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**The Transmission, Transformation and Cultural
Adaptation of the Heracles Imagery from the Near East to
East Asia (4th century BC–10th century AD)**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the transmission and diversity of transformation of the Heracles motif into the East, tracing its dissemination from the Near East via Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent towards East Asia in the wake of Alexander the Great's campaigns in the 4th century BC.

While there is abundant evidence indicating that the Heracles motif migrated from the Mediterranean to the East mainly as a result of Alexander's expeditions — further elaborated by extensive research on the reception of Heracles imagery by non- (or not entirely) Greek cultures — less attention has been paid to how the Heracles (or Heracleian) imagery was disseminated and modified across a wider geographical and temporal spectrum, especially beyond the Near East. This thesis provides an extensive typological catalogue of works discovered in regions and cultural spheres east of the Mediterranean from approximately the 4th century BC to the 10th century AD that are deemed to exhibit formal similarities with those of Heracles from the Mediterranean.

Given the considerable number of works that were influenced or possibly inspired by the Heracles motif through various socio-historical interactions over a long-time span, this study identifies the key themes and figurative types of Heracles that contributed to the longevity of the motif and stimulated its transformation, particularly in Buddhist figural arts and some secular adaptations in Iranian, Indian and Chinese cultures. By examining the enduring appeal and reinterpretation of the Heracles figure and discussing the complex interactions that accompanied the motif's diffusion, the thesis proposes different transmission routes and means through which the various types of images and motifs could have migrated to the further East, thus enhancing the "research map" of the eastward transmission of Heracleian imagery.

Abbreviations

AGBG	Foucher (1905–1951)
AM	Ashmolean Museum
ARC	Aman ur Rahman Collection
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BEFEO	<i>Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient</i>
BIGR	Coins of the Bactrian and Indo-Greek Rulers
BM	British Museum
CRAST	<i>Centro ricerche archeologiche e scavi di Torino per il Medio Oriente e l'Asia</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
<i>Crossroads</i>	Errington and Cribb (1992)
DABIR	Digital Archive of Brief notes and Iran Review
HISRM	Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum
IM	Iraq Museum, Bagdad
KM	Kabul Museum
LM	Lahore Museum
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , vol. 1–7, Zurich and Munich, 1981–1997; vol. 8, Zurich and Düsseldorf: Artemis, 1997; suppl. 1, Düsseldorf: Artemis, 2009
MAK	<i>Museum für Asiatische Kunst</i>
MDAFA	<i>Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan</i>
MDC	<i>Museo delle Civiltà</i>
MET	Metropolitan Museum of Art
MG	<i>Musée Guimet</i>
SCO	Seleucid Coins Online
TM	Taxila Museum
TNM	Tokyo National Museum
YUAG	Yale University Art Gallery
VA	Victoria and Albert Museum

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Introduction

Outline of the study

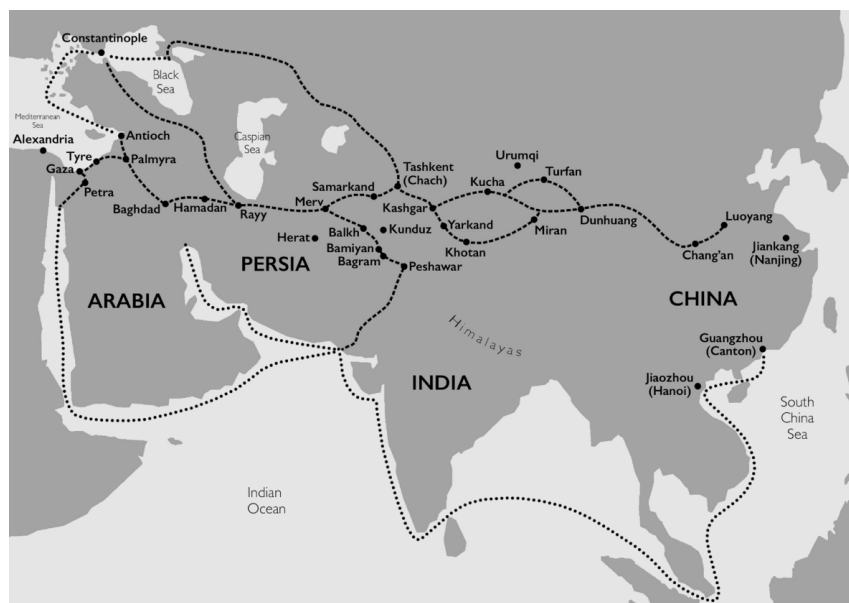
Over the past century, a substantial amount of research has been conducted on the movement and interaction of ancient visual arts in Eurasia outside the original context in which they were generated, revealing a series of complex cross-cultural exchange networks between the West and East. While these networks have been demonstrated to be multidirectional and multicultural, occurring in varied forms across different time periods and locales, one principal area of research interest has been investigating how ancient non-Greek cultures reacted to Greek art in the wake of Alexander the Great's campaigns. In this regard, numerous figurative motifs originating in Hellenistic culture have been discovered in the visual arts of regions and cultural spheres situated to the east of the Mediterranean, and a large corpus of evidence attests to considerable cultural influence in certain aspects of the respective societies, as indicated by the existence of many Greek gods and cults in the East, which has been the subject of extensive scholarly investigation. One particularly popular figure was the hero-god Heracles, whose motif has been shown to have migrated to the East and who gained considerable popularity among the various indigenous communities from the Near East to China.

This thesis examines the transmission and transformation of the Heracles motif in the East. The study aims to provide a selective yet comprehensive catalogue of Heracles-related images in the East, with a specific focus on the evidence from Central Asia and North-West India to China. This objective will be met by classifying and examining the various types of images through different media while investigating the diverse ways in which the Heracles motif has been adapted in the East across different social and functional spheres, as evidenced by the material culture. While there is a plethora of evidence indicating that the Heracles motif migrated from the Mediterranean to the Near East, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent as a result of Alexander's expeditions, as well as understanding of the reception of Heracles imagery in the Far East, there is comparatively less compilation of the evidence beyond the Near East

and less attention has been paid to how the Heracles (or Heracleian) imagery was disseminated and modified across a wider geographical and temporal spectrum, which this thesis will address.

Geographic scope of the study

In this study, the term **East** is employed in both a broad and narrow sense. In its broader application, it is used to outline the extent to which the influence of the Heracles motif may have reached, referring to the Eurasian continent situated to the east of the Mediterranean region. The broad geographical scope covered in this thesis is thus divided into three distinct areas: the Near East, Central Asia and Indian subcontinent, and East Asia, which were connected through a network of trade routes in the first millennium AD (Map 1).



Map 1. The major trade routes connecting the Near East, Central Asia and Indian subcontinent, and East Asia in the first millennium AD (adapted from a map by Evan Freeman, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

To clarify the geographical scope and to avoid misunderstandings, these areas are defined as follows:

Near East: This area is represented by the territories encompassing parts of modern Türkiye (formerly Turkey), Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran, broadly constituting the Near East.

Central Asia: This area covers parts of modern Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and parts of Afghanistan (except the Kabul Valley), as well as the western part of the modern People's Republic of China in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, hereafter referred to as **Chinese Central Asia**.

Indian subcontinent: This area should be treated separately into two parts. The first part includes parts of modern Pakistan and North-West Afghanistan along the Khyber Pass, which was historically referred to as Gandhāra and thought to be the north-western border of ancient India (hereafter referred to as **North-West India**). The second part is represented by the northern part of the Indian subcontinent that comprises present-day Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and parts of Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal in the Republic of India; however, the most relevant part for this study is Mathura in Uttar Pradesh (hereafter referred to as **North India**).

East Asia: This region is alternatively referred to as the **Far East**. As is well known, the term encompasses the modern countries of China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, but in the present study, the focus is on the Hexi Corridor, Sichuan Basins and China's Central Plain, which represent some core historical-geographical Chinese cultural areas, as well as mentioning Korea and Japan in the exchange with ancient China.

In the narrow and more focused sense in which this study centres, "East" refers to the regions extending from Central Asia and North-West India to China along the ancient Silk Road.

Chronological and cultural scope

The key aim of the thesis is categorisation of a corpus of works in various media inspired by the Heracles motif, particularly in Buddhist figural arts and some secular adaptations from Iranian, Indian and Chinese cultures, that may have migrated to and further developed in the East long after the first direct wave of Hellenisation brought by Alexander and his successors had passed.

Evidence for the introduction of Heracles into the Near East, Central Asia and Indian subcontinent is widely attributed to Alexander's emulation of the Greek hero and his campaigns. After his death in 323 BC, the regions in these areas witnessed the rises and falls of many prominent empires and kingdoms before the Islamic period, comprising the Seleucid (312–63 BC), Greco-Bactrian (250–120 BC), Parthian (247 BC–224 AD), Indo-Greek (200 BC–10 AD), Kushan (30–375 AD), and Sasanian (224–651 AD) entities. Each ruled over respectively vast domains, with the authority of some stretching almost from the Mediterranean area to the Indian subcontinent at various points in time, making them important conduits and recipients of the artistic conventions discussed in this thesis. In East Asia, the traces of Heracles are generally found among the dissemination of Gandhāran Buddhist art, which introduced the transformed version of the Greek hero into China and diffused throughout the region. It would appear that the majority of the Eastern lands of Central Asia, Indian subcontinent and East Asia are not included in the Greek legends of the hero (except for the so-called "Indian Heracles" in the classical literary sources which emerged after Alexander), as they were situated far beyond the inhabited world known to the Greeks. Nevertheless, the figure of Heracles had persisted in these markedly disparate contexts, exhibiting altered forms and conveying divergent content (and meaning) from Hellenistic culture, which will be examined across the respective chapters.

Definition of the studied material and methodology

In this study, the term **Heracleian** is used to describe images that evince certain characteristics associated with the Greco-Roman Heracles motif but do not necessarily align with the content and meaning of the Western representations. The available evidence allows for classifying these images into two main types, which will form the basis of the analysis.

The first type of evidence is exemplified by certain figurative motifs that derive their formal inspiration from the depictions of Heracles in "classical" art, namely the art of all of the "classical" civilisations of Greece and Rome, and not only that of the classical period of ancient Greece (480–323 BC). This comprises a substantial corpus of archaeological finds from the East and has been the subject of extensive attention and discussion. In this sense, the Heracleian figures, whether found in a narrative context or independently, are characterised by formal features reminiscent of typical Heracles images. The similarities lie in the hero's

physiognomy (in both young and aged forms), muscular physique, nudity and several of his iconic attributes, such as the lion scalp headdress with two paws tied beneath the chin, arms draped with the lion skin, and carrying or wielding his customary weapons of the knobbed club, and quiver with arrows and a bow. This evidence is both stylistic and content-related, yet these two aspects do not always coexist in the Eastern adaptations. In most cases, the most frequently presented element is the lionskin, with the artistic styles observed in each example exhibit considerable variation according to their regional and cultural affiliations. Nevertheless, this specific attribute can be traced as far as East Asia.

The second type of Heracleian evidence pertains to examples that have been inspired by or were possibly derivative of Heracles' narrative motifs. This particular type of evidence has been examined less extensively in previous studies. It can be divided into three subtypes. The first subtype may adopt the complete iconography of the narrative image of Heracles, such as one of Heracles' Labours, rendered in the local artistic language. The second subtype is evidenced by the mixture of similar narrative themes shared by the Heracles motif and other Eastern motifs, such as the themes of battling with a lion or, more generally, beast-fighting scenes, which have long existed in the Near East and Central Asia before the introduction of the Heracles motif into these regions. The third subtype is exemplified by "newly" generated local iconography that copied the composition of Heracles-related thematic images established in classical art. In some notable and unusual instances, the figure of Heracles is even replaced, as attested by examples in the visual arts of the Indo-Iranian world during Late Antiquity.

Irrespective of the type of evidence outlined above, the pertinent examples inevitably give rise to the same question: to what extent or in what ways could they be related to the "original" Heracles motif? This, in turn, involves an examination of the extent of hybridity in discrete artistic conventions. The visual contexts in which these variations of Heracleian representations appear typically indicate the acquisition of "new" meanings, while the "old" connotations may or may not have been entirely severed from the models that provided the reference for these variations. Therefore, the ways and media in which the Heracles motif was received, assimilated, manipulated and further mediated will be analysed according to the respective temporal contexts and case by case and without falling back on deterministic models that suppose one single transmission route

and one-way movement. The 'mapping' of these dynamics in particular represents a key contribution of this thesis to research on the topic.

The materials analysed in this study encompass various media with a wide range of functions and significances and characterised by distinct regional and temporal contexts. This study introduces the artefacts in accordance with the diverse media in which Heracles-like depictions were produced, including sculptures and reliefs of varying scales and materials, coins, precious objects, textiles and wall paintings.

The circulation of numerous coins featuring Heracleian images from the 4th century BC to the 2nd century AD in the Near East, Central Asia and North-West India is mainly attributed to the influence of Alexander and his successors in the Hellenistic East. The Heracles-type coins of the Kushan Empire may represent the easternmost instances. In the Near East, there are some large-scale sculptures and reliefs primarily crafted from limestone and a number of terracotta figurines, as well as some silverware and bronze artefacts. The archaeological finds in Central Asia provide evidence of many bronze statuettes, some precious material of artefacts and terracotta statues, figurines and plates. In North-West India, a considerable number of seals and clay tokens fashioned from an array of gemstones have been unearthed, accompanied by a multitude of sculptures and reliefs carved from schist. In Chinese Central Asia, terracotta and clay figurines and sculptures remain prevalent, accompanied by a significant number of wall paintings. This marks a notable transition from sculptural to pictorial representations of Heracleian imagery in the Far East. In China, evidence of figures with Heracleian features primarily appear in wall paintings and painted reliefs. Although the materials from each of these aforementioned regions differ significantly, such disparity is partly due to the current state of preservation and research foci and does not necessarily imply the complete absence of certain media in any cultural sphere.

The contexts (and accompanying functions) of these works are diverse, ranging from monumental or religious purposes to more secular applications. By presenting the material culture, the study aims to facilitate the analysis of representative types across different regions and periods, examine the interaction between various media within the same context, and assess the acceptance and adaptation of Heracleian imagery when it shifted from one context to another. Furthermore, the materials include portable objects that were disseminated across Eurasia, indicating

substantial material exchanges between disparate cultural spheres, which likely facilitated the transmission of the imagery. The analysis and comparison thus offer further contribution to research in shedding light on the complex processes of transmission and adaptation of Heracleian imagery across a vast spectrum of cultural contexts, emphasising the role of contextual factors in understanding the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon.

Existing scholarship

The existing scholarship on the subject of “Heracles in the East” which the thesis draws on can be broadly classified into two main categories. The first comprises archaeological reports and comprehensive catalogues dealing with the typology of the material record; and the second typically concentrates on one of the specific themes pertaining to the Heracles motif in the East.

The first category of scholarship, commencing with the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologicae Classicae (LIMC)*, comprises the most extensive and comprehensive data set concerning existing representations of Heracles in the visual arts from classical antiquity, in addition to a selection of representative examples from Central Asia and North-West India. Another comprehensive catalogue and study of Heracles in the Near East after Alexander is Susan Downey’s work (1969), which focuses on the discoveries from the site of Dura-Europos (in modern Syria) and considers other examples from the East in related areas of the same period, covering the types of Heracles figures in the areas from Syria to the Kushans. A further typological catalogue has been compiled more recently by Ladislav Stančo (2012) in his chapter on Heracles in the book *Greek Gods in the East*. This incorporated new evidence of Heracles types from Greek-ruled territories east of Iran and in the Kushan dominions. Many archaeological discoveries of the Heracleian figures are scattered across a large number of archaeological reports of sites from different regions and other catalogues dedicated to non-Hellenistic themes, which will be duly referenced in the relevant chapters.

Numismatic studies in particular have provided vital insights into the dissemination of the types of Heracles images in the Near East, Central Asia and North-West India in the period following Alexander. The comprehensive catalogues of Seleucid coinage, compiled by Arthur Houghton, Catharine Lorber and Oliver Hoover (2002, 2018), provide the

typologies of the figure of Heracles. The catalogues of the Parthian coinage produced by Warwick Wroth (1903) and David Sellwood (1980) demonstrate the sustained usage of Heracles types in the Parthian Empire. Catalogues of the Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and pre-Kushan coins have also devoted attention to the classification of the different Heracles types. This is exemplified by the volumes by Michael Mitchiner (1975–1976), Osmund Bopearachchi (1991, 2015a) and Robert C. Senior (2000). With regard to the easternmost instances of Heracles types in coinage, Robert Göbl's work (1984) provides the standard classification of the figural types of Heracles employed during the Kushan period. Additionally, works of Gul Rahim Khan (2005) and David Jongeward and Joe Cribb (2015) update some Heracles types in Kushan coinage.

The second category of scholarship concerns the examination of the connections between Heracles and indigenous divine figurative motifs and local contexts in the East. This includes undertaking comparative literature research and conducting in-depth investigations into the Heracles' assimilation in Eastern contexts. The study of comparative mythology with regard to the similarities between Heracles and other Eastern deities can be traced as far back as the 18th century when European scholars first began to draw parallels between Greek, Iranian and Indian gods, in the context of emerging Indo-European language studies. While a discussion of the Eastern adaptations of the Heracles motif in ancient literature is beyond the scope of this study, as the relevant ideas generated through textual comparisons have influenced some of our modern evaluations of material culture, they will also be mentioned, particularly in Chapter IV.

In general, greater attention has been paid to Heracles' assimilations with other deities of the Eastern tradition. Rachel Wood's work (2018) offers an up-to-date discussion and reflections on the images of Heracles in the Iranian context, in which the figure was presumably assimilated with Verethragna. In the case of the various examples of Heracleian figures in Central Asia and North-West India, especially those dating to the Kushan period, the traditional approach has been to relate such representations to the influences that remained in the Hellenistic East. Meanwhile, more holistic considerations have also been drawn to contextualise these artefacts. The most well-known case study pertinent to Heracles in North-West India is the figure of Vajrapāṇi in Gandhāran Buddhist art, and the Heracleian aspect of Vajrapāṇi is discussed in several works, particularly by Finbarr B. Flood (1989), Arcangela Santoro (1991),

Katsumi Tanabe (2005), Karl Galinsky (2019) and Lillian Sellati (2023). In China, the reception of Heracleian images is primarily attributed to the dissemination of Buddhist figural arts, particularly inspired by the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi case. In this regard, preliminary considerations regarding potential Chinese adaptations have been put forth by Ming-Liang Hsieh (1997), I-Tien Hsing (2005) and Juping Yang (2020).

From a broader perspective, the phenomenon of the Heracles motif migrating from West to East is widely acknowledged despite the occurrence of reverse directional influences in certain periods and areas. The figurative arts in China, particularly those within the Buddhist context, largely inherited the pictorial traditions established in India. Therefore, it can be assumed that the hypothesis of Heracles (or, rather, Heracleian figures) being present in the Far East is valid owing to the spread of religious and cultural exchanges along the ancient trade routes connecting Central and South Asia to China, which provides a plausible explanation for their presence in these regions. However, the current lack of classification and investigation of the Heracleian examples in Central Asia, North-West India and East Asia precludes the elucidation of many possible transmission routes. This study aims to put forward a preliminary discussion into this issue by presenting a comprehensive map of the Heracleian images in the Far East, incorporating the various metamorphoses that ultimately derive from the Greek hero to illustrate the transformations of his motif.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is broadly divided into three parts. The first part is comprised of three introductory chapters. Chapter I outlines the Western literary and artistic sources of the Heracles motif to give an overview of the general concepts and types of the Greek hero in Eastern contexts from the Western perspective. The subsequent two region-specific chapters (II and III) present and classify select evidence of the figure of Heracles from the Near East (South-East Türkiye, Syria, Iraq and Iran) to Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan) and North-West India (Pakistan), with a focus on the representative adaptation patterns of the figurative motif of Heracles in these regions that occurred after Alexander's campaigns (Seleucid, Parthian, early Sasanian, Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian periods). The objective of the first part is to ascertain which specific types and themes of the hero were possibly pivotal in the East in ensuring the longevity of Heracles' representation in art

and culture across a vast geographical area instead of encompassing all the material and interpretations.

The second part of the study consists of three chapters focusing on the metamorphoses of the Heracles motif in the Indian subcontinent. Chapter IV addresses how the concept of the “Indian Heracles”, as reflected in classical literary sources and intertwined with Hindu epics, has affected contemporary assessments of some archaeological material from Central Asia, North-West India and North India dating to the centuries around the Common Era. Following this, Chapter V first provides a survey of the archaeological evidence of Heracles images in Central Asia and Indian subcontinent postdating Greek rule, illustrating the sustained appeal of the figure and themes of Heracles. This regional chapter then examines the ways in which the Heracles motif was adapted and reinterpreted in the context of shifting and intermixing cultural traditions during the Saka-Parthian and Kushan periods, while the original meanings of the Greek hero were partially preserved. This resulted in a significant transformation of the Heracles motif in Gandhāran art during the Kushan period, as detailed in Chapter VI. In this part, we consider the extensive Gandhāran adaptations of the Heracles motif in Buddhist figural arts to suggest a pivotal moment in the transformation of the Greek hero’s image in the East, which allowed certain iconographic elements of Heracles to be integrated into Buddhist pictorial traditions that later disseminated to the further East.

The third part of the study, comprising three chapters, examines two types of evidence pertaining to the Heracleian images in the East that emerged subsequent to the Gandhāran adaptation. The first type of evidence is presented in Chapter VII, which discusses the continued presence of the Heracles figure in the Indo-Iranian world without integration with Buddhist figurative motifs. The following two chapters examine the second type of evidence, which is reflected in the Buddhist figural arts in Chinese territory from the 4th/5th to approximately the 10th centuries AD. In Chapter VIII, the evidence of Buddhist figures with Heracleian features found along the ancient Silk Routes that traversed the Tarim Basin is analysed to reveal the local adaptation approach and to trace the various foreign influences from Indian, Iranian and possibly Greco-Roman artistic sources. Finally, Chapter IX examines the Chinese evidence of figures from disparate regional arts that retain some iconographic elements reminiscent of the Heracles motif, focusing on Buddhist art and more secular genres, as seen in funerary contexts.

Chapter I

Outline of the Western literary and material sources (5th century BC–3rd century AD)

I.1. Western literary evidence of Heracles in the East: in the name of the hero

From the time of Herodotus onwards, the presence of Heracles in the East is well attested in Western literature, specifically narratives about the hero's travels to or presence in the East. From a geographical viewpoint, the narratives of "Heracles of the East", mentioned by Herodotus, Diodorus and many other Greek and Roman writers, usually refer to Heracles' expeditions to lands east of the Mediterranean sphere or to legends about other figures which the ancient authors would identify as Heracles. In the farthest East of the inhabited world (*oikoumene*) known by the Greeks, there are also figures of Heracles in India, mostly appearing in the writings of Alexander historians. All these narratives and figures relate to the Greek hero in varying degrees, but given the significant differences in time, place and cultures in which they are found and the evolving concept of the East (which originated among Greek geographers) does not grant the various representations any unifying identity or undiluted transmission of classical models.

I.1.1. Heracles' expeditions to lands east of the Mediterranean sphere

In Heracles' canonical Twelve Labours, the hero visited lands considered to be the eastern edges of the known Greek world.¹ In the ninth labour, he sailed to the river Thermodon on the Black Sea (modern Terme Çayı in North Türkiye) to fetch the war belt of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons (Diod. 4.28.1). Heracles often has offspring with foreigners in foreign lands. During the tenth labour (Geryon), on his way back to regroup the scattered herd of cattle, he returned via Scythia and had three sons

¹ Cf. Molina Marín 2021: 412–413.

with a local maiden, Echidna, one of whom became the ancestor of the whole line of the Scythian kings (Hdt. 4.8–10).² In search of the garden of the Hesperides during the eleventh labour, he wrestled with the giant Antaeus in Libya and killed Poseidon's son Busiris in Egypt (Diod. 4.17–18), then continued his journey to the Caucasus Mountains where he released Prometheus (Hes. *Theog.* 526–29; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.1). After the labours, Heracles stayed in Asia Minor in the service of the Lydian queen Omphale (Plut. *Thes.* 6.5). In the myth of the Argonauts and Phineus, Heracles went ashore once in “Asia” to get water and was left behind by the Argonauts (Diod. 4.44.5). From this selection of narratives, his propensity for travel across the ancient Mediterranean world, including North Africa and Asia Minor, is well recognised and passed down through several myths.³

I.1.2. Figures from other places assimilated to Heracles in Western literary sources

Besides the stories of Heracles' eastward movements to foreign lands, ancient Greek and Roman sources mention several figures from other places (particularly Egypt and Phoenicia) who could be related to the name and figure of Heracles in different ways.⁴ These other figures are generally not considered as equivalent to the Greek Heracles, nor do they exhibit a single direction of migration of Heracles' myth or cult from the West to the East. The ancient sources sometimes treated them as different heroes or gods, at other times perceived as assimilated to the Greek Heracles.⁵

² Pyankov 2006: 505–512. Igor V. Pyankov has suggested that Herodotus' narratives of Heracles in Scythia were local Scythian legends with Hellenic editing.

³ Gantz 1993: 374. Timothy Gantz has pointed out that many of Heracles' exploits developed quite early as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* preserve traces of them, but we must expect some of his adventures evolved as the Greek' geographical horizons widened in the Archaic period.

⁴ Cf. Mayne 2016: v, 128.

⁵ The number of all figures called Heracles, including the Greek one, varies in different sources; for example, Diodorus mentions three (Diod. 3.74), and Cicero counts six (*Nat. D.* 3.42). In Servius' commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid*, citing Varro, all those who had done valiantly were once called Heracles (Serv. A. 8.564). Cf. Arriaza 2021: 48–64.

Although the narrative details of the various figures called Heracles are not the focus here, before analysing the evidence of Heracles in the further East, we shall begin with two examples of the most ancient “Eastern” cases to show an early pattern of documenting a foreign Heracleian figure from the Mediterranean perspective, and to observe whether the pattern was shared or materialised in other figures of Heracles (or those connected to him) in the more distant East.

1.1.2.1. Egyptian Heracles

Herodotus is the first extant author who mentions that more than one Heracles existed. He writes that the Egyptian Heracles was one of the twelve ancient Egyptian gods rather than the son of Zeus and Alcmena, and he continues that the name of Heracles came to Greece from Egypt, not the other way around (Hdt. 2.43).⁶ Diodorus says the Egyptian figure was the most ancient, had conquered a large part of the inhabited world, and set up the pillar in Libya (Diod. 3.74). Cicero considers the Egyptian Heracles as the son of Nilus and the second oldest of the six heroes he counts by this name (*Nat. D.* 3.42). In Philostratus’ book describing the adventures of Apollonius and his followers on their journey to India, the Heracles of Egypt had travelled further east and overrun the Indian people with his arms (Philostr. *VA* 2.31–35).⁷ Accordingly, this association between Heracles and Egypt was known and maintained, certainly by writers, for many centuries as a key strand of the corpus of traditions surrounding the hero.

1.1.2.2. Phoenician Heracles (Melqart)

Some ancient Greek sources also distinguish the Phoenician Heracles from the Greek hero. Herodotus records that the Phoenicians worshipped an ancient god named Heracles at least five generations earlier than the son of Alcmena (Hdt. 2.44). He differentiates the older Phoenician god from the younger Greek Heracles. Similarly, Arrian writes that

⁶ Herodotus differentiates between the Egyptian and Greek Heracles, but he also notes another story where Heracles’ human parents — Amphitryon and Alcmena — came from Egypt, although they were descended from Perseus (Hdt. 2.43).

⁷ For the discussion of Philostratus’ engagement with the Indographic tradition in the *Vita Apollonii*, see Cobb 2023: 440–473.

the temple of Heracles in Tyre was the most ancient and was not dedicated to the Argive Heracles (Arr. *Anab.* 2.16.1).

While ancient authors like Herodotus, Cicero (Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.42), Arrian and Lucian (Lucian *Syr. D.* 3) were aware that a particular Phoenician god/hero under the name “Heracles” was not equivalent to the Greek hero, the Phoenician patron god Melqart (also known as Baal Şur “Lord of Tyre”) had been identified with Heracles since at least the 6th century BC based on iconographic evidence from the Levantine coast and Cyprus.⁸ The association between the two figures has thus been investigated from various perspectives, highlighting the bellicose disposition, divine status and leonine iconography.⁹ It should be clarified that, as Megan Daniels (2021) has noted, the literary and archaeological sources reveal how the heroic and divine personas intermixed over centuries of expansion and interaction instead of indicating a single figure represented by two different names or two separate figures that later syncretised.¹⁰ The case of Melqart-Heracles exemplifies the complexity of the interrelations between Heracles and other gods of Mediterranean and Near Eastern backgrounds, which possibly also happened in various places across the East, as will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

I.1.3. Heracles in India in the writings of Alexander historians

According to the Alexander historians, Heracles was worshipped in India.¹¹ India was included as the farthest East of the inhabited world in Herodotus’ *Histories* as early as the 5th century BC (Hdt. 3.98, 3.106, 4.40, 4.44), referring to the basin areas of the Indus River (in present-day

⁸ Bonnet 2007.

⁹ A rich body of scholarship has investigated the relationship between Heracles and Melqart through parsing the shared attributes, divine status, roles as colonial founders and many other aspects. Cf. Bonnet 1988, 1992, 2005, 2007; Markoe 2000: 124; Daniels 2021: 464–488. See also Bonnet 1997: *LIMC* viii.1, s.v. Melqart: 830–834.

¹⁰ Daniels 2021: 468.

¹¹ Arr. *Ind.* 5.8; Diod. 2.39; Curt. 9.4.2–3; Molina Marín 2021: 413.

North-West India and Pakistan).¹² After Alexander's Indian expedition, the Greeks acquired a better knowledge of the geography of India.¹³ Drawing on the work of Hellenistic scientists (e.g. Eratosthenes), later authors like Strabo, Pliny and Arrian referred to India as most of the Indian subcontinent (Str. 15.1.11–12; Plin. *HN* 6.56–80; Arr. *Anab.* 5.6.2–3).¹⁴ Although the Greek and Roman writers' conceptualisations of the exact location of India were time- and context-dependent, some consensus had been reached quite early on the boundaries of the land: the river Indus in the west, the mountains in the north and the ocean in the east and south.¹⁵

The earliest traces of Heracles in India in the literary sources handed down to us are from Megasthenes' *Indica*.¹⁶ Megasthenes was presumably an ambassador of Seleucus I Nicator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya (ca. 324/321–297 BC). Thanks to a wealth of quotations and summaries by later Greek and Roman writers, some fragments of Megasthenes' lost work have been preserved. However, the ambiguity of the fragments has also received polarised assessments and intrigued writers and scholars since ancient times.

Whether the Heracles in India in the Greek and Roman sources refers to the Greek hero who penetrated India or an indigenous god (or hero) with similar attributes and characteristics remains speculative. Most references to Alexander's sacrifices in India to Heracles as his ancestor come from Arrian (Arr. *Anab.* 6.3.2; *Ind.* 36.3).¹⁷ Modern scholarship has attempted to identify the figure mentioned by Megasthenes with several

¹² Herodotus tells us about the voyage of the Carian explorer and writer Scylax of Caryanda to India in about 515 BC (Hdt. 4.44). Karttunen 1989: 199. Klaus Karttunen has pointed out that a knowledge of what is now Central or South India in Hdt. 8 is of limited accuracy.

¹³ Cf. Parmar 2015: 21–24.

¹⁴ Stoneman 2022: 140–144.

¹⁵ Parmar 2015: 25.

¹⁶ Megasthenes' predecessor in writing about India, the Greek physician Ctesias, spent 17 years at the court of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II, did not mention Heracles in India in his account of India entitled *Indica* (late 5th century BC). Cf. Stoneman 2022. On the fragments of Ctesias' *Indica*, see Nichols 2011.

¹⁷ Djurslev 2021: 437–438.

Indian deities via a comparative approach, a point we shall return to in discussing the modern interpretation of the so-called Indian Heracles.

Leaving aside temporarily the varied modern opinions and the problem of how the legends are linked to Alexander, Megasthenes' discussion of the figure of Heracles in India can be summarised as follows:

- a) Heracles was born among the Indians or probably travelled to India (Diod. 2.39.1; Arr. *Ind.* 8.4).¹⁸
- b) Like the Greek hero, he also possessed the attributes of club and lionskin, and his bodily strength and bravery exceeded that of any man (Diod. 2.39.1).
- c) Heracles divided India into many parts and appointed his numerous sons as kings and his only daughter (Pandaie/Pandaea) as queen (Diod. 2.39; Arr. *Ind.* 8.6; Plin. *HN* 6.23.3; Polyaeus, *Strat.* 1.3.4).
- d) Heracles was worshipped by Indians who inhabited the plains (Str. 15.1.58), and by the Suraseni, an Indian tribe which dwelt in the cities of Methora and Cleisobora on the River Iomanes (Arr. *Ind.* 8.5).¹⁹
- e) Heracles attacked the rock of Aornus three times and was repulsed. The tribe of Sibae would become the descendants of the survivors left behind taking part in Heracles' campaigns. The Sibae carry clubs and brand their cattle with a club (Str. 15.1.8; Arr. *Ind.* 5.4–12, 5.4–8; Curt. 9.4.2–3).²⁰
- f) The myth of Heracles releasing Prometheus from the Caucasus Mountains transferred to have occurred in the Hindu Kush (Paropamisus) because Alexander's men had seen the cave in which Prometheus had been imprisoned (Str. 15.1.8; Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1–2; Plin. *HN.* 6.71; Curt. 7.3.19–23).²¹
- g) Heracles travelled all the land and sea and cleared them of evils. He was impressed by the beauty and value of the pearls he found in the sea around India (Arr. *Ind.* 8.4; Plin. *HN* 6.76).²²

¹⁸ Stoneman 2022: 31.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 42.

²² *Ibid.*: 43–45.

There are more details within these respective narratives,²³ but an outline is sufficient to present the ambiguity and variety associated with the “Indian Heracles”, which resulted in controversial perceptions of the authenticity of these narratives since ancient times, especially since we only have Western records after the death of Alexander.

Greco-Roman authors have also thoroughly documented Alexander’s Heracleian emulation during his expedition to the East. The episode of the Aornus Rock is one pertinent example –²⁴ the event purportedly occurred in 327 BC when Alexander claimed he had outdone his famous ancestor Heracles by taking the fortress on the rock when he marched into India (Arr. *Anab.* 4.28–30; Diod. 17.85.1–86.1; Curt. 8.11.2–25). Most Greco-Roman writings about Alexander’s campaigns cite this story, but not all agree on its authenticity. Some argue that the Greek Heracles did not carry out such an adventure. From Strabo, we learn that Eratosthenes considered the event untrustworthy because Alexander’s flatterers would have invented it (Str. 15.1.8–9).²⁵ Arrian seems more favourable to Megasthenes’ work judging by his detailed paraphrases, but it is evident that some of his passages seem contradictory to what he chose to narrate. For instance, on the one hand, Arrian recalls that the ancestor Heracles who conquered Aornus was the son of Zeus, yet on the other hand, he wonders if the Theban, Tyrian or Egyptian Heracles had possibly travelled to India and inclines to reject the assumption that Heracles did not penetrate into India. He concludes: “in regard to this rock, the name of Heracles was mentioned simply to add to the marvellousness of the tale” (Arr. *Anab.* 4.28.2).

In addition to the writings on Heracles in India directly derived from Megasthenes, Curtius mentions a simulacrum of Heracles carried by Porus’ army in the Battle of the Hydaspes between Alexander and Porus (Curt. 8.14.11). Based on this information, modern scholarship has sought to explain this Heracleian simulacrum as an Indian counterpart, e.g. Śiva or an Indian god of war, whom the Macedonians might have

²³ Cf. Dahlquist 1962: 71–72.

²⁴ Aurel Stein located Aornus at Pīr-sar, while Giuseppe Tucci located it at Mount Elam. See Stein 1927: 433, 1929: 120–154, 1930: 88–94; Tucci 1977: 52–55; Olivieri 1996: 64–65. For the discussion of the geography and meanings of Aornus, see Bernard 1996: 475–530.

²⁵ Bichler 2018: 52–55; Stoneman 2019: 86–87.

misidentified with Heracles.²⁶ Few passages in Greco-Roman literary sources mention the Indian Heracles without associating this figure with Alexander's campaigns. In Cicero's aforementioned discussion of different figures of Heracles, the fifth belongs to India and is called "Belus" (Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.42). Some modern studies have suggested the identification of Cicero's Belus as Balarāma, the Hindu god of agriculture and strength.²⁷ This identification has somewhat affected the modern scholarly perception of the Heracleian figures in India, which will be discussed in relation to specific works of art in Chapter V.

Overall, it is unclear whether the Indian Heracles in the Greek and Roman sources referred to the same figure. It is important to note that most of the ancient writers had no direct contact with the Eastern world, and the Greco-Roman view of India from the 3rd century BC onwards is often reflected in the reliance on Megasthenes' writings and those of Alexander's historians may also draw on preconceived cultural stereotypes. The malleability of the figure of Heracles in India, according to Greco-Roman literature, is influenced by multiple Greek traditions, including a recognition of multiple figures of Heracles, the inclusion of Heracles narratives in the histories of kings and dynasties, and adapting the theme of Heracles' journeys into narratives of (historical and mythical) Greek colonial ventures, showing the significance of using the hero's name in shaping and developing new traditions. In the modern scholarly discourse on the identities of Indian Heracles and the artistic representations of Heracleian figures in India, these documentary sources have been considered helpful in complementing the silence in ancient Indian literature on the name Heracles, even though they only provide a Western perspective regarding Heracles in the East. In the second part of the present study, we shall look in detail at the Heracleian figures in the Indian context to discuss the problem of identifying the Indian Heracles with

²⁶ Cunningham 1891: vii–viii; Coomaraswamy 1927: 42, fn. 5; Olivieri 1996: 68.

²⁷ In the 19th century, Edward Balfour (1885) interpreted Cicero's Belus as the king of Egypt, Osiris, who invaded Punjab, while Francis Wilford (1799) and James Tod (1835) identified Belus as Balarāma. Asko Parpola has recently adopted the latter identification. See Balfour 1885: 38–39; Wilford 1799: 270; Tod 1835: 139–159; Varadpande 2009: 124; Parpola 2015: 154, 303; Cf. Chopra 2019: 214.

several Indian deities when considering literary and archaeological evidence.

I.2. Evidence of the artistic tradition of Heracles in the East

Among the existing works on Heracles' representations in the visual arts, the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologicae Classicae* (*LIMC*) is the most extensive and comprehensive resource.²⁸ Numerous works on Heracles in classical antiquity are collected in the *LIMC*, in which the iconography of the figure is treated meticulously. In the fourth and fifth volumes, the entry on Heracles is sorted into twelve chapters: I) Heracles alone; II) Heracles in various non-narrative roles; III) Heracles' early life and family; IV) Heracles' labours; V) Heracles' expeditions; VI) other principal adversaries and occasions; VII) other undefined encounters; VIII) Heracles' death and apotheosis; IX) Heracles with the Olympian gods; X) Heracles with other figures of cult and myth; XI) Heracles and Theseus; XII) Heracles participates in other mythological events. Each is further divided into sub-categories, displaying the richness of the visual sources. Additional materials were later added in the *LIMC Supplementum*.²⁹

A substantial number of representations of Heracles in the East have also been collected and classified in the *LIMC*, which we shall use as a departure point for investigating the visual tradition of Heracles in the East. Through the *LIMC*, we can observe the variety of visual types of the hero that migrated to different places in the East through time. This will also allow us to further discuss the extent to which (if at all) the Heracleian form and its attributes that survived in the ancient East still retained the meaning and narratives of the Greek hero known in the West.

²⁸ Boardman, Palagia, Woodford 1988: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles: 728–838; Boardman, Brize, Felten, Kokkorou-Alewrás, Laurens, Palagia, Smallwood, Todisco, Woodford 1990: *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles: 1–192. Cf. Smith 2021: 345–367.

²⁹ Boardman 2009: *LIMC* supp.1, s.v. Herakles: 242–244.

I.2.1. Evidence of Heracles in the East in the *LIMC*

Based on the *LIMC*, many representations of Heracles in various media come from the East.³⁰ From Asia Minor (modern Türkiye), Heracles' representations, both alone and with others (e.g. Greek rulers), are realised in bronze (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 885, 1628; *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2234), stone (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1104, 1106, 1112–1115, 1575–1577, 1659; *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1725, 1730–1733, 1937, 2694), clay (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1159; *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2761), and mosaic (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1053; *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 3253–3254) survive.

In Mesopotamia (Assyria/Babylonia, now South-East Türkiye, Syria, Iraq, and Iran), Parthian rulers frequently issued coins depicting the figure of Heracles (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 756). Several marble, limestone, and bronze statues have been found at Seleucia-on-Tigris and Hatra (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 337, 787, 974, 1033–1035; *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2412), including the remarkable bronze statue of Heracles-Verethragna (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 731). In Persia (modern Iran), a statue of Heracles reclining as a symposiast is still extant at the Behistun complex (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1012), which will be discussed in more detail later.

The figure of Heracles also achieved popularity in Central Asia and North-West India, where he may be found in a variety of media. Some small Scythian gold pieces preserved the figure of Heracles that dated back to the 4th century BC (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1771, 3203). In Bactria and Sogdiana (modern Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), the portrait and figure of the hero appear on numerous coins of many generations of Hellenistic Greek rulers (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 160, 193, 195, 283, 627, 738, 946). Ivory reliefs from Takht-i Sangin show Heracles trampling enemies (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 3245a); and bronze statuettes and plaster medallions with the representations of Heracles have been discovered at the archaeological sites of Ai Khanoum and Begram (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 207, 541, 747). Clay relief, silver vessels, scaraboid seals with pertinent imagery have also been recovered

³⁰ Boardman *et al.* 1988: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles: 728–838; Boardman *et al.* 1990: *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles: 1–192.

from North-West India (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1546, 1688; *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1920).

The problem is that many of the objects mentioned above lack contextual information (apart from those belonging to the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, such as the Roman sculptures in Asia Minor). Thus, identifying these figures of Heracles from the East usually relies on attributes or formal similarities to some attested Greco-Roman types of Heracles, which may result in different interpretations of Eastern adaptations of the Heracles motif.

I.2.2. Existing types of Heracles in the East in the *LIMC*

Setting aside the problems of context and attribution, the evidence above shows several types of Heracles that have survived or were popularised in the East. The majority of types represent the hero standing and carrying his attributes. The seated and reclining types have fewer variants than the standing types but were also relatively popular in the East. The head/bust of the hero usually appears on coins and is sometimes found in plaster mouldings for metalware manufacture. Herms are primarily found in Asia Minor. In terms of the representations of Heracles with other figures or in various narratives, his early life and family, in some instances with other figures, and several of his labours are recorded, yet some of the subjects are uncertain. The following list provides the types of Heracles present in the East based on the *LIMC*.

I.2.2.1. Head and Bust

I.2.2.1.a) Young

The type of young Heracles wearing a lionskin headdress and paws knotted at the chest is mostly found on coins and shown as a profile portrait. The representation is almost indistinguishable from the profile portrayal of Alexander, and the lionskin headdress was added to many subsequent sovereigns' portraits in the Hellenistic East (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 160).

I.2.2.1.b) Aged

The type of aged Heracles shows a bearded hero's profile. Without wearing a lionskin headdress, the head/bust is usually recognised as Heracles by physiognomic similarity to the head of some sculptural types

(*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 207). On some occasions, the club is placed on his shoulder (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 193, 195).

1.2.2.2. *Standing*

1.2.2.2.a) *Young*

- (1) Heracles' right hand rests on a club, while the left stretches forward and usually holds apples (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 283).
- (2) Wreathed Heracles, weight on the right leg, right hand holds forth a second wreath, left arm carries the lionskin and club (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 627).
- (3) Heracles crowns himself with his right hand, while his left carries the lionskin and club (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 738, 747).
- (4) Heracles' right hand holds forth a drinking cup (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 756).

1.2.2.2.b) *Aged (with beard)*

- (1) Headless Heracles (aged?) wears lionskin knotted at the chest; a second lionskin hangs from his left arm; his left hand holds a cup (*kantaros*) against his chest (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 337).
- (2) Heracles (assimilated with Serapis), weight on the left leg, right hand rests on the club, apples in the left hand (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 541).
- (3) Heracles looks up to his left, right hand on his hip, his left hand hangs by the club (leaning on the club under his left armpit), and his left leg is set back (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 731).
- (4) Heracles holds a cup in the left hand, right hand rests on a club (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 787).
- (5) Intoxicated Heracles stumbles forward, club over the left shoulder, right leg advanced, lionskin draped over the left arm (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 885).

1.2.2.3. *Seated (aged)*

The type of the seated hero, aged and resting from his labours is found in some stone statues and coins. He is usually seated on rocks or a stool, his hand resting on a club that is placed on his thigh or on a pile of rocks (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 946, 974). The type and its variants are

arguably drawn from Lysippus' models, such as the colossal bronze statue in Taranto and the Heracles Epitrapezios.³¹ Variants of the seated type appear on the tetradrachms of many Greek rulers from the Seleucid Empire and the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, particularly on the coins of Antiochus II (ca. 261–246 BC) and Euthydemus I (ca. 230–200 BC).

1.2.2.4. Reclining (as an aged symposiast)

The reclining type of Heracles often holds a cup in the left hand, the right hand rests on his thigh and the lower legs are crossed. Sometimes, his club, quiver and lionskin are shown on the ground (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1012, 1033, 1034, 1035). A variant from Antioch shows the hero holding the cup in his right hand and the club in his left (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1053). The type echoes the sculptural type of drinking Heracles created at the end of the 4th century BC, probably inspired by the reclining figure of Dionysus of the east pediment of the Parthenon.³²

1.2.2.5. Herms

Hip herms of Heracles with his attributes are found in Asia Minor. According to Palagia, a herm of Heracles may have been placed as a signpost to a gymnasium or palaestra in the background of an East Greek stele of the Hellenistic period (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1104, 1159).³³

1.2.2.6. Heracles' early life and family

1.2.2.6.a) Heracles' Twelve Labours (Dodekathloi)

(*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1725, 1730–1733)

1.2.2.6.b) Labour I: Heracles and the Nemean Lion

- (1) Heracles wrestles with the lion. The hero is on one knee, and both arms (or one) are around the lion's neck. The lion claws at the hero, and its head appears below his arm (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1771).

³¹ Palagia 1988: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles: 773–775, 794.

³² *Ibid.*: 777, 794.

³³ *Ibid.*: 781.

- (2) Heracles places his foot on the dead lion and stretches his hand to a woman approaching with a jug. Eros flies above (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1920).
- (3) Heracles grips the lion's head under his left elbow (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1937).

1.2.2.6.c) Labour III: Heracles and the Ceryneian Hind

- (1) Heracles fights with the deer without weapons; he holds the antlers or ears of the deer with both hands (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 2193, 2222).
- (2) Heracles captures the deer; he stands or runs beside the deer and grabs an antler in one hand (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2234).

1.2.2.6.d) Labour IV: Heracles and the Erymanthian Boar

Heracles carries the boar on his left shoulder and brings it to Eurystheus; he stands on the rim of the pithos (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2160).

1.2.2.6.e) Labour VII: Heracles and the Cretan Bull

- (1) Heracles attacks the bull with his club, seizes a horn and the muzzle, and the bull squats upright (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2407).
- (2) Heracles' holds the bull's head with one hand, and sometimes the other holds a club (uncertain identification) (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2412).

1.2.2.6.f) Labour XI: Heracles and the Apples of the Hesperides

Heracles stands alone in the Garden, the lionskin draped over his left arm; he kneels on a branch of the tree to break it; the club is placed below (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 2694, 2761).

As presented above, following the *LIMC*, several Heracles' labours would not be attested by works from the East, including Labours II (Lernaean Hydra), V (Augean Stables), VI (Stymphalian Birds), VIII (Diomedes' Mares), IX (Hippolyte's Belt), X (Geryon) and XII (Cerberus). Among Heracles' labours that would be attested by works from the East (Labours I, III, IV, VII, XI), we can notice a selection of types, as these works seem to use only a few types, a subset of the different types employed to represent each Labour. Moreover, some of the eastern occurrences reveal visual similarities to the Greco-Roman types, but the actual identifications of the figures are uncertain. Nevertheless, some evidence

from the East shows that some representations of Heracles' labours, absent in the *LIMC*, may have once existed in the East and influenced Eastern artistic production, which we will introduce in detail in the following chapters.

1.2.2.7. Heracles with other figures

1.2.2.7.a) Heracles with Greek rulers

Heracles stands and holds a club in his left hand, lionskin draped over his left arm, and shakes hands with Near Eastern Greek rulers (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1575–1577).

1.2.2.7.b) Heracles and Demeter

Demeter with corn ears in hair; young Heracles with club and wreath (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 3203).

1.2.2.7.c) Heracles and satyrs

- (1) Supported by a satyr, Heracles stands and pulls the dress from a woman who holds out her arm to him (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1546).
- (2) Heracles wears the lionskin with the paws knotted in front, raises his club and tramples a kneeled satyr (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 3245a).

1.2.2.7.d) Heracles and Dionysus

Dionysus reclines and holds a drinking cup, flanked by satyrs and a maenad with pipes; Heracles drinks and kneels before Dionysus (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 3253–3254).

1.2.2.7.e) Heracles and Hermes

Heracles and Hermes seated on rocks (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 3361).

The evidence of Heracles in the East recorded in the *LIMC* reflects the diffusion and diversity of the hero's visual types that had migrated eastward to lands far distant from the Mediterranean sphere. The popularity of the Heracles motif in the East is usually ascribed to Alexander's campaigns, and it is possible that it became a popular subject in the Eastern regions where Greek colonies were founded or where the local communities came into contact with the Greco-Roman world. In addition to the

examples recorded in the *LIMC*, many scholars have further supplemented evidence of Heracles' representations in Eastern visual arts in more specific publications, which will be examined in the following chapters. Furthermore, the transmission of Heracles figure also triggered the metamorphoses of certain classical models in very distant contexts, such as figures that adopted some Heracleian features in Iranian and Indian art, which will also be discussed.

Chapter II

Heracles in the Near East after Alexander the Great (4th century BC–3rd century AD)

This chapter presents pertinent evidence of the figure of Heracles from the ancient Near East during the Seleucid, Parthian and early Sasanian periods. Coins, sculptures, reliefs, figurines and inscriptions offer the key archaeological evidence that attests to the successful introduction of the Greek hero in the East, a subject that has seen extensive research.

Given the focus of the present study, a comprehensive survey of every single example is beyond its scope. However, it is necessary to introduce the most representative Heracles types in the Near East regions from the Hellenistic to the early Sasanian periods, as they provide vital references and evidence for tracing their migration from the Mediterranean to Central Asia and analysing the overall diffusion of Heracles' image in Central Asia and North-West India. This chapter thus begins with the numismatic evidence, introduced by following the chronological progression within the considered geographical and chronological scope. Then, the sculptural evidence is presented in a geographical sequence, following a west-to-east trajectory. Within this geographical subdivision, the iconographic types are observed. The discussion of non-narrative iconographic types precedes that of the narrative ones. After this, a more holistic analysis of the adaptation patterns is presented in the second section as a connection to the subsequent transfers of the motif to Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. This structure is also applied to Chapter III and Chapter V, where media and types are introduced and categorised in a relatively similar manner.

II.1. Evidence from the Seleucid, Parthian, and early Sasanian periods

Numismatic catalogues have devoted considerable attention to coin types with the figure of Heracles and his attributes, especially Seleucid

and Parthian coins minted at Seleucia-on-Tigris.³⁴ In addition, sculptural evidence bears witness to the popularity of the figure of Heracles in the Near East during the considered period. Many pertinent stone statues, reliefs, terracotta figurines and bronze statuettes have been discovered at various sites in modern-day Türkiye, Syria, Iraq and Iran. For example, at Nemrut Dağı (South-East Türkiye), the figure of Heracles is included in the syncretic pantheon of the Greco-Iranian kingdom of Commagene (ca. 163 BC–72 AD), represented by several colossal statues.³⁵ During the Parthian period, numerous Heracleian sculptures made have been found at Dura-Europos³⁶ and at Hatra.³⁷ The maintenance of Heracles in the sculptural tradition is also well-attested in southern Iraq by a considerable number of terracotta figurines³⁸ and some stone and bronze statues.³⁹ In Iran, stone statues, rock reliefs, terracotta figurines and seal impressions of the Heracles figure survive.⁴⁰ Some of them suggest worship of the Greek hero by Greek colonists or administrators in the region, such as the terracotta figurines dated to the Hellenistic period unearthed at Susa and the only Seleucid-period rock carving of Heracles at Behistun.⁴¹ These examples will be discussed here according to the most representative types of Heracles in the Near Eastern regions, which also informed artistic repertoires in the motif's journey further eastward.

³⁴ For Seleucid coins, see Houghton and Lorber 2002; Hoover 2007; Houghton, Lorber and Hoover 2008. For Parthian coins, see Wroth 1903; Sellwood 1980; Magub 2018.

³⁵ Brijder 2014.

³⁶ Downey 1969.

³⁷ Al-Salihi 1971: 113–115, 1973: 65–69, 1982:137–140; Kaizer 2000: 219–232.

³⁸ Karvonen-Kannas 1995.

³⁹ Hopkins 1972; Al-Salihi 1984: 219–229; Invernizzi 1989a: 65–113, 1989b: 623–636; Bernard 1990: 3–68.

⁴⁰ Ghirshman 1975: 229–239; Callieri 2007.

⁴¹ Kawami 1987; Canepa 2018: 185–187; Wood 2018: 333–336.

II.1.1. Numismatic evidence

II.1.1.1. Seleucid coins

The figure and accoutrements of Heracles were employed prolifically on coins in the Hellenistic period. Several types have been defined and published in catalogues of the Seleucid coins, the most common being Heracles (or Alexander) in profile.⁴² This type shows a beardless Heracles facing right, wearing the lionskin headdress with the paws knotted beneath his chin on the obverse, and the reverse usually shows Zeus sitting and facing left, holding Nike in his outstretched right hand and a sceptre in the left (Zeus Nikephoros) (Cat. No. 1). Seleucus I Nicator (305–281 BC) and several subsequent Seleucid kings followed this scheme — originally promulgated by Alexander — and minted the coins in different locations.⁴³ A variant of this type with an additional club over Heracles' shoulder is depicted on Seleucus II's (246–225 BC) coins,⁴⁴ and a laureate and bearded Heracles features on Seleucus I's and Antiochus IX's (116–96 BC) coins.⁴⁵

The reverse types usually show Heracles' attributes and him sitting on a rock, resting his hand on a club (coins of Antiochus I Soter (281–261 BC) and Antiochus II Theos (261–246 BC)) (Cat. No. 2).⁴⁶ Hoover (2007) also mentioned a standing type, resting a hand on a club and carrying a lion-skin, once identified as Seleucid, though they seem more akin to Thasian and Maronean tetradrachms of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.⁴⁷ Sometimes, Heracles' club and quiver are shown on the reverses.⁴⁸ In general,

⁴² Houghton and Lorber 2002; Hoover 2007; Houghton, Lorber and Hoover 2008.

⁴³ For young Heracles in lionskin headdress, see Hoover 2007: nos. 1, 3–4, 6–7, 10–11, 13–41, 43–70, 73, 75–77, 83–94, 99–100, 102–103, 114–115, 121, 138, 167–169, 183, 185–186, 830–832, 854–856.

⁴⁴ See the SCO website: <http://numismatics.org/sco/id/sc.1.825> (accessed on 31 July 2024).

⁴⁵ Hoover 2007: nos. 5, 768.

⁴⁶ For the reverse type of Heracles' club, quiver, and bow, see SCO: <http://numismatics.org/sco/id/sc.1.85> (accessed on 31 July 2024); for the seated Heracles see Hoover 2007: 103, 143–133; for the club: 320, 836; for the bow and quiver: 410–411, 517, 717.

⁴⁷ Hoover 2007: 151, nos. 837–838.

⁴⁸ Magub 2018: Fig. 42.

the representations of Heracles on Seleucid coins are unambiguous and may have provided the archetypes of Heracles' image which were transmitted eastward through time and across locales.

II.1.1.2. Parthian coins

Coin design in the Parthian Empire adopted a certain style and several motifs from the Seleucid Empire, such as the "bowman" type on the drachms which follows the Seleucid type of Apollo Omphalos,⁴⁹ and the attributes of various Greek deities being employed on the reverse.⁵⁰ Heracles' images are also found on Parthian coins, taking inspiration from the Seleucid and Greco-Bactrian spheres.⁵¹

During Mithridates I of Commagene's reign (109? –70/69 BC), a standing Heracles type was regularly depicted on the reverse of tetradrachms minted at the conquered Seleucid capital, Seleucia-on-Tigris (Cat. No. 3).⁵² The nude hero is standing to the left with his left hand holding a club, the lionskin draped over the arm and the right hand holds a cup. The Iranian sovereigns from Characene (e.g. Hyspaosines, Apodacus, Tiraeus II, Attambelus I), a vassal kingdom of the Parthian Empire in Southern Mesopotamia (ca. 2nd c. BC–3rd c. AD), often used the model of naked and diademed Heracles sitting on a rock with his club (Cat. No. 4).⁵³ A knobbed club shown on the reverses of Mithridates II's (38–20 BC) bronze coins has been regarded as Heracles' club.⁵⁴ The figure and attributes of Heracles in the Parthian coinage generally followed Hellenistic styles and motifs.

⁴⁹ Wroth 1903: lxvii; Magub 2018: 175–176, 205.

⁵⁰ Magub 2018: 46, 224–269.

⁵¹ Alram 1986: 536–540.

⁵² Wroth 1903: lxxix–lxxx, Pl. iii 7, 10, 12; Sellwood 1980: 13.3, 13.5; Magub 2018: 43, 135, 146–147, Fig. 10.

⁵³ Hill 1922: 289–309; Magub 2018: 168, Figs. 59, 60, 61.

⁵⁴ Magub 2018: 213, Figs. 95–96.

II.1.2. Sculptural evidence

II.1.2.1. South-East Türkiye

Large-scale reliefs and sculptures featuring Heracles are found in the territory of Commagene (modern Adıyaman province, Türkiye) and are usually shown together with sovereigns. In particular, the handshake motif (*dexiosis*) was used in many reliefs, such as the stela at Nemrut Dağı (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1576) (Cat. No. 5),⁵⁵ the limestone relief from Arsameia (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1575)⁵⁶ and another basalt stela found at Samsat (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1577) (Cat. No. 6).⁵⁷ These reliefs all depict the nude and bearded Heracles standing and facing the king directly, his left hand holding the club and the lionskin draped over the arm, and the right hand shaking that of Mithridates I or Antiochus I Theos of Commagene (ca. 69–36 BC). Judging by the inscriptions found at Nemrut Dağı, figures of Heracles from this region may be identified as Artagnes-Heracles-Ares.⁵⁸

In the case of the colossal statue on the East Terrace at Nemrut, the seated figure labelled Artagnes-Heracles-Ares shares the beard and the club with the Greek hero but is dressed in a Persian manner (Cat. No. 7). Together with the rest of the statues of Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Zeus-Oromasdes, Tyche of Commagene and King Antiochus I, they are flanked by an eagle and a lion on each side.⁵⁹ The combination of Greek and Persian elements in these sculptures has been considered a sophisticated result of balancing the traditions of the Hellenistic and Persian monarchies.⁶⁰ Matthew P. Canepa (2018) has suggested that the Iranian identities are more significant even if the representations of Apollo-Mithras-Helios and Artagnes-Heracles-Ares might have maintained their Greek features.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Humann and Puchstein 1890: Pl. 39B; Canepa 2015: Pl. 2.13.

⁵⁶ Colledge 1977: Pl. 32b.

⁵⁷ Colledge 1977: Pl. 32a; TNM 2003: 102, cat. 92.

⁵⁸ Sanders 1996; Wood 2012: 210.

⁵⁹ Sanders 1996: Fig. 90; Canepa 2018: 244–246.

⁶⁰ Humann and Puchstein 1890: 340; Jacobs 2011.

⁶¹ Canepa 2018: 203.

II.1.2.2. Syria and Iraq

In Syria and Iraq, numerous stone sculptures, reliefs and several bronzes of the figure of Heracles dated to the Seleucid and Parthian eras have been found at archaeological sites, including Sweida, Palmyra, Dura-Europos and Hatra.⁶² Most of these sculptures represent nude, muscular male figures resting their hands on clubs and carrying lionskins; some are also shown together with actual lions. These examples show that Hellenistic and Near Eastern styles co-existed, while iconography was modified in several cases.

II.1.2.2.a) Reclining

One of the popular types is the reclining aged Heracles as a symposiast, a Dionysus-related motif that appeared towards the end of the 4th century BC.⁶³ The reclining hero with his right hand resting on the club and left hand with a cup (or empty) is present on Palmyrene tesserae,⁶⁴ a plaster relief from Dura-Europos (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1035) (Cat. No. 8), and several reliefs from Hatra (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1033–1034) (Cat. No. 9).⁶⁵ These examples preserve the Greek hero's iconography and attributes such as the club, cup and lionskin, and the overall style is closer to Greco-Roman conventions. They can also be compared with the votive relief of the reclining Heracles from Athens (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1023).⁶⁶

II.1.2.2.b) Standing

Many standing Heracles sculptures have been discovered in Syria and Iraq. These sculptures generally follow the iconography of the standing hero carrying attributes, but sometimes their style, design and execution level can be very distant from the Greco-Roman models. For example, several standing nude figures with the right hand holding an upright club and the left arm draped with the lionskin from Dura-Europos show less interest in anatomical accuracy and are incised with geometrical

⁶² Bounni 1986: 377–387; Downey 1969; Paul, Stone and Pinnick 2001: 421.

⁶³ Palagia 1988: 777; cf. Gavrilović-Vitas 2020: 70–79.

⁶⁴ Seyrig 1944: 64, Pl. II.

⁶⁵ Downey 1969: Pls. XX 1, XXIII 3.

⁶⁶ Cf. Palagia 1988: 777–779; Gavrilović-Vitas 2020: 76.

patterns (Cat. Nos. 10–11).⁶⁷ There are also variations of the standing type which add a cup to the left hand, and an additional lionskin knotted at the chest (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 337) (Cat. Nos. 12–13).⁶⁸ In the comprehensive catalogue of the Heracles sculptures from Dura-Europos compiled by Downey, about 22 sculptures definitely represent the Greek hero standing at rest, and two are classed as representations of Heracles because of their nudity and certain attributes.⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that, according to Downey's observation (1969), sculptures of nude males are extremely rare at Dura-Europos, and almost all of the discoveries of nude male figures have been identified as Heracles.⁷⁰

Most representations of Heracles at Hatra are free-standing statues, including a few bronze statuettes (Cat. No. 14) and numerous large-scale stone sculptures (Cat. Nos. 15–16). The most commonly found type is the standing figure reminiscent of the so-called Chiaramonti Heracles (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 461), likely based on a prototype made in the late 4th century BC derived from the Severe Style Cherchel Heracles (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 428–430) with an added lionskin.⁷¹ Some examples also wear local jewellery, such as necklaces and bracelets (Cat. No. 17).⁷² The facial features of bulging eyes, swollen forehead and a longer beard with individually defined curls have similarities to some Hellenistic terracotta statuettes from Cyprus, Smyrna and Egypt.⁷³ Downey (1972) has noted that the general characteristic of the works from Hatra barely indicates musculature. It seems that the sculptors had little interest in anatomical fidelity and opted to follow the Near Eastern artistic traditions of emphasising the textures of hair and pelts rather than naturalistic representation of the human form.⁷⁴

The standing Heracles sculptures from Mesopotamia most akin to the classical style were discovered at various ancient sites in Iraq, such as

⁶⁷ Downey 1969: Pls. VI.3, VII.1; Brody and Hoffman 2011: 335, no. 48, Pl. 48.

⁶⁸ Downey 1969: 32–33, Pl. XVI.1–2; Brody and Hoffman 2011: 369, no. 68, Pl. 68.

⁶⁹ Downey 1969: 19, 41.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 19.

⁷¹ Palagia 1988: 752.

⁷² Downey 1972: 77–78.

⁷³ Cf. Koiner and Reitingner 2019: 49–50.

⁷⁴ Downey 1972: 77.

Seleucia-on-Tigris, Babylon, Nippur and Uruk (Warka). The most well-known statue of this type from the area is the gilded bronze of the so-called Heracles-Verethragna from Seleucia-on-Tigris. This statue is categorised among variants derived from the Farnese Heracles in the *LIMC*, making it a quasi-Lysippan type (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 731) (Cat. No. 18).⁷⁵ It represents the bearded hero, naked, standing with the weight on his right leg and left slightly bent and advanced. The left arm is lost, with only the shoulder remaining, while the right arm is bent to the side and the right hand rests on the hip.⁷⁶ Although it does not have the exaggerated musculature common to most replicas of the Farnese Heracles, the execution of the figure's anatomy and overall physiognomy is meticulous and precise. Comparisons have also been made with gilded bronze Republican and Imperial sculptures from the city of Rome itself, specifically the Forum Boarium, Theatre of Pompey and Villa Albani.⁷⁷ What has attracted much scholarly attention regarding the Heracles-Verethragna bronze is not only the iconographic and stylistic similarities with the Greco-Roman replicas but also the bilingual text, in Greek and Parthian, inscribed onto the figure that comprised a highly elaborate example, which might not have been exceptional in its time and place.

A considerable number of terracotta figurines of the same standing type and variants discovered at Seleucia-on-Tigris (Cat. Nos. 19–20),⁷⁸ Babylon,⁷⁹ Nippur⁸⁰ and Uruk⁸¹ might have reflected the popularity of making copies of this type of Heracles figure during the Hellenistic period in the Near Eastern regions and some degree of artistic continuity after the Parthian conquest.⁸² The standing Heracles terracotta figurines that follow the standard repertoire of Greco-Roman terracottas were also found

⁷⁵ Palagia 1988: 765.

⁷⁶ Invernizzi 1989a: 65–113.

⁷⁷ Al-Salihi 1984; Invernizzi 1989a; Wood 2012: 30.

⁷⁸ Van Ingen 1939: nos. 252–253, Pl. XVIII; Invernizzi 1989a; Menegazzi 2007: 174, Cat. No. 86, 2019: 395–401.

⁷⁹ Van Buren 1930: 110ff, nos. 541–547; Langin-Hooper 2016: 49–77.

⁸⁰ Legrain 1930: nos. 129–130; Langin-Hooper 2016: 49–77.

⁸¹ Ziegler 1962: 94ff, 175ff, nos. 633–635, Figs. 329–331.

⁸² Downey 1969: 1–3.

in modern-day Iran (e.g. at Susa), east of the Tigris, exemplifying further dissemination of the Hellenistic style.

II.1.2.2.c) Seated

Although the seated types of Heracles frequently occur on Seleucid and Parthian coins, they are rarely found in Mesopotamian sculpture of the period. One key example of a limestone statue of seated Heracles, dated to the Parthian era, was recovered from the old Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 974) (Cat. No. 21). Heracles is bearded and nude, sitting on a stool-like base with his outstretched arms draped with a cloth or skin, while his hands are missing; he is also wearing a diadem falling onto his shoulders. This statue is generally considered as probably influenced by the prototype of Lysippus' Heracles Epitrapezios and to have been sculpted by a Greek artist active in Mesopotamia.⁸³ Nevertheless, scholars have also pointed out that the statue is not necessarily faithful to the Lysippan style or strictly follows Greco-Roman models. Murray has stated that the figure's short legs and massive body depart from the Lysippan style.⁸⁴ In Elizabeth Bartman's opinion (1986, 1992), the statue has an Eastern style that is emphasised by the strong patternation in the design of the veins and hair.⁸⁵

II.1.2.2.d) Heracles fighting/with a lion

Apart from the types of Heracles in isolation mentioned above, the hero fighting/with a lion motif was discovered at Sweida,⁸⁶ Palmyra⁸⁷ and Dura-Europos, which highlights the adaptation of a specific narrative theme.⁸⁸ The relief from Sweida, dated to the Roman period, follows the Greco-Roman convention of representing Heracles choking a lion (*LIMC*

⁸³ Murray 1882: 240–43; Invernizzi 1989b: 623–636; Bartman 1992: 181; Reade 1998b: 69–70, Fig. 4; Bollati 2007: 174, Cat. 85; Canepa 2018: 86.

⁸⁴ Murray 1882: 242.

⁸⁵ Bartman 1986: 303; 1992: 181.

⁸⁶ Abdul-Hak and Abdul-Hak 1951: 59, no. 7, Pl. 27,1; Bounni 1986: 380–383, Fig. 7.

⁸⁷ Dunant 1959: 106, no. 20.

⁸⁸ Downey 1969: 28–29, 56, nos. 29–30; Brody and Hoffman 2011: 354, no. 47, Pl. 47; Fowlkes-Childs and Seymour 2019: 202, no. 142.

v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1960).⁸⁹ Christiane Dunant (1959) and Downey (1969) have mentioned a tessera from Palmyra representing the naked hero standing and wrestling with an indistinct animal, probably a lion.⁹⁰ From Dura-Europos, there are five examples representing a naked male figure with a lion. However, it is difficult to compare them to the motif of Heracles strangling the Nemean Lion from the classical repertoire due to their poor craftsmanship, distinct style, and mostly the deviation of the poses from Greco-Roman conventions.⁹¹ Four of these sculptures show a nude male figure standing frontally, with his left arm around a standing lion's neck and a club in his right hand (Cat. Nos. 22–23).⁹² As Downey (1969) suggested, the peculiarity of the pose may perhaps represent a survival of the old iconography of a hero or king fighting a lion in ancient Near Eastern art, such as the Assyrian tradition of portraying “Gilgamesh” and a lion, which probably accounted for the local popularity of the lion-slaying motif to the exclusion of Heracles' other labours.⁹³ Similar representations have been found in Iran and as far as India, which we should bear in mind for further comparison.

II.1.2.2.e) Heracles with local gods

One of the oldest Palmyrene votive reliefs from the Temple of Bel, dated to 1st century BC, shows the type of nude, muscular, bearded Heracles carrying his club and lionskin, and standing side-by-side with a goddess and two other gods in local dress with halos (Cat. No. 24). The three local deities have been given various identifications — according to Henri Seyrig (1944), they are Aglibol (moon), Yarhibol (sun) and Baalshamin.⁹⁴ In this case, the Greek hero seems to have been adopted into the

⁸⁹ Bounni 1986: 380–383, Fig. 7.

⁹⁰ Dunant 1959: 106, no. 20; Downey 1969: 42.

⁹¹ Downey 1969: 42–49.

⁹² *Ibid.*: Pls. XI.1, XII.1–2.

⁹³ Downey 1969: 43–44; cf. Shepherd 1961: 19–25. The motif of a hero, king or god slaying/hunting a lion long existed and was persistent in ancient Near Eastern art, at least from the Uruk period (4 millennium BC) onwards in Mesopotamia.

⁹⁴ Seyrig 1944: 77–79; cf. Du Mesnil du Buisson 1962: 291–296; Teixidor 1979: 113, Pl. XXXI: 2.

pantheon of Palmyra through a “translation” of style.⁹⁵ The combination of the figure of Heracles with gods foreign to the Greeks (or with other Greek gods assimilated with foreign deities) somewhat recalls the group of colossal statues on the East Terrace at Nemrut mentioned earlier. In North-West India, some works from the Kushan era also adopted such a combination, which will be discussed in detail later.

II.1.2.3. Iran

As the images of Heracles diffused into Iran from the late 4th century BC, the continuation of the Hellenistic style during the Seleucid-Parthian era is mostly reflected by terracotta fragments found in ancient cities which the Greek military once occupied (e.g. at Susa, which served as a Macedonian garrison). Most archaeological finds, however, are distant from the Greco-Roman models and only partly conserve the Greek hero’s iconography. Local productions had modified the images of Heracles and very likely conflated his figure with local ones and conventions.

II.1.2.3.a) Reclining

The only extant rock sculpture of Heracles (also recognised as Heracles-Verethragna) from the Seleucid period in the Iranian plateau is at the Behistun complex, one of the most important Seleucid sanctuaries (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1012) (Cat. No. 25), as alluded to earlier. It is dated 148 BC and was dedicated to “Herakles Kallinikos” (Heracles glorious in victory).⁹⁶ The figure is bearded and naked, posing as a symposiast with a cup in his left hand, reclining on the rock where a contour of a lion (or lionskin) is carved out. The club, bow and quiver are represented behind the figure. The sculpture seems to reflect an understanding of Heracles’ iconography from classical sources, but it was very unlikely carried out by a sculptor trained in a Greek naturalistic style,⁹⁷ while no corresponding type is known from the Seleucid coins.

⁹⁵ Downey 1969: 77.

⁹⁶ Canepa 2018: 185–186, Fig. 8.9; Wood 2018: 335, Fig. 4.

⁹⁷ Canepa 2018: 185.

II.1.2.3.b) *Standing*

Among the terracotta figurines dated to the Hellenistic period unearthed in Susa, about 30 works represent the figure of Heracles, including several standing types. Laurianne Martinez-Sève (2002) has classified these examples as types attributed to the most common Greco-Roman models such as Heracles Chiaramonti, Albertini, Heracles holding his club resting on his shoulder and Heracles at rest.⁹⁸ These free-standing types continued to follow the Hellenistic style of terracotta figurines from Eastern Iraq. They usually represent the naked muscular hero carrying his club and lionskin in a relatively naturalistic style. One element repeatedly shown in this series of figurines that differs from the general Greco-Roman models is a harness slung on the chest, which probably emphasises Heracles' bellicose character and was associated with the worship of "Herakles Kallinikos" among the Greek military colonists in the Middle East (Cat. No. 26).⁹⁹

In addition to the Hellenistic style of terracotta, there are also primitive types of standing Heracles dated to the Hellenistic period found in Iran, as attested in a small bronze figurine in the Louvre (Cat. No. 27).¹⁰⁰ This bronze shows the naked, bearded hero holding a club in his left hand and his head bears a diadem. The torso and facial features are rendered in a very basic way.

II.1.2.3.c) *Heracles fighting/with a lion*

Sculptural evidence of the figure of Heracles with a lion from the Seleucid-Parthian era is also known in Iran and shares some features with those from Mesopotamia, such as the frontal facing of the figure and the stiff style of the pose, alluding to the influence of the popular ancient Near Eastern theme of hero or king fighting a lion. A terracotta plaque from Susa shows a naked male figure fighting a small rampant lion pouncing on his abdomen (Cat. No. 28).¹⁰¹ In the background, a branch with leaves seems to imply a tree. Downey (1969) has compared this

⁹⁸ Martinez-Sève 2002: 129–138, 704, 773–775, nos. 110–139; 2008: 355–367.

⁹⁹ Martinez-Sève 2008: 355–367; Ghirshman 1962: 102–103, Fig. 116A; Connelly 1989: Fig. 23.

¹⁰⁰ Connelly 1989: Fig. 16.

¹⁰¹ Martinez-Sève 2002: nos. 111–112; 2008: Fig. 2.

detail with a relief from Mathura.¹⁰² Both examples bring to mind the episode of the Nemean Lion, however, neither can be comfortably or fully identified as a Heracles motif because their iconographies and styles reflect influences from the local traditions of representing a heroic figure and a lion. The Mathura relief will be discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

Another type of lion-fighting representation from Iran can be observed in some limestone fragments from Masjed-e Solaiman. One example shows the naked and bearded Heracles, stylistically closer to examples from Hatra, particularly in terms of physiognomy and additional jewellery, holding a much smaller lion against his chest (Cat. No. 29). It can be debated whether this composition of the figure and the animal was designed to show the myth of Heracles strangling the Nemean Lion or not, but the representation is unconventional compared to known wrestling schemata of the Greco-Roman tradition.¹⁰³ The lack of dynamic movement and the size difference between the figure and the animal marks a change in iconography, style and perhaps even subject.

II.1.2.3.d) Heracles with local figures

South of Susa, a long frieze carved into the rock at Tang-e Botan (Shīmbār) in Khuzestan preserves a relief of 12 figures divided into five groups (Cat. No. 30). A nude and diademed male figure is shown in each of the first four groups. He leans his right hand on a club, and his left hand seems to hold a cup in front of his chest. He is followed by other figures, presumably priests and worshippers wearing Iranian costumes. Between the Heracleian figure and his followers in each group, an altar is placed in the middle with the Elymaean inscriptions above reading “who is (keeper of) the altar of Bel”.¹⁰⁴ Adrian David Hugh Bivar and Shaul Shaked (1964) speculated that the appearance of the figure of Heracles was possibly related to Syrian cults, in which the Greek hero-god might have been syncretised with local deities.¹⁰⁵ Wood (2018)

¹⁰² Downey 1969: 29.

¹⁰³ Ghirshman 1976: 91–94, Pl. LXXXIX, 5, Pl. 24; Kawami 1987: 207; Wood 2018: 340–344.

¹⁰⁴ Bivar and Shaked 1964: 268–269, Pl. I; Kawami 1987: 142–143; Mathiesen 1992: 130; Wood 2018: 344–347, Fig. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Bivar and Shaked 1964: 268.

suggested that in this relief, the iconography of Heracles was employed to represent the Semitic god Bel, who was probably the head of the Elymaean pantheon worshipped in this region.¹⁰⁶

The depiction of a Heracleian figure worshipped by locals also appears at Tang-e Sarvak (Cat. No. 31). On one relief, the standing nude male figure rests his left hand on a club, and his right hand perhaps holds a cup. To the right of this relief, two Iranian figures with arms upraised towards the Heracleian figure were supposedly carved later to join the scene.¹⁰⁷ Combining the figure of Heracles with local priests and royalty seemed to have become a local convention of representation, which continued until the early Sasanian era.

In one of the oldest Sasanian monuments, Naqsh-e Rostam, the investiture relief of Ardashir I (224–241 AD) preserves a pair of smaller figures between the kings and gods, including a nude bearded male with his right hand holding a long club and the left hand with a cloth or pelt (Cat. No. 32). He stands facing right towards a royally dressed figure, probably the eldest son of Shapur I, Bahram.¹⁰⁸ Ernst E. Herzfeld (1941) suggested a Greek identity, while Walther Hinz (1969) proposed recognising the figure as Verethragna in the guise of Heracles.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the representation is the only surviving example of the Heracleian figure in a Sasanian relief, and it only vaguely echoes the basic iconography of Heracles.

II.1.3. Summary

An introduction and overview of several representative types of the Heracles figure in the Near East during the Seleucid, Parthian, and early Sasanian eras has shown the coexistence of the Greco-Roman models and examples which show transformation in the Eastern contexts. In sum, the most recognisable types are as follows: a) head of Heracles with the lionskin headdress; b) bearded and naked Heracles carrying attributes and sitting on the rock (or stool) and variations thereof; c) bearded or beardless and naked male figure with attributes standing and variations

¹⁰⁶ Wood 2018: 345.

¹⁰⁷ Mathiesen 1992: Fig. 15; Wood 2018: 346–347, Fig. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Wood 2018: 350.

¹⁰⁹ Herzfeld 1941: 311; cf. Hinz 1969: 123–124; Ghirshman 1975: 239.

thereof; d) bearded naked male figure reclining as a symposiast; e) male figure in a fighting pose or engaged with a beast, usually a lion; f) Heraclan figure in combination with local gods or sovereigns. It should be noted that the extant evidence does not demonstrate a linear and progressive program of Near Eastern reception and adoption of the figure of the Greek hero across time and place. Nevertheless, some of the Near Eastern types might have migrated further to Central Asia and North-West India, which will be discussed particularly in Chapter V.

II.2. Parsing the evidence of the Near Eastern adaptations of the Heracles motif

The above evidence introduces the problem of contextualising the motif of Heracles outside the Mediterranean that cannot be solely addressed by relying on making inferences about mythological/narrative representations from classical art. Many scholars have attempted to decipher the various Heraclan representations by reconstructing the ancient meanings. Thus far, despite the different perspectives, it is generally accepted that the Near Eastern adaptations of the figure of Heracles reflect the transmission of the Greek hero's motif that facilitated assimilation with appropriate local legends, cult practices or myths. However, the identities of most of these representations remain disputed because of a significant change of style, proportion, attributes, inadequate evidence (lack of accompanying epigraphic support), and various assumptions and expectations that are culturally and temporally determined.

