

THE ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY OF MAITREYA  
IMAGES IN GANDHARA

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INTRODUCTION

Presumably the earliest of the so-called Pure-Land or "Paradise" (*Budhakṣetra*) cults in Buddhism, the faith (*śraddha*) cult devoted to Maitreya and his two realms of Tusita and Ketumati has been a major feature of devotional Buddhism since the earliest records in the history of the Buddhist religion. The purpose of this paper is to address an aspect of the cult that has been neglected in scholarly literature: the iconography (identification) and iconology (symbolic communicative content) of Maitreya images in Gandhara. This is especially important for today's understanding of Buddhist history because it is to Gandhara and the adjacent regions (i.e. Kapiśa, Bactria and Swat) of the second and third centuries that may, especially scholars specializing in Chinese and Japanese forms of Pure-Land Buddhism, look to as the potential place of origin of the broad range of all "Pure-land"-cults. While I will not address this problem directly in this paper, I hope to show that the cult of Maitreya as it is found specifically in the Gandharan region is a fully developed, mature version of the cult and that it is necessary to look either to much earlier times in Gandhara or to other locales for the "formative period" of the cult.<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, a reconstruction of the cult as it was practiced in Gandhara

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is methodologically problematic. No detailed reports in either early traveller's accounts or in any known literature of the cult are known to exist. Other than relating that the cult of Maitreya was important and taking notice of a few major images, the notations of the various Chinese pilgrims are of marginal value. These problems notwithstanding, there is a method by which I feel that one can establish with a high degree of probability certain elements of the nature of the cult: that is, by examining the iconology and iconography of Gandhāran images related to the cult. These sculptures constitute an attested document of the period, literally carved in stone, made by, or for, the practitioners themselves. The problem with this approach is the interpretation of the material, for in spite of the many publications that have attempted to deal with it, Gandharan Buddhist iconography is still very poorly understood. Of direct concern to this study is the fact that only an obvious few of the potential images of Bodhisattva Maitreya have been identified, and not a single Buddha Maitreya image has been identified as coming from the region. However, given the nature of the literature of the sūtras and the evidence of the cult in other parts of Asia, such Buddha Maitreya images are certain to have existed. To make the necessary iconographic determinations, I propose to use a revision and an extension of an already much-tried technique, that of comparing the Gandharan material with what is known of the cult in China.

The methodological revision that I propose is not to demand a priori that the images interpreted as the various forms of Maitreya found in Gandhāra be isomorphic with those in China. Rather, I suggest that images that have the same iconological content as Chinese images be read as equivalents to similar Chinese iconological statements regardless of their physical appearance. Previous investigators have rigorously demanded recognizable visual parallels when comparing Chinese and Gandhāran images. This has been done in spite of the clear evidence that, where we have known Gandharan images of Maitreya, e.g. the standing Bodhisattva Maitreya (see Figure 1) discussed below, there are no strict Chinese parallels.

In order to understand the iconology of the variety of Maitreya images in China and as a background for this study, virtually all major Chinese texts relating to the cult of Maitreya, including all surviving Chinese sūtras, have been examined so that the most complete picture possible of the cult in China has been established.<sup>2</sup> I shall not refer to these in great detail because, for the most part, they are not concerned with the details of the

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iconographic representations. However, the nature of the cult as practiced in China and information on the general way that Buddhist images communicate are clear in them and I shall, therefore, refer to the contents of the texts in a more general way.

## A MODERN VERSUS TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY

Until very recently, modern Buddhist iconographic scholarship was almost totally based upon texts, documents and works of art that were produced later than the sixth century. Not surprisingly, after nearly a thousand years of development of the religion, the sixth through tenth centuries was a period of "codification" and following the texts of that period has created a tendency for researchers follow the "rules" laid down in them. Modern iconographers of Buddhism, following the lead of Alfred Foucher and Benoytosh Bhattacharya, have generally accepted the later texts, especially the *Sadhanamala* and the *Nispannayogāvali* of Abhayakara Gupta, as "gospel" when it came to iconographic matters. As a result of following these late texts, modern scholars generally assume that the *mudrā*, *āsana* and *ayuddha* ("attribute" in modern iconographic jargon although it literally means "unconquerable [weapon]"), of a deity are, in a physical sense, the main identifying characteristics of a figure. But even today, in the traditional Buddhist context, these elements are conceived of as demonstrating the nature of the psychic attainment (*mudrā*), the quality of action (*āsana*), and capability [for enhancing the practitioner's Buddhological attainment] (by means of the application of this *ayuddha*) of the figure. Because of the primacy of this communicative content, in the Buddhist world they (especially *ayuddha*) are subject to a certain amount of variation. And, while it is true that later iconographic schema, in particular those of the Tantric tradition, follow closely, these and other such texts, I have actually witnessed and, on two occasions, even taken part in, vigorous discussions among high level Tantric Buddhist monks as to the exact appearance of particular deities and combinations of deities where the main concern was what was being communicated and then which attribute was appropriate to the given representation. It must be understood that it has never been the intention of the "iconographic authorities" in Buddhism just to follow rules but, always, it is their concern to communicate to the best of their ability soteriological concepts of the particular teaching they are attempting to express. (Of course, it is obvious that lower level practi-

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tioners often just follow the "rules" exactly in the vague hope of some "miracle," but this is not the level of Buddhism in which the innovative iconographic determinations took place and is, therefore, of only secondary concern to this article.) Apparently, Buddhist iconography has never been as rigid as some writers would have us believe.

Indeed, in the formative period of Indic Buddhist iconography, c. 480 B.C. through the fifth century A.D., it is very unlikely that there were "rules" at all. What appears to have taken place is that morphological "conventions" came to be repeated and specific configurations came to be associated with certain manifestations in a rather loose way. Regardless of the post-fifth century traditions, there is no single comprehensive text, or even body of literature, for Buddhist images prior to about the fifth century. Indeed, although the image tradition was very well established early in Buddhism there are surprisingly few references to the iconomorphic details of images except for a few sūtras detailing the measurements of Buddha image. In spite of this textual lacuna, there are thousands of images from the early periods. These images belonging to the period from c. 100 B.C. through the fifth century A.D. as determined by both stylistic and epigraphic evidence, demand the presumption of numerous vigorous and fully-developed image traditions. Obviously, prior to the "period of iconographic codification," there had to be a developmental period with many schools of sculpture and each with its own standards of image making. If we can only learn to read these images, a new window on the history of Buddhism will be opened.

Ultimately, it must be remembered that the images themselves are physically attested documents in the communication process of Buddhism and, in the history of Buddhist ideas, it is irrelevant if the text expounding certain concept is only known in seventh century versions, if sculptures definitely depicting the idea are known from the second century! In Buddhism, the work of art is always a means of communicating soteriological concepts to the viewer at the level at which he is ready to understand them. Because the works of art are forms of communication, the images must be seen as "texts;" because they are of the "real" Buddhism of their time, even though the details of the teaching traditions surrounding them are lost or obscure.

Using caution, working hypotheses about both the philosophical and phenomenological contexts of these images can be determined. While, for

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purposes of this study, statistical patterns of occurrence will be used to determine commonality of typology, it is minor permutations of common visual vocabularies hold the keys\*to fuller understanding of the communicative modalities and of the communicative values of the image.<sup>3</sup> For example, it is much different to state that some of the Maitreya texts were translated in China by Kushanas and Parthians than it is to state that the most popular image in Gandharan art is MAITREYA. The first could mean that a few specialists in the Maitreya cult took their texts to China. The second means that there was great popular interest in the Maitreya cult and that, at least for the level of society that offered images, it was one of the pre-eminent forms of Buddhism in the region and every practitioner in the region would have known something of the cult and there would have been many "specialists" in it.

Accordingly, it must be insisted that the reader be divested of the usual rigid patterns of iconographic determination that are currently in use for late images. Simply enough, the first through fifth centuries in Gandhāra was a period of very active and, what I would call, "willfull" growth and change in Buddhist iconography. There are many variants in the details of images and to what degree most of these variants are significant is an unresolved matter at this time. Whether they represent significant doctrinal changes or simply one "iconographic authority" exercising his creativity in contrast to his predecessors is unknown. However, one thing is certain, and that is, that the images discussed in this paper are proper documents of the Gandhāri practice of Buddhism and that their makers and patrons were giving full vent to their understanding of both the philosophy of Buddhism and the soteriological promises of the Maitreya cult as they understood them. It is simply the job of the modern scholar to learn to read the images that good fortune has left for us to examine.

### **The early cult of Maitreya in China**

It has long been recognized that the Maitreya cult was imported to China from the Gandhāra and neighboring regions and that the cult was essentially the first of the still popular "Pure-Land" Schools of the Chinese Buddhism. Indeed, it is in Chinese that the texts of the Maitreya cult survive in some number and it is from a study of these texts that the nature of the cult as it existed at a fairly early date (no later than about third century A.D.) can be known. The earliest surviving Chinese translation of a Maitreya

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text is the *Mi-lo-Lai-Shih-ching*,<sup>4</sup> translated in the Eastern Chin Dynasty (265-317). An abbreviated synopsis of a much fuller text, it still tells in some detail of the pure land of Ketumati, and earthly land in the geographical location of present day Varanasi in India, over which Maitreya Buddha will preside. It is clear from the text, that even by the time of the translation of this sūtra<sup>5</sup> it was a foregone conclusion that Maitreya was also considered the future Buddha and, already implicitly, the master of the Tuṣita paradise, where he is held to currently reside quietly perfecting his wisdom (*prajna*) until such time as the period of Ketumati arrives. Indeed, most surviving *sūtras* devoted specifically to Maitreya do not dwell on the Tuṣita period of his existence but, rather, the time of Ketumati, the qualities of existence therein and the cult surrounding Maitreya Buddha during his ministry there.<sup>6</sup> However, the majority of commentaries and other, sometimes passing, references to the Maitreya cult, emphasize Maitreya in Tuṣita and rebirth with him in Tuṣita often to the exclusion of Ketumati.

