



GANDHARAN SCULPTURE IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, PRAGUE.

Ladislav STANČO¹

In the following article, I'd like to resume publication of the Gandharan art in the Czech collections.² In spite of a small number of sculptures in the collection of the National Gallery in Prague,³ there is no publication of the whole group until now.⁴ The Department of Asian Art of the National Gallery was established in 1952 and it was originally thought as a collection which would have been put together with this of the Náprstek Museum in Prague, but lack of a representative exhibition building didn't render it possible at that time.⁵ These problems continued for the next forty years and the treasures of Asian Art were presented to the public just like short-time thematic exhibitions on the various places during this period.⁶ Since 1972, the collection was deposited at the Zbraslav castle near Prague, but the exposition was not opened until 15th October 1998.

The collections of antiquities concerning southern and south-eastern Asia are much less numerous than those of Japan or China. At the exhibition, there are only six pieces of the

¹ Institute for Classical Archaeology, Charles University, Celetná 20, 110 00 Prague, E-mail: lstanco@yahoo.de

² Cf. Stančo. 2000 and 2001a; On the other hand, I prepare publication of the Gandharan clay figurines from the Náprstek Museum and catalogue of the coins of Bactria and Northern India in Hellenistic and Kushan Period in the Czech collections.

³ I'm grateful to Dr Filip Suchomel, the director of the Asian Collections of National Gallery in Prague for allowing me to study this material. I owe many thanks to Dr Zdenka Klimtová, former curator of South and South-East Asian collections of the National Gallery, for her patient help, information and advice. Not least, I wish to thank to Professor Jan Bouzek for his support, consultation and corrections of the text. Finally, I feel indebted to the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic (G51383/2000) and Charles University, Prague (292/2000-2001/A-HN/FF) for financial support, which made possible to accomplish this project.

⁴ Z. Klimtová has published two of them recently in exhibition catalogues (in Czech), cf. *Buddha. Obraz Buddhy Šákjamuniho v asijském umění*. 1996, pp. 7–10, figs. 1–2; *Mistrovská díla asijského umění ze sbírek Národní galerie v Praze*, 1998, p. 20.

⁵ Cf. essay of L. Hájek "Umění orientálních zemí u nás/ Oriental Art in our Country" (in Czech) in: *Auboyer* 1968, pp. 180–183.

⁶ Cf. L. Kesner "Sbírký asijského umění v Národní galerii/ Asian Art in the Collection of the National Gallery" (in Czech) in: *Mistrovská díla asijského umění ze sbírek Národní Galerie*, 1998, pp. 7–14.

Gandharan sculpture, two of them are borrowed from the Náprstek Museum;⁷ the others are at the depository. Originally, the core of the collection represent reliefs inherited from the painter Emil Filla (Vp 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785). They were purchased in 1961 and three of them (Vp 780, 781, 785) have recently been returned in restitution to his heirs, despite of it, I have incorporated them into the catalogue.⁸ Other works were gradually purchased from private subjects. There are two pieces included in the catalogue, which were about to be purchased at the time of preparing this article. One interesting controversial head from the collection was excluded by myself, because there was no reason to regard it as a Gandharan one and I dealt with it elsewhere.⁹

Despite many important contributions to the Gandharan sculptures, which were made in the last decades, there are still more questions to answer. Short look back into the M. Taddei's (about 20 years old!) article shows some of these unanswered questions and could inspire us to further research.¹⁰ In spite of the lack of special studies in some aspects of the Gandharan art, like iconography, decorative patterns, relative and absolute chronology, does not allow me to establish the exact dates of origin of our reliefs and sculpture fragments. I hope the future research to be able to do more in this field, at least on base of the recent information in searching for the date of Kanishka and Kushan chronology in general, got in the last few years. Thus the dates given in the present catalogue should be taken as approximate.

In comparison with the collection of the Naprstek Museum, there are no exceptional pieces in the National Gallery from the iconographical point of view. They are not so complicated in meaning and, above all, they are not so numerous. But their importance grows in context of the excellent exhibition of the National Gallery: they show the very beginning of the Buddhist art and help to understand the later development of this art in context of Central Asian and Far Eastern traditions. As in the previous catalogue, our colleagues Richard Příklad and Marek Chvátal kindly prepared the technical appendix, which is added below in this volume.¹⁰ See pp. 17–18.

