

Buddhist Complex of Nimogram Swat, Pakistan: Its History, Classification, Analysis and Chronology

Badshah Sardar

Abstract: This research paper is focused on a very rare and important collection of large scale artefacts (467 stone images, 43 stucco pieces, 05 copper coins and 02 relic caskets) excavated from the site of Nimogram Swat. Single figures of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, narrative reliefs, decorative and architectural elements, and containers for relics associated with Gandhara religious architecture are all well represented in the collection. The antiquities discovered from the salvage excavations of Nimogram Buddhist complex were neither studied scientifically nor documented properly. Only one preliminary report published by the Department of Archaeology & Museums Government of Pakistan in 1968, no precise study has so far been conducted. Despite the artistic beauty of these sculptures and the high reputation of the site in the Gandhara region, except for a preliminary report no information is available for general public or scholars. As such, bulks of artefacts are damped and out of approach of any research.

To trace the history of the collection, classify it based on style, analyse it for the subject matter, kind of material and workout its chronology by correlating it to the already established sequence of the Swat valley sites i.e. Butkara-I (Faccenna 1980-81), Saidu Sharif Stupa (Callieri 1989), Butkara III (Rahman 1990 & 1991), Shnaisha Gumbat (Rahman 1993) and Panr Stupa (Faccenna, Nizar Khan & Nadiem 1993). The main object of this paper is to examine directly the Nimogram collection (published & unpublished) and to evaluate its religious, cultural, historical and iconographical importance so far ignored. To know the nature and degree of foreign influences on the collection, a comprehensive comparative study and analysis is under process and a monograph will be published soon. This paper discuss selective stone art pieces of the collection, reveals different subjects i.e., narrative reliefs, the Buddha's life events, miracles of Buddha, Buddha & Bodhisattva images and miscellaneous section covers architectural, decorative elements, reliquaries and relic caskets.

Keywords: Nimogram, Gandhara, Art, Buddha, Jataka, Maitreya.

Introduction

It was a general perception among scholars that Nimogram has never been reported previously. In quest of any earlier reference about the site of Nimogram, all available primary published reports, gazetteers and memoirs of the region were consulted and thoroughly examined. Fortunately, I come across a reference, mentioning the monastery of Nimogram. During the British era, in 1938, British archaeologists Evert Barger (University of Bristol) and Philip Wright (Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington), conducted the first ever scientific

excavation in Swat Valley. Their report published in 1941, cited the ruins of three Stupas, a courtyard, decayed remains, fragments of sculptures, coins and a monastery. They have mapped the site on their survey map without giving any specific name (Barger and Wright, 1941: 27-28). They highlight;

‘Three miles up the river from Gumbatuna on the same bank is the large village of Parrai. A mile north of the village, at the mouth of a ravine running up into the hills, are the ruins of a large monastery spread out along a series of

terraces about 200 yards long. There are the usual courtyards, and the much decayed remains of three stupas, one of them partly surrounded by cells. Clearance round the base of this stupa produced a few pieces of sculpture, some of them in a soft green schist of very pleasing appearance. One of these—a fragment of stupa railing ornament—is illustrated in Plate V, 3 (No. 319).

In the surface debris at the base of a second stupa were a few coins of Soter Megas. One of the villagers told us that he had discovered, (and long since disposed of) a large hoard of coins, beneath the floor of a vaulted chamber on the hill above the monastery’.

Another brief preliminary report on the Nimogram excavation was published by Inayat-ur-Rahman in *Pakistan Archaeology*, Vol. 5, in 1968. To him goes credit of being the pioneer explorer of the site. In addition to a general description of the site, he has explained the measurements of the major monuments, some important information regarding evidence of burnt wood and a human skeleton found in the monastic area suggesting that a fire may have destroyed the complex. He mentions;

‘It is to be noted that amongst the series of Buddhist monuments scattered all over the valley of Swat, a site of such importance as Nimogram had never been mentioned by the early historians and archaeologists in their accounts of archaeological survey of this region’.

Recently, Joan A. Raducha has established a website on the site and its antiquities. But a well-illustrated comprehensive catalogue was the urgent need of the time. Similarly, M. Ashraf Khan, commenting on the background on archaeological research in Swat, highlighted the

Nimogram complex in his book who briefly emphasized on the geography and the major monuments of the site (Khan 1993: 5).

Nimogram Buddhist Complex

The Buddhist remains of Nimogram lies about 45 km west of Mingora, on the right bank of river Swat, in the tributary valley of Shamoza. The site is situated at a place called Sabunkhpa towards the south of the village of Nimogram on a raised but terraced ground overlooking the narrow valley towards the east. The two seasons of excavations in 1967 and 1968, have brought to light three main Stupas in a row, from north to south, with a courtyard of 56 votive Stupas and an adjoining monastery towards the west of the Stupa’s courtyard. Besides so many monuments and finds recorded there the discovery of the three Stupas in one row is indeed significant because such a composition of Stupas has been discovered for the first time in the Buddhist sites so far excavated in the region. After Butkara-I, it is for the first time that such a huge collection of sculptures and other objects have been found from a single site, which makes Nimogram an important site all over the valley. The discovery of five coins belonging to Kushano-Sasanian period at the site has enabled scholars to date the site between second and third century A.D. Among the discovered artefacts are figures of the Buddha & Bodhisattva, narrative reliefs, decorative and architectural elements, reliefs depicting the Buddha’s life stories, his miracles, secular scenes, reliquaries and relic caskets and utilitarian objects. The most common are the muscular Atlases, which usually support pillars and brackets. The naked cupids carrying a wreath, the *gandharvi* with musical instruments, winged creatures in triangular brackets, tritons, Amorini and numerous other narrative scenes. There are also domestic scenes of marriages, love making, hunting, wrestling, archery, groups of ascetics, warriors, processions of men, kings

riding on chariots and general enjoyment. Large-scale artefacts in Nimogram complex represent narrative scenes and decorative friezes, images of Buddha as well as minor deities. However, the frequent use of the full body halo for the Buddha, bracket figures including one with a Herakles image, a series of relief panes carved by the same hand, and images of the goddess with various iconographic features are among the distinctive elements. The Nimogram collection provides large-scale narrative reliefs, all of them could not be accommodated in this paper so only selected pieces are presented here.

Catalogue of the Selective Artefacts

Majority of the sculptures are fragmentary pieces of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Amorini, wreath bearers, atlas figures, vine-scrolls, riding dragons or lions, musical performances, worshippers, the doorway motif of the *caitya* arches, frieze jambs and lintels. The bulk of the sculptures consist of architectural fragments and floral decorations and narrative panels and reliefs showing the various life happenings of the Buddha. Events from the life of Buddha are the most favourite subject of the collection.

The catalogue portion deals with general aspects and iconographic features of almost all the

collections of Nimogram. The descriptions are divided into six sections; (i) reliefs depicting the *Jataka* tales, (ii) the Buddha's life events and secular scenes, (iii) Buddha's miracles, (iv) single statues of the Buddha, (v) Bodhisattva images, and (vi) miscellaneous section, which covers architectural, decorative elements, reliquaries and relic caskets. Measurements of the objects are given in centimetres indicating height and then width. Dates are A.D., unless otherwise stated. From the bulk of the collection only selected art pieces are incorporated, the entire collection contains a single fragmentary frieze, which may be associated with *Dipankara Jataka*.

The Jatakas or Previous Incarnations

The noteworthy and most astonishing aspect of the Nimogram collection is the scarcity of the *Jatakas* stories or previous incarnations of the Buddha. Among the 467 registered artefacts two scenes of *Jatakas* and *Mahaparinirvana* of Buddha were noticed as uncommon subjects. This shows that old method of representing the *jatakas* was almost given up and their place was taken up by representing the episodes from the life of the Buddha. The entire collection contains a single fragmentary frieze, which may be associated with *Dipankara Jataka*.

Figure 1: Dipankara Jataka

Inv. no. NG.307, soapstone, from east of stupa 4, probably second century A. D., left and bottom of the frieze are broken & missing. For secondary sources see Hargreaves 1918: 4-6, Zwalf 1996: 126; Majumdar 1937: 29-34.

