

Elephant and Rider Type Buddhist Diptych Type Portable Shrines from Gandhara

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ABSTRACT

The elephant and rider type diptychs are among four main types of the Miniature Portable Shrines from Gandhara and Kashmir. The remaining three types include “Basket Man Type”, Brahmana Type” and “Plain Exterior Type”. These diptych type portable shrines were used as another medium of narrating life story of the Buddha. The main objective of this paper is to introduce these diptychs along with description of their exterior and interior iconographical treatment. A slight comparative analysis of the depiction of few episodes from life of the Buddha with the general Buddhist narrative art in Gandhara, is also a part of the investigation.

Key Words: Diptychs, Shrines, Portable, Gandhara, Buddha, Buddhist Art.

Introduction

In Buddhist artistic traditions of Gandhara and Kashmir, diptychs were used as additional media of visual narration, along with large sculptures and reliefs. These were principally made of stone and ivory. One example of an ivory diptych is preserved which reflects the use of ivory objects of this category. Carved on one or both sides, these Buddhist diptychs illustrate different life episodes of the Buddha Śākyamuni. .

Types of the Buddhist Diptychs

The Buddhist diptychs are divided into four following types: In the present work, Buddhist diptychs are divided into following types:

- Elephant and Rider Type
- Basket Man Type
- Brāhmaṇa Type
- Plain Exterior Type

This division is based upon the shape, subject matter and manufacturing technique of these objects. Each type has its own characteristics and will be discussed comprehensively.

Elephant and Rider Type

We begin our study of the Buddhist diptychs with the “Elephant and Rider Type”. The present collection includes 12 such fragments. Some of them belong to the museums and some to the private collections. Most of these shrines are in the form of fragments. Only one diptych is preserved in complete form and is made of ivory. All these diptychs are carved on both sides. Their interior depiction shows important events from Buddha’s life. In comparison to the interior, their exterior shares a common theme and depicts “transportation of reliquaries”. Owing to this reason, these are referred to as “Elephant and Rider Type” diptychs in the present work.

First Fragment from The British Museum, London

The first fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych belongs to the collection of Sir Alexander Cunningham (1887) who found this piece in Sankisa during his tour in the Gangetic provinces. Later on, Barrett (1967); Rowan (1985) and Yoshihide (2000) published it. This fragment is housed in The British Museum, London. Only the lower part of the left wing of the diptych is preserved.



**Figure 1. Exterior of the Fragment from The British Museum, London. Acc. No. 1887, 0717.72.
After Yoshihide, 2000.**

The exterior of this fragment shows the lower part of an elephant’s front leg placed on a moulded base. In front of the elephant’s leg, a male figure wearing a lower garment, is depicted in a. The man holds a shield in his left hand and a sword in his right. He also wears prominent circular earrings. The figure possibly

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illustrates one of the guards who accompanied the procession. The remaining iconographical details are no longer visible (Figure 1).



Figure 1.1. Interior of the Fragment.

The interior of this fragment is partially intact and depicts “death of the Buddha” (Figure. 1.1). The available iconographical details show upper part of the Buddha’s body laying to his right. His right hand is placed in between his head and a large cushion. Six figures including Kāśyapa holding a staff, Ānanda and other monks are depicted near the death bed. Remains of the typical brick lining pattern are also visible alongside the inner edges of the relief.

Second Fragment from the British Museum, London

The second fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych belongs to the Stein collection. It was first published by Stein (1907); Rowan (1985) and by Yoshihide (2000). Only the upper part of the diptych’s right wing is preserved. Like the previous piece, this fragment is housed in The British Museum, London.

The exterior represents the bust of a figure controlling the elephant. Behind him a shrine in the form of a stūpa and right hand of the main figure holding it, are visible (Figure. 2). The surface of the shrine is adorned with successive circular bands.



Figure 2. Exterior of the Fragment from The British Museum, London. Acc. No. 1907.11-11.48. After Yoshihide, 2000.

The interior of this fragment (Figure 2.1) illustrates “Śākyamuni’s birth and seven steps”. The execution of the scene in this limited space is very interesting. Queen Māyā, larger in size, holds the branch of a tree in her right hand. Her left arm is placed over an attendant. Māyā wears a thin upper and a thick lower garment covering her feet. She is depicted in typical Gandharan style and supported by a female attendant on her left side. The new born is depicted twice: 1) being received by Indra and 2) standing frontally. Based on the comparison to the ivory diptych (Figure. 12), it can be assumed that the birth scene would be followed either by “bath of the new born” or by “return from Lumbinī garden”. On these examples, the story line runs from top to bottom and then from right to left.

