

**More Gandhāra than Mathurā: substantial and persistent  
Gandhāran influences provincialized in the Buddhist  
material culture of Gujarat and beyond, c. AD 400-550**

Ken Ishikawa





# **The Global Connections of Gandhāran Art**

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Gandhāran 'Atlas' figure in schist; c. second century AD. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. M.71.73.136 (Photo: LACMA Public Domain image.)



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# More Gandhāra than Mathurā: substantial and persistent Gandhāran influences provincialized in the Buddhist material culture of Gujarat and beyond, c. AD 400-550

Ken Ishikawa

## Introduction

This paper investigates a new distinctive form of ‘provincial’ Buddhist material culture that emerged at Devnīmorī (Mehta & Chaudhary 1966) in north Gujarat in c. AD 400 under the Kārdamaka line of the Western Kṣatrapas (c. AD 78-415), amid the contemporary dominions of the imperial Guptas (c. AD 320-550) and their allied Vākāṭakas (c. AD 250-500) in other parts of South Asia. The Buddhist monastic complex at Devnīmorī or ancient Paśāntika-paḷḷi (Sircar 1965: 337) is characterized by its monumental brick *stūpa* and distinctive terracotta ‘buddha’ images and ornaments adorning its exterior.

The Buddhist material culture at Devnīmorī is often discussed under the heading of ‘Gupta’ art and architecture, which are well known to have come into existence out of the two preceding, and most influential, traditions of Buddhist material culture in the region of Gandhāra and at the city of Mathurā (in north India). In fact, Peshawar (ancient Puruṣapura) in Gandhāra and Mathurā were the former capitals of the Kushan empire (c. AD 30-330) in its heyday. In this paper, Mathurā is used more in the sense of a cultural capital. Although Buddhist art and architecture of Gandhāra and Mathurā under the imperial Kushans were geographically centred on Gandhāra and Mathurā, ‘Gupta’ material culture was more widespread or even pan-Indian in nature and, misleadingly, was not necessarily associated with the imperial Guptas.

Ruling from the Magadha Kingdom in the lower Gangetic Valley, the imperial Guptas were the second pan-Indian state in history, long after the earliest unification of South Asia by the Mauryans (c. 322-185 BC). Despite this fact, almost no ‘Gupta’ material remains survive from the Gupta capital of Pāṭaliputra (modern Patna). In such circumstances, the Buddhist material culture at Devnīmorī, from north Gujarat, is even considered as one of the earliest and finest examples of ‘Gupta’ art and architecture, far beyond the Gupta heartland that stretched between eastern and central India.

Hence, pan-Indian ‘Gupta’ material culture has often been discussed with reference to its problematic geo-political and socio-cultural relationship with its provinces (Harle 1974; Williams 1982). So pan-Indian ‘Gupta’ material culture merely stands as a generic model derived from its various distinctive regional manifestations. To disambiguate, the term ‘Gupta’ is used in this paper to qualify a spectrum of widespread/pan-Indian material culture during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods in South Asia with a loose spatio-temporal association with the Gupta empire, in a similar way to the use of the term ‘Gandhāra’ with its elastic geography and chronology. In addition, the term ‘province’ is also used loosely, not strictly as an imperial administrative unit, but rather as a remote region outside major cultural centres.

In particular, this paper shall examine the earliest extant buddha images in Gujarat, produced at Devnīmorī, in terms of the extent of cultural transmissions from Gandhāra and Mathurā, where the earliest extant groups of Buddha images in the Indian subcontinent were created, but also of the innovative receptivity of this newly created regional material culture at Devnīmorī. Besides, I shall also reconsider the formation of homogenous yet heterogeneous Gupta material culture through imperial vs. interregional models of the emergence of a new provincial material culture as transculturation.

This theoretical approach may potentially have subtle implications for the ongoing debate over the origins of the first Buddha images in Gandhāra and Mathurā. Methodologically, while applying a conventional object-centred approach, with the main body of my materials being buddha images published elsewhere or documented by myself, I shall also contextualize objects with archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics, and Buddhology, wherever appropriate.

Furthermore, I will trace the waves of Gandhāran influences observed at Devnīmori, which within, or after, a century or so eventually reached Sārnāth and Ajaṅṭā and locally persisted at Śāmalājī in north Gujarat, Dhānk in Saurashtra in India, and Mīrpur Khās in Sindh in Pakistan. In this scholarly inquiry, I will also touch upon the archaeological visibility of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Gujarat with reference to problematic identifications of buddhas and bodhisattvas in Gandhāra. Although many of these buddhas represented in art are regarded as the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, there have also been spatio-temporally distant buddhas such as the Seven Buddhas of the Past plus Maitreya Buddha and other buddhas or tathāgatas such as Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru, whose images are notoriously difficult to identify unless clearly labelled in their associated, well-preserved inscriptions. In other words, there is only one Buddha but are many buddhas.

I do not employ the terms ‘buddha’ and ‘bodhisattva’ as proper nouns, even though I do not regard them as generic, simply to avoid confusion. The Buddha as a proper noun and ‘buddha’ or ‘awakened one’ as a noun with no capitalization of the initial ‘b’ are carefully distinguished in this paper. The Buddha is used when it is certain that he is the historical Buddha/Śākyamuni, including his universal manifestation in Gupta-Sārnāth, but the noun ‘buddha’ is otherwise preferred when the identification is unclear, for example, in late Gandhāra, where identifications of various past and Mahāyānist buddhas are problematic. Similarly, for some of the early Kapardin Buddha images from Kushan Mathurā or one related image from Bodh Gayā, which were inscribed as ‘bodhisattva’, I employ the designation of ‘Buddha/Bodhisattva’.

### **Gandhāra or Mathurā: between the two different opinions**

There are two different opinions as to the sources of influences of Devnīmori buddhas with reference to Gandhāra and Mathurā, both of which are to be challenged in this paper.

Shah made the following remark:

At Devni Mori particularly the Buddha figures, deriving some of their stylistic features directly from Gandhāra, already reflect all the principal characteristics that one normally associates with ‘Gupta’ Buddhas. And yet, they were created at least a century before the earliest dated Buddhas of Sārnāth (Shah 1972: 46).

Schastok (1985: 35) then responded to Shah as follows:

Gandhāran features appearing in the early 5th century at Devnī Morī are seen in this argument as reflecting direct contact with a pure Gandhāran style, but even a cursory look at Kuṣāṇa sculptures from both centres shows that a number of stylistic and iconographic features had already been exchanged during the Kuṣāṇa period. Thus some Gandhāran features were already part of Indian art at Mathurā before the 4th century and might be evidence of a link between North Gujarat and Mathurā rather than Gandhāra.

I find both of the above arguments to be determinist and reductionist in limiting the sources of influences of Devnīmori either to Gandhāra or Mathurā, a view that will be refuted.

### Devnīmorī as a Buddhist archaeological site: a site profile of the monastic complex

A Buddhist monastic complex at Devnīmorī in north Gujarat (the north-east of the state of Gujarat), now submerged by a dam (the Meshvo Dam) and thus inaccessible, is located in the valley of the Meshvo river in the alluvial plain of the central part of mainland Gujarat on the western foothills of the Aravalli range (Figures 1 & 2). North Gujarat was one of the main Buddhist regions in Gujarat, at least from the early Western Kṣatrapa period, because at least two other related major Buddhist sites are known in the region, namely Vadnagar and Taranga (Rawat 2011).

The Buddhist site of Devnīmorī would have been a major, local or even regional ceremonial centre in the years in which they were active. Devnīmorī was excavated in the early 1960s by the M.S. Baroda University (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966) as an act of rescue archaeology for the construction of the Meshvo Dam across the Meshvo. While the now submerged monastic complex at Devnīmorī remains *in situ* underwater, major archaeological finds are mostly preserved at the M.S. Baroda University in Gujarat.

Archaeological excavations at Devnīmorī (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966; Chowdhary 2010) revealed a Buddhist monastic complex dating to c. AD 400. These monumental remains at Devnīmorī are characterized by a considerable use of fired bricks and terracotta, which were produced from clay locally sourced from the river bed of the Meshvo running adjacent to Devnīmorī. This was a logical choice, according to Schastock, given the very small occurrence of stone, which was also locally available but not in proximity (Agrawala 1959: 63; Schastock 1985: 25-26).

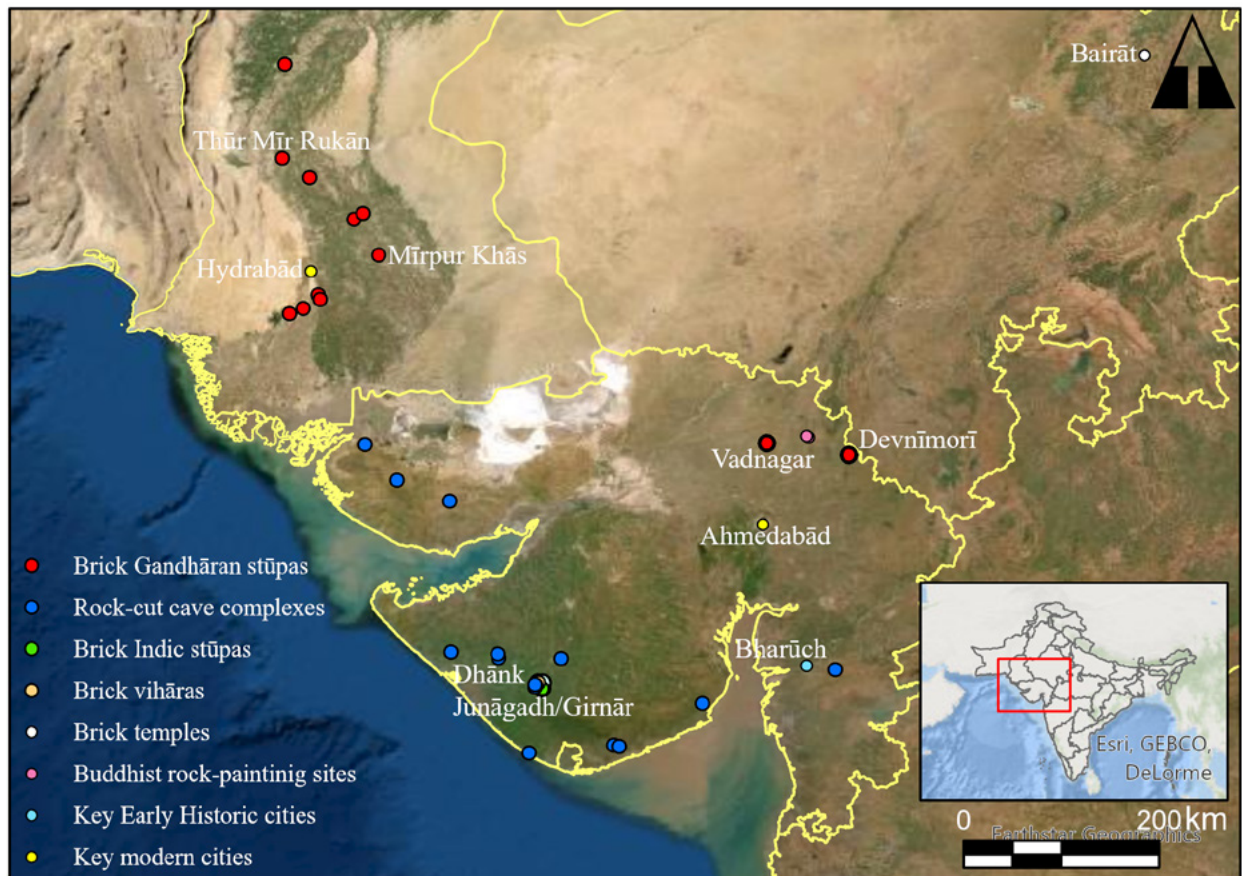


Figure 1. Map of Gujarat and Sindh showing the sites mentioned in the present paper (Map: ESRI and others; author.).



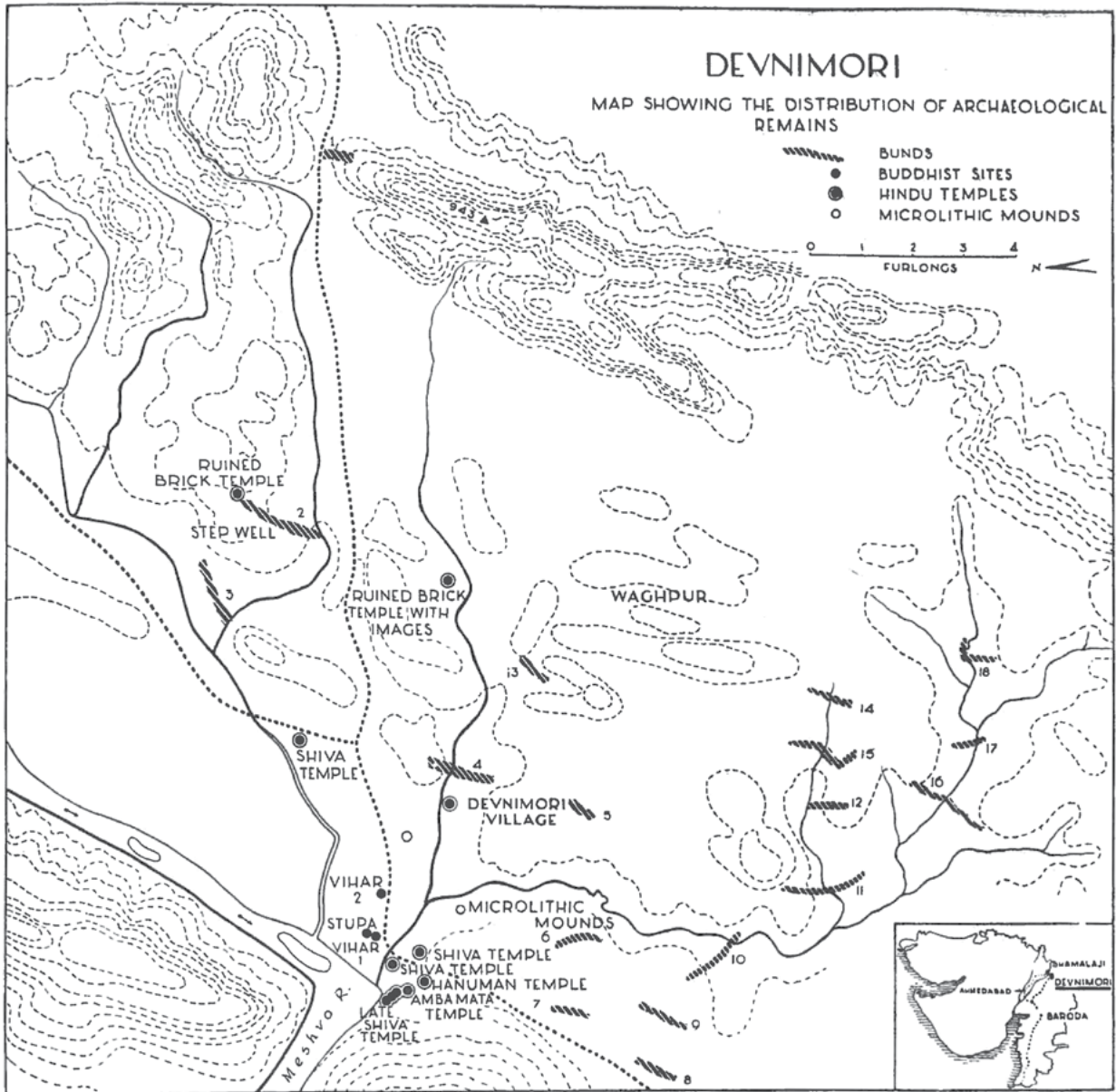


Figure 2. Map showing the environs of Devnimori (Image after Mehta & Chowdhary 1966; courtesy of M.S. Baroda University).

Despite the fact that rock-cut caves constitute the main body of Buddhist monuments in Gujarat during the Western Kṣātrapa period (Nanavati & Dhaky 1969: 15), the regional tradition of Buddhist monuments in brick is still attested in Gujarat (Schastok 1985: 29). Such brick remains are found on the foothill of Mount Girnar in Saurashtra, peninsular Gujarat, and include the Rudrasena Vihāra, a brick courtyard monastery, possibly dating to the reign of king/*mahākṣātrapa* Rudrasena I (ruled AD 200-222) (Sompura 1969: 15-16, fig. 10), and the *stūpa* called Lakha Medi in the Boria hill, which could be as early as some of the earliest extant *stūpas* in India at Sāñcī, Andher and Sonar (Mitra 1971: 98; Le 1992: 99-100), or even earlier from the Mauryan period or Western Kṣātrapa period (Lahiri 2011: 124-126).

