

NIKE-APSARA IMAGERY IN FIRST AND SECOND-CENTURY GANDHARAN ART AND  
THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ROMAN IMAGE-LANGUAGE

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Scholarship has examined the Greco-Roman deities used as prototypes for Buddhist figures in Gandhara, such as Apollo-Buddha, Tyche-Hariti, and Atlas. Minimal research has explored the surmised correlation between Nike and Apsaras. Therefore, this thesis investigates the thematic roles, iconography, and historical relationships between the two, including Roman interpretations of Nike, to expand on prior Greek and Hellenistic-centric discussions. I argue that when we look at evidence of the Apsara, such as that depicted on the first or second-century Gandharan relief in the Art Institute of Chicago, in comparison to Nike representations from the Imperial Roman period, similarities can be identified that support the notion of a correlation between the two existing in Central Asia. Further supporting this claim, I utilize the theoretical framework proposed by Martina Stoye, which builds on Tonio Hölscher's Roman-Image Language, to recontextualize the Apsara imagery on the Gandharan relief and explore why the Kushans viewed the figures as interchangeable or capable of being synthesized.

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## I. Introduction

The Kushan Empire, which at its peak controlled present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and parts of northwestern India, dominated the Gandharan region in Central Asia between the first and fourth centuries CE.<sup>1</sup> The central location of the region provided the Kushans with access to significant trade routes and connections along the Silk Roads, expanding from China to the Mediterranean, that transformed the area into a fusion of diverse cultural expression.<sup>2</sup> Gandharan art today is understood as a hybridization of Greco-Roman, Indian, and Iranian traditions. But when exploring the artistic relationship between Gandharan and Roman art, specifically concerning the iconographies of Buddhist Apsara figures as they appear in Kushan sculpture of the first and second centuries CE, can we assume a possible correlation between the two exists?

Scholars often debate which foreign artistic traditions impacted the formation of Gandharan art, however, “the hypotheses of Greek and Roman origins predominate...[And] no matter which is given priority, the fact that Roman culture was in many respects the combination and development of Greek culture is undeniable.”<sup>3</sup> Several Greco-Roman deities became the “prototypes for Buddhist figures in Gandharan art, such as Apollo-Buddha, Herakles-Vajrapani. Nike-Apsara, Atlas, Helios-Surya, Tyche-Hariti, and so on.”<sup>4</sup> Many of these figures have been analyzed but minimal research has been conducted on imagery of the Nike-Apsara. Scholars such as Juping Yang in his essay “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China” (2020), and John Boardman (2015) and Ladislav Stančo (2015), propose that Greek or Hellenistic traditions may have “influenced the evolution of the image of the Apsara in

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin, Craig. *Empires of Ancient Eurasia: The First Silk Roads Era*. 2018. 189-190.

<sup>2</sup> Behrendt, Kurt. *The Art of Gandhara in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Yale University Press, 2007. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Yang, Juping. “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China.” *Global Connections*. Archaeopress, 2020. 234.

<sup>4</sup> Yang, “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China,” 234.

Gandharan art.”<sup>5</sup> I, however, believe the conversation to be better served if we explore a relationship between the Roman and Kushan Empires. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to further examine the surmised correlation between the Buddhist Apsara in Gandhara and the ancient Greek goddess of victory, Nike, as reinterpreted in Roman art. Although Yang’s essay briefly discusses the similar iconographic and paralleled roles of the two flying figures, Apsaras (flying celestial female masters of the performing arts, specifically in dance and music), and Nike (the mythological flying female of Victory in athletic or musical competitions, as well as war), he concludes that more research about the topic needs to occur to determine if any correlation between the two exists.<sup>6</sup> Two questions in particular still need to be answered: what evidence suggests the Greco-Roman figure, Nike, and the Buddhist Apsara as depicted in Central Asia between the first and second centuries are related? What evidence suggests that the two figures could be interpreted as interchangeable by the Kushans, who dominated the area at the time and were influenced by Greco-Roman, Indian, and Iranian art?

To tackle these questions, we should look again at the representation of this figure in art and recontextualize its adaptation in Gandhara. By analyzing the Gandharan schist relief located at the Chicago Institute of Art (fig. 1), I explore the Apsara figures in relation to Nike thematically and iconographically, as well as briefly examine the historical implications that account for the possible assimilation of the western goddess into Central Asia. This narrative scene was chosen as the case study for several reasons: first, although the relief was the point of departure - in Yang’s essay, it was mainly neglected in the discussion that focused on the relationship between the Gandharan Nike-Apsara and its Chinese version as *Feitian*; second,

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<sup>5</sup> Yang, “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China,” 240. Boardman, John. *The Greeks in Asia*. Thames and Hudson (London): 2015. Stančo, Ladislav. *Greek Gods in the East: Hellenistic iconographic schemes in Central Asia*. Karolinum Press, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Yang, “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China,” 238.

because the relief depicts two winged-Buddhist Apsaras in the scene's top corners, which as I argue, stylistically seem to embrace Imperial Roman (27 BCE – 476 CE) interpretations of the Greek goddess, Nike; and third, because the stylistic choices on the fragment appear similar to other objects that also portray Apsaras as flying beings with the same stylized wings, such as a relief held in the British Museum of Art and the another from a private collection (fig. 2 and 3).<sup>7</sup> The comparable qualities between these reliefs and our case study suggest that the objects were likely produced in workshops located in the same areas or within close vicinity, and that the piece in Chicago participated in artistic practices that occurred in Gandhara between the first and second centuries CE. This is important considering the piece in Chicago does not have a documented province, which makes it difficult to analyze stylistic choices, especially regarding cultural interactions. The British Museum's relief and the one in the private collection, however, are both documented or understood as originating from the Swat Valley in Northwest Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> This region and district are critical for understanding the presence of Roman artistic practices in Gandharan art because of its geographical proximity to Bactria (present-day Afghanistan) that since the fourth century BCE had been exposed to western influences.<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, the fragment was also chosen as the case study for this analysis because it appears to be less damaged than other surviving examples. As a result, the fragment shows two wings on each flying being, which are not always present on Apsara figures in Gandharan art. The decision to not include wings on the celestial beings was made in accordance with Indian traditions that pre-date the Kushan Empire's establishment. However, while traditionally Apsaras

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<sup>7</sup> Yang, "The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China," 238.

<sup>8</sup> The relief from the private collection (fig. 3), according to Kurita is also understood as being from the Swat District. Kurita, Isao. *Gandhāran Art = Gandāra Bijutsu*. Kaitei zōhoban shohan. English-Japanese edition, vol. 2. Tōkyō: Nigensha, 2003. 131. British Museum of Art. Object no. 1966,1017.2. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A\\_1966-1017-2](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1966-1017-2).

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, Getzel M. *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East from Armenia and Mesopotamia to Bactria and India*. University of California Press, 2013. 255.

were portrayed as flying female bodies with no wings, in Gandhara, we see these female figures that, appear as “Nike” female bodies do, with wings, instead. Therefore, the inclusion of wings here must be treated as a stylistic choice that was adhering to the taste of either a particular workshop, region, patron ideal or artistic preference that was involved with the piece’s creation.

During this analysis, we must remember, as the posited connection between Roman and Gandharan artistic practices cannot explain or properly characterize entirely, how Greco-Roman and Gandharan arts were associated, if at all.<sup>10</sup> That is an issue that cannot be redacted to a historical moment and requires further study.<sup>11</sup> The development of Buddhist imagery in Gandhara also did not occur in a linear process, but rather from various spaces and times that might have coexisted chronologically, evolved separately, and eventually overlapped.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, this study discusses the peculiar relationship between the two celestial beings and asserts that the Imperial Roman iconography of Nike, specifically the stylized wings that were characteristic of the period, were used by the Kushans in some of their reliefs that featured Buddhist Apsaras, including the object from the Art Institute of Chicago.

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<sup>10</sup> Stewart, Peter. “Roman sarcophagi and Gandharan sculpture.” *The Global Connections of Gandharan Art*. Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2020. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart, “Roman sarcophagi and Gandharan sculpture,” 50.

<sup>12</sup> Rhi, Juhyung. “Positioning Gandharan Buddhas in chronology: significant coordinates and anomalies.” *Problems of Chronology in Gandharan Art*. Wannaporn Rienjang and Peter Stewart (eds.). Archaeopress Archaeology, 2018. 35.

## II. Methodological Approaches to Gandhara Art

This chapter introduces Gandharan art as scholars have come to understand it today by briefly analyzing the Kushan Empire and its formation. Exploring the conceptualization of Gandharan art in scholarship allows this study to place its argument within the current conversation and utilize approaches suggested by experts in the field. Furthermore, this chapter will focus on the theoretical framework as proposed by Martina Stoye, who expanded on Hölscher's Roman-Image Language to argue that the process of art production, as defined by the framework, applies to Gandharan art. In support of this claim, this thesis builds upon Stoye's proposed framework with its examination of the Gandharan relief in Chicago, and the evidence suggesting that the figures of Apsara and Nike could have been perceived as interchangeable or capable of being synthesized in Gandhara during the first and second centuries CE.

The Gandhara kingdom was located in the Peshawar basin and was bordered by the north Himalayan foothills and the west mountain range of the Hindu Kush (fig 4).<sup>13</sup> Between the first and fourth centuries CE, the Kushan Empire was the primary political entity in control of the region.<sup>14</sup> One prominent theory regarding the origin of the Kushans comes from Chinese historical texts that document the movement of a nomadic group known as the Yuezhi (Dayuezhi) from northwestern China to Bactria (Daxia) in the latter half of the second century BCE and eventually into the Gandharan region by the early first century CE.<sup>15</sup> Texts such as the

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<sup>13</sup> Behrendt, Kurt. "Gandhara." *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History – Essays*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Met, 2012. <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gand/hdgand.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Sinisi, Fabrizio. "Royal Imagery on Kushan Coins: Local Tradition and Arsacid Influences." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 60, no. 6. Brill, 2017. 818-819.

<sup>15</sup> Scholars have argued the initial territory of the Yuezhi group was located probably between the easternmost Tianshan Mountains and Dunhuang. Additionally, it is understood that the Yuezhi had a close relationship with the rulers of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE), who the nomadic group supplied jade and horses to. Liu, Xinru. "Migration and Settlement of the Yuezhi-Kushan: Interaction and Interdependence of Nomadic and Sedentary Societies." *Journal of World History*, vol. 12, no. 2. University of Hawai'i Press on behalf of World History Association, 2001. 261-265.