The composition is identical to the traditional Gandharan representation of the same episode (Figure. 2.1.1).



Figure 2.1. Interior of the Fragment.

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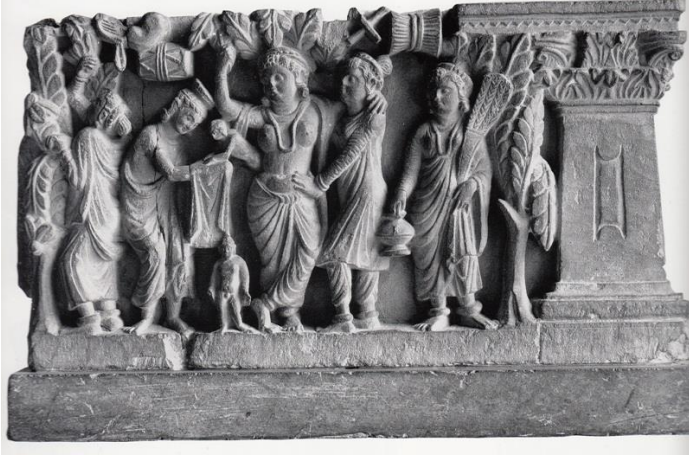


Figure 2.1.1. Birth and Seven Steps of Śākyamuni on a Relief from The Art Institute of Chicago, Samuel M. Nickerson Collection. Acc. No. 23.315. After Kurita, 2003, Figure. 48.

Third Fragment from The British Museum, London

The third fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych belongs to The British Museum and is similar to the former piece. According to the museum record, the object was purchased from Hans Abarbanell in 1960. Barrett (1967) quoted this fragment for the first time, later on Rowan (1985) and Yoshihide (2000) discussed it. Only the central part of what would be the right wing of a diptych remains.

The fragment’s exterior represents (Figure. 3) two damaged figures riding an elephant. The smaller figure sitting in front guides the elephant while the second figure, larger in size, sits at the back, and holds a stūpa-shaped shrine. The remaining details of the lower garment show a vertical frieze of squares. This pattern of decoration brings to mind Scythian and Parthian costumes (Yatsenko, 2001). A comparison of the larger figure with the ivory diptych shows that he is either a noble or a royal personality. The royalty of the elephant is made visible by using a large piece of decorated garment.



Figure 3. Exterior of the Fragment from The British Museum, London. Acc. No. 1960.10-10.1.

After Yoshihide, 2000.

The interior of the fragment represents “Śākyamuni’s birth” and “seven steps” (Figure. 3.1). In principle, the iconographic details are similar to the previous fragments. There is a small round hole in the upper right corner of the fragment, which would have been made to carry the diptych.



Figure 3.1. Interior of the Fragment. After Yoshihide, 2000.

The Fragment from a Private Collection in New York.

The fourth fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych is in better state of preservation. The diptych’s right wing has survived. It belongs to a private collection in New York. This fragment was first published by Rowan (1985) and later on by Yoshihide (2000) and by Behrendt (2012).

The surviving details of the fragment’s exterior show two figures riding an elephant (Figure. 4). The royal figure sits on a seat placed at the back of the elephant. He holds a stūpa-shaped shrine, placed right in front of him. The second figure, sitting in the front, controls the elephant. The elephant is depicted as a royal ride as reflected by the use of rich decorative outfit.

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Figure 4. Exterior of the Fragment from a Private Collection in New York. After Yoshihide, 2000.

The interior of this fragment is divided into different parts. The main body was possibly divided into two large registers. The upper register is intact whereas most of the details in the lower section are broken. The complete register illustrates “Śākyamuni’s birth and seven steps” (Figure. 4.1). Three main characters of the composition, Māyā, Prajāpati and Indra are depicted in the similar fashion as seen on the general Gandharan representation of the theme. The new born is depicted twice, 1) being received by Indra and 2) standing in between Indra and Māyā.



Figure 4.1. Interior of the Fragment. After Yoshihide, 2000.

The second scene depicted in the lower register is damaged. Only the upper body of a figure is visible in the upper right corner. She could possibly be one of the sleeping women.

