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The Figure with a Bow in Gandhāran Great Departure Scenes.

Some New Readings

JESSIE PONS

*Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Käte Hamburger Kolleg "Dynamics in
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ABSTRACT The figure holding a bow on Gandhāran illustrations of the Bodhisattva's departure from Kapilavastu has been the subject of controversy. First identified as Māra and Indra, the interpretation proposed by K. Tanabe that the protagonist is Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera rallied broader consensus. The present reassessment takes into account the multi-cultural and multi-religious context of production of the images, namely the Kushan era, to offer additional readings of the Gandhāran figure. The approach is two-fold. The examination of written and visual traditions of representing the episode is complemented by the analysis of the Gandhāran iconography in light of material from various cultural strands which came into contact in the region. As a final step, the article considers possible logics which might have constrained the construction of the Gandhāran portrayals and tests the hypothesis that further divinities from religious trends coeval in Gandhāra may be recognized under the guises of the bow-holder.

KEY WORDS Gandhāra, Buddhist iconography, great departure, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, multiple identities, Kushan era

After having renounced the pleasures of the princely life at the age twenty-nine, Siddhārtha Gautama summons his servant Chandaka to prepare his horse for departure. The latter vainly tries to dissuade his master from leaving the palace and Siddhārtha mounts his horse Kaṇṭhaka, ready to set off for the religious life. Divinities coming from all sides facilitate his escape. They sink the inhabitants of the palace into a deep sleep, lift up the horse's hooves and, having opened the city of Kapilavastu's heavy door, they rejoice at the Bodhisattva's departure.

Here summarized in its basic outline, the *abhiṣkramaṇa*, the 'renunciation' or 'great departure,' is, along with his birth, the most popular episode of Siddhārtha Gautama's biography in Gandhāran Buddhist art. The Bodhisattva is commonly shown in profile astride his horse Kaṅṭhaka whose hooves are lifted by *yakṣas* (genies), exiting the gates of Kapilavastu and passing left. A *chattra* (umbrella) bearer traditionally identified as his groom Chandaka is placed at the croup of the horse or by its right side and



FIGURE 1 Great Departure, relief from Loriyān Tāngai, India Museum, Calcutta (© Archives Madame Tissot, UMR 8546)

a figure holding a bow invariably precedes the rider. On many examples, Siddhārtha is escorted by a group of *devas* (deities) (fig. 1).¹

This paper focuses on the iconography of the figure holding a bow which has aroused much debate. He carries the weapon in the left hand and the right hand is most frequently extended but is sometimes holding an arrow. By this attitude, he seems to both guide and protect the Bodhisattva. The portrayal of the protagonist follows five main fashions. The figure is:

1. dressed in a *paridhāna* (a piece of clothing wrapped around the waist)² an *uttarīya* (a shawl) and a turban. The latter is worn either centrally (fig. 2) or sideways ([fig. 3] Spooner 1910, 11-12 and 57-58; Ingholt 1957, no. 45). Variants without the *uttarīya* also exist (Ackermann 1975, 70-71 pl. XIV; Kurita 2003, 1: no. 475),
2. wearing a long-sleeved tunic and baggy trousers ([fig. 4] Dobbins 1973, fig. 42),
3. shown with a short tunic and no lower garment. The tunic might be short-sleeved ([fig. 5] Ingholt 1957, no. 168) or long-sleeved ([fig. 6] Dagens 1964, 16 pl. III-9; Tanabe 2000, 1088 fig. 1) and tied around the waist. On the relief from Nīmogram ([fig. 7] Kurita 1988, pl. 2-1; Tanabe 1997-1998, 227 figs. 2 and 3), a mantle completes the garment. In most cases the headdress is winged,

1 This type of composition is the most popular and is used on three different media: frieze reliefs, *harmikā* (the upper-structure on a *stūpa*) and pedestals. Out of the hundred-three illustrations recorded within the framework of a doctoral research on Gandhāran Buddhist art (Pons 2011), fifty-nine display this composition. The other type of composition, discussed below, is essentially found on false niches (thirty-three examples) and depicts the Bodhisattva astride his horse in foreshortening, as though he was appearing towards the observer.

2 In most cases (see for instance fig. 3), the *paridhāna* is pulled up between the legs (*dhotī*).



FIGURE 2
Type 1, with turban worn centrally (detail of fig. 1)

The Figure with a Bow in Gandhāran Great Departure Scenes.



FIGURE 3 Type 1, with turban worn sideways, detail of a relief from Sahrī Bāhlol, Governmental Museum, Peshawar (© Archives Madame Tissot, UMR 8546)

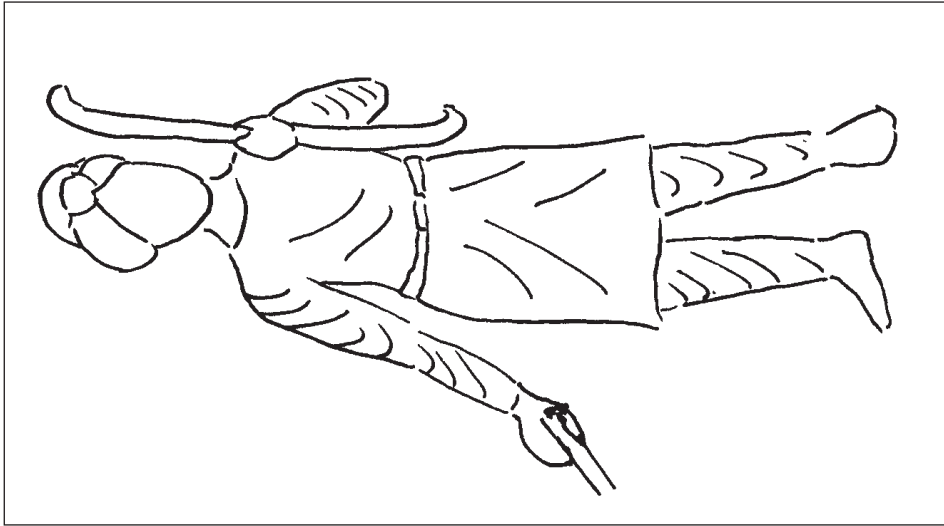


FIGURE 4 Type 2, detail of a relief from Chatpat, Dir Museum, Chakdara (J. Pons)

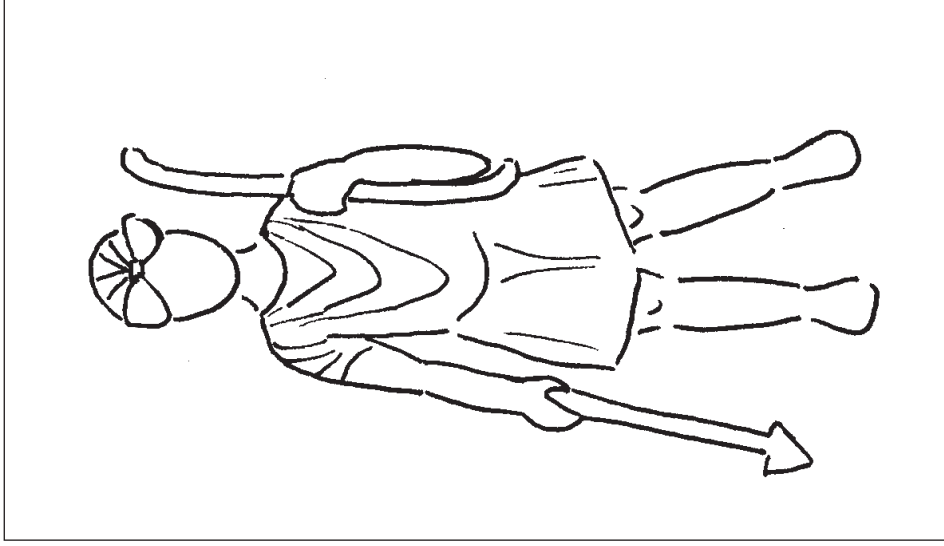


FIGURE 5 Type 3, short-sleeved tunic, detail of a relief from Sikri, Lahore Museum (J. Pons)

The Figure with a Bow in Gandhāran Great Departure Scenes.

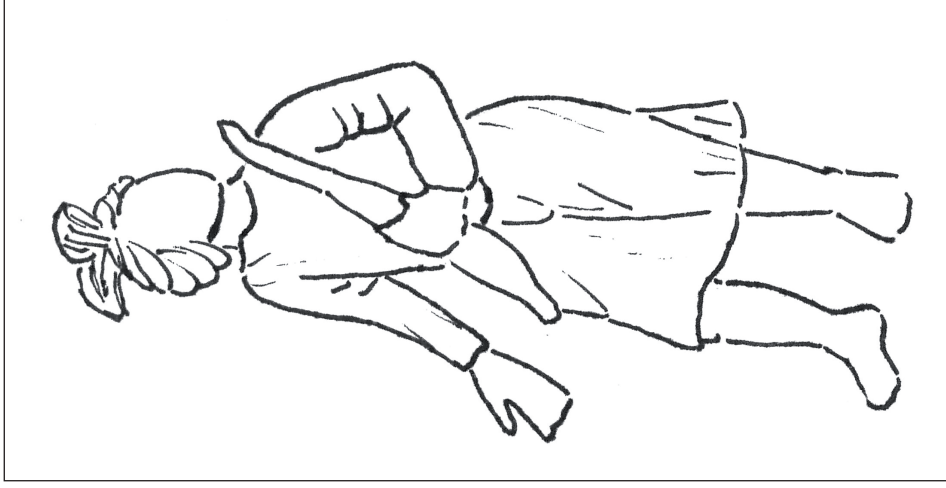


FIGURE 6 Type 3, long-sleeved tunic, detail of a relief from Tapa-i-Kafariha or Bagh-Gai, Guimet Museum, Paris (J. Pons)

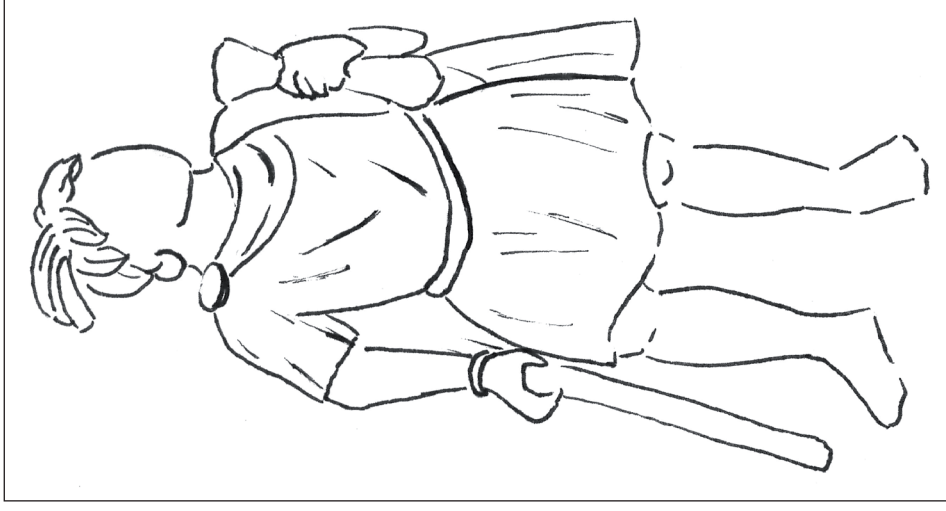


FIGURE 7 Type 3, short-sleeved tunic and mantle, detail of a relief from Nimogrām, Guimet Museum, Paris (J. Pons)



FIGURE 8 Type 4, lamellar armor and trousers, detail of a relief from Mala Tangi, Chandigarh Museum (© The British Library Board, Photo 1003/1074)

4. depicted as a warrior, carrying a lamellar type armor (*cataphractus*). Two main variants can be observed: wearing trousers (fig. 8) and wearing a *dhotī* (fig. 9).³ The figure might display a turban worn centrally or a winged headdress (fig. 10),



FIGURE 9
Type 4, lamellar armor and *dhotī*, detail of a relief from Sanghao or Chinglai, Lahore Museum (© British Library Board, Photo 1003/1116)

³ For another example see Faccenna 1962, II-2: 29 pl. 91.

