There are countless small Corinthian/corinthianizing capitals on pilasters that separate Buddhist narrative scenes (Zwalf 1996: vol. 1, 50, 61 [ch. 8 § 3]; vol. 2, nos. 451-455, 127, 131, 139 etc.; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, e.g. nos. 630, 644, 645) as well as several monumental capitals of this kind showing Buddhist figures emerging out of the acanthus leaves (Zwalf 1996: vol. 1, 61 [ch. 8 § 3]; vol. 2, nos. 456, 457; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, nos. 516, 632-634). In addition, besides acanthus friezes (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 449, 199, 219 etc.) or laurel leaf wreaths running along narrative scenes (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 448, 177, 205, 206, 208 etc.; Stoye 2007; 2010b), there are plenty of decorative friezes of chubby putti bearing undulating garlands (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 414-426; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, nos. 646-7, 653ff), all of the aforementioned motifs once adorning *stūpas* along with other more indigenous decor. There are figure groups borrowed from the Dionysiac sphere (Zwalf 1996: vol. 1, 34 n. 31; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, nos. 558, 560ff). Similarly, subjected to the pious Buddhist sphere were leogryphs (Berlin, inv. no. I 86), tritons, *ketoi*, (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 340ff; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, nos. 695ff), centaurs (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, no. 435; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, 705ff; fig. 3) or atlant-like caryatides (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 355-378; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, nos. 447-459). Even in scenes of the Buddha's lives, western-inspired figures and props appear, which did not exist in previous North Indian Buddhist imagery, such as Herakles-type males (Zwalf 1996: no. 293; Morgan 2019), a city goddess with turreted crown (Zwalf 1996: vol. 1, 44, nos. 176-178, 300), various figures with drapery billowing over their heads in *velificatio* (Mevissen 2011: 92ff; Tanabe 1998), the Trojan horse (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, no. 300; Stewart 2016), cornucopias (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 93, 95-98; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, nos. 479ff), *kantharoi* (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 98; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, 541) or tripods with lion paws (Stoye 2004) – just to name only the most obvious examples out of many possible ones.

² Burgess 1899; Grünwedel 1901; Foucher 1905-1951: vol. 2, 401ff, 866-867, and 443,1; 1942-1947: vol. 2, 306-354.

³ Fergusson 1876: 177-182; Smith 1889-1893: 118-119; Rowland 1936; 1938; 1942; 1943; 1945; 1946; 1956a; 1956b; 1958; 1967; Buchthal 1942-3; 1943; 1945; Wheeler 1949; 1951; 1954; Soper 1951; Ingholt 1957; Ahrens 1961; Seckel 1964; Ackermann 1975.

⁴ E.g. pilasters with capitals of a Persepolitan order, frequent as scene dividers in some of the more peripheral Buddhist decor bands (Zwalf 1996: vol. 2, nos. 379ff, 455; Kurita 2003: vol. 2, nos. 642-643). Some iconographic elements suggest the absorption of Iranian concepts: the flames seen on the Buddha's shoulders on some occasions, the frequent representations of a certain type of fire-altar in scenes of worship (Soper 1949; Tanabe 1981; Verardi 1987; 1988; 1994), the pictorial allusions to Pharro and Ardokhsho (otherwise known from coins) in some of the so-called 'fertility couples' of the Gandhāran imagery (Zwalf 1996, I:



Figure 1. Corinthianizing capital with Buddhist figures from Gandhāra. Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, inv. I 71. (Photo: copyright Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst / Foto: J. Liepe.)



Figure 2. Fragment of a putto-cum-garland frieze from Gandhāra. Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, inv. I 207. (Photo: copyright Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst / Foto: I. Papadopoulou.)

element was modified in order to create a harmonious whole, it is difficult retroactively to distill each respective, distinct ingredient. When it comes to the western components, most today agree that the influences from outside came in several impulses of differing cause, perhaps even through a continuous flow of ideas from the west (whatever one wants to understand by ‘west’, be it from the Middle or Near East, from Asia Minor or the Mediterranean).⁵ Even though this minimum consensus has been reached, current research on Gandhāran art is still searching for an elucidation of the details of this process. The fact that we continue to gather for workshops still occupied with the same topic that has been under discussion for 150 years, shows that a final conclusion that all can agree with has yet to be reached.

Ever since the discovery of Aī Khanoum in the 1960s, it seems to me that those who believe that the origins of Gandhāran art can only be explained as a result of Hellenistic precursors in Asia itself predominate. This long-sought discovery of a Hellenistic city in Afghanistan (even though it is quite far away from Gandhāra) has been followed by the assumption that Gandhāran culture only became what it was through the centuries long westernized influences of its surroundings. From then on, theories

44) or the impact of Sasanian art in some later Buddhist icons (Zwalf 1996: 70); on Iranian influence on Gandhāran Buddhism in general cf. Scott 1990.

⁵ As W. Zwalf (1996: vol. 1, 67) noticed quite rightly, ‘a number of the more recent supporters of the Romano-Buddhist view accepted an initial role by a Hellenistic, even Iranised, art before the Roman influence ... became dominant’. Other authors, in particular those who reflected on Gandhāran art after the discovery of Aī Khanoum, considered the western component of Gandhāran art solely as an overlay of various Hellenistic and Hellenized layers (e.g. a Hellenistic-Bactrian layer superimposed with Hellenized Parthian, as in Schlumberger 1970). Still other authors, accepting such premises, nevertheless thought the inclusion of an additional (last) Roman layer as self-evident, although the view was expressed that the latter layer in particular was difficult to discern (Nehru 1989: 4; Bussagli 1996: 244-245).



Figure 3. Fragment of a centaur sculpture from Gandhāra. Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, inv. I 218. (Photo: copyright Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst / Foto: J. v. Bruchhausen.)



Figure 4. Fragment of a sculpture of Herakles-like bearded man with child from Gandhāra. Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, inv. I 214. (Photo: copyright Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst / Foto: J. v. Bruchhausen.)

that gave room to the possibility of Roman influence were vehemently rejected by many a renowned researcher, often even without further examination.⁶ Thus, Gandhāran culture has been described as a product of the greater Central Asian region, developing out of the historic after-effects of the conquests of Alexander, a late echo of the kingdoms of the Diadochi, especially of the Seleucid Empire, from which the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom split off, itself one of several important conditions for the creation of the Indo-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms. A series of kingdoms with a Hellenistic touch followed: the Indo-Scythians, the Indo-Parthians and the Kushans, although the mass production of Gandhāran art would flourish only under the latter. As a prologue to the hypotheses I will be presenting in this paper, I would like, to a certain extent, to reconsider this narrative of a long-lasting continuity – not by denying the history of developments that I have just laid out, but rather, by focusing on the breaks in the story. Especially because compared to the relatively late appearance of Gandhāran art in terms of pictorial traditions, these breaks may have meant the drying up of possible visual sources much too early.

⁶ E.g. Dehejia 1997: 185 ‘A few early scholars also devoted their attention to narrative sculpture, explaining much in terms of Roman influence ... Such proposals, belonging to the history of the study of Indian art, scarcely need refutation here.’

