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Mahākāruṇika*

(Part I)

INTRODUCTION

In Indian art seated figures are frequently depicted with their legs apart or in the lalitāsana, ardhaparyāṅkāsana, or lalitakṣepa positions¹.

These positions, which I would venture to term pan-Indian, are at times associated with certain “meditative” figures characteristic of the

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¹ But not in rājuttāsana, cf. Harle 1979: 128 and fn. 4. M. Th. de Mallmann, in her study on Mañjuśrī, considers the three terms to be synonymous (1964: 24, fn.5 and 25, fn. 4), as they would appear to be in the Śūdhanaśāstra, a relatively late text. However, in a previous work, she drew the following distinction (1948: 254–55): a) lalitāsana: figure seated on a lotus seat, the left leg bent, with the sole of the foot visible; the right leg hanging down, the foot usually resting on a cushion in the shape of a lotus flowers; b) ardhaparyāṅkāsana: the figure is seated with one leg bent over the seat, with the sole of the foot visible; the right leg raised with the foot placed on the edge of the seat, while the knee supports the arm or the elbow. The hand is turned now inward, now outward. The left hand rests on the throne, behind the knee, in a position which causes the shoulder muscle to stand out. Roughly, this constitutes the difference which I shall bear in mind in my study, merely drawing attention to the fact that, in Gandhāran art, at least during the initial stages, these position were certainly not codified.
Buddhist world: I refer in particular to the Gandhāran school (using the term here in the broad sense). For in India figures in these positions are not restricted to Buddhist art, but may occur more or less everywhere in all periods.

Mahākarunika is a term I use here for convenience, since, as J.C. Harle (1979: 128, fn. 3) has pointed out, there are no texts on which to base the application of the term iconographically to persons represented in this posture.

According to M. Taddei (1963: 208–9), this same category includes both the figures seated with their legs apart and in a pensive attitude — usually those who are faced with a major decision — and the figures in lalitāsana etc., as well as the numerous bodhisattvas — seated with one leg resting on the other knee — with their head inclined and resting on their right hand. These types probably originated in Gandhāra and had as their prototype the Classical shepherd—philosopher model.

The first part of my paper covers the analysis of the “pensive” figures in the art of Gandhāra, with particular reference to the scenes depicting episodes in the life of the Buddha. I shall deal elsewhere with the study of what are the “pensive” figures of the “Pure Lands”, in the “Buddhist Triads”, and with the isolated bodhisattvas, such as those in the rock reliefs and in works in metal.

I shall frequently refer to A. Miyaji’s work (1985), which deals especially with the Gandhāran derivation of the Chinese bodhisattvas portrayed in a “pensive” attitude, and needs to be taken a stage further.

As regards the texts, I shall refer essentially to the Lalitavistara, the Buddhacarita and the Mahāvastu, while bearing in mind that the Gandhāran artists did not necessarily base their work on this tradition².

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

a) The Visit and Horoscope by Asita

The relief in Plate Ia from Naogram illustrates the visit and horoscope by Asita. He is seated on a wicker seat holding little Siddhārtha in his arms. Unfortunately, it is not possible to make out in what position the Brahmin is seated. Nevertheless, though the relief is not very well preserved, it may be said that Asita is resting his cheek on his right hand, and more exactly, on his right forefinger: “Asita a fait asseoir le Bodhisattva sur ses genoux, ce qui lui laisse le bras droit libre: il en profite

² See Foucher 1905: 617.
une fois pour porter la main à sa tête, et ce geste veut vraisemblablement exprimer sa douleur d'être condamné à mourir avant que ne commence à tourner la roue de la Loi [...]. Dans la version du Nord, il ne connaît à la vue du divin enfant que l'amère doucer des larmes"; thus wrote A. Foucher as long ago as 1905 (315–16).

There is no doubt that the gesture of raising one's hand to one's head denotes pain, just as it is also true that Asita's lamentation and despair are fully attested in Buddhist literature. However, in this example, as noted above, the Brahmin makes a different gesture with his right hand.

Let us see from which text the Gandhāran artist may have drawn his inspiration, bearing in mind the above remarks and considering that, according to A. Foucher (1905: 622), it was Aśvaghoṣa who was inspired by the Gandhāran reliefs, and not vice versa. Even were this so, I would definitively exclude the Buddhacarita, where we read that, after Asita had seen the baby Siddhārtha in the nurse's arms, he began to weep and to lament aloud.

This leaves the Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu. In the first of the two texts it is clearly stated that Asita took the future Buddha in his arms: "Se levant de son siège et saluant, il [i.e., the Brahmin] tomba aux pieds du Bodhisattva; puis, après avoir tourné autour de lui en le gardant à la main droite, il le prit dans son giron et entra en méditation. Et là-dessus, il se mit à gémir et à verser des larmes et à pousser de profonds soupirs".

The Mahāvastu tells how, when Asita saw Siddhārtha "[...] lying like a jewel on the blanket of fine cloth, he hurriedly rose to his feet and received the child in these arms. And when he had taken him in his arms [...] he wept and sobbed", and again: "[...] when the seer had pitifully [karaṇayanto] and tremulously [vepiṭvā] uttered these many lamentations, he lauded the excellent, self-controlled Man [...]" (Jones 1952: 35–36, 39).

As may be noted, according to these last two texts, it was on the contrary Asita who took the future Buddha in his arms, and it is especially the first text which stresses the "pensive" attitude of the Brahmin, a position which shortly precedes his grief. Was the Gandhāran artist's object here to represent Asita's "pensiveness" or his pain? I would tend

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3 As regards this episode in Buddhist literature and its dating, see Lamotte 1958: 745 and fn. 56–58.
4 See Johnston 1984, II: 13.
5 See Foucher 1949: 62; Lamotte 1958: 746. In Foucaux's translation (1884: 93, 101) we read that Asita took Siddhārtha "contre sa poitrine et resta pensif" and "l'examina méditant".
to favour the former hypothesis. If that view is correct, the artist drew on the *Lalitavistara* which, of the two texts in question, is the one which gives greater prominence to the "meditative" aspect.

In the reliefs showing this episode Asita is not the only person to be represented in this position, cf. the relief from Sahri Bahlol which depicts Māyā with her index and middle fingers pressing her right cheek, and also the relief from Sikri, again showing Māyā, who seems to be making the same gesture⁶.

The texts under review do not describe Māyā’s state of mind. They mention Śuddhodana’s concern for Asita’s pain, but only the *Buddhacarita* says how Śuddhodana, with Māyā and the friends recovering from the sadness caused by the sight of Asita’s tears, become cheerful again (Johnston 1984, II: 17). For the moment, the question whether the artist wished to depict Māyā’s pain or her perplexity on learning that Siddhārtha was to become a Buddha is left in suspense.

b) *Meditation beneath the jambu Tree*

A. Miyaji (1985: 68–70) cites an interesting relief from Peshawar which shows Siddhārtha in the centre under a *jambu* tree⁷. He is seated on a wicker seat in *lalitāsana* (a term used here for convenience, because, in fact, his right foot is resting on his left knee). His empty sandal is visible. His head is slightly bent and rests on his left hand. A peasant with a plough drawn by two bullocks is depicted on his right, and on his left we see Chandaka holding Kaṇṭhaka by the reins (Pl. Ib).

In A. Miyaji’s view, this appears to be the only Gandhāran example of the episode, and corresponds to a passage in the *Buddhacarita*, which I quote in its entirety in E.H. Johnston’s translation (1984, II: 61–63):

"[...] He went out, mounted on the good horse Kaṇṭhaka [...] he saw the soil being ploughed, with its surface broken by the tracks of the furrows like waves of water. When he saw the ground in this state, with the young grass torn up and scattered by the plough and littered with dead worms, insects and other creatures, he mourned deeply as at the slaughter of his own kindred. And as he observed the ploughmen with their bodies discoloured by the wind, dust and the sun’s rays, and the oxen in distress with the labour of drawing, the most noble one felt extreme compassion. Then, alighting from this horse, he walked slowly over

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⁶ For the first of the two reliefs, see Ingholt 1957: 54, pl. 20 and the relevant references; for the second, cf. *ibid.*: 54, pl. 22 and references.