Catalogue

1. Head of Buddha. Stucco (see fig. 1).

National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 782 (2132/4)¹². H. 0.28 m.

This head is well preserved. Nose, prolonged ear-lobes and right side of top-knot are irregularly broken as well as neck. The face is regular, round and softly modelled. Chin is wide and massive, lips are elaborated expressively and in detail. The eyes are slightly closed, which suggests meditation. Hair is combed backward and makes regular waves. The top-knot is quite high, but tiny. A small circle marks *urna*. The whole face makes harmonic impression and a good light produces delicate light-shadow effect on it. Although the place of origin is unknown, comparison with the best pieces of stucco sculptures from Hadda suggest the first half of the 3rd century AD as a date of origin.

Purchased from the Emil Filla collection in 1961.

Published: Kesner, L. (Ed.), *Mistrovská díla asijského umění ze sbírek Národní galerie*, 1998, p. 20; *Buddha; Obraz Buddhy Šákjamuniho v asijském umění. National Gallery Catalogue*, 1996, pp. 7–10, fig. 2. (both published by Z. Klimtová in Czech).

⁷ Cf. Stančo 2001a, Cat. nos. 9 and 10.

⁸ Mr Krejčí has kindly agreed with this publication.

⁹ Stančo 2001b.

¹⁰ Taddei 1984, pp. 154–175.

¹¹ See pp. 29–30.

¹² I notice the inventory number (Vp ...) as well as the acquisition number.



Fig. 1. Head of Buddha



→ Fig. 2. Buddha in meditation

Cf.: *Auboyer* 1968, pp. 164–165, fig. 54, head of Buddha from Hadda. The known head from the British Museum offers a good comparison in schist (OA 1929.11-4.2). Here cf. in slightly bigger scale the similar proportions, form of hairstyle, eyes, nose and chin, however the main features of the schist head are more sharply executed. For the best picture see *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. no. 39; For the similar stucco head from Jaulian (Taxila) see *Pugačenkova* 1982, ill. 47.

2. Buddha in meditation. Grey schist (see fig. 2).
National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 783 (2123/5). H. 0.27 m.

The well-preserved figure of meditating Buddha. Right side of the Buddha's seat irregularly broken. Halo, *ushnisa*, nose and the right knee are damaged, surface of the face slightly worn. Back side has crude chisel grooves. The head, with large plain halo behind, is round with hair undulated backwards into the bright *ushnisa*. The face is smooth, not in detail. The eyes half-opened, and the lips are narrow, although mouth is bright. The modelling of drapery is rather schematic and linear. The drapery folds are created by parallel deeper (narrower) and higher (brighter) strips with no plasticity. Especially the folds cov-

ering the hands and those behind them and on the legs are marked just by engraved lines. Buddha seats on the rectangular seat with symmetrically decorated front side, and the undulated line above suggests a low cushion. The execution of the whole relief is schematic and rustic.

Probably 2nd century AD.

Purchased from the Emil Filla collection in 1961.

Published: Kesner, L. (Ed.), *Mistrovská díla asijského umění ze sbírek Národní galerie*, Praha, 1998, p. 20; *Buddha. Obraz Buddhy Šákjamuniho v asijském umění. National Gallery Catalogue*, Praha, 1996, pp. 7–10, fig. 1. (both published by Z. Klímová in Czech).

See Nagar 1981, pp. 26–27; For the pattern of the seat see Plaeschke 1961, p. 144, Abb. 12 and 15; Ingholt 1957, Pl. XXI, 1; Ibid. fig. 55; This pattern could be a simplification of floral (rosette) pattern, which appeared also on the Buddha's seat, see Ingholt 1957, Pl. XIII, 2; For Buddha in *dhyanamudra* with covered hands by the same kind of drapery folds see Zwalf 1996, Cat. nos. 32, 33, but these examples are much better executed; see also the central Buddha figure Verardi 1991, Fig. 14; One can find the same iconographical type of meditating Buddha, in much simple form, on the relief from the Merv oasis, see Koshe-lenko 1985, p. 241, Pl. XCIX, 1.

