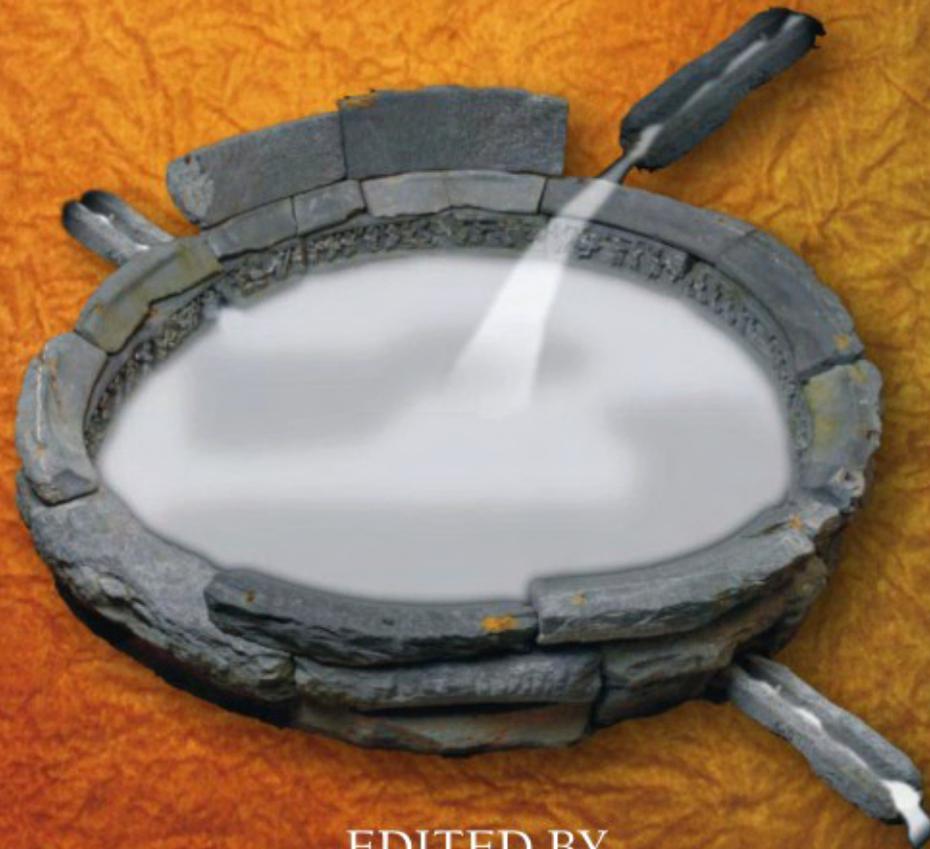


PRAJÑĀDHARA

Essays on

ASIAN ART HISTORY EPIGRAPHY AND CULTURE

in Honour of
Gouriswar Bhattacharya



EDITED BY

Gerd J.R. Mevissen and Arundhati Banerji

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An unusual object was recently added to one of the private collections of Indian Art in the USA. It was Dr. Gouriswar Bhattacharya who first contacted me to ask whether I would like to see photographs of the object, which he said was truly exceptional. As I had great faith in his sensitivity when it came to finding interesting art objects I immediately agreed to cooperate with the Collection of Dr. David Nalin, Philadelphia (cf. Basu 2005) where the object was held. I offer this article as thanks to Dr. Bhattacharya for his trust in my abilities and for his many years of friendship.

The unusual piece from Gandhara in the American collection is indeed interesting – it was once the lining of a round water cistern, or tank (**Plate 2.1**). The lining is ornamented with a series of reliefs depicting the Nāgas. It can be dated with some certainty to the 3rd century AD.

The tank lining is thought to originate in the Swabi region of Pakistan; it came to the American collection from the Japanese art market. The lining consists of 50 oblong, concave stones which have been placed together in the collection to form a circle with three rows: There are nine pieces in the bottom row, nine in the middle (all with sculptured friezes on the concave side), and ten in the highest row. The 22 remaining concave pieces suggest that there was originally a fourth level on top (shown in **Plate 2.1** with two stones); and two more levels underneath. All the pieces are smooth on the concave side. The internal diameter of the stone enclosure is 177 cm. In addition to the pieces already mentioned there is also a discharge trough that interdigitates with one of the apertures carved into the bottom level.

A similar (but square) tank lining, consisting of several rows of oblong stones, is depicted in the narrative relief identified by Inghold as the story in which Ānanda asks a Caṇḍāla girl for some water.¹

The stones of the lining in the American collection used to be linked by metal bolts placed in chiselled grooves. The bolts have mostly rusted away but the grooves are well preserved and these allow for the original position of the elements to be identified. The fact that different types of corrosion affect neighbouring stones (see below: reliefs Nos. 3 and 4) suggests that the sequence in which the stones are placed today does not reflect the original one exactly. Many stones have carved symbols at their ends, or in a few cases in their centre: These are characters of the Kharoṣṭhī *arapacana* syllabary which were used to indicate the order of the Gandharan reliefs (Salomon 2006)². Further research into the rear sides of the stones, therefore, could make clear the original sequence.

The internal side of the stone enclosure is smooth and ornamented; its outside, by contrast, is rough and there is no evidence of care having been taken over its appearance. Moreover, there is no visible erosion on the outside to indicate that people approached the tank in order to draw water. The absence of these things

suggests that the lining was either buried in the ground, or plastered, or surrounded by a second row of stones or bricks.