⁷ For the typology and some of the variants in Gandhāran art, see Schlingloff 1987: fig. 1.
the ground, overcome with grief. And as he considered the coming into being, and the passing away of creation, he cried in his affliction, ‘How wretched this is’. And, desiring to reach perfect clearness whith his mind, he stopped his friends who were following him, and proceeded himself to a solitary spot at the root of a jambu-tree, whose beautiful leaves were waving in all directions [...]’.

In the Lalitavistara we read how young Siddhārtha had gone to visit a peasant village with some other youths: ‘[…] Et après avoir examiné le travail du labourage, il entra sur un autre terrain planté d’arbres. Là, le Bodhisattva tout seul, sans second, après avoir erré de côté et d’autre en se promenant, vit un arbre Djambou, beau et agréable à voir. Là, le Bodhisattva s’assit à l’ombre, les jambes croisées […]’ (then follows the rṣi episode) (Foucaux 1884: 118). And again: Siddhārtha goes at midday to visit a village of ploughmen, where there is a leafy jambu tree: ‘[…] Après avoir vu (le travail), éclairé et affecté par la douleur (il dit): Maudit soit ce qui est composé, qui produit de nombreuses douleurs! Puis, étant allé à l’ombre du Djambou, l’esprit bien discipliné; après avoir pris des herbes et les avoir lui-même étendues en tapis, s’étant assis les jambes croisées et ayant redressé son corps, le Bodhisattva se livra aux quatre contemplations […]’ (here too there follows the rṣi episode) (Foucaux 1884: 122).

Here is the passage from the Mahāvastu (Jones 1952: 42): ‘As the Bodhisattva strolled in the pleasure ground he came to tilled lands where he saw some ploughs at work. These ploughs threw up a snake and a frog. The young boy took the frog to eat, but threw away the snake. The Bodhisattva saw this, and became deeply stirred by the sight […]. The Bodhisattva was sitting in the shade of a rose–apple tree in the forenoon, and the shade did not leave him […]’ The rṣi episode follows.

Pain and agitation, therefore, are the feelings ascribed to Siddhārtha in the Buddhacarita, the Lalitavistara and the Mahāvastu which provoked the ‘First Meditation’; Gautama appears then as a deeply disturbed and pensive being, who rapidly withdraws from secular life precisely because of his great compassion. This is the Siddhārtha whom the Gandhāran artist sought to depict with his cheek resting on his hand.

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8 As regards this episode in Buddhist literature and art, see, among others, Horsch 1964, Bareau 1974, Durt 1982, Schlingloff 1987. According to A. Bareau (1974: 227–28) in the oldest Pāli versions of the classical narrative of the episode with their respective Chinese translations, no mention is made of the state of mind which led Siddhārtha to engage in the ‘First Meditation’, almost as though the Bodhisattva had inadvertently found the solution to a problem which he had never consciously set himself.
As regards the *Buddhacarita*, A. Miyaji's views seem convincing, since this text is certainly closest to the episode as depicted on the relief in question, and since it is the only text to mention Kaṇṭhaka.

The Japanese scholar is also right in asserting that relief in Plate 1b is the only Gandhāran one showing this episode to represent Siddhārtha in a "pensive" attitude (1985: 69). However, there is another relief of this scene, in which the "pensive" figure is not Gautama, but Chandaka (Plate 1c).

This work is from Nimogram (Swat). It shows, from right to left: two male figures adorned with bracelets and earrings (perhaps the friends Siddhārtha left behind in the *Buddhacarita* description?); Kaṇṭhaka, whose reins are held by Chandaka; the Bodhisattva in *dhyānamudrā*, seated in *padmāsana*; a peasant ploughing with two bullocks; a figure shown gesturing as he talks with two fingers raised, pseudo- *cinmudrā* or *sṛī-mudrā*, probably the *śramana* of the *Buddhacarita* narrative, to which text I believe the artist referred; a tree, from which there hang two sacks, probably belonging to the peasant.

Chandaka is sitting on the ground with his head slightly bent and resting on the palm of his right hand, as though to emphasize the momentous decision Siddhārtha is about to take, and to show that the Bodhisattva is not far from starting his career. I would interpret this gesture not as a sign of Chandaka's despair at Siddhārtha's decision to leave his father's palace, but as an attempt by the groom to explain and anticipate the state of mind which is to lead the Bodhisattva to the "First Medi-

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9 The type of clothing worn by the figure with the two fingers raised would seem to indicate a *śramana*, which the *Buddhacarita* would corroborate (Johnston 1984, II: 64–65): "While this pure passionless state of mind grew within his lofty soul, there came up to him a man in mendicant's clothes, unseen of other man. The king's son asked him 'Tell me, who are you?' On this he explained to him, 'O bull among men, I am a *śramana* [...] and I wander without ties or expectations in search of the highest good, accepting any alms I may receive'. After saying this, he flew up to the sky before the prince's very eyes; for he was a heavenly being who in that form has seen other Buddhas and encountered him to rouse his attention •

The *Lalitavistara* and the *Mahāvastu* make no reference to this episode, but only tell us that Śudhodana, having sent for him and learned that his son was beneath the *jambu* tree, and that its shadow had become fixed, made their way to him (Foucaux 1884: 121–23; Jones 1952: 44–45).

As regards the gesturing in conversation, which would seem to be indicated by the two raised fingers, see Foucher 1905: 375, 378; for the pseudo-*cinmudrā*, see Santoro 1986: 41–46; for the *sṛī-mudrā*, see Carter 1987: 45–63. This gesture is fairly common in Gandhāran art, as well as in the artistic production of Nāgarjunakonda and in other odd iconographical contexts, as shown by G. De Marco (1983: 56 and fn. 198). It is interesting to note that, in the later *Nidānakathā*, the raised position of one or two fingers may denote one or two answers or solutions to a problem; see Rhys Davids 1880: 72.
tation”, like a laksana. As A. Foucher (1905: 344) has pointed out, the Gandhāran artist, in order to render an event from the Buddha’s life understandable to the spectator, which he might otherwise fail to recognize, may have recourse to a laksana which “par son pittoresque, en appellerait à la mémoire de ses clients et fixerait leurs incertitudes comme il fait aujourd’hui pour les nôtres”.

Bareau (1963: 23) points out that, in the oldest texts, this is not the main characteristic of the groom, Chanda, whose name means “desire for action” or “will power”. It might well, according to his idea, symbolise here the resolve of Siddhārtha to renounce a life of ease and wealth.

In Miyaji’s view, the episode on the relief from Mohammed Nari may be derived from the one in Plate 1b (1985: 70, pls.6, 7). On this relief the Bodhisattva is seen in the centre in lalitāsana on a wicker seat, his head gently reclining probably on his, now badly damaged, left hand, while his left elbow rests on that knee. On Siddhārtha’s left, stands Chandaka, with an umbrella. To the right and left of the Bodhisattva are two unidentifiable dignitaries in aṇḍalimudrā. A Miyaji (1985: 70–71) holds that the “pensive” Bodhisattva in this relief constitutes the prototype for all the analogous representations of Siddhārtha shown in lalitāsana, a thesis which, I maintain, cannot be sustained so long as the problem of the dating of the art of Gandhāra remains unsolved. In any case, this relief seems to be a rather late one.

J.M. Rosenfield (1967: 241), without specifying to which scene he is referring, compares the Bodhisattva in this position to the little figure lost in “thought” in the Assault by Māra in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, which we shall consider later.

Be that as it may, this episode is certainly the same as that in the badly damaged one from Butkara, where we see, in the centre, the Bodhisattva in lalitāsana, his head inclined to the right and resting on the index finger (?) or on his whole (?) right hand (Plate IIa). To Siddhārtha’s left, stands Chandaka with an umbrella, above which, as in the preceding example, a figure may be seen which is not in aṇḍalimudrā this time, but appears to be holding a lotus flower (?). On Siddhārtha’s right is a figure standing in the aṇḍalimudrā attitude as in the previous relief. Here again, the Bodhisattva rests his foot on his left knee, while his left hand rests on his hip instead of his ankle. The halo is visible.

