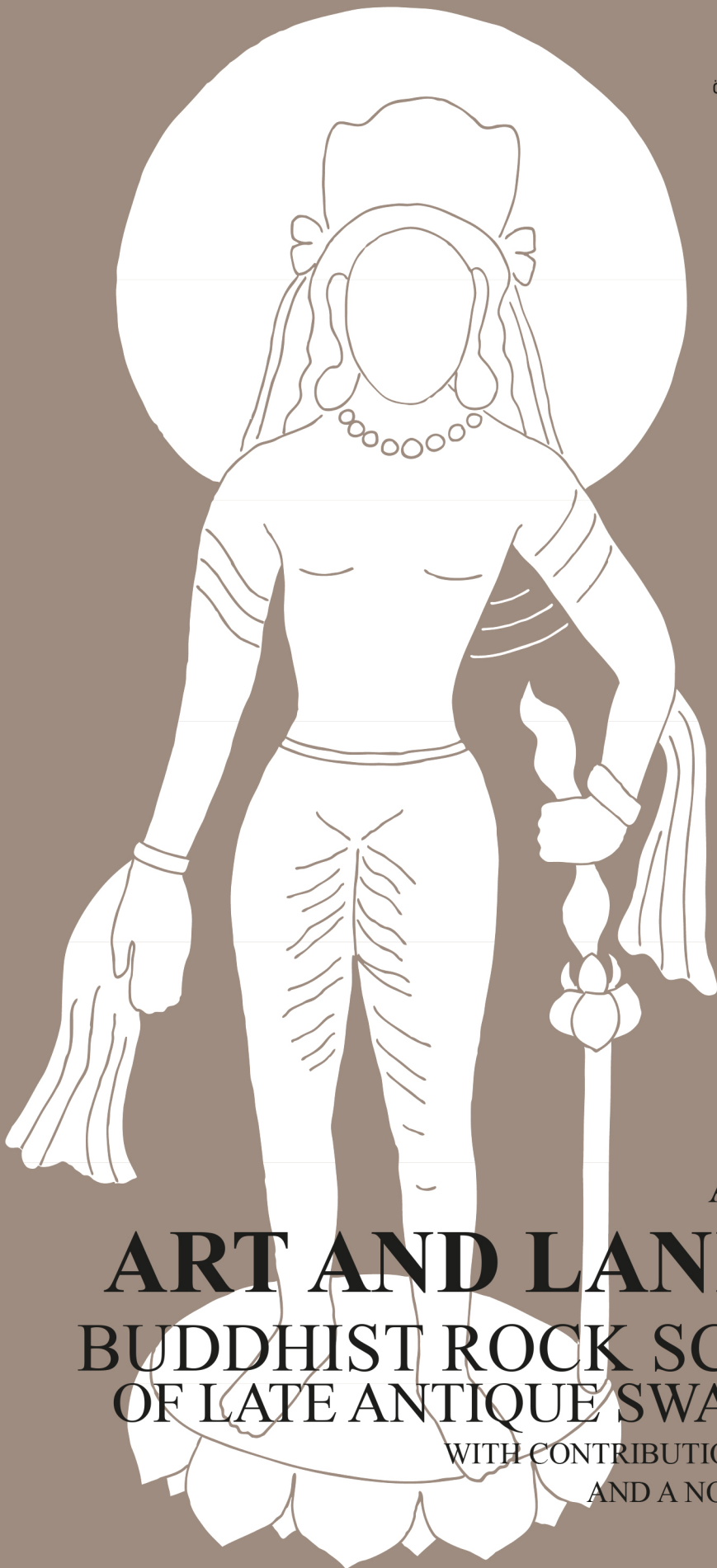


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**OAW**



**ANNA FILIGENZI**

**ART AND LANDSCAPE**  
**BUDDHIST ROCK SCULPTURES**  
**OF LATE ANTIQUE SWAT/UDDIYĀNA**

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY LUCA M. OLIVIERI  
AND A NOTE BY PETER ROCKWELL

Anna Filigenzi

ART AND LANDSCAPE

Buddhist Rock Sculptures of Late Antique Swat/Uḍḍiyāna

ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN  
PHILOSOPHISCH-HISTORISCHE KLASSE  
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## FOREWORD

The project that has given birth to this long-awaited volume has its roots in the very beginning of the Italian activity in Swat. The first rock reliefs, not counting those introduced by Sir Aurel Stein, were in fact published in 1958 by Giuseppe Tucci in his seminal Preliminary Report on an Archaeological Survey in Swat which presented to the scholarly community the results of his survey of 1955.

Belonging to a late chronological horizon close to that of Padmasambhava, these Buddhist sculptures were no doubt one of the reasons that led to IsMEO's decision to invest efforts and resources in Swat.

The dates of arrival in the IsMEO photographic archive of images of rock reliefs from Swat gives a clear idea of how since 1955 more than one generation of scholars has shown an interest in this class of artefacts, if only in the shape of photographs and a few notes on the discovery of new reliefs: from the 1950s to the 1980s, new records were accumulated by Domenico Faccenna, Francesca Bonardi, Maurizio Taddei, Alfredo Vallazza, Pietro Guj, Enrico Cimmino, Umberto Scerrato, Francesco Noci and Pierfrancesco Callieri. In 1987, in his capacity as director of the IsMEO Italian Archaeological Mission, Domenico Faccenna set up a comprehensive project to survey and study these rock reliefs, entrusting its execution to Anna Filigenzi and Luca Maria Olivieri, who had both recently joined the Mission. Anna Filigenzi had been one of the most brilliant students of Maurizio Taddei at the Oriental University of Naples, while Luca Maria Olivieri was a graduate of the Department of Historical, Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences of the University of Rome La Sapienza. The choice was intended to provide the study with a global approach in which the record of the topographical context was accorded equal importance with the iconographic interpretation of the reliefs.

Since 1987 the systematic activity of surveying and recording carried out by Luca Maria Olivieri has made considerable progress. Along with the main groups of reliefs already known, which were surveyed again using a new and more thorough methodological approach, further complexes as well as isolated reliefs were identified and surveyed, and the area of research was extended to new areas adjoining Swat, in particular Puran and Buner. The study of the topographical distribution of the reliefs has proved to be of the greatest interest, suggesting new functional interpretations.

Most of the activity of survey and recording was completed in a relatively short space of time, as it was merged with that undertaken for the project of the Archaeological Map of Swat. The long hiatus between that period and this publication is due not only to the political events which have affected the recent history of Swat but also to the reasons that Anna Filigenzi describes so effectively in her Preface and Introduction and which allowed her to resist with incredible tenacity the continual requests from her Italian and foreign colleagues to put the final results of her research at disposal of the scholarly community, given that various other publications on the same subject had started to appear.

Now even Anna Filigenzi has concluded that the time is ripe for this publication, and we can be sure that every possible attempt at interpreting this complex repertory of elegant yet enigmatic figures has been made, yielding a satisfactory understanding of the complex codes of this fascinating visual language.

The publication came about as part of a stand-alone research project funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF Project no. P 21902) that at Anna Filigenzi's request was affiliated to the Numismatic Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (from 2013 the Working Group on Numismatics of the Documenta Antiqua department at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Culture). Anna Filigenzi's expertise has constituted a welcome addition to the research programme of the Numismatic Commission, particularly as one of the special focuses of the numismatic research undertaken by the Commission has long concentrated on the coinage of the so-called Iranian Huns in Bactria and India. It has provided the unique opportunity of subjecting the archaeological finds made by the Italian expeditions in Swat to a comparative analysis with the numismatic findings. This scholarly discourse has proved to be exceptionally fruitful and has led to completely new perspectives for

## Foreword

both groups of scholars. In this connection it should not go unmentioned that we were here reviving a tradition that goes back to 1976, when Domenico Faccenna asked Robert Göbl to publish the coins found during his excavations in Butkara I.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that this fruitful cooperation and interdisciplinary collaboration can also be continued in the future.

Pierfrancesco Callieri

Michael Alram

## PREFACE

The work presented here essentially draws on the documentation collected over the years by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan of the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient (IsIAO, formerly IsMEO, Italian Institute for Middle and Far East). In addition to specific research projects, the Mission has also always carried on a constant activity of territorial survey in Swat, where it is based. It thus sometimes happens that randomly collected data merge little by little into the Archaeological Map of Swat and become significant clusters. This is the case with the rock sculptures analysed in this work.

In 1987, Domenico Faccenna – at that time Director of the Mission – entrusted Luca M. Olivieri and me with the comprehensive survey of these monuments, convinced of its potential bearing on the cultural history of the region. After an initial survey carried out by Olivieri and me that same year Olivieri made other survey campaigns in the following years. He was always accompanied by our Pakistani collaborators, who were as persevering as he in walking throughout the country and sifting evidence and information. These surveys completed the documentation previously available and at the same time provided a more accurate mapping of the sculptures.

The analytical study, topographic positioning, and a partial graphic reconstruction of the sculptures are finally presented here as a systematic and comprehensive work. The volume is divided in two parts. The first is dedicated to the iconographic exegesis of the sculptures, their particular features, geographical context and cultural relevance, with the inclusion of a Graphic Summary and a note on the technique. The second consists of the analytical catalogue, which groups the sculptures according to topographic criteria. These criteria are illustrated by specific entries at the beginning of each grouping.

In order to facilitate consultation, the illustrative apparatus has been divided in three parts, each one with its own independent numeration. Comparative materials are inserted into Part I (Analytical Study) and simply referred to in the text as “Fig. \*”. The photographic documentation of the rock sculptures is assembled in a specific section in Part II (The Corpus of the Sculptures) and referred to in the text as “II: Fig. \*”. The drawings, which have been assembled in Appendix I (Graphic Summary), are grouped according to a categorisation based on iconographic types and are referred to in the text as “GS \*”.

The long delay in the publication of this volume is solely my responsibility, and the reasons for this are partly subjective, partly objective. The first objective reason is the elusiveness of the iconographic details. Damages inflicted by the natural process of erosion and repatination as well as by iconoclastic disfigurement have severely reduced the legibility of the reliefs. Nevertheless, more consequential has been my initial inability to detect, in the seeming monotony of subjects and lack of spatial rules, the sense and coherence of this “strange” artistic phenomenon.

My study thus started with the objective of realising a “mere” catalogue of the sculptures. At the time I considered this a quite reasonable undertaking, but now I recognise my miscalculation. Compiling a catalogue requires a thorough familiarity with the subject matter, which I was far from possessing. Nor can I pretend now to present this work as complete and conclusive. Nevertheless, the descriptions are quite different today than what I would have considered correct and exhaustive in the past. The analytical study of the subjects, with their iconographic and stylistic details (often retrieved with the help of cross-comparisons between specimens with different degrees of legibility, or between the rock sculptures and other, related classes of materials), and their spatial and topographic distribution, have radically changed my initial perceptions and re-directed the research towards new and more complex goals. Over the course of the years some results concerning specific aspects have been published. Revised and enlarged, they are now incorporated into this work, whose completion is the result of support provided by a dedicated research project on the cultural history of Uḍḍiyāna.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Namely, the FWF Stand-alone Project P 21902 “The cultural history of Uddiyana 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century CE”, hosted by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for the Study of Ancient Culture, Division Documenta Antiqua.

## Preface

During these years I have accumulated many debts of gratitude that I can repay only with my sincere thanks. Let me start with Luca Maria Olivieri, who demonstrated generous confidence and friendship by accepting such a slow elaboration of the data provided by his surveys. Thanks to Peter Rockwell for his prompt response to my request for a technical opinion, something that nobody else could have provided with the same competence and sensibility. Thanks to Pierfrancesco Callieri and Giovanni Verardi, who, though pressed by innumerable other commitments and tasks, gave me the support of their invaluable advice. From Valeria Benedetti, the true “living archive” of our archaeological Missions, I received the usual indispensable collaboration in the retrieval of the relevant documentation. Special thanks go to our Pakistani collaborators and friends, in particular Dowar Khan, Akhtar Manir and the late Fazal Wahid, who, besides taking part in the surveys, constantly and actively collected essential information for us.

Thanks to the colleagues of the Italian Archaeological Mission Matteo De Chiara, Massimo Vidale, Piero Spagnesi, who provided additional information. Thanks to Harald Hauptmann, Martin Bemmann and John Falconer, who actively contributed to the photographic documentation.

Thanks to Gérard Fussman, whose invaluable scientific advice and support accompanied my first steps in this research. Thanks to Deborah Klimburg-Salter and Michael Alram, who gave me the opportunity of expanding my interests and refining my research tools. Thanks to my dear friends Erika Forte, Fabrizio Sinisi, Jürgen Schörflinger and Sara Marsano, and to my husband, Bernardo Velletri, for their help, advice and support.

Lastly, my thoughts go to two people who have since passed away: Domenico Faccenna, who has inspired this work, and Maurizio Taddei, who welcomed and encouraged my first “non-traditional” interpretations. Both awaited the publication of this work with unflagging patience, and to both I owe more than I could now express in words. I would like to say “thank you” to them, but I cannot. I can only say to those who now read these pages that my gratitude to these wonderful teachers (and great human beings) is sincere and unchanging, and that I feel honoured to have had them in my life.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AMSV:	Archaeological Map of the Swat Valley
AMSV no.:	number attributed to each site in the AMSV Sites Gazetteer (after 2000)
C:	carving
CNR:	National Research Council (Italy)
DAFA:	Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan
DOAM:	Department of Archaeology and Museums, Ministry of Culture, Government of Pakistan
GSP:	General Survey of Pakistan
Inv. Rep.:	Inventory Repertory number (since 1987)
IsIAO:	Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient
IsMEO:	Italian Institute for Middle and Far East
LM:	Lahore Museum
MAI:	Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, Saidu Sharif, Swat
MAI Inv. no.:	MAI Inventory number (until 1987)
MBBCCAA:	Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Assets (Italy)
MNAOR:	National Museum of Oriental Art “Giuseppe Tucci”, Rome.
<i>p.:</i>	<i>paridhāna</i>
PM:	Peshawar University Archaeological Museum
<i>ap.:</i>	<i>ardhaparyāṅkāśana</i>
S:	stela
SM:	Swat Archaeological Museum, Saidu Sharif



PART I  
ANALYTICAL STUDY



## INTRODUCTION

The landscape of Swat still bears conspicuous traces of its Buddhist past, particularly striking beyond the west bank of the Swat River. The profusion and splendour of monuments, which one can still easily imagine based on the ruins, and the luxuriant beauty of the surrounding scenery provide eloquent evidence of the fascination ancient Uḍḍiyāna held all over the ancient Buddhist world.

As a matter of fact, Uḍḍiyāna long remained – even after the advent of Islam – a place of pilgrimage, as attested to as late as the thirteenth century by the direct testimony of Tibetan pilgrims (Botto 1959: 266; Tucci 1971 [1940]; 1977: 69-70). As for the physical correspondence of Uḍḍiyāna to some modern geographic entity, different hypotheses have been put forward (Donaldson 2001: 8 ff.). Among these, mention must be made of the idea of Benoytosh Bhattacharyya (1924: XXXII), who identifies the ancient Uḍḍiyāna with the western part of Assam. However, most of the contrasting opinions are mainly based on textual evidence and do not take into account the archaeological sources, which instead clearly lead to the identification of Uḍḍiyāna with modern-day Swat or, possibly, with a region centred on modern-day Swat but stretching over a larger area.

From an archaeological point of view, Swat is one of the best-known regions of the Indian subcontinent. Systematic archaeological investigations have been carried out there since 1956 by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan (MAI) of the IsMEO/IsIAO in close collaboration with the Department of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Pakistan (DOAM).<sup>2</sup> A constant and capillary activity of archaeological surveys and excavations is also being carried out by teams from the DOAM and the University of Peshawar.

As consistently attested to by these thorough territorial investigations, dramatic changes seem to have affected the region sometime between the sixth and seventh centuries. The network of Buddhist settlements – so dense in the early centuries CE – fell into decline, accompanied by a general decay of the social, economic and territorial system supporting it. Thus the archaeological record seems to perfectly match the scanty textual sources, mainly represented by the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims who travelled thorough the region. The number and wealth of the sacred areas, still extolled by Songyun in 520 CE, had been considerably diminished by the time of Xuanzang, who in 620 not only notes the state of decay and abandonment of the monasteries but also criticises the conduct of the monks as being no longer congruent with the Buddhist doctrine.

This evidence apparently contradicts the persistent fame of Uḍḍiyāna as a source of teachings and teachers for Tibetan Buddhism and Bön. These teachers include revered personalities such as Padmasambhava (to whom the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet is traditionally attributed), his legendary predecessor Garab Dorje, and other masters coming from Gilgit – a region lying very near to Upper Swat – who are credited with having contributed greatly to the transformation of the primitive Tibetan Bön into a codified system (Tucci 1958: 282; Hoffmann 1969). If that is the case, then we may infer that Uḍḍiyāna must have also exercised a decisive influence on the profuse artistic and cultural blossoms that grew out of this. However, such sweeping doctrinal and artistic developments as well as great masters, which were destined to leave the indelible stamp of the Vajrayāna on Buddhism, apparently flowered amid melancholy ruins, leaving only faint traces of their existence in their homeland.

<sup>2</sup> This institution, the first and most long-standing Italian archaeological mission outside the Mediterranean, was founded by Giuseppe Tucci, who was personally involved through what may be considered not only the epilogue to his Himalayan expeditions, but also his last great Asian exploration. I refer the reader to *East and West* 2006 (a special issue celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the MAI) for a summary of the activities and related bibliography. As for the IsIAO, it was closed in November 2011 by legislative decree as part of a drastic spending review process.

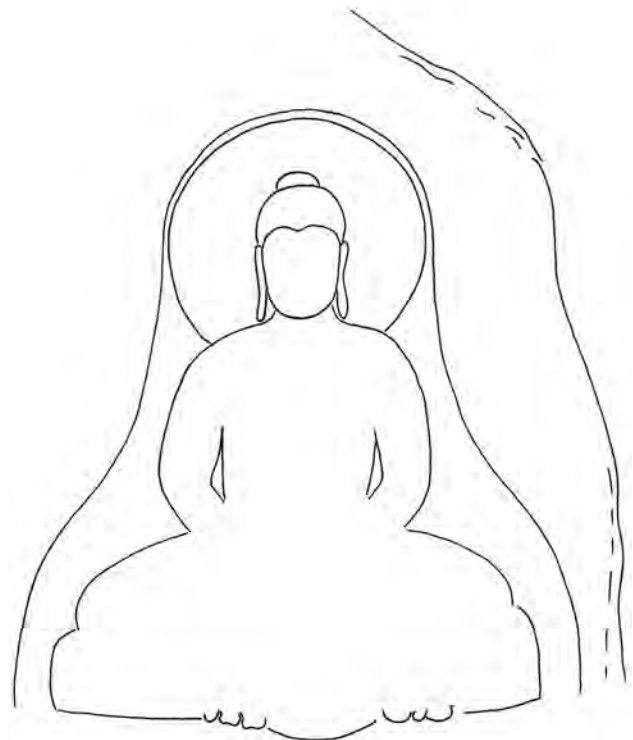
These two seemingly irreconcilable pictures – the gloomy and the glorious – warn us against dangerous forms of reductionism. Reality might be more complex than we can imagine and the links between religious/artistic culture and political-economic conditions might have been rather non-linear in ancient Swat.

It happens sometimes that uneven historical documentation leads to the emphasis of cultural phenomena at the expenses of others that, due to a series of circumstances, stand in the background. A case in point is the disparity between Kashmir and Swat/Uḍḍiyāna. The prestigious testimony of the *Rājatarāṅginī* on one hand and the well-documented influence of Kashmiri art and philosophy on the Second Diffusion of Buddhism on the other have produced a sort of centripetal trend that attempts to trace back to Kashmir the original input for any distinguished artistic production of the late antique period in the north-west regions of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, because of the blurred picture produced by contradictory archaeological data and scarce textual sources, the late antique Uḍḍiyāna remained in a dark corner of the history, and the original Holy Land celebrated in Tibetan sources was confined to the realm of legends.

Among these apparent anomalies a special place is occupied by the Buddhist rock sculptures that flourished in Swat in the seventh to eighth centuries. In a period when the ancient splendour was already on the wane before becoming irrevocably overshadowed by Islam, Buddha and bodhisattva figures started populating numerous paths in the form of carved reliefs on rock walls, isolated boulders and stelae set in the ground (Figs. 1-2).<sup>4</sup> Due to the apparently unfavourable conditions, this artistic phenomenon has long remained almost ignored or underestimated, and in any case regarded as having little artistic value and vague theoretical foundations.



**Fig. 1** – Relief on rock wall (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 36, pl. 10.3; modified by the author)



**Fig. 2** – Relief on stela (drawing by the author)

<sup>3</sup> An exemplary case of this “Kashmiri overflowing” is represented by the attribution to Kashmir of a large group of bronze sculptures that started appearing in the antique market from the mid-twentieth century (see Chap. 3, fn. 4). Most of them, and especially the earliest ones, can now be safely attributed to the area of Swat/Gilgit.

<sup>4</sup> In many cases the provenance of the stelae is unknown, either because there is no record of the exact site of the find, or because they were found lying on the ground, indicating they were removed – and theoretically a considerable distance – from their original setting.

Nevertheless, an integrated territorial analysis, to the extent that circumstances in Swat have allowed, clearly shows that much can be hidden in the folds of macroscopic evidence. New discoveries prompt new approaches, and new approaches lead to unexpected discoveries. We now have to rethink all of the sources at our disposal, trying to verify whether and to what degree they fail to reveal certain significant changes that may have accompanied or followed the “crisis” of Uḍḍiyāna and its Buddhist establishment. In this process, the testimony of the rock sculpture is far more valuable than we used to believe, since it partly fills a void in the history of late antiquity and provides further evidence for the existence in this period of a vital, polycentric cultural world stretching across the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya region.

Thus, a work which had started as a census of a corpus of sculptures progressively took a different direction, which was somehow dictated by the material evidence itself. As texts are not simply a combination of words, similarly visual art is not a mere matter of figures. In the same way as texts, “figures” in any given domain can only be interpreted in relation to each other, which means that they cannot be read and understood out of context, without a comparative knowledge and philological background. Besides, we cannot work on them without assuming that they respond to a conventionalised system of communication, which is, like all kinds of meaning systems, independent and relational at the same time. They follow their own specialised code and set of rules, which depend on the nature and modality of the medium, and yet that code is intricately related to others, either derived from heuristic approaches or unconscious stereotypes, but all relevant to the same cultural reality.

Moreover, visual communication is not, as it seems to be often believed, a mere translation in visual terms of written sources but rather, like written sources, a translation of concepts that belong to specific cultural contexts. This is even truer for formative stages of reference models, as our sculptures appear to be. Then, in general, texts and iconography can coincide, but this happens quite seldom. More often, they are simply in accordance with each other, in spirit rather than in forms. Even normative literature can be deceptive if taken as absolute value, since the simplest survey shows how many variants and discordances can exist, even in the same context, between abstract prescriptions and material realisations of artworks.

In addition, very often in the history of Indian subcontinent material evidence represents the only vestige of a rich cultural past, as in the case of our corpus of sculptures. However, any source can be deceptive, and without cross-comparisons with other sources, of similar and different nature, the risk increases.

For all these reasons, a descriptive catalogue of little-known sculptures from a little-known period could not prescind from a broader research focus on their theoretical, religious, social and aesthetic values. Thus, the work presented here is an attempt towards an inclusive interpretation of artworks still to be properly framed in the flow of history and reconnected with their cultural universe, a goal that can only be accomplished through collective work and a multidisciplinary approach.

Nevertheless, for the time being we can try at least to bring these sculptures more sharply into focus. Less alluring than the “Hellenised” works of the past, and overshadowed by the sumptuous art that the later Buddhist revival produced elsewhere, they still represent a document of great historical significance exactly for their being in a grey area, whereby we can observe a process that, besides transforming and replacing the prestigious artistic tradition of the past, also announces the forthcoming pan-Himalayan vocabulary.

## CHAPTER 1: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

### 1.1 – The distinctiveness of the Buddhist rock sculptures of Swat

Rock art in general poses serious problems regarding analytical procedures and data interpretation. Given the particular placing of the carvings or petroglyphs, showing no physical correlation with other artefacts, we are unable to relate them – at least not directly – to any archaeological context which might serve as a basis for a reliable chronology.

The Buddhist rock sculpture of Swat is not an exception in this regard. Moreover, some unusual stylistic and iconographic features make its iconographic code even more difficult to decipher, and the lack of dedicatory inscriptions or of donors' figures means we have none of the palaeographic data or evidence of function that so often provide useful clues for an art historic interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

However, the stringent consistency in the formal characteristics of the sculptures points to a circumscribed time span and cultural horizon that – with a fair degree of certainty – can be roughly dated between the seventh and eighth centuries CE. This time frame is suggested by the general tone, which already looks forward to that form of Buddhism known as “northern”, and comparison with other serial productions (in particular votive bronzes and terracottas), which reveals a marked affinity with the rock sculptures of Swat in terms of style, iconography and area of provenance. Moreover, their distribution over a vast area including Swat and, somewhat more sparsely, neighbouring areas such as Dir, Puran and Buner,<sup>2</sup> confirms that their occurrence was not episodic or sporadic but represented an autonomous, coherent artistic current advancing or consolidating ideas that were gaining ground or already well established in the religious culture of the time.

Generally speaking, the bond between these sculptures and the formal rules of the Gandharan artistic culture, which had dominated this area for centuries, appears quite weak; the Gupta art language seems to have made a larger contribution.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Indic world may well have provided various motives that influenced how the divine was conceived and represented. Be that as it may, the result as a whole can be seen as a part of a course of new formal patterns of Buddhist art that would be amply developed in the Himalayan regions, and which we see already emerging – more explicitly than in the Swat rock sculptures<sup>4</sup> – in the bronze and terracotta productions that are certainly the closest to the Swat sculptures of all artistic output.

Given the elusive nature of the historical framework, however, our knowledge about the religious and artistic culture to which the rock sculptures of Swat seem to be related is far from being complete. Further difficulties are posed by certain baffling features of the sculptures that nonetheless represent their most distinctive and consistently original elements.

At first glance, the rock sculptures very closely resemble certain examples of popular religious objects, in particular those with an apotropaic purpose.<sup>5</sup> This impression is created initially by the repetitiveness of sub-

<sup>1</sup> On this aspect see Chap. 3.2.

<sup>2</sup> For Dir see Dani (1968-69a) and Ashraf Khan (1994); for Puran and Buner see Callieri (1985) and Olivieri (1994). However, as for Dir see the Introduction to Part II, fn. 7.

<sup>3</sup> I use the term Gupta for the sake of convenience, although as it is general used it wrongly includes periods and areas that did not belong to the Gupta Empire. Moreover, we now have sufficient evidence to recognise the specific identity of the artistic trends that developed in the post-Kushan period in the north-west region of the subcontinent. A praiseworthy step in this direction is the recent coinage “Gandhāra-Nāgara” for the temple architecture along the Indus (Meister 1997-98).

<sup>4</sup> On the technical and ideological reasons leading to a certain simplification of stylistic and iconographic language in the rock sculpture repertory, see below, Chap. 3.2.

<sup>5</sup> As an exemplary case, mention could be made of the aediculae containing paintings of sacred subjects that are quite common along the roads of central and southern Italy, particularly at crossroads or at the beginning or end of a delimited territory.

jects and certain – apparently incongruous – stylistic characteristics that may appear as resulting from clumsy craftsmanship or disordered, progressive juxtapositions of figures.

As a more comprehensive picture of the sculptures emerges, however, certain recurrent elements become apparent – and in this regard the features that are absent are at least as significant as those present – as well as a studied choice of stylistic and iconographic details. Distinct characteristics materialise, and with them the sense of a visual strategy for achieving a calculated effect.

As we shall see, the range of subjects, the topographic distribution of the sculptures and their relationship with the rocks that physically contain them as well as with the surrounding landscape all combine to evoke not an unpremeditated, random proliferation, but rather a precise inspirational motive supported by a powerful artistic and conceptual plan. Any interpretation of the sculptures as a whole, or even as individual pieces, depends entirely on precise theoretical premises, since their forms, both in terms of stylistic rendering and choice of subjects, derive from canons that are not only aesthetic but also, and indeed above all, ideological.

### 1.2 – The subjects

In the course of the various surveys, nearly two hundred sculptures have been documented in Swat (see Maps 1, 2). There may be some lacunae – pieces that have escaped survey or been lost – but taken together, the objects allow us to piece together a reliable picture of rock art based in part on the calculation of probabilities. In fact, the dispersal and numerical occurrence of the various subjects – consistent throughout the area concerned – are sufficiently representative to give substantial reference points for an overall interpretation.



**Figs. 3a,b** – Tārā (courtesy MNAOR, Inv. 5211)

The first general conclusion that can be drawn is that the whole set of sculptures forms an all-male pantheon. It is certainly significant that the presence of female divinities is extremely rare among the coeval Buddhist bronzes as well. Nevertheless, distinctive iconographic types of Buddhist goddesses certainly existed in Swat at the time, as demonstrated by the general stylistic and iconographic compliance of some bronze models (Figs. 3 a, b) with the rock sculptures.<sup>6</sup> In addition, mention must be made of the fact that Swat/Uḍḍiyāna is considered one of the possible homelands of Tārā (Sinha 1971: 50).

With regard to frequency, the dominant figure is Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi. He is usually shown seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*<sup>7</sup> in a pensive pose. He is less frequently depicted standing (S137; II: Fig. 138; GS 17), generally on stelae or less often in composite scenes.

The repetition of this subject may possibly be due to the role of patron of the region that the bodhisattva could have assumed at some point. This would have won him the particular veneration of the local population (Tucci 1958: 322). However, the general context and, even more importantly, certain details of the iconography suggest that different reasons may lie behind the great popularity of Padmapāṇi or – to be more precise – that some specific functions of the bodhisattva could forge special ties with the land (see Chap. 4).

Rather less frequently we find other bodhisattva figures; in some cases they are clearly identifiable by virtue of specific and readily recognisable attributes, while in others they can only be generically linked with a particular typology that includes a range of possible identifications while excluding others. Although secondary to Padmapāṇi in terms of numerical occurrence, these cases are even more significant from an iconographic point of view since they reflect the most distinctive aspects of this particular artistic current.

It is, however, precisely this peculiarity – which has no comparable counterpart in any other environment, despite geographical and chronological proximity – that makes a correct identification particularly challenging. The greatest difficulties are raised by the iconographic types marked by common features despite their evident diversity. The bad condition of most of the sculptures makes it even harder to identify the individual figures. In fact, while some of these types show characteristic features revealing a distinct physiognomy, vague as it may remain, there are others that have only the slightest of variations to distinguish them one from the other. In these cases identification is far from certain, although, as has been mentioned, the possibilities remain limited.

An exemplary case here is offered by the figure of Maitreya, who appears in a series of iconographic variants, some readily recognisable given the singularity of their intrinsic characteristics, others only identifiable thanks to the adventitious conservation of significant details. In general it is the standing Maitreya images that display the most marked individual features. Whether isolated or included in complex compositions, they can often be identified with certainty thanks to particular attributes: the *kamaṇḍalu* (or *kalaśa* of various forms) of the earlier tradition, which may be associated with the rosary or the ascetic's staff, the latter belonging to a newly devised iconographic model often also characterised by the monastic cloth. Even more peculiar and unmistakable is the four-armed Maitreya, in which a book is added to the above-mentioned attributes. In this case the images of Maitreya appear radically remodelled to give expression to the current religious culture, stressing the characteristics of the bodhisattva-ascetic, legitimate successor to the Buddha Śākyamuni and, as such, guardian, guarantor and propagator of *dharma*.<sup>8</sup>

It is far more difficult to recognise the figure of Maitreya in the seated version, unless it retains some identifying detail, such as the *kamaṇḍalu*. In cases of poor preservation the difficulty arises over the fact that the

<sup>6</sup> The rare occurrence of female figures in the bronze sculpture was already noticed by Pal (1975: 27), although making inferences from this evidence is not an easy task. For a more detailed comparison between bronze and rock sculpture see below, esp. Chap. 3.2.

<sup>7</sup> On the terms *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* – reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* (the latter cited below) see Chap. 3.4.

<sup>8</sup> This is one of the most complex and innovative creations in the rock sculpture of Swat, with a sound theoretical basis. In particular, the four-armed figure of Maitreya, previously identified by Tucci (1958: 307) as Śiva based on an erroneous interpretation of the attributes, offers considerable food for thought regarding the entire context of the rock sculpture. For a detailed discussion of the subject, see Chap. 5.

form of Maitreya follows the same essential contours as that of Vajrapāṇi.<sup>9</sup> Both, as is borne out by comparison with the bronzes, sit in an evidently codified pose (although no traces of this have been preserved in the literature), which we might for the sake of convenience define as reverse (*vāma*) *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*. Again, the form of the attributes of the two bodhisattvas and the way they are held (respectively the *kamaṇḍalu* or *kalaśa* in various forms and the *vajra*, held on the thigh with the left hand) can assume such similar profiles as to make it impossible to distinguish them should the relief be badly abraded, as indeed is often the case. The presence of Vajrapāṇi in the rock sculpture repertory, although not ascertained among the seated bodhisattva figures, is unmistakably recognisable in certain examples (only stelae): the bodhisattva is portrayed standing, his right hand in *varadamudrā* and his left holding the *vajra*, either elongated and wavy in form or of compound shape, with the lower end resting on a lotus flower beside the bodhisattva (see Chap. 5.3).

Moreover, on the evidence of the bronze production, which in general is much better preserved, we find that another bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, is portrayed seated in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*. Again, however, among the seated bodhisattvas the rock sculptures offer not one example that could be thus identified beyond any doubt. Furthermore, a number of figures – some standing, some seated – holding the attribute of the book (this latter common to both Maitreya and Mañjuśrī) cannot be unequivocally identified, as the preserved elements are insufficient to distinguish among iconographic types that, evidently for some good reason, are shown with very similar physiognomies.

On the other hand, the more traditional Buddhist iconography provided the inspiration for depictions of the Buddha, whether alone or accompanied by two or more bodhisattvas, but in either case showing only rare departures from the schemes typical of the art of Gandhāra. Buddha images are seldom represented, and usually with generic connotations, lacking the typical elements that might allow for identification as specific figures. An exception here is relief C1 (II: Figs. 1a,b; GS 5), where the Buddha is seated on a throne supported by three elephants, of which only the heads and the forelegs are visible. In this figure we may possibly recognise Akṣobhya (see Chap. 3.5). Apart from this case, and a few others such as the reliefs C115 (II: Fig. 115; GS 2) and C92 (II: Figs. 92a,b,c,d), where position and dimensions endow the Buddha image with a particularly significant aspect, we find the Buddha figure occupying an almost marginal role within the broad context of the rock sculptures. This emerges most strikingly in the reliefs including various subjects where, apart from the triads, the Buddha never occupies the compositional centre of the scene.

Also to be noticed is the fact that, differently from the coeval bronzes, the variation of the *mudrās* of the Buddha is quite limited. Rarely represented standing, the Buddha performs in this case the *varadamudrā* with the right hand, while holding a hem of the robe with the left hand: S13 (II: Fig. 11; GS 1); S40 (II: Figs. 42a,b); S75 (?) (II: Fig. 78) and, possibly, S60 (Figs. 60a,b). Noteworthy in this respect, is the fact that Nepali scholars attribute to the combination of these two gestures the specific name of *viśvavyākaraṇamudrā* (Locke 1985: 8; fn. 19; J. Huntington 2009: 86). Although no normative prescriptions are known from textual sources, the character displaying this *mudrā* is identified, in Nepalese popular devotion, as the Buddha Maitreya. One cannot exclude, indeed, that the standing Buddhas of Swat might reflect the same tradition, especially in light of the emphasis laid by the rock sculpture's imagery on some distinctive features of Maitreya's function (see Chap. 5).

Interestingly, depictions of standing Buddhas among the rock sculptures of Swat are restricted to the stelae and never appear on boulders or outcrops. When seated, the Buddha is usually represented in *dhyānimudrā*, with a very few exceptions: in *dharmacakramudrā* in two cases: C50 (II: Fig. 50) and C205 (II: Fig. 151a); in *abhayamudrā* (?) in one case: C24 (II: Figs. 24a,b); possibly in *bhūmisparśamudrā* in one case: C6 (II: Fig. 6). Significantly or not, the *dharmacakramudrā* never occurs in association with the presence of the motif of the deers and wheel on the throne (for this latter see Chap. 3.5).

<sup>9</sup> For the sake of simplicity, reference will be made here mainly to Vajrapāṇi, nevertheless with the implicit assumption that even slight iconographic variations might have held significance in the original context, for instance with regard to a possible embryonic differentiation between Vajrapāṇi and Vajrasattva.

The relatively inconspicuous presence of the Buddha, in contrast with the copiousness of bodhisattva images, seems to suggest that the former had a secondary role in this context. Nevertheless, absence does not always imply that a personage or concept is of minor import, and this is particularly true of sacred art.<sup>10</sup> In rock art the idea of “Buddhahood” constitutes a central value that emerges even in the absence of direct reference, or just lightly sketched in, as in the small Buddha image revealed by the open lotus flower of the Padmapāṇi of Dangram/Garasa (C16; II: Figs. 16a,b; see Chap. 4.3). Here the Buddha seems to have been conceived as an incorporeal presence, implied rather than illustrated. It is symbolised by the monument – indeed, by the sacred area itself and the paths leading to it, which are populated by the images of his intermediaries with the world. And precisely this sparse presence of the Buddha in the figuration seems to enhance the idea of a goal: the physical approach to the monument that symbolically reflects the mental objective of the inner itinerary.<sup>11</sup>

The subjects so far mentioned, whether of frequent or rare occurrence, belong to the standard repertory of rock art. In addition to these, however, we find others that stand out from the overall context on account of their iconographic originality or exceptional frequency.<sup>12</sup>

Very advanced with respect to certain tendencies shown by later Buddhist art is a stela representing a personage dressed as a bodhisattva, seated in *dhyānāsana* on a throne sheltered by a canopy; the character performs the *abhayamudrā* with his right hand whilst his left hand, resting on the lap, holds a flat bowl. He is flanked by two minor figures that are also haloed: one female, the other male (S140; II: Fig. 140; GS 38; see Chap. 6.2). This corresponds with a scheme quite often encountered in bronzes and terracottas but to date unique in rock sculpture. In this stela, as we shall see later in more detail, it is possible to make out the image of a *siddha*, as is suggested not only by comparison with other examples but also, persuasively, by the religious context in which the sculpture is placed.

In this brief survey of themes that, albeit with certain features departing from the current iconographic code, are undoubtedly Buddhist, a number of isolated examples of uncertain affiliation must still be mentioned.

Among the subjects that strikingly depart from the most familiar iconographic repertory are the rare multi-armed figures. These constitute a sort of “atypical” line, since rock sculptures seem to adhere strictly to a canon of anthropomorphic normality.<sup>13</sup> Besides the four-armed Maitreya mentioned above (to our present

<sup>10</sup> Much the same phenomenon was observed by Dani (1983: 150-162) in the context of the petroglyphs of Chilas II, where he attributes the secondary position of the Buddha to a local, short-lived predominance of a schismatic sect (of Devadatta, as the scholar maintains based on the evidence of certain inscriptions) that assigned to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara a leading role. According to Dani, a deliberate effort to restore a line of orthodox cult in this area of local Buddhism is to be seen in the depiction inspired by the story of the “thousand Buddhas” at Thalpan II, which, on the basis of stylistic criteria, he dates much later than the “schismatic” representations. However, given the extemporary nature of the graffiti, which seem to reflect a pious tradition of donations made by people passing through (including pilgrims but also, and above all, tradesmen), any attempt to cluster them according to diachronic or doctrinaire criteria must take into account a non-linear stratification of variances. Rather, it is interesting to note the presence of representations – including the “thousand Buddhas” and the various *jātakas* – which find wider circulation in extra-Indian territory, and in particular in Xinjiang, from where many travellers must certainly have arrived following these routes – travellers who could occasionally have commissioned ex-votos. Although “the whole set of engravings [...] look purely Indian” (Fussman 1994b: XVI-XVII), some of the graffiti might reflect particular requests of donors more familiar with certain subjects.

<sup>11</sup> In this connection it is worth noting a similar conclusion drawn by G. Fussman (1994c: 10-13) on the absence of cult images of the Buddha at Chilas II. Contesting (rightly, in my opinion) the conclusions of M. Carter (1993), who saw in the absence proof of a context that was still aniconic, Fussman asserted the equation between *stūpa* cult and Buddha cult. In the (distinctly iconic) context of the Swat rock sculptures the infrequent presence of the Buddha might easily find an explanation in the overpowering Mahayanic impact of the bodhisattva cult. However, this seems a rather simplistic conclusion, and hardly reliable, especially with respect to the entire context. If, on the other hand, we were to accept a different interpretation, we would have to recognise in this orientation of the iconography a programmatic choice, possibly encouraged by the current ideas. The *stūpa*/Buddha equation might have been deliberately emphasised as a further means to draw attention to the sacred areas and to the related function of the rock sculpture, as we will see in section 8 of this chapter.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed discussion of these isolated and problematic iconographic themes see Chap. 7.

<sup>13</sup> It certainly reflects a distinct attitude, although one which is not easy to bring into focus. By this same time, Indian religious art had long been making frequent use of the artifice of morphological abnormality to express divine power and ubiquitousness. The scarcity



knowledge there are only five such examples, three of which are represented by stelae), this group includes the unfinished stela S124 (II: Fig. 109) showing an eight-armed divinity seated in *dhyānāsana* on a tall seat and bearing a number of attributes, not all of which can be identified with certainty. The most likely interpretation, suggested by the surviving elements as well as by the general context of the rock sculpture, is that we have here one of the many forms of Avalokiteśvara (see Chap. 4.3).

The small contingent of multi-armed figures includes a female divinity (S70; II: Figs. 72a,b) trampling on a decapitated goat. The theme – again the subject of a stela – is clearly modelled after the iconography of Durgā, evidently reinterpreted in typically local terms. Although of great interest for the witness it bears to a persistent and coherent set of autochthonous beliefs, this odd iconographic symbiosis remains the elusive document of an undetermined cultic context.

A complex iconographic scheme and the deliberately archaic style characterise a stela and two rock reliefs, related through their depictions of personages in Kushan dress accompanied by minor characters (S69, C116 and C183; II: Figs. 71a,b, 116a,b,c, and 118 respectively; GS 39, 41 and 42 respectively). The interpretations so far offered – by A. Stein (1929: 51; 1930: 32-33), who sees in the rock relief C116 the mythical king Uttara-sena in the role of donor, and by G. Tucci (1958: 295), who interprets it as a Kushan-period portrayal of a local divinity with attendants or a sovereign with his court – can now be reviewed, bringing to bear on them some newly acquired data. As we shall see, certain elements support attribution of these reliefs to the full flowering of Buddhist rock art despite their differences. When considered from an entirely different cultural perspective, the intrinsic and contextual content of this iconographic theme reveals unexpected implications, suggesting identification with Sūrya and his acolytes. We shall also see that, in the case of this iconographic theme as well, attribution to a precise cult context remains difficult, and the reliefs must therefore be added to the long list of attestations of a period of the cultural history of Swat still largely unknown.

These reliefs bring an apparently dissonant note to the ambit of Swat rock sculptures, but at the same time, together with the “atypical” sculptures mentioned above, they also help to render a more historically accurate and plausible picture of the class thanks precisely to the contrasting elements they exhibit.

### 1.3 – Sculptures, landscape and sacred topography

The reliefs examined – actually, all the reliefs so far known to us – are with a very few exceptions situated along the left tributaries of the Swat River, where urban settlement is favoured by natural conditions and is often accompanied by sacred areas at an appropriate distance. With the aim of reconstructing the original connections between the various groups of sculptures and the surrounding environment, verification was attempted to determine whether concentrations of the former in certain areas had to do with particular characteristics of the latter.

It was thus observed that the sculptures are rarely located in isolation. The general tendency is instead towards spatial clustering, often corresponding to sacred areas and the paths leading to them. In some cases we have conclusive evidence of this association, the sacred areas being sufficiently well preserved to be recognised as such if not already identified through excavation, as in the case of Butkara I, Pānṛ I, Nawe-kalai or Shnaisha. In other cases the former presence of sacred areas no longer preserved can only be conjectured where the modern built-up area has developed over the earlier settlements, or where surface examination yields some evidence, scant as it is.

Nevertheless, this late artistic flowering is not necessarily to be taken as a positive sign of vitality for the associated sacred areas, many of which had probably already fallen into decay, been abandoned, or had even

of examples of this among the rock sculptures (but also, it must be stressed, among the coeval Buddhist bronzes of this area) is not easy to interpret. It might indicate an as yet scant familiarity or sympathy on the part of Buddhism for a practice of Hindu origin, or it could be a deliberate choice aimed at confining this feature to more secluded environments reserved for communities of initiates.

physically disappeared when the rock sculptures began to sprout among them. Some of them, however, either distinguished by particular sacredness or favoured by their location on certain routes, received renewed attention in the form of restoration, albeit modest, or with the simple addition of rock sculptures.<sup>14</sup>

The phenomenon suggests that for a certain length of time, and for causes we can now only conjecture, Buddhism saw a phase of renewed vigour in Swat that must also have had a certain effect on at least some of the region's religious foundations.

The general uniformity of style and iconography displayed by the rock sculptures do not provide any valuable insights into diachronic change. The few differences observed are of little help in distinguishing between earlier and later specimens; as we shall see, they do not automatically constitute reliable indications because, as the internal cross-comparison demonstrates, they are often synchronic variations. Nevertheless, the very position of the sculptures constitutes fairly eloquent evidence of a unitary strategy. Marking out the sacred areas and the way leading to them, the rock sculptures seem to have served as a sort of re-consecration of places of worship, either fully functioning or already decayed.

Occasionally the rock reliefs may have marked out sacred areas that had not been built on, traditionally indicating the scene of some miraculous event, but no longer recognisable as such. At least one case is, however, known to us, and that is Jare, where a great image of Padmapāṇi (C107; II: Fig. 108; GS 12) was erected in the vicinity of the ford taking pilgrims from the left bank of the Swat River to the other side. Here was a celebrated place of pilgrimage, identified by Stein on the basis of evidence offered by Songyun,<sup>15</sup> for here tradition has it that an impression of the spot where the Buddha had placed his *saṃghāṭī* to dry was preserved in a rock (Stein, 1929: 86-87 and pl. 48; 1930: 56-57; Tucci, 1958: 303-304; Filigenzi 2010a: 188). Here, the relief takes on a twofold meaning, signalling the sacred place and at the same time acting as an apotropaic image; travellers about to cross at a particularly turbulent stretch of the river would certainly have addressed their prayers to it (*ibidem*).

It should also be borne in mind that the conception of a sacred place still held by the local population finds expression in extremely conservative attitudes, and indeed there is some connection between these and the superstitious practices that have long been habitually performed. The consecrated place appears to remain such even when its original function is no longer served. The custom of funerary deposits in the vicinity of or within Buddhist sacred areas is already documented in ancient times (Schopen 1987: 198), and it could go as far as burial within the sacred monument itself. This is the case of the Dhamami *stūpa* at Sahri Bahlol recounted by Bellew (1864: 140), in which a bodhisattva statue was buried together with the mortal remains. In this extreme case we witness not so much a fervent faith as a practice bordering on superstition. Not dissimilar behaviour is evidenced by the presence of Muslim cemeteries in the vicinity of certain Buddhist reliefs that, although obsolete as far as their intrinsic value is concerned, continue to transmit signals of a sacredness that transcends them, emanating from the ground on which they stand.

The survival of ancient traditions, Buddhist or otherwise, in the local cults of the Islamic period was also noted by Stein on various occasions during his explorations; one of these attestations is represented by the *saṃghāṭī* block, bearing inscriptions with Islamic profession of faith (Stein 1930: 56; 59). Curiously, the cult had recently seen some revival at the time Stein arrived, since in the same place there was also the burial of a much venerated “martyr”, who had died just two or three years before – actually, a rifle merchant murdered by some Kohistani (*ibid.*: 59). Mount Ilam, too, scene of sacred Buddhist legends (the Mount Hi-lo of Xuanzang

<sup>14</sup> This might be, for instance, the case of Pāṇṛ I. The construction phases of Pāṇṛ I terminate with Period 3, ascribed to the late fifth century CE, even though worship activities in the area may have lasted until the seventh-tenth century CE. To a late period in the life of the sacred area D. Faccenna connects also some “caves” on the W slope of the hill overlooking the site (Faccenna *et al.* 1993: 121). *Contra* see Callieri (2012). On this last aspect see Chap. 2.3.

<sup>15</sup> According to a legend recounted by Songyun (Beal 1958 [1884]: xcvi; Chavannes 1903: 409 ff.) the Buddha's garments were drenched during a terrible storm of wind and rain unleashed by a *nāgarāja* irritated by the conversions the Buddha had achieved in the kingdom of Wu-ch'ang/U-chang (Uḍḍiyāna). Briefer versions of the legend, with differently combined details, are given by Faxian (Beal 1958 [1884]: xxxi) and Xuanzang (*ibid.*: 135).

according to Foucher 1902: 368, fn. 3), enjoys great veneration both among the Hindus, who call it *Rāma takht* (throne of Rāma, who is said to have come down from the heavens on this peak), and among the local Muslim population, who hold it sacred as conserving the mortal remains of a Shahid, or Martyr (*ibid.*: 101).

Similar is the case of Mount Karamar, which can be taken as an exemplary case of cross-cultural persistence. It was identified by Cunningham (1966: 7, reprint) as the mountain on whose peak, at the time of Xuanzang (who passed there on his way to Udabaṇḍha), stood a famous sanctuary dedicated to Maheśvara and his consort, Bhīmā (Beal 1958 [1884]: 112-114). Foucher (1902: 363-365), corroborating Cunningham's thesis with further evidence, could verify that the place was still held sacred by the local Muslim population. In his work Foucher also makes incidental reference to the practice, very common among the Muslims of Kashmir, of building their sanctuaries on ancient sites of Hindu cult (*ibid.*: 363). As for Mount Karamar, he not only notes the presence on it of a *ziyārah*, but also reports the account of his local guide, which has it that a fakir made a miraculous leap from its summit. This, as Foucher points out, is much like the leap made by the *sādhu* from the height of the *svayambhū* image of Bhairava on Kashmir's Amarnath road for final liberation, according to a tradition observed in various parts of India.<sup>16</sup>

This inveterate habit may also be taken to have been influential in the flowering of the rock sculptures. It is significant that the correlation between sculptures and sacred areas does not depend on the actual state of preservation and activity of the latter. This means that the primary function of the sculptures is witnessing the immutable auspiciousness of places that, despite the ravages of time, were still perceived as imbued with some sort of sacral power.<sup>17</sup>

Clearly, the environment itself has a strong conditioning effect on the imagination, since supernatural power – benign or malign – generally has a strong enchoric characterisation and therefore manifests itself in places where the physical elements most representative of a certain ecosystem, whether positive or negative, vital or baneful to its equilibrium, are enclosed in a sort of microcosm. In the case of Swat, as in the neighbouring regions, the sacred place normally emerges from natural spaces where the beauty of the mountain landscape strikes with particular force, in the majesty of the rock faces, in the horizons of the valleys, in the vital dynamics of rivers and springs.<sup>18</sup>

The choice of an appropriate site to build a Buddhist foundation must also have been guided by considerations of this sort. That sacred buildings were generally erected in areas of exceptional beauty may be seen as

<sup>16</sup> For a different identification of the spot mentioned by Xuanzang see Chap. 7, fn. 221. On the persistence of non-Islamic traditions see also Stein 1910; Id. 1930: *passim*. This question of the survival of the sacred place (on account of cult areas as well as cemetery areas) is, however, delicate and complex, as the most recent studies show. As far as Swat itself is concerned, we might mention the case of Buddhist settlements that came to be superimposed over proto-historic necropolises, such as Katelai, Butkara II, but, above all, Saidu Sharif I, where the necropolis must have been in use up until the time of the foundation of the sacred area (Faccenna 1997). These cases had already been considered significant by Tucci (1977: 10), and they take on yet greater weight when compared with the analogies, too numerous to be a matter of chance, noted by Schopen (1996) in Indian territories, and particularly that of Andhra. In this connection it is also worth considering the observation by Jettmar (1989a: XXXII) on the superimposition of Buddhist monuments over the indigenous monuments of more ancient tradition at Chilas II. A decisive factor in such practices could be the deliberate will generated with the rise of a new religion to “expropriate” the territory of the earlier religion. On this aspect see also Chap. 3.2.

<sup>17</sup> Rock sculptures related to a Buddhist sacred area already dismantled could be, for instance, those of Barikot/Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (C117 and C118; II: Figs. 121 and 122), where a Brahmanical temple (attributed to the mid-seventh century CE) might have superseded an earlier *stūpa*. This can be inferred from the recovery of a few – otherwise inexplicable – Gandharan pieces from the excavations on the top of the hill (Olivieri in Callieri *et al.* 2000: 203). Obviously this remains a matter of speculation, since the rock sculptures might also be slightly older than the temple. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of their testifying to the persistence of the spot's sacredness even after the implantation of a cultic monument of different affiliation sounds reasonable in the light of the above-mentioned reasons. On the Brahmanical temple of Barikot see Chap. 2.4 and Part II, s.v.

<sup>18</sup> Without departing from the geographical and cultural environment of Swat and its surroundings, traces of this conception can still be discerned in the folklore of the regions of Hindu Kush, where the cosmology is closely bound up with the environment and manifestations of supernatural beings are often attributed to places characterised by certain physical features (Jettmar 1986: esp. 36 ff.). See also Chap. 3.2.

the result not only of practical considerations (isolation as well as relative closeness to built-up areas, access to supplies of water and food, a natural background psychologically conducive to meditation), but also of the pursuit of symbolic harmony between a physical space and a sacred place.

In a way, the rock sculptures can be considered an expression of time-honoured traditions. Nevertheless, they supplemented these latter with a distinct element of innovation. Although significant topographical elements may have been lost over time due to changes either occurring naturally or artificially brought about, certain common characteristics linking sculptures with their location still stand out. As close scrutiny clearly shows, the position of the sculptures was determined not only by the pathway leading to sacred areas, but also by rather more sophisticated formal criteria. In the first place, evident care was taken with the placing of the sculptures in the landscape. In fact, the artists seem to have been greatly concerned with fitting the works into the appropriate natural theatre, and in such a way as to reflect the idea that the sacred place was entirely a work of nature, so that one might in it discern an immanent manifestation of the divine.

### 1.4 – The hierophanic rock

The quite universal association between natural beauty and manifestation of the sacred, variously interpreted by the different religious cultures, became in the specific case of rock art nothing short of a systematic code that regulated the placing of the sculptures in space. Harmonious association with the natural landscape begins with the stone itself, a fact that stands out more markedly in the case of complex figurative subjects involving a number of figures. At first sight the figures look as though they had been assembled haphazardly as mere juxtaposition, and at times pointlessly repetitive: the same subject reproduced repeatedly on the same wall, compositions of figures that elude even the habitual schemes of proportional symbolism, subjects brought together in no evident relationship.

These apparent incongruities are particularly striking in certain examples such as relief C48 (II: Figs. 48a,b,c), which shows two Padmapāṇi figures in extremely close succession, identical in every respect except for a slight difference in dimensions; in relief C79 (II: Figs. 81a,f,g), where a small image of the Buddha in *dhyānāsana* is placed, in an apparently subaltern position, between bodhisattva figures; in reliefs C22 and C182 (II: Figs. 22a,b,c and 117 respectively), where a big figure of Padmapāṇi is surrounded by other, minor figures, bodhisattvas, Buddha(s) and a *stūpa*, without any apparent syntactic relations; and in relief C30 (II: Figs. 31a,b,c,d,e), where a triad recalling the Gandharan models, with Buddha and two bodhisattvas, is accompanied to the right by a standing bodhisattva and to the left by a second triad, of smaller dimensions this time, made up of three bodhisattvas.

Before systematic study of the sculptures was undertaken, the apparent lack of any coherent scheme or symmetrical order in these compositions had been tentatively interpreted as the non-organised result of a diachronic use of the same surfaces. And yet the reliefs as a whole display a certain formal unity, bizarre as it may seem, and at the same time they show no sign of significant change in stylistic or iconographic characteristics or in the techniques of execution. When we go on to consider other, extrinsic factors such as the forms, dimensions, positions and even lines of stratification of the rocks, we find precisely in the exploitation of these elements evidence of a constant compositive rule, albeit highly variable, which consists of the isomorphic adaptation of the sculpture to the physical characteristics of the space chosen and to the medium itself.

All evidence shows that keeping the manipulation of the natural rock to a minimum was an imperative requirement. We can hypothesise that the reason behind such a concern was the illusory evocation of the images being self-existent. In short, the images were not to appear as something artificially created, but rather as forms discerned in the material and drawn from it, as if the artistry lay simply in unveiling or giving comprehensible form to that which was already in existence. The idea – simple in essence yet complex in implications – is that of reducing the distance between art and nature to make visible the manifestation of the divine in the world.

In this organic pattern of artistic creation we can detect close affinity with a concept still fairly widespread in Indian territories, which finds expression in the so-called *svayambhū* images. The association between im-

age and material defines more clearly and with greater intricacy the link with the land, which runs far deeper than any incidental association with a place or monument to be signalled. While, of course, their existence is determined by the presence of some sort of pathway, the sculptures play upon it as if forming a subtle emotional counterpoint. The pursuit of a eurhythmic blending of an image with the background influences the positioning, whether in secluded corners or in vast, open areas.

Thus, a sculpture may loom out surprisingly from some semi-concealed corner, or stand out in a barren space, or it might attract the eye as if beckoning from above. We may come face to face with an authentic masterpiece of savaged harmony, as in the case of the Padmapāṇi of Qal'a (C104; II: Figs. 104a,b), inserted into the craggy mountain landscape, merging with the rock and yet jutting out from it in a striking manner. It can be a massive and soaring rock face, as in the case of the Buddha of Mingora (C1; II: Figs. 1a,b; GS 5), or a strangely smooth surface, as in the Maitreya of Banjot (C91; II: Figs. 91a,b; GS 27) and the Buddha of Shakhorai (C92; II: Figs. 92a,b,c,d).

The rock prompts and the design complies: the two identical Padmapāṇis (C48; II: Figs. 48a,b,c), conforming to the lines of stratification to achieve the appropriate position and dimensions within the perspective, convey an idea of growth and advance to the heights;<sup>19</sup> the Padmapāṇi of Kokarai (C21; II: Fig. 21) takes shape on a block beyond which a broad horizon opens out, as if a visual metaphor for the way ahead opening up by the grace granted by the bodhisattva; the reliefs of Jambil (C24; II: Figs. 24a,b) emerge from the sloping spaces between the clefts in the rock as if pouring forth from it; the Padmapāṇi of Udegram (C112; II: Fig. 113), set in a sort of body separated from the rock wall looks as if it had been driven outwards by a supernatural force; the great polyhedral block of Banjot (C89-90; II: Figs. 89a,b and 90 respectively) displays not a throng of figures, but a single, striking one on each side, as if stamped onto the smooth surface of the boulder; another Padmapāṇi at Qal'a (C95; II: Fig. 95) dominates from the height of a natural, funnel-shaped niche on a rock face so steep that the illusion of spontaneous existence appears extraordinarily concrete; the bodhisattvas of Kukrai (C73; II: Figs. 76a,b,c; GS 23, 35, 36), conforming to the lines of perspective running to the vanishing point on two converging blocks, seem to emerge from the deep recesses of the matter, like bright rays from a hidden source of light. In each case the single image or complex scene, gently conforming to the inanimate rock, convert it into an epiphany. Often the proximity of a spring (at Supal Bandai, Katelai, Nawe-kalai, Arabkhan-china and Barama) accentuates the balance of the condensed microcosm which the sculpture seems to dominate.

We can only imagine the monastic community being behind such an ambitious and wide-ranging project. Specialised monks may well have directed the process, from the general conception to the specific selection of sites and subjects, and perhaps even undertaken the actual execution of the reliefs.<sup>20</sup> The project must have taken shape under the influence of time-honoured traditions and practices, but these latter clearly drew fresh vitality from the force of new ideas that from India spread all over the Buddhist world.

### 1.5 – *Swayambhū tīrtha*: an Indian input?

The connection between rock and the divine is one of the most widespread motifs in collective religious imageries, to the extent that it might almost be considered universal. The sun rising behind mountains, peaks that reach up from the earth to almost to touch the sky: all this quite naturally prompts a series of associations that various religious cultures have expressed often in strikingly similar ways. The mountain is a sacred place, belonging both to earth and the heavens and mysteriously involved with the great daystar which seems to rise out of its tenebrous depths at dawn. To the rock it is made of, the mountain owes the attribute of immutability and eternity, complementing its connection with the divine. The solidity of the stone constitutes the ideal ele-

<sup>19</sup> On this particular example, see Chap 4.5.

<sup>20</sup> "Buddhist monks" were also thought by Dani to be the authors of analogous reliefs in Dir (Dani 1968-69a: 253). Nevertheless, the idea of monks carving reliefs "in their leisure hours" (*ibidem*) is quite difficult to believe.

ment to symbolically encapsulate the qualities of earthliness – dark, heavy and inert. No element could better serve as a foil to all that is incorporeal, subtle and luminous, precisely by being so perfectly antithetical. The dynamic power of the divine finds in its opposite a concurrence, if not, as in the case of the sun, the archetype of the nurturing womb.

Indian art has given this idea consummate expression with rock architecture. The spaces carved out of rock in western India probably represent the original core of a tradition that was to have far-reaching resonance in that part of the world where, directly or indirectly, the influence of Indian culture made itself felt. The chronology of the various “caves” of western India reveals a long tradition that seems to have been powerfully stirred to new life in the second half of the fifth century with the Mahayanic caves of Ajanta to reach its greatest splendour between 550 and 800 with the flourishing of the complexes of Elephanta, Jogesvari, Mandapesvar, Kanheri, Aurangabad, Ellora, Badami, Aihole and Mamallapuram. As Harle (1986: 45) rightly points out, rock architecture well befits the spiritual and material conditions of India: it offers solid shelter that is cool in summer and warm in winter, while the physical geography ensures a nearby supply of water and a landscape of natural beauty and at the same time gives form to the concept of elementary uncreated existence (*svayambhū*) that is so deeply rooted in Indian religious thought.

Diverse as the architectural and decorative devices may be, the caves contain this common conceptual element finding primary expression in refined formal exploration, seeking to mix and melt together art and nature. Perfectly finished within, they tend to blend with the landscape externally. The entrance, for example, generally structured in the form of a columned porch, progressively gives way to an inclusive vision merging architectural artifice and landscape into one harmonious whole.<sup>21</sup> Particularly in the Pallava and Rāṣṭrakūṭa period, rock architecture applies a varied range of technical approaches, giving maximum expression to the infinite possibilities of relations between art and nature. Along with the temples hewn out of the rock, a complementary conception is employed in which it is the temple, rather, that seems to give form to the rock, being entirely sculpted out of it, as in the case of the *rathas* of Mamallapuram and the temple of Kailasa at Ellora.

A different shade of these same theoretical orientations is represented by the particular cult that religious India always accorded to the *svayambhū* images, i.e. those monoliths that time and nature itself have moulded in forms displaying vaguely recognisable features of specific divinities. Between these naturally occurring images and rock architecture, which constitutes the most complex formulation in concrete design of the idea of the divine concealed in matter, there is an intermediary range of possibilities in which, more than in any other context, we discern a fundamental conceptual affinity with the rock sculptures of Swat. All these artistic endeavours seek to achieve, to some extent or another, the placing of an element in a space that gives the illusion of being its natural context. The sculpture may be used to create a rhythmic link bridging a hiatus, as in the case of the great triad consisting of a Buddha in *pralambapādāsana* on a lion throne with a standing bodhisattva on either side, set in a sort of natural shallow niche between caves 4 and 5 of Aurangabad (Berkson 1986: fig. 50). In other cases we see more ambitious projects, as for example the great relief of Mamallapuram, which likely depicts the descent of the Ganges.<sup>22</sup> Here the scene is not only represented but actually reproduced theatrically: the water pouring down from a small artificial basin along a natural cleft in the rock creates an illusory play of animation, subtly enhanced by the dynamic rhythm of the figuration.

<sup>21</sup> Here I make a point of referring to manifestly complete examples of rock architecture since they cannot give rise to debate. The aesthetic of the “uncreated” expressed in these art forms also has its (more questioned) counterpart in the aesthetic of the “unfinished”. While allowing for cases of works that remained unfinished by *force majeure*, due to reversals in the fortunes of clients, there are such a great number of unfinished temples in India, and in such a vast context, that one cannot help suspecting some ideological choice. On this topic, see Parker 2001, who also offers a concise review of the most significant preceding contributions.

<sup>22</sup> We owe identification of the relief as the “Penitence of Arjuna” to J. Goldingham (1798: 69-70); this interpretation, long accepted, was questioned by V. Goloubew (1914), who proposed interpretation as the “Descent of the Ganges”. Other scholars, including T.N. Ramachandran (1950-51) and M.S.N. Rao (1979), on the other hand, identify the scene as the *Kirātārjunīya* (Śiva disguised as Kirāta, with Arjuna).

Although the basic concept is by no means exclusive to India, the unflagging formal exploration into it was quite clearly conducted here, extending the expressive potential to the point of making of it an art form in its own right, well able to venture beyond the frontiers of the land that had generated it. Thus it would be difficult to believe that the flourishing of great rock monuments along the paths traced out by Buddhist expansion through Central Asia as far as China did not owe certain essential forms and contents to India.

In many cases, such as that of Swat, the Indian influence came as a further impetus to a tradition already there and fairly widespread in the mountainous regions, where rock had from time immemorial offered a page for inscribing tales, testimonies and professions of faith. Traces of a type of cult clearly imported from India still survive today, not only in Swat but also in the neighbouring regions. This provides further support to the hypothesis that the Indian influence was of decisive importance in that refined pursuit of symbiosis between art and nature that found independent, original expression in the rock sculptures of Swat. Particularly interesting evidence in this respect is offered by Xuanzang, who mentions a stone statue of Bhīmā Devī, situated on a high mountain about fifty *li* north-west of Po-lu-sha, that was regarded by the local people as having formed by itself, and was so venerated as to attract pilgrims from all over India (see above, p. 26). Another famous *svayambhū-tirtha* can be seen in the above-mentioned *Rāma takht* (Throne of Rama) on Mount Ilam, which consists of a spur of rock with a sort of artificially extended platform on top. With three other spurs it creates a more or less quadrilateral form that enhances the peculiar evocativeness of the place and sets off the “throne” even more. Moreover, not far from here three small and roughly circular lakes are aligned, offering to the eyes of the Hindus further and indeed conclusive proof of the sacredness of the place (Stein 1930: 101-102).

Together with the *svayambhū-tirtha* of evident Hindu matrix we have further evidence that comes to us from a Buddhist context but that can still be ultimately traced back to the same source of conceptual inspiration, albeit in less striking form. By far the best known examples of this are the footprints of the Buddha, as preserved, for instance, at Tirat (*ibid.*: 60, fig. 40 Quagliotti 1998: 50, fig. 24). Probably it was precisely the flattened form of the block that gave the inspiration for this sort of secondary *svayambhū*, in which the incised footprint design displaying a *cakra* in the centre is accompanied by an inscription in *kharoṣṭhī* characters attested in the first century BCE, which identifies it as the sacred *pāduka* (*ibidem*).

As disjointed and fragmentary as it may be, the evidence emerging from the past or living on in the religious world of today in some form, shows a marginal but persistent co-presence of the Indian element. In some cases we can still discern this element, but one wonders how many times it possibly escapes our attention due to its complete integration. To our eyes, as we comment on them *a posteriori*, the rock sculptures of Swat appear to emerge from a sort of hiatus following upon the waning of the long Gandharan season, in which the subjection of space to rigorous geometrical order underpinned the conception of art. The rock art, which drew the laws of its aesthetics from the apparent chaos of nature, was not a means or reflection to give the rational measure of the world, but rather embodied the intuitive capacity to grasp its secret and capture, in the ceaseless swirling flow, the mathematical point.

Today we may fail to recognise the preciseness of the context in rock art, but not the consistent inspiration, nor its links both with local tradition and the surrounding world. One of these ties is with India, its aesthetic culture and its measure of the world. The idea of the *svayambhū*, which, as attested by the Buddha’s footprints at Tirat, had long been present in Swat, albeit as yet inchoate, came to full blossoming in the rock sculptures. This possibly occurred in the wake of a revival in the heart of India, but manifestly in a dimension of its own, original and perfectly integrated with the physical and cultural environment that embraced it.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE “DECLINE OF BUDDHISM”: A NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL CHANGES**

### **2.1 – Towards a new reading of conflicting sources**

The more analytical studies highlight the artistic value, theoretical coherence, and innovative character of the rock sculptures, the more glaring appears the contradiction with literary and archaeological sources. For the period under consideration, these sources unanimously attest to a general impoverishment of the region and a marked deterioration of the ancient Buddhist monuments, which were once so numerous and flourishing.

Until now, the causes and dynamics of this crisis have not been accounted for by either archaeological findings or the scanty literary sources that are still extant. Sparse evidence has been found to support the hypothesis that the country was ravaged by a natural catastrophe, which in turn generated severe political and economic fallout. A concomitant factor in these events can be seen in a shift of the bulk of traffic to alternative routes, while the destructive impact of Hūṇa invaders postulated by previous theories nowadays finds little support among scholars.

We can easily assume that the crisis, whatever its reasons, had made unaffordable the heavy costs of the maintenance of such a complex network of Buddhist settlements. Moreover, the information provided by Xuanzang on mythical Uḍḍiyāna and the whole of the north-west regions of the Indian subcontinent in general shows a certain falling off in Buddhist zeal, or at any rate in what Xuanzang must have considered as such. Besides, recent archaeological discoveries are disclosing to us a less monolithic view of the religious culture of Uḍḍiyāna, where alternative panoramas are being highlighted. In turn, these discoveries shed more light on other pieces of evidence that thus far have been isolated and difficult to connect with any coherent framework. As a result, a more diversified cultural history of the country starts being delineated, in which Buddhism, while playing a prominent role, is to be seen from a more pragmatic perspective of an interactive relationship with other religious systems.

### **2.2 – Buddhism and other religious cultures**

The doctrinal and social face of Buddhism in late antiquity was not just a result of internal developments but also the outcome of the continuous interaction with the vicissitudes of history. Over the course of time, changes were induced by necessary compromises with religious substrata, firmly rooted although not institutionalised, and by a stronger confrontation with Hinduism, a religious phenomenon that showed a certain affinity with Buddhism in that it, too, was organised in one coherent system. In the more strictly Indian territories, Hinduism gained from the confrontation, possibly because in its multifarious divinities it more successfully fused the cultural tradition of Vedic origins with the chthonic cults. Other factors probably came into play, too, including the “nationalist” flavour with which the Guptas were able to imbue Hinduism, contrasting with the favour accorded to Buddhism by foreign invaders, while the notable wealth of many Buddhist foundations may well have generated a certain diffidence, cooling popular enthusiasm.<sup>23</sup>

As for Swat, Buddhist art and architecture seem to have dominated the region for over a thousand years – a very long time indeed, and quite enough to have significant effect on the modes of expression and collective religious imaginings. It may even have sufficed to outlast a decline in consensus and absorb external influences without making it too evident. In the course of this millennium many things must surely have changed in the relations between the Buddhist establishment and environment, but we gain no more than partial insight into

<sup>23</sup> A phenomenon much like the case in China, arising on account of the huge donations and great privileges accorded the Buddhist clergy under the Eastern Jin (Demiéville 1970: 1260 ff. [repr. 1973: 376 ff.]).



the way art reacted to or contributed to these changes. It is a matter of not only objective difficulties deriving from the partial conservation of material elements, but also, and perhaps most importantly, of the impossibility of relating them to their human context. Of the type of society that bore the cost of certain works of art, producing and maintaining them and, to some extent, being conditioned by them, we know only a few characteristic traits, and can hardly begin to gauge the psychological impact of a system of visual communication on a society subjected to far fewer such stimuli than we are today.

The evidence we have of Buddhism with regard to its socio-cultural contexts is mostly partial and disjointed, on top of which there are the notorious lacunae in our knowledge of ancient India. Generally speaking, however, as is so often the case, much can be inferred from visual arts, which show a greater openness towards the outside world than does the canonical literature. At times the need for compromise also involved religious literature, transforming spurious traditions into aetiological myths, as in the case of the legend of Hārītī; in this edifying example of evil force converted to good there survives, refined along ethical lines, the popular devotion to an ambiguous female divinity, as motherly and cruel as nature itself.<sup>24</sup>

Only rarely, however, do the texts account for occurrences of such conceptual syntheses, while iconography takes them in its stride as accomplished facts; it may relegate them to marginal contexts, but still fragmentary evidence remains of forms of symbiosis between Buddhism and other ways of conceiving the sacred. It is not always possible to identify the exact context from which the alien element emerges, and at times it is even more baffling to see why it should be absorbed, as in the case of the six-armed divinity of Butkara I (Faccenna 1962-1964: II, 3: 107-108; pl. CCCXXXVIa), for which we know of no directly comparable examples.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the reasons for and degree of effective integration, however, the divine and semi-divine figures that cross the sacred enclosure or come significantly close to it demonstrate that elsewhere, not too far away, there must be places and cults dedicated to them. In fact, while it can plausibly be argued that Buddhism was the major religious phenomenon in the North-West, at least in the first centuries CE, there is no telling how many other cults might have been peaceably practised alongside it, not only in symbiosis or forced relations of subjection but simply as alternatives.

We are also unable to assess the incidence of local religious traditions predating Buddhism, but we may reasonably suppose that they were never completely eradicated or waned away but lingered on in more or less latent forms within the dominant organised religions. In the specific case of Swat, today we can detect only elusive traces of these traditions, sensing them here and there in the context of the religious cultures that supplanted them – Buddhist yesterday, Islamic today. Archaeology has for its part yielded only scant evidence for study of the topic, although, as we will see below, recent studies and discoveries are now outlining new interpretive models. Swat has so far shown no traces of monumental buildings dedicated to organised religious systems other than Buddhism except for the very late period, but this does not mean there were none.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, we find ample documentation of the fact that the golden age of Buddhism in Swat did not uproot, for instance, the ancient fertility cults, commonly attested to by female and animal terracotta figurines brought to light by various excavations. Regardless of the faith professed by the household, these objects must

<sup>24</sup> I would very tentatively like to suggest that this may be, as it were, a first-level explanation. In fact, this exemplary tale became a very popular “fable with a moral”, alluding to the far more challenging theme of inversion and transfiguration which, perhaps mistakenly, we confine within the specific domain of Tantric doctrines.

<sup>25</sup> For G. Gnoli (1963) it is a representation of Śiva (but see the later reconsideration in Gnoli 1992). Agrawala (1966) and Taddei (1966), on the other hand, see it as a divinity of martial character, although they take different lines here; for the former the image takes inspiration from the Indian prototype of Skanda-Kumāra, while the latter holds more probable derivation from a Syrian prototype. Without departing from the Gandharan environment, however, see the possible interpretation of the presence of Skanda in certain contexts (Filigenzi 2005c), to which, although indirectly, the six-armed divinity from Butkara I is probably connected (Filigenzi forthcoming b).

<sup>26</sup> My reference is to the Hindu temple of the Śāhi period discovered on the top of the hill in Barikot (see below). Even more interesting, given their unusual features, are other religious buildings of still unknown nature that were brought to light on the slope of the hill (Filigenzi 2010c: 410 ff.) and, more recently, in the residential area of the plain (Olivieri 2014: 101 ff.; Id. forthcoming).

have had their own special place in the home as traditional omens of prosperity. Nevertheless, this remains a phenomenon of marginal importance, for fertility cults are so universal that they offer only slender evidence of the religious substratum associated with them. From a purely functional viewpoint, we can draw a parallel with the superstitions widespread in the Western world, in which it is often still possible to discern the survival of ancient pagan cults even though no conscious link with them persists.

Greater significance can be attached to the fact that Swat, or Uḍḍiyāna, is well known as an ancient land of magic. A factor that probably contributed to this fame is the ever-active ferment of a religious substratum powerfully conditioned by the human awe of the forces of nature, whose caprices and energy could in turn be subdued with the use of magic. Quite probably it was this substratum that acted as the real antagonist of Buddhism in Swat, although, given its obscure nature, there would have been no overt conflict, if any at all, until the Vajrayāna offered it the means to be channelled back into the Buddhist tradition itself (Tucci 1977: 68-69).

The ancient religious world that preceded Buddhism and Islam still survives in the regions of Hindu Kush under the guise of popular beliefs, and from these we can gather that the sacred place par excellence was once the site where the tremendous, inexhaustible force of nature concentrated and manifested itself spontaneously thanks to the chance concurrence of favourable elements. The absence of cult buildings coeval with their Buddhist counterparts and alternative to them might be due to their failure to survive because of being built of perishable material, or simply to our incapacity to recognise them as such.<sup>27</sup> We also cannot rule out the possibility that the local non-Buddhist religion preferred spaces for their cult spontaneously created by nature rather than resorting to architecture; these spaces were then left unchanged or modified imperceptibly. This is the case of the “natural sanctuaries”, whose presence in our archaeological records is growing noticeably both in number and significance. They represent the best evidence so far of rituals and beliefs living apart from the dominant cultures and, at the same time, persisting through time as a sort of underground vein passing through the latter.

### **2.3 – Culture of the valleys and culture of the mountains: the interaction between Buddhism and “Kafir-Dardic” tribes**

The stunning material evidence represented by the numerous Buddhist foundations scattered over the territory – some of which are of astonishingly imposing scale – conveys a very strong impression of widespread consensus surrounding them and the doctrine that had inspired them. In this respect, however, due attention should be paid to the relationship between propaganda and effective popular response. As rightly pointed out by Callieri (2006), the entrenchment of Buddhism in the North-West of the Indian subcontinent in general and in Swat in particular was preceded by a fairly lengthy phase of great works of propaganda (finding expression in the early Buddhist foundations) supported by the wealthy and influential classes for whom political and intellectual interests coincided.<sup>28</sup> However, in urban settlements artefacts of unmistakable Buddhist character are practically absent from the pre-Kushan archaeological layers. Furthermore, the overwhelming visibility of Buddhist remains, though of undeniable historical relevance, risks putting various socio-cultural realities into the background, realities that nevertheless may have made a noticeable impact on certain philosophical ramifications of key Buddhist doctrines and practices.

In recent years, a number of rock shelters have been documented in Swat in the framework of the “Archaeological Map of Swat Valley” project (AMSV). Their function – certainly multi-faceted – has yet to be fully understood.

<sup>27</sup> On the probable existence of actual non-Buddhist sanctuaries in Gandhāra and the neighbouring regions, see Fussman 1988: 7-8, and 1991: 162. In the two works dedicated respectively to a statuette of the goddess Śrī and a brass mask of Śiva, the scholar makes marginal reference to the question, stressing the risk of ignoring or underrating it, drawing hasty conclusions from arguments *e silentio*.

<sup>28</sup> As archaeological investigations and epigraphic records coherently show, in Swat this already happened in pre-Kushan times, under the local dynasties of Oḍi and Apraca. Being relatively new (and crucial), this issue has been under close scrutiny since the first publication of the Senavarman inscription (Bailey 1980). For some of the most important contributions, see Fussman 1982, 1993, 2003-2004; Salomon 1986, 1997; Falk 2003b; Callieri 2002; von Hinüber 2003; Schopen 2005: 79 and fns. 64-67; McDowall 2007. On the implantation of Buddhism in the North-West, see also Fussman 1994d.

In most cases they seem to have had some sort of ritual purpose, probably connected to pastoral communities living in the mountains or at the edges of the valleys (Olivieri and Vidale 2006; Olivieri 2011 and 2013, with bibliography). The graffiti and paintings that often decorate these shelters, though distributed over an extremely long period of time, namely from the Bronze Age to approximately the twelfth century CE, fit into a coherent system. In relation to the dominant artistic culture of the valleys, this system evidently represents a parallel visual code, with its own syntax and social interactions, as well as a stock of knowledge, rituals, and religious and mystic beliefs.

Recurring patterns in rock paintings, in particular dominant anthropomorphic figures with outstretched fingers, have been associated with magical or shamanic practices of trance or ritual death. Already appearing in the Bronze Age, these pictograms survive in later paintings with only slight modifications (Olivieri 2010b: 21; Id. 2013: 66-67). Furthermore, most of the painted shelters are not meant for standing visitors – the spaces are so small that a person can barely sit inside – and so seem to have served the purpose of hermitage and/or some sort of initiation rituals (Olivieri and Vidale 2006: 125; Olivieri 2011: 142). It is interesting to note that, in a way not dissimilar to the Buddhist rock sculptures of late antiquity, the shelters generally display a strong sense of geomantic harmony, which translates into a symbolic interpretation of the rocks and the surrounding landscape. Occasionally they may have had anthropomorphic or zoomorphic shapes, thus appearing to be “gigantic images sculpted by nature” (Olivieri and Vidale 2006: 141; figs. 37, 45; Olivieri 2011: 142; pls. 6-7; Id. 2013: 132 ff.) (Fig. 4). Evidence of winemaking in historical times, in the form of wine presses, adds a further element of cultural identity to the archaeological record connected to the users of the shelters. Just for the sake of convenience, we can call these people “Kafir-Dardic”, a generic name that nonetheless is, for the time being, the most pertinent we have.<sup>29</sup>



**Fig. 4** – Ghirai: Gigantic rock with anthropomorphic shape (courtesy IsIAO; photo by L.M. Olivieri)

<sup>29</sup> For the meaning and implications of this name, I refer the reader to Tucci 1977; Jettmar 1986; Klimburg 1999; Cacopardo and Cacopardo 2001. As for wine production and consumption in Swat/Gandhāra see Falk 2009 and Filigenzi forthcoming a.

Buddhist symbols can occasionally be found in the rock paintings and graffiti (Fig. 5). According to Olivieri (2011: esp. 138-141), they might be less a reflection of direct Buddhist inspiration than an indication of how these “Kafir-Dardic” tribes, living at the edge of urban areas and their rich agricultural belt, saw Buddhism. These mountain people must have had some sort of economic ties to the Buddhist settlements, probably supplying them with forest products.<sup>30</sup> Thus, while not integrated into the dominant culture, they may have regarded the Buddhist establishment as a source of welfare and accordingly recorded it as part of their symbolic visual narrative. Nevertheless, another hypothesis (not necessarily in opposition to the first) is that the painted shelters were used by various people of different creeds (*ibid.*: 139).

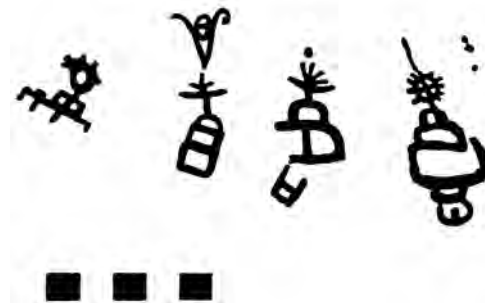


Fig. 5 – Kafir-kot 2: Rock paintings with Buddhist symbols (after Olivieri and Vidale 2006: fig. 38)

In any case, the contiguity of the two worlds appears, thanks to the recent archaeological surveys and studies, to have entailed a meaningful and effective interaction. This adds credence to Tucci’s sharp intuitive ideas about the role of aboriginal beliefs and praxis in the development of the late forms of Buddhism (Tucci 1977: 68-69).

Whether or not the graffiti and paintings depicting Buddhist symbols in rock shelters may be read as specific markers, the lack of such evidence is nevertheless a mere and inconclusive *argumentum e silentio*. We cannot rule out, in fact, the possibility that at least some of these shelters may have been used as retreats by Buddhist hermits who had totally or partly renounced cloistered monastic life.<sup>31</sup> Close contact with the “parallel” culture of the mountain people may have conferred special features on a well-rooted Buddhist tradition of secluded meditative retreat, in particular aspects of an asceticism closely connected to nature, magic and the supernatural.

The Buddhist practice of meditation, implicitly calling for remoteness and solitude, is actually better known from textual sources than material contexts. However, in recent years archaeological and art historical research has started assembling sparse pieces of material evidence, and cross-case analysis has now enabled the comparison of a few particular instances. While still only small in number, they are extremely interesting. In Swat, isolated retreats have been documented uphill from big Buddhist settlements. They consist either of monastic cells (as in the case of Abba-saheb-china, Tokar-dara, Nawagai, Saidu Sharif I; on this latter see Callieri 1989: 47, figs. 56-57) or of rock hermitages. Among these latter, worthy of special note are the sites of Amluk-dara in

<sup>30</sup> Similar modes of interaction between Buddhist monasteries and (Dardic) tribes have been documented in modern-day Ladakh (Olivieri 2011: 138, fn. 26).

<sup>31</sup> Of particular relevance to the question of hermitage is also the depiction, at several sites, of *trisūla* symbols and of a figure holding a *trisūla* (Olivieri and Vidale 2006: esp. 140; Olivieri 2010a: 359; fig. 7; Id. 2013: *passim*). I would cautiously venture to read these as a reference to Shaiva hermitage practices, whose presence would be plausible in the cultural environment we are tentatively reconstructing here. In this regard, it seems opportune to recall the several hints, scattered throughout Tucci’s works, of the strong connection between Swat (as part of a broader area including Gandhāra, the northern regions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, up to the Indus, central and eastern Afghanistan) and Shaiva philosophies (Tucci 1958: 283-284; 1963: *passim*; 1968; 1977: 68).

the upper Kandak Valley (Olivieri 2010a: 358; fig. 3), Topialai near the Cherat Pass (Olivieri and Vidale 2006: 147), Qal‘a and Tangu near the Ambela Pass (Nasim Khan 2000), and the “caves” of Pānṛ I, cut into the natural bank of compact clay.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in places as distant as Haḍḍā in Afghanistan, Kara Tepe in Uzbekistan and Qizil in Xinjiang, around the fourth/fifth century CE secluded places existed within the monastic settlements that were devoted to meditation and more precisely – as the painted decoration suggests – to meditation on death.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, many other sites that are not so specific and therefore difficult to date – such as completely bare caves near monastic settlements (Fussman 2008: *passim* [see index, s.v. “Grottes”]; Olivieri 2010a: 358, fig. 3; Callieri 2012) – speak of a quite widespread practice whose exact relationship to institutional monasticism we do not know.

This phenomenon is still poorly represented in the archaeological record and it is certainly underestimated. In fact, if we understood it better, we would probably change our perception of the historical dynamics of Buddhism. For the time being, the still meagre evidence is sufficient to shed new light on the origins and diffusion of the practices of Buddhist hermitage and asceticism, so extensively documented in the Himalayan Buddhism from its inception up to our days.

## 2.4 – Buddhism and Hinduism: archaeological evidence from the Śāhi period

Bearing noticeable relation to the multicultural environment of late antique Uḍḍiyāna is also the Hindu temple, probably devoted to a Vaishnava cult, recently discovered by the Italian Archaeological Mission on the top of the hill of Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Barikot) (Fig. 6). The life of the temple covers the entire span of the Śāhi period, from the seventh to eighth centuries (Early Śāhi or Turki Śāhi) to the ninth and tenth centuries (Late Śāhi or Hindu Śāhi).<sup>34</sup> Thus the monument, besides enhancing our scant knowledge of the political and cultural history of Swat in general and of the Śāhi period in particular, for the first time adds the concreteness of material evidence to the vague reference made by Xuanzang to ten temples of *devas* and attests to a well organised presence of Brahmanical cults. Moreover, it tells us that the flourishing of the Buddhist rock sculptures at least partly overlaps the “official” settlement of Hindu cults.

The temple, rectangular in shape and with the main entrance to the east, approached by a monumental flight of steps, was probably dedicated to Viṣṇu, as suggested by some sculptural marble fragments. The most significant piece is represented by a beautiful female figure, evidently the attendant of a larger central figure, to which the fragment of a leg larger than the natural size is most probably to be attributed (Figs. 7-8). By analogy with a well-known repertory it can readily be inferred that we are dealing here with an image of Viṣṇu accompanied by his personified attributes, Gadādevī (i.e. our female figure) and Cakrapuruṣa.<sup>35</sup> On the evidence of the

<sup>32</sup> On the caves of Pānṛ I see Faccenna *et al.* 1993: 115-124, where these are tentatively interpreted as store-rooms or dwellings (*ibid.*: 121). According to Callieri (2012), instead, the caves might have been used by the monks for dwelling or meditation, and could be dated to a quite early period in the life of the sacred area, possibly to its very beginning (mid-first century CE). The Buddhist rock shelters of Qal‘a have been only recently discovered (personal communication by L.M. Olivieri). As for the rock hermitage of Tangu, an element of extraordinary interest is its being decorated with polychrome mural paintings (Nasim Khan 2000: 35-68; reviewed by Olivieri 2002). The surviving fragment, showing a preaching Buddha flanked by two seated bodhisattvas, has been attributed by Nasim Khan (*ibid.*: 67) to a “late” Gandharan horizon (fourth/fifth century; *ibid.*: 36), although the sixth century is to be considered, more likely, the *terminus ante quem non*. A sixth/seventh century attribution is also suggested by Lo Muzio (2012: 329).

<sup>33</sup> On this topic, I refer the reader to Lo Muzio 2005: 486 ff., where other stimulating hypotheses of possible Gandharan antecedents are also suggested. See also Quagliotti 2012.

<sup>34</sup> For the temple of Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, see Callieri *et al.* 2000, Callieri *et al.* 2000-2001; Callieri 2005; Filigenzi 2005c,d; Filigenzi 2010c. For the possible presence of an earlier *stūpa*, see above, p. 26, fn. 17. For further discussion related to these monuments, see Chap. 7.4.

<sup>35</sup> The figure is standing against a sort of tapering pillar at her back which, according to a current iconographical convention, can be recognised as the *gadā* (for a more detailed discussion, see Filigenzi 2005d).

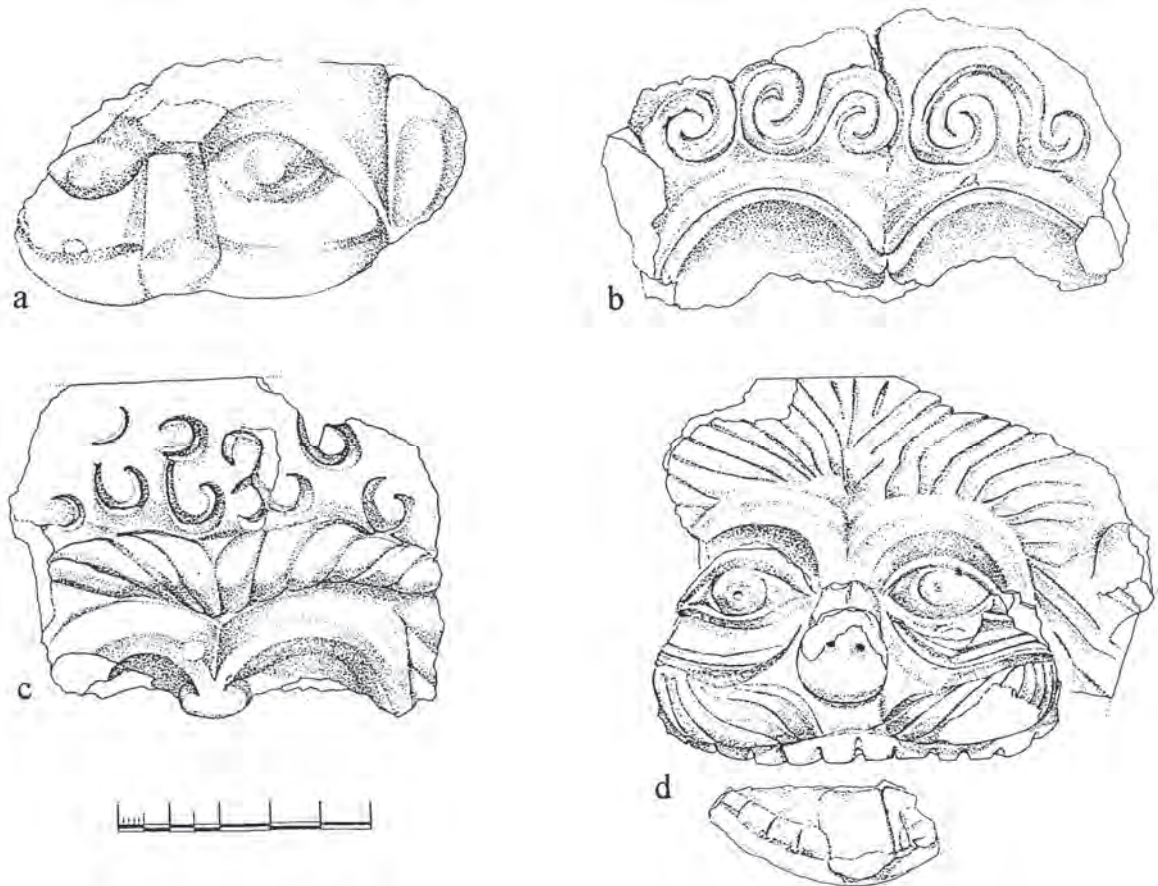


Fig. 6 – The Hindu temple at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Barikot) (courtesy MAI; photo by Luca Colliva)



Figs. 7-8 – Sculptural fragments from the Hindu temple at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Barikot) (courtesy MAI; photo by P. Callieri)

few fragments recovered we cannot detect the original iconography, whether a single headed or many-headed Viṣṇu. Nevertheless, among the number of stucco finds belonging to the architectural decoration of the temple, many fragments of animal masks deserve to be mentioned. They depict either lions or another kind of animal that, on the basis of the surviving fragments, we tentatively identified as boars (Fig. 9). These bipolar animal motifs are strongly reminiscent of the Caturānana Viṣṇu, whose iconographical depiction is characterised by the co-presence of human and animal features expressed by his four heads, with benign, lion, boar, and wrathful aspects respectively (Fig. 10).



**Fig. 9** – Samples from the architectural decoration of the Hindu temple at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Barikot) (courtesy MAI; drawing by F. Martore)

The construction of this imposing, eye-catching building, which once dominated an astonishingly vast horizon, must have required the support of the ruling class, the only one capable of affording such a formidable and expensive enterprise. Moreover, a further significant piece of evidence is represented by the remains of a monumental platform first documented by A. Foucher (1901: 167, fig. 31) and then by Farooq Swati *et al.* (2002) at Hathi-dara, in the Zalam-kot Valley. Significant similarities to the Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai temple (Olivieri and Vidale 2006: 119-120; Filigenzi 2010c: 413; Olivieri 2010a: 359) allows us to conjecture a similar function.

If we can draw any conclusion from the data at our disposal, the impression is that, as far as the religious sphere was concerned, the Śāhi rulers mostly employed their resources in disseminating or supporting the Hindu cults (Olivieri 2003: 31 ff., esp. 40; Filigenzi 2010c). The physical trajectories of competitive religious systems, well organised and politically supported, can be better evaluated when compared with other geo-cultural data, chiefly the line of military outposts created or, at least in some cases, enhanced by the Śāhis. This system, whose major lines seem to run between the Kunar Valley, in Afghanistan (Ball 1982), and Swat, was apparently based on



Fig. 10 – Caturānana Viṣṇu (after Pal 1975: no. 9)



a capillary control of the territory by means of a series of forts and watchtowers, situated at high places and crests and characterised by their imposing height (up to 10 m) and circular buttresses. Currently assigned to the Hindu Śāhi period on the basis of surface finds, they might nonetheless have had an earlier phase, although in view of the lack of any systematic research this remains mere speculation (Olivieri 2003: 31 ff.; esp. 40).

Significantly, the mapping of the rock sculptures and the military architecture chart two different geographical ranges: while the Buddhist sculptures run north-east from the Barikot area, the Śāhi forts stretch out from the Swat-Panjkora area to Buner, along the main transit roads in this crucial zone connecting the limes of Kunar in Afghanistan with Kashmir and the Mardan plain (Olivieri 2003: 42; figs. 45, 53). Thus, what archaeology is revealing about Swat’s topography in late antiquity seems to match Tibetan and Chinese sources of the eighth century, which describe Uḍḍiyāna as split into two parts, one dependent on the Laghman area, the other ruled by the king Indrabhūti (Tucci 1958: 324, fn. 1). Whether real or legendary, the king Indrabhūti epitomises the existence of a political entity with a defined ideological profile, where Buddhism evidently still played a relevant role. The concentration of the Buddhist rock reliefs in the north-eastern portion of Swat adds to the literary records the support of a material evidence that, though still vague and isolated, is reinforced by a symmetrical opposition: in the area around Barikot, where the concentration of Buddhist rock reliefs decreases, alien religious expressions seem to take over.

As for the Buddhist community, it probably did not receive from the Śāhi rulers any significant support (at least from the economic viewpoint), as the poor conditions of its settlements witness, but it also never suffered from them any prohibition or restriction of its activities.

