

# Some Begram Ivories and the South Indian Narrative Tradition: New Evidence

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Many of the Begram ivories rank amongst the finest works of art surviving from ancient India. Despite their profound interest, they are relatively small pieces of ivory and bone made in a wide variety of styles and techniques and probably by a large number of craftsmen from different regions and even at different times. The ivories were used to decorate wooden furniture, the wood having long since disintegrated. Many of them were imported from India and may have arrived in Begram already assembled into furniture while others may have been assembled somewhere near Begram, in eastern Bactria near the border of Gandhara (Map 1). The ivories were found in two sealed rooms, numbers 10 and 13, along with numerous other treasures that included bronzes and plaster casts of metalwork imported from the Greco-Roman world, Alexandrian glass, and lacquer work from China.<sup>1</sup> Neither the site of the Begram hoard nor the accumulation of objects contained within it provides us with definitive dates. The hoard is culturally heterogeneous which certainly suggests that it is chronologically heterogeneous.

The style of many of the ivories is Indian. Over the years, there has been much controversy as to their place of manufacture, as well as their date. They have been assigned to dates ranging from the first century BCE to the fourth century CE and have been compared to almost every major site of sculptural production within the Indian subcontinent. The reasons for this are intrinsic to the field of Indian art and archaeology. Since only a small percentage of ancient sites have been identified, excavated, and published, we are constantly restudying the same evidence over and over in hopes of somehow “re-dating” or “reassessing” them. Furthermore, the major regional sculptural schools were connected by trade routes and influenced each other so that styles frequently tended to coningle. Thus, despite the existence of clear regional styles, we often see forms or motifs in different regions at the same time.<sup>2</sup> Further complicating the problem, India’s reverence for the past makes it difficult to separate that which is truly old from that which is merely archaizing. To date, none of the theories regarding the ivories are universally accepted, and I do not propose to definitively solve the problems of date and/or provenance in this paper. What I will do is to insist upon the importance of the southern Indian contribution to the style and motifs of the Begram ivories

The Begram hoard was first excavated between 1937 and 1939 by Joseph Hackin and his wife Ria, and their initial pub-

lication of the hoard in the *Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan* 9 appeared shortly thereafter.<sup>3</sup> With regard to the ivories, Hackin compared some of them to Stupa I at Sanchi, while one very important one, Coffret IX (Fig. 6),<sup>4</sup> he placed from the end of the third to the beginning of the fourth century CE.<sup>5</sup> His second publication was posthumous, as he and his wife were both killed in 1941, but their notes were left in safe hands. By 1954, the second publication appeared in volume 11 of the same series with important articles by Philippe Stern, Jeannine Auboyer, Otto Kurz, and others, as well as important drawings by Pierre Hamelin.<sup>6</sup> Emphasizing a different group of ivories, and using different comparative material, Philippe Stern assigned most of the ivories to the first and second centuries CE but admitted that Coffret IX appeared stylistically somewhat later.<sup>7</sup> These two studies, as well as the excavation notes, remain the foundation upon which all subsequent studies have been made. That the Hackins were killed in World War II was not only a human tragedy but also an archaeological one, for it seems that there was much to learn from further excavation. In the 1970s, a team from the Archaeological Survey of India planned re-excavate Begram, but unfortunately those plans had to be abandoned.<sup>8</sup>

The majority of the Begram treasure was housed in the Kabul Museum, and many of its objects were lost or damaged during the war and civil unrest in Afghanistan. Despite this, new studies have made the ivories easier to study, at least from photographs, than ever before. In the recently published catalogue of the National Museum of Afghanistan,<sup>9</sup> covering the objects there from 1935 through 1985, Francine Tissot presents the ivories along with the proposed reconstructions of the furniture in which they were set, helping us to understand their context. Wisely, she cautions us when the reconstructions are speculative. The catalogue, complete with inventory numbers and references, also includes some unpublished material. While she dates the ivories to the first and second centuries or perhaps a little later,<sup>10</sup> the emphasis of the book is documentation rather than a discussion of the dating.

The detailed doctoral dissertation of Sanjyot Mehendale,<sup>11</sup> which is available on a website,<sup>12</sup> continues the process of organization. She separates the ivories into categories of subject matter and technique and brings together a vast amount of interpretive information. While she draws her own conclusions, she generously cites those taking other positions, creat-

ing an invaluable resource. Based upon recent archaeological evidence she has introduced the notion of a Central Asian component to several of the ivories, a subject that was not part of the earlier literature or archaeology. Mehendale concluded that the ivories were produced in the first century CE in the northwest, perhaps even in Begram itself, by artists trained in or conversant with other traditions.<sup>13</sup> Her study provoked a strong response from Lolita Nehru.<sup>14</sup>

Using other evidence, Nehru placed the origin of some of the ivories in Mathura in the second century CE. She also continued to address and expand upon the question of a Central Asian affiliation and reverts somewhat to Hackin's original dating, bringing it up to the early third century CE.<sup>15</sup> For one familiar with the art and issues of the Begram ivories, it is tempting to address each point individually; but that is not my intention. The avowed purpose of this article is simply to add some new information in a timely manner- and yet another article!- to the already vast bibliography in hopes that one day we will have a better understanding of the many complex issues surrounding the ivories.

My own interest in the Begram ivories began in the 1970s while I was researching my doctoral dissertation on the Buddhist narrative art of Nagarjunakonda, produced in Andhra Pradesh (Map 2) between c. 225 and c. 325 CE. The clear evidence of Roman trade and influence are seen in these Buddhist narratives, and perhaps there were even Roman craftsmen at Nagarjunakonda as reflected in the architecture of the so-called stadium.<sup>16</sup> The style of Nagarjunakonda was previously considered a unique outgrowth of the school of Amaravati, but recent excavations at the site of Phanigiri<sup>17</sup> show that the Nagarjunakonda idiom was more widely spread than hitherto known. The many parallels between the Begram ivories and the art of Nagarjunakonda - Indian style and foreign interpolations - brought me to the Kabul Museum to study these ivories.<sup>18</sup> Shortly thereafter, I published the results of my research in a student journal, *Marsyas*, in which I proposed a late date for some of the ivories - third to fourth centuries CE (reverting to Hackin) and Andhra Pradesh as the stylistic source for some of the ivories, but not necessarily the place of its production.<sup>19</sup> While that article was praised by many colleagues, support for my opinions never entered the mainstream of Indian art historical literature. Almost two decades later, I published a more developed version of that article as a chapter of my book, *The Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*.<sup>20</sup>

