The Classical Influence on the Representation of Women in the Art of Buddhist Gandhara

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This thesis marks the end of a challenging and enriching journey for which there are many people that I would like to acknowledge.

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ABSTRACT

The Classical Influence on the Representation of Women in the Art of Buddhist Gandhara

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the representation of women in the sculptural tradition of Buddhist Gandhara. Initially, I gathered images of female sculptures in Gandharan art and organized them typologically. Taking into consideration Gandhara’s central location on the Silk Road trade routes, I analyzed the inevitable Classical influences from the Mediterranean, but also explored Indian and Iranian prototypes. Subsequently, I examined the hybrid iconographies and styles in the individual sculptures, juxtaposing them with classic exemplar from other regions. I discovered that a single figure could be an integration of a lineage of deities from different parts of the Silk Road, encompassing a myriad of cultures, ideologies and motives. Due to this, the Gandharan perception of the female was highly complex: often, female figures represented abundance, fertility, and nurture, but at other times they embodied temptation, disease and death. An amalgamation of variegated religious, aesthetic and political perspectives, the Gandharan woman is dichotomous and consummate with vitality. This thesis contributes to the body of knowledge on female representation in Buddhist and South Asian art forms in an effort to further nuance the work done on women’s role and representation in the South Asian region, specifically as it relates to the traditions of Buddhist and Hindu iconography from India.
Preface:

In the fall of 2011, Professor McClendon suggested that I go to New York to visit an exhibition of Buddhist art from Gandhara in the Asia Society Museum. I took his advice and got on a bus to New York for the weekend. Little did I know, in less than a couple of years he would be my supervisor for a senior honors art history thesis on the topic itself. Gandhara fascinated me because it was a laboratory for art, an early example of the phenomena of globalization. After deciding on this area of study, I found that there was a scarcity in information about female sculpture, probably because they appeared so rarely in the global inventory of Gandharan sculpture, which mainly consisted of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Being an art history student and an Indian woman whose ethnic roots stem from the region of Gandhara itself, I found an affinity towards this topic. I was curious about how depictions of female beauty from India and the Roman Empire merged in Gandhara and about what that could tell us about assorted perspectives of women in such a syncretic region and how these perspectives shaped the lives of women from that region – even myself. I began my research by cataloguing as many female sculptures from Gandhara I could find. Subsequently, I divided the types of women into chapters of study in order to ultimately explore the multifaceted views on women absorbed from so many regions along the Silk Road.

What I discovered in the compiling these sculptures was that the representation of women was a multifaceted process. I examined the spiritual, physical, sexual, maternal, and even petrifying aspects of women as reflected in the art of Gandhara. Spanning influences from Rome, India and Iran, the image of the woman invokes impressions of fruitfulness and abundance, but she simultaneously projects an intimidation that must be placated and regarded with honor. I found that the in the Gandharan crucible, the merging of divine deities are reflective of the division of power, the dynamic of human interactions in society and the relationship between the individual and the object of worship.

Through the course of writing this thesis, I have learned how one little symbol that embellishes a sculpture can be traced in regions far away, so many centuries prior to reaching the sculpture with which I am concerned. In such hybrid Gandharan sculptures, a single figure has numerous iconographic elements from diverse regions along the Silk Road. The process of discovering the origins of each symbol and questioning how these specific motifs were filtered among many others and why they were eventually absorbed into the pantheon is what I have truly loved about writing this thesis. I have found that there is no limit to the amount one can discover about a single sculpture, which is what has made this journey so rewarding and exciting for me.
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Introduction

Gandharan art has long been recognized as significant primarily because it possesses a unique hybrid of styles and iconographies from the Silk Road, which are derived from cultures as diverse as Hellenism, Buddhism and Hinduism. However, the representation of women in Gandharan art has rarely received scrutiny. I will principally bring into focus the Classical Greek and Roman artistic influence on the art of Gandhara, whilst also exploring some aspects of Indian and Iranian imprints. This exposition touches upon art history, ancient Greek and Indian mythology, the Silk Road trade routes, and the Buddhist religion. Furthermore, the manner in which ancient mythology affects the local perception of women is a topic that continues to have traction in the gendered demarcation of South Asia today. There is a paucity of formal, scholarly material that specifically deals with the depiction of the female form in the region, although a great deal has been written about the art of ancient Gandhara. This thesis examines the spiritual, physical, sexual, maternal, and even terrifying aspects of women as reflected in the art of Gandhara from the 1st to the 5th century CE.

Ancient trade routes linking the Mediterranean and South Asia passed through the Gandharan region. Thus a confluence of cultural perspectives and artistic influences shaped the creative mindset in the arts and the representation of female figures and form. Gandharan society readily embraced figural representation and was therefore receptive to distinctive approaches to representing the human body. As a result of numerous fusions, Gandhara possesses some of the finest examples of the portrayal of the female body in Asian art, and is therefore a pivotal example of the effect of geographic, economic, and religious circumstances on the representation of women. How was the Buddhist region of
Gandhara influenced by the Mediterranean? What are possible interpretations or levels of meaning that one can discern from these connections? Could this help us to gain insight into the significance of women in Gandharan art, and consequently Hellenistic, South Asian, and Buddhist art?

My concentration, essentially on the Classical artistic influence originating from the Mediterranean on Gandhara, is but one feature of a broad and complex subject that cannot be addressed fully in the parameters of a senior thesis. In the initial stages of my research, I compiled images of females depicted in Gandharan art in a typological manner. I did not intend to establish the precise chronology of the art given the many contradictory opinions among scholars, and consequently I collocated the categories of women represented in Gandharan art in chapter formation. In Chapter 1, I provide a general context for my thesis by presenting the geographical, historical and religious background of Gandhara; Chapter 2 elucidates Gandharan objects that are acutely Western in form and subject with little South Asian transformation; Chapter 3 analyzes Gandharan tree spirit figures called *yakṣis* that originated from India; Chapter 4 examines images of Hariti, a popular cult deity in Gandharan art, that originated from the aforementioned Indian *yakṣis*; Chapter 5 expounds on narrative bas-relief sculptures depicting the Buddha’s mother, Queen Maya. In order to provide an understanding of contemporary and earthly females of the time period, Chapter 6 includes sculptures of wealthy donors who commissioned Buddhist *stupas*; finally, Chapter 7 is dedicated to deities that are anomalies in Gandharan art and so well integrated with Western, Indian and Iranian iconography that they are virtually indistinguishable.
Gandharan artisans assimilated traditions that had previously served Hellenized centers in the Mediterranean, which had been developed and filtered to cater to the commercial tastes of the region. Hellenized craftsmen, whether from Bactria, or from the west, were active in the Indo-Greek states and influenced the Indian Buddhist sculpture brought to Gandhara. The Kusana rule favored Buddhist patronage and its artistic direction, thus engendering an escalation of Buddhist art forms. Simultaneously, prolonged settlement in Gandhara led to an absorption of Indian religious elements in their oeuvre. For instance, whilst the concern for the Buddha’s life became standardized in the ethnology, at the same time imports of western goods shaped by the Hellenistic tradition additionally served as artistic models. This background provides us with one idea of the diversity within styles and iconography discussed in this thesis.

As Gandhara moved from the aniconic Hinayana tradition to the Mahayana Buddhist strain, artisans developed more interest in figural depiction. Simultaneously, images of Graeco-Roman polytheistic goddesses and other statuary arrived in the region, which was now so conducive to influences on figural composition. Buddhist goddesses that were beginning a process of formulation absorbed styles and treatments from the western world. However, scholars such as Ananda Coomaraswamy believe that the female image was derived from yaksi prototypes, which encouraged the Gandharan figural type independent of the western stimulus. In this thesis, I take into account both of these plausible viewpoints concerning the origin of the female figural image of

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Gandhara. In any case, the area was predisposed to the formation of a feminine canon, and assimilated features of female images from every wave of influence.

I surmise that the Gandharan wealthy demanded only those decorative objects from the trade route that they could relate to on a local scale, and in response, the market filtered representations of Western goddesses that could potentially express the spirit of Buddhism. These Western goddesses were introduced to Gandhara in the form of toilet trays, luxury items, coins and seals. As I will discuss in Chapter 1, much of Gandharan female figural art may be seen as the mature product of Hellenism that has come into contact with the region. At the same time, the deities from the Hindu pantheon of India symbolized the subordination of Buddhism to the castes. Cult statuary in Buddhist monuments in India did exist, as Buddhism coexisted and came to terms with beliefs and practices unrelated to its aim of salvation. Buddhist texts accepted the Hindu setting it derived from and absorbed spirits and deities, as explained in Chapter 2 and 3. Kushana coinage brought into Gandhara Iranian goddess figures that also influenced the way Gandharans visualized venerable females. For the most part in Gandharan female figural sculpture, one finds that Western deities merge with Hindu and Iranian goddesses, forming a unique Gandharan aesthetic syncretism that emerged for the purpose of monastery worship and narrative reliefs.

Female statues in Buddhist stupas are an amalgamation of styles and iconography, arriving from the West by virtue of commerce and taste, from India due to the arrival of religion, and from Iran because of the financial power of the Kusana Empire. Together,

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4 Ibid, 43.
the myriad aspects from various cultures became vital to the role of sculpture as a mediator between the human and the divine.

**Methodological Limitations**

The robust collection of Gandharan sculpture and architectural findings represents over one hundred and fifty years of archaeological study. In the mid-nineteenth century, these objects came to the attention of Western scholars who were fascinated by their stylistic and iconographical similarities to Classical art. Gandhara consisted of a large quantity of abandoned and ruined sites that contained stone and stucco cult statues and reliefs, many of which were damaged or left in fragments. The sculptures inside them were rarely *in situ*. All painting has been lost in Gandhara proper, and Buddhist metal sculpture is in small quantity and of modest size. Despite the successive formal investigations in Gandharan sites since then, much about the origins and meanings of the discoveries remain shrouded in mystery. Methodological limitations in the study of Gandharan art are primarily due to unreliable information on provenance and unorganized documentation of archaeological excavations. The existence of treasure-hunters, corrupt looters and amateur collectors who played their parts in excavations while lacking focus on scientific methodology or organization to match their findings to archaeological strata ensured this non-cohesiveness. In addition to these hindrances, uncertain chronology of items and inconsistencies between scholars regarding dating also stymie precise cataloguing of sculptures.

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6 Ibid, 20.
The main impediment to the insecure provenance details is the deficient manner in which excavations were conducted. Archaeologists were motivated to recover only the best-preserved stone sculptures and reliefs, and many failed to record the context of the discoveries. Thus, many of the Gandharan objects we now study are context-free, solitary pieces lacking sufficient provenance. Some objects are catalogued with claimed stratification, but these are very few in number and given the precarious nature of the excavations, their conclusions are rather unconvincing. In an effort to redeem the inadequate documentation of archaeological findings, many scholars even reconstruct the origins of the sculptures by meticulously analyzing photographs in the British Library. These photographs, captured during the end of the 19th century, document groups of sculptures post-excavation that would later be scattered.

The sculptures from Gandhara have been apportioned to private collections and museums globally, most of which exhibit the works with little attribution. With limited resources, museum staff are obliged to seek the means to modernize their facilities and preserve and catalogue their heritage collections. Many museums in Pakistan contain unexplored collections difficult to retrieve and therefore obscured from the study. Simultaneously, lack of funding has precipitated the closure of many museums in Pakistan. More recently, collections have been disassembled and are sometimes

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9 Ibid, 18.
unaccounted for. While much has been published and catalogued, information recorded in the catalogues are often inconsistent and of questionable accuracy.

Further reconciliation problems in the precise study and chronology exist today due to conflicting notions between the many fields involved in the art historical study of Gandhara: art history, Buddhist studies, archaeology, history, and epigraphy.\(^\text{13}\) Pakistan’s poor economy has also intensified the chronic threat of ruination of excavation sites through agricultural practices or the actions of local treasure-hunters. Of course, more recent excavation work of the twentieth century executed by British, French, Italian and Japanese teams provides hope for better foundations for the work of art historians.\(^\text{14}\)

Scholars continue to debate old, established chronologies, often nowadays moving them to a later timeframe.\(^\text{15}\) It is safe to say that most scholars agree that the sculpture was produced between the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) century BCE and the 6\(^{\text{th}}\) century CE, but within these limits much remains uncertain.\(^\text{16}\) The two most recent museum publications on Gandharan art consist of the Asia Society Museum catalogue *The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan: Art of Gandhara*, published in 2011, and Kurt Behrendt’s Metropolitan Museum of Art catalogue *The Art of Gandhara in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, published in 2007. Although both catalogues utilize the same chronological guidelines and criterion, they have established totally different results when dating specific, important works of Gandharan art, resulting in different theses to the statue cult. This elucidates merely two of the many contradictory chronologies between great scholars in

\[^{14}\] Ibid., 18.
\[^{15}\] Ibid., 18.
the art of Gandhara, evidence of the fact that the foundations for interpretation of dating
are inconsistent even within the most renowned museums and amongst scholars.

Historically, the study of Gandharan sculpture has been biased towards the
Graeco-Roman characteristics. Therefore, discussions of its history have concentrated on
this aspect at the expense of others.\textsuperscript{17} I will briefly outline the three major schools of
thought apropos of the study of Gandharan art:

- The ‘father of Gandharan studies’ was Alfred Foucher (1865-1952), who wrote
  the famous text \textit{L’Art Greco-Bouddhique du Gandhara}. He believed that due to
  the existence of the trade route from Oxus to Taxila, the earliest Western
  penetration into Gandhara was Hellenistic. By the time Mediterranean influences
  were brought to the region, an interaction between the Hellenistic world and the
  Buddhist community established in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BCE had already engendered a
  stylistic hybrid that was the birth of the unique artistic style in the region. He
  emphasizes that Graeco-Bactrian conquests strengthened the hold of these
  western elements, which succeeded Greek political extinction in Gandhara and
  continued to maintain itself after Saka and Parthian conquests.\textsuperscript{18} He also proposed
  that Hellenistic art travelled eastwards across Iran in Graeco-Iranian art form,
  such that Gandhara proper paralleled Palmyra and Dura-Europos in the West.

- On the other hand, Sir John Hubert Marshall, author of \textit{The Buddhist Art of
  Gandhara}, strongly believed that the brief period of Parthian rule in Gandhara
  revived western taste and the commercial prosperity in the early centuries of the
  Common Era, causing a rich, Hellenized art and architecture to flourish that was

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 67.
particularly Iranian in character. Therefore, he also emphasized similarities of Gandharan work to items from Shami, Hatra and Palmyra. The terms Graeco-Iranian and Graeco-Syrian explain the eastward movement of Hellenistic art and invite reference to Iranian and Graeco-Roman amalgam.\textsuperscript{19} Therefore, western elements to Gandharan art increased due to a widespread Hellenistic culture which, in different degrees and local conditions, also governed Roman and Parthian art.\textsuperscript{20} Graeco-Roman motifs passed through Bactria and Eastern Iran before arriving in Gandhara, and were therefore filtered by those local elements. Greek culture influenced the Buddhist artists who witnessed the worship of Greek gods and the use of the Greek alphabet, influenced by Greek coinage that depicted Greek deities, and participated in Dionysian themed festivals.\textsuperscript{21}

• The importance of the Indian origin to the art of Gandhara was proposed by some authors, most notably Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy\textsuperscript{22}, who I will use as a source when analyzing the role of folk Indian \textit{yakṣis} as a canon for women.

Due to the present state of knowledge and inconsistent dating methods, I have avoided placing too much emphasis on chronology over the course of my research. Rather, I have focused on analyzing and comparing styles and iconographies to regions that most probably influenced the art of Gandhara.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{22} Refer to footnote nr. 2
CHAPTER I

Background of the Kingdom of Gandhara

Geography of Gandhara

The Gandharan civilization geographically comprised the provisional expanse between the northwest corner of the Indian subcontinent, in today’s Pakistan, and the mountainous regions of Afghanistan (Map 1). It was located mainly in the Peshawar valley, the Pothohar Plateau, and the Kabul River Valley. Its main cities were Purushapura, or modern-day Peshawar, and Takshashila, now known as Taxila. This civilization can be divided into the core region of Ancient Gandhara (or Gandhara Proper) and the larger civilization that spread beyond the geographical boundaries since the first century BCE, known as Greater Gandhara (Map 2).

Ancient Gandhara is centered on the city of Peshawar and was demarcated by natural boundaries: to the west lay the Khyber Pass and Hindu Kush Mountains; to the north were high foothills; the Indus River outlined the eastern border; barren plains open up from the basin surrounding Peshawar to the south.23 These regions surrounding Ancient Gandhara form Greater Gandhara. Greater Gandhara consisted of a much wider territory including the region from Kabul to Islamabad and Udayana, which is centered on the Swat valley.24 Also included in Greater Gandhara was the ancient region of Nagaraha to the west, in what is now Afghanistan, as well as Bactria in the northwest.25 While the cultural development of Ancient and Greater Gandhara was interrelated, they did have an element of independence due to the mountainous terrain that divided them.

24 Ibid., 13.
Gandharan History

Gandhara was an astoundingly wealthy region due to its strategic position along the trade routes of the Silk Road, inducing it to become an economic and political center. It was located in the convergence at the point of collision between the cultural and commercial routes from the east, consisting of India and China, and the west, including the Roman Empire, Mesopotamia and Persia (Map 3). Its abundant prosperity and link to so many nations enticed wave upon wave of foreign invaders who took turns occupying the area.26 Between the fourth century BCE and the seventh century CE, Gandhara was under the control of the Persians, Macedonians, Mauryans, Graeco-Bactrians, Sakas, Parthians, Kushans, Sassanians, Huns, and other political entities, who successively influenced in myriad ways religious traditions and aesthetic canons.27 Therefore, the region acquired a plethora of cultural influences on its sculptures.

There were two major historical events that molded the unique sculptures of Gandhara, which are both classicizing in style and Buddhist in context. The first was the coming of the Macedonian Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE), during the conquest of the Persian Empire, who extended the eastern frontier of the Mediterranean world to the Indus River.28 The second was the promulgation of Buddhism in Gandhara by the Mauryan King Ashoka (304-232 BCE), who played a critical role in making Buddhism a world religion.

In the 5th century BCE, Gandhara was a satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire when Persia took control of Gandhara during the reign of Cyrus the Great (558-530 BCE). By

27 Ibid., 4.
about 380 BCE, Persian hold on the region weakened and many small kingdoms
developed in Gandhara. Then, in 327 BCE, Alexander III (356 – 323 BCE), better known
as Alexander the Great, conquered Gandhara and the Indian Satrapies of the Persian
Empire. Alexander the great was a resolute king of Macedon in a state in northern,
ancient Greece. He crossed the Hindu Kush, confronted the king of Taxila, subsequently
dispatching his troops and his conquest of this easternmost part of the Persian Empire
was one of his last events in a much-prolonged campaign.29 He constrained chieftains in
Gandhara to come to him and submit to his authority. Through his infiltration, the
Gandharan region came into contact with the Mediterranean. After Alexander’s death in
323 BCE, a king from Punjab and ally of Alexander named Poros took control of the
lower Indus valley. However, Alexander’s general Eudamos killed Porus in 317 BCE.
After Eudamos left India, Macedonian power waned.30 Nevertheless, many Greeks
remained in Greater Gandhara, especially in Bactria.

Chandragupta Maurya (r. 321-297 BCE), known as Sandrakottos by the Greeks,
stepped in and took over Gandhara.31 Gandhara became part of the Mauryan Empire, a
geographically extensive power in ancient India that held sway from 321-185 BCE and
took advantage of the disruptions of local powers after the death of Alexander the Great.
Chandragupta’s grandson Ashoka Maurya (268–240 BCE) was a pioneering sponsor of
Buddhism.32 After the Kalinga war, a war between the Mauryan Empire and the feudal
republic state of Kalinga, Ashoka renounced aggression and converted to Buddhism in
263 BCE. After his conversion, he became dedicated to the propagation of Buddhism

29 Michael Jansen, "The Cultural Geography of Gandhara," The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan Art of
30 Ibid., 31.
31 Ibid., 31.
32 Ibid., 31.
across Asia, establishing monuments and marking many significant sites in the life of Gautama Buddha. It was this Indian emperor, also known as Ashoka the Great, who was responsible for initiating and sponsoring the Buddhist faith in this region.

