

Franz-Karl Ehrhard & Petra Maurer (Hrsg.)

NEPALICA-TIBETICA
FESTGABE FOR CHRISTOPH CÜPPERS

BAND 2



2013
IITBS

International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH

Franz-Karl Ehrhard & Petra Maurer (Hrsg.)
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FESTGABE FOR CHRISTOPH CÜPPERS
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BEITRÄGE ZUR ZENTRALASIENFORSCHUNG
begründet von R. O. Meiszahl und Dieter Schuh
herausgegeben von Peter Schwieger
Band 28, 2

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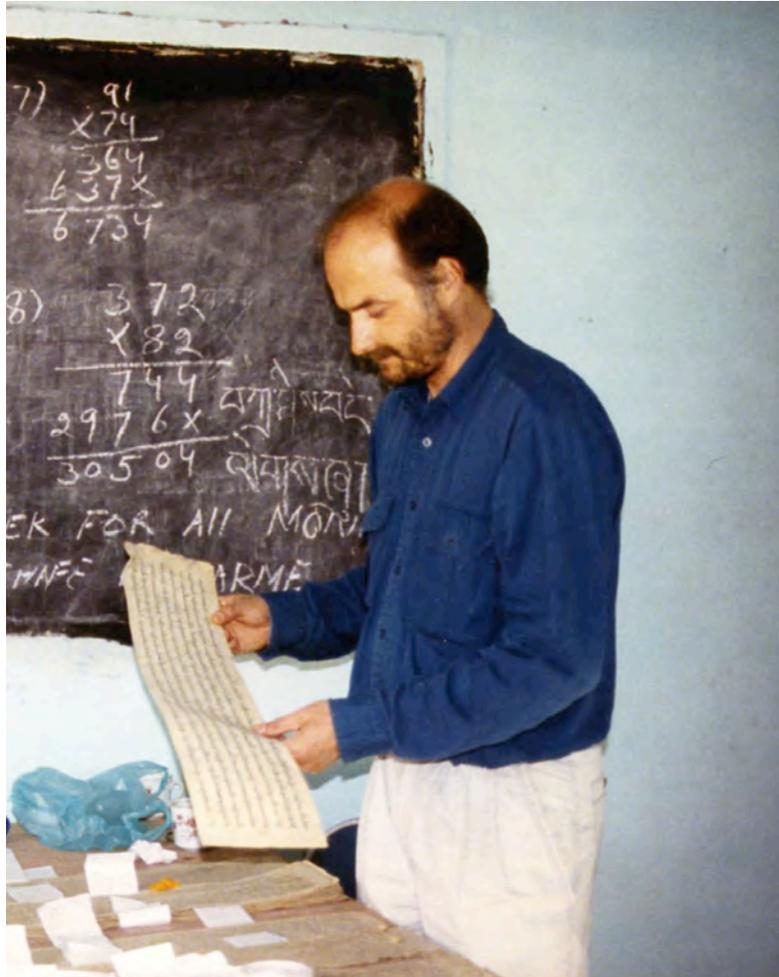
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PREFACE

A person's 65th birthday is often considered as the occasion to reflect on his or her life and achievements and to express one's thanks. This opportunity has arisen this year in the case of our friend and travelling companion Christoph Cüppers, who has dedicated his life to Tibetan and Nepalese Studies and assisted and supported many academic projects and careers in these fields.

Christoph was born into a family of lawyers from the Rhineland. His academic background is unusual as he began by studying art from 1970 to 1975 at the "Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf". He trained under artists such as Joseph Beuys and Gotthard Graubner. It was during that time that he first travelled to Asia and, on reaching Southern India, encountered Tibetan culture and its exile communities. On his return to Germany the decision was made: he changed to Oriental Studies and started to learn Tibetan, Sanskrit, Pali and Chinese at the University of Hamburg. At an Institute where the study of Tibet and its Buddhist traditions had attracted a small band of fellow students, his teachers were, to name a few, dGe-bshes dGe-'dun blo-gros, Lambert Schmithausen and Albrecht Wezler.

Fascinated by Asia he returned frequently to Southern India and Himachal Pradesh. A scholarship of the "Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes" enabled him to continue his practice on the spot: at Sera Monastery in Bylakuppe he studied Tibetan language and philosophy. With the death in 1979 of his teacher dGe-bshes dGe-'dun blo-gros, who had been a formative influence on his students, it was planned to fill the recently established chair in Tibetan Studies at the University of Hamburg with a native scholar. It was Christoph who facilitated the stay of dGe-bshes Tshul-khrims phun-tshogs at the Institute, helped in practical matters and acted as translator.

Soon afterwards, in 1983, Christoph finished his dissertation, a textual study of the ninth chapter of the *Samādhirājasūtra*. Immediately after taking his degree he was offered by Albrecht Wezler the position of Deputy Director of the Nepal-German Manuscript Project (NGMPP) and Nepal Research Centre (NRC) in Kathmandu. On his first arrival he fell in love with the country, and his feelings towards Nepal have remained constant for the last thirty years.

During his time at the NGMPP and NRC, of which he later became Director, he worked in close cooperation with the National Archives and the Department of Archaeology, collecting Tibetan manuscripts and block prints in the Kathmandu valley, and conducting expeditions to photograph manuscripts in regions of the Nepalese Himalayas such as Helambu, Southern Mustang, Jumla and Solu Khumbu. Besides his duties as Director, he supported many individual scholars in their research and assisted larger projects sponsored by the German Research Council such as the Nepal Research Programme under Bernhard Kölver. These activities continued even after his term had finished and after the establishment under Willibald Haffner and Dieter Schuh of a new programme of the German Research Council called Tibet Himalaya.

In 1989 Christoph returned together with his wife Savitri and their son Bikas to his hometown of Düsseldorf in order to work on a project at the University of Bonn. His interests had changed to politics and history: the new project was concerned with state formation in 17th-century Tibet and was based on a critical edition and annotated translation of the "Guidelines for Government officials" written by the regent Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho.

During this time he also worked on the edition and translation of a manuscript containing a Tibetan-Newari Lexicon and on a compilation of Tibetan proverbs and sayings. He also undertook a longer field trip in 1992 to Dharmasala, where he studied and collected Tibetan documents, and in 1994 he assisted the Austrian-Italian research team in Tabo in the region of Spiti.