For example, the Mauryan Empire expanded into eastern Afghanistan only *after* Alexander had arrived (for his very short interlude) in India. Aī Khanoum had already been abandoned in the 140s BC, by the latest around c. 130 BC (Mairs 2016: 61, 147, 151), and the last Indo-Greeks can only be traced to the decades around the turn of the first century BC to the first century AD (Cribb 2008: 65). I would also like to emphasize that there is still no archaeological evidence for extensive narrative relief art from those phases that could convincingly be regarded as a real precursor of Gandhāran art.⁷

The only image traditions that undeniably extend from these early Hellenistic enclaves to Gandhāran culture are the pictures found on coins (e.g. Errington & Cribb 1992: 52-88). The types of figures on coins and their range of actions are, however, so reduced that it would be impossible to see them as the main stimulating agent for the wide range of motifs and in particular of the visual narratives in second- and third-century Gandhāra. I must admit that many an Indo-Parthian was in possession of a good Greek education (Dani 1999: vol. 2, 197, 203) and, as we all know, that Parthian and Śaka preludes to Gandhāran art existed (Marshall 1960: 17-39; Fabrègues 1987; Nehru 1989: 68-94). In my opinion, however, neither of their image types not even the so-called toilet trays (Marshall 1951: vol. 2, 493-498; Francfort 1979; Dar 1979; Tanabe 2002; Lo Muzio 2002; 2011; 2018; Falk 2010; Pons 2011) adequately account for the later unified character of the mass production of Gandhāran art proper (i.e. for the sudden introduction of entire series of iconographies, even image programmes).⁸

I would also like to point out that the art of Gandhāra in its typical form, as reproduced over a period of 200 to 300 years, first developed at the end of the first century AD and flourished under the Great Kushans. Mass production began in the second and third centuries,⁹ so at exactly the same time as the flourishing and fullest extent of Roman Imperial art (see also Stewart's chapter in this volume). This fact alone must therefore allow a renewed, in-depth look at the simultaneous production of art in the Roman Empire. It even seems imperative, especially now that at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, classical archaeologists have made multiple brilliant contributions towards a new understanding of the language of Roman images.¹⁰ How Roman art is assessed and looked at is now fundamentally different from the approach at the time scholars first studied Roman prototypes for Gandhāran art, in the first half of the twentieth century. There are many possible reasons why research on Gandhāra has not taken much notice of these new contributions. Perhaps it is because these theories were mainly developed in German and not immediately translated into English, or because Gandhāran art scholarship never considered a revision of its old views of the possible impacts of Roman art (from the first half of the twentieth century) necessary, once the decision had been made to regard Gandhāran art as having grown predominantly out of regional Hellenistic sources.

As announced in the title of this paper I would now like to draw attention to an important, academic theory for understanding Roman art and its possible implications for the study of western influence(s) in Gandhāran art. In the course of my PhD studies on the Buddhavita (life of the Buddha) in Gandhāran art and its relationships to ancient western representations of human life, I scrutinized a series of Buddhavita scenes¹¹ and tried to relate them to late Hellenistic, Roman Republican, and Roman Imperial

⁷ Compare the excavations of Barikot conducted by Luca Maria Olivieri (personal communication).

⁸ Even if we were willing to accept the possibility of toilet trays being produced into the time of the Great Kushans, as suggested e.g. by Lo Muzio 2011: 338-339; 2018: 124.

⁹ Confirmed from a numismatist's point of view also by Cribb (2008: 68; 2009: 69) 'Die numismatischen Belege zeigen, dass von der zweiten Hälfte des 1. Jh. n. Chr. an ein freier Austausch zwischen Gandhara und einem Gemisch aus iranischen, römischen und indischen Einflüssen gegeben waren, die in die Entwicklung der gandharischen Bildhauerkunst eingegangen sind.'

¹⁰ Scholars who summarize the more recent research history of Roman art studies speak of an historical turn – even of a seismic shift – in scholarship in the late 1960s and 1970s (Sinn 2000: 35-36; Hölscher 2000: 147; Hölscher 2002: 24; Lang 2002: 70-71; Stewart 2008: 4-5; Borg 2015: 3).

¹¹ See <https://lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/martina_stoye> (last checked 18th May 2020). The scenes of the Buddhavita studied were: the miraculous birth and the ensuing first bath, the ride of young Siddhārtha to school, the first lesson, the

imagery, amongst them biographical Roman sarcophagi as well as certain image types found in Roman triumphal iconographies. From a very careful consideration of the potential image-forming power of the still extant Buddhist narrative tradition against that of potential western models (of which I found surprisingly many previously unnoticed or undiscussed), a consistent pattern of iconography building (conflating various sources) soon emerged, which – once observed – seemed to apply also to many more image types. It also appeared to be valid for designs of decorative patterns.¹²

Since there are no parallels for this mode of image-building in early Indo-Buddhist imagery, I then started to search for explanations in the secondary literature on western antiquity and its pictorial languages, particularly in more recent books, which had not been used for Gandhāran research so far. Thus, one day I came across a book written in German by a German professor of classical archaeology on the semantics of Roman imagery, which really struck me: this was Tonio Hölscher's *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System* (Hölscher 1987). Through his suggestions with regard to Roman image-language, all my observations on the collage-like, but in terms of content meaningful, use of heterogeneous western models in 'my' iconographies suddenly seemed to make perfect sense. Hölscher offered very similar observations of a classical archaeologist on very different, but contemporaneous objects from a distant, but nevertheless connected context. I even got the impression that if one were to transfer the view of this classical archaeologist on the reception and adaptation of pre-Roman models in Roman art to the reception and adaptation of pre-Gandhāran models in the art of Gandhāra, then many contradictions and irritations regarding Gandhāran art could easily be reassessed (e.g. with regard to the multiple roots, to the text-image relationship, to our views on style etc.) – even without much talk about chronology. To me this book had a powerful effect. I should like to share its main thoughts and the implications for dealing with Gandhāran art in the following paragraphs.

Arising from a lecture at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in 1984, Hölscher's slim volume was first published in German in a very modest edition in 1987. But in German archaeological circles, it soon became considered one of the most important and stimulating books ever written on Roman art,¹³ seminal for a deep understanding of Roman imagery,¹⁴ a book that should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in Roman art.¹⁵ Strangely enough, it took many years for this important work to be translated into English – until 2005, to be precise. The credit for accomplishing this task goes to an Oxbridge team, Anthony Snodgrass and his German wife Annemarie Künzl-Snodgrass, who provided a very beautiful, sensitive, and faithful translation,¹⁶ while Jaś Elsner contributed an insightful introduction, with helpful lists of further reading and a glossary.¹⁷

I should now like to introduce you to Hölscher's ideas.¹⁸ Hölscher's aim is to offer a new means of understanding Roman art by viewing Roman image-making as an embracing of older, Greek forms from heterogeneous backgrounds in order to express Roman ideals. He argues that in all periods of Roman art

wedding, the *Mahāparinirvāna* scene (all of them newly developed in Gandhāran art and not known in previous Buddhist imagery).

¹² On the elongated laurel wreath running along Buddhist narrative scenes as a migrated and then thoughtfully adapted decorative element, ideas were presented in Stoye 2007 and 2010b.

¹³ Stewart 2006: 210.

¹⁴ Newby 2006: 275.

¹⁵ Humble 2007: 126.

