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DYNAMIC ENCOUNTERS: USE OF A HELLENISTIC MOTIF IN THE STORY OF AṅGULIMĀLA IN GANDHĀRAN ART

ASHWINI LAKSHMINARAYANAN

ABSTRACT · Ancient Gandhāra was located in the Peshawar valley and its artistic influence can be detected in modern Pakistan, North-western India, and parts of North-eastern Afghanistan from the first to fourth century CE. Literary and archaeological evidence from this region highlights its importance along ancient trade routes connecting the Mediterranean, the Near East, Central Asia, India, and China. Within this context, this article will demonstrate how western motifs were adapted and used in the Gandhāran repertoire using the reliefs depicting the story of Aṅgulimāla. Aṅgulimāla was a violent brigand who wore the fingers of his victims like a garland. He wished to kill his own mother, but the Buddha intervened and stopped him. Their interaction resulted in the conversion of the brigand and his entry into the Buddhist community as a peaceful monk. The story was well known and was depicted in both stone reliefs and wall paintings within Gandhāra. The violent nature of Aṅgulimāla and his passion to kill were conveyed in Gandhāran art using the 'hair-pulling' motif. The motif was popular in Hellenistic art and is also found in portable objects recovered from Central Asia and North-western India. This study aims to show that the presence of this motif in the Gandhāran Buddhist artistic repertoire was a direct consequence of the economic, political, and cultural interaction between the East and the West during the Kuṣāṇa rule.

KEYWORDS · Hellenistic Art, Buddhism, Sacrifice, Heracles, Hair, Aṅgulimāla, Buddha.

THIS article explores how the 'hair-pulling' motif from Hellenistic art was adapted in Gandhāran art within the context of violence and aggression in two parts. The first section outlines how the story of Aṅgulimāla was depicted in Gandhāran art. The second section reveals how the motif was used in Greek Classical art and the Hellenistic art of Bactria. The story of Aṅgulimāla is also depicted in other Buddhist sites such as Sānchi, Bhārhut, Amaravātī, Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, and Kizil.¹ It is interesting to note that the other depictions do not include the 'hair-pulling' motif, suggesting that Gandhāran artists made use of an existing motif that was derived from the Hellenistic repertoire.

CONTEXT

Ancient Gandhāra refers to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region formerly known as the North-Western Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan. The core of the region was the Peshawar valley and comprised of modern Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda, and Nowshera. This core is often referred to in art historical and linguistic studies as 'Gandhāra Proper'. On the other hand, 'Greater Gandhāra' is used to denote the regions immediately outside 'Gandhāra Proper' but closely related to it.² Gandhāran art was not a unified homogenous production and preserves a remarkable diver-

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This study is adapted from my ongoing PhD project on gender in Gandhāran art at the Università di Roma 'La Sapienza' under the supervision of Dr Prof. Marco Galli. I thank Ms. Dominique Goddard for proofreading. All mistakes are my own.

¹ Depictions of the same episode from Sānchi, Amaravātī, Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, and Kizil can be found in ZIN 2005, 705-713.

² The terms were first used by Salomon in his study of

Buddhist manuscripts emerging from Gandhāra in 1999. He also noted that «'Greater Gandhāra' can be understood as a primarily linguistic rather than a political term, that is, as comprising the regions where Gāndhārī was the indigenous or adopted language» (SALOMON 2018, 11). Based on this characteristic, the region of Greater Gandhāra can extend from the Hindu Kush, along the Karakorum, and even to the Tarim Basin where Gandhārī was used in administrative texts. Furthermore, Buddhism around Nagarahāra/Jalalabad area was an offshoot of Buddhism around Peshawar as the two provinces were similar in weather, language, and probably social customs (FUSSMAN 2015, 155).

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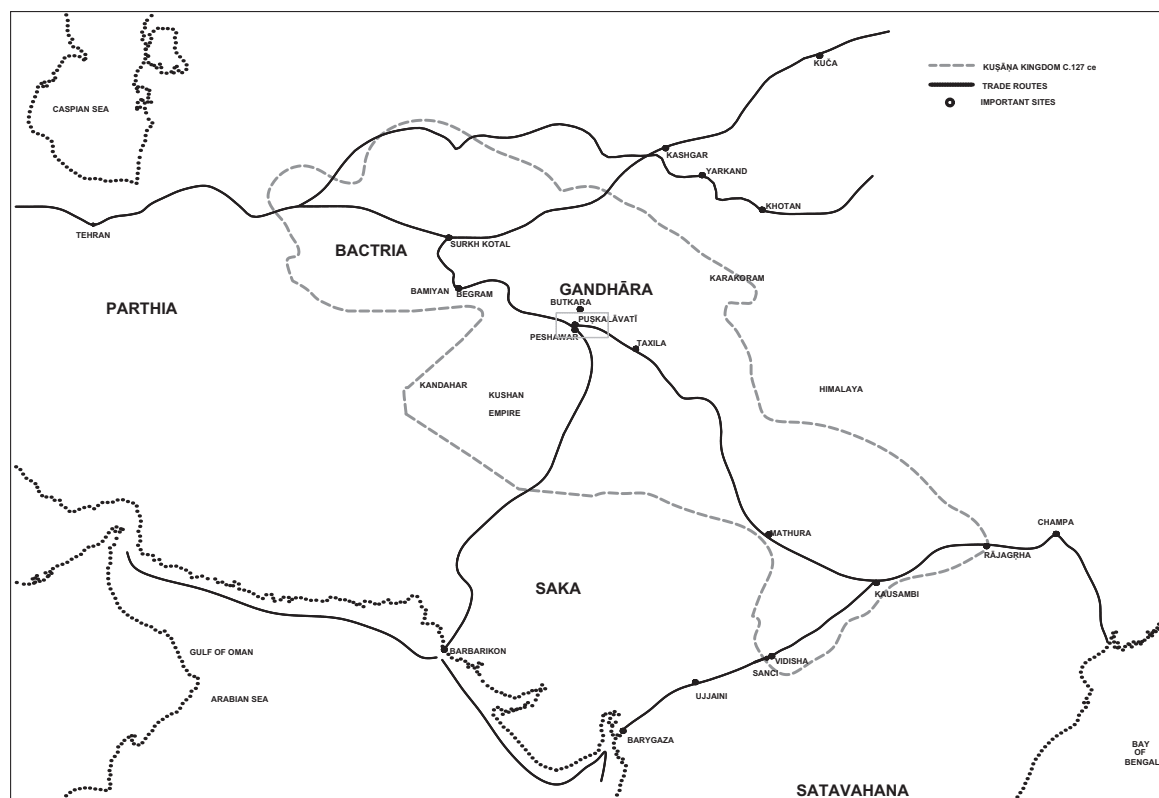


