

## Archaeology of Buddhism in post-partition Punjab: the disputed legacy of Gandhāra

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After complex negotiations, which only compounded the trauma of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent on 15th August 1947 and the enormous humanitarian crisis that resulted from it, the cultural heritage of the Punjab was also divided, with Indian Punjab receiving from Lahore Museum a total of 627 Gandhāran sculptures, miniature paintings, and so on. Clearly, the sculptures of Gandhāra were accepted as the cultural heritage of undivided Punjab, a region that extended across both Pakistan and India. The nineteenth century kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), also known as the 'lion of Punjab,' with its capital at Lahore, now in Pakistan, stretched across the five rivers into present Afghanistan and Kashmir. In 1849 this kingdom was annexed by the East India Company and British military officials initiated a search for the legacy of the Greeks, especially that of Alexander the Great (Ray and Potts 2007; Hagerman 2009: 344-92). In the quest for cities established by Alexander, they found Buddhist *stūpas*, sculptures, coins, and gems. The sculptures were often seen to bear resemblance to Hellenistic art. From 1860 onwards these collections led to the development of a distinctive School of Art termed Gandhāra.

In a paper published in an edited book (Ray 2018a: 232-260), I have examined collections of Gandhāran sculptures in museums in India along two lines of enquiry: one, the nature and size of collections in some of the major museums of the country, such as the Indian Museum, Kolkata, founded in 1814 and with the largest collection of 1,602 Gandhāran objects; or the National Museum, New Delhi, which was inaugurated on 15th August 1949, two years after Indian Independence, and has 688 objects. In contrast to the Indian Museum's collection made before 1927, the National Museum continued to add pieces until 1987, thus negating the contention often made by art historians that Gandhāran art was considered 'foreign' and hence did not receive pride of place in museums of the country. Other sizable collections include those in the Government Museum, Chandigarh and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, though the history of the collection is unique in each case. How are these differences to be understood or contextualized? The focus on 'collecting' rather than 'collections' provides insights into the changing nature of engagement between the region of Gandhāra and the history of the subcontinent.

Several issues with reference to the region remain unaddressed: did Buddhism flourish only in western Punjab in the early centuries of the Common Era, thereby anticipating the border that was to be drawn by the British in 1947 across the Indian subcontinent and creating the present nation states of India and Pakistan? Keeping the larger agenda of rediscovery and reception of Gandhāran art in mind, this paper has two objectives: one, to underscore the centrality that the archaeology of the Greeks acquired in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, leading to a biased distribution pattern of Gandhāran sculptures and to the ensuing neglect of the archaeology of Buddhism in eastern Punjab; and second, to highlight the reception accorded to the 627 Gandhāran sculptures in Indian Punjab as India grappled with the post-Partition ordeal of resettlement of refugees. A common thread that runs through the paper is the political agenda both at the regional and national level that impacted museum collections of the Punjab. I start the paper with an archaeology of the Greeks as Europeans colonized the Indian subcontinent and searched for models in attempts to establish military control over the region. The conquest of the East by Alexander the Great and his civilizing mission presented itself to the British Raj as a cogent ideal to adapt and to follow, as is evident from H.T. Prinsep's 1842 account of the expedition now preserved in the National Archives, New Delhi.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr H.T. Prinsep's *Narrative of Alexander's Expedition to India circa 1842* (For Misc. Records no. 346), National Archives, Janpath, New Delhi.

## The Archaeology of the Greeks in the Indian subcontinent

Plutarch wrote that ‘by founding over seventy cities (*poleis*) among the barbarian tribes and seeding Asia with Greek magistrates, Alexander conquered its undomesticated and beastly way of life’ (*Moralia* 328E). Scholars hypothesize that Plutarch was making a rhetorical point; nevertheless, the tradition that Alexander left a mass of cities behind in Asia is repeated in ancient sources, and modern scholarship has often seen this as a natural corollary of conquest (Bosworth 1988: 245-250):

We can see how clearly they [Alexander’s foundations] dominate the map of central Asia ... [and] foreshadow the strategic requirements and economic potential on which, centuries later, the Imperial strategists of British India ... insisted ... [T]he locations of Alexander’s cities testify that the requirements of imperial rule in Central Asia are laid down by nature, and were as valid in the time of Alexander (and earlier) as in that of Queen Victoria (Fraser 1996: 189-190; edited quotation from Reger 1997).