The monastic configuration included a terraced *stūpa*, a courtyard monastery, a *caitya* hall and smaller funerary/votive *stūpas* (Figure 3). The monastic complex at Devnimorī would have been much more extensive as one of the trenches revealed part of another *vihāra* (Vihāra II) approximately 150 metres

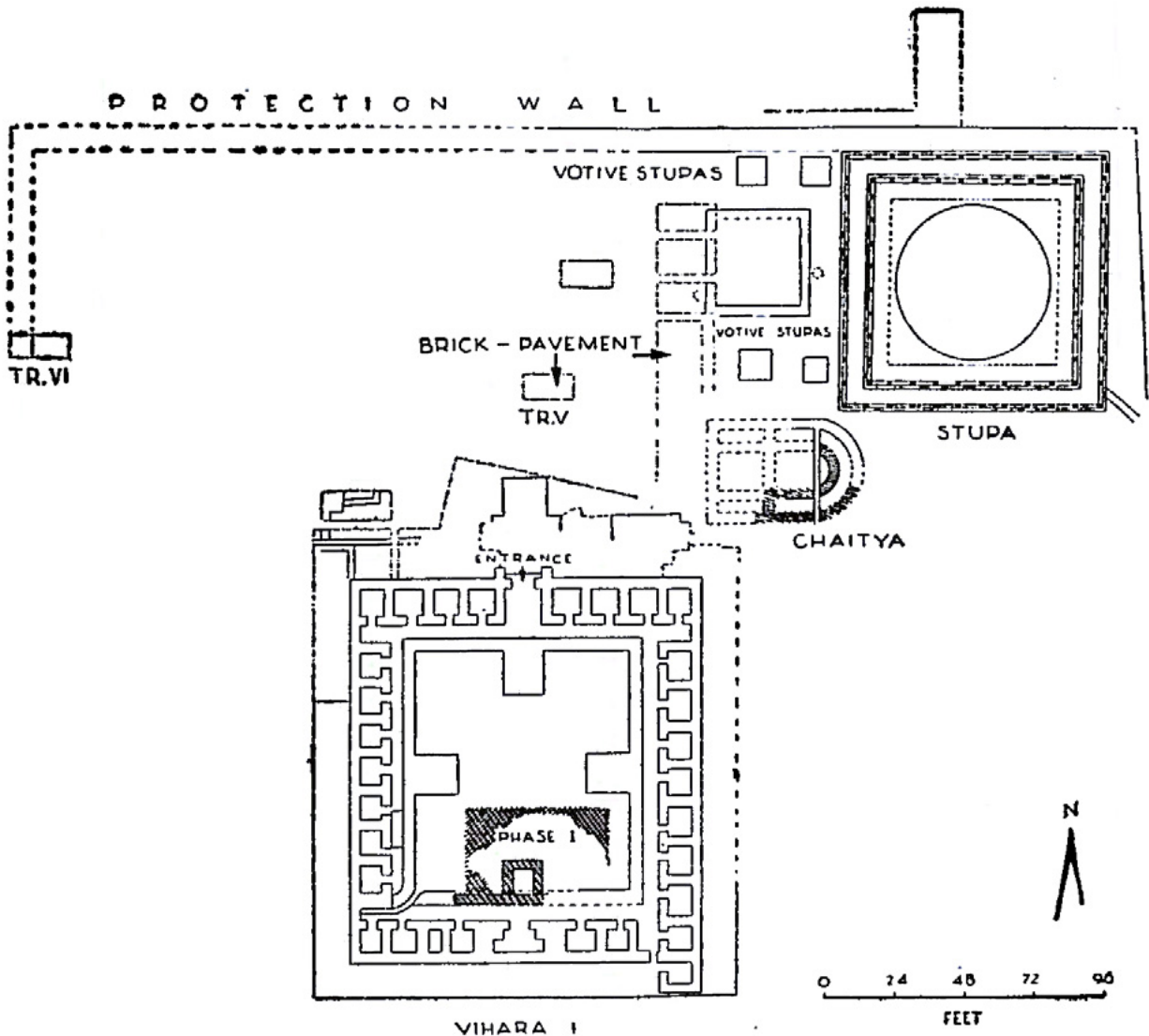


Figure 3. The configuration of the site of Devnimori monastic complex (Image after Mehta & Chowdhary 1966; courtesy of M.S. Baroda University).

to the east of the *mahāvihāra* (Vihāra I) (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 65) and still remains largely unexcavated. The ritual focus of the monastic complex at Devnimorī was the *stūpa* on a two-tier square platform, which is of the Gandhāran origin (Kato, Yatani & Masui 2017). Its exterior, though severely damaged, was adorned with buddha imagery and ornaments in terracotta, while its core was relatively undisturbed and contained a wide range of relic deposits including an inscribed relic casket, one of the two inscriptions of which refers to the *stūpa* as the *mahāstūpa* and the *vihāra* as the *mahāvihāra* (the terms which will be used for each in this paper) (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 32-66; 123-171).

The *mahāvihāra* at Devnimorī is a singled-storeyed courtyard monastery or *vihāra* with tiled roofs (Behrendt 2003: 170-171). Interestingly, the central cell at the back of the *mahāvihāra* is irregularly articulated, a feature described by the excavators as ‘a shrine room’ (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: fig. 13). This peculiar trend at Devnimorī appears to correspond to a similar pattern of rock-cut courtyard monasteries in the Western Deccan during the so-called ‘blank period’ of rock-cut monastic architecture between the third and late fourth century AD. As noted by Owen (2001), during this ‘blank period’, the innermost central

cells of rock-cut courtyard monasteries increased in their size, morphology, and ritual significance, anticipating the incorporation of the image shrine into the *vihāra* at Ajañṭā by the late fifth century AD.

The site of Devnīmori seems to show a fully ‘domesticated’ phase or state of Buddhism (see Strenski 1983; Fogelin 2015 for ‘domestication’), indicated by the existence of the courtyard monastery, which is considered to facilitate ‘law and order’ in analogy with a cloister in Christian monastic architecture (Schopen 1994: 547; Shaw 2007: 35; chs. 9 and 11; Shaw 2011: 115 for the issue of the relationship of courtyard monasteries with ‘domestication’). In this connection, the monastic community or *saṅgha* at Devnīmori was possibly engaged in water management for irrigated agriculture, as evident from a series of reservoirs found in its vicinity (Mehta 1963; Sutcliffe, Shaw & Brown 2011: 784), suggesting ‘religious/monastic governmentality’ (see Coningham et al. 2007; Shaw 2007; Gilliland et al. 2013; Chatterjee 2015; Shaw 2016 for ‘religious/monastic governmentality’).

Some pilgrims, lay Buddhists and monks may also have been involved in long-distance trade since the symbiotic relation of the Buddhist *saṅgha* with trade is well known by this period in western India in relation to Indian Ocean trade (Ray 1989) as well as in Gandhāra (Neelis 2011). This may be as indicated by the discovery of the imported Roman bronze statue of Atlas found on the riverbed of the Mashwo (*Indian Archaeology - A Review 1960-61*: 58; Chawdhary 1964: fig. 75) as well as the presence of the Red Polished Ware used for the transportation of goods between inland and coastal sites, as well as abroad in the context of Indian Ocean trade (Pinto-Orton 1991; 2013).

In fact, the *mahāstūpa* and the *mahāvihāra*, according to the Sanskrit inscription out of the two relic casket inscriptions, were constructed by two Mahāyāna monks (*śākyabhikṣu*), named Agnivarman and Sudarśana, who were superintendents of the construction (*kārmāntika*) (Sircar 1965: 337). This testifies to the diffusion of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Gujarat by the time of their construction. However, according to the Sanskrit text, the inscribed relic casket was fashioned by a mason named Varāha, a son of Sena, who appears to have been a lay Buddhist or Hindu, and the inscription also refers to the reign of a king (*nṛpati*) Rudrasena (Srinivasan 1968: 68). All these together suggest a complex social milieu and logistics behind the construction of the monastic complex.

After the initial construction, most likely in c. AD 400 in the late Western Kṣatrapa period, the site clearly remained occupied at least until some time in the Maitraka period (c. AD 475-776), suggested by the finding of three undated Maitraka coins attributed to the late repairs of the *mahāstūpa* (Mehta 1965: 413), until the abandonment of the site at some unknown point.

### **The *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori**

#### **The *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori as a Gandhāran-type terraced stūpa**

The morphology of the *mahāstūpa* on a double square platform at Devnīmori (Figure 4) can be traced back to similar cylindrical *stūpas* on square terraces that originally developed in Swāt, central Gandhāra, and Taxila in northern Pakistan during the first to sixth century AD (Chaudhary 1964: 109; Chaudhary 2010: 157-160; Faccenna & Spagnesi 2015; Kato, Yatani & Masui 2017) (Figure 5). Unlike the design of the main body of a *stūpa* in India proper, being merely a dome (*aṇḍa*) on a circular platform (*medhi*), Gandhāran *stūpas* are characterized by their three-tier structure of, from bottom to top, a square platform(s) (*medhi*), a cylindrical shaft, and a hemispherical dome (*aṇḍa*) (Karashima 2018: 474). South Asian *stūpas* are then typically topped with a superimposed structure that consists of a square pavilion (*harmika*), a pole (*yaṣṭi*) and an umbrella (*chattra*) (Karashima 2018: 474-475). The idea of the combination of a cylindrical *stūpa* with a square terrace in Gandhāra may have been conceptually inspired by the unusual circular brick temple in a rectangular enclosure at Bairāt in Rajasthan (Figure 1), which was dated by Brown to the

second century BC (Brown 1940: plate VI). Categorically the same Gandhāran *stūpas* are also regionally distributed in Sindh (Chaudhary 2010: 157-160), for instance, at the Kahujo-daro at Mīrpur Khās (Cousens 1914), Thūl Mīr Rukān (Cousens 1926: 7-11, pl. 10; Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1979: 156-8), Mohenjo-dāro (Marshall 1931) and Sudheranjo-dāro at Saidpur (Bhandarkar 1920). In north Gujarat, such *stūpas* can be found not only at Devnīmori but also at Vadnagar (Rawat 2011) and more recently in Taranga hills and beyond but nowhere else in India proper. The double square-platformed *stūpas* at both Devnīmori can be considered to be typologically comparable with those *stūpas* on similarly ‘setback’ double square platforms at Taxila (in the later development c. AD 300-400), to which the Devnīmori counterpart is almost contemporary, rather than those on single or multiple square platforms (Kato, Yatani & Masui 2017: 2986).

Such Gandhāran *stūpas* on double square platforms are known to correspond to those described in one version of the Chinese translation of the *Mūlasarvastivāda Vinayaḥṣudrakavastu*, *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pinaiye zashi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 (T.1451:24.287a-292a; Odani 2003). The text describes a funerary/votive *stūpa*, both for deceased monks and for buddhas, and the description of the terraced *stūpa* therein resembles Gandhāran miniature and monumental *stūpas* (Odani 2003: 58-63).

Similarly, the textual description of a great bejewelled *stūpa* that enshrines a body of a past buddha named Prabhūtaratna in the eleventh chapter *Stūpasamdarśana* (‘manifestation of *stūpa*’) of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* resembles Gandhāran *stūpas* because of the presence of numerous arched niches over a cylindrical barrel and a high umbrella (Karashima 2018: 473-474). At Devnīmori, while arched niches are



Figure 4. The tentative reconstruction of the mahāstūpa at Devnīmori at the Museum of the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, M.S. Baroda University. (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)



Figure 5. The miniature terraced *stūpa* on a square platform from Swat. (Photo: courtesy of the Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, Scan Number 4871.)



present, a high umbrella is not quite attested. However, some of Gandhāran examples show a high pole (*yaṣṭi*) with multiple umbrella-like discs (*chattrā*) like a tower, which also match the textual description (Karashima 2018: 474): such example of a high tower-like *stūpa* can be seen at Cave 19 at Ajañṭā (Spink 2009: fig. 135) suggesting a Gandhāran influence.

The terraced *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori is also regarded as a prototype of later Gupta terraced brick temples (Mukherjee 2008: 73) and in support of this argument, close parallels of certain motifs between the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori and the brick temple at Bhitargaon from the fifth century AD have been drawn (Schastock 1985: 31, n. 45). Most significantly, the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori displays terracotta buddha images and ornaments on its outer walls of the square platforms in a manner reminiscent of many terraced square-platform Gandhāran *stūpas*.



Figure 6. Relic Casket II and its deposits from Devnimori. (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)

### *The core of the mahāstūpa and relic deposits*

The core of the *mahāstūpa* (Figure 7) contained, from top to bottom, a buddha image, the aforementioned Casket II, a pot with eight Western Kṣatrapa coins inside, a collection of mostly broken brick ornaments

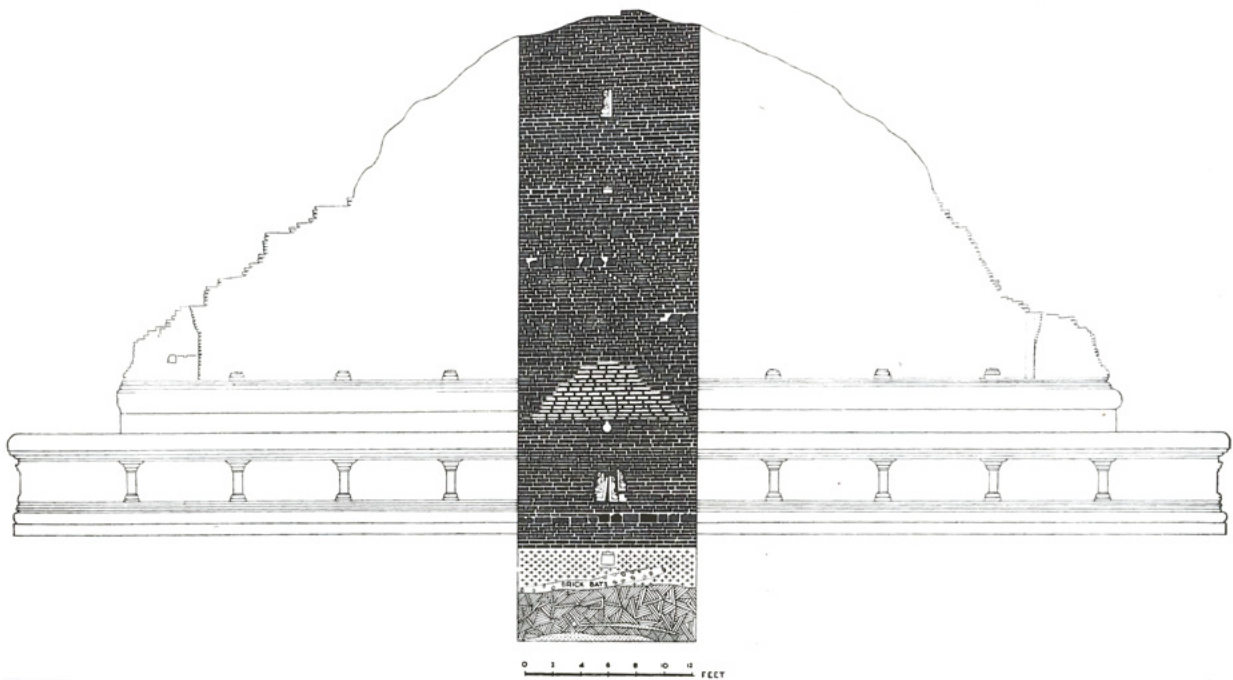


Figure 7. The section of the trench into the core of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnimori (Image: after Mehta & Chowdhary 1966, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University).

used as the floor of the core, a group of eight more terracotta buddha images, and lastly another, but broken and 'unfinished', relic casket containing ash (Relic Casket I) in schist at the base (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 118-120). The inclusion of coins in relic deposits is rather characteristic of the relic cult in Gandhāra (Jongeward et al 2012). Other excavated artefacts at the monastic complex include various kinds of pottery shards, terracotta figurines, beads, stone, metal and glass objects and sixty-nine coins though their archaeological contexts were not recorded systematically (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 69-118).

Inscribed Casket II in schist, recovered from the upper part of the core of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori, is a short, cylindrical reliquary (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 118-120; pl. XXXI, fig. B) (Fig. 6), which is reminiscent of a category of similar Gandhāran caskets (Jongeward et al 2012: 268; though not strictly Gandhāran), of a kind also seen in the relic caskets from stūpa no. 2 at Satdhāra near Sāñcī, Madhya Pradesh, central India: Maisey 1847-1854). The casket contained miscellaneous objects (Figures 6 and 7). The term *mahāstūpa* denotes, according to Skilling (Skilling 2016: 23-4), a kind of *stūpa*, which is epigraphically stated to contain relic deposits. The Sanskrit inscription on Casket II dates the construction of the *stūpa* to the reign of a Rudrasena in the year 127 of the otherwise unknown Kathika era and thus Devnīmori remains undatable with a precise absolute date.

### The dating of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori

The dating of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori has been largely disputed. In terms of epigraphy, there has been no consensus regarding the controversial date of the *mahāstūpa* as suggested by the Sanskrit one of the two inscriptions (Sircar 1965; Mehta 1965; Srinivasan 1968) on the aforementioned reliquary (Casket II). This inscription records the date of the construction of the *mahāstūpa* by two monks in the year 127 of an unknown era of the Kathika kings but also mentions the name of the king Rudrasena, who was most likely one of the Western Kṣatrapas. The era was identified with the Śaka era by Sircar (1965), who also identified the Rudrasena as Rudrasena I (AD 200-222) giving the date of the construction of the *mahāstūpa* as early as AD 205-206, or alternatively with the Kalacuri era giving the date of AD 375 (Mirashi 1965).

The palaeography (Srinivasan 1968), the use of classical Sanskrit (Mirashi 1965; Salomon 1998: 90), and the relatively early occurrence of the word *śākyabhikṣu* in both Indian and Chinese contexts in the Sanskrit inscription of Casket II and the philology of the other inscription on the same reliquary, in Buddhist Middle Indic resembling Pāli (von Hinüber 1985: 196-197), together suggest (Shizutani 1953; Schopen 1979; Cousins 2003: 232-239; Palumbo 2013: 3; Fukuyama 2014: 468-471) the reign of either Rudrasena III (c. AD 348-378?) or Rudrasena IV (c. AD 384-388), of the four Western Kṣatrapas with that name (Damsteegt 1978: 226; Jha & Rajgor 1992: 16); this is leaving aside the almost contemporary Rudrasena I and Rudrasena II of the Vākātakas. This dating range also agrees with the aforementioned chronologies of the architectural types of the 'set-back' double square-platformed *stūpa* in Gandhāra as well as of rock-cut courtyard monasteries in the Western Deccan during the third to fourth centuries AD.

