The Silk Road: The Spread and Acculturation of Buddhist Art and Architecture

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Master of Research

October 2024

Ezra Crump

Student ID: 20147177

Word Count: 24,935

Supervisors: Prof. Julian Henderson and Dr. George Woudhuysen

Classics and Archaeology

University of Nottingham

A Contents Page:

A List of Figures

26th March 2021, Archaeopress, page 19; ASI Frontier Province 1920-1921: no. 1923.

Figure 6: A photograph taken during the 1923 excavation of the site's main *stūpa*, showing the gap in the added plinth where steps would likely have been. Page 32. From: Errington, E. (2022). 'Reconstructing Jamālgarhī and Appendix B: the archaeological record 1848-1923', in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March 2021,* Archaeopress, page 13; ASI Frontier Province 1920-1921: 45, no. 1850.

Figure 7: A photograph taken in 1907 of the remains of the stucco seated Buddha statues encircling the *stūpa*. Page 36. From: Errington, E. (2022). 'Reconstructing Jamālgarhī and Appendix B: the archaeological record 1848-1923', in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March 2021,* Archaeopress, page 13; ASIFCAR 1907-1908: photo no. 173, courtesy of the Kern Institute, Leiden University: shelf mark P-036501.

Figure 8: A modern photograph of surviving pilasters within the main *stūpa* courtyard, which would have originally been covered in stucco. Page 36. From: Errington, E. (2022). 'Reconstructing Jamālgarhī and Appendix B: the archaeological record 1848-1923', in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March 2021,* Archaeopress, page 13.

Figure 9: A Corinthian column capital found at the site, featuring both acanthus leaf ornamentation and Boddhisatva images. Page 37. From: Errington, E. (2022). 'Reconstructing Jamālgarhī and Appendix B: the archaeological record 1848-1923', in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March 2021,* Archaeopress, page 15.

Figure 10: A photograph of the schist 'Seated Buddha from Gandhara' statue. Page 45. From: The Trustees of the British Museum online collection, 1895,1026.1. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1895-1026-1 [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 11: A photograph of a schist stair riser from the steps connecting the main *stūpa* courtyard and courtyard 3, depicting the Candakinnara jataka story. Page 51. From: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1880.39. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-39. [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 12: A photograph of a schist panel from the drum of the *stūpa*, depicting a scene from the Buddha's final life. Page 56. From: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1880.74. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-74. [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 13: A map of the Silk Road routes that connected China to Central Asia and South Asia, with key sites such as Dunhuang pinpointed. Page 61. From: Wilderness Travel. 2024. https://www.wildernesstravel.com/trip/china-xian-kashgar-silk-road-tour/ [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 14: A photograph of the interior of Cave 257, with its main Buddha statue within its main *stūpa* pillar. Page 70. From: Dunhuang Academy. 2024. https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-257-northern-wei-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 15: A photograph of Cave 257's main Buddha image on the east wall of its central *stūpa* pillar. Page 77. From: Vincent, J. (1948). International Dunhuang Programme. Available at: https://idp.bl.uk/collection/2CD30D7E7A064BB4804FCEE35D7C46BA/?return=%2Fcollection%2F%3Fterm%3Dcave%2520257. [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 16: A photograph of Cave 257's main Buddha image on the east wall of its central *stūpa* pillar. This is a screenshot I took using the 'Digital Dunhuang' website's panorama view of Cave 257, which is ran by the

Dunhuang Academy. Page 78. From: Dunhuang Academy. (2024). Available at: https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0257 [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 17: A photograph of the interior of Cave 275, with its main Buddha statue pictured situated along its back wall, with smaller niches along its side walls. Page 83. From: Dunhuang Academy. (2024). Available at: https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 18: A photograph of the 'Que' niches of Cave 275 along its side wall. Page 86. From: Dunhuang Academy. (2024). Available at: https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 19: A photograph of the a 'double tree' niches present within Cave 275. Page 87. From: Dunhuang Academy. (2024). Available at: https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 20: A photograph of the interior of Cave 275, with its main Buddha statue pictured situated along its back wall, with smaller niches along its side walls. Page 89. From: Dunhuang Academy. (2024). Available at: https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 21: A photograph of one of Cave 275's side walls, showing the 'Que' niches situated atop murals of stories from the Dharma, although this particular story is not identified. Page 94. From: Dunhuang Academy. (2024). Available at: (https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 22: A photograph of the 'Nine Coloured Deer' Jataka mural of Cave 257. Page 99. From: CHN Museums. (2023). Available at: https://chnmuseums.com/blogs/inspiration-stories/the-nine-colored-deer-jataka-of-the-deer-king [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

Figure 23: A photograph of a 17th-18th Century CE textile fragment featuring *ruyi* auspicious cloud patterns. Page 101. From: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 46.133.68. Available at: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/69809 [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Figure 24: A photograph of a 18th Century CE porcelain wine cup with *lingzhi* motifs. Page 101. From: The Trustees of the British Museum, PDF,B.704, 390043001. Available at: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/390043001 [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Figure 25: A section of the 'Nine Coloured Deer' mural, showing the design upon the queen's dress. Page 101. From: CHN Museums. (2023). Available at: https://chnmuseums.com/blogs/inspiration-stories/the-nine-colored-deer-jataka-of-the-deer-king [Last Accessed 23/10/24]

An Abstract

This work will examine the extent of the acculturation of Buddhist art and architecture as the religion spread along the ‘Silk Road’, focussing upon the regions of ancient Gandhāra in modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Dunhuang in the modern-day Gansu province of China. It will discuss three case studies, the site of Jamālgarhī in Gandhāra, and Cave 257 and Cave 275 at the site of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang. Within these case studies, the focus will be on their architecture, including the key Buddhist monument of the ‘stūpa’, in addition to a Buddha image and depictions of stories and scenes from the Dharma, demonstrating that the acculturation of Buddhism within these disparate regions did indeed result in composite visual languages, admixing with the existing architectural and artistic traditions. Given the importance of images within Buddhism, allowing for the spread of key concepts and stories without the need for translation or literacy, the presence of new cultural influences within Buddhist material culture can therefore be seen as a reflection of the acculturation of Buddhism and Buddhist communities as the religion spread along the ’Silk Road’.

Acknowledgements:

I’d like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Julian Henderson and Dr. George Woudhuysen for all their support and help over this last year, as I absolutely would not have been able to complete this work without it. I’d also like to thank my coursemates, housemates, and friends for their companionship this year, and for making a summer spent almost entirely in the Humanities Building and Hallward Library actually somewhat enjoyable. Finally, I’d like to dedicate this to my mum, Helen, and my brother, Malachi, for whom I’d do anything; and to the memory of my dad, who would’ve loved listening to me ramble on about archaeology. A further thank you to my long-suffering mum for listening instead.

Chapter One: An Introduction

Figure 1: A map showing the main terrestrial trading routes of the historic ‘Silk Road’ in the Han Dynasty period of 206 BCE–220 CE, with the highlighting of key hub cities such as Dunhuang in China, and Taxila, in the ancient region of Gandhāra. (China Sage, 2021).

The historic ‘Silk Road’, as a vast entity of trade networks spanning both land and sea, provided a bridge between disparate regions, empires and kingdoms across the ancient world (Frankopan, 2016; Lewis & Brook, 2009; Canepa, 2010). The terrestrial ‘Silk Road’ is traditionally thought to have stretched eastwards from the Mediterranean, traversing Southwest Asia, through the Central Asian steppe, and into the regions of China and India – whilst the maritime ‘Silk Road’ connected an extensive number of port cities from the Mediterranean Sea to the East Asian coastline through its web of itinerant merchant ships and coastal ports (Lewis & Brook, 2009; Frankopan, 2016; Canepa, 2010). Whilst the ‘Silk Road’’s primary export was, of course, the eponymous Chinese silk, a great manner of other goods were carried through the Eurasian continent and across the oceans surrounding it, including key wares such as spices, other such textiles, ceramics, and precious metals and stones (Frankopan, 2016; Hansen, 2012). These networks endured for some 2,000 years, spanning the several millennia from approximately 500 BCE to 1500 CE, and connected the ancient world in a way that is reminiscent of our current ‘globalised’ world, establishing key political, cultural, linguistic and material links that arguably endure to this day (Frankopan, 2016). Recent research has revealed a

potential ‘proto-Silk Road’, with evidence of far-reaching trade networks dating back to the 2nd Millennium BCE (Lü et al, 2021).

This ‘globalisation’ was at its most concentrated within the trading ’hub’ and ‘oasis’ cities of the ‘Silk Road’, situated along key trading roads, and thus providing accommodation and numerous customers to the travelling merchants and missionaries who not only supplied the cities with goods but also exposure to new cultures, languages and religions (Canepa, 2010; Hansen, 2012). Indeed, the study of religions and religious practices provides a unique angle in the examination of the ‘Silk Road’ and its impact, with religion pervasive across all levels of society and present within both sacred and ‘secular’ contexts (Canepa, 2010). Thus, throughout this work, I will be focussing upon the spread and acculturation of Buddhist art and architecture along the ‘Silk Road’, in order to examine to what extent this was occurring, and whether this process of acculturation and the resulting hybridisation and syncretism of Buddhist art and architecture can be seen within surviving material culture. I use the term acculturation here to refer to the process that occurs when groups or individuals from different cultures come into contact, resulting in reciprocal changes and adaptations in their original cultures, often adapting their own religious beliefs or taking on new religious beliefs as their own, in addition to new languages and customs (Sam & Berry, 2010, 473; Deeg, 2022).

Originating in what is now known as Northeastern India and Nepal in the 6th Century BCE, Buddhism's central doctrine known as the 'Dharma' revolves around the life and teachings of the historical Buddha (Liu & Shao, 2011; Fogelin, 2015). These teachings are typically concerned with the transientness or 'emptiness' of the self, with meditation in hopes of achieving this forming a key part of Buddhist practices (Liu & Shao, 2011; Fogelin, 2015). The historic Buddha is an individual whose final reincarnation as the Prince Siddhārtha allowed him to achieve enlightenment, breaking free from the cycle of reincarnation and suffering – also known as 'samsara' – upon his death, and achieving nirvana (Fogelin, 2015; Liu & Shao, 2011). The tales of his many previous lives, or 'Jātaka' stories, some 570 in total, feature prominently within Buddhism and are often depicted in Buddhist art, whilst the story of his final life as Prince Siddhārtha forms a key part of the *Dharma* (Deeg, 2022). His teachings were transcribed as 'sutras', which form another key part of the *Dharma,* providing instructions to his followers on how to live well in the hopes of achieving enlightenment, resulting in an end to their *samsara* cycle and the reaching of nirvana upon their death (Liying, 2017; Fogelin, 2015).

As Buddhism is a religion without a definitive canon, with an origin in the 6th Century CE that pre-dates many of its texts by some 700 years, the archaeological study of Buddhist material culture can help to provide a full picture as to the beliefs and practices of Buddhists within antiquity (Fogelin, 2015; Fogelin, 2003). With monastic sites, every aspect of their design would likely have been carefully and intentionally chosen, with elements such as

architecture and images of the Buddha revealing any ‘foreign’ influences, adaptations or divergences in religious beliefs, in addition to offering depictions of stories that may not have a surviving textual source (Fogelin, 2015; Kim & Han, 2011; Fogelin, 2003; Lidu, 2020). Through this, I would argue that archaeological study of Buddhist monasteries can indeed provide a certain level of insight into the beliefs, practices and languages of their communities through the analysis and interpretation of their artefacts and architecture.

Throughout this work, I will be focussing upon three case studies across two sites in two key regions of the ‘Silk Road’: Jamālgarhī in ancient Gandhāra, and two of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, China. I will be looking at adaptations in architectural styles in addition to shifts within art such as sculptures and murals and their iconography and symbols in order to examine if the process of acculturation that Buddhism and its followers underwent as the religion spread to new regions can be seen within the surviving material culture. I think that these three case studies are well suited to being studied together, as they are all Buddhist monastic sites and feature influences of other cultural and religious traditions, and mark the route through which Buddhism travelled along the ‘Silk Road’’s trading network from South Asia to China. Within my second chapter, I will be discussing the spread of Buddhism along the ‘Silk Road’ in order to provide context and background for my case studies, which will be followed by my third chapter on the site of Jamālgarhī, whilst my fourth chapter will discuss Cave 257 and

Cave 275 of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang. This work will close with a fifth chapter, taking the form of a discussion and final conclusion.

Within this work, I will use the term ‘Indic’ to refer to the ancient region which encompassed the area that is now modern-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, as these countries did not exist within their modern forms in the ancient world, instead being created in the 1947 partition as British rule ended, and the subsequent separation of Pakistan in 1971 (Chakrabati, 2016; Merriam Webster, 2024). Similarly, whilst the modern state of China was founded in 1949, the country of China was first unified in the Qin dynasty of the 1st and 2nd Century BCE, and so it did exist in various forms within the ancient world (Ebrey, 2023). I also use the term ‘Han Chinese’ to refer to the dominant Han Chinese ethnicity and culture that existed within ancient Northern China, as although I do acknowledge that regional cultural variations and ethnic minorities did indeed exist throughout the country, it is this Han Chinese culture into which non-Han Chinese individuals aimed to sinicize and which was described within ancient Confucian thought as something that others could ‘acquire’ (Chun, 1996; Ebrey, 2023, 59). The process of sinicization, or ‘becoming Chinese’, is sometimes therefore referred to as ‘becoming Han’ or ‘Han-hua’, and ‘Han’ and ‘Chinese’ are often used interchangeably when discussing the culture and society of the region, which does not acknowledge the presence of ethnic minorities within the country in both the modern and ancient world (Chun, 1996; Ebrey, 2023; Ho, 1998, 152). However, as more groups, religions and cultures acculturated within China, this expanded what it meant to be ‘Chinese’,

including the acculturation and sinicization of Buddhism (Ho, 1998). Indeed, Chinese Buddhism is also sometimes referred to as ‘Han Buddhism’ following the sinicization of Buddhism within ancient China, and it became a key part of Chinese culture and society (Liu & Shao, 1992; Ho, 1998).

I would argue that it is especially important to look at this research through a post-colonial lens, given that the sites I will be looking at were all excavated by ‘Western’ archaeologists within the colonial period (Hansen, 2012; Errington, 2022; Chen, 2022). This resulted in many of their early excavation notes, reports, and journals being not only written in English instead of local languages, but also with an inherent bias (Cunningham, 1875; Smith, 1889; Wang, 2012). Additionally, many of the finds from these sites were taken from their country of origin to museums across Europe and North America, which serves to further take agency from these countries over their own heritage and history (Errington, 2022; Chen, 2022; Shichang, 1995; Rong et al, 1999; Hansen, 2012). As there has been limited literature written on each of my case studies individually, and it does not appear that they have been studied or written about together, this work will aim to bridge this gap within the existing scholarship and establish that the spread and acculturation of Buddhism along the ‘‘Silk Road’’ can indeed be seen in the surviving material culture of differing regions within Asia.

Chapter Two: The Spread of Buddhism along the 'Silk Road'

During the historic Buddha's life, he and his followers spread his teachings along their travels in Northern India, eventually resulting in a network of ascetic monks known as the 'sangha' who spread Buddhist practices and beliefs further afield in the centuries following his death (Fogelin, 2015; Foltz, 2010). The far-reaching nature of the 'Silk Road' provided a perfect conduit for this spread, connecting India to Central Asia and then East Asia through the 'crossroads' that was the region of Gandhāra in modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, and a map of this region is provided in Figure 2 (Canepa, 2010; Deeg, 2022; Teiser & Verellen, 2011; Dietz, 2007). Through this, the 'Silk Road' supplied Buddhist monks with new audiences and communities to which to preach, alongside new regions in which to settle, corresponding with a shift within the *sangha* from living more itinerant lifestyles to settling in monastic communities (Fogelin, 2015; Dietz, 2007; Foltz, 2010). Whilst most Buddhist monks were literate by the 5th Century CE, many still were not, and neither were the vast majority of the Buddhist laity (Sen, 2012; Wu, 2024). Thus, instead of texts and manuscripts, their access to Buddhism and a Buddhist 'education' would primarily have come from stories from monks or travelling merchants, silk paintings and wall murals, portable and stationary statues of the Buddha, and other such pictorial objects that did not require literacy to access (Sen, 2012; Wu, 2024; Kieschnick, 2003). This makes material culture greatly significant in considering the extent of the acculturation of Buddhist

communities as the religion spread along the ‘Silk Road’, as whilst the syncretism of texts and manuscripts is key in understanding adaptations in Buddhist theology on a theoretical and intellectual level, it is the physical and tangible representations of this that could universally be understood within Buddhist communities (Sen, 2012).

One such example of this is the development of the Buddha image within the region of Gandhāra, who in early Buddhism was often portrayed in a metaphorical sense with his personhood replaced by an animal or other such aniconic motif, before being depicted anthropomorphically in later Buddhist art (Fogelin, 2015; Seckel & Dietrich, 2004). These Buddha images eventually came to be venerated and involved in the practice of meditation, making them highly sacred objects, and thus any adaptation to their design would have been carefully and intentionally chosen by both its patrons and craftsmen, with members of the sangha often also involved within this process (Stewart, 2024; Behrendt, 2022; Greene, 2018; Fogelin, 2015; Howard, 2015; Kieschnick, 2003). Thus, they can arguably be used to examine the acculturation of the community who commissioned and used both the image itself and its site.

There is some debate around the catalyst for the emergence of Buddha images within Gandhāra, as the region’s historic presence of Hellenistic culture arguably influenced its sculptural traditions (Fogelin, 2015; Liu, 2011; Filigenzi, 2019; Hsing & Crowell, 2005; Tanabe, 2005 Stančo,

2012; Halkias, 2014). However, the extent of this is again debated within scholarship, as there is also an historical precedent for the figural depictions of religious figures within Hinduism and Jainism, which were contemporary to the emergence of Buddhism and practiced within the same region, in addition to the development of Mathuran Buddhist art – and yet, the Buddha image is often attributed exclusively to Hellenistic art (Rienjang & Stewart, 2022; Seckel & Leisinger, 2004; Coomarsawarmy, 1926; Rhie Quintanilla, 2007; Stoneman, 2019).

Whilst Buddhism is considered to have 'arrived' in the region in the 3rd Century BCE, Gandhāra was in contact with Buddhist areas across Northern India prior to this, and so whilst there would have been some level of exposure and understanding of the religion, this certainly would not have been as widespread as it was from this point onwards (Aldrovandi & Hirata, 2005; Stonemason, 2019). Within this period, Gandhāra suffered invasions by many empires, including the Scythians, the Parthians, the Achaemenids, the Macedonians, and the Graeco-Bactrians, before being ruled by the Kushan empire from the 1st Century CE to the late 4th Century CE (Fogelin, 2015; Seldeslachts, 2007; Vassiliades, 2004). The Kushan period is often described as Gandhāra's 'Golden Age', coinciding with Buddhism's widespread acculturation within the region and subsequent dominance within Gandhāran society, marking the creation of the renowned 'Gandhāran art' tradition that is considered to have combined traditionally 'Western' and 'Eastern' styles and motifs (Dietz, 2007; Aldrovandi & Hirata, 2005; Liu, 2011; Filigenzi, 2019; Rienjang & Stewart, 2022; Vassiliades, 2004). This

multiculturalism was further amplified within Gandhāran society through the cultural impact of the ‘Silk Road’, with the presence of many merchants, artists, and travellers harking from disparate regions across Asia and the Mediterranean, bringing with them new religions, languages and indeed artistic traditions (Ciordia, 2020; Canepa, 2010).