After the death of Ashoka and a succession of weak kings, the Mauryan Empire rapidly declined and then split into two, becoming vulnerable to Greek invasions. The sub-continent was open to the inroads by the Graeco-Bactrians, or Greeks living in the colonies in Bactria. Bactrian Greek kings formed an Indo-Greek kingdom that covered many parts of the northwest regions of the Indian subcontinent during the last two centuries before the Common Era. The perpetuated authority of these Greek rulers in Bactria and their contacts with Rome inaugurated trade routes that would lead to the formation of the Silk Route and also the sea route that connected to Rome. 33 During their rule, these kings combined the Greek and Indian languages and symbols, and blended ancient Greek, Hindu and Buddhist religious practices. Some of the Greek populations had remained in northwestern India since the time of Alexander the Great and apparently converted to Buddhism:

Here in the king’s domain among the Greeks, the Kambojas, the Nabhakas, the Nabhapamkits, the Bhojas, the Pitinikas, the Andras and the Palidas, everywhere people are following Beloved-of-the-Gods’ instructions in Dharma 34

Some of Ashoka’s emissaries were Greek Buddhist monks, indicating close religious exchanges between the two cultures. In 185 BCE, Demetrius I (r. c. 200-180 BCE), a Buddhist Graeco-Bactrian king, invaded and conquered Gandhara. He was pushed towards India by Scythians, a diverse group of people who inhabited southeastern Europe

33 Ibid., 14.
and central Asia. The Graeco-Bactrians ultimately disappeared as a political entity around
10 CE following invasions of the Indo-Scythians, although pockets of Greek populations
probably remained for several centuries longer under the subsequent rule of the Indo-
Parthians and Kushans.

Indo-Scythians is a term used to refer to Scythians (Sakas), who migrated into
Gandhara from the middle of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BCE to the 4\textsuperscript{th} century CE. These Sakas may
have been an Iranian nomadic community who came from Scythia, the region
encompassing the Pontic-Caspian steppe in Eastern Europe. The first Saka king was
Maues (Moga) who established Saka power in Gandhara in the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BCE.
Eventually, an Indo-Parthian dynasty, which consisted of a group of ancient kings from
Central Asia, took control of Gandhara. These kings probably belonged to Iranian tribes
who lived in Parthia proper. They continued to support Greek artistic traditions.

From the middle of the third century CE onwards, political and cultural links to
the last pre-Islamic Persian Empire, known as the Sassanian Empire (224-651 CE), can
be observed too. The Sassanians were Iranian monarchs who ruled over Iran, Iraq,
Afghanistan, eastern Syria, southwestern Central Asia, some parts of Turkey, the
Caucasus, the Persian Gulf Area ad the Arabian Peninsula. They considered themselves
Aryans and these Sassanians remained in Gandhara even during subsequent reigns of the
Kushanas.

By the early first century CE, the Kushanas had taken control of north India,
Ancient Gandhara, Bactria and Nagaraha. They were one of the five aristocratic tribes of
the Yuezhi confederation, a nomadic people who had migrated from the Tarim Basin, in
modern day Xinjiang, China, and settled in Bactria. During the rule of the Kushan
dynasty, the trend of artistic syncretism between eastern and western traditions caused Gandharan art to reach its zenith. They first invaded Bactria in Greater Gandhara around 140 BCE and then travelled towards Ancient Gandhara.\textsuperscript{35}

The Kushanas were gradually wrestling control of the area from the Seythian tribes and succeeded in expanding Gandhara, even establishing twin capitals near present day Kabul and Peshawar, then known as Kapisa and Pushklavati respectively. The Kushana kings Kanishka (r. 129-150 CE) and Huvishka (r. 155-193 CE) brought a large element of political stability to the regions. The dynasty had diplomatic contacts with the Roman Empire, Sassanid Persia, and Han China. International trade thrived along the well-established land and sea routes.\textsuperscript{36} The Kushanas are believed to have originally followed predominantly Zoroastrianism, an ancient Iranian religion. However, from around 80-95 CE, many Kushans began adopting aspects of the Buddhist culture. They also assumed parts of the Greek culture of the Hellenistic Kingdoms, becoming partly Hellenized. The Kushans adopted elements of the Hellenistic culture in Bactria, adapting the Greek alphabet to suit their own language, and soon began minting coinage on the Greek model. Due to their accumulating control over the developing Silk Road and inasmuch as there was a gradual settlement and growth of Gandharan Buddhist communities, the Kushan rulers generously invested a large portion of their riches to construct Buddhist monasteries.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, it was the Kushana who made possible the blossoming of Buddhist art.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 4.
The Kushana Empire was succeeded by the Ki-to-lo, tribal chieftains of the Yuezhi, ancient Indo-Europeans from the Tarim Basin area who had settled in Bactria.\textsuperscript{38} Ensuingly, the Hephthalites or White Huns, who took control over the region under Mihirakula in 515 CE, invaded them. Due to these incursions, there was a gradual decline in donor patronage to Buddhist sites in the region, so the Buddhist communities were compelled to reuse older sculpture.\textsuperscript{39} In year 528 CE, the White Huns were defeated by a confederation of Indian princes under the command of Yasodhara, and were pushed back to the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. The rich Buddhist practice of Greater Gandhara diminished in the eighth or ninth century after a succession of incursions presented a new religion, Islam, that replaced and overshadowed Buddhist tradition in the region.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Introduction to Buddhism}

\textbf{Shakyamuni Buddha}

The chronicle of Buddhism commenced with the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, a Prince of the Shakya (Sakya) people, either in 623 BCE, 563 BCE, or 566 BCE.\textsuperscript{41} He was the son of Queen Maya, whom we will encounter in Chapter 4, and King Suddhodana.\textsuperscript{42} Brought up in a small Himalayan kingdom named Kapilavastu, located on the border of Nepal and northeast India, Siddhartha was sheltered from the realities of life outside his royal palace.\textsuperscript{43} Having lived a life of luxury until the age of twenty-nine, he made the decision to eschew the grandeur of his royal palace and abandon his family. Finally

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 1.
\end{flushright}
exposed to the harsh reality of poverty, suffering and death, Siddhartha realized the impermanence of life and the transient nature of physical pleasures. He felt compelled to renounce his material possessions and worldly subsistence to become a monk. Embarking upon a spiritual journey to seek out a remedy for humanity’s ills, he discovered that meditation had the power to not only calm the mind but to also heighten insights into the cause of suffering.44

After six years of advanced meditation, he sat under a Bodhi tree and came to the realization of samsara: the infinite cycle of birth, death, and rebirth that is dictated by our karma, or actions.45 Buddhists aspire to break free from the samsara in order to reach a state of spiritual enlightenment, which is the condition of an awakened mind liberated from desire and therefore, free from the suffering caused by desire.46 At the age of thirty-five, the prince achieved the title Buddha when he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. Thus, he is referred to as Shakyamuni Buddha, an enlightened master. In his life story, he is known as the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, which alludes to his identity of a human in the physical world.47 Prior to his awakening, the Buddha was a bodhisattva, an individual who has accumulated spiritual merit through exemplary moral deeds over many lifetimes. Thus, he was a Buddha-to-be or a Future Buddha.48
Spreading of the faith to Gandhara

Communities of monks called Bhikkhus were responsible for spreading the gospel of salvation, the dharma, after the death of the Buddha in the fifth century BCE. The Maurya emperor Ashoka (r. 272-232 BCE) made the largest contribution to the Buddhist faith by disseminating it to regions beyond India. Later in Gandhara, the Kushana King Kanishka heightened Buddhist faith by commissioning artistic activities and monastery building in the region.

According to religious texts, after the Buddha’s death, his ashes were divided and placed into eight reliquaries buried at the center of stupas, or funerary mounds. Since it was Emperor Ashoka’s self-imposed responsibility to spread the gospel of his newly adopted religion, he unsealed seven of the eight stupas enshrining the Buddha’s relics and further divided them. Subsequently, he granted each of the main cities in his kingdom a stupa in which they were housed. By doing this, he made the Buddha’s presence accessible to the people of this earthly realm. Generally, the center of a monastery in ancient India consisted of a stupa and residential quarters for the Bhikkhus called viharas. Furthermore, Ashoka added visual images to embellish the stupas so the faithful were provided with a tangible object upon which they could focus their prayers. This initiated the stupa cult, a channel through which Buddhists lavished their wealth in

51 Ibid., 3.
sculpture and richly decorated the *stupas*. Not surprisingly, it was during the Mauryan period that Buddhism advanced in Gandhara.

When the Kushanas conquered the region of Gandhara, they inclusively adopted Buddhism. Due to their royal patronage, Buddhist art reached a pinnacle of maturity during their reign. The newly converted Kushana king Kanishka, the founder of the second dynasty of the Kushana, also propagated the Buddhist *stupa* and monastic culture. The Buddhists believed that the most effective way to walk the path of the *dharma* would be by entering the monastic order, but many devotees became lay practitioners who pursued a happy rebirth rather than enlightenment. Therefore, the fear of an unhappy rebirth motivated the Kushana to generate good karma by donating Buddhist sculptures and structures, precipitating an upsurge in Buddhist art in the region. They even further divided Buddha’s relics from the Ashokan *stupas* and housed them in new monasteries.

These foreigners embraced Buddhism openly because unlike Hinduism with its caste system Buddhism offered an easier form of cultural acceptance. Buddhism disregarded the Brahmin hierarchy and elitism so prevalent in the Hindu creed by denying the use of rituals. The Buddha acknowledged the existence of gods venerated by the community, but he believed these deities, much like human beings, were also caught in *samsara* and were still in the process of breaking free from attachment. However, Buddhism did absorb many Indian folk beliefs, such as the Indian tree spirits examined in Chapter 3, and then reinterpreted them. It absorbed the Hindu belief in reincarnation, which suggested that an individual’s life was one of a series of many lives that were

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54 Ibid., 3.
56 Ibid., 22.
57 Ibid., 21.
prescribed based on one’s moral deeds performed in a previous existence.\textsuperscript{58} The Kushanas embraced the religion to the extent that the region became a Buddhist holy land full of goals of pilgrimage and religious foundations.\textsuperscript{59}

**Overview of Buddhist art in Gandhara**

The art of Gandhara consists of architecture and sculpture made of stone and stucco.\textsuperscript{60} It also incorporates bas-reliefs that depict the Buddha’s life events, but peculiarly excludes past life *jatakas* or tales of the Buddha, something that is otherwise ubiquitous in Buddhist sites. Figural sculpture consists of free standing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Before the Common Era, Indians abstained from representing the image of the Buddha.\textsuperscript{61} Many scholars believe the figural representation of the Buddha in fact, began in Gandhara. Some argue that it was the image worship of the Indo-Greeks that mediated the evolution of the first Buddha image in Gandhara leading to the inception of figural depiction in Buddhist art.\textsuperscript{62} Others believe it was the figural representation of the folk *yakṣi* from India that conduced the Buddha’s representation in Gandhara. In either case, the Buddha image first occurred in the bas-reliefs of the Buddha’s life and eventually the tradition lessened, making way for more prevalent singular, freestanding images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.\textsuperscript{63} An explanation for this transition may lie in the movement from the Hinayana school of Buddhism towards that of the Mahayana.

\textsuperscript{60} Chikyo Yamamoto, *Introduction to Buddhist Art*, (New Delhi: Pradeep Kumar Goel for Aditya Prakashan, 1990), 36.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{63} Chikyo Yamamoto, *Introduction to Buddhist Art*, (New Delhi: Pradeep Kumar Goel for Aditya Prakashan, 1990), 36.
Mahayana and Hinayana School

The task of maintaining the Buddhist doctrine was left to the monastic order, which lacked central authority, resulting in the separation of the religion into two sects: the Mahayana and the Hinayana tradition. The Hinayana tradition, known as the ‘Inferior Vehicle,’ is a more conservative form of Buddhism, which believed that monasticism was the exclusive manner in which to attain enlightenment. This school focused on the veneration of relics rather than bodhisattvas. In contrast, the Mahayana tradition is known as the ‘Great Vehicle’, which enriched the earlier Hinayana monasticism by appealing to everyone, from monk to layman. The Mahayana tradition incorporated universal compassion, changing the Buddhist goal from attaining enlightenment to a more accessible objective of attaining a life of altruism as a Bodhisattva.\(^6^4\) The new Mahayana movement began in Southern India during the first century CE and eventually, spiritual progress was viewed as being necessitated by superhuman powers.\(^6^5\) So, Bodhisattvas entered the pantheon as deities who postponed their own Buddhahood in order to aid all others.\(^6^6\) In Gandhara, the later influx of Bodhisattva devotional images and icon representation corroborates the greater leaning towards the Mahayana faith.

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\(^{6^5}\) Ibid., 14.
**Timeline**

c. 522 - 486 BCE: King of Persia Darius I

c. 518 BCE: Persian province

*5th century BCE*: Life of the historic Buddha

c. 326 BCE: Alexander the Great and Macedonian generals conquer the region

c. 312 BCE: Seleucid Empire

c. 305 – 180 BCE: Mauryan Dynasty; region converts to Buddhism under King Ashoka (273-232 BCE)

c. 180 BCE: Graeco-Bactrian conquest

c. 140 BCE: Scythian invasions from Central Asia (Sakas, Yuezhi, and others)

c. 7 – 75 CE: Parthian invasion causes region to become part of Indo-Parthian kingdom

c. 75 – 230 CE: Kushan Empire

c. 127 – 150 CE: Kanishka I, Kushana ruler

c. 230 – 440 CE: Indo-Sassanids

c. 450 – 565 CE: White Huns/Hephthalites

c. 1008 CE: Muslim Ghaznavids
CHAPTER II  
Classical Connections

Gandharan art is renowned for its extensive integration of non-Buddhist deities, which is now interpreted as the result of Hellenism having come into direct contact with Buddhism.\(^{67}\) In this chapter, I will explore the manner in which items featuring Western goddesses were brought into the region of Gandhara from the Mediterranean world through commercial trade. I will expound on the absorption of these Western iconographies and styles into local figures, which led to the formation of hybrid deities in Gandharan art. My analysis will focus on the influence of the goddesses Athena and Aphrodite, along with the more ambiguous Mediterranean and Iranian goddesses who hold a cornucopia.

Classical art, or art from the Greaco-Roman tradition created in the Mediterranean basin or peripheral areas that were part of the Roman Empire, was a vital stimulus that shaped Gandharan sculptures. Stylistically, this Classical mode reveals an emphasis on naturalism in the figural form, specifically in the life-like poses and accurate body proportions. There is a general regard for beauty of the human body, which is sometimes sculpted as nude. Other times, figures that are partly nude are fashioned in such a skillful manner that the drapery in fact serves to reveal the anatomical forms underneath. By depicting swathes of folds that hug the body, sculptors expose the voluptuous shape of the female form in a wet-drapery effect. Phidias, the famous sculptor, painter and architect from the Classical Greek period utilized the wet-drapery effect. The term

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*Phidian drapery treatment* refers to this style, which displays qualities of fabric that cling to the body in order to reveal its forms.

Figures that populate and influence the sculpture of Gandharan art make up a coterie of divine and semi-divine beings. The Kushans absorbed this Indian hierarchy of gods and the Buddhist belief system. Kanishka the Great (127-151 CE), the newly converted and righteous Buddhist monarch, had a penchant for cultural and religious open-mindedness that encouraged the image worship of diverse deities during the years of his reign from 127-140 CE.\(^6^8\) Some of his coins feature Buddhist deities and symbols, but most depict Graeco-Roman deities such as Herakles, Fortuna (Roma), Athena, Aphrodite and Demeter; Indian deities including Shiva; and Iranian deities such as Pharro and Ardokhsho.\(^6^9\) Of the divinities from Hellenistic sources, images of Aphrodite and Eros have been found among the pre-Buddhist levels at Taxila although these may have been imported into Gandhara.\(^7^0\) Later statues, concurrent with the Buddhist period, include representations of Athena, Tyche and Demeter.\(^7^1\) The images also represent the personification of ideas that crossed borders and cultures to merge and reemerge with refurbished name and form although with ideological content and symbolic functions intact. Nowhere is the syncretism of Central Asia more evident than in the Kushan pantheon.

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\(^{69}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 36.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 36.
Athena

Figure 2 is a four-inch high, helmeted bust of a woman forged in bronze or lead. It is hollow from the inside, suggesting that it functioned as a container of sorts. It could have served as a measuring device for liquids, a weight balance, a balsamary or a container for a salve for soothing or healing known as an unguentary. Its small size also indicates its possible role as an item used for rituals. The detail on her armor appears to represent armor scales, similar to those in figure 3 found at Dura-Europos. These armor scales dating from 200-256 CE are overlapping metal discs that were supposed to be sewn onto a leather coat. This type of scale armor was character of the Roman military, and was also utilized by Scythians and Persians. Stylistically, figure 2 is indubitably not a figure recognizable in Indian history and hence it may provide some insight as to the manner in which ideas travelled from Rome to Gandhara.

It was discovered in the Begram Treasury Room, located in the Kapisa Province, near the junction of the Ghurband and Panjshir Rivers, in Greater Gandhara or today’s Afghanistan. Begram was the capital of the Kushan Empire in the 1st century. The site is dated from the 1st to the beginning of the 3rd century C.E. and consists of a Kushan-era palace in the New Royal City with rooms containing treasures such as objects of local manufacture, ivories from India, molded stucco ornaments of Greek origin, glassware from Syria and Egypt, lacquer objects from China, and bronze items from Rome and Egypt. Although these objects do not contain indications of cultural syncretism found in the art of Ancient Gandhara, they elucidate the path of travel along the Silk Road and the subsequently artistic influence on the reconciliation of styles of the region. They are items from an array of geographical regions, traded and gifted along the Silk Road, and
their existence affirms the considerable wealth that prevailed in Greater Gandhara during the Kushan era. Since Begram was conquered and sacked by the Sassanians during the second quarter of the third century C.E., one can assume that these treasure rooms were sealed prior to the invasion. The treasures were found scattered about the rooms in desolate disregard, suggesting that they were forcibly forsaken by the frantic, fleeing Kushans.

Because figure 2 was found in the Begram Treasury Room, it was discernibly an imported artifact, its place of origin being the moot point. Figure 4 provides us with a plausible answer. Figure 4 is, as well, a balsamarium, but it was recovered in Italy and is Etruscan in style. Figure 4 might be Turan, Aphrodite’s counterpart in Etruria, bedecked with jewels and doves, the signature attribute of the goddess, a fitting well from which an elite Etruscan woman might have enhanced her allure. Ancient literary sources present a varied outlook on the appeal of perfume and cosmetics. Given that items such as these were provincial works manufactured within the Roman Empire, this intimates that figure 2 was transported from an area in the Roman Empire along the trade routes, and ended up in Begram with a myriad other items from diverse regions along the Silk Road. Figure 4, similar in size to figure 2, shows a bronze balsamariun or perfume-container, also in the shape of a deity with a helmet embellished with wings attached on either side. Figure 2 presents a head with shoulders and chest, whereas figure 4 is a bust with only the head and neck. While her facial features are comparable to that of figure 2, the hair is very non-naturalistic in style. Also hollow, this item previously included a lid, now missing, that may possibly have been suspended by two rings above the head. This item provides a

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context for figure 2, implying that figure 2 probably originated from somewhere in the Roman Empire. Figure 4 is dated to the first half of the 3rd century BCE, about five centuries prior to that of figure 2, suggesting that this type of functional object was prevalent in Rome long before it reached Greater Gandhara.

If figure 2 peregrinated from somewhere in the Roman Empire to Begram, it is conceivable that she is in fact the goddess Minerva, the Roman equivalent of the Greek goddess Athena. Her pupils and irises are incised, characteristic of post-Hadrianic Roman portraiture. Since the Hadrianic Imperial period occurred between 117-138 CE, this sculpture must have been created after that time. However, it would likely have arrived in Begram prior to the Sassanian invasion during the second quarter of the 3rd century CE. Her facial features and the manner in which her curly hair underneath the helmet appears around her forehead and extends down to her shoulders is akin to that of figure 5, the ‘Minerva with the pectoral’. Figure 5 is a Roman copy of a sculpture by the Classical Greek sculptor Phidias and it provides us with an understanding of the iconography of Graeco-Roman Athena. The original version of this Classical statue is dated from 438 BCE, and was created for the Parthenon in the Athenian Acropolis.