In 1995, with the establishment by the Reiyukai of the Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI) at Buddha's birthplace, Christoph and Savitri returned to Nepal. Their home in Sano Thimi has served since then—like the LIRI—as a centre for scholarly exchange and personal encounters between foreign researchers and native scholars. As Director, Christoph has initiated several series of publications with a growing number of titles; they are for the most part results of research projects in the fields of Buddhist, Tibetan and Nepalese Studies, supported by the LIRI and conducted on the spot. Successful seminars have also been held in Lumbini, the first of these in the year 2000 on the subject of the “Relationship between Religion and State (*chos srid zung 'brel*) in Traditional Tibet.”

Although the administrative duties are heavy, Christoph continues to travel and to cooperate with researchers, working, for example, with the International Tibetan Archives Preservation Trust (ITAPT) and the Tibetan Autonomous Regional Archives (TARA) in Lhasa, and finds the time to continue his research work.

It is therefore a great pleasure to present to Christoph this Festgabe with contributions from friends and colleagues covering the fields of his interest and documenting his influence and inspiration. We would like to thank Dieter Schuh und Nikolai Solmsdorf, who were of great help in producing this volume and bringing the individual articles into a coherent format. Special thanks go to all the authors for delivering their articles in time and making this collection a true offering.

Munich, September 2013

Franz-Karl Ehrhard & Petra Maurer

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THE BUDDHA BEYOND FIGURATION IN GANDHARAN CULT IMAGERY

Christian Luczanits¹

Gandharan art, as is well known, is predominantly Buddhist, but it has been created by a society that was in the true sense of the word, cosmopolitan. In addition to its multi-layered Indian heritage—besides Buddhism a conservative Brahmanism and a developing Hinduism are evident—the art of Gandhara not only attests to an extensive knowledge of Western, that is Greek and Roman, mythology and visual culture, but also reflects Parthian and Sassanian elements.² However, despite all these interconnections that justly can be made, the art of Gandhara can not be reduced to a product of diverse and successive influences. In the contrary, some more recent studies have pointed out the innovative nature underlying Gandharan art within its wider cultural environment.³ They reveal that Gandharan art is the result of a complex process of adoption, adaptation and reinterpretation as it can only be achieved in a true artistic centre. With this cultural backdrop in mind we move on to the focus of this tribute, the figuration of Gandharan cult imagery.

Examples

In the course of my research project on the Bodhisattva and Future Buddha Maitreya during the Kuṣāṇa period, I have worked on his specific iconography in reliefs that I termed “discussion scenes”. A relief excavated at Taxila and housed at the site museum, provides a typical example for such a scene (Fig. 1).

Maitreya is shown frontally, holding a flask in his left hand and performing the gesture with the palm open towards the viewer (*abhayamudrā*), which in the Gandharan context has a wide range of meanings, from greeting to sealing a firm statement. Maitreya is



Figure 1: Bodhisattva Maitreya in a ‘discussion scene’; Dharmarājikā stūpa area, Ruin L; phyllite, h 22.23 cm (8 3/4 in); Taxila Museum; photo C. Luczanits 2007 (D6195).

often isolated through his elaborate throne and the putto fanning him indicate a paradisaical context. Such scenes are remarkable for the active role at least one of the secondary figures takes, usually performing a gesture directed towards the Bodhisattva that can be interpreted as addressing him. Such a conversation could take place in Ketumati, the city in which Maitreya will be reborn and where he will achieve Buddhahood in a very remote future. The wish to be reborn with Maitreya at that time and place is integrative to all schools of mainstream Buddhism. Alternatively,

¹ While I have been interested in Gandharan art since my work on my Master thesis, only a fellowship at the Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI) in 2005–2006 enabled me to once again dive into this subject in depth. The fellowship yielded surprising results, among them the shared curatorship of an exhibit of Gandharan art from Pakistan the engagement in which was triggered by Christoph Cüppers. This contribution is a by-product of my LIRI project on the Bodhisattva Maitreya during the Kuṣāṇa period, and thus is a perfect fit to this Festschrift.

² In this respect the study of Nehru 1989 still remains the most comprehensive.

³ See, for example, Stoye 2004, 2007, 2008a, b; Stone 2004.

Maitreya may here be represented in the Tuṣita Heaven, where he awaits his future rebirth. This notion probably was developed in the course of the 2nd century CE and Maitreya's immediate accessibility in this heaven became the focus of a distinct cult.

In the course of the work done with Paul Harrison on the Gandharan complex steles,⁴ to which I will come back later, I also developed a more sophisticated interpretative framework for the standing Maitreya as an attendant figure to the Buddha in later Gandharan art, as on a triad from



Figure 2: Teaching Buddha Triad; Sahri Bahlol (1906–07 excavation); grey schist, 57 x 49 x 11 cm; Peshawar Museum, Inv. No. PM-2770 [old: 158]; photo C. Luczanits 2009 (D8340).

Sahri Bahlol today in the Peshawar Museum (Fig. 2). In such depictions Maitreya is iconographically assimilated with Brahmā, who is depicted to the side of the Buddha's head, while the turbaned Bodhisattva is assimilated with Indra, commonly called Śakra in relevant early Buddhist literature. Independent of the interpretation of each of these reliefs, both examples

⁴ Harrison and Luczanits 2012.

demonstrate the interest of the Gandharan artists to communicate the relationship of the depicted figures to each other.

In this contribution, I will take a closer look at other examples for the relationship between figures as expressed through the figuration of Gandharan cult images. Of particular interest in this regard is the relationship of the depiction on the pedestals of a cult image, to that image. Commonly the image and its pedestal relief are described and interpreted separately from each other and the relationship of the two is rarely discussed. This probably results from the high ratio of variation in the depictions, which makes the choice for the depiction appear random. However, given the sophistication of Gandharan art—also in the two examples I have discussed so far—there can be no doubt, that the choice of figuration is not the result of a random copying process, but one of a conscious artistic expression the details of which are imbued with meaning.

A universal form to express the relationship between figures are the gestures with which they refer to each other. In the most interesting cases their implications can become complex and



Figure 3: Veneration of Maitreya; Asian Art Museum, Berlin, Inv. No. I-87; photo C. Luczanits, courtesy of the Asian Art Museum, Berlin.

multilevelled. A perfect example of such a case is a relief today in Berlin that came to my notice in the course of my Maitreya research (Fig. 3).

In this relief, Maitreya is visited by lay followers of both sexes and different ages, all of them with their hands folded in adoration, and a monk. Maitreya, seated cross-legged on a throne and under a baldachin is of considerably larger size than the surrounding standing figures, which expresses his superior status.⁵ Facing towards the viewer and with gestures directed towards himself, he appears to pay no attention to the attending figures. To his left side is a monk, who points towards Maitreya but faces away from him towards the male worshipper standing behind him. This indicates to me, that it is actually not Maitreya who is in the centre of the composition, but an image of him, and that the monk actually acts as a guide to a group of visitors. Iconographically, the larger size, the throne and in particular the sitting posture with the legs crossed at the ankles indicate that the central image represents Maitreya as he presides in Tuṣita Heaven. Thus, the pedestal relief also references a world that differs from our own. Finally this relief has to be read in conjunction with a Buddha image that once occupied the seat of which the relief represents the front slab.