The figure of Heracles in the Near East after the Macedonian conquest has been associated with several non-Hellenic deities. In the Hellenistic Mesopotamian context, the Heracles figure was often identified with Nergal, the Mesopotamian god of the underworld, not to mention that there are also examples showing a mixture of attributes of both.¹¹⁰ Most of the figures of Heracles identified with Nergal are from Palmyra and Hatra. Only some are accompanied with inscriptions, such as the Palmyrene tessera with a club on the obverse and the name Nergal written in the local dialect on the reverse; and an inscription reading "Nergal the dog" underneath a Hatrene fragment of statue with bare feet and lower

¹¹⁰ Seyrig 1944: 62–80; Al-Salihi 1971: 113–5, 1973: 65–69; Bonnet 1992: 180–183; Kaizer 2000: 219–232; De Jong 2003: 202–203.

part of a thick club remaining.¹¹¹ In the Iranian context, he is regarded as assimilated with the Avestan Verethragna (Vahrām in Parthian and Middle Persian languages), an Iranian divine being (*yazata*), or the Elymaean Bel.¹¹² Such syncretism has been understood in multiple dimensions, but whether the shared visual and iconographic elements can be employed to interpret the relationship between the Greek canon and the Mesopotamian and Iranian traditions remains unclear. The problem of discerning between the Heracleian representation and the confusion and conflation with local figures and conventions is a prominent issue scholarship has had to contend with.¹¹³

Based on the known works, the adaptation of the Heracles figure in the Near East of this period can be summarised as follows: a) placement or production of replicas of classical types in a not purely Hellenistic cultural context; b) retained iconography with addition new elements or rendering in different styles; c) transfer of the motif and iconography to other figures. Bearing in mind that the distinction mentioned here is merely for the convenience of discussion instead of assuming it to be an exact approach taken by the ancients, which in practice does not always have clear boundaries. Nor is the intent to evaluate precisely how much the modified cases remain Heracleian. We shall present these primary patterns through a selection of works which best exhibit them.

II.2.1. Pattern a): placement or production of replicas of classical types in a not purely Hellenistic cultural context

Pattern a) is evinced by the several examples, including the seated Heracles from Nineveh, the Heracles-Verethragna at Seleucia-on-Tigris, and the considerable number of terracotta figurines of types of Heracles at rest from South-East Iraq and South-West Iran. These works are highly classicising and undoubtedly still represent Heracles even if he happens to be detached from the original contextual sources. Among these, the

¹¹¹ Seyrig 1944: 77–79; Al-Salihi 1971, Pl. 34d. Seyrig’s identification of Heracles with Nergal from Palmyra was based on two tesserae with Heracles’ attributes and the name Nergal.

¹¹² Carter 1995a: 119–140; De Jong 2003: 202–203; Wood 2012: 87, 2018: 329; cf. Shenkar 2014: 159–163.

¹¹³ Potter 1991: 285; Wood 2018: 331.

Nineveh statue and the Seleucia bronze provide more contextual information.

On the plinth of the Nineveh Heracles statue are two inscriptions: (Cat. No. 21), “ΣΑΡΑΠΙΔΟΡΟΣ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΔΟΡΟΥ ΚΑΤ’ ΕΥΚΗΝ” (Sarapidoros son of Artemidoros dedicated [this] in fulfilment of a vow) and “ΔΙΟΓΕΝΗΣ ΕΠΙΟΙΕΙ” (Diogenes made [it]). The pose of the statue seems to suggest it is a copy of a bronze that may correspond to Martial and Statius’ descriptions of a statuette made by Lysippus for Alexander.¹¹⁴ The difficulty of interpreting the Nineveh statue comes from its dating and place of discovery. Antonio Invernizzi (1989b) dated it to the 2nd century AD, while Bartman (1986, 1992) opted for a 1st century AD date.¹¹⁵ It was found at the site of the South-West Palace on Kuyunjik, a Parthian-era building, together with a fragment of a foot which Canepa (2018) identified as belonging to a figure wearing Parthian aristocratic apparel.¹¹⁶ It seems that the purely Greek subject continued to be reproduced down to the 2nd century AD under the Parthian regime, but as Julian E. Reade (1998b) correctly pointed out, by what name the statue would have been recognised by most of the population of Nineveh remains unknown.¹¹⁷

Unlike the Nineveh statue, which only preserves Greek inscriptions, bilingual inscriptions in Greek and Parthian are present on the bronze statue of Heracles-Verethragna at Seleucia-on-Tigris (Cat. No. 18). On the right thigh, a Greek inscription states that in 150–151 AD, the Arsacid king Vologases IV brought it from Mesene to the temple of Apollo at Seleucia as an offering. The Parthian inscription on the left thigh repeats the same information and tells that the statue is the god Verethragna.¹¹⁸ Both inscriptions were added after the victory of Vologases against Mithridates of Characene in 150/1 AD.¹¹⁹ Various interpretations of the statue have been proposed. Due to the prominent Hellenistic style, some

¹¹⁴ Murray 1882: 240–243; Bartman 1986: 298–311, 1992: 181; Reade 1998: 69–70; Bollati 2007: 174.

¹¹⁵ Invernizzi 1989b: 623–636; Bartman 1992: 181.

¹¹⁶ Canepa 2018: 86.

¹¹⁷ Reade 1998b: 69–70; cf. Messina 2014: 6.

¹¹⁸ Pennachietti 1987: 169–185; Potter 1991: 277–290.

¹¹⁹ Wood 2018: 336.

speculate that it was made during the Seleucid era in the 2nd century BC and transported to Mesene.¹²⁰ Wood (2018) noted that the simultaneous “translation” of Heracles and Verethragna attested to the contemporaneous double meaning of the same image, while Nergal, as the chief deity of Mesene, could have also been assimilated with the figure.¹²¹

Other archaeological evidence of Heracles in circulation in the area confirms a broad reception of the hero’s image, yet very little is known about religious life in Parthian Seleucia-on-Tigris, as Invernizzi (1989a) pointed out,¹²² which would clarify whether divine aspects of Heracles figured in local practices. The political intention of the later carved inscriptions is beyond doubt, but they do not tell us more about whether the use of Heracles’ image also implied adopting his mythological narratives to shape the contemporary image of Verethragna or Nergal.

II.2.2. Pattern b): retained iconography with addition new elements or rendering in different styles

Examples that can be included in pattern b) are hybrid in terms of form and subject. They reflect the progress of adapting the figure of Heracles to satisfy new socio-political requirements. On the basis of the material, preference of style and technique, we can see that in the Near East there was limited interest in classical aesthetics, but the use of iconographic motifs proved more enduring and influential. More importantly, a sequence of archaeological finds has proven that such a transformation was not exceptional or accidental, indicating that the locals had access to Western literary and visual sources.

Sometimes, multiple artistic influences can be observed from the same subject. For example, one relief of “Heracles and lion” from Dura-Europos presents a naked male figure wielding a club in his right hand and his left grasping the ear or mane of the beast that is only half of his size and clawing at his belly (Cat. No. 22). The type of Heracles raises a club in his right hand and fights the lion is known from the 4th-century BC Greek motif regarding the use of the club,¹²³ but the schema of the Dura-

¹²⁰ CRAST 1985: 420–422; Messina 2014: 7.

¹²¹ Wood 2018: 337.

¹²² Invernizzi 1989a: 65–113.

¹²³ Felten 1990: *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles: 32.

Europos relief is distinct and somewhat awkwardly rendered compared to its source material, probably under the influence of ancient Near Eastern types of a hero fighting a leonine monster. The figure's hair has a radiated shape called the "Parthian" hairstyle,¹²⁴ and the whorl pattern is applied to his navel, nipples, hairband, and even the mane of the animal and the knots of his club. Behind the figure, there is also a small altar. These are not expected finds in canonical imagery of Heracles slaughtering the Nemean Lion, and they challenge the reconstruction of the meaning of the Parthian examples. Downey (1969)'s suggestion that the Heracleian figures from Dura-Europos may represent the Mesopotamian god Nergal, another ancient Middle Eastern hero or a protective figure is commonly agreed upon; other scholars like Seyrig (1944) and Wathiq Al-Salihi (1971) have interpreted the image as apotropaic in function instead of identifying the figure with other oriental cults.¹²⁵

At Hatra, a great number of statues and figurines in different sizes preserve the standing type of Heracles with his typical attributes, often portrayed in a stylised fashion, suggesting a more consistent local framework for following the iconographic schema and figurative style. The Hatrene artisanship may recall some Sumerian traditions, and it seemed typical to portray Heracles wearing local jewellery, which indicates his assimilation with a local god or adaptation into the Semitic pantheon of Hatra.¹²⁶ While it is difficult to confirm any of these identifications or to provide a general pattern, there is no doubt that the Hatrene "makeover" of the Greek hero's appearance hardly prevented a Mediterranean eye from seeing it as Heracles. It has been proven by the only surviving Latin inscription on the pedestal beneath one of the Hatrene sculptures (Cat. No. 33) that not only did the practice of producing bejewelled Heracleian statues continue until the 3rd century AD, but also the figure as a symbol of military and power was so prominent that Q. Petronius Quintianus, the Roman military tribune of the Legion I Parthica, erected it to defend the city against the Sasanians.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Fowlkes-Childs and Seymour 2019: 202, no. 142.

¹²⁵ Downey 1969: 28, no. 29, Pl. XI.I; Seyrig 1944: 77–79; Al-Salihi 1971: 113–115.

¹²⁶ Downey 1972: 77–78.

¹²⁷ Maricq 1957: 288–305.

The examples that straightforwardly reflect pattern b) and its related issues may be those sculptures of Heracles' classical models rendered in a rigid style and placed together with local figures. For example, the figure of Heracles is recognisable from his nude muscular physique, his free-standing pose and attributes of the club, lionskin or cup, such as the one from the Palmyrene votive relief from the Temple of Bel, and those carved on the rocks at Tang-e Botan, Tang-e Sarvak and Naqsh-e Rajab. In these examples which combined his figure with local gods or royalty, the uses of Heracles' iconography seemed to indicate his figure being worshipped as a local divinity.

It should be also mentioned that it is not always possible to draw an explicit line between patterns a) and b). In the case of the aforementioned Behistun Heracles (Cat. No. 25) of the Seleucid period, the figurative motif and the inscription on the stele dated to 148 BC mark the representation as "Herakles Kallinikos", the symposiast and bowman.¹²⁸ The inscription "Kallinikos" is recognised by scholars as a common epithet of the hero in the Mediterranean and is closely related to Verethragna's name and nature, enhancing the possibility of interpreting the representation in Hellenistic and Iranian idioms simultaneously.¹²⁹ On the other hand, the style of the statue differs significantly from contemporary Hellenistic sculpture. Canepa (2018) presumed that a patron supplied a prototype to a sculptor to explain the coexistence of the knowledge of iconography and the local rearrangement in style and composition.¹³⁰ This example may illustrate how the Seleucid rulers participated in the Iranian traditions by sharing in the same display context but in a distinct way based on their needs.¹³¹

Although we cannot know when precisely the figure of Heracles started to be linked with Mesopotamian and Iranian deities and to what extent they might have been integrated, the spread of Heracles' image into Near Eastern contexts was strongly supported by various political powers during the Seleucid and Parthian periods. It is reasonable to assume that

¹²⁸ The location of the Behistun Heracles is of great importance because the locals had favoured Behistun as a revered site from the Achaemenid Empire onwards.

¹²⁹ Boyce and Grenet 1991: 62–65.

¹³⁰ Canepa 2018: 185–187.

¹³¹ Wood 2018: 333–336.

the symbolic meaning of the Greek hero might have remained valid to a certain extent, whatever and whomever he precisely stood for.

II.2.3. Pattern c): transfer of the motif and iconography to other figures

Pattern c) is the most ambiguous and applied to all variations of Heraclan images. Identifying a visual representation that might have been derived from the Heracles motif can be problematic and very likely remain speculative. Even assuming that the artists who made the works might have had direct contact with any Greco-Roman or intermediate models, which would complicate the situation further, we cannot securely pinpoint a connection between a Heracles motif and a seemingly similar subject. Nonetheless, it is possible to observe a pattern if certain conditions can be satisfied: the malleability of the motif; the practical means and media of transporting it; its compatibility with heterogeneous environments; and, most essentially, a new identity should be established despite being derived from Heracles or not.

II.2.3.1 Heracles' attributes as identifiers

In many cases, it is somewhat difficult to distinguish patterns b) and c) because of the overlapping features resulting in various interpretations. The problem we are dealing with is distinguishing causality and correlation. The most typical and frequently used approach to identifying pattern c) is finding Heracles' attributes, the club and the lionskin, in the representations of other figures.

Needless to say, Alexander had set the clearest example for wearing the hero's lionskin headdress in the same manner, which resulted in the intensive use of the image in many subsequent Hellenistic and Roman sovereigns' portraits, one particularly noteworthy example being the marble bust of the Roman emperor Commodus (192 AD). In the Hellenistic East, numerous coins attest to the popularity of associating kings and emperors with the "old" and "new" Heracles, while the names of dynasties and kings inscribed alongside indicated the actual political powers or identities. Heracles' lionskin headdress was taken over by Alexander and his successors, while the hero's accoutrements were almost equally transmitted, which made such a transformation a mixed type of patterns b) and c). Intriguingly, although Seleucid coins and engravings support the maintenance of the image of Heracles wearing the lionskin headdress in

the Near East, no such evidence has yet been found from the Parthian Empire.¹³²

In contrast, the other main attribute of Heracles, the club, did not experience a similarly explicit transfer like the lionskin headdress of shifting its form and concept to another established local figure. Even though the image of a club is frequently found in similar representations of other heroic, divine and martial figures, it may be easily over-interpreted by some preconceptions. The only solution for a secure reading of other figures' clubs as derived from Heracles' iconography is to assess the level of formal similarity within a reasonable historical (and archaeological) context.

II.2.3.2 Retrieving Heracles' iconographic schemata

Apart from reusing Heracles' attributes to shape other figurative motifs, another practice seems to have been repurposing his iconographic schema. Nevertheless, this approach only applies to specific iconographic comparisons and has some uncertainties that cannot be overlooked.

For example, the motif of the reclining symposiast which achieved great popularity in the Hellenistic East has sometimes been ascribed to the evidence of the reclining Heracles in the Near East from the Seleucid period onwards because of the Heracles' association with kingship and possible assimilation with Iranian gods, as exemplified by the Behistun Heracles statue.¹³³ It is true that the representation of the reclining symposiast frequently appears in the Iranian context and often acquires a specific meaning that denotes the grandeur and deportment of a sovereign,¹³⁴ as

¹³² We can only speculate about the reason for the absence of the lionskin headdress. Was it possibly because the Parthians were fully aware of the symbolic meaning and usage of the lionskin headdress and purposefully marginalised it? Regardless of whether this omission may be read as reflecting the Parthian attitude toward a Greco-Roman political symbol for propaganda, it seems unlikely that the lionskin headdress was unknown, considering the plethora of evidence of Heracleian figures in the Parthian Empire and the frequent contacts (trade exchanges and conflicts) between the Parthian and Roman Empires.

¹³³ Boardman 1994: 96, 2014: 48, 2015: Figs. 38, 118, 136.

¹³⁴ Wood 2018: 332.

many Parthian rulers were portrayed in this form, attested in the stone reliefs at the sites of Tang-e Sarvak and Bard-i But.

However, it should be clarified that the reclining Heracles or other similar Greek figurative motifs were not the inspiring force in the Near Eastern representations of the reclining symposiast and their associations with kingship. Banquet scenes showing a reclining and drinking ruler had been prevalent in these regions for centuries, with noteworthy examples dating to the Neo-Assyrian period.¹³⁵ On the other hand, the iconographic schema of a reclining figure after the arrival of Hellenistic culture in the Near East is not confined to the Heracles motif and reclining Parthian ruler portraits. From the West, there are countless representations of reclining symposiasts on Greek vases and sculptures, Etruscan frescoes and sarcophagus effigies and later funerary reliefs in the Mediterranean region, which may supplement a great variety of references to the Near East. It is thus difficult to draw a direct and unambiguous link between the depiction of Heracles as a reclining symposiast and the Iranian adaptations, despite the possibility that Parthian artists may have derived the nude and muscular form of Heracles as a means of offering an alternative representation of an ancient motif with which they were already familiar, and which they presented to audiences who were more attuned to this form.

This process of retaining an original motif while incorporating new elements or adaptations may have spread to the further eastern regions. This suggests that the transmission of such imagery is not a linear, progressive development. Rather, it embodies a collective diffusion characterised by parallel and interactive exchanges between different cultural traditions. Such complexity underlines the multifaceted nature of cultural transmission, where multiple traditions coexist and influence each other in a dynamic and interconnected way.

What is beyond dispute regarding the Near Eastern adaptation of the figure of Heracles is the flexibility of the motif and iconography which led to gradually distanced representations from the hero's canonical mythological narratives stemming from the Mediterranean sphere. In general, the Near Eastern adaptations were mainly built on the direct exchanges of images and myths while manipulating the established

¹³⁵ Reade 1998a: 88–90, Figs. 106–107.

schemata to satisfy a mixed cultural environment. Similar developments with different manifestations (to varying degrees) occurred in Central Asia and North-West India after Alexander's campaigns, and the types which filtered through Iranian culture should also be considered as significant.

Chapter III

Heracles in Central Asia and North-West India after Alexander the Great (3rd century BC–1st century AD)

III.1. Evidence from the Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek, and Indo-Scythian periods

Following the reign of the early Seleucid kings over Central Asia and North-West India, the easternmost part of the Hellenistic world became divided into the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek Kingdoms, lasting from 250 BC until 10 AD. In the following Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian Kingdoms (1st century BC–3rd century AD), Greek inspiration did not fade away and eventually passed to the Kushan Empire (1st–4th centuries AD). Excavations at a number of sites in Afghanistan (ancient Bactria) have demonstrated the prosperity of the Greek population and culture, testified by sites such as Ai Khanoum on the Amu Darya River (ancient Oxus), which have revealed a comprehensive suite of Greek-inspired material culture. In terms of the figure of Heracles, coins, figurines and various miscellaneous archaeological discoveries provide the pertinent and significant evidence. Although this chapter focuses on the pre-Kushan evidence, the later iconographic material of the region is closely intertwined with the features adopted in the Kushan period, which will be discussed in the second part of the present study.

Catalogues and studies on the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins have devoted considerable attention to classifying the different Heracles types.¹³⁶ Several of these were later adopted in Indo-Scythian coins. Compared with the evidence from the Near East, more works in precious materials have survived. Key ivory fragments showing Heracles figures,

¹³⁶ Mitchiner 1975–1976; Bopearachchi 1991, 2015a; Bopearachchi and Rahman 1995; Bordeaux 2018. A detailed bibliography of the Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins is provided by Glenn (2016), which shows the efforts of categorising and understanding the numismatic data by generations of scholars.

dated to the 4th–3rd centuries BC, were found at Takht-i Sangin.¹³⁷ Many pertinent bronze statuettes were discovered in Bactria, especially at Ai Khanoum and its vicinity, dated broadly from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD.¹³⁸ The number of clay materials recovered from the area is smaller than those from the Near East, but the Heracleian identifications on the particular objects in question are certain.¹³⁹ Due to the inevitable dating issues and unrecorded provenance, many works of art remain difficult to identify and are disputed among scholars.¹⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that, unlike in the Near East, no monumental or large-scale sculptures of the hero have survived from this region. However, given the existence of Greek cities and a wide range of Hellenistic heritage, the possibility that such sculptures were produced cannot be entirely excluded.

III.1.1. Numismatic evidence

Greek coins had already been struck and circulated in the area prior to the Greco-Bactrian period.¹⁴¹ Tetradrachms of Alexander are found in Afghanistan, which includes a type depicting the beardless Heracles / Alexander in a lionskin headdress on the obverse and the seated Zeus with an eagle on the reverse (Cat. No. 34),¹⁴² a type, as noted earlier, that featured on many Seleucid coins. The hero's image remained among the most popular subjects on Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Litvinskii and Pichikian 1994: 47–66.

¹³⁸ Bernard 1974: 280–308; Bernard and Francfort 1978; Tissot 2006; Bopearachchi 2015b.

¹³⁹ Marshall 1951; Wheeler 1962; Tissot 2006.

¹⁴⁰ E.g. A blue chalcedony scaraboid (5th c. BC?) found in Punjab or Pakistan(?) BM1890,0920.1, see Boardman 2015: Fig. 11. An onyx cameo engraved with a young Heracles / Omphale(?) wearing a lionskin cap, dated 1st–2nd centuries AD was found in Akra, Pakistan. BM1893,0502.1, see Boardman 2015: Fig. XLIV.

¹⁴¹ Bopearachchi and Rahman 1995: 9; Bopearachchi 1999: 15–121.

¹⁴² Price 1991: nos. 2986, 2925, 3931b; Bopearachchi and Rahman 1995: nos. 57–61.

¹⁴³ For a typology and catalogue of the coins of the Bactrian and Indo-Greek rulers, see the BIGR website: <https://numismatics.org/bigrr/> (accessed on 15 October 2024).

Following the period of Greek rule in Bactria and North-West India, as reconstructed through the numismatic sequence, we can observe different kings' preferences of the depicted types of Heracles.¹⁴⁴

III.1.1.1. Greco-Bactrian coins

During the Greco-Bactrian period, the figure of Heracles and his attributes are found on the coins of Euthydemus I (ca. 230–200 BC), Demetrius I (ca. 200–185 BC), Euthydemus II (ca. 185–180 BC), Agathocles (ca. 185–170 BC), and Antimachus I (ca. 176–165 BC).¹⁴⁵ There are three primary types with variants: the head/bust of Heracles, the seated Heracles at rest and the standing Heracles.

The nude beardless or bearded hero sitting on a rock and facing left, with his right hand holding the club which rests on a pile of rocks or his thigh, commonly appeared on the coins issued by Euthydemus I (Cat. Nos. 35–36).¹⁴⁶ The aged and bearded hero's head facing right is shown on the obverse of the coins of both Euthydemus I (Cat. No. 37) and Demetrius I,¹⁴⁷ while Demetrius added more details, e.g. a club over Heracles' shoulder (Cat. No. 38).¹⁴⁸ The obverse of Agathocles' commemorative coins sometimes reused the image of Heracles/Alexander wearing the lionskin headdress (Cat. No. 39).¹⁴⁹ Another frequently found representation on the reverse of coins is the nude and beardless Heracles standing and facing frontally, his left hand holding a club and draped with the lionskin, his right holding a wreath or crowning himself (Cat. Nos. 40–

¹⁴⁴ There is a consensus in scholarship on the relative chronology of the Greek ruled period in Bactria and North-West India as reconstructed through the numismatic sequence. See Cribb 1992: 17–18.

¹⁴⁵ Based on the chronology proposed by Bopearachchi 1998. See Ghosh 2017: 2, 2021: 572.

¹⁴⁶ Bopearachchi 1991: 154–159, Euthydemus I, for club on pile of rocks see Série 1–8, Pls. 2–3, for club on right thigh see Série 9–16, Pl. 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: 160–163, Euthydemus I, Série 17–24, Pls. 3–4.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 166, Demetrius I, Série 4, Pl. 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: 177, Agathocles, Série 12, Pl. 8.

41).¹⁵⁰ The self-crowning Heracles type has been compared to similar representations on the reverse of some Roman imperial medallions and coins, and the torso of a Heracles statuette in the Museo Chiaramonti of the Vatican.¹⁵¹ These are the best-known types on the Greco-Bactrian coins which continue to appear on later Indo-Greek coins with small changes.

III.1.1.2. Indo-Greek coins

Following the convention of Greco-Bactrian coins, many Indo-Greek coins adopted the Heracles types and their variants. The figure of Heracles and his attributes mainly appear on the coins of Menander I (ca. 165–130 BC), Agathoclea (ca. 135–125 BC), Zoilus I (ca. 130–120 BC), Strato I (ca. 125–110 BC), Lysias (ca. 120–110 BC) and Theophilus (ca. 90 BC).¹⁵² Among these, the most frequently occurring types are the head/bust of Heracles and several standing types. The seated type is not found as often as in the reigns of preceding Greco-Bactrian kings.

The types of head/bust of Heracles featured on the Indo-Greek coins show slight variations compared to the aforementioned Greco-Bactrian types. Menander I and Strato I added a diadem on the head of the bearded hero (Cat. Nos. 42–43).¹⁵³ A less common bearded Heracles head with the lionskin headdress is found on a bronze quadruple of Zoilus I (Cat. No. 44).¹⁵⁴ The bust on the coins of Strato I, Lysias, and Theophilus bears the club on the left shoulder.¹⁵⁵ The standing Heracles types with the crown also remained popular in Indo-Greek coinage. Zoilus took up the standing and facing forward type with an outstretched

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: On the type of Heracles holding a wreath in right hand, see 168–169, Euthydemus II, Série 1–4, Pls. 5–6; On the self-crowning Heracles type, see 164–165, Demetrius I, Série 1–3, Pls. 4–5. See also 179, Agathocles, Série 17, Pl. 8.

¹⁵¹ Vermeule 1957: 283–299.

¹⁵² Based on the chronology proposed by Bopearachchi 1998.

¹⁵³ Bopearachchi 1991: On the specific type, see 246, Menander I, Série 35, Pl. 33; on the type of diadem clad Heracles with club on shoulder, see 263–264, Strato I, Série 29–30, Pl. 37.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 250, Zoilus I, Série 6, Pl. 34.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 263, Strato I, Série 29–30, Pl. 37; 269–270, Lysias, Série 8, Pls. 38–49; 308, Theophilus, Série 5, Pl. 48.

hand holding a crown (Cat. No. 45),¹⁵⁶ similar to the Greco-Bactrian design. On top of the self-crowning Heracles type, Lysias added a palm branch to the attributes (club and lionskin) held by the hero (Cat. No. 46).¹⁵⁷ This variant of the standing type is also found in an exceptional gold coin of a more recently discovered Indo-Greek sovereign named Heliodotus, who probably ruled at the beginning of the 1st century BC.¹⁵⁸ A standing and crowned type with the right hand resting on the club and the left carrying lionskin survived in Theophilus' coins (Cat. No. 47).¹⁵⁹

The seated type of the hero at rest with his club which Euthydemus I favoured seems to have a lower occurrence in Indo-Greek coinage (it is also found on Agathoclea's bronze quadruple (Cat. No. 48)).¹⁶⁰ This Euthydemus-derived coin type is also preserved in the Indo-Greek contemporary Sogdiana coins (ca. 200–135 BC) and coins of Yueh Chi principalities in Sogdiana (after ca. 130 BC) struck in Western Sogdiana (Bukhara region) (Cat. No. 49).¹⁶¹ In this series from Sogdiana, the style of the Heracles figure was radically altered, shifting from a naturalistic to an abstract style.¹⁶²

Apart from the figure itself, Heracles' lionskin, club, bow, quiver and cornucopia are also present on some reverse types among the Indo-

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 248–250, Zoilus I, Série 1–5, Pl. 34.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 266–269, Lysias, Série 1–7, Pl. 38–39.

¹⁵⁸ Bernard, Pinault and Rougemont 2004: 333–356; Bopearachchi 2015a: 502–505, Fig. 1.

¹⁵⁹ Bopearachchi 1991: 307, Theophilus, Série 2–3, Pl. 48.

¹⁶⁰ Bopearachchi 1991: 251–252, Agathoclea, Série 3–4, Pls. 34–35; Bopearachchi 1991–1992: 1–21.

¹⁶¹ Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 4: types 477–495; Cribb 2007: 350.

¹⁶² Mitchiner 1975–1975, vol. 4: 284. Some other Sogdian issues from Kashka Darya (Qashqadaryo Region, southeastern Uzbekistan) dated to the 3rd century BC also preserved the images of Heracles, such as a group of coins with Sogdian inscriptions imitate the head of Heracles/Alexander. These issues seem to have had a more localised circulation and tended to imitate the Greek numismatic tradition in a primitive style. On the Sogdian issues of Heracles wearing the lion headdress, see Cribb 2007: 349, 363–364.

Greek coins.¹⁶³ It can be seen that the representations of the types of Heracles in the Indo-Greek coinage mentioned above, though with some slight modifications, were relatively consistent with Greek designs and generally employed on both Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins.

III.1.1.3. Indo-Scythian coins

After the Scythian nomads overthrew Greek power in Central Asia and North-West India in the 1st century BC, several types of Heracles from the previous Greek-ruled periods continued to be used in the Indo-Scythian coinage, mainly found on the coins of Maues (ca. 95–85 BC), Vonones and Spalahores (ca. 48–40 BC), Spalagadames (ca. 48–40 BC), Spalirisos (ca. 57–47 BC), Azes I (ca. 48–25 BC), Azilises (ca. 25–20 BC) and Rajuvula (ca. 10–25 AD).¹⁶⁴

The self-crowning standing type was taken from the Indo-Greek coinage and is found on the coins of Maues (Cat. No. 50),¹⁶⁵ Vonones with Spalahores as viceroy (Cat. No. 51)¹⁶⁶ and Azes with Azilises.¹⁶⁷ A variant of the self-crowning type showing Heracles with his right hand stretching out holding the wreath is found on the rectangular coins of Azilises.¹⁶⁸ Azilises also issued the type showing Heracles standing and facing left, holding his club and winged Nike.¹⁶⁹ A type representing Heracles

¹⁶³ Bopearachchi 1991: on the type of Heracles' club on Menander I Soter's coins, see 242, Menander I Soter, Série 28, Pl. 32; on the type of lionskin on Menander I Soter's coins, see 246, Menander I Soter, Série 35, Pl. 33; on the type of Heracles' club, bow, and quiver on Zoilus I's coins, see 250, Série 6, Pl. 34; on the type of Heracles' cornucopia on Theophilus' coins, see 308, Theophilus, Série 5, Pl. 48.

¹⁶⁴ The chronology of the Indo-Scythian kings who ruled from the 1st century BC to the middle of the 1st century AD is controversial. The relative chronology adopted in this study is based on recent publications by Senior (2001), Fröhlich (2008, 2009) and Bopearachchi (2020).

¹⁶⁵ Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 5: type 724; Fröhlich 2009: 63; Bopearachchi 2015a: 467–468.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: types 683, 688.

¹⁶⁷ Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 6: type 763; cf. Senior 2001: type 44; Fröhlich 2009: 63.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: type 791.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: type 795.

standing frontally with his right hand akimbo and left hand holding his club and lionskin is shown on Maues' coins.¹⁷⁰ From the Northern Satraps dynasty (Eastern Punjab to Mathura), the type of Heracles standing frontally, club and lionskin in his left hand, and right arm outstretched occurs on the coins of Rajuvula and other coins issued by an unknown governor in Jammu during the period that separated Rajuvula from Gondophares.¹⁷¹

On the coins of Vonones with Spalahores as heir and Spalagadames as viceroy, the type of seated and diademed Heracles with his club resting on his right thigh is repeated (Cat. No. 52).¹⁷² The coins of Azes I¹⁷³ and Azilises¹⁷⁴ also adopted the same seated type. Heracles' iconography is clearly derived from the type on Euthydemus' coins, but the representations seem to have undergone a process of schematisation.

III.1.2. Sculptural evidence

III.1.2.1. Bronze

Coin iconography has been frequently compared with the bronze works of the late 1st millennium BC in the region. Indeed, some bronzes might have served as prototypes for the coin designs.¹⁷⁵ A certain number of individual statuettes of Heracles used as votive or decorative objects were discovered in Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁷⁶ Most of them are of the nude standing type, with the right hand resting on a club and the left draped with the lionskin. The self-crowning type was also found, and the more general seated type on coins did not survive in metalwork except for one atypical seated figurine. The reclining type favoured in the Near East seemed to have been eschewed in this area, but the iconographic schema might have survived in other media and motifs.

¹⁷⁰ Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 5: type 702.

¹⁷¹ Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 7: types 905–906.

¹⁷² Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 5: types 690–691.

¹⁷³ Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 6: type 760.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: type 812.

¹⁷⁵ Bopearachchi 2015b: 130–131.

¹⁷⁶ Boardman 1992: 99–103.

III.1.2.1.a) Standing

A bronze statuette of a beardless naked Heracles holding an upright club in his left hand and crowning himself with the right hand (Cat. No. 53), discovered at Ai Khanoum, is reminiscent of many representations of the hero on Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins, such as those struck by Demetrius, Lysias and Theophilus.¹⁷⁷ A limestone sculptural fragment found at the same site (Cat. No. 54), showing a young, muscular, naked man wearing a foliate crown with a diadem, may reflect the popularity of the self-crowning type. Paul Bernard (1969) has pointed out that this figure possesses the facial features of Alexander the Great, and the torso greatly resembles the statue of Agias from Delphi, recalling a late classical style.¹⁷⁸ While the identity is unknown due to the missing arms and attributes, it shares similarities with the bronze statuette from Ai Khanoum. As presented in Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coinage, the self-crowning type of Heracles and its variants are usually young and without a beard, and aged variants of this type are rare. Among the known bronze works from Bactria, one exceptional bronze figurine, presumably discovered in Afghanistan, shows a bearded Heracles crowning himself (Cat. No. 55).¹⁷⁹

A more frequently found standing type of Heracles in bronze from Bactria is the nude hero stranding frontally with his left leg slightly advanced, right hand resting on the club placed on the ground, left hand draped with the lionskin and slightly stretched forward, possibly holding the apples of the Hesperides. According to Bopearachchi (2015b), a bronze statuette of this type was probably made in the vicinity of Ai Khanoum, resembling the hero's images on a series of Theophilus' silver coins (Cat. No. 56).¹⁸⁰ Other examples from Bactria include a purely classical style statuette with additional knotted lion paws at the figure's neck dated to around the 2nd century BC (Cat. No. 57),¹⁸¹ and one with an

¹⁷⁷ Bernard 1974: 302, Fig. 13; Abdullaev 2007: 535–576.

¹⁷⁸ Bernard 1969: 341–344, Figs. 17, 18; Tissot 2006: 28, no. He.p.AK.T.47.1.

¹⁷⁹ Jongeward 2019: 178, Fig. 147.

¹⁸⁰ Bopearachchi 1999: 307, Theophilus, Série 2–3, Pl. 48, 2001: 178, Fig. 2, 2015b: 130–131, Fig. 6; Abdullaev 2007: 550–552, Fig. 8; cf. *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles: nrr. 283, 288, 303.

¹⁸¹ Topsfield 1996: 266; Elsner and Lenk 2017: 48, Fig. 31.

elongated body dated about two centuries later than the previous one (Cat. No. 58). David Jongeward (2019) has suggested that the elongation of the latter example's body reflects a stylistic change from Bactria to Gandhāra.¹⁸² All three examples exhibit different iconographic details (hairstyle, facial features, lionskin), execution levels, styles and proportions of the same type.

In addition to the bronze statuettes of standing types occurring with numismatic evidence, other standing types dated to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC were also discovered in Western Afghanistan. A bronze statuette of the bearded and nude Heracles with his clenched right hand on the hip and left arm resting on the long club recalls the type of weary hero resting on his club after his labours devised in the 4th century BC (Cat. No. 59).¹⁸³ Another statuette dated between the 1st century BC and 1st century AD reveals an unexpected standing and attacking type that harks back even earlier to Archaic Greece (Cat. No. 60).¹⁸⁴ John Boardman (1992) considered these two works to be probably made in the East, though the former seems more faithful to classical proportions than the latter, with its stocky physique.¹⁸⁵

III.1.2.1.b) Seated

Although the Euthydemus-derived seated type of Heracles is one of the most frequently depicted types on coins discovered in Central Asia and North-West India, no bronze example matching this type is known to us. We only know one bronze statuette of Heracles sitting on rocks, but of a type that differs from Euthydemus' type (Cat. No. 61). The statuette has a classical naturalistic style with accurate anatomy and intricate details. The figure slightly leans back and sits on a rock while he rests his left hand on the thigh covered with the lionskin, the right arm bends inward and holds the bottom of the club that supports the weight, and the head leans against the club. Even though the size of this work is small, and the surface is somewhat corroded, it does not prevent us from seeing the artist's outstanding skills. This unique example suggests that the state of

¹⁸² Jongeward 2019: 179, Fig. 148.

¹⁸³ Boardman 1992: 99–100; cf. Palagia 1988: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles: 762–765.

¹⁸⁴ Boardman 1992: 101; cf. Palagia 1988: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles: 734–735, 780–781.

¹⁸⁵ Boardman 1992: 99–101.

our knowledge about types of Heracles circulating in Bactria at the time may be very limited, and we cannot always find corresponding types from numismatic evidence.

III.1.2.2 Ivory

The earliest known datable example of a Heracles figure in Central Asia (4th–3rd centuries BC), comes from the site Takht-i Sangin, the Temple of the Oxus (southern Tajikistan), dedicated to the eponymous river god.¹⁸⁶ Two ivory fragments (Cat. Nos. 62–63) showing Heracles were excavated, including a scabbard sheath with the representation of the head of the young Heracles/Alexander adorned with the lionskin headdress and a xiphos hilt decorated on both sides, with the hero vanquishing two other figures.¹⁸⁷ Both pieces constituted decorative elements on Greek weapons with a high level of craftsmanship and quality.

The ivory head of Heracles/Alexander (Cat. No. 62) is comparable to many Hellenistic coins with a similar design and sheds new light on the Greco-Bactrian portraits that mainly relied on numismatic evidence. It is reminiscent of the depiction of Alexander on the famous eponymous sarcophagus from the ancient city Sidon (Lebanon), apart from the wavy mane behind the figure's head. Boris A. Litvinskii and Igor. R. Pichikian (1994) have pointed out that there was a tradition of producing ivory miniatures of Alexander's head in antiquity because of the similarity with an ivory head without a headdress found in the "Tomb of Philip II" at Vergina, which is possibly another portrait of Alexander.¹⁸⁸ Whether this ivory head represents Heracles or Alexander in the guise of his hero

¹⁸⁶ For an overview of the Oxus Temple and treasure from Takht-i Sangin, see Lindström 2021: 286–312.

¹⁸⁷ Litvinskii and Pichikian 1981: 133–167.

¹⁸⁸ Litvinskii and Pichikian 1994: 60.

(most likely the latter), the motif is undoubtedly taken from Greek canon.¹⁸⁹

In the second ivory work (Cat. No. 63), the front and back of a sword hilt with two scenes of Heracles trampling a kneeling figure, shows an interest in narrative representation. Heracles' iconography is well-preserved even though his head is missing. On one side, he is standing with the raised right arm, wielding a knobbed club, while left seizes the hair of a figure, forcing his enemy to kneel with one leg on the ground. The design is similar on the other side, and the detail of the lionskin's paws knotted at the neck is preserved. Judging by the pointed ear and long hair, Russian scholars have identified the kneeling figure as Silenus or Achelous,¹⁹⁰ and the subject is categorised as Heracles threatening, pursuing or capturing satyrs (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 3245a). However, the distinctive horn on Achelous' forehead is omitted, and the composition and pose are neither commonly seen in the representations of Heracles in combination with Silenus nor with Achelous.¹⁹¹ A discussion between Bernard and Kazim Abdullaev (Abdullaev 2007) has raised the issue of identifying the subject matter, and they were inclined to interpret the scene as representing the Gigantomachy.¹⁹² Abdullaev further pointed out that the subject gave rise to local imitations, and the evolution and development can be observed through a series of terracotta figurines.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ If we leave aside the evidence on Seleucid and Greco-Bactrian coins, Alexander-like portraits are not commonly found in the East. A curious gold plaque from a 4th-century BC burial of a young Scythian woman preserved a youth head adorned with a lion head, and another example was discovered on the handle of a vase in the house on the Kokcha at Ai Khanoum. Very little information on these two has been published, but they seem to recall the memory of depicting Alexander. For the Scythian gold plaque, see Piotrovsky 1975: Pl. 27, Cat. No. 183; for the vase handle see Tissot 2006: 47, no. He.p.AK.Misc. 94.5.

¹⁹⁰ Litvinskii and Pichikian 1981, 1994.

¹⁹¹ The story of Achelous, in the form of a bull, fighting Heracles was told as early as the 7th century BC, and in Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses*, Achelous fights the hero three times: first in human form, then as a snake, and finally as a bull. Cf. Gantz 1993: 42.

¹⁹² Abdullaev 2007: fn. 51. For the representation of the Gigantomachy in the visual arts, see Massa-Pairault and Pouzadoux 2017.

¹⁹³ Abdullaev 2007: Fig. 14.

This evidence shows that one of the most successful local adaptations of the Heracles motif is the hero overpowering enemies or beasts, which we will discuss further in the following chapters.

III.1.2.3 Gold

The representation of Centauromachy was also possibly known in Bactria if we consider one rare example: an inlaid gold buckle showing a nude male figure holding a sword and about to stab a centaur (Cat. No. 64). Abdullaev (2007) dated it to the 1st century AD and suggested that it is probably a depiction of Heracles, while he admitted the difficulty of precise identification without sufficient evidence, such as the lack of Heracles' common attributes.¹⁹⁴ Since the Centauromachy was frequently depicted in the Greek visual arts, there are several possibilities for interpreting the scene on this Bactrian gold buckle: the figure slaughtering the centaur may be Heracles or other heroes such as Pirithous and Theseus.

III.1.3. Summary

During the Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian eras, the primary types of Heracles from Central Asia and North-West India are as follows: a) bearded and naked male, sometimes wearing a diadem, with attributes of sitting on a rock and variations thereof; b) a profile image of a young or aged Heracles with or without the lionskin headdress, sometimes with a wreath and diadem, sometimes with a club on the shoulder; c) a bearded/beardless and nude standing facing forward and crowning himself, and variations thereof; d) a bearded/beardless and crowned hero standing and resting on his club; e) a bearded hero wearing a diadem and striking an attacking pose; f) a hero overpowering an enemy or beast.

These representations exhibit some similarities and differences when compared to evidence from the contemporary Near East after Alexander, which resulted from the transfer dynamics and conditions in the cultural and ideological exchanges between Greek, Iranian and neighbouring nomadic peoples. However, the general state of Central Asian and North-West Indian evidence of Heracles images is distinctive even if we

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.: 563, Fig. 16.

consider the Iranian influence, and thus led to a parallel deviation in the Near East from the classical types.

III.2. Parsing the evidence of the Central Asian and North-West Indian adaptations of the Heracles motif before the Kushans

In Section II.2 of Chapter II, we have presented three patterns of the Near Eastern adaptation of the figure of Heracles, including: a) placement or production of replicas of classical types in a not purely Hellenistic cultural context; b) retained iconography with addition new elements or rendering in different styles; c) transfer of the motif and iconography to other figures. However, the same classification cannot be directly applied to the evidence from Central Asia and North-West India, especially concerning the pre-Kushan evidence. On the one hand, it is generally agreed that the visual arts of the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms were close to Greek style/ conventions and made few concessions to local artistic traditions.¹⁹⁵ The artistic representations of Heracles in Bactria under Greek influence did not seem to be assimilated with local deities as in the Mesopotamian and Iranian contexts. They were thus relatively consistent with the representations in the Greek homeland, as attested by the archaeological evidence mentioned above. On the other hand, the evidence of Heracleian representations from Central Asia and North-West India dated between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD is limited, scattered and usually lacks contextual information. Hence, we can only make corresponding speculations based on partial and uncertain evidence, and stylistic qualities regarding the adaptation during the transition from the Hellenistic to the Kushan period.

III.2.1. Heracleian facial features, physique and pose

One bronze statuette from Nigrai (Peshawar Valley, Pakistan) (Cat. No. 65), dated to the 2nd–1st centuries BC, is widely accepted as Heracles.¹⁹⁶ This example is excluded from the evidence of Heracles from North-West India in this study because the figure may also represent a satyr or

¹⁹⁵ Boardman 1992: 36.

¹⁹⁶ AGBG, vol. 2: 464, Fig. 476; Boardman 1992: 102, Cat. No. 104; Abdullaev 2007: 553–554, Fig. 11; Stančo 2012: 153, Fig. 12.

Silenus due to the absence of the hero's attributes and satyr-like facial features such as the snub nose. Regardless of the identity issue, the figure's pose and muscular physique are classical in style. He is reminiscent of the type of bearded Heracles resting his right arm on his hip and left arm stretching forth, seemingly holding the Hesperides' apples.

Another bronze from Afghanistan, dated nearly 200 years later than the previous one, is also thought to be a representation of Heracles' bust (Cat. No. 66).¹⁹⁷ This example shows the bearded type with a slightly frowned forehead, a thick neck and wearing a wreath. Previous research expressed a cautious attitude towards the figure's identity because of the missing pertinent attributes, the rough and provincial features, and the unusual design of the bust rising from an acanthus leaf, one of the most common decorative ornaments in the Western Greco-Roman world.¹⁹⁸ Notably, the representation of a bust rising from foliage is often found in the visual arts of the later classical world as well as in some Iranian and Gandhāran contexts. The identity is uncertain in both examples, yet they seem to reflect the influences of types of the Heracles figure which circulated in Central Asia and North-West India.

III.2.2. Heracleian figure with the lionskin

The Heracleian figure with his lionskin apparel might have been already incorporated into Buddhist art prior to the Kushan era. This is supported by a unique gold medallion (Cat. No. 67) from a warrior's tomb at the archaeological site Tillya Tepe (northern Afghanistan), dated to the beginning of the 1st century AD.¹⁹⁹ On one side, it shows a nude male figure draped in an animal skin pelt with the tail down, walking and hands rolling an eight-spoked wheel; on the other is a standing lion and the symbol of *nandyāvarta* face of Nandi,²⁰⁰ which also occurs on the coins of the Indo-Parthian kings Abdagases and Sases (Sasan).²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Boardman 1992: 103, Cat. No. 105; Abdullaev 2007: 555, Fig. 12; Stančo 2012: 143, 153, Fig. 13.

¹⁹⁸ Boardman 1992: 103, Cat. No. 105.

¹⁹⁹ On the general information of the coin, see Hiebert and Camon 2008: 276, Fig. 119.

²⁰⁰ Bhattacharya 1977: 1545–1567.

²⁰¹ Senior 2000: Abdagases' coins 229.51, 229.6; Sases 242.6, 242.50.

Most scholars agree on the likely identity of the figure as Śākyamuni Buddha because of the associated Buddhist symbols: the lion representing the Śākya clan, and the Kharoṣṭhī script of *dharmachakra-pravata* (“he who brings the wheel of the law into motion”).²⁰² The figure differs from the commonly agreed upon type of the earliest anthropomorphic Buddha — an ascetic male with fixed postures and supplements the knowledge of the pre-Kushan evidence.²⁰³

Meanwhile, upon which model the figure was based remains uncertain and is often entangled with the problem of meaning. Gérard Fussman (1987) first proposed two candidates as prototypes, Zeus and Heracles, and suggested the figure represents the Buddha in the guise of these two gods by following the Greek precedents from the area, such as numismatic and glyptic images.²⁰⁴ Akira Miyaji (2008) mentioned that the figure with the beast pelt draped over his shoulders was like Heracles in Greek mythology, possibly indicating that the Greeks in the area, who may have had a strong interest in Buddhism, juxtaposed the hero and the Buddha.²⁰⁵ In Martha Carter’s view (1995), the choice of Heracles as a protector of the *dharmachakra* was obvious because of the later evidence of visual assimilation between the hero and the Buddhist figure of Vajrapāṇi, an acolyte of the Buddha who frequently occurs in Gandhāran reliefs (see discussion in Chapter IV).²⁰⁶ The Tillya Tepe medallion is still an exceptional object that cannot be confidently labelled as a direct adaptation of the Greek hero motif or a concrete prototype for the figuration of the Buddha. However, the similarity with Heracles is undeniable, while the context is Buddhist and possibly symbolises the tomb owner’s social status and beliefs.

²⁰² Brown 2000: 77–87; DeCaroli 2015: 20–22; Miyaji 2008: 25–26. Katsumi Tanabe (2008) has argued that the figure is not Buddha but Heracles, see Tanabe 2008: 33–48.

²⁰³ Victor Sarianidi, the excavator of the site, called the image “a male figure” instead of giving an identity, while Robert DeCaroli pointed out that a definitive resolution of the subject cannot be confirmed due to the lack of additional contextual evidence. See Sarianidi 1985: 44; DeCaroli 2015: 22.

²⁰⁴ Fussman 1987: 67–88.

²⁰⁵ Miyaji 2008: 26, 2014: 75–105.

²⁰⁶ Carter 1995a: 119–140.

III.2.3. Heracles' attributes

Evidently, Heracles' typical attributes — lionskin, club and quiver — are shown independently on many reverse types of Indo-Greek coins, such as the bronze quadruples of Menander I (Cat. No. 42) and Zoilus I (Cat. No. 44). The use of the images of the hero's attributes symbolising political power and kingship in Central Asia is also found at the ancient Parthian site Old Nisa (modern Ashgabat, Southern Turkmenistan), founded by the first Parthian king, Arsaces I (ca. 247–217 BC). At Old Nisa, the main buildings are dated between the 2nd century BC and the 1st/2nd century AD, and a set of decorative terracotta plaques each depicted some Heracleian attributes, including the knobbed club, quiver with bow and arrow, and the head of a roaring lion, attesting to the significance of the hero's attributes (Cat. No. 68).²⁰⁷ These examples are closely related to the Heracles motif.

In particular instances, some local deities are shown with Heracles' club. As mentioned, the images of Heracles were discovered on Agathocles' commemorative coins (Cat. No. 39), while he also issued a series of bilingual coins containing the representation of the Hindu god Saṃkarṣaṇa-Balarāma wielding a club-like *musala* (pestle) (Cat. No. 69).²⁰⁸ Saṃkarṣaṇa-Balarāma was worshipped by the Bhāgavata, an ancient religious sect that traced back to the Mathura region and focused on the Vrishni cult. Boppearachchi (2016) has pointed out that the oldest historical record relating to the cult is the Brahmi inscriptions on the Besnagar Column (Heliodoros Pillar), which was erected in honour of Vāsudeva by the Greek ambassador of the Indo-Greek king Antialcidas from Taxila.²⁰⁹ Saṃkarṣaṇa-Balarāma on the Indo-Scythian coins of Maues and Azes continued to wield the club (Cat. No. 70), and Maues issued coins with the self-crowning Heracles type at the same time (Cat. No. 50).²¹⁰ Coupled with the testimony of Megasthenes, such evidence may indicate that the image of Heracles' club was recycled among divine

²⁰⁷ Pugachenkova 1967: 41, Figs. 15, 16; Abdullaev 2007: 548; Canepa 2018: 71–76.

²⁰⁸ Audouin and Bernard 1973: 238–289, 1974: 7–41; Boppearachchi 1991: 175, Agathocles, Série 9, Pl. 7, 2016: 61–78.

²⁰⁹ Boppearachchi 2016: 63–64.

²¹⁰ Cribb and Boppearachchi 1992: 80, Cat. No. 74; Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 5: type 727a.

figures worshipped by the multicultural communities at least two centuries before the Common Era.

The question is, if the attributes of lionskin and club carried by local deities were borrowed from Heracles, had they been instantly severed from their original meanings and adapted for local gods who featured in comparable myths and characteristics? Since several Indian deities, such as Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Indra and Balarāma, possess characteristics and legends that could be interpreted as Heraclean, the identity of Megasthenes' Indian Heracles remains unknown and has been disputed among scholars, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.²¹¹ Moreover, such uncertainty over Heracles' identity might have already existed in Megasthenes' era. Bernard (1974) postulated that the Greek historian possibly confused Balarāma's pestle with Heracles' club because of the superhuman strength of the Hindu god and the similar mythical stories of Balarāma as a monster slayer.²¹² Considering Megasthenes' status as a Greek ambassador of Seleucus and his historical views, this is a likely explanation.

The accumulation of material culture with depictions of Heracles in Central Asia and North-West India during the Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian periods laid the foundation for the subsequent adaptations of the Heracles figure and attributes in the Kushan era. In the dynastic art of the Kushans, who inherited Greek, Iranian and nomadic traditions, some types of representations of Heracles which followed the Near Eastern preferences (less common in the subcontinent) had also undergone a revival in popularity, such as the representation of the hero fighting beasts. At the same time, the iconographic transfer of Heracles to other figures achieved sustained success, which occurred prolifically in Gandhāran art. The significance of Heracles' metamorphoses in the East can be seen in the collective experiences of adapting his images from the Near East, Central Asia and India, which allowed his figure to achieve longevity even in the further East when and where the original classical connotations were entirely forgotten.

²¹¹ For a summary of the modern identifications of Megasthenes' Indian Heracles, see Karttunen 1989: 210–213.

²¹² Audouin and Bernard 1974: 18–20.

Chapter IV

The “Indian Heracles”?

IV.1. Classical authors’ identifications of the “Indian Heracles”

As noted in Chapter I, the so-called “Indian Heracles” typically denotes the easternmost variants of the Greek hero preserved in classical literature and mainly derived from Megasthenes’ *Indica*, written around 310 BC, which was influential in shaping western views of the subcontinent and aspects of its culture. In Section I.1.3 of Chapter I, we briefly introduced the relevant ancient sources, their relationship with the history of Alexander, and their possible influence on some modern scholarly discourses on the identities of the “Indian Heracles”.²¹³ As noted, it is unclear whether the Indian Heracles in the Greek and Roman sources referred to the same figure: the Greek hero who penetrated India or an indigenous god with similar attributes and characteristics. This duality of the Indian Heracles’ identity is first presented by Megasthenes and has been variously interpreted by ancient writers after him.

In this section, we present a selection of classical literature that offers a synthesised overview of the relevant discussions pertaining to the label of “Heracles” in the Indian context.²¹⁴ The classical sources have provided modern scholars with valuable evidence for contextualising the Indian identities of Megasthenes’ Heracles and reference for evaluating archaeological finds from India dated to the centuries around the Common Era. Hence, the primary issue in assessing the coherence between ancient texts and material depictions involves distinguishing the

²¹³ See Chapter I: Section I.1.3.

²¹⁴ For a collection of all the preserved passages of Megasthenes, see Schwanbeck 1846; McCrindle 1877; For an updated translation with commentary, see Stoneman 2022.

concepts of the figure of Heracles in India and the “Indian Heracles”, which will be discussed here.

IV.1.1. Heracles in India

In considering the later developed narratives about Heracles in India as the Greek hero who set foot on the Indian subcontinent,²¹⁵ Heracles was regarded the son of Zeus and the ancestral figure (or role model) for Greeks to emulate, and calculated as having lived 15 generations after Dionysus and 138 generations before Chandragupta (Arr. *Ind.* 9.9).²¹⁶ Most of these notions are derived from Alexander associated narratives that combined history and myths, particularly in later times.²¹⁷ For instance, Plutarch, writing in the 1st–2nd centuries AD, notes that the Macedonians (in the context of Alexander’s campaigns) followed the example of Heracles and other divine ancestors of their race to settle the victorious Greeks in India (Plut. *Mor.* 332a). Similar descriptions of Alexander and his army treading in the footsteps of Heracles and conquering India feature in Pliny the Elder, Justin, Solinus and Augustine (Plin. *HN* 1–11, 4.17.4; Just. *Epit.* 12.7; Solin. 9.18; August. *De civ. D.* 18, 18.13). Since the focus of these narratives is not on Heracles specifically, mentioning his name beside other Greek gods and heroes, such as Dionysus and Perseus, only praises Alexander’s greatness and increases the sense of the campaign’s impact. The association with Heracles in the narratives about Alexander would have taken on the pattern of mixing older and newer strata, in which Alexander transcends mortal status to become a new “god”.

Among the narratives of Heracles in India derived from Megasthenes, summarised in Section I.1.3 of Chapter I, two incidents seem to claim the Greek identity of this figure: Heracles attacked the rock of Aornus three times and was repulsed; Heracles released Prometheus from the Caucasus Mountains (recast as the Hindu Kush). As noted in Chapter I, most Greco-Roman writings that cite the story of Aornus refer to this recorded

²¹⁵ During the classical period and earlier, the concept of India for the Greeks denoted the Indus basin, which was derived from the awareness of the Achaemenid frontier being that region.

²¹⁶ Dahlquist 1962: 71; Stoneman 2022: 100.

²¹⁷ For the evidence for Alexander’s reverence for Heracles, see Djurslev 2021: 432–446.

Heracles figure as the Greek hero, even in the instances of these narratives being considered untrustworthy.²¹⁸ In other words, some ancient writers such as Eratosthenes, Strabo and Arrian were aware of the discrepancies between narratives of the Greek Heracles and Heracles in India, which is well-reflected by their dismissal of the location of Caucasus in the Hindu Kush (Str. 3.5.6, 15.1.7–9; Arr. *Ind.* 5.4–12, 5.4–8).

Regardless of where and when the concept of the Greek hero conquering India originated, its common occurrence in literature between the Hellenistic period and Late Antiquity alludes to a relatively stable core component of the narrative transmitted between Greco-Roman writers. In this circumstance, the understandings and interpretations of respective ancient writers can vary, while several new aspects in the older narratives were elaborated by taking up newly received geographical, historical and cultural information. Inevitably, this leads to consideration of the extent to which these accounts mix myth and history and how we might parse them for relevant information, in this case, the distinguishing of Heracles or figures connected with him in the context of India.

IV.1.2. Indian Heracles?

IV.1.2.1. *Similar narratives, characteristics and attributes*

Classical sources about the Heracles figure in India are generally ambiguous and exhibit some similarities between the Greek and the Indian Heracles. According to Diodorus, the latter was born among Indians; he carried the club and lionskin, his bodily strength and courage far exceeded other men, he cleared the land and sea of wild beasts, he had many wives and sons, and after he passed away, he received immortal honour (Diod. 2.39.1–4). Arrian also mentions some of these general similarities taken from Megasthenes (Arr. *Ind.* 8.6).

One of these similarities that can be immediately recognised as Heraclian is the attributes of club and skin (lionskin) carried by the Indian Heracles or an indigenous tribe that worshipped this figure. Diodorus mentions that the Indians assigned to the Indian Heracles these two attributes following Greek convention (Diod. 2.39.1–4). In Arrian's accounts, the Macedonians saw the people of Sibae (Suraseni) dressed in

²¹⁸ See Chapter I: Section I.1.3.

skins and carrying clubs, like their ancestor Heracles (Arr. *Ind.* 5.4–12, 5.4–8). On the club and lionskin, Strabo argues that these canonical Greek Heracleian accoutrements associated with the hero were not introduced until Peisander's *Heracleia* (7th or 6th century BC), so these attributes cannot identify the Sibae as descended from the people who accompanied the Greek hero's expedition to India (Str. 15.1.9).²¹⁹

IV.1.2.2. *Indian elements*

Although the information on the Indian Heracles in Megasthenes' fragments is gathered from various Greek and Roman sources as a post hoc narrative compendium, many are distant from Heracles' canonical legends and have attracted little academic interest generally except in discussions on the Greek experience in India. It is reasonable to assume that the Heracles figure recorded by Megasthenes reflects some elements from the subcontinent around the 4th–3rd century BC due to his experience at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, which has been one of the main reasons that many modern scholars suggest that his Heracles in India was a pseudonym of an Indian god, a point which will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

The most pertinent Indian context-related evidence is the ancient cities founded by Heracles and where his figure was worshipped. He is said to have founded several cities, including Palibothra (present-day Patna, historically known as Pāṭaliputra, the capital of the Mauryan and Gupta Empires), and constructed their urban systems; he underwent apotheosis, and his descendants continued to rule for many generations, and some of their kingships survived until the arrival of Alexander (Diod. 2.39.1). In Arrian's accounts, the Sibae worshipped Heracles in their two great cities, Methora (present-day Mathura) and Cleisobora (possibly in the district of Mathura) on the River Iomanes (Arr. *Ind.* 8.5).²²⁰

²¹⁹ Strabo also noted that the ancient wooden statues he was familiar with did not represent Heracles in such attire (Str. 15.1.9). We cannot pinpoint the exact statues he referred to, but the early images of Heracles, i.e. before the late 7th century BC, are known to have been depicted in military armour of the Greek heroic age or perhaps Archaic hoplite armour. Additionally, Heracles in armour is not present in the currently known archaeological evidence of his figure in the East. Cf. Smith 2021: 354, Fig. 26.8.

²²⁰ Stoneman 2022: 99.

An account of Heracles' pearl fishing is also considered "Indian". The hero travelled all the earth and seas and collected precious pearls for his daughter's adornment, with whom he copulated when she was only seven, a story that Arrian found absurd and attempted to rationalise with an anthropological approach to understanding "Indian" customs (Arr. *Ind.* 9.1–8). It seems that the Greeks had never seen pearls before Alexander's expeditions.²²¹ Both Arrian and Pliny detail these precious objects from the Indian Ocean and the trade in them (Arr. *Ind.* 8.4; Plin. *HN* 9.54.1–9.55.1).

From a historical viewpoint, both sceptics and rationalisers of classical times nevertheless helped preserve the scattered information of "Heracles in India", though little interest was paid to this peripheral extension of the Greek legend, resulting in highly speculative evidence. Overall, compared to the intensity and elaborate quality of Heracles myths circulating in the Mediterranean area, those that took hold in the subcontinent are very limited and marginal.

IV.2. Modern scholarly identifications of the "Indian Heracles"

Since the late 18th century, scholarly research on Sanskrit texts and Indian religions has provided additional perspectives for interpreting the "Indian Heracles" in classical accounts.²²² Many attempts have been made to pinpoint the "Indian Heracles" among several Indian gods by comparing classical and Sanskrit sources. The characteristics and narratives of particular Indian figures are chiefly compared with Megasthenes' fragments. Several identifications have been thus proposed, including the best-known theories of Heracles as connected with Balarāma,²²³

²²¹ *Ibid.*: 103–104.

²²² As early as the late 18th century, some European scholars had already opposed the methodology of drawing parallels between the Greek and Indian gods. See Jones 1799: 3–4.

²²³ Wilford 1799: 241–295; Tod 1831: 139–159; Varadpande 2009: 124; Parpolo 2015: 154, 303; Chopra 2019: 214.

Kṛṣṇa,²²⁴ Śiva²²⁵ and Indra.²²⁶ In addition to these four primary identifications, other lesser-known theories include the Indian Heracles as a pre-Aryan hero-god of Harappa,²²⁷ a king of the southern Mathura,²²⁸ an earth-spirit Yakṣa²²⁹ and Manu.²³⁰ Thus far, no consensus on the figure's identity has been reached among scholars because each identification has parts of the features that may respond to the classical sources and parts of them differ significantly.²³¹ More recently, Richard Stoneman (2022) commented that identifying Heracles in Greek authors with any single Indian god is misleading because each of the identifications cannot be universalised.²³²

This section does not intend to repeat the debates on the identity of the Indian Heracles of classical sources. Rather, it offers a historiographic overview of the modern scholarly interpretations of the Indian Heracles mentioned by Greek and Roman writers, which are closely related to ancient Indian literary sources and archaeological finds from Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Some of these modern identifications have influenced our current understanding of some Indian works of art that

²²⁴ Lassen 1844: 232–259; Schwanbeck 1846: 44; Rapson 1922: 408–409; Stein 1931: 301–302; Bryant 2007: 5; Stoneman 2019: 87.

²²⁵ Cunningham 1891: vii–viii; Kennedy 1907: 966–970; Rawlinson 1926: 61; Zvelebil 1991: 103.

²²⁶ Schroeder 1914; Dahlquist 1962; Sedlar 1980: 188.

²²⁷ Sachse 1981: 49; cf. Karttunen 1989: 212.

²²⁸ André and Filliozat 1980.

²²⁹ Eggermont 1986: 159–168.

²³⁰ Goyal 2000: 75–59.

²³¹ Karttunen 1989: 211.

²³² Stoneman 2022: 99. It is worth noting that some views suggest that ancient Indian texts deliberately used the Heracles themes from classical sources. For example, Fernando Wulff Alonso has proposed that the group of authors of the *Mahābhārata* borrowed the components of the Heracles' exploits (e.g. Heracles and Omphale) for the stories of the Pāṇḍavas (the five legendary brothers) who were exiled to the forest for twelve years and spent one year at the court of Virāṭa. John Duncan Martin Derrett claimed that the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* used the Greek motif of death ritual and rebirth associated with Heracles. Wuff Alonso 2008: 73–101, 2014, 2020; cf. Karttunen 2017: 195–197; Derrett 2002: 343–355.

share visual similarities with the Greek Heracles' images. The section aims to provide an art historical perspective — often overlooked or misapplied — on what iconography has been considered to support the identifications of “Indian Heracles”, particularly in the cases of identifying the hero with four Indian figures: Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva and Indra.

IV.2.1. Balarāma

The identification of the Indian Heracles as Balarāma (Baladéva), the god of strength and agriculture and the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, dates back to early 19th century scholarship. Using an etymological approach, Francis Wilford (1799) stated that “Bala” sprung from Viṣṇu or Heri; thus, Balarāma is “Heri-cula”, the “Heracles” in Megasthenes' fragments and the “Belus” in Cicero.²³³ This identification had become commonplace in scholarly discussions of Indian geography and culture during the 19th century²³⁴ and is still occasionally mentioned by scholars nowadays, although not as prominently touted as the identification with Kṛṣṇa.²³⁵ Asko Parpola (2015) takes over the identification because of Cicero's testimony on the name “Belus” and Balarāma's strength mentioned in the Old Tamil poems of the first centuries AD.²³⁶ In general, scholars who opt for this identification rely on textual evidence, and the iconographic aspect is less discussed.

Balarāma's iconography is distant from the Greek hero regardless of the different Indian traditions of depicting him.²³⁷ For instance, in contrast to his younger brother Kṛṣṇa's dark skin, Balarāma has light skin. He usually wears blue and carries attributes such as a *hala* (plough), *gadā* (mace) or *muṣala* (pestle).²³⁸ Nevertheless, there are a few discussions

²³³ Wilford 1799: 270.

²³⁴ In Growse's book on Mathura, Dionysus and Heracles are seen as corresponding with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. See Growse 1883; cf. Dahlquist 1962; Karttunen, 1989: 211.

²³⁵ Varadpande 2009: 124; Parpola 2015: 154, 303; Chopra 2019: 214.

²³⁶ Parpola 2015: 154.

²³⁷ Joshi 1979; Vemsani 2006.

²³⁸ Joshi 1979; In the *Agni Purāṇa*, Balarāma carries the *gadā* (club/mace) and *hala* (plough) in his two-armed form; and in the four-arm form, he carries a *muṣala* (pestle), *cakra* (wheel), *hala* and *śankha* (conch). Cf. Gopinatha Rao 1914: 201.

about Balarāma's iconographic similarities with the figure of the Greek Heracles in the identification of Indian Heracles as Balarāma. Wilford (1799) noted that Balarāma is generally represented as a stout man holding a club, although modern statues from Mathura are in modern dresses and have little resemblance to the Greek Heracles.²³⁹ According to him, a statue made in the pre-Islamic period at Baldeo in the Mathura district, where Balarāma used to rule according to Hindu mythology, is recalled by a British colonial officer and some locals and seems to match Megasthenes' descriptions.²⁴⁰ It is said that this statue had a plough in his left hand, a thick cudgel in the right, and the shoulder is covered by the skin of a lion.²⁴¹ This observation leads us to some of the earliest modern confirmations of the overlapping iconographic features between the Greek and Indian Heracles figures by considering material culture from the subcontinent: a muscular man with a club-like weapon and sometimes clad in the big cat's pelt.

The earliest published image to support the identification of Heracles-Balarāma appears to be an engraved intaglio claimed to have been found in Jaipur (Cat. No. 71), first and only seen in a 19th-century article by James Tod.²⁴² The intaglio engraved with a muscular, nude, beardless man wearing a beribboned diadem, standing to his right with his left hand leaning on a club and his right arm outstretched and draped with an animal pelt. This image was regarded as evidence to confirm Arrian's analogy in costume and attributes of the Greek and Indian Heracles, which, in Tod's understanding, referred to Balarāma and was the same as the simulacrum brought by Porus' army against Alexander (Curt. 8.14.11).²⁴³ Stylistically, the representation of the figure is rather classical than Indian, which can be compared with the figure of Heracles on some Roman gems, coins and medallions, such as a statuary type from the 1st century BC (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 433, 435). A second figure on the intaglio presents a wreath or coronet to "Balarāma", which cannot be recognised due to the quality of the published print. Considering the

²³⁹ Wilford 1799: 270.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 294

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*: 295.

²⁴² Tod 1831: 139–159.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*: 139–159.

Hellenistic features of the work, the second figure could be a Nike-like flying type, as is often seen in Greek-influenced Eastern art.

Notably, both Heracles and Balarāma images co-existed in the Indo-Greek milieu, seen on coins issued by Agathocles (Cat. No. 69).²⁴⁴ We cannot confirm whether the representation of Balarāma during this period might have taken some inspiration from the Greek Heracles image migrated to the subcontinent,²⁴⁵ yet given the numismatic evidence, it is reasonable to assume that both were known and occupied significant status in Central Asia and North-West India during the centuries around the Common Era.

IV.2.2. Kṛṣṇa

The most commonly accepted identification of the Indian Heracles is with Kṛṣṇa, which also emerged in the 19th century and remains popular in literary and historical studies. Following Christian Lassen's identification (1827, 1844), many have discussed the similarity between the Indian Heracles and Kṛṣṇa as evinced in classical Greek and Indian literature.²⁴⁶ This identification appears as a convention in 20th-century European scholarship²⁴⁷ and persists in some introductions of studies of Kṛṣṇa even now.²⁴⁸

Similar to the identification of Heracles-Balarāma, the identification with Kṛṣṇa was also based on an etymological approach, drawing a connection with Viṣṇu (Hari).²⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Kṛṣṇa seems to share more characteristics and narrative similarities with the "Indian Heracles". The identification is mainly based on three arguments: inclusion in the cult

²⁴⁴ Filliozat 1973: 113–123; Schmid 2010: 89–101; Bopearachchi 2016: 61–78, 2020: 163–169, 403, Cat. No. 176.

²⁴⁵ According to Bopearachchi (2020), one of the earliest images of Balarāma appeared on the Mauryan imperial coin (ca. 3rd century BC), see Bopearachchi 2020: 407, Cat. No. 180.

²⁴⁶ Lassen 1827: 91, 1844: 252, 1852: 1107; Schwanbeck 1846: 44; Rapson 1922: 408–409; Stein 1931: 301–302; Bryant 2007: 5; Stoneman 2019: 87. Cf. Dahlquist 1962: 9–11; Karttunen 1989: 211.

²⁴⁷ Stein 1931: 301–302; Rapson 1922: 408–409.

²⁴⁸ Bryant 2007: 5.

²⁴⁹ Lassen 1827: 91.

at Mathura; the characteristic of the figure having many lovers; and the figure's deeds of slaughtering monsters while travelling widely. To name a few examples, the classical passages of the Indian Heracles worshipped by the Sibae and the city "Methora" might have referred to Kṛṣṇa and Mathura as recorded in *Mahābhārata*, Kṛṣṇa's numerous wives and sons are noted in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the story of Heracles finding the pearl from the sea was Megasthenes' interpretation of the legend of Kṛṣṇa killing Pāñcajanya whose bones turned into the *śankha* (conch) of Kṛṣṇa.²⁵⁰ Among these, the foremost connection is still that with Mathura.²⁵¹

When it comes to iconographic comparisons, evidence for this identifying Kṛṣṇa with Heracles is lacking. Classical accounts have drawn scholarly attention to two Heracleian accoutrements, the club and the lionskin, but the analogy of attributes, especially the lionskin, is uncertain in Indian sources. The skin is not found in any Indian text nor associated with Kṛṣṇa's iconography,²⁵² while the club may be referred to as *gadā*, an ordinary Indian club that is carried and used by many deities in Hindu epics.²⁵³ The *gadā* is closely related to the iconography of Viṣṇu and is also known as *kaumodakī*.²⁵⁴ Given that Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu, the deity bears this attribute in some instances, such as in the *Bhāgavad-gītā* and in some early depictions of Kṛṣṇa from Mathura

²⁵⁰ Lassen 1844: 232–259, 1852: 1126. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Kṛṣṇa is said to have 16,100 wives and 180,000 sons. Lassen underlines that Kṛṣṇa was already thought of as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in Chandragupta's time and that Megasthenes' descriptions of the Indian Heracles corresponded with his contemporary Indian sources. For a summary of the identification and related criticisms, see Dahlquist 1962: 77–87.

²⁵¹ For the identification of the tribe of Suraseni with the Sātvatas and Heracles with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, see Bhandarkar 1913: 8–13.

²⁵² According to Allan Dahlquist, Lassen argues that the omission of lionskin in Megasthenes was due to the Greek manipulation of the Indian concept of lions, which denotes a warrior's outstanding qualities and could be used to identify Kṛṣṇa as the Indian Heracles. See Dahlquist 1962: 78.

²⁵³ Gopinatha Rao 1914: 4–5; Lochtefeld 2002: 231.

²⁵⁴ Gopinatha Rao 1914: 4; Banerjea 1941: 329. On a Kushan relief from Mathura, the *gadā* is of the same height as Viṣṇu, similar to a long pestle or *muṣala*. See Sivaramanurti 1955: 135, Pl. IX.

during the Kushan period.²⁵⁵ However, many of Viṣṇu's *avatāras* and manifestations also carry the *gadā*,²⁵⁶ while the early representations of Kṛṣṇa do not necessarily present it, like the image of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa on Agathokles' coin depicting the *cakra* (wheel) and the *śankha* (conch) as his attributes.²⁵⁷ If Megasthenes' Indian Heracles referred to Kṛṣṇa, it would be difficult to explain why these important identifiers for the deity in Indian tradition were omitted.

The discrepancy between text and image arguably resulted in the narrowing of the art historical discourse. Nevertheless, this identification has influenced some assessments of the Heracleian representations from India during the Kushan period. For example, a statue of a naked male figure with a lion discovered at Mathura is considered as connected to the cult of Kṛṣṇa,²⁵⁸ and a Kushan seal impression showing a male figure fighting a horse is given two possible identifications as Heracles and Diomedes' Mares or Kṛṣṇa and Keśin.²⁵⁹ These examples will be discussed further in Chapter V.

IV.2.3. Śiva

Unlike the previous two identifications centred more on textual comparison and analysis, the earliest association with Śiva relates to discussions of numismatic discoveries during British rule in India. At the turn of the 20th century, the identification first appeared in Alexander Cunningham's *Coins of Ancient India* (1891)²⁶⁰ and was followed by several.²⁶¹ Allan Dahlquist (1962) summarises that both classical and Indian literary sources provide little evidence for this identification apart from three arguments: the name "Sibae" may relate to Śiva, as the Sibae and Śiva wear

²⁵⁵ For the early representations of Kṛṣṇa from the Mathura region, see Schmid 1997: 60–80, 2010.

²⁵⁶ Gopinatha Rao 1914: 231–232.

²⁵⁷ Bopearachchi 2020: 159–182.

²⁵⁸ AGBG, vol. 2: 604–605.

²⁵⁹ Harle 1985: 643.

²⁶⁰ Cunningham 1891: vii–viii.

²⁶¹ Kennedy 1907: 966–968; Rawlinson 1926: 61; cf. Karttunen 1989: 211.

animal skins, and the incarnation of Śiva as Lakuliśa is called “the Lord with the club”.²⁶²

In the cases of identifying the Indian Heracles as Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, the influence of the identifications derived from literature can be seen in some discussions of images with Heracleian features, while the case with Śiva seems to be on the contrary. Noticing the continuity of representing the Heracleian figure (with the attributes of club and animal skin) on the early Kushan coins and learning of the connection between Śiva and Lakuliśa, James Kennedy (1907) turned to Megasthenes and the etymological method.²⁶³ John F. Fleet (1907) noted that there is no doubt that the club of Śiva is the club of the Greek Heracles (not Megasthenes’ Indian Heracles) because the appearance of Lakuliśa arrived when the Heracleian image experienced a revolutionary development on early Kushan coins.²⁶⁴ The “shared” club has been held as a crucial identifier and would account for either the Greek perception of the Indian deity and attribute or the local adaptation of the Greek iconography.²⁶⁵ Thus, the identification of Heracles with Śiva has led to a mixture of views on the literary and artistic sources, even if the Western ancient texts shed little light on local Eastern perceptions and modifications.²⁶⁶

²⁶² Dahlquist 1962: 73–77.

²⁶³ Kennedy 1907: 967–968.

²⁶⁴ It should be clarified that the Heracles whom Fleet refers to was not Megasthenes’ Indian variant but possibly a motif adopted from the Hellenistic predecessors in Central Asia and North India by the Kushans. Fleet separates the identification of Indian Heracles and the study of the figure of Heracles in India. See Fleet 1907: 424.

²⁶⁵ Ingalls has suggested that the Sanskrit name Lakuliśa may have been derived from the Greek name Heracles (Ἡρακλῆς). See Ingalls 1962: 296, fn. 30; cf. Spagnoli 1967: 259–260; Bakker 2011: 21–37.

²⁶⁶ Curtius’ writing about Porus bringing a “Heracles simulacrum” to the Battle of the Hydaspes was taken by Cunningham as a direct testimony that the Greeks identified Śiva as Heracles at the time of Alexander. However, there is no evidence that the two ancient sources are correlated. See Cunningham 1892: 51, 57; cf. Coomaraswamy 1927: 42, fn. 5; Banerjea 1941: 98–99.

In present-day scholarship, the “Heracleian Śiva” usually refers to the images of a deity labelled as “OHPO” on some early Kushan coins.²⁶⁷ On a few seals found in the North-West India, Śiva and other four-armed male deities are shown with Heracles’ attributes.²⁶⁸ In other words, some of the earliest representations of this Indian god are indeed connected with images of Heracles, a phenomenon discussed in the next chapter, but they do not correspond to the descriptions of Indian Heracles in classical sources.

IV.2.4. Indra

Identifying Indra with the Indian Heracles, or even the Greek hero, originated in early Indo-European comparative mythology. Leopold von Schroeder (1914) first elaborated on the similarities in the personalities, heroic deeds and adventures between the Greek Heracles and Indra, which are not much related to the descriptions of Indian Heracles.²⁶⁹ For example, one of the most discussed similarities between Greek and Vedic legends is the cattle raiding myth, which in Heracles’ case is the labour of the Cattle of Geryon, while in Indra’s the story with the Paṇis.²⁷⁰ This connection, however, seemed legitimate to Dahlquist (1962), who compared the *Ṛg Veda* with Megasthenes and revived the identification of the Indian Heracles as Indra, accepted by several scholars but also disputed by many.²⁷¹ Given that most of the discourse regarding this identification stems from literary and religious comparisons, the present study does not intend to repeat the controversies of Indo-European comparative mythology. We shall only focus on the remarks on the iconographic similarity between Heracles and Indra.

The only argument supporting the iconographic similarity is to correlate the club of Indian Heracles with the *vajra* of Indra. In the *Veda*, the *vajra*

²⁶⁷ Rosenfield 1967: 93–94; Cribb and Bopearachchi 1992: 86; Cribb 1997: 11–66; Giuliano 2004: 51–96; Bopearachchi 2015a: 583–598.

²⁶⁸ Rosenfield 1967: Pl.1; Bopearachchi 2015a: 583–598.

²⁶⁹ Schroeder 1914.

²⁷⁰ Schroeder 1914: 57–67; For a further discussion on the subject, see Lincoln 1976: 42–65; For the myth of the Paṇ, see Srinivasan 1973: 44–57.

²⁷¹ Dahlquist 1962. On the agreement with the identification of Heracles-Indra, see Sedlar 1980: 188; Hallam 1996; Dahlquist’s work has received severe criticism, see Jaiswal 1967: 107–113; Karttunen 1989: 212, fn. 132.

denotes Indra's thunderbolt, which is used as a weapon to kill Vṛtrá (*RV* VIII, 100, 9; 12).²⁷² However, the Vedic myth contains many passages alluding to the cosmogonic power of this attribute that cannot be simply understood as a club.²⁷³ Dahlquist (1962) interprets the *vajra* as a club etymologically and suggests that the shape of the *vajra* resembles the club based on Jitendra Nath Banerjea's (1941) summary of the representations of *vajra* in early Indian art.²⁷⁴ Though, in Banerjea's descriptions, the clublike shape of the *vajra* refers to the attribute carried by the four-armed figure OHPO (Oešo-Śiva) on Huvishka's coins, while Indra's *vajra* is represented as a symmetrical object with prongs coming out from each direction, as well-known from the oldest depictions from Sāñcī.²⁷⁵ The other iconographic element of the Indian Heracles, the lionskin, also does not suggest the identity of Indra, although Dahlquist saw the Mathura statue (usually recognised as Heracles or Kṛṣṇa) as representing Indra killing a lioness in the *Rg Veda* (*RV* VII.18.17).²⁷⁶

From an iconographic viewpoint, no sufficient evidence supports the identification of the classical recorded Indian Heracles as Indra. Nevertheless, one of Indra's attributes, the *vajra*, has been proven to have a solid connection to the Heracleian representation in the Gandhāran Buddhist art, in which the *vajra*-bearer Vajrapāṇi sometimes manifested in the guise of Heracles, a specific representation discussed in Section IV.2 of Chapter IV.