Figure 2’s helmet, however, is more analogous to the Minerva Giustiniani, figure 6, in the Vatican museum, a Roman variation of Minerva derived from a Greek sculpture of Pallas Athena of the late fifth or early fourth century BCE. The Minerva Giustiniani wears a Corinthian helmet, which is designed to cover the entire head and neck, with incisions for the eyes and mouth. Because she is not in battle, the helmet is worn upwards, a popular trend in Classical statuary, which gave rise to many variations of the

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helmet style. The Athena from figure 2 dons a helmet that may be a provincial adaptation of the Corinthian helmet, with a protrusion on the top and wings on either side, similar to those in the helmet of figure 4.

The Athena from Begram was imaginably the type of extrinsic item transported from the Roman Empire that introduced the idea of Roman goddesses to the people in the region. These types of imports appear to have inspired the artisans of Gandhara, resulting in a syncretic sculpture such as figure 7 from the Lahore Museum, a figure ripe with cultural fusions. Figure 7 portrays a ‘so-called Athena’ made of fine-grained schist. Many scholars have catalogued her as the goddess Athena, due to her helmet, partly missing lance and Greek dress. However, I propose that her identity is far more complex. Since Gandhara was exposed to goods from numerous parts of the Silk Road, they encountered several warrior goddesses who shared similar iconography to that of Athena. I hypothesize that this Gandharan sculpture is a fusion of divergent goddesses, rather than a parallel of just one. There have been suggestions that she may be a typical female guard much like the military yakṣi in figure 28 or the attendant guarding Maya in figure 43. However, the presence of a helmet contradicts that notion.

Her raised left arm would have held the spear that has been partly broken off, with a shaft visible against her left leg. What remains of her right forearm, severed exactly below her elbow, indicates that it was clutched in a horizontal position, a likely armor. Her pensive face turned slightly to the left is framed by her hair, which is parted in the middle, pulled back on the sides, and elegantly falls over her shoulders. She is ornamented with a thick necklace and wears a Greek chiton fastened over her shoulders.
Her belt is twisted and fastened under the breast. The sinuous folds or her tunic are comparable with that of figure 8, a painted Victory at Dura created between 265-256 CE at Dura-Europos. Not only does this Victory at Dura share a congruous clothing style with the Gandharan warrior of figure 7, but her attire also resembles the Athena of figure 5 as evident with the belt tied around the waist and a short draped skirt layered over a longer one. The drapery clings to her body, revealing her slightly plump belly underneath. The folds form parallel incisions that fall vertically from her waist. It has been suggested that these lyre shaped folds date this to the 2nd century, a time when relations between the Kushans and Rome were especially close and friendly, both on commercial grounds and because of their common, inimical sentiments toward the Parthians. Figure 9, the statue of Allat-Minerva from the 2nd century CE portrays a helmeted goddess in similar garb. This sculpture was found in the Roman province of As-Suwadya, Syria. Her arm posture is the reverse of figure 7, her now dismembered right arm would probably have held a lance, and her left arm a shield. Allat was a pre-Islamic, Arabian goddess whose identity in this figure appears to have merged with that of Minerva. These similarities that exist between sculptures of Athena, Minerva, Victory and Allat in various regions of the Roman Empire predicate that any variation of a warrior goddess may have reached Gandhara and inspired its artisans to create figure 7.

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75 Ibid., 27.
Aphrodite

In Greek religion and mythology, Aphrodite was the goddess of fertility, love and beauty. Another item incongruous to Gandharan art is figure 10, a goddess constituted in gold repousse and deemed the ‘so-called Winged Aphrodite’.77 The figure is dated to the 1st century CE and came from Sirkap, Taxila, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and is now located in the National Museum of Pakistan.78 It is a mere 2 ½ inches long, so it possibly served as a brooch or bibelot of some sort. Its small size suggests its easy portability and its valuable material indicates its commercial demand along the trade routes so the item may not necessarily have been a product made by Gandharan artisans.

The goddess is portly and endowed with a rounded face, spherical breasts and wide hips. She leans against a pseudo-Corinthian pillar in a contrapposto stance, The term contrapposto means ‘counter-pose’ in Italian, a human figure style originated from Classical Greek sculpture and consequently, was used in Roman copies. It describes a standing figure poised in such a way that his body weight rests on one leg, while the free leg bends at the knee. Because the weight shifts on one side of the body, the hips, shoulders and head tilt so the figure appears to stand in rhythmic ease. This goddess stands with her left knee protruding forward and her body in apparent motion, a stance suggesting relaxation and naturalism. Her identification as a possible winged Aphrodite is quite problematic due to the anomaly of the depiction of Classical Aphrodite and the presence of wings. However, in the Classical world, sirens are nude female figures that do possess wings. Figure 11 details a relief with an old man and a siren or daemon with

78 Ibid., 90.
bird claws that squats over a nude man with an erect phallus.\textsuperscript{79} The man is asleep on the ground while the female pours a mysterious liquid out of a cup in her left hand held behind her back.\textsuperscript{80} The siren is at once a dangerous and beautiful creature, portrayed as a \textit{femme fatale} who seduced sailors with enchanting music to shipwreck. In the oldest Greek texts, Eros is described as a substance that Aphrodite pours onto gods and humans alike to bring on desire.\textsuperscript{81} This might hint at the link between the siren and Aphrodite, both emblems of love and desire.

Though we have established that figure 10 is undeniably influenced by Aphrodite, it is still unclear why she is winged. Figure 11 might provide an answer. Figure 11 portrays a small, 1¾ inch pair of Lovers, catalogued as Cupid (Eros) and Psyche in gold. It was also detected in Sirkap, Taxila, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and is dated between the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BCE to the 1\textsuperscript{st} century CE. Eros, the son of Aphrodite, is traditionally depicted with wings. He is the god of love and desire, while his counterpart Psyche represents the soul or breath of life. It is peculiar that in this sculpture, Eros does not possess wings, while in figure 10, his possible mother Aphrodite is in fact winged. It appears that there is some conflation occurring between this Classical mother and son pair. Figure 12 depicts a slumbering Eros who is in fact winged, in conformity with the myth. In this case, the Gandharan people were accurate in the iconographical depiction of the Greek god Eros. It is clear that the artisans were granted artistic license when formulating images of their deities, fusing iconographical components as they saw fit. A silver, Roman pin ornamented with Cupid and Psyche in figure 13 is a countertype to that

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 126.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 126.
of figure 11. It dates to the 2nd-3rd century and possesses similar style and body proportions to those of figure 13. The Psyche from figure 13 wears a drapery that only covers the portion of her body below her hips, an identical dress to the so-called Aphrodite of figure 10. In addition, the Psyche from figure 13 does possess wings that have an equivalent shape to our so-called Aphrodite in figure 10. A Greek sculpture dating to the late 4th century BCE also features Psyche with these peculiar wings. This suggests that these wings were conceived of during the Greek period, and then were copied by the Romans, who subsequently influenced the Gandharans to depict their goddesses with these wings. The wings of the so-called Aphrodite in figure 10 and Psyche from figures 13 and 14 are not wings of the siren in figure 1, which are feathered because of her association with a singing bird. Rather, they are akin to the wings of an insect, possibly that of a moth. Given that she shared the wings and consistently nude upper body of Psyche figures from Rome and Greece, it is plausible to consider that the so-called Aphrodite of figure 10 has been identified inaccurately as she may in fact be her son’s lover, Psyche.

There is, however, some resemblance between figure 10 and the Aphrodite statuette in the Pergamon Museum, figure 15. Despite the fact that figure 15 does not possess wings, they are stylistically related. Her seductive stance and particular manner in which she is enswathed is consistent with that of figure 10, so there is a likelihood that the artisans of Gandhara re-interpreted Aphrodite figures from the Mediterranean. Figure 15’s drapery is remarkably sensuous, revealing the breasts and shoulders, and hugging the stomach, right arm, hips and thighs in such a way that her form appears discernible. Though thick and cascading, the drapery folds accentuate her curvaceous body. The
history of the female nude in Western art and that of Aphrodite are closely linked. In fact, almost all female nudes in ancient art are of Aphrodite, and almost all Hellenistic and Roman period sculptures of Aphrodites are completely nude or semi-nude. Figure 15, possibly like figure 10, is an example of an Aphrodite sculpture that is 2 ½ inches, very small in size, suggesting that it was created for applicability in modest settings, such as a homes or a tomb. The domestic function creates a sensuous private quality, much like the intimate idea of accompanying the deceased to the after-life.

Statues of Aphrodite multiplied during the Hellenistic period, all of which were inspired to some degree by the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles. A Roman copy of this Greek Aphrodite of Knidos is shown in figure 16. The original was created in the fourth century BCE and was a life size sculpture placed in a shrine in her temple at Knidos, in South-Western Turkey. As the first monumental female nude in Greek art, it was a radical departure from previous practice as it humanized the goddess. The sculpture depicts an Aphrodite caught while bathing, an action indicated by the urn for bathwater present on her left side. By including this narrative context that justifies her nudity, Praxiteles personalized the goddess as an individual engaging in a mundane activity. In addition, the sculptor alludes to the myth of the goddess’s origins from the sea, as bathing conjures up images of her birth in an aquatic setting. This connection is particularly appropriate for a statue erected specifically on the Greek island of Knidos, because in Knidos, Aphrodite was worshipped as a water goddess.

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82 Ibid., 149.
83 Ibid., 149.
84 Ibid., 149.
85 Ibid., 149.
86 Ibid., 150.
87 Ibid., 150.
88 Ibid., 150.
Her unabashed attempt to cover her body is vital to the study of her image. Her right hand is held directly in front of her pubic area, as though the goddess was caught by surprise and swiftly concealed herself.\(^89\) This suggests a gesture of embarrassment, something discordant in such an almighty divinity. Rather, the movement is a deliberate attempt to draw the viewer’s eye to the part of the body most closely associated with her sexuality. In lieu of conveying vulnerability, this Aphrodite expresses a mature sexuality, of which she is conscious. Nudity functioned as an attribute of the goddess. This interplay between exposing the body and concealing it is present in the semi-nude figure 10, suggesting that she must be a derivative of Aphrodite.

In order to understand the manner in which these Greek mythological characters arrived in the region, one can consider the Roman plaster emblem, figure 17, containing a scene with Aphrodite and Eros. This item is from the Mediterranean region and is dated to the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) – 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) century CE. It is small, only 4 inches diameter, and therefore easily transportable, rendering it viable to import into Gandhara. This figure illustrates a semi-nude Aphrodite with a draped vestment clinging to her thighs as she suspends in mid-air like a celestial being. Her finely contoured body is carved in a naturalistic manner. A stone palette of a different couple in Greek mythology, Apollo and Daphne, figure 18, was found in Gandhara even before the Roman emblem, figure 17, connoting that this type of trade and influence had been a phenomenon before the Common Era. Figure 16 dated to the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) century BCE and now in the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi is strikingly correspondent to figure 17.\(^90\) The shallow relief of Greek deities interacting within a small circular, emblem is an excellent example of how Western mythological

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 151.
scenes and classical styles, upon reaching Gandhara, were received and adapted.\textsuperscript{91}

Obvious stylistic parallels exist in the two reliefs, as the Gandharan artists incorporated Hellenistic methods of organizing narrative figures in the space.\textsuperscript{92} The figures in the dish are given a corresponding three dimensionality.\textsuperscript{93} Gandharan people might have been familiar with items such as figure 17, which depict both Aphrodite and Eros in a shared plane. This emphasizes that figure 10 may be a conflation of identities, a merge of the goddess Aphrodite and her son, Eros.

We know that similar emblematia moved east along the trade routes because they were also found in Begram, Afghanistan, much like the Athena balsamarium.\textsuperscript{94} It seems plausible to imagine a Gandharan artist reinterpreting scenes in schist dishes, especially if the figures depicted could be understood in terms of local, religious iconography\textsuperscript{95}. In the Gandharan Apollo and Daphne, figure 18, Daphne swivels around to look at Apollo who approaches, a composition that reveals the artist’s familiarity with Hellenistic motifs and narrative structures. Strangely enough, Apollo has been given the pointed hat of a Parthian showing that the artist creating this was appealing to a local audience.\textsuperscript{96} This hat is known as a Phrygian cap, a soft conical cap with the top pulled forward, associated with the inhabitants of Phrygia, a region of central Anatolia.

The fact that figures of Greek gods were represented or alluded to in some Gandharan works raise an important question: were Gandharans interested in these deities from a foreign land, or did the figures assume entirely new or different

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 10.
meanings? The luxury products found at Sirkap and Begram are dated to the first few centuries of the Common Era, during Gandhara’s main period of contact with the Roman Empire. However, the later interaction was more significant, sustained with Hellenistic Greeks when Gandhara’s maximum artistic production occurred. By the time of the Kushanas, Roman styles had already become part of Gandhara’s cultural identity.

**Goddess with the cornucopia**

One type of deity that emerges frequently in the art of Gandhara is that of an unidentified goddess holding a cornucopia, a horn-shaped container teeming with flowers, fruits, nuts, or other symbols of wealth and nourishment. Figure 19, from Sirkap, Taxila, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, depicts this type of a goddess whose only attribute is a short and squat cornucopia, which she gently cradles in her left hand. Her right hand is obscured, tucked securely underneath her mantle, something quite unusual in Gandharan imagery. As a tool of identification, the cornucopia is a very ambiguous element within Gandharan art because it is the chief attribute for many beneficent goddesses from other regions. It is likely that figure 19 is supposed to represent a specific deity rather than a generic fertility image due to her formal appearance and distinct iconography.

She is a small, steatite statuette, almost 5 inches tall, and is dated to the 1st century CE. She is a buxom goddess, with a round face and protruding eyes. There is a strong reliance on symmetry and frontality in this statuette. She wears a chiton and himation as

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97 Ibid., 10.
98 Ibid., 13.
she sits with her knees spread apart on a four-legged bench. She is crowned with a *polos*, a type of crown, high and cylindrical, worn by mythological goddesses from the Ancient Near East and Anatolia that was later adopted by the ancient Greeks. The Greek goddesses associated with this type of crown are Rhea, Cybele, Hera and Demeter. Figure 20 depicts a 7th century BCE female head wearing a *polos* from Crete. The existence of a *polos* and the Hellenistic dress suggest that figure 17 depicts a Mediterranean goddess.\(^{101}\)

The cornucopia is a large horn with its mouth brimful of the earth’s fruits, symbolic of abundance. This reification originated in the horn of the goat Amalthea, a variation of the nurturing, foster-mother of Zeus in Greek mythology, but its true origin is probably from the ancient belief that fecundity and power came from the horn of a goat or bull. It became the chief element for many Greek and Roman deities representative of harvest or abundance. In Greece, it is a symbol of fertility associated with the goddess Tyche, the presiding tutelary deity or allegorical figure that governed a city. It is also the attribute of Ardokhsho, the Iranian-derived deity adopted by the Kushans.\(^{102}\)

Figure 21, the Roman Statuette of the Tyche in Constantinople is very similar to figure 19. Tyche was a goddess who rose to popularity in the kingdoms of Hellenistic Asia Minor, and evolved from a goddess of chance to a protector of cities.\(^{103}\) Much like figure 19, figure 21 is in a seated position with her legs spread apart and her left foot supported by a low footstool. Her headgear symbolizes city walls. Her left arm gracefully holds the end of a cornucopia, overflowing with fruits, while her right arm is extended in such a position that she appears to hold another, missing item. Her iconography is

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\(^{102}\) Ibid., 59.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., 63.
canonized as wearing a *polos* in the form of a crenellated crown while holding a cornucopia. The Parthians and Indo-Scythians in Hellenized Bactria adopted the goddess Tyche and then fused her identity with their goddesses of fecundity and abundance, nana-Ardvi-Anahita. This merging of identities contributed to the development of Ardokhsho’s character under the Kushans. Thus, this syncretic goddess of Nana-Tyche-Ardokhsho represents the goddess of abundance as well as a protector of the prosperity and fortune of a city.

The Kushan’s political system of a centralized rule derived from the divine kingship of Iranian traditions. The grand Kushan regime needed a new, localized city goddess that better projected its grand scale and ideology. The city-goddess Ardokhsho became the personification of the kingly glory, abundance and prosperity of the new regime. Her image with the cornucopia appears on coins issued by most Kushan kings throughout the Kushan era. Coinage was the equivalent of an official pronouncement that was a symbolic token of a governing entity, and was traditionally conservative in design. Figure 22 provides an example of a typical, gold dinar from the reign of Kanishka I (143-168 CE) that depicts a standing Ardokhsho. Her face is in a side profile, while she stands frontally wearing a long, flowing robe. Her two hands support a long, thin cornucopia that blossoms at the topmost tip. This elongated version of the cornucopia differs from the Mediterranean examples, more characteristic of Iranian and

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104 Ibid., 63.  
105 Ibid., 64.  
106 Ibid., 65.  
107 Ibid., 67.  
108 Ibid., 67.  
109 Ibid., 9.
Indian representations. A quotation by Gherardo Gnoli in the Asia Society catalogue

_The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan_ states:

for the old city-Tychai of the Hellenistic world, which had easily come into contact with the _nagara devata_ [devata, city-goddess], there was substituted the conception of a royal Fortune, personified by the [Iranian] goddess Ardoxso [Ardoxsho], who reproduced only an echo of the ancient Hellenic ideal of the Tyche.111

The fusion of these cornucopia goddesses takes a step further in the local goddess Hariti, figure 23, a deity more fully discussed in Chapter 3. Figure 23 supposedly presents an image of Hariti on a pendant decorated in deep gold repousse. She is depicted with a joyful, smiling face and large, biconvex eyes, holding a stylized cornucopia in her left hand and a lotus in her right hand. While the symbol of the cornucopia arrived in Hariti’s iconography from the Western end of the Silk Road, the lotus is a symbol that derives from Buddhism. The lotus is one of the Eight Auspicious Symbols of Buddhism, representing spiritual purity.112 Buddhists believe that just as the lotus flower rises up from the depths of muddy ponds and lakes to blossom immaculately above the water’s surface, the human heart or mind can develop the virtues of the Buddha and transcend desires and attachments, to reveal its essentially pure nature.113 Hariti’s cornucopia is unique, adopted into the requirements of Buddhism and Hariti’s individual identity. Her cornucopia consists of a lotus stem bearing an opened blossom, which supports a cup filled with an array of fruits. One of the fruits in particular, the

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113 Ibid., 125.
pomegranate, was added because of its resemblance to human flesh, a direct reference to Hariti’s legend as a child-eating demon goddess, a story described in further detail in Chapter 3. Though the concept of a cornucopia arrived from foreign lands, it was modified and re-interpreted in Gandhara to suit the role of the local goddess Hariti. She is enwrapped in a Hellenistic chiton with a belt and hem. On her head, she wears a polos or a diadem, an ornamental headband or circular shaped crown worn by Eastern monarchs as a mark of royalty. Because Roman Emperors of the time as well as ancient Persians wore the diadem, it is indicative of Hariti’s regal stance.

The prevalence of Ardokhsho’s image on coins and sculptures as the Gandharan cornucopia goddess fused with the image of Hariti, causing a similitude in concept and function and a convergence of ideals and iconographies between the two goddesses. Initially, Hariti was depicted carrying children, who were then substituted for the cornucopia. Because all horns are considered unclean in Indian belief, the cornucopia was an unlikely symbol in Gandhara. Therefore, it is likely that the Gandharan people adopted the symbol from other cultures when they saw depictions of other goddesses holding the cornucopia in items imported from along the trade routes. The perseverance of the foreign divinities Tyche and Ardokhsho, among many others, allowed them to act as a prototype for Hariti, providing her with the characteristic traits of a goddess of wealth, abundance, protection and royal glory.

