

Buddhism in Central Asia II

Practices and Rituals, Visual and Material Transfer

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Representations of a Series of Large Buddha Figures in the Buddhist Caves of Kuča: Reflections on Their Origin and Meaning

Ines Konczak-Nagel

1 Introduction

The ancient Kingdom of Kuča (ca. 3rd–8th c.) on the Northern Silk Road (in present-day Xinjiang 新疆, PR China) included more than ten Buddhist cave complexes.¹ The caves are characterised by recurring layouts and pictorial programmes. One of the major cave types is the ‘central pillar cave’ (fig. 2.1).² This cave type typically has a square, barrel-vaulted main chamber with a niche for a buddha figure in its back wall.³ Two narrow corridors, one on either side of the niche, lead deeper into the mountain for the ritual circumambulation of the buddha figure. Both corridors are connected behind the niche by a rear corridor, which in some caves has the size of a full-fledged chamber. Due to this architectural arrangement, the back wall forms a square ‘pillar’ located in the rear part of the cave.

1 For an overview of the ancient Buddhist sites in Kuča and their remains, see Xinjiang weiwu'er zizhiqu wenwuju 新疆维吾尔自治区文物局, ed., *Xinjiang weiwu'er zizhiqu disanci quanguo wenwu pucha chengguo jicheng: Xinjiang fojiao yizhi, shang xia* 新疆维吾尔自治区第三次全国文物普查成果集成: 新疆佛教遗址, 上, 下 [A Compendium of the Results of the Third National Survey of Cultural Relics in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: Buddhist Sites in Xinjiang, 2 vols.] (Beijing: China Science Publishing & Media, 2015), vols. 1–2, 226–446.

2 There are two other main cave types: residential caves that constituted living quarters for monks and simple square caves that were painted or unpainted, depending on whether they served ritual purposes or not. For schematic layouts of the main cave types, see Giuseppe Vignato, “Archaeological Survey in Kizil: Its Groups of Caves, Districts, Chronology and Buddhist Schools,” *East and West* 56.4 (2006): 359.

3 The buddha figure in the niche of the back wall of the main chamber was sometimes removable in order to take it out on special occasions. The movable figures must have been made of wood, as images made of unfired clay would be too fragile to be easily transported. See Angela F. Howard and Giuseppe Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources of Meditation in the Ancient Monasteries of Kuča* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 66.

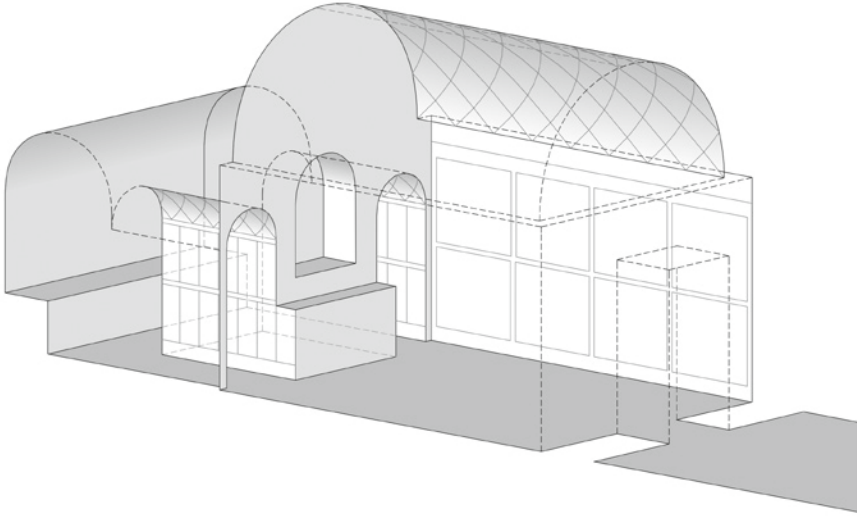


FIGURE 2.1 Axonometric drawing of a 'central pillar cave'
BY DOMINIK OCZKOWSKI

The 'central pillar caves' generally feature a uniform pictorial programme. The side walls of the main chamber are decorated with scenes of the Buddha's sermons, while the barrel vault shows scenes of various Buddhist legends, mainly events from the Buddha's previous lives (Skt. *jātaka*) or the meritorious deeds of individuals. The rear part of the cave is decorated with representations of the Buddha's death and his entry into *parinirvāṇa*. The Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* itself is shown in the rear corridor or chamber. The wall paintings of the side corridors depict either scenes that occurred shortly before or after the Buddha's death—such as the Buddha's miraculous creation of a river that prevented the people of Vaiśālī from following the Buddha on his way to the place of his death, Kuśinagara,⁴ the cremation of the Buddha's body and the distribution of the relics—or rows of *stūpas* that contain small reliquaries or buddha figures. The corridors sometimes also feature rows of donor figures in addition to the scenes and rows of *stūpas* mentioned above. This standard

4 The identification of this scene featuring a river as the Buddha's miraculous creation of a river is suggested by Fang Wang in her PhD dissertation in preparation, entitled *An Iconographic Research on the Buddha Legend Depicted in the Mural Sequence of the Treppenhöhle (Kizil Cave 110)* (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich). Previously, Ernst Waldschmidt explained the scene as the crossing of the Ganges at Pāṭaliputra, see Albert von Le Coq and Ernst Waldschmidt, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien VI: Neue Bildwerke 2* (Berlin: Reimer, 1928), 78–79, pl. 13.



FIGURE 2.2 Kizil Cave 163, left corridor, outer wall
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

pictorial programme appears in 64 caves in Kuča.⁵ In contrast, there are 13 caves in which the representation of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* is combined with depictions of multiple large standing buddhas rather than paintings related to the Buddha's death.⁶ Kizil Cave 163 is an example of this (fig. 2.2).

Similar series of large standing buddha figures that occupy the entire height of the cave wall are also found in eight caves in Kuča that do not show the *parinirvāṇa*.⁷ Typically, each of the buddhas in these series is accompanied by the figure of Vajrapāṇi or a deity represented in the upper part of the painting,

5 For a survey of all the caves in Kuča that are decorated with representations of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, see Monika Zin, *Representations of the Parinirvāṇa Story Cycle in Kucha* (New Delhi: Dev, Leipzig, 2020).

6 The 13 caves that include, besides the *parinirvāṇa* depiction, series of buddha figures occupying the entire height of the cave wall are Kizil Caves 69, 77 (sculpted buddha images, including at least one bodhisattva), 100, 104, 163, and 192; Kumtura Caves 23, 58, 61, and 65; and Simsim Caves 5, 40, and 48. The side corridors of Kizil Caves 47 and 48 are also decorated with series of standing buddha figures; they are later additions and rather small in size.

7 The eight caves that are decorated with sets of multiple large buddha figures and do not contain a *parinirvāṇa* depiction are Kizil Caves 123, 176, and 188; Simsim Caves 26 and 41; Kizilgaha Cave 45; Mazabaha Cave 8; and Taitai'er Cave 16.



FIGURE 2.3 Kumtura Cave 23, left corridor, inner wall
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

and by an adorer in the lower part of the painting. We seldom see the buddhas without any attending figures as for example, in Kumtura Cave 23 (Chin. Kumutula qianfodong 库木吐喇千佛洞) (figs. 2.3 and 2.4).⁸ This paper focuses on these series of large buddha figures. I discuss potential sources for these representations and delineate their possible meaning.

2 Previous Interpretations of the Series of Large Buddha Figures in the Art of Kuča

Angela Howard provides an explanation for the presence of the series of buddha figures in the caves of Kuča.⁹ Her analysis is based on the assumption that two of the buddhas depicted in Kızıl Cave 123 (*Höhle mit den ringtragenden Tauben*, Cave of Ring-bearing Doves)—both more than three metres tall, opposite each other on the side walls of the cave's main chamber, and endowed with mandorlas containing numerous small buddha figures—represent the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī (Skt. *mahāprātihārya*) in which the Buddha emanates

⁸ Representations of series of buddhas without attending figures are found in Kumtura Cave 23, Sinsim Cave 5, Sinsim Cave 40, and Taitai'er Cave 16.

⁹ Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 125–147.