In respect to numismatic evidence, eight coins were found in the pot deposited in the core of the *mahāstūpa* and among them three belonged to the reigns of Rudrasena I, Viśvasena and Rudrasimha, which all together give a chronological range between AD 203 and 313 (Schastock 1985: 29), again suggesting the reinternment of the relic deposits. The numismatic evidence at Devnīmori as a whole merely gives an impression of Western Kṣatrapa and subsequent Maitraka occupations (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 30, 106-116). Similarly, the pottery evidence at Devnīmori such as Red Polished Ware, micaceous ware, and stamped-and-incised red ware merely indicate a single-phase occupation only datable broadly to the early centuries AD, in parallel with other sites in Gujarat and elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 69-87; Shaw 2007: 107).

The peculiar archaeological context of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori further problematizes the uncertain date of its construction. As mentioned, the core of the *mahāstūpa* contained along with three reliquaries, nine terracotta buddha images, eight grouped at the bottom and one below the top as well as terracotta ornaments (Figure 7). These additional deposits in terracotta are identical with those that decorated the exterior of the *mahāstūpa*. It has been suggested by Gorakshkar that such a burial practice in respect to the eight buddha images can be compared with that of the bronze images of Seven Buddhas of the Past plus Maitreya Buddha of a later date, re-deposited into a pre-existing *stūpa* at Sopara (Gorakshkar 1991; Desai 2013). Thus the buried buddha images seem to have been appropriated as relics while other ornaments were used even as building materials for the floor of the core of the *mahāstūpa*.

Although the excavators emphasized that the core of the *mahāstūpa* was undisturbed, scholarly consensus supports the reinternment of the relic deposits after some external damage to the *mahāstūpa* during later reconstructions and restorations, which was rather a common local practice, as reported from other *stūpa* sites in western India and eastern Pakistan (Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1979: 164-165; Williams 1982: 58-59; Schastock 1985: 29-30). Among numerous such examples, Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw listed *stūpas* at Sopāra in the Western Deccan, at Lakha Medi in Gujarat, Mainamati, Brahmanābād and Mīrpur Khās in Sindh, whose ostensibly reinterred relic deposits in the cores of their bodies included broken/repaid relic caskets, broken sculptures and brick ornaments (Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1979: 164-165) as also seen at Devnīmori, mentioned above (Casket I).

## Devnīmori buddha images

### *General characteristics of Devnīmori buddha images*

The Buddhist monastic complex of Devnīmori is particularly significant for its characteristic terracotta buddha cult images (non-narrative and frontal imagery for worship, ritual, meditation and visualization) (Figures 10, 13 & 14) that once adorned the terraced brick *mahāstūpa* (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966; Chowdhary 2010), a manifestation of so-called Gupta material culture (Harle 1974; Williams 1982). Devnīmori buddha images (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966; Chowdhary 2010) in terracotta relief, originally coloured with whitish cream, once decorated the double square-platform of the *mahāstūpa* alongside other additional terracotta ornaments. Uniform in size, approximately 67-68 cm in height, the buddha images are modelled in high relief with simple halos, backdrops, and single- or double-petalled lotus thrones. They were originally placed under respective *caitya* arches built in separate ornamental bricks.

The common characteristics of Devnīmori buddha images (Figures 10, 13 & 14) such as meditative downcast eyes, so typical of both Gandhāran and Gupta buddhas, the *dhyānamudrā* (the meditative hand-gesture) and the *padmāsana* (a cross-legged posture), give an exceptionally strong sense of meditative practice. Despite variations in hairstyles, upper garments, and lotus thrones, and the occasional absence of the *ūrṇā*, the overall configuration of the buddha images is highly standardized, clearly indicating a single intensive phase of production. Devnīmori buddha images are examples of the finest Gupta terracotta imagery and testify to the fully-fledged Gupta style, based conservatively on Kushan and post-Kushan Mathurā buddhas and bodhisattvas and otherwise heavily influenced by late Gandhāran buddhas.

The excavation report of Devnīmori claims that twenty-six terracotta buddha images in fragments were recovered and that only twelve of them can be reconstructed fully (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 37 A-D, pl. 38 A-D, pl. 39 A-D), though it also lists a thirteenth buddha image in full (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 17 B) and a more recent, revised report lists yet another one (Chowdhary 2010: 80, fig. 39 B). Twenty heads were also recovered and twelve of them fit their corresponding torsos (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 141). It appears that at least thirty-two buddhas originally decorated the exterior of the *mahāstūpa*. Most

of the buddha images and heads are now preserved in the Museum of the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, the M.S. Baroda University, but others are missing from this collection, including one example of a buddha head now in the collection of Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Pal 1986: 263).

### *The stylistic dating of Devnīmori buddha imagery*

As discussed earlier, the *mahāstūpa* is generally dated to c. AD 400, around the time of the conquest of Gujarat under the Western Kṣatrapas by the imperial Guptas and consequently, the style of fully-fledged Gupta buddha images at Devnīmori was considered to be the result of the conquest, explained by the fact that the Guptas had acquired influence over the region (Williams 1982: 59; Schastock 1985: 30). However, whether Devnīmori post-dates the conquest is debatable, and the date of the buddha images at Devnīmori itself has long been disputed, owing partly to a poor understanding of the pre-existing material culture in Gujarat at a regional level (Williams 1982: 59; Schastock 1985: 30).

Initially, a very early Gupta date was assigned to the Devnīmori buddhas, largely on account of the late fourth-century date of the inscribed reliquary, as discussed above. Thereafter, the Devnīmori buddhas started to be identified as independent progenitors of Gupta material culture (Shah 1972: 45-46). This theory was further challenged, but the ongoing role of traditional Mathurā as a source of influence has been overemphasized owing to the absence of earlier material culture in north Gujarat (Williams 1982: 59; Schastock 1985: 30), long before recent excavations at Vadnagar (Rawat 2011). Williams considered certain features of the terracotta buddhas and ornaments at Devnīmori to be consistent with the parallel development in the other regions of Gupta India in the late fourth century AD, and thus suggested that the buddhas were somewhat later than the late fourth century AD (Williams 1982: 59-60).

Certain indications of Gandhāran influence on Devnīmori also meant that the site was given an early Gupta date (Shah 1972: 46; Schastock 1985: 30; Williams 1982: 59). However, Williams and Schastock acknowledged that overall Gandhāran influence was rather limited (Williams 1982: 59; Schastock 1985: 30). Both also argued that the emergence of the Devnīmori buddhas in the fully-fledged Gupta style was a result of the conquest of Gujarat by Candragupta II c. AD 400 (Schastock 1985: 30; Williams 1982: 59), despite the fact that no Gupta coins had been found at Devnīmori. However, more recent numismatic evidence makes the date of Candragupta II's conquest as late as AD 407, and furthermore indicates that the Western Kṣatrapa rule persisted in north Gujarat under Rudrasimha III as late as AD 415 (Bhandare 2006).

The chronology of buddha images in other parts of India may aid the relative dating of Devnīmori buddha images within a typological sequence of epigraphically datable formative, fully-fledged, and mature, Gupta-style buddhas/*tirthaṅkaras* at the major production centres in Mathurā, Vidiśā, central Magadha, Ajaṅṭā, and Sārnāth, including their hinterlands (Harle 1974; Miyaji 1980; Williams 1982; Huntington 1985). As a rule, earlier Gupta sculptural remains are fundamentally based on the influential Kushan/post-Kushan Mathurā tradition, which was long-lasting and far-reaching (Rosenfield 1963: 24). However, all the Gupta Buddha images show one or more formative-Gupta characteristics: the ornamentation of the halo with floral and gem motifs, the garments with diaphanous drapery, hair curls, meditative eyes, elongated earlobes, the pronounced lower lip and/or three lines across his neck (Miyaji 1980: 16).

Despite the paucity of datable buddhas/*tirthaṅkaras* between the post-Kushan and fully-fledged/mature Gupta phases at Mathurā, some carvings could belong to this formative Gupta stage i.e. dating from prior to AD 400 (Miyaji 1980: 12-20; Williams 1982: 29; Koezuka 1984: 88-94). However, imperial Gupta material culture was certainly being formulated at Mathurā during the last quarter of the fourth century AD, considering the pillar fragment from a Śaivite shrine erected and inscribed in GE (Gupta era) 61 i.e. AD 380 or 381 under Candragupta II (Williams 1982: 29).



Apart from such a continuous cultural sequence at Mathurā itself between the post-Kushan and Gupta periods, pre-existing Kushan or post-Kushan heritage was certainly still influential in the Gupta material culture of Mathurā. Devnīmori buddha images retain some features of the Kushan-Mathurā school, and yet are not as advanced as the Mankuwar Buddha image dated to GE 108/109 or 110 or AD 427/428 or 429, under Kumāragupta I's reign (Williams 1982: 81, fig. 104), a group of Jain *tīrthāṅkara* images from Kankāli Tilā, one of which is dated to GE 113 or AD 432/433 under Kumāragupta's reign (Williams 1982: 68, figs. 60, 210), the Govindnagar Buddha image dated to GE 115 or AD 434/435 (Williams 1982: 68, n. 3; Schopen 1987: 267) and even the four buddha images placed at Stūpa I at Sāñcī by the mid-fifth century AD (Huntington 1985: 197-198).

The formation of the early Gupta style in Vidiśā is more significant if we consider the transition from the three formative Gupta Jain *tīrthāṅkara* images in beige sandstone from Durjanapura (c. AD 376-80? under Rāmagupta; Williams 1982: 28-29, figs. 12, 13, 14) (Figure 8) to the fully-fledged Gupta Hindu rock-cut cave-temple of Cave 6 at Udayagiri (82 GE or AD 401/2 under Candragupta II's reign; Huntington 1985: 188-189). Both are epigraphically associated with the imperial Guptas themselves. Meanwhile, in central Magadha, one image of the seated Buddha in locally unavailable 'dark reddish-brown stone' (Huntington 1985: 14) or 'red sandstone in imitation of the material commonly used at Mathura, though it is clearly not an import from Mathura' (Asher 2008: 62), or otherwise 'a yellowish buff' stone (Williams 1982: 33), was found at the Buddhist centre of Bodh Gayā (Figure 9). It is inscribed as depicting a 'bodhisattva' and clearly shows a formative Gupta style.

However, despite missing arms, this Buddha/Bodhisattva from Bodh Gayā is also very clearly based on the composition of the so-called Kapardin Mathurā Buddha/Bodhisattva images (Cifuentes 2013: 87-89), which are also occasionally inscribed as 'bodhisattva' (Rhi 1994): characteristically with the right hand raised, which would have shown the *abhayamudrā*; the left hand resting on the left knee and holding the hem of the drapery of the robe, which covers the left shoulder; the nimbus covered with a lotus open directly behind the head (this feature is visible in the coloured photo of Figure 9 but unrecognizable in black-and-white photos published elsewhere), which is a feature similar to a better preserved one of the Durjanapura *tīrthāṅkara* images (Figure 8) (Dr. Claudine Bautze-Picron; Dr. Yoachim Karl Bautze: pers. comm.).

Despite such archaism derived from Kapardin Mathurā Buddha/Bodhisattva images, the Bodh Gayā Buddha/Bodhisattva is more advanced, i.e. Gupta, than the former, which is apparent from his characteristic Gupta meditative eyes. The inscription of the Bodh Gayā Buddha/Bodhisattva gives the year 64 in an unknown era under the reign of a Mahārāja Trikamala. On the basis of its palaeography, it has tentatively been dated in the Gupta era, thus giving the corresponding date of AD 383/4 (Damsteegt 1978: 156). The find-spot of the Buddha/Bodhisattva image in Magadha, not too distant from the Gupta capital of Pāṭaliputra (Patna), not only supports the dating to the Gupta era, but also indicates the image's importance as a rare early specimen from the Gupta heartland proper.

One Buddha image of the unknown origin in beige sandstone seated in the *bhadrāsana* (with legs pendant) on a *padmāsana*/*siṃhāsana* (a lotus/lion throne) (Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, acc. I 22; Revire 2016: vol. 1, 55-56; vol. 2, 36, fig. 2.34; Martina Stoye, pers. comm.), possibly from central or western India, also seems to fall into the formative stage of Gupta Buddha imagery. However, this buddha image may date slightly later than the other examples, probably to around c. AD 400, contemporaneous with Devnīmori buddha images. As Revire correctly observed, this buddha image has an archaic yet unusual style: while the styles of the robe and the nimbus show the late Kushan features of the third century AD, the introduction of the *bhadrāsana* and the *padmāsana* ('lotus throne') is almost completely new (Revire 2016: 55-56).

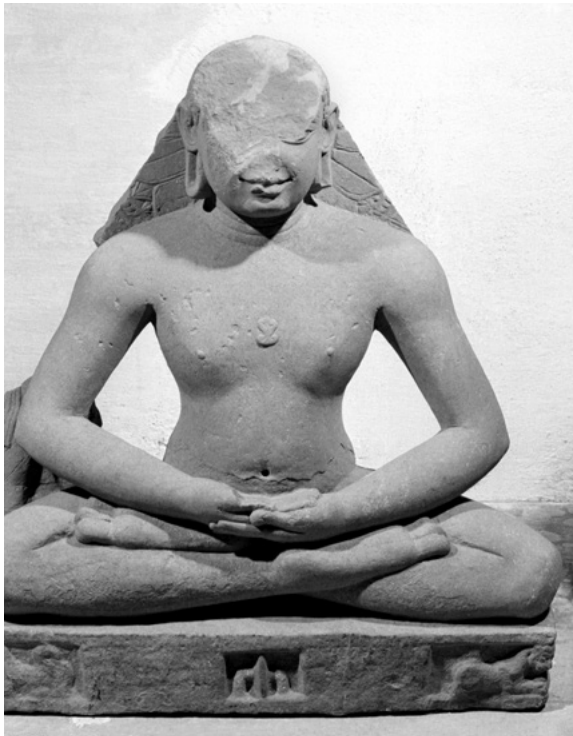


Figure 8. Sandstone *tīrthaṅkara* figure from Durjanapura, Madhya Pradesh, reign of Rāmagupta (reigned c. AD 376-380), Gupta period. Height: 66 cm. Bhopal Museum (Photo: courtesy of the Huntington Archive.)



Figure 9. Sandstone Buddha/Bodhisattva figure from Bodh Gayā, Bihar, reign of Mahārāja Trikamala, AD 383/384?, Gupta period. Kolkata, Indian Museum. (Photo: courtesy of Joachim Karl Bauze)

However, the drapery of this Buddha with no provenance seems more intricate and thus advanced, and even comparable to the much later Govindnagar Buddha, dated to AD 434/435, which wears a robe with a similar drapery. Another Buddha image possibly belonging to this phase can be recognized. This second, similar yet headless Buddha image, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (inv. 1992.191), claimed by the Museum to be from Uttar Pradesh and from the early fifth century AD, shows a similar type of drapery but also an archaic pedestal in the earlier Kushan or post-Kushan Mathurā style; it is also comparable to the Mankuwar Buddha, dated to AD 427/428 or 429 with a similar pedestal. The issue of an archaic revival of Kushan or post-Kushan Mathurā features is highly tricky in dating many early Gupta images.

Overall, the early Gupta Jain *tīrthaṅkara* images from Vidiśā are regarded as anticipating, together with the Bodh Gayā Buddha/Bodhisattva image and fully-fledged Gupta-style buddha images at Devnīmori soon after, the fully-fledged/mature Gupta Buddha images at Mathurā and Sārnāth that developed during the following fifth century AD. These examples from Vidiśā are considered to be rare Gupta prototypes that are largely based on Kushan-Mathurā Buddha/Bodhisattva and *tīrthaṅkara* images (Miyaji 1980: 16-20; Williams 1982: 28-29, 33-34; Huntington 1985: 188). The relative dating of the Devnīmori buddha images thus generates a time span between c. AD 376/380, with Durjanapura *tīrthaṅkara* images as a *terminus post quem*, and AD 427/428 or 429, with the Mankuwar Buddha image as a *terminus ante quem*.

Considering the likely date of the construction of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori to be the late fourth century AD (despite a possible earlier history of the *mahāstūpa* ascribed to the first, earlier interment of Casket I and the pot containing eight coins in the third century AD), in the late Western Kṣatrapa

period, prior to the conquest of Gujarat by Candragupta II of the imperial Guptas, the Devnīmōrī buddha images can be regarded as among the earliest fully-fledged Gupta remains. The *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmōrī, in fact, is also the earliest ‘Gupta’ monument in brick (Harle 1974: 29). Even so, the idea that Devnīmōrī or the Western Kṣatrapas were the progenitor of Gupta material culture has long been a subject of debate (Williams 1982 58-9). Although the role of western India in the formation of pan-Indian Gupta material culture is a notoriously problematic issue, we might further contextualize Devnīmōrī by reconsidering the extent of the late Gandhāran influence as well as pre-existing material culture of Gujarat.

