

ANNA FILIGENZI

FROM SAIDU SHARIF TO MIRAN

I am, I believe, speaking for us all in hailing the most recent contribution by Domenico Faccenna as one of the finest that has ever been dedicated to the study of the art of Gandhāra. *Il fregio figurato dello Stūpa Principale dell'area sacra buddhista di Saidu Sharif I*, Roma 2001, brings to this field of study, fraught as it still is with so many uncertainties, the precious support of rigorous data, as well as a penetrating and indeed, let me add, impassioned reading of the figured reliefs from the point of view of technique, form and contents.

In certain respects this contribution follows others that paved the way for it in the right direction: the excavation reports on the sacred areas of Butkara I, Panr I and Saidu Sharif¹, in which with great patience and tenacity Domenico Faccenna reconstructed the monuments in their entirety and in their single components, as also in the story of their crafting and installation, giving due account of all the

1. On Butkara I see D. Faccenna, *Butkara I (Swat, Pakistan) 1956-1962* (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Centro Studi e Scavi Archeologici in Asia; Reports and Memoirs III.1-5.2), 6 vols., Rome, 1980-1981; on Panr I, D. Faccenna, A.N. Khan & I.H. Nadiem, *Pānr I (Swāt, Pakistan)* (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Centro Scavi e Ricerche Archeologiche; Reports and Memoirs XXVI), Rome, 1993; on Saidu Sharif I, D. Faccenna, *Saidu Sharif I (Swat, Pakistan)*, 2. *The Buddhist sacred area. The Stūpa terrace* (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Centro Scavi e Ricerche Archeologiche; Reports and Memoirs XXIII. 2), Rome, 1995.

stratigraphic data and the necessary material for comparison and correct interpretation.

On this solid base of objective evidence (all the more valuable when we consider how wanting Gandharan studies generally are in this respect) the history of the frieze is pieced together in its original terms: the sequence of reliefs, and the position they occupy in the monument, in time and in the environment. Thus the field opens up for coherent, analytic ordering of the production of Swat, in the first place, but also of other productions bearing some relation to it. Indeed, we are now encouraged to hope that by applying similar research systems in the future it will be possible to reconstruct the picture of Gandharan art in all its fullness and complexity, including the various production centres and their reciprocal cultural and chronological relations.

For the time being the production of Swat, showing as it does, especially in the earliest period, a strong local character and thus an original, readily identifiable hallmark, offers us the opportunity to reconsider, on the strength of our improved understanding, some interesting processes of derivation that can be observed in various regions. As it emerges from comparative study of the archaeological data and material not only from Butkara I (the earliest and longest-lived sacred area in the region), Saidu Sharif I and Panr I, but also from the minor sites (we might take the example of Marjanai, on the left bank of the river Swat, in an area that has less to offer in terms of Buddhist archaeology), it is possible, given the isolation of certain clearly defined characteristics, to ascribe part of the sculptural production to the earliest period of artistic activity associated with Buddhism².

The outcome of an original blending of local characteristics and elements of Indic tradition, this first group shows certain distinctive stylistic features: volumes are broad and flattened, drapes rendered

2. The excavation at Marjanai has provided evidence of a local variant (or, if we may say so, an imitation) of the earliest style identified at Butkara I, the so-called "drawing" style (see below). Modest as it may appear, this artistic production is of great historic importance, since it clearly speaks of the existence of "provincial" streams whose models are those of the main artistic centres that (as Butkara I and Saidu Sharif I) flourished on the left bank of the river Swat. On Marjanai see Sh.N. Khan, "Preliminary report of excavations at Marjanai, Kabal, Swat", in *Ancient Pakistan*, 11 (1995), pp. 1-74.

with close parallel lines terminating in the sinuous movement of flared hems or coming to closely crenulated points, while the faces reveal a striking expressiveness, emphasised with marked physiognomic features and large eyes picked out with incised irises and pupils. Defined as “disegnativo”, or “drawing”, for these peculiar characteristics, where an elegant play of line predominates over volume, this group precedes (possibly by little) a process of pronounced Hellenisation. On the evidence of the archaeological context, in fact, the “drawing” style was relatively short-lived: the emergence of a second style, described as “naturalistic”, in the second half of the 1st century-2nd century AD³ set the scene for that classical component that represents the best known face of Gandharan art to make an entry as undisputed protagonist, rapidly transforming the features of the earlier production. These data probably reflect the artistic history of the region, as indeed we sense it unfolding in various other Buddhist settlements excavated in Swat⁴, although not with the same linearity given the disturbed conditions on the sites or the unsophisticated excavation methods.