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In the upper section of the fragment, represents a stūpa and a kneeling figure. The fourth scene is placed on the upper right side of the relief and portrays the episode when Siddhārtha cuts his hair (Figure. 4.1.1). Seated cross-legged on a lotus, Siddhārtha holds his hair in left hand and cuts it with a sword held in his right hand. There are three more examples of the scene in the Buddhist diptychs. The composition can be identified and understood by adding the Gandharan relief's fragment of unknown provenance (Cf. Figure. 4.2).



Figure 4.1.1. The Fourth Scene inside the Fragment



Figure 4.2. Siddhartha Cutting his Hair.

The Fragment from National Museum, Tokyo

The next fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych belongs to the collection of National Museum, Tokyo. The lower part of the left wing of this diptych has survived. The only reference of the piece is in the work of Yoshihide (2000).

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The exterior fragmentary details show two legs of an elephant, front and back, placed on a large base (Figure. 5). The base is decorated with an ornament of brick lining at top and bottom. In between the elephant legs, a figure walking beside the elephant is depicted. He wears a lower garment and most probably holds either a staff or a sword in his right hand.

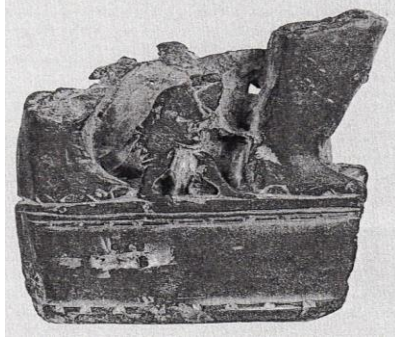


Figure 5. Exterior of the Fragment from National Museum, Tokyo. Acc. No. TC745. After Yoshihide, 2000.

The fragment's interior elaborates a different iconographical scheme. It is divided into two registers, framed inside the usual brick lining. Each register portrays an important scene from the Buddha's life. Both the scenes are complete.

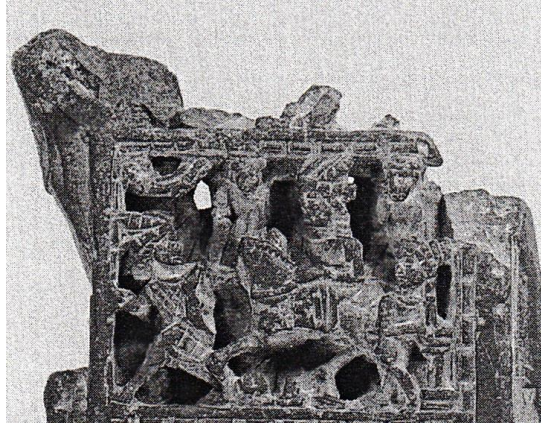


Figure 5.1. Upper Register of the Fragment. After Yoshihide, 2000.

The upper register depicts "great renunciation" (Figure. 5.1). Turbaned and jewelled Siddhārtha rides Kañṭhaka by holding reins in both hands. A turbaned figure stands behind the horse, next to an altar, placed in lower right corner of the relief. Another turbaned figure armed with a bow in left hand and arrow in right, is depicted in front of the horses striding to the left and looking back at the rider. According to Tanabe (1993/94), the figure is none other than Vaiśravaṇa, the guardian deity of the Northern region.

Besides Vaiśravaṇa, two Yakṣas are also depicted underneath the horse. They emerge from ground and hold Kañṭhaka legs. In the background, two half-length

figures are witness to the event. This representation of “great renunciation” remained one of the popular episodes of Gandharan artists as well as of the sculptors responsible for making portable shrines.



Figure 5.1.1. Lower Register of the Fragment. After Yoshihide, 2000.

The second register on the interior side (Figure. 5.1.1) depicts the Buddha seated cross-legged on a lotus throne with head turned to his right. His right shoulder is bare and the right hand is raised to chest level while the left gathers his robe. From the representation, it seems as if the Buddha is looking at a tree or tree branch on the right side. Over the far left side, there is a standing figure turned towards the tree with its hands joined in adoration. Likewise, a smaller figure can be seen near the Buddha's left shoulder. They seem to be devotees. The lower register most likely represents the event which took place shortly after enlightenment when the Buddha contemplates the Bodhi tree (Hameed 2014). The iconographical representation of this particular moment in the Buddha's life was less popular in the line of main Gandharan reliefs; however, a similar behaviour can be seen in some of the wall paintings of Kucha, in which the Buddha looks at the tree. In their recent article, Arlt and Hiyama (2014) made comprehensive and logical interpretation of the composition in one of the wall paintings of Kizil Cave 110. Most probably, such motifs could be the result of the influence of lost “Gandharan School of Paintings” (Zin, 2013).