These frequent influxes of ‘foreign’ influences resulted in a multicultural society, with even the region’s currency being bilingual – inscribed in both Ancient Greek and ‘Gandhari’, a *Kharosthi* script and the language often used by Buddhist missionaries within Central Asia during the propagation of Buddhism throughout Central Asia (Dietz, 2007; Deeg, 2022, 224; Fogelin, 2015). This can be seen within numismatic evidence, with use of both the Kharosthi and Ancient Greek script upon the region’s coinage, within epigraphical evidence such as manuscripts, as well as the clear multicultural nature of much of the region’s architecture and art (Khettry, 2015; Stewart & Rienjang, 2022). Buddhism is considered to have first reached the region during the reign of the Mauryan King Asóka, with his monumental inscriptions found at the Afghani site of Kandahar partially written in both Greek and Aramaic, instructing monks and philosophers from different sects and denominations to accept each other’s beliefs, and proclaiming that his government will accept all sects (Sick, 2007; Williams, 1989). This serves to establish the multicultural nature of Gandhāran society within this period, and the relative tolerance that Buddhism and its followers received as it was propagated within Gandhāra. I would argue that this historic acculturation provided the perfect environment in which Buddhism

could be received and adapted, resulting in the creation of a new sculptural tradition and iconographic visual language was subsequently exported through the medium of the ‘Silk Road’ into Central Asia, and in turn China and East Asia (Vassiliades, 2004; Behrendt, 2022; Teiser & Verellen, 2011). This subsequently resulted in the spread of Buddha images in the ‘Gandhāran’ style, depicting him in an idealistic human form, both in singular ‘portrait’ sculptures, reliefs and paintings, and within larger narrative tableaus of *Jātaka* stories (Deeg, 2022; Behrendt, 2022).

In turn, Buddhism’s spread into China is considered within scholarship to have started in the 1st Century CE, although it is likely that there may have been Buddhist missionaries in China prior to this (Liu, 2011; Foltz, 2010; Liu & Shao, 1992). It was first brought into the country by the merchants and monks who travelled into China along the ‘Silk Road’, bringing with them their beliefs and customs and propagating Buddhism as they settled within the region’s key ‘Silk Road’ ‘hub’ cities such as Dunhuang, Chang’an/Xi’an, and Luoyang (Liu, 2011; Foltz, 2010; Teiser & Verellen, 2011). The aforementioned ‘Gandhāran’ Buddha images began to be exported along the ‘Silk Road’ into Central Asia and then China by the 2nd Century CE, becoming instrumental within the propagation of Buddhism within China, as Buddhism then become known as the ‘religion of images’, distinguishing it from the native Chinese Daoism and Confucianism (Wang, 1999, 90; Greene, 2018, 458). Confucianism is arguably more of a philosophical belief system than religion, with an emphasis on filial piety and social harmony, and was pervasive within ancient China, forming a central part of Han Chinese

culture (Liu & Shao, 1992). Conversely, Daoism is a religion centred around living in harmony with the life forces of the universe known as the three ‘qi’, and the all-encompassing truth of the universe known as ‘the Dao’, or ‘the Way’, with an emphasis on the importance of immortal humans and aspiring to immortality (Liu & Shao, 1992; Lewis & Brook, 2009; Deeg, 2022). This aspiration of immortality aided in the acceptance and conversion of Daoist communities, as many converted to Buddhism partially due to the perception that the Buddha had imparted instructions on how to achieve immortality to his followers, a ‘goal’ coveted within Daoism, instead of instructions on how to escape *samsara* and achieve *nirvana* (Sen, 2012; James, 1989; Liu & Shao, 1992).

Within this period, Chang’an, now known as ‘Xi’an’, was the imperial stronghold of the contemporary Eastern Han dynasty, and so the successful propagation and acculturation of Buddhism into the elite society of Chang’an relied upon the approval of the emperor (Liu, 2011; Sen, 2012). The contemporary emperor to Buddhism’s arrival in Chang’an was Emperor Ming, who claimed to have independently dreamed of the Buddha flying into China prior to receiving Buddhist missionaries at his court, thus establishing imperial support of the religion even before its initial arrival within China (Sen, 2012). Despite rather legitimate concerns within scholarship as to the veracity of this story, given that the encountering of important figures within dreams by the Emperor are not only greatly convenient but a frequent occurrence within ancient Chinese literature, it still provides insight into the perception of Buddhism by the elites of Chinese society, demonstrating that

it was clearly viewed highly enough to warrant a claimed contact between Buddhism's sacred figure and the contemporary emperor (Sen, 2012).

Yet, the success of Buddhism's propagation within wider Chinese society relied upon the ability of its monks and missionaries to translate Buddhist beliefs, concepts and texts (Levman, 2018; Fogelin, 2015; Foltz, 2010). This translation occurred not only in language, but also conceptually, so as to be understood by the Chinese people, who had not encountered these ideas before (Levman, 2018; Fogelin, 2015; Foltz, 2010; Liu & Shao, 1992; Lewis & Brook, 2009; Deeg, 2022). This exegetic practice was known as 'geyi', meaning the 'matching of meanings' - or, in other words, the using of Chinese concepts and words to explain Indic Buddhist concepts and beliefs, and not simply transliterating Sanskrit or Gandhari/Kharosthi into Chinese (Wang, 1999, 90; Sen, 2012, 20). This can arguably be applied to the realms of iconography and architecture, using styles and motifs that would be familiar to a Chinese audience to more effectively convey traditional Buddhist ideas (Wang, 1999). Indeed, the term 'xiangjiao' is often translated to mean 'teaching by way of images' or the 'religion of images', and was used to refer to both Buddhism as a whole and to the importance of visual material, images, and iconography within the propagation of Buddhism within China, albeit being a direct translation of the Sanskrit term 'saddharma-pratirūpaka', meaning 'the semblance of the true teaching' (Wang, 1999, 90; Greene, 2018, 458). Whilst this term was often used derogatively by non-Buddhists within China, it serves to demonstrate not only how essential the process of acculturation was in Buddhism's successful

propagation within China, but also how the Chinese public viewed the religion (Wang, 1999; Greene, 2018).

Through this, it can certainly be argued that the spread of Buddhism through the ‘Silk Road’ resulted not only in its transportation, but in its adaptation, acculturating into the new cultures and societies it found itself in, and resulting in the creation of composite artistic and architectural styles. This can be seen in the surviving material culture of the ancient Buddhist world, including the two sites that I will be focussing on within this work, the first of which is the site of Jamālgarhī in ancient Gandhāra, followed by two caves from the site of Mogao, at Dunhuang in China.

Chapter Three: The site of Jamālgarhī in ancient Gandhāra

Figure 2: A map of the historic region of Gandhāra, highlighting key archaeological sites such as Jamālgarhī. (Asia Society, 2024).

The site of Jamālgarhī lies within the historic region of Gandhāra in modern-day Pakistan, as shown above in Figure 2, and was used as a monastery (Errington, 2022). Numismatic evidence indicates that it was occupied between the 1st and the late 4th Century CE, before being discovered in 1848 CE by Sir Alexander Cunningham, and it was subsequently first excavated in stages between 1852 and 1923 (Sathsara Perera, 2021; Errington, 2003; Stewart & Rienjang, 2022; Cunningham, 1875). This was undertaken by British archaeologists Cunningham, Crompton, Lumsden, and Hargreaves on behalf of the British Punjab government and the Archaeological Survey of India (Sathsara Perera, 2021; Errington, 2003; Stewart & Rienjang, 2022; Cunningham, 1875). However, these excavations were not documented to the extent and regulations of modern excavations, and so many of the finds from the site were lost or simply sold onto museums and private collectors without the sufficient notation of their provenance (Stewart & Rienjang, 2022; Errington, 2022). Efforts have been taken to track down these errant artefacts by scholars such as Dr. Errington in 1987, with many objects identified by a ‘J’ incised upon their surfaces (Errington, 2022; Stewart & Rienjang, 2022). Further

excavations occurred in 2012 and 2015, on behalf of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and UNESCO respectively, which recovered several more statues and coins from the site (Ullah, 2017; Errington, 2022). Despite the potential barrier of many of the site's artefacts being lost or misidentified, I think the site itself is still significant in highlighting the acculturation of Buddhism within the Gandhāran region, with a plethora of sculptures, panels, and column capitals surviving with their appropriate provenances allowing for the study of this site.

The chronology of the site, from around the 1st Century to the late 4th Century CE, places it well within the period of the Kushan empire's control and influence over the Gandhāran region, in addition to sitting within the wider context of Gandhāra's earlier occupations by the Macedonians, the Graeco-Bactrians, the Achaemenids, the Parthians, and the Scythians (Khettry, 2014; Sen-Gupta, 2004; Vassiliades, 2004; Fogelin, 2015; Seldeslachts, 2007; Errington, 2003). These occupations resulted in a diverse society, with a variety of different cultural, religious and linguistic influences (Sen-Gupta, 2004; Khettry, 2014; Vassiliades, 2004). However, this multiculturalism was both substantiated and perpetuated within Gandhāran society through the cultural impact of the 'Silk Road', hosting itinerant merchants, artists, and travellers from disparate regions in key 'Silk Road' trading hub cities within the region such as Taxila, located approximately 60 miles from Jamālgarhī (Ciordia, 2020; Canepa, 2010). Indeed, despite the relatively short occupation of Gandhāra by Hellenistic forces, the continuation of trade between India and the Mediterranean

through the ‘Silk Road’ allowed for this cultural contact between ‘East’ and ‘West’ to endure into the Roman period, and the cultural legacy of the Hellenistic conquests as the ‘Indo-Greek’ culture within Gandhāra continued into the Kushan period (Ciordia, 2020; Vassiliades, 2004).

Much emphasis has been placed within early scholarship from the 19th and early to mid-20th Century CE upon the influence of the Greeks and the Romans and within the region of Gandhāra, attributing the Gandhāran art and artistic tradition solely to ‘Western’ influences and claiming the development of the Buddha image as a Greek creation (Soper, 1951; Smith, 1889; Buchthal, 1943; Rowland, 1936; Stoneland, 2019; Coomsarawarmy, 1926; Falser, 2015). Subsequent modern scholarship has aimed to challenge this claiming of an Indic artistic and architectural tradition as a ‘Western’ creation, as it dismisses and detracts from the burgeoning figural artistic traditions that were present within India at this time and removes agency and credit from the region over their own culture (Stoneman, 2019; Falser, 2015). Whilst I do aim to acknowledge this, and by no means attribute the development of the Buddha image solely to Hellenistic sculpture, the focus of this work is acculturation, and so the possible Hellenistic influences and features within Gandhāran art will be discussed alongside its Indic origins.

Indeed, the conversion to Buddhism by Greek communities living within Gandhāra did also occur, starting during the reign of the Mauryan King Asoka in the 3rd Century BCE and continuing beyond the reign of the Indo-

Greek King Menander in the 2nd Century BCE (Ciordia, 2020; Stančo, 2012; Halkias, 2014; Vassiliades, 2004). So, the use of Hellenistic architecture within Buddhist monastic sites throughout Gandhāra can arguably also be viewed as a continuation of their traditional architecture by Indo-Greek communities, adapted for this new context and religious practice (Ciordia, 2020; Stančo, 2012; Halkias, 2014). This would suggest that the acculturation of Buddhism within the region was a reciprocal process, with local Indic Buddhist communities borrowing from Hellenistic culture, and Greek Buddhist communities borrowing from 'traditional' Indic Buddhist culture, resulting in the creation of the composite and syncretised Gandhāran culture that was neither fully Hellenistic nor Indic.

The site offers a wealth of insight into this hybridisation, with the site's material culture arguably showing Hellenistic influences within its Buddhist architecture, and figural depictions of the Buddha and portrayals of stories from the Dharma that demonstrate the development of a composite and acculturated Buddhist artistic tradition. The three artefacts that I will be discussing are all now held within the British Museum, with the 'Seated Buddha from Gandhāra' being acquired in 1895 from a private collector and politician named Eustace Smith, and the stair riser and panel both being acquired from the India museum, although the date of this has not been listed (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). It must also be noted that due to the difficulty in establishing a chronology for Gandhāran art, the exact date of the creation of

these objects is unknown, although it has been suggested by the British Museum that they all date to the 2nd-3rd Centuries CE, placing them well within the Kushan period (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024).

There has been little scholarship written upon this site, and so I have primarily relied upon the work of Dr Errington, in addition to the original 19th Century CE excavation reports by Cunningham and the online collections of the British Museum as primary and secondary sources for my research on this site. However, it must be acknowledged that the site was excavated on behalf of the colonial British government of the Punjab by British archaeologists, and so I have read Cunningham's reports critically, through a post-colonial literary lens. Within both this chapter and Chapter Four, I have also benefitted from using the 'Jātaka Stories Database', a website that is affiliated with the University of Edinburgh, the Leverhulme Trust, and the Edinburgh Buddhist Studies, and is overseen by Prof. Naomi Appleton (Jataka Stories Database, 2024). It forms an online database for the translation of *Jātaka* stories into English, alongside the depictions of these stories within art throughout the Buddhist world (Jataka Stories Database, 2024).

The Architecture of Jamālgarhī

Figure 3: A site plan first produced in 1874 by Crompton, before being reproduced in 1987 by Errington, showcasing the topography of the site. (Rienjang, 2020, 1).

Figure 4: A site plan of the main stupa area and surrounding courtyards, in addition to the adjoining areas 2-4 (Errington, 2022, 9).

The site of Jamālgarhī, as seen above in Figures 3 and 4, is a Buddhist monastery, comprising of many monastic buildings in addition to a sacred area of three courtyards, and a main *stūpa* situated within the highest courtyard (Errington, 2022; Cunningham, 1875; Ullah, 2017). This *stūpa* would have been encircled by a circumambulatory path or 'pradakṣiṇāpatha', and the entire monument was then surrounded by a circle of fifteen 'chapels' or shrines known as 'viharas', complete with their own sculptures and 'bas-reliefs' (Errington, 2022; Cunningham, 1875; Fogelin, 2015). As shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5, the main site is structured around three open courtyards connected by staircases, whilst other smaller buildings can be seen such as the Conference and Refectory Halls identified by Cunningham, in addition to some of an unknown purpose, complete with their own courtyards and small votive *stūpa*s (Errington, 2022; Rienjang, 2020; Cunningham, 1875; Ullah, 2017). It's probable that these buildings were used as accommodation for monks and other such members of the *sangha*, perhaps even hosting visiting members of the laity (Errington, 2022; Rienjang, 2020).

However, in a typical Buddhist monastery, these buildings usually form one large structure, resulting in a unified monastery building or series of

connected monastic cells within a large square enclosure, featuring a central courtyard with a *stūpa* situated within it (Rienjang, 2020; Errington, 2022; Fogelin, 2015). The deviation from the expected layout and architecture of a Gandhāran monastic site is strange, and so I would argue that it possibly indicates the influence of another architectural tradition, perhaps the more open and unconnected building complexes of the Hellenistic sanctuary (Melfi, 2016). Indeed, Cunningham writes that this layout is markedly different from that of a nearby Gandhāran monastic site, Takht-i-Bāhī, which instead had a unified monastery with a quadrangle of *viharas* surrounding its main *stūpa*, as opposed to the circular shape that can be seen at Jamālgarhī, and the site itself was not structured around a series of courtyards (Cunningham, 1875). As both Jamālgarhī and Takht-i-Bāhī are mountainous sites, this change likely would not have solely been for geographical reasons, and thus I would argue that this can be seen as an intentional adaptation in the layout of the Gandhāran Buddhist monastery at Jamālgarhī (Smith, 1889).

Figure 5: A photograph taken during the 1923 excavations of Courtyard 3, connected to the main *stūpa* courtyard by the staircase on the left, where the site's stair riser panels were found. (Errington, 2022, 19; ASI Frontier Province 1920-1921: no. 1923).

Figure 6: A photograph taken during the 1923 excavation of the site's main *stūpa*, showing the gap in the added plinth where steps would likely have been (Errington, 2022, 13; ASI Frontier Province 1920-1921: 45, no. 1850)

As pictured above in Figure 6, the site's main or 'Great' *stūpa*, was recorded by Cunningham as being 22 feet or 6.7 metres in diameter, and survived within the archaeological record with a height of 1.45 metres, which is likely not its full original height (Cunningham, 1875; Errington, 2022). The original purpose of a *stūpa* within Buddhism was to house relics of the Buddha, becoming a more symbolic representation of this over the centuries following his death and as Buddhism spread geographically from its origins in what is now known as Northeastern India and Nepal (Fogelin, 2015; Liu & Shao, 1992; Fogelin, 2003; Falk, 2013). However, it is not solely a Buddhist monument, and was also used within early Jainism as a funerary monument (Goswamy, 1980). Its shape is thought to have been intended to replicate a bubble upon the meniscus of still water, thus serving as a reminder to worshippers and attendants at the *stūpa* that life is fragile and short-lived, reinforced by the *stūpa*'s shape also being similar to a typical funerary mound (Murthy, 1993). This idea that life is fragile and short-lived aligns with central Buddhist philosophy of reincarnation and the *samsara* cycle, and so the very design of the *stūpa* monument itself provides a precedent for the use of architecture to convey key Buddhist ideals within religious sites (Liu & Shao, 2011). Thus, adaptations in this architecture can arguably provide insight into the acculturation of Buddhism, representing the influence of new ideas, religious beliefs and the exposure to new cultures within the community who commissioned, built, and inhabited the site. Much of the existing scholarship upon the archaeology of Buddhism emphasises that Buddhism does not exist in one singular entity, instead ever-changing both temporally and geographically, and thus so did the design and appearances

of physical manifestations of Buddhist beliefs such as the *stūpa* (Williams, 1989; Fogelin, 2015).

The site's *stūpa* in its original form would likely have comprised of a large stone or brick hemispherical mound rising from its base or 'medhi', the typical form and shape of a monument of this type, complete with the typical drum and chattra parasol of a monument of this type (Murthy, 1993; Cunningham, 1875; Errington, 2022; Ciordia, 2020). A plinth appears to have been added to the *stūpa*'s original base, almost completely encircling the structure, and yet including two gaps in which the plinth extended outwards at a right angle, which has been interpreted as a space to allow for the inclusion of steps rising from the structure to the top of the *stūpa* drum (Errington, 2022). Resting upon this plinth sits a wreath of painted stucco sculptures, likely also a later addition, which were still in situ by the time of Cunnigham's report and can be seen in Figure 7 (Cunningham, 1875; Errington, 2022). This ring of sculptures was divided into twenty faces by a series of pilasters, with the remnants of paint upon their surfaces suggesting that the sculptures may have been painted red (Cunningham, 1875; The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024).

However, Gandhāran *stūpa*s of this period usually featured a square base upon which the rest of the monument would be constructed, forming a 'classical' Hellenistic style terraced *stūpa* complete with columns, pilasters, entablatures and niches, and yet this *stūpa* has a clearly cylindrical base

accompanying these other features (Rienjang, 2020; Cunningham, 1875; Errington, 2022; Franz, 1980). It has been argued that the *stūpa* of Jamālgarhī was therefore an earlier monument created during the early phases of Buddhism's acculturation within the region, and thus before Buddhist architecture had adopted Hellenistic architectural elements (Franz, 1980). However, Errington argues that its circular shape and relatively small size were instead a necessary adaptation given the mountainous geography of the site, and therefore is not indicative of an early construction date, especially given the location of the *stūpa* within a courtyard that was built atop several earlier structures (Errington, 2022; Behrendt, 2004). The monument was then adapted as Hellenistic architectural elements were later added, potentially as a result of a later acculturation process. Through this, the differing architectural influences within the very shape and design of the *stūpa* itself can be seen as a reflection of the acculturation of Buddhism within the region of Gandhāra, and how this process occurred over time, demonstrating that not only was Buddhist architecture adapted to accommodate new cultural influences, but also differing geography.