## 2.5 – The crisis of Uḍḍiyāna: facts and fancy

In Swat, as anywhere else, reappraisal is now due of the opinion widely held among the scholars of past generations that the decline of Buddhism can be directly imputed to the invasion of the Hunnic people and their absolute lust for destruction.<sup>36</sup>

The most telling negative evidence in this respect we owe to Songyun, who arrived in India around 520 but made no mention of wreck and ruin. At the time of his arrival, according to the *Luoyang Qielanji* (A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang), Gandhāra was ruled by the second or third Hephthalite sovereign, who was said to have a cruel disposition and often apt to massacre. The text, however, makes no mention of religious persecution of the Buddhists, although the king did not subscribe to the faith, instead showing zealous devotion to the gods of his own people. Nevertheless, just how little his personal faith affected the destiny of Buddhism can be seen in the enthusiastic description Songyun gave of the city of Shahbaz Garhi, its inhabitants and, indeed, its Buddhist foundation. Equally positive is the picture he painted of Uḍḍiyāna, whose king is actually described as a fervent Buddhist (Beal 1958 [1884]: xciii; Kuwayama 1989: 92-94).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> A new and more detailed historical panorama is being worked out by scholars dealing with the Hunnic period, especially with regard to the different waves of peoples which appeared across Central Asia/India starting from the fourth century CE – often improperly referred to as Hephthalites – and their non-destructive impact. The number and importance of scholarly contributions is by now too big to be fully accounted for here. Some of the most relevant to this study are Kuwayama 1989; Alram 1996, 2007; Callieri 1999, 2002; Grenet 2002; de la Vaissière 2005, 2007; Melzer 2006; ur Rahman, Grenet and Sims Williams 2006; Vondrovec 2008. Re-examination of archaeological sources also provides negative evidence of the havoc attributed to the Hunnic waves; see for instance Thakur 1967: 260; Stavisky 1993/1994; Dani 1986: 6, 148; Tarzi 2009; Filigenzi 2010b; Pidaev, Annaev and Fussman 2011: 17.

<sup>37</sup> A recent manuscript on the history of Kalam (Mankiralay 1987), translated from the Pashto and based on sources probably including local traditions passed down orally or in manuscript, speaks of the peaceful and prosperous reign of Kala, a Hephthalite sovereign closely related to Mehr Gul (Mihirakula, nephew or grandchild of Kala according to the manuscript). He is said to have wrested the throne of Swat from the cruel local sovereign Raj Singh, with the approval of the population. A follower of Buddhism, of amiable and just nature, he is reported to have boosted the urban development and economic prosperity of Swat and to have assigned cultivable land to the Huns, who had been exiled from the territory controlled by Mihirakula. This resulted in the creation of numerous colonies, above all in northern Swat, that had previously been scantily populated (*ibid.*: 298-299).

The very different picture that emerges from the description of Xuanzang, who records a general decline in number and wealth of the Buddhist foundations of the North-West in the first half of the seventh century, poses challenging questions about the fate of Uḍḍiyāna Buddhism and its capacity to nurture significant doctrinaire and artistic developments.

From the mere comparison of the two accounts we can only conclude that the span of time elapsing between the visits of Songyun and Xuanzang saw a significant reversal that changed the face of the region, possibly caused by some natural calamity. Being highly seismically active, the areas of Northern Pakistan have experienced many disastrous earthquakes and floods during historical times.<sup>38</sup> Relevant archaeological evidence comes from the urban settlement of Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, still under excavation, where Period IX marks a severe decay of the lower settlement after episodes of collapsing and floods (Callieri 2010: esp. 375-377; Olivieri forthcoming).<sup>39</sup> Repetitions of large-scale seismic events might have worsened the situation and further reduced, or re-shaped, the intertwined networks of Buddhist foundations and urban settlements.

However, Songyun also tells us of a war that the king of Gandhāra reportedly waged for three years against Kashmir, probably not so much for purely territorial ambitions as to gain control over trade with the region of the Salt Range. The conflict with Kashmir is directly pointed to as the cause of the general discontent arising from the heavy taxes levied on the subject populations (Beal 1958 [1884]: 93; 95-97). It is in fact quite possible that the state of war with Kashmir (probably periodic and in any case always latent) also involved the bordering regions economically and politically, aggravating their progressive impoverishment. It is when the Hunnic domination came to an end (and not when it started), around the mid-sixth century, that the climate of instability and weakness – both economic and political – probably intensified in regions like Swat, which were never wholly integrated into a centralised state structure. Ruled by local chieftains on the basis of a “feudal” kind of system, they constituted small vassal states that held on to a sort of independence paying tributes to one or another of the foreign invaders. Although this particular system inevitably meant chronic weakness from the political point of view as well as weighing heavily on the economy, it did, as Tucci (1958: 282) rightly pointed out, allay the more serious hazards of violent, destructive invasions.

## 2.6 – Again Xuanzang and the archaeological portrait of his time

Although possibly hyperbolic, the statement of Xuanzang about the state of neglect and ruin which so many Buddhist foundations had fallen into suggests that there must have been a quantity of decaying monuments and monasteries dotting the landscape in the seventh century. This fact actually finds confirmation in the archaeological record. As discussed above, in comparison with the earlier centuries, the number had certainly been much reduced.

The natural disasters and economic distress that seem to have severely affected the network of Buddhist settlements in Swat must have led to efforts and resources being concentrated on a small number of sacred areas that, for one reason or another, were considered of particular significance. We know, for instance, that important sacred areas such as Saidu Sharif I were never rebuilt, while we have signs of activity (although at different times) in several others, like Butkara I (Faccenna 1980-1981: Part 1, 11 ff., Part 3, 635), Shnaisha (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991; Abdur Rahman 1993), Malam-jabba (Ashraf Khan 1993: 40-44; Rafiullah Khan 2011), and, to a more limited extent, Pānṛ I (Faccenna, Khan and Nadiem 1993: 130), to mention just the best-known examples. Other foundations probably also went through some sort of restoration, as indicated by additional – although less circumstantial – archaeological evidence.

<sup>38</sup> Just recently, in 2005 and 2010, we have had tragic demonstrations of what earthquakes and floods can inflict on these areas. For a brief assessment of the seismotectonics of Pakistan and earthquake recurrence, see [http://www.pakmet.com.pk/SeismicReport\\_PMD.pdf](http://www.pakmet.com.pk/SeismicReport_PMD.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> The chronology of Period IX is being now better detailed after new excavations. The suggested dating is late third-early fourth century CE (Olivieri forthcoming). Analogous episodes can be inferred from the archaeological record, probably also around the

Of special relevance to the understanding of the historical background of the rock sculpture, and particularly with regard to the chronological concurrence between the rock sculpture and refurbishment of ancient sacred areas, are the data provided by the excavation of Shnaisha. The fortuitous position of this religious foundation – open to the north, towards the valley, and protected to the south by the Tharkana heights – together with the grandeur of the main *stūpa*, the quality of the sculptural decoration and the presence of numerous other remains in the immediate vicinity all point to a complex that must once have enjoyed exceptional prestige.

Striking in this context is an exterior addition to the body of the main *stūpa* made at a later date – a simple chapel abutting on the south-east corner built with perfunctory technique using mostly recycled material from the site itself (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: 185; Abdur Rahman 1993: 15, 16, 20 and pl. VIIa). The chapel housed a stela (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: 18 and pl. 13; Abdur Rahman 1993: 20, 22 and pls. XXa, XX-VIIb; here, S179; II: Figs. 73a,b; GS 26) which, in terms of typology and style, clearly belongs to the rock sculptures class.<sup>40</sup> The concise and occasionally contradictory preliminary excavation reports do not allow any precise assessment of the find. It would be useful to ascertain whether the chapel was the place where the stela was originally installed; the fact that the missing pieces have not been found raises some doubts on this score. In particular, the stela, broken off in the lower part (the figure is apodal), rested on a base that was found in the collapsed material, but the authors give only the barest details of it. Qamar and Ashraf Khan (1991: 185) offer a brief description of it that does not, however, tally with the photo later published by Abdur Rahman (1993: XXVIIIa). Only close examination could indicate whether the base is to be considered an integral part of the sculpture, or whether – as seems equally likely – it was a pastiche combining a late piece (the stela) with an earlier one (the base) retrieved from discarded materials at the site (Taddei 1998: 178-179).

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the stela – whether specially made for the place where it was found or transported there from elsewhere – was utilised in the limited restoration of a monument already in a state of abandonment or serious decay. The prominent position of the sculpture in a newly built chapel makes the matter all the more significant, especially considering that the renovation seems to have been made somewhat clumsily and hastily, with the help of reused sculptural material.<sup>41</sup>

This remains to date the only case known to us of a sculpture of this type introduced into a newly built structure in a pre-existing religious monument. Nevertheless, a different but still significant piece of evidence is offered by Butkara I, where a stela representing Padmapāṇi (C27; II: Figs. 28a,b) was found in the immediate vicinity of the sacred enclosure. Although a clear stratigraphic relationship is lacking here, we can dare to conjecture that also in this case there must have been a significant relationship between the rock sculpture and the last refurbishment of the sacred area.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, settings of the sort featured by these two sites may have been more frequent than archaeological research could ascertain to date and are still waiting to be brought to light.

## 2.7 – Changing patterns: some indications from the archaeological record

The image of decay portrayed by Xuanzang’s description of Uḍḍiyāna also conveys a notion of cultural stagnation, if not regression, a fact that we usually read literally and take for granted without questioning the possible cultural bias of the witness. In fact, we cannot help suspecting that his judgement derived from some diffidence towards the

fourth century CE, for instance at Butkara I (Faccenna 1980-1981: Part 3, 635; see below) and Saidu Sharif I (Faccenna 1995: 482, 488; pls. 42, 46-48; Filigenzi 2010b: fn. 5).

<sup>40</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this stela and its archaeological context, see Chap. 5.2.

<sup>41</sup> The most important aspects of this phase of restoration from both the technical and symbolic point of view seem to have escaped the authors of the excavation, but they are given close examination by Taddei (1998: 182; 2006: 48- 49). He points out that the criterion used for selecting the material to be re-used shows little regard for the formal coherence of the result and is based, rather, on the relevance to the selected decorative theme, thus favouring subjects of an “iconic” nature.

<sup>42</sup> This renovation – perfunctory as it evidently was – corresponds to Period [of Great Stūpa] 5, dated by Faccenna to the end of the seventh to eighth century (Faccenna 1980-1981: Part 1, 127).

emerging Vajrayāna, of which Swat represented one of the four most prestigious centres (Lévi 1915: 105; Tucci 1958: 280). For instance, vague hints by Songyun about Uḍḍiyāna's fame for magic spells (Beal 1958 [1884]: LXXXIX, XCVIII) are reinforced by Xuanzang, who was dismayed by Uḍḍiyāna monks no longer being able to grasp the true message of the Buddha and (as we infer from the context) dabbling in magic. Xuanzang makes a point here of mentioning those who forbid it (*ibid.*: 120-121). It can be assumed that such statements correspond to the true state of affairs, but they could also be a clue that a different form of Buddhism – namely a proto-Vajrayāna – had evolved in the region. Evidence in support of the latter hypothesis is provided by the rock sculptures, which, in addition to the general characteristics discussed above, conform to a new iconographic lexicon in which we can detect the formative stage of a vajrayanic – or proto-vajrayanic – orientation of the doctrine.

The above-mentioned considerations lead to the question of whether, or how, the complex and sophisticated aesthetics of the rock sculptures – indeed the only consistent evidence against cultural regression – might help in better interpreting the somewhat disjointed picture of their historical framework. One wonders whether, having in mind the earlier “Gandharan” patterns of visual art and architecture, we fail to recognise in the objectively scanty and controversial archaeological record a watershed process that accomplished the transition from old to new models and media.

Excavations at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, the ancient Bazira of the classical sources, have moreover provided us with new pieces of information that invite us to reassess already collected archaeological records with a new critical approach. In trench BKG2, in an area partly occupied by buildings of uncertain nature (religious?),<sup>43</sup> the layers corresponding to the Hindu Śāhi Period display a noticeable change in architectural techniques and materials. The large-scale use of brightly painted, thick clay coats has been attested not only by remains still *in situ*, but even more by plentiful traces in the archaeological layers they melted into. In some cases, these coats of clay evened out the surfaces of rough masonry. This was in sharp contrast to the accurate, clean-cut stone masonry that, though still in use, seems either to represent the survival of earlier traditions observed in the lower settlement prior to the crisis of Period IX, or else was distinct for some functional reason.<sup>44</sup>

A transition towards decreasing the use of cut stone and increasing the use of clay and/or stucco was also observed in sacred Buddhist areas. We still have a blurred picture, however, of the causes, effects, and time of this process. Although it is a matter of record that stucco and clay are the predominant media in “late-Gandharan” Buddhist sculpture, we still know all too little about their coeval architectural settings. The new trends in sculpture and architecture pose challenges to archaeological interpretation, since their real magnitude and impact are extremely difficult to verify. In most cases, changes are only insufficiently documented by partial additions that overlap existing layouts. Moreover, as the durability of structures depends on the durability of their materials old installations in stone have often survived where later additions made of more short-lived materials have almost disappeared.

Without regular maintenance clay, stucco and wood decay rapidly. Therefore, one must consider that very little of any late additions and repairs made with such materials could survive centuries of total abandonment in a country that long ago acquired a different religious identity. It is clear that even the most careful investigation will not be able to fill all the gaps completely. Hasty excavations, often carried out in the framework of rescue archaeology, further aggravate this problem. Under such circumstances, traces of ephemeral buildings that may have succeeded the solid masonry of earlier times can easily be unnoticed or wrongly interpreted. This can be seen in the case of the rescue excavation of the sacred area of Nawagai, where the remains of the latest phase were only summarily recorded, and attributed to “non-believers” since they were not in keeping with the traditional “Gandharan” standards (Qamar 2004: esp. 185).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Filigenzi in Callieri *et al.* 1992: 37 ff.; Filigenzi 2010c: 411.

<sup>44</sup> By contrast, nevertheless, a magnificent religious and military stone architecture flourished in Swat under the Śāhis. I refer here to the above-mentioned defence system and the Vaishnava temple of Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai.

<sup>45</sup> The poorly built structure leaning against the *stūpa*, attributed by Qamar to a phase of de-sacralisation of the site, actually closely resembles the chapels of the late phase at Shnaisha (see above). In spite of its different connotations, some analogy can also be detected with Shrine [17] at Amluk-dara (Olivieri 2014: 357, fn. 13).

A further exemplifying case is represented by the Buddhist site of Safi Abad, in the Mardan District, which, after being heavily looted and damaged by illegal diggings, was submitted to a rescue excavation in the early 1990s (ul Wahab 2012). Though insufficient, the documentation published by the Archaeological Department allows us to hypothesise that the site was renovated or possibly founded – which would be even more significant – in the late- or post-Kushan period. If excavated and documented under better circumstances, the site would probably have provided a precious instant picture of that extremely interesting phase of co-existence of stone and clay/stucco which preceded a large-scale transition from the former to the latter.

Hence, it seems that it is not only a matter of objective difficulties but also of *modus operandi*. A change of cultural mentality is advisable, which may induce us, archaeologists and art historians, not to overemphasise the “classical” Gandharan art and architecture at the expenses of its still unknown – and prejudicially under-evaluated – aftermath.

Given the paucity of accurate archaeological records, the data provided by the excavation of the sacred area of Butkara I, identified by Tucci (1978: 60-61) with the splendid Talo/Tolo visited by Songyun and the Dhumat’ala of the Tibetan pilgrim O rgyan pa (Id.: 1971: 369 ff., 396-399), is particularly valuable (Fig. 11). The long archaeological sequence, stretching from the third century BCE to the tenth/eleventh century CE, and carefully recorded by Domenico Faccenna, allows a focused investigation into both the continuity and the changes in sculptural and architectural patterns.<sup>46</sup>

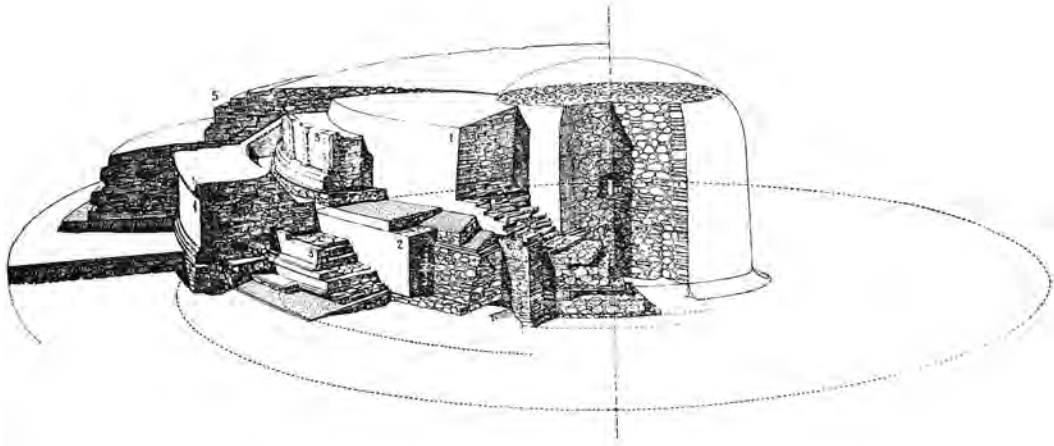


Fig. 11 – Butkara I (courtesy MAI)

At Butkara I, five main building periods have been detected, corresponding to the construction and four successive reconstructions of the main *stūpa* (GSt 1-5; Fig. 12). A shift towards plastic materials and related techniques can be observed on a large scale during the period of GSt 4 (end of third/early fourth century-seventh century CE), especially in Phase 5 of it (fifth-seventh century; Faccenna 1980-1981: Part 1, 77-120; Part 3, 649-64, 676-693). Of particular interest is a chronological clue provided by a secondary deposit of coins in one of the niches of GSt 4, which accompanied the re-positioning and restoration of a relief panel sealing the niche that had probably fallen down. This episode, which occurred in Phase 4, took place in the framework of extensive building and restoration activity after widespread collapsing and damage, most probably caused by an earthquake (Faccenna 1980-1981 Part 3, 635). The *terminus post quem* for Phase 4 is offered by the latest

<sup>46</sup> For an overview of the literary sources related to Butkara I and a stratigraphic/chronological synopsis of the site, see Faccenna 1980-1981: 171-174. I refer to Filigenzi 2010b: esp. 389-391 and Filigenzi 2012b: 113 ff. for a more detailed summary of the cultural, chronological, and historical questions connected with this site.

coins in this deposit, which were issued by Kavād I and dated by Göbl to about 356/360 CE.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the large-scale renewal of the site reveals a departure from earlier artistic traditions, and thanks to a reliable archaeological sequence we can place this event within a specific time span.



**Fig. 12** – Butkara I: Isometrical view showing the five periods of the Great Stūpa (after Faccenna 1980-1981: III.1, pl. V)

Indeed, the archaeological evidence shows that in both Butkara I and Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai, the increasing use of media such as clay and most probably wood can be connected with periods of economic distress, which might well have obliged cheaper building options using low-cost materials and processing techniques. Nevertheless, it must also be taken into consideration that there may have been other triggering or concomitant factors, such as the spreading of new ideas and tastes radiating from Afghanistan, Southern Central Asia and Xinjiang, where the large-scale use of clay and wood in architecture, architectural decoration and sculpture is a well-rooted tradition.

Certainly the more direct connection of Uḍḍiyāna to Afghanistan, prompted by the changes in the geo-political scenario and the entering of Swat (or at least a part of it) first into the orbit of the Kidarites, and then into that of the Śāhi of Kabul (Filigenzi 2010c: 409 ff.), must have contributed to an easier flow of ideas, models and techniques. Thus, we can infer from the available evidence that the trend of artistic and architectural transformations we detect at various times in late antique Uḍḍiyāna is to be regarded as a multifarious phenomenon, one not only of an economic nature but also (and possibly even more) of cultural relevance. In particular with relation to Buddhist art, one must recognise that in the above-mentioned areas strong and captivating artistic forms developed precisely because of the malleable materials, such as clay, being used. The Central Asiatic artistic expression based on coroplastics contributed significantly to a new aesthetics in Buddhist art, with gigantism, pathos and polychromy as distinctive features. On the other hand, this new aesthetic is evidently patterned on important developments in Buddhist heuristics, gnoseology and praxis. The balanced match of forms and contents gave birth to a new and widely-shared indexicality, of which we only know disconnected parts. A broader reflection on cultural contexts is indeed an unavoidable challenge that cannot be answered by excessive localism of studies, or the one-to-one relationship between iconographic lemma and specific literary references.

<sup>47</sup> See Faccenna, Göbl and Khan 1993: esp. 106; I also refer to this work for the circumstances of the discovery. Here I would like to limit myself to remarking that the substantive argument of the coins' dates perfectly matches the chronology that had already been proposed by Faccenna (1980-1981; Part 3, 635) on the basis of the entire archaeological evidence. For a summary, see Filigenzi 2010b. I take the occasion here to amend a mistake on p. 392 of that article, where it should read that the deposit of coins dates to the construction of Phase 4, not GSt 4.

Nevertheless, for the time being steps in this direction must be taken from working hypotheses. As for late antique Uḍḍiyāna, one of these concerns the aesthetic dimension of the Buddhist monasteries. If, as archaeology shows, the old architecture and sculpture in stone was largely replaced by other, more perishable materials, comparative diachronic analysis lets us conjecture that the appearance of the new buildings, with either civil or religious functions, must have closely resembled the appearance of buildings in rural Pakistan still being built today, or more closely parallel the specifically Buddhist architecture we know in the Himalayan countries.<sup>48</sup> However, with respect to the latter, the construction in late antique Uḍḍiyāna was probably on a much smaller scale since, as mentioned above, the new trends were mostly reflected in minor additions to pre-existing monuments.

On the other hand, at the synchronic level we can only investigate other incomplete archaeological evidence. The closest comparisons might be offered by Afghanistan, provided we are able to get fresh data. If we do, we will also have a better chance of retrieving overlooked details from earlier documentation. Encouraging clues are being provided by recent discoveries in Mes Aynak.<sup>49</sup> Among the many exceptional finds from this site, special mention should be made of wooden architectural elements, decorated in relief that still preserves abundant traces of a polychrome painted finish (Fig. 13). Wood is an essential component in clay architecture, but generally we can only guess about its use in ancient times. In addition to customary practices of re-use, the preservation of wooden artefacts in archaeological contexts is hampered by their perishable nature itself. As an organic material, wood normally decays under combined biological and chemical degradation when buried in earth. Only in desert sites, such as in Xinjiang, does the extremely dry climate allow long-term preservation. In other areas – including Swat – we have little more than impressions or negligible fragments. However, thanks to these crucial finds from Mes Aynak we can now reduce the distance between reality and hypotheses. Thus, despite the negative or incomplete evidence, we can try to imagine what the surviving monasteries – their number is difficult to estimate – of late antique Uḍḍiyāna looked like, with their smooth lines of clay, the bright colours of the surfaces, and the visually powerful interplay of architectural elements made of wood.

But if for the monasteries this was a time of change and not only of mere regression, less static interpretations of Buddhist monasticism might be explored as well. One must wonder whether and how the monastic system itself was affected by internal changes. Dissenting or alternative views may have led some of the Bud-

<sup>48</sup> As for Pakistan, traces of prestigious public architecture in wood and clay are represented by wooden mosques, of which relatively few samples survive, especially after the wave of modernisation that flowed into the country in the 1980s and ‘90s. A project to document surviving wooden mosques was carried out in the 1980s by the Islamic team of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, under the directorship of Umberto Scerrato (see Scerrato 1980, 1981, 1983). The project has recently been resumed under the supervision of Maria Vittoria Fontana (“The Wooden Mosques. An IsIAO Architectural Project in Pakistan”); a further project (“The Wooden Artifacts. An IsIAO Ethnographic Project in Pakistan”; director Ilaria E. Scerrato; IsIAO/ Comitato Ev-K2-CNR; funding institution: SEED [Social, Economic, Environmental Development]) is presently documenting the traditional wooden architecture in Baltistan. See also the essential contributions by Jettmar (1960), Dani (1989), Klimburg (1997, 2005). For a recent re-examination of the wooden architecture of the Hindu Kush/Pamir area, see Schadl 2009: esp. fn. 44.

<sup>49</sup> The site of Mes Aynak lies in Logar, about 30 km south-east of Kabul. Once an al-Qaida training camp, it is home to ancient Buddhist settlements of astonishing beauty (provisionally dated between the fifth and ninth century), which were probably founded there due to the site’s mineral wealth. As evidenced by abundant archaeological traces, the resources of the site (the world’s second-largest copper reserve) were already exploited in ancient times, likely by the monastic communities themselves. In 2007, a thirty-year lease was granted for the copper mine to the China Metallurgical Group Corporation (CMGC). Given the economic importance of this project (\$3.5 billion, with an expected revenue of \$880 million for the Afghan Government even before production begins), the area is soon destined to become a giant open-cast mine. Racing against time, the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, with the support of the Délégation Archéologique Française, launched in 2009 a rescue excavation of this impressively large site, which had been explored only in part. Following an agreement with the CMGC and the Ministry of Mines and thanks to Chinese and Afghan funds, the initial project has recently been extended. Except for some short summaries (Paiman 2010; AAVV 2011; Litecka *et al.* 2013), the results of the excavations are still largely unpublished. I am grateful to my colleagues and dear friends Philippe Marquis, Nader Rassouli and Abdul Qader Timori for their generosity in granting me access to the relevant documentation.



Fig. 13 – Wooden architectural elements from Mes Aynak (courtesy DAFA)

dhist intelligentsia to different practices or a hermit way of life away from the monasteries, thus laying the groundwork for the *siddha* path.<sup>50</sup> Once again, how far this social phenomenon can be traced through the archaeological record depends on the receptiveness of our investigative tools.

## 2.8 – Rock sculptures, ritual practices, and pilgrimage paths

As a new picture emerges of late antique Uḍḍiyāna, one can no longer accept the idea that the Buddhist rock art was simply an economical way to mark out ruined sacred places and restore them to life. Too close and sophisticated is the relationship between sculptures and the local topography – a relationship that is not confined to the physical proximity to holy monuments, but rather encompasses the landscape around the sculptures as well as the singular tie between the images and their material support. The illusion of the images being *svayambhū* created by the artists is a way to express in fully manifest forms the strong geomantic character of the landscape and re-establish the earlier sacred topography through a sort of “revelation” or “rediscovery” of its immanent sacredness. Hence, one must wonder whether the underlying concept of these sculptures represents a mere – albeit insightful – interpretation of the *svayambhū*, or rather a conscious and congruent visual counterpart to doctrinal issues connected with the “revealed” nature of tantric texts.<sup>51</sup> Such a conceptual coincidence appears even more likely – and significant as well – in the light of the particular role played by Uḍḍiyāna

<sup>50</sup> Though based on somewhat different reasons, similar considerations have recently been expressed by K. Behrendt (2010). On the possible presence of a *siddha* among the characters depicted in the rock sculpture of Swat, see Chap. 6.

<sup>51</sup> I am grateful to Giacomella Orofino for this suggestion and, in general, for being unconditionally available for exchanging ideas and viewpoints.



in the genesis of Vajrayāna and its textual elaboration. According to the tradition, the *Guhyasamājatantra*, the king – and earliest – of all Tantras, was *revealed* to the king of Uḍḍiyāna, Indrabhūti, by Śākyamuni himself or, in a different version of the story, passed on to Indrabhūti by Vajrapāṇi, who had heard the revelation when travelling in Uḍḍiyāna with Śākyamuni (Tucci 1949: I, 121, 212-215; 1977: 68-69; Roerich 1988: 359).<sup>52</sup>

Thus, in this particular cultural and geographic environment a common background must have existed between the rock sculptures and the textual tradition. If this is the case (whatever the linguistic expression in the semantic memory of these places), we might dare consider the intertwined phenomenon of literary and artistic experience as a sort of forerunner to the *rang byung* and *gter ma* traditions, i.e. the visionary revelation so deeply embedded in Tibetan mysticism.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, the topographical and iconographical uniformity of the sculptures raises a number of general questions about how to read their physical environment. The available evidence suggests a close association with pilgrimage practices and their metaphorical re-enactment of the spiritual journey.<sup>54</sup> If this is the case, then they must have been related to pilgrimage routes whose existence and dimension can only be inferred through archaeological data, not any direct textual evidence or a surviving tradition. One might imagine a local road network serving marginalised Buddhist communities from across the Swat valley and leading to dilapidated sacred areas. However, our perception of things might be misled by the deceptive appearance of macroscopic data. In fact, if one begins to question what seems obvious, some alternative hypotheses take shape that fit the sparse and apparently conflicting pieces of evidence even better.

## 2.9 – Politics, economy, market, and trade routes

Tibetan and Chinese sources of the eighth century attest to the strategic importance of Uḍḍiyāna for controlling the routes that connected Central Asia and northern India (Tucci 1958: fn. 1; 1977: 75 ff.). One wonders, therefore, whether and to what extent the region might have played an active role in this road network. Once again, however, we move among dispersed portions of data. Any evidence that can be retrieved is valuable, although we still have the problem of finding the right place for it within so many blank spaces.

The cultural richness that characterised Swat, especially at the acme of its splendour, during the Kushan period (Tucci 1977: 67, who cites the evidence of the *Bēishī* [*Pei-shih*]), rested on a flourishing economy that was in turn fuelled by a wide range of resources. Agriculture was thriving and must have afforded conspic-

<sup>52</sup> Scholars do not unanimously agree on the identification of Uḍḍiyāna with modern-day Swat and, consequently, on the close connection of Swat with the emergence of Vajrayāna. For an overview of the different hypotheses, see for instance Donaldson 2001: 8 ff. Nevertheless, most of the contrasting opinions are mainly based on textual evidence and do not take archaeological sources into account.

<sup>53</sup> Famous *rang byung* (self-existent) images on rock surfaces are venerated at Dentig, where there is also a cave blessed by Padmasambhava (Ricard 1994: 35, fn. 5); another famous image of miraculous self-formation is that of Hayagriva in the Agang Monastery (*ibid.*: 35, fn. 7). For a summary, mainly focused on textual materials, of the *gter ma* (“rediscovered treasures”) tradition, see Gyatso 1992, 1996. As for Swat, it is not by chance perhaps that according to local lore the Buddhist rock carvings would mark the presence of hidden treasures nearby (Khaliq 2013), a belief which is likely to trace back to an old concept no longer understood but originally much the same as the Tibetan *gter ma*. I would like to make clear that, even if this hypothesis is correct, we still may not think in terms of a one-way flow of ideas, but rather of a polycentric world that exchanged experiences, viewpoints, and reflections on topical issues, as was the case in the development of Buddhist Tantrism, mysticism and esotericism. Archaeological evidence from more or less coeval sites that are quite distant from one another helps to establish a sort of horizontal sequence, thus significantly expanding the historical framework of certain central concepts of Buddhist metaphysics (see below).

<sup>54</sup> Although no textual evidence can be directly correlated to this specific network of pilgrimage routes and their mystical character, the underlying concept must have been not much dissimilar from living practices in the Tibetan Bonpo environment (cf. Ramble 2007), whose possible connection with the aboriginal beliefs of the northern regions of Pakistan could be now re-evaluated on more firm grounds after the recent discovery in Swat of a huge amount of non-Buddhist monuments (see below). As already mentioned, the contribution of masters coming from modern-day Gilgit to the transformation of the primitive Tibetan Bön in a codified system was nonetheless already pointed out by Tucci (1958: 279, 282; Hoffmann 1969).

uous exports to the bordering mountain regions, valuable and marketable minerals including gold and silver were available (Tucci 1958: 280-281), and the region's craftwork was renowned for its quality and in demand far and wide, as in the case of the famous Swati blankets, or *kambalas*, an industry whose ancient origins are recorded in Sanskrit sources (*ibid.*: 281 and fn. 16; Stein 1930: 63; Srinivasan 1990). Swat's economy must also have benefited significantly from active participation in the trade prospering on the caravan routes connecting India with China and Central Asia. However, business was particularly vulnerable to vicissitudes, both political and environmental, that could gravely penalise the region's economy. Probably the role Swat played in this respect was also at its peak during the Kushan period, when strong state unity was able to guarantee a trade traffic monopoly. Swat, connected with Central Asia through Chitral and the roads joining Laghman to the Indus, enjoyed an extremely advantageous geographical position, but as great powers – such as the Kushan Empire first and the Hūṇa rule afterwards – came to an end and the course of historical events became more episodic when not explicitly adverse, Swat would presumably have taken a more peripheral position in relation to the great trade routes.

Traffic on the route that Swat was directly connected with – the road running from India to Central Asia via Kunar – was probably significantly reduced by the competition of alternative routes created or simply enhanced both to satisfy the needs of a more complex trade network and to exploit the higher safety standards they could offer. One of these alternative routes was developed in the first half of the sixth century through Tokharistan, Kāpiśī, and Bāmiyān. Records of traffic in this direction can be found in the accounts of famous pilgrims; although such attestations are numerically very scant, they find indirect confirmation in the archaeological evidence. Traffic along the caravan routes traversing Afghanistan can in fact be considered, as Kuwayama argues (1987: *passim*; Id. 2006: 125), a decisive economic incentive in the rise of Bāmiyān and more generally of that region, attested to by the religious foundations that flourished there.

Nevertheless, the shift in caravan traffic to the west is hardly likely to have been so drastic as to do away with the eastern routes traversing Gilgit. Indeed, recent archaeological evidence suggests that the latter were extremely vital, especially in the period between the fifth and eighth centuries. Field research and studies conducted by the German-Pakistani mission led by Karl Jettmar and his successor Harald Hauptmann (*Antiquities of Northern Pakistan* 1-5, with complete bibliography of the preceding contributions) are increasingly shedding light on the history of the northern regions of Pakistan (Gilgit, Chilas, Baltistan and the northern side of the Indus-Kohistan).

The large number of petroglyphs and inscriptions found confirms that the kingdom of Palur/Bolor, including Gilgit and Baltistan (possibly to be identified respectively with the Little and Great Palur/Bolor of the sources), constituted the most powerful political unit in the region of Karakorum in the period between the fifth and eighth centuries thanks to the strategic position on the route connecting the Tarim basin to Kashmir and, through the latter, to India – a route that was moreover already in use in the first century CE (Jettmar 1989b: *passim*). Of great historical and cultural significance is also the distinctive production of bronze sculptures that can now be definitely related to the rulers of the Palola/Paṭola Śāhi lineage.<sup>55</sup> Besides witnessing to the Buddhist affiliation of the Gilgit aristocracy, these sculptures, as remarked by von Hinüber (2004: 9-10), also had substantial bearing on the development of bronze casting in Tibet. Their high artistic level, especially in consideration of their earliness with respect to the “Kashmiri” school, is a positive evidence for the excellence of local workshops, as well as for the country (or the local intelligentsia) being at a leading-edge of the Buddhist world. However, as will be seen later, the bronzes from Gilgit cannot be considered an isolated phenomenon. Rather, they are to be seen as the expression of a broader cultural (and somehow political) entity, as proved by kindred artistic productions in Swat, not only bronze sculptures but also, indeed, our rock sculptures.

<sup>55</sup> The basic lines of the history of the reign of Palur/Bolor, the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty and the strategic importance of Gilgit had already been provided independently but with fairly close analogy by Tucci (1977) and Jettmar (1977). The studies on the Gilgit manuscript by von Hinüber (1983; 1986/1987) represent the most authoritative confirmation of the reconstruction proposed by the two scholars. For a more detailed discussion on these bronzes and their relevance to the present study see Chap. 3.

Though the exact configuration of Palur/Bolor and adjoining areas is still open to discussion, south of Palur/Bolor lay the territories of the Daradas, which for some centuries fore and after the Common Era constituted a political unit or, as better said by Jettmar, a “system”, still in existence between the fifth and the eighth century CE (Jettmar 1977: 421). Even if distinct identities, Palur/Bolor and the Daradas’ territories were certainly in close contact with each other, in virtue of geographical contiguity, routes, economic interests and cultural ties. Swat/Uḍḍiyāna was part of this system, as one of those principalities that, though formally belonging to this or that kingdom, basically maintained some sort of independent status. It might be useful to recall here what said before about the (legendary?) king Indrabhūti and his alleged sovereignty over one part of Uḍḍiyāna, which might correspond to the abovementioned division of the Swat territory into two different political units, marked by the presence/absence (or better, rarity) of Buddhist rock sculptures. The part ruled by Indrabhūti (whom we are tempted to consider here as the name – real or fictitious it matters little – of some Darada lord) would thus represent a zone of cultural continuity – and privileged interaction – with Palur/Bolor. This would also add substance to the still vague connections between material evidence and transmitted traditions concerning the active role of Buddhist and Bonpo masters from Uḍḍiyāna and Gilgit in the further Himalayan developments.

In the route network connecting the Tarim Basin with India, a position of great prestige was enjoyed by Chilas – which seems at the time to have been included as a more or less independent frontier district in the kingdom of the Daradas (Jettmar 1989a: XIX) – since the shortest and easiest way from Gilgit to Kashmir passed through it (Biddulph 1893; Tucci 1977: 81-84). Indeed, it is in Chilas, along the course of the Indus, that the most interesting concentrations of petroglyphs and inscriptions of the area – in terms of both quantity and variety – have been found.<sup>56</sup>

On the evidence of their distribution and the environmental characteristics of the complexes housing them, Jettmar draws certain conclusions of a historical-cultural nature, including the likelihood that there was an important market centre at Shatial, created mainly to offset a presumed interdiction forbidding populations from the west (in this case Sogdians above all) to encroach on Kashmir territory (Jettmar 1989a: XLII-XLV). Jettmar also conjectures that in ancient times – as it still is today – the stretch of the Indus between Chilas and Harban was much frequented by gold-seekers (*ibid.*: XXXII). The activity may also have attracted the interest of merchants stranded here often for periods of months by adverse climatic and environmental conditions, the northern passes being viable only in the late autumn, the southern ones only in the summer. The fact that there was a great emporium and the appeal of some remunerative activity during prolonged stopovers would have accounted for the constant presence of travellers, and with them the concentration of petroglyphs and inscriptions in an area stretching westward from what were considered the most beaten tracks – places apparently insufficiently hospitable as to be chosen as a place to encamp.

Compared with the route via Kunar, the eastern way via Kashmir and the route further west, via Kāpiśī, must have enjoyed greater protection, guaranteed by the control of China, Tibet and Afghanistan. The Pamir regions, on the other hand, despite having an interest in maintaining an advantageous control over the caravan routes through alliances now with Tibet, now with China (Tucci 1977: 79), must have periodically borne the consequences of the conflicts between the two powers, with negative repercussions on their internal stability. As for Swat, it seems to have adopted a policy of friendly relations with China, as attested by Chinese sources that refer to contacts through ambassadors on missions from and to Uḍḍiyāna dating back as early as the sixth century. In 720 China sent through its ambassadors investiture to the king of Uḍḍiyāna and to other neigh-

<sup>56</sup> The accurate mapping of the petroglyphs has shown the great historical relevance of this phenomenon; they are an invaluable witness to artistic, ethnographic, religious, and economic issues that are otherwise nearly unknown. Iconographic and epigraphic records offer a synoptic glimpse of the cross-cultural configuration of these road networks (Höllmann 1996; Denwood 2007, 2008, 2009) as well as their human dimension, thus allowing us to see the flow of concepts and visual forms that moved and were channelled along these routes. In particular, I would like to stress the multifarious aspects of this “graffiti culture”, which can be considered a true visual compendium of ritual practices, social habits, artistic conventions and extemporaneous issues. It brings together elements as extreme as pious devotional acts and profane “pornographic” scenes (Sander 1989: 123-126, pl. 214). This uneven stratification of meanings, of artistic morphology and syntax, and of cultural contexts from perspectives both synchronic and diachronic is what offers us an unmatched glimpse into real life.

bouring states (Beckwith 1987: 91) but, with a subsequent diplomatic mission dated 745, it recognised the sovereignty of the king of Ki-pin (Kapiśa) over the region, possibly on account of a change in the policy of Swat, favouring Tibet (Tucci 1977: 75; 84-85; see also Prakash 1970: esp. 23 and 28; Kuwayama 1991: 283-284). Interestingly, this period roughly corresponds to the arrival in Tibet of Padmasambhava and other Indian masters, a fact that might also be interpreted as a consequence of the growth of the Tibetan political supremacy over much of these areas (Beckwith 1987: 91; 162, fn. 119).

When, moreover, we turn to the map of caravan routes, the position of Swat in itself stands as proof that it cannot have been radically cut out from them. As Fussman rightly observes (1986: 60), the Gilgit route could not be traced out on paper in a single line; rather, it consists of a series of itineraries “...se nouant autour de Gilgit, utilisant toutes les passées du Karakoram, toutes les vallées des affluents de l’Indus mais fort peu l’Indus lui-même, empruntant tous les passages possibles vers le Swat et le Gandhara, le Cachemire, le Panjab. Le voyageur choisissait son itinéraire de façon à pouvoir passer les cols avant qu’ils fussent bloqués par les neiges et à franchir les rivières en période de basses eaux (ce qui imposait souvent des arrêts de plusieurs mois), en fonction de la charge qu’il portait, des animaux de bat dont il pouvait ou non disposer, du nombre de porteurs dont éventuellement il avait besoin, des troubles politiques ou du brigandage qui pouvait lui interdire telle ou telle vallée.”<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, there were still in fact conditions favourable to Swat – if not a return to the splendours of its golden age, then at least a satisfactory economic and cultural life, albeit affected by occasional negative events. Even assuming that during the late antique period the most heavily travelled routes were the ones passing through Afghanistan, Chilas and Kashmir, and that Swat had lost its prior importance as its roads became only secondary, we may reasonably assume that Swat/Uḍḍiyāna must still have retained connections with the major routes sufficient to make its associated market viable and that its pilgrimage routes, too, were not obsolete, despite the fact that Buddhist settlements had diminished in both their number and wealth.

Thus, it may be further inferred that the flowering of the rock sculpture in Swat – albeit intimately related to the specific sacred topography of the area – was part of the framework of a wider cultural, political and economic geography. If this was indeed the case, we can start exploring new interpretive models for evaluating the historic and cultural ties between northern Pakistan, Central Asia, and the Himalayan countries.

<sup>57</sup> For a critical reappraisal of this question, see Neelis (2002; Id. 2010: 257 ff.), who stresses the importance of the direct route (or better, a capillary network of routes) to eastern Central Asia passing through Chitral, Swat and Upper Indus Valleys. See also Sinha 1971, where the uninterrupted connections between Swat and Gilgit are particularly stressed.

## CHAPTER 3: THE ICONOGRAPHIC AND STYLISTIC LANGUAGE OF THE SCULPTURES

### 3.1 – The general characteristics of the iconography

As shown in the previous chapters, the overall appearance of the rock sculpture is greatly conditioned by certain peculiar factors: first, the limited iconographic repertory, and second, the general figurative concept, according to which the image is treated as an icon and displayed in its specific attributions, devoid of reference to contingent actions or situations. This latter characteristic emerges in all its simplicity with the numerous isolated images, but takes on more weighty significance in the composite reliefs – paratactic groups of figures, each enclosed within the individual self, showing no gesture or attitude expressive of communicative relations between them. Any connection with the long tradition of visual narrative appears to be totally lacking in these sculptures; indeed, with very few exceptions narrative subjects seem to have become obsolete in post-Gandharan Buddhist art in general.<sup>58</sup> The rhythm endowing the complex scenes with unity is no longer that of action, but is strictly figurative, the connection between the various subjects possibly being implicit in the scheme followed. We might in fact reasonably suppose that the more complex reliefs, whether extemporaneous creations or reproductions of schemes established by a norm, were perceived as concise iconographic indications, readily grasped at the time with the right doctrinal and cult background, but far from being evident to our eyes today.



**Fig. 14** – Late Gandharan stela from Ramora  
(courtesy Dir Museum; photo by L.M. Olivieri)

<sup>58</sup> Narrative tradition has retained a degree of vitality in the Xinjiang oases, as is demonstrated by the Shorchuk sculptures in particular. Nevertheless, these latter are to be observed from the viewpoint of a broader artistic framework that, in Central Asia, skilfully uses plastic materials, such as stucco and clay, in order to endow the sculptures with great realism and plastic vigour (suffice it to take as examples the three-dimensional compositions of Tapa Shotor and the effects produced by the combined use of full round and high relief). However, it is in the pictorial cycles (with particularly eloquent examples at Ajanta and Qizil) that the narrative genre seems to be perpetuated, while already during the late-Gandharan phases sculpture generally seems to be directed toward productions of an “iconic” nature (cf. Taddei 1999b: 84).

The general characteristics of the iconography can be interpreted more readily than its specific components. For the single iconographic elements, as indeed for the style and chronology, we find only disconnected, fragmentary comparisons scattered over a vast area that includes central-northern India, Kashmir, Afghanistan and the northern regions of Pakistan.

The production broadly definable as late-Gandharan already includes elements that can be somehow related to the subsequent artistic output represented by the rock sculptures. Nevertheless, we must also postulate an intermediate phase during which experimenting was done with new aesthetic and iconographic forms. Among the rare pieces of evidence identifying transitional forms we can include a small stela from Ramora, presently in the Dir Museum, which shows patterns of Gandharan ascendance (a scene of homage to the Buddha) already transformed by a totally different artistic sensitivity (Fig. 14). More than the stylistic and iconographic features, the use of space especially seems to anticipate concepts that we can observe on full display in the later rock sculpture. As a part of this process, outside influences were also absorbed and transformed, until they flowed – still recognisable but perfectly integrated – into the cycle of rock art.<sup>59</sup>

Classification of the rock sculptures in terms of stylistic and iconographic criteria is also hampered by the objective conditions of poor conservation. The damage produced by atmospheric agents was further aggravated by acts of iconoclasm, perpetrated by cutting off the faces and other significant parts of the reliefs or just stoning them while passing by.<sup>60</sup> Inevitably, therefore, the degree of conservation of the reliefs affects our assessments of their style, while iconographic details of great importance may have become totally indecipherable.

The problem of conservation may take on greater or lesser importance in relation to the individual figures. The least seriously affected is the figure of Padmapāṇi. The relative frequency of its occurrence is so high as to allow an easy retrieval of occasionally missing or unintelligible elements by making comparisons within the same typological group. More heavily penalised are the other bodhisattva figures, which can be broadly categorised on the basis of their most conspicuous characteristics, although we have no way of determining with any certainty whether further differentiations may have existed within the various categories. In many cases the damage suffered by the sculptures has wiped out significant iconographic details such as the specific form of an attribute or headdress. The fact that these subjects are seen less frequently makes precise interpretation of the images even more challenging; in many cases it will at best prove probable, if not decidedly dubious. Moreover, reconstruction of the missing details is further hindered by the paucity of external elements serving for comparison. Thus various points remain at the level of hypotheses.

Thanks to adequately documented serial production and evident affinity with the rock sculptures, certain classes of materials can be taken as terms of comparison. In the first place, we have the bronzes mentioned above, until some time ago labelled as “Kashmiri”, and the votive terracottas, but we also have the petroglyphs of the Upper Indus Valley, the Pāla period bronzes and, albeit somewhat less directly, the rock art of western India. The comparisons they offer represent a notable contribution to the definition of a broad cultural and artistic panorama, and yet they fill in none of the gaps in the specific context.

<sup>59</sup> Perhaps detrimental to the reconstruction of this phase – in addition to the widespread practice of using perishable materials such as stucco, terracotta and clay – was also the dubious criterion used, especially in the past, to select and make available the materials. This criterion was often based on a “collector’s spirit” rather than historic sense. In North-West India this favoured “classical” Gandharan production and alienated other finds which were deemed to be of lesser value. A targeted search carried out in the storehouses of the large museums would probably reveal the existence of a wealth of evidence referring to the late-Gandharan or post-Gandharan period, which could make a substantial contribution to our understanding of the stylistic and iconographic developments within Gandharan art and in later periods.

<sup>60</sup> These habits were abandoned long ago. Nevertheless, a dramatically fresh upsurge of this phenomenon led to the destruction of the colossal Buddhas of Bāmiyān (Afghanistan) in March 2001 and the damage of the Buddha of Shakhorai (modern-day Jahanabad) in Swat (C92; II: Figs. 92a,b,c,d) in October 2007. For this latter, a restoration process has been started in the framework of the ACT Project (Archaeology – Community – Tourism) led by L.M. Olivieri and supervised by the PIDSA (Pak-Italian Debt Swap Agreement). According to information provided by Rafiullah Khan (2011: 209-210, fn. 12) but not verified by us, also C93 (in the same area as C92) was blasted to fragments in 2009.

The “Kashmiri” bronzes have come in for critical reappraisal over the last few years, above all in terms of chronology and provenance,<sup>61</sup> the latter being in this case rather more scattered. On the other hand, the wider geographical range of the bronzes implies some cultural unity – a sort of artistic *koiné* that transcends strict territorial boundaries.<sup>62</sup> Although we have no certainty in the case of the bronzes – objects that travel very easily – the centres of production were certainly spread over a territory that extended beyond Kashmir *stricto sensu* to other neighbouring areas.<sup>63</sup>

Referring to these bronzes in a correct way is not yet possible, since they belong to a cultural and geographic area not yet epitomised in a comprehensive and specific terminology. Traditional glossaries, on the other hand, risk misleading, since they would only partially reflect a complex and still too little-known reality, whose combination of individual expressions and common background does not fit conventional geographies and periodisation. In point of fact, the “Kashmiri” bronzes also form a heterogeneous corpus from the chronological point of view, although clear and significant demarcations are still lacking. Nor we can turn to any “neutral” geographic term, since possible definitions – such as north-west Himalayan regions, for instance – are simply too vague and broad.

Thus, for the sake of simplicity, in the present work we will adopt the bare and purely instrumental definition of “bronzes” (or, if necessary in the context, “Pakistani bronzes”) when referring to a specific cluster, which includes the Paṭola Śāhi specimens from Gilgit and others that, as it will be particularised as occasion offers, display such close iconographic and stylistic connection with the rock sculptures of Swat as to clearly point to the same artistic region and chronological horizon. This artistic region might well have included adjoining areas such as Chilas, Baltistan, Dir, Buner, and possibly portions of Afghanistan too, i.e. areas that we recognise as a zone of cultural continuity, nonetheless only based, for the time being, on vague and disconnected evidence.

Anyhow, whatever the exact place of production of a certain bronze, what is perhaps even more important is that: a) a market existed for this particular artistic production; b) there was a keen interest in it over quite a vast area;<sup>64</sup> and c) there was evidently a shared aesthetic and religious sensibility leading at least to appreciate and seek the same objects, if not to produce them.

<sup>61</sup> D. Barrett (1962) was the first to attribute the definition of “Kashmiri” to a group of small bronzes that appeared in the antique market of Bombay (Mumbai) in 1948, some time after the then *Mahārāja* of Kashmir moved to the city after his abdication (for a short history of this event see Pal 1973: 727). Nevertheless, Barrett (1962) includes in this notion a geographic area that takes in Swat and western Pakistan as well. Likewise, Fussman (1993: 25) uses “Kashmir” to refer to a group of territories including the Upper Indus valleys and relative tributaries and which has Srinagar valley as its political, economic and cultural centre. In the wake of Barrett’s studies, both Goetz (1969) and Pal (1973; 1975; 1979; 1988) gave a rather low chronology for this class of materials, using Karkoṭa period art as their compulsory reference point. Higher chronologies were more recently proposed by Paul (1986), Fussman (1993), and von Hinüber (2004) on the basis of different stylistic and paleographic considerations. In particular, the introduction and evolution of the proto-Śāradā in Gilgit and Chilas, in the period between 600 and 671, allows the bronzes with inscriptions to be dated and, on the basis of stylistic and iconographic comparisons, also a part of the anepigraphic ones (Fussman 1993: 26-27). As Fussman emphasises, this is a non-mechanical operation that must take into account a series of extrinsic, historical and historical-artistic factors. In this connection, an essential contribution is made by an enhanced knowledge of the Paṭola Śāhi of Gilgit, which allows the personality of specific donors belonging to the dynasty to be recognised and dated with more refined approximation. A detailed analysis of the chronological problems is obviously beyond the scope of the present work. However, on the basis of more recent studies, the seventh-to-eighth-century horizon is taken as indicative for the production of the now relatively copious amount of bronzes that may be likened to the rock sculptures of Swat. Specific references will be made in the text on a case-by-case basis.

<sup>62</sup> A typical example is that of the bronze statuette depicting a crowned Buddha (or bodhisattva?) found in the Ču Valley in Kirghistan and originating from Swat or Gilgit (Barrett 1962: 40, pl. XXX, figs. 21-22; Genito 2002: 126, fig. 84).

<sup>63</sup> Fussman (1993: 2-3) puts forward the hypothesis that part of the so-called “Kashmir” bronzes actually come from excavations carried out in Gilgit in 1938, aimed at recovering manuscripts (Shastri 1939). Evidence of the existence of a workshop at Gilgit, according to Fussman (*ibid.*: 41), could be the famous bronze known as “Buddha of Nandivikramādityanandin”, depicting a Buddha (or, more probably, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī; see below) with his right hand resting on the head of a king belonging to the dynasty of the Paṭola Śāhi of Gilgit (Pal 1975: 108-109, no. 31; von Hinüber 1983: 62-63; Paul 1986: 202-19, pl. 86; Postel-Neven-Mankodi 1985: 252-254; Fussman 1993: 39-43, pl. 30; von Hinüber 2004: 38, fig. 5); in view of the accurate rendering of the details of the king’s clothing, the depiction is believed to come from a live portrait.

<sup>64</sup> A study on the possible political implications of such bronzes in the area of Khotan has been recently started by E. Forte (Forte 2012).

It was on this common substratum, created as a result of the huge expansion of Buddhism, that the Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, and Central Asian world gave expression to their artistic tastes in constant, reciprocal exchange as the ancient age came to an end. Needless to say, the historical vicissitudes that saw now one now another of these great powers rising or declining affected cultural mobility, by expanding or reducing the range of influence of the involved artistic centres.

### **3.2 – The technical and stylistic characteristics: cross-comparisons between rock sculptures, bronze sculptures and petroglyphs**

As mentioned above, the affinity between the rock sculptures of Swat and several of the bronzes known to us is so close and evident that no geographical or chronological separation can be postulated between the two categories. Nevertheless, we must also take into account intrinsic qualities that make the two differ substantially from each other. Correspondence and divergence are subject to a range of factors including dimensions, craft technique and, above all, client and assignment. Moreover, while no distinction can be made between provenance and final location in the case of the rock sculptures, the bronzes are of dimensions and market value such that they could enjoy practically unlimited circulation, not only geographically but also in terms of the uses they might be put to, which may also have changed over time.

Style and iconography are usually adjusted to suit the various constraints, primarily those of the material and related technical possibilities. As for the rock sculptures, the morphological characteristics of the schists forming the raw material may explain the lack of elaborate details since the natural colouring and rapid re-patina-tion of this kind of stone thwart all efforts in this direction.

It is probably because the craftsmen recognised this problem that they deliberately chose a sober artistic syntax, relying on visual impact rather than artistic virtuosity. Labour spent on a well-wrought stool or elaborate drape, for example, would prove futile: time would rapidly devour them, while what survives best and longest in open-air sculpture is the expressive force derived from a purposeful position or a keen adaptation to the setting. Just how little account the artists (who must have had an expert knowledge of techniques, materials and the processes of weathering) took of possible loss of detail can be seen in the way they executed their work, without providing any shelter for the sculptures. In fact, the reliefs usually have very little or no recessing from the rock wall, carved about the figure with short oblique strokes in such a way as to merge rapidly once again with the outer surface. The resulting shallow niche offers scant protection from exposure to the elements, which could have been reduced with a less economical technique, recessing the relief further and creating a deeper background. Alternatively, the reliefs could have been protected with added structures such as wooden canopies, but we find no evidence of any such measures.<sup>65</sup>

This aspect of the technique involves also the visibility of the sculptures. It cannot be ruled out that this was heightened by the use of colour (generally encouraged by doctrinal tendencies),<sup>66</sup> even though no trace is preserved on any sculptures. However it is precisely the complete absence of shelter that makes it highly unlikely that they were originally painted. Any pictorial decoration would have been of very short duration without constant maintenance, which in many cases was also difficult to carry out due to the position of many of the sculptures. Nor should the possibility be underestimated that the artists could have foregone the visibility of a

<sup>65</sup> The existence of wooden canopies, even if they have completely disappeared, would be attested by sockets, as in the case of the rock sculpture of Gilgit (Shastri 1939: 4, pl. 1429; here, Fig. 15; cf. Appendix II, fn. 144). A different issue is represented by the relief C178 (II: Fig. 25), the peculiar context of which is rather reminiscent of a rock shelter, possibly intended as the Buddhistic interpretation (or appropriation?) of a widespread tradition in the region (cf. Chap. 2.3).

<sup>66</sup> As for a comparative example mention could be made of the bright polychromy of the Buddhist rock sculptures at the site of Baodingshan in Dazu, in the Chinese province of Sichuan (Falco Howard 2001), even though the comparison is purely technical in view of the chronological gap (the Chinese site may be dated to between the eleventh and the thirteenth century) as well as the different cultural and artistic sensibility.





**Fig. 15** – Rock sculpture in Gilgit, showing the joint system for a canopy  
(courtesy Heidelberg Akademie der Wissenschaften, Felsbilder und Inschriften am Karakorum Highway)

brightly coloured surface, even one satisfying the iconographic rules, in favour of an impression of “naturalness”, in keeping with precise theoretical premises (see Chap. 1.3-5). Moreover, the great number of sculptures and the relatively difficult access to some of them make the idea of touching up a coat of paint a quite unlikely hypothesis.

More plausibly, one can conjecture that some sculptures could be painted on particular occasions, or for their marking a special pilgrimage spot, as in the case of the still living tradition of Nyethang, at Lhasa (Chayet 1994: 190, pl. XXVI). This sculpture in particular is suggestive of a close conceptual affinity with the rock sculptures of Swat, to the extent that one is encouraged to think of one and the same tradition. As aptly remarked by A. Chayet (*ibidem*), the big image of the Buddha reflected by the water is strongly evocative of the legend about the “Udāyana Buddha”, i.e. the origin of the first iconic representation of the Buddha (cf. Carter 1990), which Śākyamuni acknowledged as a reflection of himself (Swearer 2004: 18 esp.). The water mirror reinforces the illusion of the epiphanic character of the Nyethang image, in a play with nature closely comparable, in fact, to the dominant paradigms in the rock art of Swat.

Besides being occasional, paint might also have only been partial, and restricted, for instance, solely to the eyes. Although very few details have survived, we can still gather from our rock sculptures that big eyes were a distinguishing facial feature, in a way not dissimilar to coeval bronzes, where the importance of the eyes was usually underscored by inlay. We can thus hypothesise (as a congruous correspondence between the two classes) that the practice of painting the eyes of the images carved on the rock was common, for both aesthetic and symbolic reasons.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> We have ample evidence of the importance of the ceremony of “opening the eyes” of sacred icons (Gombrich 1966; Swearer 2004, esp. chapters 4 and 8). See also Rockwell (in this volume), who comes to the same conclusions on the basis of mere technical observations.



**Figs. 16-17** – A rock carving (C41) and a bronze sculpture (Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 444, neg. no. 1862)

Other general but unequivocal stylistic and iconographic affinities between bronzes and rock sculptures attest to the existence of some iconometric prescriptions and, more in general, of a common aesthetic and doctrinal source. The list of common features encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic elements such as the kind of ornaments (notably the particular shape of the voluminous pendant earrings, the short and relatively simple necklaces, and the three-pointed crowns), the broad faces with double chin, the triple line of the neck (*trivali*) which expresses beauty and luck (Bunce 2001: *s.v.*), the delicate sketching of the pectoral muscles, the slight protuberance of the abdomen above the belt, the narrow waist, the round flanks, the massive rigid lower limbs, and the general proportions of the figure (Figs. 16-17). Quite consistently, for instance, one can observe in standing figures that the median of the body (including the headdress, with or without crown) corresponds with the navel, and that the distance between the humerus and the wrist is equal to that from the hip to the ankle.

However, with respect to the rock sculptures the bronzes display a far richer spectrum of shades: given their modest dimensions, protected locations, and the specific artistic genre – attributable to the category of deluxe articles – they were in general crafted with minute attention to detail. It is in this dichotomy between the two classes that we may see the primary reason for what we might define as an ergonomic simplification – both stylistic and iconographic – in the production of the rock sculptures as compared with the bronze sculptures.

Thus the wealth of detail and complexity of the iconography can prove to be misleading when comparing the two classes if considered from a purely extrinsic point of view, and above all if the aim is to base a criterion for chronological determination on them. Any such system might prove to be fairly unreliable for the purpose

of classification within the category of bronzes, and all the more so when applied to comparison between the bronze and rock sculptures. Apart from the generic simplification of detail, the rock sculptures actually also appear far poorer in iconographic “types”. In comparison with the bronzes, we might speak of a “primitive” iconography, not so much in the chronological sense as in terms of the relatively limited repertory.

Moreover, the rock sculptures seem to have been produced for clients and purposes entirely different from those of the bronzes. Not only do they never bear dedicatory inscriptions, but they reveal not the slightest iconographic reference to any possible donors, except in a few, rare cases where small figures of devotees are represented. Nevertheless, the latter display generic features such that they give no real clues to the praxis of material acts of donation.<sup>68</sup> It is an absence that appears all the more significant when we consider that for Buddhists the votive offering is one of the most common ways of accumulating merits.

We may therefore infer from it further proof that the thriving rock sculpture in Swat was the result of a unitary plan, specifically designed to cover the area, rather than the chance juxtaposition of individual donations. In this large-scale plan, intended for the purpose of re-establishing the earlier sacred topography, the major unifying element was ideological and emerged, as we have seen, in the illusory uncreated nature (*svayambhū*) of the sculptures. If the inspiration for the entire project did, indeed, lie here, then it would be precisely on account of its peculiar nature that no reference is made to any individual contribution that may have been made. Not only would it have been useless, but clearly out of place. Nevertheless, the monastic community – that we assumed to be responsible for the inspiration and even, to some extent, the manual execution of the reliefs – may well have worked with the support of the laity, although no record remains of names or faces. What continues to be striking is the impact of the overall design, giving life – probably within quite a short span of time – to a throng of images ever displayed to the eyes of all the passers-by.

The ecumenical nature of the project must be considered influential on the iconographic repertory, so essential as to seem almost synoptic. The subjects are evidently among the most familiar of the current heritage of popular theology: the Buddha, the most celebrated bodhisattvas, the most universal attributes of the divinities and the most elementary meanings in the doctrine are the themes that better fit in with the equally universal and elementary open-air dimensions, while at the same time best suited to summon forth and satisfy the most widespread forms of worship and devotion.

On the other hand, in general the bronzes appear to form a more “cultured” category, often giving expression to a more markedly speculative level, and usually characterised by greater refinement in style and a richer iconography. Here the divine figures proliferate while the meaning of iconographic representation becomes more subtle and specific. We will see how the same divine figures that appear in the rock sculptures in their more generic attributions undergo diversification in the bronzes, in terms of both the quantity and quality of their representations.

Some themes in the bronzes can readily be associated with the Vajrayāna tradition (cf. Pal 1979), which is latent or scarcely visible in the rock sculptures of Swat, although the tradition had its cradle in this region. Clearly, the complexity of the Vajrayāna system, breaking down as it does the significance of the various divine manifestations, calls for a highly specific programme of instruction, not to be entered into on a generic faith alone, but demanding a greater degree of intellectual commitment. Indeed, some of the bronze sculptures – endowed as they are with a more complex iconography – seem to have been intended to satisfy a very particular demand, which goes much beyond the scope of the simple devotee. The bronze sculptures reflect a code shared by a narrow circle of initiates, in accordance with a practice that had been noted long ago by scholars (for instance Tucci 1958: 284; Botto 1959: 271). More readily than cognate artistic productions, bronze sculptures witness to how the constitutive value of an image can also descend from its being a means of spiritual education, and not only of mere enhancement of merits. As we shall see, it may also have satisfied the donor’s wishes to underline personal closeness to the cult image, possibly going as far as to identify with it to some extent.

<sup>68</sup> The only known cases are the Mangalkot stela depicting Maitreya (see Chap. 5; S141; II: Fig. 107; GS 18) and a more complex relief, again on a stela, published by Tucci (1958: figs. 14-15; here, S85; II: Fig. 87). A different case is that of stela S140 (II: Fig. 140; GS 38); regarding this see Chap. 6.

Nevertheless, demand for and custody of the bronzes was not confined to a closed circle of adepts. In some cases we know the donors from epigraphic records, and through their names we get a glimpse of the society – and of the expectations and motivations – that lay behind the donations, as well as an overview of the company of sovereigns or members of royal families, high dignitaries, and representatives of the clergy. Each was inspired by explicit aims which, in the case of the lay figures, seem to have involved accumulating merits.

In any case, it was a cultured clientele, as one may easily picture also – and possibly above all – in the case of the anepigraphic bronzes. Much less easy is the problem of detecting what they were originally intended for, whether a palace chapel or a room in the house where objects of devotion were kept, whether a religious building open to worshippers or the private cell of a monk. Nor can we rule out the possibility that it might in some cases have belonged to the baggage of a pilgrim having sufficient wealth or motivation to take a costly but portable object of devotion with him on his travels, or travelled around as prestigious gifts exchanged between high-ranking categories of donors and recipients (Forte 2012: 103-104).

Be that as it may, the location must have been private or, if public, one reserved for a particular and precisely motivated audience, and certainly not for people who might just have chanced upon some open-air setting. Thus the image reflects more freely, and with greater precision, particular forms of devotion and selective doctrinal teaching. It is, moreover, to be noted that, whether by chance or by design, the bronzes bearing dedicatory inscriptions also portray – like the rock sculptures – the divine figures most popular from the point of view of religious devotion while at the same time presenting more elementary or deliberately evident iconographic schemes. Generic as the dedicatory formulas are, in a number of examples one can sense in the iconographic choice a celebratory intention in which personal devotion – in the case of clients of a certain rank – bears a certain correspondence to their social roles.

An eloquent example can be seen in the famous so-called “Nandivikramādityanandin Buddha”.<sup>69</sup> The (generally accepted) identification of the main image as the Buddha came to the attention of Paul (1986: 207-209) and Fussman (1993: 42), who see in it an iconographic version of Śākyamuni, protector of the sovereign who favours dissemination of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* and all the other Mahayanic texts. Nevertheless, the iconographic scheme, although extremely concise, suggests a rather different ideological subject, where a historical personality, a ruler of the Paṭola Śāhi dynasty, exploiting a very well known model, presents himself as an initiate, under the guidance of the great master Mañjuśrī, here depicted as an accomplished Buddha.<sup>70</sup>

Regardless of the exact identity of the subject, the iconographic theme is perfectly clear: the divine figure, in a specific attribution associated with the revelation and dissemination of the scriptures (or dogma, albeit from the point of view of a certain school), by placing his hand on the crowned head of the king designates him as legitimate defender of those scriptures or, at the more prosaic level of political propaganda, as legitimate sovereign.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> For this specimen, cited in numerous publications, see the preceding paragraph, fn. 63.

<sup>70</sup> Such a depiction of Mañjuśrī is consistent with the role of “primordial Buddha” assigned by Buddhist tantric works to the bodhisattva (see Filigenzi 2008b: 19 ff. esp.; Bautze Picron 2010: 63-64). As a matter of fact, the Buddha’s *regalia* are usually characterised by greater completeness, with the attribution of the three-pointed cape. This seems to be valid in a relatively well-defined chronological and cultural context (see, for instance, Bāmiyān, Tapa Sardar, Fondukistan, but also the Pakistani-Kashmiri bronzes). It is difficult to decide whether this attribute is exclusive to Śākyamuni – who, as we learn from the ceremony of the *pañcavārṣikapariṣad* described by Xuanzang, was the object of a particular coronation ritual – or it may be understood to be a more generic attribute of Buddha’s regality. We therefore do not know whether all the bejewelled Buddhas lacking a cape are to be identified as figures of Tathāgatas different from Śākyamuni or whether this attribute, also for Śākyamuni, is merely occasional and linked to particular ritual meanings. Identifications of Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava among the Pakistani bronzes have moreover been proposed by von Shroeder (1981: respectively 11A and 11G & I, 11C, 12C, and 12D), although not always backed up with sufficient evidence. For a comprehensive study of the bejewelled Buddha see Bautze-Picron 2010.

<sup>71</sup> An analogous meaning, although within the frame of a more complex iconographic scheme, seems to be expressed by a figured *stūpa* model, housed in the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale “Giuseppe Tucci”, Rome, where a divested king (?) is probably depicted as the main actor of a ceremony of donation which no doubt is the counterpart of his being anointed as the righteous sovereign (Filigenzi 2005a).

We find a similar relationship associating and at the same time separating the bronze production and the petroglyphs of the Upper Indus Valley. The wealth of dedicatory inscriptions displayed by the latter, together with their relatively rapid execution, can be seen as lending further support to the hypothesis put forward by K. Jettmar (1989a: *passim*; see Chap. 2.9), who held that in this area – assiduously frequented by merchants and pilgrims passing through and stopping over – as a result of certain particular circumstances the tradition was established of leaving some attestation of faith, or at least of passage. Here, too, the iconographic repertory appears somewhat limited. If we exclude certain peculiarities, such as *jātakas* or the theme of the “thousand Buddhas”,<sup>72</sup> the predominant religious subjects are the Buddha and the most popular bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī), together with representations of *stūpas*, again a highly popular ex-voto tradition.

The overall context clearly shows that the flowering of Buddhist petroglyphs in the Upper Indus Valley stemmed from earlier traditions, a fact which suggests that these areas had been held sacred in the indigenous culture from quite remote times. Drawing upon some observations by Tucci (1973: 50) regarding “communal meeting places” for annual festivals in the borderlands of Tibet, and by Francke (1914-1926: I, 20) who indicated one of them, Jettmar postulated the existence of similar traditions at Chilas. He identified one of these places in Thalpan Ziyarat, where the concentration of petroglyphs of the prehistoric age could evidence some sort of natural open-air sanctuaries (Jettmar 1989a: XXII-XXIII).

We may take this markedly conservative attitude towards the “sacred place” as a first, generic sign of affinity with the rock sculptures of Swat. Another common factor is the simplicity of the repertory, drawing upon the theme of faith and the most universal and accessible contents of doctrine. We can also trace in the petroglyphs – mixed with local components and peculiar features – expressions of that late ancient Buddhist *koiné* to which also the bronzes and rock sculptures belong. Nevertheless, significant differences are to be underlined.

With respect to the rock sculptures, the petroglyphs of the Upper Indus Valley reveal a more extemporaneous character in which, as Jettmar (1989b: 410) notes, manifestations of “folk Buddhist” cults coexist with orthodox iconographies. The Buddhist petroglyphs in these areas are the fruit of explicit individual donations, probably encouraged by the fact that, given the technique applied, commissions could be dealt with fairly rapidly, while the limited expenditure involved would also attract wayfarers pressed for time or resources. Different is, in a word, the nature of the two productions, more markedly didascalical the former, more expressly votive the latter. Again, however, a differentiating factor of great importance is the use of a specific technique and material, which quite spontaneously lead to a selection of visual components in order to ensure the most telling results.

### 3.3 – Minimal iconographic units

Given the precarious state of conservation of the rock sculptures it is hard to discern details, although basic mechanisms of the iconographic language may be singled out. One of these is the use of symmetrical oppositions, expressing contrasting or complementary values, as a disambiguation filter to distinguish different categories of figures.

The most recurrent type is that of the bodhisattva seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, which can be conventionally defined as the posture adopted by a figure sitting in a chair, the left leg stretching downwards, the right folded with ankle resting on left knee and sole facing upward.<sup>73</sup> Invariably portrayed in this pose is Padmapāṇi, this identifica-

<sup>72</sup> See Chap. 1, fn. 10

<sup>73</sup> There is no unanimous agreement among scholars on the meaning of the different *āsanas* such as *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, *rājaparyāṅkāśana*, *lalitākṣepa*, *lalitāsana* (the last three used as synonyms by de Mallmann 1964: 24, fn. 5 and 25, fn. 4). See A.M. Quagliotti (1989: fn. 1) for a brief examination of the terms and of the bibliographic references. Herein it was preferred to use the conventional term *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* since, etymologically speaking, it seemed to be better suited for characters of royal rank, as the bodhisattvas are, and at the same time for defining a position of ease but not of extreme relaxation. Based on the reasons that will emerge from the text, the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* can be considered conceptually closest to the *padmāsana*, of which it represents

tion being borne out by the ever-present attribute of the lotus. However, this remains a generic identification since slight variations in the iconography that no longer appear of any consequence may well have originally implied variations in the significance or particular functions of the bodhisattva. We might therefore hazard a fuller attribution for the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, identifying it as the canonical pose of the bodhisattvas belonging to the family of the lotus, or of the *karuṇā*, to which we can assign Padmapāṇi and other figures possibly associated with him.

In contrast with this *āsana* we find a symmetrical opposite, which we shall conventionally term reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, in which the right leg reaches down and the left leg is folded over the seat.<sup>74</sup> The opposition is significant, for it is consistently associated with Maitreya (and Mañjuśrī?), but it is also associated with Vajrapāṇi-Vajrasattva in the bronze production. Among the rock sculptures the latter can be made out only in standing figures, but we cannot rule out the possibility of representation among the seated figures, although none have conserved any iconographic detail that could offer irrefutable evidence.

### 3.4 – The *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*

Most probably the origin of the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* in iconography is to be traced back to unwritten rules of social relationship which apply to the whole of India. In general it is adopted in situations of familiarity or between peers, but in the case of social disparity it is reserved for persons of higher rank. From this behavioural code there derived the *lalitāsana* and its variants, expressing the social – or, by extension, spiritual – prestige of the divine figure who faces none of higher rank among those before him. In contrast with the *lalitāsana* – a posture of supreme relaxation and serenity attained in the social ambit – the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* can be more easily associated with a different posture in the upper part of the body. This usually expresses watchful attention prompted by some external stimulus – observing some event, for example, listening carefully, taking part in a discussion or pondering deeply some matter. In the Buddhist tradition the posture was already to be seen in the iconography at Sāñcī, where it is in fact associated with the various *deva* figures.<sup>75</sup>

It is, however, in the art of Gandhāra that use of this posture of composed ease finds the kind of canonical application that we see regularly observed in the rock sculptures. In Gandhāra it becomes a fully-fledged iconographic model, by means of which situations and concepts of various kinds – but associated by precise analogy – could find expression. Thus the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* is to be seen consistently associated with bodhisattvas and princely figures in general, and occasionally with other categories of personages, whenever the aim is to stress an attitude of rapt attention. Of the best-known scenes illustrating situations of this type, suffice it here to cite the stela of Mohammad Nari (Fig. 18) and others of the kind, conventionally known as representations of the Miracle of Śrāvastī, but more probably theophanies in which the Buddha reveals his cosmic nature, manifested essentially as light.<sup>76</sup> In these we see a throng of bodhisattvas, often portrayed in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, intent on reflecting or discussing the significance of this revelatory manifestation, or simply looking on in admiring wonder.

In the series of variants of the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, the best-known and most frequent one shows it in association with the pensive attitude,<sup>77</sup> which had already emerged – although with sporadic appearances – as char-

a kind of inferior stage. Several variant positions of the limbs are not considered significant as they are often determined by the height of the seat, by the attribute and by the gestuality.

<sup>74</sup> Also called *vāma-lalitāsana* as the opposite of *lalitāsana* (see for instance Bunce 2001: 330, s.v.). The same posture, labelled as *vāmārdhaparyāṅkāśana*, is noticed by de Mallmann (1975: 40) as peculiar to Mañjuśrī.

<sup>75</sup> For a detailed list of the scenes cf. Miyaji 1985a.

<sup>76</sup> An extensive bibliography is currently available on the “Miracle of Śrāvastī”, after the seminal work by J.C. Huntington (1980). See Zwalf 1996: 126-127, who gives a brief survey of the various interpretations and the relative bibliography. Reference is therefore to be made to some of the more recent contributions on the topic (Rhi 2003, 2008; Filigenzi 2012a).

<sup>77</sup> On the origin of the pensive attitude see the contribution by Junghee Lee (1993) and the attentive critical reappraisal thereof in Quagliotti 1996b.



Fig. 18 – Gandharan epiphanic scene from Mohammad Nari (after Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 42)

acteristic of Padmapāṇi in Gandhāra, to become actually exclusively associated to him in the rock sculptures of Swat. In the iconography, this attitude is conveyed by showing the figure with head slightly bent to the left, the index finger raised to touch the brow or, as was the case in Gandhāra, also with palm of the hand on cheek. In Gandhāra the pensive pose is also associated with other figures (see Quagliotti 1989; 1996a: especially 98-104), but in situations sharing a fundamental characteristic that helps us to understand the transition from one generic attribution to another, more specific one. In this attitude we also find Siddhārtha portrayed in one of those fundamental episodes that precede and lead up to the great choice, i.e. the reflection that came to him on observing the suffering of humanity, animals and plants during work in the fields (Miyaji 1985a: fig. 5). The sight of small animals and buds crushed by the plough and the oppressive heaviness of the toil opened his eyes to the miserable, tragic condition of living beings, moving him to a heartsick sense of sorrow and compassion, and stirring in him profound meditation (*Buddhacarita* V, 4-9).

An interesting version of the subject can be seen in a panel from Mohammed Nari, containing figured architectural squares showing scenes of the Buddha's life (Miyaji 1985a: 70-71; figs. 6-7). The third from the bottom portrays Siddhārtha, still in his princely robes, seated under a tree in pensive attitude (as we can infer from the typical inclination of the head, although the right forearm is missing); seated below, to the right, is a personage holding an umbrella, who can be identified as the faithful groom Chandaka on the basis of analogies with other reliefs. Also taking part in the scene are two male figures which stand turned towards Siddhārtha, in *añjalimudrā*, one depicted in the middle ground behind the figure of Chandaka, wearing Brahmanic headdress, the other on the opposite side of the scene, in princely dress. Miyaji (*ibidem*), who sees in the scene a variant of the First Meditation, attributes to the two dignitaries present the generic role of worshippers (see also Quagliotti 1989: 343).<sup>78</sup>

Of unequivocal interpretation as the First Meditation, of the same type as the one described by Miyaji, is the scene depicting a pensive Siddhārtha in a relief from Saidu Sharif I, with multiple scenes accommodated in two superimposed registers (Faccenna 2001: pl. 124a,b; here, Figs. 19a,b). The curvature of the slab, which is meant to fit a small *stūpa*'s drum, gives a clear indication about the right-to-left sequence of the reading. In the lower register, the scene showing a pensive Siddhārtha and three standing male characters paying homage to him is followed to left by the Great Departure. Interestingly, the male characters, clearly of *kṣatriya* affiliation as indicated by the typical moustaches and jewels, wear no turbans. This iconographic detail, which conveys a sign of respect towards Siddhārtha, suggests a closer connection of the scene with the twin episodes narrated in the *Lalitavistara* (Chap. 11: Visit to an Agricultural Village), wherein Śuddhodana, wondering what had become of his son, went out to search for him, attended by his retinue, and found him meditating in the forest. Seeing his son resplendent in his beauty and glory, Śuddhodana paid homage to him, taking out his crown, sword and shoes (Mitra 1998; 175-180, esp. 179).

Also Chandaka appears portrayed in pensive pose in a relief from Nimogram (Swat) depicting the episode of the First Meditation according to the most familiar iconographic criterion, which has Siddhārtha seated in *dhyānāsana* under the tree. Siddhārtha is shown at the centre, while the ploughing scene appears on the left

<sup>78</sup> An identical scene is probably depicted on a Butkara relief, unfortunately badly damaged (Quagliotti 1989: 343, pl. IIa). In this specific case, the interpretation remains doubtful, since a precise episode could also match the iconographic subject, namely the search undertaken by the councillor and court priest who, urged by the grieving father, attempted to bring the prince Siddhārtha back home from the forest into which he had retreated. In vain they try to persuade Siddhārtha to desist from his intentions, reminding him of the riches he was leaving behind and the sorrow he was bringing on his family and subjects; finally, it is the two dignitaries who desist in the face of Siddhārtha's inflexible determination (*Buddhacarita*, VIII-IX). Note should be taken *en passant* also of the use made in this episode of another non-incidentally iconographic *topos*: the pair of exhorters is represented by a high official and a priest, both embodying two fundamental functions in Vedic society. The same will happen after a fresh and definitive entrance into a new state of mind with the Invitation to preaching addressed by Indra and Brahmā to the now "awakened" Siddhārtha. Siddhārtha's refusal in the first case and the compassionate condescension in the second both contain an implicit lesson on passions and on the victory achieved which – to varying degrees, one propedeutic to the next – imply the superseding of the social, ethical and religious order of Vedic tradition.





**Figs. 19a,b** – A segment of a Gandharan frieze (after Faccenna 2001: pl. 124a,b)

side of the relief. For his part Chandaka, holding the reins of Kaṅṭhaka in his left hand, sits pensively on the right-hand side of the composition, head bowed and resting on the right hand. Behind Kaṅṭhaka, in the middle ground, we see two male figures (Quagliotti 1989: 342-343; pl. Ic). According to A.M. Quagliotti's interpretation, taking reference from an observation by Foucher (1905-1951: I, 344), Chandaka's pensive pose implies no sorrow at the prince's abandonment, but rather "[...] an attempt by the groom to explain and anticipate the state of mind which is to lead the bodhisattva to the [...] First Meditation, like a *lakṣaṇa* [...] in order to render an event from the Buddha's life understandable to the spectator, which he might otherwise fail to recognize [...]"

Whatever the correct interpretation, the point that needs stressing is the quality of Chandaka's mental state at that moment, shaken as he was by a powerful feeling inspired by an event that placed him before a higher reality. Chandaka, who gains insight without rational understanding, is a sort of tool of destiny, and of this he is vaguely aware thanks to the many miraculous events he witnesses in the episode of the Great Departure.

In a famous relief in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, showing the episode of Māra's Attack (Lippe 1970: fig. 11), we see portrayed a personage whose identity has been much discussed. In princely attire, the character is seated under a tree in pensive pose. According to Rosenfield (1967: 241-242) and Lippe (1970: 16-18) this figure is a sort of "ideogram" personifying the invincible force of Siddhārtha's compassion for all living beings. It is an interpretation that finds favour with A.M. Quagliotti (1989: 350-352), given the presence of the tree under which the personage is seated – a feature deemed by all the authors cited to be perfectly characteristic of the figure of Siddhārtha. Miyaji (1985a: 74 ff.) takes up a hypothesis formulated by Coomaraswamy (1928: 392-393) on a similar iconography from Bharhut and goes on to propose the identification as the character being Māra himself, described by some texts as rapt in thought after his unsuccessful bids.

Actually this relief remains of dubious interpretation, but others, from both Bharhut and Gandhāra, pointed out by Miyaji (1985a), Spagnoli (1986) and Quagliotti (1989: 360 ff.), contain an incontrovertible depiction of the defeated Māra. He can be recognised by the rod (or arrow?) with which he traces sixteen lines on the ground (*Nidānakathā*), or figures (*Lalitavistara*), or indeed the phrase "Gotama the recluse has escaped from my power, and hence I am sore distressed" (*Mahāvastu*) (from Quagliotti 1989: 361).<sup>79</sup> According to M. Spagnoli (1986), citing the evidence of a tale contained in the *Mahāvastu*, the episode refers to Māra's unsuccessful attempt to force the Buddha to bring forward *nirvāṇa*.

In the episodes so far described we find a range of sentiments expressed by means of the pensive pose that show different degrees of intensity but, as a common characteristic, the sense of bewilderment and inadequacy on perceiving, albeit as yet only vaguely, a truth concealed beyond the painful but customary confines of *samsāra*. Supposing that we could bring the episodes together within a common perspective, we might define the pensive pose as typical of one who remains in the world despite having undergone a painful change in consciousness. However, the level of consciousness is highly differentiated. Chandaka is helpless in the face of an ineluctable destiny whose divine essence he vaguely senses, but his sentiments fail to rise beyond the persistent selfishness of the pain of abandonment. Māra, on the other hand, is defeated, or more precisely "superseded": all the charms and terrors of the world that he represents are no longer anything more than an empty shell, devoid of any appeal or power of subjection. In his bitter and apparently irredeemable admission of defeat, Māra personifies the necessary destruction of all ties, all passions, and perhaps a state of consciousness corresponding to that dreadful instant that follows destruction and precedes rebirth.

Finally, the two episodes that show Siddhārtha in pensive pose and still a "prince" reveal his having attained a state of consciousness already irreversibly projected towards Buddhahood, but yet to be relieved of the bur-

<sup>79</sup> As far as these reliefs are concerned I would like to refer to the observations made by Quagliotti (1996a: 14 ff.) concerning the instrument used by Māra to write on the ground: the arrow appears only in the oldest reliefs and was then rapidly replaced by a more generic rod.

den of his worldly qualities, since the level and object of concentration is still subordinate to and conditioned by a cause. This condition precedes (in a more logical than temporal sense) the perfect mental peace in which – all turmoil and wavering allayed – *bodhi* thought is attained. The qualitative leap in consciousness is clearly stressed by iconography, which invariably resorts to the *padmāsana* whenever it wants to describe in visual terms the imperturbable state of *bodhi*-mind.<sup>80</sup> Thus, one might say that the pensive attitude of Siddhārtha actually fits much better than the *dhyānāsana* both the situation and mental condition of the so-called “First Meditation(s)”, and more precisely expresses the propaedeutic value of this event, when Siddhārtha experiences that universal empathy of which *karuṇā* is made.

In fact, the pensive Siddhārtha seems to offer an authoritative prototype for the “bodhisattva ideal”, although a short-living one which was destined to be soon overwhelmed by Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi. Strategic iconographic adaptations were probably attempted in order to avoid confusion. One of these seems to be the source of the “strange” iconography of a small stela brought to light in 2010 at Mes Aynak and published by Fussman (2012). The relief depicts a pensive bodhisattva seated on a wicker stool beneath a pipal tree and flanked by a monk, which Fussman interprets as the “unintelligent coalescence of two stereotyped motives, a pensive bodhisattva and a *lakṣaṇa*, the pipal leaves, indicating that this bodhisattva is no other than Gautama Siddhārtha Śākyamuni”.<sup>81</sup> According to the author, the relief would be thus “indicative of the poor knowledge or understanding of the life of the historical Buddha in the workshop where it was carved and by the customer, maybe a monk [...], who bought it” (*ibid.*: 147). Actually, I rather think that this is an *intelligent* coalescence of the two motives, which is meant to unambiguously identify Siddhārtha in a period when the iconographic model of the pensive bodhisattva still applies to Siddhārtha but is increasingly emerging as characteristic of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi. If this is true, we can then go on to consider that the monk (probably the donor) was not so naïve and incompetent as to buy an iconographic and conceptual botch but exactly wanted to express its devotion in the *bodhisattva* Siddhārtha, for reasons and in ways that we could probably grasp if we only knew better the complex cultural background of “Buddhism in context”.

According to all evidence, the models elaborated in Gandhāra underwent a process of selection and conventionalisation which also marked a disambiguation of meaning. With the First Meditation(s) of Siddhārtha the iconography marks a kind of threshold point of the pensive pose. Siddhārtha’s compassion was crystallised into a historical event which, being part of an accomplished cycle, justifies the preference accorded to the *padmāsana* as a semantic sign announcing the culmination of the Buddha path. The pensive pose, on the other hand, started being exclusively (or nearly exclusively) associated to Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi, true militant hypostasis of the Buddhist compassion. Already in Gandharan art, from the moment of Enlightenment the Buddha was rarely depicted as seated in any other position than *padmāsana*, which is expressive of total control, firmness, lastingness. Only one subsequent episode was occasionally to find expression through the pensive pose, namely the Invitation to Preach (see for instance Quagliotti 1989: pl. VIIIa), when the aim is to allay not the transitory feeling of uncertainty surpassed and overcome by compassion, but rather the “distraction” from the individual pursue of *śūnya* brought about by compassion.

This is a crucial point in the development of the Mahayanic notion of the bodhisattva career, which would certainly require a more extensive discussion.<sup>82</sup> Here, we will limit our discussion to the way iconography mirrors this ideal. Actually, according to the Mahayanic perspective, the discriminate boundary is not so much between pre-awakening and post-awakening condition, but rather between two different stages of insight: the search of the individual liberation and the higher quest for others’ liberation, a compassionate motivation that

<sup>80</sup> In this way, one would say, iconography distinguishes between “pondering” and “meditating”.

<sup>81</sup> The pensive pose is actually an inference (although an indubitable one), since the right forearm of the bodhisattva is missing. It is to be noted that, what Fussman (2010: 38) interprets as “two vertical decorative bands flanking the prince” is the back of the seat; for a discussion of this and other types of seats see the next paragraph.

<sup>82</sup> For a recent reappraisal of Pāli and Chinese sources that may have influenced the notion of the bodhisattva ideal as expressed in later literature see Anālayo 2010.

arises from Enlightenment and that distinguishes the bodhisattva from the *arhat*. The bodhisattva indeed *is* an enlightened being who delays entering *nirvāṇa* in order to help all the sentient beings to reach Buddhahood. In a sense, the bodhisattva is a Buddha-maker, and in this role he is somehow ambiguously superior to the accomplished Buddha.

The bodhisattva ideal finds different expressions and shades in the post-canonical literature. Of particular relevance to the present investigation is the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, where Avalokiteśvara is fully credited with a central role in the salvation process.<sup>83</sup> According to this text, Avalokiteśvara was distracted from merging himself into the *śūnya* by an uproar from a remote distance. When he realised that this was nothing but the desperate wailings of the people at his imminent disappearance, he resolved to postpone his ultimate liberation until the last sentient being was emancipated (Bhattacharyya 1989: 29). Notwithstanding a remarkable distance between the narration of the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* and the above-mentioned episodes involving characters and conditions as different as Siddhārtha, Māra, Chandaka, a clear continuity line can be detected at the iconographic and conceptual level. The connection is represented by the perturbed states of mind all originating, albeit with different insight, from cogitation on sorrow.

The pensive pose, and the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* in general, is thus used in the Buddhist iconographic tradition – above all in the post-Gandharan phase – to express with immediacy a condition ideally projected towards Buddhahood (or better, toward *śūnya*), yet at the same time still strongly linked to the world. It is in this sense that the pose becomes a sort of *lakṣaṇa* of the nature of the bodhisattva, suspended in equilibrium between the transcendental and the immanent, precisely by virtue of that sentiment of sorrow and compassion for the miseries of the world that takes on the concrete substantialism of historic evidence in the life of Siddhārtha, but which in the personification of the bodhisattva expresses a divine, atemporal function. Although this is a characteristic generically attributable to all the bodhisattva figures, it is Avalokiteśvara who incarnates it most specifically.

The art of Gandhāra produced a great many bodhisattva figures portrayed in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, in the pensive attitude that expresses profound sharing in the sufferings of living beings and, as a necessary corollary, the commitment to succeed in putting it behind. Apart from representation as a single figure, the bodhisattva is thus portrayed in some triads.<sup>84</sup> In the art of Gandhāra the iconography of Avalokiteśvara had yet to be firmly established, but we can safely identify as such the bodhisattva marked out by sun symbolism in the headdress<sup>85</sup> – in all cases consisting of a turban – and in the attribute. At this early stage in the formation of

<sup>83</sup> The evolution of the soteriological theory of *karuṇā*, so eloquently epitomised in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, is nevertheless a long process. Whatever the exact date of the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (cf. Studholme 2002: 9-17), it is worth noting that basic concepts among forerunners to this text, such as the different forms Avalokiteśvara can assume in order to teach different kinds of sentient beings, are already expressed in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (de Mallmann 1948: 41) and attested by iconographic sources as early as in Gandhāra (Taddei 1987: 349-357, 353 esp.; fig. 5).

<sup>84</sup> There are at least three known cases of triads in which a pensive Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi appears:

- 1) triad in Brough 1982: 69, Fussman 1987: fig. 4, Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 8;
- 2) triad inside micro-architecture from Loriyan Tangai in Grünwedel, Gibson and Burgess 1901: pl. 147, Foucher 1909: pl. 11, Miyaji 1985b: pl. 19, Sawoo 1983: fig. 1, Rhi 2006: fig. 7.15, Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 9;
- 3) triad inside micro-architecture from Loriyan Tangai in Foucher 1909: pl. 12; Miyaji 1985b: pl. IX, 1 no. 16; Faccenna 1986: fig. 13, Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 398, Filigenzi 2012a: figs. 46, 46 bis).

A fourth possible case is represented by a crude relief in the Peshawar Museum, also depicting a triad, where the object in the left hand of the pensive turbaned bodhisattva might be a lotus bud (Miyaji 1985a: pl. V, 2 no. 9, Id. 1985b: 21, fig. 14, Id. 2008: fig. 15; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 41).

<sup>85</sup> On this topic see Filigenzi 2012a: esp. 122-130, but cf. Quagliotti (2000), who recognises in the bodhisattva with Sūrya in the headdress a specific iconographic connotation of Siddhārtha. This highly plausible identification nevertheless raises a problem, one that is not marginal in the art of Gandhāra, namely the weakness of the index of recognisability of analogous iconographic types: the type described by Quagliotti is actually very similar to other examples of bodhisattva present in the triads, in which it seems possible to instead recognise Avalokiteśvara. In several cases, the pose is identical with the left hand on the side, and generally with relatively undiversified attributes. See for example the well-known relief in the de Marteau collection, referred to in the literature as “the year 5 Buddha” (in actual fact a pentad), published for the first time by Harle (1974), or the example, similar in subject, of the Indian Museum

iconographic conventions, we may consider as characteristic of Avalokiteśvara the attribute of the lotus, which is usually represented in Gandhāra with one or more buds on short stems, and of the garland. Together with the turban, both of these are the attributes that – with no exceptions – mark out all the single images of the pensive bodhisattva. One particularly interesting feature is the invariable orientation shown in the position of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi, always portrayed with head leaning to the left, right leg folded over the seat in a more or less angular form, while the left leg reaches down (Fig. 20).



Fig. 20 – Gandharan bodhisattvas in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* (courtesy British Library; Photo 1003/1045)

Excluding the more complex scenes, where the presence of a great many figures in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* makes the need for symmetry particularly important, it will be seen that – not only in Gandhāra – this *āsana* remains largely unchanged.<sup>86</sup> This evidently derives from natural behaviour, the tendency being to bring the weight of the body to bear on the right side when assuming this posture if circumstances permit. The position is therefore normally attributed to figures in isolation or in all those cases where the balance of the composition does not call for mirror-image symmetry.

of Calcutta, published for the first time by Foucher (1909: pl. 10; 1905-1951: II, fig. 406). Also starting from the premise (with which I however disagree) that the figure of Avalokiteśvara is necessarily characterised, already in Gandhāra, by the effigy of Amitābha in the headdress, it is still necessary to identify all the closely related subjects that nevertheless lack this attribute and that cannot (as in the case of the bodhisattvas that appear in triads and pentads) be reduced to representations of Siddhārtha. A similar problem has been raised by the interpretation proposed by Fussman (1987: 75-76) regarding certain images of bodhisattva with the small flask and hair tied in a knot (usually identified as Maitreya), which the author identifies as Mahāsthāmaprāpta.

<sup>86</sup> One exception to this tendency is represented by several portrayals of Māra, who is depicted as marking out signs on the ground. In this case, the exception seems due to the simple need for compositional balance.

The figure of Avalokiteśvara remains essentially faithful to this iconographic model – albeit with secondary variants – even when included in a triad. In one of these cases (Brough 1982), although the left side of the relief is missing, given the rule of symmetrical balance so widely observed in Gandhāra for compositions of this type, we can safely say that the pendant to Avalokiteśvara must have been a bodhisattva of the “Brahmanic” type, also seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* or, on the evidence of other examples,<sup>87</sup> in *sattvāsana* (with ankles crossed; cf. Bunce 1994, II: 1016, fig. 256; Id. 2001: 244), as we occasionally (and almost exclusively) see Maitreya portrayed. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that in the symmetrical representations it is the Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi figure that dictates the compositional trend – naturally from left to right – and imposes a mirror-image counterpoint on the companion figure, as if the iconographic prescription specifically gave him priority over the pensive pose. We find the same convention applied, for example, in the triad first published by Grünwedel, Gibson and Burgess (1901: pl. 147), where the pendant to Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi is a bodhisattva of the “Brahmanic” typology bearing a book as attribute, and again pensive, although his pose is in fact the reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*.<sup>88</sup> Thus we find that the tendency is already established in Gandhāra to endow Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi with a distinctive but not exclusive *lakṣaṇa*: the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* associated with the pensive pose, expressing that Buddhist sense of *karuṇā* of which the bodhisattva represents the hypostasis.

The *kṣatriya/Brahman* contrast within the category of bodhisattvas is extremely frequent in Gandhāra. It epitomises two essential values and functions, *prajñā* and *karuṇā*.<sup>89</sup> While the generic characterisation of the bodhisattva remains constant, inspired as it is by the model of prince Siddhārtha,<sup>90</sup> the bodhisattva more specifically endowed with a function associated with *prajñā* may be recognised not only by his attributes but also by the lack of a turban, in the place of which we see a particular headdress which, albeit with a few variants, recalls the chignon of the Brahmanic ascetic. In Gandhāra the chignon characterises the figure of Maitreya and, probably, that of Mañjuśrī, as in the case of the triad already mentioned.<sup>91</sup> However, this contrast tends to disappear, or at least to become less rigid, in post-Gandharan art for reasons that presumably include the practice of adorning sacred images with *regalia* and a codification of attributes that had by then become the rule.

By contrast, in the rock sculptures of Swat we find established as a norm what was a trend *in nuce* in the art of Gandhāra, namely the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*/reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* contrast as an iconographic sign that the bodhisattva belongs to this or that group or family. Thus the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* is confirmed as the

<sup>87</sup> Once again the triads – that is, concise doctrinal summaries based on elementary oppositions – provide interesting confirmations and food for thought. See, for instance, the triad within micro-architecture cited in fn. 84, no. 3. A similar case is that of the triad in the Peshawar Museum (also cited in fn. 84), depicting Maitreya on the right, identifiable by the Brahmanic headdress and the *kamaṅḍalu*, seated in *sattvāsana* (or *pralambapādāsana* with ankles crossed), in *abhayamudrā*; on the left is Avalokiteśvara, seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, also in *abhayamudrā*, with an unclear attribute. In this rather late (?) and clumsily executed relief, the pose of the two bodhisattvas breaks the customary rule of symmetry, instead conforming to the iconographic convention deemed more peculiar to both. Maitreya is thus depicted also in other contexts: see for example a relief from Charsada, in the Lahore Museum, where Maitreya, in *namaskāramudrā*, is seated beneath a canopy on a backed throne with his feet on a footstool, surrounded by worshippers (Ingholt 1957: fig. 285; J.C. Huntington 1984: fig. 6; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 61). Quite similar is the Maitreya portrayed in the upper lunette of a stela in the Chandigarh Museum, a so-called “Miracle of Śrāvastī” (Quagliotti 1996c: Pl. III, fig. 5; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 44). However, as for the specific case of Mañjuśrī depicted in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* see above, fn. 74.