¹⁶ A. Snodgrass was Laurence Professor of Classical Archaeology at Cambridge from 1976 to 2001. A. Künzl-Snodgrass was a Language Teaching Officer in the Department of German at the University of Cambridge, and is a Fellow of Jesus College. Preface to the English edition in Hölscher 2004: xiii; Balty 2006: 636.

¹⁷ Jaś Elsner is Humphry Payne Senior Research Fellow in Classical Art and Archaeology at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and the author of various studies on Roman art history. Foreword, Chronology and Glossary by Jaś Elsner in Hölscher 2004: xv-xxxv.

¹⁸ For this purpose, I will use several compilations of long quotations from this translation. As my own English is quite mediocre, whereas the translation is so brilliant, I thought that this procedure would serve best to achieve true reflections of Hölscher's thoughts.

there was a profusion of types in circulation. Each time a new work of art was created, well-established image-types were selected from older art work (from whatever the source), thereby freely transferring some important aspect of the latter's well-known core message to the content of the newly created artwork. Now let us read Hölscher's own words in their English translation (Hölscher 2004).

[5] 'one basic and fundamental element of Roman art ... [is] the indelible stamp of Greece...'; [6-7] 'It is beyond argument that Roman art, in each of its fields and in as many different ways, rests on Greek foundations...'; [11] 'Close inspection of Roman art reveals a picture of bewildering diversity. In every period of Roman history, the most varied stylistic phases of Greek art – from Late Archaic to late Hellenistic – are picked up and exploited'; [14] 'In the choice of model, the extent of pluralism is remarkable'; [103] '...the whole range of forms from the Late Archaic to the late Hellenistic became available [for combinatory use]'; [11] '...we find established types of scene and figure, fundamental paradigms of scenic and figural composition, which derive from different epochs of Greek art but which are used, side by side, [at one time]...'; [16] 'The patterns ... developed in Greek art are thus appropriated and exploited with breath-taking flexibility – sometimes for the whole composition, sometimes for single figures and groups, sometimes for yet smaller details'; [104] 'The preconditions and beginnings of this language of imagery are not to be sought in Rome, but in Greek art of the second century BC ... [But] from the second century BC onwards, Rome took part in this Greek process'; [105] 'This handling of artistic forms was quickly transmitted by Greek artists to Rome'; [104] 'Then, however, the phenomena were developed into a much more rigorous form, and to more far-reaching effect, in Rome and for the circumstances of the Roman Empire'; [111] '...by Augustan times at the latest, the repertory of forms must have achieved a certain completeness'; [104] 'and ... [it] came to fulfil a specific function'; [86-87] '...structures of form which had once, in the course of Greek history, been fundamental expressions of entire epochs, now acquired a new function as part of a system with an entirely different basis. In the centuries from the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods, Greek art had gone through a rapid and radical process of change, deeply stamped with the collective experiences of the successive epochs'; [87-88] 'The unity of the various products of a given epoch thus predominated relatively strongly, ... the new system of visual language, which was shaped in late Hellenistic times and remained in operation throughout the Roman Imperial period, represents not merely a new phase of development, but a fundamental break ... formal resources, which in the past had been developed one after the other, were now available for use together. Out of a diachronic development, there came into being a synchronic range.' Or, as Peter Stewart put it in his 2006 review of Tonio Hölscher's book: 'Greek forms [were] abstracted from their "diachronically different" origins and made synchronically available to [the] artists. The artists could pick and choose from the entire formal spectrum of past Greek art according to the requirements and expectations that surrounded particular works'¹⁹ (Figure 5).

But what were these requirements and expectations? What was the intention behind the employment of such heterogeneous models? Can any intention be perceived at all? On what did the choice of models depend?

Hölscher puts it this way: [18] 'For if the choice of models does not depend on the taste and style of different periods, social groups or individuals, then on what does it depend? Is it a learned form of game-playing? Is it a symptom of Roman culture's poverty of invention? A chaos of forms?'; [77] '... how [did] the use and adaptation of the models [take] place, and with what thinking behind them?'

On the basis of his observations on the application of diverse image-types on certain monuments and on artistic judgements in Roman literature, Hölscher concludes that different artistic types must have carried with them specific ideological meanings. The choice of one particular artistic model was not

¹⁹ Stewart 2006: 211.

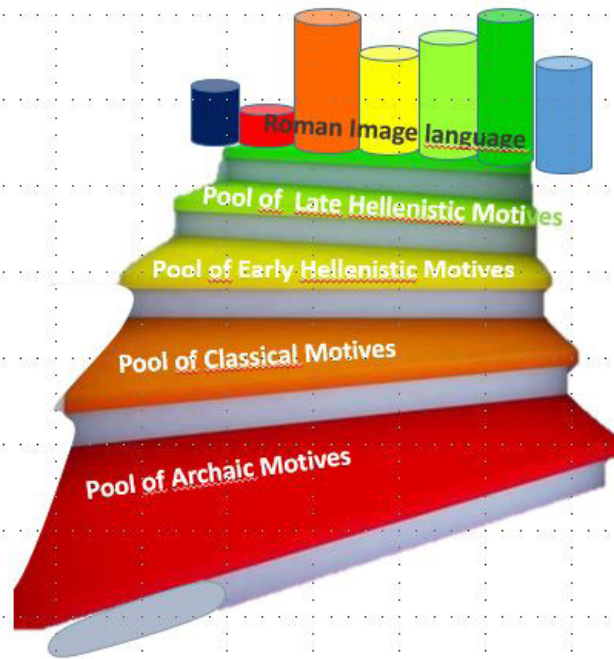


Figure 5. Simplified scheme of the strata from which Roman image-language draws its models.
(M. Stoye; based on the work of T. Hölscher.)

so much influenced by the prevailing aesthetic taste of the day, but was instead determined by well-established content-related associations corresponding with those visual forms. Or in short: in Roman art, the selection of certain models was strongly dictated by subject-matter, long associated with those models.

To give you some examples: ‘for traditionally dignified figures [...] the noble forms of High Classicism [...] were preferred.’ This applied to images of gods and heroes. Images of such noble figures were meant to convey majesty (*maiestas*), dignity (*gravitas*), sanctity (*sanctitas*), and authority (*auctoritas*). Thus, most depictions of Roman gods and heroes were based on classical models, resulting in dignified, graceful figures with beautiful, ideally proportioned bodies and ideal, de-individualized faces of immaculate beauty, culminating in a seemingly timeless youthfulness and completely balanced expression.²⁰ (Does that not, by the way, remind us of the Buddha image)? Classicism imbued with balance and *gravitas* (dignity) was also used to stage the great official ceremonies of the state.²¹

In contrast, the more naturalistic, animated, and emotional forms of the Hellenistic period (with their theatrical pathos, their inclination for dramatic passion) were very often chosen for ecstatic or wild figures, e.g. figures of the Bacchic revel (satyrs, dancing maenads, fauns, animals), for bucolic atmospheres or (typically) for battle scenes. [69] ‘No classicising taste, however strong, could have led to the search for fifth- and fourth-century [i.e. Classical] models for these motifs. The subject decided in advance the choice of representational possibilities.’ Hölscher characterizes the general composition of a Hellenistic battle scene, so readily adopted in Roman images whenever a great victory had to be underlined, as follows: [23-4] ‘[In battle-scenes of the Hellenistic period] ...there is a multiple

²⁰ Hölscher 2004: 69, 96-97, 105.