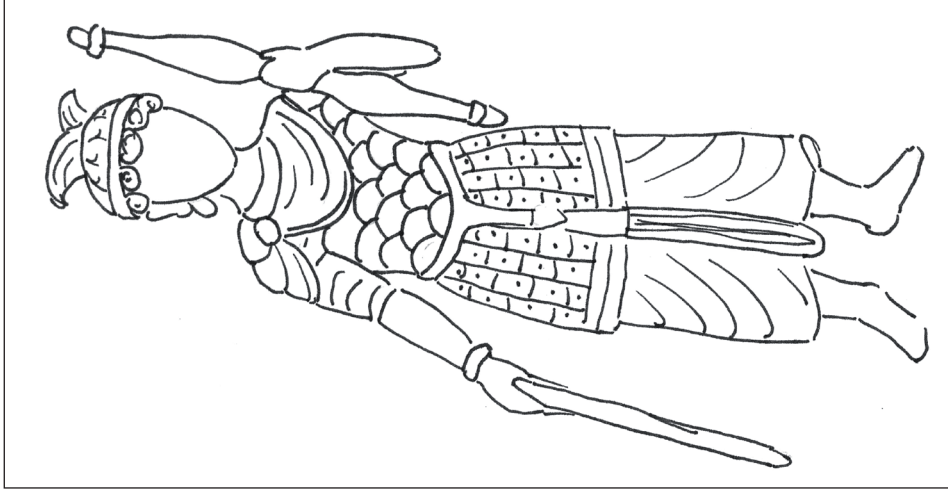


FIGURE 10 Type 4, lamellar armor and *dhotī*, with winged headdress, detail of a relief, National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi (J. Pons)

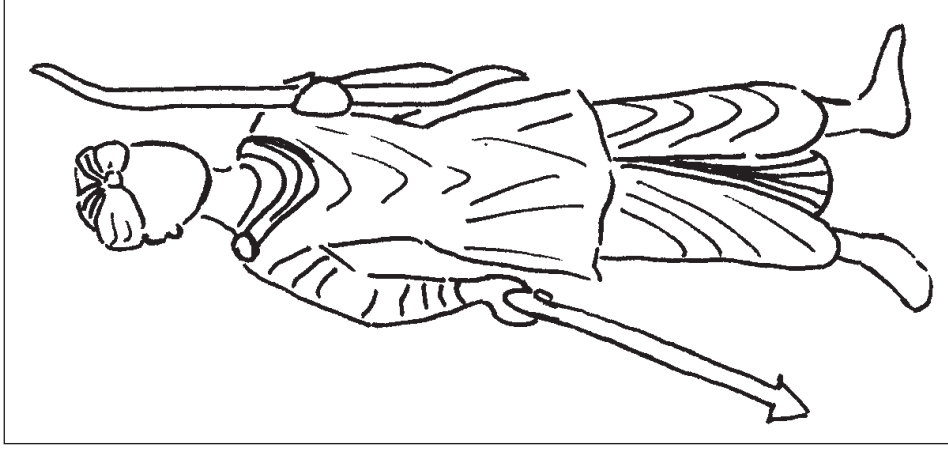


FIGURE 11 Type 5, detail of a relief from Loriyān Tāngai, India Museum, Calcutta (J. Pons)

5. wearing a *dhotī*, a long sleeved tunic and, on all the examples of this type, a turban. On several reliefs, he is clad in a mantle ([fig. 11] Sengupta and Das 1991, 38 no. 369).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, several identifications have been proposed for the protagonist: Māra,⁴ Indra⁵ and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.⁶

- 4 This identification has been suggested by A. Foucher (Foucher 1905–1951, 1: 356–357). A. Foucher finds in the *Nidānakathā* and in the *Buddhacarita* the justification for his interpretation. The *Nidānakathā* reports that Māra actively attempts to divert the Bodhisattva from his endeavor (Dutoit 1921, 14–15). As for the *Buddhacarita*, it describes Māra as the god of love (*Buddhacarita* 13.2; Olivelle 2009, 373). The attributes held by Māra, the bow and arrow, would subsequently be borrowed from his Brahmanic counterpart: Kāma. Several authors have agreed on this interpretation (Ingholt 1957, 59–60 nos. 40, 45 and 47; Ackermann 1975, 70–71 and 73–74 and 83–85 and 104 and 112–114), which was challenged by W. Lobo in the 1980s. As argued by W. Lobo, the position of the armed figure contrasts with the aggressive role played by Māra in the *Nidānakathā*. She also discards the *Nidānakathā* as a possible source for Gandhāran representations. Being composed in the fifth century c.e. it is indeed unlikely that the text provided a source of inspiration for Gandhāran artists. Furthermore, the *Buddhacarita* does not mention Māra at the occasion of the renunciation but at the moment of Enlightenment. In Gandhāran illustrations of the event, Māra is not depicted with a bow and arrow, but a sword.
- 5 According to W. Lobo, the figure should be identified as Indra or as one of the hunters (being Indra in disguise according to some sources) with whom Siddhārtha exchanges his robe. The episodes of the departure and the exchange of cloths would subsequently be conflated on the stone reliefs (Lobo 1983, 430–437). The identification of the figure as Indra has been accepted by K. Fischer (K. Fischer 1987, 61) and, to a certain extent by K. Tanabe (Tanabe 1993–1994, 157–185). As pointed out by the latter, the figure is not always Indra. His main argument is that the cylindrical tiara characteristic of many Gandhāran representations of Indra does not appear on any relief of the departure (Tanabe 2000, 1096). The second interpretation, which went unnoticed, poses a difficulty. The turban with horizontal bands and a chin band worn by hunters on Gandhāran reliefs (see for instance Ackermann 1975, 96–97 pl. XXXI and Faccenna 1962, II-3: 144 pls. 472-a and b) is not consistent with any of the hairstyles described above for the bow-holder.
- 6 The identification of the protagonist with one of the Four Great Kings, guardians of the four quarters of the universe, was proposed by K. Tanabe (Tanabe 1993–1994, 157–185). One of the fashions (type 3) in which the figure is depicted on reliefs of the great departure is similar to that of one of the kings on Gandhāran illustrations of the offering of the four bowls by the Four Great Kings. Written accounts of the latter episode suggest that

The reason for his unsecure identification holds to the discrepancy between representations of the Gandhāran departure scene on the one hand and the written accounts of the episode and ancient Indian iconographies on the other hand. Firstly, literary accounts do not always mention such a figure guiding the Bodhisattva. Secondly, when they do, his identity is fluctuating. Thirdly, a comparable protagonist is found in reliefs from India, but the sobriety of his garbs and the attributes he holds contrast with his Gandhāran counterpart. Neither tradition fully justifies both the persistency with which the figure appears on Gandhāran stone reliefs and the diverse fashions in which he is portrayed. The aim of this paper is not to propose yet another interpretation. As it will be pointed out, there is no reason to reject as a whole the hypotheses that the figure is Indra or Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.⁷ Rather, this article seeks to put the issue of identification into a different perspective and stresses the necessity to take into account the specificity of the Gandhāran multi-cultural context in which the reliefs were produced.⁸ In a region located at the crossroads of Central Asia and

Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, the king in charge of the northern quarter, played a more important role than the other three kings on both occasions. This would explain his somewhat individualized portrait and shed some light on the identity of the figure in departure scenes. K. Tanabe's convincing demonstration is amended in a second article where the author attempts to distinguish depictions of Vaiśravaṇa and Kubera (Tanabe 2000, 1087–1100). The relevance of such a distinction is put into question by the fact that Vaiśravaṇa and Kubera are two identities impossible to separate. A passage of the *Dīgha-nikāya* is illustrative in this respect: *tamā Kuvero mahārājā Vessavaṇo ti pavuccati* (“But where Kuvera dwells, their lord is called Visāṇā, whence the king bears the name Vessavaṇa”). *Dīgha-nikāya*, 32.7; Walshe 1995, 475). As it will be seen in the following section, the *Lalitavistara* also refers to the king in charge of guarding the northern direction both as Kubera and Vaiśravaṇa.

- 7 No attempt, however, will be made to reintroduce Foucher's theory that the figure is Māra as the arguments raised by both W. Lobo and K. Tanabe make a convincing case against it.
- 8 Although the chronology of the Gandhāran School remains a matter of debate, it is safe to say that the heyday of the production of Buddhist reliefs corresponds to the rule of Kushan

which, between the fifth century b.c.e. and the fourth century c.e., was successively invaded and ruled by Iranians, Greeks, Indians and nomads from Central Asia, the diversity of religious and cultural practices and the eclectic visual landscape resulting from the broad scope of interactions are likely to have played a role in the formation of Buddhist iconographies of the region. While not denying that written or oral accounts of biographical events, as well as pre-existing iconographic traditions, were a significant source for the construction of Buddhist imageries, this article explores the possibility that they were not the only ones.

As a first step, both textual and visual traditions of representing the great departure are examined. The points on which these sources agree or diverge with Gandhāran illustrations of the event are highlighted and the extent to which these shed some light on the identity of the figure with a bow, are discussed. This approach is complemented by a second one which takes into consideration material from the large range of cultural horizons which came into contact in Gandhāra. It aims at ascertaining the pictorial sources and parallels for each of the portrayals of the guiding figure and at pinpointing the logics which might underlie these iconographic borrowings and resemblances. The possible implications of this alternative approach for the identification of the figure with a bow will then be evaluated.

kings who controlled Gandhāra from the first century c.e. to end of the third / beginning of the fourth century c.e.

Written and visual narrative traditions in the representation of the great departure

This overview of written primary sources reporting the episode of the great departure takes into account documents which provide a reasonable point of comparison with Gandhāran images, that is to say texts which are earlier or contemporary to Gandhāran sculptures and which are known in either Indic languages or in Chinese translations. It goes without saying that these accounts should be consulted for their indicative value.⁹ Their dating and internal logics are often problematic and they can by no means substitute for now lost written or oral narrative traditions that could have been circulating at the place and time the reliefs were produced. In all, the sources discussed below should be considered as examples of diverse tendencies in narrating the event of Siddhārtha's flight from the palace. And, with regard to the treatment (or lack of treatment) of the guiding figure, accounts generally fall into three categories.

According to a first group of sources, the Bodhisattva was not accompanied by any escort. Such is the case of the *vinaya* of the Mahīśāsakas¹⁰ and of the Dharmaguptakas¹¹, both preserved in their Chinese translations. While the former limits the intervention of divinities to dispersing Kaṇṭhaka's neighing and hence preventing the inhabitants of the palace from waking up, the latter only alludes to the Bodhisattva's renunciation and departure.¹² The stark contrast between Gandhāran

9 Much of this literature has been considered by W. Lobo (Lobo 1983: 430-437) and K. Tanabe (Tanabe 1993-1994, 157-186; Tanabe 1997-1998, 213-233).

10 T. 22, 1421, p. 102a, L.10-102b; Bareau 1963-1995, 3: 21-22.

11 T. 22, 1428, p. 779c; Bareau 1963-1995, 3: 22-23.

12 In this respect, the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* is closely related to the Ariyapariyesanā Sutta (*Majjhima-nikāya*, 26.14-15, Bhikku Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995, 256) and to the

illustrations of the legend and the synthetic account of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* is worth mentioning since the corpora of Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions and of Gāndhārī manuscripts both attest of the strong presence of this sect in Gandhāra.¹³ In fact, an inscription associated to the Dharmaguptakas has been found at the Buddhist complex of Jamālgaṛhī (Konow 1929, 110–3 pl. 22.01), which has yielded at least three reliefs of the great departure. Two of them are giving a complex rendering of the theme. On these examples, the Bodhisattva's going forth is witnessed by Vajrapāṇi and the *nāgaradevatā* (city-goddess) of Kapilavastu in addition to Chandaka, the bow-bearer and a cortege of *devas* (Cunningham 1875, 197–202 nos. C5A and C4H; Zwalf 1996, no. 176; Klimburg-Salter 1995, 182 and 275 no. 160; Errington 1987, fig. 224. The last relief is fragmentary.)

The *Mahāvastu* contains two allusions to the Bodhisattva's escape which compare to the above *vinaya* accounts¹⁴ and a more lengthy account of the

Mahāvastu, 2.17 (see note 14) which only report that going against the will of his parents, Siddhārtha went into the homeless state.