In the middle of the enclosure a composition of piled-up elements of Gandhara sculpture has been placed (cf. **Plate 2.1**). The elements are beautiful in their own right but they do not match the stone enclosure or even one another. Two fragments of a small votive *stūpa* stand on a large base, but this square base is separated from the dome by two elements of acanthus leaves. (These may perhaps be the base and capital of a small column.) These could not possibly have belonged originally to the lining, however judging from the traces of corrosion and the green-like colour which also appear on the stones of the enclosure, it seems that it must have stood in water for a long period of time. Thus it is possible that the lining and the vertical element standing in the middle of it were placed together in ancient times.³ Throughout South Asia it is common to find pillars and other upright elements, with iconographic programmes connecting them to the divinity adored in the nearby temple, in water tanks or in their vicinity (Hegewald 2002: 102-109).

The lining has three surviving holes: Two of them, in what is today the lowest row of stones, are opposite each other. Recently, the discharge trough has been stuck to one of them (cf. **Plate 2.1**). It is quite possible that this is the correct position since the holes placed below the water level must have served as the means of draining the water. The third hole is not in the lowest row but in the second row of stones (see below: relief No. 8); this hole was above the water level, thus it could have only served as the means of supplying water into the tank. The hole has traces of water corrosion.

It is impossible to establish today how water used to get to the tank. It may be that the lining surrounded a spring; however, it seems most likely that the water was supplied from outside. Given the mountainous landscapes of the Swabi region, it is easy to imagine a system of stone or wooden pipes transporting water from local springs or water veins to the tank. The hole in relief No. 8 might have served as an inflow, or water might simply have been poured into the tank through the pipe from above (**Plate 2.2**).

There are no records of round tanks ornamented with reliefs on the inside in India. Nepalese *hitis* are the nearest point of comparison to our stone tank. *Hitis* are enclosures to which water is carried by pipes from the exterior, and they are decorated with religious reliefs. The *hitis* that have survived do not date back further than the 15th century (Gail 1997), however reliefs from the 6th or even 4th century (*ibid.*: pl. 17) were placed in them; these were probably from earlier tanks, thus it is possible that there was a continuation of the tradition from Gandharan times. Some of the Nepalese *hitis* repeat the scheme of a round lining⁴ with an inflow and outflow pipe and of the ornamentation of the lining with reliefs on the side containing the water. The reliefs consist of deities with some connection to water, thus Nāgas are prominent, alongside the higher pantheon of Gods and Buddhas, and their presence turns the place where water was drawn into a place of worship.

A series of figurative reliefs ornaments what is today the second row of stones in the Gandharan lining. The circle is made of nine concave stones of various lengths, from 39.5 to 66 cm; they are all the same height: 12.5 cm. The reliefs do not create a continuous scene. Only in two cases (Nos. 4 and 6) are the figures turned to the outside of the relief's composition as if they belonged to a neighbouring scene. The main subject depicted in the panels is Nāgas⁵ but the iconographic programme of the lining does not contain a central scene, so there is nothing drawing together the composition of all the reliefs. The description below corresponds to the sequence of scenes marked in the scheme (**Plate 2.2**), beginning from the relief above one of the outflow holes.

No. 1 (**Plate 2.3**): The left side of the relief is occupied by the Bodhisatva sitting in a European manner, with his legs crossed on a seat covered with fabric, and his hands held in front of his chest. His garment is a monk's outfit exposing his right arm, his head is covered with a turban. It is difficult to establish whether locks of hair are covering his ears, or whether he is wearing earrings; there are no other items of jewellery visible. Male worshippers stand on both sides of the Bodhisatva; the one on the left (from the viewer's perspective) appears to be holding his hands together or he may be holding a small object, and the one on the right is playing an instrument resembling the European lute.⁶ It is possible that in ancient India this instrument was known as *vallakī* (Zin 2004: 339-342). The musician is turned towards the Bodhisatva but he belongs to the group shown on the right-hand side of him, consisting of other musicians. These are playing a wind instrument (a flute or a kind of clarinet), a tambourine and a double fell drum held in front of the chest. The three musicians are wearing simple clothes made of single pieces of fabric, exposing the right shoulder; the drummer is only wearing a *dhoti*. Cobra hoods can be seen behind the backs of the two musicians, characterizing them as Nāgas. Further to the right, a couple is sitting in the European manner on a wide seat covered with fabric: A male figure on the left (from the viewer's perspective) is holding a spear (with a fish bone pattern on it), a female figure on the right is holding a vessel. The couple is depicted with characteristics that are familiar from numerous representations in Gandhara and it may be concluded that they are the tutelary deities usually interpreted as Pāñcika and Hārītī.⁷ The male deity appears to have wings on top of his head, a typical attribute of Pāñcika. The female deity, on the other hand, is here depicted with a round vessel, rather than Hārītī's usual *cornucopia*. There are two more individuals standing on the right-hand side of the couple: the first is a male figure wearing a robe with a collar, holding a spear in his left hand and pointing with the finger of his right hand to the sitting female figure. The second is a male figure with a long beard holding an unidentified object in both hands (possibly a vessel). The deity with the spear seems to resemble Skanda,⁸ the bearded one Vajrapāṇi.⁹ It is impossible to explain their presence in the context of the relief: Perhaps it was an attempt to present Yakṣas belonging to the tutelary couple.

