

Galerie Hioco

Monumental Gandhāran capital (P664)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- Its rarity: in fifteen years of activity, this is only the second large capital that we have presented and we must say that its size is impressive!
- The naturalness of the acanthus leaf motif, completely Greek, smoothly associated with an image of a bodhisattva, a compassionate being, making the gesture of appeasement (*abhaya mudrā*).
- The extremely refined vegetal decoration on this piece which was supposed to surmount a pilaster framing a niche and in which was the probably monumental statue of a Buddha or a bodhisattva.

I. Detailed description

Monumental capital (P664)

Schist

Ancient province of Gandhāra

3rd-4th century

D. 20 x 89 cm or 7 7/8 x 35 in

An undeniable Hellenistic heritage

This monumental sculpture is an impressive Indo-Corinthian capital, a work that shows the influence of Greco-Roman art on the artistic production of Gandhāra. The flat molded part - the abacus - is nicely decorated with two open lotuses figured on the corners and coming from wavy stems. Under this abacus, two large acanthus leaves with well-cut ends and delicate veins blossom under large volutes finely decorated with plant scrolls. This magnificent floral and vegetal decoration stands out for its incredible refinement.

The bodhisattva: a spiritual being of primary importance

Other smaller acanthus leaves surround a bodhisattva in the center, forming a canopy above him. This bodhisattva, of a significant size, is typical of Gandhāran iconography, which places great importance on these spiritual beings "promised to an Awakening", the specific state of historical Buddha before their "Enlightenment". They are depicted as royal figures because the Buddha himself was a prince before he renounced this life and finally attained Enlightenment. They cannot go backwards in the cycle of reincarnation, feel compassion for all sentient creatures of the earth and only wish to break free of the causal loop along with them. Here, this bodhisattva is sketching the fear-allaying gesture (*abhaya mudrā*) with his right hand and may be holding a part of his garment with his other hand. Like the Buddha, he has a tuft of hair (*ūrṇā*) between his brow bones and the *uṣṇīṣa*, the cranial protuberance incorporated into his bun: Both symbols of his omniscience. Sumptuous jewelry and drapes give Gandhāran bodhisattva a princely look, in the style of contemporary Kushan princes. These Kushan princes, who ruled the kingdom at that time, contributed with their donations to Buddhist monasteries. So it is like a prince that this bodhisattva wears a moustache and is dressed in Indian style with a long scarf covering his left shoulder while the other is left bare. He has the precious and characteristic Indian jewelry: A first large, flat, articulated necklace; a second longer necklace with a rich pectoral; heavy earrings, and bracelets on the arm and wrist. It is also worth noting the remarkable care taken in the realization of the features of his face and his curly hair.

A work with an architectural function

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 door or niche surrounds could take the form of pilasters, topped by Corinthian or composite capitals. These architectural elements are also found in miniature on the many Gandhāran reliefs, juxtaposing decorative motifs and apologetic narrative scenes, and in which they separate the scenes and structure the representations. Here, on the top of our capital, mortises indicate that it must have been placed under an upper element, and one can imagine that it was embedded in the masonry, surmounting a column engaged in a wall.

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II. Image of the piece – front view



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III. Image of the piece – left three-quarter view



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IV. Image of the piece – right three-quarter view



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V. Image of the piece – detailed view of the bodhisattva



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VI. Image of the piece – detailed views