Quite some time ago, John Rosenfield⁶ in his pioneering work on the art during Kuṣāṇa rule has pointed out that Maitreya is usually combined with representations of Śākyamuni,⁷ most

⁵ This is already clear if one just takes the ‘perspective of Meaning’ (Bedeutungsperspektive) of such depictions into account.

⁶ Rosenfield 1967: 233–34.

frequently by showing him in a pedestal relief of a cult image of that Buddha.⁸ On the most basic level, this relationship expresses the continuity of the Buddhist teaching from the past Buddha to a future one, an issue of paramount importance when Gandharan art developed, as this time coincides with the projected disappearance of the Buddhist teachings as has been stated in some early textual sources.⁹ In our example (Fig. 3) the continuity between Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is also expressed through the sun-disks and the crescent moon on the baldachin, whereby the two suns stand for the past and future Buddhas and the crescent for the present Bodhisattva, that is Maitreya.

Temporal Relation

This notion of succession and continuity is certainly the most important and most frequent motive expressed through the combination of a main figure on top of a pedestal and the pedestal relief itself. This fact becomes apparent, if one considers that both Buddha images among the five inscribed and dated works of Gandharan art known so far express this relationship. The Buddha image of Loriyan Tangai, which bears a date that likely translates to 133 CE, has Maitreya flanked by worshippers in the pedestal.¹⁰ The other image is the so-called Hashtnagar Buddha, the pedestal of which was separated from it due to its inscription and is today in the British Museum. The inscription on this piece provides a date likely converting to 199 CE.¹¹ Together the two sculptures can be taken as representing the range and development of second century Buddha cult imagery in Gandhara.

⁷ Cf. also Gaulier *et al.* 197: 1, 11–12.

⁸ Rosenfield (1967: 227) states therefore: “Most figures in Indo-Scythian dress, when shown directly with their object of worship, are devotees of Maitreya or of Śākyamuni in conjunction with Maitreya.” In later examples also other Bodhisattvas are shown with similar groups of donors, as for example the meditating Bodhisattva with turban from Sanchi (Rosenfield 1967: fig. 34).

⁹ See Nattier 1991 for a detailed study on this topic.

¹⁰ Standing Buddha from Loriyan Tangai; schist, h. 162 cm; Indian Museum, Calcutta, Inv. no. 4901/A 23217: A fairly mutilated and headless Buddha statue with a depiction of Maitreya in the pedestal. The Buddha has the characteristically projecting lower cloth underneath the knee, as it is also found on Buddha coins. Seated Maitreya, head mutilated, on pedestal relief framed by a prominent laurel band above and Corinthian pilasters at the sides. He is flanked by four donors on pedestal, possibly two monastic (one holding an incense burner?) and two secular. Coarsely written donation inscription in two lines on the socle underneath the pedestal gives the year 318, probably Yona era, 186/185 BCE = 133 CE. If the interpretation of the date in the inscription is correct, this Buddha images falls into the time period when in the inscriptions of Mathura no clear distinction is made between the Buddha and Bodhisattva. For depictions see, for example: Vogel 1906: 251–53, pl. lxix,b; Foucher 1918: fig. 477; Bachhofer 1925: Abb. 3; Bachhofer 1973: pl. 142, right (whole image), pl. 143, top (pedestal); Ingholt 1957: fig. I-2 (pedestal) and II-1 (whole image); Rowland 1960: fig. 7a; Mukherjee 1991: 150.

¹¹ Hashtnagar Buddha pedestal with Maitreya; schist, 20 x 38 x 7 cm (measurements for pedestal only); from Palatu Dheri, near Rājar; British Museum, London, OA 1890.11-16.1: Asymmetrically composed, inscribed pedestal cut off from a standing [Buddha] image which was veneration by Hindus at the site until the 1920ies. The Buddha to which this pedestal belongs was venerated as Kālikā Devi and a photograph of the image is in the ASI collection (Frontier Circle 1906–7, no. 9). On the pedestal, the Bodhisattva with the flask is unusually not represented frontally but in three-quarter profile turned to his right. The pedestal has four figures, Maitreya, seated off centre, is venerated by Brahmā and Indra, Maitreya is turned towards Brahmā, behind which a female donor throws a flower. The pedestal is dated by inscription to the year 384, likely referring to the Yona era of 186/185 BCE and thus conforming to 199 CE. For depictions see the photograph: MNAOr, Gandhara 1074, and the publications: Vogel 1906; Foucher 1918 1918: fig. 479; Bachhofer 1925: Abb. 5 & 6; Bachhofer 1973: pl. 142, left (Buddha image with replaced head), pl. 143, bottom (pedestal); Ingholt 1957: fig. I-3 (pedestal) and II-2 (Buddha image with replaced head); Rowland 1960: fig. 7b (Buddha image with replaced head); Bivar 1970; Fussman 1985; Bussagli 1984: 98; Kurita 1990: 27, no. 53; Zwalf 1996: no. 172. The latter includes an extensive bibliography.



Figure 4: Standing Buddha with image of Maitreya between the legs; Lucknow Museum; photo C. Luczanits 2006 (D7706).

Figure 5: Detail of Fig. 4 showing the turbaned figure of Maitreya; C. Luczanits 2006 (D7709).

Mathura school Buddha images only take up this topic when the Buddha depiction itself bears a dress with folds imitating the Gandharan Buddha dress. In a remarkable image in the storerooms of the Lucknow State Museum (Fig. 4), a small figure of the Bodhisattva Maitreya stands between the legs of the Buddha image (Fig. 5). As in Gandhara, Maitreya can be identified by the flask, but here he wears a turban, indicating that his association with the brahmanic caste emphasized in Gandharan art is of lesser importance in the Mathura region.

However, by the third century, Maitreya is depicted in the succession of Śākyamuni and his six predecessors.¹² In all cases of such Gandharan reliefs, Maitreya on one end of the row is clearly distinguished from the Buddhas by the flask and the open hair bound to a loop or topknot.¹³ If

¹² The seven Buddhas of the past have already been emphasized in the art of Sanchi, but there Maitreya was not yet depicted with them. Indeed, it can be assumed that the concept of the future Buddha was only developed at the time when the Sanchi gates were carved.