3. Bodhisattva Maytreia (?) in meditation. Relief fragment. Greenish grey schist (see fig. 3). National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 323 (2132/1). H. 0.262 m.



Fig. 3. Bodhisattva Maytreia (?) in meditation.

The relief is irregularly broken above the waist of the figure, lower part is lost as well as the left arm. The edge of halo, nose and right fore arm are broken. The torso of the male figure has a necklace, earrings, which identifies him as Bodhisattva. There are no traces of garment on the preserved part of the body, except the small part of the drapery on the left shoulder. That used to be probably an *uttariya*, which lies over this shoulder and arm (here missing).¹³ The head is round with hair undulating to the high *usnisa*. The eyes are considerably prolonged and nearly closed, indicating meditation.

3rd century AD.

Purchased from private subject in 1956.

For the hairstyle see Tissot 1985, Fig. 171.

¹³ For the details of Buddha's and Bodhisattva's garment see Zwalf 1996, pp. 39–49 and Tissot 1985.



Fig. 4. Bodhisattva.

4. Bodhisattva. Grey schist (see fig. 4).

National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 1758 (2123/7). H. 0.153 m, W. 0.534 m.

The upper part of this gable panel is broken; figures, originally flanked the upper throne are lost. The Bodhisattva's face as well as the decorated margin above him and attendants to his left, are broken. The back side has chisel grooves. The curved upper margin has volutes at the bottoms and saw-tooth decor. *Bodhisattva* is depicted sitting in *abhayamudra* in the centre on the throne and holding the small water flask in the hanging left hand. *Bodhisattva* is flanked by other figures, sitting on seats or standing behind the former. This scene could represent, according to the Z. Klimtová interpretation, the Bodhisattva Maytreia in the Tusita heaven.¹⁴ More accurately, there is no Maytreia, but *Bodhisattva* (or Buddha-to-be) in the Tusita heaven before his last incarnation. The water bottle in the left hand characterises both of them and identification is usually controversial.

Purchased from private subject in 1964.

2nd-3rd century AD.

For the story with Buddha-to-be meditating in the Tusita heaven see *Ingholt* 1957, p. 51. Cat. no. 8: the relief from the Sikri *stūpa* depicts Buddha sitting on the inverted lotus-throne, meditating about his last birth. However his garment (*sanghati*) is in Buddha style, simple and covers both shoulders, hair-style is still of *Bodhisattva*; For the close parallel and for the assumed appearance of the whole gable see *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. no. 251; For the curved border with volute see *ibid*, Cat. nos. 170, 256.

5. Two scenes with Buddha. Schist (see fig. 5).

National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 3205. 0.113 m, W. 0.37 m.

The well-preserved *stūpa* -drum panel has its left margin broken as well as a part of the pilaster. The left arm of Buddha in the left-hand scene is lost. The upper border slightly worn. In both scenes, one can see Buddha sitting on the simple seat or cushion under the leafy branches, indicating the Bodhi-tree. In the right-hand scene is Buddha meditating in *dhyanamudra*. The two figures flanking him could represent Brahma and Indra entreating Buddha to preach. Beside Brahma, there is Buddha's protector Vajrapani. In the left-hand scene there is Buddha in *abhayamudra* and he is flanked by two turbaned figures, probably worshippers. The scenes are separated and flanked by framed columns with the Corinthian capitals. The execution is simple, crude, with no details.

¹⁴ According to her description in the permanent exhibition; otherwise unpublished.



Fig. 5. Two scenes with Buddha.

2nd century AD.

Purchased from private subject in 2001.

For the ovolo with the pointed leaf pattern as a horizontal dividing element between scenes with Buddha below it and mainly *caitya* arch frieze above, see *Ingholt* 1957, Pl. I, 2; *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. nos. 162–165, 177, 205–206, 218.

6. Panel with a *caitya* arch frieze of four worshippers. Schist (see fig. 6).

National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 3206. H. 0.101 m, W. 0.28 m.

The upper right side of the panel is irregularly broken, upper left side damaged. The top is framed by architrave of five brackets. Below it, there are four arches, each contains a half-length figure. The second figure from the left-hand side is probably youth, others are women. The figures are shown in three-quarter view.