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Figure 6. Exterior of the Fragment. After Siudmak, 2013.

The Fragment from John Siudmak Collection in London

The next example of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych in the present catalogue belongs to the John Siudmak Collection in London. The fragment shows lower part of the diptych’s right wing. Siudmak (2013) first published this fragment.

The exterior of the fragment shows the front leg of an elephant, placed on a low platform (Figure. 6). Two figures, one broken and the other complete, stand in front of the leg. Only the left hand and shoulder of the incomplete figure are visible and it is difficult to determine whether he is a devotee or a warrior guarding the procession. The other standing figure holds a shield in his left hand and probably a sword in the right hand. There is another incomplete scene behind the elephant’s leg. Only the front part of a horse can be seen. There are two more figures, one above the horse’s head and the other standing in front of the horse. All of them are escorting the procession.

The interior of this fragment shows three scenes, two broken and one complete. In the complete scene, the standing Buddha, larger in size, is slightly turned to his right (Figure. 6.1). He holds part of his robe in his left hand while in right hand which is raised with its palm outward. The Buddha is surrounded by five figures, three half-length and two complete. Two of the half-length figures are depicted in front of the Buddha and one behind the Buddha, all in the upper tier.



Figure 6.1. The Complete Scene in the Interior of the Fragment

Among the remaining two figures, one is standing in the lower left corner of the relief, in front of the Buddha and the other is either standing or half kneeling behind the Buddha in the lower right corner of the relief. It is difficult to comprehend and interpret this composition due to a lack of parallel examples in Gandharan art.

As far as the other incomplete scenes are concerned, one is placed above and the other to left of the complete scene. The first broken scene shows the seated Bodhisattva in meditation, flanked on by half-length figures (Figure. 6.2). Two standing figures, one in each lower corner of the relief, are depicted but only the lower half of the body of these figures has survived.



Figure 6.2. The First Incomplete Scene inside the Fragment

The other incomplete scene depicts a seated female who holds a cornucopia in her right hand (Figure. 6.3). Her left hand is placed on her left knee. Below this there is a seated figure, probably a devotee. On the base of cross-examination with the similar depiction on the lower register of another fragment in the present collection, it can be suggested that the scene here may represent “first sermon”.

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Figure 6.3. The Second Broken Scene inside the Fragment

It is interesting to note that this fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych shows considerable development with regard to the treatment of its interior. Here multiple scenes are depicted. The artists divided the interior into different panels in order to accommodate more scenes from the life of the Buddha. In the present collection, we have more examples of the Buddhist diptychs which display similar treatment.

The Fragment from the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

The next fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych comes from The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. According to the museum’s records, it belongs to the 1897 Petrovsky Collection. In 2008, the fragment was published in an exhibition catalogue (Deshpande, 2008).



Figure 7. Exterior of the Fragment from The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Acc. No. GA-2975. After Deshpande 2008.

Surviving details of the fragment’s exterior (Figure. 7) represent a miniature stūpa and the left hand of a figure. The hand is partially placed on the chattras and dome of the stūpa, which in fact symbolises a shrine having a proper drum, dome and chattras. The stūpa’s main body is adorned with successive layers of petals.

The interior of the shrine depicts a standing and a seated figure, both turned to their left (Figure. 7.1). The standing male figure wears an upper and a lower garment, ornaments and a crested turban. He joins hands in adoration and looks downward. The second figure sits right below the former and holds a tree’s branch,

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position in front of his face. These figures may be identified as devotees. According to the description given in the catalogue, the seated figure is a monkey (Deshpande, 2008). The interpretation is ambiguous because such imagery (monkey with flowers) does not exist. Because of the fragment's incomplete and broken condition, it is difficult to perceive any representation.



Figure 7.1. Interior of the Fragment. Cat. No. 12, after Deshpande, 2008.

The Fragment from the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

The next fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych belongs to the collection of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. According to the museum records, the fragment came from the Collection of Petrovsky of the year 1897. The fragment was published in an exhibition catalogue (Deshpande, 2008). Only the lower part of the diptych's left wing is preserved.

