

GANDHARAN ORIGIN OF THE AMIDA BUDDHA IMAGE

Katsumi Tanabe

ABSTRACT

The most famous Buddha of Mahāyāna Pure Land Buddhism is the Amida (Amitabha/Amitayus) Buddha that has been worshipped as great savior Buddha especially by Japanese Pure Land Buddhists (Jyodoshu and Jyodoshinshu schools). Quite different from other Mahāyāna celestial and non-historical Buddhas, the Amida Buddha has exceptionally two names or epithets: Amitābha alias Amitāyus. Amitābha means in Sanskrit 'Infinite light' while Amitāyus 'Infinite life'. One of the problems concerning the Amida Buddha is why only this Buddha has two names or epithets. This anomaly is, as we shall see below, very important for solving the origin of the Amida Buddha.

Keywords: Amida, Śākyamuni, Buddha, Mahāyāna, Buddhist, Gandhara,

In Japan there remain many old paintings of the Amida Triad or Trinity: the Amida Buddha flanked by the two bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (**Fig.1**). The function of Avalokiteśvara is compassion while that of Mahāsthāmaprāpta is wisdom. Both of them help the Amida Buddha to save the lives of sentient beings. Therefore, most of such paintings as the Amida Triad feature their visiting a dying Buddhist and attempting to carry the soul of the dead to the AmidaParadise (Sukhāvātī) (cf. Tangut paintings of 12-13 centuries CE from Khara-khoto, The State Hermitage Museum 2008: 324-327, pls. 221-224). Thus, the Amida Buddha and the two regular attendant bodhisattvas became quite popular among Japanese Buddhists and paintings.

However, the origin of this Triad and also the Amida Buddha himself is not clarified as yet in spite of many previous studies dedicated to the Amida Buddha, the Amida Triad, and the two regular attendant bodhisattvas (Higuchi 1950; Huntington 1980; Brough 1982; Quagliotti 1996; Salomon/Schopen 2002; Harrison/Lutczanits 2012; Miyaji 2008; Rhi 2003, 2006). The same holds true of the origin of the Amida's Paradise.

An eminent Japanese Buddhologist, Kotatsu Fujita who has devoted his life to the study of Pure Land Buddhism, opined in his two exhaustive monographs of Pure Land

Buddhism that all the hypotheses pertaining to the origin of the Amida Buddha and Sukhāvati that were published before 2007 not only in Japan but also in Europe /USA are wrong and untenable (Fujita 1970: 261-286, 2007: 38-243, 249-261). In my opinion, Fujita is perfectly right in his critical reviews and rejecting such erroneous studies, and therefore, in this paper I will not attempt a general survey of the previous studies on the Amida Triad and Sukhāvati because it is almost useless and harmful for proper understanding the origin of this Buddha. Instead, in the following, I will attempt to clarify the origin of the Amida Buddha image and the Amida Triad in Gandhara, following my recent study of the origin of the Amida Buddha that was published both in Japanese and English in 2020 (Tanabe 2020a, b).

I- ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT OF THE AMIDA BUDDHA

Before starting investigation of the Amida Buddha image I must assert that this Buddha is not a historical Buddha like Śākyamuni but fictitious or celestial Buddha who never existed in Jambudvīpa, the world where we live. However, the Amida Buddha must have been born from something real, not from simply philosophical thinking and meditative fantasy, because ‘nothing comes of nothing’ as a proverb says. In other words, the idea of this fictitious and non-historical Buddha must have been originated from what human beings such as Buddhist monks could actually see and recognize in Gandhara. So, we must go back two millennia in time to Gandhara of the Kushan period in order to search for the most probable material that was capable to attract the attention of Buddhists, laymen or the renunciant monks who contributed to the emergence of the fictitious Buddha and its image.

According to my previous study it is beyond doubt that the concept of the Amida Buddha was born among Gandharan Mahāyāna monks in the first half of the second century CE. They got this idea directly from gilt cult images standing or seated of the Buddha Śākyamuni made in Gandhara in the late first and the first half of the second centuries CE. According to the reports of a few Chinese Buddhist pilgrims who visited Gandhara and environs such as *Son yung* and *Hui sheng*, Gandharan Buddha and bodhisattva images were originally gilt, although most gilding itself was almost lost after Kushan period (T51. no. 2085, 1020b, 1021a; no.2086, 867a, b). Furthermore, we have a good evidences of gilt Buddha images unearthed from Taxila, Swat and Kapishi regions of Afghanistan: A Buddha head in the Lahore Museum (Fig.2), the famous stele of the Great Miracle at Śrāvastī now housed in the Musée Guimet (Fig. 3), a standing Buddha image (Fig. 4) from Jaulian in the Taxila Museum and a Buddha’s life story relief panel in the Islamabad Museum (Fig.5) and two standing Buddha images (Fig. 6) from Kapishi and clay Buddha images from MesAynak in Afghanistan (Ingholt 1957:119, fig. 248; cf. Butkara III, gold wash, Rahman 1990 : 700, 1991: 154; National Museum of Afghanistan 2011:50; Iwai 2012:81, fig.16, pl. 6). Therefore, In Kushan period, Gandharan monks had undoubtedly plenty of occasions to look at gilt images of the

Buddha Śākyamuni and consequently were deeply impressed at the luminous surface of this historical Buddha's body and garment. Gilt surface of sculpted images is always brilliant so that Gandharan monks easily got the idea of infinite light (amitābha) from which originated the name of the illuminaous Amida Buddha, i.e., Amitābha (Infinite light). As gold never rusts, it emits radiance eternally. So, its innate characteristic is emitting infinite light.

