



## Buddhist Architecture Exchanges between China and Pakistan

Lian Wei<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Pakistan Research Center, Department of Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Hebei Normal University, Shijiazhuang, China  
Email: weilian@hebtu.edu.cn

**Abstract:** This study explores the friendly exchanges in Buddhist architecture between China and Pakistan from a geographical perspective. It probes mainly into the exchanges occurring from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD between ancient China and ancient Pakistan (the region where Pakistan is presently located). With the channels for exchanges between China and South Asia opening up and the Silk Road being established, the large-scale eastward spread of Buddhism became possible, creating opportunities for Buddhism communication between people of the two nations. The design and construction of Chinese Buddhist temples, pagodas and grottoes exhibit features typical of Buddhist architecture in ancient Pakistan, particularly the Gandhara Buddhist sculpture art that has profound influence on Buddha statues in China. In over a thousand years Chinese Buddhist architecture absorbed elements from that of ancient Pakistan, yet created its unique Chinese style, showing a perfect integration of the two cultures. The Buddhist architecture exchanges between ancient China and ancient Pakistan have far-reaching significance in promoting cultural communication and strengthening the friendship between people of the two nations.

**Keywords:** Buddhist architecture, exchanges, culture, Gandhara

### Introduction

It is generally believed that the friendly exchanges between China and Pakistan began with the establishment of their diplomatic relations in 1951. However, this notion fails to reflect the whole picture of friendly exchanges between the two peoples. The exchanges between China and Pakistan can be traced back to the 1st century AD when Buddhism was firstly introduced to China. Therefore, defining their friendly exchanges by the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations greatly underestimates the depth and breadth of their cultural interactions.

Pakistan was a part of India before their partition in 1947.<sup>[1]</sup> Studies in this field have mostly been conducted from the perspective of political regions, equating ancient India with present-day India, which has obscured the friendly exchanges between ancient Pakistan (the region where Pakistan is presently located) and ancient China. However, evidence supporting these exchanges has been found in numerous ancient Chinese books, including the Chinese version of Buddhist Scriptures, which recorded the names of ancient kingdom located in present-day Pakistan as follows: (1) Gandhara or Xiangxing, Xiangfeng, etc., which is located in the large area in the north of Pakistan with Peshawar as the center; (2) Wuzhangna, also known as Wuchang or Youtiannang, located in the Swat River Basin in the northernmost part of Pakistan; (3) Taxila, the ruins of which are located in the northwest of Rawalpindi, Pakistan; and (4) Sindhu. Originally known as the name of a river, i.e. the Indus River, it was later used to name the country India. In a narrow sense, however, Sindhu refers to the middle and lower reaches of the Indus River in central Pakistan.<sup>[2]</sup>

This study explores the Buddhist architecture exchanges between China and Pakistan from a geographical perspective. It probes mainly into the exchanges occurring from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. During this period, channels for communication between China and South Asia opened up and the Silk Road was established. There was large-scale eastward spread of Buddhism from ancient Pakistan to ancient China. Buddhist temples, pagodas and grottoes thrived during this period, particularly in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. The heyday of cave carving spanned from the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) to the Tang Dynasty (618-907)<sup>[3]</sup>, during which many large grottoes were constructed. After the Tang Dynasty, the enthusiasm for constructing grottoes began to fade. Chinese Buddhist temples and pagodas gradually established their own styles and were less influenced by exotic elements.

### Establishment of China-Pakistan contact and Eastward Spread of Buddhism to China

#### *Similarities between the Two Ancient Civilizations:*

Both ancient China and ancient Pakistan are renowned for their splendid civilizations, exhibiting a high degree of similarity in urban planning and construction.