FIG. 1. The Kuṣāṇa empire during the reign of Kaniṣka based on Asia Society 2020, not to scale (Drawing: Author).

sity of styles and motifs. Using an umbrella term such as Gandhāran art to describe all the different local workshops with their specific idiosyncrasies within this large geographic region has its own limitations. Since many of the material available to us today do not come from secure archaeological contexts, it is difficult to paint a complete picture of how reliefs came to be produced within the region, and how motifs were chosen based on the geographic locations and workshops.³ In the following article, I use Gandhāran art to include sites in both 'Gandhāra Proper' and 'Greater Gandhāra' in the first centuries CE (FIG. 1). In this context, the term corresponds not only to the reliefs found in 'Gandhāra Proper' but also in areas located around it, namely the Swat valley. The shared features in the material emerging from North-west Pakistan to North-east Afghanistan seem to justify the adoption of this terminology. Until more information about site clusters can be gathered based on rigorous archaeological research, the use of the term Gandhāran art with complete awareness of the term's limitations remains the best possibility going forward.⁴

Following the successful conquest of parts of Gandhāra by Alexander III of Macedon, Greek historians conceptualised the geography of the region based on their own myths.⁵ Alexander was described as an inheritor of the mythical kingdom of Dionysus and Heracles who were not only con-

³ This type of study is only possible in sites that were systematically excavated such as the excavations of Butkara I and Saidu Sharif I conducted in Swat valley by the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO, formerly the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente IsMEO).

⁴ A synthesis of the geography of Gandhāra can be found in ZWALF 1996, 11-14). It does not mention Zar Dheri which

forms the eastern boundary of the region by the Siran river. It was excavated later by the Tokyo National Museum Mission to Pakistan and the Department of Archaeology and Museums of the Government of Pakistan. BOPEARACHCHI 2020 catalogues the reliefs from this site along with excellent photographs.

⁵ *Anab.* v. 1.1-2.1; *Indica*. III.29-30.

nected to the Macedonian Argead dynasty (G. Argeádai, Gk. Ἀργεῖοι) but were also seen as conquerors of India.⁶ Alexander's conquests were unstable and soon Gandhāra was wrested between the Seleucids, Mauryans, Greco-Bactrians, Indo-Greeks, Indo-Parthian, and Scythian kingdoms.⁷ Finally, under the Kuṣāṇas, Gandhāra and its adjoining regions belonged to a single unified political power until the third century CE (FIG. 1). The creation of a unified Kuṣāṇa kingdom accelerated economic and cultural contacts between the Mediterranean, Central Asia, Gandhāra, and the Tarim Basin.⁸

Excavations in the region have yielded large-scale Buddhist *saṃgharāmas* (monasteries) and urban settlements. They commonly contained *stūpas* (mound-like or hemispherical burial monuments that contained sacred objects) and *chaityas* (shrines) that were worshipped by the local Buddhists and pilgrims. These monuments were decorated with elaborate reliefs narrating the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni and were viewed by the worshippers during the *pradakṣiṇa* (ritual circumambulation) of the *stūpa*. It is within this context, the story of Aṅgulimāla and his conversion is located.