The earliest manifestations of a figured production at Butkara I had emerged with the features of the “drawing” style already in place within the first century AD, making their first appearance somewhere around the end of the 1st century BC / beginning of the 1st century AD. While showing the same features of the same stylistic group, the frieze on the Main Stūpa of Saidu can be ascribed to a period coming shortly after, within the second quarter of the 1st century AD. This we can be certain of thanks to the firm dating of the monument to which it belongs, together with the evidence that installation of the frieze was in fact contemporaneous with the construction of the monument.

Thus the Saidu frieze finds its place within a well defined artistic horizon, while at the same time we have grounds for comparison that bring out certain qualities intrinsic to it. Of course, Faccenna’s splendid

3. D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

4. Such is the case, for example, of the above-mentioned sites of Marjanai (Sh.N. Khan, “Preliminary Report...”, *op. cit.*) and Shnaisha; on this latter see M.S. Qamar & M. Ashraf Khan, “Preliminary report on the archaeological excavations of Buddhist sites in Swat, N.W.F.P. 1989-1990”, in *Journal of Central Asia*, 14/1 (1991), pp. 173-234; A. Rahman, “Shnaisha Gumbat: first preliminary excavation report”, in *Ancient Pakistan*, 8 (1993) (*Professor Ahmad Hasan Dani felicitation volume*).

volume provides searching examination of this aspect, and I can have nothing more or better to add. I shall therefore confine my efforts to a summary of certain data relevant to the aims of this brief article, beginning with the formal consistency of the reliefs composing this great frieze, which was probably installed on the second circular body of the Main Stūpa. Originally the frieze wound through a succession of great panels (about sixty-five, of dimensions Faccenna reconstructs as 41 x 51 cm)⁵ along a circumference of over 42 m, mounted in the severe elegance of a cornice showing a balustrade motif above and moulding below, and, with a play of sharply contrasting volumes, setting it off without distracting attention from it. Behind the implementation of such a grandiose decorative plan we can imagine some donors enjoying considerable economic resources together with political and social prestige, and strongly motivated, but more striking still is the impression we receive of a workshop of extraordinary quality, able to organise and execute such an ambitious project, competent in the complex and sophisticated work of assembling parts that were to combine harmoniously in a whole, and having consummate command of the particular type of stone – schist – exploiting its possibilities to the full. And yet, in this great collective effort there stands out the figure of an artist (the first identifiable in the rich crop of Gandharan works known to us), the “Master of Saidu”, who certainly designed and directed but also, most probably, executed the figured reliefs himself, entrusting his workshop with the crafting of the reliefs – or parts of reliefs – of minor importance or difficulty. The artist’s hand emerges from the reliefs as distinctly as the evidence of graphological examination in the close, searching analysis that Faccenna brings to bear on the play of volumes, anatomical details and the formal unity of the whole.

This continuous frieze is probably one of the earliest produced in Gandhāra, or at any rate the earliest dated⁶ – one of the first examples, that is, of that new narrative tradition that represents the absolute novelty offered by the art of Gandhāra⁷. Here, in fact, we find the scenes of the life of the Buddha re-evoked on the body of the *stūpa* itself

5. D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-46.

6. D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, p. 177 ff., especially 184.

7. Tenacious commonplaces often dim the critical analysis of Gandharan art, especially when its Hellenistic *character* is taken for Hellenistic *nature*, thus implic-

forming a chronological sequence, entering into the human dimension of historical time and providing an *exemplum*, an ethical model that, surpassingly great though it is, comes within reach of man's most elevated potentialities. Observing the frieze from this point of view and considering it in its context, it hardly seems likely that its fame could have remained confined to such a limited provincial environment. To begin with, the Main Stūpa of Saidu Sharif I, built on a grandiose scale (14.50 m from base to dome)⁸ with peculiar architectural features, experimenting one of the first versions of the columned *stūpa* (if not, indeed, the very first)⁹, must as it originally stood have made an extraordinary impression as one of the finest and most innovative monuments of its time. Moreover, the religious monuments of Swat, given their happy location in a region closely connected to the then busiest trade routes between India and Central Asia, must doubtless have enjoyed the wondering attention of the great Buddhist ecumene that was forming well beyond the frontiers of India.