A detached and broken fragment of a frieze reveals a deeply carved female emerging from a doorway. A water jug with its mouth facing outwards is tucked under her left arm. She is looking towards her right to her right broken hand, held up. She is wearing an elaborated head-dress and other ornaments such as necklace, bracelets and ear pendants. The hair

arrangement in the shape of a spiral at the top of the head or a top-knot. The pose of the main figure holding a water pitcher with the balcony and above her head are two defaced female figures. Above her head is a balcony with a facade of chequered grid with alternating relief squares. The side of the balcony is decorated in a row of square panels bisected into triangles

each containing an indented triangle. Above the balcony is the torso of one female figure, also

looking to her right as well as a broken figure.

Figure 2: Bodhisattva Maitreya in Tushita Heaven



Inv. no. NG.337, soap stone, from level 2 of shrine 3, probably first half of third century A.D. Broken in eight pieces, only the left side is intact. For secondary sources see Ingholt 1957: 8; Hargreaves 1918: 6-7, pl. III; Joshi & Sharma 1969:52, fig. II.

Fragment of a relief depicting Maitreya in Tushita Heaven. Maitreya sits on a cloth covered seat of his lion throne with crossed legs. He is seated in the European position, feet resting on a broken footstool. His hair is tied up in the horizontal. He wears ornaments of ear, neck and arm. He is wearing moustaches, right hand in *Abhaya* mudra while the left hand holds a water pot hanging in front of his knee. His robe covers his left shoulder leaving the right one bare.

The most remarkable feature, however, is the lion throne (broken), which rests on two lions at

the corners. It is similar to the lion thrones of rock carvings of Swat valley, where front portions of the lions are depicted, but here complete bodies of the lions are portrayed. The throne is covered by a kind of cloth with two large tassels at either end on the front, which is a living tradition in Swat valley. The remaining figures are depicted on a much smaller scale than the bodhisattva. Two bejewelled women appear in a balcony while two richly adorned male figures, seated with legs in a similar pose to the Bodhisattva, devote their attention to him.

Buddha Life Scenes

As already pointed out, that the Nimogram's artists preferred to illustrate scenes from the early life of prince Siddhartha. The artists seem to have represented even the smallest details of the story right from his stay at Tushita heaven to his final nirvana. The most frequently depicted scenes are the three major events: Birth and Seven Steps, Great Departure and the First Sermon. The other most interesting events of his life are the first bath, Siddhartha at school, his horoscope, his archery, the visit of Indra and the offering of the handful of dust. But in addition to that, the various miracles associated with

Buddha are also depicted, for instance the offering of the bowls, miracle of Uruvilva, subduing of the mad elephant of Nalagiri and taming of the white dog. Other episodes including the exchange of clothes with hunter, farewell of Chandaka and Kanthaka, meditation of the emaciated Buddha, Brahma and Indra entreat the Buddha to preach from the chank of the Nimogram collection. The representation of birth of prince Siddhartha is naturally one of the favourite subjects of Gandhara art. Similarly birth of Siddhartha and the Seven Steps remained the most popular theme in the Nimogram collection, his birth event has been reproduced on three panels.

Figure.3 Birth and Seven Steps of Siddhartha



Inv. no. NG. 288, black schist, from south of Stupa 18, probably second century A.D. For similar composition see Hargreaves 1930: 23; Dani 1968: 30, fig. 14; Ackermann 1975: 83, figs. XXII a.

Relief panel bordered on both sides by Corinthian pilasters, with shafts displaying flutes with concave upper bevelled ends and below by a plain fillet. In the style of continuous narration, the panel contains two scenes, the birth of Siddhartha and the first seven steps that he takes. The sculpture shows Siddhartha mother Maya standing in the centre of the composition, with her right hand raised and clutching a branch of

the Sal tree, which represents the Lumbini garden. She is supported by her sister, Mahaprajapati, while attendants are clustered behind them. Meanwhile the divine child is shown emerging from the right side of the queen. Indra with a high headdress, who receives the child in his outstretched arms, while Brahma, who is distinguished by his coiffure, looks on in adoration.

In the foreground the child standing on the ground is in the act of taking the seven steps in the direction of each of the cardinal points. According to Buddhist text advancing to the east

he said, 'I will reach the highest nirvana', to the west, 'this will be my last birth', to the north, 'I will cross the ocean of existence', to the south, 'I will be the first of all creatures'.

Figure 4: Birth and Seven Steps of Siddhartha



Inv. no.NG.350, black schist, from east of Stupa 17, probably second half of first century A. D. Preserved to some extent, only bottom border is chipped off. For secondary sources see Nehru 1989: figs. 109 & 110; Ackermann 1975:60-1; Marshall 1960, fig. 99.

The relief panel, bordered on both sides by Corinthian pilasters, with shafts displaying flutes and a thin plain fillet above and below. The panel reveals two scenes, the 'birth of Siddhartha' and the 'seven steps'. In the centre, Maya stands in a twisted, dance-like posture, who stands with her right arm extending upwards to the 'Sal' tree branches above her, representing Lumbini garden. Her legs are shown in profile to the right, the upper half of her body frontally; her head is turned to the left. Prince Siddhartha emerging from the right side of Maya, Indra standing with a towel in his hands, receives the child. Maya with her tunic-like garment, wide trousers, starting low on her hips, her ornaments (anklets, necklaces, ear pendants and a wreath in her hair) does not differ from the other three ladies. Next to her stands her sister Mahaprajapati, who has arrived

from the right in Maya's assistance. She backs viewers, placing her left hand on Maya's hip while the right hand hides behind her side. The two assistants are seen in an almost frontal view. One of the maidens next to Mahaprajapati holds a fan and the other a water vessel. The Indra, wearing a turban, bends over to receive the child and Brahma, identified by his topknot, stands behind. His left leg is placed forward, almost reaching the standing Siddhartha. Behind Indra, Brahma approaches in *anjali* mudra, and can be recognized by his unadorned ascetic's clothes and by his long hair twisted into a little ascetic's knot on the top of his head. Both gods wear prominent nimbus around their heads. On the top of the figured relief, played by spiritual heavenly beings to celebrate the great event are four musical instruments, a bi-conical drum, a harp, another bi-conical drum, and a cylindrical

drum. In the foreground the child standing on the ground is in the act of taking the seven steps

in the direction of each of the cardinal points.

Figure 5: Birth and Seven Steps of Siddhartha



Inv. no.NG.352, black schist, from south of Stupa 18, probably second century A.D. Roughly carved panel, sides mostly chipped off, bottom border broken. For secondary sources see Ackermann, 1975: 83-84, fig. XXII a.

The panel (Figure 5) reversals two narrations in the centre of the picture stands Queen Maya under a projected Sal tree, slightly turned to her left, but looking forward, while the little prince Siddhartha emerges from her side. She has a soft face with full round features, button eyes and a short snub nose. She is wearing knee-length a *qamis* and foot-length *shalwar* (trouser) is protruding from underneath it, and a pair of

anklets, while a *dupatta* is draped over her shoulders. This type of dress is frequently worn by women in the hilly regions of the Swat valley even today. Her ornaments are a long necklace hanging down between her breasts. She stands in a relaxed pose, while her left leg crosses over the right leg, her right arm reaches out to a branch of a Sal tree, and her left hand she holds Mahaprajapati's hip. Mahaprajapati is also

wearing a knee-length *qamis* and foot-length *shalwar* protruding underneath it, and a pair of anklets, as well as a *dupatta* draped over her left shoulder. Her face is turned toward Queen Maya, as though she wants to encourage her. Behind her is a female servant wearing a similar dress. She is standing upright and attentively watching the miraculous event taking place. On the opposite side, Indra arrives in order to take

the baby in his outstretched hands to wrap it in a shawl he is carrying. He wears a monastic robe a unique cap and the usual ornaments, his face turned in full profile towards the little prince, watching attentively. In the foreground the child standing on the ground is in the act of taking the seven steps in the direction of each of the cardinal points.

Figure 6: The First Meditation of Siddhartha



Inv. no. NG. 293, greenish schist, from west of Stupa 7, probably first half of third century A.D. Broken at both left and right sides, lower part and bottom edge is missing. For secondary sources see Hargreaves 1930:26-7.

