

## A REVIEW OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORTS AND LITERATURE ON THE GANDHARA SCULPTURE COLLECTION OF THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

---

Irfan Ullah<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad Akram Soomro<sup>2</sup>

Mudassar Zulfiqar<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** *This review paper focuses on a forty-three-piece collection of Gandhara sculpture in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. Although individual pieces of Gandhara sculpture are widely known to scholars, but much of the collection of the Gandhara sculpture of the Royal Ontario Museum is unknown to scholars. In this paper these sculptures have been described and analysed as a collection. The paper is organised on Gandhara ancient history, physical geography, and the history of the Buddha image in ancient subcontinent Pakistan in South Asia. Emphasis is placed on the era of the Kushan Empire from the 1st to 4th century AD when the school of Gandhara sculpture achieved its highest levels of production and craftsmanship. The Gandhara School of sculpture produced work continuously for at least six centuries and reached its peak of achievement during the era of the Kushan Empire that dominated Central Asia and Northern sub-continent India-Pakistan from the 1st to 4th centuries AD.*

**Keyword:** Gandhara, Sculpture, Collection, Royal Ontario Museum.

---

<sup>1</sup> Author is PhD Scholar in Department of Archaeology at <sup>1</sup>Universiti Sains Malaysia.  
Email: [Irfanzes998@gmail.com](mailto:Irfanzes998@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Author is Assistant Professor in Department of Mass Communication at The University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> Author is working as Visiting Lecturer in Department of Sociology at University of Punjab

## **Introduction**

During the first centuries of the Christian era, a prolific and a highly sophisticated school of sculpture emerged in an area south of the Hindu Kush in South Asia. The area, known in ancient times as Gandhara, figures prominently in the history of art as the source of some of the most important religious art in the world. The Gandhara School of sculpture produced work continuously for at least six centuries and reached its peak of achievement during the era of the Kushan Empire that dominated Central Asia and Northern sub-continent India-Pakistan from the 1st to 4th centuries AD. Most of the sculpture discussed in this catalogue can be attributed to the Kushan period, and it is entirely probable that all forty-three pieces were originally created for Buddhist monasteries.

In this article, I have taken two fundamental departure points for this study of Gandhara sculpture. First, Gandhara was the centre of a subcontinent Indian art form created to serve Buddhist intentions and reflect Buddhist ideals. Strangely, this factor is often overlooked or diminished by art historians and other researchers preoccupied with problems of chronology or stylistic attributes of the art. Secondly, the flourishing of this school of art testifies to the importance of Gandhara geographical location. Gandhara cities, towns and monasteries grew as part of an extensive and enormously prosperous international trade network that flourished during the entire Kushan period.

Gandhara played a particularly important role in the history of the image of the Buddha in human form. Just as in the Christian tradition, when centuries passed before visual images of a Christ figure appeared, sub-continent Buddhism developed and spread for at least four centuries before a Buddha image in

human form emerged. The creation and acceptance of a Buddha image represented a huge conceptual leap from the earlier aniconic artistic expression, and in many respects was a revolutionary movement in the history of religious art. Determining exact dates for the emergence of Buddha images in human form is difficult, but art forms that included Buddha images had acquired a definite validity shortly after the beginning of the Christian era. Subsequent development of the image and iconography was coincident with an influx of new design and image ideas, as well as techniques and skills that became available due to Gandhara location at the crossroads of major trade routes that served several diverse cultural and political traditions (Rienjang and Stewart 2018; Irfan.et al 2018).

Trade routes of the Kushan era linked China, Central Asia, Persia, the Mediterranean and the subcontinent of Pakistan-India. Cosmopolitan cities in Gandhara, most with major Buddhist monastic complexes were primary centers for an international web of trade and exchange. Artistic ideas and styles literally came into Gandhara from the directions. In addition, Gandhara arts benefited enormously from readily available markets. Monasteries enjoyed generous patronage because of a thriving climate of intellectual and cultural climate in the Kushan era. Positive social and religious values were attributed to patronage. Donations were offered in the spirit that such contributions were a means for the donor to acquire religious merit. For centuries, monasteries installed large numbers of sculpted panels depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha. The commissioning of freestanding sculptures of Buddha's and Bodhisattvas was also popular. There is evidence to suggest that Brahmins as well as Buddhists, monks from wealthy families, lay devotees from merchant

classes, the Indian nobility and Kushan kings all patronized monastery construction and monastic arts (Aslam 2017; Irfan et al 2018).

South of Gandhara in the Indian subcontinent, during the same time, another important school of sculpture also developed images of the Buddha in human form. In Mathura, India, a natural development from pre-Buddhist Jain imagery led to images of the Buddha. Mathura art shows kinship with central and south Indian aniconic art of early Buddhism found in major monastery sites. Scholars debate whether the school of Gandhara or Mathura first introduced a Buddha image. The weight of evidence seems to suggest that Mathura influenced Gandhara more than the other way around, but it is highly probable that both schools developed Buddha images and iconography simultaneously, and both schools benefited from a culture of patronage that characterised the Kushan era (Raven 2017; Ray 2017).

Gandhara sculpture clearly and convincingly reveals its subcontinent origins, but the sculpture also displays Greek, Roman and Parthian influences. Gandhara artisans found no difficulty in borrowing ideas and images from many religious traditions. Brahminic, Zoroastrian, Mithraic and Jain, as well as many local cult sources, were all incorporated to serve Buddhist intentions. The Gandharan sculpture is remarkable because it reveals an Indian ecumenism manifesting in a Buddhist art form. Art historians trained in western traditions have freely indulged their passion for finding Roman hair curls and Greek garment folds in Gandhara Buddha images, but the uniqueness of Gandhara art lies in its inclusive absorption of an astonishing diversity of influences present at time (Femald and Sutherland 1953; Marshall 1960a; Aslam and Bukhari 2017; Ray 2017).

Sub-continent India-Pakistan Buddhism appears to have changed doctrinally in Gandhara, shifting gradually from orthodox Theravada roots in South India to a form commonly referred to as Mahayana Buddhism. Although the evidence is not conclusive, Buddhist arts of Gandhara are generally believed to reflect changes that occurred in Buddhism prior to and during the Kushan era. It was this new or revised Buddhism that spread from Northern India into Central Asia, then into China and the Far East (Rienjang and Stewart 2018; Benjamin 2018; Alvi, et al., 2020a).