To conclude, most modern scholars have agreed that the identity of the Indian Heracles in classical accounts reflects Greek perception of an indigenous god, not the Greek hero, while comparatists scrutinise ancient texts and juxtapose Greek and Indian legends. These modern identifications have formed a current empirical perspective on the reading of the Heracleian images from Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. On the one hand, it provides copious information for investigating the heroic

²⁷² Jamison and Brereton 2014: 205–208.

²⁷³ On analyses of the *vajra*, see Giuliano 1997, 2008: 103–126.

²⁷⁴ Dahlquist 1962: 154; Banerjea 1941: 330.

²⁷⁵ Banerjea 1941: Pl. VIII, Fig. 8, IX, Figs. 2, 6. For the earliest representations of *vajra* at Sāñcī, see Marshall and Foucher 1940: Pl. 49.

²⁷⁶ Alternatively, the omission of the lionskin was a misinterpretation of Megasthenes of the Sanskrit word *soma*. See Dahlquist 1962: 157, 165, fn. 1.

motif in the East; on the other hand, it may interfere with our judgment on the subject and thus challenge the reconstruction of alternative meanings.

Chapter V

The transformation of the Heracles image in Central Asia, Gandhāra and North India (1st–3rd centuries AD)

V.1. Evidence of the figure of Heracles after the Indo-Greek period

While considerable scholarly attention has been given to the transformation of Heracles' representations in the visual arts in Central Asia, Gandhāra and North India after the Indo-Greek period, evidence of the Heracles figure in the subsequent era — the Saka-Parthian²⁷⁷ and Kushan periods — is relatively sparse and contested.²⁷⁸ This section thus provides a survey of the archaeological evidence of Heracles depictions discovered in the areas of present-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and northern part of India dating to the first three centuries AD to lay the groundwork for understanding the metamorphoses of the Heracles figure in the region during Kushan dominion.

The most discussed group of Heracles figures after the Indo-Greek period is on early Kushan coins, which took over several Heracles types from Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins.²⁷⁹ Seals and gems made of precious stones and clay found in the Gandhāra region (Northern Pakistan) have preserved representations of Heracles that include several

²⁷⁷ The use of the “Saka-Parthian period” here designates the political power of people of nomadic origins in the Indian northwest regions, approximately spanning from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD. See Callieri and Filigenzi 2002: 57–61; Olivieri 2018: 123–139; Cribb 2018: 7–34; Filigenzi 2020: 205–224, fn. 3.

²⁷⁸ The standard work on the general arts of the Kushans is by John M. Rosenfield (1967), which is based on a thorough investigation of the extensive material covering coins, seals, sculptures and reliefs. A fair number of works of Heracles in these categories have been identified and collated and given preliminary analyses. See Rosenfield 1967.

²⁷⁹ Rosenfield 1967; Mitchiner 1978; Göbl 1984, 1993; Jongeward and Cribb 2015.

standing and seated types, as well as depictions of Heracles with other figures or in narratives.²⁸⁰ Terracotta mouldings and figurines with Heracleian features dated to around the 3rd century AD were found in Northern Bactria (South-West Tajikistan and South-East Uzbekistan).²⁸¹ To the north of the Hindu Kush, in the excavations of several temples and chapels at Dilberjin (Northern Afghanistan), some clay fragments have been identified as representing Heracles and suggest the practice of a cult dedicated to the hero in Bactria during the late Kushan period.²⁸² From Begram, several plaster emblemata with the bearded nude hero and a bronze statuette of Serapis-Heracles reveal an obvious Greco-Roman style.²⁸³ The representation of Heracles in narrative scenes is not as commonly seen as the individual type, but from Taxila and other sites of Gandhāra, some stone palettes (also called “toilet trays”) and a wrestler’s weight depict seemingly Heracleian figures in narrative scenes that remain open to interpretation.²⁸⁴

Most of the sculptures with Heracleian features dated to these periods no longer represent Heracles *per se*, especially the hybrid representations in Gandhāran Buddhist art, as will be discussed in Chapter IV. However, not all the sculptures explicitly present different identities. Some appear to be Heracleian but can hardly be identified as such because of the shortage and ambiguous nature of evidence, such as the Mathura statue of a naked male figure with a lion, which has been considered a reference work for identifying Megasthenes’ Indian Heracles as either the Greek hero or an indigenous deity.²⁸⁵ Other examples have been relatively less mentioned in the last decades because of their unclear condition, low number or minor status they occupy in their discovered context. Nevertheless, as a group of Heracleian figures which adorned Buddhist stupas

²⁸⁰ Marshall 1951; Callieri 1997; Rahman and Falk 2011; Errington 2021.

²⁸¹ Abdullaev 2002: 53–69, 2007: 535–576.

²⁸² Kruglikova 1977: 407–427; Pugachenkova 1977, 1987: 66–78.

²⁸³ Kurz 1954; Tissot 2006.

²⁸⁴ Francfort 1979, 2016: 305–339; Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47; Behrendt 2007; Pons 2011: 153–176; Boardman 2015.

²⁸⁵ Cunningham 1884: 109–110; Smith 1911: 134, Fig. 79; AGBG, vol. 2: 604–605; Vogel 1930: 118, Pl. XLVIIb; Dahlquist 1962: 58.

from the Gandhāran area show, the sculptural representations of Heracles might have been more significant in number.²⁸⁶

V.1.1. Numismatic evidence: 1st–2nd century AD Kushan coins

A consensus has been reached among scholars that several depicted figurative types of Heracles on the coins of Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian were passed on to Kushan coins, despite the level of craftsmanship and some transitional issues of coinage relating to the chronology of monarchs.²⁸⁷ In particular, the figure of Heracles with his typical attributes is found on the coins of Kujula Kadphises (ca. 50–90 AD) and Huvishka (ca. 151–190 AD).²⁸⁸

Based on the iconography, Göbl (1984) summarised six main reverse types of Heracles on the Kushan coins, five of which are widely recognised.²⁸⁹ All five types represent Heracles standing and naked, bearing the club and lionskin. These are:

- k1) hero facing left, left arm draped with skin, right hand placed on a club on the ground;²⁹⁰
- k2) hero facing right, right hand holding a pelt, left arm an upright club;²⁹¹
- k3) hero facing left, right hand outstretched, the left arm holding an upright club and draped with a pelt;²⁹²
- k4) hero facing frontally, right hand placed on the right hip, left arm holding an upright club, weight on the left leg;²⁹³

²⁸⁶ Taddei 1984: 154–175; Raducha 1985: 159–177; Santoro 1991: 269–309; Stančo 2015.

²⁸⁷ Cribb and Boppearachchi 1992: 81–82.

²⁸⁸ Göbl 1984; Jongeward and Cribb 2015.

²⁸⁹ Göbl 1984: 41, 92–93, Gruppe 4 (Heraklesgruppe).

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*: types 886–886A.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*: types 887–889.

²⁹² *Ibid.*: type 890.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*: types 891–891A.

k5) hero facing frontally, face turned to the right, crowning himself with the left hand, right hand holding an upright club and pelt.²⁹⁴

Type k1) appears on the tetradrachms of the first Kushan king, Kujula Kadphises (Cat. No. 72), and the corresponding obverse type shows a diademed Kujula follows the style of the Indo-Greek king Hermaeus Soter (ca. 90–70 BC).²⁹⁵ Some of these Kujula imitations of Hermaeus Heracles coins were overstruck on the coins of the first Indo-Parthian king Gondophares (ca. 20–45 AD).²⁹⁶ After Kujula, the figure of Heracles is not found on the coins of the subsequent three Kushan kings — Vima Takto (ca. 90–113 AD), Vima Kadphises (ca. 113–127 AD) and Kanishka I (ca. 127–151 AD) — until it reappears on the coins of Huvishka. Huvishka, who adopted type k1) as one of the typical reverse images and covered all the currently known types of Heracles on Kushan coins. There are three corresponding obverse types of Huvishka's Heracles coins. The first and the most common one represents the king riding an elephant facing right on the obverse, which corresponds to all five reverse types of Heracles (Cat. Nos. 73–77).²⁹⁷ The second type shows Huvishka sitting with legs crossed and holding a sceptre in one raised hand, combined with reverses of a variant of type k1) (facing right) (Cat. No. 78) and type k2) (Cat. No. 79). The third and the least common combination with Heracles is the type showing a reclining king on a throne, which appears with reverse type k1) and type k2) (Cat. Nos. 80–81).²⁹⁸

Due to deterioration and wear, some features of Heracles on these coins, especially those made of copper, are difficult to recognise, and only the basic iconographic schemata can be deciphered. Fortunately, a few gold dinars of Huvishka preserve exquisite details that help better understand the original images of other coins. One example shows the diademed and crowned king on the obverse riding an elephant facing right,

²⁹⁴ Ibid.: type 892.

²⁹⁵ For the coins of Hermaeus, see Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 3: 227–232, 234–237, types 409, 414, 415, 418–421.

²⁹⁶ Cribb 2018: 14–15, Figs. 1a, 1b, 2. For the date of the reign of Gondophares, see Boppearachchi 2015a: 424–429; for the connections between the coins of Kujula Kadphises and those of Gondophares, see also Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 8: type 1044c.

²⁹⁷ Göbl 1984: 92.

²⁹⁸ Göbl 1984: 92; Khan 2005: 25–33.

holding an elephant goad or spear, and the Heracles on the reverse is a variant of type k1) in a refined depiction (Cat. No. 82). There are similarities and differences between this figure and classical depictions of Heracles. In addition to the pose of type k1), like Heracles, his muscular physique is emphasised, and the attributes of club and lionskin were given meticulous treatment. The pelt with tail is depicted on the back of the figure instead of draped over his arm, and each knob of the club, a detail quite often omitted or degraded through time, remains discernible. He also holds a round object in his left hand, possibly an apple of the Hesperides. Next to the figure, the Bactrian inscription “HPAKIAO” indicates his identity, although some speculate the inscription only suggests a Greek equivalent rather than the Greek hero specifically.²⁹⁹ Indeed, some peculiarities of the figure are unusual compared to the classical model, such as the heavy headdress that may not be the lion’s head, and the beard style seems closer to that seen in depictions of Central Asian men.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the Greek prototype of the hero was widely known and frequently reused during Huvishka’s time, as evidenced by another gold dinar (Cat. No. 83).³⁰⁰ The obverse shows diademed and crowned Huvishka facing left, with a head nimbus and flaming shoulders, seated cross-legged. He holds a rod with a small cylindrical top (probably a kind of sceptre) in his right hand and carries a long staff in his left hand. On the reverse, Heracles is standing frontally, facing left, his right hand grasping the bottom of the knobbed club placed on the ground, the left draped with a lionskin and stretched forth with a Hesperides’ apple in the palm. Similar to the previous example, the coin is inscribed with the Bactrian script with “HPAKIAO”, while many iconographic details are meticulously treated, including Heracles’ thick, curly hair and beard, slightly wrinkled forehead, fleshy lips and muscular physique. It can be compared to the hero’s classical representations and also recalls similar standing types from the Near East and Central Asia, such as particular sculptures from Hatra (see Chapter II, Cat. Nos. 14–16) and bronze statuettes from Bactria (see Chapter III, Cat. Nos. 56–58).

²⁹⁹ Cribb 1997: 36.

³⁰⁰ Göbl 1984: type G.269.1.

V.1.2. Gems, seals and tokens

Many gems, seals and tokens from the Kushan territories (mostly of uncertain date and provenance) are engraved with Heracles' figures or figures resembling Heracles.³⁰¹ They are found in various materials, including metals (gold, silver and bronze), local precious stones (e.g. carnelian, garnet, chalcedony, agate) and clay. The types include several standing poses of Heracles carrying his attributes, the Euthydemus-derived seated hero, the profile portrait of head/bust (with/without beard; with/without lion headdress), Heracles with a lion (or a beast) and Heracles in other narrative scenes.

V.1.2.1. *Standing*

The general approach to taking over representations of Heracles in other media from a previous period was similar to continuity in coinage, especially in representing the several standing types of the hero. From Sirkap, two pre-Kushan rings (Saka-Parthian period, 1st century AD) showing the standing type were found, which bridge the transition of this type to examples from the following period.³⁰² Designs on both objects resemble Kujula's Heracles coins (Cat. No. 72). The gold ring (Cat. No. 84), only known from John Marshall's (1951) reports, is said to have been engraved with a Kharoṣṭhī script, but no reading is available.³⁰³ The bronze ring (Cat. No. 85) seems to have two additional zigzags behind the figures' shoulders, which is a characteristic that reappears on several seals dated later.³⁰⁴ The Aman ur Rahman Collection has two silver and one bronze engraved rings with similar types, and one of the silver examples preserves traces of illegible Kharoṣṭhī script.³⁰⁵

Local precious stones were also among media bearing these standing types. In the Masson Collection of the British Museum, an oval carnelian intaglio from Kabul shows the standing hero facing left, resting his right hand on the club and carrying the lionskin in his left hand (Cat. No. 86).

³⁰¹ For publications of archaeological discoveries of gems, seals and tokens centred around the Gandhāran region, see Rahman and Falk 2011: 9.

³⁰² Marshall 1951, vol. 2: 641–648.

³⁰³ Marshall 1951, vol. 2: 641; Callieri 1997: 92–93; Borell 2017: 66.

³⁰⁴ Borell 2017: 67.

³⁰⁵ Rahman and Falk 2011: nos. 06.02.09, 06.02.12, 06.02.14.

The Peshawar Museum holds another almost identical carnelian seal.³⁰⁶ Similar seals made of garnet and chalcedony agate are found in the Gandhāran region.³⁰⁷ One of the garnet ring-bezel seals (Cat. No. 87) is engraved with a similar headdress to the one on the carnelian seal. From Punjab, another garnet seal of the same type has an additional zigzag element and an illegible Kharoṣṭhī inscription (Cat. No. 88). The most noteworthy feature that differs from contemporary Roman seals is these figures' heads (headdresses), as they seem original and do not correspond to classical prototypes. On seals (Cat. No. 86) and (Cat. No. 87), the figure wears a globular helmet with a ribbon behind his neck, and the one on seal (Cat. No. 88) seems to wear a broad-brimmed cap, echoing another garnet seal from Gandhāra.³⁰⁸ Except for the standing figure of the latter seal, which has a more muscular body, most precious stone seal figures lack anatomical detail and are more schematic.³⁰⁹

Among the examples of seals and tokens made of clay, the type with the right hand resting on a club placed on the ground and the left akimbo with a lionskin remains the most popular. Some have a slightly more naturalistic style (Cat. Nos. 89–90), and some seem to lack interest in anatomical fidelity and posture (Cat. Nos. 91–92).³¹⁰

The same standing type is also found on one side of a rectangular box seal in copper alloy from Kabul, dated to the later Kushan period (Cat. No. 93).³¹¹ In this case, the figure is highly schematised but maintains the detail of a globular helmet with a ribbon from those earlier Kushan

³⁰⁶ Callieri 1997: Cats. 5.4–5.6.

³⁰⁷ Rahman and Falk 2011: nos. 06.02.06, 06.02.07, 06.02.08.

³⁰⁸ Rahman and Falk 2011: no. 06.02.07.

³⁰⁹ Callieri 1997: 92–93; Errington 2021: 216, Fig. 67.13.

³¹⁰ Rahman and Falk 2011: 71, nos. 06.02.01, 06.02.02, 06.02.03, 06.02.04, 06.02.05. It is worth mentioning that the revised seal type with a standing Heracles image, resulting from Central Asian and North-West Indian modification around the turn of the 1st century AD, was spread throughout South Asia. Similar seals were discovered at Rajghat, an ancient site of Varanasi, and among the seals found at Phu Khao Thong in the upper Thai-Malay peninsula, an equivalent intaglio attests to the circulation of such objects. Cf. Borell 2017: 59–82.

³¹¹ Rosenfield 1967: Pl. xvi; Göbl 1984: 177; Cribb 1997: Fig. 17; Errington 2021: 231, Fig. 75.9.

seals. The other three sides of this box seal depict four Kushan figures, probably indicating that the figure of Heracles was part of the Kushan pantheon.

In addition to the most commonly found standing type, the self-crowning standing Heracles with the upright club and lionskin held in his left arm is known from a rare clay token from Gandhāra (Cat. No. 94). This type corresponds to the reverse type k5) of Huvishka's Heracles coins and recalls one of the most popular Heracles types on the Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian coins. This clay token also contains bilingual inscriptions in Greek and Kharoṣṭhī.³¹²

V.1.2.2. Seated

The seated Heracles type is less common in this category than the standing type. The Rahman Collection holds two works representing the seated hero holding a club resting on his thigh. One carnelian seal shows a schematic figure with his right hand holding a club resting on his thigh and seated on a stool. The figure is slim and naked, beardless and has an abstract hairstyle that does not resemble those of Heracles (Cat. No. 95).³¹³ Another one is a clay token engraved with a naked male figure in the same pose but sitting on a pile of rocks.³¹⁴ Both bring to mind the type once prevalent in the Greco-Bactrian era, particularly on the coins of Euthydemus I (Cat. Nos. 35–36), which the Scythian nomads in Central Asia took over and which seemed to vanish in Kushan coinage. Even so, this seated type was adopted by some figural representations in Gandhāran Buddhist reliefs, such as the Heracleian Vajrapāṇi.

V.1.2.3. Head/Bust

³¹² Rahman and Falk 2011: 72, no. 06.02.11. The surviving inscriptions on seals and tokens usually been interpreted as indicating the names of the owners, and the language is not limited to Kharoṣṭhī. For instance, a Bactrian inscription was recognised from a fragmented garnet seal, and a Brāhmī inscription of four characters is shown on a carnelian seal, and both depicted Heracles. The fragment of the coin with a Bactrian script is reported as lost, see Bivar 1968: Pl. I,5; Borell 2017: 59–82; For the seal with the Brāhmī inscription "(seal) of Kaṇḍūka," see Callieri 1997: 110–111, Cat. 7.14; Rahman and Falk 2011: 15.

³¹³ Rahman and Falk 2011: no. 06.02.16.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*: no. 06.02.15.

Artistic influence from the Greco-Bactrian era is observable in the profile portraits of Heracles engraved in tokens. A clay token carved with the bearded hero with curly hair looking to the right in profile is highly reminiscent of examples on the coins of Euthydemus I and Demetrius I (Cat. No. 96).³¹⁵ Compared to the works presented here, this token reveals a more classical style. This type also occurs in a plaster cast from Begram, which is thought to be a Roman import (Cat. No. 116). Although the most common bust portrait of Alexander-Heracles wearing a lion scalp was no longer used in Kushan coinage, and the attribute rarely comes along with the figure of Heracles, a Gandhāran clay token vividly reproduces the type of the hero wearing the lion headdress (Cat. No. 97).³¹⁶ Notably, the lion headdress was adopted by some figures in Gandhāran Buddhist art and may have been transmitted further East through Buddhist art afterwards, a phenomenon discussed in subsequent chapters.

V.1.2.4. Heracles fighting/with a lion

About 15 seals and tokens from the Gandhāra region that represent Heracles (or Heracleian figures) and the lion are known to us. They are made of bronze, silver, crystal and clay. Due to the small size of these objects, it is not always possible to discern whether the beast is specifically a lion. The combat scenes can be roughly divided into four types in this set of images:

- c1) the hero fighting the beast and wielding his raised club (Cat. No. 98),
- c2) the hero facing and strangling the lion by hand (Cat. No. 99),
- c3) the hero confronting a standing beast with or without weapons (a spear or a sword) (Cat. No. 100),
- c4) the hero strangling and subduing a lion from behind (Cat. No. 101).³¹⁷

Type c1) and type c2) are most common in the classical repertoire. The bronze ring seal (Cat. No. 98) of Heracles wielding his club towards a ramping lion shows the variant of a standing fight schema for the theme

³¹⁵ Ibid.: no. 06.01.03. In the catalogue of Rahman, the head is identified as Zeus.

³¹⁶ Rahman and Falk 2011: no. 01.01.01.

³¹⁷ Cf. Rahman and Falk 2011: 73–75.

that emerged in the 6th century BC (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1848). Type c2) also echoes many classical types of standing Heracles wrestling with a lion (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1947–1948). Type c3) and type c4) are less typically seen in the classical representation of Heracles' First Labour and may reflect artistic and thematic influences from other cultures. The bronze ring seal (Cat. No. 100) of type c3) shows a nude male figure fighting a standing lion (or beast) with a spear, similar to the scene on a scaraboid seal recovered from Pakistan and dated broadly between the 4th century BC and 1st century AD (Cat. No. 102).³¹⁸ These examples reveal similarities with some Achaemenid seals and thus imply that the representation of a hero figure fighting monsters was certainly not newly introduced to Kushan territory, as it probably had already existed in the region as early as the 5th or 4th century BC.³¹⁹ One of the earliest examples is another chalcedony scaraboid seal, also claimed to have been acquired in Pakistan, engraved with a nude and bearded Heracles pressing his right foot on a subjugated lion (Cat. No. 103).³²⁰ Type c4) is represented by a crystal seal of disputed issue, showing a young muscular male with short curly hair and a short cloak slung around his neck, subduing a lion from its back (Cat. No. 101). Behind the figure's left leg, the Brāhmī inscription of "Śrī Treṭasya" is read as "(seal) of lord Treṭa." Unlike many highly schematised figures on seals, this example shows a markedly naturalistic style.

As presented, the representations of a hero fighting beasts, recalling the scene of Heracles with the lion, could have been integrated with various sources (i.e. Near Eastern) that brought different ideas and references to the local interpretation and adaptation in the Indian subcontinent.

V.1.2.5. *Heracles in other narrative scenes*

V.1.2.5.a) *Labour IV: Heracles and the Erymanthian Boar*

³¹⁸ Callieri 1997: 85–86, Cat. 4.5.

³¹⁹ Boardman 1994: 43–48.

³²⁰ Boardman (1994) compared the representation of Heracles with a metope from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia and another sealing from the East and suggested direct Greek intervention in the production. See Boardman 1994: 43–48; cf. *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles: 27, nr. 1920.

A rare, yet unsurprising, image of Heracles' Fourth Labour survived in a locally made garnet seal (Cat. No. 104).³²¹ The seal is remarkably polished, and the detailed treatment of the muscle features shows excellent refinement of craftsmanship. It depicts the scene of Heracles delivering the Erymanthian Boar alive to King Eurystheus. The hero carries the boar on his left shoulder and holds the beast's head down. He wears the lion-skin and the club lies on the ground, emphasising his identity. On the left, some Greek letters in a meaningless sequence seem neither indicative of literacy nor the owner, probably denoting a pseudo-script imitating classical epigraphy. The much smaller figure of the king is shown with only the upper half of his body and both arms raised.

In classical literary and artistic sources, frightened by Heracles, Eurystheus hid himself in a pithos, which is depicted buried /half-buried underground or placed on the ground (Diod. 1–7, 4.12.1; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.1). In this example, the pithos may be wholly buried underground, with only the rim of the vessel showing, similar to numerous Greek and Roman representations from the middle of the 6th century BC onwards (*LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 2121–2160). Although from what has survived today, the depiction of Heracles' Fourth Labour does not seem as popular as the First Labour in the East, the memory of this episode seems to have been alive in Central Asia and North-West India for many centuries. The composition of the scene eventually travelled as far as the Tarim Basin and reappeared on the murals of Kizil, to which we shall return in Chapter VIII.

V.1.2.5.b) *Heracles in Combat*

Besides recognisable representations of the labours, other narratives associated with Heracles were also produced in this category, but some can be identified only with difficulty. A pierced carnelian seal, dated to the 2nd or 3rd century AD, found in the Gandhāra region seems to recall the hero in a combat scene (Cat. No. 105). Based on Pierfrancesco Callieri's description (1997), the scene shows Heracles fighting with another male figure and a bush is depicted on the far right.³²² The content of this

³²¹ Rahman and Falk 2011: no. 06.02.32.

³²² Callieri 1997: 111, Cat. 7.14.

seal is obscure, and the primitive style is consistent with the carnelian seals mentioned above.

V.1.2.5.c) Heracles and a female figure (Omphale?)

Another example is a clay token presenting a naked male figure walking towards a seated female figure with crossed legs on a stool (Cat. No. 106).³²³ Both wear or carry some garments that are impossible to determine whether they are animal skin or clothes, and it is uncertain which figure holds the club between the two because both extend their hands to grab one end. However, the other end of the club is clearly placed on the seated female's right thigh. Although the subject is unknown, there is a possibility that this token represents the hero giving his club to Queen Omphale since the locals seemed to be aware of the visual representation of this couple, such as another example on a Gandhāran toilet tray (Cat. No. 124).³²⁴

On the whole, there has been relatively little attention paid to the evidence on gems, seals and tokens; however, as the presented group of material shows, it provides valuable information about the variety of types of Heracles images in the Gandhāra region of the time and may offer instructive clues for understanding the Heracles motif's transmission.

V.1.3. Sculptural evidence

V.1.3.1. Bactrian terracotta and clay figures

In Northern Bactria, where the popularity of the figure of Heracles from the pre-Kushan era is attested in archaeological evidence, some representations of Heracles in this area from the Hellenistic period are suggested to have given rise to the later local imitations.³²⁵

A terracotta plaque from Kara-Pichok (present-day Tajikistan) (Cat. No. 107) was probably inspired by the ivory works of Heracles trampling his enemy from Takht-i Sangin (Cat. No. 63).³²⁶ It depicts a hero

³²³ Rahman and Falk 2011: no. 06.02.17.

³²⁴ Francfort 1979: 23, no. 16; Pons 2011: 160, Fig. 12; Boardman 2015: Fig. 88.

³²⁵ Abdullaev 2002: 53–69.

³²⁶ Abdullaev 2002: 61.

overpowering another figure in the same composition; the main figure is nude and has lion paws knotted on his chest and a knobbed club wielded in his right hand, as is customary for Heracles. Such similarities imply a connection to classical iconography, but the general style of the plaque is highly primitive, and many additional new elements should not be overlooked. The subsequent eschewing of this iconography is shown on a terracotta from Barat Tepa (Surxondaryo Region, Uzbekistan) dated to the 3rd–4th century AD (Cat. No. 108).³²⁷

A few other fragments with Heracleian features were found in the Surxondaryo Region. From the Kushan site of Zar Tepa, there is a muscular terracotta figurine with a missing head and right arm (Cat. No. 109) and two heavily bearded terracotta heads with that resemble the Greek hero (Cat. Nos. 110–111).³²⁸ From the Khalchayan site, a clay bust depicting a bearded man has been interpreted as the aged Heracles (Cat. No. 112).³²⁹ Possibly, the type of bearded hero's head had already been known in the Surxondaryo Region since the time of Euthydemus I, as Greco-Bactrian bronze coins showing this obverse type were discovered in the area.³³⁰

The lion headdress is featured on some local terracotta figurines. In the Qashqadaryo Region, a fragment of a terracotta figurine, excavated at Erkurgan, preserves a male figure (beardless?) wearing a lionskin headdress (Cat. No. 113).³³¹ This feature recalls the type of the head of Alexander/Heracles that occurred on the 3rd-century BC silver drachm of the Qashqadaryo Region and reminds us of the ivory of Alexander/Heracles from Takht-i Sangin (Cat. No. 62) and a 2nd-century BC terracotta figurine from Kampyr Tepa in the Surxondaryo Region (Cat. No. 114),³³² indicating a continuous interest in classical iconography.

In the southern part of Kushan Bactria, a 1.2 m tall clay statue excavated at Dilberjin (Northern Afghanistan) has been interpreted as Heracles (Cat. No. 115), and the place of discovery may have been a sanctuary

³²⁷ Ibid.: 53–69.

³²⁸ Abdullaev 2007: 560–562, Fig. 15; Stančo 2012: 147, 155, Figs. 227, 228.

³²⁹ Pugachenkova 1971: 42, Pl. 48.

³³⁰ Abdullaev 2007: 546, Fig. 4a.

³³¹ Abdullaev 2002: Fig. 6a; 2007, Fig. 3.

³³² Abdullaev 2002: Fig. 2. Edvard Rtveladze (2018) identified the Kampyr Tepa figurine as Mithridates I. See Rtveladze 2018: 188.

dedicated to the hero in the late 3rd century AD because of the fragments of the club and a coin of Vasudeva II (ca. 275–300 AD) were discovered alongside.³³³ The statue is painted red, naked, standing with weight on the right leg, the head missing. According to Irina T. Kruglikova (1977) and Galina Pugachenkova (1987), fragments found near the body show traces of his eyes, curly hair, arms, and a club, which helped identify the figure as Heracles.³³⁴ Pugachenkova (1987) first speculated that the figure represents Śiva because of the necklace with pearls and an oval pendant adorning the chest, but she revised this identification due to the presence of a club.³³⁵ Notably, the figurative representation of a free-standing, naked, bejewelled and possibly with the right hand resting on the club, is typologically closer to the many Hatrene sculptures than most Heracleian figures from Central Asia and Northwest India. Thus, it is possible that apart from the similarity to the classical types of Heracles, the Parthian artistic tradition also influenced the bejewelled standing type.

V.1.3.2. Finds from Begram

Most of the works with a prominent Greco-Roman style dated from the 1st to the 2nd centuries AD were discovered at Begram (ancient Kapisa). The Begram Hoard is famous for its cosmopolitan taste due to the variety of luxury objects with sophisticated craftsmanship, including precious imports and, most remarkably, denoting various artistic sources. The representations of Greco-Roman gods and divine figures found at Begram are rich and suggest no specific preference among them.³³⁶

³³³ Kruglikova 1977: 407–427; Pugachenkova 1987: 66–78; Tissot 2006: 90, no. K.p.Dil.169.11.

³³⁴ Kruglikova 1977: 407–427; Pugachenkova 1987: 66–78.

³³⁵ Pugachenkova 1987: 68–69.

³³⁶ For the archaeological report of Begram, see Hackin 1939; for a complete survey of the Begram Hoard, see Hackin 1954.

V.1.3.2.a) Plaster

Some four plaster emblemata bearing Heracles' image have been recognised, including one depicting the head of a bearded hero in profile, two representing Heracles and the Erymanthian Boar, and one showing Heracles feeding an eagle.³³⁷ The plaster with Heracles' profile portrait depicts the hero with a strong forehead, heavy beard and a thick neck (Cat. No. 116). According to Otto Kurz (1954), there are also traces indicating the club on the shoulder.³³⁸ The profile resembles many Hellenistic and Roman cameos, gems and reliefs of the hero's portrait from the 1st century BC to 1st century AD, usually depicting a bust/head of the aged Heracles (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 166–210).³³⁹ As introduced, this type was abundantly used in Greco-Bactrian coinage and survived on some clay tokens in Gandhāra.

Other Begram plasters are thought to represent Heracles in narrative scenes mainly because the particular figure has a Heraclean physique and a notable naturalistic style. However, these scenes exhibit an apparent discrepancy with the canonical legends. One represents a standing nude, muscular, beardless male facing right, shoulders draped with a garment (a cloak or a lionskin?) and a boar (Erymanthian Boar?) in front of him (Cat. No. 117). A reclining figure with hands on an indistinct object (drapery?) is depicted on the upper part above the boar.³⁴⁰ Considering the presence of the wild boar, it may recall the Fourth Labour, but the meaning of the whole scene is obscure. A comparable Mediterranean example is perhaps a marble relief from the Theatre of Corinth (Hadriatic period, 2nd century AD), showing a unique scene of Heracles standing quietly behind the boar in a perspective view (Cat. No. 118).³⁴¹

Another plaster cast shows a nude, muscular, bearded male wearing a garland on his head and left shoulder draped with a garment, standing before an altar and feeding an eagle (Cat. No. 119). It vaguely recalls the myth of Ganymede or Heracles' connection with Prometheus. Kurz (1954) stated that the figure alone is almost identical to the Heracles from

³³⁷ Menninger 1996: Cat. Nos. M3, M16, M29, M30; Stančo 2012: Figs. 224–227.

³³⁸ Kurz 1954: 139, 271.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*: 128, Pl. 271, no. 133, Figs. 300, 435, 436.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: no. 100, Fig. 311.

³⁴¹ Sturgeon 1977: no. H 13-1.

a relief panel of Villa Albani, traditionally known as the Apotheosis of Heracles (Cat. No. 120). Since this Roman work is considered to be a “pasticcio” assembling different elements, the iconographic comparison with the Central Asian example is less conclusive.³⁴² Nonetheless, it is universally agreed that these plaster mouldings express a taste that harks back to the era of high Hellenism, and they arrived at Begram without being filtered through any Iranian artistic traditions.³⁴³ Achille Adriani (1955) argued that the unique and direct comparisons for the Begram plasters can only be found in Hellenistic-Roman Egypt and the areas of its spheres of artistic influence.³⁴⁴

V.1.3.2.b) Bronzes

If one considers the popularity of bronze statuettes of Heracles from Bactria in the pre-Kushan era, as discussed in Chapter III, it is somewhat surprising that no bronze work representing a pure Heracles figure has been discovered at Begram.

The most remarkable and unique case is a bronze statuette showing mixed features of Heracles and the Greco-Egyptian god Serapis (Cat. No. 121).³⁴⁵ The figure is standing frontally with both feet on the ground, weight on the left leg, slightly advanced right leg, the right hand resting on the knobbed club planted on the ground and three apples in the left hand. The bronze could have been easily identified as Heracles and categorised into one of the sculptural types created in the 4th century BC if the head was missing (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 541). Or, conversely, if the body were missing, the features of a heavy and curly beard, thick and long hair with forelocks, and the head wearing a modius decorated with olive branches would have defined him as Serapis, a “new” god notably popularised under the Ptolemaic dynasty in Alexandria.³⁴⁶ The partial reproduction of the standing type of Heracles with his club and apples may relate to the visual idiom in the area formed in the Greco-

³⁴² Kurz 1954: 122, Figs. 389, 390. For the panel of the “Apotheosis of Heracles”, see Stephani 1854: Taf. I.1, pp. S.1ff, 206ff.

³⁴³ Taddei 1992: 453–460.

³⁴⁴ Adriani 1955: 124–138.

³⁴⁵ Kurz 1954: 11, 147, 277; Tissot 2006: 283, no. K.p.Beg.711.451.

³⁴⁶ For a study on Serapis, see Stambaugh 1972.

Bactrian and Indo-Greek periods, in which the exact type was popularised in bronze statuettes and coins.

V.1.3.3. *Finds from Gandhāra*

In the Gandhāra region, there are mainly two groups of stone sculptures that preserve Heracles figures that are not formally assimilated with other figures. The first group is a series of stone palettes of several toilet trays and a rectangular palette, which show the figure of Heracles in various narrative scenes that resemble some classical themes.³⁴⁷ The second group is associated with local political and religious dynamics, possibly incorporating the Heracles figure into royal or Buddhist images, as represented by a wrestler's weight and relief fragments from Buddhist sites.³⁴⁸

V.1.3.3.a) *Stone palettes*

The dating issue of Gandhāran toilet trays has been a general concern and has not yet been resolved. This group of works can only be vaguely dated between the 2nd century BC (Indo-Greek) and the 1st–2nd centuries AD (Saka-Parthian and early Kushan), which puts them in a transitional phase.³⁴⁹ Within this timeframe, some representations of Heracles on stone palettes echo a few classical themes.

The Bacchanalian scene depicting the drunken hero is found on two stone palettes from Pakistan. One toilet tray now held at the Metropolitan Museum is labelled “drunken Heracles with two women” and dated broadly to the 2nd century BC–1st century AD (Cat. No. 122). It shows the bearded Heracles, nude with a cloak behind, a knot at the front of the chest like lion paws in other representations, standing frontally and supported by two women. Next to this group of three figures is a seated lion.³⁵⁰ A rectangular palette (or lid) depicts the same scene in a frame

³⁴⁷ Francfort 1979; Pons 2011: 153–176.

³⁴⁸ Faccenna 1962; Dani 1968–1969; Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47; Ozols and Thewalt 1984: 159, Fig. 9; Raducha 1985; Kurita 1988; Santoro 1991; Leidy 2000: 142; Behrendt 2007: 13–15; Stančo 2012; Brancaccio 2014: 380–384; Boardman 2015; Pons 2022: 281–298.

³⁴⁹ Marshall 1951, vol. 2: 481; Francfort 1979: 91–95, 2016: 305–339, 2020: 3–114; Dar 1979: 143; Lo Muzio 2002: 77–83; Pons 2011: 153–176.

³⁵⁰ Behrendt 2007: 9, Fig. 3.

with only the upper part of the three-figure group of the first work (Cat. No. 123).³⁵¹ The state of drunkenness in this work is even better illustrated than in the toilet tray by stressing the inclination of the bearded Heracles while two supporting females also hold cups in their hands. A similar representation showing Heracles supported by a male attendant and a female figure on the other side is found on a clay relief vase dated to around the 1st century BC/AD from Lahore (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1546).³⁵² Such representations vividly recall the motif of the drunken hero that derived from his association with Dionysus, first attested in the Archaic period and which became popular in Roman art, as it frequently occurs on sarcophagi, usually showing Heracles supported by satyrs, Pan, Maenads or unidentified dressed female figures.³⁵³

Figures with Heracleian features are shown together with female characters on three toilet trays. One of them likely shows Heracles with Omphale because of the presence of the hero's attributes, his feminine dress, and the queenly appearance of the female figure (Cat. No. 124).³⁵⁴ The Heracleian elements include a lionskin pelt behind the bearded man, a club on the ground at the front, and a quiver hanging on a tree next to the woman. Although interpretations of the scene have varied due to the unconventional representation, the tray is confirmed as being Greek inspired.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Topsfield 1996: 268; Boardman 1994: 117, Illus. 4.51.

³⁵² Marshall 1909: 1060–1061, Pl. III; Weitzmann 1943: 289–324, Fig. 24; Francfort 2020: 61–62, Fig. 32. Given the interaction between Heracles and the female figure, the scene may denote the drunken Heracles or Heracles and Auge.

³⁵³ Cf. *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 3229, 3259, 3261, 3262, 3264, 3270, 3271, 3276–3284.

³⁵⁴ Francfort 1979: 23, no. 16; Pons 2011: 160, Fig. 12; Boardman 2015: Fig. 88.

³⁵⁵ Francfort 1979: 23, no. 16; Pons 2011: 160, Fig. 12; Boardman 2015: Fig. 88. Henri-Paul Francfort (1979) described that Heracles is leaning tenderly on Omphale while Boardman noticed that she is being assaulted. A comparative case is a high relief on a Pentelic marble well-head (puteal) from Capri, dated to 1st–2nd centuries AD, showing the hero in female dress seizing Omphale. (BM:1805,0703.227) If the identification on the Gandhāran tray is valid, its connotation requires further investigation, owing to the legend of Heracles and Omphale reflecting the prevailing political movements and attitudes toward women in antiquity. Cf. Cauer 1891: 224–249; Suhr 1953: 251–263.

The second and third trays that may represent Heracles and female characters remain speculative due to insufficient evidence. One recovered from Chārsadda is engraved with a couple and has been interpreted differently by scholars (Cat. No. 125). The scene has been variously identified as Apollo grasping Daphne;³⁵⁶ Paris refusing Aphrodite;³⁵⁷ a satyr and a nymph;³⁵⁸ the drunken Heracles and Auge;³⁵⁹ and the most recent is Phaedra and Hippolytus from Euripides' *Hippolytus*.³⁶⁰

The fragment of the third tray shows a naked, stocky male figure holding a club and a bow and standing left to a female figure sitting in the centre with a *velificatio* (with a billowing garment) (Cat. No. 126).³⁶¹ Boardman (2015) suspected the male figure to be Heracles because of the club.³⁶² The seated female may represent Aphrodite, thus indicating the standing male figure is probably Eros. In classical art, Eros acquired Heracles' attributes in the middle of the 4th century BC, and the iconographic type was further developed during the Hellenistic and Roman times.³⁶³ Baby Erotes stealing the hero's club is frequently depicted, and the scene of these tiny divinities bringing Heracles' attributes to an altar can be interpreted as symbolising the triumph of love through dedication to Aphrodite.³⁶⁴ This could also be the case for this particular Gandhāran toilet tray, given the extensive archaeological evidence of the goddess of love with Eros or Eros alone attesting to the prevalence of the figure of

³⁵⁶ Hallade 1968: Pl. 2.

³⁵⁷ Francfort 1979: 10–11, no. 2.

³⁵⁸ Boardman 1992: 155.

³⁵⁹ Boardman 2015: 147, Fig. 85.

³⁶⁰ Francfort 2016: 330–333, 2020: 75–80.

³⁶¹ Francfort 1979: 22, no. 15; Boardman 2015: Fig. 83. Hugo Buchthal (1945) has compared the tray with the Projecta Casket from San Francesco di Paola ai Monti. See Buchthal 1945: 7, Fig. 15.

³⁶² Boardman 2015: Fig. 83.

³⁶³ Woodford 1989: 200–204; On Heracles' connection with Eros, see Woodford 1990: *LIMC*, v.1, s.v. Herakles: 172–174.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Greifenhagen 1965: 52.

Aphrodite in Afghanistan and North-West India and consequently a connection to the Hellenistic world.³⁶⁵

V.1.3.3.b) *The wrestler's weight*

On a Gandhāran stone weight now in the Metropolitan Museum, the figure of Heracles carrying a club and lionskin reappears together with a living lion (Cat. No. 127). This type of the figure is consistent with those on many Gandhāran clay seals and early Kushan coins. According to Bernard and Jullien (1982), the object was purchased from Peshawar and may date to the 2nd century AD based on the style.³⁶⁶

The hero's muscular physique is characterised by the abdominal and pectoral muscles rendered in a naturalistic style. The lion approaching the figure recalls the legend of the first labour, and the reverse scene shows a wrestling competition, echoing the tradition of honouring the hero in the palaestra and gymnasium. Some have compared the lion to other lion figures found at Karachi and Mian Khan and pointed out that the depiction is more local instead of Western influenced.³⁶⁷ Bernard and Jullien suggested this image came directly from local Hellenism, which developed in the Greek colonies of Central Asia and North-West India, while Kurt A. Behrendt proposed another possibility — that the figural type might have resulted from contact with the Roman Empire through trade. The various interpretations of the subject of this wrestler's weight are detailed in the next section.³⁶⁸

V.1.3.3.c) *Figures in stone reliefs at Buddhist sites*

Some discrete relief fragments excavated in the Gandhāra region preserve Heracles figures that usually do not participate in narrative scenes. An alabaster fragment recovered from Chārsadda shows a muscular

³⁶⁵ For the representation of Aphrodite, see Stančo 2015: 23–32; for Eros/Cupids, see Stančo 2015: 114–133.

³⁶⁶ Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47. Denise Patry Leidy (2000) dated the weight to the 1st century BC. See Leidy 2000: 142. Behrendt dated it to the 1st century AD. See Behrendt 2007: 13–15, Fig. 8.

³⁶⁷ Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47. For the lion relief from Mian Khan, see Ingholt 1957: no. 458.

³⁶⁸ Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47; Behrendt 2007: 13–15.

torso with lionskin draped over his shoulder (Cat. No. 128).³⁶⁹ An ornamental panel from Amluk-dhara carved with a couple is identified as Heracles and Aphrodite.³⁷⁰ The standard standing type with attributes reappears on the reliefs from Nimogram (Cat. No. 129), Andandheri (Cat. No. 130), Butkara (Cat. No. 131) and one with unknown provenance (Cat. No. 132).³⁷¹ Considering these are general sculptural decorations on stupas, the number of similar works may be much higher.

Joan A. Raducha (1985) has thoroughly analysed the examples from Nimogram, Andandheri and Butkara.³⁷² All represent a nude muscular male figure, weight on the right leg, standing in contrapposto and the lionskin pelt draped over the left arm. The examples from Nimogram and Andandheri bear the same pose, while the figure in the Butkara relief holds and rests his club on the shoulder and stands in front of a Corinthian column.

Several differences can be observed among these reliefs. In comparing the Nimogram and Andandheri figures, the former is beardless and has enlarged ears and a nimbus behind his head; while the latter, placed under a Caitya arch next to a Persepolitan column, seems to have traces of a beard. Due to the missing right arm of the Nimogram figure, it is unknown whether he held a club or another object in his right hand. Maurizio Taddei (1984) identified the Nimogram figure as Vajrapāṇi, assuming the missing object could be a *vajra*.³⁷³ Anna Maria Quagliotti (2003) interpreted it as part of a Tutelary Couple because of the nimbus indicating a divine aspect and his face turned to the right as if there was a corresponding figure.³⁷⁴ In the case of Andandheri, the right hand

³⁶⁹ Wheeler 1962: 123, Pl. XLI; Boardman 1994: 135–136, Fig. 4.76.

³⁷⁰ For the ornamental panel from Amluk-dhara, in Mission House, Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, nos. AKD97 & AKD98, see Brancaccio 2014: 379–384; Pons 2022: 281–298, Fig. 3.

³⁷¹ Raducha 1985: 159–177. For the Nimogram bracket figure, also see Santoro 1991: 284, Fig. 7; Stančo 2012: 156, Fig. 231; Boardman 2015: Fig. 116. For the Andandheri relief, see Dani 1968–1969a: 49, Pl. 19a. For the Butkara relief, see Faccenna 1962, vol. 2: pt. 2. For the relief in a private Japanese collection, see Kurita 1988: 342, Fig. 25; Santoro 1991: 285, Fig. 8.

³⁷² Raducha 1985: 159–177; Dani 1968–1969a: 49, Pl. 19a.

³⁷³ Taddei 1984: 154–175.

³⁷⁴ Quagliotti 2003: 247, Fig. V.3.

extends forward and rests at one end of the arch without carrying an attribute.³⁷⁵ The fourth fragment is the same type as the Andandheri relief with the arch and column, but the figure holds a club placed on the ground by the right hand.³⁷⁶

Regarding the figural style, there is no consensus on whether these figures are more classical or Indian. For example, the contrapposto of the Andandheri figure is also perceived as a *tribhanga*, an ancient Indian dance-related pose which literally means “triple-bend position”.³⁷⁷ But its elongated figure and finer quality of the craftsmanship seem to indicate a more naturalistic style than other examples. In Stančo’s opinion (2012), the overall impression of the Nimogram figure is very Indian, while Boardman (2015) described it as far more classical.³⁷⁸

As the examples above show, this standing type of Heracles carrying a club and lionskin frequently adorned stupas without being part of a narrative scene. In one instance, the type does seem to be placed in a narrative scene in a stupa, presumably from Buner and preserves five registers (Cat. No. 133a–b).³⁷⁹ One of the registers of 12 scenes shows wine making and Buddhist monks reading sacred texts, and among these, the Heracleian type seems to be conflated with the figure of infant Eros and appears between two trees in the scene of wine being poured into large jars.

V.1.3.4. *Heracles with a lion from Mathura and Quetta*

Figures with Heracleian features are rarely found in Mathura, although “Indian Heracles” in classical accounts is said to have been worshipped by the Sibae in this city (see Chapter IV). Only one example from Mathura has been arguably suggested to correspond to the Greek recorded Heracles in India, whether it represents the Greek Heracles, or an Indian god worshipped in Mathura. The Mathura statue, generally dated to the

³⁷⁵ Dani 1968–1969a: 57.

³⁷⁶ Santoro 1991: 283–286.

³⁷⁷ Raducha (1985) described the figures as standing in contrapposto, while Dani noted that the Andandheri figure stands in *tribhanga* pose. See Dani 1968–1969a: 49; Raducha 1985: 159–177.

³⁷⁸ Stančo 2012: 145; Boardman 2015: Fig. 116.

³⁷⁹ Bopearachchi 2020: Cat. No. 70.

early 2nd century AD, represents a nude standing man wearing a lionskin with two paws knotted in front and accompanied by a live lion (Cat. No. 134).³⁸⁰ This statue has been compared with other works from the adjacent areas depicting the scene of the hero and the lion, including a crystal seal from Pakistan,³⁸¹ the abovementioned Gandhāran wrestler's weight and a bronze statuette from Quetta (South-Western Pakistan).³⁸²

The image of the bronze Quetta statuette (Cat. No. 135) is known only from Major J. F. Garwood's archaeological report (1887) and has been labelled "Heracles and the Nemean Lion" since then.³⁸³ Its badly corroded condition creates even more difficulties for interpretation, such as whether the figure is fully nude or wearing any garments and whether he has a beard. The most distinguishing feature of the statuette is the miniature size of the so-called Nemean Lion grasped by the figure's left hand, resembling some Near Eastern representations of a similar theme.

Both Mathura and Quetta statues are isolated examples without contexts. Thus, they have been evaluated based on iconographic and stylistic comparisons. The representation of a man and lion brings back the memory of Heracles' First Labour, but it also recalls the ancient theme of a hero (or king) fighting a lion in Near Eastern art, while the monster-slaying motif is also common in Indian art, resulting in various interpretations of works like these two statues. We shall soon return with a more detailed discussion of these examples.

V.1.4. Summary

Overall, the evidence of the figure of Heracles found in Central Asia, Gandhāra and North India after the Indo-Greek period inherited some characteristics of the Hellenistic East from the preceding era. Given that the general political situation was dynamic and competitive among several entities jostling for power in the area, the continued use of Hellenic motifs might have served to present some notion of continuity with the

³⁸⁰ Cunningham 1884: 109–110; Vogel 1930: 188, Pl. XLVIIb; Boardman 1994: 137–138; 2015: Fig. 125.

³⁸¹ Callieri 1997: 182.

³⁸² Garwood 1887: 163, Pl. X.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*: 163.

Indo-Greek artistic programme while incrementally introducing new and local elements.

Compared with the Heracles types summarised in Chapter II and Chapter III, several prevalent in the Near East, Central Asia and North-West India of the earlier periods had considerably declined in popularity (or disappeared) by the Saka-Parthian and Kushan times, including the imitation of the profile image of Heracles-Alexander wearing lion headgear on coins, the bearded and naked hero with attributes, sitting on a rock and the reclining symposiast. Types that survived in larger numbers until this transition period include a) head/bust with a thick beard; b) bearded/beardless and nude hero standing and carrying attributes (club, lionskin, apples); c) the self-crowning type; d) the hero fighting or in combination with a beast (lion).

There are also types not seen in the Near Eastern or earlier local examples, such as Heracles' Fourth Labour, the drunken hero with two attendants and the hero coupled with a female figure in narrative scenes. His identifiers of the lionskin, club, quiver and the classical representation of tying the lion's paws at the chest appear frequently, providing references for the local adaptation.

V.2. Parsing the evidence of Central Asian and Indian adaptation of the Heracles motif after the Indo-Greek period

Drawing upon the evidence introduced hitherto, this section discusses the adaptation patterns, which not only include the Central Asian and North-West Indian traditions from the previous periods but also consider the schemes exhibited by the evidence from the Near East. The main factor that could have contributed to this situation was the diversity and wealth of artistic sources, namely Greco-Roman, Iranian, nomadic and Indian. Therefore, it is necessary to return to some aforementioned examples as reference points while investigating the patterns of this period.

Regarding the several likely pathways of Eastern adaptation, no decisive distinction can be put forward for these works of visual art that probably adapted the Heracles motif or were influenced by the Heracles image since most of the shared characteristics belong to different categories. The classification here primarily relies on the available evidence, where

each work exhibits the most distinctive features, but it inevitably has its limitations. Nevertheless, an art historical classification scheme is essential for reading these representations as comprehensively as possible in the ways they may have been perceived in the past and could reduce the impact of imposing assumptions generated through modern views.

The adaptation patterns are summarised as follows: a) receiving classical types and producing replicas in a multicultural context; b) adopting the iconography while changing the style and adding new elements; c) adapting Heracleian elements to other figurative or narrative motifs.

V.2.1. Pattern a): receiving classical types and producing replicas in a multicultural context

Several examples from the pre-Kushan and early Kushan periods mentioned earlier present a similar pattern to the Near Eastern a).³⁸⁴ This group of works has a significant classical style. In particular, the influence is reflected directly in the tradition inherited from the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek and newly introduced Roman art that arrived via imports to the East. The multicultural context is evidenced in the historical and geographical background. Sometimes, heterogeneous elements — Scythian, Parthian and Indian — were applied beside the classical source and did not directly supplant it.

V.2.1.1. Heracles on the coins of Kujula Kadphises and Huvishka

On Kujula's copper coins, the Heracles type k1) harks back to several Greek sculptural types from the middle of the 4th century BC. Similar depictions on coinage are shown in some Greco-Roman copies and variants (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 282, 317). The corresponding obverses imitate the bust of a diademed king from the coins of Hermaeus, the last Greek ruler in Gandhāra and the Kabul Valley. In addition, Kujula's Heracles coins are inscribed with the Greek legend of "ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΤΗΡΟΣΣΥ ΕΡΜΑΙΟΥ" (King Hermaeus, the Saviour) on the obverse and the Kharoṣṭhī legend of "Kujula Kadphises, ruler of the Kushans, steadfast in the Dharma (law)" on the reverse. This arrangement was considered a way for the first Kushan king, as a foreign ruler and possibly a Śaivite Hindu, to declare the legitimacy of his power in

³⁸⁴ See Chapter II: Section II.2.1.

the area by associating himself with an Indo-Greek king. However, Kujula did not fully take over Hermaeus' design, as he replaced the reverse Zeus type with Heracles.³⁸⁵ He might have reset the scheme by copying Hermaeus' obverse image and inscription and taking the model intensively represented in Bactrian bronze statuettes from the previous period as the corresponding reverse type.

While Kujula's adaptation was straightforward, Huvishka recast the figure of Heracles after it disappeared during the time between the two kings, not only did the variety of the types increase but also the approach to incorporating the Heracles figure into the Kushan pantheon evolved. Huvishka issued a large quantity of coins characterised by a wide selection of designs, officially adopting Greco-Roman (Hellenistic-Egyptian), Iranian and Indian gods into his political and religious programme. In these circumstances, the reuse of Heracles types was parallel and intertwined with its transformation. The reverse type k1) is finely depicted with meticulous details on Huvishka's gold coin (Cat. No. 83). The figure adopts classical iconography and is reminiscent of many Near Eastern and Central Asian standing types of the hero. Meanwhile, the Kushan symbol and the corresponding obverse image reflect the integration of different elements.

It remains a riddle as to why Huvishka reselected the classical image of the hero after the preceding three kings had abandoned it. Did the reuse relate to Kujula's first issue? Notably, one of the most prominent innovations of the early Kushan coinage was the change of the Greek and Kharoṣṭhī legends into Bactrian, an Eastern Iranian language that was widely spoken but not written in formal contexts until Kanishka I, the father of Huvishka. The shift in language use is considered to reflect a transitional phase of "de-Hellenisation", probably indicative of a deliberate political strategy by the sovereign.³⁸⁶

Although both Kujula and Huvishka used type k1) on the reverse of their coins, several changes attest to their respective differences. On Huvishka's gold dinar, the inscription next to the figure of Heracles no longer indicates the king's name but a Bactrian translation of the name of Heracles (HĪAKIAO), while the king's identifier is shown as a *tamga*

³⁸⁵ Cf. Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 3: 227–232, 234–237, types 409, 414, 415, 418–421.

³⁸⁶ Fussman 1974: 1–76; Taasob 2018: 71–84.

used by the Scythians. Moreover, on Kujula's coins, although heavily corroded, the body schema is more naturalistic and closer to Hellenistic art, while the later revival of the same type is more comparable to some Hatrene sculptural types. From this viewpoint, it is possible that Huvishka took up a Parthian-derived type in which the iconography remained close to the classical archetype. Whether Huvishka took the Heracles type directly from Greek sources or not, it is evident that this standing type and its variants had achieved great popularity during his reign. Many doubts persist and need further consideration, such as whether the Bactrian name identifies the Greek god or an equivalent, or why this standing type — common in other media — rarely occurs on coins from the Hellenistic East, as the closest example known to us comes from those of Theophilus.³⁸⁷

V.2.1.2. Heracles on seals and tokens

Several seals and tokens made in the area closely follow the classical iconography and show relative naturalism, such as the seal of a bearded hero in profile (Cat. No. 96), many of the first labour of the hero fighting the lion (Cat. Nos. 98–101), and a fine token of the Fourth Labour showing the hero carrying the boar to King Eurystheus (Cat. No. 104). These examples exhibit the diversity and variety of the Heracles motif present in the Northwest Indian region. Unfortunately, the lack of information about their provenance prevents better contextualisation, and the reason they were produced in this context remains speculative.

V.2.1.3. Roman imports

The prominent Hellenistic style and classical subject matter of the evidence from Begram suggest a higher likelihood of it being imported, especially the possibility of sources from Alexandria via the Red Sea route.³⁸⁸ However, one should be cautious about the unique representations of Heracles from Begram: the plaster emblemata share many similarities with the largest extant group of plaster casts recovered from

³⁸⁷ Cribb 1997: 35–37.

³⁸⁸ Kurz 1954: 89–150; Adriani 1955: 124–138; cf. Picón and Hemingway 2016: 250.

Memphis, yet the depictions of Heracles narratives are less common.³⁸⁹ Except for the profile head of the bearded hero (Cat. No. 116), the others do not correspond to the canonical imagery, especially figures Cat. No. 117 and 119.

There are several views regarding the evidence of Heracles from Begram. If the nature of these emblemata is confirmed as a Roman creation, they may be “pasticci” like the relief panel of the apotheosis from Villa Albani.³⁹⁰ Gisela M. A. Richter (1958) suggested another possibility that they were cast from Greek originals by the artists in Roman times due to the market demand for “Greek antiquities”.³⁹¹ The emblemata with the figure of Heracles in narrative scenes currently lack further evidence to identify their subjects positively, and the possibility of some specific local needs dictating the choice in subject matter cannot be entirely excluded. Given that their function was to serve as models for metalware manufacture and possibly as sample models for clients, there is no doubt that the Kushans were actively involved in the commercial chain of luxury good consumption established in the Hellenistic world.

A similar discrepancy between style and iconography emerges in the case of the bronze statuette of Heracles-Serapis (Cat. No. 121). The statuette was probably imported from Egypt, and it is thought to be a syncretic representation of Serapis and Heracles due to the mixed iconography. Although among the currently known representations of Serapis, the figure is frequently associated and assimilated with many Egyptian and Greco-Roman gods, the Begram bronze is the only one that combines the two gods into one. More broadly, the connection between Serapis and Heracles is unclear. Plutarch mentioned that in some so-called Phrygian writings, Serapis was the son of Heracles (Plut. *Mor.* 29). In Greco-Roman art, Heracles is not found assimilated with Serapis. The two are sometimes presented side by side and in a group of deities, most shown in the works from Alexandria, such as on a votive relief with Athena (*LIMC* vii.1, s.v. Sarapis, nr. 184) and a coin with Apollo (*LIMC* vii.1, s.v. Sarapis, nr. 174). Given the particularity of the Begram statuette,

³⁸⁹ The total number of Begram plaster emblemata, more than 50, is almost comparable to the number of Memphis casts, which is more than 70. For the study of plaster casts from Memphis, see Reinsberg 1980.

³⁹⁰ Kurz 1954: 93.

³⁹¹ Kurz 1954: 93; Wheeler 1954: 163–164; Richter 1958: 369–377.

in which the syncretism of Serapis and Heracles does not seem to correspond to classical literary and artistic sources, the identity cannot be easily affirmed.³⁹² Carter (1999–2000) suggested that it represents an Egyptian Heracles, identified with Herischef or Harsaphes by the Greeks, the chief god of Heracleopolis Magna.³⁹³

Notably, “Serapis” was not entirely an unfamiliar foreign god to the Kushans — his image appears on the reverse of several Huvishka’s (ca. 151–190 AD) gold coins with a Bactrian inscription Sarapo (ΣΑΡΑΠΙΟ/ΚΑΡΑΠΙΟ) and Huvishka’s early *tamga* to the left. Though very rare, two types have survived, and both represent him as a Zeus-like figure (Cat. No. 136).³⁹⁴ A profile portrait of a bearded man (Serapis?) wearing a flat-topped cylindrical headdress (a modius or polos?) is also preserved in a glass paste ring-bezel seal from Gandhāra (Cat. No. 137).³⁹⁵ Moreover, the Serapis-like bust is sometimes found on the necklace worn by Gandhāran statues of bodhisattvas (Cat. No. 138),³⁹⁶ and the bearded figure wearing a modius-like object on the top of the head, identified as a Greco-Ptolemaic-Zoroastrian god Zeus/Serapis/Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda), appears on a Kushano-Sasanian painted terracotta panel (Cat. No. 139).³⁹⁷ Thus, it is conceivable that the syncretism of Heracles and Serapis that emerged in the Kushan context is not wholly groundless.

V.2.1.4. Heracles on stone palettes

The accumulation of various sources and the wealth of new material in the Kushan period might have preserved or generated some representations less commonly found in the Mediterranean area. The discrepancy raises the difficulty in dating based on iconographic assumptions, such as the group of Gandhāran toilet trays discussed earlier, which usually

³⁹² Kurz 1954: 147.

³⁹³ Carter 1999–2000: 13.

³⁹⁴ Rosenfield 1967: 98–99, coins 57, 186, 187; Göbl 1984: 170, Sarapo Types 164/1, 185/2; Carter 1999–2000: Fig. 4; Jongeward and Cribb 2015: 289, Coin no. 724.

³⁹⁵ Rahman and Falk 2011: 68, no. 06.01.01.

³⁹⁶ Carter 1999–2000: 9–17.

³⁹⁷ Carter 1997: 573–588; Lerner 2018: 2–15; Falk 2015–2019: 25–27.

have no Greco-Roman correspondence, yet some contain elements reminiscent of the Heracles motif.

An exceptional case is the Bacchanalian theme. It could be placed as an example between patterns a) and b), but closer to the former because the general scene and style are relatively faithful to the classical representation (Cat. Nos. 122–123). However, some elements, such as the tame lion and the Eastern hemispherical cup type, are atypical.³⁹⁸

It is noteworthy that in some other Gandhāran works of art, the composition of a man (who is not Heracles) supported by attendants at a feast also appears. Several have been identified as the scene of drunken Dionysus or Silenus, including a toilet tray from Swāt, one from Chārsadda and a relief from the Valley of Peshawar (Cat. No. 140).³⁹⁹ Both Dionysus and Heracles seemed to have been associated with the drinking motif in Gandhāra and influenced the local representation of the subject,⁴⁰⁰ which later went beyond the subcontinent and transmitted further East via the Silk Road. In Xi'an, China, archaeological discoveries from the Sui Dynasty (581–618 AD) have also attested to the persistence of this Bacchanalian motif (Cat. No. 141).⁴⁰¹

V.2.2. Pattern b): adopting the iconography while changing the style and adding new elements

This pattern shares features with both the Near Eastern pattern b) and the pre-Kushan-period Central Asian and Northwest Indian approaches. The additional unusual details and the local quality in style pose a dilemma for identification, especially within the Kushan context. Even so, the reuses of certain iconographic formulas and elements often recall the Heracles motif. The selected works are divided into three groups based

³⁹⁸ Topsfield 1996: 268.

³⁹⁹ For the toilet tray from Swāt, see Francfort 1979: 31, no. 25; for the one from Chārsadda, see Francfort 1979: 25–26, no. 19; for the relief from Peshawar, see Tanabe 2020: 9–36, Fig. 2.

⁴⁰⁰ For the study of Dionysus in Gandhāran art, see Brancaccio and Liu 2009: 219–244; Pons 2022: 281–298.

⁴⁰¹ Ge 2018: 58–69.

on the types of representation: the standing type of a single figure, the hero with a lion and the hero overpowering an enemy.

V.2.2.1. The modified standing Heracles type and the changing cultural context

A certain degree of movement away from the naturalistic style is apparent in representations of the most common standing types of a single figure. Usually, the physique and muscles of the figure are illustrated without much elaboration and the overall proportions are less anatomically correct.

V.2.2.1.a) Coins, seals and tokens

Most of Huvishka's Heracles coins, with all five reverse types of the standing hero carrying a club and lionskin, depict an oversized head and a simplified, schematic body. The evidence of seals and gems shows similar characteristics. Most are distant from the prototype in style. The relatively eclectic cases of the standing type are from the Gandhāran region. Like works showing pattern a), the reproductions of the model can be recognised and belong to a context that incorporated various sources from different places and times, but on the other side, these locally-made figures are further distanced from the Greco-Roman influences. The significance of the highly abstract or schematic form may be more symbolic rather than implicitly seeking to recall the Greek representation.

Several reasons prevent us from confidently identifying these figures as Heracles or only Heracles. The first and most obvious challenge pertains to reading the slightly modified iconography. Sometimes, a nimbus is added behind the figure's head, such as in the reverse types k1), k2), and k3) of Kushan coins (Cat. Nos. 73–75, 79; cf. Göbl 886–890) and the Nimogram bracket figure (Cat. No. 129). In other examples, the figure may wear a headgear/helmet that does not always look like the lion's head (or its simplified version), as on Huvishka's gold dinar (Cat. No. 82), and the globular-shaped helmets with ribbons on seals (Cat. Nos. 86–87, 92–93), which may explain some of those corroded images showing a seemingly oversized head.⁴⁰² These elements, which do not originally belong to the Greek iconography, create uncertainty over the identity, but they

⁴⁰² This type of helmet is not exclusive to representations of Heracles on seals and gems. Cf. Callieri 1997: Cat. 1.12.

are relatively minor in the whole representation and insufficient in transforming the figure entirely into another.

Another reason which problematises the identification of the figure is its context. Although we cannot presume how these figures were perceived and understood by ancient people, in some cases, they seem to have been connected to local cults and religions. A pertinent example is the aforementioned late-Kushan box seal containing both Heracles (the same type as on coins/seals) and four local figures (Cat. No. 93), who are now identified as a three-headed Oēšo (OHPO) in the guise of Śiva, a male and a female facing each other and holding hands and a Kushan nobleman worshipping in front of an altar.⁴⁰³ The depiction of the Śiva-like Oēšo recalls the association between Heracles and Śiva/Oēšo in both literary and artistic sources. It should also be pointed out that juxtaposing the figure of Heracles with other deities from a foreign cult is not new. A similar combination is already shown in the 1st-century BC votive relief from the Bel Temple at Palmyra (Cat. No. 24), where the figure is recognised as Heracles but could also represent Nergal. Whether or not the Kushan artists intended to deliver a message like the Heracles-Nergal amalgam in the Near Eastern context, the adaptability of his figure to different pantheons can be affirmed.

V.2.2.1.b) Sculptures

The sculptural evidence of the same standing type is provided by several reliefs from some Buddhist stupas and the aforementioned wrestler's weight from Gandhāra. These examples can be easily recognised as Heracleian because of the relatively faithful reuse of classical prototypes showing the nude male figure standing and carrying the club and skin. However, some differences have caused difficulties in understanding the meanings of these figures.

As mentioned, some reliefs of the standing Heracles type discovered at Nimogram, Andandheri, Butkara etc. are decorated on Buddhist stupas, and most of them do not seem to have been integrated into any narrative representation (except for the Buner stupa example) since they are

⁴⁰³ Rosenfield (1967) suggested it may date as late as the 5th century AD, a possibility that it belonged to the Gupta period, see Rosenfield 1967: 94, seal 6; Cribb (1997) and Errington (2021) dated it to the 3rd–4th centuries AD, see Cribb 1997: Fig.17a; Errington 2021: 230, Fig. 75.9-1880.4073.

usually placed on the exterior side of the frames of the scenes, which is inferred from their designs and size (Cat. Nos. 129–133).

The question remains why the figure of Heracles was featured in Gandhāran Buddhist stupas. Were they merely decorative or intentionally borrowed the form to depict other figures? Given the rich evidence of the hero's images in the centuries around the Common Era in the Indian subcontinent, it seems less convincing that the reappearance of the Heracles figure in the Buddhist context had already wholly severed the connection to the Greek hero. However, to what extent the Heracleian representations retain the original meaning is contextually based, which is challenging in understanding our examples because most lack supporting evidence.

Several scholars have thus pondered and remarked on the group of standing Heracles figures in the Buddhist context. Raducha (1985) has suggested that in some cases the figure may have the function of a *Dvārapāla* (a door or gate guardian who usually carries a *gadā* club), flanking and protecting the entrance to a sacred occasion or precinct.⁴⁰⁴ The association is possible because not only in Gandhāra were the *Dvārapāla* figures (or general guardian figures) perhaps influenced by the images of Heracles, but also throughout Asia, some guardian figures retained traces of features that initially belonged to the hero. Santoro (1991) further speculated whether the choice of the Heracles figure was only to spread the heroic symbol or was functionally motivated.⁴⁰⁵ These questions apply to all works influenced by the Heracles' images, but no single answer can explain all cases.

One cannot generalise the motivation of various ways of adaptations even if they were formed in the same context. From the presented group of relief fragments, as they are independent of narrative depictions, the allusion to the Heracleian symbolic value through taking over the form does not necessarily conflict with their decorative function in Buddhist stupas.

⁴⁰⁴ Raducha 1985: 160–161.

⁴⁰⁵ Santoro 1991: 281–286.

V.2.2.2. *The modified representation of the Heracles figure with a lion*

This section discusses and reflects on the different views on the modified representations of a hero figure with a lion presented by the examples mentioned earlier, which have been associated with the motif of Heracles and the Nemean Lion, including the Gandhāran wrestler's weight, the Mathura statue, the Quetta statuette and a few seals and tokens engraved with a similar scene. Some of these works are also identified by scholars as representations of the "Indian Heracles" based on classical accounts or connected to the Saka-Parthian culture, giving alternative interpretations to the lion-slaying scene in the Indo-Iranian context.

V.2.2.2.a) *The wrestler's weight: Heracles, Kṛṣṇa or Skythes?*

Due to the function of a wrestler's weight as a training tool as well as a votive object, the composition of the muscular hero bearing his attributes, standing with a lion and the depiction of a wrestling scene on the other side, this exceptional weight from Peshawar has been generally regarded as a Gandhāran adaptation of the Heracles motif (Cat. No. 127).⁴⁰⁶ However, the date of the artefact remains uncertain, putting it at different points between the Indo-Greek and the Kushan eras (1st century BC and the 2nd century AD).

As tantalising as the identification with the Heracles motif may be, many scholars have expressed concerns about the "anachronistic" arrangement of the hero and the lion. If one follows the interpretation of the First Labour, Heracles would not have carried the lion's pelt while the lion was still alive. One of the explanations is that it represents the same Heracles' myth in a non-narrative form.⁴⁰⁷ Bernard and Jullien (1982) suggested that the Buddhist sanctuaries had probably paid athletic homage to Heracles, providing an environment for transforming the Nemean Lion into a kingly companion of the god.⁴⁰⁸ Marco Galli (2011) pointed out that the flying diadem worn by the figure and the tame lion reflect a

⁴⁰⁶ Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47; Behrendt 2007: 13–14; Ghosh 2023: 67–68.

⁴⁰⁷ Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47.

⁴⁰⁸ Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47; Behrendt 2007: 13–14.

connection between an athletic victory and royalty of a Hellenistic court milieu during the 1st century AD.⁴⁰⁹

Given the Scythian power in Central Asia and Northwest India around the Common Era, Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani (1998) speculated that the Heracleian figure might be Scythes, who recollected the memory of his father Heracles and was endowed with the Scythian royal characteristics: the flying diadem and the tame lion. The other side of the stone relief was thought to be an early representation of Rostam-e Sagzī, probably in combat with Puladvand.⁴¹⁰ The Iranian epic hero Rostam also seems to have been connected with Heracles in later times, but the iconographic tradition of Rostam prior to the manuscript illustrations of the *Šāhnāme* (no earlier than the 14th century) is unknown, which will be commented on further in the last chapter. Denise Patry Leidy (2000) interpreted the wrestling scene as Kṛṣṇa's feast because "Kṛṣṇa was often conflated with Herakles in the mixed culture of northwest India", a view that was apparently influenced by the modern identification of the "Indian Heracles".⁴¹¹

The complexity of an example like this weight shows how difficult it can be to determine the meaning of a syncretic image, even if it recalls one of the most common and well understood mythological motifs. It shows also how Gandhāran artists combined and adapted iconographies and styles from different times and places, creating a palimpsest of meanings often challenging to decipher.

V.2.2.2.b) Mathura statue: Heracles, Kṛṣṇa, Indra or a Buddhist figure?

Most scholars regard the Mathura relief as an Indian adaptation of Greco-Roman art because of the representation of a nude man wearing a lionskin with two paws knotted at his chest, with a live lion standing upright to the side (Cat. No. 134). Even so, it has yielded divisive interpretations.

The most commonly accepted date of the relief is the early 2nd century AD, spanning the reigns of Kanishka or Huvishka, but some have also

⁴⁰⁹ Galli 2011: 279–329.

⁴¹⁰ Melikian-Chirvani 1998: 190–192.

⁴¹¹ Leidy 2000: 142.

speculated that it could belong to the early Gupta period.⁴¹² The chronological issue reflects its problematic form and content, creating much scholarly controversy during the early decades of the 20th century. Cunningham (1884), who discovered the statue, believed it was a “direct copy of some Greek original” portraying the hero strangling the Nemean Lion, an interpretation followed by many.⁴¹³ Ludwig Bachhofer (1929) supposed that the man’s bodily form harked back to the Praxiteles circle, but he did not speculate on the subject matter.⁴¹⁴ In contrast, Ananda Coomaraswamy (1927) stated that the relief is stylistically Indian but suggestive of a Western theme.⁴¹⁵ Jean-Philippe Vogel (1930) commented that the “Heracles” has a feeble and effeminate shape, which confirms it is a weak imitation of a popular Hellenistic motif.⁴¹⁶ Although there are also views which sought to reach a compromise regarding the style, such as Benjamin Rowland’s (1967) descriptions of an Indian fullness of the body and resemblance to the Lycian Apollo, divergent perceptions remain the most prominent.⁴¹⁷ More recently, Boardman (1992, 1994, 2015) has reaffirmed that it is the exact copy of a Greek original apart from the Indian tree.⁴¹⁸ The various opinions note the level of the hybridity of this sculpture, which is iconographically and stylistically deceptive to the modern eye.

The content of this relief is unclear if we exclude the possibility of seeing it as Heracles strangling the Nemean Lion. Little information remains to understand the scene apart from the place of discovery, which draws some attention back to the connection between Heracles and several Indian gods. Some previous attempts at identification closely followed the modern ones of the “Indian Heracles”, especially the most common theory of the connection with Kṛṣṇa.⁴¹⁹ For instance, Alfred Foucher (1922)

⁴¹² Cunningham 1884: 109; For the Gupta period date, see Callieri 1997: 182.

⁴¹³ To Cunningham (1884), it was not conceivable to assign any Indian identity because the figure’s body is “superior to any purely Indian sculpture”. See Cunningham 1884: 109.

⁴¹⁴ Bachhofer 1929: Pl. 97.

⁴¹⁵ Coomaraswamy 1927: 62.

⁴¹⁶ Vogel 1930: Pl. XLVII, b.

⁴¹⁷ Rowland 1967: ix.

⁴¹⁸ Boardman 1992: 40; Boardman 1994: 137–139; 2015: Fig. 125.

⁴¹⁹ See Chapter IV: Section IV.2.2.

suggested it to be Kṛṣṇa in a classical disguise, which has not been adopted by many scholars but remains an alternative interpretation because of the cult in Mathura and possible comparison between Megasthenes' fragments and Indian literary corpus.⁴²⁰ As noted, the identification of "Indian Heracles" as Indra also drew attention to this statue.⁴²¹ Another theory was proposed by Vincent A. Smith (1911) that the relief could be a Buddhist parallel to the Greek myth,⁴²² probably because the tree behind the figure recalls the same period of depictions of many Buddhist figures shown with a tree in the background.⁴²³ We may never know the possible significance and meaning of this statue within the Buddhist context, but the assumption of a Buddhist parallel may not be entirely inconceivable due to the common usage of the Heracleian model.

V.2.2.2.c) The Quetta statuette: an Iranian Heracles?

Although the Quetta statuette has been sometimes referred to as the bronze version of the Mathura statue,⁴²⁴ the two works exhibit differences in many aspects. This statuette (Cat. No. 135) is lost to the public eye nowadays, and only a few comments can be made based on Garwood's archaeological report and some early scholarly discussions.⁴²⁵

Smith (1889) perceived the similarity between this characteristic and Assyrian relief depictions of "Gilgamesh", which show a colossal male figure clutching a lion of relatively small size. This resemblance to Assyrian sculpture had led Smith to speculate a much earlier date and suggested that the Indian example might have "borrowed the idea from some Hellenistic work of Asia Minor".⁴²⁶ Judging by the technique, Rowland

⁴²⁰ AGBG, vol. 2: 604–605. James C. Harle (1985: 652) argued that "it is very difficult to imagine that god (Kṛṣṇa) with a lion's skin around his shoulders". Rowland (1967) suggested to not overlook the possibility, while Carter (1995) wrote that the Mathura relief reinforced the identification of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva with Heracles. See Rowland 1967: x; Carter 1995: 121.

⁴²¹ Dahlquist 1962: 157, 165, fn. 1.

⁴²² Smith 1911: 134–136.

⁴²³ Raducha 1985: 167.

⁴²⁴ Harle 1992: 40.

⁴²⁵ Garwood 1887: 163, Pl. X.

⁴²⁶ Smith 1889: 141.

(1967) suspected it might be an Indian or Gandhāran copy of a Western prototype.⁴²⁷ The approach of miniaturising the hero's opponent is closer to Near Eastern traditions of the same motif, as seen in reliefs from Dura-Europos (Cat. No. 23) and Masjed-e Solaiman (Cat. No. 29). Furthermore, the figure's facial features and hairstyle are reminiscent of the clay head found at Khalchayan (Cat. No. 112), especially the similar hair carved with straight and deep grooves instead of short curls. Unfortunately, not much of the statuette is preserved to allow for further examination. One can only speculate its possible connections with multiple iconographic traditions.

V.2.2.2.d) Seals and tokens

As listed in Section V.1.2.4, four types represent a hero figure fighting (with a lion) on gems, seals and tokens found in the subcontinent during this period. Most of these small artefacts are comparable to the representations from the West or Near East with only some minor modifications, such as the hero sometimes wearing a helmet or bear garments over his shoulders.

Iconographic comparisons have been made between the crystal seal (Cat. No. 101) of type c4) and the Mathura statue (Cat. No. 134) due to the representation of the hero standing behind the lion,⁴²⁸ a type that frequently occurs in the Mesopotamian context. This seal has adopted the essential elements of the lion-slaying theme, but the schema somewhat differs from the most common representation of Heracles and the Nemean Lion from the West. For this reason, scholars' opinions on the date differ. Boardman (1992) dated it to the 1st or 2nd century AD, while Callieri (1997) suggested a 5th-century date because of the general coherence of the composition of the inscription and image, thus making the date

⁴²⁷ Rowland 1967: x.

⁴²⁸ Callieri 1997: 181–182.

Gupta instead of Kushan more likely.⁴²⁹ One essential detail that differentiates this crystal seal from the Mathura statue is the raised knee of the hero, which is more often found in scenes of Heracles fighting a deer, Antaeus, the Minotaur or Mithras with a bull.

V.2.2.3. *The modified representation of Heracles overpowering an enemy*

During the late Kushan period, several examples from Northern Bactria represent a hero figure overpowering an enemy, possibly inspired by the similar representation of Heracles from the Hellenistic period. As Abdullaev (2002) suggested, the terracotta works from Kara-Pichok (Cat. No. 107) and Barat Tepa (Cat. No. 108) might have been influenced by the 4th/3rd century BC ivory sword hilt from Takht-i Sangin (Cat. No. 63), imitating the compositional schema of earlier work representing the Gigantomachy.⁴³⁰ On the Kara-Pichok plaque, in addition to the composition, Heracles' usual identifiers are reserved, including the raised arm wielding a knobbed club and the lion paws knotted at the chest. While the artist was not interested in or incapable of representing these figures in a naturalistic way, much attention was paid to the heterogeneous elements. The figure wears a choker which holds the pelt over his shoulders, round bracelets, a belt with a quiver, and boots or gaiters (possibly made of animal skin). His crenelated crown with two ribbons framing the face is peculiar and is suggested to be vaguely reminiscent of some Sasanian royal crowns.⁴³¹ The defeated figure, whose hair is caught by the hero's left hand, is stretching forth his right arm to clutch the hero's left leg. Except for a sense of struggle, expressed by the pose and the hair-pulling, the figure is highly schematic and small. The Barat Tepa figurine abandons the club and the dwarf and is rendered more schematically.