²¹ Hölscher 2004: 47ff (chapter 6).

interrelation of actions within a coherent surrounding space... Each figure has its place and its role within this overall spatial composition; [26] ‘...forms are pushed together into masses, and thus can join together in collective movements... All this is presented with a *pathos* which was hitherto unthinkable... [here a] pain-distorted countenance ... [there an] upraised arm ... [27] pitiful gestures, as if displaying ... the emotion that the viewer of the picture should feel... For all that, sharply contrasting effects are sought after... [29] [there is a] complete separation of victors and enemies ... [44] the pathos of the fighting and the suffering of the defeated ... [27] means no diminution of the glory of the victor: his position remains unaffected. On the contrary, he is elevated so far above the conquered.’ Does that not remind us of the Gandhāran scene of Mara’s attack, a scene that is meant to represent the greatest victory in the Buddha’s career? (I realize that this is a very associative link, but compelling nonetheless).

Keeping this in mind, let us now move on to one of Hölscher’s major examples. Hölscher utilizes one monument in particular as his starting point, the Ara Pacis. It is his master example, the monument from which he unfurls his whole theory.²² The Ara Pacis was an altar to ‘Augustan peace’ erected between 13 BC and 9 BC by the Roman Senate to honour Augustus. It comprises a sculpted marble enclosure around the sacrificial altar itself, where important sacrifices would have been performed. The west side of the altar is decorated with mythological reliefs that refer to Rome’s mythical origins. The most intact relief on the east side celebrates abundance and fertility with a scene featuring a goddess often identified as Tellus.

On the side walls one finds great processional friezes. They represent a solemn ceremony, with the Emperor, high office-bearers and the Imperial family²³ participating, perhaps depicting the ‘inauguratio’ of the Ara Pacis itself.²⁴ The participants of the procession walk from east to west on both sides toward the western (main) entrance of the Ara Pacis. Hölscher utilizes the Ara Pacis to show that even on one and the same monument (itself erected in the space of only two years) we can find a variety of heterogeneous models applied: [50] ‘...the great frieze with its imposing state ceremony follows the Parthenon frieze... this resemblance lies primarily in the overall composition and the handling of relief. The type of scene, the “Classical procession”, determines the overall appearance; it conveys for the event a quality of solemnity, of the *dignitas* and *auctoritas* of the state’s leading personalities and the religious establishment. [54] ‘The subject of a solemn state ceremony was ... persuasively embodied by the form of composition used in the great frieze of the Ara Pacis’. Its general style of composition presented itself as the most perfect model for a solemn procession of the highest order also within its new, Roman context. And once designed, this type of scene, the ‘Classical procession’ with all its solemnity [55-56] ‘...retained its fundamental validity [as a scene type] for centuries.’²⁵ [77] ‘Yet the individual figures in the procession nevertheless stand very much in different traditions. While the men in togas in some ways closely resemble figure-types from the time of the Parthenon frieze, the ruler’s imposing wife and the young mothers of the Imperial house are closer to the Late Classical and Hellenistic forms which emphasise the figure; the figure of Livia has rightly been placed along with the draped female figures of the late Hellenistic phase... Next come the *flamines* with their specifically Roman dress, for which one could not in any strict sense turn to older typological patterns, but only to reality. Thus a generally Classical type of scene was enacted with figure-types of different provenances, whose choice was once again dictated by their subjects... These heterogeneous figure-types, however, are not placed abruptly side by side but, through the execution of detail, are assimilated to their neighbours.’

²² Hölscher 2004: 76ff.

²³ Hölscher 2004: 49.

²⁴ <<https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/italy/rome/arapacis/arapacis.html>> (last consulted 19th May 2020).

²⁵ Hölscher 2004: 55-56: ‘the great relief scenes of the so-called Ara Pietatis, of the Arch of Titus, the Arch of Trajan at Beneventum, and of the triumphal arch of Marcus Aurelius, form an unbroken chain from the Ara Pacis... although over time the appearance of these derivative representations moved further and further away from the forms of Classical Greek relief.’

The case of the Aeneas panel on the Ara Pacis is used by Hölscher to refine this analysis further. It shows a prefigurement of the founding of Rome. Bottom left is the white sow, who according to prophesy would show Aeneas where Alba Longa was to be founded. In the background (top left) is a miniature model of a temple, which Aeneas had brought with him from Troy and which contained the Penates, the household gods of Rome. Aeneas is about to make a sacrifice by offering at a rustic altar. Before him are two attendants to the ritual, one with a bowl and jug, the other leading the sacrificial sow.

According to Hölscher, the scene as a whole stands in the tradition of Hellenistic landscape [81] ‘...because the sacrifice of the Sow of Lavinium to the Penates was to be set in an idyllic sacral landscape, for which the only convincing tradition was that derived from Hellenistic art. The figure of Aeneas on the other hand follows Classical forms, because only thus could he acquire the qualities of *auctoritas* and *pietas* necessary for his role of ancestor and model for the Emperor. His ‘Classicism’ is thus ... founded on content ... Yet already the sacrificial attendants are distanced vonce again from this “Classical” form... [16] Again, the group of the second sacrificial assistant with the pig follows a Hellenistic model, as preserved for instance in paintings from Delos ... Finally, the depiction of Aeneas himself – while generally classical in type – is enriched by details developed only in later periods. Hence the sharply drawn folds around the legs appear in similar form on the late Hellenistic Poseidon of Melos. The patterns of representation, figural types and formulae developed in Greek art are thus appropriated and exploited with breath-taking flexibility – sometimes for the whole composition, sometimes for single figures and groups, sometimes for yet smaller details.’ [18] ‘In principle, therefore, we must distinguish between – on the one hand – modes of representation, figural types and formulae for detail which may be traced back to different epochs in Greek art, and – on the other hand – a conception of relief, together with a specific craft technique, whereby the heterogeneous elements of the work are presented in a unified “style”... The same principle applied for sculptures in the round’ (Hölscher 2004: 59ff).

The iconography was therefore constructed as follows: first an appropriate scene type was selected, followed by the selection of appropriate models for the main figures until the main scene was finished. This could then be expanded to include further figures, regardless of whether or not the ingredients came from heterogeneous sources. Most important was that the forms selected made sense in terms of content: the visual form should be able to transport values and qualities, which the newly created motif could then be associated with. It was a kind of visual language, made up of well-established image codes that could be combined at will according to the needs of the subject matter at hand. An overall stylistic finish was then given to the whole (Figure 6).

Let us now turn to Gandhāra. Can Hölscher’s depiction of a language of images in Roman art be usefully applied to Gandhāran art? Gandhāran art did develop at the time when this was already the principle of design in the Roman Empire. My experience with the iconographies that I studied indicates that it can. Have not so many studies already clearly shown that the image-creations of Gandhāran art used a similar method of composition, whereby motifs from very different sources were combined in order to create something completely new? If we allow for this possibility, how closely do we want to adhere to Hölscher’s ideas concerning the selection of motifs according to subject matter? And if we really want to accept that Gandhāran art itself adopted the semantics of the Roman visual language that Hölscher describes, what conclusions ensue for the further study of Gandhāran art?