Gandhara has recently decade attracted new attention because of a collection of birch bark scrolls written in the Kharosthi script that may be the oldest Buddhist manuscripts discovered. The scrolls date to the first century AD. Publication of the first translation of the manuscript fragments has attracted interest from the Buddhist as well as the academic community, in part because the contents pre-date the appearance of Mahayana precepts in Gandhara. Perhaps it is not surprising that Gandhara, well known for the importance of its Buddhist visual arts, is now also recognised for its early Buddhist literature (Richard 2018; Olivieri and Filigenzi 2018; Alvi, et al., 2015).

### **Physical Geography**

Geographically, the Peshawar valley of Pakistan (Figure 1) known to be a Puruṣapura (Sanskrit for City of Men), the western capital of Gandhara, is about one hundred twenty kilometres east to the west, less than one hundred north to south not a large area considering the scope of its history. From ancient times, Peshawar valley has been known for its lush greenery, orchard crops, fields of grains, farming villages and extensive irrigation canals. Xuan Zang

reported in the seventh century of the valley's abundant harvests, fruits and flowers and flowing streams. John Marshall, writing in the early decades of the twentieth century agreed with Xuan Zang. "This corner of Punjab, with

the adjoining district of Hazara, is today no less famous for its fruit gardens and crops than for its green, well-watered valleys, its impressive landscapes and invigorating climate."(Marshall 1960, 1960a).



**Map 1: Peshawar valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan (Source Google Earth 2020).**

Today, the drive east from Peshawar through the Peshawar valley to Taxila another famous old city of Gandhara takes about three hours, including the rather slow progress through Peshawar's traffic and its suburban industrial zones. The Grand Trunk highway is a surviving branch of the old Silk Road that in Gandhara times would have been lined with stupa complexes and monasteries. Few visible signs of Gandhara remain along the highway, although impressive sites can be found in Taxila and somewhat more remote districts of Pakistan. Countless Kushan-era sites have been lost in the dust due to two millennia of invasions, looting and modern development. A scenic secondary road through the Peshawar valley passes through farm country and towns, including the town of Charssada, situated near tributaries of the Kabul River and known in Kushan times as Pushkalavati. The Charssada old town is a dusty and

colourful area of narrow lanes originally designed for market stalls, shoppers and horses, and now crowded with trucks, cars, auto-rickshaws and foot traffic (Siddiqui 2018; Irfan.et al 2018).

The main population race of the Gandhara region is Pathans or Pashtuns one of the largest tribal societies in the world, makeup 90% of the population of contemporary North-West Pakistan. Millions of Pathans live in cities, towns and villages. Large numbers continue to live as semi-nomadic pastoralists. They augment their subsistence by farming but depend primarily on the raising of sheep, goats and horses, like Aryan pastoral nomads who first arrived in an area four thousand years ago (Khayyam et al 2018; Benjamin 2018).

### **The Gandhara Monastery**

The centre of Buddhist activity and creativity in Gandhara was the monastery. Early Buddhist scriptures and commentaries present a life story of the Buddha, who after enlightenment, travelled from town to town to preach the dharma, attracting followers in the process. Buddhist monastic life developed out of a custom observed by communities of wandering almsmen to take a rain retreat during the monsoon season. Brahmanical and Jain wandering almsmen observed the same custom but did not have regulations about living together in an established residence during rain retreat. The unique character of the Buddhist community was shaped by the wishes of its worshipers to settle into a fixed location for the three months of the rainy season (Ray 2017; Siddiqui 2018).

In support of the monks, wealthy patrons attracted to the teachings granted parklands for the Buddha's use. The parks were outfitted with huts and provisions for monks and as support expanded and the communities grew, the parks gradually came into use for periods longer than the rainy season. The Buddhist communities or sanghas gradually moved from a wandering to a settled life and an evolution of the Buddhist monastery commenced. Passing through several stages of development over a period of centuries, a flourishing monastery industry in sub-continent culminated in multi-story complexes with towers and circuit walls that enclosed universities, libraries, elaborate stupa courts, and many varieties of working and living areas. Buddhist monastery life survived in some areas of sub-continent until the twelfth century, when the sixteenth-century long history of the sangha in sub-continent was closed by Muslim conquests (Raven 2017; Ray 2017)

Buddhism took root in Gandhara during the Ashokan period and continued to expand and

flourish during the reigns of successive Indo-Greek, Parthian and Kushan kings. Xuan Zang, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, found most Gandhara monasteries in ruins when he visited the area in the seventh century AD. He estimated, however, that more than a thousand monasteries had flourished in Gandhara region of Pakistan during its peak period of activity. (See figure 2) At least another thousand monasteries had also been active in neighbouring Swat valley of Pakistan (Bapat 2016; Irfan et al 2018).

Monastic life in both urban and rural areas of Gandhara is well documented. Large, complex monastic organisations were integral to the cultural and religious life of Peshawar, Sahri Bahlol, Taxila and many other centres. The monasteries met the needs of monks and Buddhist lay people living in urbanised areas. A far greater number of monasteries flourished outside cities, often on hilltops or mountainsides above cultivated river valleys, near villages or towns on trade routes. A hillside location was practical as the monastery did not interfere with village life or farming, but was conveniently accessible to the village as well as visiting merchants or travellers (Cunningham and Young 2015; Sarkar 2016).

Even with the move into settled communities, the sangha never lost its urge to wander. Monks migrated from monastery to monastery following networks of well-travelled trails that crossed valleys and mountains. New trails were established as new monasteries were built. Monks walked the trails not only for purposes of pilgrimage, but probably also to experience the deeply rooted practice of walking. After centuries of growth in Gandhara and throughout northern India, monks took the trails over mountains to areas outside India where they established new communities in Central Asia and China

(Ray 2017; Benjamin 2018; Alvi, et al., 2020a).

