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Why the Jinas were different: The canonization of Jina iconography in Kuṣāṇa Mathurā

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WHY THE JINAS WERE DIFFERENT

THE CANONIZATION OF JINA
ICONOGRAPHY IN KUṢĀṆA MATHURĀ

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Cover photo: Seated sculpture of Jina Pārśvanātha, from Kañkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 39. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009089.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The archaeological complex of Mathurā and the material culture extracted from the numerous sites that conform it are, without a doubt, quintessential sources for any scholar interested in the development of early Historic Indian art (c. 300 BCE – 300 CE). Yet, due to the lack of intact architectural monuments and research difficulties caused by anti-scientific excavations that were carried out in the early 20th century, Mathurā has been eclipsed by sites such as Bharhut, Sāñcī and Amarāvātī in scholarship on early Historic Indian art (Quintanilla, 2007: xliv).

As far as the sculptures and images found in its different sites are concerned, Mathurā was the only early Historic Indian city where images of Jinas were produced in large quantities. In fact, so rich and valuable is the Jaina art of Mathurā that a close analysis of its iconography can shed some light on the major developments that Indian art underwent during the early Historic period. The anthropomorphic representation of ascetic teachers, for instance, was an iconographic innovation first introduced by Jaina art in 2nd century BCE narrative reliefs.

However, what I consider the main turning point in the development of Jaina art from this period was the consolidation of a core iconography of the Jina that was maintained throughout the next centuries. Mathurā artists selected certain symbols to be represented in three-dimensional depictions of Jaina teachers. This meticulous selection distinguished Jina sculptures and highlighted the strong identity of the local Jaina community.

It has been suggested that art has the power of increasing the self-perception of “imagined communities” that are organized around a common affiliation (e.g. religion, class, ethnicity...). The use of a shared visual culture that only the participants of a certain group understand can intensify the sense of identity and unity of these. For example, this was the case of post-colonial Indian art that blended traditional elements of Hindu iconography with urban settings in order to create a discourse of national unity (Kingsley, 2007: 1-3).

Still, we should always take into account that monolithic religious affiliations and a sense of conscious identity among practitioners are modern phenomena.¹ Early Historic Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism shared the same characters and adapted them in order to highlight certain key ideas of their respective doctrines.² The same can be said about a pan-Indian repertoire of symbols and imagery employed by virtually all Indian religions during this fascinating period.

As far as style and cultural background are concerned, virtually all images discussed in this thesis are the product of a certain period and region: Kuṣāṇa Mathurā (c. 50-300 CE). Yet, the main distinguishing factor that allows us to identify images that belong to specific religious affiliations is iconography. The use of symbols that are associated with a certain doctrine and systematically represented in numerous images results in the eventual canonization of any religious iconography.³

Jaina art from Mathurā underwent such a canonization during the Kuṣāṇa period. The large number of seated and standing sculptures of Jinas that adhere to the same core iconography are the evidence that demonstrate this artistic phenomenon. The development of such a distinctive iconography increased the sense of identity of the local Jaina community. However, many of the symbols employed in the Jina images belonged to a pan-Indian visual culture and thus could be understood by practitioners of other religious sects too.

¹ The creation of “Hinduism” during the late British colonial period as an amalgamation of different Hindu belief systems, rituals and philosophies is the perfect example of such phenomenon. Prior to the Colonial period there was a lack of a unified religious sentiment in India. Likewise, other types of identities such as caste, guild or city affiliation had a significantly higher relevance when it came to communal organization (Thapar, 1989: 210-212).

² For instance, Indra, the Vedic king of the gods, underwent such a process of adaptation in Buddhist and Jaina stories where he takes part. Originally presented as a model Indian monarch and warrior who gets involved in love affairs with women and intoxicates himself with Soma, Indra becomes an advocate of abstinence and non-violence in Buddhist and Jain literature (Appleton, 2017: 34-35).

³ Late ancient Jewish art underwent a similar process. The same Roman workshops produced artefacts and artworks for Jewish, early Christian and pagan communities that shared the same Greco-Roman motifs. Yet, the use of some symbols that were intrinsically Jewish such as the Menorah or the Torah was what distinguished Jewish art. All in all, late ancient Jewish and early Christian art would flower within a multi-religious Roman culture and develop a distinctive iconography that increased their sense of identity (Elsner, 2012: 119-121).

1.1 Research questions and structure of the thesis

Hence, the aim of this thesis will be to explore the balance between continuity and identity that characterized the development of Jaina iconography during the Kuṣāṇa period.

What were the main elements that characterized the core Jina iconography? Which symbols were selected by Mathurā artists to represent them in Jina sculptures? In which historical context did such a canonization of Jaina iconography occur? What was the role of the local Jaina community in this selection process? Did a presupposed Jaina conservatism keep Jaina art exempt from foreign influences? These are some of the questions that this thesis will try to answer.

Chapter 2 offers an overview of the archaeological profile of the Mathurā complex and all the sites that conform it. We will explore which are the main methodological constraints that any scholar interested in Mathurā has to face as a consequence of underdeveloped excavations that were carried out at the beginning of the 20th century. As such, we will outline an approximate timeline of every archaeological intervention that was carried out in Mathurā as well as the stratigraphical sequence that characterizes most of the sites.

Chapter 3 defines the core Jina iconography that was canonized during the Kuṣāṇa period at Mathurā. We will describe which are the main characteristics that distinguish this iconography. Moreover, we will examine the historical context in which such a canonization occurred and draw a timeline of the major developments that Jaina art underwent during the preceding and following centuries.

Chapter 4 offers a detailed analysis of the main symbols that were selected by Mathurā artists to be part of the core Jina iconography. We will zoom in the historical trajectory of each individual symbol. Was the core Jina iconography a complete artistic innovation? Was it the result of the continuation of symbols that had been used by Indian artists since the Maurya period?

Chapter 5 explores to what extent did foreign artistic influences impact the development of the core Jina iconography. This chapter questions the presupposed assumption that due to its strict conservatism Jaina art was significantly less exposed to foreign influences compared to Buddhist art from the same period and area. The lack of

foreign influences could be interpreted as a further characteristic of the Jina iconography that increases the sense of identity embedded in Jaina art.

All in all, this thesis wants to broaden our current understanding about the development of religious iconography in early Historic India. Focusing on Jaina art from Mathurā can help us to answer the question of to what extent did the notion of a common religious identity play a significant role in the creation of a core iconography that was going to be respected in the future.

1.2 Research methodology

The methodological approach I conducted during my research was defined by the impossibility to travel and do fieldwork abroad due to the Covid-19 pandemic. My goal was to gain a wider understanding of the artistic development that characterized the material culture from Mathurā, which would help me to answer the question of how Jina iconography was canonized between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE. I originally intended to travel to museums that stored artworks and archaeological remains which would enable me to understand this artistic development.

However, I was forced to remain in Leiden during all my research and this condition determined the qualitative data I could use to conduct my local-based fieldwork. The photographic collection of the Kern Institute, which is currently under the custody of the Special Collections room from the Leiden University Library, happened to include photos taken by Johanna van Lohuizen-de Leeuw. Being a Dutch art historian, archaeologist and South Asianist who had spent most of her academic career studying the historic and cultural relationship between Mathurā and Gandhāra, van Lohuizen took a significant number of photos of artworks from Indian, European and American museums. The Kern Institute would later store these black and white photos in boxes that are currently divided according to the museum where they were taken.

Overall, the boxes I selected consist of photos of artworks that range from seated Buddha and Jina images, sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses and architectural remains to votive tablets, terracotta figurines and miscellaneous decorative elements. Using these photos as secondary data turned out to be the perfect alternative to answer my research questions during the pandemic.

On the other hand, numismatic and epigraphic material became the other type of qualitative data I collected during my research. Coins are powerful tools for the entity that issues them as they can include different symbolic elements that underline the divine character of rulers as well as their right to rule. Furthermore, coins can contain an artistic tradition of their own with symbols and customs that transcend different types of medium (e.g. sculpture, architecture, seals...). Likewise, inscriptions found in artworks and archaeological sites provide us with useful information regarding the social background of the donors and the idiom of power used by the elite.

As far as the data collection process is concerned, the selection criteria I maintained throughout my research semester was to collect those type of material which included identifiable elements of symbolism. Hence, I have mainly gathered photos of seated Jina and Buddha images, sculptures of *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, Hindu gods and architectural remains that contained symbols such as *nandipādas*, lions, *chattras* or halos. Likewise, the coins and epigraphs I selected belonged to the same chronological framework as the photographic material. It was interesting to compare the numismatic and photographic material since the elements they shared and differed indicated which symbols could had been exported from one medium to another.

The precise way I collected the photos from the Kern Institute collection involved me going on a weekly base to the Special Collections room in the Leiden University Library. I had to book the specific boxes I wanted to examine according to their shelf mark number and take photos of the examples I found interesting and useful, as well as the description with my digital camera.⁴ Thus, I noted down the reference number of the photos I took every day in a separate sheet of paper, adding a brief description written in my own words. Overall, I would finish every week of my research semester by transferring all the photos I collected to an online inventory in Google Docs which I shared with my supervisor. Likewise, I would later create a database using Microsoft Access where, not only did I save all the different material I collected, but I also would subdivide it according to categories that allowed me to identify certain patterns of development.

⁴ The description at the back of every photograph includes data regarding the item, its current location and an approximate dating. Professor van Lohuizen dated most of the artworks taking into account inscriptional evidence (if it was available) as well as stylistic features. I agree with most of the dates that she proposed.

The collection of numismatic material turned out to be much more straightforward, as I used the website of the American Numismatic Society (ANS) and their online digital collection as the main source from which I gathered the images of coins that I would also include in my database. All in all, I searched for coins issued by Śakas, Parthians, Indo-Greeks and Kuṣāṇas that contained interesting elements of royal symbolism.

Last, but not least, I extracted most of the inscriptional material I would later use in my research from Lüders and Janert's *Mathurā inscriptions: unpublished papers* (1961). The volume includes most of the inscriptions from Mathurā that have been identified up to date, each one with their respective transliteration and approximate translation.

As I briefly mentioned above, my method of analysis was primarily based on the identification of certain themes and patterns and the historical evolution of these. The database I created helped me to organize all the gathered material into categories defined by certain identifiable elements (e.g. lion symbolism, altar-thrones, halos...). Furthermore, I ordered the materials subdivided in each category according to their rough date of production. This allowed me to observe and track the evolution that certain symbolic and artistic elements underwent through different periods.

Reading about previous research carried out by scholars such as van Lohuizen in the last century or Quintanilla more recently inspired me to use the primary sources and methods of analysis I have mentioned above. All in all, I think that the greater emphasis on the development of Jaina art that my research question implies, the use of photographic material collected by van Lohuizen as well as recent research done by contemporary scholars will enable my research to expand our current knowledge about the canonization of the Jina iconography in early Historic Mathurā.

Chapter 2 The archaeological profile of Mathurā

Mathurā enjoys an undisputed fame in academia due to the great number of Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina sculptures of outstanding quality from the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods that have been discovered at the multiple sites that comprise the whole archaeological complex. The study of these sculptures became and has remained an important research topic for scholars interested in early Historic Indian art ever since Frederick Salmon Growse published the first report about finds at the ancient city in 1882. Likewise, any important collection of Indian art in the world is most likely to include at least a distinctive spotted red sandstone sculpture carved by Mathurā artists.

Still, as mentioned in the introduction, the lack of intact archaeological has resulted in Mathurā being eclipsed by sites such as Sāñcī or Bharhut regarding its historical legacy as an important milestone in the development of early Historic Indian art (Quintanilla, 2007: xliv-xlvi). Nevertheless, at Mathurā the greatest number of pre-Kuṣāṇa sculptures were found up to this date. Thus, it is both an unquestionable and reliable source to understand the important iconographic developments that Indian art went through at the beginning of the first millennium. The anthropomorphic revolution that resulted in the human depiction of Buddhas, Jinas and Brahmanic gods, for instance, is arguably recorded for the first time in the sculptural evidence found at Mathurā.

The aim of this chapter is to briefly examine the timeline of archaeological excavations and studies that were carried out in Mathurā, with an emphasis on how the nature and the motivations behind these shaped our current knowledge about the complex. Subsequently, we will have a closer look at the archaeological characteristics that define Mathurā and correlate this data with that of other sites that underwent similar historical developments, such as Sāñcī and Bharhut. Finally, I will concentrate on the Jaina site of Kankāli Ṭila and explain why the features of the sculptures found there will form the main focus of my thesis.

2.1 Timeline of excavations and research

As happened to most of the important Indian archaeological sites, Mathurā was excavated for the first time by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under the direction of the British archaeologist Alexander Cunningham between 1861 and 1882. Yet, only between 1882, when F.S. Growse continued the excavations, and the beginning of the 20th century, when V.A. Smith published his plates of the Jaina stupa of Kankāli Ṭila (1901) and J. Ph. Vogel (1910) published his catalogue of the Archaeological Museum of Mathurā, was most of the archaeological, sculptural and inscriptional material collected and published. Needless to say, these pioneering excavations and publications were characterized by an archaic archaeology with an orientalist epistemological framework that put emphasis on the artistic heritage of the sites rather than relevant information about findspots and the wider archaeological features of the landscape (Gupta, 2015: 189).

Archaeological excavations were resumed by the ASI in 1954 and lasted until 1974 with annual campaigns that identified the earliest levels of urbanization and peripheral sites. Nevertheless, the most informative source regarding the archaeological profile that we should expect from Mathurā sites came from Herbert Härtel's reports of the excavations that his German team of archaeologists carried out at Sonkh between 1966 and 1974 (Härtel, 2007). His team identified 40 different stratigraphical levels that stretched out from the PGW (c. 800 BCE) to the Jāt period (1800 CE). The reports they published provide quintessential information about the religious, cultural and even political context that defined Sonkh as well as probably most of the other sites at Mathurā.

Research done by authors such as van J. E. van Lohuizen (1949), R.C. Sharma (1984), Gritli von Mitterwallner (1986), or Sonya Rhie Quintanilla (2007) has brought interesting insights regarding topics such as the artistic development of the Mathurā sculptures and coins, their religious affiliation and the reciprocal cultural relationship with Gandhāra. Moreover, edited volumes such as Srinivasan's *Mathurā: The Cultural Heritage* (1989) gathered articles written by archaeologists, art historians, numismatists and epigraphists that studied this area in detail.

