

# **The Geography of Gandhāran Art**

**Proceedings of the Second International  
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Edited by  
Wannaporn Rienjang  
Peter Stewart

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Finally, and fundamentally, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the Bagri Foundation and to Neil Kreitman, whose generous support has underpinned the Gandhāra Connections project from the outset.

## Editors' note

### Orthography

The editors have aimed for broad, but not dogmatic, consistency in orthography and use of diacritics, as well as some other conventions, throughout this book. We have endeavoured to apply a reasonable compromise between widely varying practices, embracing inconsistency where appropriate.

### Provenance

The Classical Art Research Centre does not normally publish previously unpublished ancient artefacts which have no recorded provenance and have become known since 1970. We seek to avoid adding value and legitimacy to objects whose origins have not been properly documented. We have chosen to make an exception in the case of the heart-shaped lamp reported to have been found in Malakand District, which Stefan Baums interprets in his paper on the basis of a photograph and information provided to him. There are two reasons for this exception. Firstly, the challenges posed by the loss of provenance information are an explicit focus of the paper, which demonstrates how epigraphic evidence may be used to try and mitigate the problem and partially to re-contextualize unprovenanced objects. Secondly, the historical value of the inscription on this object makes it imperative that it should become available to scholarly discussion.

## Contributors

**Stefan Baums** is lead researcher of the Buddhist Manuscripts from Gandhāra project at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and teaches Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit language and literature at the University of Munich. His research focuses on the edition of early Buddhist manuscripts and inscriptions, and on the linguistic description of Gāndhārī. His recent publications include a new corpus and translation of Gandhāran relic inscriptions, and the ongoing Dictionary of Gāndhārī.

**Pia Brancaccio** is a member of the Art and Art History Department at Drexel University, Philadelphia. She teaches courses widely across Asian art. Her research focuses on Buddhist art from South Asia. Her work has addressed various aspects of art and multiculturalism in the ancient world. She is co-editor, with Kurt Behrendt, of *Gandharan Buddhism: Archaeology, Art and Text* (2006).

**Muhammad Ashraf Khan** is Director of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and Chief Editor of the *Journal of Asian Civilizations*. He was formerly Director of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, and former Deputy Director of Taxila Museum. He has conducted extensive excavations and preservation of the Buddhist sites in Taxila, particularly Bādālpur monastery complex and Jinnan Wali Dheri monastery. He is a co-author of *A Catalogue of the Gandhara Stone Sculptures in the Taxila Museum* (2005).

**Zarawar Khan** is an Assistant Professor of Archaeology at the University of Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, of Pakistan. He has participated in excavations at Chitral, Hund, and Sampur Dheri, Baja Swabi under the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. His area of specialization is Buddhist Art, Architecture and Archaeology of Gandhāra. He has published research papers dealing with different aspects of Gandhāran art.

**Muhammad Habibullah Khan Khattak** is former Director of Archaeology, Department of Archaeology and Museums, and former Director (Heritage), Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage, Pakistan. He is currently Chief Editor of the journal *Frontier Archaeology*. His most recent excavation and conservation project includes the Buddhist site of Takht-i-Bāhī. He is also involved in a research collaboration between Leicester University and Hazara University on the origin of the Kalash people (Black Kafirs) of Chitral.

**Abdul Ghafoor Lone** He has carried out excavations at Jinnan Wali Dheri, Badla Pur Taxila, Harappa and Ban Faquirna-Islamabad. His main research interests includes Gandhāran art and history. He is currently working on the documentation of antiquities of the Department of Archaeology and Museums. He is also a co-author of *A Catalogue of the Gandhara Stone Sculptures in the Taxila Museum* (2005), *Taxila, Home of Stucco Art* (2005) and *Gandhara: History, Antiquity, Art and Personalities* (2004).

**Satoshi Naiki** is Assistant Professor at the Center for Cultural Heritage Studies, Kyoto University. His research focuses on the artistic traditions and carving techniques of Gandhāran sculptures, particularly those from the sites of Thareli and Ranigat in the Peshawar valley. His publications include *Gandhāran Sculptures and Buddhism* (2016), which is based on his PhD dissertation at Kyoto University.

**Jason Neelis** is Associate Professor and Chair at the Department of Religion and Culture, Wilfrid Laurier University. His areas of expertise cover South Asian religions, history, literature and languages, Buddhist transmission across Asia, and Gandhāran manuscripts, epigraphy, and archaeology. He is currently directing a project on the Upper Indus petroglyphs and inscriptions in northern Pakistan, and has been working on projects involving avadānas in the first century AD Gāndhārī manuscripts and the Buddhist rebirth narratives in the literary and visual cultures of Gandhāra.