<sup>88</sup> For this specific example see the contribution by M. Sawoo (1983); a discussion of similar subjects is addressed by Quagliotti 1990 (see below, fn. 91). We cannot rule out that in Gandhāra the opposition *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*/reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* was already fixed as a distinctive sign of specific bodhisattvas. See for instance the isolated bodhisattva in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* holding a book (?), possibly Mañjuśrī, in the Musée Guimet (Rhi 2006: fig. 7.9; Id. 2008: fig. 7).

<sup>89</sup> The various motifs of this contrast include an association of concepts that appears to be elemental in Indian philosophy, where the *prajñā*, or the commitment to the path of knowledge, finds the most spontaneous personification in the figure of the ascetic. Nevertheless this question, which is much more complex and subtle, involves a true functional specificity expressed in iconographic choices that are by no means random. For a discussion of this topic see the specific chapters on Padmapāṇi and Maitreya.

<sup>90</sup> The reason underlying the model nevertheless runs even deeper: it is precisely the regal nature of the “irreversible” bodhisattva that is highlighted by the iconography (Verardi 1985: in particular 88).

<sup>91</sup> On the presence, or rather, the identification of Mañjuśrī in Gandhāra, see Quagliotti 1990.

typical characteristic of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi, head of the *karuṇā* family. The reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāsa-na*, on the other hand, is consistently applied to Maitreya, head of the *prajñā* family and probably to other bodhisattvas not readily recognisable but whose presence is – for reasons we have already seen (see Chapter 1.2) – perfectly plausible: Mañjuśrī who, like Maitreya, incarnates not only knowledge of the Law but also its conservation and transmission, and Vajrapāṇi in his various manifestations, who incarnates custody and the combative spirit of the Law.

### 3.5 – The thrones

The actually rather limited variety of thrones can be traced back to certain Gandharan prototypes, although they may depart so far from the original models as to be hardly recognisable at first sight. A constant feature of the rock sculpture iconography is the lotus flower – a simple support for standing figures or integral part of the throne of seated figures. By now, in fact, it is so completely integrated into a system of conventional signs as to be treated with considerable freedom, in forms ranging from realistic representation of the corolla itself to lightly sketched quasi-abstraction such as a small row of petals set below or above the throne.

Among the most imaginative morphological variants of the lotus flower is the seat regularly associated with the figure of Padmapāṇi, which takes the form of a tall rectangular dais, with a sort of cushion projecting at the top and a row of lotus petals at the base (e.g. C9; II: Fig. 8a; GS 10, 16). The origin of this seat, which appears to emerge from a synthesis of various prototypes, can also be readily traced back to Gandhāra.

In the Gandharan reliefs the pensive bodhisattva usually sits on quite a high seat serving to endow the *ardhaparyāṅkāsa* with ease and naturalness, reducing the angle at which the leg stretches down. The seat itself is usually a narrow cylindrical stool, which may take on the appearance of a four-legged throne (Fig. 20, right), sometimes equipped with a back.<sup>92</sup> In this case the back will be markedly flared upwards, the top forming a straight line, although in the real prototype – supposing there was one, in this case not much dissimilar in shape from chairs still in use in the area – it must in some way have followed the curvature of the seat. Presumably the reduction to a straight line reflects the scant interest Indian art took in perspective, which shows only what the eye sees and not what is effectively there. It is in any case quite probable that the model – with a back or not – took inspiration from a type of seat actually in use, often woven in wicker, as the elaborate decorative pattern suggests. Support for this hypothesis comes from the fact that this type of seat, albeit in a simplified version, also appears in narrative reliefs, associated with persons of rank (Faccenna 2001: 113-114, fig. 37 and relative data charts), in scenes that most probably mirror settings and conditions of real life.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Besides the seats of the two bodhisattvas in the relief from Loriyan Tangai, now in the Indian Museum of Calcutta (see fn. 84, no. 2), see that of the bodhisattva Maitreya in a relief from Charsada, now in the Lahore Museum (Ingholt 1957: fig. 285; J.C. Huntington 1984: fig. 6; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 61), and in a relief from Chatpat (Dani 1968-69b: fig. b no. 93). Among the rock sculptures, the backed throne is witnessed by a single specimen in Puran (Olivieri 1994: fig. 12; here, Fig. 21).

<sup>93</sup> The various seat types can provide thought-provoking ideas concerning the relationship between the art of Gandhāra and the real world as well as on the process of extrapolating actual iconographic lemmas from the latter. It should be noted that in Gandhāra, for the figures of Buddha and bodhisattva, the simple rectangular podium prevails, often enhanced by figured scenes on the front face, as well as other seat types for minor figures that for the needs of the narrative must be portrayed seated even in the presence of the Buddha. Such is the case of high ranking personages, generally seated on elaborate stools, or ascetics that, in the scenes depicting the visit of the Buddha, sit on rolled up mats. The principal personages in “Kushan” dress, in those “unbiographical” scenes that are usually reserved for continuous friezes, are instead seated on a curved chair of curule type perhaps inspired by the folding chairs that presumably existed among nomadic peoples and were used, if not every day, at least as a sign of distinction on particular occasions or for special personages. Support to this hypothesis is provided by the funerary deposits in the Saka necropolis of Tillya Tepe in Afghanistan, where remains of a chair of this type have been found in Tomb no. 4 (Sarianidi 1984: 2, fig. 3A; Mode 2013: 215; 216, fig. 18). The backed chair, although already attested in the early Gandharan period by its occurrence in the frieze of the Main Stūpa of Saidu Sharif I (Faccenna 2001: pl. 17a), becomes a quite common feature only at a relatively late date. Judging by its widespread presence in the Pāla art of Bengal and Bihar, and by the extreme richness of its decorative motifs compared with the



Fig. 21 – Buddha on backed throne, Puran (courtesy IsIAO, neg. Dep. CS L17915 20)

If, then, this type of stool – also in real life – was apparently reserved for figures of superior status the Gandharan iconography occasionally adds a significant element of differentiation. In fact, certain images of bodhisattvas seated on stools – isolated or in triads – have one or both feet set on a footstool which is almost as broad as the seat and has the form of a fully opened lotus.<sup>94</sup> It is precisely from this particular iconographic convention, distinguishing the bodhisattva from the generic personage of rank, that a new form of stool appears to have evolved, i.e. the stool resting on or emerging from a lotus corolla represented in summary form as a rectangular dais with a row of petals at the base.

While this type of seat is only occasionally to be seen in the figurative repertory of the bronze production, it is one of the most frequent iconographic elements in the rock sculpture, albeit with the necessary adaptations to fit it into the particular context. The stool on lotus corolla appears in three bronzes also depicting Padmapāṇi, where particularly the decoration on the body of the seat clearly reveals its derivation from wickerwork, simplified as the pattern is.

scarcity and simplicity of the “Gandharan” specimens, this type of chair probably belonged to a more specifically Indian tradition, and its adoption in the Gandharan context, albeit only marginal, nevertheless appears to be significant.

<sup>94</sup> See for example the residual bodhisattva from the triad published by Brough (see fn. 84, no. 1); the bodhisattva on the left of the triad within micro-architecture from Loriyan Tangai (see fn. 84, no. 3); the pensive Padmapāṇi in the Indian Museum of Calcutta (Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 74), where the upper part of the footrest remains – obviously the pistil of an open lotus, as in the preceding examples.



The first of these, the property of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, was published by Pal (1975: 136, no. 46a,b) and Lerner (1975: 4, pl. 4). Lerner indicates the provenance as Swat or Kashmir and a dating somewhere in the first half of the seventh century; nevertheless, he considers it earlier than the Swat rock sculptures “[...] exhibiting little of the Gupta flavor of this bronze” (*ibidem*), and offers as evidence the photos published by Tucci (1958: figs. 4, 10, 13, 18, 19, 22).<sup>95</sup> The bronze represents a Padmapāṇi in pensive pose, seated on a cylindrical stool displaying incised geometric decoration, at the base of which is a row of reverse lotus petals upon which the bodhisattva rests his left foot.

Undeniable here is the correspondence with the rock sculptures of Swat: for example, the shape of the seat is to be seen in simplified form in relief C104 (II: Figs. 104a,b) and in stelae S129 and S138 (II: Figs. 131 and 144 respectively). What is more, the bronzes display other obvious similarities to features typical of the rock sculptures. These include the type of headdress, with locks of hair drawn back; the drape of the garment, portrayed at pelvis level in two series of folds following a circular movement, and the hem fanning out at the centre; and above all the anatomical structure, solid yet graceful, with the slight protuberance of the lower part of the abdomen, the broad face, large elongated eyes and, as in the case of stela S129, the attribute of an open lotus viewed frontally.<sup>96</sup> Sculpting in the round and the greater refinement in technique endow the bronze image with a more natural grace, to be seen above all in the position of the left foot (which in the rock sculptures is constrained in rigid angular profile), in the sinuous line of the lotus stem (practically straight in the rock sculptures), and again in the realistic execution of the petals. Taking together the affinities and the obvious reasons for divergence (see above, Chap. 3.2) we see as quite secondary not only the stylistic but also the iconographic differences, certain attributes or their specific forms being subject to variation according to the context.<sup>97</sup> With regard to provenance, Swat is thus to be considered certain, while the short dedicatory inscription incised on the lotus petals at the base in Tibetan characters (Pal 1975: 136) confirms the diffusion of these products well beyond the centres of production.

An almost identical piece, apart from the *dhoti*, in this case reaching down almost to the calves, is to be seen in a bronze in the Rockefeller Collection (Lee 1970: fig. 9; Pal 1975: no. 45; here, Fig. 22). This bronze, albeit somewhat abraded in the upper part, still displays the same details in the headdress, showing no difference from those of the previous one.

The third bronze was published and discussed by J.C. Harle (1979). The subject is identical, but certain characteristics of the style and iconography point to a different area of provenance. Yet it is precisely this evident difference that makes the affinities with the Swat production all the more striking. In this case the seat displaying incised decoration in the form of interlocking lozenges has a projecting moulding at the base, while the lotus corolla is set on top like a cushion – a variant which, however, is also largely attested in the rock sculpture (see for instance C32, C41, C73, C123, S130; II: Figs. 33, 36 [GS 11], 76b right, 127, 132 respectively); the lotus flower that the bodhisattva holds in his left hand is small and in full bloom.

All three figures display a decidedly ascetic characterisation,<sup>98</sup> indicated by the Brahmanic cord, the cervid or feline skin over the left shoulder, the total absence of jewels and the extreme simplicity of the headdress, which in the third case even lacks the Buddha image. Given the somatic characteristics (round face, flattened rather than aquiline nose, less pronounced eyeballs), the particular headdress (hair gathered above and falling to the left in schematic curled locks of progressive length, and a sort of circular “window” at the centre of the

<sup>95</sup> The date proposed by Lerner, although acceptable, is based on a wrong premise. It actually does not take a series of intrinsic and extrinsic elements into account which, as has often been noted here, means that it is not possible to perfectly equate artistic productions that differ in the material and technique used and their intended use even when they belong to closely related environments.

<sup>96</sup> It is to be noticed that both in bronze and rock sculptures the lotus (or a local variant of the family of *Nimphaeaceae*?), even when open and seen in frontal view, never shows the pistil, which remains always hidden within the closed inner row of petals.

<sup>97</sup> For further discussion see the following paragraph.

<sup>98</sup> For this aspect see Chap. 4.2.



Fig. 22 – Bronze sculpture depicting Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi (after Pal 1975: no. 45)

head showing the hair parted in almost horizontal locks), together with the emphatically linear execution of the drapes and hair and, finally, the type of alloy (Harle 1979: 133), the third figure takes its place in a geographical context other than that of the Pakistani-Kashmiri bronzes, which Harle assigns to north-western or western India, postulating the existence of minor or at any rate unknown production centres. In this specific case Harle sees the most probable provenance in the Panjab (*ibid.*: 134).<sup>99</sup>

The type of seat adopted in the bronzes nevertheless shows scant affinity with the iconographic lexis of the rock sculptures, which rarely dwell on sophisticated detail in their decoration. The airy play of interweaving forms displayed by the bronzes is completely lost in the rock sculpture, where the seat becomes solid and smooth.<sup>100</sup> And yet the process of simplification here is counterbalanced by an inventive approach that adapts the form of the seat to its function and, again, seems to take inspiration from the previous tradition. Certain Gandharan sculptures, probably belonging to a late phase, pointedly draw attention to the lotus supporting – or generating – the divine image, showing the flower fully open so as to expose the pistil completely. With this device the iconography is evidently intended to allude to the transcendental nature of the revelation. At the same time, by emphasising the position of the divine figure within the inner space of the lotus, the artists offer an inspired translation of a metaphor familiar to Indian religious thought – that of the lotus as a mystic receptacle.<sup>101</sup>

In the specific context of the Swat rock sculptures, the seat of Padmapāṇi (or at any rate more often associated with him than with other figures) seems to have emerged from a combination of the traditional wickerwork stool, possibly having already gone through the changes attested by the bronzes,<sup>102</sup> and this particular form of theophorous lotus. Of decisive importance here is the affinity between the upper contour of the pistil of the flower in the Gandharan sculptures and that slightly projecting element appearing at the top of seats in the rock sculptures, which at first sight looks like (and, after all, actually is) a rigid cushion. The seat is of quite considerable height in most cases, although somewhat lower in a few examples, and the presence of fillets at the base and top of the body are more suggestive of a dais than a rendering of the pistil of a lotus, however free it may be (e.g. C90 and S143; II: Figs. 90, and 145 [GS 34] respectively).

Another recurring type of seat is represented by a low backless chair, either in the shape of a podium with solid body or a four-legged throne. This typology combines two different artistic idioms, one closer to traditional forms of Gandharan origin, the other in the wake of more innovative trends widely attested by the stone and bronze sculpture that, for the sake of simplicity, we can generically term post-Gupta. These new models of throne are quite diffused over a vast area including not only Swat and Kashmir, but also central-northern India

<sup>99</sup> On the Western origin of the “window” headdress see Taddei (1962) and Harle (1987); both provide examples of the persistence of this motif in a late period, to which must be added the female bust kept in the British Museum, from Buner, and dated by Barrett to a period slightly earlier than Avantivarman (855-883) (Barrett 1957: 56; fig. 2). Also among the Pakistani-Kashmiri bronzes this particular headdress was largely present; see for example bodhisattvas nos. 42, 43, 50, 52 and 82 in Pal (1975), which, although with slight variations, are all based on the same prototype; all except no. 82, assigned by Pal to 600 ca. (a dating that is however quite doubtful), may be included stylistically in a series directly linked to the Queen Diddā bronze. Although the bronze discussed by Harle represents, at least so far, an isolated case of provincial art, it shows how the iconographic type of the pensive Padmapāṇi typical of Swat and the surrounding areas emerged as the reference model.

<sup>100</sup> The only known exception is the Padmapāṇi of Jare (C107; II: Fig. 108; GS 12), the seat of which is decorated with a circle motif that seems schematically to represent woven vegetal fibres.

<sup>101</sup> The list of examples would be pointlessly long. Reference is therefore made to Miyaji 1985b and Kurita 1988-1990 for a rapid, albeit incomplete, overview. By way of example a small but well known icon, perhaps from Jamālgharī (in Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 408) may be taken. It portrays a triad, where the quasi naturalistic treatment of the theophoric lotuses, in particular those on which the two standing bodhisattvas rest, clearly render the idea of a base. The same iconographic practice tending to emphasise a physical and mystical coincidence between the “heart” of the lotus and the divine image appears also in cases in which the theophoric lotus is depicted with straight petals. Here the detail becomes less apparent as the pistil of the flower is partly concealed and at the same time is confirmed as being significant. Also here reference is made to verification by means of a well-known example, the (incomplete) triad published by Brough (1982).

<sup>102</sup> However, the inverse process cannot be ruled out, namely that the bronzes are based on the model created by the rock sculpture.

and areas that in one way or another were exposed to Indian artistic influence, from Ladakh to Tibet and as far as Mainland Southeast Asia. Despite local variants, they unmistakably show elements of formal unity such as a common repertoire of symbolic figures and the lively and dynamic character of the representation – all features that can also be recognised, albeit in a much simplified version, in the rock sculptures of Swat.

As for the more traditional current, this is not in itself a proof of an earlier dating of the monument displaying it. One can notice indeed that it is more frequently associated with Buddha figures, which in the rock sculpture are often characterised by a deliberate archaism (see above; cf. GS 1-8, esp. 2-4).

The large relief of Shakhorai (C92; II: Figs. 92a,b,c,d), which stands out from the general context on account of the flattened volumes and elegant flow of line,<sup>103</sup> offers the simplest and most austere example of the throne – a rectangular dais with projecting fillet above and below, and a flat cushion. Slightly more complex in form is the throne of the Buddha in stela S125 (II: Fig. 55; GS 4), decorated with a vegetal motive – probably rosettes or lotus scrolls – or a re-interpretation of the rosette-and-sheaf motif. Also taking inspiration from the more traditional repertory is stela S191 (II: Fig. 147; GS 8), where on the front face of the throne of a Buddha in *dhyānāsana* we see displayed, in the space between the frontal lions, two crouching deer, in profile, converging at the sides of a wheel. The same motif appears in a relief in Puran (Olivieri 1994: 474-475, fig. 12; here, Fig. 21). It may well be that the wheel was adopted in the artistic production of the areas and period we are concerned with here as a more generic symbol of the cosmocratic power of the Buddha, while the precise reference to the Park of Deers and the First Sermon might have been made to identify the image of Śākyamuni.<sup>104</sup>

However, the more traditional current also offers signs of the iconographic trend, albeit with some exceptions and at a marginal level. Among them, mention must be made of the characteristic fringed or knotted tassels falling along the sides of the throne, or the decorated drape occupying the central part – elements frequent not only in the rock sculptures but also in the bronzes.

We have only one case (or maybe two) of Buddha seated on an elephant throne. In a large relief in the Mingora area (C1; II: Figs. 1a,b; G35) the throne is borne by three crouching elephants, executed somewhat crudely, turned three-quarters rightwards in a view that shows only the muzzle with long trunk reaching down and coiling to the left, and part of the forelegs. Unfortunately the relief is badly damaged, and certain significant details can no longer be made out. Nevertheless, the arms are set at angles suggesting that the Buddha is performing the meditation gesture, being moreover the only *mudrā* that, with the few exceptions listed above (see Chap. 1.2), the rock

<sup>103</sup> The almost “drawing” style of the figure is highly reminiscent, particularly in the schematic treatment of the drape, of the strongly conventional nature of the upper Indus Valley graffiti, where the Buddha figure becomes a kind of pictogram (see Jettmar 1982: pl. 2, fig. 7).

<sup>104</sup> “Park of Deers” is the currently used definition, although a more correct translation of the original Sanskrit would read “Park of the Antelopes”. On this topic see the remarks by Fussman (1994a: 62) also in the light of the studies by D. König (1994: 75-76, 86-87). The specific iconographic reference to the First Sermon, in extra-Indian contexts, accentuates its symbolic connotation and takes on a broader field of application, eventually becoming a recurrent decorative elements, as for example in Tibet (Fussman 1994a: 65). The wheel motif among the deer also appears in other bronzes; see for example the Buddha in the British Museum, sitting on a more complex seat comprising a lion throne with drape and tassels on a double lotus corolla that Barrett was the first to assign to the Swat Valley and dated, using too low a chronology, to between the late eighth and ninth century (Barrett 1962: 37; figs. 3-4). Quite similar is the Buddha of the Pan Asian Collection, identified by Pal as Gautama (Pal 1975: 198; no. 75), which displays a greater stylisation but also a more complex iconography owing to the presence of an elaborate radiate nimbus and two small female figures standing on lotus-shaped bases. However, the deer motif seems to take on a symbolic meaning regardless of the historical reference, even though it is derived from it. See for example the representations of deer in a rock cornice which sometimes appear in the bronzes, where the wheel is either absent (Pal 1975: no. 22a,b), or not directly connected with the deer (*ibid.*: no. 30 a,b). In these cases they seem to express a more generic relationship with the worldly level of existence, or better a reference to the value of asceticism in the scenario of the world (see for instance the association with an ascetic form of Avalokiteśvara/Lokeśvara in von Schroeder 1981: 128, 21A), although a convention persists in the iconography which requires them to be paired and squatting (on the symbolic significance of the rock see below). The mere presence of the deer evidently led Pal to consider the Buddha/Gautama identification as certain, even in the absence of the wheel (Pal 1975: no. 32, where the wheel is replaced by a crouching lion). The same identification is proposed by the author in other dubious cases as well, such as for the bejewelled Buddha of Nandivikramādityanandin (*ibid.*: no. 31).

sculptures iconography seems to have reserved for images of seated Buddhas.<sup>105</sup> The second example we have of an elephant throne was visible on the stela S85 (II: Fig. 87; GS 9) now lost (?), seen by Tucci (1958: 308, fig. 14) on the road between Manglaor and Azgharai. The stela is among the most complex and interesting from the point of view of iconography. The main subject is a standing Padmapāṇi, surrounded by minor figures, meditating Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and donors arranged vertically on a number of superimposed registers. One of the figures, on the second register from below, is portrayed seated on a throne supported by two (standing?) elephants in profile, diverging, with head and a foreleg depicted in a somewhat incongruous representation. Between the two animals there is an element that might well be interpreted as a highly stylised drape delineated with sharp lines. This character might be interpreted either as a bodhisattva or a bejewelled Buddha, or even – and more probably, indeed – as Akṣobhya, whom vajrayanic iconography often depicts as a bodhisattva (see below).

Although direct stylistic and iconographic comparisons are unfeasible, given the poor state of conservation, on the evidence of a pronounced affinity with the broader context of the rock sculptures we can liken these two examples to a sculpture belonging to a private collection, published by Kurita (1988-1990: II, figs. 295-298; here, Figs. 23a,b,c,d). The author traces the probable provenance of this object to Buner, but in the light of the possible comparisons we may equally well ascribe it to a Swati origin. On the four faces of a vertical parallelepiped sculpture, 40.5 cm tall, four principal figures are represented in relief projecting from a recessed background, conceived as a sort of niche, and four minor figures (in terms of size, but not necessarily of rank) above them, each set within a similar sort of niche with fairly regular contours.<sup>106</sup>



**Figs. 23a,b,c,d** – A miniature pseudo-*vihāra* element or miniature pillar-*stūpa* (after Kurita 1988-1990: II, figs. 295-298)

<sup>105</sup> Excluding very rare cases of total illegibility of the images, the angle of the arms allows the *mudrā* to be identified even in badly damaged sculptures. Among the rare cases of Buddhas depicted in *mūdras* other than the *dhyānimudrā*, some doubts remain about relief C6 (II: Fig. 6), in which the right arm of the Buddha is outstretched, thus suggesting a *bhūmisparśamudrā*, although it is only a non-verifiable hypothesis.

<sup>106</sup> This is probably a miniature pseudo-*vihāra* element, of which we have several Gandharan examples (cf. Kurita 1988-1990: II, nos. 431-433; Freschi 1994: no. 38). However, the chronological position of the piece, i.e. post-Gandharan, makes it equally likely that it was a miniature pillar-*stūpa* element, the latter better known outside India. The specimens preserved in Central Asia and China, especially inside caves, attest to the wide-spread diffusion of this typology, whose remote origin may be traced back to the *caitya* halls of western India. This topic, although referring to the Mogao cave site near Dunhuang, is extensively treated by Abe (1990).

Three of the principal subjects seem to represent different versions of Maitreya, while the fourth represents a Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, the head surrounded by a flaming nimbus, hair and drapes of the garments conforming to a manner of execution that finds affinities both in the rock sculptures and in the bronzes.

The throne upon which the Buddha is seated is borne by three frontal elephants, of which we see only the heads, the trunks coiling to the right, and the forelegs. The position is unnatural, the rendering of volumes heavy, almost as if squeezed in between the lower fillet and the cushion on the throne. Also reminiscent of Swati production, and especially the work in bronze, is the rendering (naïve as it is) of the lions on the throne of the seated Maitreya, which look as if they are emerging from the tassel-bordered drape.<sup>107</sup> The association with the figure of Maitreya raises a more general problem of interpretation. The figure of Akṣobhya appears to derive from an idealisation of the imperturbability of the Buddha Śākyamuni (Snellgrove 1989: 37). In fact, one of his distinctive attributions is the *bhūmi-sparśamudrā*, although the position of the hands, like the orientation of the figure, traditionally corresponding to the East, can vary, as we see in Tibetan iconography (Krom 1927: II, 146 ff.). We do not know whether, in this particular context, the figure of Akṣobhya was consciously adopted as a hypostasis of Śākyamuni or a separate identity.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, in the latter case, too, there are traces in the literature of a connection between Akṣobhya and Maitreya (as indeed, let us add, between Akṣobhya and Śākyamuni). In particular, in some of the texts of the *Prajñāpāramitā* Akṣobhya appears as the present Buddha, while Maitreya, Dīpaṅkara's disciple, is indicated as the future Buddha (*Hōbōgirin*, s.v. Ashuku).

The elephant throne appears sporadically, and somewhat later, in the art of Gandhāra.<sup>109</sup> It consists of a fully opened lotus corolla, with pistil exposed, borne by three crouching elephants almost flattened on the base of the relief, in a very limited view revealing the central elephant frontally and the two at the sides in profile. The Indian inspiration is clear in this iconography, especially in the convention of the raised trunks, and is emphatically shown in one case where each of the elephants holds a closed lotus in its trunk (see below, fn. 109, no. 3).<sup>110</sup>

Among the clay thrones found in the Terrace of the Main Stūpa at Tapa Sardar (Ghazni, Afghanistan) – the images occupying them have since been lost – there is also one supported by two elephants (Taddei and Verardi 1985: pls. 5, 7, 10; here, Fig. 24). According to Verardi, the throne could have belonged to an image of Akṣobhya, the Buddha of the East customarily associated with an elephant. Evidence for this association is to be found in the position of the throne, set – albeit not with perfect precision – towards the south-east (*ibid.*: 30). For the purpose of comparison, the author cites a bronze from Charbagh, Swat, published by Barrett (1962: 39, fig. 13), belonging to the Wali Sahab collection of Swat. According to Barrett it portrays a bodhisattva in

The examples of open air pillar-*stūpas* include the Shijia Zhenru Sheli Baota (Śākyamuni's True Likeness Precious Relic Stūpa) near Baodingshan (Falco Howard 2001: fig. 118), the simplicity of whose structure makes it particularly well suited for comparison with our piece. The architectural elements and the arrangement of the iconographic subjects is strongly reminiscent of the Mañuṣi Buddhas' *stūpas* (cf. Snodgrass 1985: 132-134), but the meaning here clearly revolves around Maitreya.

<sup>107</sup> For a brief overview of comparable bronze specimens cf. von Schroeder (1981: 10A, 11D, 11E, 11H etc.).

<sup>108</sup> See for instance the ambiguous character of the Orissan sculptures of the late sixth to eighth century depicting Buddhas in *bhūmi-sparśamudrā*, either alone or flanked by two bodhisattvas (Donaldson 2001: pp. 100 ff.; figs. 74-78).

<sup>109</sup> The elephant throne is present in at least three Gandharan stelae:

- 1) Triad within micro-architecture (Peshawar Museum; in Ingholt 1957: fig. 257; Miyaji 1985b: pl. IV, 1, no. 10; Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 396; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 45)
- 2) Triad within micro-architecture (Ingholt 1957: fig. XVI, 4; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 50)
- 3) Pentad (from Sahri Bahlol, Peshawar Museum; in Ingholt 1957: fig. 261; Miyaji 1985b: pl. III, 2, no. 5; Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 412; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 27).

<sup>110</sup> A different case is that of elephant figures acting as caryatids, as for example in a sculpture in the Portland Museum (Taddei and Verardi 1985: pl. 16). Here the Buddha is seated on a closed lotus flower beside which there are two small kneeling and praying figures. The figures are included in an architectural structure (probably a pavilion) supported by four columns of which only the bases remain. The figure rests on a bracketed base supported by three elephants with raised trunks (the two lateral ones in profile, the central one facing the front), alternated with winged atlases. An almost identical motif returns on the base of a relief depicting the *Parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, photographed in an antiques market (Archivio IsIAO, Dep. Cs Ng. R 16752, 10-12), but also in the small *stūpas* of Mohrā Morādu and Jauliān at Taxila (Marshall 1951: I, 361, 524-525; III, pls. 156-157), where the lower registers are decorated with alternating elephants and atlases.



Fig. 24 – Tapa Sardar, Throne 6 (courtesy ISIAO, neg. Dep. CS 7399/11)

*bhūmisparśamudrā*, originally holding a *kamaṇḍalu*, now lost, which Verardi however considers a possible representation of the Buddha Akṣobhya.<sup>111</sup>

Another image of Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā*, seated on a throne supported by three elephants standing frontally, may be likened to our relief C1. It consists of a bronze conserved in the National Museum of Karachi, in all likelihood from Swat, where the throne is characterised by a remarkable incongruity in the execution of the drapery: the cloth falls in two vertical series of close semi-circular folds between the elephants and seems to be finished on the two outer edges by a border with drop-shaped tassels (Figs. 25a,b).

What the elephant figures in all these extra-Gandharan examples have in common is the execution of the trunk, which is no longer raised but dangling and coiled at the end. In the Karachi bronze the attempt to give the animal figures a degree of dynamic symmetry was achieved by means of a slight differentiation in the design of the trunk – almost straight in the central one, with the lateral ones slightly raised towards the exterior – while

<sup>111</sup> The identification of this bronze sculpture with Akṣobhya is accepted also by von Schroeder (1981: 94, 11C). It is possible that the position of the right hand, which led Barrett to postulate the original presence of a *kamaṇḍalu*, is merely a misleading variant of the *bhūmisparśamudrā*.



**Figs. 25a,b** – Akṣobhya? (Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 447, neg. nos. 1859, 1873)

this stylistic sophistication, albeit modest, is completely absent in the rock reliefs. However, a greater staticity is generally observed in these figures than in the Gandhāra examples. It is perhaps due less to reasons of a purely stylistic nature and more to the different iconographic function of the animal, which is now viewed as an actual *vāhana* in association with particular divinities of the Buddhist pantheon, while in Gandhāra it seems rather to hold a more generic role of *nāga/makara*.

The identification of the Buddha on the elephant throne with Akṣobhya, as proposed by Verardi in the Tapa Sardar context, may theoretically be extended to also take in the Buddha of the above-mentioned pseudo-*vihāra* or miniature pillar-*stūpa*, the bodhisattva or Buddha depicted on the stela S85 and, ultimately, to the relief C1. However, in the latter case, any relationship between directional hierarchy and physical orientation of the sculpture, which faces north-west, is to be excluded. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that in Gandhāra as well, as perhaps at Tapa Sardar, an accurate topographic position of the sculptures (and not only in the specific case of the Buddhas of the five directions) represented an important criterion for image identification which, in the absence of an original context, is now entrusted to elements of ambiguous interpretation.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Cf. however what is stated above, with specific reference to Akṣobhya, in connection with the variability of the iconographic scheme.



The thrones examined so far belong to the simplest and most traditional typologies, even though, as we have seen, each has an equivalent that is widely attested in other similar and more or less contemporary productions which show how subjects inspired by the older tradition have again been integrated into an artistic and religious conception imbued with a fresh spirit. Nevertheless, in a very few samples we find thrones that, even in a very simplified form, can be more directly linked to the repertory typical of the bronze sculptures, where the thrones' structure is usually more complex and the iconographic motifs more innovative. However, the comparison does not stop short at the bronzes but may easily be extended to other categories of perhaps less well known objects, owing both to the limited number and to the lack of systematic studies: the stamped terracottas of Swat and the small stone icons from Kashmir (Paul 1981; Id. 1986).

One of the iconographic types most frequently found among the bronzes is the *śimhāsana* emerging from a simple or double lotus corolla, covered with a drapery bordered with tassels and often decorated with two large fringed or knotted tassels falling at the sides. Each of these elements, as has been seen, are frequently found in rock sculptures but are rarely all reproduced contemporarily and in detail.

The lotus corolla with reverse petals used to support the throne is a late Gandharan invention. It appears in a group of reliefs depicting non-narrative subjects which share highly pronounced stylistic characteristics. In particular, the iconometric canons are based on abstract values: massive flattened volumes, highly conventional anatomical rendering, schematic drapery, with sparse pairs of incised lines, relative gigantism of the figures accentuated by the disproportion of faces and hands.<sup>113</sup>

In the Gandharan version the throne is still of the traditional type: rectangular, decorated with semi-rosettes inside filleted triangles (see fn. 113, no. 4), with cushion and drape (*ibid.*, nos. 1 and 2), but also with a drapery leaving two small lateral columns uncovered (*ibid.*, nos. 3, 5, 6), perhaps to be understood not as decorative protomes of a full podium but as the legs of a seat with an open structure. The drapery is of the simple type, sometimes decorated with a vertical band with an incised rhombus pattern (*ibid.*, nos. 3 and 5). The lotus has a simple corolla, with reverse lanceolate, usually bordered, petals and an indication of the pistil. In only one specimen does the lotus have a double corolla (*ibid.*, no. 6).

This initial prototype evolves into a more complex throne. Widely documented among the bronzes, this type of throne appears among the rock sculptures in a very simplified form and with a number of variants, frequently associated with the Buddha and occasionally with bodhisattvas. The columns of the Gandharan specimens are replaced or sometimes accompanied by a pair of lions, in frontal view with the anterior paws upright, or else in profile, crouching on their rear paws, or again, in a version probably typical of Swat, in frontal view and crouching with forepaws crossed below the chest. The lion figures generally display the same proportions (oversized head, short paws) in the frontal view with upright forepaws, a peculiarity that tends to be corrected in the version viewed in profile or crouching. One example of the first case is the relief C3 (II: Fig. 3). Here the *śimhāsana*, as in the majority of rock sculptures, is much simpler than in the bronzes, with respect to which it also displays a particular variant: the lions' heads are turned towards a large central wheel, according to a common compositional pattern. A similar feature is found also in reliefs C6 (II: Fig. 6) and C9 (II: Figs. 8a,b; GS 7), where, in the central part of the throne, it is just possible to perceive residual traces of another figurative element that also in these cases might have been a wheel.

<sup>113</sup> A list of examples, probably incomplete, is given here:

- 1) Pentad, Indian Museum, Calcutta (Foucher 1909: pl. 10; Id. 1905-1951: II, fig. 406; Tsuda 1937 (?): fig. 96; Miyaji 1985b: pl. XII, 2, no. 20; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 21)
- 2) Pentad, from Sahri Bahlol (?), private collection (Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 410; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 22)
- 3) Pentad, National Museum, Karachi (Miyaji 1985b: pl. VII, 1, no. 14; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 23)
- 4) Pentad, antiques market (Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 24)
- 5) Pentad, from Charsada, Patna (or Lahore?) Museum (Miyaji 1985b: pl. X, 2, no. 25; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 31)
- 6) Triad, National Museum, New Delhi (Miyaji 1985b: pl. XI, 2, no. 24; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 32)

To this a further specimen is possibly to be added, a pentad split and cracked in the bottom right part, where the horizontal element conserved under the throne is most likely to be interpreted as the upper edge of a lotus pistil (Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 407).

In relief C30 (II: Figs. 31a,b; GS 6) the throne is even simpler; the space between the two frontal lions is empty and instead of the fringed tassels we find two slender columns that previously appeared in several Gandharan examples. The strong outward jutting of the execution should however be noted as it calls to mind the open-work treatment of many thrones in the bronze sculptures, as though the artist had drawn inspiration from them.<sup>114</sup> The good state of conservation of the relief enables us here to perceive a number of details, which are also typical of this production, such as the almost human expressiveness of the lions and the mane, which creates a crown of curls around the head and takes on a leaf-like shape on the chest, where the fur is given a hairstyle appearance with a central parting.

The more traditional form of lion throne (a low rectangular chair supported by two frontal lions and a single or double row of lotus petals at the base) is associated in one case (C31; II: Figs. 32a,b; GS 20) also with the figure of Maitreya, and in several stelae with the figure of Padmapāṇi (S37, S46, S136, and probably S44; II: Figs. 39a,b, 46a,b,c [GS 13], 137 and 45a,b respectively). Also associated with the latter is a type of *siṃhāsana* that is stylistically and iconographically more complex and innovative in the relief C96 (II: Fig. 96; GS 14), with crouching lions between which there is the typical drapery bordered with tassels. Another decorative element can also be made out on the extreme left of the throne. It probably represents not the lateral, large pendant tassel typical of many similar examples but rather a tasselled border identical to that of the central drapery, as though the drapery itself covered the entire throne and was simply lifted up over the lions' body, as in other previously illustrated cases. The same treatment of the drape may be found in another bronze sculpture, also belonging to the National Museum of Karachi collection (Figs. 26a,b). Again the image is that of a Buddha, in *varadamudrā*, on a *siṃhāsana* supported by a lotus with a double corolla.

Despite the difference in the way the dress folds are treated, with simple incised lines running from right to left in one case and converging towards the centre in the other, the two bronzes have numerous other stylistic details in common: the treatment of the clothing, which coincides perfectly in the overall design (see below); the shell-like curls of the hairstyle; the physiognomic type; the three-lined neck; the anatomical structure; and even the drape tassels, which have a similar drop-like design. It should also be noted that in both cases the hem of the dress held by the Buddha in his left hand resembles a cord rising up over the left leg and passing under the right foot.<sup>115</sup> It is therefore appropriate not to attach undue importance to the way the drape is rendered, as it might be based on different models for which in any case a long-standing previous tradition exists and which

<sup>114</sup> The same impression is also conveyed for example by a small Kashmiri stela in the British Museum (Brooke Sewell Fund, 1960, 4-11.3) depicting a triad; here the throne is characterised by greater detail and a more complex iconography, including the small figure of an atlas seated cross-legged among the lions, with arms raised. Close similarities with the throne of the stela cited here are offered by several bronzes which display the motif in an almost identical way (Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā*, in *Oriental Art*, 14, 1, 1968: 21; Buddha in *abhayamudrā*, from the monastery of Phyang, Ladakh, in M. Singh, 1968: 53; Buddha in *abhayamudrā*, protected by the snake Mucilinda, in Pal 1975: no. 23; Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā*, in Patterson 1978: fig. 6; jewelled Buddha in *abhayamudrā*, in Siudmak 2011: no. 16), or with only slight variations, where the two slender frontal columns are placed between the atlas and the lions rather than at the ends (Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā*, in Pal 1975: no. 25; jewelled Buddha in *varadamudrā*, *ibidem*: no. 32), or lastly a more complex organisation with the addition of rampant dragons between the atlas and the lions (Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā* from Fatehpur, first published by Vogel, in ASIAR 1904-1905: pl. XXXV; Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā*, in Pal 1975: no. 21a,b). Clearly, the comparison is based on the front view, which is the one reproduced on the reliefs. In the bronzes, the throne, with its three-dimensional structure, is composed of four corner columns and sometimes displays figured elements on the rear side as well (e.g. the Fatehpur bronze, the back of which again bears the portrayals of the two rampant dragons, this time facing the front with enlaced bodies, between two frontal lions). It should be noted how this type of throne, ranging from the simplest to the most complex form, is exclusively associated in the bronzes with Buddha figures. The gryphon is listed by Paul (1986: 52) among the most significant analogies between the motifs of the tiles of Harwan and the iconographic repertoire of the Hūṇa coins. However, it should be noted that a very similar motif, i.e. the intertwined dragons, was already known in Gandhāra (cf. Zwalf 1996: 344). Striking, in my opinion, are the formal and thematic similarities with the ancient but long living motif of the "animal master". For an insightful and stimulating overview of the ideological consistency of this motif see D'Erme 1997. On the astronomic/astrological meaning of the two intertwined dragons see Santoro 2003.

<sup>115</sup> One wonders if this is the loop or bandage used by ascetics to maintain the difficult position of *padmāsana*. This detail, commonly found in bronzes, also warrants a reappraisal of the Gandharan examples. On this topic see Filigenzi 2005b: 114.



**Figs. 26a,b** – Buddha on a *siṃhāsana*  
(Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 442, neg. nos. 1861, 1874)

conceivably were in use contemporaneously. Consideration must also be given to the fact that the different types of drapery can slightly alter the anatomical rendering, with the latter becoming more conspicuous where the folds are only incised lines and less evident when the drapery is rendered in relief, as in the case of these two bronzes. In short, it may be postulated that, despite the differences, they belong to the same series. The similarity of the *siṃhāsana* depicted in the Karachi bronze to that of relief C96 is striking owing to the particular rendering of both the drapery and the lion figures, which are characterised by the same arrangement of the mane, in locks falling over the shoulders, and the leaf-like appearance of the fur on chest.

The constant tendency to simplify detail, which characterises the entire rock art production of Swat, is contradicted in several instances, although it is perhaps significant that these exceptions are in any case applied only to the stelae. One example of complex *siṃhāsana* is represented, for instance, by stela S140 (II: Fig. 140; GS 38), depicting the haloed figure of a *siddha*, accompanied by two minor figures, a male and a female, also with nimbuses, standing on two small lotus flowers.<sup>116</sup> The throne is composed of a double lotus corolla with opposing petals and darts with a receding row of leaves (?); a smooth fillet borders the base of the relief, following the trend thereof. On the corolla stands the podium, supported by two lions with their heads projecting upwards on the slightly bulging cushion, from the extremities of which hang two large tassels composed of a knot and a fringe. The lions crouch frontally, the heads erect, the paws crossed under the chest, the typical curled mane falling to the sides, bulging globular eyes with incised pupils. Between them lies a hem of the drape, with the

<sup>116</sup> For a detailed analysis of this particular subject see Chap. 6.

now illegible pattern of its border decorated by superimposed rows of rosettes (?). The drape hangs downwards, describing a roughly trapezoidal curve in accordance with a convention common also among the bronzes.<sup>117</sup>

For this particular example, a close comparison is offered by a stamped terracotta plaque depicting a Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā* seated on a very similar throne (Callieri 1985: 203, pl. VIb). The plaque, discovered during the excavation of Damkot, has been dated by Abdur Rahman to the late sixth century (Abdur Rahman 1979: 288).<sup>118</sup> Here the lions, unlike those of the stela, display the fur on their chest as well, which repeats the usual leaf-like motif. Greater schematism may also be perceived in the way the throne's drapery is depicted, with no decoration and plain border, as well as in the tassels with straight and slightly oblique fringes. The base, echoing Gandharan conventions, is composed of a lotus corolla with single row of reverse petals and darts, and the exposed crown of the stamen. Several features of the plaque are of great interest, most predominantly the background, where we find a widespread and long-lasting motif that will become typical of Pāla art: the backed throne decorated laterally by rampant leogryphs mounted on elephants and topped by *makara* heads, which can just be perceived against a background entirely covered with phytomorphic motifs. The Buddha's flaming nimbus soars upwards from the back, giving the object its typical profile with a kind of cusp high up in the centre.

The Damkot plaque is not an isolated case as it may be linked to a relatively well documented mass production in the region lying between Swat and the Indus, which Paul (1981: 421) assigns to a period between the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. Although fragmentary, the objects in this particular series (small terracotta plaques and moulds) clearly display salient iconographic and stylistic characteristics that, while on the one hand are found to be typical of a genre production, on the other allow interesting comparisons to be made with other more or less contemporary art manifestations. As well as the representation of isolated figures, as attested by the Damkot plaque, the stamped clay production seems often to include another subject: a central figure of worship that from the surviving fragments may be imagined to be surrounded by a flaming nimbus, at the sides of which there are two (or more) minor figures. These figures, which also bear nimbuses, are generally denoted by a pronounced *ābhaṅga* and by the particular anatomical rendering, with the forms clearly revealed under an almost invisible garment, according to the formal tradition of the "Gupta" style. The motif of the drapery nevertheless persists in the recurring motif of the shawl, which falls laterally in a wavy motion and full-bodiedness that sharply contrast the diaphanous consistency of the robes. The same convention is applied to the female figure on stela S140 (II: Fig. 140; GS 38); the flaming nimbus appears here as well, a motif which is moreover quite widespread in rock sculpture in Swat.

The theme of a central figure accompanied by an ancillary pair is attested in environments other than that of stamped clay, not only by the stela cited but also by several bronzes. One of these is a bronze in the Pan-Asian Collection depicting the Buddha Śākyamuni, as shown by the presence at the base of two deer at the side of a wheel (Pal 1975: no. 75). Comparison with the Swat stela is particularly cogent, not only due to the presence of the ancillary figures at the sides of the Buddha, but also to the extremely similar treatment of the *śimhāsana*, with marginal differences in the view of the lions (here they are frontal) and in the shape of the lotus supporting the throne, with a simple reverse petal corolla. On top, at the centre of the Buddha's flaming nimbus, there is another recurrent iconographic motif, a *stūpa* surmounted by the astral symbol of the solar disk on a lunar sickle with infulae at the top.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>117</sup> For a quick overview of this particular rendering of the drape I refer to the several specimens in Pal 1975 and von Schroeder 1981, to which now the seated Maitreya published by Siudmak (2011: no. 23) is to be added.

<sup>118</sup> This dating is actually based on the assumption that this is the *terminus post quem non* for the life of the Buddhist settlement. The chronology of the site, especially with regard to the late phases, is nevertheless to be revised. On this see Part II, p. 234, fn. 29.

<sup>119</sup> The presence of this *stūpa* crowning motif is also documented among the graffiti of Chilas II and Thalpan (Fussman 1994a: 60-61). In stone sculpture, a *stūpa* thus crowned is depicted on the rear of a small icon in the British Museum representing a triad on the profiled anterior face (neg. no. CVIII-5), which the museum information sheet assigns to Kashmir and dates to the eighth century, although it seems rather to be part of that "transition" series documented between the North-West and Kashmir, which Paul assigns to the sixth century (Paul 1986: 101 ff.). In the bronzes this astral motif appears not only in this form but also as an ornament on the shoulders of the three-pointed cape of a bejewelled Buddha (Pal 1975: nos. 29, 30, 32). On the origin and spread of this motif, which produced original fusions with the *pūrṇaḥaṭa* at Bāmiyān (Tarzi 1973), see Berthier (1991).



**Figs. 27a,b** – Maitreya with ancillary pair  
(Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 449, neg. nos. 1855, 1870)

This is an example of that relatively complex conventional frame denoted as the “Buddhist aureole”, which is processed separately and then applied to the main figure by means of dovetailing systems. This separate body, in addition to the ancillary pair, also includes the nimbus of the central figure with its possible crown and a transition structure joining the various elements. The pattern may be made more elaborate, for instance by adding arches to frame the two lateral figures and other smaller decorative elements on the sides, and so on up to the more complex structures, of which some famous examples remain.<sup>120</sup> A frame of this kind must also have accompanied the

<sup>120</sup> There are numerous examples. For the simplest ones see the Maitreya image from the Karachi Museum (Figs. 27a,b), the frame of which includes the ancillary pair standing on a simple fillet, and the flaming nimbus with a transition element in the form of a thin continuous undecorated plate. In another specimen in the National Museum of Karachi, in a frame lacking the principal figure, the pattern is slightly more complex owing to the presence of crowning elements (*stūpa* in top centre and adamantine symbols enclosed by vegetal scrolls [Fig. 28]). In a similar case, this crown is instead figured and consists of two *gandharvas* (?) with *cāmara* (Paul 1979: fig. 21). An even greater iconographic richness is attested by the “Buddhist aureole” published by Pal (1975, no. 44), who dated it to around 800. This consists of a large flaming frame crowned by a *stūpa* with astral symbols at the top; in the centre are the nimbus and the aureole originally enclosing the central figure, without doubt a Buddha; between the latter and the edge, enclosed by a dense pattern of interlaced phytomorphic decorative motifs, smaller figures are depicted: on the side, two standing bodhisattvas, separated from the central figure by two thin semi-columns; and above a pair of *kinnaras*, a pair of *gandharvas* and a series of



Fig. 28 – Buddhist aureole (Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 444, neg. no. 1864)

Karachi image of the Buddha in *varadamudrā* described above (Fig. 26), which still bears on the back a plate fragment and on the right, at the level of the knee, a small projecting lotus-shaped base that originally served as a support for a smaller figure (of which the feet remain), which must have had a counterpart on the opposite side.

The practice of completing bronzes by means of joining elements seems however to have been quite widespread. Indeed, the bronzes examined so far, which have come down to us without any frame, all possess at least one small tenon on the back, at the shoulders level, which one assumes served as a pivot for the nimbus. However, in many cases the tenon is accompanied by a socket, generally situated at the top of the throne, which seems to point to the original presence of a more complex frame, namely, the traditional figured “Buddhist aureole” that in preserved, intact specimens displays a dovetailing system that is perfectly compatible with the tenon and socket of the “unadorned” bronzes.<sup>121</sup>

meditating Buddhas. This type of applied frame is not, however, restricted to Buddhist production. See for instance the well-known and even more complex Avatāra frame of Srinagar (Pal 1975: no. 11).

<sup>121</sup> The joining system is visible in the Karachi Maitreya and its frame (see previous fn.), which illustrate the mechanism of the double male and female joint for the more complex frames that, in view of their size, require a number of points of attachment. This is

A persistent compositional convention therefore exists which is transmitted to various categories of objects, each of which expands or suppresses certain details, adapting the basic scheme to suit its specific needs and scope according to the material, to the processing technique and ultimately to the use to which it is to be put. The intricate decorative pattern of the terracottas is lost completely in the rock sculptures and becomes schematised in the bronzes,<sup>122</sup> reappearing in the stamped decoration on stucco and clay, as in the case of Tapa Sardar (Taddei and Verardi 1985: 20; 27; pl. 6). It must therefore be inferred that this decorative motif, although popular in the north-west regions, was, for reasons of cost, limited to the objects allowing the use of the stamping technique. On the other hand, other elements persist, such as the flaming nimbus and the hemmed drapery covering the throne, largely present at Tapa Sardar (*ibid.*: 30; pls. 4, 5, 7, 9; Fig. 24).

In the pattern of correspondences between the various categories of objects, accessory elements occasionally appear as well, such as in the Damkot plaque, in which the Buddha figure displays a striking resemblance to that of the Karachi bronze depicting the Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā* on an elephant throne. The pose is identical, with the soles of the feet clearly visible. Identical are also the headdress, the body and face volumes (with a highly rounded chin and very similar features with regard to physiognomy and proportions), and the gesture, with the left hand holding a hem of the clothing. The drapery design is practically the same as well, with a 'V' neck, folds converging towards the centre of the bust, and the crenellated hem of the *saṃghāṭī* on the right leg, from which protrudes the *antaravāsaka* to form a motif consisting of straight linear folds repeated for the hem of the garment on the opposite leg. At the hem the separation between *saṃghāṭī* and *antaravāsaka* is perhaps marked by a clearly visible pair of folds executed in greater relief. Moreover, it is precisely this peculiar pattern of neckline and hems that shows the degree of affinity between the two Karachi bronzes mentioned earlier, and which confirms a non-linear distribution of the stylistic and iconographic correspondences. On the front of the rock sculpture it is possible to observe how the surviving part of the great Buddha image of Tindo-dag (C115; II: Fig. 115; GS 2) conforms to the same conventional drapery pattern.

The existence of iconographic models that have been freely adapted to suit the different contexts is reiterated by the form of a particular *siṃhāsana*, which sometimes appears in the bronzes, but is found in only one case in the rock sculpture repertory of Swat. This is one of the previously cited stela (S46; II: Figs. 46a,b,c; GS 13) or rather the lower right fragment of a stela, which has retained the left foot of a bodhisattva in *ardhaparyānkāsana*, certainly Padmapāṇi, resting on the base of a throne composed of a lotus with reverse petals and darts and a podium supported by two lions (of which only the right hand one is preserved), with torso and head facing the front, the body in profile, and crouching on the rear paws, forepaws upright, the tail coiled upwards. Lions in a similarly unnatural posture are found in several bronzes, separated by columns and atlas (Pal 1975: no. 32), or with tails enlaced and coiled, as in the case of the well-known bronze of Nandivikramādityanandin (*ibid.*: no. 31). The persistence of this motif (as well as of many others) is easily traced inside the Pāla production, where the fantastic character of such representation is often accentuated, as in the case in which the lions' tails terminate in complex volutes based on ornamental phytomorphic motifs (British Museum, Bridge Collection, 1827.7-1.27).<sup>123</sup>

No less significant than the recurring motifs is the absence – or the very sporadic occurrence – of other motifs, of which a considerable number of cases, however, are found in other, very similar contexts. Although not excluding the possibility that some evidence might have been lost because of the precarious state of conservation, they remain in any case significantly episodic.

indirect confirmation that a single tenon usually situated at the base of the neck on the back of the figures was meant for a single nimbus. For a brief verification cf. Pal 1975, where in many "unadorned" examples the rear part is visible showing the system for dovetailing the applied parts.

<sup>122</sup> The simplification of several motifs does not involve only the Pakistani-Kashmiri bronzes but also a large proportion of the Pāla production. For a rapid overview of the latter cf. S.K. Mitra (1979), S.L. Huntington 1984, and Ray, Khandalavala and Gorakshkar (1986).

<sup>123</sup> For the Pāla-era production see S.L. Huntington (1984, with preceding bibliography).



**Figs. 29a,b** – Maitreya on rock throne  
(Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 443, neg. nos. 1856, 1866)

This is the case, for instance, of the rock throne. This typology is found in only five specimens, invariably associated with the figure of meditating Padmapāṇi: in reliefs C72 (II: Fig. 75), C19 (II: Fig. 19), C100 (uncertain; II: Fig. 100), C194 (II: Fig. 66) and in stelae S132 (II: Fig. 80; GS 15) and probably, with a more complex iconography, S42 (II: Fig. 43). The body of the bodhisattva's seat consists here of quadrangular flat crude ash-lars subdivided into two or three sections by engraved lines. This is the iconographic convention customarily used to render the idea of rock, and which is widely applied in sculpture and painting, from India to Xinjang.

The most direct comparison for the rock sculptures comes from three bronzes of the Karachi collection, the execution of which is identical with regard to iconographic and stylistic idiom. The first two (Figs. 29a,b; 30a,b) consist of two seated bodhisattvas, with a long *paridhāna*, *uttarīya* draped like a shawl, a large three-crested crown held by a string with two bows projecting out from the sides of the head with long descending ends, a Brahmanic cord, bangles, bracelets, a short necklace, and pendant earrings. The hair is gathered on top, with the exception of two long coiled locks clinging to the head behind the ears and falling over the shoulders. Like the hair, the garment folds as well are defined by a dense drawing of parallel lines. The faces have a thin mouth and nose, and large elongated, semi-open and bulging eyes.

On the other hand, the pose and the attributes are different and define two distinct personalities: one of them is a Maitreya in *varadamudrā*, identifiable from the reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāsaṇa*, the *utpala* lotus in the





**Figs. 30a,b** – Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi on rock throne  
(Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 444, neg. nos. 1862, 1871)

left hand and a long-necked *kalaśa* which seems to hang from the stem of the latter and, lastly, from the *stūpa* effigy on the central crest of the crown. His necklace has a richer appearance, with threads terminating in a vaguely floral form; the other one is the typical meditating Padmapāṇi in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, who holds in his left hand, resting on one leg, a long-stemmed lotus with open frontal corolla above the shoulder and bears on the central crest of the crown the effigy of a meditating Buddha. Both bodhisattvas have the foot of the outstretched leg resting on a small curved-stem lotus which seems to emerge from the throne.

Except for the base, smooth for Maitreya and with two recessing listels for Padmapāṇi, and for the top, a simple cushion for the former and a low lotus corolla, with upturned, bordered petals and darts for the latter, the throne has the same structure: a truncated pyramid tapering slightly at the base. The optical perspective of the tapering, which is minimal in order to take into account the ratio between the base and the top, is heightened by the expedient of dividing the three rows of ashlar of which the throne is composed into two sections separated by a groove running above the lower row, which ends in the two anterior corners in a kind of upward projecting tooth.

A simpler version of the same structure is found in the third bronze (Figs. 31a,b), representing a bodhisattva belonging to the *prajñā* family, characterised by a reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*. The differences with the two preceding bronzes may be briefly listed as follows: curly hair instead of straight locks, absence of Brahmanic



**Figs. 31a,b** – Vajrapāṇi on rock throne  
(Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 445, neg. nos. 1857, 1863)

cord, necklace of cylindrical beads with circular extremity. In *varadamudrā*, the bodhisattva holds in his left hand an object hanging downwards, the grip of which is hidden. However, the shape of the object, an elongated pentagon, suggests a two-pointed *vajra*, one point of which the bodhisattva is concealing in the closed palm of the hand, perhaps to express a particular meaning. The presence of a diamond as effigy on the central crest of the crown makes this identification of the attribute likely, and consequently that of the figure as Vajrapāṇi or Vajrasattva (see also Chap. 5). The throne on which the bodhisattva is seated, with its smooth moulded base and two rows of receding ashlar, is also divided into two sections by a deep groove that heightens the gradual receding of the elements composing the throne and in this case makes up for the absence of tapering. A very similar version is found in a fourth bronze, quite certainly depicting Maitreya, in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, with *kalaśa* in the left hand stretching downwards and *akṣamālā* in the right hand lifted up to shoulder level (von Schroeder 1981: 12 H). The only differences consist of the row of ashlar also on the base of the throne and the shape of the cushion, depicted as a low lotus corolla with upturned petals.

Among the Swat bronzes, a perhaps slightly later interpretation of the rock throne is contained in an image of Padmapāṇi in the Cleveland Museum of Art (von Schroeder 1981: 84; fig. 6f). The figure is seated cross-legged, wearing only a *paridhāna* fastened on one side, in *varadamudrā*, holding a closed lotus with long, curved stem in the palm of the slightly lifted up left hand. The bodhisattva has no crown, which has been replaced by a

voluminous headdress, a fan-shaped chignon drawn tight at the base by a ribbon. The throne is of the lotus corolla type (here with reverse petals) placed on top like a cushion, while the base is made up of a row of ashlar with a broken line, with the customary groove separating it from the two upper rows. The upwards projecting teeth are here transformed into large volutes on the anterior face. The same taste of decoration for the sake of decoration can also be observed in the way the hair is treated: it is dense and tidy, with symmetrical curls.

The tapered shape of the throne, a motif that is not found in the rock sculptures, is obviously a reference to the mountain. The rock-mountain relationship and the associated imagery are strongly present in the religious art of the period and are expressed with great plastic verve not only in the bronze production, but also in several stone sculptures in Kashmir (see below). This idea gained such an important place in the religious imagery of the time that it is found very frequently and, moreover, in a range of iconographic forms that express now an aspect, now a possible relationship, now a psychological feature, to the point of becoming a true *topos* of Buddhist art from India to the Far East.

It is impossible to determine whether the explicit reference to the mountain and its symbolism expressed in these bronzes should be interpreted in a general sense, or whether, even in this simple form, it contains a specific reference to Mount Meru, which is found instead very clearly expressed in another group of bronzes, where the rock throne takes on the form of an hourglass.

The reference to Mount Meru is quite obvious in the case of the Vajrasattva in the Pan-Asian Collection (Pal 1975: no. 59 a,b), where two snake-like *nāgas* are depicted coiled around the central narrowing part of the throne. The bronze in question has a large number of stylistic features in common with the Padmapāṇi in the Cleveland Museum, owing to the typical drapery of the *paridhāna*, whose closely packed linear folds converge towards the left side, as well as to the abandoning of the albeit vague naturalism in the treatment of the hair, with a dense disc pattern. In reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* – in accordance with the custom expressed also in the rock sculptures for the bodhisattvas of the *prajñā* family – the bodhisattva has his right foot resting on the small lotus emerging from the base of the throne. He is seated on a lotus corolla with upturned petals and darts placed like a cushion on the top of the throne. The Brahmanic cord is absent, but the figure is embellished with rich jewellery and a three-crested crown bearing five small figures of Buddha in *dhyānāsana* and has as attributes a two-pointed *vajra* held in the right hand against the chest and a *ghaṇṭā* in the left hand resting on one knee. A definite suggestion for this particular iconography may be found in the legend that explicitly links Vajrapāṇi-Vajrasattva to the myth of the churning of the ocean, implemented using Mount Meru as pivot and the *nāgas* as cords.<sup>124</sup>

A more slender version of the throne, which is nevertheless almost identical with regard to the other details, appears on another bronze specimen, the so-called Buddha of the year 92 (Fussman 1993: 31-32, pls. 23-27), where in the central narrowing the snake-like ends of two *nāgas* are tied together. The reference to Mount Meru retains its force, even though in this case the lack of any explicit mythological link means it is more generic, at the same time emphasising its symbolic value. Mount Meru seems in other words to be incorporated into the late antique Buddhist iconography now as a philological reference to legendary events, now as the pure quintessence of the sacred mountain. In this acceptance, the hour-glass form of the rock throne is again associated with Vajrapāṇi, in his terrific version (Pal 1975: no. 60). Here, the throne, without the *nāgas*, nevertheless houses in a central niche two lions depicted in an extremely natural attitude, one peacefully crouching, the other with its head turned upwards as though to contemplate the figure on the throne.

In all these cases, however, the clear-cut hourglass form contains a definite and non-accidental suggestion of the *vajra*, in which it is possible to postulate a conscious synthesis between the rock/mountain theme (it is

<sup>124</sup> The churning of the ocean, in the Buddhist version of the Indian myth, was decided by the Buddhas' meeting on Mount Meru, in order to cause the Water of Life (*amṛta*) hidden in its depths to emerge, and to be used as an antidote against the poison of the demon Hālā-hala. Guarded by Vajrapāṇi, the *amṛta* was later stolen by the monster Rāhu, who was then fiercely combated and defeated. The Buddhas, however, intending to punish Vajrapāṇi for his inattention, compelled him to drink a mixture of poison and *amṛta*: this would explain the blue colour of Vajrapāṇi (Getty 1914: 49). It should be observed how Vajrapāṇi, in this version, is the Buddhist counterpart of Śiva Nīlakaṇṭha.

on a mountain top that Indian mythology, both Brahmanic and Buddhist, often places founding events) and the idea of the adamantine throne, the symbol of indestructible firmness.

A much more complex version of the rock throne appears in a bronze of the Norton Simon Foundation depicting a Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* (Fussman 1993: 49-50, pls. 35-39, with preceding bibliography). Situated in the internal cavity are a man and a woman seated in a relaxed pose. She is intently listening to him playing the flute, a now missing element whose original presence is clearly indicated by the position of the male figure's hands.<sup>125</sup> On each side, outside the cavity, are four donors with highly differentiated appearances (a man and a woman in Indian dress at the sides of the cave, followed by a bearded man in Scythian costume on the right, and a monk, on the left). In the far corners, on two receding elements on the same plane, are two (divine? royal?) male figures kneeling on a lotus flower with a double corolla, with short *paridhāna*, three-crested crown and rich jewellery accessories, including the long *vanamālā*. The relative sizes of the various figures, in the order in which they have been described, have been somewhat increased. The lower plane of the throne houses animal figures inside small niches: deer, lions, rams. With the exception of the deer, facing the front from the centre of the anterior face and peacefully crouching, the other animal figures, depicted also on the sides and at the back, may be distinguished by their different, highly natural, dynamic poses, especially the lions on the anterior face depicted in the act of licking their own genitals. A pair of birds in the centre of the front face, on the upper shelf of the rock throne, completes the concise but effective picture given of this vivid earthly universe at the feet of Buddha.

Stylistically speaking the bronze may be compared with the Buddha of Fatehpur (Vogel 1904-1905), owing to the shell-like curls of the hairstyle, to the cushion decorated with pearl-studded medallions, but above all to the characteristic pattern of the garment, which leaves the right shoulder uncovered and one part of which falls behind the left shoulder with a hem that, rising along the chest, widens into a triangle with an undulating pleat motif. The Fatehpur bronze, the lower part of which has been badly worn, has not preserved the elements of the other work, in which the hems of the garment repeat the crenellated motif of the upper part. However, a striking common element is the manneristic preoccupation with detail, which also shapes the drape of the garment – with its abstract curved lines converging on the centre in one case, and to one side in the other – as well as the softness of the features with the weak chin and the almost complacent expression on the face. These features appear to be shared by many specimens of the production labelled as Kashmiri, which includes not only bronzes (among them the above-cited Buddha of the year 92), but also ivory objects (Asher 1972) and stone sculptures, some of which reproduce the rock throne motif with minimal variations.

In the ivory sculpture the rock throne is characterised by the extraordinary vivacity of the animals contained in it, thus bearing witness to their fidelity to a model that evidently was a well known one. This is true, for instance, of the panel belonging to the Kanoria Collection (*ibid.*: pls. I, II), where the central Buddha, surrounded by Māra's terrifying hordes, is depicted in *dhyānāsana* on a throne from which emerge two roaring lions gazing upwards. A more complex case is that of the throne of the meditating Buddha surrounded by minor figures in the Prince of Wales Museum (*ibid.*: pl. X), where two cervids have been added to the lions, forced by the artist into unnatural contortions but producing a strongly dynamic effect.

<sup>125</sup> The interpretation of this iconographic detail is not easy. According to Pal (1975: 92, no. 22a,b) the couple inside the cave could be interpreted as shepherds, or simply musicians related to the worship of Buddha, in which music plays an essential part. Nevertheless the position and attitude of the couple, in which the woman seems enraptured by the music played on her companion's flute, suggests a more subtle symbolic meaning. I personally believe that this iconographic detail is an allusion to the "cavern of the senses", namely to a level of existence under the deceptive influence of the *prakṛti*, while the other figures, also depicted on the rock but outside the cave, seem to represent a different level of consciousness which is externalised in the worship of Buddha. However, I should also like to mention, although with less conviction, the legend contained in a seventh-century Chinese text (but actually dating back to an earlier tradition) in which mention is made of the "cave of *vajra*" on Mount Wu-t'ai shan, the residence of Mañjuśrī. In this case the bodhisattva was supposed to have deposited "[...] des instruments de musique célestes offerts par un démon au buddha du passé Kāśyapa [...]. Il y a là une cithare [...] en argent, jouée par un être céleste en argent, ainsi que deux parties du Tripiṭaka (Vinaya et Sūtra) du temps de Kāśyapa, sur papier d'or et écriture d'argent, également transportés là par Mañjuśrī" (Stein 1988: 7; *non vidi*; quoted from Quagliotti 1990: 102).

While the rock throne has a flattened and somewhat indeterminate form in the ivory specimens, in a well-known and roughly contemporary Kashmiri stela, the so-called “year 15 Buddha of Sukhavarman”, the throne takes on a decidedly hourglass shape, with a kind of ring around the narrow central section, which is clearly based on the model of the mountain/pivot bound by the *nāgas*. The scene depicted is once again Māra’s attack, with the Buddha in this case in *bhūmisparśamudrā* (Paul 1986: pls. 80, 80a, 80b; Siudmak 1990: figs. 1, 2). This particular throne form is interpreted by Paul as “a visual rendering of the conceptual throne or *vajrāsana*” (Paul 1986: 161), an interpretation rejected by Siudmak, who recognises in it the conventional rendering of the rock (Siudmak 1990: 853).

Both observations seem to be true, as emerges with particular clarity in this example, where the *vajrāsana* is equated symbolically with the Buddha’s imperturbable and victorious firmness. In particular, Paul’s interpretation (taken up by Fussman 1993: 38) is also well suited to certain solutions adopted by the Pāla period artists, who seem to have assimilated the conventional “hourglass” rendering of the rock/mountain with the *vajra*. Observing for example the famous Buddha of the Rockefeller 3<sup>rd</sup> Collection (Pal 1975: 30a,b) (a central bejewelled Buddha and two lateral *stūpas* on three lotus flowers blooming on a single stem), we find the rock motif on the base, which here consists of a rectangular body with the typical broken profile housing four small figures of donors on receding lateral elements. On the anterior face a wheel, two atlases and two deer facing each other are depicted inside an irregularly shaped cavity, as might be expected in openings in the rock. These are punctuated by vertical elements, a kind of natural rock pillar, the shape of which is quite the same as that of the throne of the Buddha of Sukhavarman.

This base – and other similar ones – clearly represents a well-known and widely imitated model, as is demonstrated by the pedestal of an image of a Buddha in *padmāsana*, of which only the legs remain. This comes from Sarnath and bears a long dedicatory inscription dating to the year 1083, under the reign of Mahipāla. Although the rock motif is absent, the mode of depiction on the anterior face betrays its derivation from the northern model, in any case widely imitated by Pāla art. Proceeding from the centre towards the extremities, the following are depicted: a wheel between two vertical *vajra*, two deer, two lions and two atlases, separated by two small pillars (Vogel 1903-1904: 221-223; pl. LXIII, fig. 3).

The *vajras* at the sides of the wheel probably derive from a reinterpretation of the hourglass form of the rock pillars in the original model. Moreover, this latter also must have inspired the deliberately unnatural, albeit dynamic, pose of the lions, depicted with the head and trunk facing forward, the body in profile, and one paw lifted exaggeratedly.

We have seen how, at least in one case, the hourglass form of the rock throne is directly linked to Mount Meru. Even though explicit reference is lacking in other examples, such as in the case of the Buddha of Sukhavarman, a repeated allusion to the sacred mountain *par excellence* nevertheless persists in the conservation of the hourglass form. In this meaning, the form has been accepted by Buddhist iconography beyond the boundaries of the Indian world. Stylised as two stepped opposite pyramids joined at the summits, in Japan it becomes the *sendai-za*, namely the throne that makes explicit reference to its own origin on Mount Meru (Dale Saunders 1960: 132).

The symbolic theme of the rock, explored architecturally on a macroscopic scale, seems to become a true *topos* of the iconography of the late antique Buddhist world, after a subdued presence in the art of Gandhāra.<sup>126</sup> a sacred mountain, a gloomy place where light is dimmed, throne of the divinity, scenario of the *saṃsāra* and of the dominating – but at the same time liberating – *māyā*.<sup>127</sup> Again with a dual symbolic meaning, the rock expresses the often unconscious communion of the world with the divine, the place in which it is possible to transform and redeem the most obscure and inert elements with which the creatures of the *saṃsāra* are

<sup>126</sup> Subdued presence does not however mean it was not incisive. The cave and rock theme already has a strong and precise significance in Gandharan iconography, although it is practically encrypted. On this topic see Filigenzi 2005c, Id. 2006, Id. 2012: 78 ff. esp.; Quagliotti 1996c: 11-12.

<sup>127</sup> This is the speculative orientation of the *Upaniṣad* period, in which *Māyā* is also the mother of psychic regeneration, just as in the Buddhist *milieu* she will be the mother of the Awakened (cf. M. Falk 1986: 189). This dual function of *Māyā*, always implicit in Buddhist philosophy and ethics, sometimes finds explicit expression, in particular in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (*ibid.*: 457 ff.).

weighed down. It is by means of this particular acceptance that the rock is melded with that of the *vajra* in the iconography. The transformation of the pillar into a *vajra* could actually be considered not a misinterpretation but as the explicit rendering of a concept expressed allusively in the original model. The hourglass form of certain rock thrones and pillars seems to be an attempt to implicitly underscore precisely the mountain's dual nature – at once the axis of the world and of heaven, following the two-pointed *vajra*. Likewise, of the multiple meanings of *vajra* (von Glasenapp 1940: 21) we glean one in particular from the literature and the iconography which seems to have nourished much of late antique Buddhist imagery: it is not only the weapon which annihilates the enemy, but also “[...] l’essence adamantine immanente aux être et aux choses” (Lamotte 1966: 151). It is no coincidence that the *vajra* is the distinctive attribute of Akṣobhya and the family of which he is the head. Indeed, not only does Akṣobhya represent the quintessence of Buddha's imperturbability (and therefore, we might say, he is as unmovable as a rock) but also the primordial cosmic element of the *vijñāna* and the Self-existing-body (*svābhāvika*),<sup>128</sup> namely the consciousness that humans already possess, although in a subdued form, in their innermost Self.



**Fig. 32** – Tapa Sardar: A fragment of a pinnacle in the shape of a *pūrṇaḡhaṭa* on rock-like basis (courtesy ISIAO, neg. Dep. CS LA 10423/1)

The scenario of earthly existence, in this speculative context, is thus illustrated in visual and textual sources with a blend of humility and pride. It is admirably summed up in the animal figures nestling in the rock cavity through which a pulse of life passes that contorts their limbs; in the figures immersed in a rock background at Bāmiyān (Hackin and Carl 1933: pl. XLVII, fig. 57), at Tapa Sardar (Taddei 1968: 120; fig. 41) and almost

<sup>128</sup> The idea of the seed of immanent Buddhahood even in unaware man and expressed by the *vajra* is moreover found already in Gandhāra, in the figure of the mysterious and faithful companion of Buddha, to be identified, in my opinion, with Ānanda, the disciple closest to Buddha and yet the furthest away from Buddhahood (see Filigenzi 2006).

every where in the painted and sculptured decoration of the Buddhist sites of the Xinjiang.<sup>129</sup> The idea is often translated into a rapid, summarising sweep, a strip of rock at the base of the throne, either *śimhāsana* or *padmāsana*, of Buddhas as of bodhisattvas, with the same efficacy and intensity (Pal 1975: nos. 32, 56, 74, 76, 78; von Schroeder 1981: 10B, 10D, 12D; von Hinüber 2004: figs. 3-7). The elemental force of this concept and its infinite capacity for aggregation lend themselves to a wide range of iconographic inventions. For instance, it certainly also served as inspiration for that pattern on the chest of the Buddha Vairocana of Balawaste (*Sérinde*: no. 271), in which a vigorous vegetal shoot seems to emerge from a pot, at the same time suggesting a *śrīvatsa*. The snakes coiled around the base, the sharp-edged form, and the rhombus decoration of the pot point to a synthesis between the *pūrṇaḥaṭa* and Mount Meru. The presence of an almost identical symbol among the stucco decoration of Tapa Sardar (TS 1692; Fig. 32) is no accident. It evidently belongs to a current iconographic lexicon that the entire Buddhist oecumene readily understands, elaborates, synthesises, and transmits in an exchange that enriches the common patrimony.

Owing to its wide diffusion, this theme was given little space in the Swat rock sculptures where, as we have seen, even the rock throne, so widely attested elsewhere, appears only sporadically. This absence is certainly deliberate: there is simply no need in such a context for a symbolic representation of the rock. The idea that other art forms, so similar in terms of chronology and conceptual inspiration, could only express in the narrow and immobile space of the object or reproduce in a fictitious scenario, is a constitutive part of every figure in the rock sculpture. In its simple and ingenious intuitiveness it finds an almost animated expression in the spontaneous and natural framework of the rock surface and the entire surrounding landscape.

<sup>129</sup> As it is impossible to present here an exhaustive list of the relevant specimens I refer the reader to *Murals for Xinjiang* [...] 1982 and *Zongguo shiku* [...] 1989 for a quick overview of the painted decoration; as for the sculpture see Maillard 1983: *passim*.

## CHAPTER 4: AVALOKITEŚVARA-PADMAPĀṆI

### 4.1 – Avalokiteśvara or the salvific sunbeam

As we have already seen, in proportion to the total number of reliefs and the frequency of the various subjects, the figure of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi (“the lotus bearer”) occupies a position of absolute predominance. At a rough estimate half the reliefs portray the isolated figures of this bodhisattva, and yet this calculation excludes occurrences within groups of divinities, where the figure is often the main subject of the composition.

The most recurrent iconographic type depicts the bodhisattva sitting on a high throne in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, in pensive attitude.<sup>130</sup> In comparison with the early Gandharan model, where both gesture and implied mood are evoked with greater naturalism, the pose has become rigidly set in conventional lines in the rock sculpture; the figure is erect and the rapt concentration expressed in Gandharan art with a slight bend in the bust and marked inclination of the head is simply indicated with the index finger of the right hand pointing towards the brow on one side. Between these two diverging ways of representing the same iconographic convention there must have been a process of idealisation and abstraction. Intermediate stages in this process are indeed witnessed by some late “Gandharan” works such as the already mentioned pensive Siddhārtha from Mes Aynak (see Chap. 3.4), works that mark the transition towards a stiff vertical figure.

Far less frequent than the “pensive” version is the iconographic type showing the standing bodhisattva, a subject usually reserved for the stelae. In this case Padmapāṇi is in *varadamudrā* and, as usual, holds his long-stemmed lotus flower in the left hand. This may be an almost faithful adaptation of the model developed for the seated figures, but it might also have taken inspiration from images more common in Indian regions, where the lotus stalk rises from the ground with sinuous curves and inflorescence.<sup>131</sup> The latter iconographic version is probably to be taken as an emphasis laid on the idea of the germination of spiritual life from the world of matter. Particularly suggestive of such a meaning is stela S137 (II: Fig. 138; GS 17), where the lotus stalk seems to raise from a vase of elongated shape.

As has been mentioned, the overwhelming numerical predominance of the Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi figure led Tucci to conjecture that during the period when rock sculpture burgeoned in Swat the bodhisattva was seen as a protecting divinity or even a patron deity of the region (Tucci 1958: 332):<sup>132</sup> It is indeed a likely supposition, but there are a few considerations to be added, partly suggested by the personality of the bodhisattva itself and partly prompted by the context.

In its austere simplicity the bodhisattva iconography – somewhat repetitive and uniform in the rock reliefs – clearly sums up those characteristics that the religious culture of the time held to be the most significant. In it the observer must have grasped immediately, even though with varying degrees of interpretation, the essence of the divinity’s nature and role. A fundamental characteristic of Avalokiteśvara, always evoked by the numerous forms he assumes, is that of Mahākāruṇika<sup>133</sup> – the personification of that Buddhist sentiment of universal compassion (*karuṇā*) expressed in a virtually infinite range of relationships with living beings, since the variety

<sup>130</sup> For a detailed description of this *āsana* see Chap. 3.3-4.

<sup>131</sup> For a brief, partial overview of Indian examples I refer the reader to Divakaran (1989).

<sup>132</sup> In his report the author also recalls the miraculous image and the temple of Avalokiteśvara on the right bank of the river mentioned by Xuanzang (Beal 1958 [1884]: II, 172), which he unsuccessfully tried to locate during his survey (Tucci 1958: 323).

<sup>133</sup> The term is used here in the sense of “Great Compassionate Lord”, an epithet often designating Avalokiteśvara and Siddhārtha himself in the texts, and not according to a derived use indicating with this term, in the iconographic ambit, the figure portrayed in pensive posture; the inappropriateness of this meaning has, moreover, already been pointed out by Harle (1979: 128, fn. 3) and Quagliotti (1989: 338).



of needs they show is indeed limitless. It follows that Avalokiteśvara is not only an extremely popular divinity, but also subject to a multiplication of functions whose task is to release the faithful from the bonds of need, so that he might rise above the contingent. Thus it might be said that compassionate succour, even when applied to the meanest of needs, is not qualitatively subject to differentiation since it will always represent a possibility of release that, freeing the heart and mind of the constraint (whatever it may be), opens the way to a higher goal. Avalokiteśvara is, therefore, no mere helper, but can rightly, and at all levels, be considered a positive guide for all beings. This constant value in the various functions of Avalokiteśvara derives from the very essence of his character, modelled on the theme of solar radiance. The development of this conception found ample ground not only in the specific Buddhist context but also in the vaster domain of psychological myth, expression of that Indic religious and philosophical substratum upon which Buddhism is grafted.

The solar connotation of Avalokiteśvara is a corollary of his spiritual origin itself; son of Amitābha, or in other words emanation of the supreme, infinite source of life and light, he is to the Buddha as the sunbeam is to the star that emanates it.<sup>134</sup> He is the gaze of the sun looking down, the luminous channel that reveals it to creatures and pours its vital force upon them. In this respect Buddhism clearly, albeit implicitly, evidences ideas that find explicit formulation in the *Upaniṣad*. The active, dynamic aspect of the sunbeam is repeatedly stressed in the Upanishadic myths, although in this case the sun is attributed with a two-fold nature, propitious and ominous, since it is simultaneously giver of life and death. In fact, the sunbeam is considered a thread that passes through a hole in the heavenly vault to penetrate down; thus it is also a cord, a link that unites and connects the parts of the entire manifest cosmos by identifying them and revealing them to perception. At the same time, however, precisely because it has the power to single out, the sunbeam proves a deceptive revealer since, by binding the living being to the psychic error which is the fragmentary reality of the manifold, it leads to death. The fabric of sunbeams which enwraps the universe like a mantle hides from sight the opening that the sun-disc creates in the heavenly vault, beyond which is the *Puruṣa*, the world of *brahman*, where the dualism opposing the One to the All is finally annihilated. Only the gaze of the moribund man who has shaken off the fetters of *samsāra* is permitted to behold the sun-disc no longer obscured by rays (M. Falk 1986: 80). In the sun-disc's opening as access to supreme liberation we find an analogy with the *brahmarandhra*, through which the *ātman* is freed.

According to Upanishadic speculation, it is in this ascending process that the propitious nature of the sunbeam is activated since, although it obscures consciousness with its very light, it is also the channel already traced out in descent, leading back to the night-time sun or, in other words, the transcendent light of the pre-cosmic night. Indeed, the vital, overpowering force the sun emanates with its ray reverberates in a subtle physiology, like energy circulating through the venules of the heart. This latent energy, not subjected to the control of consciousness, is the *prāṇa*, life-breath descending from the supreme source, which retains the faculty to return to it.

Thus *prāṇa* represents *ātman* in the potential state, whose actual form is reawakened by a cognitive intuition that corrects the route, identifying among the infinite misleading directions of the micro-macrocosmic rays the one that leads to liberation. According to the psycho-physiology of the *Upaniṣad* the heart veins number one hundred and one, but only one of them runs upwards – the *suṣumṇā*, which opens into the *brahmarandhra* (M. Falk 1986: 81, 184). Only whosoever proceeds upwards by this way reaches immortality, as the other veins lead to exits on all sides (*Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, VIII, 1, 6). By setting his consciousness in control over the vital functions the wise man sees the entire system of microcosm and macrocosm transfigured and arrives beyond death, in the still peace of the One; he achieves the salvific direction of the soul – not that which leads to individuation and multiplicity, and so to death, but that which leads to the very source, and thus to immortality. In Upanishadic speculation the *prāṇa* is personified by Indra, or better Indra-*prāṇa*, with the guidance of whom

<sup>134</sup> The solar connotation of Avalokiteśvara and his relationship with the Buddha is, I believe, a conceptual idea that only with later codification could have crystallised in the spiritual descent from Amitābha. Moreover, the latter is himself a hypostasis of the solar, luminous nature of the Buddha, in accordance with a functionalist attitude typical of Indian thought.

it is possible to reconstitute the unity of the microcosm and macrocosm deep in the heart, which thus sees the *brahmaloka* blossom in its own inner recess (Falk 1986: 113 ff.).

#### 4.2 – The Grace and the Self

A conception very similar to the Upanishadic Indra-*prāṇa* finds an undeniable place, in the Buddhist environment, in the figure of Avalokiteśvara, who appears to take on particular depth precisely by virtue of this psychological sun-myth dimension.<sup>135</sup> Not only does his compassionate, salvific nature recall the propitious quality of the sunbeam, but in particular a significant analogy can be seen between Avalokiteśvara and the concept of *prāṇa* personified by Indra. This is evidenced by distinct iconographic affinities between these two characters, which seem to be deliberately underlined in Gandharan art, as if to point up that they are no mere chance.

Fairly eloquent evidence in this respect emerges from the reliefs depicting a divine pentad, with a central seated Buddha flanked by two standing bodhisattvas – Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, like the Buddha shown frontally – and in the background, usually in three-quarter portrayal and in an attitude of obsequy, Indra and Brahmā. In the pattern of the scene the two Vedic divinities constitute a necessary but subordinate presence. Nevertheless, what seems above all to represent an intentional point of reference is the almost perfect correspondence shown by the respective iconographic characteristics between Avalokiteśvara and Indra and between Maitreya and Brahmā. This suggests a conscious will to underline a sort of hand-over of the insignia,<sup>136</sup> and thus also of the functions, from one order of thought to another, one seen as superseding the other, although they are recognised as having less than perfect affinity.<sup>137</sup>

The soteriological action of Avalokiteśvara, manifested through the *karuṇā*, or infinite compassion, adjusts to the scale of the creatures it is applied to in forms that they can readily recognise and understand but, in the psycho-dynamic sphere, it consists of a donation of grace able to transfigure empirical consciousness, raising it above and beyond the world of the senses.

The idea of salvation connatural in man is rooted in the speculative substratum of yoga, common to Buddhism and Upanishadic culture. In the process of transition from a potential to actual condition, it admits the intervention of a saviour-god, although subordinating it to a psychic attitude oriented towards the granting of grace. This “grace” can be conceptualised as a flash of intuition kindled by the saviour-god that brings about the ascensional inversion in the profoundest inner self. Despite the lines and codified interpretations imposed by the rationalist schools, the idea of a seed of Buddhahood inherent in human nature, like the related idea of *ātman/brahman*, is a deeply rooted concept. Indeed, certain directions taken by iconography could not be explained otherwise than in the light of this inspirational concept. Above all, certain iconographic adaptations of the lotus flower seem to allude to this theme, as visual paraphrases of the traditional symbolic formulation, where the lotus represents the mystical receptacle of the Buddha and of the Doctrine.

<sup>135</sup> In the domain of Buddhist iconography further analogies with this line of thought can be traced out. A case in point is the bodhisattva image dated to the third year of Kaniška from Mathurā; for a penetrating analysis of this specific subject see Verardi (1985).

<sup>136</sup> The handing over of the insignia is therefore symmetric, being also sanctioned for the couple Brahmā - Maitreya, between whom iconographic and conceptual analogies are to be found as much as between Indra and Avalokiteśvara. On this aspect see Chap. 5.

<sup>137</sup> The epiphanic scenes of Gandhāra, and in particular the various triads and pentads or subjects similar to that of the famous stela of Mohammad Nari, long interpreted as late and summary versions of the “Miracle of Śrāvastī”, actually constitute – as scholars today unanimously agree – extremely complex iconographic themes (whose meaning is not confined to the contents discussed here) which still serve to show how far we are from a full understanding of the art of Gandhāra. These scenes are the subject of a study in Filigenzi (2012a), Rhi (1991) (unpublished PhD dissertation), Rhi 2003, 2008, but individual examples or groups of examples have been analysed by various scholars; for a comprehensive review of the related themes and contributions on the subject, see Zwalf 1996.

In fact, like the lotus “born in the water, come to full growth in the water, rises to surface and stands unspotted by the water, even so, brethren, the Tathāgata [having been born in the world] having come to full growth in the world, passing beyond the world, abides unspotted by the world” (*Samyutta Nikāya*, III, 140).<sup>138</sup> However, beside this conventional similitude the iconography has subtler meanings to express in the lotus flower, as in the case of Butkara I, where certain reliefs portray the small figure of a naked child or adult in monastic habit within a full-blown lotus corolla (Taddei 1969). In these reliefs the iconography appears to translate the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha* or, in other words, the immanence of Enlightenment concealed within, i.e. the seed of Buddhahood awaiting reawakening (*ibidem*). This inner recess of the self is in Buddhism, as also in Upanishadic thought, the lotus of the heart – that space both physical and mystical where the micro-macrocosmic transfiguration takes place.

In Buddhism the saviour-god who guides men to the reawakening of consciousness finds personification in Avalokiteśvara. This function of the bodhisattva, constituting probably from the very beginnings the essential feature of his nature, takes on over time increasingly well-defined and specific configuration, possibly also thanks to the influence of the Yogācāra doctrine and, to some extent, also of Pāśupata Shivaism (Divakaran 1989: 168), which accentuates the role of yogic speculation within Buddhism. The iconographic type of the pensive Padmapāṇi, so often recurring in the rock sculpture of Swat, is indeed the outcome of a long process of formation. The Gandharan model – to be seen as the initial prototype – changes under the influence of new concepts, not only aesthetic but also philosophical, deriving largely from India.

The caves of western India offer an extensive picture of the evolution of the bodhisattva cult and iconography. The earliest caves (Ajanta 17, 16, 1) present an iconographic type still close to the models of Gandhāra and Mathurā, in the form of a bodhisattva in princely robes, playing the role of an attendant on the Buddha, with *cāmara* and a short-stemmed lotus flower. Soon, and by the sixth century definitively, the princely type gives way to an ascetic version of the bodhisattva, portrayed with attributes such as *kamaṇḍalu*, *akṣamālā*, *jaṭāmukuta*, the antelope pelt over the shoulder,<sup>139</sup> and the long *paridhāna* (Divakaran 1989: 162-163). The long-stemmed lotus, originally associated only with Avalokiteśvara as “Saviour from perils”, becomes a definitive attribute (*ibidem*), while the bodhisattva is depicted with increasing frequency as an independent figure, which points to development in his cult.

Thus it is India that seems to remodel the bodhisattva image, endowing it with iconographic and stylistic characteristics aptly interpreting an ideal. The decline of the artistic centres of the North-West must certainly have helped ease in the new models, which may perhaps in part be credited for the creative flair once again marking the north-western regions between the seventh and eighth centuries. The pensive Padmapāṇi in the rock reliefs of Swat (and the coeval bronzes produced in the area) is thus the outcome of a conceptual and aesthetic renewal that transformed the massive bodhisattva-prince into a more austere, ascetic figure, the solidity of the volumes being softened with the graceful smoothness of the lines – aesthetic features that convey a yogic ideal of spiritual beauty, of power subjected to the perfect control of the mind. The attribute peculiar to Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi had by this time definitively become a striking long-stemmed lotus flower with opened corolla, seen frontally or in profile at the same level as the bodhisattva’s face as if to establish some sort of contact or cause-effect link. The iconography now seems to underline the significance of the attribute with yet stronger emphasis (which quite justifies the epithet of “Padmapāṇi”), possibly in response to a more marked functional specialisation of the bodhisattva.

<sup>138</sup> A very close similitude can be seen in *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, IV, 14.3: “My Boy, they have only expounded the Regions; I am going to expound to thee that to the knower of which evil does not cling, just as no water clings to the lotus leaf”.

<sup>139</sup> In Swat the antelope pelt does not appear in the rock reliefs but is frequent in the coeval bronze sculpture. On the latter see the two examples attributed by Pal to Kashmir, but far more probably coming from Swat (Pal 1975: nos. 45 and 46a,b). This iconographic device (common to both Buddhist and Hindu iconography and especially connected with Śiva) represents the visual translation of the ascetic nature of the divine figure. It traces back its origin to the black antelope worn by the initiated Brahmans, which, in the Brahmanical literature, symbolises the sacrifice (Oldenberg 1988: 285, fn. 293; Hildebeitel 1989: 171; Kaelber 1989: 118 ff.; Kramrisch 1994: 337-340).

As an attribute of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi the lotus evidently has a significance connected with the idea of the saviour-god, dispenser of grace. In fact it symbolises the reawakening of supersensitive awareness, the world of the Buddha opening in the heart of creatures which resonates to his grace as a flower opens to the sunbeam. While Gandhāra appears to show the idea in a transitional state (Avalokiteśvara often bears short-stemmed flowers in bud or in a reclined position, as potential destinies awaiting fulfilment),<sup>140</sup> the rock reliefs audaciously show the promise in its full consummation. In these various attitudes of the iconography, however, we again find the link with the similitude set out in the texts when, after Enlightenment, the Buddha is spurred on by Brahmā to share his experience with the other creatures. Then, turning his gaze on the world, he sees it no longer as a turbulent ocean shaken by passions, but as a lake of lotuses, some still submerged, others already on the surface, and yet others fully emerged. The Buddha then understands that consciousnesses await Dharma and will be able to receive it like lotus flowers opening to it (*Dīgha Nikāya*, II, p. 38; *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, p. 169; *Samyutta Nikāya*, I, p. 138).

The paired heart-lotus symbol reproduces for Buddhists, too, the ancient idea of *hṛdayākāśa*, the space in the heart that contains, or is identical to, infinite space. Thus in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* the process of dhyanic intuition of the Buddha Amitāyus opens with the interior visualisation of the lotus. On this throne, prepared by the meditator, the Tathāgata is realised in the psyche (cf. M. Falk 1986: 471-472); and this throne is the heart, virtually containing within itself the Buddha. As the lotus is symbolic of the cosmic waters from which lightening is released, so the human heart is the dwelling of Dharma, which, clouded over by the restless flow of contingent consciousness, reawakens in the flash of ecstasy and, like the lotus, re-emerges totally from this flow in the static omni-consciousness of the *bodhi*.

### 4.3 – The iconographic transposition

The mythical symbolism with which the texts express this psychic *dynamis* is alluded to in an invention of figurative art which we might conventionally – and just in relation with the specific geographical area in question – define as “late-Buddhist”. It consists of a small Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, seated on the opened corolla of Avalokiteśvara’s lotus, whose long stem alludes here quite clearly to the image of consciousness rising above the restless waters of the sensible world. This idea appears in relief C16 (II: Figs. 16a,b; GS 16), in the valley of Dangram/Garasa.

To judge by the central position and larger dimensions, the main personage in the relief is precisely the pensive Padmapāṇi with the theophorous lotus; to the right is a figure in *dhyānāsana* (a bodhisattva?) on a throne borne by three animal figures, probably lions; to the left is a bodhisattva in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, whose attribute cannot be made out. A particular feature of this relief is in fact the prominence given to the theophorous lotus, showing the corolla in an incongruous frontal view, together with the brilliance of the enthroned Buddha emphasised by the flaming nimbus.

It may well be that this relief appears unique simply because the other – albeit rare – examples have not been conserved; moreover, that this subject is no extemporaneous improvisation is borne out by its recurrence

<sup>140</sup> Many of these examples are collected in Miyaji (1985a; 1985b) and Filigenzi (2012a); however, I shall mention some examples published in more readily accessible works, such as Grünwedel, Gibson and Burgess (1901: pl. 147, to the right); Foucher (1905-1951: II, figs. 410 and 428); Pal (1975: no. 93); Taddei (1969: fig. 17, to the right); Brough (1982: 69, to the right); Fussman 1987: fig. 4); Kurita (1988-1990: I, fig. 411, to the left); exceptions to this practice are represented by the bodhisattva to the left in Ingholt 1957: fig. 257; Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 396; and, again, the bodhisattva to the left in pl. XIX, n. 99, in the catalogue of Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co. (1974), where the lotus displays a long stem. Note that in Gandhāra the same iconographic convention may apply to different figures, evidently due to the association with a spirit, situation or function rather than one specific personage. See, for example, the relief published and discussed by Quagliotti (1989: pl. VIIa), where Siddhārtha, in the meditation leading to the Great Renunciation, is shown in pensive posture with a reclining lotus flower in his left hand; it was the context that evidently made clear which specific character the iconographic model was applied to.

in two examples in the bronze production that can, on the basis of chronology and provenance, be taken as roughly parallel to the rock reliefs. One of the sculptures (in *Oriental Art*, 18, 4, 1972: S97, p. 222) repeats the iconographic type of the pensive Padmapāṇi. The bodhisattva sits on a wicker lattice stool, at the base of which are two lotus flowers. One of them supports the left foot of the figure; on the back of the object a slot and tenon indicate that a nimbus was originally present. Marked abrasion, especially on the upper part, has eliminated many details but by the form and analogy with other works the “effaced, unrecognisable object” on the lotus held by the bodhisattva can definitely be identified as a small Buddha in *dhyānāsana*. The second sculpture (von Schroeder 1981: 9D, 90-91; Pal 1978, no. 70, p. 117) shows a standing Padmapāṇi on a moulded plinth upon which an inscription in *brāhmī* reads “This is the pious gift of Saṃghadāsa”. Here, too, the image of a Buddha in *dhyānāsana* surrounded by a flaming nimbus appears on the lotus held by the bodhisattva.<sup>141</sup>

Another version of the same idea, different but equally telling in its succinct transposition to rock, is attested in two very similar reliefs, one in the valley of Jambil (C29; II: Fig. 30), the other in the valley of Ugaḍ (C96; II: Fig. 96; GS 14). The main subject is the pensive Padmapāṇi with minor figures at the sides. In both cases the figure to the left portrays a small Buddha in *dhyānāsana*. While the image of the latter also appears on the opposite side in C29, in C96 we find on the opposite side to the Buddha, and in smaller scale, a bodhisattva seated in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāsa*. Thus the Buddha appearing to the left in the two reliefs seems to be a fixed feature, while the figure on the right may vary. Despite the singularly scant statistical evidence we are encouraged to draw conclusions by the fact that the two reliefs possess a further important common feature in the slightly concave form of the rock face that bears them. In fact, this seems to be deliberately emphasised by the depth of the figured field following and accentuating the natural curvature of the surface. The result is that the small Buddha image and the corolla of Padmapāṇi’s lotus lie at about the same level, on a slightly converging line. This device might be said to render with the greatest possible realism the idea of the reflection of the Buddha in Padmapāṇi’s lotus, just as a mirror captures and transmits the image or beam issuing from a source of light.<sup>142</sup>

Thus we find encapsulated in the lotus of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi a salvific function operating as transfiguring grace, opening up the inner self to dhyanic intuition. Such is evidently the sense of those images showing the bodhisattva in the act of opening an actual lotus flower (see Pal 1975: 206-208, nos. 79-80). This significance appears particularly evident in the iconographic version of the bodhisattva as “Saviour from perils”, embodying concepts expressed in the hymn to Avalokiteśvara contained in Chapter XXIV of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*,<sup>143</sup> where we find the fully opened lotus form recurring frequently. Subsequently it was adopted in figurative convention as a permanent, characteristic sign of this divinity. In turn, the opened lotus renders the metaphorical significance of the scenes of danger more manifest, each alluding to a mental obstacle barring the way to the salvation: wrong vision (marauders), pride (lions), longing (prison), ignorance (elephants), desire (drowning), wrath (fire), envy (snake), doubt (demons or diseases) (cf. Huntington 1981: 55, fn. 29). While the metaphor was perfectly clear to the initiates, it overlies the literal sense as a sort of normal axiom of faith recognised by the entire Buddhist community.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>141</sup> For comparison in Indic areas a similar subject can be seen at Aurangabad 2 (Divakaran 1989: fig. 4); here Avalokiteśvara is shown standing on a lotus, to the right of the door opening into the chapel; the bodhisattva, with tall *jaṭā*, long *paridhāna*, antelope pelt over his left shoulder, holds a string in his right hand which hangs down, while the left hand, beside the shoulder, delicately supports the lotus stem, just below the corolla, on which appears a small Buddha in *dhyānāsana*. A minor figure (*nāga*?) clutches in both hands the lower part of the lotus stem, which rises from the ground; above, a small flying figure holds a garland out to the bodhisattva.