FIGURE 2.4 Kumtura Cave 23, right corridor, inner wall
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

countless replicas of himself from his body (Skt. *buddhapiṇḍī*).¹⁰ In addition to these main figures, there are 13 or 14 different buddha images, almost life-size, painted on the walls of the corridors and one on each side of the entrance of the cave.¹¹ Howard suggests that these additional figures are auxiliary buddhas who are extensions of the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī and cannot, therefore, be considered as independent iconographical units.¹² Based on these considerations, she interprets almost all sets of large buddha figures in the caves of the various monastic sites of Kuča as linked to the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī; thus, they have to be regarded as emanations of Buddha Śākyamuni.¹³ However, the

10 Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 126–128. For a compilation of important works about the *mahāprātihārya*, see Dieter Schlingloff, “Das Mahāprātihārya in der zentralasiatischen Hinayāna-Kunst,” *Indologica Taurinensia* 22–23 (1997–1998): fn. 24; Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 125, n. 49.

11 The exact number of the buddha figures in the corridor can no longer be determined, as the rear part of the cave has been largely destroyed.

12 Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 129–130.

13 *Ibid.*, 130–136. The other caves with representations of series of large buddha figures Howard mentions as connected with the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī are in Kızıl Cave 100 (16 buddhas), Cave 163 (six buddhas), and Cave 176 (10 buddhas); Kumtura Cave 3 (six buddhas in the corridors and two flanking the entrance) and Cave 58 (six buddhas);

identification of the larger-than-life buddhas depicted in the main chamber of Kızıl Cave 123 as a representation of the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī is by no means as certain as it may seem. According to all literary sources, the miracle was performed by Buddha Śākyamuni in order to convert the six heretics, who, although they are the main characters of this story, are not depicted in these paintings. Instead, the attending figures seem to allude to other Buddhist stories. The main male figure next to the buddha on the left side wall holds an ornament¹⁴ in his raised right hand, reminiscent of those he wears in his own coiffure, and is about to throw the ornament at the buddha as an offering. He appears to be a potter, as what could be a hut or a kiln with pottery is clearly visible behind him (fig. 2.5).¹⁵

On the opposite wall the main person at whom the buddha gazes is a Brahmin who is about to venerate the buddha with a handful of flowers taken from a tray held by a dark-skinned, dwarf-like figure on his left side (fig. 2.6).¹⁶

Kızılgha Cave 45 (12 buddhas); Sinsim Cave 26 (11 extant buddhas in the whole cave), Cave 40 (nine buddhas), Cave 41, and 45 (four remaining buddhas); and Taitai'er Cave 16 (15 buddhas). There is only one cave which, according to Howard, contains a set of buddhas that is not connected with the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī, and that is Sinsim Cave 48. In this cave, 16 buddhas decorate the side walls of the main chamber and the outer walls of the corridors, accompanied by smaller Tocharian donors. See Howard and Vignato *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 131–132, fig. 130.

- 14 According to Albert Grünwedel, this ornament is a bouquet of flowers (Germ. "Blumenbüschel"), see Albert Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan: Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten von 1906 bis 1907 bei Kuča, Qarašahr und in der Oase Turfan* (Berlin: Reimer, 1912), 122.
- 15 Because of the potter venerating the buddha, Tianshu Zhu identifies this painting as a representation of the story of the potter Bṛhaddyuti, see Tianshu Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas in the Aureole of Buddhist Images from India, Central Asia and China* (New York: Cambria Press, 2019), 254–258. The legend deals with Buddha Śākyamuni who, in his previous birth as the potter Bṛhaddyuti, offered a bath to the buddha of that age, also named Śākyamuni, when that buddha was ill. However, the depiction differs significantly from the unambiguous iconography of the Bṛhaddyuti story in the Buddhist wall paintings of Kuča. Usually, the potter is shown in these paintings touching or washing one foot of the former Buddha Śākyamuni. For the depictions of the Bṛhaddyuti story in the Buddhist murals of Kuča and aa summary of the literary tradition, see Monika Zin, "Identification of Kizil Paintings II," *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift* 11 (2007): 46–51; see also, Ines Konczak, *Prāñidhi-Darstellungen an der Nördlichen Seidenstraße: Das Bildmotiv der Prophezeiung der Buddhaschaft Śākyamunis in den Malereien Xinjiangs* (Ketsch: Mikroform, 2014), chap. 2.6.2 and 3.1.4.2.
- 16 Because of the Brahmin who is about to scatter flowers over the buddha, Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky identifies the painting as a depiction of the narrative of Buddha Dīpaṅkara, see Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky, *Early Buddhist Narrative Art: Illustrations of the Life of the Buddha from Central Asia to China, Korea and Japan* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000), 38. The legend describes how Buddha Śākyamuni, in his previous birth as a Brahmin youth, offered some flowers to the Buddha Dīpaṅkara, which



FIGURE 2.5 Kizil Cave 123 (reconstruction), cella, left side wall

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As we can see, these paintings represent a story about a Brahmin on the right side wall and a story about a potter on the left side wall. Therefore, the numerous small buddha figures in the mandorla of both buddhas do not allude to the Śrāvastī Miracle, but rather to the Buddha's transcendent ability to multiply himself.¹⁷

miraculously hovered in the air above Dīpaṃkara's head. Thereupon the Brahmin youth made a resolution (Skt. *praṇidhāna*) to become a future buddha and received the prophecy (Skt. *vyākaraṇa*) from Buddha Dīpaṃkara that he would be Buddha Śākyamuni in the future. This identification, however, is not convincing. In the art of Kuča there was an unambiguous iconography for the Dīpaṃkara story that depicts the young Brahmin throwing seven—or occasionally, but rarely, five—flowers towards the Buddha Dīpaṃkara. The painting under discussion obviously differs from this conventional iconography. For a summary of the literary tradition of the Dīpaṃkara story and its depiction in the Buddhist murals of Kuča, see Konczak, *Praṇidhi-Darstellungen*, chap. 2.6.4 and 3.1.4.4. Zhu also points out the iconographic differences between the painting from Kizil Cave 123 and Dīpaṃkara depictions, see Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas*, 253–254.

¹⁷ According to the narrative literature, Buddha Śākyamuni demonstrated his transcendent ability to multiply himself in the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī after six heretics challenged the Buddha to a competition of miracles. The ability to multiply is one of the psychic states that a yogin experiences in the fourth stage of contemplation (Skt. *dhyāna*). Texts that mention



FIGURE 2.6 Kizil Cave 123 (reconstruction), cella, right side wall

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Consequently, there is no need to interpret the series of buddha figures in the corridors (fig. 2.7) and on the front wall as associated with the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī. Instead, it seems natural to treat them as iconographically independent, especially as the other series of buddha figures are usually found in caves that do not contain depictions of buddhas emanating replicas of themselves;

this multiplication ability as a trance experience are, for example, the *Dīghanikāya* and the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, see Dieter Schlingloff, *Die übermenschlichen Phänomene: Visuelle Meditation und Wundererscheinung in buddhistischer Literatur und Kunst. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Versuch* (Düsseldorf: EKÖ-Haus der Japanischen Kultur e.v., Munich: Iudicum, 2015), 4, n. 9. The painters of Kuča occasionally depicted small buddha figures in the mandorla of the Buddha to emphasise that he had reached the fourth contemplation. For example, in the representation of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* on the outer wall of the rear corridor in Kizil Cave 47, several small buddha figures are lined up in the mandorla and in the nimbus of the *parinirvāṇa* Buddha to illustrate the meditative state that the Buddha passed through, according to the texts, before entering the *parinirvāṇa*. For pictures of the *parinirvāṇa* representation in Kizil Cave 47, see *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Kijiru sekkutsu* 中国石窟: 克孜尔石窟 [The Grotto Art of China: The Kizil Grottoes], Volume 1, comp. Shinkyō Uiguru jichiku bunbutsu kanri inkai 新疆ウイグル自治区文物管理委員会 and Haijō ken Kijiru senbutsudō bunbutsu hokanjo 拜城县キジル千仏洞文物保管所 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1983), pls. 148, 149.



FIGURE 2.7 Kizil Cave 123 (reconstruction), cella, view of the right corridor

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which means in these caves there are no images that can readily be identified as the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī.