The story of the panel (Figure 6) is that one afternoon Prince Siddhartha was taken to see the annual ploughing festival, where in the enclosed space half-stripped men and the pulling oxen were labouring tirelessly before the assembled crowd. As the sun increased in strength, sweat ran down both men and the oxen, and for a few moments they stopped from their labour. In the meantime, various insects came out from the ground and flocks of birds descend in multitudes to devour the insects. Seeing the tired oxen, their necks bleeding from the yoke, the men toiling beneath the midday sun and the birds devouring the helpless insects, the heart of Bodhisattva was filled with grief. Retiring from the enclosure he

found a secluded place near a *jambu* tree. Dismissing his attendants, he sat down beneath its shady branches and through the love and pity produced by his reflections was wrapped in a state of unconscious.

This narrative frieze reveals different life scenes of Prince Siddhartha. The figured panel is bordered at the top by a garland of overlapping lanceolate leaves between two plain fillets. The relief is deeply cut with some components, including the reins and legs of the horse completely released from the stone behind. Siddhartha with a halo and in princely attire is seated on a raised decorated seat meditating with

his groom Chandaka and caparisoned horse Kanthaka waiting nearby. On the left side of the panel is the subject of his meditation, the suffering caused to those engaged in agriculture,

the farmer and his oxen, as well as the insects, etc., disturbed by the ploughing. Three figures in the background watch, as the scene unfolds, one with his hand held in the 'blessing' pose.

Figure.7 Great Departure of Siddhartha



Inv. no.NG.279, black schist, from west of stupa 21, probably early third century A.D. Chipped off but the extant artistic details preserve. For secondary sources see Ingholt 1957: 61, pl.47 & 48; Nehru 1989: pl. 112; Ackermann, 1975: 112-13, fig. XLII b; Hargreaves 1930: 27-28; Dani 1968: 30; Nagar 1981: 6.

The relief panel (Figure 7) is bordered by Indo-Corinthian pilasters on both the edges, pilasters' shafts with decorated flutes, and plain fillets above and below. The figured portion of the relief shows the Renunciation and Great Departure. Siddhartha has been portrayed almost in profile, seated on a tri-linear saddle holding the reins of Kanthaka, well-caparisoned with a breast band and a yoke tail crest on the forehead. Siddhartha wears a turban with a large cockade threaded with pearls and dressed in princely attire, a rimmed halo behind his head. Siddhartha is leaving the city of Kapilavastu in search of a path that will free the world from misery.

A pair of semi-gods, shown walking in profile,

holds the front hooves of Kanthaka to eliminate any sound that might awaken the guards. The fluttering edges of his shawl indicate that his horse is in motion. Behind Siddhartha is Vajrapani with thunderbolt, who turns backwards to the city gate behind where stands the city goddess, with turrets rising from her shoulder, regretting the loss of her most eminent inhabitant. One heavenly being hovers in front of the departing prince while a standing figure, sometimes identified as Mara, stands at the front, with a club in his lowered right hand. This sculpture is similar to the one discovered at the site of Loriyan Tangai, now in the National Museum Calcutta (Nehru 1989: pl. 112). A similar panel is seen from the site of Butkara I in the Swat valley (Nagar1981:6).

Figure.8 Great Departure of Siddhartha

Inv. no. NG. 411, green schist, 7 1/2" (height), from courtyard, probably early third century A.D. Right corner of bottom border is broken, cracks over it. A damaged plain fillet frames the bottom edge. For similar and secondary sources see Ingholt 1957: 61, pl.47 & 48; Nehru 1989: pl. 112; Ackermann 1975: 112-13, fig. XLII b; Hargreaves 1930: 27-28; Dani 1968: 30; Nagar 1981:6.

Figure 8 shows the fragment of a frieze, bordered on the left by an Indo-Corinthian pilaster with a flute on the shaft and a straight end at the bottom. The figures on the relief reveal the Renunciation and Great Departure. Siddhartha leaving the city of Kapilavastu on the way to renounce his princely life in search of a path that will free the world from misery. Portrayed almost in profile, Siddhartha is shown with a moustache and dressed in princely attire. He wears a turban with a large cockade. The only ornaments worn are the circular earrings with gems, a bracelet, and a necklace. His halo head and round face is turned towards the viewers, with right hand raised and the palm is visible. Siddhartha seated on a tri-linear saddle,

holds the reins of his horse, Kanthaka is shown, well-caparisoned with a breast band and a yoke tail crest on the forehead. A pair of angels raises the horse's hooves to avoid any sound that could awaken those who would stop the renunciation. Behind the prince is a half figure of Vajrapani holding a thunderbolt in one hand and a raised fly-whisk in the other. A half figure with his arms raised in a gesture, usually considered mourning. Mara, the god of desire, draped and ornamented in Indian style, stands in front of the departing Prince, to discourage him from leaving. A semi-god, shown walking in profile, holds the front hooves of Kanthaka to eliminate any sound that might awaken the guards. He wears a Greek tunic slipped down off the left

shoulder. The head of other divine beings wearing disc-shaped headdresses appear beneath the belly of Kanthaka. Though their hair is set in

the Hellenistic style, their features resemble those of the local attendants.

Figure.9 The Exchange of Clothes with the Hunter



Inv. no. NG. 462, green schist, 6 3/4" x 11 1/4", courtyard, probably early third century A. D. Broken, chipped, horizontally cracked, left edge and bottom of the relief is broken. For secondary sources see Majumdar 1937: 44; Ingholt 1957: 61, pl.46; Hargreaves 1918: 19-20; Joshi & Sharma 1969:19, fig.9a

After travelling a certain distance from the capital, Siddhartha dismounts from his horse, conscious of his costly silk attire, unsuitable for an ascetic life. Siddhartha gives his princely garments to a hunter passing by receiving in exchange the simple one of the hunter, probably a dress of that reddish yellow colour associated even today with Buddhism in India (Figure 9).

Figure 9 fragment of a relief on top by an acanthus leaf cornice, below depicts the plain fillet and one side, an empanelled Corinthian. The panel is damaged on the left side but there is

an indication that another empanelled column would have framed that edge of the panel. The Nimogram relief represents Siddhartha exchanging clothes with a hunter. The haloed Siddhartha has already removed his outer robe which he is offering to the hunter in front of him. Vajrapani stands behind him and a half figure hovers in the background, may be a god or *devaputra* between the Bodhisattva and the hunter. Two other hunters fill out the remainder of the left-side of the panel, one carrying his prey on his shoulder.

Figure.10 Brahma and Indra Entreat the Buddha to Preach

Inv. no. NG. 422, green schist, from courtyard, probably 2nd century A.D., quite preserved panel. For secondary sources see Majumdar 1937: 48; Ingholt 1957: 68, pl.72-73; Joshi & Sharma 1969:21, fig.13

Figure 10 depicts a panel in front of a bracket bordered at the bottom front by a plain fillet. Brahma and Indra are shown entreating the Buddha to preach. The haloed Buddha is seated on a low platform with incised lines indicating grass. His hands are held in the *Dhyana* mudra. On his right is Brahma, haloed and shown as usual with the topknot of an ascetic. He holds a

water vessel in his right hand and his left hand is raised towards the Buddha in a sign of appeal. On Buddha's other side is the turbaned figure of Indra, who bows his head with his hands raised in the *Anjali* mudra. This composition is generally recognized as the moment when the deities ask the newly enlightened Buddha to preach for the betterment of all beings.

Figure.11 Symbolic Representation of the First Sermon

Inv. no.NG.310, greenish schist, from west of Stupa 19, probably second quarter of the century A.D. Bottom border is chipped off and broken. For secondary sources see Hargreaves 1930: 33-4; Ingholt 1957: fig.79; Ackermann 1975:85-6, pl. XXIVa; Nagar1981:12; Joshi & Sharma 1969: Fig. 15

In the Hinayana school of art, where the figure of the Buddha is never depicted, the incident can only be represented symbolically, and the symbol chosen is naturally the wheel. Such symbolical representation also occurs in Gandhara but usually the Buddha is himself shown in the sculptures. The symbolism has not altogether disappeared, however, for in almost all cases the sacred wheel is shown, usually on the front of the 'Teacher's Seat' and sometimes in connection with the trident or *trisula* representing the three jewels of Buddhism, namely, the Buddha, the Doctrine and the Community of Monks.