According to the late Seishi Karashima, who was a promising Buddhologist and a leading authority of Gāndhārī texts, Amitābha is described in Gāndhārī as Amitābhu (infinite light) and it gradually was transformed into Amitāhu, Amitā'u, Amitāyu, and lastly Amitāyus (infinite life) from which originated another name of the Amida Buddha, i.e., Amitāyus (Karashima 2013: 121-123). Consequently, Karashima correctly maintained that Amitābha appeared first, prior to Amitāyus. However, I have a different view on the origin of Amitāyus from that of Karashima, although I share with him the priority of Amitābha to Amitāyus (cf. Nattier 2007:391).

As is already mentioned above, Gandharan monks could easily recognize the infinite life of the gold leaves covering the body of the Śākyamuni Buddha images. Gold is forever brilliant without any rust just like Sun. That is to say, the brilliance and radiance of gold leaves are permanent, eternal and immortal. Eventually, it is quite easy to get the idea of immortality, infinite and limitless life from the gold leaves of the Śākyamuni Buddha images. As is well known, gold was identified as Sun in ancient times (de Vries 1984: 287-288). Therefore, gilt images of the Śākyamuni Buddha were regarded as something like Sun god, although he was never identified with Sun god (Helios) or Mithra (Miuro, Miyro) in spite of sporadic textual references to brilliance and radiance of the Śākyamuni Buddha in Mainstream (Hīnayāna) Buddhist literature (Fujita 1970:330-331, 2007: 252-254; Jongeward/Cribb/ Donovan 2015: 269-272).

In any case, as far as the gold is concerned, the notion of infinite light is not indivisible from infinite life. As both infinite light and life are innate characteristics of gold, this fact could be easily recognized by people in Gandhara. Therefore, it is quite reasonable that Gandharan monks who were Mahāyāna-inclined or -oriented, invented two epithets of the Amida Buddha almost simultaneously, although the infinite light was recognized a little earlier than the infinite life as Karashima already asserted from philological view-point (Karashima 2013: 131-123).

From the above, it is beyond doubt that the Amida Buddha's two epithets or names originated from the innate characteristics of gold leaves attached to the surface of the Śākyamuni Buddha images made in Gandhara during the early Kushan period, probably in the middle of the second century CE. I am convinced that no other solution is not, and will not be able to more convincingly explain the contemporaneous appearance and coexistence of the two epithets or names of the Amida Buddha.

In any case, Gandharan Mahāyāna-inclined monks invented this fictitious, non-historical and celestial Amida Buddha, and ‘worked it into the pseudo-historical framework, which, along with a host of the devices, was designed to impart the traditional look to the new Mahāyāna texts, to dress them in scriptural camouflage’, if we borrow the expression of Paul Harrison about Avalokiteśvara (Harrison 2000:183).

As for Mathurā where images of Śākyamuni Buddha and a standing cult image of the Amitābha Buddha were produced, it is better to exclude it from the place of origins of the Amida Buddha and the Triad, because there is no archaeological report of gilt Buddha and bodhisattva image from Mathurā. Chinese pilgrims did not report any evidence of gilt Buddhist image from Mathurā. The important pedestal of a cultic standing image of the Amitābha Buddha found at Govindnagar and dated to the Year 26 of the Kanishka Era (153 CE) seems to keep no trace of gilding (Schopen 1987: 99-101, figs. 1-2A, B, 2005: 247-249, figs. 1-2A, B).

II- Complex Stele of the Matsuoka Museum of Art

Earliest images of the Amida Buddha can be known from a few Gandharan steles. The first one now housed in the Matsuoka Museum of Art in Tokyo depicts the Paradise (Sukhāvātī) of the Amida Buddha (Fig. 7) (Matsuoka Museum of Art 1994:105, pl.16; NHK 1998:153, pl.122). This seems to be a cultic stele rather than a narrative relief panel. On this stele a preaching Buddha with raised right hand showing probably *abhaya-mudrā* (granting the absence of fear) is seated on inverted lotusthron surrounded by twenty celestial bodhisattvas or mahāsattvas who are decorated with round nimbus as well as worshipping deities in the Tushita Heaven (Ingholt 1957: 51, fig.8). The Śākyamuni Buddha cannot be represented together with such a large number of celestial bodhisattvas, because he is always represented in Gandharan relief panels surrounded by his disciples and lay Buddhists, not by celestial nimbate bodhisattvas (Ingholt 1957: figs.96-98, 104, 189-194). Therefore, if the Buddha is depicted surrounded by celestial bodhisattvas in Gandharan relief panel or cultic stele, the relevant scene is likely to be related to Mahāyāna Buddhism, because Mainstream Buddhism does not admit the existence of such a celestial bodhisattva at all. Eventually, there can be no doubt that the central preaching Buddha on this stele is not Śākyamuni nor Maitreya Buddha but one of Mahāyāna fictitious Buddhas, most likely Amida Buddha who was invented and venerated by the Mahāyānists in Gandhara as the Gāndhārī text of the *Amitābhavyūhasūtra* or the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtras* suggests (Nattier 2007: 382-386, 390; Karashima 2013:123, 2014: 452, 465-469).

These celestial bodhisattvas are arranged in two registers following vertical perspective, but they actually are seated or standing on the same level. Some of them are listening to the Buddha (sermon) while others are indifferent to him. Some of them are paying homage to the Buddha and offering garlands to him while others are meditating. Their behaviors vary and each attitude differs from one another. The variety of behaviors of the bodhisattvas surrounding the Amitābha Buddha is described in the two earliest

Chinese translations of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* done by Lokaksema and Zhi Qian from the late second to the first half of the third century CE (T12.no.361, 285c; no.362, 305c; Karashima 2003: 27-28, 2014:465). Therefore, the depiction of the twenty celestial, anonymous bodhisattvas correspond more or less to the textual descriptions of these two Chinese translations (T 12. no.361 and no. 362). The word of this ‘correspond’ in this article does not necessarily mean that the relevant figures were made following textual descriptions of the original Gāndhārī text of the Chinese translations, but rather the relevant sculpture preceded the latter. It means that Gandharan sculptors attempted to produce such an imagery depending upon the information given by monks who knew what is the Sukhāvātī where the Amida Buddha preaches to the audience composed of innumerable bodhisattvas.