Tianshu Zhu suggests another interpretation of the series of large buddha figures.¹⁸ In her general study on images of standing buddhas in Kuča, Zhu considers all representations of standing buddhas, whether they are a single standing buddha within a narrative scene or buddhas standing in a series, so she does not treat the latter as a separate subject. Zhu reconstructs the development of representations of standing buddhas, according to which, in an earlier phase (4th/5th c.), these images were depicted as a minor subject in the corridors of the caves,¹⁹ and later (in the second quarter of the 7th c.)

18 Tianshu Zhu, “The Influence from Khotan: The Standing Buddha Images in Kucha,” in *Interaction in the Himalayas and Central Asia: Processes of Transfer, Translation and Transformation in Art, Archaeology, Religion and Polity*, ed. Eva Allinger, et al. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 127–142.

19 Zhu, “The Influence from Khotan,” 128. Examples of standing buddhas as a “minor subject” in the rear part of the cave that are mentioned by Zhu include Kizil Caves 4, 27, 98, 219, and 224, in which episodes from the *parinirvāṇa* cycle decorate the side walls of the corridor and show the Buddha standing, as in the above-mentioned episode of the

became a main theme of the main chamber. Furthermore, she notes that, unlike the paintings of seated buddhas, “most of the standing buddha figures appear in non-narrative settings with several new elements,” and therefore, “the emphasis [...] shifts from recalling a specific event in the Buddha’s life, to venerating the Buddha.”²⁰ Zhu assumes that because the tradition of representing series of standing buddha figures is only known from Khotan on the Southern Silk Road, this pictorial motif travelled from Khotan to Kuča during the 7th and 8th centuries, when Khotan, Kuča, Karashar (Chin. Yanqi 焉耆), and Kašgar comprised the Four Western Garrisons (Chin. Anxi sizhen 安西四鎮) of the Tang Dynasty (618–907, 唐).²¹ However, as we will see below, there are other sites where the tradition of representing a series of buddhas, either seated or standing, was common and developed at least since the 3rd century. The representations of series of large buddha images in Gandhāra, Haḍḍa, and Bāmiyān (that is, in the regions of Greater Gandhāra in present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan) in particular seem to have served as models for the depiction of this subject in Kuča.

3 Development of the Representation of Series of Buddha Figures in South Asia and Greater Gandhāra

One of the oldest inscribed series of buddha figures is from the *stūpa* of Kanaganahalli (Karnataka, South India) and presumably dates to the 2nd/3rd century. The set comprises eight sculptures of seated buddhas positioned in the circumambulatory passage (Skt. *pradakṣiṇapatha*), and each figure is identified by an inscription. The names given are Śākyamuni’s six predecessors, Vivasi (Vipaśyin), Sighi (Śikhin), Vesabhū (Viśvabhū), Kosa(m)ḍha (Krakucchaṇḍa), Konāgamuni (Kanakamuni), and Kassapa (Kāśyapa), as well as Sakamuni (Śākyamuni) himself and the future Buddha Ayito (Ajita, Maitreya).²² The cult of at least one predecessor of Śākyamuni is very old, as

Buddha’s miraculous creation of a river. Other examples show either series of buddhas (Kızıl Caves 104, 163, 176, and 192) or representations of the ‘Cosmological Buddha’ (Kızıl Cave 17). Both the series of buddhas and the ‘Cosmological Buddha’ are independent iconographic units, which are not directly related to the *parinirvāṇa* cycle. For a description of the representations of the ‘Cosmological Buddha’ in Kızıl Cave 17, see Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, 139–140, figs. 141, 143.

20 Zhu, “The Influence from Khotan,” 128–129, 131.

21 *Ibid.*, 132–133.

22 The inscriptions recording the donation of the buddhas depicted at the *stūpa* of Kanaganahalli are published in Maiko Nakanishi and Oskar von Hinüber, “Kanaganahalli Inscriptions,” *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced*

a pillar inscription from Aśoka (r. ca. 268–232 BCE) states that the emperor enlarged the already existent *stūpa* dedicated to the Buddha of the past, Konākamana (Kanakamuni), to twice its original size.²³ As far back as the 2nd century BCE, the group, consisting of the six predecessors of Śākyamuni and Śākyamuni himself, was fully established; these seven buddhas are referred to in the texts of all Buddhist schools.²⁴ In the 2nd/3rd century, the set of seven buddha figures was depicted in relief in the art of Amarāvati,²⁵ Mathurā,²⁶ and, most frequently, Gandhāra.²⁷ There are, furthermore, examples of paintings of this group of buddhas in the Ajantā Caves, dating to the 5th century.²⁸

Buddhology at Soka University 17, Supplement (2014): 75–81. Earlier representations of the seven buddhas, Vipasyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, and Śākyamuni, are known to us in symbolic form. They appear as empty thrones under particular trees on the railing of the *stūpa* in Bhārhut (2nd c. BCE) and as trees and occasionally *stūpas* on all four gates of *stūpa* I in Sāñcī (1st c. BCE). For a list of publications of the inscribed aniconic representations of the buddhas on the Bhārhut railing, see Monika Zin, *Ajanta: Handbuch der Malereien/Handbook of the Paintings 2. Devotionale und ornamentale Malereien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 459, n. 11. For drawings of the representations, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 469, figs. 2a–e. For a summary of the aniconic representations of the seven buddhas on the gates of *stūpa* I in Sāñcī, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 459.

- 23 This pillar inscription of Aśoka was recovered in Niglīvā in the Kapilavastu district. For the most important publications on this inscription, see Eugen Hultsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, 1, 1925), 165, and Harry Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts: A Source-Book with Bibliography*. (Mainz: Zabern, Monographien zur Indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie, 18, 2006), 187–189.
- 24 Vincent Tournier, “Buddhas of the Past,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Volume 2: Lives*, ed. Jonathan Silk et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 96. For a selection of texts from various Buddhist schools in which the six predecessors of Śākyamuni are mentioned, see Peter Skilling, “The Sambuddhe Verses and Later Theravādin Buddhology,” in *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 22, 1996, 157–158.
- 25 For references on depictions of the set of seven buddhas in aniconic and figural form in the art of Amarāvati, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 460, nos. 19, 20, fig. 3.
- 26 There are only two known reliefs depicting the set of seven buddhas from the art of Mathurā. For references, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 460, n. 21.
- 27 For references on depictions on the set of seven buddhas in the art of Gandhāra, see *ibid.*, 460, nos. 22–29.
- 28 In the Ajantā Caves, there are two paintings of a set of seven buddhas, one of which is located in the veranda of Cave 17, right above the entrance to the cave. The other one is located on the right side wall of the main chamber of Cave 22 and bears inscriptions with the names of the buddhas, see *ibid.*, 457–458, figs. 47.1, 47.2. Both sets of seven buddhas are completed by a representation of Bodhisattva Maitreya, who will become the next buddha. Depictions of the seven buddhas and Maitreya, who can either be represented as bodhisattva or buddha, are also known in the sculptural art of Ajantā, for example, from Cave VI, Cave VII, and Cave XXVI, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 461–462 and nos. 31, 32. Contemporaneous reliefs depicting the seven buddhas and Bodhisattva Maitreya are also

Of particular interest for our purpose are the series of buddhas from Gandhāra, as this region was, like the ancient Kingdom of Kuča, part of the Silk Road trading network. The numerous representations of the seven buddhas in the art of Gandhāra were frequently extended to include a depiction of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the future Buddha, so that eight figures were depicted in total. Furthermore, the art of Gandhāra also features sets of buddhas in varying numbers ranging from three to 25.²⁹ These sets of buddhas are usually small and depicted on the outer walls of *stūpas*.³⁰ The buddhas differ in their hand gestures and sometimes also in the way the outer robe is worn, either covering both shoulders or leaving the right shoulder bare.³¹ Obviously, there are variations among the buddha figures within a series, which gives them a certain degree of individuality.³²

At the latest around the beginning of the 5th century, series of large stucco buddha figures were created in Gandhāra. One example is the remains of four

found in the Buddhist caves on the Deccan Plateau, see Zin, *Ajanta*, 460–461, nos. 33, 34, fig. 1.