According to the description in the exhibition catalogue, exterior of this fragment shows two legs of a figure up to the knee level. Based on the comparative study of the external description of the present fragment with rest of the similar objects, it is obvious that exterior of this fragment also depicted “transportation of relics”.



Figure 8. The Complete Scene in the Interior of the Fragment from The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Acc. No. GA-2974. After Deshpande, 2008.

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The interior of this fragment shows two scenes, one complete and one broken. The complete scene portrays Mahāparinirvāṇa (Figure. 8). In Gandhara, there are numerous examples of the same event (Figure. 8.1). The Buddha is laying on his deathbed to the left. His head is slightly raised and rests on right hand that in turn is placed on a cushion. The Buddha's whole body is covered except for his bust and his right hand. There are four figures, one standing and three sitting, close to the bed. Moreover, there are three half-length figures behind the bed. Starting from right to left, the four figures include Vajrapāṇi, Subhadra, Ānanda and a monk. The half-length figures depicted behind the Buddha could be gods or Mallas of Kuśinagara.



Figure 8.1. Death of the Buddha. Relief from The British Museum, London. No. 1913, 1108.17. After Zwalf, 1996.

The second scene on this fragment's interior was depicted in another panel, positioned next to the Buddha's feet (Figure. 8.2). According to the catalogue, it depicts, "Behind the figure of Buddha there is a cross-legged monk, whose head had been broken off" (Deshpande, 2008, p. 92, No. 45).



Figure 8.2. Interior of the Fragment. Cat. No. 13. After Deshpande, 2008.

In fact the scene represents the Buddha seated on a raised platform, head turned to the left, his right hand raised to chest level. The Buddha holds part of his robe in left hand. Below the Buddha's seat there is a seated figure with its head raised as he observes the Buddha's conduct. The scene in another example of the post-enlightenment event with the Buddha contemplated the Bodhi tree.

The Fragment from a Private Collection in Japan

The next fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych comes from a private collection in Japan. Only lower part of the left wing of the diptych is preserved. It has recently been published by Yoshihide (2013).

Exterior of this fragment represents front and back leg of an elephant from its right side (Figure. 9). Both the legs rest upon a rectangular base, bordered with the usual brick lining pattern. The elephant’s main body shows a pair of rope and a hanging bell. Moreover, the elephant’s tail forms a circle at the end. There are several figures around the elephant’s legs. Judging by their costumes and gestures, they can be identified as warriors and devotees.



Figure 9. Exterior of the Fragment from a Private Collection in Japan. Courtesy Prof. Osmund Bopearachchi & Prof. Katsumi Tanabe.

The interior of the fragment is divided into two registers. The upper register is badly damaged and shows the legs of a standing figure in the lower right corner of the relief (Figure. 9.1). His lower garment is also visible, hanging in-between the legs.



Figure 9.1. Details of the Broken Scene in the Interior of the Fragment

On the far left corner of the relief, the Buddha’s right hand can be seen with palm inwards. It seems as if the hand is touching the ground. The space below the Buddha’s hand is badly damaged. Below the Buddha, two more figures emerge from the ground. Generally, in this part of the narrative the earth goddess is depicted, (For more information about the depiction of the Earth goddess in the

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Gandhara school see Johnes, 2014). From the available iconographical details it can be suggested that “assault of Māra” would have been depicted here.



Figure 9.2. Details of the Broken Scene in the Interior of the Fragment from a Private Collection in Japan. Cat. No. 14. Courtesy Prof. Osmund Bopearachchi. & Prof. Katsumi Tanabe

The lower register of the fragment represents the Buddha’s “first sermon” (Figure. 9.2). At the first look, one can identify all characteristic of this episode, such as the Buddha in *abhaya*, monks attending the sermon; deer park and a wheel. Here the Buddha occupies a central position, seated cross-legged on a throne. His right shoulder is bare as he holds part of his drapery with his left hand. A ten-spoked wheel is placed below the Buddha, close to his feet.

The Buddha is surrounded by several figures on each side. In the upper left corner of the relief, a seated couple and a half length figure are depicted. Of the seated couple, the female, in the upper left corner, joins her hands in *añjalimudrā* and the second figure, in front of the former, sits with crossed ankles. The figure is possibly Vajrapāṇi holding the *vajra* in his right hand. The half-length figure is depicted in the extreme upper left corner.

