GIOVANNI VERARDI

HOMA AND OTHER FIRE RITUALS IN GANDHĀRA

GIOVANNI VERARDI

HOMA
AND OTHER FIRE RITUALS
IN GANDHĀRA

CONTENTS

1. Introductory Remarks

In presenting some new elements that, in my opinion, may be useful for a better understanding of Gandhāran Buddhism, I will deliberately leave aside (though not entirely) the main path of Gandhāran studies, which has largely remained that traced out by Alfred Foucher at the beginning of this century. It has given good results solely in the interpretation of 'narrative' scenes, which he compared with hagiographic–narrative texts (Buddha's lives, *jātakas*, etc.). Many scholars after Foucher have improved (but not surpassed) his interpretations, and have explained scenes he had not: nevertheless, moving within the same paradigm, where they progressed by means of additions and corrections, they failed to offer any new insight into Gandhāran Buddhism [1]. As J.C. Huntington (1984: 134) has observed, 'Gandhāran Buddhist iconography is still very poorly understood'.

The main feature of Foucher's paradigm is that it is a modernist one, even if the French scholar did not share what has been called 'the Pali Text Society's mentality' (see Tambiah 1984: 7); as such it cannot grasp all the articulations of Gandhāran Buddhism and selects only those aspects that are in line with Buddhist modernism, which has long been channelled into the current of Western positivistic and neo–positivistic thought. D.N. Gellner, following others (Staal 1985: 41 ff.; id. 1986: 187 ff.; Gombrich 1988: esp. 185 ff.) has recently drawn attention to the modernist vision of Buddhism, naturally of Protestant origin, and to modernist Buddhism itself, so heavily affected by it. I will forbear to rehash its assumptions and effects and refer the reader to his book (Gellner 1992): one of those books that scholars of things Gandhāran do not, as a matter of principle, take into consideration.

In Foucher's paradigm a problem of method is implied: Gandhāran Buddhism is not seen as a well–integrated, though ancient and specific, part of a

---

Besides the colleagues whose assistance is acknowledged in the notes, I wish to thank Giuseppe De Marco, who assisted me in the bibliographical research. He also read the final manuscript and called to my attention some oversights.

[1] An exception was M. Bussagli, who attempted to investigate roots and developments of Gandhāran art in relation to Hellenistic and Iranian, often little known religious currents. This field of research is worth the utmost attention for there is far too much we do not know about the relationship between the Hellenistic and the Indian (not only Buddhist) worlds. Yet Bussagli (see his contribution of 1984) dealt with the whole matter as if Gandhāra never had anything to do with Buddhism and India: hence the unreliability of his paradigm. The position of J.C. Huntington (especially 1980 and 1984) is quite different. I have heard his articles (notably the second) criticized, but whatever their faults, these works must be considered a seminal contribution.

great, still *living* system, but as an episode to be understood only through the instruments of philology and those, derived from philology, that art history and archaeology produced. Of course Philology is the founding category of Modernity, and that's where we started. But not much else can be done towards a fuller understanding of Gandhāra unless we address other ancient Buddhist traditions (those of China, Tibet and Japan, besides that of a Theravāda reinterpreted and made useful to the modernist paradigm) and the living forms of Buddhism, especially those less tainted by Western evisceration and assimilation such as Japanese Buddhism, for example, or Tibetan Buddhism before the diaspora.

Living traditions directly shift our attention from a historical–philological and doctrinal level to an anthropological one, especially the ritualistic one. Had we to refer to the well–known positions of F. Staal, we might recall that in Asian religions ritual comes first, and mystical experience far behind, with doctrine following as an unimportant third (see Staal 1985: 23 ff.). I do not entirely agree, but there is little doubt that from an 'anthropological' point of view rituals appear preeminent. Rituals, as I shall attempt to prove in the following pages, were definitely central to Gandhāran Buddhism, both for the higher segments of the population, more directly under the monasteries' control, and for the lower ones, among which rituals had to maintain even more clearly those characteristics of 'invariance' and 'meaninglessness' discussed by Staal (1979; 1989).

These pages contain no coherent attempt to create a new paradigm, because several other factors ought to be considered besides those expounded here. However, it will be clear that if, with regard to Gandhāran Buddhism, the focus is brought, as much as possible, even only onto rituals, Foucher's paradigm can only fall apart: this not so much for the reason Staal would propose, but because the modernist, moralistic vision on which it is founded would collapse in the presence of hundreds of rituals and 'magic', 'superstitious' practices *which cause us to read in quite a different light even 'high' iconographies*, those that would never keep free from the strict control of the monastic authorities.

Foucher's paradigm has been so strong that even archaeological research (with philology as its model) has been conditioned by it. It is true that there are not many sacred areas of Gandhāra and neighbouring regions where excavations have been carried out under an adequate control, but no study has ever been attempted of the ceramic forms that, at least in sacred areas (but not only), are certainly related to ritual activity[2]. That was not so much due to the difficulties of such a task[3] as to the consideration that this kind of evidence was unimportant

---

[2] Among the few exceptions, Rahman's work (1968–9) is worth mentioning, although no concern is shown for the point I am discussing.

[3] I know from my own experience in Nepal how approximate the results of this sort of investigation can be, even if our excavation in Kathmandu (Verardi 1992) was simpler in this from a methodological point of view. The question of the training of the students of ceramics, almost always with a quantitative and functionalistic–materialistic approach, adds to the objective problems.

for understanding sites. In a word, the selection of 'data' has been useful to the paradigm, one of whose implicit assumptions, therefore, collapses, i.e. the positivistic pretence that it is only a matter of time for collecting all data and giving us Gandhāran Buddhism 'as it was': or otherwise that the documentary blank is such as to prevent us from escaping the accepted paradigm. In this case we lack exactly those features (the instruments of ritual) that would have integrated the iconographic sources, upon which we are still compelled to rely. Fortunately, they tell us a great deal, if we are only willing to know about them.

Foucher's paradigm is also of a historical–evolutionistic type. In it the Gandhāran phenomenon is considered, we may say, a mature form of the 'original' Buddhism. The presence of Mahāyāna currents (developing cutting across the *nikāyas*: see de la Vallée Poussin 1930; Bechert 1973, 1992) is cautiously acknowledged, and the presence of forms of esoteric Buddhism is usually denied through the well–known appeal to actual 'facts'. But facts, of course, emerge within paradigms. No 'fact' – to take a famous example – ever came out to show that it was the earth that revolved around the sun within the Ptolemaic system: it was the recovery of Aristarchus' theories, made possible by Humanism, that led to the construction of the Copernican system, within which 'facts' were promptly observed that had always been there. A paradigm, as such, shuts out from the start alternative ways of understanding reality. Being un-conscious, it does not show itself as such, but only through actual applications, which in the present case we might recall (but will not) in the bibliography with many an example.

The binding power of a paradigm is not only the result of ideology. Conformism plays an important role as well. In the academic world, sticking to an approved paradigm helps *to avoid mistakes*. Actually, it is sufficient for anyone with some preparation to move along its axis to be academically fully accepted, whatever the actual value of his contributions. Stepping outside a paradigm is, conversely, dangerous; the possibility of turning in the wrong direction is rather high, and in such cases a drop in academic standing is certain; if, on the contrary, one gets in the right direction, a long time can pass before others begin to follow, and so the damage is equally high. Thus the temptation to keep on the safe side is quite strong.

That a paradigm can stand in time is finally due, to a great extent, to a question of power, as has been shown by those we may call social epistemologists. The breaking out of a paradigm means, as a matter of fact, a loss of power for those who moved within it. And the greater is the power acquired within a paradigm, the stronger the oppositions will be to the rise of a new one. For things Gandhāran, ideology, conformism and power can be very easily tolerated, since the stakes are negligible. Indeed this is another reason why it is still difficult to define the whole matter again.

2. SIDDHĀRTHA'S MARRIAGE

The reliefs depicting Siddhārtha's marriage to Yaśodhara show that in Gandhāra it was taken for granted that it had been celebrated according to a ritual that, in its numerous variants, we know from the Hindu tradition, which is basically dependent on Vedic tradition.

Fire is indispensable to the ritual and is at the centre of two of the four moments structuring the ritual, *agnipariṇayana* and *homa*[4]. A relief in the Peshawar Museum (fig. 1) distinctly shows how Siddhārtha, holding Yaśodhara by the right hand, leads her in the circumambulation of the sacred fire and of the jar that, according to Ingholt, 'contained the water with which the father has sealed the "transfer" of his daughter to the royal house of the Sākyas' (Lyons and Ingholt 1957: no. 33), and that may be understood as the vessel where the deity is made present during the ritual. Siddhārtha, we must suppose, is uttering the ritual formula[5].

Fig. 2 shows how the couple, while performing the circumambulation, is attended by the *purohita*, who holds in his right hand an object with a rounded end, which is identifiable as the sacrificial spoon. In a third relief (fig. 3), depicting the same moment of the ritual, the *sruc*, i.e. the large long-handled wooden spoon of the Vedic texts, used to pour clarified butter, is held by a sitting young *purohita*. In the latter relief, two jars instead of one can be seen upon a platform next to the sacred fire; a flask is shown at the centre of the base of the relief, which is slightly damaged.

During the Hindu ceremony, there are many oblations of *ājya* and grains (see for example the description of the ritual made by Dubois [1906: 216 ff.] in modern times). One of the most important offerings, *lājahoma*, is made by the bride (see Kane 1930–46, II: 534). The relief of fig. 4, which is fragmentary on the right, where Siddhārtha was probably represented, is noteworthy because it actually shows Yaśodhara who is sitting on a stool and pouring something into the fire with the *sruc* – probably clarified butter from the bowl (?) that she holds in her left hand. Again, next to the fire stand two jars containing bunches of flowers or plants[6].

---

[4] The others are *pāṇigrahaṇa* and *saptapadī*. See Kane (1930–46, II: 531).

[5] 'I am *ama* (this), thou art *sā* (she), thou art *sā*, I am *ama*, I am heaven, thou art the earth; I am the *sāman*, thou art the *ṛk*. Let us both marry here. Let us beget offspring. Dear to each other, bright, having well disposed minds, may we live for a hundred years!' (ib.: 528).

[6] At a point of the ritual preceding the real wedding, bride and groom touch a vase of flowers (see Gonda 1981: 174).

These Gandhāran representations (for others, see Ackermann 1975: no. 12; Kurita 1988, I: nos. 109–12, 114; Joshi and Sharma 1969: no. 5) are of great interest because, although any analytical comparison between the ritual acts shown in the reliefs and those we know of from the literature and the living tradition is probably impossible[7], they give us very valuable information about a ritual virtually unreported in the texts on the life of the Buddha. One might think that, although it was natural for Siddhārtha, a *kṣatriya*, to marry according to a traditional ritual, it was preferred not to dwell upon rituals, such as *homa*, that Buddhism, in principle at least, rejected. However, the episode of Siddhārtha's marriage is rather common in Gandhāra[8], and on the contrary one could say that *homa* is represented there because it was performed as a custom even within the Buddhist (the most important) segments of Gandhāran society, at least on the occasion of sacramental ceremonies, such as the wedding. *Homa*, to be sure, was an exoteric ritual, or rather, considering that it was meant for the upper castes only (as is still the case today in Hindu society) a quasi–exoteric one: here the observer's viewpoint, that is, that of Western scholars who get most of their information from the upper castes (taken to represent the rationale of a hardly existing, especially in the past, 'Hindu' society), is crucial.

It is difficult for me to accept such reliefs as simply narrative, as mere illustrations of an episode in the life of the Buddha. As we will see, briefly, in section 5, *their narrative character propounds normative models*: Siddhārtha's marriage is the model, accepted by the monastic institutions (the iconographies under discussion are found in monasteries), of laymen's marriages, particularly of those belonging to the upper castes, which had the means and the status to support the religious establishments: the 'twice–born', although converted, held fast to the traditional rites of the life–cycle, including *homa*.

It is noteworthy that in northern medieval Buddhism, as can still be observed, *homa* 'forms an integral part of the life cycle rites, notably the marriage, caste initiation rites and the *dikṣa* ceremony' (Locke 1980: 103). *Homa* is performed now as it was in the past, but, on these and other occasions, it is always a specialized *Buddhist* priest now, a *vajrācārya*, who performs it. In fact, contrary to the current opinion, wrong to my eyes, which is inclined to emphasize those aspects Buddhism and Hinduism have in common (that indeed do exist)[9],

---

[7] A careful examination of the rites forming the ceremony as shown in the iconographies along with a patient control of the textual and ethnographical variants (which lies beyond the scope of this article) might produce valuable results.

[8] Although represented 'dans le plus sommaire des décors' (Foucher 1949: 63), the episode is much more common than episodes we deem of primary importance in Siddhārtha's life, such as for example the Four Encounters.

[9] This opinion is shared by Staal (for example 1985: 25, 40). But – to take a much less radical example – Catholicism and the various Protestant movements, besides a common basis, have quite a long history in common, and this does not mean that they have not been, and are not, in conflict. We can even say that when the differences within the Church became a real fracture, not only conflictual positions arose, but alternative systems.

the perception of them as separate entities was so sharp in late ancient and medieval India that *northern Buddhism had to change itself into a system where all aspects of social life were confronted by relying on its own energies alone and, with reference to rituals, had to resort to specialized figures of its own instead of depending on external priests* as, in the case of Siddhārtha's marriage, *purohitas* would be. This is why Strickmann (1983: 425) notices in Tantric Buddhism 'a near–obsessive inclusiveness'.

3. VEDIC AND BUDDHIST FIRES

The *haviryajñas*, or the oblations of milk, butter, rice seeds, wheat, barley, etc., had contributed no less than the other rituals of the *śrauta* class to the formation of that ritualistic network to which the *śramanas* were opposed. Minutely described and regulated in the first two *kundas* of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, they were the basis of many acts of the private and social life. In a reality where magical practices admittedly were extraordinarily numerous and various (see Gonda 1981: 159 ff.), the magical dimension of the rites, and of the oblations to the fire themselves, is, in Vedic texts, quite explicit. The man who habitually performed *homa* in his house kept at bay serious and less serious diseases: pustules upon the neck, the shoulder–joints and the abdomen, comsumption 'that breaks the ribs, that settles in the lungs', venereal diseases, and more (*Atharva Veda* VII, 7; cf. Chand 1982: 317–8).

The *agnihotra* itself, founding the identity of the upper castes, and such as being performed by any householder (and not by a priest) provided that he was properly initiated (Panikkar 1977: 31), assured wordly benefits.

The types of fire rituals performed by laymen are those we are concerned most with here, the ones whose invariance beyond religious boundaries is more evident. However, we know that important sectors of ancient Indian society represented by those *śramanas* whose contrast with the *brāhmanas* is at the basis of its bipolarity, reacted to the ritualistic prescriptivness and to the abuse of magical practices. The *Atharva Veda* itself (XVIII, 2, 35; cf. Chand 1982: 692) reports that there are some among the *sāmnyasis* 'who have renounced the performance of *homa* and kindle only the fire of knowledge'. By the forest ascetics of brahmanic and *kṣatriya* caste to which the *Āranyakas* pertain, the efficacy of inner or mental sacrifice is emphasized in relation to the outer and formal sacrifice. In the *Aitareya Āranyaka* (see Keith 1909) the internal *agnihotra* is described in detail as a substitute for the formal sacrifice.

Buddhism, which takes shape as a community of ascetics (*āryasaṅgha*) radically opposing the brahmanic authority (and thus the sacrifices monopolized by them), moves in the same direction. This does not mean, however, the disappearance *sic et simpliciter* of all the rituals from that segment of social life controlled by the Buddhists. It is true that the fire ritual appeared as the most perceptible discriminant between orthodox ascetics and the *āryasaṅgha*, and that is why the *jatilas* followers of Kāśyapa at Uruvilvā, on the point of their conversion to Buddhism threw the things for the *agnihotra* into the river (see Mahāvagga I, 20, 19; cf. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1885, 1: 132).

In principle, and to a great extent in fact, the sharp theoretical distinction

between outer and inner sacrifice was accompanied – in accordance with a procedure that is typical of all religious reform – by the rejection of the former in the name of the 'true', 'more authentic' meaning of the ritual. On the other hand there is plenty of evidence that the outer sacrifice was preserved in the Buddhist tradition as well. It is usually believed that certain rituals whose structure is clearly similar to that of Vedic rituals, and notably *homa*, 're–emerged' in northern medieval Buddhism for a sort of fateful, 'tantric' contamination with the Indian 'substratum' (suddenly important) and with Hinduism, but this view is to be rejected. As we will see in section 13, medieval Buddhism has, instead, a tendency to reassert firmly the inner dimension of the ritual, remaining faithful – no matter what is commonly believed – to that interpretive line that had been typical of the world of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Āraṇyakas*, a world to which Buddhism is genetically connected.

The reasons for the survival and the adjustment of some of the fire rituals in Buddhism were its success itself (which implied the expansion of its social basis) and the need to preserve instruments of social regulation to face a brahmanic system on the way of reorganizing itself. The harsh quarrel among Brahmans about the preservation of Vedic norms and rituals did not prevent the innovators who supported *bhakti* to create a new ritualistic network centred, precisely, on images and places of worship (see Stietencron 1977; Verardi 1992: 12–3, 25–6), but this in turn did not mean the end of Vedic rituals. They both went to form what we call 'Hinduism'. This was a serious challenge to Buddhism.

Concerning the first point, whether one considers the social rooting of Buddhism as a revolution 'from below' or as a consequence of a split within the élite of the Brahmans and the *kṣatriyas*, as I am inclined to believe, the break with the whole of the tradition could not be as sharp as it most probably was within the *āryasaṅgha*: it was certainly more difficult in the *saṃvṛtisaṅgha*, although this did not spread beyond the most faithful laity, and was altogether impossible within the common laity (not to speak of the lower segments of society). Strickmann (1983: 427) has drawn attention to the fact that in the *Samyuktāgama* three fires of *śrauta* ritual are spared from blame and appear as having been assimilated into the Buddhist tradition: the *āhavanīya*, which was identified with one own's parents, the *garhapatya*, meant for the other relatives, and the *dakṣina*, identified with the Brahmans and the recluses; and we will actually see how early in Buddhism is the speculation on fires (sections 5, 11). The attitude of Buddhism towards the fire worshippers is actually a rather ambiguous one. It is true that, as we have just said, the *jaṭilas* threw the *agnihotra* things into the fire when they joined the Buddha, but it is also true that the probation period imposed upon novices was not required in the case of former fire worshippers (see Mahāvagga 1, 38, 11; cf. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1885, I: 190–1); the concern of Buddhism to convert the brahmanic élite is evident.

As to the second point, one has to consider how, while we are in the position to follow the transition from Vedic ritualism to neo–brahmanic ritualism through the texts of the *vidhāna* literature, radically simplifying the rituals

(including fire rituals) [10], the re–asserted vitality of the *gṛhasūtras*, and the *āgama* literature at its start – besides, naturally, through the observation of the living tradition which still today sets us before the dialectics Vedic rituals/Hindu rituals – for Indian Buddhism we are facing the disappearance of *all* early ritual texts and ancient ritualistic traditions, of *all* early 'magic' texts, and of the *whole* living religious practice.

---

[10] The declared aim of the *vidhāna* texts was to simplify 'the complicated and burdensome ceremonies treated in the Śrauta and Gṛhya Sūtras ... with the help of magic' (see Bhat 1987: 3). We will recall in section 10 the earliest of these texts, the *Ṛgvidhāna*, which 'describes the magical effects produced by the recitations of hymns of the *Ṛgveda*' (ib.).

4. *DHĀRAṆĪS* AND MANTRAS: ŚĀKYAMUNI, MAITREYA AND THE MAHĀYĀNA
BODHISATTVAS

If we consider Xuanzang too late a source, and perhaps even a biased one,
we shall give no importance to that piece of information according to which the
Mahāsaṅghikas, after the death of the Blessed One, had also established a
Dhāraṇī–piṭaka (see Kern 1898: 6; Lamotte 1958: 313), and no use will be made
of it [11]: this is what has actually happened, but one should not ignore that
translations of *dhāraṇī–sūtras* and anthologies of *dhāraṇīs* and mantras did spread
in the Far East from the third century A.D. onward (see Strickmann 1983: 424).
Even according to the Pāli tradition, however, we know that in ancient times
'drawing amulets, something like *yantra*' did already exist (see Gombrich 1990:
28) along with protective spells, actual *dhāraṇīs*. According to Gombrich (ib.: n.
31), 'what is forbidden in general is magic, but specific kinds of white magic are
permitted'. I am quoting Gombrich because he is a student of Theravāda
Buddhism whose positions are not too distant from the modernist ones [12], but it
should be recalled that Bharati (1977: 8–7), to the eyes of some not a respectable
author [13], had already observed that various Pāli texts mention *parittas* or
protective mantras that were meant to avoid every sort of danger (diseases, snake
bites, evil spirits) and to obtain, besides a happy rebirth, peace and wealth. A
passage of the *Milindapañha* is particulaly interesting, as it is from an un-
canonical text (these are of the utmost importance to understanding Gandhāran
art, or rather would have been if they had survived). Rohana refuses to impart the
mantra to young Nāgasena unless he leaves his home: the boy can be taught that
'supreme *mantra* of the world (see Falà 1982: 31) [14] only through an initiation
which must take place in the forest hermitage. Thus Nāgasena, who will teach
Milinda the Buddha's doctrine, is considered to belong to a *guruparamparā*.

---

[11] I must say that concerning this A. Foucher (1905–51, II: 790) noticed, out of any
'philological' scheme, that 'le quatrième *piṭaka* [i.e. the *Dhāraṇī–piṭaka*] n'est la plus récente des
"corbeilles" que dans le sens où l'*Atharva–Vêda* est le plus jeune des quatre *Vêdas*'.

[12] See Staal's opinion on Gombrich apropos of a querelle between the latter and S.J. Tambiah
(Staal 1986: 192). R. Gombrich might be defined here as 'philological', and innovative, at the price
of some mistakes, Tambiah.

[13] H.P. Alper, editor of and contributor to an important book on mantras (Alper 1989),
unfortunately for us mostly devoted to Vedic and Hindu traditions, and not to Buddhist, acknowledged
in Bharati's book (1977) – in spite of its flaws – 'a model for its clear textual, philosophical, and
sociological method' (Alper 1989: 193).

[14] Rhys Davids (1890, I: 19) translated 'mantra' as 'hymn': an unlikely translation here and
indeed a good example of modernist view.

Gandhāran iconographies of the Bodhisattvas, and especially Maitreya's, show how the use of scrolls with passages of specialized *sūtras*, or real *dhāraṇīs* or *dhāraṇī–mantras*, was popular in north–western Buddhism. The cases (*kavacas*) that Maitreya bears threaded in the cords he wears cannot otherwise be explained (figs.13–14, 22), and Foucher (1905–51, II: 182) noticed this.