Figure 7: A photograph taken in 1907 of the remains of the stucco seated Buddha statues encircling the *stūpa* (Errington, 2022, 13; ASIFCAR 1907-1908: photo no. 173, courtesy of the Kern Institute, Leiden University: shelf mark P-036501)

Figure 8: A modern photograph of surviving pilasters within the main *stūpa* courtyard, which would have originally been covered in stucco. (Errington, 2022, 13).

Indeed, the presence of Corinthian columns can also arguably be seen within the site, as Corinthian capitals were discovered during Cunnigham's initial excavations, with two such examples pictured above in Figures 7 and 8 (Errington, 2022). However, the columns themselves have not been found, nor was their exact original location noted within Cunningham and Crompton's early excavation reports, with a total of 19 partial capitals found across the entire site, some with evidence of gilding (Errington, 2022). Yet, several were indeed found near to the *stūpa* itself, in the spoil heap of its courtyard during the 1923 excavation of the site, suggesting that these columns were perhaps built for and originally placed within this courtyard (Errington, 2022; Cunningham, 1875). This is especially interesting considering the traditional design of a *stūpa* courtyard, with four pillars at each cardinal point surrounding the *stūpa* mound itself (Murthy, 1993). I would perhaps suggest that it is possible that the traditional presence of these pillars was supplanted by the Corinthian capitals that were discovered within this courtyard, meaning that their purpose in representing the cardinal points of a compass would likely still remain. However, no evidence of the pillars themselves have been found thus far – instead, only eleven upper capitals and eight lower capitals have been recovered, the upper capitals of which are all in half sections with no corresponding pairs, which in turn suggests that they may not have been in use as full standing pillars. Indeed, at nearby sites such as the aforementioned Takht-i-Bāhī, reliefs have been found that show capitals being used as a base for a *stūpa* (Errington, 2022). Whilst this is an unlikely use for capitals within Jamālgarhī due to the site's surviving *stūpa* architecture, it does demonstrate that as an

architectural form their presence was deemed appropriate for this role, and so their inclusion within this sacred space clearly speaks to the acculturation of Buddhism within the composite culture of the region. In turn, Cunningham suggested that they were originally placed upon the side walls of the courtyard's *viharas*, which would also suggest that they were deemed an appropriate inclusion within sacred Buddhist contexts (Cunningham, 1875). Although the exact purpose of the capitals within this site ultimately cannot be determined with the evidence found thus far, their presence still serves to demonstrate this acculturation.

Figure 9: A Corinthian column capital found at the site, featuring both acanthus leaf ornamentation and Boddhisatva images. (Errington, 2022, 15).

Furthermore, the presence of these Corinthian column capitals demonstrates that this was a Hellenistic architectural feature that was familiar and accessible to those that built and commissioned the site, setting a precedent for their inclusion within a Buddhist context. They feature acanthus ornamentation through the repeated use of the leaves of the acanthus plant, which is prevalent within the Mediterranean region and features prominently within the traditional iconography and ornamentation of both the Greek and later Roman cultures (Gilani & Siddiqui, 2020). The use of acanthus as a decorative element for architecture was borne within the realm of Greek funerary stelae, where the plant itself was first used to adorn the monuments before the practice progressed to incorporating carvings of acanthus leaves into the stelae themselves (Ebeling, 1924; Gilani & Siddiqui,

2020). The motif came to symbolise life, death, and immortality due to the regenerative nature of the plant, and it featured heavily within sepulchral art, in addition to invoking a sense of wealth due to its association with grand and monumental architecture through its subsequent presence upon the Corinthian column capital (Gilani & Siddiqui, 2020). I would argue that the origin and meaning of the acanthus decoration demonstrates that it is a fitting inclusion, compounding the symbolism of the *stūpa* and its emulation of Indic funerary mounds with traditional Hellenistic symbols of life, death, and immortality. This serves to convey much of the same meanings as the *stūpa*, reminding worshippers that life is fragile and short-lived, and that indeed nothing is permanent (Murthy, 1993). This sense of regeneration can also arguably be linked to the Buddhist concept of reincarnation or 'samsara', especially considering the presence of the *Jātaka* stories within the sculptural panels of the site, telling of the Buddha's past lives (Fogelin, 2015; Liying, 2017).

Thus, their presence here indicates that Corinthian columns complete with acanthus decorations had reached the region of Gandhāra, perhaps first being introduced within the new buildings and settlements that were constructed by the invading Greek elites and then copied by local craftsmen as Hellenistic culture was adopted by local Gandhāran communities, or were potentially instead commissioned by Greek communities who had converted to Buddhism. This hybridisation can especially be seen within the inclusion of a Boddhisattva image within the acanthus decoration of several Corinthian capitals found at the site, with one such example pictured above in Figure 9

(Errington, 2022). This demonstrates that adaptations to the traditional design of the columns were indeed taking place, compounding the traditional symbolism of the acanthus decoration, and highlighting that the adoption by and subsequent inclusion of Corinthian columns within the architecture of Buddhist monastic sites in their ‘original’ state was not the only evidence of cultural hybridisation they provide (Gilani & Siddiqui, 2020; Errington, 2022). Corinthian columns of this type came to be known as Indo-Corinthian columns in order to emphasis this hybridisation and the creation of a new architectural style that was neither fully Hellenistic nor Buddhist (Gilani & Siddiqui, 2020).

The Buddha Images of Jamālgarhī

This acculturation of Buddhist and Hellenistic culture can also be seen within the art found throughout the site, in the form of Buddha statues and sculptural panels. These panels especially invoke imagery of traditional Hellenistic temple complexes, depicting key deities and retelling stories from popular mythology in figural tableaus of schist and stucco, instead of marble (Errington, 2022). However, they do not showcase members of the Hellenistic pantheon, nor show scenes from Hellenistic mythology – instead, they depict the Buddha and his companions within scenes from his 572 lives, prominent within Buddhist literature as the *Jātaka* stories (Fogelin, 2015; Errington, 2022). These figural depictions immediately distinguish the site as being constructed during a transition phase of Buddhism that was occurring between the 1st Century BCE and the 5th Century CE (Fogelin, 2015). During this time, figural depictions of scenes from the Buddhist canon, followed by images of the Buddha himself, were starting to emerge within monasteries situated the region of Gandhāra, with the occupation of this site sitting entirely within this time frame (Fogelin, 2015). This demarks a clear change in the beliefs and practices of these communities, as prior to this, the Buddha was not depicted in a figural form, instead being portrayed in only aniconic motifs, often as a symbol from nature such as a bird or a tree (Fogelin, 2015; Seckel & Dietrich, 2004).

Indeed, there has been much debate as to the impetus for the development of the Buddha image, with a well-established and highly

contested line of thought attributing it solely to the continued presence of Hellenistic culture and art within the Gandhāran region, first introduced via Alexander the Great's 3rd Century CE conquest, and perpetuated through the trading links provided by the 'Silk Road' that connected India to Central Asia and in turn the Mediterranean (Karetzky, 2012; Halkias, 2014; Stoneman, 2019). Thus, it is argued, the Hellenistic sculptural tradition of depicting deities and other such religious figures in figural instead of aniconic sculptures resulted in the simple imitation of these figural depictions of the Hellenistic deities within subsequent Buddhist art and sculpture (Jongeward, 2003; Halkias, 2014; Stoneman, 2019). This traditional view upon Gandhāran art typically views the 'West' as an 'active transmitter' of art and influence, and the 'East' as the passive receiver, without any agency of its own (Falser, 2015).

However, the formation of the Buddha image within Gandhāra can also be traced to the naga-cult and Yaksha-cult images shared by the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist mythologies, with clear figural depictions of the tutelary naga deities and nature and tree Yaksha gods dating from the 3rd Century BCE onwards, in addition to the contemporary development of the figural Mathuran art (Falser, 2015; Coomarawamy, 1946, [1916] 1964; Filigenzi, 2019; Seckel & Dietrich, 2004; Stoneman, 2019; Rhie Quintanilla, 2007; Stewart, 2024). This demonstrates that the 'West' was not the only contributor or 'active' transmitter of art and culture within the 'melting-pot' of Gandhāran society, and instead existing Indic art also had a clear place within the development of Gandhāran art. I would argue that this

transmission is further shown within the presence of a miniature Boddhisattva placed within the leaves of the acanthus motif of a Corinthian capital found at this site and pictured in Figure 9, reiterating that this acculturation was a reciprocal process, as adaptations to the traditional design and motifs of Hellenistic architecture were clearly also taking place (Gilani & Siddiqui, 2020; Errington, 2022). Thus, through its acculturation within Gandhāra, Buddhist and other such Indic art did indeed take an active role in producing the Gandhāran artistic tradition, forming a composite visual language and tradition as a result of the hybridisation of existing Indic and Hellenistic art.

Indeed, the depiction of scenes from the Buddhist canon such as the *Jātaka* stories and stories of the Buddha's final life within sculptures and panels provided a medium for the spread of Buddhism to occur, communicating complex ideas in spite of any potential linguistic and cultural barriers, in addition to the barrier of literacy within lay communities (Behrendt, 2022; Ray, 1994). These sculptures number in their thousands, with Gandhāran art wholly celebrated and supported by the Gandhāran elites, with patrons commissioning skilled stonemasons to create these images for such monastic sites as Jamālgarhī (Behrendt, 2022; Ray, 1994). The very existence of this sculptural tradition, with both its consistent usage of iconography and consistent depictions of key Buddhist figures and mythological scenes, suggests the existence of a community of skilled craftsmen who were familiar not only with Buddhism, but also to some extent the Hellenistic mythology and iconography, and who had created a

consistent composite visual language in combining these two traditions with the contemporary Hindu and Jain art already present within the region (Ray, 1994; Stoneman, 2019). It has been suggested that a small proportion of these craftsmen may have been Hellenistic, having travelled to the region through either the ‘Silk Road’ or the Hellenistic conquests, with similarities drawn between the Corinthian capitals found at this site and that of Palmyra in the Levant (Smith, 1889; Rowland, 1936).

A notable find within the site is the ‘Seated Buddha from Gandhāra’, a statue of the Buddha now housed within the British Museum, pictured below in Figure 10 (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Suggested to date to the 2nd and 3rd Centuries CE by the British Museum, it is a clear example of the early Buddha images that were emerging within Gandhāra by the 2nd Century CE and depicts the Buddha in a seated position (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Carved from schist, it stands at 95 centimetres tall and 53 centimetres wide, a relatively large statue for this site, and it is unclear as to where exactly within the site it was originally found or to what extent it would have been painted (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). This is again due to the lack of comprehensive recording from the site’s many excavations, resulting in a lack of exact provenances for most of the finds (Errington, 2022). However, I would argue that this statue is still useful in demonstrating the presence and development of images of the Buddha within the site of Jamālgarhī, and has survived remarkably well compared to many of the other sculptures found elsewhere across the site. I would tentatively suggest that it is perhaps a votive statue from one of the

viharas located within the main ***stūpa*** courtyard, but again, no evidence to suggest its exact provenance has been found.

Figure 10: A photograph of the schist ‘Seated Buddha from Gandhāra’ statue. The British Museum online collection, 1895,1026.1
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1895-1026-1

Here, as the name suggests, the figure of the Buddha is seated, with its legs crossed and its arms at its chest as if it is in the midst of preaching to an unseen audience. It appears to be sat upon a cushion, resting atop a plinth depicting its own scene, with hanging drapery framing the seated figure of a Boddhisatva surrounded by worshippers (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). This Boddhisatva figure is depicted wearing a turban and a garment around its legs, whilst a halo rests atop its head; to its right, there can be seen a female figure dressed in a draped garment, wearing earrings and a necklace and with a headdress placed atop its curly hair, and a kneeling man, similarly dressed with its long hair in a chignon bun, and a moustache (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). On the Bodhisattva’s other side, a male and female figure can also be seen, depicted similarly, except this headdress is horizontal and cylindrical (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Whilst it has been argued that these figures represent the statue’s donors, I would suggest that these figures could be seen to represent the Buddha’s audience, potentially emulating how the historic worship of the Buddha and Boddhisattva figures were perceived to have taken place within the practicing of early Buddhism by later Buddhists (Zwalf, 1996).

Within the sculpture, the depiction of the Buddha himself is typical of early Gandhāran images of the Buddha, except for its over-robe which is depicted draped over both of its shoulders, which is unusual for the hand gesture he is making (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Czuma, 1985). The robe itself, known as a ‘sanghāti’ appears heavy and has a thick curved neckline as it crosses the statue’s broad chest, with this drapery crossing over the bounds of its body and resting atop the cushion he is seated upon, exposing its left foot (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Czuma, 1985). It has many folds and creases, wrapping around the statue’s forearms as its hands are positioned reaching across its chest, its left hand touching the bottom of its right. I would argue that the very form and composition of the sculpture itself is reminiscent of classical Hellenistic sculpture in comparison to early Indic sculpture, with the carved drapery itself clearly showing this influence and providing a semblance of movement to the sculpture, re-iterating this sense of the Buddha being captured in the midst of preaching (Padmanabha, 1995; Kermani & Siddiqui. 2017; Halkias, 2014). Within contemporary Mathuran Buddhist art, this sense of movement within statues is instead replaced by rigidity, and so the influence of Hellenistic can arguably be seen here (Stoneman, 2019; Rhie Quintanilla, 2007).

The absence of the jewellery and ornaments within this statue is notable, considering its presence upon the smaller figures below him, and so I would argue that this was a deliberate choice to represent the Buddha’s

rejection of the world of grandeur he was born into, discarding his worldly possessions in honour of seeking enlightenment. Its face is depicted in a similar level of detail, with an oval face encompassing a large chin, full lips, and a flat nose (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Its large eyes are in the typical Gandhāran half open position, situated below large carved eyebrows, appearing almost concave within the surface of its face (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). These features are typical of early Gandhāran Buddha images, and are clearly different from the typically European features of Hellenistic sculptures, where a statue's eyes especially are typically open and intended to be lifelike and emotive (Padmanabha, 1995; Osborne, 1998). Similarities can instead be drawn with the 'double-lidded' eyes of 1st Century CE Mathuran art, indicating that these features likely originated within Indic art (Rhie Quintanilla, 2007, 204; Stoneman, 2019). Between its eyebrows is an ūrṇā, a circular curl of hair known as one of the distinguishing marks of the Buddha, an auspicious mark that denotes him as a higher being and is often also present within early Gandhāran depictions of the Buddha (British Musuem, 2024; Czuma, 1985). Framing the statue's face are two large, curved ears, with their concave shape as a reminder of the earrings of the Buddha's former material life (Czuma, 1985). Its hair is long and appears to have a curly texture, held in the uṣṇīṣa bun that is typical of early Gandhāran Buddha images, bound with a small disc (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Krishan, 1966). The inclusion of this symbol was intended to represent the 'Supreme Wisdom of his Enlightenment', and vast amount of knowledge contained within his head (Czuma, 1985). Behind its head sits a large flat halo, known as a 'nimbus',

which immediately demarcates him as a divine figure, and has clearly sustained some damage to its left side over the millennia (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Stewart, 2024). This depiction of the Buddha is certainly useful in demonstrating not only the presence of images of the Buddha within the site, but also the Hellenistic and Indic influences that can be seen within Gandhāran depictions of the Buddha, and thus the acculturation of Buddhist iconography within the region can arguably be seen.

. The Narrative Panels of Jamālgarhī

Sixteen stair riser panels have been found at the site, and they would have lined the steps that led to the ‘Great’ *stūpa* courtyard (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Errington, 2022; Smith, 1889; Cunningham, 1875). One such stair riser panel appears to depict a scene from the Candakinnara *Jātaka*, pictured below in Figure 11 (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). This story tells of the Buddha in his previous life as a kinnara, a mythical creature that took the form of a half bird and half human, complete with both human arms and shoulders and also wings, giving the creature the ability to fly (Ward, 1950). Within it, this kinnara version of the Buddha had a kinnara wife named Canda, and they lived together in the mountains of the moon before moving to the Himalayas (Ward, 1950; Chalmers et al (trans.), 1895-1907). Whilst in the Himalayas, they played music together, before being overheard by the king of Beneras, a city within the Gangetic plain of Northern India (Ward, 1950; Chalmers et al (trans.), 1895-1907). This king then fell in love with Canda and killed her husband, the kinnara-Buddha, and she fled in grief refusing to live with him as he wished (Ward, 1950; Chalmers et al (trans.), 1895-1907). Her cries were loud enough to garner the attention of Sakka, the ‘chief’ of the gods, and he appeared in the form of a Brahman to revive the kinnara-Buddha using a pot of water, and warned the pair to return to the mountains of the moon and never again interact with humans (Ward, 1950; Chalmers et al (trans.), 1895-1907).

Figure 11: A photograph of a schist stair riser from the steps connecting the main stupa courtyard and courtyard 3, depicting the Candakinnara jataka story. (The British Museum online collection, 1880.39. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-39).

(Errington, 2022, 18)

The stair riser itself is 17.6 centimetres tall and 56 centimetres wide, approximately dating to the 2nd or 3rd Centuries CE, and it was carved from schist (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). The panel was intended to be read from left to right, with a series of four alternating male and female figures within the first half of the scene, resting atop where the rest of the panel's base originally was, now damaged (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Errington, 2022; Stoye, 2020). These figures are placed upon a plain background without any overlapping, which is typical of Hellenistic panels and thus indicates a potential Hellenistic influence upon its design, despite the clear Buddhist nature of the scene itself (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Stančo, 2012). The first figure that can be seen is a male harpist, appearing to be playing the harp it is holding and facing the figures to its right, and is dressed in a uttarīya garment and paridhāna cloak, a turban, bracelets and earrings, and is seated despite no chair being visible within the panel (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). To its right, a female dancer is positioned facing the viewer, with its right arm and leg raised as if it is mid-dance too (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). It seems to be wearing a sleeved tunic with a paridhāna cloak tucked into it, alongside bracelets, anklets, and earrings. In turn, beside it sits another male harpist, similarly dressed to the first and again appearing to be mid-play (The

Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). The final of these two female dancers is instead positioned with her back to the panel's viewer, looking over at the male harpist on its left with its right arm raised above its head as if it is mid-dance, and it is also depicted wearing a sleeved tunic and paridhāna cloak, alongside bracelets, anklets, and earrings (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024).

