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SAKRA IN EARLY BUDDHIST ART

Sakra in Early Buddhist Art

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis traces the development of Indra/Śakra in Buddhist iconography in India up to the third century A.D. The change in representations of Indra/Śakra parallels a larger evolution of popular Buddhism itself from a religious system, in which the figure of the historical Buddha was predominant, into a devotional cult centered on the figures of both the historical Buddha and numerous bodhisattvas. The study thus highlights one aspect of this shift in emphasis from early Hīnayāna Buddhism to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Art forms in conjunction with relevant texts provide the context in which Indra appears in early Buddhist art (around the first century B.C.E.) and his subsequent development in Mahāyāna art (early Gandhāra and Mathurā).

The first chapter reviews the character of Indra in non-Buddhist contexts: the Vedic and Epic traditions. Evidence from these periods provides the context out of which the Buddhist Śakra emerged. The Vedic Indra developed into the Epic Indra from which the Buddhist Śakra seems to have evolved.

At the early Buddhist sites of Sāñchī and Bhārhut Śakra emerges as a devotee of the Buddha. He appears in iconography and relevant texts, in a narrative context as one of several characters in the Jātaka tales. He is identifiable either by his iconographic form (a royal figure who sometimes wears a cylindrical crown specific to him, and who carries a vajra and/or jar of amṛta), or by virtue of the context

in which he appears.

At Gandhāra and Mathurā Śakra becomes a figure of greater complexity who is often removed from any narrative context. Śakra and Brahmā attend the Buddha in prototypical representations of the Buddhist triad (the Buddha and two bodhisattvas). This triad signals an important development in the art and theology of Buddhism. It is indicative of the development of the worship of the Buddha as the main object of devotion accompanied by Śakra and Brahmā in early Buddhism and by bodhisattvas in the later tradition. It is the emergence of these latter figures in this role which represents the most significant change in popular Buddhism in India which was to be transmitted to the Far East. The Buddha has become a transhistorical figure worshipped independent of a narrative context. His attendants though they still adore the Buddha are lifted from a narrative context attaining the status of Buddhist deities.

In addition, Śakra is intimately related to the vajra-bearer who emerges at Gandhāra. The context in which this latter figure appears, his function, and his primary attribute, the vajra, indicate the nature of this relationship. This iconographic form may be prototypical of the later bodhisattva Vajrapāni and certainly is the basis of the Nio who appear as fierce guardian figures in iconography in Japan and China.

These two developments reflect the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism and are indicative of the directions it will take as it grows and develops in India, where it arose, and outside of India, in China and Japan.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANG	<u>Anguttara Nikāya</u>
BC	<u>Buddhacarita</u>
HV	Harivaṃśa
LV	<u>Lalitavistara</u>
MBh	<u>Mahābhārata</u>
MV	<u>Mahāvastu</u>
R	<u>Rāmāyana</u>
RV	<u>Rg Veda</u>
S	<u>Saṅyutta Nikāya</u>
ŚB	<u>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</u>

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INTRODUCTION

It is the intention of this paper to examine the visual aspects of Śakra in the Buddhist religious tradition and the changes that occur in his depiction in Buddhist art as it develops.

The figure of Śakra occurs in reliefs on early Buddhist monuments at Sāñchī and Bhārhut as well as in the later art of Gandhāra and Mathurā. The subjects of the reliefs in which Śakra appears most often can be established by reference to corresponding textual accounts. Hence any examination of iconographic representations of Śakra in Buddhist art requires an examination of certain Buddhist texts. The number of texts which correlate with artistic representations in this period, however, is precisely limited in number. Thus, to determine the character and the role of Śakra as he appears in Buddhist art one need only examine a selection of the vast corpus of early Buddhist literature.

In addition to the appearance of Śakra in Buddhist iconography and texts Śakra is intimately connected with Indra, a well known figure in pan-Indian mythology. Buddhism arose and developed in contact with popular Hinduism. Indra was incorporated early into the Buddhist tradition and was changed significantly, but not to the extent that he was not clearly recognizable to all Indian devotees. Hence, in order fully to describe the Buddhist Śakra his relationship to the Vedic and Epic Indra must certainly be explored. The Epic descriptions of Indra undoubtedly influenced the subsequent

representations of the Buddhist Śakra. The nature of the Epic Indra must be determined in light of the texts of this period for few representations survive. The earliest Hindu representation of Indra are contemporary with the Buddhist monuments of Sāñchī/Bhārhut and appear on coins of Indo-Greek rulers. The first chapter will treat the Vedic and Epic Indra in an attempt to discern the extent to which textual descriptions of this figure can be correlated with the early Buddhist descriptions and iconographic representations of Śakra.

The first Buddhist representations of Śakra are found on the stūpas at Sāñchī and Bhārhut (first century B.C.E.). He appears in the context of the Jātaka tales and the scenes from the life of the Buddha. Indeed the reliefs at these early Buddhist monuments primarily represent Jātaka tales and scenes from the life of the Buddha. The presence of the Buddha is the central focus of these iconographic representations and his presence is indicated at this stage symbolically rather than by depiction in human form. The task of identification of scenes represented is accomplished by reference to characterizing attributes such as symbols, by references to the texts which correspond to the reliefs, and by reference to various identifying inscriptions found at Bhārhut which may be conveniently applied to similar scenes at Sāñchī and Bodh Gayā.

The appeal of the iconography at Sāñchī and Bhārhut seems to have been widespread rather than limited to Buddhist monks and nuns: not only were both Sāñchī and Bhārhut sites of saṅghas (or communities

of Buddhist monks), they were also sites of pilgrimage. Given this context, the reliefs represented must have been popularist art forms, accessible to and possibly fashioned in light of an audience which in turn reflected the increasing popularity of the Buddha's message. Śakra's emergence in distinctive iconographic form in the reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut records the translation of what had previously been a textual and ritualistic (symbolic) presence into a distinctly Buddhist iconographic form, perhaps under the influence of Buddhism's new emphasis on devotion.

Śakra is represented at Sāñchī and Bhārhut as a figure subsidiary to the Buddha. He sometimes appears with distinctive attributes, the vajra and/or the jar of amṛta, although he is most often identifiable only through the context of a specific tale. He is represented in the reliefs as a figure amidst a crowd of others. However, reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut depicting Śakra's visit to the Buddha, at Indrasālaguhā, in which Śakra declared his devotion to the Buddha, are singular evidence of his distinctly Buddhist character. His role at Sāñchī and Bhārhut is twofold: he attends the Buddha, and he actively serves the Buddha by assisting Buddhist devotees who find themselves in problematic situations. In both cases he sets an example for Buddhists and others to follow. As such he is an agent of Buddhist morality.

An examination of Śakra's role in both the early period represented at Sāñchī and Bhārhut and later periods represented by

Gandhāran and Mathurān reliefs can certainly aid in ascertaining whether or not his function in the Buddhist tradition changed in any way. In so far as Śakra's role does change from Sāñchī to Gandhāra and the nature of this change can be established, it becomes then legitimate to remark on the degree to which this change correlates with the more general development of Buddhism in these periods. The degree to which iconographic representations alter and the specific forms and motifs which reflect this change it will be suggested may be taken as reflecting a more general change in the historical development of Buddhism.

The various shifts in emphases from early Buddhism (second century B.C.E. to first century C.E.) to later Buddhism (first century C.E. to fourth century C.E.) constitutes a major area of Buddhist scholarship.¹ Both the conceptual basis and the outward physical manifestations of early Buddhism are evidenced by the iconography at Sāñchī and Bhārhut and the texts of the early Buddhist Canon. The reliefs from Gandhāra and Mathurā as well as many texts, such as the Buddhacarita,² Lalitavistara,³ and Mahāvastu,⁴ are the primary evidence for the first to the fourth century C.E. It is in this latter period that many of the iconographic motifs characteristic of the fully developed Mahāyāna tradition were established. Thus in terms of historical continuity the art forms at Gandhāra and Mathurā represent a curious mixture of both early and later Buddhism such that neither do they represent only the older phase nor do they

represent the newer phase.

The context of the early reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut is narrative. The figures in these reliefs thus appear subject to narrative considerations, specifically, those applying to the Jātakas and scenes in the present life of the Buddha. In later Buddhist art, these same narrative contexts persist but are represented on a fuller scale both in scope and in the number of scenes depicted. Indeed, in these later Gandhāran and Mathurān reliefs one can differentiate by means of form and detail between the various figures portrayed.

These means of identification, i.e., the forms in which figures are represented and the various attributes which can be associated with them, although available to us at Sāñchī and Bhārhut, are facilitated by developments in the art of Gandhāra and Mathurā. As noted above the Buddha is never represented in human form at Sāñchī and Bhārhut but rather is indicated symbolically. He does appear in human form at Gandhāra and Mathurā. At Gandhāra other figures, among them Śakra, emerge in distinct and identifiable forms. Reliefs depicting specific subjects at Sāñchī and Bhārhut become at Gandhāra stabilized motifs which will continue to denote these events. Moreover, it is at Gandhāra that not only motifs removed from narrative contexts but also the well-known representations of the Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas first appear.

Specifically, it is in this later period at Gandhāra and Mathurā that Śakra's role as an attendant to the Buddha becomes

standardized. This role, which had found form in the early Sāñchī and Bhārhut reliefs, becomes more fully developed in this later period and extends beyond representation in narrative contexts to representation removed from any active consideration: we find Śakra represented in the isolated Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad. Moreover, even though Śakra does remain variously represented in a narrative context in the art of Gandhāra, there is another vajra-bearer who appears in this period for the first time and who also figures within a narrative context. This figure seems to be related in some way to Śakra, who is the only vajra-bearer in the reliefs of Sāñchī and Bhārhut. Śakra's functions thus diverge, and his role as a protector is usurped by a vajra-bearing figure who appears in distinct iconographic form at Gandhāra.

The origination and function of the figure Śakra cannot be removed from the context of the Buddhist tradition. An historical examination of any particular aspect of a larger whole highlighting the evolution and change of that part is also an examination of the larger context. Thus a definition of the Buddhist deity, Śakra, which both texts and art aid in establishing, is, in addition to being specific to that deity, explicative of the Buddhist tradition as a whole.

CHAPTER ONE

INDRA IN THE HINDU TRADITION

Indra is one of the earliest of popular deities. He plays a dominant role in the Rg Veda⁵ and his exploits are also recounted in the subsequent Brāhmanas and Epics. Indra also appears to have been one of the earliest Hindu gods to have been represented in concrete form in art, as seen on the coins of Indo Greek kings. It is an important question as to what extent Vedic and post Vedic descriptions of this god condition his early physical representations and to what extent these in turn influence later Buddhist concepts in art and literature. To answer this question it is necessary to examine the character of Indra in the earliest literature.

This chapter has thus been divided into the following parts: an examination of Indra in the Vedic period (the Vedas and Brāhmanas); Indra in the Epics (the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana);⁶ and finally Indra in iconography prior to and contemporary with the early Buddhist monuments at Sāñchī and Bhārhut.

The Vedic Indra

Notwithstanding the multitude of gods and goddesses who appear in the Rg Veda, the early Vedic pantheon comprises few well defined figures in comparison to other similar pantheons, e.g., Greek

Roman, etc. One exception to this general observation regarding Rg Vedic deities is the case of Indra, the Indian devarāja, or lord of the gods. Indra is closely associated with the elements of rain and thunder but emerges as a distinguishable and well-defined anthropomorphic personality.

His powerful physical stature can be outlined as follows: he has muscular arms, large hands, a heavy beard, a jaw of gold, a powerful neck, a throat like a large river and a stomach which is filled with soma. Further, he has a large appetite and a seemingly insatiable thirst for this intoxicant. Vedic texts describe him variously as young, strong, and violent; an angry lord and man of action.⁷ As a mighty general the epithet Śakra is applied to Indra.⁸ It has been translated as "le fort" by Gonda.⁹ Indra is fearless, wise, and intelligent.

He is praised in the Rg Veda as a fierce and irresistible demon-slaying warrior god, the wielder of the vajra. This weapon is described as either bright or made of metal or gold.¹⁰ He also carries a hook and a bow and arrows.¹¹ As we shall see below, the vajra is Indra's most characteristic weapon and is intimately associated with his effectiveness in matters of force. In the Rg Veda we find: "The mightiest force is Indra's bolt of iron when firmly grasped in both the arms of Indra".¹² Indra rides a chariot of gold yoked by two magnificent horses.¹³ In the Vedic period he has no equal: he is the king of the gods and is dominant in the middle

region.¹⁴

One specific sphere of his activities involves the regions inhabited by demons whom he vanquishes posthaste. It is in this mythological context that the violent aspect of Indra's character becomes clear and moreover his iconography begins to be defined. Indra's position in the Vedic pantheon, unequalled among the gods, may be explained in part by the role he plays in the destruction of demons. He is not limited to destruction of merely one demon but is responsible for a variety of demon deaths. Indra eliminates demons such as Vṛtra, Ahi, Vala, and Namuci. These most famous incidents in Indra's career are those which supply us with his unambiguous mark of identification, the vajra or thunderbolt. An example of his activities in this respect is the elimination of the demon Namuci which is recorded at least six times in the Rg Veda¹⁵ and occurs several times in the Brāhmanas. The etymology of Namuci is 'not letting go' and in the mythological context in which Indra functions may mean the demon who withholds the waters.¹⁶

In the Vedic tradition Indra slays Namuci with his thunderbolt or with the foam of water which serves as a thunderbolt. He characteristically twirls off or pierces Namuci's head. Though Indra, even in the Brāhmanas, is a mighty warrior, his physical strength alone, in these texts, does not determine in whose favor the battle will be resolved.¹⁷

In Indra's elimination of the other demons as well the vajra

is his weapon par excellence and he is epithetically referred to as vajrabhrt, the bearer of the thunderbolt. The vajra with which he pierces demons, and, in addition, the release of the waters, are mentioned in the description of Indra killing Vrtra. In one case in the Rg Veda this episode is described as follows: "The wrathful Indra with his bolt of thunder rushing on the foe, Smote fierce on trembling Vrtra's back, and loosed the waters free to run, lauding his own imperial sway".¹⁸ The conquest of demons and the liberation of waters are his mythological essence; by this act he is the constant renewer of life. It is significant that the vajra belongs predominantly to Indra and epithets derived from or compounded with this weapon in the Rg Veda are almost entirely applied to him.¹⁹ This will remain true of his later iconography as well.

In the myths Indra, in addition, is intimately associated with the potent beverage soma. It is this stimulant which immediately upon consumption increases his strength formidably and renders him invincible. In the Vedic texts, his devotees praise him with increased fervor in that he is then better able to protect them, while his enemies flee him the more he drinks. Indra is in fact so fond of consuming this elusive elixer that on more than one occasion in later texts it becomes his downfall. Soma is regularly included in the descriptions of Indra found in the Rg Veda. For example: "The soma is within him, in his frame vast strength, the thunder in his hand and wisdom in his head".²⁰

Indra is also known as a compassionate helper of his devotees and is invoked with a view towards protection and material gain.²¹

Indeed, his generosity receives the same praise as his greatest feats.²²

In an historical context, the number and import of the myths recorded with respect to the character of Indra reflect the esteem in which he was held. The Rg Vedic ideal of a mighty warrior god corresponds to the ideal of a people who were themselves invading warriors. A destroying and conquering lord of battle is a worthy object of veneration for a people engaged in precisely this kind of activity. In the Brāhmanas however, Indra's accomplishments are honored but his individual achievements are somewhat de-emphasized. The events themselves remain significant while Indra's role begins to diminish. The explanation rests on the role of sacrifice in the Rg Veda and the Brāhmanas. Sacrifice was an important aspect of Brāhmanic religion. The Brāhmanas thus reflect the evolution in religious orientation of the Indian elite away from an emphasis on physical battle and towards a preponderance of sacrificial rites.²³ This shift in emphasis is indicated by the role Indra plays in these texts. In the Namuci incident, for example, the warrior aspect of Indra is de-emphasized. His supremacy is maintained not by his might alone but through sacrifice.²⁴ Thus historical conjunctions can be established in terms of the modification of the character of Indra even at these early stages.

Indra in the Epic Period

Indra remains an important figure in the Epic texts. He is still known as devarāja, the lord of the gods, and is described variously as "he of one hundred powers", "he of one thousand eyes" and "lord of the thirty-three gods".²⁵ He is a strict upholder of morality as long as it does not challenge his authority. That is, he bestows gifts on his favorites but would rather dissuade an ascetic from becoming too virtuous than be usurped by the merit of another which surpasses his own.²⁶

Indra is called Śakra but this appellation is used as a name rather than an epithet.²⁷ As in the Vedas Indra leads the gods in battle.²⁸ He emerges in the Epics, however, in a new role: he is guardian (dikpāla) of the eastern quarter.²⁹ He is still praised for his defeat of demons, and his foremost weapon is still the vaira which is described as very terrible, hard as diamond and surpassingly swift. He also confronts his foes with a net, stones, bows and arrows, a hook, noose, and conch.³⁰ Usually he is victorious in battle but sometimes must rely on the aid of others for the successful defeat of his foes. On more than one occasion Indra finds himself in difficult situations and must appeal to other gods for help. Indra, for example, having committed brahmanicide becomes frightened and hides in a lotus stalk.³¹ His pride, amorous nature, and the difficulties which ensue from them are detailed rather frequently in the Mahābhārata. His main character in that text seems to be excessive pride and he is humbled for it by the punishment of other gods such as Siva.³² Indra is

powerless before Śiva; he takes refuge with Brahmā when in doubt; he is appointed protector by Viṣṇu and on at least one occasion begs for Viṣṇu's assistance.³³ In most cases, however, Indra's relations to other gods are those of friendly superiority.³⁴

Epic texts describe Indra as having yellow eyes, sporting a yellow beard, and wearing red or white garments.³⁵ He is adorned with a crown (kirīṭa),³⁶ jewelry, garlands which never wither, and is shaded by an umbrella. He carries a jar of amṛta with which he sometimes revives the dead.³⁷ He is surrounded by youths and remains himself perpetually young in appearance.

Amarāvati is his residence and the car of victory (mahendra-vāha) is his vehicle. It is decorated with gold and drawn by golden steeds.³⁸ Alternately he rides the elephant Airāvata. It is this later vehicle on which Indra appears in certain iconographic representations (e.g. at Bhājā) and which is useful in identifying him when represented. Airāvata arose from the churning of the ocean and was seized by Indra.³⁹ He has four tusks, three streams of water issue from his temples, and he is large and white.⁴⁰

Epic texts particularly emphasize Indra's capacity for bestowing gifts: he grants his favorites arms, knowledge, strength, energy, children, happiness, and food.⁴¹ As noted earlier he revives the dead. His chief gift, however, according to Hopkins, is rain which he often pours down from his seat on Airāvata.⁴² Indra as "bringer of rain" and as "bestower of gifts" is particularly significant with respect

to the role he plays in festivals devoted to him.

In the context of Indra festivals the above characteristics of Indra are further clarified. Indra pole festivals according to the Mahābhārata were instituted by Uparicara.⁴³ Indra gave Uparicara a victor's crown of lotus flowers which protected him in battle, and a bamboo pole, protective of its worshippers and with which Uparicara might worship him as the slayer of Vṛtra.⁴⁴ This festival dedicated specifically to Indra was generally adopted by other kings who followed the examples set by Uparicara.⁴⁵ The poles (Indrachvaja) are said to beautify the earth,⁴⁶ and are the chief objects in Indra festivals (Indramaha or Indrotsava).

The festivals are mentioned in later texts such as the Harivaṃśa in specific association with Indra's capacity to bring rains.⁴⁷ In the district of Gokula Kṛṣṇa stopped the Indra festivals.

Indra, however, became angry, as the festival in his honor was stopped. He called together the clouds and asked them to shower heavy rain to torment the milkmen and their wealth of cattle. He himself wanted to lead the clouds riding on his elephant. Then dark clouds massed together and heavy rain with lightning started. All land became a sea of water; there were floods in the rivers, and trees were uprooted. The milkmen were frightened and thought perhaps the period of dissolution had come and with it the deluge. The cattle suffered extreme distress..... Then the truthful Krishna lifted up the hill, and underneath it the caves became like large halls. Severe rain and hail storms continued, but those who took shelter underneath the raised uphill got no inkling of it. (HV 14)

The scene in Hindu iconography of Kṛṣṇa holding up the mountain and protecting the cows from the downpour is a familiar one.

The Rāmāyana mentions an Indra festival occurring in the

rainy season and describes Indra as actually pouring rain for several months in that season.⁴⁸ Indra is on more than one occasion spoken of in this text as the god of rain and is mentioned in the Hariyamśa in connection with clouds and thunder.⁴⁹ Particularly indicative of the specific existence of some form of worship of which Indra is the locus is the episode in the Hariyamśa described above.

Thus an alteration occurs in the status of Indra from the Vedic to the post Vedic or Epic period and can be specifically detailed. Indra loses his Vedic position as Supreme Being and becomes in the Epics the guardian of the Eastern Quarter. He remains a warrior but seems to lose his former ability to overcome his enemies by violent means and becomes a rather benign bestower of favors. Physical might is no longer of primary concern in the description of Indra's battles but rather his ability in this respect is ascribed to māyā or magic power.⁵⁰ The Epic Indra often finds himself in many dilemmas which, due to his love for soma and his impetuosity, demand he rely upon gods, ṛsis, and ascetics for rescue and assistance. Soma, his source of power in the Vedas, becomes through over-indulgence one source of his downfall in the Epics. He becomes, in effect, harassed and defeated, reliant on others for counsel and aid. In short, Indra is devarāja but he is no longer the Supreme Being.

Thus two associated factors are important in Indra's mythic chronology: his role in later texts suffers a decline in terms of his influence; he is still devarāja, but this position itself becomes

rather insignificant and he remains throughout a compassionate helper and protector of those who request his assistance.