Actually, the cult of Maitreya even in early China was a double cult. One aspect centered on the belief that those with sufficient merit and faith would be reborn in Tuṣita with the Bodhisattva Maitreya to wait with him until the time of his descent into Ketumati; the other aspect promised that the faithful will be reborn with him when Maitreya becomes the master of Ketumati. These are known as the ascending and descending phases of the cult and are seen as sequential rather than mutually exclusive. While it is impossible to go into detail here, it is significant that virtually all surviving early Chinese iconographic representations of complex Maitreya iconological statements, e.g. the Bei Liang (421-439) and Bei Wei (439-534) caves at Dunhuang, and the Tan Yao caves at Lung Men (late fifth century under Bei Wei period) contain images of both the ascending (Tuṣita) Maitreya and the descending (Ketumati) Maitreya. Invariably, Maitreya is portrayed as a Bodhisattva when he is in the ascending mode and as a Buddha when he is in the descending mode.<sup>7</sup>

From the foregoing, it is obvious that if the cult of Maitreya was brought to China from Bactro-Gandharan and Kashmiri regions and an inherent early part of it was Maitreya Buddha presiding over Ketumati, then the Buddha Maitreya as the lord of Ketumati ought to be part of the Gandharan iconography of the cult. Moreover, although not emphasized in the literary aspect of the Chinese version of the cult, Tuṣita Maitreya is an important aspect of the cult in both China and other parts of Asia and it is reasonable to expect to find figures of him in Gandharan art as well.

While many of the pre-Sui excavated caves at Buddhist sites in China are dedicated to Maitreya,<sup>8</sup> their iconography is complex, and to provide a full understanding of it is far beyond the scope of this article.<sup>9</sup> However, it is necessary to give an overview of the Chinese iconographic programmes on which the following comparisons to the Gandhara material depend. As stated above, there are essentially two major conventions in the iconography of the cult, the Bodhisattva (*Tuṣita*) Maitreya and the Buddha (Ketumati) Maitreya. It is inherent that each resides in his respective paradise, and may be accompanied by attendant figures who are conceived of as residing in those paradises. Ketumati Maitreya is invariably depicted as a Buddha, often in *bhadrāsana*, although versions of him in *padmasana* are known. His major attendants are often Buddhas as well; in later representations, it is especially likely that the side figures will be Buddhas although both Buddhas and Bodhisattvas occur as side figures during all periods. When the side figures are Buddhas, they are likely to be in *bhadrāsana*, e.g. cave 19 at Yungang.<sup>10</sup> Early Chinese images, prior to the seventh century, of Bodhisattva Maitreya as regent of *Tuṣita* frequently depict him in either *bhadrāsana* or in the so-called “cross-ankled” position although the *padmasana* posture is also known. He is often attended by either Buddhas (e.g. cave 17 at Yungang) or Bodhisattvas.<sup>11</sup>

At this point it is necessary to make a distinction between primary cult images (*Arya*)<sup>12</sup> and those image subsidiary to a cult image. In Buddhist theory, the *Arya* is actually the generator of the entire set of images surrounding him. Thus the “primary image” is to be understood as both the main focus of the communicative content as well as the source of all the “reflections” of himself in whatever iconographic unit he is contained in whether it is a complete temple or simply a single figure with a few attendants. This extended even to the most modest of votive images. Accordingly, it is necessary to keep in mind the position of the figure in context. If the image is in the center of the temple it is the *Arya* of the whole iconographic system of the temple; if it is but a single image, perhaps with a few attendants, it is the *Arya* of only that group. If it is a broken fragment, one does not know who the *Arya* is but it must be assumed that a major central figure probably held the role. In later iconographic conventions the *Arya* often has distinctive features that separate him from the subsidiary, frequently non-specific (“generic”) types of figures. However, apparently, in early Chinese Buddhist art and certainly in Gandharan Buddhist art, there was no established formula for “generic” figure types, on the contrary, secondary figures seem

to have frequently taken the form of well known types.<sup>13</sup> Thus, a clear understanding must be established as to whether an image was a primary image, *Arya*, or a secondary, attending figure within the realm of an *Arya* or simply a minor devotional figure. In China, if Buddha Maitreya is the *Arya*, he will usually be in *bhadrāsana* and if Bodhisattva Maitreya is the *Arya* he will usually be in either *bhadra-*, *padma-* or “cross ankle” *asana*. This does not necessarily apply directly to Gandhāra.

There is one final point about the Chinese visual vocabulary for the Maitreya cult (and other “pure-land” sects for that matter) that must be clarified before we can progress with the analysis of Maitreya in Gandhāra. One set of symbolic gestures (*mudrā*) widely used in East Asian Buddhism is not well understood by non-East Asian scholars, yet it is central to the theme of this communication. When a figure is either standing or seated and displaying *abhayamudrā* with the right hand and *varadamudrā* with the left hand it is known as the “welcoming” gesture or *laiying* (W.G. 6,679 and 13,291)‘ literally “future going-out-to-meet.” In English language literature, it is best known as the “raigo” (properly raigo-in), the commonly known Japanese reading of the Chinese characters for *laiying*, for the welcoming of the deceased by Amitabha Buddha as occurs in the *Amitāyurdhyānasūtra*, etc.<sup>14</sup> It is unclear to me why this is so poorly known among non-Asian scholar because the acceptance of this type of gesture (there are many variations) is virtually universal among Chinese and some Japanese historians of East Asian art and, the interpretation of it is treated as a foregone conclusion. Certainly, it is obvious that a large number of “welcoming” (*laiying*) figures make such a gesture, although I have been unable to determine any textual or traditional iconographic source for the convention. For the moment, I am quite willing to accept their, evidently heuristic, approach to the problem, as having produced the only possible solution.<sup>15</sup> Relative to the iconology of Gandhāran images, there ought to be some version of the *laiying* gesture identifiable, although, as I have stated previously, I do not necessarily expect it to be isomorphic with the Chinese conventions.

### A Brief Survey of Gandharan Images Accepted As Maitreya

The following group of Bodhisattva images from the Gandharan region have all been identified as representations of Maitreya. The primary reason for this identification is that the principal iconographic conventions for the type appear as the only Bodhisattva type in sets of “*manusi*” Buddhas



(Figure 1) where, for obvious reasons, the Bodhisattva can only be the future Buddha, Maitreya. As most of these groups of "manusi" Buddhas are small ( I know of none more than approximately 30 cm in height) the details of the portrayal of Maitreya in this context are scanty. However, based on this incontrovertible evidence, even the earliest investigators were able to accurately identify images of Maitreya. As a result of this early awareness of the type, more has been done with the identification of Maitreya types for Gandhara sculpture than for other areas of the Indic sphere. Both isomorphic figures and limited variations on the convention have been recognized for more than a century. All previous researchers on the topic have understood the primary recognition symbols of Maitreya as the *Kamandalu* or small vase which the figure carries in his left hand and one of two hair arrangements (discussed below).

Based on the criteria established by the images of Maitreya in the company of the seven Buddhas of the past, several types of Bodhisattvas have been identified as representing Maitreya. Numerically, standing and seated images of Maitreya with the right hand displaying *abhayamudrā* and the left hand holding the vase, are, by far, the most predominant (Figure 2). For standing figures, the left hand is almost invariably positioned along the outside of the left thigh with the vase held between the thumb and forefinger or between the forefinger and middle finger with the thumb closing the opening.<sup>16</sup> There is one fairly rare variation on this theme that occurs from about the third century on in both seated and standing figures. The right hand, rather than displaying *abhayamudra*, makes the *namaskāramudra* which is similar to the *abhaya* except that the hand is turned palm towards the shoulder instead of towards the viewer.

The seated figures that display *abhayamudra* with the right hand either hold the vase as if the left hand was in a quasi version of *dhyānamudra* with the vase pendent over the left shin (Figure 3) or simply the hand and the vase rest hanging over the left leg. There are several minor variations in finger position of the left hand, especially in the "one-handed-*dhyānamudra*" type where the forefinger and middle finger grasp around the neck of the vase. However, there does not seem to be any iconological significance to this variation. Images of Maitreya in *dhyānamudra* while holding the vase pendent also occur fairly commonly and existed at a very early date (see "A Note on Chronology" accompanying this article). These make the standard, right hand on top of the left hand, *dhyānamudra* while holding the

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neck of the vase between the forefinger and middle finger of the left hand (Figure 4). The vase hangs pendent in the center between the legs of the figure. There are several minor permutations of this *dhyānamudra* e.g. hands completely overlapping fingers to wrist, fingers only overlapping, and fingers overlapping with the tips of the thumbs touching. None of these variations seem to be of major significance although they probably represent some minor variations of the particular meditational pose as taught by various local preceptors.