Probably first half of 2nd century AD.

Purchased from private subject in 2001.

See Sikri *stūpa*, *Ingholt* 1957, Pl. I, 1.; For half-length worshippers see *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. no. 391; For the whole composition with a similar half-length figures above the stories from the Buddha's childhood see relief in Lahore, *Ingholt* 1957, figs. 22, 145, 147 and 149.



Fig. 6. Panel with a *caitya* arch frieze of four worshippers.



Fig. 7. Lotus throne flanked by two worshippers.

7. Lotus throne flanked by two worshippers. Grey schist (see fig. 7).

National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 2651 (2132/8). H. 0.7 m, W. 0.205 m, Depth of the relief 0.031 m.

The worshippers beside the lotus throne appears usually as a part of the group in Miracle of Srāvastī, where they used to be interpreted as Luhasudatta and his wife. Buddha preaching is expected to be on the throne and the two figures flanking him are interpreted as representing two Bodhisattvas or Indra and Brahma.¹⁵

Purchased from private subject in 1973.

3rd century AD.

The lotus throne appears in the Buddha's First Sermon scenes, see *Czuma* 1985, Cat. no. 109; *Ingholt* 1957, Cat. nos. 252–257, sometimes the lotus is inverted up side down: *ibid.* Cat. nos. 258–263. For the worshippers below preaching Buddha in Miracle of Srāvastī see *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. nos. 111 and 112. Similar scene but with standing Buddha cf. relief in Peshawar museum Inv. no. 2785. For the small side-thrones, flanking the big one, with standing Bodhisattvas (Maitreya to the right) see *Ingholt* 1957, Cat. nos. 256, 257, 261; *ibid.* Cat. nos. 256, 258, see small figures beside the Buddha's throne.

8. Winged Atlas. Schist (see fig. 8).

Formerly National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 780 (2132/2). H. 0.12 m, W. 0.3 m.

Well-preserved rectangular panel. The upper right corner is broken. The winged beardless youthful Atlas squats in the centre. His hand rests on his legs, the left leg is in a horizontal position and the right one in a vertical position. The lower part of the body is covered with simple non-draped garment. The wings broadly extended, showing three rows of feathers, the lower row is prolonged. Head is turned slightly to his left and shows the wild hair combed in Hellenistic manner. The face is depicted in detail; eye pupils are marked. The images of Atlas like this, I mean on the plain panel, were more popular in Swat Valley (ancient *Uddiyana*) than in Gandhara proper (Peshawar valley and Mardan district).¹⁶ In comparison with the Classical Greek Atlantes our examples have wings and do not support the heaven as they are expected to do.¹⁷

¹⁵ For detailed discussion see *Zwalf* 1996, pp. 126–127.

¹⁶ Cf. *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. nos. 355–378; The figures of Atlantes with no panel appear usually in region around Mardan (Jamalgarhi).

¹⁷ See *LIMC III*, 2, Atlas.



Fig. 8. Winged Atlas.

Purchased from the Emil Filla collection in 1961, returned to his heirs in 1992.
2nd–3rd century AD.

For the panels with the single winged Atlases see *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. nos. 369–372, especially the last example from Swat or Buner. For the similar position of legs see *Ingholt* 1957, Cat. nos. 382–384; For similar composition in more schematic execution see relief from Sahri Bahlol, *Nagar* 1981, p. 52, no. 32. (dated to 2nd century AD).



9. Buddha in meditation. Schist (see fig. 9).

Formerly National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 785 (2123/8). H. 0.27 m.

The figure of Buddha, which is depicted sitting in *dhyana mudra*, has considerable worn surface and right knee is lost. The head had been broken but was restored. The left cheek is damaged, there is a slash from nose-base to the hair on the left side. The regularly draped garment is executed in low relief and covers both shoulders and feet. There is the drapery marked by schematic grooves on the arms and legs.

Purchased from the Emil Filla collection in 1961, returned to his heirs in 1992.

Probably 3rd century AD.

Fig. 9. Buddha in meditation.



Fig. 10. Winged Atlas.