¹³ Gandharan examples for the such depictions are the following:

- Fragmented panel with Maitreya and five Buddhas from Hoti Mardan; grey schist; 36 x 52 x 8 cm; Peshawar Museum, Inv. No. PM-3091 [old: 2108] (Miyaji 1985a: pl. 13,1; Kurita 1990: 289; Exhibit 2008a: Cat. No. 188).

- Peshawar Museum fragment of an inscribed pedestal(?) (Kurita 1990: fig. 286).

- Panel with the seven Buddhas and Maitreya; grey schist, 29.5 x 58 cm; Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Inv. No. I.M. 71–1939 (Ackermann 1975: 151–52, pl. lxxiv-a; Kurita 1990: fig. 293).

- Panel with the Seven Buddhas and Maitreya from Takht-i-bahi; schist, h. 27 cm; Peshawar Museum(?); Photographs: BL Photo 1006/2(954) shows the panel still in situ in a niche of Takht-i-bahi, Photo 1006/2(260) is very well legible in terms of detail (Foucher 1918: fig. 457; Kurita 1990: fig. 291 (reprinting Foucher)).

- Fragment of a curved frieze with the Seven Buddhas and Maitreya; grey schist, 13.5 x 31 cm; Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Inv. No. I.M. 220–1913 (Ackermann 1975: 153–54, pl. lxxv-b).

- Two Buddhas and Maitreya from a larger group; light green schist, 37.5 x 42 x 7 cm; Butkara I, Inv. No. 3598 (Faccenna 1964: 75, pl. ccxcvii).

- Triad stele with the Seven Buddhas and Maitreya in the bottom register; Indian Museum Calcutta, G. 27 written on the piece (photograph from Elizabeth Errington).

such depictions are pedestal reliefs, the succession theme has by that time become a secondary motive, and the timeless nature of the cult image on top of it is being emphasized. One fascinating and unique sculpture from the Mathura school turns the relationship of Maitreya and the seven Buddhas upside down, namely a bust of Maitreya who has the seven Buddhas represented in his crown, but the flanking Buddhas are only preserved on one side.¹⁴

The importance of the succession theme and the last example indicate, that for the earliest images with a Buddha in the turban or crown, the Buddha represents the predecessor of the Bodhisattva, rather than a higher manifestation as is the case in the later convention of esoteric Buddhism. As Maitreya succeeds Śākyamuni in this world, so Avalokiteśvara succeeds Buddha Amitābha in Sukhāvātī. Only by the fifth century, and with the Buddha represented in meditation, it may well be that esoteric notions gain prominence over that of succession.¹⁵ Remarkably, later Gandharan imagery also merges the Buddha and the Bodhisattva in a single two-sided cult image,¹⁶ abolishing any notion of temporal succession.



Figure 6: Digital reconstruction of the Peshawar Museum fasting Siddhārtha; Peshawar Museum; C. Luczanits based on KAH photographs.

Direct Relation

While succession and continuation between Buddha and Bodhisattva are a theme expressed almost throughout the whole range of Gandharan art, there are many other ways representations on the pedestal relate to the main image. The two fasting Siddhārtha images preserved in Pakistani Museums provide disparate examples in this regard.

In the case of the fasting Bodhisattva of the Peshawar Museum (Fig. 6), the cult image is shown together with a narrative that relates to it temporally and causally.¹⁷ The narrative relief in the pedestal depicts the story of the two merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika, whose caravan got stuck as they passed closely by the—in the meantime awakened—Buddha, who is depicted in the centre of the relief. Further, we see a cart getting stuck to the right of the Buddha, while on the left side the two merchants offer bags to the Buddha as donation. Thus the asceticism represented above the pedestal precedes the event represented on it, as Śākyamuni precedes Maitreya, and one may also read a causal relationship into the relief, with asceticism resulting in the ultimate awakening

- Buddhafeld stele with Seven Buddhas and Maitreya on the bottom frieze; from Muhammad Nari; grey schist, h. 104 cm; Chandigarh Museum, Acc. No. 1134 (Cole 1883: pl. 1 (sketch); Cole 1885: pl. 1; Burgess 1897: pl. 112; Foucher 1905: 193, fig. 77; Grünwedel 1920: fig. 63, tracing; Marshall 1960a: fig. 123; Miyaji 1985b: pl. IX, 2; Exhibit 2002: 24, fig. 3; Paul 1986: 171, no. 1134; Kurita 1988, 2003a: pl. 397; Bhattacharyya 2002: no. 340).

¹⁴ This so far unpublished torso of a Bodhisattva is currently on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (lent by Jeffrey B. Soref, Inv. No. L.1994.24.5).

¹⁵ This understanding also may explain how it is possible that the pensive Bodhisattva featuring a Buddha in the turban, in a South Asian context is predominantly identified as Avalokiteśvara, and in an East Asian context as Maitreya, whose cult became more prominent and durable there.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Ingholt 1957: fig. 276; Kurita 2003a, b: figs. 299–301.

¹⁷ See also, for example, Ingholt 1957: pl. 53; Kurita 2003a: figs. 183–84; Rhi 2006b: fig. 2.

and the subsequent donation of the merchants, who (are forced to) recognize the miraculous nature of the Buddhas achievement and also herald the future monastic community.

The Lahore fasting Buddha (Fig. 7),¹⁸ in contrast, only communicates the veneration of Siddhārtha's miraculous achievements in asceticism, which, as Juhyung Rhi has demonstrated, is understood by some mainstream Buddhist schools as a feat of divine proportions.¹⁹ The worshippers here are monks kneeling in front of an incense burner and holding some offering. Their attention is directed towards the burner in the centre, rather than the fasting Siddhārtha above, but the incense burner is clearly to be understood in reference to him. Such representations reproduce the actual position of the worshipper towards the image of the meditating Bodhisattva in its architectural context, as cult images have commonly been displayed in a niche of a monastery or around a stupa. Similar conceptions are found in the contemporaneous art of the Mathura region with both Buddhist and Jain sculpture. However, there it is the wheel of the dharma or the tree of enlightenment that is represented in the centre.²⁰ It is thus the teaching of the respective Awakened One and his awakening that is the primary focus of the veneration, and the actual sculpture is only obliquely referred to.



Figure 7: Fasting Siddhārtha, Sikri; dark grey schist, 85 x 53.5 x 20 cm; Lahore Museum, Inv. No. G-75 [old 2099]; after Higuchi 1984: pl. I-1.

Oblique Relation

So far I have only considered the relationship between the two main images in the figuration of a cult image, now I focus on the worshippers and their position within the composition. In the following examples the worshippers are engaged with the secondary figure in the pedestal, while the main image is only obliquely hinted towards.