*Shiji*, (Historical Records), compiled by Sima Qian [circa 145-86 BCE]; the *Hanshu* (History of the Former Han) by Ban Gu's [32-92 CE]; and the *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Later Han) by Fan Ye's [397-445 CE], have led scholars to believe that a branch from the Yuezhi group, after conquering the Hellenistic Kingdom of Bactria, migrated sometime between the first century BCE and early first century CE to Gandhara and established the Kushan (Guishuang) kingdom in Central Asia and northwest India.<sup>16</sup> Following their migration into Gandhara, the Yuezhi were divided into the five Xihou, which consisted of the Xiumi, Shuangmi, Guishuang, Xidun, and Gaofu (who are also understood in some instances as the Dumi).<sup>17</sup> By the first century CE, the Guishuang defeated the other tribes and united the area under one kingdom that became known as the Kushan Empire.<sup>18</sup> During their reign, the Great Kushans (Great Yuezhi) fashioned the territory into an extensive kingdom that at its peak stretched from present-day Afghanistan to north-western India.<sup>19</sup> In its earlier periods, the empire accepted Buddhism, which alongside the region's acquisition and combination of various artistic traditions, led to the formation of individual styles that have come to define Gandharan art as scholars know it today.

In the last half-century, the style of Gandharan art has been understood as a balanced syncretic pluralism of Greco-Roman, Indian, Iranian, and Parthian artistic traditions.<sup>20</sup> Prior to the beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, when the British empire expanded into north-western India and discovered Gandharan art at sites such as Taxila or Takht-i Bahi (present-day Pakistan), the region's artistic traditions were viewed as being comprised of classical and classical-derivative art that had been discovered "thousands of miles away from where it should

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<sup>16</sup> Yang, Juping. "Some Notes on Dayuezhi, Daxia, Guishuang, and Dumi in Chinese Sources." *The Silk Road*, vol. 14. The Silkroad Foundation, 2016. 97-100.

<sup>17</sup> Yang, "Some Notes on Dayuezhi, Daxia, Guishuang, and Dumi in Chinese Sources," 101.

<sup>18</sup> Yang, "Some Notes on Dayuezhi, Daxia, Guishuang, and Dumi in Chinese Sources," 101.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin, 189-190.

<sup>20</sup> Stewart, "Roman sarcophagi and Gandharan sculpture," 51.

be (i.e. the Mediterranean).<sup>21</sup> Overtime however, this discourse led to disagreements amongst scholars, such as James Burgess (1900) and Albert Grünwedel (1901), who argued Gandharan art originated from Hellenistic artistic traditions, while others, including Benjamin Rowland (1936), Alexander C. Soper (1951), and Harald Ingholt (1957), believed the style derived from Roman artistic ideals.<sup>22</sup> Although these interpretations contributed significantly to our understanding of Gandharan art, they failed to account for the transmission of art between the West and East as a mutual exchange and analyze it as a product that utilized a variety of artistic practices known throughout the region and beyond Greco-Roman sources.<sup>23</sup>

Within the last thirty years, scholarship has begun to acknowledge the nuanced styles that are present in Gandharan sculptural reliefs, in their contexts, to better understand the various cross-cultural interactions of the region.<sup>24</sup> This remains challenging, however, because there is currently no surviving evidence from the first century BCE to the first century CE that comprehensively or convincingly could be viewed as the authentic predecessor for Gandharan art.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, scholars have continued to seek solutions to this dilemma. Stoye for example, in her contribution to the third international workshop of the Gandhara Connections Project

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<sup>21</sup> Once discovered Gandharan art became considered highly collectable, which resulted in many uncontrolled excavations and looting that unfortunately, left much of the region's art divorced from its physical and social contexts. As a result, scholarship on Gandharan art often experiences problems with an object's chronology or provenance, as well as reconstructing the narratives. Ball, Warwick. "Gandhara Perceptions: the Orbit of Gandharan Studies." *The Global Connection of Gandharan Art*. Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2020. 1-3.

<sup>22</sup> Burgess, James. "The Gandhara Sculptures." *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, 8 (1900): 23-40. Grünwedel, Albert. *Buddhist Art in India*. Gnes C. Gibson (trans). Bernard Quaritch (London), 1901. Rowland, Benjamin. "A Revised Chronology of Gandharan Sculpture." *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1936. 387-400. Soper, Alexander C. "The Roman Style in Gandhara." *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 55, no. 4. Archaeological Institute of America, 1951. 303-307. Lyons, Islay, and Harald Ingholt. *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*. Pantheon Books (New York): 1957.

<sup>23</sup> Ball, 6.

<sup>24</sup> *The Global Connections of Gandharan Art*. Stewart, Peter and Wannaporn Rienjang (eds). Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2020. vi.

<sup>25</sup> Stoye, Martina. "On the crossroads of disciplines: Tonio Hölscher's theory of understanding Roman art images and its implications for the study of western influence(s) in Gandhāran art." *The Global Connections of Gandharan Art*. Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2020. 32.



(2019), proposed a compelling methodology concerning Gandharan art that followed Tonio Hölscher's Roman Image-Language theory, as explored in his book *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System* (1987).<sup>26</sup>

According to Stoye, Hölscher argued that Roman art from all periods functioned under the production of utilizing older, Greek forms from diverse settings to convey Roman ideals.<sup>27</sup>

Stoye wrote that,

“Hölscher puts it this way: [18] ‘For if the choice of models does not depend on the taste and style of different periods, social groups or individuals, then on what does it depend? Is it a learned form of game-playing? Is it a symptom of Roman culture’s poverty of invention? A chaos of forms?’; [77] ‘... how [did] the use and adaptation of the models [take] place, and with what thinking behind them?’... Hölscher concludes that different artistic types must have carried with them specific ideological meanings. The choice of one particular artistic model was not so much influenced by the prevailing aesthetic taste of the day, but was instead determined by well-established content-related associations corresponding with those visual forms.”<sup>28</sup>

In short, Hölscher's theory recognized Roman art as a product of artistic creation that sacrificed current aesthetic tastes, in favor of specific visual forms that viewers could firmly understand. As Peter Stewart further described in his 2006 review of Hölscher's book, “The [Roman] artists [according to Hölscher] could pick and choose from the entire formal spectrum of past Greek art according to requirements and expectations that surround particular works.”<sup>29</sup> This process generated a form of visual language that catered to the idea in which Roman art served to communicate an ideological concept (whether that be in support of a political entity, religion, a city, a triumph, etc.) quickly, and coherently to an audience. Hölscher's approach also

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<sup>26</sup> Stoye also asserted Hölscher's theory has gone largely undiscussed in Gandharan art historical study because the original publication was not translated from German until 2005. Stoye, 33.

<sup>27</sup> Stoye, 33.

<sup>28</sup> Stoye, 34-35.

<sup>29</sup> Stewart is not among the scholars that supports the framework. Stewart, Peter. “Roman Art.” *The Classical Review*, vol. 56, no. 1. Cambridge University Press, 211.

contextualized the idea that the embrace of Classical and Hellenistic artistic traditions established Roman art as an individualistic cultural phenomenon.<sup>30</sup>

This approach, as summarized by Stoye, characterized the process of Roman art production as: 1) choosing the scene type (following the medium and purpose in which the work is to be viewed), 2) selecting model types for the main figures (in accordance to content – i.e. the visual forms should be able to express values through depicted motifs), 3) deciding on model types for secondary figures, and lastly, 4) altering all chosen elements to generate a cohesive image that appeals to the taste/style of the time (fig. 5).<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, Stoye believed Hölscher’s theoretical framework for Roman art production could similarly be applied to Gandharan art, and additionally asserted that the method could, potentially, alleviate many challenges art historians face when studying the art of the region (i.e., understanding Gandharan styles and the multi-cultural associations of their artistic practices).<sup>32</sup> Following Stoye’s application of Hölscher’s method to Gandharan art, my analysis utilizes this approach to explore the relief in question, the two carved Buddhist Apsara figures on the object, and how their association with the iconography of the Imperial Nike could have possibly been assimilated into Gandharan artistic practices.

For this study, Hölscher’s observations on Roman monuments, the sculptures they feature, and their application of image-types are most significant. The semantic theory concluded that various artistic traditions or types carry with them “specific ideological meanings” that are not of one artistic model influenced by the aesthetic of the day but rather are established content-

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<sup>30</sup> Classical stylistic traits include consistency, balance, clarity, economy, and a prioritizing of formal design. Stewart, Andrew. *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. 3-4. Stewart, “Roman Art,” 210.

<sup>31</sup> Stoye, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Stoye, 33.

associated visual forms.<sup>33</sup> In other words, Roman art was determined by artisans based first and foremost, on the subject matter and models associated with them.<sup>34</sup> For example, as Stoye further summarized, Hölscher identified Roman images featuring gods, heroes, and noble figures that served to convey authority (*auctoritas*), dignity (*gravitas*), sanctity (*sanctitas*), and majesty (*maiestas*), as belonging to the forms of High Classicism.<sup>35</sup> These images then resulted in “dignified, graceful figures with beautiful, ideally proportioned bodies and ideal, de-individualized faces of immaculate beauty, culminating in a seemingly timeless youthfulness and completely balanced expression. (Does that not, by the way, remind us of the Buddha image)?”<sup>36</sup> Regarding Hellenistic art, these appeared more emotional, naturalistic, and dynamic, which was often attributed, though not limited, to figures including satyrs, maenads, fauns, and performers.<sup>37</sup> Hölscher also characterized the compositions of Hellenistic battle scenes as an adopted form in Roman friezes that were used to portray great processional ceremonies, high office-bearers including the Emperor, and their Imperial families.<sup>38</sup> According to this theory, each of these individual models or types with their specified meaning or association then would be chosen and combined with other forms or styles by the Roman artist to convey a desired visual message. Additionally, these individual models could be blended or shared even on a singular monument.<sup>39</sup> One prominent example analyzed by Hölscher that demonstrated these notions was the Ara Pacis in Rome.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Stoye, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Hölscher, Tonio. *The Language of Images in Roman Art*. Snodgrass, Anthony, and Annemarie Künzl-Snodgrass (trans.). Cambridge University Press, 2004. 69.

<sup>35</sup> Stoye, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Stoye, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Stoye, 35.

<sup>38</sup> Stoye, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Hölscher, 49-56.

<sup>40</sup> Hölscher, 49-82.

As explained, the Ara Pacis was erected by the Roman Senate to honor the emperor Augustus between 13 BCE and 9 BCE.<sup>41</sup> The structure was used for sacrificial performances and consisted of an altar with a “sculptured marble enclosure” around it.<sup>42</sup> The side walls of the altar feature processional friezes that Hölscher attributed to the “Classical procession” type.<sup>43</sup> His identification of the scene type was grounded in the altar’s compositional style, which he argued embodied the same solemn quality that was presented on the Parthenon frieze, “a quality of solemnity, of the *dignitas* and *auctoritas* of the state’s leading personalities and the religious establishment.”<sup>44</sup> Yet some of those within the composition of the processional friezes were identified as expressing artistic traditions of the Hellenistic period: “While the men in togas in some ways closely resemble figure-types from the time of the Parthenon frieze, the ruler’s imposing wife and the young mothers of the Imperial house are closer to the Late Classical and Hellenistic form which emphasize the figure.”<sup>45</sup> Still, many of the figures were depicted as wearing Roman garments that could not be ascribed to any other format than one of its time.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, he argued that these heterogeneous types on the Ara Pacis were depicted not in a disconnected manner but rather were shown assimilated together.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the Ara Pacis exemplified that heterogeneous types could and were combined by Roman artisans to convey a visual message to viewers in antiquity.<sup>48</sup> Overall, what the message relayed through the iconography was most important in this artistic production because it decided the content that

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<sup>41</sup> Stoye, 36.