- 29 For a comprehensive compilation of various buddha series in the art of Gandhāra and present-day Afghanistan, see Marylin M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia, Volume III: The Western Ch'in in Kansu in the Sixteen Kingdoms Period and Inter-relationships with the Buddhist Art of Gandhāra* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), chap. 8. Sets of three seated buddhas are found, for example, at *stūpa* D5 in Jaulian (Taxila), see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 394, figs. 8.14a–b. The surviving inscriptions on three pedestals of the buddhas mention the name of the respective buddha (Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni) and indicate a depiction of the Buddhas of the Three Times, which are past, present, and future. Buddha Kāśyapa, in this context, represents the Buddha of the past; Buddha Śākyamuni represents the present; the third buddha may be Maitreya, who represents the future. A total of 25 buddhas may have been represented on the main *stūpa* of Jaulian (Taxila), see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 367, figs. 8.5a–j. Twenty-five buddhas would correspond with the buddha lineage provided in the Pali *Buddhavaṃsa*, where the list names 24 predecessors of Śākyamuni, see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 368. For secondary sources on the list of past buddhas in the *Buddhavaṃsa*, see Tourmier, “Buddhas of the Past,” 98.
- 30 According to Rhie, there are four prevalent types of sets of seated or standing buddhas: (1) three buddhas, possibly representing the Buddhas of the Three Times, which are past, present, and future, or the three predecessors of Śākyamuni in the present, fortunate aeon (Skt. *bhadrakalpa*), who are Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa; (2) four buddhas, who probably are the four buddhas of the fortunate aeon, including Śākyamuni, and/or the buddhas of the four directions; (3) five buddhas, who are probably the five buddhas of the fortunate aeon, including the future Buddha Maitreya; (4) seven buddhas, who represent the well-known group (sometimes expanded to eight, including Maitreya as bodhisattva or buddha), see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 416.
- 31 See, for example, *ibid.*, figs. 8.16c, 8.17a, 8.22b, 8.23b.
- 32 See, for example, *ibid.*, figs. 8.16c, 8.17a, 8.22b, 8.23b.

colossal standing buddhas from a courtyard of Taḥt-i Bahā'ī.³³ The tradition of creating series of large stucco buddha sculptures culminated in the art of Haḍḍa. Colossal standing buddhas appear to have adorned the perimeter of a chapel in Tapa-e Top-e Kalān,³⁴ a corridor of Tapa Kalān,³⁵ and a gallery of Tapa-i Kafariha.³⁶ Finally, a series with a large number of life-size buddhas was found at *stūpa* A of Gar-naō, decorating the pedestal.³⁷ From this evidence in Haḍḍa, we can assume that from the 5th century onwards there was a tradition in Greater Gandhāra of depicting large buddha figures either in galleries or along the pedestal of a *stūpa* that could be viewed during worship by circumambulation. Unfortunately, only the lower parts of all these sculptures are preserved, so that virtually nothing can be said about their iconography.

There was also a tradition of depicting series of large buddha figures around a *stūpa*, as evidenced in Bāmiyān, which was an important stopover, especially from the middle of the 6th century, on the travel routes that connected India and China via the Hindu Kush. In the 'Eastern Monastery' of Bāmiyān a series of 16 large clay statues of standing buddhas were excavated; they were placed along the walls of the circumambulation path running around the *stūpa*.³⁸ Unfortunately, all that is left of most of the figures is their feet, and even the few that are preserved up to the knees do not show any traces of an individual iconography. However, it seems certain that the buddhas were not accompanied by smaller figures, because there was no room for them.

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- 33 The colossal buddhas were placed on the south wall of Court xx in Taḥt-i Bahā'ī. Rhie dates these figures as close to 400, see *ibid.*, 416, figs. 8.23e, f; Kurt Behrendt dates these colossal buddha figures slightly later to ca. 5th century, see Kurt Behrendt, *The Art of Gandhara in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), fig. 28.
- 34 The colossal standing buddhas were lined up around the perimeter of Chapel CHI in the large square *stūpa* court P1 of Tapa-e Top-e Kalān, one head of which was found. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art in China*, vol. 3, 433.
- 35 Remnants of four life-size standing buddhas were found along the eastern wall of the corridor TK132 in Tapa Kalān. Jules Barthoux, *The Hadda Excavations, Volumes I & III: Complete Edition* (Bangkok: SDI Publications, 2001), 106–107.
- 36 At least six monumental standing buddhas were placed at the northern wall of Gallery K45 in Tapa-i Kafariha. *Ibid.*, 137–138, fig. 115, plan A. The monumental buddhas (with feet measuring 0.70 m) were standing on pedestals p, r, t, v, x', and y'.
- 37 Twelve life-size buddhas were lined up on the northern face of the square *stūpa* pedestal. Only the lower parts of these survive. Still more sculptures were placed along the other faces, on the sides of the projecting angles, and along the walls of the staircase leading to the pedestal. *Ibid.*, 197–198, figs. 180, 181.
- 38 Zemaryalai Tarzi, "Bamiyan 2006: The Fifth Excavation Campaign of Prof. Tarzi's Mission," *The Silk Road* 4.2 (2007): 15–17, figs. 9–13. Based on Tarzi's photographs and drawings, 16 large buddha figures stood on low benches on the walls of Gallery A9, which was the circumambulation path of *stūpa* no. 2.

In some caves at Bāmiyān, series of buddhas are represented in large format in wall paintings from the 7th century.³⁹ They decorate either the side walls of the main chamber of the cave, as in Cave 388, or the walls of the corridor, as in Cave 530. Their arrangement corresponds to that of the sculptures around the *stūpas* at Haḍḍa and Bāmiyān insofar as the series of buddhas could be seen during ritual circumambulation. The painted decoration in the caves of Bāmiyān could therefore be read as a translation of the sculptural programme of structural buildings into the interior of painted caves.

From the above, we are led to deduce that sets of multiple buddha images were a major element in the art of Greater Gandhāra from about 200 onwards, and were depicted in large format from about the beginning of the 5th c. As the sets of small sculptures often represent the buddhas of the past, including Buddha Śākyamuni, this was likely also the case with the sets of large buddha figures. The fact that often more than seven buddhas are depicted, such as the 16 buddhas in the Eastern Monastery of Bāmiyān, does not contradict the assumption that they represent buddhas of the past. The *Bahubuddhakasūtra*, for example—a text naming various buddhas of the past, beginning with Buddha Dīpaṃkara—appears in different versions that belong to various Buddhist schools, including the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Kāśyapīyas and the Mahīśāsakas, all of which coexisted in the region of Greater Gandhāra.⁴⁰ The early version of the *sūtra* features a lineage of 15–17 buddhas, beginning with Buddha Dīpaṃkara.⁴¹ From around the 2nd century to the 4th/5th century, narratives about a multitude of former buddhas flourished, and the number of past buddhas increased. The *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, for example, enumerates 228,000 predecessors of Buddha Śākyamuni. However, even this list is not meant to be complete, because the entire lineage of buddhas is ultimately infinite.⁴²

39 In Bamiyan Cave 388 on the east, west and north wall of the main chamber (Takayasu Higuchi ed., *Afghanisutan ni okeru Bukkyō sekkutsu jūin no bijutsu kōkogakuteki chōsa 1970–1978* パーミヤーン: アフガニスタンにおける仏教石窟寺院の美術考古学的調査, 1970–1978年. *Bāmiyān: Art and Archaeology Researches on the Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan 1970–1978*. 4 vols. (Kyōto: Dōhōsha, 1983–84), vol. 1, pls. 71.1–3, 72.1–2, 73.1–4) and Cave 530 in the corridor (ibid., pls. 95.1, 95.3).

