



**Gandhara – The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan  
Legends, Monasteries, and Paradise**

**9 April – 10 August 2009 at the Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin**

**Content**

1. Exhibition Dates	Page 02
2. Information on the Exhibition	Page 03
3. Wall Texts	Page 05
4. Catalogue	Page 15
5. Preview	Page 16

Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 4, 53113 Bonn  
Press Office  
Telephone +49/228-9171-204/5/6 Telefax +49/228-9171-211  
www.bundeskunsthalle.de / e-mail: [majer-wallat@kah-bonn.de](mailto:majer-wallat@kah-bonn.de)



## Exhibition Dates

Duration Berlin	9 April – 10 August 2009
Director	Robert Fleck
Managing Director	Bernhard Spies
Exhibition curators	Christian Luczanits Michael Jansen
Project management	Susanne Annen
Ausstellungsarchitektur	Michael Haacke
Press officer	Maja Majer-Wallat
Catalogue / Press Copy	€ 29 / € 15
Opening hours	daily 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Admission Standard / Reduced	€ 8 / € 6
Public transport	Subway line 2 to Potsdamer Platz city train lines 1, 2 or 25 to Potsdamer Platz or Anhalter Bahnhof bus: M29 to Anhalter Bahnhof or M41 to Abgeordnetenhaus
Press information	<a href="http://www.bundeskunsthalle.de">www.bundeskunsthalle.de</a> Press file (German/English)
Guided group tours	Information and registration: Telephone +49 (0)30 247 49 -888 Fax +49 (0)30 24749 - 883 E-mail: <a href="mailto:museumsinformation@kulturprojekte-berlin.de">museumsinformation@kulturprojekte-berlin.de</a> <a href="http://fuehrungsnetz.de">fuehrungsnetz.de</a>



## **Information on the Exhibition**

The Buddhist art of Gandhara appears strangely familiar to the Western gaze; its rootedness in Western traditions is strikingly obvious. Gandhara is the name of a historical region in present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan. At the time of its greatest expansion, its territories encompassed Bactria, the Hindu Kush and central northern India. Gandhara became known to a wider audience in March 2001, when the Taliban dynamited the Bamiyan Buddhas, the world's biggest rock-cut Buddha statues.

### **Buddhism and a Crossroads of Cultures**

Gandharan art is primarily Buddhist. First anthropomorphic depictions of the Buddha began to emerge in the 1st century AD; before that time the "Enlightened One" was represented by means of aniconic symbols alone.

The exhibition at the Art and Exhibition Hall brings to life the extraordinarily rich artistic heritage of the Gandhara region, a melting pot of many different cultures. The conquests of Alexander the Great had introduced Greek culture to the region, giving rise to an art that is profoundly marked by Greek and Roman influence. This fruitful cross-cultural exchange was facilitated by trade along the Silk Road which connected the Mediterranean and China and which was also instrumental in the spread of Buddhism beyond its native India.

### **Tour of the exhibition**

The exhibition begins with the conquests of Alexander the Great and explores the development and spread of Gandharan culture across Afghanistan and Central Asia. Although Gandharan art features numerous Greek and Roman motifs, the vast majority of the works is rooted in Buddhism whose regional development is the focus of this exhibition.

Approximately 300 outstanding objects – among them exquisite stone sculptures, highly detailed reliefs, precious coins and elaborate jewellery – take the visitor on a fascinating journey through the ancient Gandharan kingdom of the 1st to the 5th century AD.

The exhibition architecture is modelled on a Gandharan monastery court. A central stupa details the spiritual awakening of a Buddha in 36 reliefs. The rooms grouped around the stupa provide an insight into the cultural background and the architecture of Gandhara.

### **Architectural Motifs**

One of the most fascinating aspects of Gandharan art is the espousal and adaptation of imported architectural motifs by an entirely different cultural and religious environment. Corner-posts, garland-holders, brackets and capitals are often decorated with figures or even executed in the shape of figures. Near-classical and modified Corinthian pilasters as well as Indian and so-called Persepolitan columns structure architectural decoration and act as scene dividers in carved reliefs. Cornices are decorated in myriad ways. Garlands, decorative bands and floral motifs swathe the building. Later monuments also feature series of arcades.

### **Religion and Luxury**

The rich finds brought to light in excavations of ancient urban areas such as Bhir Mound and Sirkap in Taxila and Barikot in Swat attest to Gandhara's far-reaching trade relations. The luxury goods shown in the exhibition reflect the flourishing economic and cultural exchange, as indeed does the religious imagery found on these items.

### **Many Gods, Many Cultures**

Although Gandharan archaeological finds are predominantly Buddhist, the region was home to many



deities. It was open to Western motifs and Western gods imported by the Greeks. The syncretic Kushan pantheon was inhabited by Zoroastrian and Hindu gods, and Gandharan Buddhism and Buddhist art successfully integrated a wide range of popular deities, most of them ambivalent nature spirits.

### **State-of-the-art 3D Reconstruction**

A particular highlight of the exhibition is a 3D visualisation allowing visitors to explore the destroyed Buddha sculptures of Bamiyan.

The Art and Exhibition Hall has joined forces with the faculties of Computer Science/Telecommunications and Architecture of the Aachen Technical University (RWTH) in order to develop new forms of exhibition presentation. Thanks to a state-of-the-art 3D reconstruction the two dynamited Buddha sculptures of Bamiyan rise from the rubble. Over the last few years international experts have developed concepts for securing and safeguarding the remaining original fragments of the Bamiyan Buddhas. Recent laser technology has made it possible to map the geometry of the monuments. A three-dimensional stereo projection of the datasets and a pair of special glasses will give visitors a unique opportunity to experience these magnificent rock-hewn sculptures.

Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 4, 53113 Bonn  
Press Officer: Maja Majer-Wallat  
Telephone 0228-9171-204/5/6 Fax 0228-9171-211  
[www.bundeskunsthalle.de](http://www.bundeskunsthalle.de) / email: [majer-wallat@kah-bonn.de](mailto:majer-wallat@kah-bonn.de)



## Wall Texts

### **Where is Gandhara?**

Historical Gandhara lies in northwest Pakistan. Its centre is the basin around the present-day city of Peshawar. Gandharan culture, however, radiated far beyond this heartland all the way to Bamiyan in Afghanistan in the northwest and into the Punjab.

### **The History of Gandhara**

The region was first mentioned in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC in the tenth book of the *Rigveda*, a sacred ancient Indian text. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC Gandhara was a province of King Darius I of Persia.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Alexander the Great conquered Gandhara. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC the Indian Maurya dynasty came to power. From around 180 BC the region was part of the Indo-Greek kingdom, whence the markedly Western, Hellenistic influence evident in so much of Gandharan art and culture. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD the Kushans, who had been driven from their Central Asian bases into Bactria, gained control of Gandhara and parts of northern India.

### **Buddhism in Gandhara**

Although Buddhism had reached Gandhara in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, it did not attract a large popular following until the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Buddhism and Buddhist art flourished under Kushan rule between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

### **The Heirs of Alexander the Great in Gandhara**

The untimely death of Alexander the Great in Babylon in 323 BC triggered decades of fighting among his rival successors. Alexander's former general Seleucus prevailed in Asia, laying claim to a vast territory stretching from Syria to the borders of India. His rule over Gandhara, however, lasted only eight years; in 305 BC he ceded control to the Indian Maurya dynasty. The Graeco-Bactrian kingdom in northern Afghanistan fell in 250 BC; three years later the Parthians invaded, an Iranian people of horsemen. The Seleucid empire began to fall apart.

In Bactria, on the other hand, Hellenistic culture thrived, giving rise to prosperous Greek cities such as Alexandria on the Oxus (Ai Khanum). Around 180 BC these Greeks conquered Gandhara and other territories. Towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC Indo-Greek culture flourished in the Gandhara region and the prosperous city of Taxila. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and AD other peoples conquered the region. Sakas and Indo-Parthians briefly ruled Gandhara.

Which Indo-Greek kings ruled when, the length of their reigns and the extent of their territories is generally reconstructed from coin finds that often constitute the only source for the name of the ruler.

Sakan and Indo-Parthian kings are easier to fit into a timeline, because they left behind dated inscriptions.

### **Early Buddhism in Gandhara**

The earliest artefacts traditionally taken as evidence of the emergence of Buddhism in Gandhara are two rock-cut edicts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC commissioned by the Maurya king Aśoka. Stupas are said to have been erected at his behest, but no archaeological evidence has been found. Yet it cannot be ruled out entirely that the stupas of Taxila, the Dharmarājikā stupa and Butkara I date back to Aśoka's reign (268 – after 240 BC).

The Greek kings who succeeded the Maurya left little that is Buddhist. The first Buddhist inscriptions, which began to appear on reliquaries around the time of the birth of Christ, can be linked to the immediate regional predecessors of the Kushans: the elites of the kingdoms of Apraca and Odi, the rulers of the regions of Bajaur and Swat, but also the Indo-Parthians who briefly ruled Gandhara.



The inscriptions identify them as Buddhist lay devotees. The first Buddhist works of art found in Gandhara were made around the time of the birth of Christ or a little earlier. Pre-Christian classical antiquity, particularly the Corinthian Order, inspired much of Gandharan architectural decoration. Figurative architectural elements such as garland-holders and decorative reliefs began to emerge in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The Gandharan image of the Buddha must also date to this period, as this is the only possible explanation for the relative paucity of reliefs that depict the Buddha through symbols alone. Moreover, certain features of the early image of the Buddha are related to Parthian art.

### **Buddha and Alexander the Great**

The historic Buddha lived in the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BC in northeast India, in the area of the present-day states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Some fifty years after his death, Alexander the Great embarked on his military campaigns (329 – 325 BC) that took him as far as Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Gandhara was his stepping stone into northwest India. His ambition was to reach the eastern end of the world, but his mutinying soldiers stopped his further advance. Buddhism does not seem to have spread far at that time. At least there is no reliable evidence for it.

### **Ashoka**

Alexander's death triggered conflict among his successors.

In the end, his generals divided the empire. In 305 BC general Seleucus I Nicator ceded the Gandhara region to King Chandragupta, the founder of the Indian Maurya empire. His grandson Ashoka ruled from 268 until after 240 BC. Throughout his empire he published edicts which propagated a moral code that was closely related to Buddhist values. A few of these edicts were also posted in Gandhara.

### **The Kushan Empire in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD**

The Kushans were originally a nomadic people of the steppes.

Chinese sources refer to them as Yuezhi. They were driven from their ancestral lands by other steppe peoples. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD they founded an empire in northern Afghanistan, in what was then 'Bactria', and in Gandhara, and established themselves as great patrons of Buddhism. Their most important king was Kanishka I (c. 127 – 150 AD). Under his rule the kingdom experienced its greatest prosperity and Buddhist art flourished. The Kushans also supported other religions. They were extraordinarily cosmopolitan.

### **Alexander, Ashoka and Buddhism**

Gandharan Buddhist art is a unique mix of highly diverse cultural and religious influences.

When Alexander the Great and his army invaded northern India and Gandhara in 324 BC, he laid the foundations for the Hellenistic component.

Of the eastern part of Alexander's empire, only Bactria, that is northern Afghanistan, remained Greek. After 305 BC Gandhara was, once again, ruled by an Indian dynasty, namely the Maurya. The third king of the Maurya dynasty was Ashoka. He reigned from 268 until after 240 BC and was a great patron of Buddhism, which had originated in northeast India. In numerous edicts he propagated values that are closely associated with Buddhism. Two of his fourteen large rock-cut edicts are preserved in Gandhara.