Yet, our current knowledge about Mathurā relies mainly on the artistic and epigraphic material collected by colonial archaeologists with primitive methodological

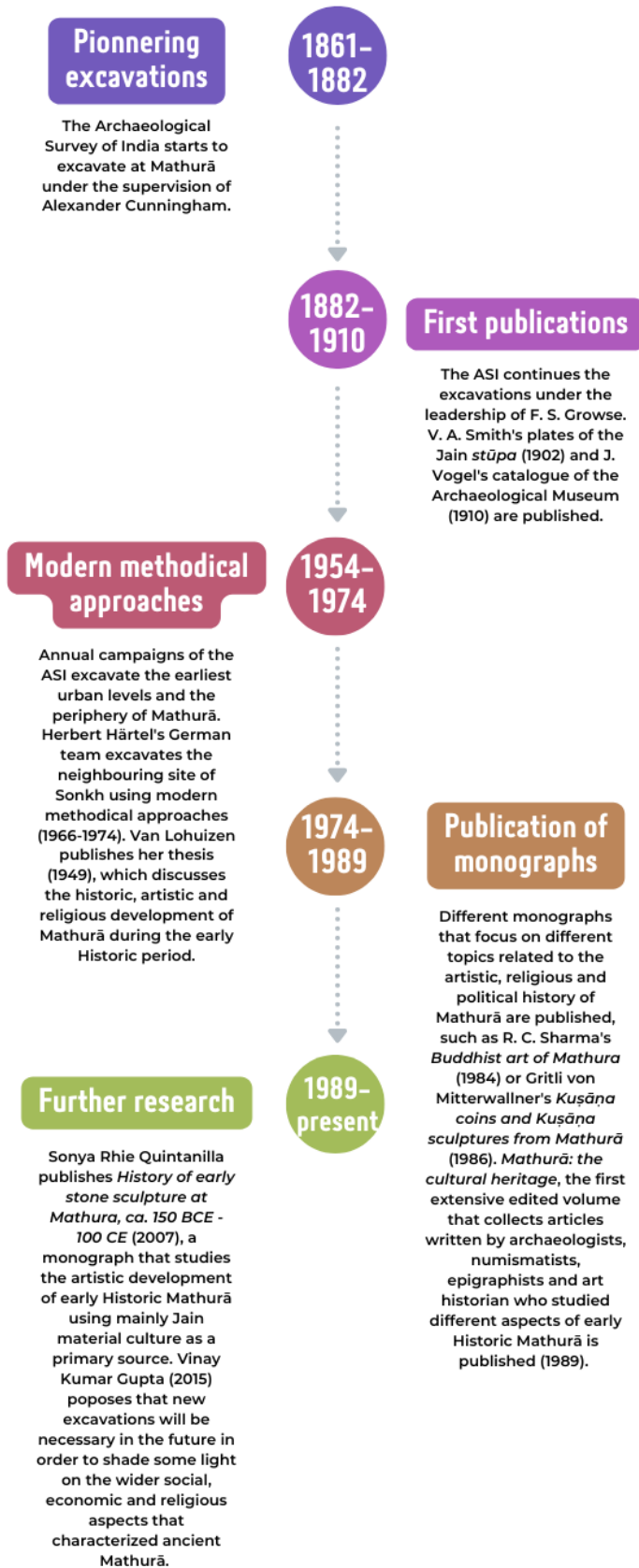


Figure 1: Timeline of Archaeological interventions at Mathurā and relevant research.

approaches. Recent authors such as the archaeologist Vinay Kumar Gupta (2015: 190) underlined how important it will be to invest in research on the archaeological landscape of ancient Mathurā with a focus on the wider societal and economic aspects that surround its material culture. Future excavations that take into account this methodological approach could, in fact, provide relevant information about the relationship between the Mathurā workshops and their surroundings, the logic behind the distribution of religious sites on the periphery of the city and the importance that water management had in the overall organization of the ancient city.

The sculptural and archaeological material extracted in the aforementioned excavations form the main primary sources of this chapter. The research and literature produced by the authors mentioned above provide historical narratives on the different artistic, economic and religious developments of ancient Mathurā (fig. 1).

2.2 Archaeological characterization of Mathurā: an early Historic Indian pattern

Regarding its stratigraphical periodization, Mathurā follows the same historic development that ancient cities from northern and central India such as Sāñcī, Bharhut, Kauśāmbi and Pataliputra underwent.

The first layers of evidenced human occupation belong to the Painted Grey Ware (1200-600 BCE) and Northern Black Polished Ware periods (600-200 BCE), which has been demonstrated by the great number of PGW and NBPW pottery found in them. These layers also correspond to the time in which, according to written sources, Mathurā was the capital of the Surasena Kingdom (c. 700-300 BCE), one of the 16 early states or *mahājanapadas* mentioned in Buddhist scriptures (Singh, 2004: 378-380). The later part of this period coincides with the time when Mathurā fell under the control of the Mauryas (3rd century BCE). The most remarkable archaeological features from this period are concentrations of mud-walls that protect natural mounds and the use of baked bricks for multiple domestic structures. These are clear signs of the early urbanization and fortification process that the ancient city of Mathurā underwent during the NBPW period (IAR, 1954: 15-16, 1974: 48-50, 1975: 53-55, 1976: 54-56).

The next stratigraphical layers that were identified by Härtel and his team supposedly belong to the Śunga period (c. 200-100 BCE), when Mathurā was a tributary state of the Śungas. The presence of inscribed coins and inscriptions issued by local rulers of the Datta and Mitra dynasties (c. 150-25 BCE), compared to the small or inexistent inscriptional and numismatic material issued by the Śungas, demonstrates that between the 2nd century and end of the 1st century BCE Mathurā was primarily controlled by small principalities.⁵ Not only do we find inscribed coins of the kings Gomitra, Sūryamitra, Brahmamitra and Viṣṇumitra with *swastikas*, taurine symbols and Brahmi script on the obverse and reserves; but this is also the period when sculptures, figurines, votive tanks and shrines dedicated to different folk deities started to be produced in great quantities (Härtel, 2007: 322-324).

Mathurā starts to produce a significant number of religious images and architectonic complexes from the 2nd century BCE onwards. Terracotta figurines of animals and mother goddesses with ample breasts and hips start appearing in virtually all layers belonging to this period. Sculptures of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*, Indian spirit-deities related to fertility, trees and wilderness, are carved as imposing stone images that are part of the urban landscape. The colossal statue of the Parkham *yakṣa* (H. 260 cm) is one of the most popular of this type of sculptures (fig. 2). Besides, the sculpture already displays certain artistic conventions that applied in future *yakṣa* images, such as the raised hand (*abhāyamudrā*), the garments and ornaments of a monarch, and the money-bag in one of the hands, an attribute that

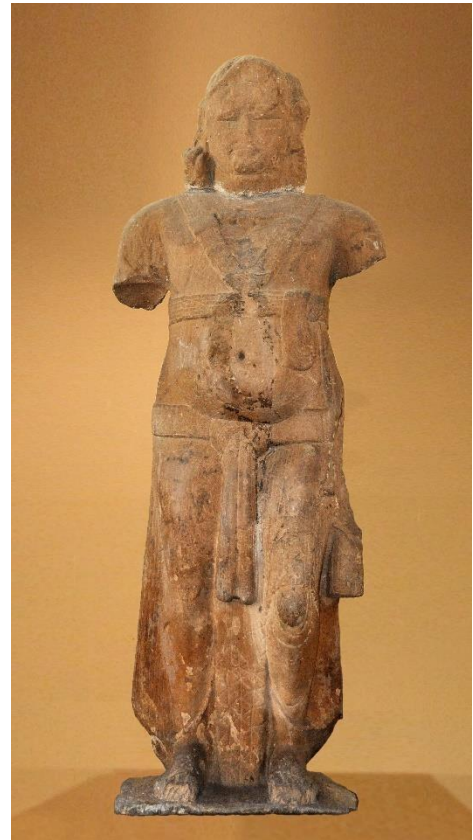


Figure 2: Colossal sculpture of the Parkham *yakṣa*, Parkham, Mathurā, 2nd century BCE.

⁵ The use of material evidence challenges the simplistic Maurya-Śunga-Kuṣāṇa sequence attributed by archaeologists to most of the Indian early Historic sites in the past based primarily on literary sources (Bhandare, 2006: 68-71).

makes sense taking into account the relationship between *yakṣas* and wealth. These deities will, in the following centuries, undergo a transformation in which they switch from being the main deities worshipped as protective spirits to subsidiary figures and acolytes of Buddhas, Jinas and Brahmanic deities (Singh, 2004: 383-384).

The other main folk deities that were carved and worshipped by the people of Mathurā during this time were *nāgas* and *nāgīs*, serpent-like divine creatures that were associated with the veneration of water. *Nāga* shrines and sculptures from Mathurā are, in fact, found next to votive tanks, wells or any type of water bodies. They were usually carved using fine techniques in order to represent their most characteristic feature: the canopy of snakes. *Nāgas*, as it happened to *yakṣas*, were also downgraded to the status of attendants of other deities with the pass of time. The case of the shrine of the Nāga Dadhikarṇa in the Jamalpur mound is a perfect example of this phenomenon; the “lord of all *nāgas*” was turned into an acolyte of the Buddha and the temple turned into a Buddhist monastery (ibid. 385).⁶

The stratigraphical levels that follow at Mathurā belong to the Śaka period, when Rajūvula and his son Śodasa were the great *kṣtrapas* who ruled the city (c. 25 BCE-50 CE). This period is characterized primarily by a mixed material culture of Śaka and Indian elements. Thus, Śaka and Datta coins as well as Indian and foreign pottery have been found in these layers (Härtel, 2007: 325). From an artistic point of view, this was undoubtedly a revolutionary period as far as the deities represented and their iconography is concerned. This is the time when the aforementioned folk deities start to be replaced by new a new Brahmanical pantheon. Hence, most of the sculptures carved in Mathurā workshops from now on are representations of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Durgā and Lakṣmī; not yet with a uniform iconography but with an undoubtedly Brahmanic affiliation.⁷ The first terracotta plaques of the goddess Mahiṣāsūramardīnī are from this period, found in the Temple no. 1 of Sonkh (Härtel, 2007: 325). Moreover, a great

⁶ Yet, this was not the case with all the *nāga* shrines from Mathurā as during the Kuṣāṇa period the Apsidal Temple no. 2 of Sonkh, for instance, developed from a humble shrine into a relevant and majestic temple with impressive stone reliefs depicting the court of the Nāga King Vasuki and his sister (Härtel, 2007: 340-342).

⁷ Śiva was, for instance, represented simultaneously in different variant forms, either with his bull, four-headed or in the *liṅga* form, though, not in a standardized way (Singh, 2008: 387).

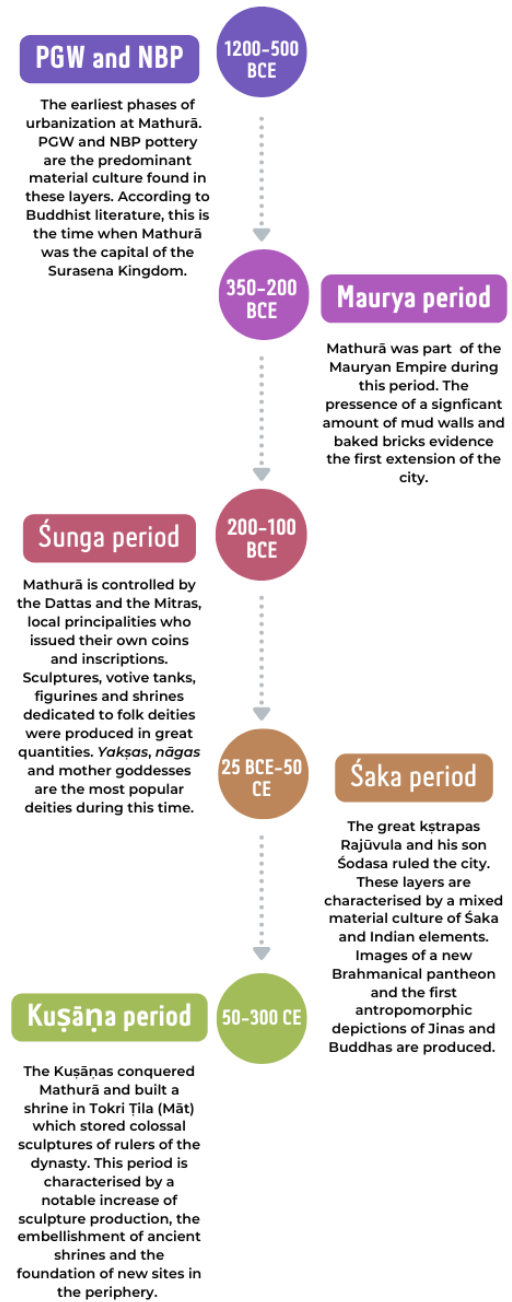
temple dedicated to Vasudeva carries an inscription on a doorjamb dated to the reign of the Kṣatrapa Śodasa (Singh, 2004: 388).

The first anthropomorphic images of Jinas and Buddhas are found in layers belonging to this historical period. Almost all Jaina votive tablets (Skt. *āyāgapattas*) carry an inscription that was engraved in the reign of Śodasa. Likewise, the first seated Buddhas of *kapardin* type are arguably dated at the transition between the Śaka and Kuṣāṇa periods (c. mid-1st century CE). The fact that some of the inscriptions of these images highlight the antiquity of the building that contained them could be evidence for the establishment of both Jaina and Buddhist communities in Mathurā prior to the Śaka period (Folkert, 1989: 110).

The last stratigraphical levels to be analyzed in this thesis correlate with the Kuṣāṇa period (c. 50-300 CE). The most characteristic feature from this period is a notable increase of sculpture production, the embellishment of ancient shrines, foundations of new sites in the periphery and outside the ancient city and the appearance of both stamped Kuṣāṇa pottery and gold coinage from the reign of Wima Kadphises onwards (113-127 CE). The site of Sonkh alone, for instance, stored 101 red sandstone sculptures alone corresponding to this period, while the main temples dedicated to Durgā and the Nāga King Vasuki were built during the early reign of Kaniṣka I (c. 127-150 CE) (Härtel, 2007: 339). It was after Kaniṣka became the king that the shrine of Tokri Ṭila (Māt) was constructed and the colossal statues of the Kuṣāṇa rulers inside.⁸ Overall, the immense artistic production that defines this historical period could be related to the profitable economic conjuncture that was created by the military conquests of the Kuṣāṇas when they politically unified India with Central Asia.

⁸ The shrine at Māt was excavated by the pandit Rai Bahadur Krishna between 1911 and 1912 and the findings were published by J. Ph. Vogel in 1912. Scholars believed that the site evidenced the existence of a dynastic shrine because sculptures of Kuṣāṇa personages were found close to images of deities. Yet, the fact that the sculptures were found far from the center suggests that rather than a dynastic cult, the shrine was used as a Saivite temple where Kuṣāṇa rulers were represented as devotees (Verardi and Grossato, 1983: 231). Being Vima Takto, Kaniṣka I and Huviṣka the three only sculptures of Kuṣāṇa rulers that were identified, it is believed that the shrine was built sometime around the beginning of the rule of Huviṣka (c. mid. 2nd century CE) (ibid. 229).

Figure 3: Main stratigraphical layers that characterize the archaeological complex of Mathurā and neighboring sites.



The stratigraphical sequence summarized in Figure 3 is not unique to Mathurā. Essentially the same periodization characterizes the historical development of other ancient Indian cities such as Bharhut, Sāñcī or Kauśāmbi. These urban centers started to develop in the Iron Age and belonged to the great NBPW culture. The Maurya empire, as well as the Northern Śaka Kṣatrapas and the Kuṣāṇas later ruled over there for a certain period. Furthermore, the same type of religious complexes and artworks have been found at most of these ancient cities. Similar *stūpas* with *torāṇas*, a railing and similar decorations have been found both at Sāñcī and at Mathurā.⁹

2.3 Archaeological landscape and settlement patterns

The main city followed the course of Yamunā river and remained limited to the area of the bank. Most of the domestic structures belonged to this central area and seldomly contained religious or artistic material culture. The peripheral sites outside the inner-city walls included such a notorious concentration of artistic material and architectural remains of shrines that they were mostly identified as religious centers or workshops of local artists (fig. 4) (Gupta, 2015: 193).

The sub-urban areas of the Mathurā complex are filled with sites that follow this pattern. The Katra mound was a fortified enclosure that secured a temple dedicated to Bhagavata. A Śiva Temple oriented to the four cardinal points was found in Bhuteswar. The northernmost site of the archaeological complex, Gokuneṣwar mound, had Brahmanic, Jaina and Buddhist sculptures together. No signs of habitation or domestic structures were found at these peripheral sites, but mostly remains of religious complexes and sculptures (ibid. 201-206),

A multireligious nature is another characteristic of these peripheral sites. The site of Kankāli Ṭila accommodated two Jaina *stūpas*, one Buddhist *stūpa* and a Sūrya Temple. We may assume that most of the sub-urban sites of Mathurā were Buddhist because of the proportionally larger quantity of Buddha sculptures that has been found in them compared to Brahmanic or Jaina images. Yet, rather than an obvious evidence of Buddhism's indisputable popularity in Mathurā, the huge concentration of Buddhist sculptures found

⁹ Sāñcī still preserves most of its architectonic complex intact in situ. Mathurā, on the contrary, has most of its remains dispersed across different museums mainly in a deteriorated state.

scattered in the whole complex could reflect their huge demand outside Mathurā. In fact, Buddhist sculptures from Mathurā have been found in Sarnath, Sāñcī and even Gandhāra (ibid. 208).