Figure 11 depicts a slab bounded on the lower margin by a simple fillet, with no margins at the

sides and upper cornice. This relief panel shows four monks with hands held in the *Anjali* mudra. The two at the front are shown kneeling down, while those behind are shown standing, all reveal shaven heads and button eyes. They flank an enthroned wheel that is surmounted by a *triratna* with two small four petal rosettes. Here instead of the Master, only the wheel is seen on the pedestal. It represents worship of enthroned objects, though this may also be taken as an aniconic representation of the First Sermon.

In Gandhara relief we sometimes find only a *triratna* being worshipped by devotees with folded hands. Other details like the depiction of deer which was a regular feature in Gandhara are somehow missing here. Although there is

nothing to indicate the First Sermon, yet scholar like Harald Ingholt has identified it with the

First Sermon.

Figure.12 Turning the Wheel of the Law



Inv. no.NG.380, black schist, from north of Stupa 17, probably second century A.D. Damaged, defaced, badly weathered and most of the details are mutilated. The panel is so much effaced that the details of the figures can hardly be seen. For secondary sources and similar composition see Faccenna 1962: pl. 119; Nagar 1981: 10; Taddei 1969: fig. 9; Marshall 1960: pl.46, fig.70.

In the Deer Park at Sarnath in the vicinity of Varanasi, the Buddha, soon after his enlightenment at Bodhgaya, meets five *bhiksus*, who had previously deserted him when he began to follow a new path of his own, different from theirs. As they listen respectfully, he tells them that he has attained supreme wisdom and that he is now ready to set the Wheel of Law in motion.

The eroded panel (shown Fig. 12) defined by a broad plain fillet below and a narrow plain fillet above reveal the same story. The haloed Buddha stands on the right, wearing a monastic robe covering both his shoulders. The folds of his robe reach down above his foot. A Vajrapani (mostly broken & defaced), dressed in a Greek tunic stands behind him. Buddha reaches out his right hand literally turning a large wheel with a

saw tooth pattern around the edge. The *Dharmacakra*s shaped much like a halo and backs the torso of a crouching muscular Atlas on a high seat, who holds three wheels above him, one on the head, and one each on the right and left hands, the three wheels carved like rosettes, symbolizing the *triratna* (three jewels) of Buddhism—the Buddha, Dharma (doctrine), and *Sangha* (order of monks). The wheel with *triratna* usually is seen mounted on a pillar, but many times it is held on the head of a *yaksha* (semi god) or Atlas. On the left, five monks with shaven heads and wearing monastic robes, who observe this event, are on the opposite side of the panel. Three are standing, among them one is holding a ceremonial water vessel for the welcoming ceremony, the other two are kneeling, but all are holding their hands in the

anjali mudra.

Figure.13 Offering of the Handful of Dust



Inv. no. NG. 454, green schist, from courtyard, probably 2nd half of second century A.D. Defaced, right edge broken.

For secondary sources see Ingholt 1957:80, pl. 110; Hargreaves 1930: 37-8; Zwalf 1996:196-7.

The story of the panel shown in Fig. 13 is that it was a daily custom of the Buddha, who instructed the same upon his monks, to wander around at a certain hour in quest of food, as the whole order were dependent for their sustenance upon the voluntary offerings of the pious. Once, as the Buddha was going along with his begging bowl, two boys of good family, called Jaya and Vijaya were playing in the dust and saw the Buddha on his begging round. Jaya give him a handful of dust, calling it a meal, while Vijaya expressed approval by joining his hand; on Jaya's pronouncing an aspiration to universal monarchy, the Buddha predicted his rebirth one day as emperor, which is said to have been materialised in the birth of Ashoka. This panel in deep relief is perfect and the artistic details of this panel are remarkable for its delicate and refined workmanship, and are extremely rare. The fine modelling of the figures being rendered in panel are vivid and remarkable.

The panel shown in Fig. 13 framed on the left by a Corinthian pilaster, the shaft of which is carved on the front and side with a haloed standing figure. The figure on the front of the pilaster holds a flower in his left hand. The panel is bordered on the bottom by a plain fillet while the top is broken. However, the top of the side of the panel has a slight projecting cornice at the top with a saw-tooth pattern below. The haloed figure of the Buddha is at the centre of the composition, holding his right hand in *abhaya mudra* while holding a bowl in his left. A figure standing before him seems to be pouring an offering into his bowl. Two other youthful looking figures are behind, one standing and holding up an offering and the other seated on the ground with the fingers of one hand held up in the two-fingered benediction pose. The torso of a haloed standing female is at the right side of the panel. Standing behind the Buddha is a bearded Vajrapani, his right arm held akimbo, with the *vajra* supported by the other. Four

torsos two with clasped hands hover in the air above.

Figure.14 Indra's Visit to the Indrasala Cave



Inv. no. NG.313, light grey stone, 7" ht. x 8" width, from west of stupa 19, probably second century A.D. Defaced and weathered, left side of bottom border is broken. For secondary sources see Majumdar 1937: 62-.3; Dani 1968: 32, pl. XVII; Ingholt 1957: 87-9, pls.128-35; Buchthal 1945: 15-20, figs. 35-46; Marshall 1960: figs. 118,120; Ackermann 1975;81-.2, fig. XXI a

The relief fragment shown in Fig. 14 once formed of a fairly long frieze, depicts the visit of Indra and the Panchasikha to the Buddha. A plain fillet borders the scene on the bottom. The mountain in which the cave is situated in from the background in softly sweeping curves, few birds fly on the top of the rock cave. The haloed Buddha sits on a low platform inside a cave with his hands in *dhyana* mudra. Buddha is deeply sunk in meditation and his body looks turned towards the left. His *sanghati* also covers his hands, eyes are clearly visible and widely open, and the hair, held back in soft waves, against which the tiny *usnisa* scarcely stands out. He faces to his left where Indra stands, with head bowed and hands in *anjali* mudra. The delicate, soft features of the entire face are seen, above

which rises the large head-dress wears a turban which is typical of Indra. He is wrapped in a long cloak-like garment covering the left shoulders and the left upper arm, whilst the right side apparently remains uncovered. His ornaments consist of a double bracelet, a necklace and ear pendants.

On the Buddha's right, Panchasikha, Indra's musician, whose duty is to announce his arrival to the Buddha by singing a hymn, approaches with his right hand raised as though to play the arched harp that he holds. His left foot is raised as though he is climbing up towards the cave in which the Buddha sits. His head and face, which unfortunately is rather damaged, looks towards the Buddha.

Figure.15 Adoration of Buddha

Inv. no. NG.311, green schist, from west of stupa 19, probably third century A.D. Both right and left sides are broken.

A flat relief with two panels of adoration is depicted in Fig. 15. Each panel depicts a seated and haloed Buddha on a low seat with his right hand in *abhaya* mudra and the left hand holding the edge of his garment. The *usnisa* is prominent and earlobes are elongated. On either side of the halo, stylized radiating branches are depicted. On either side of the Buddha, two monks stand

facing the Buddha with hands in *anjali* mudra. The panel is divided by an empanelled Corinthian column. The top border is a horizontal moulding decoration of lanceolate leaves simplified to a pattern of diamond shapes. The workmanship of the relief is unique in modelling, especially of radiating branches on both sides of the haloed Buddha head.

Figure.16 Adoration of Buddha

Inv. no. NG. 326, green schist, from west of Stupa 19, probably 3rd century A.D. Left side is broken, bottom border chipped off.

A flat relief with two panels and a fragment of a third remaining is depicted in Fig. 16. Each of the two panels on the right depicts a seated and haloed Buddha on a low seat with right hand in *abhaya* mudra and the left hand holding the edge of his garment. The *usnisa* is prominent and earlobes are elongated. On either side of the halo, stylized radiating branches are depicted. On either side of the Buddha, two monks stand facing the Buddha with hands in *anjali* mudra. The panels are divided by empanelled Corinthian columns. A Corinthian pilaster stands

on the right edge of the frieze as well as the side edge of the relief, and one attendant remains from the fragmentary panel on the left. Above, is a horizontal moulding decorated with lanceolate leaves reduced to a pattern of diamonds. The workmanship of the relief in modeling and display is very similar to Fig. 15, especially of radiating branches on both sides of haloed head of Buddha is exceptional and seems work of the same hands. These are the new addition by Nimogram artists.