Around 180 BC Bactrian Greeks conquered Gandhara. They even invaded northwest India. The rebellion of a certain Eucratides led to the formation of two kingdoms in Greater Gandhara: a Graeco-Bactrian and an Indo-Greek kingdom.

'Greater Gandhara' describes the area that was to become the heartland of Gandharan culture.

### **Western Motifs**

Anyone familiar with the art of classical antiquity will be struck by the striking similarities in early Gandharan art.



Many motifs are taken from Greek mythology or from images of the Hellenistic imperial cult. Many elements seem familiar from Western art: the naturalistic depiction of the human figure, the muscular bodies, the dynamic contrapposto stance and faces that betray emotion.

Western architectural elements enjoyed great popularity, for example the motif of garland-bearing erotes. Narrative reliefs feature Corinthian capitals. These motifs set Gandharan art far apart from the art produced in India at the time.

### **Western Models**

Gandharan craftsmen could draw on two kinds of models to fashion their wares: recently imported works and works that had evolved locally and therefore tapped into their own complex traditions.

Excavations in Begram north of Kabul, for example, brought to light a number of interesting plaster casts. Probably imported, they most likely served as templates. They may have been cast from items of metalwork imported from Egypt and originally intended to serve as inserts in bowls. Early stone palettes feature purely Western motifs; In later examples local elements begin to appear. Later still, even the motifs are local. The same process applies to jewellery.

### **Connecting Motifs**

Gandharan art is replete with motifs that are associated with wine cults.

Areas ruled by the Greeks were familiar with motifs featuring the wine god Dionysus. These motifs also inspired locally produced items. The widespread popularity of motifs depicting the consumption of wine suggest that some form of cult involving convivial debauchery and wine was practiced locally.

### **The Kushans**

The Kushan people originated in the Central Asian steppes. Towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC they conquered Bactria. This conquest exposed them to Greek culture for the first time. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD the Kushans migrated to Gandhara. There they were introduced to Buddhism, which was already fully established.

Archaeological evidence supports this series of events.

### **Patrons of Buddhism**

The Kushan's support of Buddhism in Gandhara led to an unparalleled flourishing of Buddhist culture. The Kushans themselves practiced Iranian religions and worshipped Oesho and a number of other deities. Oesho is regarded as a form of the Indian god Śiva.

Coins attest to the religious tolerance of the Kushan kings who supported all major faiths in their empire.

The so-called Rabatak inscription provides evidence that they commissioned statues of themselves and their ancestors.

The statue of the Kushan king Kanishka I from Surkh Kotal, of which only the legs in a riding habit survive, shows that these portraits could be of a monumental size. Yet Kushan donors had themselves portrayed on a smaller scale too, often in the company of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and other deities.

### **Many Gods, Many Cultures**

Although Gandharan archaeological finds are predominantly Buddhist, the region was home to many deities.

### **Western Deities**

The Greek phase of Gandharan art features a multitude of Western deities and motifs, for example Athena and Aphrodite. Yet whether Gandharan works were really intended to depict these Greek deities as opposed to local adaptations, i.e. reinterpretations as local deities, remains a matter of considerable speculation. The god Harpokrates, for example, may have been imported, similarly the river god from the Taxila Museum, who is perhaps a personification of the Oxus in Bactria. He is unlikely to represent a local deity, as rivers are female in Indian culture. Alongside the gods there are sculptures of satyrs and atlantes



and imported Western architectural elements with decorative bands of tritons and garland-bearers.

### **Indian Deities**

Śiva figures prominently among the Indian gods, probably because he was identified with the Iranian god Oesho who appears on coins. The Gandharan depictions of Śiva highlight the multifaceted nature of the god. When he is depicted in many-headed form, some of his heads can be those of animals. More popular still was Skanda, the god of war, who was evidently equated with local gods as well. Only in a single instance can he be clearly identified as Skanda: He is presented as the triumphant vanquisher of the buffalo-headed demigod (*asura*) Mahiṣa, celebrated in the Indian *Mahābhārata* epic.

Goddesses without a male consort were initially particular to Mathurā. They seem to have been influenced by images of the Iranian goddess Nanā. Nanā's symbolic animal is a lion. The image of the goddess on her *vāhana* probably influenced the sculpture of the Indian goddess Durgā. While early depictions are relatively small and probably intended for private use, later statues tend to be much larger.

### **The Kushan Pantheon**

The Rabatak inscription commemorates the erection of a sanctuary in honour of Kanishka I and his ancestors. It conveys an impression of the religious world of the Kushans. The sanctuary served the veneration of the following gods: Nanā, Omma, Aoromozdo, Mozdoano, Sroshardo, Narasao, Miuro.

The second line legitimises Kanishka's royal authority: "Kanishka ... who has obtained the kingship from Nanā and from all the gods". The gods are worshipped in order to perpetuate the authority: "may they preserve the king of kings, Kanishka, the Kushans, eternally healthy, secure and victorious for ever" (lines 17-18). The majority of the gods mentioned originated in Iran. The coins minted by the two most important Kushan kings, Kanishka I and Huviṣhka, attest to a complex pantheon, with many more gods than the few mentioned in the inscription. These gods are also depicted on coins. Taken together, the images on the two sides of the coin can be interpreted as a representation of the events described in the Rabatak inscription: The king pays homage to the gods that legitimise his kingship. Thus the Kushans themselves worshiped Iranian deities. The god Oesho appears to have commanded particular devotion.

The Buddha and the bodhisattva and future Buddha Maitreya only appear on late coins from the reign of Kanishka I minted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Bodhisattva Maitreya only appears on copper coins. The rare copper coins from the reign of Huviṣhka also feature Hindu deities.