⁴²⁹ Boardman 1992: 151, no. 152; Callieri 1997: Cat. U3.1. Several scholars have agreed with the Gupta period date; see Stronge, Smith and Harle 1988: 18–19, no. 13. Callieri (1997) further enumerated all possible comparisons from the classical repertoire to the northwest region of South Asia and pointed out that the representation of the hero behind the lion is unlike the most typical types from the Mediterranean. He also pointed out that it stylistically echoes several European medieval seals of the Heracles and Nemean Lion motif, showing “an independent reworking of iconographies distant from them in time and space”. See Callieri 1997: 181–182.

⁴³⁰ Abdullaev 2002: 53–69.

⁴³¹ Abdullaev 2007: 557–559.

V.2.3. Pattern c): adapting Heracleian elements to other figurative or narrative motifs

The criteria for judging this group of works are firstly reflected in their reference to or derivation from the Heracles motif, regardless of whether the sources were direct or indirect. Secondly, the evidence is sufficient to suggest that the transformation generated new identities or narratives associated with the figures. The pattern of adaptation shares similarities with the last group, namely, having Heracleian features but with essential differences denoting a shift in identity and the change of content.

The best-known examples from this period belong to the Gandhāran Buddhist art, in which many figures have taken some Heracleian features. Given the complexity and large quantity of this set of evidence, a substantial discussion is provided in Chapter VI. This section focuses only on the evidence of the period beyond the Gandhāran Buddhist material.

V.2.3.1. The transfiguration on early Kushan coins

Coexisting with the evidence of the figure of Heracles on the coins of Kujula and Huvishka, the hero's features are also spotted on other figures on some early Kushan coins. Many scholars have noticed similarities between Heracles and some deities with syncretic features, raising issues concerning iconographic transition and adaptation in the period. Investigating these images predicates understanding an exceptionally complex cultural system and sometimes relates to comparative mythology.

One of the most discussed cases is the assimilation of Heracles and Śiva on early Kushan coins. As mentioned in Chapter IV, one of the modern identifications of the "Indian Heracles" in classical accounts is with Śiva, which is not necessarily related to the extant archaeological data. Nevertheless, some of the earliest anthropomorphic representations of Śiva do share similarities with the figure of Heracles, especially those on early Kushan coins which show an assumption of the hero's attributes. It should be clarified that the issue concerning the deity recognised as Śiva on the Kushan coins has been much debated. In this case, the deity is labelled with a Bactrian name "OHPO" (Oēšo), probably of Iranian

origin, but his iconography reveals features of Śiva.⁴³² The controversy between the Iranian and Indian nature of the deity has been discussed by many scholars, which is beyond the scope of the present study.⁴³³ Given that the focus here is on figurative traditions, especially the connection to the figure of Heracles, the figure of OHPO equated with Śiva from an iconographic standpoint.⁴³⁴

According to Bopearachchi (2015a), a stater struck by Vima Kadphises commemorating his father provides the earliest representation of Śiva in the Kushan period (Cat. No. 142), modelled after Kujula's Heracles coins.⁴³⁵ The similarity with Heracles is the depiction of the naked standing figure with animal skin draped over his left arm, which continues to appear as one of the characteristics of Śiva-Oēšo on the reverses of early Kushan coins (Cat. No. 143).⁴³⁶ The second identifier club is not carried by the deity on Vima Kadphises' coins, but it occurs on several corresponding obverses: independently next to the king or held by the king

⁴³² Different interpretations of the legends have been proposed to understand the deity's identity, his relationship with the king and religion, and the genealogy of the early Kushan sovereigns. From an Indological perspective, this deity is meant to be Śiva regardless of whether he is called Íśvara or Rudra and may also be connected to the fire God Agni. Iranists have identified OHPO as a Zoroastrian wind god, Vesparkar or the Iranian Vayu, due to the Iranian name connected to the images. Tanabe (1997) doubted that Vima and Kanishka could have converted to Saivism and represented Śiva as their main god. Cf. Sircar 1968; Chattopadhyay 1975; Verardi 1983: 225–294; Humbach 1975; Tanabe 1997: 263–280; Grenet 2006: 87–99.

⁴³³ Cribb 1997: 11–66; Giuliano 2021: 162, fns. 1–2.

⁴³⁴ Marshak 1995–1996: 305.

⁴³⁵ Bopearachchi 2015a: 585–587, Fig. 1.

⁴³⁶ Göbl 1984: Vima Kadphises, nos. 5–6, 14–20; Kanishka, nos. 37, 45, 51, 55, 62, 67, 72, 78; Huvishka, nos. 308–309.

(Cat. Nos. 142–145).⁴³⁷ On Huvishka's coins, the club is still associated with the obverse sovereign, while the reverse deity manifested as a four-armed, three-headed figure adopted this attribute (Cat. No. 146).⁴³⁸ The club is said to have become a characteristic feature of the image of Lakuliṣa in a later period.⁴³⁹

As discussed in Chapter III, it appears that the image of Heracles' club had already been adapted in the representations of local deities in the pre-Kushan period, such as the several club-like attributes wielded by Saṃkarṣaṇa-Balarāma on the coins of Agathocles, Maues and Azes. The Kushans had likely inherited such a pattern of adapting the motif, which reflects a continuity of the previous approach of extracting a few iconographic elements of the original motif and employing them with other gods.

Evidently, the early Śiva iconography is connected with the figure of Heracles from the period of the Indo-Greek Kingdom, Indo-Scythian rule and Kujula.⁴⁴⁰ However, the overall iconography of the deity is distinct from that of Heracles, and the Greek elements should not be over-emphasised. From the earliest image on the coins of Vima Kadphises to those mostly seen on Kanishka and Huvishka's coins, the deity is depicted with key Indian elements, such as the *jaṭā* on top of the head, the Brahmanic ascetic garments, several Indian symbols (e.g. *vajra*, *kamaṇḍalu*, *paraśu*), Śiva's typical attributes and features (*triśūla*, four-

⁴³⁷ Maria M. Spagnoli (2011) defined seven main types showing the club with Vima Kadphises. In some examples, clubs looking less Heracleian are seen in the images of Huvishka's bust. The B, C and D types of Huvishka's portraits classified by Cunningham show a similar manner of holding an attribute as Vima's. Although many scholars traditionally interpreted this attribute as a club, it was also identified as a double ear of corn or a banded aspergillum. The peculiar shape of types 2 and 4 are interpreted as an extremely schematic form of Heracles' knobbed club. See Spagnoli 2011: 21–37; Cf. Göbl 1984: Type G.10.2.

⁴³⁸ Göbl 1984: nos. 366, 367/1.

⁴³⁹ Giuliano 2021: 181, fn. 54.

⁴⁴⁰ Cribb 1997: 35–37.

armed, three-headed, ithyphallic), and the lionskin is mostly replaced by that of antelope (*mrga*) etc., thus emphasising his Indian appearance.⁴⁴¹

V.2.3.2. The transformation on seals: adaptation of Heracleian attributes

In addition to numismatic data, the Heracleian features were adopted in other contemporary depictions of local deities, mostly on seals. On a clay seal excavated at Sari Dheri (near Chārsadda, Pakistan), the four-armed figure identified as Śiva carries a trident in the upper right hand, a wheel in the upper left hand, a club in the lower right hand, and an animal pelt/garment draped over the lower left arm (Cat. No. 147).⁴⁴² Apart from the wheel, the other three attributes in the same composition reappear on a controversial relief of a hybrid figure from Saozma-Kala (Afghanistan), also identified as Śiva (Cat. No. 148).⁴⁴³ Both examples that display both club and lionskin simultaneously.

Judging from the evidence, the club seems to be more frequently represented than the garment/skin draped over the right arm. The better-known seals are a bronze example from Begram showing a running male figure carrying a club (Cat. No. 149),⁴⁴⁴ an intaglio of a four-armed Śiva holding a club and standing in front of a bull (Cat. No. 150),⁴⁴⁵ and a late Kushan seal of a four-armed deity holding both wheel and club (Cat. No. 151).⁴⁴⁶ The club also appears independently on a seal found at Bir-kotghwandai Swat (Pakistan), recalling some reverses of Indo-Greek

⁴⁴¹ For thorough analyses of Śiva iconography, see Giuliano 2004: 55–59; 2021: 161–196.

⁴⁴² Callieri 1997: Cat. S1.

⁴⁴³ The Saozma-Kala relief, now in the Mazār-i Sharīf Museum, is often used to support the view of local syncretism because of the mixing of features of Poseidon, Heracles, Zeus, Śiva and even Buddha. For this viewpoint, see Fischer 1957: 416–435; Bussagli 1962: 86, fn. 2; Gnoli 1963: 36, fn. 15; Rosenfield 1967: 93–94; Cribb and Boppearachchi 1992: 82. In Tucci's (1968) opinion, given the numismatic evidence from the area, the hypothesis is possible, but a further examination would prevent drawing any conclusion due to the dubious authenticity of this piece. See Tucci 1968: 293–294; cf. Carter 1995b: 146; Giuliano 2004: 72, fn. 16.

⁴⁴⁴ Callieri 1997: 132, Cat. M3; Errington 2021: 229, Fig. 74.26.

⁴⁴⁵ Callieri 1997: Cat. U 7.2.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: Cat. U 7.3.

coins.⁴⁴⁷ The maintained use of the image attests to the popularity and pertinence of the club as divine equipment.

The problem is that unlike in the case of Heracles, for whom the club is undeniably his key identifier, in the presented examples from the North-West Indian region, it had lost such a function and meaning even if it might have been taken originally from the Greek hero. Furthermore, these presented clubs differ in shape, size and combination with the figure, which cannot be readily inferred as to whether they were derived from the same source.

In the Indian tradition, the *gadā* is an ordinary club carried by many Hindu deities and is particularly connected with Viṣṇu's iconography. In early depictions, its form has a tapering top and a stout bottom without ornaments,⁴⁴⁸ which may look like a schematised Heracleian club, especially in some smaller-scale depictions. Another example is the Gandhāran wrestler's weight preserved at the Museo delle Civiltà (inv. 18959), showing the image of an upside down *gadā* on one side and a fan palm (*tāla*) on the other side. Given that the former is one of Viṣṇu's attributes and the latter is associated with Balarāma, the two attributes seem to indicate a connection with the Viṣṇuite sphere.⁴⁴⁹ Sometimes the club has a cylindrical shape with a ball-shaped bottom, and the body seems to be made up of superimposed discs.⁴⁵⁰ This peculiar shape of the club is shown on the Begram bronze seal and an agate intaglio (Cat. Nos. 149, 151). The running figure on the former seal, still unidentified, is closer to the representations of Saṃkarṣaṇa-Balarāma in Indo-Scythian coinage and the deity on a seal of Śivarakṣita discovered at Sirkap.⁴⁵¹ It shares the running schema, an identical club wielded in the same manner, and traces of a plough and billowing garment, echoing examples on

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.: Cat. S 56.

⁴⁴⁸ Gopinatha Rao 1914: 4–5.

⁴⁴⁹ Di Castro 2003: 257–265.

⁴⁵⁰ Spagnoli 1967: 254.

⁴⁵¹ Spagnoli 1967: 254; Banerjea (1956) noticed this type of club appears on Maues' coins but identified the figure as Śiva. See Banerjea 1956: 402, Pl. IX, Fig. 18; For the seal of Śivarakṣita, see Banerjea 1956: Pl. XI, Fig. 5.

Maues' and Azes I's copper coins.⁴⁵² Maria M. Spagnoli (1967) pointed out that the shape of the club resembles the mace carried by the hunter Sonuttara on a Bhārhut relief representing the Chaddanta-Jataka (Cat. No. 152) and is similar to the smaller object held by Huvishka on his coins (Cat. No. 146).⁴⁵³ However, even the same figure does not always carry the same type of club, such as a bronze bilingual (Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī) seal showing a similar running deity wielding a plough and a Heracleian club instead of a peculiar-shaped one (Cat. No. 153).

Since the club only signifies one of the many aspects of the divine figures who bore it, they are primarily discussed in an Indian or Iranian context, in both of which several traditions were highly intertwined. Such a complex matter challenges identification as the figure may be characterised by attributes of several gods. For example, an impression of a terracotta sealing from Kula Dheri presents a four-armed deity wearing a *dhoti* and carrying attributes of a wheel, a *vajra*, and a plain club, which seems to suggest Viṣṇu's iconography but also similar to that of Śiva.⁴⁵⁴

The four-armed deity on the aforementioned agate intaglio is depicted carrying attributes of the conch, wheel, club and ring, and on the left a much smaller sized nobleman worshipping him (Cat. No. 151). The deity is recognised as a syncretic god with Viṣṇu' features, and he carries a club of a peculiar shape as described. The Iranian-style worshipper next to the deity and the Bactrian script may indicate a Central Asian origin.⁴⁵⁵

It is evident that the combination and the form of elements vary case by case and indicate a certain degree of freedom was exercised in selecting and reassembling different deities' symbols, loosening their connections to the original motif.

V.2.3.3. *Heracles and Diomedes' Mares or Kṛṣṇa and the demon horse Keśin?*

So far, only one example shows that a narrative iconography, which possibly first emerged in the Kushan period and later became conventional

⁴⁵² A similar running image is shown on a magnetic bronze ring seal. Cf. Rahman and Falk 2011: 56, no. 03.02.25.

⁴⁵³ Spagnoli 1967: 254, Fig. 14.

⁴⁵⁴ Callieri 1997: Cat. S7.

⁴⁵⁵ Callieri 1997: Cat. U 7.3; cf. Cunningham 1893: 126–127; Herzfeld 1930: Figs. 3, 6; Banerjea 1956: 124–125; Göbl 1967: 226–227; Bivar 1968: Pl. III,8.

for the Kṛṣṇa motif, could have built upon the mythological representation of one of the Heracles' deeds — Heracles and Diomedes' Mares.

A seal found at the site of Sahr-i Bahlol (Pakistan), dated to the Late-Kushan or Kushano-Sasanian period (2nd or 3rd century AD), is engraved with a possible Kushan inscription and an image of a man (nude?) raising his one leg and kicking directly at a rampant horse confronting him (Cat. No. 154).⁴⁵⁶ There are two possible identifications: Heracles fighting one of the man-eating mares of King Diomedes or Kṛṣṇa fighting the demon Keśin in the form of a horse. The former was suggested by scholars based on the general identity of the pose of horse and man and a broadly classical style, while the second interpretation includes both the Greco-Roman tradition and the later development of the iconography of the Indian legend.⁴⁵⁷ The two interpretations do not contradict one another, and the possibility of assimilating the two myths is more plausible by crediting the coexistence of the images of the two gods within the Kushan milieu and the association of Heracles with local figures as evinced in Megasthenes' fragments.⁴⁵⁸

Previous research shows that the general composition of the seal corresponds to the type of Heracles standing in a combat pose before one rearing horse, which is not very typical among all types of representation of the Eighth Labour, and the closest examples are coins from Pontus (Heraclea Pontica) (Cat. No. 155).⁴⁵⁹ The shared formula appears on several

⁴⁵⁶ Many attempts have been made to decipher the inscription, and opinions have consequently varied. A. D. H. Bivar (1955) suggested a translation of "Son of the Great Kanishka...a Kushan", while other scholars questioned this reading. See Bivar 1955: 203–210. For a summary of the debates on the inscription, see Harle 1985: 643. According to Harle (1985), Heracles' club was replaced by an unidentifiable small object, but Rosenfield's line drawing does not depict this detail. Due to the quality of the available images, it is impossible to identify this object.

⁴⁵⁷ For the identification of Heracles and Diomedes' mares, see Bivar 1955: 202–207; Rosenfield 1967: 78, 102, Fig. 8, seal 5; Boardman 2015: Fig. 98. For Kṛṣṇa and Keśin, see Harle 1985: 641–652. Harle (1985) pointed out that due to the lack of definite evidence, both identifications are plausible.

⁴⁵⁸ Schmid 1999: 79–82.

⁴⁵⁹ Harle 1985: Fig. 5b; Cf. *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2441a. For the later representations of Kṛṣṇacarita, see Banerjee 1978: Fig. 10; Hawley 1987: 137–161, Fig. 6.

stone reliefs from Mathura and Gandhāra of the same period, commonly regarded as Indian subjects. Most of them are wrestlers' weights; three are suggested as Mathura-made (Cat. No. 156), with one being only a fragment (Cat. No. 157).⁴⁶⁰ From Gandhāra, one relief panel is probably from Taxila (Cat. No. 158), and another schist weight is said to be locally made because of the technique and material (Cat. No. 159).⁴⁶¹ These examples are usually identified as Kṛṣṇa slaughtering Keśin, and some scholars have suggested that the fragment (Cat. No. 157) may depict another legendary combat of Kṛṣṇa and his brother Balarāma killing the Asura named Dhenuka, who roamed the earth disguised as a donkey.⁴⁶² Regardless, in the Gupta period, the formula for the general iconography of the Kṛṣṇa and Keśin motif (Cat. No. 160) had settled and had become a conventional segment of the Kṛṣṇacarita ever since.⁴⁶³

Among the presented examples, their similarities are evident, especially the profile depiction of the standing horse on the Kushan seal and the Pontus coin, which recalls the motif of a standing lion confronting a man, but the differences are also noticeable. The iconographic tradition of Heracles' Eighth Labour often shows him with a raised club about to strike the horse(s) no matter whether he stands beside or in front of them (it), a detail recorded in Western literary sources (Philostr. *Imag.* 2.25).⁴⁶⁴ Coins from Pontus follow this tradition, while the lionskin draped on the hero's shoulders is also clearly depicted. Both attributes are absent in Kushan seal and reliefs, which should not be considered a coincidence. While the style of the Kushan seal may seem controversial, there is no

⁴⁶⁰ The wrestler's weight in the MET collection was found in Uttar Pradesh, the others are held by the Mathura Museum (e.g. No. 58.4476). Johanna van Lohuizen-de Leeuw (1972) suggested these Mathura-made weights were imported into the North-West regions. See Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1972: 30; Joshi 1966: Pl. 64; Schmid 1999: Fig. 1.

⁴⁶¹ Schmid 1999: Fig. 2; Samad 2010: 81–83, Fig. 6.5.

⁴⁶² According to Harle (1985), Bhattacharya suggested the fragment represents Dhenuka and Saṃkarṣaṇa because it preserves a detail of a palm tree, which probably implies the palm tree forest where the combat took place (*Bhāgavata*, X. Ch. 15). See Harle 1985: 647–649, Figs. 7–8; Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1972: 30, Pl. Xla. Cf. Banerjee 1978: 21.

⁴⁶³ Kossak 1994: 28, Fig. 17; Kossak and Watts 2001: 73; Banerjee 1978: Figs. 149–150.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 2414–2454; Odgen 2021: 113–123.

doubt that all the reliefs are Indian in style, evidenced by the rendering of the body shapes, hairstyles, accessories and dresses.

Aside from the standing horse, all the extant Kushan examples represent the hero in the same pose. One of his legs kicks towards the horse, and his left arm stops short at the elbow and disappears into the horse's mouth. This unusual gesture may correspond to the Hindu legends where Keśin ran up to and stood up against Kṛṣṇa, he thrust his left arm into the horse's mouth and wrenched out all the teeth, and his enlarged arm eventually tore apart the demon (*Bhāgavata*, X. Ch. 37).⁴⁶⁵

The representation of Kṛṣṇa's kicking leg is more difficult to explain because it is neither found in the literature of this episode nor modelled after Heracles, who is always depicted with both feet on the ground with one leg flexed. The kicking pose seems conventional in the surviving Kushan works, and the later Indian representations of the scene prefer to depict the figure standing on the ground or trampling the demon. It should be pointed out that in Indian art, the raised kicking leg is not a depiction confined to the Kṛṣṇa motif. It appeared as early as on a 3rd millennium BC terracotta tablet from the Harappan civilisation (Pakistan) showing a male figure kicking and spearing a water buffalo (Cat. No. 161). In some depictions of Kālārimūrti, Śiva also kicks Kāla (or Time, sometimes identical to the lord of death, Yama) in the same way, which corresponds to some textual descriptions,⁴⁶⁶ and belongs to the sculptured iconography of Trivikrama.⁴⁶⁷

James C. Harle (1985) stated that although the formula was shared because of the persistent Hellenistic tradition of the heroes' combats in the Northwest Indian region and the contacts between the Greco-Roman and the Indian worlds, there is no evidence that the Kṛṣṇa myth was derived from the labours of Heracles.⁴⁶⁸ Intriguingly, given that the most accepted identification of Megasthenes' Indian Heracles is Kṛṣṇa in

⁴⁶⁵ Hall 1868: 339–342.

⁴⁶⁶ In the Kailash Temple, Ellora, a similar depiction of the kicking leg in the scene of Kālārimūrti is shown on the upper storey of the western wall, see Kramrisch 1981: 49. The descriptions of Śiva killing Yama with his foot are found in some Tamil literature, see Shulman 1984: 11–56.

⁴⁶⁷ Gopinatha Rao 1914: 161–181.

⁴⁶⁸ Harle 1985: 641–652.

comparative literature, the archaeological data from Mathura seems to affirm the equivalence also. However, as shown by all the cases that persistently adhere to Heracles' attributes, despite the identity issue, taking the hero's most recognisable identifiers to assemble in a different iconographic system was a deliberate manipulation of the motif to obtain a connection to the value and symbolic meaning attached to the hero. In other words, examples like the Kushan seal of the hero kicking a horse abandoned the approach to evincing the Heracleian value through his club or lionskin, and the Kushan context raises the question of why and to what extent the locals deemed one particular Greek myth appropriate for indicating a completely different legend.

The convenience of appointing the various adaptations of the period as local expressions of the Heracles motif requires reconsideration. Whether the artists intended to innovate the canonical iconography or had only borrowed the formal schemata or elements to illustrate a local character or myth, as Raducha (1985) persuasively stressed, the transformation and integration process was manifold and not confined to one kind.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁹ Raducha 1985: 169–170.

Chapter VI

“Heracles” in Gandhāran art in the Kushan period (2nd–4th centuries AD)

VI.1. Evidence of Gandhāran figures with Heraclean features

This chapter examines the Greek hero’s features as integrated into Gandhāran figural art between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD. In Chapter V, some scattered works representing the figure of Heracles discovered in the Gandhāra region have already been introduced, including coins, seals, tokens, stone palettes, wrestler weights and a few relief fragments from Buddhist stupas. They reveal Greco-Roman, Iranian and Indian artistic sources and different approaches to adopting the Heracles motif in the Gandhāran context.

The sculptural evidence of other Gandhāran figures with Heraclean features, but which usually do not actually represent Heracles, also conforms to the general aforementioned adaptation patterns. Most of the evidence is recorded in the numerous publications dedicated to Gandhāran art, appearing in archaeological reports⁴⁷⁰ and site surveys;⁴⁷¹ museum and exhibition catalogues;⁴⁷² and general studies.⁴⁷³ With help from the surviving reliefs in greater numbers and some corresponding literary sources, these types of works can be explored more methodically, which is one of the essential reasons for the extensive discussions on Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, for example, in many previous studies. Before revisiting this particular example in Section VI.2, we first consider the evidence of Gandhāran figures with Heraclean features excluding Vajrapāṇi.

⁴⁷⁰ Faccenna 1962, 1964; Dani 1968–1969a, 1968–1969b.

⁴⁷¹ Marshall 1951; Errington 1987.

⁴⁷² *Crossroads*; Zwalf 1996; Kurita 2003; Behrendt 2007; Ali and Qazi 2008.

⁴⁷³ AGBG; Ingholt 1957; Bussagli 1984; Tissot 1986; Brancaccio and Behrendt 2006; Rienjang and Stewart 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023; Stewart 2023.

Two case studies focusing on the non-Vajrapāṇi examples based on typology have been carried out: Raducha (1985) documented several individual pilaster Heracleian figures as mentioned in Chapter V; ⁴⁷⁴ Quagliotti (2003) compiled a catalogue of the Tutelary Couples with further attention paid to the Heracleian figure.⁴⁷⁵ In this study, based on accessible collections and publications, the evidence is divided into five types:

- 1) (semi) nude male figure alone standing and carrying attribute(s),
- 2) Heracleian “Atlantes”,
- 3) Heracleian figure in a pair of male and female figures,
- 4) (semi) nude male figure standing and carrying club in narrative scenes,
- 5) miscellaneous.

As noted, figures not present in any narrative scenes are classified before those that are. However, the two categories might overlap, especially considering that the nature of the “narrative art” of Gandhāra cannot be fully explained by the coherent sequences we read from particular images, which Taddei (2015) has comprehensively addressed.⁴⁷⁶

VI.1.1. (Semi) Nude male figure standing alone and carrying attribute(s)

This group includes the already discussed single figures of Heracles and the variants (Cat. Nos. 129–133a) comprising the decoration of some Buddhist stupas. As mentioned, reuse of the classical standing types with club and lionskin have led scholars to hesitate excluding the Greek hero’s identity, even though the style varies case by case and the figure’s meaning within the particular contexts is unclear.⁴⁷⁷ However, the figural type might have influenced some sculptural representations with similar designs and may share some functions with the hero.

⁴⁷⁴ Raducha 1985: 159–177.

⁴⁷⁵ Quagliotti 2003: 239–296.

⁴⁷⁶ Taddei 2015: 34–74.

⁴⁷⁷ See Chapter V: Section V.2.2.1.b).

It turns out that some minor figures featuring as decorative elements of Buddhist stupas, usually interpreted as *yakṣas*, may vaguely resemble the standing Heracles types with attributes. Raducha (1985) mentioned one example relevant to this discussion: a framed pilaster figure from the Dharmarjika Stupa at Taxila showing a beardless man standing in contrapposto under a palm tree (Cat. No. 162).⁴⁷⁸ Like Heracles, this figure leans his left hand on a club resting on the ground. He is not entirely naked, wearing a *langoṭī* (short loincloth), and the flat and square chest and hourglass shape of his legs stress his muscular physique. For these features, it is suggested that the iconographic elements of Heracles could be related to a broad group of amorphous figures such as the class of *yakṣas*.⁴⁷⁹ The same kind of muscular male figure wearing a *langoṭī* occurs in Gandhāran art frequently, typically presenting martial attendants (e.g. Vajrapāṇi), wrestlers and assassins in scenes of wrestling or some Buddhist narratives. These figures do not always carry a club but only wield it on specific occasions, which we will soon return to in discussing specific narrative evidence.

Due to the inconspicuous nature of the decorative figures which are not in narrative scenes, the scattered material and preservation conditions have given rise to considerable difficulties in identifying and classifying them. However, the actual number must be much more significant considering the need to produce such architectural elements for numerous Buddhist stupas.

Two possible examples resemble the free-standing type of Heracles with the left arm akimbo and the right hand holding an upright club are added here, recovered from the Swat Valley and Chārsadda Mound. The Swat panel shows a framed nude male figure next to a scene of several worshippers (Cat. No. 163). The figure's head, genitals and the long object held by the right hand are damaged, but the posture is similar to those of Heracleian pilaster figures standing frontally and with one hand on the hips.⁴⁸⁰ The Chārsadda panel is part of an ornamental frieze with six figures remaining (Cat. No. 164).⁴⁸¹ It is a repetitive pattern

⁴⁷⁸ Raducha 1985: 167–168, Fig. 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.: 167–168, Fig. 4.

⁴⁸⁰ Zwalf 1996: no. 483.

⁴⁸¹ Brown 1908: 17, no. 1183, Pl. VIII, no. 2; Ingholt 1957: no. 390.

containing a double-tailed Triton and a standing figure, divided into three groups. Among these, the nude figure of the second group seems to be of the same type as discussed, but the stick-shaped object held in the right hand is also damaged. Both examples are now labelled as *Erotes-yakṣas*.⁴⁸²

In this instance, similar to the one in the toilet tray fragment (Cat. No. 126) and that on the Buner stupa (Cat. No. 133a), there is a grey area between the figures of Heracles and Eros where both of their iconographies coincide, and therefore distinguishing such each respective figure is not always possible. Even cases categorised as the figure of Heracles based on iconography sometimes have child-like facial features and expressions, such as the particular figures in the Nimogram and Butkara reliefs (Cat. Nos. 129, 131). We do not know whether the figures with a softer or chubbier body shape shown with attributes suggest baby Heracles or Eros or whether it was due to artists' reluctance to represent a nude muscular body. Is it possible that a combination of a child-like figure carrying a club implies the iconographic association between the hero and the god of love? Until new evidence emerges, the general identifications of the presented two examples as *Erotes-like yakṣas* stand.

VI.1.2. Heracleian "Atlantes"

Like the first group, the figures of Gandhāran "Atlantes" are also relatively generic and sometimes adopted features of Heracles. These paunchy male figures are named Atlantes only because of their similar pose and decorative function as support figures of Atlantes in architecture from the classical world, and they can be only vaguely identified as a kind of *yakṣa*, similar to the minor figures under the Caitya arches or pilaster characters.⁴⁸³ They are usually placed on decorative friezes, serving as common architectural elements of Buddhist stupas and rarely participate in narrative scenes.

VI.1.2.1. Types of Heracleian "Atlantes"

There is no single form for representing a Gandhāran Atlas, who may appear young or aged, nude or semi-nude with different clothes, hair

⁴⁸² Ingholt 1957: no. 390; Zwalf 1996: no. 483.

⁴⁸³ AGBG, vol.2: 23, Fig. 314; Coomaraswamy 1928: 8; Zwalf 1996: 44.

and moustache in different styles, unshod or wearing a pair of boots.⁴⁸⁴ The most commonly shared element among them is wings, which occur neither in an Atlas from the West nor a figure of equivalent function from the East. They are also characterised by squat poses, most often represented with one leg vertically turning outwards and another lying horizontally and bending inward.

There are two main types of Heracleian Atlantes, evidenced in a considerable number of reliefs. Type a) is defined by Heracles' physiognomy and physique, particularly the prominent supraorbital ridge, detailed treatment of dividing the curls of the heavy beard and hair and the rendering of chest and abdominal muscles. These features are also included but not exclusive to type b), which adds the detail of wearing the lion scalp like Heracles and Alexander.

VI.1.2.1.a) Bearded

Among the 36 Atlantes recovered from the site of Jamālgarhī, at least 10 are closer to type a).⁴⁸⁵ Most are winged, exposing their broad torsos, and wear draperies about their thighs and boots (Cat. No. 165).⁴⁸⁶ Some are shown barefoot and have traces of vine leaves wreathing their curly hair (Cat. No. 166).⁴⁸⁷ According to Elizabeth Errington (1987), the large quantity of this group of examples suggests they were associated with the main stupa, probably placed between garlands and some repeating figurative motifs.⁴⁸⁸

From the neighbouring site of Sikri and belonging to the same artistic sphere, the same type of Atlas vividly recalls Heracles' appearance and

⁴⁸⁴ Stančo (2012) divided the Gandhāran Atlantes into three groups: youthful, beardless, winged; moustachioed; and bearded. Most of the Heracleian Atlantes are sorted into the third group. See Stančo 2012: 62–81.

⁴⁸⁵ Errington 1987: 504, 613–614, Cat. Nos. 39–64, Figs. 80–88. For the Atlantes with a heavy beard, see Errington 1987: Figs. 80b, 80e, 81, 83c, 83e, 84, 85a, 86a, 86b, 86c; cf. Boardman 1992: 122.

⁴⁸⁶ Errington 1987: Fig. 80e; Zwalf 1996: no. 364; Stančo 2012: Fig. 101.

⁴⁸⁷ Errington 1987: Fig. 84; Zwalf 1996: no. 362; Stančo 2012: Fig. 99.

⁴⁸⁸ Errington 1987: 228–229.

facial expression (Cat. No. 167).⁴⁸⁹ His beard and exaggerated abdominal muscles have been compared to those on Hellenistic figures from Pergamon.⁴⁹⁰ Similar cases are also discovered in Peshawar, such as a Buner relief of a slightly slender Atlas (Cat. No. 168).⁴⁹¹ On another nearby panel, two Atlantes are carved side by side and one is of the first type (Cat. No. 169).⁴⁹² Although these examples do not have Heracles' attributes, their features are regarded as Heracleian, showing the Hellenised characteristics.⁴⁹³

VI.1.2.1.b) Wearing the lion scalp with knotted paws in front

As type b) shows, the assimilation between Atlas and Heracles by taking the element of the lion scalp seems to indicate a subtle connection derived from the Greek myths. The extant cases of this type are scattered and of uncertain findspot of the region.

One of the best-quality examples is now held by the Claude de Marteau Collection, showing the heavily bearded hero wearing a lionskin head-dress with the paws knotted at the chest (Cat. No. 170).⁴⁹⁴ A similar bust fragment from the Swabi district may be the same type of Atlas (Cat. No. 171).⁴⁹⁵ Other examples exhibit different facial features despite the shared squat pose, muscular body and the lion scalp with knotted paws. A winged Atlas with only a moustache has a rounder face (Cat. No. 172). Another figure from a private collection has a bushy and short beard instead of a curly one; a third eye is sculpted between the two eyes, bringing attention to the possible connection with Śiva iconography (Cat. No.

⁴⁸⁹ Ingholt 1957: no. 387; Stančo 2012: Fig. 96. For the division of Gandhāran artistic zones, see Pons 2019: 3–40.

⁴⁹⁰ Harald Ingholt (1957) compared the whole representation to the crouching Silenus from the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens. See Ingholt 1957: 155, no. 387. A comparable Atlas from the Calcutta Museum also shows the genitals. Cf. AGBG, vol. 1: 209, Fig. 87.

⁴⁹¹ Zwalf 1996: no. 365; Stančo 2012: Fig. 102.

⁴⁹² Zwalf 1996: no. 377; Stančo 2012: Fig. 104.

⁴⁹³ Boardman 1992: 122; Stančo 2012: 64.

⁴⁹⁴ Bussagli 1984: 55; Kurita 1990: 155, Fig. 448; Stančo 2012: 81, Fig. 111.

⁴⁹⁵ The fragment is also identified as Vajrapāṇi by Isao Kurita (1990), but the bust size suggests it may be an Atlas. See Kurita 1990: 299, no. 919.

173).⁴⁹⁶ There are also two beardless Atlantes wearing the lion scalp (Cat. Nos. 174–175).⁴⁹⁷ Some scholars have suggested that the type shows the merging of Heracles and Atlas' iconography, which may be associated with the hero's Eleventh Labour.⁴⁹⁸ From this perspective, the conflation may not be necessary because the hero relieved the Titan of his duties by supporting the heavens for a short time, an often-depicted scene in classical art corresponding to Western literary sources (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.11).⁴⁹⁹

VI.1.2.2. *Heracleian "Atlantes" in Buddhist narrative scenes?*

Although Gandhāran Atlantes are usually decorative elements in architecture, there are cases in which some similar figures have been spotted in a few Buddhist narrative scenes. On one relief panel of unknown provenance, a non-Heracleian Atlas appears in the centre, surrounded by a group of monks, worshippers and Vajrapāṇi (Cat. No. 176). He is kneeling on a pedestal with his right leg and lifting three interlocking wheels with both hands. Given the presence of the three wheels and five monks, the scene may symbolise the First Sermon, alluding to the three turnings of the wheel.⁵⁰⁰ Here, Atlas is shown supporting the wheels in a pose like those from the West, which is relatively rare in most Gandhāran examples.⁵⁰¹ The Atlas is naked and wears only a cloak with a knot at his chest, loosely resembling the second type of Heracleian Atlantes showing the knotted lion paws. Admittedly, this feature may not necessarily be related to Heracles, but considering the repetitive occurrence of the second type of Heracleian Atlantes, the possibility cannot be completely ruled out. It is also interesting to note that Vajrapāṇi is almost identical to the Atlas in this scene, except for wearing the loincloth.

⁴⁹⁶ Bopearachchi 2015b: 132, Fig. 7.

⁴⁹⁷ Kurita 1990: 300, no. 924; Tanabe 2007: 138, III–14.

⁴⁹⁸ Stančo 2012: 145; cf. <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/2011.136#>.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Kokkorou-Alewrās 1990: *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles: 100; cf. Attic Black Figure (ca. 525–475 BC) National Archaeological Museum, Athens, no. Athens 1132; neck-amphora (470–425 BC) from Campania, BM 1772,0320.432.

⁵⁰⁰ Zwalf 1996: no. 202; cf. Bénisti 1977: 43–82, Fig. 23.

⁵⁰¹ For other examples of Gandhāran Atlantes with both arms raised, see Stančo 2012: 63–64.

In addition, in some reliefs representing the episode of the Visit of Indra to the Buddha in the *Indraśaila* Cave, some figures depicted on one side of the cave may be muscular and wear the lion scalp and carry a knobbed club (Cat. No. 210).⁵⁰² Due to their position as seeming to be the Buddha's attendants in the scene, while the corresponding figure on the other side usually has the features of the Hindu god Skanda-Kārttikeya or Pāñcika, it would be much easier to classify them into the Vajrapāṇi group if they bore a *vajra*, but this is not always possible. Nonetheless, the pair of attendants in this episode always appear under or near some trees/plants, in slightly larger size compared to other figures (apart from the Buddha), squatting/sitting on rocks in a pose somewhat similar to those of some Atlantes, and one is (semi) nude. Based on the known examples, the pair combination does not seem to have a regular pattern but a certain degree of variability; therefore, these figures can only be categorised as general *yakṣas*. We shall soon return to the episode of the *Indraśaila* in discussing the case of Vajrapāṇi.

VI.1.3. Heracleian figure in a pair of male and female figures

Heracleian figures are frequently spotted in pairs of male and female figures in Gandhāran art, especially in the representation of the Tutelary Couples, but also appear as one of the flanking figures in some Buddhist scenes. Similar to the pair combination in the representation of *Indraśaila*, the combination of male and female deity figures as a couple is not fixed. Notably, the hitherto suggested Heracleian cases in this group are only physiognomically or physically similar to the hero, except for only one case that shows the hero's club, and none have the lionskin or lion scalp.

VI.1.3.1. Types of Heracleian figure in the Tutelary Couples

The names of Tutelary deities vary depending on their iconographic similarities to gods and goddesses from different cultures, which do not specify the figure's identities. The male deity can be called variously Pharro-Pāñcika-Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa, and Ardokhsho-Śrī-Hārīti-Tyche for the female deity. These couples are also frequently surrounded by other minor elements, such as children and mango trees. In Quagliotti's (2003) catalogue of Tutelary Couples, the pertinent works are divided into five main types based on poses, dress and combinations with other

⁵⁰² Giuliano 2022: 234–235.

elements.⁵⁰³ Among these, three standing types and one seated example show formal similarities with the figure of Heracles.

The standing type that resembles Heracles the most represents an aged muscular figure, semi-nude with a long overgarment (*uttariya*) held by the figure's left arm bent inward, covering only the left shoulder, knees and the lower part of the legs while the genitals are exposed.⁵⁰⁴ The relief of this type recovered from Jamālgarhī preserves a relatively complete scene showing a female fleeing from the male figure (Cat. No. 177). Another very similar relief, now in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (now in the Humboldt Forum, Berlin), is suggested to be of the same type, though part of the female is lost (Cat. No. 178). Both show the male figure standing under a tree, and their hair is wreathed with vine leaves, similar to some Heracleian Atlantes from Jamālgarhī.

In both cases, an infant is placed on the Heracleian figure's shoulder. In (Cat. No. 178), the infant is climbing and touching the hair or the vine of the Heracleian figure. Albert von Le Coq (1925) interpreted the relief as a Heracleian Pāñcika carrying a boy.⁵⁰⁵ Quagliotti (2003) suggested the iconographic origin of the standing hero supporting a child as from the classical world and compared these two reliefs to the sculpture of Heracles holding Telephus from the Chiaramonti Museum. The occurrence of the child is also interpreted as symbolising the procreative capacity of the "hero".⁵⁰⁶

Based on the same depiction of the drapery and nudity, some other reliefs similar in style and with the male figure's head missing are assumed to have been bearded, such as another relief from Jamālgarhī (Cat. No. 179) and a fragment from Sahri Bahlol (Cat. No. 180).⁵⁰⁷ Most examples of this type and its variants (with an additional *langotī*) (Cat. No. 181) are badly damaged, and whether they were made as bearded is uncertain, but a relief held by the British Museum shows that there is also a young

⁵⁰³ Quagliotti 2003: 239–296.

⁵⁰⁴ Quagliotti (2003) named the type IV.b 'classical' dress. See Quagliotti 2003: 251.

⁵⁰⁵ Le Coq 1925: Fig. 159; cf. Ingholt 1957: 167, no. 439.

⁵⁰⁶ Quagliotti 2003: Fig. 30.

⁵⁰⁷ Quagliotti 2003: Figs. 18–19, 21.

and beardless type depicted with the same body and dress (Cat. No. 182).⁵⁰⁸

The Heracleian type is rarely found among the seated type of couples. Only one example has been confirmed, and the figure also carries a club (Cat. No. 183).⁵⁰⁹ The pair comprises a god and a goddess seated together, with faces slightly turned towards each other. Both are haloed and carry attributes of Heracles and Athena. The Athena figure is characterised by her helmet, shield (Indian in style) and spear, and the Heracles figure wears a diadem and is semi-naked, with only a garment hanging between his legs covering his thighs.⁵¹⁰ Both of his hands are placed on the knees, and near the right hand is the club, which leans on the inner side of his lower right leg and rests between both legs. Although no other seated couple with the Heracleian type is known, various combinations of god and goddess are shown in the same pose, such as the so-called Pāñcika and Hārīti (Cat. No. 184).⁵¹¹

VI.1.3.2. *The pair of flanking figures: "Heracles" and "Tyche"*

The iconography of many seated goddesses in the Tutelary Couples has been demonstrated as derived from that of Tyche, evidenced in the adaptation of the cornucopia, mural crown, palm and flower. Although the Tyche type does not seem to accompany the Heracleian type in the Tutelary Couples, in some examples, "Tyche" appears as a flanking figure of the Buddha and corresponds to Vajrapāṇi flanking on the other side, such as in the episode of the *Twin Miracle at Śrāvastī* (Cat. No. 185). Intriguingly, the corresponding Vajrapāṇi may be Heracleian, attested by a clay sculpture from Haḍḍa, Tapa-é-Shotor (Cat. No. 186). This example shows that the figural types of Heracles and Tyche were incorporated into the Gandhāran Buddhist figural programme as a pair of flanking

⁵⁰⁸ Zwalf 1996: no. 101. For the beardless and standing type, Quagliotti (2003) suggested that the Nimogram bracket figure (58) was part of a couple. See Quagliotti 2003: 247, type V.3.

⁵⁰⁹ Quagliotti 2003: 251–252, Figs. 24–26.

⁵¹⁰ Faccenna 1997: 202–204, Fig. 8.

⁵¹¹ Cf. Zwalf 1996: no. 98; Relief from Shah-ji-ki Dheri, Peshawar Museum: no. 1416; AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 383; Ingholt 1957: no. 344; Faccenna 1997: 204. The seated couples of Pāñcika and Hārīti are also found decorating the plinths of some Buddhist sculptures, see Bopearachchi 2021: 19.

deities, being granted the new identities of Vajrapāṇi, the *vajra*-bearer, and Tyche-Ardoksho, the Kushan divinity of Fortune, an important case to which we shall return.⁵¹²

VI.1.4. (Semi) Nude muscular male figure standing and carrying a club in Buddhist narrative scenes

As mentioned in the discussion of type 1) (Section VI.1.1VI.1.1. (Semi) Nude male figure standing alone and carrying attribute(s)), some decorative elements of Gandhāran art include individual nude male figures standing and carrying club-like objects, recalling the popular standing types of Heracles widespread in Central Asia and North-West India. Some athletic figures of this design were inserted into narrative scenes. On the one hand, they may have adopted the free-standing type of the hero with the club, while on the other hand, they were detached from the Heracles motif, mainly attributed to their participation in the Buddhist narratives. This section provides two frequently represented Buddhist narrative scenes featuring in stone reliefs, in which several figures might have adopted the standing type of Heracles.

VI.1.4.1. Heracleian figure in the *Maitrakanyaka jāta*

The exact type of the pilaster Heracleian *yakṣa* figure from Dharmarjika (Cat. No. 162) reappears in the episode of the *Maitrakanyaka jāta*, the story of one of the early incarnations of the Buddha. This episode has survived in several literary sources (*Avadānaśataka* 36; *Divyāvadāna* 38; *Mahākarmavibhaṅga*; *Liuduji jing* 4 六度集经 卷 4; *Zabaozang jing* 1 杂宝藏经 卷 1),⁵¹³ aiding in understanding the narrative representation.

On three relief panels in the Peshawar Museum, a muscular, beardless male figure wearing only a short loincloth, standing frontally, facing one side, one hand resting on a club vertically placed on the ground, occurs repeatedly. The figure has been identified as the guardian of the Underworld.⁵¹⁴ The most completed panel encompasses three scenes describing the story from right to left: the nymphs giving a hospitable reception

⁵¹² Cf. Gnoli 1963: 29–37; Tarzi 1976: 381–410, Figs. 9–13; Vanleene 2019: 149; Bopparachchi 2020: Cat. No. 55.

⁵¹³ Cf. Brough 1957: 111–132; Appleton 2014: 1–35.

⁵¹⁴ Ali and Qazi 2008: 41–43.

to Maitrakanyaka entering the city; Maitrakanyaka leaving the banquet scene and looking into the third room; the guardian showing Maitrakanyaka from the second room to a man bearing a wheel on his head (Cat. No. 187).⁵¹⁵ Each scene is divided by gates yet well-connected, and the last scene ends with a column surmounted by a Corinthian capital. Another panel recovered from Jamālgarhī has only two parts remaining. On the right of the relief, Maitrakanyaka is riding a horse approaching the Iron City and encountering the guardian, who stands at the entrance of the last scene where the man bears the wheel (Cat. No. 188).⁵¹⁶ From Sahri Bahlol, a damaged fragment only shows the last part of the guardian and the man with the wheel (Cat. No. 189).⁵¹⁷ Although the three reliefs are incomplete, the images broadly correspond to textual descriptions. For example, the three scenes of the first panel closely follow the plots of Maitrakanyaka passing through luxurious cities and having an extravagant life, as well as the final encounter with the personage with the wheel in the Iron City.

The athletic guardian with a club dividing the scenes and introducing the last chapter of the narrative seems to be a conventional representation in the Gandhāran imagery of the *Maitrakanyaka jātaka*, yet his existence in the text is ambiguous. In the *Avadānaśataka*, it is said that Maitrakanyaka entered the Iron City and saw a man of great stature with a blazing and burning iron wheel turning on his head.⁵¹⁸ The later Chinese version records that a demon opened the city gate for Maitrakanyaka.⁵¹⁹ Neither mentions a club-bearer guardian, who steadily occurs at the same position on these reliefs. Therefore, it is necessary to consider aspects beyond the Buddhist narrative art that might have inspired establishing such a representation.

Given the visual similarity between this guardian figure and the standing type of Heracles, and the position and function of the guardian in this specific narrative scene, one possible inspiration may be related to the chthonic aspect of the Greek hero. It is widely acknowledged that

⁵¹⁵ Ingholt 1957: no. 3; Ali and Qazi 2008: 41.

⁵¹⁶ Ingholt 1957: no. 2; Ali and Qazi 2008: 42.

⁵¹⁷ Ali and Qazi 2008: 43.

⁵¹⁸ Appleton 2014: 1–35.

⁵¹⁹ *Liuduji jing*, T 152, 03: 4.21b15–21b18.

Heracles is involved with chthonic themes in multiple instances, as evident from historical narratives: capturing the cattle of Geryon, obtaining the golden apples, and borrowing Cerberus.⁵²⁰ In classical art, he is sometimes depicted at the boundary between the Underworld and the Earth, such as leading Cerberus out of a doorway symbolising the Gate of Hades, which occurs on a few Roman sarcophagi, one example being the reliefs on the Velletri Sarcophagus (Cat. No. 190) in the “Oreste Nardini” Civic Archaeological Museum and the Strigil Sarcophagus in the Palazzo dei Conservatori Museum (Cat. No. 191).⁵²¹ Though being an unusual and probably unique representation of Heracles leading Alcestis out of Hades, the Velletri Sarcophagus also preserves a half-open door showing the hero escorting her through (Cat. No. 192).

These Roman examples of Heracles wandering between the Underworld and the Earth reveal similarities with the representations of the guardian in the *Maitrakanyaka jātaka* on the Gandhāran reliefs. Both Heracles and the guardian are represented as muscular and always carry the club; they stand at the architectural entrances/exits, separating different worlds, leading or escorting others from Earth to the Underworld or vice versa. While there is no mention of the guardian’s club in Buddhist sources, in Euripides, it is said that Heracles entered carrying a large club (Eur. *Alc.* 420).⁵²² Of course, the Greek myths and the *jātaka* are entirely different, and the guardian cannot be seen as Heracles, but the two figures might have been perceived as having overlapping functions in particular contexts.

Notably, the Velletri images of Heracles at the Gate of Hades are considered unusual in the West, and likewise the guardian figure with the club in the *Maitrakanyaka jātaka* is only known from Gandhāra.⁵²³ The two examples appear in entirely different cultural contexts and are from far-off locations. However, they are both dated to the 2nd century AD when the

⁵²⁰ Anderson 2021: 382.

⁵²¹ Cf. *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 2648–2649; Lawrence 1965: 207–222.

⁵²² Graves 1955: 223–225.

⁵²³ The pictorial tradition of the *Maitrakanyaka jātaka* was later transmitted to Kucha, where the guiding figure was no longer depicted. The standing muscular figure with a club is rarely seen in Kucha; only at Kizil in Cave 17 is a flanking figure wearing a *langoṭī* and holding a club, vaguely recalling the Gandhāran guardian and not reminiscent of Heracles.

Kushan Empire maintained diplomatic and trade contacts with the Roman Empire, and scholars have recognised the relationship between Roman imperial sculpture and Gandhāran art.⁵²⁴ It is thus conceivable that the Gandhāran adaptation of the Heracles types in the Buddhist narrative may sometimes be more sophisticated than merely adopting those foreign types that were already in existence.

VI.1.4.2. *Heracleian figure in a scene with a pillar preceding the Parinirvāṇa*

The athletic man with the club is also frequently found in a number of Gandhāran reliefs of a scene with a pillar surrounded by a group of figures, which is often placed before the scene of the *Parinirvāṇa*. Several identifications of this series have been put forward. The representation has been identified by Mario Bussagli (1949) as the episode of the measuring of the Buddha, by Taddei (1963) as the assault of Devadatta, by Monika Zin (2006) as the episode of the *Rock on the Road to Kuśinagara* and by Phyllis Granoff (2010) as allusion to Maitreya and the Yūpa.⁵²⁵

About eight Gandhāran reliefs of this scene known to us contain the club-bearing man, who is usually depicted as beardless and wearing a *langoti*.⁵²⁶ On one of the two reliefs from Jamālgarhī, the figure resembles the standing type of Heracles rendered in a naturalistic style (Cat. No. 193). On the other Jamālgarhī relief, another muscular man from the crowd grabs the hand of the one holding the club, both looking towards the Buddha (Cat. No. 194). Similar depictions are found at other sites in the region, such as at Shaikhan Dheri (Cat. No. 195), Swat and Buner, but the reliefs from Jamālgarhī reveal the most prominent classical stylistic traits in figures, especially when taking account of the Heracleian Vajrapāṇi in the same scene.

Since this study focuses on the possible types that Gandhāran artists might have adopted from the figure of Heracles, we will not go further into the different identifications of the narrative. However, judging from the Jamālgarhī relief, the hero's muscular physique, the club, and the way of carrying it suggest the Gandhāran adaption to the figural type of

⁵²⁴ Stewart 2020: 50–85.

⁵²⁵ Bussagli 1949: 636ff; Taddei 1963: 38–55; Zin 2006: 329–358; Granoff 2010: 115–128.

⁵²⁶ Zin 2006: nos. 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 2.16, 2.17.

Heracles in visualising some athletic men in Buddhist narrative scenes. Meanwhile, the Heracleian bearded physiognomy was adapted for the face of Vajrapāṇi, demonstrating that the Gandhāran adaptation of the hero's motif was manifold and relatively flexible, responding to different requirements.

Another pictorial tradition probably represents the same episode, in which the club-bearing man is rarely found, presenting a group of male figures lifting and holding a rectangular panel diagonally. One relief in the Museo delle Civiltà (Rome) collection preserves the club-bearing man on the left of the scene, yet his "club" is more like a long stick (Cat. No. 196). Leaving aside the different readings of the episode, as Taddei (1963) explained, the scheme of composition was adapted to a formula that was widely employed in several subjects in Roman art, such as the erection of a war trophy, the erection of a Dionysian herm and cupids playing with Heracles' club.⁵²⁷

VI.1.5. Miscellaneous

Some scattered examples show traces of Heracleian features, exhibiting some other Gandhāran applications of his attributes and characteristics which had migrated from the classical world. Since the following examples are more exceptional and do not exist in significant numbers, whether they correspond to a production pattern or were more unique cases remains uncertain.

VI.1.5.1. *Heracleian figure fighting Triton or Cetus*

A triangular stair panel recovered from Jamālgarhī is sculpted with a muscular naked male figure subduing a double-tailed Triton (Cat. No. 197). Errington (1987) interpreted this panel as the Gigantomachy.⁵²⁸ The male figure and the Triton are beardless and have the same hairstyle with short masses of round-shaped curls. The standing man grabs the left tail of the Triton with his right hand and suppresses the head of the Triton with his right hand while the sea creature swings a club in an attempted counterattack. The club seems to be of a Heracleian type.

⁵²⁷ Taddei 1963: 38–55.

⁵²⁸ Errington 1987: Cat. No. 156, Fig. 258.

In classical art, the representation of Heracles fighting Triton is frequently found in Attic black-figure vase paintings, mosaics, reliefs on pediments, sculptures and seals.⁵²⁹ Most represent the hero wrestling a creature and in fewer examples Heracles also wields the club.⁵³⁰ Although the scene on the Jamālgarhī triangular panel is atypical compared to representations from the West, the Triton's double tails, back, and hip with pronounced muscles are similar to the giant's back view on the East Frieze of the Pergamon Altar (Cat. No. 198).⁵³¹ The combination of a muscular man battling a Triton also brings to mind the Archaic Greek composition of a similar scene, such as the relief of Heracles wrestling a Triton fitted into the corner of the Hekatompedon pediment from the Athenian acropolis (Cat. No. 199).⁵³²

Another relief in the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum shows a naked male figure wielding a club towards monsters and seizing one of the monsters' necks (Cat. No. 200). This relief has been identified as Heracles attacking the *kētos* of Troy,⁵³³ a sea monster that threatened to devour the Trojan princess Hesione, who was saved by the hero. The earliest visual representations of the Heracles-*kētos* myth can be found on Greek pottery from the 6th century BC. These early Greek representations do not depict the club itself. If the identification of the Gandhāran relief is valid, the pictorial representation of Heracles wielding the club against the sea monster may be more akin to those represented in Roman wall paintings and stone reliefs.⁵³⁴

VI.1.5.2. *Heracleian figures and elements in Māra's army*

In the pictorial representations of the Buddhist narrative of *Māra's Assault*, depictions of the troops in Māra's army exhibit abundant variety, which takes inspiration from different artistic sources. The episode, which is present in the canons of several Buddhist schools and is recorded by various Buddhist texts and translations (*Mahāvastu*,

⁵²⁹ Cf. Ahlberg-Cornell 1984; Boardman 1989: 191–195; Icard-Gianolio 1997: *LIMC* viii.1, s.v. Triton: 68–73.

⁵³⁰ Cf. *LIMC* viii.1, s.v. Triton, nrr. 11, 15, 19, 31.

⁵³¹ Picón and Hemingway 2016: 48, Fig. 57; Cf. *LIMC* viii.1, s.v. Triton, nr. 118.

⁵³² Cf. Broneer 1939: 91–100; *LIMC* viii.1, s.v. Triton, nr. 17.

⁵³³ Tanabe 2007: 72–73, no. I–63.

⁵³⁴ Wickkiser 2021: 209–223.

Lalitavistara, *Nidanākathā*, *Buddhacarita* etc.),⁵³⁵ is frequently depicted in Gandhāran reliefs. About 50 reliefs have been identified thus far, and the iconography has resulted in a rich scholarship.⁵³⁶ It is typically depicted with the Buddha seated in a *padmāsana* in the centre of the scene of symmetrical composition, surrounded by Māra and his army which attempt to make an assault on the Buddha or have been defeated. This study only looks at a small aspect of the imagery, suggesting that the Gandhāran artists might have taken inspiration from the Heracles motif according to presentation needs.

VI.1.5.2.a) *Lion scalp*

On several reliefs representing Māra's army, some demonic individuals wear the Heraclean lion scalp. The relief fragment depicting Māra's army in the Lahore Museum shows a lion scalp demon with a frightening face (Cat. No. 201).⁵³⁷ On the relief in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Cat. No. 202), at the upper right edge, one of Māra's soldiers also wears the lion scalp. He is bulky like a wrestler, both hands curled about a thick rope (lasso?), and his face has a furious expression emphasised by the furrowed brow and firmly shut mouth. Notably, while the lion scalp is not found in the Heracles types on Kushan coins, it does appear on seals and tokens from the region and was adopted by several Gandhāran Atlantes and some Vajrapāṇis.⁵³⁸

VI.1.5.2.b) *The Heracles strangling snakes type (?)*

On one relief of *Māra's Assault* from a private collection in Japan, there is a portly (semi) nude male figure standing and strangling snakes with both hands (Cat. No. 203) in Māra's army.⁵³⁹ The representation of the child-like facial and physical features and both hands squeezing snakes brings to mind a seemingly unexpected classical type of the infant Heracles strangling snakes, which was popular in many media in the West from the 5th century BC onwards but very uncommon in Eastern

⁵³⁵ Wayman 1959a: 43–73; Eichenbaum 1982: 75–92; Zin and Schlingloff 2007. For an examination of the Chinese textual sources, see Anderl 2017: 44–95.

⁵³⁶ AGBG, vol. 1: 399–408, 1949: 156–160; Bopearachchi 2020: Cat. Nos. 110–120.

⁵³⁷ Grünwedel 1901: 96, Fig. 48; Ingholt 1957: Fig. 64; Santoro 1991: Fig. 3.

⁵³⁸ Santoro 1991: 273–275.

⁵³⁹ Kurita 2003: Fig. 230.

contexts.⁵⁴⁰ The figure's standing pose and hair can be compared with a bronze statuette of the infant Heracles standing frontally and looking left (Cat. No. 204) (*LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1643), a type that did not appear before the Hellenistic period.⁵⁴¹

The figure of the snake holder also occurs on several other Gandhāran reliefs of the same episode but in different forms. For instance, the figure is sometimes shown as a semi-naked bearded man standing next to the Buddha, with one arm wrapped by a snake (Cat. No. 205).⁵⁴² Sometimes, he is fully dressed, one arm coiled by a snake, hand tightly holding the snake's belly, and another snake emerging from his mouth (Cat. No. 206).⁵⁴³ The snake holder's participation in the Māra narrative is consistent, except that the form was not yet finalised, indicating a process of experimenting with different solutions for rendering the figure by Gandhāran artists, who might have taken varied inspiration from the repertoire containing rich sources to represent the story of the Buddha.

As presented, in the case of representing Māra's army, Gandhāran artists assembled some Heracleian features to the subordinate figures without much restriction, yet still followed some patterns for arranging them in the group. As Māra's warriors, these figures were no longer associated with the Greek hero. Nevertheless, the choices of Heracleian features were arguably deliberate. From the literary perspective, these elements which perhaps originally belonged to a foreign motif are not unfamiliar in the episodes describing Māra's army. *Lalitavistara* provides a detailed description of Māra's army — they were powerful, terrifying, and, above all, had “never seen or heard”.⁵⁴⁴ As noted in this Buddhist text, among all the varied beings, some have their bodies encircled by the coils of hundreds and thousands of serpents, some caught serpents in their hands and ate them, some showed themselves as lions.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁰ For the type of infant Heracles strangling snakes, see Woodford 1988: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles: 827–832.

⁵⁴¹ For the standing types of infant Heracles strangling snakes, see *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 1639–1644.

⁵⁴² Kurita 2003: Fig. 226.

⁵⁴³ Kurita 2003: Fig. 232; Ali and Qazi 2008: 112.

⁵⁴⁴ *Puyao jing*, T 186, 03: 6.521a24–521a27; cf. Goswami 2001: 278–311.

⁵⁴⁵ *Puyao jing*, T 186, 03: 6.519a19; Goswami 2001: 282–284.

Even without assessing the correlation between image and text, it is evident that a group portrait of this narrative sequence, which often includes a wide variety of mythical figures, deities and creatures surrounding the Buddha was established in Gandhāra, and significantly influenced later images of large groups of figures centred around the Buddha. Some elements in this episode have thus been loaded on a “new” vehicle to be transported further, such as the lion scalp.

In summary, the evidence of the Gandhāran figures with Heraclean features is found in both secular or non-Buddhist narrative and Buddhist narrative contexts. The standing and seated figural types of Heracles and the lion scalp were incorporated into the Gandhāran representations of many amorphous figures, including decorative *yakṣas* figures of Buddhist stupas, Gandhāran Atlantes, male gods of the Tutelary Couples, Vajrapāṇi and martial figures in Buddhist narrative scenes. As the evidence shows, the Gandhāran adaptation to the figural types and elements derived from Heracles images during the Kushan period was not constrained to the representations of Vajrapāṇi, which reveals a certain degree of diversity and flexibility in the local creations.

VI.2. The Heraclean *vajra*-bearers: “Heracles-Vajrapāṇi”

VI.2.1. Introduction

To begin with, the first and foremost point, noted by Zin (2009), that should be kept in mind is “the way in which we understand the figure of Vajrapāṇi nowadays, was by no means self-evident from the beginning”.⁵⁴⁶ In Gandhāran art, the name Vajrapāṇi (he who holds the *vajra* in his hand (*pāṇi*))⁵⁴⁷ was given to the person who appears by the side of the Buddha and bears a *vajra*, an enigmatic object that exists *a priori* for the person regardless of his many forms of manifestation, which means that the identification of Vajrapāṇi relies on only one constant, the *vajra*.⁵⁴⁸ Before the figure was given the name, it was variously interpreted

⁵⁴⁶ Zin 2009: 74.

⁵⁴⁷ In the broadest sense, Vajrapāṇi is now more commonly seen as a *bodhisattva* in Mahayana Buddhism, which should be distinguished from the Vajrapāṇi of the Kushan period.

⁵⁴⁸ Santoro 1980: 293–341. For a study on the *vajra*, see Giuliano 2008: 103–126.

as Devadatta, the cousin and rival of the Buddha,⁵⁴⁹ as the demon Māra,⁵⁵⁰ as *dharma* being a component of the Triratna (Buddhist trinity),⁵⁵¹ and as the Fravashi (a Persian guardian angel).⁵⁵² Even after the name was recognised by scholars, the nature of Vajrapāṇi is still not fully explained. Until now, the most commonly accepted theory remains Vajrapāṇi as a *yakṣa*, proposed by Foucher (1905) and elaborated by Étienne Lamotte (1966) based on Buddhist textual analysis.⁵⁵³

“Heracles-Vajrapāṇi”, one of the many types of the Gandhāran *vajra*-bearer, is widely accepted in modern scholarship and perhaps the most recognised one. Some have suggested that the physical type of Vajrapāṇi was ultimately derived from Heracles, which laid the ground for developing the theory of the assimilation of the two figures.⁵⁵⁴ Nevertheless, when the features of some Western classical gods were first spotted in the figure, the idea of a Heracleian type was not fully realised by scholars. In fact, the earliest recognised classical types were Silenus, a satyr, and Eros, while the association with Heracles was at most implied by the description of the shape of the *vajra* as “club-like”.⁵⁵⁵ It was not until Foucher’s (1918) iconographic analyses that the six types of Greek gods were clarified as Vajrapāṇi’s typical representations, including Hermes, Eros, Dionysus, Pan, Zeus and Heracles himself.⁵⁵⁶ The most complete catalogue of Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi thus far, compiled by Santoro (1980), was developed upon a mathematical coding system. It categorises 206 works distributed worldwide into 13 iconographic types; examples with Heracleian features met the criteria of more than half of the types, with some overlapping.⁵⁵⁷ Based on previous scholarly contributions, this

⁵⁴⁹ The Devadatta identification is usually stated as the “Cunningham’s mistake”, but as Santoro (1980) noticed, no reference is given. In the English edition of Grünwedel’s book (1901), one of the editors, Burgess, noted Cunningham as the initiator of the Devadatta theory. See Santoro 1980: 293–341.

⁵⁵⁰ Grünwedel 1901: 87–90.

⁵⁵¹ Vogel 1909: 523–527.

⁵⁵² Spooner 1916: 497–504.

⁵⁵³ AGBG, vol. 1: 562–565; Lamotte 1966: 113–159.

⁵⁵⁴ Hsing 2005: 103–154; Tanabe 2005: 363–381.

⁵⁵⁵ Grünwedel 1901: 87–89.

⁵⁵⁶ AGBG, vol. 2: 48–64.

⁵⁵⁷ Santoro 1980: 293–341.

study provides a survey of the Heracleian type in an attempt to further elaborate on the stylistic and iconographic evolution of the figure of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi.

It is worth pointing out that although many Vajrapāṇis bear Heracleian features, there is no direct evidence that the name and the cult associated with the Greek hero existed in this context.⁵⁵⁸ The semantic assumptions have been deployed in three aspects connecting to the Buddhist sphere: one suggests the analogous protective and quasi-martial functions of Heracles and Vajrapāṇi,⁵⁵⁹ the second relates the figure of Vajrapāṇi to Heracles' regal quality spread in the Hellenistic East and inherited by the successive dynasties in the Northwest India region,⁵⁶⁰ and the third equates Vajrapāṇi with the hero's role as a protector and guardian of travellers in the classical world.⁵⁶¹ These interpretations build upon a general agreement that the figure of Vajrapāṇi has a protective function, but whom or what exactly he is protecting remains a matter of debate.

Similar to the non-Vajrapāṇi evidence from Gandhāra, the representations of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi are not confined to one single Heracleian type. The two main groups of works share characteristics with the Heracleian "Atlantes":⁵⁶² **group 1)** echoes the hero's physiognomy and physique that hark back to the classical style, and **group 2)** includes both bearded and beardless types and obtains the hero's attributes, particularly the lion scalp and sometimes the club. The most fundamental difference from the Heracleian Atlantes is that the Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi, whether he is Heracleian or not, appears in the majority of depictions with the Buddha instead of alone. Although some damaged fragments of one figure (or only the head/bust remains) may be speculated to be Vajrapāṇi mainly due to the facial features, such as the head of a bearded man in front of spreading branches (probably recovered from the Swat Valley)⁵⁶³ and a few bust fragments of bearded men excavated from Saidu Sharif,⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁸ Raducha 1985: 166.

⁵⁵⁹ Flood 1989: 17–27.

⁵⁶⁰ Santoro 1991: 269–309.

⁵⁶¹ Tanabe 2005: 363–381.

⁵⁶² AGBG, vol. 2: 54, Figs. 87, 325.

⁵⁶³ Zwalf 1996: no. 515.

⁵⁶⁴ Faccenna 1962: Pl. 105-a et b, Pl. 121-a et b.

no evidence suggests that this figure was sculpted as a stand-alone figure.

One problem is that Vajrapāṇi's narrative role in the imagery of the life (past life) of the Buddha (in the Dīpankara Jātaka; the presence with Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka; from the Abhiniṣkramaṇa until the Parinirvāṇa cycles) is not always possible to establish from literature or Buddhist scholasticism.⁵⁶⁵ Furthermore, his involvement in the images showing the Buddha does not necessarily have a narrative function. Therefore, the question is whether the use of the Heracles type follows a certain pattern within such a framework. On what occasion does the figure of Vajrapāṇi need to be shown in the guise of Heracles or with his particular attributes?

To facilitate the discussion, the selected sculptures in this study are categorised according to discrete types, following the traditional approach of classifying the types of Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi. The main three types include bearded (aged), bearded (young), and the lion scalp. It should be pointed out that, in narrative representations of the Buddha's life story, the chronography of the narratives does not affect the figure's look: the aged, bearded type may already appear in the *Great Departure*; the young, beardless type can be shown in the *Parinirvāṇa*; the type that wears the lion scalp is only known from scenes after the *Enlightenment* and before the *Parinirvāṇa*. In other words, unlike Heracles, the appearance does not mark the narrative chronology, an aspect that implies the spiritual nature of Vajrapāṇi and may explain the discrepancy between his presence in the image and absence in some corresponding texts.

VI.2.2. Types of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi

VI.2.2.1. Bearded (aged)

The group of bearded Gandhāran Vajrapāṇis consist of young, aged, nude, semi-nude, dressed; and the facial hair types are moustache, moustache and beard, and sideburns. The Heracleian types mostly correspond to the aged, semi-nude type of Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi, and with both beard and moustache. They are characterised by short, thick, curly

⁵⁶⁵ E.g. the episode of the Bodhisattva leaving Kapilavastu; cf. Zin 2009: 75. For the presence of Vajrapāṇi with Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka, see Bopearachchi 2020: 85–86, Cat. No. 88.

hair and beard divided into rows, a wrinkled forehead, fleshy lips, and prodigious musculature reminiscent of the mature type of Heracles in classical art and sometimes reveal striking similarities with the Lysippan Heracles.⁵⁶⁶ Four poses of this type are discussed here: a) seated, b) squatting, c) standing, and d) half-length.

VI.2.2.1.a) Seated

The examples displaying a classical style are often found as the seated type and hand holding a *vajra* resting on the knee, similar to how Heracles holds the club in some examples in classical art.⁵⁶⁷ The figure is usually depicted seated on rocks or other bases (sometimes uncertain), which suggests the inspiration may have come from the seated Heracles holding a club in the numismatic finds from the Hellenistic East (Cat. No. 36). Some slight differences can be detected in the pose of the legs. When Heracles-Vajrapāṇi is placed as a flanking figure on the same horizontal level as the Buddha, his foot is set on rocks and knee raised to different heights to support the *vajra*, an adjustment by the artists made probably due to space constraints.

VI.2.2.1.a) – 1. With *vajra* and club

In two specific reliefs, his leg supporting the *vajra* is only stepping on a low-rise rock and his knee is slightly raised. The first relief, previously held in the National Museum of Kabul, shows the figure sitting next to the Buddha, holding a *vajra* on his knees with his left hand and a club on the ground with his right (Cat. No. 207).⁵⁶⁸ He appears as half the size of the Buddha, with emphasised abdominal muscles and face oriented in the same direction as the Buddha, who gazes at the *vr̥kṣadevatā* (Tree Goddess) standing under the Bodhi tree. The relief is generally agreed as meant to be read from left to right, and among the previous attempts in deciphering the right part, some have read it as the Buddha seated under the Bodhi tree,⁵⁶⁹ while others suggested that it portrayed Brahmā

⁵⁶⁶ Stančo 2012: 251.

⁵⁶⁷ Santoro 1980: 339, no. 0.4.2; cf. *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 927–949.

⁵⁶⁸ Santoro 1991: Fig. 6; Quagliotti 1991–1992: 73–105, Figs. 18–20; Kurita 2003: Fig. 622; Tanabe 2005: Fig.1; Boppearachchi 2020: 334, Cat. No. 131.

⁵⁶⁹ Miyaji 1984: Figs. 46–47.

entreating the Buddha to preach.⁵⁷⁰ According to Bopearachchi (2020), the right part represents the Buddha paying homage to the Bodhi tree that sheltered him while he attained his Awakening, one of the events that occurred shortly after the Enlightenment.⁵⁷¹ Although the ways of carrying attributes (*vajra* or club) between Vajrapāṇi and Heracles are comparable, having both the *vajra* and club is unusual.⁵⁷² In this relief, the club also has knots of wood, recalling the Greek hero's knobbed club, though the top of it seems to have been slightly modified, showing a regular combination of several ball-shaped protrusions.

Another rare example of the bearded type carrying both *vajra* and club in a similar pose is from a relief fragment of a stupa drum panel from Swāt (Cat. No. 208).⁵⁷³ Vajrapāṇi's posture and orientation towards the Buddha are like the first relief from Kabul, and he is not the only flanking figure here, having another bearded muscular counterpart on the right, who wears a Phrygian cap and holds a spear in his left hand. The representation of the Buddha in *abhayamudrā* flanked by guardian figures is relatively common in Gandhāran art. Some scholars have suggested identifying the attendant figure as Pāñcika.⁵⁷⁴ Although the figure with a spear is not always agreed upon as being Pāñcika (sometimes he is called Kārttikeya), he often occurs with Vajrapāṇi as a pair of "guardians" in several scenes, such as the following case of the *Indraśaila*.

⁵⁷⁰ Santoro 1991: 278–280; Quagliotti 1991–1992: 73–105.

⁵⁷¹ Bopearachchi 2020: 115–120; cf. *Lalitavistara* T 186. In the Tibetan version of the narrative, the Buddha "had reached perfect and complete awakening, he stared at the king of trees without blinking and without getting out of his cross-legged position". Cf. *Buddhacarita* T 192.

⁵⁷² Bussagli (1984) suggested that apart from the possible connections of Heracles with Kṛṣṇa and the coinage tradition of Euthydemus, the symbolic meaning of the "mace" had influenced the assimilation. See Bussagli 1984: 141–145.

⁵⁷³ Santoro 1980: no. 198; Zwalf 1996: no. 236.

⁵⁷⁴ Zwalf 1996: 210, no. 236; cf. Quagliotti 2003: 252, Fig. 27. Quagliotti (2003) has suggested it may be the episode of *Indra's Visit* because of the boulders topped by the platform. To the best of my knowledge, the Buddha in the *Indraśaila* episode from Gandhāra is mostly in *dhyānamudra*, not in *abhayamudrā*. At Mathura, one relief shows the Buddha in *abhayamudrā* in *Indraśaila*. See Quintanilla 2007: Figs. 295, 298.

VI.2.2.1.a) — 2. *In the Indraśaila (the visit of Indra)*

One stele panel (Cat. No. 209) in the British Museum showing the *Indraśaila* preserves the Buddha in *dhyānamudra* flanked by a pair of seated figures similar to the relief (Cat. No. 208) from Swāt. The spearman here strikes the same pose as on the Swāt relief but wears a turban and a knee-length tunic, and Vajrapāṇi is the Heracleian bearded seated type.⁵⁷⁵

The pair of flanking figures does not necessarily suggest a fixed pattern. As mentioned in the type of lion scalp Atlantes, another stele in the Museo delle Civiltà depicting the same episode, arranged in a similar composition, shows that each “guardian” of the pair was given some Heracleian features (Cat. No. 210).⁵⁷⁶ The muscular figure seated on the left has a damaged face and arms, with only the chest, one arm and overall posture remaining, though still identifiable as a bearded Heracleian type of Vajrapāṇi. We cannot know whether his missing hand holds a spear, a *vajra*, or other attributes, making further inferences impossible. It is also difficult to interpret the pair here simply as Vajrapāṇi and a spearman because the one on the right wears the lion scalp with knotted paws and does not carry a spear or a *vajra* but holds a knobbed club placed vertically on his left thigh. The appearance is Heracleian, and the posture is closer to some Gandhāran Atlantes, yet without the *vajra*, he cannot be identified as Vajrapāṇi. On another stele (Cat. No. 211) of the *Indraśaila* housed in the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, the pair of attendants are the bearded and fully dressed Vajrapāṇi at the left, corresponding to a divine figure in military attire holding a club at the right. It can be seen that this pair of figures may vary or be interchangeable, even in the same episode.⁵⁷⁷

VI.2.2.1.a) — 3. *A “Lysippan” type*

In niche V2 of The Big Vihāra (Buddhist monastery) from Tapa-é-Shotor near Haḍḍa (Eastern Afghanistan), a moulded clay sculpture of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi denotes the best example showing the adaptation of

⁵⁷⁵ Ingholt 1957: Pl. XVIII; Raducha 1985: Figs. 18–19; Kurita 1988: Fig. 333; Zwalf 1996: no. 221; Quagliotti 2003: no. 11.a.1, Fig. 47.

⁵⁷⁶ Giuliano 2022: 234–235.

⁵⁷⁷ For two similar reliefs of *Indraśaila* from Taxila and Peshawar, see Ingholt 1957: Figs. 130, 131.

Hellenistic taste (Cat. No. 186).⁵⁷⁸ Many scholars have called this statue “The Lysippan Heracles as Vajrapāṇi” for its precise execution of anatomy and detailed iconography that brings out the style that recalls the Lysippan Heracles.⁵⁷⁹ The statue has been compared to the one from Swāt (Cat. No. 208), another two discovered from the sites Takht-i Bahi (Cat. No. 212) and Chatpat, and another previously in the Kabul collection (Cat. No. 207).⁵⁸⁰

The excellence of the Haḍḍa Heracles-Vajrapāṇi lies in the exquisite craftsmanship, expression of naturalism and treatment of iconography. The way of adopting the lionskin is not merely worn as headgear or draped over the arm but placing the head of the lion on the left shoulder, the skin falls behind his back and is knotted around his lower waist, and the claws rest on the thigh. The *vajra* is also not simply a replacement for the club, but the polygonal shape of its basic hourglass shape is rendered in a rather “realistic” form, like a bone, which arguably employs the idiom of classical style to materialise the mythical attribute which in turn redefines the nature of the figure.⁵⁸¹

Similar to the bearded, seated type in the *Indraśāila*, the Haḍḍa statue also belongs to a pair of figures flanking the Buddha. Instead of being paired with a spearman, the corresponding figure is a goddess holding a cornucopia, which may include them in the “couple-system”.⁵⁸² As mentioned earlier, the pair of Vajrapāṇi and a Tyche type goddess as flanking attendants is not unusual in Gandhāran Buddhist art, especially in several reliefs of the *Twin Miracle at Śrāvastī* (Cat. No. 185), in which

⁵⁷⁸ The clay statue was discovered during the 1973 excavation carried out by the Afghan Archaeological Mission (seven expeditions at Tapa-é-Shotor, 1965–1973), headed by Mustamandy, and the site was destroyed in 1992. Tarzi 1976: 381–410, Fig. 9–13; Flood 1989: 17; Santoro 1991: 276–278; Quagliotti 2003: Fig. 28; Bopearachchi 2020: 241–245, Cat. Nos. 54 A & B, 55, 58.

⁵⁷⁹ Boardman 1994: 141–143; Schwab 1998: 27–34; Mustamandy 1998: 463–468; Tarzi 2000: 163–170.

⁵⁸⁰ Zwalf 1996: no. 236; Tarzi 2000: 168–170.

⁵⁸¹ The shape of the Gandhāran *vajra* is sometimes described as a “bone”, see Giuliano 2008: 103–126; Li 2018: 90–93.

⁵⁸² Quagliotti 2003: 252.

the *vajra* bearer is young, beardless and wears a chlamys.⁵⁸³ The pair of aged Heracles-Vajrapāṇis and “Tyche-Hārīti” was only known from Haḍḍa.

Zémaryalai Tarzi (2000) has compared the Haḍḍa statue to another Heracles-Vajrapāṇi on a pedestal panel under the statue of a fasting Buddha Shakyamuni from Takht-i-Bahi (Cat. No. 212)⁵⁸⁴ and pointed out that the beard of the latter example is even more prominent.⁵⁸⁵ The pedestal panel depicts the two merchants, Trapuṣa and Bahalika (Bhallika), offering food to the fasting Buddha, and Vajrapāṇi is placed between the Buddha and a caravan of traders, which is in the opposite place compared to the previously mentioned examples of the seated bearded type.

VI.2.2.1.b) Squatting (or seated on the ground)

Heracles-Vajrapāṇi in this posture can be regarded as a variant of the seated type, with the differences that may be shown based on a few indicators from the evidence. Given the generally small scale of this figure and where he is placed in the composition, it is sometimes unclear whether he is seated or squatting, such as in the scenario where he appears at a different horizontal position (e.g. *Indraśaila*).⁵⁸⁶

One of the comparisons to the Haḍḍa statue is a squatting (or seated on the ground) Vajrapāṇi from a panel recovered from Chatpat (Cat. No. 213).⁵⁸⁷ The whole scene represents the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* (the Death of the Buddha at Kuśinagara), in which mourners surround the Buddha lying on a bed in the centre of the composition. Here, the posture is similar to those of the Gandhāran Atlantes, with one leg vertical and another horizontal. From Loriyan Tangai, a relief showing the same episode,

⁵⁸³ For the study on the *Śrīvāstī Miracle*, see Taddei 1974: 435–449; Rhi 1991; Bopparachchi (forthcoming).