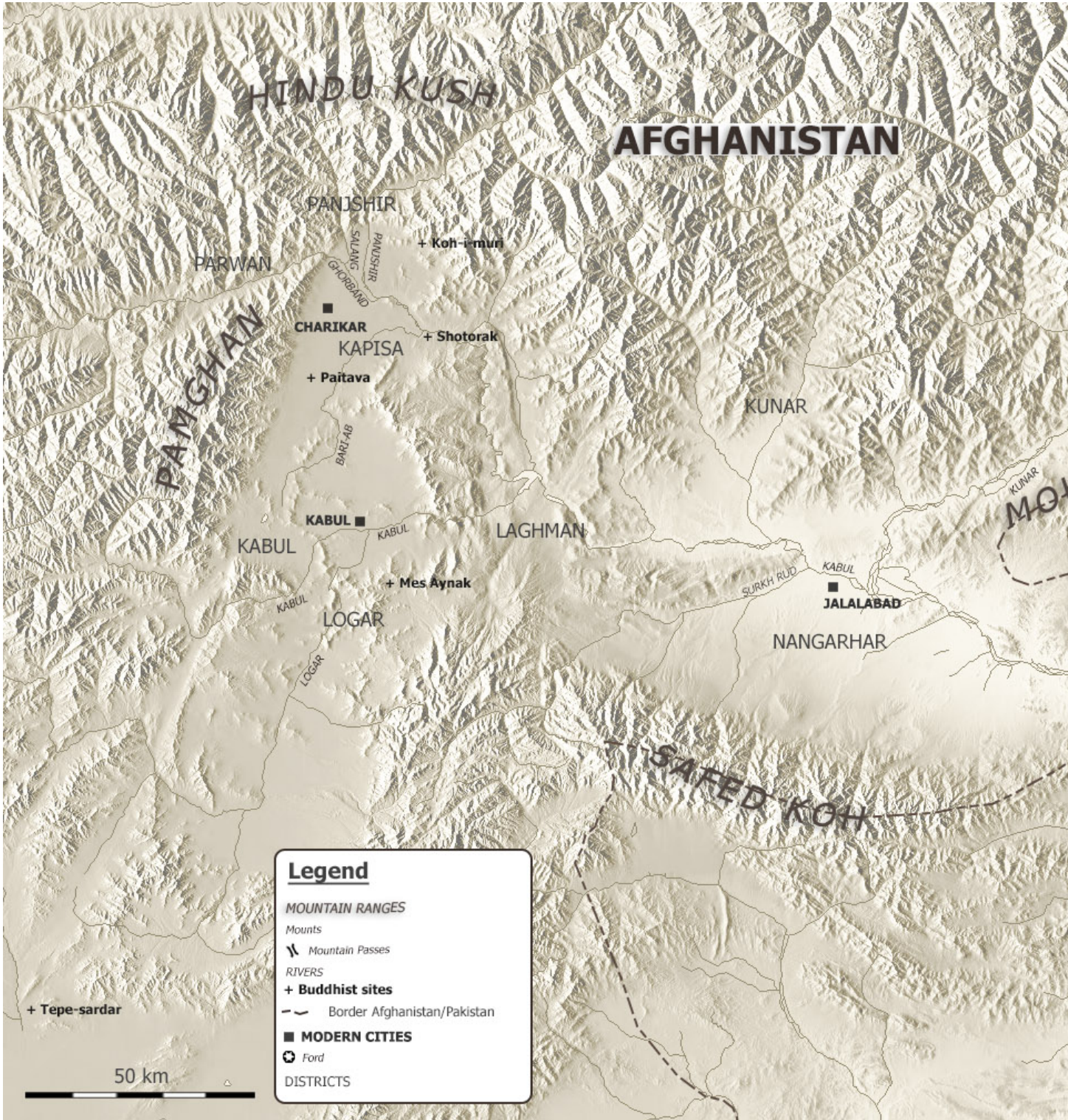
**Luca M. Olivieri** is director of the ISMEO Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan. He has been working in Swat for more than thirty years. His main long-lasting project is the ongoing excavations at the urban site of Bazira/Barikot. His principal interests include excavation and heritage management methodologies. In 2017 he was awarded with the *Sitara-i-Imtiaz* of Pakistan for his three decades of archaeological work in Swat.

**Jessie Pons** is Junior Professor in South Asian History of Religion, KHK Research Associate and Project Leader of Digitalization of Gandharan Artefacts (DiGA) at Centre for the Study of Religions (CERES) at Ruhr University Bochum. Her research focuses on Buddhist art with special attention to the representation of Buddhist narratives in Gandhāra, in oases of the Silk Road, and in the Indian Subcontinent. Her DiGA project aims to identify workshops producing Buddhist sculptures, the geographical and chronological logic of the school, and the history of Buddhism in Gandhāra.

**Wannaporn Rienjang** is Project Assistant of the Gandhāra Connections Project at the Classical Art Research Centre, Oxford. She completed her doctoral degree in Archaeology at the University of Cambridge on Buddhist relic cult in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Before starting her PhD, she worked as a research assistant for the Masson Project at the Department of Coins and Medals, the British Museum. Her research interests include the art and archaeology of Greater Gandhāra, Buddhist studies, and working technologies of stone containers and beads.

**Peter Stewart** is Director of the Classical Art Research Centre and Associate Professor of Classical Art and Archaeology at the University of Oxford. He has worked widely in the field of ancient sculpture. His publications include *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (2003) and *The Social History of Roman Art* (2008). Much of his research concerns the relationship between Gandhāran art and Roman sculpture.

**Alexandra Vanleene** is an independent scholar specializing in Gandhāran Buddhist art and archaeology. Her research focuses on the artistic tradition of Gandhāran sculptures in Afghanistan, particularly Haḍḍa, the geographic expansion of Gandhāran art, and the development of regional characteristics. She worked in Afghanistan for eight years with the French Archaeological Mission for the prospection and excavation of Bamiyan.



Map of the Greater Gandhāra



region (copyright: Jessie Pons).