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CHAPTER III

Shalabhanjika Yaksini

Introduction to Yaksini

Among the most important female figures in Gandharan art that originated from India are those of the yaksini, or yaksi. The yaksi is a female counterpart to the male yaksa and together they represent a populous class of beings with a long history in India. In the ancient texts the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda, they are described as celestial and awe-inspiring entities that radiate with light and beauty. They were believed to have taken possession of human beings and were therefore much feared in India. In an effort to mollify them, they were worshipped. Over history, these yakis and yaksas have been manifested in various forms and have represented differing powers ranging from the demonic to the divine. I have dedicated the third chapter of this thesis to one such yaksi named Hariti. However, this chapter will focus on the original form of the yaksi, a tree-dwelling spirit known as the Shalabhanjika yaksi.

In the proceeding section, my intent is to elucidate the essential etymology behind the word yaksa and outline the mention of yaksas in ancient Indian textual sources. Subsequently, I will emphasize that yaksas and yakis were embraced in the Buddhist tradition in India by analyzing the earliest preserved Indian yaksi sculpture from a Buddhist site in Sanchi, in Madhya Pradesh, India. This yaksi statuette from Sanchi will serve as a comparative reference when discussing yakis created in Gandhara about two hundred years later.

Etymology

The word *yaksa* emerges in several scripts in Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhalese, Hindi and Tamil. In this thesis, I shall allude to the Sanskrit variations, which are *yaksa* (male), *yaksi* (female), and *yaksini* (female).\(^{118}\) When used in plural form, the word *yaksa* refers collectively to both female *yakis/yaksinis* and their male counterparts, *yaksas*.

The etymology of the word and its meaning have been much debated. Many scholars believe the word emanates from the root *yaks*, which means to move quickly towards, or glisten or flash upon.\(^{119}\) Assuming this were indeed the true root word, the word *yaks-a* would connote the fleeting appearance of light that flares upon one’s vision. This derivative would therefore suggest that the *yaksa* is an ephemeral, phantom-like being. One scholar named Professor Keith, however, believes that the word originates from the word *yaj*, which means to revere or worship with offerings.\(^{120}\)

In either case, the denotation of a *yaksa* would be consistent with the description of the *yaksa* in ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts. These texts sometimes suggest that the *yaksa* is somewhat equivalent to a *deva* or *devata*, the Sanskrit words for deity. In some instances they are characterized in a lofty, celestial sense and in others, they embody the lowest class of being such as that of a goblin or a fearsome ghost. Whether lowly or superior, the *yaksa* was and is honored as a deity, and the content of its name insinuates a rapid incandescence of an apparition that must be venerated.\(^{121}\)

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\(^{119}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{120}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{121}\) Ibid., 9.
Rishika Assomull

Senior Thesis

**Rig Veda and Atharva Veda**

The *Rig Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*, two of four canonical sacred texts of Hinduism which date to the 2nd millennium BCE, include several writings on this invisible spirit. They mention that it dwells and manifests itself in the Tree of Life.\(^{122}\) The *Atharva Veda*, interposes a yaksa in quite a mystical and descriptive manner its text x.7 explicating the concept of the stauros, or skambha, which means the pillars-apart heaven and earth as the axis of the universe and the trunk of the Tree of Life.\(^{123}\) In x.38, one finds:

A great yaksa in the midst of the universe proceeding in a glowing on the back of the ocean; therein [that is, in the pillar, with which the hymn is primarily concerned] inhere the universal deities, like the branches of trees about a trunk.\(^{124}\) Apropos of this, the analogy of a yaksa and tree branches is established. The yaksa was believed to have resided in trees, and it is from this idea that the cult of trees was initiated. In essence, to honor the tree is to honor the yaksa dwelling in the tree.\(^{125}\) These spirits became immutably present in the landscape of the people’s lives.

**Yaksis in Buddhism**

The tree is, likewise, a very conspicuous icon in the narrative of the historical Buddha, who was born under a *Sal* tree and who found enlightenment under the *pipal*, or Bodhi tree. Therefore, it is understandable that the pre-existing concept of tree worship was absorbed into the Buddhist pantheon. In fact, the Bodhi tree literally became a reference to the Buddha himself as clearly indicated in a *Jataka* tale, which refers to a body of stories regarding the Buddha’s previous incarnations. It is in the *Kalinga-bodhi*

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 11.
\(^{123}\) Ibid., 10.
\(^{124}\) Ibid., 10.
\(^{125}\) Ibid., 11.
Jataka (no. 479) where the Buddha explains that due to its real association with fruition, it is only the Tree that may be substituted for his own essence as an object of worship.\textsuperscript{126}

As an integral part of the pre-existing cosmology in India, yaksas and yaksinis were embodied in the Buddhist faith. The Buddha and generations of his adherents never challenged their beliefs or interrupted their cultic activity. These nature spirits became supernatural allies of the Buddha and protectors of his followers.\textsuperscript{127} It has also been claimed that yaksis and yaksas are mentioned in the life stories of the historical Buddha, as the trees under which he attained enlightenment and entered the state of parinirvana were yaksha reliquaries.\textsuperscript{128}

**Visual representations**

Yaksi sculptures are one of the first figural representations in Indian sculpture. Prior to their emergence, during the Maurya age in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BCE, pillars were solely embellished with organic, geometric, or animal motifs and reliefs. There was no concept of figural representation in South Asia. Even in Buddhist sites, legends of the Buddha’s life were illustrated in early railings of stupas, or funerary mounds, but exclusively with aniconic symbols.\textsuperscript{129} Human cult images until the last centuries before the Common Era were non-existent in classical Indian religions.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{127} Miranda Shaw, *Buddhist Goddesses of India*, (New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 2006), 64.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 65.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 91.
Sanchi yakṣī

The first examples of Indian yakṣīs appear in the gateway railings of Bharut and Sanchi, where they surround and bless the sanctuaries dedicated to the Buddha.¹³¹ These yakṣīs were among the first images to greet devotees as they entered the sacred precinct and circumambulated the stupa.¹³² Sanchi is a small village in Raisen District of the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, renowned for its stupas, which are said to contain the relics of the Buddha himself. At Sanchi, four large toranas, or gateways, face the four cardinal directions around the stupa like a crossroads, serving as entrances to a ritual of circumambulation.¹³³ The sandstone beams across the gateways were held up by yakṣīs, buttress like, forming a bracket between two horizontal elements and one of the torana posts shown in figure 24. There were two larger and at least two smaller female figures per gateway. Judging from the consistent location of the yakṣīs, placed along the outskirts of monasteries, one can surmise that they served to protect the stupa as tutelary deities. This is consonant with Hindu and Jain sites throughout India as well.

Figure 25, the yakṣī from the eastern gateway of Stupa 1 at Sanchi, originated from an ancient, pre-Buddhist, Indian tale, where beautiful young maidens were said to usher in spring by kicking a tree trunk while breaking off a branch, so as to arouse the tree into blossoming.¹³⁴ These early yakṣīs are known as Shalabhanjika yakṣī, literally translating to the yakṣī who is breaking a branch of the Shala or Sal tree, identified as the Shorea Robusta.¹³⁵ Of the trees typically represented with the yakṣī, the most common are the Asoka, Mango and Shala trees. This specific Sanchi yakṣī is entwined with a

¹³⁴ Ibid.
¹³⁵ Ibid.
mango tree. The *yaksi’s* ample hips, slight waist, robust shoulders, and spherical breasts portray her as a beautiful and voluptuous vision. She is in the *tribhanga* pose, a standing body position used in traditional Indian sculpture inspired by classical dance forms such as the Odissi. The posture is engendered by three flections in the body: at the neck, waist and knee, gracefully fashioning it in a converse curve at the neck and waist form an elegant ‘S’ shape. This *yaksi* from Sanchi is scantily clad, commensurate with the style of the early *Satavahana* dynasty responsible for her conceptualization. A single pearl necklace falls between her bare breasts, drawing the eye to her chest\(^{136}\). Except for a belt looping her hips, her lower body is nude, too. She wears 17 heavy anklets on each leg and 13 bracelets on each arm, and her hair falls behind her, tied into elaborate plaits.\(^{137}\) Her bejeweled belt is called a *mekhala*, which appears already on pre-Maurya terra-cotta figures of fertility goddesses.\(^{138}\) The *Atharva Veda* mentions that it is a charm symbolizing long-life, or *ayusya*.\(^{139}\)

In accordance with Indian fashion, figure 25 is dressed with a chignon, a knot or coil of hair, upon the top of her head, which camouflages with the clusters of mango leaves above it. Her left arm shares the width of the tree branches and peaks through a fork of branches. This creates a visual simile and aesthetic interplay between her and the tree, altogether showing the unity of their spirit as she hangs off the gate, pensile, her right arm is intertwined with a tree branch.\(^{140}\) Her left leg is assuredly bent behind her right leg in an effort to strike the trunk and stimulate the tree’s growth whilst her right leg

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136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
139 Ibid., 83.
perches on the end of gateway balustrade, like that of a bird in a symbiotic accord with nature. According to Gustav Roth, a scholar in the Buddhist art of India, “there is really no other pose than this one which could more clearly express the unity of a tree with its deity.”

There is an erotic sense to the image, as the word ‘Lata’, means a woman who gracefully curves, embracing her lover, and also means ‘creeper’, ‘vine’, or ‘entwining tree’.

**Sexuality in a Buddhist context**

The sparse manner in which the Sanchi *yaksi* is dressed, her voluptuous and nubile body, and her provocative stance, all symbols of fecundity are clearly sexual in intent. Prima facie, it may seem incongruous that the disciples and believers who entered these Buddhist shrines were immediately greeted by such sexually charged female sculptures. More importantly, such erotic representation appears contradictory to the Buddhist philosophy of detachment. It is essential to note, however, that though the Sanchi *yaksi*, our earliest example of a *yaksi* sculpture, is located on Buddhist monastic premises, her identity is not exclusively or primarily of Buddhist character. Instead, she is drawn from an Indian cultic practice stemming from open-air religious traditions that predate Buddhism. By the time that a necessity had arisen for the erection of these monasteries, Buddhism had passed beyond the circle of monasticism and become a popular religion with a cult. The *yaksis* were present because the people were present. These *stupas* are not merely tributes to the Buddha. They are an amalgamation of

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141 Ibid., 67.
143 Ibid., 85.
religious sentiments of those who commissioned and worshipped in these monuments.\textsuperscript{144} The \textit{yakṣis} took on a significance profoundly related to fortification and talismanic symbolism. Their existence provided a feminine and irenic aura to the shrines that the reverent Indians could appreciate.

\textbf{Gandharan \textit{yakṣis}}

Images of \textit{Shalabhanjika yakṣis} flourished in Gandhara during the Kushan dynasty. The \textit{yakṣis} in the Gandharan region possess similar characteristics to those from Sanchi, but being exposed to successive waves of Roman, Greek and Persian invaders over centuries, foreign stylistic influences are paramount. In Gandhara they remain dryads, but may be dressed in foreign garb and tend to stand beneath unidentifiable trees in an awkward cross ankle pose that is less flexible and more exaggerated than the Sanchi \textit{yakṣi}.\textsuperscript{145} Gandharan \textit{yakṣis} often stand on top of a \textit{purna kalasa}, or auspicious pot, an ancient symbol of creation in Indian traditions that represent beauty and good fortune.\textsuperscript{146} They also stand beneath foliage rather than a tree branch, suggesting that the artists took these elements from \textit{Shalabhanjika} figures as decorative elements rather than consistent references to the story.

Unlike the Sanchi yakṣi who is sculpted in the round and placed outside \textit{stupa} gateways, Gandharan \textit{yakṣis} serve less as protectors of the Buddhist faith and are more inconspicuous in the overall iconography. In Gandhara, they more prominently exist as compositional devices between narrative relief panels. Reliefs in Gandhara were sometimes segregated by pseudo-Corinthian column, which we will encounter in Chapter

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 71.
V (see figure 42), but other times they were reliefs demarcated by *yakṣi* figures standing in indentations (see figure 43). In India, the male *yakṣas* sometimes took on the similar role of replacing a column. Figure 26 shows four *yakṣas* propping up each *torana* column, assuming a supportive role. However, the idea of a female beauty replacing a column is a very Greek architectural concept, recalling the caryatids supporting the porch of the Erechtheion in Athens. These caryatids in the south porch of the Erechtheion on the Athenian Acropolis were the most influential caryatids in architectural history. A caryatid is a sculpted female figure that serves as an architectural support. As one can see from figure 27, the female figures have entablatures on their heads, stand on a high parapet and support the roof of the porch as if they were columns. They first appeared in ancient Greek architecture around the mid-6th century BCE, and were also used in Roman architecture.\(^{147}\) The Greek word ‘caryatids’ translates to the “maidens of Karyai”, which was an ancient town of Peloponnese. This town had a famous temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis, who was considered a caryatid:

As Karyatis she rejoiced in the dances of the nut-tree village Karyai, those Karyatides, who in their ecstatic round-dance carried on their heads baskets of live reeds, as if they were dancing plants.\(^{148}\) The reference to the village with trees and the basket of live reads displays the caryatid’s characteristic of abundance, a trait also shared by *yakṣis* who possess the power to bear fruit. The Gandharan *yakṣi*, though probably influenced by Greek caryatids, do not stand in the round replacing columns, they are primarily reliefs, replacing pilasters.

It is evident that figures 28 and 29, the *yakṣi* from Swat, Gandhara, differ relative to the Sanchi *yakṣi*. Rather than gracing a gate, they are decorative elements serving a

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relief panel. They are carved as reliefs on panels rather than in the round, so they must be influenced by the caryatids and probably served as scene-separators. The *purna kalasa* pedestals on which they stand recall patterns from the Ancient Persian city of Persepolis, also once ruled by Alexander the Great\textsuperscript{149}. Though there is some resemblance to their Indian *yaksi* prototypes, they have been modified: highly westernized, they lack the elemental eroticism, nudity, and unconstrained demeanor of the Indian *yaksi*. They are both poised in more rigid positions with stiff necks, stare straight forward in a more prescribed and formal fashion. Other than her bent right knee, figure 28 stands in a stately manner, with no attempt of accentuating her figure. Figure 29 stands completely straight, a stark contrast from the Sanchi *yaksi* who hangs off the balustrade in a sensual *tribhanga* pose.

Unlike their scantily clad *yaksi* predecessors, figure 28 is enveloped in more conservative Iranian attire while figure 29 wears Greek garb. Armed with a spear and shield, figure 28 is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic, and from the waist to the knees the himation is arranged as a skirt\textsuperscript{150}. She is adorned with a lyre-shaped necklace and an anklet on each foot. This *yaksi* has turned into a *yavani*, a Greek or Muhammadan maiden who serves as a guard. In contrast, figure 29 holds a musical instrument\textsuperscript{151}. Her Greek attire drapes down to her toes and the body under her clothes is completely obscured, only discernable through the ridges of her folds, that hang horizontally and drape downwards in the middle, revealing the contrast between her small waist and large hips.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 151.
The manner in the folds of their clothes are depicted is highly classicizing, conforming to the classical drapery style that reveals the body by concealing it.

Sir John Hubert Marshall, the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1902 to 1928 believes that the yakis from Swat stem from the ‘Adolescent Period of Gandharan art’. He affirms that, since figure 28 and 29 originate from the northern part of Gandhara, it has shed its characteristic Indian voluptuousness for a narrow-waisted, flat chested form akin to Greek and Iranian prototypes. This formative period, covered by the first four or five decades of Kushan rule, is according to Marshall the most fascinating in the history of Gandhara. At this time, artists attempt to overcome their initial difficulties, to reconcile Greek and local ideas, and to create from them a new synthesis of religious art suited to the needs of the Buddhist religion.

The succeeding phase Marshall maintains is the ‘Early Maturity Period’, when figure 30, a yaksi from the Upper Monastery at Nathu, was sculpted. Stylistically, this yaksi is very similar to figure 31, and is therefore assumed to be from the same location and time period. Since they are both broken pieces with no context, it is difficult to determine their function. Since they are in much higher relief compared to those in figures 28 and 29, so they may not serve as decorative elements separating relief panels. The surviving foliage atop both these statues are allusive of Shalabhanjika yakis, and figure 30’s posture is far more related to the Shalabhanjika than that of figure 28 and 29. Aware of her sexual appeal, figure 30 holds her right hip, drawing the viewer’s eye towards her projected hip. Her left knee that bends over her right leg suggests her

153 Ibid., 47.
154 Ibid., 47.
155 Ibid., 71.
similarity to the *Shalabhanjika* posture. This shows that the Gandharan artists absorbed the original *Shalabhanjika* tradition in varying degrees depending on their different locations and time periods.

Though her body is neither as nude as the Sanchi *yaksi* nor as concealed as those examples from Swat, Figure 30’s clothing reveals the shape of her body very much. She is garbed in a scarf and a *dhoti* wrap draped in graceful folds and a long sleeved jacket. Her light scarf winds in flowering curves around her right arm and shoulders. Marshall predicates that it was only in the Sanghao-Nathu area that they acquired the fashionable appearance in this figure. Both figures 30 and 31 are crowned with wreaths in a pointed-leaf pattern deriving from Graeco-Parthian origin. Figure 30 possesses a cranial bump above her head, called an *usnisa*, an element that became generalized in Gandharan depictions of the Buddha after the Kusana rule of Kaniska I who is believed to have initiated the figural depictions of the Buddha. In Gandharan Buddhist art, the *usnisa* is thought of as a bony protuberance that indicated wisdom, though its origins may lie in a bun or hair arrangement suitable for wearing a turban or the ascetic’s top-knot. Their hair is parted in the middle of their foreheads, causing two locks of hair to naturally fall over the top of their foreheads, each ending in a curl. Extruding from these locks is a circular ornament on each of their foreheads partly covered in figure 31, and entirely visible in figure 30. This adornment is known as the *urna*, a hairy spiral between the

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156 Ibid., 71.
157 Ibid., 71.
160 Ibid., 91.
eyebrows usually portrayed as a raised circle.\textsuperscript{162} Both the \textit{urna} and \textit{usnisa} are among the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of a Buddha or Universal Monarch.\textsuperscript{163}

A remarkable attribute of figures 30 and 31 is the presence of distinctly long and semi-concealed eyes that are disparate to the bulging eyes that distinguish \textit{yaksis}. The eyes of figure 30 are inclined while those of figure 31 are horizontal. Marshall deems that the artisan’s motive behind the slanting eyes of figure 30 was to project the \textit{yaksi} as a deity rather than a human and posits that forthwith, the Buddha depictions too were furnished with tilted eyes in order to enhance a sense of other-worldliness. They connote something transcendental, unearthly, and superhuman. Both \textit{yaksis} possess arched and exaggerated eyebrows, their eyelids seductively concealing a portion of their eyes. What is particularly uncharacteristic is the fact that the artist carved out the periphery of figure 31’s pupils and irises.\textsuperscript{164} Notwithstanding Figure 31’s face is planate and expansive relative to that of figure 30, they share similarly broad noses corresponding smiling countenances and slightly parted lips. Another unique aspect of Gandharan creativity is in the depiction of body proportions. While figure 30 is hewn with a sizable head, a relatively shapely torso and very small, spherical breasts, the Sanchi \textit{yaksi}, is more statuesque and buxom.

Like figures 28 and 29, figure 32 stands on a pot and her body averted to her left. Much like the \textit{yaksi} from Sanchi, figure 32 is plump and curvaceous, and her stance is in \textit{tribangha}. There is no need for her to perch her foot on one side because the tree is absent now, and only the leaves and branches remain overhead, a solitary and

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 91.
symbolic reference to the myth of *Shalabhanjika*. Above her is a Persepolitan capital with humped bulls, a central lion, and a die supporting a volute double bracket capital, showing influence from the originally Iranian Kushans.\(^{165}\) She is poised in quiescence in a semi-circular recess framed in a bead and reel course. The bead and reel molding consists of a thin line where bead-like shapes alternate with more cylindrical ones. It is a design element used to embellish Greek Ionic capitals and entablatures, most often adorning Ionic astragals and Greek and Hellenistic sculpture. They even appeared on the border of Hellenistic coins, which was possibly the portable means through with this to Gandhara. In fact, the motif entered South Asia during the Mauryan Empire, as they appear at the base of the capitals in some of the Pillars of Ashoka.