<sup>42</sup> Stoye, 36.

<sup>43</sup> Hölscher, 54-55.

<sup>44</sup> Hölscher, 54-56.

<sup>45</sup> Hölscher, 77.

<sup>46</sup> Hölscher, 77.

<sup>47</sup> Hölscher, 77-79.

<sup>48</sup> Hölscher, 81-82.

then determined which types of forms could be selected and utilized by the artist.<sup>49</sup> According to Stoye, this method of image construction might have been used similarly in Gandhara.<sup>50</sup> As I argue, the fragment in Chicago showcases this method of arrangement in its visual language as well, which is further explored in the following chapters.

Overall, Gandharan art is described as a balanced syncretic pluralism of Greco-Roman, Indian, and Iranian artistic traditions that must be carefully analyzed if scholars wish to better understand the various cross-cultural interactions of the region.<sup>51</sup> As Stoye proposed, the application of Hölscher's Roman Image-Language theory to the study of Gandharan art could, potentially, alleviate many challenges art historians face when examining the region.<sup>52</sup> The semantic theory recognizes Roman art as a method of construction that sacrificed current aesthetic tastes, concerning the subject matter, in favor of specific visual forms that viewers could firmly understand. This approach contextualizes the idea that the embrace of Classical and Hellenistic artistic traditions established Roman art as an individualistic cultural phenomenon, which Stoye argues when applied to Gandhara can be understood as the same – i.e., Gandharan art as an embrace of older and contemporary models from Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, Indian, and Parthian traditions. Adopting the method of construction for Roman art as detailed by Hölscher's framework but expanded by Stoye will, thus, allow this study to explore how the Apsaras on the relief in Chicago embrace Imperial Roman artistic practices in their imagery, which will be further discussed in the last chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> Stoye, 37.

<sup>50</sup> Stoye, 37.

<sup>51</sup> Stewart, "Roman sarcophagi and Gandharan sculpture," 51.

<sup>52</sup> Stoye, 33.

### III. Apsara and Nike: Early Iconography, Thematic Roles, and Historical Interactions

This chapter examines the similarities and differences between the thematic roles and iconographical characteristics of the Greco-Roman Nike and Buddhist Apsara, both in textual and visual material before they were combined in Gandhara. Surviving evidence from the region consists mainly of schist reliefs, coinage, and a few paintings in the Kizil and Miran, Xinjiang Province, China, that are often seen as influenced by Gandharan art.<sup>53</sup> By briefly examining the historical implications that account for the transfer of the imagery for both figures across the Roman and Kushan empires, I will look for possible evidence that suggests the two might have been viewed as interchangeable in Central Asia during the first and second centuries CE.

The origin of the Apsara has been ascribed to the churning of the ocean as described in the ancient Indian poem, *Rāmāyana*.<sup>54</sup> In Vedic literature, the figure was associated with water and trees, specifically residing in the Trayastrimśas heaven that is controlled by Indra.<sup>55</sup> Comparable to Nike, they were also flying female celestial beings that served to deliver a message of victory to the victor to whom they are depicted alongside. In addition, they were known in their mythological context as masters of the performing arts, specifically music and dance, as well as being overtly beautiful.<sup>56</sup> Most importantly, these figures were celestial entertainers for other heavenly beings, which differentiates them from “veśyās” (their earthly counterparts) who entertain men on earth.<sup>57</sup> Unlike veśyās, Apsaras do not provide entertainment to beings that are not heavenly.<sup>58</sup> When the heavenly nymphs are shown in imagery with the

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<sup>53</sup> Rice, Tamara Talbot. *Ancient Arts of Central Asia*. Thames and Hudson, 1965. 143-172.

<sup>54</sup> Covill, Linda. “Apsarases: The Buddhist Conversion of the Nymphs of Heaven.” *Buddhist Studies Review*, vol. 22. Equinox Publishing, 2005. 131.

<sup>55</sup> Covill, 132.

<sup>56</sup> Roy, Oly. “The Other Women – Heavenly and Earthly: Notes on “Apsaras and Veśyās.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 75. Indian History of Congress, 2014. 186.

<sup>57</sup> Roy, 188-189.

<sup>58</sup> Roy, 188-189.

Buddha, they are presented as arriving to “honor the enlightened Buddha.”<sup>59</sup> In these images of paradise, the figures are depicted as hovering over the Buddha and are almost always produced in shallow relief rather than free-standing sculpture.<sup>60</sup> One of the earliest images of the Apsaras, according to Yang, is found on a panel from the stupa of Bhārhut in central India that dates to the second century BCE (fig. 6).<sup>61</sup> On the Stupa, several panels feature the heavenly nymphs (fig. 7 and 8), but for this study, only the piece referenced by Yang will be analyzed.<sup>62</sup>

In the relief of the Bhārhut stupa discussed by Yang, the two celestial beings are shown flying at the top corners of the fragment, holding either a palm branch or garland.<sup>63</sup> They are both portrayed in flight with their bodies forming a horizontal “U”-shape as seen with the figures on the Gandharan relief, though stylistically, they appear different than the Apsara on the fragment in Chicago. For example, instead of showcasing two mirrored winged beings with one on either side of the relief, the Indian stupa depicts only one winged figure on the right, while the figure on the left is shown wingless.<sup>64</sup> Yang interprets both as Apsara, however, the first should be interpreted as a kinnara (right) and the second as an Apsara (left).<sup>65</sup> A kinnara in ancient India

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<sup>59</sup> Dehejia, Vidya. “Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems.” *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 21, 1991. 51.

<sup>60</sup> Considering Apsaras are almost always shown in shallow relief, this study has attempted to limit imagery of Nike from a Western context to sculptural material in its discussion. However, many of the statues that will be highlighted are free-standing sculptures, large, and/or have elaborately ornate details, which all differ from the case study of this analysis. Therefore, some additional material featuring the goddess of victory that is smaller in size and demonstrates less ornate detailing, such as the *Glass medallion featuring the winged Victory* (1<sup>st</sup> c.), has been included. Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. “Other Divinities.” *A Visual Source of Chinese Civilization*. University of Washington, 2009. <http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/bud/5imglshi.htm#:~:text=In%20Buddhist%20traditions%2C%20apsaras%20are,as%20a%20free%20standing%20sculpture>.

<sup>61</sup> Yang, “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China,” 238.

<sup>62</sup> Brancaccio, Pia. “Art and Performance in the Buddhist Visual Narratives at Bhārhut.” *Journal of Philosophy*. Springer Nature B.V., 2022. 8-12.

<sup>63</sup> Yang, “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China,” 238-239.

<sup>64</sup> Zhang, Guoying Stacy. 2016. “From Kinnara to Kalavinka: On the Autonomy of Image in Buddhist Transmission from India to China.” Paper presented at *Images and Codes: 2015-2016 Graduate Student Symposium in East Asian Art*, Princeton University, 2016. Courtland Institute of Art. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Yang, “The Sinicization and secularization of some Greco-Buddhist gods in China,” 238-240. Whitfield, Roderick. *The Art of Central Asia. The Stein Collection in the British Museum*, vol. 1. Tokyo Kodansha International, 1982. 306.

is a winged musician with the legs and billowing tail of a bird.<sup>66</sup> Kinnaras are small in size and are portrayed flying above aniconic symbols of the Buddha.<sup>67</sup> Like Apsaras, kinnaras are shown in pairs and hold garlands, which they offer to the Buddha relic.<sup>68</sup> Although the kinnaras are also shown as flying figures that holds garlands, are related to music, and are placed similarly in mirrored pairs above the Buddha as are the Apsaras, their overall forms are different: with the kinnaras appearing as a human-animal hybrid, and the Apsaras, as humans. This pairing of Apsaras with a kinnara is different than what is depicted in the fragment in Chicago that instead showcases two symmetrical Apsaras. Additionally, the style of the wing depicted on the flying kinnaras appears different than the wings of the celestial beings on the Gandharan relief.

The one wing on the Bhārhut stupa panel protrudes upwards in a rectangular shape. The feather detail consists of smaller lines that begin at the base of the wing (at the figure's shoulder) and end at the wing's bottom, which appears as if the feathers are fanning out. These small lines also seem round at the base but become more jagged as the detail continues to the wing's end. Stylistically, these elements contrast with the winged characteristics on the Gandharan relief that instead appear round at the top and ending in a singular point. The lines present on these wings, specifically on that of the most intact wing on the Apsara to the far right, consist of two sections; a) the top three-to-four-tiered section that features round, almost circular shapes and b) the bottom portion that has thin, vertical lines following the shape of the wing to its point. These distinctions indicate that winged motifs and the Apsara figures evolved as the imagery transferred with Buddhism from India into the Gandharan region by the first century CE. Following Hölscher's theoretical framework, we can propose that the Kushans made these

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<sup>66</sup> Whitfield, 306.

<sup>67</sup> Zhang, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Zhang, 6.



changes because they were actively creating their visual language, which would be used to communicate ideological messages to their viewers. The visual language on the fragment in Chicago thus demonstrates that for this case, the Gandharan artist might have decided to utilize elements of Nike from the Imperial Roman period, specifically her stylized wings, for their imagery. But why? Who is Nike, and why might she have been perceived as interchangeable or related to the Buddhist Apsara?

The earliest known mention of Nike appeared during the Archaic period (c. 700-480 BCE) in Hesiod's *Theogony*.<sup>69</sup> The poem, which was published sometime around the beginning of the seventh century BCE, detailed the origins of the gods and beasts in Greek mythology, which included the birth of the goddess.<sup>70</sup> She was born from Styx, daughter of Okeanos, and Pallas, and ultimately served as the female personification for victory.<sup>71</sup> The deity's predominant iconography in ancient Greek contexts showed the figure as a two-winged being, entering a scene through flight, to crown a victor with a diadem or wreath. She was also often depicted alongside the mythological gods, Zeus and Athena.<sup>72</sup> Nike's relationship with Zeus reflects her initial purpose, which was to serve as a metaphoric extension of Zeus himself rewarding victors of athletic events, games, or musical competitions.<sup>73</sup> As her imagery developed from the sixth century BCE and forward, the deity also became visually and conceptually synonymous with notions of triumph and war, specifically becoming an icon used to represent victorious deeds.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Mayfield, Megan. "The Winged Victory: Nike in Ancient Greece." *Studia Antiqua*, vol. 20, no. 1. Brigham Young University, 2021. 48.