Contrary to Miyaji’s assertion (1985: 94), this group also includes a Bodhisattva in the relief from Pañārā (Kabul Museum) with the “Miracle of Śrāvastī” (Plate IIb). In the centre, stands a Buddha (whose dimensions are far larger than those of the other figures) with flames emanating from his shoulders and, above, two gandharvas with umbrellas. Flanking the Buddha are four trees, below which there are depicted, counter–
clockwise: 1) A bodhisattva in lalitāsana seated, according to A. Miyaji (1985: 94) on a lion; the bodhisattva is resting his head on the index finger of his left hand. Unfortunately it is not possible to ascertain the position of the right hand; 2) The ascetic Bodhisattva; 3) The Bodhisattva in bhūmisparśamudrā; 4) The figure is completely effaced.

As to the first bodhisattva, Miyaji, while not excluding that this might be Siddhārtha, prefers to interpret this figure as a bodhisattva whose counterpart would have been the fourth figure and places it in the “Triad” category. This hypothesis must be ruled out. In my view the first of the four figures represents Siddhārtha in his “First Meditation”. Since in 2) we have the ascetic Bodhisattva and in 3) the Buddha in bhūmisparśamudrā, it is more than probable that in 1) as well we have a scene from the life of Buddha — an episode preceding his ascetic period. Why not take this to be the “First Meditation”, since the Bodhisattva is in an analogous position to those in the same scene? Since the figure is seated on a lion, it is more natural to regard it as Siddhārtha rather than any bodhisattva. (Unfortunately, it has not been possible for me personally to see the Kabul relief, and it is not clear from the photographic reproductions whether the Bodhisattva is really seated on a lion. However, since in Plate IIIa — see below — a similar Bodhisattva is seated on an elephant, we can not exclude the possibility that this is also the case in the Kabul relief, but this does not of course affect the identification of the figure in Plate IIb as the Bodhisattva). It may well be that there was once a Buddha beneath the fourth tree, either in dharmacakramudrā or in dhyānamudrā, whereas it seems unlikely that the Buddha was depicted reclining in parinirvāṇa, because the space under the tree does not appear to be sufficient to show such a figure.

The Bodhisattva is stylistically similar to that in Plate IIIa, which, in my opinion, belonged to a relief of the same type, and which I include in this group, whereas Miyaji (1985: 32) places it in the category of the “Buddhist Triads”.

The Bodhisattva is seated in the lalitāsana attitude on an elephant, his right foot resting on a stool, with his hand on that knee, while his head, in a turban, would appear to be resting on his left index finger. Here, too, he is seated under a tree (the same tree as in Plate IIb), on an elephant.

c) The Presentation of the Bride

This section is closely connected with the one on the Assault by Māra. I have not combined them because the various events in the Buddha's life are analysed here in chronological order.

In a series of reliefs showing this episode, we can see, on the left,
a small “pensive” figure which presents some difficulty of interpretation. I shall begin with the relief in Plate IIIb, formerly in the Guides’ Mess at Mardan, but now in the Peshawar Museum.

In the centre, the relief shows Siddhärtha erect and of larger dimensions than the other figures. He is wearing a turban, has a halo, and his left hand is on his hip, while his right one performs the abhayamudrā gesture. On his left is a purowita, who is holding in his right hand a small flask the contents of which he is sprinkling on the Bodhisattva. He is holding Gopā/Yaśodharā by the hand, and she turns her head away modestly. Above the last two figures we see from right to left: Indra (?), with the vajra, and Brahmā (?). To the (proper) right of the Bodhisattva are two female figures, the first of whom is kneeling and touching Siddhärtha’s foot with her right hand, while the second one is standing and appears to be holding a lotus in her hand. Above the female figures are two unidentifiable figures. On the extreme left, a figure wearing a turban, but without a halo (?), is seated in the lalitāsana position, his left foot resting on his right knee, and his cheek cupped in the palm of his left hand.

H. Ingholt (1957: 56–57), who interprets the scene as the presentation of Yaśodharā, and the female figures to Siddhärtha’s right as women of the harem, does not mention the “pensive” figure.

According to F. Sehrai (1985: 30), for whom this is the same episode, the figure above Yaśodharā is to be identified as Vajrapāni, the two girls (the one standing and the one kneeling) as handmaidens, and the “pensive” figure as Siddhärtha’s father who is rejoicing at the event.

A. Miyaji (1985: 72–73) identifies the latter figure as the Bodhisattva, and thinks that the artist, in his representation of the episode, refers to the passage in the Lalitavistara in which Śuddhodana, to prevent his son from embracing the ascetic life, urges him to marry: the “pensive” figure is therefore Siddhärtha in a state of indecision.

The interpretations listed above need in fact to be re–examined, because, as we shall show, the relief depicts two scenes: the “Presentation of the Bride”, on the right, and the “Assault by Māra”, on the left.

I quote the relevant passage in the Lalitavistara about the event under discussion as translated by Ed. Foucaux (1884: 125): “[...] Le jeune prince dit: Dans sept jours vous entendrez ma réponse [as to whether he will marry or not]. Et le bodhisattva se mit à penser: Je le sais, les maux du désir sont sans fin [...]. Pour les qualités du désir, je n’ai ni goût ni inclination et je ne me plais point au milieu d’une troupe de femmes [...]. Et ayant encore réfléchi en déployant la science des moyens, il fut pris d’une grande compassion [...].”

If indeed the Gandhāran artist was referring to the Lalitavistara, on
the assumption that the female figures on the Bodhisattva’s right were handmaidens of the harem, then the “pensive” figure might well be Siddhārtha, in doubt whether to take a wife or not. The fact that the text makes no mention of kneeling female figures at the feet of the future Buddha may be explained as follows: A. Foucher, writing about a relief in the Lahore Museum which is badly damaged and depicts the same episode, and in which neither Siddhārtha nor the “maid–servants” are visible, but only the Brahmin with Yaśodharā, concluded that, even if in the Lalitavistara the Brahmin was simply reporting to the Bodhisattva’s father that he had found the bride, the only way the artist could render the episode understandable would be to introduce Yaśodharā herself into the scene (1905: 328, fig. 168). In that case, there is nothing against Siddhārtha being identified as the “pensive” figure.

However, before accepting such a hypothesis, we must analyse other reliefs showing the same scene.

The lunette in Plate IVa depicts, in the centre, the Bodhisattva in the same position with a turban and a halo, and on a larger scale than the accompanying figures. Once again, to his left is the purohita, leading Yaśodharā by the hand who is sprinkling him with water. Above the Brahmin is an unidentifiable figure holding his left hand behind his head. The group on the Bodhisattva’s right is made up of seven figures, of whom three are female: the first seems to be holding a basket of flowers, and the second resting her left hand on her shoulder. Behind them are three male figures, standing, the second and the third of whom are wearing turbans and necklaces, while the first one, which is without a turban, is clad in a saṅghāti. The last of the seven figures is the familiar “pensive” figure shown here in profile, and resting his right leg on the left one, while his cheek rests on his right palm. Here too our observations on the preceding relief are relevant.

Lastly comes the lunette from Butkara in Plate IVb which holds the key to the interpretation of the preceding two reliefs.

I quote in full M. Taddei’s description (Faccenna 1962: 46–47): “Fragment of a lunette […] Royal Chaplain Introduces Yaśodharā. Siddhārtha is standing in the middle wearing paridhāna, uttarīya and turban, his left hand on the hip and right in abhayamudrā; his halo is decorated with an incised line near the edge, and above it there is a canopy. At his sides are figures of attendants. A woman kneels, touching the Bodhisattva’s right foot; a brahman offers him a water–pot ready for the rite and brings Yaśodharā, shown behind him, into the presence of Siddhārtha. At the left corner, behind a seated figure, is a dwarf; in the background is Vajrapāṇi holding the thunderbolt […]. The seated figure on the left, with the left ankle resting on the right thigh, the right foot
on a low stool [...] wears *paridhāna, uttariya*, short band–shaped necklace and long necklace; his right hand holds a stick pointing downwards. The dwarf at his feet is dressed as a warrior, with scaled and fringed cuirass, bandages round the face and rolled *uttariya* crossing his breast. Part of the standing female figure is visible on the right: she wears a long tunic and large anklets".