The bulk of my previous discussion of the south Indian element in the Begram ivories was based mostly on the sculpture of Nagarjunakonda. In light of new evidence, I wish to expand the geographic horizon of the discussion, for it can now be proven that many of the motifs and stylistic features of the Begram ivories were firmly rooted in the South, but farther west into Karnataka as well as Andhra Pradesh. I will refer to all of the sites under discussion as being part of the Amaravati School since Amaravati (Maps 1 and 2) had the longest Buddhist tradition and employed the best sculptors. Elements of

its style were probably transmitted by itinerant artists to many other sites.<sup>21</sup> One such site, Kanganhalli in Karnataka (Map 2), has only recently begun to be known. It has been excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India, and we are looking forward to its publication. Nevertheless, I wish to present a portion of this material at the present time. While we must await further studies of the Kanganhalli material for secure dates, the visual comparisons with the Begram ivories are striking and further reinforce the hypothesis that a group of the ivories had their stylistic sources in southern India.<sup>22</sup>

Kanganhalli, first excavated in 1994, is a highly significant stupa site of which a large portion of the sculptural elements survive. The sculptures provide us with everything we have long been looking for: sources and comparative material for the Andhra sculptural tradition, as well as for some of the Begram ivories. It is only a few kilometers from the more well-known site of Sannathi<sup>23</sup> on the east bank of the Bhima River, just south of Gulbarga. Thus both Sannathi and Kanganhalli were farthest west of the Buddhist establishments along a vast river system ending in the east coast of Andhra Pradesh. The two sites should be considered together, as well as with the Andhra sites. Like most Indian stupas, the one at Kanganhalli was built over a long period of time with continuous additions of both narrative reliefs and free-standing sculptures. The most important available information about Kanganhalli appears on the internet in two descriptive articles by D. Dayalan of the Archaeological Survey of India.<sup>24</sup> According to him, the drum of the stupa was in two tiers. While I am unable to judge definitively from the photographic documentation alone, it would seem that the stupa could resemble the one excavated at Chandavaram in the Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh.<sup>25</sup> In the Kanganhalli stupa, the lower portion is decorated with architectural representations alternating with blank slabs, while the decoration of the upper portion contains tall narrow slabs with jatakas and scenes from the life of the Buddha. Panels of a similar shape were excavated at Chandavaram. Based upon my experience with the stupas at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, I formerly believed the upper panels to be dome slabs. However, if Dr. Dayalan's description is correct, I think it best to refer to the two sets of panels simply as "upper" and "lower" panels, while awaiting the Archaeological Survey of India's further evidence for the reconstruction of their original positions.

Many of the Kanganhalli scenes are labeled and easily identifiable. Aside from the above mentioned narrative reliefs which appear to date from around the beginning of the Common Era, the reliefs on the ayaka platforms were added at a later date, perhaps as late as second or third centuries CE. Aside from the sculptures decorating the stupa, numerous Buddha-padas (feet) were found in proximity to the stupa. While it is difficult to determine their date they are certainly not part of the earliest group, but seem to date to around the late second or early third century CE as will be discussed below. The Buddha images appear to be even later. Inscriptional evi-

dence indicates that the site flourished between the first century BCE and the fourth century CE.

Based on my study of the Kanganhalli stupa, many of the sculptures of the lower group are stylistically related to or derived from the early Andhra sculptures at Amaravati and Jagayyapeta, while the panels of the upper portion reflect the art on the Great Stupa at Sanchi. The sculptures on the *ayaka* platforms appear closer in style to the early phase of Nagarjunakonda, as do the Buddha-*padas*, while the Buddha figures are quite similar to many of the late Buddha images throughout Andhra Pradesh.

The relationship between the upper panels of the Kanganhalli stupa and the sculpture on the Sanchi gates must be shown before we can compare both sites with the Begram ivories. In several of the compositions from Kanganhalli, for example Fig. 1, figures move diagonally forward from an undefined space behind them.<sup>26</sup> This approach to composition clearly parallels thus use of space on the panel of Indra on his elephant on Sanchi's south gate (Fig. 2).<sup>27</sup> As described by Stella Kramrisch, the "perspective of coming forth" was an innovative technique at Sanchi and contrasted to more conservative style on the upper architraves of the south gate of Sanchi. She believed this innovation to be directly influenced by the ivory carvers of Vidisha, who according to an inscription on the same pillar, donated a panel to the stupa.<sup>28</sup> One might suspect that compositional innovations were transmitted at least in part through ivories.

As there seems to be a connection between sculptures at Sanchi and ivory carvers, as well as the sculptures of Sanchi and the upper slabs at Kanganhalli, we shall also compare the Begram ivories to the Kanganhalli sculptures. Many of the compositional arrangements at Kanganhalli are both distinctive from other sites and repetitious within the site, thus making Kanganhalli sculptures easily identifiable. Even though the Kanganhalli sculptures may represent different Buddhist tales, the conventions of their representations are often virtually the same. For example, the figures sit on baskets in a circular group with a void in the center, relating to each other through hand gestures and body movement (Fig. 3). This central void, even when no baskets are present, is a constant feature of the sculpture. While this compositional arrangement appears in several variants at Kanganhalli, it also appears on small plaques from Begram. A striking example is from the side of a Coffret X (Fig. 4).<sup>29</sup> Although many of the Begram plaques are in poor condition, their compositions can be discerned through drawings (Fig. 5) of Pierre Hamelin as well as his reconstructions of the contexts in which they were placed.<sup>30</sup>

Coffret IX from Begram (Fig. 6) is probably the most beautiful, and the most widely published of all the ivories. The most interesting of the motifs are on the top of the ensemble (Fig. 7) which I had concentrated on in my prior publications, but now I can add further information from Kanganhalli. While I have found many parallels between the Begram ivories and the school of Amaravati, one motif I had not previously seen

in the school of Amaravati is a hip-girdle composed of large circular decorated links, presumably made of gold. There are two examples of it on top of Coffret IX from Begram (Fig. 8), on which the girdles hug the hips below the waistband of the cloth garment. The same girdle, with a spiral decoration on the links, appears on a female figure on a fragmentary narrative panel from the upper portion of the Kanganhalli stupa (Fig. 9). Thus, we have direct evidence of that the hip-girdle appearing on Begram Coffret IX was known in southern India.