In 1963 Mario Bussagli had, in his *Painting of Central Asia*, brought his keen acumen to bear on an issue that scholars had been confronted with as a result of the discoveries made by Sir Aurel Stein in what is now Xinjiang, in China, and that is the evident Gandharan influence on the region's earliest Buddhist production, notably in the case of the paintings of Miran, one of the easternmost sites on the southern track of the Silk Route¹⁰. To the comparisons with Gandhāra and with the traditions of eastern Hellenism that had already been proposed by

itly supposing the necessary existence of a classical precedent for each of its prominent elements. A good example of how far the research can go when free form such commonplaces is represented by M. Taddei's work on the genesis of Gandharan narrative art, where the originality of this phenomenon is proved by a scientific reasoning based on historic, chronological and artistic data and comparisons: see M. Taddei, *Arte narrativa tra India e mondo ellenistico* (Conferenze IsMEO 5), Rome, 1993; id., "Oral narrative, visual narrative, literary narrative in ancient Buddhist India", in A. Colonna (ed.), *India, Tibet, China. Genesis and aspects of traditional narrative*, Florence, 1999, pp. 71-85.

8. D. Faccenna, *Saidu Sharif I...*, *op. cit.*, p. 565.

9. D. Faccenna, "Lo *stūpa* a colonne dell'area sacra buddhistica di Saidu Sharif I (Swāt, Pakistan)", in G. Brucher *et al.* (eds.) *Orient und Okzident im Spiegel der Kunst. Festschrift Heinrich Gerard Franz zum 70. Geburtstag*, Graz, 1986, pp. 55-80; *id.*, *Saidu Sharif I...*, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 572-575.

10. A. Stein, *Serindia*, Oxford, 1921, pp. 349, 485 ff., 506; *id.*, *Innermost Asia*, Oxford, 1928, p. 170 ff.

Stein himself, as well as E. Herzfeld and N. Kumagai¹¹, Bussagli added more precise and closely delimited reference in the sculptural material of Swat, with which the paintings of Miran showed analogies too close to be a matter of mere chance. In particular, Bussagli focused attention on certain stylistic and iconographic details such as the tall *uṣṇīṣa* of the Buddha figure, the structure of the face, long slanting whiskers, hemmed halo and treatment of the drapes (Fig. 1), pointing out affinities with the reliefs of Swat (or Yusufzai, as the region was then called), known not only through the specimens to be seen here and there in the various museums but also through the Guides' Mess of Mardan collection, now in the Museum of Peshawar. Postulating provenance from one single monument given the unity these reliefs show in terms of style and dimensions, Bussagli advanced the hypothesis that they might be attributed to the individual figure of one artist, possibly the very *Tita* who had signed the paintings of Miran¹².

The comparison between a well-known bronze Buddha head from Khotan and a schist Buddha head from Butkara I, already made by Kumagai¹³, offered evidence for the hypothesis, formulated by Bussagli, that the connection between Gandhāra and Xinjiang had its major geographical and cultural link in the Swat valley¹⁴, but the idea that *Tita* the painter of Miran and the sculptor of the Mardan reliefs was one and the same person appeared – hardly surprisingly, we may add – somewhat far-fetched, and as such was noted critically in a review of the book by B. Rowland Jr., who went on to recall the possible attribution to Buner of the reliefs cited by Bussagli¹⁵. Furthermore, on direct examination certain differences in material and form are to

11. E. Herzfeld, *Iran in the Ancient East*, London – New York, 1941, pp. 295, Pls. CII-CIV; N. Kumagai, "The art of Chinese Turkestan", in *Seiiki bunka kenkyū* (Monumenta Serindica) 5 (1962) (in Japanese), p. 122.

12. M. Bussagli, *Painting...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-24. The name *Tita* (a Prakrit form of Titus) would suggest the western origin of the artist (*ibid.*, p. 21).

13. N. Kumagai, "A gilt bronze head of Buddha from Khotan", in *Bijutsu kenkyū* 200 (1958), pp. 1-19; the sculpture is also reproduced in *Sérinde, terre de Bouddha. Dix siècle d'art sur la Route de la Soie* (catalogue of the exhibition), Paris, 1995, n. 54, pp. 106-107.

14. M. Bussagli, *Painting...*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

15. B. Rowland Jr., "Art along the Silk Roads: a reappraisal of Central Asian art (Review article – *Painting of Central Asia* by Mario Bussagli)", in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 25 (1964-1965), p. 254.

be seen among the Mardan reliefs that rule out any possibility of provenance from a single context¹⁶.