# The scope of the Buddhist 'workshops' and artistic 'centres' in the Swat Valley, ancient Uḍḍiyāna, in Pakistan

Abdul Ghafoor Lone

In Buddhist traditions Swat is known as Uḍḍiyāna (Stein 1927: 417; 1930: 418; Crindle 1992: 69; Filigenzi 2014: 16).<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, the term, 'Gandhara art', is applied beyond the core area (the historical region, centred on the city of Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan) to a wider region from Kabul to Islamabad, which includes the Swat valley (Luczanits 2008: 16; see also Jessie Pons in this volume) (Figure 1). Longstanding research conducted by IsMEO established the unbroken cultural evolution of ancient Swat, from prehistory to the advent of Islam (Vidale 2016:1). The Swat valley was the main north-south transit route, connecting the most important monastic settlements in the northern valleys and mountains with the large east-west trade route in the Kabul valley (Figure 2; Jansen 2008: 28).<sup>2</sup> The ancient Buddhist art of the Swat Valley was cosmopolitan, liberal, dynamic, and trans-cultural in outlook. With the passage of time and the development of skills and patronage, that perspective contributed to the spiritual character of this artistic tradition. The Buddhist art of the Swat valley developed through devotional legends, mostly based on the traditions practised by the Buddhists. The regional sculptural styles of Swat (ancient Uḍḍiyāna), Gandhāra proper (the Peshawar valley, henceforth Gandhāra, Taxila valley, Kapisa (Panjshir-Gorband valley), and Bactria in Afghanistan are slightly distinct from each other. Buddhist art being at the service of human-centred myth, was for the most part concerned with representing natural forms, either in idealized form or rendered realistically. Particularly in its later stages, it was closely associated with the ruling political power (Ackermann 1975: 5).

## The emergence and development of Buddhist art in the Swat valley

The Indus-Oxus School of Buddhist art developed a hybrid culture drawing elements from Persia, India, Central Asia, Greece, and Rome (Swati 1998: 29). Buddhism did not become a culturally formative mass movement in its own right until the beginning of the Common Era. The Buddhist pantheon was not uniform through time (Dani 1968: 27). The 'Uḍḍiyāna' or Swat style is quite distinct from other contemporary regional styles of the Indus-Oxus region. It seems that this early style spread westward to Bactria and south-east to Gandhara and Taxila respectively (Swati 1998: 32). The Buddhist sculpture of the Indus region was not adopted in Swat and its distinctive style was eventually transmitted to neighboring regions of Gandhara, the Peshawar valley, Mansehra, and Taxila valley. That sculptors worked on the site is evidenced, for example, by the discovery of unfinished stone panels from the site of Butkara III (Swati 1997: 17; Rahman 1990: 706). It has also been ascertained that no single source supplied sculptures for all sites in the Swat Valley. No evidence came to light to suggest that there was a single industrial site or complex that was supplying or manufacturing sculptures for all the monastic complexes in the whole area, but there must have been collaboration between sculptors of different kinds and skills. Such groups of sculptors were producing the required and desired stone sculptures on the spot, i.e. monastic complexes. It is quite possible that most of the construction of monastic complexes and production of sculptures was simultaneous. A group of sculptors produced Buddhist sculptures accordingly and after completing the task, move to their next destination.

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese pilgrims Faxian and Xuanzang referred to Swat as Su-ho-to and Su-po-fa-su (equating to Subhavastu and Suvastu/Suvastu respectively in Sanskrit and Soastus [Crindle 1992: 69]).

<sup>2</sup> The close resemblance between the Buddhist reliquaries unearthed in the Taxila valley and the Swat valley is sufficient evidence that there were deep connections between Dharmarājikā *stūpa* and Butkara I in the Swat valley. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw also noticed such a resemblance and the influence between the stone sculptures unearthed in the Swat valley and Taxila valley (Lohuizen 1949: 38).





Figure 2. Administrative map of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in north-west Pakistan, showing the location of Swat (author).

The Italian Archaeological Mission has established a sound chronology for some key sites in the Swat valley such as Butkara I, Saidu Sharif, Pāṇṛ and Barikot (Olivieri 2006: 29; 2011: 23; 2016: 1; Callieri 2006: 11; Tanweer 2010: 42).<sup>3</sup> The earliest Buddhist sacred areas appear to have been established in Swat as early as the third century BC, or slightly after, at the Buddhist site of Butkara I (Olivieri 2006:23; Errington 1999/2000). Errington (1999/2000) remarks that the punch-marked coin on which the foundation date

<sup>3</sup> In 1956 the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, headed by Tucci, unearthed larger monastic complexes in the Swat Valley and the substantial ancient city of Barikot. Large-scale excavations and their results strengthened the efforts of researchers to unravel the trans-cultural Buddhist art of the region. The most important and richest artistic centre of the region, Butkara I, was excavated and recorded by Domenico Faccenna from 1956 to 1962 (Faccenna 1980-81:41; Olivieri 2006: 23; 2011: 62; Callieri 2006: 11).

of Butkara I is based belongs to the type (GH305) which was probably issued towards the end of Aśoka but this coin-type continued to circulate until at least the early second century BC. The coin found at Butkara I is extremely worn and so it provides a *terminus post quem* of end of the 3rd to early 2nd century BC for the foundation of Butkara I.<sup>4</sup> Systematic and scientific excavations have helped us to review and study the development of Buddhist art in this part of the region. Most of archaeological sites situated on the ancient trade routes in the valley, exhibit long-distance culture influences, while the sites located on the border of Gandhāra display the influence of Gandhāran style. Characteristic of the material from Butkara I is a large amount of sculpture discovered through the Italian excavations in which



Figure 3. The descent of the Buddha from Trāyatrimśa Heaven. Relief from Butkara I. Swat Museum, no. Bk2524. (Photo: author.)