Furthermore, the lid of Coffret IX is surrounded by an inhabited vine scroll with alternating flower and bird motifs (Fig. 10). A similar scroll (Fig. 11), to be discussed below, appears at Kanganhalli on the Buddha-*padas*, but before elaborating on this, I will suggest a possible date of the Buddha-*padas*.

The Buddha-*padas* from Kanganhalli are quite different from standard Buddha-*padas*.<sup>31</sup> In the usual type, the Buddha's feet are sculpted on a rectangular panel, with various motifs both on the feet and on the panel itself. At Kanganhalli, the entire composition is on a square base. In the center of the square is a circular rim creating a sort of a well which contains an incised lotus roundel upon which the Buddha's feet are placed. While this is the basic type, the lotuses are sometimes replaced by foliage or animate figures.<sup>32</sup> Although similar Buddha-*padas* have not been found elsewhere as independent objects, they are illustrated as objects of veneration in narrative reliefs belonging to the third century CE at Nagarjunakonda.<sup>33</sup>

Not all of the incised designs on the Buddha-*padas* are clear, but what survives is nevertheless quite interesting. To return to the comparison with Coffret IX, we note a so-called acanthus rinceau inhabited by alternating bird and flower motifs surrounding the central plaques. The rinceau itself has been compared to by numerous scholars, including myself, to Roman examples from the first to third centuries CE as well as to a stone sculpture from Mihintale in Sri Lanka and similar examples from Amaravati,<sup>34</sup> but none of these examples contain the alternating bird and flower motifs. The incised circular inhabited vine scroll containing alternating birds and flowers does indeed appear in at least two similar examples at Kanganhalli and provides us with an example I have long sought out.

The most interesting of all the Buddha-*pada* designs is one which is unfortunately difficult to illustrate from the photographs because the design is both lightly incised and eroded by the water which has collected in the central well. Nevertheless, it is clear that the design around the Buddha's feet consists of a group of figures arranged in a circle. While there are both male and female figures, they sit separately on either side of the circle. The female figures have been photographed separately and are important to my discussion (Fig. 12). Figure 13 is a tracing of the major female figures from the Buddha-*pada*. The two central figures, with their knees spread apart and their hair pulled up in a pony tail remind us of a more provocative example in a bone plaque from Begram (Fig. 14).<sup>35</sup> Other figures on the Buddha-*pada* are reflected in ladies on similar bone



plaques from Begram with their hair drawn up in a perky little pony tail (Fig. 15). Note also the similarity of the female figure on the left holding some sort of offering in her hands, perhaps a lotus, to the one on bended knee in the right part of the composition in Fig. 7. While one individual comparison may seem merely coincidental, that there are several such comparisons strengthens the possibility of a connection between Kanganhalli and the Begram ivories.

In my previous studies of the Begram ivories, I emphasized both Coffret IX (Figs. 6 and 7) and the ivory throne back (Fig. 16) which has been reconstructed using the original ivories and a few plaster casts. Both objects still bear stylistic indications of a late date: the elongated bodies and lively interaction of the figures well-known at Nagarjunakonda and the graceful twists and modeling of the bodies on Coffret IX pre-figure the fifth century wall paintings of Ajanta.<sup>36</sup> The major decoration on the throne back consists of decorated plaques alternating with spindles. This type of furniture construction is illustrated on narrative reliefs from the school of Amaravati dating from the second to the early fourth centuries CE.<sup>37</sup> The bottom part of the decoration is composed of spools, and a very similar entire back is illustrated on a third-century stone relief from Nagarjunakonda.<sup>38</sup> The pierced scroll-work on the ivory throne back from Begram (Fig. 17) also appears on the front of Coffret IX (Fig. 6). It is considered a variant of the rinceau on Coffret IX but, instead of a flowing scroll, the vines form individual compartments inhabited by birds and various animals, with little space in between them.<sup>39</sup> While comparative motifs were seen at Amaravati, we also find a good example of the scroll on the base of an inscribed figure of the Buddha Kanakamuni at Kanganhalli (Fig. 18). In this case, the compartments are inhabited by horses and the scroll is de-emphasized, which can also be seen in many of the variants at Begram.<sup>40</sup> The paleography of the inscription indicates an Ikshvaku date of about the third or fourth century CE.

In looking through the Begram ivories, one often sees birds of all types used as both border motifs and in reliefs with other figures.<sup>41</sup> One of the most attractive is a group of geese in flight with their wings spread, their long necks curving downward, and their head raised with branches in their mouths (Fig. 19). Geese (*hamsas*) appear in India on a large number of Buddhist works of art from Mauryan times onward.<sup>42</sup> These particular geese have been compared to similar ones on the Shah-ji-ki Dheri reliquary from Peshawar.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, in southern India, border motifs on Buddhist narrative reliefs are generally either floral or have geometric designs, although I know of one panel from Nagarjunakonda with a bird frieze.<sup>44</sup> These framing devices are usually made in matched sets often helping us to distinguish one site or one stupa from another when stylistic analysis is unclear. On the Kanganhalli stupa, birds frequently form the border motif on many of the upper panels and they also appear within the narratives. This is a pervasive rather than an occasional motif. But it is at Sannathi, near Kanganhalli, where we find our closest comparison to some of the birds on

the Begram ivories. A panel from Sannathi, with two surviving sections of narratives (Fig. 20), is in very poor condition. Usually only one detail, the lower right of the lower panel, is illustrated, for that detail shows so-called *yavanikas* or foreign ladies.<sup>45</sup> However, a row of *hamsas*, with their wings spread in a manner similar to the Begram example divides the upper and lower scenes. While M.S. Nagaraja Rao has dated this panel to the first or second century CE,<sup>46</sup> it appears to me to be somewhat later.