The construction and embellishment of the sacred complexes were supported by kings, queens, and local elites revealing their popularity within the region. Local royalty such as the Apracarājas and Oḍirājas, and their families donated generously to the Buddhist community. These local kingdoms were allied to the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian kingdoms that controlled Gandhāra. The Apracarājas, who ruled in the Bajaur valley, are known from seven-coin issues, over twenty donative inscriptions, five seals, and one Buddhist Kharoṣṭhī manuscript. The Oḍirājas ruled the kingdom of Uḍḍiyāna in the Swat valley and their lineage is known to us through the gold scroll inscription of king Seṇavarma.⁹ Their royal administration reflected the multicultural nature of their kingdom and included titles such as *stratega* or generals (G. strategos, Gk. Στρατηγός), *anankaia* or ministers (G. anamkaya, Gk. ἀναγκαιός), and *meridarkhena* or district officers (G. meridarkhes, Gk. Μεριδάρχης).¹⁰ The popularity of Buddhist institutions amongst royals is further affirmed by a recently discovered Gāndhārī manuscript which identifies Vima Kadphises, the third Kuṣāṇa king as a donor to a Buddhist monastery.¹¹

THE STORY OF AṅGULIMĀLA

The conversion of Aṅgulimāla, from blood-thirsty brigand to peaceful monk, was popular in both Buddhist art and literature.¹² In literary sources, it is preserved in the Pali *Aṅgulimāla sutta*,¹³ the *Mahāvagga*,¹⁴ the *Dhammapadattakatha*¹⁵ and the *Theragāthā*.¹⁶ It was also found in fragments belonging to the Śrāvākayāna-schools,¹⁷ the Turfan collection, and two fragments from the Hoernle collection.¹⁸ It was translated into Chinese five times¹⁹ and can be found in the Tibetan text *'dzangs blun zhes byaba'i mdo* (*Sūtra of the Wise Man and the Fool*). The different literary sources generally describe the same details. In one text, he was the handsome son of a minister in the court of King

⁶ For the relationship between Alexander-Dionysus-Heracles, see AVI-YONAH 1978, 11-21; FISCHER 1987, 59-65; MUSSINO 2000, 111-121.

⁷ This is also evident in Patala in the lower Indus, where the Macedonian fleet was prematurely pushed out [Strab. 15.2.5 = FGrH 133 F 1a (Jacoby)]. Arrian stated that Alexander made a station and ship sheds at Patala, near the Indus river [Anab. VI. 18.2 = FGrH 133 F 33 (Jacoby)].

⁸ NEELIS 2007, 79; IDEM 2011, 133.

⁹ CKI 249 found at <https://gandhari.org/catalog?textID=249> (created by Stefan Baums and Andrew Glass accessed on 23.03.2021).

¹⁰ For an analysis of Greek names and titles in Gandhāra see FALK 2010, 73-89.

¹¹ Mark Allon identified that in Fragment A of the Gandhārī manuscript of the *Pratyutpannabuddhasammukhavasthitasamādhī Sūtra*, Grema Kataphsa or Katapha of the ledger as Vima Kadphises (2019, 2). He dated the manuscript

between 104/5 CE and 127 CE as it corresponds to the reign of the king.

¹² For a summary see GOMBRICH 1996.

¹³ MN 86 in HORNER 1957, No. 86, 284-285.

¹⁴ *Mahāvagga* I. 41.

¹⁵ BURLINGAME 1921, XIII.5-6.

¹⁶ RHYS DAVIDS 1913, CCLV, 319-320.

¹⁷ HARTMANN 1997-98, 351-363.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 357.

¹⁹ ANALAYO 2011, 485-502; ZIN 2006, 101-107. Out of which, only three versions of the *Taishō Tripitaka* (hereby abbreviated as T.), the T. 118 (*Yang juemo jing* translated by Dharmarakṣa in 226-313 CE), T. 119 (*Yang jue ji jing*, translated by Fa Zhu in 290-307 CE) and T. 120 (*Yang juemolou jing*, translated by Gunabhadra in 435-443 CE) are relevant to the current context (THOMPSON 2015, 162, fn.8). The story continued to be popular in the seventh century as noted by Xuanzang, the Chinese pilgrim (BEAL 1884, 3).

Prasenjit, and in another text, he was a student at Taxila.²⁰ As he grew up, he became stronger than elephants and could defeat thousands of people in combat. He was able to jump as fast as a horse and fly like a bird.²¹ As a good student, he rejected the sexual advances made by his teacher's wife, but the wife became upset and wanted revenge. She concocted a lie that Aṅgulimāla attacked her and convinced her husband, the teacher to punish him. Without physically harming Aṅgulimāla, the teacher planned to punish him indirectly. He ordered his student to kill a hundred people and collect their fingers as proof.²² Murder was a heinous crime that generated bad karma and resulted in the birth of the aggressor in Avici hell. Unable to refuse his teacher's orders, Aṅgulimāla began his murder spree.

Due to his strength, he was able to capture and kill people quickly and efficiently. He collected the fingers of his victims as proof for his teacher and wore them around his neck. While townspeople were fleeing their homes in fear of the serial murderer, his mother, Mantānī decided to bring him food. Upon seeing Mantānī, Aṅgulimāla realised that he only needed his final kill to complete the task and decided to sacrifice her. Buddha, in his all-knowing nature, understood that Aṅgulimāla was about to commit a heinous crime, appeared before him to stop him. Seeing the Buddha, he changed his mind and let go of his mother and decided to kill the Buddha instead.²³ Despite chasing the Buddha, he was unable to catch up to him. The tale reaches its conclusion when the Buddha preaches to Aṅgulimāla and successfully converts him. The story highlights the ultimate strength of the Buddha as he was able to tame even the worst of criminals and bring them into the fold of Buddhism.