The stupa and the monastic complex of Dharmarajika stupa (Figure 2) near the present day Taxila Museum in Punjab, Pakistan. A fine example of the stone architecture of the time. Its ground plan is characteristic of early Gandhara monasteries that were constructed in an urban context. Numismatic evidence suggests that the construction Dharmarajika began about a

hundred years after Ashoka, during the reign of an Indo-Greek king, Menander I (c. 155-130 BC), who is regarded as sympathetic to Buddhism. The Great Stupa of Dharmarajika is circular with a raised terrace around its base and flights of steps at each of the cardinal points. An open passage around the base of the stupa was used as a ceremonial path for monks. A variety of stupa groups, chapels and courts surround several plaza areas (Sehrai 1986; Farooq and Gull 2015; Ray 2017)



**Figure 1: The stupa and the monastic complex of Dharmarajika stupa (Source: Siddiqui 2018)**

Today, Dharmarajika is situated within sight of a huge Pakistani military-industrial complex. Grassy mounds are all that remain of many detached buildings that were part of an extensive monastery area. Remains of monastic cells, an assembly hall, and a few relatively well-preserved sculptures of the Buddha are on site in wall niches. Although Dharmarajika pre-dates the Kushan period, the sculpture was probably installed during Kushan times, beginning in the first or early

second century AD (Farooq et al 2015; Ray 2017).

Within two centuries of the construction of Dharmarajika, hundreds of other monastery complexes were constructed in Swat and Peshawar cities of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. The most documented sites, however, are located on hilltops and crests of mountains away from the cities. High in the hills, monks lived in a cooler and cleaner environment than offered by cities. To

reach sources of water, monks cut steps on the rocky hill slopes. They maintained networks of trails between neighbouring monasteries and villages. Monks walked where they wished, taking sanctuary at the end of the day in hilltop monasteries that provided a retreat for study, meditation and sleep. An early Buddhist account describes a favourite Gandhara retreat. A spot not too far from the town and not too near; suitable for going and coming; easily accessible to all people; by day not too crowded; at night not exposed to noise and alarm; clean of the smell of the people; excluded from men; well fitted for a retired life. (Ray 2017; Siddiqui 2018)

Beginning at least two centuries before the Kushan period, systems of monastic organisation and discipline developed as the number of monasteries increased and monastic life became common. Several generations of monks articulated contracts of rules and regulations that eventually determined a system of corporate life for monastic communities. Collections of monastic rules, vinayas, are found in many early Buddhist texts, the Vinaya Pitaka of the Theravada Pali Canon, and also in the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya that probably were known in Gandhara monasteries. Beginning in the Ashokan era, by their possession of the Visayas, monasteries became self-governing institutions that were protected and respected by kings. As a result, the monastery moral and social values influenced Indo-pak society, although these values changed over time. The Buddhist sangha, called upon to learn the cardinal doctrines of dharma the Four Themes for Mindfulness, the seven constituents of Wisdom, the Noble Eightfold Path was no doubt also called upon to remember its considerable influence outside the sangha (Narain 1985; Aslam and Bukhari 2017).

In Theravada tradition, monks who chose to enter the monastic community or sangha were not allowed to retain personal property, including their houses, fields, cattle, gold and silver. The Siddhartha Gautama Buddha rejected the money and material possessions when he departed from his life as a prince, and so established a precedent for monks and nuns to follow. In a sermon of the Pali canon, for example, the Buddha states that a loss of money is a trifling matter, whereas loss of wisdom brings utter misery (Šamánková et al 2018).

According to the Pali canon, in Buddha's first sermon he instructed his monks to follow a Middle Way. They were to avoid strict asceticism or self-torture on the one hand and indulgence in the passions on the other. The doctrine of the Middle Way probably followed the spread of Buddhism to Gandhara, but interpretation and enforcement of the vinayas changed over time and was likely different in some respects in each monastery. Nevertheless, the sangha and the Vinaya developed together; the nature of the monastic community and the rules co-evolved to meet specific conditions. Monks were admonished to be attentive to communal as well as personal objectives, and especially to remember the benefits and obligations that accompanied the patronage upon which they depended. Nevertheless, in addition to monastery commitments, monks were free to return to their families and enjoy the privileges of home (Huntington 1985; Rienjang and Stewart 2018).

While the Buddha may have said that money was to be regarded as a trifling matter, especially for monks and their teachers, money was an important reality for monastic life, especially in Gandhara. Archaeological excavation in Gandharan monasteries has unearthed quantities of coin hoards from



stupa relic caskets and many other locations. The principle of gift-giving, or Dana, was strongly emphasised in Buddhist teachings for both monks and laity. Gift giving was perceived to “ripen” the giver, increasing material and spiritual levels. Monasteries, by necessity, where, in fact, borrowing and lending institutions. Even the vinayas mention efforts by monasteries to improve their reputations to appeal to lay followers. Choice hilltop locations or awe-inspiring art and architecture attracted wealthy travellers and their donations (Sehrai 1986; Farooq et al 2015; Ray 2017).

Because of large membership and its influence in the society, the Buddhist Sangha of Gandhara became thoroughly institutionalised. The culture of patronage that seems to have reached a fever pitch in the Kushan period provides an economic explanation for the process of institutionalisation that occurred. Transactions between the monastic and lay communities were frequent and complex, involving major construction projects, commissioning of quantities of artwork, expansion plans and maintenance programs. The sangha and laity entered into a system of reciprocity. In exchange for donations of land, money, jewels, silk and other valuables, donors received in return accumulated merit, honorary ceremonies, structures with inscribed dedications, inscribed statuary or other forms of art (David 2002; Cunningham and Young 2015; Ray 2017).

Isolation from society was not an objective for Buddhist monastic life. From the beginning, the aims and activities of Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists were related. They jointly organised festivals. Stupa worship, initially a form of lay ritual, was later adopted as a canonical institution. Monasteries and the surrounding society served each other in

widely accepted formalized agreements. Monks and monasteries were maintained by endowments and grants, sometimes from kings, but more often from a continuous stream of donors’ gifts from members of wealthy merchant classes or family lineage (Sehrai 1986; Siddiqui 2018).

The efforts of Gandhara monastic communities to gain favour with patrons is reflected by the apparent efforts of Kushan kings to petition favours from the gods. In the Kushan period, Pharro was a god of monetary wealth favoured by kings as well as the Buddhist merchant class. Ardoxsho, an Iranian goddess of wealth and good fortune, was another favourite. Both Pharro and Ardoxsho have frequently portrayed deities on Kushan coins. Pharro is either shown offering a pan of fire or holding a victory wreath, symbols of royal glory and legitimacy as king of kings. Ardoxsho is portrayed carrying a cornucopia, a symbol of abundance and good fortune. Although neither deity is Buddhist, both deities were frequently used on the coins of Kanishka (c. 127-153 AD) who is famous for his patronage of Buddhism. Kanishka’s successor, Huvishka (c. 154-192 AD) also favoured Pharro and Ardoxsho as royal benefactors. The kings coins suggest a similar reciprocity as found in the monasteries relationship with patrons. The kings honoured the gods in the form of temples and coin representations, expecting abundance and good fortune in return (Ray 2017; Steinhardt 2018; Siddiqui 2018; Rienjang and Stewart 2018).