10. Winged Atlas. Schist (see fig. 10).

Formerly National Gallery Inv. no. Vp 781 (2132/3). H. 0.14 m.

The rectangular panel, like the previous one (fig. 8), is well preserved, its surface slightly worn. Naked figure of bearded Atlas sits frontally in the centre of panel. His hands rest on his knees. Chest and abdomen show plasticity of muscles, but the proportions of upper and lower arms are wrong as well as the size of the legs. The wings are widely opened showing four rows of feathers, the last row is very prolonged. The left wing extends up to the bottom left corner. Head with the heavy beard has a low forehead and small eyes; long hair is undulated backward.

Purchased from the Emil Filla collection in 1961, returned to his heirs in 1992.

2nd–3rd century AD.

For the bearded Atlas with large wings and similar position see *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. no. 377; *Ingholt*, Cat. nos. 385–387.

Note

In the catalogue of the Gandharan sculpture of the Náprstek Museum, I published, among the others, also relief with a woman holding a branch in her left hand.¹⁸ I interpreted this scene, in agreement with an earlier opinion, as Maya and the birth of Siddhartha. The woman is actually not Maya herself, but female assistant standing to her right, behind her supporter. For well preserved example see *Zwalf* 1996, Cat. no. 145. This volume also includes technical analysis of the stone sculptures. The above mentioned relief,

¹⁸ Stančo 2001a, Cat. no. 9.

as well as the second loan to the National Gallery from the Náprstek Museum, were added to the following study on the stone material.¹⁹

Abbreviations and bibliography

- Auboyer, J. 1968: *Umění v Afghánistánu / Art of Afghanistan*. Praha.
Buddha. Obraz Buddhy Šákjamuniho v asijském umění / Buddha, Portrait of Buddha Shakiamuni in Asian Art (National Gallery Catalogue), Exhibition catalogue. Praha.
- Czuma, St. 1985: *Kushan Sculpture: Images from early India*. Cleveland.
- LIMC (Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae) III, 2. Zürich und München. 1986.
- Ingholt, H. 1957: *Gandharan Art in Pakistan*. New York.
- Kesner, L. (Ed.) 1998, *Mistrovská díla asijského umění ze sbírkách Národní galerie / Masterpieces of Asian Art from the National Gallery*. Catalogue. Praha.
- Кошеленко, Г. 1995: Древнейшие государства Кавказа и Средней Азии. Москва.
- Nagar, S. D. 1981: *Gandharan Sculpture. A Catalogue of the Collection in the Museum of Art and Archaeology. University of Missouri-Columbia*.
- Pal, P. 1986: *Indian Sculpture. Volume I. A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.
- Plaeschke, H. 1961: Zur Stilentwicklung und Verwendung des Buddhbildes in der Gandharaschule. Wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. X/1, pp. 139–156.
- Pugačenkova, G. A. 1982: *Iskusstvo Gandhary*. Moskva.
- Stančo, L. 2000: Gandharan Toilet Tray with the Image of Scytho-Parthian King Graecolatina Praegensia XVIII. 137–140.
- Stančo, L. 2001a: Gandharan Sculpture of the Náprstek Museum in Prague. *Annals of the Náprstek Museum* 22, pp. 31–64.
- Stančo, L. 2001b: Buddhists in Alexandria? *Studia Hercynia* V, pp. 69–74.
- Stančo, L. 2003: Gandharan Toilet Tray with the Image of Scytho-Parthian King. Graecolatina Praegensia XVII. In print.
- Taddei, M. 1984, Neue Forschungsbelege zur Gandhara-Ikonographie. In: Aus dem Osten des Alexanderreiches. Völker und Kulturen zwischen Orient und Okzident Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indien. Ozols, J. und Thewalt, V. (Hrsg.). Köln. pp. 154–175.
- Tissot, F. 1985: *Gandhara*. Paris.
- Verardi, G. 1991: *Le sculture del Gandhara nel Civico museo archeologico di Milano*. Milano.
- Zwalf, W. 1996: *A Catalogue of Gandharan Sculpture in the British Museum*. 2 vol. London.

¹⁹ Stančo 2001a, Cat. nos. 9 and 12. The Náprstek Museum Inv. nos. A 14 208 and A 18 182.