Gandhāran reliefs

Aṅgulimāla was depicted at least eleven times in stone reliefs and once on a wall painting in Haḍḍa, Afghanistan.²⁴ The Gandhāran artists chose to depict a critical moment rather than the entire story, with Aṅgulimāla aiming to kill his mother and being stopped by the Buddha's presence. The reliefs were previously studied by Maurizio Taddei and Pia Brancaccio. According to Taddei, the story of Aṅgulimāla was adapted into Buddhism and possessed a non-Buddhistic core. He argued that the depiction of Aṅgulimāla reflected Dionysiac iconographical influence due to his silvan features.²⁵ He noted that jumping personages from Classical art were used in Gandhāran art to depict *yakṣas* (semi-divine nature divinities) and should not be dated earlier than the first century CE. Aṅgulimāla may be a representative of *yakṣas* and other local semi-divinities who were converted to Buddhism and represented exemplars. He also added that representations of Mantānī in Gandhāran reliefs are comparable to the Bacchanalian female assistant offering a bowl. On the other hand, Brancaccio's analysis focussed on the relationship between Aṅgulimāla and the forest within which he spent most of his time. According to her, the story provided insights into the way the forest was perceived by the early Buddhists. By taming the forest-dweller Aṅgulimāla, the Buddha was presented as having tamed the forest itself, which was perceived as a place of chaos that needed to be brought into "the folds of the *dharma*".²⁶ Aṅgulimāla represented forest dwellers who were converted to Buddhism during the early days.²⁷ In depicting this story, Brancaccio persuasively argued that the Gandhāran artists successfully combined both Indian and Western motifs.²⁸ The aim of the current analysis is not to debate the points previously raised by Taddei and Brancaccio, but to add the discussion regarding semantic convergence in Gandhāran art using the 'hair-pulling' motif.

Few fragments depicting this story come from known excavated contexts. Even in these cases, their dating remains a matter of dispute. The eleven known fragments can be classified into two types. The first type depicts Aṅgulimāla holding the hair of his mother and about to kill her. He is

²⁰ T. 202 (*Xianyu-jing*, "Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish") see FRYE 1981, 180-195. In the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, he was born in Taxila (RHYS DAVIDS 1913, CCLV, 319-320).

²¹ FRYE 1981, 180.

²² The number of people required for the sacrifice changes between the texts. For example, in T.202, the number is thousand.

²³ In the Chinese *Ekottarika-āgama*, he comically states that he would be back for his meal after killing the Buddha (EĀ xxxviii.6:).

²⁴ For the painting in Haḍḍa see VANLEENE 2019, 143-167.

²⁵ TADDEI 1969, 64.

²⁶ BRANCACCIO 1999, 117.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 116.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 114.



FIG. 2. Detail of the relief from Sahri Bahlol with the story of Aṅgulimāla, h. 40.6 cm, Peshawar Museum No. 1371 (Drawing: Author).

interrupted by the standing Buddha who preaches to him. On the other hand, the second type depicts Aṅgulimāla seated or standing next to his mother to indicate their conversation, and then later next to the Buddha with his sword raised in attack mode.²⁹ In all the reliefs, the story ends with a converted Aṅgulimāla falling upon the feet of the Buddha. His crown made of fingers can also be identified on the ground signifying the change in his personality.

The 'hair-pulling' motif is only preserved in 'Type 1' as it captures the moment before Aṅgulimāla kills his victim. In this type, Aṅgulimāla is depicted two or three times to indicate the temporal progression of the story.³⁰ A relief from the Peshawar Museum depicts the most elaborate version of this type (FIG. 2). The Buddha is the central figure of the narrative and is depicted

²⁹ KURITA 2003, Pl. 473 (Private collection, Provenance Unknown); *Ibidem* P3-IX (Private collection, Provenance Unknown); *Ibidem* Pl. 475 (Sahri Bahlol); DANI 1968-69, fig. 9 (Chatpat); FOUCHER 1905-51, ii, fig. 305 (Provenance Unknown).

³⁰ A total of five reliefs: CSMVS No. 23929; Peshawar Museum No. 1371, No. 02770 (from Sahri Bahlol); KURITA 2003; *Ibidem* Pl. 472 (Private Collection, Provenance unknown); *Ibidem* Pl. 471 (Private collection, Provenance Unknown).

in large proportions, whereas the other figures are smaller in comparison. He is depicted only once in the centre, in the *abhayamudrā* (gesture of fearlessness), with his right hand held upright, and palm facing outwards. The other main figures, Aṅgulimāla and Mantānī are depicted in the front. Subsidiary figures such as the celebrating crowd and followers of the Buddha are depicted on the back. The relief is fragmented but the figure of Aṅgulimāla is depicted three times. Reading the episode temporally, the story starts with Aṅgulimāla and Mantānī on the right. Aṅgulimāla stands wearing a finger crown, and a short, tattered lower garment with a rolled girdle. He holds a sword in his right hand and towers over his mother, Mantānī. Mantānī wears a long-sleeved garment, and her hair is untied. Aṅgulimāla holds his mother prisoner by grabbing her hair and pulling it to sacrifice her as his last victim. His intention, not just to obtain her fingers for his garland, but also to kill her is conveyed using the 'hair-pulling' motif. After being interrupted, he decides to kill the Buddha standing to his left. He is portrayed for the second time, flexing his body, with one leg raised and his sword swooping down to attack the Buddha. During the climax of the story, Aṅgulimāla is depicted for the third and final time, paying his respects by the feet of the Buddha. His finger garland lies at the base of the relief and the onlookers celebrate the Buddha's strength and Aṅgulimāla's miraculous conversion.