In the very same years when these issues were being discussed, new chapters were being added to the history of Gandharan studies with material from the excavations carried out in Swat by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan of the IsMEO (now IsIAO). As from the publication of the Butkara I sculptures¹⁷, these additions were destined to open new horizons, expanding our knowledge of the artistic production of a region that displays the characteristics of a robust, autonomous current in the general scene of the art of Gandhāra. In the final report on excavation of Butkara I sacred area Faccenna himself dedicated a chapter to the pictorial decoration of the monuments including brief but significant reference to the links between Gandhāra and Miran, again identifying the crossroad in Swat¹⁸. However, it was in fact the recent publication of the Saidu Sharif I frieze that provided the most direct contribution on the question raised by Bussagli, which finds in this series of reliefs both a refutation and a confirmation.

The certain attribution of the frieze to the second quarter of the 1st century AD offers precise chronological reference, within which we can therefore place a mature phase of that “drawing” style which we saw gaining ground in Butkara I in the course of a few preceding decades, i.e., within the first quarter of the century, to be rapidly overshadowed then by a naturalism of Hellenistic stamp. If this was indeed so, and if we are not to push the dating of the Miran paintings quite appreciably back, then we must take it that by the time the paintings were executed (3rd-4th century, according to the majority of the scholars)¹⁹ the current production of Swat had already seen significant change, departing from the ear-

16. D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

17. D. Faccenna, *Sculptures from the sacred area of Butkara I (Swat, W. Pakistan)*, photographs by Francesca Bonardi, descriptive catalogue by Maurizio Taddei (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Centro Studi e Scavi Archeologici in Asia; Reports and Memoirs II.2-3), 2 vols., Rome, 1962-1964.

18. D. Faccenna, *Butkara I...*, *op. cit.*, part 3, pp. 717-718.

19. The dating proposed by Bussagli (second half of the 3rd century) on the grounds of stylistic and iconographic consideration falls within the broader terms already indicated by Stein (3rd-4th century): see Bussagli, *Painting...*, *op. cit.*, p. 27. Recent studies substantially acknowledge these views. Cf. for instance R. Jéra-Bézard & M. Maillard, “Remarques sur les peintures de l’Asie Centrale ancienne”, in

lier tradition which those common characteristics shared by Swat and Miran – and pointed out by Bussagli – go back to. The hypothesis of one single artist, weak as it was, thus proves totally groundless.

And yet, if ever any doubt might have been cast on the derivation of Miran's paintings from the figurative tradition of Swat, there can now be no room for the slightest shade. Indeed, I believe, we might now venture a hypothesis even firmer than Bussagli's, and recognise in the paintings of Miran no merely generic inspiration deriving from the Swat complex as a whole, but a free yet faithful transposition of a specific model, namely the Saidu frieze.

Of course, it is true that the Saidu frieze, while showing those particular artistic traits that mark it out, shares with the earlier Swat production as a whole a great many stylistic and iconographic conventions that evidently belonged to canons widely shared throughout the region, and it is also true that our knowledge of the artistic background to the frieze must be due only to works spared by the ravages of time. Nevertheless, what strikes us in certain subjects of the Miran paintings is such a close affinity with similar subjects in the Saidu frieze that we cannot help thinking that the artist must have worked with this model in mind, or, more precisely, before his eyes.

Of the fragments of the Saidu frieze, not one has conserved the figure of Siddhārtha. In the scene of the Encounter of Siddhārtha with huntsmen (S 48), of the left half of which hardly anything remains, there have survived to the bottom left the feet of a standing figure turned towards the group of huntsmen depicted to the right, and we can be fairly sure that they must have belonged to Siddhārtha, according to the conventional organization of the scene. It is only on this slender evidence that we can have any certainty that the figure of Siddhārtha, in the

G. Brucher et al. (eds.), *Orient und Okzident im Spiegel der Kunst. Festschrift Heinrich Gerard Franz zum 70. Geburtstag*, Graz, 1986, pp. 148-149 (3rd century); C. Debaine-Francfort, A. Idriss & Wang Binhua, "Agriculture irrigué et art bouddhique ancien au coeur du Taklamakan (Karadong, Xinjiang, II-IV siècle)", in *AAasiat*, 49 (1994), p. 48 (end of the 3rd century) and Ch. Haesner in *Sérinde, terre de Bouddha. Dix siècle d'art sur la Route de la Soie* (catalogue of the exhibition), Paris, 1995, pp. 103-105, no. 52 (3rd-4th century), but it is to be recalled that Xinjiang's schools of art, although very well known, still represent for scholars a mine of unexplored elements. Much is still to be expected from archaeological, iconographic, stylistic, philological investigations.