Huge numbers of Gandhara stone and stucco images have survived and are held in public and private collections. All Gandhara images come from monastery ruins. Relatively few have been found in their original settings, and most are damaged. Nevertheless, statuary and narrative reliefs provide clues to a monastic



architecture of the period. Gandhara monastery sites were in ruins by about the sixth century AD, and archaeological evidence suggests that the sites were gradually abandoned rather than deliberately destroyed. Only a few Gandhara area sites have been competently excavated, and most have endured centuries of pillage and amateur digging, with finds dispersed into the antiquity markets. The practice continues today throughout Central and South Asia, and government efforts to protect sites and preserve artefacts is for the most part wholly inadequate (Mogali and Abrahams 2017; Aslam and Bukhari 2017; Irfan et al 2018).

The characteristic architectural environment for the art consisted of a stupa complex and monastery. There was usually the main stupa, often located at the centre of a quadrangle. Because of merit gained by sponsoring construction, a complex of many small stupas was often built at the same monastery site, usually adjacent to the main stupa quadrangle. Stupas were often lavishly adorned with tiers of stone or stucco reliefs that covered the base and parts of the hemispherical dome. The main stupa quadrangle was characteristically lined with rows of chapels, platforms and niches constructed to support or shelter statuary, especially the iconic full-figure images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas (Foucher et al 1986; Raven 2017; Ray 2017).

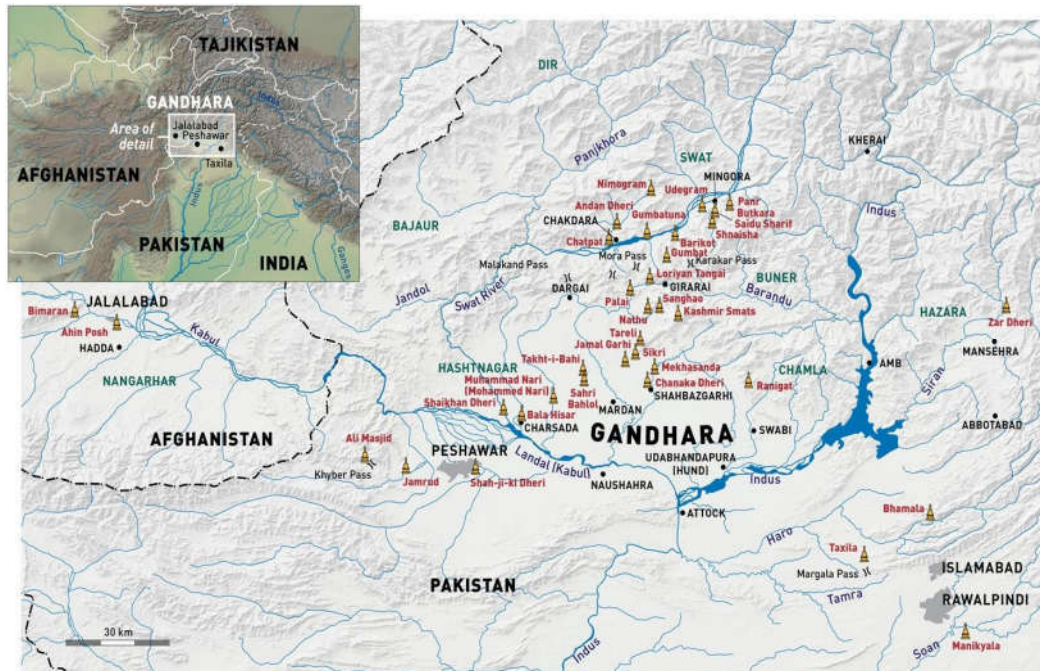
One of the largest and best preserved Gandhara monasteries in Pakistan is UNESCO world heritage of Takht-I-Bahi (Figure 3). Its dramatic hilltop setting overlooks villages and fields of the Mardan valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan and the stark rock of surrounding ridges. The site includes a monastery quadrangle lined with two stories of monks' cells, the main stupa quadrangle lined with image chapels, two additional stupa

complexes, and two courtyards, including a lower level court skirted by rows of monks' cells. A British sergeant first excavated the site in 1871. Dr Spooner, who continued work at Takht-I-Bahi and nearby sites for several years, began the first systematic excavation in 1907. Conservation work commenced about the same time and continued from 1907 to 1929. Large numbers of sculptures were recovered annually, with many now preserved in the Peshawar Museum (Sehrai 1986; Abhijeet 2015; Bapat 2016; Ray 2017). The rest is widely dispersed. As Spooner wrote,

*"The extraordinary extent and relatively good preservation of the ruins themselves are sufficient to explain the interest that has long been taken in them by archaeologists, an interest which has been widened by the fact that many of the best pieces of Gandhara sculpture now to be found in the museums of Europe were originally recovered at this site."*(Sehrai 1986).

No sculptures remain in the site at Takht-I-Bahi, but the existing ruins and reconstructed buildings, quadrangles and courts provide ample evidence for the former presence of artwork. Another Gandhara monastery active throughout the Kushan period is at Julian in Taxila, Pakistan (Figure 4) also has partially reconstructed buildings and a stupa complex with the remains of stucco panel reliefs skirting the bases of the stupas (Figure 4). Monasteries served multiple functions as centres of learning and spiritual practice. Outside of the royal houses, monasteries were the primary cultural institutions of the time. They were complex self-governing communities, the following practices of both a secular and spiritual nature that were a

major influence in the society (Ray 2017; Siddiqui 2018).



**Figure 2:** The map shows the core region of **Gandhara** extending from Jalalabad to the West towards **Taxila** in the East, with Peshawar at its centre and Swat in the North. (Source: <https://www.ancient.eu/image/3943> 2018).



**Figure 3:** One of the largest and best preserved UNESCO world heritage site of Gandhara monasteries in Pakistan is Takht-I-Bahi (Source: The Author 2016).



**Figure 4:** A stupa complex with remains of the stucco panel reliefs skirting the bases of the stupas Julian in Taxila, Pakistan (Source: The Author 2016).