No. 2 (**Plate 2.4**): The next relief has a central scene: In the middle of the relief there is a large serpent in the form of an inverted letter S, holding its head up. A male figure is dancing on each side of the snake and to each side of the dancers there is a band of musicians.

Looking from the left side of the relief, there is a musician with a wind instrument (a flute or a kind of clarinet), another one with a drum under his left arm and a drumstick in his right hand, and a third musician who has a double fell drum hanging in front of him which he is beating. The person next to him is holding an instrument with a small round resonance box and a long narrow neck, on the end of which there is a kind of cross-bar for hanging the instrument from the shoulder. This instrument is depicted two more times in the reliefs in the tank (Nos. 5 and 8). Although Sanskrit literature, known in the region of Gandhara, names a great variety of musical instruments,¹⁰ it is not possible to match them to visual representations. Tibetan sources mention a *pi wañ rgyud gcig pa*, that is a *vīṇā* with one string¹¹ and this may give the identity of our instrument, which has a small number of strings. Between the musicians and the dancers, there is a male figure who is standing with his right hand raised (he may be a singer). On the other side of the group, another drummer and a figure blowing into a conch can be seen. Three of the musicians have cobra hoods behind their heads.

The right side of the relief is occupied by a scene that will be easier to understand after it has been compared to similar representations in other reliefs (Nos. 3, 4, 7, 8). An anthropomorphic Nāga, characterized

by a cobra hood behind his back, is depicted standing aslant at such an angle that in reality he would have fallen over. His feet (which have not survived here) must have touched the serpent rather than the ground. This snake, whose outline is still visible between the male figure and the tree depicted near the right edge of the relief, is similar to the one in the middle of the relief.

No. 3 (**Plate 2.5**): There is a tree in a similar position in the next relief; among its leaves there is a large drum, which is being beaten with a drumstick by a male figure standing next to it. Behind him, two other musicians with wind instruments (a flute and a conch) can be seen. The left side of the composition is far more difficult to interpret: Near its left edge there is a male figure who is standing, dressed in a simple outfit which exposes his right shoulder, just like the majority of figures in the reliefs. Part of the relief is damaged but the figure may once have had a Nāga hood or held something in his raised right hand. In front of this figure, a large serpent is rising from the bottom of the relief to its top edge, forming a wavy line. Above the serpent, strange oval shapes which mutate into a human body appear to be attached to the serpent's back or to emanate from it. Below the top edge of the relief, a human head can be seen: Its face is damaged, but an outline of hair is clearly visible.

No. 4 (**Plate 2.6**): The first four individuals in the next relief carry large bowls. They are turned towards the left and so seem to be part of the composition of the relief on the left – it is difficult to establish today if this was the relief discussed here as No. 3. Relief No. 4 is thoroughly corroded, its bottom part (the feet of the figures) has been completely worn away. Relief No. 3 does not show such corrosion, so in this respect No. 4 would seem to sit better next to No. 2 or No. 7.

The right-hand side of the composition in No. 4 is filled by individuals who are turning in the direction of a serpent (now only visible as an outline). The serpent, as in the other reliefs, was probably depicted as a wavy line emanating from the bottom of the relief. To the right of the serpent, there is another individual standing at an improbably slanted angle. This individual is also accompanied by musicians and dancers, some of which have Nāga hoods; one of them is naked.

No. 5 (**Plate 2.7**): This relief features more musicians. Looking from the left, one figure is playing a lute-like instrument, a second the long-necked string instrument which hangs from the shoulder (like in No. 2), and a third the conch. Further to the right, the Bodhisatva, sitting in the European manner with his legs crossed, is being worshipped by two Nāgas with cobra hoods behind their backs. The Bodhisatva is sitting under the tree, on a throne without a back, and he is holding his hands in front of his chest. His long hair, with its characteristic loops, makes it possible to identify him as Maitreya.

Towards the right-hand edge of the relief, there is a tree. Next to it is a large serpent coming out of the bottom edge of the relief; something seems to emanate from its head, below the top edge.

No. 6 (**Plate 2.8**): The following relief is dominated by the two tutelary deities – Pāñcika with a spear and Hārītī with a *cornucopia* – who are sitting together on a common throne. The goddess is also holding a round vessel in No. 1. The musicians to each side of the couple are playing a double fell drum, the lute-like instrument previously mentioned, a clarinet, a conch and a tambourine. The last three musicians are not turned towards the tutelary couple but rather to the right – they must belong to the composition of the neighbouring relief. The clarinettist and the tambourine-player have clearly visible Nāga hoods.

No. 7 (**Plate 2.9**): The bottom part of this relief has been seriously damaged by water corrosion, especially in the middle. The damage takes the form of a horizontal groove which continues beyond the right-hand edge to the beginning of relief No. 8.

The left-hand side of the composition is occupied by the Bodhisatva sitting on the throne; he has a turban on his head and jewellery in his ears and probably also on his neck. He is holding his hands in front of his chest like the two Bodhisatvas mentioned above (Nos. 1 and 5). The Bodhisatva is placed at the very edge of the relief, so the musicians in relief No. 6 must have served as his worshippers. On his other side there is a figure who may be a musician or a worshipper. Further to the right there is a scene that, although damaged, can be identified because it is similar to other scenes in a better condition (particularly the one in No. 8): A giant serpent is appearing and forming a wavy line ascending to the top edge. Next to it, there is a person positioned aslant, with his feet not touching the ground but with one foot on the serpent's body. On the other side, behind the serpent's back, an indefinite oval shape can be seen again; it is partly damaged. The next three figures are two musicians, one with a conch and one with a tambourine beaten with a drumstick, and a worshipper with flowers.