Iconographic Representations

However circumstantial the evidence may seem, it appears that some sort of iconographic forms were indeed created in the Vedic period. What is important in this context is the degree to which these forms figured in the religious life and the manner in which they were employed. The primary evidence which supports this study of the iconographic forms of Indra is textual and is specifically in reference to his ritual worship.

Although not unambiguous there are a few passages in the Rg Veda which contain allusions to both unspecified representations of Indra and devotion to him. In the Rg Veda, for example, the following stanzas appear:⁵¹

Indrāgnī śumbhatā narah (men decorate Indra and Agni)
(RV 1,21,2)

Ka imam daśabhirnamendram kṛnati dhenubhiḥ / Yadāvṛtāni
janghanadatahanam me punar dadat (who will buy this my
Indra for ten cows? When he has slain his foes he may
give him back to me.)
(RV 4,24,10)

Indrasya kartā svapastamo bhūt (the maker of Indra was a
most stalwart being, a most skillful workman)
(RV 4,17,4)

The gods of the period of the Rg Veda were required to fulfill the desires of those who performed sacrifices in their honor and in the case of Indra these desires seem to range from victory in battle both

on a large national scale and on an individual level, to protection and material gain. The devotee propitiates the god by offering oblations and praise, by realizing his own insignificance in relationship to the gods and by admitting the inability of success without the aid of the deity. In this light, the above second passage might indicate that representations of images of Indra were indeed employed in rituals for the purpose of inflicting harm on an enemy. Although images seem to have existed, the notion of image worship as a central aspect of ritual, even in light of the above passages, is doubtful given the paucity of references to such cult worship in the Vedas, and the total absence of concrete evidence.

This doubt is further supported by an examination of the Brāhmanas which follow the Vedas in time. These texts are almost entirely concerned with sacrificial ritual and one would therefore expect a multitude of explicit references to the fashioning of images, if, indeed, images were of primary ritual importance. Unfortunately, upon examination these texts reveal only sporadic references to the representations of gods as they were used in ritual.⁵²

The earliest extant representations of Indian deities appear on the reverse side of coins of certain Indo-Greek kings, where the obverse represents an image of the issuing ruler. These are much later than the Vedic period, and date from the second century B.C.E. On the coins of Eukratides, Antialkidas and other Indo-Greek rulers as well as on those of Maues, a figure thought to be the Grecian Zeus is represented. However, certain distinctly Indian characteristics lead

us to believe that the figure represents Indra, the Indian counterpart to Zeus.⁵³

On the coins of Eukratides (170-155 B.C.E.) the figure is enthroned, holding a wreath in the right hand and a palm branch in the left; the forepart of an elephant (only rarely is the whole animal shown) appears to the right and a conical object on the left. The conical object has been identified as a mountain. The connective element between the figure and this conical object, or between the figure and the mountain, is the elephant. Characteristically, Indra is mentioned in association with the elephant Airāvata, the presiding genius of Śvetavatalaya which is the residence of Śvetavat, one of the names of Indra. This same tableau is repeated on one of the coins of Antialkidas (140-130 B.C.E.). On another of the coins of Antialkidas, this figure is standing with a long sceptre (vajra??) in his left hand and accompanied by his elephant. One other coin is worthy of mention here. It is a square copper coin of Maues whereon the deity is seated on a throne. His left hand rests on a human figure. Banerjea has identified this figure to the deity's left as a personification of the vajra.⁵⁴ On some of the coins of Indramitra (first century B.C.E.) the figure appears standing on a pedestal holding an uncertain object in his right hand and a club in his left.

Now these figurative representations correspond to some degree with the descriptions of Indra found in Vedic texts. Among those elements which appear as distinctly characteristic of Indra are the

personified vajra and the juxtaposition of animal and deity. These are then the only extant representations of Indra from an early period and are generally attributed to the second century B.C.E. The fact of his representation on public coinage indicates that he was culturally important. The prevailing political influence in this period was Indo-Grecian and insofar as we can assume that the figure on these coins is representative of Indra, it is also representative of the Greek Zeus. This has prompted scholars to refer to the figure represented on these coins as "Indra in the garb of Zeus".⁵⁵

There is no extant evidence of iconographic forms, other than these Indo-Grecian coins, prior to the images of Indra which appear in early Buddhist reliefs. An interesting representation of Indra is that of the great veranda relief at Bhājā, an early Buddhist cave dating early second century B.C. (figure 1). There are on either side of a portal two massive sculptures. One has been identified as Sūrya, the sun god. The other, by virtue of context and situation alone, seems to be Indra.⁵⁶ He is riding his elephant Airāvata and is accompanied by an attendant who carries a banner. The relief is mentioned here in that it closely corresponds to the conception of Indra in Vedic and Epic texts.

Conclusion

The character and role of Indra suggested above undergoes certain transformations from the Vedic to the Epic period. Two major differences between the Vedic and Epic Indra emerge. Unlike the

Vedic Indra, the Epic Indra figures prominently in cultic rituals or Indra festivals. While the Rg Vedic Indra is a strong man, particularly with respect to demon slaying, in the Epics, though he continues to slay demons he becomes a good natured but often foolish dikpāla - protector of the Eastern quarter. In the Vedas he is known by the epithet Śakra (the strong). In the Epics Sakra is used rather like a name. This as we shall see below represents more than a mere similarity of name between the Vedic and Epic Indra with the Buddhist Śakra. Śakra emerges in the Buddhist tradition as an distinct and identifiable iconographic form, but with many of his Vedic/Epic traits intact.

Though no concrete evidence survives it is not beyond the scope of this study to suggest that images or representations of Indra of some kind were fashioned even as early as the Vedic period. As has been mentioned, the few references contained in the earliest texts suggest that representations of Indra were employed toward the infliction of harm.⁵⁷ The above cited passages in the Rāmāyana and the Harivamśa from the Epic period indicate that a growth in devotional practices had taken place and a trend away from sacrificial rituals towards cultic festivals directly related to Indra and wherein he functions as the primary object of veneration had occurred. It is in the context of Indra festivals that one would expect to find images of the deity, although the textual evidence on festivals indicates that Indra was represented by his pole or dhvaja. Indra does appear in the sculptures and reliefs of the later Hindu period, which fall outside the purview of the present study.

It should be noted that early Buddhist reliefs, including the Bhājā relief, are executed with a degree of sophistication suggestive of cumulative experience. The similarities between the descriptions of Indra in the Vedas and the form he takes in early Buddhist reliefs would seem to indicate that corresponding images of Indra were fashioned. One can only infer therefore given Vedic textual evidence and given the above Buddhist correlative, that Indra, as well as the other figures who appear in these reliefs, was given iconographic form in the Vedic period and early Epic period.

Those features which are important in identifying Indra in Buddhist reliefs emerge, therefore, in both Vedic and Epic texts. The vajra appears in Indra's hand in the Vedas and is effective in combat. In the Epics Indra's elephant Airāvata emerges from the churning of the ocean and Indra is described as carrying a jar of amṛta. In both the Epics and Vedas Indra is a warrior/kingly figure and it is in this form and with these implements that Indra emerges in Buddhist iconography.

CHAPTER TWO

ŚAKRA AT THE EARLY BUDDHIST MONUMENTS OF SĀNCHĪ AND BHĀRHUT

It is the aim of this chapter to discuss the character of Śakra as he is represented at Sānchī and Bhārhut with reference to corresponding episodes which are related in the Pāli Canon. In this way an understanding may be reached of the identity of Śakra and the role he plays in the Buddhism of this period.

The Buddhist Śakra, then, appears in the early reliefs at Sānchī, Bhārhut, certain reliefs at Bodh Gayā, and in the texts of the Pāli Canon. He figures fairly prominently in the Jātaka tales,⁵⁸ or stories of the past lives of the Buddha, which are represented at Bhārhut and Sānchī, as well as in a variety of episodes in the present life of the Buddha. The fact that he is accorded special recognition in the Sakka Pañha Suttanta of the Dīgha Nikāya (that Suttanta being devoted entirely to Śakra's visit to the Buddha at Indrasālaguhā) leads us to believe he is more than just a nominal figure in the Buddhist tradition.⁵⁹ Indeed Śakra is one of the few deities, among whom we may include Brahmā, who emerges in Buddhism as a distinguishable character. Śakra and Brahmā attain the status of attendant/protector figures in Buddhist texts and art by accompanying the Buddha on his descent at Sankīśa, and they are positioned on either side of the Buddha in the earliest reliefs of this event at Sānchī and Bhārhut.

This relationship of Śakra to Indra is of a complex nature. The evidence suggests that Śakra is, in terms of forms and deeds, the Indra of the Hindus⁶⁰ while in terms of his function he is a distinctly Buddhist character. As noted earlier, the mighty vaira-wielding general of the Rg Veda had by the time of the early Buddhist Canon (c.200 B.C.E.) undergone a transformation. In the Vedas, Indra is epithetically referred to as Śakra, an epithet which often refers to Indra's capacity as a compassionate helper.⁶¹ Śakra in the Rg Veda just as in Buddhist sources is the lord of the heavens of thirty-three gods and is the slayer of demons. In addition, Śakra wields the thunderbolt, which is an attribute corresponding well with the Rg Vedic vaira.⁶² However, the Buddhist vision of Śakra is more closely related to the textual description of Indra in the Epic texts. In Buddhist iconography Śakra is given form with specific physical attributes: for example, he wears a special crown ('kirīṭa'),⁶³ he carries an amṛta flask (the liquid contained herein restores human life),⁶⁴ is dressed in the attire of a royal personage, and is shaded by an umbrella. He is not the Supreme Being in the Epics nor is Śakra the Supreme Being in the Buddhist tradition. The attention of the Epics is beginning to be focused away from Indra toward the eventual supremacy of Viṣṇu and Śiva.⁶⁵ The Indra of the Vedas has lost much of the grandeur he held by the time we find him in the Epics and by the time we find Śakra figured in the earliest reliefs and texts of the Buddhists.

The appearance of an Indra-like figure must certainly have had an effect in the amelioration of the strangeness of the Buddhist tradition in its early stages. The appearance of a familiar distinguishable character who figures in the Hindu tradition would no doubt render early Buddhism more appealing. The relationship between Indra and Śakra appears to be evolutionary: Indra has become the Buddhist deva Śakra. Thus Indra was incorporated into Buddhism as a Vedic/Epic figure whose character necessitated modification in accordance with Buddhist doctrine. Indra and Śakra share common characteristics and are historically connected. But Śakra is different from the Epic/Vedic Indra. It cannot therefore be maintained that the Indra of the Epic period and the Śakra of the early Buddhist period are one and the same. Despite the similarities between Indra and Śakra, Śakra acts in Buddhism in a distinctly Buddhist manner. Both Śakra and Brahmā pay homage to the Buddha. Śakra is conspicuous for his geniality and softness of character (attributes somewhat de-emphasized in the Vedas). His ethical character, only one of his attributes in the Vedas, is particularly emphasized in Buddhism: he is prone to performing good acts.⁶⁶ He is certainly vulnerable to the same pitfalls as mankind.⁶⁷ His status as a god in adoration of the Buddha carries particular weight in legitimizing the position of the Buddha.

Few heavenly beings can be distinguished in early Buddhism as distinct figures. The emergence of Śakra as one of these few distinct figures in both texts and iconography of early Buddhism is indicative of the importance of the position he holds in the Buddhist tradition.

Early Buddhist Monuments

Among the earliest reliefs which have survived from ancient India are those which decorate the stūpas at Sāñchī and Bhārhut. One must rely almost entirely on these monuments for early representations of Śakra. His representations here in conjunction with the contemporary texts of the Pāli Canon make it possible to present a reasonably accurate analysis of the Buddhist figure of Śakra.

These reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut are the only surviving evidence of the steps in the iconographic developments which occurred in North India at this time. As both Sāñchī and Bhārhut are situated on what were important trade routes, they are not the work of an isolated populace. The representations there reflect the influx of new ideas, the interchange of those ideas with local ideas, and thus the development of Buddhist tradition. There is no reason, however, to assume that Sāñchī and Bhārhut were the most important of early Buddhist sites. One can assume that these monuments were among several such monuments. Not even the Chinese pilgrims who visited India from the third to the sixth century C.E. deem Sāñchī important enough to document as they did other monuments.⁶⁸ Nor is Sāñchī itself mentioned in Pāli Literature save in the Mahāvamsa.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it is here at Sāñchī and Bhārhut for the first time, three to five centuries after the death of the Buddha, that one finds concrete representations of stories found in ancient Buddhist texts.

The Bhārhut reliefs are somewhat earlier than the earliest reliefs at Sāñchī. The figures are executed in a simple style and

possess a certain degree of dignity.

The Bhārhut reliefs deal primarily with the Jātaka tales and contain many of the details from the particular tale they represent. This of course makes for easier narrative identification.

The reliefs at Sañchī have been divided into three broad historical groups: early, intermediate and late.⁷⁰ Little variety in representational style is found in the earliest stages. These reliefs concentrate on select events in the life of the Buddha. Yaksas and decorative motifs occupy the remaining areas. Śakra does not appear in any clearly identifiable form on the reliefs of this period. In the reliefs from the intermediate stage certain Jātaka tales are represented for the first time. Of these tales, five have been identified in various reliefs. As well, several new scenes from the life of the Buddha are found which are not in evidence in the reliefs from the early period. The later stage reliefs at Sañchī are from the Gupta period and bear little relation to the reliefs of the early Buddhist period. It is the intermediate period at Sañchī, in which representations from both the life of the Buddha and the Jātaka tales appear, and certain reliefs from Bhārhut which are significant for our study.

Few of the figures at these sites are recognizable outside of the narrative context. The majority of reliefs deal with the life of the Buddha who is himself not represented in human form; select symbols indicate his presence. The surviving reliefs from Bhārhut are invaluable in deciphering the particular narrative meanings of the

reliefs at Sāñchī thanks to the inscriptions a large number of them contain. From these inscriptions one can identify specific groupings representing scenes in Buddhist legends. Without the presence of identifying features, the figures cannot be identified.

Identifying Features

Śakra appears in the reliefs of each of the early Buddhist monuments at Sāñchī, Bhārhut, and Bodh Gayā in one or more of the following forms: with a turban-like headdress of the usual Āndhra type; with this same turban-like headdress but with the additional attributes of the amṛta flask and the vajra; with a different headdress of cylindrical form (once with laterally projecting wings); or with the cylindrical headdress but with the additional attributes of the amṛta flask and the vajra. At Sāñchī he appears in three of these forms, at Bhārhut in one form, and at Bodh Gayā in one form.

Table 1 shows the form(s) in which Śakra appears at each of the three monuments. In addition, where he appears at a monument, the specific textual event depicted in the relief is given. The numbers following the event are plate numbers from sources to be named below and are given as reference.

TABLE 1

INDRA'S REPRESENTATIONS IN EARLY BUDDHISM

	Sāñchī*	Bhārhut**	Bodh Gayā***
Turban	pl 34a Miracle at Śrāvastī pl 34c Descent at Sañkīśa pl 35bl Indrasālaguhā pl 18a3 Indra and Sacī pl 49c Adhyesana pl 64a2 " pl 64a3 Indrasālaguhā	pl XLVIII.7 Bhiṣa Jātaka pl XLIII.8 Migapotaka Jātaka pl XXVIII.4 Indrasālaguhā pl XVIII Descent at Sañkīśa	
Turban and Attributes	pl 49a,b Six deva- ckas		
Cylindrical Headdress			pl XXXIX Indra as Śānti
Cylindrical Headdress and Attributes	pl 29c Vessantara Jātaka pl 65al Śyāma Jātaka		
<p>Plate numbers refer to those found in:</p> <p>* Marshall, J., and Foucher, A., <u>The Monuments of Sāñchī</u>, Delhi, 1944, Vol. II</p> <p>Plate numbers refer to those found in:</p> <p>** Cunningham, <u>The Stūpa of Bhārhut</u>, Varanasi: 1962</p> <p>Plate numbers refer to those found in:</p> <p>*** Coomaraswamy, A., <u>La Sculpture de Bodh Gayā</u>, Paris</p>			

When Śakra is represented in the first form mentioned above (at Sāñchī and Bhārhut) with only the turban-like headdress, he is

without other identifying features. He does, however, often appear here dressed in royal garb, accompanied by attendants, and in close contact with his elephant, Airāvata. This headdress is indicative of royal and godly status and is in fact of the early royal type: "a large muslin turban interwoven with long hair so that a ball of material forms a sort of crest at Bhārhut and the same type but of a more symmetrical crossing of the narrow bands of material above the forehead at Sāñchī.⁷¹ As figures in the reliefs in which Śakra appears in this form may also appear with this same headdress, his identification in these reliefs is made difficult. His presence in this form must be deduced from textual evidence alone. Śakra in this form will be discussed with reference to the reliefs devoted to Indra's visit to the Buddha at Indrasāla-guhā, the descent of the Buddha at Sañkiśa and a variety of Jātaka tales.

In the second form, Śakra appears (at Sāñchī) wearing this same turban-like headdress. His identification is facilitated though by two attributes exclusive to him: the jar of amṛta (an ambrosia-like liquid) which he holds in his left hand and an object which resembles the Greek thunderbolt which he holds in his right hand. He is in this form often dressed in royal garb and accompanied by attendants.

Śakra appears at Bodh Gayā disguised as the Brahman Śānti. His headgear appears to be that of the third form, i.e., of the cylindrical type. It is a relatively short object. There is some question however as to the nature of this detail. Because this relief depicts

Śakra in disguise, Bachhoffer infers that this cylindrical form is nothing more than hair.⁷²

In a few scenes at Sāñchī Śakra appears in the third form, which is distinctive iconographically. His head apparel is unique to him alone even at this early stage: a tall cylindrical crown made apparently of metal, sometimes bejewelled and once represented with what appear to be lateral wings projecting from the sides. This headdress is not a turban. In early Indian art it appears only in connection with Indra.⁷³ It is the Greek Polos and has been transmitted to India through the intermediary of Parthian art.⁷⁴ As this crown is the exclusive property of Śakra, this feature coupled with the thunderbolt and/or jar of amṛta with which it is invariably represented at Sāñchī clearly identify this figure as Śakra (e.g. Vessantara Jātaka, Syāma Jātaka).

Jātakas

The Jātakas are tales of the past lives of the Buddha and illustrate the virtue which a bodhisattva must possess if he is to attain perfect enlightenment. Many of them are popular legends of pre-Buddhistic origin adapted by Buddhists as illustrative of Buddhist doctrine. The Buddha himself is said to have told many of these as edifying tales in the course of his career as a teacher.⁷⁵

In the earliest Buddhist reliefs, it is both the Jātakas and scenes from the present life of the Buddha which are dominant.

The reliefs at both Sāñchī and Bhārhut are thus narrative and

include amazingly minute details from a given tale. At Bhārhut, however, many of these representations are accompanied by identifying inscriptions. These two features of the Bhārhut reliefs, the inscriptions and the attention given to detail, suggest that the tales represented were not publically familiar and that precaution was taken to insure correct identification. Otherwise why are not all of the reliefs inscribed? Identifying inscriptions of this type do not appear at Sāñchī. In addition, there is an almost complete lack of perspective. Often in a given relief one finds more than one scene from a tale juxtaposed to another from the same tale. Certainly the iconographic forms and the tales which are not inscribed must have been familiar enough to render these tangled reliefs readily accessible. Without the aid of textual sources it is almost impossible for present day scholars to identify a story or scene in any particular relief.

Śakra is one of the few heavenly beings that can be consistently identified at Sāñchī and Bhārhut. The Jātakas in which Śakra appears illustrate both his iconographic form and his role in Buddhist legend. He does not, it should be noted, play a starring role in any of the reliefs but is rather an important secondary figure. Śakra appears in the reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut in the following Jātaka tales.

Vessantara Jātaka⁷⁶

This important Jātaka is illustrated at length at Sāñchī.⁷⁷

It is the tale of a past life in which the bodhisattva is born as the Prince Vessantara. Devoted to giving gifts, Vessantara gives away his magical elephant. He and his family are then banished to the forest where he subsequently gives away everything, including his two children. Śakra, perceiving Vessantara's virtue, disguises himself as a brahman and requests that Vessantara give up his wife. Vessantara complies. Śakra then reveals himself and restores to Vessantara his wife. Finally, his children and kingdom are returned to him and they live happily.

Śakra is represented in the relief in two ways: in the disguise of the brahman requesting the wife of Vessantara; and, in his true form at the end of the panel to the left, in the final scene in which all is restored to Vessantara. The incident of Śakra disguised as a brahman requesting the wife of Vessantara is represented.⁷⁸ Here Śakra appears in the usual costume of a brahman. Śakra, revealed in his true form, appears in princely garb adorned with the cylindrical headdress peculiar to him⁷⁹ (figure 2). He carries the thunderbolt in his left hand and a jar of amṛta in his right. This is one of the few scenes at Sāñchī in which Śakra appears wearing this headgear. The row of figures in which he appears is otherwise unidentifiable.

This Jātaka was and is one of the most popular tales recording the past lives of the bodhisattva. As illustrative of one of the ten virtues required to attain Buddhahood (charity) and as the Buddha's

last birth as bodhisattva it plays a focal role in Buddhist tradition. The ability of Śakra to grant boons indicates the nature of his power: it is in this life that Śakra can assist man. Although Vessantara is not pleased with his fate in the forest, he does not ask for assistance from the gods and is later rewarded by Śakra after having been put to the test. Śakra does not need to be called for his assistance; he only appears on earth when a being exercises extreme virtue. Śakra, in this case, appears as an essentially moral figure.

Śyāma Jātaka⁸⁰

This tale is represented at Sāñchi.⁸¹ The bodhisattva is born to an ascetic husband and wife as a result of Śakra having foreseen that the couple would lose their sight: he has sent the bodhisattva to be born to them. The child is named Śyāma and attends his parents. One day, a king shoots the lad. Learning of the old couple's physical affliction, the king attends upon them himself. Miraculously, the boy is cured and the parents recover their sight.