[Received 11 June 2023; Accepted 25 June 2023; Published (online) 30, September, 2023]



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

The famous Indus Civilization originated in present-day Pakistan. The ancient urban ruins discovered in Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, located in present-day Pakistan, are known as the “Indus River Valley Civilization” or “Harappan Civilization”.<sup>[4]</sup> This civilization flourished from 2300 BC to 1750 BC and is considered the earliest urban civilization in the Indian subcontinent. The ruins display a grand urban design, planned on a grid system with streets running in all directions. These ruins include both residential and non-residential structures, featuring a well-organized and efficient drainage system that still impresses people to this day.

In the central period of urban development in the Indus River basin, urban construction in ancient China also thrived, with similar features in architectural planning and techniques. One of the most notable examples is the Erlitou cultural site located in Yanshi, Henan Province, which features the earliest known urban road network in China.<sup>[5]</sup> Its layout served as the basis for ancient Chinese urban planning system. This site flourished from the 21st century BC to the 16th century BC, which corresponds roughly to the same period when the Harappan Civilization existed.

Thousands of years ago, the two ancient civilizations exhibited a high degree of similarity in urban planning and construction. With the opening of the communication channel between China and South Asia, exchanges between the two civilizations have become increasingly frequent.

#### ***Establishment of Contact between China and South Asia:***

According to Jin Kemu, an esteemed Chinese researcher of Indian culture, during China’s Qin and Han Dynasties (from 221 BC to 220 AD), channels for exchanges between China and South Asia (particularly India) were opening up and preliminary contacts were established.<sup>[6]</sup> Sima Qian, a renowned Chinese historian of the Western Han Dynasty, mentioned Zhang Qian’s mission to the Western Regions in his *Historical Records: the Biography of the Southwest Barbarians*. “When living in Tokhgra (also Tochari, one of the ancient states in the Western region), I (Zhang Qian) saw cloth from Shu (an abbreviation for Sichuan province in China) and bamboo sticks from Qionglai (located in Sichuan province in China). I inquired about their origin and was told that they were from the southeast Sindhu.” “Sindhu” is a phonetically translated name used by the Chinese civilization from the pre-Qin period to the Sui and Tang Dynasties, referring to the civilized region on the Indian subcontinent, with the scope of the present Indus River Basin area.<sup>[7]</sup> These records serve as evidence that commodities such as Qiong bamboo sticks and Shu cloth were traded with India through the “Shu-Sindhu Road” during the Western Han Dynasty. They can be considered reliable written records of cultural exchanges between ancient China and South Asia. Zhang Qian’s expedition to the western regions marked the commencement of the Silk Road. This new passage facilitated increased exchanges between China and South Asia.

Chinese people’s records of the architectural skills of South Asian people can be traced back to the Han Dynasty. The craftsmanship of engraving designs and hollowing out materials in architecture, as is demonstrated by the people of Koppen, was documented in *The History of the Former Han Dynasty* by Ban Gu, a renowned Chinese historian of the Eastern Han Dynasty. In ancient times, the Koppen region encompassed present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan and part of Kashmir. From the Western Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, Koppen encompassed the valley between Kafirstan in Afghanistan and the middle and lower reaches of the Kabul River, including Peshawar in Pakistan and Western Kashmir.<sup>[8]</sup> Similarly, South Asians have long been familiar with Chinese architectural techniques. In 428 AD, the king of an Indian kingdom sent messengers to China who said that China has solemn palaces and flat streets. These records provide reliable evidence for the architectural exchanges between ancient China and ancient South Asia.