No. 8 (**Plate 2.10**): This relief differs from the former one in the number of figures, but it repeats the same scheme. There is a worshipped figure on the left-hand side and a serpent on the right. In this scene, however, the seated person is dressed in a monk's outfit which covers both shoulders, and he has no earrings. This can only mean that he is the Buddha, even though his hair and *uṣṇīṣya* are not clearly visible. The Buddha is surrounded by four musicians with drums and string instruments. Further to the right, we can see two dancers shown in parallel, but not symmetrically as they are in No. 2. However, like in No. 2, there is a serpent in the form of the letter S between them, though it is not as well preserved here. Further to the right, a clarinetist and a drummer separate this scene from the following one: In the adjacent scene a large serpent appears in the form of a wavy line stretching from the bottom edge of the relief towards the top. There is a tree behind its back, and to one side of it can be seen again the individual positioned aslant with one foot on the serpent's body. This figure, and also one of the musicians, has a clearly visible Nāga hood behind his back. Further to the right, behind the hole that might have supplied water to the tank, two more figures can be seen, the furthest of whom is carrying something in his hand that may be a round vessel.

No. 9 (**Plate 2.11**): This relief does not contain any objects of worship but it depicts six musicians and two dancers, some of whom have Nāga hoods.

* * *

As a whole, then, the iconographic programme of the tank lining consists of the Buddha (No. 8), three Bodhisatvas (Nos. 1, 5, 7), two pairs of tutelary deities (Nos. 1 and 6) and eight giant serpents (Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8; two in Nos. 2 and 8), as well as worshippers, dancers, and most abundantly of all musicians, all of whom are male. Only some of them have cobra hoods but although this attribute is not always depicted, it may be assumed that all these figures should be treated as Nāgas.

Both reliefs depicting the tutelary couple were placed above the holes discharging water from the tank. These were located symmetrically on both sides of the lining. This must have been a symbolic representation indicating that life-giving water was supplied by these fertility deities. This would explain the presence of the water vessel, not normally part of the iconography of the couple, in the hands of the goddess.¹² Perhaps Roman imagery – which could have been known in Gandhara – also played a role; Roman goddesses like *Abundantia* or *Aquileia* were sporadically shown with a *cornucopia* and a vessel.¹³



Fig. 1: Details of No. 2, Plate 2.4 (a); No. 4, Plate 2.6 (b); No. 7, Plate 2.9 (c); No. 8, Plate 2.10 (d)

The presence of serpents ascending from the bottom to the top edge of the relief is a characteristic feature of the tank lining. There is something comparable in niche C of the Stūpa court in Hadda. Its walls are decorated with waves, there are full plastic fishes, like long snakes, slithering along the ground towards the walls, and then depicted on the walls between the waves.¹⁴ However, the figures in Hadda (one of whom has a head with two lion faces, one above the other on a snake-like body) are smaller: They are the size of cobras rather than giant boas. Moreover, unlike the snakes in the Gandharan relief, they are not being worshipped. In the Gandharan tank there are no depictions of anthropomorphic Nāga kings with many cobra hoods, instead their place appears to be taken by giant snakes which are being worshipped. The reliefs depicting two such scenes (Nos. 2 and 8) place the serpents between two dancers.

In Nos. 2, 4, 7 and 8, the anthropomorphic figure is shown next to the serpent, aslant and not touching the ground (*Fig. 1a-d*). In Nos. 2 and 8 this figure is identifiable as a Nāga thanks to the cobra hood. In Nos. 2, 7 and 8, the figure is touching the serpent with his foot. Such iconography is not found anywhere else in Indian art. Perhaps it should be concluded that the person is appearing from the serpent, or else that Nāgas have two different aspects: a zoomorphic and an anthropomorphic form. In Indian imagery Nāgas can have the appearance of a snake, or take the shape of a human being. As one very interesting literary reference proves, the potential anthropomorphism of Nāgas was believed to be real. The interrogation of people wishing to become monks included questions like, “do you have a contagious disease?” or “do you have debts?”; would-be monks were also asked “are you a Nāga?” (Härtel 1956: 79). The narrative explaining why this last question must always be asked, tells of a Nāga who changed his shape from a human into a snake and frightened his fellow lodger terribly. This was a situation that was to be avoided thereafter.

The cobra hoods that are depicted behind the anthropomorphic Nāgas in art were not seen behind “real” living Nāgas in “nature”. We read in many sources that the Nāgas were not recognized at first glance as different from human beings.

In Nos. 3 and 7, we can see strange oval objects on the serpent’s back, one of which is in the process of metamorphosing into a human shape. I know of nothing similar in any other Gandharan relief. These objects resemble the clouds. Nāgas, as water deities, are responsible not only for water tanks but also for the rain and so the clouds. One of the important texts that includes rituals for invoking Nāgas to send rainfall is called the *Meghasūtra*; the Cloud-Sermon.¹⁵

In Nos. 2, 5 and 8, there are trees above the serpents; perhaps, like wishing trees, they should be treated as objects provided by the life-giving Nāgas. The tree shown in No. 3 with the drum in its crown (the only one not positioned near the big serpent) thus acquires a deeper meaning.