Śakra appears with one attendant and above the dead child at the top of this relief. His right hand is raised in a gesture of encouragement; his left holds the amṛta flask. As in the Vessantara Jātaka, he wears a tall cylindrical headdress. However, in the relief of the Śyāma Jātaka his headdress is elaborated to include what appear to be laterally projecting wings. It is here for the first time in Indian art that this type of headdress appears.⁸² Śakra, in this relief is the figure responsible for restoring Śyāma to life. In the relief, he is obviously in the air. As this figure is not bound by

earthly constraints, he is of godly status. The amṛta jar which he carries is spoken of as early as the Mahābhārata where it was used by Indra for restoring life to the dead.⁸³ The earliest versions of the Pāli Jātakas ascribe the act of restoration in this specific tale to a goddess.⁸⁴ However, there is no figure in this relief identifiable as a goddess. Because of Śakra's position above the dead child, amṛta flask in hand, we may assume that, in this specific relief at Sāñchī, Śakra appears not only in the capacity of patron but also in the capacity of the life-restorer.

Kuśa Jātaka⁸⁵

This Jātaka represented at Bhārhut tells the story of a king whose wife bore no children.⁸⁶ His subjects are notably distressed on this account and prevail upon the king to try all rightful means in accordance with the rules of ancient morality to obtain the birth of a son. Accordingly, the king sends his chief queen out into the streets as a solemn act under religious sanction in order to find someone who can give her a child. At this point the throne of Śakra glows, awakening him to the virtue of the queen. Śakra carries the queen off to his abode and grants her two boons. One is the conception of an ugly but wise son; the other is the conception of a handsome but foolish son. She chooses to have the ugly son first and accepts the Kuśa grass given to her by Śakra. She returns to the king. Śakra in disguise as a brahman touches her with his thumb and she immediately conceives the bodhisattva.

The focal point of the relief representing this Jātaka is the queen informing the king as to her adventures. Śakra is seen behind the couple, returning to heaven. His back is to the spectator. Śakra is not represented in any iconographic form that would identify him as the king of Travastrimśa. He is dressed in a nondescript manner. Thus, the only means afforded us for his identification as Śakra are contextual. Again Śakra responds to virtue and acts accordingly. He grants the queen two sons and leaves her to decide which one (wise or foolish, handsome or ugly) is preferable. It is a choice in moral terms: a decision is made in favor of good over beauty.

Migapotaka Jātaka⁸⁷

In a number of Jātakas, such as the Migapotaka Jātaka, the bodhisattva himself is born as Śakra.⁸⁸ In this particular story, there is a hermit who laments the death of his pet deer. The bodhisattva born as Śakra appears to the hermit and admonishes him for such foolishness. The hermit is ultimately cured of this madness of weeping and Śakra returns to his abode.

A relief of this Jātaka is found at Bhārhut. The figures are the lamenting hermit, the dead deer, and Śakra who appears in this relief wearing the turban-like headdress and without other identifiable attributes. This relief must be therefore identified contextually.

Bhisa Jātaka⁹⁰

This scene is represented at Bhārhut.⁹¹ In this Jātaka the story of the bodhisattva who is born into a Brahman family is told.

The bodhisattva renounces the world and retires into the mountains with his sister, six brothers, two servants, and one companion. A tree deity, a monkey, and an elephant are his devotees. Each day one of the brothers gathers lotus fibre food for all and divides it up. He then leaves a portion of this food for the others which they must pick up individually. The bodhisattva's share disappears on several occasions. Gathering together, they make an oath to the bodhisattva disavowing the theft. Suddenly Śakra appears, admits to the crime and praises them for sincerity.

The bodhisattva, yakṣa, (tree spirit) and monkey appear in the relief each with an arm outstretched and thumb in palm, an ancient gesture of oath making. Śakra appears to the right adorned with the royal turban-like headdress offering the stolen lotus stalks. An elephant appears to the extreme right of the relief. The presence of Śakra can only be determined contextually. He wears the turban of royalty and carries the lotus stalks indicative of his role in the story (figure 3). The scene was identified by Rhys Davids only with reference to the inscription which appears here.⁹²

Only a small number of Jātaka tales from the entire Jātaka collection are represented in the reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut. The tales are intended to be instructive, to be illustrative of a particular virtue necessary to Buddhahood, and to remind the reader/viewer of the great sacrifice required of the bodhisattva. Underlying the stories is the knowledge that the bodhisattva was to eventually attain

supreme enlightenment. It is the concern of the Jātakas to deal with the nature of the bodhisattva's character and this is accomplished within the context of a narrative. The Jātaka reliefs in which Śakra appears at Sāñchī and Bhārhut illustrate the role he plays in Buddhist legend. This role is clearly secondary for it is the bodhisattva who is the primary subject of both the reliefs and the tales.

Śakra's iconographic form is distinctive at Sāñchī, in the two Jātakas in which he appears represented there. In both of the reliefs he wears his distinctive cylindrical headdress and carries either one or both of the jar of amṛta and the vajra. At Bhārhut his form is either that of a royal personage wearing the turban-like headdress or that of a brahman in disguise. As neither form at Bhārhut is unique to Śakra he can only be identified by context.

Scenes in the Life of the Buddha

In addition to the Jātakas, or tales of the past lives of the Buddha, Śakra figures in the present life of the Buddha. The texts from the Pāli Canon which deal with this subject are contemporaneous with the Jātakas. They will be specified as sources when the reliefs depicting the events are discussed. Śakra can be identified here in much the same manner as we have seen in the section dealing with the Jātakas. However, in the present life of the Buddha, Śakra's role is always that of an attendant or devotee of the Buddha. In the reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut Śakra appears in the following scenes in the life of the Buddha.

The Visit of Śakra

This event is described in the Sakka-Pañha Suttanta or "The Questions of Sakka".⁹³ The Suttanta begins when the Exalted One is residing on the Vediya mountain in a cave called Indrasālaguhā where Śakra and other devas are congregated. Śakra, desiring an audience with him, sends Pañcaśikha, his harpist, with this request. The cave at this point is described as bathed in radiance. Pañcaśikha, in order to gain the attention of the Buddha, proceeds to play his harp and recite certain verses. The Buddha is well pleased with the music and grants Śakra an audience. Śakra appears with his retinue and asks a variety of questions relating to the Buddhist doctrine the answers to which suffice to convince him of the Truth of the Buddhist doctrine. Śakra is taught the dharma and realizes that enlightenment is not won by blows or the defeat of asuras (which are Indra's typical feats) but by dharma.⁹⁴ Having his questions answered and his doubts dispelled, Śakra worships the Buddha and vows to teach the Dharma himself.⁹⁵

There are three reliefs depicting this scene which are of early date: those from Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Bodh Gayā.

The earliest of these reliefs -at Bhārhut- is identified by means of the inscription Indra-sāla-guhā (figure 4).⁹⁶ The relief is not entirely intact yet one can discern the characteristics which are to become the identifying features of other reliefs of this subject. The fragment which would identify the owner of the hand has been lost. However in the context of the Suttanta, the harp is sufficient data to identify it as having been part of the Pañcaśikha figure. Śakra does

not appear in distinctive form in this relief. Either he appears as one of the devas who wait at the cave or his figure has been lost or he was not represented at all. The presence of the Buddha is indicated by an altar canopied by an umbrella from which hang two garlands. Rocks are piled above the altar indicating a rocky grotto which is polished inside. A small Indrasāla tree is shown on the upper ridge of the cave growing amongst the rocks. Two monkeys sit on rocks above the cave and two bears look out from piles of rocks.

Two different reliefs dealing with this event appear at Sāñchī. In the first (figure 5), the cave is rendered at the top of the panel in a manner similar to that found at Bhārhut but with an arched front and flames issuing from the rocks at the top.⁹⁷ Mountain goats on the right and lions on the left replace the monkeys and bears from Bhārhut. Pañcaśikha appears on the right with his harp. Inside the cave a small tree grows in front of which is an altar indicating the Buddha's presence. Śakra cannot be recognized by any particular attribute or headdress. However, it may be supposed that he is the central figure of the ten figures representing the devas who appear in two rows below the cave wearing the Āndhra type turban. This central figure is slightly larger than the others of this group, and stands, with his back to the spectator in an attitude of reverent supplication. This relief is one of the most elaborate and detailed treatments of this particular event. The second relief at Sāñchī dealing with this event does so very minimally: only the outline of the grotto can be deciphered.⁹⁸

A relief at Bodh Gayā which dates from the first century B.C.E., represents this event also.⁹⁹ The cave is indicated in the usual manner, but, a step and railing have been added externally. An altar without an umbrella indicates the Buddha's presence. To the right of the cave is what appears to be a tree. To the left is Pañcaśikha holding his harp. Śakra is not represented.

The identifying iconographic features of this event are fixed at Bhārhut and Sañchī. They are: the cave, the presence of the Sāla tree, and the figure of Pañcaśikha. The inscription identifies the Bhārhut relief and the above elements, also present at Bhārhut, denote the scene in most subsequent reliefs. The presence of Śakra can only be inferred from the texts. If he is represented, he appears as one of the figures in front of the cave at Bhārhut and is at Sañchī the central figure in the upper row. Distinguishing attributes of other figures are lacking except with respect to Pañcaśikha. It is this figure whose presence alone in the Bodh Gayā relief suffices to recall the event. The animals above the cave indicate the wildness of the area and the flames issuing from the rocks at Sañchī correspond with the description of the cave in the Sakka pañha Suttanta.¹⁰⁰ The tree which appears in most of the reliefs may be indicative of the name of the cave, Indrasālaguhā.

The subject of this event as indicated in the texts and the reliefs is an affirmation of faith by the god Śakra. The implication is clear: The desirability of the Buddhist doctrine is emphasized in

that even the king of the gods, once he has heard the answers of the Master, is unable to resist capitulation. Śakra simply becomes hereafter a staunch supporter of the new faith. This mythic mode of affirmation regarding faith (Śakra affirms the Buddhist doctrine) has its historical correlative in the Harivamśa¹⁰¹ with respect to the confrontation between Indra and Kṛṣṇa. As noted, in that event Indra responds to Kṛṣṇa's interference with violence and accepts Kṛṣṇa's superiority only when he is proven unsuccessful. In the Buddhist context it is Śakra who takes the initiative in seeking out the Buddha for answers to his questions. After having heard the answers and perceiving them to be true he affirms the Buddha's superior wisdom. Śakra's actions here testify to his nature as a thinking moral being.

This is reminiscent thematically of the visit of Indra and Verocana to Prajāpati recorded in the Chāndogya Upanisad.¹⁰² The purpose of the visit in Pāli and Hindu texts is to seek instruction. It is therefore suggested by narrative example that the reader seek out the truth of the claim contained in the texts rather than rely on secondary sources. Indeed, what better example could one follow than that of a god to whom one is devoted?

The inscription of this episode at Bhārhut is of course critical to an understanding of the narrative event in which it figures. Because of the nature of Prakṛt, the inscribed words can be read in two different ways: either as Indra sālā gubā (or the cave of the Indra sāl tree); or Indra śaila gubā (or the rocky cavern of Indra). In

both cases the inscription is explanatory. As Indra sālā guhā, it would refer to the tree which appears in most of the reliefs in early Buddhist art which treat this event. This same expression occurs in several passages of the Dīgha Nikāya of the Pāli Canon.¹⁰³ As Indra śaila guhā or Indra sila guhā, it would refer to the rock cave in which the altar representing the Buddha appears. These particular words, Indra sila guhā, appear in an inscription of a relief dealing with this event on a later Buddhist site at Ghosrāwa in Bihār.¹⁰⁴ The name Indraśailaguhā is also used by the Chinese Pilgrims Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang (In-to-lo-shi-lo-kia-ho-shan).¹⁰⁵

Keeping the Indra/Śakra relationship in mind, the words Indra śaila guhā take on an interesting light in the framework of the development of this relationship, and of the relationship between the Vedic and the Buddhist historical periods. If indeed the meaning of the inscription is 'the cavern of Indra', one would expect to find Indra represented in the cave. We do not. Rather it is the altar representing the presence of the Buddha that takes this position in the cave. The Buddha has taken Indra's designated place. Indra has thus been displaced passively, as what had been his is now the Buddha's. If he is indeed among the devotees in the relief, he has been displaced actively, as his act of pilgrimage is implicative of his acquiescence to the Buddha. Devotees had praised Indra; now Indra praises the Buddha. In this context, this is not only an affirmation of the Buddha's supremacy but an affirmation of Indra's loss of supremacy.

Divyāvadāna, the Dhammapada Commentary, the travels of Fa-hsien, and Hsüan-tsang.¹⁰⁹ In all of these accounts of this event, the main points of the story remain the same although the details differ. The story according to the introduction of the Sarabha miga Jātake is as follows.

After having performed the miracles at Śrāvastī, of multiplying his person while walking in the air, the Buddha ascends to Trayastrimśa heaven in order to teach the gods. There he remains until the festival is over. He then descends to earth at Saṅkiśa by means of a stairway which was constructed by the architect Viśvakarma at the command of Śakra. It is a single stairway with three parallel divisions: one of gems, one of silver, and one of gold. Śakra, who carries a bowl and robe, Suyama, who bears a yak's tail fan, and Brahmā, who carries a sunshade, as well as the deities of the ten thousand spheres, pay homage to him. Having descended, the Master questions his disciples and then declares the Law to the entire company.

On the west gate of Bhārhut is a relief of the great ladder by which the Buddha descended (figure 6).¹¹⁰ This ladder is portrayed as a triple flight of stone steps. At the top of the middle ladder is one footprint engraved with a wheel indicating the Buddha's teachings to the gods in Trayastrimśa heaven. There is an identical footprint at the bottom of the middle ladder indicating the preaching of the law to those spectators who were present at his descent. This group of spectators appears in three rows to the left of the ladder wearing

The Buddha asserts himself as master of Indra who himself had been master of the gods. Moreover we may draw some inferences from the labeling of the relief as Indra Śaila guhā when in fact we know from textual evidence that the event deals with the god Śakra.

This voluntary act of accession to the Buddhist Dharma is governed by ethics and morality. The demand to choose what is right (in this case Buddhism) renders Śakra an agent of morality.¹⁰⁶ In the Vedic age, the emphasis in the character of Indra is not on the moral aspect of his actions: he slays demons because he likes to slay demons. As Śakra acts in favor of good, he is not the Indra of the Vedic period but is rather Indra in a Buddhist context. He is seen here as an esteemed figure. Śakra is a being who willingly acts in favor of Buddhist truth; and remains both a staunch supporter of the new faith and a devotee of the Buddha.¹⁰⁷

It is in this role that he appears overwhelmingly in later Buddhism. The reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut and the corresponding texts which represent this event in the present life of the Buddha are among the earliest indications of his career in the Buddhist context.

The Descent at Sañkiśa (or Samkāśya)

Another story in which Śakra plays a role and which is depicted at Sāñchī and Bhārhut is that of the descent of the Buddha (devāvatara) from travastrimśa at Sañkiśa. This event is related in the preamble to the Sarabha miga Jātaka and functions as a story of the present life of the Buddha.¹⁰⁸ It also occurs in later texts: the

turbans identical to those of the flying figures above, i.e., the Āndhra-type turban. In the upper portion of the relief, two to the left and one to the right of the ladder, appear three flying figures. A tree grows to the right hand side of the ladder and under it is a seat which is covered with lotus marks and is canopied by an umbrella from which hang garlands. In front of and to the right of this seat is a group of individuals who sit with joined hands and who are, one would assume, listening to the words of the Master. They wear turbans of two types: a nondescript turban, or one of the Āndhra-type turbans. This mixture of turban types would imply that the group is either composed of men and royal personages or men and deities.

A relief similar to the above is found at Sāñchī (figure 7). The ladder is here constructed without divisions. Above the ladder, the sermon of the Buddha to the gods is represented: six seated divinities, two of whom play a drum, surround a tree which is surmounting a seat. At the bottom of the ladder is another seat surmounted by a tree. On either side of this are small human figures. In the middle of the relief between these two similar groupings and on either side of the ladder appear two rows of deities wearing royal Āndhra-type turbans who accompany the Buddha on his descent. These deities are larger in stature than the group of human figures appearing at the bottom of the ladder. (Size is a common indicator in the reliefs at Sāñchī and is used to denote degree of importance. Generally, the largest figures are deities.)

In the relief the Buddha is depicted as teaching the gods in Trayastrimśa heaven, descending from that heaven, and teaching again on earth. Although in other reliefs heavens are depicted, this event is the first event represented at Sāñchī which does not take place on earth but in heaven.

The task of identifying either Śakra or Brahmā amongst the deities who appear in these reliefs is impossible. The above mentioned texts (which are later in date) in which the Descent at Sankīśa is recorded affirm the presence of Śakra and Brahmā at this event. However, neither the relief at Sāñchī nor the relief at Bhārhut give us clear iconographic evidence of their presence. What is identifiable in these reliefs are figures who represent deities. Later textual versions of this event - the texts used by the sculptures of the Gandhāra period as referents to this event - clearly specify not only Śakra's and Brahmā's presence but their position relative to the Buddha as well. The reliefs at Gandhāra actually represent the physical form of the Buddha and, in the reliefs which depict this event, place a recognizable Śakra to his left and Brahmā to his right. This iconographic format which appears elsewhere at Gandhāra becomes in later Gandhāran reliefs the format chosen to represent the Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas.¹¹¹ Hence, as both the later Buddhist texts and the reliefs at Gandhāra representing this scene give specific information regarding the presence of Śakra and Brahmā at this event, and as the texts of the early Buddhist Canon refer to their presence at this event, we can assume that, however unidentifiable they are, Śakra and

Brahmā are present in the reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut which deal with this present life of the Buddha.

In addition, it should be noted that these reliefs at Sāñchī and Bhārhut are both preceded by reliefs identifiable as the miracle at Śrāvastī. If one credits the later Divyāvadana as the referent for the Śrāvastī reliefs, as does Foucher, then the tale must have been concurrent with the execution of this relief.¹¹² The Divyāvadana specifies that the Buddha is flanked by Śakra and Brahmā. In these early Buddhist reliefs of the miracle of Śrāvastī, figures recognizable as deities appear on either side of the Buddha. As this event is the preamble to the descent at Sañkīśa in the Sarabha miga Jātaka, the two events are part of one larger unit. So must the reliefs be viewed. Two of the acolytes in both of the reliefs dealing with these two events at Sāñchī and Bhārhut are representations of Śakra and Brahmā.¹¹³

The iconographic Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā motif has been clearly established neither at Sāñchī nor at Bhārhut. As it has been established however, that Śakra and Brahmā figure in the texts in some form and attendant to the Buddha, this relationship is implied iconographically at this early date. The position of the two figures relative to the Buddha, though, has not been fixed.

The absolute excellence of the Buddha would of course not be indicated if he were represented with earthly attendants only. The notion of attendant implies service and protection. These in fact are the two characteristics that Śakra is imbued with and which are

exemplified by the Pāli Canon with respect to the Buddha and his followers.¹¹⁴ Devas appearing attendant to the Buddha further enhance the position of the Buddha himself. How could mere men oppose a figure whose well-being is safeguarded by not only devas but devas who are in his service?

Devas, specifically Śakra, respond to exceptional acts of goodness and asceticism and grant favors to the wise. The permanent allegiance which Śakra exhibits towards the Buddha is, however, textually unprecedented. The Epic texts, Indra responds reluctantly when summoned by exceptional ṛsis and in one case attempts to dissuade a seer from practising tapas.¹¹⁵ In Buddhist legend Śakra does at one point in the Alambusa Jātaka attempt to dissuade a seer from doing so; however, he realizes his folly and subsequently repents.¹¹⁶ In general, Śakra does not question the authority of Buddhist doctrine. Rather, praise and homage are in order. Brahmā and Śakra textually and by iconographic implication honor the Buddha by accompanying him on his descent to earth. Their presence with the Buddha is to become even more commonplace, particularly in later iconography.

Miscellaneous Representations of Śakra

Śakra figures in certain early reliefs other than those previously described. These are: heavenly scenes, or the scenes of Śakra's heaven; the visits of Śakra and Brahmā; and at Bodh Gayā, Śakra as Śānti.

Heavenly Scenes

There is at Sāñchī a non-narrative representation of the worlds of the devas which has no particular textual source (figure 8).¹¹⁷ The relief is divided into three compartments, each divided by carved pillars and each representing one of the six Kāṃavacāra heavens. In each of these central compartments is a figure wearing an early Āndhra-type turban, holding a vajra in his right hand, and an amṛta flask in his left. Seated next to him is a figure identified as a crown prince.¹¹⁸ It is the upper compartment, which represents Trayastrimśa, over which Śakra resides properly and immediately presides. The type in all of the central compartments is Śakra. He wears the headdress of royalty, carries an amṛta flask as in the Śyāma Jātaka and the vajra as in the Vessantara Jātaka. These latter attributes, the vajra and the flask of amṛta, are specific to Śakra at Sāñchī.

In addition to this relief of the heavens, there is a relief at Sāñchī representing Śakra's heaven. The subject of the relief is the Turban-relic festival. The festivities revolve around the Turban of the bodhisattva which was discarded at the time when he renounced life in the palace. The discarded turban was rescued by Śakra who carried it to Trayastrimśa where it was enshrined.¹¹⁹ The turban depicted is like that worn by Śakra (of the usual Āndhra-type) and is the focal point of the relief. Deities pay homage to it and apsarases, who dwell in Śakra's heaven, dance below. In a relief adjacent to this an elephant with two riders appears.¹²⁰ It has unfortunately been damaged and no attributes have survived which would

render a positive identification possible, but the two riders may be Śakra and his wife Sacī hastening themselves to Trayastrimśā for the festival. A similar scene representing the festival appears at Bhārhut although no distinctive attributes are apparent.¹²¹

Visits of Brahmā and Śakra

According to the Pāli Canon, Śakra and Brahmā visited the Buddha several times.¹²² On one occasion they did so after the Enlightenment in order to persuade the Buddha to preach the Dharma. This has prompted Marshall to identify Śakra and Brahmā in two reliefs at Sāñchī as among the gods appearing there.¹²³ However, as Śakra and Brahmā lack identifying features as part of the group of deities wearing Āndhra-type turbans, it must be from textual evidence alone that Marshall makes this assumption.