In another relief, the 'hair-pulling' motif is only partially preserved (FIG. 3). The central figure is the standing Buddha in *abhayamudrā*. He is accompanied by Vajrapani, wearing a short garment with a rolled girdle, and holding a *vajra* in his left hand. Mantānī stands on the left proper, and the figure of Aṅgulimāla next to her is missing. Nevertheless, her hair is held by a hand that certainly belonged to her son. At the centre of the relief, Aṅgulimāla is depicted for the second time as he attempts to kill the Buddha. He is depicted for the final time by the feet of the Buddha in *añjalimudrā*, with his palms held together in reverence after his conversion. His conversion is conveyed to the viewer by the missing finger crown. Several male figures watch the conversion and celebrate the Buddha's powers.

The motif is not limited to Aṅgulimāla's failed attempt to kill his mother. Successful killings of Aṅgulimāla also use the motif to depict the brigand capturing people. On a relief from the stūpa of Shnaisha in Swat valley, Aṅgulimāla captures travellers seated inside a horse-drawn cart.³¹ Although it does not show Aṅgulimāla killing his victims, the information is conveyed by the 'hair-pulling' motif which dramatically implies their fate. The location of the scene is a forest as implied by the tree in the background. A two-horse-drawn ceremonial cart with three passengers is depicted on the right. The body of the cart is decorated, and a few decorative ridges are visible. Two figures stand within the cart with their hands thrown up in fear. The third figure is pulled by his hair and completely bent over the front of the cart. He is likely the driver as he holds the reins. Aṅgulimāla stands in front of the carriage with one foot on the forest floor and the other placed on the head of the horses. He wears a short lower garment with a frontal zone. His attributes such as the sword and the finger crown are not preserved on the relief. His right hand is likely raised with a sword and, with his left hand, he drags the driver by the hair.

In Gandhāran reliefs, Aṅgulimāla is shown repeatedly performing the same task before killing his victims. He grabs them by their hair to prevent them from moving and prepares to deal a killing blow. The 'hair-pulling' motif was used by Gandhāran artists to convey the violent aggressive actions of Aṅgulimāla without depicting the actual killing. The motif, we will see, has a long history in the Classical repertoire and was adapted in Gandhāran art specifically for this context.

³¹ RAHMAN 1993, 94, PL XLB. The fragment was dated to Period I of the site, around the first century CE, and measures 28 x 33 cm. The complete panel was broken into two fragments and the larger piece is preserved in the SSAQ Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at the University of Peshawar. The larger fragment is recorded under no. SSA

1990-1-119. The upper fragment is currently missing. In the excavation report, both fragments were identified and photographed (ZARAWAR 2014, 43-54). The surface of the fragment is damaged and the details such as clothing and jewellery are not completely preserved.