The presence of local Indic clothing within the scene reinforces its 'non-Western' nature, clearly demarking these figures as Indic, with the scene itself as a portrayal of a *Jātaka* story reinforcing its Buddhist nature. I would suggest that the presence of these dancers and harpists suggest that this scene is taken from the section of the story in which the kinnara-Buddha and his wife Canda are playing music and dancing within the Himalayas, despite their omission from the panel itself. Their absence within the panel may suggest that it is based upon earlier sculptural depictions of this story within which the Buddha was not yet featured, and yet I would argue that this is unlikely given the lack of an aniconic motif symbolising him or his wife. This theme of dancing is common within Hellenistic art and is typically associated with the deity Dionysus, with traditional Dionysiac art depicting dancing, drinking, and bacchic revelry (Stančo, 2012; Liu, 2012; Halkias, 2014; Tanabe, 2020). This potential link is especially interesting considering that within Gandhāran art, Dionysus is rarely depicted within Dionysiac scenes himself, and the kinnara-Buddha and his wife are both omitted from this panel (Tanabe, 2020). I would argue that this therefore potentially indicates a Hellenistic influence upon the design of the panel despite its

clearly Buddhist nature, suggesting that a level of hybridisation between Hellenistic mythology and the Buddhist canon was occurring in order for this to be deemed an appropriate inclusion within the depiction of a *Jātaka* scene, and potentially impacting how the figures within this scene were, or, more relevantly, were not, portrayed.

To the right of this final dancing figure sits a blossoming tree, representing the nature this story takes place within, with the possible remnants of another tree on his other side (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Finally, on the far left of the panel, a mounted warrior carrying a sword, a spear, and with what seems to be either a bow or a shield on its back, is likely a depiction of the king of Benares (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). This figure is dressed in a girdled knee-length tunic and trousers, and is sat atop a stationary horse that is stocky in statue and is complete with reins and a crest between its ears (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). I would argue that the king's position within the scene, entering it from the left and facing the rest of the tableau, possibly suggests that this is a depiction of the scene before he comes across the kinnara-Buddha and Canda for the first time, only hearing the music they (and potentially others such as the harpists) were playing (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). The presence of this panel demonstrates that anthropomorphic depictions of *Jātaka* stories were indeed occurring at this site and within the region of Gandhāra at this time, aligning with the contemporary cultural development of depicting figures within Buddhist art through the creation of the Gandhāran style. It also highlights the shift to

visually depicting scenes from the Buddhist canon, with sculpture providing a storytelling medium that did not require literacy nor fluency in a specific language (Behrendt, 2022; Ray, 1994). Furthermore, the acculturation of Buddhist and Hellenistic art can arguably be seen, with possible Hellenistic influences within the structure of the scene itself, and the emphasis on revelry and dancing over a figural depiction of the kinnara-Buddha and his wife invoking Dionysiac themes.

Another such depiction of anthropomorphic figures within sculptures found at the site is a panel that can seen below in Figure 12, and was likely originally part of the *stūpa*'s non-extant drum, complete with the same Corinthian column pilasters that separated its base into twenty separate faces, resulting in the inclusion of one full scene and one partial scene within this surviving panel section (Errington, 2022; The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Due to this, I will be focussing only upon the full scene of this panel to allow for the interpretation of it and its figures, as opposed to an incomplete scene. The full scene shown within the panel is likely taken from the Buddha's final life as Prince Siddhartha, as he is portrayed here in his traditional form (Czuma, 1985). This figure of the Buddha is prominent within the panel, portrayed as being taller than the figures that surround it so as to immediately demarcate its importance, and it is dressed in a typical 'over-robe' or *sanghāti* that here covers not only its shoulders, but also its hands (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). It appears to be barefoot, matching the other figures within the scene, and is stood facing the viewer with its left knee slightly raised (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). It

appears to have the large ‘half open’ eyes and typical headdress of his early Gandhāran Buddha depictions, seemingly delicately carved in comparison to the cruder and more minimal facial features of its companions within the scene. Its face is downturned as if it is looking at the ground, and its right arm is raised as its hand is outstretched towards the figure on its left (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024).

Figure 12: A photograph of a schist panel from the drum of the stupa, depicting a scene from the Buddha’s final life. (The British Museum online collection, 1880.74. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-74).

This figure to the Buddha’s left is seemingly holding out flowers to him, and thus I would argue that this scene is a depiction of worshippers attending to the Buddha (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Indeed, this figure is of a man, approaching the Buddha with its back to the audience, whilst its head is turned to look over its left shoulder (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Its hair appears to be cropped short whilst it is dressed wearing a uttarīya and paridhāna cloak, and he is followed by a female figure wearing a headdress consisting of a wreath and flower, with a garment seemingly wrapped around its body in addition to a paridhāna cloak (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). This female figure is positioned facing the figure of the Buddha, and its left wrist appears to be held by the Buddha, whilst its right arm is raised to its face, its index finger held to its lips (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). In the left corner of the scene, a spectator figure can be seen from the waist up, with its legs omitted, and it appears to have long hair wrapped in a chignon, wearing a uttarīya over its

right arm. (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024) It has been suggested that this is a portrayal of a deity, and so I would argue that the purpose of its inclusion was to emphasise the sense of protection that the Buddha receives within this frame, given its placement overseeing the scene (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Another partial figure can be seen within the scene, placed immediately to the left of the Buddha and depicted wearing a turban (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024).

This sense of protection arguably provided by this deity figure overseeing the scene can also be seen within the inclusion of the figure Vajrapāṇi, situated to the right of the Buddha, whose role in protecting and accompanying the Buddha was of great importance within the Buddhist canon (Tanabe, 2005; Stančo, 2012; Sathsara Perera, 2021). Here, he is portrayed topless, with the figure's bare torso clearly muscular and arms slim, and with a thick pleated garment wrapped around its waist and thighs (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). Its face is damaged, but its remnants appear to be facing the figure of the Buddha, and its right hand is placed upon its hip whilst its left is raised, holding a 'vajra' vertically (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024). A vajra is the typical accompaniment and weapon of Vajrapāṇi, considered to represent the deity Indra's thunderbolt, and so its presence serves to aid in the identification of this figure, which is especially useful given the damage to its face as Vajrapāṇi is typically depicted with a beard or a moustache (Linrothe, 2014; Hsing & Crowell, 2005; Tanabe, 2005; Stančo, 2012; Halkias, 2014; Sathsara Perera, 2021).

Indeed, in many Gandhāran depictions of Vajrapāṇi, he is portrayed similarly to Hellenistic depictions of the demigod Heracles, and the eventual conflation of the two figures speaks to the syncretism of Buddhism and Hellenistic culture within the region at this time (Hsing & Crowell, 2005; Tanabe, 2005 Stančo, 2012; Halkias, 2014; Stewart, 2024). In some sculptures, he is even depicted with Heracles' club, instead of his own vajra, and with a more rounded than muscular appearance aligning with a more local tradition of depicting bodies (Hsing & Crowell, 2005; Tanabe, 2005; Halkias, 2014). It is also notable that the figure of Vajrapāṇi is primarily found within Gandhāran art and not Buddhist art of any other region, suggesting that it was this conflation with the Hellenistic Heracles as a result of the acculturation that Buddhism underwent within the region that led to its popularity within Gandhāra (Tanabe, 2005). Indeed, this hybridisation can also be seen within the use of Corinthian columns as pilasters separating the scenes within the panel, which in turn reinforces the panel's likely location upon the drum of the site's main *stūpa* due to the presence of pilasters and sculptures around the *stūpa*'s base (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Errington, 2022; Cunningham, 1875). Through this, the presence of the figure of Vajrapāṇi within this panel arguably demonstrates the acculturation of Buddhism into the 'Indo-Greek' culture of Gandhāra, and further reinforces this sense of a shift towards using sculpture and other such visual arts as a medium for storytelling and thus conveying key tales and ideas from the Buddhist canon, without requiring literacy or fluency in a specific language (Behrendt, 2022; Ray, 1994).

Chapter Three – A Conclusion

Overall, I would indeed argue that the site of Jamālgarhī does provide insight into the acculturation of Buddhism within Gandhāra. This can be seen within the site's hybridised architecture, from the very layout of the monastery itself, the presence of Corinthian column capitals featuring both acanthus and bodhisattva motifs, and with the design of the site's 'Great' *stūpa* adapted to include Hellenistic pilasters, columns, and sculptural panels. The repeated presence of this hybridised architecture invokes imagery of the Hellenistic temple, which suggests that this was deemed appropriate for a Buddhist monastery by the community who commissioned, built, and used the site. This in turn suggests that the acculturation of Buddhism into the 'Indo-Greek' culture of Gandhāra had been successful, resulting in the clear hybridisation that can be seen. This can further be seen within the sculptures found throughout the site, showcasing figural instead of aniconic depictions of the Buddha with arguably Hellenistic elements, in addition to figural depictions of *Jātaka* stories and stories from the Buddha's final life that could be considered to invoke Dionysiac themes and feature the syncretised deity Vajrapāṇi, who became synonymous within Gandhāra with the Hellenistic Heracles as a protector of the Buddha. Through this, the hybridisation of Buddhism and Hellenistic culture can arguably be seen, and the acculturation process that Buddhism underwent within Gandhāra continued as Buddhism spread along the 'Silk Road' to China.

Chapter Four: The site of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, China

Figure 13: A map of the Silk Road routes that connected China to Central Asia and South Asia, with key sites such as Dunhuang pinpointed. (Wilderness Travel, 2024).

The Mogao Caves, or, 'Mogao ku 莫高窟', forms part of the temple complex at the site of Dunhuang. Dunhuang is a prominent Buddhist site within China's Gansu province, situated along the 'Silk Road' tributary that connected Central Asia to China, shown above in Figure 13 (Wang, 1999; Hansen, 2012). The caves themselves are rock-cut, numbering 735 in total across five levels, including 492 decorated caves, and with each cave being carved out of the alluvial conglomerate cliff (Abrams, 2021; Yin et al, 2019; Wang & Yan, 2023; Hansen, 2012). Rock cut cave temples were amongst the earliest form of Buddhist architecture, originating in the 3rd Century BCE in the Bihar state of eastern India (Ciordia, 2020). The continuation of this temple form demonstrates that traditional Buddhist architecture was retained despite the religion's spread and acculturation across Asia. As can be found in other South and Central Asian cave temple complexes, the Mogao caves themselves fall into two separate types: 'chaitya' caves, in which worship would occur, and 'vihara' caves, which provided accommodation for the site's monks and worshippers – within this chapter, I will be looking at *chaitya* caves only (Higuchi & Barnes, 1995; Xinian & Steinhardt, 2002; Fogelin, 2015). Within India, *chaitya* caves typically included a main 'ogee' niche, a

horseshoe shaped space carved within the rock face, and I would argue that the continuation and adaptation of this can be seen in the repeated presence of niches throughout the Mogao Caves (Steinhardt, 2019). The earliest of the caves date to 366 CE, and the latest to the 14th Century CE, shortly after which the site was abandoned (Abrams, 2021; Wang & Yan, 2023). The site was later rediscovered in 1900 by a local Daoist monk, Wang Yuanlu, who attempted to excavate several of the caves and eventually uncovered the renowned 'Library Cave', home to some 50,000 manuscripts (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Rong et al, 1999; Hansen, 2012).

As he unsuccessfully attempted to direct governmental attention to this site, Wang resealed the 'Library Cave' in 1904, following years of caretaking of the site and its contents (Shichang, 1995; Rong et al, 1999; Hansen, 2012). However, his attempts had garnered the attention of the British-Hungarian archaeologist Sir Aurel Stein, who excavated the site in 1907, with subsequent excavations by various archaeologisxts including Pelliot, Kozui, and Oldenburg over the following seven years (Shichang, 1995; Rong et al, 1999; Hansen, 2012). A great number of the site's artefacts were bought or taken by these foreign archaeologists, and now reside in a variety of museums and archives, including the British Museum in London, the National Museum in New Delhi, the Musée Guimet and Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, and the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg (Shichang, 1995; Rong et al, 1999; Hansen, 2012). This seizing of 'Eastern' artefacts by primarily 'Western' archaeologists can, of course, be viewed through the lens of colonialism, and efforts have since been made by the Chinese

government to protect and conserve the site, which can be placed within the wider context of the growing national aim of repatriating objects taken from China during the colonial period of the 19th and early 20th Centuries CE (Chen, 2022). The Dunhuang Academy was established in 1944 to conserve and research the site, and it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987 (Dunhuang Academy, 2024).

The sheer scale of this site is intensified by the monumental nature of its art, with each cave home to expansive wall murals, statues, and *stūpa*s, totalling 45,000 square metres of murals and 2000 sculptures across the entire site (Abrams, 2021; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Whilst access to the caves within this early period would likely have been limited to the monks who tended the site and who visited on pilgrimage, only being accessible to the laity on special occasions, not all of these individuals would have been literate – including the site's monks - and so the effective use of images in order to convey key Buddhist ideas was crucial (Abrams, 2021; Wu, 2024; Shih, 1993; Pei-Ling, 2013; Whitfield et al, 2000). Indeed, it has been suggested that these murals formed what could be considered an early form of theatre, with the flickering light from the torches creating movement within the scenes of the murals themselves (Abrams, 2021).

The site soon became a famous site for monks, scholars, and artists from across China, in addition to the itinerant travellers, merchants, and missionaries who used Dunhuang as an oasis during their travels due to its

convenient location along the ‘Silk Road’, introducing new cultures, languages, and religions to the region (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Chen & Wang, 2020; Pei-Ling, 2013; Whitfield et al, 2000). The direct connections that Dunhuang had with the major cities of Luoyang and Chang’an/Xi’an through the ‘‘Silk Road’’ fostered the movement of people and ideas between the three cities, which in turn would have allowed for the spread of a composite Chinese Buddhist artistic tradition from Dunhuang across the rest of Northern China (Chen & Wang, 2020; Zhang, 2023; Wang, 1999; Whitfield et al, 2000). As very few paintings between the late 5th Century CE to the early 7th Century CE have survived within the archaeological record elsewhere in China, the evidence provided by the Mogao Caves is all the more important in examining the acculturation of Buddhist art within China (Pekarik & Stokes, 1983).

Given the vast number of caves within this site, all featuring unique and impressive murals that depict a wide range stories from the Dharma in addition to portraits of their patrons, I will primarily be focussing upon only two, dating to the Northern Liang dynasty and the Northern Wei dynasty. The Northern Liang dynasty ruled from 397–439 CE, whereas the Northern Wei ruled intermittently from 386–535 CE (Wang, 1999; Guo et al, 2018; Shih, 1993). As two of the earliest caves within the site, I think that they offer a wealth of insight as to the initial acculturation of Buddhism within China, showcasing hybridised architecture, and with clear Indic, Central Asian and Han Chinese influences within their statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, and within the scenes of their murals. Much like the panels of Jamālgarhī,

these murals primarily depict *Jātaka* stories, and so the potential differences within the format, framing, and the portrayal of the characters within these scenes arguably provide insight into how these tales were adapted as Buddhism was sinicized. However, much like my inclusion within Chapter Three of the *stūpa* drum panel that depicts the Buddha, I will also be looking at the mural of a Dharma story that tells of the historic Buddha's final life and journey to Buddhahood, in order to demonstrate that this adaptation extended to all types of stories from the Dharma and indeed to depictions of the Buddha himself. As the caves both date to this transitional 5th Century CE period, yet are from separate dynasties and were patronised by different donors, the consistent presence of this hybridisation therefore demonstrates that this acculturation was not simply a singular occurrence from one specific dynasty, but instead was widespread throughout this period.

Whilst examining the varying cultural influences present within these caves, the wider social and political context of these dynasties must also be considered. The Northern Liang dynasty and the successive Northern Wei dynasty were both ruled by families with non-Han Chinese origins, instead being of the Xiognu/Lushui Hu and Xianbei ethnicities respectively (Tsiang, 2002; Shufen, 2002; Wang, 1999). These groups originated within Northern China, and formed a minority within ancient China where the predominant ethnicity was Han Chinese (Shufen, 2002; Tsiang, 2002; Wang, 1999; Wong, 2003). Given the unstable politics of the period, they sinicized in order to legitimise their rule and to foster the perception that they belonged amongst the imperial dynasties of China. The result of this can arguably be seen

within the repeated presence of traditional Chinese architecture and art within these caves (Tsiang, 2002; Shufen, 2002; Wang, 1999; Wong, 2003). This provides context for the ongoing acculturation of Buddhism within 5th Century CE China, especially considering that the ruling family of the Northern Liang dynasty themselves were the donors and patrons of Cave 275 (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Thus, the use of traditional Chinese architecture within these Buddhist temples could be seen as an attempt to sinicize and thus legitimise both Buddhism and the Northern Liang dynasty. Whilst there is no named donor of Cave 257, I would suggest that it is likely that it was patronised by a member of the local elites or someone of a similar status, and thus also would demonstrate this acculturation process.

Cave 275, measuring approximately 3 metres tall and 5 metres wide, was likely constructed during the Northern Liang dynasty's control over the Gansu province in the early 5th Century CE, preceding that of the Northern Wei dynasty (Guo et al, 2018; Shih, 1993; Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Whitfield et al, 2000). This dynasty is noted for their support and propagation of Buddhism, and this is reflected in their patronage of the Mogao caves, building three caves, 268, 272, and 275, which are considered to be amongst the first decorated caves at the site (Guo et al, 2018; Steinhardt, 2019; Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Soper, 1958; Wang, 1999). Radiocarbon dating and subsequent Bayesian chronological modelling of the straw, chaff, and fibres from the basal layer of the cave's murals has revealed that the caves were likely constructed between 410 and 440 CE, given that the plants' short growing periods and ineligibility for long-term storage rule out the possibility

that these were stored materials used at a later date (Guo et al, 2018). This places the cave within the this later Northern Liang period rather than the slightly earlier Western Liang, which is useful in establishing the chronology of the site considering the wider dynastic instability of this period (Guo et al, 2018; Shih, 1993).

Cave 275 itself has not been widely documented or photographed, as poor preservation of its ceiling has limited access, in addition to the rather literal barrier of a parapet wall dating to the Northern Song dynasty that partitioned off the front of the cave and was only fully removed in the 1990s (Soper, 1958; Shih, 1993; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Therefore, there has been limited scholarship focussing upon the cave, and so I have primarily used the archives of the national Chinese research organisation into the site of Dunhuang, the Dunhuang Academy, through their collaboration with the International Dunhuang Programme, a project by the British Library which aims to provide online access to the site's caves and artefacts in order to facilitate further research. I have used the information and images provided by these organisations for my research into the cave itself, whilst of course applying my own wider research to the site, allowing for the interpretation of its contents.

I will also be looking at Cave 257, which was constructed as part of a series of seven caves built at Mogao between 465 and 500 CE, during the Northern Wei dynasty's control over the Gansu province in the late 5th

Century CE (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023). The dimensions of this cave have unfortunately not been made available within the existing scholarship, but it is probable that it is similar in size to Cave 275, with the dimensions of the decorated caves across the entire site generally being of a small size, with '18 large caves of over 100 square meters, 21 caves of 50-100 square meters, 41 caves of 25-50 square meters, 123 of 10-25 square meters, and 289 caves of about 10 square meters' (Jinshi et al, 2014, 32). Although the method in which this cave was dated has not been provided by the Dunhuang Academy, it is noted that the cave does feature unnamed patron portraiture from the Northern Wei and Song dynasties, and so it is probable that it was dated typologically using the style of its art in order establish its chronology within the site, which was a common dating technique for the caves in the mid-20th Century CE (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Guo et al, 2018). The Northern Wei dynasty followed a period of great political and dynastic instability, and is considered to have 'united' China, bringing an end to the warring Sixteen Kingdoms period and succeeding the Northern Liang dynasty within the Gansu province (Puning, 2018). It is a dynasty known for its support of Buddhism, using the religion in combination with Daoism and Confucianism as a way to both legitimise their rule and provide a common religious identity between their dynasty and the Han Chinese people, demonstrating the success of Buddhism's acculturation and eventual status as part of 'the Way', the central belief and practice of Daoism (Puning, 2018; Soper, 1958; Wong, 2003; Liu & Shao, 1992; Shufen, 1995). I would argue that this acculturation process can be seen within the architecture and art of Cave 257, with the presence of clear Indic influences

in conjunction with traditional Han Chinese culture. There is little scholarship written upon this specific cave, and it has also not been widely photographed or documented. This has also provided barriers to my research, and much like my research into Cave 275, I have therefore used the archives of the Dunhuang Academy and the International Dunhuang Programme in addition to the 'Digital Dunhuang' website ran by the Dunhuang Academy, whilst again applying my own wider research to the cave itself, allowing for the interpretation of its content.