### **The Integration of Deities into Buddhism**

Many of the earliest motifs of Buddhist art in Gandhara can be associated with the integration of popular cults devoted to welfare and prosperity.

Even the veneration of the tree under which the Buddha achieved enlightenment assimilated and supplanted an earlier local cult that was devoted to nature spirits or similar demigods who often resided in trees. There were male nature spirits (*yakṣa*) and female ones (*yakṣī*). Sacrifices were made to them on simple altars (*caitya*).

That these spirits were seen as beings who had converted to Buddhism becomes apparent in some of the most remarkable Gandharan sculptures. Among the best-known is that of a popular couple: the *yakṣa* general Pāñcika and his consort Hārītī. Originally a goddess associated with smallpox, Hārītī looks after the welfare of children. The identification of the couple is based on a much later Buddhist legend. They are also mentioned in a local inscription that can be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

There are, alas, a great many popular deities that cannot be clearly identified. The ancient Brahman gods Brahmā and Indra also supported the Buddhist faith. Indra is often shown as the companion of the Buddha. Occasionally he is shown as a Greek Heracles wielding the thunderbolt of Zeus. The Four Great Kings (*caturmahārāja*) were similarly integrated into Buddhism.



### **Buddhism in Gandhara ...**

The works of art found in Gandhara deal primarily with Buddhist subjects. This exhibition focuses on the development and form of Gandharan Buddhism.

#### **... its Presentation in the Exhibition**

This is also reflected in the exhibition architecture in the shape of an abstracted stupa. Based on the typical centrally planned building at the heart of a Gandharan monastery, it presents archaeological finds, exemplary reliquaries and cult figures of the Buddha that symbolise the Buddha and his teachings.

Visitors can perform the ancient circumambulation ritual by circling the stupa in a clockwise direction. This path along a series of 36 reliefs traces the spiritual development of the Buddha from the first vow in earlier incarnations to the distribution of the sacred relics.

#### **...and its Development in Gandhara**

Buddhism became popular in Gandhara in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, though the Buddha was already known by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. He was venerated through pious donations and the construction of stupas.

Stupas and the sacred relics deposited inside them initially represented first and foremost the historic Buddha. Later they came to represent his teachings as well. The presence of stupas is an incontestable sign for the establishment of Buddhism in a given region.

The Buddha himself was first represented during the Kushan period. His image marks a change in the conception of the Buddha from a specific historical figure to a supernatural being. This is also evident in the depictions of the life of the Buddha which begin to focus increasingly on his miracles.

#### **Symbols of the Buddha and his Teachings**

Early Buddhist images avoided the representation of the founder of the religion as a human figure. Instead they resorted to symbols that allude to the Buddha and his teachings.

One such symbol is the tree under which the Buddha achieved enlightenment (*bodhi*). Another is an empty seat (*āsana*) or a parasol (*chatra*). A wheel can symbolise the Buddha himself, but also the wheel of the law (*dhamma/dharma*) that he set into motion. Special symbols are his footprint (*pada*) and the stupa. Feet of deities or high-ranking figures were the object of particular veneration. The attention to feet in the depiction of Hindu gods reflects a similar tradition.

The stupa was originally the repository of the mortal remains of the Buddha. This alone accounts for its extraordinary status. It can also contain other valuables as well as sacred texts. For this reason it symbolises the teachings.

#### **How did the Stupa Evolve?**

The stupa evolved from the burial mounds erected above the mortal remains of the dead. The first Buddhist stupas were built for the remains of Buddha Śākyamuni and his predecessors.

Later stupas contain not only the relics of a Buddha but also those of other Buddhist saints or an assortment of special objects or texts. The stupa is the focus of veneration in a monastery.

#### **What are the Elements of a Stupa?**

Traditionally the stupa consists of the following elements: A cylindrical base, the drum, supports a hemispherical dome, the *aṇḍa* (egg). This in turn supports a post anchored in a square platform. The post is surmounted by one or more canopies and represents the axis of the world. The fence surrounding it is called *harmikā*. A processional path, the *pradakṣiṇāpatha*, circles the base of the dome.

#### **The Stupa in Gandhara**

As Gandharan Buddhism developed, a specifically Gandharan type of stupa emerged. The drum is raised and rests on a new square podium. Sometimes lion columns mark the four corners. Base and drum are structured with Corinthian pilasters. The space between the pilasters is sometimes used for narrative



scenes, usually from the life of the Buddha, or series of Buddha and bodhisattva images. Often a central stupa is surrounded by several secondary ones. These small stupas were erected as votive offerings.

### **The Life of the Buddha**

Many stupas feature scenes from the life of the Buddha. Key episodes frequently decorate elaborate false dormers as well as the *harmikā* platform on top of the dome. Most often, however, they form a frieze of individual scenes that girdles the base or the cylinder of the stupa.

The scenes are separated by pilasters. Arranged chronologically and clockwise, the scenes line the path of the ritual circumambulation. Stories about the Buddha's earlier incarnations are rare, with one notable exception: the legend of his first vow before Buddha Dīpaṃkara.

This story transforms the Buddha legend into a path of spiritual progress, from the first encounter with a Buddha a long time ago to the attainment of nirvana and the distribution of the relics. A complete circle of the stupa corresponds to one life cycle of the Buddha, or at least part of it.

Of particular significance are the four key events, namely birth, enlightenment, first sermon and nirvana. Gandharans also attached great importance to the Buddha's renunciation of the comforts of the palace. The 'Great Departure' was often depicted in the central panel of a false dormer. Gandharan art offers a wealth of hitherto unknown details, and many a scene is unique.

Later a number of scenes from the life of the Buddha achieved iconic status and were represented without narrative framework. An example of this is the Buddha's extreme asceticism.