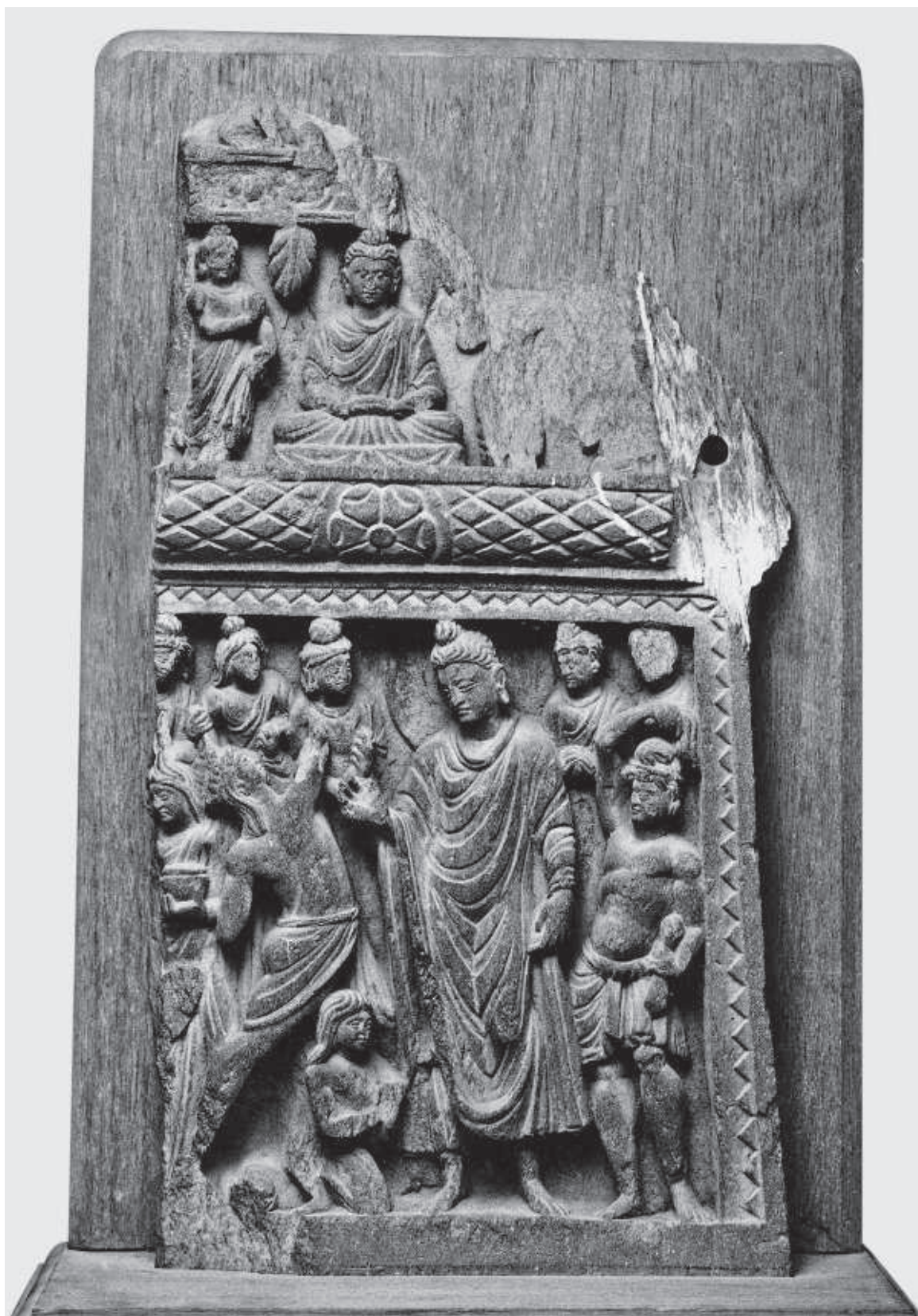


FIG. 3. Relief depicting the conversion of Aṅgulimāla AIIS Negative Accession no. 23929
(© AIIS Photo Archive).

'Hair-pulling' motif

The motif has its earliest precedent in a relief from the Throne Room of Ashurbanipal's Northwest Palace, which depicts captive women dragged by their hair.³² The forcible dragging of the hair which would be otherwise neatly and elaborately coiffured can be interpreted as the debasement of the victim. Free women who were forced into captivity were dragged by their hair in a derogatory manner to emphasise the change in their status.

In Classical Greek art, the motif became associated with rape and sacrifice, and it was commonly used in *Illioupersis* scenes. A popular subject of this period, vase paintings depict Ajax the Lesser abducting and raping the Trojan Cassandra in the Sanctuary of Athena. A kylix dated around 500 BCE–490 BCE, now at Villa Giulia, depicts Ajax dragging Cassandra by her hair, with his left arm.³³ His right arm, which is missing, presumably held his weapon. Another depiction on a hydria of *kalpis* type (rounded shoulder) attributed to the Kleophrades Painter in Naples also preserves the motif.³⁴ The painting depicts the sacking of Troy around the shoulder of the vessel. It preserves multiple scenes including Aeneas fleeing Troy, Askanios leading the way, Cassandra beseeching Ajax, and the mourning of Priam. During the height of the war, Greek soldiers are depicted capturing youthful Trojans by their hair to kill them.

A bronze casket known as the 'Revil cista' and dated between 325 BCE–250 BCE from Palestrina shows the motif in a sacrificial scene.³⁵ It depicts an episode from the *Iliad*, where Achilles performs a human sacrifice in front of Patroclus' funerary pyre. He pulls back the head of a young Trojan prisoner as he is about to sacrifice them. Several nude Trojan youths stand to the right, guarded by well-armoured Greeks, and await their eventual death.

In both Classical and Hellenistic art, the motif was associated with Amazonomachy and Centauro-machy. In scenes of Amazonomachy, Greek soldiers attack and kill Amazons, a tribe of female warriors. They drag the female warriors forcefully by their hair to rape and kill them.³⁶ A marble block from the temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassai depicts the battle between the Greeks and the Amazons.³⁷ The East and South frieze depicts a male figure pulling the hair of an Amazon and his left foot is pushed against her leg to gain traction. Her entire body is curved towards the male figure as she attempts to release the hold on her head. Her two hands also push against the male figure in an unsuccessful attempt to break free.

In the Hellenistic period, the motif can be identified on the Great Frieze from Pergamon in high relief. It was part of the relief programme of the Altar of Zeus, erected around 175 BCE on the Pergamene Acropolis. It preserves the most elaborate depiction of the Gigantomachy with a height of 2.30 m and length of 120 m in vivid detail. One scene shows Athena grabbing the hair of a giant to prevent its escape. It is carved dramatically with the giant being subjugated and dragged by Athena.³⁸ The twists and turns of the giant's captured body, the expression of anger and despair in his face as a response to Athena's forceful dragging of his hair are carefully executed by the artists.

³² Cifarelli 1998, 221.

³³ For the image see: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Villa+Giulia+121110&object=vase> accessed on 21.01.2020.

³⁴ For image see: <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/record/5E80388C-3FoB-402B-8AAD-F7D3D71532CF> accessed on 21.01.2020.

³⁵ See BM 1859,0816.1 accessed on 23.03.2020. The motif is also used by tragedy writers and historians to signify rape (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1347–53; Eur. *Andr.* 390–406; *Helen* 115; *Trojan Women* 860; Diod. 17.35.6–7).

³⁶ Bartman's study engaged with individualised hairstyles of women in Roman portraits during the second and third century CE. On one hand, elaborate coiffures were associated

with female behaviours, leisure, cults, and determined the physical attractiveness of the woman. On the other hand, unkempt hair was associated with "barbaric" women when depicted in the context of Roman triumph (Bartman 2001, 6). Unbound hair of women was used to control them and simultaneously represent the control of barbarians. Cosgrove studied unbound hair in the Greco-Roman world and noted that it had sexual connotations. The act of unbinding women's hair was associated with religious devotion, sexual aggression, and prostitution. Unbound hair was associated with grief and supplication to male warriors to beg for peace and avert war (Cosgrove 2005, 684).