Indeed, by the 6th Century CE, Buddhist architecture had become wholly incorporated within Han Chinese architecture, and the two could no longer be deemed separate traditions and styles within China (Xinian, 2002). I would argue that the transitional phase of the 5th Century CE is therefore key in understanding how this acculturation occurred - which facets of prior 'foreign' Buddhist culture were retained, and which were supplanted by that of the newfound Han Chinese culture – and this can arguably be seen within Cave 257 and Cave 275.

The Architecture of Cave 257

Figure 14: A photograph of the interior of Cave 257, with its main Buddha statue within its main stūpa pillar. This photograph was published by the Dunhuang Academy. (https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-257-northern-wei-dynasty/).

The cave's main chamber is formed around a central ***stūpa*** pillar, as pictured above in Figure 14, with a separate antechamber (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Whilst the ***stūpa*** as a monument is lifted from Indic Buddhism, its presence within Cave 257 differs from the domed monument of Jamālgarhī, with its traditional dome-like mound and an accompanying drum, base, and chatra. (Katsuaki, 2014; Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Steinhardt, 2019; Xinian, 2002). Within the early Buddhist cave temples of Central Asia and China such as this, this monument was instead replaced by a central pillar, which is suggested to have been based upon the reliquary caves of India wherein a central ***stūpa*** would feature (Steinhardt, 2019; Murthy, 1993; Irwin, 1980; Xinian, 2002; Howard, 2015, 22; Pekarik & Stokes, 1983; Fogelin, 2015; Higuchi & Barnes, 1995). The central placement of the pillar within the cave allowed for its circumambulation, echoing the earlier paths that would have been walked around ***stūpa*** mounds throughout Central and India as a key part of both prayer and meditation (Steinhardt, 2019; Murthy, 1993; Irwin, 1980; Fogelin, 2015; Xinian, 2002). Yet, after the 6th Century CE, the construction of caves in this 'central pillar' style appears to have been limited, potentially indicating that as Buddhism acculturated within Han Chinese culture, with the two architectural traditions arguably becoming syncretised by the end of the 6th Century CE, this 'foreign' style lost popularity (Pekarik & Stokes, 1983; Xinian, 2002).

On the *stūpa* pillar's eastern side, a large painted arch encompasses its statue niche and features *chiwei* figures on either side, which an avian symbol that takes the form of an 'owls tail', forming a traditional motif typically found within Han Chinese roof architecture (Katsuaki, 2014; Steinhardt, 2011; Little, 1992). Within the Northern dynasties, it was prevalent within the architecture of imperial and other such governmental buildings, and was soon included within the architecture of Buddhist temples (Katsuaki, 2014). I would argue that the adoption of this traditional motif, coupled with the cave's gabled roof and rafters, demonstrates the clear and intentional efforts to present Buddhist temples as being part of and belonging to Han Chinese culture, emulating the buildings that would likely have surrounded them in order to assimilate into contemporary Han Chinese society, especially considering that within the cave, this architecture was decorative in function. I would further argue that the intentional choice to adopt a motif that was commonly associated with buildings within imperial and governmental contexts for the architecture of a Buddhist temples was likely an attempt to legitimise both the temple and through this the Buddhist religion as a whole, and therefore demonstrates how this acculturation process occurred.

This can further be seen within the decoration of the roof gables themselves, with a motif of the Buddha sat atop a lotus flower repeated throughout the cave's antechamber (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). The lotus flower is a prominent symbol within Buddhism and is heavily associated with

the Buddha himself, and he is often depicted sat upon a lotus flower throne within Buddhist art (Nicolini-Zani, 2022). Through this, the presence of the lotus flower motif, especially when used in conjunction with an image of the Buddha, distinguishes any object it is featured upon as divine and sacred, as it is a symbol considered to represent creation and purity itself (Ward, 1952) (Yan, 2009). The inclusion of this image within the simulated Han Chinese architecture of the cave serves to demonstrate the acculturation of Buddhism within Han Chinese culture and society, tying their sacred symbols with the existing cultural landscape of China. This can further be seen within the ceiling of the cave's main chamber, where an image of children swimming amongst lotus flowers, honeysuckle flowers, and flying apsaras has been painted throughout (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Apsaras are celestial creatures prominent within Buddhist mythology and are comparable to the nymphs of Hellenistic mythology, living on earth, within rivers, and in the clouds due to their shapeshifting abilities, connecting the mortal earth with the divine heavens (Young, 2017). Typically depicted as young women, they are considered to represent immortality (in addition to sexuality), and their placement upon the ceiling of the cave, amongst floral imagery, could be seen as an attempt to invoke the nature of Buddhist heaven, transforming the ceiling of the cave to the heavens of the sky instead (Young, 2017). This could potentially extend to the aforementioned ceiling of the antechamber, given the divine nature of the lotus flower motif and the repetition of an image of the Buddha himself. Through this, the hybridisation of key Buddhist imagery and traditional Han Chinese architecture in order to convey specific

Buddhist ideas to the cave's audience can be seen, thus demonstrating the acculturation of Buddhism within this western region of China.

Furthermore, whilst rounded arches do appear within this cave such as above the main Buddha statue, they were not a typical architectural feature within ancient Han Chinese architecture, and instead the 'dougong' was a common occurrence from the Western Zhou dynasty of the 10th to the 7th Century BCE onwards (Sainan & Dolah, 2022; Yun, 2002). With its frame of interlocking vertical and horizontal wooden beams where the top of a column meets a crossbeam, it allowed for the formation of something visually similar to an arch between two columns, albeit with no softened or curved corners (Peng & He, 2019; Ye & Fivet, 2020; Sainan & Dolah, 2022; Yun, 2002). By the Northern Dynasties of the 5th and 6th Century CE, it had become a more decorative element in addition to its practical nature, and was becoming a frequent feature within Chinese-Buddhist architecture (Sainan & Dolah, 2022). Yet, likely as a legacy of the prevalence of arches within Indic architecture, the introduction of Buddhism to the region resulted in the creation of the 'shanmen' monastery gate, a rounded arch that provided the only access to a monastery, thus forming something of a portal, much like the 'pailou' memorial gate (Xinian, 2002; Daiheng, 2002; Bhatti & Mohyuddin, 2014). I would therefore argue that the use of a painted arch within this cave instead of a simulated *dougong* colonnade was intended to imitate this *shanmen* gate, which is especially interesting given the placement of the arch over the cave's main Buddha statue. This demonstrates that a new composite architectural was indeed being created

through the acculturation of Buddhism within China, with the legacy of Indic Buddhist architecture being perpetuated as Buddhism was propagated throughout Central Asia and then into China. Indeed, the use of a *shanmen* in combination with the traditional *chiwei* motifs that frequented the roofs of Han Chinese buildings within this period further demonstrates the acculturation of Buddhism and Buddhist communities within this western region of China, showing that the adoption of some aspects of Han Chinese culture and architecture whilst retaining other aspects of more traditional Buddhist culture and architecture did occur, resulting in the hybridisation that can be seen here.

Furthermore, the cave's ***stūpa*** pillar holds several Buddha and Bodhisattva statues, with the largest situated on its east wall, facing the entrance to the cave. The four sides of the ***stūpa*** pillar and the images held within them were often considered to represent the four quadrants or cardinal points of the Buddhist world (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). The repeated presence of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas arguably exemplifies this sense of the 'thousand Buddhas' present throughout the site, emphasising the multiplicity of the Buddha himself in addition to the Bodhisattvas, and demonstrating that bodhisattva-hood can indeed be attained by the cave's audience (Shih, 1993; Xinian, 2002; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). These images rest within niches, primarily taking three forms, the 'double tree' niche, the 'palace' niche and the rounded niche. The 'double tree' niche as an architectural form originated in Indic architecture, and was common throughout the architecture of the 'Western Regions', a name given by the

ancient Han Chinese to regions of Central and South Asia, including other such key ‘Silk Road’ hubs such as the Tarim Basin, an area which was in turn influenced by India due to its proximity to the region and location along the ‘Silk Road’ (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; De Crespigny, 2006; Chen & Wang, 2020). The ‘double tree’ motif is typically used to invoke imagery of the Buddha’s contemplation whilst sat under the Bodhi tree, and so the seated nature of the statues held within these niches is fitting (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Rhie Quintanilla, 2007). In turn, the use of a ‘palace’ niche further serves to reinforce this sense of imperial architecture found elsewhere within the cave, providing status and legitimacy to the cave and demonstrating Buddhism’s assimilation into Han Chinese society (Dunhuang Academy, 2024).

The Buddha Images of Cave 257

Figure 15: A photograph of Cave 257's main Buddha image on the east wall of its central stūpa pillar. This photograph was taken by John Vincent in 1948, and is accessible within the online collection of the International Dunhuang Programme. (https://idp.bl.uk/collection/2CD30D7E7A064BB4804FCEE35D7C46BA/?return=%2Fcollection%2F%3Fterm%3Dcave%2520257)

Figure 16: A photograph of Cave 257's main Buddha image on the east wall of its central stupa pillar. This is a screenshot I took using the 'Digital Dunhuang' website's panorama view of Cave 257, which is ran by the Dunhuang Academy. https://www.e-

The cave's largest statue is an image of the Buddha, as pictured above in Figures 15 and 16, and he is depicted seated within a large niche on the pillar's east side that is decorated with many bodhisattva figures with dark skin, and with a rounded and ornately painted arch stretching over its roof, flanked by two aforementioned *chiwei* (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Unfortunately, the measurements of this statue have not been provided within the existing scholarship. At the left of the niche, a statue of a 'Heavenly King' accompanies this statue of the Buddha, as can be seen in Figure 13, and this is the only representation of 'lokapala' found at Mogao (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). The 'Heavenly Kings', known within China as the 'Sida Tianwang 四大天王' were a group of four deities who guarded the four corners or cardinal points of the Buddhist world, and so the presence of this figure upon the cave's *stūpa* pillar serves to reinforce the notion that its four walls represent the four quadrants or cardinal points of the Buddhist world (Zhu, 2023, 1). I would perhaps suggest that this further links to the allusions of the Buddhist heaven within the painted images upon the cave's ceilings, transforming the cave itself into a representation of the world. The Buddha statue itself appears to

have been made of clay, with the Buddha's body and face painted red (Katsuaki, 2014). It is sat atop a rectangular throne, with his feet bare and uncrossed. Its legs are clothed by a *sanghāti* robe, the typical costume of the Buddha, which hangs diagonally across its torso leaving its chest partially bare, and its left arm fully clothed.

As previously mentioned in Chapter Three in regard to the Hellenistic-style folds of the Jamālgarhī 'Seated Buddha', the folds of the Buddha's robe would have been intentionally positioned during the creation of the statue, and the specific style in which this was carried out can be used to ascertain the influence of differing artistic traditions within the sculpture (Rhie, 1976). With this, I would tentatively place the statue's clothing within the 'incised-line fold' category, which originated within the stucco Buddha sculptures of northern India and Central Asia, and became popular within 5th Century CE Chinese Buddha images, although a slight variation from this type can be seen in the placement of this robe only over the left shoulder (Rhie, 1976). Conversely, it has also been suggested that the robe of this statue is not in fact a *sanghāti*, and instead was a 'dayi', similar to the emperor's mourning clothes (Katsuaki, 2014). This would serve to further illustrate the intention to link Buddhism and the Buddha to imperial iconography that can be seen throughout the cave's architecture. I would argue, however, that it is more likely that this is indeed a *sanghāti*, due to the considerable precedent for this clothing on statues of the Buddha and the similarity that can be seen between this depiction of his robe and the 'incised-line fold' style. Indeed, the presence of South and Central Asian influences within this statue is certainly

interesting, especially when considered alongside the presence of both Indic and Han Chinese architecture within the cave. I would argue that this suggests that early Chinese Buddhist culture encompassed a continued presence of Indic and Central Asian Buddhist elements alongside the newfound Han Chinese culture, thus demonstrating the acculturation of Buddhism within China and the hybridisation of Han Chinese, Indic, and Central Asian culture that occurred as a result of this process. I would further argue that this can be seen within the deliberate inclusion and perpetuation of this 'incised-line fold' within a new medium, adapting it from stucco to clay.

The statue's arms appear to be reaching out towards an unseen audience, whilst its hands have not survived and their removal has clearly damaged the forearms. This does make it difficult to ascertain the statue's expression, given that the hands of the Buddha were typically portrayed in specific 'mudra' positions to convey various meanings – although, it is possible that this is a Buddha depicted in contemplation or meditation, given its seated nature and the presence of 'double tree' niches elsewhere within the *stūpa* pillar itself (Carter, 1987). Its head is round, with two large ears that are similar to that of the 'Seated Buddha' at Jamālgarhī, which have a concave shape that serves as a reminder of the earrings and jewellery of the Buddha's former grand life (Czuma, 1985). The statue's hair is long and appears curly. Much like the hair of the 'Seated Buddha' statue of Jamālgarhī, it is pinned up in the uṣṇīṣa bun, bound with a small disc which represents the 'Supreme Wisdom of his Enlightenment' and the great amount of knowledge contained within his head (Krishan, 1966). The

comparable features between these two statues, from two disparate regions, again demonstrates a sense of continuation between Indic Buddhist and Han Chinese Buddhist art, retaining key iconographic features of the Buddha amidst the acculturation of Buddhism and hybridisation of 'foreign' and Han Chinese art.

The statue's face has small features, including a small nose, small full lips positioned in the semblance of a smile, and small almond-shaped eyes. The paint around these facial features appears to have been damaged or faded, revealing the white of the clay underneath. The positioning of the Buddha's lips in a small smile is typical of the Northern Wei period, and has been compared to the slight smile of Archaic Greek sculpture, differing from the neutral position of the lips of earlier Buddhist art (Chow, 1965). This perhaps suggests that Buddhist art within China was starting to diverge from Buddhist art found elsewhere, creating its own typical styles and iconography. This is further demonstrated in the use of almond-shaped eyes for this statue, differing greatly from the large half-open eyes of Gandhāran Buddhist art, and indeed from the large round eyes of Central Asian Buddhist art (Padmanabha, 1995; Tsiang, 2002). This serves to further demonstrate the acculturation of Buddhism within China, and resulting in a new iconographic style as a result of the hybridisation of Han Chinese and 'foreign' art.

The Architecture of Cave 275

Figure 17: A photograph of the interior of Cave 275, with its main Buddha statue pictured situated along its back wall, with smaller niches along its side walls. This photograph was published by the Dunhuang Academy. (https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/)

This cave, unlike Cave 257, appears to be without a central *stūpa* pillar, which was instead replaced by what is considered to be either a Maitreya Buddha/bodhisattva or Mahasattva bodhisattva statue, seen above in Figure 17 (Soper, 1958; Shih, 1993; Dunhuang Academy 2024). This statue is large in scale, stretching nearly the entire height of the cave itself, 3.24 metres or 9.7 'Chinese feet' in height, as measured by Hsieh Chih-liu in 1944 (Soper, 1958; Shih, 1993; Dunhuang Academy 2024). This places the cave within the architectural category of the 'Big Buddha cave', a common 4th and 5th Century CE style for Chinese Buddhist cave temples, with its monumental Buddha image the focal point of the cave's rectangular design, arguably supplanting the *stūpa* (Steinhardt, 2019, 83). The absence of a stūpa pillar and presence of a central Buddha image unlike Cave 257 is interesting, and I would suggest that this is potentially due to Cave 275's earlier construction, perhaps as a result of an earlier phase of acculturation wherein the *stūpa* pillar had not yet been adapted from the central *stūpa* of Indic reliquary caves (Pekarik & Stokes, 1983). However, the cave's ceiling, while damaged, is again unusual, and is decorated as if to emulate a gabled roof with exposed rafters (Soper, 1958; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This simulated architecture can be seen elsewhere within the cave, complete with pillars, brackets, rafters, and tile-ends, and decorated in the typical red-

woodwork and plaster of contemporary Han Chinese architecture (Soper, 1958; Shih, 1993). Furthermore, the inclusion of this typically Han Chinese architectural style within a sacred Buddhist space suggests that it was deemed appropriate within this context, thus indicating that to some extent Han Chinese architecture had been adopted by Buddhist communities.

This architectural style certainly differs from the Hellenistic architecture of the site of Jamālgarhī, with its open courtyards framing buildings and monuments made of schist, complete with ornamental panels and panels (Errington, 2022; Ullah, 2017). Whilst the sites do, of course, have very different contexts, being a rock-cut cave complex and an open courtyard complex respectively, they are both still highly religious monastic sites, and all aspects of the design of which would likely have been carefully chosen by the cave's patrons (Pei-Ling, 2013). The simulated architecture within this cave is clearly intended to be decorative and not functional, and so it is interesting that this architectural style is primarily Han Chinese, and not Central Asian or Indic in nature, or even Hellenistic as a legacy of syncretised Gandhāran Buddhism. Through this, the acculturation of Buddhism and Buddhist communities within China can arguably be seen.

However, as this cave is amongst the few that were patronised and commissioned by the ruling Northern Liang dynasty themselves, it is perhaps also likely that this inclusion of typically Han Chinese architecture within the decoration of the cave is instead a reflection of their influence (Soper, 1958;

Soper, 1966; Shih, 1993; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Thus, the presence of this architecture within this particular cave can be partially viewed as the result of Buddhism being adopted by the elites within Han Chinese society, who then built and commissioned temples within the architectural style and medium they were already familiar with, rather than resulting from migrating Buddhist communities adopting the architectural styles of their newfound home in order to assimilate. Yet, due to the Northern Liang's non-Han Chinese ancestry, the use of this architecture could instead be viewed as an attempt to sinicize themselves, positioning their dynasty amongst the great ruling dynasties of China and therefore legitimising their rule.

Figure 18: A photograph of the 'Que' niches of Cave 275 along its side wall. This photograph was published by the Dunhuang Academy. (https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/)

The six smaller niches within the cave take two forms – the 'Que' niche, and the aforementioned 'double tree niche'. The 'Que' niche, which can be seen above in Figure 18, is a traditional Han Chinese architectural feature meaning 'absence' and was typically used for surveillance purposes in imperial and palatial buildings (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). When considered with cave's gabled roof, this could be seen as an attempt to turn the cave into such a building, thus re-creating and representing the 'heavenly palace of Buddhism' (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Within these niches rest seated Boddhisattva figures, sitting cross-legged and in contemplation, making them likely part of the 'Standby' Bodhisattvas who ruminated on how

to achieve Buddhahood even before entering the world (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Certainly, given that the cave was commissioned by the ruling Northern Liang dynasty, the use of imperial and palatial imagery is to be expected, and yet I would argue that this imagery to further reinforce Buddhist ideas of 'heaven' attests to the religion's acculturation, using symbolic architecture that would be familiar to the cave's audience to convey and reinforce key Buddhist ideas.