### About the Collection

The first piece of Gandhara sculpture to enter Royal Ontario Museum collections arrived in 1924. Of the forty-three objects described in this catalogue, seven pieces were donated. The ROM purchased five pieces from Spink of London in the 1920's and 1930's and another three came from an auction at Waddington's in Toronto in 1985. Twenty-eight sculptures were acquired from the Ram Dass & Company thanks to a fortuitous combination of circumstances that occurred in the late 1930's (Vollmer et al 1953).

The ingredients necessary for building ROM's Gandhara collection included a determined Director, a temporarily reliable source of funding, and, for the twenty-eight pieces, a knowledgeable but unpredictable Indian dealer from the city of Rawalpindi, Present Pakistan. ROM's relationship with Ram Dass & Company occurred during the early years of World War II, the end of British

rule in India, and the partition that created the new country of Pakistan. Because Ram Dass and his family were Hindu, they were forced at the time of partition to leave behind their family home and business (Quagliotti and Maria 2000).

The sculpture acquired from the Rawalpindi dealer includes many outstanding pieces, full-figure images of seated and standing Buddha's and Bodhisattvas, panel reliefs and several schists, stucco and fired clay heads. The objects were acquired during the beginning of World War II and shipped through war zones from Calcutta to Halifax. Several large boxes sent by the dealer and destined for the Royal Ontario Museum were shipped as "loan exhibition material" and labelled for purposes of Indian Customs declarations, as "plastic toys," "stones cut and engraved," "stone sculptures" and "clay toys." (Vollmer et al 1953).

Charles Currelly was the Royal Ontario Museum's first Director when it opened its doors to the public in 1912. He continued as Director of the Museum and Professor of Archaeology at the University until he retired in 1946. Born and raised in Toronto, Currelly attended Victoria College at the University of Toronto. As a student, he found opportunities to pursue his love of collecting, beginning with moths, butterflies and plants. He received BA in Archaeology in 1898 and a MA in 1901. In England, not long after graduation, Charles Currelly met the famous Egyptologist, William Petrie, with whom he went to work for several seasons. Currelly subsequently worked as an archaeologist in several Mediterranean sites. The work inspired Currelly to start a museum in Toronto. With a museum building and financial backing from the University of Toronto, Currelly's dream was realized and the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology was created in 1912. As first Director and Curator, Currelly travelled around the world in search of material for ROM collections. He possessed a great instinct for collecting and among his many finds are outstanding ancient Chinese ceramics, paintings and bronzes for which the ROM is justly famous (Vollmer et al 1953; Quagliotti and Maria 2000; Olivieri and Filigenzi 2018).

In his lively and highly readable memoirs, "I Brought the Ages Home," Currelly recounts the ROM's history and his early years of building ROM collections. Although his memoirs emphasize the Chinese collections, there are a few details about Currelly's interest in building an Indian collection. He notes that opportunities for acquiring objects sometimes arrived at the museum out of the blue (Vollmer et al 1953; Ray 2017).

*"On one occasion I received a photograph of an excellent piece of Indian sculpture of about*

*1000 AD, a dancing Shiva. The price asked was more than I felt I could get, but the man kept writing me and I finally made him an offer that I thought would shut him up completely. To my amazement I received a word, 'Statue shipped.'"(Ray 2017).*

Some years later, a photo and full page description of the dancing Shiva was published in the Illustrated London News. As a result, Currelly received a notice he could not refuse. He was offered:

*"A collection of fine pieces, mainly of Gandhara sculpture, at prices I was able to meet. These were things I had never dreamed that Canada might possess, as anything of this type I had seen in London was held at fantastic prices. This work had always interested me very much, as it was Indian, but deriving from the Greek tradition which followed Alexander's conquest."(Quagliotti and Anna Maria 2000).*

When the first shipment from India arrived, Currelly wrote, "In this transaction, plus others that followed, we obtained a very good little collection of Indian sculpture, and I sincerely hope that in some way more may be obtained."

The source of funding for Currelly's purchases of many Gandharan pieces was Reuben Wells Leonard Bequest to the Royal Ontario Museum. Although Reuben Wells Leonard was one of Canada's great philanthropists, he avoided publicity all his life. He died in St. Catharines Ontario in 1930. Leonard did make front-page headlines on every newspaper in England, however, in 1923, after he bought a former home of prime ministers in London, Chatham House at #10 St. James Square. Leonard subsequently donated Catham House to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, an organization founded during conferences at Versailles as



the world's new "Instrument of Peace" (Quagliotti and Anna Maria 2000).

In Toronto, Leonard orchestrated a similar gift. His donation did not make news, however, until an article appeared in the *Toronto Star* fifty-five years after Leonard's death. What the article revealed was that Leonard had donated an elegant white stone two-story building to Wycliffe College. Leonard Hall is adjacent to Hart House on the University of Toronto campus. Its medieval castle-like hall is a grand setting for the Wycliffe College library (Hameed 2014; Ray 2017).

In his teens, Leonard was a cadet at the Royal Military College in Kingston and took courses in metallurgy and engineering at Queen's University. After graduation, he quickly gained a reputation as an engineer and was put in charge of a major hydroelectric project at Niagara Falls. Later, he chaired the Canadian government's national transportation commission. Throughout his engineering career, Leonard never lost his interest in mining. He staked his first claims in mines of northern Ontario and made his fortune after gaining control of one of Ontario's most lucrative silver mines. According to Donald Jones, a history reporter for the *Toronto Star*, Leonard belonged to a rare breed of turn-of-the-century millionaires, like Andrew Carnegie, who considered their fortunes 'public money held in trust' that must eventually be returned. Leonard's philanthropy was extraordinary, yet only a few close friends knew about his countless gifts to museums, colleges, schools, hospitals and art galleries (Khandalavala 1985; Xinru 2000; Ray 2017).

More of the story of the ROM's Gandhara collection came to light when examined

museum records that include correspondence between ROM and the Indian dealer, Ram Dass. Questions regarding authenticity, pricing, shipping and handling of antiquities are enormously complex in today's museum culture, but there were also highly sensitive issues in the 1920's and 1930's. The museum is legally bound by Canada's 1978 signing of the UNESCO conventions that prohibit illicit import or export of cultural property. The convention is intended to protect artefacts and prevent looting of antiquities from the tombs and archaeological sites, as well as from national and private collections. Determining the precise provenance of most antiquities is very difficult. Gandhara is an exception because it is a small area geographically. Technical analysis of the stone used in sculpture readily leads to confirmation of local sources, although not exact quarry sites (Brancaccio 2017; Steinhardt 2018).

