Encyclopædia Iranica

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Published: December 15, 1983
Last Updated: June 1, 2018

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ix. Pre-Islamic Art

Small, simple clay statues from the Neolithic period, which may be protective divinities, can be found in all sites from the Middle East to India; in Afghanistan one sees them in such places as Mondīgak (J. M. Casal, *Fouilles de Mundigak*, Paris, 1961), Nād-e ʿAlī (G. F. Dales, *New Excavations at Nad-i-ali (Sorkh Dagh) Afghanistan*, Berkeley, 1977), and Deh Morāsī Ḡonday (L. Dupree, "Deh Morasi Gundai: A Chalcolithic Site in South Central Afghanistan," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 50/2, 1963); a small stone head (Casal, *Fouilles*, pl. XLIII, XLIV; J. Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan et son art*, Prague, 1968, pl. 1) resembling certain Mesopotamian statues suggests the portrait of a noble. Inspired by the Greco-Iranian tradition, the Bactrians and then the Kushans and their successors made the portraiture of sovereigns on coins an important art form and an inexhaustible source of historical data (J. M. Rosenfeld, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, Berkeley, 1967, pls. I-XV). Royal portraits can be found carved on the thresholds of stone temples (D. Schlumberger, "Fouilles à Surkh-Kotal," *JA*, 1952, p. 443, pl. VI; Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan*, pl. 41) and painted on the walls of sanctuaries (Z. Tarzi, *L'architecture et le décor rupestre des grottes de Bamiyan*, Paris, 1977, pl. Al, figs. 9 B14, B15, 10-12).

Occidental influence began in the Median period, or in any case, during the conquests of Cyrus and Darius I in the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. Remains from this era found at such sites as Nād-e ʿAlī (Dales, *New Excavations*), Qandahār (S. V. Helms, "The British Excavations at Old Kandahar: Preliminary Report of the Work of 1977," *Afghan Studies* 2, forthcoming), Balḵ (J. C. Gardin, *Ceramiques de Bactres*, Paris, Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan [MDAFA] 15, 1957), Ṭelā Tapa (V. I. Sarianidi, *Raskopki Tillya-tepe v Severnom Afganistane* I, Moscow, 1972), Ālten Tapa (V. I. Sarianidi, "Altin-tepe, rovesnika drevneichikh ," *Vokrug Sveta* 2, 1968, pp. 46-48), and Dahāna-ye Ḡolāmān (U. Scerrato, "Excavations at Dahan-i-Ghulaman [Seistan-Iran]: First Preliminary Report [1962-1963]," *East and West* 16, 1966, pp. 9-30) or "Zarin," the ancient capital of Drangiana, mentioned by Ctesias. The Hellenistic levels of these cities date back to the time of Alexander's conquest in the 4th century B.C. Alexander's successors in the east—the Seleucids, Parthians, Greco-Bactrians, and Sasanians—are the true transmitters of Greco-Iranian art in their periods (3rd cent. B.C.-6th century A.D.). Their influence is visible in architecture (plans of cities and fortresses, colonnaded palaces, urban structures, etc.), in sculpture (pseudo-Corinthian pilasters, figured capitals, garland and scroll patterns), and in painting, where the decorative elements of stone grottos owe a great deal to Sasanian art. The nomads of steppes, hellenized Scythian goldsmiths, and artisans from southern Siberia and Ordos also carried traditions and models into Afghanistan. And from the first century A.D. Buddhist monks from the Ganges region in India created an ever-increasing demand for icons and sculptured and painted decoration for their monasteries. An iconography inspired by those of ancient India and Gandhāra lasted until the Islamic era.

Ancient Afghan art first came to light through treasures placed from the very beginning in the interior of Buddhist stupas and discovered either accidentally by travelers or unexpectedly by archeologists (C. Masson, "Memoir on the Ancient Coins Found at Beghram, in the Kohistan of Kabul," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3, 1834, pp. 153-75; 5, 1836, pp. 1-28, 537-47). The treasure of Bagram, dating from the 1st-2nd centuries A.D., was discovered in 1937-39 by J. Hackin and his team from the Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan. It contained glassware, bronze statuettes and vessels, and plaster casts of Hellenistic themes, objects which for the most part came from the Mediterranean world (J. Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram*, Paris, MDAFA 9, 1939, pl. IV, XI, XII; VII, XX, XXIV; Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan*, pl. 14a, b, 15; 10-12; 8, 9). It also contained a wooden piece of furniture decorated

with engraved and sculptured ivory plates from central India, where similar plates were recently found (Hackin, *Recherches*, pl. XXVIII, XXXIX; idem, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram*, Paris, MDAFA 11, 1954, fig. 8ff.; Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan*, pl. 25, 20). Finally, Chinese lacquer bowls testify to the use of the silk route (Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches*, fig. 243-49).