While there is considerable variation in the details of the jewelry that the Bodhisattva wears, these differences too do not seem to have any particular iconological significance. However, one feature, the headdress/hair arrangement, changes dramatically. One common type has two loops of hair, one to the right and one to the left of a central knot on top of the head (Figure 2). A second variant is the chignon or bun in a hairnet of gems (Figures 3,5). Hairnets of the type have been found in late Greek and Hellenistic burials and may have had some soteriological significance. 17 That Maitreya is shown wearing it in the second and third centuries would seem to demonstrate a conceptual parallelism to Hellenistic salvation cults and further ties the underlying concept, at least in the minds of the sculptors designing the imagery and trying to communicate its meaning to the Gandhāran populace, to Hellenistic cults. A few images appear with what seems to be a combination of the "two loops" and hairnet type of arrangement. Instead of a chignon or bun, the figure wears the "two loops," usually on top of a bun, and also wears a hairnet. The third variation is not Hellenistic but from the Indic tradition. Turban-wearing images of Maitreya occasionally occur (see Figure 8). Such figures are frequently minor images of Maitreya in a more complex setting. The turbans are often ornamented with gems and the types of turbans exhibit considerable variation. In the appropriate place below, a possible iconological interpretation for aspects of the variations in head ornamentation will be suggested.

Except for the hair arrangement/turban variations described above, the standing and seated figures of Maitreya Bodhisattva of the types just described remained remarkably consistent over the entire six centuries (c. 50 B.C. to c. 550 A.D.) of the Gandharan and related schools of sculpture, from the earliest surviving images such as those at Butkara I<sup>18</sup> in Swat Valley, to the latest stucco figures at Taxila and Haddā (the latter, actually not in Gandhara proper but in the neighboring Jelalabad district of Afghan-

istan).<sup>19</sup> This uniformity leads one to the speculation that there was already an established typology prior to the first surviving stone figures for there is no preserved evidence of trial and error or innovation on the part of the sculptors. The implications of such a statement are very important for it suggests that the whole spectrum of communicative content for the images was pre-existed the stone tradition, which is now thought to date back as far as Maues (c. 90–60 B.C.) in the Bactro-Gandhāran regions. Thus, it is appropriate to suggest that the date of the major themes of the Maitreya cult are, at the latest, first century B.C. and may well predate the first century B.C. by some time.

One rare type of Gandharan Maitreya Bodhisattva image is a seated figure displaying, what is known to modern scholarship as the Gandhāran variant of the *dharmacakramudrā* (see Appendix One). The figure is seated on a throne or platform with worshippers on the lower portion who pay obeisance to the vase which is raised on a pedestal (Figure 5). Obviously, with both hands engaged in forming *dharmacakramudrā* there is no way that the left hand could hold the vase pendent between the forefinger and middle finger. Most examples of this type of which I am aware come from Sahri Bahlol<sup>20</sup> and it may be that these are a local variant or that Sahri Bahlol was a center of a particular form of the cult about which there is currently insufficient information. Maitreya Bodhisattva in early Chinese images is frequently in *dharmacakramudra* (especially in the early caves at Dunhuang) and there may have been a direct contact between these two centers. This is an especially interesting hypothesis, since these Maitreya sculptures from Sahri Bahlol would seem to be approximately contemporaneous with the earliest Dunhuang caves (c. late fourth or early fifth century for the Sahri Bahlol figures and fifth century for the Dunhuang material); only further research will tell.

The image types discussed in this section provide another important insight for the rest of this study, for they present the first definitive evidence for what would otherwise be empirically assumed to be a "truism" in Gandhāran iconographics: the scene under the Ārya is not only directly related to the main object of the stele, but is an integral part of the overall iconological statement. One of Maitreya's "recognition symbols" is, obviously, the vase. In the case of the few sculptures of this type, where it is physically impossible, if the *dharmacakramudra* is to be depicted as being made properly, for the figure to hold the vase in his hands, it is shown below the

figure as separate object of veneration. The close relationship between the base scenes and the Ārya is the case in virtually all Gandhāran sculptures, and I shall return to this theme in the following sections.

The last well recognized form of Maitreya is, for the purposes of this study, one of the most important. It is Maitreya as the *Rāja* or *Rājikumār* of Tusita teaching the Dharma to the residents there (Figure 6). In the few known examples of this type, the Bodhisattva usually makes the *namaskaramudra* with his right hand. Interestingly, in a majority of these scenes, Maitreya sits in the “cross-ankled” position so commonly associated with him in Chinese images. because he holds the vase and makes the *namaskāramudrā* (a gesture definitively associated with Maitreya but not unique to him in Gandhāran sculpture) there can be no doubt of the identification. One such representation, the upper portion of a stele of about the fourth century now in the Chandigarh Museum (Figure 7) is above a depiction of Amitayus’ Sukhavati paradise.<sup>21</sup> This unique combination has been identified by Yu-min Lee as belonging only to the “longer” *Pratyutpanna-samadhisūtra*.<sup>22</sup> Here then, uniquely, is a verification of the essentially heuristic (“it can be no other”) iconographic constructions that led to the identification of the two types of scenes in the first place. If the two different paradises, identified independently of each other, are found in a third context where they come together as the result of an independent text which demands the presence of both, it provides confirmation of the previous identifications. Accordingly, the vase, the *namaskaramudrā* and the cross-ankled position are all verified as being characteristic of Maitreya in a specifically text derived (although not specifically described in the text) setting.

#### A Previously Tentatively Identified Image Type of Maitreya Bodhisattva

To complete our “survey” of Gandhāran Maitreya image typology, it is necessary to digress to a previously only tentatively identified Maitreya image type. Based on the “cross-ankled” position, a number of authors have identified images of Bodhisattvas sitting in that posture and displaying *dharmacakramudrā*<sup>23</sup> as Maitreya (Figure 8). Most examples of this type are shown with the turban rather than either the “two loops” or hairnet arrangements. To my knowledge, no image of this type exists with a vase anywhere in the composition although a few with other obvious characteristics of Maitreya (e.g. the “two loops” hair arrangement) have caused some

closely related images to be identified as Maitreya. (These, however, largely have been an unargued educated guesses rather than a true iconographic determination.<sup>24</sup>) Based on the preceding two images types where, in one, the *dharmacakramudrā* and, in the other, the cross-ankled position are definitively associated with Maitreya and, in addition, based on the fact that many of the early Chinese figures of Maitreya are specifically “cross-ankled and display *dharmacakramudrā* while they do not display the vase, it seems to me that there is little doubt that this image type in Gandhāra is also Maitreya.<sup>25</sup> This image convention for Maitreya survives to the present day in a number of Buddhist realms, especially in the Himalayan regions where it is still in use as the one of the major forms for representations of Maitreya Bodhisattva as the agent of *Tuṣita*.

### The Present State of Knowledge Regarding Maitreya Imagery

Although the foregoing would seem to be a fairly comprehensive and, for Bodhisattvas, an all-inclusive morphology of Maitreya imagery in Gandhāra, it is not, indeed, many aspects of Maitreya imagery in Gandhāra remain to be clarified. It may be noted that Ketumati Maitreya has not been mentioned in connection with the Gandhāran school images at all yet; *Tuṣita* has been mentioned only in relation to one image type; and no Buddha Maitreyas or “welcoming” images have been identified. However, if such images were in early China as a result of direct influence from the Gandhāra region, it seems safe to assume that such images were made in Gandhāra, the problem is to identify them among the many surviving images.

By definition, as found in all versions of the Maitreya *sūtras*, the Maitreya of *Tuṣita* has yet to become a Buddha; therefore, he must be a Bodhisattva. Consequently, all the Bodhisattva images discussed up to this point can be identified as “*Tuṣita-Maitreya*.” Unfortunately, that is too easy an answer. There is much more to the role of Maitreya than just the existence of the hypostasis in *Tuṣita*. Thus, we need to do much more than just identify Maitreya. Although Buddhism is the religion of non-discrimination, the one thing that we can count on in iconographic programs is detailed discrimination of meanings detailed and indicated by variations in iconographic elements. Accordingly, we should even expect to find slight variations in meaning between the image types we have just seen.

### Images of Maitreya With Dual Layers of Meaning.

To illustrate this, let me discuss briefly a figure of Maitreya from the Peshawar region, now in the Seattle Museum (Figure 9). His identifying vase is broken away but there is a small fragment of it still attached to the garment indicating its original position. The figure also wears the bun in a hairnet characteristic of many other Maitreya images from the Peshawar region, so, in spite of the loss of most of the vase, there is no doubt as to who the main figure is. On the pedestal below the main image is a small figure of the meditating Maitreya also identified by the *abhayamudra* and vase convention. Now, if there were but a single purpose for having made images of Maitreya or was a single meaning to all images of Maitreya, there would have been no need to depict two distinct types in the same piece of stone. We know from the Chinese representations of *Tuṣita* Maitreya that there are many aspects to him. The most important are, 1) he who greets the practitioner into *Tuṣita* and he who resides there, 2) either teaching to the residents or 3) meditating in an effort to perfect his knowledge for the coming of Ketumati. In Chinese portrayals, the residing image is invariably shown seated while welcoming images are shown standing. Accordingly, it may be suggested that the standing Bodhisattva, with his *abhayamudrā* and vase, are the welcoming Bodhisattva Maitreya of *Tuṣita* while the seated figure is probably that of the resident of *Tuṣita* or that of an earthly transformation of him who appears to receive the devotions of the faithful ("object of worship," who is conceptually identical to the resident for purposes of devotions)<sup>26</sup>. Regardless of the exact identification of the lower figure, there can be no doubt that there are two manifestations of Maitreya on this sculpture. As already noted above, regarding the image of Maitreya with the worship of the vase on the pedestal (see Figure 5), the content of the sculpture is an integrated whole. The message of the image is the promise of "Welcoming" the meritorious faithful into *Tuṣita* (and thereby promise of future rebirth in that paradise) and a demonstration of the necessary actions (worship of Maitreya) by which the faithful assume that they will attain enough merit to be born there.