#### ***Gandhara Buddhist Culture from the Kushan Empire:***

Gandhara kingdom was located in the South Asian subcontinent in the 6th century BC. with Taxila (near Islamabad) as its capital city. The core areas of the kingdom included northeast Pakistan and the eastern part of Afghanistan. The territory of Gandhara Kingdom varied in different historical periods. In the first century AD, the Kushan Empire founded by the Yuezhi people gained control of Gandhara. During the reign of King Kaniska I (127-151 A.D.), the capital city was Purusapura, which is now Peshawar, the capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in Pakistan. The Kushan Empire witnessed a golden period of Gandhara. King Kaniska I converted to Buddhism and built numerous Buddhist stupas throughout the kingdom, creating a conducive environment for the development of Gandhara art.<sup>[9]</sup> A Buddhist Pagoda called Queli Stupa was built in Peshawar during this period. Yang Xuanzhi of the Northern Wei dynasty wrote in his *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang: Song Yun and Hui Sheng’s Journey to the Western Regions* that the stupa is the first among all the stupas in the western regions. The records of the stupa were also found in the *Book of Wei Dynasty: a Biography of the Western Regions and the Kingdom of Gandhara*, stating that it was “seventy feet high, with an enormous girth of three hundred steps.” Xuanzang, an eminent Chinese monk in the Tang Dynasty, once made a special visit there.

During the period of Kushan Empire, Gandhara became a gathering place of eminent monks as well as a center for cultural exchanges between the East and the West.<sup>[10]</sup> By that time, the Silk Road had already been established, making possible the spread of Buddhism both by land and by sea.<sup>[11]</sup> The Kushan Empire played a very important role in the eastward spread of Buddhism into China. The territory of the Kushan Empire at that time spanned Central Asia and South Asia, covering the areas where the Silk Road threaded its way.<sup>[12]</sup> Due to the ardent sponsorship of the King

Kaniska I, Buddhism gradually spread into the vast areas of northwest India and even Central Asia, and finally entered the mainland of China.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **Origin of Chinese Buddhist architecture and its Main Forms**

The records of the spread of Buddhism in the Eastern Han Dynasty are quite mythical. As is recorded in *the Book of Later Han Dynasty's Biography of the Western Regions*, in 64 AD. Liu Zhuang, Emperor Ming of the Eastern Han Dynasty, dreamed of a golden man, which he believed symbolized the Buddha and auspiciousness. Consequently, the emperor dispatched envoys to the western regions to explore Buddhism. In 67 A.D., the Han envoys, along with two distinguished Sindhu monks, Kāśyapamātanga and Chu Falan, arrived in Luoyang with Buddhist scriptures and statues carried by white horses. The local government made Honglu Temple their guest house. "Temple" originally referred to a government office during the Han Dynasty, but later became a specific term for Chinese Buddhist temples.<sup>[14]</sup> In 68 A.D., Emperor Ming commissioned the construction of the White Horse Temple outside the Yong Gate of Luoyang in honor of the white horse that carried the Sutra. It was in this temple that the two distinguished Sindhu monks translated the Sutra in Forty-Two Sections, which was the first Buddhist Sutra in China.

There have always been doubts about the reliability of Emperor Ming's dream. What is reliable is that it was during his reign that envoys were sent for Buddhism and the White Horse Temple was built. In the cultural sense, the spread of the dream deepened the cultural exchanges between east and west, and promoted the eastward spread of Buddhism.

From the Han Dynasty, Buddhist scriptures were translated and introduced to China by foreign monks who came to China. Many of these monks were from Kushan Empire (the region where present-day Pakistan is located). Chinese monks, in turn, made pilgrimages to the western regions to seek Buddhist scriptures. Along with the exchanges of Buddhism, Buddhist architecture began to thrive. The Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties witnessed numerous Buddhist pagodas, temples and grottoes being established, mostly influenced by Buddhist style of ancient Pakistan. For instance, Yungang Grottoes built in the Northern Wei Dynasty perfectly absorbed the Gandhara sculpture art, which was typical of ancient Pakistan.