<sup>142</sup> In a particularly explicit way, we find here at work the expedient which Chap. 1 deals with at length: namely, harmonious adaptation between the rock surface and figurative representation, the intention evidently being to suggest the illusion of *svayambhū*, or self-procreation.

<sup>143</sup> The hymn was evidently held to possess extraordinary propitiatory value, to the extent that in China it was on various occasions set out independently under the title *Sūtra of Guanyin*. Moreover, it constituted a direct source for iconography, which drew from it, besides the image of the bodhisattva as “Saviour from perils”, also the Ekādaśamukha Avalokiteśvara, where the eleven heads and innumerable hands express his omnipresent watchfulness (see *Sérinde*: 357 ff.).

<sup>144</sup> Evidence for this is offered by the Chinese pilgrim Faxian, who looks to the protection of the bodhisattva in moments of danger (Legge n.d.: 112-113).

The theme of Avalokiteśvara as “Saviour from perils” was of very frequent occurrence in the rock temples of western India and later in extra-Indian areas but virtually unknown in north-west India, only one example having so far come to light in the production of Swat (Miyaji 2000). However, the scant favour for the subject found in the rock sculpture of Swat is hardly surprising if we consider the general tone, with little taste for didactic illustration. The ubiquitous power of Avalokiteśvara is only hinted at, suggested more by the multiplication of images than by details of iconography, although the eight-armed figure depicted on a stela from Swat is probably to be interpreted as Avalokiteśvara (S124; II: Fig. 109). Indeed, this is one of the very few examples in the rock sculpture repertoire where the idea of divine power is represented with morphological abnormality.<sup>145</sup> Identification remains hypothetical given the difficulty in interpreting the attributes and the split face and headdress, leaving no chance of detecting the possible presence of the Amitābha effigy.

The haloed figure is seated in *padmāsana* on a tall throne, soles of the feet in evidence. The two front hands are in *dhyanimudrā*, while the remaining six, beginning with the lower left hand and proceeding clockwise, are presented thus: 1) in *varadamudrā* with *akṣamālā* (some beads of which can still be discerned, especially above, to the right); 2) sideways, with open palm, probably in an unusual version of *abhayamudrā*; 3) with *triśūla* (?); 4) with lotus (?); 5) with a vertical rod, termination uncertain (*tridaṇḍi?* *gajasuṇḍa?* arrow?); 6) with an object held downwards, possibly a *kamaṇḍalu*. This is probably a sculpture that was never completed, as is suggested by a certain roughness about the whole work and, above all, a short curved line in relief (to the left, in the space between the two upper hands), which in this form makes no proper sense. One is led to think that it may possibly be a segment of a bordered nimbus, followed through neither below nor on the opposite side, or, more probably, a failed or initial attempt at representing a bow, that in this case would have had a symmetric and logic counterpart in an arrow in the opposite hand (attribute no. 5).

Actually, identification of this subject with Avalokiteśvara is supported only by two inductive criteria, namely the existence of another iconographic version of an eight-armed Avalokiteśvara in the rock art repertoire (Miyaji 2000) and summary compatibility of the attributes with the known forms of the bodhisattva. For example, a certain affinity can be seen with the figure of Sugatisandarśana Lokeśvara, which according to the texts was in possession of six arms with the following attributes: *abhaya-* and *varadamudrā*, *akṣamālā*, *kamaṇḍalu*, *tridaṇḍi* and *padma* (cf. Pal 1975: 144, no. 50). Nor is the *triśūla* attribute unusual for other forms illustrated by both the texts and the iconography (cf. Foucher 1905: 29 ff.; de Mallmann 1952); the *gajasuṇḍa* also appears among the attributes of Trailokyavaśaṅkara-Lokeśvara, associated by the *sādhana* with Uḍḍiyāna (Foucher 1905: 36-37). However, some discrepancy between the normative texts and the iconography is quite natural, not only because we possess only partial collections of both but also because perfect matching probably was never obtained. Moreover, it may be noted that the spirit behind the iconography of the Swat rock reliefs shows equal distance both from the illustrative tones of certain genre themes (such as the “eight dangers”, to take a relevant example) and from the complicated symbolism of Vajrayāna pedagogy, while at the same time drawing upon them for the essential characteristics of its own repertoire.

#### 4.4 – The push and the obstacle: the Tantric way to salvation

The dogma of transfiguring grace granted by Avalokiteśvara, though constituting the elementary semantic unity of the bodhisattva’s iconography, only rarely takes on the form of conventional illustrative themes, as demonstrated by the one case of the “Saviour from perils”; however, the rock sculpture offers an alternative transposition of the theme, the origin of which can be traced back to the field of Tantric doctrines. The soteriological meaning of the overcoming of danger thanks to the help of Avalokiteśvara translates into technical terms in Tantric Buddhism, which provides for a series of rituals aiming at removing obstacles. Such obstacles are clearly of interior nature: doubts and fears that cloud over the mind, disturbing meditation and lead-

<sup>145</sup> The eight-armed figure seems to be unknown in India, while a number of examples are to be found in Xinjiang (see Miyaji 2000).

ing the mind astray. The rituals therefore aim at the acquisition of control over Vināyaka, the personification of dulled consciousness succumbing to the deception of the senses, but also of that dark area of the psyche where uncontrollable drives lurk. This is the unknown or ungovernable part of the mind that turns against the self those fears and weaknesses symbolised by the variegated ranks of evil demons that have in Vināyaka their leader.

Much important information about this part of Tantric doctrine is to be found in the Chinese literature of the seventh and eighth centuries, based on the teachings and texts translated by illustrious masters such as Vajrabodhi, Bodhiruci, Ratnacinta, Śubhakarasiṃha, and Amoghavajra. Here we find an occasionally contradictory attitude towards Vināyaka, or Gaṇeśa, the god with the elephant head, mostly considered in totally negative terms but in some cases subject to radical conversion that renders him a benevolent ally of the observant (Lancaster 1991: *passim*).<sup>146</sup> Correlated in the texts with Gaṇeśa/Vināyaka, personification of the negative forces standing in the way of progress towards *bodhi*, we often find Avalokiteśvara intervening as a positive counterpart in the process of identifying and removing obstacles. Externalised in the form of evil creatures and ritual acts of pacification, this is actually a psycho-dynamic process, and the fundamental identity between performer and the object to exorcise is reflected precisely in this Avalokiteśvara/Gaṇeśa pairing, where the latter is explicitly indicated as the emanation of the former (Wilkinson 1991: 236).<sup>147</sup>

In rituals focusing on Vināyaka, identification and removal of the obstacle may involve ceremonies performed on the effigy of Avalokiteśvara and then repeated on the image of Vināyaka, such as anointing the image of the former 108 times, and then again 108 times for the image of the latter; thus Vināyaka is pacified and the obstacle removed (Lancaster 1991: 284). It may be Avalokiteśvara himself who performs the rite, the act taking on the tones of a cosmic event: when Avalokiteśvara utters the *mantra* the earth shakes, a rain of flowers falls from the sky, the frozen underworld grows warm, the burning underworld cools down, and a light shines out as far as the Akaniṣṭha heaven. The army of Māra as well as Vināyaka and his ranks are defeated and the mournful cries of the demons are covered over by the melodious voices of the chanting verses of the *sūtra* (*ibid.*: 283). This particular description evocatively illustrates the power of Avalokiteśvara over the negative forces that produce obstacles in the way to Enlightenment – a power that can evidently be transmitted to the observant in performance of the ritual.

A summary but precise description of this particular function of the bodhisattva can be found in relief C98 (II: Figs. 98a,b,c,d,e); apart from the destructive work of the natural processes of deterioration, the relief is badly damaged in the upper part, hewn away by a clean cut which has completely defaced the bodhisattva. The relief shows a pensive Padmapāṇi, head surrounded by a flaming nimbus, seated on a throne supported by two squatting lions viewed frontally (II: Fig. 98b). To the left, below, a small four-armed Gaṇeśa figure is portrayed (II: Fig. 98c; GS 40), also seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāsa*. Its back left hand holds a vertical object – a stick or inverted axe – while the front left hand is held at belly level, just below the trunk which curves to the right (the hand probably bore a bowl of sweetmeats which the god dipped into with his trunk). The back right hand holds an object that has much the shape of a horseradish as represented in Indian sculptures of the Pāla period (cf. Nava 1988: figure opposite p. 33; Pal 1995: fig. 8) or even a broken tusk, although a short trident cannot

<sup>146</sup> In this wavering – possibly emerging all the more evidently given the difficulty to adapt it to the Chinese spirit – is reflected the Indian conception of the ambiguous nature of Gaṇeśa, to a large extent modelled on the practice of problematic taming of the elephant and its unpredictable behaviour. However, the analogous reference to the pacification of the elephant achieved by Śākyamuni offers also to extra-Indian Buddhist circles the elements of a metaphor on the possibility of “inversion”, with which the god-elephant of an adverse faith may readily be associated.

<sup>147</sup> This particular concept probably reflects a fundamental principle of Tantrism, which states that, while it may be impossible to subtract anything from human nature or add anything to it, all its components are subject to conversion. Conquering evil consists of the positive inversion of negative drives; since, however, that which is unknown cannot be defeated, self-probing must be taken to its extreme limit, so as to bring into perception and materialise the darkest, most hidden components. Thus, arousing the army of negative forces slumbering in the deepest reaches of the self is a dangerous but inevitable trial the initiate must overcome.



**Fig. 33** – Mane-tangai, Dir: The Avalokiteśvara/Gaṇeśa coupling (after Ashraf Khan 1994: fig. 10)

be excluded (cf. Bhattacharya 1995: fig. 2; Shetti 1995: fig. 1), and the front right hand is in *varadamudrā*.<sup>148</sup> Above, at the sides of the bodhisattva’s nimbus, are two small flying *gandharvas* or *vidyādhara*s (the one to the right probably female), right arm lifted up, left hand on the abdomen (II: Figs. 98d,e; GS 43). Every feature of the scene alludes to a victorious event – the leonine throne of the bodhisattva, the subordinate position of Gaṇeśa, the presence of the *gandharva* or *vidyādhara* figures.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>148</sup> The Avalokiteśvara/Gaṇeśa coupling is to be found – with very similar characteristics – in a relief at Mane-tangai, in Dir (Ashraf Khan 1994: figs. 10-12; Filigenzi 2000: figs. 12-13; here, Fig. 33). Here, as well, to the left of a pensive Padmapāṇi image is portrayed a smaller figure of Gaṇeśa, seated in a sort of *padmāsana* (*sattvāsana*?), with four arms; only the attribute of the back right hand, an axe, can clearly be identified. Given the precarious state of conservation of the relief – the right side is missing while a great split defaces the upper left side – we can make no hypotheses on the possible presence of flying figures originally appearing at the sides of the bodhisattva, as in the Qal’a relief. On the presence of Gaṇeśa in another context, but again in the chronological ambit of the Swat rock reliefs, see Chap. 7.3.

<sup>149</sup> The *gandharvas* (or *vidyādhara*s?) portrayed in this relief are to be taken as a significant presence since their appearances in the context of rock sculpture are indeed rare. Apart from the complex relief C30 in the Jambil valley, in the Arabkhan-china area (II: Figs. 31a-e), where a pair of flying figures is shown at the Buddha’s sides, the subject recurs in relief C89 (II: Figs. 89a,b). The relief shows a recurrent iconographic scheme, with a pensive Padmapāṇi accompanied by a standing bodhisattva figure of smaller proportions to the right (II: Fig. 89b; GS 29). Exceptionally, this relief includes, to the left, a small flying figure of now indistinct outlines, displaying elements in the upper part by no means easy to interpret. The vertical element that the figurine seems to hold in the left hand calls to mind a sword, i.e. the *nandana*, the prodigious weapon that Brahmanical texts attribute to the *vidyādhara* (Przyluski 1923: 310), although this would be more congruous in the right hand. The *gandharvas* are often cited in the texts or portrayed in Buddhist iconography with a role associated with their mythical ancient origins, meticulously examined by M. Falk (1986: *passim*). As a primordial being, once dwelling on the summit of the heavenly vault, the *gandharva* knows “the immortal names”; ousted from his original seat by Indra, he dwells in the intermediate sphere and pronounces in the womb the name by which the individual is generated. Having fallen from the indistinct



#### 4.5 – God of the path: the iconographic synthesis of the rock sculptures

However, if we exclude these few examples where reference to specific functions or doctrines is made explicit, the Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi iconography displayed by the rock reliefs is schematic and repetitive. It thus conforms with the general features which constitute the predominant characteristic of this art context: concision, evocative power, and pursuit of a universal language, resulting in an intelligent ambiguity in the message offered to the eyes of a variegated range of often occasional passers-by. Thus, for the Great Helper, the bodhisattva who frees the path of obstacles and offers guidance to a higher goal, the Swat rock reliefs present a summation of his compassionate power, making of him a true “God of the Path”. The reiterated presence of the figure along the routes leading to the sacred areas makes him a ubiquitous fellow traveller,<sup>150</sup> ever ready to guide the steps or give succour, as at Jare (C107; II: Fig. 108; GS 12), where we have seen an image of him protecting the river ford from a particularly impetuous current.

With this reassuringly vast connotation, spanning from spiritual metaphor to benevolent involvement with material needs, the universal sense of salvific compassion appears fully accomplished. In some cases the message may become more sophisticated while, however, retaining the typical language of this peculiar art form, essential and evocative. Such is the case of one of the finest examples – a sculpture situated in the Arabut area, carved on an isolated rock of somewhat rounded shape (C48; II: Figs. 48a,b,c). The rock rises in an open space on a slight slope, the inclination of the ground being followed and accentuated by the stratification lines of the rock. On this surface, naturally marked as it is with ascending lines, are sculpted in relief two almost identical pensive Padmapāṇi figures aligned diagonally, in harmony with the stratification lines of the rock. The figure to the left, set in the higher position, is of slightly larger dimensions. The sculpture only has real sense when viewed with this perspective of vertical progression, suggested by nature and emphasised with what is, after all, a very simple stratagem: a figure duplicating and growing larger, suggesting the idea of ascent. And this is not just any figure, but the bodhisattva of compassion, the pathway to divinity and guide of beings towards salvation.

The salvific guide function expressed in a variety of ways on both the psychical and spiritual levels is an aspect which the iconography describes, especially at its origins, with symbolic attributes that have lost the force of evidence to our eyes, as in the case of Gandhāra. However, we gain some idea of just how manifest it must have been in the religious culture of the time from the fortune enjoyed also (and above all) in extra-Indian territory by certain iconographic representations of rhetorical figures illustrating the function in the texts, one of the most explicit and, indeed, moving being the bodhisattva with banner showing the way to the souls of the departed (*Sérinde*: nos. 241, 242, 250). This sublime investiture, conferred by common piety upon the great bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, is yet another of those infinite rivulets along which branches out the all-seeing compassion that relieves pain, assuages need, and enlightens the mind to kindle the spark of Dharma in the heart.

Universe to the World of individuation, he nevertheless still holds out for the individual the potential capacity to reconstruct his own integrity. Similarly, he himself longs to be reunited with the hypercosmos, the resplendent place of his origins. His voice is that of the Lover, and the object of his desire, the splendid *apsaras*, lends himself – strikingly in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (II, 267) – to similitude with the *bodhi*, the supreme Wisdom, when the song of the *gandharva* echoes the approach of Gautama’s Enlightenment. The *gandharva* thus becomes in a way symbolic of the mystical marriage of the Enlightened One with the *prajñā*, a concept that moreover finds a very substantial place in Tantric Buddhism (cf. M. Falk 1986: 60 ff.; 398 ff.). The power of the word pronounced by the *gandharva* relates him to another flying entity: the *vidyādhara*, the personified “magic formula” (see Przulski 1923), perhaps the very subject of this specific iconography

<sup>150</sup> This meaning takes on a special meaning in the specific context of the rock sculpture of Swat, which, as has repeatedly been underscored, is closely connected with the paths of the ancient sacred topography. The ubiquitous presence of Padmapāṇi might have also served the explicit purpose of re-establishing the prominent position of Swat in the network of Buddhist pilgrimage roads.

## CHAPTER 5: MAITREYA

### 5.1 – The traditional type of iconography

Among the figures that make up the modestly sized iconographic repertoire of these sculptures, although the prime position is occupied by Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi, the representations of Maitreya deserve particular attention. This is due not so much to the quantity of images but rather to their variety and specificity, from which we can grasp certain peculiar aspects of the cult devoted to this bodhisattva.

One of the simplest iconographic versions of Maitreya is represented on stela S141 (II: Fig. 107; GS 18). Thanks to the fortuitous conservation of details and the more traditional iconography, this is also one of the most easily recognisable subjects, which in turn provides useful elements for comparative analysis of other, less preserved specimens. The bodhisattva is depicted standing on the corolla of a lotus with upturned petals. He has bare feet and is wearing a *paridhāna* with a belt knotted at the waist, a shawl, a Brahmanical cord, bracelets, a short beaded necklace, and large hanging earrings. The headdress seems to consist of a crown of matted hair (*jaṭāmukūṭa*), or maybe a three-pointed *mukūṭa* tied at the sides, leaving the *jaṭā* fully visible, with an image of a *stūpa* in the central crest. The right hand, in *abhayamudrā*, is holding an *akṣamālā*, while the lowered left hand holds a pyriform *kamaṇḍalu*. Two small figures of offerers kneel below at his sides: to the right is a woman with a lotus flower and on the left is a man (?) with a votive lamp (an open portable fire-stand?).

The good preservation of details makes S141 the unambiguous paradigm of a specific iconographic type, characterised by the simultaneous presence of *akṣamālā* and *kamaṇḍalu*. This association is an important clue to a safe identification, especially when, as in the case of rock sculptures, the surfaces are worn down by centuries of exposure to the elements. Thus, we can positively identify Maitreya among standing figures (S147; II: Fig. 141; GS 19) and seated figures as well (S38, S68, C73; II: Figs. 40, 70 and 76b left respectively; GS 22, 21 and 23 respectively; see also below).

Several stylistic and iconographic elements of S141 seem to place it among the earliest rock art works: the symmetrical rows of curls, the receding features of the face, the heaviness of the figure, and the straight instead of knotted belt ends all call to mind certain late-Gandharan examples.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, the presence must be noted of other details that are absolutely typical of the rock sculpture of Swat, such as the drapery of the *paridhāna*, with hem raised above the left knee, the simple beaded necklace, and the rather rigid pose of the body despite the bending position. These are all features that place the work within the new current. Also, despite several marginal iconographic variations, this sculpture finds a close comparison in a bronze that Barrett assigns to the Swat (1962: 40, pl. XXIX, fig. 20). Previously described by Grünwedel, Gibson and Burgess (1901: 186-188) as being among the antiquities of the Berlin Museum, the piece disappeared after World War II. In addition to unusual icono-

<sup>151</sup> Although a rigorous stylistic classification of the sculptures of Gandhāra is still impossible, certain marked stylistic and iconographic characteristics that recur frequently and with cross associations can be the basis for a rather loose chronological scheme. Consideration is to be given, for example, to particular draperies with flat pleats that are ribbon-like or in pairs of engraved lines. These are mostly associated with strong facial characteristics that in their relative variety (e.g. the shape of the face, narrow and long or wide and squashed) also contain common stylistic motifs, such as protruding slanted eyes, receding facial features quite close to each other, and the schematic and artificial decorativeness of the headdresses. Frequently there are, in association with such stylistic characteristics, also particular iconographic motifs such as the chair with round, elongated legs, sometimes with a back that is flared at the top; see e.g. Ingholt 1957 fig. 285; Taddei 1985 fig. 6; Id. 1987 figs. 9-11; Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co. 1982 n. 361; Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 413; cf. also, in Callieri *et al.* 1992: pl. XVIII, figs. 1-2 and p. 35, the two small stela statues depicting two seated bodhisattvas, found at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai. According to the revised chronology and periodisation of the site (Olivieri forthcoming), the two stelae belong to the context of Period VII, dated to the first half of the third centuries CE. For their stylistic and iconographic characteristics, the two sculptures can be assigned to the latest phase of this chronological horizon.



**Fig. 34** – Chilas I: Standing Maitreya  
(courtesy Heidelberg Akademie der Wissenschaften, Felsbilder und Inschriften am Karakorum Highway)

graphic features (rare among the bronzes and unknown among the rock sculptures), such as the presence of the *vanamālā* and the garments decorated with small circular motifs, this bronze is also characterised by infrequent technical devices such as the particularly intricate inlay decoration in silver and copper.

It cannot be ruled out that these uncommon features may constitute, within the class of the bronze sculpture, an analogous indication of relative archaism. With a cautious hypothesis, it is possible to compare it with the group of post-Gandharan sculptures roughly dated to the sixth century CE, which show, in addition to an exchange of influences with Kashmiri art, a taste for an overly ornate – though schematic – decoration (Paul 1986: 119 ff.). On the other hand, the bronze of the Berlin Museum can be compared, in an even more immediate manner, with certain petroglyphs from Chilas I, in particular the standing Maitreya (Fig. 34) depicted between a *stūpa* (on the right) and a minor figure of Avalokiteśvara (on the left). While Avalokiteśvara is identified as such by the iconographic details as well as by the inscription (*#[na]mo aryavalokiXXX*), the inscription

that accompanies Maitreya is a generic votive formula that mentions the donors (Siṃhoṭa and Gamanaśūra) but not the divinity that is the object of the dedication (Fussman 1993: 23; pl. 16). Nonetheless the attributes of the figure (*akṣamālā* and *kamaṇḍalu*) leave no doubt concerning its identification.

This series of petroglyphs, executed at the same time as the inscriptions and therefore also chronologically classifiable on a palaeographic basis, is assigned by Fussman (*ibidem*) to a date certainly before 630, even if the author fixes a generic term *ante quem* just for reasons of prudence, cautiously suggesting indeed the possibility of a much earlier dating.<sup>152</sup> Besides the generic affinity of the crown and other ornaments, the style and decoration of the garments, as well as the feet set widely apart, appear too similar to be casual. The evidence is perhaps tenuous but nevertheless significant, since it testifies to a transitional phase in which Swat sculpture was moving between a Gandharan legacy and new artistic inputs. It thus constitutes a precious record of the artistic process which led to the full formal independence of the slightly later production, where the elements inherited by previous experiences are almost unrecognisable, merged as they are into a new, different vocabulary.

With the exception of this example, the depiction of Maitreya in the rock art of Swat, although inspired by the preceding tradition, contains strongly innovative elements that seem to represent not so much a mere iconographic evolution of older models as a true evolution of the contents that we can attempt to link to historical documentation.

## 5.2 – The iconographic innovations

A form of representation still echoing the Gandharan tradition – in the conceptual scheme rather than in iconography and style – is that of Maitreya as a member of the divine triad, where he shares with Avalokiteśvara the function of attendant to the Buddha. However, a fully recognisable Maitreya appears in this role only once (and with innovative characteristics compared to the preceding tradition), in a relief in the Jambil Valley, C9 (II: Figs. 8a,b; GS 24).<sup>153</sup> The relief shows, on the right, a large image of a pensive Padmapāṇi and on the left a triad composed of a seated Buddha flanked by two standing bodhisattvas. The Buddha, with nimbus and aureole, is in *dhyānāsana* on a throne supported by lions standing frontally with snouts facing each other, and surmounted by an ornate cushion with the characteristic fringed tassel. The two bodhisattvas at the sides, haloed and smaller in size, are standing on two identical lotus corollas with two opposite rows of petals, in an accentuated, identical bending pose.

The precarious state of conservation of the relief, aggravated by the (intentional?) disfigurement of the faces, prevents a detailed description of the headdress, which nonetheless, judging by the respective profile and particularly the height, must have consisted of a crown, which most likely differed in form from each other. The bodhisattva on the left is certainly Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi: in *varadamudrā*, the bodhisattva holds in his left hand, lifted up at shoulder level, his distinctive attribute, the lotus flower. But he holds it in a very unusual manner: by the end of the stem, so that the corolla points downwards. As usual, his garments are composed of the *paridhāna* with a knotted belt, probably the *uttarīya*, and the typical short beaded necklace. To the right is Maitreya, with his ascetic characteristics strongly accented: in addition to the *kamaṇḍalu* held along his side in his left hand, the bodhisattva holds in his right hand the sound-making staff of the ascetic (*khakkara*). This has the form of a long pole topped by a circular element with hanging rings, whose profile can be conjectured on the right. The garments are the typically monastic ones, i.e. a rather short *saṃghāṭī* from which a length of the *antaravāsaka* sticks out.

<sup>152</sup> “[...] je ne connais pas d’argument qui empêche de les dater des environs de 500 par exemple” (Fussman 1993: 23).

<sup>153</sup> Although in the rock art of Swat depictions of triads composed of a Buddha between two bodhisattvas are rather rare, it cannot be ruled out that Maitreya was present in other examples of this type as well. Nevertheless, the poor conservation of the reliefs does not permit the certain identification of the attributes, among which however there appears the ascetic’s staff, an object frequently associated with the images of the standing Maitreya (see further on).

Maitreya reappears with these same characteristics in other compositional groups where the major differences from the Gandharan tradition and, at the same time, the innovative features of the rock sculpture stand out with greater immediacy. Again in the Jambil Valley, relief C30 (II: Figs. 31a-e) clearly shows the most original traits of the rock art of Swat in terms of iconography and spatial organisation of the figures. The centre (not physical but rather conceptual) of the scene is a triad composed of a Buddha, in *dhyānāsana* on a *siṃhāsana* of the “columned” type, accompanied by two bodhisattvas standing on two identical lotus flowers. From their attributes (respectively a lotus flower and a manuscript) the bodhisattvas can be identified as Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi on the right and Mañjuśrī or Maitreya on the left (see below, Chap. 5.4; II: Figs. 31a,b; GS 37). To the right of the triad, on a simple lotus corolla in the centre of the longitudinal axis of the relief, is an image of a standing Maitreya (II: Fig. 31d; GS 25), small in proportions compared to the components of the triad but with the same attributes and garments as the preceding relief. To the left of the main group is depicted a second triad (II: Fig. 31e) notably smaller than the first. It is composed of a pensive Padmapāṇi accompanied by two standing bodhisattvas. The one to left is difficult to identify; the one to the right, although not well preserved, can be positively identified as a replica of the preceding Maitreya, the only difference perhaps being the garment that here seems to consist of a simple *paridhāna*.

The rule determining the composition, according to the overall concept of rock art, is the renouncement of artificially imposed symmetry in favour of an adaptation to the space provided by the natural shape of the stone. On the other hand, it is much more difficult to establish the rule, if any, that determines the choice of the subjects and, even more, of their juxtaposition. Worth noting, however, is the triad composed of bodhisattvas only, a subject certainly atypical in comparison to the traditional Gandharan repertoire (which, however, still inspires the iconographic scheme) but not infrequent in the rock art of Swat and bordering areas. In this specific case, the triad has Maitreya depicted as an attendant. The relief preserves the details of the *kamaṇḍalu* of Maitreya, i.e. an inverted cone-shaped vase with horizontal pod-like elements and a handle on top. The form of this attribute remains constant in all the representations of Maitreya as an ascetic, in an iconographic version inspired by the figure of the errant monk.

A more detailed version of the *kamaṇḍalu* is supplied by the stela found at Shnaisha inside a kind of chapel that, in a late phase of the life of the site, was set against the wall of the main *stūpa* (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: 185, 188; pl. 13; Abdur Rahman 1993: 20, 22 and plates XXa, XXVIIb; here, S179; II: Figs. 73a,b; GS 26).<sup>154</sup> Unfortunately the stela is mutilated: the figure is apodal, the face and the hairdress are greatly chipped, and the end of the pole is missing (although, by analogy, the object can safely be identified as an ascetic’s staff). Also missing is (most probably) the nimbus. As in relief C30, the bodhisattva is wearing a *paridhāna* instead of a monastic garment, confirming the existence of a (significant?) variation in the clothing. Due to several stylistic and iconographical details (the shape of the face, the anatomical structure, the position of the body, the drapery of the garments, and the wavy design of the ends of the belt), the stela fits perfectly into the sphere of rock sculpture, even though its position in the specific context of Shnaisha remains uncertain. In this example the vase of Maitreya, although conserving its typical form, is decorated with incised geometrical motifs.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Regarding the stela found at Shnaisha, the two excavation reports published up to now offer discordant interpretations. Qamar and Ashraf Khan (1991: 185) hypothesise that it portrays the bodhisattva Maitreya, although erroneously interpreting the attribute as a lance. Of a different opinion is Abdur Rahman (1993: 20, 22), who interprets the figure as an image of Śiva Mahādeva, recalling, although without citing it, an hypothesis previously formulated by Tucci (see below). On the basis of this premise, which I consider to be erroneous, and in consideration of the position of the chapel that contains the image, the author draws wrong conclusions regarding the religious syncretism of the period. According to Abdur Rahman’s reconstruction, the period in question is that of the Kushan hegemony, as testified, according to the author, by the stela itself. Nonetheless, the author does not cite any archaeological datum that could corroborate such a dating, which is absolutely impossible both for the stela under discussion as well as for the other rock sculptures that he himself cites in comparison. See the critical reappraisal by Taddei (1998), followed by a polemic reply by Abdur Rahman (2001) that, however, does not clear up the doubts raised by Taddei’s review. On this subject see also Chap. 1.3 and Part II, Introduction.

<sup>155</sup> From this, as with many other examples of the same type, it emerges that the tendency toward a certain simplification of details, which characterises the rock sculptures and which can at first sight influence a judgement regarding style and chronology, actually

The iconographic version of the ascetic/errant monk Maitreya is certainly repeated in other reliefs, all asymmetric groups of bodhisattvas.<sup>156</sup> In one of them, located in the Kokarai area (C71; II: Fig. 74), the group is composed of a triad (on the right) and a bodhisattva in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* (on the left). The main character of the triad is a pensive Padmapāṇi, while the ascetic Maitreya is one of the two standing attendants, the other being a second Padmapāṇi in *varadamudrā*. Most likely the bodhisattva that completes the relief on the left – shown in a different iconographic attitude (see below) – is again Maitreya.

In relief C100 (II: Fig. 100), in the Ugad Valley, the standing figure of the ascetic Maitreya is placed between two pensive Padmapāṇi who were differentiated, to judge from what has been conserved of the relief, by only a few elements such as the throne (a rectangular podium surmounted by a cushion for the Padmapāṇi on the right, the typical lotus-shaped throne for the one on the left) and the central hem of the garment, visible only in the Padmapāṇi on the left. The difference in size, less marked between the two Padmapāṇi, is more conspicuous in the figure of Maitreya, who appears noticeably smaller, especially in view of the fact that he is standing. As in many other instances in the rock art of Swat, the different sizes of the figures in this case seem to be primarily dictated by criteria of spatial organisation that, as we have seen, do not always render with proportional variations the concept of a hierarchic relationship. Nonetheless, the visual result of the scene, despite the centrality of the Maitreya figure, actually translates into an effect of predominance of the two Padmapāṇi.

Even more clearly, the (apparently?) subordinated position with respect to Padmapāṇi is reasserted by relief C118 (II: Fig. 122), where the standing ascetic Maitreya is represented, smaller in size and standing frontally, to the proper left of a seated Padmapāṇi.<sup>157</sup> In relief C22 (II: Figs. 22a,b,c), also in the Kokarai area, the principal subject is again a triad with a pensive Padmapāṇi flanked by two standing bodhisattvas of uncertain identification. Above this group are two smaller figures: to the right a figure in *dhyānāsana* (also a bodhisattva?) and to the left a standing Maitreya with an ascetic's staff and a *kamaṇḍalu*. The group is completed on the right by the image of a bodhisattva over a smaller one of a pensive Padmapāṇi, and by the depiction of a *stūpa* with a tall square body that hosts the image of a Buddha (?) in *dhyānāsana*. In all the examples cited, and especially in the last one, the figure of Maitreya occupies a marginal position which, however, seems limited to this specific aspect of bodhisattva iconography.

Of a different tenor are the several representations of the enthroned Maitreya. They depict a distinct iconographic type, for which we possess a direct comparison with the bronzes. The diversification in the iconographic rendering of Maitreya, depicted sometimes as an errant monk and sometimes enthroned, is so manifest and constant that it appears to follow a precise iconological criterion. It is probably aimed at establishing a code of recognition that refers not so much, or not only, to two different temporal conditions of Maitreya – reigning in the Tuṣita heaven or descended as a Brahman in the land of Ketumatī – but rather to two aspects of the bodhisattva and his relationship with the earthly world. Worth noticing is however the fact that in both cases the top of the headdress mostly shows a slightly curvilinear profile, probably formed by a projecting *jāta* as if to highlight the inherent ascetic nature of the bodhisattva.

As we have seen, in the rock sculpture of Swat certain iconographic variations can be categorised as semantic signs that serve to create immediately perceptible distinctions. Such is the *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*/reverse *ard-*

responds to a sort of ergonomic principle. It cannot be by chance that some stelae show greater iconographic richness, perhaps because they were destined for a more sheltered place and intended for close viewing, compared to the sculptures executed on rocky boulders or walls that are subject to more rapid deterioration and are not related to a fixed and close point for observation.

<sup>156</sup> To these reliefs of certain interpretation we should perhaps add C79 (II: Fig. 81a), where the standing bodhisattva to the left of the pensive Padmapāṇi (II: Fig. 81b) could be holding a long pole, which in this case can only be the ascetic's staff of Maitreya. However, this reading is only a possibility.

<sup>157</sup> In this relief, unfortunately badly damaged, Maitreya holds a *kamaṇḍalu* in his lowered left hand. It is difficult to say which attribute he holds in the right hand, whose position, raised to shoulder level, would comply both with holding a book or an ascetic's staff. An almost identical scheme (a pensive Padmapāṇi to the left and a "minor" standing figure of Maitreya to the right) is repeated in a relief in Buner (Olivieri 1994: fig. 9); in this case, the attribute in Maitreya's right hand is a book.

*haparyāṅkāśana* opposition that represents two different and complementary functions. As discussed in the previous chapters, the second – a mirror version of the first – is reserved for the *prajñā* family, to which not only Maitreya, but also Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi-Vajrasattva can be ascribed.<sup>158</sup> While the standing versions of the bodhisattva usually possess a greater index of recognition, it is particularly in the seated versions that identification is more often uncertain. This depends on the scarce differentiation of the specific attributes, almost always reduced to a vague profile in which the attributes of each of the three bodhisattvas find an equally compatible form.

### 5.3 – Maitreya and Vajrapāṇi<sup>159</sup>

Cross-comparison shows how the silhouette of many rock sculptures corresponds almost perfectly with that of the bronzes. This indicates, as we have often been able to ascertain, the existence of common iconographic models that, although with variations and adaptations, are repeated in both productions. By virtue of this patent analogy, details often lost in the rock sculptures can be retrieved from the bronzes. Nonetheless, the degree of precision is determined by the index of recognition of the different iconographic models. In some instances individualities are only scarcely differentiated and, for lack of specific details, their identification remains uncertain. This is exactly the case with Maitreya and Vajrapāṇi. Several bronzes show them both seated in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* and with a profile that is so similar in the form of the attribute and the pose of the hand holding it that their silhouettes are practically superimposable. Thus, in the rock reliefs even a superficial abrasion makes it difficult to distinguish one from the other, also in view of the fact that other significant details – such as the features of the headdress, which generally offers a further element for recognition in the case of the bronzes – in the rock sculpture are often barely preserved, if not completely obliterated.<sup>160</sup>

Actually, the presence of Vajrapāṇi among the seated figures of bodhisattva in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* in the rock sculpture is merely a likely hypothesis based on the existence of a version (this also known from very few samples) that unmistakably portrays the bodhisattva as standing. For this iconographic type there are no known comparisons outside the specific sphere of the rock sculptures of Swat, not among coeval productions in different media (such as bronzes, terracottas and paintings), but also not among the rock sculptures in the adjacent areas (Dir, Puran, Buner).

Among the rock sculptures, the standing Vajrapāṇi appears in two different versions, either with right hand with *vajra* held horizontally to the shoulder and left hand on hip (S18; II: Fig. 18; GS 32), or in *varadamudrā*, holding in his left hand a *vajra* (S43 and S144; II: Figs. 44 and 146 respectively; GS 30 and 31 respectively). The lower extremity rests on a lotus with a long stem that emerges from the ground and usually rises as far as the top of the bodhisattva's thigh, and a minute corolla, seen in profile, which shows two opposite rows of petals. Due to the scant details that have been preserved, the lotus is not immediately recognisable. The thick, rigid form of the stem and the unusual size of the corolla, too small in proportion, make the lotus appear, at first sight, more like a *daṇḍa*. Unnatural forms of the lotus, in a way similar to this one, can occasionally be found. Among the rock sculptures, a comparison can be seen in stela S133 (II: Fig. 134), which depicts a standing Padmapāṇi whose lotus has a rather stubby stem, making the corolla – already more minute than usual – appear even smaller in size. Also the *vajra* shows an unusual and variable shape, which probably changes according to some specific meaning or function. It can be classified in two different types: a symmetrical wavy form (type *a*), and a compound form, with triangular upper part and bulbous lower part (type *b*), possibly to be interpreted as a combination of the *vajra* either with a bell (*ghaṇṭā*) or a dagger (skt. *kīla*; tib. *phurba*).

<sup>158</sup> On the characteristics and implications of this symmetrical opposition see esp. Chap. 3.3-4.

<sup>159</sup> On the conventional use of the name “Vajrapāṇi” in this volume see Chap. 1, fn. 9.

<sup>160</sup> For example, in the bronzes of Karachi, the gem in the headdress of Vajrapāṇi (Figs. 31a,b) or the *stūpa* in the headdress of Maitreya (Figs. 29a,b).

As for the lotus' shape, more numerous and easier comparisons – although indirect – are often found in other contexts.<sup>161</sup> Nonetheless, in our case, the most likely hypothesis is that, in the specific repertoire of rock sculptures, this is the iconographic form conventionally attributed to the blue lotus (or nocturnal *utpala* or *nīlapadma*), which is depicted as a closed flower seen in profile, often with an external row of reverse petals (Bunce 1994: s.v.), associated with the night and the moon (Id. 2001: s.v.).

The lotus that rises from the earth, supporting the *vajra* held by Vajrapāṇi (or the one from whom Vajrapāṇi receives the *vajra*?), finds only a vague analogy in the rather common iconographic convention that places the attribute of the divinity on the corolla of a lotus, a lotus that the divinity itself, however, holds in its hand. This particular device, which applies to both seated and standing figures, becomes a quite common feature in Buddhist iconography especially from the sixth/seventh century onward (Pal 1986-1988: II, fig. 90a).

The peculiar image of the standing Vajrapāṇi depicted in the rock sculpture of Swat conforms, in its general characteristics, to the iconographic type portrayed in a *sādhana* of an eleventh-century manuscript cited by Foucher. Here the bodhisattva, in *varadamudrā*, is holding both the *vajra* and the *utpala* lotus, and is defined in the *sādhana* as “Vajrapāṇi of Maṅgakoṣṭha in Oḍḍiyāna” (Foucher 1905: I, pl. VI, n. 5; p. 193, n. 22). The precise geographical reference given in the text explicitly indicates a significant connection between the bodhisattva and Swat,<sup>162</sup> which may be the possible source of this iconographic theme and its later variants, among which the manuscript's illustration itself can be counted.

Various traces of this special link can be found in Buddhist literature. Texts containing direct references to Vajrapāṇi and the North-West (in particular Uḍḍiyāna), albeit cryptically, offer clear evidence of a part of the doctrine not revealed by the Buddha to the great assembly of the *śrāvakas* and the bodhisattvas, but – in a conversation without words and without time or place – to an intimate entourage (*abhyantaraparivāra*), in which Vajrapāṇi plays the principal role. In fact, he seems to represent, in the sphere of the esoteric disciplines, the intuitive, mystic capacity to duplicate the substantial identity of the three mysteries – the body, voice and thought of the Tathāgata – of which Vajrapāṇi is considered the Lord (*Guhyakādhipati*). He is, in a word, the expression of the substantial, but unknown, unity of the Tathāgata with all human beings, a unity that can only be accomplished through a process of magical auto-identification.<sup>163</sup>

Compared with Padmapāṇi or Maitreya, Vajrapāṇi does not seem to have ever enjoyed a true popular cult, a sphere in which he is essentially acknowledged (or presented) as a kind of guardian, with a ferocious face, of Dharma. This literal expression of his functions gives the bodhisattva an abstract scholastic character, difficult to approach for the immediate needs of the faith, not even through transitive properties. The true home of Vajrapāṇi remains that of the esoteric circles, within which he represents the quintessence of magical science.<sup>164</sup>

The iconographic version of Swat, which in its austere simplicity is distant from the martial or purely ancillary image often attributed to Vajrapāṇi,<sup>165</sup> is perhaps one that most faithfully transmits a recollection of

<sup>161</sup> As for Gandhāra, a case in point is represented by the bodhisattva to the left in the triad within micro-architecture of the Peshawar Museum (in Ingholt 1957: fig. 257; Miyaji 1985b: pl. IV, 1 no. 10; Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 396; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 45). An analogous solution is documented in Kashmir by the Pandrethan Padmapāṇi (Siudmak 1990: fig. 9).

<sup>162</sup> On the identification of Mangakoṣṭha as Dhānyapura/Dangram, see Tucci 1958: fn. 24 (mentioning earlier theories), 228, 316.

<sup>163</sup> Such doctrinal formulations appear in a more or less explicit form in the seventh century in texts such as *Mahāvairocanasūtra* from China (Lamotte 1966: 152-154); nevertheless, already the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin, in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, tells of a long journey taken by the Buddha Śākyamuni in central and southern India. During the second leg of the journey, in the North-West, the Buddha separated from Ānanda and was accompanied only by Vajrapāṇi (Przyluski 1914). Although the *Vinaya* is silent on why, it is difficult to consider it merely by chance that, within the tantric tradition, Vajrapāṇi is said to have received the teaching and confidence of the Vajrayāna from the Buddha in Uḍḍiyāna (cf. Tucci 1949: 212-215).

<sup>164</sup> A close relationship between the *vidyārājas* – who can be briefly defined as magical, personified formulas – and Vajrapāṇi, to whose authority the former are subject, is established, for example, in the *Ārya-Maṅjuśrīmūlakalpa* (Przyluski 1923: 311-312).

<sup>165</sup> According to relatively late traditions, summarised in a passage of the *Abhisamayālamkāralokā* by Haribhadra, Vajrapāṇi is the one who protects the doctrinal Body [revealed] from the material body of all the Tathāgatas. He is the perpetual acolyte (*nityam*



the tantric nature of the bodhisattva.<sup>166</sup> It is probably not by chance that the very few examples that portray Vajrapāṇi standing with a lotus emerging from the earth are found exclusively on stelae, for which we can postulate a more protected and reserved placement. Also worth mentioning is the iconographic coincidence with the image cited in the manuscript, where the *utpala* lotus is not held by the bodhisattva's hand but insinuates itself through his bent arm, as if the flower's stem were not cut off but still attached to the roots and emerging from the ground. In another manuscript of the same collection (Ms. A. 15, No. 10; Foucher 1905: I, pl. II, n. 3), the bodhisattva is shown standing beside Akṣobhya, his spiritual progenitor, and again the lotus he is holding in his left hand is still attached to the roots and rises up from the earth (or from water?) until the corolla reaches his face's level. It would therefore seem that a crucial aspect in the iconography of Vajrapāṇi, at least in certain contexts, is this specific form of the lotus, which may point to particular meanings of an esoteric nature. This is indirectly indicated through the recurrent presence of this motif in the grottoes of western Deccan (Kanheri, Ellora, Aurangabad), which many scholars now believe to be connected to the diffusion of tantric Buddhism.<sup>167</sup>

As will be more evident further on, traces of a substantive affinity between Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi can perhaps be detected in their active connection with the Law, and namely its revelation, transmission and protection. This affinity is expressed, in the enthroned version of these bodhisattvas, in the sharing of the reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*. A cursory examination of the iconography of the three bodhisattvas, as testified by the bronzes, reveals the difficulty in distinguishing one from another in the evanescent profiles of the rock sculptures.

The bronzes portraying an enthroned Maitreya provide important information regarding the form of his distinctive attribute, which is not the handled vase characteristic of the standing ascetic Maitreya reproduced in the rock sculptures, but a small, elongated flask the bodhisattva is holding in the palm of his hand resting on his thigh, or suspended from his wrist or on the stem of the *campā* (flower of *nāgakeśara*; cf. Pal 1975: 202, no. 77; von Schroeder 1981: 94-95, 11H). In one of the Karachi bronzes the bodhisattva is portrayed seated cross-legged (in *sattvāsana*?) on a lotus with two opposite rows of petals, with a strip of stylised rock at the base and the right hand in *mahāśrīmudrā* (Figs. 35a,b).<sup>168</sup> In another he is in *padmāsana* on a leonine throne resting on a lotus corolla, the right hand in *varadamudrā* (von Schroeder 1981: *ibid.*). In the remaining two instances, he is in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, the right hand in *varadamudrā*. The throne, missing in one of the examples (Pal 1975: 202, no. 77), is in the other example a truncated pyramid of the rock type (Figs. 29a,b).<sup>169</sup> The bronzes also include portrayals of Vajrapāṇi and Vajrasattva seated in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, on rock thrones of different forms.

In one case (Figs. 31a,b) Vajrapāṇi is depicted in *varadamudrā*, holding in his left hand a *vajra* by the upper point, which remains thus concealed, while the lower point rests on his thigh. Exactly the same posture applies to several images of Maitreya, who is shown seated in *padmāsana* and *abhayamudrā* on a lotus with two opposite rows of petals (von Schroeder 1981: 92-93, 10G), or in *padmāsana* and *varadamudrā* on a leonine

*anubuddha*) of the *nirmāṇakāya* of the Buddhas and one of the compilers and guardians of their *kharmakāya* (Lamotte 1966: 147-148), in an interesting parallel with Ānanda (*ibid.*: especially 145-149).

<sup>166</sup> Despite some slight modifications, the iconographic model elaborated in Swat surface in various places and at other times, as for instance on a fragment of a silk banner from Dunhuang that has been dated to the ninth century (Singer and Denwood 1997: fig. 81).

<sup>167</sup> For a brief comparison I refer the reader to R.S. Gupte (1964); J.C. Huntington 1981; S.L. Huntington 1999 (first ed. 1985): 239-274. In particular, in Gupte 1964 the Vajrapāṇi in Sk 28 (pls. 9b, 9d) shows a close affinity with the above-mentioned Vajrapāṇi of Ms. A. 15 no. 10 (Foucher 1905: I, pl. II, n. 3). It should be noted that in the caves of Deccan, the lotus of Vajrapāṇi is also generally the *utpala*, which appears to be specially connected with the achievement of knowledge in an esoteric sense (Huntington 1981: 51).

<sup>168</sup> The *mahāśrīmudrā* is considered a variant of the *vitarkamudrā*, or rather the gesture linked to the magical-sacral value of the word, the dogma, the argument and therefore the exposition and explanation of the Law. The *mahāśrīmudrā*, where the thumb forms a circle with the ring finger instead of the index finger, is also an auspicious gesture towards the faithful (Dale Saunders 1960: 71).

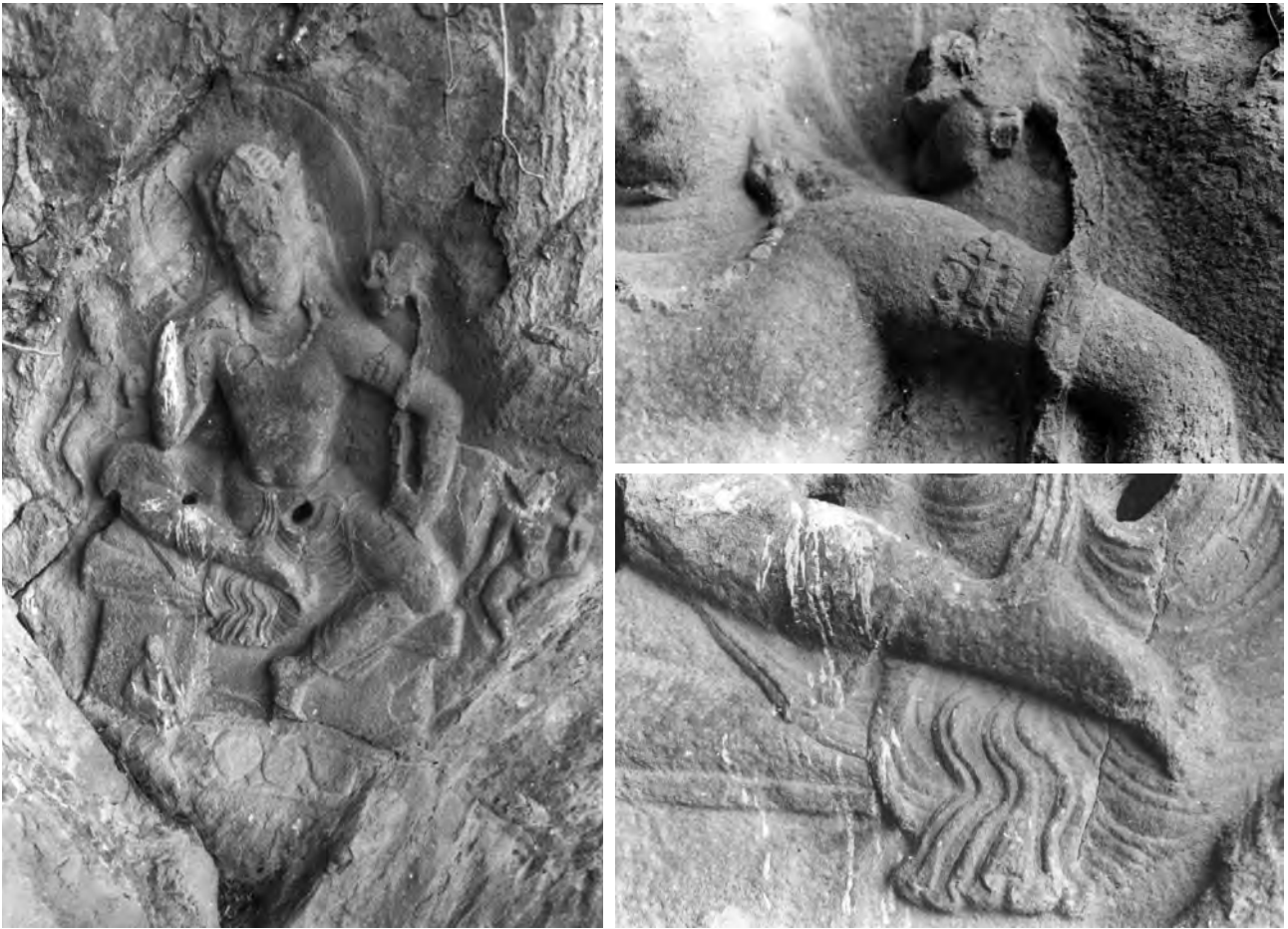
<sup>169</sup> The case records include other examples (von Schroeder 1981: 5G; 6C; 6H; 10E; 12H), however, in which the form and position of the attribute are very close to the Gandharan tradition.



**Figs. 35a,b** – Maitreya in *sattvāsana* (?) on lotus throne  
(Karachi National Museum; courtesy MNAOR, NM 1959 448, neg. nos. 1854, 1872)

throne resting on a lotus-shaped base (*ibid.*: 91-92, 10A, 94-95, 11D, with a variation in the pose) and, with his fingers closed in a downward position, holding by the neck the little flask lying on his thigh. In another example (Pal 1975: 164, no. 60) Vajrapāṇi, here portrayed with a ferocious look, grasps in his right hand, held at chest level, a kind of short staff with a knotted upper end, while his distinctive attribute, the *vajra*, rests in the palm of his left hand lying on his thigh. Vajrasattva is portrayed in a similar pose as well, with *vajra* in the right hand on his chest and *ghanṭā* in the left hand lying on his thigh (Pal 1975: 162, no. 59a,b). However, this is also the way Maitreya sometimes holds his flask. Such cases, although few in number, nonetheless prove the existence of two different iconographic types whose silhouettes are almost perfectly coincident. This introduces an element of doubt in the identification of all those barely legible images whose profiles show a generic compatibility with both of them. In several instances, however, a precise identification is still possible, especially in the stelae, which often show a better state of preservation. This latter fact indirectly confirms the hypothesis that the stelae, or at least most of them, might have been originally meant for a somewhat sheltered location.

For example, Maitreya can be recognised with certainty in stela S68 (II: Fig. 70; GS 21), where the bodhisattva is portrayed seated on a high podium with a lotus-shaped base, with an *akṣamālā* in the right hand pointing



**Figs. 36a,b,c** – Kafir-dherai, Puran: Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi and minor bodhisattva figures (courtesy IsIAO, neg. Dep. CS L17915/31; L17918/14; L17918/16)

downward (in *varadamudrā*?), and a small globular flask in the palm of the left hand resting on his thigh. The only element that departs from the norm is the position of the legs, in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* instead of reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*.<sup>170</sup> Rather similar is the bodhisattva depicted in relief C63 (II: Fig. 62): it is executed on a roundish mass that stands out from others more irregular in shape. Here the figure is sitting in the usual pose of reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* on a podium decorated with a row of lotus petals at the top instead of the bottom (in a variant of the lotus throne described in Chap. 3.5) and is certainly in *varadamudrā*. Although largely erased, the attribute conserves a compact form that is much more compatible with a vase than with a *vajra*. Moreover, the presence of the *akṣamālā*, which the bodhisattva holds in a rather unnatural manner in the open palm of the right hand, lends further support to this hypothesis. Indeed, the *akṣamālā* appears to be exclusively associated with Maitreya and hence – when preserved or clearly absent – it may serve to disambiguate uncertain identifications. The leonine throne and the conserved form of the attribute, roundish with an elongated protuberance at the top, make it possible to also recognise Maitreya in the main figure in relief C31 (II: Figs. 32a,b; GS 20), where again the natural form of the rocky block, with a kind of central cusp separated by a fissure from a lobe of approximately triangular shape to the left, is masterly supported by the figuration. In the centre, on a raised plan, Maitreya, in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* with *akṣamālā* in the right hand in *varadamudrā* and a small flask in the palm of the

<sup>170</sup> While this is not a unique exception, it is still rather rare. See, for example, the bronze image of Maitreya published by von Schroeder that, to judge from the stylistic characteristics, certainly comes from Swat (von Schroeder 1981: 96-97, 12H).

left hand resting on the thigh, is portrayed seated on a throne supported by two frontal lions and decorated at the base by a row of lotus petals. Columns and/or fringed tassels are vaguely recognisable in the vertical elements that are conserved at the sides of the throne. To the left, on two superimposed levels, are depicted a Buddha in *dhyānāsana* (above) and a standing bodhisattva (below) of much smaller dimensions. At the sides and below are two figures of pensive Padmapāṇi that are identical except for size, the Padmapāṇi to the left being slightly larger and occupying the triangular lobe of the block. This gives it a natural predominance, both proportional and visual, over its twin on the right.

In addition to the specimens that can certainly be identified as Maitreya, there are others for which identification is probable,<sup>171</sup> or where the form of the distinctive attribute held in the palm of the hand might be either a flask or a *vajra*.<sup>172</sup> Therefore, it is only from the short list of examples of uncertain identification that we can draw the hypothesis – probable but not verifiable – that among the enthroned bodhisattva the anonymous sculptors of Swat may have also inserted Vajrapāṇi and Mañjuśrī. If that was the case, their parsimonious presence scale would betray the fact that these two bodhisattvas belong, exclusively or electively, to the more restricted levels of philosophical speculation.

#### 5.4 – Maitreya and Mañjuśrī

While at least the standing version of Vajrapāṇi is safely identifiable in the iconographic repertory of the rock sculpture, the hypotheses regarding Mañjuśrī are much vaguer since the bodhisattva cannot be identified with certainty in any of our examples. The problem arises mostly due to the lack of a truly exclusive attribute, for example the sword, which is absent not only among the rock sculptures but also among the bronze sculptures that, because of stylistic and iconographic affinity, can be attributed to the same geographic and chronological environment. In fact, less distinctive is the sole attribute of the book, which in the rock sculpture is also borne, as we will see, by Maitreya, and in the bronze sculpture by other divinities. As for these latter, some characters are easily recognisable (as is the case, for example, with female divinities such as Prajñāpāramitā), while in other instances the identification depends on a strictly contextual reading, as in the case of the bronze of Nandivikramādityanandin, where Mañjuśrī, holding a manuscript, is depicted as a bejewelled Buddha (see Chap. 3.2). Once again, the deterioration due to exposure to the open air further decreases the possibility of specific identification in the case of the rock sculptures.

The presence of Mañjuśrī in the repertory of rock sculptures, although not proved by unquestionable evidence, is nonetheless highly probable, not only in consideration of the important position the bodhisattva generally occupies in the Buddhist pantheon, but also in the specific definition given to it in Swat. In fact, from this region come two particularly significant bronze sculptures that up to now have been interpreted as depictions of the Tathāgata Vairocana. The first one, which comes from Charbagh and belongs to the collection of Wali Saheb – already published by D. Barrett (1962: 38-39, Pl. XXVI, fig. 12), Ph. Granoff (1968-1969: 85-86, fig. 13), and U. von Schroeder (1981: 94, 11A) – shows a figure seated on a *siṃhāsana* of a rather peculiar type consisting of a series of nine frontal lions on a double lotus corolla. This image owes the current identification

<sup>171</sup> This is the case especially with several ancillary figures either standing – such as the figure to the right in two rather similar reliefs, C87 (II: Fig. 88) and one found at Bhai II, in Buner (Olivieri 1994, figs. 5, 9; for this particular relief see further on) – or seated, particularly the figure at the bottom left of the front face of the throne of Padmapāṇi, in a relief from Kafir-dherai, in Puran (Olivieri 1994: fig. 19; here, Figs. 36a,b,c), where the attribute in the left hand seems to be the pyriform vase of Gandharan reminiscence.

<sup>172</sup> In particular see: C22, figure on top right (II: Fig. 22b); S128 (II: Fig. 130; GS 33); S38 (II: Fig. 40; GS 22), where the hold and profile of the attribute in the bodhisattva's left hand recall those of the terrifying Vajrapāṇi in Pal (1975: 164, no. 60), although the (likely) presence of an *akṣamālā* in the right hand in *varadamudrā* makes the identification with Maitreya more likely. See also the figure on the left in reliefs C72 (II: Fig. 75) and C73 (II: Figs. 76a,c; GS 35); the figure on the left in a relief from Tangai in Buner (Olivieri 1994: fig. 6); the small figure on the left in the already mentioned relief from Kafir-dherai, which, although it is very disfigured, we imagine to be similar to another relief at the same site (Olivieri 1994: respectively figs. 19 and 13); and finally S143 (II: Fig. 145; GS 34). For this iconographic type see below.

as Vairocana to the *dharmacakramudrā*, but actually the sculpture (like the second one) shows iconographic characteristics (*paridhāna*, hair partly hanging over the shoulders) more compatible with the figure of a bodhisattva rather than with that of the bejewelled Buddha. As a matter of fact, in the specific context of the Pakistani bronzes the latter is distinguished by gathered-up hair (a detail especially noticeable from the back), the *saṃghātī*, and usually by the three-pointed cape.

The second bronze (von Schroeder 1981: 11G, 11I) again shows, also with a variant, the bodhisattva in *dharmacakramudrā* on a throne very similar to the first one but with six lions instead of nine. The most indicative characteristic is the crown, which has five identical figures of Buddha in *dhyanimudrā* disposed in the three usual crests and in the spaces between them at the top.<sup>173</sup> This might be read as a reference to the esoteric form of Arapacana-Mañjuśrī, in which *a ra pa ca na* are the five syllables of the *mantra* of the five Buddhas (Huntington 1981: 51). Two *sādhanas* consecrated to Mañjuśrī (*Sādhanamālā*: I, 89-91) offer a textual parallel in which the bodhisattva is defined as “[...] full of splendour, who settles all doubts by his solemn words [...] who shines like the Rising Sun [...]”. In the iconographic version of this form of the bodhisattva there is an obvious reference to the symbolism of the seven rays of the sun, which is expressed here not by means of the seven horses, as in the more customary iconography of the chariot of Sūrya, but through an analogical transfer of the function of the horses to the *vāhana* of Mañjuśrī, the lion, which also bears a strong solar connotation. The version with six lions may well be, indeed, an iconographic variation in which Mañjuśrī himself (like the Buddha) is seen as the seventh and most important ray of the sun (cf. Snodgrass 1985: 24 ff.)

One cannot be surprised that this particular iconographic version of the bodhisattva, strongly steeped in esotericism, was welcomed in Swat, a region that, as we have noted from various sources, must have been at the time one of the most prestigious centres of tantric teaching. The rock sculpture clearly witnesses a boundary which separates the circumscribed world of the gnosis from the larger, everyday world of religious practices and beliefs. At the same time, it also demonstrates that between the two worlds there exists a connection, as a tenuous stream of the first can be detected in the iconographic lexicon of our reliefs. We must therefore consider the presence of Mañjuśrī among them as very likely. Nevertheless, since the probabilities are restricted to a few cases of uncertain interpretation, the fact remains that from a merely quantitative analysis the presence of this bodhisattva in the rock sculpture repertory is marginal and that we must consider it, as in the case of Vajrapāṇi, an evident overflowing of the highest intellectual Buddhist circles.

In a few cases, however, the probability of recognising Mañjuśrī among the unidentifiable specimens of the rock sculpture becomes less vague. We can assume that, among the immediately recognisable indices of the different iconographic types, there was a criterion of selective exclusion/inclusion in which each attribute or iconographic sign assumes a dominant character in relation to specific figures, as, for the case in point, the *kamaṇḍalu* for Maitreya and the manuscript for Mañjuśrī. That is to say, the *kamaṇḍalu* alone identifies Maitreya and remains, in the occasional associations with the manuscript, the dominant sign of identification. The manuscript, in the absence of other distinctive iconographic signs, could instead be considered peculiar to Mañjuśrī, when other dominant signs do not apply. In the same way, to cite an example that can be verified more easily, the completely open lotus and/or the image of Amitābha in the headdress are dominant characteristics of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi, which annul any possible error of identification in the case of occasional associations with the *kamaṇḍalu*.

A probable example of this is offered by a rock sculpture in Buner, in the Bhai II area (Olivieri 1994: 473 fig. 9), where, to the right of a pensive Padmapāṇi, is portrayed a second bodhisattva, standing, with *kamaṇḍalu* in the left hand and a second attribute, probably a manuscript, in the right hand lifted up to shoulder level. The presence of the *kamaṇḍalu* is significant in identifying the bodhisattva as Maitreya. Analogous reasoning can be applied to C73 (II: Figs. 76a,b,c; GS 23, 35, 36), perhaps one of the most fascinating examples in the entire production. In the rocky block to the right, a pensive Padmapāṇi is portrayed on the right side, and on the left a

<sup>173</sup> The presence of the five effigies of Buddha in the headdress is expressly cited in the *Sādhanamālā*: I, 140.

bodhisattva seated in *sattvāsana*. The right hand of the latter is lifted up to the shoulder with *akṣamālā*, and his left hand is on his thigh, with an attribute of conical shape, most probably a *kalaśa* (GS 23).<sup>174</sup> On the boulder to the left, the first figure on the right is a bodhisattva in reverse *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, with the right hand in *varadamudrā*, and the left hand lifted up to shoulder level, with an attribute barely distinguishable (GS 36). Nonetheless, the conserved profile suggests a manuscript in the form of a closed case with a lace with a terminal circular element. An idea of the actual model that inspired the attribute can be conveyed by Manuscript No. 2 found in the excavation of Mound C at Gilgit (Shastri 1939: pl. 1424 A), an object roughly contemporary to our sculpture.

The bodhisattva possesses *only one* object as an attribute, evidently the one that belongs to him in the most specific and significant manner. Similarly, it can be noted how the three-pointed crown is clearly drawn, as if the hair of the bodhisattva is not arranged in the high *jaṭā* that usually overhangs the profile of the crown in the images of Maitreya. A cautious hypothesis could be suggested regarding the unusual pointed shape of this crown, that it could have been originally identical or similar to that of the Arapacana-Mañjuśrī of the bronze mentioned above. The figure that closes the relief to the left is a bodhisattva in *padmāsana*, with the right hand presumably pointing downward (in *varadamudrā*?) and the left hand on the thigh with attribute (a *kamaṇḍalu*? a *vajra*?).

The differences between the four bodhisattva figures, which would be perceived as obvious in other contexts, appear to be particularly significant in the rock sculptures of Swat where the composite reliefs often contain repetitions of the same character. It could be said that the differences are meant to specifically represent four distinct personalities, perhaps, respectively: Padmapāṇi, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi. Obviously, this is a hypothetical interpretation since, except for Padmapāṇi, the figures are part of the case records of iconographic types that are not very different from each other. However, this is a most likely hypothesis, since Maitreya is never portrayed without *kamaṇḍalu* (which makes plausible the identification with Mañjuśrī of the bodhisattva with only the book), even though the distinction between Vajrapāṇi and Maitreya remains uncertain in the case of the figure on the extreme left of the relief (II: Fig. 76c).

The figurative language of the rock sculptures lacks external comparisons for aspects that, precisely because of their originality, remained so far confined within a limited context. Nevertheless, being in itself coherent and organic, this context itself offers sufficient data for supporting likely hypotheses.

### 5.5 – Maitreya as custodian and successor

The most innovative feature the rock art of Swat introduces into the iconography of Maitreya is the ascetic/errant monk characteristic, expressed by the attributes of the ascetic's staff and the monastic garments. To these two objects the Buddhist community must have attached a particular symbolic value that linked the figure of Maitreya to the Buddha Śākyamuni. According to the accounts of Faxian, Song Yun and Xuanzang, the ascetic's staff and monastic robes of the Buddha Śākyamuni were preserved among various other relics in nearby Nagarahāra, close to Haḍḍā. In the eyes of the faithful, these particular relics must have been precious not only because they were the personal belongings of the Buddha, but also because they were signs of a specific condition. From the cult of these objects, iconography probably obtained a sort of historical and theological justification at one time for attributing them to Maitreya as symbols of legitimate succession on earth.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>174</sup> For a close comparison, and indeed a confirmation of this identification, see the bronze sculpture in von Schroeder 1981: 12H.

<sup>175</sup> For this suggestion I am indebted to M. Deeg, who indicated the possible connection with the stories of the Chinese pilgrims (see Beal 1958 [1884]: xxxv; cvii; 96-97); in particular, Song Yun mentions the Ki-ka-lam Temple (*khakkhara*, or the Temple of the Ascetic's staff) where the two relics were kept together (instead of in two separate places, as described in the story by Faxian). Despite the differences in detail, the various stories agree on the placement of the relics in Nagarahāra, on the importance of the cult devolved to them, and on their miraculous powers. An interesting appendix is contained in the account by Xuanzang, who reports the story of a king who, having learned about the existence of objects belonging to the Buddha, took them away from the temple and brought them to his palace. However, after a short time, they were miraculously returned to the original place of cult, thus making a fool of this "illegitimate" claim by the king. Regarding the particular esteem in which these "historical" emblems were held, there are traces of a portable votive tabernacle in wood found by Stein in Ming-ōi near Shorchuk (*Sérinde*: 229-230, n. 173). Of the

Nevertheless it remains significant that these particular iconographic versions of Maitreya were produced in Swat, and that they put a particular emphasis on the modest aspect of the ascetic/errant monk, as evidenced, for instance, in the above-mentioned transformation of the traditional small flask of the bodhisattva in a prosaic container for water, perhaps derived from forms in current use. The iconographic fusion between the condition of the coming Buddha and that of the ascetic/errant monk was evidently born of a mixture of contingent factors with characteristics deriving from the historical evolution of the bodhisattva.

Beyond the specific artistic sphere of Swat, the only possible comparison from a strictly iconographic point of view is with the figure of Devadatta in Pāla art (Mitra 1979: figs. 3, 7; S.L. Huntington 1984: figs. 35, 38; Pal and Meech-Pekarik 1988: pl. 5) and with the figure of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha in Far Eastern art (*Sérinde*: 333 ff.; figs. 252a,b). Both personages are portrayed in monastic garb and are holding the attribute of the *khakkhara*, or ascetic's staff, with its characteristic circular termination with suspended hanging rings. The sound of these rings announces the presence of the errant monk and, in a certain sense, is a substitute for his voice, to which the ascetic practice imposes silence.

Although the origin of Kṣitigarbha remains unclear, there are traits of its personality and function that can, in some ways, be superimposed on those of Devadatta, namely the monastic characterisation and the connection with the infernal regions. From the version the orthodox texts of Buddhism give of the history of Devadatta it emerges that, because of his wickedness, he was plunged into hell by the Buddha (Oldenberg 1921: 158-159). What the texts propose as an unpardonable sin of blasphemy and presumption, culminating in a schism, is the aversion of Devadatta to the relaxing of the customs of the monastic community, which according to him had dangerously deviated from their original purity and austerity. Therefore, Devadatta is, for his followers, the champion of ascetic rigor.

The testimony of the Chinese pilgrims indicates that the sect of Devadatta counted, during the period of their passage, a considerable number of followers.<sup>176</sup> Even during such a late period, the sect must have enjoyed strong popularity. Devadatta is mentioned, for example, in one of the dedicatory inscriptions found at Chilas. The text, which is entirely or partly repeated three times on the same rocky boulder, is recorded by Dani as “*vicarati devadatta sabodhapati*”, meaning, according to the author's reading, “Devadatta, Lord of knowledge, spreads (or preaches)” (Dani 1983: 152).<sup>177</sup> It is also unusual that, despite the fact that the art of Gandhāra – which certainly represented an authoritative tradition – preferred to avoid the representation of Devadatta, the Pāla art manifestly displays his ascetic character in a clearly orthodox context, an evident sign of a sort of cultural acclimatisation to this concept. In short, it seems that the claims of Devadatta enjoyed a vitality that, albeit limited, was constant and capable of imposing on the “official” art a kind of recognition.

The orthodox doctrine does not seem to have been insensitive to the criticism that appears patently epitomised by Devadatta and radicalised by the schism, but that might have been in latent ferment within the

original object, which was probably a triptych, only one panel has survived, which illustrates, on three superimposed levels, a kind of apology for the Maṇuṣi Buddha. At the top is depicted a haloed standing figure in *abhayamudrā* and *varadamudrā*, wearing a loincloth and accompanied by an attendant. The central scene illustrates again the same figure in a loincloth and a second character bowing down before him. The lower part is divided by a listel into two separate fields containing a standing Buddha (Śākyamuni?) on the right and two worshippers on the left. The character in the loincloth is to be interpreted as the newly-born bodhisattva, although, according to a convention also known in the Himalayan regions, as for instance in Tholing (<http://whav.aussereurop.univie.ac.at/whav/media/10136/>) and Tabo (<http://whav.aussereurop.univie.ac.at/whav/media/9032/>), he is not depicted as a baby but is only recognisable as such by the particular dress. The accomplished Buddha of the lower register wears the traditional *saṃghāṭī* and holds in his left hand the *khakkhara*. Whatever the exact symbolic content of this relief, which would deserve a more detailed analysis, the loincloth, i.e. the iconographic sign that unmistakably indicates the earthly birth, brings to the fore the close connection that existed between the Buddha incarnated in mortal form and the personal objects that will later distinguish him.

<sup>176</sup> Faxian mentions the existence of followers of Devadatta in Central India (perhaps referring to the Kosala), who venerate the three Buddhas of the past but not Śākyamuni (Beal 1958 [1884]: xlviii). Also Xuanzang, regarding the kingdom of Karnasuvarna (Kie-lo-na-su-fa-la-na), speaks of the existence of many heretics and of three *saṃghārāmas* where, according to the rules imposed by Devadatta, use is not made of curdled milk (*ibid.*: 201).

<sup>177</sup> The meaning proposed by Dani for *vicarati* is questioned by von Hinüber, who explains it as “wanders about” (von Hinüber 1989: 45).

orthodox community as well. Since it was impossible to openly recuperate the value of asceticism through the compromised figure of Devadatta, the orthodoxy worked on other personages. One example is Piṇḍola, who was transformed from a gluttonous monk into the symbol of continence and noble poverty and an incitement to the virtue of making donations.

Piṇḍola, by now celebrated as an *arhat*, could suddenly appear to anyone, in the lowest and most humble guise, with the intention of testing the willingness to make an unselfish gift. In Piṇḍola, the monastic community extols its own virtue and that of the lay community, which it praises and incites for support. In this story of painful redemption can also be detected a kind of warning concerning leniency and faithfulness in the capacity of the monastic community for self-discipline, and also a response to criticism that admirably circumvents self-criticism.

The north-western origin of the legend connected with the figure of Piṇḍola (Lévi and Chavanne 1916: 254) and, more generally, of the *arhats* as “protectors of the Law” (*ibid.*: 204; Demiéville 1954: 373 ff., in support of the hypothesis of a Kashmiri origin), seems to be a sign of a particular religious culture strongly linked to the value of asceticism and individual responsibility in the person of the monk. This culture could easily have produced the iconographic innovation in which the bodhisattva/ascetic par excellence (Maitreya) takes on the features of the errant monk.<sup>178</sup> This appears to be even more motivated in the period corresponding to the flowering of the rock sculptures, in which the regional contraction of economy in general, and of the Buddhist monastic community in particular, might have favoured the recuperation of original codes of behaviour that contributes to the preservation of the monastic community while adding dignity and prestige to it.

Piṇḍola and Maitreya seem to share several characteristics that connect the two, although on two different levels, to a fundamental theme of the doctrine: the conservation and protection of the Law. Above all, there exists between the two an “historical” connection, since Piṇḍola, like the other *arhats* “protectors of the Law”, cannot enter *nirvāṇa* until the arrival of Maitreya will release him from his commitment. Nevertheless, there are other specific characteristics of Piṇḍola that place him in the wake of a sort of “Maitreyology”, of which he helps us to grasp some crucial contents

The personality of Piṇḍola and the reasons for the cult devolved to him<sup>179</sup> emerge from the complex and sometimes contradictory group of legends regarding his historical connection with Śākyamuni, of whom he is a sort of testimony and representative. The essential traits of Piṇḍola, as we can gather from the texts, are the following: his being a *bhikṣu*, of which he incarnates the ideal; his activity as a “catalyst” of meritorious actions; and his excellence in the “lion’s roar”. This last characteristic is interpreted by some as the emission of a sound of ecstasy and exultation<sup>180</sup> and by others as the capacity to triumph dialectically over heretics.<sup>181</sup> Both interpretations can be considered true and, in a way, complementary, since the “lion’s roar” emitted by Piṇḍola on the attainment of Illumination is accompanied by the declaration of his capacity to resolve the doubts of others since he has now reached the peak (Strong 1979: 69).

Piṇḍola proposes himself, at many stages of his legend, as the one who can resolve “the dharmalogical doubts” of monks on the path, a role which “[...] complements his function of reassuring the doubting mer-

<sup>178</sup> To judge from the earlier artistic production, from Swat we obtain a rather different image than that of the rest of the “Gandharan” *koiné*. Throughout its exceptionally long life span, the site of Butkara I did not yield images that can be considered explicitly inspired by Mahayanic ideas, such as the epiphanic scenes variously distributed elsewhere, if we exclude the later works that present only generic references to transcendent realities. This does not automatically mean that Swat is a stronghold of Hīnayāna, since the relationships between the two vehicles is rather more complex and blurred. Nonetheless, it is legitimate to suppose that the attitude of the religious community was oriented towards greater individualism in the learning process and spiritual improvement, a climate that lends itself easily to nourishing the genesis of the Vajrayāna.

<sup>179</sup> The cult of Piṇḍola is well attested in China and in Japan by various documents, both literary and artistic (cf. Strong 1979: espec. 78-82), while we can only presume, although with good reason, its existence in Indian territories. The popularity of this personage is also documented in Central Asia (*ibid.*: 53-54) and in Tibet (*ibid.*: 52, 70).

<sup>180</sup> Cf. T.W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede in *Pali-English Dictionary*, s.v. “*sīhanāda*” (see also Strong 1979: 68, fn. 70).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Lévi and Chavannes 1916: 250; see also Strong 1979: 68, fn. 69.



it-makers in their karmic acts of offering” (*ibid.*: 70). This activity as “resolver of doubts” is deliberately underlined in Tibetan iconography, which confers on Piṇḍola, besides the traditional attribute of the bowl, also the book (*ibidem*). Piṇḍola appears in this guise to reassure Daoan, who is dubious regarding the comment of the *sūtra* (*ibidem*), but Asaṅga as well, who did not succeed in penetrating the doctrine of the void. Though he understood the theoretical explanation Piṇḍola had given to him according to the orientation of the Hīnayāna, Asaṅga was still not satisfied and went as far as the Tuṣita heaven, where Maitreya himself instructed him in the doctrine of the void according to the Mahāyāna concept (*ibid.*: 72; cf. also Rahula 1966: 2). It was therefore Maitreya who removed Asaṅga’s doubts, but nevertheless it is Piṇḍola who, aware of Asaṅga’s torment from afar, magically appeared before the great master and saved him from suicide, an extreme measure to which Asaṅga was pushed by his irresolvable doubts.

In certain aspects the legend of Piṇḍola appears like a sort of repetition in a minor tone of that of Maitreya, which is also marked by contradictions or obscure paradoxes. Nevertheless, behind the apparent inadequacy one can find concealed the reasons that make both figures, although on different and almost superimposed levels, the depositories and defenders of the *dharma*. The explicit prediction of the Buddha Śākyamuni regarding the destiny of Maitreya as the future Buddha, repeatedly indicated in the texts, assumes strongly symbolic tones in the *Lalitavistara*. Here, he who resides in the Tuṣita heaven waiting to be incarnated for the last time in Siddhārtha responds to the despair of the assembly of *devas* for his approaching abandonment by designating Maitreya as his successor. The latter will reign in the Tuṣita heaven in his place, waiting to become incarnate as a Maṇuṣi Buddha in the next temporal cycle. The investiture is sanctioned by a transfer of emblems, the royal crown the future Siddhārtha removes from his own head and places on the head of Maitreya (Foucaux 1884: 40). In this symbolic gesture, Mus (1928: 274-275) correctly sees a symbol of the permanence of the celestial, eternal Buddha, in other words an act of revelation whose hidden meaning, however, remains inaccessible to the assembly of the gods.<sup>182</sup>

Despite his prestige, Maitreya nonetheless appears unexpectedly out of place, or excessive, on certain occasions. The *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* shows him to be surprised by the prodigies that precede the transcendent teaching revealed by Śākyamuni to the assembly of the bodhisattvas. The significance of the prodigies is revealed to him by Mañjuśrī, who moreover knows the destiny of Maitreya, of which Maitreya himself seems to be unaware (Burnouf 1925: 18; Kern 1884: 28; Mus 1928: 184-185). In this episode, Mañjuśrī reveals that during the time he was the Varaprabha bodhisattva, he had among his disciples a lazy individual who was hungry for fame, inconstant, and incapable of fixing the teachings in his mind. His name at that time was Yaśaskāma, the present Maitreya who would become the last Buddha of the present era, thanks to the merits he had accumulated (*ibidem*).

As with Piṇḍola, for Maitreya negative traits are revealed from his past character and a certain inferiority or weakness. This earned Piṇḍola the censure of the Buddha and Maitreya the need to be instructed by a bodhisattva, who nonetheless recognised the greatness of his future role. In the same way, the punishment for having

<sup>182</sup> The significance of a stela conserved in Lahore should be seen in a similar light: it shows, within an aedicula (?) with a segmental trapezoidal architrave, a bejewelled bodhisattva seated in *bhadraśana*, with his ankles crossed and making a preaching gesture, and with a crown of leaves suspended over his head. To the sides are two standing Buddhas, smaller in size, the one on the left seeming to be looking at a small figure crouched down at his feet, and the one to the right holding a vase or urn in his left hand (Rhi 2006: fig. 7.10; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 49). The bejewelled bodhisattva undoubtedly calls to mind the episode described in the *Lalitavistara*, especially since he is portrayed in a pose often associated with Maitreya. The symbolic value of the scene appears to be reinforced by the two complementary figures of the Buddha, which suggest, in the same veiled tone as the literary version, the fundamental identity with the central figure. The iconography also seems to emphasise this reality not for what it *is* but for what it *appears to be* through its perceptible manifestations. Regarding the symbolic transmission of royal insignias see also the studies on the episode of the gold tunic offered by Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī to the Śākyamuni Buddha, refused by him in favour of Maitreya, or spontaneously accepted by Maitreya after the refusal of the other members of the community (Przyluski 1919: 39 ff.; Mus 1928: 269; Lévi 1932: 361 ff.). A complementary analogy is thus established between the attribution to Maitreya of the crown in the Tuṣita heaven, which refers to the “celestial” sphere, and, in the worldly sphere, that of the monastic robes and ascetic’s staff, which significantly are removed from an illegitimate possession (see above).

abused the magical powers translates for Piṅḍola into the task, apparently incongruous, of keeping watch over the maintenance of the *dharma* until the arrival of Maitreya. The hypothesis of Mus (1928: 184-185), who sees in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* the legitimisation of the Mahāyāna and of its superiority over the Hīnayāna represented by Maitreya, although reasonable, does not cancel the impression that in this episode there is a hidden meaning. Even admitting that the intent is to prove that the old belief is subordinate to the new one, it appears excessive and inappropriate to label as ridiculous one who is still unanimously considered the next Buddha. What Maitreya seems to impersonate in this context is the role of the initiate, which appears to be reasserted in a significant way in the *Mahāsukhāvāṭīvyūha*. In fact, it is Maitreya who receives revelation from the Buddha, who shows him and describes in detail the Pure Land (Mus 1928: 185, fn. 1). Even more eloquent in its apparent contradiction is the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, which portrays a hesitant Maitreya who, like the other bodhisattvas, is convinced of the superiority of Vimalakīrti. Nevertheless, in the same text not only does Vimalakīrti acknowledge Maitreya as the future Buddha (Lamotte 1976: 85-88), but, moreover, Śākyamuni himself entrusts Maitreya with the custody of the *sūtra* (*ibid.*: 265-270).<sup>183</sup>

Also in the episode of the gift of the golden tunic, which is to say, in the Hinayanic context, Ajita/Maitreya is described as the last-comer among the disciples of the Buddha. He is, in short, the “boy”, the promise not yet realised but projected towards the goal. Regarding this, an interesting comparison, already brought to our attention by M. Taddei (1969), can be established between Maitreya and the *brahman/ātman*. They both represent, in two different contexts, the potential for complete development of the consciousness. Just as the *brahman/ātman* of the *Upaniṣad* is symbolically described as the being no larger than a grain of rice who lives in the internal space of the heart, the Yogācāra school considers the *tathāgatagarbha*, i.e. the “embryo” of Buddhahood, to be contained in every being as “the hidden gem of which speaks the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *bodhicitta*, our interior reality, a λόγος σπερματικός to be eventually re-attained” (Taddei 1969: 370). The presence at Butkara I of reliefs that portray small figures inside the corolla of an open lotuses (*ibid.*: 364-366; figs. 1-4) is probably linked to this current of ideas, whose existence in that land of Uḍḍiyāna is not surprising.

The reliefs cited by Taddei, as the author emphasises, strongly recall certain representations of Harpocrates, or Harpocrates, whose iconography, as shown by the examples of Begrām and Sirkap, was well-known in the Hellenised cultural milieu. In particular, the close affinity with the reliefs of Butkara I is detected in the iconographic and conceptual connection (of which the author cites various examples; *ibid.*: 366-367; but see also Lecuyot 1998) between the young boy Harpocrates and the lotus flower.

The common characteristics the Gandharan iconography attributes to Harpocrates and the *brahman/ātman* (or rather, in this specific case, with the seed of Buddhahood) are partly transferred to the figure of Maitreya, whose iconographic affinities with Brahmā (personification of the *brahman*) have been clearly shown. Nevertheless Taddei, emphasising the “plumpy and boyish” aspect of certain images of Maitreya (cf. the numerous examples in Ingholt 1957: figs. 101, 191, 227, 228, 259, 310, 345 etc.; see also Ackermann 1975: 158; pl. LXXVIIIb), points out the affinity with the young boy, Harpocrates, both for conceptual coincidences – such as the lunar character and the role of “successor” of the Sun God – and for iconographic analogies. These include the particular posture of the seated images; the attribute of the vase; the gesture of the right hand, which Harpocrates raises to his chin as well as to his shoulder, in a way that recalls the *abhayamudrā*; and even the gesture, often associated with Maitreya, of the hand on the shoulder with palm turned inward. The same head-dress – the *pskhent* between two lotus buds for Harpocrates, the bipartite chignon with a pear-shaped ornament for Maitreya – offers a comparison between the two (*ibid.*: 379-380). This characteristic of a divine young boy, which the texts as well as the iconography attribute to Maitreya, is one of his most distinctive traits, where potentiality and the act of becoming take form contemporaneously.

The relationship between Maitreya and the Mahayanic doctrine, too often dismissed by scholars on the assumption of a clashing “inadequacy” (cf. Luczanits 2005: 185), seems actually to be much more complex than

<sup>183</sup> Also in the *Lalitavistara* Maitreya is indicated by the Buddha as the custodian of the *sūtra* (Vaidya 1958: 27, 318).

appears at first sight and would merit a thorough analysis that is outside the scope of this work. What is considered the “re-education” of Maitreya could instead constitute the elaboration in the most markedly Mahayanic sense of characteristics innate in the personage, who seems to represent the projection of the gradualness of the spiritual progress in a dimension suspended between the celestial and the earthly. In addition to the idea of salvation obtained by virtue of faith, grace, and as a gift, in Maitreya we find epitomised the tenacity of the disciple, the commitment of the intellect, threatened but not defeated by fallibility and misconception. The idea of progression, of a quality leap, seems to be the constant of his controversial figure, one that is reasserted by his earthly biography. The *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the text that deals with it the most, although not explicitly mentioning the original affiliation of Maitreya in his earthly incarnation, implies that he will convert to Mahāyāna during his life and that he in turn will convert many members of his family and his clan (cf. Jaini 1988: 77-78).

In this mixture of incompleteness and unavoidability, Buddhist speculation realises a symbol of infallible progress, crowned by the initiation, but also marked during its development by apparent contradictions which sagaciously epitomise the stages of attainment. Maitreya is therefore a prototype that concretely reassumes the path that leads to Buddhahood and the qualities that one has to develop along the way. As is shown by the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, he can therefore resolve the doubts of Subhūti regarding why and how a bodhisattva perceives exultation from meritorious acts performed by others and transforms this exultation into an instrument of salvation for the same (Vaidya 1960: 71). And again it is Maitreya, in the *Śālistambasūtra*, who clarifies to Śāriputra the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* (conditioned co-production) (Vaidya 1961: 100-106). In clearing up such doubts, he thus represents the exemplary process of perfecting wisdom (cf. Jaini 1988: 66-67).

This is the way an essential characteristic of Maitreya is delineated in the texts: in the presence of the Buddha, and sometimes other bodhisattvas, he is the one who *receives* the teaching. Before men and *devas*, however, he is the one who *transmits* and *explains* the doctrine. In the same way that he is the object of an initiation, by transitive property he seems to be considered – at least in certain circles – as the active subject of the initiation. This particular vocation of Maitreya reverberates directly on history and individual destinies. In fulfilling his function, he appears as the inspirer or revealer of doctrinal texts of which he, on the other hand, is often and explicitly identified as the custodian. Great teachers and commentators refer to his authority, having directly learned from him the basis of the works later produced by them. As we have seen, among the excellent disciples of Maitreya who can rightly be called his “initiates”, there appears the name of Asaṅga, the founder of the Yogācāra school. After having been instructed by Maitreya on the doctrine of the void, Asaṅga at various times goes to him, in the Tuṣita heaven, to receive instruction on the Mahayanic *sūtras*, which he in turn will preach to others.<sup>184</sup> Confronted with the scepticism of men, Asaṅga begs Maitreya to descend into the Jambudvīpa and explain the doctrine to the sceptics himself. Every night for four months, Maitreya appears in front of a vast assembly and explains the doctrine, while during the day Asaṅga comments on his teachings (Rahula 1966: 2).

The case of Asaṅga is the one for which we have the best documentation; nevertheless he belongs to a large group of “saints” who manage, by methods the literature does not always explain clearly,<sup>185</sup> to enter into direct

<sup>184</sup> We can see the affinity between the personal vicissitude of Asaṅga and that of Maitreya, as is referred to by the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. From this parallelism we can deduce a kind of paradigm of the initiated/initiator relationship and of the meaning of the “transmission” of knowledge.

<sup>185</sup> According to Paramārtha, the revelation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* to Asaṅga occurred at night in order that Asaṅga could receive it in a dream or in a deep state of concentration during the nocturnal calm, thanks to the *abhijñā* of the Small Vehicle (Takakusu 1904: 273-274). Only after having initiated Asaṅga to the Mahāyāna will Maitreya teach to him the *samādhi* of the “solar light”, thus making him capable of ascending to the Tuṣita heaven (*ibid.*: 275). It is therefore thanks to the *samādhi* that it is possible to make this journey, described in some texts as an actual physical displacement – by virtue of the magic powers (the first of the six *abhijñā* possessed by the *arhat*) obtained through the cultivation of the *samādhi* – and in other texts as a spiritual journey (Demiéville 1954: 380 and fn. 4). Rather, it is in a dream that a monk receives the visit by Maitreya, who reveals to him how, disguised as a Brahman, he himself executed the statue of the Buddha for the temple of Mahābodhi. It is perhaps significant that also this work, which no

communication with Maitreya for the purpose of being instructed or entirely removing doubts of a doctrinal character (Demiéville 1954: 376 ff.), or to execute a copy of his image, as in the case of the colossal statue in wood at Darel, first mentioned by Faxian. According to the legend linked to this statue, the artist was conducted to the Tuṣita heaven three times by an *arhat* (Legge n.d.: 24-25). Another version of the same legend, gathered by the pilgrim Fajiang, who passed through Darel shortly after Faxian, only the *arhat* went to Maitreya and made a portrait of him, on which the statue was based (Demiéville 1954: 379 and fn. 4). An interesting feature of the story by Faxian is the opinion – reported to him by the local population – that the propagation of the Doctrine in the East occurred following the erection of the statue of Maitreya. Faxian finds this hypothesis completely plausible, since Maitreya is the “great spiritual master” (Legge n.d.: 27-28).

The encounter between human saints and Maitreya, passed down by a considerable body of literature on the argument,<sup>186</sup> represents a sort of historical appendix of the cult of the bodhisattva and of the speculation related to his paradise, for which testimonies of various kinds survive, mostly from non-Indian regions. As for the artistic evidence, there appears to be significance in the massive presence of Maitreya in Xinjiang (Baruch 1946: 67-71), an area which has also provided important literary testimonies – including the annals of Khotan in which the history of the country is intertwined with the name of Maitreya – as well as numerous votive inscriptions, confessions of sins, and the *Maitreya-samiti*, a hymn to Maitreya in Tibetan found near Khotan (*ibid.*: 71 ff.).

The development of a true mythology of Maitreya, which is somehow related to millenaristic doctrines originating from the prophecy about the decline of the Dharma (see Nattier 1991), seems to belong to a relatively late era. However, it is possible to identify traces of it in that part of the canonical literature that, though belonging to the Hinayanic tradition, represents a kind of hinge towards Mahāyāna. This is the case with the *Mahāvastu*, elaborated probably within the Mahāsaṃghika and Lokottaravādin communities. It contains the first mention of Maitreya in a state preceding the condition of bodhisattva when, in a remote past in which he lived as a earthly *cakravartin*, he expressed in the presence of the Tathāgata Suprabhasa the vow to become, in the distant future, a Buddha himself (Jones 1949-1956: I, 67-68). This episode, although with different details, is repeated and amplified in the *Maitreya-vyākaraṇa* of the *Divyāvadāna*, where the future bodhisattva, in the guise of the king Vāsava, pronounces the vow in the presence of the Buddha Ratnaśikhi, who prophesies that one day Vāsava will become a Tathāgata with the name Maitreya (Cowell and Neil 1886: 3, 40). This represented the implicit establishment of the necessity of a vow (*praṇidhāna*), formulated in the presence of a Buddha, to become in the distant future a Buddha one’s self. This vow must be “accepted” in a certain sense by the Buddha, who sanctions it by means of a prediction (*vyākaraṇa*).

The direct relationship between human beings and Maitreya is realised not only through mystic contact but also through an encounter that is realised, by means of a vow, on earth or in heaven (or both) either near or far in time. That is to say, the devout person can express a vow to be reborn with Maitreya in the Tuṣita heaven or, in a more distant future, in the land of Ketumatī where, at the completion of his cycle, Maitreya will become incarnate and a Buddha. Great personalities of Buddhism have left personal testimonies of this vow: Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Xuanzang (Demiéville 1954: 388-389), and Bu ston (Obermiller 1939: I, 89-90). Often the vow to be reborn in the Tuṣita heaven, which could be realised in the immediate future, soon after death, is accompanied by a vow to follow Maitreya in his incarnation in the land of Ketumatī (cf. Nattier 1988: *passim*). This, for example, is the hope of Xuanzang (Demiéville 1954: 388).

artist could have executed, was accomplished by Maitreya in four months, like the teaching of the Mahayanic *sūtras* in Asaṅga’s story (Julien 1857-1858: II, 466-470). Often the intermediary is an *arhat* (see *infra*). One of the versions of the legend of Vasumitra says that he put doctrinal questions to an *arhat* who, unable to find a solution, through the force of concentration ascended to the Tuṣita heaven to ask Maitreya (Demiéville 1954: 370). In this case Vasumitra is an “indirect” disciple of Maitreya.

<sup>186</sup> In addition to the above-mentioned instances, see the exemplary cases of the king of Ceylon, who obtained on his deathbed the vision of the Tuṣita heaven (Demiéville 1954: 383), and of a king of Khotan who went there to contemplate Maitreya, transported by the magical powers of an *arhat* (both episodes are recorded by Nattier 1988: 40, fn. 27). In these cases, as Nattier emphasises, they are persons who apparently enjoyed this experience without having exercised any effort to merit it.

The “complementary” vow to be reborn during the advent of Maitreya on earth is motivated not only by the happiness promised by the event itself (the era of Maitreya is the height of the ascending curve of a cycle; cf. Nattier 1988: 26-28), but also by the possibility of receiving from Maitreya the *vyākaraṇa* that will make it possible to become, in turn, a Buddha. This is in fact the expectation of Xuanzang (Demiéville 1954: 388), the same that we find formulated in a dedicatory inscription from the region of Turfan related to the erection of a pole, most likely in 728.<sup>187</sup> In it the founders express the vow to meet the Buddha Maitreya in the future and to receive from him the blessing to acquire the condition of Buddha (Baruch 1946: 73-74). The coincidence of the testimonies leads us to suppose that the *praṇidhāna-vyākaraṇa* mechanism, already implicitly asserted by the *Divyāvadāna*, is an important and constant feature of the cult of Maitreya. The Nepalese tradition, which attributes to Maitreya a specific “*viśvavyākaraṇamudrā*” (see Chap. 1.2), might well represent the iconographic and devotional reflection of this binomial concept. A similar inspirational source can also be conjectured for our standing Buddhas S13, S40, S75 (?), and S60 (?) (II: Figs. 11 [GS 1], 42a,b, 78, and 60a,b respectively), and regarded as a complementary and integrative delineation of that salvific mission so clearly stressed by the rock sculpture of Swat.

It is therefore legitimate to wonder whether or not, regarding the cult of Maitreya and his heaven as outlined in more detail in non-Indian documents,<sup>188</sup> there might also be traces in Indian regions, particularly in visual art. Actually, Gandhāra has produced many isolated statues of Maitreya or, in the reliefs, depictions of him as a member of divine triads or as a protagonist in scenes portraying the Tuṣita heaven,<sup>189</sup> surrounded by an assembly of persons (cf. J.C. Huntington 1984; Luczanits 2005). It is rather hard to believe that the isolated figures of bodhisattvas in Gandhāra, which already appear greatly characterised by their individual (or typological) iconographic traits, as well as by their mutual relationships and complementary oppositions, are not the expression of a well-established cult, already based on a solid textual and ritual tradition. This is especially true for Maitreya, who is not only the depository of a function that brings him close to history but is also located in a place accessible to the faithful.