40 For secondary sources regarding versions of the *Bahubuddhakasūtra*, see Tournier, “Buddhas of the Past,” 98–99.

41 Tournier, “Buddhas of the Past,” 99.

42 Ibid., 102.

4 Representations of Series of Large Buddha Figures in Khotan

In Khotan, on the Southern Silk Road in the Tarim Basin, there were also series of buddhas represented on the walls bordering the square area around a *stūpa*. Although much of Khotan art is lost, there is evidence that these were executed in both sculpture and painting. In 1901, when Aurel Stein excavated the *stūpa* of Rawak, northeast of Khotan, he reported that series of sculptures decorated the walls of the *stūpa* court.⁴³ The majority of these stucco statues attached to the walls—both on the outside and on the inside, facing the court—consisted of a number of groups of large-sized buddhas and bodhisattvas, with smaller representations of buddhas and bodhisattvas between them. While the small-sized figures are largely preserved in their entirety, only the lower bodies of the larger ones have survived. Due to a lack of characteristic features, the buddhas are unidentifiable. Stein distinguishes at least two different styles among the sculptures, which he dates to between the 3rd and 7th centuries.⁴⁴ In terms of their appearance, Stein describes the treatment of the drapery as almost the same as the standing buddha figures of Gandhāra.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the images from this region served as model for the Rawak statuary. However, the dating to the 3rd century seems too early in view of the fact that the figures are stylistically close to late Gandhāran art. This is one of the reasons why Yim Young-ae, who analysed the sculptures typologically and stylistically in detail, dates the earlier group to the mid-fourth to early 5th centuries and the latter group to the 5th century.⁴⁶ Gerd Gropp, who meticulously documented Emil Trinkler's field research in the Khotan oasis and studied his collection, dates the Rawak site even later, to the 6th century.⁴⁷

43 Stein, M. Aurel, *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), I, 486, figs. 61, 62, 65–68; II, pls. XIIIb–XVIIIb, pl. XL (plan of the Rawak *stūpa* court). See also, Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas*, figs. 78, 79.

44 The dating is based on numerous finds of coins from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220, 漢); a currency that was in circulation until the beginning of the Tang Dynasty. *Ibid.*, 501. The dating that other scholars assign to the sculptures, ranges between the 3rd and 6th centuries. For an overview of different dates scholars propose for the Rawak sculptures, see Zhu, *Emanated Buddhas*, 349.

45 Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, I, 490.

46 Yim Young-ae 임영애, “Hotan Rawak sawŏnji sobulsang ui Yŏn’gu 호탄 (Khotan, 于闐) 라와 (Rawak) 寺院址 塑佛像의 研究 [A Research on the Clay Sculptures of Rawak Temple Site, Khotan],” *Misulshak Yŏn’gu 미술사학연구* 198 (1993): 23–58.

47 Gerd Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan, Chinesisch-Ostturkestan: Die Trinkler-Sammlung im Übersee-Museum, Bremen* (Bremen: Röver, 1974), 44.

Painted representations of standing buddha images in Khotan are known to us from the murals of the Buddhist Temple No. 1 at Toplukdong, Domoko (Chin. Damagou 大瑪溝) township, which dates between 618 and 656, according to a C14 analysis.⁴⁸ As in the other Buddhist temple sites of Khotan, the upper part of the wall is not preserved and only the lower bodies of the buddha figures survive. The images are very similar and have no characteristic features by which they could be identified. Sometimes the buddhas are flanked by small nimbate figures that could represent bodhisattvas but are also unidentifiable.

In summary, the earliest surviving depictions of series of buddhas in Khotan are compositionally and stylistically oriented towards the art of Gandhāra and, as in their model, the individual buddhas are not identifiable. The practice of depicting series of buddhas persisted in Khotan art at least until the 7th century.

As mentioned above, Zhu believes that the standing buddha images from Khotan served as a model for the representation of this subject in Kuča, and that the motif travelled during the 7th and 8th centuries, when Khotan, Kuča, Karashar, and Kashgar comprised the Four Western Garrisons of the Tang Dynasty. However, although the dating of the Kuča murals is still controversial, all scholars generally agree that the Kızıl Cave paintings that include series of buddha figures occupying the entire height of the wall date before the conquest of Kuča by the Tang, meaning before the middle of the 7th century.⁴⁹ It is therefore unlikely that the motif of the series of standing buddhas reached Kuča at the time of the Four Western Garrisons from Khotan. Instead, the presence of the motif in Kuča in the 6th/7th century indicates that it came to Kuča earlier. In the art of both Kuča and Khotan, the source for this motif appears to have been Greater Gandhāra. Unlike in Khotan, however, accompanying figures which point to particular narratives were added to the standing buddhas in Kuča.

48 Two standing buddhas appear on each side wall, and one additional figure is located on the rear wall of Temple No. 1 at Toplukdong. Gropp, *Archäologische Funde aus Khotan*, fig. 77.

49 For an overview of the different dates of the Kızıl Caves, see Marianne Yaldiz, "Evaluation of the Chronology of the Murals in Kizil, Kucha Oasis," in *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Eli Franco and Monika Zin (Bhairahawa: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010), 1038–1041. The only cave in Kızıl with a representation of a series of nearly life-size, standing buddhas that is dated by Ernst Waldschmidt to after 650 is Kızıl Cave 123, see Albert von Le Coq and Ernst Waldschmidt, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien VII: Neue Bildwerke 3* (Berlin: Reimer, 1933), 29.

5 Representations of Series of Large Buddha Figures in Kuča

As mentioned above, in Kuča, the series of buddha images occupying the entire height of the cave wall most frequently appear in the corridors of the ‘central pillar caves’, surrounding the ‘pillar’ that contains a niche for a buddha figure. Thus, like the above-mentioned paintings in the Bāmiyān caves, the Buddha images were meant to be seen during ritual circumambulation and positioned accordingly—an arrangement already known from the earlier temples of Greater Gandhāra. Hence the source for the depiction of series of large Buddha figures in Kuča seems to have been the art of Greater Gandhāra, especially as the sites were connected through trade and, to a lesser extent, by pilgrimage. Kurt Behrendt offers one possible explanation for the transmission of late Gandhāran forms to Central Asia. Based on the diffusion of motifs specific to Gandhāran art,⁵⁰ he argues that Gandhāran Buddhist communities moved to other Buddhist centres after their patronage in the heartland of Gandhāra collapsed in the late 5th century.⁵¹

What makes the art of Kuča special is that the paintings of the individual buddhas in a series often provide more information than the sculptures and paintings from Greater Gandhāra, as the buddhas are not only differentiated by hand gestures and the way they wear their outer robe, but frequently have varying attending figures as well. In Kızıl Cave 163, for example, the attending figure of the first buddha painted on the outer wall of the left corridor indicates that a buddha of the past is depicted here. The buddha is accompanied by a Brahmin youth, who is about to scatter a bunch of flowers over the buddha

50 Kurt Behrendt, “Evidence for the Diffusion of Gandharan Forms after the Late 5th Century,” in *South Asian Archaeology and Art 2012, Volume 2: South Asian Religions and Visual Forms in Their Archaeological Context*, ed. Vincent Lefèvre, Aurore Didier, and Benjamin Mutin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 407–416. The Gandhāran motifs Behrendt examines are the Fasting Buddha, Dipaṅkara Buddha, and large scale *parinirvāṇa* images.

51 Shoshin Kuwayama proposes that the trade route at the western fringe of the Hindu Kush was abandoned as result of the occupation of parts of Tokharistan by the Western Turks (583–659, 西突厥) in the middle of the 6th century, which led to the economic isolation of Gandhāra, see Shoshin Kuwayama, “Pilgrimage Route Changes and the Decline of Gandhāra,” in *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*, ed. Pia Brancaccio and Kurt Behrendt (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2006), 125–126. From the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (600/602–664, 玄奘), who visited the region in the early 7th century, we know that the *stūpas* at Haḍḍa (Nagarahara) were already “deserted and in dilapidated condition” by this time and that the royal family of Gandhāra was extinct, see Rongxi Li, trans., *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions (Taishō Volume 51, Number 2087)* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 55, 59.

with his raised right hand, and above the buddha there are eight blue flowers hovering in the air. Based on a comparison with other depictions of this kind, we can ascertain that this is Buddha Dīpaṃkara (fig. 2.8), even though eight flowers make an odd total, as, according to the texts, the Brahmin youth presents either five or seven flowers to the buddha.⁵² In this painting the accompanying figure and the hovering flowers serve as iconographic elements to determine the identity of the depicted buddha.