To establish ROM collections, Currelly trusted his instincts and extensive knowledge developed during a long career in archaeology, museum, collecting and conservation, and museum management. Neither his memoirs nor museum records indicate that Currelly ever had doubts about the authenticity of the Subcontinent objects that he personally selected. He did not hesitate to work with dealers in London and Rawalpindi whose companies were recognized and sanctioned by their respective governments.

In 1924, twelve years after the museum opened its doors to the public, Currelly began to purchase Gandhara sculpture. Five of the first six Gandhara pieces to enter the collection were acquired from Spink & Sons and include the frequently exhibited and published a pair of stair-riser reliefs. In business since 1666, by the turn of the twentieth, century Spink & Sons had

established a reputation for dealing Indian and Islamic material. To this day, Gandhara sculpture is sold at Spinks in London (Zwalf 1996; Jongeward 2002; Irfan et al 2018).

Currelly wanted to add full-size seated and standing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to the collection, but such figures were far too costly in London. In August 1938, several years after his first purchases of Indian sculpture, Currelly received letters and photographs from India that offered Gandhara sculpture at affordable prices. The dealer's letterhead declared: Ram Dass SC Company. Art Experts, Bankers & Old Coins Exporters. Established in 1880. Rawalpindi Pakistan (Marshall 1960; Jongeward 2002; Ray 2017).

According to a grandson, Ram Dass was the only boy in his village who graduated from high school and spoke English. Beginning in childhood, Ram Dass was fascinated by history and came to realize that he lived in one of the most historically rich crossroads of the ancient world. As he investigated north India's heritage, Ram Dass found abundant evidence in his own backyard of nine major civilizations.

Ram Dass's interest in history was soon accompanied by a passion for collecting. While still a young man, Ram Dass met a British army officer stationed in Rawalpindi who promised to buy whatever coins or antiquities Ram Dass found. Ram Dass agreed but always kept the best pieces in his own collection. As a result of this friendship, Ram Dass's dealings with the British officer led to the formation of Ram Dass & Company in 1880.

Selecting from photographs sent by Ram Dass, Currelly initiated a process of acquiring pieces for the museum. The ROM forwarded an acquisition policy that Ram Dass agreed to and confirmed in writing. One of the

stipulations was that the name of the museum would not appear on box labels or shipping forms. The name "Roma" could be used, but only if necessary. No payment would be forwarded to Ram Dass until the objects arrived in the museum and were examined. Currelly used the services of (F.St.G) Spend-love as a purchasing agent from the beginning of dealing with Ram Dass. At the time, Spend-love was a curator from the museum's Far Eastern Department. He handled all correspondence with Ram Dass & Company in his own name (Vollmer et al 1983).

In early 1939, Spend-love sent the first ROM purchase order to Indo-Pak Sub-continent. He included detailed instructions on how the objects should be packed for shipping. Ram Dass replied by saying he was totally confident in these matters and that Spend-love need not have bothered with the advice. As it turned out, Ram Dass was right. In preparing sculptures for shipping, Ram Dass rolled each object in wheat straw and packed them individually in burlap sacks. Wood crates were custom made, fastened with screws rather than nails, and designed with sufficient space around each burlap sack. This space was filled with sawdust. The closed boxes were secured and strengthened by iron strapping (Quagliotti and Anna Maria 2000)

Eight wood boxes shipped from Calcutta cleared Customs in Halifax and arrived at the ROM in August of 1939. Included in the shipment were two standing Bodhisattvas, a seated Bodhisattva, a series of 'terracotta heads,' and several other South Asian objects that Currelly had ordered. Currelly was especially impressed with the great stucco head of a Bodhisattva that also arrived with this first shipment. He decided to pay for the stucco head personally and give it to the museum in honour of his mother (Vollmer et al 1983).

Immediately upon receipt of the boxes, Spend-love sent a cable to Ram Dass & Company. The August 28 cable states: "Toys arrived today perfect condition money cabled letter follows." In his letter, Spend-love sounds exuberant. "Your shipment came perfectly packed, not one single bit of damage. I congratulate you. We have never had more wonderful packing." And later in the same letter, "Please ship the big Buddha as soon as you can, provided there is no war. If there should be, we must see what chances there would be of its arriving." (Vollmer et al 1983).

ROM dealings with Ram Dass did have problems, however. Included in the eight boxes were several small sculptures that had not been ordered. A letter that arrived before the shipment alerted ROM to Ram Dass's inclusion of additional pieces. ROM's response was immediate. "We were very much surprised and grieved to hear that you had sent a selection of objects to us on approval, as it was only the photographs we asked for. Send nothing more without definite instructions from us." (Vollmer et al 1983). When the shipment of eight boxes arrived, the museum returned many objects listed under the heading "Extras in Box No." Despite the "stop shipment" notice, more boxes arrived that included extras. In October of the same year, however, the correspondence reveals that despite the problem, Currelly was determined to receive further shipments.

*"We asked you to cable us whether our orders have been shipped. If not, please send them as soon as suitable opportunity offers, preferably by a neutral ship, with full insurance covering war risks and all other risks. We are keeping three small terracottas for the time being. The other extras that were sent at various times are being returned to you fully insured and prepaid. We require*

*standing Bodhisattva and will not accept the other pieces unless this one is sent."*(Vollmer et al 1983).

Another box from India arrived at the ROM in February 1940. In an internal memo circulated by Spend-love, he announced receipt. "We are immensely relieved to know that our shipment from Ram Dass has arrived. One case, containing the Buddha figure, and a stone head" (Zwalf 1996). The stone head, however, was another extra. Ram Dass explained the shipment with all the enthusiasm and guile of a practised dealer.

*"We received your orders to the effect that no extras should be sent. But this head is most fine and in perfect condition. We believe your good self will feel "the necessity of having many heads of different types and sizes of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, etc. when you will display other articles in this Indian gallery as other curators of other museums of the different countries have felt. We again say it with authority that such a beautiful head with fine art and in perfect condition can be had only by chance as these beautiful pieces are not always available for sale. Therefore, the Museum should not miss this chance, but should have it on our strong request and experience of opinion."*(Zwalf 1996).