Figure 32 wears a short-sleeved tunic, a sign of permeating Roman influence. Over it she wears a *paridhana* with a knotted girdle from which there loops a long scarf, which passes over both upper arms at the top of the headdress.\(^{166}\) She is bedecked in a collar with jewel in the center, in place of a pearl string. Her hair is curly rather than braided, and is framed with raised circular loop that may be a floral crown.\(^{167}\) Above this rises a role of hair in the center of her head. She coyly holds a flower pendant against her thigh. Her voluptuous body, overtly spherical breasts and sensual body language is not as Classicizing as our previous Gandharan *yaksi* examples, and it instead retains its Indian ideal of sexuality.

Though Gandharan *yakis* have shed the overt sexual tendencies of their Indian prototypes, they still remain symbols of beauty, nature, and fertility and possess attributes that refer to the original *Shalabhanjika yaksi* tradition. Charging the *Shalabhanjika yaksi*...
with a more decorative role, Gandharans decided to focus their worship on a specific, more dichotomous *yaksi* named Hariti, as explained in the succeeding chapter. Chapter 5 will demonstrate how, in Gandhara, the *Shalabhanjika* figural canon survived more accurately in the form of the Buddha’s mother, Queen Maya, who was designated the pose.
CHAPTER IV

Hariti

Although there are many Shalabhanjika yaksi in Gandhara, the most common types of yaksi sculptures found in the region are those of the ogress Hariti. The earliest surviving sculptures of Hariti date from the Kushana period and are found in the region of Gandhara itself. Hariti was initially a folk deity originating from Swat, and her story is accounted for in ancient Indian scrolls such as the Samyukavastu. Prior to Buddhism, Hariti existed in the Hindu pantheon as the folk goddess Mari, Mata, Badi, or Mai.\(^{168}\) It was during the life of Shakyamuni Buddha that her identity was assimilated into the Buddhist ideology. Many ancient, Buddhist texts describe the tale of Hariti as one of transformation, as she converts from a voracious devourer of helpless infants to a staunch protector of children.

As mentioned in the Goddess with Cornucopia section of Chapter 2, Hariti’s precursors were the goddesses of fertility and abundance deriving from Greece, Rome, Iran, India, and the Near East.\(^ {169}\) Unlike cult images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, devotional images of Hariti are not restricted by one particular canonical representation.\(^ {170}\) The diverse ways that artists chose to depict the goddess reflects the syncretism of her identity. Being the derivative of many prototypes, Hariti’s multicultural iconographical elements serve as evidence of her composite nature. In this chapter, I will outline the function of Hariti in accordance with myth and the manner in


\(^ {170}\) Ibid., 48.
which she was worshipped in Gandhara. Subsequently, I will juxtapose her story with the
iconography within her depictions. There are four ways in which Gandharan artists have
portrayed Hariti, so I have divided her visual representations into the following types:
Hariti as a mother goddess; Hariti as a demon-goddess; Hariti coupled with her consort
Panchika; Hariti with a cornucopia.

Samyukavastu account:

According to Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), a pioneering historian and
philosopher of Indian art, the most detailed narrative of Hariti’s story exists in
Samyukavastu, Chapter 31, in the Bhiksuni Vibhanga of the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya.\textsuperscript{171}
This material is dated to the fourth or fifth century, although portions of the work are
apparent earlier. In this text, Hariti is known as the yaksi Abhirati, which translates to
“Joyful Girl”. Her father was Sata, the patron yaksa of Rajagrha, the ancient land in
today’s Nalanda district of the Indian state of Bihar. Once Sata died, Abhirati’s duty was
to follow in her father’s footsteps. However, she refused to commit to her filial
expectations having already sworn an oath in her prior life, to devour the children of
Rajagrha. Though her brother Satagiri was aware of her malicious intentions, he failed to
dissuade her. In order to distract her from her perverse vow, he arranged for her marriage
to Panchika, the son of the patron yaksa of Gandhara. Abhirati lived with her husband
and gave birth to five hundred children. Ultimately, the irrevocable force of her pledge
manifested itself and could no longer be denied. She descended on Rajagrha with her
brood, kidnapping and consuming the infants and children of the town.

The citizens of Rajagrha, in a desperate means to appease the unknown yaksa
responsible for the carnage, offered food, flowers, music and banners in their prayers.

When a yaksa identified Abhirati as the hellion ravaging their young, the populace determined that the so-called “Joyful Girl”, better deserved the name Hariti, which denoted “Thief”. In a bid to exact retribution, the townspeople turned to Shakyamuni Buddha, who secreted Abhirati’s youngest child under his begging bowl, rendering him undetectable. Hariti, inconsolable, searched far and wide for her child in vain and and appealed to the Buddha, claiming that she would end her life if he refused to return her beloved offspring. The Buddha stated: “You have lost only one out of five hundred, but still you are so much grieved, imagine the immense sufferings you are causing to others by devouring their children, in some cases even the only child.”\(^\text{172}\)

Hariti, empathetic and finally penitent impressed Shakyamuni with her willingness to change, and he returned her child and took her under his auspices as her guru. She received the five precepts of Buddhism and became an Upasika, or a female lay worshipper. Abiding by one of his five precepts: to abstain from taking life. Hariti expressed her misgivings that her children would starve without the flesh diet to which they were so accustomed. The Buddha then promised that his disciples would leave a plate of food each time they sat for a meal, as an offering to Hariti and her children. In exchange, Hariti and her offspring would eternally protect his devotees and grant a sense of wellbeing and tranquility to his monasteries.\(^\text{173}\)

Intrigued by the tale, the townspeople asked the Buddha the reason for Hariti’s initial vow to prey on infants. He elucidated that in her former life, she had assumed the identity of a herdswoman in Rajagrha. During her daily routine of selling buttermilk in the market, she serendipitously encountered a festival in progress. Though pregnant, she


zestfully participated in the singing and dancing to the point of breathless exhaustion culminating in a miscarriage. Full of fury and frustration at the loss of her unborn child, she became deranged. Upon encountering the Pratyeka, or the solitary Buddha, she proffered five hundred mangoes that she had previously bought in exchange for her buttermilk. The Pratyeka Buddha, touched by her generous offerings provided her with magical powers and Hariti, who vowed to wreak revenge for the loss of her child now had the power to do so. Thus, in order to fulfill her vow, she was reborn as Abhirati, a yakṣi with the power to consume human flesh.¹⁷⁴ It is important to recognize that people at the time believed that yakṣis could endow fertility to women and induce their pregnancy, but also appropriate children. Infantile illness or miscarriages were consequences of incurring the curses of another yakṣi. To seek vengeance, Hariti wanted to provoke the sufferings of other women who may have been responsible for cursing her.

Shakyamuni’s response to Hariti’s heinous deeds was one of concern rather than anger: demonstrating the Buddhist virtue of compassion even at the most violent behavior. He understood that her actions were derived from a deep wound from a previous life that had caused her to become psychologically disturbed and merciless. He allowed her redemption and exoneration by a renewal of the self. He saw potential for enlightenment in every soul, no matter how deformed the character was. He induced and found in Hariti, the faint remnant of goodness in her love for children and utilized this aspect of her to elicit her moral transformation.¹⁷⁵ Hariti repentantly pledged to devote herself to the well-being of others as a benefactor.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 113.
¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 115.
It-Sing account:

The Chinese pilgrim Yijing, also known as I-Tsing (671-695 CE), recounted the legend of Hariti and reported that laypersons did in fact provide food offerings at her altars, in keeping with the story. He reflects: “[Hariti] has the power of giving wealth. If those who are childless on account of their bodily weakness, make offerings of food, their wish is always fulfilled… Everyday an abundant offering of food is made before this image”.

Hariti as the personification of small pox:

There is another account of Hariti, which interprets her as a personification of small pox. This account is solidified by the observation the French scholar and archaeologist who coined the term Graeco-Buddhist art, Alfred Foucher (1865-1952), who stated:

In India, smallpox is so dreaded that children aren’t counted as ‘living’ until they survive it. In fact, it is common in India to attribute a female divinity as the origin and cure of febrile disease, naming them “fever goddess”, “small pox goddess.” The epidemic was so widespread that specific beliefs about the smallpox goddesses varied from location to location across the Indian subcontinent. However the goddesses were consistently provided with the dichotomous powers of inflicting the disease and preventing or curing it. They are all satisfied through food offerings or even ritual sacrifice. The worship of deities responsible for outbreaks of epidemic disease appears to be an ancient popular cult of indigenous origins that has been documented as a folk

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176 Ibid., 120.
177 Ibid., 120.
practice in Indian villages till today. Malignant female ghosts and disease demons were rampant in the Hindu pantheon. The imagery of cannibal goddesses re-emerged in Buddhist legends, proving the cultural expressions of the shared ideology. In the Hindu tradition, the most popular *Shitala Mata*, the wife of Shiva the Destroyer, the goddess of sores, ghouls, pustules and disease. Her name *Shitala* literally means smallpox in Sanskrit, but she is colloquially referred to as *ma* or *amma*, which means ‘mother’. Her name implies both a maternal condition and a purveyor of plague, associations that are also prescribed to Hariti. Hariti, *Shitala Mata* and many other disease goddesses share the characteristic of ambivalence, operating as a figure of malevolence and benevolence at once, simultaneously the source of disease and the agent of its cure. Historically, these epidemic goddesses are always identified as a maternal female. Hence, the construction of a nurturing yet vile mother is a nation-wide expression of the underlying trepidation of the feminine that was manifest in Brahmanical and Buddhist orthodoxy.

The *Avadana Kalpalata* directly affirms that when Hariti descended on Rajagrha, “an epidemic in the city caused the women to lose their children in the womb.” Therefore, in versions of the legend, Hariti may have abducted children by imbuing diseases due to the beliefs of period when her story was in formation. Naturally, it was the *yaksi* Hariti who developed into the embodiment of smallpox, the most dreaded of all infantile diseases at the time. What adds gravity to this hypothesis is the rationale behind the concentration of Hariti images in the Gandharan region. Relative to other areas

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181 Ibid., 120.
182 Ibid., 120.
183 Ibid., 120.
184 Ibid., 120.
185 Ibid., 120.
abiding by the Buddhist religion during a contemporary time period, Gandhara possesses a plethora of Hariti sculptures. According to A. Bivar, a notable scholar and archaeologist of Gandhara, in the “Chronology of the Kusanas”, this was a response to a specific smallpox epidemic that raged through the Silk Road in the second century.\footnote{A.D.H. Bivar, "Hariti and the chronology of the Kusanas," \textit{Part I}, Vol. XXXIII, (London: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1970).} It originated from the Roman Empire and travelled through the trade routes, eventually reaching Gandhara.\footnote{Miranda Shaw, \textit{Buddhist Goddesses of India}, (New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 2006), 124.} It was at this time, during the artistic pinnacle of Kushan rule, that people felt the need to submit to Hariti in order to prevent the danger of contagion. Therefore, the people leaned toward this \textit{yaksi} in particular, forming a Hariti cult. The claim provides the socio-historical conditions that may have stimulated the spread of her cult.\footnote{Ibid., 124.}

\textbf{Hariti in Buddhism:}

The Buddhist sanctum incorporated supernatural beings of local character wherever the Buddhist practice spread.\footnote{Ibid., 116.} While \textit{yakṣis} typically graced \textit{stupa} railings and doorways outside the monastic premises, Hariti sculptures were placed within them. Her worship was that of the first independent goddess cult within Buddhism.\footnote{Ibid., 110.} Of a loftier rank relative to other \textit{yakṣis}, Hariti was revered as a \textit{yakṣevāri}, or queen of the \textit{yakṣis}. The dangers posed by Hariti proliferated fears that were already prevalent in the region.

Her characterization as a child-eater was by no means unique to the region: certain \textit{yakṣas} and \textit{yakṣinīs} were, and are still, believed to possess the power of sucking the vitality out of humans by consuming their flesh. The fear they induced among people...
in their desire to steal and ingest babies originates from traumas of childlessness, miscarriage, death in childbirth, and death of an infant. Women of the time would choose to be reborn as *yakṣis* to seek vindication against the ones responsible for harming their children. This pattern, prevalent in the culture, would become a vicious cycle perpetuated over lifetimes, with each vengeful mother causing havoc in her next life.\(^{192}\) It was the Buddhists who transformed her from this curse into a beneficent deity.\(^{193}\)

In the Gandharan Buddhist tradition, Hariti’s persona adds a feminine touch to a religion so rampant with male images of the Buddha. Since Shakyamuni Buddha had transcended the earthly plane and entered the realm of *parinirvana*, devotees turned to Hariti: an earthly, and therefore more approachable, deity.\(^{194}\) She attended to the needs of the common people, providing them with an image to which to pray for the welfare of their children. As recompense, they apportioned a part of their repast in the belief that Hariti’s children would consume the food.

**Visual Representations:**

Though considered a *yakṣi*, Hariti hardly conforms to the typical *yakṣi* figural type, ubiquitously depicted as sensual and fairy-like tree-dweller as we have seen in the *Shalabhanjika yakṣis* from the previous chapter. Instead, Hariti is portrayed as a maternal and stately woman, exuding a majestic air. Hariti’s cult figures depict her in both standing and seated positions with strict frontality. There is considerable variation in style of costume and personal adornments but lack of emphasis on symbolic gestures.\(^{195}\)

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\(^{192}\) Ibid., 117.
Gandharan artists have captured her multi-faceted personality and depicted her in varying stages of her narrations: surrounded by her offspring, with babies and her husband Panchika, and grasping a cornucopia with her husband Panchika, and as a dreaded demon. This attribute of the cornucopia is a marker of the prevailing Hellenistic influence even when processed by intermediate Iranian civilizations.\(^{196}\) Due to the presence of a cornucopia, Hariti has been deemed an amalgamation of numerous goddesses from Mediterranean and Iranian cultures: Demeter, Roma, Fortuna, Tyche, Anahita and Ardokhsho.\(^{197}\) As discussed in Chapter II, it is probable that these other cornucopia goddesses, whose analogous characteristics enabled their ultimate synthesis with Hariti, introduced the concept of the cornucopia into Gandhara. Since Hariti may embody elements from Tyche, Ardoxsho, Demeter or Athena, her counterpart Panchika might in fact possess elements from other gods that were worshipped along the Silk Road, such as Kubera, Vaishravana, Pharro, or Heracles.\(^{198}\) In spite of disparities of outward appearance and variations in attribute, all symbolic content emphasizes her function as a protective deity of fertility and affluence.\(^{199}\)

The presence of one or more children represented with the image of their deified mother provides the only unambiguous identification of Hariti.\(^{200}\) The statue of Hariti located in the Lahore Museum, Pakistan, figure 33, originates from Sikri, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and dates from the Kusana period, 2\(^{nd}\)-3\(^{rd}\) century CE. She is

\(^{196}\) Ibid., 53.  
\(^{197}\) Ibid., 53.  
\(^{200}\) Ibid., 53.
illustrative of the converging influences of Hellenism and Parthian Iran.\textsuperscript{201} She is sculpted in a standing posture skirted by three children: one cradled on her right with a hand lying on her exposed breast, and the other two perched on each shoulder. In order to signal their superhuman status, the children are somewhat plump and substantially ornamented with armbands, necklaces and bracelets. The child on the left shoulder caresses her head, possibly playing with her hair or a pearl from her headgear. Bending one leg, the child balances on his mother’s shoulders as though climbing stairs. The children’s playful attitude and close, comfortable interaction with their mother’s body portrays the security they derive from her presence.

The manner in which the children clutch on to their mother’s body is similar to that of the Roman Tellus in figure 34, a relief from the Ara Pacis Augustae. This marble relief was created in Rome during the Early Empire, the Augustan period, in the years 13-9 BCE. Tellus was considered a goddess of the earth in ancient Roman religion and myth. Just like Hariti, Tellus’s attributes were the cornucopia, bunches of fruit and flowers and babies. The name Tellus is the Latin word for land, territory and earth, conjuring up notions of fertility.

In addition to the identical iconography, it is evident that figure 33 has adopted the western wet drapery style so evident in the relief of Tellus. Hariti is dressed in an Indian \textit{sari}: a dress made from a single piece of cloth draped over one shoulder, the style of drapery folds are fashioned in a similar manner to that of Tellus.\textsuperscript{202} The folds are fashioned by a repetition of emphasized ridges that fall from her left shoulder down to her right ankle. The wet drapery effect is transparent and figure hugging, revealing the

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 57.
shape of her breasts, girdles hips and her overall solid body. The creases bare the shape of
her thick thighs, curved waist, the dented area around her navel, the thick girdle around
her hips, and cut a thin swathe around her spherical left breast.

At the sides of her head, her hair is brushed back, but in the center, right above
her forehead, her hair clusters and forms snail-shell curls. Suspended from these curls
on a thin cord appears a small rosette, resting on the center of her forehead. The rosette, a
vegetative motif, suggests Hariti’s association with earthly fertility. The rosette design
proves and hints at the influence of the Mediterranean on this sculpture. Rosettes
appeared in Mesopotamia and Ancient Greece, one of the earliest one found in the famed
Phaistos Disc dating from the 2nd millennium BCE, recovered from the Phaistos
archaeological site in southern Crete. This design seemingly traveled to Gandhara and
derives from the natural botanical shape, which was common in funeral steles. The fact
that she wears this ancient vegetative motif further underscores her original identity as a
yaksi tree-dweller, a woman whose origins exist in a natural setting.

As queen of the yaksi clan and a lady of prosperity, Hariti of figure 33 is
festooned with jewelry. She wears a pearl diadem with medallions and a neck ornament
that sits flat on her collarbones, both of which are similar to those of royal figures and
funerary reliefs from Hatra and Palmyra. Drawing the eye to her voluptuous form,
another necklace falls in between her breasts and locks of hair hang over her shoulders. In
addition, she is embellished with earrings, bracelets, a girdle under her sari, and two
necklaces. Standing in a contrapposto pose, her right knee bent, she appears in the midst

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 146.
  \item \textsuperscript{204} Benjamin Schwartz, "The Phaistos Disc," \textit{Journal of Near Eastern Studies}, 18, no. 2 (1959): 105-112.
\end{itemize}
of movement. She clutches her hip with her left hand, sturdily yet gracefully balancing
the three children in symbiotic ease, as if she were a tree. The aura with which she
radiates is undoubtedly one of benevolence, fecundity, and abundance. Illustrative of
influences of Hellenism, Parthian Iran and India, figure 33 highlights the eclectic
erraticism of her representations and the convergence of assorted cultural influences that
gave rise to Gandhara’s characteristically hybrid art.\(^{206}\)

As evident in figure 36 and 37, Hariti sculptures are often combined in a single
relief with those of her husband Panchika. In the story of Hariti recounted from the
Samyukavastu, Panchika appears briefly as her husband with whom she lived and bore
500 children prior to returning to Rajagrha to plague the inhabitants. Though the pair
never reunites in the legend, Hariti is frequently depicted along with her spouse as they
both play benefactor roles and form a fitting divine couple in a devotional context. While
Hariti is queen of the yaksi clan, Panchika stands for the aggregate of the yaksas that
follow and support the Buddha.\(^{207}\) When displayed together, they emanate with an
impression of grandeur and strength. Contrary to the early Indian representations of
nature deities, Hariti and Panchika were individualized.\(^{208}\) The couple evolved and were
formulated a separate identity that was independent of the actions or life events of the
Buddha.\(^{209}\)

These tutelary couples are the most interesting examples of religious syncretism
as the gods are shown with assorted iconographies. The male yaksa may either be in

\(^{206}\) Ibid., 57.
\(^{208}\) Jennifer Gilmanton Rowan, *Danger and Devotion: Hariti, Mother of Demons in the Stories and Stones
of Gandhara: A Historiography and Catalogue of Images*. (MA Thesis, Graduate School of the University
of Oregon, 2002), 80.
\(^{209}\) Ibid., 80.
Indian or non-Indic dress, and may have wings, hold a purse, spear, and a *kantharos*-like cup or wine goblet. The female may also vary in her garb, may be accompanied by children, and sometimes hold grapes, a pomegranate or a cornucopia. In both figures, the couple is seated on a shared plinth in a European posture, with their legs spread apart much like the cornucopia goddesses in figures 19 and 21 discussed in Chapter II. The term “European posture” to describe a pendent-legged pose made its first appearance in the end of the 19th century among European savants immersed in a colonial environment. The term was adopted by Alfred Foucher and given his pioneering writings on Buddhist art, it continued. Ananda Coomaraswamy found the term inappropriate, believing it reflected the Eurocentric biases of Western scholars in the criteria for classification.