In the well concealed and untouched tombs of Ṭelā Tapa, the dead are covered with fine fabric sewn with gold bracteates, while their clothing is woven from gold thread and embroidered with pearls. Their swords and daggers are placed in gold sheaths decorated with fantastic animals, and their belts are embellished with figured medallions; their necklaces and pendants portray Greco-Iranian divinities, such as Cybele in the form of the Mistress of the Animals (V. I. Sarianidi, "Trésors d'une nécropole royale en Bactriane," *Archéologia* 1979, no. 135, pp. 18-27; p. 21, fig. 4; p. 24, fig. 1, 2; p. 25, fig. 4; p. 23, fig. 3). Such artwork, perhaps made by Scythian or Sakan goldsmiths in the service of nomadic or semi-sedentary princes of Bactria, provided sculptors in Gandhāra, where influences from both Parthian Hellenism and the steppes intermingled, with models for the ornaments of the statues of the Boddhisattvas.

Bactria. Ancient Bactria, located in the valley of the Āmū Daryā or Oxus river, formed a single political entity in an area that is today divided. Texts describe it as prosperous and densely populated (A. Foucher, *La vieille route de l'Inde de Bactres à Taxila*, Paris, MDAFA 1, 1942, I, p. 13ff.), though today the region is desert. Recent investigations have uncovered astonishing urban and cultural sites that have yielded unsuspected examples of architecture and ornamentation.

The city of Āy Ḵānom, located in the extreme northeast of Bactria at the junction of the Kōkča and Āmū Daryā rivers, was inhabited from the 4th century B.C. and abandoned around 130 B.C. because of advancing nomads. Not having undergone further habitation, it is nearly intact on the level of its present plan (P. Bernard, *Fouilles de Aï-Khanoum*, Paris, MDAFA 21, 1973, II, pl. 1). A fortified city at the foot of a citadel, it embraces temples and tombs, a large palace, a gymnasium and palestra, and the only ancient theater discovered this far east; in short, it presents a microcosm of the Hellenistic world. Nevertheless, Āy Ḵānom's art is marked by numerous oriental details. The decoration, inspired by Greek patterns, reinterprets components to yield original works, as in the pseudo-Corinthian capitals of the colonnades south of the palace's main courtyard (Bernard, *Fouilles*, pl. 44; idem, "Aï-Khanoum, ville

coloniale grecque," *Les Dossiers de l'Archéologie*, Dijon, 1974-75, pp. 99-114, fig. facing p. l04). The stone statues are slightly deformed copies of Greek models, such as the bearded Hermes raised on a square pillar in the gymnasium (Plate XX/1), or an unfinished and therefore locally made statue of a man, whose anatomy has nothing to envy in classical Greek art, or another man wearing a chlamys and petasos. The bronze statues, like that of Heracles crowning himself copied from a Greek coin, are on the whole unskillful (Bernard, "Aï-Khanoum," pp. 111 right bottom, 113, 110 top). A gilded silver plaque represents Cybele on her chariot pulled by two lions with curiously raised paws (ibid., p. 114; Plate XX/2), another blend of Greek and oriental traditions.

In the south of Bactria on one of the first low mountains of the Hindu Kush stands a half-fortress, half-temple known as Sorḵ Kōtal. At the end of a monumental staircase cut into the side of the hill and intercepted by a number of terraces is found the sanctuary of an as yet unknown divinity, decorated by pilasters with pseudo-Corinthian capitals and garlands carried by young boys (D. Schlumberger, *L'Orient hellénise*', Paris, 1970, fig. 26, pp. 62-63; *JA*, 1952, p. 446, pl. VIII, no. 2). On the facade, badly preserved stone statues, royal portraits and the scene of an investiture evoke the realistic and triumphal art of the hellenized Parthians (*JA*, 1952, p. 443, pl. VI; *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* 1955, p. 66-67, fig. 2, 3). This is undoubtedly the art that was taken to India by the Kushan nomads. One of the statues is considered that of the great Kushan king Kanishka, because of its resemblance to a statue inscribed with his name in the Mathura museum (Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan*, pl. 41; cf. *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*, 1955, pp. 66-67). An inscription still under study seems to explain the function of the temple and its approximate date: 2nd century A.D. (A. Maricq in *JA*, 1958, pp. 345-429, pl. I; Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan*, pl. 40).