Coming back to the dated Lorian Tangai image mentioned above, the inscription also states that it is the pious donation (*dānamukha*) of a certain Budhaghōṣa, companion of Saghōruma.²¹ While this inscription has to be read as a reference to the entire image, the worshippers on the pedestal approach the Bodhisattva with an incense burner. As Rosenfield pointed out, the veneration of Maitreya in the pedestal area, reflects the actual position of the donor as one between the last Buddha and a Bodhisattva whose future Buddhahood is the only hope to escape transmigration without severe hardship through many rebirths. Thus, when worshippers approach an image of Maitreya in Tuṣita heaven with devotion, as is also the case on the Berlin pedestal relief (Fig. 3), their aim is to be reborn with him in Tuṣita Heaven, and by extension, to be again reborn with him on earth when he achieves Buddhahood in his last life.

¹⁸ See also, for example, Kurita 2003a: pl. P2-IV, fig. 193; Rhi 2006b: fig. 1; Catalogue 2006: no. 1.

¹⁹ Rhi 2006b.

²⁰ See, for example, Rosenfield 1967: figs. 31–33; Czuma and Morris 1985: nos. 15 and numerous more in the appendix; Härtel 1985: figs. 6–9, 11; Myer 1986: figs. 11, 12; Asthana 1999: nos. 69, 74; Exhibit 2002: nos. 10, 39; Chakrabarti 2006: pls. 34-a, 39, 40; Rhi Quintanilla 2007: 136, 137.

²¹ For the inscription and all references see <http://gandhari.org/> no. CKI0111.



Figure 8: Maitreya blessing a monastic on a pedestal relief of a seated Buddha; location unknown; photo courtesy of the Warburg Institute, London (C. Luczanits 2011, D3168).

The Hashtnagar pedestal includes Brahmā and Indra among the worshippers, and Maitreya actually engages with Brahmā, looking towards him. The person behind Brahmā possibly is a monk. While it is unclear what the dialog between Brahmā and Maitreya refers to in this case, an exceptional relief recorded in an old photograph of the Warburg Institute shows Maitreya laying his hand on the head of a kneeling monk, blessing or anointing him (Fig. 8). His legs crossed at the ankles, haloed and seated under a tree, Maitreya likely is to be understood as residing in Tuṣita heaven, and the blessing of the monk may thus refer to the popular stories of advanced Buddhist practitioners or arhats visiting Maitreya there in order to clarify doubts on the Buddhist teaching. I read these examples as implicitly referring to the Buddha above insofar, as Buddhahood is the ultimate goal of the depicted monks. Given the active role Maitreya takes in this relief, the Buddha represented above is likely not meant as representing a particular Buddha of the past, but rather a Buddha beyond our time and space.

Such implicit referencing can also be seen in other examples, as on a frequently published standing Buddha image from the Lahore Museum.²² In the pedestal relief the attention of the monastic and female worshippers is directed towards an enthroned reliquary, probably shown to the public at the occasion of a ceremony. Of course, the reliquary represents the physical remains of the past Buddha, who is referred to by the image standing on the pedestal. As in the previous example, the Buddha image can be read as both a reference to the past, the Buddha whose corporal remains are inside the reliquary, and as a reference to the future, to the Buddha during the life of which the worshippers wish to be reborn. The Buddha thus is again to be understood as beyond the worshipper's time.

²² Higuchi 1984: no. I-2; Catalogue 2006: no. 9; Exhibit 2008a: cat.no. 131, detail of the pedestal relief on page 167; Proser 2011: no. 55.



Figure 9: Four standing Buddhas with frieze of the life of the Buddha underneath: birth on the left, departure, veneration of the Buddha and veneration of the Three Jewels; Butkara I; black-bluish schist, h. 50 cm; Museum Saidu Sharif, no. B1551; after Faccenna 1964: pl. cxxvi.

Another type of oblique relation is represented by a fascinating fragmentary relief from Butkara I (Fig. 9). It shows a row of four standing Buddhas on top of a frieze with four main scenes of the Buddha's life. On the basis of literature references, these can be identified as Buddha Śākyamuni and his three predecessors living in the same *kalpa*, a subgroup of the Seven Buddhas of the Past that can be traced back to the 3rd century BCE. The Buddhas are shown together with their respective last lives, which follows the same scheme and thus comprises of the same events. The Buddhas here are obviously beyond our time and space, and their blossom filled background further alludes to the idealized and abstract nature of the world in which they are represented.

There are also Bodhisattva steles with a Bodhisattva in the pedestal relief. Since the main Bodhisattva on these is commonly represented teaching—and thus in a very advanced stage of Bodhisattvahood—they can essentially be read similar to the Buddha steles. For example, the veneration of a turbaned Bodhisattva in the pedestal relief can be read as expressing the wish to be reborn with the teaching—and thus more advanced—Maitreya type Bodhisattva sitting on that pedestal.²³ Thus the veneration of any Bodhisattva typologically conforms to the veneration of Maitreya.

By extension similar readings can be applied to compositions with a turbaned teaching Bodhisattva, a Bodhisattva of the Avalokiteśvara type, as the main image. In one case the main Bodhisattva may once have had a Buddha figure in the crescent of his crown (Fig. 10). Here, too, the

²³ A good examples for such a relief is a teaching Maitreya type Buddha with a turbaned Bodhisattva in the pedestal relief in the Peshawar Museum (see e.g. Ingholt 1957: fig. 306).



Figure 10: Teaching Bodhisattva of the Avalokiteśvara type with Buddha flanked by worshippers on the pedestal and presumably also in the turban; Sahri Bahlol (1911–12 excavation); Peshawar Museum, Inv. No. 3074; after Exhibit 2008a: cat. no. 199.

Figure 11: Veiled female worshipper and monk with incense burner on venerating the (lost) image above them; provenance unknown; grey schist, 15.5 x 42 x 8 cm; Lahore Museum, Inv. No. G-254 [old 411/229]; photo C. Luczanits 2007 (D5695).



eneration of the Buddha image below obliquely refers to the image above as the future goal of the action represented. In my opinion, multiple Bodhisattva or Buddha figures on the pedestal of a sculpture do not substantially change the general meaning implied through the depiction, but emphasis the miraculous nature of the event.

Rhetorical Relation

While the relationships discussed so far are fairly clear cut, there are numerous cases in which the temporal and spatial barriers between the protagonists are bridged. I call these relations rhetorical, as such representations address the relationship between the figures on the sculpture—and also the viewer—more directly.