Let us first look again at the Birth Scene. Harking back to an already published article on the western source for one of its core motifs, the *deva* with the swaddling cloth (Stoye 2008; 2010a), I would like to expand on this study of its central motif and draw attention rather to the combinatory character of the whole iconography with regard to its heterogeneous sources. I will then show that the same principles of image-construction seem to have been at work in depictions of the first bath, using published and unpublished work of my own (Stoye 2004; Stoye, forthcoming).

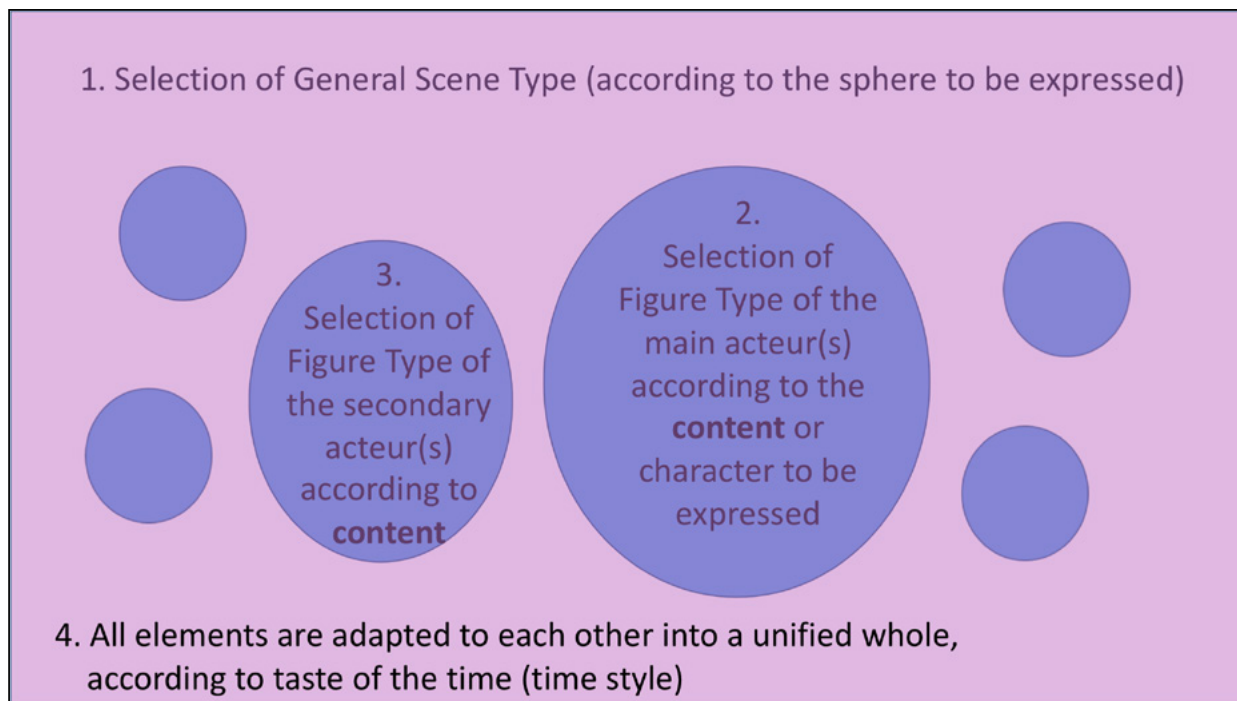


Figure 6. Simplified scheme of the steps in the creation of a new meaningful iconography in Roman image-language (M. Stoye; based on the work of T. Hölscher.)

Reliefs of the birth of Siddhārtha Gautama

Let me quote selectively from my earlier publication in order to explain the example (Stoye 2010a): [160] ‘in the centre of the composition ... Mâyâ, the mother of the Bodhisattva, is depicted in a charming stance ... under the foliage canopy of a tree, her right hand grasping a branch of the tree above her head while the future Redeemer emerges half-length from her right flank. Her left arm rests on the shoulders of a female assistant, who supports her and acts as a midwife by pressing Mâyâ’s belly with her hand; [161-162] ‘The blessed child entering the light of day is always shown ... head upwards, with outstretched arms moving away from his mother, casting his eyes in the direction of a male *deva* who approaches the mother from her right side.... Very often this *deva*, who receives the child on a swaddling cloth, is shown mid-stride, one foot forward, as if the artist had intended to show the motion, the speed and the impetus of the deity hurrying to be the first to receive the Saviour-to-be, an honour in itself... This striding out is often [not always] combined with a bowing down of the *deva*’s torso, which gives the figure a sense of enthusiastic devotion. This *deva* is always shown reaching out for the baby. Without exception, his outstretched hands are completely covered with a cloth, the ends of which fall down on both sides in gentle folds.’ Often there are additional figures added on both sides: [159] ‘male *devas* and spectators behind Indra and female assistants beside Maya’s midwife, bringing various props.’ [162] ‘Whatever the variations from relief to relief, the pose of Mâyâ or of the child is never abandoned, neither does Indra/the *deva* do anything else but receive the holy child on the cloth.’ Obviously this group was the central and binding element of the iconography, its quasi-canonical part, whereas the figures in its periphery were optional and could be handled with flexibility: different types of figures could fill their positions (Stoye 2010a: 159-160.).

For a long time, the form given to the birth scene by Gandhāran artists *had* been explained exclusively in reference to Buddhist textual tradition (Stoye 2010a): [162] ‘But there are two fundamental problems with regard to the text-image relationship: firstly, close scrutiny of the textual record shows its details not to be congruent in a strict sense with the visual form chosen by artists... Secondly,... if we take into consideration

what has been made known through philological research about the history and structure of the textual sources in question, we have to admit that the relevant passages exist in textual layers which may possibly be considerably younger than our iconography.' [168] '[Thus,] we must ask: where, then, did the Gandhāran iconographers derive their well-defined form of the nativity scene from, which must have been very meaningful, even sacrosanct to them, as they clung to it without allowing any change. Beyond the Indian textual tradition, was there any other precursor?'

In my article (Stoye 2010a: 168-173), I tried to show that Gandhāran iconographers, starting from a still very simple narrative of the birth, in their search for an adequate image formula for a new anthropomorphic iconography of the Buddhist nativity, scoured western visual repertoires for meaningful equivalents, and came across depictions of the birth of Dionysos. And, considering the well-established connection of this theme's image-formula to the subject of the divine birth, they found the application of its central scheme to be an exceedingly suitable tool to portray the Buddha also as a divine child who, like Dionysos, was born in a supernatural way. (The artists' familiarity with Dionysiac imagery in Kushan India has been convincingly demonstrated – see also Tanabe's paper in the present volume.) In the adjustment of the image to Buddhist needs, Dionysos became the Buddha. Sitting Zeus was replaced by standing Māyā and Hermes was transformed into Indra. In elaborating the details of their image further on, the artists then took recourse to even more visual motifs, some from an Indian background, some of other western inspiration than the image core. And they combined them – as it seems – without hesitation. By applying the *śālabhāñjikā* pose to the figure of Māyā, they utilized an ancient Indian motif. On the one hand it solved the problem of depicting her standing parturition in a pleasing, even elegant way. At the same time, through its common Indian association with prosperity, the artists underscored the auspiciousness of this significant moment in the Buddhist narrative of salvation. The midwife-assistant, again, has its precedents in the western visual tradition. The lady behind her recalls female Hellenistic figures: the peacock fan in her hand is an Indian prop, the way she balances it in her hand, however, alludes to the western visual personifications of victory (Nike, Victoria) with palm-leaf in their hands). Of Indian inspiration are the male figures in the picture's left periphery. Nevertheless, a persistent treatment of folds in all figures betray the finishing in a unifying style.