The upper register of the Sannathi relief panel (Fig. 21), while quite mutilated, is still of interest. The figure at what would be the center of the composition appears to be in a posture of meditation, with his left hand on his left leg and his right hand in *abhaya mudra* (the gesture “fear not”). He wears a bracelet on his left wrist and a belt around his waist. The closest comparison we have is the figure of Mandhata (Fig. 22), the central figure, in the Mandhata *jataka* from the Amaravati stupa, probably belonging to the third century CE.<sup>47</sup>

We have drawn upon comparisons between the Begram ivories and the sculptures of Kanganhalli/ Sannathi which were produced over a long period of time from around the turn of the Common Era to the third or fourth century CE. While many of the ivories appear to be early, rather late-looking ivories such as Coffret IX have both early and late features of the Kanganhalli stupa, suggesting that certain motifs or objects such as the belt had a long life. As has been suggested, some of the late features have earlier prototypes which relate to the Begram ivories. Hopefully, new excavations in southern India will clarify the relative chronology.

The Begram ivories vary in style and technique from the quite primitive to great masterpieces. Since this paper is solely about the ivories which reflect a south Indian style, there are many that we have not shown which seem to belong to quite different traditions. The most important thing to remember about the Begram ivories is that like any other ivories, they were luxury trade goods which were not necessarily produced at the sites at which they were found—although indeed some might have been. For this reason, we cannot attribute a source of origin to any ivory in the hoard, by comparing it to other ivories which may appear elsewhere for these ivories too may have been imports. Similarly, we cannot date the ivories by the dates of the other objects found with them, since the entire Begram hoard is chronologically heterogeneous.<sup>48</sup> What the newly excavated material does show us is that southern India remains a viable source for the style of several of the Begram ivories. My own approach has been to compare the ivories to relatively datable stone sculpture found in a reliable archaeological context and in regions which were known to have benefited from their positions along the massive web of trade routes participating in the trade between India and the West. While some of this material seems to reflect early dates, the later finds at Kanganhalli reaffirm the late date of some of the ivories. But most importantly, it reaffirms a close affiliation with the Southern Indian tradition.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The sealed rooms in which the objects were found were in the “New Royal City.” Opinions vary as to when the city was destroyed, a recent example being at the end of the third century CE: Osmond Bopearachchi, “Les données numismatiques et la datation du bazar de Begram,” *Topoi* 11 (2001[2003]): 419.

<sup>2</sup> After I had written several articles containing within them the importance of trade and trade routes, I was pleased to see my work neatly summed up in a paragraph by Robert L. Brown (“Vakataka-Period Hindu Sculpture,” in *The Vakataka Heritage, Indian Culture at the Crossroads*, ed. Hans T. Bakker (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2004), 64.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram: Chantier no.2, 1937*. Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9 (Paris: Les Éditions D’Art et D’Histoire, 1939).

<sup>4</sup> Neither the individual nor the groups of Begram ivories have agreed designations, and are occasionally known by the names and numbers assigned to them by the original archaeologists. In recent times, Coffret (box) IX has been referred to as Tabouret (footstool) IX. In fact we are not really sure of its function. As the function of the objects has very little relevance to our argument, we will continue to use the designations originally assigned to the objects by their excavators.

<sup>5</sup> Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram: Chantier no.2, 1937*, 14-22.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram, ancienne Kâpicî, 1939-1940*. Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 11 (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1954).

<sup>7</sup> Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram, ancienne Kâpicî, 1939-1940*, 49-50.

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication, the late Haribishnu Sarkar, Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, October, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Francine Tissot, *Catalogue of the National Museum of Afghanistan: 1931-1985* (Paris: UNESCO, c. 2006), 134-264.

<sup>10</sup> Tissot, *Catalogue of the National Museum of Afghanistan*, 134.

<sup>11</sup> Sanjyot Mehendale, *Begram: New Perspectives on the Ivory and Bone Carvings*, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University Of California, Berkeley: Spring 1997. More recent works by Mehendale are her articles: “The Begram Ivory and Bone Carvings: Some Observations on Provenance and Chronology,” *Topoi* 11 (2001[2003]): 485-514; and “Begram: The Heart of the Silk Roads,” in *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*, ed. Frederik T. Hiebert and Pierre Cambon, (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2008), 131-43.

<sup>12</sup> Sanjyot Mehendale, *Begram: New Perspectives on the Ivory and Bone Carving*, <http://www.ecai.org/begramweb/>. The web site is still in the process of being created.

<sup>13</sup> Mehendale, “Begram: At the Heart of the Silk Roads,” 143; “The Begram Ivories and Bone Carvings,” 487, Mehendale states “...the artists trained in different schools worked together in the same atelier, or community of ateliers in the same location. Each artisan would work in a distinct mode, but the ensemble would be formed and imagined as a unit, each piece with an eye to and literally on its partners. When combined with other arguments concerning provenance as discussed herein, this hypothesis supports the idea of ivory workshops as Begram itself.” This article is based upon Mehendale’s dissertation *Begram: New Perspectives on the Ivory and Bone Carvings*, wherein she comes to the same conclusions in different words. In all writings, she justifies her first century date by the putative dates of other objects in the hoard, citing those opinions that best suit her hypothesis.

<sup>14</sup> Lolita Nehru, “A Fresh Look at the Bone and Ivory Carvings from Begram,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology*, X (2004): 97-150. While much of her article centers around the important comparisons with Bactrian finds, she suggests that the original Indian source for many of the ivories could only have been Mathura. Nehru partially bases her arguments for style and dating with material from the excavations at Sonkh in Mathura.

<sup>15</sup> Nehru, “A Fresh Look at the Bone and Ivory Carvings from Begram,” 123; part of her support for the third century date is a study by Osmond Bopearachchi’s study of the coins found at the site. See Note 1.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Rosen Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), 10-11.

<sup>17</sup> While Phanigiri is not yet published, there are several photographs on the internet which give a good idea of the site. For good photographs see Peter Skilling, “Image and Interpretation: Life of the Buddha from Phanigiri, Andhra Pradesh,” lecture delivered at the Siam Society, August 16, 2007; <http://www.siam-society.org/events/328>; Skilling, “New Discoveries in the Buddhist Art of South India, The life of the Buddha from Phanigiri,” lecture under the series title, Les Conférences Iéna: Art, archéologie et anthropologie de l’Asie (EFEO-MUSÉE GUIMET), <http://www.efeo.fr/ConfIena/conferences/skilling.html>; Skilling has written an article on Phanigiri which is due to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Arts Asiatiques*. The best photographs of the sculptures are in an article not exclusively devoted to Phanigiri by Benoy Behl “Valley of stupas,” in *Frontline*, 21, Oct. 20-Nov. 2 (2002): <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2.421/stories/20071102504206400.htm>. While the pictures from Phanigiri are labeled “1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.,” the works of art illustrated were produced in the late third century.