The same holds true of the almost same facial features of these bodhisattvas. The above mentioned Chinese translations say that they are equally handsome with the same beautiful and noble face and color (T 12. no.361, 283a; no.362. 303c; Karashima 2000:102; cf. Gómez 1996:88). As sculptors are liable to make figures with the same facial feature, such clear-cut faces of the twenty bodhisattvas are quite natural and appropriate in Gandharan sculpture. I do not think that Gandharan monks paid attention to facial features of human being and bodhisattva and wrote it down in text. Therefore, the sculptor who made this stele did not necessarily follow the description of the original Gāndhārī version of the relevant Chinese translations, but rather depicted the handsome faces of the same facial features freely and independently from the Gāndhārī text but following his traditional technique of sculpturing. In other words, sculpturing figures is likely to precede the textual description in this case.

Next, a very important element of this representation can be found in a bodhisattva depicted in the lower register and to the left of the seated Buddha (Fig.8). He is seated on inverted lotus throne raising the right hand showing the gesture of dialogue or conversation by the two raised fingers (Tanabe 2016; 1-7, figs.1-4). By this unique hand gesture, it is beyond doubt that this bodhisattva asks some questions to the Buddha and the Buddha is expected to answer him. Therefore, although this Buddha does not take the so-called *dharmacakra-mudrā* the definite preaching gesture of both hands, but the *abhaya-mudrā* (fearlessness, protecting and apotropaic sign), he is obviously preaching or explaining the Dharma, monastic principles, stories and so on to the audience (Saunders 1960:55). As is well known, the typical hand gesture of the Amida Buddha is the *dharmacakra-mudrā* (Saunders 1960: 94-95). Preaching Amida Buddha in Sukhāvātī and his preaching toward many bodhisattvas are mentioned in the earliest Chinese translations of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (T12.no.361, 287c, 289a and no.362, 307a). Therefore, the *abhaya-mudrā* taken by the Buddha means the same thing as the *dharmacakra-mudrā* does, because the former gesture originally had the symbolic meaning of transmitting the law (Saunders 1960:56). The same holds true of preaching Buddha depicted in Amarāvātī and Nāgārjunakonda relief panels according to Monika

Zin (Zin 2018: 7, figs. 2, 3, 6). That is the reason why the *abhaya-mudrā* was employed to symbolize the Preaching the Law by the Śākyamuni Buddha in the Scene of the First Sermon (Ingholt 1957: fig.76; Lippe 1970: 20, fig.14; Kurita 2003: fig.280-281). In the case of the Matsuoka Museum of Art piece, the *abhaya-mudrā* was employed as the substitute for the *dharmacakra-mudrā*, and designed to convey Preaching of the Amida Buddha by adding the dialogue gesture to an attendant bodhisattva, because the *dharmacakra-mudrā* did not exist yet.

Therefore, this stele had been probably produced before the seated image of preaching Śākyamuni Buddha with the right shoulder uncovered displaying the *dharmacakra-mudrā* (Fig.9) was created in Gandhara (Ingholt 1957: 118-120, figs. 245-251). As the preaching Śākyamuni Buddha with the right shoulder bare is represented seated on a cushion placed on a bed, pedestal or couch (Kline) quite differently from lotus throne, any Buddha image seated on lotus throne cannot be identified as the Śākyamuni Buddha but most likely as celestial, non-historical Buddha such as the Amida Buddha.

Generally speaking, this dialogue scene also corresponds to the textual description of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* in Chinese and Sanskrit (T 12. no.361, 289a; no.362, 307a,b; Karashima 2004:80, 82).

The third important bodhisattva (Fig.10) is the meditating one with crossed legs who is depicted, one in the upper and the other in the lower register. Both of them are seated on inverted lotus throne and raising the left hand near the forehead. Seated with this pensive posture, together with the face looking slightly downward (*avalokita* in Sanskrit), Gandharan meditating bodhisattvas raise, as a rule, the right hand near the forehead, but if such bodhisattva is depicted to the right of the preaching Buddha, he is depicted raising the left hand as well as the Triad (Fig.11) housed in the Indian Museum, Kolkata (Foucher 1917: pl.XXV-2; Sawoo 1983: fig.1; Quagliotti 1990: figs.1, 3, 8; cf. Mohammad Nari stele, Jansen/Luczanits 2008: 256, fig.3, Cat. no.204).

Another important element is the canopy (*puṣpa-chattra*) above the head of the Buddha. This canopy or parasol is composed of the so-called *puṣpa-puṭa*, bundle of flowers. A.M. Quagliotti proposed that it might be mango tree (Quagliotti 1996:2). However, the depiction of this plant motif does not show any characteristic of mango (*āmra*, *amba*, *Mangifera indica* or white mango (*puṇḍarīka*, *Mangifera caesia*) (Shimizu 2010: 22-23, 36-42, figs.8-9, 25). What is more, as mango was not cultivated in Gandhara, sculptors of this region could not know mango tree nor the exact shape of mango fruit. Therefore, the Gandharan depiction of mango fruit and leaves, attested in the so-called Donation of Mango Garden to the Śākyamuni Buddha by a Vaisālī courtesan, Āmrāpālī/Ambapālī, is tremendously inaccurate (Marshall 1960: pl.60, fig.88; Ingholt 1957: 92, fig.136; Kurita 2003: figs.477-480; Tanabe 2016: figs.1, 4-6). So, we cannot identify the relevant plant motif as mango leaves and fruits. If we refer to the description

of the *puṣpa-chattra* in the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* and its Chinese translation, that floral motif is a canopy made of bundle of flowers falling from the sky and resting in the air above the Amida Buddha (T12. No.362, 306b; Gomez 1996: 91; Karashima 2003:30, 32). Maybe it is a substitute for the Bodhi-tree of the Amida Buddha that is equivalent to the *aśvattha* or pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*) of the Śākyamuni Buddha. However, in the above-quoted texts, the Bodhi-tree of the Amida Buddha is said to be composed of seven jewels. Therefore, this figural representation of canopy does not correspond to the textual description of the Bodhi-tree of the Amida Buddha. So, it is better to identify it as the celestial *puṣpa-chattra*.