Although Gandharan iconography often preserves a margin of ambiguity that makes the interpretation uncertain, it is still possible to detect, especially when comparing similar subjects, details that indicate significant differences. The reliefs portraying Maitreya in the Tuṣita heaven could be generically interpreted as a mere iconographic transposition of what is affirmed in the texts: that Maitreya is waiting for the completion of the cycle in the Tuṣita heaven surrounded by the *devas* who live there. However, I would like to point out a relief from Charsada (Ingholt 1957: fig. 285; J.C. Huntington 1984: fig. 6; Klimburg-Salter 1995: n. 152; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 61), in which the generic assembly of personages dressed in princely costumes, as the divinities are usually depicted, is substituted by a group of different people (men and women in various costumes, and a monk),<sup>190</sup>

<sup>187</sup> The erection of a pole was, according to the ritual custom of the region, a symbolic act that preceded the foundation of a temple or monastery (Baruch 1946: 72-73).

<sup>188</sup> It is above all Chinese literature that conserves the most detailed documents concerning the cult of Maitreya, first of all the *sūtras* expressly dedicated to him, such as the *Great sūtra of the bodhi of Maitreya*, translated by Kumārajīva in 402, and the *Great sūtra of the contemplation of Maitreya ascended to be born in the Tuṣita Heaven*, which was translated towards the middle of the fifth century, and also the Maitreyan *sūtra* inserted in the Chinese version of the *Ekottarāgama* (translated towards the end of the fourth century), which contains the first allusion to a group of four *arhats* whom the Buddha had destined to wait for the coming of Maitreya. In addition to these, Chinese tradition also possesses a considerable body of commentaries which reflect the animated debates regarding several doctrinaire and cultural orientations (see Demiéville 1954: *passim*; cf. also J.C. Huntington 1984: 137).

<sup>189</sup> See the stela of the Chandigarh Museum where Maitreya is portrayed in the upper crescent-shaped part of the relief (Rosenfield 1967: fig. 91; J.C. Huntington 1984: fig. 7; Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 399); the Lahore relief from Charsada (Ingholt 1957: fig. 285; J.C. Huntington 1984: fig. 6; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 44), that portrays Maitreya with the right hand at his shoulder, the palm facing inward, seated on a low bench, his feet on the ground crossed at the ankles; a relief in the Musée Guimet (Luczanits 2005: fig. 1; Filigenzi 2012a: fig. 62), where the bodhisattva is, instead, in *padmāsana* and *abhayamudrā*, within a segmental trapezoidal architrave outside of which are eight figures, four of them masculine at the bottom and four of them feminine at the top between two small covered side balconies, which in this free architectural synthesis appear to be suspended in the air. To these examples we can add the relief discussed in fn. 182, which portrays Maitreya in *dharmacakramudrā*.

<sup>190</sup> In the non-narrative reliefs, the art of Gandhāra often places the female figures in a peripheral position, positioning them mostly inside small balconies, as is the case in the relief cited above in fn. 189.

gathered in a non-hierarchical order around an enthroned Maitreya. The liveliness of the scene is mainly the result of a felicitous visual arrangement that uses a pyramidal scheme to create the illusion of a crowd “encircling” the bodhisattva. This conveys the impression that the characters depicted are not typified portraits of followers or donors but rather people in actual contact with the divinity,<sup>191</sup> which we imagine could be realised in the celestial dimension of the Tuṣita heaven<sup>192</sup> or in the future land of Ketumatī.

Certain marked stylistic and iconographic characteristics (the receding features of the faces, the schematic decorativeness of the hairstyles, the drapery with thin pairs of engraved lines, the particular seat of Maitreya with its thin legs and decorated back flared at the top) ascribe the relief to a late phase of Gandharan art that can be dated to approximately the late third/fourth century.<sup>193</sup> Its chronological placing is therefore perfectly compatible with what can be considered a period of great expansion for the cult of Maitreya. This is documented not only in the works of his illustrious followers but also by the fact that to this chronological horizon is also attributed the arrival and translation in China of doctrinaire texts concerning Maitreya and that group of *arhats*, the “protectors of the Law”, who were waiting for his coming (Demiéville 1954: *passim*).

Although the fourth and fifth centuries appear to be a rather fertile period for the Maitreya cult, the beginning of the cult obviously predates this. In addition to the testimony of iconography, another indication of this is the devotion to Maitreya and his heaven by Saṃgharakṣa, the author (or, as he defines himself, the compiler) of a *Yogācārabhūmi* preceding that of Asaṅga (Demiéville 1954).<sup>194</sup> As for its longevity, the literary, epigraphical, and iconographic sources of Xiujiang bear more than eloquent witness to this, though one must take into account the fact that the particular incidence of the cult of Maitreya in a religious environment like that of Central Asia, which was strongly influenced by messianic doctrine, could have extended its duration.

The range of documents corroborating the wide diffusion and acceptance of eschatological notions centred on Maitreya also includes monumental remains from datable archaeological contexts in Afghanistan. At Tapa Sardar, a colossal image of the Buddha Maitreya, surrounded by minor figures of bodhisattvas and lay devotees, was housed in Chapel 100, a shallow open room (a sort of gigantic niche just below the Upper Terrace) in axial correspondence with the entrance to the Upper Terrace and the Main Stupa’s stairway (Figs. 37, 38). This focal axis (north-west direction) is oriented towards the Dašt-e Manara plain and the ancient town of

<sup>191</sup> The same impression is obtained from the reliefs of Kapiśa where, despite the hieratic formalism, the bystander figures always have a marked connotation of “actuality” due to the differentiation of sex, category and age, and to the “Iranian” characterisation of their costumes. This seems to represent a conscious desire to distinguish them from what appear, in the “Gandharan” tradition, to be a kind of iconographic convention for the “Indian” personage. This positioning in the present, or rather in the sphere of a perceptible reality, is often reinforced in the Kapiśa reliefs by distinct attenuation, if not the actual absence, of the proportional hierarchy between the figures of the devotees and those of the divinities (as, for example, among the numerous related examples, in part still unpublished, Rosenfield 1967: figs. 104, 105).

<sup>192</sup> Chinese and Japanese literature has handed down the existence of an opposition between two currents of thought, one connected with the cult of Amitābha and the other with the cult of Maitreya, that have produced ample debate about the nature of the paradise of one and the heaven of the other. The Amidist schools claim the superiority of the Pure Land of Amitābha, a true transcendent paradise, over the Tuṣita heaven, which instead belongs to the sphere of the *kāmadhātu*. For this current, one of the strongest points in the dialectic opposition of the two theological orientations is the fact that Sukhāvātī is a paradise without women, in the sense that whoever achieves rebirth does it as a man, while in the Tuṣita heaven men and women remain differentiated, being still subjected to a reciprocal attraction that prevents spiritual perfection. For their part, the followers of Maitreya (among them Xuanzang) claim that the positioning in the sphere of *kāmadhātu* makes it easier for the laity to enter the Tuṣita heaven, which can be achieved by a rebirth immediately after the earthly life. In contrast, the immediate rebirth in the paradise of Sukhāvātī is understood by Xuanzang to be a distortion in the sense of the Amidist *sūtras*, which should be considered intentional and not literal. The promise of this rebirth to common human beings would have the scope of encouraging the cultivation of determined *dharma* in relation to determined causes. It therefore will not be realised immediately but rather in an imprecise future (cf. Demiéville 1954: 389-395).

<sup>193</sup> Cf. the dating suggested by Taddei (1987: 359) for the *devī* in the Fujii-Yurinkan Museums of Chinese Art in Kyoto; see also fn. 151 above.

<sup>194</sup> Regarding the dating of Saṃgharakṣa, reserved acceptance should be given to the tradition that says he was, together with other great personages such as Aśvaghōṣa, the spiritual master of Kaniṣka. In any case, Saṃgharakṣa is already considered an historical personage by Daoan, i.e. at the end of the fourth century.

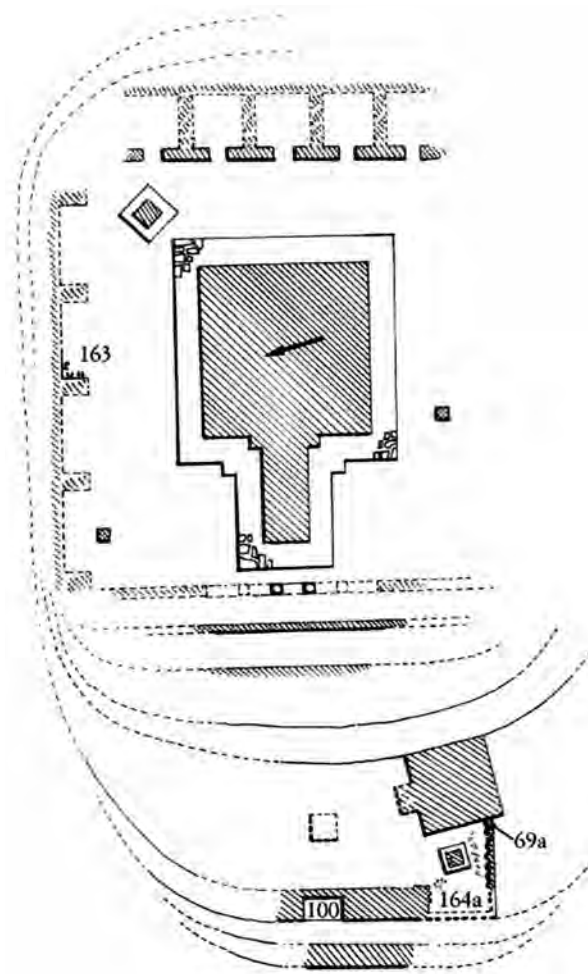


Fig. 37 – Tapa Sardar: Ground plan of the Upper Terrace and Chapel 100 (after Verardi and Paparatti 2005: fig. 22)

Ghazni, which means that the colossal image of Maitreya – well visible from a great distance – was a sort of welcoming protector of the site. Based on archaeological data and iconographic consideration, this impressive installation (which belongs to a second phase of the chapel) was assigned by M. Taddei to a late phase of the Early Period II of the site (fifth-sixth century CE; Taddei 1999a: 392-394), and to the sixth century CE or even later by Verardi and Paparatti (2005: 425).

Tapa Sardar also offers an unparalleled glimpse into the connection of the cult of Maitreya with royal ideologies – probably widespread among the “Buddhist kingdoms” of the early medieval period – which emphasise the role of the pious king in the devolutionary cycle preceding the advent of Maitreya. The lay devotees in “Kushan” dress who surround Maitreya in Chapel 100 are not generic characters. We can assume that the gilded reliquary (TS 2090), fragments of which were found in the debris, was held by the main lay figure as a clear hint to an actual act of donation. Also the presence of a child in the group (Verardi and Paparatti 2005: 425) suggests the typified portrait of a family of donors, either Nēzak/Alxon, or, according to Verardi and Paparatti, of the *rtbyl* aristocracy of Zābul (Verardi 2005: 591-592; see also Verardi and Paparatti 2004: 99). In a later phase (seventh-eighth century CE) Maitreya reappears twice (at least, as a Buddha) in the chapels surrounding the Main Stūpa on the Upper Terrace. Although the partial preservation of the chapels and their decorative apparatus does not allow a precise reconstruction of the overall iconographic programme, what remains suggests a coherent progression. The unfolding theme seems to be that of the endless *dharma* which, after the *Pārinirvāṇa* of Śākyamuni, will be renewed on earth by Maitreya and defended in the meantime by a “regent” king (Filigenzi 2008a,b).



**Fig. 38** – Tapa Sardar, Chapel 100: Colossal Maitreya with minor bodhisattvas and lay devotees  
(courtesy IsIAO, neg. Dep. CS 12488/14)

No doubt, the entanglement with a formalised rhetoric of power must have constituted a driving force behind the cult of Maitreya, as attested by different sources (Filigenzi 2008b: 19-22 esp.), but no less significant is the pervasiveness of the intrinsic contents of the doctrine. Judging from the iconographic evidence, the religious culture of Swat, for its part, appears to have been extremely sensitive to theological and soteriological speculations connected with the figure of Maitreya, which in the sphere of rock sculpture assumes, in some cases, rather peculiar characteristics that are only legible in the light of those doctrinaire orientations. The most evident reflection of these orientations on the iconographic repertory of rock art are found in certain representations of Maitreya with four arms that were identified by Tucci as portrayals of the god Śiva (Tucci 1958: 307). This identification is based on the misinterpretation of two attributes: the ascetic's staff and the manuscript, which Tucci describes respectively as a *triśūla* and a *damaru*. This erroneous identification can be corrected today on the basis of a nearly complete census of the sculptures which, besides offering the possibility of cross-comparisons between the various portrayals of Maitreya with two and four arms, can avail itself of comparisons with better-conserved examples that have come to light in recent years.

There are now five known specimens of this particular iconography of Maitreya: stela S61 (II: Fig. 61), published by Tucci (1958: fig. 26); the stela published by D. Klimburg-Salter (1982: 99, pl. 18; here, Fig. 39); relief C91 (II: Figs. 91a,b; GS 27) in the valley of Ugad, in the locality of Banjot; relief C65 (II: Figs. 64a,b; GS 28) in the valley of Saidu, in the locality of Supal Bandai; and finally stela S126 (II: Fig. 129), of unknown origin, now in the Swat Museum in Saidu Sharif. This case record provides a secure basis for an analytical





Fig. 39 – Four-armed Maitreya (after Klimburg-Salter 1982: 99, pl. 18)

approach, especially considering that these works belong to one and the same geographical, cultural, and chronological sphere. The state of conservation, although precarious in some cases, is nonetheless sufficient to clearly determine the exact superimposition of all the figures that, with marginal variations, repeat the same subject: a standing figure with four arms, the two upper ones bent upwards, with an ascetic's staff in the right hand and a manuscript in the left hand; and the two lower arms pointing downwards and extending slightly away from the sides, and (not regularly) with an *akṣamālā* in the right hand and a *kamaṇḍalu* (often) in the left.

As is shown by the best-conserved examples, the monastic robe is accompanied by a high tiara and jewellery that includes large earrings, a short beaded necklace, and bracelets. Three of the five sculptures are on stelae and two on a rock wall. In every case, with the exception of stela S126, which lacks the lower part, the figure rests on a simple lotus corolla with a single row of petals. The style of the tiara is identical in four of these five examples: a tripartite *mukuṭa* (or *jaṭāmukuṭa*?), with crests of equal height, the central one having a rounded upper profile. In one of the better-conserved examples (Fig. 39) the central crest is fan-shaped and recalls the Gandharan tradition of the skull-cap turban, but also a particular type of chignon of the bodhisattva (cf. the examples in Taddei 1969: fig. 20 and Kurita 1988-1990: I, fig. 411, on the right). Only in the case of relief C91 the shape of the tiara might be slightly different, but the precarious state of conservation does not offer any certainty regarding this. However, the ribbons descending on the sides are rather well-conserved, although their presence is uncertain in the other cases.

Relief C91 stands out for its powerful visual impact, which is produced by the particular conformation of the rock wall, a sort of elongated rectangle with an extraordinarily smooth and regular surface, separated by a net fissure from a more irregular and slightly receding base. The figure seems to be characterised by greater immobility compared to the similar specimens, which show moderate movement in the body, with the weight gracefully shifted to the right leg. Nevertheless, the slightly oblique placement of the rock and the elevation from the ground are perhaps responsible for what could be either a mere optical impression or the effective result of an execution that must have been conducted in difficult conditions, within the narrow space of a scaffolding.

We owe the correct reading of the attributes of this iconographic type to D. Klimburg-Salter, who published and described a stela from a private collection, indeed one of the better-preserved in the small series (Klimburg-Salter 1982: 99, pl. 18).<sup>195</sup> D. Klimburg-Salter identified the subject as an image of Brahmā but, although mentioning as a comparison the supposed image of Śiva published by Tucci (relief C65), she did not proceed to further collations. The interpretation proposed by Klimburg-Salter, though disproved by new evidence, is nonetheless close to the truth. Returning to an hypothesis already advanced by Pal (1975: 54), Klimburg-Salter asserts that, if the interpretation of the figure is exact, the presence of Brahmā in a Buddhist context should not be considered a mere intrusion but rather the expression of a syncretic tendency of Buddhism, evidence of which was already yielded by archaeological investigations at Tapa Sardar, in Afghanistan.<sup>196</sup>

The analytical study of the entire corpus of the rock sculptures of Swat, which demonstrates the unequivocal correspondence between the various four-armed figures – all referring to a single iconographic type – also evinces that the interpretative hypotheses of Klimburg-Salter and Tucci do not match the ideological frame of reference, which is coherently Buddhist. This four-armed figure does not appear in marginal contexts or in a subordinate position, but as the subject of isolated stelae or in direct relationship with images of Padmapāṇi, as in the case of relief C65,<sup>197</sup> or even, as is evident from relief C91, in a position of absolute dominance over the surrounding space. Such prominence conferred on an exogenous divinity – moreover emphasised by its being the only four-armed one in a context of divine figures connoted by “normal” anthropomorphism – would have appeared ambiguous and thereby generate confusion about an antagonist religious system.

The affinity between the iconography of Śiva and that of Maitreya in Gandhāra has often been emphasised (see Sherrier 1993: 624). Nevertheless Śiva is always recognisable on the basis of one or more distinctive signs: the three faces, the third eye, the erect penis, the *trīśūla*, and the presence of his consort and/or his animal vehicle (for a brief examination of the known specimens and the relative bibliography see Sherrier 1993). This customary iconographic affinity between Śiva and Maitreya would inevitably have induced the artists of Swat to maintain one or more of these distinctive signs if they had intended to represent Śiva or, as is actually the case, to confer on Maitreya characteristics that were unequivocally recognisable. Among these, in addition to the ascetic’s staff, the monastic robe must be included, which often occurs in the iconography of the four-armed divinity of Swat. This garment, which expresses the compliance with a rule and the explicit affiliation

<sup>195</sup> I have to point out the doubts expressed by A. Gail about the authenticity of this stela during the discussion following the first presentation of this topic at the South Asian Archaeology Conference in 1997 (Filigenzi 2000: 1068, fn. 4). The observation, which comes from a very skilled scholar, calls for attentive, close study of the piece, which I know only from the published photograph. In any case, the existence of this iconographic type is confirmed beyond any doubt, even if the hypothesis of A. Gail is proven to be correct, since we possess corroborations that are not suspect. Nevertheless, the rarity of this subject, which is limited to very few examples, makes a counterfeit improbable, especially on account of the fact that at that time only the less well-conserved had been published. The possible counterfeiter would not only have to possess the courage for such an initiative but also a great capacity for iconographic analysis.

<sup>196</sup> The author refers to the colossal clay sculpture of a female deity with the same iconographic features as the Hindu goddess Durgā, which was found in the Buddhist settlement of Tapa Sardar. See Chap. 7, esp. fn. 220.

<sup>197</sup> The relief C65, executed on a large block of gneiss, shows Maitreya with four arms between two figures of Padmapāṇi, the one on the right in a pensive pose and that on the left standing. The presence of this figure with four arms between the two Padmapāṇi eliminates any possible doubt of his belonging to an alternative cultural context that might exist regarding the isolated figures.

to the monastic order, appears not to be very consistent with the anti-institutional and “transgressive” nature of Śiva. Rather, the unequivocal authority of this figure is much more plausibly explicable when traced back to the sphere of legitimate and innate affiliation with the general context. It does not represent Śiva, nor Brahmā, but Maitreya *as* Brahmā: the preserver, the inspirer, the revealer.

Also the affinities between Maitreya and Brahmā have been amply discussed (cf. Taddei 1969: 374 ff.), although from a strictly iconographic point of view rather than with regard to the semantic aspect. The relationship that exists between the Buddha and Maitreya is analogous to that between the *brahman* and Brahmā: in both it is a relationship between a symbol of creation and one of continuity. The conceptual correspondence between Brahmā and Maitreya finds confirmation in the symbolism of the “priestly” garment, which bears witness to the function of Brahmā, the priest who, among the officiants, has the task of guarding, directing and successfully completing the rite (cf. Silburn 1955: 90; Bailey 1983: 6-7). This is equivalent, on a transcendent level, to the function of “guardian of the *dharma*” in the samsaric cycle, i.e. of creation according to the Brahmanic values for Brahmā, of the Law according to Buddhistic values for Maitreya. In Brahmanic literature the connection between Brahmā and the *dharma* is often emphasised. Created, according to Upanishadic speculation, in the beginning of the world by the Lord who transmits to him the Veda (M. Falk 1986: 225), Brahmā acts according to the *dharma* since his own essence is the *dharma*, as is illustrated by the epithets of *dharmamaya* (he who consists of the *dharma*) or *dharmapuñja* (personification of the *dharma*) (Bailey 1983: 139 ff.).

The author, revealer or inspirer of the propagation of sacred texts (*ibid.*: *passim*), Brahmā appears in Puranic mythology as the one responsible for communicating the *dharma* to human beings, thus impersonating on a transcendent level the role the Brahman holds in society, that is, the incarnation of the *dharma*, of his precepts and their actuation, whereas the *kṣatriya* incarnates activity in the world (cf. Lingat 1973: 216). In this role Brahmā is also mentioned in Buddhist literature, where he incites the Buddha to communicate doctrine, or other personages to embrace the monastic life. In the Buddhist transposition, the role of Brahmā stops at the threshold of doctrine, in which sphere he must give way to someone else. Gandharan iconography already explicitly demonstrates a passage of functions, from Brahmā to Maitreya, from Indra to Avalokiteśvara, with the reconstitution of complementary roles in relation to the *dharma* of a superior moral order.<sup>198</sup> Like Brahmā in the Brahmanic sphere, Maitreya is the incarnation of the *prajñā* and of the preservation of the *dharma* through teaching, inspiration and conduct. His role is complemented by Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi who, embodying the *karuṇā*, predisposes the mind to receive the *dharma* and helps this latter to inform – and transform – individual destinies.

It is a fact that from Kashmir to Central Asia – although with various nuances – Maitreya appears to be venerated as the guardian of the doctrine, the lord of a nearby heaven, the depository of the baptismal gift of prophecy. Therefore, the iconographic features of Maitreya in the rock sculpture of Swat cannot be considered a random invention, but rather a further witness to the vitality of regional artistic centres, where ideas largely shared by the Buddhist community were translated in original visual forms.<sup>199</sup> The iconographic transformation

<sup>198</sup> This is the case with the above-mentioned icons depicting a divine pentad, composed of a seated Buddha flanked by two standing bodhisattva (Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara) and by Indra and Brahmā, portrayed in the background in respectful attitudes. The iconographic affinity between the two Brahmanic divinities and the two bodhisattvas is so explicit that it must be considered intentional and significant; otherwise, it would be absolutely misleading. Indra and Brahmā yield to the two bodhisattvas a “function” in the world, in the interior world of the microcosm and in exterior world of the macrocosm, a function that obviously has its origins in the Upanishadic speculation. Images of pentads from Gandhāra have been amply published. The most famous of the series is undoubtedly that in the de Marteau collection, known as the “Buddha of year 5” (published for the first time by Harle 1974: fig. 71). For a quick overview of analogous examples I refer the reader, besides the already-mentioned work by Harle (fig. 74), to: Ingholt 1957: figs. 253, 254; Miyaji 1985b: pls. I, 1, II, 2 no. 3, III, 1 no. 4, X, 2 no. 25; Kurita 1988-1990: I, figs. 403, 404, 405, 411, 413; Filigenzi 2012a: figs. 1-7, 21-24, 27, 30-31.

<sup>199</sup> Beyond Swat, but in areas that are culturally similar, other images have been found of Maitreya with four arms. The most important, for position and size (almost eight meters in height), is depicted in relief on a large solitary block of rock near Mulbeck between Srinagar and Leh. Despite a certain simplification of the details, the image is very close to the Kashmiri style of the eighth to ninth centuries (cf. the image in bronze of Mañjuśrī with four arms in Pal 1975: 156, no. 56, which the author perhaps dates too late, to

undergone by Maitreya's distinctive attribute, the flask, can also be read as the result of a strong development of the cult of the bodhisattva in a soteriological sense. The various forms of the *kamaṇḍalu* appear, when observed from this perspective, not as casual variants, but as explicit formulations of the various symbolic values connected with it. If the vase of the ascetic/errant monk bodhisattva expresses with immediacy a condition, the elongated flask of the bodhisattva portrayed in his inherent royal nature seems rather to recall a function. The form is often deliberately different from the pyriform *kamaṇḍalu* of Gandharan tradition, perhaps precisely to render more effectively the idea of such a function. In all evidence, this function was firmly associated, in the religious thought of the time, with that of the “baptism” and was symbolically expressed through the lustral rite or unction. This can be inferred above all from the form of a small pitcher as it appears in several bronzes (but also in the above-mentioned image of Maitreya at Chilas I; here, Fig. 34),<sup>200</sup> although it appears equally immediate in the globular vase held on the thigh or in the palm of the hand.

It could be said that the cult of Maitreya brought with it the requirement to iconographically renew the image, especially by means of a container that emphasises more explicitly the concepts. The new iconographic tradition, which we see so amply affirmed in the late antique phase, nevertheless finds at least one precedent in Gandharan art that, significantly, seems to represent a rather late issue. The sculpture (Musée Guimet, photographic archive: 1222/53; Fig. 40) shows the bodhisattva seated in *padmāsana* on a moulded podium, in *namaskāramudrā*, with a globular vase in the left hand resting on the thigh. The relatively late dating of the sculpture is suggested by several typical stylistic indicators such as the drapery with thin pairs of lines engraved in parallel; the large, wide, flattened face; the slightly receding features; and the drawing of the hair in pronounced vertical rows of waving curls. Another prominent iconographic element in this example is the figure of the devotee, certainly the donor, in Scythian costume portrayed on the right kneeling and praying in a three-quarter view. He is depicted not within the field of the front face of the podium, as usually occurs in Gandharan sculptures, but rather *in front of* the podium, as is made clear by his exceeding size. This almost suggests a desire to represent, beyond the Gandharan stereotype, the individual, concrete act of donating and personal devotion.

The relationship of the devotees with Maitreya is exemplarily illustrated in iconography as personal, intimate and direct, because it is with Maitreya that one can be reborn. It is Maitreya who can shorten the length of time between a vow and its realisation. As J.C. Huntington aptly remarks (1984: 162, fn. 16), the *kamaṇḍalu* therefore cannot be merely the symbol of the Brahmanic nature of Maitreya, but, as suggested by its visual representations, also – and moreover – the receptacle of the teaching and perhaps the esoteric vase “of generation (*utpatti*) in the visualisation of paradisaal *vyūhas* or, possibly, in certain types of meditations on various deities. In any case, it probably signifies some sort of initiation (*abhiṣeka*) [...]. Within the context of Maitreya cult it may have symbolised the promise to the faithful that attained his paradise of their own *cakravartin*-ship

the ninth century). Unlike in the typical iconography of Swat, here Maitreya is holding in the two upper hands the *akṣamālā* (in the right hand) and the *nāgakeśara* (in the left hand); he holds the *kamaṇḍalu* in the lower left hand and with the lower right hand performs the *varadamudrā* (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977-1980: I, 1, fig. 4; Fontein 1979: fig. 1). A second figure of Maitreya with four arms is depicted on a stela in Dras. Here the bodhisattva, standing on a lotus corolla with two opposite rows of petals and flanked by two small figures of devotees, holds the *kamaṇḍalu* in the palm of the hand at his side, and the right lower hand is not in *varadamudrā* but in *namaskāramudrā* (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977-1980: II, fig. 3, on the left). It is not possible to add to these examples the stela found at Chang-pa (Ladakh) (*ibid.*: fig. 12), as suggested in the original article (Filigenzi 1999: fn. 37, fig. 12). I am thankful to Ch. Luczanits for pointing out the mistake to me, which was based on a photograph that was only partially legible, and for kindly sending me much better images, which he took himself, that clearly show that the divinity represented is actually Hayagriva. It is interesting to note that another monumental relief depicting Maitreya is found beyond the Rasila Pass, about 35 kilometres in a straight line from the large relief of Mulbeck, near the village of Karchekar in the valley of Suru. This one, however, is in the more usual iconographic form, with two arms, with an *akṣamālā* in the right hand in *namaskāramudrā* and a *kamaṇḍalu* in the left hand held below (Fontein 1979: 7; figs. 2-4; Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977-1980: II, fig. 7). The monumental size of this relief can perhaps be linked to the fame of the statue of Darel, which the local worshipers venerated as the original cause of the expansion to the East of Buddhism. It is therefore not out of place to suppose the existence of a tradition that, while identifying Maitreya with the *dharma*, assumed the image to be not only a *sema* but also a symbol gifted with active power.

<sup>200</sup> An analogous reference, although different and chronologically distant, is the vase with a mouth that appears on the Gandharan reliefs and is connected with lustral rites (cf. Zwalf 1996: nos. 145, 158, 162; 137, 173; Faccenna 2001: 264).



**Fig. 40** – Gandharan Maitreya and devotee  
(Musée Guimet, photographic archive, 1222/53;  
drawing by B. Velletri)



**Fig. 41** – Standing Maitreya  
(after Pal 1975: no. 38)

with its inherent promise of either Universal Monarch-hood or Buddha-hood”. It is certainly these values that inspire certain documents from Xinjiang, such as the dedicatory inscription that invokes of Maitreya the excellent benediction to acquire the condition of Buddha (Baruch 1946: 74), or the hymn to Maitreya found by H. Francke near Khotan that hopes for the attainment of the bodhi “having drunk the ambrosia of his Doctrine” (*ibid.*: 92).

In harmony with these testimonies of faith are the numerous bronzes that, in the northern areas of the Indian subcontinent and in Kashmir, confirm by their chronological horizon the existence and the importance of the cult of Maitreya, portrayed sometimes in ascetic robes and sometimes in royal garments.<sup>201</sup> Among them is

<sup>201</sup> There are numerous examples published by Pal (1975) and von Schroeder (1981).

one that seems to give voice to the reasons for this faith (Pal 1975: no. 38; here, Fig. 41): Maitreya is shown standing on a completely open lotus corolla with a simple fan-shaped chignon and an antelope skin on the left shoulder. The right hand is at the shoulder with the palm facing inward.<sup>202</sup> In the left hand he is holding the *kamaṇḍalu*, not hanging as in the usual grasp, with the neck held between the fingers, but in a gesture which seems to give effect to a promise, with the palm slightly outstretched as if in the act of offering the contents.

<sup>202</sup> The gesture of placing the right hand on the shoulder with the palm facing inward seems to generally indicate an expression of homage (Bhattacharyya 1958: 437) or, according to a more precise reading of the contexts where it appears, “of subordination and deference” (Taddei 1969: 375 ff.; see also J.C. Huntington 1972: 91). In the case of Maitreya, however, it must have a significance of deference and therefore of loyalty with respect to the Buddha and particularly his teachings, which Maitreya is committed to defending and re-proposing to mankind in due course. The hypothesis of Pal, who reads in it the idea of beckoning (Pal 1975: no. 38, p. 122; Id. 1979: 255-256, where the gesture is defined as a variant of the *abhayamudrā*), is also plausible in the specific reference to Maitreya who, when calling to himself, calls to the Doctrine. Nevertheless, this hypothesis fails to take into account the clear significance of deference that this *mudrā* assumes in the art of Gandhāra, where it is often performed by young Brahmanic ascetics and *devas* in the presence of the Buddha or at least of personages of a superior level (cf. the examples gathered by Taddei 1969). However, Pal is right in his objection to the definition of *namaskāramudrā* (which instead is an alternative definition of the *añjali* or *ḥṛtāñjalimudrā*) given to this gesture by Bhattacharyya (1958) and assumed by J.C. Huntington (1972). However, it must be remembered that Huntington accepted it with reservations, pointing out the omission, on the part of Bhattacharyya, of the sources and reasons on which the definition rests. For the sake of convenience but also with the same reservations, this definition has occasionally been used in this work.

## CHAPTER 6: THE WHISPERING OF VAJRAYĀNA

### 6.1 – The concealed presence of Vajrayāna

As we have seen, an approximate chronological correspondence is in fact the most evident link we can detect, based on a surface view, between the rock sculptures and Vajrayāna. Vague as it may be, it suffices for us to be able to associate the history of this artistic phenomenon with one of the most celebrated personalities of the period: the great *siddha* Padmasambhava who, according to tradition, was born in Uḍḍiyāna.

Of this great master, summoned to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen, we have legendary biographies whose underlying truths are difficult to discern.<sup>203</sup> We may, however, presume that the ideological sphere in which Padmasambhava moved — an inextricable melding of magic and mysticism — represented what was at his time the settled orientation of the religious culture of Swat. The fame of this culture had already reached well beyond the region's borders by the mid-eighth century, to the extent indeed that it could constitute a driving force for the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Viewed in the broader perspective, Padmasambhava thus appears as the epigone of an obscure, anonymous chain of masters in a consolidated tradition that preceded him and found in him its first historical exponent.<sup>204</sup>

Nevertheless, as we have seen, this cultural blossoming has never been reflected in archaeological evidence in the territory of Swat. For this period, archaeology has yielded nothing but monuments apparently in ruins or kept in precarious existence with minimal restoration works,<sup>205</sup> nor was any such sign expected to have come down to us from the rock sculptures. However, as experience has often taught us, if it is risky to go over the material data to find confirmation of an idea, it is also all too easy to miss something in a context where we do not expect to find it. We saw how traces of the Vajrayanic philosophy, slight as they might be, can be detected even in the apparently “neutral” and popular icons of Padmapāṇi, or in the presence, in the iconographic repertory of the rock sculptures, of some deities peculiarly linked to Vajrayāna, such as the pair Avalokiteśvara/Gaṇeśa, Vajrapāṇi and, perhaps, Mañjuśrī. Features emerge that are distinctly associated with a view of the religious path and even with rituals typical of the Tantric doctrines. Moreover, among faint presences at least one clear imprint survives of the new ideological horizon.

### 6.2 – A manifested Vajrayanic theme

Unique among the rock sculpture, there is an interesting relief which can illustrate this Vajrayanic “presence” in the rock sculpture in a particularly direct and eloquent manner (S140; II: Fig. 140; GS 38).

Executed on a stela of the typical irregular egg shape, the relief shows a central figure enthroned accompanied by two standing ancillary figures of appreciably smaller dimensions. The central figure is seated in *vajraparyāṅkāśana* on a lion throne of a quite complex type (see Chap. 3.5). Following an equally typical for-

<sup>203</sup> Aside from the Abhayadatta's *Caturśīti-siddha-pravṛtti* (History of the Eighty-Four Siddhas, the most important extant Indian text on the *siddhas*), translated from the Tibetan by J.B. Robinson (1979), see the Tibetan biography of Padmasambhava in W.Y. Evans-Wentz (1954), and Yeshe Tsogyal (1984).

<sup>204</sup> Padmasambhava is believed to be the (spiritual?) son of Indrabhūti, the famous king of Uḍḍiyāna, whose name is closely linked with the diffusion of Vajrayāna, being the author of one of the most famous Tantric texts, the *Guhyasamājatantra* (Tucci 1977: 68-69; see also Chap. 2). Even in the legend of his life, Padmasambhava is in fact related to an earlier tradition.

<sup>205</sup> But see what is said in Chap. 2 about the emblematic case of Butkara I and Shnaisha and, in general, about the possible re-interpretation of the archaeological data.

mula, the throne rests on a broad lotus corolla and is adorned with side tassels and a rich drape inspired, probably, by models of the local textile craft (the famous *kambalas*), whose production was already well-known and widely appreciated in the Maurya period.<sup>206</sup> The figure is dressed as one of the many bodhisattvas appearing in rock sculpture: a crown tied at the sides of the head with ribbons hanging down, a shawl draped over the arms, *paridhāna* and jewels. The right hand appears to be in *abhayamudrā*, while the left holds a rather flattish object. Above the head, surrounded by a nimbus with flaming borders, is a sort of canopy adorned with tassels, jewels and circular elements. The two figures at the sides, a man and a woman, bear objects that are hard to identify and – significantly – are also characterised by a nimbus and are borne on lotus flowers.

The stela was published some years ago by P. Callieri (1986), who proposed identification of the subject depicted here as the Buddha Amitāyus. This interpretation was based essentially on the bowl-like object the central figure holds in the left hand, in which Callieri sees the miraculous ointment vase symbolising the healing power of Amitāyus. This is a probable hypothesis since it corresponds broadly with the iconographic conventions associated with this figure, which is moreover often depicted in the guise of a bodhisattva. When the study appeared, systematic survey had yet to be conducted on the rock sculpture of Swat. Nevertheless, Callieri found close comparisons with this category and, indeed, with productions having some affinity in terms of geographical, chronological and cultural contiguity, namely votive bronzes and terracottas produced in Swat, Kashmir and Tibet.<sup>207</sup>

Yet, the interpretation proposed by Callieri also contains certain incongruous elements which, with the fuller knowledge of the general context of rock sculpture we now possess, we can relate to a more markedly Tantric environment. In particular, the form of the attribute and the *mudrā* itself do not match with the iconography of Amitāyus. In fact, Amitāyus is usually shown in *dhyānimudrā*, with a vase, rather than a bowl, on the palm of his hands. Although subject to variation, the form of Amitāyus' vase appears to be inspired by ritual vessels or at any rate more elaborate and refined than a simple bowl, and evidently deemed more suited to the content. It may, moreover, be that this iconographic choice served precisely to differentiate the medicinal vase from the *pātra*, of which we also have at least one illustration offered by rock sculpture, confirming a decidedly more prosaic form for this attribute (S192; II: Fig. 56; GS 3). However, closer observation of the object our personage bears in his hand suggests that it is even too flat for the typical bowl form, coming much closer to representing a *kapāla*. The left hand, unfortunately much abraded, also appears to depart somewhat from the customary depiction of the *abhayamudrā*. Indeed, it appears to fit better with the position the *abhayamudrā* takes on when accompanied by the presence of an attribute, which is usually — whether in sculpture or in painting of Tantric inspiration — a small *vajra*.<sup>208</sup>

While remaining confined to the level of hypotheses, we cannot rule out the possibility that this is also the case with our sculpture, as suggested by the profile conserved. For example, the vertical element to the right of the palm is of disproportionate length for the thumb, while the short horizontal protuberance we can just make out on the left might actually belong to a *vajra*. Apart from these particular details, the general tone of the iconographic theme is, I believe, well suited to depiction of a *siddha*, the central figure of Vajrayāna and pre-eminent model of perfect accomplishment. Although *siddhas* essentially represent a non-monastic ideal, militantly anti-conventional, it is nonetheless not infrequent for them to pursue accomplishment within the monastic order or in association with it.<sup>209</sup>

This is the prevalent tendency, for example, in the iconographic models of the *Mahāsiddha* in Tibet, very often shown in monastic garments and grave, imposing postures, perfectly and eloquently offsetting other

<sup>206</sup> For the importance of this specialised craft production to the country's economy see Chap. 2.9. We may assume that the drapery covering the thrones in both bronze and rock-cut sculpture (see Chap. 3.5), though usually far less elaborate than this specific specimen, were derived from real artefacts and their usage as prestige symbols.

<sup>207</sup> As regards the bronzes and terracotta plaques see *infra*; for the *ts'a ts'a* see Tucci 1932.

<sup>208</sup> A good example is provided by the Vajrasattva published by Pal (1975: 162, no. 59a,b).

<sup>209</sup> See for instance Tucci (1995 [repr.]: 43-47) and Eliade *et al.* (1987: 124) *s.v.* Mahāsiddhas.



iconographic types where, in sharp contrast, the *siddha* figure appears as a yogin or even as one seized by holy possession.<sup>210</sup>

However, classical Vajrayāna, usually (and perhaps in part wrongly) considered a development of the Mahāyāna, conceives of the *siddha* as a bodhisattva, whose principal aim lies in commitment to the benefit of others. Indeed, Tibetan tradition accounts for the variety of extraction, methods and practices characterising the biographies of the *siddhas* precisely with fulfilment of the bodhisattva's vow to help living creatures of every level and condition, identifying with them and adopting the same lifestyles (see Eliade *et al.* 1987: 124, *s.v.* Mahāsiddhas).

Returning now to our stela, I believe we may attempt an initial interpretation thus: if this is the image of a *siddha*, then it offers a spiritual model perfectly delineated but probably still in a process of formation at the iconographic level. Nevertheless, comparison with serial productions bearing some affinity reveals a number of points in common that can hardly be put down to mere chance. Once again, the area favoured for examination is that of the bronzes and votive plaques made of clay or terracotta. Moreover, it is above all the latter that offer the possibility to cross over to the world of Tibetan iconography, distant in time and space but conceptually close, where the figure of the *siddha* in particular was to find collocation in a conventional code serving to express accomplished "canonisation". While the ideal bodhisattva-figure inspiration prevails in the Swat stela, the tradition that would become established in Tibet was of more distinctly monastic inspiration.

Clearly, the Tibetan option had strong ideological content to be accounted for with — eventually successful — efforts to curb the secularisation of Buddhism and bring the potentially dangerous currents, as indeed were the Tantric ones, back under the control of dogmatic rules.<sup>211</sup> However, the striking affinities to be seen in general with Indian tradition and in particular with the northern regions confirm the persistence of models elaborated, or in course of elaboration, in these areas between the seventh and eighth century CE, probably finding their way into Tibet with these very bronzes and votive terracottas. Our knowledge of these objects is undoubtedly limited to a very small sample of the total volume of production and circulation, which we can only suppose to have been much more extensive than has so far been documented. In particular, whatever its origins, the production of Swat appears readily recognisable on the basis of close affinities with the rock sculpture, physically immovable and inseparably linked with the area that produced it, enjoying a self-contained dimension and thus constituting reliable geographical and cultural reference.

The two ancillary figures accompanying the central figure on the stela may appear something of an anomaly in the sphere of rock sculpture but they definitely represent recurrent features among the votive bronzes and terracottas which, by virtue of geographical and chronological horizon, we may consider as belonging to the same cultural environment.<sup>212</sup> A particular meaning is clearly being expressed in this man/woman couple. The hieratic character of the subject and, above all, the repetitive iconographic module convey the impression that these are not simply donors but, even if they were, the role-associated features and attributes they display suggest identification as a symbolic couple.<sup>213</sup> Unfortunately, in this case, as in most others known to us, the attributes are not recognisable. In this particular case we nevertheless might hazard a hypothesis,

<sup>210</sup> Examples of both types can easily be found in the iconographic repertoires. A brief review is offered for instance by the old but still useful *Mythologie asiatique illustrée*, Paris 1928, pp. 131 ff., esp. 151-158; see also Tucci 1932: I, 102-106 and pls. XXXVIII, b-XL, b; Rhie and Thurman (1981: 154-155, 165 ff.); Pal (1984: pl. 40).

<sup>211</sup> On this topic see for instance Tucci (1995 [repr.]: 43-44); Snellgrove and Richardson (1968: 129-131).

<sup>212</sup> This is a very common and widespread motif in Buddhist iconography, especially in Tantric contexts. Within the limits of our theme, see the bronze sculptures of our Figs. 27a,b and 28 as well as Pal (1975: 198, no. 75) and the terracotta specimens in Paul 1981.

<sup>213</sup> This process of identification appears perhaps more evident in connection with kingship and patronage. Evidence abounds throughout the ages of political propaganda made through religious iconographic themes, as in the well-known history of the Maurya and Gupta period, but to cite just one particular case, see the personification as Indra displayed by Harṣa Vardhana, documented by Xuanzang in his description of the royal festival at Kanauj (Beal 1958 [1884]: II, 242) and other similar traditions recalled by M.D. Willis (1997: II, esp. 620-621).



Fig. 42 – A *siddha* with *vajra/ghanṭā* symbols (courtesy MNAOR, Inv. no. 5637)

namely that the couple correspond to that complementary opposition, well attested in Tibetan iconography and liturgy, of *vajra* and *ghanṭā*. Actually, this hypothesis might also be extended to other examples where the conserved form of the attributes, if not identifiable, at least appears compatible with these two objects.

Occurrence of the *vajra/ghanṭā* pairing in Swat and within the chronological horizon we are dealing with is proved by at least one example – this time well conserved – that leaves absolutely no doubt about identification of the attributes. This motif appears, for instance, in the aureole reproduced in Fig. 28. This type of more or less complex “Buddhist aureoles” that were slotted onto the back of central cult images must also have been very frequent, as attested by the presence of tenons and sockets on the back of many bronzes that have survived in isolation.<sup>214</sup> In the particular case of our stela, the profile conserved and the hold the male figure has on the attribute are closely echoed in a bronze depicting a fierce aspect of Vajrapāṇi (Pal 1975: 164-165, no. 60). Even more poorly conserved is the female figure, but the attribute does not appear incompatible with a *ghanṭā* if we view her as holding it on the palm of the left hand, holding the handle in her right hand. The complementary *vajra/ghanṭā* union, expressed here in the physical presence of the couple, is conserved in Tibetan iconography stripped of any accessory form, where the lotuses do not support the humanised hypostases of the symbols but rather the symbols in all their essential nature (Fig. 42).<sup>215</sup>

In relation to the more general theme of the *siddha* figure, various other features for comparison with the Swat stela can be found in Tibetan iconography. The arrival of Padmasambhava in Tibet at the invitation of King Trisong Detsen marks a definite *terminus ante quem* for the history of Vajrayāna. It implies that at that time Vajrayāna had already acquired not only a mature doctrinal dimension but also, we assume, an iconographic lexicon of its own, where a special place must have been accorded to the *siddha* as the ideal model of “perfect accomplishment”.

<sup>214</sup> See Chap. 3.5.

<sup>215</sup> On the symbolism of *vajra* and *ghanṭā* see Dale Saunders (1960: 146-147, 184-191); in relation to the iconography of *gurus* and *siddhas* see Tucci (1932: I, 104-105).



Fig. 43 – Padmasambhava (after Tucci 1949: pl. 59)

If the hypothesis I propose here is correct, we may suppose that this model corresponded more or less to that of our stela. Actually, Tibetan iconography itself offers a version of the Padmasambhava figure that comes fairly close to it, to the extent that it might be the most direct intermediary between a prototype elaborated in his land of origin and an image re-modelled according to canons more in keeping with the land that received him. Of the “eight aspects of guru Padmasambhava”, the first (and presumably most archaic) describes him as seated on a lotus, having two arms and holding a *vajra* in his right hand and a skullcap in the left,<sup>216</sup> just as the central figure does in our stela. Moreover, among the various *siddha* figures, Padmasambhava is often distinguished by sumptuous cloaks, in which we may discern the reflection of some relationship with the bodhisattva figure (Fig. 43).<sup>217</sup> Despite the difference, the affinity remains evident with the subject of the Swat stela – as yet the only surviving example of the kind known to us, but probably not the only one produced. It does, however, seem worth noting that this subject never appears among the very many reliefs executed on walls or large boulders of rock, as if meant not for a place universally accessible but rather for some reserved, protected place.

It is quite possible that replicas more or less matching this subject circulated in the form of bronzes or terracottas, as indeed we are also encouraged to believe by the line associating it with Tibet. The extraordinarily important role played by terracotta figurines, seals and sealings (possibly not all ‘votive’, as they are usually described) in the transmission of iconographies is, I believe, generally acknowledged, or at least readily imaginable. Indeed, a good many of them were quite probably models, of no great cost, weight or bulk, easy to transport and reproduce. This, in fact, is amply demonstrated by the many Tibetan *ts’u ts’u* themselves, some of which would seem to have been cast from Indian moulds or repeated copies of them.<sup>218</sup> In particular, let us take a look at one of these, the first to have aroused my curiosity, and a specimen of unmistakably Tibetan crafting (Fig. 44).

According to Tucci the subject depicted here is Tsong Khapa with his two principal disciples, Gyaltshab Dharma Rinchen (rGyal ts’ab dar ma rin c’en) and Mawei Ņima Geleg Pal (sMra bai ni ma dge legs dpal) (Tucci 1932: I, 103-104, pl. XXXIX, a). If Tucci’s hypothesis is correct, this small clay plaque cannot be from before the fourteenth century, and yet certain features of the subject, as well as the general organisation of the scene, look like stubborn survivals of earlier motives, possibly no longer understood and reinterpreted in the light of current conventions.

It may seem somewhat far-fetched, but one cannot help seeing in this *ts’u ts’u* a reflection of a model very close to our stela. The figure on the stela is seated beneath a canopy adorned with large, wavy vittae and circular elements which Callieri (1986: 435) interpreted as rosettes, although the depression at the centre of the lateral elements seems too marked. If we observe now the *ts’u ts’u*, we shall see that its upper area is a concise depiction of the sky, although the volute form of the clouds and the arrangement of stars composing it suggest direct descent from the canopy in the Swati stela (which, after all, may well have been adorned with astral symbols). It is nearly as though the latter had been the model for it – not clearly grasped but in a sense understood correctly as symbol of the celestial residence of the immortal *siddha*.<sup>219</sup> The basket of flowers, too,

<sup>216</sup> For textual references to the iconography of Padmasambhava, the most authoritative source is the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* Pantheon (in Lokesh Chandra 1991: 43-54); for a succinct review of the same see Bunce (1994: I, 384-385) under the heading Padmasambhava; see also Tucci (1949: II, 540; III, pls. 141-142).

<sup>217</sup> For further specimens see for instance Baader *et al.* (1981: 286); Rhie and Thurman (1981: 166-182). Often Padmasambhava is represented wearing a particular hat, as a memory of his place of birth, decorated with a feather (that of an eagle, symbol of penetrating vision, according to Rhie and Thurman 1981: 167). I would recall the custom, still alive in Swat at least until a few decades ago, of wearing a lophophore’s feather as a sign of distinguished intellectual rank.

<sup>218</sup> Many illustrative examples are to be found in the fine collection of *ts’u ts’u* housed in the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale G. Tucci, Rome (most of them formerly belonging to the private collection of Giuseppe Tucci); leaving aside the specimens pointing to an Eastern origin (Xinjiang or China), I would draw attention to those which clearly descend from Indian models dating back even to the pre- or early Pāla period, such as Inv. nos. 5366, 5396, 5419, 5463, 5462, 5464, 5638, 5679, or from Medieval Kashmir, as Inv. no. 5368.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Eliade *et al.* (1987: 124), *s.v.* Mahāsiddhas; see also Tucci (1949: II, 617, fn. 295).



Fig. 44 – A Tibetan *ts'a ts'a* (courtesy MNAOR, Inv. no. 5347)

bears an odd resemblance to that hem of the *kambala* falling onto the throne of the *siddha* on the stela; even the marked underlining of the scene in the lower part of the *ts'a ts'a* recalls the curious fillet defining from below the figuration on the stela. Actually, this would not be the first case of a *lectio faciliior* ultimately bringing into greater evidence a concept already inherent in the original model, possibly at a distance of centuries.

Despite the geographical and chronological gap, comparison is inevitable, suggesting – as indeed do so many other examples of various subjects – that there must certainly be some bridge between the two worlds and two ages. As yet we simply lack knowledge of the intermediate stretches of the bridge, but the rock sculptures of Swat would, together with other related productions, seem to constitute one of the initial stages. From this we see emerging ever more clearly a complex ideological and iconographical heritage that evidently cannot stand as an isolated phenomenon but which merges into the broader context of a new religious culture in which the great innovatory ferment has already taken on definite characteristics. The journey of Padmasambhava begins from this tenacious outpost of Buddhism, bearing in his train the – already famous – baggage of the new doctrine, together with its codes of thought and visual expression.

## CHAPTER 7: THE “ALIEN” PRESENCES

### 7.1 – The undecipherable plurality of forms

Side by side with the Buddhist subjects, which represent the bulk of the rock sculpture of Swat, there are some “atypical” specimens that, although borrowing their models from a different religious context (and perhaps even belonging to it), share with the rest of the sculptures the same chronological horizon and artistic language. Their presence, marginal as it is in mere numerical terms, introduces into an otherwise homogeneous panorama some elements of dissonance which attract attention and pose a question of appurtenance: are they foreign bodies challenging the rival system, or are they to be viewed as immigrants adopted and “domesticated” by Buddhism? So far no evidence has come to light that can answer this question. We can only take account of the existence of these discordant subjects and assign them a special place, whatever their significance may have been, awaiting any new data that could shed light on this unexpected coexistence.

### 7.2 – The Durgā-like goddess

Only attested by one solitary example (S70; II: Figs. 72a,b) is a female divinity, portrayed in the immediate aftermath of slaying a goat by decapitation. The subject matter, certainly derived from the sphere of autochthonous beliefs, shows a singular affinity with the Durgā iconography and, at the same time, an equally singular divergence from it. Just as Durgā kills the demon Mahiṣa by cutting off his head, here an eight-armed goddess decapitates a caprid, whose head lies on the ground.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine which cult environment this iconography referred to – a local cult influenced by an organised and officially “dominant” religious system or vice versa. It is equally difficult to ascertain whether the “official” iconographic model is Buddhist or Hindu.<sup>220</sup>

Tucci’s observations on the matter, as insightful and comprehensive as ever, render detailed analysis of the stela superfluous. I would, however, like to add a few remarks that I think bear out his interpretation. Ultimately, Tucci sees in this variation on Durgā iconography “a peculiar local variety of some homologous religious entities” (Tucci 1963: 152), in particular of a female divinity worshipped by the hunters as the supreme she-master of all ibexes in the mountain areas between Gilgit and Swat (*ibid.*: 153). The antiquity, persistence, and diffusion of this cult finds confirmation in the Bronze Age graffiti of Gogdara I – an expression of “evolved hunters” societies, iconographic themes of which belong to a “Nuristani” horizon that appears now, in the light of recent discoveries, more ancient and widespread than previously believed (Olivieri and Vidale 2004: 172 ff.; Olivieri 2008, 2013).

In the mature phase of Gogdara I (end of first Millennium BCE) the wild goat (ibex) is the most reiterated icon (Olivieri 1998: 84 ff.; Id. 2013: 122, fn. 49; Olivieri and Vidale 2004: 153 ff.; Id. 2006: 124), while among the paintings of the rock shelter of Sargah-sar in the Kandak Valley (Vidale and Olivieri 2002: 208-209; figs. 3, 18, 19) and in the graffiti of Muhammad-patai (Kotah Valley) we have the explicit representation of

<sup>220</sup> An interesting case of inclusion of a “Durgā” – or Durgā-like goddess – in a Buddhist context is documented in the Late Period (seventh/eighth century CE) at Tapa Sardar (Afghanistan), where a colossal clay sculpture of an eight-armed goddess of the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī type was found in one of the chapels of the Upper Terrace (the main cultic area of the site), vis-à-vis an equally colossal image of a bejewelled Buddha. See Taddei 1992; Silvi Antonini 2005; Filigenzi 2008a: 57; Verardi 2010: 346-347. Evidence of a very similar installation – a colossal Mahiṣāsūramardīnī in a Buddhist context – was also brought to light at Mes Aynak (Engel 2013: 55; Filigenzi and Giunta, in print), although in this case only scanty traces survive of the sculpture and its setting.

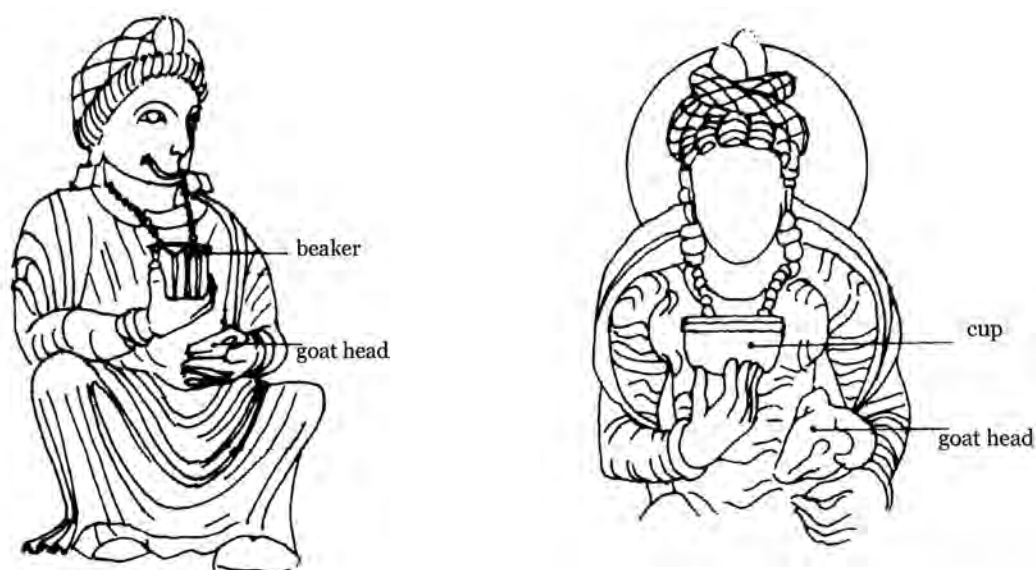


**Fig. 45** – Śonkur R̥ṣi temple (Nasogy, Upper Kulu Valley): Durgā (after Diserens 1986: 465, pl. Vb)

a divinity (female?) standing on an ibex. In both cases we are confronted with an iconographical opposition between the ibex and the feline, this also well attested at Gogdara (Olivieri 2011: 110; Id. 2013: 169).

A comparable image may possibly be offered by a similar depiction of Oshibat (König 1994: 114, Abb. 18). Clearly reflecting the same cult tradition are the wood sculptures of Kafirstan, which show a woman riding a goat (Edelberg 1960: 250, figs. 7-9; Tucci 1963: 154; Motamedi and Edelberg 1968), but I would like to add a curious example from Nasogy, in the Upper Kulu Valley (Diserens 1986: 465, pl. Vb; here, Fig. 45). On a relief carved in our own times, which decorates the door of the temple of Śonkur R̥ṣi, Durgā armed with a trident is portrayed on an animal that she incongruously holds by the tail, in evident superimposition with the Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī iconography. However, another and even more interesting iconographic superimposition – in this case evidently with the ancient model of the goddess standing on or riding a wild goat – has to do with the pose of the goddess, seated (?) in an unnaturally rigid way on her mount, and the figure of the animal itself. This is meant to be a lion, as we can tell from the schematic mane clinging to the neck and the long tail, but otherwise faithfully reproduces the features of a caprid. Modest as it is in craftsmanship, the relief constitutes an important document, revealing simultaneously a twofold, persisting iconography: the female divinity reigning over the animals of the mountainous regions, and her time-honoured symbiosis with Durgā, the goddess whose characteristics are somehow – as indeed the local populations recognise – transformed into a cultured, “official” version.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>221</sup> For a similar case of the assimilation of a mountain goddess with Durgā in Swat, see Tucci (1977: 28). The case in point is of particular interest due to its striking witness to the transmission of a pattern across different religious traditions: the cult of the



**Figs. 46-47** – Female deities holding a vessel and a severed goat’s head  
(after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 184, pls. 143.1 and 143.2 respectively; modified by the author)

We can find other traces of this world – tenuous and scattered as they may be – living side by side with the dominant Buddhist culture. Actually, a number of late Gandharan works attest to the existence of female deities whose realm is the ominous region beyond the domesticated enclosure of the human societies, epitomised by their connection and even translational identity with the animal world (Taddei 1987: figs. 9-13; Kurita 1988-1990: II, figs. 483, 750; Zwalf 1996: n. 105, p. 123, with additional references; here, Figs. 46-47). Severed heads of animals and cups or beakers in these deities’ hands indicate their demand for sacrifices, sacrifices that would possibly propitiate their ambiguous and potentially dangerous nature.

It is a fact that Uḍḍiyāna, besides being revered as the land where many great teachers of both the Vajrayāna and Bonpo traditions were either born or passed through, was also well known as a land of magic with special “female” connotations. The capricious and ambiguous *shisha*, *peri*, *hapidei*, and *rū-i* of the local folklore of the northern areas of Pakistan (Lorimer 1929; Jettmar 1961: 79 ff.; Tucci 1963: 155; Id. 1977: 69; Cacopardo and Cacopardo 2001: *passim*) are most likely the progenitricies of the *ḍākiṇī* dignified by Vajrayāna Buddhism. This further reinforces the hypothesis that a fecund osmosis occurred between Buddhism and aboriginal beliefs. The latter were probably shared by a broad range of “mountain peoples” from the Hindu Kush to the Himalaya, where they were further blended with Bön. To all appearances, time is giving us ever more cogent arguments supporting Tucci’s idea that this religious substratum in Swat, given its non-formalised structure, was never uprooted by Buddhism (and not even by Islam, for that matter), but rather found its way into the Buddhist tradition itself by means of the Vajrayāna system (Tucci 1977: 68-69).

mountain (Mount Karamar; see Chap. 1.3) and of an aboriginal *devī* (to which Mount Karamar was sacred), the later assimilation of the goddess into Bhīmā Devī, the self-made (*svayāmbhū*) image of the goddess, and the survival of the cult under Islam in the form of a woman fakir or fairy whose name, Shehr Banu, corresponds to Siṃhavāhinī, an epithet of Durgā. In Mount Karamar, as we have seen, A. Foucher identifies a spot mentioned by Xuanzang. A different interpretation is given by Nasim Khan, who thinks that the place described by Xuanzang is to be identified with the site of Kashmir Smast (Nasim Khan 2006: 11-13, 43). Here, the Archaeological Department of Peshawar University is presently conducting surveys and small scale excavations which have also yielded evidence of a Saivite cult. The name of Bhīmā is largely present among the epigraphic records from the site (H. Falk 2003a; Nasim Khan 2006: 74, 102-103; Srinivasan 2011). Whatever the correspondence with the ancient topography is, the fact remains that both places bear a distinctive Saivite connotation.



### 7.3 – Sūrya and Gaṇeśa

Long known to us, but erroneously interpreted in terms of both iconography and chronology, is another very peculiar relief, housed in a small natural cave about forty feet above a road in the locality known as Shinkerdar (or Shingardar), or, more precisely, near the village of Tindo-dag. Today its state of preservation is so poor that any analysis needs to be based upon archive photographs dating to the late 1950s, when the relief, although badly worn, still preserved significant details (C116: II: Figs. 116a,b,c; GS 41).

The relief shows a figure in nomadic attire, standing frontally on a pedestal along the front of which a row of animals in frontal position are represented. All around the central figure a number of lesser figures are to be seen: four of them at his sides and a fifth on the upper left side, while the sixth, a small kneeling figure on the lower left side, may have had a pendant on the opposite side. The cave is still barely accessible, notwithstanding the presence of a stairway cut by order of the late Wali of Swat; wide and high enough at the entrance, it narrows progressively towards the interior to become a small passage, where further progress can just be made on all fours, although the original floor level might have been covered by accumulation layers. This passage leads to a broader recess (probably artificially enlarged to create a sort of dome and high enough to allow the visitor to stand up), which receives air and light from a hole at the top. The relief was executed on the right wall at the entrance. One of the most attractive scenes in rock art, a huge image of the Buddha in *dhyānāsana* looking towards the river and the Mankyal (C115; II: Fig. 115; GS 2) stands immediately below the cave.

The relief was first reported by Stein, who not only described it, proposing hypothetical reconstruction for details which were by then already lost, but advanced a precise interpretation of the subject. On account of the presumption that the nearby *stūpa* was to be attributed to Uttarasena,<sup>222</sup> Stein identified the main figure of the relief as Uttarasena himself portrayed as a donor, possibly bearing a miniature *stūpa* in his hands. In his opinion, the animal figures on the pedestal must have been lions (Stein 1929: 51; 1930: 32-33). This interpretation was later rejected by Tucci, who considered the attribution of the *stūpa* to Uttarasena highly unlikely (Tucci 1958: 299-302). According to him, the relief depicted “the local deity with his attendants or a king of the Kushāna period with his retinue” (*ibid.*: 295). On the grounds of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* – an iconographic device of frequent occurrence on Kushan coins – Tucci suggested for the sculpture a date somewhere between the reigns of Huviṣka and Hormizd (*ibidem*).

As a matter of fact, all the extant elements which lend themselves to comparison with other contexts point to a much later chronology. In both costume and size the central figure, like stela S69 (II: Figs. 71a,b; GS 39), even though (deliberately, we may suppose) linked to the Kushan tradition, closely resembles the donors of high rank that are depicted in some bronze sculptures dating from the reign of the Paṭola Śāhi of Gilgit.<sup>223</sup> Moreover, the iconographic features as a whole point to a different interpretation. The surrounding figures are haloed too. As for the animal figures represented on the pedestal, the identification proposed by Stein as six lions (1930: 33) is not supported by any significant detail. It is a fact that in the old photographs we refer to, six animals are still discernible. However, if we take into account that the right corner is missing and that the feet of the main figure standing on the pedestal would have been oddly off-centred if there had been only six animals, the existence of a seventh animal, now lost, does not seem too incautious a supposition. The identification of the animals as lions is also merely hypothetical; it would be just as legitimate to identify them as horses and the subject of the relief as Sūrya with his retinue, in one of the possible local variants.

<sup>222</sup> The legend of Uttarasena and the *stūpa* he would have erected in the same spot where his elephant suddenly fell dead is narrated by Xuanzang, who had heard it from local people (Beal 1958 [1884]: III, 126).

<sup>223</sup> See for example two famous sculptures, the bejewelled Buddha between two *stūpas* (Pal 1975: 106, no. 30a,b; Fussman 1993: 43-47, no. 6.6, pl. 31) and the so called “Buddha of Nandivikramādityanandin” (Pal 1975: 108-109, no. 31; Fussman 1993: 39-43, no. 6.5, pl. 30; here, Fig. 48); I refer to Fussman (1993) and von Hinüber (2004) for additional bibliographic references on the sculptures at issue and on the question of the Paṭola Śāhi of Gilgit.



Fig. 48 – Portrait of Nandivikramādityanandin (after Pal 1975: no. 31; drawing by the author)

As for the four secondary figures at his sides, with a fair degree of likelihood we can recognise the one on the lower right as Daṇḍin/Skanda holding a spear and, perhaps, a shield, as the accentuated projection of his outline on the right side seems to suggest. We may therefore conjecture that the figure on the left represents Piṅgala. Of the two figures above we can only make out the more slender and elongated silhouettes, which we may attribute to Sūrya's two wives. Finally, on account of the way in which the arms of the central figure are bent, one may infer that the hands were held at the sides of the breast. In order to show that such a position is fully consistent with a representation of Sūrya we may cite some images from Mathurā that match our figure perfectly with regard to the position of the arms and attributes.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>224</sup> See e.g. Rosenfield 1967: figs. 43-45; Pandey 1989: pls. VI-VII; Klimburg-Salter 1995: 133, fig. 8; 231, fig. 222; the latter is a Gupta specimen but with a similar arrangement of arms and attributes. The hands held at the sides of the breast are a constant characteristic of the Sūrya images; in the sculptures cited here the comparison with the Sūrya of Tindo-dag is, however, particularly significant because of the shape and position of the attributes, whose profile scarcely projects over the shoulders, if at all.

Of particular interest is the figure on the upper left, which has no pendant on the opposite side. Although much defaced, on account of its peculiar shape (especially the unmistakable profile of the head) this figure can be reasonably identified as a four-armed Gaṇeśa and suitably compared with the two depictions of this same god mentioned before, respectively from Qal‘a, in Swat (C98; II: Figs. 98a,c; GS 40), and from Mane-tangai, in Dir, where Gaṇeśa appears in connection with a major figure of Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi (see Chap. 4.4; Fig. 33). Despite the poor preservation, all the three specimens show a general compliance with the same model. The Tindo-dag Gaṇeśa has both his back hands lifted up, holding attributes which are no longer recognisable; the front left hand rests on his lap, while the front right one is in *varadamudrā*. Below, on the left, on what must have once been the god’s seat, we discern a projecting silhouette, possibly to be interpreted as the front part of an animal sitting upright. On the basis of comparison with other known specimens, we may identify the subject of this relief as Gaṇeśa on a lion.<sup>225</sup>

The significance of this iconographic scheme, as of other famous coeval iconographic representations linked with the solar cult, could be debated at length. On this occasion I shall limit myself to stressing a few significant features: to begin with, the possible relationship with the huge Buddha image carved on the eastern side of the hill, which points to an analogy with Bāmiyān, where a solar deity is depicted on the vault over the head of the smaller of the two colossal Buddhas;<sup>226</sup> secondly, its being housed inside a cave, a situation which prompts us to draw a parallel, for example, with Dokhtar-e Noshirwan.<sup>227</sup> This similarity had already been pointed out a few years ago by D. Klimburg-Salter, who did not go into the interpretation of the Tindo-dag relief, but contested the early date traditionally attributed to it (Klimburg-Salter 1993: 357). In my opinion, this relief, like the abovementioned stela S69 (certainly depicting the same subject),<sup>228</sup> can be dated to the time when Buddhist rock art was at its height; the image of Gaṇeśa, the pedestal with zoomorphic figures, and the whole iconographic scheme all assign the relief to that chronological horizon, although a peculiar figurative language and significance are to be noticed.

Moreover, the relief not only seems to fall into line with other works of art of the Turki Śāhi period but could even be closely connected with their own cultural characterisation.<sup>229</sup> To what degree the solar myths played an important role among them with regard to the legitimation of kingship can be inferred from al-Bīrūnī’s tale

<sup>225</sup> Close comparison is offered by a marble stela representing Gaṇeśa found in Afghanistan and published by Verardi (1977). The god is four-armed: the upper right arm holds a *daṇḍa* (?), the lower left presumably the sweetmeat (*modakas*), and the two remaining arms are partially lost. The big belly, full of *modakas* and surrounded by the *sarpa-yajñopavīta*, is probably intended to represent Gaṇeśa as *lambodara*, the Lord of the universe, who encloses everything (see Seetharam 1952: 31, 43). Gaṇeśa, wearing wide trousers instead of the usual *dhoti*, is sitting in *ardhaparyankāsana*, with left leg bent horizontally and the right one bent vertically, on a crouching lion, turned to the right with frontal head. The position of Gaṇeśa’s legs and of the lion in the Tindo-dag relief would therefore be reversed with respect to the Afghanistan Gaṇeśa, in what is to be considered in any case a (meaningless?) variant.

<sup>226</sup> Among the rich bibliographic materials on Bāmiyān, see the comprehensive work of Klimburg-Salter (1989: esp. 154 ff.), and the study by Grenet (1995), who interprets the solar deity depicted on the vault as an image of Mithra. The association between the Buddha and the rising or victorious sun is frequently suggested by both literature and iconography; on this subject see for example the old but still useful study by Rowland (1938), and a new approach to this topic by Quagliotti (2000).

<sup>227</sup> On the painting of Dokhtar-e Noshirwan (or Nigar) see Mode 1992; Klimburg-Salter 1993; Grenet 1995. I refer to the latter for a survey of the previous studies on this painting, interpreted initially as a royal portrait, and later as a deity (Ohrmazd according to Mode, Mithra according to Grenet), or as an unspecified portrait modelled after the image of Ohrmazd, according to the more cautious formulation of Klimburg-Salter. The peculiar features of the subject and the complexity of its cultural background are worthy of attention from many points of view and different fields of competence. As regards comparison with the Tindo-dag relief, I cannot rule out that in the future we could find further links; for the time being, I simply wish to underline that both the works are executed in a shallow cave, barely accessible, which allows for no rituals unless performed by one individual or very few persons (see below).

<sup>228</sup> Besides this stela, Tucci (1958: 300) mentions – but with no graphic illustration – a group of rock reliefs near Nawe-kalai - Kota, among which he saw a standing figure very similar to that of Tindo-dag. The same figure is referred to by Faccenna (1985: 101), who records its being recently destroyed.

<sup>229</sup> We know that at the time and in the territory of the Turki Śāhi iconographic evidence of northern solar deities as well as of Gaṇeśa is not only frequent, but can also be found in a Buddhist context. For a survey see Kuwayama 1976; in addition, see Bernard and Grenet 1981 on the (then) newly discovered Sūrya from Khair Khaneh. On the two statues of Sūrya from Khair Khaneh, however, see Tanabe 1996, suggesting an earlier dating. On the Gaṇeśa images from Afghanistan, see Verardi 1977 (cf. fn. 225) and Kuwayama 1991.

about Barhatakin, who is consecrated as king after a sort of ritual birth from the womb of the mountain, just like the rising sun (Sachau 1910: II, 10). The stratagem certainly takes as its model mythological themes of the time connecting the solar deity with the mountain, as for example the birth of Mithra. A similar symbolism is alluded to by the Kushan coins showing the king sitting on, or emerging from, the rock (Rosenfield 1967: pls. II, 20; III, 44, 46-47 etc.). Most probably the king/sun association, so firmly rooted in the common imagery of ancient times, was emphasised in particular moments by certain sovereigns or dynasties, and it would be not surprising that this association was celebrated with ritual performances, possibly linked with cyclic events of the calendar.

al-Bīrūnī's tale about Barhatakin, obviously in some way disfigured, could have recorded a ceremony of this kind, and the shallow cave of Tindo-dag as well, oriented towards the east and housing the image of a solar deity, looking out over a wide, open space, could have served such a device. The cave, with its narrow entrance and inner recess,<sup>230</sup> also recalls other details of al-Bīrūnī's tale: Barhatakin entered a cave in Kabul "which none could enter except by creeping on hands and knees", but supplied with water and victuals for some days (Sachau 1910: II, 10). This prompts us to assume the existence of an inner recess. In due time Barhatakin crept out of it "in the presence of the people, who looked on him as a new-born baby" (*ibidem*). In conclusion, the Tindo-dag cave, just like the Kabul cave, offers all the suitable characteristics for a *darśan*, i.e. the hierophanic vision of the king brought forth by the rocky womb like the glorious rising sun.<sup>231</sup>

The presence of Gaṇeśa adds something peculiar to the iconographic scheme of the Tindo-dag relief. Afghanistan has yielded a number of Gaṇeśa images (see fn. 229), one of them bearing a dedicatory inscription by Kṛiṅgala, king of Uḍḍiyāna.<sup>232</sup> To this evidence we can add the reliefs from Swat and Dir, which probably show a Tantric version of the same deity, but as far as I know, there are no suitable comparisons for such an unusual iconography outside the Swat territory.<sup>233</sup> The elephant-god's multifarious personality lends itself to various hypotheses, all of them equally probable: his connection with Sūrya may possibly be accounted for by his relationship with the intermediate sphere and with the Navagrahas, or alternatively in the light of his relationship with the celestial elephants, that is to say with clouds, rain and waters. This would not be out of place in solar iconography, as attested first of all by the Anantagumphā and Lala Bhagat evidence. On the other hand, it may simply stand as an initial, auspicious symbol of success and wealth.<sup>234</sup>

<sup>230</sup> My thanks are due to P. Callieri and F. Martore, who provided me with a detailed description of the Tindo-dag cave.

<sup>231</sup> al-Bīrūnī says that Barhatakin came out dressed in his Turkish clothes; preservation of this detail in the tale is probably due to the strong impression made by his appearance, much like the solar deity of "northern" type.

<sup>232</sup> This image of Gaṇeśa from Gardez was first published by Tucci (1958: 328, fig. 40), who read in the inscription the name of Kṛiṅgala king of Uḍḍiyāna. This reading is endorsed by Kuwayama (1991), who also briefly discusses the works thereafter devoted to this subject. For a more recent reassessment of the numismatic and literary evidence related to the enigmatic name of Kṛiṅgāla/Kṛiṅkhila/Kṛiṅjil (both as ruler and dynasty), see Kuwayama (1999: 41-45) and Abdur Rahman (2002).

<sup>233</sup> Sometimes Gaṇeśa is represented along with Sūrya, but as part of a group of deities accompanying the sun god or by the side of the Navagrahas (Getty 1936: 30-31; Pandey 1989: 124 ff.), without any particular prominence.

<sup>234</sup> According to some scholars Gaṇeśa was originally a symbol of the sun god (Getty 1936: 1); a form of this god is worshipped in Nepal as Sūrya-Gaṇapati (*ibid.*: 39). The *Mudgala-purāṇa* speaks of eight incarnations of Gaṇeśa, the sixth being Sūrya (Granoff 1991: 90-91). The symbolic link between the solar deity and the vital principle of water is a recurrent motif in iconography, often expressed by the elephant; an elephant-headed human figure is probably represented at Anantagumphā, in Orissa (first century CE), along with an elephant carrying a bunch of lotuses in his trunk, near a representation of Sūrya; in the same cave, another frieze contains a Gaja-Lakṣmī (Banerjea 1948: 56); a similar scheme is repeated at Lala Bhagat, in Kanpur (second century CE) (*ibid.*: 55). Different, but in some way related to the same symbolism, is the *gajasuṅḍa* carried by Aruṇa in some representations of the solar god in Bengal since the eighth century; it symbolises, according to Pandey (1989: 132), an asterism which, in conjunction with the sun, brings rain. In the complex personality of Gaṇeśa a prominent role is undoubtedly played by his link with the mythological substratum of the celestial elephant, symbol of water, growth, wealth and success (see Nava 1988: 45 ff.). A possible connection between Gaṇeśa and favourable asterisms could be encrypted in the dedicatory inscription of the Gardez Gaṇeśa, consecrated under the constellation of Viśākhā and the *lagna* of the lion (Kuwayama 1991: 269). Whatever the presence of Gaṇeśa may stand for, in a context such the Tindo-dag relief it suggests an idea of fortune and prosperity, so enhancing a possible allusion to the analogy between the solar function and the institution of kingship.



**Figs. 49a,b** – Terracotta statuette representing Gaṇeśa (courtesy G. Stacul)

Processes that are sometimes conventionally labelled as religious syncretism manifest subtle contents, deep roots and complex reasons that we may no longer be able to understand clearly but which we can nevertheless still perceive, as in the case in question. On account of his manifold and eclectic personality, Gaṇeśa could well be adopted in diverse cultural and iconographic contexts, with either negative or positive connotations,<sup>235</sup> in the subtlest speculation as in the simplest devotion. Gaṇeśa’s popularity in Swat does not seem to have been limited to official religious art, as is shown by the find, so far unique but nonetheless significant, of a small image of the god at Kalako-deray in the upper layers of the site (Fig. 49).<sup>236</sup> Roughly executed, this small clay statuette represents a very useful document, as it gives us an everyday or, I would say, “normal” image of a complex and stratified religious culture, though one which lies within or vis-à-vis the hegemony of Buddhism.

#### **7.4 – Tindo-dag and Barikot: sacred topography and political geography**

The interpretation proposed for the Tindo-dag relief has become more than conjecture after recent discoveries, beginning with the imposing temple unearthed by the Italian Archaeological Mission on the top of Barikot hill, very close to the Tindo-dag cave, which possibly relates our relief to a broader political plan.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Gaṇeśa, as lord of obstacles (*Vighneśvara*), can place or remove them (Getty 1936: 6-7). In the Buddhist context he maintains the same ambiguity, being either a benevolent deity or a demon to be subdued (*ibid.*: 37-38; Bhattacharyya 1974: 521). Of particular interest, as we have seen (see Chap. 4.4), is his presence at the bottom of reliefs depicting Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi.

<sup>236</sup> On the site of Kalako-deray and the Gaṇeśa image see Stacul 1997: esp. 374, figs. 25-26.

<sup>237</sup> On the temple of Barikot see Chap. 2.4.

The temple of Barikot, situated as it is in such a prominent position, is the first important witness to non-Buddhist cults during the period that we can label as Šāhi or, more precisely, judging from the archaeological context, Turki Šāhi. An initial link with sound archaeological evidence can be thus established: our relief no longer appears now as the extemporaneous expression of some unknown will but as the outcome of a culture that had to find its own space in a strange land and among its rooted traditions.

Still, more explicit confirmation has come from a recent rediscovery made during an archaeological survey:<sup>238</sup> right on the slope of the same hill where the Tindo-dag cave opens, somewhat higher up, four rock sculptures were found, all located at short distances from one another. Three of them are purely Buddhist (C182, C184, C185; II: Figs. 117, 119 and 120 respectively), but the fourth (C183; II: Fig. 118; GS 42), although perfectly consistent with the others as far its stylistic and iconographic lexicon is concerned, shows an indisputable difference of subject: again we are confronted with an image of Sūrya, this time fully recognisable, with his two lotuses rigidly held against the chest; as fully recognisable is the Gaṇeśa image to his left. Less well preserved, but still legible, is a third image to his right, possibly Viṣṇu. Standing frontally, with a long garland or scarf, this deity is four-armed: the two upper hands bear indistinguishable attributes, while the lower two are placed on the heads of small attendants. Closer at the sides of Sūrya two minor figures, one of them clearly looking towards him, are probably to be identified as his two attendants: again, as at Tindo-dag, the figure on the right bears a spear and, most probably, a shield. What is even more interesting in this relief is the fact that the Sūrya image is no longer the stout figure in nomadic attire, but a more “Indian” character, very similar in form to the numerous bodhisattvas in the rock sculpture, which evidently were taken as a model.

Also worth noting is another peculiar feature of this Sūrya image: its being legless. The boulder is not broken: the figured field is complete. Most probably, we are confronted here with a different version of the deity, deriving from the Puranic myth that, attempting to explain the foreign attire of Sūrya within an Indian perspective, refers to his unbearable effulgence (which had driven even his wife Saṃjñā to flee from him). In order that Sūrya might be gazed upon, his brilliance was dimmed by Viśvakarman, who put Sūrya on his lathe and peeled much of the brightness from the upper part of the god’s body but left his legs untouched (Banerjea 1948: 73-74): this is, according to the myth, the reason why the legs of Sūrya must remain hidden, by means of boots or, in the “Indian” iconographic alternative, by the wall of his car. In our relief this iconographic device takes a short cut and the deity’s legs are simply not represented – a solution perfectly consistent with the ergonomic syntax of the rock sculptures.

Despite the gaps in the historical reconstructions, both the archaeological and artistic evidence can now be considered in a broader perspective: if our reliefs are to be read not only as an expression of religious culture but also in a political key, we cannot but relate them to a political geography. Perhaps the most reliable source of information is represented, for the time being, by the defence system of the Šāhi period (see Chap. 2.4). This system was certainly meant to keep under safe control the Khyber road and the Peshawar plain, at the same time attesting to the strategic importance of Swat (Olivieri 2003: 41-42 especially). Within such a perspective one can hardly overestimate the key role of the area around Barikot. This not only offers the southernmost bulwark before the Malakand Pass and the plain below, but also represents (as the archaeological evidence clearly attests) one of the most important urban agglomerations of Swat – one that we can imagine as a constellation of minor settlements (some, perhaps, no less opulent than the major one, as probably in the case of Tindo-dag) politically and economically related to a dominant centre (Barikot). A sketch map shows in this area the highest concentration of tower-house complexes and military outposts and castles, thereby attesting to the great concern of the political establishment in this special tract of land.

<sup>238</sup> The first discovery was made by Badshah Sardar (Sardar 2004-2005), although at that time my colleagues and I were unaware of his publication; the reliefs were then independently documented by Luca M. Olivieri, Massimo Vidale and Pietro Spagnesi in May 2004 while surveying the area in connection with their work on the archaeological map of Swat. I am grateful to them for drawing my attention to the sculptures and the area in general, which I visited soon after receiving this information.

A few more considerations are to be added, once again suggested by the whole context, but this time viewed from a closer perspective. Our survey extended to the hill of Tindo-dag, on the top of which, besides the rock sculptures, we also found imposing wall remains and a great many shards which clearly evidence an important settlement. Moreover, the place seems to have been endowed with a special atmosphere probably since some time in the remote past: the presence of a number of cup marks, small, dried-up springs and pools, and rock esplanades, not to mention the vast, magnificent view over the valley below, all suggest a symbolic value attached to this space. It may indeed have been simply the implications we may suppose are inherent in the local scenery that inspired the newcomers, the Śāhi from Kabul, to select this place as the natural memorial of their solar kingship. What is most significant in terms of artistic vehicles is that the signs they left, although relevant to a different cultural horizon, borrow their formal language from the current local traditions, just as we see at work within the Buddhist rock sculptures. Lastly, despite caution, one cannot avoid calling to mind what Major A.H. Deane, first Political Officer of the Malakand Agency, writes about the former existence of a Hindu temple in this area (Deane 1896: 660; see Part II: 221). Deane’s guess might prove to be correct: is this “Deva temple” still concealed somewhere in the area of Tindo-dag/Manyar, as the recent discoveries and the name “Hindu-ghar” itself seem to suggest?<sup>239</sup>

Time is perhaps not yet ripe for further speculation, but what is undisputable is the coexistence, within the same chronological, geographic and artistic framework, of two different religious systems, as the odd mixture of the Tindo-dag reliefs clearly witnesses. Whether this coexistence was marginal or ample, friendly or belligerent, temporary or lasting, we are still unable to affirm, but these two places that look at each other from their prominent positions shed new light on the history of Swat and, more in general, on the interweaving intellectual, artistic and political trends prevalent at that time within Swat and adjoining areas. The picture that emerges is far more complex and variegated than was supposed so far: the legendary Uḍḍiyana of the Tibetan sources and the historical Uḍḍiyana of archaeology come finally closer to each other.

<sup>239</sup> Apart from the presence of a Hindu or Brahmanical substratum preserved in the name ‘Hindu-ghar’ given to the rock cave on the northern cliff of Tindo-dag (see above), mention must be made of the fact that from the top of the Tindo-dag hill one may see on the other side of the river Swat another, most probably Śāhi, large fortified center, at Bar-tangai (Olivieri 2003).

## APPENDIX I

### Graphic Summary \*

Given the particular nature of the sculptures and the complexity of their analytical survey, it has been judged appropriate to supply the text with recapitulatory charts of distributions and drawings as a visual overview of the reconstruction process.

The reconstruction drawings presented here do not cover the whole range of iconographic types. They take into consideration only types or specimens that permitted safe renderings, which is to say reconstructions based on complete retrieval of details through internal comparisons, or at least highly probable integrations of non-extant or conjectured parts.

For the sake of simplicity and internal coherence, the numbering of the drawings generally follows an order based on a categorisation of types rather than a strict conformity to the succession of references in the text.

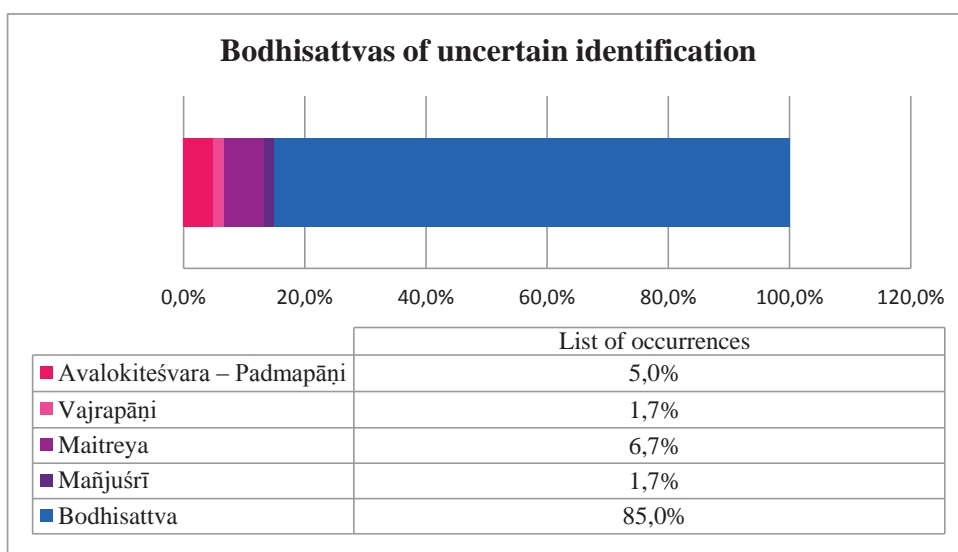
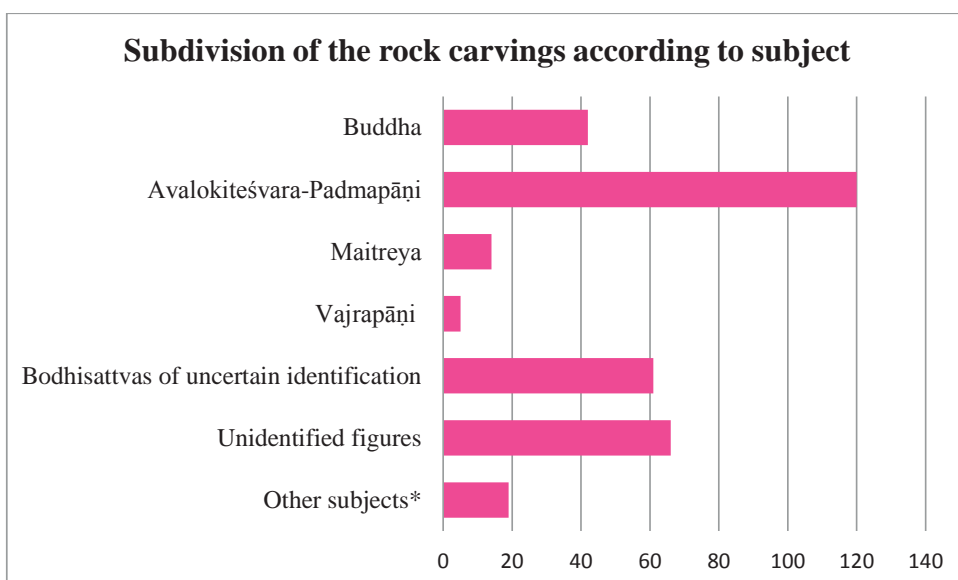
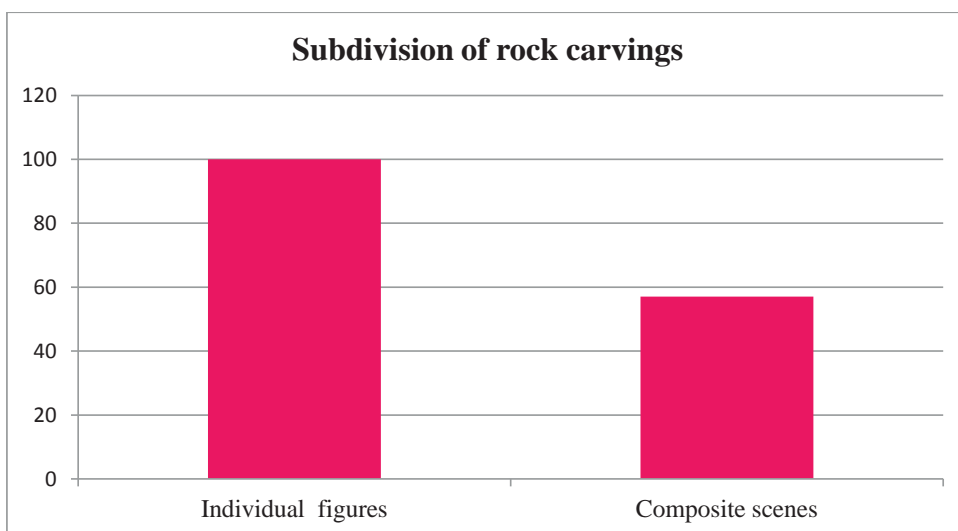
Special focus has been put on iconographic types (such as Maitreya and Vajrapāṇi) whose recognition provided new paradigms for understanding the internal code, features, and pantheon composition of this artistic production, at the same time highlighting its prominent place in the cultural history of Buddhist art and culture.

Specimens that, though fully recognisable on account of their unmistakable profile, are too poorly preserved are excluded from the reconstruction process. This is the case, for instance, of the eight-armed goddess killing a caprid (Inv. Rep. S70; II: Fig. 72a,b) and the eight-armed bodhisattva of stela S124 (II: Fig. 109).

These reconstructions are to be considered a work in progress, whose main scientific aim is to provide a preliminary thesaurus to be enriched, refined or corrected as new studies on comparable material hopefully appear.

\*Distribution charts by Sara Marsano. Drawings by Anna Filigenzi and Bernardo Velletri.





\*Other subjects include worshippers, donors, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, *stūpas*, flying genii.