### **Gandhāran influence on the Devnīmōrī buddha images**

Although a very small number of motifs decorating the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmōrī originate in Gandhāra, most importantly the chequer pattern (Williams 1982: 59), I consider the overall Gandhāran influence found at the monastic complex of Devnīmōrī to be very significant because of the form of the terraced *mahāstūpa* on a double-square platform; the short cylindrical reliquaries (though not exclusively Gandhāran as mentioned earlier); the buddha cult imagery; one of the architectural elements with a relief of a buddha on acanthus leaves - possibly part of a pilaster (Devnīmōrī: Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 60, A and B)<sup>1</sup>; and the schist relief of the *buddhapāda* or the footprint of the Buddha with *svastika* symbols on its fingers (Devnīmōrī: Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 67, B; Gandhāra: e.g. Kurita 2003: figs. 786 and 788).

However, the postulation of an indirect Gandhāran influence through earlier Mathurā rather than directly needs to be treated cautiously; for instance, the interaction between Gandhāra and Mathurā can be seen in the iconography of the Seven Buddhas of the Past and/or Maitreya (Behrendt 2014) or in the Indo-Corinthian pilasters (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: figs. 55, B, C) of Gandhāran origin that appear at Mathurā and then at Devnīmōrī.<sup>2</sup> In particular, in what follows, I demonstrate direct Gandhāran influence on Devnīmōrī sculptures in the form of the occasional wavy hairstyle, the monastic dress, and the lotus throne.

### ***Gandhāran wavy hairstyle***

The occasional occurrence of a Gandhāra-derived wavy hairstyle has long been recognized at Devnīmōrī (Figures 10 & 11) as the most obvious example of Gandhāran artistic/iconographic influence beyond Greater Gandhāra (Sompura 1969: fig. 12). Although the vast majority of Devnīmōrī buddha images have a series of curls known as Gupta curls, which slightly differ from other Gupta and late Gandhāran counterparts and which are even comparable to those from Andhra (Mori 2007: 285), one buddha image and one fragmentary buddha head excavated from the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmōrī exhibit a specific late Gandhāran variant of the Gandhāran wavy hairstyle (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 40, A & B) (Figure 10).

Although the early Gandhāran wavy hairstyle of buddhas in Gandhāra was rendered naturalistically in the Greco-Roman style (Rhi 2008b), the one at Devnīmōrī constitutes a distinct late Gandhāran variant, consisting of a series of bow-shaped waves in a few radiant concentric circles, altering their direction one layer after another. This distinctive wavy hairstyle modelled in terracotta at Devnīmōrī originates in one of the recognizable, though not yet systematically studied, variants of the late Gandhāran wavy hairstyle in Gandhāra, which appears mostly in stucco but occasionally in terracotta or stone.

Gandhāran examples of the wavy hairstyle seen at Devnīmōrī include the stucco buddha head in the Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. IM3-1931) and a stone buddha head in the British Museum (inv. OA 1889-174), which are both typically dated to fourth-fifth century AD (Zwalf 1996: 460). Williams

<sup>1</sup> See also Cousens 1914: pl. 36, b for Mīrpur Khās; Zwalf 1996: 46 for Gandhāra.

<sup>2</sup> See also, for Mīrpur Khās: Moti 1964: fig. 13b, but also at earlier Mathurā, Vogel 1930: fig. LIII, c.



Figure 10. One of the Devnimori buddha images. (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)



Figure 11. Detail of the sculpture in Figure 10 showing the Gandhāra-derived wavy hairstyle. (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)

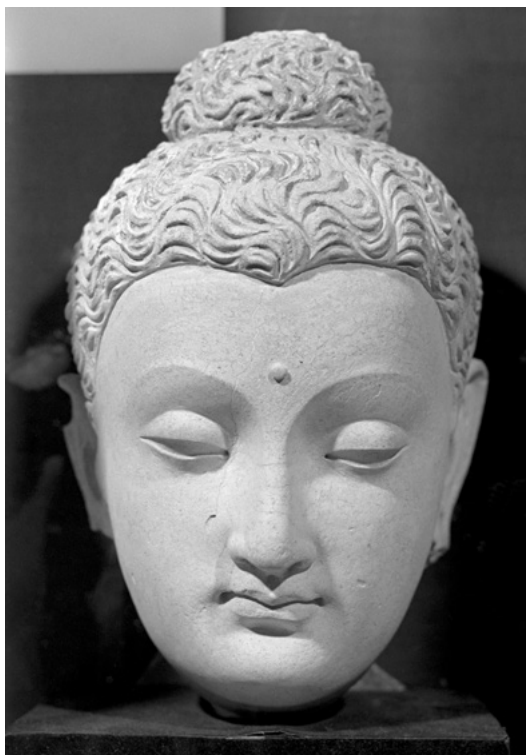


Figure 12. The Devnimori-type, Gandhāran wavy hairstyle of a stucco buddha head from Hadda, Afghanistan. Kabul Museum. (Photo courtesy of the Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, Scan Number 10579.)

observed the long continuation of the late Gandhāran wavy hairstyle in Gandhāra, as late as in the seventh century at Fondukistan (Williams 1982: 59), though her example merely shows the persistence of the late Gandhāran wavy hairstyle in general, but not necessarily of its distinctive variant seen both in Gandhāra and Devnimorī.

#### ***Gandhāran influence on the monastic dress of the Devnimorī buddhas***

There are two types of monastic dress among the fourteen Devnimorī buddha images published: nine are entirely clad (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 37, A-D, pl. 38, B-D, pl. 39, A and pl. 42, B) (Figure 13) and the other five have only one shoulder covered and the other exposed (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 38, A, pl. 39, B-D; Chowdhary 2010: 80. fig. 39, B) (Figure 14). In the more frequent first type (entirely clad), the drapery takes the form of concentric U-shaped lines, which apparently corresponds to the similar drapery from the late Kushan and post-Kushan periods onwards (Takata 1967: 334-342; Miyaji 1980: 18-9).

In Gandhāra, the first type (entirely clad) is associated with meditation or, iconographically, the *dhyānamudrā* (a meditative hand gesture with hands resting on the lap) whereas the second type (with only one shoulder covered) is related to teaching or the *dharmacakramudrā* (a hand gesture of teaching that symbolises the turning





Figure 13. One of the Devnimori buddha images.  
(Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)



Figure 14. One of the Devnimori buddha images.  
(Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)

of the *dharmacakra*, the wheel of the dharma i.e. teaching of the Buddha or a buddha or, in some cases, an advanced bodhisattva) (Filigenzi 2005: 108-109). Although the combination of a type of dress and its corresponding *mudrā* may carry a specific meaning in Gandhāra, Devnīmōrī buddha images with both types of dress all invariably show the *dhyānamudrā*. Two fragments of the buddha images in schist, possibly produced locally, with the first dress-type (entirely clad) but in the Mathurā style were also found at Devnīmōrī (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: 89: pl. 23, D and E).

On the other hand, the second dress-type (with only one shoulder covered) largely reflects the adaptation of the Buddha/Bodhisattva images of this type in Kushan Mathurā. As observed by Uehara (Ishikawa & Uehara 2014), the second dress-type at Devnīmōrī also shows the inner dress (Figure 15) not seen at Mathurā but very obviously depicted in late Gandhāran images of a preaching buddha, for example, the Muhammad Nari stele (Figure 26). This particular type of monastic dress might realistically depict the three garments prescribed in the *Vinaya*, i.e. the ‘robe’ (Pāli, *uttarāsāṅga*) subtly shown under the ‘upper garment’ (Pāli, *saṅghāti*) on the upper body and the ‘undercloth’ (Pāli, *antaravāsaka*) on the lower body (Griswold 1963: 87-88).



Figure 15. Detail of Figure 14, revealing the Gandhāran-type inner dress. (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)

Uehara also pointed out peculiar details of the upper garment that appear on the first dress type (entirely clad) of Devnīmōrī buddhas: the pronounced layers of the long sleeves of the upper garment visibly overlay the thighs (Ishikawa & Uehara 2014). This peculiar feature is also seen in one later buddha bronze from Swat, now in the Ashmolean Museum (inv. EA1995.115) (Ishikawa & Uehara 2014), along with the same concentric U-shaped lines of the drapery and the Gandhāran-style wavy hairstyle.

Meanwhile, the occurrence of the second dress type (with only one shoulder covered) contradicts the general trend of the Gupta period (except for Ajaṅṭā), during which the first dress-type (entirely clad) was preferred. This peculiarity can be interpreted both as an archaic feature inherited from early Swat or Kushan-Mathurā Buddhas/Bodhisattva images of around the first to third century AD and as a reflection of the late Gandhāran adaptation of this feature from the third and fourth centuries AD. Although the aforementioned Bodh Gayā Buddha/Bodhisattva image also shows the second type (with only one shoulder covered), the Devnīmōrī buddha images seem to be less archaic.

***Gandhāran influence on the lotus thrones of the Devnīmōrī buddha images***

There are three types of lotus thrones at Devnīmōrī: 1) the single-petalled type (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 39, B; Chowdhary 2010: 81, fig. 40, A); 2) the double-petalled type (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 37, A & C; pl. 39, A) (Figure 18); and 3) the inside-out single-petalled type (Mehta & Chowdhary 1966: pl. 37, B & D, pl. 38, A-D, pl. 39, C & D, pl. 42, B; Chowdhary 2010: 80, fig. 39, B). Of these, the inside-out, single-petalled lotus throne (Figures 16 and 17), which is the most frequent at Devnīmōrī, is of a particular type that, in my view, consists



Figure 16. The Gandhāran inside-out, single-petalled lotus throne of one of the Devnimori buddha images. (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)



Figure 17. The inside-out, single-petalled lotus throne of a late Gandhāran preaching buddha image. Taxila Museum. (Photo: courtesy of the Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, Scan Number 10271.)



of the three horizontal layers of lotus components such as, from the bottom, inside-out petals, filaments in the form of vertical lines (rather than *kuśa* grass spread underneath certain buddhas in early Swāt, mature Gandhāra, and post-Kushan Mathurā) and an oversized stigma as a cushion. Inside-out single-petalled lotus thrones almost identical to those at Devnīmori are seen underneath some images of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha (for Gandhāran examples, see Harrison & Luczanits 2011; 207, figs. 16 and 18).



Figure 18. The double lotus throne of one of the Devnimori buddhas.  
(Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)

On the other hand, the single-petalled and double-petalled lotus thrones at Devnīmori can also be compared with other late Gandhāran counterparts, which are more three-dimensional in nature (once again underneath late Gandhāran preaching buddha images).<sup>3</sup> These are more conventional and standardized, like the Andhran examples.<sup>4</sup> Brown has even shown the resemblance to the lotus thrones of one Mucilinda (Mucalinda in Pāli) Buddha from Andhra, which precedes the Gupta period, and a Śiva from Mandhal, from the early Vākāṭaka period (Brown 2004: 6, figs. 5.18, 5.19).

According to Harrison and Luczanits, the lotus throne or *padmāsana* is not traceable to the earliest groups of Buddha images in Kushan-period Gandhāra and Mathurā in a strict sense (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 81). However, the Buddha on the lid of the so-called ‘Kaṇiṣka’ reliquary (Jongeward et al 2012: 82-83, figs. 3, 32a-b, 276, no. 253), more recently dated to the reign of Huviṣka c. mid- to late second century AD (Errington & Falk 2002), is technically and conceptually seated on a *padmāsana*, with a stigma of the flattened full-blown lotus engraved on the lid, while attended by Indra and Brahmā both exhibiting the *añjalimudrā*.

Similarly, the lotus throne was not unattested at late Kushan or post-Kushan Mathurā: one small Buddha image on a double-petalled *padmāsana* (height: 38 cm), with a halo having the typically Mathurā-school scalloped edge, was found at Chaubara (Lucknow Museum inv. B 23; Foucher 1905: 685, fig. 552), in which the Buddha is attended by what appear to be Indra and Brahmā (but seated on lotuses!) adopting the *añjalimudrā*, more or less like the Buddha over the ‘Kaṇiṣka’ reliquary.

In contrast, the lotus throne was well documented in South India, predominantly in buddha images in Andhra Pradesh of the late second to the early third century AD, as well as among seated late Gandhāran buddha and bodhisattva images, which are ‘generally’ dated to the third to fourth centuries AD (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 81-83).

Lotus thrones of buddhas in India proper certainly became manifest in pan-Indian Gupta material culture, especially at Sārnāth (Figure 19) and Ajaṅṭā. The inscription on the Sārnāth Buddha image dated to AD 477 refers to his single-petalled lotus throne as a *padmāsana* in the sense of a lotus throne

<sup>3</sup> For example, for the single-petalled type, see Harrison & Luczanits 2011: fig. 9; for the double-petalled type, see Harrison & Luczanits 2011: fig. 12; Loriyan Tangai/Indian Museum, Kolkata: inv. A23485/5090

<sup>4</sup> For example, Stone 1994: figs. 110, 112, 118.



rather than the cross-legged posture of the same name (Rosenfield 1963: 12-13). The earliest occurrence of the *padmāsana* in Gupta India proper, at least in a Buddhist context, was possibly among Devnīmoriī buddha imagery c. AD 400 but it may be challenged by the two depictions of Brahmā on a lotus over the Varāha image at Cave 5 at Udayagiri (Mitra 1963: 100) and over the severely damaged image of Viṣṇu as Śeṣaśayana at Cave 13 (Willis 20014: 31), both of which can be dated to the fifth century AD but possibly as early as c. AD 400 (Huntington 1985: 192-193).

Within a century or so after Devnīmoriī, the *padmāsana* spread, in the Buddhist context, to Sārṇāth (Figure 19) and Ajaṅṭā. The double-petalled *padmāsana* of the Gandhāra/Devnīmoriī type also reached Sārṇāth (Huntington 2000: 35, fig. 3) and the Western Deccan, where it is ubiquitous. Even in the Hindu-Gupta context, within a century or so after Udayagiri, *padmāsanas* appeared underneath Śiva at Mandhal under the Vākāṭakas (Brown 2004: 68, fig. 5.20) and then Brahmā at Deogarh (Huntington 1985: 207, fig. 10.29). The Gupta text of *Kumārasambhava* (86.2) by Kālidāsa, indeed, describes Brahmā as sitting upon a *padmāsana* (*‘padmāsanasthā’*) when worshipped.

One key aspect of this development is an innovative combination of an Indic *siṃhāsana* (‘lion throne’) and a Gandhāran *padmāsana* (‘lotus throne’) within a single throne that appears among Buddha images in the so-called *bhadrāsana* posture c. AD 400, as seen in the aforementioned Buddha image with no provenance (Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, inv. I 22; Revire 2016: vol. 1, 55-56; vol. 2, 36, fig. 2.34) and then at Sārṇāth (e.g. inv. 1880.7, British Museum) and Ajaṅṭā (e.g. the main cult image of a buddha juxtaposed onto the rock-cut

Figure 19. Sandstone Buddha image from Sārṇāth, AD 476/477, Gupta period. Sarnath Site Museum. (Photo: courtesy of the Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, Scan Number 55207)



*stupa* in Cave 26: Spink 2009). This certainly is a significant late Gupta innovation. In this connection, it is noteworthy in a conceptual sense that the Gilgit manuscripts of the *Saddharpunḍarīka*, a *siṃhāsana* is considered to be located in a calyx of a lotus (Schopen 1977: 182).

In this connection, the lotus throne of the buddha at Museum für Asiatische Kunst, possibly dating to c. AD 400, seems extremely experimental, since such a lotus throne is normally used for buddhas or bodhisattvas seated cross-legged or standing on it but here used as a seat. A pair of lions are somewhat detached from the structure but they definitely derive from those of the Indic-type pedestal in the Kushan and post-Kushan Mathurā style.

On the other hand, the Sārnāth version of the *siṃhāsana/padmāsana* ‘(lion/lotus throne’ or vice versa) shows the adaptations of a classic Indic *siṃhāsana* in the style of Kushan and post-Kushan Mathurā and of a classic Andhra-style *padmāsana* footrest, which originates in the square pedestals of the Buddha’s footprints (*buddhapāda*) (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 81).

The lotus throne, however, was the most significant in the late Gandhāran context among late Gandhāran preaching buddha images, as exemplified by the Muhammad Nari stele (Harrison & Luczanits 2011) (Figure 26). In this context, Rhi associated images of the late Gandhāran buddha on a lotus with the textual account of the practice of image-making of buddhas on lotuses (Rhi 2003: 167-170) while Harrison and Luczanits shed light on the soteriological significance of the image-making tradition to be reborn on a lotus (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 116-117).

### **Overall Gandhāran influence on the Devnīmori buddhas**

As attested above, the wavy hairstyle, the inner dress, and the lotus throne of the Devnīmori buddhas dating to c. AD 400 are incidentally and specifically associated with almost contemporary late Gandhāran buddhas, most importantly, preaching buddhas, that are generally dated to the third to fourth century AD but evidently not considerably earlier than Devnīmori buddhas.

### **Substantial and persistent Gandhāran influences beyond Devnīmori**

#### ***Mīrpur Khās in Sindh***

In the neighbouring region to Gujarat, to the north-west in Sindh, at the remote site of Mīrpur Khās (Figure 1), now reportedly destroyed, one comparable set of material remains to Devnīmori is known from its Kahujo-daro *stūpa*. It has a Gandhāran-style terraced brick *stūpa* on a square platform and Buddha imagery which is Gupta-style but with some clearly late Gandhāran influences (Cousens 1914). The *stūpa* facing the west rests on a one-tier square platform, whose front i.e. western face had a slight projection, with three small inner cell shrines and traces of a pair of stairs leading up to the terrace (Cousens 1914: 83). Made in terracotta, plastered and decorated with polychrome, the Mīrpur Khās buddha images in high relief are set against square panels with ornamental edges. They once adorned the square platform of the *stūpa*, three on each of the three side faces of its one-tier square platform, numbering nine in total (Cousens 1914: 86) (Figures 20, 21, 22 & 23).