The simplest form of such a rhetorical relationship are cases where the worshippers represented on the pedestal are looking, and thus directed towards, the figure above. An unambiguous example in this regard is a pedestal relief from the Lahore Museum that once was placed underneath a seated Buddha or Bodhisattva towards which the veiled women and a monk holding an incense burner depicted on it are directed (Fig. 11). Given their relative position the veiled woman may well be the mother of the monk.

An incense burner flanked by monks is also the focus of the pedestal relief of another Buddha stele, but in contrast to the relief underneath the fasting Buddha from Lahore (Fig. 7), the kneeling monks are now gazing at the Buddha above them (Fig. 12).²⁴ Visually they thus directly engage with the large Buddha, as do the gods Brahmā and Indra flanking his head. This double veneration may well signal that the Buddha in the focus of this veneration is not a historical personage, but a Buddha beyond our world, the truly space and timeless Buddha postulated with proto-Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Again, what is true for the Buddha is also found with teaching Bodhisattvas, such as the teaching Maitreya. On his pedestal of one of his depictions (Fig. 13), a giant bejewelled flask is pointed out by a monk, while the worshippers on the other side of the flask look up to the Bodhisattva himself. One can well imagine that the monk tells the visitors about the Bodhisattva teaching in Tuṣita Heaven and/or in the city of Ketumati. The flask, originating from the water vessel carried

²⁴ This sculpture documented in archival photography at the Asian Art Museum, Collection of South, Southeast and Central Asian Art, Berlin, has also been published in Taddei 2003: fig. 5, with the note that it was offered at Sotheby's in September 1985.



Figure 12: Teaching Buddha worshipped by Brahmā and Indra as well as two monks flanking an incense burner; origin and location unknown; photo Asian Art Museum, Collection of South, Southeast and Central Asian Art, Berlin (NR3).

Figure 13: Teaching Maitreya with veneration of his flask; Sahri Bahlol (1909-10 excavation); grey schist, 110 x 67 x 15 cm; Peshawar Museum, Inv. No. 3000 [old 1435]; after Exhibit 2008a: cat. no. 194.

by brahmanic ascetics, is now richly bejewelled, possibly an indicator that it contains the nectar of deathlessness (*amṛta*) rather than just purifying water.

Rhetorical relationships are particularly interesting when sizes are varied, as in the case of this sculpture of Siddhārtha meditating under the rose-apple-tree (Fig. 14). In this case, actually a number of conventions we have seen already come together; besides the two worshippers to the side of the incense burner only obliquely referencing the main figure, there is also a narrative vignette of a man ploughing that assures the correct identification of the sculpture. Finally, a larger kneeling lay worshipper is directly directed towards the meditating Bodhisattva. Like the emaciated Bodhisattva, the First Meditation takes a special place in Kuṣāṇa period Buddhism which in this case also had considerable appeal in Mathura art, as a Mathura style sculpture found in Sānchī and dated to the Kuṣāṇa year 28 (presumably 255 CE, but theoretically also 100 years earlier) indicates.²⁵

²⁵ This topic not only has been popular in the Mathura region, but is also recorded in early Buddhist literature (see Schopen 2005: 128–37). Mathura examples are:

– a fragmented sculpture from Sanchi of Mathura region Sanstone dated to the year 28 {Willis, 1999/2000 #3667} = AIIS 73.90; Sanchi Museum no. A82; according to {Marshall, 1915, #1360}: 20, pl. viii,b, excavated from stūpa n. 29, to the east of the apsidal temple, 29 “nearest to the great stūpa.”

– a richly adorned Bodhisattva in meditation in the Mathura Museum apparently once haloed, h. 65 cm; {Bachhofer, 1973, #758}: pl. 85.



Figure 14: The Bodhisattva meditating under the rose-apple-tree; Shari Bahlol, Mound C (1911–12 excavation); grey schist; 70 x 36 x 16 cm; Peshawar Museum, Inv. No. PM-2750 [old 1739]; photo after Exhibit 2008a: 25, Abb. 8.

Figure 15: Detail of Fig. 4 also showing the worshippers to the sides of the Bodhisattvas feet; photo C. Luczanits 2006 (D7719).



The Mathura school Buddha image from around 300 CE we already referred to earlier (Fig. 4), is similarly ambivalent. Besides the Buddha and the Bodhisattva Maitreya standing between his feet, there are also two worshippers, which even though they are kneeling are considerably larger than the standing Bodhisattva (Fig. 15). Their veneration gesture and garland offering are directed towards the exceedingly large Buddha figure. On the temporal plain, the worshippers are located between the two main subjects as one can read that their present veneration of Buddha Śākyamuni is the expression of the wish to meet the Bodhisattva and Future Buddha Maitreya. On a spatial plain, the relative giant size of the Buddha is to be understood as a reference to his superior nature or accomplishments.

Size Matters

The relative sizes of the figures on the last two examples begs the question if it has some intrinsic meaning, and it certainly does. Not accidentally, even the first Indian cult images of *yakṣa* in stone, such as the so-called Parkham Yakṣa today in the Mathurā Museum, are larger than life.²⁶ And one of the first dated Buddha images of the same art school, the so-called Bala Bodhisattva dating to the year three of Kanīṣka (ca. 130 CE), is larger than life as well.²⁷ In these cases, size is an expression of the deification of the depicted, which is particularly clear with the Bala Buddha image, since the symbols of the zodiac are represented on the umbrella that once was mounted on the pillar against which he was standing.²⁸

– On pedestal of Buddha flanked by an extended Kuṣāṇa family, year 22 = AIIS 228.58; Sanchi Museum no. 2785/83; AIIS JR Neg (21775).

– Mathura Museum M/3, post with two scenes from the life: BS at first meditation and leaving his sleeping wife.

²⁶ The *yakṣa* from Parkham, UP, and today in the Archaeological Museum of Mathura is 8.66 feet or 2.64 meters high. Also the Mat image of the seated Kuṣāṇa ruler Vima Kadphises, who reigned c. 115–126 CE, would originally have been more than 2 meter high (185 cm or 6 foot 10 without head).

²⁷ The Bala Bodhisattva is said to measure 97 5/8 inches or 248 cm (Czuma 1977: fig. 22).

²⁸ On this image and its symbolism see in particular Verardi 1985.