The ROM agreed to purchase the head" An associate Director was obliged to explain the circumstances of the purchase.

*"Despite express instructions to send no "extras," Ram Dass included with the stone figure of the Buddha ordered many months ago a stone Buddhist head. Because of the very great difficulties of returning objects under present customs, conditions, and because the head is very fine and very cheap, Dr Currelly wishes to keep it for the museum."*(Sehrai 1986).



A third standing Bodhisattva figure that Currelly considered of special importance also arrived in 1940. But the shipment signalled significant change. Not long after, correspondence between the ROM and Ram Dass stopped. Conditions in India had deteriorated rapidly. Museum records suggest that Spend-Love did not try to contact Ram Dass again until 1946. Ram Dass did not respond until October 1949.

*“Due to the partition of the country and existence of Pakistan, we have with great difficulty reached Delhi. I very much regret that I could not write to you earlier, but this is due to my being in distress. I could only bring moveable property. I now have for sale Indo-Greek, Parthian, Scythian coins, which are all rare and very fine and you will want them for your Indian collections.” (Ray 2017)*

The Ram Dass family postponed leaving Rawalpindi for as long as possible. By 1948, Ram Dass had assembled a large collection of stone and stucco sculpture, a full figure Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, heads and relief panels, as well as a sizeable coin collection. An unusual feature of their Rawalpindi home was its hidden basement, accessible only by removing floor tiles on the ground floor. To store or move artefacts into or out of the basement, Ram Dass engineered a moveable crane system for lifting and lowering heavy stone objects. When the family was forced to leave their home, Ram Dass received help from his best friend and neighbour, a Muslim man, who arranged for a truck and driver. The driver was hired with all expenses paid and told to do whatever necessary to get the truck with its load of family belongings and a few sculptures to New Delhi within two weeks. Ram Dass left his house and most of his collection behind and the family flew to New Delhi. The driver and truck arrived a few days later, safe and sound. A few Gandhara pieces

that had arrived by the truck were eventually placed in the National Museum in Delhi. Several hundred objects that Ram Dass left behind in his Rawalpindi home now form the basis of the Taxila Museum collection in Pakistan (Marshall; 1960a; Rienjang and Stewart 2018). There are other objects in ROM acquired from Ram Dass & Company that are not Gandharan and do not appear in this catalogue. They include objects attributed to the Indus Valley civilization, Mathura and the Gupta period of Indian history.

## Conclusion

The format I have adopted follows in part precedents established by three other catalogues: Zwalf's two volume set on the British Museum collection of Gandhara sculpture, Stan Czumak's catalogue that accompanied a 1985 Cleveland Museum exhibition of Kushan era sculpture, and Cribb and Errington's catalogue that accompanied a 1992 Fitzwilliam Museum exhibition.

## The forty-three objects in this catalogue are arranged as follows.

#1-7: Images of the Buddha, four of schist stone, one of fired clay, one stucco.

#8-16: Bodhisattva images, eight schists and one stucco.

#17-28: Schist panel reliefs, fragments and statuary that relate to the life story of the Buddha.

#29-35: Deities and images not specifically Buddhist in origin, but adopted in Gandhara for Buddhist purposes.

#36-42: Fired clay heads.

#43: Bronze figure.

## Each description is comprised of eight parts.

1. Title.

2. five-point heading.

A) Medium from which the sculpture was created. Although Grey schist is the generic name for the stone, I include the geological classification of the stone in one sculpture, as found by technical analysis conducted at ROM.

B) Date. The dates are approximate to the nearest century.

C) Provenance. For a few pieces, museum records and comparative study provide possible find spots within Gandhara.

D) Dimensions.

E) The Royal Ontario Museum accession number.

3. Description. The descriptions derive from several examinations of all the sculptures. Observations were supplemented by comparing and contrasting sculptures found in published collections. Of the forty-three pieces in the ROM collection, only three have previously received comprehensive catalogue

descriptions. The three include the two stair-riser reliefs (#33 and 34) and the Kushan soldiers (#35).

4. Condition. Descriptions of the sculptures' condition sum up the more obvious breaks, cuts, scrapes and missing parts. I did not attempt descriptions of patina except in unusual examples.

5. Publications, if any. In addition to the three reliefs catalogued for the Cleveland Museum exhibition, standing Bodhisattva (#9) has attracted the most attention in scholarly publications. I include texts and articles that highlight ROM objects, and any reference, however brief, found in academic and non-academic sources.

References where only photographs appear are also included. Many sculptures in the collection have never been published.

6. A Source of object and nature of funding or donation.

7. Photography. Photos follow the descriptions, with detail photography added for six pieces.

## Figures



**Figure 1:** Standing bodhisattva, Gandhara, Pakistan, Kushan Period, the 3rd century (Source: Royal Ontario Museum).



**Figure 2:** Hariti or Ardoxsho, Gandhara, Pakistan, Kushan Period, 2nd century (Source: Royal Ontario Museum).



**Figure 3:** Standing bodhisattva, possibly Siddhartha, Gandhara, Pakistan, Kushan Period, the 3rd century (Source: Royal Ontario Museum).



**Figure 4:** Maitreya, schist, the 3rd century, Gandhara, Pakistan (Source: Royal Ontario Museum Canada).



**Figure 5:** The Head of the Buddha, Gandhara probably Attock or Taxila, Pakistan (Source: Royal Ontario Museum Canada).



**Figure 6:** Hariti, Gandhara, Pakistan, Kushan Period, 2nd century (Source: Royal Ontario Museum).

#### References

- Abhijeet, K. (2015). Looking at Gandhāra. *Historia i Świat*, (4), 439-447.
- Alexander, F. T. (2017). The So-Called Hellenization of Gandhara: an Analysis on Indo-Greek Period Numismatics and Acculturation (Doctoral dissertation).
- Alvi, A. K., Hussain, Z., Tahir, M., & Gondal, M. A. S. (2015). DOES THE RELATIONSHIP OF WORK LIFE BALANCE AND MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP WITH EMPLOYEE JOB ENGAGEMENT EXIST IN BANKS OF LAHORE?. *Science International*, 27(4).
- Alvi, A. K., Jabeen, Z., Jawaid, A., & Kaur, P. (2020). Relationship of Career Success and Organizational Performance Through the Path of Business Strategy. *International Journal of Economics, Management and Accounting*, 28(1), 1-33.
- Alvi, A. K., Lashari, R. H., UR Rehman, S., Kaur, P., & Jawaid, A. (2019). The Impact of Organizational Justice on Organizational Performance in View Point of Employee Voice. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, 8(4), pp-624.