Buddhist material culture in Sindh shows stylistic similarities with that in north Gujarat: Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw conducted a comparative analysis of similar motifs used in carved bricks between various sites in Sindh (including Mīrpur Khās and Sudheranjo-dāro) and Devnīmori (Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1979: 167-168). Likewise, the Mīrpur Khās buddha images are also comparable to those at Devnīmori and the sizes are almost equivalent to each other; for instance, the buddha image in the Victoria and Albert Museum mentioned below (IM13-1931) measures 68 cm in height.



Figures 20-23. Buddha images from Mīrpur Khās, Sindh. Mumbai, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangraha. (Photos: courtesy of the Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, Scan Numbers 6752, 6744, 6764, 6755.)

The practically uniform Mīrpur Khās buddhas are again invariably shown meditating, with downcast meditative eyes, seated in the *padmāsana* and exhibiting the *dhyānamudrā*, as at Devnīmori. They consistently wear a garment, with both shoulders covered and, unlike the figures from Devnīmori, there are no buddha images with only one shoulder covered. As on the Devnīmori buddhas, the *ūrṇā* is occasionally absent, and there are variations in hairstyles and thrones (Cousens 1914: 86-87). At Mīrpur Khās, the double-petalled lotus throne of Devnīmori type also occurs (Chandra 1964: figs. 1, 3b) (Figure 20), but the majority of thrones at the site constitute one distinctive type of the single-petalled (Figure 21) or double-petalled (Figure 22) lotus thrones (Chandra 1964, figs. 2b, 3a), which are rather closer to those of later buddha bronzes from the Swāt Valley from the following centuries.

The Mīrpur Khās buddhas certainly follow their regional prototypes from Devnīmori. They are also fundamentally comparable to Gupta-Sārnāth Buddha images but are also substantially influenced by late Gandhāran buddhas. Out of the nine buddha images at Mīrpur Khās, seven were still *in situ* at the time of the excavation, while two had already been removed (a buddha image and a buddha head) by Woodburn, as stated in the notes to his published drawings (Woodburn 1897). The buddha image is identified with the one now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The buddha head, with the upper part of the panel and the halo, may be identical to the one also now in the same museum (inv. IM14-1931), but, if so, the head is likely to have been removed from one of the nine images (Cousens 1914: 86). Finally, five of the remaining buddhas are now in Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), along with numerous terracotta ornaments, as well as the famous *dvārapāla* with polychrome decoration (Chandra 1964: fig. 5b; Mukherjee 2008: 68).

As for the dating of the Kahujo-dāro *stūpa* at Mīrpur Khās, the uninscribed reliquary and its undated deposits do not provide any evidence. The Mīrpur Khās buddha images show somewhat later features, especially in the diaphanous drapery of the upper garment and their elaborate halos/thrones, which are comparable to Buddha/buddha images from Sārnāth (and Ajaṅṭā) from the late fifth century AD. Two such Gupta-Sārnāth Buddha images are dated to GE 154 or AD 473/474 under the reign of Kumāragupta II (Rosenfield 1963: 10, fig. 1) and to GE 157 or AD 476/7 under the reign of Buddhagupta (Rosenfield 1963: 11, fig. 2). All these images from Sārnāth (and Ajaṅṭā) can be used as a basis for comparison with the Mīrpur Khās buddha images. Along with the aforementioned Jain image from Mathurā under the reign of Kumāragupta I, the three dated Buddha images from Sārnāth testify that they were produced directly under the imperial Guptas during the fifth century AD. Huntington dates the Mīrpur Khās buddha images to the mid- to late fifth century AD (Huntington 1985: 205), which seems cautious and appropriate, if we take into consideration Williams's argument that there was no significant time lag between the centre and the 'provinces' in Gupta India (Williams 1982: 34). Another piece of evidence to support such an argument is the pan-Indian motif of a pair of long-necked *hamsas* or geese coming out of the mouths of a pair of *makaras*, as decorative elements of the throne of a preaching buddha. A pair of long-necked *hamsas* occurs in a portable terracotta plaque (16 x 15 cm) at Mīrpur Khās (Chandra 1964: fig. 4b) but also in rock-carvings at Ajaṅṭā (e.g. Spink 2008: fig. 81), Aurangabād (e.g. Huntington Archive no. 55845: Cave 7) and Nāsik (e.g. Huntington Archive no. 26856: Cave 23) in the Western Deccan (Dr. Claudine Bautze-Picron, pers. comm.).

The diaphanous drapery of the upper garment and the elaborate halo of the Mīrpur Khās buddha images are comparable to those of Gupta Sārnāth from the late fifth century AD, but subtle V-shape wrinkles on the drapery are also related to Gupta Buddha images from Mathurā. However, the Mīrpur Khās buddhas reflect the proportional blending with its own Gandhāran heritage. The Gandhāran hairstyle of one of the Mīrpur Khās images (Figure 20) again is one of the most obvious Gandhāran elements (Chandra 1964: fig. 1) and the undersized halos at Mīrpur Khās (Figures 20, 21, 22 & 23) unlike their oversized Gupta counterparts can also be seen to reflect general Gandhāran influence. Similarly, the rim of the triangular rays of the Mīrpur Khās buddhas (Figures 20, 21 & 22) seems to derive from the halos of Gandhāran bodhisattvas (e.g.

Bautze-Picron 1990: 84, 91 n. 72, figs. 13 & 15; Zwalf 1996: 55, 58, 66), rather than to the scalloped halos from Kushan Mathurā that Huntington alludes to (Huntington 1985: 197-198).

Two of the Mīrpur Khās buddhas (Chandra 1964: fig. 3a; Gorakshakar 1991: 83, fig. 2) subtly show an explicitly Gandhāran folded hem: with the zigzag hemline to the proper left of the Gandhāran-style ‘droopy’ semicircular front hem (Figure 21). This folded hem is absent from the Sarnāth Buddha images, but common in Gandhāra, where it is depicted aside the droopy semicircular front hem.<sup>5</sup> However, similar zigzag hems can be seen in standing images from Mathurā already in the early fifth century AD as exemplified by the aforementioned Givindnagar Buddha image. Therefore, the zigzag hemline at Mīrpur Khās in the late fifth century AD can be taken either as the result of pan-Indian influence or the inheritance of the Gandhāran aesthetics through Mathurā. As for the ‘shortened legs’ of the Mīrpur Khās buddhas, this peculiarity can be explained by their undersized thrones (Figures 20, 21, 22 & 23), just like those of late Gandhāra, which are commonly narrower than the horizontal extent of the seated buddha, as in the central preaching buddha in the Muhammad Nari stele (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 199, fig. 4) (Figure 26). It seems that placing a late Gupta buddha on such a small late Gandhāran lotus throne at Mīrpur Khās resulted in the shortening of the legs as a provincial feature (Figure 23).

### *Śāmalājī and Dhānk in Gujarat*

In the period following Devnīmori, i.e. after c. AD 400, Gandhāran influences can be traced within Gujarat itself at Śāmalājī near Devnīmori in north Gujarat as well as at Dhānk in inland Saurashtra. At the Hindu site of Śāmalājī, dated to the beginning of the sixth century AD by Schastok (Schastok 1985), some late Gupta Hindu images possibly show some Gandhāran influences in their zigzag drapery, drapery loops, and leaf ornaments in female coiffures. This was argued by Shah with comparison to a late Gandhāran Hārītī image from the Peshawar Museum (Shah 1960: 60-62) possibly dating as late as the fifth century AD (Lyons & Ingholt 1971: 39). However, Shah’s view that there was direct Gandhāran influence on Śāmalājī was later rejected by Schastok, who regarded Śāmalājī as an example of indirect Gandhāran influence, owing to the chronological gap between Gandhāra and Śāmalājī and the potential role of Mathurā as a mediator of the influence (Schastok 1985: 33-35).

At Dhānk in Saurashtra (Figure 1), during my fieldwork I have discovered a relief in a weathered condition depicting a Buddhist triad with a preaching buddha in the *bhadrāsana* (with his legs pendant), possibly attended by a pair of *bodhisattvas* (Figure 24). This new evidence is complemented by the much larger image of the buddha in the *bhadrāsna*, again from Dhānk, that was reported with a photograph (neg. 210.39, American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon; Ray 2004: 55, fig. 4) but now unfortunately untraceable. Such paradoxically provincial yet pan-Indian kinds of buddha images date probably



Figure 24. The stele of the preaching buddha image in a triad with a pair of bodhisattvas from Dhānk, Gujarat (c. 50 x 50 x 20 cm). (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University).

<sup>5</sup> For example, a Gandhāran buddha in schist from the British Museum: inv. 1895,1026.1.



Figure 25. Buddha image in a triad with a pair of bodhisattvas in Cave 26 at Ajañṭā, late fifth century AD, the Vākātaka period. (Photo: courtesy of the Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, Scan Number 8616.)



Figure 26. The Muhammad Nari stele from Muhammad Nari. Lahore Museum. (Photo: courtesy of the Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, Scan Number 9650.)



from the late fifth to the early sixth century AD, from the time of the Mairataka dynasty, though the latter piece was dated by Ray to the fourth century AD (Ray 2004 55, fig. 4), which seems dubious and too early. Spink dates buddha images in *bhadrāsna* at Ajañṭā to the late fifth century AD (Spink 2009: figs. 66, 98) but *bhadrāsna* buddha images at Ajañṭā are generally understood to date somewhat later (Owen 2001: 38). It can be seen clearly that these Dhānk buddha images relate on one hand to Sārnāth and on the other to Ajañṭā from the late fifth century AD onwards, especially in respect to the predominance of the *bhadrāsna*, which was the least common pose in Gandhāra. Although the ultimate origin of the iconography of the preaching buddha is certainly Gandhāran, the Buddhist triad found at Dhānk is stylistically related to those at Ajañṭā. Yet some provincialized Gandhāran stylistic features such as the broad shoulders and the drapery are still seen in the larger buddha found at Dhānk.

### **Ajañṭā in the Western Deccan and beyond**

At Ajañṭā in the Western Deccan, Gandhāran influences are seen provincialized in such a distant region. The connection between Ajañṭā and Gandhāra is evident especially in the Gandhāran-style murals of standing buddhas added to the pillars of Cave 10 (Krishna 1981) but – relevant here – also significant in some of the buddha images at the site (Miyaji 1985; Fukuyama 2014). Almost simultaneously with Sārnāth and Mīrpur Khās, the first ever locally created buddha images emerged at Ajañṭā in the late fifth century AD (Spink 2009: 33-35): for example: the standing buddha at Cave 19, the seated buddha in the *bhadrāsana* at Cave 26, and the seated buddha in the *padmāsana* at Cave 11), that are essentially parallel to the Sārnāth Buddha images. Ajañṭā was then directly under the Vākātakas, who allied themselves with the Guptas.

According to Spink, the buddhas at Ajañṭā variously date between AD 468 and 480 with very speculative precise dates based on external evidence, assigned to each of them (Spink 2009: figs. 22, 57, 66, 70, 71, 81, 84, 90, 98, 122, 130, 132, 147, 148, 173, 178, 181, 182). Although it is impossible to verify these exact dates, it can be said that these buddha images were produced in the dating range of AD 468-480 or later, which is more or less contemporaneous with the dated Sārnāth Buddha images mentioned earlier. However, different chronologies of the monastic complex of Ajañṭā also exist (Fukuyama 2014: 77-87).

At Ajañṭā, Gandhāran influences are clearly seen in images of the preaching buddha in a triad with a pair of bodhisattvas as also seen in late Gandhāra but often in the *bhadrāsana*, which was rare in Gandhāra (Miyaji 1985; Fukuyama 2014) (Figure 25), even more clearly than Devnīmori and Dhānk. It appears that the late Gandhāran preaching buddha images of the third to fourth century AD became influential in Buddhist rock-cut cave complexes in the Western Deccan, most prominently at Ajañṭā, from the late fifth century AD onwards. As discussed above, both the inner dress and the lotus throne of the Devnīmori buddha images dating to c. AD 400 are incidentally and specifically associated with the almost contemporary late Gandhāran preaching buddhas less than a century before Ajañṭā.

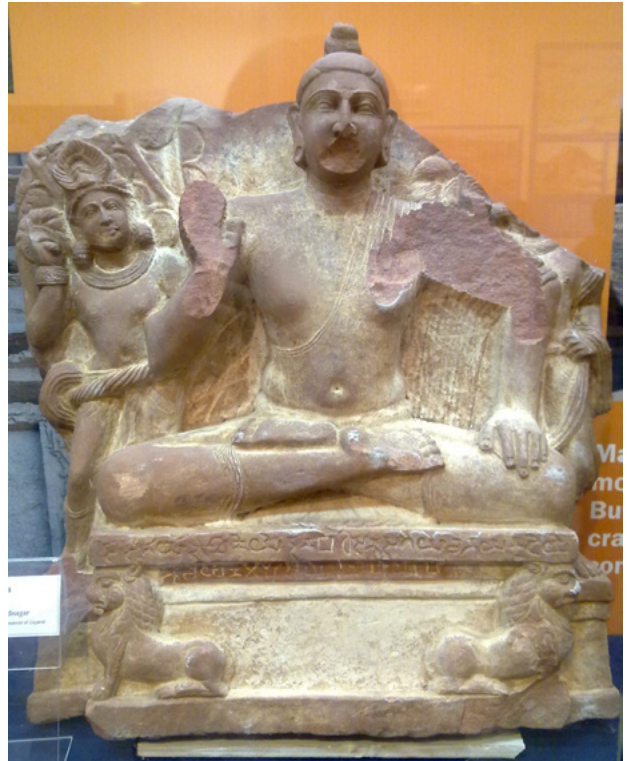


Figure 27. The imported sandstone Kushan-Mathurā Buddha/Bodhisattva found at Vadnagar, Gujarat. Second century AD. Vadnagar Museum. (Photo: author, courtesy of M.S. Baroda University.)

Despite such clear influences from late Gandhāran preaching buddha images at Ajaṅṭā, all the buddha images at Devnīmori invariably show the *dhyānamudrā*. However, the preaching buddha images at Ajaṅṭā clearly inherited the *mudrā* of the Gandhāran preaching buddhas, which resembles the contemporary *dharmacakramudrā* shown by Sārnāth Buddha images. The *dharmacakramudrā* mainly symbolizes the Buddha's first sermon (Sounders 1960: 94) (though not exclusively). However, the *dharmacakramudrā* at Ajaṅṭā is considered a distinct variant and identifications of buddhas are unclear: Huntington even identifies them as the double image of Śākyamuni/Vairocana (Sounders 1960: 94; Huntington 2000: 34-36).

Certain iconographic elements of the 'palace' and 'lotus-pond' compositions of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha images (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 96-101, figs. 10-12, 16) also recur at Ajaṅṭā, for instance, a pair of putti with wings holding a circular wreath or an umbrella over the head of the buddha with a new addition of a crown also being offered to him instead, though the 'palace-type' architecture was largely lost or simplified (Fukuyama 2014: part 2) (Figure 25).

The substantial recurrence of the late Gandhāran double-petalled lotus throne of the Devnīmori type, of Gandhāran origin, occasionally growing out of a pond, accompanied by a pair of *nāgas* (Figure 25), is also geographically and chronologically significant in the transmission and the distribution of the iconography of the late Gandhāran buddha from Gandhāra to the Western Deccan, possibly through Gujarat. The double-petalled lotus throne of the Devnīmori/Ajaṅṭā type, of Gandhāran origin, eventually became prevalent during the Pāla and Sena periods in eastern India, and in Bengal in the eighth to thirteenth century AD.

### **The problematic identifications of preaching buddhas and bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna Buddhism**

The above case-studies of the Devnīmori buddha images and other related examples demonstrate strongly that late Gandhāran influence was substantial and far-reaching. I have shown that the Devnīmori buddha is stylistically, chronologically and geographically related to the late Gandhāran preaching buddha. It is evident that the iconography of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha played an exceptional role in the cultural transmission of Gandhāran Buddhist material culture to Gujarat and beyond. A further investigation on the late Gandhāran preaching buddha may assist the identification of the Devnīmori buddha images, for which only limited evidence is available. Therefore, this section revisits the issue of the obscure identity of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha and discusses the implications it may have for identification of Devnīmori buddha images.

#### ***Identifying the late Gandhāran preaching buddha***

There is an identification problem regarding the late Gandhāran preaching buddha showing his characteristic preaching *mudrā*, on a lotus throne, in a triad with a pair of bodhisattvas. This appears on over forty steles in Gandhāran Buddhist art (Miyaji 2011: 129), in both simple and complex compositions, as exemplified by the Muhammad Nari stele (Figure 26). Identification of the preaching buddha remains an open question, despite tremendous art-historical and Buddhological investigations hitherto carried out (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: Miyaji 2002). Luczanits and Harrison categorized extant remains of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha images into three main compositional types defined by such representations as lotus ponds, palaces, and emanations, of which the palace type was selected as the main specimen owing to its iconographic richness and complexity, suitable for its comparison with textual evidence (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 88-106, 117-118).