#### ***Buddhist Architecture Exchanges and Its Major Forms:***

Prior to Buddhism's arrival, Chinese culture had already been in existence for nearly 2000 years. Chinese architecture had an even longer history than what is found in written records.<sup>[15]</sup> By the time Buddhism was introduced to China, Chinese craftsmen had already amassed significant experience in creating a unique architectural system that encompassed various forms of architecture, including houses, palaces, government offices, workshops, warehouses and spiritual structures such as the traditional Chinese altar and temple for offering sacrifices to Heaven and Earth and the God of Cereals. It was on this foundation of accumulated architectural knowledge that Chinese Buddhist architecture began to thrive.<sup>[16]</sup>

#### **(1) Buddhist Temple**

As has been mentioned earlier, the White Horse Temple constructed during China's Han Dynasty has connections to the distinguished monks of ancient India, Kāśyapamātanga and Chu Falan. Records of the White Horse Temple can be found in various sources, including *the Biography of Eminent Monks*, a Buddhist history book by Huijiao, a monk from the Southern Dynasty of China, and *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang*, an ancient Chinese Buddhist history book written by Yang Xuanzhi from the Northern Wei Dynasty. *The book of Wei*, the earliest comprehensive historical record of Buddhism in China, also offers a description of the White Horse Temple's design and construction, stating that it is adorned with Buddhist images and exquisite paintings in a square form. The book further explains that the construction of palaces and pagodas follows the typical rules of ancient Indian style.

For a long time, the White Horse Temple has been recognized as "the earliest Buddhist temple in China" and the first officially recognized place for translating Buddhist scriptures. Therefore, it is regarded as the source and "ancestral chamber" of Chinese Buddhism. Two eminent Indian monks, Kāśyapamātanga and Chu Falan, are honored as the ancestors of Chinese Buddhism. Their statues were built in the grottoes by the side of Longhong Cave of Flying Peak, located in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. On the right side of their statues are the statues of white horses carrying Buddhist Sutra.

In recent years, the Putong Pagoda Temple located in Nangong City, Hebei Province, has attracted the attention of scholars who study and explore local historical documents. According to the historical records of Nangong County, the Putong Pagoda in the temple was built in the 10th year of Yongping (67 A.D.) during the Eastern Han Dynasty. Other evidence confirming the construction time of this pagoda includes records made during the reign of Emperor Guangxu in the Qing Dynasty when the Putong Pagoda Temple was rebuilt. Additionally, an inscription on the back of a bronze Buddha found in the Putong Temple reads "built in the 10th year of Yongping" (67 A.D.). According to these documents, the Putong Pagoda Temple was built under the guidance of Kāśyapamātanga and Chu Falan, two eminent monks from Sindhu. Its construction began a year earlier than the White Horse Temple in Luoyang. Therefore, it can be inferred that on their way to Luoyang, the two monks may have stayed in Nangong County, where they helped build the Putong Pagoda. The construction of the Putong Pagoda continued after they left until it was completed five years later.

Unfortunately, the Putong Temple was destroyed in a flood during the Ming Dynasty in 1478 AD, but the Pagoda inside the temple remained. Today's Putong Temple was reconstructed in 1992. As the "first Buddhist Pagoda in China", the Putong Pagoda has undergone eight major repairs<sup>[17]</sup> throughout its two-thousand-year history. Thanks to careful maintenance, it has been preserved and is considered a treasure of Buddhist architecture in China.

Towards the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty in 193 AD, a man called Ze Rong generously funded the construction of Buddhist temple and pagoda in Xiapi (now in Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province). The pagoda built under his direction is a combination of Indian stupa and Chinese wooden structure. It became the archetype for early Chinese Buddhist pagodas and its layout persisted until the early Tang Dynasty. Given the period of its construction, Ze Rong's Buddhist pagoda was very likely to be influenced by the ancient Indian style.<sup>[18]</sup>

During the Jin Dynasty, Buddhist monks from South Asia played significant roles in constructing Buddhist temples in China. One such monk was Buddhacinga. He became a monk at the age of nine in the state of Wuchang, presently located in the Swat River basin in northern Pakistan. In 310 AD, when he was 79 years old, Buddhacinga arrived in Luoyang. As is documented in the ninth volume of *the Biography of Eminent Monks- the biography of Buddhacinga*, he aided in the construction of 893 Buddhist temples in the prefectures he visited. During this period, Chinese monks also travelled westward for Buddhist sutras. They kept records and drawings of Buddhist architecture<sup>[19]</sup>, such as the Buddhist temples mentioned in *the Biography of Fa-Hsien* (also known as *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*) and the Queli Buddhist Stupa (located in the kingdom of Gandhara) in *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang*, which offer compelling evidence. These records and drawings may have influenced the style of Chinese Buddhist temples at the time.