- Aslam, N., & Bukhari, M. F. (2017). Buddhist art in ancient Gandhara, an appraisal of its distinctive features.
- Aslam, N. (2017). Ancient corridor of Pakistan linkages with rest of other world and its impact on trade culture and pilgrimages. The International Conference on Land Transportation, Locomotive Heritage and Road Culture-2017.
- Benjamin, C. (2018). Empires of Ancient Eurasia: The First Silk Roads Era, 100 BCE–250 CE. Cambridge University Press.
- Brancaccio, P. (2017). The collection of Gandharan art in the residence of the Malakand Political Agent, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan. In Buddhism and Gandhara (pp. 154-172). Routledge India.
- Bhandare, S. (2017). Numismatics of 'the other': investigating coinage and 'Greekness' at Taxila. In Buddhism and Gandhara (pp. 88-121). Routledge India.
- Bapat, P. V. (2016). 2500 years of Buddhism. Publications Division Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.
- Cunningham, R., & Young, R. (2015). The archaeology of South Asia: from the Indus to Asoka, c. 6500 BCE–200 CE. Cambridge University Press.
- Foucher, et al. (1986). "Numismatic and epigraphic evidence for the chronology of early Gandhara art," in Yadiz, and Lobo, eds. Investigating Indian Art, Berlin, pp. 67-88.
- Femald, H. and Sutherland, (1953). "Buddhism and Graeco-Buddhist Art," ROMA East/West Bulletin #21, 1953. PP.21-27.
- Farooq, M., Hassan, M., & Gull, F. (2015). Mycobial deterioration of stone monuments of Dharmarajika, Taxila. Journal of Microbiology and Experimentation, 2, 36.
- Huntington, John, (1985). "Origin of the Buddha Image: Early Image Traditions and the Concept of Buddhadasanapunya," in A.K. Narrain, ed. Studies in the Buddhist Art of South Asia, Kanak Publications, Delhi, pp. 23-58.
- Hameed, M. (2014). Representation of ParinirvaNa in Gandharan Diptychs. Journal of Asian Civilizations, 37(2), 61.
- Irfan et al. (2018). The Pakistani Collection of Terracotta Figurines in the British Museum. PAKISTAN HERITAGE (Vol 9 pp.37-56).
- Jongeward, David, (2002). "Coin and Sculpture Arts of the Kushan Empire," Continuity and Change in Central Asia, Journal of the Central and Inner Asia Seminar, V. 5, University of Toronto.
- Khandalavala, Karl, (1985). "The Five Dated Gandhara School Sculptures and Their Stylistic Implications," in Asher, F.ed. Indian Epigraphy, Oxford & IBH Publishing, pp. 61-70.
- Khayyam, U., Ullah, E. I., & Shah, S. (2018). Socio-cultural dynamics and their relation with the participatory development in the Pashtun tribal society of Pakistan. Trames. A Journal of the Humanities & Social Sciences, 22(2).
- Liu, Xinru, (2000). "Trade and Pilgrimage Routes from Afghanistan to Taxila, Mathura and the Ganges Plains," unpublished manuscript, presented in Symposium hosted by Nelson Atkins Museum Conference, On the Cusp of an Era: Art in the Pre Kushan World, November.
- Majumdar, N.G. (1987). A Guide of the Sculptures in the Indian Museum, vol. II the Graeco-Buddhist School of Gandhara, Delhi 1937, reprint Patna.
- Marshall, John, (1960). The Buddhist Art of Gandhara, Cambridge.
- Marshall, John, (1960a). A Guide to Taxila, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1951, 3 vol. reprinted as a guide book in, cf. 1-46, 95-123.

- Narain, A. K. ed. (1985). *Studies in the Buddhist Art of South Asia*, Kanak Publications, Delhi.
- Olivieri, L. M., & Filigenzi, A. (2018). On Gandhāran sculptural production from Swat: recent archaeological and chronological data. In *Problems of Chronology in Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the First International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project*, University of Oxford, 23rd-24th March, 2017 (P.71). Archaeopress
- Quagliotti, Anna Maria, (2000). "Puer Mingens: A Gandhara Relief in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto," in ACSAA Symposium papers
- Rienjang, W., & Stewart, P. (2018). *Problems of Chronology in Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the First International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project*, University of Oxford, 23rd-24th March, 2017. Archaeopress.
- Richard, S. (2018). *Buddhist Literature of Ancient Gandhara: An Introduction with Selected Translations*. Simon and Schuster.
- Raven, E. M. (2017). In the Shadow of the Golden Age. *Art and Identity in Asia from Gandhara to the Modern Age*.
- Ray, H. P. (Ed.). (2017). *Buddhism and Gandhara: An Archaeology of Museum Collections*. Taylor & Francis.
- Ray, H. P. (2017). *Buddhism and Gandhara*. Taylor & Francis.
- Ray, H. P. (2017). *Decoding Gandharan art: the making of museum collections in India*. In *Buddhism and Gandhara* (pp. 250-278). Routledge India.
- Siddiqui, R. A. (2018). *Community archaeology in Pakistan: three sites in Gandhara as a case study* (Doctoral dissertation, Bilkent University).
- Sarkar, S. (2016). *Taxila—An Alternative Urbanisation between the Silk Road and the Uttarāpatha (the Northern Road)*. *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 51, 644-652.
- Šamánková, D., Preiss, M., & Příhodová, T. (2018). *Personality and Ethics in Theravada Buddhism*. In *The Contextual Character of Moral Integrity* (pp. 199-216). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Steinhardt, N. S. (2018). *Archaeological and Visual Sources of Meditation in the Ancient Monasteries of Kuča*. By Angela F. Howard and Giuseppe Vignato. pp. 214. Leiden, Brill, 2012. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1-3.
- Sehrai, Fidullah, (1986). *A Guide to Takht-i-Bahi*, Lahore, Newfine Printing Press, pp. 31-36.
- Vollmer, John, Keall, E. J, and E. Nagai-Berthrong, (1983). *Silk Roads and China Ships*, Royal Ontartio Museum.
- Zwalf, W. (1996). *A Catalogue of the Gandhara Sculpture in the British Museum*, 2 vol. British Museum Press.