Another obvious example of the lower image being directly related to the upper portion of the sculpture is seen in the offering of the fire (or incense, [*gandha*]) to the image of Maitreya (Figure 4). This type of offering is fairly common in Gandharan sculpture and would seem to represent an

important ritual aspect of the Maitreya cult (but not necessarily exclusive to it).

The next question is, can this understanding of the sculpture as a unified message be extrapolated to other such images? While we can never be certain, and everything that follows must be considered hypothetical, given the extreme conservatism of the Gandhāran school, it seems to me that it is highly probable that such extrapolations can be made. Once this window of multiple layers of imagery on the same piece of stone is open, a veritable flood of interpretations is possible that fall exactly into the pattern of what we expect from the cult.

Based on the foregoing accepted images of Maitreya, it is possible to make the following definitions of Gandhāran iconographic conventions.

1. Any frontal figure with either a pedestal configuration or bilaterally arranged subsidiary figures may be considered the *Ārya* of the composition.
2. Except for laity in devotional postures, the *Ārya* may be considered the progenitor of all subsidiary elements
3. Secondary elements communicate something about the character of the *Ārya*.
4. Pieces that are clearly not fragments or portions of complex groupings are considered to contain a single, coherent message.

The inherent conclusions of the foregoing definitions may be applied in the examination of a considerable number of pieces that fall within the parameters of the image typology under discussion. There are literally hundreds of images that have a scene on the pedestal base and, as far as I am aware, there has been no systematic attempt to correlate the iconological content of the pedestal scenes and the *Ārya*. Yet locked within these relationships would seem to be a great deal of useful information. In one sense, the application of these implications is a kind of a test. Exactly as if the visual vocabulary of the pieces were a grammatical language (it is a visual communication language using graphic symbols conveying ideas rather than alphabets representing phonemes, words, sentences, etc.), once the grammar

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and symbols of selected decipherable statements in the language has been understood, the test for validity is to see if other statements in that language may be read with consistency of meaning and communication value.

As an example of the application of the above definitions let us examine an image of a seated Maitreya Bodhisattva, displaying the *dharmacakramudrā* (Figure 10). His identity as Maitreya is determined by the presence of the very conspicuous “two loops” type hair arrangement. As has been shown above, the *dharmacakramudrā* is one that can be expected on Maitreya images, so there is no contradiction of elements in the *Ārya*. Beneath him, in front of the draped throne on which he is seated, is a seated Bodhisattva in meditation (*dhyānamudra*) being paid obeisance by a total of six monks and laity. As has been seen above, where it is possible to read the symbolism of the pedestal image along with the *Ārya*, the base under the *Ārya* relates directly to the theme of the sculpture and the base and the *Ārya* combined contain a more complex message that either portion individually. It is my opinion that the base invariably relates directly to the *Ārya* and, in this case, I hold that it is axiomatic that the lower figure has to be another representation of Maitreya, the “meditating resident of *Tuṣita*” (perhaps appearing as “the-object-of-worship” Maitreya). This would provide two additional insights into Maitreya iconography in Gandhara: one, that the *dhyānamudra* Bodhisattvas are potentially representations of Maitreya and, two, that the turban, indeed a somewhat heavy, “wide brimmed” version of it, is also appropriate to Maitreya images.

How then, may this image be interpreted? Here, I think the turban versus the “two loops” hair arrangement is the clue. As the resident of *Tuṣita*, Maitreya has essentially three functions. one, to perfect his own wisdom (*prajna*), two, to greet the faithful into his realm and, three, to teach the *Dharma* to those the other residents of *Tuṣita*. The perfecting stage is, by definition, a pre-attainment stage and is one in which Maitreya is less than perfectly prepared but is still the *Raja* or *Rajkumar* of *Tuṣita*. It represents him in a period of time during which he perfects his wisdom and, in Buddhist practice, this is done through meditation. As the yet to be fully perfected regent of *Tuṣita*, Maitreya would be expected to wear the ornaments of a *Rājā*, specifically the elaborate turban. Indeed, in the Pali canon, it is specifically noted that the Buddha’s princely garments are his birthright when he was born in the Śākya clan.<sup>27</sup> It cannot be expected that Maitreya as the regent of *Tuṣita* would have less. After the perfection, when he is fully enlightened, but is yet to become a Buddha, is the time when his

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*Brahma*-nature becomes apparent. The "two loops" hair arrangement is also highly specific to images of the God *Brahma* in Gandharan sculpture. That both the proto Buddha and the Buddha himself have become *Brahmā* is a theme treated literally dozens of times in the Pali canon. Specifically "Brahma-faring" (*Brahmacarya*) is described as the path to further Buddhist attainment<sup>28</sup> and the Buddha's attainment is stated to have been "becoming *Brahma*."<sup>2</sup> It may, therefore, be suggested that the appearance of Maitreya as the Brahmin youth, with the various interpretations of the *Jatamukuta* hair arrangement, is a reference to such time as he has perfected his transcendental wisdom and is a fully enlightened being,<sup>30</sup> and is awaiting the time of his final rebirth in ketumati. This suggests that the turbaned Maitreya is in the process of attaining his enlightenment while the other, either "two loops" or "Bun in Hairnet" (these two not only seem to be interchangeable but are sometimes overtly combined, see Figure 4), are worn after the enlightenment has taken place. Thus, working within the hypothetical rules for Gandhāran image interpretation, we have established new information about the Maitreya image conventions in Gandhāra. From this point, it is easy to construct a much fuller vision of what Maitreya's iconography in Gandhara must have been.

### Ketumati-Maitreya-Buddha

For example, a representation of a standing Buddha above a seated Maitreya Bodhisattva iconomorphically identical to that on the base of the Seattle piece may be identified as Ketumati Maitreya above the "resident of *Tusita* Maitreya, or possibly the "object-of-worship-Maitreya" (Figure 11). Indeed, if one accepts the unity of communicative content between the lower and upper portions of the image, there is virtually no other interpretation possible. Simply, since the lower figure is definitively Maitreya, the upper figure must be Maitreya. The Buddha form of Maitreya is Ketumati Maitreya, thus there can be no other identification for the upper image. Using either identification for the lower scene, the pedestal image represents the means to the end of attaining rebirth in Maitreya's Ketumati paradise.

The Buddha exhibits the *abhayamudra* with his right hand and holds the hem of his garment in the extended left hand. This gesture is ubiquitous in Gandharan sculpture and has, up to now, been interpreted as simply the standard gesture of Sakyamuni Buddha. In part, such a view is warranted

since many images that are definitely identifiable as Śākyamuni because of context make this gesture. However, the issue is much more complicated than it would appear. First of all, it is easily demonstrable that Śākyamuni Buddha is not the only Buddha to make the gesture. For example, the *manusi* Buddhas (see Figure 1) all invariably make this gesture in Gandhāran art. Apparently, any and all Buddhas may make it, especially in Gandhāran sculpture. In the case of Maitreya Buddha, whose life is considered to be virtually identical with Śākyamuni, it is obvious that he would also make it.

It is interesting, however, that there may be permutations of meaning to the gesture when it is made by Maitreya versus Śākyamuni. As noted above, the meaning of the *abhaya* – and *varadamudrā* combination of gestures in the context of the Pure Land cults of China is that of welcoming (*laiying*) the faithful into paradise. Except for the element of the fold of cloth from the Buddha's robe in the left hand, the Chinese and Gandhāran sets of gestures are virtually identical. The detail of the fold of cloth held in the hand has been shown by one of my graduate students, Constance Bond, to have been brought into the region as a symbol of salvation with origins in the Asiatic version of the cults of Apollo and Dionysus.<sup>31</sup> The folder or knotted loop of cloth is virtually ubiquitous in Hellenistic Asia in connection with the cults and, given the number of other Hellenistic symbolic elements that are to be found in Gandharan imagery, it is not too much of an act of faith to accept that this one element made its way into this aspect of the Maitreya cult. That it is not found widely in early Chinese images (a few very early Bei Liang images actually have the fold of cloth) may be because the Chinese audience had no particular referent for the fold of cloth as a symbol of salvation. It appears to have been simply omitted from the "greeting gesture" as interpreted by iconographers in China. Given the salvationistic symbolism of the drapery fold in the Gandhāran context, it is possible that the gesture combination in Gandharan region may have had salvationist overtones. Indeed, one important aspect of the question is, did all Buddha images displaying the gesture combination have salvationist symbolism, even Śākyamuni Buddha? Yet another aspect of the question is, how many of the Buddha images in Gandhāra are actually depictions of Maitreya? There are hundreds of potential candidates and I am afraid that there is no way to determine the iconography of pieces detached from their bases. However, given the known popularity of the cult in the region, it is possible that the majority of standing Buddha images are actually Ketumati Maitreya and not Śākyamuni!