⁵⁸⁴ AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 440; Ingholt 1957: 67, Figs. 53, 67; Ali and Qazi 2008: 104–105. The incident is recorded in different versions of various sources including the Pāli *Vinaya*, *Mahāvagga* 5–6, the *vinayas* of the *Mahīśāsaka* and *Dharmaguptaka* in Chinese, *Lalitavistara* 277 etc. For a detailed discussion of the episode, see Bareau 1963: 106–123; cf. Granoff 2005: 129–138.

⁵⁸⁵ Tarzi 2000: 168–169.

⁵⁸⁶ Ingholt 1957: no. 134; Dani 1968–1969b: Pl. 60a, no. 117 (Reg. no. 33).

⁵⁸⁷ Dani 1968–1969b: Pl. 44b, no. 85 (Reg. no. 235).

portraying a larger scene with numerous participants, also preserves the type (Cat. No. 214).⁵⁸⁸ Vajrapāṇi is shown sitting on the ground in front of the bed, his left hand holding a *vajra* and his right hand raised, expressing his grief over the death. Although the figure lacks anatomically correct proportions, due to being squeezed into a limited space lower than the bed, his beard and musculature are evident.

As seen in many Gandhāran reliefs with more figures, some on the top may emerge without connecting to an explicit spatial dimension. Another relief from Loriyan Tangai reflects the ambiguity caused by such a composition (Cat. No. 215).⁵⁸⁹ The panel shows the episode of the *First Sermon*, a scene that frequently includes the figure of Vajrapāṇi. In this relief, he seems to be squatting, or sitting with legs bent, on the upper right and looks towards the Buddha. The examples in this pose are far from being as similar to the image of Heracles as the previous group of images, but they are nevertheless of the same type.

VI.2.2.1.c) Standing

The standing bearded type is commonly featured in most episodes of the life story of the Buddha from the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa* to the *Parinirvāṇa* cycle. In addition, among the 15 recognisable *Jātaka* from Gandhāra, the *vajra*-bearer appears in the *Dīpankara* and sometimes adopts the standing type.⁵⁹⁰ Whether the standing type appears on the left or right side of the Buddha, the *vajra*-bearer always accompanies his master and stands in contrapposto (or at least being influenced), holding a *vajra* in one hand. The other hand varies in gesture, mainly akimbo, extended outward, raised over his head, and wielding a *chauri* (fly whisk).⁵⁹¹ Most wear a short loincloth, sometimes draped with an additional loose piece of long

⁵⁸⁸ Rowland 1958: 199–208, Fig. 5; Sengupta and Das 1991: 27, no. 261; Bopearachchi 2020: 342, Cat. No. 138. Rowland (1958) suggested the Roman prototype for this relief as the sarcophagus of the Battle of Romans and Germans in the Museo delle Terme.

⁵⁸⁹ Karetzky 1995: 127–147, Fig. 3.

⁵⁹⁰ For the study on Gandhāran *Jātaka*, see Neelis 2019: 175–185.

⁵⁹¹ In Santoro's catalogue (1980), about 20 out of 206 carry the *chauri*. See Santoro 1980: 293–341.

garment (*uttarīya*) over one shoulder or arm, and in several cases the genitals are exposed.

VI.2.2.1.c) – 1. *Nude*

It is unclear and quite unlikely whether the tradition of heroic nudity existed in the Gandhāran Buddhist context, even though nudity is represented occasionally, such as in minor figures for decorative purposes, some male characters in the Tutelary Couples and ascetics.⁵⁹² Naked Vajrapāṇi is found in both bearded and beardless types and the stylistic choice is not limited to one site. However, the fully naked examples, without the draped overgarment from the shoulder passing across the legs, are known only from Jamālgarhī, where the representations of Heracleian features are also found in non-Buddhist subjects.

One appears in the episode of the child Sudāya nourished in the tomb by his deceased mother (Cat. No. 216).⁵⁹³ As the Buddha's attendant, Vajrapāṇi looks on at the meeting between his master and the child without interfering. The figure and his pose can be compared with some classical representations of Heracles with weight on the left leg, right hand on the hip, lionskin draped over his left arm, holding a club or cornucopia over his left shoulder,⁵⁹⁴ as well as with those in Greco-Bactrian coins and bronze statuettes.⁵⁹⁵

The second example from Jamālgarhī shows a back view of a naked Vajrapāṇi standing next to the Buddha, who is holding up a bowl with a snake inside and showing it to the Kāśyapa brothers (Cat. No. 217).⁵⁹⁶ The damage to Vajrapāṇi's head prevents us from seeing whether he bore the face of the hero, though, according to some recent scholarship, his backside seems analogous to that of the Farnese Heracles.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹² For the iconography of the naked ascetics, see Brancaccio 1991: 121–131; Zin 2018: 137–170.

⁵⁹³ Foucher 1917: 257–281; Tissot 1986: Fig. 6; Errington 1987: Fig. 126.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nrr. 603, 612, 617.

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. Cat. Nos. 40–41, 55.

⁵⁹⁶ Majumdar 1937: Pl. VI-b; Santoro 1980: nos. 118, 119; Errington 1987: 257, Fig. 124.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Morgan 2019.

VI.2.2.1.c) — 2. *Nude with a long overgarment*

The same back view of Vajrapāṇi from the Jamālgarhī relief also appears in the episode of the *Submission of Apalāla* (Cat. No. 218).⁵⁹⁸ Like the former example, the figure's buttocks are depicted, his left hand is raised and holds the *vajra*, and his right holds a garment. The difference is that the garment in Jamālgarhī does not cover the figure's back, while the relief of the *Submission of Apalāla* shows a long overgarment, possibly an *uttarīya*, draped across his legs.

Many figures wear the *uttarīya* in Gandhāran reliefs, including bodhisattvas and worshippers. The *uttarīya* is often worn over the figure's left shoulder like a shawl, and the drapery falls and winds around the left elbow; a loose type extends to the feet. It was usually worn together with other garments, like the *antarīya*, *paridhāna* or *langoṭī*. Vajrapāṇi is frequently presented clad in this garment, either aged or young. However, in the Buddhist narrative reliefs, he seems to be the only figure who is draped with a single *uttarīya* and with genitals exposed, similar to some male gods in Tutelary Couple depictions.⁵⁹⁹ The bearded Vajrapāṇi type with this look is considered Heracleian,⁶⁰⁰ while the young beardless type is traditionally viewed as Hermes.⁶⁰¹ Likewise, this type is not exclusive to any particular site in the region.⁶⁰²

In a panel showing the Buddha performing a miracle before ascetics (perhaps the Kāśyapas), Heracles-Vajrapāṇi raises a *chauri* with his right

⁵⁹⁸ Zwalf 1996: no. 215.

⁵⁹⁹ Wladimir Zwalf (1996) described the look as a "Western style of plunging dress," chiefly on Vajrapāṇi, see BM 1961,0218.1, 1922,0211.1, 1902,1002.7, 1880.37, 1957.1015.1.

⁶⁰⁰ Zwalf 1996: nos. 184, 203, 295.

⁶⁰¹ On the type of Hermes-Vajrapāṇi, see AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 329; Santoro 1980: no. 55; For another Hermes type, see BM 1922,0211.1, Relief of *The Offering of Dust*. Young Vajrapāṇi in a classical guise is generally accepted as a Hermes type, although some have regarded it as a young Heracles. See Flood 1989: Fig. 4; Galinsky 2019: 315–339, Fig. 14.4.

⁶⁰² Errington 1987: 257–258, Cat. No. 196, Fig. 126.

hand and *vajra* in the left (Cat. No. 219).⁶⁰³ This relief shows that Vajrapāṇi's beard is apparently different from the type depicted on ascetics, and indeed the same type appears in several other reliefs. In some generic offering scenes, this type of Vajrapāṇi accompanies the Buddha and holds the *vajra chauri*.⁶⁰⁴ One fragment relief in the British Museum shows him standing before the Corinthian pilaster and, most likely, behind the missing Buddha (Cat. No. 220). Two other reliefs (one in a private collection and the other in the Lahore Museum) relate to a narrative sequence representing the Buddha's encounter with the *kuśa*-grass cutter Svastika (Cat. No. 221), from whom he would receive the grass for preparing the seat of Enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree (Cat. No. 222).⁶⁰⁵

It is noteworthy that the figural type of a nude muscular male figure wearing a loose *uttariya* (or *himation*) is also evidenced in some representations of non-Vajrapāṇi characters in the Greater Gandhāra area. Except for the mentioned male gods of the Tutelary Couples, some fragments, presumably representing ascetics, are of the same type with pronounced muscular features (Cat. No. 223).⁶⁰⁶ It was also employed on some figures in the wine drinking scene in early Gandhāran art, typically accompanied by a few female characters.⁶⁰⁷ From Haḍḍa, the bearded, aged type dressed in this manner is paired with a child and a woman, who has a crescent moon adorning her brow (Cat. No. 224).⁶⁰⁸ On a stair riser from Jamālgarhī, the same type of male figure holds a wine bowl

⁶⁰³ Based on this example, Flood (1989) suggested that the pose of the "Lycian Herakles" was adopted almost exclusively for the representations of Vajrapāṇi. See Flood 1989: 20.

⁶⁰⁴ BM 1902,1002.7; One in *Dīpankara*, KM: no. 62-3-72; cf. Tissot 2006: 360, no. K.p.Ha.935.2.

⁶⁰⁵ AGBG, vol. 2: 389–395, Fig. 199; Bopearachchi 2020: 98, Cat. No. 108; cf. Majumdar 1937: Pl. VIII-b; Zwalf 1996: no. 184.

⁶⁰⁶ Ingholt 1957: 166–167, Fig. 438.

⁶⁰⁷ It has been long noticed that the revival of Hellenism under the Parthians had ultimately led to the depiction of drinking wine, dancing and playing music in the early Gandhāran art. A scene that expresses pleasure and decadence, which seemed opposed to the principles of Buddhist teaching, had remained a popular theme as decoration on stupas for centuries. See Marshall 1960: 33–39. For the study of the Dionysus motif in Gandhāran Buddhist art, see Brancaccio and Liu 2009: 219–244.

⁶⁰⁸ Marshall 1960: Fig. 50; Tissot 2006: no. K.p.Ha.993.60.

(possibly a *kantharos*), and on the left of this panel shows a naked drunken male supported by a female (Cat. No. 225), recalling other depictions of Heracles supported by male or female characters discovered in the area (Cat. Nos. 122–123).⁶⁰⁹

VI.2.2.1.c) — 3. *Wearing garments with torso exposed*

The vast majority of Vajrapāṇi figures are not depicted naked. For the Heracleian type, the figure usually wears a *langotī* like an athlete or a *paridhāna* knotted at the waist, exhibiting his musculature. Given the numerous representations of this type in the Buddha's life story, the following examples are introduced by following the chronology of the Buddha's life story (often beginning with the *Dīpankara Jātaka*, the latest past life of the Buddha).

In the *Dīpankara Jātaka*, the bearded standing type is shown behind the Dīpankara Buddha (Cat. No. 226);⁶¹⁰ after being absent in the Buddha's childhood, he reappears in the Great Departure when the Bodhisattva leaves his palace at Kapilavastu (Cat. No. 227).⁶¹¹ In the period of the Bodhisattva searching for Enlightenment, the standing type occurred in the episodes of the *Hymn of the nāga Kālīka* (Cat. No. 228),⁶¹² meeting Svastika (Cat. No. 221), and the preparation for the seat of the Enlightenment (Cat. No. 222). After the Awakening, this type is depicted in the journey of the Buddha's preaching and usually shown together with a group of monks (Cat. No. 229)⁶¹³ and worshippers (Cat. Nos. 230–231),⁶¹⁴ e.g. the meeting with the five monks (Cat. No. 232).⁶¹⁵ In the scenes representing the Buddha with children, the type is found in the episode of the *Alms Gift of Dust* (Cat. No. 233). In the *Conversion of Nāga Apalāla*, which sometimes depicts the figure Vajrapāṇi twice, with one staying close to the Buddha and another avatar involved in the action (battle),

⁶⁰⁹ See Chapter V: Section V.1.3.3.a).

⁶¹⁰ Cf. Kurita 2003: no. 002.

⁶¹¹ Ingholt 1957: 50, Fig. 40.

⁶¹² Zwalf 1996: no. 183.

⁶¹³ Tissot 1986: Fig. 102; TNM 2003: 137, Cat. No. 137.

⁶¹⁴ Ingholt 1957: Figs. 188, 192, 194B; Kurita 2003: 148, no. 424; Demandt 2009: Cat. No. 350; Galinsky 2019: Fig. 14.3.

⁶¹⁵ Kurita 2003: no. 268.

the type of half-dressed Heracleian Vajrapāṇi is also represented (Cat. Nos. 234–235).⁶¹⁶ In the scene with a pillar preceding the Parinirvāṇa, the exact type of Vajrapāṇi accompanies the Buddha (Cat. No. 193). At last, the type is depicted in the Parinirvāṇa when the Buddha passed away (Cat. No. 236).⁶¹⁷

As the evidence shows, the standing, bearded, half-dressed type of Heracleian Vajrapāṇi is distributed across many episodes of the Buddha's life story, and their appearances do not specify the chronology and content of the Buddhist narratives. On the other hand, in the abovementioned narrative scenes, the types of Vajrapāṇi are diverse and not limited to Heracleian types.

VI.2.2.1.d) *Half-length*

VI.2.2.1.d) — 1. *In a group of figures*

The bearded type of Heracleian Vajrapāṇi is sometimes shown half-length in groups of figures near the Buddha, who is seated in the centre. This subtype has a similar role to the seated and standing bearded types and can be found in several narratives mentioned above, most frequently seen in some preaching scenes, such as the relief from the Dharmarajika Stupa (Cat. No. 237) or in the depictions of the *First Sermon at Sarnath*, where the Buddha turns the wheel of *Dharma* and reveals the teachings to the Bhikṣus (*Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra*) (Cat. Nos. 238–239).⁶¹⁸

VI.2.2.1.d) — 2. *Bust of bearded type carved on an arch*

Following the conventional representation of the Buddha and Vajrapāṇi, we may expect Vajrapāṇi to sit or stand beside the Buddha instead of appearing in a different dimension. Nevertheless, the half-length type may appear without directly participating in the main scene of some reliefs. In a few false gable panels that preserve a specific imagery type of the pensive Buddha seated and steadily gazing at the Bodhi tree under

⁶¹⁶ Kurita 1990–1998: Fig. 870; Zwalf 1996: no. 214; Zin 2009: 75–78.

⁶¹⁷ Zwalf 1996: no. 231; Pemberton 2002: 51.

⁶¹⁸ Marshall 1951: Pl. 220, no. 118; Ingholt 1957: Figs. 75, 189; Tissot 1986: Fig. 191. The aged Vajrapāṇi is sometimes rendered in so-called Homeric dress, similar to one of the appearances of the hero told by Xanthus. Cf. Boardman 1988: LIMC iv.1, s.v. Herakles: 729.

a pointed arch, the bust of Vajrapāṇi is always carved on the left side of the inner curve of the arch (left intrados).⁶¹⁹ Both bearded and beardless types are found among these examples.

On two highly similar false gable panels (one in the Museo di Arte Orientale and the other in a private collection in Japan), both Vajrapāṇis are bearded, emerge from the left intrados, look in the direction of the Buddha, and hold the *vajra* in their right hands (Cat. Nos. 240–241). The scene under the arch is the same as the Kabul panel (Cat. No. 207), which shares some iconographic elements, yet the overall composition is very different. The arch is surrounded by deities (including Indra holding a *vajra*), mythical creatures and various narrative scenes on a much smaller scale.⁶²⁰ Many of these narrative scenes usually include the figure of Vajrapāṇi when they are placed separately (e.g., the *Dīpankara Jātaka* and the *Offering of Dust*), but in the case of this series that integrated them into one false gable panel, Vajrapāṇi is omitted in each narrative. Such an arrangement may be related to the role of Vajrapāṇi in this context, which probably connects to all the elements and scenes surrounding the arch.

In general, Vajrapāṇi's martial appearance and his position near the Buddha has led scholars to see him as a bodyguard or at least a follower of the Buddha. On this type of false gable panel representing the pensive Buddha and the Bodhi tree, the relationship between the Buddha and Vajrapāṇi may be addressed through the placement of Vajrapāṇi's bust protruding from the architectural structure. He is half involved in the Buddha's present moment but also linked to all the dimensions related to the power and memory of the Buddha, which allows the newly enlightened one to observe the past, present and future.

VI.2.2.1.d) — 3. *The attendant of each Buddha and Bodhisattvas*

The allusion to the past and the future may have resided in a repetitive figural pattern of a row of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, each accompanied by a different type of half-length Vajrapāṇi. The iconography of this group of figures (with or without Vajrapāṇi) is sometimes interpreted as

⁶¹⁹ For detailed analyses of the series of false gable panels, see Bopearachchi 2020: 251ff, Cat. Nos. 63–64.

⁶²⁰ Bopearachchi 2020: 251ff.

the *Past Seven Buddhas* with the Buddha of the Future Maitreya.⁶²¹ However, besides the current condition of the extant works, not all similar groups follow the rule of depicting seven Buddhas and one Bodhisattva, so it is uncertain whether it represents the same subject.

Despite this uncertainty, this pattern gives a glimpse into the variety of the appearance of Vajrapāṇi. On a stupa drum panel in the British Museum (Cat. No. 242), five seated Buddhas and two Bodhisattva remain. A bearded Vajrapāṇi emerges from the background at half-length, accompanying a Buddha in *dhyāna*. The other five Vajrapāṇis serve their own masters, manifest in various appearances, and hold the *vajra* in different ways.⁶²² The pattern is also used in the standing group. In a relief fragment from Sikri, only four Buddhas (their faces destroyed) and three Vajrapāṇis survive, one of which is bearded (Cat. No. 243).⁶²³ Small worshippers are preserved in between the figures of the Buddhas, standing or kneeling. At the top of the background, three figures are scattering flowers and at the bottom are the garland bearers.

From the Haḍḍa area, several fragmented clay and stucco statues (with only the head surviving) showing Hellenised features resembling the bearded Heracles and some of them are speculated as representing Vajrapāṇi given the “Lysippan” type from Tapa-é-Shotor (Cat. Nos. 244–246).⁶²⁴ One example that is now labelled as Vajrapāṇi is a painted clay head housed in the Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum (Cat. No. 247).⁶²⁵ In addition to the slightly wrinkled forehead, fleshy lips and large curly beard, which are standard features of Heracles, this head is one of the few works that preserve colour. The dark curly hair and the tanned skin are similar to that of Heracles in many Roman wall paintings. Whether this head was made to represent Heracles, Vajrapāṇi or others, the locale of the Greater Gandhāra region was likely familiar with this type during the early centuries AD.

To conclude, the beard is a feature often found in the representation of Vajrapāṇi, and one of the types arguably resembles the image of aged

⁶²¹ Ingholt 1957: 91–92, Figs. 135, 224.

⁶²² Zwalf 1996: no. 118.

⁶²³ AGBG, vol. 2: 259, Fig. 136; Ingholt 1957: Fig. 224.

⁶²⁴ Barthoux 1930: Pl. 58g; Boppearachchi 2021: 21.

⁶²⁵ Tanabe 2007: no. 179, IV-54.

Heracles. Although not all are as close to being truly Heracleian, some iconographic and artistic similarities in the features can be detected. In a few instances, he carries not only the *vajra* but also the lionskin and the club. On the other hand, the physiognomy that recalls the classical mature type of Heracles might have been a general model adopted and adapted in Gandhāran art.

VI.2.2.2. *Beardless (young?)*

Admittedly, finding a beardless Heracleian Vajrapāṇi is difficult. Due to a lack of Heracles' attributes or recognisable imitation of any explicitly figural types of the hero, labelling a beardless type as Heracleian can be misleading. According to Foucher (1922), there is no beardless Heracleian type, though some more recent studies have interpreted his example of the Hermes type as the young Heracles type (Cat. No. 248).⁶²⁶ Nor does Santoro's (1980) catalogue suggest any beardless Vajrapāṇi as reminiscent of the hero, apart from the minimal cases in which the figure wears the lion scalp.⁶²⁷ The question should therefore be asked about the criteria by which a beardless Heracles-Vajrapāṇi is defined. Foucher (1922) referred to the bearded type as "second-hand Zeus and Heracles", which clarified the ambiguous nature of the uses of classical guises. Even if there was an indirect connection between some beardless Vajrapāṇi examples and the young hero, the images should be at least considered "third hand".

In order to understand the intermediate type between the beardless "Heracleian" Vajrapāṇi and the possible archetype, we must return to the evidence of the hero's features from the Kushan milieu, which may provide a hint of possible inspiration.

VI.2.2.2.a) *Diademed (?)*

As discussed above, the image of diademed Heracles is frequently found on coins and seals from Central Asia and North-West India (Cat. Nos. 52, 71, 86–93). The best sculptural example of a young beardless hero wearing a diadem is also provided by the wrestler's weight recovered from Peshawar (Cat. No. 127). The Tutelary Couple of Heracles and Athena

⁶²⁶ AGBG, vol. 2: 48–64; Flood 1989: 17–27, Fig. 4; Zwalf 1996: no. 217; Galinsky 2019: Fig. 14.4.

⁶²⁷ Santoro 1980: 293–341.

also contains the beardless hero with short, curly hair tied with a fillet (Cat. No. 183). This headband is usually worn by a beardless male figure, which feature is also seen in a few representations of Vajrapāṇi. On the previously mentioned stupa drum panel of six Vajrapāṇi figures (Cat. No. 242), the diademed beardless one is right next to the bearded one. Other classical figural types of Vajrapāṇi may also wear this headband, such as the so-called Hermes type on the relief panel of the *Offering of Dust* (Cat. No. 248) and the Eros type can be diademed.⁶²⁸ However, the diademed type occupies a small portion of the currently known images of Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi, and the surviving examples are also inconsistent. Thus, they can hardly be placed in the Heracles-Vajrapāṇi category.

VI.2.2.2.b) *Curly hair (sometimes wearing a chlamys or exomis)*

As shown in Chapter V, the figures of Heracles on the Peshawar wrestler's weight (Cat. No. 127), the Nimogram bracket (Cat. No. 129) and the Butkara pilaster (Cat. No. 131) share a similar hairstyle: short, curly hair further divisible into types. In particular, the Butkara relief gives a slightly exaggerated depiction of the hairstyle by enlarging the round-shaped curls. This hairstyle became even more abstracted in the triangular stair panel from Jamālgarhī, showing a naked male figure fighting a Triton; both have the same masses of big and round curls (Cat. No. 197). In the crystal seal engraved with a beardless hero kicking a lion from its back, the semi-nude figure has the same hair and wears a short cloak like the chlamys (Cat. No. 101). Similar treatment is evident in some beardless Vajrapāṇis. They share the same hairstyle, sometimes wearing a loincloth with chlamys or an exomis. It is possible that the type was derived from the representation of the young Heracles or Alexander the Great.

Like the bearded type, the beardless Vajrapāṇi, with the abovementioned characteristics, appears in many depictions showing the Buddha. In the life story, we meet him dressed in an exomis standing beside the Dīpankara Buddha (Cat. No. 249). He is shown half-length with both hands holding the *vajra* in the *Great Departure* (Cat. No. 250).⁶²⁹ Among

⁶²⁸ AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 327.

⁶²⁹ Arlt and Hiyama 2016: 187–205, Fig. 1. Cf. Ingholt 1957: Fig. 45; Tanabe 2000: 1087–1100; Kurita 2003: no. 475; Pons 2014: 15–94.

the total of 13 relief panels on the Sikri Stupa, the same type of Vajrapāṇi appears in only two: the *Hymns of Nāga Kālīka and his wife* (Cat. No. 251), and the *Offering of Kuśa Grass* from Svastika (Cat. No. 252).⁶³⁰ Both figures wear a cloak and a short *paridhāna* knotted at the waist, exposing a muscular torso. After the Enlightenment, he stays close to the Buddha in the *First Sermon* as is custom (Cat. No. 253).⁶³¹ During his journey accompanying the Buddha, he witnessed the moment of presenting the serpent to Kāśyapa (Cat. No. 254).⁶³² He “splits” into two avatars in the *Conversion of Apalāla* — one remains close to the Buddha, and the second lifts his *vajra* and threatens the *nāga* family (Cat. No. 255).⁶³³ One particular kind of attire is sometimes worn by this type of Vajrapāṇi — a short cloak similar to chlamys closed with a circular clasp in front of the chest. In a relief depicting Vajrapāṇi accompanying the Buddha, whose feet are cleared by a prostrate humped bull, Vajrapāṇi is clad in this attire, standing and left hand akimbo (Cat. No. 256).⁶³⁴ In addition to the *vajra*, a long sword may be hung at the figure’s waist, perhaps indicating his martial characteristics (Cat. No. 257).⁶³⁵ On several other occasions, he wears a pair of boots, such as in the episode of the pillar placed before the *Parinirvāṇa* (Cat. No. 258) and in the *Parinirvāṇa* (Cat. No. 259). At the moment of the Buddha’s death, as described and depicted in many media, Vajrapāṇi drops his identifier due to his emotional breakdown, a figurative motif that can be depicted with **beardless type b** (Cat. No. 260).⁶³⁶

In non-narrative compositions (which could also in some instances be part of a narrative), the occurrences of **beardless type b** are not much less common than the bearded type. Under some circumstances, the

⁶³⁰ AGBG, vol. 1: 384, Fig. 194; Ingholt 1957: Figs. 56, 60.

⁶³¹ Behrendt 2007: 39, Fig. 34.

⁶³² Ingholt 1957: Fig. 85.

⁶³³ Zin 2009: Fig. 3; Ali and Qazi 2008: 235, no. 11.6.

⁶³⁴ Zwalf 1996: no. 223.

⁶³⁵ Dieter Schlingloff (1994) identified the episode as representing the Buddha crossing the river Ganges. According to Zin (2020) and Fang Wang, another plausible identification could be the narrative of the Buddha preventing the people of Vaiśālī from following him to Kuśinagara. See Schlingloff 1994: 571–584; Zin 2020: 13–14, fn. 77.

⁶³⁶ Rosenfield 1967: Fig. 85; Bussagli 1984: 249; Bopearachchi 2020: 66, Cat. No. 61 A&B.

depiction of the type may reflect a more regular pattern. As mentioned earlier, the beardless Vajrapāṇi, wearing a short cloak with a circular clasp, is paired with a Tyche-like female figure as a flanking couple. This pair is usually found on each side of the relief panels of the *Twin Miracle at Śrāvastī* (Cat. Nos. 185, 261).⁶³⁷ As one of the many forms of Vajrapāṇi, he is often placed in the row of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas representing this type (Cat. Nos. 242–243, 262), and sometimes flanking a standing Buddha (Cat. No. 263).

Regarding quantity, **beardless type b** is on par with the bearded type. Even so, their iconographic association with the Heracles figure seems more indirect. Most of the figures are young, and the depiction of the torso often stresses the muscular physique, but the face may occasionally look child-like. If we look at specific examples of this type, it is noticeable that his portraiture and apparel are more akin to the figure of Alexander the Great than Heracles.

Although it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the iconographic connection between Vajrapāṇi and Alexander and the cultural implications of this, a few notes should be made to clarify the beardless type that was perhaps modelled after Alexander. First, the hairstyle may be influenced by how Alexander wore his mass of leonine hair with his forehead devoid of hair because he thought it was more appropriate for a soldier (*It. Alex.* 13). Whether it is Vajrapāṇi or other figures with this hairstyle found in Central Asia and North-West India, they all have clean-shaven faces, perhaps following the tradition set by Alexander. His aquiline nose is also adopted in some depictions of Vajrapāṇi, such as the profile or three-quarter portrait of Vajrapāṇi (Cat. Nos. 254, 257).⁶³⁸ His contracted, bulging brow and undulating lips appear on the face of Vajrapāṇi in the dramatic moments (Cat. No. 260), while the innocent child-like look was adopted in the instances of the figure being a witness to the Buddha or simply as a flanking companion (Cat. No. 262).⁶³⁹ Lastly, the short cloak reminiscent of the chlamys worn by Alexander, a standard military and hunting garb, also reminds us that there may be a connection between the enigmatic Buddhist figure and the foreign conqueror (Cat. Nos. 256, 261). In the Kushan region, the traces of

⁶³⁷ Rosenfield 1967: 200, Fig. 106.

⁶³⁸ Cf. Stewart 1993: 348.

⁶³⁹ For a young portrait of Alexander the Great, see Getty Museum: 73.AA.27.

Alexander's image are evident, as we only need to recall the bronze of a rider from Begram (Cat. No. 264) and the remarkable clay statue of "Alexander-Vajrapāṇi" in the *First Sermon* from Tapa-é-Shotor (Cat. No. 265).⁶⁴⁰

VI.2.2.3. *Lion scalp*

The characteristic of Vajrapāṇi wearing the lion scalp over the head with paws knotted at the chest has always been regarded as the most crucial evidence of the assimilation of the motifs of Heracles and the *vajra* bearer.⁶⁴¹ This iconographic tradition was prolifically adopted by mortal rulers and emperors from Alexander onwards as a symbol of political power and high office across a wide geography. In the Hellenistic East, Alexander's successors continued using the lion scalp in propagandistic portraits, attested in Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins.⁶⁴² Although Kushan rulers did not directly take over the lion scalp for their own portraits, the attribute survived in many other representations. For instance, on one Gandhāran clay token (Cat. No. 97), Alexander's profile portrait with the lion scalp is meticulously rendered, which reflects the local familiarity with the image. Undoubtedly, the figure of Vajrapāṇi that adapted this element has attracted the most attention of the pertinent previous research. It is frequently interpreted by comparing and associating the function and meaning of represented subjects to demonstrate that the reuse of the iconography suggests a semantic similarity.⁶⁴³

However, as presented and explained in this chapter, the scalp is featured on several other figures in Gandhāran art, with Vajrapāṇi being merely one. It is worn by the Atlantes (Cat. Nos. 170–175), the demonic warriors in Māra's army (Cat. Nos. 201–202) and sometimes by "Heracles" in a Buddhist scene (Cat. No. 210). Moreover, the number of

⁶⁴⁰ For the bronze rider from Begram, see Kurz 1954: Fig. 335; Tissot 2006: 284, no. K.p. Beg.715.455. For the Alexander-Vajrapāṇi from Haḍḍa, Tapa-é-Shotor: niche V3, see Moustamindy 1973: 53; Tarzi 1976: 402–404; 1979: 77–80, Fig. 16–17; Kurita 2003; Vanleene 2019: Fig. 7.

⁶⁴¹ Flood 1989: 17–27; Carter 1995: 119–140; Hsieh: 1997: 32–53; Hsing 2005: 103–154.

⁶⁴² See Chapter III: Section III.1.1.

⁶⁴³ Santoro 1991: 269–309; Hsing 2005: 103–154; Tanabe 2005: 363–381; Galinsky 2019: 315–332.

Vajrapāṇis wearing the lion scalp is surprisingly somewhat low. Although it is necessary and reasonable to explain such an adaptation (to some extent) within the scope of Hellenistic influence, whether it can be used to reconstruct any particular meanings derived from the Greek hero's legend, which consistently guided the development of the Heracles motif, is questionable. It must be clarified that by no means does this study deny the nature and power of the symbols of myth, nor does it imply that the reuse of iconography happened at random.

To better understand the uses of the lion scalp with the figure of Vajrapāṇi, we shall begin with the number and the concrete examples. Of the 206 reliefs in Santoro's (1980) catalogue, only three show Vajrapāṇi in this attire (Santoro 1980, nos. 53, 68, 200);⁶⁴⁴ one is problematic, which will be discussed below. In fact, in Santoro's (1991) case study of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, as the second part of the survey of the Gandhāran examples, Santoro already noticed that the lack of corresponding data may affect our understanding of the motivation behind the adaptation.⁶⁴⁵ From the available data we have been able to collect so far, there are less than 10 examples that can be confirmed. Considering the overall number of Vajrapāṇis or even limited to the number of the bearded type, the negligible number of Vajrapāṇis wearing the lion scalp should give rise to caution.

Another issue with these examples is their generally damaged condition which prevents us from reading the image as comprehensively as possible. Four relief panels have survived with complete scenes, including one housed in the Peshawar Museum, one in the British Museum, and two in private collections. The lion scalp Vajrapāṇi appears in the *First Sermon* (Cat. No. 266), an episode in which Vajrapāṇi had a required role in the pictorial tradition. In this panel, he is young and has a smooth, clean-shaven face with a calm expression. He wears the lion scalp (or another feline skin) draped over his head, covering the neck, without the paws knotted in front. Instead, the knot is replaced with a short cloak similar to Alexander's conventional attire. The figure is fully dressed, as shown by the drapery from his right arm. The second panel with this type represents the *Visit of nāga Elāpatra* (Cat. No. 267), and the look of

⁶⁴⁴ Santoro 1980: 304–336.

⁶⁴⁵ Santoro 1991: 273–277.

this Vajrapāṇi is distant from the first example.⁶⁴⁶ Although he is wearing the skin over his head and has the paws knotted in front, his hair is not entirely covered but appears in wavy curls under the headdress. He has slightly bulging brows, compressed lips and a moustache, a facial characteristic uncharacteristic of Heracles and Alexander. The third example comes from a middle compartment of a false gable from a stupa (Cat. No. 268)⁶⁴⁷ showing Vajrapāṇi flanking the seated Buddha. He holds a *vajra* in his left, wields a *chauri* in his right hand, and stands behind a kneeling worshipper. This Vajrapāṇi is a young type. Based on the shape of his hair beneath the lion scalp, it can be inferred that the hairstyle may be similar to the beardless type with curly hair. Another case that preserves the type in a complete scene is a small, framed panel compartment (Cat. No. 269). According to Zwalf's (1996) reading, it represents a story of the Buddha and a dog, and Vajrapāṇi "wears a lion's skin over the top and back of his head and secured across his chest by the forelegs".⁶⁴⁸

It is impossible to detect any patterns through such limited examples, yet their occurrences in the scenes with the Buddha do not seem to be fundamentally different from that of Vajrapāṇi in other forms. For instance, the relief fragments with Vajrapāṇi in this attire show him with monks and worshippers, a typical figural composition that frequently occurs around the Buddha. Two relief fragments are held in the British Museum exhibiting this conventional depiction. The most cited and published relief shows Vajrapāṇi wearing the lion scalp over his head with the paws knotted at the chest (Cat. No. 270).⁶⁴⁹ He wears a *langoṭī*, exposing his muscular torso like an athlete, and the baldric of a sword hangs about his waist. The *vajra* is firmly gripped by his right hand, and his left is making a peculiar gesture with the index and middle fingers raised and the thumb while fourth finger holds the sword. This Vajrapāṇi was previously thought to be a young type, but he appears to have wrinkles on the forehead thanks to the higher resolution of modern

⁶⁴⁶ Stein 1912; AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 317; Tissot 1986: Fig. 96; Ali and Qazi 2008: 239.

⁶⁴⁷ Kurita 2003: no. 638.

⁶⁴⁸ Zwalf 1996: no. 226.

⁶⁴⁹ Zwalf 1979: Fig. 21; Flood 1989: Fig. 1; Santoro 1991: Fig. 2; Boardman 1992: Fig. 134; Zwalf 1996: no. 293; Blurton 1997: no. 254; TNM 2003: Fig. 138; Hsing 2005: Fig. 27; Elsner and Lenk 2017: Fig. 32.

images. His brows seem to suggest an expression of pensive melancholy. The type may be closer to the one in the *Visit of nāga Elāpatra* (Cat. No. 267) because of the shared moustache. Another fragment relief in the British Museum belongs to the central compartment of a false gable panel (Cat. No. 271).⁶⁵⁰ Regardless of the damage, Vajrapāṇi's pronounced musculature is emphasised by the pronounced pectorals. The type of headdress and the manner of dress is similar to the example depicting the *First Sermon* (Cat. No. 266). In the Museo delle Civiltà, one relief fragment (Cat. No. 272) is comparable to the one that carries a sword in the British Museum. Both figures of Vajrapāṇi are standing in contrapposto and are dressed the same way with the lionskin, *langoṭī* and sword. Due to the damage to the face and left hand, whether Vajrapāṇi in the Rome Collection is with or without a moustache or whether his left hand also carries the sword with the same gesture is unknown. Nevertheless, the overall composition (with monks and worshippers), posture and attributes are relatively consistent with the British Museum panel. There is also a unique example of a Vajrapāṇi bust made of clay recovered in Afghanistan (Cat. No. 273),⁶⁵¹ which, judging by the style and technique, may be attributed to the artistic school of Haḍḍa. The face seems to remind us of Alexander because of the bulging brow and undulating lips, but he has a short beard with sideburns. Clay-based sculptures and wall paintings of lion scalp figures are also found on the northern Silk Road in Chinese Central Asia. Although they do not always represent Vajrapāṇi and are unlikely to be Heracles, they have demonstrated the popularity of this specific headdress in the further East (see discussion in Chapter VIII).

Accordingly, these lion scalp Vajrapāṇis are of different types in terms of their facial features. They can certainly be roughly divided into bearded and beardless types, following the traditional way of categorising Heracleian features, but the problem is that none of them has a genuine Heracleian beard, unless the aforementioned fragment (Cat. No. 171), with the same size as an Atlas, can be proven to be a Vajrapāṇi.

Last but not least, some suggest that the knot of the lion's paws might have inspired a garment worn by the figure of Vajrapāṇi occasionally,

⁶⁵⁰ Zwalf 1996: no. 254.

⁶⁵¹ TNM 1996: 158, no. 173; Hsieh 1997: 40–41, Fig. 11; Hsing 2005: 103–154, Fig. 26; Tanabe 2007: no. IV-55.

transforming the paws into a simple knot.⁶⁵² In this instance, the lion scalp disappears with only the knot remaining. The assumption is possible given that those Atlantes who adopted the lion scalp would wear a cloak with a knot tied similarly (Cat. No. 176). However, even if we consider the knot as a simplified version, examples are limited, and the connection to Heracles is even more of secondary importance. For example, one of the Vajrapāṇis of the Alexander type from the Sikri Stupa wears a cloak knotted in front (Cat. No. 274), which may look like the lion's paws, according to some scholars.⁶⁵³ In one of the three examples in Santoro's (1980) catalogue, Vajrapāṇi has the knot in front, but his hairstyle is that of a brāhmin (Cat. No. 275).⁶⁵⁴

The problem of the transformation of the knot may be even more complicated if considering the evidence beyond Gandhāra, as we have already seen in the Mathura statue that represents a hero figure with the knot and standing with a lion (Cat. No. 134). On a stele inscribed with "year 32" of Kanishka from Mathura showing the seated Buddha with attendants, the flanking figure of Vajrapāṇi is not Heraclean, but he bears a "simplified" knot (Cat. No. 276).⁶⁵⁵ Given the literary tradition of the so-called Indian Heracles from the city Mathura, it seems probable that the knot might have been associated with the Heracles motif. However,

⁶⁵² Soper (1951) recognised that the physical type of Vajrapāṇi "could be assimilated to that of Hercules". From a pair of friezes in the Calcutta Museum, he perceived that Vajrapāṇi wearing something like a "chlamys", knotted in front, resembles Heracles wearing the lionskin. See Soper 1951: Pl. 24 a-b; Flood 1989: 17.

⁶⁵³ AGBG, vol. 1: Fig. 245; Ingholt 1957: no. 136; Flood (1989) interpreted the knot as a lion paw knot, see in Flood 1989: 17.

⁶⁵⁴ The relief is traditionally identified as *Introducing Yasodharā*, the wife of Prince Siddhartha, to the Bodhisattva. In this circumstance, the appearance of Vajrapāṇi could be problematic, as he usually does not appear prior to the *abhinīṣkramaṇa* cycle. In Bopearachchi's (2020) opinion, the unusual appearance of Vajrapāṇi in this episode may indicate that the happy moment of the young prince's life would eventually end with his abandonment of earthly life. In Robert Schulz's (2020) identification, the relief is explained to be a variant of the *Great Departure*. It remains possible that the Gandhāran artist mixed different narrative motifs into one scene. See Bopearachchi 2020: 85–86, Cat. No. 88; Schulz 2020: 60–63; Fig. 14a.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. Myer 1986: 107–142, Fig. 11; Quintanilla 2007: Fig. 137.

the connection cannot be fully explained merely based on the scarce evidence and interpretations. The representation of Vajrapāṇi wearing the lion scalp reappears in the wall paintings in Kucha (Xinjiang), which received the Gandhāran pictorial tradition but no longer represents Vajrapāṇi in a classical figural form, a new phase of the metamorphosis of the “Heracleian” type in the further East detailed in Chapter VIII.

In conclusion, most examples of Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi with Heracleian features are the bearded type, and examples of the so-called beardless type are inconsistent and probably more indicative of Alexander the Great. The examples of Vajrapāṇi wearing the lion scalp (or skin) are very limited, while each has some features distant from the figure of Heracles. The considerable number and the frequent occurrence of the Heracleian type seem to indicate a preference among Gandhāran artists for depicting Vajrapāṇi in the guise of Heracles and probably allude to some intrinsic values of the hero. However, the Heracleian type coexists with the many other manifestations of Vajrapāṇi in all these occurrences, and above all, as Foucher (1922) already noticed, the figure always lacks involvement in the narratives, like a spectator, problematising our understanding of the use of the Western prototype in the Buddhist context.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁶ AGBG, vol. 2: 48–64; cf. Santoro 1980: 298–299.

Chapter VII

Persistence of the Heracles image in the Indo-Iranian world in the first half of Late Antiquity (ca. 2nd/3rd–6th centuries AD)

The transmission of the Heracles image from Central Asia and North-West India to the further East has been mainly attributed to the spread of Buddhist art from Gandhāra to China by most scholarship on the topic. In this case, the movement of the iconographic motif and associated attributes has been suggested to be specifically from Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi via the post-Kushan Vajrapāṇi and several guardian deities in northern Buddhism, which informed depictions of general warrior-like guardian figures of both sacred and secular functions in East Asia,⁶⁵⁷ discussed in Chapters VIII and IX. However, following the geographical pattern between the Gandhāran examples of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi and the Buddhist figures with Heracleian features on the northern trade route to China, which most previous research has examined, there is a significant chronological gap and paucity of evidence spanning a few hundred years in between that requires some additional considerations.

This chapter focuses on the evidence of the figure of Heracles in the Indo-Iranian world beyond Buddhist art and its persistence from the end of the Classical period throughout the first half of the Late Antiquity, roughly between the 2nd/3rd and 6th centuries AD. Although limited material has survived, the extant and pertinent works of art may allow us to put forward some hypotheses on the transmission of Heracles images to the Far East, not only through the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi type.

The first section analyses a group of silver vessels of supposed Bactrian origin which were scattered across various locations within the Indo-Iranian linguistic area and whose style and iconography may have been influenced by Greco-Roman, Byzantine, Parthian, Kushan and Sasanian

⁶⁵⁷ Carter 1995a: 119–140; Hsieh 1997: 32–53; Tanabe 2003a: 19–23; Hsing 2005: 103–154; Yang 2020: 234–247.

art.⁶⁵⁸ The selected examples show figures more firmly identified as Heracles or speculated as derived from his figurative motif. Although only one of the silver vessels to be discussed was discovered in China, given their connection to the contemporary local visual arts in Central Asia and North-West India, as well as the evidence of other silverware depicting classical motifs — possibly imported by the Sogdian merchants and diplomats via the Tarim Basin Route — which have been found in different locations within China,⁶⁵⁹ it is necessary to consider the iconographic evidence of the Heracles figure in this light, as it may assist in our understanding of likely dissemination pathways of the Greek hero's images to the Far East.

Other travelling objects, such as non-Buddhist figurines and small precious stone seals, may have also played a role in introducing the figure of Heracles into China. In the second section, we provide some early archaeological finds of the Heracles figure from the ancient sites on the southern trade route that lies in the Tarim Basin, connecting the West to China. This includes a clay figurine, several seal impressions and a batik (textile) fragment that were most likely imported to the western regions of China during the first centuries AD. The material is scarce, yet the evidence indicates that classical motifs like Heracles may have been incorporated into the local material culture of an Iranian-speaking population in Chinese Central Asia.⁶⁶⁰

VII.1. Evidence of the figure of Heracles in non-Mediterranean Hellenising silver vessels: from “Bactrian” to Sasanian silver plates

This section focuses on a group of silver vessels containing the figure of Heracles or figures with Heracleian features. Each of them has an unclear provenance and was recovered from different places, ranging from Iran to Chinese Tibet. These artefacts stem from the ancient metalwares traded across Eurasia during Late Antiquity and have long provoked

⁶⁵⁸ Weitzmann 1943: 289–324; Smirnow 1957; Denwood 1973: 121–127; Harper 1983: 1113–1129; Marshak 1986; Gunter and Jett 1992; Boardman 1994, 2015; Eastmond and Steward 2006; Schulz 2018: 26–45, 2019: 183–194; Dan and Grenet 2021: 143–194.

⁶⁵⁹ Chu 1990: 1–9; Ge 2015: 111–125; Ran 2024: 57–64.

⁶⁶⁰ Stein 1907, 1933; Rhie 2007.

controversy around their date, origin (place of manufacture) and subject matter.⁶⁶¹ While their craftsmanship is considered to be of Eastern origin, the interpretations of their style vary from Hellenised Parthian / Kushan to Byzantine / Sasanian.⁶⁶²

In particular, there are seven, well-known silver vessels speculated as depicting the Heracles figure. Three show the same scene derived from the motif of the Triumph of Dionysus;⁶⁶³ two may be depicting scenes from the plays of Euripides;⁶⁶⁴ one has been interpreted as representing Heracles or the scenes from Homer's *Iliad* or the Jewish version of the *Alexander Romance*;⁶⁶⁵ and the last one presents Heracles' Fourth Labour with the Erymanthian Boar.⁶⁶⁶ Although these silverwares are rare and controversial, they exemplify how some classical-derived images were preserved and circulated in changing social, geographical and historical contexts, and the significance of transfer from one culture to another.

VII.1.1. Heracles in the Triumph of Dionysus(?)

Three silver plates of almost identical size, shape and composition depict the scene derived from the theme of the Triumph of Dionysus. Since not much information is known about these plates, the culture and time with which they might have been affiliated primarily relies on stylistic comparisons. Judging by the style, the earliest among them is a gilded silver plate now held in the British Museum (Cat. No. 277); the other two plates, one in the Freer Gallery of Art (Cat. No. 278) and one in the State Historical Museum in Moscow (Cat. No. 279), are most likely Sasanian works. None have an archaeological provenance: the British Museum dish was once an heirloom of the Mirs of Badakhshan (Hazara rulers in Northeastern Afghanistan);⁶⁶⁷ the Freer plate came from an art market and is

⁶⁶¹ Cf. Harper 1983: 1113.

⁶⁶² Boardman 1994: 90–99.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*: 96–97, Figs. 4.27–4.29.

⁶⁶⁴ Weitzmann 1943: 289–324.

⁶⁶⁵ Boardman 1994: 96, 2015: 178; Denwood 1973: 122; Dan and Grenet 2021: 143–194.

⁶⁶⁶ Ortiz 1996: Pl. 243; Boardman 2015: Pl. XLV.

⁶⁶⁷ Dalton 1964: 50.

suspected to be from Iran,⁶⁶⁸ and the Moscow plate was a chance find in Alkino, Southern Urals, Russia.⁶⁶⁹

The main scene of these three plates occupies the upper three-quarters of the space, showing the central figure (both male and female) half naked with garments draped across the lower body, reclining on a flat and square chariot, holding a bowl in the right hand. A female figure, also semi-nude, is sitting in the rear corner of the chariot. Behind the chariot is a nude male figure with features of Heracles or a satyr, which we will examine below. He stands next to a tree or a vine, meandering up to the top, shading the protagonist. Several “Erotes” are placed around the chariot: one is standing at the front of the vehicle, the left hand holding a jug, and the right the end of a whip-like line attached to a long stick held by another Eros, who is flying above; the other one (or two in the Sasanian plates) is kneeling and propelling the wheel of the chariot. A pair of female figures are walking (or running) in front of the chariot. The lower quarter of these plates depicts a feline climbing into the open mouth of a footed vase in the centre and a pair of plants or musicians at both sides.

Previous research has extensively compared these three plates and investigated their possible classical models.⁶⁷⁰ Since our focus in these plates is on figures that the (Western) Heracles images might have influenced, we only point out the most obvious adaptations of this series to the classical representation of the Triumph of Dionysus, including the change of identity or gender of the reclining protagonist; the figures of Erotes and Psychai have lost their wings and their narrative functions per the classical Dionysian imagery (such as Psychai pulling the chariot); and some original elements are rendered as Persian (such as the depiction of Sasanian costumes).

⁶⁶⁸ The plate was purchased from the Mahboubian Gallery of Ancient Art, Tehran, in 1964. See <https://asia-archive.si.edu/object/F1964.10/> (accessed on 31 July 2024).

⁶⁶⁹ Smirnow 1957; Schulz 2018: 26–45.

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. Gunter and Jett 1992: 121–127.

VII.1.1.1. *The Badakhshan dish*

The metalworking techniques of the Badakhshan dish indicate a date no later than the 3rd century AD, probably of Parthian or Kushan make. However, the specific date, place of manufacture, and artistic sources of this plate have given rise to divergent opinions. Ormonde M. Dalton (1964) argued that the dish's style is distant from that of Gandhāran sculpture, and the Greek artisans under the Kushan rule would probably have avoided this oriental method of applying silver reliefs. Hence, he suggested a Parthian origin because the rendering of a classical subject seems too clumsy to indicate Syrian or Asia Minor production.⁶⁷¹ Antony Eastmond and Peter Steward (2006) proposed the dish to be a product of Antioch in the 3rd century AD,⁶⁷² while Prudence O. Harper (2000) and Tanabe (2003b) considered it to have been made in the early Sasanian period, between the 3rd and 5th centuries AD, and the style is closer to Hellenised Eastern Iranian.⁶⁷³ Since the earliest provenance is only 19th-century Afghanistan, we cannot know whether it was initially produced in a Bactrian workshop or was a later import. Nevertheless, most scholars agree that the origin of the composition on the Badakhshan dish is late Hellenistic, in which the image was possibly transmitted through cameos or metalwork, and one frequently mentioned Western parallel is a cameo from Naples (in the Medici Collection) dating to the first centuries BC / AD (Cat. No. 280).⁶⁷⁴

Two figures on the Badakhshan dish might have adopted the figural types of Heracles. The first is a reclining semi-nude male figure sitting on the chariot in the centre. The second is a nude attendant carrying lion skin and a club.

VII.1.1.1.a) *Reclining Dionysus, Heracles or others?*

Although the face is damaged, the reclining symposiast on the Badakhshan dish is usually suggested to be Dionysus owing to the gender and compositional similarity with the Dionysian triumph imagery from the

⁶⁷¹ Dalton 1964: 49–51.

⁶⁷² For the Antioch origin, see Eastmond and Steward 2006: 161, no. 92.

⁶⁷³ Harper 2000: 53; Tanabe 2003b: 113, no. 107.

⁶⁷⁴ Dalton 1964: 50; Boardman 1994: 90–99; 2014: 22, 46, Fig. 10. Cf. Clark 2018: 87–88, Fig. 11.

classical world.⁶⁷⁵ Boardman (2014) recognised the figure as Heracles because the appearance and posture resemble the rock sculpture of Heracles-Verethragna from the Seleucid period at the Behistun complex (see Cat. No. 25). He speculated that the misunderstandings and preferences of the Eastern artisans could have resulted in placing the Iranian translated Heracles figure on the chariot instead.⁶⁷⁶ As noted in Chapter II, the images of a reclining symposiast were prevalent in the Hellenistic East, and this iconographic schema was employed to represent not only the Heracles figure but also other Hellenic gods, Parthian rulers and also many non-Hellenic gods and humans.⁶⁷⁷ It is uncertain whether the Iranian adaptations were directly derived from the Heracles motif. Nevertheless, the frequent appearance of figures reclining and drinking indicates that the type was widely used in the Parthian period, becoming more generic and a pictorial convention that Kushan and Sasanian art followed.⁶⁷⁸ Taking into further account that no attribute of Heracles is shown, the identity of this reclining figure remains uncertain, nor can we deny that a non-Hellenic figure might have also been given Hellenic form because of the general tendency of syncretism.

Although there are many examples of Dionysiac subjects in the Hellenistic East, few directly show a reclining nude (or semi-nude) male figure

⁶⁷⁵ Carter 1968: 121–146; Schulz 2018: 26–45.

⁶⁷⁶ Boardman 2014: 46–48. Cf. Chapter II: Section II.1.2.3.a).

⁶⁷⁷ Chapter II: Section II.1.2.3.a).

⁶⁷⁸ For the Kushano-Sasanian adaptation, see the fragmentary shallow silver plate from the British Museum (BM 124093) that preserves a male figure reclining on a couch (or throne), holding in his right hand a flower and a (missing) cup in his left; see Harper 1989: 854–855, Pl. VI. The conventional representation of a reclining and drinking ruler lasted much longer than Sasanian rule. For a later Iranian adaptation, see the silver plate from St Petersburg (The State Hermitage Museum: S-47) with the enthroned king surrounded by musicians and servants. The posture was taken up by many dressed noble figures in banquet scenes, reclining on the bed and hand-holding a drinking cup (or bowl), typically seen in toilet trays, cf. Francfort 1979: nos. 27–31. In the Buddhist narrative depictions, Prince Siddhārtha is sometimes found in this posture in the scene of him drinking in the palace, which is a proper reuse of the iconographic formula, cf. Ingholt 1957: 58, no. 38; Boppearachchi 2020: 88, Cat. No. 91. This pictorial tradition might be directly inherited from the Parthian variants.

in the scene of the triumphal procession. If we follow the conventional dating of the Badakhshan dish (ca. 2nd or 3rd century AD), as agreed upon by most previous studies, and assume that it is of Bactrian origin, one Gandhāran relief fragment may be comparable, suggesting one possible development of the triumph motif in Central Asia during the Kushan period.

The Gandhāran relief in question is a stupa drum panel from the Buddhist monastic dating to about the 2nd or 3rd century AD. It is divided into two registers — the lower represents the early life stories of the Buddha, and the upper is the so-called Dionysiac scene in which the reclining nude male drinker reappears, although he is no longer lying on a chariot (Cat. No. 281)⁶⁷⁹ as on the British Museum plate. The upper register is divided into several parts by a curling vine scroll with leaves and tendrils. On the far left is a decorative grapevine pattern, followed by a group of three people sitting on a chariot pulled by two lions. To the right is the reclining drinker, wearing a turban, bearded, stout and naked, who does not look like Dionysus or Heracles. A female figure serves him on one side, holding a drinking cup in her right hand. A second chariot carrying another group of three figures appears on the right, with the difference being that two swans instead of lions are pulling the chariot, bringing to mind the similar swan-drawn chariots ridden by Aphrodite, Apollo and Eros in the classical world.⁶⁸⁰ The adoption of elements from the Dionysiac triumphal procession imagery shows that the scene on this Gandhāran relief alludes to a similar theme. However, the composition and each figure were highly modified to better constitute the composition of the Buddhist relief, probably to symbolise the pleasure and decadence of earthly life in contrast to the Buddhist doctrine.

Additionally, the reclining nude (or semi-nude) male symposiast type appears on other Gandhāran relief fragments without being in the scene of the triumphal procession but still associated with the Dionysiac

⁶⁷⁹ Bopearachchi 2020: Cat. No. 81.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. *LIMC* ii.1, s.v. Aphrodite, nr. 1212; *LIMC* ii.1, s.v. Apollo/Aplu, nr. 74; *LIMC* iii.1, s.v. Eros, nr. 204.

theme.⁶⁸¹ A figure on an unprovenanced relief fragment from Afghanistan or Pakistan (Cat. No. 282) is almost identical to the one on the Badakhshan dish. He reclines on the ground in the same posture and holds the same open bowl with his right hand. From the remaining parts, three female figures (only the lower parts have survived) seem to be standing around the drinking man, and a large vine leaf is carved between two of them. Another similar figure occurs in a better-preserved relief from Jamālgarhī that has been interpreted as showing the manufacture and consumption of wine (Cat. No. 283). On the left side of this relief panel, the reclining figure is placed in front of two men. Carter (1968) interpreted the depiction as the conclusion of the scene, showing the two revellers pouring wine from a large jug into the mouth of the drinker.⁶⁸² These figures are most likely not associated with Dionysus or Heracles, but a generalised figural type denoting the state of drunkenness in scenes of grape harvesting, wine making and tasting.

VII.1.1.1.b) Running Heracles or a dancing satyr?

The second Heracleian figure on the Badakhshan dish is the attendant standing behind the chariot. Dalton (1964) identified this figure as Heracles because of the draped lionskin, the knobbed club resting on the shoulder and the robust physique.⁶⁸³ Tanabe (2003b) agreed with the identification as Heracles and stressed the hero's role as the protector of travellers.⁶⁸⁴ However, some unusual details have put the identification in question, foremost of which is the left leg bending backwards and pointing up, a typical dancing pose of satyrs in the representations of a *thiasus* that harks back to the 4th century BC.⁶⁸⁵ The posture and the draped feline skin on the figure's left arm are strikingly reminiscent of the dancing satyr on the Borghese Vase, although this satyr carries a

⁶⁸¹ As Carter (1968) stated, the cult of Dionysus and the "Dionysian or Dionysiac imagery" in Kushan art should be distinguished because the latter is more "in a freely improvised generic sense" and may not be associated with any specific classical themes. See Carter 1968: 121–146.

⁶⁸² Carter 1968: 127; Ingholt 1957: 103–104, no. 175.

⁶⁸³ Dalton 1964: 49–51.

⁶⁸⁴ Tanabe 2003b: 113, no. 107.

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. The bronze statue of The Dancing Satyr now in the Museo del Satiro (Chiesa di Sant'Egidio, Mazara del Vallo, Italy). For a Roman marble copy, see MET 19.192.82, cf. *LIMC* viii.1, s.v. Silenoi, nr. 217b.

thyrsus on his shoulder instead of a club and has a tail (Cat. No. 284). Some scholars have speculated that the one on the Badakhshan dish might originally have a tufted tail behind his waist, leading the identity of this figure to be variously interpreted as Heracles or a satyr.⁶⁸⁶ In the following two Sasanian examples, the same attendant clearly has a tiny tail in a different style, making the Badakhshan attendant more likely a satyr.

VII.1.1.2. Two Sasanian silver plates

The two Sasanian silver plates (Cat. Nos. 278–279) showing Bacchanalian triumphal scenes are almost identical in all aspects, probably produced in the same workshop or by the same group of silversmiths. Some subtle differences can be perceived in specific elements, but their respective compositions follow that of the Badakhshan dish. The general style is Sasanian-Iranian, dated to between the 5th and 7th centuries AD.

Unlike the Badakhshan dish, the reclining figure on both was transformed into a woman on the Freer plate and a slim figure of uncertain gender on the Moscow plate, excluding the possibility of interpreting them as Heracles. Only the attendant on these two plates has been speculated as Heracles because of the nudity and pertinent attributes.⁶⁸⁷ The posture of both attendants is similar to the one on the Badakhshan dish except for the decreased angle of raised leg. A pointed hat and a bracelet were added, and the draped feline skin is stylised, with geometric patterns denoting the coat markings. In both cases, none of these figures carries Heracles' club. The one on the Freer plate looks like a staff ending in a large top, while the one on the Moscow plate seems to be a thyrsus, which is more appropriate for a satyr in this instance. A peculiarity of these attendants also concerns their little tails, which seem attached to the vine behind them.⁶⁸⁸ Although these two Sasanian plates are generally considered modelled after the Badakhshan dish, they also reveal some details that cannot be simply addressed by comparing them with the latter. If the Badakhshan dish was part of an intermediary stage indicating one path of transmission of the late Hellenistic motif into the Iranian world and conversion into a Sasanian variant, what was the

⁶⁸⁶ Boardman 1994: 97; 2014: 48; Eastmond and Steward 2006: 161, no. 92.

⁶⁸⁷ Dalton 1964: 50; cf. Marshak 1986: 254; Boardman 2014: 46–49.

⁶⁸⁸ Boardman 2014: 48.

significance of the depiction of Heracles' club carried by a satyr? Was it merely because of the misunderstanding of classical iconography due to the stagnation of classical artistic conventions in the Hellenistic East?⁶⁸⁹ Or was the Iranian world, at a certain point, aware of the theme of satyrs robbing Heracles of his weapons through early Roman, Arsacid or Bactrian sources?⁶⁹⁰ Due to a lack of contextual evidence, no conclusive answer can be given. The seemingly strange Sasanian version of the features that belong to satyrs, Heracles and wearing a pointed hat remains difficult to fathom.

Nevertheless, given the pictorial consistency of the Sasanian examples, adaptation into the Sasanian iconographic vocabulary was likely carried out earlier than they were produced. Thus, other artistic influences, such as the Late Roman/Early Byzantine art from the West and the artistic syncretism in the post-Hellenistic period from the East, might have also influenced the motif's reformulation.

VII.1.2. Heracles in Euripides' plays(?)

Kurt Weitzmann (1943) identified the imagery on three "Bactrian" silver bowls as representing the narrative scenes from the 5th-century BC Greek playwright Euripides' tragedies.⁶⁹¹ All three bowls are nearly hemispherical in shape and have reliefs decorating the outside. Two of them contain figures with Heracleian features. One is the Stroganov bowl, housed in the Hermitage Museum (Cat. No. 285), and the other is the so-called Kevorkian (or New York) bowl (Cat. No. 287), supposedly found in North-West India and now housed in the Freer Gallery of Art.⁶⁹² The subject matter which profoundly affects the dating and affiliation of these works has been disputed and interpretations vary.⁶⁹³ Despite the

⁶⁸⁹ Dalton 1964: 49–51; Boardman 1994: 97–99; 2014: 46–49.

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Schulz 2018: 29–30.

⁶⁹¹ Weitzmann 1943: 289–324.

⁶⁹² A third "Bactrian" silver bowl, identified by Weitzmann as illustrating a play of Euripides, was found near Kustanai (North Kazakhstan). See Weitzmann 1943: 290–303.

⁶⁹³ For the literature review on the arguments against the Euripides interpretation and the several interpretations on other possible narratives, see Schulz 2019: 183–194.

controversy, one cannot deny that some of the scenes may recall the plays of Euripides.⁶⁹⁴

VII.1.2.1. *The Stroganov bowl*

The Stroganov bowl presents two Heracleian figures. The first, often identified as Heracles but also sometimes Zeus (Cat. No. 285a),⁶⁹⁵ is placed above the medallion engraved with a grotesque face at the bottom of the bowl.⁶⁹⁶ The second figure appears behind the first one but belongs to another group (Cat. No. 285b).

VII.1.2.1.a) *Seated*

The first Heracleian figure is bearded, muscular and semi-nude, with a garment hanging over the right elbow, draping and covering his thighs. He sits on a stool and looks to the right. His head slightly leans on his right hand, and his left hand holds a club vertically on the raised left thigh. The seated type with the club on the thigh has been suggested to be reminiscent of the Heracles coins of Euthydemus I. Thus, the bowl was linked to the Greco-Bactrian realm by earlier scholarship.⁶⁹⁷ Weitzmann (1943) disagreed on the similarity of the posture because the sculptural prototype for the coins of Euthydemus I did not seem to be the same as that of the “leisurely reclining man” on the cup, though he agreed with identifying the figure as Heracles.⁶⁹⁸

Among the previous studies that recognised the figure as Heracles or at least modelled after him, opinions vary on the narrative role and the

⁶⁹⁴ For the comparison with the depictions of Admetus and Alcestis on the Etruscan Vase and Roman sarcophagus, see Weitzmann 1943: Figs. 1–2, 4; Boardman 2015: Fig. 139.

⁶⁹⁵ Eduard Gerhard (1843) suggested identifying the figure as Zeus because the object is more like a sceptre than a club to him. Gerhard 1843: 161–165.

⁶⁹⁶ The pattern of a grotesque face achieved popularity in China since approximately the 6th century AD; it has been frequently found on clay and terracotta fragments from ancient sites in Khotan and Kucha (Xinjiang), as well as decoration on Chinese Tang pottery/porcelain and sarcophagi, and possibly also adorning warrior armour. Cf. Stein 1907: Pl. XLIV; Hsieh 1997: 40–53; Wang 2012: 177–178.

⁶⁹⁷ Trever 1940: 81–87.

⁶⁹⁸ Weitzmann 1943: 304.

significance of the reuse of the figural type. Kamilla V. Trever (1940) connected the figure to the worship of Heracles as the ancestor of royal families in the Hellenistic East and suggested that the scene represents a royal wedding where Heracles manifested.⁶⁹⁹ By interpreting some of the iconographic elements on the bowl as satyric, such as the figure carrying a wineskin and the satyr-like motions and look of another figure confronting the Heracles figure, Weitzmann (1943) identified the scene as stemming from Euripides' satyr play the *Syleus* and described that the image as showing the moment of Heracles resting after completing his deeds in Syleus' vineyard.⁷⁰⁰ Other views that consider the seated figure as the only one modelled on Heracles locate the representation in the Hellenised Iranian context. Michael Rostovtzeff (1933) hypothesised that the Stroganov bowl told a story of a Hellenised Iranian hero in three acts, though no corresponding Iranian story in epic poetry has been found.⁷⁰¹ In more recent research, Robert Schulz (2019) suggested that the employment of already-known iconography of Heracles derived from the analogies between the Greek hero's chthonic function and that of Srōš, the guide of the dead into paradise in Zoroastrian sources.⁷⁰² The lack of contextual evidence has certainly resulted in various assumptions and interpretations, while another reason for the lack of consensus is that overall composition is very unfamiliar to us as modern viewers. Even if we put aside the subject matter issue, readings of the image on this series of silver vessels may differ.

VII.1.2.1.b) *In attack mode?*

The second Heracleian figure on the Stroganov bowl is shown in a three-quarter back view with his right arm raised and wielding a club, and his left hand seems to grasp the mane or ear of the boar confronting him. In front of the boar, another man dressed in a short tunic holds a dagger in his right hand and points to the right. This composition of two men and a boar has been interpreted differently. In Weitzmann's (1943) view, the scene illustrates Heracles slaying Syleus (the one holding a dagger), and the representation of the boar "laying on the ground" indicates the cause

⁶⁹⁹ Trever 1940: 84.

⁷⁰⁰ Weitzmann 1943: 305–306.

⁷⁰¹ Rostovtzeff 1933: 161–186.

⁷⁰² Schulz 2019: 183–194.

of the fight in Euripides' eponymous play, in which the bull was misinterpreted as a boar by the artisan.⁷⁰³ Boardman (2015) disagreed with the identification of Euripides' play and saw the club wielder as Heraclean but with no lionskin and belabouring the dagger holder.⁷⁰⁴

However, the scene does not seem to represent the two male figures in conflict but rather against the boar, allowing the image to be read as the two men assisting each other to capture or kill the beast. Under the bowl's overall theme of a wedding feast, as postulated by Trever (1940), this reading is valid regardless of whether the animal is slaughtered for a ritual or merely for the feast.⁷⁰⁵ Schulz (2019) further elaborated on the motif of boar hunt within the Zoroastrian funerary context as it may symbolise a good deed, which probably recalls a vague memory of the Heracles motif.⁷⁰⁶

We may compare the dagger holder and the boar on the Stroganov bowl with a terracotta fragment (Cat. No. 286) found at the site of Lumbitepa (Fergana, Eastern Uzbekistan). This fragment was originally part of a spherical cup, dated between the 5th and 7th centuries AD.⁷⁰⁷ Although the hunter in this terracotta is chasing after the boar instead of already having captured it, there are several almost identical details shared with the Stroganov bowl, such as the boar's profile and the mane, the dress of the hunter's lower body and his posture, with one leg forward and about to stab the boar. Bakhtul Abdulgazieva (2010) identified the hunter as an Iranian epic hero, Bijan, and pointed out that the image reminds us of Heracles' Fourth Labour.⁷⁰⁸

It should be remembered that the boar hunting motif occupies a significant position in the Iranian artistic tradition, as the general animal hunting motif was undoubtedly drawn from existing and long-lived ancient Near Eastern imagery.⁷⁰⁹ The motif was extensively featured in

⁷⁰³ Weitzmann 1943: 306.

⁷⁰⁴ Boardman 2015: Fig. 141.

⁷⁰⁵ Trever 1940: 81–87.

⁷⁰⁶ Schulz 2019: 183–194.

⁷⁰⁷ Abdulgazieva 2010: 17–19; Stančo 2012: 146, fn. 197.

⁷⁰⁸ Abdulgazieva 2010: 17–31.

⁷⁰⁹ Shapur Shahbazi 2004: 577–580.

metalwork and textile pattern design, generally marking the highest social status of the military hierarchy of the Iranian community, and the imagery of the hunt persisted in the visual culture of Parthia, Byzantium, Sasanian Iran, Central and East Asia.⁷¹⁰ Meanwhile, it is frequently juxtaposed or linked with banquet scenes and found in funerary contexts, which could be the provenance of the Stroganov bowl.⁷¹¹ Thus, the Heracleian figural types might have been adjusted to be compatible with an overall visual language that is more Iranian than Greek.

VII.1.2.2. *The Kevorkian bowl*

Heracleian figures or elements are present in three groups of depictions on the Kevorkian bowl. The first group of three figures contains a club wielder, the second shows the lionskin draped on the chair, and the third depicts a bearded man draped with a lionskin and fighting with a bear.

VII.1.2.2.a) *The Mad Heracles?*

The club wielder on the Kevorkian bowl bears some similarities in posture with the one on the Stroganov bowl. He raises the club in his right hand, and his left grabs the neck of the second male figure kneeling in front of him. Like the Stroganov figure, he grabs the boar's ear, while the Kevorkian figure is beardless, shown in a three-quarter frontal view, wearing a tunic and cloth headdress. A woman with her hands tied is standing and looking at the scene (Cat. No. 287a).

Weitzmann (1943) identified the imagery as illustrating a scene from Euripides' play *The Madness of Heracles* showing hero murdering his second son with his club.⁷¹² Assuming that the kneeling figure is Heracles' son, the woman standing aside is thought to be Heracles' first wife, Megara. In Euripides' play, Megara does not appear in the scene where Heracles kills his second son, and thus, it has been argued that the artisans conflated two separate scenes.⁷¹³ Although this identification as part of the interpretation that the whole plate presents a Euripidean scene has not

⁷¹⁰ Canepa 2009: 157–160. Notably, a scene of the Tang emperor Gaozong (628–683 AD) hunting was depicted on a wall painting at the Sogdian capital Samarkand when Sogdiana was part of the Tang Empire.

⁷¹¹ Cf. Schulz 2019: 183–192.

⁷¹² Weitzmann 1943: 307–309.

⁷¹³ Weitzmann 1943: 307–309; Gunter and Jett 1992: 151.

been entirely rejected, closer observation reveals some details that do not allude to the Greek tragedy.

One detail in this group of figures cannot be overlooked: rope fetters about the woman's crossed hands and the kneeling figure's neck, making them look like slaves. Weitzmann admitted that this detail is not found in Euripides' plays, but it was an artistic convention that classical artists used to depict a person who would be sacrificed, which, in this case, should be Megara.⁷¹⁴ According to Phyllis Ackerman (1940), this detail shows that the scene represents two captured prisoners, and the kneeling one is about to be sacrificed with a club.⁷¹⁵ Notably, the kneeling male figure being tied up has an adult physique, with an exposed torso and wearing a tunic, similar to that worn by the other male figure on the same bowl (Cat. No. 287b), who is bent over and carrying a basket of fruit on his back. To the best of our knowledge, if the kneeling person is Heracles' son, it is not so common to find an adult form of this figure in classical depictions of the mad Heracles. We may recall the image of Heracles throwing one of his sons on the pyre on the 4th-century BC Assteas Krater or the mad hero killing his son as Megara stands by on the 3rd or 4th-century AD mosaic panel from the Villa Torre de Palma; in either case, the son is an infant or a small child.

VII.1.2.2.b) *The lionskin*

The lionskin appears twice on the Kevorkian bowl. It covers a chair on which a young male figure is sitting (Cat. No. 287c) and is wrapped around the upper legs of a bear hunter (Cat. No. 287d). Weitzmann interpreted the seated figure as Theseus in the scene from Euripides' *Hippolytus*.⁷¹⁶ As noted by Ann C. Gunter and Paul Jett (1992), the only scene on the Kevorkian bowl that Weitzmann did not identify as an episode from Euripides' plays is the bear hunt. Given the presence of the lionskin garment and the act of killing a beast, Gunter and Jett have identified the figure as Heracles.⁷¹⁷ The degree of resemblance to the classical source material seems to direct us to a coherent Greek narrative setting, which Boardman (1994) has disputed as he pointed out that the Greek elements

⁷¹⁴ Weitzmann 1943: 307–309.

⁷¹⁵ Ackerman 1940: 325.

⁷¹⁶ Weitzmann 1943: 309–311.

⁷¹⁷ Gunter and Jett 1992: 152.

are non-specific or have been adjusted to serve a non-Hellenic narrative.⁷¹⁸

VII.1.3. Heracles on a “Bactrian” bowl from Tibet?

Possible Heracleian elements are present on a curious silver bowl recovered from Tibet,⁷¹⁹ once an heirloom of an old Tibetan aristocratic family from Lhasa and now displayed in the Ancient Orient Museum in Tokyo (Cat. No. 288). Boris Marshak (1986) suggested dating it to the Hephthalite period (late 5th or early 6th century AD).⁷²⁰ Boardman (1994, 2015) saw a young Heracles wearing the lion scalp in a non-narrative scene and suggested a date of about the 2nd century AD.⁷²¹ However, in Denwood’s (1973) detailed examination of the bowl, none of the figures wears the lion scalp.⁷²² Philip Denwood postulated that the bowl represents the prophecy of the seer Calchas that occurred at Aulis before the Achaeans embarked on the Trojan War in Homer’s *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* 2.303–330) because of the repeated pattern on the bowl of the serpent attacking birds.⁷²³ More recently, Anca Dan and Frantz Grenet (2021) followed Marshak’s dating and provided a new interpretation of the bowl as representing the Jewish version of the *Alexander Romance*.⁷²⁴

Regardless of the overall subject matter, which remains open for further discussion, here we only note two points regarding the figural type and the significance of transmitting such images. Firstly, the nude male figure is shown three times on this bowl, probably representing the same figure. There are good reasons to see him as Alexander or a young Heracles, even without narrative settings or attributes. As Dan and Grenet

⁷¹⁸ Boardman 1994: 95, 2015: 178.

⁷¹⁹ For another Bactrian (or Indo-Bactrian) silver vessel discovered in Tibet, see Mango 1990: 80–81, Figs. 1, 13. Another gilt silver plate with classical figures was discovered at Dulan Reshui (Qinghai, China) on the Qinghai Path trade route, connecting Tibet and China in the period of 6th–8th centuries. See Ran 2024: 57–64.

⁷²⁰ Marshak 1986: 37, Fig. 17; 2017: 79, Fig. 17.

⁷²¹ Boardman 1994: 96; 2015: Fig. 142.

⁷²² Denwood 1973: 121–127.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*: 122.

⁷²⁴ Denwood 1973: 122; Dan and Grenet 2021: 143–194.

(2021) explained, the figure's short and abundant hair, forehead and heroic nudity point to Alexander (Cat. No. 288a).⁷²⁵ These features also bring to mind the figural type of a young hero, and one of these figures is wearing a cloak that is knotted in front, similar to how Heracles knotted his lionskin. Secondly, if we follow the typology and chronology suggested by Marshak, Dan and Grenet, the location of discovery hints at the possible role played by this kind of artefact during Late Antiquity. Like other "Bactrian" prestige objects, it travelled from place to place through long-distance trade routes and was treated as an exotic treasure. The means of transporting and exchanging goods in medieval Central Asia and the Eastern interest in collecting them might have both enhanced the visibility of images derived from the figural types of Heracles to the East.

VII.1.4. The Sasanian version of Heracles and the Erymanthian Boar

Pure Greek composition with classical iconographic elements is rare in surviving Sasanian silverware. However, one exceptional silver-gilt plate in the George Ortiz collection vividly recalls Heracles' Fourth Labour (Cat. No. 289). The plate is commonly dated to between the 5th and the 6th century AD.⁷²⁶

This Sasanian version represents the moment of Heracles tipping the Erymanthian Boar onto King Eurystheus in a jar, which faithfully follows the iconography codified for the Fourth Labour in classical art. The overall style is Sasanian, and some additional elements are foreign to the classical representation of the same episode. The facial features and costumes of the Sasanian version of the Greek hero and the king have been considered as indicative of differences in ethnicity. Aleksandr Leskov (1994) pointed out that the shape of their noses indicates racial differences from the Greeks, and Eurystheus' dress may be that of Sogdians or Sakas (Scythians).⁷²⁷ In contrast to the general representations of Heracles' nudity in the Iranian context, he is depicted wearing a hat, long-sleeved shirt and trousers on this Sasanian plate. Meanwhile, his lionskin

⁷²⁵ Dan and Grenet 2021: 154.

⁷²⁶ Ortiz 1996: Pl. 243; Boardman: 2015: Pl. XLV; cf. Musée Rath 1966: 121, Cat. No. 677, Pl. 71.

⁷²⁷ Ortiz 1996: Pl. 243, fn. 9.

is rendered in an unconventional way, ensuring that every angle of the lion could be seen as if it was not a skin draped on the figure but flying behind him in the air in a lively manner.

The endurance of the motif of Heracles holding the boar over Eurystheus in the Indo-Iranian world before Islam is not a surprise but has not attracted much scholarly attention. In Chapter V, we introduced a garnet seal made in Gandhāra (see Cat. No. 104) showing the same episode of Heracles' labours, which also contains a pseudo-script imitating classical epigraphy. The Sasanian silver plate gives a glimpse into the possible development of the same classical motif in a later period and foreign contexts, showing how it persisted throughout the Late Antiquity. Furthermore, these precious objects might have travelled across Eurasia and been brought to different locations on different branches of ancient trade routes. Although we find no other Eastern-made examples showing Heracles' Fourth Labour, the iconographic schema derived from this motif did not seem to die out in the East before Islam. In the murals at the Buddhist monastic complex of Kizil (Xinjiang, China), compositions derived from the Fourth Labour had undergone a radical transformation to meet the changes of content, which is discussed in Chapter VIII.

VII.1.5. Concluding remarks

The Hellenising silver vessel series discussed above preserves the Heracles figure or Heracleian figural types. They were produced much later than the Greek rule in the East and had become scattered on the way from Iran through Central Asia to China through trade or other means, such as gift-giving. Among these, the Badakhshan dish and two Sasanian plates depict similar scenes that were ultimately derived from the image of Dionysus' triumphal procession in the classical world, which suggests an interest in the East in taking over this Dionysiac-derived representation from time to time during the pre-Islamic period. The Stroganov and Kevorkian bowls present a hybridity in both style and iconography, both Greco-Roman and Iranian, which further complicates understanding of the subject. The peculiar "Bactrian" bowl from Tibet also remains speculative, and the naked, beardless type of young Heracles or Alexander on it may facilitate deciphering the iconography on this unique vessel. The Sasanian plate might have captured the latest wave of classical artistic influence in the Iranian/Central Asian region, which assimilated the classical imagery of Heracles' Fourth Labour.

Sometimes, the seemingly unusual adaptations shown on these silverwares are considered a result of the Greek subjects being misunderstood and misinterpreted by Eastern artisans or lack of artistic skill. Due to the lack of contextual information, these visual traces of Heracles do not guarantee a straightforward transmission of Heracles' identity, while the identities of figures who have taken over the Greek hero's form are not always known to us. What is known is that the Heracles image was persistent in the Indo-Iranian cultural sphere from the end of the Classical period throughout the first half of Late Antiquity, not simply because of the surviving Hellenistic heritage in the East but also because of subsequent waves of classical influence from the West continued to arrive until the 5th century AD,⁷²⁸ which may account for the multiple facets of these unique representations.

Although no Late Antique silverware with Heracleian elements has been discovered in further Eastern areas, it is worth mentioning the importance of travelling metalwork along the ancient Silk Road network.⁷²⁹ A number of imported silverwares dating from the 2nd century BC until the 6th century AD have been unearthed in China.⁷³⁰ The variety includes silverware from the Mediterranean regions, Near East and Central Asia from different periods. Their arrival in China through trade and diplomatic activities had an essential influence on the technique, patterns and artistic style of the dynastic silverware in the Tang Dynasty, in which a new syncretic taste was developed. The 8th-century AD imperial treasures of the Shōsōin (正倉院) in Japan attest a final destination of these various kinds of wandering objects. It can be postulated that some Heracleian images had also travelled as far as East Asia, evinced by surviving Western metalwork, which remains an important indication of one possible means of the motif's transmission towards the Far East.