2.4 Kañkāli Ṭilā: a source of Jaina art

The site of Kañkāli Ṭilā and the numerous Jaina images found there are a primary source in this thesis. In fact, more than half of the photos selected by me from van Lohuizen's copies illustrate Jina sculptures from this site alone.¹⁰

Kañkāli Ṭilā was, without a doubt, a revolution that changed all the presumptions regarding early Jaina art. Its discovery happened at a pivotal moment in Jaina studies when debates over the origins and antiquity of Jainism shaped all pioneering excavations in India (Folkert, 1989: 104). The late 19th century study of early Jaina literature focused on proving the historical existence of Mahāvira and the independence of the ascetic movement as a religious movement separate from Brahmanism. Yet, the antiquity of Jainism, which was supposed to predate the foundation of Buddhism, was still put in doubt as no material evidence existed to support it (ibid. 108).

It was at this critical moment of the debate that numerous sculptural and inscriptional material from Kañkāli Ṭilā were rescued and published (fig. 5). A peculiar inscription on one Jaina *stūpa* that claimed that the building was “built by the gods” (Skt. *devanirmita*) was used as primary evidence to prove the antiquity of the whole architectonic complex. The argument stated that linking the construction of the building with the gods was a way of denoting that a Jaina shrine had been standing there before the inscription was engraved and the building expanded. Thus, the earliest Jaina presence in Mathurā was dated sometime between the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE (ibid. 109-110).

The problem with this approach was that most of the articles and volumes from the early 20th century offered a one-dimensional picture of Jaina life in Mathurā limited to proving Jainism's antiquity through inscriptions. The plates and report published by Vincent A. Smith, for instance, only offered a descriptive and rather simplistic account of

¹⁰ Most of the Jina sculptures found at Kañkāli Ṭilā are currently stored in the State Museum Lucknow and Government Museum Mathurā.

the different seated and standing Jina sculptures, *āyāgaṇas*, narrative reliefs as well as architectural remains from the site (Smith, 1901).

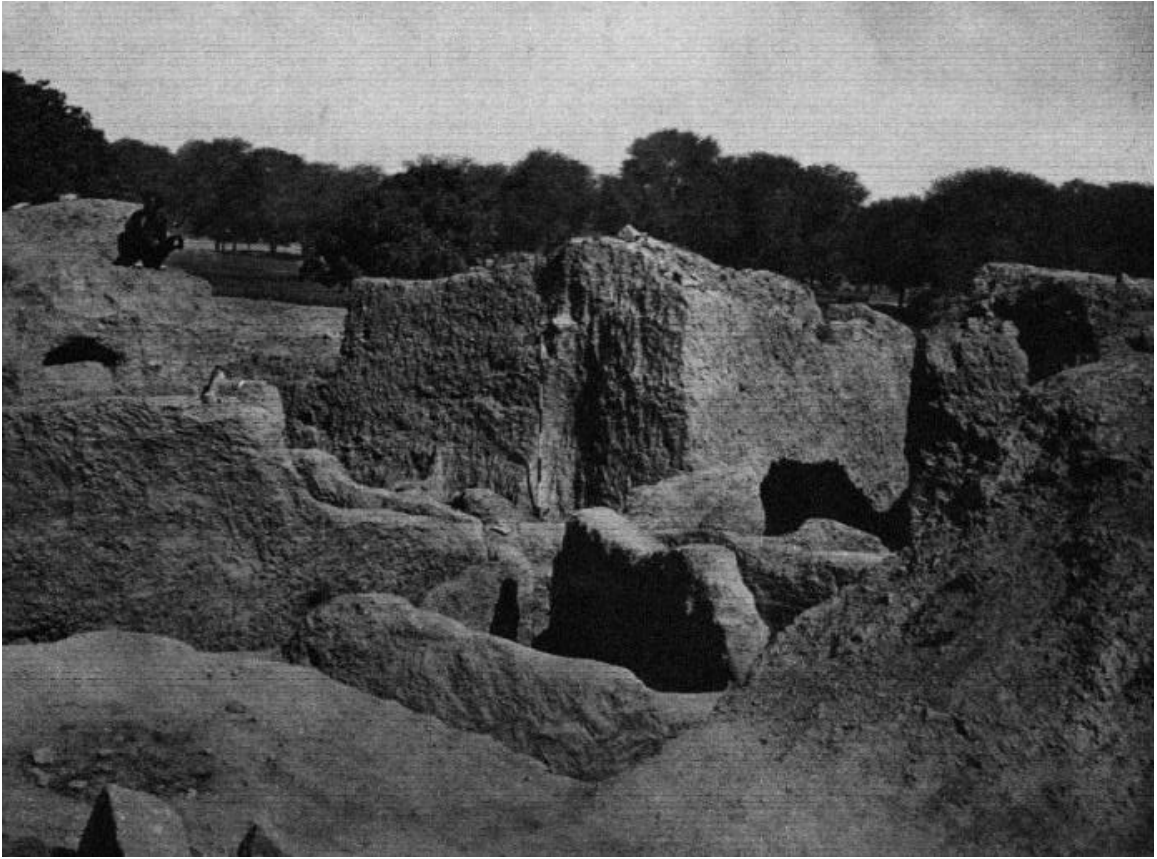


Figure 5: View of the Jaina *stūpa* of Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā as excavated by the ASI, 1900.

Thus, it is necessary to avoid such a one-dimensional picture of the Jaina material culture recovered from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā and to analyze it holistically as a primary source to understand the religious, artistic and social history of early Historic Mathurā.

Chapter 3 Defining the core Jina iconography

The sculptures that quantitatively stand out at the site of Kañkālī Ṭlā are those that represent Jinas seated on lion thrones. I have identified 50 such representations that, with minor variations, follow a similar artistic configuration that infuses the image with royal symbolism and ascetic symbolism. 21 identified sculptures of standing Jinas were also added to my database. The standing counterparts implemented some of the artistic motifs and symbols that characterize the seated sculptures. The fact that the number of seated images is more than two times that of the standing ones suggests that the Jaina community of Mathurā in the Kuṣāṇa period preferred patronizing seated sculptures of their teachers.

This is not a unique phenomenon for the Jaina art from Mathurā, as I also identified 23 sculptures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that, in a similar proportion, outnumber the 7 standing examples (fig. 6).

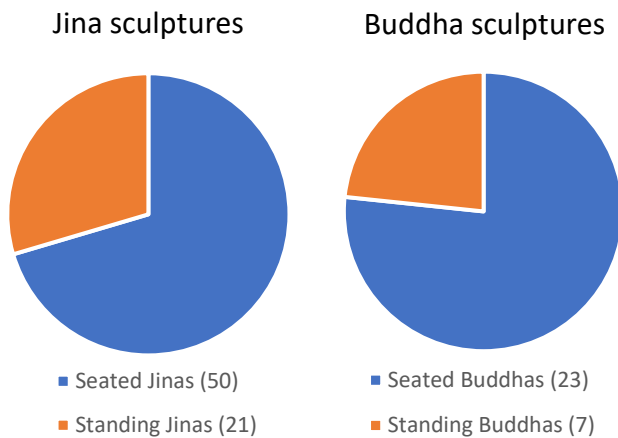


Figure 6: Buddha and Jina sculptures identified in Mathurā

The fact that significantly more Jaina sculptures were carved in Mathurā between the reigns of Kuṣāṇa Kings Huviṣka (r. 150-180 CE) and Vasudeva I (r. 191-232 CE) than their Buddhist equivalents could be evidence for a stronger presence of the Jaina community during this time. Some Buddhist texts such as the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*, for instance, contain passages about Mauryan emperor Aśoka visiting Mathurā and

worshipping a Jaina *caitya* by mistake as he thought it to be a Buddhist shrine (Lohuizen-de Leeuw, 1949: 149-150). In addition to this, inscriptions found on Jaina tablets, sculptures and *stūpas* indicate that female donors belonging to low social classes were significantly active patronizing image making (Quintanilla, 2009: 115-116).¹¹ Thus, the

¹¹ Lüders and Janert, 1961: inscriptions 14, 15, 17, 20 and 23.

existence of a notably large number of female Jaina devotees and donors during the second half of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century CE could indeed have conditioned a continuous massive production of Jina images.

3.1 Defining the canon: Seated and standing Jina images from Mathurā

All sculptures of Jinas I mentioned above follow a standardized way of depiction. Artists of Mathurā employed a combination of royal and ascetic symbolism through certain motifs that highlighted the kingship attributes of the Jina without contradicting the asceticism that was so important for the Jaina doctrine. I hereby give a general description of how these Jina images look like taking into account the general characteristics that all of them share.

3.1.1 Seated Jina images

The 50 seated Jina images that I identified present the Jaina teacher in *dhyānamudrā*, a meditative posture which consists of resting both hands on the crossed legs (fig. 7). This hand gesture undoubtedly matches with the ascetic lifestyle that all Jaina teachers practiced as well as the meditative practices in which they engaged. What distinguishes these images from other depictions of Buddhas or ascetic sages portrayed with this gesture is the fact Jinas are always naked and bear the *śrīvatsa* symbol on their chest, the distinctive mark that characterizes all 24 Tīrthaṅkaras.

As far as the head of the figures is concerned, some *lakṣaṇas* of *mahāpuruṣas* (marks of great men) are also spotted in all works of art that preserve the uppermost part of the body. Extraordinary physical features such as long earlobes and the *ūrṇā* (tuft of hair) on the forehead are easily distinguished. Even though these marks are also used in Buddhist images, an undoubtedly well-known *lakṣaṇa* such as the *uṣṇīṣa* is missing in all seated Jina sculptures with the head preserved.

Regarding the back of the figure, a circular halo decorated with geometric and/or vegetative patterns usually accompanies the seated Jina. The complexity and characteristics of the decorative motifs displayed in the halo can be used as a device to date the Jina image according to different artistic trends. A variant of the seated Jina sculptures that does not contain a halo are the images that represent Pārśvanātha, the 23rd Tīrthaṅkara (Fig. 8).



Figure 7: Standard seated Jina sculpture, from Kaṅkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. late 3rd century CE.



Figure 8: Seated sculpture of Jina Pārśvanātha from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

A seven-headed cobra is represented giving shelter to the Jina because this is his cognizance symbol.

Leaving aside the figure of the Jina, the other element that defines these seated figures are the distinctive pedestals on which the Jina sits. As two lions, either facing the viewer or turned to the sides, are carved in both edges of the seat, I shall refer to this kind

of seats as lion-thrones or, using the proper Sanskrit term, *simhāsanas*. I label the seats as “thrones” because, as I will argue in the next chapter, the seat and its symbolism highlight the kingship attributes of the Jinas.

The throne on which the Jina sits consists of a rectangular platform. An inscription in Brāhmī script has been engraved in the uppermost and lowermost layers under the Jina. It usually contains information about the date when the image was carved, the identity of the Jina, and about the devotees who commissioned the sculpture.

The last iconic feature of these thrones is the worship scene depicted in the middle. A wheel placed on top of a pillar is flanked by Jaina *ardhaphālaka* monks and nuns that worship it. In all identified sculptures nuns are depicted on our right and monks on our left, while they hold lotuses and flywhisks respectively or join both hands in *añjalimudrā*.

These are the characteristics that all seated Jina images of Mathurā share. Some minor variations exist, such as the number of worshippers depicted, their posture (kneeling or standing), the orientation of the wheel and the lions, and the occasional presence of infant worshippers.

It is important to note that these sculptures are also accompanied by subsidiary figures that flank the Jina. However, most sculptures are damaged and only few preserve such figures (fig. 9). These usually consist of *yakṣas* dressed in royal attires that stand at shoulder-height of the Jina in *añjalimudrā*. The fact that most seated Jinas accompanied by such subsidiary figures are dated in the later Kuṣāṇa period suggests that this was an artistic

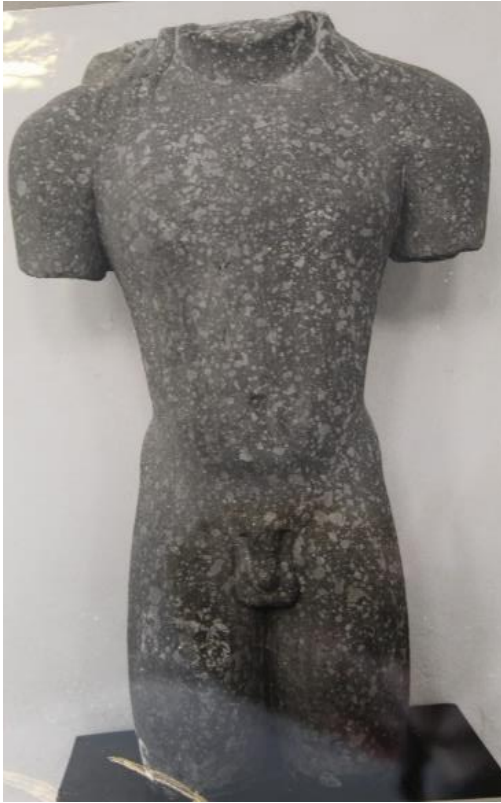


Figure 9: Critically damaged seated Jina sculpture flanked by a figure in *añjalimudrā*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

trend that developed later. The deteriorated state of most sculptures does not allow us to know for certain whether if the earliest seated Jina sculptures from Mathurā included flanking subsidiary figures.

3.1.2 Standing Jina images

Sculptures of standing Jinas are the other important manifestation of Jaina sculptural art in Mathurā. Standing Jinas from Mathurā are have survived in even more critical condition. Most sculptures that could be identified as standing Jinas are broken torsos that bear the



śrīvatsa symbol on their chest, the only Jaina iconography that can be recognized (fig. 10).

Nevertheless, the best preserved standing Jinas, which still conserve the platform on which the Jina stands, indicate that a significantly higher artistic variation existed among all standing sculptures.

Regarding the pedestal on which the Jina stands, I have identified three different artistic varieties implemented by the Mathurā artists.

First, we come across pedestals of which the uppermost layer represents a cushion (fig. 11). Second, we have pedestals that mimic those of the seated Jinas. They consist of a flat rectangular platform that depicts a worship scene of the wheel in the middle (fig. 12). The only, and crucial difference is that no lions are represented

Figure 10: Severely damaged torso of a standing Jina with the extremities and pedestal missing, Kaṅkālī Ṭilā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

in the pedestals of standing Jinas. Third, the last type of pedestal of standing Jinas is probably the most simple and humble one (fig. 13). It consists of a layered platform with no scene or fillings at all.



Figure 11: Type 1 pedestal of standing Jinas, Kaṅkālī Ṭilā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.



Figure 12: Type 2 pedestal of standing Jinas, Kaṅkālī Ṭilā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

As far as the Jina figure that stands on a platform is concerned, his features are the same that characterize seated counterparts: a face with *lakṣāṇas* such as long earlobes or the *ūrṇā*, curly hair without an *uṣṇīṣa*, the *śrīvatsa* symbol on the chest and a halo with geometric and vegetative patterns on the back. The most remarkable difference compared to seated sculptures is that the standing Jinas (obviously) stand in a hieratic and rigid posture with both of their arms straightened known as the *kayotsarga*.



Figure 13: Type 3 pedestal of standing Jinas, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 3rd century CE.

A significant difference between seated and standing Jina sculptures from Mathurā is the inclusion of subsidiary figures. While I suggested that seated Jinas could have been given these flanking figures in a later period (taking into account problems of conservation), almost all standing Jinas that preserve the key parts have these figures.

Subsidiary figures usually flank the standing Jina from three different positions: At feet level, flanking him at elbow-height and above him. The figures at feet level are Jaina devotees that kneel down in *añjalimudrā* or *yakṣa*-modelled figures wearing royal attires that hold flywhisks (Fig. 14). Conversely, figures at elbow-height can also be



Figure 14: Detail of standing Jina sculpture flanked by yakṣas at knee height holding *cāmaras*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā. Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

yakṣas as well as *nāga* kings who worship the Jina in *añjalimudrā* or with flywhisks (Fig. 15). Though, the figures that are represented above standing Jinas (in the few examples that display them) differ from the other two, since they usually consist of flying garland-bearers (Fig. 16).¹²

¹² The stele of figure 16 deserves some additional considerations. The anatomy of the Jina, the design of the halo and the position of some of the subsidiary figures is likewise different from the rest of the sculptures



Figure 15: Standing Jina flanked by a *yakṣa* on the right side at shoulder height, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 3rd century CE.