Last but not the least, I must say about the importance of lotus throne, either inverted or not. The Buddha and the twenty bodhisattvas are seated on inverted lotus throne. In Indian literature the lotus has been assumed to symbolize *yoni* (female genital), perfection, purity, immortality, transcendence and sacred rebirth in heaven, i.e., the Paradise of the Amida Buddha (*Sukhāvātī*) and so on. According to the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* and the earliest Chinese translations say that millions of bodhisattvas will be born in the Amida Paradise in addition to those already existing in this Paradise (T12. no.361, 299a, b; no.362, 317a, b; Gómez 1996: 107). These Chinese translations say that bodhisattvas will be born in lotus flowers (T.12. no. 361, 291c, 292a, c; no.362, 310, 1, b, c; Karashima 2005: 8, 11,15). The *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* says that those bodhisattvas without doubts about rebirth in the Land of Bliss will be reborn miraculously to appear sitting cross-legged in open lotus flowers (Gómez 1996: 104, 106). Although these passages are concerned with the dialogue between the Buddha Śākyamuni and Ajita/Maitreya that is assumed to be a later interpolation, I believe that Gandharan lotus throne emerging from lotus pond gave rise to such passages. Therefore, we are allowed to admit that lotus-throne depicted on Gandharan relief panels or steles symbolized the miraculous rebirth from lotus-flower in the Amida Paradise. Miraculous rebirth here means that the resurrected Buddhists are not born from bloodied uterus of woman as humans but without impurity. The most favourite throne to be taken by celestial bodhisattvas of the Amida Paradise is said to be lotus throne in one of these Chinese translation of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (T.12. no.362, 304b, 305c; Karashima 2001:137).

Furthermore, I must insist that on this stele the Amida Buddha is depicted surrounded by twenty anonymous bodhisattvas, but the two regular attendant bodhisattvas, i.e., Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta who are supposed to flank on the Amida Buddha are not depicted at all. The above quoted Sanskrit and Chinese texts (T. 361 and T. 362) make reference to these distinguished Bodhisattvas, but the places where their names are referred to are most likely to be later (Chinese) interpolation according to the studies by Kotatsu Fujita and Fumihiko Sueki and Xiao Yue (Sueki 1980:258; Fujita 1973:173-175, 2007: 90-92; Harrison 2000:172, note 24; Xiao Yue

2016:14-22). Therefore, the original Gandhārī text of these two Chinese and Sanskrit versions are supposed not to have contained the reference to these two Bodhisattvas.

Lastly, I must point out that in the upper register are depicted two laymen around the canopy holding a garland. They are not nimbate and distinguished from the other celestial bodhisattvas who are, as a rule, nimbate with round nimbus. So, they are probably devotees (donors of this stele) of the Amida Buddha to be reborn in his paradise. What is more, they are not women because all women become men in their rebirth in the Amida Paradise according to the above quoted two Chinese translations (T12.nos.361 and 362) (Harrison 1998:554-559, 563-566).

III- COMPLEX STELE OF THE ANCIENT ORIENT MUSEUM

The complex stele (Fig.12) housed in the Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo depicts a preaching Buddha with the right shoulder uncovered seated on lotus throne surrounded by twelve celestial bodhisattvas wearing a turban arranged in three registers. Their faces are equally handsome as is the case with the twenty bodhisattvas of the Matsuoka Museum of Art (Fig.7). It goes without saying that the uniformity of this facial depiction corresponds more clearly to the textual description than that of Fig.7. In addition, two male donors seemingly emerging from lotus petals are represented beside the lotus throne of the preaching Buddha.

According to Kimiaki Tanaka, a Japanese Tibetologist, this preaching Buddha can be identified as the Amitda Buddha (Tanaka 2016). This seated Buddha is embellished with double haloes: a round nimbus and a big circular mandorla. In my opinion, as these double haloes are a characteristic and an attribute for the Amitābha Buddha of infinite light, I agree with Tanaka's identification.

The canopy (*puṣpa-chattra*) composed of six flowers is depicted floating or resting in the air above the head of the Amitābha Buddha. From three flowers are emerging three godlings (*vrkṣa-devatā*) two of whom paying homage to the Buddha by joining their palms together (*anjali-mudrā*) while the resting one holding a garland to be dedicated to the Buddha. Just like the same kind of canopy (Fig.7) depicted on the Matsuoka Museum of Art panel, this also means a celestial parasol (*puṣpa-chattra*), substitute for the Bodhi-tree of the Amida Buddha.

The most important bodhisattva on this stele might be the one (Fig.13) depicted to the left of the Amitābha Buddha in the lowest register. He is seated on unidentified dais seemingly composed of knitted canes or bamboo strips and putting the left foot on a lotus emerging from the lotus pond. He has a lotus flower in the left hand and is raising the right hand near the forehead as if meditating. This meditating posture has been regarded as one of the characteristics of the pensive Avalokiteśvara and then Tanaka identified this as Avalokiteśvara (Tanaka 2016: 107-109). In comparison with the two meditating bodhisattvas depicted on the Matsuoka Museum of Art panel (Fig.7), the meditating

bodhisattva occupies a special place beside of the Buddha. The chair on which he is seated is different from a cane throne (Fig.14) supposed to be used for Avalokiteśvara (Matsuoka Museum 1994:103, pl. 9).