During the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), Buddhism thrived, particularly during the Northern Wei Dynasty. In Luoyang alone, there were over 1300 Buddhist temples. The records of the Yongning Temple indicate that the temple had a gate at the front with a pagoda as the central building. Behind the pagoda was the temple hall. Liu Dunzhen, a renowned Chinese architectural historian and educator, wrote in *The History of Ancient Chinese Architecture* that "the layout of early Chinese Buddhist temples is roughly the same as that of India".<sup>[20]</sup> The pagoda, where the Buddhist relics are kept, is the object of religious worship and is therefore normally located in the center of the temple. Yongning Temple is typical in its layout during this period. The square-shaped temple yard layout, with a gate at each of the four sides and a central building, was inspired by Indian Buddhist temples and developed in combination with ritual architecture since the Han Dynasty.

During the Southern Dynasty in China, Buddhist temples were constructed in significant numbers, as is narrated in a poem written by Du Mu, a renowned Chinese poet from the Tang Dynasty. Du Mu wrote:

*"Four hundred eighty splendid temples still remain  
Of Southern Dynasties in the mist and rain."*

- Translated by Xu Yuanchong

Most of these temples were constructed in Jiankang (Nanjing, Jiangsu Province). During this period, Indian monks also contributed to the construction of Buddhist temples in China, leaving a significant impact on the development of Chinese Buddhist architecture. During the reign of Emperor Wen (424 AD - 453AD), a native Kopen named Dharmamitra came to Shu (now Sichuan Province) from India. He travelled along the Yangtze River to Jiankang, the capital city at the time and started translating Buddhist scriptures and preaching to the people. In 435 AD, Dinglin Temple was built on the Zhongshan Mountain under his direction.

During the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism thrived and the temples were known for their grandeur and magnificence. Temples in the Tang Dynasty can be classified into two main types in terms of their layout- the concave layout and the courtyard layout. The former prevailed from the Sui Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty, while the latter became dominant afterwards.<sup>[21]</sup> The typical layout of Buddhist temples during the Tang Dynasty also had a profound influence on the temples in the Song Dynasty. Some monks who arrived in China during the Tang and Song Dynasties possessed architectural knowledge and took part in the construction of the temples. As is recorded in *the Biography of Eminent Monks in the Song Dynasty*, "a temple was built in Longmen Mountain, with its design based on the western region." This indicates that during the early Tang Dynasty, Indian monks were involved in designing the temple buildings, with the layout and style based on the western region.<sup>[22]</sup>

## (2) Buddhist pagoda

Pagoda is one of the most significant architectural forms in Buddhism. Early pagodas in China were typically constructed alongside temples and were the main parts of the temple, like the pagoda and temple built by Ze Rong during the Han Dynasty. The pagoda in Yongning Temple of the Northern Wei Dynasty adopted the style by Ze Rong. As is described in *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang*, Yongning Temple has "a nine-story pagoda made of wood, 90 Zhang in height." These records not only confirm the prominent position of the pagoda inside the Yongning Temple, but provide detailed descriptions of the architectural style and scale of the pagoda.<sup>[23]</sup>

China's pagoda evolved from ancient India's pagoda, also known as stupa (stūpa), which is a commemorative Buddhist monument housing the sacred relics of Buddha or other saintly persons. *The Book of Wei* states that "after the Buddha passed away, his corpse was burned and his bones turned into small, hard, grain-shaped objects called 'śarīra' (Buddhist relics)". They were collected by the disciples, who put them into a precious vase and built a "stupa" to house

the sacred relics and show their respect. Xuanzang, an eminent Buddhist monk of the Tang Dynasty in China, also mentioned stupa in his *Buddhist Records of the Western World*.