⁷²⁸ Canepa 2009: 7–33.

⁷²⁹ Carter 1995c: 259–261.

⁷³⁰ Qi 1999: 249; Marshak 2004: 47–56.

VII.2. The Evidence of the figure of Heracles in Chinese Central Asia (ca. 2nd–4th centuries AD)

At the beginning of this chapter (and alluded to in preceding ones), we have mentioned the general importance of the spread of Buddhist art in the transmission of Heracleian images to the further East from Central Asia and North-West India, as well as further transformation in Chinese territory. Another transmission path which brought the Heracles image into China may have been along the multiple ancient long-distance trade routes connecting Eurasia. In this trade network, the media that probably led to the introduction of the Heracles figure in East Asia include metalwork (similar to those discussed above),⁷³¹ coins, precious stones or seals, tokens, figurines and textiles, which preserve Hellenistic artistic traces. These travelling objects were valuable goods and highly portable, possibly making their way as far as East Asia through the transit zone of the Tarim Basin of the present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China (also called *Xiyu*, the Western Regions of China, which refers to Chinese Central Asia or Eastern Central Asia).

Historically, geographically and anthropologically, the oases of the Tarim Basin were the closest trade hubs between Central Asia, South Asia, Tibet and China. Being the frontier borderlands of Northern Afghanistan, Northwestern Pakistan, and Western Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Yuezhi, several nomadic groups (e.g. the Xiongnu) and Chinese Han vied for control of this area in the centuries around the Common Era, which resulted in a multicultural society.⁷³² Archaeological excavations of inscriptions from different ancient sites have presented us with the multilingual landscape of the area, mostly of several Indo-European languages,⁷³³ revealing cultural intersections between Iranian, Indian and Chinese cultures during the early centuries AD.

⁷³¹ Although Bactrian and Sasanian silver vessels have not been found in Xinjiang, as Marshak (2004) pointed out, some of the metalwork found in China might have been travelled along the route linking the southern part of Afghanistan with Tibet. See Marshak 2004: 51.

⁷³² Neelis 2011: 289–310.

⁷³³ Liu 2023: 4.

Artefacts with Hellenistic features have also been discovered in this area, probably both imported from the Mediterranean region or the Near East and local Hellenised products. Among those, only a few small objects that may be of the Heracles figure have survived, and they were recovered from the southern branch of the trade route around the Tarim Basin, connecting the Yang Pass (Yang-kuan gate) and to Miran and Niya, then on to Khotan, Yarkand and Kashgar.⁷³⁴ From the Yōtkan site (in Khotan), the 1910 Ōtani Expedition⁷³⁵ found a clay figurine now labelled as Heracles and held in the Tokyo National Museum. During Stein's expeditions to the area in the early 20th century, a series of clay seal impressions originally borne by the obverses of covering tablets of Kharoṣṭhī documents on wood was collected, and some of these seal impressions from Niya preserve some figural types of Heracles.⁷³⁶ These classical-influenced images were rarely mentioned after being uncovered by the early explorers in Chinese Central Asia, except for the Kharoṣṭhī documents, which have been intensively translated and studied since.⁷³⁷ In the vicinity of the Niya site, a rare 2nd/3rd century AD batik fragment was unearthed in the tomb of a couple. This fragment displays visual elements that may be related to the themes of Heracles.⁷³⁸ These are the earliest objects we know of whose connection with classical art was not entirely severed and may represent the Heracles figure, which were also embedded in daily life.

VII.2.1. A Khotanese clay figurine of Heracles?

The Ōtani Mission in Yōtkan found two figurines representing foreign deities. Both are made from moulds.⁷³⁹ One is of Serapis and Harpocrates, now held in the National Museum of Korea, which has attracted

⁷³⁴ Neelis 2011: 289–310; cf. Cariou 2016.

⁷³⁵ Rhie 2007: 265. For the three Ōtani Expeditions in Central Asia (1902–1914), see Küçükyalçın 2017: 31–35.

⁷³⁶ Stein 1907: 344–358; Stein 1933: 89, 99, 104.

⁷³⁷ For the transcriptions and translations of the Kharoṣṭhī documents from Niya, see Boyer, Rapson and Senart 1920–1927; Rapson and Noble 1929; Burrow 1937.

⁷³⁸ Zhao 2004: 196–197; Rhie 2007: 364, Pl. XI; Hansen 2015: 39; Wei and Mei 2018: 39–44; Wei, Deng and Mei 2021: 107–113.

⁷³⁹ Rhie 2007: 265–266.

much attention because it is identical to a Serapis terracotta figurine from Fayum, Egypt, corresponding to the Greco-Roman type of Serapis enthroned and resting his right hand on the head of Harpocrates.⁷⁴⁰ The second figurine is labelled as Heracles and is much less frequently mentioned or discussed.⁷⁴¹ Based on similarities with Greco-Roman Egyptian figurines, both are dated to the 2nd to 4th century AD; perhaps either the moulds or the figurines were imported to Khotan.⁷⁴²

The “Heracles” figurine represents a nude, chubby child standing frontally with his right hand holding around a large and long object, his left hand akimbo, and a small column to his left (Cat. No. 290). It has been suggested to be a child Heracles because of the young appearance, the shape of the attribute similar to the club, and the animal skin is suspected to be draped over his left shoulder.⁷⁴³ However, this identification is not definitive, as several details indicate other possibilities for the figurine’s identity. The attribute may be seen as a club, but it is carved with several lines regularly crossing on its surface, which differs this object from the knobbed type of club of Heracles and may represent a torch instead. He wears a cap, probably of Phrygian type. There is an additional part that looks like a tiny wing on the back of his left shoulder. These details show that the child may also be interpreted as other Hellenic figures, such as an Eros figure, which also achieved great popularity in Central Asia and North-West India and may sometimes be confused with Heracles,⁷⁴⁴ or it is probably connected to the figure of Harpocrates which is known by the East as well.⁷⁴⁵ We know almost nothing apart from what may be

⁷⁴⁰ For the figurine of Serapis and Harpocrates, see Mailard 1975: 223–230, Figs. 1–2; Rhie 2007: 265–266; Kwon 2010: 157.

⁷⁴¹ Naruse 2002: 38, Fig. 5; Rhie 2007: 265–266; Valenstein 2007: 65; Katsuki 2017: no. 59.

⁷⁴² Rhie 2007: 265–266.

⁷⁴³ Naruse 2002: 38; Rhie 2007: 266.

⁷⁴⁴ See the Gandhāran toilet tray of Eros carrying a club standing next to Aphrodite and the Eros-Heracleian figure on the Buner stupa, Cat. Nos. 126, 133a. The figure of winged Eros is also depicted on other occasions in Xinjiang, such as in fragments of wall paintings recovered from Miran and on a 6th–7th century Buddhist reliquary reportedly from the Subashi Temple in Kucha (TNM: TC-557). Cf. Stein 1921: Pls. XL–XLI; Bussagli 1979: 86; Wang 2009: 22–24; Sheng *et al.* 2023: 91–100.

⁷⁴⁵ Cf. Kurz 1954: 147, 282–283, no. 153; Tanabe 1988: 91, Pl. IV.

divined from the figurine itself, but given the media and the possible subjects, both figurines from Yōtkan may be related to a funerary or sanctuary context.

VII.2.2. Seal impressions of Greek gods in Niya

A number of the rectangular and wedge-shaped tablets inscribed with Kharoṣṭhī and with their string fastenings and clay seal impressions were discovered by Stein during his expedition in Niya in 1900–1901.⁷⁴⁶ Thanks to the texts, mostly administrative documents, these tablets can be dated to the 3rd century AD of Shan-shan Kingdom.⁷⁴⁷

The clay seal impressions on these tablets are oval or square and preserve figures and busts showing Saka-Parthian, Kushan and classical features.⁷⁴⁸ The variety reflects similarities with those found in the Gandhāran region.⁷⁴⁹ Among the recognisable Greek god figures, Aurel Stein (1907) was most intrigued by the figure of Pallas Athene, while he also mentioned the representations of other classical-derived images, including winged horses, helmeted busts, Hermes, Zeus and Heracles.⁷⁵⁰ These seals were used as a means of authentication, showing how the locals formally incorporated classical motifs into their system, though the date of the seals may be earlier than that of the tablets. Stein (1933) noted that he recognised representations of Heracles on these seal impressions.⁷⁵¹ Although he only specified one of the examples, there are probably two figural types of Heracles.

VII.2.2.1. *Standing*

On the seal impression of tablet N. ii. 2, a nude male figure standing and facing left is identified as Heracles (Cat. No. 291).⁷⁵² From the available image, we cannot tell which standing type this figure corresponds to, whether he carries a club and lionskin or is diademed like those found

⁷⁴⁶ Stein 1907: 344–416.

⁷⁴⁷ Brough 1965: 582–612.

⁷⁴⁸ Stein 1907: 354–358; Rhie 2007: 363.

⁷⁴⁹ Cf. Callieri 1997; Rahman and Falk 2011.

⁷⁵⁰ Stein 1907: 284, Fig. 95, 1933: 99, 104.

⁷⁵¹ Stein 1933: 99.

⁷⁵² Stein 1907: 355.

in Central Asia and North-West India.⁷⁵³ The musculature of the figure seems to suggest more of a Heracleian representation. Similar male figures of classical design are spotted on tablet N. i. 9 (Cat. No. 292) and tablet N. iv. 80 (Cat. No. 293).⁷⁵⁴ These examples are poorly preserved and cannot be further examined.

VII.2.2.2. *Seated*

The seated type is shown on the seal impression of tablet N. xv. 330 (Cat. No. 294). The figure is beardless and nude, seated on a stool and facing right. Stein identified the figure as Eros because of the pattern behind the shoulder, which may be the wing.⁷⁵⁵ Likewise, the identity is uncertain because of the poor condition. What can be said is that this seated type is probably derived from classical art, whether it is associated with the Heracles figure or not and may reflect more broadly the diffusion of classical motifs from Central Asia to China.

VII.2.3. **Textile of gods in Niya**

A rare batik (wax-impregnated dyed textile) fragment, dated to the 2nd/3rd century AD, was discovered in a Later Han Dynasty tomb of a couple (Tomb 59MNM 001), 2 km northwest of the Niya site. This fragment is probably the earliest batik textile found in the Chinese territory and has been suggested to be an import from the Gandhāran region.⁷⁵⁶

Six squares remain on the fragment, only one of which shows a complete image of a bejewelled and haloed nude goddess holding a cornucopia (Cat. No. 295). The pattern in the lower section has been interpreted as a Chinese dragon, an Indian *makara* or a wavy garland surrounded by birds.⁷⁵⁷ The goddess has also been variously identified as Tyche, Hārīti,

⁷⁵³ Stein (1907) mentioned one impression showing Heracles with a club and lionskin, but no corresponding image is found. See Stein 1907: 284, Fig. 95, 1933: 99.

⁷⁵⁴ Stein 1907: 355, Pl. LXXI, nos. N. i. 9, N. iv. 80.

⁷⁵⁵ Stein 1907: 355–356.

⁷⁵⁶ Zhao 2004: 196–197; Rhie 2007: Pl. XI; Hansen 2015: 39; Ge 2015: 113; Wei and Mei 2018: 39–44; Wei, Deng and Mei 2021: 107–113.

⁷⁵⁷ Zhao 2004: 196–197; Rhie 2007: 364.

or Ardoksho because of the iconographic similarities with Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and Kushan representations of goddesses of fertility.⁷⁵⁸

The upper incomplete section shows a checkerboard pattern in one square. In the other square, there are traces of a man's foot, a lion's tail and a paw, which are thought to be related to the themes of Heracles or Dionysus.⁷⁵⁹ Feng Zhao (2004) speculated that the position of these elements indicates the scene of a man strangling a lion, which may be comparable to Greco-Roman mosaic representations of the hero's deed.⁷⁶⁰ Following the Greco-Roman iconography of Heracles' First Labour, Chinese scholars Yilin Wei and Rong Mei (2018) recently proposed an image restoration for the batik which shows Heracles standing and strangling the Nemean Lion from the back (Cat. No. 295a).⁷⁶¹ Although its fragmented state prevents us from understanding what exactly the central scene depicted, we may recall the popularity of representing a goddesses with cornucopia in a pair with other Buddhist male figures or as part of a Tutelary Couple in Kushan art, in which the figural type of Heracles was also frequently presented.⁷⁶² This fragment thus provides important evidence for understanding the transmission of classical elements via Gandhāran artistic motifs to Chinese Central Asia.

VII.2.4. Summary

The earlier Heracles types found in Chinese Central Asia, which are probably not related to Buddhist art, are consistent with some of the Heracleian figural types in Central Asia and North-West India during the first centuries AD. Although only limited examples have survived, a few nude male figures rendered in classical style are still preserved. The so-called child Heracles from Khotan shares some characteristics with the art of the Hellenistic East and, together with the figurine of Serapis and Harpocrates found at the same site, demonstrate that moulds and small artefacts were once brought to China from as far afield as Egypt.

⁷⁵⁸ Laing 1995: 1–18; Zhao 2004: 197.

⁷⁵⁹ Rhie 2007: 364.

⁷⁶⁰ Zhao 2004: 197.

⁷⁶¹ Wei and Mei 2018: 39–44.

⁷⁶² Rhie 2007: 364–365; Chapter VI.

The classical seal impressions on a considerable number of Kharoṣṭhī tablets found in Niya and surrounding areas in the Tarim Basin may have diverse origins. They may have been brought from Central Asia, North-West India, or through a long-distance trade connection from the Mediterranean region. It is significant that these classical seal impressions were officially placed with letters written in the Gāndhārī Prakrit language, which is the same practice shown by the seals and gems found in the contemporary Gandhāran area.⁷⁶³ The batik fragment from the Han Dynasty tomb in Niya, which depicts a goddess with a cornucopia and some Heracleian elements, also illustrates the continuity and acceptance of Gandhāran motifs in the Tarim Basin. The Heracles figure and other seemingly foreign images were thus not necessarily exotic to those who used them daily in the area.

Post-dating these artefacts, the Heracles figure that still retains some classical taste is no longer found in China and beyond in East Asia.⁷⁶⁴ However, an examination of portable objects and other imports provides a glimpse into the circulation of diverse artistic traditions that interacted and manifested in specific media. In particular, the persistence of Heracles' images on silver vessels produced in the Near East or Central Asia reflects the incorporation of Heracleian elements by the elite Iranian circle, resulting in the hybridity of motifs. Meanwhile, the figurines from the Mediterranean and the precious seals from Central Asia and India indicate that the iconography of Heracles was introduced to China through the migration of various nomadic and Sogdian (mercantile) communities, particularly in the context of the secular applied arts.

On the other hand, the adaptations of figural types and iconographic elements derived from the Heracles figure followed the trajectory of artistic representations from Gandhāra to Chinese Central Asia, facilitated by the dissemination of Buddhist art, giving an alternative life to "Heracles"

⁷⁶³ See Chapter V.

⁷⁶⁴ A gold ring inlaid with a blue gem was discovered in the 6th-century tomb of Xu Xianxiu (徐显秀) in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province. Some speculate that the figure on the ring represents Heracles because of the shape of the head, and the figure seems to carry a club-like object. Regardless of whether it represents the Greek hero, the figural type does not correspond to the Heracles figure in the West. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider how Western imports in China were placed in a funerary context. Cf. Zhang and Chang 2003: 53–57.

who travelled as far as East Asia through religion. It is possible that both secular and religious art may have disseminated the Heracles (or modified Heraclean) imagery as far as China, leaving iconographic traces on some Eastern representations along the multiple transmission paths.

Chapter VIII

Buddhist figures with Heracleian features in Chinese Central Asia (4th/5th–10th centuries AD)

In Chapter VII, we highlighted the possibility that Heracles images circulated alongside traded goods along the ancient Silk Road, which connected the Mediterranean region, the Near East, Central Asia, South Asia and China. Another means of introducing Heracles images to China that was also closely related to the Silk Road trade was through Buddhist figural art, which has been generally attributed to the transformation of the Heracles figure in the Far East. The evidence of Buddhist figures with Heracleian features and attributes in Chinese Central Asia (Xinjiang) has been regarded as indicating the initial stage of the adaptation of the Heracles figure within the Chinese context due to the geographical proximity and historical interconnectivity between Central Asia, South Asia, Tibet and China, as well as the transition of Buddhist art from Gandhāra to the Tarim Basin.

This chapter presents the evidence of Buddhist figures that retained Heracleian features found in Chinese Central Asia between the 4th/5th and 10th centuries AD, with a focus on the figurative art traditions and examines their possible influences on the further adaptation of the figure of Heracles in China. Notably, the discussed examples were mostly recovered from the northern route, one of the two principal routes of the Silk Road, whereas no concrete evidence from the southern route has been identified.

With regard to the southern route, while the early evidence of Khotanese art displays certain similarities with Gandhāran art,⁷⁶⁵ the influence of the Gandhāran Heracleian figural types on the Khotanese figural art remains unknown due to lack of evidence. Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that Heracles images may not have been entirely absent from this area. In addition to the non-Buddhist figurine, seal impressions, and the

⁷⁶⁵ Lo Muzio 2022.

textile discussed in Sections VII.2.1VII.2.1. A Khotanese clay figurine of Heracles?– VII.2.3VII.2.3. Textile of gods in Niya, a few known Buddhist relics may also indicate the presence of some small traces of the Heraclean figural types derived from Gandhāran art, such as those on a fragment of an imported miniature shrine⁷⁶⁶ and a bronze figurine that probably represents Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi.⁷⁶⁷ Thus, the first section discusses the potential traces of the Gandhāran-derived Heraclean figural types represented by the scarce evidence in Khotan (South-West Xinjiang), giving a glimpse into the diminishing dissemination of the once popular Gandhāran types of the muscular bearded nude (semi-nude) male figure into Chinese Central Asia.

As most previous studies have suggested, the criteria for recognising a Buddhist figure in Chinese territory as Heraclean are based on similar accoutrements instead of the physiognomy and physique.⁷⁶⁸ Evidence found on the northern Silk Road that meets this criterion in showing a number of different Buddhist figures wearing the lion scalp. In particular, clay heads/busts wearing the lion scalp were discovered at Tumshuq (图木舒克), Kucha (库车, 龟兹) and Turfan (吐鲁番). A painted silk fragment from Turfan shows a similar head with examples of Turfan clay sculpture. Many figures with the lion scalp, including Vajrapāṇi and other *yaṅśas* and demons, appear in the wall paintings of the Buddhist cave complexes at Kucha and Turfan. In a few examples, some figures are thought to carry a Heraclean club.⁷⁶⁹ In Kucha, local art seemed to have developed new pictorial conventions based on non-Buddhist traded objects from Central Asia, adopting some iconographic elements that had originally been part of the Heracles motif. These examples exhibit characteristics reminiscent of pertinent images of the Heracles motif but do not represent the Greek hero, and the shared attributes do not denote exact equivalence in the way they were perceived. Meanwhile, they reflect different regional styles along the northern route at different historical stages, which are explored in this chapter's second section.

⁷⁶⁶ Yoshihide 1999: 11–12, 85–158; Hameed 2015.

⁷⁶⁷ Elikhina 2008: 35, Fig. 10.

⁷⁶⁸ Carter 1995a: 119–140; Hsieh 1997: 32–53; Hsing 2005: 103–154; Yang 2020: 234–247.

⁷⁶⁹ Hsing 2005: 127–128.

VIII.1. Evidence of Gandhāran Heracleian types on the Southern Silk Road?

As noted above, there is no evidence of Buddhist figures with Heracleian features found along the southern route in Chinese Central Asia, although early Khotanese art does bear similarities to Gandhāran art. Nevertheless, given the considerable volume of people and goods passing through this major trade route and the artistic connections established through cultural and religious exchange, a few Buddhist relics may indicate the possibility of the Gandhāran Heracleian types that once circulated on the southern Silk Road.

VIII.1.1. A miniature portable Buddhist shrine

About 27 fragments of portable miniature Buddhist shrines have been found along the Silk Road from Gandhāra and Kashmir to further East.⁷⁷⁰ Among all, at least five schist fragments were recovered from Khotan,⁷⁷¹ and like those found in other places or without provenance, these travelling Buddhist relics serve as important evidence for disseminating the Buddhist doctrine through images. The portable stone shrines discovered in Khotan were crafted from schists accessible in North-West India and were likely imported by monks, pilgrims and merchants travelling between India and China. The iconography of these shrines generally follows the conventions of earlier Gandhāran stone reliefs, while they also exhibit characteristics of the post-Gandhāran and Gupta periods, which has led to the common dating of these shrines to either the 4th/5th or the 7th/8th centuries.⁷⁷²

On one Buddhist diptych (Cat. No. 296) from Gandhāra/Kashmir found in Khotan, we may find two figures sharing a loose schematic connection with the seated and half-length types of Gandhāran Heracleian figures.⁷⁷³ This diptych is carved with images on both sides. The external side

⁷⁷⁰ Hameed 2015.

⁷⁷¹ Stein 1907: 209, Pl. XLVIII; Zwalf 1985: 101, no. 134; Hameed 2015: 195–200, Cat. No. 22; Forte 2015: 156–162.

⁷⁷² Forte 2015: 157–159.

⁷⁷³ See Chapter VI: Sections VI.2.2.1.a) and VI.2.2.1.d) VI.2.2.1.d) Half-length—1.

shows a fully draped male figure seated on a stool with the right hand resting under the chin with a pensive attitude.⁷⁷⁴ On the internal side, divided into two registers, the upper has been identified as the episode of *Māra's Assault*, and the lower represents the *First Sermon*.⁷⁷⁵ Both narrative scenes are reminiscent of some common 2nd-century Gandhāran Buddhist reliefs. In the upper scene, the Buddha is seated in the centre under the Bodhi tree and surrounded by many figures that are now damaged. Following the identification of the scene as *Māra's Assault*, the two figures on either side of the Buddha may be Māra's daughters, but the posture of these two indistinct figures is also vaguely reminiscent of seated attendants of the Buddha, such as the pair of a seated Heracleian figure and a spear-bearer on some Gandhāran reliefs (see Cat. Nos. 208–209). The *First Sermon*, depicted in the lower register of this diptych, may have preserved a half-length bearded type of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, who appears in the background to the left of the Buddha. Nevertheless, the reading of the images remains speculative due to the diptych's deteriorated state.

VIII.1.2. A bronze figurine of Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi?

In light of the archaeological findings in Chinese Central Asia, where Buddhist art displays influences of Gandhāran art, non-nude (or semi-nude) male Buddhist figure with a muscular physique comparable to the Heracles figure has been discovered. Given that Khotanese art had no interest in narrative themes,⁷⁷⁶ it did not adopt the Gandhāran convention of depicting Vajrapāṇi as an attendant of the Buddha in narrative scenes. Consequently, Vajrapāṇi (including the Heracleian types) in this role is not seen in Khotanese art. Nevertheless, the Heracleian figural types derived from Gandhāran art may have been arrived at the Khotan

⁷⁷⁴ Douglas Barrett (1967) identified the seated figure as the Brahmin ascetic Asita because of the Brahmin's water pot beneath the stool, followed by Rowan (1985), Zwalf (1985) and Forte (2015). Muhammad Hameed (2015) proposed that the water pot might also indicate the figure as Indra. Barrett 1967: 12–13; Rowan 1985: 256–257; Zwalf 1985: 101; Forte 2015: 160; Hameed 2015: 196–197.

⁷⁷⁵ Barrett 1967: 12; Rowan 1985: 257; Zwalf 1985: 101; Hameed 2015: 197–200.

⁷⁷⁶ Lo Muzio 2022.

oasis due to the dissemination of portable Buddhist relics, such as the portable Buddhist shrine mentioned above.

Among metal objects found at Khotan, one unique bronze figurine (Cat. No. 297), probably dated between the 4th and 6th centuries AD,⁷⁷⁷ may capture some features of the nude standing type of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi in Gandhāran art (see Section VI.2.2.1.c) VI.2.2.1.c) Standing— 1). The figurine shows a nude (or probably wearing a short loincloth) beardless male figure standing frontally on a pedestal. His hairstyle is that of a brāhmin and behind a head nimbus. His left arm is akimbo, and his right holds a variant of the Gandhāran *vajra*, which has taken on the “double spear-point” form.⁷⁷⁸ The overall style of this bronze figurine is Indian, and its iconography may indicate the figure as the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi,⁷⁷⁹ a Buddhist deity in *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, rather than the Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi.⁷⁸⁰ Similar to other metal objects found in Khotan, this figurine might have been used as an amulet,⁷⁸¹ affirming the possible identification as a Bodhisattva, though not necessarily as Vajrapāṇi because there are various other figures depicted holding a *vajra* in Khotan.⁷⁸²

Besides the similarity with the representations of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi in the Buddhist art of post-Gandhāran India and its neighbouring areas affiliated with *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhist schools, this Khotanese example also seems to present some classical influences. The figure’s S-shaped pose can be perceived either as a *tribhaṅga* or in contraposto.⁷⁸³ As observed in the cases of the individual Heracleian reliefs from Buddhist sites in Chapter V, the S-shaped pose can sometimes be

⁷⁷⁷ Elikhina 2011: 336, Fig. 3.3.

⁷⁷⁸ This variant of the *vajra* appears in other places in India, see Giuliano 2001: 269–278. A clay fragment of a hand holding a similar type of *vajra* is found at Karashar in Xinjiang, see Hermitage Museum: IIIIII-584. In Kucha, many Vajrapāṇi figures hold this type of *vajra*. For the various representations of *vajra* in Khotan, see Williams 1973: 109–154.

⁷⁷⁹ Elikhina 2008: 35; cf. Forte 2015: fn. 44.

⁷⁸⁰ For the Buddhist deity Vajrapāṇi, see Bhattacharya 1995–1996: 323–354.

⁷⁸¹ Cf. Forte 2015: 166–169.

⁷⁸² Williams 1973: 109–154.

⁷⁸³ Elikhina 2008: 35.

interpreted in these two ways.⁷⁸⁴ Furthermore, the figure's musculature seems to be emphasised, somewhat different from the Indian representations of the figure of Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi.⁷⁸⁵ In other words, this Khotanese figurine might have been an eclectic case in which a Gandhāran Heracleian figural type was mixed with Indian Bodhisattva iconography and style. As Julia Elikhina (2008) pointed out, Vajrapāṇi is not listed as one of the protectors of Khotan in the Tibetan records. Thus, this bronze figurine might have been an exceptional case.⁷⁸⁶

Due to the scarcity of evidence, the various translated Heracleian types in Gandhāran Buddhist art were seemingly not popular in the Khotan oasis. Nevertheless, given that many Khotanese Buddhist deities were introduced and preserved in Dunhuang, an area that had close connections with Khotan around the 9th/10th century AD, it also does not seem that all the Heracleian types adopted by Buddhist figurative art had disappeared completely on the southern route. In Chapter IX, we will examine the evidence of Buddhist figures with Heracleian features reappearing in Dunhuang, where many lion scalp clad attendants accompany one of the divine protector deities of Khotan, Vaiśravaṇa, who also appears on the northern route.⁷⁸⁷

VIII.2. Evidence of figures with Heracleian features on the Northern Silk Road

On the northern route, a fair number of Buddhist figures discovered in Tumshuq, Kucha, and Turfan, dating approximately from the 4th/5th to 10th centuries AD, are represented with Heracleian accoutrements or have taken indirect influences from the Heracles motif. These figures are found in clay sculptures, paintings on silk and murals. They are typically depicted wearing lion scalps. Owing to the transitional sequence of artistic representations from Gandhāra over Kucha to Turfan, these Heracleian features have been interpreted as adopting the Gandhāran

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. Chapter V: Section V.1.3.3.c).

⁷⁸⁵ Cf. Bhattacharya 1995–1996: 323–354.

⁷⁸⁶ Elikhina 2008: 35.

⁷⁸⁷ Cf. Forte 2022: 118–152.

pictorial convention of incorporating visual elements derived from the Heracles motif.⁷⁸⁸

However, the differences between the pertinent Gandhāran reliefs (discussed in Chapter VI) and the figures with Heracleian features on the northern route are evident in many aspects. In particular, the latter examples show no interest in following the classical representation of Heracleian musculature and facial features that have survived in the Gandhāran examples; they reflect more local figural styles blended with Indian, Iranian and Chinese influences from different periods. From an iconographic viewpoint, although these figures from the northern route meet the criterion of having attributes similar to those of Gandhāran Heracleian figures, only some of them follow the already established Indian pictorial formulas. The media of most wall paintings, a few clay sculptures and one silk painting also differ significantly from the stone reliefs of North-West India, which should be considered when comparing the evidence from India and China.

As previous chapters have shown, figures bearing Heracleian features are referred to by different names depending on the context, with many of their identities and roles remaining unknown or speculative. Similarly, the figures that retain Heracles' accoutrements on the northern route are labelled differently. Some of them can be identified as Vajrapāṇi, as they follow somewhat the Gandhāran pictorial convention, while others have been vaguely suggested to be demonic figures or identified as other Buddhist figures, such as Gandharva or a companion of Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa. To date, there has been no consensus on the names and identities of these figures.

VIII.2.1. Clay sculptures with lion scalps

This section presents three representative examples of clay sculptures of figures' heads wearing lion (feline) scalps from Tumshuq, Kucha and Turfan. The three clay heads' facial features are distinct from those of Heracles, and their expression and characteristics are considered to represent *yakṣas* or demons. Despite sharing the lion scalp and some small details, these sculptures differ in overall style, indicating the dynamic

⁷⁸⁸ Carter 1995a: 119–140; Hsieh 1997: 32–53; Lim 2004: 161–185; Hsing 2005: 103–154.

nature of different artistic influences along the northern route and how they might have been blended according to particular artistic conventions.

VIII.2.1.1. *Tumshuq (Tumshuk, Tumshuke)*

A clay head with a lion scalp (Cat. No. 298) (now housed in the Musée Guimet) was discovered by Paul Pelliot in 1906 in Temple “I” at Toqquz-Sarai, Tumshuq, situated at the western end of the northern route in the region.⁷⁸⁹ The site is dated between the 4th and 6th centuries AD, which provides a basic chronology for the sculpture.⁷⁹⁰

This sculpture presents a beardless, youthful and chubby face. The hair is stylised and consists of rows of small curls. Two tiny tusks protrude from the half-open mouth showing teeth and the earlobes are elongated. His slightly bulging brow and undulating lips convey a subtle expression, which is typically indicative of a demonic face. Such facial features and expressions reveal similarities with those of stucco demon heads from Haḍḍa in Afghanistan and *yakṣas* faces on the Kucha murals.⁷⁹¹ The lion scalp adorning the top of the head shows the beast’s open mouth with prominent teeth, but it is unclear if the lion’s paws were tied beneath the figure’s head in the manner of Heracles depictions. The presence of the lion scalp may bring to mind the type of lion scalp commonly featured with the Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi,⁷⁹² but the physiognomy of the Tumshuq head is markedly distinct from the majority of Gandhāran Vajrapāṇis and bears no resemblance to Heracles.

Taking into account the context of the head, one hypothesis put forward is that it is associated with the representation of the Buddhist narrative. According to Jacques Giès and Monique Cohen (1996), the head belonged to a figure that probably appeared on the bench running along the wall in Temple “I”, which may depict some Buddhist narrative

⁷⁸⁹ Paul-David, Hallade and Hambis 1961–1964: 344–345, Pls. XXXVIII, XXXIX, Figs. 81–83; Giès and Cohen 1996: 286–287; TNM 1996: 159, no. 174; Rhie 2002: 510; Hsing 2005: 143–144, Figs. 55–56.

⁷⁹⁰ Paul-David *et al.* 1961–1964: 344–345, Pls. XXXVIII, XXXIX, Figs. 81–83; Giès and Cohen 1996: 286–287; Rhie 2002: 510.

⁷⁹¹ Barthoux 1930: Pl. 99e; Tissot 2006: 454, no. K.p.Ha.1280.347.

⁷⁹² Giès and Cohen 1996: 286–287.

scenes showing groups of figures, such as the Buddha's preaching scenes or *Māra's Assault*.⁷⁹³ Pierre Cambon (1996) suggested that the head originated from the demon depicted with a lion scalp in Gandhāran representations of Māra's troops.⁷⁹⁴ In light of the several examples of lion scalp figures observed on the Gandhāran reliefs of *Māra's Assault* and the late Gandhāran style of sculptures from Tumshuq, it is possible that the head belongs to a demon in Māra's army.⁷⁹⁵ Nevertheless, as presented in Chapter VI, lion scalp figures are not limited to a single identity or a single type of figure in Gandhāran art. In the absence of a reconstruction of the wall in Temple "I", the clay head may also belong to other narrative scenes or, alternatively, a non-narrative figure.

VIII.2.1.2. *Kucha*

In the cave complex of Kizil, situated in the Kucha region on the northern route that traversed the Taklamakan Desert, Le Coq discovered a painted, dried clay head adorned with a lion scalp (Cat. No. 299) within a cave that was designated "letzte Höhle, letzte Anlage" (last cave of the last complex section) during the German Turfan Expeditions (1902–1914).⁷⁹⁶ The head, currently housed in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, is accompanied by a limited amount of information derived from Le Coq's report, which recorded several other clay-based heads found in the same complex and dated to the 6th or 7th century AD. Nevertheless, this sculpture is one of the rare examples that has retained its original colours to a considerable extent. It is important to note that, similar to ancient Greek and Roman sculptures, most Buddhist sculptures from Central Asia and North-West India were also once vibrantly painted and lost their colours over time (see Cat. No. 247). As a result of such deterioration, much information originally conveyed through colours has become obscured, affecting our modern views and understandings. The preserved colour of this head allows for the observation of details that are not present in the colourless sculptures of the lion scalp figures.

The head and neck were coated with a thin layer of white paint, while the eyeballs were painted in a thicker layer of white with black pupils.

⁷⁹³ Giès and Cohen 1996: 286–287.

⁷⁹⁴ Cambon 1996: 286; cf. Rhie 2002: 510.

⁷⁹⁵ Cf. Grünwedel 1901: 96, Fig. 48; Ingholt 1957: Fig. 64; Santoro 1991: Fig. 3.

⁷⁹⁶ Le Coq 1922: 23, no. 26a. The location of this cave is nowadays unknown.

The figure's brow ridges, rims of the eyelids, moustache and the gaps between the teeth are delineated by black lines. Compared to the Tumshuq head, the Kizil head is notable for wrinkles on the cheeks and the absence of two tusks. However, it shares a similar peculiar expression, evident in the upward-looking eyes and the exaggeratedly leering mouth. Le Coq (1922) has described this expression as mockingly brutal.⁷⁹⁷ A row of blue curly patterns between the lion's nostrils and the man's forehead may signify the figure's hair. The lion scalp adorning this head is also depicted unconventionally — rather than a scalp helmet, it seems to imitate the beast's fur, framing both sides of the face.

As in the case of the Tumshuq head, the lion scalp on the Kizil head also brings to mind the iconography of Heracles, even though the face reveals no Heracleian features. Le Coq noted that this type can be traced back to the depictions of Heracles, possibly also on coins that were decorated with a lion scalp figure.⁷⁹⁸ Even so, the figure's identity remains unknown.

Notably, another clay head with uncertain headgear from the same complex presents an almost identical face (Cat. No. 300), which has been suspected to be a demon or Vajrapāṇi through comparisons with a demon wearing a triangular helmet in Māra's army on the Gandhāran relief fragment in the Lahore Museum (see Cat. No. 201) and helmeted Vajrapāṇis on the Bezeklik murals in Turfan from the Chinese Tang Dynasty.⁷⁹⁹ It can be seen that such facial representation on the two Kizil heads was relatively common in Chinese Central Asian figural art, and it frequently appears on the faces of demons or *yakṣas*.

VIII.2.1.3. Turfan

In the Museum für Asiatische Kunst collection, another lion scalp clay head (Cat. No. 301), also discovered by Le Coq, was recovered from Temple No. 7 of the Sengim-aghiz Caves in Gaochang (also called Khocho, Karakhoja), Turfan.⁸⁰⁰ Given that the site dates back to the

⁷⁹⁷ Le Coq 1922: 23, no. 26a.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 23.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*: 24, no. 26d.

⁸⁰⁰ Le Coq 1913: Tafel. 55n. For the survey on Temple no. 7 of the Sengim-aghiz Caves, see Li 2020: 23–32.

period when Gaochang was a Tang prefecture “Xizhou” (7th–8th centuries AD) that lasted until the Uyghur Kingdom (9th–13th centuries AD),⁸⁰¹ the clay head has been estimated to date to approximately the 9th/10th century AD.⁸⁰²

Since its discovery, this head has been identified as a demon.⁸⁰³ The face is depicted as ferocious, with tiny tusks protruding from the mouth like those observed in the Tumshuq example, and with exaggerated brow ridges comparable to those seen in demonic heads from Kucha. Additionally, the state of preservation of the head at the time of its excavation also left traces of colour. Le Coq (1913) documented that the face was painted reddish-brown, the eyes were white with black pupils, the eyebrows, moustache and goatee were delineated with green lines, and the tiny tusks were painted white. The lion scalp may have also been reddish-brown, with traces of green paint remaining on the nostrils.⁸⁰⁴

Although the Turfan head shares a few similar features with the examples from Tumshuq and Kucha, its style had undergone a radical transformation, exhibiting distinctive characteristics that are more likely to be associated with the wrathful appearance of Buddhist figures in representations drawn from *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* influenced Buddhist art. Such wrathful and terrifying forms were derived from *yakṣa* figures in India, employed in various Buddhist figures with protective and apotropaic functions, and have been preserved in the pictorial tradition of Buddhist figural art from Tibet, China’s Central Plain, and as far as Korea and Japan.⁸⁰⁵ In East Asia, some Buddhist deities in the wrathful form sometimes adopted the lion scalp, which will be discussed in Chapter IX.

⁸⁰¹ Li 2003: 157; cf. Xia 2022: 201–224. For the relationship between Tang China and Turfan, see Wang 2013.

⁸⁰² Le Coq 1925: 62, Fig. 80. See: <https://id.smb.museum/object/1252586> (accessed on 31 July 2024).

⁸⁰³ Le Coq 1913: Tafel. 55n; 1925: 62, Fig. 80.

⁸⁰⁴ Le Coq 1913: Tafel. 55n.

⁸⁰⁵ Cf. Linrothe 1999: 20–21.

VIII.2.2. Lion scalp figure on a silk fragment from Turfan

A silk fragment originally belonging to a painted banner (Cat. No. 302), discovered in Gaochang at the same time as the clay head (Cat. No. 301), also depicts a male head wearing a lion scalp,⁸⁰⁶ with the general technique showing the influence of Chinese painting. Although the painted silk is a different medium to the Turfan clay head, the two share some common iconographic features. These include the general colour palette, the full face and lips, the bulging brow, the moustache and goatee drawn with strokes, and the same type of lion scalp (the tawny skin and black patterns seem to indicate the scalp of a tiger instead of a lion). Differing from the Turfan head, the painted figure has almond-shaped eyes rather than round, large eyes, and he does not have fangs protruding from the mouth. Neither of them displays the leering smile that is characteristic of the clay heads from Tumshuq and Kizil. Besides these differences, the two heads exhibit a high degree of similarity. Willibald Veit (1982) suggested that the face depicted on the silk fragment exhibits an almost benevolent appearance, with only a slight sceptical expression due to the brow.⁸⁰⁷ The face indeed resembles East Asian depictions of some Buddhist celestial beings with martial power (the class of Devas).

Since the figure on the silk fragment has neither a subtle smile nor a pair of tusks, it seems to rule out the possibility of identifying him as a demon. The figure has been interpreted as either Gandharva or a companion of Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa.⁸⁰⁸ In contrast to the conventional approach of identifying the aforementioned clay sculptures through tracing the lion scalp figure motif back to Indian and Central Asian art, the two identifications were based on the iconographic and stylistic similarities with Buddhist figurative motifs from the area that lies east of the Tarim Basin or from China's Central Plain. The identification of this figure as Gandharva may have been influenced by the iconography of the *Eight Devas* (God and Dragon of Eight Types, Tianlong Babu) from Dunhuang

⁸⁰⁶ Veit 1982: 185, no. 123; TNM 1996: 163, no. 181; Haesner 1996: 294–295, no. 224; Hsieh 1997: 37–38, Fig. 7; Hsing 2005: 140–142, Fig. 51; Abdullaev 2007: 574, Fig. 22.

⁸⁰⁷ Veit 1982: 185, no. 123.

⁸⁰⁸ For the identification of Gandharva, see Veit 1982: 185, No. 123; Hsing 2005: 140–142, Fig. 51. For the identification of a companion of Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa, see Haesner 1996: 294–295; Abdullaev 2007: 574, Fig. 22.

and Sichuan, which was prevalent in the Tang and Five Dynasties (7th–10th centuries AD).⁸⁰⁹ The more widely accepted identification of the figure as a companion of Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa is related to the consistent representation of a tiger scalp figure accompanying Vaiśravaṇa in the art of Dunhuang.⁸¹⁰ This tradition was closely related to Khotan on the southern route and the Tibetan Empire. A group of pertinent examples are compared and further discussed in Chapter IX.

As Chhaya Haesner (1996) observed, a comparison of the lion scalp figures from west to east reveals that while the lion (or tiger) scalp remained consistent, the figures who wore it underwent significant changes over time and across cultural boundaries, including alterations to their attributes and divine hierarchy.⁸¹¹ It is also noteworthy that the clay and painted silk examples from Turfan, along with some of the murals from the same context, suggest that this specific representation from Chinese Central Asia was not necessarily created prior to those from China's Central Plain. This indicates that the Chinese reception and adaptation of the Heracleian elements were by no means following a single West to East trajectory or a linear process.

VIII.2.3. Heracleian elements in Buddhist wall paintings

In the ruins of Buddhist cave complexes situated along the northern Silk Road, many figures depicted in Buddhist wall paintings appear to have been indirectly influenced by the Heracles motif. Notable examples include depictions of *yakṣas* and demons wearing the lion scalp as their headdress, similar to examples discussed above, including Vajrapāṇis and other unidentified figures. Some spirits are depicted holding a type of knobbed club that has been argued to be reminiscent of the club of Heracles. These figures with presumed Heracleian accoutrements are distributed primarily in Kucha (and a few in Turfan) and exhibit a variety of types. Therefore, this section focuses on the possible adaptations of the Heracleian elements that survived in the Kucha region.

⁸⁰⁹ Veit 1982: 185, no. 123. For the study of the concept and iconography of the Eight Devas, see Zhu 2023: 115–174.

⁸¹⁰ Haesner 1996: 294–295. Cf. Williams 1973: 134; Ma and Sha 2014: 15–22; Huo 2016: 24–43.

⁸¹¹ Haesner 1996: 295.

Additionally, the evidence from Kucha indicates that the influence of the Heracles motif in the East may have extended beyond similar figural types or attributes. It is possible that certain iconographic elements that originally belonged to the narrative arts with the figure of Heracles were meticulously manipulated and transformed by the Kuchean artists into new conventions for specific Buddhist themes with no iconographic precedent. This aspect has yet to be explored by scholarship.

VIII.2.3.1. *Lion scalp*

Among the numerous murals in the Buddhist rock monasteries of the Kucha region, a number of lion scalp figures have been spotted in the caves of Kizil, Kumtura and Simsim. Following the conventional categorisation of the local artistic styles of the Kuchean murals — namely, the First and Second Indo-Iranian Styles — the images of these lion scalp figures are attributed to the latter, thereby dating them approximately to the 6th/7th century AD.⁸¹²

While various factors may account for the thematic and stylistic differences between the Gandhāran reliefs and Kuchean murals, it has been widely acknowledged that many Kuchean paintings had adopted the pictorial tradition established in Gandhāra.⁸¹³ A comparative analysis may, therefore, offer insight into the understanding of each school. In this instance, given the particular consistency in the use of the lion scalp on certain figures, especially the figure of Vajrapāṇi, which can be traced back to the Gandhāran sculptural evidence, it is necessary to examine the Kuchean variations by referencing the several Gandhāran Heracleian types discussed in Chapter VI. Meanwhile, the Kuchean evidence also illustrates some distinctive developments exclusive to this regional art.

In the following discussion, the Kuchean lion scalp figures are divided into two groups: Vajrapāṇis and other figures. This classification distinguishes between recognisable types and those that have not yet been precisely identified. It should be noted that, in Kucha, the lion scalp is shared by the figures of the *yakṣa* class, regardless of whether it

⁸¹² In this thesis, the approximate dating of the Kuchean murals follows German research; see Le Coq and Waldschmidt 1933: 24–31; Zin 2023: 40. For a summary of all the theories of the dating of the murals of Kizil, see Liao 2012: 6–16.

⁸¹³ Zin 2013: 35–66, 2018: 103–122.

represents Vajrapāṇi or not. In contrast to the Gandhāran Vajrapāṇis that adopted several classical forms, which may have resulted in the hesitation in firm identification, the nature of the *yakṣas* of the lion scalp figures is clearly evident in Kucha.⁸¹⁴

VIII.2.3.1.a) Vajrapāṇis

Images of Vajrapāṇi wearing a lion scalp with paws knotted in front of the chest mainly feature in the seated and half-length types, which are found in **Kizil Caves 97, 123, 175 and 188**; at **Simsim**, they are depicted in **Caves 26 and 41**. In general, several characteristics of the Kuchean Vajrapāṇi figure are similar to those of the Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi. The Kuchean Vajrapāṇi figure bears the Gandhāran type of symmetrical *vajra* with additional ornamentation (pearls), appears as the Buddha's close attendant in nearly all sermon scenes (the Parinirvāṇa cycles and non-narrative scenes), and is split into two avatars when in action. As with the various forms of the Gandhāran Vajrapāṇi, the Kuchean Vajrapāṇi is also presented in multiple ways, with the lion scalp being one such characteristic.⁸¹⁵

However, comparing the Kuchean paintings with the Gandhāran reliefs regarding the figure of Vajrapāṇi with Heracleian features reveals a multitude of distinctions. The most striking difference between these figures and Heracles is that they bear no resemblance to the Greek hero's traditional appearance. They are adorned with head nimbi and are beardless, exhibiting facial features similar to those of the Tumshuq clay head, including a slightly bulging brow, pointed ears and elongated earlobes. Furthermore, Kuchean paintings show no interest in "copying" the musculature of the Gandhāran Heracleian figures; instead, one of the common appearances of Vajrapāṇi in Kucha is illustrated with a double chin and a round belly. Notably, these figures are also never depicted entirely nude. In addition to the lion scalp headdress, which is sometimes embellished with floral motifs, they are attired in various ways, with accessories such as pearl chains crossing the chest, calf warmers or sandals. Occasionally, a *chauri* or a peacock feather fan is held in the other hand. In contrast to the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, who sometimes carries a

⁸¹⁴ Zin 2023: 56, 86.

⁸¹⁵ For the main three types of Vajrapāṇi's appearance in Kucha, see Zin 2023: 56–57.

club, no evidence exists to suggest that the Kuchean Vajrapāṇi had adopted this attribute. Nevertheless, the knobbed club is frequently depicted alongside other deities and spirits in the wall paintings of Kucha, which may be interpreted as a vague allusion to the Heracles motif.

VIII.2.3.1.a) — 1. Seated

The seated type of the Kuchean lion scalp Vajrapāṇi might have adapted one of the basic postures of the Vajrapāṇi figure from Gandhāran art, which represents Vajrapāṇi with one hand holding a *vajra* placed on the knee and positioned next to the Buddha. The identified examples of this type in **Kizil Cave 175** (Cat. No. 303), and **Simsim Caves 26** (Cat. No. 304) and **41** (Cat. No. 305) are represented as one of a pair of figures, a composition common in Gandhāran art.⁸¹⁶

In addition to the noted visual features that distinguish the Kuchean lion scalp Vajrapāṇi from the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, such as the facial expression, the attire and the round belly depicted in **Kizil Cave 175** and **Simsim Cave 41**, other alterations can be observed. In terms of the iconographic elements, unlike the Gandhāran reliefs, which usually portray the Heracles-Vajrapāṇi figures seated or squatting on stones or rocks, the lion scalp Vajrapāṇis in this context are depicted seated with legs crossed on an hourglass-shaped stool, which originated in South Asia.⁸¹⁷

As discussed in Chapter VI, in Gandhāra, the seated type of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi is typically paired with the figure of the so-called Pāñcika holding a spear in some narrative scenes. In Kucha, the lion scalp Vajrapāṇi is cast in the similar role and placed in landscape scenes associated with the episode of *Indraśaila*, as evidenced by the paintings on the rear wall of the main chamber in **Kizil Cave 175** and **Simsim Cave 41**.⁸¹⁸ In such instances, the spearman previously paired with Vajrapāṇi is replaced by another figure bearing a *vajra*, thus forming a pair of symmetrical figures of two Vajrapāṇis dressed in different attire. Some have identified these two Vajrapāṇis in Kucha as representing two distinct

⁸¹⁶ See Chapter VI: Section VI.2.2.1VI.2.2.1. Bearded (aged).

⁸¹⁷ Grünwedel 1912: Fig. 423.

⁸¹⁸ Zin 2023: 366–368.

types of Vajrapāṇi based on Chinese Buddhist literature.⁸¹⁹ The lion scalp Vajrapāṇi is identified as Vajrapāṇibalin, while the other in military attire and wearing a crown-shaped helmet (or hat) is designated as Vajrapāṇi Guhyapāda.⁸²⁰ However, the two names do not explain the multitude of Vajrapāṇis in Kucha, and no literary evidence provides further information on the iconography of either Vajrapāṇibalin or Vajrapāṇi Guhyapāda.

Nevertheless, the specific *yakṣa* role in the *Indraśaila* from Gandhāra to Kucha appears to have retained a connection with the iconography of Heracles. Recall that in the Gandhāran representations of this scene,⁸²¹ the two *yakṣa* figures seated on each side of the Buddha, regardless of whether they hold a *vajra* or not, may have been associated with different characteristics attributed to Heracles. The figure is sometimes depicted wearing a lion scalp and holding a club simultaneously but without a *vajra* (see Cat. No. 210). In other instances, he is portrayed as a *vajra*-bearer whose posture, musculature and beard resemble the Greek hero or the “spearman” is depicted holding a Heracleian knobbed club instead of a spear (see Cat. Nos. 209, 211). In other words, the representation of the *yakṣa* figure in the *Indraśaila* had undergone experimentation with several iconographic features of Heracles to shape this specific role. The lion scalp headdress, one of the select Heracleian elements derived from the Gandhāran pictorial tradition, had probably become more stabilised in Kucha. Meanwhile, on the one hand, the Kucheian painters had developed a new form of depicting two Vajrapāṇis, and on the other hand, paired the lion scalp Vajrapāṇi with a monk, such as in **Simsim Cave 26**.

VIII.2.3.1.a) – 2. Half-length

The half-length lion scalp Vajrapāṇi is represented in the wall paintings in **Kizil Caves 97** (Cat. No. 306), **123** (Cat. No. 307) and **188** (Cat. No. 308). These examples also reveal some continuity of certain pictorial traditions extending from Gandhāra to Kucha. As with the Gandhāran reliefs, the half-length type in Kucha is also depicted in the life stories of the Buddha,

⁸¹⁹ Huo 2005: 1–7. Cf. Foru niepan miji jingang lishi alian jing, T 394; Yamano 2001: 211–228.

⁸²⁰ Huo 2005: 1–7.

⁸²¹ See Chapter VI: Section VI.2.2.1.a) VI.2.2.1.a) Seated— 2.

including some preaching and conversion scenes.⁸²² Another tradition from Gandhāra is evident in the Kuchean paintings, with multiple half-length Vajrapāṇis accompanying a row of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.⁸²³

In **Kizil Cave 97**, the painting in the lunettes above the cult niche represents the subjugation of the six heretics in which Vajrapāṇi is depicted twice: the one with a lion scalp remains close to the Buddha and the second (likely in military attire) flies and brandishes his *vajra* at the heads of the heretics.⁸²⁴ The representation of Vajrapāṇi in action corresponds to the Buddhist legend,⁸²⁵ while the appearance of two Vajrapāṇis follows the pictorial convention established in Gandhāran art when Vajrapāṇi is required to be shown in action, as evidenced by the scene of the *Conversion of Apalāla* (see Cat. No. 255). The distinction between the Gandhāran convention and the Kuchean paintings lies in the representation of the two avatars “split” by Vajrapāṇi. In Gandhāran art, the two avatars are depicted in a single form, whereas in **Kizil 97**, they are represented in two distinct forms that closely resemble the pair of seated Vajrapāṇis depicted in **Kizil Cave 175** and **Simsim Cave 41**.⁸²⁶ Whether there was any specific meaning of the attendant avatar acquired the lion scalp is unknown, but it seems that in all Kuchean paintings, this head-dress is not associated with action but rather status.

Given that Vajrapāṇi is almost never absent in the *First Semon* in Gandhāran art, it is unsurprising that the lion scalp type is also depicted in this episode in Kucha, which is attested by the paintings on the front wall in **Kizil Cave 123**. In this instance, Vajrapāṇi, situated behind the seated Buddha, grasps a *vajra* in his left hand and wields a *chauri* in his right. This conventional representation of a guardian figure wearing the lion scalp and wielding a *vajra* and a *chauri* has been well-preserved in the wall paintings in Kucha and continued to influence the figures of

⁸²² See Chapter VI: Section VI.2.2.1.d) VI.2.2.1.d) Half-length— 1.

⁸²³ See Chapter VI: Section VI.2.2.1.d) — 3.

⁸²⁴ A comparable flying Vajrapāṇi in military attire is found in Kizil Cave 80, see Zin 2023: Fig. 125.

⁸²⁵ For the incident recorded in Mongolian, see Frye 2006: 49–65; in Chinese, see *Xian yu jing*, T 202.

⁸²⁶ Huo 2005: 1–7.

Vajrapāṇis and Lokapālas (and their retinues) in their military aspects in the wall paintings of Turfan, such as those in the Pranidhi scenes.⁸²⁷

Another example in Kucha that is clearly influenced by Gandhāran art is presented by the repetitive figural pattern of a row of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, each accompanied by a different type of half-length Vajrapāṇi. In **Kizil Cave 188**, several half-length Vajrapāṇis, including one wearing the lion scalp, appear behind a group of standing Buddhas. The overall composition is reminiscent of Gandhāran reliefs of the *Past Seven Buddhas* with the Buddha of the Future Maitreya or merely a row of standing Buddhas.⁸²⁸ Although the lion scalp type is not found in this representation among the extant Gandhāran reliefs, the restored images in **Kizil 188** closely resemble the relief (Cat. No. 243) in the Lahore Museum.

VIII.2.3.1.b) Other lion scalp figures

In Gandhāran art, in addition to the lion scalp Vajrapāṇi, other figures commonly depicted wearing this headdress include the “Atlantes” and certain demonic individuals in Māra’s army.⁸²⁹ While these two types are not present in the corresponding narratives depicted in Kuchean murals, the Gandhāran tradition of employing the lion scalp element on various mythical figures or creatures was adopted in Kucha, particularly in the representations of large groups of figures centred around the Buddha. Although some have postulated that they may also represent Vajrapāṇi,⁸³⁰ it is difficult to ascertain their identities without the *vajra*, which leaves them with vague identities as a class of *yakṣas* or demons based on their appearance or narrative contexts. Most of them are half-length and usually appear in group portraits. A smaller number of examples of a whole figure also reveal a certain pattern of employing the lion scalp.

⁸²⁷ Le Coq 1913: Tafel 17.

⁸²⁸ See Chapter VI: Section VI.2.2.1.d) VI.2.2.1.d) Half-length— 3.

⁸²⁹ See Chapter VI: Sections VI.1.2.1.b) and VI.1.5.2.a)VI.1.5.2.a) Lion scalp.

⁸³⁰ Huo 2005: 6.

VIII.2.3.1.b) – 1. Half-length

In scenes of large groups of figures surrounding the Buddha, a lion scalp *yakṣa* or demon sometimes emerges half-length as one of the group members. The appearance of this type of figure is comparable to that of the lion scalp Vajrapāṇi in Kucha, as both are typically depicted with *yakṣa* features. The most well-preserved examples of these figures can be found in murals from **Kizil Caves 178** (Cat. Nos. 309–310) and **224** (Cat. No. 311). In these cases, the lion scalp individual is commonly placed in a large group of figures, including many Hindu deities.⁸³¹ According to Grünwedel's early records (1912), a lion scalp "demon" was discovered in **Kizil Cave 80** (Cat. No. 312).⁸³² There are likely more examples of this type than those preserved, but many are now too damaged to be identified.⁸³³

In the main chamber of **Kizil Cave 178**, which was originally decorated with two rows of sermon scenes, the lion's scalp *yakṣa* (or demon) appears on both the right and the left sidewalls. The left sidewall represents the Four Heavenly Kings with their retinues surrounding the seated Buddha, and the lion scalp figure is depicted in the upper left quarter of the paintings behind Virūpākṣa, the Heavenly King from the West and leader of the *nāgas*.⁸³⁴ On the right sidewall, the same character emerges in another sermon scene, where the seated Buddha is talking to a monk.

Unlike Vajrapāṇi, the two lion scalp figures in **Kizil 178** are without head nimbi, differentiating them from gods and monks in the same scene. Each figure is depicted with a bare upper body and bright skin, wearing a lion scalp and earrings. The one on the right sidewall is also draped with a half-transparent garment over the arms. It should be noted that the lion scalp figure is often accompanied by another type of demonic individual with dark blue (or black) skin, long hair and a distinctive

⁸³¹ For the study on the Hindu deities in Kizil Cave 178, see Konczak 2015: 349–372.

⁸³² Grünwedel 1912: Fig. 221; Le Coq 1925: Fig. 79.

⁸³³ The lion scalp figure making a gesture of *añjali-mudra* is also possibly depicted in a sermon scene in Kizil Cave 192.

⁸³⁴ Zin 2023: 453–454.

feature of two “feathers” above the forehead.⁸³⁵ The elements of the lion scalp and the two “feathers” appear to be a relatively common choice for depicting a pair of *yakṣas*, one with lighter skin and another with tanned skin, which is invariably present in the standing type described below.

A frequently depicted gesture of the lion scalp figure shows two hands folded, making the *añjali-mudra*, which denotes the act of hearing the sermon. This depiction appears on the right sidewall in **Kizil 178**, in Grünwedel’s line drawing of **Kizil 80**⁸³⁶ and another wall painting in **Kizil 224**.⁸³⁷ Similar to **Kizil 178**, the figure in **Kizil 224** is also positioned in the middle of a large group of supernatural beings and is depicted with pointed ears and canine teeth, recalling the Tumshuq clay head type. Although the narrative scenes from the latter two examples remain unidentified due to damage and unclear condition, the lion scalp individual seems to be a regular character in the scenes showing various deities and creatures paying homage to the Buddha.⁸³⁸

VIII.2.3.1.b) – 2. *Standing*

As we have seen in **Kizil 178**, two *yakṣa*-like figures, one with white skin and wearing a lion scalp and the other with dark skin and wearing the two “feathers”, are often depicted next to each other. Likewise, the lion scalp standing type figure is also found together with the figure adorned with two “feathers”. On the ceiling of **Kumtura Cave 34**, which depicts many spirit deities, these two figures appear one after the other (Cat. No.

⁸³⁵ The figure with two “feathers” is also seen in many other wall paintings in Kucha, such as on the front wall in Simsim Cave 48 (Zin 2023: Drawing 147). Cf. Grünwedel 1912: Figs. 304, 398. Grünwedel (1920) suspected that this feature shown in the Kuchean paintings was a local misunderstanding of the depictions of a satyr’s horn. Konczak-Nagel (2021) has pointed out that this particular feature is not recorded in any corresponding Buddhist textual sources and has suggested that the depiction may have been based on ancient Dionysian models from the Mediterranean. See Grünwedel 1920: 38; Konczak-Nagel 2021: 4–13.

⁸³⁶ Grünwedel 1912: Fig. 221; Le Coq 1925: Fig. 79.

⁸³⁷ Grünwedel 1912: Fig. 397a.

⁸³⁸ A Chinese-style tiger scalp figure is depicted in Bezeklik Caves 17 (Turfan). See, *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 6: 78.

313).⁸³⁹ On the inner wall in the left corridor of **Simsim Cave 30**, two similar figures appear as a pair of *yakṣas* (Cat. No. 314).⁸⁴⁰ These figures are in military attire with straps crossing their chests and are heavily jewelled and draped with garments.

The full figure standing type allows for a closer observation of the accoutrements. Intriguingly, although the lion scalp *yakṣa* does not bear other Heracleian attributes, the companion with two “feathers” carries a knobbed club in the caves at both Kumtura and Simsim. This may be indicative of a potential influence of the Heracles motif on the iconographic repertoire of the region.

VIII.2.3.2. *Figures with Heracleian club?*

In Kucha, the knobbed club seems to have been often carried by the figure with two “feathers” above the forehead, seen in another example in **Simsim Cave 46**.⁸⁴¹ Additionally, many other figures appear to bear the weapon. In **Kizil Cave 67**, a figure seated in front of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the Heavenly King from the East and leader of Gandharvas, is holding a knobbed club.⁸⁴² Grünwedel saw a sculpture of a giant club-holding god in **Kizil Cave 76**,⁸⁴³ while he also recorded that in **Kizil Cave 80**, there was a blue demon with a club depicted.⁸⁴⁴ In Kucha, the knobbed club is associated with the iconography of the spirit *kumbhāṇḍa*, evidenced by the wall paintings from **Kumtura Cave 23** (Cat. No. 315) and three other figures on the ceiling in **Kumtura Cave 34**.⁸⁴⁵ Overall, the knobbed club is often carried by spirits in Kucha, and some of them may be associated with the Four Heavenly Kings.

It is important to note that, with the exception of the duo of the club bearer and the lion scalp figures, there is no other evidence to imply that the Kuchean artists took this element directly or indirectly from the Heracles motif. In Kucha, the depiction of the club is more of an Indian

⁸³⁹ Zin 2023: 260–263, Drawings 201–202.

⁸⁴⁰ Zin 2023: 87.

⁸⁴¹ Grünwedel 1912: 190; Zin 2023: 458; fn. 1257.

⁸⁴² Zin 2023: 510–511, Drawing 427.

⁸⁴³ Grünwedel 1920: II 3; Zin 2023: 198.

⁸⁴⁴ Grünwedel 1912: 98; Zin 2023: 451, fn. 1238.

⁸⁴⁵ Zin 2023: 96, 259, 285, 313, Drawings 46, 199.

tradition. Nevertheless, I-Tien Hsing (2016) proposed that the cowherd Nanda with a knobbed club depicted in the First Indo-Iranian Style in **Kizil Cave 77** (ca. 500 AD) (Cat. No. 316) may have been influenced by the Greek iconography of Heracles and the Cattle of Geryon or Heracles and the Cretan Bull, indicating that the Kuchean painters were aware of the narratives of the Greek hero's labours connected with cattle.⁸⁴⁶ This association cannot be proven due to the significant differences in iconography, style, and content between classical and Kuchean Buddhist art. Other potential correlations between the club and a deity have been proposed, such as the club as an attribute of Yama from South Asia.⁸⁴⁷ Even if the knobbed club in Kucha could be considered to have ultimately been derived from the Heracles motif, it is not necessarily the case that this element was introduced to China as an intermediate point, nor that the original Western meaning was guaranteed to have been present.

VIII.2.3.3. Possible influences through travelling objects with Heracles motifs

While there is no direct evidence to suggest the extent to which Kuchean artists were aware of the original Heracles motif and were not merely limited to the Gandhāran "second-hand" figural models, some conventional representations in the Buddhist wall paintings in Kucha appear to exhibit visual similarities with images associated with Heracleian themes that are irrelevant with Buddhist art. As these Kuchean images do not draw upon the figural types of Heracles, this study presents only two examples to show an alternative, distinct pattern of adaptation of the Heracles motif from non-Buddhist sources, particularly in Kucha. A comparison with some portable objects that circulated in the Indo-Iranian world, as mentioned in Chapter V and Chapter VII, also provides insight into one possible means of transfer of the "Heracles" motif.

VIII.2.3.3.a) From dancing Heracles/Satyr to Brahmin standing on one leg

In the Badakhshan dish discussed in Chapter VII, a Heracleian figure is presented standing on his right leg with the left bent backwards and pointing up, a typical dancing pose of satyrs in a *thiasus* seen in Greco-

⁸⁴⁶ Hsing 2016: 166–168. For the depictions of the cowherd Nanda, see Le Coq and Waldschmidt 1933: 66; Bussagli 1979: 72; Härtel and Yaldiz 1982: 66–67.

⁸⁴⁷ Zin 2023: 313.

Roman art.⁸⁴⁸ Curiously, the posture of Heracles' / satyr's lower body appears in some Kuchean wall paintings depicting a young Brahmin paying homage to the Buddha Puṣya (a previous incarnation of the Buddha) in the *Jātaka*.⁸⁴⁹ Figures in this pose are represented in **Kizil Caves 34, 99, 175, 176, 184, 187 and 188; Simsim Caves 24, 30 and 44;** as well as **Kizilgaha Cave 13**.⁸⁵⁰ In most cases, these figures are depicted with their hands folded in the *añjali-mudra* and standing on one leg on one side of the Buddha Puṣya (Cat. No. 317). On the other side of the Buddha, a demon is depicted invariably. In another instance, as illustrated in **Kizil 188**, the figure is restored to a lower position, situated adjacent to one of the standing Buddhas (Cat. No. 318).⁸⁵¹

Despite the narrative of this *Jātaka* being well documented in numerous Chinese translations and preserved in one Sanskrit text,⁸⁵² neither descriptions of the posture nor earlier depictions are currently known to exist. The specific homage posture of the Brahmanical ascetic appears to be a Kuchean invention. Furthermore, some other heretical ascetic depictions in Kucha, besides the *Jātaka* story, also adopted this posture, such as the nude male figure in **Simsim Cave 43** (Cat. No. 319).⁸⁵³

As Fang Wang (2015) pointed out, although the posture is intended to represent an extreme form of asceticism derived from the Indian tradition, the Kuchean visual interpretation differs from the Indian form of an ascetic figure.⁸⁵⁴ In light of the resemblance to the Heracles / satyr figure in the Badakhshan dish and the likelihood of imported Central Asian silver vessels in the region, it is plausible that Kuchean artists have adopted this posture from other figurative traditions from the West.

VIII.2.3.3.b) *From Heracles and Eurystheus to Varṣākāra and Ajātaśatru*

A Buddhist pictorial narrative exclusive to Kuchean murals reflects a local interest in one of the iconographic types originally registered for

⁸⁴⁸ See Chapter VII: Section VII.1.1.1.b).

⁸⁴⁹ For the identification of the narrative, see *Kizil Grottoes*, vol. 2: 203.

⁸⁵⁰ Wang 2015: 42–43, Figs. 55–61; Zhao 2021: 416, 525; Zin 2023: 385–391.

⁸⁵¹ Zhao 2021: 525.

⁸⁵² Zin 2023: 390.

⁸⁵³ Wang 2015: 42–43, Figs. 55–61.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 42–43.

Heracles' Fourth Labour. In the representation of King Ajātaśatru's revival story, the resurrected Ajātaśatru is depicted as half-hidden in a jar, with both arms raised and a slightly open mouth, expressing fear or shock (Cat. No. 320).⁸⁵⁵ This is reminiscent of King Eurystheus, who is also shown hidden in a pithos in the canonical representation of the Fourth Labour in Greco-Roman art (Cat. No. 321). The formal similarity between Eurystheus and Ajātaśatru, coupled with the coincidence of their identities as kings, may suggest that they were somehow connected despite the entirely different narratives behind the images. In this instance, the depiction of Heracles bearing the Erymanthian Boar has been replaced by that of Ajātaśatru's minister, Varṣākāra, who plays a pivotal role in the story as he was responsible for presenting the Buddha's entire life with his illustration in order to elucidate the *parinirvāṇa*. The preserved murals with this scene come from **Kizil Caves 4, 98, 101, 178, 193, 205, 219** and **224**. The frequently depicted pair of the minister and the king attests to the motif's popularity in Kizil.

Similar to the case of the figures with one leg bending backwards and pointing up in the Jātaka, the imagery of King Ajātaśatru's revival story may also be a Kuchean invention because no such depiction is found in Buddhist art from other regions and countries. Moreover, there are discrepancies between Buddhist texts and the pictorial details of this episode. While this study does not intend to further address the subject matter through its textual basis and exploring its role as being integrated into the *parinirvāṇa* cycle, it is important to note that the repetition of the image indicates certain ideological transformations of Buddhism in the Kucha region.⁸⁵⁶ Regarding iconography, the classical inspiration probably reached Kucha via "second-hand" classical images transformed in the Indo-Iranian world. As discussed in Chapter V and Chapter VII, the image of Heracles' Fourth Labour is persistent in non-Mediterranean Hellenising objects, such as the Gandhāran garnet seal imitating the Greek image and the Iranianised Sasanian silver plate representing the same episode (see Cat. No. 104, 289). Such portable objects may have played a role in the transmission of this particular Heracles motif from the Mediterranean to the Tarim Basin through ancient trade networks,

⁸⁵⁵ Grünwedel 1912: Fig. 383; Zin 2020: 79–81.

⁸⁵⁶ The iconography of King Ajātaśatru's revival story in Kuchean wall paintings is addressed in Lin and Wang (forthcoming).

offering the Kuchean artists a variety of visual elements to manipulate a Buddhist pictorial narrative that they intended to deliver without any antecedent iconography from India.

VIII.2.4. Summary

Overall, Buddhist figures in Chinese Central Asia that adopted some iconographic elements derived from the Heracles motif do not reflect the classical taste that remained in the Gandhāran adaptations. The classical sources for the local visual arts may have come from the Mediterranean regions through long-distance trade or from the “second-hand” images already transformed by Iranian and Indian art, including Buddhist art from South Asia and non-Buddhist art from Central Asia, which stimulated local adaptation and innovation.

These examples are mainly found on the northern route of the Silk Road, and most of them are demonic figures wearing the lion scalp with the paws knotted at the chest, possibly inherited from Gandhāran art and attesting to the longevity of this attribute of Heracles in the representation of some Buddhist figures. It should be noted, however, that the adaptation of the same headdress does not indicate a consistent reuse of the same iconographic element. The lion scalp figures have been identified variously as general *yakṣas* and demons, Vajrapāṇi, Gandharva or a companion of Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa. Furthermore, there are some significant gaps in the representative examples discussed so far in terms of their possible literary sources, affiliation to Buddhist schools and sources of pictorial traditions.

Although the pertinent works from Tumshuq and Kucha can be considered to share a closer style, as Tumshuq was a vassal of the Kucha Kingdom for several centuries, and it is generally accepted that the political, economic and cultural environment was relatively united with Kucha's,⁸⁵⁷ they show a stark difference to the examples from Turfan, where Chinese and Uighur cultures had many influences. More importantly, before the rise of Islam, along with the ideological transformations of Buddhism in the Tarim Basin, these western regions had undergone multiple wars against political powers from neighbouring

⁸⁵⁷ Huang 1958: 59–61; Lin 1995: 434ff; Rong and Duan 2000: 12–13; Liao 2012: 127.

empires such as Tang China and the Tibetan Empire, which probably influenced the depiction of lion (or tiger) scalp warriors. One of the possible influences is related to the Tibetan military tradition of the “Great Tiger Skin” (Da Chong Pi) system, which we will return to in discussing the case of Dunhuang.⁸⁵⁸

The knobbed club of Heracles is more challenging to associate with the Greek hero’s western iconography, as the spirits or deities bearing this attribute do not closely resemble the figure of Heracles. Nevertheless, the pair of *yakṣas* are depicted as one with the lion scalp and the other carrying a knobbed club, suggesting that these typical Heracles’ accoutrements might have been separately reused on figures with a military aspect.

Less attention has been paid to another possible influence of the Heracles motif in comparison with the figural types and similar attributes, which seems to be captured exclusively by some Kuchean wall paintings representing Buddhist themes. These images reveal partial similarity with some narrative depictions associated with the figure of Heracles, possibly derived from the “second-hand” classical images modified by Iranian and Central Asian art. These depictions, as argued here, do not rest on any extant written sources or Buddhist iconographic precedents from South Asia but are drawn upon classical models that were recycled and mediated along their eastward movement, witnessing cultural and material exchanges across Eurasia and highlighting the particular way of adaptation in Kucha.

It should be noted that in some previous studies, the examples of Vajrapāṇis with lion scalps at Kizil were considered to be the main mediators of bringing the Heracleian images further east.⁸⁵⁹ However, lion scalp Vajrapāṇis are not found in Dunhuang or China’s Central Plain. Curiously, in the east of the Western Region, as far as East Asia, some different Buddhist figures retained the iconographic features of a lion scalp, knobbed club and even the excessive musculature, which vaguely

⁸⁵⁸ Ma and Sha 2015: 19–20; Hsing 2016: 106.

⁸⁵⁹ Carter 1995: 131, Fig. 19; Hsing 2005: 123–125, Figs. 28–30, 2016: 163–168, Figs. 43–44.

recall the memory of the Greek hero, though the visual contexts in which these elements appear suggest the acquisition of new meanings.

Chapter IX

The transformation of the Heracleian features in China and the subsequent influences (5th–10th centuries AD)

This chapter examines the transformation and adaptation of the Heracleian elements in China from the 5th to the 10th century AD, and their subsequent influence on East Asian figural arts. In China, the figures with Heracleian elements known to us are mainly represented by the lion scalp headdress worn by several Buddhist figures in sculptures, reliefs and wall paintings across numerous Buddhist complexes in Dunhuang, Sichuan and China's Central Plains. A particular type of Vajrapāṇi characterised by pronounced musculature emerged and evolved in China around the 6th century AD,⁸⁶⁰ which subsequently became the most prevalent for representing the guardians of two Vajrapāṇis in the East Asian context. It has been suggested that this type was inspired by the figure of Heracles owing to the Gandhāran adaptation,⁸⁶¹ a perspective that is reassessed in Section IX.1.2.

In general, the evidence of Buddhist figural arts with examples of Heracleian features in China indicates the continuation of some pictorial traditions that were adopted from South and Central Asia. Furthermore, the prevalence of Buddhist figural arts has also resulted in the adaptation of the Heracleian lion scalp in secular contexts beginning in the Chinese Tang Dynasty. A significant number of warrior figurines have been discovered wearing this headdress, predominantly in the tombs of nobility and aristocrats. This serves to illustrate the popularity of the Heracleian lion scalp headgear as a defining feature of some general martial characters without indicating a particular identity in the Chinese context, let alone harking back to Heracles himself.

⁸⁶⁰ Lim 2009: 275–303.

⁸⁶¹ Carter 1995a: 130–131; Tanabe 2003a: 19, 23; Maeda 2003: 138; Kurita 2003: 341–342; Tanaka 2004: 53–54.

Previous studies have proposed that the Chinese adaptations of the Heracles motif were derived from the figure of Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, as a result of interactions from the West to the East via the Tarim Basin, Dunhuang and Sichuan to China's Central Plains. During this transmission, the adaptations underwent a gradual transformation into particular Chinese Buddhist figures and folk deities, which were subsequently disseminated throughout East Asia.⁸⁶²

However, a more detailed examination reveals that the figure and concept of Vajrapāṇi underwent a significant transformation in China and East Asia, and the relationship between the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi and the Chinese Heracleian figures remains unclear. Meanwhile, the pertinent Chinese evidence does not demonstrate a clear geographic and chronological progression from the West to the East. In light of this, it is necessary to reconsider the latter transmission route and whether the type of Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi is consistent with the Chinese examples to ascertain possible adaptation approaches revealed by the Chinese evidence.

IX.1. Evidence of Buddhist figures with Heracleian features in Dunhuang

The Buddhist cave sites in and around the Dunhuang area (situated in the Hexi Corridor, Gansu, China) represent the most extensive, diverse and enduring repository of Buddhist art worldwide, spanning the 4th to the 14th centuries AD. The Dunhuang complex comprises the Mogao Caves, the Western Thousand Buddha Caves, the Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves, the Five Temple Caves and the Yulin Caves, which currently constitute 715 caves preserving 2,145 statues (made of clay, wood and stone) and approximately 45,000 m² of wall paintings.⁸⁶³ Numerous manuscripts have also been found in these caves, notably recovered by Stein, Pelliot and other explorers in the early 20th century.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶² Hsieh 1997: 32–53; Hsing 2005: 103–154; Wang 2020: 150–157, 2021: 99–108; Yang 2022: 120–137.

⁸⁶³ *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 1999–2001.

⁸⁶⁴ Stein 1921. See also the Stein Collection website, <https://idp.bl.uk/stein-collection/> (accessed on 31 July 2024); the Pelliot Collection website, <https://idp.bl.uk/pelliot-collection/> (accessed on 31 July 2024).

In Dunhuang, the lion scalp is the most frequently discussed iconographic motif that may have originated from Heracles' attribute.⁸⁶⁵ While the association with Heracles' iconography remains a possibility, other potential sources of inspiration for the animal skin garment have also been proposed.⁸⁶⁶ Dunhuang also preserves a number of sculptures and paintings of the most popular East Asian variant of Vajrapāṇi, namely the "*vajra-wrestler*" with pronounced musculature and a wrathful expression. Some have suggested that this muscular type of Vajrapāṇi was also derived from the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi type, which harkens back to the Heracles motif.⁸⁶⁷ This section thus examines the types of Buddhist figures with these two features in Dunhuang and reflects on their association with the Heracles motif.

IX.1.1. Lion scalp

In the Mogao and Yulin Caves, many Buddhist figures were discovered wearing the lion scalp. They are typically depicted in two major Buddhist figural groups: the *Eight Devas* (天龙八部, Tianlong Babu, The God and Dragon of Eight Types) and the group of Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa and his retinue.⁸⁶⁸ The former is a Chinese creation of a divine group based on the eight classes of Indian divine beings,⁸⁶⁹ and the latter is associated with the worship of Vaiśravaṇa in both Khotan and Dunhuang. Most depictions of these figures are in wall paintings, and others in several ink and colour paintings on banners and printed illustrations. These representations appear to be influenced by some pictorial traditions from Gandhāra and Chinese Central Asia while also exhibiting a distinct iconography and style. Notably, the lion scalp Vajrapāṇi, which is

⁸⁶⁵ Hsieh 1997: 32–53; Hsing 2005: 103–154; Wang 2020: 150–157, 2021: 99–108; Yang 2022: 120–137.

⁸⁶⁶ Lu 2004: 35–41, 109–110, 2005: 110–120; Cui and Wang 2020: 51–61; cf. Wang 2020: 150–157.

⁸⁶⁷ For the influence of the figure of Heracles on the Japanese Niō modelled after the Chinese variant of Vajrapāṇi-wrestler, see Kurita 2003: 341–342; Tanabe 2003a: 19, 23; Tanaka 2004: 53–54.

⁸⁶⁸ Cf. Wang 2020: 150–157.

⁸⁶⁹ For the relationship between Indian deities and Chinese adaptation, see Zhu 2023: 120–133.

representative and can be easily recognised in Gandhāran and Kuchean arts, has not been discovered at Dunhuang.

In addition to the figures depicted wearing a lion scalp as a headdress, some figures in the Dunhuang area are draped with a lion or tiger skin. These representations have been suggested as inspired by either the Heracles motif (via Central Asian art) or Tibetan military attire of the “Great Tiger Skin” (大虫皮, Da Chong Pi).⁸⁷⁰ Such types are found in both paintings and sculptures.

IX.1.1.1. In the group images of the Eight Devas (7th–10th centuries AD)

The figure with the lion scalp is frequently depicted in the group of the *Eight Devas* in wall paintings from caves dated to the Tang and Five Dynasties periods (618–979 AD) in the Mogao and Yulin Caves, including **Mogao Caves 6, 9, 99, 138, 158, 202, 220, 321, 325, 340, 445** and **Yulin Caves 2, 16, 25** and others.⁸⁷¹ The name of the *Eight Devas*, *Tianlong Babu*, is frequently referenced in reliable Chinese Buddhist literary sources dating back to the 4th/5th centuries AD,⁸⁷² and it has also been recorded as depicted in various media as early as the mid-5th century AD.⁸⁷³ Today, the earliest datable images of this group of figures come from some 7th-century AD caves in Dunhuang and Sichuan. Although a consensus has been reached among scholars on the identification of some major characters in the group — classifying them into eight types of Deva, Nāga, Yakṣa, Gandharva, Asura, Garuḍa, Kinnara and Mahoraga — these

⁸⁷⁰ Hsing 2005: 103–154; Wang 2020: 150–157. For the military system and worship of the “Great Tiger Skin” in Tibetan and Nanzhao State, see Lu 2004: 35–41, 109–110; Cui and Wang 2018: 51–61.