There are different ways to put oneself in relation with Maitreya, and these have been formalized by J. Nattier (1988), who sees four [15]. If in the 'here/later' type, by far the most common in the canonical literature (Nattier 1988: 26), 'the patient accumulation of the moral and spiritual prerequisitions that will eventually lead to being reborn at the time of Maitreya's appearance on Earth is not disjointed from 'the veneration of texts dealing with Maitreya' (ib.: 27–28), it is the 'there/now' and 'here/now' type that we are more concerned with. In the 'there/now' type, the believer, through vision, encounters *now* Maitreya in the Tuṣita Heaven, i.e. *there*: the encounter is made possible by the practice of *samādhi*, which, however, as Nattier has noted, is restricted to the 'professional' religious (ib.: 30). Ordinary laymen succeed in ascending to the Tuṣita Heaven thanks to rituals. Once there, they may be bestowed protective or magic formulas that Maitreya is endowed with.

Yet, in Gandhāran iconographies, it is not so usual a feature of Maitreya seated in meditation or with his right hand raised in *abhayamudrā* to welcome the faithful by bearing the *kavacas*. Instead, he almost always bears them when he is represented *standing* and in *abhayamudrā* (fig. 22). This iconography may be considered to belong to Maitreya descending from Heaven to Earth [16], bestowing upon the believer a number of gifts including *dhāraṇīs* and mantras. Here, I believe, we are within Nattier's 'here/now' type, although possibly not within a frame of political and millenaristic movements, as the observed examples are (ib.: 30–2).

The encounter with Maitreya must be considered, in any case, as having a concrete meaning, and cannot be understood in merely ethical–religious terms, or, as it happens, in moralistic terms: *the laymen yearn for it and try to make it possible not only and not as much for spiritual ends, but in order to achieve wordly ends.* It is precisely to this purpose that *the encounter can be artfully caused by means of magic rituals.*

It may be appropriate to recall that esoteric traditions bound to the cult of

---

[15] 1) *Here/now*: the believer expects to meet Maitreya on earth, during his present life; 2) *Here/later*: the believer expects to meet Maitreya on earth in a future rebirth; 3) *There/now*: the believer strives for an immediate encounter with Maitreya, who sits in the Tuṣita Heaven; 4) *There/later*: the believer aspires to be reborn in the Tuṣita Heaven.

[16] The question of Maitreya's descending activity, to which Nattier (1988: 29) briefly alludes, should be discussed here. But it is not possible, but for an observation in note 18, below, to address such a complex matter, to which I hope to return on a future occasion. I have outlined in the past the question of the descending aspect of the Bodhisattvas with special reference to Mathurā iconographies. The necessary corrections to that work would not change, I think, its basic coordinates (see Verardi 1985).

Maitreya are found as well in countries of Theravāda tradition (where the future Buddha, for want of salvific figures, assumes a very central position): so in Burma, where alchemical practices aim 'at acquiring an extension of life until the appearance of the next Buddha and in order to witness his dispensations' (Tambiah 1984: 315–6; he discusses a passage of Spiro's work of 1984) [17].

Also in Gandhāra the Buddha Maitreya, who in the iconographies is always conceived in his function of Bodhisattva [18], is the catalyst of a great number of functions, which it would be important to recognize on the basis of iconographic variants [19]. In many contexts Maitreya appears as the only Being who is able to fulfil the desires of the faithful next to the Saṃsāran deities, whose sphere of competence it would be extremely useful to understand. Fig. 30 shows a fire ritual performed before a tutelary couple, the purpose of which is difficult to specify (to have children? but perhaps, in that case, we would have a couple instead of a single worshipper; in any case the rite probably has something to do with a request concerning family matters), but that clearly shows how offerings (borne by the worshipper in her left hand) are associated with the fire (held in her right hand).

The proliferation of other Bodhisattvas in Gandhāra [20] is due to the fact that more and more numerous specializations were needed, commanded by very powerful beings (and not by simple *devas*), that were meant to fulfil every sort of spiritual and material needs of the laymen. Such a proliferation is possible, however, only in Mahāyāna Buddhism, where in the infinite universes existing at one and the same time a corresponding infinite number of Buddhas exists [21] and,

[17] Tambiah in his well-known book discusses at length the esoteric currents in Burma and Thailand, vindicating their pertinence to Buddhism, clearly seen as a ritual system, and therefore rejecting the alleged dichotomy between 'true', doctrinal Buddhism and esoteric forms (see Tambiah 1984: 314–7, and *passim*).

[18] He is never shown with the monastic robe, unless represented along with the Past Buddhas (to be considered, in a Mahāyānist way, *manuṣi* Buddhas?). His iconography does not emphasize the aspect of *otiosus* Enlightened Being, but of one who, having reached the *anivartanacaryā* (as explained in the *Mahāvastu*; see Jaini 1988: 55), is an *active* Enlightened Being, i.e. a Bodhisattva who interferes in things human.

[19] Maitreya's case is typical of how it is not always possible to rely on texts (which are in any case only one type of source and do not represent the total reality) to reconstruct a historical–religious phenomenon. P.S. Jaini has recently emphasized how, in the canonical literature of the Theravādins, Maitreya is mentioned only once, and that we have only two non-canonical texts, whose date and authorship are uncertain, that deal exclusively with Maitreya (see Jaini 1988: 54 ff.; 71 ff.).

The main features of Maitreya as a prototype have been stressed, for Gandhāra, by J.C. Huntington (1984).

[20] J.C. Huntington (ib.: 153) has observed that more than one hundred types of Bodhisattvas can be recognized there. Now, even if several of them may refer to a single Bodhisattva figure, of whom they might represent different aspects and functions, the actual number of Bodhisattvas is definitely high.

[21] See Kloetzli (1983) for a very useful, at times illuminating examination of the different cosmological–salvific systems of Buddhism, where particular attention is to be drawn to the distinction between the *sahāsra*–cosmology, typical of the Hīnayāna (and in particular of the Sarvāstivādins) and the *asaṅkhyeya*–cosmology, typical of Mahāyāna Buddhism. See the Appendix.

therefore, an infinite number of Bodhisattvas, who are the descending and salvific aspect of the former. They may be represented bearing *kavacas*, too (fig. 29; however, this Bodhisattva probably is *sūryavaṃśa* Siddhārtha; see Appendix).

Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas have the function of taking the place, at least at a 'high' level (monasteries) of most Saṃsāran deities. As to the requests made by the faithful, there are no substantial differences between the ones addressed to them and those addressed to Maitreya. But in much of ancient and proto–medieval India they served the need better than Maitreya because, endlessly multipliable, they could better answer to the requests of the most varied social segments, and opposed with greater efficacy the huge and articulate offer that on the market of the *bhakti* and of the daily needs came from the newly established, soon to be hegemonic, Hindu movements. These had, as noted in the previous section, renewed but not abolished, the countless, functional Vedic rituals.

Dealing in *dhāraṇīs*, either loose or collected in special texts to circulate, was probably very active in Gandhāra, where they could be perceived either as magic–devotional formulas descending from above or as imposed from below on the divine Being. The *Puṣpakuṭadhāraṇī Sūtra* was translated into Chinese between A.D. 223 and 253 (see Payne 1991: 20), and we know that a translation of the *Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī–mantra for Asking the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara to Counteract the Injury of a Poison* (*Qing Guan shi yin pu sa xiao fu du hai tuo luo ni zhou jing*) was made before the one of A.D. 420 that has reached us (cf. Nanjio 1883: no 326; Taishō Tripiṭaka, XX, 1043). *Dhāraṇīs* capable of opposing equally serious but more frequent danger could not but be in great demand.

A less specialized *Sūtra Spoken by Buddha on the Spiritual Mantra for Keeping the House Safe* (*Fo huo an zhai shan zhou jing*; cf. Nanjio 1883: no. 478; Taishō Tripiṭaka, XXI, 1394) had already been translated into Chinese at the time of the Later Han, and therefore before A.D. 220; it can be considered as a text of the first–second century A.D. It leads us to reflect upon the functions of Śākyamuni, whose position, in a Hīnayāna context, remains a crucial one in the system. But Śākyamuni, unlike Maitreya, has already been through his descending path; as the *kalpa* proceeds, the positive consequences of his descent to earth are less and less perceivable [22]. Therefore, he is increasingly credited with the transmission of *dhāraṇīs* and mantras, and, one might think, of particularly effective rituals that keep on achieving the desired effects through time.

I shall not enter into the discussion about Śākyamuni ever having imparted an esoteric teaching besides the one received in the Pāli Canon, as brilliantly argued, for example, by Bucknell and Stuart Fox (1983). What matters is that, many years after his death, this was believed – at least in certain milieus. A text

---

[22] In third–century Chinese translations, references to the imminent end of the religion are numerous. These and later apocalyptic literature are not necessarily linked to special historical circumstances, as is often maintained, but find an explanation in Buddhist eschatology itself (on this see the very valuable contribution of Strickmann 1990: 86 ff., esp. p. 88). In Gandhāra the perception of living in the final years of the Dharma had to be very sharp: hence the stress on the Buddha as Saviour and originator of mantras, on descending Maitreya and on the Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas.

such as the last–mentioned one shows that the Buddha was considered a real Master Mantrin, the one who knew the effective formulas and handed them down in the proper ways. This feature is actually implied in the Buddha's figure when he comes to be considered in his guru aspect, which is definitely crucial. This is a topic that modernist scholars are not willing to tackle, and one to which I shall return (see Appendix).

5. THE *HOMA* ICONS

Both Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism are 'replete with ritual' (Staal 1985: 27–9; id. 1986: 188). We must take into consideration this dimension of north–western Buddhism and not be conditioned (Gandhāran reliefs, however, attest this in abundance) by the general elusiveness of the iconographic sources. If we had to judge medieval Hinduism in relation to the tight ritualistic network that characterizes it only on the basis of the iconographies that it indeed produced in great number, we would be certainly led to a rather insufficient idea of it.

Iconography (like any source) is selective and does not represent the totality of a system. Religious iconographies, in particular, are seldom concerned with depicting what is well known and is part of everyday life, rather setting themselves as 'high' models of reference. They are prescriptive, not descriptive, and in their own way. 'Narrative' scenes are no exception. In the Christian art of the West many 'narrative' scenes would be unintelligible if we had no independent knowledge of what it is all about. If we were to deduce the existence of the sacrament of the Eucharist and its ritual from Tintoretto's two large canvases representing the Fall of the Manna from heaven and the Last Supper which are at the sides of the high altar in the church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, we would be in great difficulty, and even the textual evidence from the Bible would not be of great help [23]. In Gandhāra the 'narrative' scenes that present us with the same sort of difficulties of interpretation are probably the majority. The stele are even more difficult to interpret, unless we persist in seeing them as simple simulacra meant to favour a generic devotion, and nothing more.

---

[23] Allowing that the passage of St John (6: 31–5) could be understood today if Christian tradition had come to an end many centuries ago, how can it be reconciled with the report on the Last Supper made, say, by St Luke (22: 14–20)? But the methodological problems do not end here. In fact, would it not be legitimate, for want of contemporary sources (which, in the light of the Council of Trent, would give us a full account, as they actually do, of the meaning of such iconographies), to try to explain Tintoretto's paintings on the basis of *any* text, either much earlier or much later, that gave us information on the Eucharist, the related rituals and its founding episodes in the Bible? The quarrel about proper (read: roughly contemporary) textual verifications comes entirely from the modernist, 'philological' side. It is not possible, I think, to generalize: each case has to be carefully examined. To try to impose as the only 'correct' norm the chronological, in addition to the doctrinal, relationship between iconographies and texts, can prove paralysing in a number of cases, especially when we are not in a position to get a truly detailed picture of a certain epoch, as it was for the founding fathers of modern art history, mainly interested in the Italian Renaissance. Returning to Tintoretto, it can be added that there are *anyway* later texts (devotional, sacramental and doctrinal texts of even the twentieth century – never mind the historical–critical ones) perfectly right for explaining those painting of four centuries earlier. Similar appeals for common sense (earlier than for methodology) made by J.C. Huntington (1984: 136) have been completely ignored.

But, as said above, reliefs and stele in which the rituals are clearly attested are plentiful in Gandhāra. They need to be studied not only for what they tell us about ancient Buddhism, but for the information they may give on other reliefs and stele that at first appear not especially meaningful. Clearly – as will be increasingly evident in the following pages – they cannot be explained on the basis of the extant canonical or quasi–canonical literature. Much Gandhāran iconography can only be understood either by referring to what is kept in later texts that belongs to early traditions or by assuming the existence, in Gandhāra, of 'apocryphal' texts of the kind we know of from the Chinese corpus. For an idea of the immense potentiality of this line of research *for Gandhāra*, the reader is referred to Strickmann (1990), even if he discusses Chinese Buddhism.

Here we consider a few iconographies that include fire rituals mostly represented on the bases of stele [24]. The real fire ritual, or *homa* (be it exoteric or esoteric: see below, sections 7, 8, 10) seems actually to be depicted in that place and in relation to cult images to which it is structurally connected. Attention is to be drawn on the very position this iconography occupies, if what J.C. Huntington observed (1984: 13, n. 26) is true, 'that the lower register of any Gandhāran image usually contains manifestations and symbols that are more directly related to the worship practices of the populace': which is, however, a point to which we will return, because the relationship between the 'populace' and a 'high' prescriptive system must be examined thoroughly.

The first image to consider, as its iconography is quite explicit, is a stela of unknown origin now in the De Marteau collection in Brussels (figs. 25, 26). It shows a haloed Bodhisattva, possibly Maitreya [25], in *dharmacakramudrā* seated on a throne which is covered by a cushion. In the lower register, in front of the throne, resting on a stool, there is a burning brazier, the rim of which is in the shape of a lotus flower. At its sides there are two genuflecting laymen portrayed in the act of throwing something (most likely grains) into the fire with their right hands. The left arm of the figure on the right is chipped, but he seems to have something in his hand (probably also grains).

Quite similar to this, and probably coeval, is a stela in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, which also shows a Bodhisattva seated in *dharmacakramudrā* (figs. 27, 28); this one, however, wears a turban. In front of the image, at throne level, here, too, there are two kneeling laymen at the sides of a brazier, decorated with small incised circles and resting on a stool. Both worshippers have their hands joined. I think that the scene here represents a moment of the ritual

---

[24] In a previous, tentative work (Verardi 1987) it seemed to me that in Gandhāra two rituals were attested where the use of large portable lamps could be observed: the first, which had *paryagnikaraṇam* as a model, being the circumambulation of stūpas with lamps; the second, thought to be parallel to the *ārati–pūjā* (see here section 8), being performed before an image. I hope in this work to make up for some of the numerous flaws of the previous one.

[25] Kurita (1990: no. 56) counts this Bodhisattva among the Maitreya images, although his hair–dress is not typical of Maitreya, and he holds no flask. See, however, J.C. Huntington's considerations (1984: esp. 149 ff.).

immediately preceding the one that we see performed on the Brussels stela: without doubt, the recitation of mantras.

F. Staal, to whose numerous works we owe not only important analytical observations on a series of Indian rituals but also the theorization of the science of ritual[26], has shown that 'to study a ritual system is to study a system of *mantras*, and vice versa' (Staal 1986: 44). The mantras, considered by Staal pre–linguistic expressions, give access to a pre–linguistic condition that 'continues to exist beneath a state of awareness now steeped in language' (id. 1989: 80). 'The mystical state is a prelinguistic state of mind that can be reached when language is renounced, through silence, *mantras*, or rites' (ib.). The fact that we lack any corpus of ancient Buddhist mantras should not lead us to give a positivistic evaluation and too hurried a judgement of ancient Buddhism – Gandhāran Buddhism in our case – only because we are confronted with serious difficulties in getting analytical reconstructions of its evolution.

According to all that we know about *homa*, the stele of figs. 25 and 27 are a documentation of quite an evolved stage of the ritual. If we consider its basic structure, they are well suited to illustrate the earliest (? see below) text, preserved in Chinese, which firmly attests Buddhist *homa*, the *Spirit Spells of the Eleven–Visaged Guan Shi Yin (Shi yi mian Guan shi yin shen zhou jing*; cf. Nanjio 1883: no. 327; Taishō Tripiṭaka, XX, 1070), that, translated between A.D. 561 and 568 refers to an aspect of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and to a ritual related to it. This aspect is documented by iconographies in that period, although not in Gandhāra, but the ritual – as expected – is not[27]. Strickmann (1983: 432) summarizes the ritual as described in that text as follows:

---

[26] Staal's works are numerous, and all of the greatest interest. In addition to those quoted in the text, see especially 1979, 1982, 1989, 1990.

[27] The case of the eleven–headed Avalokiteśvara at Kānheri is worth considering, notably for the methodological questions that its very existence implies. As a matter of fact, as S.L. Huntington (1985: 265) says, it is a form, dating 'from approximately the late fifth or early sixth century', which 'while found frequently in later Buddhist art outside of South Asia as in Nepal, Tibet, China and Japan, is not known in the Indic realm except at a rather late date in Kaśmir and the eastern regions. This image is thus the only artistic documentation for the view that this iconographic type originated in India'. If this single image had not reached us, no modernist scholar would ever have admitted, even hypothetically, that around A.D. 500 there could have been, in India, such fully developed iconographical forms.

Rather than emphasizing the possibility that iconographies of crucial importance have not reached us, let us point out that they may have not emerged from the 'conceptual basis' of a system. This is obvious, however, and it is amazing that art historians make such methodological blunders. To take an example (for what it is worth), it is well known how through the whole first millennium of Christian art there are no iconographies representing God the Father and the Holy Ghost, but only Christ, who alone represented the Holy Trinity: now, there is no doubt that many students would deduce that the concept of Trinity had not developed yet, or would perhaps, more subtly but not less wrongly, maintain that, in considering early Christian and early Medieval images of Christ, the Trinitarian 'interpretation' is not 'relevant'. Thank goodness for St Augustine's *De Trinitate* (A.D. 399, while the Trinitarian iconographies all date after 1000)!

'The proper mantras are to be recited (in the presence of Ekādaśamukha Avalokiteśvara)
during the first fortnight of the month, as the offerings set before the image are gradually
increased. On the fourteenth and fifteenth days, the officiant is to light a fire of sandalwood
in front of the icon. Before his own seat he is to place a pint of vegetable oil in a bronze
vessel. He should have prepared 1.008 slender, inch–long pieces of aloes wood. Beginning at
noon on the fifteenth he takes the aromatic tablets one by one, dips them in oil, and places
them in the fire as he recites the mantra of Kuan Shih–yin. He continues until all 1.008 slips
have been consumed. During these two days, the fourteenth and fifteenth, he is to eat nothing
at all. When the rite has been completed, during the night of the fifteenth, Kuan Shih–yin will
descend into the icon, which will begin to tremble. From the topmost of the statue's eleven
heads will issue a voice praising the officiant: "Well–done, well–done, good son – I have
come to behold you. All your wishes shall now be fulfilled'.

I will not maintain that our Gandhāran stele necessarily refer to so
meticulously defined a ritual. But it is evident that the ritual represented in the
iconographies is structurally the same as the one described in the *Spirit Spells*:
the Bodhisattvas of the stele are actually evoked and induced to perform the
actions that are proper to their descending function. The ritual is centred upon the
visualization by the officiant of the Bodhisattva to whom it is addressed and to
whom the officiant proceeds to identify or otherwise unite (see ib.: 418). These
stele are capable of expressing the unity of the interior mind made of fire, evoked
divinity and officiant, of which we are told by texts such as the *Mahāvairocana
Sūtra*. J.C. Huntington (1984: 154, 164 n. 35) thinks that this *sūtra* is from the
fifth century 'at the latest' and that earlier versions of it may have existed [28].

The date of the earliest surviving text describing *homa* is still unsettled. I
accept what Strickmann (1983: 42) says of the *Mātaṅgī Sūtra*, and refuse to
consider it a reliable source, though it is often proposed as the earliest one
regarding *homa*. Toganō (1935), as reported by Payne (1991: 44), 'identifies the
first reference in the Chinese Canon to the full fire ritual as dating from the
Eastern Chin dynasty (A.D. 317 to 420), during which *The Mantra Sūtra Taught
by the Seven Buddhas of the Past (Ch'i fo pa p'u sa so shuo ta t'o lo ni shen
chou ching*, T. 1332, K 433) was translated. This *sūtra* includes a fuller
description of a sacrificial fire ritual than the one found in the *Mātaṅgī Sūtra*,
comprising the blessing of mustard seeds in preparation for being burnt' [29].

I am not in a position to weigh this information (which Payne does not
discuss, and Strickmann does not report although he knows Toganō), nor do I
know whether its traditional date could hold up under critical examination of the
text – and with it the date of the fire ritual. I will observe that it is probably a
work produced in a Hīnayāna milieu, considering that the mantra being talked
about is not associated with any Bodhisattva, nor even with Maitreya, but with

---

[28] A much criticized English translation of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* has been published
recently by C. Yamamoto (1990).

[29] The *pinyin* transcription of the title of this *sūtra* is *Qi Fo ba pu sa suo shuo da tuo luo ni
shen zhou jing*. T. = Taishō [Tripiṭaka]; K = *Koryŏ Dè čaṅ gyŏṅ* (Corean Canon).

the Seven Buddhas of the past, who are typical of the Hīnayāna conception locating the Buddhas along a temporal line [30].

Many discussions of the early existence of a developed Buddhist *homa* could be cut short if we accept A. Wayman's dating of the *Vairoca-nābhisambodhi Tantra* to the mid–sixth century. Wayman asserts that 'it could not have been earlier and could not have been later' (see Wayman and Tajima 1992: 10). Now, whereas texts such as *The Mantra Sūtra* and the *Spirit Spells* simply give instructions for performing the ritual, the *homa* chapter of the *V.A.T.* is so detailed (it considers twelve fires) and, above all, displays such a great hermeneutic effort to give a Buddhist explanation to 'invariant' rites, that any unbiased student cannot but wonder how far speculation had gone by late Gupta times, and how ancient was the practice of performing different kinds of *homa* in Buddhism. I am not saying this to allow a 'convenient' time for such a speculation to develop, and thus artfully reduce the distance between iconographical evidence and textual evidence, but because – as we shall see below (section 12) – there is at least one important Gandhāran iconography that can only be explained in the light of information provided by the *V.A.T.*

The interpretation of the '*homa* stele' given above can be further argued. Such explicit iconographies seem indeed to be nothing other than the clearest emerging evidence of a reality that is at once devotional, ritualistic and magic, and that we have many reasons to believe was fairly widespread.

---

[30] Mahāyāna Buddhism, as is known, makes its own the Past Buddhas, who, taken as *mānuṣi* Buddhas, find place in its cosmological–salvific vision.

6. Visualization and Consecration

The very existence of stele implies the existence of particular rituals[31]; icons and rituals together may imply the process of visualizing the deity. Both are in fact the basis of visualization, especially for the laymen. Magic rituals such as *homa*, if performed according to the rules, *ensure visualization*, and allow laymen, to skip not only complex meditational practices, but also rituals – those we often see represented on Gandhāran reliefs[32] – of which the result may not be considered certain.

The mere term 'visualization' (*sādhana*) will sound quite unbearable to most scholars of things Gandhāran, who seem to have a Tridentine idea of cult images, that they are mere devotional images[33]. The concept of visualization is too closely connected to the taboo topic of Tantrism, of which it forms indeed one of the founding pillars[34], to be taken into account in Gandhāra: I believe, actually, that nobody ever did it. The fact that most Gandhāran images come from contexts that we are unable to reconstruct in any reliable way (thanks to disastrous archaeology) has obviously favoured such an attitude as this, which, however, should be rejected.