Early Greek writings on Alexander not only provided justification for European expansion into Asia and set the tone of much of eighteenth- to twentieth-century scholarship but were also often configured to suit ideologies of Empire. Significant insights into this process are provided by the works of William Robertson (1721–1793), especially his 1791 publication titled *Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India*. Robertson was not only aware of British activities in India, but was also influenced by the work of early British surveyors when he chose to write about Alexander in his *Historical Disquisition*. He confesses that he turned to the topic of European conquests after reading the *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan* by James Rennell, the erstwhile Surveyor General of the East India Company’s Dominions in Bengal (Robertson 1791: v). Not only Rennell, but the memoirs, and geographies by men such as Alexander Burnes, Colonel Leake, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and John Macdonald Kinneir who retraced Alexander’s route in Asia in the nineteenth century influenced the return to early accounts of Alexander, for as Robertson remarks:

the European powers, who now in their Indian territories employ numerous bodies of the natives in their service, have, in forming the establishment of these troops, adopted the same maxims; and probably without knowing it, have modelled their battalions of Sepoys upon the same principles as Alexander did his Phalanx of Persians (Robertson 1791: 25).

The nature of imperial discourse current in Britain from 1860 to 1930, the period when British imperialism was at its height, impacted the way in which images from Greek and Roman archaeology were invoked in academic literature in Britain. In turn, these influenced writings by popular authors, which sustained this discourse and moulded British attitudes towards the past (Vasunia 2007: 89-102).

The defence of the North-West Frontier of India against perceived Russian threat became a priority of the British Government in India established in 1858 and one that continued until Indian Independence in 1947. Another strand in this complex legacy of Alexander is provided by the Persian Epics the *Shahnama* of Ferdowsi (c. 940-1020 AD) and the *Sikandarnama* of Nizami (1141-1209) that survived in India up to the present and which were on the syllabus of Persian teaching institutions, especially in the Punjab. These narratives had Sikandar or Alexander as their male protagonist and a conflation of the Persian and the European tradition gradually resulted in the amalgamation of the Persian Sikandar and the Greek Alexander of Macedonia in the imagination of the Europeans. The Persian accounts of Alexander were by no means direct translations of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, Syriac or the Ethiopic versions of the *Alexander Romance*, but nevertheless presented a positive portrayal of the king. This may be due in part to the appearance of an Alexander figure, the Prophet-King Dhu’l Qarnayn (‘The Two-horned one’), in the Qur’an (early seventh century AD) (Akhtar 2007: 76-88).

Thus, it is no surprise that in 1830 Jean-Baptiste Ventura, one of the Italian officers in the employ of the Punjab court, decided to spend his money and time in opening the *stūpa* at Manikyala, which local tradition regarded as the resting place of Sikandar or Alexander's horse.

The name [Manikyala], as Ventura who was in the service of Ranjit Singh explained, meant 'White Horse' beneath which are buried extensive ruins. Searches by Ventura had yielded coins bearing Greek legends and he carried out excavations for two months into the cupola. Ventura suggested (grounded on conjecture) that upon this site stood the city of Bucephalia erected by Alexander the Great in honour of his horse. Ventura deemed it probable that the inscription on one of the relics may relate to some circumstances connected with the invasion of the Panjab by that great captain (Mohan Lal 1846: 30-32).

After his excavations, Ventura informed Ranjit Singh in a short note in Persian, that the resting place of Sikandar's horse had been discovered (Lafont 2006: 98-107). This account of the search for Alexander's city leading to the discovery of *stūpas* or Buddhist funerary monuments was repeated several times in the nineteenth century and is one that I have discussed in some detail in a recent publication (Ray 2018a). This edited book interrogates the grand narrative of 'Greek influence' of which Gandhāra has been a part. The essays in the volume underscore the diverse cultural traditions of Gandhāra and trace the links between twentieth century 'archaeological' work, histories of museum collections in India and related interpretations by art historians. It is evident that the distribution map of Gandhāran Buddhist sites in present Pakistan reflects the continuation of the bias created in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Was the presence of Buddhism restricted to western Punjab and hence it was non-existent in eastern Punjab? This is a question that is relevant and will be discussed in the next section.