⁸⁷¹ Mizuno 2000: 11–32; Chen 2007: 146; Wang 2020: 150–157; Zhu: 2023: 115–174.

⁸⁷² The earliest known record of Tianlong Babu seems to be the Chinese translation of the *Āmrapālī and Jivaka Avadāna Sūtra* (佛说捺女祇域因缘经, *Foshuo Nainii Qiyu Yinyuan Jing*, T 553), dated to the 2nd century AD. However, it was not until the late 4th and early 5th century that more detailed textual evidence of Tianlong Babu was found in Buddhist literary sources, such as in the *Śariputrāpariprcchā* (舍利弗问经, *Shelifu Wen Jing*, T 1465) and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary* (注维摩诘经, *Zhu Weimojie Jing*, T 1775). Cf. Chen 2007: 146; Zhu 2023: 122–124.

⁸⁷³ See A Collection of Records on the Emanation of the Chinese Tripitaka (出三藏记集, *Chu Sanzang Jiji*) T 2145. Cf. Chen 2007: 146; Zhu 2023: 133.

figures and their pairings reveal discrepancies between images and texts as well as the Indian and Chinese iconographic traditions.⁸⁷⁴

The *Eight Devas* group images, which include a lion scalp figure, exhibit some common elements and combinations of figures, yet their iconographic details and number in compositions vary case by case.⁸⁷⁵ They typically represent various divine and demonic individuals who accompany, witness or pay homage to the central scenes of the wall paintings. Examples of this can be seen in the depictions of the *Emergence of the Treasure Tower* of the *Lotus Sutra* in **Dunhuang Cave 202** (Early Tang) (Cat. No. 322), the *Maitreya Sutra Transformations* in **Dunhuang Cave 445** (High Tang) (Cat. No. 323) and **Yulin Cave 25** (Middle Tang) (Cat. No. 324). In general, this group of figures does not appear independently and can be placed in a variety of pictorial representations of the *Sutra Transformations*. The roles of these group figures also correspond with the large group of gods and demons worshipping the Buddha, which reminds us of Kuchean wall paintings showing large groups of demonic spirits surrounding the Buddha in some non-specific preaching scenes.

According to Saya Mizuno's (2000) classification of the main figural types of the *Eight Devas* in Dunhuang, despite the issue of defining each figure's identity, the lion scalp figure is often shown in the military attire, such as the examples in **Dunhuang Cave 158** (Middle Tang) (Cat. No. 325), **Cave 9** (Late Tang) (Cat. No. 326) and **Cave 36** (Five Dynasties) (Cat. No. 327).⁸⁷⁶ As seen in (Cat. Nos. 322–323), figures with bare chests and wrathful facial expressions also wear the lion scalp, and the one in (Cat. No. 323) is draped with a half-transparent garment over the arms, similar to the lion scalp *yakṣa* in **Kizil Cave 178** (see Cat. Nos. 309–310). In some cases, evidenced in the wall paintings in **Dunhuang Caves 156** (High Tang), **231, 361** (Middle Tang), **99** (Five Dynasties) (Cat. No. 328) and a silk painting **No. Ch.lii.003** from **Cave 17**,⁸⁷⁷ the lion scalp figure appears in military apparel playing a lute in the scenes such as the *Pure*

⁸⁷⁴ Mizuno 1999, 2000, 2001.

⁸⁷⁵ Mizuno 2000: 11–32.

⁸⁷⁶ Mizuno (2000) divided these characters into four figural types, including the Asura type, the divine warriors in military attire, the muscular demonic figures with bare chests and divine individuals that do not show a wrathful expression and without military equipment. See Mizuno 2000: 31.

⁸⁷⁷ Whitfield 1983: Pls. 9-1, 9-6; cf. Wang 2016: 60–61, Figs. 4, 6.

Land, the group following the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra who sits upon an elephant and other *Sutra Transformations*.

It is noteworthy that the occurrence of the musical instrument may have a significant impact on both the ancient and modern identifications of the lion scalp figure in the group images of the *Eight Devas* in East Asia.⁸⁷⁸ Since the High Tang period (705–780 AD), Chinese adaptation of the group of Indian deities may have already led to confusion between the figure of the lion scalp *yakṣa* and the Indian concept of the celestial musician Gandharva, whose iconography is not associated with the lion scalp in Central, South and Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, in East Asian Buddhist art, the lion scalp has long been regarded as an authentic “Indian” iconographic representation of Gandharva, particularly in Japan, where the iconography and the pertinent concept had been adopted since at least the 8th century AD.⁸⁷⁹

As Tianshu Zhu (2023) has pointed out, the iconography of the Chinese version of Gandharva has no direct connection with the original iconography from South Asia, and the lion scalp did not suggest the identity of Gandharva during the formation period of the Chinese creation of the group images of the *Eight Devas*.⁸⁸⁰ The depiction of the lion scalp figure was influenced by the pictorial tradition of group images surrounding the Buddha from India and Central Asia, which often show a variety of divine and demonic individuals who defer to the Buddha, and one of them occasionally retains this headdress. Similar Chinese adaptations in the Buddhist context are represented by the sculptures of the *Eight Devas* in the Sichuan area (contemporary to Dunhuang) and some reliefs of the *Spirit Kings* prevalent in China’s Central Plains around the 5th/6th centuries, which will be discussed in detail in Section IX.2.1.

Nevertheless, the “new” iconography of Gandharva wearing a lion scalp, which probably originated in Tang China and was popularised in East

⁸⁷⁸ Another typical representation showing a deity in military attire and playing the lute (without the lion scalp) is the image of the *Heavenly King of the East* Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who leads the Gandharvas and Piśācas.

⁸⁷⁹ For one of the earliest Japanese sculptures of the lion scalp Gandharva, see the wooden sculpture from Kōfuku-ji, Nara (710–794 AD). <https://www.kohfukuji.com/property/b-0013/> (accessed on 31 July 2024).

⁸⁸⁰ Zhu 2023: 151–152.

Asia, has further influenced some modern identifications of the figures with the same features and unknown identities. In the *Eight Devas*, regardless of whether the figure is in military attire or a *yakṣa*-like appearance, the lion scalp figure is generally labelled as Gandharva. Similarly, some have identified the lion scalp head on the silk fragment from Turfan as Gandharva (see Cat. No. 302), and one of Vaiśravaṇa's companions mentioned below has also been recorded with the same Indian name tied with the later developed East Asian iconographic tradition.

IX.1.1.2. In the group images of Vaiśravaṇa (7th–10th centuries AD)

In the group images of Vaiśravaṇa and his companions,⁸⁸¹ a male figure wearing the lion (or tiger) scalp is frequently depicted as an attendant of Vaiśravaṇa. The group typically comprises of the crowned Vaiśravaṇa, either standing (sometimes stepping on other figures) or seated, with a few attendants standing nearby on each side. In Dunhuang, this group image, including the lion scalp figure, is depicted in a number of different artistic media, including wall paintings, silk and paper paintings and woodblock prints. The wall paintings with this theme are represented by **Yulin Caves 15** (Cat. No. 329) and **25** (Cat. No. 330), which date from the period between 776 and 900 AD. From **Mogao Cave 17**, an 8th-century silk painting fragment (Cat. No. 331) and a woodblock print dated to 947 AD (Cat. No. 332) were recovered. The Pelliot Dunhuang Collection also includes a painting on paper of the same subject (Pelliot chinois 4518 (27)) (Cat. No. 333).⁸⁸²

In these examples, the lion scalp figure is depicted as young, beardless, with a bare chest, wearing a loincloth and wrist and ankle bracelets. The skin of the lion or tiger varies in each case, but it is always shown as a full covering of the head and shoulders, with two paws tied beneath the figure's chin, following similar images of Heracles. The patterns of the skin, fur and tail of the animal are depicted in great detail, which differentiates the species of lion and tiger. The figure usually holds a *cintāmaṇi* (a pearl-shaped, wish-fulfilling jewel), a sack of gold, or a mongoose as

⁸⁸¹ In this particular group image of Vaiśravaṇa, which differs from the depiction of a group of all *Four Heavenly Kings*, Vaiśravaṇa is often characterised by his Central Asian long armour which was heavily influenced by the Iranian style of warrior equipment.

⁸⁸² Soymié 1995: 149–150; Anderl 2018: 289; Galambos 2020: 183–186.

a living purse in hand, which affirms his relationship with Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera. In **Yulin Cave 15**, the musculature of the tiger scalp figure is clearly emphasised. Other examples, although not as detailed or meticulous as that from **Yulin 15** in representing the muscles, generally show a robust young male figure.

To date, the lion scalp figure is mentioned primarily in the context of Vaiśravaṇa worship due to his frequent occurrence in this group image. However, as with other attendants in the same group, the figure's identity has been the subject of several interpretations without definitive conclusions. The relatively consistent appearance in the group suggests that he may be related to the cult of Vaiśravaṇa. Although a discussion of Vaiśravaṇa is beyond the scope of this study, it is necessary to briefly mention some characteristics of this unique god to further evaluate the possible role of the lion scalp figure as a member of his retinue.

The origin and history of the Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa (god of warfare and fortune) and his iconography can be traced from Iran and India into Central and East Asia, and the complexity of the subject lies in the mixture and intertwining of various cultural traditions and multiple identities,⁸⁸³ which has occupied modern scholarship since the early 20th century.⁸⁸⁴ A substantial body of previous research has demonstrated the profound Iranian and Indian influence on the iconography of the subject matter, with particular attention on the connections with the Iranian embodiment of kingly glory, Pharo or Xvarəna (through the Kushans), and the Hindu god of wealth, Kubera.⁸⁸⁵ Meanwhile, ancient Chinese and Tibetan texts and archaeological finds have proven that Vaiśravaṇa was associated with the Khotanese and ancient Tibetan legends and cults.⁸⁸⁶ Some iconographic features of Vaiśravaṇa from Khotan, Dunhuang, Sichuan and Yunnan are particularly well preserved in Japan, where

⁸⁸³ In addition to his most well-known roles as the god of warfare and fortune, Vaiśravaṇa also assumes a multitude of other secondary roles, including that the head of the *yakṣas*, Emperor of Vidyādhara, Guardian of the World, Protector of the Law of the Buddha, and numerous others. See Lalou 1946: 97.

⁸⁸⁴ Stein 1907: 156–159, 176, 202, 253; Minamoto 1930: 40–55; Matsumoto 1937: 417–462; Rosenfield 1967: 245ff.

⁸⁸⁵ Granoff 1970: 144–168.

⁸⁸⁶ Abel-Rémusat 1820: 38; Stein 1907: 156–159, 176, 202, 253; Thomas 1935: 17–59; Granoff 1970: 160–161; Williams 1973: 109–154; Forte 2014: 215–224.

Vaiśravaṇa is called *Tobatsu Bishamonten* (兜跋毘沙門天), deriving its etymological origin from ancient Tibet.⁸⁸⁷ The diversity of the Vaiśravaṇa motif reflects the multifaceted nature of this unique deity, which has been transmitted across various cultural boundaries.

The identification of the group figures beside Vaiśravaṇa accordingly varies, but in most cases, the female figure standing on one side of Vaiśravaṇa is identified as the goddess Śrī (Lakṣmī), a small female figure (sometimes flanked with two *yakṣas* named Niranba and Biranba)⁸⁸⁸ who emerges from the earth and holds the feet of Vaiśravaṇa is considered to be Pṛthvī and a demonic figure with long hair carrying an infant has been identified as the *yakṣa* Āṭavika.⁸⁸⁹ Notably, the figure of Āṭavika is not only present in the Vaiśravaṇa's group but also appears in the *Eight Devas* together with the lion scalp "Gandharva".

With regard to the lion scalp figure, it is possible that he is part of the retinue of Vaiśravaṇa, as listed in the *sūtras* devoted to the Heavenly King. However, there is no evidence in Buddhist texts to suggest that anyone in the retinue wears an animal skin. Furthermore, the lists of Vaiśravaṇa's retinue are contradictory.⁸⁹⁰ Eiichi Matsumoto (1937) first identified the figure as Gandharva, an interpretation that has been widely adopted.⁸⁹¹ This identification is associated with the East Asian iconography of the lion scalp Gandharva, as mentioned above. In recent decades, several scholars have put forth alternative interpretations.⁸⁹² These views have taken into account the Tang Empire's relationship with the Tibetan Empire and the Western Regions. For the connection with Tibet, many have suggested that the Tibetan "Great Beast Skin"

⁸⁸⁷ Matsumoto 1944: 273–314. Cf. Shinohara 2006: <http://dsr.nii.ac.jp/narratives/discovery/07/> (accessed on 31 July 2024).

⁸⁸⁸ Lalou 1946: 97–111; Granoff 1970: 146.

⁸⁸⁹ Wang 2016: 58–70. Matsumoto (1937) identified the infant carried by the *yakṣa* as one of the sons of Vaiśravaṇa based on the *Bishamon-tennō-gyō* and suggested that it may be connected with the legends of the kingdom of Khotan recorded by Xuanzang. See *Pishamen Tianwang Jing* (Japanese: *Bishamon-tennō-gyō*) T. no. 1244. See Matsumoto 1937: 420.

⁸⁹⁰ Williams 1973: 134.

⁸⁹¹ Matsumoto 1937: 420–421, 454, 458; Anderl 2018: 289; Wang 2020: 150–157; Khokhlov 2022: 95, fn. 163.

⁸⁹² Cf. Haesner 1996: 295; Ma 2022: 199.

military award system is evidenced by the deities and warriors who wore the skin in the visual arts of Dunhuang.⁸⁹³ Particularly, the depictions of the feline scalp muscular figure in **Yulin Caves 15** and **25**, where both caves display a mixture of Tang and Tibetan styles, were probably influenced by the Tibetan worship of the tiger and military association with Vaiśravaṇa, which was introduced to Dunhuang at the time of the peace treaty negotiation between Tang China and Tibet in 783 AD (Treaty of Qingshui).⁸⁹⁴ In this case, the lion scalp figure in the group image of Vaiśravaṇa is recognised as Ku Zang Shen (库藏神, the deity of storage), possibly related to the *Vajrayāna* Buddhism.⁸⁹⁵ However, no records of Ku Zang Shen are found among the attendants or members of Vaiśravaṇa. Alternatively, several sons of Vaiśravaṇa have been proposed as the lion scalp figure,⁸⁹⁶ such as the second son Du Jian (独键), who is said to have defeated the Tibetans, Arabs and Sogdians across 12,000 leagues and defended the frontier of the Tang Empire in Anxi (the Chinese Tang military garrisons installed in the Tarim Basin) on behalf of his father (742 AD), according to the Chinese legend of the *Rules for the Worship of Vaiśravaṇa*.⁸⁹⁷ As Joanna Williams (1973) pointed out, this story is more akin to legend than history, yet it reflects the actual expansion of Arab and Tibetan powers in the mid-8th century in Chinese Central Asia,⁸⁹⁸ where Vaiśravaṇa was said to be the ancestor and the protector of the Kingdom of Khotan.⁸⁹⁹ However, this story also does not directly explain the presence of the lion scalp, making the identification of the figure speculative.

From the available evidence, the lion scalp figure in the group image of Vaiśravaṇa seems to indicate mutual iconographic influences from the Western Regions, the Tibetan Empire and Tang China through the cult

⁸⁹³ Lu 2004: 35–41, 109–110, 2005: 110–120; Cui and Wang 2018: 51–61; cf. Wang 2020: 150–157.

⁸⁹⁴ Ma and Sha 2015: 19.

⁸⁹⁵ Wang 2020: 150–157.

⁸⁹⁶ Cf. Granoff 1970: 144–168.

⁸⁹⁷ Li 2011: 188. For the record of the story, see Waley 1931: 42–43; Tucci 1949: 573.

⁸⁹⁸ Williams 1973: 134–135.

⁸⁹⁹ Lin 1999: 13–22.

of Vaiśravaṇa. In a rare case, the pair of lion scalp figures and an accompanying goddess, who are supposed to be Vaiśravaṇa's attendants, are not shown with the Heavenly King. In a painting on paper from Dunhuang (Pelliot chinois 4518 (31)), the two are depicted on each side of a standing Buddha (Bhaiṣajyaguru?), and the name Ku Zang Shen is written next to the lion scalp figure (Cat. No. 334).⁹⁰⁰ It seems that regardless of whether the lion scalp figure was exclusive to the ritual representation of Vaiśravaṇa, the figural type of a muscular male wearing the feline scalp in a manner reminiscent of Heracles was a relatively common choice for representing an attendant in the Dunhuang area between the 7th and 10th centuries, as we have already encountered them in the *Eight Devas*.

On the other hand, in certain representations of Vaiśravaṇa (with or without the lion scalp attendant), the lion (or tiger) skin is donned by Vaiśravaṇa. This is exemplified by the painted silk banners from **Mogao Cave 17** (851–900 AD) (Cat. Nos. 331, 335) and the sculpture from **Mogao Cave 205** (7th/8th century AD) (Cat. No. 336). Given the shared skin between Vaiśravaṇa and his lion scalp attendant and the two exchanging the attribute of the mongoose from time to time, the attendant may also be a personification reflecting some functions of Vaiśravaṇa. This may be similar to the visualisation of the relationship between the Buddha and the spiritual Vajrapāṇi in Gandhāran art. As these examples diverge from the type wearing the lion scalp headdress, they exhibit no parallels with the Heracles image and may reflect iconographic influences derived from other sources. For instance, the lion heads on the pauldrons for Vaiśravaṇa's shoulders in (Cat. No. 331) and the elaborate Central Asian armour with incorporated tiger skin (Cat. No. 335) demonstrate Sogdian influences that were introduced into China's Central Plains through Sogdian merchants as early as the Northern Wei period.⁹⁰¹ The examples presented here indicate that the adaptation of animal skin may have originated from a variety of sources.

IX.1.2. The muscular Vajrapāṇis — from Heracles to Niō?

In Dunhuang, Vajrapāṇis from all periods are not found wearing the lion scalp nor are they physiognomically reminiscent of Heracles. The

⁹⁰⁰ Soyumié 1995: 152.

⁹⁰¹ Cheng 2017: 6–14.

earliest evidence of the Vajrapāṇi figure in Dunhuang dates to the Northern Wei period (ca. 5th century AD), which reveals visual similarities with some examples (without Heracleian features) from the Kuchean wall paintings, such as the type in military attire.⁹⁰² In the late Northern Wei period (first half of the 6th century AD), some new manifestations of Vajrapāṇi emerged in Dunhuang. Among these, a prototype of the muscular and wrathful Vajrapāṇi represented in two figures as a pair (Cat. No. 337) appeared and later became particularly popular in the Tang Dynasty.⁹⁰³

This type of Vajrapāṇi has a wrathful face, a bared upper body and garments draped around the lower body, displaying pronounced muscularity. A considerable number of sculptures of this type were discovered in Dunhuang, as represented by the 8th-century AD examples from **Mogao Cave 194** (Cat. Nos. 338–339). They are usually placed as a pair of guardian figures at the gates of temples or Buddhist complexes. Paintings and woodblock prints have also been recovered from Dunhuang, showing the standardised iconography of the type (Cat. No. 340). In the scenes consisting of the *Eight Devas* (both in Dunhuang and Sichuan), the type is also shown in the group images and sometimes stands next to the lion scalp “Gandharva” (Cat. No. 323). The pair of this type subsequently became the most typical representation of Vajrapāṇi, disseminated throughout East Asia, where they are known by various names, such as *Heng and Ha Two Generals* (哼哈二将, Heng Ha Er Jiang) in Chinese Buddhism and *Niō* (仁王) in Japan (Cat. No. 341).⁹⁰⁴ Additional Buddhist names derived from Buddhist texts adapted to Indic sources have been

⁹⁰² Lim 2008: 5–12. For the earliest Vajrapāṇi sculpture in Dunhuang, see *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol. 8: 23, Fig. 8.

⁹⁰³ Lim 2008: 7, 2009: 275–303.

⁹⁰⁴ The earliest Vajrapāṇi of this type in Korea comes from the Bunhwangsa (분황사) a temple complex from the Old Silla era of Korea), dating to 634 AD; the earliest Japanese examples are from Hōryū-ji (法隆寺), Nara dating to 711 AD.

also given to the type, such as Guhyapāda Vajrapāṇi (密迹金刚)⁹⁰⁵ and Nārāyaṇa Vajrapāṇi (那罗延金刚).⁹⁰⁶

The shared name Vajrapāṇi and the musculature presented by the semi-nude figure seem to recall the figure of Heracles and the pertinent Gandhāran adaptations. The association between this type and the Gandhāran examples first emerged in European scholarship in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which proposed that the Japanese *Niō* was typologically derived from Vajrapāṇi.⁹⁰⁷ Although the view is now outdated, it does not appear to have been entirely refuted or re-examined thus far. Some suggested that this muscular Vajrapāṇi type prevalent in East Asia is the final and extreme transformation of the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi.⁹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, even if we follow this geographical transmission path from Gandhāra to the Western Regions into the Hexi corridor region of China,⁹⁰⁹ differences between the types of Vajrapāṇi from these areas between India and China remain strikingly conspicuous. The main differences are as follows.

Firstly, the muscular Chinese Vajrapāṇi iconography is relatively consistent and evidently Sinicised. These figures exhibit a high degree of similarity in appearance and posture. In addition to the robust musculature and wrathful expression, they have the same hairstyle, characterised by a Chinese bun and crown. Sometimes, they are bejewelled, with head nimbi, and arms draped with a flying garment. The two Vajrapāṇis of this type are mostly presented in a standing and ready-to-defend (or ready-to-attack) pose and are often placed in pairs at the front gates of temples, consisting of an open-mouthed subtype and a closed-mouthed subtype (in Japanese called *Agyō* and *Ungyō*). Although in both Gandhāran and Kucheans arts, Vajrapāṇi is often present as a pair of figures, the former does not show a pair in symmetry, while the latter had

⁹⁰⁵ See *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra (Da Bao Ji Jing)*, T no. 0310, 11: 9.52c20-52c23; 52c29-53a1; *Ekottara Āgama (Zeng Yi Ahan Jing)*, T no. 0125, 02: 22.663c6-663c9.

⁹⁰⁶ For the assimilation of Vajrapāṇi and Nārāyaṇa in the Chinese context, see Inahata 2009: 90.

⁹⁰⁷ Grünwedel 1901: 95, fn. 1.

⁹⁰⁸ Sugiyama 1970: 9–26; Carter 1995a: 130–131; Kurita 2003: 341–342; Maeda 2003: 138; Tanabe 2003a: 19, 23; Tanaka 2004: 53–54.

⁹⁰⁹ Hsing 2005: 126; Lim 2008: 5–12.

established a model of a pair with distinctive appearance between each. As mentioned in Chapter VIII, some have suggested identifying the two Vajrapāṇis in the Kuchean wall paintings of the Second Indo-Iranian Style as Vajrapāṇibalin (金剛力士) and Vajrapāṇi Guhyapāda independently based on Chinese Buddhist literature.⁹¹⁰ These names are also shared with the muscular variants found in East Asia, but they are not found in the Tocharian sources. Meanwhile, the various forms of the Kuchean Vajrapāṇis show little interest in developing a muscular form, neither inclining to the Gandhāran Heracleian type nor the East Asian muscular type. In this case, it seems that the musculature of the Chinese variants recalling the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi type was likely not introduced to China through the Kuchean adaptations, even though these regional arts are closely intertwined and generally followed the transmission route from the West to the East.

Secondly, unlike the Gandhāran and Kuchean pictorial traditions of Vajrapāṇi, the attribute of the *vajra*, which typically defines the figure's identity, is not a mandatory component of this Chinese variant. The *vajra*, which is neither a "club-like" object nor reminiscent of the hourglass shapes of Gandhāran *vajra*, is omitted when Vajrapāṇi has his palm open or makes a fist.⁹¹¹ The inseparable connection between the *vajra* and Vajrapāṇi, which was established in Gandhāran art, is difficult to discern in this East Asian variant with one exception: in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, this type of Vajrapāṇi reclaims one of his most iconic narrative roles, expressing his grief towards the deceased Buddha and dropping his *vajra*. Since the Sui Dynasty (581–618 AD), Vajrapāṇis in East Asian representations of *Mahāparinirvāṇa* have only been depicted in this muscular form, such as in the wall paintings in **Mogao Cave 295** (Cat. No. 342). Furthermore, the prevalence of the two guardian Vajrapāṇis in the Tang Dynasty resulted in a "new" variation of the depiction of Vajrapāṇi in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, splitting the original single figure into two, which deviate from both literary and artistic sources of the incident in South and Central Asia. Both the older iconography and this variation are evidenced in

⁹¹⁰ Huo 2005: 1–7.

⁹¹¹ Lim 2008: 9, 2009: 287–288.

many Chinese and Japanese paintings that depict the same theme from the 12th century onwards.⁹¹²

However, aside from the narrative representation of Vajrapāṇi in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, which resonates with the Gandhāran pictorial tradition, Vajrapāṇi in Dunhuang, or more broadly, in East Asia, is distinct from those in North-West India and Central Asia. Whether he obtained a narrative role or merely acts as a spectator, Vajrapāṇi follows the Buddha closely in Gandhāran and Kuchean art, which is no longer the case in East Asia. The primary function of the East Asian variant is being a guardian of gates and present in some Buddhist scenes, making the figure of Vajrapāṇi thereby separated from the Buddha in most cases.

The aforementioned differences relate to a multitude of aspects, with the foremost being the Chinese reception and adaptation of the concept and iconography of the figure of Vajrapāṇi during the Northern Wei and Tang Dynasties. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the conceptual transformation of Vajrapāṇi from South and Central Asia to China and Tibet from the perspective of Buddhist doctrine. However, it is important to note that the functions of Vajrapāṇi in different regions may have varied due to their affiliations with particular Buddhist schools and cultural spheres.

For example, as discussed in Chapter IV, in Gandhāra, one aspect of Vajrapāṇi, regardless of how it is interpreted, concerns assimilation with the muscular figure of Heracles, indicating local acknowledgement of the classical motif. This Gandhāran adaptation is known to us only through images, not texts. In China, the earliest examples of Vajrapāṇi appeared in the Northern Wei period when numerous sutras had already been translated into Chinese and Buddhist concepts were localised thanks to the many monks and pilgrims travelling back and forth between India and China, crossing the Tasim Basin.⁹¹³ In this instance, the Heracleian aspects of Vajrapāṇi, which originated in Gandhāra, do not

⁹¹² Lin 2016.

⁹¹³ For example, Dharmarakṣa (233–310 AD), presumed to be of Yuezhi origin, who translated around 154 sutras, lived in Dunhuang for a long time and travelled between Dunhuang and the Western Regions. Other famous monks like Dharmakṣema (385–433 AD) from India and Kumārajīva (344–413 AD) from Kucha also dedicated a great corpus of sutra translations. For the early Chinese Buddhist translations, see Deeg 2008: 83–118.

appear to have been adopted through iconography. Instead, they were incorporated into Chinese translations and interpretations of Vajrapāṇi from texts, resulting in the emergence of multiple epithets, with a particular focus on the name combining the terms “*vajra*” (金剛) and “wrestler” (力士) appears to be the most suitable for a subordinate yet powerful divine guardian. The epithet “*vajra-wrestler*” is only known in the East Asian cultural sphere. In this manner, a wrestler-type Vajrapāṇi was derived from the protective function of Vajrapāṇi to serve a specific purpose as a pair of apotropaic guardians exclusively in the East Asian Buddhist context, and neither does the type contradict nor correspond to the many Vajrapāṇis that are recorded in some Buddhist texts and pilgrim records, such as Vasubhandu’s *Abhidharmakośa* and Xuanzang’s *Xiyu Ji* (Records of the Western Regions).⁹¹⁴

From a typological point of view, slightly before the earliest examples of the muscular Vajrapāṇi type in Dunhuang, the type already appeared in the Yungang Grottoes (465–494 AD) in Shanxi Datong in North China, such as the relief sculptures in **Yungang Cave 12** (Cat. No. 343). Young-ae Lim (2008) has thus suggested that the emergence of the muscular type of Vajrapāṇi in Dunhuang in the late Northern Wei period was related to the reversal of the direction of artistic influences from China’s Central Plains through those which Northern Wei officials sent to the Hexi corridor region.⁹¹⁵ It can be seen that the muscular type of Vajrapāṇi in Dunhuang has a more direct iconographic link to the Northern Wei examples from China’s Central Plains than Vajrapāṇi types from the Tarim Basin.

We cannot be certain of whether this Chinese adaptation of the Vajrapāṇi figure or the Chinese epithet came first, but it is plausible that they were influenced by each other at a later stage since both the image and the text were widely disseminated from the Tang Dynasty onwards, as evidenced by their continued prevalence in China, Korea and Japan to the present day. Apart from the shared name, the robust musculature and a general protective function, there is no further evidence indicating how the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi transformed into the Chinese muscular Vajrapāṇi. Whether this type can be traced back to the Heracles

⁹¹⁴ Cf. Zin 2023: 68, fn. 224.

⁹¹⁵ Lim 2008: 9.

motif specifically remains speculative and contingent upon cultural and contextual factors.

IX.2. Evidence of figures with Heracleian features in Sichuan and China's Central Plains

The dissemination of Buddhist art across East Asia led to the survival of certain Heracleian representations in China outside Dunhuang. In Sichuan to the south and China's Central Plains to the east, figures with lion scalps continue to be discovered in group images of divine individuals inspired by Indian gods. In China's Central Plains, a considerable number of funerary figurines wearing the lion scalp have been excavated. This section presents the pertinent evidence in two groups: Buddhist figures and funerary figurines.

A review of the iconographic evidence of Heracles' attributes from the East thus far reveals that examples of a figure wearing the lion scalp headdress and carrying a club together are relatively scarce, even among cases of Hellenistic style. In Gandhāran art, Heracleian figures with one hand draped with the lion skin and the other holding a club are relatively common, but only one example both wearing the lion scalp and holding the club is known to us (see Cat. No. 210). Other Gandhāran figures wearing the lion scalp are either Atlantes or Vajrapāṇis without the club. In Kucha, the two attributes were probably separately assigned to two *yakṣa*-like figures standing next to each other (see Cat. Nos. 313–314). Curiously, the two attributes appear to have been reassembled into one figure in some sculptures from China's Central Plains, which may be interpreted as representing the easternmost parallel of the Heracles motif.

IX.2.1. The lion scalp Buddhist figures

As previously stated, the depictions of Chinese Buddhist figures wearing the lion scalp may have been influenced by the South Asian compositional tradition of the large groups of divine and demonic individuals centred around the Buddha. In the wall paintings of Dunhuang, the Chinese adaptation thereof is exemplified by the lion scalp figure in the group images of the *Eight Devas* between the 7th and 10th centuries AD. The sculptural evidence of the *Eight Devas*, including the lion scalp figure, is present in cave sites from the Sichuan region, contemporary to the Dunhuang examples.

Prior to the *Eight Devas* representations in Dunhuang and Sichuan, in Northern China, another group of Buddhist figures, the so-called *Spirit Kings* (神王), was prevalent in the Central Plains around the 6th century AD. In this group, one of the kings is recorded as the Lion Spirit King, who is depicted wearing a lion scalp and occasionally holding a club. The figures of the Lion Spirit King are usually sculpted together with the many other divine kings on the bases of Buddhist stele or architecture in Buddhist complexes.

IX.2.1.1. In the group images of the Eight Devas (7th–9th centuries AD)

The images of the *Eight Devas* in Sichuan and the vicinity are primarily concentrated in Guangyuan (广元) and Bazhong (巴中) areas, dating from the late 7th to the early 8th centuries AD. The Huangze Temple (皇泽寺) in Guangyuan, constructed during the Early Tang period and situated in the hometown of Empress Wu Zetian (624–705 AD), is widely regarded by scholars as the earliest representation of the *Eight Devas* in China, predating the Dunhuang wall paintings.⁹¹⁶ Nevertheless, some have suggested that the eight clay reliefs (with one lion scalp warrior figure) at the Majijshan Grottoes (麦积山石窟) in Tianshui, Gansu, Northwest China, dating to the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557–581 AD), are earlier examples.⁹¹⁷ In this study, we consider the Majijshan case to be more akin to the representation of the *Spirit Kings*, and therefore, they will be discussed in the next group.

In the Guangyuan area, the lion scalp figure in the *Eight Devas* is represented in the **Huangze Temple Caves 28** (Cat. No. 344) and **51** (Cat. No. 345) (Early Tang), the **Qianfoya** (The Thousand-Buddha Cliff Grottoes) **Caves 206** (Cat. No. 346), **689** and **806** (High Tang). In the Bazhong area, similar representations are from **Xikan** (西龕) **Caves 5** (Cat. No. 347) (Early Tang) and **10** (715 AD) and **Shuining Temple Cave 8** (High Tang).⁹¹⁸ Other examples dating to the same period in Sichuan are from Chengdu (成都), Anyue (安岳) and Leshan (乐山).⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁶ Mizuno 1999: 30–31; Zhu 2023: 136

⁹¹⁷ Fu 1998: 208; Hsing 2005: 124–125, Fig. 31.

⁹¹⁸ Cf. Liu 2004.

⁹¹⁹ Liu 2004: 22–32; Wang 2021: 99–108.

These lion scalp figures appear to share a similar function with those from Dunhuang. They are situated within the context of group sculptures of the *Eight Devas*, which play the attendant roles and serve as a backdrop for the central Buddhist scenes.⁹²⁰ Although there are minor variations between the lion scalp figures from different caves in the Sichuan area, the lion paws of the headdress are particularly distinctive in these examples. Two basic types of paws can be identified: one is similar to Heracles' lion scalp, fastened by tying the two paws beneath the figure's chin in front of the chest (see Cat. No. 344); the second type appears in the examples dating from the High Tang to the Late Tang periods, representing the figure grasping each paw with each hand at the shoulders, as if carrying the skin on the back (see Cat. No. 347).

As with the Dunhuang examples, the identification of the lion scalp figures in the Sichuan area remains problematic. They are conventionally identified as Gandharva or sometimes as Mahoraga,⁹²¹ but no definitive interpretation is given. In some Buddhist sutras from the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the iconography of the *Eight Devas* is described, such as the *Wei Mo Jing Lue Shu* (维摩经略疏).⁹²² However, no textual record of the animal scalp is found, demonstrating that this motif was derived from images.⁹²³

By the 8th century AD in Sichuan, the lion scalp figure stabilised as part of the typical iconography of the *Eight Devas*. Yet, after the 9th century, the *Eight Devas* were no longer popular in this area. Nevertheless, in accordance with the precedents established in Dunhuang and Sichuan, the iconography of the *Eight Devas* achieved longevity from the Tang Dynasty onwards in East Asia. The lion scalp figure had arrived in Korea and Japan no later than the early 8th century AD, evidenced by the wall painting of the *Pure Land of Maitreya* in Kondō Hall of Hōryūji Temple in Japan

⁹²⁰ It is noteworthy that a pair of sculptures of the muscular Vajrapāṇi type are invariably placed as the guardians outside caves housing the *Eight Devas*, which is reminiscent of the combination in the wall paintings in Dunhuang.

⁹²¹ Liu 2004: 10.

⁹²² *Wei Mo Jing Lue Shu*, T no. 1778, 38: 2.582a21-582b23.

⁹²³ Chen 2007: 146–150.

(710 AD)⁹²⁴ and the relief sculpture in the Seokguram Grotto in Korea (751 AD).⁹²⁵

IX.2.1.2. In the group images of the Spirit Kings (5th–6th centuries AD)

As previously stated, one lion scalp warrior-like figure in the **Maijishan Grottoes Cave 4** (Cat. No. 348) from the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557–581 AD) is sometimes considered as a member of the *Eight Devas*.⁹²⁶ This is primarily due to the total number of the group to which the figure belongs and the overlapping iconographic feature of the lion scalp. However, no concrete evidence suggests that the eight figures decorating each column of the façade of **Cave 4** correspond to the established iconography of the *Eight Devas*. In particular, the absence of the pivotal member of the group, the multiple-armed-and-headed Asura, has cast doubt on this identification.⁹²⁷ This lion scalp figure has also been identified as a Lokapāla inspired by the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi because of the protective function of both.⁹²⁸ In the absence of evidence for the lion scalp Vajrapāṇi in China, it is uncertain whether the specific type of Vajrapāṇi influenced the Maijishan relief. When considered in conjunction with the other seven figures in the same group, it appears that the adaptation of the lion scalp figure in this context is more inclined to be a general representation of various divine spirits surrounding the main Buddhist scenes. The earliest Chinese adaptation of this South Asian pictorial tradition in the Buddhist context is evidenced in the group image of the *Spirit Kings*, which usually consists of a Lion Spirit King (獅子神王) wearing the lion scalp headdress and sometimes hand holding a sword or a club, similar to the Maijishan relief.

The group image of the *Spirit Kings* first emerged in the Central Plains in the 5th century AD and became popular in the 6th century, as evidenced by stone reliefs on the bases of votive stele, lower walls and bases of central pillars in Buddhist caves. Similar to the creation of the concept and

⁹²⁴ See Mural No. 9 in Kondō Hall of Hōryūji Temple: <https://view.horyuji-kondohekiga.jp/>.

⁹²⁵ Cf. Zhu and Sun 2023: 25–31.

⁹²⁶ Fu 1998: 208; Hsing 2005: 124–125, Fig. 31.

⁹²⁷ Liu 2022: 21–28.

⁹²⁸ Hsing 2005: 124–125, Fig. 31; Yang 2022: 236, Fig. 6.

the iconography of the *Eight Devas*, the *Spirit Kings* were also formed by the early Chinese Buddhist art by adapting selective Indian iconographic traditions and Buddhist texts and incorporating deities of nature and animals into the Chinese system of worship. The number and types of the *Spirit Kings* depicted are not fixed according to available evidence. Typically, the number is between 6 and 10, and their names vary considerably.⁹²⁹

As there is no Sanskrit equivalent for the *Spirit Kings*, the names of these figures are primarily derived from the inscriptions that remain on the reliefs themselves, and the only reliable reference is the inscriptions next to each king on the base of the Luo Zi Kuan (骆子宽) votive stele (Eastern Wei, 543 AD) (Cat. No. 349), which is currently housed in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.⁹³⁰ Through the Luo Zi Kuan Stele, 10 names of the *Spirit Kings* are known to us, which are the spirits kings of lion, bird, elephant, pearl, wind, dragon, river, mountain, tree and fire. Among them, the Lion Spirit King is depicted wearing a lion scalp and holding a lotus in his left hand, and the arms are draped with flying garments.

According to Shen Jin's (1995) classification of the identified examples of the *Spirit Kings*, the lion scalp Lion Spirit King is also presented in **Longmen Binyang Central Cave** (龙门宾阳中洞) (ca. 505–523 AD), **Gongxian Grottoes Cave 4** (巩县石窟) (6th century AD) (Cat. No. 350) and a Northern Qi marble sculpture of *Bodhisattva with Four Attendants* (Cat. No. 351).⁹³¹ Among these, the relief of the Lion Spirit King in the **Gongxian Cave 4** appears on one side of the bottom of the central pillar, showing the king with both hands resting on a weapon placed vertically on the ground.⁹³² The Maijishan example may have been influenced by this type of lion scalp warrior-like figure of the Lion Spirit King.

The imagery of the *Spirit Kings* was a result of the Chinese adaptations of some Indian iconographies.⁹³³ Jin (1995) has compared the

⁹²⁹ Jin 1995: 55–62; Zhu 2020: 22–41.

⁹³⁰ Chavannes 1914: Pl. XX; Jin 1995: 55.

⁹³¹ Jin 1995: 55–62.

⁹³² Hsing 2005: 126, Fig. 23.

⁹³³ For the Buddhist textual basis of the Spirit Kings, see Zhu 2020: 22–41.

representations of several *Spirit Kings* to some examples from South Asia and suggested that the images of the *yakṣas* may have inspired the Tree Spirit King; the Pearl Spirit King may be associated with the cult of Kubera; the Elephant Spirit King echoes Ganesha; the Mountain Spirit King shares similarities with the Gandhāran Atlantes; and the Wind Spirit King reflects the popularity of the Wind God in Kushan coinage and Gandhāran reliefs.⁹³⁴ Although the Lion Spirit King has not been compared with any South Asian images, given that all these *Spirit Kings* typically serve as architectural elements at the bottom of Buddhist votive stele and pillars, similar to the position of the Atlantes figures in Gandhāran art, it is possible that the figure of the Lion Spirit King was derived from the lion scalp type of the Gandhāran Atlantes, which was one of the popular adaptations of the Heracleian element in Gandhāran art. Zhu (2020) has suggested that the overall component of this group image was inspired by the 6th-century Chinese representation of *Māra's Assault*, which was modelled after Gandhāran examples, and the use of demonic and animal features on the *Spirit Kings* also corresponds to the half-beast half-human creatures in Chinese culture.⁹³⁵

A lion scalp attendant of the Buddha, probably associated with the Lion Spirit King, is also found in the 5th-century relief from **Yungang Cave 13** (Cat. No. 351). On the eastern side of the south wall, a seated Buddha and two flanking bodhisattvas are positioned in the central niche. Outside the niche, there are four registers on each side. On the right side of the second register, from top to bottom, a squatting figure wearing the lion scalp is depicted. The figure is shown with a bare chest and a head nimbus, holding a spear in his left hand. His arms are draped with flying garments. The other figure corresponding to him holds a spear in hand and is also semi-nude with the straps crossing on the bare chest, an attire that has already been observed in some Kucheian examples.

Under the assumption that the Yungang figure was modelled after the Gandhāran Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, some scholars have speculated that the depiction of the lion scalp figure may indicate that the cult of Heracles existed in the 5th-century Yungang Grottoes.⁹³⁶ In our view, it is hardly

⁹³⁴ Jin 1995: 55–62. For the transformation of the Wind God motif from Central Asia to the Far East, see Tanabe 1990: 51–80.

⁹³⁵ Zhu 2020: 22–41.

⁹³⁶ Wang 2020: 61–69.

possible that the surviving traces of Heracleian features in the Chinese Buddhist context can still be associated with the Greek hero. Nevertheless, the recurrence of this specific figural type in a similar pictorial composition that is reminiscent of certain Gandhāran representations offers insight into the transmission route and transformation of the iconographic elements originally associated with the Heracles motif. Although this Yungang case does not represent the *Indraśaila*, the composition has a certain similarity with the Gandhāran examples.

In addition, the blue pigment preserved on the lion scalp in Yungang is indicative of the type of divine lion symbolising wisdom and power in the East Asian context, usually associated with the belief of Mañjuśrī, who rides the blue lion. The blue lion scalp continues to appear in examples dating to the later periods in China, such as the one in the *Eight Devas* from the High Tang period in **Anyue Qianfozhai Cave 51** (Cat. No. 353) and a divine attendant in the Southern Song painting of the *Eighth Arhat Vajraputra* by Lu Xinzong (陆信忠) (Cat. No. 354) (late 12th century) that was made for export to Japan.⁹³⁷ It is interesting to point out that Vajraputra often cradles a small lion, and in Lu Xinzong's illustration, this attribute is personified by wearing the lion scalp. Such later examples show that the representations of lion scalp figures in China's Central Plains had subsequent impact on similar representations in both the western and eastern regions of East Asia, while the connection between this headdress and the Greek hero had long been severed yet vaguely remained with some familiar connotations, such as the kingly power, the protective function and the warrior-hero charisma.

To conclude, the evidence of the lion scalp figures in Buddhist art from Gandhāra to China presented thus far indicates that this iconographic element does not define the respective figures' identities. Instead, it has been employed regularly in the depiction of various figures, such as those belonging to the classes of spirit individuals. In Gandhāran art, the headdress is worn by Vajrapāṇis, Atlantes and demon soldiers in Māra's army. In the Chinese territory, the type of Vajrapāṇi wearing the lion scalp is not found in China except for those in the Kuchean wall paintings, while the attendants of the Heavenly King, the Lion Spirit Kings and the deities in the *Eight Devas* with this headdress indicate that early Chinese Buddhist art inherited the Gandhāran pictorial formulas of

⁹³⁷ Lin 2016: Fig. 2-1.

inserting the lion scalp figures into group images or as attendant spirits. It is important to note that such transformations did not occur in a one-directional or consistent manner. The iconography transferred from one context to another was frequently influenced and interrupted by other factors stemming from dynamic exchanges that occurred and local cultural factors, which resulted in the varied diffusion of certain images from different times and places. This reminds us that the seemingly logical geographical and chronological progression may sometimes mislead our evaluation of the extant material, given our academic hindsight.

IX.2.2. Heracleian funerary figurines: adaptation of religious images for secular use

The last body of evidence showing Chinese adaptation of Heracleian features is represented by some funerary figurines, which may have been derived from Buddhist figures in the guise of warriors and wearing the lion scalp headgear. Although funerary figurines of warrior guardians were discovered in China as early as the Western Jin Dynasty (266–316 AD), the type of warrior figurine wearing the lion scalp emerged and gained popularity during the Tang Dynasty. This phenomenon is likely related to the widespread images of the warrior-like lion scalp figure in the *Eight Devas* during this period. Other potential influences have been put forth, including the veneration of Vaiśravaṇa or the Tibetan military garb of the “Great Tiger Skin”. Regardless of the source of the direct influence, some examples have been proposed as being of Greek origin due to the presence of both the lion scalp and the club.

A considerable number of these funerary figurines have been unearthed in the Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Xi’an areas, and the majority of them are made of pottery with colours. One Tang Sancai lion scalp figurine from Xi’an (Cat. No. 355) has been frequently regarded by Chinese scholars as the ultimate transformation of the Heracles figure in China’s Central Plains.⁹³⁸ Notably, the Xi’an warrior clearly exhibits Sogdian influence in the lion heads on the pauldrons.

The archaeological finds have revealed a considerable number of lion scalp warrior figurines from tombs dated to the Early Tang and High Tang periods. These examples are similar in type and are typically

⁹³⁸ Hsieh 1997: 32–53; Hsing 2005: 103–154; Yang 2022: 120–137.

discovered in the tombs of nobility, court officials with ranks lower than the third and fourth classes or the offspring of officials. Sometimes, the lion scalp figurines are found as members of the ceremonial military troop in the tomb, such as the several figurines of this type in the tomb of the formally Crown Prince Jiemin and his wife Lady Yang (节愍太子墓) in Shaanxi (710 AD).⁹³⁹ It is evident that these figurines were relatively popular and common as funerary objects. They served an apotropaic function while projecting the political or military power and the social status of the tomb owner during his lifetime and continuation in the afterlife.

In a few cases, this kind of lion scalp warrior figurine also holds a club, bringing to mind the two most iconic attributes of Heracles. Two figurines of this type are from the tomb of Yang Kan (杨侃) and his wife in Anyang, Henan (761 AD) (Cat. No. 356), while another one is from another Tang tomb at Beishicao (北石槽) in Changzhi, Shanxi. Although the three examples presented include both the lion scalp and club, it is challenging to ascertain whether the two elements were introduced to China simultaneously via the Heracles motif due to the ubiquity of the club as a general weapon. As has been demonstrated in the majority of Eastern variations of figural types derived from the Heracles motif, the two elements are not necessarily associated.

In the Chinese funerary context following the Tang Dynasty, the lion scalp warrior did not disappear but continued to be carved inside the tombs during the Song Dynasty, such as those from the tomb complexes in Luzhou (庐州), where these warriors are presented with various weapons.⁹⁴⁰ It can be seen that the element lacks any specific indication of a particular personage, but a general feature of a warrior-like figure. Intriguingly, although the Chinese lion scalp warriors do not echo the Heracles motif, they coincidentally reveal a chthonic aspect that was also associated with the Greek hero.

⁹³⁹ Shen 2010: Fig. 28; Ding 2022: 56–59; Xu 2022: Fig. 4.2.

⁹⁴⁰ Wang 2021: 99–108.

IX.3. Summary

An analysis of figures with Heracleian features in Dunhuang, Sichuan and China's Central Plains reveals that the Chinese adaptations of the Heracleian figure and attributes do not exhibit stylistic similarities with those from North-West India and Central Asia or through only one particular figurative motif. Rather, the adaptation followed the Gandhāran pictorial tradition of representing more general scenes in which the Heracleian figures participate or some classes of amorphous figures that bear some Heracleian iconographic features. For instance, the lion scalp figure in the group images of the *Eight Devas* and the *Spirit Kings* in China may have been derived from those wearing the same headdress in the group images of *Māra's Assault* and the divine and demonic groups surrounding the central preaching scenes and the Buddha in Gandhāran arts. The composition of the lion scalp figure attending the Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa from Dunhuang is analogous to that of the Buddha and Vajrapāṇi in Gandhāran art. The Gandhāran lion scalp Atlantes might have been conflated with some general warrior gods and transformed into the Chinese Lion Spirit King. Such transformations continued in the East Asian context, and the lion scalp figures had further multiplied. It can be said that the Chinese adaptations, particularly in the Buddhist context, were inspired by the role and position that the lion scalp figures occupied in narrative or non-narrative scenes while implementing different themes based on the Chinese understandings and interpretations of Buddhist doctrines and Indian elements.

On the other hand, the currently available evidence does not permit us to propose a certain transmission path from the West to the East within the Chinese territory. In Dunhuang, while the area is closest to the Tarim Basin, the lion scalp figures are only dated from the 7th century AD. However, the earliest datable example of a figure with this feature in China is found in the 5th-century AD Yungang Grottoes in North China, which has been demonstrated to be influenced by Gandhāran art and dated even earlier than the lion scalp figures from the Second Indo-Iranian Style wall paintings in Kucha. The scattered groups of Chinese Buddhist figures with Heracleian features in China may reflect the multiple directions of circulating and recycling the Gandhāran iconographic traditions at different historical stages. No later than the Tang Dynasty, when the Heracleian lion scalp had achieved considerable popularity and become even more generic through assimilation with divine individuals in China, the dissemination of religious figures bearing such features resulted in

the adaptation of the iconography in some regular warrior-like figurines, which were frequently discovered in funerary contexts. It is similarly important to consider the impact of influences from other cultural sources, which may help to elucidate the mixture of iconographic elements and styles resulting from the multicultural exchanges that took place throughout Asia.

The examples presented illustrate the enduring popularity and universality of the original lion scalp of Heracles in changing contexts. This iconographic feature was disseminated in East Asia following its transmission to China from India. However, the specific indication of the Greek hero or even the “second-hand” Gandharan Heracles-Vajrapāṇi is absent. It appears that the reuse of the lion scalp does not refer to a specific personage or allude to any narratives. Instead, it is closely associated with the established pictorial composition, which can be traced back to early Buddhist art in South Asia. In this context, it can be reasonably assumed that a figure with such an appearance would occupy an appropriate position. Meanwhile, the physical resemblance between the muscular Vajrapāṇi type, the “*vajra-wrestler*”, in East Asia and the Gandhāran Heracleian Vajrapāṇi may be more coincidental than a result of shared ancestry, given that they share the name and function to a certain extent.

It is also pertinent to provide a brief account of the subsequent lives of the lion scalp figures after Tang China. The figural art traditions established during the Sui and Tang dynasties profoundly influenced the entire East Asian cultural sphere. The Heracleian lion scalp was also undoubtedly incorporated into Buddhist figural art in Korea and Japan, owing to the lion scalp figure being a member of the *Eight Devas* created in China. Consequently, this visual element has been regarded as the authentic “Indian” iconography of Gandharva in East Asia. The Korean lion’s scalp Gandharva was reunited with the Indian concept of the musical aspect of Gandharva by carrying musical instruments.⁹⁴¹ In Japan, while the lion scalp figures continued to be depicted in those large group images in Buddhist art, it was also worn by various deities that later emerged, such as the so-called Cadana Gandharva (Sendan Kendatsuba 梅檀乾闥婆) (Cat. No. 357), Rāgarāja (Aizen Myō-ō 爱染明王)⁹⁴² and

⁹⁴¹ Zhu 2023: 151–152.

⁹⁴² Cf. Izumi 2000: 19–42.

Kṣitigarbha in the guise of a general (Shōgun Jizō 勝軍地藏). It is intriguing to observe how these East Asian divine figures were created by assuming Sanskrit names devoid of Indian contents and adopting the headdress of Heracles as a symbol of their military attire and function as apotropaic and protective signs.

On the other hand, the persistence of the depiction of a heroic warrior adorned with the lion scalp in East Asia may have later flowed back to the Iranian world. As presented, since the Tang Dynasty in China, the more general lion scalp warrior type wearing Central Asian military armour was derived from the lion scalp Buddhist figure, inspired by the Indian iconographic tradition. This tradition of military figures wearing the feline scalp headdress may have been introduced back to the Iranian world through Chinese paintings in the 15th century,⁹⁴³ whereby the lion/leopard helmet reappeared on the images of the Iranian epic hero Rostam (Cat. No. 358), whose mythological roots were closely linked to the Heracles motif. While the concept of Rostam wearing the feline's scalp might have been still inspired by the Greek narratives,⁹⁴⁴ the Persian illustrations of this element in illustrated manuscripts were certainly influenced by the numerous works of East Asian art imported into Iran during the Timurid and subsequent periods, mainly resulting from diplomatic and trade activities with the Chinese Yuan and Ming courts via maritime and land routes.⁹⁴⁵ This illustrates the durability and considerable fluidity of the circulation of such Heracleian elements across Eurasia in terms of their movement back and forth and their potential reunification with other motifs. It may be of interest for future research to examine the interaction between the "old" and "new" traditions and to trace Heracles back to the West.

⁹⁴³ Robinson 2005: 253–268. Although the leopard headdress has been frequently used in depicting Rostam in illustrated manuscripts, the earliest depiction of this element is found in depicting Rostam's great-great-grandfather Garshasp instead of the epic hero.

⁹⁴⁴ Melikian-Chirvani 1998: 173–178; Abdullaev 2007: 572–574; Boardman 2015: fn. 465.

⁹⁴⁵ Serruys 1967: 540; Rossabi 1973: 129–136.

Conclusions

This study traces the diffusion and transformation of the Heracles motif in the East following the campaigns of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC. It supplements the “research map” of the eastward journey of Heracleian imagery, including, in particular, the discoveries in Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and China. It shows how a considerable number of Heracles-like images, initially under the impetus of Hellenistic culture in more westerly regions were preserved and further transformed through various media in the visual arts of Central Asia and North-West India. It also examines the subsequent inheritance and adaptation of Heracleian imagery through contact and exchange with regions further East, namely China. This study makes an important contribution in highlighting the diversity of Heracles-like images found in several regions and cultural spheres situated to the east of the Mediterranean, identifies certain patterns in the adaptation of these images, and explores the various channels through which these images were transmitted.

A comparative analysis of Heracleian figures from Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent against the representative types from classical antiquity and the Near East allows for an evaluation of the Central Asian and Indian subcontinent’s awareness of the Heracles motif and its selective adoption of certain iconographic types and narrative themes. In these Eastern regions, where Hellenistic culture merged into those of the local multicultural communities, particularly during the Seleucid, Parthian, Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Greek and Kushan periods (spanning the 4th century BC to the 4th century AD), we demonstrate how the figure and attributes of Heracles were frequently incorporated into regional visual arts and underwent varied processes of adaptation, especially in formatting the hybrid figurative motifs. The nature of this hybridity, whether purely formal or content-related, has been given case-by-case analyses since the works themselves in each context are varied and the patterns of their adaptation cannot be generalised. This is indicative of contextually specific dynamics, in which social, cultural and political apparatus no doubt informed the artistic outcomes involving the particular guises of Heracles.

The catalogue presented in this study constitutes a selection of the most well-preserved, widely known, and frequently discussed hybrid Heracleian examples in the East, as well as other pertinent ones that have not yet been categorised due to a lack of contextual evidence or a generally lesser prominence in academic research. The former, exemplified by Heracles-Verethragna in the Iranian world and Heracles-Vajrapāṇi in Gandhāran Buddhist art, effectively demonstrates that the striking similarity in form that emerged in a multicultural context can signify a mixture of content and meaning, while the core signification and identity of Heracles may not have been necessarily replaced or completely forgotten.

For the less prominent examples, this catalogue expands on the variety and quantity of the variants of Heracleian imagery from the Greater Gandhāran area, Chinese Central Asia and China, which present a considerable number of examples that served as carriers of the Heracles imagery and reflect the multiple forms of Eastern adaptations of the Heracles motif. As this study presents, the evidence of the Heracleian imagery in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent between the 1st and 4th centuries AD reveals various types, including non-narrative figures carrying Heracles' attributes, several narrative representations adapting the themes of the hero fighting monsters, as a solo symposiast or with female figures, as well as adaptation into Buddhist figural arts. Such adaptations did not occur randomly — based on the available material, we have identified several prevalent patterns. These include directly copying classical types or themes of Heracles, adopting the iconography while altering the style and incorporating new elements, and transferring iconographic elements to other figurative or narrative motifs (see Chapters V and VI).

This study also emphasises the importance of recognising the broad use of the Heracleian visual elements instead of limiting them to deterministic models. As the catalogue shows, Heracleian visual elements, such as the hero's appearance and attributes, were applied to various figures that may have carried some functions similar to those of the Greek hero. These figures constitute the major corpus of the Heracleian images in Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and China. They serve as carriers of the Heracles imagery and reflect the multiplicity of Iranian, Indian and Chinese adaptations of the Heracles motif.

In particular, various divine and demonic figures in Gandhāran art (tutelary deities, Atlantes, some Buddhist attendants and demons) adopted the figural types and attributes of Heracles. Furthermore, the examples in Chinese Central Asia and China reveal how particular Heracleian elements were maintained and transformed within the framework of Buddhist art from India to China instead of transferring a holistic figure of Heracles, marked by the frequent depiction of *yakṣas*, demonic individuals and warriors wearing the lion scalp. The occurrence of these Chinese adaptations is proven to be generally aligned with the conventional portrayals of those in Gandhāran art, although the figures' identities may have changed accordingly (see Chapters VI and VIII), not to mention meaning in the Chinese context.

The few specific case studies (e.g. Heracles-Vajrapāṇi) that have attracted the most scholarly attention should be regarded as one of the many manifestations of the Heracleian imagery instead of being taken as the decisive factor for transmitting the Heracles motif. However, given the particularity of the case of Heracles-Vajrapāṇi, we also provide a thorough examination of its figural types and analyse the specific visual contexts in which these types are positioned (see Chapter VI). This classification facilitates an understanding of the role played by Heracles-Vajrapāṇi in the transmission of Heracleian imagery from India to China via Buddhist art. As the result shows, the Vajrapāṇi figure in China (except for the western regions) is no longer depicted with Heracleian attributes, and there is a lack of sufficient evidence to link unequivocally the muscular Chinese Vajrapāṇi type with the Gandhāran Heracleian type. It can be concluded that the Chinese adaptations were generally based on the typology of Gandhāran Buddhist figures that adopted the Heracleian visual elements rather than on a specific figurative or narrative motif.

Another primary issue concerning the metamorphoses of Heracles in the East, discussed in this thesis, is the change in meaning and the figure's identity. This raises the question of the circumstances under which Heracles was no longer perceived according to his classical identity and why his image and attributes were selected in the representation of other figures. While there is no definitive and single answer to these questions, it can be confirmed that within the multicultural spheres in which the presence and influence Hellenistic artistic culture remains indisputable, even in cases where the visual context indicates the acquisition of new identities, the allusions to the Heracles motif cannot be easily denied. Such allusions may relate to classical narratives likely known by some of the

local communities, connotations associated with the Heracles motif, or connections with Alexander's Heracleian emulation, as evidenced by the hybrid examples, including religious and secular objects discovered in Central Asia and North-West India that frequently incorporated Heracleian elements into visual representations.

No evidence indicates that ancient China preserved Heracles' classical narratives or cult practices, despite some direct contact between the ancient Far East and the classical world (particularly during the Han and Roman Empires) and the Chinese inheritance of secondary Heracleian imagery from the Indo-Iranian world. As examined in this study, the East Asian examples, exhibit significant differences from the Heracles motif and do not correspond to the identities of their presumably Indian precedents. These adaptations usually emerged collectively and reflect a process of recreating select foreign visual elements in the Chinese context. For example, the lion scalp "Indian gods" of the *Eight Devas* and the *Spirit Kings*, which were prevalent in East Asia but never existed in India, more likely emulated the depictions of figures with analogous hierarchical positions established in the Buddhist pictorial precedents from South Asia, without establishing a connection to the Heracles motif.

Admittedly, the profound symbolic significance attributed to the Heracles motif, which is evident in its association with broader notions of strength and power, may have served as a source of inspiration for the reuse of analogous imagery in the protective attendant or apotropaic contexts, such as those warrior-like or demonic figures adorned with the lion scalp discovered in Chinese Central Asia and China. The chthonic aspect of the Greek hero also seems to have been adopted by the club-bearing muscular demon in the Gandhāran imagery of the *Maitrakanyaka jātaka* and indirectly reflected by the Chinese Tang funerary figurines wearing the lion scalp. It is, however, important to recall that a considerable number of heroic motifs from a variety of cultural traditions are as ancient as (or even more than) that of Heracles and are similarly enduring and universal in their appeal. In order to clarify the possible connections established between other heroic images and those of Heracles, it is fundamental to examine how similar iconographic elements were reconfigured in new contexts, as this thesis proposes. This approach would avoid the correlation of intrinsically unrelated motifs from different contexts based solely on similar visual elements and more generalised figures.

Artefacts that were possibly imported to the East or locally made by the Greek artisans have also been taken into account in this study, a group of materials that are usually separately discussed aside from the transforming motifs or less mentioned. These objects have a higher likelihood of retaining the original identity of Heracles without explicitly assimilating him with other figurative motifs. Such a reception of the Greek hero occurred exclusively in contexts where the Greek pantheon was partially present, testified by the archaeological discoveries of bronze statuettes and Roman imports at sites such as Ai Khanoum and Begram. It is possible that the Indo-Iranian communities that migrated to and inhabited the Tarim Basin area may have preserved the memory of Heracles from the most distant areas to the Greek homeland, as evidenced by the Greco-Roman Egyptian figurines in Yōtkan and the local uses of seal impressions of Greek gods in Niya (see Chapter VII).

Overall, the primary vehicles by which the Heracleian imagery was transmitted followed the trajectory from the West to the East after the era of Alexander and before the advent of Islam, mainly due to the eastward Hellenistic influences and the spread of Buddhist art. However, we are fully aware that in this process of diffusion over a large geographical area, through many channels and over a long period of time, it is inevitable that there will be reverse directional influences and exceptional cases. Some objects may bear appearances that unexpectedly reverted to older traditions or flowed back to western regions, which prevents us from discerning a continuous and consistent transformation path for the Heracles motif as it moved to the East. This is exemplified by some portable objects which remain controversial in date, origin and subject matter, such as the “Bactrian” silver vessels discussed in Chapter VII bearing the figural types of Heracles and reflect different periods and areas of artistic influences and how they interacted with each other.

Limitations of the study and future research

It is essential to acknowledge some limitations of this study. The labels “Heracles” and “Heracleian”, employed to classify and describe images from very different cultural spheres and contexts, are essentially drawn upon our modern familiarity with the representations of the Greek hero in the works of art from classical antiquity onwards, as defined for the most part by academic discourse. This contrasts with our significantly lesser familiarity with figures exhibiting similar iconographic features that emerged in the East. By no means can we deny the possibility that

some universality of divine, heroic and regal themes among distinct ancient cultures might have resulted in similar iconographic renderings, such as the donning of animal skins by warriors, heroes, kings and gods, and the conquering of enormous difficulties and evils.

Notwithstanding the considerable geographical expanse, stretching from the Mediterranean to East Asia; and the extended time span, from the post-Alexander to the pre-Islamic period, the examples collected and analysed in this study reflect the continuous cultural interaction and meditation among different communities across the Eurasian continent. These interactions at different historical stages and key crossroads resulted in notable instances of multicultural exchange and fusion. Consequently, the works exhibiting Heracleian characteristics were shaped by broader socio-historical contexts, which determined their direct or indirect connections to the motif of the Greek hero. Even instances seemingly distant from or lacking direct contact with Hellenistic culture could still have been interconnected through various channels, such as the transformation through Buddhist art, which occurred across different periods and specific contexts from the Indian subcontinent to the Far East. From this perspective, new possibilities for identifying certain Heracleian iconographies with figurative motifs from the local societies are worth exploring (as has also been a trend in the most recent scholarship). One important area of future research that should be considered is conducting a comparative analysis of different textual traditions with the aid of anthropological studies, thus taking on a more interpretative approach to these collected images in their respective cultural contexts.

Although this study examines a selection of salient findings within their respective contexts, focusing primarily on highlighting the influences of pictorial traditions from various cultures, the complexity of each example's content and the diversity of all the Heracleian examples preclude a comprehensive investigation of all the relevant literature and the specific communities involved. While it would be possible to develop the analysis of each instance in depth through more detailed contextualisation, such as focusing on a few key examples to further examine the objects' contexts of use, modes of display, and how they were engaged with by the local communities, the resulting work would exceed the confines of this thesis. Therefore, the intention here was to lay the groundwork for such future studies by undertaking a larger scale investigation in terms of chronology and geography; highlighting likely paths of motif transmission; and variety of artistic media.

The majority of the works in this catalogue are identified as Heracleian based on the presence of similar figures and shared attributes, including those observed in narrative scenes. In a few instances, we have discovered how a narrative scene that initially included the figure of Heracles underwent a complete transformation by sharing the compositional or figural schema without the figure of Heracles. This is exemplified by the formation of the iconography of Ajātaśatru's revival story in the Kucheian wall paintings, which was based on the reconstruction of the decomposed elements of Heracles' Fourth Labour. This potential method of transferring the Heracles motif could be investigated further by identifying additional comparable examples.

Like most previous research, this study follows the West-to-East direction of the transmission of Heracleian imagery and has not extended its scope beyond the Chinese evidence. It should be noted, however, that the Heracleian elements continued to circulate and be recycled beyond China, such as in Korea and Japan, or to flow back into the Iranian world at a later date. In these contexts, a motif such as the lion scalp was retained, either in the figure of Gandharva, in other deities with apotropaic and protective functions, or in some Iranian heroic figures, illustrating the durability and considerable fluidity of the circulation of Heraclitean elements across Eurasia in terms of their movement back and forth and their potential reunification with other motifs. Thus, it may be of interest for future research to examine the interaction between the "old" and "new" traditions and to trace the movement of Heracles in the opposite direction. This, in conjunction with more contextually focused approaches and research questions pertaining to social and political receptions of Heracleian motifs promise to add further understanding of the Greek hero in different cultural guises beyond his native Mediterranean sphere.

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Catalogue



Cat. No. 1. Silver tetradrachm of Seleucus I Nicator

(305–281 BC)

Minted in Seleucia-on-Tigris.

Obv. Beardless head of Heracles wearing lion headgear.

Rev. Zeus Nikephoros.

W. 16.93 g

BM: 2002,0101.1320

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 2. Silver tetradrachm of Antiochus I Soter

(281–261 BC)

Minted in Smyrna or Sardis.

Obv. Diademed head of Antiochus I Soter.

Rev. Seated nude Heracles facing left, resting hand on club.

W. 17.05 g.

Bibliography: Hoover 2007: 103.



Cat. No. 3. Silver tetradrachm of Mithridates I

(109?–70/69 BC)

Minted in Seleucia-on-Tigris.

Obv. Diademed and long-bearded head of Mithridates.

Rev. Standing Heracles facing right, left hand holding lionskin and club, right hand holding cup.

W. 15.95 g

BM: RPK, p196.1.ArsVI

Bibliography: Wroth 1903: lxix–lxx, Pl. iii 7, 10, 12; Sellwood 1980: 13.3, 13.5;

Magub 2018: 43, 135, 146–147, Fig. 10.



Cat. No. 4. Silver tetradrachm of Tiraius II

(79/78–49/48 BC)

Minted in Characene.

Obv. Diademed and long-bearded head of Tiraius II.

Rev. Seated naked Heracles facing left, right hand holding club resting on thigh.

W. 13.68 g

BM: RPK, p193.1.Tir

Bibliography: Hill 1922: 289–309; Magub 2018: 168, Figs. 59, 60, 61.

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Cat. No. 5. Relief of Heracles with
sovereign

Nemrut Dağı

Bibliography: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr.
1576; Humann and Puchstein 1890: Pl.
39B; Canepa 2015: Pl. 2.13.

Cat. No. 6. Relief stela of Heracles with
sovereign (oil-press) Samsat

BM: 1927,1214.1.

Bibliography: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles,
nr. 1577; Colledge 1977: Pl. 32a; TNM
2003: 102, cat. 92.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 7. Reconstruction of the East Terrace Artagnes-Heracles-Ares at Nemrut Dağı

H. ca. 8.05 m.

Bibliography: Sanders 1996: Fig. 90; Canepa 2018: 244–246, Fig. 2.10.



Cat. No. 8. Plaster relief of reclining Heracles from Dura-Europos

Dura-Europos
21.5 x 28 x 12.5 cm
YUAG: 1935.49
Bibliography: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1035.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 9. Marble relief of reclining Heracles from Dura-Europos

Hatra: 419
Bibliography: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 1033; Downey 1969: Pl. XXIII.3.



Cat. No. 10. Limestone relief of Standing Heracles from Dura-Europos

(ca. 100–256 AD)
Dura-Europos
31.5 x 16 cm
YUAG: 1935.51
Bibliography: Downey 1969: Pl. VI.3;
Brody and Hoffman 2011: Pl. 48.



Cat. No. 11. Gypsum relief of Standing Heracles from Dura-Europos

(ca. 2nd century AD)
Dura-Europos
22.3 x 13 x 5.2 cm
YUAG: 1938.5309
Bibliography: Downey 1969: Pl. VII.1.



Cat. No. 12. Limestone relief of Standing Heracles holding a cup and club from Dura-Europos

(ca. 1st century AD)
Dura-Europos
28.6 x 19.7 x 8.9 cm
YUAG: 1938.5321
Bibliography: Downey 1969: Pl. XVI.1.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 14. Bronze Heracles from Hatra

Hatra
IM: 68072
Bibliography: Downey 1969: Pl. XVIII.2.



Cat. No. 13. Limestone statuette of Heracles holding a cup and club from Dura-Europos

(ca. early 3rd century AD)
Dura-Europos
35 x 19 x 14 cm
YUAG: 1931.416
Bibliography: Downey 1969: Pl. XVI.2;
Brody and Hoffman 2011: 369, no. 68,
Pl. 68.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 15. Mosul marble statue of Standing Heracles from Hatra

Hatra
IM: 60495
Bibliography: Downey 1969: 72, Pl.
XXII.1–2.

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Cat. No. 16. Limestone statue of Standing
Heracles from Hatra

(ca. 2nd century AD)

Hatra

H. 88 cm

TNM: TJ-4822.

Bibliography: TNM 2003: 103, cat. 93.

Cat. No. 17. Cult statue of Heracles from
Hatra Shrine 7

Hatra

IM: 56768

Bibliography: Downey 1972: 77–78.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 18. Bronze statue of Heracles-Ver-
ethragna from Seleucia-on-Tigris

(150/151 AD)

Seleucia-on-Tigris

H. 85.5 cm

IM: 100178

Bibliography: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr.
731; Invernizzi 1989a: 65–113; 2007: 65, 2;
Messina 2014: Fig. 8.

Cat. No. 19. Terracotta figurine of rest-
ing Heracles from Seleucia-on-Tigris

Seleucia-on-Tigris

H. 11.3 cm.

Bibliography: Menegazzi 2019: 397, Fig.
28.3.

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for distribution



Cat. No. 20. Terracotta figurine of resting Heracles from Seleucia-on-Tigris

(150 BC- 200 AD)
Seleucia-on-Tigris
13.7 x 5.8. 4.4 cm
Kelsey Museum of Archaeology (University of Michigan): 14884
Bibliography: Invernizzi 2007: 174–175, Fig. 86.

Cat. No. 21. Limestone statue of seated Heracles from Nineveh

(ca. 1st century AD?)
Nineveh
H. 52.9 cm.
BM: 1881,0701.1
Bibliography: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 974; Murray 1882: 240–243; Invernizzi 1989b: 623–636; Bartman 1986: 303; 1992: 181; Reade 1998: 69–70, Fig. 4; Bollati 2007: 174, cat. 85; Canepa 2018: 86.



Cat. No. 22. Gypsum and plaster relief of Heracles fighting a lion(?) from Dura-Europos

(1st century AD)
Dura-Europos
33.3 x 23.7 x 8.5 cm
YUAG: 1938.5305
Bibliography: Downey 1969: Pl. XI.1.



Cat. No. 23. Limestone relief of Heracles and the Nemean Lion(?) from Dura-Europos

(ca. 160–256 AD)
Dura-Europos
51.8 x 34.29 x 27.94 cm
YUAG: 1938.5302
Bibliography: Downey 1969: Pl. XII.1–2.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 24. Limestone votive relief from
the Bel Temple at Palmyra

(100–1 BC)
22.5 x 35 cm
National Museum of Damascus:
4242/10050
Bibliography: Seyrig 1944: 77–79; Kaizer
2000: 219–232.

Cat. No. 25. Statue of the Behistun
Heracles-Verethragna

(148 BC)
Behistun, Iran
Bibliography: *LIMC* iv.1, s.v. Herakles,
nr. 1012; Canepa 2018: 186, Fig. 8.9;
Wood 2018: 335, Fig. 4.



Cat. No. 26. Terracotta statue of Heracles
from Susa

Susa
Teheran Museum
Bibliography: Ghirshman 1962: Fig.116 A;
Connelly 1989: Fig.23.



Cat. No. 27. Bronze statuette of Heracles
holding a club from Iran

(ca. 300 BC –300 AD)
Iran
10.4 x 3.9 x 2.2 cm
Louvre: AO 25535
Bibliography: Connelly 1989: Fig. 16.



Cat. No. 28. Terracotta plaque of Heracles and the Nemean Lion from Susa

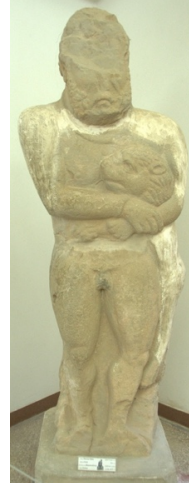
(ca. 312–64 BC)

Susa

22.5 x 17.7 x 3.6 cm.

Louvre: SB 2781; A 7903

Bibliography: Martinez-Sève 2002: nos. 111–112; 2008: Fig. 2.



Cat. No. 29. Limestone statue of Heracles holding a lion from Masjed-e Solaiman

(ca. 175–225 AD)

Masjed-e Solaiman

H. 240 cm

Susa, Archaeological Museum, Iran

Bibliography: Ghirshman 1976: 91–94, Pl. LXXXIX, 5, Pl. 24; Kawami 1987: 207; Wood 2018: 340–344.

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Cat. No. 30. Tang-e Botan (Shīmbār) frieze

Bibliography: Bivar and Shaked 1964: 268–269, Pl. I; Kawami 1987: 142–143; Mathiesen 1992: 130; Wood 2018: 344–347, Fig. 9.

Cat. No. 31. Tang-e Sarvak I

Bibliography: Mathiesen 1992: Fig. 15; Wood 2018: 346–347, Fig. 10.

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for distribution

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for distribution

Cat. No. 32. Relief of Ardašir I,
Naqš-e Rostam I

Iran

Bibliography: Herzfeld 1941: 311; cf. Hinz
and Borger 1969: 123–124; Ghirshman
1975: 239; Wood 2018: Figs. 11–12.

Cat. No. 33. Limestone statue of
Heracles (headless) dedicated at Hatra
by Roman tribune Petronius Quintianus

(238–241 AD)

H. 91 cm

IM

Bibliography: Maricq 1957: 288–305;
Downey 1969: Pl. XIX.2.



Cat. No. 34. Attic-standard tetradrachm of Alexander

Found in Afghanistan.

Obv. Beardless head of Heracles wearing lion headgear.

Rev. Zeus sitting on stool-throne, holding eagle on outstretched right hand and sceptre in left.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi and Rahman 1995: no. 57.



Cat. No. 35. Silver tetradrachm of Euthydemus I

Obv. Diadem clad head of youthful king facing right.

Rev. Heracles sitting on a rock, holding a club which rests vertically on a pile of rocks.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991:154–159, Euthydemus I, série 6.



Cat. No. 36. Silver tetradrachm of Euthydemus I

Minted in Bactria.

Obv. Diadem-clad head of king facing right.

Rev. Heracles sitting on rock, holding club which rests vertically on his right thigh.

BM: G.1157.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: Euthydemus I 12a.



Cat. No. 37. Coin of Euthydemus I

Obv. Bearded Heracles facing right.

Rev. Leaping horse facing right.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: Euthydemus I, série 17.



Cat. No. 38. Copper dichalkon (double unit) of Demetrius I

Obv. Bearded Heracles facing right, club over shoulder.

Rev. Artemis standing and facing forward, holding a bow in left hand, drawing an arrow from quiver on back with right hand.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: 166, Demetrius I, série 4, Pl. 5.



Cat. No. 39. Agathocles' commemorative coin

Obv. Beardless head of Heracles wearing lion headgear facing right.

Rev. Zeus seated on stool-throne, holding an eagle in outstretched right hand and sceptre in left.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: série 12, Pl. 8.



Cat. No. 40. Attic-standard tetradrachm of Euthydemus II

Obv. Diadem clad head of youthful king facing right.

Rev. Standing Heracles facing frontally, wearing wreathed crown, holding a second wreath in right hand, club and lion skin in left hand.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2015: 497, coin no. 91.



Cat. No. 41. Agathocles in the name of Demetrius I

Obv. Diadem clad head of king facing right, wearing elephant's scalp.

Rev. Standing naked Heracles facing frontally, crowning himself with right hand, carrying club and lion skin in left arm.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2015: 128, Fig. 4.



Cat. No. 42. Bronze quadruple of Menander I

Obv. Diadem clad and bearded Heracles facing right.

Rev. Lion skin

Published: CNG e250 lot 192

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: 246, Menander I, Série 35, Pl. 33



Cat. No. 43. Bronze quadruple of Strato I

Obv. Diadem clad and bearded Heracles facing right, club on shoulder.

Rev. Standing winged Nike facing right, holding a palm and wreath.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: 263–264, Strato I, Série 29–30, Pl. 37.



Cat. No. 44. Bronze quadruple of Zoilus I

Obv. Bearded Heracles in lionskin head-dress facing right.

Rev. Club and bow in quiver.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: Série 6, Pl. 34.



Cat. No. 45. Coin of Zoilus I

Obv. Diadem clad head of youthful king facing right.

Rev. Heracles holding a wreath in right hand, club and lion skin in left.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: Série 1, Pl. 34.



Cat. No. 46. Coin of Lysias

Obv. Diadem clad and helmeted king seen from the back.

Rev. Standing naked Heracles facing frontally, crowning himself with right hand, carrying club, palm frond and lion's skin in left arm.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2020: 208, Cat. no. 24.



Cat. No. 47. Coin of Theophilus

Obv. Diadem clad head of king facing right.

Rev. Crowned Heracles standing, right hand resting on club and left carrying lion's skin.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: Série 2, Pl. 48.



Cat. No. 48. Bronze quadruple of Agathoclea

Obv. Helmeted king facing right.

Rev. Heracles sitting on a rock, holding club which rests vertically on his right thigh.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 1991: Série 3H, Pl. 34.

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Cat. No. 49. Silver tetradrachm from Bukhara Region, Uzbekistan

Imitation of coins of Euthydemus I.

Obv. Diadem clad youthful king facing right.

Rev. Heracles sitting on the rock with club.

Bibliography: Cribb 2007: 350, Fig. 56.



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Cat. No. 50. Bronze quadruple of Maues

Obv. Zeus enthroned and half turned to left, holding sceptre in left hand.

Rev. Standing naked Heracles facing frontally, crowning himself with right hand, and carrying club, palm and lion skin in his left arm.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2015: 467, Fig. 2.

Cat. No. 51. Bronze quadruple of Vonones

Obv. Standing Heracles facing frontally, holding club and lion skin, and crowing himself with wreath.

Rev. Standing Athena facing left, holding spear and shield.

Bibliography: Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 5: 452, type 688.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 52. Bronze quadruple of Spalahores with Spalagadames

Obv. King riding horse walking rightward.

Rev. Diadem clad Heracles sitting on rocks facing left, holding club.

Bibliography: Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 5: 453, type 691.