However, it is not clear whether this bodhisattva represents Avalokiteśvara or not because the counterpart of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta cannot be identified on iconographical and textual basis. If we take into consideration the Triad composition, the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta might be represented as the one sitting on a cane or rattan chair of basketwork with crossed legs to the right of the Buddha (Tissot 2002: 103, 222, pl. XXXV-2, 4, 5, figs. 248, 249). Unfortunately, his right hand is lost and his turban does not differ from those of other bodhisattvas. Therefore, it is very difficult to identify this bodhisattvas as Mahāsthāmaprāpta. What is more in the original Gāndhārī *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* the name of Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara are not likely to appear as was already suggested above.

From the above argumentation it might be better to avoid identifying the meditating bodhisattva as Avalokiteśvara. I prefer to regard that one as proto-Avalokiteśvara or Avalokiteśvara to be or an anonymous bodhisattva destined to be Avalokiteśvara in due course, for the time being. The same holds true of his counterpart bodhisattva as Mahāsthāmaprāpta to be.

Lastly, I must draw attention to double haloes that I assume to be symbolize the infinite light of Amitābha. Gandharan Buddha images adorned with double haloes are quite rare and this fact induces us to identify this preaching Buddha as Amitābha because his utmost radiance surpasses those of other Mahāyāna celestial Buddhas. Probably, the circular mandorla was employed to refer to the utmost radiance of the Amitābha mentioned in the two Chinese translations of the Bāndhārī *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (T12. No.361, 281c; no.362, 302c; Karashima 2000:95-9). However, this sūtra does not mention anything about a mandorla around the body of Amitābha. Radiance emitted by Amitābha and other celestial Buddhas is said to come out from the top of head (*uṣṇīṣa*) or the nape of neck according to the two Chinese translations of the Gāndhārī *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (T 12. No.361, 282a, b; no.362, 302b, c; Karashima 2000:95-96). These Chinese translations do not mention mandorla at all. The discrepancy between textual and figural sources cannot be ignored. Probably, the author of the original Gāndhārī text or exemplar of these translations seems not to have known the mandorla of Amitābha image. It means that the circular mandorla of this preaching Buddha was most like to have been invented by a Gandharan sculptor after the relevant Gāndhārī text was written.

The fact that there is no female figure on this stele corresponds to the textual description of the Amitābha's Paradise where all woman are reborn as male (Harrison 1998:554-559, 563-566).

Anyhow, it is beyond doubt that this complex stele is one of the ‘proto-complex steles’ from which was originated the Amida Triad in Gandhara.

IV- Fragment of Amida Triad of the State Art Museum of Florida

An Amida triad can be seen in the fragmentary relief panel (Fig.15) housed in the State Art Museum of Florida in USA (Salomon/ Schopen 2002: figs.1-4). The preaching Buddha with the right shoulder bare is embellished with double haloes as well as the Buddha (Fig.12) of the Ancient Orient Museum stele. Above the head is depicted a celestial canopy with garlands emerging from petals which are more elaborated than that of the Ancient Orient Museumstele. To his left is depicted a pensive bodhisattva seated on unidentified throne putting the left foot on lotus pedestal. Above his head is a canopy or parasol from both sides of which is pending a garland.

Fortunately, this sculpture is inscribed with a Kharoṣṭhī inscription. It runs as follows:

- (1) Budhamitrasaolo’isparedanamukhebudhamitrasaamridaha...
(translation: The Avalokiteśvara of Buddhamitra, a sacred gift, the Amṛtābha of the Buddhamitra (Brough 1982: 66-67))
- (2) Budhamitrasaoloisparedanamukhebudhamitrasaamridaha
(translation: Don de Buddhamitra, (cet) Avalokiteśvara; don de Buddhamitra, (cet) Amitābha...(Fussman 1999: 543))
- (3) Dhamitrasaoloisparedanamukhebudhamitrasaamridae
(translation: Gift of Dhamitra at Oloispara(?), for the immortality of (i.e.nirvāṇa) of Buddhamitra (Salomon/Schopen 2002: 27))
- (4) Dhamitrasaoloisparedanamukhebudhamitrasaamridae
(translation: Dhamitra’s gift for Oloispara, Buddhamitra’s (gift) for Amridaa Karashima 2014: 478-479)

The first ‘Budhamitra’ is not correct and it should be deciphered ‘Dhamitrasa (Dharmamitrasa)’ that is attested by the Kharoṣṭhī inscription engraved on the pedestal of a pensive bodhisattva image housed in the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum (Tanabe 2007: pl.II-13,104-106, 295: Dhamitrasanavaka[rmina?])

According to Karashima, the name of Avalokiteśvara (Oloispara) is inscribed just below the pensive bodhisattva seated under a canopy and the name of Amitābha (amridae) is just below the preaching seated Buddha (Karashima 2014: 478). Undoubtedly, J. Leroy Davidson and Jérôme Ducor were mistaken in identifying the pensive bodhisattva as Maitreya (Davidson 1968: 23, fig.23; Ducor 2004: 363). I completely agree with the above Karashima’s interpretation of this inscription because this preaching Buddha is also decorated with double haloes of utmost radiance that can be attested on the Ancient Orient Museum stele (Fig. 12). The double haloes and the above

‘amridae’ corroborate my interpretation that double haloed Buddha is the Amida Buddha in Gandhran art.