guise of prince/Bodhisattva during the first half of his existence, and thus as Buddha subsequent to Enlightenment, made a showing in the frieze²⁰. On the other hand, it appears quite likely that the Buddha of the frieze reliefs corresponded closely to the Buddha to be seen in other examples belonging to the “drawing” group – a figure with a face dominated by large, wide-open eyes and long, slanting whiskers, displaying a tall *uṣṇīṣa*²¹, as we also see him depicted in the Miran paintings (Fig. 1). This hypothesis is further borne out by the remaining series of analogies – concrete and direct, this time – in the fragments from temple M III and temple M V at Miran; certain of the figures show physiognomy and dress, attitudes and attributes affording very close comparison with the figures in the Saidu frieze, and as much is also true of the scene settings, which evidently draw upon a common repertory.

Without going into the more generic affinities with Gandharan production as a whole (such as the seats decked with drapes and the footstools), we may say that the seated figures in fragment M III 002 (Fig. 2) represent a perfect pictorial counterpart to those sculpted in the Saidu reliefs: see, for example, panels S 246, S 676, S 1102, S 1176, S 1246, S 1325²². The figures show virtually identical anatomical structure, notably in the slight disproportion of the lower limbs which, in the case of seated figures, were usually shown a little shorter and slenderer in comparison with the rest of the body. No less affinity is to be seen in the somewhat rigid, schematic angulation of the upper limbs, as emerges most strikingly from comparison between the main figure in fragment M III 002 in Miran (Fig. 2) and the figure in panel S 1246 (Fig. 3), portrayed in practically identical postures with left hand resting on thigh, elbow raised at right angles; similar, too, is the rendering of the folds in the garments, and in particular the drape of the *uttariya* on the right shoulder, showing at Saidu and Miran alike the same pronounced yet soft substantiality. Above all, the main personage in the fragment of painting from Miran and the figure in panel

20. D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-148.

21. Cf. D. Faccenna, *Sculptures...*, *op. cit.*, pls. CCVIIa, CCIXb, CCXa, CCXIa-b, CCXIIa-b, CCXVIIa-b; J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, “New evidence with regard to the origin of the Buddha image”, in H. Härtel (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1979*, Berlin, 1981, especially pp. 384-385.

22. D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, Pls. 22, 35a, 46b, 57a, 58c-d, 59b-c.

S 1246 show remarkably close analogy in the rendering of the way the *uttariya* falls across the bust to the right leg. Again, the turban displayed by the seated figure in our Miran fragment (as indeed by the other figures conserved in the paintings of temple M V) finds a perfect match in the Saidu reliefs: a skull-cup turban with a vertical wing on either side edged with a plain border and a projecting diadem at the centre, with a base composed of short superimposed bands (Fig. 4)²³. Such details combine reciprocally to heighten the sense of moment, and all the more forceful and striking appears the prerogative shared by the figures from the two sites of other intrinsic elements such as the wide open eyes and virile enhancement of moustaches.

Even more significant analogies with the Saidu frieze are exhibited by the Miran paintings in the portrayal of the *Vessantara-jātaka* in temple M V, along the wall delimiting the circular pathway around the *stūpa*. In the scene showing the prince on horseback entering the city gate (Figs. 5-6) we observe not only virtually identical configuration of the iconographic type of personage of rank but also a surprising correspondence in the rendering of the horse, here as at Saidu characterised by the nervous elegance of the small, slender head rising straight and proud on a powerful neck. At Miran we note a marked disproportion between the modest dimensions of the head and the robust proportions of the neck, which might well reflect a deliberate effort at faithful rendering of the particular features shown by the original model. Again, we are struck by the similarities of more specific features still discernable such as the wavy crest on the brow and expressive eyes, large and elongated, or the harness, with breast collar adorned with a round *falera*, while a certain incongruity is to be seen in the head pieces, where a loose strap adorned with round pendants or studs suggests a misinterpretation of the cheek piece and *faleras* at a point where various elements come together in the Saidu examples (Figs. 7-8)²⁴. Even the city gate through which prince Vessantara emerges in the Miran painting (Figs. 5-6) seems to echo a figurative scheme previously applied at Saidu – a gate of the type with architrave framed by continuous bands, moulded at Saidu, at Miran decorated with a row of acan-

23. In addition, cf. the numerous examples in D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82, illustrated with drawings.