Coomaraswamy substituted the word with a new Sanskrit compound of his own creation: *pralambapada asana*, later transformed to *pralambapadasan*, literally meaning “the sitting posture with the two legs pendant”. This was an indigenous response to Foucher’s apparently European biases. This mode of sitting was common in Gandhara in the time of the Kushanas and was allotted to bodhisattvas, divinities and kings, perhaps echoing Greek and Parthian traditions. This is called the *pralambapada* pose, wherein the knees are spread apart and the feet are pressed firmly down, a posture that imbues a sense of authority and royalty. They appear relaxed and composed, in a state of repose.

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211 Ibid., 44.
212 Ibid., 44.
213 Ibid., 44.
214 Ibid., 45.
However, in the Gandhara this particular pose is slightly different from the traditional European pose because their left legs are elevated on a slight pedestal. The Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, figure 38, a marble Early Christian sarcophagus used for the burial of Junius Bassus, who died in 359 CE, shows Christ with a very similar sitting position as those from figures 36 and 37. His right foot is elevated because he is sitting with his feet on a billowing cloak representing the sky, carried by the classical personification of the heavens, Caelus. Though the elevated foot upon a footstool existed in the Mediterranean and influenced Gandharan sculptures, it appears that Gandharan artists modified the pose, causing it to appear exaggerated.

In Gandharan sculptures of the tutelary couple, it is evident that there are two distinct methods of portraying the couple. The first noticeably represents Panchika and Hariti, while the second type absorbs attributes from other divine pairings into the identity of the couple, and may in fact be perceived as a different couple altogether. In order to best show the iconographic differences, I have chosen two sculptures from the Peshawar museum, both of which were excavated from Sahri Bahlol. The first yaksa pair, figure 36, is undoubtedly acknowledged as Panchika and Hariti, within the context of Brahmanic and Buddhist Indian traditions. However, the second representation, figure 37, shows the couple’s later manifestation in Gandhara when the Kushans paired Hariti and Panchika with their corresponding deity of wealth and abundance.\footnote{\textsuperscript{216} Jennifer Gilmanton Rowan, \textit{Danger and Devotion: Hariti, Mother of Demons in the Stories and Stones of Gandhara: A Historiography and Catalogue of Images.} (MA Thesis, Graduate School of the University of Oregon, 2002), 81.}

Figure 36 exemplifies of the most standard formula of the celestial couple Hariti-Panchika. Hariti’s headgear consists of a wreath of leaves with a flower at the center. She wears a robe that luxuriantly spills down to her ankles in sumptuously pooling ridges.
There are four children present in the sculpture, all demanding her attention. One suckling sits cradled in her left arm, playing with his mother’s necklace; another is perched on the edge of the chair, beside her left shoulder; a bald-headed child with an ornament above his forehead stands beneath his two parents, while lovingly holding his mother’s right knee; the fourth child stands next to Panchika’s right leg, playing with an ornament on his parent’s cushioned seat. All four children are nude and plump, bedecked with thick bands around their ankles, identical to those of their mother. A wizened, grinning yaksa pops up between their shoulders to extend an offering.

Both of Panchika’s arms in figure 36 are broken. It can be guessed that his right hand would have held a spear or trident, and his left hand would have held a coin purse, signifying his granting of wealth. Panchika appears very majestic. He is mustachioed and richly adorned with a bejeweled turban, two necklaces, and a pair of long, circular earrings, suggesting his regal status as king of the yaksa clan. An important quality of Panchika in this sculpture is his potbelly. Coomaraswamy asserts that from an Indian point of view, the large stomach is certainly not an accidental feature or defect. The portly belly signifies the yaksa’s powers of producing progeny and also his capacity to consume: symptomatic of his ability to create, but also to terminate. The former power appears as a feminine trait of fertility, likening his stomach to a womb. This conception harks back on the Rig Veda, which states that in the macrocosmic body of deity, the atmosphere, or space between heaven and earth, is the belly, or what amounts to the same thing, the navel: and that in the microcosmic house, the atmosphere, or interior, is called

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217 Ibid., 85.
a womb or store house; it is between heaven and earth that all good things come into and have their temporal being.\textsuperscript{220} In this sense, the big belly of the \textit{yaksa} is productive. In addition it also represents the power of drinking great draughts.\textsuperscript{221} The large belly does not exist in figure 34, suggesting that the artists have deviated from the rules of the \textit{Rig Veda}.

On the base of figure 36 is a long relief that serves as a pedestal for the couple. It is edged with two Corinthian pilasters and sixteen figures playing, wrestling, interacting with one another, and one in the center even riding an animal. Ingolt believes that fourteen of them are \textit{amorini-yaksa}s and two are potbellied \textit{sileni}, providing a fitting postscript to an image representing gods of abundance and fertility.\textsuperscript{222} This \textit{amorini-yaksa} relief is a reformed version of friezes on the bases of Roman sarcophagi. Figure 39 illustrates the base relief of a Roman sarcophagus in Ostia, Rome, decorated with a row of children interacting and playing with one another. They are \textit{putti}, chubby male children symbolizing prosperity and leisure, or \textit{amorini}, which are children representing cupid and therefore associated with love. In Gandhara, artists have fused these Classicizing children with \textit{yaksa}s, as the two characters are gran ters of prosperity and agricultural bounty. In figure 36, the body language of these \textit{amorini-yaksa}s remain spirited and mischievous, one in the center even riding on an animal, and a few others lightheartedly wrestling with one another. The small size of these characters emphasize the physically large size of the tutelary couple above them.

Prima facie, for compositional reasons, the statue of the second tutelary couple in figure 37 appears to be consistent with figure 36 as they are seated in a comparable

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 38.
\item \textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 38.
\item \textsuperscript{222} Islay Lyons, and Harald Ingholt, \textit{Gandharan Art in Pakistan}, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), 147.
\end{itemize}
manner on a similar plinth. A sense of imperial dignity emanates from their stately physical build and body language. However, they possess unique iconographical traits, engendering debate among scholars regarding the identity of the characters. Though this couple repeats the basic components of both Hariti and Panchika in an identical arrangement, the couple’s iconography, demeanor and dress are divergent, suggesting they are different deities altogether.\textsuperscript{223} The differences may be described as reflecting an Iranized or modified Hellenism that entered Gandhara from the northwest frontier of the Kushan Empire.\textsuperscript{224}

It is evident from an analytic perspective that the male differs from Panchika in his attire. While Panchika from figure 36 was barefoot, bare-chested, turbaned, mustachioed and garbed in an Indian dhoti, the man in figure 37 is dressed in an Iranian caftan with a pleated skirt and high boot cuffs reaching just below his knees. Unlike Panchika he wears no facial hair. Though far less ornamented, he does wear two large earrings. His right hand wields a scepter instead of a lance, while his left holds a drooping money purse. While Panchika from figure 36 sits in the European style with his left foot resting on a slight pedestal, figure 37 yaksa’s left foot is raised from the ground in a slant, but unsupported, peculiarly floating in the air.\textsuperscript{225} He also does not possess that idiosyncratically large belly of Panchika from figure 36.

The woman in figure 37 claps a large cornucopia instead of a child, and replaces the Indian sari with a high girt tunic, an outfit adopted in Western Asia and Iran. Unlike Hariti from figure 36, she wears some sort of shoes, which are obscured by her thick

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 86.
garment. Her face is in a state of disrepair and the sculpture lacks overall detail. Though their clothing is shirred as indicated by paired and parallel lines for ridges, the cloth is extremely thick and conservative, in contrast to the finer and more revealing fabric in figure 36. Figure 37 as well is marked by the omission of children. In addition to appearing with children as shown in fig 33, the Greek god Tellus is also associated with the cornucopia. Fig 40 illustrates the breastplate of Augustus of Prima Porta, a famous marble statue of the Augustus Caesar in his role as the commander-in-chief of the Roman army. In the lower part of his breastplate exists a relief Tellus cradling two babies and holding a large cornucopia. She exists here as an imperial symbol of the abundance that this leader brought his empire. Much like Hariti, Tellus is associated with both children and the cornucopia, suggesting that Hariti’s identity may have been fused with that of Tellus. While the cornucopia symbolizes abundance, children represent fertility. With the increasing wealth of the Kushana’s, the cornucopia served as a more apt feature

In this figure 40, less emphasis has been accorded to childbearing and fecundity and more on the materiality of fortune. Due to the fact that she holds a cornucopia, this female with a cornucopia may be compared to the very Hellenized, so-called Hariti with a Cornucopia from Sirkap, Taxila, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, shown in figure 19. It is unclear whether the artists added this attribute to the Hariti composition while retaining her identity, or so that they could depict another deity altogether, such as Tyche, Ardokhsho, Demeter, among others. Thus, it is perceivable that they may in fact be two distinct couples. Absent too, are the *silenis* and *amorinis* on the base relief which has instead an image of round coins spread in three, orderly rows that spill out from two vases on either side of the relief.
Panchika’s identity in Gandhara is a fusion of various gods, specifically the Indian Kubera and Vaisravana and the Iranian Pharro. In the Lalitavistara, Panchika served as one of twenty-eight generals over Kubera’s yaksa army.\(^{226}\) However, in Gandharan art and legend, the Panchika and Kubera are substituted for one another and even blended together such that their roles and attributes coalesce into a single identity.\(^{227}\) Kubera’s identifying traits, the moneybag symbolic of his status as the God of Wealth and guardian of treasures of the earth, and his club or spear are both included in figure 37.\(^{228}\) However, another god named Vaishravana also sheds his traces in this sculpture. Vaishravana, recognizable by the small wings sculpted on his head, is ‘He who is knowing’, or ‘He who hears everything in the kingdom’, and is the chief of the Lokapala, or Four Heavenly Kings, and the guardian of the North and of winter.\(^{229}\) Vaishravana in fact serves as Kubera’s alter ego, but his representations were modeled on those of Hermes or Mercury, syncretized with those of the Iranian god Pharro during the Kushana period.\(^{230}\) Hermes, the winged god of thieves, travelers and merchants, possesses attributes such as the bag and the caduceus symbolizing peace and prosperity, as well as the spear.\(^{231}\)

Though figure 37 might assume the role of Hariti and Panchika-Kubera, it takes on a more Iranianized and Hellenistic form in comparison to fig 36, suggesting that they


\(^{227}\) Ibid., 40.


\(^{229}\) Ibid., 67.


might represent Iranian deities Pharro and Ardokhsho, who are also considered deities of royalty and fortune.\textsuperscript{232} This Iranian couple was introduced in Gandhara by the late Kushans in a conscious protest against the influence of India and its religions. The Kushans tried to substitute for Panchika and Hariti two Iranian gods with similar powers.\textsuperscript{233} Whichever their deemed identities, these divinities function as the sanctified supporters of the monarchy or the personifications of divine sanction of the legitimacy of Kushan dynastic rule.\textsuperscript{234} In addition to being an emblem of Kubera, the lance was also a military symbol of the Indo-Shakas, and later became an important emblem of imperial authority under Kanishka.\textsuperscript{235} Linking Pharro with Ardoksho and their conjoined attributes of military authority and worldly riches naturally became fused with the corresponding iconography of their Indian \textit{yaksa} counterparts, Panchika and Hariti.\textsuperscript{236} It is misleading to force these syncretic deities into a single classification. Hariti, in her very origins, is a composite goddess whose was formulated through a slow and timely process of progressive amalgamation of iconographic representation and meaning. Hariti’s Indian predecessor was the pre-Vedic nature \textit{yaksi}, but her other prototypes include Near Eastern, Hellenic and Iranian cultures that each augmented to the identity of the \textit{yaksi} queen.

A less benign example of Hariti is the famous standing Hariti from Sahri Bahlol, figure 41, which dates to the 4\textsuperscript{th}-5\textsuperscript{th} century and is now located in the Peshawar

\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 90.
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid., 91.
Museum.\textsuperscript{237} This monumental image, four feet tall, is dressed in the Indian manner with sari and bare feet, bejeweled with anklets. It is a rare rendition of Hariti prior to her metamorphosis, epitomizing her demonic and carnivorous stature. She has an urna, or a tuft of hair or small, pearl-like mole on her forehead.\textsuperscript{238} The urna, superimposed on an outsized halo serve as emblem of her celestial ranking. Her abnormally elongated ears are not uncommon to figures in Buddhist art as they symbolize royalty. Since Indian princes traditionally wore heavy earrings made of gold and precious jewels, their earlobes would inevitably stretch downwards.\textsuperscript{239} The historical Buddha himself is often depicted with long earlobes as a remnant of his opulent life prior to his journey to enlightenment. This correlation to the Buddha’s extended earlobes may also signify Hariti’s extraordinary wisdom and spiritual advancement post-conversion.

Much like the Hindu god Siva, the Hariti from figure 38 is endowed with four arms. Her upper left hand holds a trident, a weapon that symbolizes the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha.\textsuperscript{240} According to Ingholt, the trident is borrowed from her husband Pachika’s lance, much like the wine-cup on her upper right hand. According to Bivar, it is a trisula, a symbol of Siva, which has an obvious relevance to the destructive effects of smallpox.\textsuperscript{241} On her bottom right hand she holds a water container, while her bottom left hand holds a child, alluding to her power of imparting fruitfulness to both earth and man.\textsuperscript{242} Two tusk-like teeth protrude upwards

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{237} Ibid., 57.
\item \textsuperscript{238} Charles F. Chicarelli, \textit{Buddhist Art An Illustrated Introduction}, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2004), 268.
\item \textsuperscript{239} Meher McArthur, \textit{Reading Buddhist Art An Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs & Symbols}, (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2002), 93.
\item \textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 141.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Islay Lyons, and Harald Ingholt, \textit{Gandharan Art in Pakistan}, (New York : Pantheon Books , 1957), 146.
\end{itemize}
from both sides of her smiling lips: indicative of the deranged Hariti prior to conversion. A cluster of leaves alongside her head represents the symbolic vestiges of the tree of fertility associated with the Indian yaksīs.\textsuperscript{243} Her overall image is impressive and fear inducing. Below on either side of her feet, stand two figures on a smaller scale. They are undoubtedly donors as they each hold offerings to the goddess in their hands. They have thick hair and wear clothing that leave their right shoulder and legs bare.\textsuperscript{244} She is depicted in an upright position, with her left knee slightly bent forward, dressed in a short-sleeved sari with a twisted belt wrapped around her waist. While the attributes in this sculpture are very Indianized and the multiple arms derivative of Hinduism, the wet drapery style is evidence of Western influence that prevails in the 4\textsuperscript{th}-5\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Creases form in between her two legs and below her knees, accentuating the bent knee and slightly protruding belly.

Gandharan Buddhism demonized this deity and then transformed her. These Hariti sculptures have generated a set of questions related to representations of the feminine in Gandharan Buddhism. This Hariti from figure 41 anthropomorphizes an inconsistency that evokes the inconceivable: she is the dedicated mother of five hundred sons, but simultaneously possesses a second face, wherein she is also a rapacious monster and exemplifies the ultimate collapse of order and a system out of balance.\textsuperscript{245} The fear of the woman is evident here, something that exists in Buddhist belief. The woman poses as an obstacle hindering men from achieving enlightenment, a temptress that sustains

\textsuperscript{244} Islay Lyons, and Harald Ingholt, \textit{Gandharan Art in Pakistan}, (New York : Pantheon Books , 1957), 146.
samsara, the endless cycle of rebirth. By granting her a bipolar nature and the power to give children and to usurp them, Buddhism demonizes Hariti but then converts her, imparting upon her the emblems associated with other divinities of popular worship, the powers of fortification and of granting offspring.\textsuperscript{246} This particular sculpture, fig 41, desexualized the childbearing goddess, a process consistent with the desexualized Shalabhanjika yaksis discussed in Chapter II. The irregular representations of Hariti and the perseverance of her myth and cult confirm the universality and persistence of a belief in a goddess of prosperity, even as a subtext of Buddhist orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{247}

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 1.
CHAPTER V

Mayadevi

Queen Maya or Mayadevi is the mother of Shakyamuni in the Buddha’s life story, or jataka, and a figure that appears prevalently in Gandharan base-reliefs. Though she was a human woman who gave birth to a human son, she miraculously conceived Shakyamuni without the help of a male, suggesting that she possesses a celestial aura. She has become a central figure in Buddhist legend and is respected as a divinity and even a goddess. The name Mayadevi can literally be translated as the “Goddess of Magical Creation” or the “Goddess of Motherly Love”. An independent goddess cult has grown around this queen, revered not only as the mother of Buddha but also as the mother of Buddhism. Lumbini, the locality in Southern Nepal where she gave birth to the Buddha, has become an international pilgrimage site specifically for its function as a shrine to the mother-goddess. Rather than commemorating the Buddha himself, the site venerates the mother who gave birth to him. In Gandhara, Queen Maya is never sculpted in the round. Instead, her representation appears as a customary feature of stupa iconographic friezes from the first century CE onwards. In this chapter, I will examine the two standard scenes in which she appears in the Buddha’s life narrative: the scene of her conception and that of Shakyamuni’s birth.

249 Ibid., 47.
Bas-Reliefs:

In Gandhara, there is a plethora of bas-reliefs that serve to decorate bases of statues, staircase risers, and mostly on votive stupas themselves. A fascinating attribute of these bas-reliefs is that they are created in a narrative style, similar to Greek and Roman friezes. They were designed to represent the life episodes of the Buddha in an instructive and visual manner, in order to remind the faithful of their master’s earthly existence. Each episode is confined to a single scene in an organized and concise manner. Initially, the narrative chapters were carved on small stone units and subsequently fitted into the architecture. These individual slabs become part of the mono-scenic narration, each portraying a static episode. This allows the story to unfold in a very logical sequence, unlike earlier Indian Buddhist traditions where multiple episodes were fused onto a single slab. The episodes are to be read chronologically from right to left, in conformity with the pradakshina order of clockwise circumambulation, the Buddhist ritual of circling a monument. Another aspect of Gandharan reliefs is that emphasis is given to the human figure, which is generally centered and provided with personal space.

Primarily for spiritual education, Gandharan friezes particularly consist of stable groupings, uniform compositions and simple designs. One can clearly notice the uniform composition in figure 42 from Sikri and figure 43 from Jamalgarhi. Though they are from different sites, they depict a nearly identical scene: Maya asleep in an equivalent posture, on a similar couch with a trapezoidal pilaster framing her sacred space.