Śakra as Śānti

One finds at Bodh Gayā a relief of Śakra disguised as Śānti, the gardener. Śānti offered Kuśa grass to the Blessed One who then sat beneath the Bodhi tree. The figure wears the cylindrical crown of Śakra and holds the grass in his hand.¹²⁴

Conclusion

Śakra appears in a variety of iconographic motifs at the early Buddhist monuments. Some general observations may be made regarding the sites themselves as well as specific observations regarding Śakra.

The reliefs at both Sāñchī and Bhārhut are executed with little regard for the three-dimensional medium with which the artist has to work. Scenes are jammed together with little attempt to separate the episodes in a single story nor to place figures or objects in perspective. The events are depicted in detail: little is left to the imagination of the spectator. Reliefs are designed to illustrate specific stories and take the form of continuous narratives. They have, so to speak, no independent existence: one must know the content of the texts themselves to make the reliefs meaningful. The tales are designed to be instructive. The detail and the inscriptions found at Bhārhut insure correct identification. Not all the reliefs are inscribed, perhaps because Bhārhut represents a transitional stage in which identifying inscriptions became optional. It is because of the abundance of Jātakas represented that Bhārhut is said to have been in the mainstream of the Jātaka tradition.¹²⁵ At Sāñchī the inscriptions are altogether lacking: the iconographic form which depicts the events had become familiar enough so as to allow for their elimination.

Because of the dearth of artistic representations from the pre-Buddhist period, it is at Sāñchī that Śakra is first depicted in a distinctly identifiable form. Thus what has previously been an entirely textual and ritual presence becomes in Buddhism an iconographic one as well. Śakra thus becomes a concrete iconographic personage. His iconographic representations are distinguished by the following variables: he appears in diverse situations, i.e., the

Jātakas, Indrasāla guhā, the descent at Saṅkiśa, and in heavenly scenes; his presence is indicated by his headdress; he often appears with distinctive attributes (the vajra and/or the jar of amṛta) and he often appears simply as a figure amidst a crowd of other figures. In all cases Śakra appears as a figure secondary to the Buddha. He is in early Buddhist iconography depicted as a royal figure. In some reliefs his heavenly nature is indicated by his position in mid-air (Śyāma Jātaka). This device, coupled with a halo, identifies this figure as a god in the later reliefs at Gandhāra.

Śakra's role in the Jātakas is that of the protector or guardian angel. Śakra as guardian angel is not however identical to Śakra as attendant of the Buddha. Only a hint of the role in which Śakra acts in consort to the Buddha is contained in the reliefs at Sāñchī (specifically the descent at Saṅkiśa and the miracle at Śrāvastī). It is, however, verified by subsequent reliefs at Gandhāra and Mathurā dealing with this very event.

The notion of attendance implies devotion. Śakra at the time of his conversion (Indraśailaguhā) declares his devotion to the Buddha. The direction this devotion takes is reflected by Śakra an attendant of the Buddha. In proclamation of the truth which the Buddha proclaims he actively accompanies him through most of the major events in the life of the Buddha and on which Buddhist legend focuses. In later iconography at Gandhāra this characteristic is emphasized.

By the time of the execution of the reliefs at Bhārhut, Sāñchī, and Bodh Gaya, Śakra's character is specifically Buddhist in context, i.e., as these are Buddhist reliefs, this is a Buddhist god. However, these reliefs show us that a certain degree of similarity exists between the Vedic god Indra and the Buddhist god Śakra. Continuity is established in terms of Śakra's ability to disguise himself, his sovereignty over the heaven of the thirty-three (Buddhist Trayast-rimśa), his response to great acts of virtue, and his granting of favors to the virtuous. Indra proceeds in such actions with some reluctance. Although traces of this reluctance in the activities of Śakra are hinted at in Buddhist sources, in general, his favors are granted automatically: he is a god striving for righteousness. The moral aspect of Śakra's actions is emphasized in the Pāli Canon while the moral aspect of Indra's actions in pre-Buddhist stories is only occasionally intimated. The Jātakas in which Śakra is mentioned favor this role. Śakra then is not just Indra transposed into the Buddhist tradition but is Indra transformed in the Buddhist context. Śakra has attained the position of a moral being via moral actions and he is bound to act accordingly in Buddhist tales. The specifically Buddhist aspects of his personality, while remaining characteristic of Śakra, will undergo a further transformation which is recorded in the later Buddhist art at Gandhāra and Mathurā.

CHAPTER THREE

ŚAKRA IN THE ART OF GANDHĀRĀ AND MATHURĀ

The figure of Śakra continues to evolve both textually and iconographically from the first to the third century C.E. in correspondence with the continuous development from Hinayāna to Mahāyāna Buddhism to be shown below. He appears at Gandhāra and Mathurā in the same Jātakas and scenes from the life of the Buddha in which he was represented at Sāñchī and Bhārhut. But he is depicted here not only in additional scenes from these narratives but also in situations removed from any narrative context. His iconography is unique: he wears a cylindrical headdress and, frequently, bears attributes which are specific to him. As Śakra's identification is at Gandhāra and Mathurā unmistakable, in the representations of the Miracle at Śrāvastī and of the Descent at Sañkīśa, at these two sites the two figures flanking the Buddha which could only be textually identified in the reliefs of these events at Sāñchī and Bhārhut, can here iconographically be identified as Śakra and Brahmā. Hence it is here for the first time in Buddhist iconography that the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad is encountered. Śakra removed from the world of the Jāataka Tales is now an independent figure adoring the Buddha. This triad will alter in time, but it sets the pattern for much of later Buddhist iconography.

There is in addition a vajra-bearing figure appearing ad infinitum in Gandhāran art who is related to Śakra. This figure too under-

goes transformation in time but remains an important figure in later Buddhist art.

It remains now to examine the new figure of Śakra from Gandhāra and Mathurā in the light of historical and religious developments of the period.

Historical Details Regarding Style

In the early centuries of the present era (C.E.) there arose in India new and prolific art forms at Gandhāra in the northwest and Mathurā, to the south. It is in this period that Mahāyāna Buddhism was beginning to claim supremacy in India. The art forms at Gandhāra and Mathurā cannot exclusively be labeled as products of Mahāyāna Buddhism but represent a curious mixture of the older (Hinayāna) and the new (Mahāyāna). Gandhāran and Mathurān artists maintained a continuity with earlier representations, the same scenes being represented with the same elements present. Jātaka tales continue to be represented as do scenes in the life of the Buddha. The former, however, are represented less frequently than the latter. The number of the scenes of the life of the Buddha increases as does the number of elements of which they are composed. In addition, it is at this time that the first image of the Buddha in human form is fashioned, in Gandhāran reliefs with a decidedly Hellenistic appearance and in Mathurā in a more indigenous style.

It is in this period that the Kushans came to power in the northern portion of the Indian subcontinent and became patrons of

Buddhism and, by extension, Buddhist art. The Kushan empire maintained trade connections with the empires of Rome and China. The coming of the Kushans corresponds in time to the rise of these distinctly new art forms (e.g., images of the Buddha) which became standardized forms later spreading to the Far East.

Foreign elements are therefore commonplace in the art of Gandhāra, although less frequent at Mathurā. One need not explore the web of intricate arguments which pervades the question of the origination of forms at Gandhāra and Mathurā. There were even at Sāñchi elements of foreign origin; foreign elements in the art of Gandhāra simply become more numerous. The art of both Gandhāra and Mathurā remains, however, Buddhist in theme and predominantly Indian in conception. Many of these depictions by the end of the Gandhāran period (fourth century C.E.) have become rigid traditional forms from which artists rarely deviate.

Identifying Features

Śakra appears invariably in the art of Gandhāra and Mathurā in the garb of a royal figure and wearing either one of two types of headdresses: the cylindrical headdress (which is often bejewelled or is decorated with a symmetrical crisscrossing of bands [Figure 9]) or the Kushan type turban or royalty (identified by a symmetrical crossing of narrow bands of material above the forehead which are drawn through and knotted about a circular or oval metal plate placed on the crest). Additionally, he may be represented as holding a vajra, sporting a

moustache, or wearing earrings and a necklace.

As the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad is to become of increasing importance in the art of later periods we would do well to be aware of Brahmā's distinguishing characteristics as well. He can be most often identified by his coiffure which is worn with hair loose and a knot, (jata) symbolic of an ascetic, on top. His clothing is scanty and not infrequently does he carry the water bottle (kamandalu) usually associated with holy men.

Jātakas and Scenes from the Present Life of the Buddha

The content and scope of the large number of scenes in the life of the Buddha and certain Jātakas executed at this time are more extensive than that found at Sāñchī. Certain new Jātakas are introduced to the iconographic repertoire. Increasing attention is paid to the life of the Buddha in reliefs, and corresponding texts were compiled in this period devoted to the story of the Buddha. Specifically, episodes which had appeared in various texts of the Pāli Canon concerning the life of the Master were now written as a unified textual account of the life of the Buddha. These texts are the Buddhacarita written by Aśvaghosa, the Lalitavistara, and the Mahāvastu. All three texts are invaluable aids in deciphering Gandhāran reliefs.

Whether it is the case that new art forms preceded and hence influenced the descriptions of events in these texts as Grünwedel maintains¹²⁶ or that the texts preceded and hence influenced the composition

of the reliefs is a moot point. Both texts and iconography arose within the prevailing spirit of Buddhism. They are interdependent and developed contemporaneously. We shall not consider here the texts concerning the life of the Buddha and the reliefs which give them form, but rather utilize both in an attempt to discover the developing role of Śakra.

Jātakas

The Jātakas are represented at Gandhāra far less frequently than the scenes of the life of the Buddha. Those in which Śakra plays a role and in which he is represented in distinctive form are as follows.

Śibi Jātaka ¹²⁷

In his birth as King Śibi, the bodhisattva displays his excellence by saving a pigeon who is being pursued by a sparrow hawk. As compensation Śibi offers the hawk a portion of his own flesh equal to the weight of the pigeon. Scales are brought and the pigeon is placed on one side. The pigeon, however, magically grows heavier as Śibi's flesh is added. The scales balance only when Śibi's whole body has been given and it is at this point that Śakra intervenes and brings an end to this sacrifice.

A relief representing this tale is found in Gandhāra.¹²⁸

Śakra watches the scene with his right hand raised above the scale apparently preparing to control the ending. He wears his distinctive

cylindrical crown and carries the vajra in his left hand. The halo with which he is adorned is a device found in Gandhāra, being seen only in representations of the Buddha and devas.

Dīpaṅkara Jataka¹²⁹

The bodhisattva is born as the brahman Megha at the time of Dīpaṅkara Buddha. Megha pays homage to Dīpaṅkara and Dīpaṅkara predicts that he will become a Buddha in the future.

On a stele from Shotorak (second to third century C.E.), Dīpaṅkara Buddha is standing with his right hand in abhayamudrā (figure 10). Megha appears twice: once carrying a water vase and once prostrating himself at the feet of the Buddha. Śakra and Brahmā appear above on either side of the Buddha carrying parasols and paying homage to him. Śakra wears his cylindrical crown and Brahmā the locks of a brahman ascetic.

Vessantara and Śyāma Jātaka¹³⁰

Unfortunately many of the reliefs of these tales are fragmentary or only represent certain scenes in the stories.¹³¹ Śakra does not always appear.¹³² One relief found at Taxila portrays Śakra in the Śyāma Jataka much as he appeared at Sañchī, carrying the jar of ambrosia and wearing his cylindrical crown.¹³³ However, here in Gandhāra the crown is without the laterally projecting wings.

Kumbha Jātaka¹³⁴

In addition to these Gandhāran representations of the Jātakas,

an interesting contemporary representation of the Kumbha Jātaka appears in the later reliefs at Bodh Gayā.¹³⁵ Śakra is responsible for a discourse on the evils of drink. The king to whom he speaks is dissuaded from drinking and all ends well.

One can only wonder at the soma-slurping hero of the Vedas who now figures as a proselytizing abstainer. The relief here, dated in the second century, C.E., is illustrative of the need for abstinence and hence the need for restraint. This transformation of Śakra can be viewed as evidence of his now fully Buddhist character.

Scenes in the Present Life

The Birth

Scenes from this event appear at Sāñchī and Bhārhut where they possess features which are to remain constant, i.e., they become iconographic hallmarks of the event. Primarily, identification of the nativity is established with reference to the figure of the mother, Māyā, who is clinging to the branch of a tree with her right hand, the bodhisattva issuing from her right side.

At the earlier sites, the presence of the Buddha is indicated only by symbols while in the several Gandhāran and Mathurān representations he appears in human form, sometimes with a halo, sometimes without. In attendance at the birth at Sāñchī and Bhārhut there are several figures, none of whom have distinguishing characteristics, while at Gandhāra and Mathurā the birth scene is represented with a variety of figures in attendance. In the context of this event Śakra

takes the following forms.

In certain reliefs the figure who receives the child is haloed although he does not wear a cylindrical crown.¹³⁶ Grünwedel has identified this figure as Śakra in the relief from Loriyan Tangai. The same figure appears with neither crown nor halo in certain reliefs.¹³⁷

An identifiable Śakra receives the child on a sacred cloth in a relief from the first century C.E. at Gandhāra in reliefs from the second century¹³⁸ (see also figures 11, 12), and in one from Benares, third century C.E.¹³⁹ while Brahmā stands to the left. Śakra wears his distinctive cylindrical crown and holds the sacred cloth. Brahmā can be identified by his typical coiffure (figure 11). In the relief from Benares Śakra kneels to receive the child.

According to textual sources, both Śakra and Brahmā are present at the birth.¹⁴⁰ In one case devas are said to have received him.¹⁴¹

The pilgrim Hsüan-tsang tells us definitely that Śakra received the bodhisattva.¹⁴² The identification of Śakra by Hsüan-tsang and in the Gandhāran and Benares relief is certain. It is probable, therefore, given textual confirmation and given the immediately preceding verifiable identifications from reliefs of this period, that the unidentifiable figure in reliefs of the nativity is Śakra. In any case, it is certain that, although there is some textual confusion as to who received the child, Śakra and Brahmā are present at the event.

The first Days of the bodhisattva

There are two events in which Śakra figures after the birth

of the bodhisattva: the seven steps taken by the child in declaration of his Buddhahood, and the bath of the newly born infant.

In four of the Gandhārah reliefs representing the birth, the child is shown twice (e.g. figure 12):¹⁴³ once issuing from his mother's side and once in a standing position. This second representation of the child is in reference to the seven steps he was believed to have taken at birth.¹⁴⁴ Śakra's participation is confirmed by the Phū Yau King.¹⁴⁵ However, of the four representations employing this motif, it is only a relief from Swāt that Śakra's presence can be iconographically verified with specific reference to this event.¹⁴⁶ Here he appears with his cylindrical headdress, standing to the left of the child and holding his vajra in his right hand. Brahmā appears on the right of the child holding a water vessel (kamandalu).

At least four reliefs from Gandhāra illustrate the first bath of the bodhisattva.¹⁴⁷ Śakra and Brahmā stand respectively on the left and right behind the child and pour holy water from flasks over him. In three representations, Śakra wears his cylindrical headdress and carries a vajra in his left hand (e.g. figure 13). In one relief Śakra carries a vajra and wears a Kushan-type turban (see figure 14). Brahmā is figured wearing his characteristic coiffure.

The Buddhacarita states that two streams of water from heaven bathe the child but does not specify the source of this water.¹⁴⁸ In the Mahāvastu two pitchers of water simply appear in the sky for this purpose.¹⁴⁹

It is only in the later Chinese Phū Yau King that Śakra and Brahmā "cause water to flow for washing" the child.¹⁵⁰ Yet their presence is clearly indicated in at least these three reliefs of the event dated first to third century C.E. Hence, Śakra and Brahmā's presence at this early date confirm that in the early centuries C.E. Śakra and Brahmā's activities in this sphere were well known. From available evidence it would seem therefore that Śakra's and Brahmā's iconographic presence in the early Gandhāran period pre-dates their textual participation. Perhaps this is one instance of art supplying details for textual descriptions.

The Gods Entreat the Buddha to Preach

This event takes place after the enlightenment. The Buddhacarita¹⁵¹ and Saddharmapundarika¹⁵² state that Brahmā requested that the Buddha teach. The Lalitavistara ascribes this action to both Śakra and Brahmā.¹⁵³

The several reliefs representing this event depict the two figures in an attitude of entreaty on either side of the Buddha. In some cases they are haloed¹⁵⁴ and in others they are not.¹⁵⁵

Brahmā is identifiable by his coiffure in all these reliefs and his presence is verified by all texts referring to this event. On the basis of the Lalitavistara one can only suppose that the other figure, who is dressed in royal attire and who is otherwise unidentifiable, is Śakra.

The Visit of Śakra

There are a variety of reliefs which depict Śakra's visit to the Buddha at Indraśailaguhā. All of these take the characteristic form first encountered at Sāñchī and Bhārhut (figures 4,5): the cave has an arched front; animals inhabit the regions above the cave; Śakra often appears to the left of the cave. The symbol which designated the presence of the Buddha at Sāñchī and Bhārhut is now replaced by the figure of the seated Buddha himself. The most distinctive element in the reliefs is the presence of the harpist Pañcaśikha who appears to the right of the cave. In other reliefs the scene can be identified by the large arched cave with the Buddha seated in meditation, Pañcaśikha on the right, and several figures on either side.

The scene appears at both Gandhāra and Mathurā. In a relief from Loriyan Tangai Śakra appears wearing his cylindrical headdress on the left of the cave accompanied by his followers, one of whom holds an umbrella over his head. Pañcaśikha appears on the right (figure 15).

Śakra appears in this same position wearing his cylindrical headdress in a Gandhāran relief in Lahore (figure 16). In other representations from Gandhāra, Śakra is indistinguishable although he may be one of the figures represented there (figure 17).¹⁵⁶

At Mathurā, Śakra appears wearing his cylindrical headdress and in a posture of worship to the Buddha's left.¹⁵⁷ In these reliefs Śakra appears (once seated crosslegged) with an elephant (perhaps Airāvata). The Mathurā reliefs are much simpler than those of Gandhāra but when Śakra is identifiable he appears on the left of the cave with

his hands in an añjali or devotional pose.

The legend underlying this scene, as noted in chapter two, appears in a variety of texts which specifically confirm Śakra's presence and his visit to the cave where the Buddha is residing. The number of reliefs depicting the tale of Śakra's visit to the Buddha at Indrasālaguhā reflect its degree of importance in the Buddhist tradition and the popularity it claimed. Indeed those Gandhāran depictions in which the Buddha appears in a large arched cave in the center of the relief have caused Gaulier to remark on the similarity between these and the statues of the Buddha in Central Asia: placed in arches dug in the pillars of rock shrines and surrounded by rock-work, may be they are allusions to the cave depicted in these reliefs.¹⁵⁸

In the scenes in the life of the Buddha in which Śakra figures and which were discussed above, one can perceive a general trend in Gandhāran and Mathurān art. As Foucher notes there is "seemingly infinite multiplication of episodes borrowed from the youth and teaching career of the Master whose corporeal image occupies the centre of the compositions".¹⁵⁹ Śakra appears in many scenes in which he was not visibly present in earlier reliefs. The Buddha retains the primary position in the reliefs but is no longer surrounded by featureless devotees: Śakra is distinctly represented.

Figures other than the Buddha have evidently at this time become worthy of the attention and esteem of the sculptors. Śakra appears in situations which signify some degree of change in the

Buddhist tradition. The iconographic and textual representations of the Buddha in the company of a distinctly identifiable Śakra and a distinctly identifiable Brahmā point to both a confirmed elevation of the status of Śakra and Brahmā in their direct association with the Buddha and to the primacy of the Buddha relative to all deities.

The events described in this section do not exhaust Śakra's role in Buddhist iconography of this date. Other reliefs of the life of the Buddha in which Śakra figures are described in the following sections as they relate specifically to Śakra in one of the two roles in which he becomes significant. These two roles are: Śakra as a vajra-bearer in his relationship to the yakṣa Vajrapāni; and Śakra in the role of attendant to the Buddha.

Śakra and Vajrapāni

A figure carrying a vajra usually occupies a position to the left of the Buddha in the art of Gandhāra. This vajra-bearer also appears in reliefs from Mathurā, though less frequently. He is variously identified as Śakra, or the yakṣa Vajrapāni, or simply as a vajra-bearer. This figure is given two different representations, each of which evokes a particular mood. Either he appears as a rather ferocious figure, his hair wild, his physique muscular (e.g. figures 21, 22, 23, 27), or he appears as a benign, gentle, princely youth (e.g. figures 20, 25). Occasionally he is depicted wearing a lion skin and occasionally wearing a beard and moustache. In all cases he wields a vajra shaped rather like a small dumbbell which he either carries by its middle or

holds upright on his palm. Invariably he appears in close proximity to the Buddha, often directly over the Buddha's left shoulder.

Now, Śakra appears in the early reliefs at Sāñchī and in Gandhāran and Mathurān art bearing this weapon which is fashioned in exactly the same shape as that carried by the vajra-bearer (although sometimes the latter holds an elongated version of the implement). We can confirm Śakra's identification by the cylindrical headdress. Indeed, Śakra is the only figure at Sāñchī who bears such a weapon. This single iconographic form employed by two figures suggests that there is a relationship between the vajra-bearer in Gandhāran art and the Buddhist deity Śakra. The nature of this relationship is by no means direct and can be established only with reference to the specific reliefs and texts in which the vajra-bearer appears.