<sup>70</sup> Mayfield, 48.

<sup>71</sup> Rodríguez López, María Isabel. "Victory, Triumph and Fame as the Iconic Expressions of the Courtly Power" *Music in Art*. Research Center for Music Iconography, the Graduate Center University of New York, 2012. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Sinisi, 871.

<sup>73</sup> Sikes, E. E. "Nike and Athena Nike." *The Classical Review*, vol. 9, no. 5. Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association, 1895. 281.

<sup>74</sup> Rodríguez López, 10.

The oldest visual portrayals of the goddess date to the sixth-century BCE, and the “first known sculpture of Nike was found on the Island of Delos” (Fig. 9).<sup>75</sup> Although the figure from Delos does not have wings that survive, there are other similarly surviving Nike figures from this period that do still have their wings and therefore, can provide us with an idea on how wings in the Archaic period were depicted (Fig. 10).<sup>76</sup> Held at the Getty, for example, is a sixth-century BCE terracotta incense burner of Nike that shows the being with wings that point upwards, raise higher than the figure’s head, and show no feathered ornamentation. Ultimately, the wings on this Nike appear distinct from those seen on the relief in Chicago and others in later Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman periods.

By the first half of the fifth century BCE through the Classical period (480-323 BCE), Nike’s iconography evolved. The mythical being was now often featured in a more realistic and dynamic style that would be expressed through the curvature of the body with a slight bend at the figure’s knees as she is about to take off (Fig. 11).<sup>77</sup> Alongside this pose, other surviving depictions of Nike from the Classical period varied in terms of pose and activity, including Nike shown adjusting her sandal, as seen on the relief that was found on the south side of the Temple of Athena Nike in Athens.<sup>78</sup> Regardless of these various poses and activities, the figure continued to display two key characteristics: wings and an expression of movement. Other significant iconographic features associated with Nike were often held by the goddess, including ribbons, wreath crowns or diadems, musical instruments, and branches of palm or olive.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, in Gandharan art, Apsaras were portrayed in flying positions that were represented by their body

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<sup>75</sup> Mayfield, 49.

<sup>76</sup> “Thymiaterion Supported by a Statuette of Nike.” *Museum Collection*. Getty Museum. 20 March 2023. <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103WEF#full-artwork-details>.

<sup>77</sup> Rodríguez López, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Young, Yael. “Binding, Loosening, or Adjusting Her Sandal?: On Nike From the Parapet of the Athena Nike Temple.” *Notes in the History of Art*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2015). 2.

<sup>79</sup> Rodríguez López, 10.

positions, which were either curving at the hips or knees, forming an almost “U”-shape, as seen on the relief in Chicago, or completely horizontal. Similarly, they would also hold various objects, such as wreath crowns, plants (sometimes garlands), the sun and moon, or bags.<sup>80</sup>

Following the Classical period, Nike’s iconography developed once again during the Hellenistic period (323-31 BCE) that began with the reign of Alexander the Great (336–323 BCE).<sup>81</sup> The empire of Alexander stretched from the “coasts of Greece, Macedonia, and Anatolia...[to] the abundant Nile Valley and Delta...the then ‘fertile crescent’ of present-day Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq...and, to the east, the high plains of Afghanistan and the vast and verdant Indus Valley.”<sup>82</sup> Geographically and ethnically vast, the art of Alexander’s empire is defined as Hellenistic: meaning late Greek culture, history, literature, and art from the time of Alexander’s death to the Roman occupation of the Hellenistic kingdom, Ptolemaic Egypt, in 30 BCE.<sup>83</sup> Hellenistic art therefore, is a form of ancient Greek styles that often incorporates other Mediterranean, local, and regional traditions, such as Antigonid (mainland Greece), Attalid (modern Turkey), Ptolemaic (Egypt), and Seleucid (Middle East).

In the Classical period, Nike’s imagery had become synonymous with triumph in battle following the Persian Wars of 490 and 480-79 BCE.<sup>84</sup> In the Hellenistic period, this thematic notion for the mythological figure continued and became widely used for political propaganda by various rulers, especially on coins that have been found throughout the ancient Mediterranean and as far East as the Indus Valley.<sup>85</sup> The imagery on these coins paired rulers with Nike, the symbol of victory, and thus, visually displayed to the ancient viewer that the featured political

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<sup>80</sup> Yang, “The Sinicization and secularization of some Graeco-Buddhist gods in China,” 239.

<sup>81</sup> Rodríguez López, 10.

<sup>82</sup> Stewart, Andrew. *Art in the Hellenistic World*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. 26.

<sup>83</sup> Stewart, *Art in the Hellenistic World*, 303.

<sup>84</sup> Stewart, *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art*, 33.

<sup>85</sup> Rodríguez López, 10.

leader and their reign was victorious. Two prominent depictions of this iconography presented a Hellenistic king or queen on the *verso* with Nike on the *recto*, either crowning the sovereign as they ride on a horse or chariot or simply presented alone sometimes with accompanying text.<sup>86</sup> Many coins highlighting this imagery have survived, including the *Gold Stater of Alexander the Great (Alexander III of Macedon)* (Fig. 12) and a gold coin of Philip II of Macedon (fig. 13). Similarly, Kushan rulers, such as Heraios (r. 1-30 CE) (fig. 14) and Kujula Kadphises (r. ca. 30-80 CE) (fig. 15), also utilized this victorious propagandistic imagery on their coinage in support of their reigns.<sup>87</sup> Although this does not indicate that the Kushans were aware of Nike's Greek mythology, it does demonstrate that the rulers in Gandhara understood the figure as an iconographic and thematic representation of victory. If this is true, how then does this relate to the fragment in Chicago and the depicted Apsaras? In other words, could the meaning have transferred with the motif?

Carved on the fragment housed at the Art Institute of Chicago is a Buddhist triad that features Buddha in the center of the composition under the bodhi tree with his hands positioned in a *dhyāna-mudrā* (the meditating gesture).<sup>88</sup> Buddha is flanked by two men who have been identified as the deities Indra (right; gods of gods; identifiable through the turban or crown motif) and Brahmā (left; creator of the universe; identifiable by the hair tied in a bowknot).<sup>89</sup> Indra and Brahmā were originally Hindu deities that became integrated into Buddhism during the

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<sup>86</sup> Stančo, 176-208.

<sup>87</sup> Raziéh Taasob, "Language and Legend in Early Kushan Coinage: Progression and Transformation" *Dabir*, no. 5. Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture, University of California, 2018. 71-76.

<sup>88</sup> Rhi, Juhyung. "Presenting the Buddha: Images, Conventions, and Significance in Early Indian Buddhism." *Art of Merit: Studies in Buddhist Art and Its Conservation*. David Park, Kuenga Wangmo, and Sharon Cather (eds.). Archetype Publications (London): 2013. 5.

<sup>89</sup> Miyaji, Akira. "Iconography of the Two Flanking Bodhisattvas in the Buddhist Triads from Gandhara: Bodhisattvas Siddhartha, Maitreya and Avalokitesvara." *East and West*, vol. 58, no. ¼. Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO), 2008. 131.

first century CE.<sup>90</sup> Indra, who appeared in the oldest hymns of the *Rigveda*, has taken on many different meanings throughout time, which have included the god of Rains, the god of War, the Lord of the Land, *asura* (an older Hindu term for “shining god”), and the chief or king of gods in the Trayastrimśas heaven.<sup>91</sup> While Brahmā has always been viewed as the supreme creator god in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions.<sup>92</sup> In Buddhist art from Gandhara, the two men, Indra and Brahmā, were considered “protective figures, part of the class of deities known as devas...typically paired as attendants flanking a buddha or bodhisattva.”<sup>93</sup> This particular iconographic composition of the Buddhist Triad was categorized by Akira Miyaji into two categories: the Triad that featured the Buddha flanked by two Bodhisattvas, and the Triad where the Buddha is depicted as surrounded by Bodhisattvas, worshippers, and small Buddha figures.<sup>94</sup> In both groups, the Buddha is portrayed as the center of the composition, while sitting under a tree and displaying a mudra gesture.<sup>95</sup> The fragment in Chicago belongs to the second group, of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and worshippers because of the Apsaras that serve as additional devotees. The placement of these two beings above the Buddha, along with the two flanking men (Indra and Brahmā), symmetrically placed underneath, all together refer to the four cardinal directions, while the Buddha serves as the center of the cosmos that obtains enlightenment and attains perfection.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, the scene represents the victorious moment in which the Buddha has reached enlightenment.

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<sup>90</sup> “Brahma and Indra in Buddhist Art.” *Asian Art Museum*. <https://collections.asianart.org/collection/the-deities-brahma-and-indra/>.

<sup>91</sup> Shrimali, Krishna Mohan. “The Formation of Religious Identities in India.” *Social Scientist*, vol. 45, no. 5/6. Social Scientist, 2017. 4. Williams, George M. *Handbook of Hindu Mythology*. OUP USA, 2008. 156.

<sup>92</sup> McGovern, Nathan. “Brahmā: An Early and Ultimately Doomed Attempt at a Brahmanical Synthesis.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 40, no. 1. Springer, 2012. 4-5.

<sup>93</sup> Shrimali, 4-5.

<sup>94</sup> Miyaji, 123.

<sup>95</sup> Miyaji, 123.

<sup>96</sup> Dehejia, 51.

According to Juhyung Rhi, depictions of Buddha displaying his hands in a *dhyāna-mudrā* (the meditating gesture), as he is shown on the Gandharan relief, appears to characterize a theme “that was used distinctively in a series of narrative relief[s] from Swāt (north of the Peshawar valley) in which a meditating Buddha is flanked by Brahmā and Indra” who urge Sakyamuni to share his teachings with others.<sup>97</sup> The scene is typically understood as the “Entreaty for the Buddha to preach by Brahmā and Indra” or “Entreaty to Preach and the Indraśailaguhā (more commonly known as Indra’s visit).”<sup>98</sup> Although this image represents the first time Brahmā and Indra interact with Sakyamuni as the Buddha, its interpretation as suggested by Rhi is still questionable. However, the scene does represent an instance that occurred after the Buddha spent forty-nine days and nights under a tree in a deep meditation while fighting the forces of the Mara, until the seventh day of the seventh week when he reached nirvana.<sup>99</sup> This is significant because obtaining enlightenment is the prime objective in the Buddhist ideology - signifying one has conquered worldly attachment and, therefore, is relieved from suffering. In a sense, reaching enlightenment is the ultimate victory for the practicing Buddhists. The fragment in Chicago that portrays this specific enlightened moment then would have been understood by the ancient viewer as representing a victorious scene. The Apsaras further represented this victory because, in the composition, alongside the Buddha, the figures are presented as arriving to “honor the enlightened [being].”<sup>100</sup> In other words, the Apsaras are the figures that descend from the heavens to announce and signify that the Buddha is victorious and is now enlightened. This victorious theme, which is expressed in the relief’s imagery, would account for why the Kushans

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<sup>97</sup> Rhi, “Presenting the Buddha: Images, Conventions, and Significance in Early Indian Buddhism,” 5.