251 Ibid., 103.
254 Ibid., 106.
aureole above her is undeviating, consisting of an identically depicted elephant. Slight differences include the scene-separators and attendants, but the overall composition is remarkably constant. It is important to note that regions outside Gandhara portrayed the same episode under a very different canon. This is evident in figure 44, a relief from Bharhut, India, which illustrates the identical jataka scene as figures 42 and 43, but has a completely contradistinctive composition and style. The fact that the same scene in Bharhut is portrayed in such a different manner proves that the Gandharan composition was formulated and utilized in Gandhara itself, and the iconographic details were actualized from the very beginning as they are applied repeatedly in numerous Gandharan stupas.\(^{255}\)

Often, Maya’s birth scene is grouped in the form of a harmika, a square platform with a railing located at the top of a stupa. The harmika would consist of a set of four scenes ranging from the Birth and early years to the Death cycle, but the choices of scenes would differ between panels. The harmika block shown in figure 45 displays its solid, orthogonal structure with all sides entirely carved with the following scenes: the Birth of the Buddha (figure 46), Assault of Mara, the Entreaty to Preach the Doctrine and the First Sermon of the Doctrine.\(^{256}\)

**The Conception/ The Dream of Maya:**

The narrative unfolds with Queen Maya’s conception, an event that manifests in a sublimated fashion. In both Gandharan reliefs, figure 42 and figure 43, Maya is arrayed in a tunic and a wreathed headdress, nobly ornamented with bracelets, anklets and earrings to amplify her royal identity. Both examples illustrate Maya as ensconced

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\(^{255}\) Ibid., 116.

beneath a trapezoidal roof, in a tranquil repose on her left side on a couch with a footstool. Figure 42 incorporates a slender post with a oil-lamp glowing behind Maya’s bed and her attendants share her space, while in figure 43, her attendants positioned outside Maya’s frame. Figure 43 consists of two *Shalabhanjika yaksis* within their rectangular niche on each side of the frame, serving as decorative scene separators. In contrast, figure 42’s scene separator consists of a semi-circular column, a very Classical and Mediterranean element. The column stands on an undecorated base and supports a pseudo-Corinthian capital ornamented with acanthus leaves in a degenerate classical form.\(^{257}\) The existence of the influence of the Greek Corinthian order here proves Western influence permeating into the Buddhist *jataka* scene. Similar columns can be found in the architecture of the Hellenic city of Ai Khanum in Bactria, showing that these are an intermediary column type that has come from Greek origin, has been reinterpreted through an Iranian filter and arrived in Gandharan architecture, adopted as early as the 1\(^{st}\) century CE.\(^{258}\)

Buddha’s consideration of his final rebirth from his vantage point in *Tushita* heaven was the prelude to his life story. Having selected Queen Maya to be his mother, he appeared to her in a dream one evening as elucidated in figures 42 and 43. In the *Abhiniskramana sutra*, Maya “thought she saw a six-tusked white elephant… descended thro-space and enter her right side”.\(^{259}\) Apparent in these Gandharan scenes, the Buddha, disguised as an elephant, suspends in a halo above Queen Maya, representative of his


descent from *Tushita* heaven and subsequent entry into the right side of the his mother’s bosom. Connected accounts of the conception of Queen Maya’s dream generally represent her as asleep, her husband in absentia, emphasizing the miraculous nature of her conception\textsuperscript{260}. The scene is emblematic of Shakyamuni’s physical entrance into the earthly realm through the subconscious state of his mother.

Figure 44, the Bharhut version of this *jataka* scene is stylistically very different from the Gandharan accounts, providing an Indian archetype we can use to juxtapose with the Gandharan reliefs therefore elucidating the impact of non-Indian influence on figures 42 and 43. In figure 44, the elephant above Maya does not appear within a circle, and the depiction of figures, body language, clothing, and facial expressions are far more stylized and less naturalistic. This is evidence that the naturalism in the Gandharan reliefs has arrived from Classical influence. The scene in figure 44 is framed by a circle rather than by pseudo-Corinthian pilasters and *yakṣis*, because these pilasters have specifically come to Gandhara from the Mediterranean and the *yakṣis* take on a decorative element in scene-separators in Gandharan reliefs. In contrast, *yakṣis* in Bharhut would grace *torana* posts, much like the Sanchi *yaksi*. What is particularly different about this scene is inconsistent points of view: Queen Maya is depicted from an aerial perspective; the elephant suspends above her, depicted in a side-profile; Maya’s attendants who should be on either sides of her bed are shown directly below and above her. In contrast to the Gandharan relief that is viewed from an earthly realm of naturalistic human perception, this Indian relief appears to attempt to replicate the Buddha’s view from *Tushita* heaven.

The Indian artist is attempting to show each subject within the relief in its most descriptive and clear angle, without taking account of the overall perspective.

The sleeping position of Queen Maya in Bharhut is very different from Maya’s sleeping postures in the Gandharan reliefs. Queen Maya’s body position consists of her left hand propping up her head while her right arm holding her mattress, a very relaxed pose. This sleeping arm posture is identical to that of Ariadne in figure 47, painted on a Stamnos Greek apulian Red figure vase. Since this is a late classical work, dated from 400-390 BCE, it demonstrates that the pose of Maya was very much part of the classical artistic vocabulary of the time and very different from the Indian composition. Ariadne, the daughter of Mino king of Crete was a figure from Greek mythology that became the wife of the god Dionysus, thereby becoming immortal. In this vase, Ariadne slumbers peacefully as a winged god named Hypnos, or Sleep, drips Lethean water on her head. The shape of Ariadne’s bed, pillowed in such a way that her head is propped up and held by her arm, is identical to Maya’s bed shape and very much unlike the Bharhut bed, which is depicted in an aerial point of view. Though Maya’s arm positions are identical to that of Ariadne, Maya’s left leg bends downwards rather than upwards. It is evident from these comparisons that the Gandharans were very inspired by Classical narrative relief styles, but retained the stories and iconographies from their Buddhist Indian roots.

**Birth of the Buddha:**

Ten months pursuant to her dream, Queen Maya gave birth to Siddhartha in a wooden grove called Lumbini. The park was located outside her palace at Kapilavastu, a small city-state located in the Nepal side of the modern border region between Nepal and
India.\textsuperscript{261} This event would have ensued in the year 623 BCE consistent with Theravada tradition, or 563 or 566 BCE according to other texts\textsuperscript{262}. This nativity scene is a pivotal event in the Buddha’s \textit{jataka}, and occurred during a full moon at the exact time when natural bounty was at its height.\textsuperscript{263} Figure 46 represents Maya as centered in the scene with various people tending to her needs, patently the cynosure of all eyes. She is depicted modestly as human, with no attempt on the part of the artist to provide her with any larger-than-life character.

Maya gathers her composure and stands under a tree, often said to be the \textit{Sala} or \textit{Ashoka} tree, when the Buddha “perceiving his mother, Maya, standing thus with a branch in her hand, then with conscious mind arose from his seat and was born; now shall I accomplish the end of my being, and become Buddha.”\textsuperscript{264} As depicted in figure 46, Maya does stand under some foliage, her right arm grasps a limb of the tree above her while her left arm grips on her sister Mahaprajapati’s shoulder for physical support. Maya’s delivery appears painless, as she serenely tilts her head towards her new child. The haloed Buddha effortlessly materializes from her right side with a visible, three-dimensional oval called an \textit{usnisa} on his head, which is one of the physical characteristics of the Buddha spelled out by the Buddhist canon. The \textit{usnisa} symbolizes his attainment and reliance on the spiritual guide. In complete synchrony with the tranquil mise en scene, both the Buddha’s arms reach out when the turbaned Vedic god Indra receives

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{261}] David Jongeward, \textit{Buddhist Art of Pakistan and Afghanistan: The Royal Ontario Museum Collection of Gandhara Sculpture}, (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre of South Asian Studies, 2003), 83.
\item[\textsuperscript{262}] Ibid., 83.
\item[\textsuperscript{263}] Miranda Shaw, \textit{Buddhist Goddesses of India}, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 38.
\end{itemize}
Rishika Assomull

Shakyamuni with a fine piece of cloth, a softly tanned antelope hide. On bended knees, Indra carefully cradles the divine child, who appears pure in the afterglow. He wears an *uttariya*, an Indian, cotton, scarf-like dress that descends gracefully from the nape of the neck to spiral around both arms in an Indian fashion. In addition, he is adorned in a collar, earrings and a cylindrical cap with a crossed, diagonal motif.

Maya’s accouterment, elaborate in its arrangement comprises a garment draped from the left shoulder, an enswathing dhoti, a scarf skirting behind her back to hang pliantly from both upper arms, a cross hatched wreath headdress, earrings, bracelets, a collar and anklets. Though slimmer than the Indian norm, this Maya from fig 46 conforms to the Indian ideal of female beauty and her pose is reflective of the Indian aesthetic. Her sister Mahaprajapati, who bolsters her body from the left side, is attired in a long sleeved tunic over a *dhoti* and a twisted, globular headdress, ornamented with large earrings and anklets. The female attendant, or *yavani*, stands behind her in awe, as indicated in her stance, with her right hand covering her mouth and her feet spread apart. The *yavani’s* left hand grasps a crosshatched palm branch or the Indian equivalent of peacock feathers, intimating her intent to wave the branch or feathers to fan the queen.

All the figures are fashioned with long oval faces and protruding eyes and project very natural and fluid body language. Broad framing pilasters flank the panel with sharply cut Corinthian capitals in distinct upper and lower parts, in order to mark the constraints of the scene.

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267 Ibid., 148.
268 Ibid., 148.
269 Ibid., 148.
Much like figures 42 and 43, figure 46 is very classicizing. The drapery style, the pseudo-Corinthian capitals framing the scene, and the verisimilitude of body language and facial expressions are not aspects prevalent in an Indian jataka such as figure 44. These stylistic qualities were definitely infiltrated into the style of Gandhara from the Greeks. The result: scenes from India with high verisimilitude and realistic, systematic composition. Mahaprajapati’s bearing directly mirrors that of her sister, with her right foot crossed behind her left leg while Maya’s left foot decussates her right leg at the front. Mayadevi in the Gandharan nativity scene is always represented in a recognizable visual format: her figure was conflated with the established in earlier Shalabhanjika yaksinis as she is entwined with her resident tree, expressing the shared life essence and fruitfulness. The theme of a woman giving birth beneath a tree may have struck a chord within the Indian imagination, evoking a long-standing association between fecund women and flowering trees. Thus, Mayadevi’s iconography was modeled on that of the yaksinis, symbolizing her personal fertility, abundance, the fruit she bore would be a son influence enduring for a millennia. The leaves on the branches above them are symmetrically paired, framing the upper segment of the panel and emphasizing the natural bounty in the setting of the Lumbini park which parallels Mayadevi’s fertility. In this sense, Maya as a mother is presented as the conveyor of prosperity, a role not easily attributed to the Buddha himself. Maya offers the irresistible leitmotif of a woman in the bloom of youth, giving birth to the wondrous child destined for greatness.

271 Ibid., 51.
272 Ibid., 51.
CHAPTER VI

Donors

Introduction:

As developed in this thesis, it is evident that in Gandhara, freestanding sculpture was primarily devotional and iconic. Evidence of portraiture is scant and consists of royal figures and donors. In this chapter, I will examine another category of the representation of women in Gandharan sculpture that serves primarily in a Buddhist context: Donor women. First, I will discuss the notion of giving in Buddhism, and explain the reasons initiating an exponential increase in donations in Gandhara. Subsequently, I will examine three types of female donor sculptures: life sized figures, statuettes, and friezes.

Dana or Daan (Palli, Sanskrit):

The word Dana or Daan is interpreted as ‘giving’, one of the foundational requirements of Buddhist practice and spiritual development. The notion of giving is a basis of merit or wholesome kamma by virtue of being a quality that affirms the depth of one’s humanity and one’s capacity for self-transcendence. There were three themes prevalent in the Mahayana Buddhism that marked the school’s distinction from that of Theravada. The themes consisted of the ideal of the bodhisattva, the nature of the Buddha and the concept of emptiness. It is the first theme, the aspiration towards becoming a bodhisattva, that is the key factor in providing incentive for donations. A bodhisattva is a spiritual being who has attained enlightenment but, out of concern for compassion or

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Karuna chooses to stay in the earthly realm in order to help benefit other sentient beings. These bodhisattvas would have already endured infinite lifetimes of virtuosity in which they had accumulated innumerable meritorious acts across several cosmic periods or kalpa.\textsuperscript{276}

This long quest is made up of the bhumi, or the ten stages explained in the \textit{Dasabhumika Sutra} or the ‘Ten Stages’ sutra.\textsuperscript{277} These ten stages, or ten perfections (\textit{paramitra}), provide an ideal path for the laity to follow. The perfections listed in various texts consist of charity (\textit{dana}), moral conduct (\textit{sila}), endurance (\textit{ksanti}), wisdom (\textit{prajna}), energy (\textit{virya}), meditation (\textit{dhyana}), helpful ways (\textit{upaya}), earnest wish (\textit{pranidhana}), power (\textit{bala}) and wisdom-knowledge (\textit{jnana}).\textsuperscript{278} The first perfection is that of the \textit{dana}, or charity. The practice culminates in one of the perfections or \textit{paramita}: the perfection of giving, known as \textit{dana-paramita}, characterized by cultivating an unattached and unconditional generosity, giving and relinquishment.

The overarching aim in Buddhism is to attain nirvana and liberate oneself from the karmic cycle of suffering and rebirth. In earlier Buddhism, one’s aim was to become an \textit{arhat} who has endured the long quest of undertaking an infinite number of virtuous lives in order to attain nirvana. However, only monks and nuns were qualified for this destiny. There were some disciples known as \textit{srvaka} who received teachings directly from the Buddha himself and could therefore attain enlightenment in a single lifetime. Similarly, devout lay followers, \textit{upasika}, wanted to accumulate some sort of merit in order to increase the likelihood of rapid enlightenment. Those \textit{upasika} who made

\textsuperscript{276} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 14.
donations could accompany the *arhat* in order to attain a better incarnation in the future.\textsuperscript{279} These donations are known as *deya*, dharma, or meritorious gift.

**Donations in Mahayana Buddhist Gandhara:**

Though the Buddha iterated that materialistic possessions were a trivial matter, wealth was an important reality for monastic life in Gandhara.\textsuperscript{280} In early Pali Buddhist texts, there is no mention of the flock being desirous of acclamation from the Buddha. There was a predisposition prevalent in early Buddhist literature to extol and venerate rich merchants who supported the *Sangha*, the monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks and nuns. This instituted a new attitude, which suited the aspiration of merchants in accumulating riches and entering the higher social statuses.\textsuperscript{281} In return for their donations, the wealthy were given honorary ceremonies and artists dedicated structures or statuary with personalized inscriptions for them.\textsuperscript{282}

During the first two or three centuries of the common era, Buddhist cosmology evolved inasmuch as the pantheon developed from one that only included the Buddha to a more all encompassing one that incorporated innumerable bodhisattvas.\textsuperscript{283} New deities began developing cults and people started to believe that since these deities have accumulated enough merit to reach enlightenment, they could share their accrued merit with their worshippers.\textsuperscript{284} Consequently, Buddhist literature increasingly stressed the concept of worship and donation, causing it to become the major route to

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{280} David Jongeward, *Buddhist Art of Pakistan and Afghanistan: The Royal Ontario Museum Collection of Gandhara Sculpture*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre of South Asian Studies, 2003), 35.
\textsuperscript{281} Jason Hawkes, and Akira Shimada, *Buddhist Stupas in South Asia: Recent Archaeological, Art-historical, and Historical Perspectives*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 179.
\textsuperscript{283} Jason Hawkes, and Akira Shimada, *Buddhist Stupas in South Asia: Recent Archaeological, Art-historical, and Historical Perspectives*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 189.
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 189.
enlightenment. Therefore, in order to accumulate virtue, the laity would provide food and board at monasteries, and even fund the construction and ornamentation of stupas and jewels buried along with the Buddha’s relics. The reverence for relics enlarged the scope of potential donations to Buddhist institutions. One example of an inscription in the compound of Dharmarajika stupa at Taxila where a Bactrian resident established the Buddha’s relics states:

For the bestowal of health on the Great King, King of Kings, son of the gods, the Kushana, in honor of all Buddhas, in honor of Pratyekabuddhas, in honor of the Arhats, in honor of all beings (sarvasattvanam), in honor of mother and father, in honor of friends, ministers, kinsmen, and blood-relations, for the bestowal of health upon himself. May this they right munificence lead to Nirvana.

The presence of hordes found in Gandhara can be attributed to the principle of gift giving, in order to ‘ripen’ or increase the giver’s spiritual level and promised reward at the material level.

Early Pali, Buddhist texts stipulate that patrons had solely proffered food and lodging to the Buddha and his Sangha. However, later Sanskrit documents after the advent of numerous bodhisattvas voice that the major items of donation were monumental stupas, monasteries, and sumptuous goods popular in contemporary commerce. Over a hundred Kharoshthi inscriptions in mixed Sanskrit that record these donations have been recovered in Gandhara. Almost all records conclude with the

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285 Ibid., 189.
286 Ibid., 179.
donor’s aim to honor (puyae) the reigning monarch, a variety of elevated beings, the Dharma and Sangha, venerable people, and sometimes all beings (sarva-sattvanam). ²⁹¹

This formula accents the evolving belief in Mahayana Buddhism. Occasionally, a specific request is enunciated such as one for an increase in life span, strength, health, fortune, or happiness. ²⁹²

Due to the profusion of donations during the Kushana period, the avocation of the monastery culture received a boost engendering multi-story dwelling places, stupa complexes, courtyards, teaching centers, libraries, and various work and living areas. ²⁹³

The Buddhist Sangha became institutionalized and the culture of patronage reached fever pitch in the Kushan period (75-230 CE) providing an economic explanation for the process of institutionalization. ²⁹⁴ Wealthy patrons were granted parklands, outfitted with huts and provisions, which would be of benefit for periods longer than the rainy season.

Figure 48 is extremely classicizing, illustrates a stair riser relief with nine figures clad in Greek dress. Five women are interspersed amongst men, each one clad in a high-belted chiton and himation. With the exception of a single one in the center of the frieze, the men appear to be offering the women tall drinks in goblets, signifying their possible status as attendants. These minions are garbed in tunics that leave one shoulder bare and reach down to their knees. The distinct male in the center is nude to the waist with his lower body clothed in a himation and feasibly holds a different status. These men and women consonantly contributed to the Buddhist buildings in which the relief was found.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 205.
²⁹² Ibid., 205.
²⁹³ David Jongeward, Buddhist Art of Pakistan and Afghanistan: The Royal Ontario Museum Collection of Gandhara Sculpture, (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre of South Asian Studies, 2003), 34.
²⁹⁴ Ibid., 35.
Their activity pronounces their participation in a sacrificial meal, which was an obligatory ritual.

Figure 49, a life-size sculpture of a woman from Sahri Bahlol, is indicative of a female donor bearing a miniature shrine. The item in her hands, a small trefoil shrine or reliquary, suggests that she is most definitely a female donor. Her jewelry attests to her royalty and wealth: she wears a fillet or circlet, a round band worn around her head and over her gracefully curled hair, with a roughly cut, central dowel marking the place of a lost ornament. Below her fillet are vertical divisions of locks lining her forehead, ending in curly corkscrew side tresses. She is liberally adorned with an array of ornaments: a necklace with a circular pendant, a broad armlet with nine bands, three bracelets on her left wrist, numerous rings on her fingers and thumb, and a double chain that falls from her left shoulder down to her right ankle, ending in a clasp.

She is attired in a short-sleeved dress, fashioned in a diaphanous material that almost renders her unclothed. The material above her waist so transparent and figure hugging that the only way to determine she is not nude is due to the shallow, thin and faint lines to show folds. Her skirt, conversely, is a *dhoti* made of heavy cloth. The customary shawl drapes behind her left leg, emerging from under her right knee, ending in a swirl over her left arm. Ridges accentuate the shirred folds of the shawl and *dhoti*.

This statue was found with two Sassanian coins imprinted with local imitations of King Shapur II, who lived from 309-380 CE, implying the date was circa 3rd-4th century CE.295

The large scale of the figure is revelatory of the artisans attempt to immortalize this donor. This figure is a blend between Classicizing and Indianized sculpture.

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In contrast to this large donor, figure 50 shows a statuette of a donor that could virtually fit in one’s palm. The small size suggests that this is a pre-Kushan item, as it was only after the wealth brought by the Kushan era that sculptures grew in scale and ostentatiousness. This figure is conceivably dated earlier as it was found in Stratum II, suggesting it is pre-Kushan, dated in the early 1st century CE.296 She is enrobed in a cloak that envelops her back and a transparent undergarment that extends down to her feet. She is amply ornamented with a necklace, girdles, and anklets, symptomatic of her royal status. Much like figure 49, her lavish jewelry and the item in her hands are suggestive of her identity as a munificent donor. The style of figure 50 is radically different from that of figure 49, as it is far less classicizing. Unlike the more naturalistic figure 49, the posture of figure 50 is very rigid and lacks verisimilitude overall. Drapery folds are very stylized, with horizontal lines along her arms and scarf.

296 Ibid., 158.
CHAPTER VII

Anomalous and Hybrid images

Sculptures in Gandharan art were syncretic, often a fusion of Graeco-Roman, Indian, and Parthian styles and iconographies. Through the course of this thesis, I have analyzed various influences and characteristics, subsequently matching them with goddesses from various sections along the Silk Road that affected the region of Gandhara. However, some female sculptures in Gandharan art seem to reflect such polycultural inspirations that it is difficult to identify the deities they represent.