The Pāli texts are surprisingly silent on the subject of vajra-bearers.¹⁶⁰ A yakṣa Vajrapāṇi appears on two occasions in the sutras of the Pāli Canon. In the Ambatṭha Suttanta the Buddha asks Ambatṭha a question but the latter remains silent.¹⁶¹ The yakṣa Vajrapāṇi with his vajra, "a mighty mass of iron, all fiery, dazzling, all aglow",¹⁶² sounds in the air above Ambatṭha saying that if he does not respond he will splinter his head in several pieces. An identical situation is presented in the Cūlasaccakasutta when Satyaka Nirgranthaputra refused to respond to the Buddha.¹⁶³ With the exception of that of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, in which he appears on three occasions, the Vinayas make no mention of Vajrapāṇi.¹⁶⁴

Because of the similarity between the character of the yakṣa Vajrapāṇi and the character of Śakra, Buddhaghosa equates the two figures, suggesting that the yakṣa Vajrapāṇi is none other than the Buddhist deva Śakra.¹⁶⁵ However, Sénart and Bloch doubt this identification in that the vajra-bearer appears as a distinct figure in Gandhāran art and is mentioned in later texts quite apart from Śakra.¹⁶⁶ The implication of both Senart's and Bloch's work on this subject is that the yakṣa Vajrapāṇi, who appears in the Ambatṭha and Cūlasaccakasutta wherein Śakra is not mentioned, is the figure who brandishes the vajra in Gandhāran art, who appears as Vajrapāṇi in later texts, and who is unrelated to Śakra and belongs to the group of yakṣas. Representations of yakṣas do appear at Sāñchī and Bhārhut, however, it should be noted that none of the Sāñchī or Bhārhut yakṣas carry this weapon or even one resembling it.

There is an infinite number of yakṣas who occupy all spheres in Buddhist cosmology. Yakṣa itself is a flexible term which is often appended to a god's name.¹⁶⁷ Lamotte observes that the yakṣa Vajrapāṇi occupies the privileged position of guarding the gods of the thirty-three and is thus somewhat removed from the authority of Vaisravana, the king of the yakṣas.¹⁶⁸ As such, he is directly related to Śakra from whom he would also get the attribute of the vajra. Guhyakādhīpatih (Lord of the Guhyakas) is associated with Vajrapāṇi according to the Lalitavistara in that from Guhyakādhīpatih issued the race of yakṣas Vajrapāṇi.¹⁶⁹

Śakra, it must be remembered, appears in the Early Buddhist Pāli Canon in much the same capacity as the yakṣa Vajrapāṇi named in the Ambaṭṭha Suttanta. In the Sambula Jātaka, Śakra comes with his thunderbolt to frighten the goblin who harasses Sambula.¹⁷⁰ In the Khandahāla Jātaka Śakra frightens Khandahāla for trying to harm his son.¹⁷¹ Again, in the Ayakūta Jātaka, Śakra appears with his bolt to frighten the rakṣasas who come to kill the bodhisattva.¹⁷² The bolt is described in these accounts as a mass of fiery iron. This description is the same as that found of the bolt carried by the yakṣa Vajrapāṇi in the Pāli suttantas.¹⁷³

Now, because of the relative silence of early texts and art forms on the subject of this yakṣa Vajrapāṇi and because of the similarity between the weapon and the actions of Vajrapāṇi, it seems that Vajrapāṇi is a simple manifestation of Śakra in his role as a menacing divinity.

Śakra has the ability to take on various forms and is definitely recorded in the Avadānaśataka as taking the form of a Guhyaka in order to test the king Dharmagavesin.¹⁷⁴ The yakṣa Vajrapāṇi of the early period represented in the Pāli Canon and the reliefs of Bhārhut and and Sāñchī appears to be a metamorphic form of Śakra.

However, identification of Śakra with the yakṣa Vajrapāṇi does not appear to be the last state of evolution in Vajrapāṇi's character. In fact, Vajrapāṇi has become in the Gandhāran reliefs described below and in post-canonical literature (e.g. The Lalitavistara) an autonomous

being. No longer does he personify an aspect of Śakra's character but instead appears in juxtaposition to Śakra.¹⁷⁵ He is no longer simply a scarecrow destined to frighten the adversaries of the Buddha but has come to be, in Buddhism, the symbol of protection.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, he appears in many Gandhāran reliefs behind the Buddha as a protective genius. He frightens adversaries of the Buddha and Buddhist doctrine and is for this reason given menacing form.

The form given Vajrapāṇi in Gandhāran reliefs attests to his development as a personality distinct from Śakra. He is a half-clad, muscular figure with long (and often dishevelled) locks. His head is bare. He is never represented with a halo (see figures 18 to 27). This form is distinctly separate from the form given Śakra earlier at Sāñchī or at Gandhāra. Vajrapāṇi shares the vajra only with Śakra who, however, is otherwise entirely different. Śakra, it must be remembered, is dressed as a royal personage; he wears either a turban or his cylindrical headdress. He is fully dressed. Occasionally in this period he is represented with a halo. Identification of a vajra-bearer as either Vajrapāṇi or Śakra should thus not be difficult. In the following reliefs the figure holding the vajra lacks those characteristics we have come to recognize as the defining attributes of Śakra. He is thus Vajrapāṇi.

In reliefs of the event of the great departure, a figure bearing a vajra in his left hand stands to the left behind the bodhisattva (figure 19).¹⁷⁷ According to the Lalitavistara the gods present at

this event include Śakra and Vajrapāṇi.¹⁷⁸ The Mahāvastu records the presence of the deities of Trayastrīṃśa (i.e., Śakra and Vajrapāṇi),¹⁷⁹ and the Buddhacarita only records devas in general as being present.¹⁸⁰

As the texts record his presence, we may assume Śakra is among the group of deities represented. However, the figure situated behind and to the left of the Buddha does carry a vajra. He is not represented wearing the distinguishing cylindrical headdress, or even a Kushan-type turban, but, rather, is shown with curly hair. Hence he is not Śakra but must be Vajrapāṇi.

A vajra-bearer appears in the reliefs dealing with the first meeting of the Buddha with Brahmans (figure 20).¹⁸¹ The presence of either Śakra or Vajrapāṇi is not recorded in the Mahāvastu nor the Buddhacarita version of this event.¹⁸² The figure appears in two of the reliefs with a vajra in his right hand¹⁸³ and in another with the vajra in his left.¹⁸⁴ In this latter relief the figure wears a beard and moustache.

A figure appears bearing a vajra in a relief representing the offering of grass prior to enlightenment (figure 21).

The next event in which the vajra-bearer appears is that of the First Sermon. He is situated to the left of the Buddha (figure 22). Vajrapāṇi is not recorded in the texts as figuring in this event.

In the reliefs depicting the conversion of Kāśyapa, a figure bearing the vajra hovers over the left shoulder of the Buddha.¹⁸⁶ In the former relief cited he wears a beard, and in the latter he is

beardless but wears what appears to be a lionskin outfit.

One relief depicts the Buddha's preaching in Travastriṃśa in which a bearded figure holding the vajra appears to the right of the Buddha (figure 23).

In reliefs representing the miracle of Śrāvastī,¹⁸⁷ a figure bearing the vajra appears as recorded in later texts.¹⁸⁸

The vajra-bearers appear on a relief relating to the snake king Elephatra who appears before the Buddha in human form. The Buddha requires him to show himself in his true form but he is reluctant as he fears his enemy Garuda. The Buddha commands Vajrapāṇi to protect him and he does so. A small figure brandishes his thunderbolt threateningly while a second vajra-bearer walks behind the Buddha.¹⁸⁹

A vajra-bearer plays a significant role in the reliefs of the death of the Buddha. He figures in most of the reliefs of this event. Either he is in front of the couch fallen in despair, his vajra on the ground (figure 24),¹⁹⁰ or he is to the left of the couch with his right hand held up as if in despair (figure 25),¹⁹¹ or he is to the right behind the deceased Buddha who is prostrate.¹⁹²

It must be noted here that the Mahā Parinibbāna Suttanta in the Dīgha Nikāya of the Pāli Canon records an early version of the death of the Buddha in which Sakra recites specific stanzas in despair at the death of the Buddha.¹⁹³ In later texts both Śakra and Guhyaka Malla (another name for Vajrapāṇi),¹⁹⁴ sing stanzas in praise of the Buddha and despair over his death.¹⁹⁵ Hsüan-tsang notes that Vajrapāṇi, holding a mace, weeps at this event.¹⁹⁶

Texts record various plots devised by Devadatta, the cousin and rival of Śākyamuni, against the Buddha. On one occasion a great elephant, Nālāgiri, at Devadatta's instigation was let loose for the purpose of destroying the Buddha. There is an interesting though fragmented relief representing this event and in which a vajra-bearer appears hovering over the left shoulder of the Buddha (figure 27). Such a figure is not mentioned in the earliest texts recording this event.¹⁹⁷

In addition to these reliefs, there are several fragments on which a vajra-bearer appears.¹⁹⁸ He appears frequently in reliefs of the Buddha and his worshippers (e.g. figure 26).

These reliefs clearly indicate that the vajra-bearer is a separate entity from Śakra who also wields a vajra but is identified by his hat and princely garb. Nowhere at Sāñchī is Śakra represented as wearing a lionskin or with long dishevelled hair. In all the above cases the vajra-bearer is a fierce, protecting figure distinct from Śakra. This iconographic form may be prototypical of the later Bodhisattva Vajrapāni and certainly is the basis of the Nio who appear as fierce guardian figures in iconography in Japan and China. In any case at Gandhāra and Mathurā this figure has become the vajra-bearer par excellence.

Although Śakra still carries his vajra in the art of Gandharā and Mathurā, it is a non-functioning symbol rather than a weapon. In fact, the attribute of the vajra is not at all depicted in the context

of the isolated Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad. What had once been one of Śakra's prime attributes both textually and iconographically has been assumed by Vajrapāṇi who, it would appear, exhibits one aspect of Śakra's character. In the only two instances in which Vajrapāṇi is mentioned in the Pāli Canon of the early period he acts violently. He does not appear in any of the Sāñchī or Bārhut reliefs but plays a dominant role in the early Gandhāran period as a ferocious being. (These reliefs depict him in such intensity that he was at one time identified as Māra, the symbol of evil.)¹⁹⁹ There are numerous occasions in Pāli literature where Śakra appears in a violent capacity; however, he is featured primarily in iconography in a passive role. In the later Gandhāra period, Vajrapāṇi is still depicted as the fierce protector. Śakra in the later Gandhāran reliefs is never depicted in violent actions: there is no implication of violence even in his form.

Śakra and Brahmā Attend the Buddha

Of the several Gandhāran reliefs in which Śakra and Brahmā appear on either side of the Buddha, those representing events in the life of the Buddha correspond in theme to those found at Sāñchī and Bārhut. They depict the miracle at Śrāvastī, the descent at Sañkīśa, and the visits of Śakra and Brahmā. However similar the early Buddhist and later Buddhist reliefs are thematically, the Gandhāran representations exhibit for the first time a common motif: an identifiable Śakra and an identifiable Brahmā flanking the Buddha.

Descent at Saṅkiśa

The Gandhāran reliefs representing this scene retain a ladder as the focal position in the center of which is depicted the Buddha in human form. Śakra appears to the left of the Buddha wearing his cylindrical or Kushan-type crown and Brahmā on the right wearing the locks of a Brahmanical ascetic (figure 28).²⁰⁰

The texts generally affirm this configuration. Of those texts mentioned in chapter two with respect to this event, all affirm the presence of Śakra and Brahmā.²⁰¹ The introduction to the Sarabhamiga Jātaka, however, is silent regarding the position of the two deities relative to the Buddha. The Dhammapada Commentary places Śakra on the right of the Buddha and Brahmā on his left. Hsüan-tsang and the Divyāvadāna specify Śakra on the left and Brahmā on the right. There is obviously some confusion as to positions here. However, it is these latter texts which the reliefs confirm.

The attributes of both Śakra and Brahmā are also variable in the texts. Brahmā is mentioned carrying a chauri (parasol).²⁰² Śakra as carrying a parasol²⁰³ and a bowl and robe.²⁰⁴

Hsüan-tsang's concluding comment is of interest. Without doubting the reality of this event, he states that all three ladders had by his time disappeared and in their place had been constructed another single ladder. On the top of this, the people of the Saṅkiśa district had placed a Vihāra in which was a statue of Śakra and one of Brahmā flanking the Buddha.

Miracle at Śrāvastī

This event precedes the descent of Saṅkiśa in textual sources. The Buddha is said to have performed two miracles: he walks in the air emitting flames and waves, and he makes multiple images of himself. Following these events, he preaches the Law.²⁰⁵

It is only in the Divyāvadāna that Śakra and Brahmā take their place beside the Buddha.²⁰⁶ In this text it is recorded that after the first two miracles had been performed, the "Buddha conceived a mundane thought".²⁰⁷ The gods immediately rush forward to execute it. Śakra appears at his left while Brahmā takes his place on the right of the Buddha. The miracle which follows is that of duplication.

Foucher has dealt at length with the Gandhāran representations of the event.²⁰⁸ In those scenes which he identifies as the Miracle of Śrāvastī, he states that it is Śakra and Brahmā who appear on either side of the Buddha.²⁰⁹ The Buddha in these scenes is seated on an inverted lotus throne in a dhyanamudrā, or attitude of meditation. Foucher identifies these reliefs as the Miracle at Śrāvastī in that they incorporate various motifs: the Buddha often emits flames from his shoulders (see the miracle of fire), he appears in the dhyanamudrā on an inverted lotus. Śakra and Brahmā appear in the halo of the Buddha and carry umbrellas, and Śakra and Brahmā appear on either side of the Buddha.

However, Śakra wears his cylindrical crown in only some of the reliefs. As several represent the two devas on either side of

the Buddha as royal personages and often with halos, the identification of one of these figures as Śakra is permissible given the textual confirmation of the Divyāvadāna and given the definite identification of these figures in other reliefs of this period dealing with this event.

Isolated Representations

Other reliefs in which Śakra and Brahmā figure on either side of the Buddha may either reflect the adhyesana, the event in which Śakra and Brahmā implore the Buddha to preach, or they may simply be isolated depictions of this Śakra/Brahmā motif (figure 29).²¹⁰

The common element of Gandhāran reliefs depicting the Miracle at Śrāvastī and the Descent at Saṅkiśa is the motif of the Buddha flanked by Śakra and Brahmā. In these reliefs the Buddha demonstrates both his miraculous powers and his ability to abide in different realms (i.e., earth and heaven). Each of these events is depicted only once at Sañchī and only once at Bhārhut. In Gandhāra, they are depicted numerously. However, the early Buddhist reliefs depict neither a distinct iconographic Śakra nor a distinct iconographic Brahmā and represent the Buddha only symbolically (figure 6, 7). In Gandhāra we find Śakra and Brahmā taking distinctive form and the Buddha in human form. The obvious widespread popularity of the Buddha image in this period, coupled with the fact that the Buddha is no longer depicted symbolically but is personified, suggests that the

Buddha has indeed become not only, in the context of these reliefs, a transcendent being, but also a prime object of worship. That Śakra and Brahmā accompany the Buddha in these reliefs likewise implies their elevation to this status. Indeed, evidence of this is to be found in the Bīmarān relic casket and the casket of Kanishka, to be discussed below, where we find the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad isolated altogether from any narrative context.

Reliquary Caskets: Two Examples

Reliquary of Kanishka (figure 30)

The reliquary of Kanishka made of gilded brass, was discovered by Spooner at Shāh-jī-kī Dherī near Peshawar.²¹¹ There are three free-standing figures on the lid of the reliquary. The Buddha is seated on a slightly expanded lotus, the petals of which decorate the lid surface. Behind his head is a large halo decorated with flower petals. On either side of him appear two haloed figures with their hands in añjali poses, the attitude of devotion: to the right of the Buddha is Śakra with his customary cylindrical headdress, and to the left is Brahmā with a topknot on his head. On the lip of the lid of the reliquary is a frieze depicting geese. The side of the main body of this circular reliquary depicts Buddhas seated in meditation and two demi figures reposing in waves of garlands supported by garland bearers. A figure in typical Scythian costume is represented, and we assume, from the punctured inscription on the lid and sides of the casket, that this is Kanishka.²¹²

The execution of this reliquary is stylistically rather rough and clumsy indicating that it belongs either to the early Gandhāran period or to the late, wherein a multitude of influences had conjoined to formulate somewhat decadent styles. It is more likely that it belongs to the beginnings of Gandhāran art. Despite the lack of a large body of data, we know that Kanishka reigned during the early Gandhāran period known as the Kushan period. We know that the flower decorating the Buddha's halo is of early origin. And we know that the motifs of both the garland bearers and the geese are indicative of an early Hellenistic influence.²¹³

This influence appears to a significant degree in the earlier Indo-Bactrian and Parthian periods but is less frequently encountered in the Gandhāran period. It is precisely this Hellenistic influence which suggests an early-Gandhāran dating for the reliquary. It is generally accepted by scholars that the high point of Gandhāran art is its earliest period wherein Hellenistic influences are easily detectable. If the reliquary is to be dated later Gandhāran, we are compelled to reassign dates to these pieces and force them backward in time to a period prior to the reign of Kanishka. A date of the first century B.C.E. for the high point of Gandhāran art is not compatible with other iconographic forms of this date.²¹⁴ One more piece of evidence suggests that the reliquary dates from the early period: the three figures on the lid are wrapped entirely in robes in a manner common to the early Sikri Buddhas and which are carved in an archaic

manner identified as belonging to the middle of the first century.²¹⁵

Bīmarān Relic Casket (figure 31)

The Bīmarān relic casket was found in the early nineteenth century by Mr. C. Masson at a stupa at Bīmarān in Pakistan inside a steatite vase beside which coins attributed to the dynasty of Azes (58 B.C.E.) were found.²¹⁶ The circular casket is made of gold and embedded with rubies arranged around it in two parallel rows at the top and bottom. A lotus is engraved on the bottom surface. The casket is decorated with a series of eight figures each standing under arches between which eagles with outstretched wings appear. The figures are separated by flat columns supporting the arches.

Of the eight figures appearing on the casket, four are repeated. One of these is the Buddha, with a moustache, his right hand lifted in front of his chest in abhayamudrā, and wearing an usnīsa on his head. The figure to the right and the figure to the left of the Buddha are turned towards him in postures of worship. Haloes behind each of these worshipping figures indicate that they are divine beings. The figure on the right of the Buddha is bearded, bare headed, wears his hair in an ascetics knot, and carries a water jar: he is undoubtedly Brahmā. The figure on the left of the Buddha wears a turban of the Kushan type and is completely draped in a robe: this figure is Śakra.

The identity of the fourth figure is questionable. His identity has been accepted as being that of the casket donor. Nevertheless, it appears to me that this figure, like the three recognizable deities

he is placed among, is depicted with a halo-like object behind his head. Certainly there is good evidence here to support an interpretation of this figure as a deity. His identification in this manner is problematic and perhaps accounts for the complete lack of mention regarding the halo by scholars dealing with this casket.

The exact date (or even the approximate date) of the Bīmarān casket is not without difficulty and considerable academic fury surrounds it.²¹⁷ It is not within the scope of this study to enter into this debate.

Suffice it to say that the Bīmarān relic casket and, more certainly, the reliquary of Kanishka are among the first iconographic depictions of the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad removed from any narrative context. Certainly this motif is implied on some of the Sañchī and Bhārhut reliefs where inside the framework of scenes from the life of the Buddha, devotees generally appear on either side of the Buddha symbol. The devotees in the Sañchī and Bhārhut reliefs are depicted in postures devotional to the Buddha symbol: they are not distinct individuals but devotees in general.²¹⁸ We must ask what is more important in the context of a narrative depiction - the Buddha himself or his deeds. The two reliquary caskets examined above clearly establish that in this early Gandhāran period, the Buddha himself had achieved the stature of a devotional being: both reliquaries depict the clearly identifiable devas Śakra and Brahmā in devotional postures.

That the two objects are reliquaries and that they were both found in stūpas would impart to them more than a common degree of devotional significance. This, coupled with the non-narrative nature of the format and the devotional status of the depicted Buddhas, implies the elevation of Śakra and Brahmā to the rank of beings who are themselves worthy of worship.

The Kanishka casket, ascribed to early Gandhāra, clearly establishes the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā motif. We know that in late Gandhāra, not only are the first representations of Bodhisattvas found, but also we encounter the new motif of the Buddha accompanied by two Bodhisattvas. The Bīmarān relic casket and the reliquary of Kanishka, then, are among the first examples of the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā motif removed from narrative context and may therefore be prototypical of the Bodhisattva/Buddha/Bodhisattva motif which is to follow.

Two Bodhisattva Reliefs

Finally, we must turn to two reliefs found at Peshawar wherein the Buddha, two Bodhisattvas, and Śakra and Brahma are depicted (e.g. figure 32).²¹⁹ These reliefs have not been precisely dated but are ascribed by Ingholt to the Gandhāran period.²²⁰ The two reliefs entitled "The Preaching Buddha on Lotus Throne", are both removed from narrative context, and are virtually identical in their primary elements.

A large Buddha is seated in dharmacakramudrā on a throne on the base of which is a lotus flower. He takes the central position. To his immediate right and left are two figures dressed in royal garb and

who have haloes behind their heads. They stand in full frontal position. The Buddha and the two haloed figures thus form a straight line. Occupying the space behind this row and standing with their heads turned toward the Buddha are, to the right of the Buddha, a figure wearing the coiffure of a brahman ascetic and, to the left of the Buddha, a figure in a cylindrical headdress holding a vajra. The little variation between the two reliefs is a matter of the stylization of flowers in the canopy over the Buddha and the base of the relief itself.