<sup>18</sup> I was strongly urged to study the ivories by the late Dr. Moti Chandra.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Rosen [Stone], “The Begram Ivories,” *Marsyas* 17 (1974): 45-6.

<sup>20</sup> Stone, *Nagarjunakonda*, 91-7.

<sup>21</sup> In 1933, Stella Kramrisch pointed out that the leading artists worked at Amaravati, and the lesser ones went to other sites (Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981; reprint of London, New York etc.: Oxford University Press, 1933], 211.) Recent excavations have not contradicted her opinion.

<sup>22</sup> In the fall of 2007, Harry Falk and Christian Luczanits conducted a seminar at the Free University of Berlin on the site of Kanganhalli. The seminar centered on Luczanits’s extensive photographic documentation of the excavation site, and my own study was made from his photographs. The seminar concluded in January 2008 with a two-day symposium at which papers were given by outside scholars and invited guests. As I was invited to speak on the subject of Kanganhalli and the South Indian Buddhist tradition, I found myself re-visiting the subject of the Begram ivories and showing significant comparisons between Begram and Kanganhalli. I thank Christian Luczanits both for sharing these photographs with me and for his many wise and thoughtful observations on the site.

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of Sannathi see J. R. Howell, *Excavations at Sannathi, 1986-1989, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 93 (New Delhi: Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India, 1995). This volume was published as a collaborative effort between the Archaeological Survey of India and the Society for South Asian Studies in Great Britain. The site has a long history as two Ashokan rock edicts were found in the Chandralambha temple at Sannathi (Harry Falk, *Ashokan Sites and Artefacts: Source-book with Bibliography*, Monographien zur Indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie, Bd. 18 [Mainz: Phillip von Zabern, 2006], 130-31). Its dates range from the first to third centuries CE and it has features in common with other sites throughout the Deccan including Nagarjunakonda, and other related sites. An inscription found there refers to a yavanika (female foreigner) (M.S. Nagaraja Rao, “Brahmi Inscriptions and their Bearing on the Great Stupa at Sannathi” in *Indian Epigraphy: Its Bearing on Art History*, eds. Frederick M. Asher and G. S. Gai [New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta: Oxford and I.B.H. Publishing Co., 1985], 43) and foreigners with western hairstyles appear in the sculpture. A detail of the sculpture in question was published both by M. Sheshadri, “Buddhist Monuments in Mysore,” *Artibus Asiae* 34 (1972): pl. 12; and Nagaraja Rao, “Brahmi Inscriptions,” pl. 69. The sculptures in question are a detail of the lower por-

tion of our Fig. 15, but the details of the faces and hairdos are now no longer readable.

<sup>24</sup> We anticipate that the excavation reports for Kanganhalli will appear shortly. In the meantime, the most useful information about the site can be found on the internet: R. Dayalan, "A unique discovery of Buddhist site in India, <http://www.vbu.edu.vn/?aacecom+view&code=detail&id=60>; See also another article with same author and title at <http://www.vesakday2008.com/bainghiencuu/index.php?menu=detail&mid=4&nid=157>

<sup>25</sup> P. Rama Chandra Murthi, "Buddhist Remains at Chandavaram in the Prakasam District, AP" in *Krishnabhinandana: Archaeological, Historical, and Cultural Studies, Festschrift to Dr. V.V. Krishna Sastry*, ed. P. Chenna Reddy (New Delhi: Research India Press, 2008), 292-95; P. Ramachandra Murthy, "A Critical Study of the Hinayana Stupa at Chandavaram," in *Buddhism: Art, Architecture, Literature & Philosophy*, ed. G. Kamalakar (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2005) II, 297-301.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Meister, "Early Architecture and Its Transformations: New Evidence for Ve[r]nacular Origins for the Indian Temple," in *The Temple in South Asia*, ed. Adam Hardy, Proceedings of the 18th conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists, London, 2005, (London: The British Association for South Asian Studies, The British Academy, 2007). On p. 8, n. 6 Meister acknowledges that Monika Zin has identified this panel as illustrating a scene from the Mandhata Jataka. This is significant in because the Mandhata Jataka is very popular in sculpture of the school of Amaravati and the importance can now be extended into another area.

<sup>27</sup> Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, 157, description of pl. VIII, no. 33.

<sup>28</sup> I have taken the liberty of quoting from numerous class lectures and discussions with Stella Kramrisch during the 1960s and 1970s. John Marshall and Alfred Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, 3 Vols. (London: Probsthain, 1940; reprint Delhi: Swati Publications, 1982), vol. 2, pl. 18,a3 for the Indra panel is on the west pillar front face of the gateway; and pl. 18, b3 for inscribed panel, on the west, pillar east face. The two panels are contiguous.

<sup>29</sup> For variants of the composition, see Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram*, figs. 662-67. Mehendale ("The Begram Ivory and Bone Carvings," 508, fig. 8) has noted the similarity between my Fig. 2 and an ivory comb from Dalverzain suggesting that the works may have come from the same distribution center. As she has noted, several of the ivory finds in Central Asia have a particularly Indian flavor while others are purely Central Asian.

<sup>30</sup> The most convenient way to see the reconstructions of the various pieces of ivory furniture and to understand the ivories in their original context is in Tissot's *Catalogue of the National Museum of Afghanistan: 1931-19*. The composition with the void in the center is also seen on the top left of this piece of furniture (Tissot, 163). Related compositions are also seen on pp. 246 and 247. While many of the reconstructions of the drawings are in Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram*, additional ones are published in Tissot's book.

<sup>31</sup> An excellent study of this theme is Anna Maria Quagliotti, *Buddhadas: an essay on the representations of the footprints of the Buddha with a descriptive catalogue of the Indian specimens from the 2nd century B.C. to the 4th century A.D.* (Kamakura-shi, Japan, Institute of Silk Road Studies, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> This custom is followed at Bharhut, where various motifs are substituted in place of the lotus roundel. Compare for example the variants on the form in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *La sculpture de Bharhut* (Paris: Vanoest, 1956), pls. XXXVIII-XXXIX.