As in the preceding two reliefs, here, too, we find the Bodhisattva in the same position and the Brahmin, leading Yaṣodharā by the hand, who is sprinkling him with water. As compared with Plate IIIb, Indra is replaced by Vajrapāṇi and Brahmā is absent (?). Again, as in the relief at the Guides' Mess, the kneeling female figure is touching the Bodhisattva's foot. By analogy, it is not impossible that one of the unidentified figures in the left-hand group in Plate IIIb is another female figure. Here, too, on the extreme left, we have the now familiar "pensive" figure, but, in contrast to the preceding figures, he holds a staff in his hand with the end pointing downwards, and at his feet there is a dwarf in armour who does not even come up to his left knee. This is certainly Māra, with a soldier of his army, who is drawing a series of lines on the ground, as we shall see. So it can be said that the three female figures in the lunette from Butkara are his three daughters.

At this point the discussion may be extended to Plates IIIb and IVa. The "pensive" figure is neither Siddhārtha nor his father, but the daemon, and the "handmaidens", contrary to the views expressed elsewhere, are none other than Māra's daughters.

The lunette from Butkara is also important for another reason. Re–used in Stūpa 70 when that was being reconstructed, it belongs stylistically to the particular Gandhāran typology which is akin to the groups of sculptures having as their chronological point of reference Stūpas 14 and 17, and it may be dated to between the end of the 1st century B.C. and the beginning of the 1st century A.D. ¹⁰. The lunette from Butkara must therefore be regarded as one of the oldest Gandhāran reliefs depicting this episode. In it, Māra is shown with a staff, a highly significant detail, as we shall see. In addition, it can be said that, as early as this period, not one, but two episodes could be represented in one panel.

¹⁰ The reconstruction of Stūpa 70 must be later than the end of the 3rd–beginning of the 4th century A.D. For the date of the first construction of the *stūpa*, see Faccenna 1980, Part 2: 369, 378. As regards the Gandhāran sculpture somewhat similar to the Butkara I groups which are chronologically related to Stūpas 14 and 17, see van Loonhuizen 1981; as regards the style of the sculpture on Stūpas 14 and 17, see Faccenna 1974: 172–75. As regards the date assigned to, and the description of, Stūpas 14 and 17 (1st–beginning of the 2nd century A.D.), see Faccenna 1980, Part 2: 239–54.
d) **The "Great Renunciation"**

According to A. Miyaji (1985: 68), in the art of Gandhāra, Siddhārtha, in this episode, although seated in lalitāsana, was never represented in a "pensive" attitude. This affirmation needs to be revised.

The relief in the Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Mass., (Plate Va) shows the Bodhisattva seated on a couch in lalitāsana, with his right foot on a footstool. Siddhartha, with no turban, inclines his head and leans it on his right index finger, his left arm hanging loose on his left leg, and his hand resting on his calf. Yasodharā is lying on the bed asleep. On the right are two female attendants; one, in a crouching position and absorbed in playing a musical instrument, and one standing; on the left are two more figures, one standing, the other crouching with a fan in her hand — it is the "Great Renunciation".

Let us see how the episode is recounted in the *Lalitavistara* and in the *Mahāvastu*. In the former, the passage reads (Foucaux 1884: 159, 179 and 181): "[...] Ainsi donc [...] le Bōdhisattva, lorsqu’il était au milieu de l’appartement des femmes [...] n’était pas privé de méditer la loi dans son esprit’’; "À la mémoire du Bōdhisattva ainsi entré dans la pensée de la loi, dans les palais remplis de concerts où il était à l’aise au milieu de l’appartement des femmes, pensant à la conduite des Boudhas d’autrefois, pensant être utile à tous les êtres, le sens de (ses) quatre prières d’autrefois se représenta […]’’; "[…] Après les avoir vues [the sleeping women], le Guide du monde ayant soupiré avec compassion, dit: Hélas! ces créatures son tombées dans la misère! […] Cependant le Bōdhisattva, par cette porte lumineuse de la loi examinant encore l’appartement des femmes, se lamenta sur les êtres avec des lamentations d’une grande compassion […]’’.

In the *Mahāvastu* we read that Siddhārtha, after his father, anxious lest he abandon palace life, had put thousands of women at his disposal, "went up to his upper chamber and entered it. He sat down and applied his mind to the same meditation that he had achieved in the rose–apple shade […]’’ (Jones 1952: 139).

The *Buddhacarita* tells us only of Siddhārtha’s disgust at the sight of the sleeping women (Johnston 1984, II: 73), but relates, in an episode prior to the "First Meditation" (which in this text comes after the "Encounters’’), that, when the women sought to entice the prince, Gautama "[…] firmly guarded his senses, and his perturbation over the inevitability of death, was never rejoiced nor distressed”, and thought: "Do these women then not understand the transitoriness of youth, that they are so inebriated with their own beauty, which old age will destroy?” (Johnston 1984: 52).
I quote this passage from the *Buddhacarita*, which does not strictly speaking refer to the "Great Renunciation", but illustrates the Bodhisattva's reaction to feminine grace. Siddhārtha's attitude to the inevitability of death was to be the same as Bhārgava's in the later *Vinaya* of the Mulasarvāstivādins, when the Bodhisattva finds him, immersed in thought, his cheek cupped in his hand, as we shall see later.

To come back to the *Lalitavistara* and the *Mahāvastu*, in both these texts we find the concept of compassion which leads Siddhārtha to leave home; compassion, which in the *Mahāvastu* is expressed by the formula that the Bodhisattva was in the same frame of mind as when he experienced the "First Meditation". Compassion, therefore, but also pensiveness when confronted by the need to take a decision. And this is the state of mind which the artist sought to portray when he depicted Siddhārtha with his cheek resting on his hand.

The same scene is depicted on one of the reliefs belonging to a private collection (Plate Vb), which shows Siddhārtha, on the right, thinking about leaving the palace, with his face resting on his left hand, and, on the left, the Bodhisattva about to leave Yaśodharā who is fast asleep.

The episode on the "Western façade" of the cross-shaped reliquary from Shaikhān Dheri (Allchin 1972: 22) has been identified as the same one. The central figure on the lower panel, is wearing a turban and sitting on the ground in *sukhāsana*, his head inclined to the left and resting on the palm of his hand (Plate VIa) 11.

This relief is of primary importance because it is a very early one. In particular, a fundamental point, the reliquary comes from a scientifically conducted excavation. It was found in "house D", destroyed by fire during or after the reign of Huviṣka, and, in all probability, around the middle of the 3rd century A.D. (Allchin 1972: 25) 12. The reliquary broke, and was restored, but, after breaking a second time, it was put aside with other objects of religious significance (Allchin 1972: 17). According to F.R. Allchin (1972: 25), if one considers that the wood from the ceiling of "house D" has been radiocarbon-dated to the middle of the 1st century A.D., this may well be approximately the period in which the shrine was built, and in consequence, the reliquary would have been placed there later, say between 50 and 100 A.D.

Lastly come two reliefs from Saidu Sharif. On the first one (Plate VIIa) the Bodhisattva, with halo, is depicted as seated on a wicker seat

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11 Originally, the scene was interpreted as an offering of food to the Buddha, either during the meditation or after the enlightenment; see Dani 1966: 42 and 1968: 37.

12 F.R. Allchin (1968: 31) places the beginning of the Kaniska era at 130–140 A.D.
in the lalitāsana posture under a tree. His left foot rests on a footstool and his left knee supports his right ankle. Siddhārtha, wearing a turban, bends his head slightly and rests it in his right palm, while his left hand, holding a lotus ("par contenance", as Foucher would say, 1905: 330), lies negligently on his right ankle. To the right and left of the Bodhisattva, stand, each with a lance, the guardians of the harem, who provide the key to the scene. Above them on his right, are Vajrapāni and an unidentified person (Chandaka?) on the right.

On the second relief (Plate VIb), the Bodhisattva (most of the upper part of the body is damaged) is seated in a pose similar to the preceding one. Here, too, the wicker seat and the footstool are evident. Although Siddhārtha's right hand has been completely worn away, like most of his right arm, traces of the elbow leaning on the knee still allow us to say that the Bodhisattva was seated in a "meditative" posture. To Siddhārtha's left is a standing female figure, who is probably, here too, a guardian of the harem. To his right is another female figure, of whom only the head and upper part of the torso remain; she has the same hairstyle as the corresponding figure in the preceding relief, and she too may be a guardian of the harem. Above is an unidentified figure in aṅgkalimudrā (?). Above Siddhārtha we can make out traces of a tree.

e) The Assault by Māra

The relief in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, is one of the best known.13

In the centre, the Buddha in bhūmisparśamudrā is seated on a throne under a bodhi tree. He is surrounded by Māra's army (on the ground, in front of the throne are two defeated soldiers); to the Buddha's left, at shoulder height, is Vajrapāni; to the extreme left of the onlooker, at the bottom, a figure is seated in lalitāsana on a wicker seat, with his left foot placed on a footstool and the left hand on his right knee, on which the right elbow is also resting. This figure, in a turban, but without a halo, is supporting his slightly bent head on the index finger of his right hand. The identity of this figure is keenly debated.