The figures standing beside the Buddha in the front are bodhisattvas. This is confirmed by the halo and, more importantly, by the stance in which they are depicted. They stand facing the sculptor. Their stance does not indicate that they are devotees of the Buddha. This particular mode of representation is certainly the most well known in the depiction of bodhisattva images in Indian art. The figure behind to the left of the Buddha is undoubtedly Śakra. The cylindrical headdress and vajra he carries confirm this. The figure behind and to the right of the Buddha is Brahmā: he wears his typical coiffure. Their postures are devotional.

These two reliefs are significant in that they are definite iconographic evidence of the ascendance of two bodhisattvas to the positions once held by Śakra and Brahmā and are evidence of the descendance of Śakra and Brahmā to a position ancillary to this new triad. No longer are Śakra and Brahmā the primary companions to the Buddha. They are to completely disappear from any motif involving the

Buddha in a triad context. Certainly these two reliefs hail the waning popularity of both Śakra and Brahmā in the Buddhist tradition. It is legitimate to suggest therefore that the new bodhisattva/Buddha/bodhisattva triad has as its precursor the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad encountered in the reliquary caskets.

Conclusion

The development of Gandhāran and Mathurān art witness both the ascendance of Śakra to the zenith of his career in the Buddhist tradition and his subsequent decline. His role in the life of Buddha in this period is expanded and he appears at various events in the reliefs and texts representative of those events. However, if we are to admit that Vajrapāṇi became separated from Śakra in much the same way as Śakra became a figure separate from the Vedic Indra, then the emergence of the Vajrapāṇi figure signals not only an isolation of characteristics, in which case Śakra is removed from violence and enters a devotional realm, but signals perhaps his impending descent in the Buddhist pantheon.

The advancement of Śakra's position to that of attendant to the Buddha finds its culmination in the Bīmarān and Kanishka reliquary caskets. Although the Miracle at Śrāvastī and the descent at Saṅkiśa set the precedent for the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā motif both textually and iconographically, the motif no longer refers to the event. Indeed, it is outside of the narrative context that both Śakra and Brahmā attain

their highest position. It is iconographic forms and not texts that at this point define both the characters of Śakra and Brahmā and their positions in the Buddhist tradition as well. We may assume that their positions as the standard attendants of the Buddha and perhaps as devotional beings themselves are not only the culmination of their careers but are, moreover, the culmination of their popularity. The emergence in texts and art forms of figures who displace Śakra and Brahmā at this time signals the emergence of a pervading Bodhisattva tradition.

CONCLUSION

Despite Śakra's diverse characteristics one can perceive a continuity between not only the early Buddhist Śakra and his Vedic counterpart Indra, but also Śakra and the later figure of Vajrapāṇi. Indeed, in terms of the scope of the material presented in this work, we may go so far as to suggest correlatives between Śakra and later bodhisattva figures. In terms of what is new in the iconography of Śakra in this tradition we thus gain hints not only of the genesis and flowering of the Buddhist tradition in India but also of the directions of its subsequent growth in other nations of the Far East.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that there exists a more than incidental relationship between the Vedic/Epic Indra and the Buddhist Śakra. Both the early Buddhist iconography and Epic texts establish that this relationship is an intimate one: the Vedic Indra developed into the Epic Indra, from which the Buddhist Śakra seems to have evolved. Many of the characteristics of the Epic Indra find correspondence in the Buddhist Śakra: both wield a vajra, both sometimes carry a jar of amṛta, both respond to extraordinary acts on earth, and both grant favors to the perpetrators of those acts. At the same time as Indra figures in the Epic context and as Śakra finds form in the Buddhist context, however, these characters differ in important respects. As there is a dearth of extant iconographic representations of Indra from the Epic period, the nature of this relationship

can only be seen by examining the texts in which Indra is mentioned.

In the Vedas and Brāhmanas Indra is a warrior: conquering demons with his characteristic weapon, the vaira, is his major feat. He is a heavy drinker of soma. Via his association with rain in these texts Indra may be perceived as a guardian of fertility, and giver of gifts.

In the Epics, Indra continues to wield the vaira even though his warlike attributes are suppressed. Simultaneously his status as god of fertility is elevated. Characteristically he assists devotees and bestows boons. This new emphasis in the role of Indra is highlighted in the Epics by the institution of Indra-festivals in which he functions as the main deity.²²² Several features of the festivities are of interest, but it is the centrality of the Indra-pole which for our purposes seems significant. Although extant iconography from the early Epic period is fragmentary we do find anthropomorphic representations of Indra and other Epic deities. Indra, however, is represented only by a pole in the context of his festivals.

Apart from his association with festivals Indra in the Epics is prone to immoderate drinking and is imbued with a new false pride. These two features reduce his sphere of influence and render him helpless on various occasions and in need of assistance.

The Buddhist deity Śakra, the Epic counterpart of Indra, clearly emerges in both the iconography and texts of early Buddhism. From these sources it is clear that Śakra is an important although secondary

anthropomorphic figure. He appears at Sāñchī and Bhārhut in a narrative context amidst a crowd of others. Reference to textual accounts of the stories in which Śakra appears confirms his identity in the reliefs. This is, in fact, the only means of identification when he appears with the turban-like headdress alone, and certainly aids in his identification in other forms. In any of the reliefs of these early monuments in which a figure appears with the turban-like headdress and holding the amṛta flask and vajra, or with a short cylindrical headdress, or with a tall cylindrical headdress and holding the amṛta flask and vajra, it is invariably Śakra. The group of attendants, the royal garb, and the elephant are auxiliary means of identification.

The iconographic representations of Śakra in Gandhāra and Mathurā evidence a series of developments both in terms of Śakra himself and in terms of the scenes of the life of the Buddha in which Śakra figures. These latter scenes are notably expanded. There is no doubt that sculptors of this period were influenced by foreign forms. However, Gandhāran art is manifestly Buddhist in theme. The position of Śakra in the reliefs indicates that his function is that of an attendant/protector of the Buddha. He attends the Buddha in the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad and appears in close proximity to the Buddha, wielding the vajra in representations of the yakṣa Vajrapāni. Both Śakra and the yakṣa Vajrapāni appear in Gandhāran art as clearly identifiable figures.

The question of the iconographic development of Indra is complicated by the paucity of representations of deities prior to those

featured at Sāñchī and Bhārhut. Though it is difficult to argue from an absence of iconographic images, the evidence at early Buddhist monuments suggests that early in Buddhism Śakra was accepted as a Buddhist deity. He is given fixed form and a well defined role. The regularity of the representations of Śakra in definite identifiable form for the first time at Sāñchī and Bhārhut and in a Buddhist context in itself suggests a change from the previous periods. He is no longer represented by a pole as the main deity in the Indra-festivals of the Epics. Rather he is represented variously at both Sāñchī and Bhārhut in identifiable anthropomorphic form while the Buddha himself appears only in symbolic form. These features highlight a main distinction between the Epic Indra and the early Buddhist Śakra. The Epic Indra is a main cult deity represented in symbolic form whereas the Buddhist Śakra is a subsidiary and anthropomorphic figure.

The Epic Indra's association with fertility is maintained in the character of the Buddhist Śakra in that one of Śakra's important characteristics is his capacity to bestow boons. However, evidence for cult worship of Indra in the form of Indra-festivals, as suggested in the Hariṃśa, is not evident in any direct sense in early Buddhist texts or iconography. There is no iconographic evidence to suggest the worship of the early Buddhist Śakra either as a main object of devotion or as the primary actor in the context of ritual festivals. However, this picture does alter at Gandhāra and Mathurā. Śakra emerges

in the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā motif as an exalted being who, by nature of the non-narrative context of the motif, appears to be worthy of devotion. This same motif appears outside of art as well. Śakra does indeed appear within the context of annual festivals in the description of a procession recorded by Hsüan-tsang.²²³ On that occasion monks and kings who were taught by Śīlāditya, the king, assemble on his return to Kanyākubja from a religious pilgrimage. Monks carry a statue of the Buddha. King Śīlāditya dressed as Śakra holds a canopy and walks on the right of the statue and Kumārarāja dressed as Brāhmanarāja (Brahmā) holding a cāmara, walks on the left. The ceremony is followed by the giving of alms. Though there is no evidence of Śakra-festivals in early or later Buddhism both Śakra and Brahmā as attendant figures of the Buddha become in later Buddhism important and isolated from any narrative context. This motif is evidenced by the two relic caskets depicting just this arrangement from the Gandhāran region. These are the Bīmarān relic casket of early date (first century C.E.) and the Kanishka relic casket (first to third century C.E.), mentioned above. Both of these pieces certainly warrant inclusion in any analysis of the figure of Śakra, for the motif in which Śakra and Brahmā figure as attendant figures of the Buddha is to become the even more common motif of the Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas in later Buddhist art in India and the Far East. The motif has a long history. Common at Sāñchī and Bhārhut is a symbol representing the Buddha on either side of which appears a worshipper.²²⁴ These devotees are indistinguishable

as individual figures. However, in reliefs depicting specific events at Gandhāra and Mathurā Śakra and Brahmā replace the faceless devotees. Śakra's presence here does not indicate any particular narrative; rather he appears to be a being worthy of devotion - if not singularly, then at least with respect to his position relative to the Buddha. That is, in so far as the Buddha has become at Gandhāra and Mathurā an object of devotion, so too have Śakra and Brahmā gained a similar status in proportion to that of the Buddha. As we have seen, two bodhisattvas appear in addition to Śakra and Brahmā on either side of the Buddha in some later Gandhāran reliefs and finally Śakra and Brahmā disappear altogether, leaving a motif of the Buddha and two bodhisattvas. This motif, though rare in the art of Gandhāra, is to become an important aspect of later Buddhist art in China and Japan.

The question might be raised at this point as to whether or not Śakra and Brahmā in the context of the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad are the objects of any kind of devotion similar to that given the later bodhisattvas who also appear in this same motif in Buddhist sculptures: the Buddha is flanked by two bodhisattvas. Obviously Śakra and Brahmā are not bodhisattvas and as such cannot at this time be said to have been accorded similar status. In so far as the iconographic scheme of the Buddha flanked by two bodhisattva motif can be said to have its genesis in the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā motif, we must question the degree to which the figures of Śakra and Brahma are worshipped. It is not within the scope of this paper to answer this

question but rather to raise it. One can note the similarity between the costume (i.e., princely garb), actions (assisting Buddhist devotees in difficulty), and position (on either side of the Buddha) of the bodhisattva figures and Śakra and Brahmā but must keep in mind the underlying differences between the two: the bodhisattvas vow to postpone Nirvana and to aid the unenlightened, while Śakra, though he functions in a similar role with respect to Buddhist followers, makes no such commitment.

The triad, then, signals an important development in the art and theology of Buddhism. It is indicative of the development of the worship of the Buddha as the main object of devotion, accompanied by Śakra and Brahmā in early Buddhism and by bodhisattvas in the later tradition. It is the emergence of these latter figures in this role which represents the most significant change in popular Buddhism in India which was to be transmitted to the Far East. Bodhisattvas are, with the Buddha, objects of devotion.

Śakra is transformed in the Buddhist tradition in other important respects. He functions as a devotee of the Buddha and protector of the Buddhist Law. As such he is an agent of Buddhist doctrine. In this capacity a trace of Indra's old war-like impetuous self is to be found.

By the time of the Epics and the early Buddhist monuments of Sāñchī and Bhārhut the violent aspect characteristic of the Indra of the Vedas has been somewhat subdued. Although Indra continues to

slay demons in the Epic traditions, the grandeur associated with these feats as performed by Śakra has diminished. However, the evidence of Buddhist art suggests that Śakra's war-like characteristics remain a significant aspect of the Buddhist conception of this deity. This is seen by the fact that an important attribute of the Buddhist Śakra is the vajra. It is with this same implement that Indra slays demons. This attribute is one of the few of Śakra's identifying features in Buddhist art. But it seems to be the case that the vajra, which carries with it an implication of violence, has become an attribute outside of a demon-slaying context. One need only examine the reliefs to note the apparent contradiction between the rather benign Śakra in Buddhist reliefs and his identifying attribute which is apparently the weapon with which he won his fame as the master of war in the Vedas.

Even in early Buddhist texts, however, it appears that Śakra is not an entirely benign bestower of favors. He attends and accompanies the Buddha offering protection. He carries the vajra. If one is to accept the common identification of the vajra-bearing yakṣa in the Ambattha Suttanta of the Pāli Canon as Śakra, his role as the agitated protector in subsequent representations as the vajra-bearer at Gandhāra is firmly established.²²⁵ Indeed, the actions of the yakṣa are certainly in keeping with Śakra's Vedic counterpart. Indra is the warrior par excellence of the Vedas. In this Suttanta the threat to Ambattha is rather mild by comparison. The yakṣa merely intends to splinter Ambattha's head into a myriad of pieces if he dares

to refuse to answer the Master's question. Thus in the early Buddhist tradition Śakra retains traces of his potential violence, so important to the Vedic Indra.

Indeed, many reliefs of vajra-bearers appear in the later art of Gandhāra. A connection between the early Buddhist Śakra and these later vajra-bearers on the basis of certain characteristics can be established. Both attend the Buddha and both carry the vajra. Moreover, in the same way as one would hesitate completely to equate the Epic Indra with the Buddhist Śakra, one would hesitate completely to equate Śakra with the Gandhāran Vajrapāni. In both cases context alone indicates that there is a difference. Though Indra retains much of his former character his function in the new Buddhist context as devoted to the Buddha and Buddhist law clearly indicates his new role. Similarly the early Buddhist Śakra continues to appear at Gandhāra and retains certain features but in the context of Gandhāra his new role as a vajra-bearer and his dominant characteristic as protector indicate a new function. Any explanation of their relationship lies in both their similarities and their differences.

Vajrapāni is a distinct figure apart from Śakra. He makes his first appearance in iconographic form beginning with Gandhāran art. In early Buddhism, he appears textually twice in the texts where he bears a notable similarity to Śakra. As Buddhism develops so does the figure Vajrapāni until he becomes in Gandhāran art a distinct personality and the prototype for the Bodhisattva Vajrapāni.²²⁶ Evidence suggests

that Vajrapāṇi was at first only an aspect of Śakra's character and that he became, in the later tradition, crystallized into a distinct personality. Vajrapāṇi resides with Śakra in Trayastrimśa and thus it is not uncommon to find him, on the occasion of the Buddha's sojourn in Trayastrimśa to teach his mother, represented there along with the other devas receiving the instructions of the Master (figure 23).

Vajrapāṇi functions as a protective figure in many Gandhāran reliefs as well as in the early texts in which he is mentioned. In the Ambattha Suttanta for example, perceiving the Buddha to be in danger, he rushes forth to avert that danger. In iconography his primary attribute is the vajra which he brandishes, sometimes rather menacingly. He almost always appears in close proximity to the Buddha. It is probable that his presence signals to an observer that any attempt to harm the Buddha would be met with fierce opposition. That this is consistent with early Buddhist doctrine is indicated in the Ambattha Suttanta.

As reviewed in this paper the evolution of the figure of Śakra from the Vedic period through the Gandhāran and Mathurān periods is more than just the development of an isolated character: it is evidence of and is witness to the shift in emphasis from Hinayāna Buddhism to Mahāyāna Buddhism as well. In the Epics Indra is an Epic figure, a varied personality with less than admirable morality; at Sāñchī and Bhārhut, Śakra is a devotee of the Buddha and a helper of Buddhists.

The same might be said of Śakra in the early and the later periods of Buddhism. As Śakra becomes Vajrapāṇi and an object of devotion in the context of the Śakra/Buddha/Brahmā triad, his role in later Buddhism is changed from that of the early period. The emergence of the vajra-bearer at Gandhāra and his development into the later Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi and the fierce protective deities are not simply the resurrection of the demon-slaying Indra of the Vedas but represents a new turning point in popular Indian Buddhism. Henceforth fierce protector figures become the norm in Buddhist iconography across Buddhist Asia. Finally, in the later period a variety of figures including the Buddha himself become objects of devotion and, in this context, the iconographic representations of Śakra too become less representational and more iconic. The evolution of Śakra thus parallels the evolution of the figure of the Buddha itself. As the Buddha becomes an object of worship, removed from narrative accounts of his previous births, so too does Śakra become an individual figure, lifted out of the maze of characters in the Jātaka tales. The triad motif, then, signifies an important development in art and theology of Buddhism; the rise in importance of mythological bodhisattvas and their cults of devotees.

Thus Śakra's role is transformed in two important directions: his influence is notable in the case of the bodhisattva/Buddha/bodhisattva motif and in the case of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, and his fierce counterparts. These two developments reflect the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism and are indicative of the directions it will take as it grows and develops in India, where it arose, and outside of India, in China and Japan.