excavators distinguished characteristic styles (Zwalf 1996: 69). The mature figural style is characterized in sculpture by a longer or more oval head with very even transitions of the planes integrating the features and, in contrast with the earlier ringed treatment, often a narrower eye with a heavier upper lid. The full volumes of the body do not protrude under drapery, which is given spaced and often dynamic and prominent folds, the key ridges or ribs with rounded edges usually somewhat undercut, mainly from above. This vitality is also found on the reliefs with folds shown varying in density and depth. The late period is characterized by fleshy and globular heads and expansive volumes of the figures. Many significant archaeological sites like Butkara I, Pāṇṇ and Butkara III, located in Jambil valley, exhibit the typical features of the figures (Figure 3; Swati 1997: 18).<sup>5</sup> The figures are active and are shown performing certain activities. Striking features of the Buddhist sculptures reported from Nimogram, Marjanai, and Chatpat, located in Shamozaï valley, are the well rendered but short figures and the obvious mobility in their execution. Facial features of the sculpture are generally flat and tend towards elongation but the typical round faces with the elongated noses are prominent.<sup>6</sup> The Ilam Khwar Sub Valley Zone including narrative reliefs from Shahnasha, situated in Saidu valley, has figures of normal stature, robust with long, beautiful, fleshy faces, executed in Central Asian and western styles and Indian drapery. The most interesting feature of sculptures, from the Swat valley, is the so-called 'drawing style', already mentioned, which Faccenna named, along with the 'naturalistic' and 'stereometric' styles. The drawing style was first identified in the artistic production of the major centre at Butkara I, on the basis of the stratigraphic sequence of the site and further detailed by comparison with other sites such as Saidu

<sup>4</sup> The long archaeological sequence at Butkara I, stretching from the third century BC, or slightly after, to the tenth/eleventh century AD, was divided into five main structural periods, corresponding to the construction and four successive reconstructions of the Main Stūpa, which evidenced the changes in sculptural and architectural patterns.

<sup>5</sup> Figures are depicted with their small statures, broad round and prominent faces, and bold and heavy physical make up. The drapery of the figures is in Indian style.

<sup>6</sup> The figures were dressed with typical Indian and Central Asian costumes. The heavy folded draperies with clear, deep lines and curve of Gandhāran style are frequently depicted.

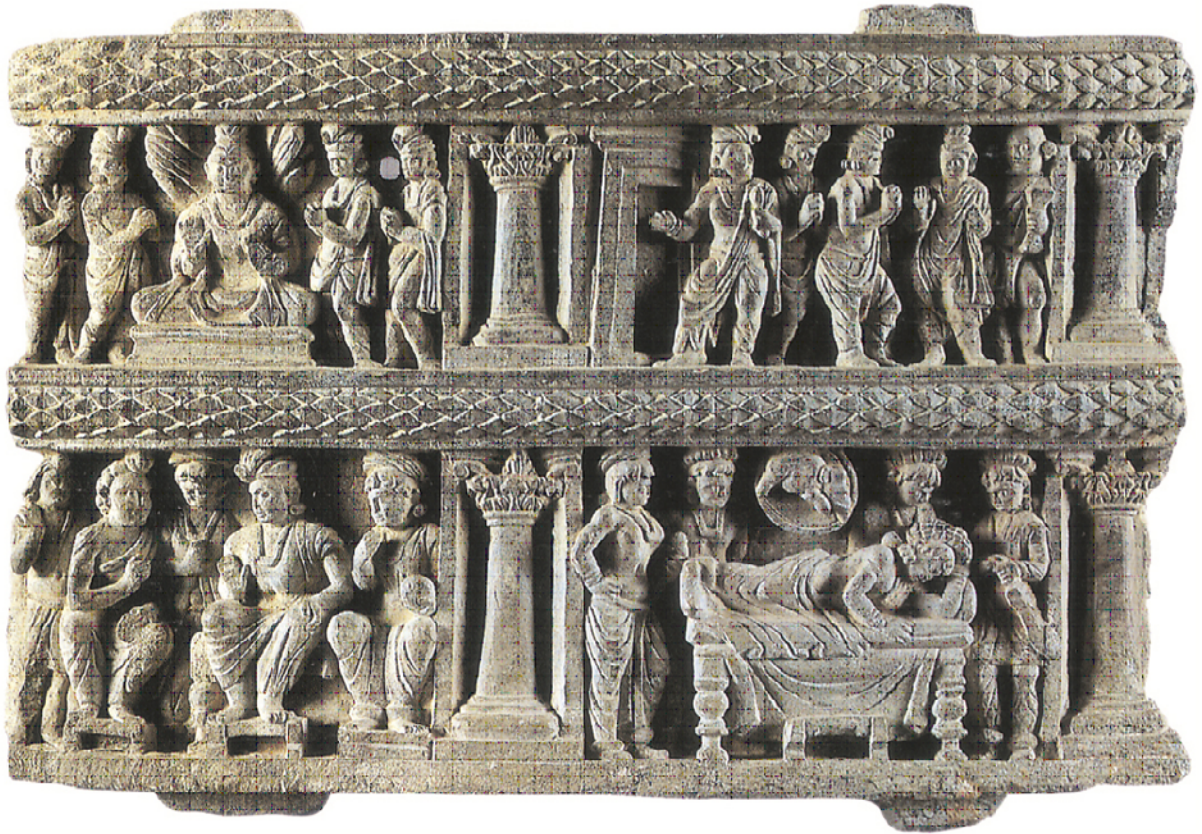


Figure 4. Scenes from the life of the Buddha. (no. SS 563) from Saidu Sharif. Swat Museum. (Photo: author.)

