Response to ***New Light on (and from) the Mohammand Nari*** by Paul Harrison & Christian Luczanits

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I am interested in the identification and interpretation of Gandhāran reliefs from the viewpoint of Buddhist art history. Generally speaking, there is a tendency to think that art works (icons) were produced based upon texts (sūtras). Certainly, in the area of Esoteric Buddhist Art and Buddhist scrolls and paintings (*kyōhenga* 経変画) during the Tang Dynasty in China, art works and texts show a close relationship. However, it does not mean that these art works reflect the precisely what is described in texts. Furthermore, at the initial stage of Buddhist art history (from the 2nd century BC to the 6th century AD), there is a prominent distance between art works and texts. It is questionable whether or not the artisans (artists) truly read the sūtras before modeling their artwork. The artisans were probably illiterate, and thus modeled the reliefs based on what they had heard from monks. The artisans probably tried to combine the textual information from the sūtras they heard with past iconographical expressions. Modifications were then made and new inspirations added. I wish we had knowledge about both what and how the artisans heard from the monks, but this is something we can only imagine based on the existing Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, or Chinese texts.

Regarding the Mohammand Nari stele (hereafter abbreviated as M.N.S.), the main theme for this presentation, various identifications and analyses were made in past. However, we scholars never reached an agreement. In past years, studies were done based on clues from the specific text which this stele might be based on. As a result, *Divyāvadāna* (Chapter 12, *Prātihārya-sūtra*), *Lotus Sūtra, The Larger and Smaller Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtras, Aṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūha*, etc. were suggested as the sources for these art works, and respective studies followed. Although the M.N.S. composition corresponds to these sūtras partially, there was no indication for the complete match.

Concerning these matters, Harrison and Luczanits' paper suggests that we reconsider past approaches to the M.N.S., especially those in which scholars tended to rely on a single textual source or specific sūtra. This is a call for philologists and art historians to realize and acknowledge that we need to work together in order to develop analyses on textual and iconographic aspects. Their conclusions are based upon careful examination of both these aspects, as they determine the correspondence between specific textual contents and art motifs or elements. In this sense, this paper was very successful and presented notable achievements. Such collaborative research process should be highly valued and this method recognized. I strongly believe a neutral attitude and collaborative approaches are keys for achieving further success in deciphering Gandhāran reliefs. (cf. my article "Shaeijō no shinpen to daijō bukkyō bijutsu no kigen" 舎衛城の神変と大乗仏教美術の起源 [The Miracles at Śrāvastī and the Origin of Mahāyāna Buddhist Art] in *Bigaku Bijutsushi Kenkyū Ronshū* 美学美術史研究論集, 20), published in 2002. A revised version of this article can be found in my book *Indo bukkyō bijutsu shiron* インド仏教美術史論 [Essays on Buddhist Art History in India], published in 2010. The speakers pointed out the characteristic motifs or elements from the group of steles related to M.N.S.: 1. Buddha on lotus, 2.

Triadic composition, 3. Many Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, and 4. Sacred and divine architecture. They also categorized these steles into three types.

(1) Lotus pond type steles
(2) Palace type steles
(3) Emanation type steles (Meditating Buddha and Bodhisattva showing *dyāna mudrā* emanate Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Devas)

In their paper, each of the above types is carefully studied. Variations among the descriptions presented in *The Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha*, *The Smaller Sukhāvatīvyūha*, and the *Akṣobhya's Sūtra* are also examined. The authors then conclude that the steles in question represent the Buddha-field, especially in relation to the images presented in *The Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha.* They point out that we can also observe depictions related to the idea of Buddhakāya in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The group of Gandhāran reliefs titled "The Miracle at Śrāvastī", which since Alfred A. Foucher (1865-1952) has been considered in relation to early Buddhist sectarian schools, was, in this paper, nearly determined to have developed in deep connection with Mahāyāna worship. Iconographical elements and textual information were well-analyzed and classified. But there is just one thought that I cannot give up. I still feel that it is necessary to re-evaluate whether these steles are the product of the worship of Amitābha Buddha. There are two reasons for that.

First, there are more than forty specimens of Buddhist Triads existing in Gandhāra. Most of the flanking Bodhisattvas are Bodhisattvas Maitreya (with the topknot hairstyle and water flask in hand) and Avalokiteśvara (wearing a turban and carrying a lotus flower or a garland), and some are Maitreya and Siddhārtha. After the Gupta period, this Triad type, Śākyamuni Buddha, Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara, became very popular in India. So I identify the center Buddha of these Gandhāran Buddhist Triads as Śākyamuni Buddha, however not as the historical Buddha but as the eternal Buddha of Mahāyāna Buddhism. (cf. my "Iconography of the Two Flanking Bodhisattvas in the Buddhist Triads from Gandhāra: Bodhisattva Siddhārta, Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara", *East and West*, vol. 58, nos. 1-4, 2008).

Second, the stele at Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery depicts the Bodhisattva Maitreya in Tuṣita in the upper division and the worship of Buddha's bowl in the lower one. Thus the Buddha appears in the middle division of this lotus pond type stele, and is more likely Śākyamuni because the Buddha's bowl symbolizes the succession of the dharma, in this case from Śākyamuni to Bodhisattva Maitreya. Furthermore, some of the palace type steles depict the Śākyamuni's narrative scenes.

For these reasons, I believe that both the lotus pond type and the palace type steles are based on the Buddhakāya concept, thus reflecting Mahāyāna Buddhism. In relation to the Mahāyāna sūtra, I see a strong connection to the descriptions from these particular sūtras as follows: Chapter one of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Ch. *Fǎhuá jīng xù pǐn*, Jp. *Hokkekyō jobon* 法華経序品), *Tathāgatotpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa* (Ch. *Huáyán jīng rúlái xìngqǐ pǐn*; Jp. *Kegon kyō nyorai shōki bon* 華厳経如来性起品), *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (Ch. *Rúláizàng jīng*; Jp. *Nyoraizō kyō* 如来蔵経), and *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Ch. *Jiě shēnmì jīng*; Jp. *Gejinmikkyō* 解深密経). Therefore, when Śākyamuni is in deep meditation (*samādhi*), the great

ray of light is emitted from the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows (*ūrṇā*). The light emitted by Śākyamuni illuminated countless Buddha-fields and turned into innumerable lotus flowers, where Buddhas and Bodhisattvas manifested. Bodhisattvas, Devas and worshippers are all filled with joy, admiration and wonder. Surrounded by joyous crowds, the Buddha revealed the dharma of the Mahāyāna. I feel that this is the scene artisans aimed to sculpt. At this point, I reached the tentative conclusion that the Buddha sitting on a lotus throne represents Śākyamuni as an infinite being, as the Dharmakāya. However, this theory still needs to be further verified.

In many ways, I believe that collaborative research between philologists and art historians may ensure more accurate analyses in the future. In this manner, this paper is a valuable, highly productive, and suggestive contribution.