Buddha figures

Buddha figures



GS 1



GS 2



GS 3

Buddha figures



GS 4



GS 5



GS 6



GS 7

Buddha figures



GS 8

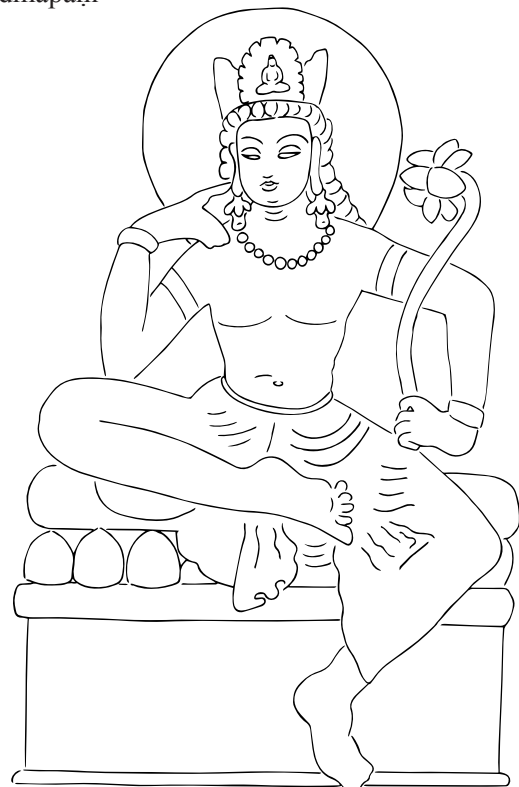


GS 9

Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi

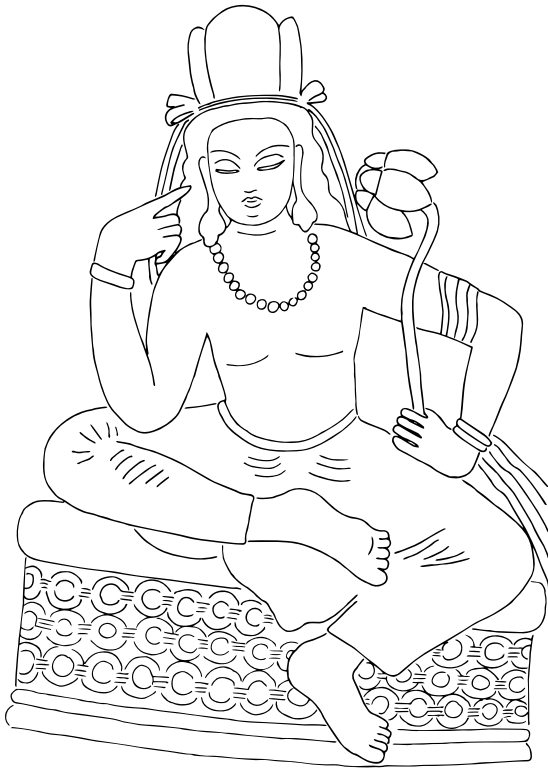


GS 10

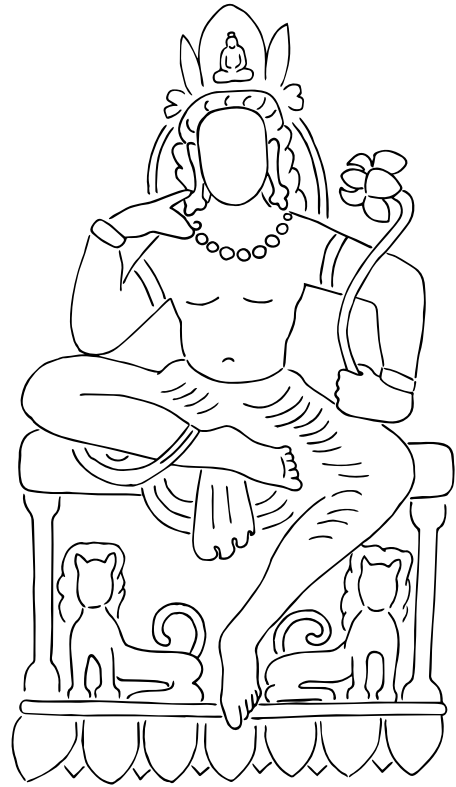


GS 11

Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi



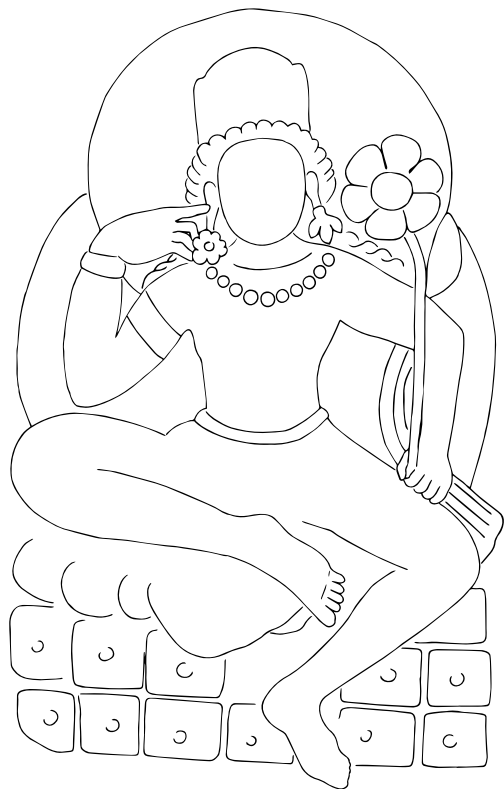
GS 12



GS 13

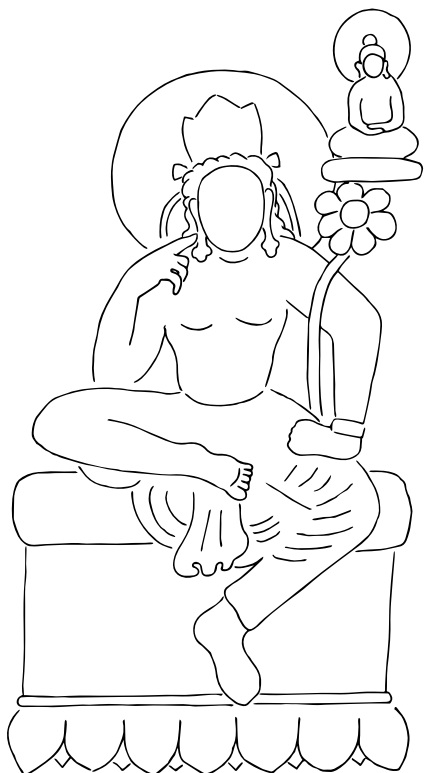


GS 14

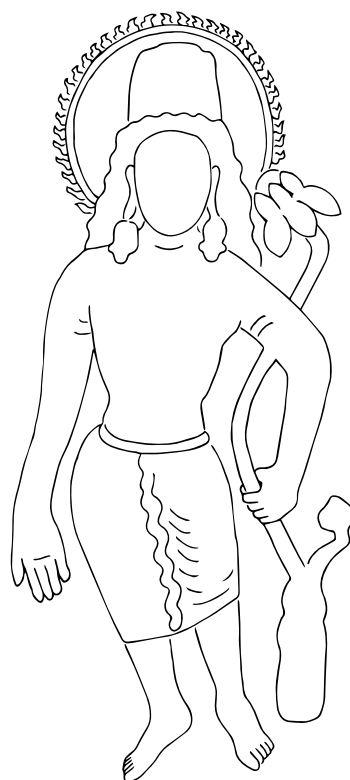


GS 15

Avalokiteśvara-Padmapāṇi



GS 16



GS 17

Maitreya

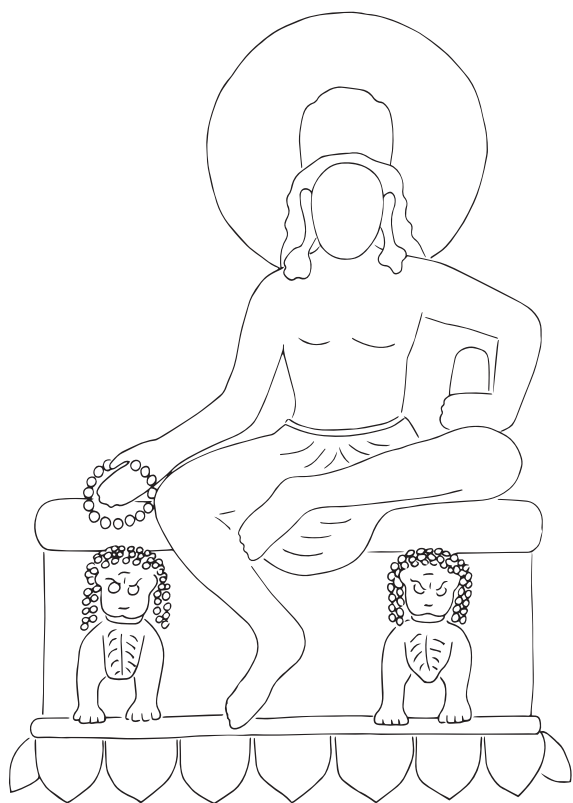


GS 18

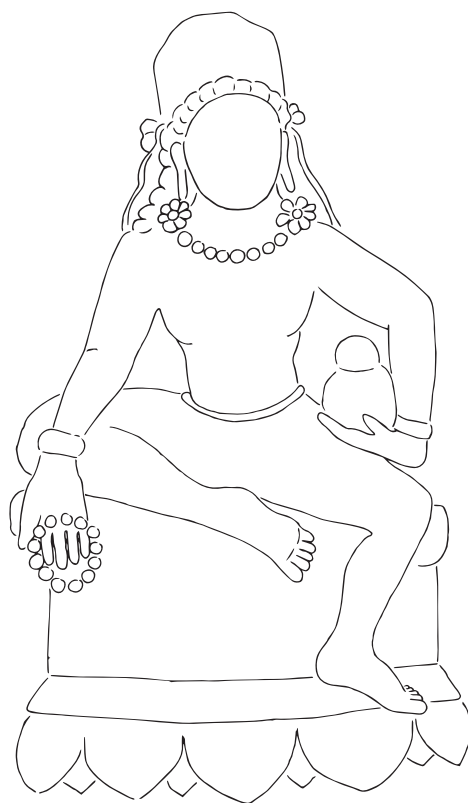


GS 19

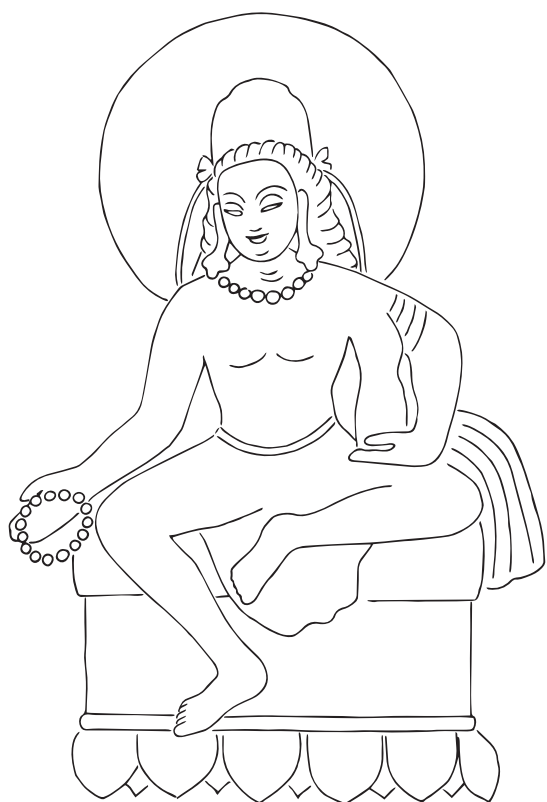
Maitreya



GS 20



GS 21



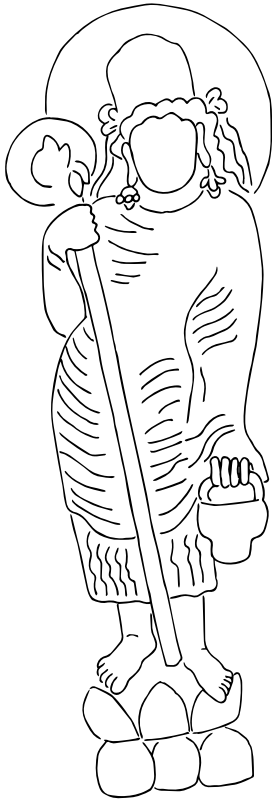
GS 22



GS 23

Maitreya

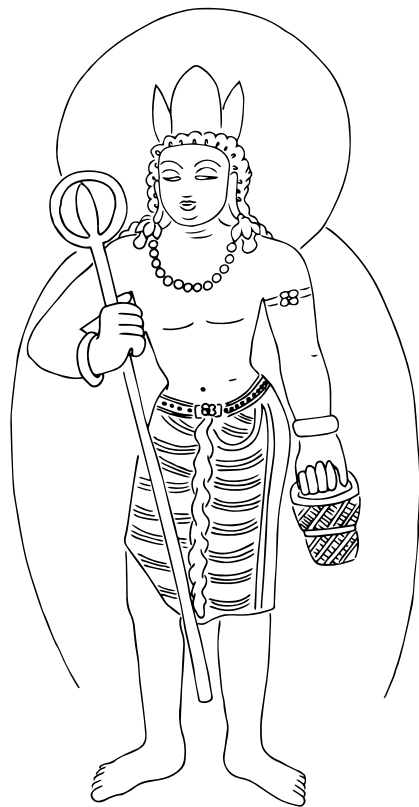
Maitreya



GS 24



GS 25



GS 26



GS 27

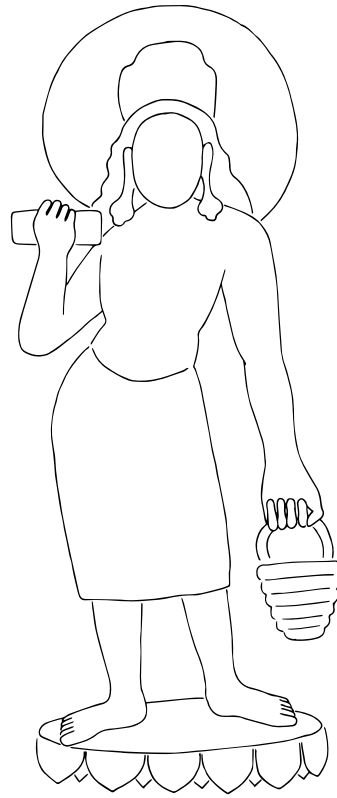


Appendix I

Maitreya

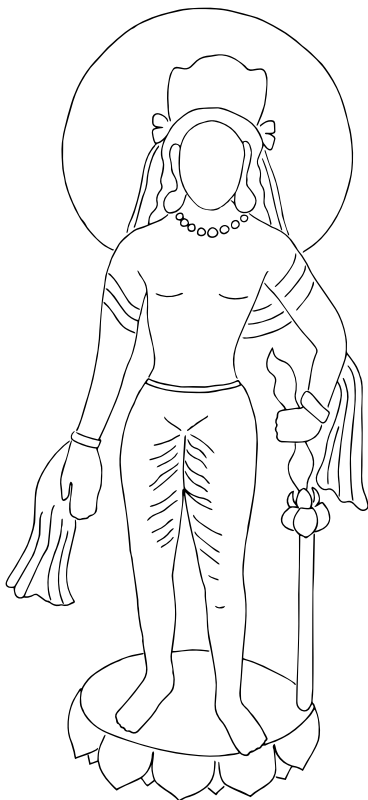


GS 28

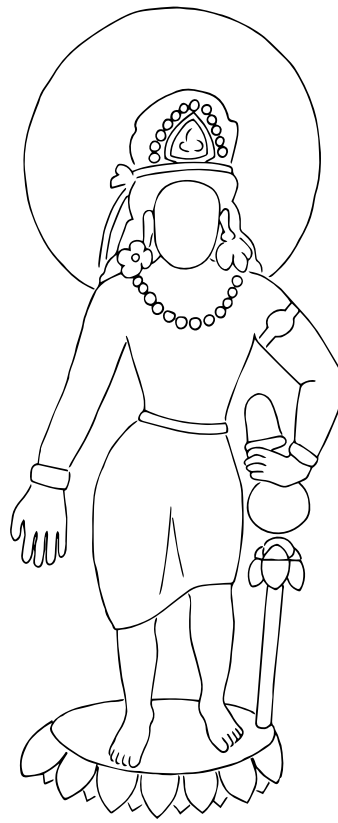


GS 29

Vajrapāṇi



GS 30



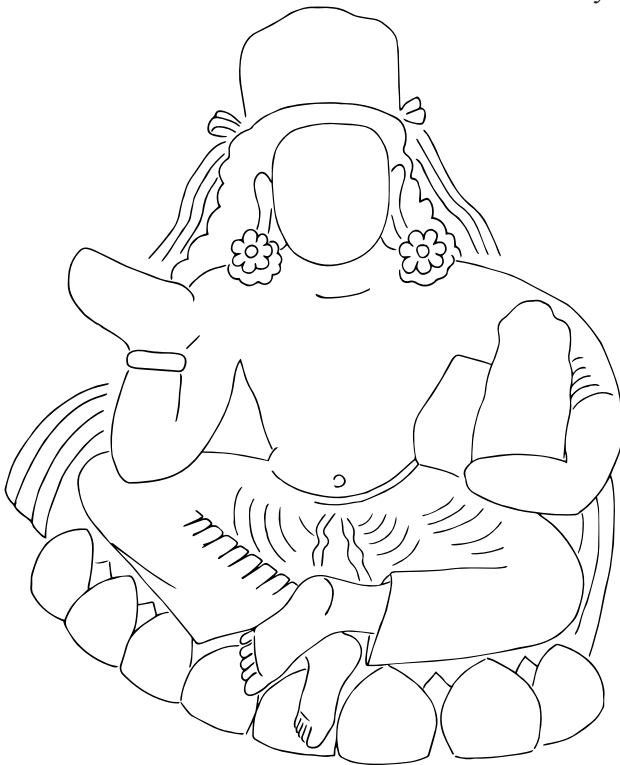
GS 31

Vajrapāṇi

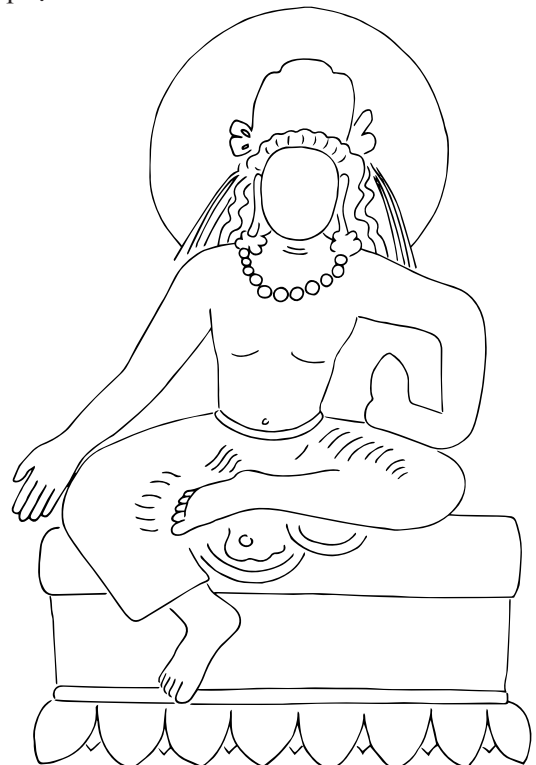


GS 32

Maitreya/Vajrapāṇi



GS 33



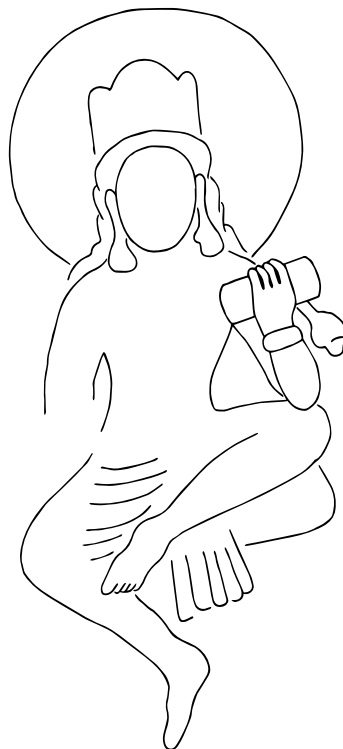
GS 34

Maitreya/Vajrapāṇi



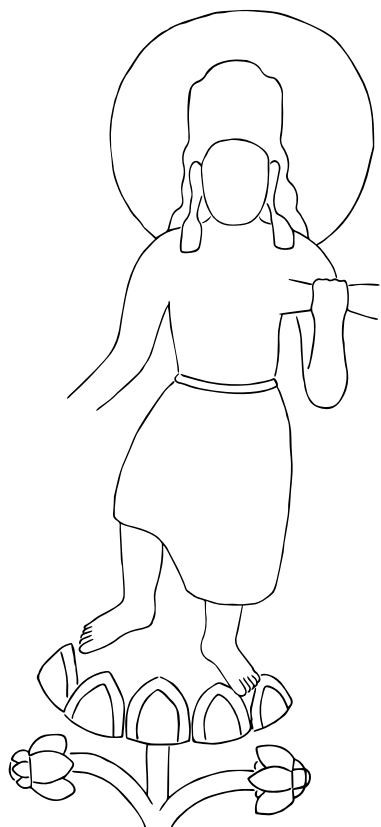
GS 35

Mañjuśrī



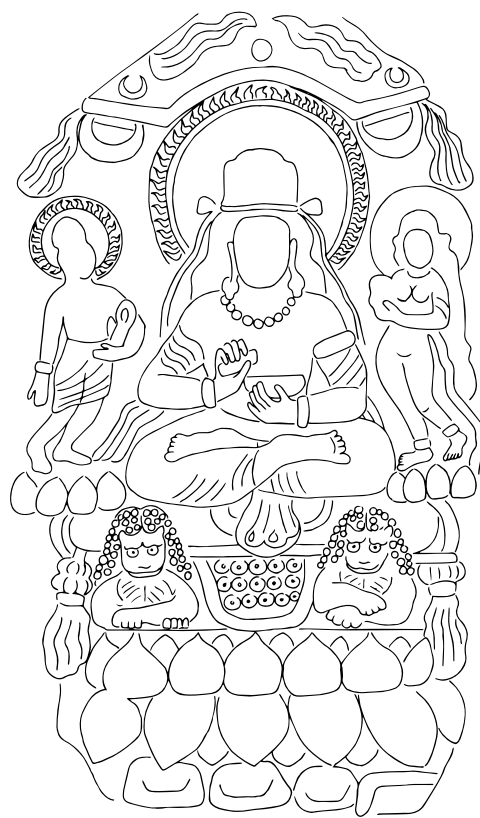
GS 36

Maitreya/Mañjuśrī



GS 37

*siddha*



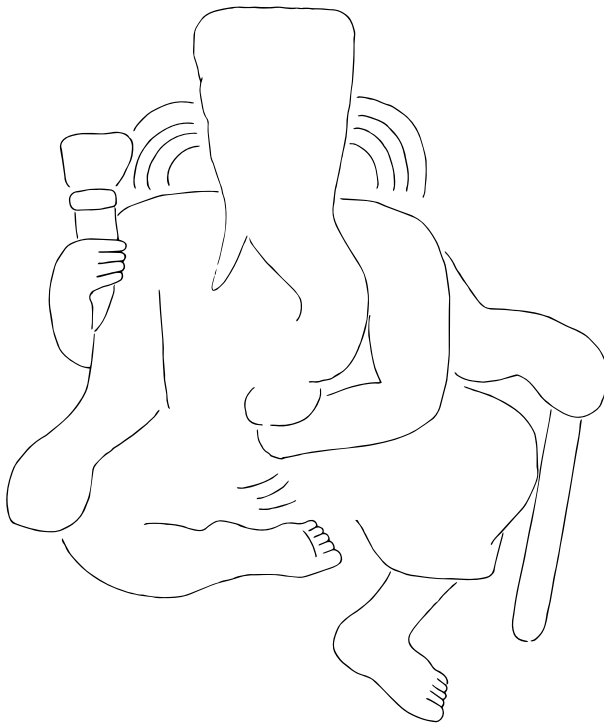
GS 38

Sūrya



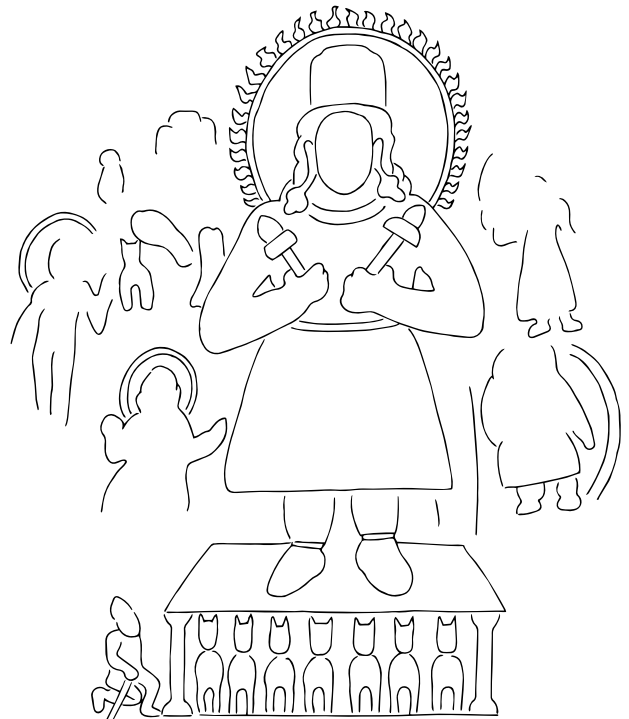
GS 39

Gaṇeśa



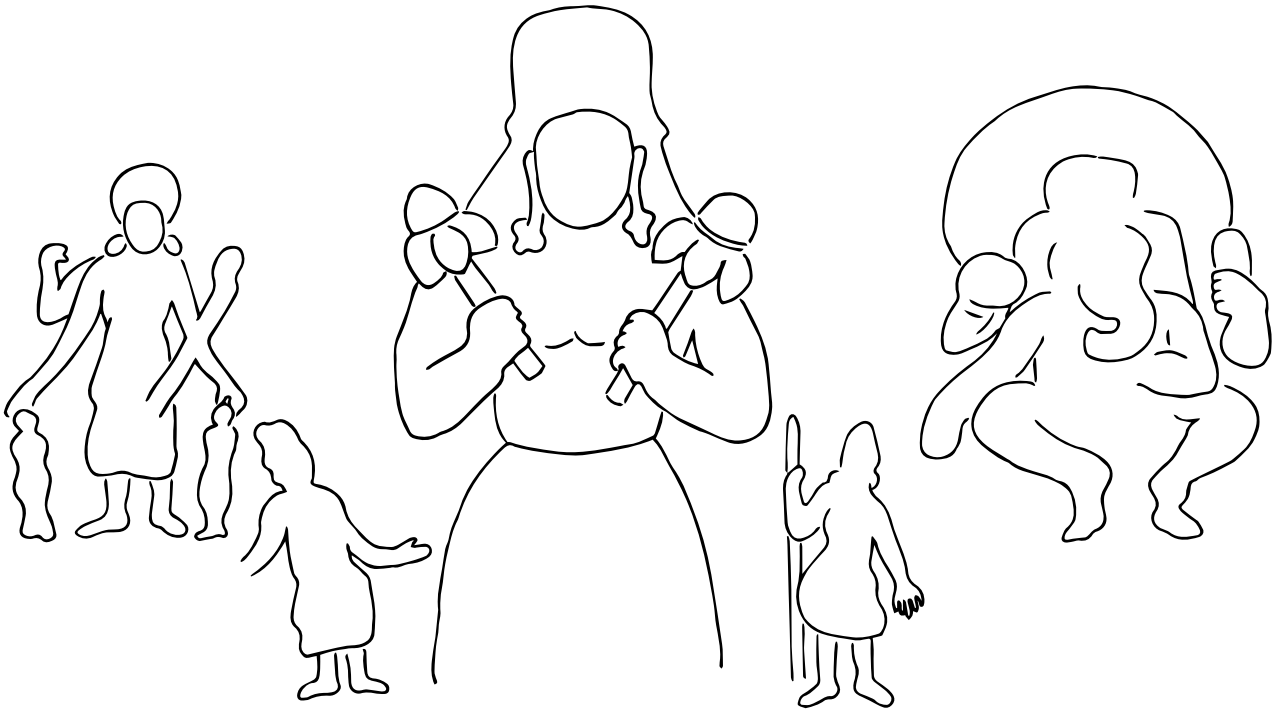
GS 40

Sūrya and Gaṇeśa



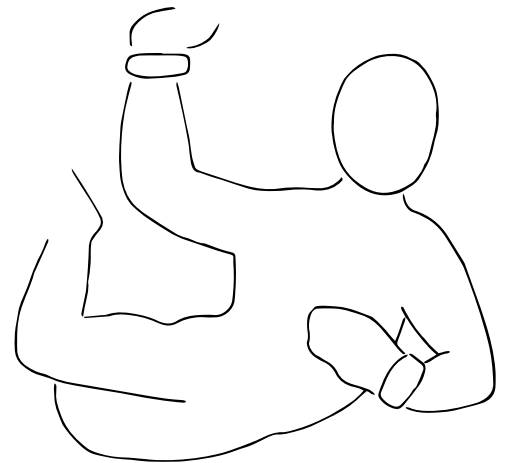
GS 41

Sūrya and Gaṇeśa



GS 42

*gandharva/vidyādhara*



GS 43

## APPENDIX II

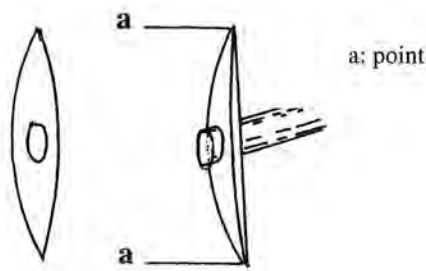
### Rock-cut carving and stelae in the Swat Valley: a commentary on the carving technique by Peter Rockwell

Most essays describing the techniques of a group of carvings can follow a rational sequence, describing the tools and the techniques involved. For a number of reasons this is not possible with the rock-cut carvings and the stelae of the Swat Valley. These carvings show a variety of technical contradictions (or so it seems at least to this observer) between the carvings and differences from both what one would normally expect and what one sees in other areas and periods of stone carving. Therefore this essay will take the form of a series of commentaries which will attempt to give a technical description of the carvings as well as explain how unusual they are. The result may not solve the problem of how these works were carved but rather suggest why such a solution is difficult to arrive at. Finally, some of the reasons for the technical anomalies certainly exist outside the area of technique. The carver/sculptors may have had to meet religious or aesthetic paradigms which required that they carve in particular ways or meet unusual conditions. As this is an essay on technique it is not the place to discuss this aspect, although it may be necessary to suggest its existence.

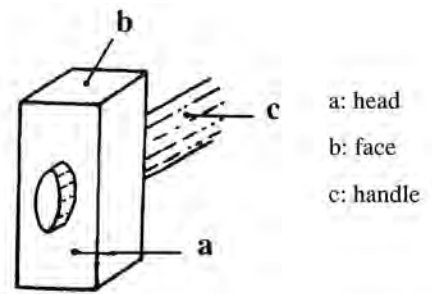
The first technical anomaly and perhaps the most important is that whereas most stone sculpture done in a limited period in a particular area is executed in one or two usually similar stones (the rock-cut temples in Deccan are all carved in volcanic tuff while the carving in Mahabalipuram and the surrounding area is all in a form of granite), the carvings in the Swat Valley are in a wide variety of stones which not only vary greatly in hardness but also in their reaction to tools. Many of the carvings are in gneiss, a hard granite-like stone. But there are also carvings in marble, a medium-hard material which is worked differently from gneiss, while still others are carved in forms of limestone, generally a softer stone. Finally, one unfinished stela is carved on green schist, a very soft stone which also has a tendency to split easily. Each of these stones has characteristics which required it to be carved differently and often with different tools from the others. We are thus presented with a group of stone-carving sculptors who were technically sophisticated enough to be experienced with a wide variety of stones and knew that they must be treated differently, often with different tools.

There are two over-life-sized rock-cut Buddhas which are virtually identical in pose but in different materials. One (C92; II: Figs. 92a-d) in gneiss is carved on a rock face rather high above ground level. It is perhaps the largest of the rock-cut Buddha figures. The other (C115; II: Fig. 115; GS 2) is in marble, also large, considerably over-life-sized, but at ground level. The pose and design of the drapery are very similar, yet there are obvious differences in the sculptures. The sculpture in gneiss is in lower relief, and the drapery folds, the spaces under the legs and overall depth of relief of the details are much less pronounced than those of the marble Buddha. The marble Buddha has small details of design – such as a twisting fall of drapery from the right ankle and the treatment of the drapery where it lies across the platform on which the figure is sitting – which are carved much more ornately than on the gneiss figure. The gneiss figure has decorative falls of drapery in the same area, they are just simpler and in low relief. At first sight we might attribute these differences to different artists, period or clients.

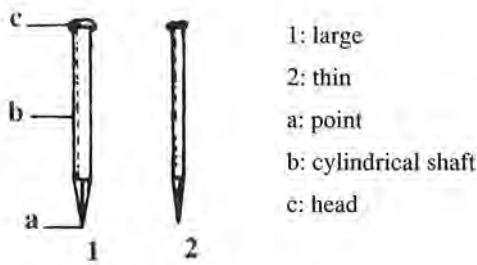
The gneiss has been carved using a sculptor's pick hammer or *picchiarello* – a common tool in granite carving (Fig. 50). This tool, still in use in Swat, is like an axe with the cutting part being a point at one or both ends. The tool hits the stone at a ninety-degree angle, slowly chipping away the material. The carver gradually picks out the form, breaking off small pieces of stone with each blow. He does not cut the stone but rather shatters it. With this tool it is easy to engrave shallow lines and forms, but more difficult to create a three-dimensional form. It is especially difficult to cut deep narrow passages and next to impossible to carve undercuts into the stone. Because this Buddha in gneiss was in good condition until the iconoclastic attack in 2007 (see Chap. 3.1, fn. 60), we can see in the details such as the eyes and the lines of the drapery the little holes made by the pick hammer (II: Figs. 92b,c). At no point do we see the long lines of a tool passing along the stone.



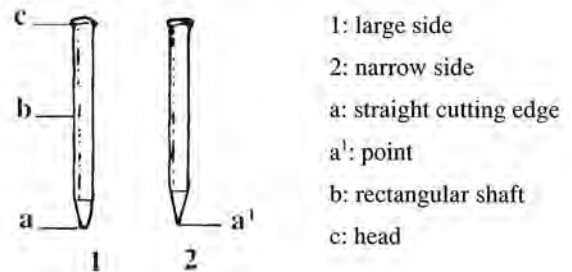
**Fig. 50** – Picchiarello (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 27, pl. 1.6; modified by the author)



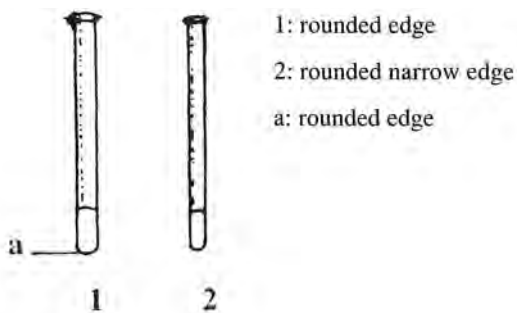
**Fig. 51** – Hammer (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 27, pl. 1.1; modified by the author)



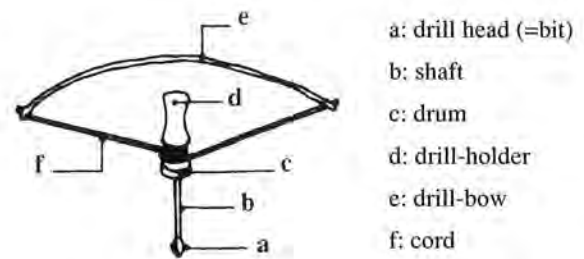
**Fig. 52** – Point chisel with cylindrical shaft (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 28, pl. 2.1; modified by the author)



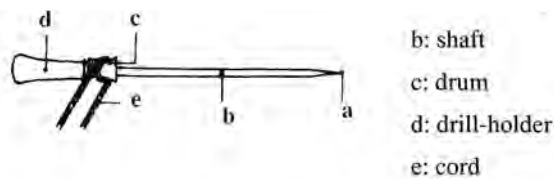
**Fig. 53** – Point chisel with rectangular shaft (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 28, pl. 2.2; modified by the author)



**Fig. 54** – Rounded edge chisel (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 28, pl. 2.4; modified by the author)



**Fig. 55** – Bow drill (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 30, pl. 4.1; modified by the author)



**Fig. 56** – Strap drill (after Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 30, pl. 4.2; modified by the author)

The marble Buddha is in much worse shape. The head and shoulders of the figure are damaged so as to be unrecognisable. However, we can see that the whole figure is carved more deeply into the stone and the arms and legs cut more roundly and in deeper relief. The drapery beneath the legs is carved more intricately and in deeper relief as well. Although the damage makes the tool marks much harder to recognise, there are no signs of the *picchiarello* visible. The more complicated drapery around and beneath the ankles seems to be carved with a hammer (Fig. 51) and flat or round-headed chisels (Figs. 52-54). It is possible that a drill (Figs. 55-56) was used in the areas of complicated drapery. In other words, the sculptor is using a marble carving technique which allows him to carve deeper incisions and a more three-dimensional form.

A third figure, this time from Puran (Olivieri 1994: fig. 19; here, Figs. 36a,b,c), has been carved with a *picchiarello*. I do not have an identification of the material but it looks like gneiss. One can see this from the details of the arm bracelets as well as from the drapery beneath the raised ankle and foot (Figs. 36b,c). Although the relief is deeper and the drapery is in slightly deeper relief and more complicated than that on the first gneiss figure, one can see that the carver has avoided the more intricate folds of the marble Buddha. The difference between these two gneiss carvings suggests the difference between two sculptors' interpretations of the medium, whereas the difference between these and the marble carving show the differences between the handling of two types of stone.

A fourth carving is an unfinished stela in schist (S105; II: Figs. 105a,b,c), the soft stone that was used frequently in Gandharan sculpture. In this carving one sees the use of a point chisel to rough out forms. These forms are carved out deeply and not rounded, but the cuts to outline the arms and legs are vertical to the face of the stone. One has the impression that the depth of relief will be even greater than the marble carving. The carver is clearly working with a very soft stone which allows both deeper and cleaner cutting even than the marble. Interestingly, the workmanship is not the same as unfinished Gandharan sculpture. On this stela there is much more work with a point chisel whereas at the same level of work a Gandharan sculptor would be using a flat chisel. The composition of the figure indicates that it is probably contemporary to the rock-cut figures discussed above.

The conclusion we can draw from this comparison is that we are dealing with sculptures carved by sculptors who were capable of working in different materials with different techniques. If we do not accept this, we have to presume that there were enough sculptors working in the Swat Valley, during a period in which it was not an important centre, that there could be specialists in each material. Both possibilities have existed in different periods. There was specialisation in Western Europe and the northern US in the second half of the nineteenth century. For example, the granite decoration on the outside of the New York State Capitol building was carved by sculptors of German descent whereas the soft sandstone interior work was done by Irish carvers. However, there were over a thousand stoneworkers working on the building at the time. Given the number of rock-cut carvings it is impossible that there would have been such a large number of sculptors working in the Swat Valley during the period in question.

An opposite example can be given from the present: I have been working in a carving shop in Carrara, with no more than fifteen workers, where the carvers were able to carve in almost any stone. This is because there are now no large carving shops; each needs to be able to do work that arrives from many parts of the world, such as a full sized portrait of the wife of the President of Korea in marble, a large granite abstraction for Europe, or limestone carvings for North America. It is therefore necessary for carvers in this workshop to work in many different types of stone. However, this type of workshop depends entirely on modern tools, such as the pneumatic hammer and tungsten carbide (Widia) cutting tips, which allow a marble carver to treat granite with a technique that is closer to marble technique than was possible before the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the case of the stela and especially the rock-cut carvings in the Swat Valley, it seems to me that the only reasonable possibility is that a small number of sculptors were forced to learn to work in a variety of materials. The reasons for this unusual situation are derived from the special conditions they worked under. The first of these is the peculiar geological nature of the Swat Valley. Existing as it does along a major geological fault, it seems to contain almost every variety of stone imaginable. While almost every other area with stone monuments has only one or two workable stones – for example, marble at Pisa, volcanic tuff in Deccan and on Easter



Island, and travertine and peperino in Rome – the Swat Valley has gneiss, marble, limestone, schist, and slate. Even in the Gandharan monuments, on which the sculpture and carved decoration were made in schist, the structures were in a variety of stones, often that which was closest to the building site. Thus the schist could be reserved for the sculpture and carved decoration. The second reason is that these are rock-cut sculptures, and it is possible that the places where the rock-cut figures were sculpted were determined by clients not on the basis of the stone. Perhaps the placing of the rock-cut carving was dictated by the presence of a monastery or a particularly holy site. Given the variety of places where these carvings are found, this seems the most likely explanation. Therefore the carvers had to be prepared to work in any one of a variety of stones. The geological makeup of the area is so complex that the conditions did not exist for the carvers to specialise.

An important characteristic of the rock-cut carvings is the lack of preparation of the surroundings for the carvings. The sculptures are occasionally cut into rock faces, as with the large gneiss Buddha, but in many cases they are carved on rocks sticking up out of the ground. If the rock face is slanted, then so is the relief. If the mass of the rock is rounded, then the figures at the sides are either smaller or set lower than those in the centre (C30, C48; II: Figs. 31a and 48a respectively). The figures always seem to be carefully placed so that they do not break the original profile of the mass of the rock. No attempt is made to prepare the form of the rock for the reception of the sculpture. The sculpture is carved to fit the rocks rather than the rocks being shaped to give a controlled space for the carving. An interesting comparison is with the carving in Mahabalipuram. The rock forms there are often rounded boulders (it is evidently one of the oldest unchanged geologic areas in the world). The boulders are much more detached from their environment than those in the Swat Valley. Yet the carving of these forms is so complete that they have lost all sense of being boulders. Even those areas where the basic outline of the natural rock forms has been preserved have been so completely filled with carved figures and architectural forms that the original outline of the rock is totally unimportant (see S.L. Huntington 1999: 302-303, figs. 14.16 and 14.18). Thus while the Swat carvers allow their work to be dominated by the natural surroundings, those in Mahabalipuram dominate the natural surroundings.

The closest thing I have seen to this sort of treatment of carved designs to the natural rock face is the drawings on the rock faces in the Upper Indus Valley (see Jettmar 1982). The Swat carvings are not put together in such a confused overlapping grouping as these drawings, it is true.<sup>240</sup> There is control and composition in the relationship of various figures. However, the siting seems to have an almost accidental characteristic about it, as if the carvers either do not care about the surroundings or desire the surroundings to dominate the sculpture. Little or nothing has been done to create a monumental environment for the figures or to group them with some sense of a formal aesthetic.

It is important to note how unusual it is for rock-cut carving to be carried out in this way. We have rock-cut carving in many areas of the world, from Egypt, Jordan, India, China, Korea, Italy (Etruscan tombs) and the modern United States (the portraits of four presidents at Mount Rushmore and a Confederate Memorial in Georgia). In every case the intent is for the carving to dominate the environment and not vice versa. It would seem that we are dealing not with an accident but with a technical-aesthetic decision. It cannot even be said that the placing of the carvings in some way protects them or avoids the inevitable weakness of the outer surfaces of the rocks. The reliefs carved on slanted stones are more subject to weathering than they would be if they were vertical. Nor are the figures of some of the carvings (C30, C48) set enough below the top of the block to avoid either weathering or the natural weakness that the more weathered surfaces would have. Thinking in technical terms, it almost seems as if some of the carvings were sited so as to make them as difficult to carve as possible.

A characteristic that the stelae have in common with the rock-cut carvings is that the outer shape of the block shows no signs of special shaping (Figs. 1-2). It would seem that the stelae were not quarried as such.

<sup>240</sup> It is interesting to note that the Swat carvings in gneiss and the carvings and the inscriptions in the Upper Indus Valley are carried out with the same type of tool used in the same way, although in the case of some of these works the tool may have been a stone rather than metal tool.

More likely, they were either smaller stones found in the fields or stones that could be conveniently broken from a larger mass. Therefore they share with the rock-cut carvings a lack of interest on the part of the sculptors in preparing a carved environment for the figures. The principal differences between the stelae and the rock-cut carvings are two. The first is that with a few exceptions (S69, S85, S140, S141; II: Figs. 71a,b [GS 39], 87, 140 [GS 38] and 107 [GS 18] respectively) the stelae all depict single figures.<sup>241</sup> The stelae are obviously meant to be simpler and dedicated to only one figure, whereas the rock-cut sculptures are more complex in their frequent representation of several figures and the way they relate to each other. In technical terms, this means that the stelae are simpler to design and to carve.

The second distinction between the stelae and the rock-cut carvings is that the stelae all have a flat background to the figures. The background would seem to be the same level throughout.<sup>242</sup> This means that the sculptors could be preparing their design much as archaic Greek sculptors prepared their reliefs. The method involves first drawing an outline of the figure on the face of the stone. Then the stone around the outline is carved away to a flat plane which is the background. After this, the rounding of the figures and their details are carved as a separate process. If this is the method by which the stela figures were carved, it means that for a design the sculptor needs only a simple outline drawing. The details of dress and anatomy are not included in the design but are invented by the sculptor as he carries out the final carving. The one unfinished stela, the schist piece (S105), suggests that this is the process. Nonetheless, this description of the method must be considered a hypothesis, as we have only one example. In any case the fact of the flat background is an important distinction between the stelae and the rock-cut carvings.

In the rock-cut carvings the shape of the outer line of carving around the figure or groups of figures is just enough to allow the sculptor to carve the figure to the depth desired. It is as if the sculptor drew his basic design on the rock face and then started carving, leaving just enough space from the outline of the figure to allow carving the relief to the desired depth. The effect is almost like having a shadow outline around the figure which always follows the outline of the figure itself. This effect is especially clear in the gneiss carvings, such as the large Buddha (C115), but it is also clear in the other gneiss carvings. The marble carvings, in contrast, have a much deeper cut around the figures, which allows a deeper relief. The cut is also inclined to be at a sharper angle to the front face of the stone. One would suspect that the reason for this is the hardness of the gneiss, which makes it much more difficult to cut deep relief into it.

Another interesting and unusual technical characteristic of many of the rock-cut reliefs is that the background – what there is of it – is not flat but rather a concave curve moving into the stone. Because of this the relief of many of the figures is deepest between the torso and the arms of the figures. One has the impression that the carver started from the outside and worked toward the centre of the relief, carving deeper and deeper relief as he got nearer the centre. I have never observed a technique like this before and it is therefore difficult to explain its logic. One can only presume that it somehow facilitated the carving of the relief, although it is not clear why it did so.

This technique is not without variations, which suggests that it was thought out and not an automatic reflex. There is a large sculpted rock that has two groups on one side (C30; II: Fig. 31a). The larger group is made up of a central figure on a sort of throne flanked by two standing figures, while to the right of the figure standing on the right-hand side is a smaller figure that may or may not be part of the three-figure composition. The relief curves in toward the figures in much the same way it does in other compositions. However, the central figure stands out from the background further than the two side figures, while the deepest part of the background is not between the arms and torso but the area immediately behind the outline of the central enthroned figure, thus clearly defining the outline and emphasising the importance of this figure. The sculptor has clearly thought

<sup>241</sup> It should be noted that S140 is perhaps the most sophisticated in design of all those I have seen, including the rock reliefs. The organisation and balancing of the figures, as well as the upper framing, look much more carefully designed than any of the other sculptures.

<sup>242</sup> The only exception is again S140.

about his relief's subject matter and modified the normal relief carving technique in order to emphasise the central figure. The result of this analysis of the relief techniques is to suggest that we are dealing with sculptors who are not simply craftsmen following a formula. They may have had formulas that they normally followed, but they were capable of making modifications when necessary.

The *picchiarello* has already been briefly described, but it deserves more attention because it is so important to the effect of the gneiss sculptures, which represent a majority of the rock-cut sculptures. As far as I know, the *picchiarello* was very seldom used as a finishing tool. Instead, it held the same place in the carving process of marble as the tooth chisel normally does in marble. It clarifies forms roughed out with a point chisel but does not clearly define them. In granite carving or in carving with stone tools (Inca and some Egyptian carvings, for example) the *picchiarello* or a pointed stone that functions in the same way as a *picchiarello* gradually refines the surface of the stone until it is ready for smoothing with abrasives.<sup>243</sup> To my knowledge, the gneiss carvings of the Swat Valley are the only sculptures where the *picchiarello* is used as a finishing tool. This leads to a certain kind of finished surface to the figures. Because the *picchiarello* works by striking the stone vertically and breaking away small pieces, it cannot cut sharp edges or deep narrow passages, which would create strong sharp-edged shadows. Therefore the surface of a sculpture finished with a *picchiarello* always has a certain softness of form. The forms are clearly visible but lack any sharp edges. This can be clearly seen in the face of the large gneiss Buddha (C92; II: Fig. 92c): the eyebrows are clear but the line formed by the juxtaposition of the forehead with the eye socket is soft because of the way it was cut. The same is true for the hair, where there is a certain softness in the passage between the forms. Thus the use of a particular tool, the *picchiarello*, imparts a certain effect to the sculpture.

The question that comes to mind, of course, is to what extent this is intentional. The carvers used different tools on the softer stones, so they certainly knew that the *picchiarello* was not the only tool available. This might suggest that its use was intentional. However, its use exclusively on the gneiss sculpture suggests that this was the only tool they had that could reliably cut the gneiss. The lack of any hard stone work finished with abrasives suggests that they did not have or did not know how to use abrasives to achieve a sharper finish. From another point of view, however, if they were satisfied by the effect of the *picchiarello*, why try for a sharper finish? It seems to me that the finish must have implied intentionality on the part of the sculptors because it is so consistent.

A major effect of the soft finish of the *picchiarello* is something that is impossible to convey in photographs. When one sees the figures in better condition, such as the large Buddha, they do not seem so much sculptures in stone as living presences in the hillside. The way they fit into the stone face without architectural framing or preparation of flat surfaces for the relief, combined with the softness of the detail, makes these figures seem to be expression of the mountains themselves rather than of human labour. This same effect is brought about by those reliefs that are carved into unprepared boulders. The question we must ask, then, is whether this technique is an intentional method to express a certain religious viewpoint. Is the carving done this way to show us that these religious figures actually exist in the environment? I certainly do not have sufficient knowledge of Buddhism to know if this notion would be consistent with its beliefs.

There is a problem concerning the statues which is made most clear by the carving of the eyes on the large Buddha C92. These eyes are carved as flat surfaces between the eyelids. There are no pupils or details within the eye proper. Were they left this way because they were intended to be painted with colour, or were they in fact painted and the colour has weathered away? This is of course a problem with all the rock-cut figures as well as with the stelae. They may have been intended to be painted, and there is nothing in the carving inconsistent with this, but the paint no longer remains. We know that some Gandharan and much ancient statuary were painted so there would be nothing inconsistent in painting them. However, the lack of any evidence of paint means that we have no way of answering the question.

<sup>243</sup> The *picchiarello* is also used as a sort of drawing tool, creating drawings on polished coloured stones. Examples of this can be seen in modern Muslim tombstones in Swat and on some Ancient Egyptian granite figures. The marks of the *picchiarello* are white against the colour of the polished stone, thus creating the drawing.

How were these reliefs designed and how were the designs applied to the stone? Again we face a lack of evidence. There are no signs on the carvings themselves of centring lines or measuring lines. In fact, there is no evidence showing a method of applying a drawing to the stone. We can see that these carvers were either unaware or uninterested in the earlier methods of using incised lines for working from design to finished carving.

A notable element of these sculptures, both the rock-cut figures and the stelae, is the limited number of designs and figure types. Added to this is the simplicity of their placing without any architectural settings. What variations there are could easily be the product of an individual sculptor, carried out while he was carving. It would therefore seem that we have two possibilities for the way the designs were passed. The first is that there existed some sort of design book or series of drawings of the basic figure designs that a sculptor would carry with him as a part of his tools. This solution is one often preferred by art historians for other periods: the existence of a sort of pattern book that could be copied and passed on. An interesting variation on this existed in the Carrara workshop, which in the 1960s specialised in Christian religious statuary. There was a printed catalogue which contained nothing but small photos of most of the variations on the Virgin and important saints. When a statue was ordered, the carver was simply told to do number 23, for example, and given the height. Thus one would see a carver carving a statue of the Virgin with flowers in a block of marble almost two metres high, working from a printed photograph only about twenty centimetres high. The carver did not take measurements but worked only by eye. There is no reason why the carvers of the Swat Valley could not have been working in the same way from a set of simple line drawings. The question then is what was the material on which these line drawings were made?

There is, however, another method within the traditions of stone carving. This is the simple one by which an apprentice carver learning the trade also learns a group of traditional designs. These designs do not need to exist except in the memory of the master, who can then pass them on to his apprentices, who memorise them. Given the fact that the carvings in the Swat Valley have few basic designs which are repeated with variations, this seems to me as likely an explanation for the continuity of the designs as the existence of drawn designs on paper, wood, etc.



**Figs. 57a,b** – Saling (Baltistan): Graffito or preparatory sketch for a relief  
(a: after Klimburg-Salter 1982: 20, fig. 2; b: courtesy Heidelberg Akademie der Wissenschaften, Felsbilder und Inschriften am Karakorum Highway)

In either case, the carver probably simply sketched the composition on the stone with a coloured stone or a piece of charcoal and worked from there.<sup>244</sup> Given the lack of any sign of measuring marks or incised design lines, this seems most likely. What this presumes then is probably a small number of itinerant or semi-itinerant sculptors who were prepared to carry out commissions within a limited number of designs. What makes them different from what one would expect from this description is their ability to work in a variety of different stones requiring different techniques. They were not simple craftsmen used to working in one or two materials. They were sophisticated craftsmen at least in terms of their ability to adjust to a variety of stones. In this sense our image of humble itinerant sculptors is wrong. They were technically highly competent stone-carvers.

Another aspect of their technical skill is their ability to work on rocks lying about in the countryside. Under the normal conditions of carving, one avoids stone that has been on the surface and weathering for a long period of time. This is because this stone is likely to have fractures and weakness caused by its long exposure to the elements. The Swat sculptors were obviously working with this sort of stone. One must presume, I think, that the stones they were working with weathered well, or that they had some choice in location so that they could avoid those areas where the stone was not fit for the type of sculpture that they carved.

A further point contradicting the image of a simple itinerant sculptor is the variety of details added to their basic designs and the quality of the works, even given the weathering damage they have received. This is true both of the lower drapery of the large marble carving (C115) and of the details of some Padmapāṇi figures (e.g. C41; II: Fig. 36, GS 11; cf. also the above-mentioned relief from Puran). Especially on this latter figure the carving of the flowers, the drapery falling from his waist under his ankle, and the necklace all show a delicacy and an individuality of carving that suggest an expert sculptor. We are thus looking at the work of sculptors who could not only handle large sculptures but also add delicate and interesting details. This, as well as the ability to handle a variety of stones, indicates sculptors of considerable ability and training.

This combination of a small number of basically repetitive overall designs and a lack of any interest in a background or framing for the figures, along with the seemingly contradictory evidence of elements of technical virtuosity, is what makes it so difficult to place these sculptors in relation to carvers and sculptors in other places and periods. In contrast, the carvers of Mahabalipuram from close to the same period are wonderfully consistent. Perhaps we can only say that there must have been special conditions in the Swat Valley in the seventh and eighth centuries which allowed for or demanded sculptor/carvers with such seemingly contrasting characteristics.

Finally, from my point of view as a carver I can feel only great admiration for the qualities of the sculpture they were able to create under difficult conditions. Carving on site is difficult enough without the added difficulty of carving in the countryside on rock faces or masses rising from the field. The condition of stone types and their positioning represented circumstances for the sculptors that make it difficult to image that these craftsmen could have learned their trade somewhere else. I therefore think we must be dealing with a local tradition which developed locally and lasted as long as there were clients who wanted this type of work.

<sup>244</sup> Possible evidence in support of this hypothesis is offered by a gigantic graffito (c. 8 m high) in Saling (opposite Khaplu, Baltistan), representing a bodhisattva (Figs. 57a,b). This graffito might rather be the outline sketch of a relief never executed. The inverted-V lines above the head of the figure, indeed, suggest a canopy frame, which is more congruous to a relief. Though from a different area, this appears to be a suitable comparison for the technique we can conjecture in Swat. Moreover, the presence of canopies elsewhere, serving the function of protecting rock reliefs, makes even more significant their absence in Swat (cf. Chap. 3.2, fn. 65). I am grateful to Martin Bemann for pointing out to me the particular case of Saling, and for providing the relevant photograph [note by A. Filigenzi].

PART II  
THE CORPUS OF THE SCULPTURES  
Catalogue and Photographic Documentation

## INTRODUCTION\*

### The field research

The first information regarding stelae and rock sculptures with a Buddhist subject came from A.E. Caddy's fieldwork in the Malakand Agency (Caddy 1896), followed by A. Stein's reconnaissance carried out in Buner in 1898 (Stein 1898; Id. 1899).<sup>1</sup> Stein nevertheless believed he could identify a "purely Hindu character" in these works (Stein 1899: 14). He himself, with hindsight, then recognised the Buddhist nature of these monuments after the extremely important inspection he carried out in the Swat Valley in 1926 (Stein 1930), the starting point for all the subsequent archaeological and historical research conducted in the region. Without overlooking the research carried out by E. Barger and Ph. Wright in 1938 (Barger and Wright 1941), it was necessary to wait for the year 1956 before new and important data became available on these monuments. The inspection carried out by G. Tucci that year (Tucci 1958) may be said to have marked the beginning of the study and interest focused on these monuments. Between the late 1950s and early 1960s, the archaeologists of the Italian Archaeological Mission (hereafter MAI) carried out research in this field, in particular in the Saidu Valley (e.g. Taddei 1962). A first systematic reconnaissance was performed in 1964-1965 in the Jambil Valley by E. Cimmino and P. Guj, during the work that led to the compiling of the archaeological map of the Jambil Valley (Faccenna 1980-1981: pls. 1, 2; Faccenna *et al.* 1993: pl. XXIX). An important contribution to the study of these monuments came, in the late 1960s, from the publication of the results of the research carried out by A. H. Dani in the neighbouring district of Dir and the Malakand Agency (Dani 1968-69a). In the 1980s, the research continued and was expressed in the form of reports or specific finds both in Swat and in the surrounding areas (Callieri 1985, Callieri 1986, Callieri 1990, Taddei 1985).

In 1987 Domenico Faccenna decided to undertake, as a research project, the comprehensive survey of these monuments, both those still *in situ* and the ones preserved in museums and collections, also including archival data.

A preliminary inspection of the rock carvings was then made in the autumn of 1987. In spring 1989 an intensive reconnaissance was carried out over a period of about three months. Further reconnaissances were performed in 1990-1993, 2004, 2006, and 2010-2011. Our fieldwork was based extensively on the previous reconnaissances by the MAI, the Department of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM) and others in the Swat Valley and neighbouring areas.

Particular interest was focused on the study of the location of the surveys in the territory and on the attempt to come up with a functional interpretation. As mentioned earlier, the autumn 1987 reconnaissance was preliminary in nature and served to frame the reconnaissance problem in its various aspects, ranging from topography to catalogue type and photographic documentation.

During the spring 1989 reconnaissance, an initial census and documentation was made of monuments (some of which already known) located in valleys that were well known from previous work: the Jambil and Saidu Valleys. Consideration was later given to the Ugad Valley (N of Jambil). After the exploration of the valleys of these three tributaries of the left bank of the Swat, the reconnaissance was then focused on the left side and subsequently on the right side of the Swat Valley as far as the Chakdarra area.

Following P. Callieri's research work in Puran (Callieri 1985), it was endeavoured to verify whether the sculptured monuments of the type under investigation might be located in the vicinity of the ancient communi-

\* The Introduction and the geographic data for each area are by Luca M. Olivieri (LMO), while the description of each monument is the work of Anna Filigenzi (AF)

<sup>1</sup> Caddy's fieldwork has been examined in Olivieri 2015 (documents 6 and 42, the latter with commentary), and Behrendt (*ibid.*, Appendix 1).

cations routes and in particular of the mountain passes linking Swat and Buner (along the southern watershed), Puran, and the upper reaches of the Indus (eastern watershed; Callieri 1985: 205-206, pl. VII; Callieri 1990: 120; Faccenna *et al.* 1993: 137). The most important mountain passes in this sense are those situated at the end of the valleys of Saidu (principally the Moi-kandao, 2195 masl), Jambil (Kalel-kandao, 1946 masl), and Ugad (Bar-kandao, 2669 masl). In this connection research was carried out (1990-92) in all these areas, with a further extension to the area N of Bar-kandao, along the Rani-sar range, and on the southernmost passes of the so-called “Buddhist roads” (in particular from the S: Cherat-kandao, 1013 masl; Morah-kandao, 1175 masl), leading into the Mardan area, as well as on the extremely important Karakar-kandao (1236 masl). Subsequently (1993) archaeologists turned their attention to several zones situated beyond these passes, specifically Buner and Puran (Olivieri 1994; followed by Saeed-ur-Rehman 1996), where rock reliefs had actually been reported in the past (Stein 1898, Callieri 1985).

While we were concentrating our efforts on these areas outside the Swat valley, Pakistani colleagues continued the research in Swat proper, a fact that eventually led to the discovery of various new monuments (Ashraf Khan 1996c; Sardar 2003, 2004-2005, 2005; see fn. 3).

The last steps of our reconnaissance were carried out in 2004, 2006, and 2010. The two campaigns in 2004 and 2006 fortuitously led – in the framework of the Archaeological Map of the Swat Valley Project (AMSV)<sup>2</sup> – to the discovery of previously unknown carvings in the areas of Manyar (Tindo-dag) and Arabkhan-china (Jambil). Finally, more newly discovered stelae were documented in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

In our documentation fieldwork we were assisted by members of the MAI staff, namely Mr Dowar Khan (1989), Mr Aziz-u-Rahman (1989), Mr Akhtar Manir (2000-2010), Mr Shafiq Ahmad (2006-2010), and the late Mr Zamani (1987) and Mr Fazal Wahid (1991-1992).

As shown by the catalogue, it was found that the majority of the rock monuments were situated in the immediate vicinity of the sacred areas, or along the paths accessing them. In no case (except for the Spinubo stela S105; II: Figs. 105a,b,c) were they found at any great distance from the places of worship, and certainly not along the ridges or in the vicinity of the mountain passes. This is without doubt of considerable significance. It must also be considered significant that rock monuments were not found in all the known sacred areas of Swat (not, for instance, in Abbasaheb-china, Tokar-dara, Najigram, Nawagai, Nimogram, or Gumbatuna, to mention only the most important ones; see Olivieri and Vidale 2006). The area of diffusion of the rock sculptures is restricted to the principal valleys around the Mingora area; the more outlying finds of reliefs and stelae (at the present state of our knowledge) seem more like fragments of a rather circumscribed phenomenon than further centres of diffusion (for instance, at Parrai, Damkot, Mane-tangai, or several areas in Buner and Puran). As far as stela S105 (Spinubo) is concerned, the fact that it was found outside its specific context, in an advanced stage of processing inside the quarry from which the stone slab was extracted, demonstrates that the production of these sculptures must have been linked to a complex system (commissioning-quarrying-processing-transport in the case of the stelae; commissioning-processing in the case of the reliefs) that implied an economic life in the centres of worship that was neither static nor recessive.

<sup>2</sup> The AMSV project is currently directed by L.M. Olivieri and M. Vidale, but the project was first conceived in the late 1950s by Domenico Faccenna. A first form of the project was attempted in the early 1960s with the reconnaissance of E. Cimmino and P. Guj for the archaeological map of the Jambil Valley (Faccenna 1980-1981: pls. 1, 2; Faccenna *et al.* 1993: pl. XXIX; see above). The first AMSV phase was completed in 2006 and published in Olivieri and Vidale 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The first catalogue of this class of sculptures was attempted by Badshah Sardar 2005. The MAI specialists also contributed to this catalogue with data and photographs concerning the MAI collection in Saidu Sharif. However, Sardar’s work exhibits many gaps (documentation technique, photographic standards, and basic data) that unfortunately undermine its otherwise extremely useful documentary value. Nonetheless we refer to it when necessary. By the end of the MAI research in 2010 the following papers had already been published: Ashraf Khan 1994; Filigenzi 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2000-2001, 2003, 2010a; Olivieri 1993, 1994, 2003; Humera Alam and Olivieri 2011. Moreover, 2010 saw the publication of the first preliminary catalogue of the coeval Buddhist rock sculptures of Ladakh (Dorjay 2010).



## Methodology

The reconnaissance results are set out on the following GSP maps (scale 1:50.000): 38 N/14, 43 A/8; 43 B/1, 2, 5, 6, 9 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). It should, however, be borne in mind that at the time of the first reconnaissances (i.e. until 1992) these publications were not available, as Swat was considered a restricted area. The fieldwork was therefore initially dependent on partial mapping supports (Stein 1930: map 1; Tucci 1958: 287; Faccenna 1980-1981: pls. 2a, XXIX), and then on the general map elaborated by C. Faccenna on the basis of the available GSP maps, further elaborated by S. D'Acchille in Spagnesi 2006. Subsequently, the data were fed into a database interfaced with a GIS georeferenced system based on available GSP and satellite data. The digitising of the mapping and Landsat photo-satellite data was performed first by S. Laurenza (Vidale and Laurenza 2005) and then by E. Morigi as part of the AMSV Project directed by M. Vidale and L.M. Olivieri (Olivieri and Vidale 2006).

The final maps published here (Maps 1, 2) were developed by the University of Vienna, Department of Geography and Regional Research, in the framework of the FWF Stand-alone Project P 21902 "The cultural history of Uddiyana 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century CE", held by A. Filigenzi. They visualise all the relevant thematic data so far available, based on various geographic data and map sources, both of recent and older acquisition.

No specific data form was devised for recording data during the reconnaissance; however, account was taken of the indications provided by the MBBCCAA/CNR concerning the data structure of the archaeological monument data sheet (Parise Badoni and Ruggeri 1988). Wherever possible, special attention was focused on lithological analysis. The latter was performed by S. Lorenzoni and E. Zanettin Lorenzoni (Geomineralogical Department, Bari University) who monitored the archaeological reconnaissance in the field (Faccenna C. *et al.* 1993) and later by P. Rockwell, who also analysed the sculpture techniques used (see for example Rockwell 2006). Lastly, as far as photographic documentation was concerned, consideration was given to the peculiar nature of these monuments, situated as they often are in mountain areas and in sometimes inaccessible places. They have not always been well preserved and, as they are mostly carved on rock surfaces, present particular photographic problems relating to their exposure to sunlight, which in some cases emphasises them and in others conceals them.

When illustrating the position of all the monuments mentioned in the literature or documented during our reconnaissances with reference to their geographic and archaeological context, the order followed was that of the reconnaissance, discovery, and documentation of the principal areas: Mingora, with the related Jambil and Saidu Valleys; and Manglaor, with the Shaldara-tangai, Landai, Ugad, and Charbagh Valleys. The valleys of the tributaries were documented by following their courses upstream from the zones of greater concentration, first on the right bank and then on the left bank. The Swat River area was surveyed in a downstream direction, first the left bank (where the majority of sites were reported) and then the right bank. Lastly, the Buner and Puran areas were explored, though in a non-systematic way.

The monuments *in situ* and the stelae of ascertained provenance are illustrated in the first section. The monuments are broken down by area, by valley, by site, and then by individual location. For each valley the general bibliography is given, and for each monument the specific bibliography. Wherever possible, it has also been attempted to achieve a positive association between the monuments (or sites) and the individual sacred areas. When possible, the data sheets include a topographic reference to the site. Geographic coordinates, map references, AMSV nos. and the bibliography are given for each site (not for each monument); each monument is identified by an inventory number preceded by an acronym in capitals specifying whether it is a relief (C) or a stela (S),<sup>4</sup> and, for the stelae, by the present location (SM, PM, MNAOR, or MAI Headquarters).<sup>5</sup> Any missing information is conventionally indicated with [information] *vacat*.

<sup>4</sup> The cross-references between AMSV nos., Inventory Repertory nos., MAI Inventory nos., Figure nos. and Maps in this text are illustrated by Tabs. 1-2. Preliminary inventory nos. and serial nos. have been used during our fieldwork and are mentioned in different MAI documents, like survey logs, draft maps, etc.

<sup>5</sup> For these abbreviations, see the list given at p. 13.

The Catalogue refers principally to the data sheets compiled by the MAI during the surveys from 1987 to 1992 with the addition of finds made in 2004-2006 and 2010. It also includes the reliefs and stelae recorded and photographed in the past and subsequently lost: these monuments will have their own Inv. Rep., accompanied by the indication *vacat*. The Catalogue will therefore not provide a detailed analysis of the reliefs reported by other authors for which the original photographic documentation is not available or whose analytical data could not be verified. However, these monuments are mentioned in the topographic analysis referring to each area and assigned with their own Inv. Rep. no., basic description, and bibliography. In this way the quantitative census may be said to be complete as far as the current state of research is concerned.<sup>6</sup> In the second section of the Catalogue all the Swat stelae conserved in museums or collections of which the provenance is unknown will be presented. Wherever possible the location will be followed by the relative bibliography. As it refers to Swat *strictu sensu*, the Catalogue does not include the so-called monuments of Dir<sup>7</sup> (Middle Swat, lower section), Buner, and Puran, which were published separately (Dani 1968-69a, Ashraf Khan 1994, Olivieri 1994).<sup>8</sup> With reference to these areas, the Appendix at the end of the Catalogue will give only the geographic information, while their monuments will receive an Inv. Rep. number, again for the purpose of numerical completeness.

Inv. Rep. numbers are not in serial sequence.

The Photographic Inventory follows the Catalogue's order: to each monument is given a single Fig. no.; in case more than one photograph is published for the same monuments, the individual Fig. no. is followed by an alphabetic letter (example: Fig. 2; Fig. 5a; Figs. 7a,b).

### Additional notes<sup>9</sup>

“Lotus” or “lotiform throne”: unless otherwise specified, this refers to the most common form – tall, with rows of petals at the base and projecting cushion at the top; the variants, if any, are indicated.

The Padmapāṇi lotus: this always has a long stem. “Type a” is the most common form: undulating stem, first corolla fully opened and viewed in profile, which reveals the closed second corolla concealing the pistil, facing in the direction of the bodhisattva's face. Any variants are specified. The lotus (although present) is not mentioned when it is insufficiently well conserved to identify the type with any certainty.

“Central hem of *p.*”: circular, with inner hem falling vertically, with crenellated points.

Measurements are given in centimeters, in the following order: height, width, depth. The latter is not always given, particularly if the relief is badly worn; measurements given in parentheses generally indicate the height of the figure without nimbus.

Modern toponyms are transliterated without diacritical marks.

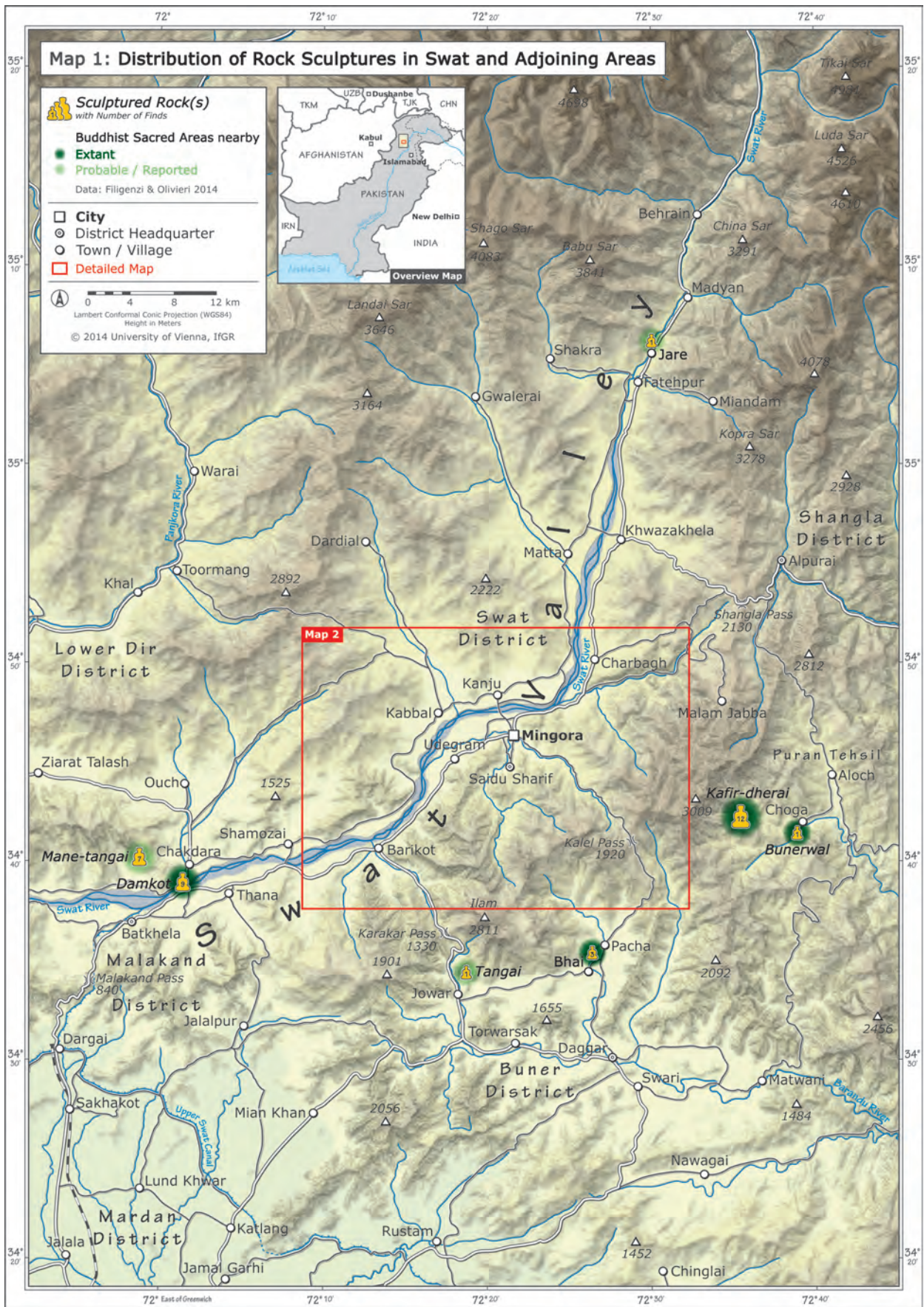
Photographs and metadata, unless otherwise indicated, were taken by L. M. O. during his fieldwork.

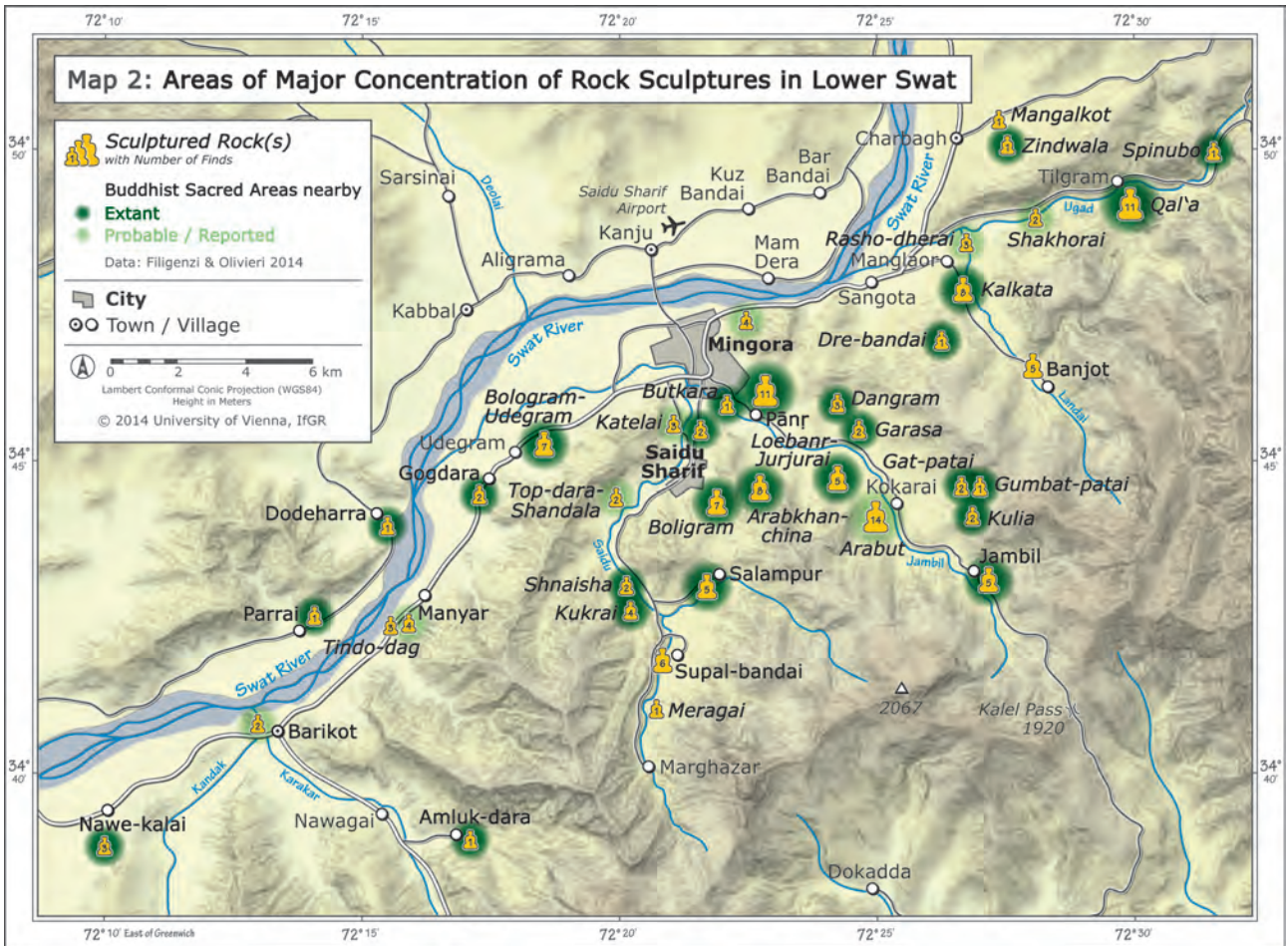
<sup>6</sup> For their topographic location, see Map 2.

<sup>7</sup> Actually they have been found in the Malakand Agency, not in the Dir District.

<sup>8</sup> For their topographic location, see Map 1.

<sup>9</sup> For the terminology used, we refer to Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007.





Name (Map)	Inv. Rep. No.
Amluk-dara (2)	C119
Arabkhan-china (2)	C28-34, C41
Arabut (2)	S40, S42-46, C47-48, S49, C50, S146, S189, C190, S197
Banjot (2)	C87-91
Barikot (2)	C117-118
Bhai (1)	C162-163, C198
Boligram (2)	C51-57
Bologram-Udegram (2)	C108-112, S124, S186
Bunerwal (1)	C164
Butkara (2)	C27
Damkot (1)	C148-153, C203-205
Dangram (2)	C16, S17-18
Dodeharra (2)	S181
Dre-bandai (2)	C76
Garasa (2)	C14-15
Gat-patai (2)	C19-20
Gogdara (2)	C113-114
Gumbat-patai (2)	S23
Jambil (2)	C24-25, C199, S26, S187
Jare (1)	C107
Kafir-dherai (1)	C165-176
Kalkata (2)	C79-84, S85, C86
Katelai (2)	C67, S68, C188

Name (Map)	Inv. Rep. No.
Kukrai (2)	C72-74, S75
Kulia (2)	C21-22
Loebanr-Jurjurai (2)	C35, S36-39
Mane-tangai (1)	C154-160
Mangalkot (2)	S141
Manyar (2)	C182-185
Meragai (2)	C66
Mingora (2)	C1-4
Nawe-kalai (2)	C120-122
Pānṛ (2)	C5-11, S12-13, C177-178
Parrai (2)	C123
Qal'a (2)	C94-104
Rasho-dherai (2)	C77-78, S132
Saidu Sharif (2)	S125, S192
Salampur (2)	C58-59, S60-61, C62
Shakhorai (2)	C92-93
Shnaisha (2)	C71, S179
Spinubo (2)	S105
Supal-bandai (2)	C63-65, C193-195
Tangai (1)	C161
Tindo-dag (2)	C115-116, C180
Top-dara/Shandala (2)	S69-70
Zindwala (2)	S106



## CATALOGUE

### 1. ROCK MONUMENTS *IN SITU* OR OF CERTAIN PROVENANCE (TABLE 1)

#### Mingora area

The Mingora area comprises two very important valleys: the Jambil Valley, which joins the Saidu at the level of Butkara, and the Saidu Valley, which joins the Swat, after following its course, in the proximity of Udegram. The two valleys are separated by the watershed of the Shararai chain, the highest peak of which, Mt. Loe-sar (2570 masl), lies to the S; both end in passes (see *infra*) through the mountains separating Swat from Buner (southern watershed). The Saidu Valley runs parallel to that of the Swat, from which it is separated by a mountain ridge that is joined to the southern watershed of Swat through the peak of Maran-sar (2181 masl; Ilam range: 2810 masl).

#### Jambil Valley

Stein 1930; Tucci 1958; Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965; Faccenna 1964; Faccenna 1980-1981: pl. XXIX; Faccenna *et al.* 1993; Abdur Rahman 1991; Ashraf Khan 1993; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan 1996c; Faccenna and Spagnesi 2014.

#### *Right bank*

#### Mingora and Pānṛ (AMSV 005, 006)

Lat. 34°45'N, long. 72°23'E. 43 B/5

Stein 1930: 42, 46, pl. 8; Tucci 1958: 309 (as Badama: 312); Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: nos. 62, 74, 73; Faccenna 1964: 53-55; Callieri 1985; Faccenna *et al.* 1993; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan 1996c; Filigenzi 1999.

A first group of monuments is situated on the outskirts of the heavily urbanised area of Mingora (formerly Mengjieli; see Olivieri 1996: 71), now called Faza-gat (Ashraf Khan 1996c). From here it must have been possible to reach the area of Manglawar via a path crossing the Shamelai chain. Here, on a rock cliff overlooking the NE sector of the Mingora bazaar, along the ancient pathway (which may be followed as far as the entrance to the present-day State Emerald Mine, Mare-kandao area; in Pashto, *mare* = emeralds), four reliefs were found (C2, C3, see Ashraf Khan 1996c: figs. 50 and 48; C1, C4). Starting from Mingora, the first is now located inside the city, on the E face of the rock cliff; the other three are found on the rock face skirting the narrow road leading to the mine. In this zone the *stūpa* of Rangmala-gumbat was reported, but is no longer visible today (Stein 1930: 42; Tucci 1958: 309; Faccenna *et al.* 1993: 136, n. 2).

The second group of monuments has been documented S of the limestone highlands of Kandao-patai (1292 masl), which is also part of the Shamelai chain (Faccenna *et al.* 1993: 136) WNW of the Buddhist sacred area of Pānṛ I.<sup>10</sup> The SE highlands are exploited as a quarry; to the NW, on the mountain sides, two reliefs (C5 and C6) were found to which may be added a further two (C177 and C178), located by Ashraf Khan (1996c: figs. 43 and 45B) in this area. The peak of the Kandao-patai takes the form of an amphitheatre-shaped ridge cut by a

<sup>10</sup> As detailed in Part I of this work, very few archaeological indications are available that may be used to date the rock sculptures of Swat. Their contiguity with several excavated and documented sacred areas may therefore be taken into consideration, at least for statistical inferences. As for Pānṛ I, see Chap. 1.3.

stream valley towards the N and the E, which here dominates the north-western outskirts of Mingora (the entire area is dotted with Buddhist ruins: Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: nos. 61/65). Corresponding to the innermost point in this amphitheatre, facing the sacred area of Pānṛ I, two further reliefs (C7 and C8) are located. On the slopes overlooking Mingora three reliefs were found (C9, see Callieri 1985: pl. Vb; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 46; Filigenzi 1999: fig. 1; C10; and presumably the above-mentioned C177). S of the site of Pānṛ I, along the road, a relief (C11) is found in the vicinity of a brick kiln (Rash-gata area). The two stelae S12 (Sardar 2003: 10-11, pl. 14) and S13 (Ashraf Khan 1993: 25, fig. 8; Sardar 2003: 3, pl. 1) also come from this area, although their original location could not be ascertained.

Inv. Rep. C1 (Figs. 1a,b; GS 5) Buddha  
 Cons.: badly chipped almost over the entire surface; corrosion; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: calcareous schist.  
 Meas.: 250 (228-185) x 155 x 36.5; elephants: 42 x 55 x 25  
 Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 50.

Haloed Buddha, in *dhyānāsana*, with triple-lined neck; wearing *saṃghāṭī* with round neckline and central pleats over breast; on low quadrangular throne, with cushion, supported by three elephants squatting frontally, with head to right in profile, trunk lowered, folded towards the left, large elongated eyes.

Inv. Rep. C2 (Fig. 2) Bodhisattva  
 The relief follows the inclination of the schistose rock.  
 Cons.: very poor; badly chipped, corroded, abraded.  
 Mat.: sericitic limestone schist.  
 Meas.: 153 x 80 x 11.5 (max)  
 Ashraf Khan 1999a: fig. 48.

Bodhisattva in reverse *ap.*

Inv. Rep. C3 (Fig. 3) Buddha / standing figure  
 Cons.: severely leached, corroded, abraded; chipped; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: 70 x 72 x 13.5; 64 x 23 x 6; tot.: 120 x 96

Buddha in *padmāsana*, with nimbus (?) and aureole; on throne with cushion and figured front face: in the centre *cakra* with inscribed lotus; on the sides, two frontal lions with heads turned towards the wheel. On left: frontal standing figure, with long robe; right hand in *varadamudrā* with attribute (*akṣamālā?*); on base composed of a row of reverse lotus petals.

Inv. Rep. C4 (Fig. 4) Padmapāṇi  
 Cons.: very poor; badly chipped, corroded, abraded, especially the lower part.  
 Mat.: calcareous schist.  
 Meas.: 130 (115) x 80 x 7 (max)  
 Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*; with short necklace.

Inv. Rep. C5 (Fig. 5) Triad (Buddha and bodhisattvas)  
 Cons.: abraded; chipped; corroded. Buddha figure badly chipped and abraded on the head and shoulders; the right-hand figure badly abraded; upper part of left-hand figure missing.  
 Meas.: from right: 70 (65-58) x 27 x 3; 119 (84-74) x 55 x 21; 40 x 10 x 4.5  
 Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 45; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 2.

In the centre: Buddha with nimbus and aureole, in *dhyānāsana*, with *saṃghāṭī* with lateral pleats, uncovered feet, on a high throne covered by a drape, with cushion and base composed of petals and sepals and listel on top, supported (?) by two frontal crouching lions, with crossed paws, curly mane rendered by means of

circular discs, fur of the chest with leaf-like shape with central parting between them; between the lions are two small crouching animals, viewed in profile, converging at the sides of a *cakra*. On the sides, two standing bodhisattvas, half the size of the Buddha, on half-closed lotus corollas; the right figure with nimbus, on right leg, right hand on shoulder, left hand on flank with attribute; with *p.*, short necklace, pendant earrings, elongated headdress; left one on left leg; a vertical element (staff?) may be seen on right of the figure.

Volumes simplified and bulky, particularly conspicuous in the Buddha figure, which displays a rectangular bust, round shoulders, triangular leg profile; summary drapery execution, with occasional pairs of parallel lines; in particular the central hem of the garment and the drapery on its sides stand out as decorative devices.

Inv. Rep. C6 (Fig. 6) Triad (Buddha and bodhisattvas)  
 Cons.: poor; severely abraded; chipped; corrosion; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: *vacat*.  
 Meas.: from right: 72 (63) x 36 x 4; 88 (61-52.5) x 41.5 x 4; 59 (55) x 16.5 x 6

In the centre: Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, with uncovered feet; with nimbus and aureole, right hand stretching downwards, left hand on thigh (in *bhūmisparśamudrā*?); seated on a high throne with cushion, supported by a pair of frontal crouching lions with crossed paws, muzzles turning inwards and upwards, curly mane rendered by means of circular discs; on the right, bodhisattva seated on throne with cushion, in reverse *ap.*, short necklace, pendant earrings, high tapering headdress; right hand on leg (with attribute?), left hand on thigh, with attribute; on the left, bodhisattva standing frontally on right leg, haloed, with *p.*, short necklace; right hand on shoulder, left hand lowered, with attribute.

Details of the drapery have been preserved, with symmetrically arranged parallel lines.

Inv. Rep. C7 (Figs. 7a,b) Padmapāṇi  
 Cons.: very poor; only the figure's outline has been preserved.  
 Mat.: calcareous schist.  
 Meas.: tot.: 68 x 40; fig.: 60 x 40  
 Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*; the sharp outline of the ogival-shaped niche is visible.

Inv. Rep. C8 (Figs. 7a,c) Buddha  
 Situated about 70 cm to left of C7. On the right, in the immediate vicinity, two reliefs of which only the profile of the niche remains; the position, at a slightly lower level, follows the lines of rock stratification.  
 Cons.: very poor; only the outline of the figure remains.  
 Mat.: calcareous schist.  
 Meas.: 78 x 5; fig.: 60 (55-50) x 42 x 7

Buddha in *dhyānāsana* on podium, with nimbus and aureole; it is possible to observe the clear-cut lines of the niche, approximately triangular and rounded in shape.

Inv. Rep. C9 (Figs. 8a,b; GS 7, 24) Various subjects: Triad / Padmapāṇi.  
 On a large rocky outcrop with terminal lobe on the right, projecting upwards.  
 Cons.: fair; abrasions; lime incrustations; badly chipped on upper part, corresponding to the figures' faces and arms and Buddha's bust, as well as bottom left; crossed by a continuous vertical cut corresponding to the right knee of Padmapāṇi, and by a continuous oblique cut bottom left; corrosion.  
 Mat.: *vacat*.  
 Meas.: from right:  
 140 (134) x 89 x 7; 107 (88) x 25.5 x 6; 131 (88-80) x 69.5 x 3; 108 (94-87) x 36.5 x 4  
 Callieri 1985: pl. Vb; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 46; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 6; Filigenzi 1997: fig. 1; Filigenzi 1999: fig. 1; Filigenzi 2000: fig. 2.



Left: Triad; centre: Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, with uncovered feet, with nimbus (and aureole?), on tall throne with cushion and undulating lateral tassels; underneath the cushion, at the two extremities, two frontal lions, erect with their forepaws slightly spread and decorated with banded bracelets, head in profile view facing inwards, wavy mane with fur on the chest in a leaf shape, parted in the middle. At the sides, two smaller haloed bodhisattvas, standing in three-quarters view facing the Buddha, on a lotus with double corolla, the lower one reverse: on the right, Maitreya, with *p.* and *samghātī*; the right hand holding the ascetic's staff to the shoulder, sloping transversely; left hand below with ansated vase; on left Padmapāṇi (?) with *p.*, belt visible with knotted ends, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings; right hand in *varadamudrā*; left hand on the shoulder with reverse lotus (?), held at the lower extremity of the stem, with corolla facing downwards.<sup>11</sup> At the base of the relief runs a row of lotus petals and reverse sepals, slightly oblique, diverging from the centre.

On the right, and dominant in proportion, is a haloed pensive Padmapāṇi in *ap.* on a lotus throne; with *p.*, *dupaṭṭā* rolled around the arms and falling on the left side with pronounced undulation, bracelets, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings; tall headdress (crown?); three-lined neck; with type a lotus.

Slight anatomical disproportions are visible, especially in the exaggerated volume of faces and hands; the lions' figures are very clumsy and over-simplified; the drapery follows conventional criteria, with dense parallel lines; repeated curved and crested lines in drapery and headdress.

Inv. Rep. C10 (Fig. *vacat*) Two Buddhas in *padmāsana*  
Not far from Inv. Rep. C9.  
Cons.: very poor; only a few traces of the relief remain.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: from right: 31 x 29; 53 x 51

Inv. Rep. C11 (Fig. 9) Various subjects: Padmapāṇi / minor figures  
On the projecting isosceles lobe of a boulder.  
Cons.: rather poor; right side of relief missing as recently removed; severely leached, abraded, chipped; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: main figure: 130 x 75 x 13;  
minor figures: from below: 35 x 25; 65 x 47 x 4; 35 x 25

Pensive (haloed?) Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on throne with cushion. Left: in the centre Padmapāṇi, as above, smaller in size. Below: small figure in *padmāsana*. Above: small figure of Padmapāṇi, as previous.

Inv. Rep. S12 (Fig. 10) SM Standing bodhisattva (Vajrapāṇi?)  
Irregularly oval-shaped, elongated stela.  
Cons.: whole; face, lower part of legs and left arm badly chipped; abraded on the entire surface.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 136 x 58  
Sardar 2003: 10-11, pl. 14.

Bodhisattva, with nimbus with circle and flaming edge, standing on the right leg on a lotus corolla with reverse petals; wearing short *p.*, *uttariya* draped like a shawl, Brahmanic cord (?), crown knotted at sides with descending ribbons; the bracelet and decorated armilla on right arm, the short necklace and the earrings can

<sup>11</sup> For a possible comparison of this unusual attribute and the manner it is held, see the relief 1995.570.2 at the Metropolitan Museum (<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/38640?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=1995.570.2&pos=1>), which shows nonetheless some uncommon features in both iconographic and technical aspects, as for instance the shape of the throne and the attribute of the bodhisattva on the right side, possibly a long-stemmed lotus but of apparently inconsistent shape.

be made out; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand lowered. The relationship between the element depicted on the right (probably a lotus emerging from the ground) and the left hand (with *vajra* with lower point on the lotus?) is not clear.

Inv. Rep. S13 (Fig. 11; GS 1) SM Standing Buddha  
Irregularly oval-shaped, elongated stela.  
Cons.: whole; chipped along the top edge; whole surface slightly abraded.  
Mat.: dioritic gneiss.  
Meas.: 65.5 x 37  
Ashraf Khan 1993: 25, fig. 8; Sardar 2003: 3, pl. 1; *Gandhara, the Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan*: 364, cat. no. 288.  
Buddha standing (on base?), with *samghātī* with round neckline and central pleats, with crenellated hem on right, *antaravāsaka*, separate *uṣṇīṣa* with large ribbon or ring at the base; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand holding to breast a hem of the robe (?). Several anatomical details (hands, feet) highlighted by relative disproportion.

Inv. Rep. C177 (Fig. 12) *Vacat* (description based on Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 43). Bodhisattvas: two pensive Padmapāṇis and a standing bodhisattva  
Cons.: badly chipped and abraded.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: 230 x 170  
Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 43.  
Two pensive Padmapāṇis, in *ap.* on thrones of uncertain shape; with nimbus, tall crown, bracelets, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings, type a lotus. Between the two Padmapāṇis is a bodhisattva standing on right leg, on a pedestal of uncertain shape, with right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand at the shoulder, with attribute (?); wearing a short *p.*; of the ornaments only the pendant earrings are still distinguishable.

Inv. Rep. C178 (Fig. 13) *Vacat* (description based on Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 45B).  
Buddhas and bodhisattvas  
The carving is set in a sort of wide, open, rock shelter.  
Cons.: badly abraded and chipped; heads cut off.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: 122 x 170  
Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 45B.  
Five figures (A-E, from right): B and E are Buddhas in *dhyānāsana* on a low seat, probably a full-blown lotus with two opposite rows of petals; of the first one the nimbus and the body halo are visible. The three other figures are smaller; A: seated figure (in *padmāsana*? with body halo?); C: standing Padmapāṇi, in *varadamudrā*, with nimbus, tall crown, bracelets, short necklace, pendant earrings; D: pensive Padmapāṇi.

### Dangram and Garasa (AMSV 007, 008)

Lat. 34°45'N, long. 72°24' E. 43 B/5

Tucci 1958: 288, 312, 316, fig. 24; Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: 22a, 22b, 24; Faccenna 1964: 25; Olivieri 1993 (as Gudz); Ashraf Khan 1996c; Faccenna and Spagnesi 2014.

The small Dangram Valley (perhaps the ancient Dhānyapura; see Tucci 1958: 288, 316) stretches beside a right bank tributary of the Jambil. At the level of the Garasa village, another small river flows into the Jambil. The two valleys thus formed are separated by a small ridge, where the following have been discovered: relief

C14 and C15, just SW of the Garasa mosque. WSW of the first of the two valleys, about 500 m upstream from the Mingora-Jambil road, relief C16 was found (Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: no. 24; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 42). The three reliefs, and the stela S17 (Tucci 1958: 306, fig. 24; Sardar 2003: 12-13, pl. 19) and S18 (from Dangram; Sardar 2003: 19-20, pl. 31) might have been linked to the Buddhist ruins of Dangram (Tucci 1958: 312; Faccenna and Spagnesi 2014) (AMSV 007) and Garasa (Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: nos. 26/28) (AMSV 008).

Inv. Rep. C14 (Figs. 14a,b,c) Padmapāṇi / *stūpa*  
 On a polyhedric-shaped boulder.  
 Cons.: only fair; leached; corroded; abraded; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: 90 x 54 x 9; 52 x 18 x 2; tot.: 90 x 83 ca.

On the left: pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on throne composed of a double corolla lotus, the lower one reverse; wearing *p.* with knotted belt visible, with extremities descending on to the seat; crown with figurine of Buddha in *dhyānāsana* on the central crest; with bracelets, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings; type a lotus; on the right, small *stūpa* on plinth, with triple (?) moulded body, quasi-spherical *aṇḍa*, tall pinnacle and set of umbrellas probably supported by struts, which are still visible below the first *chattra*.

Relatively shallow field, of a roughly ogival shape.

Drapery rendered by dense parallel lines; despite the simplification of the volumes, a certain air of naturalism has been achieved, particularly regarding the position of the bodhisattva's body.

Inv. Rep. C15 (Fig. 15) Three Padmapāṇis / small figure in *dhyānāsana*  
 Decorated field delimited above by an engraved horizontal line that prolongs the natural fissure line to the left.  
 Cons.: badly corroded, abraded, chipped; large areas of lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: from right: 74 x 27; 35 x 22; 84 x 37; 95 x 43 x 4.5; tot.: 95 x 149

Three pensive Padmapāṇis, probably haloed, in *ap.*, with type a lotus, on a tall throne; the one on the left – almost completely conserved – with a base with a double row of petals, the lower one reversed; the central figure conserves traces of drapery in the space between the arms and the trunk, probably of *dupaṭṭā*.

Between the first and the second figure from the right there is a small figure in *dhyānāsana*, on a throne (with lotus-shaped base?).

Figures characterised by harmonious proportions and a degree of naturalism in the position of the body.

Inv. Rep. C16 (Figs. 16a,b; GS 16) Padmapāṇi / bodhisattva / Buddha  
 On a large elongated ovoidal boulder; the figured field occupies the left lateral extremity marked by natural fissures. In the vicinity there is a basin dug out of the rock.  
 Cons.: relatively poor; severely abraded and corroded; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: from the right: 78 x 40 x 4; 34 x 15.5 x 2; 105 x 56.5 x 9.5; 78 x 40 x 7.5  
 Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. IV.

At the centre: pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.*, on a tall (lotiform?) throne with cushion; long-stemmed, full-blown lotus in frontal view, on which there is a small figure of Buddha in *dhyānāsana* on a low seat, with nimbus with decorated circle. Right: a haloed figure (Buddha or bodhisattva?) in *dhyānāsana* on a throne with cushion, supported by three frontal lions sitting on hind legs. Left: a bodhisattva in reverse *ap.* on a tall throne, right arm stretching downwards (perhaps with a flat elongated attribute, held horizontally), left hand on thigh with attribute (*vajra*?).

1. Rock monuments *in situ* or of certain provenance

Inv. Rep. S17 (Fig. 17) SM Standing Padmapāṇi  
Stela with irregular elongated oval shape, with very low foot.  
Cons.: whole; almost entirely chipped, except for chest, right leg, and feet of the figure.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 136 x 64

Tucci 1958: 306, fig. 24; Sardar 2003: 12-13, pl. 19.

Padmapāṇi, nimbate, standing on right leg on flat full-blown lotus; wearing short *p.* with laced belt, knotted, with undulating end(s) descending in front, tall crown tied at the sides with descending ribbons, short necklace, earrings with polylobate terminal part; right hand in *varadamudrā*; left hand held low on one side grasping the curved stem of the lotus, which emerges from the ground.

Inv. Rep. S18 (Fig. 18; GS 32) SM Standing Vajrapāṇi  
Stela of irregularly oval, elongated shape.  
Cons.: whole; badly abraded: only the outline of the figure is conserved, lacking any legible details.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 59 x 28  
Sardar 2003: 19-20, pl. 31.

Vajrapāṇi, standing on right leg, with right hand with *vajra* held horizontally to the shoulder on one side, left hand on hip.

**Kokarai sub-area (AMSV 009, 010, 011)**

Lat. 34°44', long. 72°24' E. 43 B/6

Tucci 1958: 308, 312; Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: nos. 6, 11, 75, 84, 86, 87; Faccenna 1964: 25; Olivieri 1993.

Kokarai is a large village in the vicinity of a valley and stream. S of the village stands a shoe-shaped hill separating the narrow Kokarai Valley from another through which a stream runs; the latter is a right bank tributary of the Jambil, into which the stream flows in the vicinity of Jambil. Following the Kokarai torrent up its valley, we are led in an ENE direction to the Ghuz plateau: just before reaching the plateau (Gat-patai zone) we come across reliefs C19 and C20 near the ruins of Buddhist structures (AMSV 009); slightly after this (Gumbat-patai zone; Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: nos. 9 and 13) stela S23 was documented (AMSV 010). Continuing S at the same height we come to the village of Kulia, N of whose mosque stands relief C21. In this area, from which also relief C22 comes, numerous ruined *stūpa* were discovered (see Faccenna 1980-1981: pl. XXIX) (AMSV 011).

Inv. Rep. C19 (Fig. 19) Padmapāṇi  
Cons.: very poor; severely corroded and abraded.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: 130 x 86 x 6  
Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 42.

Pensive Padmapāṇi in *ap.*, with long-stemmed lotus, on tall throne with cushion and body subdivided into three horizontal rows of quadrangular ashlar (cf. Rep. C194, C72, S132); traces of the *p.* are still visible, in particular the drapery on the pelvis and the central hem falling over the throne.

Inv. Rep. C20 (Fig. 20) Padmapāṇi  
Cons.: very poor; almost entirely corroded and abraded, especially the upper part; head completely obliterated.

Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: 82 x 76 x 5  
 Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on tall throne with cushion.

Inv. Rep. C21 (Fig. 21) Padmapāṇi  
 On a round boulder on the edge of a cliff.  
 Cons.: head and lotus flower badly abraded; forearm and right hand badly chipped; slightly leached and abraded; small lime incrustations in the upper part of the relief.  
 Mat.: granitoid to granite gneiss.  
 Meas.: 210 x 150 x 13

Filigenzi 1996: fig. 5; Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. IIa.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, with nimbus and aureole, in *ap.* on tall throne with cushion and moulded base with pronounced lateral projection; wearing *p.* with central hem and belt falling over the throne, beaded armilla, pendant earrings, crown (tied at the sides?); with type a lotus.