Sharif I and Pānṛ (Figure 4; Faccenna 2007: 165-199; Filigenzi 2008: 297). What was identified was a 'drawing (disegnativo)' group, characterized by dense and thin grooves, sometimes of quite primitive execution, angularity, summary and flat treatment of volumes, and a developed narrative convention which exhibits a distinctive artistic character quite different from that of later work. Broadly speaking, the bodies of the Swati figures are somewhat shorter and normally have broad, round or square, flatter faces than the standard 'Gandhāran' ones (Swati 1997: 6).<sup>7</sup>

Prof Swati devised zonal divisions of the Swat valley to designate the local peculiarities of its Buddhist Art. He divided the valley into three 'zonal workshops', each of which sub-valleys has common, characteristic features and a distinctive 'zonal style' (Figure 5; Swati 1997: 20; cf. Rahman 1993: 7).<sup>8</sup> Dr Tahira Tanweer claimed another zonal workshop of the Buner valley as part of the Swat valley and Dr Amjid Perviaz identified the zonal workshop of Malakand (Tanweer 2010: 235).<sup>9</sup> The traditions of the

<sup>7</sup> Broader chins and straight, high-bridged noses are characteristic features of Swati sculptures while those of Gandhāra have oval or triangular faces with smaller chins and slightly curved, beaked noses with sharp ends, besides other distinctive features. The eyes of the figures in the Swat valley are mostly shallow and prominent. The eye ridges of figures are boldly defined, which differs from the sharply marked Gandhāran ones. Eyes are wide and prominent, eye sockets shallow, and the eyeballs not deeply embedded as is apparently the norm in the Gandhāran figures. In some cases irises are marked by incised circles and pupils by a dint. Swati figures are naturalistic in style, not idealized.

<sup>8</sup> The analytical data provided by Prof Dr Swati, concluded that in the Swat valley there were multiple zonal styles, each of which was based in a geographical unit or sub-valley. Each style was the outcome of a few workshops with a common origin, though might be fashioned by different hands. They share some technical and physical features. Based on stylistic study of sculptures particularly from Butkara III and then from Shansha, Chat Pat, and Marjanai, he concluded that each locality probably had its own group of sculptors or a workshop.

<sup>9</sup> Dr Amjid Perviaz has studied the Malakand collection, comprising stone sculptures and narrative reliefs in Swat Museum. On the basis of comparative artistic study of the sculptures he claims the fifth zonal workshop of Malakand. In 2016 he submitted

‘zonal workshops’ either continued from one period to another or were completely absorbed into others in the subsequent period, when a site needed any sculptural replenishment, or when new construction necessitated it at any later date (Swati 1997: 21). Although, owing to the customary religious system in the whole region to the north-west of India, iconography was consistent, the anatomy of the Swati figures, the composition, and the schematic arrangement of the reliefs are different from the rest of Gandhāra (Swati 1997). A complete change in a workshop’s traditions was often caused by the coming of a new population group and their patrons, with a different cultural background, into the sub-valley, either subduing or displacing the old one (Olivieri 2014). The use of schist as a material, remained a major and almost constant element but the demand for sculpture in schist, fluctuated from time to time even within the same artistic group or zonal workshop.<sup>10</sup> In each sub-valley, Buddhist art had its own, distinct artistic features. The regional divisions and groupings of Buddhist art in the Swat valley does not reflect the variation in opinions among those Buddhist communities so much as different levels of skill among artistic groups. Nevertheless, new settlers always contributed some of their traditions to the Buddhist pantheon (Tucci 1958: 281). For example, there might have been Greek artists and craftsmen, refugees no doubt from the abandoned Greek cities of Bactria, available to establish the workshops, to design the typical motifs of the new style, and above all to develop the highly original draped image of the Buddha.

The dating of sculpture from Gandhāra and other contemporary regions is complicated.<sup>11</sup> Sculptures were largely recovered without documentation over generations, whether through crude, earlier excavation, purposeful looting, or as the result of more casual finds and we have ended up relying heavily on numismatic evidence (Rienjang & Stewart 2018). The attempt at such dating has relied on a series of understandings based on archaeological contexts, material and stylistic analysis, and iconographic developments, which led the great *maestro* of Buddhist archaeology, Faccenna, to determine the three styles

