Beyond Boundaries: BUDDHIST ART OF GANDHARA

Texts by Osmund Bopearachchi

UC BERKELEY ART MUSEUM & PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

Beyond Boundaries: Gandharan Buddhist Art is organized by Osmund Bopearachchi, adjunct professor of Central and South Asian art, archaeology, and numismatics in the Group in Buddhist Studies, UC Berkeley, and Julia M. White, senior curator for Asian art, with Lucia Olubunmi Momoh, curatorial assistant. The exhibition is supported in part by the Asian Art Endowment Fund.

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The Life of the Historical Buddha in Gandharan Art

When visualizing different episodes of the life of the historical Buddha, known variously as Gautama or Siddhartha, Gandharan artists presumably followed the chronological order laid out in the *Lalitavistara*, an influential Sanskrit Mahayana Buddhist text likely composed in Gandhara around 150 CE. The *Lalitavistara* narrates the major life events of Gautama Buddha, beginning with his Descent from the Thushita Heaven, through his Great Awakening, and ending with the Preaching of the First Sermon.

Born a prince, Siddhartha was destined to become a great king; to prevent him from being attracted to an ascetic life, his father, King Shuddhodana, arranged a marriage for the prince with a young woman named Yashodhara. Destined to the luxurious life as a prince, Siddhartha had three palaces—one each for the summer, the winter, and the rainy season. Each palace had splendid inner apartments, gardens covered with wooden bridges, and ponds filled with white lotuses, all specially built for him by his father, who ardently wished for Siddhartha to become a great king. Yet, in the midst of these worldly pleasures, Siddhartha's four encounters outside the palace—first with an old man with wrinkled skin, then with a man stricken by disease, then with a dead man on a palanquin, and finally with a mendicant monk dressed in saffron garments—led him to comprehend the impermanence (*anitya*) of life. He then made the momentous decision to abandon his life of royal ease in search of the truth. Many of the sculptures here visualize important episodes following this moment of existential despair for the Bodhisattva.

Great Renunciation of the Bodhisattva Siddhartha
Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

King Shuddhodana, having heard that the Bodhisattva had witnessed the wretched reality of human life, had many walls and solid gates erected around the palace in order to prevent the Bodhisattva from leaving. He instructed the young women of the palace to dance and play music without interruption day and night to charm the young prince with their feminine wiles and ensure that he would not leave home to become a wandering monk. Yet, according to the sacred texts, on the day the Bodhisattva decided to abandon the palace, the women entertainers appeared to him as though plagued with fatigue. He was disgusted by their disheveled hair and ugly, discolored faces. They were drooling, snoring, mumbling, laughing, and gritting their teeth with repulsive expressions. The Bodhisattva, states the *Lalitavistara*, had the impression of being in a cemetery. It is this crucial moment that is depicted theatrically in this sculpture. Yashodhara, the Bodhisattva's wife, wearing a Greek tunic (chiton) and a large necklace, is asleep on a high bed with a mattress, pillows draped with a hanging textile decorated with geometrical designs. The haloed, mustached Bodhisattva sits on the bed wearing only an undergarment, leaving the entire torso bare apart from the necklace. His groom, Chandaka, approaches from the right, carrying an over robe or shawl to the Bodhisattva, who is now ready to leave the palace. The woman standing to the viewer's left, dressed in a long-sleeved tunic, bracelets, and anklets, is sleeping, holding on to her spear. The women in this scene wear diaphanous, long-sleeved tunics and are adorned with necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and anklets. All the women, even the ones standing, have their eyes closed in slumber. The squatting female musician, in front of the bed by the left foot of the Bodhisattva, leans against the vertically standing banded barrel drum. The other female musicians and dancers at the right foot of the Bodhisattva all sleep in awkward positions.

Great Renunciation and Great Departure of the Bodhisattva Siddhartha

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2012.23

The upper register of this sculpture depicts Siddhartha's Great Renunciation of worldly life. The scene takes place inside the palace, rendered here as a highly elaborate building composed of arches and balconies. The haloed Bodhisattva wears a *paridhana* (undergarment) and an *uttariya* (over robe) wrapped around the left shoulder and arm, leaving most of the chest bare, except for his long and short necklaces. He sits on a bed silently making a sign to his groom Chandaka, who enters the scene from the left. His wife, Yashodhara, sleeps deeply on the bed, her head just visible under the Bodhisattva's left arm. A woman to the right, wrapped in a robe that leaves her backside bare, stands with her back to the viewer. Two women entertainers seated in front of the bed are in a profound sleep; the one to the left rests both hands on a barrel drum, while the other cradles a hand drum. The casual behavior of the palace women as known from the sacred texts is suggested here by their relaxed, revealing poses.
The lower register depicts the *Abinishkramanaya*, or the Great Departure. Prince Siddhartha and his favorite horse, Kanthaka, are rendered frontally. The Bodhisattva emerges on horseback holding the reins of Kanthaka in his left hand and perhaps making a gesture with his (broken) right hand. He wears a crested turban, a collar necklace, and a long necklace of multiple strands, and the same attire as in the upper register, suggesting a closeness in time of the two events. A demon or a god, seen frontally between the front legs of the horse, carries the horse by holding on to its front hooves, which also serves to muffle any sound of the departure.

Border Relief with Musicians and Dancers

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

This multistory border relief—with open galleries, ramps, parapets, and columns—depicts gods, worshippers, musicians, and dancers. This architectural element is most probably a part of a larger panel showing Gautama Buddha or a Bodhisattva appearing to the left. The iconography of rejoicing dancers and musicians adoring the gods, and worshippers in *añjalimudr*ā (greeting or venerating with joined hands), has significance in this context. The tower-shaped relief is bordered to the left by volutes of vine leaves and tendrils held by a seated figure, and to the right with a straight, vertical festoon with overlapping lanceolate leaves. Each niche is filled with musicians and dancers depicted in lively adoration of the Buddha.

Offering of a Handful of Dust

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

Buddhist texts recount that one day when two children—Jaya, from a prominent family, and Vijaya, from a less prominent family—were building a house in the dirt by the side of the main road, Shakyamuni passed by begging for food. Having nothing else to offer, Jaya threw a handful of dirt into the Buddha's begging bowl, thinking to himself, "I will give him some ground meal." Jaya then pronounced his wish (*pranidhana*): "By this good merit, I would become king, after placing the earth under a single umbrella of sovereignty, I would pay homage to the Blessed Buddha." The Blessed One immediately perceived the boy's character and, recognizing the sincerity of his resolve, predicted that he would be reborn as the Emperor Ashoka. Keeping to the stylistic rendering of the scene to the left, the Buddha Gautama holds out an empty bowl in the left hand toward Jaya, who stands in front of him with a handful of dust. The Buddha is characterized by the hair undulating into a large, oval *ushnisha*. Vajrapani, holding a *vajra* (thunderbolt), stands behind Vijaya and is shown in conversation with the male figure, who makes a gesture with his outstretched right hand.