The figure is characterised by harmonious proportions and by a certain naturalism in the anatomical rendering, despite the simplification of the volumes; thick drapery, rendered by means of symmetrical curved lines.

Inv. Rep. C22 (Figs. 22a,b,c) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs)  
 Various subjects: Padmapāṇis / Maitreya / bodhisattvas / Buddha(s) / *stūpa*  
 Cons.: severely abraded and corroded, especially the upper part: in particular, faint traces still exist of the heads of the minor figures. The description of the relief (not found in the course of recent surveys) is based on archive photographs  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: *vacat.*

Filigenzi 1999: fig. 2; Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. Ia.

Centre: Padmapāṇi, pensive, in *ap.* (haloed?), with *p.* with circular central hem with vertical drapery on the inside, with short necklace, pendant earrings with expanded final portion, with curved-stem lotus; corolla's shape unidentifiable. Symmetrically arranged around the central figure are four other minor figures, two below and two above: on top, on a base of uncertain shape, are two standing bodhisattvas, the one to right with right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand on the hip; the one to left with right hand on the shoulder (with attribute?), left hand on the thigh. At the bottom, even smaller figures: on the right, bodhisattva or Buddha, probably with nimbus and aureole, in *dhyānāsana*, with covered feet, circular central hem of robe; on moulded podium: on left Maitreya (with nimbus and aureole?), with *saṃghāṭī*, right hand on shoulder grasping ascetic's staff upright sideways, left hand below (with vase?).

On the left, in non-symmetrical arrangement, are other figures: above, bodhisattva standing on left leg, on base of uncertain shape; arm position not clear, however with elbows visibly protruding at the sides, especially the right-hand one; below, but smaller, pensive Padmapāṇi in *ap.*; on the left end of the figured field a small *stūpa* on a base composed of two (quadrangular?) bodies: the lower one, taller, with a niche in the centre, accommodating the figure of a Buddha in *dhyānāsana*; the upper one receding slightly; *aṇḍa* of uncertain shape (bell-shaped?), high pinnacle with circular disks with edge interrupted by regular engraving (small bells?).

Inv. Rep. S23 (Fig. 23) Padmapāṇi  
 Ogival-shaped stela.  
 Cons.: only fair, most of the surface badly chipped; leached; corroded.  
 Mat.: augen schist.  
 Meas.: 100 (90) x 70 (63) x 4

Pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.*, on tall throne with cushion and body with traces of figurations on the side (probably lions); at the base irregular projection (row of lotus petals?); the bodhisattva is wearing *p.* with

central three-pointed hem falling over throne, short necklace, pendant earrings, headdress with pronounced projection of central crest above; type a lotus.

Figure characterised by massive volumes; note the pronounced inclination of the head (index finger of right hand almost touching the forehead), which makes the pose less conventional than the more widespread model; traces of drapery, executed with parallel lines, are still visible.

### Jambil (AMSV 012)

Lat. 34°43'N, long. 72°27'E. 43 B/6

Tucci 1958: 310-311; Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: nos. 14, 15; Olivieri 1993.

The village of Jambil is situated near the end of the valley. The reliefs C24 (erroneously attributed to Fazagat by Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 49) and C25 were documented between the village and the river. A third piece reported during the 1965-66 reconnaissances upstream from the village (Faccenna 1980-1981: pl. XXIX), is relief C199 (not found). The stelae S187 and S26 have been recently documented in the same location. Near the village, on both sides of the river, a number of ruins, possibly belonging to Buddhist sacred areas, were noticed (Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: nos. 16, 113, 114 and 115).

Inv. Rep. C24 (Figs. 24a,b) Various subjects: three reliefs close together: Triad (Buddha and bodhisattvas) / two Padmapāṇis  
The reliefs are situated between two descending bands formed by natural fissure lines in the wall.

Cons.: only fair; badly leached.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: Triad: Buddha: 135 (87) x 69 x 15; bodhisattvas: 67 x 21 x 3; Padmapāṇis: from right: 53 x 35 x 4; 54 x 35 x 3; distance of the three reliefs from each other: ca. 1 m.

Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 49; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 16.

From the right: Triad: at the centre, Buddha with nimbus (and aureole?), in *padmāsana* and *abhayamudrā* (?); on throne with base composed of a row of reverse lotus petals, supported by two frontal, crouching lions with crossed paws; between them, in the centre, a vertical element (deers and wheel?) touching the base and the cushion; on the sides are two bodhisattvas appreciably smaller than the Buddha, haloed, standing frontally on bases of uncertain shape: the right-hand one with right hand on the shoulder, left hand at the side; the left-hand one with right hand lowered (in *varadamudrā*?) with attribute (*akṣamālā*? *kamaṇḍalu*?), left hand on side (with lotus?). These are followed, on the left, above, by two pensive Padmapāṇis in *ap.*, on thrones of uncertain shape; each of the figures is housed in an ogival niche with rather clear-cut lines.

Inv. Rep. C25 (Fig. 25)<sup>12</sup> Various subjects: Padmapāṇi / Buddha

Cons.: only traces of the figuration have been conserved.

Mat.: augen schist with fuchsite.

Meas.: in the order of the description: 84 x 54 x 5; 80 x 49 x 3; 60 x 35 x 3; 49 x 34; tot.: 310 x 105

Centre: two pensive Padmapāṇis in *ap.*, with minor figures at the sides. Right, pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* Left, Buddha in *dhyānāsana*; pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*

<sup>12</sup> Discovered by Badshah Sardar

Inv. Rep. C199

*Vacat.*

Inv. Rep. S26 (Fig. 26) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs).<sup>13</sup> Bodhisattva  
Oval-shaped stela.

Cons.: broken in two pieces, recomposed; badly chipped and heavily corroded and encrusted.

Mat.: gneiss (?).

Meas.: *vacat.*

Haloed bodhisattva seated in reverse *ap.* on cushion over tall throne with flat base; the right hand in *abhayamudrā* (?), the left hand lowered with attribute.

Inv. Rep. S187 (Fig. 27) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs).<sup>14</sup> Standing bodhisattva  
Elongated stela.

Cons.: badly chipped and heavily corroded and encrusted.

Mat.: gneiss (?).

Meas.: *vacat.*

Standing bodhisattva wearing *p.*, with long hair, necklace, holding a lotus (?) with the right hand, the left one lowered along his flank.

***Left bank***  
**Butkara (AMSV 013)**

Lat. 34°46'N, long. 72°22'E. 43 B/5

Stein 1930: 42-43; Tucci 1958: 287-288; Faccenna in Faccenna and Gullini 1962; Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: n. 118; Faccenna 1964: 27-52; Faccenna 1980-1981: 753, pls. 13, 470; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 44.

The monument, relief C27, was discovered inside the archaeological area of Butkara I<sup>15</sup> (in Pashto, *but* = idol; from “Buddha”) during excavation of the Inhabited Area near entrance E to the Sacred Area, perhaps in connection with an itinerary of access to the Sacred Precinct surrounding the *stūpa* area (Faccenna 1980-1981: 753, fn. 2; pls. 13, 470; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 44). Nearby is the sacred area of Butkara III (Abdur Rahman 1991); slightly to the W, towards the Saidu River, is an artificial mound where the fortified site of Barama I was discovered (Faccenna 1964-1965).

Inv. Rep. C27 (Figs. 28a,b) Padmapāṇi

Small boulder roughly triangular in shape, tapering upwards.

Cons.: broken in the centre into two reconnected fragments; head, and left arm and leg badly chipped; corroded; abraded.

Mat.: dioritic gneiss.

Meas.: 129 (124) x 83 (68) x 45

Faccenna 1980-1981: 753, fn. 2; pls. 13, 470; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 44.

Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*, with *p.*, crown knotted at the sides, short necklace, pendant earrings; on throne composed of cushion and lotus corolla with double row of petals and sepals, the lower one reverse.

Drapery sketchy and symmetrical, with closely-spaced thin pleats.

<sup>13</sup> Courtesy of Badshah Sardar.

<sup>14</sup> Courtesy of Badshah Sardar.

<sup>15</sup> Relief C27 can be tentatively – but quite reasonably – related to Period 5 (late seventh/early eighth century CE–tenth century CE) of the site.

### Arabkhan-china (AMSV 014)

Lat. 34°45'N, long. 72°23'E. 43 B/5

Stein 1930: 45, fig. 38 (as Shararai); Tucci 1958: 310, fig. 18; Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: n. 17; Faccenna 1964: 25; Callieri 1985; Olivieri 1993; Filigenzi 1999; Sardar 2004-2005 (as Rehman Cheena).

On high ground, near a spring, eight monuments were documented. Following the course of a stream up-valley leads one first to a flat area where the reliefs C28, C29, C30 (Stein 1930: fig. 38; Tucci 1958: fig. 18; Callieri 1985: pl. Vb) and C31 (Filigenzi 1999: fig. 8) were documented; further on, in an ESE direction, are the reliefs C32 and C33; lastly, slightly further upstream in a WNW direction relief, C34 is situated. Slightly upstream from this zone, near the ridge of the Shararai range, stand the ruins of six *stūpas* (Stein 1930: pl. 7). Recently a new carving has been documented (C41) in the plain S of the six *stūpas*.

Inv. Rep. C28 (Figs. 29a,b,c) Padmapāṇi / Buddha  
On an isolated boulder.

Cons.: only fair; leached; corroded; bodhisattva's face chipped all over; incrustations.

Mat.: augen schist.

Meas.: 148 (124) x 75 x 7; 60 (51) x 42 (37) x 3.5

Left: pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.* on lotiform podium; with type a lotus; wearing *p.* with central hem falling over throne, crown (cap-like with fan and knotted at the sides?), pendant earrings.

Right, centre, half way up: small Buddha in *dhyānāsana*.

Each figure is inserted in an irregularly-shaped field that follows the contours of the figuration.

The figures are massive, the volumes geometric; a degree of anatomical disproportion is visible above all in the compression of the trunk and in the ratio between the head and the rest of the body.

Inv. Rep. C29 (Fig. 30) Padmapāṇi / two Buddhas

A large niche carved onto an isolated boulder.

Cons.: only fair; leached; the bodhisattva has a completely abraded face; left arm and leg chipped; incrustations.

Mat.: granitoid two-mica gneiss.

Meas.: 115 x 80 x 71; 47 (37) x 30 x 8; 42 (36) x 32 x 8. tot.: 143 x 132 x 71

Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. Va.

Centre: Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.* on rectangular podium with cushion; with long-stemmed lotus; left foot on circular footstool; wearing *p.*, crown.

Sides: centre, half way up: two small Buddhas in *dhyānāsana*, inside niche.

The figuration is contained in a large field that is approximately oval in shape, with concave surface and projecting lower horizontal plane.

The figure of the bodhisattva is characterised by slender and harmonious proportions; in particular, the wide angle of the left leg and the slightly raised left shoulder enhance the slenderness of the figure and the impression of depth.

Inv. Rep. C30 (Figs. 31a,b,c,d,e; GS 6, 25, 37) Various subjects: Triad / Triad of bodhisattvas / Bodhisattva  
On an isolated boulder of a rather elongated oval shape.

Cons.: heads chipped, as well as the lower part of the large central Buddha; the central part of the relief is crossed by a large fissure; abrasions; corrosion; chipping.

Mat.: granitoid two-mica gneiss.

Meas.: from left: 52 x 20 x 2; 78 x 39 x 3; 95 (70) x 68 x 13; 95 (80) x 33 x 4; 50 x 18 x 3.5; 57 x 28 x 3; 46 x 20 x 3.7; right angle: 25 x 20 x 3.7

Stein 1930: fig. 38; Tucci 1958: fig. 18; Callieri 1985: pl. Va; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 3; Filigenzi 1997: fig. 3.



The composition is made up of three groups of haloed frontal figures: Triad with Buddha and bodhisattvas in the centre, Triad of bodhisattvas on the left, isolated figure of bodhisattva on the right.

Central group: in the centre: Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, wearing *saṃghāṭī* leaving the feet uncovered and with circular lower hem, on tall throne with turned legs; in the inner space between the latter are two frontal lions, with upright forepaws, globular eyes, and curly mane rendered as circular discs. Above the Buddha's head there are tree branches and leaves, or a fringed parasol. On each side of the Buddha are two standing bodhisattvas, on half-closed lotus with bordered petals and short stem from which project, at the side, two smaller lotuses, full-blown, with pistil clearly visible. The bodhisattvas are wearing *p.* with visible belt, with left end knotted, descending, right end lifted up and secured at the waist, pendant earrings; bodhisattva on the right (Padmapāṇi) on right leg, right hand on shoulder, left hand on side with type a lotus; bodhisattva on left (Maitreya? Mañjuśrī?) on left leg, right hand lowered to the side with *akṣamālā*, left hand on the shoulder with attribute (a manuscript closed by loop with pendant?). In the space between the two figures, above, four small minor figures: above, two flying (winged?) figures, in three-quarters view, converging towards the Buddha, with hands joined at the breast (with attribute?); below, two figures seated in European fashion with legs stretched wide apart.

Left group: three bodhisattvas with *p.*, pendant earrings. Centre: Padmapāṇi in *ap.* on tall podium with cushion-like row of petals on top, following the inclination of the right leg; with short beaded necklace, crown; type a lotus in the left hand. Sides: two bodhisattvas standing on lotuses with half-closed corolla with bordered petals. The bodhisattva on the left (Maitreya) with right hand to the shoulder with an ascetic's staff, left hand lowered holding a vase with vertical top handle and body divided into three horizontal, convex motifs; bodhisattva on the right with right hand lowered, with attribute (*akṣamālā*?), left hand on side, with attribute.

Isolated bodhisattva on the right: Maitreya, as in the preceding group, but with ascetic's staff held in the front, at a slight angle.

The figuration is enclosed in an irregularly-shaped field which follows its outline.

Simplified and massive volumes, drapery with closely-spaced parallel lines.

Inv. Rep. C31 (Figs. 32a,b; GS 20) Various subjects: Maitreya (?) / Buddha / bodhisattvas  
On bilobate rocky outcrop.  
Cons.: leached; abraded; chipped; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: two-mica granitoid gneiss.  
Meas.: from right: 65 x 38 x 4.8; 90 x 61 x 6.3; 49 x 14 x 4; 31 x 20.5 x 4; 84 x 44.5 x 5.5  
Filigenzi 1996: fig. 7; Filigenzi 1999: fig. 8.

Centre: haloed bodhisattva (Maitreya?), in reverse *ap.*, on lotiform podium, with base composed by a row of petals surmounted by a pronounced listel, on which two frontal lions stand erect on their forepaws, with curled mane. The bodhisattva wears *p.*, short necklace, pendant earrings, tall headdress (*jaṭāmukuta*? crown?) with side knots; right hand lowered on one side with *akṣamālā*; left hand on thigh with attribute (*kalāśa*?). Followed on left by two superimposed minor figures: below, standing haloed bodhisattva, with *p.*, pendant earrings, crown (?), probably Padmapāṇi; above, Buddha inside niche (with nimbus and aureole?), in *dhyānāsana* on tall throne, with cushion on a row of lotus petals; at each end of the figured field, a pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on a tall podium with cushion, the right-hand one smaller in size and better preserved, with *p.*, short necklace, Brahmanic cord (?), pendant earrings, crown.

The figures are characterised by harmonious proportions.

Inv. Rep. C32 (Fig. 33) Padmapāṇi  
On large rocky outcrop.  
Cons.: fair; nose and left hand chipped; slightly leached and corroded; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: 169 x 94 x 7

Pensive haloed Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on throne with body topped by laterally projecting listel, row of upturned lotus petals, cushion. The bodhisattva is wearing *p.*, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings, tripartite crown

with figurine of Buddha in *dhyānāsana* in the central crest; type a lotus. The figuration is enclosed in an irregularly-shaped field, clearly defined only on the right side, which roughly follows the figuration's outlines.

The figure is characterised by harmonious proportions; the details of the face have been partially conserved; it is round and prominent in the lower part, with large eyes, widely separated and slightly oblique; the drapery is stylised, with pairs of parallel lines; the hems of the garment fall over the throne and are given a manneristic treatment with alternating vertical curved and straight lines.

Inv. Rep. C33 (Fig. 34) Padmapāṇi  
 Small isolated boulder.  
 Cons.: very poor; badly leached, corroded; lime incrustations; only the figure outlines can be made out.  
 Mat.: *vacat*.  
 Meas.: 41 x 27 x 2  
 Pensive, haloed Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*, on throne with cushion.

Inv. Rep. C34 (Fig. 35) Buddha / Padmapāṇi  
 A roughly trapezoidal-shaped rocky outcrop.  
 Cons.: very poor; badly leached, abraded, corroded.  
 Mat.: *vacat*.  
 Meas.: 115 (91.5) x 66 x 12; 96 (84) x 53.5 x 6.

Right: Buddha, with nimbus and aureole, in *dhyānāsana*, with *saṃghāṭī* leaving feet uncovered, on oblong podium with traces of figuration on the front face. Left: pensive Padmapāṇi, slightly smaller in size, with nimbus and aureole, in reverse *ap.* and lotus in right hand, on low lotiform throne.

An irregularly-shaped field encloses each figure, following its outlines, with a deeper and clearer cut on the left side.

Figures constructed using geometric volumes, which are observable above all in the accentuated angle of the legs, especially those of the Buddha, rendered in the form of a triangle.

One significant detail is the pose of Padmapāṇi, which presents a mirror image with respect to the customary depiction.

Inv. Rep. C41 (Fig. 36; GS 11) Padmapāṇi  
 A large isolated boulder.  
 Cons.: fair.  
 Mat.: augen schist.  
 Meas.: 170 (160) x 125

Sardar 2004-2005.

Pensive haloed Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on throne with body topped by laterally projecting listel, row of upturned lotus petals, cushion. The bodhisattva is wearing *p.*, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings, tripartite crown; type a lotus.

The figure is characterised by harmonious proportions; the details of the face have been conserved; it is round with large eyes, widely separated and slightly oblique; the drapery is stylised, with pairs of parallel lines; the hems of the garment fall over the throne and are given a manneristic treatment with alternating vertical curved and straight lines.

**Loebanr, Jurjurai and Arabut (AMSV 015, 016 and 017)**

Mean Lat. 34°45'N, mean long. 72°24'E. 43 B/6

Stein 1930: 46, fig. 28, pl. 7; Tucci 1958: 305, 310-312, figs. 19-23 (as Shanglai, Arabut); Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965: 32, 84, 86-87, 101; Faccenna 1964: 25; Callieri 1985; Ashraf Khan 1993: 43-45; Olivieri 1993 (as Ghildodar); Ashraf Khan *et al.* 1996 (as Loi Banr); Faccenna and Spagnesi 2014.

SE of Arabkhan-china, along the contour of ca. 1200 masl lies a series of ruins of *stūpas* and remains of structures associated with them; moving NW up the valley, following this contour, we find the twin Buddhist sites of Loebanr (Ashraf Khan 1993: pl. IV, fig. 18; Ashraf Khan *et al.* 1996: 86; Faccenna and Spagnesi 2014) (AMSV 015) and Jurjurai (Stein 1930: fig. 28) (AMSV 016). These are probably connected to the remains of the completely illegible C35 (now disappeared, but documented in Loebanr), as well as the stelae S36, S37, S38 (Tucci 1958: fig. 23) and S39. Even further SE we come across the site of Arabut, near which the following stelae were documented: S40 (Tucci 1958: fig. 20), S42 (*ibid.*: fig. 23), S43 (*ibid.*: fig. 21), S44 (not found; it could correspond to no. 32 in Cimmino and Guj 1964-1965), S46 (*ibid.*: no. 86a) and S49, as well as reliefs C47 and C48. Relief C50, documented by Cimmino and Guj (*ibid.*: no. 101) and reported in the area of Shahama, SE of Arabut, has not been found. Also the reliefs S197, C190 and stela S189 are now missing: according to the scant data recovered in the MAI archive, the three rock sculptures might have been originally photographed in this area. The stela S146 is also probably connected to this zone. According to Tucci, this zone should also contain the Kṣāntivādin *stūpa* mentioned in the Chinese sources (Tucci 1958: 305).

Inv. Rep. C35 (Fig. 37) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Seated figures.  
On an oblong flat boulder.  
Cons.: very poor: badly abraded over the entire surface.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: *vacat*.  
Traces remain of figures seated on the right end, top, corresponding to the greater height.

Inv. Rep. S36 (Fig. 38) Triad (Buddha and bodhisattvas)  
Ogival-shaped stela.  
Cons.: now broken off near the base, at the sides and above, corresponding to the upper part of the bodhisattva figures (the description is drawn from a 1964-65 photographic document showing the still-intact stela); badly leached and abraded; chipped, particularly the face, the arms and the hands of the Buddha.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas. (current): stela: 95 x 78 x 24; fig.: 60 x 40 x 4

Centre: a haloed Buddha, in *dhyānāsana*, with *saṃghāṭī* with round neckline, feet uncovered, on lotus with double corolla (the lower one reverse) of a rather wide and flattened shape and with a short stem from which project the long curved stems of two appreciably smaller lotuses with half-closed corolla, aligned with the central lotus; supported by them two standing frontal haloed bodhisattvas: the one on the right on the left leg, right hand on the shoulder (with attribute?), left hand lowered (with attribute?); the left one, in an identical pose, but as a mirror image; only the outlines of the headdresses are conserved, narrower and more compact than that of the right hand bodhisattva, wider and taller than that of the left hand bodhisattva; at the base of the relief are unidentifiable figuration elements.

Massive figures, simplified geometric volumes, conspicuous above all in the triangular profile of the Buddha's legs and in the conventional anatomical pattern; the bodhisattvas have narrow waist, round flanks, massive rigid lower limbs; sketchy drapery, rendered with closely-spaced parallel lines.

Inv. Rep. S37 (Figs. 39a,b) Padmapāṇi  
Ogival-shaped stela.

Cons.: split longitudinally into two adjoining fragments (the description has been drawn from a 1964-65 photographic documentation; the right hand fragment has now been lost); face, arms and lotus badly chipped; abraded; corroded.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: 91 x 43 x 13

Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on tall throne, supported by frontal lions upright on the forepaws and with a row of reverse lotus petals at the base; the bodhisattva is wearing *p.*, crown, bracelets, short necklace, pendant earrings; with type a lotus.

Harmonious proportions, despite the simplification of the volume; rather sketchy drapery consisting of pairs of parallel lines.

Inv. Rep. S38 (Fig. 40; GS 22) SM Seated bodhisattva  
Irregularly oval-shaped stela.

Cons.: whole; the projecting parts chipped; entire surface abraded.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: 100 x 75

Tucci 1958: 312, fig. 23; Filigenzi 1997: 627, fig. 2; Sardar 2003: 10, pl. 13.

Nimbate bodhisattva, in reverse *ap.* on lotiform throne. The hem of the *uttarīya* can be seen falling over the left arm in a wide curve, as well as the short beaded necklace, the pendant earrings with thickened end and, indistinctly, the profile of the crown crests. The bodhisattva has the right hand in *varadamudrā*, the left one on the thigh with vertical attribute, slightly tapering upwards and with tapered upper ending on top (*vajra? kamaṇḍalu?*). The facial features are partially conserved: large eyes with pronounced eyebrows, slightly downward gaze, small fleshy mouth; remarkable rendering of the facial expression, with smile accentuated by slight prominence of the cheeks and the expressiveness of the gaze. For a similar iconographic device cf. S133.

Inv. Rep. S39 (Fig. 41) Triad (Buddha and bodhisattvas)  
Stela of roundish shape.

Cons.: badly abraded, especially the upper part of the figure; corrosion; lime incrustations.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: from the right: 76 (68-63) x 22 x 5; 107 (84-75) x 59 x 11; 73 (67-63) x 20 x 5

Sardar 2003: pl. 4.

Centre: Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, with uncovered feet, with nimbus with circle and decorated external edge (probably with flames); on stool-like throne supported (?) by two frontal lions, upright on forepaws (with muzzle facing inwards? Cf. C6), which seem to be raising with their back a bordered drape which falls over the centre with a circular hem; the two vertical elements at the ends of the throne should probably be interpreted as tassels. At the sides, two bodhisattvas, haloed, standing frontally on a full-blown lotus, with *p.* and *dupaṭṭā* worn as a shawl falling over the left side, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings; the right-hand one with right hand on the shoulder with attribute, left hand on hip; the left-hand one (Padmapāṇi) on left leg, with (knotted?) belt visible, right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand on the shoulder with type a lotus.

Simplified volumes, geometric pattern of figures, visible above all in the triangular profile of the Buddha's legs; the bodhisattva figures display a pronounced bending; they have narrow waist, round flanks, massive rigid lower limbs; sketchy drapery consisting of closely-spaced parallel lines.

Inv. Rep. S40 (Figs. 42a,b) MAI Standing Buddha  
Ogival-shaped, elongated stela with tall foot.

Cons.: whole; corroded and abraded.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: 215 x 70

Tucci 1958: fig. 20.

Buddha, nimbate, standing on right leg, with *saṃghāṭī* with oval neckline and *antaravāsaka*, hair rendered in concentric waves, right hand in *varadamudrā*, left held to breast on one side, probably with a hem of the garment. Below the Buddha's right hand there is a silhouette of uncertain identification, perhaps a small figure of a devotee, kneeling, in profile.

Inv. Rep. S42 (Fig. 43) SM Pensive Padmapāṇi and small *stūpa*  
Irregularly oval, elongated stela.  
Cons.: whole; figure's face and arms badly chipped; abraded over entire surface.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 130 x 68 (125 x 78)  
Tucci 1958: fig. 22; Sardar 2003: 8, pl. 10.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on throne with front face with illegible figuration and row of reversed lotus petals at the base; the circular central hem of the *p.* is visible, as well as elements of the crown, secured at the sides with descending ribbons, short necklace, earrings with polylobate end part.

Low, left, there is a small *stūpa* composed of several (four?) superimposed bodies, quasi-spherical *aṇḍa*, tall pinnacle with discs supported by perimeter struts.

Inv. Rep. S43 (Fig. 44; GS 30) SM Standing Vajrapāṇi  
Irregularly oval, elongated stela with low foot.  
Cons.: whole; badly corroded and abraded; chipped, especially the figure's face.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 118 x 56  
Tucci 1958: fig. 21; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 10; Sardar 2003: pl. 21.

Vajrapāṇi, nimbate, standing on a base, probably a flat lotus corolla; the adherent *p.* is visible with its closely-spaced thin drapery, as well as the profile of the crown secured at the sides and the earrings; the right hand is in *varadamudrā*, the left hand with an elongated *vajra* of type *a*, the lower point of which rests on the corolla of a lotus emerging from the ground.

Inv. Rep. S44 (Figs. 45a,b) Padmapāṇi  
Thick oval-shaped stela or small boulder.  
Cons.: only fair; badly abraded, corroded, chipped.  
Mat.: leucogranite to granite gneiss.  
Meas.: fig.: 112 x 64 x 14; stela: 152 x 94 x 30  
Sardar 2003: pl. 18.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on tall throne with cushion and body with projecting vertical elements at the sides (legs? lions?), base with projecting horizontal element (row of lotus petals?); the bodhisattva is wearing *p.* with central hem falling over throne; a section of sketchy drapery with pairs of parallel symmetric lines has been conserved.

Inv. Rep. S46 (Figs. 46a,b,c; GS 13) Padmapāṇi  
Stela with tall foot.  
Cons.: two non-contiguous fragments of the lower part of the stela have been conserved: part of the torso, the left arm, left leg and part of the attribute (section of stem) of the figure; part of the right leg, and right arm of figure; badly abraded.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: 160 x 50 x 23 / 161 (155) x 58 x 5; tot. 207 x 58 (?)

Padmapāṇi, certainly pensive, in *ap.*, on tall throne with cushion, supported (?) by lions sitting on hind legs, with muzzle and front part of body facing front; of the right-hand lion the whole body has been conserved; it displays conspicuous anatomical disproportions, with the front part rather squat and the rear highly elongated and

slender; tail coiled upwards; in the left fragment, a vertical element has been conserved (leg of throne? tassel?) on the side of the lion, on the outside; base of throne composed of row of petals and sepals, and listel on top.  
For the throne cf. Pal 1975: 31.

Inv. Rep. C47 (Fig. 47) Padmapāṇi / *stūpa* / two standing figures  
On large round boulder.  
Cons.: figure of bodhisattva abraded, corroded, incrustated; the other elements of the figuration are badly damaged and only a few details remain.  
Mat.: augen schist.  
Meas.: 109 x 79 x 7

Centre, Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on tall throne with cushion; with *p.*, central hem falling over throne, bracelets, short beaded necklace, Brahmanic cord (?), pendant earrings with expanded extremity (cluster? flower?), with crown (?) knotted at the side; type a lotus. Right, centre, a small *stūpa*, the quasi-spherical shape of whose *aṇḍa* is visible, as well as the tall pinnacle; left, centre, two small standing figures. Figure with massive wide volumes; conspicuous disproportion of the head.

Inv. Rep. C48 (Figs. 48a,b,c) Two Padmapāṇis  
On elongated ovoidal boulder. The position of the two figures, at a slightly different height, follows the lines of the rock stratification.  
Cons.: fair; leached, corroded, particularly the lower part; chipped.  
Mat.: leucogranite gneiss.  
Meas.: from right: 155 x 94 x 9; 210 x 125 x 12

Tucci 1958: fig. 19; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 14; Filigenzi 1997: fig. 5; Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. X.

Two pensive Padmapāṇis, in *ap.* on tall throne with cushion (the left-hand one has conserved traces of figuration on the body); with *p.* with central hem falling over throne, armilla (?), bracelets, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings, crown; thick curly hair; nimbus with flaming border; type a lotus. Bodhisattva on left with *dupaṭṭā*, of which the end portion is conserved on the left, and crown with lateral knots (details not clear or not present in the right-hand figure).

The figures are characterised by harmonious proportions, and by a somewhat naturalistic anatomical rendering, despite the simplification of the volumes; somewhat prominent belly, large triple line on neck; the bodhisattva on the right partially conserves the somatic features: broad face, massive cheeks, large eyes, elongated and widely spaced, small fleshy mouth close to the short nose. Drapery consisting of closely-spaced pairs of parallel symmetric lines.

Inv. Rep. S49 (Fig. 49) Padmapāṇi  
Ogival-shaped stela.  
Cons.: only fair; split top right; badly leached and abraded; incrustations.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: stela: 174 x 60; fig.: 144 (138) x 55 x 10

Pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.* on tall throne with cushion; with *p.*, *dupaṭṭā*, short beaded necklace (and pendant earrings?), crown.

Inv. Rep. C50 (Fig. 50) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Triad?  
On an approximately isosceles triangle-shaped boulder.  
Cons.: very poor: whole surface badly abraded.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: *vacat.*

Three figures are visible: the central, largest one is probably seated in *padmāsana*, on a throne supported by lions (with head facing front and body in profile?), hands on breast (*dharmacakramudra?* with attribute?); the two figures at the sides are standing. Probable figuration element top left, between the central and the lateral figure.

- Inv. Rep. S197 (Fig. 51) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs).  
Three Padmapāṇis / unidentified figure  
On rectangular boulder.  
Cons.: very poor: whole surface abraded.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: *vacat*.  
Horizontal row of four figures seated in *ap.*, the first three from the right may certainly be identified as Padmapāṇi owing to the better conservation of significant details such as the lotus and the pensive pose; identification of the left-hand figure uncertain.
- Inv. Rep. S189 (Figs. 52a,b) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs).  
Unidentifiable subject  
Ogival-shaped stela (?), found lying on the ground  
Cons.: very poor.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: *vacat*.  
Standing figure.
- Inv. Rep. C190 (Fig. 53) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Seated figure  
Cons.: very poor; figure almost entirely removed.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: *vacat*.  
Figure seated on tall throne.
- Inv. Rep. S146 (Fig. 54) SM From Loebanr? Vajrapāṇi  
Irregularly oval-shaped elongated stela with straight cut on sides and foot.  
Cons.: whole (?); badly corroded and abraded.  
Mat.: augen schist  
Meas.: 134 x 57  
Sardar 2003: 17, pl. 26.  
Vajrapāṇi, nimbate, standing, with crown tied at sides and descending ribbons, with unidentifiable figuration in the central crest; the profile of the short necklace and earrings can just be made out; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left lowered with *vajra*, the lower point of which rests on the corolla of a lotus emerging from the ground.

### Saidu Valley

Stein 1930; Tucci 1958; Taddei 1962; Faccenna 1964; Faccenna 1980-1981; Callieri 1989; Callieri 1997; Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991; Olivieri 1993; Abdur Rahman 1993; Faccenna 1995; Noci *et al.* 1997; Taddei 1998; Faccenna 2001; Olivieri and Vidale 2006.

### Saidu Sharif area (AMSV 502)

Two stelae have probably been found in this area: S125 and S192. The latter in particular is said to have been originally found in the vicinity of the present-day location of the Saidu Sharif Hospital, i.e. just opposite the excavated ruins of the Saidu Sharif I Sacred Area and Monastery (Callieri 1989; Faccenna 1995; Noci *et al.* 1997; Faccenna 2001).

1. Rock monuments *in situ* or of certain provenance

Inv. Rep. S125 (Fig. 55; GS 4) SM Seated Buddha  
Cons.: mutilated; top and left part missing; Buddha's head missing; badly abraded.  
Mat.: limestone/marble.  
Meas.: 44 x 58

Buddha in *dhyānāsana* on throne with protruding upper edge and decorated front face, probably with lotus scrolls motif; the Buddha wears *samghāṭī* with round neckline; feet visible.

Inv. Rep. S192 (Fig. 56; GS 3) SM Seated Buddha  
Ogival-shaped stela.  
Cons.: mutilated: upper left part missing; head of the figure almost totally missing; corroded.  
Mat.: marble.  
Meas.: 60 x 40  
Filigenzi 2003: fig. 5; Sardar 2003: pl. 2.

Buddha, with bordered nimbus and aureole, seated in *dhyānāsana*, with *pātra*, on a low pedestal with plain body and projecting base and cornice; hands and feet exposed; *samghāṭī* with curved pleated neckline, left side folds, lower circular hem.

***Right bank***  
**Boligram (AMSV 018)**

Lat. 34°22'N, long. 72°23'E. 43 B/6

Stein 1930: 45; Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991; Ashraf Khan 1993: 37-39.

Although long since lost, the reliefs C51-57 are worth mentioning, also because they must have been connected with a recently discovered Buddhist sacred area. In the early 1960s, M. Taddei photographed a relief with seven figures carved out of a rock face at the entrance to the small Baringan Valley, near Aqba, today lying on the southern outskirts of Saidu Sharif (the sacred area of Saidu Sharif I was possibly the area of the ancient Rahorbhyara of the Tibetan pilgrims. See Tucci 1971: 416, fn. 2 [repr. Tucci 1997: 43, fn. 196]). It should be noted that at the time of Stein a further seven were visible (Stein 1930: 45). The sculptures were located on the rock cliff, on the right, as one travels up along the valley; today, this cliff, which offers good-quality striped marble, is used as a quarry; this activity is responsible for the disappearance of the monuments. At the bottom of the valley, on the NE slopes of the Dop-sar (near the pass leading to Salampur), not far from Aqba, lies the Buddhist sacred area of Boligram, investigated by the DOAM (Ashraf Khan 1993: pl. VI).<sup>16</sup>

Inv. Rep. C51-57 (Fig. 57) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Various subjects  
On a section of smooth, vertical rock wall.  
Cons.: very poor surface, entirely abraded and leached.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: *vacat*.

Groups of unidentifiable individual carvings (representing Padmapāṇi?) arranged close together on two or three planes, each enclosed in a separate field.

<sup>16</sup> According to the authors of the report on the Boligram excavations, the life of the sacred area came to an end in the seventh-eighth century CE (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: 206-207).



**Salampur (AMSV 019)**

Lat. 34°23'N, 72°23'E. 43 B/6

Tucci 1958: 313-314; Faccenna 1980-1981: pl. XXIX; Olivieri 1993.

This site (present-day Islampur) lies at the end of a small valley formed by a right-hand tributary of the Saidu, at the foot of the SE slopes of Mount Dop-sar (1732 masl) separating Salampur from Saidu Sharif. The monuments documented here may be related to a Buddhist sacred area noticed in the 1960s (as “Balan”, see Faccenna 1980-1981: pl. XXIX; probably rendered better as “Balo”). However, they might also be connected with the sacred area of Boligram (see above), to which the Salampur Valley provides an additional access. The reliefs were actually all found upstream from the village, along the mule track leading to Boligram (C58, C59, C60), except for stela S61, which was found in Manichinar, a site located downstream from Salampur (Tucci 1958: 314, fig. 26); another relief (C62; Tucci 1958: 314) previously reported in this area was not found.

Inv. Rep. C58 (Fig. 58) Padmapāṇi  
 Cons.: very poor; only the figuration, in slight relief, has survived.  
 Mat.: dioritic gneiss.  
 Meas.: 85 (75) x 69 (49) x 5.5

Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*, with crown, pendant earrings. Above the left forearm figuration elements are visible that can only partially be ascribed to the lotus attribute.

The figure is characterised by simplified volumes, anatomical disproportions and irregularities, which are particularly visible in the right arm and the left leg, which is lifted up and appears unusually close to the body.

Inv. Rep. C59 (Fig. 59) Buddha  
 Cons.: very poor; only the figuration in slight relief has survived.  
 Mat.: dioritic gneiss.  
 Meas.: 62 x 58 x 35

Buddha (haloed?) in *padmāsana*; on throne of uncertain shape supported by two frontal lions.

Inv. Rep. S60 (Figs. 60a,b) SM Standing figure (Buddha? bodhisattva?)  
 Irregularly oval-shaped, elongated stela with low foot.  
 Cons.: mutilated; right side split along the edge on the median section; highly abraded and corroded; right hand chipped as well as the whole face; chipped; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: tourmaline bearing ophiolite.  
 Meas.: 150 (141-127) x 56 (42) (max) x 12.5

Frontal figure standing on right leg, with calf-length robe and sinus section below knees (tunic and cloak?); below neck and over breast curved lines in relief (short necklace and long necklace, or round neckline and central fold?); with nimbus with flaming external border, right hand in *varadamudrā* (with attribute?); left hand on hip (?); the preserved details (partial profile of the head, and lower hem of the dress to left) render identification with a Buddha likely.

The figure displays simplified volumes; of the sketchy drapery, which is probably sparse over the rest of the body, the section between the legs has been conserved, receding, with closely-spaced, thin concentric pleats.

Inv. Rep. S61 (Fig. 61) SM Standing four-armed Maitreya  
 Irregularly oval-shaped stela.  
 Cons.: broken off on left and top; face completely (and intentionally?) chipped as well as the arms; badly abraded; chisel marks on the left.  
 Mat.: sandstone.  
 Meas.: h.: 108  
 Tucci 1958: fig. 26; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 9.

Four-armed Maitreya, standing on a base in the shape of a lotus corolla with reverse petals and sepals. Wearing *saṃghāṭī* and *antaravāsaka*, crown (or *jaṭāmukuta?*), earrings; lower right hand in *varadamudrā* (with *akṣamālā?*), upper right hand grasping an ascetic's staff; lower left hand with *kamaṇḍalu*, the upper one on the shoulder with cylindrical, horizontal attribute, identifiable as a manuscript (cf. C65, C91, S126).

Inv. Rep. C62

*Vacat.*

### Supal-bandai (AMSV 020)

Lat. 34°42'N, long. 72°22'E. 43 B/6

Stein 1930: 44; Taddei 1962: fn. 21; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan 1996c; Filigenzi 1999.

Slightly N of this site, not far from the road, the reliefs C63, C64 (Filigenzi 1999: fig. 7) and C65 were documented (Taddei 1962: figs. 11 and 12; Olivieri 1993: fig. 5; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 56). The reliefs C193 and C194 (not found) have been recorded in the past around Supal-bandai. The relief C195 is probably also from the same area.

Inv. Rep. C63 (Fig. 62; cf. GS 21) Bodhisattva (Maitreya?)

Cons.: badly corroded and abraded; chipped.

Mat.: dioritic gneiss.

Meas.: 70 x 48 (45) x 3

Filigenzi 1996: fig. 8; Filigenzi 1999: fig. 7.

Bodhisattva in reverse *ap.*; with crown (or *jaṭāmukuta?*) with lateral projections at the base (knots?); long wavy hair; right hand on knee in *varadamudrā*, with *akṣamālā*; left hand on thigh with attribute (probably *kalaśa*); on tall throne with upper projecting border composed of a row of reverse lotus petals.

The figure has simplified volumes and displays a certain degree of anatomical disproportion, especially the lower limbs.

Inv. Rep. C64 (Fig. 63) Padmapāṇi

On isolated boulder discovered overturned on one side.

Cons.: corroded; abraded; chipped.

Mat.: augen schist.

Meas.: 125 (113) x 80 (67) x 4.5

Pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.*; with crown knotted at the sides, long wavy hair; with short necklace, pendant earrings; on tall throne with cushion.

Inv. Rep. C65 (Figs. 64a,b; GS 28) Various subjects: two Padmapāṇis / four-armed Maitreya

On a large boulder.

Cons.: split longitudinally on the right into two contiguous fragments; the split involves the first figure on the right, which lacks the head; heavily corroded and abraded; chipped.

Mat.: augen schist.

Meas.: from right: 107 (90) x 75 (?) x 9; 145 (133) x 71 x 5; 110 (95-90) x 37 x 3; tot.: 160 x 255

Taddei 1962: figs. 11 and 12; Olivieri 1993: fig. 5; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 56.

From right: Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on tall throne with projecting upper edge composed of a row of lotus petals (upturned?).

Maitreya, probably haloed, with four arms, standing frontally on right leg, on a base in the form of a half-closed lotus corolla; with *saṃghāṭī* with ample sinus over the knees, crown (or *jaṭāmukuta?*), long hair,

pendant earrings; front right hand in *varadamudrā*, probably with attribute (*akṣamālā*?); back right hand on the shoulder, with ascetic's staff; front left hand lowered, holding an ansated vase, with tall foot and expanded body; rear left hand on the shoulder, with attribute (probably manuscript).

Padmapāṇi, haloed, standing frontally on right leg on lotiform base resembling the previous one; with *p.* and *dupaṭṭā*, crown with lateral knots, pendant earrings; right hand in *varadamudrā*; left hand at the hip's level, with type a lotus.

Inv. Rep. C193 (Fig. 65) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Padmapāṇi  
On a big boulder, at ground level.

Cons.: badly eroded.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: *vacat*.

A pensive Padmapāṇi.

Inv. Rep. C194 (Fig. 66) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Padmapāṇi  
On a big boulder.

Cons.: badly eroded.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: *vacat*.

A pensive Padmapāṇi, on a throne with body composed of superimposed horizontal rows of quadrangular ashlar.

Inv. Rep. C195 (Fig. *vacat*) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Padmapāṇi

Cons.: badly eroded.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: *vacat*.

A pensive Padmapāṇi.

### Meragai (AMSV 392)<sup>17</sup>

Lat. 34°41'N, 72°21' E. 43 B/6

Tucci 1958: 315.

The site is located just before Marghazar, S of Supal-bandai.

Inv. Rep. C66 (Figs. 67, 68) Padmapāṇi  
On a boulder with a slightly inclined plane.

Cons.: badly leached, corroded, abraded; head completely chipped; left arm and lotus chipped; lime incrustations.

Mat.: dioritic gneiss.

Meas.: 138 (127) x 90 (74) x 8

Pensive Padmapāṇi in *ap.*; with short necklace, pendant earrings; on tall throne with upper edge composed of a row of reverse lotus petals.

<sup>17</sup> Olivieri and Vidale 2006: 98.

***Left bank***  
**Katelai (AMSV 021)**

Lat. 34°46'N, long. 72°21'E. 43 B/5

Tucci 1958: 294 (as Katelai A); Faccenna 1964: 65; Callieri 1985; Filigenzi 1999.

In the Katelai area numerous ruins had been reported in the past, probably related to Buddhist sites (also judging by the finds discovered there); today, as a result of intense urbanisation, much of this evidence has disappeared, together with relief C67 (Tucci 1958: fig. 4); relief C188 (missing) and stela S68 come from the same zone (Filigenzi 1999: 17-18, fig. 6; Sardar 2003: 17, pl. 27). In the vicinity there is a sulphurous spring, the water of which is deemed to have curative properties (Skhachina), identified by Tucci as the Āyurpāṇi spring in the Tibetan sources (Tucci 1958: 294; Tucci 1971: 417, fn. 1 [repr. in Tucci 1997: 44, fn. 201]).

Inv. Rep. C188 (Fig. *vacat*) *Vacat* (description based on Tucci 1958: 294).  
Triad (Buddha and standing bodhisattvas)

Cons.:

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: *vacat.*

Tucci 1958: 294.

Inv. Rep. C67 (Fig. 69) *Vacat* (description based on Tucci 1958: fig. 4). Pensive Padmapāṇi

Cons.: *vacat.*

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: *vacat.*

Tucci 1958: fig. 4

Pensive Padmapāṇi, with curly hair, bracelets, short necklace, earrings, high head-dress, type a lotus; seated on a pedestal with plain solid body and projecting base and cornice, with cushion. The figure shows a certain naturalism in the proportions, treatment of the muscles, and posture (cf. Rep. C48).

Inv. Rep. S68 (Fig. 70; GS 21) SM Seated Maitreya

Irregularly oval-shaped, elongated stela.

Cons.: broken top, right, along the edge; badly abraded; entire face chipped, perhaps deliberately (in the upper part the chipping seems to be the result of a blow).

Mat.: gneiss.

Meas.: 60 x 30

Filigenzi 1999: 17-18, fig. 6; Sardar 2003: 17, pl. 27.

Nimbate Maitreya, seated in reverse *ap.* on a lotiform throne. The ribbons tied at the sides of the crown (or *jaṭāmukuta*?) are visible, together with the short beaded necklace, and the earrings with polylobate ends. The bodhisattva has the right hand in *varadamudrā* with *akṣamālā*, left hand on thigh with ampulla-like *kalaśa*.

**Top-dara and Shandala (AMSV 022, 023)**

Lat. 34°44'N, long. 72°20'E. 43 B/6

Tucci 1958: 312-313, fig. 25; Faccenna 1980-1981: pl. XXIX.

Between the site of Katelai and that of Shandala numerous sacred areas have been reported, among which Prang-tangai and Top-dara. Approximately in the area between Shandala and Top-dara, Tucci photographed the stela S69; during a reconnaissance carried out in 1962, S70 was found (Tucci 1963: 146, figs.1-2; Taddei 1987: 358-359, fig. 13).

- Inv. Rep. S69 (Figs. 71a,b; GS 39) SM Figure in Scythian costume (Sūrya?) and minor figures  
Irregularly oval-shaped stela.
- Cons.: Broken at top and on right, with two rejoined fragments; badly chipped and abraded; head of main figure missing; minor figures: of the figures below the profile is completely preserved, though highly abraded; of the figure top right only the outline of the base has been preserved, together with a section of the body's outline (bottom, left); of the figure top left the lower part, badly abraded, has been preserved.
- Mat.: *vacat.*
- Meas.: *vacat.*
- Tucci 1958: fig. 25.

Male figure standing frontally, on a base of indistinct shape, with caftan or tunic, probably with dagger held horizontally in front of belt. Hands on the side of breast, with attributes, possibly lotuses with short stems (on the left shoulder a protruding outline, circular in shape, perhaps a full-blown lotus, has been conserved). At the sides, on two superimposed planes, there are four minor figures, also standing frontally on a base of indistinct shape. Only in the case of the figure lower left can the position of the left hand be made out, at the breast on one side, with attribute. For a possible identification with Sūrya and his retinue cf. C116 and C183. On the subject matter see Chap. 7.3.

- Inv. Rep. S70 (Figs. 72a,b) SM Eight-armed goddess killing a caprid  
Irregularly oval-shaped, elongated stela.
- Cons.: mutilated; two rejoined fragments, with parts missing; badly chipped and abraded.
- Mat.: limestone.
- Meas.: 120 x 48
- Tucci 1963: 146, figs.1-2; Taddei 1987: 358-359, fig. 13.

Goddess in *ālīḍha* posture with her right feet on the hip of a decapitated animal, probably a caprid, lying on the ground with the four legs bent towards the body, foot against foot, and severed head represented at the bottom of the stela. The goddess (whose female sex is indicated by the preserved traces of the breast on the left side), with *mukuṭa* (or *jaṭāmukuṭa*?) tied by means of a ribbon knotted at the sides and descending with undulating movement, seems to be wearing *p.* and bracelets. The eight arms, starting from the main right arm and proceeding clockwise, are represented as follows: on the shoulder, grasping a *triśūla* thrust into the animal's body; below, on one side, with a quiver full of arrows; uplifted up with a *cakra*; upraised, with a sword (?); upraised, with a bow; upraised, with a small shield; of the third and main left arm nothing is preserved; below, with an attribute (*pāśa*? *akṣamālā*?).

**Shnaisha and Kukrai (AMSV 024, 025)**

Lat. 34°43'N, long. 72°20'E. 43 B/6

Stein 1930: 43-44, fig. 34 (as Shinasi-gumbat); Tucci 1958: 313 (as Shanesha); Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: 176-197 (as Shna-shah); Abdur Rahman 1993; Olivieri 1993 (as Shnesha); Ashraf Khan 1996c; Filigenzi 1997; Taddei 1998.

A very important sacred area, known for some time, is located in the Shnaisha area (AMSV 024) but has only been excavated in the late 1980s in the framework of rescue archaeology (Stein 1930: fig. 34; Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991, Abdur Rahman 1993).<sup>18</sup> It is of particular importance with regards to the category of monuments under examination as during the excavations stela S179, with a decorated pedestal, was found *in situ* (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: pl. 13; Abdur Rahman 1993: pl. XXVIIa-; Filigenzi 1997: 628; Id. 1999: 10-11; Id. 2000: fig. 3; Taddei 1998: fig. 9). In the proximity of the area relief C71 was found (Taddei 1998: fig. 2). Just S of Shnaisha lies the village of Kukrai (AMSV 025); advancing up the narrow valley where the built-up area is located, upstream from the latter it was possible to document reliefs C72 (Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 54), C73 (Stein 1930: fig. 32; Ashraf Khan 1996c: figs. 52 and 53), C74 (Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 55). The stela S75 was instead found at the beginning of the Salampur Valley, near the junction with the Saidu, and reused in a low terrace wall.

Inv. Rep. S179 (Figs. 73a,b; GS 26) Standing Maitreya  
From Shnaisha, Cell no. 2.  
PM  
Stela of fairly regular shape, probably intended to define a body halo around the figure; figured base with large socket on the upper face.  
Cons.: mutilated: feet, ears, nimbus (?), and the upper part of the ascetic's staff missing; badly chipped on the upper part of the head and on the frontal part of the crown.  
Mat.: brownish schist.  
Meas.: 128 x 80; base: 30 x 40 x 60  
Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: pl. 13; Abdur Rahman 1993: pl. XXVIIa; Filigenzi 1997: 628; Id. 1999: 10-11; Id. 2000: fig. 3; Taddei 1998: fig. 9.

Ascetic Maitreya, standing on the left leg, with a round, slightly smiling face, curly hair; he wears a short *p.* whose descending final hem is secured to the decorated belt, to the left; a coiled cord hangs down from the belt between the legs; the ornaments are composed of (plain?) bracelets, armlets decorated with a central rosette, short beaded necklace, high tripartite *mukuta* (earrings not preserved). The bodhisattva holds an ascetic's staff grasped with the right hand at chest level; with the left hand he holds a small jar with body decorated with a lattice pattern with oblique fillets, swollen upper part and vertical top handle. According to the excavators, the stela was found along with "a heavy pedestal" (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991: 179-180, who inadvertently describe another piece from the same site; cf. Abdur Rahman 1993: 32-33). It is difficult to say whether this base originally belonged to the stela (cf. Taddei 1998: 469-471).

Base: the front face shows two lions whose clumsy rendering aims probably at depicting them as seated on hind legs (three legs are visible); heads disproportionately big, with humanised features, prominent forehead, globular eyes, whiskers in the shape of moustaches, small ears, curly mane. Between the lions, inside a square delimited by a projecting fillet, are two small human figures, kneeling, in *añjalimudrā*, heads bent back as though looking upwards, at the sides of a cloth decorated with a rosette with six pointed petals. On the upper part, next to the socket, is a full-blown lotus with reverse petals, in low relief.

Inv. Rep. C71 (Fig. 74) Padmapāṇi / standing bodhisattva  
Cons.: very poor; badly chipped and corroded over the entire surface; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: granatiferous phyllite.  
Meas.: in the order of the descriptive information sheet: 85 x 52 x 3; 53.5 x 22 x 4; tot.: 120 x 139  
Taddei 1998: fig. 2.

<sup>18</sup> The importance of the finding of stela S179 has unfortunately been lessened by the contradictions contained in the two excavation reports published by different authors only a few years apart (Qamar and Ashraf Khan 1991 and Abdur Rahman 1993). For the entire question see the fundamental contribution in Taddei 1998 and the reply by Abdur Rahman (2001). For a discussion of the archaeological value of the stela S179 with relation to the general framework of the rock sculpture see Chap. 2.6.

Left: Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*; with *p.*, crown, pendant earrings; on tall throne of uncertain shape.

Right: bodhisattva standing frontally on right leg, with pronounced body bending, on a base shaped like a half-closed lotus corolla; with tall voluminous headdress (crown? *jātamukūṭa?*); right hand lowered with *akṣamālā*.

Drapery with closely-spaced parallel lines.

Inv. Rep. C72 (Fig. 75) Various subjects: triad of bodhisattvas; single bodhisattva  
 Cons.: badly leached; corroded; abraded; especially the third figure from the right.  
 Mat.: white marble.  
 Meas.: from the right: 67 (65.5) x 25 x 2; 89 x 52 x 4; 59 x 25 x 3; 76 (65) x 40 x 4; tot.: 100 x 167  
 Abdur Rahman 1993: pl. XXb; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 54; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 4.

Right: triad of bodhisattvas, with central haloed Padmapāṇi, pensive, in *ap.*; with *p.* with circular central hem with vertical drapery on the inside, crown tied at the sides, bracelets, short necklace, pendant earrings; triple line on neck; on tall throne with row of reverse lotus petals (?) at the base, body divided into irregular, quadrangular ashlar (?) by incised lines, upper edge composed of a double lotus corolla, the lower one reverse, cushion. At the sides: two bodhisattvas, smaller in size, standing frontally (haloed?), with pronounced body bending: the right-hand one on the right leg, with *saṃghāṭī*, tall headdress with roundish top (crown? *jātamukūṭa?*), pendant earrings; ascetic's staff, held transversely, in the right hand held to the shoulder, with the hem of *dupaṭṭā* descending from the arm; on a base shaped like the corolla of a half-closed lotus; the left-hand one on the left leg, with *p.*, tripartite crown with clearly distinguished crests, pendant earrings; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand on flank with long-stemmed lotus; on a base of uncertain shape.

Left: haloed bodhisattva, of medium size, in reverse *ap.*; with *p.*, crown, short necklace, pendant earrings; right hand on knee, left hand on thigh with conical-shaped attribute (*kalaśa?* visible portion of *vajra?*); on tall throne with upper edge formed by a row of upturned lotus petals; same motif at the base (with points facing downwards?).

The figures are characterised by harmonious proportions, despite the simplification of the volumes; sketchy drapery, symmetrical, with closely-packed thin pleats.

Inv. Rep. C73 (Figs. 76a,b,c; GS 23, 35, 36) Various subjects: two pairs of bodhisattvas  
 The two pairs of figures are represented by two boulders converging at an acute angle with an opening of 158 cm.  
 Cons.: leached; abraded; corroded; chipped; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: white marble.  
 Meas.: from right: 95 (88) x 53 x 4; 76 (60) x 42 x 4; 77 (75) x 33 x 4; 59 (56-50) x 35 x 3  
 Stein 1930: fig. 32; Abdur Rahman 1993: pls. XXIa-XXIIa; Ashraf Khan 1996c: figs. 52-53; Filigenzi 1997: fig. 4.

Two pairs of haloed bodhisattvas, with *p.*, pendant earrings.

Right hand pair, from the right: pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*, with crown, triple line on neck; on seat composed of a row of upturned lotus petals and thin cushion; followed by a bodhisattva seated cross-legged, in *sattvāsana*, with *mukūṭa*; right elbow on the knee, hand to the shoulder with attribute, most probably *akṣamālā*, left hand on the thigh with attribute of conical shape, most probably *kalaśa*, on a lotus corolla which follows the inclination of the legs.

Left hand pair, from the right: bodhisattva in reverse *ap.*, with *p.* with triangular central hem, tripartite crown with clearly separated crests; right hand in *varadamudrā*, right elbow on knee, hand on shoulder with elongated attribute, with element falling downwards (manuscript tied with knot with pendant?); on a seat of uncertain shape; followed by: bodhisattva seated cross-legged, in *sattvāsana*; with crown; right hand on leg (?), left arm bent at right angles, elbow upraised, hand on thigh with conical-shaped attribute (*kalaśa?*; visible portion of *vajra?*); on puffy cushion or lotus corolla.

Figures characterised by harmonious proportions, despite simplified volumes; sketchy drapery, with pairs of parallel lines.

1. Rock monuments *in situ* or of certain provenance

Inv. Rep. C74 (Fig. 77) Padmapāṇi / bodhisattva  
Cons.: very poor; the outlines of the figs. appear in slight relief; covered by a white coloured layer; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: white marble.  
Meas.: 84 x 42 x 3; 78.5 (77-70) x 46 (36) x 3  
Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 55.

From the right: Padmapāṇi, pensive (?), haloed, in *ap.*; with crown (?); on tall throne with cushion; followed by: bodhisattva in reverse *ap.*; right hand on shoulder, left hand on thigh with attribute; on a seat of uncertain shape.

Inv. Rep. S75 (Fig. 78) Buddha (?)  
Tapered stela rounded at top.  
Cons.: highly corroded, abraded, entire figuration chipped.  
Mat.: phyllite.  
Meas.: 110 (90) x 42 x 7; tot.: 119 x 55

Buddha (or Maitreya with *saṃghāṭī*?) standing frontally on right leg; with nimbus; right hand in *varadamudrā*; left hand on breast; on a probably lotiform base.

### Manglaor area

The area denoted by this name (the ancient Mangala[p]or of the Tibetan sources; see Tucci 1958: 286; Id. 1971: 386 [repr. Tucci 1997: 17]) takes in four valleys named from S to N.

The first is the Shaldara-tangai Valley, or the incised valley to the N of the Jambil, from which it is separated by a ridge. On the southern slopes of this ridge, which culminates in the Unran-sar Peak (2829 masl), stand the villages of Dangram and Garasa).

The Shaldara-tangai Valley joins the Swat River at Sangota, a village near which the tableland of the same name rises and where some *stūpa*-like structures have been documented (Stein 1930: 43).

This is followed by the Landai Valley, which Stein (1930: 51) referred to as the “valley of Banjot”, the torrential watercourse of which flows into the Ugad ENE of the built-up area of Manglaor. The Landai Valley is separated from that of the Jambil by the same mountain range associated with the Shaldara-tangai Valley. The two valleys begin from the same system of southern valleys of the Swat and both culminate, like those of the Saidu and the Jambil, in the southern watershed separating Swat from Buner.

Next to be considered is the Ugad Valley, which culminates in the Dwo-sare mountain system forming the eastern watershed of the Swat; the eastern slopes of this system overlook the closed valley of the Puran (see below).

The crest of the Khadang-sar separates the Ugad Valley from the last of these four valleys: the northern valley of Mangaltan, the wide dry bed of which opens into the Swat near Charbagh. This valley is important as a communication route with Ghorband and the Indus Valley, which is alternative to the northernmost one starting from Khwazakhela (and which today goes as far as Alpurai-Besham, via the Shangla pass, along a bitumen road). Both these roads, in order to reach the Indus River, must cross the eastern Swat watershed via high-altitude passes (see also Rafiullah 2011).



**Shaldara-tangai Valley  
Dre-bandai (AMSV 026)**

Lat. 34°47'N, 72°25'E. 43 B/5

Tucci 1958: 306-307 (as Shaldara); Olivieri 1993.

Near where the valley ends, on a small plain in the Dre-bandai area, stand the ruins of a vast Buddhist sacred area, with the remains of two *stūpas* and related monastery; squared building blocks of *kañjūr* were found among the ruins. Situated near the sacred area is relief C76; beside it is a circular basin dug out of the rock.

Inv. Rep. C76 (Fig. 79) Padmapāṇi  
 Cons.: fair; corroded, abraded; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: granitoid to granite gneiss.  
 Meas.: 160 (120-112) x 95 (71) x 12.

Padmapāṇi, pensive, nimbate, in *ap.* on lotiform throne; with *p.* with central bipartite hem (and *dupaṭṭā?*), crown (with figured central part?), bracelets, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings; type a lotus; figured field within ogive-shaped field.

Very sketchy drapery, with closely-spaced curved parallel and symmetric lines; pronounced anatomical disproportions, apparent above all in the ratio between torso and head.

**Landai Valley  
Rasho-dherai (AMSV 027)**

Lat. 34°48'N, long. 72°25'E. 43 B/5

Stein 1930: 48-49.

Near the junction of the Landai and Ugad Rivers, ENE of the village of Manglaor, Stein reported the ruins of the *stūpa* of Rasho-dherai; in the vicinity of the sacred area, Stein identified two reliefs, C77 and C78, which were later lost; it will be recalled that in the travel narrative of the Tibetan pilgrim O rgyan pa mention is made of "...a temple founded by king Indrabhūti and called Mangalaor, where there are various stone images of Buddha (Munīndra), Tārā and Lokeśvara" (Tucci 1971: 398 [repr. Tucci 1997: 28]). From this area the stela S132 is reported.

Inv. Rep. C77  
*Vacat.*

Inv. Rep. C78  
*Vacat.*

Inv. Rep. S132 (Fig. 80; GS 15) SM Pensive Padmapāṇi  
 Irregularly oval-shaped stela.  
 Cons.: mutilated; upper edge, upper right section (?) and lower left section missing; face, abdomen, right arm and hand, and left foot (deliberately?) badly chipped; entire surface abraded.  
 Mat.: limestone.  
 Meas.: 100 x 54  
 Sardar 2003: 7-8, pl. 9.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, nimbate, in *ap.* on ashlar-decorated podium with row of reverse lotus petals at the top, with full-blown lotus in frontal view; wearing *p.*, crown, short necklace, armillae (?), bracelets, ear-rings. Section of hair-style conserved, rendered by means of symmetrical locks arranged horizontally around the face.

### Kalkata (AMSV 028)

Lat. 34°47'N, long. 72°26'E. 43 B/5

Stein 1930: 49 (as Maizere); Tucci 1958; Olivieri 1993.

The zone of Kalkata is situated "...in a field near a poor hamlet almost opposite Azgharai" (Tucci 1958: 308). The followings reliefs were found in an apparent lack of order: C79, C80, C81, C82, C83 (Tucci 1958: fig. 13) and C84. This zone also yielded stela S85 (Tucci 1958: figs. 14, 15). Upstream from the reliefs there are numerous ruined structures, perhaps linked to a sacred area. Slightly downstream from this site lie the ruins of a *stūpa* near the area of Inzar-tangai (Stein 1930: 51). Tucci also reports the finding of reliefs at Gidakot (or rather Gadakot), defined with a collective number C86, which were not found (Tucci 1958: 308).

Inv. Rep. C79 (Figs. 81a,b,c,d,e,f,g) Various subjects  
 Cons.: very poor; badly leached, abraded and chipped, especially the central part.  
 Mat.: augen schist.  
 Meas.: the measures are listed in the order of the descriptive data sheet: 58.5 x 31 x 3; 58 x 19 x 3; 104 (93) x 59 x 4.5; 41 x 14 x 3; 47 (43) x 16.5 x 3.5; 27 x 19 x 2; 54 (47) x 29 x 3; 27.5 (23) x 16 x 3.5; 44 (max) x 32 (max) x 5; 51 (45-39) x 25 x 5.5; 97 (87-83) x 44 x 7; *vacat*; 37 (33.5-29.5) x 16 x 3; tot.: 193 x 283

From the right: pensive Padmapāṇi (A), in *ap.* on tall throne with base of uncertain shape; three-quarter standing bodhisattva on the left (B) with pronounced bending of body; haloed; right hand on the shoulder (?), with staff (?), left hand held low (with attribute?).

This is followed, in the centre, by: large bodhisattva (Padmapāṇi?) in *ap.* (C), with *p.* with large central hem, on a throne supported (?) by two frontal lions erect on their forepaws, with cushion and base made up of rows of upturned lotus petals; lower down, at the sides, two bodhisattvas of much smaller size, standing frontally on base (a lotus corolla with upturned petals may be identified in the right-hand one), haloed; the right-hand one (D), probably Maitreya, with right hand on shoulder, with rod (ascetic's staff?) slightly inclined transversely, left hand held low with attribute (ansate vase?); the left-hand one (E) (Maitreya?) with right hand on shoulder (with upright lateral staff?), left hand held low with attribute (ansate vase); on the left, below, an unidentifiable figuration element; at the sides, above: two bodhisattvas (from the right: F, G) of the same size as the preceding ones, in *ap.* on a throne of uncertain shape, with *p.*, tall headdress; right hand (viewed in profile and turning outwards) on shoulder, left hand on thigh (with attribute?); slightly higher, on the left, between C and G, small Buddha in *dhyānāsana* (H) on a throne of uncertain shape.

These are followed, below, by: small figure (I) badly leached and abraded, aligned below with E, in *dhyānāsana*, with headdress of uncertain shape; above: figure in *dhyānāsana* (?) (L), aligned with G and having the same proportions, with head completely abraded, on throne of uncertain shape.

This is followed, on the left, by: a large Padmapāṇi (M), haloed, pensive, in *ap.*, with *p.*, crown, short necklace, pendant earrings; on throne with cushion and moulded base composed of a plinth (or row of reverse petals?) and listel; on the right the body of the throne has conserved several figuration elements of uncertain shape; on the right: below, male figure (N) standing frontally, with pronounced bending of body, with clothing of uncertain shape, of which only the belt around the waist is visible; uncertain headdress (hat?); right hand held low (with attribute?); left hand at shoulder height, with attribute, apparently voluminous; above, haloed figure in *dhyānāsana* (O).

- Inv. Rep. C80 (Figs. 82a,b,c) Buddha / Padmapāṇi  
 On two consecutive faces of a squared stone block which display a lower projecting edge.  
 Cons.: only fair; badly leached and abraded.  
 Mat.: hoplitic gneiss.  
 Meas.: Buddha: 60 (55) x 49 x 18; Padmapāṇi: 63 x 54 (41) x 18  
 On one face: haloed Buddha, in *dhyānamudrā*, on podium, with attribute (*pātra?*); on the other face: Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on tall throne (lotiform?); with *p.*, bracelets, short necklace, pendant earrings; type a lotus.
- Inv. Rep. C81 (Fig. 83) Padmapāṇi  
 On isolated boulder marked by a continuous natural split, passing almost horizontally at the level of the figure's neck.  
 Cons.: only fair; head and lotus corolla missing; badly chipped and leached, especially in the upper and lower portions.  
 Mat.: *vacat*.  
 Meas.: 55 x 53 (45) x 4  
 Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on tall throne with cushion; with *p.*  
 A small section of drapery remains over the left thigh, rendered with closely-spaced parallel lines.
- Inv. Rep. C82 (Fig. 84) Padmapāṇi  
 On isolated boulder.  
 Cons.: very poor; badly chipped, leached, abraded, especially the head; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: laminated tourmaline hoplite.  
 Meas.: 90 (83) x 59 x 9  
 Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*, with foot on oblong footstool, with *p.* with ample central hem.
- Inv. Rep. C83 (Figs. 85a,b) Padmapāṇi  
 On isolated boulder roughly shaped as an isosceles triangle.  
 Cons.: very poor; badly leached and abraded, especially in the upper part; part of the left foot and the lower part of the torso are missing; corresponding to these elements the boulder is crossed by a continuous horizontal split; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: augen schist.  
 Meas.: 59 (52.5) x 43 (30) x 3.5  
 Tucci 1958: fig. 13.  
 Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on throne with cushion; with *p.*, tall crown, bracelets (and short necklace?), pendant earrings; full-blown lotus in frontal view.
- Inv. Rep. C84 (Fig. 86) Padmapāṇi  
 On isolated boulder, on the upper side of which there is an artificial recess.  
 Cons.: only fair; badly leached and corroded; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: granitoid to granite gneiss.  
 Meas.: 100 (92) x 57 x 5  
 Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on tall throne (lotiform?), with *p.* with visible tied belt (and *dupaṭṭā?*), tall tripartite crown (with figuration in the central part?), bracelets, short necklace, pendant earrings; with type a lotus.  
 Sketchy drapery, with curved symmetrical parallel lines.
- Inv. Rep. S85 (Fig. 87; GS 9) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs).  
 Standing Padmapāṇi and minor figures

Cons.: badly chipped and abraded.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: *vacat*.

Tucci 1958: figs. 14-15.

The description is based on the only two photos published by Tucci (1958: figs. 14-15) which provide a partial view of the object, only summarily described in the text (*ibid.*: 308).

Padmapāṇi, nimbate, standing on a low lotus corolla with reverse petals, with *p.*, *uttarīya* draped like a shawl, tall crown tied at the sides with descending ribbons, earrings; right hand in *varadamudrā*, grasping with left hand the stem of a lotus emerging from the ground. On the sides there are minor figures: the right-hand ones are less clearly discernible; from below: (partially visible) a figure, probably of a donor as on the left; lacuna; small standing figure (?); Buddha in *padmāsana* on throne; lower part of a figure in *padmāsana* (?). Left, below: small figure of donor (male?), kneeling, in profile, towards the interior, head in three-quarters view, hands clasped, with attribute (?) of uncertain shape; slightly larger figure (female?), similar to the preceding one, with lotus buds; to the right of this, a small standing figure of bodhisattva, with right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand on shoulder at side with attribute (*vajra?* manuscript?); on a second level, above, is a figure of bodhisattva or Buddha (Akṣobhya?) in *padmāsana* on throne covered by drapery descending in a semi-circular central hem and supported by two frontal elephants, with trunks coiled inwards; further above, is a bodhisattva standing on a base of uncertain shape, like the preceding one, but larger, with *uttarīya* draped like a shawl; on the left of this, there are two superimposed smaller figures of standing bodhisattva, like the preceding ones; this is followed, above, by a small figure in *padmāsana*.

Inv. Rep. C86

*Vacat*.

### Banjot (AMSV 029)

Lat. 34°46'N, long. 72°29'E. 43 B/5.

Stein 1930: 51; Tucci 1958: 308; Olivieri 1993.

The village of Banjot is situated on the right bank of the upper reaches of the Landai River. Before the village, in the Sangate area near the bridge, the following reliefs were found: C87, C88, C89, and C90 (the latter two, together with others of which only traces remain, belong to a group of reliefs carved out of a single large roughly parallelepiped-shaped boulder, with smooth vertical walls). Relief C91 was found in Banjot (Olivieri 1993: fig. 9). Tucci refers to reports, which he did not verify and which have not been confirmed by us, of other reliefs at Diwanbut.

Inv. Rep. C87 (Fig. 88) Various subjects: Padmapāṇi / bodhisattvas

Cons.: very poor; badly leached, abraded, corroded, chipped; lime incrustations.

Mat.: augen schist.

Meas.: 105 (100) x 66 x 6.5; 60 x 44 x 6; 78 x 48 x 2; *vacat*; tot.: 120 x 210

Centre: Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on a throne with cushion and projecting base (lotus petals?).

On the right: bodhisattva (?), smaller than the preceding one, in reverse *ap.* on a seat of uncertain shape; right hand on the knee, with circular-shaped attribute (*akṣamālā?*); left hand on thigh (with attribute?). Left: two figures, probably haloed, the left-hand one slightly larger than the preceding one, the right-hand one smaller; on the left, bodhisattva (?) in reverse *ap.*; figure on the right unidentifiable.

Inv. Rep. C88 (Fig. *vacat*) Figure unidentifiable

On another face of the same boulder on which C87 is situated.

Inv. Rep. C89 (Figs. 89a,b; GS 29) Various subjects: Padmapāṇi / bodhisattva / flying genie (*vidyādhara?*)  
On a large rectangular boulder, with two figured faces.

Cons.: badly leached and abraded; chipped.

Mat.: augen schist.

Meas.: *vacat.*

Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. IX a.

Centre: Padmapāṇi haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on lotiform throne, with pronounced listel below the cushion; with *p.*, crown (?) with central, non-protruding element, with lateral knots, short necklace, pendant earrings; type a lotus.

On the right: bodhisattva haloed, smaller, standing in three-quarter view on the left on right leg, with pronounced bending of the body, on a base of uncertain shape, with *p.*, tall wide headdress (crown? *jātamukūṭa?*), short necklace, pendant earrings; right hand on shoulder with attribute, left hand lowered with attribute (*ansate vase?*). On the left: small winged figure (*vidyādhara?*), suspended in flight, three-quarter right, with tall voluminous headdress, hands on the shoulders at the side with attributes of uncertain shape, the one on the right possibly a sword.

Stylistically similar to the preceding one

Inv. Rep. C90 (Figs. 89a, 90) Padmapāṇi  
On the other face of the same large quadrangular boulder as C89.

Cons.: badly leached and abraded.

Mat.: augen schist.

Meas.: fig.:104 (95-86) x 56 x 4.5; field: 104 x 68

Filigenzi 1996: fig. 15.

Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on lotiform throne, with body with figuration on the front face (?) and cornice with listel; the bodhisattva has a tall tripartite crown with lateral knots, type a lotus.

Although the details are poorly conserved, the figure displays harmonious proportions and a certain anatomical realism, despite the simplification of the volumes.

Inv. Rep. C91 (Figs. 91a,b; GS 27) Four-armed Maitreya / small figure  
On a large smooth wall, oblong in shape, separated by a horizontal split from a receding base with an irregular surface.

Cons.: only fair; highly abraded and chipped, especially the upper part.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: 185 (173) x 65 x 2 (?)

Olivieri in C. Faccenna *et al.* 1993: fig. 8; Filigenzi 1999: 44.

Maitreya standing frontally on a base composed of a row of bordered, reverse, lotus petals and sepals. The bodhisattva has a large nimbus, probably *saṃghāṭī* (as indicated by the large circular hem of the robe in the front), crown tied with large ribbons descending at the sides; the two lower arms are lowered at the sides, the two upper ones are bent upwards: lower right hand with *akṣamālā*; upper right hand with ascetic's staff, held just below the top; upper left hand with manuscript (?) (rectangular sheet type held between tablets?); lower left hand: the profile of the attribute, poorly conserved, suggests an ansate vase.

Below, left: the profile of the upper part of a small figure is preserved.

### Ugad Valley Shakhorai (AMSV 030)

Lat. 34°49'N, long. 72°29'E. 43 B/5

Deane 1896: 656; Bühler 1896-1897: 133 ff.; Lüders 1901: 575-576; Stein 1930: 49-51; Tucci 1958: 305-306; Ashraf Khan 1993; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan *et al.* 1996 (as Jāhanabad); Rafiullah 2011.

The site of Shakhorai (present-day Jahanabad) is located in the left bank of the valley. The site is well known in literature for the exceptional importance of the sculpted and epigraphic monuments, in particular, for the huge relief of Buddha in *padmāsana* (C92; Stein 1930: fig. 37; Tucci 1958: fig. 11; Ashraf Khan 1993: fig. 49).<sup>19</sup> To the left of the relief a track leads off up the slope to the top of a small tableland on the sheer N sides of which a huge Buddha has been sculpted. A relief of normal size is found along the track (C93; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 58). Climbing up even further we find two rock inscriptions in *nāgarī*<sup>20</sup> script containing a Sanskrit version of the *Dhammapada* (vv. 182, 281) and the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (IV 16) (Deane 1896; Bühler 1896-1897; Stein 1930: 49-50, fig. 35; Tucci 1958: 306). A third inscription, slightly further down on the NE side, contains other verses from the Buddhist canons (Lüders 1901; Stein 1930: 50). On the other side of the inscriptions, further up on the tableland, the large ruins of a *stūpa* appear (Tucci 1958: 306; Ashraf Khan *et al.* 1996: 86). From the spot where the relief C93 stands it was also possible to reach the top along a second path in which steps had been carved out of the rock. According to Tucci this was probably the area where the Adbhuta *stūpa* mentioned in the Chinese sources must have stood (Tucci 1958: 305).

Inv. Rep. C92 (Figs. 92a,b,c,d)<sup>21</sup> Buddha  
 On a large boulder with a rather smooth, regular face, which appears to be sheltered by other, projecting, irregularly-shaped boulders.  
 Cons.: [before the attack of September 2007] excellent; nose, eyes, hands chipped; slightly abraded. Present conditions: head badly damaged, especially in the upper part.  
 Mat.: gneiss.  
 Meas.: 6 (5.50) x 5.15 (4.20)

Stein 1930: fig. 37; Tucci 1958: fig. 11; Ashraf Khan 1993: fig. 49; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 11; Rafiullah 2011: fig. 2.

Haloed Buddha, in *dhyānāsana*, with feet covered, on a podium with cushion and smooth listel projecting from the base, and on top; with cloak with large round neckline and pleated sides; triple line on neck, hair with pointed hairline on the forehead, *uṣṇīṣa* separated, curls rendered by means of squares arranged in concentric rows. Flattened sketchy volumes; the drapery imitates a thin fabric; the pleats are flat, and rendered using pairs of parallel lines; the pattern of the circular central hem over the legs is repeated on the torso, where the garment falls and forms one central and four smaller lateral hems respectively touching the base and the top of the upper listel; broad, massive face, with small fleshy mouth close to nose; half-closed, large, elongated eyes.

As well as in the shallow niche with its hazy outline, the figure is included in an inset that cuts the surface, evening it out along a rectangular band.

Inv. Rep. C93 (Fig. 93) Padmapāṇi  
 On an isolated boulder.  
 Cons.: fair; leached and abraded, especially the face; chipped. For the present conditions see Rafiullah 2011: 209-210, fn. 12.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: 150 (135) x 80 x 7

Abdur Rahman 1993: pl. XXIIb; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 58; Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. I1b; Rafiullah 2011: fig. 3.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on tall lotiform throne; with *p.* with visible knotted belt, crown (with figuration in the central part?), bracelets, short necklace, pendant earrings; full-blown lotus viewed from front.

<sup>19</sup> This colossal relief recently became the object of the local Taliban iconoclastic fury; the face of the Buddha was targeted by a multiple automatic shooting two times on 11 and 23 September 2007. A similar attack has been reported against C93. See Chap. 3.1, fn. 60.

<sup>20</sup> Bühler's epigraphic study led him to date the characters of the two inscriptions, the forms being likened to those of the third cent. CE (Bühler 1896-1897: 133 ff.; Tucci 1958: 306).

<sup>21</sup> We take this occasion to correct a typographical error: in Filigenzi 2006 (fig. 1), the caption the photo of this monument bore the wrong toponym of Shinkardar.

**Qal'a (AMSV 031)**

Lat. 34°49'N, long. 72°30'E. 43 B/5

Stein 1930: 50-51 (as Nangrial, Kala); Olivieri 1993 (as Qal'a); Rafiullah 2011.

This is a hill overlooking the village of Tilgram: relief C94 is situated just before the village. A path leads off from the village, probably following an ancient track. Along this path (flanked by the slopes, partly terraced by walls, of the hill) there is a series of reliefs, in the following order: C95, C96, C97, C98 (Stein 1930: fig. 36; Olivieri 1993: figs. 6-7), C99, C100, C101, C102, and C103. The S and N slopes of the hill are the site of huge remains of masonry substructions which perhaps gave it its name (*qal'a*, in Pashto = castle). On the top there are extensive remains, probably from a sacred area. From the top of the hill, proceeding SE along a ridge, we encounter relief C104; continuing along the ridge we find the remains of a *stūpa*.

Inv. Rep. C94 (Fig. 94) Standing figure (bodhisattva?)  
 Cons.: very poor; badly leached, corroded, chipped.  
 Mat.: granitic gneiss.  
 Meas.: 95 x 37 x 2 (max)

Standing figure (bodhisattva?), frontal, on right leg; left, a vertical section in relief has been conserved – a staff or more probably a *dupattā* hem.

Inv. Rep. C95 (Fig. 95) Padmapāṇi  
 On inaccessible rock face, at a considerable height, inside a natural funnel-shaped niche.  
 Cons.: very poor; badly leached and abraded.  
 Mat.: *vacat*.  
 Meas.: 136 x 80 x 7 (max)

Filigenzi 1996: fig. 18; Rafiullah 2011: fig. 7.

Padmapāṇi, pensive, in *ap.*; top, right, traces of figuration or irregularly-shaped niche.

Inv. Rep. C96 (Fig. 96; GS 14) Padmapāṇi / Buddha / bodhisattva  
 Cons.: leached; abraded; chipped, especially the face, the arms, and the left foot of Padmapāṇi; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: *vacat*.  
 Meas.: in the order of the description sheet: 210 x 154 x 24; 57 x 42; 50 x 35

Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. Vb.

Centre: Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.*, with *p.* with knotted belt and circular central hem with crenelated inner pleats, short necklace with amulets, pendant earrings; triple line on neck; on throne with cushion and upper border decorated with bordered petals and sepals (?), and base of uncertain shape; supported (?) by two crouching frontal lions, with crossed forepaws, long curly mane and fur on chest parted in the middle; with jaws slightly open, showing the teeth, bulging eyes, thick eyebrows; the throne is covered with a drapery with tasselled borders, upraised around the figures of the lions and falling in rigid and sharp angled hems.

Top, left: small figure of haloed Buddha in *dhyānāsana* on a podium of uncertain shape, with *samghāṭī* with circular neckline, feet covered; below, unidentifiable traces of figuration.

Top, right: bodhisattva, smaller in size than the Buddha, in reverse *ap.* on throne of uncertain shape, with right hand lowered (with attribute?), left hand on thigh with attribute.

Relief characterised by a certain naturalism in its proportions and in the pose adopted by the large central figure, as well as in the details, elaborated in a non-realistic key; sketchy drapery with closely-spaced, thin pleats.

- Inv. Rep. C97 (Fig. 97) Buddha  
 Cons.: badly leached and abraded.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: 52 (45-38) x 36 x 3.5  
 Haloed Buddha, in *dhyānāsana*, with feet (and hands?) covered by cloak with circular neckline, on a rectangular low podium with cushion.  
 Squat massive figure; sketchy drapery, with closely-spaced thin pleats.
- Inv. Rep. C98 (Figs. 98a,b,c,d,e; GS 40, 43) Padmapāṇi / Gaṇeśa / flying genies  
 (*gandharvas? vidyādhara?*)  
 Cons.: Padmapāṇi: head and right arm missing; Gaṇeśa: head and lower left arm missing; abraded; corroded; chipped.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: 230 x 158 x 28; 57 x 48 x 20; 27 x 34 x 5; 27 x 24 x 4; tot. 251 x 210  
 Stein 1930: fig. 36; Olivieri 1993: figs. 6-7; Filigenzi 2000: figs. 10-11; Filigenzi 2000-2001: pls. VIb, VII, VIIa,b; Filigenzi 2006: fig. 4; Rafiullah 2011: figs. 4-5.  
 Centre, Padmapāṇi in *ap.*, with nimbus and aureole with flaming outer edge, with *p.* with knotted belt and central circular hem with crenellated internal pleats; shawl-like *dupattā* of which sections of drapery have been conserved lower left and on the right between the torso and the arm; with type a lotus; on throne with upper border with a projecting listel and cushion, supported by two frontal crouching lions, with long curly mane.  
 Below, left: small Gaṇeśa in *ap.* on podium of uncertain shape; front right hand in *varadamudrā*; back right hand with attribute (broken tusk? three-pointed *vajra?* horseradish?); front left hand on breast with attribute (bowl of *modaka?*); back left hand on side with attribute (stick? inverted axe?). Above, at sides, two small flying figures (*vidyādhara?*), placed three-quarters on toward the central figure: the right-hand one, female (?), with anklet, right arm lifted up (forearm missing), left hand on abdomen (with attribute?); the left-hand one with right hand lifted up with attribute, left hand on breast with attribute.  
 Sketchy drapery, with closely-spaced thin pleats.
- Inv. Rep. C99 (Fig. 99) Bodhisattva (?) / Padmapāṇi  
 On large boulder with upper edge tapering toward the left; the figured field has been adapted to fit the shape of the latter, with the left-hand figure placed lower, and thus creating, with the right-hand figure, the perhaps unintentional effect of a second plane in the background.  
 Cons.: badly abraded, corroded, chipped.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: from right: 86 x 58 x 4; 88 x 62.5 x 8.5; tot.: 200 x 140  
 Right, bodhisattva (?), seated (in *padmāsana?*), with uncovered feet, robe with circular central hem and inner crenellated pleats, on a throne of uncertain shape (covered by drapery?); right hand lowered; left hand on thigh with attribute.  
 Left: pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*; with crown; on oblong throne with cushion or smooth projecting upper border and base of uncertain shape.
- Inv. Rep. C100 (Fig. 100) Two Padmapāṇis / standing Maitreya  
 Cons.: left side missing; badly abraded, corroded and chipped, especially the central figure in the upper part, and the left-hand figure, whose head is missing; left part of body chipped all over.  
 Mat.: *vacat.*



Meas.: in the order of the descriptive data sheet: 140 x 109 x 16; 107 (max) x 45 (max) x 15; 185 (165-138) x 45 x 9

Right: Padmapāṇi, haloed, pensive, in *ap.* on oblong podium with body divided into five horizontal sections by incised lines (ashlar?) and thick cushion; with crown (? with crests of equal height?), bracelets, pendant earrings; full-blown lotus viewed from front.

Left: Padmapāṇi in *ap.*, with *p.* with circular central hem with elaborate inner drapery; on lotiform throne.

Centre: Maitreya, haloed, standing frontally, slightly smaller than previous figures, on smooth oblong base; right hand (on shoulder?) with ascetic's staff held somewhat transversely; left hand lowered with ansate vase.

Inv. Rep. C101 (Fig. 101) Various subjects: Buddhas / bodhisattvas / *stūpa* (?)

On oblong-shaped boulder, perhaps having fallen from its original site.

Cons.: very poor; broken off bottom left; chipped lower right; badly corroded and abraded; chipped.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: from right: 35 x 27 x 7; 34 x 7 x 5; 40 x 30 x 5; 36 (32) x 9 x 5; 36 (32) x 26 x 5.5; 30 (27) x 19 x 5; tot.: 57 x 158

From right: A) Haloed Buddha, in *dhyānāsana* on throne of uncertain shape. B) Small *stūpa* (?) with tall pinnacle, bell-shaped lower profile (originally a quasi-circular *aṇḍa* on a square-shaped body?), with lateral infulae descending from the top. C) Haloed Padmapāṇi (pensive?), in *ap.* on a throne of uncertain shape, probably lotiform. D) Haloed bodhisattva, smaller than C), standing frontally on a raised base of uncertain shape, probably lotiform; with *p.* and shawl-like *dupaṭṭā*, with hem draped over left arm; tall, wide headdress (crown with crests of equal height? *jaṭāmukuta*?); left hand lowered (with attribute?), right hand on flank (with attribute?). E) Haloed Buddha, same size as C), in *dhyānāsana*, with uncovered feet; on full-blown lotus, with visible pistil acting as a support for the image. F) Figure in *dhyānāsana* (Buddha?), same size as D), with nimbus (?) and aureole (?), on a throne of uncertain shape.

Inv. Rep. C102 (Fig. 102) Seated figure

Cons.: very poor, badly leached, corroded, abraded; lime incrustations.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: 110 (85) x 90 x 25

Pensive figure seated on a throne of uncertain shape; right hand on knee (in *varadamudrā*?; with attribute?); left hand on lap, probably with attribute.

Inv. Rep. C103 (Fig. 103) Buddha (?)

Cons.: very poor; badly leached, corroded, abraded; chipped, especially the head.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: 115 (70) 80 x 25

Buddha (?), haloed, in *dhyānāsana*, on throne supported by two lions, between which there are traces of an unidentifiable figuration.

Inv. Rep. C104 (Figs. 104a,b) Padmapāṇi

On a jagged steep face, with no access path.

Cons.: head, arms, legs and lotus chipped over entire surface; leached; corroded, abraded; lime incrustations.

Mat.: saccharoid marble.

Meas.: 220 (185) x 125 x (109) x 8.5

Filigenzi 1996: fig. 17. Rafiullah 2011: fig. 6.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*, with *p.* with visible belt and circular central hem with inner vertical drapery, crown (tripartite?), pendant earrings; on lotiform throne with base composed of row of petals and two superimposed listels.

Very sketchy drapery, symmetrical, with closely-spaced thin pleats.

### Spinubo (AMSV 032)

Lat. 34°50'N, 72°34'E. 43 B/9

Olivieri 1993.

The site is located about 1400 masl; the unfinished stela S105 was found in an ophiolite quarry still in use. About five km further uphill lies the sacred area of Malam-jabba<sup>22</sup> (2445 masl) (Ashraf Khan 1993: 40-44, pl. VIII, fig. 22; see also Rafiullah 2011).

Inv. Rep. S105 (Figs. 105a,b,c) Unfinished sculpture. Padmapāṇi  
Cons.: very poor; chipped over all the more projecting surfaces, corroded; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: muscovite chloritischist or post-kinematic biotite.  
Meas.: 154 (120) x 95 x 9; tot.: 162 x 115  
Rafiullah 2011: fig. 8.

Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*; with crown with crests of equal height, short necklace, pendant earrings; on a throne of uncertain shape (supported by lions?).

### Mangaltan Valley Zindwala (AMSV 033)

Lat. 34°51'N, long. 72°29'E. 43 B/5

Stein 1930: 52-53 (as Zundwala); Barger and Wright 1941: 29-31; Tucci 1958: 307-308; Olivieri 1993.

This site lies slightly E of Charbagh on the left side of the valley; here, near the village of Gumbat, a *stūpa* was reported (Stein 1930: 52); slightly further S lies the village of Zindwala, where stela S106 was documented (Barger and Wright 1944: 31). In front of these sites, on the right bank, lies the site of Jampur-dherai, previously reported by Stein (1930: 52) and subsequently excavated (Barger and Wright 1944: 29-31, pl XI4).

Inv. Rep. S106 (Fig. 106) Padmapāṇi  
Stela  
Cons.: lower left part missing; left top broken off; badly corroded and abraded; chipped.  
Mat.: calcareous schist.  
Meas.: 103 x 47 (max) x 33.5 (max)

Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*; with crown; type a lotus; on tall throne the front face of which retains unidentifiable figuration elements; the extremity of a vertical element (tassel?) has been conserved, followed on the left by a vertical internal hourglass-shaped element.

### Mangalkot (AMSV 503<sup>23</sup>)

Lat. 34° 41' 45" N, 72° 29' 29" E (approximate)

<sup>22</sup> There is insufficient evidence to confirm a dating for the later phases of the sacred area. Judging by the typology of the principal *stūpa* (seemingly a *Dharmarājika*) and by the masonry technique used, the sacred area is probably an ancient one (third-first cent. BCE; Ashraf Khan 1993: 52-53).

<sup>23</sup> This toponym was in use until the mid-1960s, seemingly to specify a small hamlet in the outskirts of Mangaltan (N of Zindwala).

- Inv. Rep. S141 (Fig. 107; GS 18) SM Standing Maitreya with worshippers  
Lobe-shaped stela.  
Cons.: mutilated: broken off at the top, left, upper right and in the lower corner; small chips, especially on bodhisattva's face; whole surface slightly abraded.  
Mat.: schist (?).  
Meas.: ht.: 47  
Taddei 1985: 621-622, fig. 7; Filigenzi 2000: 1065, fig. 1.

Maitreya, nimbate, standing on right leg on flattened lotus corolla, with upturned petals; wearing short *p.* upraised to the left knee, with laced belt tied, with one end descending and the other lifted up; *uttarīya* draped like a shawl, Brahmanic cord, crown (or *jaṭāmukuṭa*?) tied at the sides with descending ribbons and central *stūpa*-shaped ornament, bracelets decorated with a flower-shaped plaque, short necklace, polylobate earrings with drop-shaped ends; right hand in *abhayamudrā* with *akṣamālā*, left hand lowered with *kamaṇḍalu*. At the side, below, two smaller figures of worshippers, kneeling, depicted in profile towards the inside, head in three-quarters view, hands clasped, with attribute, on a base of uncertain shape: the one on the right, female (with *p.* and *uttarīya*?), with a lotus flower; the right-hand one, male (with tunic?), with portable fire altar.

**Swat Valley**  
**Left bank**

*Middle Swat (upper section)*<sup>24</sup>

**Jare (AMSV 034)**

Lat. 35°6'N, long. 72°30'E. 43 A/8

Bühler 1898; Konow 1929: 8; Stein 1930: 55-61; Tucci 1958: 302-304; Olivieri 1993.

The site is unanimously considered one of the most important in the sacred Buddhist topography in Swat. The finds known to have been made near Tirat, on the right bank of the river, are the boulder with the depictions of Buddha's footprints and inscription in *kharoṣṭhī* script, now in the Swat Archaeological Museum (Bühler 1898; Konow 1929: 8; Stein 1930: fig. 40; Tucci 1958: fig. 9; considered within a broader framework by Quagliotti 1998: 50-51, fig. 24), as well as the rock on which tradition has it that Buddha laid his clothes out to dry (Stein 1929: 86-87, pl. 48; Stein 1930: 55-56; Tucci 1958: 303). Near Tirat, Stein identified a sacred area (Stein 1930: 60-61; Tucci 1958: 302); another was found in the vicinity, at Kargha-dherai (Stein 1930: pl. 8). The rock monument C107 is situated on the left bank, before Tirat, near which there is a ford providing access to the other bank of the river (Tucci 1958: 303-304).

- Inv. Rep. C107 (Fig. 108; GS 12) Padmapāṇi  
Cons.: slightly leached, corroded, abraded.  
Mat.: dioritic gneiss.  
Meas.: 325 (275) x 325 (223) x 10 (max)  
Tucci 1958: fig. 10; Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. IXb.

Padmapāṇi, pensive (with halo?), in *ap.* on a throne in the form of a wicker lattice stool; with *p.* with visible belt, shawl-like *dupaṭṭā*, crown with upward tapering central crest, with decorated outer edge and central figu-

<sup>24</sup> So far the name of Lower Swat has been used to refer to the river's stretch S of Khwazakhela, as opposed to Upper Swat; the terminology is incorrect and another has been proposed: Upper Swat (from the source as far as Manglaor), Middle Swat (as far as the junction with the Panjkora), Lower Swat (from here until it flows into the Kabul at Charsada) (see Olivieri 2003: 13). Middle Swat may be further subdivided, according to the morphology and the catchment areas, into: "upper section" (from Manglaor to Saidu Sharif), "central section" (from Saidu Sharif to Landakai), and "lower section" (from Landakai to Panjkora).

ration (Buddha in *dhyānāsana*?), lateral knots; banded bracelets, armilla with decorated bands, short necklace, pendant earrings; type a lotus.

Flattened relief; simplified volumes; the anatomy and limb movement are characterised by extreme rigidity and angularity; the face is wide, massive, the eyes open and elongated, slightly oblique; sketchy drapery, with closely-spaced and thin pleats.

*Middle Swat (central section)*

**Bologram-Udegram and Gogdara (AMSV 035, 036)**

Lat. 34°45'N, long. 72°17'E. 43 B/5

Deane 1896: 659-660; Stein 1930: 30 ff.; Tucci 1958: 288 ff.; Gullini in Gullini and Faccenna 1962; Faccenna 1964; Tucci 1971 [repr. Tucci 1997]; Scerrato 1985; Scerrato 1986; Di Florio *et al.* 1993: 67; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan 1996c; Olivieri 1998: 57; Bagnera 2006; Filigenzi 2006.

Along the Kalam-Mingora-Malakand main road, NE of the important village of Udegram (probably the ancient Ra yi k'ar or Rāyīsar of Tibetan tradition “which is said to have been the capital of the King Indrabhote” according to the text of O rgyan pa; Tucci 1971: 398-399 [repr. Tucci 1997: 28]), lie the twin villages of Bologram and Udegram (AMSV 035). The stela S124 was originally acquired in the village of Udegram. Before Udegram, by the roadside near the hamlet of Bologram, lie the reliefs C108, C109 and C110. Climbing towards Udegram and bypassing it, on the N slopes of the valley carved out by Kushalkhan-china, we encounter the reliefs (kindly pointed out to us by F. Noci) C111 and C112. The valley ends in the site of Rajagira, where the Ghaznavid mosque was recently discovered in a Buddhist sacred area. Another sacred area is situated slightly further SW, at Gogdara III (Stein 1930: 34; Di Florio *et al.* 1993; Olivieri 1998: 57) (AMSV 036). Above and to the left of the wall, on which the protohistoric rock engravings of Gogdara I are found, are reliefs C113 (Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 57) and C114. On the top of the highland lies the Buddhist site of Gogdara III.

Inv. Rep. S124 (Fig. 109) MNAOR Seated multi-armed Avalokiteśvara  
Stela of irregularly oval shape; possibly unfinished.  
Cons.: whole; chipped along the edge (?); jutting parts badly chipped, especially the face (completely missing); badly abraded.  
Mat.: black or dark gray schist.  
Meas.: 80 x 53  
Filigenzi 2000-2001: 257-58, pl. VIa.