The same patchwork approach becomes apparent when examining other Gandhāran iconographies. I would now like to draw attention to the iconography of the First Bath as another example (Figure 7). Once again, I reproduce here the observations made in my other publications on the topic (Stoye 2004: 169-171; Stoye, forthcoming).

The First Bath of the baby Siddhārtha: the tripod with lion-paws

Three dozen Gandhāran examples of the scene known to us share the same composition: the baby Bodhisattva is shown in the centre and in frontal view standing on a three-legged table. Two male deities in three-quarter view, one to his left, the other to his right, pour water over the boy from a pitcher held over his head. Two kneeling women in richly pleated garments assist with the bath by supporting the standing new-born on either side. (Later, often not so carefully worked reliefs tend to simplify the details and eliminate the kneeling women and occasionally the three-legged support.) Until now, this basic iconography has been explained solely in the context of the Buddhist texts. The focus of discussion has been the depiction of the two male bathers as gods rather than *nāgas*, as was the case in the pictorial tradition of Sārnāth. The bathers have thus been identified as Indra und Brahma, and the Gandhāran iconography has been linked to the *Lalitavistara*, the only text that offers such an interpretation. Yet even this text is inconsistent and in one passage refers to the bathers as the *nāgas* Nanda and Upananda. While the texts prove unsatisfying in explaining even some of the central features of the images, other iconographic elements such as the kneeling women or the three-legged support, which were especially important in the early formulations of the representation, go entirely unmentioned in the texts.

It is precisely when textual and pictorial traditions diverge that art-historical formal analysis can be introduced to account for idiosyncrasies of the visual formulation. For it is conceivable that discrepancies between image and text are the result of artists expressing religious concepts in modes unique to the pictorial tradition, following their own semantic system of visual codes. In the case of Gandhāran art, the pictorial repertoire of the western art tradition often served as a source of inspiration. This was obviously the case here. The three-legged support in the scene of the First Bath can be recognized as one such western motif that reveals Gandhāran sculptors adopting not simply a Mediterranean form of furniture but a meaningful iconographic formula. The tripod in the Gandhāran reliefs, though occasionally of a rather simple shape, usually consists of a horizontal plate with three legs in the form of the paws of a beast of prey. In a few of the reliefs these legs have a special decorative form, which I call *leontocephalopod* (i.e. with a lion's head and foot), following Schwendemann 1921. Here the lion-foot leg ends just above the knee joint with a lion protome, so that the leg's projection becomes both the thigh of the lion leg and the chest of a beast of prey. This type of furniture has no prototype in early Buddhist art; yet furniture with legs in animal form, particularly lion-foot legs, exist in large numbers in Greek and Roman Art. The equivalent piece is the tripod with a round plate (Greek: *tripous*), widespread in the Mediterranean antique world where it was always categorized as a table (Greek: *trapezai*, Latin: *mensae*), rather than a type of seating or footstool (as may be surmised by its depiction in the First Bath scenes). The tripod is seen with increasing frequency on monuments in the Greek cultural area from the fourth century BC onwards, with either completely plain supports or simple, delicately shaped theriomorphic legs without protomes. By the Hellenistic Period (third and second centuries BC) the tripod is almost always seen with animal legs as a standard furnishing in banquet scenes, where it is shown next to the reclining diners and holds serving dishes. These Hellenistic lion-foot legs often looked rather muscular, but they always ended at the top with the thigh section and never included a lion protome. The adornment of the animal-leg form with further zoomorphic decoration, especially with the heads of lions, panthers, leopards, griffins, and related fantasy forms, became popular only in the Roman period.

It must have been shortly before the first half of the first century BC that a table leg with a lion's paw and protome was developed, probably in neo-Attic workshops. Numerous reliefs from all parts of the Roman Empire and countless finds of individual legs in this design from marble tables, the latter investigated by Moss 1988, testify to the popularity of the *leontocephalopod* type of table leg during Roman times.²⁶ The golden age of this particular type of furniture was the first century AD. In the second century and thereafter, archaeological evidence shows a decrease in the number of such tables.

Representations of the *leontocephalopod* table on reliefs first appeared during the Augustan Period (27 BC-14 AD) and continued into the beginning of the fourth century. The *leontocephalopod* table leg form is thus distinctly Roman. Because the earliest Gandhāran depictions of the First Bath date from the second half of the first century AD, and the *leontocephalopod* table was popular in the western world in the first half of the first century, one may recognize the middle of the first century AD as the point in time when the transfer of this motif from the Mediterranean pictorial world to Gandhāra occurred. By virtue of its refined design and expensive materials the *leontocephalopod* table clearly stood out from the mass of objects for daily use. In wealthy Roman households it was a luxurious piece of furniture; in temples and sanctuaries it served as an appropriate cult table. Its use as a sacred table in particular appears to have been of importance in the adoption of the motif for the First Bath scene in Gandhāra. The use of the tripod table either as an altar for offerings or as a centrepiece for religious rituals can be attested to by numerous Roman sources, both visual and textual. More importantly, in the Mediterranean world the table could also be used as the base for a cult image and can be seen depicted as such. Of particular interest as a counterpart to the Gandhāran motif is a relief from Ostia of a high priest of Kybele, the only Roman representation of a tripod that includes the

²⁶ Stoye (2004: 170): 'According to Moss's research, the earliest datable example of a small *leontocephalopod* tripod table comes from Pompeii and was manufactured before 42 BCE (fig. 10); one-third of all extant tables were excavated in the cities around Vesuvius (before 79 CE); those with inscriptions make clear that many originate from the time of Julius Claudius (27 BCE-68 CE); the remaining examples are more evenly distributed.'



Figure 7. Gandhāran relief of the First Bath of Siddhārtha, probably from the Swāt region, c. early second century AD. Japan, private collection. (Photo: after Kurita 1988, courtesy of Isao Kurita; previous academic publication in Stoye 2004: fig. 4.)

figure of a child-god, similar to the figure of the infant Siddhārtha Gautama in the Gandhāran scene of the First Bath. The Ostia relief provides a new understanding of what was likely intended in Gandhāra when the Bodhisattva was placed on the table with lion's feet: namely, the designation of Siddhartha as *venerandum*. That is, immediately after leaving the womb – and well before the enlightenment that he would achieve as an adult – the future Buddha is depicted as divine, very much in the manner of a cult image.

The First Bath of baby Siddhārtha: the motif of the two symmetrically kneeling woman

If we now take into consideration the two women kneeling on both sides of the centrally standing baby on its tripod (not mentioned in the Buddhist texts), but appearing in many Gandhāran scenes of the First Bath,²⁷ further meaningful references to Roman visual models seem to emerge. On each side of baby Siddhārtha (as *venerandum*) a kneeling woman is shown in profile view. They are conceived as mirroring each other: the frontally standing baby provides the axis for their symmetry. Usually (but not always) the tiny figure towers above their heads. In those cases, the gaze of the slightly tilted back heads of the ladies is directed towards the baby. Their posture is 'semi-kneeling': Only one knee touches the ground (the sole of the corresponding foot is then vertical to the ground, only the toes are on the ground). The other knee is upright, on the level

²⁷ For variations see Zwalf 1996, I: 152.