Fig. 1 Indra at Bhājā

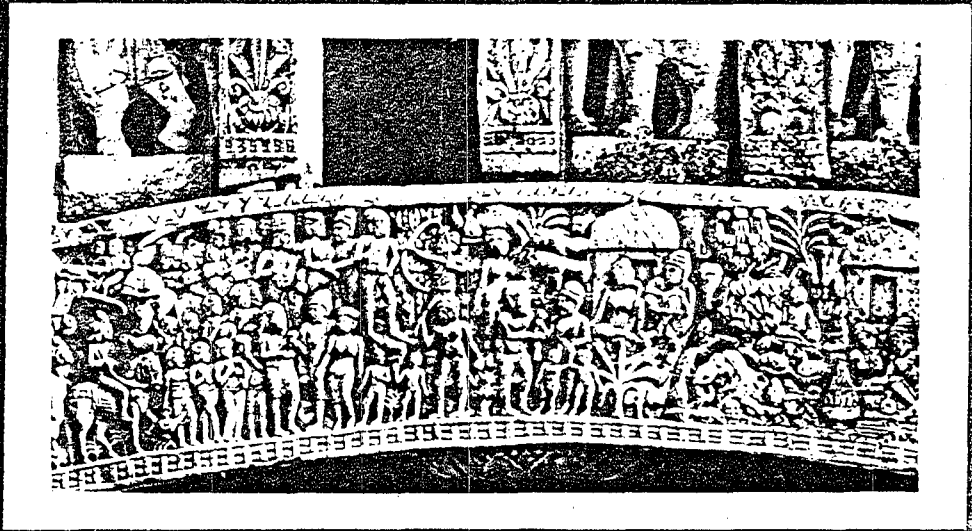


Fig. 2 Vessantara Jātaka
Sāñchī



Fig. 3 Bhiṣa Jātaka
Bhārhut



Fig. 4 Visit of Śakra
Bhārhut

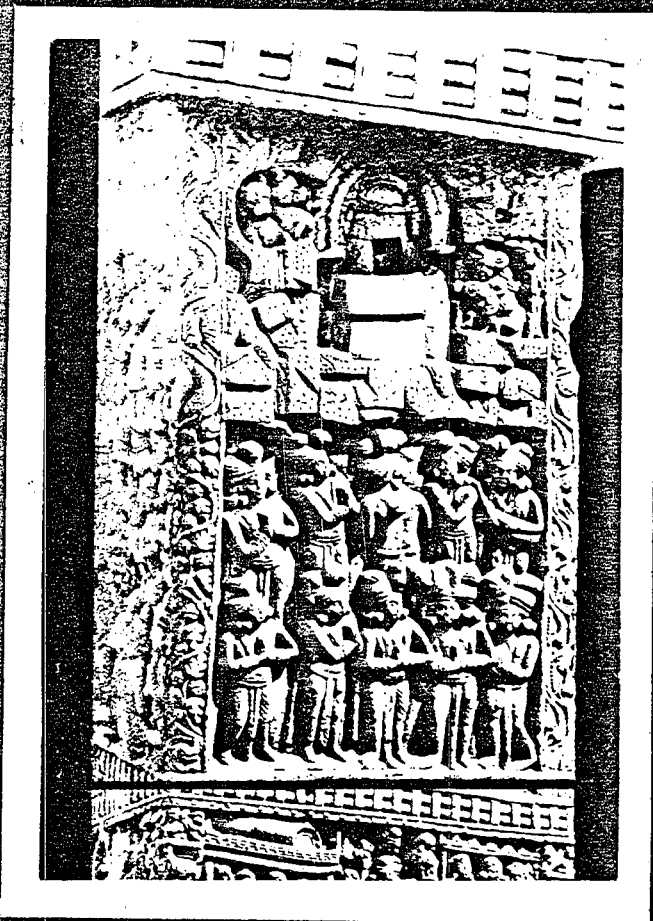


Fig. 5 Visit of Śakra
Sāñchī

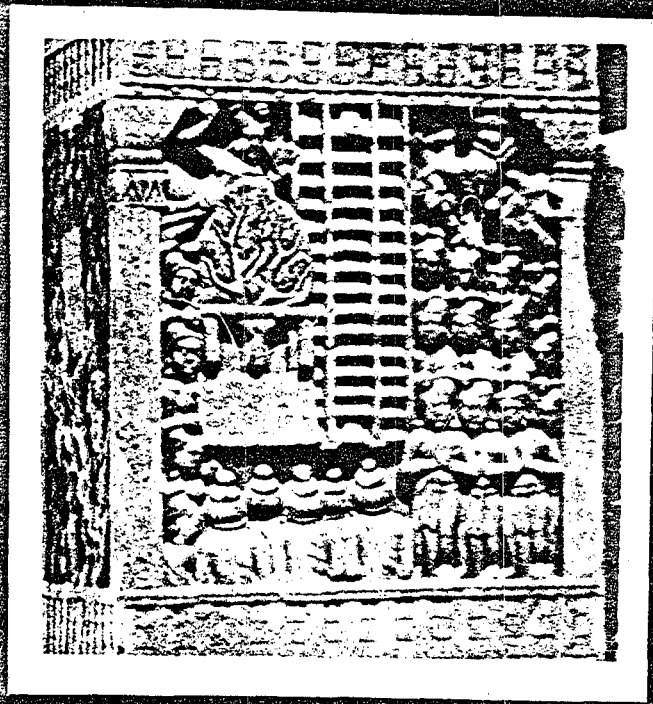


Fig. 6 Descent at Saṅkīśa
Bhārhut

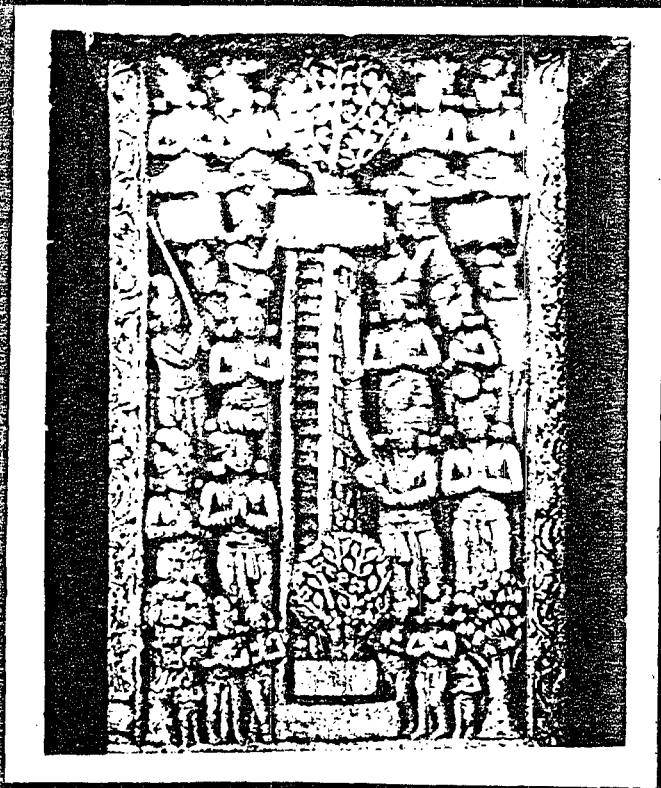


Fig. 7 Descent at Saṅkīśa
Sāñchī

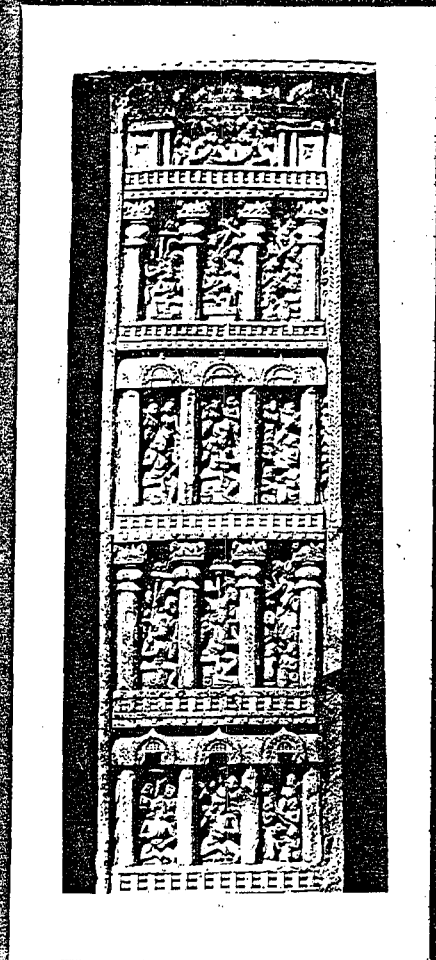


Fig. 8 Devalokas, Sāñchī

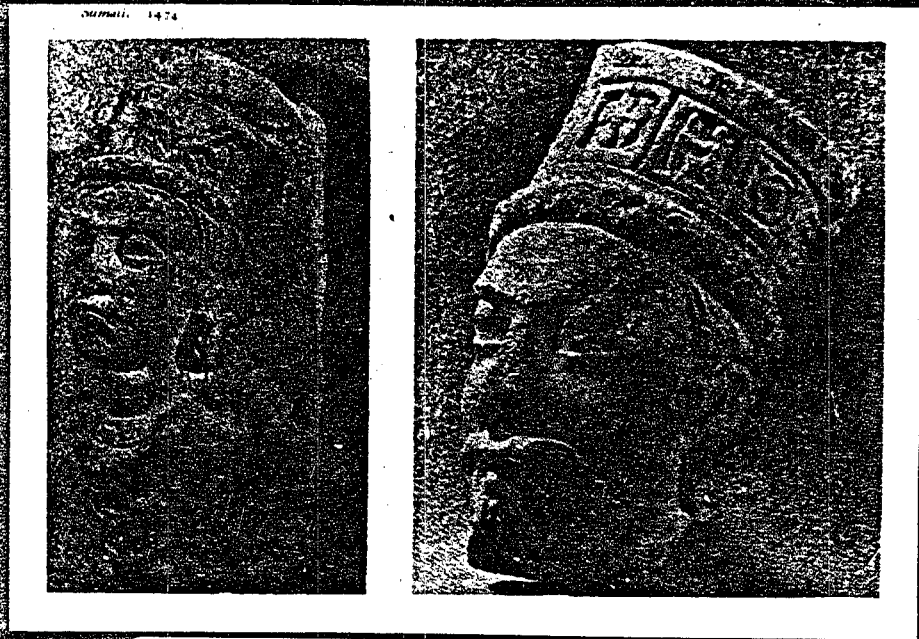


Fig. 9 Heads of Indra,
Gandhāra



Fig. 10 Dīpaṅkara Jātaka
Gandhāra

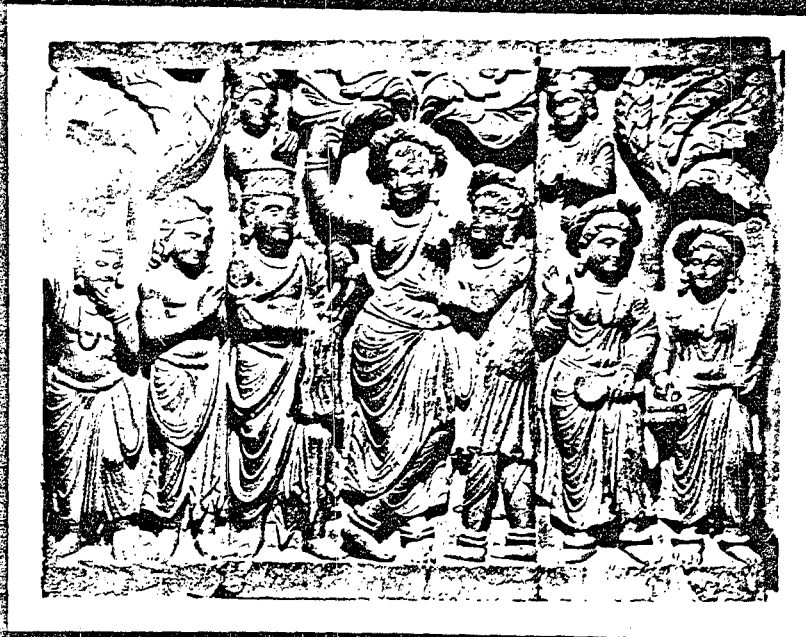


Fig. 11 Birth of the
Bodhisattva, Gandhāra

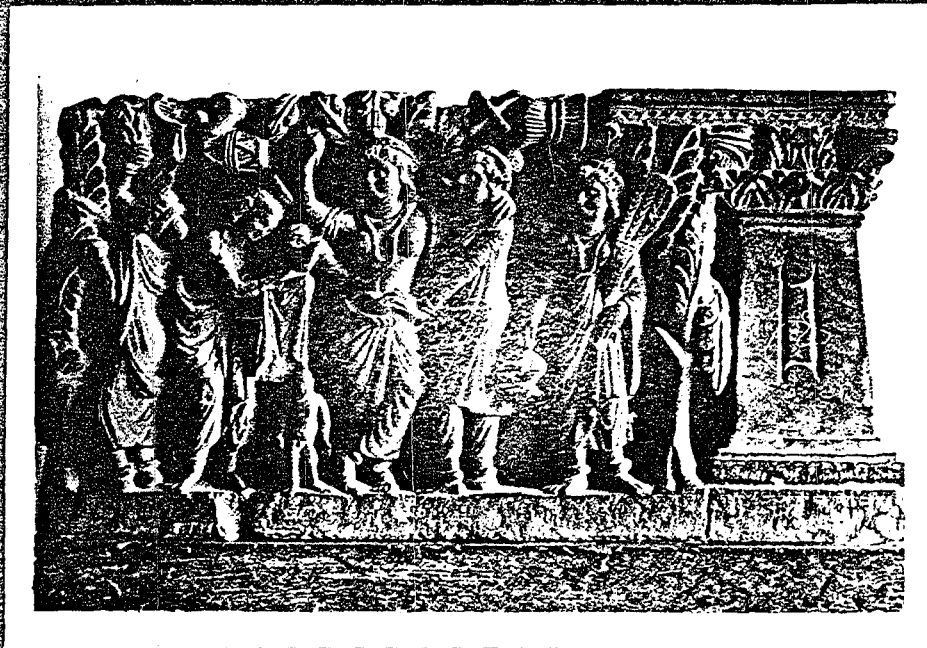


Fig. 12 Birth of the
Bodhisattva, Gandhāra



Fig. 13 Bath of the Bodhisattva, Gandhāra

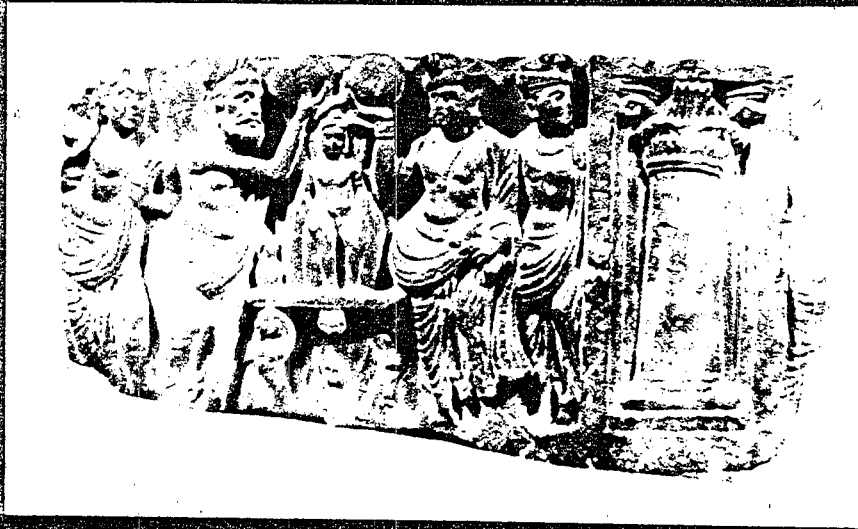


Fig.14 Bath of the Bodhisattva, Gandhāra

Fig. 15 Visit of Śakra,
Gandhāra



Fig. 16 Visit of Śakra,
Gandhāra



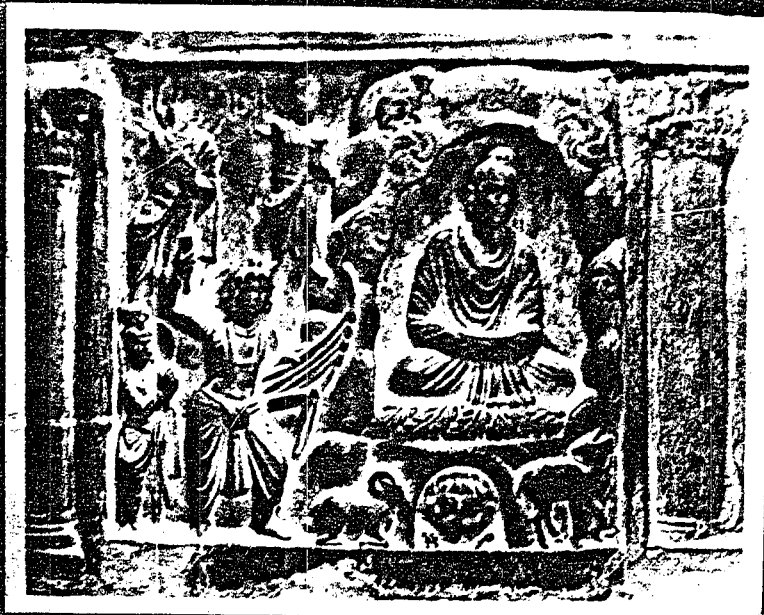


Fig. 17 Visit of Śakra
Gandhāra



Fig. 18 The Buddha and
Vajrapāṇi, Gandhāra

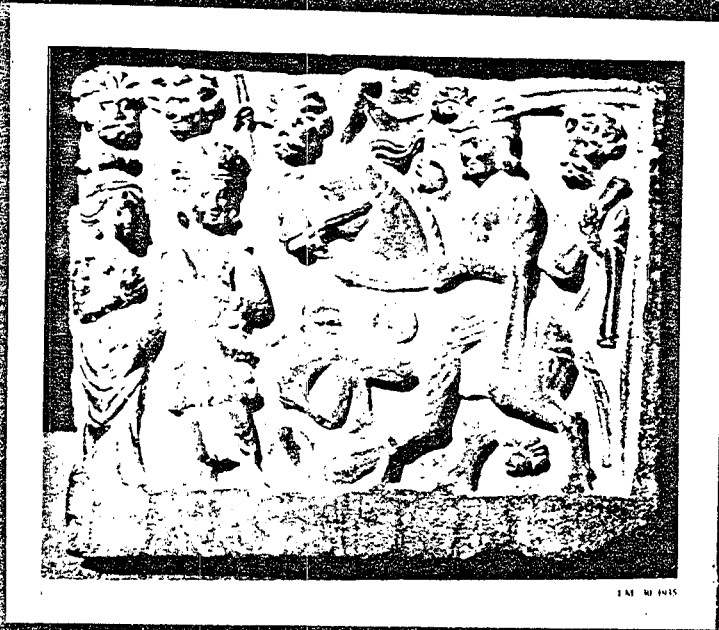


Fig. 19. The departure of the Bodhisattva, Gandhāra



Fig. 20 First meeting with a brahman, Gandhāra



Fig. 21 Offering of grass,
Gandhāra

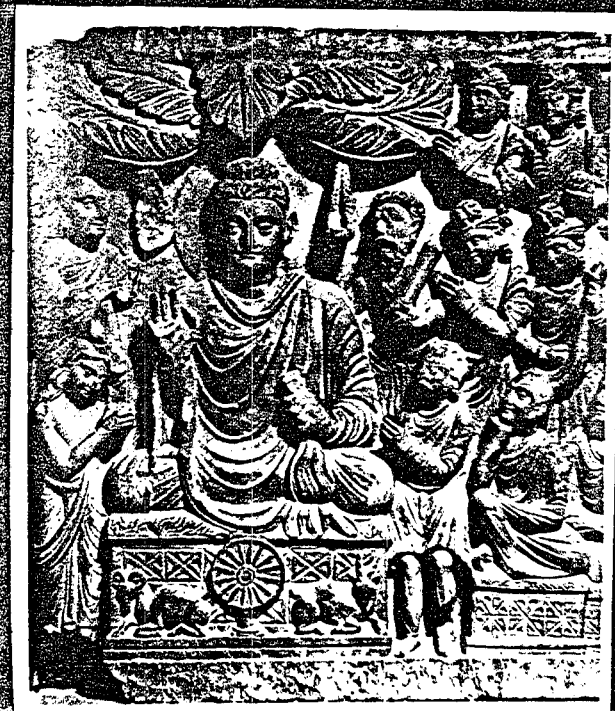


Fig. 22 Buddha's First Sermon,
Gandhāra



Fig. 23 Buddha preaches to gods
in Trayastrimśa heaven
Gandhara



Fig. 24 Parinirvana, Gandhāra



Fig. 25 Parinirvana, Gandhāra



Fig. 26 Buddha and female
worshippers, Gandhāra

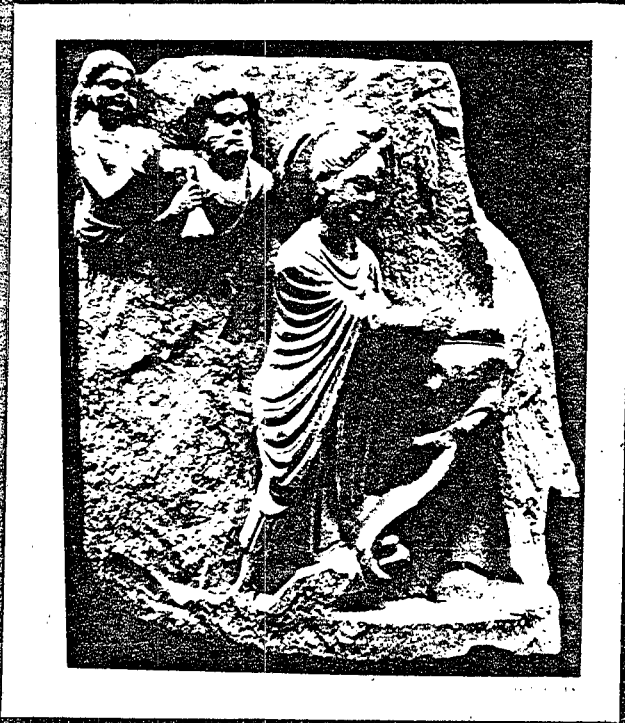


Fig. 27 Nālāgiri Elephant,
Gandhara

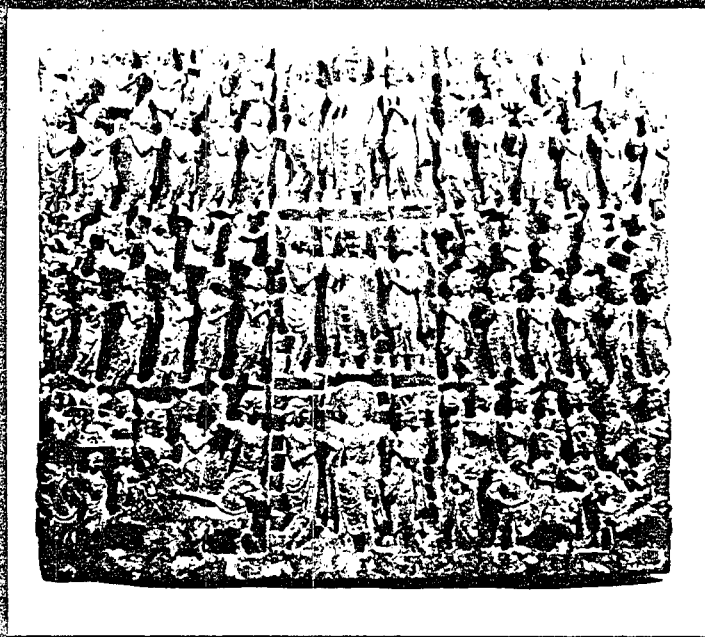


Fig. 28 Descent at Sankīśa,
Gandhāra

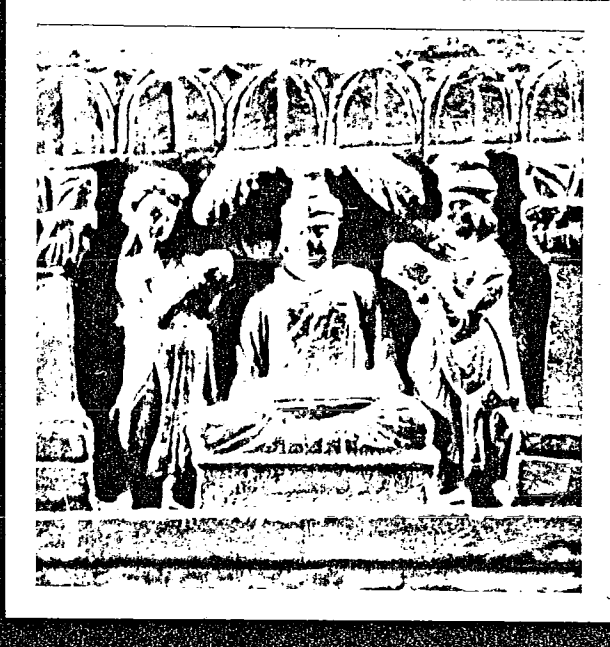


Fig. 29 Buddha flanked by Sakra
(above) and Brahmā, Gandhāra

Fig. 30 Reliquary of Kanishka,
(right) Gandhāra





Fig. 31 Bīmarān Relic Casket,
Gandhāra



Fig. 32 Preaching Buddha,
Gandhāra

Footnotes

¹The designation of 'early' and 'later' Buddhism is, of course, merely a convenient one for the purpose of discussing Buddhist art.

²Buddhacarita, trans. with an Introduction by E.H. Johnston (Lahore: Motilal Banarsidass, 1936; reprint ed., Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1972) and Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King, Sacred Books of the East, vol. XIX, trans. Samuel Beal (London: Oxford University Press, 1883; reprint ed., Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1975).

³Le Lalitavistara, Annales du Musée Guimet, vol. 6, trans. Ph. Ed. Foucaux, ed. E. Leroux (Paris: 1884).

⁴Mahāvastu, parts 1-3, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 17, 18, 19, trans. J.J. Jones (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1956).

⁵Hymns of the Rg Veda, trans. R.T. Griffith, ed. J.L. Shastri (revised ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973).

⁶Future references to the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana are found in E. Washburn Hopkins, Epic Mythology (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1968) unless otherwise noted.

⁷A more complete description of Indra in the Vedic period is contained in J. Gonda, Les Religions de l'Inde, Vol 1: Vedisme et Hindouisme Ancien (Paris: Payot, 1962), p. 71 ff.

⁸This epithet is applied to Indra approximately forty times while it is used to refer to other gods only five times. A.A. Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, (Strassburg: 1898; reprint ed., Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), p. 58.