Other representations of Buddha Dīpaṃkara that span the entire height of the cave wall are found in Kızıl Cave 69 (fig. 2.9) and Mazabaha Cave 8 (Chin. Mazhaboha shiku 玛扎伯哈石窟) (fig. 2.10). Remarkably, in all three caves, the number of buddhas in the series differs. While there are six buddhas represented in Kızıl Cave 163 on the outer walls of the left and right corridors, there are two in Kızıl Cave 69—one on each side wall of the main chamber of the cave—and twelve in Mazabaha Cave 8, on the outer walls of the corridors. In general, the number of buddhas corresponds to the available space on the walls and ranges between two and 22.⁵³

Kızıl Cave 188 is a square cave that was decorated by at least twelve buddha figures occupying the entire height of its walls. Four buddha figures are depicted on the rear wall (fig. 2.11), and four buddhas appear to have been on each of the two side walls, of which only three on the left side wall (fig. 2.12) and two on the right side wall (fig. 2.13) are completely preserved. As the front wall of the cave collapsed, it is not possible to determine whether it was also

52 For a short summary of the Dīpaṃkara story, see above, fn. 16. In the art of Kuča, the Brahmin youth usually throws seven flowers in the direction of the Buddha Dīpaṃkara. There are only few exceptions in which the number of flowers is five; this number of flowers frequently occurs in the art of Gandhāra, see Konczak-Nagel, *Prañidhi-Darstellungen*, chap. 3.1.4.4.

53 In Kızıl Cave 69, there are two buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 77, there were at least six sculptural images (some of which might have been figures of bodhisattvas); in Kızıl Cave 100, there were 16 buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 163, there are six buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 192, there are probably six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 23, there are six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 38, there are eight buddhas, in Kumtura Cave 58, there are six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 61, there are probably six buddhas; in Kumtura Cave 65, there are probably three buddhas; in Simsim Cave 5, there are probably seven buddhas; in Simsim Cave 40, there are nine buddhas; and in Simsim Cave 48, there are 16 buddhas. Also, in the eight caves in Kuča, which are not decorated with a representation of the *parinirvāṇa*, but with a series of buddhas, the number of buddhas varies. In Kızıl Cave 123 there are 15 or 16 buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 176, there are 10 buddhas; in Kızıl Cave 188, there are at least twelve buddhas; in Simsim Cave 26, there are 11 buddhas; in Simsim Cave 41, there are ten buddhas; in Kızılğaha Cave 45, there are possibly 22 buddhas; in Taitai'er Cave 16, there are 15 buddhas; and in Mazabaha Cave 8 there are eight buddhas.



FIGURE 2.8 Kızıl Cave 163, left corridor, outer wall, detail,
 narrative on Buddha Dīpaṅkara
 DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.9 Kizil Cave 69, cella, right side wall, detail, narrative on Buddha Dipaṅkara
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

decorated with buddhas. At least two of the buddhas on the rear wall are identifiable based on their accompanying figures (fig. 2.11). The buddha on the left side of the rear wall is attended by a figure of Vajrapāṇi to the right of his head.

The buddha was also once accompanied by a Brahmin standing on one foot to the right of his lower body, but this figure was removed by the third German expedition in 1907 and is now housed in the Museum für asiatische Kunst,

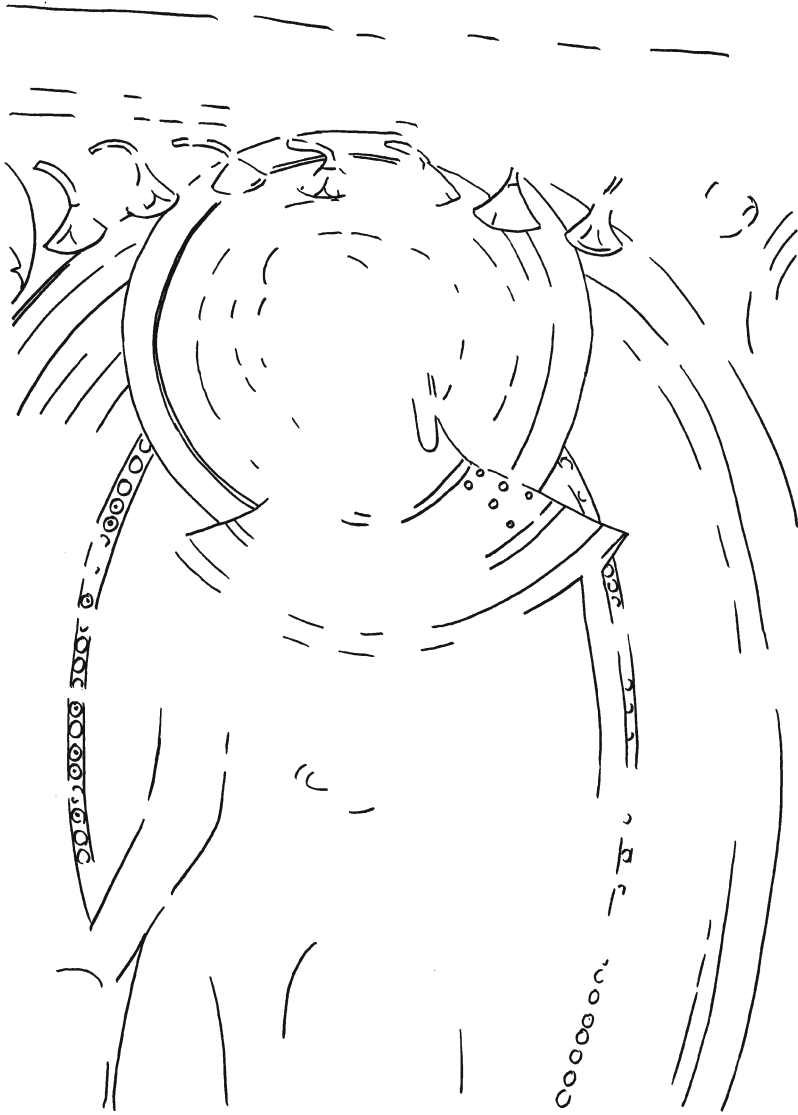


FIGURE 2.10 Mazabaha Cave 8, rear corridor, outer wall, detail, narrative on Buddha
Dīpaṅkara
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.11 Kizil Cave 188, cella, rear wall
RECONSTRUCTED DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.12 Kizil Cave 188, cella, left side wall
RECONSTRUCTED DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN



FIGURE 2.13 Kizil Cave 188, cella, right side wall
RECONSTRUCTED DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

Berlin (no. III 9030).⁵⁴ The pictorial motif of the Brahmin standing on one foot was already identified by Ma Shichang.⁵⁵ The underlying narrative relates the

- 54 Zhao was able to digitally reconstruct the original appearance of the paintings of the rear wall (fig. 2.11) and the left side wall (fig. 2.12) of Kizil Cave 188, including all fragments that were removed by the third German expedition in 1907 and are now kept either in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, or in the State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, see Li Zhao 赵莉, et al., *Haiwai Kez'er shiku bihua fuyuan yingxiang ji* 海外克孜尔石窟壁画复原影像集 [Compendium of Photographic Restoration of the Kizil Grotto Murals Oversea] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2018), 101–105. The digital reconstruction of the painting of the right side wall (fig. 8.13), including the painting of the Brahmin (see below n. 55), was done by the author of the present paper and drawn by Monika Zin.
- 55 Ma Shichang 馬世長, “Kijiru sekkutsu chūshin chūkutsu no shushitsu kucchō to kōshitsu no hekiga” キジル石窟中心柱窟の主室窟頂と後室の壁画. Paintings on Main Chamber’s Barrel Vault and Wall of Back Corridor, in Square Columned Caves at the Kizil Grottoes,” in *Chūgoku sekkutsu: Kijiru sekkutsu* 中国石窟: 克孜尔石窟. *The Grotto Art*

story of Buddha Śākyamuni, who, in one of his previous lives, was a heretical sage and climbed the mountains gathering herbs. In the mountains, he sees Buddha Puṣya⁵⁶ seated in a jewel cave practising the ‘concentration on fire’. The heretical sage experiences great joy at this sight and venerates Buddha Puṣya by standing erect on one leg for seven days and seven nights, praising the buddha with a verse. At the end of this time period, he receives a prophecy from Buddha Puṣya informing him that he will become Buddha Śākyamuni in the future.⁵⁷ Based on this narrative, we can be sure that the former Buddha Puṣya is depicted here. The buddha to the right, attended by a nun whose eyes radiate green rays, has not been identified so far.⁵⁸ However, the accompanying figure of the next buddha of this series hints at a familiar pictorial motif that is also based on a narrative in which Buddha Śākyamuni meets a buddha in one of his previous lives. It is the story of the potter Bṛhaddyuti, who takes care of this former buddha, who also bears the name Śākyamuni, and bathes him while he is ill.⁵⁹ The former Buddha Śākyamuni thereupon prophesies that the potter will become a buddha in the future who will also be named Śākyamuni. The accompanying figure is shown bathing the feet of the buddha with water from a little vase held in the figure’s left hand. Another familiar pictorial motif appears on the right side wall of the same cave. Here, we see a buddha (the

of China: *The Kizil Grottoes, Volume 2*, comp. Shinkyō Uiguru jichiku bunbutsu kanri inkai 新疆ウイグル自治区文物管理委員会 and Haijō ken Kijiru senbutsudō bunbutsu hokanjo 拜城县キジル千仏洞文物保管所 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1984), 170–236, fig. 96. Ma mentions the Chinese translation of the *Avadānaśataka* (no. 97) *Zhuanji baiyuanjing* 撰集百緣經 (T. 200.4, 253c20–254a02) as a primary source for the story about the Brahmin standing on one foot. Other primary sources in Sanskrit and Chinese containing the legend are listed in Étienne Lamotte, *La traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)*, Tome I: *Chapitres I–XV* (Louvain: Bureaux du muséeon, 1944), 252, n. 2.