Figure 8. Frieze with victories from the Basilica Ulpia, Rome. Munich, Glyptothek, inv. GL 348.

of the ladies' hips, the corresponding feet firmly set on the ground. The moderately bent arms are slightly lifted and the ladies' arms are stretched out towards the adored protagonist, apparently to hold the standing new-born child by one forearm. This pair of women (as an image type) has no predecessors in earlier Indo-Buddhist art. Their formally quite stereotyped appearance does not find any detailed explanation in Buddhist textual tradition. However, kneeling figures have a long and complex pictorial tradition in Graeco-Roman art. This is discussed in detailed in my article (Stoye, forthcoming).

The symmetrical kneeling of two women in the Gandhāran bath scene is astonishingly close to the Roman decorative motif of symmetrically kneeling *victoriae* (female personifications of victory) that particularly adorned one of the most important imperial monuments of the Trajanic period (AD 98-117), the Basilica Ulpia on the Forum of Trajan in Rome (Figure 8).²⁸ Its symmetrically arranged pairs of *victoriae* may have had their predecessors on the so-called Campana reliefs, a type of architectural decorative panels made from clay or terracotta, widely used in the first century BC and first century AD to embellish architraves on buildings, mainly in Latium, of a more common type. Their strict symmetrical arrangements in particular were recognized through archaeological research as typically Roman (Borbein 1968: 179). The marble version of symmetrically kneeling goddesses of victory in the aforementioned imperial Basilica Ulpia is in all probability the noble culmination of a motif that had already been part of the Roman tradition for longer. The associations connected with the pictorial programme there are quite interesting in our context. The inauguration of the Basilica took place ten years after Trajan's first triumph over the Dacians. As Packer writes in his book about the Forum of Trajan (Packer 1997: 4-5): 'Construction ... began in A.D. 106-107, and the buildings ... were substantially complete by AD 112, the year when, according to an inscription found in Ostia, the complex was officially dedicated.' Trajan styled himself here as *optimus princeps* (Zanker 1970: 531). The image-programme refers to his victories (Zanker 1970: 527). It celebrates his victoriousness in general. According to Zanker, on the Forum of Trajan everything is dominated by the one moment of the great victory, which includes all future and past victories and the resulting eternal presence of the new God (= Trajan). Trajan tried to address expectations of salvation and latent religious needs by concentrating gazes on the ruler as a supernatural being in order to give the empire greater cohesion (Zanker 1970: 543).

The building must have received outstanding public attention: it is exaltedly praised in an ancient source and its depiction also adorned Roman Imperial coins of the period. The Forum is where numerous imperial acts took place (Packer 1997: 5). It must definitely have been among the places to be visited first by the embassies from India (= the Kushan empire?), of which we find mention in various ancient sources (Cobb 2018: 120).

It is from this context that the similar motif of the two kneeling victories originates. Excavations at Trajan's Forum in 1931-32 revealed fragments of an impressive architrave frieze, once placed over the inner columns

²⁸ Trajan's family name was Ulpianus.



(Photo: copyright Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München, Foto: Renate Kühling.)

of the building, to which also the frieze fragment in the Munich Glyptothek once belonged (Fuchs 2002: 142). On the relief frieze, a symmetrically arranged representation framed by acanthus-covered balusters is repeated: the centre is occupied by a kneeling pair of victories, who decorate a *thymaterion* between them with laurel wreaths and at the same time scatter incense into the flames. On either side of the central grouping is a group of bull sacrifices: a half-dressed victory presses her knee into the back of a bull which she has forced to the ground (Fuchs 2002: 142) (in the Basilica Ulpia this scheme was repeated sixty-five times around the nave [Packer 1997: 233]). While the bull-sacrificing *victoria/nike* is historically based on a long Greek tradition, the image scheme of the goddesses of victory kneeling in front of a sacrificial device – in particular in its symmetrical arrangement with two *victoriae* – is not based on a classical Greek model, but is of Roman origin (Fuchs 2002: p. 143, in particular notes 19, 20).

The Roman kneeling women are shown in profile view. They are conceived as mirroring each other. In the Trajanic frieze the *thymaterion* provides the axis for their symmetry. The gaze of the slightly tilted-back heads of the ladies is directed towards the ritual object. The kneeling women on both sides of the *thymaterion* are shown in ‘semi-kneeling’ pose: only one knee touches the ground (the sole of the corresponding foot is then vertical to the ground, only the toes are on the ground). The other knee is upright, on the level of the goddesses’ hips, the corresponding feet are firmly set on the ground. The moderately bend arms are slightly lifted and the goddesses’ arms are stretched out towards the *thymaterion*.

If we accept Hölscher’s theory of Roman image-language and allow the possibility that a similar image construction method might have been at work in Buddhist Gandhāra (which was contemporary to the Roman Empire), which might have been inspired not only by locally transmitted Hellenistic but also by newly infiltrated Roman image-types, then we might open up to imagine the process of creation of this iconography as follows: Gandhāran iconographers, starting from a still quite simple narrative of the miraculous events immediately after the Saviour’s birth (the seven steps, proclamation of the final ‘victory’ of the Buddha-to-be, i.e. his escape from the cycles of rebirth in this last birth, the first bath of the new-born baby), in their search for an adequate image-formula for this moment pregnant with the preview of future victory, might have come across the image-formula of the pair of kneeling victories, devoting themselves to the solemn and focussed worship of a *venerandum*. This image-formula would not only have provided a beautiful visual form for underlining the importance of the small but central figure of the new-born baby, but (if Hölscher’s idea can be applied to Gandhāra) could also be read as encapsulating an undertone of the *victoria aeterna* of a *princeps optimus*. In designing the new scene the Gandhāran artists thus might have maintained the poses of the western female personification of victory (semi-kneeling, in profile view, slightly lifting up their arms towards a *venerandum* in between them), but then might have dropped their wings (as these would not have been adequate in their transfer to a Buddhavita scene) and replaced the *thymaterion* by a frontally standing baby Siddhārtha, thus providing a new axis-like *venerandum* between them and lending the scene

in their adaptation to a Buddhist context a ‘high-end’ solemnity of quasi-imperial status and a flavour of victoriousness of the highest kind.

I admit that all this is an assumption. It is, however, an intellectually tested assumption developed from Tonio Hölscher’s ideas and earlier research in the field of Roman studies unnoticed so far by Gandhāran researchers and it makes, according to my view, surprisingly good sense, especially if we can apply the principles supposed and described here not only to one case of Gandhāran narrative but to a whole series of iconographies, as shown by my PhD studies.

After having come to know Hölscher’s book, it seems to me that the genesis of Gandhāran iconographies works in much the same way described by Hölscher for Roman art. If we allow that this principle of image creation as described by Hölscher is also at work in Gandhāra, what are the conclusions and points of departure for the evaluation of narrative Gandhāran art in general?

There are, I think, important conclusions with regard to the relationship between text and image, with regard to the diverse roots of Gandhāran iconography, and with regard to style as a tool for dating. And with regard to a potential consideration of the reliefs as evidence for everyday life in Gandhāra.