Figure 16: Stele of a standing Jina with flanking subsidiary figures as well as garland bearers above him, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. late 3rd century CE.

3.2 Timeline of teacher image production in Mathurā

I consider it fundamentally important to bear in mind that the Jina sculptures that were produced in Mathurā between the mid-2nd century and mid-3rd century CE were a result of different artistic and iconographic developments that occurred in the span of two centuries. These developments correlated with artistic changes that Buddhist sculpture and architecture was undergoing, since the same Mathurā artists were behind all these processes. In fact, seated and standing Jina sculptures were first produced at Mathurā when Buddhists had already been financing three-dimensional sculptures of their teacher for half a century and started to adopt certain influences from Gandhāra.

from my list. The body of the Jina has a much more robust complexion, the halo is decorated with a lotus motif and the figures at elbow-height stand on square pedestals. Even though van Lohuizen dated this image in the Kuṣāṇa period, I think that this image shows clear signs of further artistic developments and new iconographic trends. Thus, I would personally assign the image to the late Kuṣāṇa or even early Gupta period (mid. 3rd century CE- early 4th century CE).

As such, my goal in this section is to list chronologically the main artistic developments that conditioned the creation of Jina sculptures. I will concentrate on briefly defining the time framework that I will explore in the next chapters. Knowing the sequence of the most relevant artistic events will be helpful to trace back the different symbols that conform the core Jina iconography in Chapter 4.

3.2.1 The first anthropomorphic Jinas: Ṛṣabha and Paśvanātha (c. 100-50 BCE)

One of the most important events in the development of early Historic Indian art occurred at Mathurā. The very first seated and standing anthropomorphic depictions of religious teachers were commissioned by Jainas from Mathurā who gathered in the *stūpa* of Kaṅkālī Ṭilā.



Figure 17: Detail of the Nīlāñjanā relief that shows two simultaneous depictions of the first Jina Ṛṣabha seated on a cubical platform and flanked by a *cāmara* bearer, Kaṅkālī Ṭilā, Mathurā, c. 100 BCE.

A *stūpa* relief depicts the last dance of Nīlāñjanā, a famous episode in the life

story of the Jina Ṛṣabha where the first Tīrthaṅkara renounces to his throne with the aim of attaining awakening (fig. 17). A double depiction of Ṛṣabha seated in *dhyānamudrā* on a cubical platform was represented in the left side of the relief. Quintanilla dated this relief around 100 BCE because of the similarities in style and technique with Buddhist *jātakas* that were depicted in architraves from around the same time (Quintanilla, 2007: 46-47).

A fragmentary standing sculpture of the Jina Paśvanātha which is flanked by an attendant in *añjalimudrā* could had been the first representation of a Jina in *kayotsarga*. (Quintanilla, 2007: 93-94) (Fig. 59). On the one hand, Mitterwallner dated the sculpture to the first third of the 2nd century CE taking into account the similarities with the Morā torsos,

which were carved during the reign of King Kanīṣka I. On the other hand, Quintanilla argued that the Parśvanatha sculpture was probably carved in the early 1st century BCE because of its stylistic features.¹³

Accepting the earlier dating proposed by Quintanilla would have significant consequences regarding our current understanding of the development of the Jina iconography. Not only would it mean that the development of freestanding anthropomorphic images of Jinas preceded that of Buddhas (Quintanilla, 2007: 94), but it would also suggest that the *kayotsarga* became a canonized element of the iconography of standing Jina images in the early 1st century BCE.



Figure 18: Standing Parśvanātha sculpture with attendant, Mathurā, c. 100-75 BCE.

¹³ The headless standing Jina is identified as Parśvanatha because of the snake coils that survive behind the image. Mitterwallner claimed that sculpture was undoubtedly early because it still lacked symbols that were canonized later in the iconography of Jinas, such as the *śrīvatsa* in the chest or the cakra in the palms. However, she dated the image to the same time as the Morā torsos because of the similar winding of the scarf tied around the legs of the attendant (Mitterwallner, 1986: 92-93). Conversely, Quintanilla suggested that the sculpture represented a transitional state between the 2nd century BCE “Bharhut style” of Mathurā and the naturalism that gradually grew from the 1st century BCE onwards (Quintanilla, 2007: 93-94).

3.2.2 Seated Jinas in *āyāgapaṭas* (c. 50 BCE-50 CE)

The second event that took place at Mathurā was the carving of the Jaina *āyāgapaṭas* of Kaṅkāli Tīlā. Produced during the reigns of the Māhākṣatrapa Rajuvula and his successor Śodasa, these consist of votive tablets that, according to some authors (Quintanilla 200, 87-88; Kishore 2015, 24-26), were installed vertically or horizontally in *stūpas* as the main worship object of the time.



Figure 19: Detail of Pārśvanātha *āyāgapaṭa* showing the snake-hooded Jina flanked by two Ardhaphālaka monks in *añjalimudrā*, Kaṅkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 15 CE.

Regarding the early Historic development of Jaina art at Mathurā, *āyāgapaṭas* are undoubtedly a benchmark for the representation of Jinas (and Buddhas too) since they are the first artistic device in which the anthropomorphic depiction of a teacher occurs consistently (fig. 18). These tablets are filled with a strong symbolism and certain artistic motifs would be preserved in some of the Jaina and Buddhist artworks produced in the next centuries. Worshippers in *añjalimudrā*, lions, wheels and seated Jinas in *dhyānamudrā*, among many other elements, will also be implemented in the seated Jina sculptures that were carved two centuries later.

3.2.3 *Kapardin* Buddhas: the first seated sculptures of a teacher (c. 50 CE-100 CE)

The *kapardin* Buddhas were the first depiction of an anthropomorphic teacher in three-dimensional sculptures. These Buddhas follow a canonic model defined by a certain amount of artistic conventions (fig. 20): The *kaparda* as the *uṣṇīṣa* of the Buddha, the left hand resting on the knee, the right hand half-turned in *abhāyamudrā*, the light robes of the Buddha with the shoulder bare, Vajrapāṇi and Padmapāṇi or a couple of *yakṣas* with flywhisks flanking him, the display of lions in the pedestal... Buddhas with similar characteristics and stylistic traits were also carved in architectural contexts (fig. 21).



Figure 20: Seated *kapardin* Buddha flanked by *cāmara*-bearers, Katra Mound, Mathurā; c. 1st century CE.

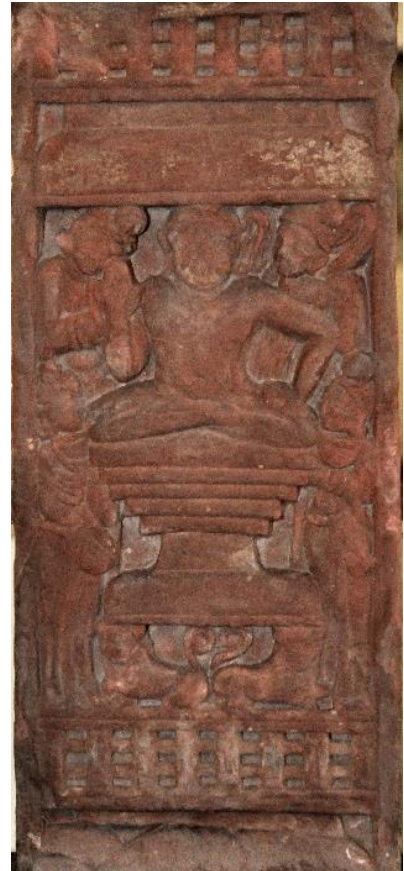


Figure 21: Buddha seated on a pillared platform flanked by four *lokapālas*, Isapur, Mathurā; c. 1st century CE.

The *kapardin* Buddhas were the predominant type of sculpture of a sectarian teacher that Mathurā artists were producing between the middle of the 1st century CE and the beginning of the 2nd century CE. It seems reasonable to suggest that they served as a source of inspiration for the Jina sculptures that were carved in the later part of the 2nd century CE. Yet, sculptures of Buddhas started to undergo significant changes before that happened.

3.2.4 Standing *kapardin* Buddhas and standing Jinas (c. 100-150 CE)

Mathurā artists eventually produced standing counterparts of seated *kapardin* Buddhas. We could label these sculptures as *kapardin* Buddhas because, even though they differ in the posture of the Buddha, the present the basic elements that characterize the seated sculptures carved in the second half of the 1st century CE: the *kaparda* as the *uṣṇīṣa*, the right hand in



Figure 22: Standing *kapardin* Buddha carved on a *stūpa* railing pillar, Mathurā; c. early 2nd century CE.

abhāyamudrā, light robes that leave a bare shoulder and a austere halo with simple circular decorations.

Some of these standing *kapardin* Buddhas were carved on *stūpa* railing pillars (fig. 22). Likewise, Mathurā artists produced three-dimensional standing *kapardin* Buddhas that were exported to relevant ancient Indian Buddhist sites such as Sarnath. This was the case of a standing Buddha made in Mathurā that was donated by a monk named Bala together with a stone umbrella (see 4.2.3). The fact that these standing Buddhas are represented with a much more consistent iconography compared to the first seated *kapardin* Buddhas and inscriptional evidence¹⁴ suggest that they were carved around the beginning of the second century CE.

However, the standing *kapardin* Buddhas were not the only type of standing teacher sculptures produced during this time at Mathurā. The lower remaining fragment of a standing Jina sculpture represents a type 1 pedestal with an inscription that, with the necessary adjustments, would date the image in the year 142 CE (fig. 11). Mitterwallner suggested that this sculpture was made around the same time as the colossal seated statue of Vima Takto in Tokri Ṭīlā due to paleographical similarities (Mitterwallner 1986, 60-61). If we accept this dating, we could consider that standing Jina sculptures from the Kuṣāṇa period started to be made slightly before their seated counterparts (see 3.2.6).

3.2.5 The three stages of Gandhāran influence in Buddha sculptures from Mathurā (c. 100-200 CE)

The beginning of the 2nd century CE marks the history of Mathurā with an unquestionably important event: the Kuṣāṇa conquest of North India. The incorporation of Mathurā into the Kuṣāṇa Empire and its constitution as one of the capital cities of these rulers seem to have increased the influx of western influence to local workshops. In fact, there is enough

¹⁴ Epigraphia Indica 8 (1905-1906): 173-178. Retrieved from: <https://archive.org/details/EpigraphiaIndica/page/n235/mode/2up?view=theater> (08-03-2022).

evidence to support that a mutual influence and cultural exchange existed between the workshops of Mathurā and Gandhāra, since artworks produced in Mathurā have been found in Gandhāra and vice versa (Errington et al. 1992, 41).

Indeed, it is in this historical context that the Kapardin Buddhas at gradually displayed influences from Gandhāra. Professor van Lohuizen proposed that three different stages marked the progressive increase of Gandhāra influences in Buddhist sculptures from Mathurā (Lohuizen-de Leeuw, 1949: 180).

The first stage would be characterized by the depiction of seated Buddhas structured in a similar way as the *kapardins* but with the crucial difference that wear thicker and longer robes that covered both of their shoulders. These Buddhas imitated the Gandhāran seated Buddhas not only in the way they dressed, but also in how each of them started to hold the garments with the left hand. The lions in the pedestal are facing to the sides during this stage (Ibid.181-182).

The second stage of Gandhāran influence caused the garments of the Buddhas from Mathurā to be thicker, the lions of their pedestals look frontally towards the viewer and Kuśa grass was depicted underneath the Buddha (Ibid. 189-190).

The third stage introduces the family of the donor and different worshippers the main scene of the pedestal. It is also in this phase that the wheel on top of a pillar becomes the center of the pedestal and the main symbol that is worshipped by the figures flanking it (Ibid. 193-194).

3.2.6 The production of seated Jina sculptures on lion-thrones and standing Jinas (c. 150-230 CE)

Buddhist imagery was not unique in representing the worship of certain symbols such as the wheel in the pedestals beneath their teachers. Virtually all seated Jina sculptures depict the worshipping of the wheel in the main scene of their lion-thrones with a significant stylistic and iconographic uniformity that lasted a century.

As far as the chronological framework is concerned, all seated Jina sculptures I identified for this study were carved during the reigns of the Kuṣāṇa Kings Huviṣka (r.

150-180 CE) and Vasudeva (r. 191-232 CE).¹⁵ The production of these Jina sculptures began between the second and third stage of Gandhāran influences that arrived to Mathurā (c. mid-2nd century CE). Furthermore, this periodization makes sense taking into account the strong iconographic and stylistic similarities between the Buddhist pedestals of the third stage and the ones beneath Jinas.

However, seated Jinas were not the only form of Jaina sculptural art developed at this time. The lower fragment of a standing Jina sculpture represents a type 1 pedestal with an inscription that would date the image in the year 142 CE (fig. 11). Mitterwallner suggested that this sculpture was made around the time that the colossal seated statue of Vima Takto in Tokri Ṭilā was produced because on the basis of paleographical similarities (Mitterwallner, 1986: 60-61). If we accept this dating, we could consider that standing Jina sculptures were first made before their seated counterparts.

3.2.7 Later Jina sculptural forms: *Sarvatobhadrikā* sculptures (c. 230 CE onwards)

The period of the later Kuṣāṇas was characterized by an outburst of image production and the adoption of new image types by the main sects of Mathurā. Regarding Jaina art, *sarvatobhadrikā* sculptures were produced in this time. These sculptures consisted of representations of four standing Jinas each facing a cardinal point (fig. 23).

We can consider the production of these sculptures as the benchmark of late Kuṣāṇa Mathurā sculpture that was defined by implementation of more detailed halos and subsidiary figures surrounding the Jina (Mitterwallner, 1986: 99-100). This type of sculpture became so popular that it continued to be produced during the Gupta period and the following centuries to come.

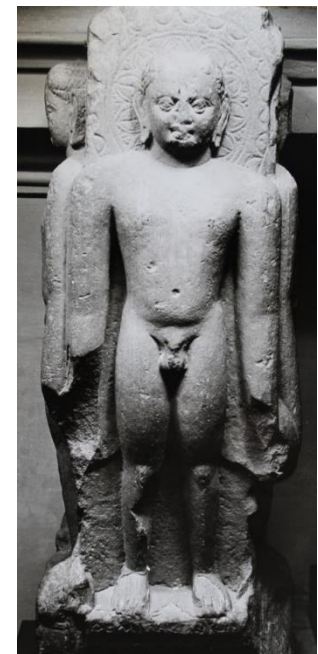


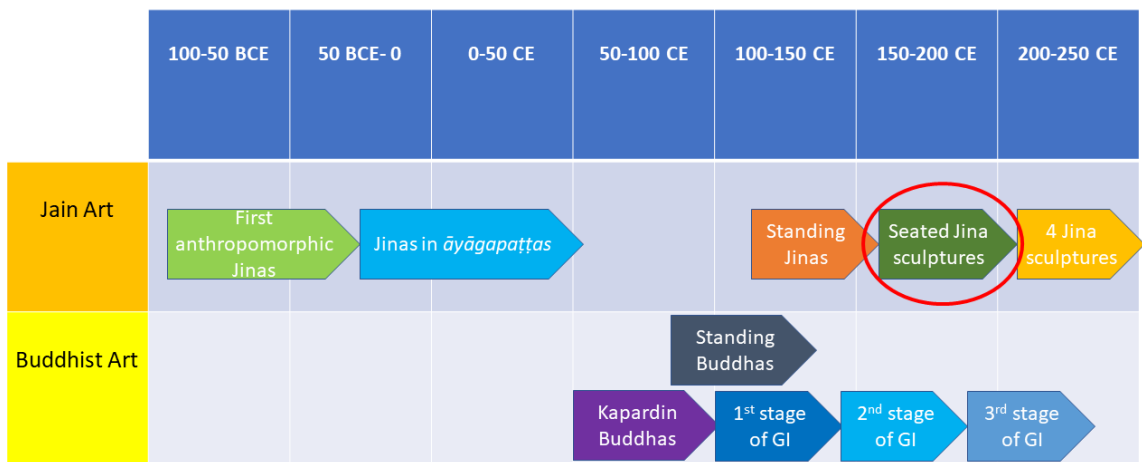
Figure 23: *Sarvatobhadrikā* sculpture featuring four standing Jinas, Kaṅkālī Ṭilā, Mathurā, c. 3rd century CE.