The body of ancient Indian stupas resembled an overturned bowl and this style prevailed in the early Gandhara stupas. The Dharmarajika stupa in Taxila is a representative of the early Gandhara stupas.<sup>[24]</sup> Around the starting of the Christian era, stupa with vertical structure and square tower base emerged.<sup>[25]</sup> The octahedral stupa originated in the southern part of Gandhara (now Taxila in northern Pakistan). With the spread of Buddhism to the east, the octahedral stupa also spread eastward. During the Northern Wei Dynasty, an octahedral central pillar cave appeared in the Qingyang Grottoes Temple in Gansu Province. During the Sui, Tang and Five Dynasties, octahedral stupas prevailed<sup>[26]</sup> and gradually became a dominant structure of Chinese Buddhist pagodas.

Chinese pagodas are often octagonal or square in shape, with an odd number of tiers. Pavilion pagoda is the dominant type of the existing ancient pagodas in China, followed by the multi-eave pagodas.<sup>[27]</sup>

The Putong Temple Pagoda mentioned above is an octahedral pavilion-style brick-stone pagoda with nine tiers. The Xuanzang Pagoda of Xingjiao Temple in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province is the tomb pagoda of Xuanzang. It was built in 669 AD, five years after his death and is the earliest existing brick Pagoda in China. It also belongs to the pavilion type and is square in shape. The Songyue Temple Pagoda in Dengfeng County, Henan Province, is also a pagoda with a long history. It was first built in the second year of Yongping of the Northern Wei Dynasty (509 A.D.) and was expanded 11 years later. It is a multi-eave brick Pagoda. Additionally, we would like to mention the Chongsheng Temple pagoda located in the northwest of Dali City, Yunnan Province. Unlike other pagodas, it is comprised of three separate pagodas, including a square-shaped multi-eave pagoda that is one of the tallest brick pagodas from the Tang Dynasty.<sup>[28]</sup> The two smaller pagodas are octahedral multi-eave brick pagodas.

The pagodas mentioned above were all built under the influence of ancient Indian pagodas.<sup>[29]</sup> They are either in pavilion style or in multi-eave style. Some are single, some have twin towers or even more. They can be classified according to the number of their tiers (single or multiple), or to the number of their sides and angles (four and eight), all appearing in various types and having high aesthetic value. These pagodas vary in their building materials. Before the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, wooden and brick pagodas coexisted; after the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, there was a gradual decline of wooden pagodas.<sup>[30]</sup>

### (3) Grottoes

Grottoes are exemplary specimens of Chinese Buddhist architecture, consisting of caves built into the cliff walls and adorned with religious frescoes or statues. The period spanning from the fourth century to the tenth saw tremendous development of grottoes in China.

The statues found in Chinese Grottoes are mostly of the Gandhara style. At the beginning of the Christian era, cities under the governance of the Kushan Empire, including Peshawar and Taxila, rapidly developed and laid the foundation for the expansion of the Silk Road in northwest India.<sup>[31]</sup> Excavations of the Taxila site revealed magnificent Gandhara Buddhist grottoes with great artistic value along the Silk Road, extending from the northwest of India to the East, across the South Pass of Karakoram mountain and finally to Hotan, an area south of the Tarim Basin.<sup>[32]</sup> These grottoes had some influence on grottoes in the western regions and Yungang Grottoes.<sup>[33]</sup>

Along the Silk Road, the Bezeklik, Kizil and Kumutara Thousand-Buddha Caves, Xumi Mountain Grottoes, Maiji Mountain Grottoes, Bingling Temple Grottoes, Mogao Grottoes, Yulin Grottoes, Yungang Grottoes and Longmen Grottoes were all influenced by Gandhara sculpture art. Yungang Grottoes, for instance, exhibited a perfect integration of Gandhara Buddhist art into China's local art.