The relative size of figures also matters, as from the earliest iconometric manuals the importance of a figure is also expressed by superior size, a notion that in the art can be traced back to at least the first century CE as proven by the Sonkh architrave relief of a central snake (or *nāga*) couple flanked by worshippers.²⁹ Specific to Buddhism the larger size may also signify a more fortunate realm or age where people in general are larger than in our world today. Thus Maitreya's size in Tuṣita Heaven is likened to the size he is supposed to have in his future rebirth when he is becoming the next Buddha in our world. As such in Buddhist art size appears to compensate for the absence of multiple heads and limbs that are used in contemporaneous early Hindu imagery to signify the cosmic divine.³⁰

In late Gandharan art the size differences become gigantic, as obvious from the foot of a Buddha image found in the Dharmarajika complex of Taxila, or the famous gigantic Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan.

Gesturing Monk

The most remarkable feature of the relief I used as a prime example is the monk facing away from the central Bodhisattva but pointing towards him (Figs. 3, 16). In a South Asian context such a behaviour would be impossible if one would assume that the Bodhisattva in the centre is physically present. If a high personage is flanked by two persons, the one immediately to the left of it takes the most prominent position. It is the monk that takes this position in the relief, but he does not afford any attention to the main figure. I thus interpret him as the custodian of an image of Maitreya, just as the monk on the pedestal of the teaching Maitreya is the custodian of the bejewelled flask venerated there (Fig. 13). In fact, there are a number of reliefs in which such monk guides are represented, and all of them count among the late Gandharan stone sculptures.

Gesturing monks are, for example, represented in the pedestal reliefs of two sculptures of teaching Buddhas, each of them with a meditating Bodhisattva represented in the centre. In the first case the Bodhisattva is clearly turbaned and thus of the Avalokiteśvara type,³¹ and in the second case probably of the Maitreya type.³² While the monk usually takes the position on the left, there are also cases where he kneels on the right side, as is the case in the pedestal relief of the teaching Bodhisattva in Fig. 10.



Figure 16: Detail of Fig. 3, showing the monk directed away from the central Bodhisattva and towards the lay followers; Asian Art Museum, Berlin, Inv. No. I-87; photo C. Luczanits, courtesy of the Asian Art Museum, Berlin.

²⁹ See, e.g., Härtel 1993: 429–30, 438.

³⁰ As is well known, for Hindu images this has convincingly been worked out in Srinivasan 1997.

³¹ Large size seated and teaching Buddha with turbaned and haloed Bodhisattva flanked by a monk and a family of three in the pedestal. The monk to the Bodhisattva's right gesturing towards him (see, e.g., Ingholt 1957: fig. 251).

³² Teaching Buddha of the Lahore Museum in unusually bright stone with a Maitreya-type Bodhisattva seated with the legs crossed at the ankles in the center. The monk to the Bodhisattva's immediate right gesturing towards him (see, e.g., Ingholt 1957: fig. 247; Exhibit 2008b, a: cat. no. 135).



Figure 17: Worshippers flanking a Buddha flanked by two Bodhisattvas; origin and location unknown; photo courtesy of the Warburg Institute, London (C. Luczanits 2011, D3272).



Figure 18: Palace type Buddhafeld stele with Seven Buddhas and Maitreya from Muhammad Nari; grey schist, 105 x 77 cm; Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery, Inv. No. 1134; photo C. Luczanits 1994 (150,19), WHAV.

In this case, the main sculpture is a Bodhisattva, and the venerated image in the pedestal relief is a meditating Buddha, an interesting reversal which implies, when interpreted similar to the Buddha images, that the veneration of the Buddha image leads to becoming an accomplished Bodhisattva who is able to teach just like the Buddha. This is, of course, the perfect expression of the Bodhisattva ideal, and a more immediate goal than becoming a Buddha. In the case of this particular image, the eventual Buddhahood may have once been represented in the crest of the turban.

Gesturing monks are not restricted to pedestal reliefs. In a longer frieze documented in a photograph preserved at the Warburg Institute, it is a triad of the Buddha flanked by two Bodhisattvas that is introduced by a monk to worshippers (Fig. 17).³³ Here, too, the three central figures could well be images.

However, there are also cases in which such straight interpretation is not possible. In the lower frieze of a palace type stele³⁴ found at Muhammad Nari the Seven Buddhas and Maitreya are depicted (Fig. 18).³⁵ They are flanked by worshippers, and if we take a closer look, we see that the first Buddha in the row is directed towards the male worshippers to the left of him, and also his hand gesture seems to be directed there (Fig. 19). On the opposite side of the group, we have a monk introducing worshippers in a now familiar way to a couple of lay followers (Fig. 20). As

³³ The origin and present location of this relief is not known to me.

³⁴ For a typology of such steles see Harrison and Luczanits 2012: 88–106.

³⁵ Archival photos: Asian Art Museum, Collection of South, Southeast and Central Asian Art, Berlin; British Library (<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/photocoll/s/019pho000001003-u01099000.html>). Among others published in: Cole 1883: pl. 1 (sketch); Cole 1885: pl. 1; Burgess 1897: pl. 112; Foucher 1905: 193, fig. 77; Foucher 1917: pl. xxvi, 1; Grünwedel (1920: fig. 63, tracing); Marshall 1960b: fig. 123; Miyaji 1985b: pl. IX, 2; Paul 1986: 171, no. 1134; Kurita 1988, 2003a: [I] pl. 397; Rhi 1991: pl. 45; Bhattacharyya 2002: no. 340.



Figure 19: Buddha Vipasyin directed towards a group of worshippers; detail of Fig. 18; photo C. Luczanits 2009 (D5713).

Figure 20: Maitreya directed towards a monk guiding a worshipping couple; detail of Fig. 18; photo C. Luczanits 2009 (D5715).

the Buddha on the left beginning the row, Maitreya is directed towards the monk and the worshippers, but the monk gestures towards Maitreya, and looks towards the couple depicted to his side. Obviously, here the explanations offered so far are not sufficient any more.

The stele in question is clearly divided into two areas, the palace type frame above occupied by numerous figures of different sizes and presided by a large Buddha, and the row of seven Buddhas underneath. As Paul Harrison and I have worked out, such complex steles are most likely dedicated to different variants of a Buddhafield, a realm created by a Buddha for the benefit of sentient beings.



Figure 21: A Buddha pointing out a Buddha field to a worshipping monk, detail of Fig. 22; photo C. Luczanits 2007 (D5796).

Different Worlds

A pointing gesture with the palm towards the central image can also be considered decisive for clarifying that some of these complex steles are representations of a different world, a Buddha-field, but now the pointing person is a Buddha (Fig. 21).