Four Encounters and the Great Renunciation

Gandhara, 3rd–4th century CE
Green schist
Private collection

The panel portrays sights described in the legendary account of Gautama Buddha's life that led him to the realization of the impermanence and ultimate dissatisfaction of conditioned existence. When he left the palace, the Bodhisattva is said to have witnessed the scenes depicted here: a decrepit man, a man suffering from disease, a corpse lying on a stretcher, and finally, a mendicant with pure conduct. In this panel, the Bodhisattva in his princely attire leaves the city riding a horse, making a gesture of despair with his extended right hand. To the left, an emaciated old man, standing in a hunched-over posture, reveals to Siddhartha the consequences of aging. A decrepit person with emaciated body and swollen belly sits on the ground, looking at the young prince. A god standing in front of the young prince, holding a parasol in his left hand, gestures to a sick man. Demarcated by columns surmounted by Corinthian capitals, the panel to the left depicts the great renunciation of the worldly life by Siddhartha. The scene takes place inside the palace. The haloed Bodhisattva sits on a bed, his groom, Chandaka, leaning forward from behind the bed, holding the Bodhisattva's headdress. His wife, Yashodhara, wearing a thin, sleeved jacket, sleeps profoundly on the bed with one hand under her head on the pillow.

Sujata Offering the First Meal to the Bodhisattva after His Six Years of Ascetic Practice

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

The ascetic Gautama, intending to demonstrate how to perform great austere practices, sat with crossed legs on the unswept earth, putting his body and mind through great torment for six years. The Bodhisattva undertook fierce austerities by fasting, thinking this was the means whereby death and birth could be destroyed. He believed the mortification of the body was an obligatory passage toward his ultimate goal of attaining supreme enlightenment. Realizing after six years that he could not achieve complete enlightenment through austerities, Bodhisattva Gautama decided to eat solid food again and regain his strength. Sujata (which means "Nobly Born") milked a thousand cows and made the sweetest and most nourishing milk to use in creating a delicious milk-rice dish as an offering to the Bodhisattva to break his fast. Taking the delicious milk-rice in a golden bowl, she went to the banyan tree, where the Bodhisattva Gautama had undergone severe penance. The emaciated Bodhisattva is seated on the same seat where he practiced mortification of the body for six years. Sujata, to the Bodhisattva's right, holds the bowl of rice. The woman on the opposite side holds a water flask in order to wash the hands of the Bodhisattva. Two other women, each holding a bowl filled with food, stand on either side.

Mara's Attack, Trapusha and Bhallika, and the First Sermon

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Asian Art Museum, the Avery Brundage Collection

Having spread the handful of fine grass offered to him by the grass cutter, Svastika, the Bodhisattva Gautama prepared the meditation seat and decided to attain the perfect enlightenment. At that moment, Mara, the lord who intoxicates gods and men, launched an attack against the Bodhisattva with his demonic horde. The Bodhisattva, seated on a carpet of grass under the Bodhi tree, becomes the Buddha, calling the Earth Goddess to be his witness, by touching the earth with his right hand. This episode is depicted on the right of the lower register of the sculpture. Mara unsheathes a sword to attack the Bodhisattva. The lower left register depicts the first sermon delivered to the five monks (only four are shown here) at the Deer Park. In the middle panel, the Awakened One, or Buddha, seated in meditation posture under a tree, receives rice cakes and honey from the Orissa merchants Trapusha and Bhallika. The merchant to the right may hold the pouch with the rice cake, and the one to the left, a spouted container filled with water. This sculpture may have originally belonged to the topmost part of a stupa. The upper register depicts the worship of the Buddha and his turban by gods in heaven.

Mara's Attack

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

This fragmented piece from a larger sculpture depicts the disappointment of Mara and his demonic horde after their assault on the Bodhisattva Gautama. The Buddha, usually shown seated on a high base under the Bodhi tree, is broken away. The headless man to the right held by a soldier with a grotesque face could be Mara, exhausted by the attack. The soldier, in the middle, protected by a Greek breastplate and a metal skirt, looks at Mara with empathy. The three figures in veneration, to the left, most likely look at the Buddha (now missing), who has attained enlightenment.

Offering of the Four Bows by the Four Lokapalas
Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

The Buddha fasted for seven weeks immediately after his great awakening in the vicinity of the Bodhi tree that gave him shelter to attain his Buddhahood. At the end of the seventh week, Trapusha and Bhallika, two merchants from Orissa, reached the Rajayatana (Kingstead) tree, under which the Buddha was seated, and offered him the refreshment of honey and rice cakes. The Guardian Gods of the Four Directions, known as the Four Heavenly Kings, or Lokapalas, offered four golden bowls, seeing that the Buddha did not have a bowl to use for the food offered by the two merchants. Thinking the golden bowls were unsuitable for an ascetic, the Buddha did not accept them. Nor did he accept other sets of bowls made of silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, diamond, and emerald, offered by the gods. Ultimately, the Buddha accepted four stone bowls offered by the heavenly kings, and turned them into a single bowl. Here, three of the Four Heavenly Kings stand holding a bowl to be offered to the Buddha. The haloed Buddha, seated under a tree, holds the bowl offered by the fourth king, kneeling in adoration next to him. Four other gods, standing behind the Four Heavenly Kings, witness the event.

Gods Entreat the Buddha to Preach

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

During the eighth week, the Buddha thought the dharma (teaching) he had obtained was so profound, perfect, and complete that it would be difficult for ordinary beings, blind with passion and greed, to understand, so he decided not to teach. Brahma, seeing that the Buddha was inclined not to teach the dharma, begged him to reconsider his decision. Seeing that the Buddha Gautama was not ready to teach, Brahma approached the Buddha several times with Indra, the lord of the gods; the gods of the Trayastrimsha Heaven (Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods); and many other gods, begging him over and over again to teach. The relief depicts this moment. The haloed Buddha is portrayed under a tree, seated on a throne, wrapped in an over robe that covers both shoulders, and making the gesture of reassurance with the right hand. Four haloed gods, two on either side—wearing lavish garments, rich jewelry, and high turbans—are engaged in a discussion with the Buddha.