24. See D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

thus leaves above and rosettes set in panels separated by fillets on the jamb visible to the right. As at Saidu, the view opens out on a stretch of city wall showing a segmented profile, possibly intended to suggest a sequence of projecting towers. The design of the lower part of the wall, with alternating rows of horizontal and vertical elements framed by fillets (the idea may have been to distinguish the building material used here from that of the upper part), and the arrow-head form of the loopholes (one is conserved to the left; see Fig. 6) mark the most striking departure to be seen at Miran from the corresponding elements at Saidu (Fig. 8)²⁵, possibly representing adaptation to the existing local models.

Again in terms of more complex iconographic units, we find various other figurative schemes at Miran eloquently indicative of their origin. Taking up the thread of prince Vessantara's adventures once more, we now observe the scene in which he makes a gift of the royal white elephant to an ascetic (Fig. 9) – a deed that would bring down on him the wrath of the king, his father, and the decree of ostracism. Striking here, apart from the presence of the tree, conventionally used in the Gandharan code to suggest an open-air setting (an austere and solitary sign which later Xinjiang painting would replace with a richer natural background)²⁶, is the fact that the prince bears a vase with handle at top and a long spout – a very particular form that makes frequent appearances in the production of Swat, notably in S 1112, with the scene of the Gift of the elephant (Fig. 4)²⁷. While the function of the lustral vessel (and the act of pouring water) in the stipulation of contracts or donations has been amply elucidated²⁸, given the variety of ways and forms in which the element is presented in Gandhāra²⁹ we cannot help wondering at the extremely close resemblance between the prince Vessantara of Miran, and above all the form of the

25. See D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

26. Details like this, though representing a sort of primary units of an organic system of signs, seem to be very often misunderstood or undervalued. Cf. for instance the description made by Ch. Haesner (in *Sérinde*, *op. cit.*, no. 52, pp. 103-105), where the scene of our Fig. 1 is labelled as "Le Bouddha et ses disciple traversant une forêt".

27. See D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-264.

28. See W. Zwalf, *A Catalogue of the Gandhāra sculpture in the British Museum*, 2 vols., London, 1996, nos. 137, 145, 158, 162, 173 with relevant bibliographic references; D. Faccenna, *Il fregio figurato...*, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

29. Cf. e.g. W. Zwalf, *A Catalogue...*, *op. cit.*, loc. cit.

vessel with which he is about to ratify the donation, and the figure bearing the lustral vessel at Saidu. And, indeed, what are we to make of the coincidence of an identical action (the gift of an elephant) despite the different narrative context?

Can such coincidences be put down to pure chance?

Let us then consider a hypothesis that may seem far-fetched but is, I believe, legitimate: the artists of Miran (whatever their provenance) did not simply look to generic Gandharan models, but worked with certain particular examples before their eyes. And if we see the Saidu frieze as a famous and much admired work, may we not reasonably take it to have afforded a model to copy? May we not conceive of copies of works like this circulating in the Buddhist ecumene, as was the case of so many works of classical antiquity, possibly, for example, in the handy form of “cartoons” on light, easily transported supports? That there were artists paid to reproduce copies of famous works is not, I believe, a mere possibility but something more like a certainty, and if this was the case, then we might reasonably suppose that they drew largely on that kindred art, painting, of which Gandhāra has left us scant evidence³⁰, but which we are led to believe must have had a flourishing existence³¹. And Miran, perpetuating the memory of Gandhāra’s almost totally lost painting at another time and in another place, offers us a possible image of it, at the same time reflecting the fame that one of Swat’s finest works must have enjoyed in the Buddhist world around it, and that proved far longer lasting than the brief artistic season that produced it.

30. The remains of Gandharan painting so far known, besides being very few, are all relatively late. Leaving apart the painted decoration of architectural and figural elements (this also only sporadically attested), and suspicious specimens sometimes making their appearance in the antique market, fragments (more or less extensive) of mural paintings are known from Uzbekistan (Kara Tepe, Fayaz Tepe), Afghanistan (Dilberjin, Hadda, Tapa Sardar), Pakistan (Butkara I). To this short list we can now add the splendid fragments recently discovered at Jinna Wali Dheri, in the area of Taxila; see M. Ashraf Khan & Mahmood-ul-Hasan, “Discovery of mural paintings from Jinan Wali Dheri, Taxila Valley”, in *Journal of Asian Civilizations* 27/1 (2004), pp. 14-27.