- 13 That being said, Chinese texts cannot always be accepted as straightforward translations of originals in Indic languages. The preliminary analysis of Gāndhārī texts belonging to the *vinaya* of the Dharmaguptakas conducted by M. Allon (2008, 167) reveals that “[...] some portions of these texts do not match their counterparts in the Chinese *Dīrghāgama* or Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, which is probably to be interpreted as further evidence that slightly different versions of stories were transmitted by the same school”. The event of the great departure has not been preserved in the Gāndhārī corpus yet it is to be doubted that a more lengthy account of the story would have existed.
- 14 While staying at Śrāvastī, the Buddha briefly tells his disciples how he renounced his sumptuous home and universal kingship and withdrew towards the city of Veśālī (*Mahāvastu* 2.117; Jones 2006, 2: 114). Later in the *Mahāvastu*, Śuddhodana, his aunt and Yaśodharā each have a dream, the true significance of which (i. e. the renunciation of Siddhārtha Gautama) is respectively revealed to them by the four “Guardians of the World” (*lokapāla*), “the lord of the *devas*” (*devarāja*, i. e. Indra) and Brahma (*Mahāvastu* 2.133–135; Jones 2006, 2: 129–131). The juxtaposition of several distinct versions of the same biographical event which are likely to have been composed at different time periods is characteristic of the heterogeneous nature of the *Mahāvastu*.

event which is here considered (*Mahāvastu* 2.140–166 [esp. 160–166]; Jones 2006, 2: 134–161 [esp. 156–161]). It illustrates a second trend according to which many divinities participate more or less actively in the event. The text indicates that thousands of *devas* gathered with arms full of garlands to honor the Bodhisattva, that others caused all sorts of treasures to rain down, that *apsaras* (celestial dancers) and *gandharvas* (celestial musicians) danced and sung while the Four Great Lords are complicit of the escape as they “took hold of Kaṇṭhaka’s hooves.”¹⁵ Shaken by the Bodhisattva’s renunciation, the abode of Māra became “exceedingly gloomy” and the wicked one, “unhappy and discomfited.”¹⁶ The account further reports that armies of *nāga* (serpents) and *suparṇa* (mythical birds) lords and kings “escorted the Bodhisattva”¹⁷ and that the latter was “welcomed by thousands of *devas* and by the Four Great Kings”¹⁸ as he set forth towards Anomiya. The verb *puraskari* which means “to place before or in front, to cause to precede” (Monier-Williams 1960, 634. Other meanings given by M. Monier-Williams are “to make one’s leader, to attend to, to respect, to honour”) and which is translated by J. J. Jones as “escorted” tallies nicely with the posture of the figure with a bow on Gandhāran reliefs. However, in this case, it refers to a mythological bestiary which does not appear on reliefs.

The third group of texts is more comparable to Gandhāran images. In addition to mentioning the divinities attending the Bodhisattva in his

15 *caturhi mahārājehi kaṇṭhakasya pādā grhītā* // (*Mahāvastu* 2.160–163; Jones 2006, 2: 156).

16 *atīva mārabhavanāni dhyāmāni abhūnsuḥ / durvarṇā niṣprabhāṇi dhvajāgrāṇi mārakāyikānāṃ devānāṃ māro ca pāpīmāṃ duḥkhī durmano vipratīsārī dhyāmantavarṇo antośalyaparidāghajāto* // (*Mahāvastu* 2.163; Jones 2006, 2: 158).

17 [...] *bodhisatvam eva puraskarensuḥ* // (*Mahāvastu* 2.164, Jones 2006, 2: 159).

18 *bodhisatvo devasahasrehi caturhi ca mahārājehi sampratigrhīto kapilavastuto dakṣiṇena dvādaśa yojanāni nīto mallaviṣayaṃ anomiyaṃ nāma adhiṣṭhānaṃ vaśiṣṭhasya ṛṣisya āśramapadasya nātidūre* // (*Mahāvastu* 2.164; Jones 2006, 2: 159–160).

renunciation of the mundane life or merely witnessing the escape, they specify that one or several gods were leading and showing the way. The identity of these benevolent deities nevertheless varies. In the Sanskrit version of the *Lalitavistara*, the role is successively attributed to Vaiśravaṇa, Indra (Śakra in the text) and Brahma. While making the necessary plans for the Bodhisattva's escape, the former first orders *yakṣas* to bear the horse while he "shall march in front."¹⁹ In turn Indra declares that "he shall throw open the doors and point out the way."²⁰ Later in the account, no sooner has the Bodhisattva summoned Chandaka to fetch his horse than each of the Four Guardians of the Universe²¹ and Indra arrive at Kapilavastu and, having successively circumambulated the city, stand "saluting the Bodhisattva."²² The verse portion of the *Lalitavistara* tells a slightly different story according to which both Indra and Brahma (not Vaiśravaṇa) stood in front of him and

19 *ahaṃ ca purato yāsyē yūyaṃ ca vahathā hayam [...]*. (*Lalitavistara* 15; Vaidya 1958, 147; Mitra 1998, 249). De Foucaux (1988, 178) translates: "Pour moi, j'irai en avant, et vous, portez le cheval."

20 *svayaṃ ca śakro devānāmindra evamāha-ahaṃ dvārāṇi vivariṣyāmi/mārgaṃ ca saṃdarśayāmi //* (*Lalitavistara* 15; Vaidya 1958, 147; Mitra 1998, 250). De Foucaux (1988, 179) translates: "J'ouvrirai les portes et je montrerai la route."

21 In this particular instance, the king of the northern direction is not referred to as Vaiśravaṇa but as Kubera.

22 *bodhisattvaṃ namasyamānaṃ sthitam [...]*. (*Lalitavistara* 15; Vadya 1958, 157; Mitra 1998, 262). De Foucaux (1988, 192) translates: "s'y arrêta, adorant le Bodhisattva." Being composed in hybrid Sanskrit (as opposed to the classical Sanskrit of the prose section), the *gāthās* belong to an earlier strata of the *Lalitavistara*. The Chinese translation, attributed to Dharmarakṣa and dated 308 c.e., predates the Sanskrit text which has come down to us. The discrepancies between both versions, the Mahāyāna character of the Sanskrit text, as well as the variety of Sanskrit used, suggest that the Sanskrit account was revised at a later date than the Chinese version and probably several times. On the problematic dating of the composition of the *Lalitavistara* and of its various revisions see Winternitz 1913, 242 and de Jong 1954, 313.

indicated the best way.²³ In the *Pǔyào jīng* (普曜經) a Chinese translations of the *Lalitavistara*, the Bodhisattva is preceded by both Indra and Vaiśravaṇa (Píshāmén tiān, 毘沙門天).²⁴ The Sanskrit version of the *Saṅghabhedavastu* (the 17th section of the *vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin) reports that the way was pointed out by Kubera, Indra and Brahma alike.²⁵ Indra does not seem to be mentioned in the Chinese version of the text.²⁶ The Chinese and Sanskrit versions of the *Buddhacarita* slightly differ from one another in their casting of divinities. While the Sanskrit text remains imprecise in mentioning “fiery-bodied denizens of heaven,”²⁷ the account in Chinese (*Fó suǒ xíng zàn jīng*, 佛所行讚經) is somewhat more specific and refers to “*nāgas* and the company of *Devas*.” Both versions nevertheless agree on that these beings illuminated the way with their innate light.²⁸ As for the *Fó běnxíng jí jīng* 佛本行集經²⁹, the source reports that Vaiśravaṇa and “other

23 *śakro brahma ubhau ca tasya purato darśyanti mārgo hyayam* // (*Lalitavistara* 15.80; Vadya 1958: 160). De Foucaux (1988, 194) translates: “Çakra et Brahmâ, tous les deux devant lui, montrent la meilleure route.”

24 T. 3, no. 186, 506c-507b: 北方毘沙門天王與無數億百千闍叉，手執焰光明珠威耀晃晃，身被甲冑，從北方來，住北方界，稽首菩薩。天帝釋梵與無數億百千諸天，手執華香雜香[打+鳥]香華蓋幢幡，來住虛空，稽首菩薩。

25 *mārgaṃ svayaṃ darśayate kuberaḥ śakras tathā brahmasahīya eva* // (*Saṅghabhedavastu*; Gnoli 1977-1978, 89).

26 T. 24, no. 1450, 117a: 多聞及梵釋 先引菩薩路。

27 *hutavahavapuṣo divaukaso'nye* [...]. (*Buddhacarita* 5.85; Olivelle 2009, 158-159).

28 *akṛṣata tuhine pathi prakāśaṃ ghanavivaraprasṛtā ivendupādāḥ* [...]. Translated by P. Olivelle (*Buddhacarita* 5.85; Olivelle 2009, 158-159) as: “shined a light on his frosty path, like moonbeams coming down through an opening in a cloud.” The Chinese account (T. 4, no. 192, 10c) reads: 各以自力光，引導助其明。 and was translated by S. Beal (1883, 58) as: “each with his own inherent light led on the way shedding forth their brightness.” The same passage is translated by C. Willemen (2009, 38) as follows: “Each guided him with the light of his power, assisting him with their brightness.”

29 T. 3, no. 190. The *Fó běnxíng jí jīng* (*Sutra of the Collected Stories of the Buddha's Deeds in Past Lives*) is presented by S. Beal as a Chinese version the Sanskrit *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* done by the North-Indian monk Dīñanakuta at the end of the sixth century c.e. (587). The

gods” showed the way (T. 3, no. 190, 897a: 毘沙門等示道路) and that the *śuddhadevas* and the *devas of the kāmadhātu* “went on before the Prince, leading the way.” On each side, the *śuddhadevas* (and seemingly them only) “scattered the glorious light of their person” (T. 3, no. 190, Beal 1875, 139). Brahma, the Trāyastriṃśa *devas* and the Four Heavenly Kings are further listed in the cortege of gods accompanying Siddhārtha in his flight (T. 3, no. 190, Beal 1875, 139).

Extent written accounts of the episode discussed alternatively describe the Bodhisattva setting off for the religious life alone or escorted by divinities of shifting identities, some of whom were guiding him. Given these inconsistencies, it is not surprising that the art historians who turn to written texts in hope of identifying firmly and unarguably the figures carved on Buddhist reliefs have had some difficulties with accounting for the presence of the protagonist and agree on his identity. Nevertheless, certain features of Gandhāran illustrations and of written accounts mutually echo each other. More weight is subsequently given to the interpretations previously suggested that the bow-holder is Indra or Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera. For instance, on two reliefs from Loriyān Tāngai (fig. 1)³⁰, the presence of Brahma, who is undoubtedly recognizable by his ascetic bun and Brahmanic cord, generally incites to identify the figure in front of him with Indra.³¹ The two gods are frequently associated on Gandhāran reliefs. This interpretation is supported by written traditions such as the *Fó běnxíng jí jīng*, the *Saṅghabhedavastu* and the *Lalitavistara* according to which both

title “*Abhiṅskramaṇasūtra*”, which is in fact that of the chapter dedicated to Siddhārtha’s renunciation (for instance in the *Lalitavistara* and the *Buddhacarita*), is not attested for any collection on the biography of the Buddha in an Indic language.

30 See also the panel on the *stūpa* in the India Museum of Calcutta (Burgess 1900, 88 fig. 35; Kurita 2003, 1: no. 24).

31 The absence of a halo behind Indra’s head on one of the reliefs (fig. 1), however, is surprising since Brahma is depicted with one.

either facilitate or simply witness Siddhārtha's escape. In turn, the bow and arrow held by the figure and the heavy armor he sometimes wears on stone reliefs could be explained in light of a passage of the *Lalitavistara*. The text (this is the section on which K. Tanabe's hypothesis relies) reports that the *yakṣas* sent by Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera as Siddhārtha is on the verge of leaving Kapilavastu are armed with all sorts of weapons including "bows and arrows" and are "protected by stout armour and mail-coats."³² In this context, another passage from the *Lalitavistara* can be referred to, although not directly related to the flight from the palace. It indicates that—having taken the decision to leave—the Bodhisattva greets the four guardians of regions attended by Rakṣhas, Gandharvas, and Nāgas "all attired in armour and mail-coats, armed with swords, bows, arrows and crests of jewels."³³ Finally, as observed, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera or at least the four *lokapālas* are recurrently alluded to in other sources, here carrying the horse's hooves, there rejoicing at the Bodhisattva's vow.³⁴ These brief

32 *uttarasyā diśaḥ kubero mahārāja āgato'bhūt sārdham anekair yakṣakoṭinīyutaśatasahasrair jyotīrasamañiratnapariḡhītair dīpikāpāñipariḡhītaiś ca jvalitolkāpāñipariḡhītair dhanurasiśaraśaktitomaratriśūlacakraṇayabhīndipālādīnānāpraharaṇaparīḡhītair dṛḍhasaṃnaddhavarbhītakavacitaiḥ* [...]. (*Lalitavistara* 15; Vadya 1958, 158; Mitra 1998, 262). The passage is translated by de Foucaux (1988, 192) as: "Le grand roi de l'horizon, Kouvéra, arriva avec plusieurs centaines de Yakchas, tenant à la main des diamants, des perles, des pierres précieuses, et des torches allumées; tenant des arcs, des flèches, des piques, des javelots, des lances à deux et à trois pointes, des disques, des traits, des armes de toutes sortes, et revêtus de fortes cuirasses."