Indra and Brahma Entreat the Buddha to Preach
Swat Valley, Gandhara, c. 50–11 BCE
Schist
Asian Art Museum, the Avery Brundage Collection

This sculpture and the previous one nearby portray the same episode in the life of the Buddha. Furthermore, both are of the same style associated with the Swat Valley, situated in the northern boundary of Gandhara in Pakistan. The god to the viewer's right is Indra king of the gods, who wears sumptuous garments and jewelry. The kneeling god on the opposite side is Brahma, shown as an ascetic without ornaments. The Buddha is depicted under the tree in the meditation posture. The next important event in the Buddha's life is the First Sermon, or the Turning of the Wheel of the Law at the Deer Park at Varanasi. It is the repeated requests of Brahma and Indra, and his own great compassion toward human beings, that made the Buddha change his mind and decide to teach the dharma in the Deer Park in the grove of Rishipatana at Varanasi. His first disciples were five of the ascetic teacher Rudraka's mendicants, who accompanied him and assisted him in undergoing the fierce penance at Uruvilva. At first, the five mendicants did not want to welcome the Buddha, whom they saw as an "unfortunate person" who neglected the practice of mortification. Nevertheless, when the Buddha advanced toward them, they were overwhelmed by his splendor and majesty, and voluntarily welcomed him, offering him a seat. The Buddha sat down upon the seat offered by his five future disciples and preached the dharma based on the Four Noble Truths: "suffering, the source of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way that leads to the cessation of suffering."

Great Miracle of Sravasti

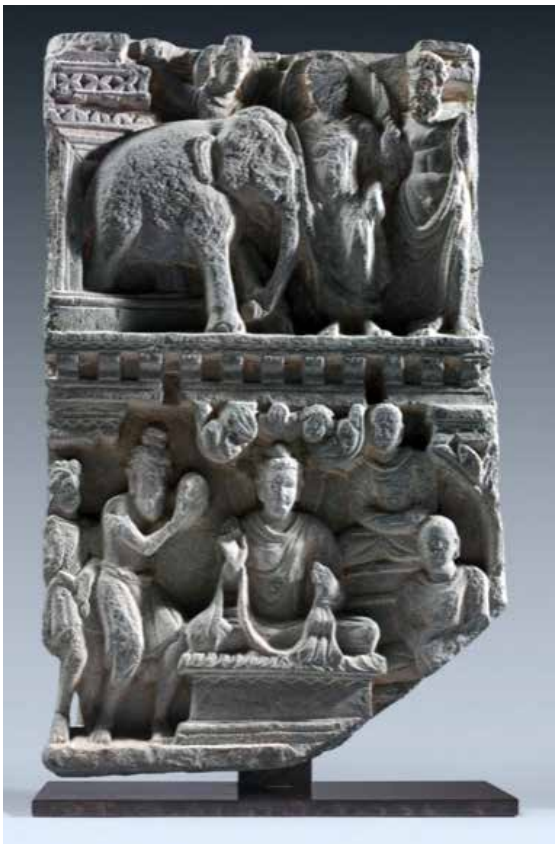
Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

At the invitation of his father, the Buddha returned to his native kingdom. Some heretics and even some members of the royal family were still unsure about whether Gautama Buddha was really enlightened. Some thought he was the same Prince Gautama who had abandoned his family to become an ascetic. In response to their disbelief and to clear their misperceptions, the Buddha reportedly displayed the "Twin Miracle," so called because of its simultaneous production of apparently contradictory phenomena—in this case, fire and water. Upon seeing this, the heretical masters, the king, and the people of Kapilavastu felt great devotion to the Buddha. This large sculpture depicts the Buddha levitating while water pours from his feet. The flames flaring up from his left shoulder are partly visible, but those over his right shoulder are completely damaged. Tiny figures of the Hindu gods Indra and Brahma venerate the Buddha at his feet.

Prince Nanda and the Buddha at Kapilavastu

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Asian Art Museum, the Avery Brundage Collection

On the third day after the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu, he was invited to the wedding of Prince Nanda, his youngest stepbrother. After partaking of his meal, the Buddha silently handed his bowl to Nanda, and exited. Thinking that the Buddha would want his bowl back, Nanda followed him until he reached Nigrodha Park, where the Buddha was staying. This was the Buddha's silent demonstration of the dharma to his younger brother. The Buddha questioned Nanda regarding whether he might become a monk. Although Nanda had just wedded the beautiful Janapada Kalyani, he took ordination and joined the community of monks that very day. The haloed Buddha is shown here taller than everyone, wearing an over robe covering both shoulders; he accepts the begging bowl returned to him by Nanda. Wearing a lavish dress and a necklace, Nanda kneels in front of the Buddha holding the begging bowl. The young male figure holding a thunderbolt in both hands, standing next the Buddha, is Vajrapani, the guardian spirit of the Buddha. Apart from the monk standing behind him, the other three figures depicted on either side of the Buddha with hands in veneration could be the royal entourage of Kapilavastu. Six gods depicted at the upper level of the panel manifest their joy by throwing flowers or venerating the Buddha.



Taming the Elephant Nalagiri
Gandhara, 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

The upper register of this sculpture depicts one of the many miracles performed by the Buddha after his enlightenment: the taming of the drunken elephant Nalagiri. Devadatta, the son of the Buddha's maternal uncle and therefore the Buddha's cousin, had been jealous of him since their youth. Once, Devadatta persuaded the royal elephant-keepers to let loose the fierce Nalagiri on the path of the Buddha after making him drunk with palm wine. The ferocious and dangerous-looking elephant started down the streets, and people fled at his sight. The Buddha, however, kept walking with his usual dignity. Meanwhile, a frightened, disoriented woman dropped her baby at the feet of the Buddha; when the advancing animal was just about to trample the baby, the Buddha touched the animal's forehead and stroked it gently. Calmed by the Buddha's touch, the elephant bowed down before him. The Buddha then delivered a sermon on the dharma to the elephant. The upper register of the panel depicts some elements of this story: The intoxicated elephant comes out of the main gate of the city. The haloed Buddha, shown even bigger than the elephant, touches the forehead of the animal. An aged Vajrapani stands behind the Buddha. The lower register depicts the Buddha seated under a tree, preaching to two monks seated to his left. Two ascetics enter from his right, the older one holding a fruit and asking the Buddha to teach them the method of deep meditation. The Buddha replies, "Listen brahmanas, like this fruit has a seed, even in you there is a seed, a *buddhadhatu* (Buddha nature)!" The Buddha then preached to both of them.