S.K. Abe (1990) has recently devoted a study to Cave 254 at Mogao (Dunhuang) 'constructed between C.E. 475 and 490'[35] in the context of that

---

[31] 'Particular' because rituals exist anyway, as the Indian world shows in the most explicit of ways. Rituals, according to Staal (see especially his important study of 1986) are human acts that belong to a domain of biology. *Per se*, they do not express meaning, but are governed by rules.

[32] See, for example, the rites connected with the Bowl or Turban worship, or even the 'simple' offerings of flowers. The latter, usually made by laymen, are likely to be ritual acts which were part of complex ceremonies, other parts of which were most probably performed by monks.

[33] Against Tridentine ideas on this matter rises the bulwark of Orthodox Christianity (see, for example, Florenskij 1977), but in Western Europe there has not been any attempt, since the Council of Trent, to define again the question and found anew the world of images. The advent of bourgeois art (landscapes and barmaids in the living rooms) blocked even scholars, as far as religious art is concerned, on Tridentine positions.

[34] See Beyer (1973) for an important analytical examination of the visualization process in modern Tibetan tradition. Beyer's book, although not directly useful for the topic discussed here, remains a model for the question it deals with.

[35] I will take the liberty of saying how unpleasant and hypocritical I find the use that has taken root in Anglo–Saxon countries (notably the U.S.) to say C(ommon) E(ra) instead of B(efore) C(hrist) or A(nno) D(omini). The origin of this is probably the 'liberal' belief of not hurting, by recalling Christ, the feelings of non–Christian cultures. If, however, one wished to establish a model of neo–colonial reckoning, then no better could have been done. What fails to come across is why Muslims ought to think the Christian era as 'common', when it is the Hegira that founds their history and identity – not to mention other cultures of Eastern Asia, which with Christ had, and have, nothing

Liangzhou Buddhism which owed much to Dharmakṣema (433–85), the Buddhist saint who emphasized the importance of the practical, concrete aspects of Buddhism, 'the mystical powers of the Buddhas, the gods, and the mantras' (ib.: 2), and even more – one may add – to Gandhāran Buddhism as a whole. In fact, the iconographical programme of Cave 254 is based on the dialectics Śākyamuni/Maitreya (cf. ib.: 1–2), as is certainly the case of many Gandhāran installations.

Abe provides some interesting observations on the meaning of Buddhist images in general (ib.: 4–5). Here I would focus on the visualization techniques (*guan* in Chinese) practised at Mogao and documented in texts made available in a Chinese translation between A.D. 398 and 455. If, as Abe maintains, they had been written in Central Asia some time earlier, we have good reason to think that India (and possibly Gandhāra) had produced their prototypes even before, in any case establishing their theoretical basis. What is most likely is that the purpose of visualizing the deity was one of the main reasons for the spread of the anthropomorphic images of the Buddha and Maitreya and that, notably in Gandhāra, it caused the appearance of actual icons.

The *Sūtra on the Sea of the Samādhi of Buddha Visualization* (*Guan Fo san mei hai ling*; cf. Taishō Tripiṭaka, XV, 643), mentioned, with other texts, by Abe (ib.: 5–6) includes some rituals as prerequisites for the visualization of the Buddha (the use of various earths, the burning of incense, the scattering of flowers, etc.), also documenting a point which is of great importance to us, as we shall see below, that is that such visualization is possible for 'any monk or nun or lay devotee of either sex, or god or Nāga or other members of the Eight classes' (ib.: 6): which means that in fifth–century Dunhuang very important rituals were not yet under the exclusive control of a specialized clergy.

As far as we know, the rituals that were likely to be performed at Mogao did not include *homa*[36], but the site helps us understand what life in a Gandhāran site may have been like, and why laymen would rush there. *Homa*, however, is a peculiar ritual that can go with others, and that in Gandhāra is documented on an independent basis. Its magic character is connected with the practice of visualization in a structural manner, and its existence, already in a comparatively ancient Buddhist context as Gandhāra, is to be considered a particularly effective means to the eyes of the laymen, who had no other means as quick and unfailing to see their wishes fulfilled: the power of a ritual such as this was, in ancient experience, a fact. Now we may see the appropriateness for understanding the '*homa* icons' of the passage from the *Spirit Spells* mentioned in the preceding section; in fact its conceptual core is exactly the visualization of the deity. The

---

in common. We would do better to keep for ourselves the B.C. and A.D., and other cultures, if they wish, their own reckonings. A truly liberal spirit would find better exercise in making up concordance tables.

[36] The *argumentum ex silentio* should, as known, be discarded. However, the loss, even at Dunhuang, of the instruments of rituals, and the scant attention paid by scholars to these matters, cast heavy doubts on what today has the appearance of facts.

true purpose of the production of icons appears particularly evident there, and as to Gandhāra, the great number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in meditation or in benevolent attitude the study of which has been traditionally neglected, may find an explanation in this light.

As I have already drawn the attention to the relationship between iconographies and texts (section 4, especially notes 23 and 27), there is no need to emphasize here that any fulmination against resorting to a sixth–century text (as the *Spirit Spells* is) to explain icons that go back approximately to the second–third century A.D. is out of the question, though one probably has to expect it. The methodological difficulties that such a fact involves are in any case much smaller than the ones proper to a blind philological method, which is much more distant from Gandhāran Buddhism than the Mogao caves and a sixth–century *sūtra* may ever been [37].

* * *

The worshippers depicted on the bases of Gandhāran stele are identifiable only in a general way: couples, family groups, members of the aristocracy in Central Asian garments, etc. Those on the '*homa* stele' are less recognizable than usual, although they are probably couples. It is therefore difficult to say whether we are dealing with those very laymen who had the images made at their expense. But this is possible, and if true, we would be dealing with part of the consecration ceremony of an image. The *Spirit Spells* may suggest such an interpretation, as it is a text directed to the fashioning and consecration of an icon (Strickmann 1983: 432). The visualization of the deity through *homa* on the occasion of the consecration ceremony was most probably accompanied, in Gandhāra, by the well–known 'opening the eyes'. As to Theravāda tradition, Tambiah (1984: esp. 254) has shown how in modern South–East Asia the latter rite is the last of a ceremony whose main purpose is to make the image, where the presence of the Buddha is made immanent, effective through several means, including the transfer therein of the psychic energies of the monks sitting in meditation. Actual visualization and 'opening the eyes', along with a number of other rites, are also present in the Tibetan tradition whenever an image is fashioned (see Beyer 1973: 640), and *homa* proper is documented on this very occasion in Newar Buddhism (see Locke 1980: 103, 107 ff.) [38].

---

[37] Also Abe (1990: 16, n. 84) feels bound to clear himself from resorting to a famous commentary of Wŏnhyo, the *Doctrinal Essentials of the Sūtra on Maitreya's Rebirth Above* [*in Tuṣita Heaven*] (*Mi le shang sheng jing zong yao*, cf. Taishō Tripiṭaka, XXVIII, 1773), even though his arguments are quite persuasive.

[38] Even late medieval texts like the *Hevajra Tantra* (to be utilized with the greatest caution, but not to discard a priori in relation to *all* information it gives us) requests *homa* for *pratiṣṭhā*, i.e. the consecration of religious objects, books, images, etc. See Snellgrove (1959, I: 88–9).

7. EXOTERIC *HOMA*: PROTO–*HOMA* AND FIRE RITUALS FOR THE DEAD

Let us consider now the stela of fig. 16, which shows a Buddha in *abha-yamudrā* (the forearm is lost) standing on a pedestal on which two couples (?) are depicted one on each side of a stand (which we must imagine as of terracotta or metal) the upper part of which is shaped like a brazier. The two female figures at the ends of the relief address the Buddha a request that their husbands make more persuasive by performing a ('the'?) fire ritual. This stela is noteworthy for two reasons: first, it is of the Buddha (most likely Śākyamuni's), and not of a Bodhisattva; second, the ritual fire is not burning in a simple round vessel as in the stele examined above, but in a huge stand.

I would emphasize, first, how the ritual is addressed to Śākyamuni, who here is conceived, therefore, not so much as an Enlightened Being but rather as a Benevolent Being who has given men the means (rituals and mantras) to solve spiritual and practical problems. The already mentioned *Sūtra Spoken by Buddha on the Spiritual Mantra for Keeping the House Safe*, of the first–second century A.D., may be considered a sort of reference text for understanding fig. 16 in that, although it does not mention any fire ritual, the request made by the two couples is likely to be of the same order. Another text quoted above, *The Mantra Sūtra Taught by the Seven Buddhas of the Past* may be recalled as well, and all the more so in that instead it includes *homa*.

The base of a stela showing again the Buddha (? see fig. 19; there are several examples of fire rituals performed before him: see e.g. Kurita 1990, no. 17, with two kneeling devotees; in Lyons and Ingholt 1957, no. 232, the Buddha is seated in meditation; etc.) may be compared with the one above, because the fire-stand, though different from the other, is also very large.

As shown in figs. 20–22 Maitreya too can be the deity to whom the ritual is addressed [39].

Made of either terracotta or metal, large, and even almost monumental, fire–stands have to be imagined fixed, or quasi–fixed in front of an icon in a chapel or some other place especially prepared for the purpose, for a precise ritual, probably a form of proto–*homa*. We will see (section 8) that large fire–stands can be used for a few other functions (e.g. as incense burner), but, because of their size, not many.

In a stela with the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, some kind of relationship between the main image and the scene on its base is evident. We may still be

---

[39] The image of fig. 20 is that of a standing Bodhisattva wearing sandals; he is quite likely to be Maitreya.

uncertain about the nature of the ritual performed, but that it is directly connected with the divine image and its powers cannot reasonably be doubted. It is more difficult to understand their relationship when the ritual is referred to a quasi–narrative scene (we might define it an 'exemplary' one) as that of fig. 18. This is the fragment of a relief found in the excavations at Butkara that, along with other sculptured slabs, had been part of a large scene representing Śakra's visit to the Buddha (see Faccenna 1962–4, II: CCCX). The fire–ritual scene is rather complex. Probably fourteen laymen (ten are visible), apparently belonging to two family groups, took part in it. The head of the right–hand family is tossing a small round object, most likely a grain, into the fire; in his left hand he holds a branch. The head of the other family is certainly doing the same thing: his right hand is chipped, but there is no other reason why he should be stretching it over the flame. He is, in short, the counterpart of the other *grhapati* (the scene is carefully symmetrical with respect to rank and functions of the two family groups). Female figures bear flowers and branches, and the two women who are third in each procession are (to judge from the intact right–hand figure) the female members of two other couples. Each holds a basket, which probably contains herbs to throw into the fire or is in some way indispensable to the ritual[40].

Any ritual but *homa* is unlikely, be it a question of exoteric *homa*, i.e. a fire ritual not entirely assimilated yet to Buddhist speculation: a form of Buddhist proto–*homa* we may say. As a matter of fact, into the fire some grains are clearly thrown that are not incense grains (which are in any case perfectly compatible with *homa*: see section 9). We can say this not because a fire–stand could not function as an incense burner, but because incense burning would be rendered not with a flame rising from the bowl on top, but with smoke, which in Gandhāra is represented with particular conventions (figs. 1–5). In fact, incense burns and fumigates on embers.

But why is the fire ritual depicted below Śakra's visit to the Buddha? There is no immediately apparent connection: the ritual appears to be independent, or relatively independent, from the scene above[41]. Its presence would probably find an explanation in the entire iconographical context, which is unknown to us. If, moreover, we consider the rituals, with Staal, as *independent variables, homa,* powerful as it is, should be considered as performed *per se.* It is unimportant whether its assimilation into a historical–doctrinal context is easy and actually sought. In this perspective, we should simply acknowledge that the patrons who wanted themselves represented performed *homa.* If I am in doubt about this

---

[40] In fully developed Buddhist *homa*, the materials needed for the ritual include *kuśa* grass and flowers in Nepal (see Locke 1980: 103 ff.) and medicinal plants and *shikimi* leaves in the Shingon fire ritual in Japan (see Payne 1991: 83; the basket containing these leaves may be seen here in fig. 37).

[41] In this scene (as in others in Gandhāra), the Buddha is clearly shown as having higher status than the gods (Śakra asks him questions that only he can answer). The laymen nearer the *saṅgha* are drawn to consider him as the substitute of all Saṃsāran deities and the only addressee of rituals.

point, it is because the fire ritual, in this case too, is documented in a 'high', specific place (a sacred area), where we must assume that there was some form of control from the monastic side. Thus a learned interpretation of the ritual, consistent with the doctrine, must have existed. Actually, there is reason to believe that a learned interpretation had already been given to fires and *homa* in about the first–second century A.D. (sections 11, 12), the period to which we may assign the relief under discussion.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

There are also small, portable fire–stands along with the large ones, which often look like real lamps. In this section we consider them in relation to a group of scenes that permit us to associate them with funerary rituals.

Fig. 11 shows a relief made known by Kurita (1988: no. 531) which depicts a monk leading other monks in the *pradakṣiṇā* around a stūpa of an early type [42] while holding a fire–stand on top of his head. The same ritual is shown in other reliefs as well, such as the well–known one in the Worcester Museum (see Marshall 1960: fig. 197). Small fire–stands are also found in front of stūpas (for an example see Verardi 1987: 379, fig. 12): although there is no sign of any ritual being performed there, it may be argued that the same ritual is alluded to. Similar fire–stands are often to be seen in the scenes depicting the coffin of the Buddha (see a relief in the Karachi Museum in Higuchi 1984: II–18, and another, beautiful one in Kurita 1988: no. P4–IV), the urn where, after the funeral pyre, the remains of the Tathāgata were gathered (fig. 6), and the distribution of those relics that precisely make the stūpa sacred and worthy of veneration (see a relief in Berlin, reproduced in Verardi 1987: 380, fig. 14). Sometimes the fire–stand is also shown in the *parinirvāṇa* scene (fig. 5), the first of what we may call the 'funerary cycle'.

There can be no doubt that we are confronted with fire rituals meant for the dead. The funeral is the last *rite de passage*, and in fact we are in a situation that in a way recalls that of Siddhārtha's marriage (section 2): better still, there can be no doubt in this case that the rituals we see or imagine being performed were well known and customary. In fact, *they may not be those actually performed for Śākyamuni but are certainly those performed by the laymen for their dead relatives or by monks for their brethren* [43]. A relief published by Kurita (1988: no. 546), unfortunately flaked, seems actually to attribute these rituals to the Buddha himself: in fact the Blessed one is shown leading the procession around a stūpa on whose upper *pradakṣiṇāpatha* is placed a fire–stand. In any case, the attribution of these rituals to the last part of the Buddha's life comes as a justification for their existence and *establish their practice in a Buddhist milieu*.

---

[42] The type of stūpa rising on a platform with four corner pillars has been studied by Faccenna (1986).

[43] The question of burial of monks in stūpas within sacred areas and of ordinary laymen just outside it has recently been discussed by Schopen (1991; see also id. 1987a).

These are rituals that we know well from the Hindu tradition and that belong to the *śrāddha* class. They are as long as they are complicated (see Kane 1930–46, IV: 334 ff.; Dubois 1906: 482 ff.), but if we had to give a summarizing definition of them we could say that a *śrāddha* denotes 'three things, viz. *homa*, the offering of *piṇḍa* (ball of cooked food) and gratification of the *brāhmaṇas* invited to a dinner' (Kane 1930–46, IV: 335). Being connected to the life cycle, the Hindu rituals for the dead certainly go back to Vedic times, and notably so *homa*, at least in its basic structure. That Buddhist laymen followed the same rituals is made clear by some epigraphical evidence, such as the inscription on the Bajaur reliquary documenting the existence of funerary rites entailing the offering of *piṇḍas* to the ancestors (see Fussman 1993: 95 ff.) [44] – cleary a 'Hindu' rite, or rather an 'invariant' rite interpreted along Buddhist lines.

In fig. 12, a relief in Milan, we see that some of the men walking in the procession bear a few round objects in their hands. They may be *piṇḍas* (cf. Verardi 1991: 80–2) [45] or relics. They seem to be wrapped in nets, like those of the Buddha, which we can observe in a number of reliefs (e.g. fig. 8). In the latter case it would be the very ceremony during which the relics of monks or laymen were deposited into a stūpa. The fire–stands hold by those who lead the procession (monks and laymen) in figs. 11 and 12 may well be considered as simple, though large, lamps, and not meant, as such, for the fire ritual proper, but possibly connected with it in those monasteries where *homa* was performed. In fig. 7, showing the urn, covered by a cloth, where the burned remains of the Buddha's body are being guarded by two chauri–bearers, we see a round fire vessel in the foreground which is neither a fire–stand of the small variety nor a lamp, but rather reminds us of the braziers of the '*homa* stele'.

The offering of *piṇḍas* is a detail that actually suggests that the traditional rites for the dead had been adopted – or, rather, had never been abandoned – by the Buddhists. The performance of *homa*, traditionally a part of them, was all the more understandable on these occasions if – as Schopen (1991) has shown – ordinary monks, and not (or not only) saints, were buried after being cremated,

---

[44] Fussman is right, I believe, when he maintains that the sentence *na śaddhro na piṃḍoyakeyi pitri griṇayati*, 'curieuse pour un bouddhiste... ne s'appliquerait pas aux reliques du Bienhereux Śākyamuni, mais aux rests des ancêtres de Vijayamitra enterrés ... près du monument contenant les reliques du Buddha ...' (ib.: 110).

[45] The story of the publication, by me, of this relief in a semi–clandestine booklet is a tale that wants telling. The director of the Archaeological Museum, Milan, Mr E. Arslan, invited me to publish the museum's Gandhāran pieces (without remuneration or even reimbursement of expenses). In October 1991 he surprised me with the printed book. Unfortunately, it contained numerous errors that could have been corrected had I been shown page proofs with plates and drawings, which I was not. Only after the intervention of my attorney did Mr Arslan make some effort to correct the worst errors. The volume was, to my knowledge, never distributed, which would mean that the small collection remains, for all practical purposes, unpublished. The competence of the editors of this catalogue (Ms R. La Guardia was in charge of the edition along with Mr Arslan) can be dispassionately appraised by, for example, looking at the layout of pl. XI, or the ludicrous pl. XV. The moral of the story could be at the very least: Never work for free.

in stūpas mushrooming around the main one, and if even *pṛthagjanas*, or common men, were given the same kind of burial (ib.: 282). Not all of them, to be sure, were non–returners and in certain monasteries *homa* may have been considered a good means, along with more orthodox ones, to ensure a good rebirth, or one to oppose *pretas* and other evil spirits during the very difficult phase which follows death.

We have recalled the Hindu tradition for comparison[46], but there are grounds for asserting the existence of the *homa* ritual for the dead in ancient Buddhism also on the basis of the Buddhist, albeit later, tradition itself. A section of the *Sarvadurgapariśodhana Tantra*, a comparatively early *tantra* which in the eight century A.D. was commented upon in India by Buddhaguya among others and translated into Tibetan by Śāntigarbha and Jayarakṣita (see Skorupski 1983: XXIV ff.), is dedicated to the different rites for the dead centred upon *homa* (ib.: 81 ff.). This is of course a *homa* made entirely 'tantric', taking place within a *maṇḍala* and, most of all, performed by a *mantrin*, and not by a layman, but the rite is there along with a few structuring details[47] which show that a late derivation from Hindu practices or late independent developments are indeed unlikely, and that, rather, Indian Buddhism shared an ancient tradition with orthodox Indians as far as the basic rituals for the dead were concerned[48].

[46] This point would deserve careful attention because in Hindu monastic establishments like those of the Kānpatḥā yogis, there is the custom of burying the dead brethren in *samādhs*, which at times (as at Mṛgasthalī in Kathmandu) look like stūpas with an underground chamber. The funeral rites are performed by the fellow–yogis, and not by Brahmans (see Briggs 1938: 39), and rites include processions, offerings, the use of lamps, etc., which might enlighten the ceremonies carried out in ancient Buddhist India. On the *samādhs* of the Gorakhnāthīs, in addition to Briggs (ib.: 39 ff. and *passim*) see Unterschied (1985: 129) and, in relation to Mṛgasthalī, De Marco (1987: 224–5).

[47] According to the *Durgatipariśodhana Tantra*, the *mantrin*, after washing and anointing the corpse, consecrates, by means of different mantras, its eyes, ears, nostrils, throat, forehead, head, shoulders, elbows, ankles, the front and rear private parts and the crown of the head (see Skorupski 1983: 84, n. 27). Describing the funeral ceremonies of the Brahmans, the abbé Dubois (1906: 486) reported 'a most extraordinary ceremony, which at the same time is certainly a very disgusting one, the chief mourner placing his lips successively to all the apertures of the deceased's body, addressing to each a *mantram* appropriate to it, kissing it, and dropping on it a little ghee'. The main difference between the two traditions certainly is that in the former case it is a specialized priest who performs the rite, and a layman in the other.

[48] Staal, in his 1990 work (p. 8) maintains that what is important in the east is orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. This may well be true at an 'anthropological' level, but if we ever want to appraise the difference, say, between Buddhism and Hinduism, there is no doubt that orthodoxy (i.e. the continuous recalling and reviving of the Veda, perceived as a founding set of texts, whatever the remoteness from it of actual practices), and not orthopraxy is the key to the question (see, for an example, Verardi 1992: 23 ff.).

8. Typological, functional and Chronological Problems. Other Fire Rituals

Fire–stands, both large and small, are an adaptation, from a typological and, partly, also functional point of view, of the *altaria* and *thymiateria* of the Graeco–Roman world. These are divisible on the basis of the stands supporting the upper bowl into six types. Early models have a smooth cylindrical shaft (see e.g. figs. 13, 17 for Gandhāran examples); next there are those, possibly unkown in Gandhāra, with supports that are triangular in section; later, the support has feet in the shape of a lion's paws, whose transformation and simplification is instead clearly noticeable in Gandhāra (see fig. 33). In time, the shaft of the *thymiaterium* appears with rings (here figs. 20, 21–22, 24) until, in the last type, it takes the form of the pillar of a balustrade[49].

In Gandhāra the Hellenistic models often appear elaborated and Indianized. This is clearly shown, in a number of cases, by a decoration in the shape of simple or double lotus flowers (figs. 18, 20–21), which certainly conveys a symbolic meaning (Agni, the fire, is born from the waters, which are symbolized by the lotus). Graeco–Roman *thymiateria*, moreover, are often equipped with a conical lid, which, when present in Gandhāra (wee see it hanging open: figs. 8, 9–10), indicates that they are incense burners and serve only that use. (above section 7, and below section 9).

It is not the purpose of this article to address typological problems, nor to discuss with the attention it deserves the difficult problem of the relationship between classes of objects and their functions. Yet, a few tentative suggestions can be made before completing our survey. From what we have seen so far, we deduce that: a) fire–stands, both large and small, were mainly employed for performing quasi–exoteric *homa*. Their size seems to be related to the places where, and to the procedures according to which, similarly structured rituals were performed, rather than pointing to differently structured ritual acts; b) small fire–stands, however, are clearly multifunctional, and in a few cases can barely be distinguished from lamps (not the small oil–lamps commonly used in sacred areas, which belong to an altogether different class); c) the ritual performed with

---

[49] On *thymiateria*, in addition to the article in the *Realencyclopädie* (1936, VI: 706–14), see especially Wigand (1912), Deonna (1938: 374–89), Queyrel (1988) and Testa (1989). The difference among *thymiateria, altaria, arulae, foculi* is far from clear. Their functions in the rituals have not been satisfactorily interpreted (see, in particular, Queyrel 1988).