Now, we know that the images of the Amida Buddha and Avalokiteśvara were produced in Gandhara. About Mahāsthāmaprāpta, the counterpart of Avalokiteśvara, J. Brough proposed that that bodhisattva was once represented in the missing right part of the stele, to the right of the Amida Buddha (Brough 1982: 66, 1996:470 ; Fussman 1987:73, fig.4, 1999: 543; contra Rhi 2006:169-170). I also agree with Brough’s proposal to a certain extent and suppose that the missing right part was assigned to the other attendant bodhisattva of the Amida Buddha, who is seated as well as the Indian Museum Triad (Fig.16) (Miyaji 1985: pl. X-1; Fussman 1987: figs. 6, 7). However, I am not sure whether he can be identified as Mahāsthāmaprāpta or not. For the time being, I prefer to call the missing seated attendant bodhisattva as proto-or pre-Mahāsthāmaprāpta, model of Mahāsthāmaprāpta-to-be.

Lastly, I must say one thing about the headdress of Avalokiteśvara depicted on this stele. If this pensive seated bodhisattva is Avalokiteśvara, it is quite strange that he does not wear a small, transformed Amida Buddha seated (Fig.17) in the crest that is commonly assumed to be a marker or indicator of Avalokiteśvara (de Mallmann 1948: 123-134, pls. Ia, XXI-a; Ingholt 1957: 142-143, fig.326 ; Jansen/Luczanits 2008: 274, Cat.no. 200; contra Rhi 2006: 163-164, fig.7.12, a general or generic sign not confined to Avalokiteśvara). I suppose that this Triad (Fig. 15) had already been produced before the transformed Amida Buddha was added to the crest of Avalokiteśvara’s turban as an attribute. In my opinion, such a transformed Amida Buddha in the turban crest (Fig.17) became an attribute of Avalokiteśvara comparatively late in Gandharan Buddhist art. What is more, there are known a few so-called Avalokiteśvara images from Gandhara such as that of the Brussels Triad, but I am afraid that they are likely to be modern fakes, because the transformed Amida Buddha seated of those doubtful pieces is not decorated with double haloes (Figs.12, 15, 17) that I take as an undisputable attribute for Gandharan Avalokiteśvara images. I already asserted above (Czuma 1985: 198-199, pl.109; Fussman 1987:fig.3; von Mitterwallner 1987: fig.1; Pal 2010: figs.1,2, 5, 6). If they are genuine sculptures, they might have been produced before the small transformed Amida Buddha became an attribute for Avalokiteśvara’s turban crest.

V- FRAGMENT OF AMIDA TRIAD OF THE INDIAN MUSEUM

There is another preaching Buddha image (Fig.18) of Gandhara now housed in the Indian Museum, Kolkata (Acc.no.5095. 28.2 x 21.9. Indian Museum 2005: 35, fig.36, but wrongly labeled Miracle of Śrāvastī). Although it is a fragmentary piece and badly damaged, the preaching Buddha with the right shoulder disclosed and seated on lotus throne is decorated with double haloes that convince us of the Amida Buddha. Above the Amida Buddha’s head was originally a canopy. To the left of the Buddha is depicted a seated bodhisattva resting the left foot on lotus pedestal. Unfortunately, the upper body of

this bodhisattva is broken away and we cannot know whether he takes a pensive posture or not. However, the depiction of the lower body apparently resembles that of the pensive Avalokiteśvara image of the Florida Triad (Fig.15), including the type of throne and crossed legs. Then, that is likely to represent the pensive Avalokiteśvara. Between the preaching Buddha and the relevant bodhisattva is depicted a Triton-like figure holding in the left hand a dolphin and in the left an oar. This fragment is inscribed with a Kharoṣṭhī inscription but unfortunately its right part is broken away as well as the Florida Triad. The remaining part runs as follows according to J.P.Vogel :

S[im]hamitrasadanamukhe Sahilaasadare[sarsa?])

Translation: Gift of Simhamitra [and] of Sahilaa....?

(Vogel 1906: 253-254, pl.LXVIII-6; von Mitterwallner 1987: 228-229).

Unfortunately, we cannot know the name of another attendant bodhisattva making this Triad from the inscription. However, there must have been depicted to the right of the Amida Buddha, a seated attendant bodhisattva like the one depicted on another Indian Museum fragment (Fig.16)(Miyaji 1985:pl.X-1). That missing bodhisattva might be called as proto- or pre-Mahāsthāmaprāpta as well as the case with the Fig.15.

From above, the existence of the preaching Buddha seated on lotus throne and decorated with double haloes are attested by three steles from Gandhara: the Ancient Orient Museum(Fig.12), the State Art Museum of Floria (Fig. 15) and the Indian Museum (Fig.18). The last two fragments of stele belong undoubtedly to the earliest type of the Amida Triad in Gandhara, although the right half of each relevant sculpture is missing.

In any case, there can be no doubt that the Amida Triad was created in Gandhara in the Kushan period, i.e., from the second to the third century CE, and the Gandharan Amida Triad is likely to have been made for cultic purpose or as cult image. Eventually, contrary to Daniel Boucher's contention, Pure Land Buddhist Art already emerged in Gandhara before the fifth century CE, in Kushan period, at the latest in the early third century CE (Boucher 2008:318, 318, 319).

VI- BODDO OF KANISHKA I 'S GOLD COIN AND THE DATE OF THE AMIDA TRIAD

Now I was able to identify at least two relief panels as the Amida Triad on the basis of double haloes. These might have been produced around the middle of the second century CE or later, i.e., the second half of the second or the third century CE. This dating may be corroborated by the gold coin issued by the Kushan king Kanishka I (127-150) on the reverse of which is depicted a standing Buddha image (Fig. 19) decorated with double haloes (Cribb 1999/2000:167, pl.1). Although its name is inscribed as BODDO, a generic name of all the Buddhas applicable to historical and celestial Buddha, he must be the

Amida Buddha, because he is unprecedentedly and exceptionally embellished with double haloes, an attribute of Amitābha.