The iconographic programme of the tank lining features the Buddha (No. 8) and three Bodhisatvas (Nos. 1, 5 and 7). All of them are holding their hands in front of their chests, thus suggesting the gesture of teaching, the *dharmacakramudrā*. If the reliefs are studied more carefully, it will be noticed that the Buddha and Bodhisatvas are not teaching but holding round vessels in their hands in front of their chests (*Fig. 2a-d*). This is peculiar iconography, and I am not aware of another example of it. In the context of the rest of the iconography, the objects in their hands are obviously waters vessels. Such representations of the Buddha and Bodhisatvas suggest that they, who occupy an incomparably higher position than Nāgas in the hierarchy of the Buddhist pantheon, are the true providers of water. The representations of the Buddha being worshipped by Nāgas as their spiritual master, come from the same line of thought that sees the Buddha instruct the Nāgas, cast spells against snakebite,¹⁶ or spells (*dhāraṇī*) bringing rain.¹⁷

A linkage between the cult of the Nāgas and the Buddha is expressed in the stories of their subjugation by the Teacher. The most famous of these stories is that of Nāgarāja Apalāla (Zin 2006: 54-68): This evil Nāga caused hail to fall on earth, but then he was subsequently converted by the Buddha and became a friend to humans. It follows that the benign attitude of Nāgas, which is demonstrated by them sending rain at suitable times, is wholly due to the Buddha. Literary descriptions of the adoration of the Buddha by the Nāgas¹⁸ greatly resemble our reliefs and we can therefore conclude that the reliefs are the pictorial representation of the such events.

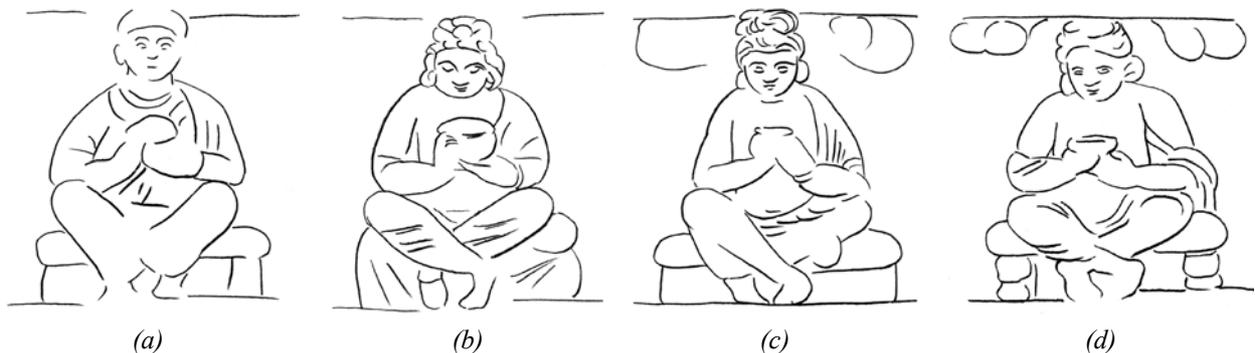


Fig. 2: Details of No. 8, Plate 2.10 (a); No. 1, Plate 2.3 (b); No. 5, Plate 2.7 (c); No. 7, Plate 2.9 (d)

The link made in imagery between Nāgas, water and rain is an ancient one; it obviously originates in the observation that serpents approach human settlements shortly before the monsoon (in order to avoid water), they are welcome and blessed by the inhabitants, and soon afterwards the rains arrive (Winternitz 1888/1991; *idem* 1905/1926). Doubtless, this is the origin of the conviction that Nāgas must be blessed in order for the World to receive rain, and that most importantly of all, they must be satisfied (Zin 2002: 158-163). Satisfaction for the Nāgas lies primarily in protection from their deadly enemy Garuḍa. In later Indian representations of the Bodhisatva Avalokiteśvara as protector against dangers (the so-called “Litany of Avalokiteśvara”),¹⁹ one of the eight scenes illustrating dangerous situations, from which this particular Bodhisatva saves individuals, depicts a Nāga escaping from Garuḍa.²⁰ Thus Avalokiteśvara (at least in the India of the 5th century, when the first “Litanies” appeared) was thought to be the protector of Nāgas. Representations survive from the period of Gandharan art analysed in this paper of the still unidentified Bodhisatva, the head of whom is ornamented with a scene showing Garuḍa kidnapping Nāgas²¹ (**Plate 2.12**)²². This cruel scene on the crown of the Bodhisatva – the embodiment of goodness and mercy – can only indicate the Bodhisatva’s compassion towards the suffering Nāgas and the protection he provides. Thinking of this kind undoubtedly led to the representations of the Bodhisatvas with vessels on the tank lining: Nāgas only provide water if they are protected by the Bodhisatvas, so, ultimately, people owe the gift of water to the Bodhisatvas.