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Cat. No. 53. Bronze statuette of Heracles
crowning himself from Ai Khanoum

Ai Khanoum
18 x 9 x 3 cm
KM: 12-33-81
Bibliography: Bernard 1974: 303, Fig. 13;
Bernard and Frankfort 1978; Tissot
2006: 30, He.p.AK.T. 56. 10; Abdullaev
2007: 535–576.

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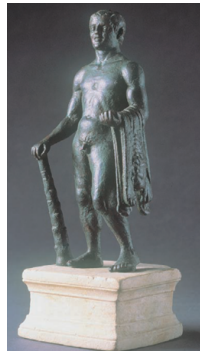
Cat. No. 55. Bronze statuette of bearded
Heracles crowning himself from
Afghanistan

7.3 x 3.5 x 1.4 cm
Probably from Afghanistan
AM: EA1994.57
Bibliography: Jongeward 2019: Cat. 147.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 54. Limestone fragment of a
crowned male youth from Ai Khanoum

H. 35 cm
Ai Khanoum
Bibliography: Bernard 1969: Figs. 17–18;
Tissot 2006: 28, He.p.AK.T.47.1.



Cat. No. 56. Bronze statuette of Heracles
from the vicinity of Ai Khanoum

Probably made in the vicinity of Ai
Khanoum.
H. (including pedestal) 21 cm.
Private collection of Tom Pritzker
Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2001: 178, Fig.
2, 2015b: 131, Fig. 6; Abdullaev 2007: 550–
552, Fig. 8.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 57. Bactrian bronze statuette of standing Heracles with lionskin and club

Bactria
H. 11.3 cm
AM: EA 1993.34
Bibliography: Topsfield 1996: 266; Elsner and Lenk 2017: 48, Fig. 31.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 58. Bactrian bronze statuette of standing Heracles with lionskin and club

Bactria
13.2 x 5.4 x 2.6 cm.
AM: EA 1993.33
Bibliography: Jongeward 2019: Cat. 148.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

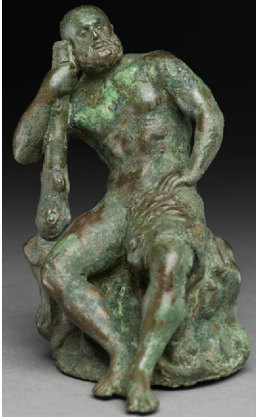
Cat. No. 59. Bronze statuette of standing Heracles from Western Afghanistan

Western Afghanistan
H. 16.8 cm.
Collection A.I.C.
Bibliography: *Crossroads*: 99, Fig. 102.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 60. Bronze statuette of Heracles from Western Afghanistan

Western Afghanistan
H. 8.4 cm.
Collection A.I.C.
Bibliography: *Crossroads*: 101, Fig. 103.



Cat. No. 61. Bactrian bronze statuette of seated Heracles with lionskin and club

Bactria
H. 13.5 cm
AM: EA 1999.31

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 62. Ivory head of Heracles/Alexander from Takht-i Sangin

Takht-i Sangin, Tajikistan
H. 3.6 cm
National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan: M7013
Bibliography: Litvinskii and Pichikian 1994: Fig. 15; Boardman 2015: Pl. XXI.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 63. Ivory of Heracles vanquishing enemies from Takht-i Sangin

Ivory
Takht-i Sangin, Tajikistan
National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan: M7249
Bibliography: Litvinskii and Pichikian 1981: Pl. V; Abdullaev 2007: fn. 51.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 64. Inlaid gold buckle of Heracles fighting a centaur(?) from Bactria(?)

(1st century AD?)
Inlaid gold buckle
Bactria(?)
Bibliography: Abdullaev 2007: 563, Fig. 16; Francfort 2020: Fig. 26.



Cat. No. 65. Bronze statuette of Heracles(?) from Nigrai, Yusufzai, Pakistan

Nigrai, Yusufzai, Pakistan
 19 x 14.5 cm.
 BM: 1892,1104.61
 Bibliography: Foucher 1922: 464, Fig. 476;
 Boardman 1992: 102, Cat. no. 104; Abdullaev 2007: 553–554, Fig. 11; Stančo 2012: 153, Fig. 12.

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution

Cat. No. 66. Bronze appliqué bust of Heracles(?) emerging from an acanthus plant from Afghanistan

Afghanistan
 6 x 5.3 cm
 Collection A.I.C.
 Bibliography: Boardman 1992: 103, Cat. no. 105; Abdullaev 2007: 555, Fig. 12; Stančo 2012: 143, 153, Fig. 13.

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution

Cat. No. 67. Gold medallion from Tillya Tepe Tomb IV

Tillya Tepe, Tomb IV
 D. 1.6 cm
 National Museum of Afghanistan:
 04.40.392
 Bibliography: Fussman 1987: 67–88;
 Brown 2000: 77–87; Miyaji 2008: 25–26,
 2014: 75–105; Hiebert and Camon 2008:
 Fig. 199; DeCaroli 2015: 20–22.

Cat. No. 68. Metope from Nisa

Metope with Heracles' club, quiver and the head of lion from the façade of the Red Building, Nisa
 Bibliography: Canepa 2018: 75–76, Figs. 4.3–4.5.



Cat. No. 69. Silver coin of Agathocles showing Sāṃkarṣaṇa-Balarāma and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa from Ai Khanoum

National Museum of Kabul

Bibliography: Audouin and Bernard 1973: 238–289; 1974: 7–41; Filliozat 1973: 113–123; Bopearachchi 1991: 175, Agathokles, Série 9, Pl. 7, 2015a: 135, coin fig. 12, 2016: 61–78.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 70. Coin of Maues

Obv. Balarāma walking to left, holding club and plough.

Rev. Unidentified goddess standing to right.

Bibliography: Cribb and Bopearachchi 1992: 80, Cat. no. 74; Mitchiner 1975–1976, vol. 5: type 727a.



Cat. No. 71. Heracles wearing diadem, with club and lion-skin

Intaglio, found in Jaipur?

Present location unknown.

Bibliography: Tod 1831: 139–159.



Cat. No. 72. AE tetradrachm of Kujula Kadphises

Obv. Diademed head of the king (follows Hermaeus Soter)

Rev. Type k1) Heracles standing left with lion-skin in left hand, club in right.

Cabinet des Médailles, BNF

9.41 g; 23 mm.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2015: 128, Fig. 5.



Cat. No. 73. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Minted in Afghanistan.

Obv. King riding elephant to right.

Rev. Type k1) Heracles standing left with lionskin in left hand, club in right.

12.26 g; 23 mm.

BM: 1893,0506.22

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: 92, Type 886.



Cat. No. 74. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Minted in Peshawar.

Obv. King riding on elephant to right.

Rev. Type k2) Heracles standing to right, holding a raised club in the right hand and lion skin in the left.

Legend in Bactrian: HPAKIAO.

8.671 g; 24 mm.

American Numismatic Society.

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type 887.6.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 75. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Obv. King riding elephant to right.

Rev. Type k3) Heracles standing left with lionskin and club in left hand.

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type 890.

Cat. No. 76. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Obv. King riding elephant to right.

Rev. Type k4) Heracles standing frontal and holding a raised club in the left.

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type 891.



Cat. No. 77. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Obv. King riding elephant to right, holding elephant's goad or spear.
Rev. Type k5) Heracles standing facing, crowing himself with right hand and holding a raised club and lion skin in the left.

11.03 g; 25 mm.

BM: 1893,0506.24

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type 892.2.



Cat. No. 78. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Obv. King seated cross legged on mountain, holds sceptre in raised left hand.
Rev. Type k1) variant. Heracles standing to left, holding a club in the right hand and lion skin held by the left. Legend in Bactrian: OOK (?).

12.74 g; 24 mm.

BM: 1981,0322.25

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: 92; Cribb 2011.



Cat. No. 79. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Obv. King seated cross legged, holds sceptre in raised left hand.
Rev. Type k2) Heracles standing to right, holding a raised club in the right hand and lion skin in the left.

BM: 1988,0322.33

10.96 g; 25 mm.

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: 92; Cribb 2011.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 80. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Obv. Reclining king.
Rev. Type k1) Heracles standing left with lionskin in left hand, club in right.
Bibliography: Khan 2005: 25–33, Coin 12.



Cat. No. 81. Tetradrachm of Huvishka

Obv. Reclining king
Rev. Type k2) Heracles standing to right, holding a raised club in the right hand and lion skin in the left.

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution

Cat. No. 82. Gold Dinar of Huvishka

Obv. King riding on elephant to right, holding elephant's goad or spear. PAO-hAhOPAO OOhPKI KOPANO.
Rev. Type k1) Heracles standing facing to left, holding a club in the right hand, wearing lion skin. Legend: hPAKILO.
W. 7.99 g
 Published: CNG. Coin ID=96901.



Cat. No. 83. Gold Dinar of Huvishka

Obv. King seating with cross-legged to left, with nimbi and diadem.
Rev. Type k1) Heracles standing facing to left, holding a club in the right hand, holding lion skin in the left. Legend: hPAKILO.
 7.99 g; 19 mm.
 BM: 1879,0501.7.
 Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type 269.1.

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution

Cat. No. 84. Gem on a gold ring of Heracles from Sirkap, Taxila, Pakistan

Sirkap, Taxila, Pakistan.
D. 22 mm.
 Bibliography: Marshall 1951, vol. 2: 645–646, no.17; vol. 3: Pl. 197, no.17.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 85. Bronze ring of Heracles from Sirkap

D. 19 mm.

TM: 8797

Bibliography: Marshall 1951, vol. 2: 648, no. 44; vol 3: Pl. 198, no. 44; Borell 2017: 67.

Cat. No. 86. Kushan Seal of standing Heracles from Kabul, Afghanistan

H. 15 mm

BM: 1880.3544

Bibliography: Callieri 1997: 92–93, Pl.14, Cat. 5.4; Errington 2021: 216, Fig. 67.13.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 87. Garnet ring-bezel seal of standing Heracles

Gandhāra.

18 x 14 mm

ARC: GKg 042

Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 71, no. 06.02.06; Borell 2017: Fig.10.

Cat. No. 88. Garnet seal of standing Heracles with inscriptions

North-West India

18.8 x 16 x 5.2 mm

BM: 2005,0815.4

Bibliography: Borell 2017: Fig. 5.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 89. Clay seal of standing
Heracles

Gandhāra
19 x 15 mm
ARC: GKc 224.
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 71,
no. 06.02.01; Borell 2017: Fig. 11.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 90. Clay seal of standing Hera-
cles

Gandhāra
16 x 13 mm
ARC: GKc 223.
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk, 2011: 71,
no. 06.02.06; Borell 2017: Fig. 13.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 91. Clay seal of standing
Heracles

Gandhāra
17 x 12 mm
ARC: GKc 222.
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 71,
no. 06.02.03; Borell 2017: Fig. 12.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 92. Clay seal of standing
Heracles

Gandhāra
12 x 10 mm
ARC: GKc 409.
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 71,
no. 06.02.04; Borell 2017: Fig. 14.



Cat. No. 93. Rectangular box-seal in copper alloy from Kabul

18 x 10.5 x 10.5 mm.

BM: 1880.4073

Bibliography: Rosenfield 1967: Pl. xvi; Göbl 1984: 177, Fig. 8; Cribb 1997: Fig. 17; Errington 2021: 231, Fig. 75.9.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 94. Clay token of Heracles with
bilingual legend (Greek and Kharoṣṭhī)

Gandhāra

14 x 13 mm

ARC: Gkc 373

Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 72,
no. 06.02.11.

Cat. No. 95. Dark carnelian pierced seal
pendant of a seated Heraclean figure

Gandhāra

24 x 18 mm

ARC: GKg 066.

Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 73,
no. 06.02.16.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 96. Clay token of a bearded man

Gandhāra
13 x 11 mm
ARC: Gkc 576
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 68,
no. 06.01.03.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 97. Clay token of Alexander the
Great

Gandhāra
27 x 24 mm
ARC: Gkc 145.
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 32,
no. 01.01.01.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 98. Bronze ring seal of Heracles
fighting the lion with club

19 x 18 mm
ARC: Gkm 657
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 73,
no. 06.02.18.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 99. Baked clay token of Heracles
strangling the lion

17 x 14 mm
ARC: Gkc 203
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 74,
no. 06.02.23.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 100. Bronze ring seal of Heracles fighting the lion with a spear of sword(?)

18 x 10 mm

ARC: Gkm 657

Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 73, no. 06.02.19.

Cat. No. 101. Crystal seal of Heracles and lion(?)

(1st–2nd century AD?)

North-west Pakistan.

27x 18 x 3 mm.

VA: I.S 43-1948.

Bibliography: *Crossroads*: 151, Fig. 152.



Cat. No. 102. Scaraboid seal of Heracles and the lion(?)

Found in Pakistan.

28 x 20 mm

BM: 1955,1020.1

Bibliography: Callieri 1997: Cat. 4.5.



Cat. No. 103. Scaraboid seal of Heracles stepping on a lion

Found at Punjab (Pakistan)

35 x 28 mm

BM: 1890,0920.1

Bibliography: Boardman 1994: Fig. v.2.34.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 104. Garnet ring-bezel seal of
Heracles carries the boar to the king

Gandhāra
Legend in left "NOXOGIIOCI".
19 x 14 mm
ARC: Sg 060
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 75,
no. 06.02.32.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 105. Cornelian seal of a combat-
ing scene

Gandhāra
BM: 1962,0518.22
Bibliography: Callieri 1997: Cat.7.14; Bo-
rell 2017: 67, fn. 24.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 106. Clay token of a Male and
female (Omphale and Heracles?)

16 x 15 mm
ARC: Gkc 254
Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 73,
no. 06.02.17.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 107. Terracotta plaque from
Kara-Pichok (Tajikistan)

(3rd–4th centuries AD)

Bibliography: Abdullaev 2007: Fig. 14b.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 108. Terracotta plaque from
Barat Tapa (Surxondaryo, Uzbekistan)

(3rd–4th centuries AD)

Bibliography: Abdullaev 2002: 53–69.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 109. Terracotta figurine from Zar
Tapa

Surxondaryo, Uzbekistan

(3rd–4th centuries AD)

Bibliography: Abdullaev 2007: Fig. 15.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 110. Terracotta head of Heracles
from Zar Tapa

Surxondaryo, Uzbekistan

65 x 40 mm

Bibliography: Stančo 2012: Fig. 227.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 111. Terracotta head of Heracles
from Zar Tepa

Surxondaryo, Uzbekistan

65 x 50 mm

Bibliography: Stančo 2012: Fig. 228

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 112. Polychrome clay head of old
Heracles(?) from Surxondaryo, Uzbeki-
stan

24 x 15 cm.

Museum of Fine Arts, Tashkent Khal-
chayan.

Bibliography: Pugachenkova 1971: 42, Pl.
48, 1978: 71.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 113. Terracotta fragment from
Erkurgan

Qashqadaryo region, Uzbekistan.

8.5 x 6.8 x 2.6 cm

Bibliography: Abdullaev 2002: Fig. 6a,
2007: Fig.3.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 114. Bactrian terracotta figurine

(2nd century BC?)

Bibliography: Abdullaev 2002: Fig. 2;
Rtveladze 2018: 188.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 115. Dried and painted clay
statue of Heracles(?) from Dilberjin,
Afghanistan.

(3rd century AD)

H. 120 cm.

Bibliography: Kruglikova 1977: 407–427;
Pugachenkova 1987: 66–78; Tissot 2006:
90, no. K.p.Dil.169.11.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 116. Emblema of head of Hera-
cles in profile from Begram

D. 19 cm

KM: 57-1-70.

Bibliography: Kurz 1954: 139, 271; Tissot
2006: 299, no. K.p.Beg.771.511; Stančo
2012: 154, Fig. 16 (224).

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 117. Emblema of Heracles with
Erymanthian boar(?) from Begram

D. 15.5 cm

KM: 57-1-77.

Bibliography: Kurz 1954: no. 100, Fig. 311;
Tissot, 2006: 295, no. K.p.Beg.752.492;
Stančo, 2012: 154, Fig. 18 (226).

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 118. Marble relief of Heracles
and Erymanthian boar from Corinth The-
atre, Greece.

(2nd century AD)

Bibliography: Sturgeon 1977: no. H 13-1;
LIMC v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2166.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 119. Emblema of Heracles with eagle(?) from Begram

White plaster.

Present location unknown.

Bibliography: Kurz 1954: Fig. 389, no. 128;
Menninger 1996: cat. no. M16; Stančo
2012: 154, Fig. 17 (225).

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 120. Relief panel of the Apotheosis of Heracles from Villa Albani, Rome

Bibliography: Kurz 1954: Fig. 390;
Stephani 1854: Taf. I.1.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 121. Bronze figurine of Serapis-Heracles from Begram

(1st century AD)

24.5 x 6.45cm.

KM: 57-3-4

Bibliography: Kurz 1954: 11, 147, 277; Tisot 2006: 283, no. K.p.Beg.711.451.

Cat. No. 122. Stone toilet tray of the drunken Heracles supported by two women and flanked by a lion

(2nd century BC–1st century AD)

Pakistan.

D. 12.4 cm

MET: 1987.142.105

Bibliography: Behrendt 2007: 9, Fig. 3.



Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 123. Lid or palette with the drunken Heracles supported by two female attendants

(1st or 2nd century AD)

Green steatite

7.1 x 11.2 x 1.1 cm

AM: EA 1993.24

Bibliography: Topsfield 1996: 268; Boardman 1994: 117, Illus. 4.51.

Cat. No. 124. Toilet tray of Heracles and Omphale(?)

Bull Collection.

Bibliography: Francfort 1979: no. 16; Pons 2011: 160, Fig. 12; Boardman 2015: Fig. 88.



Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 125. Schist toilet tray from Chārsadda, Pakistan.

10.2 x 2 cm

VA: IS.695-1950

Bibliography: Hallade 1968: Pl.2; Francfort 1979: no. 2, 2016: Fig. 15, 2020: Fig. 40; Boardman 2015: Fig. 85.

Cat. No. 126. Fragment of a toilet tray of Aphrodite and Eros/Heracles?

W. 12.6 cm.

PM: 1103.

Bibliography: Buchthal 1945: Fig.15; Francfort 1979: no. 15; Boardman 2015: Fig. 83.



Cat. No. 127. Wrestler's weight from Peshawar

(1st–2nd century AD)

Schist.

26 x 34.9 cm.

MET: 1994.112

Bibliography: Bernard and Jullien 1982: 33–47; Behrendt 2007: 14, Fig. 8; Galli 2011: 279–329, Fig. 1.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 128. Alabaster fragment of
Heracles with lion skin from Chārsadda,
Pakistan.

(1st century AD?)

Bibliography: Wheeler 1962: 123, Pl. XLI;
Boardman 1994: 135, Fig. 4.76.

Cat. No. 129. Bracket figure of Heracles(?)
from Nimogram, Swat.

H. 17.15 cm

Bibliography: Raducha 1985: Fig. 3; San-
toro 1991: 284, Fig. 7.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 130. Relief of Heracles within an arch from Andandheri

Bibliography: Dani 1968–1969a: 49, Pl. 19a; Raducha 1985: 176, Fig. 2.



Cat. No. 131. Relief panel from Butkara

MDC: 1123

Bibliography: Faccenna 1962, vol. 2: pt. 2; Raducha 1985: Fig. 1.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 132. Japan, Private collection

Bibliography: Kurita, 2003: 300, Fig. 25; Santoro 1991: 285, Fig. 8.

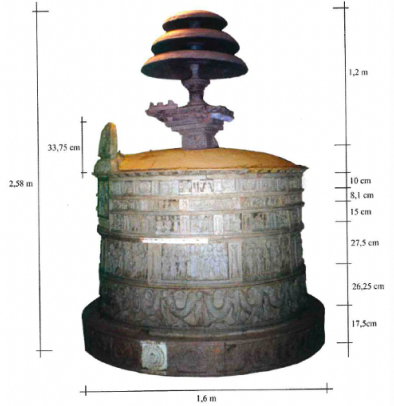


Cat. No. 133a. Nude male figure carrying club and skin on the Buner Stūpa

(ca. 2nd century AD)

Schist. Private Collection.

Bibliography: Boppearachchi 2020: 262.



Cat. No. 133b. Stūpa (presumably from Buner)
 [Image after O. Bopearachchi 2020: Cat. No. 67 A and B]
 (ca. 2nd century AD)
 Schist. Private Collection.
 Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2020: 73–76.

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution



Cat. No. 134. Relief of Heracles and the
 Nemean lion(?) from Mathura

(2nd century AD?)
 Indian Museum Kolkata.
 Bibliography: Cunningham 1884: 109–
 110; Vogel 1930: 188, Pl. XLVII; Board-
 man 1994: 138, Fig. 4.81; Callieri 1997:
 181.

Cat. No. 135. Bronze statuette of Heracles
 and lion(?) from Quetta, Pakistan

Present location unknown.
 Bibliography: Garwood 1887, vol. LVI:
 163, pt. I. Pl. X; Callieri 1997: 181.



Cat. No. 136a. Gold coin of Huvishka, Serapis (CAPAPIO)

Obv. Bust of King to left.

Rev. Figure of Sarapis sitting frontal.

BM: 1893,0506.19

Bibliography: Rosenfield 1967: 98–99, coins 57, 186, 187; Göbl 1984: G.185.2., Sarapo Types 164/1, 185/2; Jongeward and Cribb 2015: 289, Coin no. 724; Carter 1999–2000: Fig. 4.

Cat. No. 136b. Gold coin of Huvishka, Serapis (CAPAPIO)

Obv. Bust of King to left.

Rev. Figure of Sarapis standing to left.

BM: 1879,0501.11

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 137. Glass paste ring-bezel seal
from Gandhāra

11 x 8 mm

ARC: Gkg 100

Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: 68,
no. 06.01.01.



Cat. No. 138. Bodhisattva (Maitreya?)

(2nd–3rd century AD)

Schist.

175.3 x 71.1 x 25.4 cm

Norton Simon Museum: F.1975.04.1.S

Bibliography: Carter 1999–2000: 9–17, Fig. 1; cf. Tissot 1999: 399–412.



Cat. No. 139. Painted terracotta panel of the god Zeus/Serapis/Ohrmazd and worshiper

(3rd century AD)

Terracotta, gouache.

56.8 x 52.3 x 5.4 cm

MET: 2000.42.2

Bibliography: Carter 1997: 573–588, Figure 1; Falk: 2015–2019: 25–27; Lerner 2018: 2–15, fn. 7.



Cat. No. 140. Relief of a banquet scene from Peshawar

(2nd–3rd century AD)

TNM: TC-705.

Bibliography: Tanabe 2020: 9–36, Fig.2.



Cat. No. 141. Ceramics of a camel with Dionysian imagery on its saddle bags

(6th–7th century AD / Chinese Sui Dynasty)
Xi'an, China.

27.9 x 29.2 cm.

MET: 2000.8.

Bibliography: Ge 2018: 58–69; Liu 2023 cover.



Cat. No. 142. Vima Kadphises' gold stater

Obv. Bust of king to right.

Rev. Three-headed Śiva standing frontal, holding a trident adorned with vajra, paraśu, and cakra in the right hand, holding skin in the left.

7.86 g; 17.5 mm

Bibliography: Boppearachchi 2015a: 585–587.



Cat. No. 143. Gold coin of Vima Kadphises

Obv. Bust of king to left.

Rev. Śiva-Oešo standing facing to left, holding a trident in the right hand, holding antelope skin in the left.

7.98 g; 19 mm.

BM: 1894,0506.5.

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type. G.19.7.



Cat. No. 144. Tetradrachm of Vima Kadphises from Begram, Kabul

Obv. King standing to left, sacrificing at an altar, a trident-battleaxe in front of and a club behind him.

Rev. Three-headed Śiva-Oešo standing before a bull, holding a trident in the right hand.

17.26 g, 26 mm.

BM: IOLC.2437

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type. 762; Errington 2021: Fig. 38.13.



Cat. No. 145. Gold coin of Vima Kadphises from Kabul

Obv. King sitting frontal on a throne, head to left, right hand holds a twig with three leaves, a club in the left field.

Rev. Śiva-Oešo standing before a bull, holding a trident in the right hand.

15.83 g; 24 mm.

BM: IOC.268

Bibliography: Göbl 1984, G.11.1; Errington, 2021, fig. 38.1.

Illustration not authorized for distribution



Cat. No. 146. Gold coin of Huvishka from Peshawar

Obv. Bust of king to left.

Rev. Three-headed Śiva-Oešo standing frontal, upper right hand holds a vajra, lower right flask, upper left trident, lower left club.

7.93 g; 20 mm.

BM: 1879,0501.26

Bibliography: Göbl 1984: Type. G.366.1.



Cat. No. 147. Red terracotta seal of a four-armed male deity from Sari Dheri, Pakistan

(1st century AD)

L: 2.6 cm.

VA: IM.11-1943

Bibliography: Callieri 1997: Cat. S1.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 148. Plaster relief of a syncretic
god from Saozma-Kala

Mazār-I Sharīf Museum
Bibliography: Fischer 1957: 416–435;
Bussagli 1962: 86, fn. 2; Rosenfield 1967:
93–94; Gnoli 1963: 36, fn.15; Tucci 1968:
293–294; *Crossroads*: 82; Carter 1995: 146;
Giuliano 2004: 72, fn. 16.

Cat. No. 149. Copper seal of a running
figure from Begram

(2nd–4th century AD?)
Begram.
L. 13 x 10 x 2 mm; handles: 1.5 x 5 x 2
mm.
BM: 1880.3632 (Masson Collection)
Bibliography: Callieri 1997: 132, Cat. M3;
Errington 2021: 229, Fig. 74.26.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 150. Intaglio of a four-armed
male deity (Śiva) standing frontal,
ithyphallic, before a bull.

(2nd–3rd century AD)
Semi-transparent white chalcedony.
20 x 14.5 x 11.5 mm
BM: 1892,1103.162
Bibliography: Bivar 1955: S 17; Callieri
1997: Cat. U 7.2.

Cat. No. 151. Intaglio of a four-armed
male deity and a noble worshipper

(4th century AD?)
Agate, white.
34 x 25 x 6 mm
BM: 1892,1103.98
Bibliography: Cunningham 1893: 126–
127, Pl. X, No.2; Herzfeld 1930: Figs 3, 16;
Banerjea 1952: 47; Göbl 1984: 153, Pl. 177,
no.7; Callieri 1997: Cat. U 7.3.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 152. Stone relief of the
Chaddanta Jātaka at Bhārhut

(125–75 BC)

Indian Museum, Kolkata

Bibliography: Spagnoli 1967: Fig. 14.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 153. Bronze double-hoop
pendant seal

Bilingual.

34 x 39 mm

TM: 8856

Bibliography: Rahman and Falk 2011: Ap-
pendix I-TM 07.01.01.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 154. Seal impression in black
from a Kushan intaglio

(Line drawing after Rosenfield)

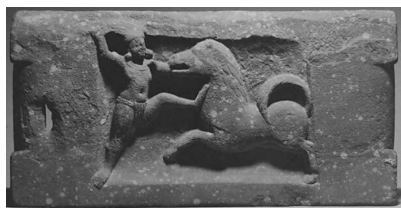
AM: AN1953.131

Bibliography: Rosenfield 1967: 78, Fig. 8;
Göbl 1984:177, Fig. 3; Harle 1985: 641–
652.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 155. Coin from Pontu showing
Heracles and the mare

Bibliography: Harle 1985: Fig. 5b; cf.
LIMC v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2441a.



Cat. No. 156. Late-Kushan exercise
weight of Krṣṇa killing Keśin

(3rd century AD? previously also dated
Gupta)

Uttar Pradesh, Mathura

Sandstone.

25 x 50 x 7.6 cm.

MET: 1987.142.286

Bibliography: Lerner and Kossak 1991:
9394, cat. no. 62.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 157. Kushan exercise weight of
Krṣṇa killing Keśin

(1st–2nd century AD)

Red sandstone.

Mathura Archeological Museum: MM 58
4476.

Bibliography: Leeuw1972: 30; Harle 1985;
Schmid 1999: Fig.1.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 158. Exercise weight of Kṛṣṇa
killing Keśin

Taxila Museum

Bibliography: Samad 2010: Fig. 6.5.



Cat. No. 160. Sculpture of Kṛṣṇa killing
Keśin

(5th century AD/Gupta period)

Uttar Pradesh.

Terracotta.

53.3 x 4.06 x 10.8 cm

MET: 1991.300

Bibliography: Kossak 2001: 73.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 159. Exercise weight of Kṛṣṇa
killing Keśin and a wrestling scene

(3rd–4th century AD)

Gandhāra?

Grey schist.

The Russek Collection, Zurich.

Bibliography: Schmid 1999: Fig.2.



Cat. No. 161. Harappan terracotta tablet
showing a male figure spearing a water
buffalo

(c. 2500 BC)

Punjab province, Pakistan.

3.91 x 1.62 cm.

Archaeological Museum Harappa.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 162. Framed pilaster figure from
the Dharmarjika stupa, Taxila

Bibliography: Raducha 1985: 167–168,
Fig. 4.

Cat. No. 163. Panel fragment of worship-
pers with nimbī and a framed naked fig-
ure (holding a club?) from the Swat Val-
ley

Grey schist
6.5 x 22.5 x 36.3 cm.
BM: 1902,1002.20
Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 483.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 164. Frieze panel from Chārsadda

17.78 x 66.04 cm.

LM: 1183.

Bibliography: Brown 1908: 17, no. 1183, Pl. VIII, no. 2; Ingholt 1957: no. 390.



Cat. No. 165. Winged and bearded Atlas from Jamālgarhī

Grey schist.
22.50 x 18.50 x 7cm
BM: 1880.182

Bibliography: Errington 1987: Fig. 80e;
Zwalf 1996: no. 364; Stančo 2012: Fig. 101.



Cat. No. 166. Bearded Atlas from Jamālgarhī

Grey schist.
19.60 x 18.20 x 7.30 cm
BM: 1880.177

Bibliography: Errington 1987: Fig. 84;
Zwalf 1996: no. 362; Stančo 2012: Fig. 99.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 168. Bearded Atlas from Buner, Peshawar

Grey schist.
14.30 x 10.80 x 4.5 cm
BM: 1902,1002.45

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 365; Stančo 2012: Fig. 102.

Cat. No. 167. Bearded Atlas from Sikri.

Schist.
H. 23.16 cm
LM: 2118

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: no. 387;
Stančo 2012: Fig. 96.



Cat. No. 169. Atlantes

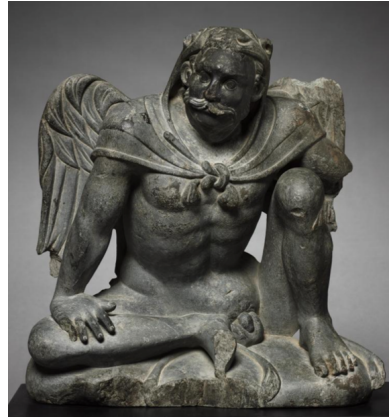
Grey schist.
 16 x 30 x 7 cm
 BM: 1914,0502.2
 Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 377; Stančo
 2012: Fig. 104.

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution

Cat. No. 170. Bearded Atlas wearing the
 lion scalp

H. 51 cm
 Claude de Marteau Collection, Brussels.
 Bibliography: Bussagli 1984: 55; Kurita
 1990: 155, Fig. 448; Stančo 2012: 81, Fig.
 111.

Illustration not authorized
 for distribution



Cat. No. 171. Fragment of Heracleian At-
 las or Vajrapāṇi(?) from Swabi

Schist.
 H. 16.5 cm
 Japan, private collection.
 Bibliography: Kurita 1990: 299, no. 919.

Cat. No. 172. Winged Atlas wearing the
 lion scalp

Schist.
 H. 38.1 cm
 The Cleveland Museum of Art: 2011.136.



Cat. No. 173. Winged Atlas with Śiva's third eye and Heracles' lion scalp?

London, private collection.
Bibliography: Boppearachchi 2015b: 132, Fig. 7.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 174. Lion scalp Atlas

U.S.A, private collection.
Bibliography: Kurita 1990: 300, no. 924.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 175. Winged Atlas with lion scalp

Schist.
25 x 25 cm.
HISRM: 100148
Bibliography: Tanabe 2007: 138, III-14.



Cat. No. 176. Panel of The First Sermon

Grey schist.
31 x 19 x 11 cm
BM: 1970,0602.1
Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 202.

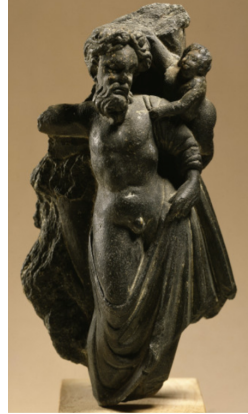


Cat. No. 177. Tutelary couple from Jamāl-garhī

21.7 x 14 cm.

Indian Museum, Kolkata: G 44 / A
23345 / GD 108.

Bibliography: AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 365; Errington 1987: Fig. 70; Quagliotti 2003: Figs.1–2.



Cat. No. 178. Male figure with a child

16 x 8 x 5 cm.

MAK: I 214.

Bibliography: Le Coq 1925: 83, Fig. 159;
Ingholt 1957: 167; Quagliotti 2003: Figs.
22–23.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 179. Tutelary couple from Jamāl-garhī

18.4 x 11.7 cm

Indian Museum, Kolkata: No. G 3 / A
23377 / GD 110.

Bibliography: AGBG, vol. 2: 110, Fig. 380;
Tissot 1985: Fig. 109; Errington 1987:
Fig.71.b; Quagliotti 2003: Figs.18–19.

Cat. No. 180. Male figure, probably belongs to a Tutelary couple from Sahri Bahlol

33 x 16.5 cm

PM.

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: no. 439; Quagliotti 2003: Fig. 21.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 181. Tutelary couple from Jamāl-garhī

30.4 x 24.5 x 10.9 cm
Indian Museum, Kolkata: No. G 8/GD 109.
Bibliography: Majumdar 1937: no.100;
Quagliotti 2003: Figs. 9–10.

Cat. No. 182. Tutelary couple

5.3 x 19.40 x 10.2 cm.
BM: 1939,0119.18
Bibliography: Kurita 1990: Fig. 503;
Crossroads: no. 135; Zwalf 1996: no.101;
Quagliotti 2003: Fig. 15.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 183. Heracles and Athena

H. 16 cm.
Private collection, Japan.
Bibliography: Tanabe 1985: Fig. II.8; Kurita 1990: Fig. 504; Faccenna 1997: 202–204, Fig. 8; Quagliotti 2003: Figs.24–26.

Cat. No. 184. Tutelary couple from Takhti-Bahi

10.3 x 27 x 24.7 cm.
BM: 1950,0726.2
Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 98.



Cat. No. 185. Relief panel of the Twin Miracle at Śrāvastī

Probably from Paitava (site)
74.5 x 50 x 14 cm.
MAK: I 67.



Cat. No. 186. The Big Vihāra from Haḍḍa, Tapa-é-Shotor: niche V2

(2nd or 3rd–4th century AD?)
Plaster over unbaked clay modeling.
125 x 140 cm.
Bibliography: Tarzi 1976: 394–399, Figs. 9–13; Flood 1989: 17; Santoro 1991: 276–278; Boppearachchi 2020: 241–245, Cat. Nos. 54 A and B, 55, 58.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 187. Relief fragment of the Maitrakanyaka Jātaka

13.98 x 38.12 cm.

PM: 02715.

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: no. 3; Tissot 1985: Fig. 276; Ali and Qazi 2008: 41.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 188. Relief fragment of the
Maitrakanyaka Jātaka

17.79 x 38.12 cm.

PM: 02714.

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: no. 2; Ali and
Qazi 2008: 42.

Cat. No. 189. Relief fragment of the
Maitrakanyaka Jātaka from Sahri Bahlol

(Excavation, ASI 1911-12 A.D.F.C)

10.17 x 16.52 cm.

PM: 00352.

Bibliography: Ali and Qazi 2008: 43.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 190. Velletri sarcophagus, left end, Heracles and Cerberus

Museo Civico Archeologico Oreste Nardini, Velletri. DAI Rom 59.332.
Bibliography: Lawrence 1965: Fig. 33.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 191. Detail of the Strigil Sarcophagus, Heracles and Cerberus

Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome.
1394. DAI Rom 36.522
Bibliography: LIMC v.1, s.v. Herakles,
nrr. 2648–2649; Lawrence 1965: 207–222.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 192. Velletri sarcophagus, front, Alcestis

Museo Civico Archeologico Oreste Nardini, Velletri. DAI Rom 59.321.
Bibliography: LIMC v.1, s.v. Herakles,
nrr. 2648–2649; Tanabe 2005: Fig.8.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 193. Relief panel from Jamāl-garhī

Indian Museum, Kolkata: No. G-10/A23281.
Bibliography: Tissot 1985: Fig. 100; Errington 1987: Fig.127; Zin 2006: 2.7.



Cat. No. 194. Relief panel from Jamālgarhī

Indian Museum, Kolkata: No. G-12/A23280.
Bibliography: AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 302; Errington 1987: Fig.128; Zin 2006: 2.8.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 195. Relief panel from Shaikhan Dheri

19.06 x 44.58 cm.
PM: 2031, NN 112 (or 02823)
Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: No. 427;
Zin 2006: 2.5=fig.7; Ali and Qazi 2008:
229, no. 11.4; Granoff 2010: Fig. 2.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 196. Relief panel showing a group of wrestler-like figures

MDC: 427.
Bibliography: Bussagli 1984: 234; Taddei 1963: Fig.1; Zin 2006: 2.13; Granoff 2010: Fig.7.

Cat. No. 197. String panel of a stair, triangular in shape from Jamālgarhī

Indian Museum, Kolkata: No. G-89/A23365.
Bibliography: Errington 1987: cat. no. 156, fig. 258.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 198. Detail of the back view of a giant on the Great Frieze of the Pergamon Altar

Berlin.

Bibliography: Picón and Hemingway 2016: 48, Fig. 57; Cf. LIMC viii.1, s.v. Triton, nr. 118.

Cat. No. 199. Hekatompedon. West pediment. Heracles and Triton

(c. 570 BC)

Limestone.

8 x 3.55 m

Acropolis Museum: ΑΚΟ. 3

Bibliography: Broneer 1939: 91–100; LIMC viii.1, s.v. Triton, nr. 17.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 200. Relief panel of Heracles attacking the kētos?

Schist.

19 x 101 cm.

HISRM: 103127

Bibliography: Tanabe 2007: 72–73, no. I-63.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 201. Relief fragment of Māra's
army

56.8 x 25.7 cm.

LM: 538

Bibliography: Grünwedel 1901: 96, Fig.
48; AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 202; Ingholt 1957:
Fig. 64; Santoro 1991: Fig. 3.

Cat. No. 202. Māra and his sons and the
Enlightenment of the Buddha

Schist.

52.6 x 58.5 cm.

MAK: I 10198.

Bibliography: Yaldiz et al.: 31, no. 44; Ku-
rita 2003: 118, Fig. 229; Bopearachchi
2020: 316, cat. no.116.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 203. The Māra's Assault

Private collection, Japan.
Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: 230.



Cat. No. 205. Detail of the Māra's Assault

67 x 289.8 x 9.8 cm.
National Museum of Asian Art (Freer
Gallery): F1949.9a-d
Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: Fig. 226.

Cat. No. 204. Statuette of the infant Hera-
cles strangling snakes

(3rd–2nd century BC)
Bronze.
12.2 x 8.2 x 5.5 cm
Brooklyn Museum: 63.185.
Bibliography: LIMC iv.1, s.v. Herakles,
nr. 1643.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 206. Detail of the Māra's Assault

44.47 x 33.04 cm.
PM: 02768.
Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: Fig. 232;
Ali and Qazi 2008: 112.



Cat. No. 207. The Buddha in the vicinity of the Bodhi tree and Vajrapāṇi with a club and a vajra

(ca. 2nd century AD)

Originally from the National Museum of Kabul.

Schist.

31 x 67 cm.

Bibliography: Santoro 1991: Fig. 6; Quagliotti 1991–1992: 80–81, Figs. 18–20; Faccenna 2001: Fig. 162b; Kurita 2003: Fig. 622; Tanabe 2005: Fig.1; Boppearachchi 2020: 334, cat. no. 131.



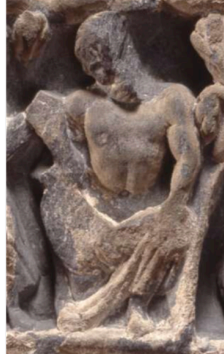
Cat. No. 208. Part of a stupa drum panel showing a Heracleian Vajrapāṇi from Swat Valley

Schist.

5.5 x 11.8 x 16 cm.

BM: 1965,0801.5

Bibliography: Raducha 1985: 94–96; Zwalf 1996: 210, no. 236; Quagliotti 2003: 252, Fig. 27.



Cat. No. 209. The Visit of Indra

Grey schist.

5.10 x 34 x 25.4 cm.

BM: 1880.69

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: Pl. XVIII; Raducha 1985: Figs. 18–19; Kurita 1988: Fig. 333; Zwalf 1996: No. 221; Quagliotti 2003: No. 11.a.1, Fig. 47.



Cat. No. 210. The Visit of Indra

MDC: 8890.

Bibliography: Giuliano 2022: 234–235.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 211. The Visit of Indra

Schist.

63.5 x 54 cm

HISRM: 105088.

Bibliography: Tanabe 2007: 39, no. I-29.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 212. Pedestal under a fasting Siddhartha from Takht-i-Bahi

H. 18m

PM: 02756

Bibliography: Tissot 1986: Fig. 288; Ali and Qazi 2008: 104–105, 7.2.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 213. Relief of the Mahāparinirvāṇa from Chatpat

Niche of V.S.24.

Grey schist.

23 x 7 cm.

Bibliography: Dani 1968–1969b: Pl. no.44b; Tarzi 2000: 169.



Cat. No. 214. Relief of the Mahāparinirvāṇa from Loriyan Tangai

Schist.

40 x 70.8 cm.

Bibliography: Rowland 1958: fig.5; Sengupta and Das 1991: 27, no. 261; Boppearachchi 2020: 342, cat. no. 138.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 215. Relief of The First Sermon from Loriyan Tangai, Pakistan

Indian Museum, Kolkata: A23277.

Bibliography: Karetzky 1995: 127–147, Fig.3.



Cat. No. 216. Relief of The Nursing of the Dead Woman (Sudāya) from Jamālgarhī

Schist.

20.5 x 34.5 cm

Indian Museum, Kolkata: G42/A23288.

Bibliography: Foucher 1917: 257–281; Tissot 1986: Fig. 6; Errington 1987: Fig. 126; De Marco 1987: Fig. B-1.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 217. Relief of The White Dog barking at the Buddha and the Buddha presenting snake to the Kāśyapa brothers from Jamālgarhī

Schist.

Indian Museum, Kolkata: G34/A23292.

Bibliography: Majumdar 1937: Pl. VI b; Marshall 1960: 88, Fig. 115; Santoro 1980: nos. 118, 119; Errington 1987: 257, Fig. 124.



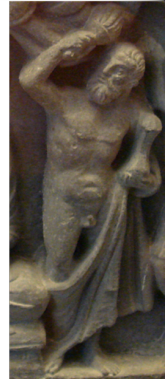
Cat. No. 218. The Submission of Nāga Apalāla

Schist.

7.7 x 52 x 58.4 cm.

BM: 1957,1015.1

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 215.



Cat. No. 219. Relief panel showing the Buddhas performing a miracle before ascetics

Schist.
 29. 50 x 7.20 x 52 cm.
 BM: 1961,0218.1.
 Bibliography: Flood 1989: Fig. 2; Zwalf 1996: no. 203.



Cat. No. 220. Relief fragment showing bearded and naked Vajrapāṇi

Schist.
 5.3 x 18.5 x 9.4 cm
 BM: 1892,0801.10.
 Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 295.



Cat. No. 221. Relief of The Encounter with the kuśa-grass cutter Svastika

Schist.
 22 x 30 cm
 Private Collection.
 Bibliography: Boppearachchi 2020: 98, cat. no.108.



Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 222. Relief of The Preparation of
the Seat of Enlightenment

LM: 384
Bibliography: AGBG, vol. 2: Fig.199; San-
toro 1980: Scheda, no.16.

Cat. No. 223. Relief figure of a naked ascetic (?)

H. 21.59 cm.
PM: W.U.985.
Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: 166–167, Fig.
438.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 224. Relief fragment of the Bacchanalian scene from Haḍḍa

Limestone.
17 x 29 cm.
KM: 62-3-24.
Bibliography: Marshall 1960: Fig. 50; Tissot 2006: no. K.p. Ha.993.60.



Cat. No. 225. Stair-riser from Jamālgarhī

Schist.
3.5 x 13.6 x 42.3 cm
BM: 1880.37
Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 331.



Cat. No. 226. Relief of The Visit of Indra and the Dīpankara Jātaka

Schist.

60 x 37.1 x 7.3 cm

Art Institute of Chicago: 2015.447.

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: 002.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 227. Relief fragment of The Great Departure

LM: 463.

Bibliography: Ingholt: 50, Fig. 40.



Cat. No. 228. Relief fragment of The Hymn of Nāga Kālika

Schist.

7.7 x 13 x 28.2 cm.

BM: 1880.196

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 183.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 229. Relief fragment of Vajrapāṇi
and Bhikṣus

24 x 16 cm.

MG: 3462.

Bibliography: Tissot 1986: Fig. 102; TNM
2003: 137, cat. no. 137

Cat. No. 230. Relief fragment of Vajrapāṇi
and worshippers

Gray schist

Private collection Pakistan

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 2: 148, no.
424.



Cat. No. 231. Relief of the Buddha and Brahmin

MDC: 430.

Bibliography: Demandt 2009: cat. no. 350; Galinsky 2019: Fig. 14.3.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 232. Relief of The Meeting with the Five Monks

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: no.268.



Cat. No. 233. Relief of The Alms Gift of Dust

Schist
14 x 21 x 21cm
MET: 67.43.12.



Cat. No. 234. The Submission of Nāga Apalāla from Loriyan Tangai Pakistan
Indian Museum, Kolkata: 5079/A23476a



Cat. No. 235. Relief fragment of the Submission of Nāga Apalāla

Schist.

5.4 x 37.2 x 78.8cm

BM: 1947,1016.1

Bibliography: Kurita 1990–1998: Fig. 870; Zwalf 1996: no. 214; Zin 2005: 75–78.



Cat. No. 236. Relief fragment of the Parinirvāṇa

Schist.

8.4 x 23.8 x 35cm

BM: 1913,1108.17

Bibliography: Marshall 1951: Pl. 220, no. 118; Ingholt 1957: Figs. 75, 189; Tissot 1986: Fig. 191. Zwalf 1996: no.231; Pemberton 2002: 51; Galinsky 2019: Fig.14.6.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 237. Relief fragment of the Buddha with female worshippers

The Dharmarajika stupa. Taxila, Punjab.

H. 49 cm.

Mohatta Palace Museum. (previously in the Taxila Museum)

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: Fig.189; Tissot 1986: Fig.191.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 238. Relief of The First Sermon

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol.1: no. 269.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 239. Relief of The First Sermon

The Dharmarajika stupa
Taxila, Punjab. (No.361)
H. 48.3 cm.

Bibliography: Marshall 1951: Pl. 220, no.118; Ingholt 1957: Fig. 75.



Cat. No. 240. Buddha looking at the
Bodhi tree with a steady gaze

65 x 42 cm.

Museo di Arte Orientale, Turin.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2020: 251, cat.
no. 63.

Cat. No. 241. Buddha looking at the Bo-
dhi tree with a steady gaze

52 x 41 cm.

Private Collection, Japan.

Bibliography: Bopearachchi 2020: 253, cat.
no. 64.



Cat. No. 242. Stupa drum panel of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Vajrapāṇis

Schist.

7.4 x 11.4 x 39 cm.

BM: 1880.75.

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 118.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 243. Relief panel of Buddhas and Vajrapāṇis from Sikri

Schist, 49 x 54 x 6 cm

LM: G-1285

Bibliography: ABGB, vol. 2: 259, Fig. 136; Ingholt 1957: Fig. 224.



Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 244. Lime Hellenised head from
Haḡḡa, Afghanistan?

(4th–5th century AD?)

H. 14.5 cm.

VA: IM.171-1929

Bibliography: Ashton 1950: 40, cat. no.
133.

Cat. No. 245. Hellenised head

(2nd century AD?)

Haḡḡa, Afghanistan.

H. 12 cm.

Bibliography: Barthoux 1930: 16, Pl. 58.g.



Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 246. Hellenised head

(2nd–3rd century AD)

Clay with colour.

Probably from Haḡḡa, Afghanistan.

Private collection.

Bibliography: Boppearachchi 2021: 21.

Cat. No. 247. Hellenised head

Painted clay

31 x 20 cm

HISRM: 102995

Bibliography: Tanabe 2007: 179, no. IV-54.



Cat. No. 248. Relief fragment of The Offering of Dust

Schist.

7.10 x 39.70 x 53.60 cm.

BM: 1922.0211.1

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 217; Flood 1989: Fig. 4; Galinsky 2019: Fig. 14.4.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 249. Relief of the Dīpankara Jātaka

William Clark Collection

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: 2.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 250. Relief fragment of The Great Departure

Indian Museum, Kolkata: 5043

Bibliography: Spooner 1910: 11f. 57f; Bussagli 1984: 190; Pons 2014: 15–94; Arlt and Hiyama 2016: Fig.1.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 251. Relief of the Hymns of nāga Kālīka and wife on the Sikri Stupa

H. 33 cm.

LM: 11

Bibliography: AGBG, vol. 1: 384, Fig.194; Ingholt 1957: no. 56.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 252. Relief of the Svastika offering kuśa grass on the Sikri Stupa

H. 33 cm.

LM: 11

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: no. 60.



Cat. No. 253. Relief of The First Sermon

Schist.

28.6 x 31.1 x 5.1 cm.

MET: 1980.527.4

Bibliography: Behrendt 2007: 39, Fig. 34.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 254. Relief fragment of the Buddha Presents the Serpent to Kāśyapa

30 x 39.6 cm.

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: no. 85.



Cat. No. 255. Relief of the Submission of the Naga King Apalala

61 x 68.62 cm.

PM: 02809.

Bibliography: Marshall 1906–1907: 159; Zin 2005: Fig. 3; Ali and Qazi 2008: 235, no. 11.6.



Cat. No. 256. Relief of the Buddha with a prostrate humped bull and other figures

Schist.

4.20 x 19.20 x 25.70 cm.

BM: 1912,1221.2

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 223.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 257. Relief fragment of the Buddha crossing the river Ganges

(Or the Buddha preventing people from following him to Kuśinagara?)

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: no. 552; cf. Schlingloff 1994; Zin 2020: 13–14.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 258. Relief fragment of the episode placed before the Parinirvāṇa

Private Collection, USA

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: no. 426; Zin 2006: Fig. 2.17.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 259. Relief of the Parinirvāṇa

Indian Museum, Kolkata: A2323.

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: no. 485; Zin 2020: Fig.14.



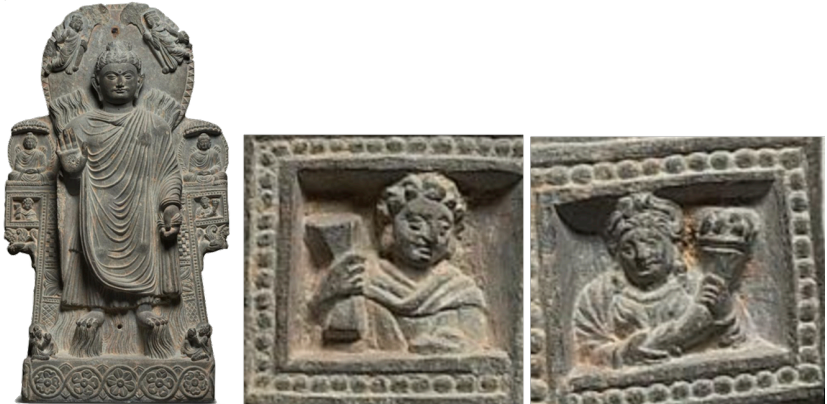
Cat. No. 260. Relief fragment of the lower part of the Parinirvāṇa

(3rd century AD)

Green schist. 42 x 123 cm.

VA: IS.7-1948.

Bibliography: Rosenfield 1967: Fig.85; Bussagli: 1984: 249; Boppearachchi 2020: 66, cat. no. 61A and B.



Cat. No. 261. Twin Miracle at Śrāvastī from Paitava

H. 81 cm.

MG: 17478.

Bibliography: Rosenfield 1967: 200, Fig.106.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 262. Relief of the Buddha and a child-like Vajrapāṇi

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 2: no. 83.

Cat. No. 263. Stele of the Buddha and Vajrapāṇi

MG.

Published: available online at

<https://art.rmngp.fr/fr/library/art-works/buddha-debout-haut-relief-calcaire-sculpture-technique> (accessed on 31 July 2024)

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 264. Bronze figurine of a young horse-rider (Alexander?) from Begram

(1st century AD)

13.1 x 3.5 cm

KM: 57-3-9

Bibliography: Kurz 1954: Fig.335; Tissot 2006: 284, no. K.p.Beg.715.455.

Cat. No. 265. Alexander-Vajrapāṇi in The First Sermon from Haḍḍa

Tapa-é-Shotor: niche V3.

Plaster over unbaked clay modelling.

125 x 140 cm.

Bibliography: Tarzi 1976: 402–404, 1979: 77–80, Figs.16–17; Vanleene 2019: Fig.7.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 266. Relief panel of The First Sermon

Grey schist. 22.9 x 44.1 cm.

Private collection. (Previously in Japan, resold by Christie's in 2021)

Bibliography: Kurita 1988: 139, p3-II.



Cat. No. 267. Relief panel of the Visit of Nāga Elāpatra from Sahri Bahlol

36.25 x 45 cm

PM: 02811

Bibliography: AGBG, vol. 2: Fig. 317; Tissot 1986: Fig. 96; Ali and Qazi 2008: 239.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 268. The middle compartment of a false gable from a stupa

Private collection.

Bibliography: Kurita 2003, vol. 1: no. 638.



Cat. No. 269. Part of a relief panel with three scenes

Schist.

7.10 x 17.20 x 16.60 cm.

BM: 1917,1009.11

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 226.



Cat. No. 270. Relief fragment showing Vajrapāṇi and other attendant figures

(2nd–3rd century AD)

Pakistan

Schist. H. 61.5 cm.

BM: 1970,0718.1

Bibliography: Flood 1989: Fig. 1; Santoro 1991: Fig. 2; Crossroads: Fig. 134; Zwalf 1996: No. 293; Blurton 1997: No. 254; TNM 2003: Fig. 138; Hsing 2005: Fig. 27; Elsner 2017: Fig. 32.



Cat. No. 271. Relief fragment of a central compartment of a false gable from Takht-i-Bahi

Schist.

7.6 x 20.10 x 36.80 cm.

BM: 1899,0715.13

Bibliography: Zwalf 1996: no. 254.



Cat. No. 272. Relief fragment panel showing a lion scalp Vajrapāṇi with monks and worshippers

Schist

MDC: 20625.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 273. Stucco bust of a lion scalp
Vajrapāṇi

(2nd–4th century AD)

Afghanistan?

39 × 28 cm

HISRM: 102023.

Bibliography: Cambon 1996: 285–286, No. 216; TNM 1996: 158, No. 173; Hsieh 1997: 40–41, Fig. 11; Hsing 2005: 103–154, Fig. 26; Tanabe 2007: IV-55.



Cat. No. 275. Relief fragment of the Intro-
duction of Yasodharā or the Great Depart-
ure(?)

Schist

33.04 × 34.31 cm.

PM: 02745/ 2052.

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: No.32; San-
toro 1980: No.68; Kurita 2003.

Cat. No. 274. Relief of the Donation of
Mango Grove of Lady Amrapālī Part on
the Sikri Stupa

LM: 11

Bibliography: AGBG, vol. 1: Fig. 245;
Ingholt 1957: No. 136.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 276. Seated Buddha with attend-
ants from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh

(159 AD, year 32 of Kanishka)

Red sandstone.

55.25 cm

Bibliography: Myer 1986: 107–142, Fig.11;
Quintanilla 2007: Fig. 137.



Cat. No. 277. Gilded silver plate of the Triumph of Dionysus

(2nd–3rd century AD?)

Found in Afghanistan. Made in Iran/Afghanistan?

22.3 cm.

BM: 124086/1900,0209.2

Bibliography: Dalton 1964: 49–51; Boardman 1994: 94; 2014: 46–48; Harper 2000: 53; Tanabe 2003: 113, no. 107; Eastmond and Steward 2006: 161; Schulz 2018: 26–45



Cat. No. 278. Sasanian gilded silver plate of the Bacchanalian triumphal scene

(5th–7th century AD)

Iran?

22.1 x 4.5 cm.

FGA (Freer Gallery of Art): F1964.10

Bibliography: Marshak 1986: 254; Boardman 1994: 95; 2014: 46–49; Carter 2015: 38–39; 358–359.



Cat. No. 279. Sasanian gilded silver plate of the Bacchanalian triumphal scene

(5th–7th century AD)

State Historical Museum: OK 14318 (or ПИМ 84845)

21 x 4 cm.

Bibliography: Smirnov 1957; Schulz 2018: 26–45.

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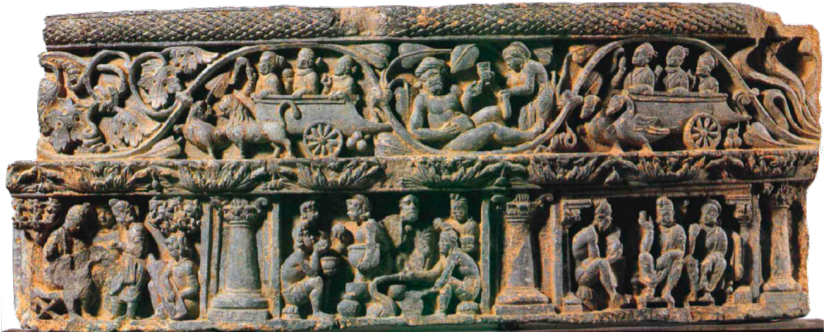
Cat. No. 280. Cameo of Dionysus on a chariot pulled by Psyche

(40–31 or 34 BC)

Inscribed LAV.R.MED.

Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples: 25840

Bibliography: Dalton 1964: 50; Boardman 2014: 22, 46, Fig.10; Clark 2018: 87–88, Fig.11.



Cat. No. 281. Relief fragment of Asita predicting the future of Siddhārtha, feast and the young prince in school

(ca. 2nd–3rd century AD)

Schist

20.5 x 53.2 cm.

HISM: 102782

Bibliography: Tanabe 2008: 22–23, Fig. I-10; Bopearachchi 2020: cat. no. 81.



Cat. No. 282. Relief fragment of a reclining nude male

(ca. 2nd –4th century AD)

Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Schist

11.4 x 32.4 x 5.7 cm

Philadelphia Museum of Art: 1999-150-113.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 283. Relief fragment of the winemaking scene

(ca. 2nd –3rd century AD)

Jamālgarhī

Schist

18.4 x 55.8 cm.

PM

Bibliography: Ingholt 1957: 103–104, no. 175; Carter 1968: Fig.5.



Cat. No. 284. Satyr on the Borghese Crater

(ca. 1st century BC)

In comparison with the figure on the Badakhshan dish
Marble.

175 x 140 cm, W. 1100 kg.

Louvre: MR 985 (or N 274/ Ma 86)

Bibliography: Boardman 1994: 97.



a)



b)



Cat. No. 285. Stroganov Bowl

(ca. 5th–6th century AD)

4.5 x 14.5 cm, W. 847.5 g.

Hermitage Museum: S-75

Bibliography: Trever 1940: 81–87; Weitzmann 1943: 289–324; Boardman, 1994: 93;

Schulz 2019: Fig. 1a.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 286. Terracotta cup of the boar slaughtering scene from Lumbitepa

(5th–7th century AD?)

Fergana, Uzbekistan

Bibliography: Abdulgazieva 2010: 17–19; Stančo 2012: 146, fn. 197.



a)



b)



c)



d)

Cat. No. 287. Kevorkian bowl

(4th–5th century AD?)

Afghanistan?

Silver and gilt

4.3 x 19.2 cm.

Freer Gallery of Art: F1945.33

Bibliography: Ackerman 1940: 325; Weitzmann 1943: 289–324; Gunter and Jett 1992: 152.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 288. “Bactrian” bowl found in Tibet

(5th –6th century AD?)

6.5 x 21 cm, W. 1134 g.

Ancient Orient Museum in Tokyo

Bibliography: Denwood 1973: 121–127; Marshak 1986: 37, Fig. 17; 2017: 79, Fig. 17;

Boardman 1994: 96; 2015: Fig. 142; Dan and Grenet 2021: 143–194.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 289. Gilt silver plate showing Heracles tipping the boar onto Eurystheus

(5th –6th century AD?)

D. 19.9 cm.

Ortiz Collection.

Bibliography: Ortiz 1996: 473–474, Pl. 243; Boardman: 2015: Pl. XLV.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution



Cat. No. 290. Clay figurine of Heracles(?)
from Yötkan

(2nd –4th century AD)
4 x 5 cm.

Tokyo National Museum: TC-508_5
(Otani collection)

Bibliography: Naruse 2002: 38, Fig. 5;
Rhie 2007: 265–266; Valenstein 2007: 65;
Katsuki 2017: no. 59.

Cat. No. 291. Seal impression from Niya

Wedge-shaped tablet inscribed with Kha-
rošthī.

Stein Collection: Tablet N. ii.2.

Bibliography: Stein 1907: 355, Pl. LXXI, N.
ii.2.



Cat. No. 292. Seal impression from Niya

Wedge-shaped tablet inscribed with
Kharoštī.

Stein Collection: Tablet N. i. 9.

Bibliography: Stein 1907: 355, Pl. LXXI, N.
i. 9.



Cat. No. 293. Seal impression from Niya

Wedge-shaped tablet inscribed with Kha-
rošthī.

Stein Collection: Tablet N. iv. 80.

Bibliography: Stein 1907: 355, Pl. LXXI, N.
iv. 80.



Cat. No. 294. Seal impression from Niya

Wedge-shaped tablet inscribed with Kharoṣṭhī
Stein Collection: Tablet N. xv. 330 (or. 8211/1656 Niya).
Bibliography: Stein 1907: 355–356, N. XV. 330.



a)

Cat. No. 295. Batik fragment from a Later Han Dynasty tomb of a couple from Niya

(2nd/3rd century AD)

Tomb 59MNM 001

Fragment size: 89 x 48 cm.

Bibliography: Zhao 2004: 196–107; Rhie 2007: Pl. XI; Hansen 2015: 39; Ge 2015: 113; Wei and Mei 2018: 39–44.

a) Restoration image after Wei and Mei 2018: Fig. 9.



Cat. No. 296. Left wing of a Buddhist diptych carved on both sides from Khotan

(4th/5th or the 7th/8th c. AD)
Schist, H. 8.5 cm.

Bibliography: Barrett 1967: Figs. 2(b)–3b;
Zwalf 1985: 101, No. 134; Rowan 1985:
Pls. 6A–B; Yoshihide 2000: 133, Pl. 15;
Hameed 2015: 195–200, cat. no. 22.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 297. Bronze figurine of a Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi(?) from Khotan

(4th–6th century AD?)
Cast bronze, H. 9 cm.

Hermitage Museum: GA-1071.
Bibliography: Elikhina 2008, Fig. 10; 2011:
336, Fig. 3.3.

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for distribution



Cat. No. 298. Lion scalp head from Tumshuq

(4th–5th century AD)
Toqquz-Sarai, Small temple 1
Unbaked clay. (Pelliot expedition, 1906–
1909).

MG: EO 1331.
Bibliography: Giès and Cohen 1996: 286–
287; TNM 1996: 159, no. 174; Rhie 2002:
510; Hsing 2005: 143–144, Figs. 55–56.

Cat. No. 299. Lion scalp demon head
from Kizil, Kucha

(6th/7th century AD)
Dried clay, painted.
21 x 14 x 10 cm, Weight: 2 kg.
MAK: III 7932.

Bibliography: Le Coq 1922: Tafel 26a.



Cat. No. 300. Head of Vajrapāṇi(?) from Kizil

(6th/7th century AD)
Kucha. Last cave of complex II (cave/s)
17.5 x 11 x 8 cm.
MAK: III 7893
Bibliography: Le Coq 1922: Tafel 26d.



Cat. No. 301. Lion scalp demon head from Sengim-aghiz, Turfan

(10th century AD)
Clay, painted.
MAK: III 856.
Bibliography: Le Coq 1913: Tafel. 55n.



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Cat. No. 302. Painted silk fragment of a lion scalp deity from Gaochang, Turfan

(8th–9th century AD)
MAK: III 4799.
Bibliography: Veit 1982: 185, no. 123. Härtel and Yaldiz 1982: no. 123; Haesner 1996: 294–295; TNM 1996: no. 181; Hsing 2005: 140–142, Fig. 51; Abdullaev 2007: 574, Fig. 22.



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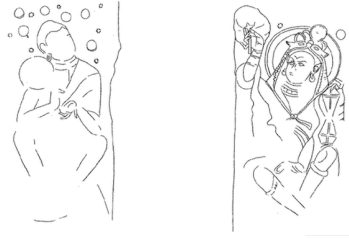


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Cat. No. 303. Vajrapāṇis in Kizil Cave 175

(6th/7th century AD)

Bibliography: *Kizil Grottoes*, vol. 3: Pls. 14–18; *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 1: 221, 223–225, Pls. 196, 198–200; Zhao 2021, vol. 1: 394–396; Zin 2023: Drawing 274.

Cat. No. 304. Lion scalp Vajrapāṇi in Simsim Cave 26

Right corridor, inner wall, two sides of a niche, in situ.

Bibliography: *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 5: 13, Pl. 11; Zin 2023: Drawing 28 a–b.



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Cat. No. 305. Vajrapāṇis in Simsim Cave 41

Bibliography: *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 5: 62, Pl. 58; Zin 2023: Fig. 121.



Illustration not author-
ized for distribution

Cat. No. 306. Vajrapāṇis in the Taming of the Six Heretic Teachers in Kizil Cave 97

Bibliography: *Kizil Grottoes*, vol. 2: Pls. 189–191; *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 3: 36–37, Pls. 30–31; Zin 2023: Drawing 33.



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for distribution

Cat. No. 307. Lion scalp Vajrapāṇi in the
First Sermon in Kizil Cave 123

MAK: III9080

Bibliography: *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua
yishu*, vol. 3: 69, Pl. 59.

Cat. No. 308. Lion scalp Vajrapāṇi in Kizil
Cave 188

MAK: III 9028.

Bibliography: *Kizil Grottoes*, vol. 3: Pl. 56;
Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu, vol. 3: 166–
167, Pl. 147.



Cat. No. 309. Lion scalp figure in Kizil Cave 178 main chamber, left side wall

MAK: III 8725a.

Bibliography: Grünwedel 1920: Pl. 24; Härtel and Yaldiz 1982: 103, no. 35; *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 3: 104, Pl. 92; Zhao 2021, vol. 2: 435, 458; Zin 2023: Drawing 369.



Cat. No. 310. Lion scalp figure in Kizil Cave 178 main chamber

MAK: III 8725 c.

Bibliography: Grünwedel 1920: Tafel 26–27, Fig. 2; *Kizil Grottoes*, vol. 3: Pls. 203–205; *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 3: 114–115, Pl. 101.



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for distribution

Cat. No. 311. Lion scalp figure in Kizil Cave 224

MAK: III 6682

Bibliography: Grünwedel 1912: Figs. 397a, 397b (drawing); Grünwedel 1920: Fig. 48 (drawing); Le Coq and Waldschmidt 1928: Pl. 12; *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 2: 155, Pl. 139; Zhao 2021, vol. 2: 704–705; Zin 2023: Fig. 26.

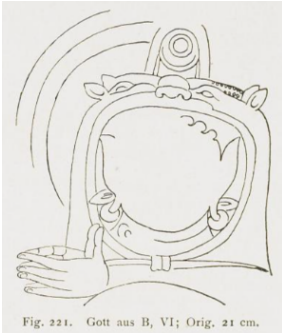


Fig. 221. Gott aus B, VI; Orig. 21 cm.

Cat. No. 312. Lion scalp figure in Kizil Cave 80

Bibliography: Grünwedel 1912: Fig. 221; Le Coq 1925: Fig. 79.



Cat. No. 313. Two yakṣas in Kumtura Cave 34

Main chamber, dome (9), abd dume (8), close to the right side wall, *in situ*.
Bibliography: *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 4: 143–152, Pls. 140–149; Zin 2023: Drawings 201–202.



Illustration not authorized for distribution

Cat. No. 314. Two yakṣas in Simsim Cave 30

Left corridor, inner wall, *in situ*.

Bibliography: *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 5: 274–275, Pls. 246–247; Zin 2023: 522, Drawing 434.



Cat. No. 315. The spirit kumbhāṇḍa in Kuntura Cave 23

Right corridor, outer wall, at the rear.

MAK: IB 8640.

Bibliography: Grünwedel 1912: Fig. 49 (drawing); Zin 2023: 96, Drawing 46.



Cat. No. 316. The cowherd Nanda in Kizil Cave 77

MAK: III 8840.

Bibliography: *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 2: 282, Pl. 251; Zhao 2020, vol. 1: Fig. 9.

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Cat. No. 317. Brahmin standing on one leg worshipping Buddha Puṣya in Kizil Cave 175

(Restored by Zhao)
Bibliography: Zhao 2021, vol. 1: 416; Zin 2023: Drawing 302.

Illustration not authorized
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Cat. No. 318. Brahmin standing on one leg in Kizil Cave 188

(Restored by Zhao)
Bibliography: Zhao 2021, vol. 2: 529, Fig. 13.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 319. Nude figure standing on one leg in Simsim Cave 43

In comparison with the figure on the “Bactrian” silver dish (Cat. Nos. 277, 284)
Bibliography: *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 5: 84, Pl. 79; Wang 2015: 42, Fig. 57; Zin 2023: Drawing 115.

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Cat. No. 320. The revival of Ajātaśatru in Kizil Cave 205

Left corridor, inner wall.

Bibliography: Grünwedel 1920: Tafel 42–43; *Zhongguo xinjiang bihua yishu*, vol. 2: 133, Pls. 122, 134–135; Zhao 2021, vol. 2: 610, Fig. 33.

Cat. No. 321. Bronze relief of Heracles and Eurystheus from Delphi

(ca. 500 BC)

Delphi Museum: 6792.1871.

Bibliography: *LIMC* v.1, s.v. Herakles, nr. 2120.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 322. Wall painting of the lion scalp deity in The Emergence of the Treasure Tower (Lotus Sutra) in Mogao Cave 202

(618–704 AD)

Bibliography: *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol. 7: cat. no. 43; *Zhongguo dunhuang bihua quanji*, vol. 5: 161, cat. no. 182.

Illustration not authorized
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Cat. No. 323. Wall painting of the lion scalp demonic figure in the Matraiya Sutra in Mogao Cave 445

(705–780 AD)

Bibliography: Wang 2002: cat. no. 41; *Zhongguo dunhuang bihua quanji*, vol. 6: 95, cat. no. 89.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 324. Wall painting of the lion scalp deity in the Maitreya Sutra Transformations in Yulin Cave 25

(781–847 AD)

Bibliography: Luo 2002: 240, cat. no. 242; *Yulin Grottoes*: cat. no. 26; Mizuno 2000: 11–32; Hsing 2005: Fig. 53; Wang 2020: 150–157.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 325. Wall painting of the lion
scalp deity in the Nirvana Sutra Transfor-
mations in Mogao Cave 158

(781–847 AD)

Bibliography: *Zhongguo dunhuang bihua
quanji*, vol. 7: 55, cat. no. 52.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 326. Wall painting of the lion
scalp deity in the Manjusri Transfor-
mations in Mogao Cave 9

(848–906 AD)

Bibliography: *Mogao Grottoes*, vol. 4: cat.
no. 179.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 327. Wall painting of the lion
scalp deity in the Samantabhadra Sutra
Transformations in Mogao Cave 36

(907–979 AD)

Bibliography: *Mogao Grottoes*, vol. 5: cat.
no. 23.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 328. Wall painting of the lion
scalp deity playing lute in Mogao Cave
99

(907–979 AD)

Bibliography: *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol.
2: cat. no. 255.

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Cat. No. 329. Wall painting of Vaiśravaṇa and his companions in Yulin Cave 15

(781–847 AD)

Bibliography: *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol. 2: 226, cat. no. 228; Hsing 2005: Fig. 49; *Yulin Grottoes*: cat. no. 4; Li 2011: Fig. 18.

Illustration not authorized
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Cat. No. 330. Wall painting of Vaiśravaṇa and his companions in Yulin Cave 25

(781–847 AD)

Bibliography: *Yulin Grottoes*: cat. no. 42; Granoff 1970: 144–168; Lu 2004: 35–41, 109–110; 2005: 110–120; Xie 2008: 54–59; Li 2011: 188, Fig. 5.2; Cui and Wang 2018: 51–61.



Cat. No. 331. Silk painting fragment of Vaiśravaṇa and the lion scalp attendant from Mogao Cave 17

(8th century AD)

H. 74 cm, W. 31 cm.

BM: 1919,0101,0.38 (Stein Collection)

Bibliography: Stein 1921: 953; Whitfield 1983: Pl. 84; Hsing 2005: Fig. 50; Li 2011: Fig. 8.



Cat. No. 332. Woodblock print of Vaiśravaṇa and his companions from Mogao Cave 17

(947 AD)

H. 40 cm, W. 26.5 cm.

BM: 1919,0101,0.245 (Stein Collection)

Bibliography: Stein 1921: 1037; Matsumoto 1937: 420; Whitfield 1983: Fig. 153; Hsing 2005: Fig. 52; Wang 2016: 58–70.



Cat. No. 333. Vaiśravaṇa and his companions from Dunhuang

(10th century AD)

H. 65.6 cm, W. 34.5 cm (Pelliot chinois 4518 (27))

Bibliography: Lalou 1946: 97; Granoff 1970: Fig. 25; Soymié 1995: 149–150; Anderl 2018: 289; Galambos 2020: 183–186.



Cat. No. 334. Feline scalp figure and female attendant flanking the standing Buddha (Bhaiṣajyaguru?) from Dunhuang

(10th century AD)

H. 25.4 cm, W. 26.8 cm (Pelliot chinois 4518 (31))

Bibliography: Soymié 1995: 152.



Cat. No. 335. Silk banner painted in ink and colours on silk of Vaiśravaṇa from Mogao Cave 17

(851–900 AD).

H. 47.5 cm, W. 20 cm (Stein Collection)

BM: 1919,0101,0.135

Bibliography: Stein 1921: 961–962, Pl. LXXXV.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 336. Sculpture of the Heavenly King-like figure draped with lion/tiger skin in Mogao Cave 205

(781–847 AD)

Bibliography: *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol. 8: cat. no. 196; Li 2011: Fig. 25; Cheng 2017: 6–14; Yang 2020: Fig. 7.

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for distribution

Cat. No. 337. Sculptures of two Chinese Vajrapāṇis in Mogao Cave 435

(6th century AD)

Bibliography: *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol. 8: 35; Lim 2009: Fig. 11.

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Illustration not authorized
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Cat. No. 338. Sculpture of the Wrestler
Vajrapāṇi in Mogao Cave 194

(8th century AD)
Bibliography: *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol.
8: cat. no. 183.

Cat. No. 339. Sculpture of the Wrestler
Vajrapāṇi in Mogao Cave 194

(8th century AD)
Bibliography: *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, vol.
8: cat. no. 184.



Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 340. Drawing of two Wrestler
Vajrapāṇis from Mogao Cave 17

(851–900 AD)
H. 21.5 cm, W. 29 cm.
BM: 1919,0101,0.158.+
Bibliography: Stein 1921: 968, Pl. XCVIII;
Whitfield 1983: Fig. 94.

Cat. No. 341. Wooden sculptures of two
guardian Vajrapāṇis (Niō) at the gate of
Tōdaiji

(1203 AD, Kamakura period)
Assembled-block construction, painted
during H. 836.4cm (L), 838 cm (R), W.
455.5 cm (L), 458.5 cm (R).
Sculptors: Kaikei and Unkei.

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for distribution

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Cat. No. 342. Wall painting of the
Mahāparinirvāṇa in Mogao Cave 295

(581–618 AD)

Bibliography: *Mogao Grottoes*, vol. 2: cat.
no. 42; Lin 2016: Fig. 1–4.

Cat. No. 343. Painted reliefs of two Va-
jrapāṇis in Yungang Cave 12

(465–494 AD)

Bibliography: Chen 2009: 102–106.

Illustration not authorized
for distribution

Cat. No. 344. Painted relief of the lion scalp warrior-God in Huangze Temple Cave 28

(581–618 AD)

Bibliography: Luo 2005: 31, cat. no. 10; Liu 2004: 22–32; Wang 2021: 99–108.

Illustration not authorized
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Cat. No. 345. Painted relief of the lion scalp deity in Huangze Temple Cave 51

(7th–8th century AD)

Bibliography: Luo 2005: 54, cat. no. 36; Liu 2004: 22–32; Wang 2021: 99–108.

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Cat. No. 346. Painted relief of the lion
scalp deity in Qianfoya Cave 206

(8th–9th century AD)

Bibliography: Luo 2005: 120, cat. no. 100;
Liu 2004: 22–32; Wang 2021: 99–108.

Cat. No. 347. Painted relief of the lion
scalp deity in Xikan Cave 5

(8th–9th century AD)

Bibliography: Wang 2021: 99–108.

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Cat. No. 348. Relief of the lion scalp warrior-god in Maijishan Cave 4

(557–581 AD)

Bibliography: *Maijishan Grottoes*: cat. no. 229; Fu 1998: 208; Hsing 2005: 124–125, Fig. 31; Yang 2020: Fig. 6; Liu 2022: 21–28.

Cat. No. 349. Luo zi kuan votive stele

(543 AD)

Limestone, 142.2 x 81.9 x 62.9 cm.
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Bibliography: Chavannes 1914: Pl. XX; Jin 1995: 55; Zhu 2020: 22–41.



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Cat. No. 350. The Lion Spirit King in Gongxian Cave 4

(6th century AD)

Bibliography: *Gongxian Grottoes*: cat. no. 176. 3; Jin 1995: 55–62; Hsing 2005: 126, Fig. 23.

Cat. No. 351. Marble sculpture of the Bodhisattva with Four Attendants

(6th century AD)

Tokyo National Museum: TC-63
Bibliography: Jin 1995: 55–62.

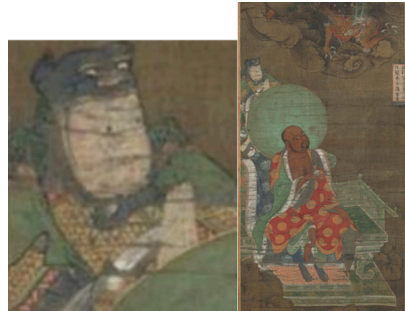


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Cat. No. 352. Painted relief of the lion scalp attendant in Yungang Cave 13
(5th century AD)
Bibliography: Wang 2020: Fig. 1.

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Cat. No. 353. Blue lion scalp deity in
Anyue Qianfozhai Cave 51
(705–780 AD)
Bibliography: Wang 2021: Fig. 5.5.



Cat. No. 354. Painting of The Eighth Luo-
han Vajraputra by Lu Xinzong
(Late 12th century)
Ink, colour and gold on silk. 80 x 41.5 cm.
MFA Boston: 11.6124. (William Sturgis Bi-
gelow Collection)
Bibliography: Lin 2016: Fig. 2-1.

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Cat. No. 355. Xi'an Tang Sancai figurine
found in Hongqing, Baoqiao district

(8th century AD)

Xi'an Museum.

Bibliography: Hsieh 1997: 32–53; Hsing
2005: 103–154; Li 2011: Figs. 19–21; Yang
2022: 120–137.

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Cat. No. 356. Two funerary figurines
found in the Tomb of Yang Kan

Anyang, Henan

(761 AD)

Anyang Museum

Bibliography: Hsing 2005: Figs. 45–46.

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Cat. No. 357. Cadana Gandharva in The
Extermination of Evil

(12th century /Heian period)

Scroll painting, 25.8 x 77.2 cm
Nara National Museum: 1106.



Cat. No. 358. Portrait of Rostam (part of
the scene of Rostam slaying his som
Suhrab)

(1435–1440)

Made in Shiraz.

BM: 1948,1009,0.51

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