Figure.17 Two Miracles of Buddha in front of Kashyapa



Inv. no.NG.184, green schist, from west of shrine 2, probably second century A.D. Broken and chipped off. For secondary sources and similar accounts see Ingholt 1957:72-3, pl.85-9; Chandra 1974: 14, pl. 33

Part of a frieze defined above and below with fillets, both worn is shown in Fig. 17. The Buddha presents the serpent to Kashyapa. In this small section of the original panel, the Buddha sits holding the bowl from which the black serpent can be seen rising. In front of him, half sitting and half kneeling Kashyapa, is holding a water pot. Another miracle of Buddha is the fire

which first could not be lit, then could not be put out. The fire flames from ground in between Buddha and Kashyapa can be seen. Both Buddha and Kashyapa represent weak anatomical details. Buddha emaciated body after practicing austerities for seven years has been well portrayed by the sculptor.

Figure.18 Conversion of Kashyapa

Inv. no.NG. 459, green schist, from courtyard, probably second century A.D. Right side of the relief is broken. For secondary sources see Majumdar 1937: 49; Marshall 1960: 55-6, figs 73 & 74; Hargreaves 1930:34-5; Ingholt 1957:72-3, pl.85-89

This relief story depicted in Fig. 18 is that Kashyapa of Uruvilva who was the eldest of three brothers, all famous Hindu ascetics, who lived with a vast multitude of disciples on the bank of a river near the place where the Buddha had himself practiced austerities. One day Buddha himself went to Kashyapa's shelter, intending to convert him and all his followers. But this proved no easy task, and the Buddha was bound to perform some five hundred miracles there. One of these was the victory over the serpent, Buddha is shown holding an alms bowl in front of Kashyapa, in which the snake lies coiled.

Fragment of this relief is defined above by an acanthus leaf cornice, below by a plain fillet and to the side, an empanelled Corinthian half-column. The panel is damaged on the right side. The relief depicts the Buddha presenting the serpent to Kashyapa. The Buddha approaches from the right with the bowl containing the coiled snake in front of him. Vajrapani stands behind the Buddha. They approach a group of three young standing ascetics and the elderly Kashyapa, seated in front of his grass hut. One of the young ascetics and Kashyapa each hold a small water pot.

Plate.19 Subjugation of Nalagiri Elephant

Inv. no. NG. 265, black schist, from west of shrine 2, probably middle of the second century A.D., broken, chipped off, eroded and defaced. For secondary sources see Majumdar 1937: 54; Ackermann 1975:93, fig. XXIX a; Hargraves 1918: 32-3; Chandra 1974: 14, pl. 34

Only left half of the panel shown in Fig. 19 is preserved. The bottom and right side portion broken off, at the front of a false bracket with a plain fillet defining the lower edge of the panel. In the centre stands the Buddha turned to the right in near profile, and slightly bent forward to touch the forehead of the enraged elephant with his right hand, to tame the elephant Nalagiri which has been sent to crush him. The elephant has rushed in from the right, but has already peacefully lowered his trunk. Vajrapani, half the size of the Buddha, with Herculean example, holds the *vajra* in his left hand while waving a fly whisk above his head in the other. Behind him is the torso of a haloed figure who holds his

right hand in the two-fingered gesture of blessing. Above the head of the elephant one can recognize an outline which may have belonged to the city gate of Rajagraha. The heads of two female figures are above the door frame as though from a balcony they are witnessing the event.

The workmanship of the panel lacks stylistic unity and looks coarse and rough. The folds have been produced rapidly by means of long strokes of the chisel. The style is very similar to that of the other reliefs from Gandhara and Udyana. There is a vertical groove on the backing stone and a mason's mark on its upper shelf.

Figure. 20 Taming of the White Dog

Inv. no. NG. 412, green schist, courtyard, probably second century A.D. Broken in the middle, chipped off and defaced. For secondary sources see Hargreaves 1930: 38; Zwalf 1996:202-3.

The relief shown in Fig. 20, represents a well-known story of the white dog that barked at the Buddha when he went to visit a certain man named Suka, who was not at home when Buddha arrived. Suka had a white dog, which at the moment of his entrance, was eating out of a dish on the top of a table. The sight of the Buddha enraged the dog extremely, and he barked in furiously. The dog had hidden a vast treasure and through the intervention of the Buddha, now reveals it as hidden beneath the platform on which the dog sits. The Buddha argued, and told him that he had fallen into this state because he had been so rich. Thereupon the dog deeply ashamed crept away to a far corner.

Fig. 20 depict a relief bordered at the top by a moulding with a saw-tooth pattern, plain fillets and a dentil and bar band. The moulding has been in part carved away to make room for the narrative scenes in the panels below. The front face of the relief fragment contains one complete

and one fragmentary scene. The scene on the right is bordered by two Corinthian pilasters on the front face. The faces of the pilasters are decorated with a naked Eros. The pilaster dividing the two scenes is decorated with a figure with folded hands. The narrative panel shows the Buddha holding his right hand in the *abhaya* mudra gesture, calming the animal, presumably a dog, on a high seat in front of him. Hovering below the pedestal is another figure of a dog an apparent instance of continuous narration showing two moments in the encounter of the Buddha with the dog. Bodhisattva Maitreya stands behind the dog holding a water pot in his left. Behind the Buddha is a bearded figure of Vajrapani, looking downwards, with the *vajra* in his left hand. The scene on the left contains two standing figures facing to their right, heads bent and hands held in *anjali* mudra. Both wear turbans and heavy earrings as well as robes typically worn by lay worshippers and minor deities.



Figure.21 Offering of Bowls

Inv. no. NG. 414, green schist, from courtyard, probably first quarter of the second A.D. Left & bottom edge broken, figures defaced & head less. For secondary sources and similar composition see Hargreaves 1918: 27-8, pl. XXI; Chandra 1974: 12, pl. 29; Majumdar 1937: 47; Joshi & Sharma 1969:21, fig. 12

After enlightenment, for seven weeks the Buddha had not touched any food. Now it so happened that two merchants, named Trapusha and Bhallika, who were passing by, offered him in all humility some eatables to break his fast. The Buddha accepted the offering, but thought that it would be appropriate to have it in a vessel. The guardians of four quarters (*Lokapalas*) immediately appeared there with golden bowls in their hands. Because their unsuitability for an ascetic the offer was not accepted. Ultimately, they brought stone bowls. This time the Buddha accepted the offering but thought that it would be appropriate to have it in a vessel. Lest any of them should feel offended, he accepted all the four bowls and through his miraculous powers, he pressed them into one.

The panel shown in Fig. 21 of Nimogram collection reveals the same event. It is bordered

on one side by a Corinthian pilaster, the front of which is decorated by a haloed male figure standing cross-legged on a lotus. The side of the pilaster is decorated with a lotus bud on a stem. The panel is bordered at the top with a plain fillet, then a saw-tooth band, while on the bottom by a plain fillet under which is a band with a saw-tooth pattern. The narrative field contains a large standing image of the Buddha and 14 others. The Buddha looks to his right, head now missing, approaches with a bowl held out as an offering. A doorframe behind this figure is filled with two figures, one sitting on the ground while another stand behind him in a supportive posture. Above them are two figures facing each other. On either side of the Buddha are two half figures, in different postures. Behind the Buddha, Vajrapani stands, his right hand raised and his left holding the *vajra*. Behind him are two monks and a child. The

upper left contains three half figures, hands raised in adoration. The stone appears brown and has the waxy feel of soapstone, though identified as green schist in the antiquities register. The scale and deep carving of the figures is characteristic of other soapstone sculptures found at Nimogram.

BUDDHA Images

Another most important iconographic theme in the Nimogram collection is the image of the Buddha. In early Buddhist art, Buddha was not

represented in human form but was referred to by means of symbols. An empty throne, the royal umbrella and footprints all signify his presence. The growing popularity of Mahayana doctrine, however, assigned divine characteristics to Buddha and his worship became the supreme means of salvation. In the Nimogram collection, the Buddha is no longer represented by symbols but has been portrayed in human form. A few of his statues from Nimogram artefacts are presented here.