### Archaeology and Buddhism in eastern Punjab

Under British rule, there were major changes in the landscape of eastern Punjab, as a result of the digging of canals from the Sutlej River and the levelling of the land for agricultural purposes, but there was little interest in its archaeology, which was largely carried out in the western part in the region of Gandhāra, which is now in Pakistan. British Punjab with the five rivers, viz. the Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum, forming its core was at least seven times the size of present East Punjab (Siddiqi 1984: 293-312). The region had strategic importance for the British Empire: by 1875, the Indian army drew a third of its recruits from the region, even though Punjab comprised one-tenth of the total population of British India. Improved communication and the railway network in the Punjab, as also irrigation facilities, aided agrarian expansion. New cash crops such as wheat, tobacco, sugarcane, and cotton were introduced and the per capita output of all its crops increased by nearly 45 percent between 1891 and 1921 (Talbot 2007: 3-10).

Following a treaty with the Sikhs, the British felt that digging a canal between the Yamuna and the Sutlej would yield political and financial results. The principal perennial canals that the British constructed in the Punjab were the Jhelum canal; the Chenab canal; the Bari Doab canal (Bari is a unison of the two names Beas and Ravi); the Sirhind canal (Sir = head, hind = India); and the Western Jumna canal (Buck 1906: 60-67). The construction of these canals transformed the landscape in the arid modern states of Haryana and Punjab in east Punjab. Explorations and surveys as a methodology of archaeological research were yet to develop. Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), the first Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, visited Sirhind in 1863-64. Though Cunningham found coins of Kanishka and those of Indo-Scythians at the site, there is little information on the ancient settlement at Sirhind (Figure 1).

It is significant that in his report, Cunningham makes no mention of the site of Sanghol as he travelled from Jalandhar to Ambala, though the eighteen metre high mound was in existence barely fifty kilometres from Sunit and Janer, the places that he visited, and it was also inhabited. In 1862, the Maharaja of Patiala had purchased Sanghol along with sixty other villages for a sum of more than seven lakhs. Sanghol, popularly known as Ucha Pind, in Samrala Tahsil, is situated about twenty kilometres from the tahsil headquarters and about forty kilometres from Chandigarh on the Chandigarh-Ludhiana highway. Until 1948 Sanghol formed a part of the former Princely State of Patiala and was transferred to Ludhiana district on January 25th, 1950.

There has been little overall interest in the archaeology of Buddhism in the Indian State of Punjab, though local residents were aware of the rich coin finds from the sites. In 1933 Shri Krishan Dev, a resident of a village near Sanghol or Uchhapind in the Patiala State, sent some coins that he had collected from the village to Shri M.S. Vats, the then Superintendent Archaeologist of the Northern Circle, Archaeological Survey of India, who had conducted eight seasons of archaeological work at the Bronze Age site of Harappa until 1933-34. Vats, at this time, was interested in assessing the extent of the Harappan civilization in the Punjab and this objective was better met with his work at Ropar or present Rupnagar located at the spot where the river Sutlej enters the plains. As a result, he largely ignored Sanghol and this state of affairs continued despite finds of coins from Sanghol (Ray 2010).

Change came about gradually in the 1960s when the Punjab Legislature passed the Punjab Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1964 and around the same time the state established an archaeological cell under the Director Archives and Curator Museums on 20th December 1968 under the charge of R.S. Bisht. It was this newly established cell that started excavations at Sanghol and continued these until 1974. During extensive explorations in the region, R.S. Bisht observed a network of abandoned canals and river-beds, dotted with numerous Chalcolithic and Early Iron Age sites (Bisht 1982: 114). An analysis of plant remains from third to second millennium BC Harappan and Early Historical sites in the Haryana-Punjab plain indicates a long history of agriculture. There is evidence for summer (monsoon) grown pulses, and some rice and millets in addition to the typical winter Harappan crops, such as wheat, barley, lentils, peas, chickpeas, and grasspea (Saraswat 1997: 97-114). The cultivation of grape-vine in the Haryana-Punjab plains during the third-second millennium BC is evident from the seeds and stem charcoals of *Vitis vinifera* found at Rohira in district Sangrur of Punjab in pre-Harappan levels. At Sanghol grape seeds were recovered from the residential complex, as well as seeds and carbonized raisins identified from the fire-altars, further corroborating the importance of grape-vine in the economy as also in ritual (Pokharia and Saraswat 1998-99: 75-121). It is evident that there is adequate proof of third and second millennium BC settlement in East Punjab and that many of these sites continued well into the historical period.