This BODDO has been regarded as the Śākyamuni Buddha, but in my opinion this BODDO is not the Śākyamuni Buddha nor the Maitreya Buddha. Both the Śākyamuni Buddha (Fig.20) and the Maitreya Buddha (Fig.21) are struck on the bronze coins issued by Kanishka I with the legends Sakamano Boydo and Metrago Boydo (Cribb 1999/2000: pls.2-12). However, they lack the double haloes and have only a round nimbus. The round or circular nimbus does not mean emitting light, but only a sign or indicator of deity because it symbolizes ‘the endless light’ in Pahlavī (*asarrošnīh=amitābha*) of the invisible world where gods and goddesses are given a share in the luminous world in which they have their being (Bailey 1971:xviii, 8-9). The round nimbus was introduced to Gandhara for the first time by the Kushans as is demonstrated by many nimbate deities such as Miiror Mioro (Mithra), Mao, Nana, Nanashao, Ardoxsho, Pharro, Oesho, Maaseno, Shaoreo, Lrooaspo, Oaxsho and also a few Kushan kings, Huvishka, Vasudeva I, Kanishka II, struck on Kushan coins (Jongeward/Cribb/Donovan 2015: 98, 235, 152, 253-255, 257, 271, 273, 275-276, 279-285, 290-291, 293-295). These nimbate Kushan gods and kings emit no light as well as Śākyamuni and Maitreya Buddhas depicted on the bronze coins of Kanishka I (Figs.20, 21). Their round nimbus simply proves that they are not human beings but deities, and therefore, they are not endowed with such a big mandorla as attached to BODDO. Such a big mandorla symbolizes infinite light emitted exceptionally by this BODDO. The Buddha who can be recognized by Buddhist scripture as emitting the utmost amount of light is the Amitābha Buddha. The Chinese translation (T12.no.362, 302c) of the *Larger Sukhāvāṭīvyūhasūtra* confirms that the light of the Amida Buddha surpasses those of all other celestial Buddhas in not only quantity and but also distance (Karashima 2000:95-97), because his radiance is the most excellent, unrivalled, peerless, incomparable, and illuminating full ten millions of buddha fields while maximum of other Buddhas only two millions). Therefore, the BODDO image cannot be identified as either of these two Buddhas (Figs.20, 21) of Mainstream Buddhism nor other celestial Buddhas. With double haloes the image of BODDO can be correctly identified as the Amida Buddha who emits infinite light symbolized by the large mandorla appearing around his body.

Last, I must say something about the curious fact why the BODDO was not designated by his proper name: Amitābha or Amitāyus. It is undoubtedly a very difficult question and nobody has not been able to answer it as yet. I suppose that the die-cutter of the gold coins avoided intentionally to inscribe the proper name of the Amida Buddha, either Amitābha or Amitāyus. According to Kotatsu Fujita, there were two rival sects among adherents of the Amida Buddha (Fujita 1970: 320-321, 2007: 280, 287). One of them adhered to adopt the name of Amitābha than Amitāyus while the other clung to the belief in Amitāyus. What is more, one sect preferred the ‘*Amitābhavyūhasūtra*’ (the *Larger Sukhāvāṭīvyūhasūtra*) that puts more stress on Amīābha than Amitāyus while the

other supported the ‘*Amitāyusvyūhasūtra*’ (the *Smaller Sukhāvativyūhasūtra*) consecrated to Amitāyus (Fujita 1970: 311-315, 2007: 257). Eventually, the die-cutter avoided involving in such a sectarian antagonism and did not adopt both proper names but simply inscribed BODDO in the Bactrian language and Greek script, on the the reverse of the relevant gold coin. This is my temporary hypothesis as regards the absence of the proper name of Amitābha or Amitāyus on the Kanishka I’s gold coins. If a better explanation of BODDO without proper name is offered, I am always ready for accepting it.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Above I investigated and discussed the problem of the origin of the Amida Buddha mainly on the basis that double haloed Buddha is the Amida Buddha. In my opinion, an elliptical or circular mandorla wrapping the body of the Buddha image is the Gandharan attribute of Amitābhathat was given rise to from the huge amount of light radiating from this Buddha.

Although in this paper I picked up only three steles that depict double haloed Amida Buddha image, there are more or less fifty ‘complex’ steles from Gandhara that might be regarded as representing the Amida Buddha and Sukhāvati Paradise together with Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Maitreya, Mañjūrī or unspecified anonymous bodhisattvas. On these ‘complex’ steles most of preaching Buddhas seated on lotus throne are not decorated with an elliptical or round mandorla. Therefore, it is difficult to prove that most of them are also the Amida Buddha on firm evidence, textual or iconographical, although I believe that they are also the Amida Buddha. In addition, these ‘complex’ steles contain many difficult problems to be solved, but it is almost impossible for me to solve them all in this paper. I will attempt to treat them, one after another, in another articles if I will be able to escape from the Covid-19.

- This article is the revised and enlarged version of the paper that I read at One day International Seminar on “Gandharan Civilization & Buddhist Studies” held on February 29, 2020, organized by Department of Archaeology, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

ABBREVIATION:

T. *TaishōShinshūdaizōkyō*, eds. by J.Takakusu, K.Watanabe and G.Ono, Tokyo, 1924-1934. CBETA[Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association] Chinese electronic Tripiṭaka collection, collection, Taipei, Version April 2011.T.12 means the twelfth volume of this series. No. means serial number of sūtra.