The construction of the Yungang Grottoes is generally divided into three periods. The early period saw the creation of the five major caves (16th-20th) between 460 AD and 465 AD during the Northern Wei Dynasty. Under the guidance of a monk named Tanyao, the craftsmen, mainly from Liangzhou (now in Gansu Province, China), creatively absorbed the essence of Buddhist Statue art from Gandhara, Mathurā and China's western regions to carve out the magnificent grottoes in the foothills of Wu Zhou Mountain. The "Tanyao Five Caves" had profound influence on later Buddhist statues.<sup>[34]</sup> The Buddha statues are tall and vigorous, with strong Gandhara artistic features and are regarded as the best-kept sculptures with Gandhara style in China.

The middle period started after the completion of "Tanyao Five Caves" and ended around the year 494 AD when Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei Dynasty moved the capital to Luoyang. The statues built in this period featured prominently the integration of Chinese traditional carving art and the art of Gandhara.<sup>[35]</sup>

The construction of small and medium-sized caves in the late period did not end until the Zhengguang Period (520-525) when Emperor Xiaoming ruled the Northern Wei Dynasty. It was the time when the sculpture of Buddha had been gradually integrated into the culture and art of Han nationality, which finally brought about the establishment of Chinese Buddhist art.<sup>[36]</sup>

### (4) Exhibitions of Gandhara Buddhist Art in China

In recent years, due to the increasing cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan, valuable collections of statues and pictures of Gandhara art have been exhibited in Buddhist centers and art galleries in China. These exhibitions

offered the Chinese people access to the origins of Gandhara art and Chinese Buddhist sculpture. The following table includes the main Gandhara art exhibitions in China in recent years:

Theme	Time	Place
“The Belt and Road” art exhibition of Gandhara Buddha Statue	July 2016	Jingci Temple Art Gallery, Hangzhou
“From Gandhara to Dunhuang” - Gandhara Buddha Art Exhibition”	August 2016	Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang
“Hometown of Buddha”-Gandhara Buddhist Art exhibition	February 2018	Henan Museum
“Buddha’s life” Gandhara Buddhist statue art exhibition	April 2019	Suzhou Hanshan Art Museum
Gandhara Buddha Art Exhibition	July 2019	Jiade Art Center, Beijing
Gandhara Heritage Along the Silk Road	March-June 2023	the Palace Museum, Beijing

**Table 1** the main Gandhara art exhibition in China since 2016

In the golden period of ancient Gandhara Buddhist art, the Silk Road was accessible for Buddhism to spread eastward to China. Today, the ancient Gandhara art is like a golden thread weaving the fabric of friendship between China and Pakistan in their endeavor to jointly build the “Belt and Road”.<sup>[37]</sup>

### Conclusions

Architecture is the carrier of history and architectural culture is an important component of historical culture that embodies human memories and emotions of their own history. Buddhist architecture has brought new types to Chinese architecture, altered the physical features of the cities, enriched the scenery, and left great wealth of cultural heritage. Exchanges of Buddhist architecture between China and Pakistan create both practical and aesthetic values, and promote cooperation and development. With the promotion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the architectural exchanges between China and Pakistan has a bright future. People of the two nations will enjoy the comfort and convenience brought about by modern architecture and pass on their friendship to future generations.

**Acknowledgments:** We acknowledge the support of Mr. Mazhar Alam, Co-founder of Pakistan Research Center of Hebei Normal University, for his generous advice on improving the paper. This research work was supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology Project “ ‘the Belt and Road’ Innovative Talent Exchange” (Grant No. DL2022003001L).