J.M. Rosenfield sees in him Siddhārtha and cites a passage in the Buddhacarita (1967: 241–42): "The text is close to the Freer relief in its description of the troops of demons having faces of boars and horses, many faces, protruding bellies; assuming many forms, they leap about wildly to terrify the Bodhisattva and launch violent assaults. In the midst of all this […] an invisible being tells Māra that Śākyamuni is like a

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13 See Lippe 1970: fig. 11.
great physician [...]. His one desire is to free mankind from the snares of delusion. So great are his vow, his energy, his psychic powers, and his compassion for creation that he has become invincible". Rosenfield goes on to specify how the concept of Sākyamuni, the "powerful agent of mercy", is expressed in more or less the same manner in the Śatapāñciśaṭika by Mātṛceṣa: "Which shall I first extol, you or the Great Pity (mahākaruṇam) by which you were so long in saṃsāra though knowing its evils so well?" "You are the island of those swept along by waves, the defense of the stricken in spirit, the refuge of them who fear existence, the resort of them who desire release".


G. Hockfield Malandra (1981: 130), on the contrary, sees in him Māra, and, in support of this view, quotes another passage from the Buddha- carita which says: "after Māra's arrows were shot at Sākyamuni, his re- solve was not shaken, so that Māra became despondent and full of anxiety".

A. Miyaji (1985: 74 ff.) also appears to disagree with Rosenfield, and takes the "pensive" figure in the Freer relief to be Māra. He points out that, as in the various reliefs from Bhārhat, Amarāvati, Gaṅgaśāla, Mathurā, Sārnath, etc., there is often a small "pensive", crouching figure which can be identified as the daemon. Miyaji points out that, in fact, the only centre where Māra is depicted with staff in hand is Bhārhat (the Japanese scholar does not seem to know of the relief from Butkara shown in Plate IVb), and seems to mean that it is to Bhārhat that one must look for the model of Māra lost in thought. This idea is in part correct as we shall see in the conclusion. Meanwhile, I would like to draw at- tention to the fact that, at Bhārhat, there are two, not one, reliefs represent- ing the daemon in a "pensive" attitude. I shall revert to this point.

Let us now see what the texts have to say about Māra.

In the Lalitavistara, we read (Foucaux 1884: 286): "La douleur, l'effroi, l'infortune, le chagrin et la ruine, la parole de malédition, l'humiliation et le mépris, voilà ce que j'ai obtenu aujourd'hui [referring to Māra's mood]". On this occasion the text does not mention the staff held by the daemon, but, as we shall see later, in another episode, when the Buddha refuses to enter nirvāṇa ahead of time, Māra "se retira d'un côté et resta immobile. Triste, abattu, la tête basse, traçant avec un bâton des figures sur la terre, il se dit: Il a surpassé mon empire" (Foucaux 1884: 314).

In the Mahāvastu we read (Jones 1952: 264, 318): "[...] and wicked Māra, wretched, discomfited, consumed by the sting within him, stood deep in thought, and wrote on the ground with a cane: Gotama the Re- cluse will pass beyond my power"; "[...] and Māra was then confounded and with his staff he wrote on the ground, 'Vanquished am I by the deva of devas, by the mighty Śākyan lion'" ("cane" and "staff" should
be translated as "arrow", kāṇḍa, as pointed out by Lüders, 1963: 175).

The Buddhacarita unlike the other two texts, makes no mention of the staff which Māra holds, nor is this shown in the relief in the Freer Gallery – which is a point in favour of Hockfield Malandra's interpretation. All the same, there is a detail which inclines me to accept Rosenfield's hypothesis, and that is that the "pensive" personage is shown as being seated beneath a jambu tree, almost as though the Gandhāran artist had wished to represent Siddhārtha in the very frame of mind experienced during the "First Meditation"; an "ideogram", as Rosenfield writes (1967: 241), or an image symbolizing the values he wished to express. If we believe that, as has been shown (Schlingloff 1987: 115), the jambu tree in Indian Buddhist art usually symbolizes Śākyamuni's "First Meditation", the figure seated "pensively" in laliṭāsana under the jambu tree is the Bodhisattva and not Māra.

Lastly, we come to a relief from Swat which is of great interest (Plate VIIb). In it, the Buddha, who appears to be seated on a throne in bhūmisparśamudrā (?), is surrounded by Māra's army. Māra's daughters (only two this time) are depicted on the right. On the extreme left, we see the customary "pensive" figure on a wicker seat. His left foot rests on a footstool, while the right one is raised and rests on the seat. His right hand and left elbow are placed on the right knee. The figure, wearing a turban, leans his cheek on the palm of his left hand. Who is he? Māra, says Miyaji (1985: 77), and correctly, as we shall see.

The importance of this relief lies in its antiquity. In fact, as with the lunette in Plate IVb, on stylistic criteria (such as the treatment of the drapery in thin parallel grooves and the linear sensitivity which predominates over the rather summarily rendered volumes of the body), this work can also be placed in the group which has been dated to the period between the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D., as shown above. Here we have, therefore, one of the oldest reliefs from Gandhāra portraying a "pensive" figure. I shall come back to this point in the conclusion.

f) The Gods Entreat the Buddha to Preach

The relief in Plate VIIIa from Butkara shows, in the centre, Siddhārtha seated in ardhaparyankāsana on a throne under a tree. His right knee supports his right elbow and left hand. His head, with a halo, is slightly bent, and is supported by his right hand. On his left are Indra, also with a halo, in aṇjadimudrā, three monks, and, behind the first of them, Vajrapāṇi; to his right are two monks, and Brahmā in aṇjadimudrā, with a halo.

This relief depicts the entreatment to the Buddha by Brahmā and Indra to preach; but let us see how the texts tell the story.
In the *Lalitavistara* (Foucaux 1884: 326–32), we read that the Bodhisattva, uncertain whether or not to start teaching the Law, is approached first by Brahmā, alone, then together with Indra, and again alone. In all three instances, both Brahmā and Indra raise their joined hands to their foreheads. The text describes how the two divinities bow down at the Buddha’s feet, while, on the relief under review, they are only shown in *aṇḍalimudrā*, just as we read that they kept to one side of the Bodhisattva only, and not to either side, as they do in Plate VIIia. The story continues (Foucaux 1884: 333): then the Bodhisattva had this thought: “[...] Que j’enseigne la loi ou que je ne l’enseigne pas, cette agglomération qui est fixée dans la condition de la vérité reconnaîtra sûrement la loi. Quant à l’agglomération qui n’est pas fixée, si je lui enseigne la loi, elle la reconnaîtra, et si je ne l’enseigne pas, elle ne la reconnaîtra pas [...]. Alors le Tathāgata, en voyant les êtres qui faisaient partie de l’agglomération des êtres sans fixité, commença à concevoir une grande pitié pour eux [...]” And again (Foucaux 1884: 333–34): “Aujourd’hui, amis, par le Tathāgata [...] a été faite la promesse de tourner la roue de la loi [...] par pitié pour le monde [...]”. The Buddha decides, having learned that both Rudraka and Kālāmā are dead, to begin to teach the Dharma to the five monks who had first abandoned Rudraka to follow him and who then left him when the Bodhisattva had realized that the ascetic way was not the path to follow to attain Enlightenment. And, in fact, the five monks in our relief are the first disciples.