31. On this topic I refer the reader to A. Filigenzi, “From mind to eye: two-dimensional illusions and pictorial suggestions at Saidu Sharif I”, in P. Callieri (ed.), *Architetti, capomastri, artigiani, L'organizzazione dei cantieri e della produzione artistica nell'Asia ellenistica. Studi offerti a Domenico Faccenna nel suo ottantesimo compleanno*, Roma, 2006.

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Fig. 1 – Buddha and monks. From Miran, temple M III. National Museum, New Delhi (after M. Bussagli, Painting of Central Asia, Geneva, 1963, fig. on p. 23).



Fig. 2 – Unidentified scene. From Miran, temple M III. National Museum, New Delhi (after M. Bussagli, Painting..., op. cit., fig. on p. 22).



Fig. 3 – Relief fragment with seated male figure. From Saidu Sharif I. Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale "Giuseppe Tucci", Rome (Inv. S 1246; after D. Faccenna, Il fregio figurato dello Stūpa Principale nell'area sacra buddhista di Saidu Sharif I, Roma, 2001, Pl. 58c).

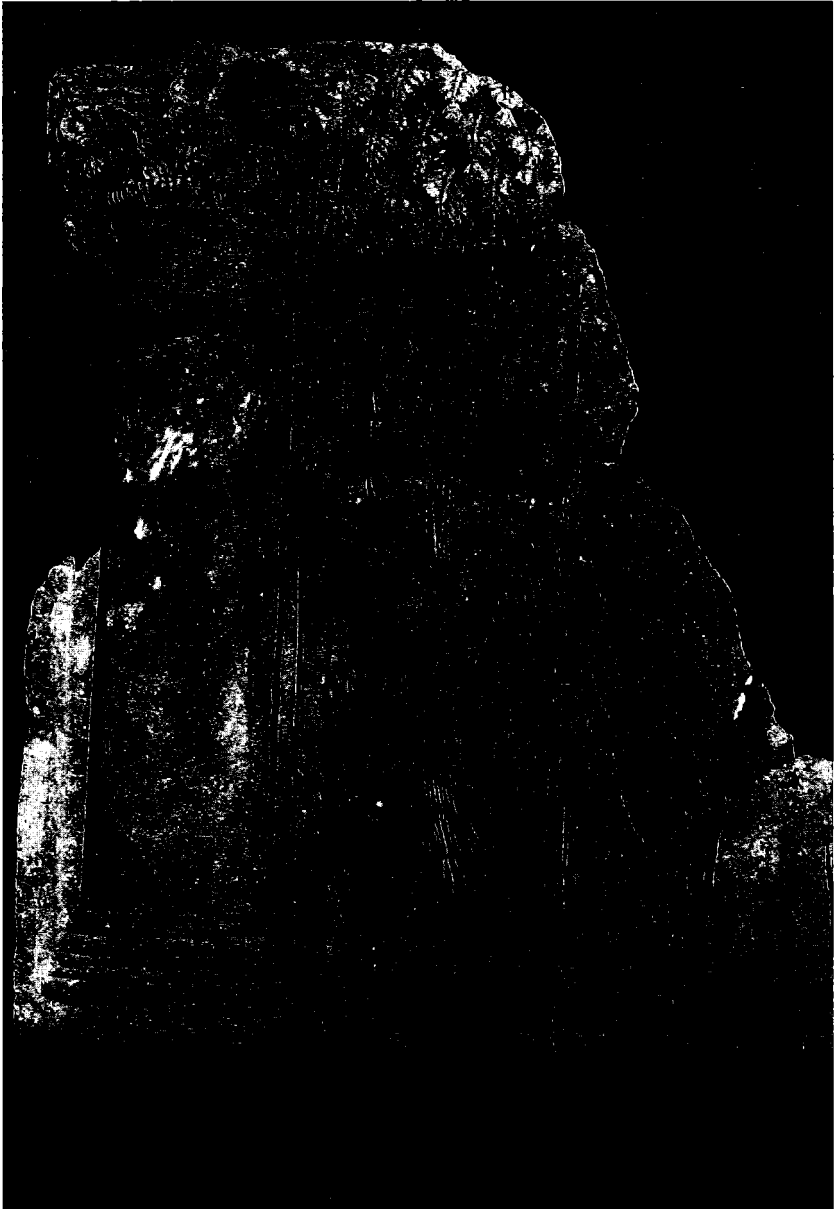


Fig. 4 – Relief fragment showing the Gift of the elephant. From Saidu Sharif I. Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif (Inv. S 1112; after D. Faccenna, Il fregio figurato..., op. cit., Pl. 47)



Fig. 5 – Painting fragment with scene from the Vessantara-jātaka. From Miran, temple M V. (after A. Stein, Serindia, Oxford, 1921, fig. 135).