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Perhaps, in terms of numbers, the most important Ketumati Buddha-Bodhisattva combination is that occurring when the Bodhisattva on the base is simply in meditation (*dhyanamudra*) (Figure 12). I have shown above (and will further demonstrate below, cf. the section on Maitreya-Pranidana-gatharaja) that, following the hypotheses presented in this paper, the *dhyanamudra* Bodhisattva is an image of Maitreya. There are literally scores of Buddha images, in every *mudra* and position occurring in Gandharan imagery that have *dhyanamudra* Bodhisattva on the base. I recognize that it may be contended that this is just a "generic" Bodhisattva. However, until the case for a "generic" Bodhisattva is proven, I think we must accept the strong evidence for identifying the *dhyanamudra* Bodhisattva on the base of Buddha sculptures as Maitreya. My reasoning is as follows. First, we know that some *dhyanamudra* Bodhisattvas are demonstrably Maitreya so that nothing about the iconographic schema contradicts the identification. Second, so far as is known from a survey of the surviving *sutras* that are known to have been translated by western Asians into Chinese, of all the major Bodhisattvas that are known to appear in Gandharan sculpture, only Maitreya has a mode of existence in which the meditation activity is a prominent part of his hagiography. Third, there is no evidence of a major emphasis on any other Bodhisattva except Maitreya in Gandharan imagery until late third century or even early fourth century. In spite of the fact of the existence of representations of Bodhisattvas who are thought to be Avalokitesvara, Samantabhadra and others,<sup>32</sup> there is no evidence of anything more than occasional use of their imagery prior to the mid- to late third century. Moreover, before that and throughout the Gandharan Buddhist period, it is obvious that Maitreya images predominated, resulting in the high probability that, even if the *dhyanamudra* Bodhisattva image on the base of these Buddha images might somehow be seen as a "generic" Bodhisattva, Maitreya is the "generic" Bodhisattva in the Gandharan region!

#### COMMENTARY ON THE FOREGOING

For those familiar with the details of Gandharan sculpture, the ramifications of the foregoing have to be obvious. Many, if not most, Buddha-Bodhisattva and Bodhisattva-Bodhisattva combinations in Gandharan art are very probably Maitreya-Maitreya images. Indeed, there are several more permutations of the Bodhisattva-Bodhisattva and Buddha-Bodhisattva combinations that seem too obvious for inclusion here. In the final analysis, there are very few that do not seem to be some sort of a Maitreya-Maitreya

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combination. But there are a few. As far as I am able to discern, these are mostly late images that would seem to derive their basic design from the Maitreya-Maitreya convention. None of these, of course, are ones which have an obvious Maitreya image involved in the schema. All that I have identified thus far, are Buddha images which would seem to have a different Bodhisattva below them. It is my current opinion that all that I have found so far are Amitābha/Amitāyus with Avalokiteśvara below him,<sup>33</sup> however, I am certain other possibilities exist.

What would seem to be most important is the extent of the Maitreya cult in Gandhāra. The number of sculptures that can be identified as Maitreya eloquently testifies to the fact that, among the image offering segment of the population (presumably the wealthy merchants and nobility), belief in Maitreya and his two paradises was very widespread. Thanks to the lower sections of many of the sculptures, we are made aware that fire/incense offerings, obeisance to images (conceptually, of course, to Maitreya himself), and, obviously, the offering of images, were major forms of devotional exercises by which one could hope for rebirth in *Tuṣita* and, when the time comes, *Ketumati*. Since sculptures falling within the communication system of the cult date from the late first century through the early seventh century, one sees a remarkable uniformity of theme and purpose at one level (probably the popular or public level) of the cult. Other images tended to keep current with the developments within Buddhism that were taking place and the advent of Buddhas making the *dharmacakramudrā* followed by images of Maitreya Bodhisattva making the same gesture and other advances characterize a fairly rapidly changing iconic communication system. In short, Maitreya continued in his earliest guises and new ones were added as time progressed.

#### A FINAL IMAGE: MAITREYA-PRANIDHANA-GATHARAJA

By accepting the relationship of the scenes on the base of an image to the main image we are then faced with the fact that at least one image of Maitreya is of the esoteric tradition and it is a fairly early image, late third to fourth century, at that (Figure 13): A very specialized group of Bodhisattvas occurs on the base of this image. In the centre of the group is a "cross-ankled" image of Maitreya displaying *dharmacakramudrā*. To either side of him are two bodhisattvas demonstrably in a very specific arrangement. One of the Bodhisattvas, far left, carries a lotus that identifies him as

the manifestation of the *Dharmakula* (or *Padmakula*), *Padmapani* (or *Avakitesvara*). The figure next to him carries a bag of gems identifiable in part, because it is identical to various representations of them in the hands of Kubera in Gandharan Sculpture. This would identify him as the manifestation of the *Ratnakula*. Even though the other two Bodhisattvas, on the right side, are too damaged to determine what they are carrying, the fact that the two on the left side of the base are carrying the correct objects and are in the correct position that would be used in the schematic representation of a *maṇḍala*, i.e. left to right, west, south, centre, north, east, used to the present day strongly suggests the presence of a schematic *maṇḍala* representation. Indeed, given the more than one hundred types of Bodhisattva images in Gandhāran sculpture, there is great statistical improbability that these two, along with the figure of Maitreya in the centre of the group, are randomly generated "generic Bodhisattvas" and simply residents of Tuṣita. Accordingly, there seems to be a very high degree of probability that the lower group of figures depicts a *maṇḍala*. The esoteric forms of Maitreya that I am aware of are *maṇḍala* progenitors (*Āryas*) of the personification of the eight vows of Maitreya.<sup>34</sup> They consist of Maitreya in the centre with four Bodhisattvas in the cardinal directions and offering (*pūjā*) deities in the intermediate points. In most drawn and painted *mandalas* of this subject, such as those in the *Shosonzuzō* cited above, there are deities for each of the vows along with the central *Ārya* of the *mandala*. However, in both paintings and sculpture it is possible, and commonly done, to reduce the *maṇḍala* to its essential elements. While the *Ārya* can represent the whole *maṇḍala*, a phenomenon that greatly complicates the identification of early esoteric subjects, other, less total, reductions are also possible. Commonly, only the *Ārya* and the four primary emanations are depicted. As a result, I think there can be little doubt of this identification. The difficulty for most is that the date of this piece is third to fourth century!

I am aware that many scholars working in the field will reject the Tantric identification of this image out of hand simply because of the date assigned to it. There is a problem with this rejection, statistical probability is heavily in favour of the identification. If we say that there are only 100 seated Bodhisattva types in Gandhāra (there are more) and we have three out of five in the right place, the random probability against that occurring is 300:1, and factoring the limitation of five specific Bodhisattvas in the group the ratio is 1500:1 against accidental occurrence. Even without an inscription we are approaching certainty that the identification is correct.

Given this kind of mathematical probability, the burden of proof is actually on the naysayer to demonstrate some other iconographic interpretation for the group. Accordingly, those who would reject early *Tantra* on the premise of, "if it is early, it cannot be *Tantra*," shall have to come up with a very solid set of facts to deny a document such as this image presents.

Remarkably, what this demonstrates is an advanced form of *Tantra*. Assuming the existence of some early version of the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*,<sup>35</sup> or a "proto-*pañcajina-maṇḍala*," there still has to have been time for the integration of the Maitreya doctrines and themes into the system. I freely admit that, given the extreme popularity of Maitreya in Gandhāra, this might have been a very high priority but it would still demand that whatever form the "proto-*pañcajina-maṇḍala*" teachings might have taken (at this time an orally transmitted *śāstra*?) it had to pre-exist the date of this image. Moreover, since there is a strong argument that stone images are among the last to be made in an iconological system, the tradition may have been much older by the time this image was made.<sup>36</sup> As a whole, the image of the meditating Bodhisattva as *Ārya* simply reiterates the identification the meditation (*dhyānamudrā*) posture with Maitreya and, as I have suggested in the preceding, it is probably that this pose is characteristic of *Tuṣita* Maitreya in meditation perfecting his wisdom (*prajñā*) prior to his birth in Ketumati. The *maṇḍala* group beneath him is present as simply indicating another means of attaining rebirth in the ascending mode of the Maitreya cult.

## CONCLUSIONS

One may legitimately despair of ever locating the "Rosetta stone" of Gandhāran iconography. Not only does it probably not exist, but any sketchbooks and other devices that did exist to transmit Gandhāran iconographic ideas to Inner Asia and China are probably lost forever. Only the relatively late "famous images" paintings from and at Dunhuang survive, and these tell us virtually nothing of the type of information that is the concern of this article. The only hope we have of understanding the didactic content of these images is based in the heuristic processes used here. By basing our analysis on a thorough knowledge of the Chinese cults, known to have been imported to China more or less directly from the region, we have a foundation from which to work. When images are found that conform to the expected iconological content, and when it is established that there is a

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very broad based pattern of iconological correspondence, such as has been demonstrated in this article, then it would seem that the hypotheses presented here are verified.