33 *caturaś ca lokapālān yakṣarākṣasagandharvabhujagagaṇasaṃparivṛtān saṃnaddhadṛḍhavarmītakavacitān asidhanuśaraśaktitomaratriśūlahastān salīlaṃ mañimukutaḥvilambitacūḍān bodhisattvaṃ namasyamānān sthitān paśyati sma* [...] (*Lalitavistara* 15; Vadya 1958, 151; Mitra 1998, 255; de Foucaux 1888, 185). The Sanskrit is ambiguous and it is difficult to tell who is described with armour and weapons. Mitra and de Foucaux each give a different translation of the passage, attributing the attire of a warrior to the Four Lokapālas and their retinue respectively.

34 See in this regard the *Buddhacarita* (5.85): *iti vacanam idaṃ niśamya tasya Draviṇapateḥ pariśadgaṇā nananduh pramudita* [...] translated by P. Olivelle (2009, 158–159) as "Hearing

allusions certainly do not prove that the bow-bearer is Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera but at least do not contradict the hypothesis. In sum, nothing prevents us from recognizing Indra on Gandhāran reliefs where Brahma appears and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera on others. This overview of preserved written accounts of the great departure shows that various versions of the story of Siddhārtha's departure existed and that some of them did favor Indra and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.³⁵

As far as visual narrative traditions are concerned, Gandhāran images share much of their general features with the early Buddhist art of the Indian subcontinent notably from Bharhut (second century b.c.e.), Sāñcī (second-first century b.c.e.), Pitalkhora (second century b.c.e.), Kanaganahalli (ca. first century b.c.e.) and Amarāvātī (ca. 150 b.c.e.-250 c.e.).³⁶ Nearly all images agree on the following core elements of the composition: a horse

these words of his, the retinue of the court of the Lord of Wealth rejoiced, and hosts of deities, their minds filled with joy, announced to him the success of his vow".

35 None of the reviewed accounts however provides ground for reintroducing Foucher's theory that the protagonist facing the fleeing Bodhisattva is Māra. The latter's distress is indeed a topic in both the *Mahāvastu* (*Mahāvastu* 2.162-163; Jones 2006, 2: 158) and the *Fó běnxíng jí jīng* (T. 3, no. 190; Beal 1875, 137) but neither of them report that he left his abode. In fact, the *Fó běnxíng jí jīng* actually indicates that the assault that he launched from his abode were neutralized by the *śuddhadevas*.

36 It is by choice that the art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa is not considered here. Scholars, E. Rosen Stone among others (Rosen Stone 1994), have demonstrated the close ties existing between Gandhāran art of the Kushan period and the production which developed in the region of Andhra under the Ikṣvākus (ca. 225-300 c.e.), particularly the influence of the first, in addition to Hellenistic art, on the second. If one was to assume that early Indian schools were a source of inspiration for Gandhāran art, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa would probably not be a relevant place to take into account. Interesting to note with respect to representations of the great departure however, is the fact that the protagonist leading the rider on several reliefs from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa displays a lamellar armour and a turban comparable to that worn by the Gandhāran figure. For an example of such portrayal see Longhurst 1938: pl. XXVIIIc.

in profile, an umbrella-bearer behind or beside the horse and a figure preceding the rider.³⁷ Overall, the complexity of compositions ranges from minimal illustrations such as seen on a drum frieze from Amarāvātī ([fig. 12] Knox 1992, no. 49) and a Gandhāran panel in the British Museum ([fig. 13] Zwalf 1996, no. 178. For other examples see Ackermann 1975, 83–85, pl. XXIIb [from Gumbat]; Sengupta and Das 1991, 29 no. 283 [from Loriyān Tāṅgai] and Mizuno 1978, 121 pl. 104 no. 4 [from Thareli]), to expanded compositions where additional protagonists such as fly-whisk bearers, divinities, dancers and musicians join the ranks of the escort ([figs. 14 and 15] Knox 1992, no. 11; Ingholt 1957, 168; Vitali *et. al.* 2008, 223 no. 158). Contrasting impressions may result from the stylistic treatment of the human figure and space. The profusion of protagonists depicted in dynamic poses on the reliefs from Sāñcī, Kanaganahalli and particularly Amarāvātī gives a lively quality to the scene. By comparison, the carefully ordered Gandhāran figures or the characters in static poses on the relief from Bharhut (fig. 17) seem to participate in an action suspended temporarily.

37 The parallels drawn here pertain to composition (i. e. the ordering of figures in space) and not to motifs themselves. In this regard, a fundamental difference related to the portrayal of Siddhārtha Gautama exists between early images from India on the one hand and from Gandhāra on the other hand. While the Bodhisattva is anthropomorphically represented in Gandhāra, his presence is evoked by symbols at Sāñcī, Bharhut, Pitalkhora, Kanaganahalli and on some panels from Amarāvātī. In reliefs of his departure, he is referred to by his princely attributes (i. e. the steed and the *chattra*). One may also mention that the reliefs from Bharhut and Pitalkhora show the rider passing in the opposite direction and no *yakṣa* supporting the horse's hooves. Only the relief preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum provides a Gandhāran parallel for this peculiar representation of the Bodhisattva's escape (Ackermann 1975, 73–74 pl. XVb).

The Figure with a Bow in Gandhāran Great Departure Scenes.



FIGURE 12 Drum frieze from Amarāvati, British Museum, London, Acc. No. 1880,0709.60 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)



FIGURE 13 Stone relief, British Museum, London, Acc. No. 1939,0119.16 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)



FIGURE 14 Railing pillar from Amaravati, British Museum, London, Acc. No. 1880,0709.7 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

The Figure with a Bow in Gandhāran Great Departure Scenes.



FIGURE 15 False niche, Lahore Museum, London (© Archives Madame Tissot, UMR 8546)

Besides the anthropomorphic representation of Siddhārtha Gautama, Gandhāran visual tradition diverge in two respects: the appearance of a novel type of composition where by the Bodhisattva is seen a frontal position on horseback (fig. 15) and, more importantly, the treatment given to the figure preceding the Bodhisattva. Concerning the second type of composition, it shows groups of protagonists of varying sizes spread evenly on each side of the rider. In most examples, the figure with a bow is placed on the left half, while Chandaka stands on the right. The frontal depiction of Siddhārtha is likely to be a Gandhāran innovation. Gandhāran artists may well have transposed to a new subject, that of the great departure, a motif which already had a long history in both Classical and Indian visual traditions. The motif probably derives from images of Helios riding a chariot as exemplified by the coinage struck by the Greco-Bactrian ruler Plato³⁸ as well as from depictions of Sūrya or of figures riding chariots from the Indian subcontinent.³⁹ With regard to the leading figure, Gandhāran and Indian reliefs differ not only in the rendering of the motif, in other words the pose, the attributes and the garb but also in the meaning, or rather the identity the motif bears. Also worth noting is that while Gandhāran portrayals appear if not codified at least consistent throughout the large corpus of reliefs, the handful of examples from each of the sites on the Indian subcontinent reflect diverse tendencies. An account of these is outlined in the following paragraphs.

38 Bopearachchi 1991, 74 and 220 no.1, pl.24, no.1. For a good reproduction see Bopearachchi *et. al.* 2003, 108 no. 87b. For some of these parallels see Tanabe 1997-1998, 221.

39 See for instance at Bodh Gāya, Barua 1931-1934, fig. 42. With regard to Gandhāra, a good example can be seen on the fragment from Butkara I, Faccenna 1962, II-3: 131 pl. 419b. On these two different compositions see Foucher 1905-1951, 1: 354 *sqq.*

A first tendency, which gives the lead to Chandaka, Siddhārtha's groom, is exemplified by a relief from Kanaganahalli⁴⁰ and two reliefs from Sāñcī.⁴¹ The panel from Kanaganahalli shows Chandaka ahead of Kaṇṭhaka whose hooves are supported by four *yakṣas*. He is followed by a small procession composed of three men wearing turbans. The latter, possibly a representation of the company of *devas* who facilitated the escape, are respectively portrayed astride a long stick and holding a fly-whisk and an umbrella. The identity of the Bodhisattva's servant is revealed by the lower register of the panel. It depicts Chandaka returning to Kapilavastu with Kaṇṭhaka and presenting the prince's attire to Śuddhodana and Yaśodharā. The fashion in which Chandaka is shown is identical on all three scenes: a short *paridhāna*, a long sleeved upper-garment and a hooded cap.

It is also by analogy that A. Foucher and J. Marshall recognize Chandaka under the guise of the ewer-bearer on the reliefs from Sāñcī. On the pillar of the northern gateway representing the "four drives," (Foucher and Marshall 1983, 2: pl. 35a) also referred to as the "four encounters," Siddhārtha's groom precedes the princely chariot and is credited with a ewer. He is again depicted with the same attribute on both southern and eastern gateways. While the former gives a simplified illustration⁴² of the great departure

40 The full report of the excavation of Kanaganahalli has recently been published by K. P. Poonacha (Poonacha 2013). For a good reproduction of the relief from Kanaganahalli see: <http://www.luczanits.net/gallery3/index.php/docu/Kanganhalli/37-South-west-side/Kaganhalli-CL00-37-35> and <http://www.luczanits.net/gallery3/index.php/docu/Kanganhalli/37-South-west-side/Kaganhalli-CL00-37-05> (Consulted 22/08/2014).

41 Foucher and Marshall 1983, 1: 203-204 and 2: pl. 16a (projecting end of the top lintel, southern *torāṇa*) and 40 (middle lintel, eastern *torāṇa*).

42 Parallels for this synthetic representation of the event can be drawn with other reliefs such as the drum frieze previously mentioned (fig. 12, Knox 1992, no. 49) and a sculpted plinth now in the Chennai Government Museum (Shimada 2012, 18-19), both from Amarāvati and attributed by Shimada to the early phase of activity on the site (ca. 150-100 b.c.e.).

and shows only two additional figures joining hands (*añjalimudrā*) in the background, the latter probably offers the most complex composition. It is however confusing with respect to the portrayal of Chandaka. The nocturnal procession is repeated five times: once passing the gates of Kapilavastu, twice on the way to the forest, once in the forest and once returning. On the two first scenes, Chandaka is accompanied by a sandal-bearer. Both seem to reappear on the following scene yet with a different garb: the waist garment is not represented and they are now bejeweled. Having taken leave from his Master, Chandaka returns leading Kaṇṭhaka back to Kapilavastu. He carries Siddhārtha's royal trappings but this time, he simply wears a short *paridhāna*. If the ewer-bearer is indeed Chandaka following his Master at each stage of the action, as A. Foucher and J. Marshall believe, his change of fashion is somewhat enigmatic.

The relief from Pitalkhora (fig. 16) is likely to illustrate a second trend. While the man who precedes the horse has been identified as Chandaka in previous scholarship (Parimoo 1982, 75–76), his position and attributes suggest otherwise. He is dressed with a knee-length jacket with a round collar and decorative borders worn over a *dhotī*. This fashion distinguishes him from the *paridhāna* and *uttarīya* worn by other attendants. The latter stand rigidly at the back, either holding the umbrella or waving a scarf (as far as one can judge from the fragmentary state of the relief), while the figure we are concerned with is running ahead. His readiness and attributes, a torch and a dagger with a curved handle, are probably less appropriate for Siddhārtha's groom than they would be for one of the deities who, as sources such as the *Buddhacarita* and the *Fó běnxíng jí jīng* report, escorted him and shed light on the way for the Bodhisattva to follow. One may, very tentatively, relate the illustration from Bharhut (fig. 17), to that of Pitalkhora. Kaṇṭhaka is surrounded by four figures, three are at its side

and one at its head.⁴³ The latter holds the horse's rein in his right hand and his left leg is bent and slightly raised up, as though he was about to step forward. Unfortunately the right border of the pillar is broken off and it is impossible to know what gesture he may have made with the left hand. These features nonetheless clearly set him apart from his companions who either wave a scarf or join hands in a gesture of devotion. But his garment lend little support for his identification as all four figures are similarly dressed with a *paridhāna*, an *uttarīya* and a turban worn sideways.