On the Buddha’s other side are two seated monks in the lower tier and a seated couple in the upper tier. One monk is seated close to the throne and another near the Buddha’s left shoulder. Their left hand is placed in their lap and their right hand by the cheeks. The seated female in the upper right corner of the relief holds a cornucopia in her left hand and an unidentified object in her right hand. Next to the female, a half-length figure is depicted. The whole composition is framed inside the typical brick lining ornament.

With the exception of the huge sculptures of the meditating Buddha in Hadda, Afghanistan (Cf. Behrendt, 2007), such representation of the event is rare to be found at least in the Gandharan sculptures from Pakistan. In Hadda, the Buddha is flanked by a female figure with a cornucopia on his left and Vajrapāṇi on his right side. The objects that both figures are holding have a striking resemblance with our figures.

Gandharan artists portrayed the event frequently and included the main characters namely, the Buddha, five monks, a wheel and deer (for Gandharan

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examples, see Ackermann, 1975, Plate. DXXXVIIa. Faccenna, 1962 Vol. II.2: Plates. LIV & CXXVI. Ingholt, 1957, Plates. 75-79. Kurita, 2003, Plates. 3-II, 3-III & 3-IV. Figures. 269, 271, 280, 281 & 185. Zwalf, 1996, Plates. 199-201).

As far as the iconography of the present fragment is concerned, there are a couple of interesting elements to discuss including the appearance of four, instead of five monks. Judging by the body language, these monks seem to be surprised except for the one standing in *añjalimudrā*. Secondly, a female figure sitting in the upper right corner of the relief and a male figure to the opposite side, both hold objects in their hands. The female figure may be holding the branch of a tree or a cornucopia. The male figure seems to be holding a *vajra*, which rests upon his right knee.

The Fragment from a Private Collection in London

The next fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych belongs to a private collection in London. Only the lower part of the diptych’s right wing is preserved. The present work is the first study to publish this fragment.

The imagery on its exterior shows part of an elephant’s left front foot and half of its back leg resting on a rectangular platform. The platform is decorated at the borders by using a traditional brick lining pattern (Figure. 10).

The shrine’s interior shows two square panels. The first square panel shows Siddhārtha seated cross-legged on a raised platform. He turns slightly to the right and holds sword in his right hand (Figure. 10). The sword is raised to head level and touches his hair that has been brought forward. It is difficult to see his left hand which is either broken or wrapped in drapery.



Figure 10. Exterior of the Fragment from a Private Collection in London. Courtesy Prof. Osmund Boppearachchi.

The Buddha is surrounded by three figures on each side. The figures sitting close to the lotus seat on both sides are possibly Indra and Brahma. Turbaned Indra, holding a piece of cloth in both hands, is depicted to the viewer’s left. Above Indra and Brahma two, one standing and the other half length, figures are depicted on each side. They are also looking at the Buddha. The two half-length figures are visible in the each upper corner of the relief. These iconographical

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details illustrate the episode when the prince cuts his hair and the gods come to collect it in order to take it to heaven. There are a few more examples of such depiction in the present catalogue.



Figure 10. First Scene in the Interior of the Fragment. Courtesy. Prof. Osmund Boppearachchi.

In Gandhara this episode is rarely depicted (Figure. 10.1). Kurita documented a couple of such reliefs (Cf. Kurita, 2003, Figures. 616-617) in which the prince is seated frontally with hands raised above his head. He holds his hair with his left hand and cuts it with a sword in right hand. Indra stands on the prince's left side and holds a piece of garment. Most probably, Brahma stands to the opposite side. In our fragment, the position of Indra and Brahma has changed from the left to the right.



Figure 10.1.1. Fragment of a Gandharan Relief from a Private Collection in Pakistan. After Kurita, 2003.

The second square panel represents “fasting Siddhārtha” flanked by Indra and Brahma (Figure. 10.2). In a gesture of meditation, the emaciated Siddhārtha is slightly turned to his left. The impact of the intense fasting is vividly represented by depicting his skinny body. Brahma, in his half-kneeling position, stands in the right corner of the relief and appears to be in conversation with Siddhārtha. Indra,

on the other hand, is standing in the opposite corner. There are two half-length figures on the second tier of the relief. The whole composition depicts “gods visit to Siddhārtha, when they ask him to abandon fasting. There are three more examples of this event in the present collection of the portable shrines.