In west Bactria to the northeast of the Aqča river stands an ancient rectangular city that was inhabited for nearly eight centuries called Delbarǰīn, with a central fortress, palaces, houses, and numerous temples and chapels decorated with divinities, princely figures, and votaries with offerings (I. T. Kruglikova, *Delbarjin*, Moscow, 1974; idem and G. A. Pugachenkova, *Delbarjin*, Moscow, 1977). Unbaked and painted clay is used in modeling or as a base for the paintings. A fresco representing the Aśvins or Dioscuri dates to the Greco-Bactrian period (Kruglikova, *Delbarjin*, pl. 2, 3). Statues in painted clay are very similar to works discovered at Khalchavan in Uzbekistan and thus date from

the Kushan period (ibid., frontispiece). The long lines of donors painted on the walls of several chapels date from a later period, Hephthalite or even Turkic, and evoke similar works found at Panjkent in Tajikistan (A. Yu. Yakubovskiĭ et al., *Zhivopis' drevnogo Piandzhikenta*, Moscow, 1954, pl. XXIX) and at Kyzyl in Sinkiang, China (7th-8th centuries; A. Von le Coq, *Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasian* VI, Berlin, 1928, pl. 6).

Hadda. When Indian Buddhist monks reached northwest India at the outset of the Christian era, they settled in Gandhāra and also in the region of Jalālābād in Afghanistan. Monasteries proliferated around the present-day village of Hadda and on the cliffs bordering the Kabul river. Resembling the monasteries of Gandhāra in their plans, they are constructed from schist, limestone, or clay, and decorated with painted and modeled clay and, above all, stucco. Scenes of the Buddha, often much grander than his entourage, are composed with great skill, while his supporting cast is portrayed with astonishing realism. The artists were able to reproduce perfectly the facial features of different ethnic groups and the details of various costumes and baroque ornaments: witness a barbarian, a soldier, a princess, a monk with shaved skull, a nomad draped in a cloak (J. Barthoux, *Les Fouilles de Hadda, figures et figurines*, Paris, MDAFA 6, 1930, pl. 66a, 106a, 44, 60c, 45). Witness also the chapels excavated at Tapa-ye Šotor, where, like a tableau vivant, princes, donors, and gods of primitive Hinduism crowd around the Buddha alone in his meditation (Z. Tarzi, "Hadda, à la lumière des trois dernières campagnes de fouilles de Tapa-i-Shotor (1974-1976)," *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*, 1977, pp. 381-410, figs. 5-7). Some of these representations, like the bust of a king-naga (S. and M. Mustamandi, "Nouvelles fouilles à Hadda (1966-1967) par l'Institut afghan d'archéologie," *Arts Asiatiques* 19, 1969, pp. 15-36, figs. 15, 16), evoke the art of India; others, such as the Heracles-Vajrapāni (Plate XXII/1) or the Vajrapāni-Alexander (Tarzi, "Hadda," figs. l0, 16, 17) were undoubtedly copied from ancient coins or small bronze statues from the occident. Today the art of Hadda is usually dated to the 2nd-6th centuries A.D.

Kāpīsā. The area of Bagrām, which seems to have been the site of the Kushan capital and is located in the present-day province of Kāpīsā near Kabul, provides examples of pre-Islamic art dating from the arrival of the Kushans in the first century A.D. to the reign of the Hendūšāhīs of Kabul in the 2nd/8th century. At the foot of the mountains south of Kabul stand the monasteries of Ševā-kī and Goldara, whose 4th-5th century stupas are decorated with friezes

of semicircular or trilobate arcades (G. Fussman and M. Le Berre, *Monuments boddhiques de la région de Kaboul* I. *Le monastère de Gul dara*, Paris, MDAFA 22, 1976; Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan*, pl. 85-88). The mountain route between the two sites is marked by a column, the Manār-e Čakarī, whose architecture resembles that of Indian columns of the Mauryan period (Auboyer, *L'Afghanistan*, pl. 89).