¹⁵ Lüders and Janert, 1961: inscriptions 14, 15, 17, 20 and 23. Huviṣka is the monarch mentioned in virtually all Jina sculptures that bear a readable inscription. There are some cases like inscription 14 which state that the sculpture was carved in the year 48 of King Huviṣka. This suggests that this sculpture was made during the time of Vasudeva since Huviṣka's reign lasted 30 years according to recent periodizations provided by Harry Falk (Bracey, 2017: 48).

3.3 The canonization of Jina iconography

The main elements that characterized the core Jina iconography were defined at Kuṣāṇa Mathurā, between the reigns of Kings Huviṣka and Vasudeva (c. 150-230 CE). This chapter was devoted to define which were these elements that distinguished seated and standing sculptures of Jinas. Furthermore, we have seen that the canonization of this iconography was the result of an almost three-century-old process that started with the first anthropomorphic depictions of Jinas at the end of the 2nd century BCE (fig. 23). Mathurā artists gradually selected certain symbols that highlighted the special qualities of Jinas and some ideas that were core to the Jaina doctrine.

What was the goal behind the symbols used in the core Jina iconography? Were these symbols a complete innovation or had they been used by Indian artists for centuries? Did these symbols make Jina sculptures from Mathurā different from contemporary images of Buddhas and Brahmanic gods or were they an evidence for Jaina art from Mathurā still being part of a pan-Indian visual imagery? These are some of the questions that we will address in Chapter 4.



GI: Gandhāran influence

Figure 24: Approximate timeline of the main artistic developments underwent by Jain and Buddhist art at Mathurā (c. 100 BCE- 250 CE). The production of seated Jina sculptures is the main focus of this study and hence marked with a red circle.

Chapter 4 Selecting symbols for the Jina

We saw in the previous chapter that between the second half of the 2nd century CE and the first half of the 3rd century CE a core Jaina iconography developed at Mathurā. Hence, all three-dimensional Jina sculptures carved by Mathurā artists after the reign of Kaniṣka I would adhere to this core iconography despite having minor differences.¹⁶ Not only did this iconography crystallize in the Kuṣāṇa period, but the popularity of the free-standing sculptures evidenced by the significantly high number of seated Jina images recovered from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā also indicates that three-dimensional sculptures became the main object of worship for the Jaina community of Mathurā.¹⁷

A closer analysis of this standardized iconography can reveal us that there was in fact a systematic choice and combination of symbols meticulously designed by Mathurā artists to evoke certain religious principles that were core to Jainism. One of these principles is the idea that the Jina is the embodiment of the perfected soul, an enlightened being who has left apart all his attachments and who, as an ascetic teacher, shares his knowledge with all sentient beings (Cort, 2009: 20-21). This, without a doubt, is a quintessential idea highlighted by the iconography of virtually all existing Jina images manifested in its intrinsic centrality, symmetry and stability.

Nevertheless, as indicated in the introduction, I will structure my iconographic analysis on another fundamental concept of Jainism: the idea that Jinās were conceived as «would-have-been kings» who had not lost their kingship attributes. We can identify a significant number of pan-Indian royal symbols in each Jina sculpture that presents the main figure as if he was a king. Yet, we also encounter another kind of symbols in the Jaina

¹⁶ Arguably all Jina sculptures produced in the following centuries, from the medieval and early modern period, up to the present, still follow this core iconography. Even though the complexity of the decorations and the quantity of the subsidiary figures have undoubtedly increased, sculptures of Jinās still follow the same basic iconographic patterns: the Jina as the central figure engaged in either standing meditation (*kayotsarga*) or seated with the hands resting on his lap (*dhyānamudrā*), being flanked by worshippers on a pedestal adorned with lions (Ghoṣa, 1974: 65-66).

¹⁷ The popularization of worshipping sculptures was linked to the pan-Indian trend of representing the teachers and gods of different religious sects anthropomorphically rather than through the use of diagrammatic imagery consisting of symbols related to the figure to be worshiped. This artistic development took place between the 1st century BCE and the 2nd century CE and it also affected Buddhist and Hindu art (Quintanilla, 2009: 121-122).

images of Mathurā that highlight the ascetic attributes of the Jina as a teacher of a religious sect.

This chapter aims to trace back the origin of these two kinds of symbols that became part of the core iconography of Jina sculptures from Mathurā. This analysis allows us to determine the artistic trajectory of these symbols, the changes these underwent as well as which features made Jaina images unique compared to Buddhist or Hindu sculptures that were produced around the same period. Furthermore, knowing for how long these symbols had been in use in India could help us to establish to what extent the development of the core Jaina iconography was an Indian phenomenon. Did foreign influences also play a substantial role?¹⁸

I have divided the symbols employed in Jaina images of Mathurā over three different categories. The first two correspond to the aforementioned ascetic and royal symbolisms. Some symbols could be included in both categories since they were interchangeably used for images of kings and ascetics. Hence, I have created a third category that includes those symbols that highlight both the royal and ascetic attributes of the Jinas (fig. 25).

Royal symbolism	Ascetic Symbolism	Shared symbolism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lions • Flywhisks • <i>Chattra</i> • The wheel • <i>Yakṣas</i> and <i>nāgas</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dhyānamudrā</i> and <i>kayotsarga</i> • Platform of the teacher • Monks and nuns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lakṣaṇas</i> • Halo • <i>Nandipāda</i>

Figure 25: Different types of symbols identified in the seated and standing Jina aculptures.

I have identified the material culture of certain Indian sites as the artistic precedents from which most of these symbols derive. Without a doubt, the *āyāgapaṭas* of Mathurā, Jaina votive tablets used as the main object of worship between the 2nd century BCE and

¹⁸ Chapter five will address this topic.

the 2nd century CE, can be considered as the medium in which prototypic Jaina iconography started to develop (see 3.2.2). Sonya Rhie Quintanilla pointed out that the symbols found in these diagrammatic votive tablets were adapted and transferred to the three-dimensional sculptures of Jinas produced after the reign of Kanīṣka I (Quintanilla, 2000; 2007; 2009). Likewise, the narrative reliefs among architectural remains found at the Jaina site of Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā (Mathurā) contain prototypical depictions of Jinas as well as some of these symbols. Reliefs from other Indian archaeological sites that were produced around the same time as the ones at Mathurā must also be taken into account. The art of the *stūpas* of Sāñcī and Bharhut as well as the great temple of Bodh Gaya shares the use of the same pan-Indian symbols and iconography that we see in Mathurā. The first three-dimensional images of a religious teacher produced in Mathurā, the sculptures of the *kapardin* Buddhas, also display a symbolism that was adopted and re-adapted by Jina sculptures made later.

4.1 Shared iconography

The development of early Historic Indian religions¹⁹ is characterized by a common use of pan-Indian characters, concepts and narratives, which were adapted and transformed according to specific sectarian needs. This phenomenon happened during a period in which an ongoing inter-religious dialogue caused different religions to draw certain deities from each other, re-interpret them and give them new functions with the aim of gaining new devotees (Appleton, 2016: 10-13).

4.1.1 *Lakṣaṇas*

A pan-sectarian belief shared by virtually all main Indian religions is that great men (Skt. *mahāpuruṣas*) are born with extraordinary physical attributes (Skt. *lakṣaṇas*) that indicate their special status.²⁰

Regarding the seated and standing sculptures of Jinas that were carved in Mathurā during the Kuṣāṇa period, we can clearly distinguish a certain number of *lakṣaṇas* that

¹⁹ With early Historic Indian religions, I refer to early Historic Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanic Hinduism (c. 300 BCE-300 CE) rather than to Harappan religions or Vedic cults.

²⁰ The first mention of bodily marks suggesting a divine or royal status goes back to Vedic literature (c. 1200-750 BCE) in which Indra, the king of the gods, is described as a *mahāpuruṣa* with 32 distinctive external features named *ākāras* (Bollée, 2005: 24). Buddhists also adopted this notion that a great person must possess particular physical characteristics and re-defined it as a requirement that all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should meet. The story of the Buddha Vipāśyin (the 22nd Buddha of the past) is where the greater 32 *lakṣaṇas* are listed for the first time as a visualization of how the future Buddha should look like (Zin, 2003: 107).

characterize their faces and bodies. The tuft of hair between the eyebrows (Skt. *ūrṇā*), long earlobes and wheels carved on the palms of their hands and feet are the most usual *lakṣaṇas* that Jina sculptures from this period tend to display. However, the most iconic physical attribute that virtually all images of Jinas from this period bear is the *śrīvatsa* mark on the chest. In fact, it was so common to see this mark that archaeologists used it as an evidence to distinguish fragmentary torsos of Jinas found in Mathurā from Buddha sculptures.²¹

As far as the precedents of *lakṣaṇas* in the Jaina art of Mathurā are concerned, the Jinas represented in the *āyāgapaṭas* carved between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE do not display most of the distinguishing physical features mentioned above. Yet, the only *lakṣaṇa* that can be distinguished in these Jinas are the long earlobes. The damaged state of most of the *āyāgapaṭas* and their small size makes it difficult to assert a conscious use of the *lakṣaṇas* by the artists of Mathurā during this period. The Jinas that we encounter in the center of these votive tablets are still prototypic stylistically and iconographically. However, the presence of long earlobes marks a turning point in the development of the Jina iconography, since this is the first time that the image of a Jaina teacher is represented with extraordinary physical attributes. In fact, the Rṣabha relief which is considered to portray the first anthropomorphic image of a Jina (dated around the end of the 2nd century BCE) did not display any *lakṣaṇas* yet (see 3.2.1).

Regarding sculptures of Buddhas that were carved around the same time in Mathurā, we see that the implementation of *lakṣaṇas* starts around the mid-1st century CE. The seated *kapardin* Buddhas, the Isapur Buddha pillar and a bas-relief of Buddha preaching to a king offer the first identifiable examples of a Buddhist religious teacher depicted with physical qualities of a *mahāpuruṣa* (figs. 20, 21 and 26).

The best preserved example of a *kapardin* Buddha (fig. 20), which comes from the Katra mound, was carved with most of the recurrent marks of a great man that we tend to see in all seated Mathurā sculptures of religious teachers from the Kuṣāṇa period: long earlobes, webbed fingers, the *uṣṇīṣa* in the form of a *kaparda* (small shell), wheels in the

²¹ The *śrīvatsa* also became a typical *lakṣaṇa* represented in the chest of the Hindu god Viṣṇu from the Medieval period onwards. Yet, the *śrīvatsa* became a quintessential element in the iconography of Jinas as it was represented in the chest of virtually all Jina images from the Kuṣāṇa period and up to the present (Srivastava, 1979).



Figure 26: Bas-relief panel of Buddha addressing a king, Mathurā; c. 1st CE.

palms and feet and the *ūrṇā* between the eyebrows. Moreover, Buddhas carved in reliefs around this period also displayed certain *lakṣaṇas*. A seated depiction of the Buddha carved on a railing pillar from Isapur (fig. 21) as well as a bas-relief panel in which the Buddha is preaching to a king (fig. 26) both represent the Buddha with a prototypic *uṣṇīṣa*²², long earlobes and the *ūrṇā*.

Hence, we can see that Mathurā artists start to represent *lakṣaṇas* in the very first anthropomorphic depictions of Buddha, both in three-dimensional sculptures as well as in reliefs carved on *stūpa* railings. Mathurā artists continued this trend when they started to carve sculptures of seated and standing Jinas after the middle of the 2nd century CE, providing them with the same *lakṣaṇas* as the *kapardin* Buddhas with the exception of the *uṣṇīṣa*, a *lakṣaṇa* that was interpreted either as top-knot that was supposed to be covered by a turban or as a cranial bump.²³

²² The *uṣṇīṣa* of the Isapur Buddha is significantly flattened because its shape adapts to the frame of the railing pillar. Conversely, the preaching Buddha's *uṣṇīṣa* consists on a spherical surface.

²³ Both Buddhist schools and modern scholars have dealt with the problem of how to interpret the *uṣṇīṣa*. Coomaraswamy pointed out that the interpretation of the *uṣṇīṣa* as a cranial bump was an event that took place in later literature and art. Regarding the etymology of the word and its earliest mentions in Brahmanical texts and early Pāli literature, the *uṣṇīṣa* denoted the place on the head where a *mahāpuruṣa* was supposed to wear a turban and this was symbolized with the hair that was left uncut when Gautama left his palace (Coomaraswamy, 1926: 831). Tianshu Zhu more recently suggested that the Sarvastivadins, which were significantly interested in the worship of *lakṣaṇas* of the Buddha, were the ones that began interpreting the



Figure 27: A Buddha and a Jina head, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

In fact, just as the *śrīvatsa* was a distinctive *lakṣaṇa* restricted to sculptures of Jinas, the representation of the *uṣṇīṣa* was limited to sculptures of Buddha during the Kuṣāṇa period (fig. 27). Jainas eventually also adopted the *uṣṇīṣa* as a *lakṣaṇa* to represent on top of the head of images of their teachers. However, there are no Jina sculptures that have the *uṣṇīṣa* until the Gupta period (c. 300-550 CE), which suggests that this was an exclusively Buddhist attribute during the Kuṣāṇa period. Jainas eventually incorporated it into the iconography of their teachers after seeing the popularity that this *lakṣaṇa* had in the sculptures that their Buddhist competitors commissioned.

All in all, Jainas adopted the idea of the *lakṣaṇas* to present their spiritual teachers as extraordinary humans, though, with significant conceptual differences compared to their Buddhist competitors. The 32 *lakṣaṇas* mainly consist of special physical characteristics such as having webbed fingers (Skt. *jālalakṣaṇa*), the *ūrṇā* between his eyebrows or a *uṣṇīṣa* on top of their head. Yet, the 32 special characteristics of a Jina, which the texts usually name as *atiśaya* (eminence), tend to be more abstract in nature. A breath with a lotus fragrance, the presence of good weather around the Jina or the disappearance of

uṣṇīṣa as a cranial bump and that they were responsible for spreading this idea that eventually influenced the Buddha iconography (Zhu, 2015: 32-33). Yet, early 20th century scholars such as Kramrisch already claimed that the whole discussion about the interpretation of the *uṣṇīṣa* was trivial, since this *lakṣaṇa* was just an emblem that symbolized the awakened nature of the Buddha (Kramrisch, 1935: 153-154).

demons and monsters are some of the special characteristics highlighted in Jaina texts (Cort, 2009: 22-23).

4.1.2 The Halo

The halo is the radiating light behind the head or body of a king, a deity or a religious teacher typically represented in art as a circle that emanates beams of light. Even though most of the remains of the Jina sculptures from Mathurā do not conserve the halo because of their deteriorated state, the best-preserved sculptures do, in fact, maintain this symbol behind their back (fig. 28).

We may assume that virtually all seated and standing Jina sculptures from Mathurā indeed had halos behind. The decoration underwent a significant development since we no longer encounter the simple circle with an almost flat surface that characterized the halos of the *kapardin* Buddhas (fig. 20). On the contrary, Jinās start to be represented with halos decorated with spikes, dots and lotus petals that emulate the rays of the sun.

The solar symbolism evoked by the full-blown lotuses and wheels that form the central circles on which the Jinās from the *āyāgapaṭas* are superimposed can be considered as a precedent of the halos that will be given to Buddha and Jina sculptures (fig. 29).



Figure 28: Standing sculpture of a single Jina with the hands, feet and pedestal missing, from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. late 3rd century CE.



Figure 29: Detail of Dhanamitra *āyāgapaṭa*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, 20 CE.