### **The Image of the Buddha**

The Buddha was first depicted in human form in the Kushan period. These images evolved along two independent lines: the Mathura School and Gandharan art. The Mathura type emphasises the royal aspect of the Buddha. The Gandharan Buddha is of the serene meditative type that was to gain general currency.

### **What does the Buddha Look Like?**

The body of the Buddha bears the characteristic marks that distinguish individuals of extraordinary destiny (*mahāpuruṣa*). Among the most obvious is the cranial protuberance (*uṣṇīṣa*), which is generally hidden by a topknot, and the whorl of hair between the eyebrows (*ūrṇā*). The arms of the Buddha are said to reach the knees. His fingers and toes are webbed. This last mark may have been informed by the technical exigencies of stone sculpture. The palms and the soles of his feet are marked with a wheel. His footprints bear further auspicious symbols.

### **The Deification of the Buddha**

Donor inscriptions of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC indicate that the Buddha was seen as a divine being even before the first images in human form emerged. This is also borne out by early sculptures of superhuman size.

As Gandharan art developed, so did the image of the Buddha. The Buddha grew increasingly transcendent, yet accessible in his paradises through meditation, albeit only by select devotees and sages.

### **What are Relics?**

A reliquary containing relics of the Buddha or of another Buddhist saint was deposited inside or beneath the stupa. The relic usually consists of the remains of a cremation. It represents the essence of the stupa and endows it with spiritual significance.

### **What are Reliquaries?**

Originally reliquaries were simply carved stone vases with a lid. These were deposited in chambers constructed from slabs of stone. In Gandhara even simple vases were lavishly decorated.

### **Types of Reliquaries**

There are many different types of reliquaries. The most common was probably a cylindrical container. This shape also appears in reliefs. Sculptures hold them in their hands. The relic itself was usually placed in a



small container made of gold or silver. These small containers were deposited inside larger ones. Reliquaries could also be made of precious metals. One example is the copper vessel from Shah-ji-ki Dheri. It is attributed to the Kushan king Huvishka. Other reliquaries take the form of miniature stupas.

### **What is Inside a Reliquary?**

In most cases the actual relic has not survived. The reliquaries tend to be filled with a range of offerings such as jewellery, precious stones, coins and even figurative works of art.

### **Changing Buddhism**

Buddhism changed considerably over the course of the Kushan reign in Gandhara. This change is also reflected in the art of the period.

### **Do the Roots of Mahāyāna Buddhism Lie in Gandhara?**

The increasing emphasis on the transcendent nature of the Buddha suggests that a great many of the concepts that were to characterise Mahāyāna Buddhism were developed in Gandhara. The deification and multiplication of the Buddha and a novel conception of the role of the bodhisattva – originally a person striving for enlightenment – can be documented very early on in Gandhara.

Maitreya, the current bodhisattva and future Buddha, was not the only bodhisattva in Gandhara to develop an iconography all his own.

The Buddha came to represent the Absolute and the historic Buddha its manifestation for the benefit of humanity. Buddhas were also depicted in paradises known as Buddha-fields. They are accessible to believers and one can be reborn in them.

### **What is a Bodhisattva?**

The Buddha achieved enlightenment under the bodhi tree. The word *bodhi* means enlightenment or awakening. The word *sattva* means being or existence. Thus a bodhisattva is a being aspiring to enlightenment.

Bodhisattva is the term used for the Buddha before his enlightenment. Later it was also applied to earlier incarnations of the historic Buddha. In one such earlier incarnation

he made his first vow to strive for enlightenment before another, earlier Buddha. Everybody who has made this vow is a bodhisattva.

### **Bodhisattvas in Gandharan Art**

Gandharan art features three main bodhisattvas: Maitreya, Śākyamuni and a third bodhisattva. Like Śākyamuni, this third bodhisattva is turbaned and holds a wreath, but he cannot be identified with any degree of certainty. Śākyamuni is often shown during his first meditation under the rose apple tree and during his extreme asceticism. Gandharan bodhisattvas wear opulent jewellery. Adapted Western motifs also appear frequently.

In the late flowering of Gandharan art that third unidentified bodhisattva was replaced by a bodhisattva holding a blossom. Comparison with later sculptures suggests an identification as bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

### **A Forward-looking Concept**

Here a novel concept forges a new path. Bodhisattvahood itself is an ideal worth aspiring to. The bodhisattva postpones his own enlightenment in order to assist other people.

Mahāyāna Buddhism, which enshrined this notion, features a great many bodhisattvas in a wide range of Buddha-fields of different forms. At the same time the bodhisattva became a miracle worker, capable even of manifesting gods. This is usually referred to as an ‘emanation’ of a god. For this reason an increasing number of cults were devoted to bodhisattvas.



## **Maitreya**

Maitreya is the future Buddha. For this reason he is currently a bodhisattva. Depictions of Maitreya provide a striking illustration of the gradual transformation of Gandharan Buddhism. His portrait on the copper coins minted by Kanishka I and numerous Maitreya sculptures in Gandhara testify to an early Maitreya cult.

### **The Distinguishing Marks of Maitreya**

In addition to the usual marks that distinguish individuals of extraordinary destiny, Maitreya's hair is gathered into a knot. He wears the sacred Brahman initiation thread (*yajñopavīta*) and carries a small bottle. These details allude to his coming reincarnation as a Brahman. The hair of his topknot is often gathered in a double loop and decorated with a large pear-shaped jewel. A crescent moon is another identifier of Maitreya. His right hand, palm facing inwards, can be raised to his shoulder in a gesture of reverence. Yet, since none of these characteristics are exclusive to Maitreya, the future Buddha can only be identified with any degree of certainty when several of them occur together.