Figure 19: A photograph of the a 'double tree' niches present within Cave 275. This photograph was published by the Dunhuang Academy. (https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/)

In turn, the cave's 'double tree' niches, which can be seen above in Figure 19, originated in Indic architecture and were common within the aforementioned 'Western Regions' (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). The 'double tree' motif typically is used to invoke imagery of the Buddha's contemplation whilst sat under trees, which is reinforced by the presence of two trees at either side of the niche's Bodhisattva image, painted in great detail and complete with a canopy of leaves (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). The Boddhisattva statue itself is sat on a throne, and is clothed in ornate necklaces that appear similar to those typically associated with the earlier kings of the 'Western Regions' (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This clear use of non-Han Chinese architecture within the cave in order to convey key Buddhist stories such as that of the Buddha's contemplation and meditation under trees is contrasted by the repeated presence of traditional Han Chinese architecture. I would argue that this provides insight into the process

of acculturation that Buddhism experienced as it assimilated into Han Chinese society and culture, and both adopted Han Chinese culture and was adopted by Han Chinese communities. As these niches all contain bodhisattva images, when these are viewed in conjunction with the cave's main Maitreya Buddha statue, can be viewed as an attempt to emphasise the multiplicity of bodhisattvas and that bodhisattva-hood can indeed be attained by the cave's audience (Shih, 1993).

The Buddha Images of Cave 275

Figure 20: A photograph of the interior of Cave 275, with its main Buddha statue pictured situated along its back wall, with smaller niches along its side walls. This photograph was published by the Dunhuang Academy. (https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/)

The cave's main Buddha image, the painted statue of the Maitreya Buddha or possibly the Mahasattva bodhisattva, appears to be reaching out of the wall and into the room of the cave and can be seen above in Figure 20 (Soper, 1958; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). As previously mentioned, its height is 3.24 metres, and it is an imposing figure that stretches from the floor to the ceiling of this back wall (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Much like the typical statues of Chinese-Buddhist cave temples of this period, it has been carved from clay, and its body and face appears to have been painted red or orange, with its clothing also painted (Wang, 2011; Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Katsuaki, 2014). The figure itself rests on a square throne with a triangular back and is flanked by two lions, an animal that was typically associated with the Budda throughout Indic Buddhist art, however these appear to be depicted in the style of Chinese guardian lions (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Leidy et al, 1997). The symbol of the Chinese guardian lion is thought to have been created through the syncretism of Indic Buddhist lions, introduced during the Han dynasty, and Chinese celestial dogs, and thus further demonstrates the creation of a hybridised Chinese-Buddhist visual language following the acculturation of Buddhism within China (Leidy et al, 1997; Feltham, 2009).

The statue's feet are barefoot and crossed at the ankle, whilst its legs are clothed in a pleated dress, held by a turquoise belt at its waist. Thus, I would argue that this is indeed a statue of the Maitreya Buddha, the 'future Buddha', as he is typically depicted with crossed ankles in the style of Indic royal portraiture (Abe, 1990; Tsiang, 2002; Lee, 1993; Kieschnick, 2003). Its hands are expressive, with its left placed upon its knee in the *mudra* gesture of supreme generosity, and its right, albeit damaged, reaching out towards an unseen audience (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). The statue's build appears stocky, and its wide shoulders are clothed in a *sanghāti* robe that hangs low on its torso whilst its chest is bare, except for several ornate turquoise necklaces that drape around its neck and reach down to its abdomen (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This inclusion of ornate jewellery immediately demarcates the statue as a bodhisattva or Maitreya Buddha/bodhisattva image, and not an image of the historical Buddha, as he was traditionally depicted in simple dress so as to represent his rejection of material objects and the grandeur of his former royal life (Czuma, 1985; Williams, 1989; Stewart, 2024). I would therefore argue that the inclusion of a Maitreya Buddha/bodhisattva image within this cave, instead of a statue of the historic Buddha, can be seen as a reflection of the growing importance of the Maitreya figure within Chinese Buddhism throughout the 5th Century CE (Kitagawa, 1981; Li, 2018).

Furthermore, the placement of the folds of the Buddha's robe here is classified as the 'raised string fold' and is an uncommon costume within 5th Century CE Chinese Buddha images, with parallels found within earlier

Gandhāran and Mathuran Buddhist art (Rhie, 1976, 457). As mentioned in both Chapter Two and previously in this chapter, the folds of the Buddha's robe were positioned carefully and deliberately, and the specific style in which this was implemented can be used to ascertain the influence of differing artistic traditions within the sculpture (Rhie, 1976). Through this, the use of a typically Indic style for this Buddha or Bodhisattva image is interesting when considering the patronage of this cave and the emphasis on Han Chinese culture within it, clear in the repeated presence of traditional Han Chinese architecture. The use of this Indic costume for the cave's main Bodhisattva image, therefore, provides a sense of continuation with Indic Buddhism even within China, and arguably attests to the hybridisation that occurred as Buddhism acculturated into Han Chinese society.

The statue's face is round, with a long straight nose, straight eyebrows, and large rounded lips, and its eyes are large and round, and appear to be open (Dunhaung Academy, 2024). It appears solemn, and the level of detail within its face and throughout the statue is simplistic (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Atop its head rests a three-beaded Dharmakaya crown, which represented the absoluteness of the Buddha, whilst behind it appears to be a decorated halo or 'nimbus', patterned with turquoise, and its long wavy hair is down, reaching its shoulders (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Cleary, 1986; Stewart, 2024). Much like its clothes, the statue's throne and overall style suggests the influence of Central and Indic art, and its large round eyes differ greatly from the half-open eyes of Gandhāran art, and indeed from the almond-eyes of typical Han Chinese art,

and so therefore potentially suggest a Central Asian influence (Padmanabha, 1995; Tsiang, 2002). This deviation from the typical Gandhāran depiction of the Buddha can further been seen in its hairstyle, with its long hair positioned down atop the shoulders, differing from the uṣṇīṣa bun of the Gandhāran Buddha and Bodhisattvas, which was intended to symbolise their wisdom and divinity (Czuma, 1985). As the statue's differing features, from differing artistic traditions, coexist within the image, it certainly encapsulates the syncretism of Buddhist art as it spread along the 'Silk Road', adopting elements of new artistic styles from newfound regions whilst still retaining earlier aspects from prior regions.

The Murals of Cave 275 and Cave 257

Figure 21: A photograph of one of Cave 275's side walls, showing the 'Que' niches situated atop murals of stories from the Dharma, although this particular story is not identified. This photograph was published by the Dunhuang Academy. (https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-

The murals of cave 275 are numerous, featuring *Jātaka* and Dharma stories, as can be seen below in Figure 21, in addition to portraits of the cave's patrons, the ruling Juqu family of the Northern Liang dynasty (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). They are portrayed here with Hun-like features, including the traditional 'Kuzhe' dress, referencing their non-Han Chinese ancestry (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Tsiang, 2002). However, I will be focussing here upon the Dharma story of how the historic Buddha attained Buddhahood, due the interesting form and structure of this mural as a 'comic strip', especially when considered in conjunction with the narrative panels found at the site of Jamālgarhī (Dunhaung Academy, 2024). I will also examine the 'Nine Coloured Deer' *Jātaka* mural of Cave 257, as it is also structured in this 'comic strip' style (Dunhuang Academy, 2024).

A mural of a Dharma story is situated on Cave 275's south wall, below several the 'double tree' niches and their bodhisattva sculptures (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). However, as this cave has not been widely photographed, no photograph of this mural can seemingly be found online, nor within any museum archive, as the mural remains very much *in situ*. This has unfortunately been something of a barrier to my research, however, the

description of the mural by the Dunhuang Academy and (Shih, 1993) has allowed me to still study it, as I think that the insight that can be gleaned from its presence and narrative form is significant. The story itself forms a prominent part of the Buddhist canon, the ‘Four Encounters’ within the wider story of how Prince Siddhartha became the historic Buddha (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Shih, 1993). It depicts two of these four encounters, which occur after the prince is allowed to leave his family’s palace by his father, King Suddhodana (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Prior to this, he had expressed interest in becoming a monk, which worried his father (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). At the palace’s east gate, the prince saw an aging man; at its south gate, he saw a sick man; and at its west gate, he saw a dead man – together, these form the main sufferings of the human world: aging, illness, and death (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). However, at the palace’s north gate, he met a monk, who had not been affected by any of these ills (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This encouraged him on his quest to become a monk himself, and achieve Enlightenment (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Shih, 1993). The mural depicts only the aging man and the monk, so as to condense the story into its key parts – the Prince Siddartha encountering both the transientness and suffering of life, and the possibility of overcoming this (Shih, 1993).

Within this mural, this story is told as if it were a comic strip, with its characters and landscapes placed beside each other in sequential scenes from left to right, with no accounting for relative size, distance or perspective (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This is a typical narrative style for the art of the

earlier Han and Jin dynasties, known as the ‘Chinese horizontal scrolling serial painting’, and so further demonstrates this adoption of new mediums through which to tell key Buddhist stories and convey key ideas (Ran, 2023; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). I would argue that this is comparable to the possible influence of Hellenistic narrative panels within Gandhāran art, with the stair riser panels of Jamālgarhī placing its characters side by side, resulting in the story of the scene being able to be read from left to right (The Trustees of the British Museum, 2024; Stančo, 2012; Czuma, 1985). Given the significant nature of this story within Buddhism, telling of how the historic Buddha achieved enlightenment and became the Buddha, the fact that this has been adapted into a more typically Han Chinese narrative form demonstrates the acculturation and adaptability of Buddhist art. I would argue that the repeated choice, in both Gandhāra and in China, to use styles and forms that would be familiar to the art’s audience as Buddhism spread to new regions shows that the attempt to more effectively convey key stories from the Buddhist canon to these new audiences did occur. Furthermore, the features and costumes of the characters within this mural are considered to have clear influences from the art of the ‘Western Regions’, which is fitting considering the aforementioned ‘Western Regions’ influences present within the cave’s Buddha statue (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This again demonstrates the hybridisation that can be seen within Chinese-Buddhist art within this period, retaining aspects of earlier Buddhist art from elsewhere within the Buddhist world, whilst also using aspects of the traditional art from this newfound region.

This hybridisation can further be seen within the ‘Nine Coloured Deer’ mural of Cave 257, also known as the ‘Deer King *Jātaka*’, and pictured below in Figure 22 (Ran, 2023; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This mural is also in the ‘comic strip’ horizontal scrolling serial painting style of the earlier Han and Western Jin dynasties, forming a sequential narrative starting at either side of the cave’s west wall, before meeting in the middle at the climax of the story’s plot (Ran, 2023; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). The dimensions of this mural have been provided, unlike Cave 275’s mural and the main Buddha statue of Cave 257, stretching 0.95m high and 3.85m wide, demonstrating the vast nature of the painting itself (Ran, 2023).

The *Jātaka* story itself tells of one of the historic Buddha’s many past lives as a mythical ‘nine coloured’ deer who saved a man from drowning in the Ganges River (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023; Nicol (trans.), 2024). After rescuing him, the deer made the man promise to not tell anyone about this or the mythical deer itself, or he would suffer sores upon his body (Ran, 2023; Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Nicol (trans.), 2024). The local queen, however, dreamed of the deer and wanted it to be captured so she could have clothing made from its nine-coloured pelt (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023; Nicol (trans.), 2024). Within China, this story was first featured within the ‘Liudu ji jing’ collection of sutras, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in the 3rd Century CE, and the mural was likely adapted from a version of this translation (Jātaka Stories Database, 2024). Indeed, the presence of the queen here indicates that it was likely adapted from either the ‘Nine-Coloured Deer Sutra’ translated by Zhiqian, or the ‘Shufan Deer

King Sutra' translated by Kang Shenghui (Ran, 2023). The story continues with the king issuing a warrant for the deer's capture, promising reward, and the man responded, assisting the royal hunt (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023; Nicol (trans.), 2024). A crow woke the deer up as the hunt arrived, and the deer told the king and his companions of the man's ungratefulness (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023; Nicol (trans.), 2024). This moved the king, and he abandoned his hunt and ordered for the deer to have royal protection (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023; Nicol (trans.), 2024). The man, as the deer forewarned, ended up with sores across his body, foaming at the mouth (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023; Nicol (trans.), 2024).

Figure 22: A photograph of the 'Nine Coloured Deer' Jataka mural of Cave 257. This photograph was taken from the CHN museums website. https://chnmuseums.com/blogs/inspiration-stories/the-nine-colored-deer-jataka-of-the-deer-king

Indeed, the mural depicts scenes from this story within this aforementioned 'comic strip' narrative style, starting on its left side with the deer saving the drowning man, forming a two-dimensional scene. Here, the deer is painted predominantly white in front of the red backdrop of the wall, with multicoloured spots identifying it as this mythical 'nine-coloured' deer, carrying the drowning man on its back out of the river as the man holds onto its neck. To the right of this scene, the man is depicted kneeling beside the deer, with dark skin and wearing a loincloth, sat beside the blue-green Ganges River. This is likely a depiction of the man's promise to the deer, and this section of the mural is framed by rows of mountainous landscape,

invoking the idyllic setting of this and many other *Jātaka* stories. The first scene on the right of the mural shows the king and queen in their palace, depicting the queen asking her husband for the deer, whilst the man is shown kneeling, telling them of its location. Much like the depiction of the man, these figures are likely intended to be Indic given both their features and the setting of the story (Ran, 2023). Whilst the king and the man have darker skin and are only half clothed in black robes or skirts, the queen is shown with lighter skin with an elaborate dress. I would argue that the swirls on the main body of the dress invoke imagery of both the auspicious 'ruyi' cloud, a Daoist symbol that represented the three 'qi', the life forces and energies of the universe, and the 'lingzhi' mushroom motif, the 'numinous mushroom' that provided immortality and access to the gods and was associated with Daoist rituals within ancient China (Nicolini-Zani, 2022; Liu & Shao, 1992; Steavu, 2018, 353). The potential presence of these native Han Chinese symbols within this mural, pictured below in Figures 23 and 24, would therefore serve to further allude to the divine nature of the story as a *Jātaka*, telling of the Buddha's past life. This would also demonstrate the acculturation and subsequent syncretism that Buddhist art underwent within China, using symbolism from China's native Daoism to place emphasis upon an Indic Buddhist story and setting.

Figure 23: A photograph of a 17th-18th Century CE textile fragment featuring *ruyi* auspicious cloud patterns. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 46.133.68. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/69809)

Figure 24: A photograph of a 18th Century CE porcelain wine cup with *lingzhi* motifs. (The British Museum online collection, PDF,B.704, 390043001.https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/390043001)

Whilst these artefacts both date to long after the Northern Wei period, I am simply using them as clear examples of the *ruyi* and *lingzhi* motifs that were in use during the Northern Wei period.

Figure 25: A section of the 'Nine Coloured Deer' mural, showing the design upon the queen's dress. (CHN Museums, 2023)

Furthermore, the king and queen are shown seated under a palatial structure, the roof of which I would argue is reminiscent of traditional Han Chinese architecture, featuring what I would tentatively suggest are *chiwei* placed upon its edges. This again would demonstrate the acculturation that Buddhism underwent, with a key Buddhist story set within India instead featuring traditional Han Chinese architecture, supplanting traditional Indic architecture. The narrative of the mural ends in its centre, with the royal hunt finding the deer, and the deer telling them of the man's betrayal as his body is covered in sores (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023). The characters of the mural are depicted with emotive facial features, showcasing the man and the queen's greed, and the deer's stubbornness and pity towards them both (Ran, 2023). This vivid portrayal differs from earlier depictions of this story within Central and India and serves to emphasise one of the key concepts of Buddhism – karma (Ran, 2023). This can potentially be seen as a syncretism of Buddhist and Confucian thought, with the emphasis on the righteousness of being moral and ethical clear within the deer's portrayal,

showing his perseverance and opposition to evil that ultimately rewards him (Ran, 2023).

Chapter Four – A Conclusion

Overall, the acculturation that Buddhism underwent as it was propagated within China can indeed be seen within these two caves, with the consistent inclusion of decorative Han Chinese architecture alongside elements of Indic architecture throughout both caves, and the adaptation of the traditional ***stūpa*** mound from a central ***stūpa*** cave, as found within ancient India, to a central ***stūpa*** pillar (Howard, 2015; Fogelin, 2015; Pekarik & Stokes, 1983). This hybridisation can also be seen within their Buddha and bodhisattva statues, featuring traditional Han Chinese features and costumes alongside that of the 'Western Regions' and India (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Indeed, this can further be seen within the caves' murals, in the adoption of the Han Chinese 'comic strip' style, and the inclusion of Han Chinese architecture and possible Daoist motifs within the Indic setting of the story, and potential alignment with Confucian beliefs (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Ran, 2023). Through this, the caves demonstrate the 'transitional' nature of Buddhism in 5th Century CE China, clearly showing the process of acculturation that the religion and its followers underwent during this period.

Chapter Five: A Discussion and Final Conclusion

Ultimately, the process of acculturation can indeed be seen within all three of my case studies, the site of Jamālgarhī, and Caves 257 and 275 at the Mogao Caves. This is evidenced within their hybridised architecture and art, with elements of Indic Buddhism included alongside Hellenistic, Central Asian, and Han Chinese features. This serves to demonstrate the cultural interactions that were occurring as Buddhism spread from ancient Northeastern India to the historic region of Gandhāra, and then from Gandhāra to Central Asia and China, resulting in the creation of composite visual languages and new architectural and artistic traditions within these regions.

Firstly, I would argue that the process of acculturation can indeed be seen within the adaptations to key Buddhist monuments found across the two sites and regions that I have discussed. Within Gandhāra, the adaptation of the traditional *stūpa* took the form of a square base instead of the traditional circular base, which was likely the result of the influence of Hellenistic temple architecture and the emulation of terraced courtyards (Franz, 1980). Whilst the *stūpa* at Jamālgarhī does have a circular base, deviating from this typical hybridised Gandhāran style, this was likely due to geographical constraints, given the clear and consistent use of Hellenistic pilasters throughout the *stūpa* base and drum (Errington, 2022). Yet, within

Central Asian and Chinese Buddhist cave temples, this traditional monument was instead adapted into the ‘central pillar’ that can be seen within Cave 257, likely inspired by the central *stūpa* of Indic reliquary caves (Xinian, 2002; Steinhardt. 2019; Pekarik & Stokes, 1983; Higuchi & Barnes, 1995). The placement of this pillar still allowed for its circumambulation, and the cave’s main Buddha images arguably took the symbolic place of the Buddha’s relics as an object of veneration and worship (Fogelin, 2015; Murthy, 1993; Pekarik & Stokes, 1983; Xinian, 2002). However, Cave 275 does not have a central *stūpa* pillar, only a large Buddha statue along its back wall which has arguably more ‘Western Regions’ and Central Asian features than Cave 257, perhaps indicating that the adoption of Han Chinese architecture and iconography was in an earlier stage, as the cave was built several decades prior to Cave 257 in the earlier Northern Liang dynasty (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Soper, 1958).