Nāgas live in water – rivers, lakes or ponds: This was common imagery repeated without explanation and appearing regularly in literature. One example is the story of Apalāla in which Vajrapāṇi throws a mountain peak into a lake of Nāgas forcing them to emerge on to the shore (cf. Przyłuski 1914: 510-512; Zin 2006: 56). Wells were also assumed to be their habitat: In the art of Mathura, Nāgas are presented as standing waist-deep in wells.²³ Wells were understood to be the entrance to the underground kingdom of the Nāgas in Pātāla. This imagery is reflected in literature: One *Jātaka* (No. 256) relates the story of some merchants who were digging in an old well and who found precious objects; below the well they discovered the palace of the Nāgas.²⁴ The fact that wells are the typical image of the Nāgas’ habitat is best proven by pictorial depictions of the stories of Nāgarāja Apalāla and Nāgarāja Kālīka. According to the literary sources, Nāgarāja Apalāla lived in the river Śubhavastu (today’s Swat),²⁵ while Nāgarāja Kālīka dwelled in the river Nairāñjanā;²⁶ in the Gandharan reliefs, however, both Nāgas are depicted as coming out of a well.²⁷ The well in those representations has a railing enclosure, and the water outflow is frequently depicted in the form of the lion’s head borrowed from Roman art (**Plate 2.13**)²⁸. As the literature proves, this element was known as *siṃhamukha*.²⁹ It acted as the inflow and outflow of water cisterns.³⁰

The tank, to and from which water flows, is of the same kind as the one under discussion. It is difficult to establish nowadays whether such a water tank was a genuine invention of the inhabitants of Gandhara or was, like lion-shaped spouts, borrowed from Roman tradition. This type of cistern is certainly typical of mountainous areas, where water that flows from the mountains in small brooks must be collected.

The ornamented tank must have been extremely impressive when it was filled with water. The water level probably reached the lower edge of the reliefs: The lower parts of some of them have suffered water corrosion (No. 1: the left side only, No. 2: the entire lower part, No. 4: the entire lower part, No. 8: the left side only, No. 9: very seriously). The fact that the corrosion is not even or regular around the entire enclosure relates to the way in which water poured into the tank: If there was one or more water pipes pouring water from above (cf. **Plate 2.2**), the water falling on the surface of the well would have caused waves to hit

the nearby walls of the tank lining. Another possible reason that only some of the reliefs are corroded could be the use and placing of pitchers. Pitchers might have floated on the surface of the water and made a horizontal groove in the reliefs. Whatever the actual reason, the horizontal straps of corrosion prove that the water level was somewhere around the lower edge of the reliefs, and the water level was undoubtedly considered in the planning of the iconography: The giant serpents that rise from the bottom edge of the reliefs must have looked as if they were coming out of the water.

The entire iconographic programme of the reliefs is related to water, in these reliefs individuals are shown with water vessels, even if they are usually depicted without them in other objects of art. It is possible to find some analogies to part of the iconography in a relief in the British Museum,³¹ in which a couple of tutelary deities are depicted (sitting like Pāñcika and Hārītī). These however are Nāgas, each of them with as many as seven cobra hoods, and they are holding vessels as their only attributes; the Nāgī standing on the side of the goddess is carrying a *cornucopia*. The comparison with this relief leads us to suppose that our tutelary couple (even when they do not have cobra hoods) represent Nāgas. The rest of the iconography – large serpents, Bodhisattvas, and the Buddha with round vessels – does not seem to have any analogies. It is pertinent to mention again here the similarity between our lining and the Nepalese *hitis*. Gail has argued that the latter featured “unusual or even unique iconographic inventions” (1997: 374). As we have seen this also applies to the well from Gandhara.

The lining of the tank now housed in the American collection contains objects from Gandhara of a type previously unknown. The question is if, among the numerous surviving Gandharan reliefs which feature Nāgas, there are other comparable concave ones which will prove to have come from similar tanks. For now, this remains the subject of prospective research.

Notes

1. Relief from Sikri, Lahore Museum, no. 2169; cf. Ingholt 1957: fig. 103.
2. I am extremely grateful to Prof. Gérard Fussman (Collège de France) for calling this paper to my attention.
3. The American collection received, together with the stones of the water cistern and the vertical element, nine, white, approximately round stone pieces. These were said to have been found together and can be seen in the picture (cf. **Plate 2.1**). They were regarded by the finders as “snakes’ eggs” or “dragons’ eggs”. One more was said to be lost in Japan in the packing material, along with, reportedly, a stone parasol-shaped *stūpa* finial which was set into the top of the central *stūpa*.
4. Patan, Sundharicok; illustrated Gail 1997: pl. 10; Hegewald 2002: figs. 37, 264.
5. The best work on the representation of Nāgas in both literature and art is still Vogel 1926.
6. On the forms of Indian string instruments cf. Zin 2004.
7. Foucher 1912; Bachhofer 1937; Quagliotti 1999-2000; John 2002-03; Zin 2003: 236-245.
8. For references regarding Skanda cf. Quagliotti 2005, especially p. 276, fn. 8.
9. References in Zin 2003: 409-418 and Zin (in press).
10. Cf. for example in *Mahāvastu* (ed. vol. 1, p. 227), or *Lalitavistara* (ed. p. 163); Zin 2004: 341, fn. 271.
11. *Mahāvīryūtpatti* 5015 (ed. p. 331).