Elephant Carrying the Relics of the Buddha / Elephant Gathering Lotuses
Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2007.15

Elephant Carrying the Relics of the Buddha / Elephant Gathering Lotuses
Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2007.18

The Buddha reportedly became ill suddenly after he ate a special delicacy offered to him by his generous host Chunda, a blacksmith. Although extremely weak, the Buddha decided to continue on to Kushinagara. He then asked Ananda, his faithful disciple, to make a couch ready for him to lie down, with its head to the north, between two tall Sal trees. Lying on a couch between the two trees, surrounded by his disciples, the Buddha passed away and attained *Parinirvana*, or release from the cycle of rebirth, at the age of eighty.
When Buddha's remains (relics) were collected after the cremation, they were covered with garlands and venerated for a week in an assembly hall in the kingdom of the Mallas. Having heard the news, kings of various kingdoms claimed the relics. At first, the Mallas refused to share the relics, but with the intervention of the Brahmin Drona, the relics were divided into eight parts and distributed. Each of these two elephants carries an urn containing the relics of the Buddha; the urns are placed in palanquin-like structures on carpets on the back of the elephant.

Gandharan Art in a Cross-Fertilized Context

The cross-fertilized character of Gandharan art is evident in the appearance early on of new forms of art inspired by Persian and Greek models, adapted and transformed to narrate stories of Indian origin. Conversely, at the time the Kushan dynasty reached its apogee, cultural interactions with preexisting Persian, Greek, Scythian, and Parthian artistic forms facilitated a progressive Indianization of the art of the entire region.

The Teaching Buddha

Gandhara, 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist with remains of gilding and red paint
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.3.2012.1

The Buddha, seated cross-legged in the lotus position on the pistil of a lotus with downward-turned petals in full bloom, displays the *dharmacakra mudra*, the hand position signifying the turning of the wheel of the dharma, or the setting into motion of the Buddha's teaching. The lotus-throne of the Buddha is supported on each side by an elephant holding a lotus flower in its upraised trunk, while a seated lion supports the throne directly below the Buddha. Women and men standing in the balconies behind waist-high balustrades on either side of the much larger figure of the Buddha lift and press their hands together in a ritual gesture of reverence. The balconies are supported by four Persepolitan columns surmounted by bell-shaped capitals featuring two humped bulls seated back to back.

Apart from the columns surmounted by Corinthian capitals, Hellenistic inspiration dominates a lively scene on the plinth of the sculpture. Hariti, a Buddhist goddess regarded as the protector of children, and Panchika, her companion, are depicted at the center wearing Greek garments and jewelry. Hariti, whose iconography derives from the Greek goddess Tyche (city goddess or goddess of fortune), holds a cornucopia, the horn of abundance, the foremost attribute of Tyche; she wears the mural crown depicting city walls or towers, Tyche's usual headgear. Panchika, as the commander-in-chief of the *yakshas*, a class of nature-spirits, holds a long lance and, as the god of wealth, bears a bag of jewels or money. Two Atlas figures, derived from the Titan in Greek mythology who was condemned to hold up the celestial heavens for eternity, flank the couple; they are dressed in Greek attire and support the edifice above with one hand each. On both sides of the plinth, an elderly man is accompanied by a young woman dressed in Greek clothes. The man to the right holds a cup filled probably with an alcoholic beverage; the man to the left extends his right arm to grasp the cup held by the young woman. A common motif of Gandharan reliefs, these couples evoke *gandharvas* of the Indian tradition, inspired by Greek drinking couples associated with the Greek god of wine and eternal life, Dionysus. Traces of gold foil are still visible on the sculpture, as is a reddish pigmentation left by the chemical used in antiquity to affix the gold leafing to the surface of the sculpture.

Hariti in the Guise of the Greek Goddess Tyche

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2007.4

Presented in the likeness of the Greek goddess Tyche, also known as the city goddess, Hariti stands wearing the mural crown representing the city towers. The sculpture is damaged, but it likely originally included a depiction of her male consort, Panchika. The hands, and the attributes they held, are also missing. She is dressed in a long, diaphanous chiton, customarily fastened with a pin (fibula) at the back of the left shoulder. The dress clings to the body, revealing Hariti's breasts. Its shawl-like extensions cover the left shoulder but leave the right shoulder bare. Instead of the large belt worn over the chiton under the breasts, Hariti wears an Indian jeweled hip-girdle (*mekhela*) adorned with a bodhi leaf at the center. Another notable addition is the halo decorated with a beaded border, which together with her jeweled armlets, torque (collar necklace), long necklace hanging between her breasts, and long earrings, represents an Indianization of the goddess.

Devotee of the Buddha

Gandhara, 2nd or 3rd century CE
Clay
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2012.20

Although damaged, this sweet-faced figure has admirable traces of Hellenism, especially in the modeling of the torso and face. Like many sculptures found in Hadda in Afghanistan, this piece could have been made of either dried clay or fired clay (terracotta). The figure is shown dressed in a transparent tunic—worn over an undergarment and secured with a pin (fibula) at the left shoulder—that clings to the abdomen and breasts. Remaining circular elements around the neck are traces of a three-dimensional torque (collar necklace). The figure's long, curly hair and facial features recall Hellenistic prototypes. In her extended left hand, she holds a lotus in full bloom, likely meant as an offering to the Buddha. This helps to identify her as a devotee, as does her sensitively modeled facial expression.

Standing Devotee

Swat Valley, Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Mica schist
Asian Art Museum, Museum Purchase

A muscular male devotee stands frontally, wearing a shawl over the undergarment, tied with a girdle. The shawl is wrapped around the left shoulder, leaving the chest and right shoulder bare. He is adorned with a turban featuring a central gem, a long necklace of multiple strands, armlet, and thick bracelets. In his hands, he reverently cradles a bouquet of flowers to be offered to the Buddha.

Garland Bearers

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Asian Art Museum, the Avery Brundage Collection

This panel depicts cupids (*amorini*) supporting an undulating garland; the bottom of each loop is adorned alternately with stylized ribbons, or with lotus buds or fruits. Within each loop of the garland is a male bust; the figure at the extreme right probably holds a thunderbolt. A column surmounted by a Corinthian capital is sculpted at the left corner. The upper molding is decorated by a sawtooth design. The garland-bearer design first appeared at the end of the Hellenistic period, and became popular during the Roman period. The design reached a peak of popularity in the second century CE, adorning sarcophagi (stone coffins).