Furthermore, the hybridisation of South and Central Asian Buddhist culture with secular imperial Han Chinese culture can clearly be seen within Cave 257 and Cave 275. This adoption and emulation of imperial Han Chinese architecture within a sacred Buddhist space does indicate that Buddhism had acculturated into wider Han Chinese society, and that this architecture was deemed appropriate for such a context. It also perhaps can be viewed as an extension of the acculturation process that the ruling dynasties of the 5th Century CE were undergoing, with the Northern Liang and Northern Wei dynasty both being ethnic minorities as opposed to Han Chinese (Tsiang, 2002; Shufen, 2002; Wang, 1999). Due to this, the

adoption of Han Chinese culture was key in establishing and legitimising their rule, placing themselves amongst the great dynasties of ancient China (Tsiang, 2002; Shufen, 2002; Wang, 1999; Wong, 2003). As the Juqu family of the Northern Liang dynasty were the patrons of Cave 275, I would therefore argue that it is fitting that this emulation of traditional Han Chinese imperial culture can be seen (Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This use of imperial architecture can also arguably be seen within the site of Jamālgarhī through the presence of Hellenistic architecture. Whilst the Hellenistic architecture used throughout the site, such as pilasters, narrative panels, and Corinthian capitals, would have been used in both religious and secular contexts, the first introduction of this architecture to Gandhāra would have been in a colonial context as the varying Hellenistic empires invaded the region over the course of several centuries (Fogelin, 2015; Rienjang & Stewart, 2022). This does provide an interesting context for its use within the site, and I would argue that much like the use of imperial architecture within Cave 257 and Cave 275, its presence could be viewed as an attempt to legitimise the religion, presenting Buddhism as part of the ruling Indo-Greek culture. However, the site itself dates to the Kushan period, and so this would not be a current attempt at legitimisation, but rather perhaps a reflection of an earlier process that endured long past its original period, much like the perpetuation of Hellenistic culture within the region long into the Kushan period (Sathsara Perera, 2021; Errington, 2003).

I would argue that further comparisons can be drawn between the very form of the Gandhāran and Han Chinese Buddhist art that can be seen

across these three case studies. Indeed, the format of both the murals of Cave 257 and Cave 275 and the narrative panels of Jamālgarhī can be viewed as hybridised, reflecting the influence of traditional Chinese scroll paintings and Hellenistic panels respectively (Ran, 2023; Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Stančo, 2012; Czuma, 1985). Within Chapter Three and Four, I chose to examine both a depiction of a *Jātaka* story and a story of the historic Buddha's final life within each chapter in order to demonstrate that this hybridisation was not merely limited to one type of story from the Dharma, and instead was a wider change within Buddhist art. The use of the 'comic strip' or 'horizontal scrolling serial painting' structure for the murals at Mogao certainly demonstrates the acculturation of Buddhist art and culture within China, as this traditional Han Chinese painting style has been wholly adopted within the framing of these murals (Ran, 2023; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). Similarly, I would argue that the narrative panels of Jamālgarhī are indeed reminiscent of the panels of Hellenistic temples, and thus could be considered an emulation of this – especially when the presence of Hellenistic pilasters can be seen within the structure of the panels themselves, framing the narrative scenes (Stančo, 2012; Czuma, 1985; Errington, 2022; Cunningham, 1875). Whilst narrative panels are not without their precedent within contemporary India, also being found within Mathuran art in panels depicting Yaksha deities and other such Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain mythological figures, the presence of Hellenistic pilasters within Jamālgarhī's panels demonstrates the clear influence of Hellenistic art and architecture (Rhie Quintanilla, 2007; Errington, 2022; Cunningham, 1875; Stoneman, 2019). In turn, the presence of pilasters and panels with pilasters throughout

the site's *stūpa* further demonstrates this acculturation, with these Hellenistic architectural features deemed appropriate for such a sacred context (Errington, 2022; Cunningham, 1875).

The hybridisation between Buddhism and the native Chinese religion, Daoism can also potentially be seen within Cave 257, as I would argue that there is a possible presence of the Daoist *ruyi* cloud pattern within the queen's dress in Cave 257's 'Nine Coloured Deer' mural. Prior to introduction of Buddhism, Daoism itself had a very limited iconography, and instead was heavily influenced by the Buddhist artistic tradition and visual language which ultimately led to the creation of the Daoist artistic tradition within the Eastern Han and Northern dynasties (Yang, 2001; James, 1989). The choice to include this motif within the mural would therefore suggest that the impact of Buddhist art upon Daoist art was to some extent reciprocal within this 5th Century CE period, and indeed by the 6th Century CE, the two religions then came to be practiced in tandem, with their beliefs aligning, eventually resulting in a composite Dao-Buddhist visual language and belief system (Teiser & Verellen, 2011; James, 1989 Yang, 2001; James, 1989). This sense of a religious syncretism can arguably also be seen at the site of Jamālgarhī, within the inclusion of a bodhisattva amongst the acanthus leaves of a Corinthian capital found within the ***stūpa*** courtyard, in addition to the inclusion of the deity Vajrapani within the ***stūpa*** drum panel, who was popular within Gandhāra as a syncretised deity due to his conflation with the Hellenistic Heracles (Errington, 2022; Tanabe, 2005; Stančo, 2012). The possible invocation of Dionysiac themes within the site stair-riser panel would

also serve to demonstrate this, as well as the possible alignment with Confucian thought found in Cave 257's mural (Stančo, 2012; Liu, 2012; Halkias, 2014; Tanabe, 2020; Ran, 2023). I would therefore argue that this reciprocal acculturation of Hellenistic and Indic Buddhist culture within such sacred contexts as the site's main *stūpa* and its courtyard is comparable to the possible inclusion of a Daoist *ruyi* cloud and invocation of Confucianist thought within the depiction of a *Jātaka* story, and therefore shows that composite visual languages were being produced across the Buddhist world as Buddhism spread and acculturated along the 'Silk Road'.

In turn, the very context of the two sites can also be compared. Whilst these case studies are not necessarily contemporary to each other, with Jamālgarhī dating to the 1st to the 4th Century CE and the caves both dating to the 5th Century CE, construction of the first Mogao Caves begun in the 4th Century CE, and so therefore the sites do demonstrate that differing cultural interactions were occurring within the same period in two very different regions of Asia (Sathsara Perera, 2021; Errington, 2003; Stewart & Rienjang, 2022; Abrams, 2021; Wang & Yan, 2023). Furthermore, the audience of both sites would have primarily been the *sangha* community who inhabited and visited them, especially during this early period of construction at the Mogao Caves, and so the varying cultural influences present within their art and architecture are arguably representative of the acculturation of these communities and the differing cultural interactions they experienced (Shih, 1993; Fogelin, 2015; Pei-Ling, 2013). Whilst the donors of Cave 275 are named as the Juqu family of the ruling Northern Liang family, all three of my

case studies would have had different patrons, who commissioned and paid for the construction of the sites (Dunhuang Academy, 2024; Pei-Ling, 2013). Whilst the patrons of Jamālgarhī and Cave 257 have not been provided, I would argue that it is probable that their patrons would have been members of the contemporary local elites, given the impressive and likely expensive nature of these sites.

Indeed, within the region of Gandhāra, the patronage of Buddhist art by the elites of Gandhāran society was widespread, with the commission of sculptures numbering in their thousands, created by skilled artists and craftsmen, both local and non-local to the region (Behrendt, 2022; Ray, 1994). Indeed, it has been suggested that Gandhāran art was primarily being produced by a small group of artists who travelled across the region, resulting in the cohesive artistic tradition that can be seen, with some of these artists potentially coming to the region from the Mediterranean, and thus working within the Hellenistic tradition (Stoneman, 2019; Jones, 1889; Rowland, 1936). Through this, the acculturation of the local (and imperial, in the case of Cave 275) elites of Jamālgarhī and the Mogao Caves can arguably also be extrapolated, demonstrating that these communities were indeed undergoing acculturation as Indic Buddhist, Hellenistic, Central Asian, and Han Chinese cultures interacted. Whilst this does not necessarily provide any clear insight into the acculturation of the lower classes of these regions, their Buddhist education would likely have derived from the kind of images that have been found within these two sites, as images do not require literacy, nor fluency, in any foreign languages (Sen, 2012; Wu, 2024;

Kieschnick, 2003). As the images at these sites display clear hybridisation, I would suggest that it is likely that the images that were accessible to the lower classes, provided by Buddhist monks and travelling merchants in the form of small Buddha statues, would also display a certain level of this hybridisation, with composite Buddhist visual languages being created within new regions as the religion spread along the ‘Silk Road’ (Sen, 2012; Wu, 2024; Kieschnick, 2003).

Moreover, the influence of the ‘Silk Road’ can arguably be seen within both sites. Jamālgarhī’s proximity to the ‘Silk Road’ hub city of Taxila would have likely exposed its community to the varying cultural influences brought by the itinerant merchants who used the ‘Silk Road’, perpetuating the region’s Hellenistic culture through contact with merchants and travellers from the Mediterranean, in addition to providing the artists and craftsmen who would have constructed the site and its varying statues and monuments (Neelis, 2011). Indeed, it has been suggested that the majority of Gandhāran art was produced by a small group of artists who travelled across the region, resulting in the cohesive artistic tradition that can be seen (Stoneman, 2019). The likely small number of non-Gandhāran artists working within the Gandhāran art tradition are considered to have travelled to the region through both the Hellenistic conquests and the ‘Silk Road’, potentially from far flung regions such as Palmyra in the Levant (Jones, 1889; Rowland, 1936; Stoneman, 2019). This argument is partially based upon the distinct similarities between Jamālgarhī’s surviving Corinthian capitals and those found at Palmyra, although I would argue that it is also possible that these

capitals were both independently based upon the same Hellenistic model that was subsequently emulated in Gandhāra by the artists and craftsmen familiar with it (Jones, 1889; Rowland, 1936). This would still serve to demonstrate the artistic influence of Hellenistic culture upon the artists and craftsmen working within the Gandhāran tradition, and thus the influence of the ‘Silk Road’ within its very creation.

Conversely, the influence of the ‘Silk Road’ can also be seen at the site of the Mogao Caves due to its location within the ‘Silk Road’ hub city of Dunhuang, positioned along the key ‘Hexi Corridor’ trading route that reached the Central Plains of China, wherein the cities of Luoyang and Chang’an/Xi’an are situated (Zhang, 2023; Wang, 1999; Dunhuang Academy, 2024). This resulted in the city of Dunhuang being a cosmopolitan trading hub, subject to the influence of Han Chinese, Central Asian, and South Asian culture, art, and religions brought by the various people who used the ’’Silk Road’’ (Zhang, 2023; Wang, 1999; Whitfield, 2000). Indeed, the direct connections that Dunhuang had with Luoyang and Chang’an/Xi’an allowed for the movement of people and ideas between the three cities, which in turn provided a means for the spread of a composite Chinese Buddhist artistic tradition from Dunhuang across the rest of Northern China (Chen & Wang, 2020; Zhang, 2023; Wang, 1999).

To conclude, I would argue that the acculturation that Buddhism underwent as it was propagated along the ‘Silk Road’ can certainly be seen

within the sites of Jamālgarhī and the Mogao Caves. The repeated and consistent presence of Hellenistic architecture within the site of Jamālgarhī certainly demonstrates this, with 'Indo-Corinthian' capitals and pilasters found throughout the site, in addition to the layout of the site itself being unusual for a Gandhāran monastery, being structured around three terraced courtyards. Within Cave 257 and Cave 275 the presence of Han Chinese architectural elements can also be seen in the use of simulated wood-and-plaster gabled roofs, Han Chinese niches, arches, and *chiwei* as consistent decorative features, in addition to the adaptation of the central stūpa to the central stūpa pillar. Through this, my case studies do demonstrate the acculturation process that Buddhism and Buddhist architecture underwent as it reached new regions – adopting new features whilst retaining elements of Indic Buddhist architecture, resulting in a composite architectural tradition within each region that can be seen within the surviving material culture.

This can also be seen within the realm of art, with the main Buddha statue within each case study showcasing hybridised features in both their costume and appearance. Across all three case studies, the very form of their depictions of stories and scenes from the Dharma have also been adapted, invoking the structure of the Hellenistic narrative frieze and the Chinese 'comic strip' style respectively. These depictions also arguably show hybridised features, with a potential Dionysiac theme within Jamālgarhī's stair riser and the presence of the syncretised figure of Vajrapāṇi/Heracles within its *stūpa* drum panel, in addition to the 'Nine Coloured Deer mural' of Cave 257 potentially featuring a Daoist *ruyi* cloud in conjunction with a

possible allusion to Confucian thought, as well as possible Han Chinese architecture within an Indic setting. Through this, the composite visual languages and artistic and architectural traditions that resulted from Buddhism's spread and acculturation along the 'Silk Road' can indeed be seen.

Thus, I would argue that these three case studies do indeed provide a wealth of insight into the spread and acculturation of Buddhist art and architecture as it was propagated along the Silk Road, demonstrating that the process of Buddhism's acculturation can be seen within the surviving material culture of the Buddhist world as the religion and its followers adapted to newfound regions and cultures, and was indeed also adopted by communities within these regions.

Bibliography

Websites, Online Archives and Collections

Dunhuang Academy. (2024). *Cave 275 (Northern Liang Dynasty)*. Available at: https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-275-northern-liang-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Dunhuang Academy. (2024). *Cave 257 (Northern Wei Dynasty).* Available at: https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-257-northern-wei-dynasty/ [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Dunhuang Academy. (2024). *Introduction to Our Project*. Available at: https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/introduction-to-our-project/ [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Jataka Stories Database. (2024). *Story in Text: Candakinnara-jātaka*. Available at: https://jatakastories.div.ed.ac.uk/stories-in-text/jatakatthavannana-485 [Last Accessed 24/10/2024]

Jataka Stories Database. (2024). *Story in Text: [Deer king saves a drowning man].* Available at: https://jatakastories.div.ed.ac.uk/stories-in-text/liudu-ji-jing-t152-58 [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Jataka Stories Database. (2024). *Textual Collection: 六度集經 Liudu ji jing [T152].* Available at: https://jatakastories.div.ed.ac.uk/textual-collections/liudu-ji-jing-t152 [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Jataka Stories Database. (2024). *About*. Available at: https://jatakastories.div.ed.ac.uk/about/ [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Merriam-Webster. (2024). *Indic*. Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Indic [Last Accessed 24/10/2024]

Rienjang, W. (2020). *Jamālgarhī'.* Available at: www.carc.ox.ac.uk/GandharaConnections/otherResources. [Last Accessed 23/10/2024]

The Trustees of the British Museum. (2024). *Stair-riser*. Available at: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-39. [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

The Trustees of the British Museum. (2024). *Figure*. Available at: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1895-1026-1 [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

The Trustees of the British Museum. (2024). *Panel.* Available at: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-74 [Last Accessed 24/10/24]

Translations

Chalmers, R. W. H. D., Rouse, H. T., Francis, R. A., Neil, E. B (trans.). (1895-1907). *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, (eds). Cowell, E. B. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 4, pp. 179-182.

Nicol, Janine (trans.). 2024. *The Liudu Ji Jing: Database translation*. Available at: https://jatakastories.div.ed.ac.uk/stories-in-text/liudu-ji-jing-t152-58. [Accessed 23/10/2024]

19th and early to mid-20th Century Scholarship

Buchthal, H. (1943). 'The Common Classical Sources of Buddhist and Christian Narrative Art', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2, pp. 137–148.

Chow, F. (1965). 'Chinese Buddhist Sculpture', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 23(9), pp. 301–24.

Coomaraswamy, A. K. (1927 [1916]). 'The Origin of the Buddha Image', *The Art Bulletin*, 9(4), pp. 287–329.

Coomaraswamy, A. (1926). 'The Indian Origin of the Buddha Image', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 46, pp. 165–170.

Cunningham, A. (1875). Report for the Year 1872-73. Archaeological Survey of India. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 5, pp. 46-53.

Ebeling, H. L. (1924). 'The Origin of the Corinthian Capital', *The Art Bulletin*, 6(3), 1924, pp. 75–81.

Smith, V. A. (1889). 'Hellenistic Influence on the Civilisation of Ancient India', *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, (eds). Honorary Philological Secretary, 58, pp. 117-72.

Krishan, Y. (1964). 'Was Gandhāra Art a Product of Mahāyāna Buddhism?', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, (3/4), pp. 104–119.

Krishan, Y. (1966). 'The Hair on the Buddha's Head and Uṣṇīṣa', *East and West,* 16(3/4), 1966, pp. 275–89.

Rowland, B. (1936). 'A Revised Chronology of Gandhāra Sculpture', *The Art Bulletin*, 18(3), pp. 387–400.

Soper, A. C. (1958). 'Northern Liang and Northern Wei in Kansu', *Artibus Asiae,* 21(2), pp. 131–164.

Soper, A. C. (1966). ‘Imperial Cave-Chapels of the Northern Dynasties: Donors, Beneficiaries, Dates’, *Artibus Asiae*, 28(4), pp. 241–270.

Ward, W. E. (1950). ‘Selected Buddhist Symbols in Siṅhalese Decorative Art’, *Artibus Asiae*, 13(4), pp. 270–96.

Ward, W. E. (1952). ‘The Lotus Symbol: Its Meaning in Buddhist Art and Philosophy’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 11(2), pp. 135-146.

Modern Scholarship

Abe, S.K. (1990). ‘Art and Practice in a Fifth-Century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temple’, *Ars Orientalis*, 20, pp. 1–31.

Abe, S. K. (2001). ‘Provenance, Patronage, and Desire: Northern Wei Sculpture from Shaanxi Province’, *Ars Orientalis*, 31, pp. 1–30.

Abrams, J. J. (2021). ‘Ancient Chinese cave paintings as cinema: the volcanos and dragons of Mogao Cave 249’, *Int. Commun. Chin. Cult*, 8(2), pp. 289–316.

Aldrovandi, C. & Hirata, E. (2005). ‘Buddhism, Pax Kushana and Greco-Roman motifs: pattern and purpose in Gandharan iconography’, *Antiquity*, 79(304), pp. 306-315.

Behrendt, Kurt. (2018). ‘Architectural Evidence for the Gandhāran Tradition after the Third Century’, in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *Problems of Chronology in Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the First International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 23rd-24th March 2017*, Archaeopress, pp. 149–64.

Behrendt, K. A. (2022). ‘Gandhāran Imagery as Remembered by Buddhist Communities across Asia’, in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P*. The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March 2021*, Archaeopress, pp. 107-23.

Bhatti, M. I. & Mohyuddin, A. (2014). ‘Structural Design of the Buildings in Gandhara as Gleaned on Sculptures’, *Journal of Asian Civilization*, 37(2), pp. 151-194.

Carter, M. L. (1987). ‘A Gandhāran Blessing’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, pp. 45–63.

Canepa, M. P. (2010). ‘Distant Displays of Power: Understanding Cross-Cultural Interaction Among the Elites of Rome, Sasanian Iran, and Sui-Tang China’, *Ars Orientalis*, 38, pp. 121–154.

Ciordia, J.M. (2020). ‘The Ship in the Cave: The Greek and Nautical Origin of Buddhist Architecture’, *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering,* 19, pp. 48-69.

Chakrabarti, S. (2016). ‘Interpreting the Legacy of Partition in the Subcontinent: Indian and Pakistani Perspectives’, *Politeja*, 40, pp. 21–30.

Chen, H., Wang, Q.E. (2020). ‘Dunhuang on the Silk Road: A hub of Eurasian cultural exchange-Introduction’, *Chinese studies in history*, 53(3), pp. 187–191.

Chen, R. (2022). ‘Healing the Past: Recovery of Chinese Cultural Objects Lost during the Colonial Era’, *Santander Art and Culture Law Review*, (2), pp. 207-230.

Chun, A. (1996). ‘Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity’, *Boundary 2*, 23(2), pp. 111–138.