<sup>33</sup> In two examples (Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, 46, figs. 91-92), the feet are at an angle as if the aniconic image is "walking," while in a third example it is on an otherwise empty throne (Quagliotti, *Buddhadas*, 139, fig. 166; *Indian Archaeology, A Review, 1957-8*, pl. VI c left).

<sup>34</sup> For a summary of the literature see Rosen [Stone], "The Begram Ivories," 44, and Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, 97. While we tend to think of the survival or translation of Roman motifs as belonging to Gandhara, such motifs are equally at home in the school of Amaravati (see Elizabeth Rosen Stone, "The Sculpture of Andhra Pradesh and Roman

Imperial Imagery," in *Krishnabhinandana: Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Studies*, 100-06).

<sup>35</sup> Much has been made of the frank nudity of many of the Begram plaques; this particular figure is blatantly provocative that it suggests that the furniture was meant for private quarters rather than public rooms. The possibility that some of these ivories were intended for a bordello has been discussed. See Mehendale, "Begram: New Perspectives on the Ivory and Bone Carvings," 149-54 (Corresponds to 3.4.1 on the website).

<sup>36</sup> The bodily movements and gestures of the hands on Coffret IX have been noted by Nehru, "A Fresh Look at the Bone and Ivory Carvings from Begram," 123 where she observes certain late stylistic features including the hand gestures. For interesting comparisons that illustrate this point, see Rosen [Stone], "The Begram Ivories," 43 and ns. 45-51.

<sup>37</sup> Jeannine Auboyer et Jean François Enault, *La Vie publique et privée dans l'Inde ancienne IIe siècle av. J.-C.-VIIIe siècle environ*, Publications du Musée Guimet. Recherches et documents d'art et archéologie, 6 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959- c1979), part 6, *Le Mobilier*, by Isabelle Gobert, pls. 30-42. These plates show over fifty examples of chairs using this or similar type of construction from the sites of Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, and the related site of Goli. While many of them are, in fact from the third century, the examples from Goli are from the late third to early fourth centuries (see chronology in Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*).

<sup>38</sup> Rosen [Stone], "The Begram Ivories," fig. 14; Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nagarjunakonda*, fig. 272. Both studies contain important comparisons between the female couples on the throne back and the *mithuna* couples on the Buddhist narrative reliefs at Nagarjunakonda.

<sup>39</sup> Rosen [Stone], "The Begram Ivories," 44.

<sup>40</sup> For variants of this type of scroll work containing scenes with human figures, see Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram, ancienne Kâpici, 1939-1940*, figs. 169-74; 186-9.

<sup>41</sup> Mehendale, "Begram: New Perspectives on the Ivory and Bone Carvings," 130-132 (Corresponds to 3.1.3 on the website).

<sup>42</sup> Jean Phillippe Vogel, *The Goose in Indian Literature and Art*, Memoirs of the Kern Institute, 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962), 54-74.

<sup>43</sup> For a line drawing of the reliquary frieze, see Elizabeth Errington and Joe Cribb, eds. *The Crossroads of Asia: Transformation in Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan*, Exhibition Catalogue, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (6 October - 13 December 1992) (Cambridge: Ancient India and Iran Trust, c. 1992), 195.

<sup>44</sup> It appears on a narrative relief belonging to the third quarter of the third century CE: T.N. Ramachandran, *Nagarjunakonda 1938*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 71, (Delhi: Manager of Publication, Government of India Press, 1953), pl. XXXIII B.

<sup>45</sup> Nagaraja Rao, "Brahmi Inscriptions," 41, pl. 53.

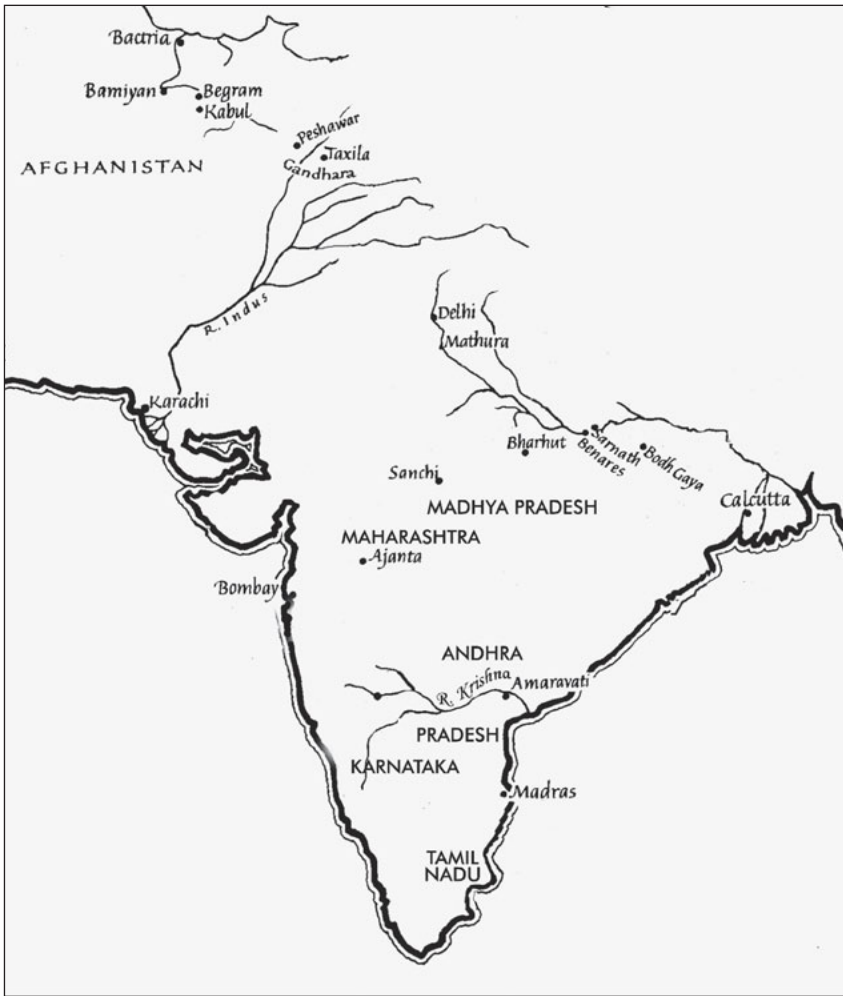
The surface of the piece seems to be greatly eroded but good details may be seen in early publications such as Nagaraja Rao, "Brahmi Inscriptions and their Bearing on the Great Stupa at Sannathi," figs. 68-69.