### **Maitreya's Significance in Buddhism**

To this day, it is the dearest wish of many lay devotees of Theravāda Buddhism to be reborn with Maitreya when he achieves Buddhahood in the city of Ketumati. Maitreya is believed to reside in Tuṣita Heaven where he awaits his final reincarnation. This puts him in reach of advanced practitioners of meditation; lay devotees can aspire to go there after their reincarnation. Both concepts are evident in Gandharan art, although not always clearly separated.

### **Paradises**

Later Gandharan stelae feature the motif of a triad: the teaching Buddha seated on a conspicuous lotus, accompanied on either side by a bodhisattva.

One is Maitreya; the other one – turbaned and holding a wreath – cannot be clearly identified. They are iconographically related to Brahmā and Indra, and therefore represent the Brahman and the warrior caste. When the second unknown bodhisattva carries a lotus blossom, he is identified as bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

The triad also formed the basis of much more complex stelae. These emphasise the wonder-working power of the Buddha and of fully fledged bodhisattvas. They show paradises or 'Buddha-fields' (*buddhakṣetra*). These are realms of influence created by the Buddha that are depicted either as a celestial palace or as a world rising from a lotus pond.

These 'paradise stelae' attest to the emergence in Gandhara of concepts that are typical of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus Mahāyāna Buddhism fosters the notion of the heavenly realms of Buddha Amitābha (*Sukhāvatī*) and of Buddha Akṣobhya (*Abhirati*). While these were already known in Gandhara, they cannot always be identified clearly in Gandharan art.

### **Art of the Swat Valley**

The Swat River Valley lies in the very north of Gandhara and is distinguished by a highly independent artistic style. Moreover, many of the sculptures and reliefs found in Butkara I, Saidu Sharif and other archaeological sites are among the earliest Buddhist works of art in Gandhara. Unfortunately not much remains of the earliest cycle of the life of the Buddha from Saidu Sharif. Several scenes have thus far been found in Swat alone.

### **Styles of the Swat Valley**

Archaeologists distinguish three styles, of which the 'drawing style' is the earliest. The majority of objects shown here is executed in this style and can thus be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Typical of the 'drawing style' are large flat forms. Hair and drapery folds of the figures are rendered in forceful parallel grooves. The expressive faces have vividly drawn eyes, complete with an incised iris and pupil. Reliefs in this style



are characterised by very tightly spaced figures with heads placed at alternating height. Female figures wear local costume and jewellery.

The 'drawing style' was followed by the 'naturalistic style', which adopted numerous Hellenistic details, and then by the 'stereometric style', which is more schematic than the 'drawing style'. Independent of their style, works of art from Swat are instantly recognisable. Unlike the works from the Peshawar Valley, they are made of greenish stone.

### **City and Monastery**

The large Buddhist monasteries of Gandhara did not exist in a self-contained vacuum. They have to be seen against the financial, social and cultural background of the nearby cities. This relationship is best demonstrated in the Taxila Valley, home to three consecutive urban settlements, namely Bhir Mound, Sirkap and Sirsukh which were surrounded by numerous monasteries. Similarly well researched is the area of Barikot in the Swat Valley. Monasteries are also known to have existed on the outskirts of the historical cities of Puruṣapura (Peshawar) and Puṣkalāvātī (30 km northeast of Peshawar).

While there is still very little research into the interaction between the cities and between city and monastery, there is much to suggest that Gandharan culture was the product of a cosmopolitan society. This is borne out by archaeological excavations, by the depiction of architecture in narrative reliefs, by the architectural elements of monasteries and by donor portraits and precious jewellery.

### **Architectural Motifs**

One of the most fascinating aspects of Gandharan culture is the extraordinary wealth of imported motifs that were adapted and integrated into the local architecture to respond to local cultural and religious needs. Corner pilasters, garland-holders, brackets and capitals are often decorated with figures or executed in the shape of figures. Near-classical and modified Corinthian pilasters serve as scene dividers in friezes and structure architecture. Cornices are designed in a variety of ways. Bands of garlands and other plant motifs girdle the building. Later monuments also feature series of arcades.

The areas between the structuring pilasters on the podium and on the drum provide space for series of narrative and figurative reliefs. On early stupas these reliefs are usually devoted to episodes from the life of the Buddha. Later stupas, on the other hand, tend to be decorated with series of stucco Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

A particular feature of Gandharan stupas are the richly decorated and often large false dormers, many of which consist of several parts. A remarkably well preserved example of a large dormer is the spectacular find from Zar Dheri shown here.

### **Stucco and Clay**

Fired and unfired clay has always been an important artistic medium in South Asia, particularly for objects associated with popular cults. The varied forms of stucco, on the other hand, attained particular significance in Gandharan art alone, both for large-scale sculptures and for highly detailed decoration.

The most important archaeological site for stucco sculpture is Hadda near Jalalabad in Afghanistan. Excavations in Taxila also yielded several monuments with rich stucco decoration.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century, towards the end of Gandharan art, stucco was more prominent than stone sculpture and may have replaced it altogether. This went in hand with an increasing simplification of form, at times also with repetitive detailing.

Unlike stone sculptures, a relatively large number of stucco sculptures still bear traces or even large parts of polychromy. Towards the end of Gandharan art clay gradually came to replace stucco.



### **Where do the Religious Finds Come From?**

The exhibition focuses predominantly on works of art that once decorated the sacred structures within a monastic complex. The wealth of the monasteries is unthinkable without the support of the inhabitants of a nearby city.

Not all religious items were found in monasteries, the cities also yielded devotional objects, among them small shrines and ritual objects from Buddhist, Brahman and non-Indian contexts. They show that religious symbols left their mark on the everyday.