Figure 10.2. The Second Scene inside the Fragment from a Private Collection in London. Courtesy Prof. Osmund Bopearachchi.

The Fragment from a Private Collection in London

The next fragment of the “Elephant and Rider Type” belongs to a private collection in London. The fragment is discussed and listed for the first time here. It consists of the central part of a diptych’s left wing.



Figure 11. Exterior of the Fragment from a Private Collection in London. Courtesy Prof. Osmund Bopearachchi.

The exterior surface of the fragment shows an elephant, mostly broken (Figure. 11). The elephant’s body is covered with a piece of garment and a decorated rope, meant to fasten the seat on the elephant’s back. A bell, tilting backwards, is attached to one of the ropes around the elephant’s body. The slanting position of the bell indicates that the elephant is moving.

The interior of this fragment is divided into panels of different size of which only a few square panels are preserved. These square panels are positioned in the

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upper part of diptych. This is further evidenced by comparison with the interior of the ivory diptych's fragment which shows a similar division of its interior. The remaining panels of the present shrine are broken.



Figure 11.1. Interior of the Fragment from a Private Collection in London, Courtesy Prof. Osmund Bopearachchi.

The first panel, on the right side of the fragment, shows a turbaned and jewelled Siddhārtha sitting on a small seat (Figure. 11.1.1). His left leg is folded, placed on the seat while the right rests on the ground. The prince is surrounded by four figures, three standing and one seated. The standing figure to the prince's left is offering something to him. There is a seated figure, with upraised hands, in the lower right corner of the panel. Similarly, in the lower left corner, a small standing figure is depicted playing some musical instrument, possibly a *vīṇā*. The third standing figure is depicted near Siddhārtha's right shoulder and is holding an unidentified musical instrument.



Figure 11.1.1. First Complete Panel of the Interior of the Fragment

A comparison of this depiction with the narrative scheme of the ivory diptych shows a similar representation on its right wing. In the ivory diptych, Siddhārtha is depicted in the same manner, with the exception that his head is slightly turned to

the left. This cross-examination shows that the scene illustrates “Siddhārtha in women chamber”.



Figure 11.1.2. Second Complete Panel of the Interior of the Fragment

The second panel may depict Māyā (Figure. 11.1.2). Her head is no longer visible. From her frontal standing position and the position of her arms, it can be suggested that this scene may represent “parting of hair” (For literary traditions and other representations of parting of hair, Cf. Quagliotti, 2001/02), which Rowan described as “lustration of hair”.



Figure 11.1.3. Third Square Panel of the Interior of the Fragment

The third square panel depicts Siddhārtha with the right hand raised above his head (Figure. 11.1.3). The prince is accompanied by two standing and two half-length figures. The half-length figure, close to the prince’s right arm, is broken while the one on other side is intact. The latter joins both hands in front of his chest. The remaining two figures are positioned in the each lower corner of the panel. The one to the prince’s right holds a staff in his left hand; the right hand is placed on the side frame. The other standing figure, whose head is broken off, is depicted to Siddhārtha’s left. A similar depiction can be found in one of the scenes on the right wing of the ivory diptych. Based on the comparison it is obvious that this scene represents “Siddhārtha calls his groom”. In the ivory diptych, the scene is followed by “great departure”, depicted on the opposite leaf of the diptych.

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Figure 11.1.4. The Broken Scenes inside the Fragment

The incomplete scenes are positioned on the top and the bottom of the former panels. Starting with the first row of the three square broken panels the first on the right depicts a standing figure with a sword in his upraised right hand (Figure.11.1.4). The second broken panel shows two figures striding to their left side; their heads are no longer intact. They are seen from the back and have stretched arms. A small standing figure is depicted in lower left corner.

Interior of the ivory diptych shows a similar depiction on its first row of the square panels. This comparison helps to understand that this broken panel depicts “Siddhārtha cutting a bunch of reeds” as rightly identified by Zin (2008) with examples from Gandhara and Kizil. In the middle panel, Siddhārtha takes part in archery competition, where two archers aim at one target. Such representation is common in Gandhara art (Cf. Zwalf, 1996, Plates. 164-165). The last incomplete square panel is mostly damaged.

Similarly, below the complete square panels, most part of the lower section of the interior division is broken. From right to left, the upper body of standing Buddha in *abhaya* is depicted. He is turned to his right and looks at two half-length figures. His body is covered entirely by upper garment, which forms a heavy neckline.