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SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig.1 After S. Ariga (ed.) *Murals of the Kondo of Hōrūji Temple*, 2011, Tokyo, pl. 54

Fig.2-4, 6, 9, 14, 17, 19-21 Author’s photos

Fig.5 Courtesy of Tadashi Tanabe

Fig.7,8 After NHK 1998: pl.122

Fig.10 After Matsuoka Museum of Art 1994: detail of fig. 16

Fig.11 After Sawoo1983: fig.1

Figs.12, 13 Courtesy of the Ancient Orient Museum

Fig.15 After Salomon/Schopen 2002: fig.1

Fig.16 After Miyaji 1985: pl.X-1

Fig.18 After Vogel 1906: pl.LXVIIIb

CAPTIONS FOR FIGURES

Fig.1 - Amida Triad, mural of the Hōryūji Temple, Nara, ca.700 CE



Fig. 2 Gilt Buddha head, Lahore Museum

FOR FIGURES

Fig.3 Gilt Miracle at Śrāvastī, MuséeGuimet, H: 81cm



Fig.4 Gilt Buddha standing, Taxila Museum, H: 62cm



Fig.5 Gilt Adoration of the Buddha, Islamabad Museum

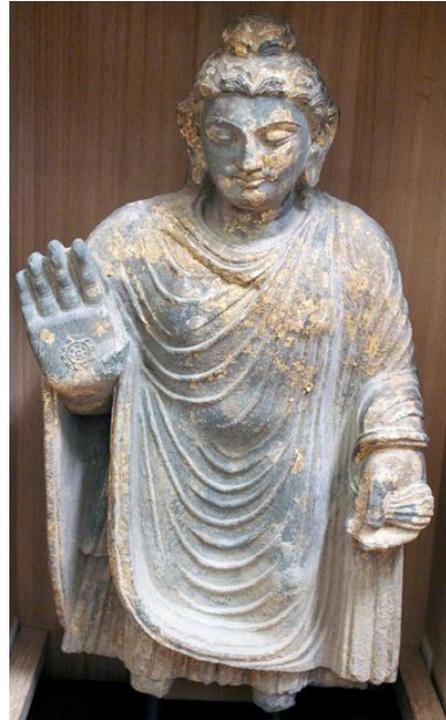


Fig. 6 Gilt Buddha standing, National Museum of Afghanistan



Fig.7 Preaching Buddha seated on lotus throne, Matsuoka Museum of Art, Tokyo, L: 86cm



Fig.8 Bodhisattva raising the right hand, detail of Fig.7

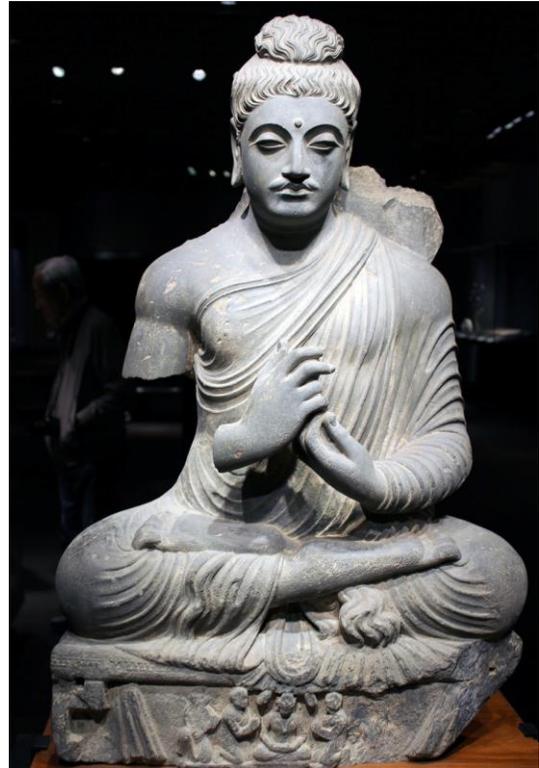


Fig. 9 Preaching Buddha seated, Tokyo National Museum

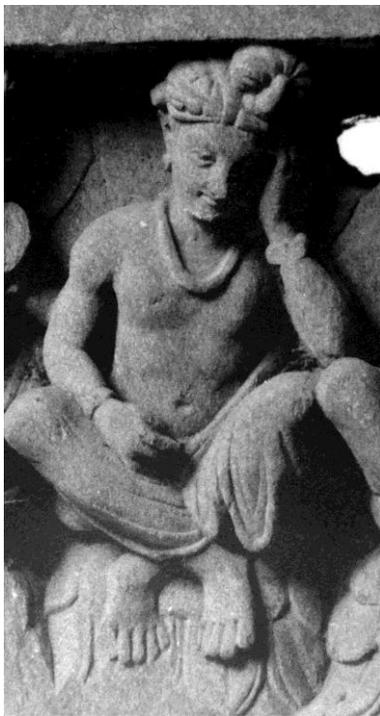


Fig.10 Pensive bodhisattva, detail of Fig.7



Fig.11 Amida Triad, Indian Museum, Kolkata



Fig.12 Preaching Buddha seated on lotus throne, The Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo, H: 64cm



Fig.13 Pensive bodhisattva holding a lotus flower, detail of Fig.12



Fig.14 Pensive bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Matsuoka Museum of Art, Tokyo, H: 67cm

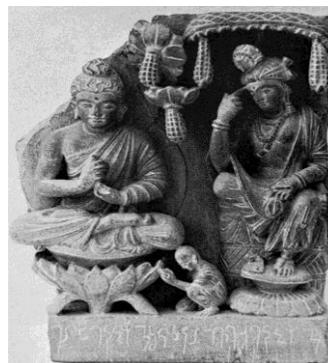


Fig.15 Amida Triad with Avalokiteśvara, The State Art Museum of Florida, H: 30cm



Fig.16 Amida Triad, Indian Museum, Kolkata



Fig.17 Head of Avalokiteśvara with a transformed Amitābha in the turbancrest, Peshawar Museum



Fig.19 BODDO, Gold coin of Kanishka I, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, Japan, D: 2.7cm



Fig.18 Amida Triad with Avalokiteśvara (?), Indian Museum, Kolkata



Fig.20 Śakyamuni Buddha standing, bronze coin of Kanishka I, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, Japan, D: 2.4cm



Fig.21 Maitreya Buddha seated, bronze coin of Kanishka I, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, Japan, D: 2.5cm