- 56 The Buddha sometimes appears in other versions of the legend under the name Tiśya, see Lamotte, *La traité*, 253, n. 1.
- 57 Most versions of the story contain the prophecy of Śākyamuni’s future buddhahood; one exception is the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, see Lamotte, *La traité*, 253. The story is also included in the verse section about the former *prañidhānas* of Buddha Śākyamuni in the Tibetan version of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstīvādinaya* Q no. 1030 ‘*Dul ba ge* 257b6. There it is stated that in one of his former existences Śākyamuni venerated Buddha Puṣya in a jewel cave with a verse, however, the fact that he was standing on one leg for seven days and nights is not mentioned. I thank Gudrun Melzer for providing the information on the Tibetan source.
- 58 The painting of the nun with radiating eyes was brought to Berlin by the third German expedition in 1907 (no. IB 9027). Since 1945, it has been housed in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, no. ВДсэ 702.
- 59 For a short summary of the story about the potter Bṛhaddyuti and representations of this story in Kuča, see above fn. 15.

second from the left) represented holding an alms bowl in his left hand, and, on the viewer's left, a Brahmin standing with both hands raised, intending to present something to the buddha (fig. 2.13).⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the gift is no longer recognisable, because it was destroyed when the German expedition removed the painting of the Brahmin. Nevertheless, we can assume it was food offered by the Brahmin to the buddha, since this pictorial motif also appears in the series of large buddha figures in Kızıl Cave 163 (fig. 2.14). In this painting, a tray, probably containing fruit, is offered by the Brahmin to the buddha, who is holding an alms bowl in his left hand. However, I have not yet been able to establish which specific underlying story relates to this painting.⁶¹

In all the preceding examples from Kuča, the large buddha figures that are identifiable are buddhas of the past. Their identification is possible through the accompanying figure that alludes to a certain narrative. Other caves that contain representations of series of buddhas, including attending figures, are Kızıl Caves 100 and 192, and Simsim Caves 26 and 41 (Chin. Senmusaimu qianfodong 森木塞姆千佛洞). However, there are also a few representations of series of buddhas in which the individual buddhas are not narratively depicted. As in Greater Gandhāra, the buddhas are depicted either without an attending figure, as in Kumtura Cave 23 (figs. 2.3 and 2.4) and Simsim Cave 5, or accompanied by donors, who probably financed the decoration, as in Simsim Cave 48 and Taitai'er Cave 16 (Chin. Taitai'er shiku 台台爾石窟). In general, there seem to be more representations of buddhas from narratives in the series in Kuča than non-narrative ones. However, we should keep in mind that many of the paintings in other caves of Kuča were so badly damaged that it is impossible to determine whether the buddhas were once depicted with attending figures and thus, whether their depictions were based on any narratives or not.⁶²

60 The painting of the Brahmin was brought to Berlin by the third German expedition in 1907 (no. 1B 9031). Since 1945, it has been housed in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, no. ВДсэ 863. The identification of this fragment as belonging to the painting of the right side wall was made by the author of the present paper.

61 One possible underlying story to this pictorial motif could be the story of Buddha Śākyamuni who, in a previous birth as a Brahmin, offered a delicious fruit to Buddha Aniruddha. A verse referring to this story is part of the verse section on the former *pranidhānas* of Buddha Śākyamuni in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvastivādinaya*, see for example in its Tibetan version Q no. 1030, 'Dul ba ge 256a6. I thank Gudrun Melzer for providing the information on the Tibetan source.

62 Grünwedel, for example, mentions eight buddha figures depicted in the corridor of Kumtura Cave 58, of which at least two were provided with attending figures. However, the paintings were already so badly damaged when Grünwedel visited the cave that he could not give an accurate description of their details. See Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten*, 34.

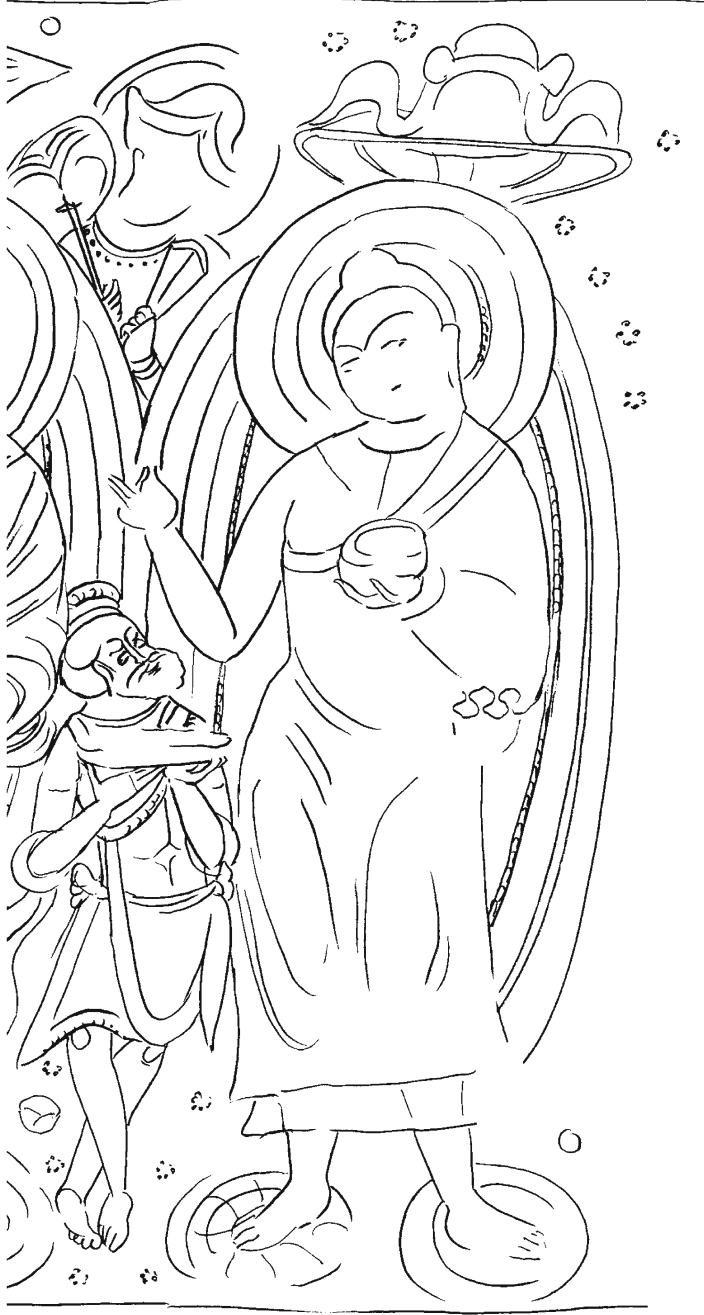


FIGURE 2.14 Kizil Cave 163, left corridor, outer wall, detail, narrative on a Brahmin offering food (?) to the Buddha
DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