The ivory shrine provides a similar setting of the lower part of its both wings and standing figures of the Buddha performing *abhayamudrā* can be seen. The remaining details include a couple of heads of figures and a Bodhi tree inside an arch curvature. The scheme is identical to the ivory diptych. A comparison of the present fragment and the ivory shrine suggests that several events after the great renunciation were illustrated in this particular section of the fragment such as “meeting with ascetics”, “practice of austerity”, “crossing Nairāñjanā”, “Māra’s attack”, “first sermon”, “preaching” and “Mahāparinirvāṇa”. With regard to the decorative treatment, an extensive use of the usual brick lining pattern is prominent.

The Ivory Diptych

The last piece of the “Elephant and Rider Type” diptych in this collection is unique in its material and in its state of preservation. It is the only available Buddhist diptych which is made of ivory and preserved in complete shape. It was discovered in the Chinese province of Kansu and belongs to the Committee for the Administration of Cultural properties of the Kansu province. The diptych was

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handed over to the Museum of Chinese History (now known as National Museum of China) in Beijing (Barrett, 1967).

The first account of its discovery and iconography was published by Soper (1965). Afterwards, Barrett (1967); Rowan (1985) and Yoshihide (2000) contributed. A study of this shrine has helped enormously in determining the shape and contents of all the fragments of this type of portable shrines.

The exterior of the ivory diptych represents an elephant and a rider in complete profile. Similar treatment is repeated on its both wings (Figure. 12) and it shows a heavily dressed man, either a noble or a royal, riding an elephant. He has a round face, healthy cheeks and prominent circular earrings. His headdress consists of a piece of garment, fasten by a prominent ribbon. His heavy upper garment or shawl is marked by wavy horizontal lines running across his body. A small round shawl fastener is visible on his shoulder. The man wears decorated trousers that shows a vertical frieze of dotted squares running all the way down to his feet, placed on a saddle. The seat fixed on the elephant's back is richly decorated. It is fastened by ropes all around the elephant's body. A bell swings on each side of the elephant's belly, right above the soldiers. The elephant looks calm; his trunk and tail are rolled into circles.



Figure 12. Exterior of the Ivory Diptych from National Museum of China, Beijing. No. 1952 ICL, after Yoshihide, 2000.

The rider holds a stūpa-shaped shrine which consists of a large base, a dome and five chattras. A seated figure with a sword or knife in his left hand is also depicted behind the rider. Two standing figures, close to the bell in between the elephant's legs, are depicted. They hold shields in their right hands and swords in their left. There is another figure standing in front of the elephant's leg. The man is depicted in the same fashion as the formers except for a dotted helmet. The men are soldiers guarding the procession transporting the Buddha's relics.

The lower part of the diptych shows a rectangular platform. Two oval shaped recessed panels are carved inside this platform and bordered by a single groove at the top and the bottom.

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The ivory diptych's other wing displays a similar carving and execution. Both the wings are joined with an iron hinge passing through a circular hole. These holes would have been used to join the two wings. The perforation has been so carefully executed that it does not damage any part of the carving in both wings. Perhaps the perforations were drilled first and the carving was done afterward.

The interior of this ivory diptych represents a complex iconographical treatment. It is divided into 54 panels of variable shapes and sizes (Figure. 12.1). These panels narrate complete life story of the Buddha, starting from Dīpaṃkara to death of the Buddha. An extensive study of the ivory diptych will be made in a separate article.

Conclusion

Exterior of these shrines give three-dimensional view of an elephant rider holding relics. The study throws light on the method of visual narration applied on inner wings of these shrines. Inner surface of these shrines is profusely carved and represents relatively different scheme of handling the main theme. In these shrines, couple of important events from life of the Buddha such as “Bodhisattva cutting his hair” and “the Buddha contemplating the bodhi tree” are repeatedly depicted. We rarely find these episodes in general Buddhist reliefs. This particular aspect is one of the distinguishing features of these tiny objects and reflects their significance that lies beyond their size. The study of the presents and the remaining Buddhist diptych types is inevitable in order to extend our scope of understanding Buddhist sculptural art of Gandhara and Kashmir.



Figure 12.1. Interior Arrangement of the Ivory Diptych. Cat. No. 17, after Yoshihide, 2000.

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