Musicians and Dancers

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

Between the two large leonine feet of the base, a harpist, two female dancers, and a flutist perform music and dance. The plinth was originally destined to hold a statue of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. Although the arched harp with the sound box, its strings, and even the plectrum is clearly visible, the horizontal flute held by the woman standing at the right end is partly broken. The two women dancers wear the same type of dress—a Greek sleeved tunic worn over an Indian *dhoti*, tied around the waist with a thick girdle. Both wear double anklets adorned most likely with padded bells. The dancer, second from the left, exudes hypersensuality. Clad in transparent clothes, she turns her seminude back to the spectator. Both females dance with raised arms and look at each other as if responding to a musical rhythm. These exceptional depictions evoke Greek musical and dancing scenes associated with Dionysus, the Greek god of pleasure, festivity, madness, and wild frenzy.

Winged Atlas

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

A bearded and muscular middle-aged Atlas figure sits on the ground with a half-raised left leg and the right leg (broken) posed horizontally. He wears an ivy or grape-leaf wreath around the head, evoking the Greek god Dionysus or Heracles (Hercules), who relieved Atlas of his duties for a short period. However, like many Gandharan images of this type, he also has wings, so as to appear superhuman. The titan Atlas of Greek mythology was condemned to carry the heavens upon his shoulders; in Gandharan art, Atlas figures multiply and support religious edifices, as seen in the sculpture of the preaching Buddha exhibited nearby. It is unclear whether the solitary Atlas figure in this fragmented relief supported an edifice in his upraised left arm or not.

Head of Hellenized Figure

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Clay with color
Private collection

This broken head made of dried clay originally belonged to a larger sculpture. The original polychrome has suffered from time spent in a harsh outdoor environment. Typically, this sculptural type, very close in style to Hellenistic prototypes, is found in Hadda, the neighboring region of Gandhara. The hair is drawn back in a quite realistic way with dynamic undercutting. The modeling of the face is of a very high order, with a sharp nose, thick moustache, and a beard with free-flowing curls. Although the identity of the figure is not certain, it might be Vajrapani, the protector of the Buddha, in the guise of the Greek hero Heracles (Hercules).

The Story of the Devoted Son Syama

Swat, Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist with gold leaf
Private collection

Compared to early Indian Buddhist art, represented by stone reliefs of the celebrated Sanchi and Bharhut stupas dating back to the second and first centuries BCE, Gandharan art depicts very few Jataka tales, stories of the previous births of the Buddha. This rare example features the Buddha's rebirth as a dutiful son. According to the sacred texts, in one of his former lives, the Buddha was reborn as Syama, the only son of blind parents who lived in the forest as hermits. As a Bodhisattva aspiring to be the Buddha, Syama attended to their special needs with unparalleled devotion. One day, when Syama went to draw water at a river, the king of Benares wounded him inadvertently with a poisonous arrow. Witnessing the king's repentance and the profound grief of Syama's parents, the supreme Hindu god Indra intervened and healed Syama's wounds. He also restored the sight of Syama's parents. This panel depicts an earlier moment, when Syama leads his blind parents through the dense jungle, indicated by three trees. Either the story continued on another panel (lost today) or the Gandharan artist purposely decided to encapsulate the story in a single image of filial devotion rather than a series of illustrated Jataka tales.

The Historical Buddha Gautama and the Celestial Bodhisattvas

Stone sculptures depicting the Buddha found in the ancient region of Gandhara survive in great numbers, especially compared to those in other contemporary schools of Buddhist art in India. Many freestanding images of the Buddha are adorned with haloes and feature the Buddha performing the abhayamudra, or "gesture of reassurance," with a raised right hand. These statues were usually installed in niches set out in the courtyards around the stupas. Even today, one can see a schist sculpture of the Buddha displayed in a niche at the monastic site of Takht-i-Bahi in the heart of Gandhara.

Standing Buddha Gautama

Gandhara, c. 3rd–4th century CE
Schist
Private collection

This sculpture is of a style associated with the famous Buddhist site of Sahr-i-Bahlol. The Buddha stands frontally and holds the hem of the samghati (outer cloak) with the left hand, the back of which is turned toward the viewer. A diaphanous top robe reveals the contours of the shoulders, chest, abdomen, and left knee, as well as the arms of the Buddha. Dense waves of hair undulate toward the ushnisha (the three-dimensional protuberance at the top of the head). The urna (an auspicious mark in the middle of the forehead) is modeled in low relief. The ushnisha and urna are two of the thirty-two mahapurusha lakshana, or "marks of a Great Man." The slight dip of the head and the half-open, downward-tilting eyes curve in harmony with the gently arching eyebrows, creating a quiet but alert calm.

Standing Buddha Gautama

Gandhara, c. 3rd–4th century CE
Schist
Private collection

The haloed Buddha stands frontally, most probably making the abhayamudra, or "gesture of reassurance," with raised right hand (partially damaged today). He holds the hem of the over robe with his lowered left hand. The Buddha's over and under robe are both well delineated from top to bottom. The wavy locks of his hair ripple toward the crowning ushnisha. The head is centered in a halo decorated with a band of radiating projections formed from schematized leaves of the Bodhi tree. An unusual feature of this sculpture is the upright, cylindrical element jutting from the halo. Like the sculpture of the seated Buddha in meditation nearby, this architectural element may have been used to affix a parasol (chatra), a symbol of royalty.

Head of Buddha

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2007.16

This head once belonged to a large standing Buddha image. The round- to oval-shaped head is covered with hair that laps in thin strands of varying relief from the widow's peak to the high, round ushnisha. The urna on his forehead is depicted in relief.

Seated Buddha

Gandhara, 2nd or 3rd century CE
Schist
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2007.22

The Buddha makes the meditation posture with his hands and sits cross-legged in the lotus position. The head is centered in a large circular halo without decoration. A parasol (chatra) was most likely fixed to the cylindrical architectural element jutting from the halo. This characteristic is also seen in a nearby sculpture. The spiraling ringlets of hair end in an ushnisha, the protuberance on top of the head. The urna between his eyes is carved in high relief.

Seated Buddha Making the Gesture of Reassurance

Gandhara, c. 3rd–5th century CE
Schist
Asian Art Museum, the Avery Brundage Collection

The Buddha is seated on a lion throne making the gesture of reassurance with a raised right hand. The middle of the palm displays a wheel sign, symbolizing the dharma (teachings). He holds the hem of the over robe with his lowered left hand. The head is centered in a large, circular halo decorated with concentric borders of a radiating, sawtooth pattern and a single undulating line. The locks of hair are gathered from the center of the forehead toward the chignon (ushnisha), which is secured, at its base, by a string of beads. In place of the customary legs in the form of a lion's paws, the drapery-covered seat has two extensions composed of the body of a lion; unfortunately, the lion heads are damaged.