12. The water vessel is, however, known in depictions of Hārītī sitting alone; cf. Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 481.
13. Cf. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, vol. 1, s.v. ‘Abundantia’, ‘Aquilaia’.
14. Hadda, Stūpa court, “niche à décor aquatique”; cf. Monstamindi 1969: figs. 13-20; S.A.A.P.C. I-1212, 2:13.
15. *Meghasūtra*, ed. and transl. in Bendall 1880.
16. Cf. for example the most famous collection of such spells, the *Mahāmāyūrī* (transl. p. 14), “At the beginning, has been placed the episode of the Bhikshu Svāti who was bitten by a serpent while chopping woods. Ānanda, agitated, calls for the help of Buddha. The latter communicates to him on this occasion the Peacock Formula [i.e. *Mahāmāyūrī*], exalts its power and speaks of its origin.”
17. *Meghasūtra* (ed. & transl. pp. 294-297): *tena hi bhujāṅgādhipate śrṇu sadhu ca suṣṭhu ca manasikuru (...) tasmāt tarhi bhujāṅgādhipate maitreṇa kāyakarmmaṇā maitreṇa vākkarmmaṇā maitreṇa manaskarmmaṇā vihartavyam, punar aparaṃ bhujāṅgādhipate sarvasukhaṃdadā nāma dhāraṇī pravarttayitavyā, sā sarvanāgānāṃ sarvanāgaduḥkhāni pratiprasamayati, sarvasukhāni ca dadāti, yeneha jambudvīpe kālena kālaṃ varshadhārā utsrjati, sarvvaṭṭṛṇagulmauśadhivanaspatiśasyāni ca virohayati (...)*; “... the Venerable One thus addressed the Snake-monarch (...) ye must live with benevolent action of body, speech and mind. Again, further, Snake king, a dhāraṇī called ‘Sarvasukhandadā’ must be put in action. That is destined to put to rest all serpents’ woes, and to give all blessings: because here in Jambudvīpa in season and for a season it produces clouds, and causes to arise all grass, shrubs, herbage, forest-trees, and corn ...”.
18. *Meghasūtra* (ed. & transl. pp. 288-289): *evam pramukhai sarvanāgarājapūrvaṅgamaiś caturaśītyā nāgakoṭīniyu-taśatasahasraiḥ sannipatitaiḥ sannīṣaṇṇaiḥ, tena khalu punaḥ samayena sarve te nāgarājāḥ saparivārā utthā-yāsanebhya ekāṃsam uttarāsaṅgāni kṛtvā dakṣiṇāni jānumaṅgalāni pṛthivyāṃ pratiṣṭhāpya yena Bhagavāms tenāñjaliṃ praṇamyāprameyāsankhyeyaiḥ paramavidharuciraiḥ puspadhūpagandhamālyavilepanacūrṇacīva-racchatradhvajapatākāpaṭṭadāmavādyatūryatādāvacarasaṅgītiratrakusumaratnadāmamuktāhāranāga-puṣpamuktājālair ggarñjanto guḍugudāyamānā mahāvātaṃ pravāyanto mahānādaṃ nadanto ramaṇīyāms ca dharmmanādān nadantaḥ mahatāgurugoravacitrīkāreṇa Bhagavantam abhicchādayantaḥ pradakṣiṇī kurvanti sma*; “Now at that time all these snake-kings with their retinue, rising from their seats, placing their upper robes on one shoulder, putting their right knees on the ground, bending their clasped hands towards the Venerable One, with immeasurable and innumerable, and with infinitely various and resplendent flowers, incense, odours, garlands, unguents, sandal, monks’ robes, shades, banners, canopies, silks, instruments, motions to the beat of drums; symphonies; jewel-flowers, jewel-strings, pearl-chains, snake-flowers, and pearl-nets, rustling, murmuring, emitting a mighty blast, sounding a mighty sound, and sounding delightful sounds of the Law, overshadowing the Venerable One with a great marvellous store of aloes and saffron, made the pradakshina.”
19. Mallmann 1948: 292ff.; Mitterwallner 1986; Leese 1988 (with the identification of the Bodhisatva as Maitreya); Divakaran 1989; Zin 2003: 420-431; Bautze-Picron 2005.
20. Ajanta, Cave XXVI, lower relief (Burgess 1897-1911, 2: pl. 206; Mallmann 1948: pl. 3b; Takata 1971: pl. (S) 29; Leese 1988: fig. 168; S.A.A.P.C. I-1081, No. 37,26:22); Kanheri, Cave II (Mitterwallner 1986: pl. 73; S.A.A.P.C. I-1086, No. 1:25-26); Kanheri, Cave XXI (XLI) (Mitterwallner 1986: pl. 74; S.A.A.P.C. I-1061, No. 9:17); Kanheri, Cave LXVI (XC) (Coomaraswamy 1927: fig. 164; Leese 1988: fig. 171; Divakaran 1989: figs. 10-12; S.A.A.P.C. I-1086, No. 13:16, 14:4).
21. Karachi Museum (Burgess 1897-1911, 1: pl. 6; Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 106; S.A.A.P.C. I-209, 3:22); Lahore Museum, No. 23.75 (Tissot 1985: fig. 181; Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 172; S.A.A.P.C. I-1209, 4:47-49); Indian Museum, Kolkata, No. 5014/A 23191 (Klimburg-Salter 1995: pl. 137; S.A.A.P.C. I-1238, 3:19); Musée Guimet, Paris, No. AO 2907 (Hallade 1968: fig. 68; Tissot 1985: fig. 209; Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 7; Klimburg-Salter 1995: pl. 138); Priv. Coll.