<sup>46</sup> Nagaraja Rao, "Brahmi Inscriptions," captions to figs. 68-69.

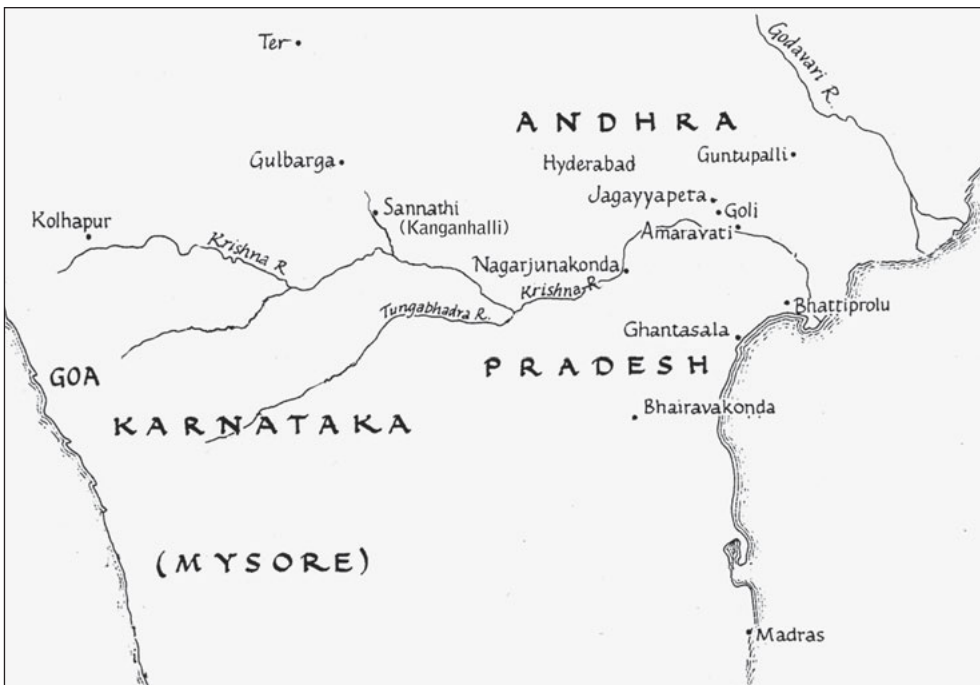
<sup>47</sup> A good photograph of this image is in Vidya Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997), 156, fig. 133. A simpler version of this jataka is in a European private collection (Elizabeth Rosen Stone, "The Amaravati Master": Spatial Conventions in the Art of Amaravati." in *Hari Smriti: Studies in Art, Archaeology and Indology: Papers Presented in Memory of Dr. Haribishnu Sarkar*, I, ed. Arundhati Banerji, (New Delhi, 2006), pl. 3.1.

<sup>48</sup> For an interesting discussion of a hoard which contains objects belonging to several time periods, see Richard Daniel De Puma in "The Roman Bronzes from Kolhapur," in *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade*, eds. Vimala Begley and Richard Daniel De Puma (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 82-112.

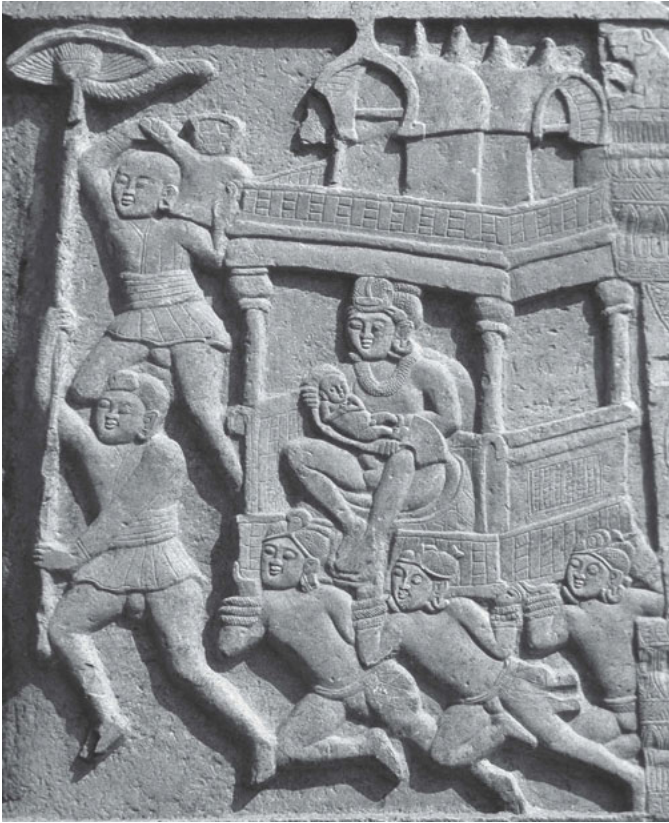




Map 1: South Asian Subcontinent. Courtesy, Richard E. Stone, adapted from Benjamin Rowland, Jr. *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1953), xviii.



Map 2. Major sites of the Amaravati School of Sculpture. Courtesy, Richard E. Stone, adapted from J.C. Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, reprint 1990), p. 14, map of Southern India.



1. Mandhata *Jataka* (?). *In situ*, Kanganhalli (Karnataka, India). Limestone. Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 1)



2. Indra and his cortege. *In situ*, South Gate, Stupa I, Sanchi. Stone. Author's Photograph. (See Colour Plate 2)



3. Unidentified narrative relief. *In situ*, Kanganhalli (Karnataka, India). Limestone. Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 3)



4. Three women and a child. Detail of Coffret X, Begram (Afghanistan). Ivory; 11.5 x 11.7 x 0.8cm. After Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram. Chantier no.2 (1937)* Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9, (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1939), Vol. 2, pl. LXIII, fig. 190.