In lotus pond type steles, such as the most famous one from Muhammad Nari now in the Lahore Museum (Fig. 22), this display or revelation motif is a crucial element insofar, as it marks the difference between two worlds explicitly. In a majority of the examples of this type, somewhere in the upper right-hand region of the stele, we find a small narrative scene, showing a Buddha in conversation with a monk in an attitude of reverence.³⁶ This Buddha gestures towards the larger Buddha in the centre of the stele, revealing him and his entourage to the monk, and at the same time indicating to us a qualitative distinction between the revealing Buddha and the main one.

There can be no doubt that these two Buddha representations are an expression of two different qualities of buddhahood, that of a *nirmāṇakāya* Buddha active in this world, and that of a more exalted Buddha-manifestation beyond our common world, whether one chooses to call it *saṃbhogakāya* or something else. The difference between the two worlds is also qualitatively expressed, with the revealing Buddha seated in the wilderness, and the central one on a large miraculous lotus blossom. In fact, with the exception of the wilderness scene, all elements in the main field of the stele are borne by lotuses.³⁷

³⁶ For a listing with description of such steles see Harrison and Luczanits 2012: 88–96.

³⁷ In another case, the revealing Buddha is entirely separated from the main one, just as other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on his level, all of which likely preside their own miraculous realms (see Harrison and Luczanits 2012: fig. 9).

Palace type steles do not have such a revelation scene, but the fact that in the bottom row of the palace type stele also from Muhammad Nari (Fig. 18), the two outer figures of the row of past and future Buddhas are shown in communication with the monk and worshippers flanking them reflects the emphasis on the miraculous nature of the depicted. In addition, the worldly manifestation of Buddhahood, the *nirmāṇakāya*, is included in palace type steles through the incorporation of key scenes of the life of the Buddha, such as the Great Departure from the palace depicted in the gable above the Buddha image. Palace type steles thus emphasize the display character of this life as it occurs in more developed Mahāyāna thinking. As such, the interaction of the Buddha and Maitreya with the flanking figures in the bottom field of the stele makes the worshippers participate in the wondrous world of the Buddha depicted here. In other words, on the behalf of the Buddha above, the images of the Seven Buddhas of the Past and Maitreya become alive and begin to interact with the worshippers.



Figure 22: Lotus pond type Buddhafield stele from Muhammad Nari; light grey schist; 119 x 97 x 17.8 cm; Lahore Museum, Inv. no. G 155 (old 1135, I-255); photo C. Luczanits 2009 (D8531).

Buddha Beyond

To me, thus, the figuration of the Gandharan cult images surveyed conveys an understanding of the main image that is far from a simple depiction of a well known historical personage of the past. That personage, Buddha Śākyamuni, was turning the wheel of the Buddhist teaching³⁸ and roaring the lion's roar to expel fear,³⁹ as he is represented and described on the unsuccessful first Buddha depiction preserved on a token from Tilya Tepe dating around the turn of the era.⁴⁰ Instead, the earliest inscribed and dated Mathura School Buddha image was complementing or replacing an aniconic representation, a "walking path" (*caṃkrama*) that served as marker of a place where the Buddha walked.⁴¹

³⁸ An aged naked wheel turning figure with the inscription *dharmacakrapravartako* – "he who turns the wheel of the dharma."

³⁹ Lion with *nandipāda/nandyavarta* and the inscription *siho vigatabhayo* – "the lion that expelled fear" = Śākyasiṃha.

⁴⁰ For illustrations see, for example, Cambon *et al.* 2007: fig. 119; and Tanabe 2008: figs. 1 and 2.

⁴¹ As Härtel 1985: p. 677, notes in another context: "The inscription of the year 2 says clearly and quite plainly that the nun Buddhāmītra [...] sets up [this image of] Bodhisatva at the promenade of the Lord Buddha [bhagavato Buddhāsa caṃkame]." This is the image of Allahabad Museum, AM69, from Kauśambi published in Chandra 1970: no. 85.

Thus the image replaces a symbolic representation of his former presence, as can also be demonstrated by a drawing of a now lost Amaravati relief recorded in 1810.⁴² In this representation, a seated Buddha image flanked by fly-whisk bearers is placed in front of what probably depicts the decorated seat on which the Buddha once sat. Such obvious meta-images are rare in early South Asian art, but the Gandharan cult images I have examined in terms of their figuration in this article indicate, that they are more frequent than previously thought, with the relief that triggered this research only one of a variety of examples.

More importantly, when considered together with their pedestal reliefs the main images acquire a strong sense of remoteness. A clear temporal relation between the main figures of a cult image also implies a divergence in accessibility, and stresses that the Buddha on the pedestal is beyond our time and world. He or his qualities can best be reached through the veneration of a more immediate, accessible representative of the Buddhist teaching, such as the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Both the Buddha and the Bodhisattva in the pedestal is occasionally marked as an image rather than a Buddha or Bodhisattva active at a particular time and place. Such meta-images only occur in the latest phase of stone sculptures in Gandhara and the main image is invariably shown with the teaching gesture.

Rhetorical relations between the worshippers on the pedestal and the main image also only occur in this latest period and with the same types of images. These representations communicate, that the main image itself is considered accessible in his own world. Rhetorical relations may also be the result of the emergence of the concept of *darśan*, of seeing and being seen by the divine, within the Gandharan Buddhist context.

Only recently, fragmentary texts from Gandhara in the local language and Kharoṣṭhī script and dated by C14 analysis to the second century CE have proven that the region was familiar with emerging Mahāyāna ideas. Concerning art, triadic compositions such as the one from Peshawar (Fig. 2) have been identified as dependent on Mahāyāna ideas,⁴³ but both, the representations of Maitreya and the present study make me wonder if the archaeological and visual evidence do not provide a much broader evidence for reflections on the gradual emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

I think they do, albeit in a form that is hardly evident in the main images themselves, but only if one considers the entire composition of a cult image, its usage and ideally also its context. Seen in this light, it does not surprise anymore that the Buddha represented on the coins of Kaniṣka is modelled after the carved Buddha image, as Joe Cribb has proposed.⁴⁴ And this carved image itself may from the very beginning have been understood as an emblematic image of a Buddha beyond our time and space, just as the slightly earlier emblematic representation of the Sanchi Stupa 1 North Gate.⁴⁵ It is quite plausible, that a germ of Mahāyāna Buddhism is already visible in this depiction.

⁴² See British Library, Drawing of a rectangular slab showing devotees venerating an image placed on a tree altar [WD1061, folio 25]; <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/amaravati/singleframe.html>.

⁴³ See in particular Rhi 2006a.

⁴⁴ See the latest reinforcement of that theory in Cribb 1999.

⁴⁵ For images see, for example, AIIIS photo archive <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aais/> image identification number 40168; Scanlon 1996: fig. 4.

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