Bhir Mound, the oldest city in the Taxila Valley, yielded terracottas of nature spirits (*yakṣa*) that are associated with popular fertility cults. Evidence suggests that these go back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

All of the ritual figures found in the cities are relatively small, which suggests that they were in private hands. Some of the urban finds were obviously imported goods. Of particular note are the different incense burners. The quality of the workmanship and the decoration attest not only to a long tradition but also to Gandhara's far-reaching trade connections.

### **Religion and Luxury**

Excavations of urban areas, for example Bhir Mound and Sirkap in Taxila and Barikot in Swat, attest to Gandhara's extensive trade connections. The far-reaching economic and cultural exchange is clearly reflected in urban luxury goods. This is also true for their religious symbolism.

Four ivories with fence motifs, which were found in Begram, had been imported from India. They exemplify the nuanced assimilation of religious and popular symbols in a specific cultural context. Religious symbols or decorative motifs with religious origins were also used in gold and silver jewellery, although by no means in every item.

The exhibition presents jewellery and toilet articles from Taxila. They exemplify the sophistication of Gandharan applied arts. The outstanding skill of Gandharan craftsmen is evident in the extremely fine granulation work and in the way in which thin sheets of gold and silver were fashioned into complex anklets. The elegant toilet articles skilfully combine a variety of materials.

### **Gandhara's Legacy**

Travelogues by Chinese monks attest to the fact that for centuries after the decline of the Kushan dynasty, Gandhara remained a stronghold of Buddhism, defying the changed political situation brought on, for example, by the invasion of Hephthalites (White Huns).

### **How Far did Gandharan Culture Radiate?**

Gandharan Buddhism and its art exerted a powerful influence on Central Asia, China and the Indian subcontinent with Kashmir Afghanistan played an important role in preserving and spreading Gandharan culture beyond its heartland. From there it radiated to Central Asia, the oasis towns of the Tarim Basin and into China. In China the Gandharan influence is reflected in unusual typologies

In Central Asia it affected themes and styles alike. In the region of present-day eastern and central Afghanistan Gandharan art experienced a late flowering. The region of Paitava north of Kabul, for example, fostered a style all of its own with unique iconographic types. Of particular note are depictions of the Buddha bringing forth water and fire from his body. They are based on the legendary miracle of Śrāvastī. Spectacular, too, are the colossal rock-cut Buddhas carved around 600 AD in Bamiyan in Afghanistan. Less awe-inspiring are the clay sculptures that emerge in Afghanistan and numerous wall paintings with wonderful multiple depictions of the Buddha. In present-day Pakistan Buddhism survived for centuries, above all in the mountainous regions, but without the international contacts that had shaped Gandharan art earlier and without the great wealth of the monasteries. Crude stone reliefs and bronzes, often depicting subjects associated with Mahāyāna Buddhism and executed in a distinctive local style, are characteristic of later art of the Swat region. Fantastic bronzes were produced under the Palola-Shahi dynasty who ruled the area around Chilas and Gilgit on the present-day Karakorum Highway from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. Yet Gilgit has yielded little evidence of Buddhist art from the time of Gandhara



artistic prime.

### **Great Buddha of Bamiyan (Afghanistan)**

The two monumental rock-cut Buddha sculptures in the Bamiyan Valley were dynamited by the Taliban in 2001, reducing to rubble the most impressive testament to the late flowering of Gandharan culture in present-day Afghanistan. In 2003 the valley was declared a World Heritage Site. Since then an international group of experts has been working on the sustainable conservation of this cultural landscape. This entails the consolidation of surviving stucco fragments and the conservation and painstaking cataloguing of the countless sculpture fragments on the ground. These works are carried out by the German National Committee of ICOMOS under the direction of Prof. Dr. Michael Petzet. The project is subsidised by the Federal Foreign Office and supported by the German Embassy in Kabul.

The Department of Urban History at the RWTH University in Aachen under the direction of Prof. Dr. Michael Jansen has been in charge of documenting the valley and of coordinating the work on the Buddha sculptures since the start of the works. This involved the evaluation of historical photographs in an international cooperation with colleagues at the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (Tokyo/Nara). In collaboration with the Institute of Building Archaeology of the Vienna University of Technology, the latest laser technology was used to map the geometry of the niche of the smaller Buddha. The data obtained permitted the three-dimensional reconstruction of the form of the destroyed figure. A stereo projection allows visitors to experience the sculpture. This reconstruction serves as a working model, a tool in the planning and discussion of strategies for future consolidation and repairs.

### **The Destruction of the Great Buddhas**

The early Arab conquerors of Sīstān in the 7<sup>th</sup> century pillaged sanctuaries of Iranian deities in eastern Afghanistan before moving on to Bamiyan in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. What happened to the Great Buddhas at that time is unknown. What is interesting, however, is that the word *but* (derived from Buddha) for ‘idol’ entered the Persian language at that time.

### **The History of the Bamiyan Buddhas**

It is likely that the heads of the two large Buddhas were defaced at the very start of Muslim rule, in order to rob them of their ‘soul’. In 1695 soldiers of Aurangzeb, the ruler of the Mughal Empire, used the Great Buddhas for target practice. The same is reported about soldiers serving under the Afghan emir ‘Abd ar-Rahman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These comparatively moderate acts of destruction did evidently not satisfy the fanaticism of the Taliban who had come to power in Afghanistan in 1996. They sought to wipe out all traces of pre-Islamic religiosity and to demonstrate their unqualified contempt for distinctions like ‘World Heritage Site’. Moreover, the destruction allowed them to humiliate the despised local Shiite Hazara population who held the sculptures in great respect. The Taliban dynamited the Bamiyan-Buddhas in March 2001.