The *Mahāvastu* (Jones 1956: 303–5) narrates how the Bodhisattva, who happened to be beneath a banyan tree, was uncertain whether to start teaching the Law. Despite the intervention of, first, Indra and then Brahmā, he declined. In the text there are two more versions of this event (Jones 1956: 305–6 and 306–8): the first one mentions only Brahmā’s visit, to whose invitation the Bodhisattva gave a negative reply, while the second one, still referring to Brahmā’s visit alone, reports his success in convincing Gautama to begin teaching: “So the Exalted One [...] conceiving a great compassion for men and remembering that those majestic lords of devas and rulers had come to him [...] granted Great Brahmā’s request [...]” (Jones 1956: 308). Even if the first of these three versions mentions other gods who call on the Bodhisattva, this is the only one to name, not only Brahmā, but Indra. And if, in the text, the only one of the two divinities to be described with his hands joined is Brahmā, this is an insignificant detail, because we read that both bow down before the Buddha, and this gesture does not preclude, but, on the contrary, implies the probability that the hands are joined in *aṇḍalimudrā*. Then follows the narration of the conversion of the five.

The description of the episode in the *Buddhacarita* is rather muddled
(Johnston 1984, II: 215–17): the "two chiefs of the heavenly dwellings" (Brahmā and Indra) draw near to the Bodhisattva only after he has decided to begin teaching. On the one hand Siddhārtha, full of compassion and mindful of his previous promise (but the text does not specify what it is, nor when he made it), "formed a resolution for the preaching of tranquillity"; and on the other, the two divinities approach him, as noted above, and praise him before returning whence they came. Finally, the Bodhisattva decides to go to speak to the five. Only in the next canto, the 15th, is the episode of the conversion mentioned; this canto, however, cannot be taken into consideration, since it has only reached us in the late Tibetan and Chinese versions.

It is difficult to decide which of the texts examined above corresponds most closely to the relief, so, for the time being, the question remains open. The fact is that, as far as can be ascertained, this is the only Gandhāran relief in which the Bodhisattva is represented in a "pensive" attitude after the sambodhi, in doubt as to whether to start teaching the Dharma or not, and yet, at the same time, sad and compassionate of the suffering of humanity.

g) Nanda's Ordination

The relief in Plate VIIIb, whose upper surface is damaged, shows the Buddha in the centre, seated in the padmāsana posture on a throne and holding the hem of his dress in his left hand. Unfortunately, the right hand is broken. Nevertheless, it is not impossible that it was in abhayamudrā. To his left are four seated monks; to his right are four figures of whom three are standing and one is placed on a wicker seat. The latter has been identified by A. Foucher (1905: 467–69) as Nanda, who, though still wearing his jewels, is about to have his hair cut by the barber on his right holding a semicircular razor. Between Nanda and Buddha is a monk who holds a ewer in one hand, with which to sprinkle water on the head of Buddha's stepbrother. Nanda leans his cheek on his left hand, uncertain as to what decision to take.

Unfortunately, neither the Lalitavistara, Mahāvastu nor the Buddhacarita mentions the episode. The only text to refer to it is the later Nidānakathā (Rhys Davids 1880: 128), where it is clearly stated that Nanda had no intention whatsoever of becoming a monk.

As far as I know, this is the only Gandhāran example to portray Nanda in a "pensive" attitude or, according to the Nidānakathā, in one of affliction. However, the latter hypothesis seems to me to be highly improbable.
h) The Sixteen pāraṇaśas Question the Buddha

The central portion of the relief from Butkara in Plate VIIIc is badly damaged. In the centre, the Buddha, of whom only the head and the left side of the halo remain, is shown beneath a tree (here, too, only the part on the Buddha’s left is intact) and was probably seated in padmāsana. To his left are six Brahmin ascetics, recognizable by their hair style, and by the flask and the stick which some of them carry. From right to left: the second one, who is young, turns to the first one; the fourth one, who is also young, turns towards the figure who is elderly and bending forward, and who appears to be resting his chin on his right hand, while the elbow is supported by a person or an object (?); of the last two, the fifth is seated, his left hand on his left knee, his head slightly inclined and leaning on his right hand. To the Buddha’s right, two other ascetics are visible. The first of the two is young, and turns towards the second one.

These are the sixteen Brahmin ascetics, the disciples of Bāvari, who are calling on the Buddha at Śrāvasti, just as related in the Suttanipāta (Fausbøll 1965: 176–202)\(^{14}\). (The Lalitavistara, Mahāvastu and Buddhacarita do not mention this episode).

Let us look at the narrative: Bāvari, a Brahmin ascetic and a native of Śrāvasti, had retired to a hermitage in Dakṣīṇāpatha, on the banks of the Gṛdaśāri. One day, a Brahmin asked him for five hundred pieces of gold, which Bāvari was not in a position to give him. Thereupon the Brahmin cursed him and foretold that his head would explode into seven pieces. Nevertheless Bāvari was reassured by a divinity: the Brahmin was unaware of the meaning of “head” and of “explosion of the head” and, to Bāvari’s question as to who might know the meaning, the divinity replied that a Buddha had appeared in the world (who would be able to answer him) and that he was to be found at Śrāvasti. Bāvari decided to send sixteen of his disciples to the Buddha. They paid him a visit in the Pāsaṇa Cetiya (rock temple) at Vaiśāli, and the Buddha answered all their questions.

Now it seems strange that this should be the episode in Plate VIIIc, because it depicts the Buddha, not in a grotto but under a tree, which is not the case in other reliefs of the same scene: we need merely cite the relief in the Werner Coninx-Stiftung in Zürich (Russek 1987: pl. 52) and the one in the Museum of Art and Archaeology of Missouri (Nagar

\(^{14}\) Suttanipāta’s Pāraṇaśas (Chap. V, vv. 976–1149) is considered by Lamotte (1958: 380, 775) to be one of the oldest Buddhist texts to be used as a source by the canonical sūtras. For this episode, see also Lamotte 1958: 380, 776.
1981: 13, no. 8). However, if we consider the relief in the Victoria and Albert Museum, just to cite another example (Ackermann 1975: 126–27, pl. LVb), where fourteen of the sixteen ascetics are shown (the relief is somewhat broken), it will be seen that the Buddha is portrayed under a mango tree. It is clear that this example deals with the same scene because here, as in the latter two cases, the same ascetic is shown with his legs crossed, his elbows resting on his knees and his head deeply bowed. It follows that this episode and the one in Plate VIIIc are identical.

Who is the “pensive” ascetic in our relief? Unfortunately we do not know, because the Suttanipāta does not furnish us with a basis for a reply. Nevertheless it must be one of Bāvari’s disciples, who is reflecting on the answers which Buddha gave to the different questions.

i) The Death of the Buddha

The relief, formerly in the Mardan Guides’ Mess and now in the Peshawar Museum, is one of the best known.

In the centre, the Buddha is lying between two sāla trees; to his right, Vajrapāni raises his right hand to his forehead in order to denote his grief; behind the Buddha are four figures (the Mallas), one of whom is incomplete; the other three make the same gesture. Three monks are seated on the ground before the Buddha on his pallet; from right to left: Subhadra, back view, with his head turned toward the second one, who is depicted in profile, his right shoulder bare and his chin resting in the palm of his right hand. The third one turns his back on the first two and rests his head in his left hand. Who can the last two monks be? Are they perhaps Ānanda and Aniruddha/Anuruddha awaiting the arrival of Mahākāśyapa in order to cremate the Buddha? The third monk, with some reservations, has been identified by Ingholt (1957: 93) as Ānanda.

Perhaps an explanation may be found in the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra (Rhys Davids 1881: 119–21) which relates how, following the Buddha’s death “[…] those of the brethren who were not yet free from the passions, some stretched out their arms and wept […]”, but those of the brethren who were free from the passions (the Arhats) bore their grief collected and composed at the thought: Impermanent are all component things!

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15 See Ingholt 1957: pl. 137.
16 The image of a “pensive” monk opposite the Buddha’s pallet was handed down over a long period, as is shown by certain reliefs from Sārnāth (Williams 1975: pl. 4, figs. 4, 5), by Cave 26 in Ajanta (Huntington 1985: 252–53, pl. 12.14), and by certain reliefs from Nalanda, as for example in the reliefs nos. 00076 and 12233 in the Nalanda Museum. It is possible that the 10th century relief in the British Museum (Snellgrove 1978: pl. 223) comes from the same site.
[...]” According to E.H. Johnston (1984, III: 7) this must be the passage referred to in the Tibetan and Chinese version of canto XXVII of the Buddhacarita: “[...] Then those who had not put away passion shed tears, and the company of mendicants, losing their steadfastness of mind, gave way to grief; but those who had completed the cycle reflected that it is the nature of the world to pass away and did not depart from self-control” (Johnston 1984, III: 111).