<sup>98</sup> Rhi, “Presenting the Buddha: Images, Conventions, and Significance in Early Indian Buddhism,” 5.

<sup>99</sup> Brown, Kathryn Selig. “Life of the Buddha.” *The Met*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003.

[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/buda/hd\\_buda.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/buda/hd_buda.htm).

<sup>100</sup> Dehejia, 51.

might have perceived Nike and Apsara figures as interchangeable, or at the very least, capable of being synthesized.

In Central Asia, imagery of Nike can be traced back to the pre-Kushan-Yuezhi period, and more specifically to the so-called, Gold Hoard of Bactria.<sup>101</sup> As part of the hoard, archeologists discovered a first-century CE gold and turquoise plaque, which is believed to depict Nike crowning Dionysus as he holds Ariadne (fig. 16).<sup>102</sup> The hoard was unearthed from six graves in Tillya Tepe which was conquered by the Yuezhi in the second half of the second century BCE.<sup>103</sup> The cultural origin of the plaque remains undetermined because the hoard consisted of over 20,000 objects that featured various styles.<sup>104</sup> However, a *denarius* (silver coin) in situ featuring the Roman emperor Tiberius (r. 14-37 CE) has proposed a possible date for the site – placing it in the early first century CE.<sup>105</sup> Overall, this evidence, like that of the Kushans' royal coinage, further suggests that those in Gandhara had been exposed to the goddess' imagery either before or at the beginning of their empire's establishment in the first century CE.

Kushan knowledge of ancient Greek imagery might be attributed to the conquests of Alexander the Great, who brought Greek culture and artistic traditions as far as India and the Hindu Kush.<sup>106</sup> During this period, Hellenistic kingdoms were established and Greek or Macedonian citizens that traveled East with the political ruler, or on their own, became residents

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<sup>101</sup> Youso, Kristina. *Afghanistan: hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*. Christensen, Tom and Tisha Carper Long (eds). The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2008. 7-23.

<sup>102</sup> In 1978, a archaeologists excavated six graves and uncovered the “Golden Hoard of Bactria” at the site of Tillya Tepe (present day Afghanistan). Peterson, Sara. “Parthian Aspects of Objects from Grave IV, Tillya Tepe.” University of London (MA diss), 2011. 3-6.

<sup>103</sup> Stewart, *Art in the Hellenistic World*, 42. Peterson, 3-6.

<sup>104</sup> Stewart, *Art in the Hellenistic World*, 42. Peterson, 3-6.

<sup>105</sup> Benjamin, 2018. 184.

<sup>106</sup> Stoneman, Richard. *The Greek Experience of India: From Alexander to the Indo-Greeks*. Princeton University Press, 2019. 36-44.

of these territories.<sup>107</sup> Their presence helped maintain and popularize Greek ideals that were then combined with local or regional traditions. Nevertheless, it is more likely that the Kushans were influenced by Imperial Roman (27 BCE – 476 CE) artistic practices, including Hellenistic models, which they acquired through trade and the neighboring Parthian Empire (247 BCE to 224 CE) that controlled the territory between Gandhara and the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>108</sup> The Parthians were Eastern Iranian-nomadic people who conquered the eastern territories of the prior Seleucid kingdom in the second century BCE and developed into a major neighbor to the Roman state and Kushan Empire by the first century BCE.<sup>109</sup> Eventually, they became a shared enemy of both the Kushans and Romans.<sup>110</sup>

During the reign of Trajan (r. 98-117 CE), the Romans reached the Parthian city of Susa, which they captured in 117 CE.<sup>111</sup> Though this was as far east as Trajan and his military went, these conquests further diminished the distance between the Kushans and the Romans and encouraged the two to enjoy a mutually profitable relationship that was economically significant for both.<sup>112</sup> From Central Asia, the Romans could acquire commodities like silk, lapis lazuli, furs, and turquoise.<sup>113</sup> In turn, the Romans traded a variety of objects that appealed to the taste of the Kushans, such as glassware, gemstones, silverware, gold, and silver metal for coins, and figurines.<sup>114</sup> Textual evidence supports these long-distance trades and interactions between the Kushans and the Romans through the documentation of Bactrian embassies being sent to

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<sup>107</sup> Stoneman, 36-44.

<sup>108</sup> Stančo, 49.

<sup>109</sup> Lee, A. D. *Warfare in the Roman World*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2020. 9

<sup>110</sup> Stewart, "Roman Sarcophagi and Gandharan Sculpture," 78.

<sup>111</sup> Benjamin, 164.

<sup>112</sup> Stančo, 181.

<sup>113</sup> Thorley, John. "The Roman Empire and The Kushans." *Greece & Rome*, vol. 26, no. 2. Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Classical Association, 1979. 188.

<sup>114</sup> Thorley, 188.



emperor Hadrian around the time of the Kushan ruler Kaniska in 128 CE and again in 150 CE.<sup>115</sup> “We are told about embassies to the emperor Hadrian (by ‘kings of the Bactrians,’ perhaps around the time of Kaniska’s accession c. CE 128: *Historia Augusta, Hadrian*, 21.14) and Antoninus Pius (‘from the Indians, Bactrians, and Hyrcanians’ in the years around CE 150: [Aurelius Victor], *Epitome de Caesaribus*, 15.4).”<sup>116</sup> In addition to textual evidence, surviving coins also seem to support the notion that a diplomatic or trade relationship between the Romans and the Kushans existed. For example, in Bactria, several coins featuring Nike have been found at the sites of Khalchayan, Tillya Tepe, and Payon Kurgan.<sup>117</sup> These images appear on Greek, Parthian, and early Kushan coins generally in the first century BCE and first century CE.<sup>118</sup>

Furthermore, affirmation of a Roman presence on the Silk Roads has been attributed to Kushan numismatic evidence that features Roman motifs, specifically on the early coins of Kujula Kadphises (r. c. 30 – 80 CE), who was the first ruler of the Empire.<sup>119</sup> Kadphises had a series of copper *tetradrachms* issued that depicted the king in a manner that was “closely modeled on that of the Roman ruler Augustus on the obverse side, and a curule chair – a symbolic seat upon which Roman magistrates who held imperium were entitled to sit – on the reverse” (fig. 17).<sup>120</sup> A comparative example minted in Rome during the Imperial period is in the British Museum (fig. 18). Similarly, it depicts the bust of the Roman emperor Augustus on the obverse with the seated ruler on the reverse. According to Craig Benjamin, the usage of Roman motifs on Kadphises coins demonstrates a Roman artistic presence on the Silk Roads and the Kushan’s awareness of the western iconography following the reign of Augustus (31 BCE – 14

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<sup>115</sup> Stewart, “Roman Sarcophagi and Gandharan Sculpture,” 78.

<sup>116</sup> Stewart, “Roman Sarcophagi and Gandharan Sculpture,” 78.

<sup>117</sup> Stančo, 179.

<sup>118</sup> Stančo, 179.

<sup>119</sup> Benjamin, 185.

<sup>120</sup> Benjamin, 185.

CE).<sup>121</sup> Such a statement is also confirmed by the imagery on coins that feature Kushan rulers with Nike, which were used as victorious propaganda in support of an authority's reign (fig. 14 and 15).<sup>122</sup> More recently, Peter Stewart, Tadashi Tanabe, and Pia Brancaccio have also argued that western traditions moved east with Roman artisans that traveled to Gandhara and participated in the artistic production of the region.<sup>123</sup> A similar idea had already been proposed by Alexander C. Soper in 1951.<sup>124</sup> Soper argued that Roman sculptors traveled to Gandhara and trained assistants as early as the second century CE.<sup>125</sup> The movement of artists rather than the movement of objects seems to be the most plausible explanation for the transfer of motifs between the two empires. Ultimately, as contemporaries that shared a neighboring enemy, traded, and had a diplomatic relationship, it is more likely that the Kushans acquired Roman artistic practices, which already included Greek models, and used them to establish their cultural and artistic identity. As Hölscher's theoretical framework implies, art does not evolve in clear-cut and decisive moments but instead overlaps with other traditions and cultural notions that spread through the interplay of people.<sup>126</sup>

By introducing and examining the imagery of the Apsaras on the relief at the stupa of Bhārhut, in this chapter, I have discussed the distinctive difference in the iconography of the Buddhist figures between their portrayal in India during the second century BCE and in Gandhara throughout the first and second centuries CE. The most prevalent variation includes the style of the wings as they are depicted on the various flying figures, which on the Gandharan

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<sup>121</sup> Benjamin, 185-186.

<sup>122</sup> Razieh, 71-76.

<sup>123</sup> According to Stewart, Brancaccio suggested to him the possibility that Roman artists in Central Asia were also Roman slaves or former slaves returning home to Central Asia after acquiring freedom. This would additionally account for the assimilation of Roman artistic traditions into Gandhara. Stewart, "Roman Sarcophagi and Gandharan Sculpture," 80.

<sup>124</sup> Soper, 303-307.

<sup>125</sup> Soper, 303-307.

<sup>126</sup> Hölscher, 88.

relief displays a strong resemblance with those of Nike from the Imperial Roman period. Although scholarship has debated whether Greek, Hellenistic, or Roman traditions have impacted artistic production methods in Gandhara, this thesis argues that the Apsaras on the fragment in Chicago express Roman traditions, specifically from the Imperial period. In support of this claim, this chapter has briefly explored the historical implications that account for why the Kushan and Roman empires interacted and thus, shared artistic traditions. Ultimately, as contemporaries who traded, had a diplomatic relationship, and shared a common enemy, it is likely the Kushans utilized Roman artistic methods in their art traditions – in accordance to their taste. This chapter has also analyzed the variations of Nike and Apsara from their origins to their syncretization in Gandhara in the first and second centuries CE, which has allowed this study to discuss the evolution of both celestial beings thematically and iconographically within their own contexts. By accounting for the iconographic and thematic similarities, I have found that the notion of victory was prevalent enough to be transferred with the motif. Finding that as a portrayal of Buddha reaching enlightenment, the narrative relief in Chicago thematically did express victory to the ancient viewer. The role of the Apsaras, who appeared in imagery “to honor the enlightened Buddha” further confirmed that this scene represented victory.<sup>127</sup> As such, this theme similarly would account for why the Kushans might have perceived Nike (victory) and Apsara figures as interchangeable or at the very least, capable of being synthesized in Gandharan art.

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<sup>127</sup> Dehejia, 51.