Figure.22 Standing Buddha



Ino. no. NG. 327, black schist, 8" (height), from east of Stupa 18, probably third century A.D. Both left and right sides of halo is broken and damaged

Fig.22 depicts a bracket with a statue of a standing Buddha, his right hand raised in *abhaya* mudra. The palm lines are incised on the raised hand. With his left hand, he holds the end of his robe. The halo is decorated with a single incised circle near the perimeter. His eyes look

downward. The hair is carved in a series of vertical waves from the centre and the *usnisa* is low. The earlobes are slightly elongated. The robe covers both the shoulders. He stands on a plain pedestal.

Figure. 23 Standing Buddha

Inv. no. NG. 398, black schist, stray findings, probably first quarter of third century. The statue is in two pieces, broken at the neck, right side of halo is missing.

Image of a standing Buddha on a high pedestal, right hand raised in *abhaya* mudra is depicted in Fig. 23. Palm lines are incised on the raised right hand. With his left hand, he holds the end of his robe. The halo is decorated with an incised line from which triangles jut out towards the outside edge, perhaps a stylized form of flames. His eyes are half closed and traces of the *urna* can be seen on his forehead. The hair is shown as

coils with a low but separate *usnisa*. The earlobes are significantly elongated with traces of a hole in the bottom of the lobe. The robe covers both shoulders. He stands barefooted on a pedestal decorated with half rosettes within filleted opposite triangles. Two nail holes one between the feet and another in the bottom of his left arm.

Figure.24 Seated Buddha

Inv. no. NG. 331, black schist, from north of shrine 3, probably third century A.D. Lower portion of the image is chipped off.

A seated Buddha on a low seat, right hand raised in *abhaya* mudra. In the left hand, he holds the end of his robe. The Buddha faces forward with his eyes wide open, slightly flattened nose and a small mouth. The body is well-fashioned. A monastic mantle covers both the shoulders, though the underside of his right foot is visible. The drapery is arranged symmetrically in long and short concave folds. An elaborate halo is decorated with two incised lines from which

triangles jut out towards the outside edge, perhaps a stylized form of flames. The hair is shown lateral continuous waves with a separate *usnisa*. At the centre of his forehead is an incised circle indicating the *urna*. His earlobes are significantly elongated. There is also a raised circle on the palm of his right hand a sign of a Buddha. There is a nail hole through his left shoulder.

Figure.25 Seated Buddha

Inv. no. NG. 340, black schist, from west of Stupa 19. Probably third century A.D. Mutilated and chipped off, contains soil incrustation.

In Fig 25 is depicted a seated Buddha with his right hand raised in *abhaya* mudra, with his left hand he holds the end of his robe. The Buddha faces forward with his eyes wide open. Here the face is rather full with plump cheeks, arched eye-brows, open eyes, a straight nose and a small mouth. This treatment of a fleshy full face with plump cheeks may be found in the stucco school of Taxila valley. The hair is shown as stacked coils with a separate *usnisa*. At the centre of his forehead is an incised circle

indicating the *urna*. His earlobes are significantly elongated. There is also an incised circle on the palm of his right raised hand and his fingers seem attached to a web, other signs of a Buddha. The halo is decorated with two incised lines just inside the outer perimeter. The robe covers both the shoulders though the sole of his right foot is uncovered. The etched lines under his knees may signify a grass covered seat. The back side is flat, no nail hole or hook sign is visible over the statue.

Figure.26 Buddha Head

Inv. no. NG. 300, whitish lime stone, from west of Stupa 19, probably second century A.D. On Buddha's face a large scratch line, starts from the curly hair reaches to chin or jaw.

Figure 26 depicts the head of Buddha with almond shape elongated eyes, a flat nose, *urna* on the forehead, hair in irregular waves with a separate *ushnisa*, and long earlobes. The head is separated near the neck from the lower body

which is missing. The round shape of a full fleshy face, slightly protruding eyes, casually carved eyebrows, flat nose (broken) and full sensuous lips tend to show indebtedness to the style of an earlier period.

Figure.27 Buddha Head

Inv. no. NG. 322, light greenish stone, from south of shrine, probably second century A. D. Left side of the head is covered in soil incrustation

Figure 27 depicts a head of a Buddha with wavy hair, *ushnisa* at top, *urna* on forehead, and

elongated earlobes. His hair dressed by combing it back, almond shaped, eyes half closed and a

straight nose and closed lips. He has an oval shaped face.

Figure.28 Buddha Head



Inv. no. NG. 453, green schist, from courtyard, probably second century A. D. Cracks over the face, left ear is broken and damaged

Figure 28 depicts a well-preserved head from a Buddha image carved in round. For hair, the stone is cut into deep clusters of waves with an *ushnisa* at the crown. The eyes are elongated and the *urna* is carved in low relief on his forehead. Both ears have elongated earlobes with his right lobe seeming to have a hole at the bottom. The scale suggests the image would have been larger than many found at the site, perhaps 1/2 as large as a life size image.

Bodhisattvas Images

The Bodhisattva images are of great interest as

they follow the actual human types and have always been adorned with plentifully luxurious ornaments in manner of the contemporary Indian princes. Though the position of their hands is almost the same as in the Buddha images, their faces, however, bear a smiling expression and the hair styles are often threaded with fillets or interlaced strings of pearls grouped into broad bands. The costume is of the royal Indian type. The *dhoti* reaching the knees is heavily gathered, and the scarf is worn in different ways.

Figure.29 Standing Bodhisattva Maitrya



Inv. no. NG. 285, sandstone, west of Stupa 19. probably second century A.D. The stela is preserved to an extent

The front of the bracket in Fig 29 depicts a deeply carved standing haloed male figure. He wears a prominent turban and his face is turned towards his right. He is wearing a robe, fully covering his body and the folds of his robe

reaches up to his knees. His right arm extends across the upper chest inside his robe with the hand held to his chest. A water bottle is hanging from his left hand which is the eminent characteristic of Maitriya.

Figure.30 Standing Bodhisattva



Inv. no.NG.353, green schist, south of Stupa 18, on the floor of level 3, probably second century A. D. Damage and both hands broken, crust of white patina, greatly weathered.

Figure 30 depicts a barefooted standing young figure of Bodhisattva, carved out likely from the front of a bracket. There is a plain halo behind his head. Most likely the Bodhisattva stands on a low pedestal and his face is turned towards his right with the head bowed. Other features are his

delighted face, half closed eyes, plump cheeks and short chin. He wears an elaborate turban with a fantail crest, earrings and neck ornaments. In the sling of his robe, a pattern suggesting flowers can be seen. He holds his hands (broken) in *anjali* mudra.

Figure.31 Standing Bodhisattva on Bracket



Inv. no. NG.418, soapstone, from courtyards, probably second century A.D. Damaged and broken

Figure 31 depicts a bracket the front of which holds a male figure on a high pedestal with bare feet, his face turned towards his right. He wears an elaborate turban, earrings and necklaces. His robe covers his left but not his right shoulder. He holds a bowl in his left hand. The right arm is broken. The back of the bracket, partly decorated on the front of the side, extends about 2 ½ inches behind the figure.

Miscellaneous:

The Nimogram collection also includes popular iconography themes other than the Buddha and

Bodhisattva images, like Hariti, city goddess, donors, secular subjects, brackets, Garuda, atlantes and cupid carrying a garland. Floral motifs are common, among them grapevine creepers, acanthus leaves decorating friezes and Corinthian capitals. Another significant motif is the lotus a symbol of purity and other floral motifs such as bands of petals, stems with leaves, garlands and floral patterns. Among these elected miscellaneous scenes are either unidentified or whose identification is still debatable.

Figure.32 Narrative Relief with two scenes

Inv. no. NG. 104, soapstone, from east of Stupa 5, probably second century A.D. Left side is broken but extant artistic details are clear. For secondary sources and similar composition see Majumdar 1937:106

Figure 32 depicts the extant remains of a frieze with two panels divided by a Corinthian pilaster with a shaft decorated with a large lotus blossom on a stalk in front of a flute. A saw-toothed band surmounted by a projecting plain fillet borders the top, while the bottom is delineated by a plain fillet. The panel on the right shows a figure approaching the ascetic Kashyapa seated on a bedroll inside a straw hut. While the figure is much damaged, the Vajrapani figure immediately behind him allows us to identify the approaching figure as that of the Buddha. Another now headless figure stands at the edge of the panel while a figure depicted with the upper torso only hovers in the background between the ascetic and the Buddha. A single branch behind the hut confirms a forest setting.