The episode is not mentioned in the Lalitavistara, since the narrative stops at the Buddha’s First Sermon, as does the Buddhacarita, which ends the story with the episode of the Enlightenment. The Mahāvastu makes no mention of this episode either.

As to other texts, Ed. Foucaux (1884: 390–98) quotes a passage from the Pāli Annals which reads as follows: “A l’instant où Bhagavat atteignit le Nirvāṇa, parmi ces Religieux qui n’étaient pas encore arrivés à l’état d’Arhat, quelques–uns pleuraient tout haut avec les bras élevés [...]. Mais les Religieux qui avaient obtenu la qualité d’Arhat, rassemblés et recueillis, disaient: – Les choses qui passent sont périssables, comment pouvons–nous obtenir dans ce monde qu’il en soit autrement”. The same happens to the monks who are with Mahākāśyapa when they are informed that the Buddha has been dead for seven days: “[...] quelques–uns qui n’avaient pas atteint la sainteté de l’état d’Arhat, pleuraient en levant les bras; quelques–uns tombaient comme renversés [...]. Mais les Religieux qui avaient atteint l’état d’Arhat, assemblés et recueillis, se réalignaient en disant: – Les choses qui passent sont périssables; comment pouvons–nous, en ce monde, obtenir durée permanente?” (Foucaux 1884: 394).

CONCLUSIONS

Of the Gandhāran reliefs analysed up to now, the various figures in a “pensive” attitude, with all their possible iconographic variations are usually deeply immersed in their thoughts, on the eve of momentous decisions, as is the case with Nanda and Siddhārtha in all the examples reviewed here. However, when no decisions have to be taken, the figures may simply be pondering deeply, like Asita, Māra, the sixteen pārāyaṇas, or the monks in the relief showing the death of the Buddha.

In the introduction, we saw how, according to M. Taddei, in India, these figures originated in Gandhāra and had as their prototype the Classical shepherd–philosopher. The Classical influence is undeniable, but, today, thanks to more recent research, or at least work done after Taddei’s studies, that scholar’s views leave some scope for elaboration.

First, however, I will touch briefly on the “pensive” figures in the
Classical world. This will be an excursus, since their typology is outside the scope of my research, and has been fully studied by G. Neumann (1965) and S. Settis (1975), to whose works I refer the reader.

If, in the Classical world, the gesture of leaning one's face on one's hand seems to have been used originally to express situations of "suspense" on the eve of a dramatic event, it was also one of sorrow, or utter sadness, as is illustrated by the numerous figures on the Attic funerary stelae; however, there is another category of figures who make a similar gesture, that of "meditating", which was introduced into Greece by the portrayal of Penelope reflecting on her status as a woman faithful to her long absent husband and on the conditions which such a choice imposes on her (Settis 1975). The latter gesture, in my opinion, is the one visible in the majority of the figures analysed above. In Greece, it was destined to enjoy a great vogue and was applied to certain mythical figures, and to people contemplating a major decision, even the murder of their parents or suicide.

This gesture was also made by philosophers and poets, when, in Greece, the purely medical concept of melancholy was merged with the Platonic "fury" and was expressed in the paradoxical proposition that melancholy afflicted not only tragic heroes, but artists, poets, philosophers and politicians, not least of all Socrates and Plato (Klibansky 1985: 12–39).

Not only philosophers and poets were affected by melancholy, but also Cronus/Saturn, who was characterized by a sad and meditative elderliness. The sombre and solitary god, the king of the underworld, banished to the nether regions or beneath the vastness of the sea. Once Cronos becomes equated with Saturn, this divinity also assumes a melancholy cast of thought, to the point that Ptolemy includes thinkers amongst those governed by Saturn, and it is Saturn, the thinker, who is portrayed, with his head resting on his left hand, on the tomb of Cornutus, the symbol of the gloomy stillness of death (Klibansky 1985: 127–28, 131–32).

At this point, although it is later than some of the Gandhāran reliefs examined above, one is reminded of the Mithraic stele from the old Villa Altieri (2nd century A.D.?), with the bull-slaying god between the two torch bearers (Fig. 1), one symbolizing the warmth of life, and the other, seated on the left of the divinity with his head bent and leaning on his left hand, cold and death. It is interesting to note that Cautopates, in Classical art, is generally depicted as standing, rather than sitting, as can be seen from the numerous reliefs analysed by M.J. Vermaseren (1956 and 1960).

But, to return to Saturn, he remains ambivalent, because, besides being hard-hearted, the god of death, the cold god of hidden malice, he is also Φανώv, the resplendent planet, the god Ninib of the Babylonians, of whom almost nothing is known other than that he has at times been
considered to be the nocturnal substitute for the sun (Klibansky 1985: 127–28, 131–32).

Now this bipolarity makes one think of Māra, who is identified with death, although not the cause of it. In the Atharva-Veda he is called yama, mṛtyu, agha māra, pāpyān. As P. Eichenbaum Karetzky (1982: 77) points out, in the Atharva-Veda pāpa means ‘sleep, exhaustion, misery, old age, baldness, greyness, theft, bad deeds and falsehood’, all coming under the heading of ‘evil’. But Yama, the king of death, who reigns over the sub-solar universe, is also the solar cakravartin, the possessor of the knowledge of immortality and the one who provides the dead with their final abode in the kingdom of the sun. The resemblance between the two is surprising, as is the fact that, just as Cerberus accompanies Saturn, the dog is in association with Yama. But, and this is the main point, yama is also the name of the planet Saturn, who is regarded as
the son of Vivasvat and Chāyā. Does, then, a common substratum point to an affinity between Māra/Yama, Saturn/Cronus, Cautopates/Yama (?) and the "melancholy" figures who ponder on the impermanence of things, or who, in the case of a pensive Māra, symbolize this transitoriness? "[...]
E allora il Bodhisattva, rasi i capelli, avvolto nella tunica color arancione, qua e là vagando, giunse all’eremo dell’asceta Bhârghava. E in quel momento l’asceta, poggianta la guancia sulla mano, stava assorto nei propri pensieri. Così lo vide il Bodhisattva e gli domandò: 'dimmi, sommo vate, perché mai stai così pensoso poggiando la guancia sulla mano?' e l’asceta, rispondendogli disse: 'Le palme del mio eremo avevano d’oro i fiori ed i frutti ed ora mi sembrano divenute annose'. Il Bodhisattva replicò: 'colui per il cui potere, in quest’eremo, le palme avevano d’oro i fiori ed i frutti, ora turbato dalla presenza della vecchiaia, della malattia e della morte s’è rifugiato nella foresta. Se egli non fosse stato turbato dalla presenza della malattia e della morte questo sarebbe stato il suo giardino' " (Tucci 1967: 165): this is what we read in the Vinaya of the Mulasarvāstivādins, which E. Lamotte dates back to the 4th–5th century A.D. (1967: 165). Certainly, it could be objected that the Vinaya is a late work and is therefore not decisive in the matter under discussion. Nevertheless, there is nothing to prevent it from reflecting traditions handed down over a long period which might have been expressed in some of the "pensive" figures of Gandhāra.

Which is the oldest representation of a "pensive" figure in India?
I think we must look to pre–Kushan central India, and here I shall make a second digression.

First, let me state that, as I have mentioned in the section on the Assault by Māra, at Bhārhat there are not one but two representations

17 On the other hand Yama is also a twin, the god who in the Re–Veda "rules the spirits of the dead", he who has a twin sister, Yami, by whom he is mourned after his death, so that the gods, to make her forget her sorrow, create night. Then, why not relate Yama to Cautopates? It is true that, in the Vedas, it is Varuṇa who is often associated with Mithras presiding over the night as Mithras/Mitra over the day, so it is true that Varuṇa is called, together with Mithras, sindhū–pāti, "lord of the sea or of the rivers", and this makes us think of the myth of Cronus, god of the rain or of the sea; all the same it should be added that, in the Vedas, he is invoked together with Yama.