#### IV. Nike-Apsara in Gandhara: Iconography and Stoye's Application of the Roman Image-Language

Building upon the thematic resemblance, the cultural interactions of the Kushans and Romans, and the iconographic understandings of each figure, this chapter analyzes two particular iconographic similarities that I believe further suggest the celestial beings were capable of syncretization. The two iconographic parallels include the Imperial Roman-styled wings and the symmetrical composition of the Roman Victory – both of which are present on the relief in Chicago. Furthermore, using Stoye's framework from Hölscher's Roman Image-Language theory, this chapter will demonstrate why the Kushans combining iconographic models and form-types was comprehensible for the ancient viewer and image production.

Roman interest in Greek art and culture led to the continued usage of Nike as a propagandistic representation of victory following the Greek and Hellenistic periods.<sup>128</sup> Although the deity's thematic relationship to triumph, triumphal processions, and "cult parades associated with the gods" extended into the Roman period, her iconographic and mythological understanding evolved with the new Empire where she became better known as *Victoria*.<sup>129</sup> This is an important distinction between the Roman concept of the deity and the Greek or Hellenistic notions of Nike. However, as seen on Kushan coinage, often carrying inscriptions in Bactrian language, the term Nike was preferred in Central Asia.<sup>130</sup> Bactrian was an eastern Iranian language written predominately in Greek characters that became the lingua franca of the Kushan

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<sup>128</sup> Mayfield, 57.

<sup>129</sup> Rodríguez López, 11.

<sup>130</sup> This study will continue to use the term Nike throughout its discussion because the Kushans themselves, did not use the term, *Victoria*. Harmatta, Janos. "Languages and Literature in the Kushan Empire." *History of Civilizations of Central Asia, vol. 2: The Development of sedentary and nomadic civilizations, 700 B.C. to A.D. 250*. Unesco Publishing, 1994. 412-413.

empire and replaced Greek.<sup>131</sup> Although the Kushans did not use the name *Victoria*, they likely understand the figure as such. As this study has demonstrated with the Kushan numismatic evidence, those in Gandhara did have knowledge of the figure's iconography and thematic role as a personification of victory (fig. 14 and fig. 15). Furthermore, Nike of the *Victoria Romana* type thematically continued to symbolize military potency and dominance, as she did during the Classical and Hellenistic periods.<sup>132</sup> Thematically, the deity did not change greatly from her previous associations, which is important if we are to believe the Kushans might have perceived the goddess during the Imperial period as interchangeable with the Apsaras. However, with this new form, Nike's iconography changed and depicted the winged figure as standing on a globe.<sup>133</sup> Though standing, the deity remained portrayed in a form of flight in the sky with "the illusion of wind [that was] achieved by the briskly moving drapery of the garment that swirls creating a mass of folds around the legs, leaving one breast exposed."<sup>134</sup> One of the most well-known examples of Nike of the *Victoria Romana* type was found during excavations of Hadrian's Library in 1999 (fig. 19).<sup>135</sup> While the wings of this figure do not survive, there are other Hadrianic (r. 117 – 138 CE) examples with some that do, including two marble sculptures that were found at the Nymphaeum of Side located in modern-day Turkey (fig. 20 and 21).<sup>136</sup>

When compared to the Apsaras on the fragment in Chicago, the wings on the surviving sculptures from Nymphaeum show stylistic features that bear a strong resemblance to those

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<sup>131</sup> Although the Bactrian language used the Greek alphabet, they did adjust the Greek letters to account for the Bactrian phonetic system. Harmatta, 413.

<sup>132</sup> Sourlas, Dimitris S. "The Emperor's Nike. The Nike Statues in Hadrian's Library as a Means of Promoting Power and Imperial Ideology." *Known and Unknown Nikai: In History, Art, and Life*. Lagigianni-Georgakarakos, Maria (ed.). National Archaeological Museum: Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development, 2010. 227.

<sup>133</sup> Sourlas, 227.

<sup>134</sup> Sourlas, 224.

<sup>135</sup> Sourlas, 222.

<sup>136</sup> Sourlas, 228.

depicted on the Gandharan relief. These stylistic parallels consist of a wing that is rounded or curved on top, separated into two sections that together create the feather details, and ending at the bottom in a singular point. Like those on the Apsaras in the Gandharan relief, the two sections that produce the feather ornamentation includes rounded lines that are stacked in three-to-four-tiers in the wing's upper portion and a series of vertical lines in the bottom portion that cover the remaining motif. On one of the Nymphaeum examples (fig. 21), there is an additional feathered layer shown on the wing, as well as details that further decorate the feathered elements that are not found on the Gandharan relief. However, these contrasts do not hinder this study because the Gandharan fragment is much smaller than the Nymphaeum statues and therefore, might not have required extensive ornamentation for these figures within the image's composition. Smaller Roman examples from the Imperial period, also, sometimes excluded these additional details, as seen on objects like the *Glass medallion of winged Victory* that is currently located at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 22).<sup>137</sup> Like that of the Gandharan relief, the glass medallion limits its winged details to rounded feather elements stacked in three rows at the wing's top and straight lines covering the remainder of the motif. Although damage prevents us from knowing if the wings would have ended in a singular point, they are both rounded at the wing's top similarly to the depiction of the wings on the Gandharan relief. Overall, the two statues from Nymphaeum and the glass medallion demonstrate that the wings of Nike figures in the Imperial period utilized three key elements to create the motif: the rounded top, the pointed bottom, and the two sections of feathered ornamentation. These elements are essential for understanding the Buddhist Apsaras on the Gandharan fragment in Chicago which also uses these features to create their wings. Similar scenes found on Gandharan reliefs included varying

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<sup>137</sup> "Glass Medallion of winged Victory." *The Met*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-2023. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/249590>.

depictions of these winged components (fig. 2 and 3). For example, the object in the British Museum (fig. 2) portrays the wing on the celestial beings as rounded at the top and pointed at the bottom, however, the feathered detail is less elaborate, showing only vertical lines that follow the wing's shape to its end. Regardless of the variations, it remains apparent that this stylized motif was also created through a combination of the three elements (curved top, ending in a singular point, and two sections of feather ornamentation) that were used by both the Romans and Kushans.

Alongside the stylized wing, Roman depictions of Nike differed in iconographic arrangement and now portrayed the deity in a symmetrical composition with two figures of victory.<sup>138</sup> This iconographic shift was not based on Greek or Hellenistic traditions but was rather a Roman concept.<sup>139</sup> An example of this mirrored composition is found on a relief fragment from the Trajanic frieze (second century CE) that was once located above the inner columns of the Trajan Forum in Rome (fig. 23).<sup>140</sup> The frieze fragment shows several winged figures on the relief but specifically portrays two kneeling women shown in profile view, at the fragment's center, who have been identified as Nike.<sup>141</sup> These two symmetrically paired figures are depicted posed as the "bull-sacrificing *Victoria/Nike*" type that is historically found in the ancient Greek tradition and consists of a scheme that shows the goddesses in front of a sacrificial device and kneeling.<sup>142</sup> However, in the Greek tradition, this image typically includes one singular portrayal of victory, rather than a symmetrical pairing, as seen on the Trajanic frieze.<sup>143</sup> The combination of the traditional Greek bull-sacrificial victory type with the Roman notion of

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<sup>138</sup> Stoye, 43.

<sup>139</sup> Stoye, 43.

<sup>140</sup> Stoye, 42-43.

<sup>141</sup> Stoye, 42-43.

<sup>142</sup> Stoye, 43.

<sup>143</sup> Stoye, 43.

mirrored figures of victory can be understood if we follow Hölscher's Roman Image-Language theory that argued Roman art was produced by utilizing older Classical and Hellenistic traditions with their own to generate their ideals. The Roman artists would have produced the imagery as follows: 1) choosing the narrative (victory sacrificing a bull); 2) establishing the main actors to be depicted in the image and their placement within the composition (*Victoria/Nike* and the bull); 3) deciding on the need for secondary figures (not needed in this case), and 4) altering the imagery to appease contemporary tastes (depicting the *Victoria/Nike* as mirrored figures in accordance to the taste/styles of the time when it suited the visual material's purpose).<sup>144</sup> This is a simplified version of the imagery's construction because it does not include a discussion on material, location, purpose, and other factors that would have affected the frieze's production. However, it does provide an idea of how the imagery was constructed and how it utilized older Greek and Hellenistic traditions with and in accordance with Roman ideals.

By applying this theory to the Gandharan relief in Chicago, the image construction can be understood following the same notion: 1) narrative is chosen (Buddha reaching enlightenment and approached by the two men to preach); 2) main actors are selected (Buddha, Indra, Brahmā, and Apsaras); 3) secondary figures are designated (not needed in this case); and 4) the imagery is altered to meet contemporary ideals (adding Imperial Roman stylized wings to the Apsaras). Choosing to incorporate these stylized wings while creating the Buddhist Apsara might have appealed to a specific regional taste of the first and second centuries CE, which seems particularly evident in the Swat Valley as confirmed by other reliefs found in the area that show the same types of narrative scenes and wing-types (fig. 2 and 3). Alongside appealing to regional tastes, when following Stoye's application of Hölscher's theory, including these wings can be

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<sup>144</sup> Stoye, 33.



understood as adding to the visual forms within the imagery rather than taking away from it or altering it. In other words, the wings acted as a visual form that emphasized the Apsaras as figures in flight rather than as an element that changed their role within the image. The inclusion of these wings did not affect the subject matter and therefore, their insertion may have been viewed as appropriate.

Furthermore, like the *Victoria/Nike* on the Trajanic frieze, the Apsaras on the relief in Chicago are depicted as a symmetrical pair. This mirrored composition for Apsaras is found in older examples from India, such as on the Bhārhut stupa (figs. 6, 7, and 8), and therefore, is not an iconographic feature inspired by Western traditions alone.<sup>145</sup> However, the compositional similarities between the Imperial Roman *Victoria/Nike* figures on the Trajanic frieze and the Apsaras on the fragment in Chicago as symmetrically paired beings are significant because they support the notion of the Kushans' adaptation of the Roman Nike in a local Buddhist context.

Symmetrical images of the Roman Nike are not limited to the fragment from Trajan's Forum. They are also present on marble sculptures of Roman emperors, such as the first century CE *Cuirassed torso, probably of Domitian* currently housed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (fig. 24). Like the Roman glass breastplate in the Met's collection that would have ornamented a soldier's attire (fig. 22), the sculptural torso depicts a decorated breastplate with winged victory on it. The marble torso does, however, show two mirrored Nike figures rather than just one. The flying beings on the marble torso are flanking the goddess Minerva, who was the patron deity of Domitian (r. 81-96 CE).<sup>146</sup> This iconography, featuring two Nike figures

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<sup>145</sup> Karetzky, Patricia Eichenbaum. "The Image of the Winged Celestial and Its Travels along the Silk Road." *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 225. Sino-Platonic Papers, 2012. 10.