Seated Buddha Holding a Bowl

Gandhara or Swat, c. 4th–5th century CE
Green schist
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2007.14

The Buddha is seated in front of a full-body halo (mandorla), delineated above by a border of stylized lotus petals and below by a milled edge. Stylistically, this statue is not earlier than the fourth century CE. The wavy locks of hair are grooved in low profile. The facial expression of this Buddha calls to mind Gandharan prototypes, as well as Chinese examples from Xinjiang. The pursed mouth discretely suggests a smile. The over robe covers both shoulders symmetrically and has a wide, semicircular neckline. The Buddha cradles an object that looks like a bowl; however, it is not a monk's begging bowl—it is most likely a bowl filled with medicinal nectar. If this provisional hypothesis is correct, then this statue may be one of the earliest depictions of the Medicine Buddha (Bhaisajyaguru in Sanskrit), a prominent Buddha who gained in popularity in Tibet, China, and Japan.

Bronze Buddha in the Gupta Style

Gandhara, c. 6th–7th century CE
Bronze
Private collection

This is one of the finest examples of Gandharan metalwork of the Gupta period. The Buddha stands on a stepped and molded rectangular base. The over robe covers both shoulders and has a loose, V-shaped neckline. Worn close to the body, it allows the chest, abdomen, and flexed right leg to emerge into view. The hem of the over robe is gathered in shallow, vertical pleats at the left shoulder. The hair flows in waves from the widow's peak at the hairline to the high and large ushnisha. As in many Gupta images, the urna is absent. The lips are full yet divulge a discrete smile. Although the halo is missing, the pin at the back of the image indicates where it once was. The right hand is broken, but a study of similar sculptures suggests the Buddha was making the gesture of reassurance.

The base bears an inscription:
This is the pious gift of the Shakya monk an image of the Buddha by Yaso-Nandini [...] together with mother and father, most difficult [...] Buddha, by the teacher.

—Translated by Raymond Allchin, Crossroads of Asia

Gilded Buddha

Kashmir School, Western Tibet, c. 10th or 11th century CE
Gilt bronze
On long-term loan from a private collection EL.1.2007.41

The gilded bronze statue of the Buddha is also of the Gupta period. He holds the end of his over robe with his left hand, while his right hand performs the gesture of reassurance. The over robe covering both shoulders has a thick and semicircular neckline, and it cascades downward with large, semicircular, and regular ridges. It clings to the body, rendering the thighs, legs, abdomen, and chest fully visible. The hair is arranged in a series of concentric, snail-shaped curls ascending up over the high ushnisha. The body is elegantly slender and well proportioned, and the face is finely detailed and sensitively modeled.

Seated Preaching Buddha

Swat valley, Gandhara, c. 7th–8th century CE
Bronze
Private collection

This is an impressive and elegant example of the preaching Buddha from the Jammu-Kashmiri region, which neighbors Gandhara. The Buddha is engaged in expounding the dharma, indicated by the symbolic gesture known as the turning of the Wheel of the Law. His robe clings to the body, particularly at the thighs and knees. It covers both shoulders and is characterized by a typical Kashmiri wide, V-shaped, collar-like arrangement of the cape with tasseled edge. The pupils of the half-opened eyes and eyebrows are highlighted with black. The Buddha is seated in the so-called European posture, with both feet resting on a flat cushion. He sits on a cushioned pedestal decorated with a beaded border and supported by a pair of rampant griffins standing on the pistil of the lotus. The lotus pedestal's upper section comprises two rows of large and small upright, intercalating petals, echoed in the lower section by similar petal motifs pointing downward. The backplate takes the form of an aureole combining a mandorla below and a nimbus above. The outer foliate band features radiating projections formed of a circular bead and a pointed leaf ending in a cluster of three circular beads. The leaves are of the Bodhi tree. An inner band is decorated with a creeper of seven-petaled rosettes.

Teaching Buddha / Maitreya and the Seven Buddhas of the Past

Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Gray schist
Private collection

The false gable—a large, tri-lobed panel on the face of a stupa—depicts three themes in three successive registers. Unfortunately, the topmost vault of the panel is damaged; only two birds survive, one on each side of the broken base. In the top register, the Bodhisattva Siddhartha (or the Buddha-to-be) stands frontally in the arch making the abhayamudra, the gesture of reassurance, with his right hand while the left rests on the waist. In the middle register, the Buddha is seated in padmasana (lotus position) and displays the dharmacakra mudra (teaching gesture) on the pistil of a fully opened lotus. A haloed Brahma, the Hindu god of creation, venerates the Buddha to his upper right, while a lavishly crowned Indra, Hindu deity of the heavens, lightning, thunder, storms, and rains, venerates the Blessed One to his upper left. The presence of major Hindu deities affirms their allegiance to the Buddha.

Above the head of the Buddha, two putti, without wings, hold a garland. Flanking the seated Buddha are two Persepolitan columns, each surmounted by a capital composed of two humped bulls seated back to back on the upper molding. This distinctive form of column, developed in the Achaemenid architecture of ancient Persia, attests to the inspiration of Persian art forms on Gandharan art. The row of figures in the lower register were originally flanked by an elephant at each end, but the one on the left is now missing. Next in line to the elephant, on each end, is the standing figure of a woman wearing lavish clothes and sumptuous jewelry. Between the two women, seven Buddhas, plus—last in line—the Bodhisattva Maitreya (regarded as a future Buddha), stand frontally at the far left end. Four Buddhas perform abhayamudra, the gesture of reassurance, with the right hand and grasp the hem of the over robe with the lowered left hand. Three other Buddhas hold a flower in the left hand. In all, this sculpture visualizes the evolution of Siddhartha from Bodhisattvahood to Buddhahood and the transition from the Buddha Gautama to the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

The Bodhisattva Maitreya

The number of Bodhisattva images found in Gandhara is far greater than those found in the ancient regions of Mathura and Amaravati-Nagarjunakonda. In Gandharan art, the iconography of the Bodhisattva Maitreya is easily recognizable, thanks to his foremost attribute: the flask. Because it is clear from the sacred texts that, in his last birth, Maitreya will be a brahmin, there is no valid argument to challenge the identification of a Bodhisattva figure holding the sacrificial water flask of a brahmin as Maitreya.