I thank Prof. I. Bragantini, Dept of Classical Studies of the Istituto Universitario Orientale, for helping me in this research.

the large fire–stands seems to have developed up to the point of losing its exoteric characteristics. Their use was abandoned in favour of round braziers.

We also deduce that *homa* was normally performed in connection with *rites de passage* (marriages, funerals) of laymen belonging to the *saṃvṛtisaṅgha* since the very beginning of what we perceive to have been a 'Gandhāran society', as shown by a number of reliefs that can be dated early. It was as popular among the laity as a means to obtain wordly benefit. Monastic authorities did not oppose its practice, and in fact it is represented on a number of stele in sacred areas. Appropriate justifications were given according to the developing Buddhist doctrine. Lastly, doctrinal elaboration on fires probably had already made *homa* also acquire the characteristics of a salvation ritual.

The heart of the question lies in the passage between quasi–exoteric *homa*, which is proper to Vedic/Hindu tradition and early northern Buddhism, and esoteric *homa*, typical of the late Buddhist tradition. This point will be addressed in sections 10–12.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The existence of fire rituals other than *homa* and proto–*homa* but which use the smaller fire–stands is to be noted. Fig. 33 shows a monk who raises a fire–stand up towards a (lost) image above. Clearly he is performing the rite on behalf of the woman standing nearby with her joint hands upraised towards the deity. This relief is noteworthy because it is one of the few (but of those depicting the procession around the stūpa, which belong to the 'funerary cycle') that show a monk, not a layman, performing a fire ritual.

Fig. 32 shows a female devotee who holds a small fire–stand (actually a lamp whose flame she is shielding with her right hand) as she pays homage to the Buddha, seated in *abhayamudrā*. Both reliefs seem to represent a ritual corresponding to the *ārati–pūjā* we know from present–day India [50].

In certain reliefs, a small fire–stand (or lamp) is depicted in front of an image (fig. 17): this is probably a moment of the same ritual, although we are not given any further clue to understanding an apparently unimportant scene.

Finally, there are fire rituals which make use of instruments completely different from those seen so far. An example is that of fig. 30, where the ritual is performed before a tutelary couple (see section 4). Another is shown in fig. 31, depicting the lower part of a stela preserving a draped throne of which a wooden leg can be seen on the right side: it is likely that a Bodhisattva was seated there. On the left side, two female figures are depicted on a platform with their faces upturned to the image above; the first figure bears something, now chipped away, in her hands. The details of the scene on the right side are also damaged and difficult to discern. The male figure, apparently naked, actually wears a chlamys pinned around his neck, an edge of which folds over the left forearm. The figure,

---

[50] During the *homa* ritual performed by *vajrācāryas* in Newar Buddhism, the rite of showing the light is repeated more than once (see Locke 1980: 108 ff.).

who holds a club (?) with his left hand, is clearly modelled after the image of Heracles (as often happens, in Gandhāra, with Vajrapāṇi). At first, one would say that he is holding out in his right hand an oblong object, a lamp with a handle on which the fire is burning. This is unlikely, however, because the lamp would stand in mid–air. Thus the naked figure can only hold an instrument with a long curved handle, which we may compare with a special class of incense burners (figs. 14–15), in turn similar to the Japanese *egōro* (fig. 37), which, however, has a pierced lid.

So we are left in the dark. The fragmented relief of fig. 31, attesting a ritual as yet unseen, illustrates the complexity of the whole matter and how far we are from having even a partial idea of it.

9. INCENSE BURNERS: FUMIGATIONS AND FESTIVALS

We have seen (section 6) how at Mogao there were in all likelihood rituals aimed at the visualization of the Buddha which – as established in the *Sea–Sūtra* – included the burning of incense. Similar fumigations are well attested in Gandhāra, where they probably refer to different kinds of rituals.

The stele with Maitreya of figs. 13 and 14 clearly represent fumigations because of the stylized spirals rising from the vessel placed in front of the icons. Incense, as noted in section 7, burns on embers, not on the living flame. The vessels are different from each other, however. In the first case we have a large fire–stand, while in the second we see a round vessel to which a long handle is apparently attached, that is, a kind of hand–held incense burner. The handle makes it look like the instrument of fig. 31 discussed above (section 8), where a flame is burning, and – were it not for the absence of a lid – like an *egōro*. This is employed to perform a rite within the *homa* ritual in Tendai and Shingon Buddhism (see Payne 1991: 83; pls. 4, 8; Saso 1991: 40; here, see fig. 37). Because of the handle (?) the instrument in fig. 15 is also to be considered an incense burner, even if the smoke is not rendered conventionally.

Fig. 10 shows a ritual performed before a Buddha image by the members of a family standing on either side of the *thymiaterium* with joined hands, bearing garlands, or holding flowers with the end of their garments. Here the instrument of the ritual is most clearly an incense burner, with a conical (and certainly pierced) lid hanging open from the upper bowl. The little bells hanging from the lower, inverted bowl, which jingled when the object was borne in procession, are also to be noted.

These fumigations do not otherwise require specialized vessels: from fig. 13 we understand that the incense is burning in a large stand similar to those used for exoteric *homa*; in figs. 14 and 15 it burns in vessels similar to others meant for a fire ritual (fig. 31). Thus we remain uncertain about the rituals performed, although the hypotheses can be reduced to two: the first, that they are specific kinds of rituals, and different from each other. Along with the recitation of mantras, they would include only offerings of flowers and incense to attain the visualization of the deity – a bit like what is prescribed by the *Sea–Sūtra*; the second, that they are incense offerings made within *homa*, as attested in the still living tradition. This might be the case, in particular, of figs. 14 and 15, whose setting is rather similar to that of the '*homa* icons' examined in section 5. In any case, as observed by Strickmann (1983: 430), 'there are remarkable parallels between *homa* and incense burner. Theoretically their proper functions are quite

discrete, but in East Asia at least they show certain intriguing convergences'[51]. I
wonder whether in ancient Indian Buddhism fumigations represented a sort of
compromise before the acceptance of real *homa*.

A true incense burner (with a lid) is standing in the middle of the very
interesting relief of fig. 11. Two Nāga princes, at the head of two separate groups,
are throwing something on a *thymiaterium* out of the basket held by their wives,
while an apparently wild dance is being performed all around to the sound of
wind and percussion instruments. The relief is 81 cm long, but it is far too low
(12 cm) in proportion to have served as the base of an image. This is also
excluded by the moulding at its bottom, which also rules out the possibility that
it was a stair–riser. The relief was perhaps part of a long frieze upon which panels
with narrative scenes were placed.

It is possible that in Gandhāra there were independent shrines dedicated to
the cult of the Nāgas, like those found at Sonkh (see Härtel 1993: 64 ff., 413 ff.).
The well–known reliefs from Kāfir Koṭ (see them in Marshall 1960: pl. 56; also
Kurita 1990: nos. 507, 508), though rather small, may have belonged to a shrine
of that kind, for they represent homage scenes paid, respectively, to a Nāga
couple and to a Nāgarāja at the centre of the relief. In fig. 11 they are the Nāgas
themselves who, by means of a ritual centred upon the incense burner (placed
along the same axis around which the scene above was set) are addressing a
Being superior to them. In a word, the Nāgas are here the representatives of one
of the 'eight classes' allowed into the world of the Buddha.

If we consider many other music and dance scenes attested in Gandhāra, it
is evident that the recommendations of the Pāli *Vinaya* on this matter had not,
and could not have, many chances to be applied in a number of monastic
establishments. In the *Cullavagga* (V, 2, 6: cf. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1885,
III: 71) we read:

'Now at that time there was a festival on the mountain–top at Râgagaha; and the Khabbaggiya
Bhikkus went to see it.

'The people murmured, were annoyed, and became indignant, saying, "How can the
Sakyaputtiya Samanas go to see dancing, and singing, and music, like those who are still enjoying the
pleasures of the world?" And they told this matter to the Blessed One.

'You are not, o Bhikkus, to go to see dancing, or singing, or music. Whosoever does so, shall
be guilty of dukkaṭa'[52].

Dancing, singing and music were instead, in Gandhāra, part of rituals that,
if not directly performed by monks, were part of the accepted religious practices.

---

[51] Strickmann (1983: 429) recalls here a *dhāraṇī* collection (*Da ji i shen zhou jing*, cf. Taishō
Tripiṭaka, XXI, 1335) translated into Chinese in A.D. 462 that 'gives comprehensive instructions for
burning different types of incense and reciting mantras before the images of various deities to bring
about the apparition of a golden–bodied goddess who will fullfil the worshiper's every wish'.

[52] But even 'singing the Dhamma' within the monastic community is forbidden; the passages
of the scriptures have to be only 'intoned' (*Cullavagga* V, 3, 1–2; cf. ib.: 72). On the recitation of
Buddhist sacred texts in India, see Lévi (1915) and also Demiéville (1929–30).

That they were represented in sacred areas means a sort of sanction from the monastic side. The example of fig. 9 shows how much distance lies between the Buddhism of the preserved texts and that actually practiced, and should prevent many scholars from taking a patronizing attitude in this matter.

The relief of fig. 11 may be considered, for certain aspects, together with 'Dionysiac' scenes that, although they have earned scholars' attention, have not found a persuasive setting within the accepted Gandhāran paradigm. B. Goldman, with reference to the well-known stair raiser reliefs from Buner, showed that in Gandhāra would take place the performance of sacred dance dramas, 'part of a dionysiac or bacchic celebration' (Goldman 1978: 194), 'when the emblematic chest, the holy container, is brought on stage as the focus for the dramatic action' (ib.: 196). I doubt that the implications of Goldman's conclusions have been understood, and I cannot remember their having been discussed. Recently M.C. Carter has suggested that the orgiastic festivals of Dionysiac and local origin[53] depicted in early Buddhist art of Gandhāra are rationalized representations of the pleasures waiting the devotees in the most accessible Heavens of the *cakravāla* cosmology. Such scenes were suppressed in the later Kuṣāṇa period, when new ideologies evolved (Carter 1992: 57–8).

What our fig. 11 shows is that very peculiar festivals were directly connected to rituals, as is made clear by the incense burner at the centre of the scene, and that the ritual could well be addressed to the Buddha (or to a Bodhisattva). This raises a few questions: how is it that the monastic authorities accepted such developments? There was no reason to do so if the festival–cum–ritual was not strictly functional to some aspect of Gandhāran Buddhism (and not only of Gandhāran society). And why, as Carter emphasizes, were these festivals no longer performed after, say, the second century A.D.[54]? Is it possible to establish a link between the disappearance of such iconographies as these and the disappearance of those representing proto– or exoteric *homa*?

The answer to the third question is to be found in the passage from the performance of rituals perceived as being (relatively) exoteric and from what has been called 'diffuse esoterism' (see section 13) to a full, self–conscious elaboration of the whole matter in Buddhist terms, that is to esoteric forms of Buddhism. More will be said below on this. Here I would simply add that in 'dionysiac' reliefs, and in those like that of fig. 11, there is no such thing as a 'rustic folk religion' (Carter 1992: 51), just as it is not the populace to practice *homa*: the rituals are, rather, performed by the representatives of important lineages such as the Nāgas, or even Hellenized or Iranized segments of Gandhāran society.

---

[53] According to Carter (1992) there was a sort of syncretistic meeting between Greek dionysiac festivals and local cults. But that Alexander's Macedonians were so simple–minded as to mistake Indra for Dionysos is an over–simplification.

[54] Carter (ib.) argues that the *cakravāla* heavens with such earthly aspects were replaced by the representation of the Sukhāvatī.

10. THE BUDDHISM OF LAYMEN: FROM EXOTERIC TO ESOTERIC *HOMA* ·

We have quoted above a passage from the *Atharva Veda* in which it is the householder who performs *homa*. We have also recalled a text such as the *Rgvidhāna*, which openly asks a twice–born person to engage himself with *homa* and overcome adversities by means of it (see Bhat 1987: 88). All the laymen that form the backbone of the brahmanic society are in the position to perform rituals aimed at obtaining wordly ends. The ritual, therefore, is simplified to the highest degree. The utensils, for instance, 'are confined to two spoons: one for dipping (*śruva*) and the other for offering (*śruk*)' (ib.: 89–90). The requests made to the deity by means of the ritual give us a cross–section of a traditional society: in fact, next to the requests of a long life, of offspring, and recovery from illness, certain kinds of offerings secure a thousand gold pieces, horses, elephants, a virgin wife, clothes, silver pieces, food, etc. (see ib.: 90 ff.). When offering a particular oblation to the fire, addressed to a particular deity, in such a rite as this (clearly what in Buddhism we would call a *pauṣṭika* rite, i.e. the *homa* of augmentation) one has to repeat a particular mantra. In fact, just at the beginning of the *Rgvidhāna*, obeisance is payed to Brāhma and 'to the seers of Mantras' (I, 1; cf. ib.: 281), and it is acknowledged that several mantras have tangible purposes (I, 3).

Looking at the matter from a different angle, that of early medieval Buddhism, we know that *śāntika*, i.e. the most popular among *homa* rites, was performed in order to fight ills, which 'are without number, comprising in the external world flood, fire, insects, hail, locusts, and all the other afflictions that devastate crops and cattle. Within the body itself, there are a myriad forms of disease and distress. All these the Śāntika rite eliminates, whether from one's own body or that of another' (Strickmann 1983: 443).

In Gandhāra laymen certainly had the same desires and worries that the laymen of *Rgvidhāna* and later Buddhists had, and in fact they performed rituals that were structurally similar. Laymen, however, are not the populace (always at the edge of or completely outside any Indian high system and not taken into account either by texts such as the *Rgvidhāna* or by monastic institutions); rather, we should turn to those social segments that in Gandhāra either considered themselves as 'twice–born' even after being converted to Buddhism or were their Buddhist equivalents: they were the laymen who had enough economic weight to support the monasteries and be the patrons of chapels and images. That a society such as the Gandhāran did not have a caste organization only students trained on texts of the Theravāda tradition (but see Gombrich 1988: *passim*) can suggest (not by chance that tradition has survived in countries where castes never existed). On the contrary the main problem of ancient Indian Buddhism was to correlate with

a society that was just about to organize itself according to a real castal model, changing from one based on the trifunctionalism of the *varṇas* (brought to a crisis, at least in the Northwest, also by the social changes favoured by the Greeks) to one based on *jātis* [55].

Considering rituals such as *homa* as an intrusion 'from below' means sharing the persuasion that doctrine precedes rituals. Referring to Staal (1985), it is convenient to recall not only that ritual is independent from doctrine, but that one of the most important functions of the latter is to give the ritual a meaning.

This takes us back to our iconographies. A number of them show how *homa* was performed in situations and according to procedures that convince us that the rites were the equivalent of what the *Ṛgvidhāna* recommends, or can be otherwise attained by means of other, and even more common forms, of *homa*, i.e. *śāntika*.

Fig. 23 can serve as an example of what we mean. It reproduces a well–known stela from Sahr i Bahlol depicting Siddhārtha in meditation under the *jambu* tree in the labourers' village. To understand this iconography let us recall first the 'narrative' version of the same episode as represented on the Sikri stūpa (cf. Lyons and Ingholt 1957: no. 36; Kurita 1988: no. 129): Siddhārtha, worshipped by *devas* is shown there meditating at a certain distance from the ploughmen and the ox, who fill all the foreground exept for a figure at the right corner, identifiable as Śuddhodana.

The Sahr i Bahlol scene, on the contrary, is depicted on the base of a proper icon, which urges us to examine the relationship between the upper and the lower part of the sculpture. In fig. 23 the ploughman and the oxen fill only a part of the base, as if simply indicating the setting of the scene and making the identification of the upper icon possible. The central part of the scene shows a fire–stand (standing exactly along the axis of the composition) before which a couple in *añjalimudrā* is visible. Another figure in *añjalimudrā*, larger in size, is on the left. This may be identified as that of a *deva* on the basis of a figure of comparable size and in the same position, but with a halo, in a stela very near to the one under examination (cf. Kurita 1988: no. 130). He might be identified with that Śuddhāvasa or Śuddhādivāsa god referred to in some texts (see Durt 1982: 107, 109).

The fire ritual which is being performed is clearly the focus of the Sahr i Bahlol icon, and it may be suggested that Siddhārtha is being requested (or even obliged, because of the rite's inherent power) to grant favours, or avoid damages, in relation to some kind of agricultural activity. In such an icon Siddhārtha should not be considered the Buddha–to–be, as may be the case of the narrative scene of

---

[55] The trifunctionalism of the *varṇa* system as a variant of Indo–European trifunctionalism has been the object of Dumézil's investigation (see, for instance, Dumézil 1958). His ideas have been criticized by Gonda (for example, 1974). On *jātis* as a distinct phenomenon from *varṇas*, see Baechler (1988: esp. 45 ff.). He considers their rise and establishment as an answer to the failure of the Maurya state. The Greek presence at the borders of the Subcontinent and in India proper, nowadays reconsidered, was certainly a very important factor for the crisis of the old Vedic system and its reorganization on new bases.

the Sikri stūpa (where other scenes from the Buddha's life are represented as well), but as an already Enlightened Being who, as shown by his miraculous birth and exploits as a newborn child, has decided to descend on earth as a Bodhisattva to help people both in matters pertaining to salvation *and* for the needs of everyday life. It is not too far–fetched, I believe, to see the devotees performing the ritual as landowners. In a setting where divine functions may not yet have been attributed to a great number of Bodhisattvas (see section 4), Siddhārtha, as a descending Bodhisattva, plays a role of his own with reference to the demands of the laymen along with the proper Buddha, the past Buddhas and Maitreya (I leave aside, for want of more information, the Saṃsāran deities, for whom, however, see fig. 30, recalled in section 4). I cannot say what the *exact* link between Siddhārtha and agricultural activities may have been, but a thorough examination of the episode would probably help to grasp the ritual's aim (Durt's contribution, 1982, did not help, however).

Wordly ends are also the aim of those fire rituals performed by two or even more couples together (figs. 16, 20, 23), or by family groups (? fig. 19), although we lack there the iconographical details that would allow us to understand, at least to a certain extent, the ritual setting and aim.

In their own way, also funeral rituals (about which the *Ṛgvidhāna* obviously does not speak) are meant to obtain practical results, albeit in the afterlife. The performance of *homa* in Vedic and Hindu society in these circumstances is due to the fact that it forces destiny. In Gandhāra, both rituals of the kind met in the *Ṛgvidhāna* and funerary rituals have in common the utensils employed, i.e. fire–stands, and from the stylistic point of view, most depiction are apparently early. This points to a setting not yet too distant from traditional orthopraxy.

In practically all these examples the rituals, as said above, are quasi-exoteric; yet the problem remains of how laymen could gain access to them and be allowed to perform them. In early Gandhāra either monastic authorities accepted, without interfering, the procedures allowing access to the rituals as they were regulated in brahmaṅic society, or new, alternative procedures were created. In both cases, the devotees were initiated: they were *dīkṣitas*, at least in the sense that the word *dīkṣa* has in Vedic and Hindu tradition.

Vedic *dīkṣā* allowed the twice–born, among other things, to sacrifice. We know the relatively simple procedures by which it was conferred upon lay couples (see Kane 930–46, II: 1135 ff.; V, 1116). The spiritual (and social) position of Gandhāran couples was probably about the same: in fact Vedic rituals had been simplified, but not completely replaced by the *bhakti* rituals (they will never be).

In the other case, Buddhist doctrine was there to explain invariant rituals within a Buddhist context. Once again, the fact that different kinds of *homa* were not simply tolerated (or they would not be depicted), but were to some extent integrated into Buddhist monastic life, implies that the monastic authorities controlled the rituals and the procedures which gave access to them as early as the period when the presumably early reliefs just examined were carved. In other words – considering that some form of initiation is necessary for performing rituals – early north–western Buddhism had already elaborated its own initiation

rules for the laymen of the *saṃvṛtisaṅgha*. The most important aspect of any *dīkṣā* is that its content must be a mantra, invariably imparted along with it (see Bharati 1977: 155).

There are additional reasons to consider as *kriyā–dīkṣitas* (though a different term should perhaps be used) the laymen of the '*homa* stele', in which we see a form of developed Buddhist, apparently no longer exoteric, *homa*. The rarity of these iconographies indicates, I believe, that a change had taken place: these are no longer brief, exoteric fire rituals that any twice–born can perform in the presence of his family or other family groups, but comparatively complex rituals (like that discussed in the *Spirit Spells*) that doctrine itself, and the evolution of northern Buddhism vis–à–vis 'Hindu' society, tend to transform into esoteric ones. Before disappearing, *homa* iconographies tell us that in early and middle Gandhāra there were still laymen allowed to perform rituals that were soon to become secret, reserved for specialized priests.

Although early Buddhist ritualistic literature has not survived (but many instructions could be spoken), we can possibly get an idea of it by assuming that it was akin to that group of texts that later on came together in the *Kriyā–* and *Caryā Tantras*. Snellgrove (1987: 233) maintains that these classes of 'lower' *tantras* 'can be best understood if they are accepted as part of the normal Mahāyāna scene'. The *Kriyā Tantras*, for instance, 'describe *maṇḍalas* and rites relating to those divinities and higher beings who were part of the early Mahāyāna scene, namely Buddhas with names already familiar to us from early Mahāyāna sutras and related Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas and Early Disciples, as well as some feminine divinities whose cult already forms part of Buddhist practice, as well some fierce protective divinities' (ib.: 232–3). Also the *Caryā Tantras* continue to belong to the same kind of Mahāyāna setting.

According to the Tibetan tradition the *Kriyā Tantras* are performed by those men who are disposed to liturgical acts to overcome the taints of sin (even if the rite alway symbolizes interior purification), that is, by those whom the Buddhist masters identify as brahmans, and the *Caryā Tantras* are appropriate for the nobles, in whom respect for the ceremonial is coupled with a greater reflective capacity (see Tucci 1969: 93). In conclusion, they are rituals for the laymen, precisely for those we see so often performing rituals in Gandhāra (high caste devotees).

It is not at all easy to define a 'Mahāyāna scene', or a 'Mahāyāna setting' in relation to Gandhāra, and notably early Gandhāra. Nor can *all* the *homa* and other fire rituals be referred to such a scene or setting. As to *homa*, the following distinction may be drawn. 'Hindu'–like, basically exoteric (although magic) rituals may well have been acknowledged and tolerated even by those *nikāyas* that stayed untouched by Mahāyāna developments to the extent that monasteries did not interfere in the life of the laymen and did not dictate strict rules of social behaviour; esoteric, or quasi–esoteric *homa* ritual certainly developed within Mahāyāna which, as noted in section 1, did affect most *nikāyas*. These rituals, developing from the normally practiced, accepted form of *homa*, were transformed into Buddhist rituals and were related to such practices as visualization.

11. MONASTIC DEVELOPMENTS I: THE BELLY FIRE

What about fire-rituals and monks? Was it only a matter of monks coming to terms with laymen and society at large? I do not think so, although the iconographical evidence is really scanty here (and reasonably so), amounting to a single example. I know of only one relief – a famous one – where a fire ritual is clearly performed by monks to the exclusion of laymen in what is certainly a monastic setting. This is the small stela with Siddhārtha fasting in the Lahore Museum (fig. 24), which I used to find particularly difficult to understand.