<sup>146</sup> Display label. Museum of Fine Arts, *Boston, Massachusetts*.

flanking a celestial authority, has also been found on the second-century CE marble commonly known as the *Cuirassed statue of the emperor Hadrian* (fig. 25).<sup>147</sup>

On the sculpture torso of Hadrian, the two flying beings are shown crowning the goddess Athena as she stands on the “She-wolf, suckling Romulus and Remus – the symbol par excellence of the city of Rome.”<sup>148</sup> Dylan K. Rogers has recently addressed the combination of the She-wolf with the suckling twins (Rome) and the Greek goddesses Athena and Nike and argued that it demonstrated how Roman visual material sought to blend artistic ideals with older Greek traditions and the local identity (in this case Athens, where the sculpture was found).<sup>149</sup> The *Cuirassed statue of the emperor Hadrian* exemplified this notion because the sculpture expressed how the ancient inhabitants during the reign of Hadrian (117 -138 CE) would have understood their local Athenian identity – as a fusion of Athenian, Greek, and Roman ideals.<sup>150</sup> The Athenian identity on the marble torso was represented by the Athena figure (the goddess of Athens) that was placed at the center of the composition and shown crowned by the two flanking Victories.<sup>151</sup> Likewise, the *Cuirassed torso, probably of Domitian*, represented the Roman emperor’s identity with the emperor’s patron deity similarly depicted as being crowned by the two Nike figures. Thus, in the Roman context, the symmetrical composition of two flanking Victory was understood as capable of adaptation and variation within their traditions. Variations further developed in the Gandharan-Buddhist context that replaced the central deity with the Buddha shown flanked by two paralleled Apsara figures above the seated being. This compositional arrangement was rooted in Indian practices that pre-dated the figures’ introduction

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<sup>147</sup> Rogers, Dylan K. “Roman Athens.” *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens*. Neils, Jennifer and Dylan K. Rogers (eds.). Cambridge University Press, 2021. 423.

<sup>148</sup> Rogers, 423.

<sup>149</sup> Rogers, 423.

<sup>150</sup> Rogers, 422-424.

<sup>151</sup> Rogers, 422-424.

into Central Asia and the figurative form of the Buddha (fig. 6, 7, and 8). As a preconceived notion, I believe the parallel composition of the beings would have allowed the Kushans to perceive the mirrored Nike figures of the Imperial Roman period, as analogous to the Apsaras and thus, capable of sharing motifs, such as wings.

Overall, according to Stoye's application of Hölscher's theoretical framework, the combination of Nike and Apsara figures in Gandhara, evidenced by the inclusion of Imperial Roman stylized wings, could have occurred because doing so emphasized the visual form of the figures in flight and might have appealed to the regional tastes of fragment's production. Additionally, the feathered ornamentation, the three key winged characteristics that formed the motif, and the compositional similarities between the Imperial Roman idea of the symmetrically paired Victory and the pre-conceived notion of the mirrored iconography for the Buddhist Apsaras may have allowed the figures to be further viewed as capable of syncretization.

## V. Conclusion

This research has examined the surmised correlation between the Buddhist Apsara in Gandharan art, and the ancient Greek Goddess of Victory, Nike, as reinterpreted in Roman art. This study has asked and answered two questions that were prompted by Yang's research: what evidence suggests the Greco-Roman figure, Nike, and the Buddhist Apsara as depicted in Central Asia between the first and second centuries CE are related? What evidence suggests that the two figures could be interpreted as interchangeable by the Kushans, who dominated the area at the time and were influenced by Greco-Roman, Indian, and Iranian art?

Utilizing the Gandharan schist relief located at the Chicago Institute of Art (fig. 1) as the case study for this analysis, we found that the roles of both Nike and Apsaras possessed similarities that suggest an association between the two could have existed, including their roles as winged flying celestial females that appear in moments of victory. Although we must acknowledge their appearance is dependent on the scene and context of their imagery – i.e., Apsaras flanking the Buddha in his moment of victory after reaching enlightenment or two Nike figures shown flanking and crowning Domitian's patron deity, Minerva on a sculpture of the emperor's torso – these similarities may have allowed the two to have been viewed as related.

Iconographic evidence of both beings, such as the "U"-shaped depictions of their female bodies, the symmetrical composition flanking a central celestial being, and their shared Imperial Roman stylized wings, also suggests the two might have been perceived as interchangeable or capable of synthesis and thus, sharing motifs. The one motif in particular that this analysis examined included the stylized wings and its two main components: a) the top three-to-four-tiered section that features round, almost circular shapes and b) the bottom portion with thin, vertical lines that echo the shape of the wing and extend to its singular point. Additionally, this

study has also explored evidence that demonstrated there being a distinct difference between the iconography of the Apsaras as they were portrayed in some of their earliest Indian contexts and how they were depicted in Gandhara throughout the first and second centuries CE. The most prevalent variation consisted of the style and inclusion of the wings, which on the relief in Chicago did not present a strong resemblance to Apsara figures according to Indian traditions but rather to the Nike figures from the Imperial Roman period. Although scholarship has debated whether Greek, Hellenistic, or Roman traditions have impacted and influenced artistic production methods in Gandhara, this thesis has argued that the Apsaras on the fragment in Chicago utilized Roman traditions, specifically from the Imperial period.

In further support of this claim, this analysis has succinctly examined the historical implications of Kushan and Roman interactions and concluded that as contemporaries who traded, had a diplomatic relationship, and shared a common enemy, it is more probable that the Kushans utilized Roman artistic methods in the development of their artistic identity. Alongside accounting for the iconographic similarities and historical interactions, the figures have been examined thematically and this study has argued that the notion of victory was prevalent enough to account for the assimilation of Nike into Central Asia. As a portrayal of Buddha reaching enlightenment, the narrative relief in Chicago did express victory to some degree to the ancient viewer. As such, this thematic similarity would also account for why the Kushans might have perceived Nike (victory) and Apsara figures as interchangeable or at the very least, capable of being synthesized.

Lastly, by applying the theoretical framework proposed by Stoye that builds on Hölscher's theory to the image's construction on the Gandharan relief in Chicago, this analysis has found that the inclusion of Imperial Roman stylized wings may have appealed to the regional

tastes at the time and/or may have been used to emphasize the visual form of the figures in flight within the image. According to the theoretical framework, their inclusion may have also been perceived as acceptable because adding wings did not misconstrue the subject matter. Overall, the evidence presented in this analysis suggests that there is a possible correlation between Nike and the Buddhist Apsara in Gandhara during the first and second centuries CE.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Just before the submission of this work, a two-foot-tall standing Buddha statue was discovered in the ancient Egyptian port of Berenike. The statue is datable to the second century CE and seems to be made of Mediterranean marble, which provides new evidence of the artistic and cultural connection and trade between Indian and Rome. Parker, Christopher. "Archaeologists Unearth Buddha Statue in Ancient Egyptian Port City." *Smithsonian Magazine*. Smithsonian Magazine, 1 May 2023. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/buddha-statue-found-berenike-egypt180982075/#:~:text=Archaeologists%20Unearth%20Buddha%20Statue%20in%20Ancient%20Egyptian%20Port%20City,-The%20new%20find&text=May%201%2C%202023%2011%3A48%20a.m.&text=Researchers%20have%20discovered%20a%20two,Review%20of%20Books'%20William%20Dalrymple>.

Appendix A: Figures



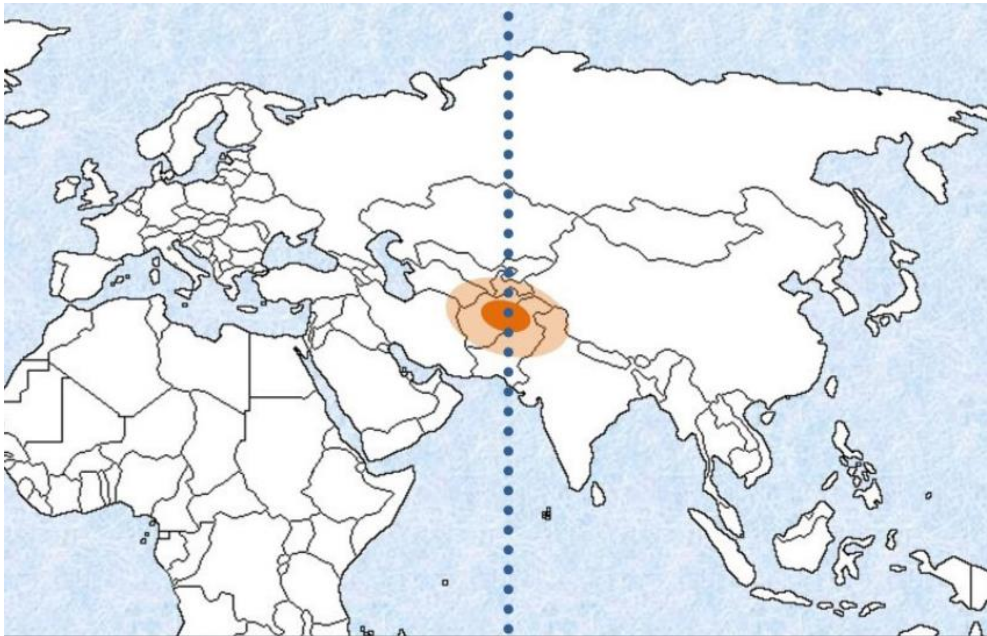
**Fig 1.** *Buddha Worshipped by the Gods Indra and Brahmā*, 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE, Schist, Kushan period, Gandhara, *Art Institute of Chicago*, Kate S. Buckingham Fund, reference no. 1995.263 <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/142512/buddha-worshipped-by-the-gods-indra-and-brahma>.