Given the numbers of images inherently identified by the suggestions in this article (roughly half or more of all single figure images in the Gandhāran idiom), it is clear that the Maitreya cult was extremely popular in Gandhāra. Certainly, this would account for the fact that western Asian Buddhist proselytizers in China taught and emphasized the cult. However, as to its origins, there seems to be no evidence whatever of western Asiatic origins.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the earliest surviving images are iconographically and iconologically identical to some of the latest images of the type in the region. This suggests that the major themes of the cult were fully developed before the Gandhāran stone sculptural tradition even began. Accordingly, scholars who would see the "origin" of the cult in second to third century Gandhāra must look either to much earlier periods of Gandhāra or elsewhere. It is my belief that both much earlier and elsewhere will be the answer. Only further research and time will tell.

#### APPENDIX ONE

#### ON THE DHARMACAKRAMUDRĀ IN GANDHĀRA

The Gandhāran version of the "*dharmacakramudrā*" is highly specific and virtually ubiquitous in sculpture of the region. The left hand is palm up with all five fingers brought together above the palm while the right hand encloses the tips of the fingers (or in some permutations, seen mostly in the Kapiśa region, e.g. Shotorak, etc., the whole left hand, which is flat against the chest, is enclosed by the right). While it may not be possible to ever be certain of the meaning attached to the gesture, its potential symbolism is too close to the *bodhyangimudra* as made by *Mahāvairocana* in the *maṇḍalas* of the *Vajradhātu* as known in China and Japan to ignore.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, since the right hand does not form a circle in any manner, as occurs in all other forms of the *dharmacakramudrā*, but simply encases the fingers of the left hand, it may have been inappropriate for early scholars to have called the Gandhāran gesture "*dharmacakramudrā*". Rather, it would appear to fall into a class of gestures, as they are known only in their final developmental form, the intention of which, is to be a demonstration of the "unity of the five [Buddhas, *jñānas* and all other symbolic permutations]."

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Because of the implication such a suggestion holds for the potential earliness of Tantric themes in Buddhism, this suggestion will be an anathema to some scholars committed to the idea of the seventh century “emergence” of Tantric soteriological methodologies. However, there is clear evidence for early (much earlier than the traditionally accepted seventh century) *Tantra* and, for the moment all that can be suggested is that this might be indicative of a “developmental stage.”<sup>39</sup>

If one accepts this peculiar *mudrā* as a potential indication of an association with Vairocana, it opens the way to another possibility. As discussed above and in note 25, there is an obvious close connection between the Gandhāran and Dunhuang visual idioms of the fifth and early sixth centuries. Indeed it is so very close that it is hard to imagine that there was not direct contact with either Gandhāra proper, or one of its immediate neighbours, i.e. Kapiśa, Bactria, or, in the other direction, Kashmir. In many of the earliest caves at Dunhuang, the chamber is essentially a square room with a square column (chung hsien, literally “central heart”) in the centre of the devotional area. The Maitreya imagery varies considerably on the column, but many of the caves have, in the centre of the back wall, directly behind the chung hsien from the entrance, an image of what is called the “white robed Buddha.”<sup>40</sup> The images are always very distinctive, and clearly copies of the Gandharan figurative tradition. They display a rather loosely formed *abhayamudrā* with the right hand and a similarly loosely formed *varadamudrā* with the left. At least one of the images is clearly crowned, albeit the painted version of the crown is both faint and unique, there can be no error in determining the intentions of the artist.<sup>41</sup> To me, at least, the implication is obvious. Vairocana, is associated throughout Buddhism with the colour white; in the Mahāvairocana and Vairocana cycle Tantric systems, he is the progenitor of the *Buddhakula* and thereby of Maitreya. Since the imagery in the Dunhuang caves of this period is associated in detail with Gandhāran imagery, it strongly suggests that the association of the specific type of “*dharmacakramudrā*” with images of Maitreya in Gandhāra may indeed be as the progeny of Vairocana and that Maitreya is already demonstrated iconographically as a reflection of Vairocana by the time of this group of Gandhāran *dharmacakramudrā* Maitreya sculptures. Whether this is a form of early *Tantra* or advanced *vaipulya sūtra* iconology is impossible to suggest at this time. I frankly suspect that it may be both, depending on the level of attainment and initiation of the observer. If my interpretation is correct, it is the universalistic manifestation of the *Dharmakāya* that would



provide the faithful, actively seeking rebirth in one of the paradises of Maitreya (usually *Tuṣita*), with the long-term promise of realization of identity with the *Dharmakāya* and the validation of the totality of his ultimate destination. For the advanced initiate, he would understand that the manifestation of Maitreya and the appearance (*vyūha*) of his paradises was one of the magic displays produced by the skillful means (*upāya*) of Vairocana, with whom he understands himself to be identical. It is, therefore, one of the skills that he must master out of his altruistic compassion (*karuṇā*) for all sentient beings.

### A NOTE ON CHRONOLOGY

My very fruitful discussions with the various members of this, the "International Conference on Archaeology, Ethnology, History, Art, Linguistics, Languages, Folklore, and Social Condition of Northern Areas of Pakistan" on the subject of the chronology of Gandhāran images revealed to me just how astonishingly unsettled this issue is. Opinions held by scholars present, range from a very limited period of time, c. 78 to 240 A.D., to account for the production of virtually all images of the Gandhāran school, to a seven century span of production beginning about 100 – 50 B.C. to the late sixth or early seventh century. It is my personal opinion, that the latter view will eventually be proven correct and I have attributed dates to the images in this article on that basis. Briefly, I see the emergence of a stone carver's tradition (supplementing and later supplanting a wood carver's tradition) in the middle of the first century of the pre-Christian era. In the second century A.D. there is a strong burst of energy in the stone tradition, presumably with the impetus of a few immigrant stone carvers from late Hellenistic Asia working in a "quasi-naturalistic" tradition. From the early third century to the third quarter of the fifth century (the time of the Hūna invasion of about 460) there was a continuing metamorphosis of style with strong local variations, literally on a side by side basis. After the Hūna period, there was a "resurgence" largely in the form of reconstruction of damaged monuments. The stone sculpture tradition never regained its vitality, although the stucco tradition, which had been present from about first century B.C., flourished briefly. The whole tradition came to an end with the advance of Islam in the early eighth century.

The obvious lack of dated material demands that the attribution of a chronological time frame for a particular sculpture to any given period be

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considered tentative. The problem of local variations, in particular, demands that even the best of stylistic chronologies allow for a two to three generation factor in the movement of a style to a given site. Fortunately, two processes are under way which will do much to provide answers to the question of chronology, both recent and current excavations and the re-evaluation of material from specific sites excavated before the advent of modern archaeological techniques, hold great promise. One eagerly awaits the work of Domenico Faccenna, Director of I.S.M.E.O.'s Butkara I excavations, in the forthcoming I.S.M.E.O. volume of the reports on Butkara I, and the publications of the excavations by the University of Peshawar teams under the direction of Professor Farzand Ali Durrani. Also very promising is the work on two separate and independently conceived projects, one by Madam Francine Tissot, of the Musee Guimet, and the other by Mrs. Elizabeth Errington, a graduate student working under Professor David Bivar. Both are attempting to re-establish the corpus of work from certain sites and, once that is established, to work on the chronology of that site. The net result of these anticipated publications and reports should finally provide a foundation on which chronological attributions can be made.

For a preliminary publication of some of my own work on aspects of this problem see, Susan L. Huntington with John C. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, John Weatherhill, New York and Tokyo, 1984, pp.113-123, 133-148.

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### FOOTNOTES

1. As an aside, I refer the reader to two presentations I have made before the Association for Asian Studies. Both "*Karuṇā and Prajñā in Mahāyāna Shrine Iconography*" (presented 19 March 1976) and "The Origins of the Bodhisattva in Art and Literature," (presented 31 March 1979) addressed the origin of the Bodhisattva and various aspects of the Bodhisattva cult. In them, I have suggested that the origin of all *Karuṇā*-side Bodhisattvas is to be found in a hypostasis of Brahṃā, that Maitreya's Tuṣita is the prototype of all later Buddhist paradises and that it had its origin in the Brahmāloka. Moreover, I have suggested that the cult of Brahṃā and Indra much preceded the time of Śākyamuni (at least by five hundred years or so) and that the roots of the Mahāyāna *karuṇā-prajñā* duality is to be found in the Indra and Brahṃā cult. I am fully aware that these are very controversial views that deserve more explanation. They will be explained fully in the first volume of my *Studies in Mahāyāna Iconology* which should be forthcoming in the near future.
2. In the process of this examination, all but one of the *sūtras* to Maitreya have been translated by one of my former Graduate Students, Dr. Yu-min Lee while she was a graduate student in our program. It is hoped that it will be possible to see these into print under my editorship in the relatively near future. Other Chinese texts, commentaries and exegetical works have also been translated by various of my students and I hope to edit these into a subsequent volume of translations of pure land commentaries.
3. For some of my earlier work citing examples of the process of using works of art as attested documents of the period see, my "The Tendai Iconographic Model Book Shosonzuzo

Dated 1858," in *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture*, vol. IV, (1975), pp. 128–130; and "Cave Six at Aurangabad: A Tantrayāna Monument?" in *Kāladarsana: American Studies in the Art of India*, edited by Joanna G. Williams, the American Institute of Indian Studies, with Oxford Book Company and IBH, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 47–55.