A dozen reliefs from Amarāvātī⁴⁴ form a coherent ensemble characterized by the presence of two or three men in front of the rider (fig. 14).⁴⁵ In some cases⁴⁶, one of them is likely to be Chandaka, holding a circular object which has been interpreted as a duplicate of Kaṅṭhaka's rein (Parimoo 1982, 76–77). In other examples⁴⁷, he holds a large stick or a spear and thus armed, he rather compares to the protagonist on the Pitalkhora relief. More often than not, he displays a short tunic with long sleeves worn over a *dhotī* and tightened at the waist by a large cloth-belt. As for the remaining figures, they are shown in dynamic poses conveying both determination and fast

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- 43 The same three figures, along with musicians are represented on the lower register. The continuing panel having not been preserved, it is impossible to reconstruct the rest of the scene.
- 44 For a recent chronology of Amarāvātī sculptures see Shimada 2006, 89–141 and Shimada 2013. With respect to representations of the great departure, a complete list is given by the author (Shimada 2012, 28 Table A). The reliefs discussed in this paragraph belong to the late Amarāvātī phase as per the author's classification.
- 45 Three figures, two of whom holding the umbrella and the reins, also precede the steed on a second panel from Kanaganahalli. Unfortunately, the panel is too worn to be further deciphered.
- 46 See for instance Parimoo 1982, fig. 111.
- 47 The sculptures, preserved in the Madras Government Museum, are published by C. Sivaramamurti (Sivaramamurti 1942). For a good quality image see: <http://huntington.wmc.ohio-state.edu/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=showThisDetail&ObjectID=30031238&detail=largeZoom> (Consulted 22/08/2014).

pace. One leg is stretched out, the other bent at the knee and their feet are hardly touching the ground. These are unmistakably *devas* swiftly flying through the air, a long pleat of their short *dhoti* floating. Their gestures leave no doubt as to their intention toward the Bodhisattva. Their head or torso is facing the latter, one arm is bent across the chest and the other raised up or fully extended while one hand is pointing forward. They are communicating to the Bodhisattva that he must follow them.



FIGURE 16 Relief from Pitalkhora, National Museum, New Delhi (Courtesy of the National Museum—New Delhi Collection; Acc. No. 67.183)

The Figure with a Bow in Gandhāran Great Departure Scenes.



FIGURE 17 The Great Departure of Siddhārtha Gautama, Railing pillar from Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh, c. 100 b.c. 137.2 x 22.9 x 27.9 cm, Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena (Courtesy of the Norton Simon Foundation)

From the previous discussion, it follows that while certain visual traditions exemplified by the reliefs from Kanaganahalli and Sāñcī stand in stark contrast with Gandhāran depictions, others compare to them more closely. This is the case of the relief from Pitalkhora and to a larger extent of the panels from Amarāvātī. Whereas the first shows that a guide led the Bodhisattva, the images from Amarāvātī indicate that the latter was not only guided but also accompanied by an armed escort. In sum, Gandhāran reliefs do follow a trend in the treatment of the great departure which is consistent with those reflected by some of the written and visual sources considered. Yet the extent of their resemblances is limited. Firstly, they do not fully explain the effort to produce an individualized portrayal of the guide and even less the diversity of the garbs in which he is shown. Secondly, they do not account for the choice of attributes held by the Gandhāran protagonist. Therefore, given the unusual character of the motif, it stands to reason that the mechanisms behind its formation are specific to the regional context and, as the forthcoming analysis of its pictorial sources and parallels will show, bear witness to the rich heritage of the region.

Ascertaining the pictorial sources and parallels of the Gandhāran motif

Each of the fashions previously described must now be considered in some detail. The ascertaining of their iconographic prototypes and parallels might read as a tedious catalogue but it will become evident that this is a necessary step in order to unravel some of the logics which could underlay the construction of the Gandhāran motif.

The type with a *paridhāna* or *dhotī*, an *uttariya* and a turban worn either centrally or sideways is widely used to depict both noblemen and divinities in the early art of the Indian subcontinent and of Gandhāra alike. As previously noted, this particular fashion does not constitute a criterion to identify protagonists depicted on reliefs and for lack of a distinctive attribute, it is impossible to tell the divinities apart. In consequence, their identities may only be deduced from the presence of an inscription, from the narrative context, or from the company of a conventional partner. For instance, the deity carved on a pillar from Bharhut preserved in the India



FIGURE 18 Offering of the four bowls by the Heavenly Kings, from Sikrī, Lahore Museum (© Archives Madame Tissot, UMR 8546)

Museum in Calcutta is only identifiable by the inscription engraved above: “*Kupiro Yaskho*” (Yakṣa Kubera) (Lüders 1963, 73; Bhattacharya 1987, fig. 1). The Four Great Kings are recognizable on Gandhāran reliefs because they each carry a bowl which, as the legend goes⁴⁸, they have come to offer to the Buddha (fig. 18).⁴⁹ The iconographic type is also used for the portrayal of Pāñcika and Indra (figs. 19⁵⁰ and 20).⁵¹ The officer of the army of yakṣa and the King of Gods are each recognizable because they are accompanied by Hāritī and Brahma respectively.



FIGURE 19

Pāñcika and Hāritī, stelae from Sahrī Bāhlol, Government Museum, Peshawar (J. Pons)

48 See for instance the account in the *Mahāvastu* 3.304. Jones 2007, 3: 290–298.

49 See Bhattacharyya 2002, 129 no. 546 and Ingholt 1957, no. 69 for other representations of the offering of the four bowls by the Four Heavenly Kings.

50 For other examples of representations of Pāñcika with a turban worn sideways and centrally see the sculptures from Shāh-jī-kī-Ḍherī (Ingholt 1957, no. 344) and Allahdand (Zwalf 1996, 1: 120 no. 100) respectively.

51 For other reliefs portraying Indra and Brahmā see Vitali *et. al.* 2008, 226 no. 165 and Kurita 2003, 1: no. 265.



FIGURE 20 Indra and Brahmā entreating the Buddha to preach the Doctrine, British Museum, London, Acc. No. 1966,1017.2 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

The type with long-sleeved tunic and baggy trousers is encountered in representations of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera in another narrative context ([fig. 21]



FIGURE 21 Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, Offering of the four bowls by the Four Heavenly Kings, Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, Kamakurashi, Acc. No. 100120 (Courtesy of the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum)

Tanabe 1993-1994, 180 fig. 2) and derives from the art of Parthia. The stone reliefs from Palmyra, Dura Europos, Hatra or Bisutun illustrating Parthian princes may give examples of prototypes for this particular portrayal which is also common for depictions of royal figures in Gandhāra. The cross-over jacket, the large folds of the trousers and the thick dropping moustache worn by a prince banqueting on a Gandhāran stone dish (fig. 22) for instance⁵², are reminiscent of the statue of the Parthian ruler from the temple of Schami

52 More examples of trays carved with a similar motif can be found in Francfort 1979, 43 no. 46 pl. 23 and Tanabe 1985, 32 no. 1-25. These figures also bear resemblance to the Scythian rulers Maues I and Azes I as portrayed on their coinage. Stanco 2000, 138-139.



FIGURE 22 Scythian prince drinking, Gandhāran tray, Private Collection, Japan
(Courtesy of I. Kurita)

in Bagdad (ca. second century b.c.e., [Ghirshman 1962, 88 fig. 99]). The felt boots, the mantle covering the tunic tied at the waist worn by Kushan rulers on their coinage⁵³ parallel those of a Parthian prince at an altar on a relief from Bisutun (ca. first-second century c.e. [Ghirshman 1962, 53 fig. 66]).

53 Bopearachchi *et. al.* 2003, 181 and 199 no. 158 gives more examples of type of fashion used on the coinage of Kaniška I.

As evidenced by representations of Pharro on the obverse of Huviška's issues (Cribb and Bracey 2011, E.C2-iii 1u), the model is also used for the portrayals of the Zoroastrian god. The winged headdress that he and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera are wearing, however, is borrowed from another divinity whose iconography played a significant role in shaping the next type.

As previously indicated, two variants have been observed for the type with a tunic without lower garment: the short-sleeved and long-sleeved tunic, both often worn in combination with a mantle, a winged-headdress and boots. The prototypes of the first variant are traceable to images of Hermes from the Mediterranean world. His various modes of portrayal seen on the bronze issues of the Greco-Bactrian king Diodotos I (fig. 23), of his son Diodotos II (Bopearachchi 1991, 45 and 152 pl. 2, series 12-14), and of the Indo-Scythian king Azes II⁵⁴ attest of the popularity of the Greek god and of the long history of his iconography in the region. The *chitoniskos* (a short tunic) and the *chlamys* (mantle) displayed by Hermes on a relief from the Hellenistic period from Lampsaque (*LIMC*, 5: "Hermes", no. 349) along with his position, leaning on the front leg and lightening the way with a torch to guide the three Charites, find an echo in, for instance, representations of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera from Bagh-Gai/Tapa-i-Kafariha (fig. 6) and Nīmogram (fig. 7). As may be observed on the coinage of Huviška (fig. 24), the pictorial model is also that of Pharro.⁵⁵ The name of the Zoroastrian god is provided by the legend in Bactrian but his garment and attributes, the winged headdress and the *kerykeion*, are taken from his accepted Greek

54 Bopearachchi *et. al.* 2003, 142 and 162 no. 124. Unlike the bronze issues of the Greco-Bactrian kings which only show the head of the god, the coinage of the Indo-Scythian king depicts Hermes full-length, holding the *kerykeion*.

55 Göbl 1984, G.346.2. While the *chitoniskos*, the *petasos* (the wide-brimmed hat) or the *pilos* (a rounded cap) and the *kerykeion* (the herald's wand) are already part of the god's attire in the Archaic period, the variety of winged headpieces appear during the Classical period. Sieber in *LIMC*, 5: "Hermes", 381-387.



FIGURE 23 Hermes, coin issued by Diodotos I (obverse), Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (Courtesy of Osmund Bopearachchi)

equivalent⁵⁶ and comparable to those carried by Hermes-Mercury on small Greco-Roman bronzes from the second century c.e. (*LIMC*, 5: “Hermes” nos. 974 and 975). Pharro and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, however, are not the only

56 As put by F. Grenet, “the practice of seeking from Greek art what Iranian tradition was unable to provide is more systematically observed in the Kushan empire” (Grenet 2006, 88). For other examples of Zoroastrian gods depicted with the features of their Greek



FIGURE 24 Pharro, coin issued by Huviška, British Museum, London, Acc. No. 10C.339
(© The Trustees of the British Museum)

divinities depicted under the guise of the Greek herald of gods. As exemplified by two images from Takht-i-Bāhī ([fig. 25] Zwalf 1996, 2: 63 no. 98; Stein 1912, fig. 2; Tanabe 1993–1994, 182 fig. 6), Pāñcika may also be shown in a similar fashion wearing either ankle-boots or sandals tied at mid-carves.

With regard to the long-sleeved tunic, it is used in other portraits of Pāñcika ([fig. 26] Spooner 1908, 12–18), Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera (fig. 27) and Pharro ([fig. 28] Göbl 1984, G.280.1). The decorated median braid (fig. 26), the wide belt or the belt with a hanging lower hem ending in a knot (Tanabe 1993–1994, 181 fig. 3), evoke the Kushan and Parthian costumes previously mentioned. Yet, none of the above gods wear the baggy trousers typical of this Iranian costume. The absence of undergarment, like the winged headdress and the boots, rather take from Classical models. This

and Indian equivalents on various supports see Grenet 2006, 87–99. The functional equivalences between Hermes and Pharro are developed in the following section.

combination of features from disparate origins is also characteristic of the fourth and fifth types.