³⁷ See British Museum No. 1815,1020.22.

³⁸ Farnell 1882, 331.

A related episode was found on a plaster fragment in Termez, Southern Uzbekistan.³⁹ The fragment depicts Heracles at the centre fighting two males with serpent-like legs. Heracles is naked except for the lion's skin on his shoulder. His right hand is raised with a long sword and his left hand is missing. Based on other depictions of Heracles in combat and the position of the anguiped (or giant) on the right, it is clear that Heracles' missing left hand held the hair of the anguiped to render him immobile. Another anguiped is depicted on the left and he attempts to stop Heracles' descending sword by pushing against his right bicep. Despite its fragmentary state, the object is important in establishing the relationship between the motif in Hellenistic and Gandhāran contexts.

The popularity of this motif in Bactria can be identified based on several objects recovered in this region. The motif continued to be part of episodes that depict the complete subjugation of an opponent and sacrifice. It was not only confined to monumental art and was also depicted on portable objects. An ivory ceremonial hilt of a double-edged infantry sword (*xiphos*) preserves the moment of triumph of the hero over his enemy. It was found in Corridor no. 2 of the Oxus temple at Takht-i Sangin (modern-day Tajikistan).⁴⁰ The Oxus temple was located within the central mound of the site and was dedicated to the deity of the Oxus river. It consisted of a large central hall with four columns surrounded by subsidiary rooms. The temple was likely used from the Greco-Bactrian period until the end of the Kuṣāṇa rule and accumulated a variety of votive offerings. The artefacts recovered from this temple reveal the strong presence of Greek artistic traditions that were pervasive in decorative, utilitarian, and votive objects.⁴¹ The ivory hilt, dated to the late fourth century BCE, was one of the earliest offerings found within this complex. The hilt survives up to 7.1 cm and depicts a standing Heracles with a club in his right hand and holding Achelous (?) by his hair.⁴² The captured Achelous has his body contorted as Heracles gains traction with his feet to grasp and pull his enemy's hair. The moment of subjugation and intention to kill the opponent is conveyed in the hilt using the 'hair-pulling' motif.

The same structure was used to depict the struggle between Heracles and Nessos on a belt buckle. The artefact was likely found in Bactria but its exact provenance is lost to us.⁴³ The oval-shaped buckle preserves the fight between the two figures on the horizontal axis. Heracles holds a short sword in his left hand and the hair of the centaur in his right hand. He pulls Nessos' hair back and forces the centaur to arch as he gets ready to deal him a deathly blow. The centaur, with his hands reaching towards Heracles, vainly attempts to free himself. The three objects from Bactria during the Hellenistic period, despite their difference in workmanship and material, depict the culminating moment of the confrontation between the hero and his enemy. The grip of the hero's hand on his enemy's hair ensured that the latter did not escape when the hero brought down his sword.

The scene of Heracles fighting in close combat continued to be popular in the post-Hellenistic period. Although the aforementioned objects were precious and rare specimens, their iconography was popular and pervasive. The episode was found on a terracotta plaque, dated to the third century CE, from Kara Pičok in Northern Bactria. It shows a standing Heracles grasping the hair of a male figure before the final kill.⁴⁴ The two male figures are presented frontally and the 'hair-pulling' motif is abstract. Unlike the aforementioned examples, the hair of the enemy is rendered as thin sticks above the head. The static hand of Heracles reaches over to grab the stick-like hair strands of his opponent. The change in the interpretation of the motif by the artist can be attributed to the

³⁹ Termez, along with Bactra, were two important urban centres in Bactria in the Hellenistic period. They were part of the easternmost cities under Seleucid control in Central Asia. Termez is located on the right bank of the Amu Darya river, and its citadel surveyed important trade routes. The plaster moulded fragment was recovered during the excavations conducted by the Mission archéologique Franco-Ouzbèke de Sogdiane (MAFOuz) under the supervision of P. Leriche and Sh. Pidaev. For the image see FRANCFORT 2020, 59, fig. 27.

⁴⁰ It is housed in the Institute of History, Archaeology, and

Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan in Dushanbe (Inv. No. 1224/1091). For a detailed drawing see LITVINSKIY - PIČIKIAN 1995, 136. Other Greek swords and hilts were also found in the Oxus Temple, see IDEM 1999, 47-104. The urban site of Takht-i Sangin (The Stone Platform) was located near an ancient caravan route and was protected by stone defensive walls. For more information see IDEM 1981, 134.

⁴¹ BERNARD 1999, 118.

⁴² LITVINSKIY - PIČIKIAN 1995, 129.

⁴³ ABDULLAEV 2008, 136.

⁴⁴ IDEM 2002, 54.

difference in medium. The lack of space and malleability of the material resulted in static depictions of the two figures and without much room for dynamic movement and detail.