We see six monks on its base, three on each side of a fire-stand. Two of them, in *añjalimudrā*, are kneeling in front of it, and the others (some of whom hold something in their hands) are approaching it. Two small bells hang from the lower, inverted cup of the fire-stand, making it similar to the incense burner of fig. 10 (which, as such, has a lid).

In the light of what we have seen so far, we would say, on the one hand, that a form of exoteric or proto–*homa* is being performed; and on the other that – since the ritual is being performed by monks – this is a developed, Buddhist form of *homa*. What is more, the ritual is not addressed to a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, but to Siddhārtha *fasting*, which would suggest that the considerations made so far appear to be not very consistent with the fire ritual actually represented. If the scene represents *homa*, the whole matter should be reconsidered.

The ritual depicted is probably *not* proper *homa*. At the same time the stela cannot be explained except with reference to practices and texts not considered by scholars to be 'politically correct'. In fact, the only clue we have to understanding what the ritual is about is the *homa* chapter of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi Tantra* (see Wayman and Tajima 1992: 189 ff.; above, section 5). Twelve fires are considered there, of which four can be taken as actual 'outer' *homa* fires: no. 2, *dhāraṇāgni*, meant for *śāntika*; no. 4, *rohitāgni*, for *vaśīkara*; no. 5, *mṛḍāgni*, for *pauṣṭika*; no. 6, *krodhāgni*, meant for *abhicāruka*. Among the other fires, one (no. 1) is an 'inner' fire, and others 'seem to involve features of Buddhist practices' (ib.: 200).

Fire no. 7 is the *audāryāgni*, i.e. the Belly Fire, unfortunately not commented upon by Buddhaguya (on his commentary, see ib.: 27 ff.), who otherwise helps us to understand the meaning of other fires. *Audāryāgni* is the fire of hunger, extinguished by food. 'Presumably'– says Wayman (ib.: 196), 'it is this internal fire which yogis learn to evoke as the *siddhi* (magical power) of heat'. Being probably connected with practices, it 'would concern the fasting cults' (ib.: 200).

The Lahore stela seems, in fact, to evoke the practice of fasting in order to

reach *tapas* (Siddhārtha's actual aim) and is evidence for the existence of an esoteric fire ritual with this purpose.

We can get no better insight into the matter: did monks, in certain monasteries, fast to get special powers? Siddhārtha was indeed a model for this, as long as one does not subscribe to the belief that in Gandhāra he is a future Buddha instead of an Enlightened Being who shows the Path and whose actions establish the behaviours of his followers. The frame that we have outlined allows the upper and lower parts of the Lahore stela to be unified and understood. We can add that the stela is early, contemporary with a number of stele where exoteric *homa* is represented. This means that Buddhist speculation on fires was, as we suspected, already well developed at an early phase of Gandhāran Buddhism, and that later (?) developments, such as those documented in the '*homa* stele', cannot be surprising.

12. MONASTIC DEVELOPMENTS II: *GANDHAKUṬIS* AND FIRE–ROOMS

According to the *avadāna* literature, and to other texts as well, a special cell, sometimes acquiring (as in the *Palāyi jātaka*) the features of a palace (cf. Cowell 1895, II: 152), was reserved for the Buddha in the Jetavana monastery at Śrāvastī. The Enlightened One would spend long periods of retreat there during the rainy season. According to the *Divyāvadāna*, XXIII (ed. Cowell and Neil 1886: 333, 4–6), each of the Past Buddhas had his own *gandhakuṭī* as well.

The Jetavana monastery apparently establishes the model for all Buddhist monasteries, as clearly stated in the Tibetan *Dulva* (cf. Woodville Rockhill 1884: 51). Thus each monastery would have a cell where Śākyamuni, or a Past Buddha, was thought to have dwelt during his visits to different places. Also in Gandhāra, so distant from Magadha and the neighbouring regions, the Buddha was thought to have visited many places such as Peshawar, as Faxian tells us (cf. Giles 1923: 13). Actually, the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins seems to imply that monasteries might be provided with such a cell, and gives directions for its location, generally in the centre of a *vihāra* (III, 2, 125, 4; 33, 133, 6–11; cf. ed. Dutt 1939–59)[56]. The *Nidhānakathā* (cf. Rhys Davids 1880: 130) assures us that Anātha Piṇḍika had actually built the *gandhakuṭī* in the middle of the building he had constructed in the Jetavana; etc.

Gandha means 'smell', 'fragrance', 'fragrant substance', and the like, and we may speculate about the 'scented abode' or cell where the Buddha dwelt: was it because of the scent emanating from Śākyamuni? or rather because of the flowers and perfumed substances that were offered to him, the guru, by his disciples and the faithful? A passage from the *Abhiniṣkramana Sūtra*, I, 2 (cf. Beal 1875:6) may suggest both things: Ananda, visiting the Buddha in his abode, speaks of 'his body so pure' that we may imagine a special fragrance emanating from it. At the same time Ananda adores the feet of the Lord, which means that he pays him the homage that is due to a guru, whose abode must be kept clear and perfumed. The *Avadānaśataka* (ed. Speyer 1906–9, II: 39, 13; 40, 1–2) recounts of a boy who

---

[56] R. Garbini, whom I thank, has translated the latter passage as follows: 'The Blessed One answered: "If you make a building with three cells (*layana*), the central one shall be the *gandhakuṭi*, at the sides of which there shall be another two [*layanas*]; therefore in a triple building there shall be nine cells. In a building with four rooms (*śāla*), the *gandhakuṭi* shall be the one at the centre, in front of the door, while at the sides of the door there shall be two cells'. 'But it is not known how many upper rooms (*pura*) are to be built'. The Blessed one said: 'In the monks' *vihāra* five upper rooms (*pura*) are to be built, whereas the *gandhakuṭi* must have seven of them, and the upper part (*pūtika*) of the *vihāra* as many; differently, the nuns' *vihāra* must have three upper rooms, the *gandhakuṭi* five, and the upper part of the *vihāra* as many".

gathers flowers and goes to Rṣipatana in the forest near Benares, where he covers the head of Bhagavan with garlands and scented ointments.

Once again, it is unimportant to establish what was really going on in the Jetavana *gandhakuṭī* or in any other retreat of the Buddha: what matters is what, in northern, late ancient Buddhism, was believed to have happened, and what was done to keep alive the memory of the Buddha's presence in the *Ur*–monastery. Incense was most likely one of the 'fragrant substances' used in the Jetavana abode to honour the Buddha. In fact, the Chinese rendering of *gandhakuṭī* is generally *xiangshi*, where *shi* means 'home' or 'abode' and *xiang* means both 'fragrance' and 'incense', that is, a fragrance due to incense burning.

Clearly in many monasteries there was a room where rituals were performed with the purpose of recalling the presence of the Buddha and honouring his memory; *this implies the presence of images and of visualization practices.*

To my knowledge, no archaeologist has shown much concern for identifying such a room in Buddhist sacred areas. Not that literary texts should be considered a reliable guide for excavating, but some concern is certainly needed. I wonder whether among the great number of 'assembly halls', 'refectories', 'storerooms', 'kitchens', and whatever goes into the monateries *à la* Ruskin in the Marshall tradition, there were *gandhakuṭīs* or rooms functionally different from what a self–reassuring, bourgeois idea of Gandhāran religious establishments has been handed down to us by Gandhāran archaeology.

* * *

The excavations carried out in the 1970s at Tapa Šotor (Hadda) have revealed a large and until then unknown type of room built at the north–western corner of the monastery court and opening into it (figs. 34–35). This is square room 10, dating back to the second–third century A.D., whose sides measure 12.2 m and whose roof was supported by four columns. At its centre there was a round hearth 10–15 cm high and with a diameter of 1.9 m, showing clear evidence of burning (a large part of the centre of the hearth underwent calcination: see Tarzi 1991: 96 ff.).

The fire–room is clearly connected with the *vihāra* and the stūpa court nearby. Its size, which, along with its location, cannot but surprise us, rules out the hypothesis that it was used for material needs, or material needs only. Its presence is connected with the religious life of the monastic settlement. Fire was burning there as an important, even central feature of the monastery, connecting it with at least some of the fire rituals described in these pages. If we had to stay on the safe side, we might suggest that the fire burning in room 10 was meant to feed the incense burners and the fire–stands, large and small, that were most likely employed at Tapa Šotor as in a number of other Gandhāran monasteries; but there would have been no need for such a fire and for as monumental a structure as this to light the utensils of rituals ranked low and unimportant. It is reasonable to assume, instead, that the fire burning there was given the utmost importance, and that it was the object of doctrinal, highly developed interpretations.

Whatever the explanation of room 10 and its fire, the point is that the sacred fire of old, which the Buddhists threw out door, had come back in the window, at least at Tapa Šotor: here it is no longer a matter of the monastic authorities allowing the laymen to keep late Vedic or early Hindu habits related to their social status, but to have them elaborated anew in Buddhist terms and set forth systematically. In conclusion, a leap in quality has taken place, and I cannot imagine anything other than intellectual speculation on fire, as that seen for the Lahore stela of Siddhārtha fasting in the previous section, and that on *homa*.

* * *

A few centuries later, at Tapa Sardâr (Ghazni) we have a fire room (as different as anything from the one at Tapa Šotor) that can unhesitatingly be interpreted as a *homa* shrine. The structure (fig. 36), which has been described by Taddei (1984) consists of three rooms, nos. 87, 89 and 96, of which the first has three benches against three walls and 'contains a star–like octagonal clay altar, in the centre of which there is a shallow cavity with traces of burning and ashes' (ib.: 266). The altar has an outer diameter of *c.* 1 m and is *c.* 25 cm high. The adjoining room 89 was a kind of sacristy where many traces of fire were found along with a small fireplace. Access to room 87 was gained through a narrow doorway from vestibule 96, that 'was found closed by a stretch of very coarse masonry, a sort of temporary closing that emphasizes the secrecy of the shrine' (ib.: 268)[57].

The reasons why I believe that this is a *homa* shrine are the following:

– the fire ritual finds explanation within Buddhism, without resorting to external, always difficult interpretations (notably those based on Iranian rituals and beliefs). By the period to which the Tapa Sardâr shrine belongs, *homa* was of course a current practice everywhere in northern Buddhism;

– the shrine is built aside from the main monastic structures, and appears to be a secret place. If for comparison we may rely on the evidence from Japan, which I regret not to be able to examine in the detail it deserves, I may quote Payne (1991: 82): 'It seems to have been more common in the past for separate halls to be constructed which were devoted solely to the performance of the goma ... There are ... cases where old, separately standing goma halls still exist and remain in use, as for instance in the temple complex atop the island of Miyajima'. Furthermore in Japan (as everywhere else in northern medieval Buddhism), *homa* rituals are still kept very secret, owing to their esoteric nature[58].

– the uncommon octagonal shape of the Tapa Sardâr altar indicates the existence of various specialized altars. It may be useful, once again, to recall the

---

[57] We do not actually know if the altar in room 87 and the pit in room 89 are contemporary. No charcoal sample could be taken from either of them, and thus we have no Carbon–14 dating.

[58] I asked Prof. S. Kuwayama, Kyoto University, for information about *goma* and the places where it is performed in modern Japan. He replied that little has been written on the matter even in Japanese, and that access to rituals is difficult because 'the Tandai Goma rite, and the Shingon rites in particular, are performed very secretly', their rules being transmitted from priest to priest. This has

Japanese altars of the past, when four different fireplaces were used according to the different kinds of *homa* and the different Bodhisattvas to whom the ritual was addressed: they were in the shape of a moon–crescent, of a full moon (i.e. round), square or octagonal. The latter was perceived as being in the shape of a lotus flower and was meant for *vaśīkara*; the requested colour for the instruments of the ritual was violet (see Mohizuki 1958, II: 1295)[59].

Naturally the subdivision found in Japan goes back to Chinese practice and theorization. In fact, the same kind of hearths are documented in Chinese Buddhism (see Soothill and Hodous 1937: 484b), which is of particular interest for us because of the links between the late sculptural material at Tapa Sardâr and Chinese production[60].

Different fireplaces are recommended in early Indian Tantric texts, which are, of course, the ultimate source of all the rituals performed in northern medieval Buddhism. In the *Vairocanābhisambodhi Tantra, śāntika,* which is the commonest of all *homa* rituals, is performed on a circular altar, *vaśīkara* on a triangular one, *pauṣṭika* on a square altar, and *abhicāruka* goes with the bow' (see Wayman and Majima 1992: 193 ff.). Also in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra* a round hearth is required for *śāntika,* a square one for *pauṣṭika,* a 'hearth shaped like a bow' for *abhicāruka* and a triangular one for *vaśīkara* (see Skorupski 1983: 69 ff.). It may be of some interest to note that, *ceteris paribus,* triangular fireplaces are found here instead of octagonal ones, and that the substitution apparently affects *vaśīkara,* which is the *homa* of subordination.

* * *

Is there any relation between *gandhakuṭī* and fire-rooms and *homa*? The first came to mean a room in a monastery where rituals based on incense burning and visualization were performed. It has been observed above (section 9) how close are the relationship between incense and fire rituals, and it has also been suggested that incense offering may have been considered in northern India a sort of intermediate step towards the establishments of Buddhist esoteric *homa*. This is obviously *not* a necessary development within Buddhism (nothing of the kind ever happened in Theravāda countries), but it may be what actually happened in northern Buddhism, where exoteric *homa* had been accepted very early.

---

not prevented a few American scholars from studying and (partly) referring on the Tendai and Shingon *goma* (Payne 1991; Saso 1991). A study of the ritual lineages of Japan would certainly shed light on the monastic life and practice of late ancient Buddhism.

[59] Thanks are due to my colleagues Profs. P. Calvetti and L. Polese for helping me in this point of my research.

[60] They have been noticed (Taddei and Verardi 1978: 135), but not properly studied yet. This is not to say that post–Gandhāran Buddhism depends on China from the point of view of its tenets, rituals, and iconographies. They both depend on Indian developments, the evidence of which is either lost (religious establishments, iconographies, actual practices, etc.), still largely unknown (most medieval texts), or misunderstood.

13. Fuzzy Sets

With reference to the whole of northern Buddhist tradition, Japanese scholars and Japanese Buddhist tradition distinguish between an early period of 'diffuse esoterism', or *zōmitsu*, and fully Tantric 'pure esoterism', or *junmitsu*. The former 'is supposed to treat exclusively of means of attaining wordly ends: protection from disease, robbers, death: the bringing of rain, and the augmentation of riches or length of life'; in the second, 'Ritual is still the central concern, but a complex anagogic structure has been superimposed upon each rite and all its component parts' (Strickmann 1983: 424–5). Strickmann observes that 'at our present state of nescience', the criterion of 'worldliness' applied to the former should still be considered an open question and that the transition to the latter period should be seen as 'a gradual and subtle process' rather than as a clear–cut demarcation.

These observations, based on Buddhist literature, apply very well to iconographies. In a number of cases it is difficult to evaluate the procedures and the nature itself of Gandhāran fire rituals. Considering those that were performed with fire–stands we cannot say whether only wordly benefits were requested or spiritual ones as well (happy rebirth, etc.); moreover, we also see monks performing the rituals, either by themselves, as in the Lahore stela of fig. 24, or on behalf of laymen (fig. 33). There is little doubt that some anagogic structure had been superimposed upon the rituals, and that a complex speculation on fires (*homa* and non–*homa*) had developed, and particularly so when such structures as room 10 at Tapa Šotor are taken into account. Finally, in what we have called the '*homa* stele', we observe praticioners rather than petitioners, which entails as well a complex interpretation of the ritual.

Moreover, the distinction I have tried to draw between fire rituals and incense offerings cannot be maintained in clearly defined terms. Besides the difficulties inherent in the iconographical and typological evidence (sections 8, 9), there is 'an axial relationship between incense burner and fire altar, for the rite is structurally all but identical' with the procedure observed in the homa rite[61], and 'both the fire's basic fuel and its subsequent mantra–endowed nourishment are fragrant woods, among the most precious of aromatics' (ib.: 432).

We actually seem to have a 'gradual and subtle process' in the iconographies. But this should not be understood as simply diachronic, but as concerning *some* Gandhāran communities, or parts of them, as early as the emergence of Gandhāran art. The emergence of Buddhist *homa* rituals is to be

---

[61] Strickmann refers to *homa* as described in the *Spirit Spells*, partially quoted in section 5.

removed from a rigidly evolutionistic scheme. The basic mechanism of this elusive transition has already been made sufficiently clear: the *homa* rituals performed from time immemorial by upper–caste laymen for both *rites de passage* and ordinary needs were first accepted and tolerated by monastic authorities, then given a Buddhist interpretation, and finally transformed into fully Buddhist, i.e. esoteric, rituals. The construction of a chronological sequence of the ritual on the basis of logical passages should be accepted with a certain caution, however. While we can consider the first two steps fairly well documented in Gandhāra, the last, with the exception of the stela with Siddhārtha fasting and the '*homa* stele', is not. But clearly, *the more esoteric a ritual becomes the less documented it is*, and Buddhist *homa* is indeed a secret ritual, transmitted through priestly lineages even in modern times (in Nepal, Japan) [62].

We are fortunate enough to have a kind of specular evidence from the literature. In spite of very large blanks, a growing involvement in doctrinal explanation and regulation of the ritual is evident here. Now, the more we know from literary sources (consider for instance Yijng's commentary on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*), the less information we have at the iconographical level. The increased control of ritual through strict regulations (now often written down) means, in the case of Buddhist *homa*, a general inadequacy of the iconographical evidence [63]. But the two kinds of evidence considered together in their chronological complementarity fill blanks and *make us certain of the existence of an uninterrupted tradition of* homa *and other exoteric and esoteric fire rituals in northern Buddhism.*

* * *

We have observed that many fire rituals seem to relate to what is apparently a Hīnayāna setting. They are mainly addressed to Śākyamuni and Maitreya, who, along with the Past Buddhas, are the repositories of *dhāranīs*, mantras and ritual procedures. Tapa Šotor, with its large fire-room, seems to have been a monastery of the Sarvāstivādins (see Tarzi 1976: 409). This, however, could not have been otherwise, in that monastic communities continued to adhere to the traditional subdivision into the eighteen *nikāyas*, whatever doctrinal positions they might have turned to. Without ruling out the possibility that fire rituals were accepted and given a doctrinal explanation, at least to a certain extent, even by the most traditional monks, it is much more likely that they were the Mahāyāna currents, affecting most *nikāyas*, that pushed towards similar developments. I do not think that they were encouraged because Mahāyāna is, in itself, a movement susceptible

---

[62] The decline of Gandhāran narrative style in favour of icons and emblematic scenes does not help us to get evidence as such after the third–fourth century A.D. The utensils of this and other rituals would have helped us if any importance had been attached to them in excavations (section 1).

[63] *Homa* things are represented, however, in Tibetan and Central Asian *thaṅ–kas*. The latter, rolled up and kept in special places, are to be considered as secret and personal as *homa* and *maṇḍalas*.

of dubious adaptations, but beacuse they were thought to be a better means to counteract brahmanic pressure[64]. As a matter of fact, Buddhist tradition will continue to allude 'to the continuous popularity of various forms of Homa among non–Buddhists – a Homa false and delusive, when compared with its Buddhist counterpart' (Strickmann 1983: 425). In fact, to quote Tajima,

> The *homa* of esoteric Buddhism is the first phase of contemplation. It signifies the destruction of our passions by fire and the fire is the insight and compassion of the Tathāgata. The twigs and the offerings which feed the fire are only the symbols of our passions. Purely symbolic, the Buddhist *homa* has nothing in common with Brahmanical *homa*. He who does not know the true esoteric thought must not take it as a simple external rite or interpret it in a superficial way' (Wayman and Tajima 1992: 219)[65].

Medieval Tantric literature will actually insist on inner *homa*, which 'confers meaning and efficacy on all that precedes and follows it – the Outer Homa, within which it is encapsulated (Strickmann 1983: 444, apropos of Yi Jing's commentary). As noted above, emphasis on inner *homa* keeps medieval Buddhism closely bound to its roots, i.e. to the world of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Āraṇyakas*, which theorized first the inner fire sacrifice (section 3).

Monks following old tenets and others adhering to Mahāyānic speculation and practices would live side by side in one and the same monastery provided that the rules of the *saṅgha* were not broken (Bechert 1973: esp. 12–3). Different approaches would allow Buddhist priests a wider range of instruments for controlling outer society. It should be noticed that *one of Buddhism's weak points vis–à–vis brahmanic society was, in fact, its monastic organization*: whereas Brahmans would live within society, making the renouncers play a role parallel to, but not able to replace theirs, Buddhist monks were nothing but renouncers *who could rule society only by influencing laymen from outside, or either developing some form of despotism*[66], which was what actually happened in northern countries.

Yet, there are some who are not convinced of an early Mahāyāna presence. A case worth considering is Schopen's (1987), even if his arguments are to be considered partly inconsistent from a theoretical and historical point of view in the light of Bechert's criticism (1992; see the above considerations as well). Most

---

[64] Differences of opinion among scholars seem to depend very often on the Eastern societies they are more familiar with. Studying Buddhism in Sri Lanka or Thailand may not lead to a proper understanding of what Indian Buddhism had to face, i.e. a complex society based on brahmanic rules, and not societies organized at a social and theoretical level simpler than that introduced by the Buddhists. The strength of their opponents makes much of the difference between the various forms of Buddhism.

[65] Tajima's concern to emphasize those aspects of *homa* which are acceptable to modernists is clear from these words, written in the 1930s.

[66] The weakness of the monastic model may be understood from Western examples as well. Until Reformation, monasteries were the main organized presence of the Church in society. The rise of so powerful and organized enemy as the Reform movement led the Church not only to foster new Orders more open towards outer society but to create a network of parish churches whose priests had exactly the task to live within society, the secular clergy.

of Schopen's arguments stem from that positivistic way of looking at past events discussed in section 1. His frequent appeal to the evidence of 'facts' seems to prevent him, like a Ptolemaic astronomer, from seeing other facts. Epigraphical evidence, which he often proposes, is important but cannot be considered as representing the whole of past reality or even, in a context such as ancient India, a significant part of it[67]. For Gandhāra, we have nothing but a few hundred often incomplete and mostly indifferent inscriptions, which clearly were *not* written with the aim of helping us to reconstruct Gandhāran political or religious history. The same can be said, often to a greater degree, for other regions of the Sub-continent, and I do not understand why we should expect that an ancient Indian inscription mentions, say, the Sukhāvatī cult (Schopen 1987b: 115–6) when – to make an example – in Theravāda canonical literature Maitreya is mentioned only once (see n. 19): comparing the Chinese evidence on this matter with the Indian means pretending to ignore the profound difference between the Chinese and the Indians as regards their attitude towards recording things in written forms. In ancient India inscriptions are a scarce and often *random* evidence. I fail to understand the alleged historical value of the statement that 'the earliest known occurrences of the term *mahāyāna* in Indian inscriptions all date to the 5th–6th century' (ib.: 99; see also p. 124), both because the Mahāyānists were apparently known as *Vaipulyas*, and, more important, because it is only from the fifth–sixth century onwards that we have in India as a whole a (comparatively) systematic epigraphical production[68]. A statement such as 'There is not a single undisputed reference to Amitābha anywhere in our sizable corpus of Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions from Gandhāra and Northwest India – neither before, during, or after the Kuṣān period' (ib.: 117) is true, but not determinant. One would indeed be surprised to find the name of Amitābha or, for that matter, many other divine beings in early inscriptions, which do not form a systematic set.