Bodhisattva Maitreya
Gandhara, c. 2nd–3rd century CE
Schist
Private collection

Identifying this Bodhisattva figure is difficult without knowing the attribute he once held in his left hand (now broken). If it was a water pot or flask, he is the Bodhisattva Maitreya, or the future Buddha. But several other well-articulated features often found in contemporary images of Maitreya may lead to the same conclusion: One end of the over robe is held in the figure's hand, while the other end appears to hang by the left side from under the shoulder loop. The head is rounded at the crown and oval at the jawline, like the ideal form of an egg. A halo decorated with a border of two flowering branches meeting at the central flower frames the head. The face has a curling moustache, sharp lips, a rounded chin, and wide, prominent eyes. The hair, undulating to both sides from a peak, forms dense rows of thicker curls at the temples, partly covers the ears, and falls abundantly onto both shoulders. The tight, double-looped chignon—a major characteristic of the iconography of Maitreya—is secured around its base by two strings of beads. The earrings have the forepart of a small, winged lion. The collar necklace has a rosette motif. The long, multichained necklace has a large, central, faceted bead, with an open-mouthed monster on either side. Two bead necklaces with large, faceted beads at intervals pass over the right shoulder. Below them, multiple cords carry two cylindrical boxes. The exposed armlet of the right arm has a three-lobed arm plate while that on the left arm is covered by the robe.

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara

Bodhisattva Padmapani–Avalokiteshvara
Gandhara, c. 7th–8th century CE
Bronze
Private collection

The name Avalokiteshvara means "Lord who looks down with compassion." He embodies the compassion of all Buddhas. Avalokiteshvara became popular because of his healing powers and, most especially, his reputation as the protector of land and maritime traders mentioned in the Lotus Sutra (Saddharmapundarika).

In this example, Padmapani–Avalokiteshvara is seated frontally with a bare left foot on a footrest extending from the lower edge of the seat and his right foot drawn up onto the seat decorated with latticework of flowers, leaves, and roundels. In his left hand, he holds the stem of a lotus, blossoming above the shoulder. Likewise, his face has finely delineated features and inclines slightly to his right. The image is adorned with armlets, bracelets, and earrings, and he wears a short necklace made of beads arranged in decreasing sizes. Long, braided locks of hair fall over the shoulders. An image of the Buddha Amitabha seated in meditation is visible against the lavish knot of the headgear worn by Avalokiteshvara. Avalokiteshvara, destined to attain Buddhahood, is the emanation and spiritual offspring of the Buddha Amitabha. Originally, this sculpture may have had a backplate composed of a halo and a mandorla affixed to the pedestal of the main sculpture with a tenon and to the back with a pin.

A History of Gandhara and Its Adjacent States through Coins

Following Alexander the Great's invasion of the Central Asian satrapies of the Persian Empire (329–326 BCE), Greek colonizers brought to Gandhara their culture and economic tools, including their coinage. Coins were as powerful as armies and could be employed to prevent death and destruction. For example, in 327 BCE, the Indian ruler Omphi, the prince of Taxila, protected his kingdom from Alexander the Great's devastation by paying him tribute in the form of eighty talents of coined silver. Additionally, the symbolism employed on the coins suggests cultural exchanges between the Greco-Roman Empire, Gandhara, and ever-changing adjacent states.

The small selection presented here illustrates the rise and fall of a sequence of rulers in the region from 326 BCE to 288 CE. On the labels, the approximate dates for each coin's creation reflect the reigning dates of the rulers portrayed. Notice the various types of propagandistic iconography employed across time, and how the rise of Buddhist and Hindu references corresponds to the fall of Greco-Roman powers.

All coins on loan from a private collection

1 *Alexander the Great versus King Poros*

c. 326–325 BCE
Replica of the silvery decadrachm

This coin commemorates the defeat of the Indian King Poros at the hands of the so-called Alexander "the Great" and his Macedonian army. In 326 BCE, Alexander fought a decisive battle against Poros. Although Alexander did not face Poros in a duel, this silver decadrachm memorializes the battle by showing Alexander on horseback attacking Poros, who sits atop a massive elephant. On the reverse, Alexander wears the armor of a Macedonian cavalryman of the highest rank, crowned by a flying Nike, Goddess of Victory in Greek mythology, thus audaciously insinuating that he embodies Zeus himself.

2 *Diodotos I, Founder of the Graeco-Bactrian Kingdom*

c. 250–230 BCE
Silver tetradrachm of Attic standard

After Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE, a number of his former generals and associates divided his empire. The obverse of this coin features the rebel Diodotos, who revolted against the most powerful of Alexander's successors, Antiochos II, and founded an independent kingdom in Bactria.

The reverse depicts Diodotos in the likeness of Zeus hurling a thunderbolt with the right hand, bearing the aegis (divine shield) on the left arm, and placing an eagle with outstretched wings at his feet as a reminder of Alexander the Great. The depiction is meant to present Diodotos as a divine ruler.

3 *Euthydemos I, Successor to the Two Diodotoi Kings*

c. 230–200 BCE
Silver tetradrachm of Attic standard

The obverse of this coin bears an idealized portrait of Euthydemos wearing a diadem, which is a symbol of Greek royalty. According to the Greek historian Polybius, Euthydemos became the king of Bactria by killing the successor of Diodotos I.

On the reverse of the coin, Euthydemos chose Heracles as his major monetary type in order to identify himself with Alexander the Great. Alexander had associated himself with the celebrated demigod whose astounding feats earned him a place among the Greek Olympian pantheon.

4 *Demetrios I, Conqueror of Gandhara and Northwest India*

c. 200–185 BCE
Bronze coin of Attic standard

A coin made during the era of Demetrios I, son of Euthydemos I (featured on the previous coin), showcases an elephant head with a raised trunk and a bell hanging from its neck, meant to symbolize India. Demetrios I became the first Greek king to cross the Hindu Kush mountains to recapture Gandhara, an invaluable point of economic and cultural exchange, for the Greeks.

The reverse of the coin features a *caduceus*, a staff carried by the god Hermes in Greek mythology. Its presence represents Demetrios I's stature as the patron god of trade activities.

5 *Menander I, Greatest of All the Greek Sovereigns in Gandhara*

c. 165–130 BCE
Silver tetradrachm of India standard

The obverse of this coin depicts Menander I—one of the greatest kings in all Indo-Greek history—diademed and helmeted. Menander I was a good king who inspired Greek, Roman, and Indian writers, becoming the only Greek suzerain in India to appear in Indian literature.