18 And at that moment the ascetic, resting his cheek on his hand, asked him: 'Tell me, O most eminent seer, why ever are you so pensive, resting thus your cheek on your hand?' And the ascetic said to him in reply: 'The palm trees of my hermitage had flowers and fruits of gold, and now they seem to have become aged'. The Bodhisattva replied: 'He, by whose power, in this hermitage, the palm trees had flowers and fruits of gold, dismayed by the presence of old age, illness and death, has sought refuge in the forest. Had he not been disturbed by the presence of illness and death, this would have been his garden'.
of the daemon lost in "thought", images which are absent from Sāncī and Bodh Gayā (Plates IX, Xa). The second of the two seems to have escaped the attention of Miyaji. These two reliefs have recently been re-examined by M. Spagnoli in a study to which I refer the reader (1986).

Plate IX shows the daemon, seated in lalitāsana with his left ankle on his right leg, leaning his head on the palm of his left hand. In his right hand he carries a staff with the end pointed downwards. To his left, the divinities, shown as standing, are celebrating the Bodhisattva's victory over Māra.

According to A.K. Coomaraswamy (1928: 392–93) and M. Spagnoli (1986), the artist has represented here the daemon "dismayed" by the defeat sustained. As noted in the section on Māra, Miyaji concurs in this view. The analysis of the texts to which I would refer the reader is also dealt with in that section.

In the second of the two reliefs (Plate Xa), Māra appears seated with his left leg bent and leans his left elbow heavily on his knee while he supports his head with his left hand. The staff, held in his right hand, is visible with the point turned downwards.

This scene has been interpreted in various ways\(^1\). However, in my opinion, the only valid approach is that of M. Spagnoli (1986). According to her, the artist has here sought to illustrate an episode after the bodhi, or, more exactly, the one in which Māra attempted to force the Buddha to anticipate his entry into nirvāṇa. The texts on which M. Spagnoli has drawn on are as follows — Mahāvastu: in the third week after the Enlightenment, the Buddha spent seven days walking backwards and forwards, while Māra, not far from the Enlightened One, was seated "ill at ease, dejected and filled with remorse. With his staff he wrote on the ground 'Gotama the recluse has escaped from my power, and hence I am sore distressed' " (Jones 1959: 269; cf. Spagnoli 1986: 226–27); Nidānakathā, where we read that, in the fifth week following the Enlightenment, a saddened Māra traces on the ground sixteen lines with his staff; each line stood for a reason why he had to admit why he was inferior to the Buddha (Rhys Davids 1879: 106–7; cf. Spagnoli 1986: 227); Lalitavistara (Foucaux 1884: 314; cf. Spagnoli 1986: 227–28): on the Buddha's refusal to enter nirvāṇa for the time being, Māra withdrew to one side much saddened, with his head bent. He drew some figures on the ground with a staff, all the while saying to himself that the Buddha had gained dominion over him.

According to M. Spagnoli (1986: 230–35) this episode may be con-

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\(^1\) For the bibliography on this subject, see Spagnoli 1986. For the dating of the Bhārhat reliefs, I follow W. Spink (1958: 95–104).
sidered as a continuation of the bold assault by Māra and his followers under the bodhi tree. As for the text which the artists at Bhārhat have drawn on, that scholar tends to prefer the Lalitavistara, because, as she specifies, this version of the story was already in existence and would have been sufficiently well known to be recognized by the faithful who visited the Bhārhat Stūpa.

The foregoing sections have shown that the oldest Gandhāran reliefs representing “pensive” figures are three in number: the one on the reliquary from Shaikhan Ḟherī, with Siddhartha in the “Great Renunciation”, and the two reliefs from Swat (Plates IVb and VIIb), with Māra. We have seen that, in these two, the first portrays Māra with staff in hand, but the second one without it, which goes against Miyaji’s opinion according to which it is only at Bhārhat that Māra traces the signs on the ground with his staff. On the other hand, if, in India, it is the two Bhārhat reliefs which for the first time portray the daemon with his staff, and, what is more, in a “pensive” attitude, why not consider pre-Kushan central India to be the source of inspiration of these works? And should this hypothesis be extended to all the “pensive” figures in early Indian art? If we believe so, 1) speaking of Māra’s soldiers lying on the ground, and often shown in divergent position, M. Spagnoli (1986: 230) maintains, contrary to P. Eichenbaum Karetzky (1982: 89) that, although the influence of Roman art is not to be ruled out, the origin of this formula is to be sought in pre-Gandhāran Buddhist art. And 2) as has been shown (van Lohuizen 1981; Faccenna 1974 and 1984), the oldest reliefs from Swat are those which, from a stylistic point of view, bear a more Indian stamp (compared with subsequent, more “Classical” ones). I therefore think that it is to pre-Kushan central India that one must look for the origin of the “pensive” Māra with his staff. But then, in Gandhāra, there are two separate traditions; the first one, exemplified by the relief from Butkara with the daemon with a cane, and the second one, without it. It is not impossible that, at a certain point, the two traditions fused, which may explain why, in Gandhāra, on the one hand, in the oldest of the three reliefs examined (Plate IVb), Māra is represented as holding a staff, while in the other he is shown without it. Instead, it seems that the Gandhāran artists drew on the Classical world for the representation of the Bodhisattva from Shaikhan Ḟherī as well as for the other “pensive” characters in the narrative reliefs (which seem to be absent at Mathurā). From the texts examined above, while Māra is described only once, in the Mahāvastu, as “deep in thought”, while in general he is wicked, discomfited, sad and dejected, the other “pensive” figures are generally people who may be sad, but their sadness arises not from a defeat but from a realization of the existence of grief and of the transitoriness of human
things. Above all, these figures, as in the Classical world, are facing major
decisions or the possible consequences thereof.

The tradition showing Māra without a staff is also present at Mathurā.
The relief in Plate Xb, from Jamālpur, is of extreme interest, because,
at the bottom, to the right of the Buddha in bhūmisparśamudrā, with
both shoulders covered and surrounded by the daughters of the daemon,
there appears the customary “pensive” figure with his cheek resting on
the palm of his left hand, who has been correctly identified as Māra by
G. Hockfield Malandra (1981: 130) and R.C. Sharma (1984: 201). Ac-
ccording to Sharma (1984: 201–2, 277), the relief forms part of the Mathurā
group which saw the “culmination of Gandhāra impact”.

Again in Mathurā, I think one could identify as the daemon the
“pensive” figure in the relief from Rājghat who is seated to the right
of Māra grasping a bow (Huntington 1985: pl. 8.33). Here too, the
Gandhāran influence is evident. If this figure is indeed the daemon, we
would have an example analogous to that of the later relief from Ram-
nagar (Plate XI), in which Māra is represented at least twice (and pos-
sibly trice). The first time he is shown standing, with the bow in his hand,
and the second time as seated in a “pensive” posture, with his head on
his left palm.

That the two reliefs from Mathurā display a marked Gandhāran in-
fluence is undeniable. However, for the reasons given above, as regards
Māra in thought, it is to pre–Kushan central India that we must look
for the model, since it is there, as M. Spagnoli has shown (1986), that
the oldest Indian representation of the daemon in his armour is to be
found. As further confirmation of this view, we may add that, since the
two soldiers of Māra’s army, who were present in the Bhārhut relief of
Plate Xa, have heads of enormous dimensions, we find the same warriors,
with equally disproportionate heads, not only at Sānci (Marshall & Foucher
1939, II: pl. 29; cf. Spagnoli 1986: fig. 4) but, also, at Rājghat.

The numerous Attic funerary stelae depicting standing figures resting
their cheek on their hand may be regarded as having inspired certain
Gandhāran figures in the same pose, such as the goddess of Kapilavastu
grieving over Siddhārtha’s departure (Plate XIIIa) 20, or the turbaned fig-
ure in the relief showing the closing of the Buddha’s coffin (Plate XIIb),
but I shall defer to some other day the study of the Indian figures, not
sitting, but standing in this posture.

In another paper of mine, to be published shortly, we shall see what,
at the outset, appears to be a gesture expressive of meditateness/

20 For this episode, see Foucaux 1884: 195.
reflection prior to a major decision, compassion/pain, was destined, with the passage of time, to become a gesture typical of some bodhisattvas, and eventually to be characteristic of the compassionate bodhisatta par excellence: Avalokiteśvara.

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