FIGURE 25 Pāñcika and Hāritī, stele from Takht-i-Bāhī, British Museum, London, Acc. No. 1950,0726.2 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)



FIGURE 27 Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, Offering of the four bowls by the Heavenly King, Government Museum, Peshawar (© Archives Madame Tissot, UMR 8546)

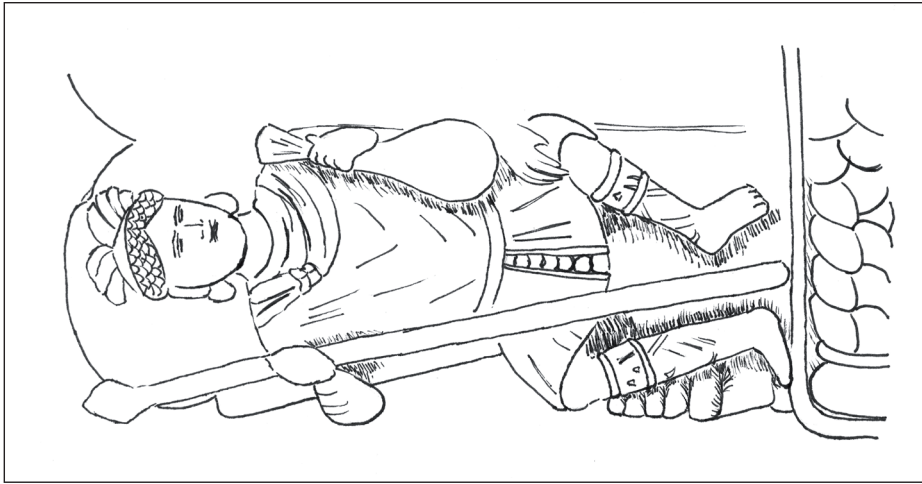


FIGURE 26 Detail of a stele representing Pāñcika and Hārīti, Gandhāra, Government Museum, Peshawar (J. Pons)



FIGURE 28 Pharro, coin issued by Huviška, British Museum, London, Acc. No. 1860,1220.204 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

Dressed in lamellar armor with trousers, the Gandhāran protagonist finds equivalents in the portrait of the Kushan ruler Vāsudeva (ca. 188–230 c.e.) struck on the obverse of his golden dinar and stater issues ([fig. 29] Göbl 1984, 507; Bopearachchi *et. al.* 2003, 187 no. 175). The *cataphractus* of the military elite is itself borrowed from images of the king on a horseback struck by Scythian rulers on their coinage. These predecessors of the Kushans thus continue a fashion already attested in the second century-first century b.c.e. notably on bone plates discovered at Orlat.⁵⁷ As for the winged headdress,

57 This particular fashion is referred to as “Kuṣāṇ type” in the repertory of terms established by the ISIAO (Faccenna & Filigenzi 2007, 172 pl. 131). However, early Kushan rulers (Vima Kadphises, Kaniška and Huviška) do not wear the lamellar armor but are clad in heavy caftans. It is only after Huviška that this fashion, retained from their Iranian predecessors, is replaced by the *cataphractus*. As shown by O. Bopearachchi on the basis of the Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian coins from a hoard discovered in Bara (Pakistan), the lamellar armor worn by later Kushan rulers is borrowed from Indo-Scythians. By comparing the portrayal of Indo-Scythian rulers on their coinage with the pieces of armor discovered in the Greco-Bactrian city of Ai Khanum (ca. 146/145 b.c.e.), the frieze from the Kushan palace of Khalchayan (ca. first century b.c.e.-first century c.e.) and the bone plates found



FIGURE 29 Golden stater, Vāsudeva I, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (Courtesy of Osmund Bopearachchi)

it is again taken from representations of Hermes. In the Gandhāran context, it is found in association with the lamellar armor in depictions of Pharro on the coinage of Huviška (ca. 153–191 c.e., fig. 30. Cribb & Bracey 2011, E.G2iib).

in the Scythian burial ground of Orlat (Uzbekistan, second century–first century b.c.e.), the author demonstrates that the *cataphractus* is Scythian. Bopearachchi 2003, particularly Chapter 2.



FIGURE 30

Pharro, coin issued by Huviška, Acc. No. 1894,0506.87 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

Concerning variants on this type, pieces of Indian clothing (i. e. the *dhotī* and/or the turban) have replaced the Central Asian lower garment and the Classical headdress. As attested by the statues of Skanda-Kārttikeya from Charg Paṭe (Vitali *et. al.* 2008, 161 no. 112) and Kāfir Koṭ ([fig. 31] Zwalf 1996, 1: 121 no. 102)⁵⁸ as well as by the headless image of Pāñcika attended by Hāritī discovered in Butkara I (Faccenna 2001, pl. 90a and pls. 91a and b), other gods display a similar combination of diverse garbs. As noted by D. Faccenna, however, the portrayal of the officer of *yakṣas* as a warrior differs from more common representations previously considered where the latter is dressed with a short tunic.⁵⁹

58 See also Swati 1997, 49 pl. 38 and Vitali *et. al.* 2008, 160 no. 111 for other examples. This mode of portrayal (with lamella armor and *paridhāna* or *dhotī*) is called the “Indo-Greek type” in IsIAO’s repertory of terms (Faccenna & Filigenzi 2007, 171 pl. 130). This type probably refers to the juxtaposition of the thorax and metal skirt of the Classical armor with the Indian *paridhāna*. However, the term “Indo-Greek” might be misleading. As it was pointed out by O. Bopearachchi, none of the Greek rulers from Gandhāra and the Punjab (Indo-Greek rulers) was depicted with this specific armor.

59 D. Faccenna who could not have been aware of the material from Bara and Orlat has compared this type with the representations of Parthian warriors from Palmyra and Dura Europos (Faccenna, 2006, 183; Seyrig 1941, 31-44).



FIGURE 31
Skanda-Kārttikeya, stelae from Kāfir
Koṭ, British Museum, London, Acc.
No. 1899,0609.6 (© The Trustees of the
British Museum)

Similar dynamics seem to be at play in the fifth and final type showing the figure dressed in a long sleeved tunic and a *dhotī*. Although Indra is more frequently depicted with a *paridhāna* and an *uttarīya*, he is shown in this fashion on the relief from Loriyān Tāṅgai previously mentioned (fig. 11). This assemblage of the Kushan upper and the Indian lower garments nevertheless finds a parallel in a small stele preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Ackermann 1975, 82–83 pl. XXIb).

Examining the pictorial sources for each of the various portrayals of the bow-bearer indicates that his iconography draws upon a variety of sources: Hellenistic, Greco-Roman, Parthian, Scythian and Indian predominantly. These modes of portrayal are characteristic of Gandhāran imagery in that they exhibit various degrees of likeness to objects found, say, in the Mediterranean West or in Central Asia. For instance, the type with *chitoniskos* suggests that artists were familiar with Hellenistic modes of portrayal of Hermes-Mercury. Other types, however, mix iconographic motifs from various artistic traditions. Worn without a lower garment, the long-sleeved tunic with a median braid looks like a *chitoniskos* which was tuned to Iranian aesthetics. As for the last two types, they display an assemblage of garments from Central Asian, Western and Indic origins. Thus, in light of the foregoing discussion, one may conclude that the construction of the portrayals of the Gandhāran motif feeds upon a rich pool of pictorial traditions which came into contact in Gandhāra and that the diversification of the modes of representation owes to the large range of pictorial models existing in the region. In other words, the rich heritage of Gandhāra has fostered the diversification of the motif.

What this examination of pictorial sources and parallels fails to account for, however, is the systematic presence of the bow, and that (less systematic) of the arrow. As noted above, the bow and arrow are solely listed in the

Lalitavistara among the many weapons attributed to Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera and/or his *yakṣas* retinue on the occasion of Siddhārtha's escape. In fact it is this passage which has lead K. Tanabe to identify the bow holder as Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, who armed in this way, would protect the Bodhisattva.⁶⁰ In a second article, K. Tanabe reconsiders his interpretation and attaches a new meaning to the two weapons carried by the protagonist, this time associated to "light and the dispersal of darkness" (Tanabe 1997-1998, 222). His demonstration is based on a carving on a railing pillar from Bodhgaya depicting Sūrya on the quadriga. The sun-god is framed by Uṣā and Pratyūṣā, respectively personifying dawn and crepuscule and respectively holding a bow and an arrow. The author establishes a parallel between Sūrya and the Bodhisattva on the one hand and Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera and Uṣā and Pratyūṣā on the other. He subsequently concludes that armed with the bow and the arrow, borrowed from Uṣā and Pratyūṣā, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera disperses the darkness in front of the Bodhisattva.

The hypothesis is interesting and to some extent in line with versions of the legend reporting that deities cast light onto the path. Yet it is not entirely convincing, in part because the claim deserves to be further substantiated. It is not certain that the comparison between sculptures which were produced three centuries apart is sufficient to prove K. Tanabe's point. Besides, several other documents weaken K. Tanabe's interpretation. Firstly, the corpus of Gandhāran sculptures counts more depictions of Sūrya on his chariot without Uṣā and Pratyūṣā than with. This leads one to question the extent of the light symbolism attached to the two weapons, at least in the region. Secondly, one may contend that

60 According to W. Lobo, the bow and the arrow are not combat weapons but weapons used by the hunters with whom the Bodhisattva exchanges his dress (Lobo 1983, 436). The reasons why this hypothesis does not hold have been stated above (see note 5).

the representation of a torch would be likely to constitute a visual signal more effective in conveying the function of a 'disperser of darkness.' The aforementioned relief from Pitalkhora does indicate that a torch was in fact employed.⁶¹ Therefore, given the existence of both visual and written traditions describing numerous *devas* in armors and holding weapons while escorting the Bodhisattva, one is more tempted to accept K. Tanabe's first interpretation that Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, and to this we may add possibly Indra, are guarding or protecting the Bodhisattva with the help of the bow and arrow.

In the remaining section, I would like to consider the possibility that the iconographic motifs used to portray Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera and Indra are endowed with additional meanings or identities. To put it differently, could other divinities be recognized on Gandhāran illustrations of the great departure under the guises characterized for Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera and Indra? As previously highlighted, material evidence shows that in Gandhāra, some of the fashions described were also common to representations of other gods associated to other religious pantheons coeval in Gandhāra, namely Pāñcika, Pharro, Skanda-Kārttikeya and Hermes. One may argue that the introduction of a Zoroastrian, Brahmanical or Classical god would be a mismatch to the Buddhist propos. However, for reasons that will now be developed, it is an assumption which is worth testing.

61 This is also the case on a relief from Pagān which the author mentions to support his hypothesis on the light symbolism attached to the bow and arrow. Tanabe 1997-1998, 222.

The protective function of Buddhist, Brahmanical, Zoroastrian and Classical gods

Previous scholarship has pointed out the links existing between some of these divinities and underlined how iconographic borrowings or similarities may mirror functional correspondences. Each of the divinities listed are invested with several functions and associated to various concepts in their respective pantheons. In this case, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, Pāñcika, Indra, Skanda-Kārttikeya, Pharro and Hermes are predominantly connected to ideas of leadership, protection, fertility and ambivalence.⁶² Nonetheless, it must be noted that these correspondences should not be considered as a fixed system of relationships. The reason for this is that the very nature of the divinities in question can hardly be envisaged as monolithic. Qualities

62 Neither an extensive account of the shifting natures of the six divinities nor a list all scholarship dealing with the iconographic or functional associations between the Buddhist, Brahmanical, Zoroastrian and Classical gods can be given here. The following studies or introductory chapters dedicated to the various gods or to the connections between them can be noted here. The figure of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera has been the topic of several monographs, doctoral dissertations and articles, see for instance: Bedeker 1969, 425–451; Modhey 1971–1972, 299–306; Klimburg-Salter 1981, 253–262; Tanabe 1999; Wessels-Mevissen 2001; Satapathy 2002; Astier 2014. An introductory discussion on Indra’s status and symbolism is given in the recent translation of the Ṛg-vedic hymns by Jamison and Brereton 2014, 1: 38–40. The most recent and complete study on Skanda-Kārttikeya is that of Mann 2012. The works of Agrawala 1967; Chatterjee 1970; Ghurye 1977; Sinha 1979 and Srinivasan 1997–1998, 233–264 can also be mentioned. With regard to Pharro see Bailey 1971; Shabazi 1974, 135–144; Shabazi 1980, 119–147; Skjærvø 1983, 241–259 and Lubotsky 1998, 478–488. With respect to Hermes: Bruchmann 1893; Sieber 1990, 285–290 and 373–387; Vergados 2013. Concerning the ties linking some of these gods or more broadly the issue of multiple identities, of particular relevance are Gnoli 1963, 29–37; Taddei 1966, 89–93; Grenet 1995–1996, 277–297 (Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera/Pharro); Grenet 2006, 87–99 (Pharro/Hermes); John 2003, 421–438 (Pāñcika/Pharro); Quagliotti 2003, 239–293; Quagliotti 2005, 271–291; Quagliotti 2008, 126–129 (Pāñcika/Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera/Pharro); Mann 2012, Chapter 6, 123–148 (Skanda-Kārttikeya/Pharro/Orlagno/Sraošo); Astier 2014, Chapter 3 (Pāñcika/Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera/Pharro).

of gods have been shaped and reshaped over time, in response to global or local circumstances, and are described or visually transcribed in documents whose date or place of production, composition or compilation are often problematic. It is difficult to determine which aspect(s) of a particular divinity was/were emphasized or disregarded at a given time and place and if so, whether this was the case in all parts of the population or only in some. In the following paragraphs, attention will be drawn to a salient feature of the characters of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, Indra, Skanda-Kārttikeya, Pāñcika, Pharro and Hermes and particularly relevant to the narrative context of the great departure: protection. Ensured either by kingly rule, military power, wit or prophylaxis, is it certainly a significant quality shared by all the divinities drawn together by the iconographic analysis.