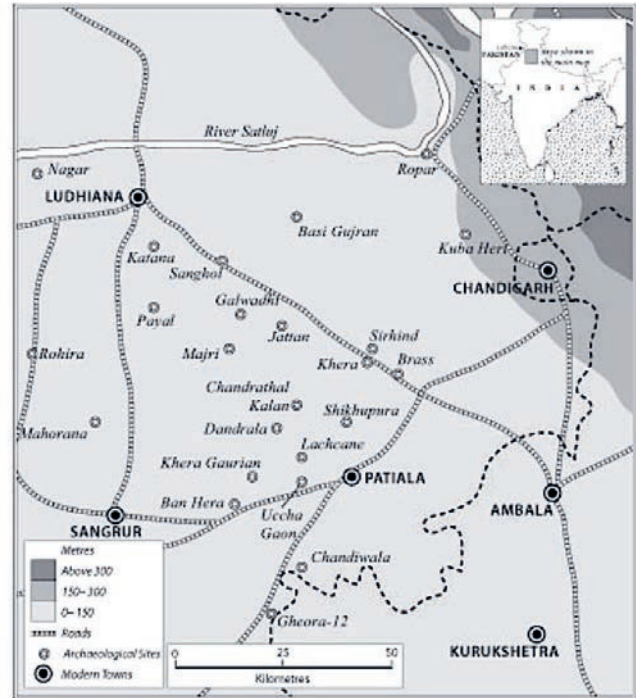


Figure 1. Map showing Buddhist sites in the Punjab (drawn by Uma Bhattacharya).

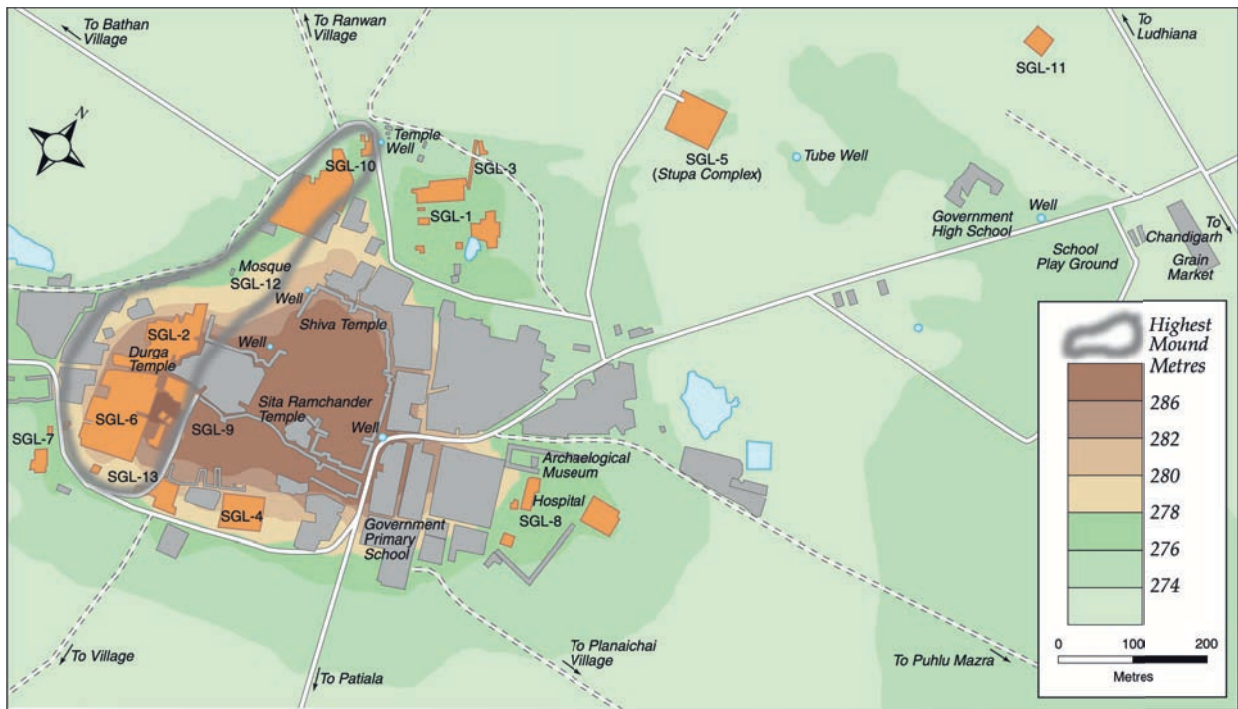


Figure 2. Plan of excavations at Sanghol (drawn by Uma Bhattacharya after Margabandhu 2010).