6 Conclusion

Among the representations of series of buddhas in Kuča, several are depicted in a narrative context. Although we cannot determine all of the stories underlying the narrative buddha images, the paintings that are identifiable appear to depict the buddhas of the past. The practice of representing buddhas of the past was most likely adopted from the art of Greater Gandhāra. This is clear from how the series of buddhas found in both regions were arranged to make sure that they were visible during ritual circumambulation. There are also stylistic similarities between the buddha sculptures from Haḍḍa and the painted buddha figures in the caves of Kuča. According to Jules Barthoux, the drapery of the buddhas' robes in Gar-naō, *stūpa* A, was made of a thin layer of stucco and thus revealed the shape of the body.⁶³ This characteristic feature of a robe that clings to the body and reveals the body shape is also depicted in large-scale buddha sculptures from Khotan and in the paintings of large buddha figures in the caves of Kuča. This again indicates that the representation of large-sized buddhas in the art of both Kuča and Khotan was adopted from Greater Gandhāra. The motif was perhaps adopted in Kuča when the Turks ruled over the western Tarim Basin, where Kuča was located, as well as over parts of present-day Afghanistan and northern India (560–657).⁶⁴

The art of Gandhāra, the forerunner of the art of Greater Gandhāra, already featured numerous representations of the pictorial motif of the seven buddhas of the past, in which the individual buddhas could often only be distinguished by their different gestures, poses, or ways of wearing their outer robe. An exception is an incompletely preserved relief of the seven buddhas, in which each buddha is accompanied by a figure of Vajrapāṇi next to their head and by at least one smaller worshipping figure (fig. 2.15).⁶⁵ This feature of accompanying figures rarely appears in the large series of buddhas in Greater Gandhāran art. However, in the art of Kuča, the accompanying figures became an important

63 Barthoux, *The Hadda Excavations*, 198.

64 After the Turks established their First Khaganate in about 560, they divided their new empire into a western and eastern khaganate in 583. The Western Turks then controlled Zungharia, the Ferghana Valley, the western Tarim Basin, and parts of Afghanistan and northern India. In 657, the Tang Dynasty took control of the Western Turk Empire. For the history and territory of the Turk Khaganates, see James Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads. A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 31–35, 376.

65 The relief is housed in the Lahore Museum, nos. 2306, 2058, and 2059, and is illustrated in Alfred Foucher, *L'art Gréco-Bouddhique du Gandhāra: Étude sur les origines de l'influence classique dans l'art Bouddhique de l'Inde et de l'Extrême-Orient. Tome I* (Paris: Leroux, 1905), fig. 136; Ingholt, Harald, *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), fig. 224.

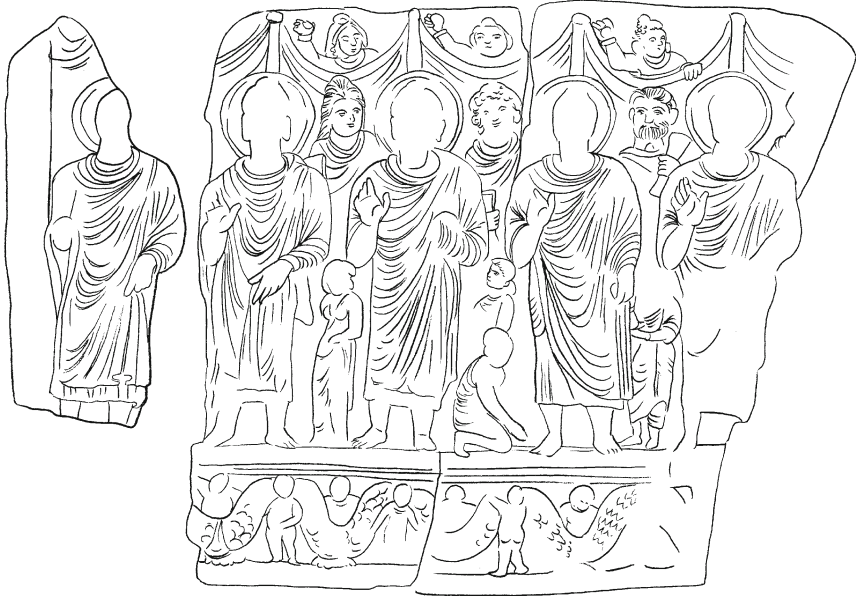


FIGURE 2.15 Relief. Sikri, Gandhāra, dated 2nd/3rd century. Lahore Museum, nos. 2306, 2058, 2059

DRAWING BY MONIKA ZIN

element in series of large buddhas. They allude to a certain narrative by which the respective buddha can be identified. One of the reasons for depicting the buddhas in a narrative context may have been the preference for narrative representations in Kuča, like those found in the majority of the decorated caves.

The representations of buddhas in a series identified so far may depict prophecies about Buddha Śākyamuni made by a buddha of the past, known in the secondary literature as *prañidhi* paintings. The existence of small-scale *prañidhi* paintings in Kuča has already been proven, as they sometimes bear Tocharian inscriptions by which they could be identified.⁶⁶ The Kučean paintings of large buddhas of the past that reference narratives, may represent a

66 Incribed small-scale *prañidhi* paintings, of which only a few inscriptions are still legible, are depicted in several registers on the walls of Kumtura Cave 34, see Georges-Jean Pinault, “Une nouvelle inscription koutchéenne de Qumtura: Légende de scènes bouddhiques de Prañidhi,” *Bulletin d'études indiennes* 11–12 (1993–1994): 171–220; Hirotoshi Ogihara 荻原裕敏, “Tuholuoyu wenxian suo jian fuming xilie—yi chutu fodian yu Kumutula kuqunqudi 34 ku bang ti wei li 吐火罗语文献所见佛名系列—以出土佛典与库木吐喇窟群区第 34 窟榜题为例. Lists of Former Buddhas in Tocharian Texts: A Comparative Study of Unearthed Manuscripts and Captions in Kumtura Cave No. 34,” *Xiyu wenshi* 西域文史. *Literature and History of the Western Regions* 9 (2015): 33–49.

further development and be regarded as direct predecessors of the famous Uyghur large-scale *prañidhi* paintings of the Turfan region.⁶⁷

In some of the series of buddhas represented in Kuča, the buddhas are depicted either with donors, as in Simsim Cave 48 and Taitai'er Cave 16, or completely without accompanying figures, as in Kuntura Cave 23 and Simsim Cave 5. As these buddhas are generally placed in exactly the same position in the cave as the series of narrative buddhas, that is, in the circumambulatory path, we can assume that the artists of Kuča also painted buddhas of the past here. It is quite possible that these series of non-narrative buddhas were created at a later time, when the depiction of buddhas was more important than their identification.

Finally, in order to develop an understanding of why the buddhas of the past were included in the pictorial programme of the caves, it seems reasonable to suppose that they had the same function as the texts. The *Bahubuddhakasūtra*, for example, was used in meditative practice as well as in more secular matters.⁶⁸ As the names of buddhas were deemed to have magical power, chanting them could protect the speaker against calamity. Furthermore, the repetition of the names of buddhas was believed to produce a beneficial state of mind and favourable *karma*. This meant that while the worshipper circumambulated the 'pillar' of the cave containing the niche with the central buddha figure, they could recite the names of the depicted buddhas of the past, often identifiable by their attending figure, and thus accumulate merit and create protection.⁶⁹ Another reason for the representation of buddhas, whether they belong to the past or the future, is the emphasis on the infinity of the *dharma*. The visual presence of the buddhas indicates that the *dharma* has lasted from time immemorial and will continue to exist in the future. These two reasons are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary.

67 This statement has already been presented in Konczak, *Prañidhi-Darstellungen*, chap. 3.1.6, and in Mori, Michiyo 森美智代, "Kiji sekkutsu no 'ryubutsu no retsuzo' to seiganzu ni tsuite 亀茲石窟の「立仏の列像」と誓願図について [On Depictions of 'Rows of Standing Buddhas' and *prañidhi* Scenes in the Kizil Grottoes]," *Bukkyō geijutsu 佛教藝術 Ars Buddhica* 340 (2015): 9–35.

68 Richard Salomon, *The Buddhist Literature of Ancient Gandhāra: An Introduction with Selected Translations* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2018), 270.

69 For the practical application of the *Bahubuddhakasūtra* and similar texts, as well as their visual counterparts in series of buddhas, see, *ibid.*, 270–271.