4. *Taishō*, 457.
5. Contrary to the opinion of some of the more "conservative" scholars working on Chinese Buddhism, I do not believe that the earliest date that can be assigned a text is "shortly before it was translated into Chinese." There are ample numbers of texts, e.g. the *Āgamas*, that were demonstrably translated long after their formation. Accordingly, there are only two considerations I am willing to accord the fact of the translation of any given text into Chinese, first, it pre-existed the date of its translation, second, it was considered important enough to take time to translate. The first consideration is patently obvious and the second is almost irrelevant for *sūtras*, because virtually any untranslated *sūtra*, which by definition is the actual words of the Buddha, would have been considered important enough to translate. Thus, as far as I am concerned, the fact of translation into Chinese is basically irrelevant except when there are obviously differing versions of the text that survive.
6. This suggests to me that the cult and literature of Maitreya had the following development.
  1. The concept of Maitreya as the future Buddha arises and he is held to be resident in Tusita
  2. The cult to him develops and interest in what comes after his life in Tusita grow. (Period of four vows?)
  3. Descriptions of Ketumati by preceptors of the cult become important. (Period of eight vows?)
  4. The first descriptions of Ketumati are held to be *sūtras*.
  5. The "*sūtra*-fiction" of the majority of Ketumati descriptions.
  6. Expansion into lengthy *sūtras*.
  7. The period the development of abbreviated texts such as the *Mi-lo Lai-Shih-Ching*.

For me, all of this implies a considerable period of time. The references to Maitreya's Tusita are few in number and sparse in description. However, it is clear from what is known of the early cult (and as it is still practiced) that the main devotional emphasis was on rebirth in Tusita. Thus, the whole of "Ketumati literature" is essentially secondary to the cult. Since the earliest surviving Chinese translation is an example of the latest phase of the development, it may be suggested that, at the least, two to three centuries of Maitreya cult activity had passed prior to the formulation of that *sūtra*. By this, admittedly speculative, reasoning, the "origin" of the Maitreya cult may be seen as dating from the first century B.C. at the latest, with the reservation that it may be earlier – even much earlier. Moreover, since it is my opinion (see note 1) that Maitreya is a hypostasis of Brahma, it seems to me that he would have to have "originated" in India proper at the time of the contesting between the early Buddhists and the Brahmins. As this occurred prior to the formulation of the earliest layers of the Pali canon (where it is actually a recurring theme), it appears that a central Indian "origin" between the late fifth and the mid-third century B.C. is the most likely frame for the beginnings of the cult.

7. To the date of this writing, a thorough iconographic analysis of this early material is lacking. Among art historians, at issue are the "hanka pose" Bodhisattvas and the cross ankled Bodhisattvas. Because more than one may occur in some versions of Tusita paradise scenes with Maitreya, it is assumed that they all can't be Maitreya all the time. Actually, it must be remembered that the inhabitants of any of the paradises are considered to be "reflections" of the

presiding *Ārya* (see note 12) and therefore actually are identical to him. Thus, in the case of two "hanka pose" Bodhisattvas attending a cross-ankled Bodhisattva, e.g. on the *chung hsien* of cave 275 at Dunhuang (see The Dunhuang Institute for Cultural Relics' *Chugoku Seki-Kutsu*, "Tonko Moko-Kutsu," (Heibonsha, Tokyo, 1980), vol. 1, plates 11 and 12), these are nothing more than emanations of "reflective" aspects of Maitreya. The same issue applies to the *bhadrāsana* (or *pralambapādāsana*) Buddhas that occur in Ketumati. Frequently, there is a central Buddha Maitreya attended by two side Buddhas in *bhadrāsana*. In this case, they are both the reflex aspects of the *Ārya* and probably a specific demonstration of the accounting in the Maitreya *sūtras* about the three preaching assemblies of Maitreya in Ketumati.

8. Two recent dissertations have dealt extensively with this subject. Rei Sassaguchi, *The Image of the Contemplating Bodhisattva in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture*, Harvard University, 1975, and Yu-min Lee, *The Maitreya Cult and Its Art in Early China*, The Ohio State University, 1983.
9. For the best published overview to date of the early caves see the Du Huang Institute for Cultural Relics' *Chugoku Seki-Kutsu*, "Tonko Moko-Kutsu," (Heibonsha, Tokyo, 1980), vol. 1, pls. 6, 7, 11, 12, 18, 19, 26, 33, 34, 38, 46, 62, 66, 89, 108, 114, 149, 156, 158, 174, 183. Regrettably, commentary in this work is almost entirely non-specific as to whom is represented in these early caves and one must combine the illustrative material with the recent understanding provided by Lee and Sasaguchi (see note 8 above).
10. See note 7.
11. Here it is necessary to distinguish between the cross-ankled pose, and the "hanka-pose" (in Japanese, actually *hanka-fuza*). In the "hanka" position, the calf of one (either) leg rests across the knee of the other with the elbow of the same side as the raised leg resting on the raised knee and with the hand reaching towards the face in some manner. While in Japan and apparently in Korea, main images of Maitreya were made in the "hanka-pose" they are exceedingly rare as main images in China (if they exist at all) although they are quite common as depictions of the secondary Bodhisattvas in *Tusjita*.
12. "*Ārya*" following the east Asian use of the character *Zun* (*Tsun*) (W.G. 11, 945) or *Son* (*Jp.*) essentially, "revered one," as the proper noun for the primary deity of any iconological system. See William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, London, 1937, p. 370-71.
13. For a somewhat fuller discussion of this problem see my, "A Gandhāran Image of Amitāyus' Sukhāvati," in *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, vol. 40 (N.S. XX), pp. 664 ff.
14. It is interesting to note that, although this *sūtra* is the major canonical source for the welcoming of Amitabha, vows fourteen through sixteen, no mention is made of any gesture to be made at the time of the welcoming (see *The Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Muller, vol. XLIX, part II, "The Amitayur-Dhyana-Sutra," translated by J. Takakusu, f.p. Oxford, 1984, reprinted, Delhi (two volumes in one) 1968, (part II pp. 188-199.) According (it must be concluded that the *mudrā* tradition behind this text was part of the oral tradition or, at least, part of the non-canonical traditions surrounding it. It should also be noted that this gesture and two permutations) are known as the middle rank, upper birth, middle birth and lower birth gestures of ninefold Amitabha in both Japan and China (*Butsu Zuzo-I*, section on the nine Amidas); also E. Dale Saunders, *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist*

*Sculpture*, Bollingen Foundation, New York, 1960, pp. 73-75, 91-92.