First, Hölscher’s theory, with its emphasis on the decisive formative role of long-established visual models in the building of iconographies seems capable of inspiring Gandhāra researchers to modify their strongly text-oriented views of the text-image relation in Buddhist imagery - and perhaps to allow for the possibility that visual models could have shaped an iconography just as much or perhaps even more decisively than many a narrative detail of Buddhist texts. Of course, there was a narrative core from which the image-designers began. An image is, however, a different medium from a text, following its own rules: an image needs to focus and condense a legend in a very different manner from a text. The main message needs to be visible at a glance. That image and text in Indian art often do not agree should in my opinion not be explained, as is often the case, as the result of a textual tradition having been lost. Image-creation always began with a very simple narrative or dogmatic core. But the image was then composed of older image types with all of their underlying established connotations, cleverly and meaningfully combined for a new context, just as described by Hölscher’s image-language (compare n. 11).

Second, once we have identified the visual precursors, we can begin to decipher further nuances and deeper meanings added to Gandhāran reliefs. If we allow the possibility that the semantic field of a model played a crucial role in its selection, then any meanings underlying the image type may have acted as a kind of sounding board within the new iconography. Because combinatory use from diverse sources was common, the connotations incorporated into the image mean that the image could be interpreted on various levels. On the basis of my experience with the iconographies that I studied, I should even go so far as to assert that the choice of motifs was often so sophisticated that a consistent bilingual reading was possible. In most cases, I would even say that a bilingual visual opus was deliberately created that in all its subtlety must have appealed to the pious Buddhist as well as to the cultured Hellenistic, or Hellenized person.

Third, considering the long-standing debate on the origins of Gandhāran art as Hellenistic or Roman, by making use of Hölscher’s theory of Roman image-language we can start to relax a lot: if we assume that the same method of image-making that Hölscher describes was also in use in Gandhāra, namely that diachronic elements were merged into something synchronous, then it becomes quite clear that we should expect elements of dissimilar date and heterogeneous origin in the different segments of Gandhāran art. All were present together: Hellenistic elements, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian, Iranian and – I would argue – also Roman. It is exactly this kind of motif-reception and combination that is described by Hölscher. When we find elements of differing origin, therefore, it does not need to be a source of conflict. Instead, this is altogether in keeping with the style of the time (first to third) whatever we decide to call it.

Why, though, does Gandhāran art on the whole look so dissimilar to Roman art? This can also be explained by Hölscher. On the left of Figure 9 can be seen the developmental phase model of Roman art according to my previous sketch. Transferring this to Gandhāran art would require the following amendments, as one can see on the right. In addition to Hölscher's preliminary phases we would also need to include the regional antecedents to Gandhāra in the heterogeneous motif pool. Moreover, the underlying Buddhist religion set different priorities when choosing forms, leading in the end, of course, to a different appearance.

Fourth, using Hölscher we may have to re-evaluate how we understand the different styles of Gandhāran art. Not only motif, but whole stylistic scenes could be transported from the diachronic to the synchronic system. Therefore, we need to consider the possibility that very differently worked pieces may not necessarily date to different time periods. We can see this on the Ara Pacis: the stylistic differences – on the one hand classicistic, on the other hand using Hellenistic forms – very clear in Hölscher's comparison of the two procession friezes (Hölscher 2004: 78-79), arise from their differing intentions, not their date. Both are dated to 13 BC to 9 BC.

Fifth, once a motif had been incorporated, over time its appearance could move further and further away from the form from which it had originally derived, through local developments taking their own directions (without further exchange with the original source). Thus, after a certain period of intra-Gandhāran transmission, an imported and then carefully adapted motif would still show similarity to the original visual idea in its iconographic structure, though less and less similarity in stylistic appearance. Sometimes the imported motifs that were incorporated at the beginning of the second century were later discarded again, perhaps because they did not mean enough to the simple believer, or because they were a kind of sophisticated elaboration considered dispensable in the often very reduced versions on small votive *stūpas* of the later second or third century. Interestingly some of them were also no longer passed on in further pictorial developments, e.g. in Northern India (of the fourth and fifth centuries), for example the aforementioned pair of kneeling women.

Sixth, if we accept that the semantics of the Roman image-language played a certain role in Gandhāran iconography, then even further perspectives open up, with which I have not dealt today, but which may

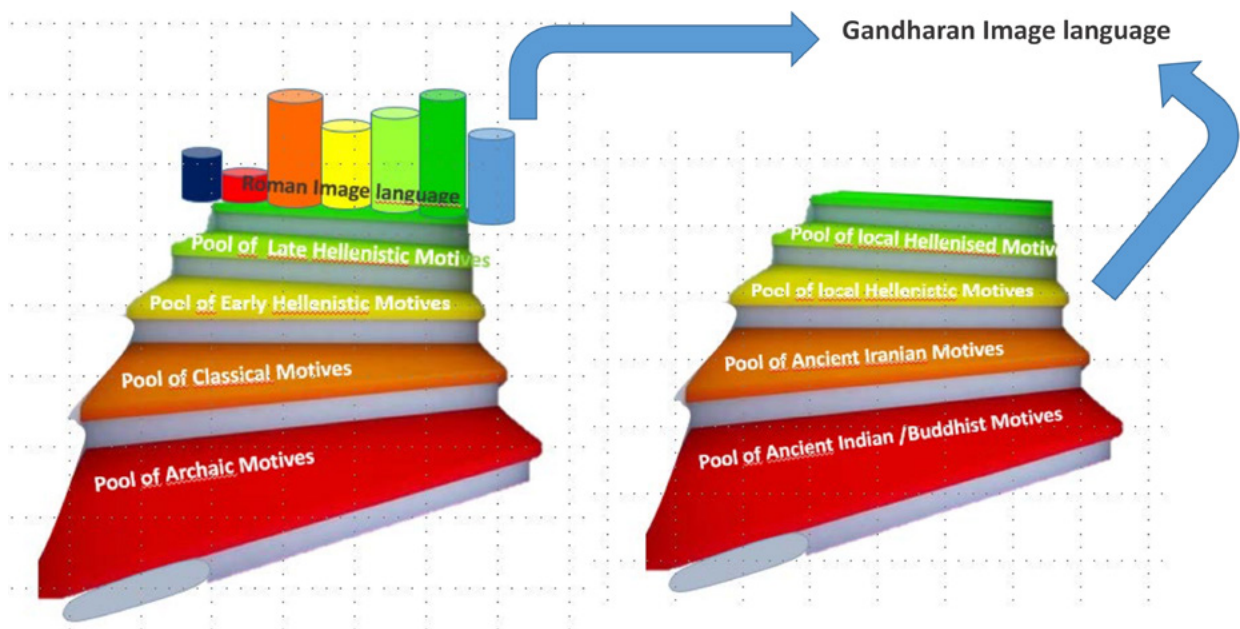


Figure 9. Simplified scheme of the strata from which Gandhāran image-language draws its models (M. Stoye; based on the work of T. Hölscher.)

enrich further research, e.g. the allusion to certain key virtues through certain image-types in Roman art. Such scenes, for example, formed a crucial part of biographical scenes (they occur in the pictorial world of sarcophagi as well as in so-called historical reliefs of triumphal arches). If we take Hölscher's account as valid for Gandhāran art, too, then not only the form but also the deeper meaning of such image types might have transferred itself in a modified form to Buddhavita scenes.

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