### REFERENCES

- [1] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 3). Shanghai People’s Publishing House.
- [2] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 3). Shanghai People’s Publishing House.
- [3] <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%9F%B3%E7%AA%9F/480477?fr=aladdin>.
- [4] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 6). Shanghai People’s Publishing House.
- [5] Xu, Hong (2015). Erlitou: A Key Point in the Early State Formation of China. *The Central Plains Culture Research* (4) : 52.
- [6] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 29). Shanghai People’s Publishing House.
- [7] <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%BA%AB%E6%AF%92/1815283?fr=aladdin>.
- [8] [https://www.sohu.com/na/427406551\\_120145143](https://www.sohu.com/na/427406551_120145143).
- [9] <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%8A%8D%E9%99%80%E7%BD%97/8769718?fr=aladdin>.
- [10] Guo Yaling & Wang Hua & Mazhar Alam (2022). Buddhist Exchanges between Ancient Pakistan and China, *Journal of Asian Civilizations*. Vol. 45, No. 2: 61.
- [11] Guo Yaling & Wang Hua & Mazhar Alam (2022). Buddhist Exchanges between Ancient Pakistan and China, *Journal of Asian Civilizations*. Vol. 45, No. 2: 60.

- [12] Liu Xinru (1993). The Features of Buddhism spreading eastward from Kushan Empire, *South Asian Studies* (3):41.
- [13] Wang Hongmou (2014) .The Eastward Spread of Buddhism and Cultural Exchanges During the Kushan Empire.*Chinese Culture Research* (4):59.
- [14] Liang Sicheng (1961). The Buddhist architecture in China. *Journal of Tsinghua University (Science and Technology)* (2): 51-72.
- [15] Liang Sicheng (1961). The Buddhist architecture in China. *Journal of Tsinghua University (Science and Technology)* (2): 52.
- [16] Liang Sicheng (1961). The Buddhist architecture in China. *Journal of Tsinghua University (Science and Technology)* (2): 52.
- [17] <https://www.visitbeijing.com.cn/article/47QqZhX65Xf>.
- [18] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 147). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [19] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 333). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [20] Liu Dunzhen (1984). *The History of Ancient Chinese Architecture* (pp. 87). China Architecture & Building Press.
- [21] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 333). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [22] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 335). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [23] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 337). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [24] Chen Xiaolu (2006). On the Eastward Transmission of Gandhara Art in terms of the Octahedral Stupa. *The Western Regions Studies* (4): 64.
- [25] Chen Xiaolu (2006). On the Eastward Transmission of Gandhara Art in terms of the Octahedral Stupa. *The Western Regions Studies* (4): 63.
- [26] Chen Xiaolu (2006). On the Eastward Transmission of Gandhara Art in terms of the Octahedral Stupa. *The Western Regions Studies* (4): 72.
- [27] <https://m.yuanlin.com/newsdetail/gj/29970.html>.
- [28] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 339). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [29] Xue Keqiao (1998). A General Survey of Chinese Culture: the Cultural exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 339). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [30] Liang Sicheng (1961). The Buddhist architecture in China. *Journal of Tsinghua University (Science and Technology)* (2): 64.
- [31] Pang Xiaoxiao (2017). The Expansion of Kushan Cities and the Silk Road in the South Asian Subcontinent. *The Western Regions Studies* (1) : 55.
- [32] Chao Huashan (2001). *The Light of Buddha: Buddhist relics in India and Central Asia*. Beijing: Cultural Relics Press.
- [33] Zou Fei (2017). On the excavation process of the Buddhist site of Taxila. *Journal of Dunhuang Studies* (3): 188.
- [34] Jin Wei (2018). Influence of Gandhara and Mathura Buddhist Statue Art on Five Tan Yao Caves. *Journal of Shanxi Datong University (Social Science Edition)* (6) :18.
- [35] Fan Qi (1993). On the Evolution of Gandhara's Artistic Style in Yungang Grottoes, *Journal of Henan Institute of Finance and Economics* (3) :94.
- [36] Fan Qi (1993). On the Evolution of Gandhara's Artistic Style in Yungang Grottoes, *Journal of Henan Institute of Finance and Economics* (3) :94.
- [37] Jie Qing & Deng Xin (2016). *Gandhara* (pp. 1). Xiling Press.