In short, the palace type as a composite stele, as in the Muhammad Nari stele (Figure 26), is characterized by a central preaching buddha on a lotus, who is exhibiting the Gandhāran *dharmacakramudrā* in a triad with a pair of bodhisattvas; he is surrounded by buddhas and bodhisattvas in tiers in a palace-like

architectural composition or mandorla. Having been identified initially as a depiction of the Miracle of Śravāstī (Foucher 1905), the composite images of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha in a palace-like mandorla have been seen increasingly as a product of Mahāyāna Buddhism, primarily on account of the presence of bodhisattvas, whose precise identities are as problematic as the main buddha.

Proposed Mahāyāna identifications of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, established through text-image parallels, include: Amitābha or Amitāyus in Sukhāvātī (Huntington 1980; Fussman 1987: 73; Quagliotti 1996); Akṣobhya in Abhirati (Schopen 1987: 273-274, n. 50); the cosmological Śākyamuni of the Mahāyāna Buddhist imagination, not as the historical Buddha but as his Mahāyāna manifestation that appears in multiple Mahāyāna texts (Howard 1986: 56; Miyaji 2002: 147-151); Vairocana in the \**Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* (Giès & Cohen 1996: 341-344); or a generic buddha (Fussman 1999: 548-551; Rhi 2008a; 2011).

Among these above identifications, there are certain common views that the palace-type represents a buddha-field (Skt. *Buddhakṣetra*) (Fussman 1999: 548-551; Rhi 2008a; 2011; Harrison & Luczanits 2011) as an embodiment of a buddha (Miyaji 2002: 143, 153; Harrison & Luczanits 2011), whether certain or generic, or a theophany (Rosenfield 1967: 235-238; Rhi 1991, 148; 2003: 174-175; 2006, 171) or a visionary experience (Luczanits 2008: 47-49). As is evident from an apparent lack of scholarly consensus, the identification of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha remains highly obscure and therefore existing scholarship on this subject needs to be reviewed in order to identify the Devnīmorī buddha.

### **Methodological problems**

The above history of the exceptionally large body of existing research on identifying the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, with no convincing result, urges us to review the methodology. Recent interdisciplinary iconographic projects between art history and Buddhology by Miyaji (2002: 144), Harrison and Luczanits (2011: 115), and Rhi (2018: 255-6) have shown that text-image parallels cannot be drawn convincingly, and that references to Mahāyānist literature cannot help to identify the late Gandhāran preaching buddha with any particular buddha in his buddha-field.

Nonetheless, even with no definitive text-image parallels drawn, but only partial associations, Harrison and Luczanits were inclined to hypothesize that the late Gandhāran preaching buddha was Amitābha attended by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthānaprāpta. Their justification involved intentionally compromising on the crucial discrepancy in the identification of one of the individual bodhisattvas as Maitreya (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 115-116, 118), as clearly demonstrated by Miyaji (Miyaji 1985), which contradicts the iconographic programme of the Amitābha triad. They supported such a hypothetical identification by arguing the case for the abstraction of the individual identities of bodhisattvas into a symbolic meaning or meanings of the triad as a whole, which is the permanence of the dharma as clearly underlined in the Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūha* (Harrison & Luczanits 2011: 115).

Similarly, Miyaji's identification of the triad as Śākyamuni flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya is not textually attested in the corresponding Mahāyāna context; that is to say, there is no attestation of Śākyamuni/Avalokiteśvara/Maitreya in Mahāyānist materials thought to be contemporaneous with the production of these images, but only in the *Vajrāsanāsādhana*, a still Mahāyānist (but from a slightly later period in the development of Indian Mahāyāna) but also tantric text in the *Sādhanamālā* (Miyaji 2002: 114). He then admitted common disagreements between artistic and textual representations, which are recognizable in Buddhist art and iconography between the second century BC and the sixth century AD (Miyaji 2002: 128), rather than justifying the time lag.



Consequently, there is a clear scholarly trend towards accepting the gap between textual and visual images but extracting underlining symbolic theological meanings. Such a shift is even seen in the latest paper by Rhi on the subject, which takes a very conservative view on any identifications of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha with his flanking bodhisattvas, and considers Gandhāran Buddhist art as highly conceptual (Rhi 2018: 256-7). There seems to be a shift of methodological focus from the study of the iconography to that of general symbolism in respect to the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, but this scholarly trend seems to have come to a standstill.

### *The visionary/psychedelic experience of samādhi*

In order to go beyond iconography and symbolism, as typically discussed in the field, a fundamentally different approach needs to be undertaken to advance the study of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha. In doing so, I will highlight a socio-ritual role of the Gandhāran preaching buddha in actual practice in the contemporaneous Buddhist community, in particular, in the context of the practice of visualization.

To date, only the narrative aspect of the visionary experience of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha has been discussed. but not with reference to the actual practice of visualization. The elaborate steles with complex compositions depicting this buddha have been recognized as a theophany but also as a cosmological vision of infinite lotuses, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and buddha-fields attained through *samādhi* ('concentration'); the depiction has been described by art historians in such psycho-spiritual terms as 'visionary' (Luczanits 2008: 47-49) and 'mystical' (Miyaji 2002: 148).

Like the art historians, the Buddhologist Harrison argued that the elaborate descriptions of other worlds i.e. buddha-fields, as found in the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha* and several other Mahāyāna texts, are closely associated with the parallel development of the concept of *samādhi* and the practice of visualization in the early Mahāyāna Buddhism. In turn, accounts of visualization practice can help explain the background to the emergence of 'Pure Land' literature, such as versions of the *Sukhāvativyūha* (Harrison 2003: 120-128).

In fact, these visionary aspects of the elaborate textual descriptions of the Mahāyānist cosmology in the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* have been understood as reflecting actual visualization practice and been described accordingly as 'entopic' (Osto 2018) or 'fractal' or 'psychedelic' (Fox 2015: 263). In cognitive anthropology, however, the shamanic, entopic vision denotes the residual image effect of an abstract nature (Lewis-Williams 2002), and therefore the inherently eidetic vision of *samādhi* can be better explained as psychedelic or visionary.

In this connection, Osto (2018: 1880190) analysed a specific, early Mahāyānist visualization practice called *pratyutpanna-samādhi*, in which a practitioner visualizes any of myriad/infinite buddhas of the present, in the socio-ritual context. *Pratyutpanna-samādhi* is considered as an adaptation of the earlier practice of *buddhānusr̥ti* ('commemoration of the Buddha') in mainstream Buddhism and involves prolonged visualization of a buddha in his buddha-field (Harrison 2003: 120). The idea is that through mentally constructing an image of a buddha in a buddha-field according to specific guidelines prescribed, a meditator captures a vision of a buddha either in a waking or dreaming state that assures him of reaching this very buddha-field (Harrison 2003: 120).

*Pratyutpanna-samādhi* is highly relevant to discussion of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, owing to its association with Pure Land Buddhism. The early Mahāyāna *pratyutpanna-samādhi* meditation/visualization text of the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* has survived in its entirety only

as Chinese and Tibetan translations, while there are fragments in Sanskrit and Gāndhārī (Harrison, Lenz & Salomon 2018: 117-120).

The earliest extant translation the *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 (T.416-419) is attributed to Lokakṣema in AD 179 (Harrison 1998: 1-2; Harrison, Lenz & Salomon 2018: 118-119). A recently identified group of fragments of a manuscript of the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* in Gāndhārī language and Kharoṣṭhī script is palaeographically dated to the first or second century AD, but radiocarbon dates of its related Gāndhārī manuscripts suggest an even earlier date of the first century BC (Harrison, Lenz & Salomon 2018: 121-123). The very early Buddhist practice of *buddhānusr̥ti* adopted in the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, dates back even further (Harrison 1978; Williams 2009: 209-212).

According to Harrison, this work is considered to be ‘a work of Pure Land Buddhism’ if not its pure product and contains the earliest datable reference to Amitābha (Harrison 1998: 2-3). In fact, the object of visualization meant therein can be any buddha or buddhas of the present in any direction to any buddha-field and Amitābha is ‘merely adduced as an example’ (Harrison 1978: 43-44; 1998: 2-3). Therefore, regardless of any possible certain identities of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, the study of *pratyutpanna-samādhi* provides an understanding of a wider socio-ritual context of the iconography, which is also useful for the analysis of the Devnīmori buddha images.

Osto (2018) argued that altered states of consciousness of *samādhi*, by analogy with psychedelic experiences, may have been induced by such ‘mind-altering techniques’ as ‘fasting, sensory and sleep deprivation, intense concentration, visualisation meditation and hypnosis’, with the aid of the ‘set and settings’, described in the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (Osto 2018: 188-190). The resulting vision of *samādhi* is accordingly described as ‘dream-like’ or ‘mind-only’ state, but not as a physical experience by means of superhuman powers (Harrison 1978: 46).

Harrison argues that these visualized mental images are ‘no mere hallucinations’ but doctrinally a manifestation of the Mahāyānist concept of *śūnyatā* or *emptiness* lacking their intrinsic material nature (Harrison 1998: 2-3; Williams 2009: 212-213). The question then arises as to whether the depiction of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha as a vision of *samādhi* was merely to recount this visionary experience or if the imagery had a socio-ritual function in the actual visualization practice.

### ***The use of buddha images in the practice of visualization and the origins of Buddha images***

One crucial point that Osto (2018) did not discuss regarding the set and the settings in the visualization practice of *pratyutpanna-samādhi* described in the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* is the references therein to the making of (physical) images of a buddha, either as a sculpture or a painting (Ominami 1975: 734; Harrison 1978: 38-39). The consequent possibility, as argued by Harrison, is that these buddha images may have been used as aids for visualization (Harrison 1978: 38-39; Harrison 1998: 1-2), which are of direct relevance to the study of the ritual role of the late Gandhāran and Devnīmori buddhas images.

Meanwhile, the idea of *samādhi* and the practice of visualization add an important perspective to continuous discussion of the origins of the Buddha/Bodhisattva images in South Asia. The first ever sculpted or drawn/painted buddha image may have been made for the particular purpose of visualization, and thus supposed to be conceptually identical with a ‘mental image’ (Harrison 1978: 38-39). Harrison points out that the transition from aniconism to anthropomorphism certainly took place by the beginning of the second century AD, as attested by the date of the *Banzhou sanmei jing*, which itself makes references to buddha images (Harrison 1978: 38-39).

To put the practice of visualization into context, Osto's (2018) methodology of connecting the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* with the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*, which is generally dated to AD 200-300 (Osto 2004: 60), shows a slight chronological gap. He then even misses a crucial transition between the visualization of a buddha and the *seeing* of a buddha in the sense of *darśana*, a ritual act of seeing. This developed towards c. AD 400, as clearly observed, for instance, in the *Guan Fo Sanmei Hai Jing* 觀佛三昧海經 (*The Sūtra on Ocean-Like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha*), the earliest of so-called visualization texts that survive in Chinese translations, with their typical emphasis on visual imagery. There the visualization of a buddha is considered as a skilful means for the 'seeing' a buddha (Ominami 1975: 735).

The *Guan Fo Sanmei Hai Jing*, which is generally dated to the fifth century AD, explains three successive stages of visualizing, recollecting and 'seeing' buddhas (Ominami 1975: 735). Although the attribution of the Chinese translation of the *Guan Fo Sanmei Hai Jing* to Buddhahadra (AD 359-429) has been disputed (Ogasawara 2019: 194; Yamabe 2019: 397), some suggest its Indian origin (Yamabe 2019: 418). Therefore, the practice of visualization continued into the fourth and fifth centuries AD, which is our study-period for the late Gandhāran preaching buddha and Devnīmori meditating buddha images.

In this connection, Miyaji notices the general transition from narratives to cult images with reference to the late Gandhāran preaching buddha as well as Gupta buddhas as a relatively late development (Miyaji 1993: 425-426). However, the earliest buddha and/or bodhisattva images in Swat and Mathurā already have the nature of cult images in a triad with either Brahmā and Indra or a pair of whisk-bearers, respectively, just like later triadic compositions with a pair of bodhisattvas, with narrative elements either stripped or simplified. Therefore, consideration of the possible non-narrative, socio-ritual function of buddha images for visualization in the first half of the first millennium AD in South Asia needs to be incorporated into discussion of the origins of the Buddha images. It is therefore highly likely that the earliest Buddha images from the latter half of the first century AD to the early second century AD already had different functions for exchange-oriented ritual by worshippers (Karashima 2013: 181-184) and for visualization by meditators (Harrison 1978: 38).

### ***Superhuman powers and supernatural miracles of the Buddha***

Equally relevant to discussion of late Gandhāran and Devnīmori buddhas is the notion of yogic superhuman powers (eg. Sanskrit *abhijñā*: Pāli *abhiññā*) and supernatural miracles (e.g. Sanskrit *prātihārya*: Pāli *pāṭihāriya*) caused by buddhas. The Muhammad Nari stele (Figure 26) has long been considered to depict a miracle scene of multiplication (Foucher 1905) or emanation (Harrison & Luczanits 2011) or the emission of light (Miyaji 1993).

Such supernatural miracles can be categorized into *ṛddhiprātihārya* in Sanskrit or *iddhi-pāṭihāriya* in Pāli ('supernatural miracles') in the traditional list of the three types of *pāṭihāriyas* ('miracles') (Goshima 2015: 1). The category of *iddhi-pāṭihāriya* corresponds to that of *iddhi-vidhā-nāṇa* 'the wisdom of diverse supernatural powers' in the traditional list of six kinds of *abhiññās* ('wisdoms') (Clough 2012: 77). In these lists, both *iddhi-pāṭihāriya* and *iddhi-vidhā-nāṇa* are treated as mundane and even achievable by non-Buddhists. In contrast, the third *pāṭihāriya* and the sixth *abhiññā* are elevated as transmudane i.e. profound, clearly distinguished from the rest and reserved only for Buddhism. As such, superhuman powers are also said to have been viewed negatively by the Buddha himself and displaying such powers before householders was prohibited by him (Goshima 2015: 2).

With such conservatism, the term *pāṭihāriya* meaning 'miracle' started to possess a connotation of 'indoctrination' or 'instruction' (but still through superhuman abilities and supernatural miracles) from early on (Goshima 2015: 30). In both mainstream and Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism, the use of supernatural miracles had to be justified by the purpose of conversion of non-Buddhists: Fiordalis argues

that this aspect can be regarded as a ‘religious’ role (Fiordalis 2012: 122). All this also suggests that the iconography of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha may have a double meaning of his miracle and his teaching and may also have been useful for proselytizing Mahāyāna Buddhism in Gandhāra.

Yet all these ambivalent attitudes paved the way for some major multiplication/emanation miracle stories in Mahāyāna Buddhism by the first or second century AD (e.g. in the Smaller and Larger *Sukhāvātivūhas* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*) (Miyaji 2002; Harrison & Luczanits 2011). In mainstream Buddhism, the multiplication aspect of the Great Miracle at Śrāvastī was added only at a later stage in the *Divyāvadāna* to the pre-existing popular miracle story of the mango tree, due possibly to such earlier Mahāyāna influence: this development was also seen in art at Sārnāth and Ajaṅṭā in the late fifth century AD (Miyaji 2002). Likewise, in Gandhāra, the Great Miracle at Śrāvastī was represented only as the so-called Twin Miracle (Miyaji 2006).

### **Miracles of light**

Miyaji argued that the Muhammad Nari stele (Figure 26) depicts Śākyamuni, who emits light from his *ūrṇā*: his analysis shows that visual points of astonished bodhisattvas surrounding him all focus on the *ūrṇā* (Miyaji 1993). The scene was identified by him with ‘the miracle of great light (大光明)’ in the prologue of the Chinese translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* by Kumārajīva, dated to AD 406 (Karashima 2015: 166). His argument based on the internal visual evidence is significant in exploring the broader conceptual meaning of light as a supernatural miracle through his superhuman power.

In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Vaidya 1960), at Rājagrha, having taught the *mahānirdeśa* (‘great instruction’), the blessed one (*bhagavat*) with his disciples was seated cross-legged (*paryāṅka*) on a throne of the great dharma (*mahādharmāsana*) and went into a *samādhi* called *anantanirdeśapratīṣṭhāna* (‘the abode of infinite instructions’). Then there fell over them a rain of divine flowers and it trembled the buddha-field in six ways, and a diverse assembly looked at him in amazement. (2, 1) He then emitted light from his *ūrṇā*: illuminated and revealed 18,000 buddha-fields in the eastern quarter with all beings, monks, nuns, lay Buddhists, yogis, yoga practitioners, bodhisattvas the mahāsattvas, buddhas, the blessed ones, and jewelled *stūpas* of past buddhas (3, 1).

Most importantly, Mañjuśrī explains to Maitreya the meaning of the scene, namely that the miracle of light anticipates the tathāgata’s teaching of the great dharma (11, 1), i.e. the *saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (‘the white lotus of the sublime dharma’) (13, 1).

In the Nidānaparivarta prologue of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* in Sanskrit, datable to c. AD 100 (Karashima 2015: 163), the light emitted by the blessed one is simply called ‘miracle-light’ (*prātihāryāvabhāsa*) (3, 1) rather than ‘great light (大光明)’. This light in fact consists of a single ray of light (*raśmi*) which is omitted from his *ūrṇā* (‘hair’) on the forehead in the Sanskrit original (3, 1).

This single ray of light emitted from the *ūrṇā* is conceptually similar to the divine eye as light (*āloka*) but also as sight (*ālōka*), as described as one category of superhuman powers (*abhiññā* in Pāli) in the *Visudhimagga*: the divine eye can see as far as light can reach with its all-pervading light and all-seeing sight (Fiordalis 2011: 108).