One example, figure 51, is a statuette found in Jandial, Taxila, dated between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE. Her head and right arm have been cleaved from the body, and she sits upright in *palambapadasan* pose with her knees spread apart, suggesting her regal status. Her left arm supports a unique cornucopia, which ends in a coil that rests on her shoulder. The other end of the modified cornucopia, which she holds in her left palm, is embellished with an animal head. Two crouching lions, positioned on either side of her legs, flank her throne.297 She wears a short tunic with a pleated skirt that stops above her knees, and underneath, a longer garment flows to the floor. Her narrow waist is tightened with a thin belt, emphasizing her much wider hips and overall voluptuous torso. A scarf drapes down from her left shoulder to her right ankle. Parallel ridges accentuate the direction of the drapery on her legs and scarf, but a unique, whirlpool pattern, which begins over her left breast and travels below her right breast, accentuates the bodice of the tunic.298 She is ornamented with a double-stranded, beaded necklace with a medallion.

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298 Ibid., 321.
in the center, as well as a bracelet on her left wrist. The Taxila Museum catalogue identifies this image as Panchika, Hariti’s consort.\footnote{Ibid., 321.} However, this figure is unmistakably female and therefore cannot be Panchika. The existence of lions and a cornucopia are essential to her possible identity.

Figure 52 is a statuette from Sikri featuring a standing woman with a similarly sensual and curvaceous form. Their small sizes suggest they were intimate objects that could be held in the hand and worshipped. Also headless, her right arm is completely dislocated while her left arm is severed at the elbow just below the upper section, showing that it was slightly upraised.\footnote{Islay Lyons, and Harald Ingholt, \textit{Gandharan Art in Pakistan}, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), 168.} She wears a simple necklace. Tied around her hips with a thick belt is a scabbard or a sheath for holding a sword, attached in the style of the Iranians.\footnote{Ibid., 168.} A wet drapery style is applied to her torso, revealing her rounded breasts, thin waist and ample hips, and exposing her naval. However, the style of drapery is not very classicizing. A thicker garment flows from below her scabbard belt, hugging her stately thighs as the gathered pleats gracefully course downwards from the center of her hips. Influenced by the \textit{tribhanga} pose emphasized by \textit{yaksi} archetypes, she stands with her right hip protruding upwards and her left knee bowed.

Ingolt suggests that this figure 52 depicts Nana, a martial goddess imported from the Near East, because she is often portrayed on Kanishka coinage, upright with scepter in her raised right hand and a sword on her left side.\footnote{Ibid., 168.} In addition to her role as a martial goddess, Nana is also a lion-escorted deity.\footnote{Ibid., 168.} Therefore, the presence of the lions suggest that figure 51 may also represent Nana. Images of Nana appears on seals from Bactria

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\textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 321.
\textsuperscript{300} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{303} Jan N. Bremmer, \textit{The Strange World of Human Sacrifice}, (Lueven, Belgium: Petreers, 2007), 176.
\end{footnotesize}
\end{itemize}
that were created during the Bronze Age, c. 2500-1500 BCE, and her counterpart was worshipped in Kushana times. Figure 53 is identified as Nana-Anahita from the Sassanian period, the 3rd to 5th centuries CE. It illustrates a female deity with four arms, wearing a crenellated crown. She sits on a lion, her primary attribute. In her upper left hand, she holds a lunar crescent, while her upper right hand clutches a bowl and her lower right hand hoists a scepter, an emblem represented in the Kushana coins. Figure 53 is a fusion of the goddess Nana and Anahita who offered equivalent symbolic value as goddess of natural phenomena and abundance. Anahita was a Persian and Iranian goddess whose ionic shrine cult was introduced in the 4th century BCE and existed until the Sassanid Empire.

Both Anahita and Nana are the ancient precursors of the Gandharan Goddesses of abundance. They were part of a lineage of mother goddesses that originate from Near Eastern civilizations of the third millennium BCE. The historical origin of this ancestry returns to that of the Great Mother Goddess or Great Goddess of Western Asia. Indications of her cult have been unearthed in Hatra and Palmyra. Figure 54 depicts a bas-relief of Allat from Palmyra from the 1st century CE, who holds a palm branch and once again, a lion is a recurrent escort. The original mother goddess from eastern civilizations actualized into various forms in diverse regions, each time conflating with a

304 Ibid., 176.
308 Ibid., 62.
309 Ibid., 62.
local goddess. In Bactria, Nana-Anahita may have been combined with Ardokhsho, justifying the presence of the peculiar cornucopia in figure 51 and the much simpler cornucopia in the form of a single palm branch in figure 54. Though the identity of figures 51 and 52 remain ambiguous, they still possess traits that link with those of tutelary city-goddesses and goddesses of abundance.

Among these images of goddesses of fortune are those whose extreme degree of conflation are beyond the familiar iconographic repertory and therefore impede direct classification. The most hybrid image of all known female sculptures in Gandhara is that of figure 55, an animal headed goddess, now located in the British Museum, whose provenance is unrecorded.\textsuperscript{310} She is haloed and sits with her knees angled in \textit{palambapasadasana} pose, implying her lofty and royal status.\textsuperscript{311} She is adorned with a braided wreath on her head and a necklace with thick beads. She wears a long-sleeved dress, mostly obscured by a long scarf that drapes from her left shoulder down to the floor, and continues to wrap around her right calf. Her right hand grasps a drinking cup while her left hand holds an animal head that is identical to her own face. Her pointed ears and sharp muzzle suggest that her face is canine, that of a wolf or dog.\textsuperscript{312} An anomaly in Gandharan art, this animal headed goddess did not form an independent cult, as she appears no-where else in the repertoire. Her origins are unpreserved and remain shrouded in mystery.

\textsuperscript{310} Ibid., 62.
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 68.
Conclusion

As part of a metaphysical world invented by human beings, polytheistic goddesses, deities, and demons are reflective of the cultures that conceive them. The variegated female forms discussed in this thesis were created in Gandhara, but were the result of an accumulation of predecessors of ancient Indian, Greek and Iranian models, which represented the bounteous facets of the feminine ideal. Within the context of a dynamic trade route spanning the Asian subcontinent, Indian yaksis brimming with an overt sense of fertility and sensuality merged with the cultivated Greek Aphrodite, Athena, and Tyche. In Gandhara, these yaksis found a balance between the pronounced nudity of the Indian tradition and the Classical Phidian drapery style from the Mediterranean. Retaining her identity, the yaksi transposed her physical and erotic tribhanga posture to a more subtle contrapposto stance, eventually branching off from her Shalabhanjika role and transforming into the maternal Hariti. As influenced by her Greek sister Terra, the portrayal of Hariti’s children defined her motherly devotion and status as a goddess of compassion. However, the need for a symbol of abundance in the Kushana political sphere rendered Hariti’s children redundant and they were replaced with the cornucopia borrowed from their Iranian deity, Ardokhsho. The nature goddess turned into a city goddess: within the context of a new political propaganda, an apotheosis of maternal love was no longer necessary and was substituted with an object that emphasized the copious and the lavish environment of Gandhara. Meanwhile, the tribhanga pose survived in Queen Maya, a woman treated with much veneration, consistency and care in the art of Gandhara. As described in this thesis, sculptures of deities from the Hindu pantheon, Zoroastrianism, and the Greek religion embraced one
another and assimilated to such a degree that at times, their identities become completely elusive. The premise of this study, however, is incomplete without mention of those earthly and wealthy Gandharan women responsible for funding these magnificent sculptures that are immortalized, serving as today’s physical evidence of the proliferation of Buddhist art in the first few centuries of the Common Era.

It is evident, through the course of this thesis, that the sense of nurture, love, sumptuousness and wealth derived from the female form and her attributes battles with a deep, underlying fear of the feminine. As the growing Mahayana tradition opened its doors to women in monasticism, the female increasingly became perceived as a hindrance to personal salvation and ultimately, enlightenment. As child bearers, they were responsible for the perpetuation of samsara and were therefore the cause of all suffering. Female beauty, designed to lure men to their doom, was a concept prevalent in the Indian yaksi and local disease goddesses, but also touched on in the Mediterranean siren. The Hindu legends, rampant with the fear of the female fleshed out over time, manifested the woman as the threat of the unclean. Female yaksis represented those bipolar women with the power to grant the natural elation associated with progeny but also the suffering brought about by the disease and death of a child. The existence of a femme fatale in Indian myth reveals itself in the profile of Hariti, a woman representing the petrifying and unimaginable: cannibalism, murder, and abortion. Malignant purveyors of disease re-emerged in Buddhist legend in the form of Hariti as an expression of shared ideology. Despite stylistic and iconographic influences from the Western world that depicted women as desirable, the idea of a good and evil mother that was emphasized in Brahmanical and Buddhist orthodoxy haunted the region.

313 Ibid., 116.
Spanning reflections from Rome, India and Iran, the image of the woman conjures up notions of fruitfulness, maternity and abundance, but also a sense of seduction and accompanying it, the power that threatens all men. Though treated with honor and esteem, the permeating apprehension towards them signals a worship that serves to mollify and appease the demonic woman. The discrete, ambivalent attitudes towards the female form and the woman in the milieu of society sometimes encompassed and at other times renounced in the multicultural setting of Gandhara. The alliances of the divine mirror the allocation of power, the inner workings of human interactions in society and the dynamics of the relationship between the individual and his object of worship.
Note: For access to the images, please contact Jennifer Stern, the Visual Resource Curator for the Department of Fine arts
jstern@brandeis.edu
Mandel Center for the Humanities, 227
Mandel Quad, MS 092
Glossary

Amorino (amorini): A putto represented as an infant cupid

Bactria: The ancient name for a region in northern Afghanistan

Bodhi tree: Tree under which the Buddha reached enlightenment; the cosmic axis of the universe

Bodhisattva: One who has reached enlightenment but chooses to remain in the earthly realm in order to assist others in achieving enlightenment rather than entering nirvana

Buddha: An enlightened being; the historic Buddha is known by other names, including Shakyamuni Buddha, Gautama Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama Buddha

Caftan: A long garment with long sleeves, tied at the waist by a girdle, usually made of rich fabric and worn under a coat in the Middle East.

Circumambulate: To walk or go around something, especially ceremoniously. In a religious context, the object would be related to or embody the transcendent qualities aspired to. In Buddhism, the object of circumambulation would be a stupa, a Buddha sculpture, or a holy mountain.

Contrapposto: A sculptural canon originated by the ancient Greeks, invented in the 5th century BCE, consisting of a standing human figure that poses in such a manner that the weight rests on one, engaged leg, allowing the other leg to loosen and bend on the knee. The weight shift causes the hips, shoulders, and head to tilt, imbuing the figure with a sense of relaxation and life-like movement.

Cornucopia: A horn containing fruit, grain or drink in endless supply. In Classical Greek mythology it refers to the horn possessed by Amalthea, the goat or nymph that suckled Zeus. It is a symbol of abundant, overflowing supply.

Deva (devata): A deity, divine being or god in Hinduism and Buddhism. Also means one of an order of evil spirits in Zoroastrianism.

Dharma: Conformity to religious law, custom, duty, or one’s own quality of character. In Hinduism it refers to the essential principle of the cosmos and the natural law. In Buddhism it means the ideal truth set forth in the teachings of the Buddha.
Dhoti: A long loincloth worn by Hindu men in India.

Donors: Lay men and women, monks, nobles, merchants, and even entire villages who donated funds in order to commission Buddhist establishments and structures.

Enlightenment (in Buddhism): The awakening to ultimate truth by which man is liberated from the incessant cycle of reincarnation.

Gandhara (Gandhara proper, Ancient Gandhara): Ancient region in northwest Pakistan, bound by ancient Udayana (present day Swat), ancient Nagarahara and Bactria (present day Afghanistan, the Indus River, and also Kashmir).

Greater Gandhara: The wider region including the Peshawar basin, Swat Valley, Taxila, Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Greaco-Bactrian Kingdom: The eastern part of the Hellenic world that reached Bactria and Sogniana, which expanded into Gandhara around 180 BCE.

Hariti: Goddess who protects children from disease.

Harmika: The square block at the top of a stupa, with each side representing one of the four cardinal directions; sometimes the four faces are carved with narrative reliefs depicting the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment, the first sermon and parinirvana.

Hepthalites (White Huns): A nomadic confederation in Central Asia that ruled between 408-557 CE.

Historical Buddha: Prince Shakyamuni Gautuma, the founder of Buddhism.

Indra: In the Vedic tradition, Indra was a god of thunder; in the Buddhist tradition Indra was a deity considered the lord of the Trayasrimsa heaven.

Indo-Greek Kingdom: A Hellenistic kingdom that covered Gandhara during the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE.

Indo-Parthian Kingdom: A group of ancient kings from Central Asia who ruled Gandhara during or prior to the 1st century CE.

Indo-Scythians: Scythians who migrated to parts of Central Asia and northern South Asia, including Gandhara, between the middle of the 2nd century BCE up to the 4th century CE.
Jatakas: The past life stories of Shakyamuni Buddha, each tale addresses a moral or virtue

Karma: The concept of an action or deed, either good or bad, that causes a cycle of rebirth

Kushans: One of the five branches of the Yuezi confederation who migrated to Gandhara during the 1st and early 2nd century CE.

Lumbini: The gardens in the Ganges basin, near the southern edge of Nepal, where Queen Mayadevi gave birth to Shakyamuni Buddha

Maya (Mayadevi): The mother of Shakyamuni Buddha

Maurya Empire: A powerful empire spanning the eastern side of the Indian subcontinent founded in 322 BCE by Chandragupta Maurya, lasting until 185 BCE.

Monastery: The domestic quarters for monks

Mudra: Hand gesture with symbolic meaning

Nagarahara: The ancient name for the eastern part of today’s central Afghanistan

Narrative sculpture: Relief sculptures that, in this case, depict scenes from the life of the Buddha or his jatakas

Nirvana: The state of nonexistence associated by the release from the cycle of rebirth; the Buddha died, reached enlightenment and was liberated from the karmic cycle and attained nirvana, ceasing to exist

Peshawar basin: The modern name for ancient Gandhara, the area in northwest Pakistan

Putto: A figure depicted as a chubby, male child, usually nude and sometimes winged.

Sassanian Empire: The last pre-Islamic Persian Empire, ruling from 225-651 CE.

Scythians (Sakas): Groups of militarist Iranian pastoralists who inhabited western and central Eurasian steppe lands
**Samsara:** The endless cycle of rebirth

**Satrap:** The name given to governors and provinces of the ancient Median and Achaemenid (Persian) Empires and also in the Sassanid and Hellenistic empires

**Schist:** Metamorphic rock that was used in Gandharan sculpture and units

**Shakyamuni:** The historical Buddha

**Skanda:** Deity depicted as a war god

**Sri:** Goddess of good fortune

**Stupa:** A hemispheric, mound-like structure containing Buddhist relics, typically the ashes of the deceased, used as a place of meditation

**Swat:** Ancient Udayana; high river valley north of the Peshawar basin

**Udayana:** The ancient name for Swat Valley

**Pipal tree:** An Indian, fig tree known for its large size and longevity; regarded as sacred by Buddhists

**Polos (plural: poloi):** A high and cylindrical crown worn by Ancient Near Eastern and Anatolian goddesses and later adopted by the Greeks for their mother goddesses, specifically for Rhea, Cybele and Hera

**Bodhi tree:** An old, large and sacred fig tree located in Bodh Gaya under which the historical Buddha achieved enlightenment

**Maurya Empire:** A geographically extensive historical power founded by Chandragupta Maurya that ruled ancient India from 322 to 185 BCE; the empire expanded westwards towards Gandhara, fully occupying the region and defeating Alexander’s leftover satraps by 320 BCE

**Yaksa (yaksha):** Male nature spirit associated with wealth

**Yaksi (yakshi, yaksini):** Female nature spirit and tree-dweller associated with fecundity and agricultural bounty
**Kalinga-bodhi Jataka:** The story in which the Buddha explains the Bodhi tree’s power of fruition and its importance as an object of worship

**Kantharos or Cantharus:** A type of Greek utilitarian pottery, characterized by high swung handles extending above the lip of the pot, used for drinking

**Torana:** A type of gateway in Hindu and Buddhist architecture in the Indian subcontinent; they are associated with Buddhist stupas

**Tribhanga (tri-bent pose):** A standing body position used in Indian sculpture and art, deriving from a sensual Odissi classical dance position; consists of three bends in the body, at the neck, waist and knee, allowing the neck and waist to curve in opposite directions, providing it with an ‘S’ shape

**Trisula:** In Sanskrit and Pali, it means ‘three spear’, referring to an Indian trident used as a Hindu-Buddhist symbol; it is associated with the Hindu God Shiva

**Samyukavastu:** Chapter 31 in the Bhiksuni Vibhanga of the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya

**Sangha:** A word in Pali and Sanskrit meaning community, signifying to the Buddhist monastic community of ordained monks and nuns, traditionally referred to as the bhikku-sangha

**Sari:** The Sankrit word for ‘strip of cloth’, referring to a strip of cloth worn by women that is draped over the body in various styles native to the Indian Subcontinent

**Shalabhanjika:** In Sanskrit, literally means ‘breaking a branch of a Sala tree’; refers to the sculpture of a woman standing near a tree and grasping a branch

**Shalabhanjika yaksi:** A young, female tree spirit who serves as fertility symbol from India; she is depicted in Indian sculpture as grasping a branch of a tree and pressing her foot at its bark, a posture that would become a canon in Indian art

**Shakyamuni (Gautama Buddha or Siddhartha Gautama):** the historical Buddha, the awakened or enlightened one and the founder of Buddhism

**Shala (Sal) tree:** The Shorea robusta tree under which Queen Maya was said to have given birth to the Buddha in Lumbini
Sileni: The plural of Silenus, who in Greek mythology was a companion of the wine god Dionysus who was older than the satyrs of the Dionysian retinue; in plural form they are depicted as differentiated from a satyr because they have the attributes of a horse rather than a goat.

Stauros (Greek) or Skambha (Sanskrit): A central pillar corresponding to the Tree of Life and to the vertical of the cross; the Axis of the Universe.

Satavahana dynasty: A royal Indian dynasty covering much of India from 230 BCE to about 220 CE; they are known for their patronage of local deities and Buddhism, resulting in many Buddhist monuments such as the stupa at Sanchi.

Sanchi: A small village in the Raisen District of Madhya Pradesh, India, which was an important place of Buddhist pilgrimage; many Buddhist monuments from the 3rd century BCE onwards are located at Sanchi, including one of the oldest stone structures in India called the Great Stupa at Sanchi.

Paridhana or dhoti: A long loincloth traditionally worn by Hindu men in South Asia; it is wrapped around the hips and thighs with one end brought between the legs and tucked into the waistband.

Parinirvana: The final nirvana that occurs when someone who has attained awakening, dies; it suggests the breaking free from samsara.

Pratyeka Buddha: In Sanskrit, literally means ‘a lone buddha’, referring to one of the three types of enlightened beings, who achieve it own their own.

Pralambapada (European Pose): This is a sitting posture that appears in sculptures from all Buddhist cultures where the subject sits on a throne with legs pendent; in some cases, the feet rest on a small stool, raising the knees.

Rosette: A round, stylized floral design that appeared in Mesopotamia and was used to decorate funeral stele in Ancient Greece; later used as a decorative motif in Graeco-Buddhist art in Gandhara.

Rigveda: An ancient Indian sacred collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns; one of the four canonical sacred texts of the Hindu Vedas.

Rajagrha: The capital of Magadha, a town visited by the Buddha on numerous occasions.
**Atharva Veda:** The fourth Veda, a sacred text in Hinduism composed by rishis from the end of the 2nd millennium BCE or the early Indian Iron Age, corresponding to the 12th to 10th centuries BCE.

**Urna:** A spiral or circular dot placed on the forehead between the eyebrows of exalted beings; an auspicious mark symbolic of the third eye, which represents the vision into the divine world past the earthly world of suffering; usually presented in the form of a whorl of hair.

**Ushnisa:** The three-dimensional, oval-like protrusion on the top of the Buddha’s head symbolic of his enlightenment.

**Upasika:** The Sanskrit and Pali word for female attendant, or female lay devotees of Buddhism who are not monks, nuns, or monastics.

**Vedas:** The oldest holy text of the Hindu religion and Sanskrit literature; they originated from ancient India and were written beginning ca. 1000 BCE.
Bibliography