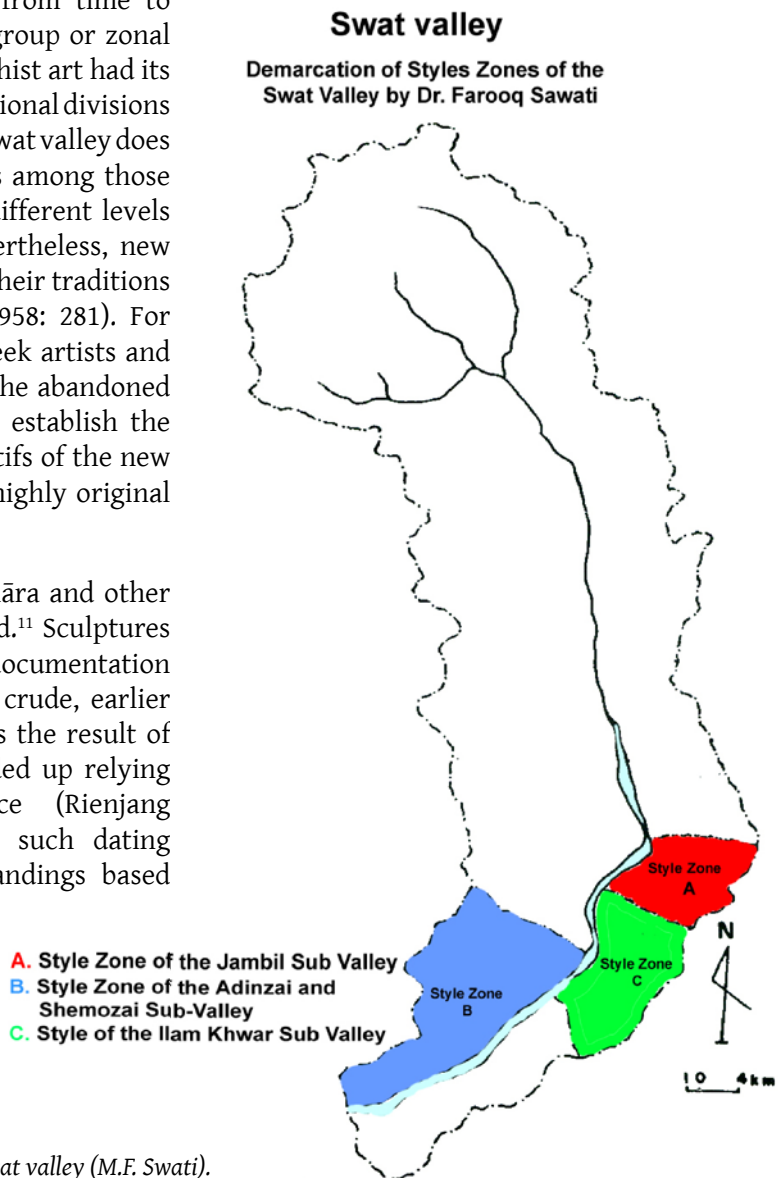


Figure 5. Map of style zones of the Swat valley (M.F. Swati).

his unpublished PhD dissertation at Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

<sup>10</sup> Recently Olivieri has published comprehensive reports on the excavations in Gumbat, Amlukdara, and Barikot, to determine the chronology of stone sculptures in the Swat valley (Olivieri 2014). The archaeological sequence documented at those sites also offers much food for thought with regard to the shift from schist to stucco in sculptural decoration, and to the related production chain towards the end of the third century AD.

<sup>11</sup> See Cribb (2018) where he discusses the importance of numismatic evidence in the dating of Kaniška I, and its relevance on the dating of Gandhāran sculptures.

mentioned above, extending from the beginning of the first century AD to the end of the third century AD (Faccenna et al. 2003: 294; Filigenzi 2003: 350). Certain broad assumptions are generally accepted, for example that the narrative reliefs which attract so much attention within the study of Gandhāran art are a comparatively early phenomenon (Rienjang & Stewart 2018: 6). The new chronology, as well as the early chronology of Kushano-Sasanian governors proposed by Joe Cribb and M. Carter, not only contracted the historical sequence, which in the tradition of earlier numismatics (developed by scholars such as Robert Göbl) considered them to last until the late fourth or fifth century AD, but finally made Faccenna's chronology of Butkara I, fully compatible with the overall picture (Rienjang & Stewart 2018: 6). The final touch was given by the excavations at Barikot and Amluk-dara with their long and reliable set of C-14 dating and numismatic data (Olivieri 2014). Evidence from the excavations at both Barikot and Amluk-dara proved that the climax of schist production was already over towards the end of third century AD.<sup>12</sup> Evidence from outside Gandhāra, preserved in India, Central Asia, and China can be useful to determine the importance and nature of the post-Kushan period. In turn, considerable architectural evidence provides a picture of late Buddhist activity in Gandhāra (Behrendt 2018: 149). In contrast, archaeological research in Gandhāra notably at Sahrī Bahlol, Takht-i-Bāhī, Jamāl Garhī, Swat, and Taxila certainly has sufficient monumental and sculptural evidence but has not offered solid data about their historical and cultural frame. We can categorize developing stages of Buddhist art and so-called zonal workshops through their emergence, transformation, climax, decline, and then refuge in China, Korea, and Japan. Circumstances put pressure on Buddhism in the region at the stage of its subordination and Buddhist art deserted this region, only to reappear in indigenous forms and styles in the Far East. Against this background the Buddhist art of stone sculpting in Swat itself passed through different stages of development.

### **Emergence of zonal workshops**

Around 190 BC Greeks rulers from Bactria conquered and annexed the Indus region including Swat, Gandhāra, and Taxila. This Macedonian presence in Swat lasted long enough to have an effect on the material culture as has been demonstrated by archaeological work (Callieri 2008). Hellenistic crafts had already started in the Swat valley in the Indo-Greek period. Work at Barikot has supported the evidence from the Buddhist sanctuary at Butkara I, where the second century BC sees the introduction of stone moulded elements in the architecture of the Main Stūpa. Besides, this must be integrated into the broader context of artefacts of Hellenistic inspiration datable to the Greek period: the coins and toilet-trays, but also the seals, as well as the Hellenistic architectonic elements, mouldings of bases and capitals present in other sites of the region such as Jandial and Mohra Maliaran near Sirkap, Taxila (Faccenna 2007). Most of the subjects depicted in toilet-trays recovered at Taxila are clearly Hellenistic in style, and there can be no doubt that this kind of art was introduced from Hellenistic cultures from the West (Marshall 1951: 493). At the early stage of emergence, each locality in the Swat valley probably had its own group of sculptors and therefore independent workshops. The Swat valley has provided researchers with the much anticipated discovery of at least one major artistic centre where the sculptures of that school were produced and archaeology has finally entered the stage of studies on Gandhāran art in this early period (Callieri 2008: 60). The Italian Mission not only yielded the first secure chronological indications for the art of Gandhāra but also unearthed well defined evidence of an artistic centre in its cultural setting, as was brought to light at Butkara I (Olivieri 2015: 365; Brancaccio & Behrendt 2004: 4).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Schist was widely available and quarried in the Swat valley. Until the third century AD, schist was widely used in the Buddhist monastic complexes. Subsequently kanjur and stucco came into use together in the Swat valley. The large-scale use of stucco decorations during the course of the third century AD both at Barikot (e.g. in the shrines of Units B and K) and at Amluk-dara and Gumbat finds a chronological comparison in recent data from coeval Kushano-Sasanian evidence found at Termez (Ferrerias et al. 2014: 736).