Miyaji also makes references to other Mahāyāna texts that include not identical but broadly similar descriptions of miracles of light (Miyaji 1993), but he does not give details of their differences in nuance nor his view on the chronological development of such an idea. In this respect, his comparison of the Muhammad Nari stele from the third to fourth century AD with the prologue of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* from c. AD 100 generates a significant time lag despite its long-term influence.

Such a chronological gap can be filled by looking at a more developed form of the story of the miracle of light in Mahāyāna Buddhism towards the third century AD, around the time of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha of the third to fourth century AD. In particular, the Larger *Prajñāpāramitā* ('The Transcendence of Wisdom') material, also known as 'the light-emission group', that characteristically includes miracle stories of light, exemplifies the chronological phase of c. AD 150-250 (Katsusaki 2015: 31). There also is growing evidence that the *Prajñāpāramitā* scripture originates in Gandhāra, in the Gāndhārī language, at least in its earliest datable phase of AD c. 50-150, despite the apparent superiority of the *Prajñāpāramitā* scripture as a physical object of worship over Buddha images in this phase (Karashima 2013).

In fact, as Okada has argued, the story of the miracle of light (*raśmyavabhāsa*) in the Larger *Prajñāpāramitā* shows striking parallels with that in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* but constitutes a later chronological development: according to him, the author of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* was aware of the content of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Okada 2017: 101). Therefore, this related but later version of the miracle of light could potentially be chronologically more appropriate for discussion of the Muhammad Nari stele.

On this matter, the prologue of the partially preserved version of the Gilgit manuscripts of the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in Sanskrit (Conze 1962; Zacchetti 2005) is particularly pertinent, both chronologically and geographically, to late Gandhāra. This collection contains some descriptions useful for analysis of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, such as miracles of light, emanations, and a palace, which will be discussed below.

Miracle stories of light can be found throughout the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* but especially at the beginning of the prologue. The blessed one (*bhagavat*), seated on a *siṃhāsana* ('lion-throne'), first entered into a *samādhi* called *samādhi-rāja* ('the king of concentration') and looked at a buddha-field through his divine eye. He then issued 'sixty hundred thousand *niyutas* of *kotis*' of rays of light from each of his body parts and hair pores. These rays then illuminated the trichiliocosm and other world-systems 'as numerous as the sand of the Ganges' in all the ten directions, and ever being exposed to the light 'becomes fixed in supreme perfect awakening' (*anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*) (LPG 2r).

The text then describes a miracle of emanations (*vigraha*). The blessed one put out his tongue, covered the entire trichiliocosm with it, smiled, and then his tongue emitted 'many hundreds of thousands of *niyutas* of *kotis*' of rays of light. From each of these rays arose a golden, bejewelled and thousands-petalled lotus with an emanation of the standing and seated tathāgata on it. These emanated tathāgatas then instructed the dharma i.e. the six *pāramitās* ('perfections') in the world-systems in the ten directions. All the beings who had heard the *dharma* became 'fixed in supreme perfect awakening' (LPG 3r).

Furthermore, there is a description of a miracle of palace. The blessed one then entered into another *samādhi* called *siṃhavikrīḍita* ('lion's play') again on a *siṃhāsana* and then trembled the trichiliocosm and world-systems in the ten directions in six ways. All the humans and devas looked at the tathāgata ('thus-come/thus-gone'), rejoiced, and worshipped him, and then offered him divine flowers, garlands, incenses, ointments, powders, cloths, flowers, filaments, the bark, leaves, decorations, umbrellas, flags, banners. These offerings were then transformed into a summit-palace (*kūṭāgara*) as immense as the trichiliocosm through his superhuman power (*adhiṣṭhāna*) (LPG 3r-5r).

These miracle scenes in the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, discussed above, undoubtedly show many parallels with the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, but with further elaboration. It appears that by the mid-third century AD, most of the miraculous elements that are present in the Muhammad Nari stele such as light, emanations, and palace should have been common enough to anticipate the Gandhāran preaching buddha in the third to fourth century AD, if the text came earlier than the image.

Yet these miracles in the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* again typically anticipate the teaching of Śākyamuni as seen in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Okada 2017: 100): one tathāgata Ratnakāra explains that Śākyamuni, who is tathāgata, *arhat*, and *samyaksaṃbuddha*, ‘stands, abides, and remains’ in the world-system of Sahā in the western direction and teaches *prajñāpāramitās* to bodhisattvas the mahāsattvas (LPG 5v).

The comparison between the above two prologues certainly implies the existence of a common generic model of a story that can take any form with a broadly similar base plot but with further modifications and elaborations. This character applies to many elements, such as differences in thrones, *samādhis*, entities, assemblies, bodhisattvas, types of the dharma and so on, just like all the similar life stories of past buddhas, but with different names, under different *bodhi* trees, from different *kalpas* etc.

Meanwhile, consistent emphasis on the real-life benefits of the exposure to the light issued from the blessed one shows an additional soteriological aspect, which was lacking in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Okada 2017: 100) but is present rather in earlier material of Pure Land Buddhism (Amitābha literally means ‘infinite light’) (Ishida 1997: 11). In the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, all the humans who have been exposed to the light attain *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*, which is buddhahood in Mahāyāna Buddhism. This soteriological aspect can be seen as a confluence of different Mahāyāna ideas.

The description of such instant awakening may also explain a lack of the depiction of the diverse assembly in the Muhammad Nari stele, which is questioned by Harrison and Luczanits. They deny Miyaji’s identification of it as the depiction of the miracle of light in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* owing to the absence of the depiction of *śrāvakas* (Harrison and Luczanits 2011: 114). In fact, it was not only *śrāvakas* who were missing but the entire diverse assembly, described above. If all those in the diverse assembly who had been exposed to the light and heard the teaching of the dharma attained *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi* or ‘supreme perfect awakening’, they should all look like bodhisattvas. Therefore, this may explain the predominant presence of bodhisattvas in the Muhammad Nari stele.

However, there are still obvious discrepancies, as should be expected. For instance, the *siṃhāsana* of the blessed one, described in the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, is absent in Muhammad Nari stele. In the text he is not on a lotus but on a lion-throne (*siṃhāsana*). However, as mentioned earlier, according to the Gilgit manuscripts of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, a *siṃhāsana* is considered to be located in a calyx of a lotus (Schopen 1977: 182) and thus it could have been technically challenging to depict a lotus and a *siṃhāsana* in one image, which only appears in India proper from the Guptā period onwards.

Another important text belonging to the period immediately preceding the time of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha is the aforementioned *Gaṇḍavyūha*, whose principal buddha is called Vairocana: such proto-Vairocana (‘one who shines forth’) is comparable to the blessed one in the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, who is frequently described as shining forth (*virocate*) (*vivruca*). In-depth comparative studies of related Mahāyāna texts belonging to this chronological period may enhance our understanding of the concept of the buddha behind the late Gandhāran buddha image.

### ***Different ideas of buddha-bodies***

Discussion of supernatural miracles and superhuman powers leads us to different ideas of bodies of buddhas that developed in Buddhism over time, but especially towards the time of the late Gandhāran and Devnīmori buddhas. In the Mahāyāna context, the initial distinction and contrast between the two buddha-bodies of *dharmakāya* (dharma body) and *rūpakāya* (form body) developed into tripartite divisions of *trikāya* (three bodies), i.e. *dharmakāya* plus two forms of *rūpakāya* that are *saṃbhogakāya* (enjoyment/bliss body) and *nirmāṇakāya* (emanation/transformation body) towards the fourth century

AD (Williams 2009: 177, 179). In *trikāya*, particularly relevant to the late Gandhāran preaching buddha is the *saṃbhogakāya* (or *saṃbhogikāya*), which is the blissful and luminous buddha-body in the mainstream Yogācāra doctrine of *trikāya* or the three bodies as described in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, which possibly dates to the fourth century AD, and then into its later tantric manifestation (Tucci 1930; Hakamaya 1986; Griffiths 1990: 111-112, n. 12).

The *saṃbhogakāya* is a buddha-body of bliss and light, which entails visionary experiences, enjoyed by a buddha, as well as by other advanced bodhisattvas, by attaining buddhahood through self-identification with a buddha (Williams 2009: 181). It is also the ‘glorified’ body of a buddha with his physical major and minor characteristics (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*), seated on a lotus and preaching the Mahāyāna to his assembly of bodhisattvas in an akaniṣṭha heaven until the end of *saṃsāra* (Williams 1989: 180-181). Such embodiment shows some similarities with the earlier Theravādin idea of a mind-made body (*manomaya-kāya*) explained in such scholastic path manuals as the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, which roughly dates to the second century BC, and the *Vimuttimaggā*, which possibly dates to the first century AD; *manomaya-kāya* is considered as a ‘hollow’ body permeated with the bliss (*sukhatā*) and lightness (*lahutā*) in order to enter into the fourth *jhāna* and cultivate supernatural powers categorised as *iddhis* and *abhiññās* (Clough 2011: 82-83).

The concept of *saṃbhogakāya* clearly demonstrates the maturity of visionary, experiential, and magical aspects of non-ontological Buddhist cosmology that developed in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which was later inherited by Vairocana, whose body is the *saṃbhogakāya* in the *\*Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*, whose first comprehensive Chinese translation dates to AD 418-421 (Williams 2009: 132-138, 175). Huntington alludes to the *saṃbhogakāya* of Vairocana in relation to the Muhammad Nari stele (Huntington 1980: 659) (Figure 26).

Existing scholarship tells us further that much earlier than the Mahāyānist idea of the three bodies, the polemic against the conventional relic worship gave a rise to different ideas of buddha-bodies or embodiments of buddhas – *vajrakāya* and *tathāgatagarbha* are innovations associated with the second century AD, even if only appearing in Chinese translations a century or two later. In light of the dating of the *Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra* by Radich (Radich 2012; Radich 2015; Jones 2016). Radich has explored the historical development of the idea of immortality that was initially ascribed to cosmically distant buddhas, but by the fourth century AD applied to Śākyamuni embodied as a permanent and indestructible buddha-body of adamant known as *vajrakāya* in contemporary with the *trikāya* doctrine.

According to Radich, the idea that the Buddha has a *vajrakāya* comes shortly before *tathāgatagarbha* (Radich 2015: 171) and emerged out of the Mahāyānist reinterpretation of the *dharmakāya* as the self-identity of the Buddha with the *absolute* (*dharmatā*, *dharmadhātu*, *tathatā*; Radich 2012: 272-273). His research has also established a close link between the buddha-body of adamant and mental states of adamant, which is most manifest in the *samādhi*, as frequently seen in certain Mahāyāna texts of around AD 400 (Radich 2012: 274-280). This reinforces the above discussion of the relationship between *samādhi* and embodiments of buddhas.

Another relevant point made by Radich concerns the personhood of the buddha of the *vajrakāya* in relation to *stūpa*/relic worship, namely that the indestructible relics of the Buddha contained in *stūpas*, which were venerated collectively as a *dhātu* (‘element’) but not conventionally as relics or *śarīrāṇi* (‘body’), attributed buddha-nature or what later came to be known as *tathāgatagarbha* internally to sentient beings rather than externally to a *stūpa* (Radich 2012: 280-281).

In light of the revised chronology of *tathāgatagarbha* texts by Radich (2012; 2015) and Jones (2016), it is apparent that there was no single idea of buddha-bodies that was universally accepted in South Asia

at the time of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha and Devnīmori buddha images towards the fourth century AD in South Asia, though sectarian affiliations or geographical origins of different Mahāyānic doctrines of buddha-bodies and embodiments require further Buddhological inquiry. In response to the work of Radich (2012), we may need to decode underlying meanings of buddha-bodies and embodiments, for instance, the permanence and immortality of cosmically distant buddhas or Śākyamuni.

In relation to the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori, its relic casket inscription refers to the relics contained therein as *śarīrāṇi* ('śarīra' in the compound *daśabala-śarīra-nilaya* or 'a receptacle of relics of the *daśabala*' ['the one who is endowed with ten (superhuman) powers'] – possibly an epithet of the Buddha but not exclusively (Srinivasan 1968: 69) – instead of a *dhātu*. Since *śarīra* and *dhātu* do not represent very different ideas of 'relics' at *stūpas*, it is likely that the *mahāstūpa* was a conventional *stūpa* with relics (*śarīrāṇi*) embodying the presence the Buddha or a buddha as a person while simultaneously manifesting him as the *dharma* as the *dharmakāya* (Boucher 1991: 1516, 27). A similar form of the embodiment of the Buddha is also attested at the site level at Devnīmori by the excavated steatite seal of the so-called *ye dharmā hetuprabhavā* 'creed' (Mehta & Chawdhary 1966: 122, fig. 36). This creed is known to establish *stūpas* and the presence of the Buddha just as relics do (Boucher 1991: 4; Ghosh 1967; Hinüber 1985; Strong 2004: 10).

### ***The changing meaning of the dharmacakramudrā***

The significance of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha showing the *dharmacakramudrā* (Figure 26), which means 'the hand gesture of the wheel of the dharma', including a variety of forms that developed over time within South Asia and across Buddhist Asia. Saunders explains its Gandhāran variant in these terms: 'the right hand, with the fingers rather close together and the palm turned inward, loosely envelopes the joined ends of the thumb and index of the left hand: the other fingers are negligently closed' (Saunders 1960: 94, 231-232). This *mudrā* can otherwise be contextualized in the post-Gandhāran development of this *mudrā*, inherited from Gandhāra, at Sārnāth and Ajaṅṭā, with a clear association with Śākyamuni's first sermon at Sārnāth (Nakanishi 2013).

The *dharmacakramudrā*, first emerged in late Gandhāra and became the most popular of all *mudrās* during the Gupta period. The Gandhāran version of the *dharmacakramudrā*, as shown by the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, which is the earliest of its kind, has been noted as a variant, according to the criteria of the standard Sārnāth model; 'the right hand with gathered fingers and the palm turned inward, loosely enveloping the joined ends of the thumb and index finger of the left hand, whose other fingers are negligently closed' (Saunders 1960: 94).

In Gandhāran narrative art, the Buddha's first sermon was shown in the narrative with different *mudrās* in close association with a *dharmacakra* and a pair of deer (Zwalf 1996: cat. no. 199; vol. 1, 181-183; vol. 2, 121; Huntington n.d.: 11-12), that indicates the location of Sārnāth (Nakanishi 2013). The Buddha's sermon is otherwise represented with a *dharmacakra* without the deer (Zwalf 1996: cat. nos. 145 and 200; vol. 1, 183; vol. 2, 122), which possibly symbolizes some other teaching.

Despite its typological importance, the relationship between the late Gandhāran and Sārnāth versions of the *dharmacakramudrā* has not been discussed adequately. In particular, the *dharmacakramudrā* shown by the late Gandhāran preaching buddha may be distinguished from the Buddha's first sermon at Sārnāth because of a lack of specific iconographic references to Sārnāth such as a pair of deer. According to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, there were two distinct types of *dharmacakras* in early Mahāyāna Buddhism: while one of them is the conventional *dharmacakra* i.e. the Śākyamuni's first sermon at Sārnāth, the other is the foremost and maximum *dharmacakra*, reinterpreted as the 'true' teaching of the Buddha, i.e. the *ekayāna* ('one vehicle') rather than the *triyāna* ('three vehicles'), which was previously taught only



provisionally by Śākyamuni at Sārnāth (Fujichika 1995: 705-706). In the Chinese Mahāyāna context, towards the beginning of the fifth century AD, the sermon of the Buddha at Sārnāth was considered as the second sermon while the first was at Akaniṣṭha (Chappell 1983; Huntington 2000: 37).

It is therefore likely that the *dharmacakramudrā* shown by the late Gandhāran preaching buddha symbolized the Mahāyānist *dharmacakra* taught by Śākyamuni with his transcendental Mahāyānist identity or by any other Mahāyānist buddha. In addition, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* also refers to turning of the *dharmacakra* by other buddhas (Fujichika 1995: 706) just like all accounts of past buddhas. Therefore, the *dharmacakramudrā* may symbolize any teaching of the dharma by any buddha or advanced bodhisattva but often with its historic reference to the Buddha's first sermon at Sārnāth.

### ***The late Gandhāran preaching buddha and Devnīmori meditating buddhas***

Turning back to the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, we have seen that archaeologists have struggled to identify him conclusively either as a specific buddha or as a generic figure, but this 'unknowable' nature of the concept of 'buddha' is in fact nothing new; indeed it is an ancient one in the Mahāyānist discourse, in which the question of whether there is one Buddha or many buddhas was debated (Williams 2009: 180).

The notion of the multiplication of the Buddha is as old as the cult of the Seven Buddhas of the Past dating back at least to the mid-third century BC at the time of Aśoka, who doubled the size of the *stūpa* dedicated to Konākamana (Koṇāgamana in Pāli and Kanakamuni in Sanskrit), one of the Seven Buddhas of the Past (Gombrich 1980: 67) at Nigali Sagar. From the Buddhist perspective of the *absolute*, no buddhas are intrinsically indistinguishable from one another (Williams 2009: 180; Radich 2012: 273), which implies that any buddha can otherwise be self-identified with Śākyamuni.

In this respect, Strong argues that relics of past buddhas were venerated exclusively in association with Śākyamuni as the Buddha of the present (Strong 2004: 49). Strong's view also resonates with an account of a *stūpa*, described in the eleventh chapter *Stūpasamdarśana* ('manifestation of a *stūpa*') of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* in the Mahāyāna context: a great bejewelled *stūpa* that enshrined a body of a past buddha named Prabhūtaratna became personified as a person (Prabhūtaratna) and conversed with Śākyamuni (Karashima 2018: 472-473).