G.B. Sharma, a local resident who joined the Punjab Department of Archaeology, continued the work, though with gaps, until 1985 (Sharma and Kumar 1986). Given the limited resources of the State Department, both in terms of finances and trained personnel, the excavations were restricted in nature, though they did uncover many of the Buddhist monastic complexes at the site. The archaeological deposit at Sanghol is unmistakable at a series of mounds inhabited in different periods of time (Figure 2). For example, the earliest settlement was documented at SGL-2 on the western slopes of the mound and six structural phases were identified, dating from early Harappan (Bara) period (third millennium BC) with walls of houses built of mud and overlapping with Black Slipped and Grey Wares, followed by pre-Kushan and Kushan structural phases. The total cultural deposit of four metres is evident and four different localities on SGL-9, SGL-10 and SGL-12 have provided information on the Bara period habitation (Margabandhu and Gaur 1986-87: 1-4). SGL-1, also known as Hathiwara mound, yielded a deposit for six metres above natural soil dated to the first three centuries of the Christian era. Five structural phases were identified, including structures with brick paved floor with post-holes and well-built pathway.

The main monastery and *stūpa* complex was unearthed at SGL-5 dating to the period from 200 BC to AD 200, based on the finds of Kushan ceramics in the layer sealing the *stūpa* complex (Figure 3). The topmost layer yielded coins of Mohammad Shah, while from layer 2 a hoard of Kota coins was unearthed (Sharma and Kumar 1986: 6). The whole *stūpa* complex seems to be constructed on the natural soil with baked bricks (size: 34 x 23 x 6 cm) sometimes decorated with finger impressions (IAR 1972-73: 28). A second monastery and three *stūpas* were located in SGL-11 toward the north of the main *stūpa* (Figure 4). The structural complex comprised a small *stūpa*, having two circles with inner diameters of 1.45 m and 3.70 m with eight spokes, and a monastery. This being a non-habitational site, it has not yielded much pottery and antiquities (IAR 1985-1986: 67-8).

It is however to the credit of the excavators working under difficult conditions that, in SGL-5, they discovered the stone railings of the *stūpa* buried neatly in its vicinity. A chance discovery on 1st February



*Figure 3. Main wheel-shaped stūpa in SGL-5 at Sanghol. (Photo: author.)*



*Figure 4: Stūpa complex at SGL-11 at Sanghol. (Photo: author.)*

1985 was that of 117 stone sculptures from a trench close to the main *stūpa* complex (SGL-5). The sculptures include four corner pillars, fifty-eight upright pillars, seven double-sided pillars, thirty-five cross-bars and thirteen coping stones. While many of them are in a good state of preservation, others are weathered or mutilated. Several of the railing pillars are said to bear a close resemblance to those from Kankali Tila at Mathura, both in terms of dimensions and in workmanship. Unlike the Mathura railing pillars, however, those at Sanghol do not bear inscriptions, though they do present *yakṣīs* and *śālabhañjikās* involved in a range of activities, often being admired by onlookers from balconies (Gupta 1985: 41-54).

This discovery brought Sanghol into the limelight and also drew the attention of institutions of the Government of India, such as the National Museum and the Archaeological Survey of India. An exhibition of selected pieces of railing pillars from Sanghol was arranged in the National Museum, New Delhi, which was inaugurated by the President of India, and a catalogue of Kushan Sculptures was published by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Punjab, jointly with the National Museum (Gupta 1985). Large-scale excavations were conducted at Sanghol by the Archaeological Survey of India in collaboration with the Department of Cultural Affairs, Archaeology and Museums, Punjab over at least four seasons until 1990. In 1990, the Department of Cultural Affairs, Archaeology and Museums, Punjab, established a site museum to display the rich archaeological heritage of Sanghol, including several from the almost 15,000 antiquities from the site.