As Schopen is demonstrably *not* a bad scholar (quite the reverse)[69], we

---

[67] The introjected model for any epigraphical work is – alas – Graeco–Roman epigraphy. But whereas for classical antiquity the inscribed evidence is added to all the other (generally rich) evidence, and everybody knows what use to make of it, for ancient India, for reasons that we all know, the value of inscriptional evidence is at the same time essential and over–emphasized.

[68] How to judge, for instance, the complete epigraphical silence with regard to the Gupta dynasty until Samudragupta's *praśasti*? In late Gupta and post–Gupta India new trends are re-cognizable, but even then: a) epigraphical evidence cannot normally be taken as consciously devoted to record historical events, so that much hermeneutical work is necessary to disentangle them from a number of often (for us) indifferent pieces of information; b) non–epigraphical periods, even very long ones, may well follow in northern medieval India, and, as historians, we are obbliged to try to understand why this happens and what it may mean. I found myself in exactly this situation when working in the field in Kathmandu (see Verardi 1992: esp. 29).

[69] I greatly appreciate, in particular, his lack of academic circumspection. He is not afraid to expose himself, and what he says is perfectly clear. In the field I know best, that is, the archaeological one, many scholars are so dependent on academic respectability that they prefer either to avoid the risk of publishing archaeological reports or to limit themselves to descriptions, without discussing the most important issues.

clearly have here a *methodological* problem. Ancient India, and, subordinate to it, Gandhāra, *are to be considered as 'fuzzy sets'. i.e. complex unities that we are, not in a position to evaluate with reasonable confidence in that, owing to the type of information flowing from them, we are not able to bring them into focus. Thus information cannot be taken* ipso facto *as data, with which it is not to be confused* [70].

The whole matter is complicated indeed, because we may have an enormous amount of information from a segment of a given set (say, pottery from a historical Indian site), very scant information from another segment, such as religious life (say, a few inscribed lines mentioning a *yakṣa*), and no information at all from a third one (say, political history). The information flowing from the unities forming the whole (the history of an ancient Indian region), may be of no use whatsoever in throwing light on the other aspects, or very little indeed (pottery versus political history), and the latter may not receive, in turn, any direct light from any other unity (hence the impossibility – to make an example – of understanding the use of most pottery, and therefore classing it according to meaningful standards).

For Gandhāra we have a huge amount of iconographical evidence (but only partially utilizable because most original contexts are lost), and no literary historical sources, a small number of inscriptions (partly utilizable for political and religious history), and no literary religious text *directly* referable to a particular monastic establishment, very little evidence on the so–called 'material culture', and no information at all on daily social needs. Only considering Gandhāra a 'fuzzy set' (though not presuming to push the mathematical parallel too far) we may hope to define the terms of the problem and start off towards unbiased research.

One point must be made clear. Until recently, and even nowadays, scholars in the humanities sensitive to the achievements of the hard sciences have tried, unsuccessfully in my opinion [71], and sometimes ludicrouusly, to adapt scientific theories and methodologies to such fields of research as social history, anthropology and archaeology. The emergence of theories on complexity may bring closer for the first time, on a reasonable basis, scholars belonging to very different fields. These theories can be credited with getting rid of the various forms of mecanistic determinism and physicalism in the human sciences, but are subject to sink into the marshlands inhabited by those who simply do not care, and still think (often without knowing it) that the last word on how to conduct research is positivism and its chain of 'facts'.

* * *

---

[70] This is exactly what Schopen does when he speaks of 'facts': they actually are pieces of information, most of which flow casually from Gandhāra or Mathurā. For other 'facts' see e.g. Hirakawa (1993: 247 ff.; 275 ff.).

[71] I have expressed some considerations on this matter with reference to archaeology in Verardi (1992: 1 ff.).

To return to our problem, even Mahāyāna trends do not explain all the developments that we observe in Gandhāran fire rituals. Had we to resort to the arguments of Japanese scholarship and tradition, in recognizing a self–conscious, complex doctrinal symbolization of fire rituals, we should attribute a part of them to *junmitsu*, i.e. to 'Tantric' Buddhism. Had we to follow Strickmann's suggestion, that *homa* rites 'are "Tantric" if we accept as a minimal definition of this imprecise but useful term that they center upon the visualization by the officiant of the deity to whom the rite is addressed, with whom the officiant then procedes to identify himself or otherwise unite' (Strickmann 1983: 418), we should attribute a part of the developments documented in Gandhāra to the same form of Buddhism.

I refer the reader to the Appendix for a number of open questions, and will simply recall that the term 'Tantrism' does not exist in Sanskrit, and that it may well be true that it is 'probably one of the haziest notions and misconceptions the Western mind has evolved' (H.V. Günther, quoted in Padoux 1981: 350). Concepts and practices seen so far (mantras, visualization, *homa*, etc.) would indeed, for many scholars, belong to Tantric Buddhism. According to their own premises, they should – leaving aside moralistic and academic superciliousness – accept this evidence as a demonstration that Tantrism strongly affected Gandhāra. I think, however, that, to the extent possible, it would be better to ignore the received terminology and classifications and try to look at Gandhāra as a complex and fuzzy set that has to be approached from different directions subject neither to modernist and positivistic certitudes nor to hasty conclusions. The complexity of Gandhāra eludes the accepted dichotomies Hīnayāna/Mahāyāna or non–Tantric/Tantric Buddhism as we, following Western Jacobin parameters, usually understand or even create.

As I do not want this position to be taken for academic weariness, I will say that to understand what is still not clear in Gandhāra there is more to look for in the direction of what is commonly believed to be 'Tantric' than in the direction of an up–to–date 'Pāli Text Society mentality'. Much has already been done in the latter direction, and we cannot reasonably expect more than new interpretations of episodes, new editions and translations of dedicatory inscriptions, and the like. But what we need more is ideas, and these can only come from a thorough and unbiased examination of the whole northern Buddhist tradition, both ancient and still current.

APPENDIX

A developed system of rituals, visualization, the Buddha as originator of mantras, *homa* ... One would say that all we need is a theorization on gurus and *maṇḍalas* to give a picture of northern Buddhism as it developed in late ancient times very different from the accepted one.

Something more may be said on the guru figure because we realize that in Gandhāra its social status was already that which we know from medieval India. In the reliefs depicting Siddhārtha at school we see (cf. Lyons and Ingholt 1957: no. 25) or guess (Verardi 1991: no. 4) that the Bodhisattva is performing one of the rituals that are due to a guru. In fact Siddhārtha is carrying a water jug to pour water on his guru's feet, performing the *gurupādukāpūjā* or *gurupādāśraya*. The same ritual is clearly performed – this time for the Buddha himself – just before the First Sermon. We can observe in some reliefs (such as the one in a private collection published by Kurita 1988: no. 28) that Śākyamuni is given a draped seat, which makes him the equal of a *rāja* or of a guru, by one of the five disciples, that a second monk holds a fly–whisk, and that a third one is carrying a water jug. We guess that after washing the Teacher's feet before the Sermon, the pupil would collect the water in a vessel and pour it over his own head, and possibly drink what was left of it. The 'revolting' signs of respect payed to gurus have been described by Dubois (1906: 126 ff.) as far as pre–modern, Hindu India is concerned, but such independent evidence as the power with which even the excrement of lamas is endowed in the Tibetan tradition suggests that such customs share an ancient tradition.

I understand how indignant many scholars (and modernist Buddhists) would feel at the idea that ancient or late ancient Buddhism partook of these beliefs and practices, but it is quite likely that it did. It should be noted that Buddhism, differently from Hinduism, is a religious movement issuing from a teaching (and thus from a guru), and therefore is compelled to stress the role of the source of its legitimacy, and to emphasize the powers of those who play it on earth through time.

As to *maṇḍalas*, the attitude of most scholars about the mere possibility that such a feature existed in ancient and late ancient Buddhism is sternly negative. The recent attack on J.C. Huntington delivered by G. Schopen (1987b) is worth looking at because, unlike the mere deprecations of most scholars, it consists of a coherent series of statements. Schopen admits that the cults of Amitābha and Akṣobhya are early ones, but consider them independent from the theory of Buddhafields, and foreign to that form of *maṇḍalas* we know from early medieval

Buddhism, i.e. the one based on the *pañcatathāgatas*[72]. However, the very existence of Amitābha and Akṣobhya, *who are Buddhas, but not Past or Future Buddhas,* means that the transition from an axial cosmological–salvational vision where a single Buddha exists, to a directional one, where many Buddhas are conceived to be existing at one and the same time (i.e. now), had already taken place. This, I believe, is the crucial point, the one implying the existence – in the monasteries where these theories had developed – of a *maṇḍala*–based Buddhism, whatever its actual forms may have been in the beginning. It may be of some interest to recall that the *asaṅkhyeya* cosmology, which, to modern eyes, appears to be fully developed in the *Mahāprajñaparamitā Śāstra* (see Kloetzli 1983: 7–8), owes much to Hellenistic cosmological speculation, in particular to Archimedes (ib.: 114 ff.). This makes one think that the cosmological–salvational debate within north–western Buddhism, eventually leading to mature Mahāyāna developments, had begun quite early, when the Buddhists who settled in Gandhāra and Afghanistan were confronted with ideas that had been introduced from the West and were, most probably, current in north–western and Central Asian towns[73].

Schopen (1987: 113–4) recognizes a basically narrative form in the 'directional' literature, and denies the identification of the centre towards which the various directions converge with Vairocana. However, 'the eschatological drama of the "*asaṅkhyeya*–cosmology" is possible only because of a series of vital interplays between Śākyamuni and the Buddhas of the ten regions' (Kloetzli 1983: 96). In fact, it is the rays of light which issue from the Buddha Śākyamuni at the centre of this cosmological vision that permit access to the regions and enable visualization of the Buddhas (ib.: 104). The role played by the central Buddha is absolutely necessary to the *asaṅkhyeya* system, either fully developed or not, and a Buddha endowed with such immense, extra–historical powers *has clearly acquired the function of Vairocana,* whether or not he is called by this name in the literature available to us.

In Gandhāra, Śākyamuni is sometimes represented as a sun–disc. This may be explained by the fact that 'The Buddha was a scion of Ikṣvaku lineage which was the Solar Dynasty par excellence' (Chandra 1982: 60)[74]. Now, Vairocana means 'Sun', and 'the transition from Śākyamuni to Vairocana was inherent in the lineage of the Enlightened One' (ib.). *Such a transition,* in my opinion, *is*

---

[72] Schopen too makes use of the term *dhyāni buddha,* which was first introduced by B.H. Hodgson. As it is not found in any text, it would be better to avoid it.

[73] Nowadays we know for certain that Greek texts were known – as could be expected – in the Hellenistic towns of Bactria. Rapin (1992: 115–30) has published the fragments found in the Palace at Ai Khânum, where a library existed in the third century B.C. to meet the needs of the Greek élite.

[74] I had tried to explain these iconographies (common both to Gandhāra and Mathurā) as representing the 'irradiation' of the Enlightened One when, 'renouncing' nirvana, he decides to set off for his descending path (see Verardi 1985: 85; 1988: 1542). The 'lineage explanation' is much better, although it does not account for the fact that the Buddha is represented in this form only when he reaches enlightenment and not, for example, when he is born.

likely to have taken place exactly when the axial cosmology was first flanked –
and later on, in northern Buddhism, replaced – by a directional cosmology. I am
not the right person to estimate how much of the original *Vaipulya* literature has
entered the existing corpus of Buddhist literature and can be recognized as such;
nor can I estimate to what extent it deals with the problems touched upon here[75],
but I think that one should not avoid these problems.

Turning to Gandhāran iconographies, I would observe that even in medieval
Buddhism, sculpture is *not* the normal medium to represent *maṇḍalas,* and this
for reasons that anybody can understand (notably for the particular relationship
between a *maṇḍala* and the pratictioner). Anyone who looks for evidence of this
kind in Gandhāra simply does not know what he is talking about. Even in much
later contexts – say, Pāla Buddhism – it would not be at all easy to hypothesize
the existence of *maṇḍalas* on the basis of the *sculpture* production. *Maṇḍalas* are
still usually drawn with perishable materials (ground rice, powders, etc.) on very
special occasions; when painted, they were kept hidden from the uninitiated.
Moreover, even in late contexts which are clearly 'Tantric', the *pañcajinas* are
not necessarily represented within a circle, but in a row, as can be seen in a
number of *thaṅ–kas* or in the popular prints on the door lintels of Newar
Buddhists' houses.

* * *

As said above, 'Tantrism' is a word that does not exist in Sanskrit. In the
same way as the word 'Hinduism' has created more problems in understanding
the actual functioning of late ancient and medieval Indian society than it has
solved, it has led to distinctions and definitions of a kind different from those
perceived by the Indians as the proper ones. In certain Indian contexts (e.g.
Kashmir), we find the word *tāntrika* as clearly opposed to *kaulika.* It is the
kulaprakriyā which puts the stress on sudden realization through the overflowing
of inner energies, ritual coitûs, etc., whereas the *tantraprakriyā* emphasizes the
intellectual aspect, and lacks exactly what the term 'Tantrism' usually suggests[76].

As a result of the impasse that the very introduction of this word into the
literature has led to, scholars of Buddhism have not drawn a convincing line of
demarcation between Tantrism and other forms of northern Buddhism. Had we to
rely on a well–known scholar such as Snellgrove, according to whom the main
difference between Vajrayāna and the earliest forms of Buddhism derives from
the Vajrayāna use of incantation and ritual as means towards the ultimate goal,
whereas in the earlier phases of Buddhism their use was 'largely peripheral'
(Snellgrove 1987: 130), Gandhāran Buddhism, as we have seen in these pages,

---

[75] On *vaipulya* literature the reader may be referred to Chandra (1984), a contribution which is
also a part of id. (1982: 14 ff.).

[76] I discussed this point with Prof. R. Torella, University 'La Sapienza', Rome. I thank him for
the many suggestions he gave me, only partly reported here (see also the following note).

would appear indeed as largely dependent on Vajrayāna tenets[77]. It seems to me, however, that what many scholars believe is the actual demarcation between 'Tantrism' and other forms of Buddhism, although they do not generally express this clearly through a sort of academic restraint, is based on the presence of sexual practices, either actually performed or assumed as symbolic. If this is the real demarcation, some agreement might be reached on the likelihood that other features generally labelled as 'Tantric' are in fact common with earlier forms of Buddhism (mantras, *dikṣā*, visualization, magic, etc.).

As far as Tantric Hinduism is concerned, Biardeau (hers opinion is different from the one maintained above) considers it an attempt 'to place kāma – desire – in every sense of the term, in the service of deliverance ... not to sacrifice this world to deliverance, but to reintegrate it in one way or another within the perspective of salvation' (Biardeau 1972: 209; quoted in Padoux 1981: 351, with comments). The difficult point is to understand *when kāma* in fact became a component of the salvation process. The answer of most scholars, whatever their opinion on Tantrism, would, no doubt, be that this happened 'late'. This certainly depends on the date of the sources we have on the matter, both textual and iconographical; but it depends also, to a certain extent, on the introjected model according to which any historical process is made of an uncorrupted beginning, a balanced maturity and a period of decadence due to the emergence of a number of deviations. In ancient Buddhism, however, we are confronted with ico-nographies which cannot but make us think that *kāma* did already play some role within the system, although one whose meaning is not easy to understand in the proper way. Snellgrove (1987: 316) shrinks from the idea that the couples 'depicted on the capitals in the *caityagṛha* at Kārle may have anything to do with Tantric developments', and in fact they may be interpreted as *devas*. But what about the famous couples depicted at the sides of the entrance to the cave? Their presence cannot be attributed to 'attendant causes', as suggested by Snellgrove, in that they are most clearly part of the iconographic programme of the *caityagṛha*. I cannot explain why they were carved there and why they were given such emphasis, but I think that we should keep prejudice out of our approach. O.C. Gangoly (1973: 72), discussing the *mithunas* depicted in great number in the Buddhist sculpture at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, calls them 'productive couples', stressing the derivation of the theme from Vedic tradition. This, I think, is an interesting clue[78], and one which agrees with the idea of early and ancient Buddhism as a particular, authoritative interpretation of the Tradition carried out according to 'Gnostic' lines.

As to Gandhāra, we have strong evidence of early, very developed practices

---

[77] Contrary to Snellgrove's position, one may maintain that the *tantraprakriyā* is characterized – rather – by gradualness in ritual actions.

Snellgrove's position is practically the same as that of Japanese scholars and tradition (section 13), which takes to draw the same conclusions.

[78] Gangoly's final interpretation is, however, reductionist.

involving *kāma* there. It is significant that in these last 20–25 years no student of Gandhāran art has ever to my knowledge mentioned in print a most extraordinary Shaivite piece published by Tucci in 1968 (it did not escape M. Eliade's attention, however: see Eliade 1982: 116 ff.). The piece in question is a three–sided stand depicting, in the first scene, a young man raising his hands, in the act of masturbating, and in the last scene in a state of rest. According to Tucci, to whose admirable insight I refer the reader, the figures are to be interpreted as the *akulavīra* or *ekavīra* aspects, and the stand an *arghapātra* which was first filled with alcoholic substances, and next with *kuṇḍagolaka*, i.e. the male and female elements (*argha*), which were eaten by the initiates, *as is also documented by a similar and related tradition by the* rÑiṅ ma pa *in Tibet*. Tucci, who began his article saying that 'there has always been a tendency in India to keep secret the teachings of the religious schools ... [and] All the more so, in the esoteric schools which needed a special initiation', concluded it saying that 'practices which are documented in Tantric literature written in later periods ... were current already in some schools, to which we cannot so far give a name beyond contention, that existed in some parts of the North–Western regions of the Indo–Pakistani Subcontinent, in the 1st cent. or the beginning of the 2nd cent. A.D.' (Tucci 1968: 289, 292).

Positivistic scholars, the *bêtes noires* of this article, will obviously say that, since this piece is 'isolated', no conclusions can be drawn until more evidence emerges: only when we have a certain number of facts of the same kind will we be authorized to take them into consideration. This positivistic attitude (until recently often disguised in Marxist clothing) is so widespread that it is probably vain to recall that these positions have long been criticized by epistemologists such as Popper, and that this very criticism is at the basis of modern research. In fact we know that whereas even a great number of confirming examples cannot validate a proposition, a single contrary example is sufficient to show that it is not true. From a methodological point of view, a piece such as the one published by Tucci is enough to change one own's mind about the emergence of 'Tantrism'. If scholars do not change theirs, it is not because of facts but because of ideology.

Of course, the object published by Tucci refers to a Shaivite, not to a Buddhist milieu. However, not considering the close relationship between Shaivites and Buddhists (both belonging to the *śramaṇa* pole; see section 3) until the latter were eventually ejected from the Indian world and the rÑiṅ ma pa tradition, we know that the Buddhists shared the practice of yoga with the world of the *Upaniṣads*. To put it with Falk (1986: 352), 'The practice of dhyāna and brahmavihāra, native soil of the bodhi and cradle of the Buddhist vision, is as much intimately congenial to yoga as it is extraneous to Brahmanism'. Now, those yoga practices indeed had 'sexual' implications, exactly as those we know from medieval, 'Tantric' Buddhism (see Tucci 1969: 139; he makes his own the considerations made by Falk, to whose analysis of *Atharva Veda* IV, 1 I refer the reader: see Falk 1986: 64 ff.). Unless we think that there has been an undefiled, 'original' Buddhism rather than a complex movement related to the Indian tradition and involved in history, we must admit that the idea of a complete gap

in the tradition of yoga between the world of the *Upaniṣads* (still recognizable as such in the second–first century B.C. [79]) is untenable. Whatever the *ipse dixit* of Hīnayāna texts, we should leave open the possibility that in certain Buddhist milieus normally unaccepted practices (such as those reported in some Buddhist texts and recalled by Bhattacharyya, 1982: 187) could well be carried out with new interpretations: the case of *homa* is an example of this.

---

[79] This is the date suggested by Wayman (1973: 13 ff.; 1977: 99).

Da ji yi shen zhou jing	大吉義神咒經
Dunhuang	燉煌
egōro	柄香爐
Faxian	法顯
Fo shuo an zhai shen zhou jing	佛説安宅神咒經
guan	觀
Guan Fo san mei hai jing	觀佛三昧海經
junmitsu	純密
Liangzhou	涼州
Mi le shang sheng jing zong yao	彌勒上生經宗要
Mogao	莫高
Qi Fo ba pu sa suo shuo da tuo luo ni shen zhou jing	
	七佛八菩薩所説大陀羅尼神咒經
Qung Guan shi yin pu sa xiao fu du hai tuo luo ni zhou jing	
	請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼咒經
Shi yi mian Guan shi yin shen zhou jing	
	十一面觀世音神咒經
shikimi	樒
Shingon	眞言
Tendai	天臺

xiangshi   香室

Xuanzang   玄奘

Yijing   義淨

zōmitsu   雜密

FIGURES

All the drawings, with the exception of figs. 34 and 35, are by Elio Paparatti

Fig. 1. Siddhārtha's marriage: *agniparinayana*. Peshawar Museum.

Fig. 2. Siddhārtha's marriage: *agniparinayana* and *purohita* performing *homa*.
Location unknown.

Fig. 3. Siddhārtha's marriage: *agniparinayaṇa* and *purohita* sitting. From Takht i Bahī (?). Private collection.
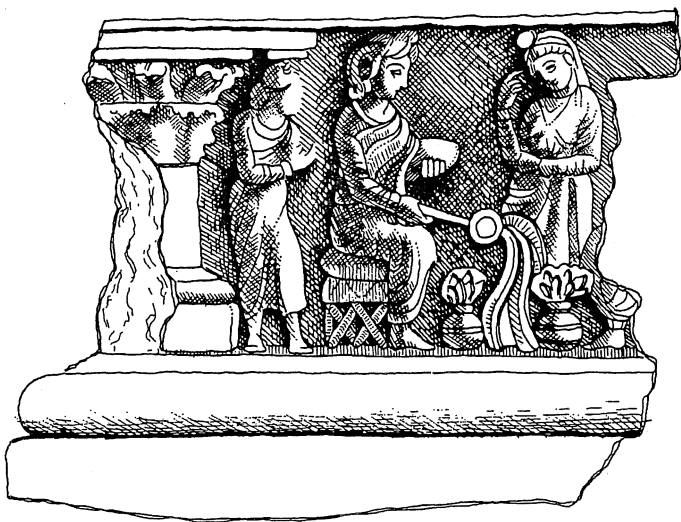
Fig. 4. Yaśodhara performing *homa*. Peshawar Museum.