**Fig 2.** *The Entreaty to Preach the Doctrine*, 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE, Schist, Kushan period, Swat Valley, Gandhara, *The British Museum of Art*, Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund, registration no. 1966,1017.2. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A\\_1966-1017-2](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1966-1017-2)

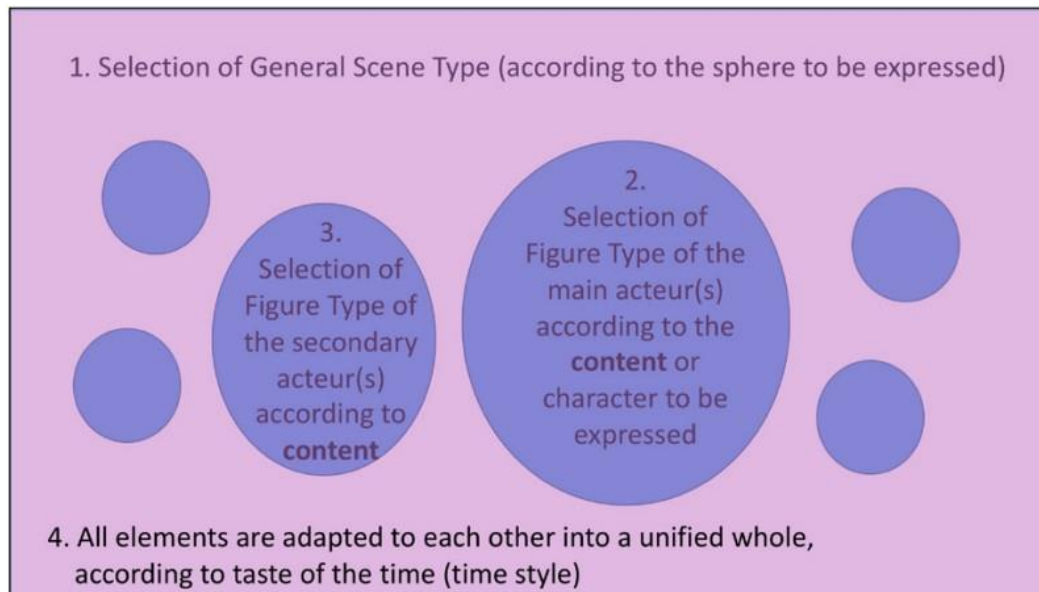


**Fig 3.** *Indra and Brahmā Entreat the Buddha to Preach*, 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE, Schist, Pakistan, Swat Valley, Image from Kurita, Isao. *Gandhāran Art = Gandāra Bijutsu*. Kaitei zōhoban shohan. English-Japanese edition, vol. 2. Tōkyō: Nigensha, 2003. 131.



**Fig 4.** Map of Eurasia illustrating the central position of Gandhara. Image from Ball, Warwick. “Gandhara Perceptions: the Orbit of Gandharan Studies.” *The Global Connection of Gandharan Art*. Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2020. 1.

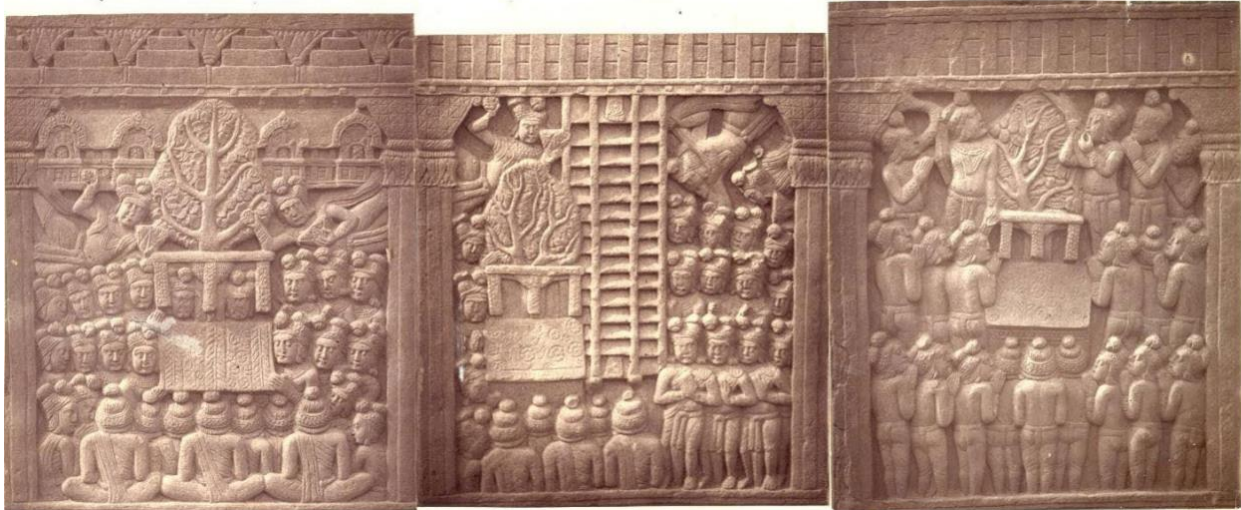




**Fig 5.** Stoye’s Simplified scheme of steps in the creation of iconography in Roman Image-Language *Theory*. Image from Stoye, Martina. “On the crossroads of disciplines: Tonio Hölscher’s theory of understanding Roman art images and its implications for the study of western influence(s) in Gandhāran art.” *The Global Connections of Gandharan Art*. Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2020. 38.



**Fig. 6,** *The winged, flying Feitian (Apsaras) holding garland and palm, on a relief Bhārhut India, early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE, Sandstone, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington. Accession no. F1932.26. [https://asia.si.edu/explore-art-culture/collections/search/edanmdm:fsg\\_F1932.26/](https://asia.si.edu/explore-art-culture/collections/search/edanmdm:fsg_F1932.26/).*



**Fig. 7,** *Reliefs from the corner pillar of the west Torana, Bhārhut stupa (detail), ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE, Stone, India.* Image from Brancaccio, Pia. “Art and Performance in the Buddhist Visual Narratives at Bhārhut.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy.* Springer Nature B.V., 2022. 3.



**Fig. 8,** *Bhārhut stupa (detail), ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE, Stone, Indian Museum Kolkata.* Image from Karetzky, Patricia Eichenbaum. “The Image of the Winged Celestial and Its Travels along the Silk Road.” *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 225. Sino-Platonic Papers, 2012. 10.



**Fig. 9**, Archermos (sculpt.), *Nike of Delos*, c. 570-560 BCE, Marble, Greek, *Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge*. Accession: Purchased 1884, from Martinelli, Athens. <https://museum.classics.cam.ac.uk/collections/casts/nike-delos>.



**Fig. 10**, *Thymiaterion Supported by a Statue of Nike*, c. 500-475 BCE, Terracotta, Greek, *Getty Museum, Los Angeles*. Object no. 86.AD.681. <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103WEF>.



**Fig. 11,** *Terracotta statuette of Nike, the personification of victory, late 5th c. BCE, Classical period, Terracotta, Greek, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Rogers Fund, accession no. 07.286.23. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/247903>.*



**Fig. 12,** *Gold stater of Alexander the Great (Alexander III of Macedon) (verso), Winged Nike (recto), ca. 330–320 BCE, Gold, Minted: Amphipolis, Ashmolean Museum. Accession no. HCR9627. [https://collections.ashmolean.org/collection/search/per\\_page/100/offset/300/sort\\_by/relevance/object/207410](https://collections.ashmolean.org/collection/search/per_page/100/offset/300/sort_by/relevance/object/207410).*



**Fig. 13,** *Gold coin of Philip II (Macedon), ca. 359–336 BCE, Gold, Minted: Macedonia, The British Museum of Art. 1940,1202.1. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_1940-1202-1\\_1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1940-1202-1_1).*



**Fig. 14,** *Heraios* (Kushan king, reign: 1-30 CE), 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE, Silver tetradrachm, Gandhara. Classical Numismatic Group (henforth, CNG) e-auction 308 (7-8-2013), lot 214 (28mm, 15.04g). Image from Sinisi, Fabrizio. "Royal Imagery on Kushan Coins: Local Tradition and Arsacid Influences." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 60, no. 6. Brill, 2017. 871.



**Fig. 15,** *Kujula Kadphises* (reign ca. 30-80 CE) (*verso*), Nike (*recto*), 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE, Silver Drachm, Gandhara. Image from Razieh Taasob, "Language and Legend in Early Kushan Coinage: Progression and Transformation." *Dabir*, no. 5. Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture, University of California, 2018. 81.



**Fig. 16,** *Gold and Turquoise plaque*, ca. 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE, Tillya Tepe, found with the "Golden Hoard of Bactria" in 1978. <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2009/afghanistan/photo-gallery>.



**Fig. 17,** *Kujula Kadphises*, c. 40-90 CE, copper drachm. *American Numismatic Society 1973.56.220* (17mm, 3.35g). Image from Sinisi, Fabrizio. "Royal Imagery on Kushan Coins: Local Tradition and Arsacid Influences." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 60, no. 6. Brill, 2017. 827.



**Fig. 18,** *Coin of Gaius (Caligula)*, c. 37-41 CE, copper, Minted: Rome (city), Roman, Imperial period, *British Museum*. Registration no. R.6469. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C\\_R-6469](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_R-6469).



**Fig. 19,** *The over-life-sized statue of Nike on a globe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE, Marble, Roman, Imperial Period, *Hadrian's Library, Athens, Attica, Greece*, inv. no. BA 395. Image from Sourlas, Dimitris S. "The Emperor's Nike. The Nike Statues in Hadrian's Library as a Means of Promoting Power and Imperial Ideology." *Known and Unknown Nikai: In History, Art, and Life*. Lagigianni-Georgakarakos, Maria (ed.). National Archaeological Museum: Hellenic Organization of cultural Resources Development, 2010. 225.



**Fig. 20,** Nike statue from the Nymphaeum of Side, 117-138 CE, Marble, Roman, Imperial period, Modern-day Turkey, *Archaeological Museum of Side*, inv. no. 116. Image from Sourlas, Dimitris S. “The Emperor’s Nike. The Nike Statues in Hadrian’s Library as a Means of Promoting Power and Imperial Ideology.” *Known and Unknown Nikai: In History, Art, and Life*. Lagigianni-Georgakarakos, Maria (ed.). National Archaeological Museum: Hellenic Organization of cultural Resources Development, 2010. 228.



**Fig. 21,** Nike statue from the Nymphaeum of Side, 117-138 CE, Marble, Roman, Imperial period, Modern-day Turkey, *Archaeological Museum of Side*, inv. no. 114. Image from Sourlas, Dimitris S. “The Emperor’s Nike. The Nike Statues in Hadrian’s Library as a Means of Promoting Power and Imperial Ideology.” *Known and Unknown Nikai: In History, Art, and Life*. Lagigianni-Georgakarakos, Maria (ed.). National Archaeological Museum: Hellenic Organization of cultural Resources Development, 2010. 228.



**Fig. 22,** *Glass Medallion of winged Victory*, 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE, glass, early Imperial period, *Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, accession no. 17.194.353. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/249590>.



**Fig. 23,** *Trajan's Frieze*, second c. CE, Marble, Roman, Imperial Period, *from the Basilica Ulpia, Rome*. Munich, *Glyptothek*, inv. GL 348. Image from Stoye, Martina. "On the crossroads of disciplines: Tonio Hölscher's theory of understanding Roman art images and its implications for the study of western influence(s) in Gandhāran art." *The Global Connections of Gandharan Art*. Archaeopress Publishing Limited, 2020. 43.





**Fig. 24,** *Cuirassed torso, probably of Domitian, 81-96 CE, Marble, Roman, Imperial period, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Image taken by Dr. Mariachiara Gasparini (Winter 2023).*



**Fig. 25,** *The Cuirassed statue of Hadrian from the Ancient Agora, 117 – 138 CE, Marble, Roman, Imperial period, Archive of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Ancient Agora. Image from Rogers, Dylan K. “Roman Athens.” *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens*. Neils, Jennifer and Dylan K. Rogers (eds.). Cambridge University Press, 2021. 424.*

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