Cleary, J. C. (1986). ‘Trikāya and Trinity: The Mediation of the Absolute’. *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, *6*, 63–78. https://doi.org/10.2307/1390132

Czuma, S. (1985). ‘Kushan Sculpture: Images From Early India’, *Archaeology*, 38(6), pp. 54–57.

De Crespigny, R. (2006). ‘Some Notes on the Western Regions 西域 in Later Han’, *Journal of Asian History*, 40, pp.1–30.

Deeg, M. (2022). ‘The Buddha in the ‘Wild West’: The Localization of Jātakas in Gandhāra and the Rāmāyaṇa’, *Religions of South Asia*, 16(2-3), pp. 220–248.

Dietz, S. (2007). ‘Buddhism in Gandhara’, in *The Spread of Buddhism*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 49-74.

Ebrey, P. B. (2023). ‘Rethinking Han Chinese Identity’, *China Review*, 23(2), pp. 57–86.

Errington, E. (2003). ‘Jamalgarhi [Jamālgarhī]’, *Grove Art Online*, Oxford, pp. 1.

Errington, E. (2022). ‘Reconstructing Jamālgarhī and Appendix B: the archaeological record 1848-1923’, in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March 2021,* Archaeopress, pp. 1-42.

Fabrègues, C. (1987). ‘The Indo-Parthian Beginnings of Gandhara Sculpture’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, pp. 33–43.

Falk, H. (2013). ‘The Ashes of the Buddha’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 27, pp. 43–75.

Falser, M. (2015). ‘The Graeco-Buddhist style of Gandhara - a 'Storia ideologica', or: how a discourse makes a global history of art’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 13, pp. 1-53.

Feltham, H. B. (2009). ‘Everybody was Kung-Fu Fighting: The Lion Dance and Chinese National Identity in the 19th and 20th Centuries’, in (ed). Marianne Hulsbosch *Asian Material Culture*. The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 90-120.

Filigenzi, A. (2019). ‘Non-Buddhist Customs of Buddhist People: Visual and Archaeological Evidence from North-West Pakistan’, in (ed.) B. Kellner *Buddhism and the Dynamics of Transculturality*. Germany: Walter de Gruyter GmbH. pp. 53–84.

Fogelin, L. (2003). ‘Ritual and Presentation in Early Buddhist Religious Architecture’, *Asian Perspectives*, 42, pp. 129–54.

Fogelin, L. (2015). *An Archaeological History of Indian Buddhism*. New York: Oxford Academic.

Foltz, R. (ed). (2010). ‘Buddhism and the Silk Road’, in *Religions of the Silk Road*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, pp. 37–58.

Frankopan, P. (2016). *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*. Bloomsbury: London.

Franz, H.G. (1980). ‘Stupa and Stupa-Temple in the Gandharan Regions and in Central Asia’, in (eds). Dallapiccola, A.L and Zingel-Avé Lallemant, S. *The Stupa: Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance*. Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, Beiträge zur Südasienforschung, 55, pp. 39-48.

Fraser, S. E. (2004). ‘Introduction to the Material Culture of Dunhuang Buddhism: Putting the Object in Its Place’, *Asia Major*, 17, pp. 1–13.

Galli, M. (2011). ‘Hellenistic Court Imagery in the Early Buddhist Art of Gandhara’, *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia*, 17(2), pp. 279-329.

Gilani, S.M. & Siddiqui, K.S. (2020). ‘Acanthus Leaves in Gandhara Art: A Symbol or a Decorative Pattern’, *Pakistan Historical Society Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 68(3), pp. 7-34.

Greene, E. M. (2018). ‘The "Religion of Images"? Buddhist Image Worship in the Early Medieval Chinese Imagination’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 138(3), pp. 455-484.

Guo, Q. (2004). ‘From Tower to Pagoda: Structural and Technological Transition’, *Construction History*, 20, pp. 3-19.

Guo, Q., Staff, R.A., Lu, C., Liu, C., Dee, M., Chen, Y., Pollard, A.M., Rawson, J., Su, B. & Liu, R. (2018). ‘A New Approach to the Chronology of Caves 268/272/275 in the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes: Combining

Radiocarbon Dates and Archaeological Information within a Bayesian Statistical Framework', *Radiocarbon*, 60(2), pp. 667-679.

Halkias, G. T. (2014). 'When the Greeks Converted the Buddha: Asymmetrical Transfers of Knowledge in Indo-Greek Cultures', in (eds). Wick, P. and Rabens, V. *Religions and Trade: Religious Formation, Transformation and Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West.* Boston; Leiden: Brill, pp. 65–116.

Hansen, V. (2012). *The Silk Road: A new history*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Higuchi, T. & Barnes, G. (1995). 'Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan', *World Archaeology*, 27(2), pp. 282–302.

Ho, P.-T. (1998). 'In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's "Reenvisioning the Qing."', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, pp. 123–155.

Howard, A. F. (2015). 'On "Art in the Dark" and Meditation in Central Asian Buddhist Caves', *The Eastern Buddhist*, 46(2), pp. 19–40.

Hsing, I-T., Crowell, W. G. (2005). 'Heracles in the East: The Diffusion and Transformation of His Image in the Arts of Central Asia, India, and Medieval China', *Asia Major*, 18(2), pp. 103–54.

James, J. M. (1989). 'Some Iconographic Problems in Early Daoist-Buddhist Sculptures in China', *Archives of Asian Art*, 42, pp. 71–76.

Jishu, F., Lu, T. L-D., Demgenski, P. (2014). 'The Preservation of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, China'. Public Lecture, Institute of Chinese Studies and Centre for Cultural Heritage Studies, Department of Anthropology, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, pp. 1-36.

Jongeward, D. (2003). *The Royal Ontario Collection of Gandharan Sculpture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for South Asian Studies.

Karetzky, P. E. (2012). 'The Image of the Winged Celestial and Its Travels along the Silk Road', *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 225, pp. 1-45.

Katsuaki, O. (2014). 'The Sinicization of Dunhuang Mogao Cave Buddhist Art', *International Journal of Korean History*, 19, pp. 47-66.

Khettry, S. (2014). 'Social Background of Buddhism in Gandhara (c. 2nd Century BCE to the Middle of the 4th Century CE'. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 75, pp. 41–48.

Kieschnick, J. (2003). *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*. Princeton University Press, Oxfordshire, p. 90.

Kim, Y-J., Han, D-S. (2011). 'Evolution, Transformation, and Representation in Buddhist Architecture - The Square Shrines of Buddhist Monasteries in

Central Asia after the Fourth Century', *Architectural research*, 대한건축학회, 13(4), pp. 31-42.

Kitagawa, J. M. (1981). 'The Career of Maitreya, with Special Reference to Japan', *History of Religions*, 21(2), pp. 107–125.

Lee, J. (1993). 'The Origins and Development of the Pensive Bodhisattva Images of Asia', *Artibus Asiae*, 53(3/4), pp. 311–357.

Leidy, D. P., Siu, W. A., & James C. Y. Watt. (1997). 'Chinese Decorative Arts', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 55, pp. 1–71.

Lewis, M.E. & Brook, T. (eds). (2009). *China's Cosmopolitan Empire*. Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2(1).

Levman, B. (2018). 'The Transmission of the Buddhadharma from India to China: An Examination of Kumārajīva's Transliteration of the Dhāraṇīs of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra', in (ed). Heirman, A. *Buddhist Encounters and Identities across East Asia*. Boston; Leiden: Brill, pp 137-195.

Lidu, J. Y. (2020). 'Cross-Cultural Buddhist Monastery Ruins on the Silk Road and beyond: The Layout and Function of Buddhist Monasteries Reconsidered', in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Global Connections of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Third International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 18th-19th March 2019*. Archaeopress, pp. 207-33.

Li, Y. (2018). 'Maitreya statues in the Southern Dynasties and the incarnation of Fu Dashi as Maitreya', *Chinese Archaeology*, 18, pp. 155–163.

Linrothe, R. (2014). 'Mirror Image: Deity and Donor as Vajrasattva', *History of Religions,* 54, pp. 5–33.

Little, S. (1992). 'The Arhats in China and Tibet', *Artibus Asiae*, 52(3/4), pp. 255–281.

Liu, J., Shao, D. (1992). 'Early Buddhism and Taoism in China (A.D. 65-420)', *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 12, pp. 35–41.

Liu, X. (2011). 'A Silk Road Legacy: The Spread of Buddhism and Islam', *Journal of World History,* 22, pp. 55–81.

Liying, K. (2019). 'The Da fangdeng tuoluoni jing (Vaipulya-dhāraṇī-sūtra) and Dunhuang Evidence', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 105, pp. 179–228.

Lü, Q.-Q., Henderson, J., Wang, B. (2021). 'Natron glass beads reveal proto-Silk Road between the Mediterranean and China in the 1st millennium BCE', *Scientific reports*, 11, pp. 3537–3537.

Melfi, M. (2016). 'The making of a colonial Pantheon in the colonies of Caesar in Greece: The case of Corinth', in (eds). Melfi, M. and Bobou, O.

Hellenistic Sanctuaries: Between Greece and Rome. Oxford: Oxford Academic, pp. 229-255

Murthy, K. K. (1993). ‘Buddhist Ideologies Transmuted in Stūpas’, *The Tibet Journal*, 18(4), pp. 49–55.

Neelis, J. (ed). (2011). ‘Historical Contexts for the Emergence and Transmission of Buddhism within South Asia’, in *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia*. Boston; Leiden: Brill, pp. 65–182.

Nicolini-Zani, M. (ed). (2022). ‘The Scriptures Were Translated’, in *The Luminous Way to the East: Texts and History of the First Encounter of Christianity with China*. Oxford Academic: New York, pp. 117-190.

Osborne, R. (1998). *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Padmanabha, K. (1995). ‘The Buddha Image in Sculptural Arts of India’, *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 20(4), pp. 93–98.

Pei-Ling, H. / 黃佩玲. (2013). ‘Devotional Buddhism, Sinicization, and the Politics of Representation in the Northern Dynasties Music Iconography at Dunhuang’, *Music in Art*, 38(1–2), pp. 171–190.

Pekarik, A. J., & Stokes, S. (1983). ‘The Cave Temples of Dunhuang’, *Archaeology*, 36, pp. 20–27.

Peng, S. and He, M. (2019). ‘The comparative study of classical architecture in Tang and Song dynasties and in ancient Rome’, *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 592, pp. 12106.

Puning, L / 劉璞寧. (2018). ‘Becoming the Ruler of the Central Realm: How the Northern Wei Dynasty Established Its Political Legitimacy’, *Journal of Asian History*, 52, pp. 83–117.

Ran, L. (2023). ‘Extraterritorial Images and Horizontal Scroll Composition: On the Northern Wei "Nine-Coloured Deer Benson" from Cave 257 of Mogao Caves and the Transformation of China’, *Frontiers in Art Research*, 5(16), pp. 88-94.

Ray, H. P. (1994). ‘The Parallel Tradition: Early Buddhist Narrative Sculpture’, *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, 54/55, pp. 349–355.

Rhie, M. M. (1976). ‘Some Aspects of the Relation of 5th-Century Chinese Buddha Images with Sculpture from N. India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia’, *East and West*, 26(3/4), pp. 439–61.

Rhie Quintanilla, S. (2007). *History of Early Stone Sculpture at Mathura, ca. 150 BCE- 100 CE*. Boston; Leiden: Brill.

Rienjang, W. & Stewart, P. (eds). 2022. ‘Preface’, in *The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandharan Art Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 24th-26th March, 2021*. Archaeopress, pp. vii–ix

Rong, X., 榮新江, & Hansen, V. (1999). ‘The Nature of the Dunhuang Library Cave and the reasons for its sealing’*, Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie*, 11, pp. 247–75.

Sainan, P. & Dolah, J. (2022). ‘Structure and Decoration Art of Dou-Gong Bracket Sets and its Cultural Communication’, *Jurnal Gendang Alam (GA),* 12(2), pp. 1-15.

Sam, D. L & Berry, J. W. (2010). ‘Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(4), pp. 472–81.

Sathsara Perera, C. T. S. (2021). ‘Amalgamation of Hellenistic and Indian Elements in the Frieze of the Buddha and the Nude Vajrapani of Kushan Art at Jamal Garhi’, *IJHSSI*, 10(5), pp. 16-21.

Seckel, D. & Leisinger, A. (2004). ‘Before and beyond the Image: Aniconic Symbolism in Buddhist Art’, *Artibus Asiae, Supplementum*, 45, pp. 3–107.

Seldeslachs, E. 2007. ‘Greece, The Final Frontier? The Westward Spread of Buddhism’, in Heirman, A. & Bumbacher, S.P. (eds). *The Spread of Buddhism*. Brill: Boston, pp 131-166.

Sen, T. (2012). ‘The Spread of Buddhism to China: A Re-examination of the Buddhist Interactions between Ancient India and China’, *China Report*, 48, pp. 11-27.

Sen-Gupta, A. (2004). ‘Synthesis of Foreign and Indian Elements in Bactro-Gandharan Art: Some Unusual Examples’, *East and West*, 54(1/4), pp. 63–86.

Sick, D.H. (2007) ‘When Socrates met the Buddha: Greek and Indian Dialectic in Hellenistic Bactria and India’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 17(3), pp. 253–278.

Shichang, M. (1995). ‘Buddhist Cave-Temples and the Cao Family at Mogao Ku, Dunhuang’, *World Archaeology*, 27(2), pp. 303–317.

Shih, H.-Y. (1993). ‘Readings and Re-Readings of Narrative in Dunhuang Murals’, *Artibus Asiae*, 53(1/2), pp. 59–88.

Shufen, L. (1995). ‘Art, Ritual, and Society: Buddhist Practice in Rural China during the Northern Dynasties’, *Asia Major*, 8, pp. 19–49.

Shufen. L. (2002). ‘Ethnicity and the Suppression of Buddhism in Fifth-century North China: The Background and Significance of the Gaiwu Rebellion’, *Asia Major*, 15, pp. 1–21.

Stančo, L. (2012). *Greek Gods in the East : Hellenistic Iconographic Schemes in the Central Asia*. Karolinum Press.

Steavu, D. (2018). ‘The Marvelous Fungus and the "Secret of Divine Immortals”’, *Micrologus*, 26, pp. 353-383.

Steinhardt, N. S. (2004). ‘The Tang Architectural Icon and the Politics of Chinese Architectural History’, *The Art Bulletin*, 86(2), pp. 228–254.

Steinhardt, N. S. (2011). ‘The Sixth Century in East Asian Architecture’, *Ars Orientalis*, 41, pp. 27–71.

Steinhardt, N. (2019). *Chinese Architecture : A History*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Stoneman, R. (2019). *Greek Experience of India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stoye, M. (2020). ‘On the Crossroads of Disciplines: Tonio Hölscher’s Theory of Understanding Roman Art Images and Its Implications for the Study of Western Influence(s) Gandhāran Art’, in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Global Connections of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Third International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 18th-19th March, 2019*. Archaeopress, 2020, pp. 29–49.

Tanabe, K. (2005). ‘Why Is the Buddha Śākyamuni Accompanied by Hercules/Vajrapāṇi? Farewell to Yakṣa-Theory’, *East and West*, 55(1/4), pp. 363–81.

Tanabe, T. (2020). ‘The Transmission of Dionysiac Imagery to Gandhāran Buddhist Art’, in (eds). Rienjang, W. and Stewart, P. *The Global Connections of Gandhāran Art: Proceedings of the Third International Workshop of the Gandhāra Connections Project, University of Oxford, 18th-19th March, 2019*. Archaeopress, 2020, pp. 86-101.

Teiser, S. F. & Verellen, F. (2011). ‘Buddhism, Daoism, and Chinese Religion’, *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie*, 20, pp. 1–12.

Tsiang, K. R. (2002). ‘Changing Patterns of Divinity and Reform in the Late Northern Wei’, *The Art Bulletin*, 84(2), pp. 222–245.

Ullah, M. (2017). ‘Jamal Garhi Monastery Excavation 2012: The Sculptures’, *Journal of Asian Civilizations*, 40(2), pp. 103-202.

Vassiliades, D. T. (2004). ‘Greeks and Buddhism: Historical Contacts in the Development of a Universal Religion’, *The Eastern Buddhist*, 36(1/2), pp. 134–183.

Wang, E. Y. (1999). ‘What Do Trigrams Have to Do with Buddhas? The Northern Liang Stupas as a Hybrid Spatial Model’, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 35, pp. 70–91.

Wang, J. (2012). ‘Aurel Stein’s Dealings with Wang Yuanlu and Chinese Officials in Dunhuang in 1907’, in (ed). Wang, H. *Sir Aurel Stein, Colleagues and Collections*. London: British Museum Press, pp. 1-6.

Wang, W. & Yan, A. (2023). ‘Body, Scale, and Space: Study on the Spatial Construction of Mogao Cave 254’, *Religions*, 14(7), pp. 953-970.

Wei, C. (2015). ‘Daoism in China’, in (eds). Deeg, M. and Scheid, B. *Religion in China: Major Concepts and Minority Positions*. Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, pp. 13–28.

Whitfield, R., Whitfield, S., Agnew, N. (2000). *Cave temples of Dunhuang : Art and History on the Silk Road*. London: British Library.

Williams, P. (1989). *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The doctrinal foundations.* London: Routledge.

Wong, D. C. (2003). ‘Ethnicity and identity: Northern nomads as Buddhist art patrons during the period of Northern and Southern dynasties’, in (eds). Di Cosmo, N. and Wyatt, D. J. *Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries and Human Geographies in Chinese History*. London: Routledge.

Wu, S. (2024). ‘A Study on the Literacy Rate of Buddhist Sangha in the Tang Dynasty’, *Religions*, 15(3), pp. 306-321.

Xinian, F. (2002). ‘The Three Kingdoms, Western and Eastern Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties’, in (ed). Steinhardt, N. S. *Chinese Architecture*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, pp. 61-90.

Xinian, F. (2002). ‘The Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties’, in (ed). Steinhardt, N. S. *Chinese Architecture*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, pp. 91-134.

Yan, X. (2009). ‘The Confluence of East and West in Nestorian Arts in China. In: Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters’, in (eds). Winkler, D. W. and Tang, L. *Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*. Münster: Lit Verlag, Orientalia--patristica—oecumenica, pp. 383-393.

Yang, L. (2001). ‘Origins of Daoist Iconography’, *Ars Orientalis*, 31, pp. 31–64.

Ye, J., & Fivet, C. (2020). ‘The Zaojing: Review of a unique wooden construction typology’, *Construction History*, 35, pp. 23–50.

Yun, Q. (2002). ‘Introduction: Part II’, in (ed). Steinhardt, N. S. *Chinese Architecture*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, pp. 5-10.

Zhao, X. (2017). ‘The Hall of Superabundant Blessings: Toward an Architecture of Chinese Ancestral-Temple Theatre’, *Asian Theatre Journal* 34(2), pp. 397–415.

Zhang, X. (2023). ‘The Dunhuang Caves: Showcasing the Artistic Development and Social Interactions of Chinese Buddhism between the 4th

and the 14th Centuries', *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21, pp. 266-279.

Zhu, T. (2023). 'Lute, Sword, Snake, and Parasol—The Formation of the Standard Iconography of the Four Heavenly Kings in Chinese Buddhist Art', Religions, 14(6), pp. 798-824.

Zwalf, W. (1996). *A Catalogue of the Gandhara Sculpture in the British Museum*. London: British Museum Press.