The panel on the right reveals a young

seemingly naked boy standing under a tree with hands to the stem of a tree, while a spear-holding guard is watching from behind. The guard is tall man with a tough body and is holding the long spear in his right hand is approaching the boy who seems to have been condemned to death. The haloed Buddha with his hand raised in *abhaya* mudra is approaching followed by Vajrapani. The Vajrapani carries a thunderbolt in his left hand and a flywhisk in his raised right hand. This scene has not yet been identified. This is a unique scene not noticed elsewhere in Gandhara, except the one discussed by Majumdar at National Museum Kolkata, India. The artistic details of this frieze are remarkable for its delicate and refined workmanship. The fine modelling of the figures inside the panels are vivid and very remarkable.

Figure.33 Amorini Under *Caitya* Arches

Inv. no. NG. 309, green schist, from south of shrine 2, probably second century A.D.

Figure 33 depicts a flat frieze top border a band with overlapping lanceolate leaves set between two plain fillets and below by a plain fillet. Four complete carinated arches, while one only partially carved remains. The arches end in volutes from which pendants carved with a tendril pattern hang. Door frames under the arches are carved with various patterns, from right to left, a festoon of opposite ovate leaves, chevrons pointing downward, chevrons pointing upward, and plain. From the right, the first three

standing figures are nude and could be Eros in various postures, leaning or facing the right, the next figure kneels on one knee and faces his right, while the figure in the unfinished arch (may be a female devotee), holds her hands in *anjali* mudra and faces the kneeling figure. All are wearing elaborated head gears. Four Indo-Persian pillars separate the arches. There is a square socket at the top on both edges, a dovetail socket at the centre and a groove on the backside.

Figure. 34 Human figures under carinated arches



Inv. no.NG.401, green schist, from courtyard of the monastery near the niche, probably second century A.D. Left corner of upper border and bottom fillet are broken

Figure 34 depicts a flat frieze defined above by a band of lanceolate leaves or honeycomb design at top and bottom by a plain fillet. There are four carinated arches ending in volutes with pine cone motifs, and separated by five Persepolitan columns. Only one doorframe shows decoration, i.e the second from the left. Beneath each arch is a single figure from right to left, a standing figure in *anjali* mudra or clasped hands, turned

towards the centre of the relief, a kneeling figure also in *anjali* mudra and also facing to his left, a figure seated in cross legged fashion, and his right hand on his cheek and finally a standing figure with his palm on his chest facing the seated figure to his left. The seated figure, the only one represented before a decorated doorframe, thus seems to be the principal figure.

Figure.35 Naked Heracles

Inv. no. NG. 416, green schist, from courtyard, probably second century A.D. Cracks on the left leg of the Heracles is visible. For secondary sources and similar composition see Faccenna 1962-4:1, 12, pl. XIX

Figure 35 shows a haloed, naked figure of Heracles on the front of the bracket. The halo is decorated with circular ring at the edges. The curly haired figure is looking towards his left with his left ear carved quite large. A lion skin hangs over his left arm while his club rests on the ground on his right side, apparently held fixed by his now missing hand. Heracles has also been found on Bactrian-Greek coins and always depicted with a club and without a lion-

skin on the shoulder (Errington and Cribb 1992: 78-82, 99-103). The discovery of Heracles at Nimogram is not a new phenomenon, since figures of Heracles have been found at many other sites in the Swat Valley (Faccenna 1962:1, 12, pl. XIX). References by classical writers suggest the existence of the cult of this divinity much before the arrival of Alexander. However, the Heracles of Nimogram differs from the others found in Gandhara region. His influence

in iconography is not only obvious but isolated examples in the Gandhara sculpture appear to

represent him.

Figure.36. Winged Atlas



Inv. no.NG.460, black schist, from courtyard, probably second century A.D. Left edge is chipped and broken, face of Atlas is chipped off. For secondary sources and similar compositions see Majumdar 1937:112; Nagar 1981:69; Zwalf 1996:257-65; Ingholt 1957: 154-5, figs.381-7; Chandra 1974 :20-1, pl.56; Joshi & Sharma 1969: 91-3, pls.

72-8

Figure 36 shows a well carved stele depicting a winged Atlas with a complete human body carved out in relief. The figure has a full beard and wears a loin cloth. Tresses of his hair flow behind and touch his shoulders. The bended Atlas poses as though heavy weight carrying with chubby face both of his hands extended upwards. His hands and head are all almost at the same level, as though he is being crushed under the weight of what he is holding. His face and moustaches (defaced), and wings are spread

behind his hands with muscular a body expression. The bearded figure wears a loin cloth, clinging between his legs. The figure is inclined to the front, represented as carrying a heavy burden on the back, and seems to belong to a different class altogether, produced under definite Hellenistic influence. They are sometimes frequently endowed with wigs and the treatment of the muscles and the beard are characteristically Hellenistic. The relief is carved out from a stone.

Figure.37 Two Atlas in a Frieze

Inv. no. NG.131, light green schist, from north of stupa 19, second century A.D. Broken and chipped off. For secondary sources and similar composition see Majumdar 1937:112; Nagar 1981:69; Zwalf 1996:257-65; Ingholt 1957: 154-55, figs.381-87; Chandra 1974 :20-1, pl.56; Joshi & Sharma 1969: 92, pl.74

Figure 37 depicts a fragment of a flat frieze with two panels, each containing a single Atlas figure wearing a loin cloth. The left foot of the figure on the right of the panel appears to have a series of semicircles similar to what would indicate the hoof of an elephant. Both the crouching Atlas (heavy weight supporter) with chubby faces in pose of carrying heavy weights. Their obese bellies, plump faces with flat noses and large ears, are boldly protruded. Their heads, shoulders are all almost at the same level, as if they are being crushed under the weight, but there is little modelling of the muscles to indicate their exertion. The panels are separated by a Corinthian column with a flute on the shaft. The sculptor has tried to depict the pressure of the heavy weight by indicating powerful muscles in the chest, arms, and thighs and by tilting the head, but Atlas seems merely to be squatting somewhat awkwardly.

Salient Iconographic Features

Considering the above descriptions stress is laid on the life events of Buddha. It is noteworthy that the *Jatakas* depiction is less in number as compared to other themes. The figures are fleshy and muscular, and wear dresses much alien to

the Indian soil. Symbolic representation of the Buddha is an uncommon, except the scene of symbolic representation of the first sermon or worship of *Triratna* (Figure. 12). In the Buddha images, the head is covered with long wavy hair, forming a topknot standing for *usnisa*, with a halo and an *urna*. Fine moustaches also appear. Generally, both the shoulders are draped. Covering only the right shoulder is taken to be a later variation and is normally associated with the preaching attitude seen casually in the Nimogram collection. In the earlier pieces, the size of the Buddha is almost the same as that of his attendants present in composition but in Nimogram to represent the superiority of the master, his height has been raised. The haloes are mostly decorated, and nimbus decoration has been practiced since Kanishka's reign. The Bodhisattva images and very often figures of Brahma and Indra have been modelled after the general features of kings and royal personalities. Beautiful hair, garments with heavy and deep folds, profuse ornaments, handsome appearance, well-built physique, jewelled headgear and halo behind the head are some of the salient features of the Nimogram collection.

As far the Buddha life story is concerned, scenes

depicting cycles of birth and youth are represented very often where the mother of Buddha, Queen Maya is shown standing under a tree in the Lumbini Garden, where she gave birth to the child. Maya strictly conforms to the form of an Indian woman. Often celestial musicians are shown celebrating the event. The miracle of birth is succeeded by the bath of the Bodhisattva, in which he is being bathed by Indra and Brahma. This scene is followed by the predictions by sage Asita, on his visit to Kapilavastu. Siddhartha as an Indian prince has been shown in school, and learning archery, a royal family sport, depicted in different panels. In spite of the princely life, Siddhartha realized the difficulty of existence when he was first confronted with human suffering. The prince was haunted by the visions of suffering and decided to leave the palace in search of truth. His departure from the city is an event often depicted in art. He is shown mounted on his horse and accompanied by Vajrapani. The interest is, however, focused on the four guardians of the sky who offer alms-bowls to the Buddha and in the scene where the gods pray that he should preach his doctrine.