<sup>13</sup> Fortunately Swat remained secure from the raids of classic art-collectors in the early nineteenth century because until 1926 this region was not under the administrative control of British Empire. British army personnel and chief political officers like Major Deane extended access to art-collectors so they were able to extract what they could. The European antique collectors

It should be noted that Buddhist sacred areas could have been established in Swat as early as the third century BC (at Butkara I; Olivieri 2016: 35).<sup>14</sup> This is confirmed by both archaeological and radiocarbon data. The fortified urban settlement at Barikot (lower area and acropolis) was established around the mid first millennium BC on the ruins of an Early Iron Age village dated to the eleventh to eighth centuries BC (Olivieri & Filigenzi 2018: 71).<sup>15</sup>

### Integration of Buddhist Art in different zonal workshops

Different tribes of the Scythian (Śakas) pushed by the Kushan from Bactria, entered the Indus region, settled there and further east in the Ganges Jamuna plains (Swati 1997: 6). Śakas and Parthians were familiar to Greek culture. Thus, they developed a synthesis. This is the reason that an astonishing art, mixing all the styles – those of the Bactrians, Pahlavas, and Śakas – emerged in this period. By the beginning of the Common Era, Buddhism in Gandhāra had turned into a mass movement (Luczanits 2008: 75). At an early stage, the stone sculptors were demonstrating their distinctive skills working in different zonal workshops. After the arrival of the Parthians in the Indus region at about the end of the first century BC, the workshops became more refined, though still within the indigenous style. During this period, large-scale monastic complexes in the Swat valley developed their regional workshops on a larger scale, which have distinct artistic features. Such regional workshops remained active till the integration of sub-valleys and developed into an Uḍḍiyāna School of Art or ‘Workshop’. As long as Buddhist art expanded and its demand increased, sculptors moved from one zone to another in quest of inspiration and appreciation. Such movements enable them to adopt and borrow multiple features from other art groups, so-called ‘workshops’. During the period, Greek, Roman, and Pahlava features are dominant in the sculptures. Green schist was mainly used for the execution of stone sculptures. The carving represents the high skill-level of the workshops, which flourished probably in the second quarter of the first century AD.

Contemporary Buddhist art centres such as Gandhāra and Taxila were also contributing Buddhist sculptures with an identical style. At the end of first century AD, Buddhism started using the great international trade routes connecting China with the Mediterranean (Jansen 2008: 30). There is evidence that during the first century BC and first century AD in Swat and Taxila there were some stone crafts, making use of various features, motifs, and designs in common, i.e relic caskets (Figures 6 and 7). It indicates that there were some deep relations, connections among contemporary Buddhist art centres of Swat, Gandhāra, and Taxila. Significant movements of artisans from one regional centre to another beyond geographical boundaries was usual too. Kurt Behrendt regards as characteristic of this period of expansion, the fact that most structures abounded with narrative reliefs, and there was a regional religious development that emphasized the life-story of the Buddha and the worship of relics associated with the Buddha. Behrendt observes that image-shrines started to appear after the second century AD (Behrendt 2003; Rienjang 2018: 99). *Stūpa* Shrines for holy relics and monasteries, in the Swat Valley, were fashioned out of locally available schist in the first to second centuries AD. Dr Swati emphasized

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were involved in the smuggling of Gandhāran sculptures from Swat to abroad. The then local administration considered it a harmless hobby and relaxed border security for the transportation of the antiques (Brancaccio & Behrendt 2006: 1). Barger and Wright took the bulk of their sculptures to Peshawar and thence consigned them to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Barger & Wright 1941: 13).

<sup>14</sup> A possible hint of an even earlier Buddhist presence in the city is afforded by the recent discovery of a fine black-ware bowl from the Śaka-Parthian levels bearing a Kharoṣṭhī inscription which has been studied by Stefan Baums (Olivieri & Filigenzi 2018: 72).

<sup>15</sup> Previously the excavations of the rock-shelter at Ghaleygai, in Swat, established a chronological sequence for the Swat Valley. Twenty-four cultural strata were exposed, which were divided into seven periods by the Italian Archeological Mission (Swati 1997: 2). The C<sup>14</sup> (radiocarbon) date of Periods I-IV is (2400-1400 BC), which correlates to the Chalcolithic periods of Central Asia (Turkmenistan), the Indus Valley (Harappan Cultures), and Neolithic period of Burzahom in Kashmir. Periods V to VII belong to various phases of Gandhāra Grave Culture dated from thirteenth century to fourth century BC (Stacul 1969: 82-85).



Figures 6-7. Reliquary lids from the Taxila and Swat valleys. Taxila Museum (reserve collection); Swat Museum (inv. 0781). (Photos: author.)

that workshops established during the Scytho-Parthian rule in the Swat Valley continued until the advent of the Kushan dynasty. This period he termed a transitional phase of Buddhist art in the Indus region which developed from zonal styles.

### Expansion of regional Buddhist workshops

The Indus-Oxus school of Buddhist art was divided into a number of small kingdoms regions such as Uḍḍiyāna, Gandhāra, Taxila, Kapisa, Bactria, and others.<sup>16</sup> The history and culture of these ancient small kingdoms, to some extent a hub of the Buddhist active zones, overlapped to a greater extent for various reasons, i.e. social, political, religious, economic, etc. Schist was widely available and quarried in Swat till the third century AD and it was widely used in the Buddhist monastic complexes. At a later stage, kanjur and stucco came into use together in Swat. At Butkara I, a shift towards plastic materials and related techniques can be observed on a large scale during the period of the Great Stūpa, which covers a long time-span, from the end of the second/early third century to seventh century AD, and encompasses crucial moments of change, enrichment, and embellishment. Stone Sculptures became rare and perhaps costly in the third century AD as demand for them increased with the spread of Buddhism (Sehrai 2017: 132).