5. Reconstruction of Coffret X. Drawing by Pierre Hamelin. After Joseph Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram, ancienne Kâpicî, 1939-1940*. Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 11 (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1954), Vol. 2, fig. 652.



6. Coffret IX. Begram (Afghanistan), as displayed in the Kabul Museum. Ivory; h. ca. 30.5 cm. Photograph courtesy of the American Institute for Indian Studies.



7. Top of Coffret IX. Begram (Afghanistan). Ivory; 46.5 x 29 x .04 cm. From Joseph Hackin, *Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Begram, ancienne Kâpicî, 1939-1940*. Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 11 (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1954), Vol. 2, fig. 233. (See Colour Plate 7)





8. Seated woman holding a mirror. Detail of fig. 7. After Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologique à Begram: Chantier no.2 (1937)* Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9, (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1939), Vol. 2, pl. LVIII, fig. 176.



9. Detail of an unidentified narrative relief. *In situ*, Kanganhalli (Karnataka, India). Limestone. Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 5)



10. Vine scroll. Detail of fig.7. After Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologique à Begram: Chantier no.2 (1937)* Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9, (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1939), Vol. 2, pl.LXI, fig. 183.





11. Fragment of a *Buddhapada*. *In situ*, Kanganhalli (Karnataka, India); Limestone. Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 7)



12. Detail of a *Buddhapada*. *In situ*, Kanganhalli (Karnataka, India). Limestone. Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 8)



13. Traced drawing of Fig. 12. Courtesy, Richard E. Stone.



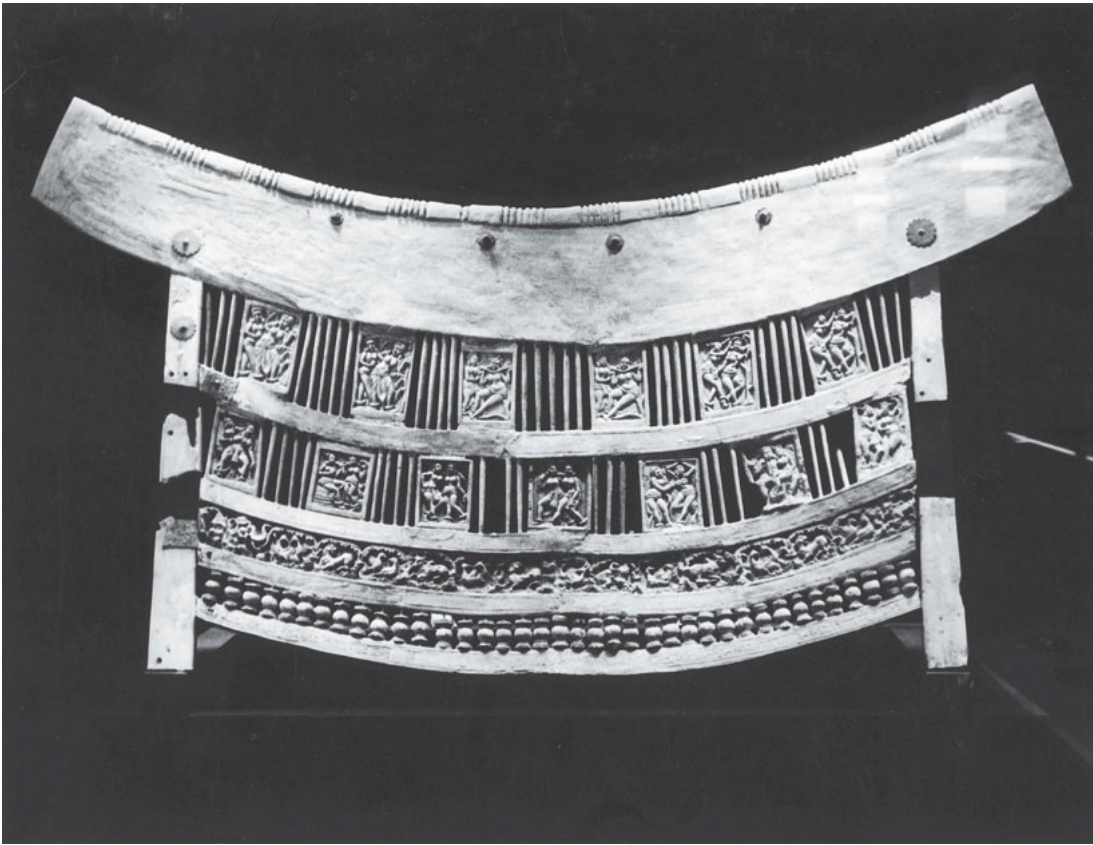
14. Woman seated on a cushion. Begram (Afghanistan). Bone; 6.7 x 6.1 x 0.19 cm. After Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram: Chantier no.2 (1937)* Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9, (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1939), Vol. 2, pl.XLI, fig. 88.



15. Woman seated on a basket holding a cup. Begram (Afghanistan). Bone; 7.8 x 7.3 x 0.19 cm. After Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram: Chantier no.2 (1937)* Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9, (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1939), Vol. 2, pl. XL, fig. 84.







16. Throne back, as reconstructed after drawing by Pierre Hamelin. Begram (Afghanistan). Ivory; ca. 61 x 91.4 cm. Kabul Museum. Photograph courtesy of the American Institute for Indian Studies.



17. Vine Scroll. Detail of Fig. 16. Photograph courtesy of the American Institute for Indian Studies.





18. Detail from base of a statue of the *Buddha Kanakamuni*. *In situ*, Kanganhalli (Karnataka, India). Limestone. Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 9)



19. Frieze of geese in flight. Begram (Afghanistan). Bone; 2.7 x 15.6 cm. After Joseph Hackin, *Recherches archéologiques à Begram: Chantier no.2 (1937)* Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan 9, (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1939), Vol. 2, pl.LXX, fig. 218.



20. Unidentified relief. Sannathi (Karnataka, India). Limestone. District Museum, Gulbarga (Karnataka). Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 6)





21. Detail of Fig. 20. (See Colour Plate 10)



22. Mandhata *Jataka*. Ca. second to third century CE. Section of a railing from the Amaravati stupa (Andhra Pradesh, India). Limestone. Government Museum, Chennai. Photograph courtesy of Christian Luczanits. (See Colour Plate 11)