How is Sanghol to be studied within the larger context of Buddhism in the region of Gandhāra? A few of the railing pillars are proudly exhibited at the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, and Sanghol continues to be showcased as a success story of the post-Independence archaeological work in the Punjab. Nevertheless, there has been little recognition of the efforts of local archaeologists and most of the archival material from the Punjab State Department's excavation work remains unpublished. Nor does Chandigarh Museum highlight the distinctiveness of the Buddhist sites of Punjab or the major role played by local residents such as Sharma who lived about three kilometres to the northeast of Sanghol in the village of Bathan Kala in collecting antiquities and coins from the site and bringing it to the notice of the larger academic community. 'Born in 1929, G.B. Sharma spent his childhood picking up coins, coin moulds, seals, and pottery. In 1948, at age nineteen, he joined the Indian Air Force and served for twenty-six years. While in the Air Force, he went back to school and earned an M.A. in Archaeology from University of Kurukshetra. Sharma kept collecting antiquities throughout his life, and in 1956 he began to organize his collection as he grew more interested in archaeology' (Michon 2015: 78).

The apathy towards local knowledge in the Punjab is striking and yet it is these local initiatives that have helped sites such as Sanghol to survive. Michon rightly suggests that the Archaeological Survey of India's search for culture-historical chronology of early India and the legacy of the Harappan civilization now lost to Pakistan has fuelled archaeological work in post-Independence India (Michon 2015: 68-81). In the years after the success of Sanghol several other Buddhist sites were discovered by officers of the Punjab State Department of Archaeology. No further archaeological work could be undertaken by the Department owing to financial constraints and lack of support from the Archaeological Survey of India.

A final question however needs to be addressed: what was the nature of interaction between Gandhāra and contiguous regions of the subcontinent? Traditionally the two major centres of focus have been Gandhāra and Mathura – the first indicating Greek presence, while the latter is seen as a locus for indigenous development in art and sculptural traditions. Is this division valid? The Gandhāran relic inscription, from Sanghol (Baums 2012: no. 49) consists of two words *upasakasa ayabhadrasa* 'of the lay-follower Ayabhadra' and has already been included in the Catalogue of Gāndhārī texts (Baums and Glass 2002-: CKI 239).

The find of the inscribed relic casket and a stucco head of the Buddha at Sanghol indicate that neither in Gandhāra nor in Afghanistan did Buddhism develop in isolation. Both these regions were linked through routes, such as the *uttarapatha* or northern route leading from the subcontinent to Central Asia. The antiquity of the route is not in doubt, as is evident from the third century BC Mauryan king Aśoka's edicts in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since 1958, several of the Greek and Aramaic inscriptions of Aśoka have been discovered at Taxila, Pul-i-Darunta, Shar-i-Kuna (near Kandahar), Kandahar and Laghman. Rock Edict V alludes to the *dharmamahamatras* responsible for the establishment and promotion of *dharma* even among the *yavanas*, *kambojas*, and other residents on the western borders of his dominions (Sircar 1975: 44), while Rock Edict XIII indicates the territories of *yavanaraja* Antiyoka and others bordering his dominions (Sircar 1975: 52). These edicts are valuable indicators of communication networks in the Mauryan Empire, since both Aśokan inscriptions and the account by Megasthenes refer to the maintenance of roads. Notable among these was the Achaemenid royal road to north-west India, which Aśoka continued to maintain (Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 96).

A characteristic feature of the monastic complex at Sanghol was the wheel-shaped *stūpa*. More than two dozen *stūpas* are known to have been built on the wheel-shaped pattern in South Asia and their distribution ranges from sites in Gandhāra or north-west India to those in the upper Yamuna basin, the cluster being most dense around the mouths of the Krishna and Godavari rivers (Kuwayama 1997: 119-20). The *dharmacakra* pattern appears around the first century AD. The spokes of the wheel vary from eight at Shāh-ji-Dherī, sixteen at Dharmarājikā at Taxila, to eight at Sanghol 2 (SGL-11), eight plus eight at the Jain *stūpa* of Kankali Tila to twelve plus twenty-four plus thirty-two at Sanghol 1 (SGL-5).

Nevertheless, the mobility of Buddhist monks, lay followers, and pilgrims did not preclude the possibility of Gandhāra or any other region even within India evolving a distinctive Buddhist identity and this becomes evident from an analysis of *stūpa* deposits, the use of the Buddha image on coins, and the Buddhist monastic code through which the affairs of the monastic establishments were monitored. This issue has been examined elsewhere (Ray 2018b) and need not be repeated here.

It must also be remembered that excavations at Sanghol were carried out during growing political instability and social unrest in the Punjab throughout the 1980s with rising demand for a separate Sikh State. This movement resulted in the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31st 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards. Once again religious identity had overtaken archaeology and its practice, which is an issue that I discuss in the next section.