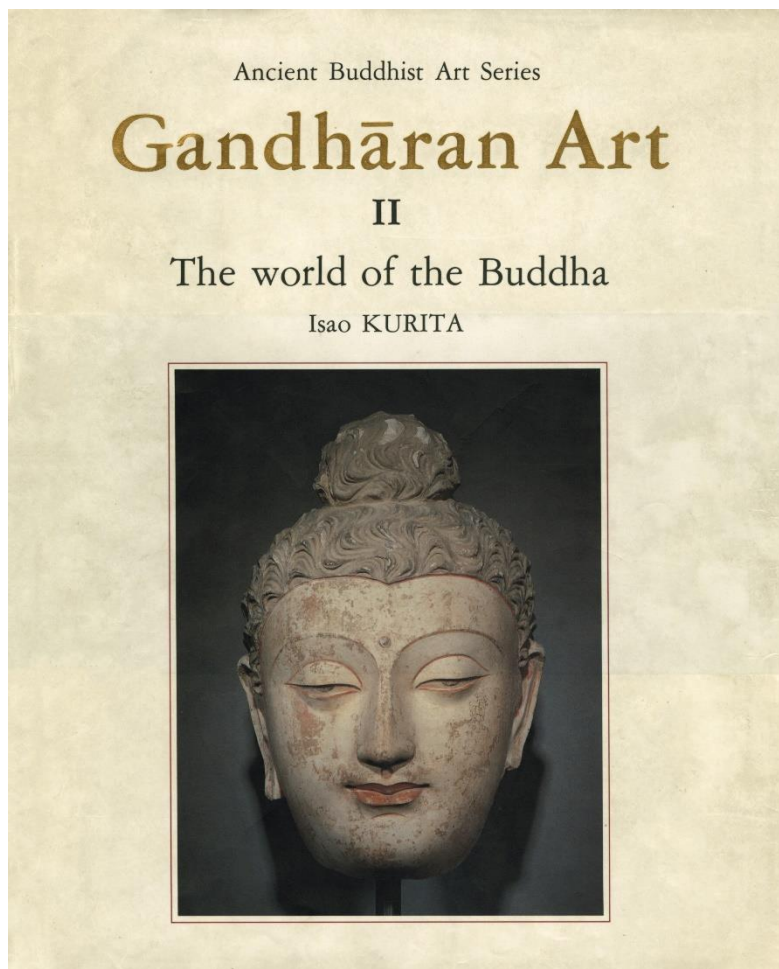


VII. Provenance: in all transparency!

. This piece comes from a private Japanese collection and was published in volume 2 (1990) of *Gandharan Art* written by Isao Kurita (reproduced below).

. 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.



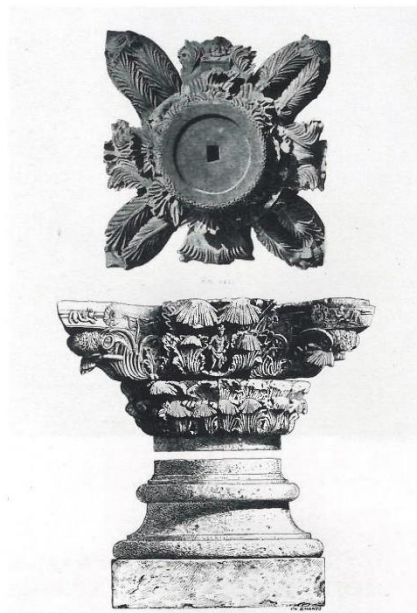
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632



633



634



635

632/インド・コリント式柱頭と佛陀
Gray schist
Private collection Japan

633/インド・コリント式柱頭と菩薩
Gray schist, h.20cm w.90cm
Private collection Japan

634/インド・コリント式柱・柱頭
Calcutta Museum

635/柱
Gray schist
Private collection Japan

VIII. Condition report: our scientific approach

This large Gandhāran capital measuring 89 cm in length and 20 cm in height (or $7\frac{7}{8} \times 35$ in) is made of schist and dated to around the 3rd-4th century. The upper surface is flat and has been polished on its right half. Two mortises are visible, indicating that an element surmounted this capital. The stone block is still imposing at the back, even if the sculpture in the central part has been reduced. The sculpture is overall in a good condition. A few losses are evident: a fragment of the abacus on the left side at the level of the molding is missing, as well as a small part of the back of the large acanthus leaf under the left scroll. The end of the acanthus directly to the right of the bodhisattva's head is also missing. The bodhisattva's fingers, nose, and all of the acanthus leaf tips are slightly spalled. Other small asperities appear all over the carved surface. All these breaks are old as evidenced by their weathered surfaces. In the center, just above the cranial protuberance of the bodhisattva, the end of the acanthus has been reattached. The bodhisattva's head has probably been cleaned. Most of the carved surface - but also the back and the upper side - has lime deposits or sand concretions. This is probably explained by a period of burial of the sculpture in the ground. This condition appears consistent with schist carvings of the Gandhāran period. No other restoration was evidenced.

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.

IX. Comparable museum artwork – The British Museum

A large capital (71 cm long) belonging to the collections of the British Museum in London (1880.172):

The British
Museum



School/style

Gandhara School

Production place

Made in: Gandhara (Pakistan)

Asia: South Asia: Pakistan: Gandhara (Pakistan)

Findspot

Found/Acquired: Jamalgarhi (According to Cunningham, 1875: pl. XLIX.)

Asia: South Asia: Pakistan: North West Frontier Province: Mardan District: Jamalgarhi

Materials

schist

X. Comparable museum artwork – Museum für Asiatische Kunst

A large capital (70 cm long) with a bodhisattva in the center, belonging to the collections of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin:



**Korinthisierendes Kapitell mit
buddhistischer Verehrungsgruppe
Relief**

2./3. Jh.

Kushana-Zeit

Gandhara

Nordwestliches Pakistan

Kapitell aus Schiefer

Objektmaß: 13,6 x 69,7 x 24,5 cm

Gewicht: 30,6 kg

Ident.Nr. I 71

Sammlung: Museum für Asiatische Kunst | Süd-, Südost-
und Zentralasien

© Foto: Museum für Asiatische Kunst der Staatlichen
Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Fotograf/in: Jürgen Liepe

☐ Zum Portfolio hinzufügen

Link zum Versenden

<http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=E>

XI. Comparable museum artwork – Swat Museum

A large capital belonging to the collections of the Swat Museum of Saidu Sharif in Pakistan and published in the catalog of the exhibition *Pakistan, terre de rencontre (1er-VIe siècle). Les arts du Gandhara*, organized at the Guimet Museum in 2010.



XII. Our guarantees: for a serene acquisition!

- 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.