## **Catalogue**

### **Gandhara – The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan**

384 pages with more than 400 color illustrations

Format: 24,5 x 28 cm

German

Museum edition: 29 EUR

Trade edition: [Verlag Philipp von Zabern](http://www.verlag-philipp-von-zabern.de)

ISBN-10: 380533916X

ISBN-13: 978-3805339162



**Preview 2009 / 2010**  
*subject to alteration*

**Amedeo Modigliani**

**17 April – 30 August 2009**

Amedeo Modigliani was one of the most important artists of the 20th century. His works have long since gained iconic status in our collective pictorial memory. The Art and Exhibition Hall is holding a comprehensive retrospective exhibition to pay tribute to this outstanding artist, who died tragically young at the age of only 35. Born in Italy in 1884, Modigliani was a painter, draughtsman and sculptor. With the exception of a handful of landscapes, his creative energy was entirely devoted to portraits and nudes. Modigliani's paintings are deeply rooted in Italian art history, drawing particularly on the formal languages of the Renaissance and Mannerism. These he combined with elements from Expressionism, Cubism and Symbolism as well as African sculpture, whose perceived primitivism and iconic presence equally fascinated many other avant-garde artists of his day. While Modigliani's work cannot be easily classified as belonging to any contemporary styles such as Cubism or Fauvism, it bears eloquent testimony to the restlessness and exuberance of an artist only too aware of his own vulnerability and mortality, and who needed the euphoria of intoxication to live and work. Even today, Modigliani's idiosyncratic, at times melancholy portraits have lost none of their power to captivate the viewer. The exhibition is structured biographically, reflecting the decisive turning points of his life. The Art and Exhibition Hall hopes to present a representative selection of paintings, drawings and sculptures from 1900 to 1919, giving a vivid impression of the oeuvre of this exceptional artist.

**Summit of the Modern Art**

**The Kunstmuseum Winterthur**

**24 April – 23 August 2009**

This summit of leading modernist artists provides a veritable feast of outstanding paintings and sculptures – and offers the chance to trace the development from Impressionism to contemporary art through this unique collection of around 240 paintings, sculptures and drawings. This remarkable exhibition at the Art and Exhibition Hall in Bonn, on show from 24 April to 23 August, comprises works from the Winterthur Art Museum by a range of artists whose names seem to read like a "Who's Who" of the art world: Arp, Artschwager, Beckmann, Bonnard, Brancusi, Braque, Calder, Cézanne, de Chirico, Delacroix, Delaunay, Degas, Ernst, Fontana, Giacometti, van Gogh, Guston, Hodler, Kandinsky, Kelly, Kokoschka, Kounellis, Léger, Lehmbruck, Magritte, Maillol, Merz, Miró, Mondrian, Monet, Morandi, Picasso, Renoir, Richter, Rodin, Schlemmer, Sisley, Tanguy, Tapiès and many more. The exceptional collection of the Winterthur Art Museum, offering a complete overview of the period, can be favourably compared to the collections at internationally renowned museums such as the Guggenheim or the Museum of Modern Art. Gerhard Richter even named the Winterthur Art Museum as his favourite museum.

**James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific**

**28 August 2009 – 10 January 2010**

The British explorer, navigator and cartographer James Cook (1728–1779) achieved world fame for leading three expeditions into the vast and uncharted waters of the Pacific Ocean. He was the first to survey and map New Zealand, Australia and the South Pacific islands, completing our modern image of the world and finally defeating the idea of a mythical southern continent.

The exhibition includes around 500 original exhibits presenting the voyages of James Cook and the international team of scientists and artists accompanying him. Their work during the European enlightenment period contributed new insights to a host of disciplines from navigation and astronomy to natural history, philosophy and art. It even led to the birth of a new science: the field of ethnology and ethnography.

As early as the end of the 18th century many of the ethnographic and natural history objects from diverse



Pacific cultures, which were collected during the three Cook voyages, were spread into various collections all over Europe. Now, for the first time, they are being reunited for this exhibition in Bonn. Many of the objects are of incalculable value to art historians since such exquisite feather ornaments, wooden sculptures and other Oceanic artefacts can no longer be found in the Pacific region.

The ethnographic exhibits are supplemented by magnificent paintings and drawings by the artists accompanying Cook on his voyages. Their works offer a fascinating insight into the explorers' euphoric yet curious view of the exotic South Sea landscapes. Ship models, original sea charts and navigation instruments also provide a vivid introduction to the world of James Cook's voyages. The exhibition is a cooperation between the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, the Kunsthistorisches Museum – Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (March to July 2010), and the Historisches Museum, Bern (August 2010 to January 2011).

**Markus Lüpertz – A Retrospective**  
**9 October 2009 – 17 January 2010**

The Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn has presented a series of major monographic exhibitions on German painters starting with Gerhard Richter in 1993/94, and continuing with Sigmar Polke in 1997 and 2000/01, and Georg Baselitz in 2004. The series now presents a comprehensive retrospective of works by Markus Lüpertz. The exhibition, covering around 2000m<sup>2</sup>, is showcasing a representative selection of around 130 works – paintings, drawings, and sculptures – by this leading contemporary artist. Almost uniquely among artists today, he cultivates the gestural and rhetorical posture of the "genius", the epitome of the artist in the classical sense. The exhibition has taken on the task of looking behind the "grand gestures", identifying the conscious playing with the role of the artist and exploring Lüpertz's oeuvre in all its passionate, intellectual, serious and multifaceted dimensions. Here, we meet an artist who never felt indebted to any one style, never believed in the sheer mimetic quality of art, and who, as a 'creator', draws on a vast wealth of material to create anew, freely and with his own individual handwriting.

Art and Exhibition Centre of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 4, 53113 Bonn

Press

Telephone +49 (0)228-9171-204/5/6 Fax +49 (0)228-9171-211  
www.bundeskunsthalle.de / e-mail: [majer-wallat@kah-bonn.de](mailto:majer-wallat@kah-bonn.de)