The innermost circles on which the Jinas from the *āyāgapaṭas* are superimposed have a strong symbolic meaning which has been compared to the symbolism of the *chattra* as an emblem of both, kingship and divinity (Quintanilla, 2000: 92). The circular section of the *āyāgapaṭas* could also have a much more explicit Jaina meaning and symbolize instead the dome of the sky in which the Jina is sitting in meditation.²⁴

Kuṣāṇa coins that were issued around the same time that Jina sculptures from Mathurā were carved tend to represent halos behind the head of the ruler in the obverse and the god or goddess in the reverse (fig. 30). Overall, the halo symbolizes the divine radiance of the king and likewise the connection of the Iranian deities with the Avestan cult of the sacred fire (Rowland, 1949: 11-12).

²⁴ This is a popular scene in Jain literature and art in which the Jina is sitting on the dome of the sky in order to give a teaching to all the sentient beings. The Jina is conceived as the perfected liberated being who sits in mediation. The circular section of the *āyāgapaṭas* would, hence, symbolize this dome of the sky while the outer square frame would stand for the earth (Quintanilla, 2000: 93-95).



Figure 30: Gold dinara of Huvishka, from Peshawar, 150 -190 CE. Obverse: Bust of king Huvishka with the halo at the back. Reverse: Iranian god Ardochso standing.

However, as we have seen above, the symbolism of the halos that we see in the back of the seated and standing Jinas of Mathurā preexisted in India before the arrival of the Kuṣāṇas. By the time the first *kapardin* Buddhas were made (c. late 1st century CE), halos had become a symbol that Mathurā artists would depict at the back of three-dimensional sculptures of religious teachers.²⁵ It is true that the halo was a popular symbol of divinity and kingship used by the Kuṣāṇas in their coins. Yet, the Indian religious and iconographic conception of the halo predates the conquest of the Kuṣāṇas. The halo was already listed as a special characteristic of great men in Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina literature.²⁶

²⁵ Claudine Bautze-Picron proposed that the antecedents of the motifs that we see in the halos of the Buddhas of Mathurā have their origin in the medallions of the Buddhist *stūpas* from Sanchi and Bharhut. She labelled the wheels and lotuses that decorated these medallions as “pre-nimbus” since, according to her, the decoration of the first halos of Buddhas would have emerged as an evolution of the solar symbolism encapsulated in these medallions (Bautze-Picron, 1990: 82-84).

²⁶ Hindu literature that mentions the halo, can be traced back to the Bhagavad Gita (3rd century BCE). Dating Buddhist texts that list the 82 lesser *lakṣaṇas* of a Buddha, in which the halo is included, as well as Śvetāmbara scriptures that mention the halo among the 32 *atiśayas* of Jinas is a much more complicated issue. Both the Pali *Digha Nikaya* and the Chinese *Āgamas*, where the halo is mentioned as a special characteristic of the Buddha, were compiled after the rule of the Kuṣāṇas (c. 5th century CE). Likewise, the Śvetāmbara *Āgamas* where the halo is described as a *atiśaya* of Jinas were redacted around the same time (c. 5th century CE). Though, the nature of the transmission of early Buddhist and Jain literature, which suggests that these texts had been transmitted orally

Furthermore, literary works such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* (3rd century BCE) already compared the knowledge that a person seeking god must cultivate with light emanating from the body of god.²⁷ Likewise, the *tejas* or radiance emanated by a Buddha is considered the 38th of the 82 lesser minor *lakṣaṇas* of a *mahāpuruṣa* in Buddhist literature while the halo is listed among the 32 *atiśayas* of a Jina according to Śvetāmbara scriptures (Rowland, 1949: 15; Cort, 2009: 22).

4.1.3 The *nandipāda*

The *nandipāda* is a ω-shaped, pan-Indian auspicious motif that was represented in different media since ancient times.²⁸ Many scholars, taking into account the etymology of the word (*nandi* = bull + *pada* = foot-print) tend to define it as a “taurine symbol” that is supposed to illustrate the mark of the hoof of Nandin, the bull of Śiva (Liebert, 1976: 191). Yet, as far as the Jina sculptures from Mathurā are concerned, the *nandipāda* that we see supporting the wheel at the center of many pedestals did not have any Śaiva connotation, but it was conceived as a pan-Indian auspicious symbol that we encounter in Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist iconography indistinctively (fig. 31).

Almost all the Jinas at the center of the *āyāgapatas* are surrounded by four *nandipādas* (fig. 29) that tend to be ignored by some scholars or even named differently.²⁹ Coming back to the symbolic notion of the “dome of the sky” that *āyāgapatas* might try to evoke, the four *nandipādas* that surround Jinas could be interpreted as his presence and teaching expanding to the four cardinal points (Quintanilla, 2000: 92). Moreover, the *nandipāda* is one of the *aṣṭamaṅgala* (eight auspicious symbols) which are more often

for centuries, may allow us to argue that the idea of the halo as a special physical characteristic was already present in early Buddhist and Jain literary works that predate the Kuṣāṇas and did not survive to this day.

²⁷ *Bhagavad Gita* (Chapter xiv, verse 11). Retrieved from: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/14/verse/11-13> (06-03-2022).

²⁸ Some authors even go all the way back to the Harappan period (3300-1900 BCE) to suggest that the shape of the horns of the Proto-Śiva from the Paśupati seal was the prototype of what later would be the *nandipāda* symbol (Imam et al. 2006: 7): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2f/Shiva_Pashupati.jpg (06-03-2022).

²⁹ Mitterwallner rejected the use of the term *triratna*, which can be misleading as this can be confused with the Buddhist auspicious symbol representing the three jewels (Mitterwallner, 1986: 98). Likewise, *nandyāvarta* tends to be another term used by art historians, which is a synonym of *nandipāda* (Bhattacharya, 2000: 270-271).



Figure 31: Fragment of seated Jina pedestal showing a wheel supported by a *nandipāda*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, 2nd century CE.



Figure 32: Fragment of Tusikā *āyāgapāṭa* depicting some *maṅgalas* including the *nandipāda*, the *bhadrāsana* and the *śrīvatsa*, Mathurā, 75 BCE.



Figure 33: Relief fragment depicting two devotees worshipping the seat of the Buddha with *nandipādas* behind, Bharhut, 2nd century BCE.

represented in the *āyāgapāṭas*, as we also find it in the outermost layer of each tablet (Fig. 32).

The symbol had been used by Indian artists in the early Historic Buddhist reliefs that predate the very first seated Jina sculptures that were carved in Mathurā. In fact, the *nandipāda* was already present as an auspicious motif in the earliest Buddhist stūpas such as Bharhut (fig. 33).

The art of the early Historic reliefs of 2nd century BCE Buddhist *stūpas* such as Bharhut tends to be considered as the main source of inspiration that conditioned the early styles of Mathurā (Quintanilla, 2007: 10-11).

As an auspicious motif, the *nandipāda* was so popular in India that the Kuṣāṇas incorporated it into the iconography of their coins. Some copper issues of Kujula Kadphises (r. 30-50 CE) already displayed this auspicious symbol next to a humped bull on the obverse (Mitterwallner, 1986: 2).³⁰ Yet, it was not until the monetary revolution of Vima Kadphises (r. 113-127 CE) that the *nandipāda* was represented in the reverse of virtually all Kuṣāṇa gold issues representing the god Weś (fig. 34). Some authors even claimed that the iconographic origin of the *nandipāda* was undoubtedly link to its depiction on Kuṣāṇa coins (Bhattacharya, 2000: 265).



Figure 34: Gold dinara of Vima Kadphises, from Bactria, 113 – 127 CE. Obverse: King Vima Kadphises riding a chariot. Reverse: Śiva/Oesho standing with the trident next to a *nandipāda*.

³⁰ The *nandipāda* is represented above a humped bull depicted on the obverse of bronze issue: <http://coinindia.com/Kujula-bull-penta-295.1.JPG> (27-07-2022).

4.1.4 Following the norm

The use of motifs such as the *nandipāda*, *lakṣaṇas* or the halo demonstrates that the Jina iconography was composed of symbols that were part of a pan-Indian visual imagery. As such, Jina sculptures from the Kuṣāṇa period underwent a similar artistic evolution compared to Buddhist sculptures carved around the same time in India.

The main difference during this period was the fact that the *uṣṇīṣa* was a *lakṣaṇa* only represented in Buddha sculptures. Likewise, the *śrīvatsa* was a mark that could only be found in the chest of seated and standing Jinas. As such, we see that some symbols that initially were pan-sectarian gradually became associated with certain religious doctrines and the iconography of their respective teachers.

4.2 Royal iconography

Without a doubt, the importance of kingship is a recurrent topic addressed by all the Indian religions.³¹ The king has the fundamental duty of being the protector of his subjects and the mediator between the gods and the mundane world. In fact, it is necessary for him to meet certain ideal characteristics and to behave according to his warrior-duty (Skt, *kṣatradharma*) in order to be accepted by his subject as a legitimate ruler (Gonda, 1956: 36-40).

The three-dimensional sculptures of Jinas that were carved in Mathurā during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE also evoke these characteristics. Seated on a platform with a lion on each side, flanked by devotees holding flywhisks, having the royal umbrella above their head and the wheel of the monarch at the center of their pedestal, accompanied by *yakṣas* or *nāgas* that worship them; the Jina is presented as a universal monarch.

It might seem at first that this image of the ideal king is absolutely incompatible with Jainism, a non-Brahmanical religion that puts emphasis on asceticism and renunciation. However, not only did the Jainas respect the importance of kingship in Indian

³¹ Early Indian courts set an image of the ideal Indian king through the production of a broad body of literature that extended from elite treatises (Skt. *śāstras*), courtly poetry (Skt. *kāvya*), and royal inscriptions to didactic expressions that were popular among members of the ruling classes (Ali, 2004: 20-22). Not only did this ideal image of Indian monarchs define the behavior and functions of the king, but also their physical appearance, gestures and possessions that became innate symbols of kingship (Ibid. 143-150).

society, but they actually adapted it to their religious worldview and incorporated certain pan-Indian symbols of royalty in the iconography of the Jina.³²

According to biographies of their teachers, all 28 *tīthāṅkāras* were axiomatically born as members of the warrior class and renounced their kingdoms as kings. This decision did not go against the ideal Indian image of a king since, from the Jaina point of view, *tīthāṅkāras* renounced kingship in its worldly form in order to become superior spiritual kings (Babb, 1993: 4-6).

Royal symbols that can be identified in the seated and standing Jina sculptures from Mathurā were intentionally selected to highlight the idea that *tīthāṅkāras* were spiritual kings that retained certain elements of a worldly king. I will, thus, proceed to analyze each of the royal symbols that I identified individually and argue that all of these have Indian artistic precedents.

4.2.1 Lions

Lions were a universal symbol of royalty in antiquity all the way from the Mediterranean to East Asia (Berthier, 1990: 115-117). We find them at each side of the platform of virtually all seated Jina sculptures recovered from Mathurā. The lions tend to vary stylistically and as far as their orientation is concerned, some of them being either more grotesque or realistic and facing outwards or towards the viewer. Despite these minor variations, the lions are the main element that transform the seat of the Jina, once a simple rectangular platform, into the throne of a monarch. Even though the representation of lions on each side of a seat was not an artistic convention limited to India³³, the lion-throne (Skt. *siṃhāsana*) was part of the royal paraphernalia that the ideal Indian king had to possess in

³² Jaina literature and historiography combined a martial idiom of power with ascetic core values of non-violence in order to re-define the image of its teachers. The word «*jina*» itself comes from the verbal root √*ji* (to conquer), which presents the Jaina teacher as a spiritual conqueror. Moreover, Indian kings who might have embraced Jainism such as Chandragupta Maurya (c. r. 324-297 BCE) were incorporated to the Jaina historical imaginations as kings who had, lived according to their warrior duties and then renounced the throne to become an ascetic monk (Pierce Taylor, 2020).

³³ The first sculptures that depicted lions flanking the seat of a deity come from terracotta statuettes of the goddess Narundi and a mother-goddess from Mesopotamia and Anatolia respectively, which date back to the 6th millennium BCE (Berthier, 1990).

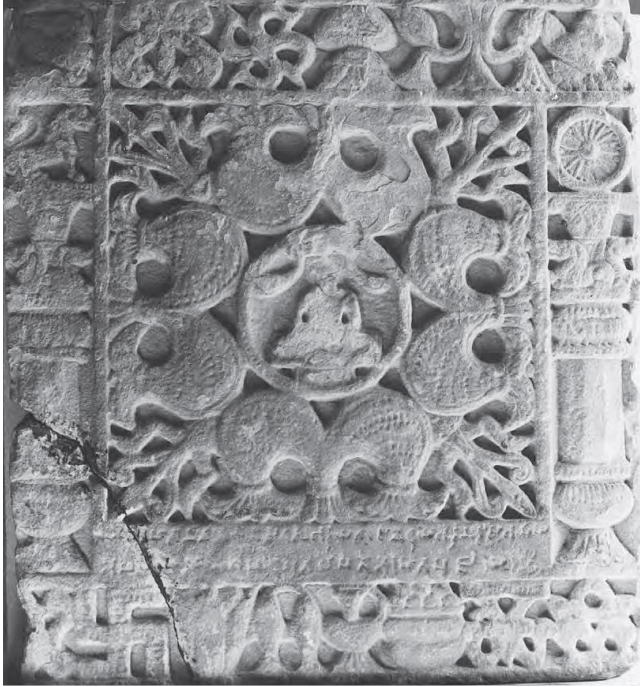


Figure 35: Acalā *āyāgapaṭa* depicting a seated Jina between a pillar crowned by a lion and another one crowned by the wheel, from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 25-50 CE.

order to legitimate his rule (Gonda, 1956: 130). Thus, the lions at each side of the seats of seated Jina sculptures had the function of underlying the royal status that each *tīrthānkāra* still maintained even after renouncing their throne.

As far as earlier Jain material culture from Mathurā is concerned, a special type of *āyāgapaṭas* that depict the Jina flanked by two pillars could be considered as the artistic precedent of the lion as a symbol of kingship in the iconography of Jinas (fig. 35). Indeed, most of these *āyāgapaṭas* tend to have a lion crowning one of

the two pillars at each side that has been interpreted as a cognizance symbol of the 24th *Tīrthānkāra*, Mahāvira, whose name is written on the inscriptions accompanying these tablets (Quintanilla, 2000: 95-96).³⁴

Despite the fact that the use of the lion in these *āyāgapaṭas* as a cognizance symbol is undoubtedly proved by inscriptional evidence, its function as an emblem of royal symbolism should not be overlooked. In fact, the image of the lion crowning a pillar had been used in India at least since Mauryan times (350-200 BCE) as a symbol of the monarch. Regardless of its exact artistic origins³⁵, by the time the seated Jinas from Mathurā had lions at each side of their pedestal, the lion motif had been modified and adapted to suit the

³⁴ All 24 *tīrthānkāras* have an animal or object as their cognizance symbol in order to identify them. This symbol may or may not accompany the Jina in his pictorial representations. The most frequent cognizance animals are the lion of Mahāvira, the snake of Parśvanatha and the elephant of Ajitanatha.

³⁵ Scholars proposed two main ideas regarding the origin of these pillars. On the one hand, an Indian tribal tradition of erecting *śālastambhas*, wooden pillars which according to John Irwin were crowned by copper gilded animals (1973: 713-715), seems to have predated the construction of the first Mauryan pillars. On the other hand, the source of inspiration for the modelling of the lions, an animal which (unlike the elephant) was not domesticated by Indians and not that familiar, was said to come most likely from West Asia with undeniable Irano-Hellenistic influences (Kumar, 2017: 434-435).

Indian ethos (Kumar, 2017: 436) and used in different media for at least three centuries. Not only do we find lions crowning pillars in *āyāgapataṣas*, but we also see this artistic motif in previous early Historic *stūpa* reliefs from Mathurā, Sāñcī and Bharhut.

Buddhists from Mathurā also adopted the lion as a motif to symbolize the spiritual kingship of the Buddha. The railing pillar of Isapur shows for the first time two lions supporting the pillared platform where one of the earliest anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha sits (fig. 21). Likewise, the *kapardin* Buddhas are the first Indian, three-dimensional sculptures of a religious teacher that display two or three lions modelled in a similar style and posture as the lion in the Mauryan pillars (fig. 20). As with the *lakṣāṇas* and halos and other artistic motifs that we will analyze below, the *kapardin* Buddha statues were probably the main source of inspiration from which the lions of the seated Jinas derived.