Fig. 5. The Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. Private collection.
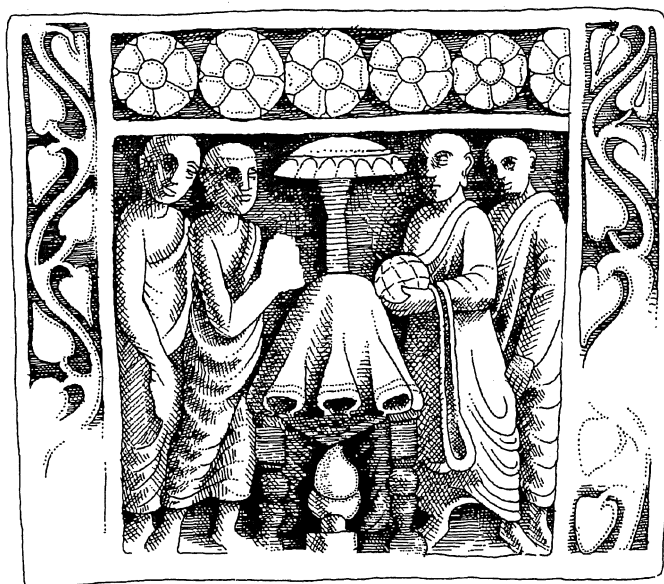
Fig. 6. The Buddha's urn. Private collection.
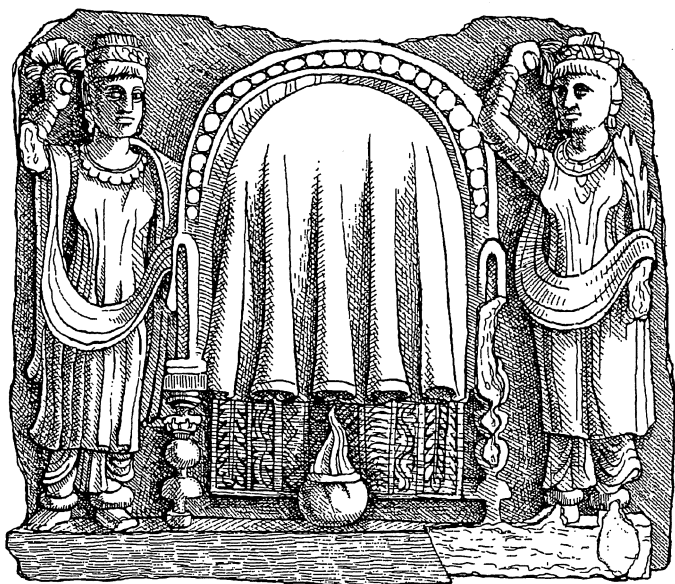
Fig. 7. Guard to the Buddha's urn. Private collection.
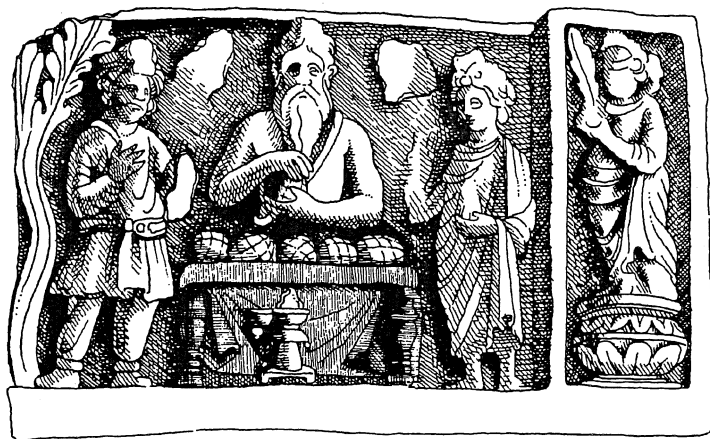
Fig. 8. Distribution of relics. Lahore Museum.
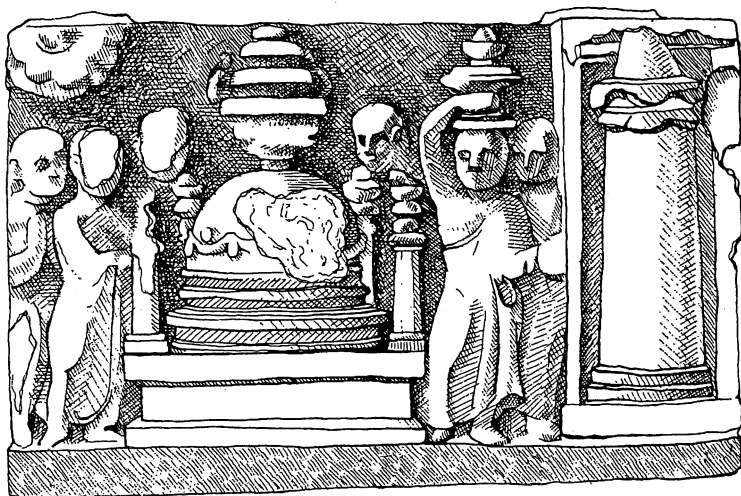
Fig. 9. Circumambulation of the stūpa. Private collection.

Fig. 10. Procession towards the stūpa. Civico Museo Archeologico, Milan.

Fig. 11. Ritual festival. Private collection.
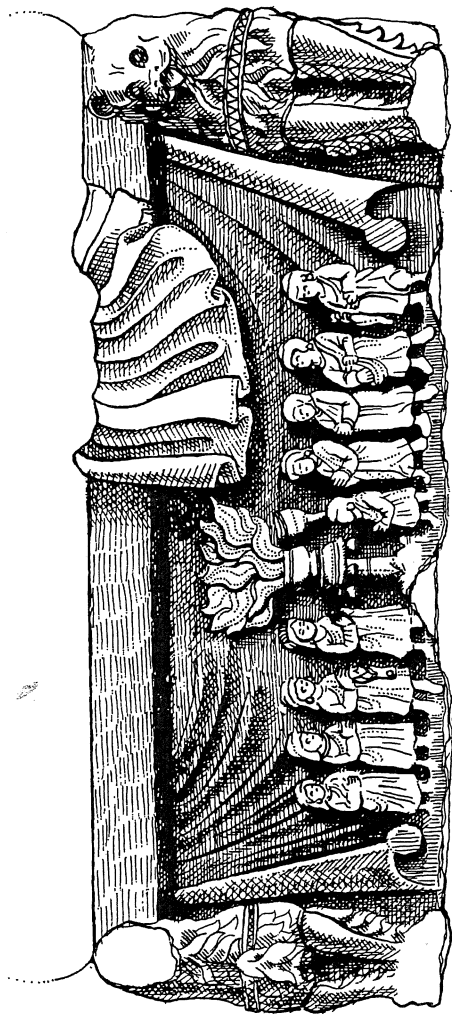
Fig. 12. Incense burner and ritual performed before the Buddha. Detail of a stela in the Peshawar Museum.

Fig. 13. Maitreya in the Tuṣita Heaven with devotees performing a ritual by means of an incense burner. Lahore Museum.

Fig. 14. Maitreya in the Tuṣita Heaven and incense burner.
Private collection.

Fig. 15. Maitreya in meditation and incense burner. Location unknown.
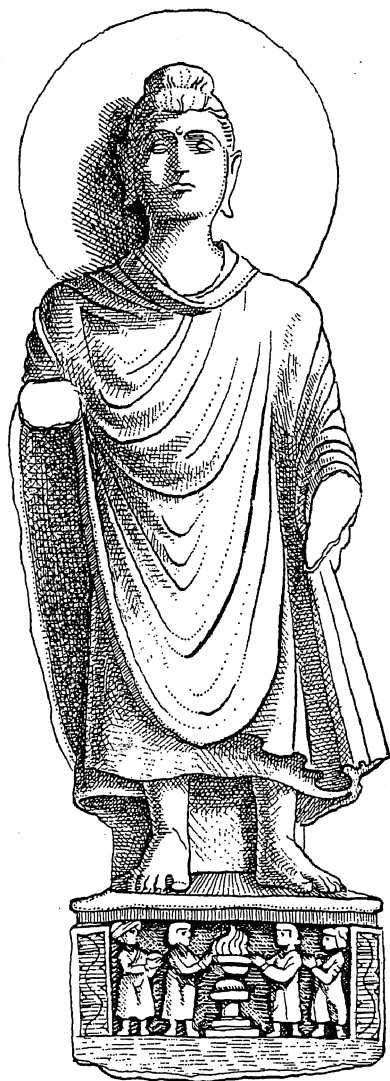
Fig. 16. Descending Buddha with devotees and fire–stand.
Private collection.
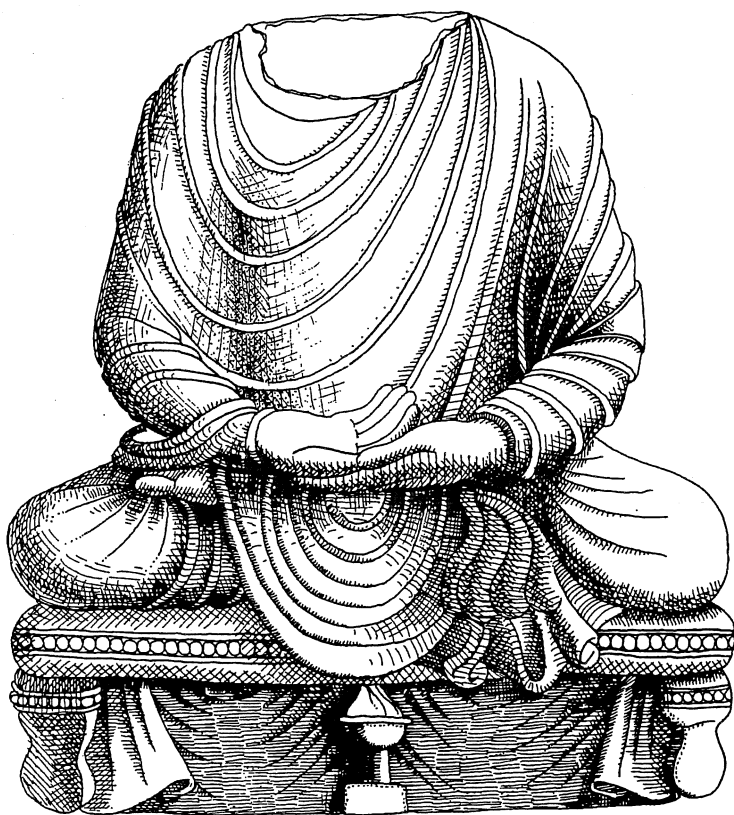
Fig. 17. The Buddha in meditation. Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin.
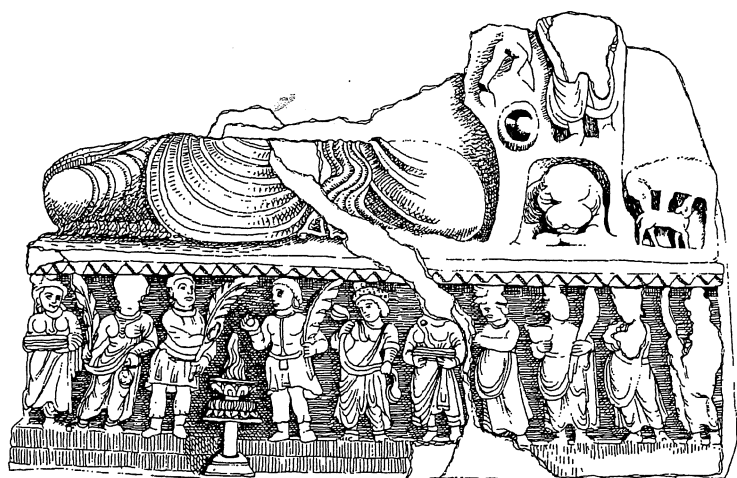
Fig. 18. Exoteric *homa* performed before the Buddha visited by Śakra. From Butkara.
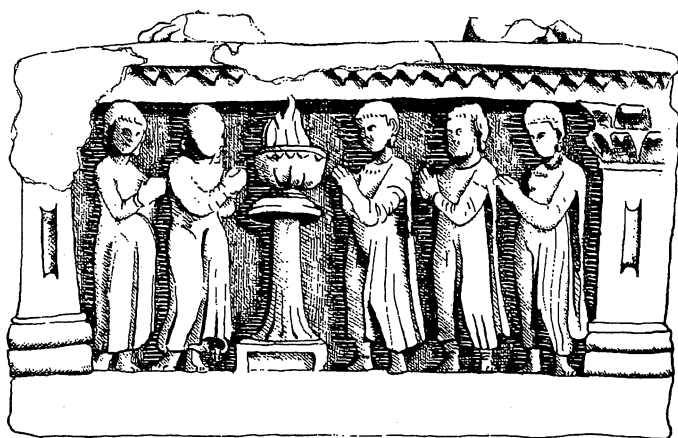
Fig. 19. Fire–stand and devotees before the Buddha (?). Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
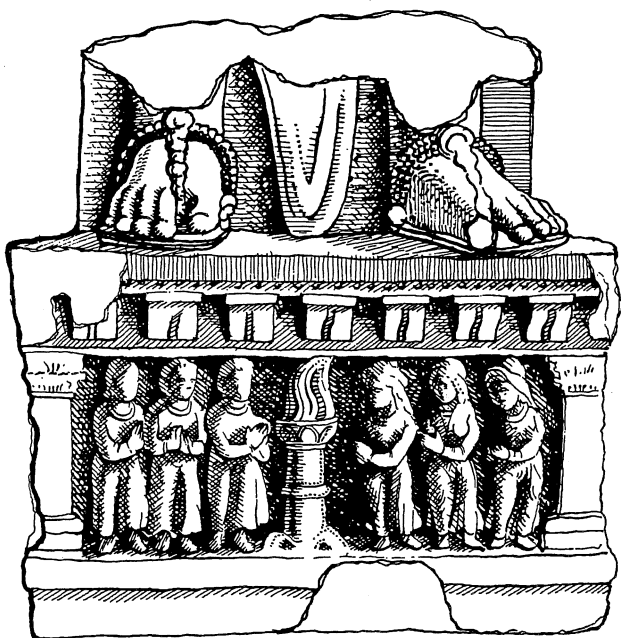
Fig. 20. Fire–stand and devotees before Maitreya. Lahore Museum.
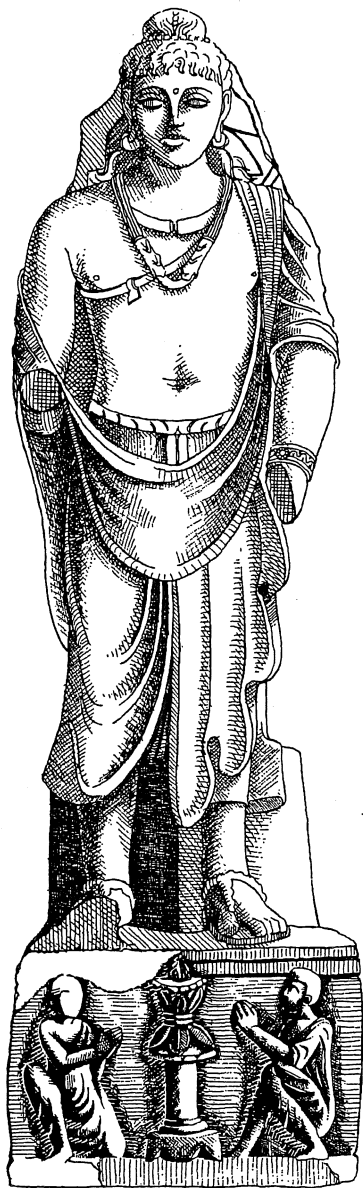
Fig. 21. Fire–stand and devotees before
descending Maitreya. From Naranji.
Private collection.

Fig. 22. Fire–stand and devotees before a descending Bodhisattva, probably Maitreya. Museum Rietberg, Zurich.

Fig. 23. Exoteric *homa* performed before Bodhisattva Siddhārtha. From Sahr i Bahlol.
Peshawar Museum.
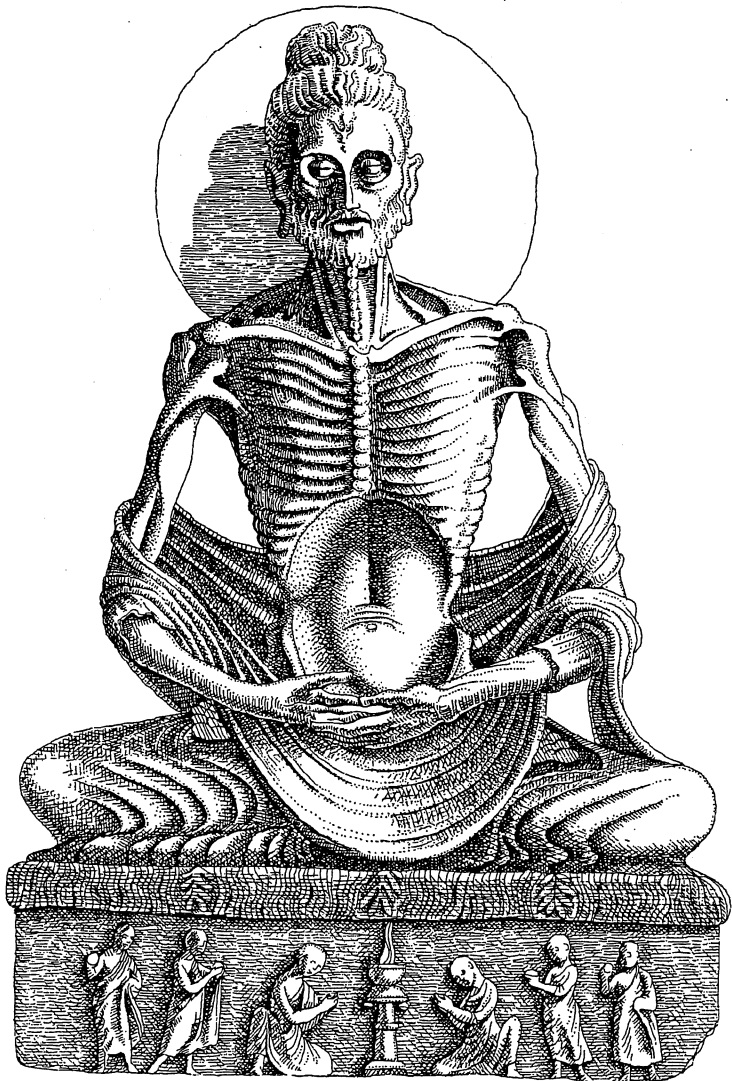
Fig. 24. *Audāryāgni* performed before Siddhārtha fasting. Lahore Museum.
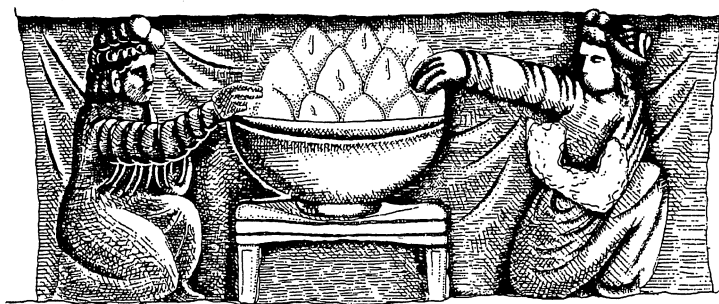
Figs. 25, 26. Devotees performing *homa* before a Bodhisattva. Collection de Marteau, Brussels.
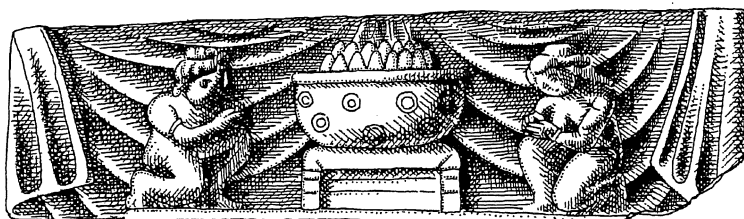
Figs. 27, 28. A moment of the *homa* ritual performed before a Bodhisattva.
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
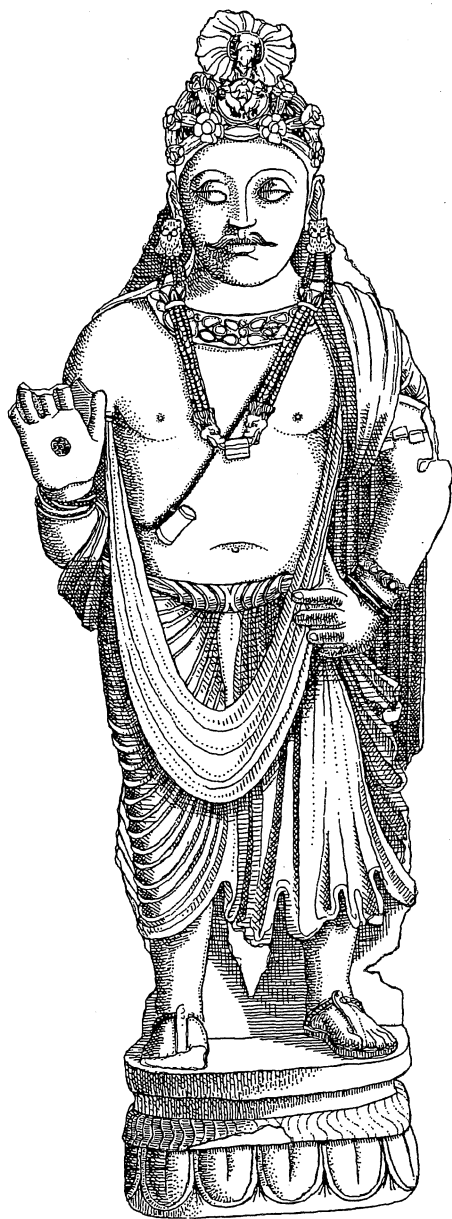
Fig. 29. Descending Bodhisattva (pro-
bably Siddhārtha). Royal Ontario
Museum, Toronto.

Fig. 30. Tutelary couple with devotee performing a fire ritual. From Nimogrām.
Private collection.
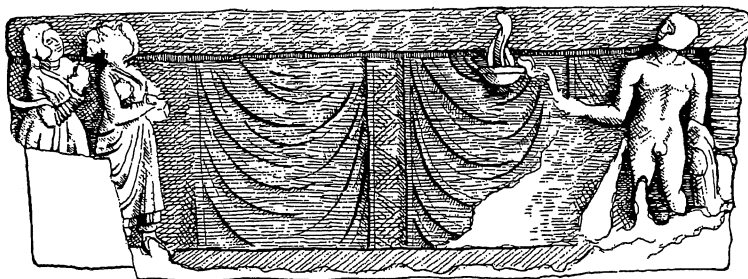
Fig. 31. A fire ritual performed before a lost image. Lahore Museum.
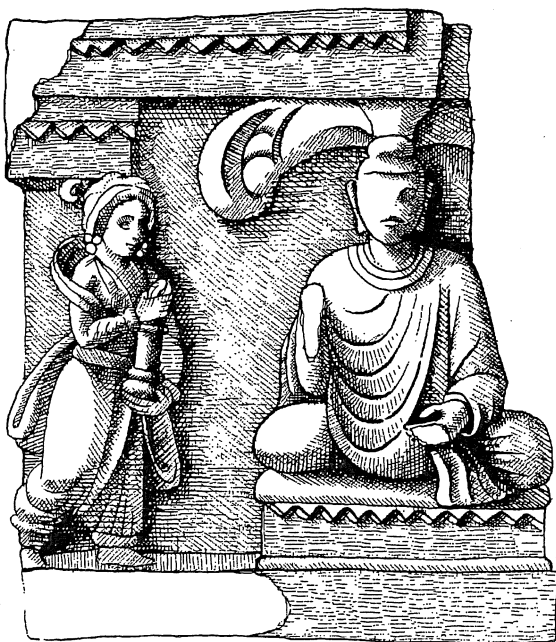
Fig. 32. Devotee performing a ritual before a Buddha image. Lahore Museum.