⁹Gonda, 78.

¹⁰RV 1:52,8;1:57,2;3:44,4;3:44,5;10:96,3.

¹¹RV 8:17,10;8:44,4;8:66,7;8:66,11.

¹²RV 8:85,3.

¹³RV 3:45,2-3;8:33,12, etc.

¹⁴RV 1:32,15, etc.

¹⁵RV 1:53,7; 2:14,4; 5:30,8; 6:20,6; 8:14,13, cited by Macdonell in Vedic Mythology, p. 161, 162.

¹⁶'na' meaning not 'muc' meaning to release. This derivation is suggested by Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, p. 162.

¹⁷One account of this conflict is recorded in The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Bk 1-5, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 39-44, trans. J. Eggeling, second ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966) 12:7,1-4.

¹⁸RV 1:80,5

¹⁹Macdonell, p. 55.

²⁰RV 2:16,2.

²¹RV 1:173,13; 1:84,19; 7:20,9-10; 8:55,13; 8:45,40-42; 8:69,1.

²²This phenomenon is noted by Gonda in Les Religions de l'Inde, 1:71.

²³See, for example, Ś B 12:7,3,4.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵E.W. Hopkins, p. 122

²⁶MBh 1:71,20f; 1:130,5 as noted in Hopkins, Epic Mythology, p. 138.

²⁷Hopkins, p. 122

²⁸R 3:59,15 cited by Hopkins in Epic Mythology, p. 122.

²⁹Hopkins, p. 149.

³⁰R 6:59,103. His weapons including the vajra are discussed in Hopkins, Epic Mythology, p. 123-124.

³¹MBh 12:343,28f.

³²MBh 13:161, 33.

³³R 7:27,14f.

³⁴Indra's relations with other gods in the Epics is discussed in Hopkins, Epic Mythology, p. 140

³⁵A more complete description of Indra is found in Hopkins, Epic Mythology, p. 122.

³⁶MBh 2:7; 4 ff.

³⁷MBh 3:5,12f; 12:246,18.

³⁸Hopkins, p. 124.

³⁹MBh 1:18,40.

⁴⁰MBh 1:227,29; 1:105,26.

⁴¹MBh 3:229,8f; 6:27,14.

⁴²MBh 6:95,34; Hopkins, p.127.

⁴³MBh 1:63,13.

⁴⁴Vasudeva S. Agrawala, Ancient Indian Folk Cults (Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, 1970), p. 49,50.

⁴⁵MBh 1:63,27.

⁴⁶MBh 9:9,21; 9:9,11,23.

⁴⁷Harivamśa, ed. and trans. D.N. Bose (Calcutta: Datta Bose and Co., 1839), chapter 10-14.

⁴⁸R 11:84,23; 11:122,18.

⁴⁹R 4:13,39; 4:29,7; 4:39,2; HV 1:44,6.

⁵⁰Sukumari Bhattarji, Indian Theogony (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 270.

⁵¹These stanzas are cited and translated in Jitendra Nath Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography, second ed. (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1956), p. 44-46

⁵²For further discussion and reference see Banerjea, p. 69

⁵³The identification of this figure as Indra, the Grecian Zeus is found in Banerjea, p. 148.

⁵⁴This phenomenon also occurs with respect to the attributes of Visnu in early Indian iconography. Banerjea, p. 148.

⁵⁵The above descriptions of the Indo-Greek coins as well as this excerpt is contained in Banerjea, p. 148.

⁵⁶Some scholars have doubted this identification in that much simpler reliefs of the early Āndhra type need not necessarily represent Indra. See Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography", Eastern Art, 1 (1928):33.

⁵⁷A characteristic of the early Vedic age was that of war. Hence, devices used to instill fear would have been effective tools in military affairs - the figure of Indra is a logical choice toward this end given his mythic capabilities.

⁵⁸The Jātaka, trans. and ed. by E.B. Cowell, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907; reprint ed., London, Luzac and Co. for the Pāli Text Society, 1969).

⁵⁹Dīgha Nikāya [Dialogues of the Buddha], 3 parts, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 2-4, trans. T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, 4th ed. (London: Luzac and Co. for the Pāli Text Society, 1959) 2:294-321. This scene is represented on the reliefs at Bhārhut, those of an intermediate date at Sāñchī (first century B.C.E.), and Bodh Gayā.

⁶⁰Coomaraswamy makes the following comment in this regard: "Whether the representations of Indra in Buddhist art are to be regarded as based entirely on the non-Buddhist literary sources, or the corresponding popular beliefs, or whether they reflect the iconography of contemporary non-Buddhist cult images of Indra, can hardly be decided at present; all that we can be sure of is that the Buddhist sculptors did not invent the type in Early Indian Iconography", p. 40.

⁶¹RV 1:10,5-6 as noted by Charles Godage in "The Place of Indra in Early Buddhism", in Ceylon University Review, vol. 3, No. 1 (April, 1945):46.

⁶²See Śakra at Sāñchī carrying a bolt in John Marshall and Alfred Foucher, The Monuments of Sāñchī, 2 vols. (Delhi: 1944), 2: pl. 49a,b; 29a.

⁶³MBh 2:7,4ff. Śakra wears a distinct headdress at Sāñchī. Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl. 29c, 65a1.

⁶⁴MBh 3:5,12f; 12:146,18. Śakra carries a jar (of amṛta) apparently to restore life to Śyāma at Sāñchī. Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl. 65a1.

⁶⁵One important exception to this general trend is the importance of Indra in Indra festivals. See the Harivamśa, chapter 10-13.

- ⁶⁶In the Vedas: RV 1:84; 7:31; 8:85; 8:69. In Buddhist texts see Saṅgīyutta Nikāya, 1:221,222,224-227,237, cited by C. Godage, "The Place of Indra in Early Buddhism", p. 59f. (All subsequent references to the Saṅgīyutta Nikāya and Anguttara Nikāya are from Godage unless otherwise noted.).
- ⁶⁷S 1:219, Ang III:37.
- ⁶⁸Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 1:8.
- ⁶⁹Ibid.
- ⁷⁰This division is found in Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 1:32f.
- ⁷¹Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography", p. 41.
- ⁷²See Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography", p. 41.
- ⁷³Ibid., p. 41.
- ⁷⁴Malcolm A.R. Colledge, Parthian Art (London: Elek Books, 1977), pl. 32.
- ⁷⁵See for example, the Mahāvastu.
- ⁷⁶Jātaka, no. 547.
- ⁷⁷See Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl. 23,25,27,29,31,33.
- ⁷⁸Ibid., 2: pl. 27,29c.
- ⁷⁹Ibid., 2: pl. 29c.
- ⁸⁰Jātaka, no. 540.
- ⁸¹Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl. 65a1.
- ⁸²Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Iconography", p. 37.
- ⁸³MBh 3:5,12f; 12:246,18.
- ⁸⁴Jātaka, no. 540, p. 51.
- ⁸⁵Jātaka, no. 531.
- ⁸⁶Alexander Cunningham, Stūpa of Bhārhut, Introduction by V.S. Agrawala, 2nd edition (Varanasi: Indological Bookhouse, 1962), pl. XLV.8.

- ⁸⁷Jātaka, no. 372.
- ⁸⁸According to the Anguttara Nikāya the Buddha was born as Śakra thirty-six times. Ang. 4:89.
- ⁸⁹Cunningham, pl. XLIII.8.
- ⁹⁰Jātaka, no. 488.
- ⁹¹Cunningham, pl. XLVIII.7.
- ⁹²Benimadhab Barua, as noted by in Bhārhut, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Indian Research Institute, 1934) 1:140.
- ⁹³Dialogues, 2:294-321.
- ⁹⁴Dialogues, 2:318.
- ⁹⁵Ibid., p. 320
- ⁹⁶See also Cunningham, pl. XXVIII, p. 88-89. The Pāli is Indasāla-guhā according to Barua, Bhārhut, p. 55.
- ⁹⁷See also Dialogues, 2: p. 300
- ⁹⁸Marshall and Foucher, Sānchī, 2: pl. 64a3.
- ⁹⁹Ananda Coomaraswamy, La Sculpture de Bodh Gayā (Paris: Ars Asiatica), pl. XLVII.1; 8. See also Benimadhab Barua, Gayā and Buddha-Gayā, vol. 1, reprint (Calcutta: Chuckervertty, Chatterjee and Co. Ltd., 1931), pl. 2.
- ¹⁰⁰Dialogues, 2:300,
- ¹⁰¹HV chapters 10-13. See also chapter one above.
- ¹⁰²Chāndogya Upanisad 8.7.2-3 in Godage "The Place of Indra in Early Buddhism", p. 62.
- ¹⁰³Dialogues, 2:299.
- ¹⁰⁴Cunningham, p.88.
- ¹⁰⁵Si-Yu Ki [Buddhist Records of the Western World], 2 vols. in one trans. Samuel Beal (London: Kegan Paul Trench Trübner and Co., 1968; reprint ed., New York, 1968), 2:180. The romanization of chinese characters has been taken from this text unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰⁶See also S I:237-238.

¹⁰⁷For example: Vināya 1:38; S 1:234-6; Jātaka 3:305-307 cited by Godage in "The Place of Indra in Early Buddhism", p. 69.

¹⁰⁸Jātaka, no. 483.

¹⁰⁹Divyāvādāna, p. 384, 401 in Barua, Bhārhut, p.39. Si Yu Ki, 2: 62, 202-206, Dhammapada Commentary, Part 1-3, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 28-30, trans. E.W. Burlingame (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), 14.2:3, 199-230.

¹¹⁰See also Cunningham, pl. XVII.

¹¹¹See chapter three below.

¹¹²Alfred Foucher, The Beginnings of Buddhist Art (Paris: Paul Geunthner, 1918), p. 175.

¹¹³Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl 34a, 34c and Cunningham, pl. XVIII.

¹¹⁴Psalm of the Early Buddhist, 2:89 (Śakra assists a brethren in his travels bringing him safely to Sāvattī.) Ibid., 2:272 (Śakra and Brahmā pay homage to the one who gained insight.) Vināya 4:51; 1:38 (Śakra and Brahmā attend the Buddha.) Jātaka 5:92; 3:146 (Śakra saves a Bhikku from trouble.) DN 2:284 (Śakra becomes a pupil of the Buddha) in Godage "The Place of Indra in Early Buddhism", p. 43f.

¹¹⁵Minoru Hara remarks on the fear of Indra with respect to tapas in the Epic texts. Minoru Hara, "Indra and Tapas" in The Adyar Library Bulletin, 39 (1975): 129-160.

¹¹⁶Jātaka, no. 523.

¹¹⁷See also Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl. 49b.

¹¹⁸Coomaraswamy "Early Indian Iconography", p. 37.

¹¹⁹Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl. 18b2.

¹²⁰Ibid., 2: pl. 18a3.

¹²¹Cunningham, pl. XVI.

¹²²S 1:233; Th 1.64, 628; Dialogues 2:p. 157 in Godage "The Place of Indra in Early Buddhism", p. 64-66.

- 123 Marshall and Foucher, Sāñchī, 2: pl. 64a2,49c.
- 124 Coomaraswamy, Bodh Gayā, pl. XXXIX.
- 125 Barua, Bhārhut, 1:53.
- 126 Albert Grünwedel, Buddhist Art in India, trans. A.C. Gibson, 2nd. ed. (London: Sisil Gupta, 1965), p. 213.
- 127 Harold Ingholt, Gandhāran Art in Pakistan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957). This Jātaka does not correspond to Jātaka, no. 490.
- 128 Madeleine Hallade, The Gandhāran Style, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), pl. 82.
- 129 Simone Gaulier, Robert Jera-Bezard, and Monique Maillard, Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia, vol. 1,2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 2:20. See also MV 1:194-248.
- 130 Jātaka, no. 547,540.
- 131 See, for example, Ingholt, pl. 6.
- 132 Ibid., pl. 1-5.
- 133 John Marshall, Taxila, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 3: pl.217:90.
- 134 Jātaka, no. 512.
- 135 Jātaka, no. 512.
- 136 Ingholt, pl. 14,15; Benimadhab Barua, Gayā and Bodh Gayā, 2 vols. (Varanasi: Bharatiya Pub. House; reprint ed. Calcutta, Chuchervertty, Chatterjee and Co., 1931-34), 2:112, fig. 70; Grünwedel, pl. 64.
- 137 Ingholt, pl. 13. Hallade, pl. 85.
- 138 Roy Craven, A Concise History of Indian Art (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), pl. 52.
- 139 Foucher, Beginnings of Buddhist Art, pl. IV. a.
- 140 MV 2:7; LV p. 77.
- 141 MV 2:22.

- 142 Si Yu Ki 2:25.
- 143 Ingholt, pl. 14,15; Grunwedel, pl. 40.
- 144 MV I:174; BC 1:14.
- 145 "Phū Yau King" in Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King, p. 350.
- 146 Grunwedel, pl. 40.
- 147 Hallade, pl.87; Ingholt, pl. 16,18.
- 148 BC 1:16.
- 149 MV 2:24.
- 150 "Phū Yau King" in Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King, p. 350.
- 151 BC XIV.96; Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King, p. 165
- 152 Saddharmapundarika [The Lotus of the True Law], Sacred Books of the East, vol. 21,° trans. H. Kern (London: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 55, verse 114.
- 153 LV, chapter 25.
- 154 Marshall, Taxila, pl. 219:110; Ingholt, pl. 70.
- 155 Ingholt, pl. 71,72,73.
- 156 Ibid., pl. 129-131,133,134 and Marshall, Taxila, pl. 219:113 and F.A. Khan, Architecture and Art Treasures in Pakistan, (Karachi: Elite Publishers Ltd., 1969), p. 113. In addition T. Bloch cites at least six reliefs at Lahore of this scene of which he is aware. T. Bloch, "The Buddha Worshipped by Indra", Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1898), p. 186-89.
- 157 J.R. Burgess, Ancient Monuments, pl. 60.1 cited by Bloch, "The Buddha Worshipped by Indra", p. 188.
- 158 Gaulier, 2:6.
- 159 Foucher, The Beginnings of Buddhist Art, p. 26.
- 160 Etienne Lamotte, "Vajrapāni en Inde" in Mélanges de Sinologie, effects à M. Paul Demieville, Paris: (1966), p. 116,117.

161 Dialogues, 2:115-117.

162 Dialogues, 2:117.

163 Majjhima 1: p. 231,30-37; Saṃyukta, T.99,k.5,p. 36a, 15-20; Ekottara, T.125,k.30, p. 716a, 7-12 cited by Lamotte, "Vajrapāṇi en Inde" p. 117.

164 Notably at Śrāvastī. See T. 1435,k.38, p. 27a, 14-17 in Lamotte, "Vajrapāṇi en Inde", p. 118.

165 As noted by Emile Sēnart, "Vajrapāṇi dans les Sculptures du Gandhāra" in Actes du XIV^e Congrès International des Orientalistes, part I, Algiers: (1905); Kraus reprint, Nendeln: (1968), p. 123.

166 Ibid., p. 125-131 and T. Bloch, "Buddha Worshipped by Indra", p. 188.

167 For example: Śakra is called yaksa (Majjhima I, p. 52,10) and the Buddha is called a yaksa (Majjhima II p. 261,11). Lamotte "Vajrapāṇi en Inde", p. 119.

168 Ibid., p. 114-115.

169 In fact, the Guhyakas are a rather mysterious group of yaksas who appear only rarely in Buddhist or Brāhmanic India. Ibid. See also LV p. 65.

170 Jātaka, no. 519.

171 Jātaka, no. 541.

172 Jātaka, no. 347.

173 Dialogues, 2:117.

174 See Vajrapāṇi as lord of the Guhyakas (Speyer, Lalitavistara, I: 220,5-7, p. 189,3-7). These transformative abilities are not unusual. In the Mahāvastu, the Buddha is said to have himself taken the form of Vajrapāṇi out of pity for all existence (MV 1, p. 183,8-9). In the Mahāyānasūtras, the great Bodhisattvas assume diverse forms to convert creatures. But more notably, Avaloketesvara, according to the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka notes the efficacy in these terms of taking on the form of Vajrapāṇi. Lamotte "Vajrapāṇi en Inde", p. 119ff.

175Grünwedel, fig. 45.

176The appearance of Vajrapāni in the capacity of a 'protector' in Buddhism has been noted by various scholars. For example: "... il est le protecteur attitre de la Religion..... Ordinairement il aupres du Buddha un role bienveillant et protecteur;.....(Emile Sénart, "Vajrapāni dans les Sculptures du Gandhāra", Actes du XIV^e Congrès International des Orientalistes. Part I, Algiers, (1905); Kraus reprint, Nendeln: (1968), p. 121-131.) and "Il se born à menacer de son foudre les ennemis du Buddha; ..." (Lamotte, "Vajrapāni en Inde", p. 157). See also Grünwedel, p. 89. It is interesting to note that Vajrapāni appears in certain situations rather appropriate to his role as protector, i.e., he often appears when the Buddha is threatened. This seems to be particularly true in later texts. For example: when Devadatta sends a boulder to crush the Buddha an unidentified deity averts its course in the earliest texts (Pāli Vinaya 2:193). The vinaya of the Mulasarvastivadīn (T 1450; k. 18) p. 192c 1-19) introduces Vajrapāni in place of the anonymous deity as does the Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa (T 1509, k. 14, p. 165a 2-4). Lamotte "Vajrapāni en Inde", p. 127, 128.

177See also Ingholt, pl. 45; Hallade, pl. 91; Grünwedel, pl. 106.

178LV 15:178.

179MV 2:163.

180BC 5:85-86.

181See also Ingholt, pl. 54, 59, 60.

182MV 2:131; BC 7.

183Ingholt, pl. 54, 60. See also fig. 20.

184Ingholt, pl. 59.

185See also Ingholt, pl. 75; Grünwedel, pl. 96; Marshall, Taxila, pl. 220:118, 220:119.

186Grünwedel, pl. 79; Ingholt, pl. 85.

187See Foucher, Beginnings of Buddhist Art, p. 147-184.

188Tch'ou, T 2145, k.2, p. 598c 1-599a 16; Hien yu king, T 202 k. 2, p. 363a 1-9. Lamotte "Vajrapāni en Inde", p. 122-124.

189Schiefner, Tibet Lebens beschreibung des Sākyamuni, S. 19 S.A. cited by Grünwedel p. 94. The plate described can be found in Grünwedel, pl. 45.

- ¹⁹⁰See also Ibid., pl. 71,72.
- ¹⁹¹See also Ibid., pl. 73.
- ¹⁹²Ibid., pl. 70; Ingholt, pl. 142.
- ¹⁹³Dialogues, 3:175
- ¹⁹⁴Lamotte, "Vajrapāni en Inde", p. 115.
- ¹⁹⁵Dirghāgama T 1,k.4, p. 26, c27b cited by Lamotte, "Vajrapāni en Inde", p. 128.
- ¹⁹⁶Si Yu Ki, 2:36.
- ¹⁹⁷According to T.W. Rhys Davids the earliest text that records this event is the Kullavagga translated in p. 247-250 of the Vinaya texts, Sacred Books of the East, vol. XX (London: Clarendon Press, 1885). See note 1 in The Question of King Milanda, pt. 1, Sacred Books of the East, vol. XXV (London, Clarendon Press, 1890; revised ed., New York, Dover, 1963) p. 298. A vajra-bearing figure does not appear in the version of this event presented in the Kullavagga or The Questions of King Milanda.
- ¹⁹⁸Ingholt, pl. 90,334,335,336.
- ¹⁹⁹Sénart, p. 122.
- ²⁰⁰Alfred Foucher, L'Art Greco Bouddhique du Gandhāra, vol. 1,2 (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1918), 1: fig. 264, 265.
- ²⁰¹Sarabha miga Jātaka in Jātaka, no. 483, p. 263-267; Dhammapada Commentary, 14:2,iii, p. 199-203; Foucher, Beginnings of Buddhist Art, p. 175. See also chapter two above.
- ²⁰²Si Yu Ki, 2:238
- ²⁰³Ibid.
- ²⁰⁴Jātaka, no. 483, p. 265.
- ²⁰⁵Foucher, Beginnings of Buddhist Art, p. 147-184.
- ²⁰⁶Divyāvadāna, p. 162 cited by Foucher, Beginnings of Buddhist Art, p. 143-146.

- 207 Ibid.
- 208 Ibid., p. 143-84.
- 209 Ibid., pl. XIX-XXVI.
- 210 See also Frank Caro, Sculpture of Gandhāra (New York); Benjamin Rowland, Art in Afghanistan (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), p. 26; and Dietrich Seckel, The Arts of Buddhism (New York: Grey-stone Press, 1968), pl. 11; Marshall, Taxila, pl. 220:111.
- 211 J.E. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, The Scythian Period (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1949), p. 98.
- 212 Khan, p. 75.
- 213 Lohuizen-de Leeuw, p. 100.
- 214 Ibid.
- 215 Ibid.
- 216 Reginald Le May "The Bīmarān Casket", Burlington Magazine 82 (May, 1943): 116.
- 217 For arguments concerning the date of this casket see Benjamin Rowland, "A Revived Chronology of Gandhāran Sculpture", The Art Bulletin 18 (1936): 387-400; Le May "The Bīmarān Casket"; and Lohuizen-de Leeuw, p. 98f.
- 218 Marshall and Foucher, Sānchī, 2: pl. 64a2.
- 219 See also Ingholt, pl. 253, 254.
- 220 Ibid., p. 120, 129.
- 221 For example see John M. Rosenfield, The Dynastic Art of the Kushans, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pl. 92.
- 222 These celebrations are described at length in Agrawala, Ancient Indian Folk Cults, p. 49f.
- 223 Si Yu Ki, 2:214-218.
- 224 Marshall and Foucher, Sānchī, pl. 29, 34, etc.
- 225 For a detailed discussion of this matter see chapter three above.
- 226 See Lamotte, "Vajrapāni en Inde", p. 150-151.

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