### **The discourse on Buddhism and changing politics in the Punjab**

Before I discuss political changes in the Punjab over the last seven decades that have impacted the reception of Gandhāra sculptures in the Chandigarh Museum, it would be useful to provide a background to the discourse on Buddhism at the time of Indian Independence. Two issues relating to the past emerge repeatedly in the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), the first Prime Minister of independent India: first, the question of the unity of the country once it achieves independence; and second, the vital life-giving quality of the past, which necessarily meant that a distinction had to be made between an integrated vision of life and the deadwood of the past. Nehru successfully intertwined the symbols of the past such as the policies of the third century BC Mauryan king Aśoka with aspirations for the future of modern India (Josh 2012: 394-408). By the early twentieth century, the righteous ruler Aśoka of early Buddhist Pali texts entered historical discourse as the first emperor whose control and authority extended not only over the entire subcontinent, but who also sent Buddhist missionaries to other countries, such as Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand among others. The emperor was credited with the setting up of pillars and *stūpas* to mark sites associated with the life of the Buddha and thus established a Buddhist sacred geography extending from Afghanistan to south India and Sri Lanka.



Thus, the fascination with what may be termed the ancient Buddhist past among political leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), the first Law Minister of the Government of India, in the early twentieth century is evident. It is also apparent that Buddhism was perceived very differently by Gandhi, Nehru, and Ambedkar and it is important to bear these distinctions in mind, as they continue to impact public discourse in India to the present. For Gandhi, Buddhism was a cohesive force – *dharmā*; for Nehru it was a catalyst for change – a progressive force; and for Ambedkar, it was the path to a caste-less society (Ray 2014: 233). Despite these different perspectives the enormous contributions of the Mauryan king Aśoka were not in doubt and were accepted both by politicians and historians of early India (Ray 2012: 65-68). Within this larger acceptance of Buddhism and its influence in the Indian subcontinent, how were the Gandhāran sculptures received in the Punjab? This is an issue that needs to be discussed within regional politics of the Punjab and its changing priorities.

As mentioned earlier, the post-Independence political situation in Indian Punjab was complicated by the Sikh demand for an independent homeland and the continuing political presence of the Princely States of Patiala and Nabha, with the former being one of the largest and richest. Several challenges faced the Government of India, as it sought peaceful integration of the Princely States into the Union of India as well as a solution to the Sikh demand for autonomy. Religion as the defining feature of polity had by now lost its relevance in the face of the growing demand for housing and shelter for the thirteen to seventeen million refugees. Nevertheless, resentments based on linguistic differences between Punjabi-speaking Sikhs and Hindi-speaking Hindus continued to simmer, along with calls for the Pahari-speaking region of Kangra to merge with Himachal Pradesh. After much discussion and negotiation, Punjab became bilingual in 1956 and language rather than religious identity became the defining features of the polity. As a result, the state of Punjab was once again divided along linguistic lines creating the contemporary states of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. The new state capital of Chandigarh became a Union Territory under the central Government in New Delhi.

In March 1948, the Government had approved the area at the foothills of the Shivaliks as the site for what was to be developed as the new capital of Chandigarh. In an attempt to break with the past and to develop an innovative master-plan, modernist buildings and new land-use patterns, the French architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965) was entrusted to design the new city. One of the buildings that he planned for the new city was that of the Government Museum and Art Gallery, which was located in proximity to the city centre in sector 17. It was planned as a sprawling and extensive campus with space for the Government College of Art and a cultural complex that could then promote Chandigarh to rival Lahore as a cultural capital.

After many ups and downs, the museum was finally inaugurated almost twenty-one years after Partition on 6th May 1968, under the initiative and active support of M.S. Randhawa (1909-1986), renowned connoisseur and patron of art, and the then Chief Commissioner of Chandigarh. Randhawa had also been responsible for the rehabilitation of refugees displaced after Partition and had thus performed dual roles. It would be worth examining the speeches made at the inauguration of the museum on May 6th 1968 about priorities in this changed political environment and at the culmination of an uphill struggle to have the museum up and running. The Museum opened with three major galleries: 627 Gandhāran sculptures; 4,000 miniature paintings mainly of the Pahari and Rajasthani Schools, as well as Sikh Art; and contemporary or modern paintings by Indian artists. In her speech at the inauguration, Grace Morley, the well-known museologist and Founder Director of the National Museum, New Delhi from 1960 to 1966, spoke of major collections of the museum of importance for India, which included the largest and finest collection of Gandhāra sculptures in the country; and the largest and finest group of miniatures of the Punjabi Pahari courts in the world.