15. For a considerable number of Japanese examples (mostly based on lost Chinese prototypes) see, Joji Okazaki, *Pure Land Buddhist Painting*, Kodhansha international, Tokyo, New York and San Francisco, 1977, *passim*.
  16. The general symbolism of Maitreya's vase is not well understood in Western literature on the subject. It may simply be the symbol of Maitreya's *brāhmin* nature or Maitreya's exoteric vase of water for "washing away defilements;" it may symbolize the receptacle of the teachings, the empty vase which the practitioner must become (to receive the teachings), or, since it exactly predicts some esoteric vase types, it may already carry some meaning as essentially a vase of generation (*utpatti*) in the visualization of paradisaal *vyūhas* or, possibly, in certain types of meditations on various deities. In any case, it probably signifies some sort of initiation (*abhiṣeka*). Since the kingship rituals associated with the vase type predate Buddhism and continued in varying forms through to the Islamic period, there is little doubt that some sort of *abhiṣeka* (literally, "head-sprinkling") initiation is being indicated. Within the context of Maitreya cult it may have symbolized the promise to the faithful that attained his paradise of their own individual future *cakravartin-ship* with its inherent promise of either Universal Monarch-hood or Buddha-hood. Just how it would be specifically interpreted by the various levels of laity and various ranks of monks is unknown. Interestingly, Maitreya's association with the vase soon died out in China, Yet survives to the present day in Tibet. In China and Japan, Avalokiteśvara assumes an association with a seemingly related vase, a *kuṇḍika*, a mouth washing vessel that symbolizes ritual purity.
  17. I am indebted to my Graduate Student, Carolyn W. Schmidt, for this information. She will, I am sure, treat this subject in detail in her forthcoming dissertation on the crown in Buddhism.
  18. For example, see Domenico Faccenna, *Sculptures from the Sacred Area of Butkara I*, Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente: Reports and Memoirs, vol. II, ptd. 2, plates CCLXX-XII and CLXXXIIIa.
  19. There are several examples of Maitreya Bodhisattva in stucco from Hadda. For a very late example see *stupa* four in the *stūpa* court. See Susan L. Huntington and Janice L. Dundon, editors, *American Committee for South Asia Art: "Gandhāra," "Hadda" (I-1212)*, the Inter-Documentation Company, Leiden, n.d., fiche 1, no. 20.
  20. See D. B. Spooner, "Excavations at Sahribahlol," *Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports, 1911-1912*, p. 55 and pl. XX, d and e. Here, in the first publication of this iconographic convention, Spooner recognizes this type of figure as Maitreya but presents them as such without discussion of any relevant iconographic features.
  21. While much smaller and, therefore, significantly less detailed, the scene of Amitāyus' Sukhāvati in the Chandigarh stele is iconographically and iconologically very close to the Mohammed Nari stele discussed in my "A Gandhāran Image of Amitāyus' Sukhāvati," in *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, Vol. 40 (N.S. XXX), pp. 651-672, especially p. 656.
  22. Lee, *op. cit* pp. 211-215.
  23. Again I qualify the use of this term by referring the reader to Appendix One.
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24. There has been an interesting inconsistency brought about by this type of image. For example, Harald Ingholt in this catalog of material photographed by Islay Lyons (I. Lyons and H. Ingholt. *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*, New York, 1957) identifies one such image (Figure 309) as Maitreya- presumably the identifying feature is the "two loops" hair arrangement- while he identifies two others (Figures 319 and 325) as simply "Preaching Bodhisattva." This kind of inconsistency has run through literature on the Gandhāran iconography of this image type. I should also note that his Figure 325 is the same as that published in ASIAR 09-10, but at the time of Lyon's photograph it was lacking its head.
25. Some of the earliest caves at Dunhuang have nearly identical figures. See Dunhuang Institute, *op. cit.* vol. 1, pl. 12, the north wall of cave 275 easternmost sculpture. Not only is the position of the figure virtually identical to the sculpture under discussion, but the triangular throne backs that appear to either side of the figure are virtually identical to those in Figure 6 of this article. This suggests that the image at Dunhuang was modeled directly on Gandharan prototypes. Since these are Northern (Bei) Liang caves, it also, very convincingly, suggests a late third or early fourth century date for the prototype in Gandhāra.
26. They are conceptually identical at all but one level. I must beg my reader's indulgence for not explaining in greater detail the identification of the image of Maitreya on the pedestal as the "earthly manifestation who appears to receive the devotions of the faithful" ("object of worship"). In my current research on Gandhāran images, it has become apparent that the lower register of any Gandhāran image usually contains manifestations and symbols that are more directly related to the worship practices of the populace (just as the Seattle piece has, with the worshippers beside the lower figure rather than the upper figure). Although it is not universal, the convention predominates in Gandhāran sculpture. Accordingly, one must assume that there were accepted explanations of how Maitreya would have been resident in Tusita, greeting the deceased and appearing to the living faithful all at the same time. For another example in which the lower register of figure interacts with the devotee, see my "A Gandhāran Image of Amītayus' Sukhāvati" cited in note 13 above pp. 666-67.
27. *Dīgha Nikāya* vol. 3. 00. 159, translated as *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. 3, pp. 151. While, in general, I have reservations about using references to the Pali canon for the study of Gandhāran iconographic problems, this and the following references are so ubiquitous that they seem to have been foregone conclusions in early Buddhism and therefore examples would be acceptable from virtually any source. For more on my reservations about using the Pāli canon, see the section of my letter to Maurizio Taddei, published in his "Addenda to the Story of the Buddha and the Skull-tapper (AION, 39, 1979,3)" in *Analli dell' Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, vol. 43 (1983), pp. 335-337.
28. E.G. *Majjhima Nikāya*, vol. 1, pp. 147-48 in the text and in the translation, (*Middle Length Sayings*), pp. 189-90. There is an interesting dichotomy in the Pali canon. On one hand the way of Brahma is the Buddha's way and, on the other, Brahma is Buddha's enemy (*Dīgha Nikāya*, vol. III, p. 175. However, the great emphasis is on how much like Brahma the Buddha is and how "Brahma-fa'ing" will advance one in the Buddhological quest.
29. E.G. *Dīgha Nikāya*, translated as the *dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. 1, p. 319.
30. In Mahāyāna, all of the major Bodhisattvas are considered to be fully enlightened beings. They are waiting until all other sentient beings are saved prior to accepting their own Buddhahood. I have yet to learn what, if any, distinction is made between the enlightenment of a "fully enlightened" Bodhisattva and a Buddha. I presume there is held to be no difference, but no

definitive source or authority on the topic has yet come to my attention.

31. Constance Bond, unpublished seminar paper, June 1975. Presented before the Association for Asian Studies, annual meeting 31 March 1979.
32. There are clearly other Bodhisattvas in Gandhāran sculpture, such as Avalokiteśvara, Mahāstamaprāpta, Sāmantabhadra, and, awaiting proper publication of his identification, an image in the Royal Ontario Museum, on Sūryaprabhā (with an obvious sun chariot ie his headdress). These other Bodhisattvas do not seem to have very strong iconographic identities in Gandhāran iconographics and there are many problems with their respective identifications. Among the most convincing identifications are that of the ROM Sūryaprabhā with his sun chariot, and Avalokiteśvara carrying the wreath as a symbol of promised victory for the practitioner. Other identifications, including those based on the presence of a Buddha in the headdress, usually associated with Avalokiteśvara but textually associated with Maitreya as well, are problematic. Other emblems, the lotus for example, when it is held in an upright position, may be specific (to Avalokiteśvara) but when held in some other position is not indicative of any presently identifiable Bodhisattva. For more on this problem see my "A Gandhāran Image of Amitāyus' Sukhāvati," cited above in note 13.
33. This is a very complex issue. The iconography of early images of Avalokiteśvara in China is unquestionably intermixed with that of Maitreya. This led me to currently hold the opinion that the cult of Avalokiteśvara had its origins in the cult of Maitreya. If we accept the translation of the name Avalokiteśvara as the "Lord-who looks-down (and add) [from Tuṣita heaven]" the issue may become clearer. Moreover, the compassion connection of the two Bodhisattvas in early literature is very closely related. Maitreya is the hypostasis of Brahmā while Avalokiteśvara is the personification of the *Brahmavihāra*. The resolution of the origin and early development of Avalokiteśvara and other *karuṇā* side issues awaits extensive further research.
34. See both my "The Tendai Iconographic Model Book *Shosozuzu dated 1858*," in *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Cultures*, vol. 4, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 266-67, and *Mikkyo Daijiten*, Kyoto, f.p. 1932 (Showa 6), reprinted 1975 (Showa 49), vol. 6, pp. 2128-29.
35. The *Mahāvairocanaśūtra* itself must be fifth century at the latest. The fact that both the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*, which is based on the *Mahāvairocanaśūtra*, and the *Mahāvairocanaśūtra* are iconographically present in the themes developed in the sixth century Aurangabad, Caves i.e., 6, 6A and 7 (and 9) dictates that there had to be a period of development sufficient for both texts to have developed prior to their use there. See my work cited in note 2.
36. For a second century example of what is probably a *pañājinamaṇḍala* see the discussion of the Jamalgi mound *stūpa* in my soon to be published paper, "Mathura Evidence for the Early Teachings of Mahāyāna," in *Proceedings of the Mathura Seminar* (8-16 January 1980), edited by Doris Srinivasan, American Institute of Indian Studies, forthcoming, 1984 or 1985.
37. See Lee, *op. cit.* pp. 357-390 for a thorough refutation of the "Maitreya arose from Mithra" theory of the origin of Maitreya.
38. For a late ninth century example of this *mudrā* as made by Ekamudrā-Mahāvairocana, see Takaaki Sawa, *Art In Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*, translated by Richard L. Gage, New York and Tokyo 1972, p. 25 (figure 14).



39. See my "Cave Six, at Aurangabad: A Tantrāyana Monument?" in *Kalādarśana: American Studies in the Art of India*, edited by Joanna G. Williams, new Delhi, 35c., 1981, pp. 47-55. for a fully developed sixth century Tantric monument and further discussion on the earliness of Tantra. See especially note 4, p. 53, regarding the earliness of Tantra. See also, Alex Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra*, Delhi, 1977, p. 99 for the earliness of yet another Tantric system.
40. See the Dunhuang Institute, *op. cit.* vol. 1, pl. 30 (cave 254) and pl. 68 (cave 435). The latter image is crowned, a certain sign of esoteric Buddhist practices.
41. See note 40.

### FIGURE LIST

1. "Mānusi" Buddhas, Peshawar Museum.
2. Standing Tuṣita-Maitreya with vase and "two loops" hair arrangement, Peshawar Museum.
3. Seated Tuṣita-Maitreya with vase and bun in hairnet hair arrangement, Indian Museum, Calcutta.
4. Seated, *dhyanamudra* Tusita-Maitreya with vase pendent from left hand, Lahore Museum.
5. Seated, *dharmacakramudrā* Tusita-Maitreya with a scene of devotees worshipping the vase on the base, Peshawar Museum.
6. Detail of a Maitreya in Tusita group, Lahore Museum.
7. The visualization of the identity between Amitābha's Sukhāvati and Maitreya's Tusita from the *Pratyutpanna-samādhisūtra*, Candigarh Museum.
8. "Cross-ankled", *dharmacakramudrā* Tusita-Maitreya, National Museum, Karachi.
9. Standing Tusita-Maitreya with vase (only fragments remain) and bun in hairnet hair arrangement with a scene of devotion to a seated image of Maitreya on the base.
10. Seated, *dharmacakramudrā* Tuṣita-Maitreya with "Apollo" hair arrangement with a scene of devotion to a seated, *dhyanamudra* Maitreya on the base, Peshawar Museum.
11. Standing Ketumati-Maitreya with a scene of devotion to a seated Tusita-Maitreya on the base, Indian Museum, Calcutta.
12. Seated, *dharmacakramudrā* Ketumati-Maitreya with a scene of devotion to a seated Tusita-Maitreya on the base, Peshawar Museum.
13. Seated, *dhyanamudra* Tusita-Maitreya with the bodhisattvas from the *mandala* of Maitreya-Pranidhana-Gatharaja on the base, Peshawar Museum.



Figure 1

Figure 2



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Figure 3

Figure 4





Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8





Figure 9

Figure 10



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Figure 11

Figure 12



Figure 13