- Paris (Frédéric 1959: pl. 66); Priv. Coll. London (Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 170); Priv. Coll. Japan (Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 9). Preserved parts of Bodhisatva crown with the same motif: Lahore Museum, No. 1045 (Foucher 1905-51, 2: fig. 320; Ingholt 1957: pl. 350; Tissot 1985: fig. 190; Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 188; S.A.A.P.C. I-1209, 13:15); Peshawar Museum, No. 1099 (Foucher 1905-51, 2: fig. 398); Priv. Coll. Europe (Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 190); Priv. Coll. Japan (Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 186); Priv. Coll. Japan (Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 187); cf. drawings in: Tissot 1985: 210, pl. 29). Cf. a painting in Kizil, Cave 297, “Malerhöhle” (Grünwedel 1912: fig. 343 (drawing). For Mathura cf.: Lucknow, State Museum, No. B.25 (Vogel 1930: pl. 36a; Raven 1994: pl. 3; Sharma 1995: fig. 150; Krishan 1995: fig. 27a); cf. Zin 2002.
22. Basu 2005: 108.
23. Relief from Kankali Tila, Mathura Archaeological Museum, No. H.1 (Vogel 1930: pl. 52b; Sharma 1995: fig. 25).
24. *Jarudapāna-Jātaka*, No. 256 (ed. vol. 2, pp. 294-296); verses: *jarudapānaṃ khaṇamānā vāṇijā udakatthikā, ajjhagaṃsu ayo lohaṃ tipu sīsaṇ ca vāṇijā. rajataṃ jātarūpaṇ ca muttā veḷuriyā bahū te ca tena asantuṭṭhā bhīyyo bhīyyo akhāṇisum. te tatthāsīvisso ghorō tejasī tejasā hani, tasmā khaṇe nātikhāne atikātaṃ hi pāpakaṃ, khātena ca dhaṇaṃ laddhaṃ atikhātena nāsitan ti*; transl. (pp. 205-206): “Some merchants, wanting water, dug the ground in an old well, and there a treasure found: - Tin, iron, copper, lead, silver and gold, Beryls and pearls and jewels manifold. But not content, still more they did desire, and fiery serpents slew them all with fire. Dig if you wilt, but dig not to excesses; for too much digging is a wickedness.” The prose repeats the same procedure in the main text and in the *paccuppannavatthu* as well.
25. For the references cf. Zin 2006: 54-58.
26. *Lalitavistara XIX* (ed. p.: 284); *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, Gilgit-Mss. (ed. vol. 1, pp. 111-113; *Nidānakathā* (ed. p. 71; transl. p. 93).
27. Apalāla: Asian Art Museum, Berlin, (war loss) IC 34909 (Dreyer *et al.* 2002: 37; Zin, 2006: ch. 3, fig. 4); London, British Museum, OA 1947.10-16.1 (Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 870; Zwalf 1996: no. 214: Barikot in Swat); Private Collection, Pakistan (Kurita 2003, 1: fig. 637); Private Collection, Japan (Kurita 2003, 1: fig. 454). Kālīka: Peshawar Museum, 1972 (Ingholt 1957: fig. 56; Tissot 1985: fig. 237; Kurita 2003, 1: figs. 202, 204-205); New Delhi, National Museum, 69-140 (S.A.A.P.C. I-1209. 11:20; Tissot 1985: pl. 39,10).
28. Peshawar Museum, No. 1972 (Ingholt 1957: fig. 57; Tissot 1985: fig. 237).
29. *Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchā II* (ed. p. 40): ... *aṣṭottaraṃ ca siṃhamukhaśataṃ yena gandhodakaṃ praviśati tasyāḥ khalu punaḥ puṣkariṇyāḥ/aṣṭaśataṃ eva siṃhamukhānāṃ yena punar eva tad vāri nirvahati*; transl. (p. 38): “And there were a hundred and eight lion’s mouths, through which perfumed water flowed in, and again that lotus-pond had a hundred and eight lion’s mouths, through which that water flowed away.”
30. The *siṃhamukha* may be the beginning of a very popular motif in Indian art – “Kīrtimukha” (for the motif in Indian architecture, cf. Kramrisch 1946: 322-323; for later art cf. Donaldson 1976); it was placed as an ornament on the heads of Bodhisatvas, Nāgas, and later Hinduistic Gods (cf. Zin 2003: 99-105).
31. Zwalf 1996: no. 338; Kurita 2003, 2: fig. 507.

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Plate 2.1: Water Tank, Gandhara, Swabi region?, Collection of Dr. David Nalin, USA. Photo © Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.2: Water Tank, Computer-generated reconstruction, © Dominik Oczkowski.



Plate 2.3: Stone No. 1 from the Water Tank, see Plate 2.2. Photo © Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.4: Stone No. 2 from the Water Tank, see Plate 2.2. Photo © Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.5:
Stone No. 3 from
the Water Tank,
see Plate 2.2.
Photo ©
Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.6: Stone No. 4 from the Water Tank, see Plate 2.2. Photo © Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.7: Stone No. 5 from the Water Tank, see Plate 2.2. Photo © Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.8:
Stone No. 6 from
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see Plate 2.2.
Photo ©
Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.9:
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Photo ©
Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.10: Stone No. 8 from the Water Tank, see Plate 2.2. Photo © Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.11: Stone No. 9 from the Water Tank, see Plate 2.2. Photo © Dr. David Nalin.



Plate 2.12: Detail of a
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Bodhisatva, Gandhara,
Collection of
Dr. David Nalin.
Photo © Dr. David Nalin.

Plate 2.13: Buddha and
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Photo © Wojtek Oczkowski.



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