Fig. 6 – Detail of the previous piece (A. Stein, Serindia, op. cit., fig. 134).



Fig. 7 – Relief fragment with horse and rider. From Saidu Sharif I. Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale "Giuseppe Tucci", Rome (Inv. S 621; after D. Faccenna, Il fregio figurato..., op. cit., Pl. 32b).

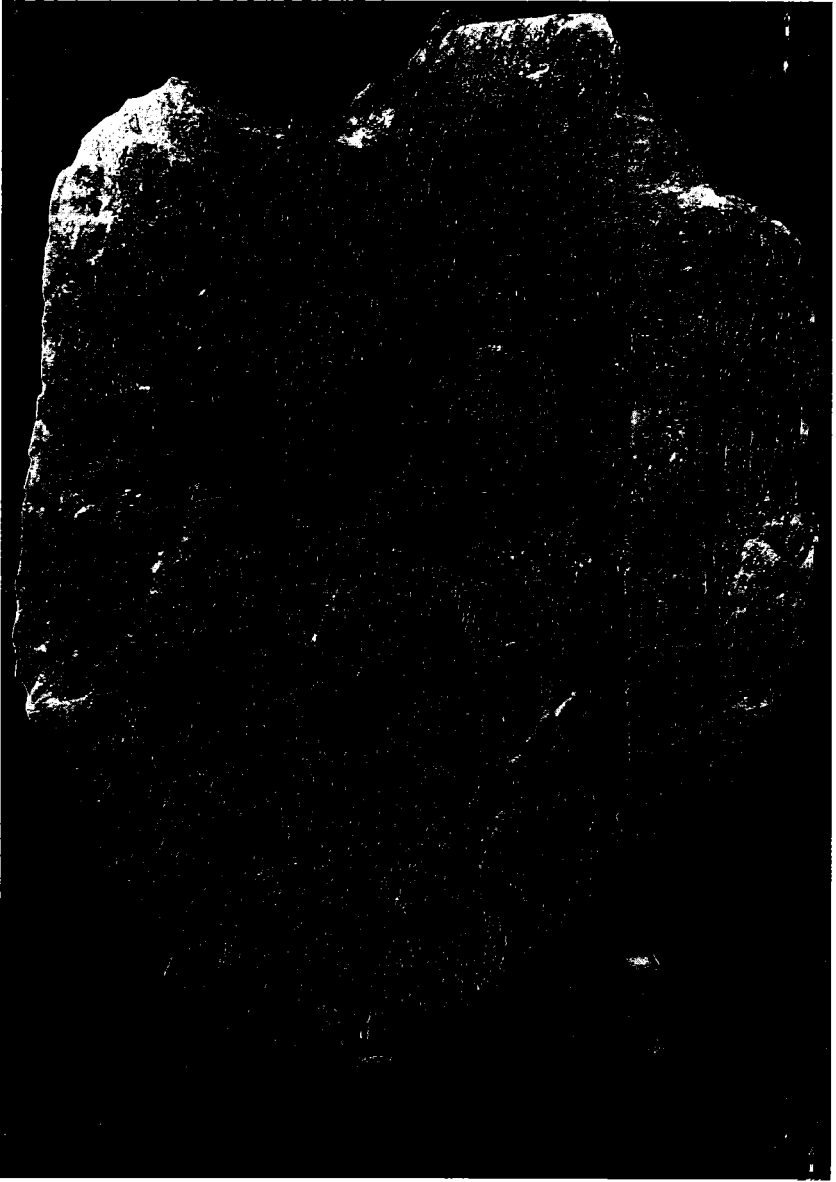


Fig. 8 – Relief fragment showing horsemen riding out of the city gate. From Saidu Sharif I. Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale "Giuseppe Tucci", Rome (Inv. S 709; after D. Faccenna, Il fregio figurato..., op. cit., Pl. 37).



Fig. 9 – Painting fragment with scene from the Vessantara-jātaka. From Miran, temple M V. (after A. Stein, Serindia, op. cit., fig. 137).