The cult of past Buddhas was certainly popular in north Gujarat as attested by a fragment of a relief depicting four buddhas in the natural rock-shelter of Jogida in the Taranga Hill (Rawat 2009: 20/pl. 2, 97; Rawat 2011: 231): this sculpture possibly belongs to the Maitraka period and would have represented the Seven Buddhas of the Past under their respective trees, as most commonly depicted in the Western Deccan. Likewise, the presence of eight terracotta buddha images interned into the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori as relics suggests the cult of the Seven Buddhas of the Past plus Maitreya Buddha in north Gujarat, as discussed earlier. The relics in the inscribed reliquary excavated from the core of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori are referred to as belonging to a the *daśabala* ('the one who is endowed with ten [superhuman] powers') (Srinivasan 1968: 68-69), who may well be Śākyamuni or some past buddha. As Strong argued, Śākyamuni and the Seven Buddhas of the Past would have been venerated in conjunction (Strong 2004: 49), and this would also have been the case in north Gujarat.

In this connection, Karashima identified the rock engraving of a *stūpa* topped with a high pole with multiple disks accompanied by a pair of *stūpa*-like buddhas at Hodar in Gilgit in Pakistan (Hauptmann 2008: 353) as Śākyamuni conversing with past buddha Prabhūtaratna in the aforementioned *Stūpasamdarśana* chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Ishida 1997: 9; Karashima 2018: 476). This depiction resembles two similar representations of a *stūpa* accompanied by a pair of smaller *stūpas* (but without anthropomorphic

buddhas) on the rock painting in Shelter I in the group of undated *stūpa* rock-paintings near Gambhirpura (Sonawane 2013) and on the ivory seal excavated at Vadnagar, palaeographically dated to as early as the third to second century BC (Rawat 2011: 219, 221/fig.11.6), both from north Gujarat itself.

After all, the identity of Devnīmori buddha images, which have some iconographic features of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha such as the wavy hairstyle, the inner robe and the lotus throne, is unclear. This is owing especially to the *dhyānamudrā* shown instead of the Gandhāran *dharmacakramudrā*. The comparative analysis of Devnīmori and Mīrpur Khās buddhas clearly concerns the invariable presence of the *dhyānamudrā* shown by them as a hand gesture of meditation. I have shown above the importance of the state of *samādhi* in Mahāyāna Buddhism with reference to the late Gandhāran preaching buddha and thus it is probable that deep attention was paid to this *mudrā* in association with the *samādhi* at regional levels in north Gujarat and Sindh.

The *dhyānamudrā* including its variants was first shown in Swat, by Śākyamuni venerated by Brahmā and Indra (Huntington n.d.), depicted on some of the earliest Buddha cult images ever created in South Asia (Miyaji 2005). In Gandhāra proper, the *dhyānamudrā* was associated with meditation and superhuman powers, most significantly, in the narrative of Indra's visit of Śākyamuni meditating inside Indrasālaguhā (Inrasālaguhā in Pāli) on the Vediya mountain. According to Miyaji, one group of frontal meditating images of the Buddha in a cave, in a landscape context with the Vediya mountain, depicts flames around the opening of Indrasālaguhā indicative of the flame-*samādhi* (huoyan zanmai 火焰三昧) of the Buddha described in one of the different versions of the same story in the *Chang ahan jing* 長阿含經 (the \**Dirghāgama*) (T.0001:01.0562c12-13; Shichi 1987; Miyaji 2010). The *dhyānamudrā* is also shown in Gandhāran narratives by another flame-*samādhi* at Urubilvā (Miyaji 2010) or some individual cult images of buddhas and bodhisattvas (Filigenzi 2005: 108-109) including the emaciated Siddhārtha (Brown 1997).

In India proper, by and large, the *dhyānamudrā* was shown by any *tīrthaṅkaras* in Kushan and post-Kushan Mathurā, and occasionally by buddhas in Buddhist art, for instance, some of the Seven Buddhas of the Past (Behrendt 2014: 31: fig. 3 a, b, c). The narrative of the Buddha meditating in the Indrasālaguhā was also depicted in Kushan and post-Kushan Mathurā occasionally with the *dhyānamudrā* (Huntington n.d.: 22). The *dhyānamudrā* is also shown by the fully-fledged Gupta Buddha images dating to the mid-fifth century AD placed in the four directions over the Sāñcī Stūpa 1, which were mentioned earlier.

These Sāñcī Buddha images are considered to be the prototypes of the later *jinās* in tantric Buddhism at their formative stage, in which they were not yet distinguished by individual distinctive *mudrās* (Huntington 1985: 197-198), though this view remains highly speculative. Yet Radich also observes the further development of the *vajrakāya* in later tantric Buddhism (Radich 2012: 282), and thus analogies gained from later tantric traditions, may enhance understanding of earlier material. The *dhyānamudrā* is also shown by multiplied buddhas of the depiction of 'the Buddha's Great Miracle at Śrāvastī' at Sārnāth from the late fifth century AD (Brown 1984: 83/fig. 6).

This takes us to discussion of the prominence of both the *dhyānamudrā* and the *dharmacakramudrā* of the Gandhāra origin. In late Gandhāra, these two closely associated *mudrās* were depicted in the same relief as on the Muhammed Nari stele (Figure 26) (the central buddha with the *dharmacakramudrā* and a pair of buddhas on the top corners with the *dhyānamudrā*) or on the same *stūpa* as at the Jauliān monastery (Huntington Archive, Digital Database Collection, no. 9957). The semiotic meaning of the *dhyānamudrā* is *samādhi* while that of the *dharmacakramudrā* is the dharma: I have discussed above the close relationship between the *samādhi* and the dharma with reference to the visualization practice of *pratyutpanna-samādhi*. According to Harrison, 'The principal fruit of this encounter (*pratyutpanna-samādhi*) is the hearing of the dharma preached by the Buddha, which a practitioner is urged to remember and preach to others after

emerging from the *samādhi*' (Harrison 2003: 120). Therefore, it is clear that the Gandhāran preaching buddha first went into *samādhi* and then taught the dharma.

However, although the late Gandhāran preaching buddha is supposed to be showing the *samādhi* state with the *dhyānamudrā*, he is actually teaching, exhibiting the *dharmacakramudrā*, which does not signify meditation. Therefore, there seems to be a discrepancy in the depiction of the Gandhāran preaching buddha, in that two different scenes of the *samādhi* experience and the following teaching of the dharma had to be incorporated in one image! Conversely, the *dhyānamudrā* shown by Devnīmori buddhas does not negate their other aspect of teaching the dharma, which is the key Mahāyāna practice of not only attaining buddhahood but also helping other sentient beings to reach the same psychospiritual goal.

The Devnīmori buddhas also do not show triad compositions, unlike their late Gandhāran counterparts. However, the terracotta plaque mould of a Gandhāran-style *stūpa* with a juxtaposed buddha image on its façade flanked by a pair of what appear to be *bodhisattvas* wearing so-called Gupta crowns, excavated at Devnīmori (Mehta & Chawdhary 1966: pl. 18, B.), may evince a more advanced Mahāyānist idea of the embodiment of a buddha. Therefore, Devnīmori buddha images may show some transitional stage in the development of buddha-bodies, and there seems to be a clear overlap between the *dharmakāya* and other new Mahāyānist forms of embodiments as well as identifications between Śākyamuni and other Mahāyānist buddhas.

My arguments developed in this section, overall, support the ongoing scholarly consensus regarding Mahāyāna association with the late Gandhāran preaching buddha, as outlined earlier, but they further strengthen this general claim. My new view, that the late Gandhāran preaching buddha image may have a link with a specific visualization practice as a meditation object, as explained in the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, is particularly significant considering the recent identification of fragments of a Gāndhāri/Kharoṣṭhī manuscript of the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (Harrison, Lenz & Salomon 2018). My findings fit well with the Buddhological discourse on the increasing recognition of the associations of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Gandhāra. There have been continuing discoveries/identifications of more Mahāyānist manuscripts, yet this is still a handful, among far too many of the mainstream Śrāvakayāna materials in the Mahāyāna trend of relating itself to mainstream Buddhism (Harrison, Lenz & Salomon 2018: 119).

In turn, at Devnīmori, Gandhāran Mahāyānist iconographic influence was subtly expressed and the possible overlap between old and new ideas of buddha-bodies, as argued in this section, also agrees with the general view of Mahāyāna Buddhism as uninstitutional and non-sectarian. The juxtaposition of the Middle Indic inscription (Hinüber 1985) with that in Sanskrit on the same reliquary at Devnīmori (Srinivasan 1968) is also noteworthy. Hinüber explains this coexistence of the Middle Indic and Sanskrit as the difference between scriptural and administrative languages, respectively (Hinüber 1985: 198), and this may be the case.

However, the contrast of the archaic idea of *pratīyasamutpāda* or 'dependant origination' in the Middle Indic inscription with specifically Mahāyānist technical terms such as *śākyabhikṣu* or *saṃyaksambuddha* in Sanskrit, may also be indicative of a religious climate of inclusivity of Mahāyāna Buddhism within a conventional monastery. The fact that the relics of the *mahāstūpa* at Devnīmori were established by a lay mason but the *mahāstūpa* itself was built by two Mahāyāna monks or *śākyabhikṣu* (Srinivasan 1968: 68) is also suggestive of a diverse Buddhist community at Devnīmori. The further demonstration of the ongoing iconographic influence of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha in the Western Deccan (Fukuyama 2014: part 2) after Devnīmori possibly demonstrates the further spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism from Gandhāra to the Western Deccan through Gujarat.

## Discussion and conclusion

In Gujarat, the process of the major pan-Indian transition from ‘aniconic’ to anthropomorphic Buddha images took place at Devnīmori around AD 400, two to three hundred years later than at Mathurā, in Gandhāra, and in South India. Buddhist art in Gujarat starts with an ‘aniconic’ phase in the Western Kṣātrapa period, characterized by mostly plain Buddhist rock-cut caves, with anthropomorphic cult images of the Buddha being strictly absent (Nanavati & Dhaky 1969: 15). This contrasts strongly with the iconic representations found to the north and east, in the territory of the Kushans and the Sātavāhanas. However, image worship was not absent in Gujarat prior to Devnīmori: a seated so-called Kapardin Buddha/Bodhisattva image in Sikri sandstone from Kushan Mathurā was found at the Buddhist site of Vadnagar in north Gujarat in 1992 (it is now in Vadnagar Museum; Hinüber & Skilling 2016) (Figure 27).

The active importation of religious imagery at Vadnagar is further attested by the result of the recent excavations at the Buddhist monastic complex there, which have revealed votive square-platform *stūpas*, largely similar in structure to those of Devnīmori and Mīrpur Khās (Rawat 2011). The archaeological finds include a fragment of a portable Buddhist narrative relief of the offering of the monkey in schist from Gandhāra (Rawat 2011: figs. 11, 19), as well as the small fragmentary image of the head of a Buddha/Bodhisattva in red Sikri sandstone from Kushan Mathurā (Rawat 2011: figs. 11, 18). The long-distance trade and circulation of religious imagery from Gandhāra and Mathurā under the Kushans is well known: for instance, a few sculptures in schist from Gandhāra were found in Mathurā, while several others in red Sikri sandstone from Mathurā were found in Gandhāra as well as in the Gangetic Valley (Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1972: 38-39), and this enhances our understanding of the direct influences of these two production centres on other regions.

I have argued in this paper that different regions adopted one or more elements of Gandhāran Buddhist art. Consequently, distant Buddhist sites should have been connected remotely yet ‘closely’ by travelling monks, pilgrims, and merchants. Foucher, in his 1907 paper entitled ‘The Beginnings of Buddhist Art’, made an argument that the idea of, *stūpa* architecture spread all over South Asia because of pilgrims possibly carrying portable miniature *stūpas* while travelling from site to site (Foucher 1917: 11) though there is no archaeological support for his hypothesis. Yet it appears that Devnīmori and Mīrpur Khās had much more direct contacts with Gandhāra than other regions. However, the wider picture looks much more inter-regional and pan-Indian: Czuma’s 1970 paper argues that for portable Buddhist bronzes, the Gandhāra prototype served as a substantial body for later Gupta-style bronzes in South Asia, and different influences from Mathurā, Sārnāth, and Gandhāra merged within individual sites and reached far beyond even Nepal (Czuma 1970). Buddhists or artists seem to have had positive attitudes towards a mix-and-match of different regional styles in experimental ways. Gandhāra was often especially influential in the rest of the subcontinent and Gandhāran ‘heritage’ appears in different regional formations over time.

As is evident from the result of this paper, it is now clear that Buddhist material culture at Devnīmori was achieved by the integration of different cultures through a complex network of interregional connections, in this case with Gandhāra and Mathurā. North Gujarat was a natural junction as well as a crossroads of trade routes that connected mainland Gujarat with the Kutch/Indus Delta to the south of Gandhāra, as well as with North India through Bairāt to Mathurā. As such, the case study of Devnīmori provides an alternative explanation regarding the formation of a widespread material culture. Direct Gandhāran influence on Devnīmori and Mīrpur Khās further gives a sense of the harmonious development of the Devnīmori buddhas between Gandhāra and Mathurā. At the same time, the receptivity of foreign influences at Devnīmori strongly shows highly creative and innovative features such as the almost exclusive use of terracotta and the completely new kind of buddha images in the Gupta style.

Overall evidence supports the view that the regional Devnīmorī buddha images are among the earliest examples of pan-Indian Gupta material culture that came into existence clearly under the influence of the two main cultural sources of Gandhāra and Mathurā. Gandhāran ‘influences’ may be the most recognizable in Mathurā in terms of the importation of sculptures and the assimilation of specific iconographic features such as the pleated garment. However, Devnīmorī buddhas seem to show more of direct Gandhāran influences not just iconographically but also stylistically. Meanwhile, Devnīmorī and subsequent Gupta Buddha/buddha sculptures represent a new historic phase in the development of Buddhist art, having incorporated features from Mathurā, where Gandhāran influences had been constantly assimilated.

This formation process often involved the import of small-sized images from these regions, as attested by finds at Vadnagar as discussed above. Such a regional and inter-regional network of influences was often kept intact, as seen in the emergence of Devnīmorī under the influence of Gandhāra and Mathurā, and its subsequent by-product, Mīrpur Khās, under the influence of Gandhāra and Sārnāth (or pan-Indian). A strikingly similar convergence or melding of two traditions was noted at Sārnāth, where the then universal Buddha image type, especially in the *bhadrāsana*, was created out of the Buddha images of Gandhāra and Mathurā.

Equally significant is the second wave of Gandhāran influence seen at Devnīmorī through the singularly most important iconographic type of the late Gandhāran Mahāyānist preaching buddha, which within a century eventually reached the Western Ghats (Fukuyama 2014) and Sārnāth and even after a century or so, locally persisted at Dhānk as well as at Mīrpur Khās in Sindh. The preaching buddha images of late Gandhāran origin appeared almost simultaneously at Dhānk, Ajaṅṭā, and Sārnāth in the late fifth to early sixth century AD. Such different regional/local manifestations characterize stylistic development around this period and belong to the pan-Indian tradition. Mīrpur Khās and Devnīmorī are sites precisely located at the articulation between the earlier and still partly contemporary art of northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan and the art of India proper and southern Pakistan. At the same time, Devnīmorī's Buddhist material culture may have remained influential even after the fall of the Western Kṣatrapa, as indicated by Maitraka coins found at the site in association with later repairs.

Gujarat can be conceived of as having a long-established regional network of communication and interactions as a local heritage rather than the dominant widespread culture such as Gandhāra and Gupta influencing ‘provincial’ regions even if not parts of the Gupta empire. In this respect, the notorious debate on the origin of the Buddha images, disputed between Mathurā and Gandhāra (Linrothe 1998), may be missing the whole point. Among different theories I support Van Lohuizen’s initial emphasis on the model of cultural contacts between Gandhāra and Mathurā as a chief driver of the origin of the Buddha images in these two regions, in which she argues that the concepts of the Buddha, his iconographies, and artistic styles were exchanged in both directions between the two (Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1972). I am inclined to elaborate that two different origins of Buddha images at Mathurā and in Gandhāra may not have been mutually exclusive and pre-Buddhist Graeco-Roman and Indic anthropomorphic images may well have been in circulation prior to the appearance of the first Buddha images between the two places. The case study of Devnīmorī, certainly reinforces her argument and has given us an alternative view on formations of regional and pan-Indian material cultures, although she had been known to advocate Mathurā as an independent origin of the Buddha image (Van Lohuizen-De Leeuw 1949; 1981).

However, my inter-regional model as ‘transculturation’, argued through the emergence of Devnīmorī buddha images, does not provide any justification for the ultimate origin of the Buddha image in South Asia. However, it may contribute to the fresher direction of investigation into the emergence of Gandhāran art from the perspective of transculturation (Filigenzi 2012; Bhandare 2018; Karashima 2013;



Filigenzi 2019; Kellner 2019). It can be argued that so-called Gupta material culture can be explained by the case-study of Devnīmori as a product of transculturation of Gandhāra and Mathurā. This viewpoint also stimulates the ongoing debate on the incorporation of Mahāyāna Buddhism, as evident from the transcultural transmission of the iconography of the late Gandhāran preaching buddha. Meanwhile there have been several recent, intensive surveys and excavations of newly discovered Buddhist sites in north Gujarat, in Taranga and beyond, showing some affinities with the Buddhist material culture at Devnīmori, which await further contextualization.

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