4.2.2 The flywhisk

Another symbol of Indian kingship is the flywhisk made of a yak's tail (Skt. *cāmara*), an object carried by the attendants of a king or a divine figure.³⁶



Figure 36: Detail of pedestal of seated Jina depicting a male and a female *cāmara* bearer flanking the wheel, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

³⁶ Not only is the flywhisk listed in Indian literature among some of the most typical regalia of a monarch next to the white umbrella, the shoes, the turban or the throne (Gonda, 1957: 122); but we also have material evidences of flywhisks engraved with precious stones that have been found in archaeological sites belonging to the Maurya period (Raven, 2008: 124).

So popular was this symbol in early Historic Indian depictions of kings that one would expect to find *cāmara* bearers as attendant figures next to most of the standing and seated Jinas that were carved in Mathurā after the middle of the 2nd century CE. However, there are only few examples of *cāmara* bearers depicted in any of the sculptures of Jinas carved after the rule of Kaniṣka I (fig. 36). This may be related to the deteriorated state of most of these sculptures, since *cāmara* bearers could have been depicted, as seen in sculptures from the Gupta period (c. 300-550 CE), flanking the Jina at shoulder height (fig. 37).

Yet, what we do find in most pedestals of these Jina sculptures are *rajoharaṇas* (brushes) and flowers being held by *ardhaphālaka* monks and nuns respectively (fig. 38). The manner in which these objects are held reminds us of the way *cāmara* bearers hold flywhisks next to royal or divine figures. Even though *cāmaras* and *rajoharaṇas*

are two strikingly similar objects (both with handles with animal hair attached), their practical and symbolic functions are completely different. On the one hand, *cāmaras* are tools used to swat flies and, as we saw above, a pan-Indian symbol of royalty that is supposed to be held by the attendants of a monarch. *Rajoharaṇas*, on the other hand, are brushes used by Jain monks in order to sweep away dust or small living beings that may stand in their way. Moreover, *rajoharaṇas* as well as flowers are objects used in Jain

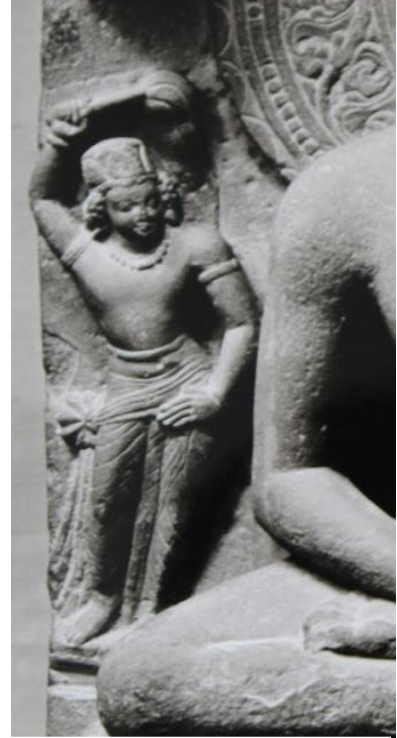


Figure 37: Detail of seated Jina flanked by *cāmara* bearers at shoulder height, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 300-550 CE.



Figure 38: Detail of pedestal of seated Jina with monks and nuns flanking the wheel, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.



Figure 39: Detail of Amohini *āyāgaṇa* that shows a Jain female deity being flanked on her left side by a female *cāmara* bearer, from Kaṅkāli Tīlā. Mathurā. c. 15 CE.

worship and, in the case of Jina sculptures, symbols of the monastic community (Quintanilla, 2009: 113-114).

Some of the *āyāgaṇas* already use the *cāmara* as a royal symbol, the most famous example being the Jain goddess who is flanked by a female *cāmara* bearer in the Amohini *āyāgaṇa* (fig. 39). Not only Jain, but also Buddhist artworks of Mathurā made use of this pan-Indian royal symbol, which can be seen in the attendants of the Buddha that carry *cāmaras* in the Isapur Buddha pillar relief as well as the early *kapardin* Buddha sculptures (figs. 20 and 21).

Overall, *cāmara* bearers were represented continuously as attendants or independent figures at Hindu, Jain and Buddhist sites of Mathurā from the 2nd century BCE until the 2nd century CE. We see them depicted in *stūpa* railings, narrative reliefs or as free-standing sculptures. The c. 100 BCE relief representing the dance of Nīlāñjanā already shows *cāmara* bearers next to two seated representations of the first Jina Ṛṣabha (fig. 40).



Figure 40: Detail of the Nīlāñjanā relief that shows a *cāmara* bearer clanking the Jina Ṛṣabha, Kaṅkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 100 BCE.

4.2.3 The umbrella

The white umbrella (Skt. *chattra*), just as the flywhisk, is one of the most common objects listed among the regalia of Indian kings and, therefore, an unquestionable symbol of royalty.³⁷

The popularity of the *chattra* as a pan-Indian symbol of royalty grew so much during the early Historic period that it was also used by the artists of Mathurā. Not only did Jains adopt this symbol to represent it in their *stūpa* reliefs, but they also integrated it into the very first anthropomorphic iconography of the Jinas in the *āyāgapaṭas*. In fact, virtually all seated Jinas that were carved in the center of the *āyāgapaṭas* have a *chattra* above (fig. 41).

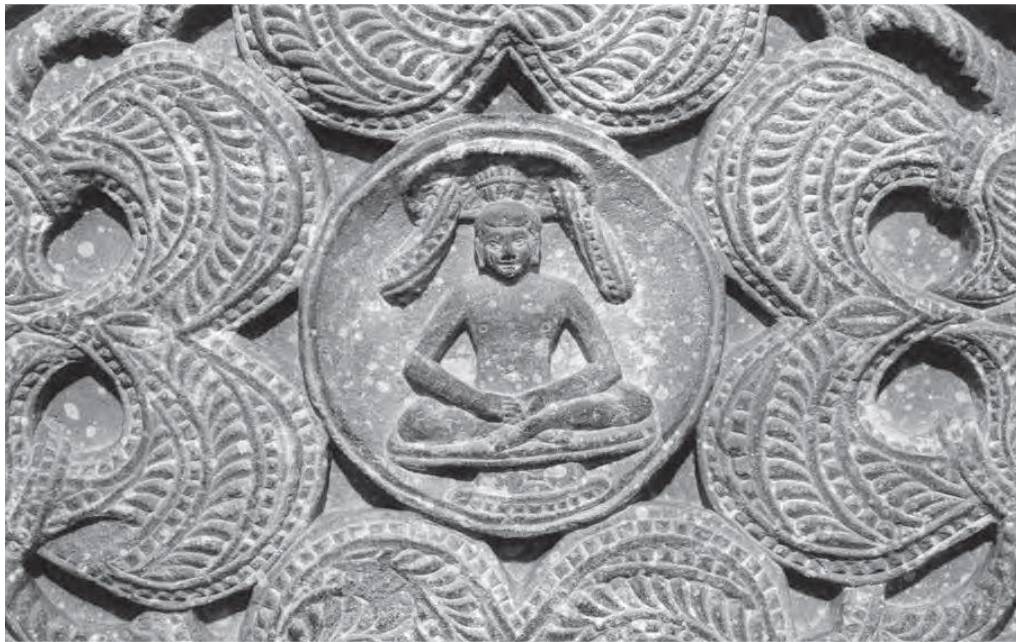


Figure 41: Detail of Sihanāṃdika *āyāgapaṭa* showing a seated Jina with a *chattra* on top, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 25-50 CE.

³⁷ The royal umbrella has a strong solar symbolism attached to it, even though it has the function of blocking the sun. Both the sun and the king emanate rays of light that represent their might (Skt. *tejas*). Thus, it was believed that the *tejas* of the sun could neutralize the *tejas* of the monarch if he was not protected by a parasol (Gonda, 1957: 123).

Yet, when it comes to analyze the use of the *chattrā* in the time that the seated and standing Jina sculptures from Mathurā were carved a similar phenomenon compared to the *cāmara* occurs, since we basically find no depictions of *chattras* above the Jinas during this period.

As an important iconographic element of religious and royal figures, the *chattrā* was also a sculptural element that used to be donated separately by devotees. However, there are no inscriptions in Mathurā from the Kuṣāṇa period that explicitly mention a *chattrā* as the object donated by Jains. Only a broken pillar with four winged lions on top from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā contains an inscription with the word *chattrā*.³⁸

Buddhist sculptures carved around the same period provide multiple examples of standing Buddha sculptures made in Mathurā that were donated by monks to sites as far as Sarnath (Schopen, 1988: 159). The inscriptions found in

these standing sculptures mention the *chattrā*, together with the bodhisattva statue, as a gift of the monk Bala.³⁹ In addition to this, the best-preserved standing Buddha sculptures from Mathurā found in Sarnath still display a stone umbrella above the Buddha (fig. 42).

Was the *chattrā* then a royal symbol only employed by Buddhists in Kuṣāṇa period Mathurā? And, was its use restricted to standing sculptures?

The *chattrā* was a popular symbol of royalty employed by Buddhists in their early Historic *stūpas*. We see the *chattrā* as a common architectonic element crowning the 2nd



Figure 42: Standing Buddha sculpture carved in Mathurā with the remains of a stone umbrella above, Sarnath, c. 125 CE.

³⁸ Lüders and Janert, 1961: inscription 82.

³⁹ Epigraphia Indica 8 (1905-1906): 173-178. Retrieved from: <https://archive.org/details/EpigraphiaIndica/page/n235/mode/2up?view=theater> (08-03-2022).

and 1st century BCE *stūpas* of Bharhut and Sāñcī.⁴⁰ In addition to this, the *chattra* was depicted in *stūpa* and *toraṇa* reliefs, either crowning objects related to the Buddha (e.g. the *stūpa*, the wheel, the *bodhi* tree...) or held by attendants of royal figures.

The Jain community from Mathurā, as we saw above, frequently used the *chattra* as a pan-Indian symbol of kingship in their *stūpas* as well as in the *āyāgapaṭas*. Hence, the reason why *chattras* were not placed above Jina sculptures during the Kuṣāṇa period could have been a choice made by the Jain patrons. The lack of a *chattra* made the Jina less royal and thus more ascetic compared to Buddha sculptures that had a *chattra* above their head.

However, I think that the omission of the *chattra* during this period is probably a result of the deterioration of the sculptures. It does not make much chronological sense for the *chattra* to be a popular royal symbol represented in virtually all depictions of Jinas on *āyāgapaṭas*, disappear during the Kuṣāṇa period and reappear in Gupta and later periods.

4.2.4 The wheel

The wheel is one of the most prominent symbols linked to both the Buddhist and the Jaina doctrine. As far as its origins in the Indian cultural sphere are concerned, the wheel was originally conceived as a quintessential symbol of the universal monarch.⁴¹ Not only was it used as a symbol of the *dharma* of King Aśoka Maurya in some of the famous 3rd century BCE pillars, but Buddhists already accepted it as a symbol of the teaching of the Buddha in some of the oldest *stūpas* such as Bharhut, Sāñcī or Bodhi Gaya (fig. 43).



Figure 43: Detail of a *stūpa* railing pillar depicting a female and a male devotee worshipping the wheel, Bodhi Gaya, c. 2nd century BCE.

⁴⁰ The crowning *chattra* highlighted the idea that the Buddha, represented as the *stūpa*, possessed the same kingship attributes as a universal monarch (Davendra, 1961: 233).

⁴¹ The wheel, together with the elephant, the horse, the gem, the wife, the householder and the counselor, is one of the seven gems (skt. *saptaratna*) that an ideal king is supposed to possess. Likewise, one of the most common epithets used to refer to paradigmatic Indian kings in Sanskrit is *cakravartin* (wheel-turning monarch), which highlights the universality of his rule that extends to all the cardinal points (Karunaratne, 1969: 4-7). Both, Buddhists and Jainas ended up incorporating the concept of *cakravartin* into their religious doctrines and visual vocabulary in order to present Buddhas and Jinas respectively as spiritual counterparts of universal monarchs.

Jainas incorporated the wheel not only into their doctrinal discourse, but also into their symbolic imagery at least two centuries before the seated Jina sculptures were first made. The wheel became an independent object of worship in the early Jaina art of Mathurā, being the central focus of some of the *āyāgapaṭas* from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā (fig. 44). The center of the *āyāgapaṭas* usually surrounded by four *nandipādas* represents the teaching of the Jaina doctrine to the four cardinal points (Quintanilla, 2000: 92), the wheel being a pan-Indian royal symbol that came to represent the teaching of the Jina.



Figure 44: Mātharaka *āyāgapaṭa* depicting the wheel as the main object of worship at the center of the tablet, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 20 BCE.

Even though the wheel was represented in the palms and feet of *kapardin* Buddhas as a *lakṣaṇa*, the wheel became the core symbolic element of the pedestals of three-dimensional sculptures when Mathurā artists started to carve seated Jina sculptures. In the middle of the 2nd century CE the way in which the wheel was depicted by Mathurā artists had a great variation.

Overall, four main ways to represent the wheel on the pedestal were used during the time that the Jina sculptures were carved. The wheel could be (either *en-face* or turned to the side) 1) mounted on a pillar 2) rest on a *nandipāda* 3) held by a *guhya*⁴² or 4) placed directly on the floor (Joshi, 1989: 343) (figs. 45, 46, 47 and 48).



Figure 45: Pedestal of seated Jina with the central wheel mounted on a pillar, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

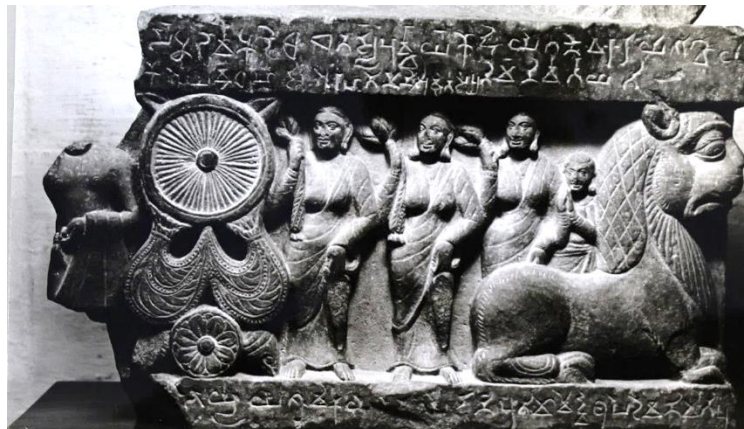


Figure 46: Fragmented pedestal of a seated Jina with the central wheel resting on a *nandipāda*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

⁴² *Guhya*s are small corpulent mythical creatures listed in Indian literature among other demonic beings such as *piśācas* or *rākṣasas*. They are said to reside inside the earth and to be the servants of Kubera, the Hindu god of wealth, king of the *yakṣas* and *lokapāla* of the North. They usually have weight-lifting functions in early Historic Indian art. It is possible to see them lifting *yakṣas* and *yakṣis* carved on stūpa railing pillars of Bharhut as well as some of the architectonic elements of the cave-temples of Pitalkhorā (Raven, 1988: 112-116).



Figure 47: Pedestal of standing Jina with the central wheel hold by a *guhyaka*, from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.



Figure 48: Pedestal of seated Jina with the central wheel resting on the ground, from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

4.2.5 *Yakṣas* and *nāgas*

Yakṣas are Indian spirit deities that dwell in the wild and whose worship is based on the fertility that they may grant, specially their female counterparts (Skt. *yakṣī*), as well as the protection they bestow to the dead (DeCaroli, 2004: 56-58). Conversely, *Nāgas* are semi-divine snake deities that take the form of half-human half-serpent hybrid beings who live close to water bodies (e.g. lakes, waterfalls, rivers...) and have the power of regulating rainfall (DeCaroli, 2019: 3-5).