Avalokiteśvara, nimbate, seated in *dhyānāsana* on a podium (probably of the lotiform type with row of petals on upper edge), with tall crown kept in place by laterally knotted ribbons, barely distinguishable short beaded necklace, bracelets (only one has been conserved and is visible, on the middle right arm); the bodhisattva has eight arms, the two anterior ones in *dhyānāsana*, the remaining ones arranged radially. From the left, in a clockwise direction: in *varadamudrā* (with *akṣamālā*?); open palm, on the side; raised, with *triśūla* (?); raised, with attribute (lotus?); raised, with attribute (vertical rod); lowered, probably with outward turning palm, with attribute (*kamaṇḍalu*?). On the left, a part of the hair style is visible, rendered in the form of large symmetrical locks. Left, between the two hands on top, there is a section in relief, slightly curved, which seems out of place and not linked to any of the other elements present. The anatomical treatment of the arms reveals conspicuous disproportions and incongruities, in particular as far as the two lower arms on the side are concerned.

- Inv. Rep. S186 (Fig. 110) *Vacat* (description based on archive photographs). Padmapāṇi / minor figures  
From the area between Tok-dara and Udegram.<sup>25</sup>  
Oval-shaped stela (?).  
Cons.: broken off below (?); chipped all along the edge; protruding parts badly chipped, particularly the bodhisattva's face and legs; abraded and corroded.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: *vacat*.

Seated Padmapāṇi, with nimbus with circle and flaming edge, crown tied at sides with descending ribbons, full-blown lotus viewed from the front. On the right, three minor figures have been conserved, on three superimposed planes: the one below, larger than the others, unidentifiable; the other two, very similar to each other, are probably Buddhas in *dhyānāsana*: one at the same height as the bodhisattva's elbow, the other above, immediately above the lotus corolla.

- Inv. Rep. C108 (Fig. *vacat*) Bodhisattva  
Cons.: only faint traces remain.  
Mat.: carbonatic phyllite.  
Meas.: 96 (71?) x 90 (68?-53?) x 3 (max)  
Bodhisattva (haloed?), seated (in *ap.*?), with tall square-shaped headdress (crown?) with lateral knots; left hand on thigh.

- Inv. Rep. C109 (Fig. *vacat*) Buddha in *padmāsana*?  
Cons.: only faint traces remain.  
Mat.: carbonatic phyllite.  
Meas.: 105 (97?) x 80 (max)  
Buddha in *padmāsana*?

- Inv. Rep. C110 (Fig. 111) Padmapāṇi  
Cons.: only traces of the figuration remain.  
Mat.: carbonatic phyllite.  
Meas.: 95 (91?) x 71?  
Padmapāṇi in *ap.*; on tall throne; left foot on footstool?

- Inv. Rep. C111 (Fig. 112) Padmapāṇi  
Cons.: very poor; badly chipped, corroded, abraded; lower part cut obliquely and badly chipped; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: calcareous muscovite schist.  
Meas.: 100 (90-85-75) x 94 (63) x 3.5

Padmapāṇi, pensive, in *ap.* on tall throne, with nimbus and aureole, bent head; wearing *p.* and visible belt, shawl-like *dupaṭṭā*, crown with lateral knots, short necklace, pendant earrings; type a lotus.

In the vicinity of the left hand a section in curved relief is discernible (*akṣamālā*?).

Although only poorly conserved, the figure displays a certain harmony and naturalism both in its proportions and position, despite the simplification of the volumes; sketchy drapery, symmetrical, with closely-spaced thin pleats.

<sup>25</sup> The photograph was provided by Domenico Faccenna from his personal archive. The photo was taken by Felice Benuzzi, First Secretary of the Italian Embassy, who accompanied Giuseppe Tucci on his first reconnaissance in Swat (see Olivieri 2006). The author's handwritten caption on the back of the archive photograph reads "tra Udegram e Tok-dara". Actually the two sites are about 10 km away; consequently the attribution to the Udegram area is a mere conjecture.

## 1. Rock monuments *in situ* or of certain provenance

- Inv. Rep. C112 (Fig. 113) Padmapāṇi  
On irregular polyhedron projecting from the rock face.  
Cons.: very poor; badly chipped, corroded, abraded; continuous horizontal split through centre.  
Mat.: calcareous muscovite schist.  
Meas.: 86 (73) x 71 x 3 (max)  
Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*; on tall throne with cushion and/or upper protruding edge.
- Inv. Rep. C113 (Figs. 114a,b) Various subjects: bodhisattvas / *stūpa*  
On rock outcrop roughly in the shape of an isosceles triangle to which the composition of the figured field has been adapted.  
Cons.: badly chipped, corroded, abraded; lime incrustations.  
Mat.: sericitic calcareous schist.  
Meas.: in the order of the descriptive data sheet: 126 (117) x 66 (63) x 5; 65 (59) x 36 x 2.5; 27.5 x 19 x 2.5; 75 (64) x 37 x 3; 36 x 22 x 1; tot.: 150 x 126.5  
Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 57; Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. Ib.  
Centre: Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*, with crown, pendant earrings; type a lotus; on tall throne with highly inclined cushion.  
Smaller figures on the three sides: right: bodhisattva, haloed, in reverse *ap.*, with tall crown (?), pendant earrings; right hand in *varadamudrā* (with *akṣamālā*?), left hand on thigh with conical-shaped attribute (*kalaśa*?). Between this and the central Padmapāṇi, below, there is a small *stūpa* on a tall base formed by receding bodies (the truncated-pyramid profile suggests a “star-shaped” base with steps on all four sides); quasi-circular *aṇḍa* and tall pinnacle. Left, top: Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*, with crown, pendant earrings; lotus like the preceding one; on tall throne with upper edge composed of a row of reverse lotus petals; below: haloed figure, smaller in size than the preceding ones, in *padmāsana*; right hand on shoulder?
- Inv. Rep C114 (Fig. *vacat*) Buddha in *padmāsana*  
Cons.: very poor; only a few traces of the figuration have been conserved.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: *vacat*.  
Buddha in *padmāsana*.

### Tindo-dag and Manyar area (AMSV 037, 038)

The two sites differ in their topographic position; however, they actually refer to the same area, the large limestone cliff face overlooking the Swat River. The term “Tindo-dag” is used to refer to the group of reliefs situated on the lower face of the cliff (also known as “Hindu-ghar”); “Manyar” to those at the cliff top. It is also interesting that Deane, when describing the area around Shingardhar and the so-called “Elephant’s Rock” or “Hathi-dara” (see Stein 1930), writes: “[...] from what I can understand from the people, there is also a fine Deva temple near it” (Deane 1896: 660). The existence in the Tindo-dag top hill of a – possibly Turki-Śāhi – cultic centre has been recently conjectured (Filigenzi 2006, 2011; see Chap. 7.4).

### Tindo-dag

Lat. 34°42’N, long. 72°16’E. 43 B/2

Deane 1896: 660; Stein 1930: 32-34 (as Ghaleghai); Tucci 1958: 294-295; Ashraf Khan 1993: 69-70; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan 1996c; Filigenzi 2006.

The first of the two monuments (C115) is situated by the side of the main road, carved out of a tall limestone cliff (Tucci 1958: fig. 6; Ashraf Khan 1993: fig. 40; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 59). Just above is the so-called Hindu-ghar cave, which contains relief C116 (Stein 1930: fig. 25; Tucci 1958: fig. 7; Ashraf Khan 1993: fig. 41); on the high ground at the top of the cliff lie remains that are perhaps related to a Buddhist sacred area. A short distance away lies the Shingardar *stūpa*, which Deane and Stein, but not Tucci, identified as the Uttara-sena *stūpa* of the Chinese sources (Deane 1896: 660; Stein 1930: 33 ff.; Tucci 1958: 294, 299; see below the site of Nawe-kalai). On the S face of the cliff is relief C180 (Ashraf Khan 1996c: 47).

Inv. Rep. C115 (Fig. 115; GS 2) Buddha  
 On the rock face, below, right, with respect to the entrance to the cave containing relief C116.  
 Cons.: head, torso and right arm badly chipped; chipped; corrosion.  
 Mat.: limestone.  
 Meas.: 500 ca. x 330 (290) x 62  
 Tucci 1958: fig. 6; Ashraf Khan 1993: fig. 40; Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 59; Filigenzi 1996: fig. 12; Filigenzi 2000: fig. 8.

Haloed Buddha, in *dhyānāsana*, with *saṃghāṭī* with lateral pleats over torso, feet uncovered; on low rectangular podium with upper border or projecting cushion.

Simplified volumes; massive triangle-shaped sitting figure with slightly drooping round shoulders, lacking naturalism in the lower limbs' crossing and anatomical form. The drapery, with its thin, often coupled, pleats, features mannerist patterns, especially in the crenellated lower hem of the *saṃghāṭī* and the large circular central hem, flanked by a series of smaller hems, each with a crenellated border.

Inv. Rep. C116 (Figs. 116a,b,c; GS 41) Various subjects: Sūrya with attendants; Gaṇeśa; worshipper  
 Cons.: very poor; badly chipped, corroded, abraded; lime incrustations.  
 Mat.: limestone.  
 Meas.: in the order of the descriptive data sheet: 84 x 44.5 x 2; 24 x 16 x 1; 30 x 15 x 1; 32 x 18 x 2; *vacat*; 41 x 23 x 2; 14 x 7 x 1; tot.: 190 x 100

Stein 1930: fig. 25; Tucci 1958: fig. 7; Ashraf Khan 1993, fig. 41; Filigenzi 2000: fig. 9; Filigenzi 2006: figs. 2, 3.

Centre: Sūrya, standing frontally, with nimbus with flaming outer edge; wearing caftan rigidly tapering downwards, fastened by a belt with central pendant element (dagger?), trousers (and short boots?); hands on breast (with attribute[s]?); on large quadrangular base with figured front face (row of animals, probably seven horses); right, behind the caftan, in the space between the left arm and the base, a flat vertical element is visible (sword?).

At the sides of Sūrya are other smaller figures. Four of these, standing frontally and haloed (two on right and two on left), are arranged around the central axis of the relief: the two lower figures probably males, as suggested by the profile of the garment, compatible with a caftan similar to that of the central figure. The figure on the right (Daṇḍin/Skanda) stands on a base of uncertain shape; it has bordered aureole (?), right hand on the shoulder with upright rod (spear?) and left hand on flank, probably with attribute (shield?); the figure on the left (Piṅgala) has right hand lowered on one side (with attribute?), left hand on the shoulder on one side (with attribute?).<sup>26</sup> The upper two figures are female, as suggested by the more slender profile (Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā); the one on the right, which is better conserved, with long garment, right hand on the shoulder with attribute, left hand probably lowered (with attribute?); on a base of uncertain shape; the left-hand one has the right hand lowered.

<sup>26</sup> The description of the relief and in particular of this figure, which has now been completely lost (the measures should correspond roughly to that of the figure with which it is symmetrical, on the right) was described on the basis of 1959 archive photos.

Top, left: a four-armed figure (Gaṇeśa: note the massive profile of the head, with lateral projections, which match the god's large ears), seated (most probably on a lion: the projecting element on the left, below, is compatible with the front part of an animal sitting upright), with nimbus (bordered?); rear hands lifted, with attributes; front right hand lowered (in *varadamudrā*?); front left hand on lap (with attribute?).

Below, left, beside the base of the central figure, is a small figure kneeling on right leg, facing three-quarters right, with skull-cap-like headdress; grasping sword hilt in right hand, obliquely, with tip pointing downwards. It may conceivably have been part of an originally symmetrical composition with a similar figure, now lost, on the right.

The entire figuration is characterised by simplified, squat, massive volumes.

Inv. Rep. C180 (Fig. *vacat*) *Vacat* (description based on Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 47)  
Pensive Padmapāṇi / standing bodhisattva / small Buddha  
On the projecting and smooth portion of a rock wall.  
Cons.: chipped; abraded; heads defaced (intentionally?).  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: 120 x 150

Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 47.

Three figures, all nimbate: at the centre is a pensive Padmapāṇi with nimbus, type a lotus; on a high throne with a row of upturned lotus petals on the top. On the left is a smaller standing bodhisattva, in *varadamudrā*, with right hand on the chest (with attribute?). On the right, above, is a small Buddha (?) in *dhyānāsana*.

### Manyar

Lat. 34°43'N, long. 72°17'E. 43 B/2

Filigenzi 2006.

At the top of a limestone cliff overlooking Ghalegai there is a large archaeological area made up of numerous remains of masonry and artificial terraces, probably belonging to a Buddhist monastic area. Along the path leading up to the top, facing E and N, are four reliefs (C182, C183, C184, C185), two of which carved out of white marble boulders (C182, C183).

Inv. Rep. C182 (Fig. 117) Various subjects: Padmapāṇi; figure in *dhyānāsana* (?); bodhisattva; two Buddha figures; *stūpa* (?)  
On an approximately quadrangular-shaped boulder.  
Cons.: badly chipped and leached.  
Mat.: limestone (white marble).  
Meas.: in the order of the descriptive data sheet: 74(60) x 33 x 5.5; 56 x 21 (max) x 8.5; 24 x 20; 18.5 (max) x 15

Left: Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.* on lotiform throne; with *p.*, crown (with lateral knots?), pendant earrings; on the right, equally bulky but slightly larger in size is a figure in *dhyānāsana* (Buddha?) on a large flattened lotus corolla, with upturned petals; in the centre, a smaller figure of a bodhisattva standing on a lotus flower with upturned petals; to the right of Padmapāṇi, above and below, are two small figures of Buddha (?) in *dhyānāsana*. Between the Buddha and the standing bodhisattva is an elongated element, probably a *stūpa*.

Inv. Rep. C183 (Fig. 118; GS 42) Various subjects: Sūrya and attendants, Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu (?) and attendants  
On an oblong boulder.  
Cons.: very poor; badly chipped and leached.  
Mat.: limestone (white marble).



Meas.: in the order of the descriptive data sheet:  
72 x 37 x 9; 30 (max); 30 x 15 x 2.5; 54(38.5) x 39 x 4.5; 45 x 26 x 3; 12 x 5

Filigenzi 2006: figs. 6-8.

Centre: standing figure of Sūrya, only the upper part visible, up to the height of the thighs, with indistinct garment (*p.*?), tall crown, long earrings; hands to breast, holding on the side two short-stemmed lotus flowers, sloping outwards, the corollas of which project above the shoulders; on the sides, below, two small standing figures; the right-hand one, slightly larger, holds a spear in the right hand, above, at the side; left hand lowered to one side with attribute (garland?); the left-hand one with inclined torso, appears to be looking upwards, with arms outstretched. On the right is Gaṇeśa, seated in European fashion on a throne of uncertain shape, with four arms, the upper two bent upwards, with attributes, the two lower ones lowered on the side, the left one with attribute, the right one probably in *varadamudrā* (with attribute?). On the left is a four-armed figure standing frontally (Viṣṇu?) with a long garland or scarf hanging down from the forearms; his two upper hands bear undistinguishable attributes, the lower two are placed on the head of small attendants of whom only the profile has been preserved, the left one to a lesser degree.

Inv. Rep. C184 (Fig. 119) Padmapāṇi  
On a small roughly quadrangular spur jutting out from rocky outcrop.  
Cons.: broken on the upper part: figure headless; badly corroded and leached.  
Mat.: limestone.  
Meas.: 37 x 44 (max)  
Filigenzi 2006: fig. 5.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.*, on a lotus-shaped throne.

Inv. Rep. S185 (Fig. 120) Bodhisattva (standing?)  
Cons.: fragment; only part of the bust of a headless figure is preserved; badly chipped over the whole surface.  
Mat.: limestone.  
Meas.: *vacat.*  
Bodhisattva, probably standing.

### Barikot (AMSV 26; in Olivieri and Vidale 2006: '002<sub>a</sub>')<sup>a</sup>

Lat. 34°41' N, 72°12' E. 43 B/2

Stein 1930: 11 ff.; Barger and Wright 1944: 14 ff.; Tucci 1958: 295 ff.; Callieri *et al.* 1993 (with preceding bibliography on the excavations); Callieri *et al.* 2000, Callieri *et al.* 2000-2001, Callieri 2005 (see here the more recent bibliography); Olivieri 2003 (see here the general description and location of the reliefs); Olivieri forthcoming; Olivieri and Vidale 2006.

Overlooking the Middle Swat reaches, the Barikot tableland (in Pashto: Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai) has been subjected to continual studies, excavations and research over the past thirty years. The site was identified by Stein and Tucci as the Bazira, or Beira, of Alexander's accounts and by Tucci as the Vajīrasthāna of the tenth century CE, mentioned in an inscription from the site (Tucci 1958: fn. 28; see Olivieri 1996 for a reassessment of the relevant sources). On the SE and N slopes of the hillside the reliefs C117 (Olivieri 2003: pl. XIb, as SBK I) and C118 (Olivieri 2003: pl. XXVIIIa, as SBK II)<sup>27</sup> were found.

<sup>27</sup> On Barikot Hill, as everything seems to indicate (see Olivieri 2003: 45), there must have been a Buddhist sacred area; this area was later eradicated by subsequent building (see Chap. 1.3, fn. 17). On the E terrace of the hill a Brahmanic structure of the Śāhi period was discovered (Callieri *et al.* 2000-2001; Callieri 2005; Filigenzi 2005; Filigenzi 2010c).

The hill is located near the junction of two large valleys, that of Karakar and that of Kandak (Stein 1930; Barger and Wright 1944; Tucci 1958; Olivieri 2003). Karakar Valley descends along the pass of the same name (the K'a rag k'ar or K'arakśar of the Tibetan sources, see Tucci 1971: 398, fn. 1 [repr. Tucci 1997: 28, fn. 94]; see also Olivieri 1996: 74) which crosses Mount Ilam (the ancient Aornos-Varaena, the Xiluo of the Chinese, the Tibetan Hilo; Olivieri 1996: 68-69, fn. 33).

Inv. Rep. C117 (Fig. 121) Various subjects: bodhisattvas / Buddha (?)  
 Cons.: only the outlines of the figuration, in slight relief, have been conserved; lower part of the figure on the right missing.  
 Mat.: phyllite.  
 Meas.: in the order of the descriptive data sheet: 136 (115) x 66 x 2.54 (max) x 45 (max) x 1 (max); 50 x 40 (max)

Olivieri 2003: pl. XIb.

Centre: pensive Padmapāṇi, in *ap.* on tall throne; haloed, with bent head.

Right: pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed; smaller in size than the preceding one.

Left, below: Buddha (?) smaller in size than the preceding figures, in *dhyānāsana*.

Inv. Rep. C118 (Fig. 122) Padmapāṇi / Maitreya  
 On the upper part of a rocky outcrop, smooth in the zone of the relief.  
 Cons.: badly chipped; corroded; abraded.  
 Mat.: granatiferous phyllite.  
 Meas.: 95 x 50 x 6; 75 x 31 x 2; tot.: 95 x 92

Olivieri 2003: pl. XXVIIIa.

Left: pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.* on a throne of uncertain shape, with *p.*, crown (with lateral knots?), short necklace, pendant earrings.

Right: Maitreya, smaller in size, standing frontally on right leg, with pronounced bending of body; with *p.*, *saṃghāṭī* with ample sinus over the knees, tall headdress (crown? *jātamukūṭa*?), short necklace, pendant earrings; right hand on shoulder (with attribute? with slightly inclined ascetic's staff?), left hand lowered with attribute, probably a vase.

### Amluk-dara (AMSV 314)

Lat. 34°40' N, long. 72°30' E. 43 B/2

Stein 1930; Callieri 1986; Olivieri and Vidale 2006; Spagnesi 2006; Faccenna and Spagnesi 2014.

The area (approx. 35,000 m<sup>2</sup>) is irregularly shaped as a triangle whose base runs NW-SE along the course of a stream. An extended Buddhist sacred area, recently excavated by the MAI (Olivieri 2014), lies approximately at the centre of the triangle. Not far from the main *stūpa* a Śāhi watchtower (a decayed mound interpreted as a *stūpa* in Stein 1930: 19) has been documented, as well as a series of wine presses, cup marks, and a painted shelter. An ancient quarry area (phyllite) with traces of unfinished extraction (*chattras*) was found in Zaro-tangai near the spring. Near the SE limit of the area, there is an ancient artificial pond, which is still used as a reservoir. SW of the village of Amluk-dara, Stein documented a rock carving on a granite boulder (C 119), which no longer exists as it was destroyed (before 1987) when the granite outcrops were blasted to obtain construction material.

Inv. Rep. C119 (Fig. 123) Buddha  
 Unfinished sculpture; on a large isolated boulder.  
 Cons.: *vacat.*  
 Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: “4 feet 8 inches in height” (after Stein 1930:18)

Olivieri (2013): 328; fig. p. 330.

Buddha in *padmāsana*. Unfinished. Only the deeply carved outline is visible in the photograph taken by Stein, who defines it a “rudely carved relieve” (Stein 1930: 18). The original photograph taken by Stein is presently conserved in the British Library, Stein Collection (© British Library Board; Stein 392\_30\_127).

### Nawe-kalai (AMSV 398)

Lat. 34°39’N, long. 72°11’E. 43 B/2

Tucci 1958: 300-302; Olivieri 1993; Abdul Nasir and Faiz-ur-Rehman 1996 (as Barabru); Olivieri and Vidale 2006.

The locality, which Tucci identified as the site of the Uttarāsena *stūpa*, was excavated in the late 1980s; a Buddhist sacred area was discovered. Upstream from the latter relief C120 is situated; W of the latter lie the reliefs C121 and C122. Continuing towards the left, the traces of two reliefs have been found. Traces of ancient canals are visible.

Inv. Rep. C120 (Figs. 124a,b,c,d) Various subjects: Padmapāṇi / Buddha

On two faces of a roughly square boulder with a parallelepiped shape.

Cons.: badly corroded and abraded, especially on the left front face; broken off at the top (and on the right?); chipped; lime incrustations.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: in the order of the descriptive data sheet: 62 x 40 x 3; 67 x 45 x 4; 59 (54-42-37) x 31; 30 (27) x 15 (max); 67 (60) x 51 (max)

Right front face: Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*; with short necklace, pendant earrings; on throne with cushion, supported (?) by two frontal lions (crouching?); Padmapāṇi, like the preceding one; Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, on tall throne with cushion or protruding upper edge; on the right end, above, small Padmapāṇi (pensive? with inclined head?) in *ap.* on lotiform throne; with full-blown lotus in frontal view?

Left front face: traces of figuration, probably Padmapāṇi in *ap.*

Inv. Rep. C121 (Fig. 125) Padmapāṇi

Cons.: only traces.

Mat.: granitoid gneiss.

Meas.: 53 x 39

Padmapāṇi, pensive, haloed, in *ap.*; on a throne of uncertain shape, with cushion and protruding upper edge.

Inv. Rep. C122 (Fig. 126) Padmapāṇi

Cons.: only traces.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: 86 x 80

Padmapāṇi (haloed?), pensive, in *ap.*; with crown with lateral knots, short necklace; on a throne of uncertain shape.

***Right bank***

*Middle Swat (central section)*

**Dodeharra (AMSV 039)**

Lat. 34°45'N, long. 72°13'E. 43 B/2

Ashraf Khan 1993: 57-60; Di Florio *et al.* 1993: 69-73; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan 1996c; Ashraf Khan 1996b.

The locality, in which traces of ancient quarrying activities have been discovered (Di Florio *et al.* 1993), is rich in Buddhist remains and Śāhi-era fortifications; a sacred area was recently excavated (Ashraf Khan 1993: pl. IX).<sup>28</sup> SW of the latter, on a small hill, the remains of a sacred area have been found; at the foot of the hill stela S181 was discovered (Ashraf Khan 1996b: fig. 51).

Inv. Rep. S181 (Fig. *vacat*) *Vacat* (description based on Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 51).

Pensive Padmapāṇi

Cons.: broken: upper part missing; badly chipped over the whole surface.

Mat.: *vacat*.

Meas.: *vacat*.

Ashraf Khan 1996c: fig. 51.

Pensive Padmapāṇi on tall throne.

**Parrai (AMSV 040)**

Lat. 34°42'N, long. 72°14'E. 43 B/2

Barger and Wright 1944: 27-28; Tucci 1958: 318; Filigenzi 1984: 496; Olivieri 1993; Ashraf Khan *et al.* 1996.

Facing Barikot lies the village of Parrai. Just upstream from the village lie the remains of a Buddhist sacred area and of some caves that were perhaps associated with it (Ashraf Khan *et al.* 1996: 82); relief C123 is situated on the path leading to this area.

Inv. Rep. C123 (Fig. 127) Padmapāṇi

Cons.: broken off at the top; badly chipped, corroded, abraded; lime incrustations.

Mat.: striped marble.

Meas.: 65 max x 31 x 3

Padmapāṇi, pensive, in *ap.*, with flaming (?) nimbus (and aureole?); with *p.* with circular central hem, crown (with lateral knots?); long locks of hair falling at the sides of the face, strongly inclined outwards, long necklace (and pendant earrings?); full-blown lotus, with pistil turned upwards; on tall throne with cushion and upper edge composed of a row of upturned petals and sepals.

<sup>28</sup> According to the short excavation report, the site may be dated between the second and fifth cent. CE (Ashraf Khan 1996b: 94).

2. STELAE OF UNCERTAIN OR UNKNOWN PROVENANCE (TABLE 2)

- Inv. Rep. S196 (Fig. 128) SM Seated Buddha  
Stela of irregularly oval shape.  
Cons.: mutilated; top and left parts missing; Buddha's head partially missing; badly abraded.  
Mat.: limestone.  
Meas.: h.: 47  
Buddha in *dhyānāsana* on flattened lotus corolla with upturned petals; wearing *saṃghāṭī* with round neckline; feet visible. Figuration elements visible on the left, below, perhaps a section of aureole, on top an indistinguishable element (section of nimbus with flaming edge?).
- Inv. Rep. S126 (Fig. 129; cf. GS 27, GS 28) SM Standing four-armed Maitreya  
Cons.: mutilated; upper and lower right hand side missing; face practically chipped all over; badly abraded.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 72 x 50  
Filigenzi 1999: 43, fig. 11; Id. 2000: 1067, fig. 4; Sardar 2003: 16-17, pl. 25.  
Four-armed Maitreya, standing, with *saṃghāṭī* and *antaravāsaka*, crown with central crest with rounded upper end, earrings, bracelets; lower right hand in *varadamudrā*, upper right hand grasping ascetic's staff on top; lower left hand with *kamaṇḍalu* in the shape of an ansate vase, upper one on shoulder at the side with horizontal, cylindrical attribute, identifiable as a manuscript (cf. C61 and others). Section of hairstyle visible at the side of the face, on the right, rendered as large locks, perhaps curls.
- Inv. Rep. S128 (Fig. 130; GS 33) SM Seated bodhisattva  
Rather regularly oval shaped stela.  
Cons.: badly abraded and chipped on the most projecting parts.  
Mat.: *vacat*.  
Meas.: 46 x 34  
Filigenzi 1999: 21, fn. 13, fig. 9; Sardar 2003: 17-18, pl. 28.  
Bodhisattva, with nimbus bordered (by flames?), seated cross-legged (in *sattvāsana*?) on a flattened corolla of lotus, with upturned petals; wearing *p.* and *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl, flat crown, with ribbons knotted at the sides, globular shaped earrings; right hand on the shoulder at the side, with attribute, left hand on thigh with attribute (*kalaśa*? *vajra*?). Sections of the drapery, with closely-spaced symmetrical lines, have been conserved together with the hair-style, rendered as a crown of curls at the sides and curled locks descending obliquely over the shoulders. For a discussion of this and similar figures of uncertain identification, see Chap. 5.3.
- Inv. Rep. S129 (Fig. 131) SM Pensive Padmapāṇi  
Cons.: mutilated; parts missing at the sides; face, arm and right hand badly (deliberately?) chipped; abraded.  
Mat.: limestone/marble.  
Meas.: 115 x 82  
Ashraf Khan 1993: 169, fig. 128; Filigenzi 2000-2001: 248-249, pl. IIc; Sardar 2003: 8-9, pl. 11.  
Pensive Padmapāṇi, with nimbus and aureole, in *ap.* on rather flat lotiform throne, seemingly decorated; holding in the left hand on the thigh the long stem of a full-blown lotus with large central button and two smaller inflorescences half way up, viewed frontally. The bodhisattva wears *p.* with fan-shaped central hem inscribed within a circular hem, *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl falling over right side in an undulating fashion, crown with ribbons knotted at the side, a short necklace of beads and a longer necklace with pendant (?), earrings, decorated armbands, bracelets (the one on the left arm visible) and, probably, a Brahmanic cord. The hairstyle has been conserved, with large wavy locks, as well as the outline of the face with broad chin, nose and

2. Stelae of uncertain or unknown provenance (Table 2)

mouth close together, large widely-separated eyes. On the central crest is a small Buddha figure in *dhyānāsana*. Drapery rendered by means of closely-spaced, symmetrical lines.

Inv. Rep. S130 (Fig. 132) SM Pensive Padmapāṇi  
 Cons.: mutilated; broken into two rejoined fragments; parts missing on top and at the sides in the upper section and in the lower right corner; badly chipped and abraded; outline of the figure and, in part, of the lotus and the throne have been conserved.  
 Mat.: limestone.  
 Meas.: h.: 78  
 Sardar 2003: pl. 11.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, with nimbus (with flaming edge?) and aureole. Tall throne probably of the lotiform type with row of petals along upper edge.

Inv. Rep. S131 (Fig. 133) SM Standing bodhisattva  
 Cons.: mutilated; upper and lower parts missing; badly chipped, especially the conserved part of the figure's head and legs; badly abraded.  
 Mat.: gneiss.  
 Meas.: 110 x 66  
 Sardar 2003: 12, pl. 17.

Standing bodhisattva; with *p.* with knotted belt, with descending undulating ends, *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl; right hand in *varadamudrā* (with attribute?), left hand on shoulder at the side grasping horizontally held cylindrical object (*vajra?* manuscript?). On the left a parallel section of ribbon descending from the crown and the headdress have been conserved which schematically outline the profile of the head and the shoulder.

Inv. Rep. S133 (Fig. 134) SM Standing Padmapāṇi  
 Irregularly oval-shaped elongated stela with tall foot.  
 Cons.: mutilated; parts missing above left along the edge and in the lower right corner; face and right hand chipped; entire surface abraded.  
 Mat.: dioritic gneiss (?).  
 Meas.: 68.5 x 35

Ashraf Khan 1993: 24, fig. 7; Filigenzi 2000-2001: 249, pl. IIIa; Sardar 2003: 6-7, pl. 7; *Gandhara, the Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan*: 364, cat. no. 289 (erroneously identified as Maitreya).

Padmapāṇi, with nimbus, standing on right leg on flat full-blown lotus, wearing short *p.*, raised up to left knee with short knotted belt, crown with central crest with rounded top, armband on right arm, short necklace, earrings with polylobate endings; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left holding frontally full-blown lotus with cut stem and two smaller inflorescences on the right.

Squat massive volumes, especially the lower limbs; oversized head.

Inv. Rep. S134 (Fig. 135) Standing Padmapāṇi  
 Oblong stela, with tall foot.  
 Cons.: mutilated; broken off at the top; acephalous figure, left arm badly chipped; whole surface slightly abraded.  
 Mat.: gneiss.  
 Meas.: 107 x 45  
 Sardar 2003: pl. 21

Standing Padmapāṇi, with short *p.*, raised up to left knee, with decorated belt and looped belt (?), with one end descending in a wavy pattern, the other lifted up, *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl, bracelets, decorated armband, short necklace of beads; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand at the side, clasping the stem of a lotus emerging from the ground.

Inv. Rep. S135 (Fig. 136) SM Standing Padmapāṇi  
Irregularly oval, elongated stela with low foot.  
Cons.: whole; projecting parts badly abraded; face and left arm badly chipped, right arm only partially chipped.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 136 x 50  
Sardar 2003: 10, pl. 14.

Padmapāṇi, with nimbus with flaming edge, standing on right leg on flat lotus corolla with reverse petals and sepals, wearing short *p.*, probably raised up to left knee, *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl, crown tied at sides with descending ribbons, probably an armband on right arm, short necklace; right hand in *varadamudrā* (with *akṣamālā*?), left hand clasping, at the side, below, the curved stem of a lotus emerging from the ground. On the left, section of wavy hair-dress has been conserved, falling quite naturally over the shoulders. The upper part of the figure, with the exception of the lotus, is included in a slightly recessed ogival field.

Inv. Rep. S136 (Fig. 137) SM Pensive Padmapāṇi  
Irregularly oval-shaped stela.  
Cons.: mutilated: broken off at the top and on the left along the upper edge; badly chipped and abraded over the entire surface.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 102 x 51  
Sardar 2003: 7, pl. 8.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, with nimbus with circle and flaming edge, in *ap.* on throne with two frontal lions on the front face.

Inv. Rep. S137 (Fig. 138; GS 17) SM Standing Padmapāṇi  
Irregularly oval-shaped elongated stela.  
Cons.: whole; face, arms and right flank of the figure badly chipped; badly abraded and corroded.  
Mat.: gneiss.  
Meas.: 91 x 36  
Filigenzi 2000-2001: pl. IIIb; Sardar 2003: 11-12, pl. 16.

Padmapāṇi, with nimbus with circle and flaming edge, standing on right leg; wearing short *p.* with laced belt, tied, with end(s?) descending over front, crown, decorated armbands, earrings; right hand in *varadamudrā*, the left hand, held low, clasping the curved stem of a lotus emerging from the ground, with enlarged lower section (vase?).

Inv. Rep. S139 (Fig. 139) SM Standing Padmapāṇi  
Irregularly oval-shaped elongated stela with hinted foot.  
Cons.: mutilated: broken off at top and in the upper section, at the sides, and along the edge; face and arms of the figure entirely chipped; badly abraded.  
Mat.: limestone.  
Meas.: 55 x 28  
Filigenzi 2000-2001: 249, pl. IIIc; Sardar 2003: 13-14, pl. 20.

Padmapāṇi, with nimbus with circle and flaming edge, standing on right leg on a flattened lotus corolla with upturned petals; wearing *p.* and *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl, crown, decorated armbands, earrings; right hand in *varadamudrā*; the left hand on the side, lowered, grasps the curved stem of a lotus which emerges from the ground.

Inv. Rep. S140 (Fig. 140; GS 38) SM Seated *siddha* (?) with attendants  
Irregularly oval-shaped stela, with straight cut on the sides.

2. Stelae of uncertain or unknown provenance (Table 2)

Cons.: whole; lower left corner chipped; face of main figure entirely chipped (deliberately?); whole surface abraded.

Mat.: limestone/marble.

Meas.: 94 x 50

Callieri 1986: pls. I-IV; Ashraf Khan 1993: 170, fig. 129; Id. 1996: fig. 61; Sardar 2003: 5-6, pl. 6; Filigenzi 2003.

Male figure, with nimbus with circle and flaming edge, in *padmāsana* on throne with lions, supported by a double lotus corolla, under a canopy, flanked by a pair of smaller haloed figures, standing three quarters on towards the central figure on lotus flowers with upturned petals and short stem emerging from the throne. The central figure is dressed as a bodhisattva: *p.*, *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl, crown tied at the sides with descending ribbons, short beaded necklace, decorated armbands, earrings; right hand held to breast, with palm turned outwards, probably with attribute (small *vajra*?), left hand on chest with flattened attribute (skull cap?); of the minor figures, the right hand one, female, apparently naked except for a narrow thin shawl and ornaments (ankle band, short necklace and earrings), holding an attribute in both hands at one side of the breast (*ghaṇṭā*?); the left hand figure, male, with *p.* and *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl, the right hand extended downwards, holding an attribute with the palm of the left hand at the side (*vajra*?); details of headdress indistinguishable.

The throne is covered with a decorated drape, with hem falling over the centre, and is surmounted by a cushion from the sides of which two heavy tassels hang. The lions, crouching frontally with crossed forepaws, have globe-shaped eyes and long mane with symmetrical curls; below the lotus, in the centre, there are three figuration elements (buds?); a border in relief runs round the bottom of the figuration.

The canopy is decorated with a border in relief and inside by undulating ribbons descending from the tip, a full circular element, at the centre, and two lateral elements of uncertain shape (circular with central depression? half-moon-shaped?); undulating tassels and semicircular decorations (rows of beads/garlands?) hang from the two lower ends. For a possible identification of the scene see Chap. 6.2.

Inv. Rep. S147 (Fig. 141; GS 19) SM Standing Maitreya  
Stela of oval shape, elongated.

Cons.: broken off lower left; face, headdress and right foot chipped all over.

Mat.: limestone/marble.

Meas.: 37 x 23

Maitreya, standing on right leg on a flat lotus corolla, with upturned petals; wearing *p.* with laced belt, tied, with one end descending and the other lifted up, shawl-like *dupaṭṭā*, crown tied at the sides with descending ribbons, short beaded necklace, pendant earrings; left hand stretching downwards, with *kamaṇḍalu*, right hand on shoulder with rosary.

Inv. Rep. S142 (Fig. 142) SM Standing Vajrapāṇi (?)  
Irregularly oval-shaped stela, with foot.

Cons.: mutilated: broken off top right and below; recomposed from two fragments; chipped, particularly the upper part; badly abraded.

Mat.: gneiss?

Meas.: 69 x 37

Sardar 2003: pl. 23.

Vajrapāṇi (?), nimbate, standing on right leg on base of uncertain shape, probably a flat full-blown lotus; still discernible: a section of the drapery of the *p.* and the laced belt, descending, undulated, the profile of the crown tied at the sides with descending ribbons, and short necklace. The bodhisattva has right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand on one side, with attribute, probably a *vajra* of uncertain shape, the lower part of which rests on the corolla of a lotus emerging from the ground.

Inv. Rep. S127 (Fig. 143) MAI Seated Buddha  
Irregularly oval-shaped stela.



Cons.: mutilated; parts missing on top right and at the sides, along the edge; badly chipped, especially in the upper part; badly abraded.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: 1.29 x 0.78

Sardar 2003: 4, pl. 3.

Buddha with (flaming?) nimbus, in *dhyānāsana*, with feet visible, on throne with protruding upper edge, with two lions in profile facing outwards, head frontal, which seem to emerge from two cavities. A short curved section on the right could be related to an aureole.

Inv. Rep. S138 (Fig. 144) MAI Pensive Padmapāṇi

Irregularly oval-shaped elongated stela with barely hinted foot.

Cons.: whole; face, arms and part of the figure's torso badly chipped; abraded and corroded over the entire surface.

Mat.: gneiss (?).

Meas.: 102 x 53

Sardar 2003: 14-15, pl. 22.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, nimbate, in *ap.* on lotiform throne; wearing *p.*, *dupaṭṭā* draped like a shawl, crown tied at sides with descending ribbons, short beaded necklace. The volumes are rendered quite naturally in both their proportions and their composition.

Inv. Rep. S143 (Fig. 145; GS 34) MAI Seated bodhisattva

Irregularly oval-shaped stela.

Cons.: whole; projecting parts chipped; abraded.

Mat.: marble.

Meas.: 88 x 68

Filigenzi 1999: 21, fn. 13, fig. 10; Sardar 2003: 15-16, pl. 24.

Bodhisattva, haloed, ithyphallic (?), seated in reverse *ap.* on comparatively low lotiform throne, with *p.* with circular central hem; the short beaded necklace, pendant earrings and profile of the crown tied laterally with descending ribbons can be made out; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left on thigh with attribute (*vajra?* *kamaṇḍalu?*). For a possible identification of this and similar figures see Chap. 5.3.

Inv. Rep. S144 (Fig. 146; GS 31) Civic Museums of History and Art of Trieste

Standing Vajrapāṇi

Irregularly oval-shaped elongated stela with tall foot.

Cons.: mutilated: broken off on the right along the edge; badly abraded over the whole surface.

Mat.: *vacat.*

Meas.: *vacat.*

Ruaro Loseri 1973: 15.

Vajrapāṇi, haloed, standing on right leg on base of uncertain shape (probably a flat lotus corolla), with short *p.*; the profile of the crown can be made out, as well as the short necklace and earrings with polylobate ends; right hand in *varadamudrā*, left hand on flank at side with *vajra* of type b, the lower part of which rests on the corolla of a lotus with reverse petals emerging from the ground.

Inv. Rep. S191 (Fig. 147; GS 8) MNAOR Buddha

Cons.: Incomplete: upper and part of the left side missing; head of the figure cut off (intentionally?). Badly chipped and eroded, especially on the left side.

Mat.: Schist

Meas.: 1.15 x 0.85 x 0.10

2. Stelae of uncertain or unknown provenance (Table 2)

Buddha in *padmāsana*, with flaming nimbus and aureole, uncovered hands and feet, robe with crenellated edge on the ankles and round lower edge falling over the throne. The throne has a base composed of a row of reverse lotus petals and cushion on top, with lateral tassels, and is supported by two standing lions viewed frontally, with curly manes; between the lions, two small antelopes, crouching and facing the sides of a wheel. For the treatment of the figure and the garment in particular cf. Kurita II: figs. 295 and 389.

Inv. Rep. S200 (Fig. 148) LM (H 909) Seated Padmapāṇi / Buddha  
Ogival-shaped stela.  
Cons.: mutilated: the stela is broken and the upper left edge is missing, the main figure is badly chipped, in particular the face, the crown, both arms, right knee and foot; corroded.  
Mat.: marble.  
Meas.: h.: 90 ca.  
Humera Alam and Olivieri 2011.

Pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.* on flat throne with lotiform cushion, row of lotus petals and dart at the base, and figured legs (lions?); holding in the left hand on the thigh the long undulating stem of a full-blown lotus of type a but with corolla oriented straight upwards. The bodhisattva is wearing *p.* with partly crenellated central hem and *dupaṭṭā*, draped like a shawl and falling in a rigid fashion along the sides; round-topped crown, with ribbons knotted at the sides; short necklace of beads; earrings; and, probably, a Brahmanic cord. The thick drapery is rendered by means of symmetrical curved lines. On the left, at the height of Padmapāṇi's right elbow, is a small Buddha, haloed, in *dhyānāsana* on a lotus (with double corolla?). The lower hem's drapery of the Buddha's robe is rendered by means of parallel semi-circular lines.

Inv. Rep. S45 (Fig. 149) Private collection, Saidu Sharif. Triad (Buddha and bodhisattvas)  
Triangular-shaped stela.  
Cons.: mutilated: the stela is broken and the upper left edge is missing; Buddha figure badly chipped and abraded on the head, arms and shoulders; only the lower part of the minor figures is preserved, although badly chipped; abraded; corroded.  
Mat.: *vacat.*  
Meas.: 88 x 77 x 3

In the centre is a Buddha, with nimbus and aureole, in *dhyānāsana*, with *saṃghāṭī*, uncovered feet (on low podium with cushion?). On the sides are two standing bodhisattvas, half the size of the Buddha, wearing *p.* The slab shows tool marks on the rear face.

APPENDIX

*Middle Swat (lower section)*

**Damkot (AMSV 041)**

Lat. 34°39'N, long. 72°2'E. 43 B/2

Caddy 1896; Dani 1968-69a; Abdur Rahman 1968-69.

This group of monuments was documented at the foot of the SW slopes of the Damkot hill, near Chakdarra. Approaching from the W the following reliefs were documented: two, C148, C149 (not photographed by Dani); and four others, C150-C153 (Dani 1968-69a: pls. 103a, 103b, 103c, 104a, 104b). On the hill a large archaeological site was discovered, occupied from protohistorical times until the Śāhi period; an important chronological phase is related to a Buddhist sacred area.<sup>29</sup>

Three further reliefs (C203, C204 and C205), photographed by Alexander E. Caddy in 1896 and no longer extant, are probably to be located W of Damkot (Olivieri 2015: comment to Document 42). Being unpublished, and basically unknown, these three reliefs will be described and illustrated.

Inv. Rep. C203 (Fig. 150) Buddha / Padmapāṇi  
 On a large rocky outcrop with projecting upper part which creates a sort of natural shelter for the relief.  
 Cons.: faces (especially Padmapāṇi's), hands of the Buddha and feet of Padmapāṇi badly chipped (intentionally?).  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: *vacat.*

To right: Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, haloed, on a square podium topped by a double lotus corolla, with *saṃghāṭī* with round neckline and lateral pleats over breast, uncovered feet.

To left: pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.* on tall throne with moulded base and cornice (?), topped by a row of lotus petals (or a double corolla?) wearing *p.* with central hem and belt falling over the throne, *dupaṭṭā* rolled around the left arm, beaded necklace, pendant earrings, crown (tied at the sides?); with type a lotus.

Inv. Rep. C204 (Fig. 151a: left) Various subjects: triad (Buddha and bodhisattvas) / Buddhas  
 On the projecting and rounded upper portion a large rocky outcrop marked by a deep wavy cleft whose descending terminal part on left seems to have been artificially enlarged in order to accommodate the isolated Buddha figure.  
 Cons.: faces chipped (intentionally?).  
 Mat.: *vacat.*  
 Meas.: *vacat.*

To right, centre: triad composed by a Buddha seated in *padmāsana* on a low podium, haloed, in *dharmaśakramudrā*. At the sides two standing bodhisattvas, haloed, in symmetric position; the bodhisattva to right with three-pointed crown, with right hand on the chest and left hand extended downwards (with attribute?); to left, Padmapāṇi, with crown (or *jaṭāmukuta*?) with rounded upper profile, in *varadamudrā*, holding a short-

<sup>29</sup> The sculpted monuments of Damkot must be related to the sacred area located on the hill. The chronological phase to which the excavators have assigned the sacred area is Period IV, dating to the fourth-sixth century CE. Some doubts are raised by the phase of obliteration of the sacred area (Period V) and the re-use of the area for the construction of a fortification. The latter actually has the typical features of a Śāhi fortress and may thus be dated to around the ninth-tenth century CE; if that is the case, then the life of the sacred area may be extended by a couple of centuries.

stemmed lotus. At the sides of the triad are two smaller, haloed Buddhas in *dhyānāsana* on low podium, that on right raised from the ground level.

To left: Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, with no visible seat, possibly unfinished.

Each figure is inserted in an irregularly-shaped field that roughly follows the contours of the figuration. The sculpture is characterised by a quite low relief.

Inv. Rep. C205            Figs. 151a: right; 151b) Various subjects: Padmapāṇi / Buddhas / bodhisattva  
                                  On a rocky outcrop close to the preceding one, smaller than the latter and characterised  
                                  by an elongated rectangular form. Worked on two faces.  
 Cons.:                    not discernible.  
 Mat.:                    *vacat.*  
 Meas.:                   *vacat.*

On the square face: a pensive Padmapāṇi, haloed, in *ap.* on throne supported by a pair of frontal lions. To right, two minor figures: below, a bodhisattva in reverse *ap.*, right hand in *varadamudrā* (?), left hand on thigh, with attribute; above, smaller, a seated figure (Buddha? bodhisattva?). To left, perhaps, other figures, not clearly discernible.

On the rectangular face, from left: Buddha in *dhyānāsana*, with nimbus (and aureole?), on a square podium. To right: two (identical?) figures of Padmapāṇi, smaller than the Buddha. The size of the figures complies with the shape of the rocky face, marked by an irregular projection to right which reduces the exploitable smooth surface.

### Mane-tangai (AMSV 042)

Lat. 34°39'N, long. 73°56'E. 38N/14

Caddy 1896; Dani 1968-69a; Ashraf Khan 1994; Behrendt 2010.

This group of monuments was documented near the mosque of the village of Mane-tangai, downstream from the latter and then following a track leading to a hill upstream from it where the masonry remains may perhaps belong to a Buddhist sacred area (Dani 1968-69a: 253). Moving back up the track, five reliefs were documented: C154-C158 (Dani 1968-69a: 99a,b; 100a,b,c = Ashraf Khan 1994: boulder 1; Dani 1968-69a: 101a,b; 102a,b,c = Ashraf Khan 1994: boulder 2, fig. 4.; Ashraf Khan 1994: boulder 3, fig. 5; boulder 4, fig. 6; boulder 5, fig. 7). At the top of the plateau two other reliefs were found: C159 and C160 (Ashraf Khan 1994: boulder 6, figs. 8, 9; boulder 7, figs. 10, 11 e 12).

### Buner

Ancient Varaena, the Bhonele of the Tibetan sources (Olivieri 1996: 68-69; Tucci 1971: 397 [repr. Tucci 1997: 28] can be reached from Swat through the Karakar Pass and the other passes NE of this that cross the southern watershed. The road descending from the Karakar Pass following the course of the Churano Stream passes through the village of Jowar (Siddhabhor=Siddhapur in the Tibetan sources; see Tucci 1971: 398 [repr. Tucci 1997: 27]). S of Jowar, the Churano Stream flows into the Girarai Stream, which descends from the mountains W of Jowar (which separate Buner from the Mardan area). Continuing further E the Girarai Stream flows into the Wuch River. E of Jowar there is another river valley, that of the Charai, which flows into the Wuch in the proximity of Tursak. Slightly further W we find the Burjonkanrai Stream, which rises in the Ilam peak; the latter collects the water of the Koga and Tanta Streams and other smaller ones (all rising on the S slopes of the southern watershed of Saidu and Jambil Valleys). S of the Pacha village we encounter the most important river of Buner, the Barandu, which just to the S receives from the W the water of the Wuch and from the E the water of the Sandas. This complex hydrographic (and orographic, consisting of isolated massifs)

situation seems to correspond to the description given by the Tibetan pilgrim sTag ts'an ras pa of the zone of Dsomok'ati, where the palace of the king of Uḍḍiyāna stood and where all the rivers of that kingdom meet (*ibid.*: 415 [43]).

Archaeological research in Buner is still at the embryonic stage; for the purposes of our subject, it is necessary to mention only Stein's 1897 reconnaissance (Stein 1899) and our more recent ones (Olivieri 1994) together with those of the DOAM (Saeed-ur Rehman *et al.* 1996; Khattak 1997).

*Jowar area*  
**Tangai (AMSV 043)**

Lat. 34°34'N, long. 72°19'E. 43 B/6

Stein 1899: 13-14 (as Juvur); Olivieri 1994: 468-473.

The locality is situated NNE of Jowar, near the end of the Charrai Valley, in a small amphitheatre-shaped valley crossed by a narrow gully, which gave rise to the toponym (*tangai*, in Pashto= gully, defile). At the bottom of the valley lies the monument C161, carved out of a rock face, half way up the NE slope (Olivieri 1994: figs. 2 e 3). At the foot of the relief lies a large horizontal stone slab. Below the wall there is a large terrace on which many ruins lie that presumably belong to a Buddhist sacred area.

*Pacha area*  
**Bhai (AMSV 044)**

Lat. 34°35'N, long. 72°25'E. 43 B/6

Stein 1899: 23-24; Olivieri 1994: 468-473; Saeed-ur Rehman *et al.* 1996: 46-47 (as Naro Ubo Tange); Khattak 1997.

The village of Bhai lies at the foot of Mt. Ilam, on the alluvial plane formed by the junction of the Barandu and Burjokanrai Rivers. Behind the village, climbing the slope of the Halak-sar, we come to a spring known as Jurjurai (in Pashto: *jurjurai* = 'bubbling, rumbling'). Here Stein identified the ruins of two *stūpas* (Stein 1899: 24), no longer visible today. Higher up, along a track, is a projecting boulder, almost a shelter, inside of which there is a series of depictions (C162) (Olivieri 1994: figs. 4, 7 and 8). The ruins of masonry structures lie nearby. Going back along the track we come to a plateau overlooking the village of Pacha. Here, behind the numerous remains of monastery wall structures, lies relief C163 (Olivieri 1994: figs. 5, 6; Saeed-ur Rehman *et al.* 1996: fig. 64; Khattak 1997: front cover). A third relief, C198, has been also discovered in the area (Khattak 1997: 71).

*Puran*

This area consists of a wide closed valley traversed from the W by a series of streams rising in the eastern watershed of the Swat and all flowing eastwards (from the N: Bunerwal, Machkandai, Ismailkhel and Babrak); flowing into these are other streams (from the E: Khonan, Baina) rising in the watershed separating Puran from Buner to the S. Along the WSW slopes rivers rise (as the Sandas) which flow into the Barandu in the Daggarr area. Puran is consequently separated by two great bastions of the Swat (to the W) and by the Buner (SW and S), all the passes of which rise to an altitude of 2000 masl. The waters of the hydrographic basin of the Puran are gathered in the Itai River which flows into the Indus after passing Martung. To the NW the Puran is separated from the Mangaltan Valley (Shangla Pass area) and to the N (Alpurai area) by another powerful watershed,

which is crossed by the only navigable road. This road leads from Swat into the valley, and then across the Yakh-tangai Pass, which in turn leads to Aluch and then on to the Bunerwal area (valley of the Puran Stream).

From the standpoint of archaeological research this clearly explains its isolation with respect to Swat; so far only two reconnaissances have been carried out – one by P. Callieri in 1982 (Callieri 1985) and ours in 1993 (Olivieri 1994): both had the objective of finding Buddhist rock monuments.

### **Bunerwal (AMSV 35)**

Lat. 34°44'N, long. 72°40'E. 43 B/10

Callieri 1985; Olivieri 1994: 474.

To the SSE of Aluch, near the mouth of the Bunerwal Valley, on the left flank, a relief has been documented (C164) (Callieri 1985: Pls. I-IV; Olivieri 1994: fig. 10). Not far away, in the Giro-china area, lie the ruins of a *stūpa*; another is found in the Gumbat area.

### **Kafir-dherai (AMSV 36)**

Lat. 34°41'N, long. 72°36'E. 43 B/6

Olivieri 1994: 474-479.

The Babrak Valley is crossed by the stream of the same name which rises on the SE slopes of Mt. Dwo-sare. Practically at the end of the valley lies the village of Pandorai; S of the village stands a steep hill with the significant name of Kafir-dherai, accessible via the Mangweldara Pass. Once the pass has been reached, the rocky tower-like peak of the Kafir-dherai rises on the right, at the top of which lie some masonry ruins belonging to a Buddhist sacred area. Along the track leading to the top, from S to the W, twelve reliefs, C165-C176, are found (Olivieri 1994: figs. 12-20).



ILLUSTRATIONS PART II



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b





Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 4-6



Fig. 4

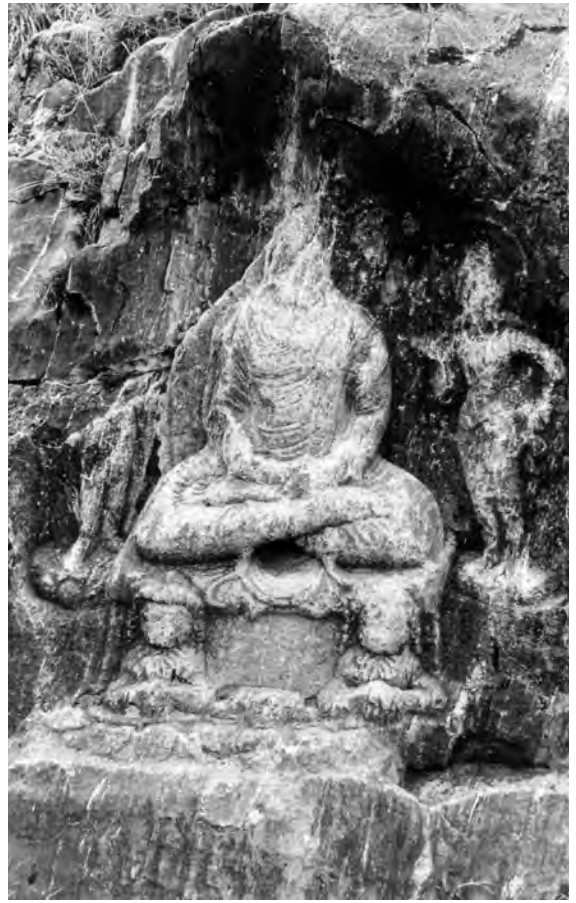


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7a



Fig. 7b



Fig. 7c



Fig. 8a



Fig. 8b



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 11-14a



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14a



Fig. 14b



Fig. 14c



Fig. 15



Fig. 16a





Fig. 16b



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

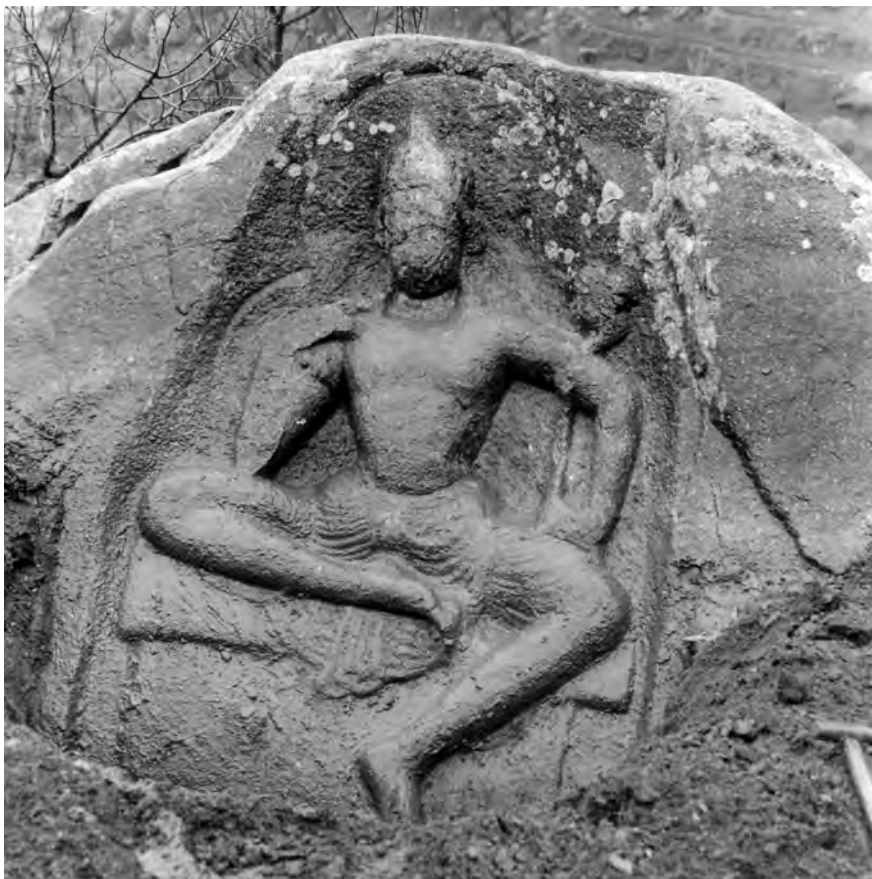


Fig. 21



Fig. 22a



Fig. 22b



Fig. 22c



Fig. 23

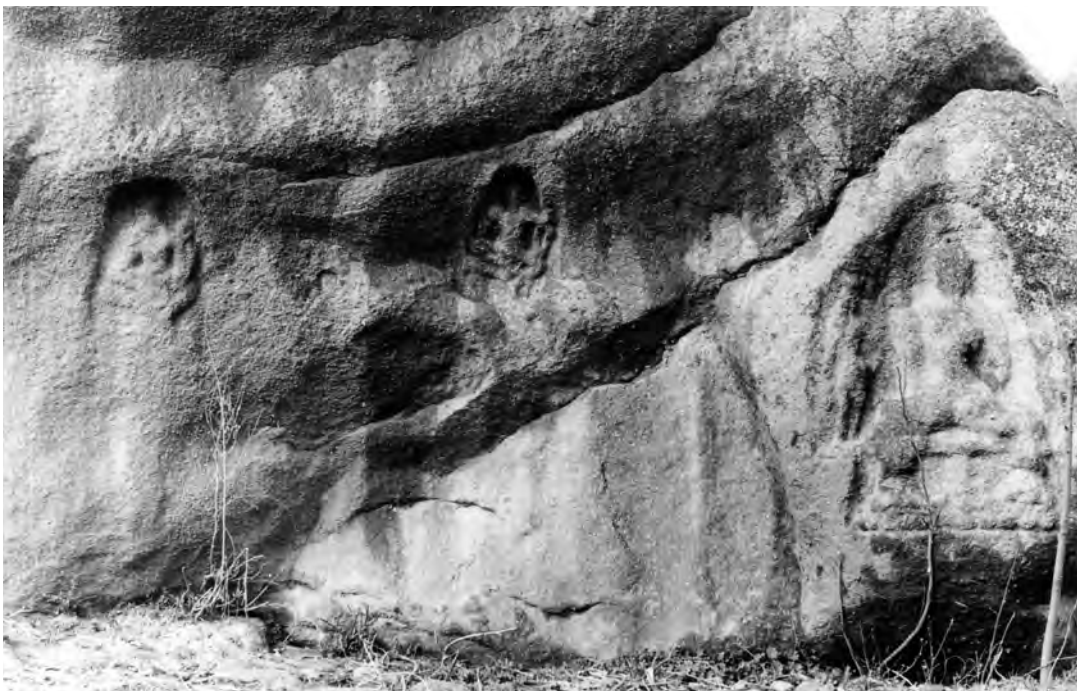


Fig. 24a



Fig. 24b



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28a



Fig. 28b



Fig. 29a



Fig. 29b



Fig. 30



Fig. 31a





Fig. 31b

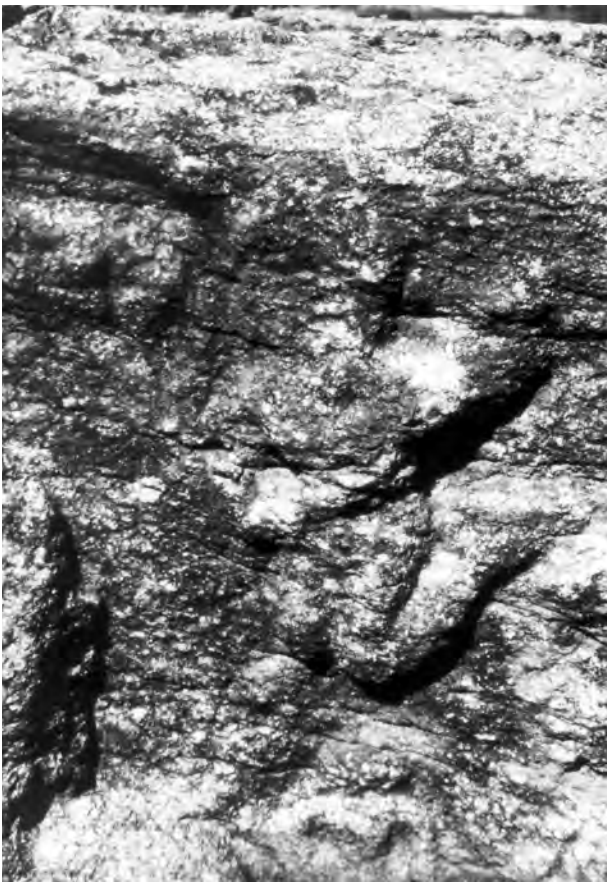


Fig. 31c



Fig. 31d

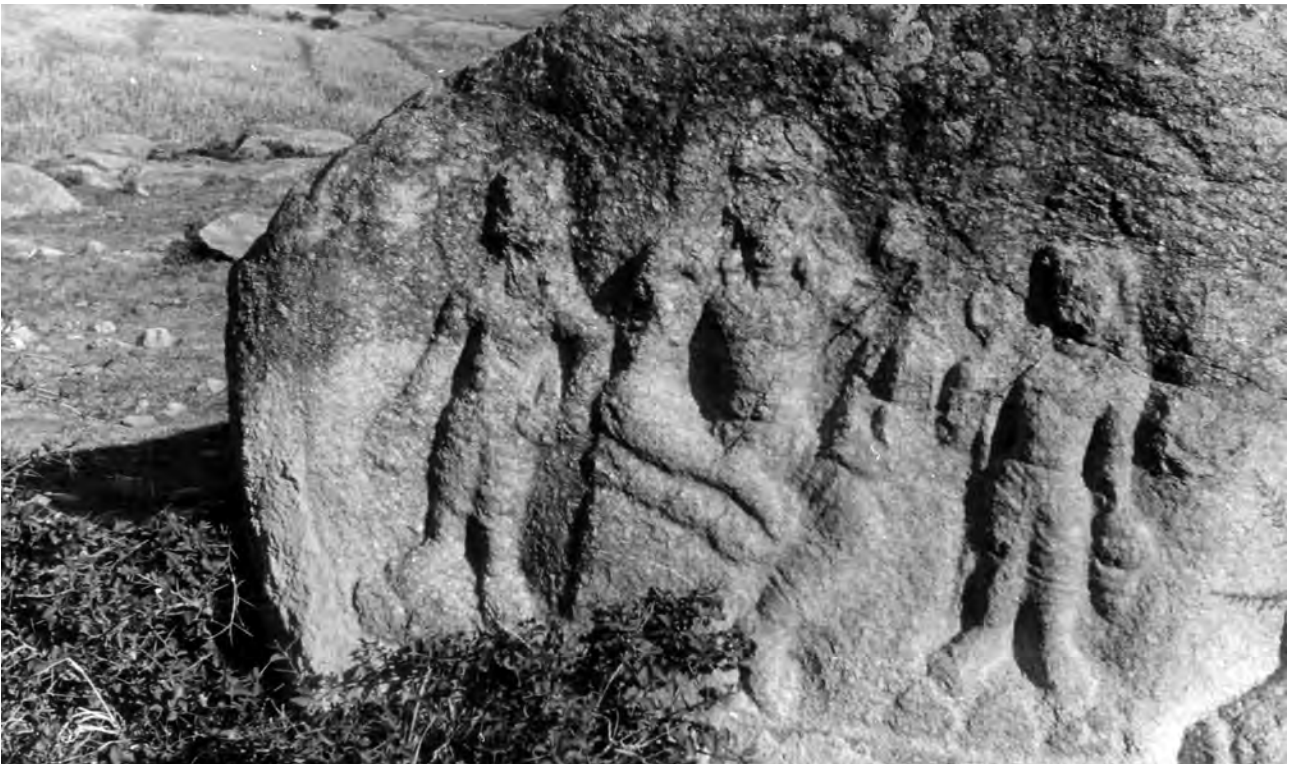


Fig. 31e



Fig. 32a



Fig. 32b



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 39a



Fig. 39b



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42a

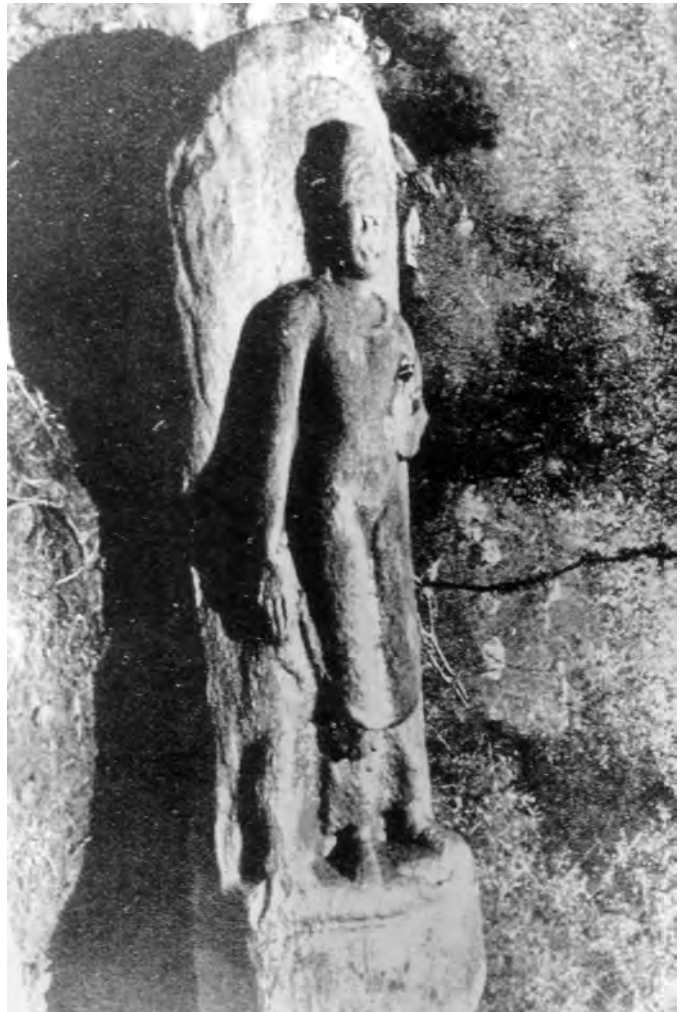


Fig. 42b



Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45a



Fig. 45b





Fig. 46a



Fig. 46b



Fig. 46c



Fig. 47



Fig. 48a



Fig. 48b

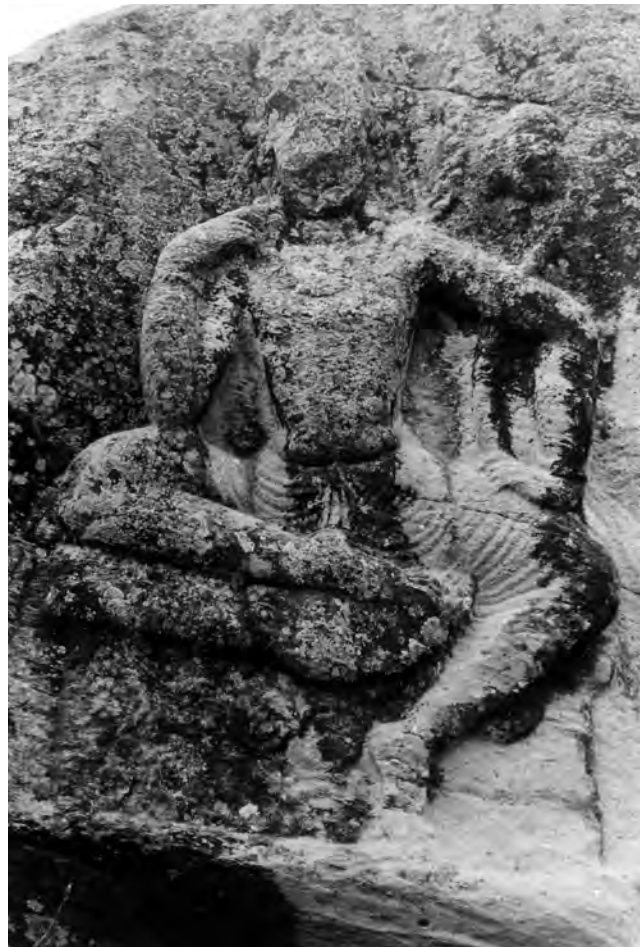


Fig. 48c



Fig. 49



Fig. 50

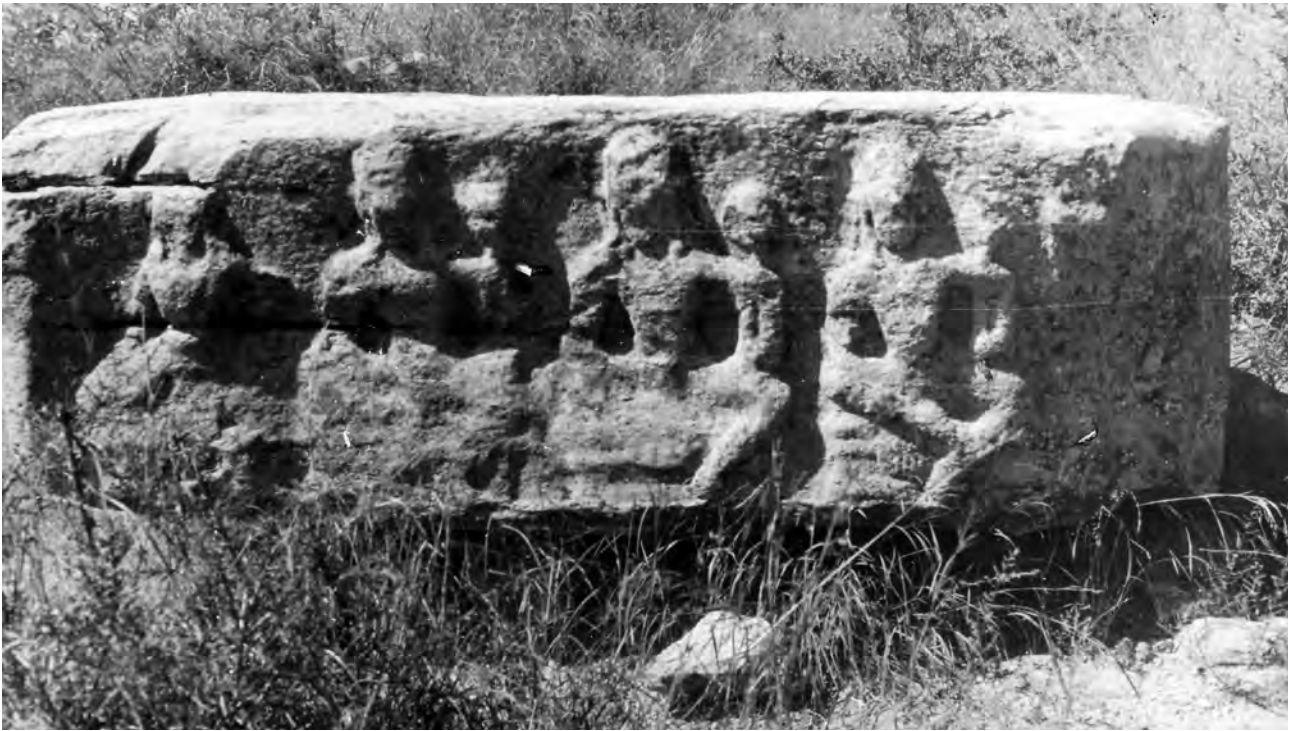


Fig. 51



Fig. 52a



Fig. 52b



Fig. 53



Fig. 54



Fig. 55



Fig. 56



Fig. 57



Fig. 58



Fig. 59



Fig. 60a



Fig. 60b





Fig. 61



Fig. 62



Fig. 63

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 64a,b



Fig. 64a



Fig. 64b



Fig. 65



Fig. 66



Fig. 67



Fig. 68



Fig. 69



Fig. 70



Fig. 71a



Fig. 71b



Fig. 72a



Fig. 72b



Fig. 73a



Fig. 73b



Fig. 74

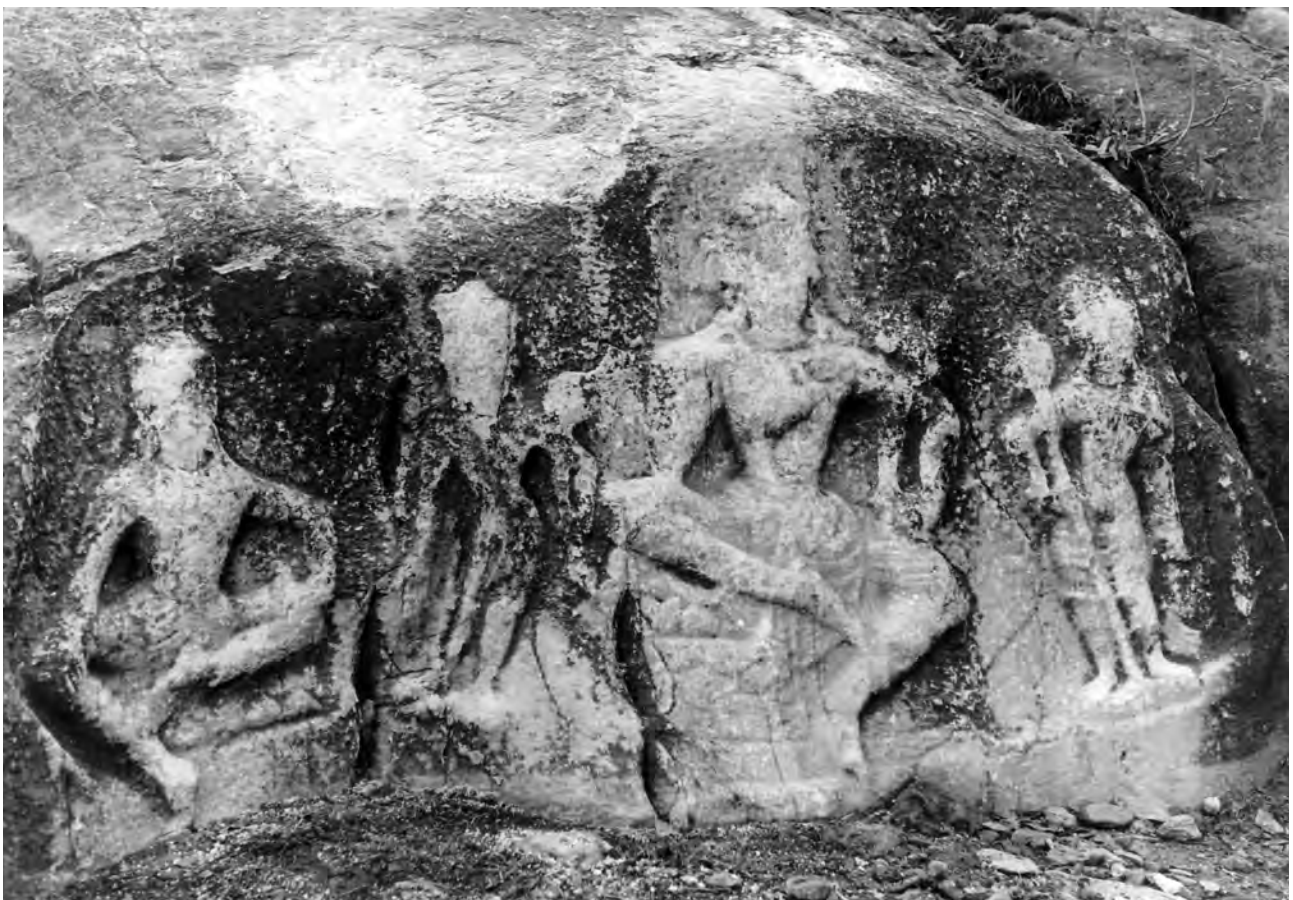


Fig. 75

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 76a,b



Fig. 76a



Fig. 76b





Fig. 76c



Fig. 77



Fig. 78



Fig. 79



Fig. 80



Fig. 81a

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 81b-d



Fig. 81b



Fig. 81c



Fig. 81d



Fig. 81e



Fig. 81f



Fig. 81g

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 82a-c



Fig. 82a



Fig. 82b



Fig. 82c



Fig. 83



Fig. 84



Fig. 85a



Fig. 85b





Fig. 86



Fig. 87



Fig. 88

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 89a,b



Fig. 89a



Fig. 89b



Fig. 90

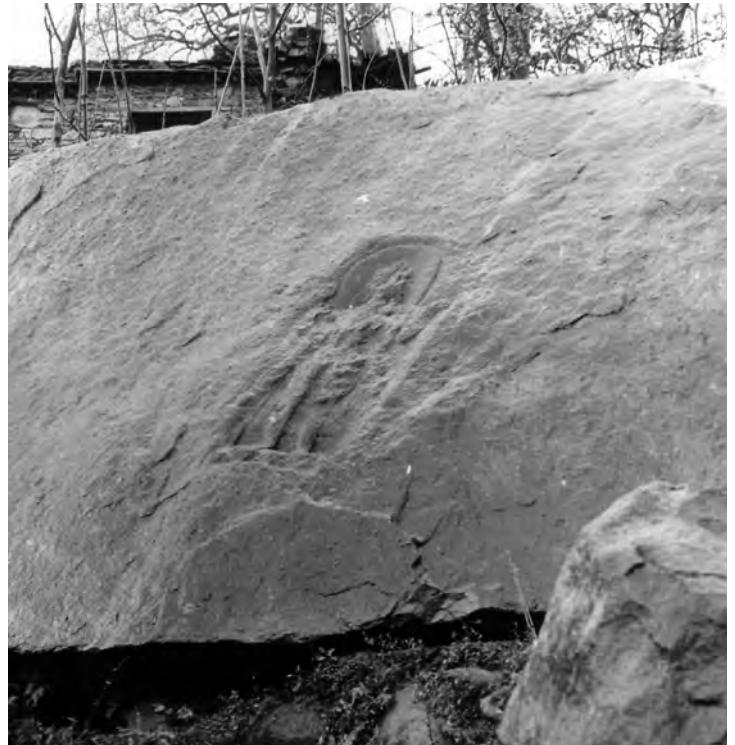


Fig. 91a



Fig. 91b

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 92a-d



Fig. 92a



Fig. 92b



Fig. 92c



Fig. 92d



Fig. 93



Fig. 94



Fig. 95



Fig. 96



Fig. 97



Fig. 98a



Fig. 98b



Fig. 98c



Fig. 98d



Fig. 98e



Fig. 99



Fig. 100





Fig. 101



Fig. 102



Fig. 103

Illustrations Part II: Figs. 104a,b



Fig. 104a

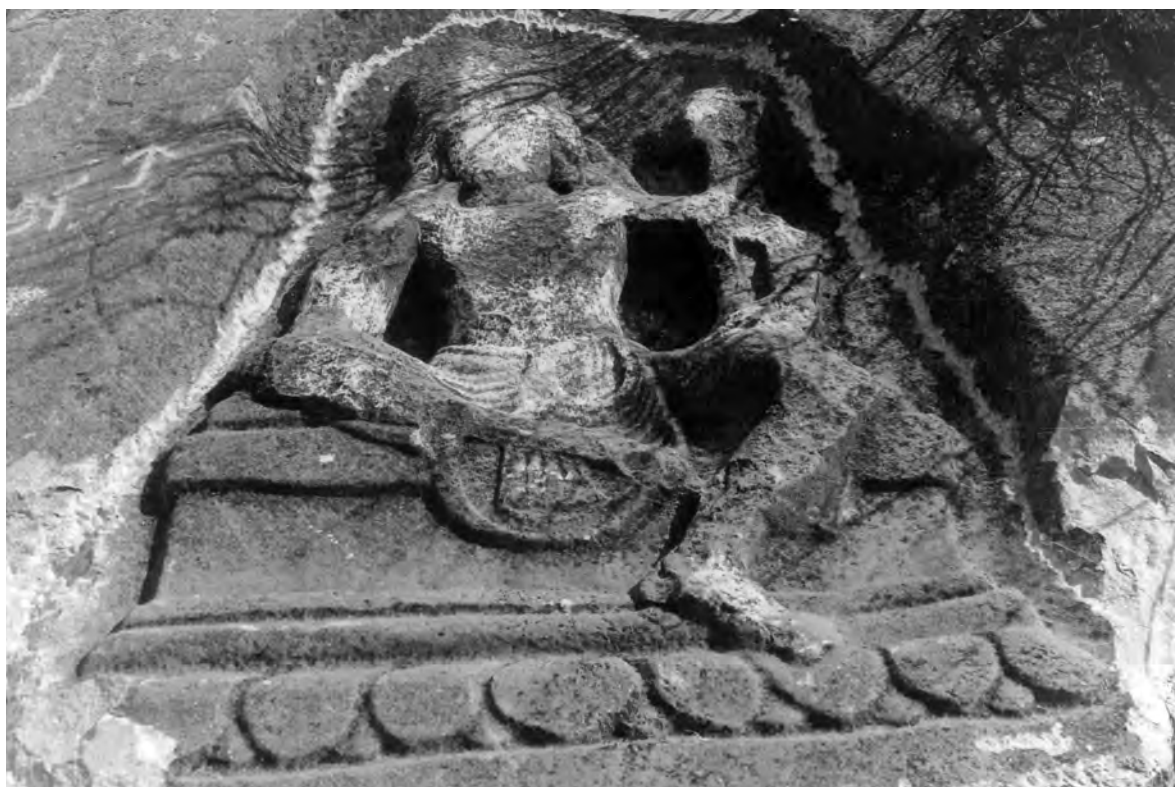


Fig. 104b



Fig. 105a



Fig. 105b



Fig. 105c



Fig. 106



Fig. 107



Fig. 108



Fig. 109



Fig. 110



Fig. 111



Fig. 112



Fig. 113



Fig. 114a



Fig. 114b



Fig. 115



Fig. 116a



Fig. 116b

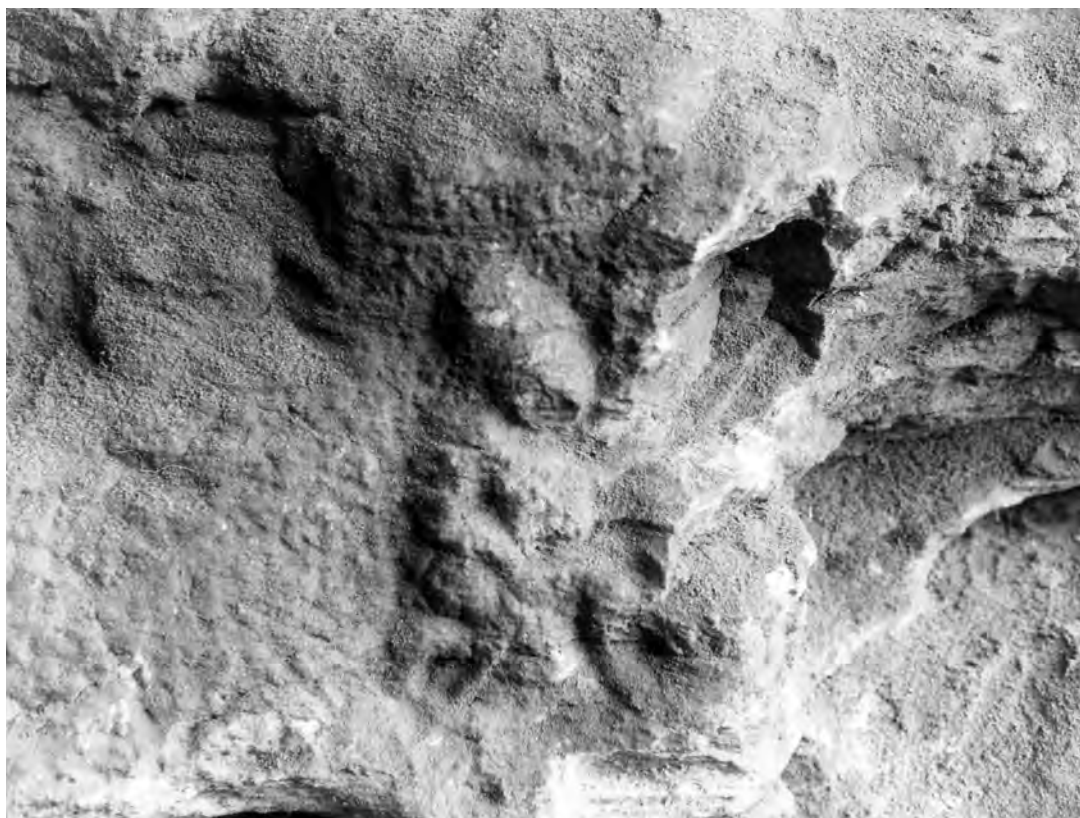


Fig. 116c





Fig. 117



Fig. 118



Fig. 119



Fig. 120



Fig. 121



Fig. 122

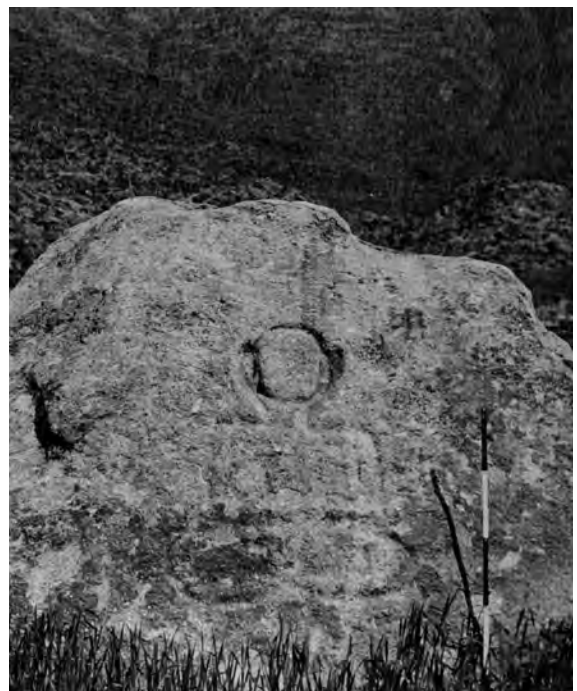


Fig. 123



Fig. 124a



Fig. 124b



Fig. 124c



Fig. 124d

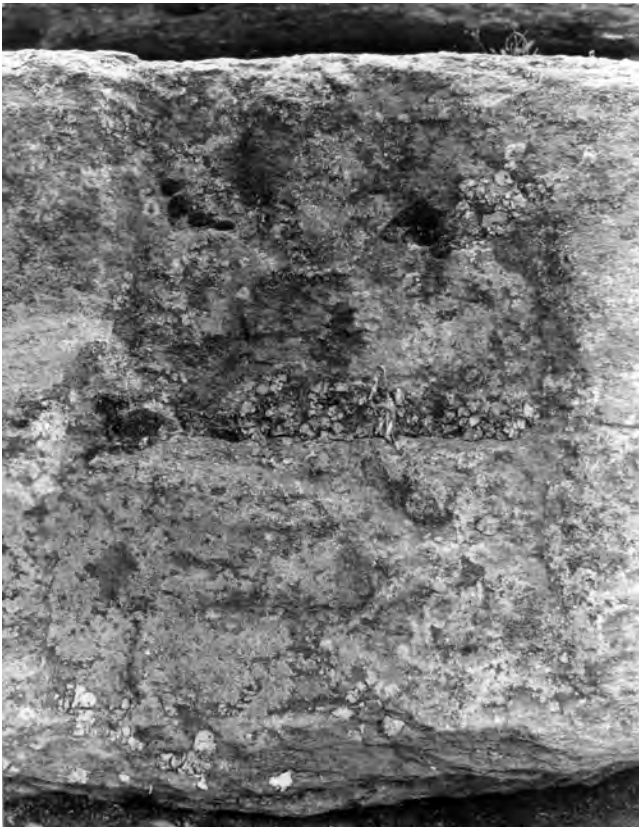


Fig. 125



Fig. 126



Fig. 127



Fig. 128



Fig. 129



Fig. 130



Fig. 131



Fig. 132



Fig. 133



Fig. 134



Fig. 135



Fig. 136



Fig. 137



Fig. 138





Fig. 139



Fig. 140



Fig. 141



Fig. 142



Fig. 143



Fig. 144



Fig. 145



Fig. 146



Fig. 147



Fig. 148



Fig. 149



Fig. 150



Fig. 151a



Fig. 151b

## TABLES OF CORRESPONDENCES

**Table 1: Rock monuments *in situ* or of certain provenance**

AREA	BANK	VALLEY	BANK	SITE	AMSV NO.	INV. REP. NO.	FIG. NO.	DRAWING NO.	MAP NO.				
SWAT MINGORA	left	JAMBIL	right	Mingora	005	C1	1	GS 5	2				
						C2	2		2				
						C3	3		2				
						C4	4		2				
								Pānr	006	C5	5		2
								C6		6		2	
								C7		7a,b		2	
								C8		7a,c		2	
								C9		8a,b	GS 7, GS 24	2	
								C10		<i>vacat</i>		2	
						C11	9		2				
						S12	10		2				
						S13	11	GS 1	2				
						C177	12		2				
						C178	13		2				
				Garasa	007	C14	14a,b,c		2				
						C15	15		2				
				Dangram	008	C16	16a,b	GS 16	2				
						S17	17		2				
						S18	18	GS 32	2				
				Kokarai (Gat-patai)	009	C19	19	Cf. GS 15	2				
						C20	20		2				
				Kokarai (Kulia)	011	C21	21		2				
						C22	22a,b,c		2				
				Kokarai (Gum- bat-patai)	010	S23	23		2				
				Jambil	012	C24	24a,b		2				
						C25	25		2				
						C199	<i>vacat</i>		2				

Table 1 Rock monuments *in situ* or of certain provenance

AREA	BANK	VALLEY	BANK	SITE	AMSV NO.	INV. REP. NO.	FIG. NO.	DRAWING NO.	MAP NO.
						S26	26		2
						S187	27		2
			left	Butkara	013	C27	28a,b		2
				Arabkhan-china	014	C28	29a,b		2
						C29	30		2
						C30	31a- e	GS 6, GS 25, GS 37	2
						C31	32a,b	GS 20	2
						C32	33		2
						C33	34		2
						C34	35		2
						C41	36	GS 11	2
				Loebanr-Jurjurai	015, 016	C35	37		2
						S36	38		2
						S37	39a,b		2
						S38	40	GS 22	2
						S39	41		2
				Arabut	017	S40	42a,b		2
						S42	43		2
						S43	44	GS 30	2
						S44	45a,b		2
						S46	46a,b,c	GS 13	2
						C47	47		2
						C48	48a,b,c		2
						S49	49		2
						C50	50		2
						S197	51		2
						S189	52a,b		2
						C190	53		2
						S146	54	Cf. GS 31	2
		SAIDU	right	Saidu Sharif	502	S125	55	GS 4	2
						S192	56	GS 3	2
				Boligram	018	C51	57		2
						C52	57		2

Tables of correspondences

AREA	BANK	VALLEY	BANK	SITE	AMSV NO.	INV. REP. NO.	FIG. NO.	DRAWING NO.	MAP NO.
						C53	57		2
						C54	57		2
						C55	57		2
						C56	57		2
						C57	57		2
				Salampur	019	C58	58		2
						C59	59		2
						S60	60a,b		2
						S61	61	Cf. GS 28	2
						C62	<i>vacat</i>		2
				Supal-bandai	020	C63	62	Cf. GS 21	2
						C64	63		2
						C65	64a,b	GS 28	2
						C193	65		2
						C194	66		2
						C195	<i>vacat</i>		2
				Meragai	392	C66	67, 68		2
			left	Katelai	021	C188	<i>vacat</i>		2
						C67	69		2
						S68	70	GS 21	2
				Top-dara Shandala	022 023	S69	71a,b	GS 40	2
						S70	72a,b		2
				Shnaisha	024	S179	73a,b	GS 26	2
						C71	74		2
				Kukrai	025	C72	75		2
						C73	76a,b,c	GS 23, GS 35, GS 36	2
						C74	77		2
						S75	78		2
SWAT MANGLAOR		SHALDARA-TAN- GAI	both	Dre-bandai	026	C76	79		2
		LANDAI	both	Rasho-dherai	027	C77	<i>vacat</i>		2
						S132	80	GS 15	2
						C78	<i>vacat</i>		2

Table 1: Rock monuments *in situ* or of certain provenance

AREA	BANK	VALLEY	BANK	SITE	AMSV NO.	INV. REP. NO.	FIG. NO.	DRAWING NO.	MAP NO.
				Kalkata	028	C79	81a-g		2
						C80	82a,b,c		2
						C81	83		2
						C82	84		2
						C83	85a,b		2
						C84	86		2
						S85	87	GS 9	2
						C86	<i>vacat</i>		2
				Banjot	029	C87	88		2
						C88	<i>vacat</i>		2
						C89	89a,b	GS 29	2
						C90	89a,90		2
						C91	91a,b	GS 27	2
		UGAD	left	Shakhorai	030	C92	92a-d		2
						C93	93		2
				Qal'a	031	C94	94		2
						C95	95		2
						C96	96	GS 14	2
						C97	97		2
						C98	98a-e	GS 40, GS 43	2
						C99	99		2
						C100	100		2
						C101	101		2
						C102	102		2
						C103	103		2
						C104	104a,b		2
			right	Spinubo	032	S105	105a,b,c		2
		MANGALTAN	left	Zindwala	033	S106	106		2
				Mangalkot	503	S141	107	GS 18	2
SWAT		MIDDLE SWAT (UPPER SECTION)	left	Jare	034	C107	108	GS 12	1
		MIDDE SWAT (CENTRAL SECTION)		Bologram- Udegram	035	S124	109		2
						S186	110		2
						C108	<i>vacat</i>		2



Tables of correspondences

AREA	BANK	VALLEY	BANK	SITE	AMSV NO.	INV. REP. NO.	FIG. NO.	DRAWING NO.	MAP NO.
						C109	<i>vacat</i>		2
						C110	111		2
						C111	112		2
						C112	113		2
				Gogdara	036	C113	114a,b		2
						C114	<i>vacat</i>		2
				Tindo-dag	037	C115	115	GS 2	2
						C116	116a,b,c	GS 41	2
						C180	<i>vacat</i>		2
				Manyar	038	C182	117		2
						C183	118	GS 42	2
						C184	119		2
						S185	120		2
				Barikot	002d	C117	121		2
						C118	122		2
				Amluk-dara	314	C119	123		2
				Nawe-kalai	398	C120	124a-d		2
						C121	125		2
						C122	126		2
			right	Dodeharra	039	S181	<i>vacat</i>		2
				Parrai	040	C123	127		2
		MIDDE SWAT (LOWER SECTION)	right	Damkot	041	C148-C153	–		1
						C203	150		1
						C204	151: left		1
						C205	151a,b		1
				Mane-tangai	042	C154-C160			1
BUNER		JOWAR (area)		Tangai	043	C161			1
		PACHA (area)		Bhai	044	C162, C163, C198			1
PURAN		BUNERWAL (zone)		Bunerwal	045	C164	–		1
		KAFIR-DHERAI (zone)		Kafir-dherai	046	C165-C176	–		1

Table 2: Stelae of unknown or uncertain provenance

**Table 2: Stelae of unknown or uncertain provenance**

INV. REP. NO.	MAI INV. NO.	FIG. NO.	DRAWING NO.	LOCATION
S45		149		private collection
S126		129	Cf. GS 26, GS 27	SM
S127	V1158	143		MAI
S128	V3 (?)	130	GS 33	SM
S129		131		SM
S130	V251	132		SM
S131	V284	133		SM
S133	V12	134		SM
S134	V250	135		SM
S135	<i>vacat</i>	136		SM
S136	<i>vacat</i>	137		SM
S137	<i>vacat</i>	138	GS 17	SM
S138	V1159	144		MAI
S139	V251	139		SM
S140	V165	140	GS 38	SM
S142	V252	142		SM
S143	V157	145	GS 34	MAI
S144	<i>vacat</i>	146	GS 31	Civic Museums of History and Art of Trieste, Italy
S146	<i>vacat</i>	54		SM
S147	<i>vacat</i>	141	GS 19	SM
S189	<i>vacat</i>			missing
S191	V933	147	GS 8	MNAOR
S196	V253	128		SM
S197	<i>vacat</i>			missing
S200		148		LM



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