Among the conversions appear the conversion of the three brothers who were descendants of Kashyapa, the Brahman ascetic of Uruvilva. The conversion was accompanied by miracles, including the miracle of the fire which is extinguished by turns and the victory over the black serpent. This miracle brought about the conversion of the Kashyapa brothers. The subjugation of the elephant of Nalagiri employed by the Buddha's wicked cousin Devadatta is shown in one of the panels. Another episode of the white dog which barked at the Buddha is represented in a panel. Similarly, a child is shown offering a handful of dust to the Buddha because he had nothing else to offer.

The depiction of animals in the Nimogram collection are no doubt rare. Their presence is there in the fragment of Indra's visit to Buddha, where they (rams & deer) are part of the landscape around the cave, or in one of the scenes from Siddhartha's life that depicts his favourite horse, Kanthaka, elephant, dogs, snakes and lions. The weakness of the Nimogram collection is that not a single piece depicts the *Mahaparinirvana* or death, coffin, cremation and division of relic/ashes of Buddha.

Materials

These reliefs and friezes were used to decorate the walls of the Stupas of Nimogram, and were mostly made of schist and locally available slate. The material used by the Nimogram sculptors is a soft schist (phyllite), that varies in colours from light to dark grey and often contains sparkling particles known as chloritoid quartz-mica phyllite, which is found only in Swat valley (Reedy 1997: 278). It appears that the greyish schist which represents the central Nimogram corpus of sculptures was a standardized material with only slight variation and was quarried from the hills of Swat valley. The outcrops and quarries of these materials have been identified by Pakistani geologists in an area of Shah Deri in Kabal tehsil of Swat valley. They have mapped the area which is about 19 km northwest of Mingora, where many sculptures have also been discovered (Rehman and Alam Zeb 1970: 96). It may be mentioned that sometimes the stone was covered with gold leaf (NG. 390), to give it lustre in dark interiors or to make it appear more precious. In general, this Buddhist art enjoyed an exceptionally long life, initiated from Kushana times and witnessed its zenith and artistic development in second century A.D. This was followed by a long period of prosperity, marked by the production of countless sculptures, first in stone, stucco,

bronzes and later on the rock surfaces.

Conclusion

The Nimogram art, because it developed in Buddhist monasteries, is essentially religious in character devoted to the service of Buddhism. The Buddha figure occupies a very prominent place among the collection. Numerous Indian or Indianized motifs like the atlantes, fantastic creatures, griffons and the flora and fauna of India are depicted. Foreign influence are the vine scrolls, the acanthus leaves, cupids and garlands and marine divinities. Minute architectural details of this ancient school are evident in the railings. Bead and reel and saw-tooth mouldings, horse-shoe arches, trapezoidal door-ways, merlons and Indo-Persepolitan pilasters, Indo-Corinthian columns, modillion cornices and foliated mouldings are prominent.

- The art pieces of this catalogue tell us, that the interest of the Udyana artists, however, is by no means limited to their religious and aesthetic aspects.
- Buddha and Bodhisattvas images, deities, bracket figures, framed figures and monsters, narrative scenes and

miscellaneous figures are prominent among the broken panels, and they throw a lot of light on the life of Buddha.

- The costumes of all classes from the princes to the poor, the furnishing of houses, the sport, armour, ornaments, saddles, carts and carriages, horses and yoke, tools, agricultural implements, cult objects and musical instruments are all skilfully depicted. Their existence can be seen even today in the Swat valley.
- The people at work, play and worship, engaged in acts of devotion, marriages, cremations, donations, sports, and ceremonies, the appearance of musicians, ascetics and wrestlers all have a close similarity with folklores of the Swat valley.
- The imagination depicted in the panels (battlemented, guarded city walls and gateways) are still survive in the tribal area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.

References

- Ackermann, H. C. (1975). *Narrative Stone Reliefs from Gandhara in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London*, IsMEO, Rome.
- Barger, E. & Wright, P. (1941). 'Excavations in Swat and Explorations in the Oxus territories of Afghanistan', *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 64, Delhi.
- Buchthal, H. (1945). 'The Western Aspects of Gandhara Sculpture', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XXXI.
- Callieri, P. (1989). *Saidu Sharif I (Swat, Pakistan), the Buddhist Sacred Area, The Monastery*. Rep Mem, XXIII, 1. Rome.
- Chandra, M. (1974). *Stone Sculpture in the Prince of Wales Museum*, the Board of Trustees of the Price of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.
- Dani, A. H. (1968). *Gandhara Art of Pakistan*, Archaeological Guide Series, no. 3, Peshawar.

- Department of Archaeology (1968). *Pakistan Archaeology*, No. 5, Department of Archaeology, Karachi, pp.116-21.
- Errington, E. and Cribb, J. (edd.), (1992). *The Crossroads of Asia, transformation in image and symbol in the art of ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan*, Cambridge.
- Faccenna, D. (1962). *Reports on the campaigns 1956-1962, in (Swat, Pakistan)*, Mingora: site of Butkara I IsMEO Reports and Memoirs I, Rome.
- Faccenna, D. (1980-81). *Butkara I (Swat, Pakistan) 1956-1962*, IsMEO Reports and Memoirs, III 1-5.2, Rome.
- Faccenna, D. A. N. Khan & I. H. Nadiem, (1993). *Panr I, (Swat, Pakistan)*, Rep Mem, XXVI, Rome.
- Hargreaves, H. (1918). *The Buddha Story in Stone; An Interpretation of Thirty Four Graeco Buddhist Sculptures in the Lahore Museum*, Calcutta.
- Hargreaves, H. (1930). *Handbook to the Sculptures in the Peshawar Museum*, Govt. of India Central Publication Branch, Calcutta.
- <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/Arts.Nimogram>.
- Ingholt, H. (1957). *Gandhara Art in Pakistan*, New York.
- Joshi, N.P. & R.C. (1969). *Sharma Catalogue of Gandhara Sculptures in the State Museum*, Lucknow, Lucknow.
- Khan, M. A. (1993). *Buddhist Shrines in Swat*, Lahore Pakistan.
- Majumdar N. G. (1937). *A Guide to the Sculptures in the Indian Museum, The Graeco-Buddhist School of Gandhara*, part II, Manager of Publications, Delhi,
- Marshall, S. J. (1960). *The Buddhist Art of Gandhara The Story of the Early School: its Birth, Growth and Decline*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Nagar, S. D. (1981). *Gandharan Sculpture, A Catalogue of the Collection in the Museum of Art and Archaeology University of Missouri-Columbia*, USA.
- Nehru, L. (1989). *Origins of the Gandharan Style; A study of Contributory Influences*, Oxford University Press, Bombay.
- Rahman, A. (1990). 'Butkara III: A Preliminary Report', *South Asian Archaeology 1987*, part. 2.
- Rahman, A. (1991). 'Butkara III: A Preliminary Report', *Ancient Pakistan*, Vol. VII, Department of Archaeology University of Peshawar.
- Rahman, A. (1993). Shnaisha Gumbat: First Preliminary Excavation Report'' *Ancient Pakistan*, Vol. 8, Department of Archaeology University of Peshawar, pp....
- Reed C. L. (1997). 'Technical Studies of Gandhara Art', *Gandharan Art in Context, East-West Exchanges at the Crossroads of Asia*, Cambridge.
- Rehman, J. and Alam Zeb, (1970). 'The Geology of the Shah Deri Kabal Area, Swat', *Geological Bulletin*, Vol. 5, University of Peshawar. pp.96-110.
- Taddei, M. (1969). Harpocrates-Brahma-Maitreya: a Tentative Interpretation of a Gandharan Relief from Swat. *Dialoghi di Archaeologia*3:364-90.
- Zwalf, W. (1996). *A Catalogue of the Gandhara Sculpture in the British Museum*, Vol. 1&2, London.