With respect to Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, restricting ourselves to Buddhist sources, at least to begin with, he is unequivocally referred to as one of the four great kings of the quarters (of the universe) (Pāli: *cātummahārājāno*, Sanskrit: *catur-mahārāja*) also referred to as the four guardians of the regions (*lokapālā*). In this regard, he is associated to the northern quarter. The most detailed account of their defensive function, and incidentally of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's, is probably that of the *Āṭṭānāṭṭiya Sutta* (*Dīgha-nikāya*, 3.32; Walshe 1995, 471-478). After having "set up a guard, a defensive force, a watch over the four quarters," (*Dīgha-nikāya*, 3.32.194; Walshe 1995, 471) the four kings proceed to meet the Buddha in order to transmit to him the *Āṭṭānāṭṭa* protective verses, by means of which followers of the Buddha "may dwell guarded, protected, unharmed and at their ease" (*Dīgha-nikāya*, 3.32.194; Walshe 1995, 471-472). These verses, recited by Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera himself, describe each of the four directions, the north being:

[...] guarded by a king,
 Mighty in power and fame is he,
 Lord of all the yakkha folk,
 And Kuvera is his name.⁶³

A passage in the *Mahāvastu* is also quite telling of the four kings' power and protective charge. Here, the Buddha pronounces a blessing on Trapusa and Bhallika who ought to be watched over by the "Four Great Kings, glorious guardians of the world" who "with blazing radiance guard the four quarters."⁶⁴ Again, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera is associated to the northern quarter and presented as "lord and king of all the *yakṣas*" (*sarvayakṣādhipo rājā*).⁶⁵ Although probably laying more emphasis on Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's quality as god of wealth, similar traits are depicted in the epic literature of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.⁶⁶ A vivid description of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's fighting *yakṣa* and *rakṣasa* host is given in the *Mahābhārata* (*Mahābhārata* 3.3.160), which alternately refers to the gods as the "lord of all *yakṣas*," the "king of *yakṣas*," or the "lord of treasures." As for the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it reports that his functions of guardian and protector of the world were boons granted by Brahma (*Rāmāyaṇa*, Sundarakānda, 7.11; Goldman and Sutherland Goldman 2007, vol. 5, 10).

63 *yaṃ disaṃ abhipāleti mahārājā yas assi so yakkhānaṃ ādhipati Kuvero iti nāma so [...].* (*Dīgha-nikāya*, 3.32.203; Walshe 1995, 476).

64 *catvāraś ca mahārājā lokapālā yaśasvinaḥ/praivalamānavarṇena rakṣanti caturdiśaṃ //* (*Mahāvastu* 3.310; Jones 2007, 297).

65 *Mahāvastu* 3.309; Jones 2007, 3: 296. For a discussion of Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera's function as protector of the kingdom of Khotan see Anderl (forthcoming).

66 The *Yajurveda* (1.8.7), the *Atharvaveda* (1.3) and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (3.6.4) also assign gods to each of the four directions. Their identities however differ from those found in the Buddhist and epic narrative contexts. The northern region is for instance attributed to Varuṇa or Soma. On this see Coomaraswamy 1971, 2: 31.

Contrary to Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera who figures in accounts of the high deeds of major gods of Buddhism and Brahmanism alike, Pāñcika, the great general of the latter's army remains essentially associated to the Buddhist sphere. In the *Prātihārya-sūtra* and the *Sudhanakumāra-avadāna* of the *Divyāvadāna*, the latter is explicitly presented as the Heavenly King's *mahāyakṣasenāpati* or simply *yakṣenāpati* ("the great field marshal of the *yakṣas*" or "leader of the *yakṣa* army") (*Divyāvadāna* 12.101 (Rotman 2008, 281-282) and 30.290 (Tatelman 2005, 260-261). In these stories, Pāñcika respectively summons heretics to take refuge in the Buddha and leads the troop of *yakṣas* to defeat a recalcitrant hill-tribe chieftain. Pāñcika's dedication to the Buddha and his doctrine is also illustrated in the account of the great departure as given by the *Lalitavistara*. There, upon hearing that the Bodhisattva will renounce his princely life, the "*yajñasenāpati*" commands that "we [*yakṣas*] should exert ourselves for his worship."⁶⁷

The wealth of hymns addressed to Indra in the *Ṛg-Veda* present him as the most prominent god whose greatest deed is to have slayed with his *vajra* the gigantic cobra *Vṛtra* which blocked the course of waters. His warlike nature makes him a symbol of power and of heroism and as the destroyer of *Vṛtra*, the paradigm of obstacles⁶⁸, of protection. Indra remains portrayed as the chief of deities and praised for his military prowess in the later mythology of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* as well as in Buddhist legends. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* for instance, he appears as a standard of comparison with valiant warriors such as Rāma, to name but one:

67 *tasya yuṣmābhiḥ pūjākarmaṇe autsukyamāpattavyam* // (*Lalitavistara*; Vaidya 1958, 146; Mitra 1998, 249). Translated by de Foucaux (1988, 180) as "Empressez-vous donc de lui offrir œuvre de sacrifice."

68 For a recent translation of *Ṛg-vedic* hymns Jamison and Brereton 2014, 3 vols.

Once Bharata's older brother had slain in combat Kumbhakarna, crusher of the hosts of the gods, whose efforts had never before been thwarted in great battles, he rejoiced, as did Indra, the lord of the immortal gods, when he had slain the great asura Vṛtra.⁶⁹

In the Buddhist cosmological system, Indra or Sakka (Sanskrit: Śakra) is the king or chief of gods (Pāli: *devānam indo*, Sanskrit: *deva indra*) and lives in one of the worlds of *devas* named Tāvatiṃsa (Sanskrit: Trāyastriṃśa).⁷⁰ Several *jātakas* describe him driving *asuras* away from the realm of *devas*, yet by outwitting them rather than by force.⁷¹ However, both Buddhist and epic legends often place him in a position subordinate to other gods. His active figurations in major events of the Buddha's previous and last existences are probably illustrative enough. With respect to epic traditions, particularly relevant to the present discussion are two episodes in the

69 *sa kumbhakarṇaṃ surasainyamardanaṃ mahatsu yuddheṣv aparājitaśramam / nananda hatvā bharatāgrajo raṇe mahāsuraṃ vṛtram ivāmarādhipaḥ // (Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa, 55.129; Goldman, Sutherland Goldman and van Nooten 2010, vol. 6, part. 1: 299).*

70 Indra's status in the Buddhist cosmological system is notably described in the *Samyutta-nikāya* (1.11.2.2). Indra (here Sakka) is described as: *sakko bhikave devānam indo devānaṃ Tāvatiṃsānam issariyādhipaccanaṃ rajjaṃ kāresi tasmā devānam indo ti vuccati* [...]. "Sakka the king of gods rules over the gods of the thirty-three in great splendour so he is called king of gods" (Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000, 229). In the Buddhist context, Indra is most frequently referred to as Sakka or Śakra (strong, powerful, mighty), an epithet which is occurring many times in the Vedas mainly to qualify Indra. Despite the differences between the Vedic Indra and the Buddhist Śakra, the characteristics which they share make the two entities inseparable.

71 See for instance the *Kulāvaka-jātaka* (Fausbøll 1962-1964, 1.31; Cowell and Chalmers 1957, 1: 76-83), *Kakkatā-jātaka* (Fausbøll 1962-1964, 3.267; Cowell and Chalmers 1957, 2: 235-237) the *Āsaṅka-jātaka* (Fausbøll 1962-1964, 3.380; Cowell and Chalmers 1957, 3: 161-164), the *Tacchasūrata-jātaka* (Fausbøll 1962-1964, 14.492; Cowell and Chalmers 1957, 4: 216-222).

Mahābhārata where Skanda-Kārttikeya is asked, in fact once by Indra himself, to become or replace Indra who “protects the group of gods.”⁷²

The circumstances which lead Skanda-Kārttikeya to take the leadership of the army of gods differ to varying degrees between sources. Accounts found in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Kumārasaṃbhava*, to mention the most verbose on the topic, agree that Skanda-Kārttikeya was engendered in order to take over a role forsaken by another god but often diverge on the identity of the predecessor (usually Indra or Śiva)⁷³ and on the child’s lineage (Agni, Rudra-Śiva, Svāhā, Gaṅga, the Kṛttikās and Pārvatī).⁷⁴ As for the actual task with which the god is invested, this is explicitly stated by Skanda-Kārttikeya as he answers Indra’s request: “Consecrate me to the generalship for the purpose of protecting cows and Brahmins, and for the success of the gods and the destruction of Dānavas.”⁷⁵ The consecration of Skanda-Kārttikeya as *senāpati* is followed by a glorified portrayal of the military god in armour and weaponry.⁷⁶ Skanda-Kārttikeya’s slaying of

72 Skanda-Kārttikeya is himself not certain what this task implies and asks: *kim indraḥ sarvalokānām karotīha tapodhanāḥ/kathaṃ devagaṇāmś caiva pāti nityaṃ sureśvaraḥ* // (*Mahābhārata*, 3.218.8). The passage is translated by Mann (2012, 59) as follows: “Great ascetics, what does the Indra of the worlds do? Tell me, how the lord of all the gods always protect the group of the gods?”

73 In the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.36) and the *Kumārasaṃbhava* (Canto 2.1) for instance, we are told that the assembly of gods approached Brahma and requested a leader for their army while Śiva was engaged in austerities.

74 For a discussion on the various accounts of Skanda-Kārttikeya’s origin see Mann 2012, part. 62–73 and 79–101 and 182–187 and 199–201.

75 *dānavānām vināśāya devānām arthasiddhaye/gobrāhmaṇasya trāṇārthaṃ senāpatye ‘bhiṣiṅca mām* // (*Mahābhārata* 3.218.22; Mann 2012, 60).

76 *araje vāsasī rakte vasānaḥ pāvakātmajaḥ/bhāti dīptavapuḥ śrīmān raktābhrābhyām ivāṃśumān//kukkuṭaś cāgninā dattas tasya ketur alaṃkṛtaḥ/rathe samucchrito bhāti kālāgnir iva lohitaḥ//[...] viveśa kavacaṃ cāsya śarīraṃ sahajaṃ tataḥ/yudhyamānasya dehasya prādurbhavati tat sadā//śaktir varma balaṃ tejaḥ kāntatvaṃ satyam akṣatiḥ/brahmaṇyatvam asaṃmoho bhaktānām parirakṣaṇam//nikṛntanaṃ ca śatrūṇām lokānām cābhirakṣaṇam/skandena saha jātāni sarvāṇy eva janādhipa* // (*Mahābhārata*

Tāraka is undoubtedly the most famous of his achievements. The demon who torments the gods and endangers Brahmanic values is alternatively Skanda-Kārttikeya's first mission (*Mahābhārata* 13.86.26–27) or the very reason why the boy was engendered and born.⁷⁷ In quality of *senāpati* however, Skanda-Kārttikeya confronts various demons in battle, among which the demon named Mahiṣa (*Mahābhārata* 3.221.60), whose defeat is normally attributed to Dūrga. The reason why this is worth noting is that this somewhat minor episode is only rarely illustrated and that one of the few depictions comes from Mohammad Zai and is now preserved in the Department of Archaeology Museums at Peshawar (Vitali *et. al.* 2008, nos. 111, 132 and 160).

As for Pharro, the term has been identified as the Bactrian form of the Avestan *χ^varənah-* and of its Iranian cognates (*hvarnah* in Old Iranian and *farrah* in Middle Persian) and is generally taken to refer to the personification

3.218.31–36). The passage is translated by Mann (2012, 60–61) as follows: “The son of Pāvakā [Agni] was clothed in a pair of red dustless clothes. His blazing and glorious body shone like the sun covered in two red clouds. The cock, which was given to him by Agni and which adorned his banner and which was raised over his chariot, shone red like the Doomsday fire. His armour entered his body, which was produced at his birth; it always becomes manifest when the god is firing. Spear, armour, strength, splendour, beauty, truth, invulnerability, Brahminic faith, lack of confusion, protection of worshippers, and the destruction of enemies, and the protection of all the worlds were all born with Skanda, O King.” The consecration is only briefly alluded to in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.36.29–30): *gṛhītvā kṣīram ekāhnā sukumāra vapus tadā/ajayat svena vīryeṇa daityasainyagaṇān vibhuḥ//surasenāgaṇapatim tatas tam amaladyutim/abhyaṣiṅcan suragaṇāḥ sametyāgnipurogamāḥ//* translated by Goldman (2007, 195) as: “After that lord had drunk their milk for but a single day, he conquered the hosts of *daitya* warriors through his own might, through his form was that of a tender boy (29). Therefore the hosts of the gods assembled and making Agni, the god of fire, their spokesman, consecrated him whose radiance was unblemished, as commander of the hosts of the gods (30).”