This stage saw a lot of similarities among different Buddhist art centres in the different regions, that is to say Uḍḍiyāna (Swat), Gandhāra, and Taxila. These connections give clues of intermixing and interchanging of the skills of craftsmen from different production centres, the different workshops in Indus-Oxus. In them we encounter celestial beings floating like birds; the youthful Brahmācārin type of Vajrapāṇi; palmette-like lotus plants; Sala trees; large haloes; column shafts. Herald Ingholt associated this group with other specific features such as, *dhyānamudrā* with the Buddha's hands uncovered and *dharmacakramudrā*: scalloping of the edge of the halo; the use of a shell-shaped the *uṣṇīṣa*; the bare right shoulder and feet; and diaphanous drapery. The throne is flanked by a pair of lions, in profile looking outward. A 'sleeve over knee' formula is employed; the hair has an almond-shaped form just over the centre of forehead. The Buddha has a large very halo, and the edge of the halo is decorated with rays. Therefore the Buddhist stone sculptures from Swat and their style are also connected to other production centres such as Gandhāra and Taxila.

<sup>16</sup> These different states mostly remained under the administrative or authoritative control of one authority or ruler which united them in all aspects of life, including art. Such unification encouraged the movement of craftsmen attracted to other areas.

### Decline of Buddhist art in the Swat valley

In the absence of royal patronage, Buddhist art centres in the Swat valley followed the gradual disintegration and disappearance of significant Buddhist iconography on stone sculptures, becoming dominated by the contemporary religious art centres of non-Buddhist cults. Sculptures executed on rock walls as well as on roughly cut stelae, represent the last artistic expression of Buddhism in Swat (Figure 8; Olivieri et al. 2011: 67). The Buddhist art of narrative reliefs was substituted by the production of large-scale rock-carving such as the Jehanabad Buddha and Ghaleyge Buddha. During the time of Great Stūpa 4 at Butkara I, there was a major shift towards plastic material and related techniques. A decrease in the demand of fresh stone sculptures in this period is obvious at Butkara I. The use of stucco for sculptures and decoration of monastic complexes increased. The period of Great Stūpa 4, precisely demonstrates a dramatic change of taste, techniques and materials, which is most clearly traceable in phases 4 and 5, when dynamic building activity and striking sculptural and pictorial embellishment is documented by the scanty and yet most telling surviving evidence. The fifth century saw a decline of stone sculpture.<sup>17</sup> After the invasion of Huns in Swat, Chinese pilgrims mentioned 1400 desolated



Figure 8. Late period stelae from the Swat valley. Swat Museum. (Photos: author.)

<sup>17</sup> Disintegration is reflected when stone from collapsed monuments was re-used, often as filling material, sometimes re-cut and reworked; less frequently it was re-employed in the decoration of the monument, with the missing parts reintegrated by means of stucco additions. Use of local soapstone, kanjur, and stucco has significant correlations with periods of economic distress, which may have favoured the adoption of cheaper building options based on low-cost materials and processing techniques. Overlapping of masonry layers, reconstruction, and renovations sometimes prevented the preservation of the early evidence. This may put our reconstructions of the Gandhāran phenomenon at risk and prevent it from filling all the gaps completely.

Buddhist monastic complexes on both sides of the Swat River (Beal 1906: 120). Chinese records also clarify that the Buddhist monastic complexes had already declined and were desolate quite early before the Muslim invasions in the region (Barger & Wright 1941: 32). According to the Chinese pilgrim Faxian, who came to the Swat valley in the fifth century AD, there were at that time 500 Buddhist monasteries in Swat all belonging to Hīnayāna, or little vehicle (Beal 1906: ix; Khan 2004: 1). It seems that at the time of Great Stūpa 4, at Butkara I, the most important and the richest artistic centre of the region was not able, or not inclined, to obtain newly made stone sculptures. Side by side with the increasing use of calcareous stone as building material, stucco sculptures and decorations began to predominate, while stone sculptures became an ever rarer commodity.

### Status of zonal workshops in the Swat Valley

The Buddhist art of stone sculptures in the Swat valley appears to be the earliest of its kind in all the Buddhist monastic complexes of the region and this kind of art may in fact have begun in Swat. Invasions and large-scale migrations from Western and Central Asia caused the cultural and social setup of the Swat Valley to evolve. Distinctive styles of Buddhist stone sculptures were eventually transmitted to neighboring regions of Gandhāra, Taxila, and Afghanistan. A 'transitional phase' of Buddhist art in the Indus region, which developed during Scytho-Parthian rule in the Swat Valley, continued until the advent of the Kushan dynasty. In the transitional phase there was a demarcation line between zonal workshops of Swat and contemporary regional centres of Indus-Oxus Buddhist art. The chronology created by the discovery and analysis of ancient coins in Gandhāra provides a framework for its political history and a relative dating system for its archaeology (Cribb 2008: 64). Fresh archaeological excavations may enable us to connect and interpret Buddhist art and the scope of workshops not only in the Swat valley but also within a larger context. However, a change of cultural mentality and bias towards certain kinds of material will also be advisable for archaeologists and art historians, so as to avoid overemphasizing and somehow canonizing the 'classical' in Gandhāran art and architecture in stone at the expense of its still little-known, and perhaps under-evaluated, cultural, aesthetic and technical dynamism.

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