

Detailed file – The Marriage of *Siddhārta* (P644)

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What do we like in this sculpture?

- Its rare iconography: the marriage of *Siddhārta*, the historical Buddha, of which there are few examples, enriched by a palace scene showing the prince at his wife's side.
- The classical but exquisite representation of the architectural pattern: balconies, arches, columns, capitals, testifying to this superb fusion of sometimes Indian and sometimes Mediterranean motifs.
- The remarkable plasticity of the figures, entirely due to the virtuosity of the Gandhāran workshops, using here a beautiful grey-blue schist.

I. Detailed description

The Marriage of *Siddhārta* (P644)

Grey schist

Ancient region of Gandhāra

Circa 2nd-3rd century

L. 66 cm or 26 in

A remarkable aesthetics

It is in the region of Gandhāra that the iconography of the Buddha in a human form is gradually being established. The school of Gandhāra focuses on the last existence of the historical Buddha, as well as on his past lives or *jātaka*. It develops a syncretic style, which can be seen in the presence of composite pilasters with acanthus motifs, a pattern used by the Greeks to allow the different moments of a narrative to be partitioned and highlighted, as is the case here. Moreover, the characters' clothing bears witness to the Hellenistic and Roman stylistic influence, sometimes draped in broad clothing with quilted folds reminiscent of a toga or *himation*, sometimes the muscular torso left visible and covered with jewelry reminiscent of the nomadic ancestry of the *Kuṣāṇ* tribes (*Guishuang*, *Yuezhi* tribe that gave the term *Kuṣāṇ*). Halfway between the Indian sage, in the mode of monks, and the Indo-Greek prince of Apollonian type, the historical Buddha embodies the access to liberation or Enlightenment. The school of Gandhāra literally puts in image the texts of the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* or *Divyāvadāna*, testifying to his pedagogical and missionary fervor in the first centuries of the era.

Two rare scenes

Featuring two scenes probably inherited from the *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, mixing historical biography of the Buddha with marvelous wonders, one recognizes in the first scene on the left an architectural decoration with an Indian arch, similar to the monumental openings made in the facades of the great halls of the monasteries, built in the *Mahārāṣṭra* cliffs of northeast Deccan as of the 2nd century B.C.E. (e.g. *Bhājā*), and copied directly from real wooden structures. These arches are extended on both sides by balconies, frequently depicted in the art of Gandhāra. Small spectators watch the main scene: a central figure, wearing an elaborate turban, lies half-reclining on a couch and faces a woman sitting on his right. Above them are perhaps stylized garlands. On either side, assistants watch the scene. By comparison with a relief from the British Museum (1917,1009.5), this could be the representation of *Siddhārta* and his wife. The scene on the right shows a princely figure holding his sword in his left hand, while a woman in profile faces him. A figure stands behind them and musicians celebrate the scene. While identification cannot be asserted with certainty, it would be possible and consistent to see a rare depiction of the marriage of *Siddhārta*, which would also explain this scene of jubilation.

The art of narration in the region of Gandhāra

The Gandhāran monasteries had two types of areas: courtyards accessible to devotees and crowded with all sorts of ex-voto monuments, such as reliquary tumuli (*stūpa*) and chapels, and beyond that an area reserved only for monks. In the public areas, the bases of the *stūpa*, the door and window surrounds, the plinths and sometimes even the risers of the stairs bore numerous reliefs, juxtaposing decorative motifs and apologetic narrative scenes. The curved surface of this frieze indicates that it decorated a *stūpa*. The remarkable plasticity of the figures should be noted, entirely due to the virtuosity of the Gandhāran workshops using a grey-blue schist typical of the creative centers of northern Pakistan, in the Swāt valley for example.

Galerie
Hioco

II. Image of the piece – view 1



Galerie Hioco

III. Images of the piece – views 2 and 3



Galerie
Hioco

IV. Image of the piece – detail view 1



Galerie
Hioco

V. Image of the piece – detail view 2



VI. Provenance

- . This piece comes from a famous French private collection: the Vérité collection.
- . We are always very cautious and diligent about the provenance of the artworks we offer. Ensuring the seriousness and reliability of the information given by the former owners is one of our priorities and we then guarantee this origin by engaging our responsibility.
- . In order to reinforce this guarantee, we systematically verify that these artworks have not been registered as missing or stolen. As Interpol has granted us the right to directly consult their database of stolen or reported items, we verify by ourselves and issue a certificate attesting to this.

VII. Condition report

This relief from Gandhāra is made of schist, dated back to the 2nd-3rd centuries and measures 26 cm high and 66 cm long (or 10 ¼ x 26 in). It has a slightly curved form, coherent with its function: it decorated a base of a stūpa whose form is curved. Two holes (one on the left, under the Indian arch; the other on the right, between the prince and a musician) were probably used to fix the relief on the stūpa. There are obvious losses: the lower right corner of the relief is missing, as is the lower left corner but in lesser proportions. Of the central female figure in the right scene, only the head remains. Several faces are also missing, including the ones of the prince (right scene), of the seated woman (left scene), and of assistants/musicians. Other asperities and slight losses are visible throughout the relief. The entire carved surface is eroded, the carved parts having become rounded over time. Abundant light-colored concretions - perhaps the result of a mixture of sand, silt deposits and a coating (which served as a preparatory layer for polychromy) - are visible in many places on the sculpted surface, notably on the architectural patterns, the upper frame of the relief, and on some figures. A diagonal line of slightly darker color running across the scene on the right (crossing the central female figure) suggests that the right end of the relief was once broken and then reattached. No other restoration has been detected.

Please note that since we are not conservators or restorers, it must be understood that any condition report we made is a subjective qualified opinion, even if we do our best efforts. Prospective buyers should inspect the piece to satisfy themselves as to condition.

VIII. Comparable museum artwork – 1

A gable made of schist, measuring 23 cm in height (or 9 in), from the British Museum in London (BM1917,1009.5):



The British
Museum

Description

Middle section of a false gable assemblage showing the Bodhisattva in his palace with his wife and musicians. In the central scene Siddhārtha half-reclines on a couch, wearing a high crested turban, an *uttariya* in the narrow mode, earrings, a collar and a necklace over his right shoulder. He holds an indeterminate object (lotus) to his head in one hand and a wreath in the other. Seated beside him, his wife, her feet on a footstool, wears a wreath headdress with a loop of hair, earrings, collar and necklace, bracelets, anklets and a tunic with an overgarment draped over her left shoulder. She holds a bunch of lotuses at shoulder level. Their couch has a mattress, pillow, turned legs and a pendent cloth in between gathered at the side(s); above them (compare BM1900.0522.1) may be a damaged wreath.

IX. Comparable museum artwork – 2

A relief that was the property from the Rubin Museum of Art in New York, and that was sold at Christie's New York in 2011.



A rare gray schist relief with the marriage of Siddhartha
Gandhara, 2nd/3rd Century

With Siddhartha at right, dressed in a *sanghati* and adorned with princely jewels facing
Yasodhara at center, herself dressed in a long *sanghati* and fanned with a palm leaf by a
female attendant figure, with three further figures at left, including a seated Brahmin
who tends the flame and water jugs at the couple's feet
8½ in. (21.6 cm.) wide

X. Our guarantees

- More photos will be sent to you on request.
- In case of purchase, we will establish an invoice that you can pay by bank transfer.
- You will receive our certificate of authenticity with the photo of the artwork, its detailed description and the mention of the provenance.
- We will define together the shipping modalities and we will take care of all customs formalities if you live outside of France.
- If you do not like the piece, we give you the possibility to return it to us and we will assist you with the resulting terms and conditions.