77 *Kumārasambhava*, Canto 2.51. The passage reads: “O Almighty God, we, therefore desire to create a leader to destroy him (Tāraka), as those desirous of salvation wish to amass religious virtue, which cuts off the fetters of Karman.” (Kale 1981, 176).

of the Zoroastrian concept of *χ^varənah*.⁷⁸ Much of the knowledge about *χ^varənah*- derives from the *Yašt*, the section of the Zoroastrian *Avesta* containing hymns dedicated to divinities or divine concepts. These, notably *Yašt* 10, 17 and 19 have been thoroughly reviewed by Bailey who highlighted the changing nature of the concept showing that it evolved:

from the primary meaning 'the things obtained or desired' by way of 'good things' and 'riches' to the 'good fortune' assured by riches to the possessor of *hvarnah*, and thence to 'Fortune', a divine (*mēnōkīk*) hypostasis, and a force bestowing 'good fortune' including all success and victory. It is a creation of Ahura Mazdā and therefore an object of *yasna*, reverent worship [...]. (Bailey 1971, 29)

In the context of the Kushan era, the existence of a cult to Pharro is essentially attested by the numismatic types issued by Kaniška I and Huviška I and scholarship refers to him as a personification of royal good fortune (Rosenfield 1967, 96). As observed, the feathered headdress is a characteristic of Pharro and is borrowed from that of Hermes-Mercury to whom he is equated in quality of herald of gods and god of fortune. More generally, the bird imagery may be interpreted as an emblem of legitimate kingship, received from Ahura Mazdā.⁷⁹

78 The matter, however, is more complicated than that as both the concept of *χ^varənah*- and its etymology are themselves subject to debate. For a summary on the topic see Lubotsky 1998, 480.

79 On the symbolism of bird imagery within the Iranian context see Curtis 2007; Rosenfield 1967, 95-93 and Granoff 1970, 163. With respect to Kushan coinage, bird imagery is common to representations Orlagno (*Avestan: Verethraghna*) on Kushan coinage, although taking a different form. The god of war or the god of Iranian in arms is shown with a bird in his headdress.

Concerning Hermes, it is evidently not the qualities of a leader or of a military hero that are to be listed here. Nevertheless, a passage of the *Iliad* endows the Greek god with a mission comparable to that of Pharro's symbolism. In this passage, Hermes is acting as a link between Zeus and Pelops in the transmission of the Atreids' scepter to Agamemnon, "to bear, to rule over many islands and all of Argos." (*Iliad* 2.100-108; Powell 2014, 65) More directly connected to the protective function highlighted for others gods is Hermes's quality of guide. This quality is conveyed in various episodes and epithets⁸⁰ but is elaborate in the *Iliad*. Hermes is the *pompos*, the guide, sent by Zeus to lead Priam to the corpse of his dead son Hector which is lying beside the Achilles's ship. The god, who conducts the old man through the night, is described not only as a guide, but as a protector and a helper:

But as your guide I would go even to famous Argos, attending you kindly either in a swift ship or on foot. Nor would any man scorn me as a guide and attack us⁸¹

Thus Hermes the helper spoke. Then he leaped upon the chariot and swiftly he took hold of the whip and took the reins in his hands. (*Iliad* 24.427-433; Powell 2014, 557)

Hermes auspicious qualities are further celebrated by Priam:

80 For an overview the episodes portraying Hermes as a guide (either of travellers, of souls, or cattle) see Siebert 1990, 286-287.

81 A few lines above, Hermes himself states: "I will defend you against anyone else" (*Iliad* 24.364; Powell 2014, 556).

Surely, some god has stretched forth his hand over me, who has sent a wayfarer such as you to meet me. You are a bringer of good fortune, one wonderful in form and beauty. (*Iliad* 24.366–371; Powell 2014, 556)

Let us close this indicative overview of some of the characteristics ascribed to Buddhist, Brahmanical, Zoroastrian and Classical gods and reconsider the hypothesis suggested at the outset that multiple meanings are attached to the figure with a bow. The preceding overview highlights a system of values shared by the divinities and centered on the function of protection. These functional affinities are, as previously observed, paralleled on the visual level by certain iconographic affinities. If we ignore the Buddhist affiliation of the relief, from the strictly functional point of view each of the gods listed has the ability or the ‘credentials’ to both guide and protect the prince in his escape. Likewise, from a purely formal point of view, given that the fashions described above are also characteristic of representations of Pāñcika, Skanda-Kārttikeya, Pharro and Hermes found in the region, nothing prevents us from recognizing another Buddhist figure or the Brahmanical, Zoroastrian and Classical gods. Consequently, in principle, there are no reasons that would speak against attaching additional meanings to the fashions used to portray Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera and Indra.

Two problems arise, however. Firstly, the attributes carried by the protagonist on the Gandhāran reliefs are inconsistent with the preferential attributes found in representations of the above-mentioned gods, whether in Gandhāra or elsewhere. As can be seen on figures 25 and 26, Pāñcika usually holds a spear and a purse or a cup. Statues of Skanda-Kārttikeya from Gandhāra (fig. 31) depict him with a cock and a spear. The last attribute is also that of Pharro who can also carry a sword (fig. 28) or the

kerykeion (fig. 24), which he takes from Hermes.⁸² As a matter of fact, Indra himself is usually credited with the *vajrā*. As for Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, it is only in the context of the great departure that he is credited with some weapons. Later depictions of the god⁸³, however, show him with a spear and a miniature *stūpa*.⁸⁴ Secondly, one cannot ignore that the context in which the figure with a bow appears is a Buddhist one. But would the introduction of a non-Buddhist god beside the Bodhisattva really constitute an oddity to the Gandhāran viewer?

Concluding remarks

By way of conclusion, let us briefly consider the illustrations of the great departure in their broader context of production, namely the multi-cultural and multi-religious context of the Kushan era. In this respect, three sets of documents can be mentioned, starting with the representation of two divinities who are frequently depicted on reliefs of the great departure: the *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi and the *nāgaradevatā* (the city goddess) of Kapilavastu. These two examples, undoubtedly the most commented

82 As already indicated, Hermes is shown in full-length, holding the *kerykeion* on the coinage of Azes II. See note 54.

83 For examples of a later representations of the guardian of the northern quarter of the universe from Dunhuang and attributed to the eighth and ninth centuries see Anderl (forthcoming).

84 One could probably find in written or visual traditions justifications for the unusual attribution of the bow and arrow. The rainbow is for instance referred to as Indra's bow (*Indra-dhanús*) in the *Atharvaveda* (15.1.6). The *Rāmāyaṇa* reports that the arrow Lakṣmaṇa uses to defeat the demon "had been granted to him in a dream by immeasurable Kubera himself" (Yuddhakāṇḍa, 78.14-15; Goldman, Sutherland Goldman, van Nooten 2010, vol. 6, part 1: 381). As for Skanda-Kārttikeya, Gandhāran depictions of the god do show him with the arrow across his chest. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that these weapons are not emblematic of either visual or written portrayals of these gods.

upon, are characteristic of the tendency of Gandhāran artists to draw upon a pool of iconographic traditions to construct the iconography of the Buddhist figure. Their iconographic prototypes derive from or show affinities with depictions of Heracles on the one hand and with several goddesses: the Greek Tyche, the Roman Fortuna, the Iranian Ardoxšo and the Indian *yakṣī*. The reasons why Vajrapāṇi and the *nāgaradevatā* have been equated to Classical, Zoroastrian and more generally Indic divinities have been discussed by several scholars. These have demonstrated that the iconographic borrowings or similarities rely on symbolic equivalences associated to terrestrial power concerning Vajrapāṇi⁸⁵, fertility and city protection with regard to the *nāgaradevatā* (Foucher 1913, 123-138; Gnoli 1953, 29-37; Fischer 1987, 61-65). Whether or not the original meanings of the Classical, Zoroastrian or Indic divinities were understandable to viewers of the reliefs is difficult to tell but the following epigraphic documents might shed some light on the question.

The first document is a silver *phialē* published by H. Falk, dated to the fourth-third century b.c.e. on the basis of toreutic parallels and bearing two inscriptions, one in Greek and one in Gāndhārī. Both are commemorating the gift of a Greek official (a *meridarchēs*) to redeem a boon granted by a god.⁸⁶ The god is named Chaos in the inscription in Greek and Boa in the Gāndhārī version. While Chaos is not attested as a god in Greek literature

85 The reasons why Vajrapāṇi's iconography feeds upon representations of Heracles predominantly, but also of Alexander the Great, Pan or Serapis, are one of the most debated subjects in the field of Gandhāran Buddhist art. It is beyond the scope of this paper to review all the hypotheses formulated. For the main propositions see Foucher 1905-1951, 1: 544-543; Lamotte 1966, 113-159; Santoro 1979, 293-343; Flood 1989, 17-27; Santoro 1992, 269-309; Giuliano 2001, 247-298; Quagliotti 2002-2003, 16-30; Tanabe 2004, 111-137; Zin 2005, 73-88; Filigenzi 2006, 271-285.

86 Falk 2009, 26-28. The inscription in reads "Kalliphōn, the Meridarchēs, after a vow dedicated (it) to *Chaos." and "By Kalliphōn, the Meridarchēs, after a promise, (this) was repaid for Boa."

(but rather for a concept), the name Boa can be identified with the Vedic Bhava, a form of Rudra. Bhava is regarded as “a name of the uncivilized primeval deity” (Falk 2009, 28) to which, admittedly, the Greek equivalent used by the *meridarchēs*, “Chaos,” does justice.⁸⁷ The remaining inscriptions come from the Buddhist monastic complex of Zar Ḍherī, located on the right bank of the Siran River in northeast Pakistan. They are carved on the back of some of the stone reliefs which were found on the site and record the names of some of the donors and sculptors involved in the sponsorship and construction of the complex.⁸⁸ Their names, “Boïrea of the Pharas,” “Priṇadi,” “Cavaliaoḍa of the Vavaṇaas” and “Hariśava,” are Iranian (Indo-Scythian) and Indian in origin and give a glimpse of the multi-ethnic milieu of Zar Ḍherī. Worth noting is the fact that the name “Hariśava,” probably that of a sculptor, is carved at the back of a stone relief which was once attached on the base of the Buddhist *stūpa* and which shows a group-portrait of Olympian gods banqueting (Koizumi 2011, 309 pl. 216).

What are the implications of this in the context of the great departure scene? In light of the cultural and religious entanglement illustrated by visual and epigraphic documents, the following proposition is submitted for evaluation. The diversity of the motifs used to represent the guiding figure on Gandhāran reliefs and which contrasts with ancient illustrations of the event of the Indian-subcontinent, can be accounted for by the rich pool of religious and pictorial traditions which came into contact in the Gandhāran

87 The Rabatak inscription attributed to Kaniška I provides another good example of an explicit assimilation between two gods from different religious traditions: Skanda-Kārttikeya and Sraoša. Incidentally, it shows that one god may be associated to more than one divinity. While the main inscription provides a list of Zoroastrian gods, a short interlinear inscription placed between the Zoroastrian Nana and Sraoša reads: “who in Indian is called Mahāsenā and is called Viśakha” (Sims-Williams 2004, 56).

88 The study of the epigraphic corpus from Zar Ḍherī has been conducted by R. Salomon and is published in the archaeological report of the site (Salomon 2011, 381–391).

region. Several divinities may be recognized under the five main guises depicted, making their bearer ambiguous or rather polyvalent. As shown, the Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Brahmanical and Classical gods portrayed with these fashions in Gandhāra all share the charges of a protector and a guide. These functions are consistent with the role played by several *devas* in some written and visual accounts of the great departure. In the Gandhāran context, these functions are indicated by the position of the figure leading the cortege, the heavy armor and additionally signaled by the bow and arrow which could for instance, be interpreted as generic and unifying attributes for gods belonging to different pantheons.

In view of the common characteristics and existing logic which parallel the iconographic affinities between the deities of the Buddhist, Brahmanical, Zoroastrian and Classical pantheons, one may suspect that the multiple intenders of the motif included into the Gandhāran relief were not accidental. In other words, those individuals who selected from a repertoire of pictorial models to construct the portrayal of the figure with a bow are likely to have been aware of the functional links existing between the deities and may have hoped that the unique iconography created would resonate with many sectors of the Gandhāran population. Given the multi-cultural and multi-religious context in which Gandhāran imageries were produce, the possibility that the figure with a bow may evoke deities other than, or additional to, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera and Indra to some viewers, is at least worth considering.

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