On the reverse, Athena stands holding a shield decorated with the Gorgon's head and wielding the thunder of her father, Zeus. With his coins, Menander I declared that he was the ruler of India, both in Greek, his native language, and in Gandhari, the local Indian language.

6 *Heliocles I, Last Greek King in Bactria*

c. 145–130 BCE
Silver tetradrachm of Attic standard

This coin features Heliocles I, the last Greek king of Bactria. After his reign, the Greeks were completely overpowered by the Yuezhi tribes, who came to be known as the Kushans. The son of Eucratides I, Heliocles I is said to have committed patricide. If this is true, Heliocles I assassinated his father around 145 BCE, allegedly declaring that he had killed "not a parent, but a public enemy."

On this coin, Heliocles I introduces a unique reverse type: Zeus holding a scepter in one hand and a thunderbolt in the other.

7 *Hippostratos, Last Greek King in Gandhara*

c. 65–48 BCE
Silver tetradrachm of Indian standard

The Greek king depicted on this coin series is Hippostratos, who came to power following a temporary overthrow of the Greeks by a group of ancient tribes of nomadic warriors called the Scythians. His coins declare, both in Greek and in Gandhari, "Great Savior King Hippostratos."

The reverse depicts the king mounted on a prancing horse, wearing a diadem and a helmet. Ultimately, Hippostratos was the last Greek king to rule in Gandhara, as the Greek subjugation of India came to a definitive end around 48 BCE.

8 *Azes II, Indo-Scythian King in India*

c. 20 BCE–20 CE
Silver tetradrachm of Indian standard

The successors of the Greeks in Gandhara were known as the Indo-Scythians. On their coinage (as on this coin), Scythians repeated the most popular Greek monetary types, such as Pallas Athena.

At the same time, Indo-Scythians inaugurated a new type on the obverse: rejecting the Greek tradition of displaying the head or the bust of the king, they instead presented the king on horseback, wearing heavy armor (cataphract, or *cataphractus*). The *cataphracti*—heavily armored horsemen—usually fought in columns, wielding their long spears against the infantry.

9 *Kujula Kadphises, Founder of the Kushan Empire*

c. 30–90 CE
Bronze of Indian standard

On the obverse of this coin is a portrait of King Kujula Kadphises, who founded the Kushan dynasty. The portrait is believed to be inspired by Roman portraits of Augustus. According to Chinese records, Kujula invaded the kingdom of Anxi (perhaps the possession of the Indo-Parthians south of the Hindu Kush) and captured Gaofu (present-day Kabul), Puda (Pushkalavati), and Jibin (Cashmere) and died at the age of eighty.

On the reverse, the king is seated on a Roman curule chair, a symbol of political or military power, making a gesture with his outstretched right hand.

10 *Soter Megas, Known as "the Nameless King"*

c. 92–110 CE
Bronze of Indian standard

This coin depicts Soter Megas, also referred to as "the nameless king," in the guise of the Iranian sun god Mithra with sun rays. Soter Megas had been entrusted to run India by the second Kushan king, Vima Taktu, the son of Kujula Kadphises (whose coin is featured nearby). Vima Taktu reportedly conquered India and then appointed Soter Megas to supervise and govern the region. Soter Megas usurped Vima Taktu and took India for himself.

On the reverse, the king appears on horseback with long, fluttering diadems and holding a battle-ax. Greek legend cites him as the "king of kings, the great savior."

11 *Vima Kadphises, the Legitimate Heir to the Kushan Throne*

105–127 CE
Bronze

The obverse of this coin features a bearded king, Vima Kadphises, clad in a heavy Kushan coat, a pair of baggy trousers, and boots. He stands, head turned left, sacrificing over a fire altar with the extended right hand. Legitimate heir to the Kushan throne, Vima Kadphises used his portrait coins as a medium of propaganda, adding flaming shoulders to suggest superhuman qualities.

The reverse features the three-headed Shiva with a frontal human face holding a trident while standing in front of his vehicle, the sacred bull calf Nandi.

12 *Kanishka, the Greatest of All the Kushan Kings*

c. 127–150 CE
Bronze coin

The obverse of the coin depicts King Kanishka clad in a heavy coat and long trousers, holding a scepter in one hand and making an oblation in the other. The Kushan Empire reached its apex around 127 CE under Kanishka I, the son of Vima Kadphises.

The reverse side depicts the Buddha standing frontally and making the *abhayamudra*, the "gesture of reassurance and safety." To the right is the *tamga*, the dynastic symbol of the early Kushan rulers. It is commonly believed that Kanishka's reign witnessed the birth of Gandharan art—during this period, the first anthropomorphic image of the Buddha emerged.

13 *Kanishka, Favoring Multireligious Cults*

c. 127–150 CE
Gold dinar

The obverse of the coin, like that of its predecessor, depicts the king making an oblation over an altar. The king is named "Shah of Shahs, Kanishka the Kushan."

The reverse of the coin shows a four-armed Shiva, head turned to the left, holding a thunderbolt (*vajra*), a sacred water flask, a trident (*trishula*), and the horns of an antelope (*mrga*). This coin honors a Brahmanic deity with a Zoroastrian appellation, "Oesho." It demonstrates the diversity and syncretism characterizing Gandharan Buddhist art under Kanishka, as trade routes developed across Gandhara, creating a meeting point of different cultures.

14 *Huvishka in Line with His Father Respecting His Religious Policy*

c. 150–188 CE
Gold dinar

The obverse of the coin depicts the diademed half-length bust of Huvishka, who succeeded Kanishka; he faces left, holding a mace-sceptre and the hilt of his sword. The legend in Bactrian reads: "Shah of Shahs, Huvishka, the Kushan." His coin types suggest that he continued the broad political and religious policy of his father.

The goddess engraved on the reverse is Nana. She wears a nimbus, or halo, and stands in three-quarter view to the right with a tiny crescent over her head and a staff in both hands.

15 *Vasudeva I, Last of the Great Kushan Kings in Gandhara*

c. 188–228 CE
Gold dinar

This coin features Vasudeva I, Huvishka's successor and the last of the great Kushans who ascended to the throne. The name *Vasudeva* evokes the popular Hindu god of the same name; he is the first Kushan king to be named after an Indian god, and Hinduism became very popular during his reign. On the coin, Vasudeva I stands frontally, head facing left, wearing heavy armor, sacrificing over the altar, and holding a filleted and decorated trident that evokes the Hindu god Shiva, shown on the reverse. Shiva stands frontally, holding a trident, the bull Nandi standing to the left.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