The motif was also found on a silver bowl from Kazakhstan in Turgay province and is currently housed in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.⁴⁵ It is rendered in an abbreviated manner but without doubt, stems from the act of seizing the hair to drag and kill someone. One of the scenes on the bowl narrates the story of Alcestis. The tragedy, dramatized by Euripides, narrates the story of Admetus' quest to find a willing substitute who will die in his place.⁴⁶ His devoted wife Alcestis agrees to sacrifice her life so that Admetus could continue living. The bowl depicts a male figure, holding a staff in his right hand, and touching the head of a female figure with his left hand. The two figures are identified with death and Alcestis, with the former dragging the latter away to be sacrificed. The male figure who strokes her chin is likely her husband bidding her farewell.

The presence of the motif in Bactria during the Hellenistic period and the post-Hellenistic period suggests that the motif may have reached Gandhāra through Bactria. Although the chain of transmission cannot be traced, the presence of the motif in the same context within the two cultures suggests a possible relationship. A concomitant question remains: What are the elements that facilitated the adoption of this motif within the Gandhāran context?⁴⁷ Gandhāran art took from available repertoires what it deemed appropriate for its own context while simultaneously infusing it with its own traditions. Evidence shows that the 'hair-pulling' motif was combined in the local context in novel ways to create something markedly different from the original Hellenistic models. This dynamic of reception prevents us from dichotomising between the original models and the final local product, i.e., presenting the former as superior and the latter as inferior. Such judgments do little to explain the historical context and the presence of the motif within the local context. In the context of Bactria, styles, and motifs slowly developed a meaning of their own through repetition after being selected from the Hellenistic repertoire. The repetition of motifs in a certain context provided them with new meaning and purpose. They also acquired new forms and agencies of their own.⁴⁸

The adaptability of the motif was also facilitated by common traditions and ideology. Within the Gandhāran context, coiffured hair of both male and female figures was an important aspect of their iconography. Strict social codes regarding both male and female hairstyles within Gandhāran art suggest that hair was also used to manifest mental disturbances such as fear and sadness. For example, on the reliefs depicting the episodes immediately following the departure of Prince Siddhārtha from the palace, the harem women, wives, and Mahāprajāpatī, his foster mother, are depicted in various states of despair.⁴⁹ Their distress is highlighted by their body language as they fall to the ground and couches with their hair undone. The mental turbulence of the women is depicted using chaotic bodily posture and unkempt hair which would normally be neatly coiffed. In another relief fragment from Butkara I, likely belonging to the four encounters of the Prince Siddhārtha, a funeral scene is depicted with mourners.⁵⁰ At the centre of the fragment, there is a standing female figure with her hair completely untied. Her hair strands fall behind her head in long streaks and her hands are thrown up in the air in mourning. Again, in this relief, the distress of the woman is highlighted by her untied hair. Given the importance of coiffured hair in both Hellenistic and Gandhāran contexts, and the meaning of unkempt hair as a symbol of mental and physical distress, the selection of the 'hair-pulling' motif in the Gandhāran art is less surprising. The decision to adapt this motif in the story of Aṅgulimāla may have been a result of semantic convergence rather than 'influence'.

⁴⁵ WEITZMANN 1943, 297.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 289.

⁴⁹ KURITA 2003, Pl 173.

⁴⁷ I thank the anonymous reviewer for their comments on this topic.

⁴⁸ For late-Hellenistic and Roman art see HÖLSCHER 1987, 61-65.

⁵⁰ MNAO (Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale 'Giuseppe Tucci') Inv. No. 1211. For a similar depiction of mourners from Shaikhān Dheri, Charsadda, see Peshawar Museum. 02835.

In the Classical and Hellenistic repertoire, the 'hair-pulling' motif was commonly used to represent violence and to show the strength of the aggressor while simultaneously highlighting the helplessness of the victim who was unable to fight back. The motif is used to depict a victim about to be sacrificed as the dominant figure seized their hair within an inescapable hold. It is found in a similar context in Gandhāran art. Aṅgulimāla captures his mother, Mantānī, to kill her as the final victim and achieve his goal. He was stopped by the Buddha's supernatural force before dealing a deathly blow. This aggressive move by the brigand is conveyed through a well-known motif that was associated with killing and sacrifice. Using the 'hair-pulling' motif, the reliefs depict the culminating point of the narrative, when Aṅgulimāla was ready to commit the most vicious act of sacrificing his own mother until he was interrupted by the Buddha.

CONCLUSION

The story of Aṅgulimāla was one of the popular conversion stories in the Buddhist world. He was an unstoppable, bloodthirsty brigand who was only able to change his ways because of the Buddha's intervention. In Gandhāran art, the story was used to highlight the power of the Buddha. While other people ran away in panic, the Buddha approached the brigand fearlessly and successfully converted him. In order to show Aṅgulimāla's intention to kill his victims, Gandhāran artists used the Hellenistic 'hair-pulling' motif. In Hellenistic art, unkempt hair signalled mental distress and impending doom. Untied hair rarely occurs in Gandhāran art outside of tragic scenes that depict death and abandonment. The common ideologies regarding hairstyle and self-presentation resulted in the seamless integration of this motif in Gandhāran art. Aṅgulimāla pulled his victim's hair out of its coiffured state to demonstrate his complete control of their bodies and eventual death. This motif ensured that the story was depicted with maximum dramatic effect and highlighted the cruel nature of the brigand before his conversion. The depiction of the same story in Sānchi, Amaravātī, and Kizil without this motif once again confirms the strong relationship of Gandhāra with its neighbouring Hellenistic kingdoms and their materials.

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