In contrast, Kulbir Singh, Chief Engineer of the Project regretted that the archaeological materials from the Bronze Age sites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro that now formed a part of Pakistan had not been divided, depriving Chandigarh of the collections. What impact did the excavations at Sanghol have on the growth of the Chandigarh museum? How were the results of this work received? No doubt twelve of the beautifully sculpted railing pillars from the *stūpa* site at Sanghol were displayed at the Chandigarh Museum, as reported in the media: ‘About the sculptures, the Director of the museum, Mr V.N. Singh, said the museum was fortunate to have the Sanghol collection on loan from Punjab. He said the pieces had been tastefully displayed in the section – Cultural Window of Punjab – and formed a priceless part of the museum’s collection.’<sup>2</sup>

Nearly three decades after the opening of the museum, a colloquium on Gandhāran art was organised in March 1998 in which Dr Saifur Rahman Dar, former Director of Lahore Museum, also participated. Issues of chronology, identification of sculptures and system of classification were discussed. These deliberations resulted in the publication of a catalogue of sculptures of the museum, as also some of the papers that were presented, though the history of the collections does not find detailed discussion (Bhattacharya 2002). The provenance of 406 of the total of 627 sculptures in the museum at Chandigarh is not available. The remaining sculptures come from many sites, with a large number of images from Sikrai or Sikri. Sikri was excavated by Harold Deane in 1888 and a plan recording some of the sculptures was made. On the basis of the plans of the structures and the sculptures it is surmised that Sikri may be dated to Phase II (c. middle to late first century AD to early third century AD) and the middle part of phase III (third to fifth century AD) in a period in which narratives give way to devotional images of the Buddha and the bodhisattva. An issue that received no attention was the excavations at Sanghol and their significance in highlighting interconnections and linkages between the Buddhist sites of western and eastern Punjab in the early centuries of the Common Era. The cultural heritage of undivided Punjab has not been able to overcome the tyranny of the border created by the colonial government between India and Pakistan.

Daniel Michon (2015: 63) argues that three areas of archaeological research have received attention in Pakistan Punjab: the Harappan civilization; Gandhāran civilization; and Islamic sites. In contrast, the focus in Indian Punjab has been on the Harappan civilization and defining the extension of the second and first millennium BC cultures of the Ganga valley, the Painted Grey Ware, and the Northern Black Polished Ware, linked by some archaeologists such as B.B. Lal with the Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata*. This paper has highlighted changing priorities of archaeological work in the Punjab and the role that this played in the construction of the region’s past, both pre- and post-Partition. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century European and subsequently British interest in the antiquity of the region of Punjab was deeply steeped in Orientalist assumptions about the superiority of Greeks and in trying to uncover the legacy of Alexander’s invasion and the cities that he established (Ray and Potts 2007: 106-107).

Mortimer Wheeler, the British Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1947 advised Indian archaeologists that, ‘recent Partition has robbed us of the Indus valley.’<sup>3</sup> We now have therefore no excuse for deferring longer the overdue exploration of the Ganges Valley. After all, if the Indus gave India a name, it may almost be said that the Ganges gave India a faith’ (Wheeler 1949: 10). Presumably he was referring to Hinduism. In a similar vein at the inauguration of the National Museum of Pakistan in 1950, he urged Pakistan to adopt the Indus valley civilisation as a model for the new state. Thus, in terms of the study of the past, the two new nation states were urged to re-centre the beginnings of

<sup>2</sup> *Chandigarh Tribune*, online edition, Friday, May 16th 2003, Chandigarh, India.

<sup>3</sup> This is a reference to the third and second millennium BC Bronze Age Harappan Civilization discovered in the 1920s at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Most of the sites of this Bronze Age civilization were located in north-west India and went to Pakistan after the Partition.

their history and archaeology. While Pakistan was seen as the natural inheritor of the third and second millennium BC Harappan civilisation and Gandhāra, India was urged to ‘discover’ its archaeological roots in the Ganga valley civilization. Buddhist sculptures from both sides of the border thus got caught up in the politics of colonial rule and its legacy.

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