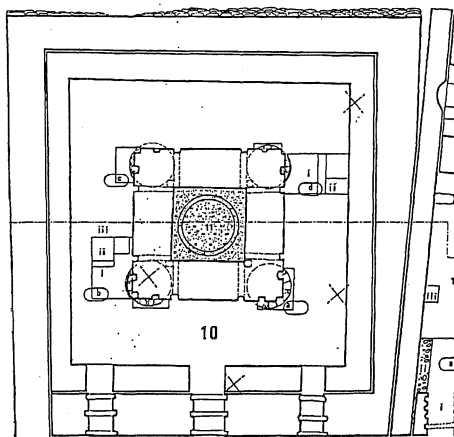Fig. 33. A monk performing a fire ritual and devotee. Lahore Museum.
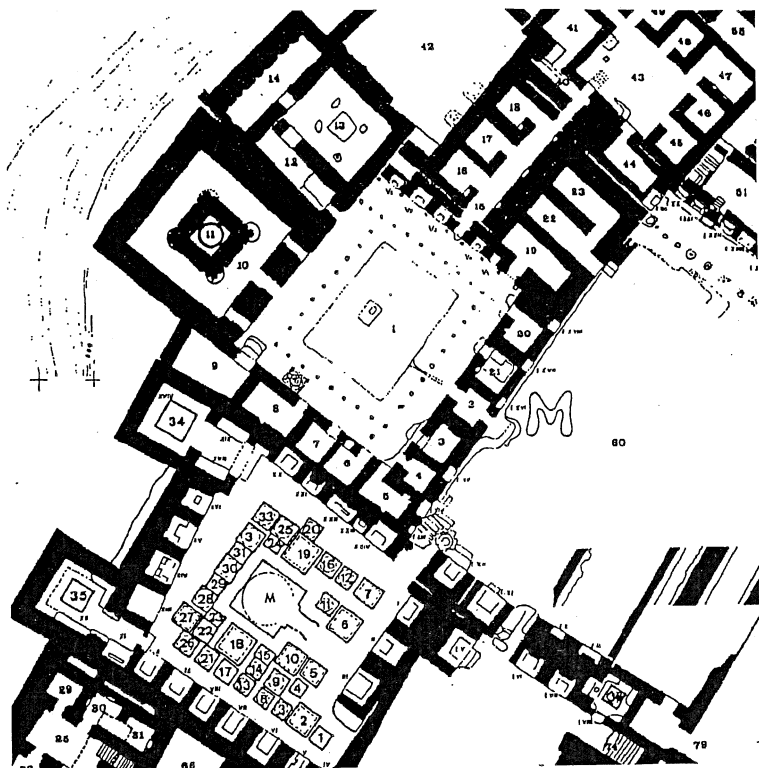
Fig. 34. Tapa Šotor, stūpa area
and monastery. Courtesy Z. Tarzi.

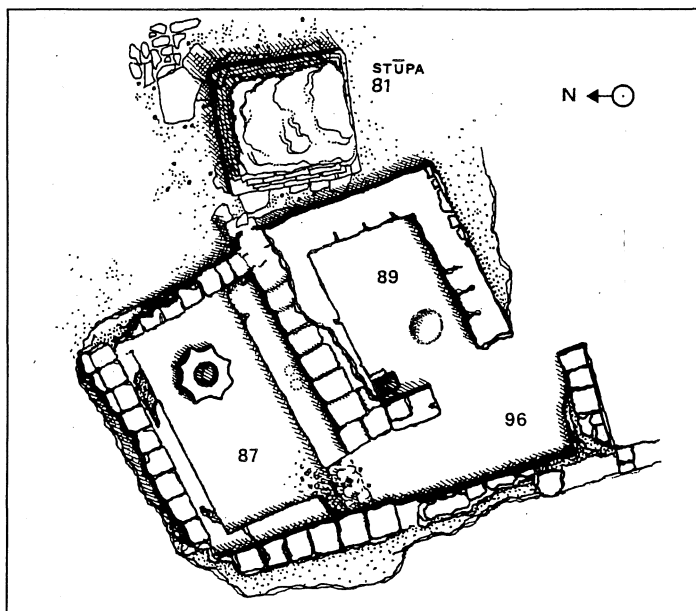Fig. 35. Tapa Šotor, fire-room 10.
Courtesy Z. Tarzi.

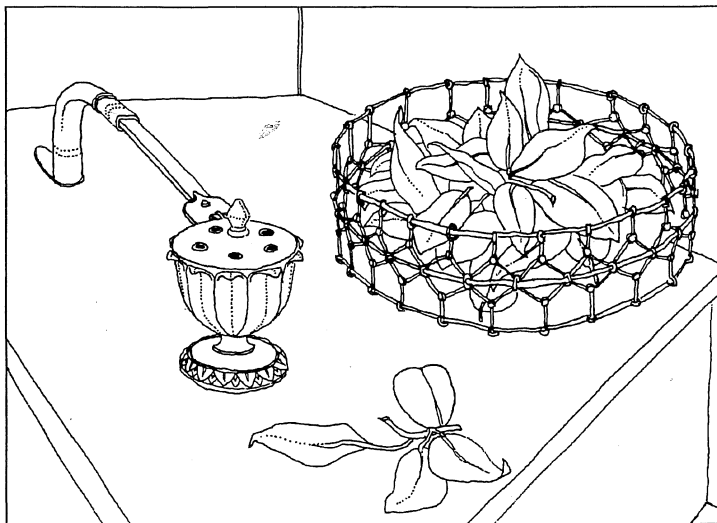Fig. 36. Tapa Sardâr, fire-room 87. After Taddei (1984: 265).

Fig. 37. *Egōro* and *shikimi* leaves used for *goma*. After Payne (1991: pls. 4, 6).

REFERENCES

Abe, S.K. (1990) Art and Practice in a Fifth Century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temple, *Ars Orientalis*, 20, pp. 1–31. Ann Arbor.

Ackermann, H.C. (1975) *Narrative Stone Reliefs from Gandhāra in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London* (IsMEO Reports and Memoirs, 17). Rome.

Baechler, J. (1988) *La solution indienne. Éssai sur les origines du régime des castes*. Paris.

Beal, S. (1875) *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha. A Translation of the Chinese Version of the Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*. London.

Bechert, H. (1973) Notes on the Formation of Buddhist Sects and the Origin of Mahāyāna, *German Scholars on India*, 2 vols., I, pp. 6–18. Varanasi.

Bechert, H. (1992) Buddha–Field and Transfer of Merit in a Theravāda Source, *Indo–Iranian Journal*, 35, pp. 95–108. Leiden.

Beyer, S. (1973) *The Cult of Tārā. Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley.

Bharati, A. (1977) *La tradizione tantrica*. Roma (*The Tantric Tradition*, London 1965; rev. edn. Delhi 1993).

Bhat, M.S. (1987) *Vedic Tantrism. A Study of* Ṛgvidhāna *of Śaunaka with Text and Translation*. New Delhi.

Bhattacharyya, N.N. (1982) *History of the Tantric Religion. A Historical, Ritualistic and Philosophical Study*. New Delhi.

Biardeau, M. (1972) *Clefs pour la pensée hindoue*. Paris.

Briggs, G.W. (1938) *Gorakhnāth and the Kānpaṭha Yogis*. Calcutta.

Bucknell, R. and Stuart Fox, M. (1983) Did the Buddha Impart an Esoteric Teaching?, *Journal of Indian History*, 61, pp. 1–17. Trivandrum.

Bussagli, M. (1984) *L'arte del Gandhāra*. Torino.

Carter, M.L. (1992) Dionysiac Festivals and Gandhāran Imagery, in *Banquets d'Orient* (= *Res Orientales*, 4), pp. 51–60. Bures–sur Yvette.

Chand, D. (1982) *The Atharvaveda*. New Delhi.

Chandra, L. (1982) Iranian Elements in the Formation of Tantric Buddhism (Paper presented to the Symposium on the Silk Route and the Diamond Path, University of California, Los Angeles).

Chandra, L. (1982) Vaipulya Sūtras and the Tantras, in L. Ligeti (ed.), Tibetan and Buddhist Studies Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, 2 vols., II, pp. 99–115. Budapest.

Cowell, E.B. (1895) *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, 6 vols. plus Index vol. London and Boston.

Cowell, E.B. and Neil, R.A. eds. (1886) *The Divyâvadâna, a Collection of Early Buddhist Legends*. Cambridge.

De Marco, G. (1987) The Stūpa as a Funerary Monument: New Iconographical Evidence, in *East and West*, 37, pp. 191–246. Rome.

Demiéville, P. (1929–30) Bombai, in *Hôbôgirin. Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises*, I, pp. 93–113. Tōkyō.

Deonna, W. (1938) *Le mobilier délien* (Exploration archéologique de Délos faite par l'École Française d'Athènes, 18), 2 vols. Paris.

Dubois, J.A. (1906³), *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. Oxford (*Moeurs, institutions et cérémonies des peuples de l'Inde*, 2 vols., Paris 1825).

Dumézil, G. (1958) *L'idéologie tripartie des Indo–Européens*. Bruxelles.

Durt, H. (1982) La "visite aux laboureurs" et la "méditation sous l'arbre *jambu*" dans les biographies sanskrites et chinoises du Buddha. Tentative de classement des épisodes narratifs, in L.A. Hercus et al. (eds.), *Indological and Buddhist Studies. Volume in Honour of Professor J.W. de Jong on his Sixtieth Birthday*, pp. 95–120. Canberra.

Dutt, N. (1939–59) *Gilgit Manuscripts*, 4 vols. in 9 parts. Srinagar (upto III, 3) and Calcutta.

Eliade, M. (1982) *Occultismo, stregoneria e mode culturali*. Firenze (*Occultism, Witchraft, and Cultural Fashions*, Chicago 1976).

Faccenna, D. [M. Taddei] (1962–64) *Sculptures from the Sacred Area of Butkara I (Swat, W. Pakistan)*, 2 vols. (IsMEO Reports and Memoirs, II, 2, 3). Roma.

Faccenna, D. (1986) Lo stūpa a colonne dell'area sacra buddhistica di Saidu Sharīf I (Swāt, Pakistan), in G. Brucher et al. (eds.), *Orient und Okzident im Spiegel der Kunst. Festschrift Heinrich Gerhard Franz zum 70. Geburtstag*, pp. 55–80. Graz.

Falà, M. (1982) Milindapañha. *Le domande del re Milinda*. Roma.

Falk, M. (1986) *Il mito psicologico nell'India antica*. Milano (Roma 1939).

Florenskij, P. (1977) *Le porte regali. Saggi sull'icona*. Milano (Ikonostas, *Bogoslovskie Trudy*, 9, 1972, pp. 88–148. Moskva).

Foucher, A. (1905) *Étude sur l'iconographie bouddhique de l'Inde d'après des textes inédits* (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études. Sciences réligieuses, XIII, 2). Paris.

Foucher, A. (1905–51) *L'art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhâra*, 3 vols. Paris (1905, 1917–22) and Hanoi (1951).

Foucher, A. (1949) *La vie du Bouddha d'après les textes et les monuments de l'Inde*. Paris.

Fussman, G. (1993) L'Indo-grec Ménandre ou Paul Demiéville revisité, *Journal Asiatique*, 281, pp. 61–137. Paris.

Gangoly, O.C. (*s.d.* [1973]) *Andhra Sculptures* (Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series, 36). Hyderabad.

Gellner, D.N. (1992) *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest. Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual*. Cambridge.

Giles, H.A. (1923) *The Travels of Fa–hsien (399–414 A.D.), or Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*. London.

Goldman, B. (1987) Parthians at Gandhāra, *East and West*, 28, pp. 189–202. Rome.

Gombrich, R.F. (1988) *Theravāda Buddhism*. London and New York.

Gombrich, R.F. (1990) How the Mahāyāna Began, in T. Skorupski (ed.), *The Buddhist Forum*, 1, pp. 21–39. London.

Gonda, J. (1974) *The Dual Deities in the Religion of the Veda*. Amsterdam.

Gonda, J. (1981) *Le religioni dell'India. Veda e antico Induismo*. Milano (*Die Religionen Indiens. Veda und älterer Hinduismus*). Stuttgart 1960.

Härtel, H. (1993) *Excavations at Sonkh. 2500 Years of a Town in Mathura District*. Berlin.

Higuchi, T. et al. eds. (1984) *The Exhibition of Gandhara Art of Pakistan*. [Tokyo].

Hirakawa, A. (1993) *A History of Indian Buddhism, from Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, transl. and ed. by P. Groner. Delhi (University of Hawaii Press 1990).

Huntington, J.C. (1980) A Gandhāran Image of Amitāyus' Sukhāvatī, *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, 40, pp. 651–72. Napoli.

Huntington, J.C. (1984) The Iconography and Iconology of Maitreya Images in Gandhara, *Journal of Central Asia*, 7, pp. 133–65. Islamabad.

Huntington, S.L. (1985) *The Art of Ancient India. Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. New York–Tokyo.

Jaini, P.S. (1988) Stages in the Bodhisattva Career of the Tathāgata Maitreya, in A. Sponberg and H. Hardacre (eds.), *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, pp. 54–90. Cambridge, Mass.

Joshi, N.P. and Sharma, R.C. (1969) *Catalogue of Gandhāra Sculptures in the State Museum, Lucknow*. Lucknow.

Kane, P.V. (1930–46) *History of Dharmaśāstra (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India)* (Government Oriental Series, Class B, 6), 5 vols. Poona.

Keith, A.B. (1909) The Aitareya–Āraṇyaka. Oxford.

Kern, H. (1898) *Manual of Indian Buddhism*. Strassburg.

Kurita, I. (1988) *Gandhāran Art, I: The Buddha's Life Story*. Tokyo.

Kurita, I. (1990) *Gandhāran Art, II: The World of the Buddha*. Tokyo.

Lamotte, E. (1958) *Histoire du bouddhisme indien, des origines à l'ère Śaka*. Louvain.

Lévi, S. (1915) La récitation primitive des textes bouddhiques, *Journal Asiatique*, 11ᵉ série, 5, pp. 401–47. Paris.

Locke, J.K. (1980) *Karunamaya. The Cult of Avalokitesvara–Matsyendranath in the Valley of Nepal*. Kathmandu.

Lyons, I. and Ingholt, H. (1957) *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*. New York.

Marshall, J. (1960) *The Buddhist Art of Gandhāra. The Story of the Early School: its Birth, Growth and Decline*. Cambridge.

Mochizuki, S. (1958) *Bukkyō dai jiten (Great Dictionary of Buddhism)*, 8 vols. Tōkyō (enlarged and rev. edn.; 1st edn. 1932).

Nanjio, B. (1883) *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka, the Sacred Canon of the Buddhists in China and Japan*. Oxford.

Nattier, J. (1988) The Meanings of the Maitreya Myth. A Typological Analysis, in A. Sponberg and H. Hardacre (eds.), *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, pp. 23–47. Cambridge, Mass.

Padoux, A. (1981) A Survey of Tantric Hinduism for the Historian of Religions (Review Article of *Hindu Tantrism*, by S. Gupta, D.J. Hoens, T. Goudriaan, Leiden 1979), *History of Religions*, 20, pp. 345–60. Chicago.

Panikkar, R. (1977) *The Vedic Experience. Mantramañjarī. An Anthology of the Vedas for Modern Man and Contemporary Celebration*. London.

Payne, R.K. (1991) *The Tantric Ritual of Japan. Feeding the Gods: the Shingon Fire Ritual* (Śata–Piṭaka Series, Indo–Asian Literatures, 365). New Delhi.

Rahman, A. (1968–9) Excavations at Damkot, *Ancient Pakistan*, 4, pp. 103–250. Peshawar.

Rapin, C. (1992) *Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum VIII. La trésorerie du palais hellénistique d'Aï Khanoum. L'apogée et la chute du royaume grec de Bactriane* (Mémoirs de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan, 33). Paris.

[*Realencyclopädie*] *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft in alphabetischer Ordnung*, ed. G. Wissowa, 1893–. Stuttgart.

Rhys Davids, T.W. (1880) *Buddhist Birth Stories; or Jātaka Tales. The Oldest Collection of Folk–Lore Extant: Being The Jatakatthavannanā* (ed. by V. Fausböll), 2 vols. London.

Rhys Davids, T.W. (1890) *The Questions of King Milinda*, 2 vols. (The Sacred Books of the East, 35). Oxford.

Rhys Davids, T.W. and Oldenberg, H. (1885) *Vinaya Texts. Translated from the Pali by...*, 3 vols. (The Sacred Books of the East, 20). Oxford.

Saso, M. (1991) *Homa Rites and Mandala Meditation in Tendai Buddhism* (Śata–Piṭaka Series, Indo–Asian Literatures, 362). New Delhi.

Schopen, G. (1987a) Burial 'ad sanctos' and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism. A Study in the Archaeology of Religion. *Religion*, 17, pp. 193–225. London.

Schopen, G. (1987b) The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India, *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 10, pp. 99–134. Madison.

Schopen, G. (1991) An Old Inscription from Amarāvatī and the Cult of the Local Monastic Dead in Indian Buddhism, ib., 14, pp. 281–329.

Skorupski, T. (1983) *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra. Elimination of All Evil Destinies*. Delhi.

Snellgrove, D.L. (1959) *The Hevajra Tantra. A Critical Study*, 2 vols. Oxford.

Snellgrove, D.L. (1987) *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan Successors*. London.

Soothill, W.E. and Hodous, L. (1937) *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. London.

Speyer, J.S. ed. (1906-9) *Avadānaçataka. A Century of Edifying Tales Belonging to the Hīnayāna*, 2 vols. St.–Petersbourg.

Spiro, M.E. (1982) *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley–Los Angeles (2nd rev. edn.; 1st edn. 1970).

Staal, F. (1979) The Meaninglessness of Ritual. *Numen. International Journal of the History of Religions*, 26, pp. 2–22. Leiden.

Staal, F. (1982) *The Science of Ritual*, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. Poona.

Staal, F. (1985) Substitutes de paradigmes et réligions d'Asie, *Cahiers d'Extrême–Asie*, 1, pp. 21–57. Kyoto.

Staal, F. (1986) The Sound of Religion, *Numen. International Journal of the History of Religions*, 33, pp. 33–64, 185–224. Leiden.

Staal, F. (1989) *Rules without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences*. New York.

Staal, F. (1989) Vedic Mantras, in H.P. Alper (ed.), *Understanding Mantras*, pp. 48–95. New York.

Staal, F. (1990) *Jouer avec le feu. Pratique et théorie du rituel védique* (Publications de l'Institut de civilization indienne, Série in–8°, 57). Paris.

Stietencron, H. von (1977) Orthodox Attitudes towards Temple Service and Image Worship in Ancient India, *Central Asiatic Journal*, 21, pp. 126–38. Wiesbaden.

Strickmann, M. (1983) Homa in East Asia, in F. Staal (ed.), *Agni. The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, 2 vols., II, pp. 418–55. Berkeley.

Strickmann, M. (1990) *The Consecration Sūtra*. A Buddhist Book of Spells, in R.E. Buswell (ed.), *Chinese Buddhist Apocripha*, pp. 75–118. Honolulu.

Taddei, M. (1981) Evidence of a Fire Cult at Tapa Sardâr, Ghazni (Afghanistan), in B. Allchin (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1981*, pp. 263–70. Cambridge.

[Taishō Tripiṭaka] *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, eds. J. Takakusu, K. Watanabe, G. Ono (1924–35), 100 vols. Tōkyō.

Tambiah, S.J. (1984) *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of the Amulets*. Cambridge.

Tarzi, Z. (1976) Hadda à la lumière des trois dernières campagnes de fouilles de Tapa–é–Shotor (1974–1976), *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, pp. 381–410. Paris.

Tarzi, Z. (1991) *Hadda à la lumière des fouilles afghanes de Tapa–e–Shotor et Tapa–e–Top–e–Kalan* (Ph. D. Thesis). Strasbourg.

Testa, A. (1989) *Candelabri e Tymisteria* (Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie pontificie: Museo Gregoriano Etrusco). Roma.

Toganō, S. (1935) *Himitsu jisō no kenkyū*. Kōyasan.

Tucci, G. (1969) Oriental Notes (III). A Peculiar Image from Gandhāra. *East and West*, 18, pp. 289–92. Rome.

Tucci, G. (1969) *Teoria e pratica del mandala, con particolare riguardo alla moderna psicologia del profondo* (2nd rev. edn.). Roma.

Unbescheid, G. (1980) *Kānpaṭhā. Untersuchungen zu Kult, Mythologie und Geschichte Śivaitischer Tantriker in Nepal* (Beiträge zur Südasien–Forschung, Südasien Institut, Universität Heidelberg, 63). Wiesbaden.

de la Vallée Poussin, L. (1930) Opinions sur les relations des deux Véicules au point de vue du Vinaya, Notes bouddiques 18. *Académie royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et Sciences politiques*, 5ᵉ série, 16, pp. 20–39. Bruxelles.

Verardi, G. (1985) *Avatāraṇa*: a Note on the Bodhisattva Image Dated in the Third Year of Kaniṣka in the Sārnāth Museum. *East and West*, 35, pp. 67–101. Rome.

Verardi, G. (1987) The Buddha's Dhunī, in M. Yaldiz and W. Lobo (eds.), *Investigating Indian Art. Proceedings of a Symposium on the Development of Early Buddhist and Hindu Iconography Held at the Museum of Indian Art, Berlin, in May 1986*, pp. 369–83. Berlin.

Verardi, G. (1988) Tematiche indiane di alcune iconografie gandhariche. Il Buddha, Agni, i *lakṣaṇa*, il miracolo di Śrāvastī e altri problemi connessi, in G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti (eds.), *Orientalia Josephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, 3 vols. (1985, 1987, 1988; Serie Orientale Roma, 56), pp. 1533–49. Roma.

Verardi, G. (1992) *Excavations at Harigaon, Kathmandu. Final Report* (Ismeo Reports and Memoirs, 25), 2 vols. Rome.

Wayman, A. (1973) *The Buddhist Tantras. Light on Indo–Tibetan Esotericism*. New York.

Wayman, A. (1977) *Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra. The Arcane Lore of Forty Verses. A Buddhist Tantra Commentary*. Delhi.

Wayman, A. and Tajima, R. (1992) *The Enlightenment of Vairocana. Book I, Study of the Vairocanābhisambodhitantra. Book II, Study of the Mahāvairocana–Sūtra*. Delhi.

Wigand, K. (1912) Thymiateria. *Bonner Jahrbücher*, 122, pp. 1–97. Bonn.

Woodville Rockhill, W. (1884) *The Life of the Buddha and the Early History of His Order Derived from Tibetan Works in the* bkah–hgyur *and* bstan–hgyur. London.

Yamamoto, C. (1990) *Mahāvairocana–sūtra* (Śata–Piṭaka Series, Indo–Asian Literatures, 359). New Delhi.