A337-Asia-Gandhara-Avalokiteśvara-Schist-Kushan Period-4th Century CE 

Fig. 1. Gandhara-Avalokiteśvara-Schist-Kushan Period-4th Century CE

**Case no.: 3**

**Accession Number: A337**

**Formal Label:** Gandhara-Avalokiteśvara-Schist-Kushan Period-4th Century CE

**Display Description:**

The Kushan Period art of Gandhara in Peshawar Valley flourished by commemorating the Jatakas during the reign of king Kanishka the Great (128–151 AD/CE), when the cities of Taxila (Takṣaśilā) at Sirsukh and the capital at Peshawar were built. Kanishka as a patron of Buddhism helped diffuse the religion to Central Asia and the Far East across Bactria and Sogdiana (now Xinxiang Province), where his empire intersected with the Han Empire of China. This attracted Chinese pilgrims to worship at Buddhist monuments along the Silk Road. Mahayana Buddhism represented the Buddha in human form and many new sculptures of the Buddha were carved and new stupas and painted and sculptured caves were built while others were enlarged.

This particular sculpture is culturally important in that it shows Avalokiteśvara with Hellenistic style folded robes as well as open eyes so characteristic of Greek deities and this offers a glimpse of a Greek woman who was accompanying Alexander’s troops who posed for this sculpture. The sculptor was obviously inexpert at carving the correct mudra of the hands so he left them in an unidentifiable pose, which suggests he was a Greek sculptor.

Enormous statues of the Buddha were erected and carved into hillsides such as the ones carved from a sandstone cliff at Bamiyan in 507 CE and 554 CE in the Hazarajat region of central Afghanistan, 230 km NW of Kabul at an elevation of 2,500 m. representing classic Gandharan style. Although these were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001 as being idols and anathema to the Quran, they are being rebuilt with aid from the Swiss and the Japanese.

**LC Classification**: [NB992.2.K36](http://josiah.brown.edu/search~S7?/c2-SIZE+NB992.2.K36+B87+1978/cnb++992.2+k36+b87+1978/-3%2C-1%2C0%2CE/frameset&FF=cnb++992.2+k36+b87+1978&1%2C1%2C)

**Date or Time Horizon:** Kushan Period-4th Century

**Geographical Area:** Taxila, Gandhara (modern location: Rawalpindi District, Punjab, Pakistan)

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**Map, GPS coordinates:** [33°44′45″N 72°47′15″E](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Taxila&params=33_44_45_N_72_47_15_E_region:PK_type:landmark)



Fig. 2. Map of Gandhara and area from http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-ykxrKlxxjkg/U5rg7JPM\_RI/AAAAAAAAC9o/CvRbz8pUfbc/s1600/AlexanderConquestsInIndia.jpg

**Cultural Affiliation:** Gandhara

**Medium:** schist.

**Dimensions:** H 162.18 mm; 6.39 in.

**Weight: 411 gm; 14 3/8 oz.**

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:** unknown

**Discussion:**

Taxila (Greek for Takshashila,”Rock of Taksha”) in Indian and Greco-Roman accounts and by Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, Faxian and Xuanzang as the prosperous and well-governed capital of the kingdom of Gandhara and as a great center of learning. In 326 BCE, Ambhi (Omphis), the ruler of Taxila, surrendered the city to Alexander and placed his resources at Alexander’s disposal.

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