On the plateau of Bagrām north of Kabul the monasteries of Pāytāva and Šotorak (J. Hackin, *L'oeuvre de la DAFA en Afghanistan [1922-1932]*, Tokyo, 1933, p. 16; J. Meunié, *Shotorak*, Paris, MDAFA 10, 1942), among others, exhibit statues and

reliefs sculpted in schist and painted in vivid colors and gold dating from the 3rd century. The style typifies a local school, while the iconography seems to be specific to the area. The scale of the statue of the central cult figure is considerably larger than that of the other personages; the canon is short and squat, the faces square, and the attitudes schematized (Meunié, *Shotorak*, pl. X, fig. 36; pl. XIX, fig. 62). Very different is the site of Ḵayr-ḵāna overlooking Kabul, a 7th-8th century temple to an unknown Brahmanic divinity. The white marble and the post-Gupta style recall certain statues of Kashmir. In 1980 an impressive statue of the Indian god Sūrya, probably the assistant to a still undiscovered monumental statue, accidentally came to light (P. Bernard and F. Grenet, "Découverte d'une statue du dieu solaire Surya dans la région de Kaboul," *Studia iranica* 10/1, 1981, pp. 129-46, pls. XIII-XVI). This statue is a landmark in the collected evidence for the influence of Indian art during the period.

Bāmīān. The rupestral monasteries in the valley of Bāmīān are located at the heart of the Hindu Kush, on the arduous route connecting Kāpīsā and Bactria (A. Godard, *Les antiquités bouddhiques de Bamiyan*, Paris, MDAFA 2, 1928; J. Hackin and J. Carl, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Bamiyan*, Paris, MDAFA 3, 1933; Z. Tarzi, *L'architecture*). Occupied probably by the 3rd century A.D. and certainly up until the 7th or 8th centuries, the sanctuaries are decorated with painted clay reliefs on a painted base. Influences from Sasanian Iran and the later Indian culture of Gandhāra and the post-Gupta period are clearly in evidence. It is highly probable that these symbioses were encouraged by the Kidarites (the later Kushans) or even the Hephthalites, some of whom, according to Chinese pilgrims, were good Buddhists, (Hiuan-Tsang, *Si-yu-ki*, tr. T. Watters, London, 1904). On a cliff oriented toward the south two monumental niches enclose enormous statues of the Buddha. The

interior of the niches was covered entirely by holy figures with multicolored halos and mandorlas (Hackin and Carl, *Nouvelles recherches*, pl. XXVII, fig. 29; Tarzi, *L'architecture*, pl. 61, B128). Under the vault protecting the 38 meter Buddha a grand solar god, perhaps Mithra, is dressed in caftan and flowing cloak, as are two rows of donor-kings on the springing of the vault (Godard, *Antiquités*, pl. XXII; Tarzi, *L'architecture*, pls. 6, B6; 89, C2). In other niches, frontal boddhisattvas draped in dhotis and loose scarves are sometimes placed under short frontons (Tarzi, *L'architecture*, pls. 34, B70; 58 B121; 92, C6). The ceilings evoke familiar structures in Central Asia, while the domes imitate Iranian architecture (ibid., pls. 17, B33; 21, B41). The decorations of the neighboring sites of Kakrāk (Plate XXIII/1) and Fōlādī correspond to those of the late Bāmīān period (for Kakrāk: Hackin and Carl, *Nouvelles recherches*, pp. 39-46; for Fōlādī: U. Scerrato, "A Short Note on some Recently Discovered Buddhist grottoes near Bamiyan, Afghanistan," *East and West* 11, 1960, pp. 94-120; B. Dagens, "Monastères rupèstres de la vallée de Foladi," in MDAFA 19, Paris, 1964, pp. 43-48).

A small monastery situated on the route to Bāmīān, Fondūkestān, has yielded exquisite 8th-century statues of painted unbaked clay typifying the symbiosis of multiple influences referred to above (J. Hackin, "Le monastère bouddhique de Fondukistan," MDAFA 8, Paris, 1959, pp. 49-58). In statues exhibiting a certain realism and great technical suppleness a charming Indian maiden gives her hand to a local prince dressed like a Turk (ibid., figs. 189-194; XXIII/2). Paintings of gracious Buddhas and baroque Boddhisattvas with slightly outlandish aspect and attire help to fill up a rather late pantheon (ibid., esp. figs. 193-94). Another monastery located near Ḡaznī at Tapa Sardār seems to have been used in the 3rd-8th centuries. An Italian mission found material that displays the various influences already cited and allows for subtle comparisons of motifs (M. Taddei, "Tapa Sardar, First Preliminary Report," *East and West* 18, 1968, pp. 109-24, fig. 47; idem, "Tapa-Sardar, Second Preliminary Report," *East and West* 28, 1978, pp. 33-135, figs. 81, 135). The unbaked clay and stucco and the painted and gilded statues exhibit an iconography that permits a study of the evolution of culture and religious sentiments over a long period and of the slow passage of early Mahayana Buddhism as Brahmanism underwent a revival.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.