As far as early Historic Indian art is concerned, *Yakṣas* and *Nāgas* underwent an iconographic transformation. From being worshipped and represented as independent deities with the characteristics of a monarch that governs a certain area in the wild⁴³, *yakṣas* and *nāgas* acquired a new role as attendants of royal figures and deities that were depicted as flanking subsidiary figures or carved on stūpa railing pillars.⁴⁴

One element that characterizes the seated Jinas that were made between the 2nd and 3rd century CE in Mathurā is that most of them do not have *yakṣas* or *nāgas* flanking them. Yet, this could simply be related to the deteriorated



Figure 49: Seated Jina sculpture flanked by a *nāga* and a *yakṣa* in *aṅjalimudrā*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 3rd century CE.

⁴³ They both possessed the physical characteristics and regalia associated with typical Indian monarchs: a tall height and a frontal posture, wearing royal attires such as the turban or precious ornaments, holding objects related to the royalty like the *cāmara* or swords ... (DeCaroli, 2004: 63-64)

⁴⁴ This conversion was manifested textually through the popularization of stories in which the Buddha subdued *yakṣas* or *nāgas* that tormented the life of mortals as these became protectors of the Dharma (DeCaroli, 2019: 9). As far as their artistic representation is concerned, the 2nd century BCE stūpa of Bharhut marks a turning point since *yakṣas* started to be represented in railing pillars rather than independently: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CunninghamBharhut.jpg> (20-08-2022). Likewise, these deities were incorporated into the hagiographies of Jinas as minor characters and to the Jaina pantheon as personal attendants of the Ṭīthāṅkara known as *śāsanadevatās* (Sutherland, 1991: 127).

state of the sculptures, since there is one sculpture of a seated Jina that still preserves a *yakṣa* and a *nāga* flanking in *añjalimudrā* on the left and the right respectively (fig. 49). Van Lohuizen indicated that the sculpture belongs to the later Kuṣāṇa period in the notes she wrote behind the photograph, probably taking into account the decoration of the halo that consists on a pearl band and spikes that imitate rays of light, which Bautze-Picron considers to be a significant feature of halos from the Gupta period (Bautze-Picron, 1990: 83).

Regarding the standing sculptures of Jinas that were carved in Mathurā during the Kuṣāṇa period, we have some examples of *yakṣas* being displayed as subsidiary figures of the Jina at different heights (see 3.1.2). Two small *yakṣas* wearing their characteristic turbans and a dhoti flank a standing Jina at knee height (fig. 14). Likewise, what also seems to be a *yakṣa* wearing a dhoti, with a halo behind his head and his broken right arm extended (probably holding a *cāmara*) flanks another standing Jina on its right side at shoulder height (fig. 15).

Was the representation of *yakṣas* as subsidiary restricted to standing sculptures during the Kuṣāṇa period?

This possibility is erased the moment we take a glance at some of the 1st century CE *āyāgapaṭas* that depict a *stūpa* as the main object of worship. Female dancers, whose postures remind us of *śālabhañjikā yakṣīs*, flank the *stūpa* while the *yakṣa* Naigameśin and a *yaksī* stand in niches next to the stairs that lead to the *stūpa* (fig. 50).



Figure 50: *Śilāpaṭṭa* depicting female dancers, flying monks and *kinmaras* flanking the *stūpa* as well as the *yakṣa* Naigameśin and a *yakṣī* in a niche next to the stairs, Maholi, Mathurā, c. 75-100 CE.

In addition to this, the seated *kapardin* Buddhas that were carved in Mathurā between the end of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century CE also include *yakṣas*. Indeed, some of the attendants that flank the seated *kapardin* Buddha sculptures are *yakṣas* that hold *cāmaras* or flowers. *Yakṣas* were also represented in smaller size at each side of the wheel that occupied the center of the pedestal (fig. 51). Hence, it makes virtually no sense to argue that Mathurā artists stopped representing *yakṣas* as subsidiary figures when they started making seated Jina sculptures to eventually put them back in the Gupta period, while they were still being depicted in seated Buddha sculptures.

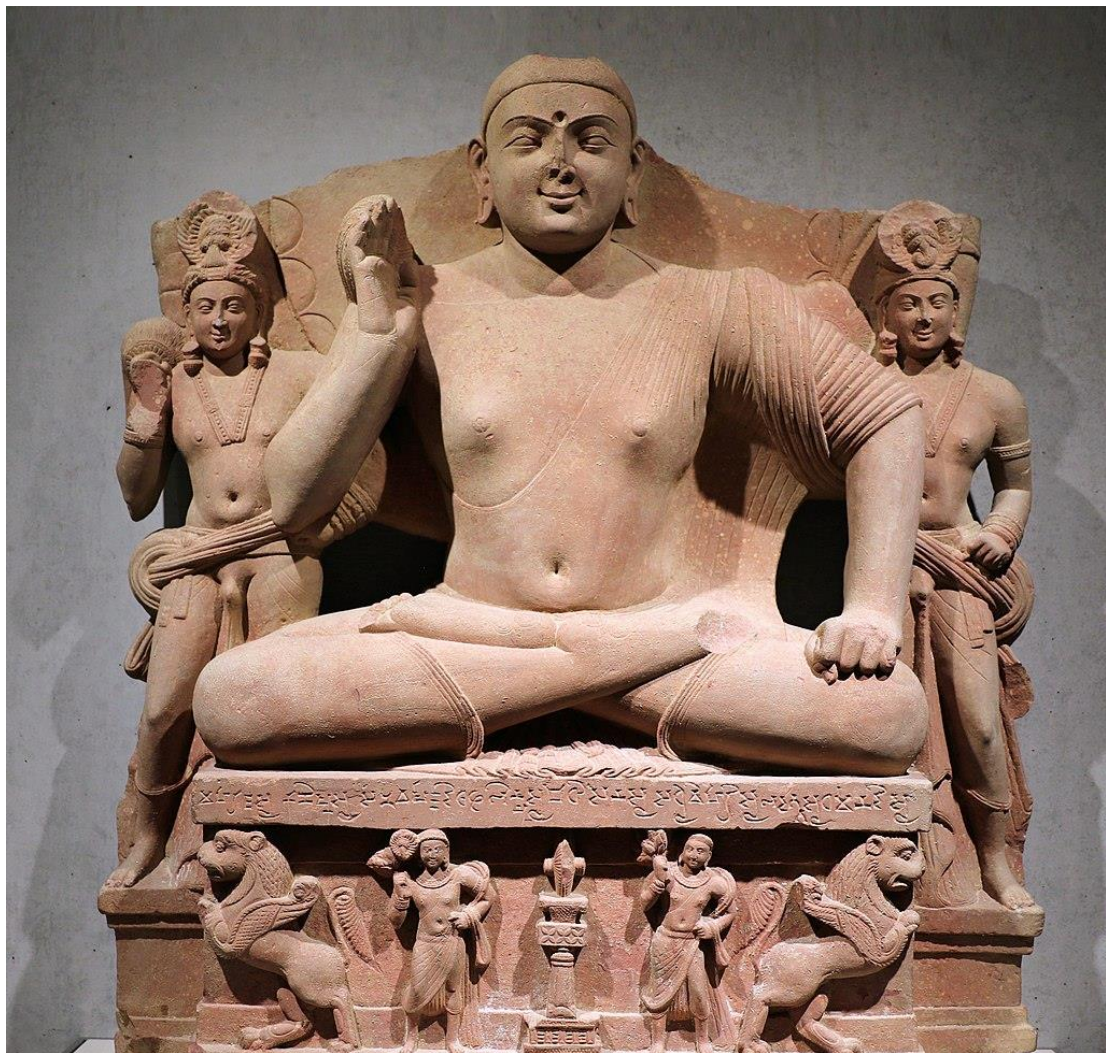


Figure 51: Kimbell Art Museum *kapardin* style seated Bodhisattva flanked by *yakṣa*-like attendants and small *yakṣas* flanking the wheel in the pedestal, Mathurā, c. 131 CE.

Even though we do not have any clear evidence of *nāgas* being depicted in the Jina sculptures from Mathurā at least until the late Kusāṇa or early Gupta period, the snake canopy behind the head of standing and seated sculptures of the Jina Pārśvanātha can be considered as a Jaina adaptation of *nāga* iconography (fig. 52).



Figure 52: Deteriorated head of a Pārśvanātha sculpture, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

The snake was the cognizance animal of the 23rd Jina Pārśvanātha and, as such, a canopy of snakes used to be depicted behind his head in the same way that Mathurā artists depicted a snake with multiple heads behind the head of *nāga* kings. Yet, this tradition did not start when the first Jina sculptures were carved in the Kusāṇa period. Pārśvanātha was already represented with his characteristic canopy of snakes in the center of one of the early 1st century CE *āyāgapaṭas* (fig. 53).



Figure 53: Detail of Pārśvanātha *āyāgapaṭa* showing a snake-hooded Jina flanked by two Ardhaphālaka monks, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 15 CE.

Overall, *nāgas* were Indian folk deities that enjoyed a significant popularity in early Historic Mathurā. As we saw in Chapter 2, former *nāga* and *yakṣa* shrines were turned into monasteries.⁴⁵ However, *nāgas* continued to be worshipped in shrines dedicated to them and represented

⁴⁵ This was the case of the Jamalpur mound, which was originally a shrine dedicated to the *nāga* Dadhikarṇa that was turned into a Buddhist *vihara* (Singh, 2004: 383-384).

in independent sculptures or as the main protagonists in relief scenes when the first Jina sculptures were carved. A *nāga* court scene from Sonkh, for instance, represents an enthroned *nāga* king (Skt. *nāgaraja*) next to his queen and flanked by different devotees (fig. 54). The number of the hoods of the snake canopy matches with the importance and status of each *nāga*, seven being the number reserved for kings (Duran, 1990: 45).



Figure 54: Architrave depicting a *nāga* court scene, Sonkh, c. 2nd century CE.

Not only did Jainas adopt the snake canopy of *nāgarajas* for the iconography of Parśvanatha, but Brahmanical Hindu deities such as Balarāma also started to be represented with the canopy behind the head (fig. 55). Being the *avatāra* of Śeṣa, the snake canopy was represented behind the head of Balarāma in order to emphasize that he still was the king of all *nāgas*. Likewise, the snake canopy of Parśvanatha was a royal symbol adopted from the iconography of *nāgarajas* that aimed to highlight that the 23rd Jina still maintained his kingship after attaining awakening.

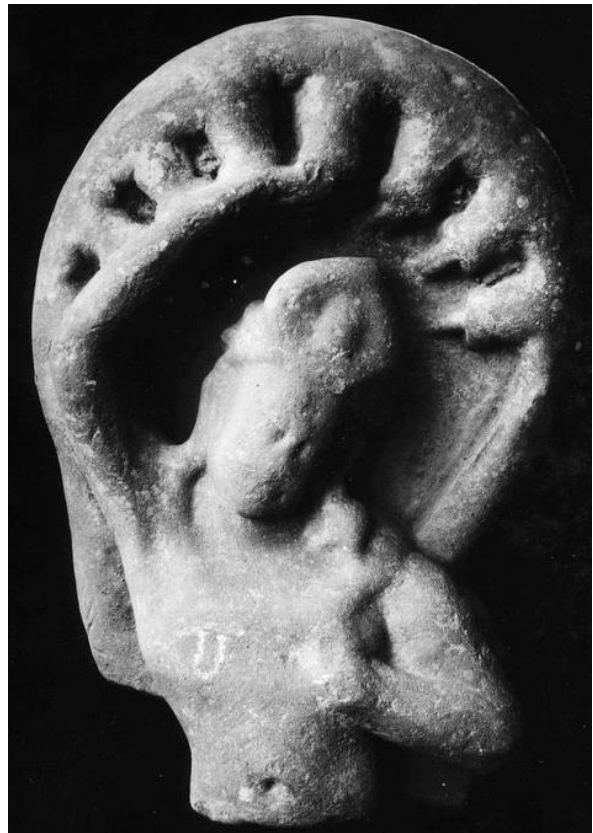


Figure 55: Bust of Balarāma with the snake canopy, Ganesra, Mathurā, c. 3rd century CE.

4.2.6 Making the Jina royal

The presence of royal symbols such as lions, *cāmara* bearers or the wheel highlight the idea that Jinas maintained kingship attributes even though they left their throne. Mathurā artists had been using such royal symbols for more than three centuries before the Jina sculptures were carved.

The lack of *chattras* and subsidiary figures that flank the Jina during the Kuṣāṇa period could be interpreted as an intentional choice to make the Jinas less royal in this time. Yet, in all likelihood it is because of the deteriorated state of the sculptures that these royal symbols are missing. In fact, sculptures of Buddhas carved at Mathurā around the same time displayed them.

A royal symbol that reveals the distinguishing nature of Jina sculptures could be the wheel at the center of the worship scene in every single pedestal. Even though this symbol was undoubtedly used by Buddhists as well in the sculptures of their teachers, Jina sculptures display it meticulously in every pedestal while Buddha sculptures do it sporadically.

4.3 Ascetic iconography

From a religious, symbolic and social point of view, ascetics represent core values quite different from the warrior duties of kings.⁴⁶ Jainism and Buddhism proposed a lifestyle based on ascetic practices such as physical abstinence (Skt. *tapas*), non-violence (Skt. *ahiṃsā*) and meditation (Skt. *dhyāna*) (Ghosa, 1974: 20-21).

A symbolism that represents some of these core values developed together with the earliest Indian sculptural art and became part of the iconography of the Jina. Since Jinas were viewed at the same time as would-be-kings and ascetic teachers, the various elements of ascetic symbolism that I will analyze in the following paragraphs complement the royal symbolism discussed above.

⁴⁶ Vedic texts give descriptions of sages (Skt. *munis*) engaged in yogic, meditative and ascetic practices that went beyond Brahmanic orthodox rituals in order to attain spiritual liberation (Skt. *mokṣa*) through self-realization. Ascetics have a substantial role in the early Upaniṣads (c. 700-500 BCE) as teachers of basic religious principles, such as the figure of Vyasa, the sage who supposedly composed these texts (Ghosa, 1974: 18-20).

4.3.1 *Dhyānamudrā* and *kayotsarga*

Dhyānamudrā is a hand gesture (Skt. *mudrā*) used in yogic and meditative practices and found across different Indian religious traditions. The gesture is usually performed by resting the right hand on the left hand with the palms facing upwards and the thumbs slightly lifted so that they can touch each other. In addition to this, the *mudrā* is usually displayed while seated in lotus pose (Skt. *padmāsana*) as a way to achieve mental and spiritual concentration.

All the three-dimensional sculptures of seated Jinas that were carved after the reign of Kaniṣka I are in *dhyānamudrā*. In fact, this posture became an axiomatic element of all seated representations of Jinas from the early Historic period until nowadays since meditation was one of the core ascetic practices that enabled Jainas to attain liberation.

All seated Jinas represented in the *āyāgapataṣas* from Mathurā, regardless of the date in which they were carved or the Jina that was depicted, show this hand gesture. Likewise, the first anthropomorphic depiction of a Jina displays it. The *stūpa* relief from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā that depicts the scene of the last dance of Nilāñjana represents Ṛṣabha two times seated in *dhyānamudrā* (fig. 17). Hence, we might conclude that the *dhyānamudrā* was canonized as an ascetic posture in the iconography of seated Jinas since the second century BCE.

The *dhyānamudrā* was not a hand gesture exclusively used by the Jainas of Mathurā. On the one hand, an architrave fragment from Katrā, which was carved around the same time as the Nilāñjana relief (c. 100 BCE), depicts seated Brāhmaṇas with the hands in a posture which reminds us of the *dhyānamudrā* (fig. 56).



Figure 56: Detail of Katra architrave showing seated Brāhmaṇas, Mathurā, c. 100 BCE.



Figure 57: Relief sculpture of a Bodhisattva seated in *dhyānamudrā* and flanked by three devotees in *añjalimudrā*, Maholi, Mathurā c. 1st-2nd centuries CE.

On the other hand, we have a handful of reliefs and sculptures depicting seated Bodhisattvas in *dhyānamudrā* that, taking into account their stylistic and iconographic features, seem to have been carved sometime between the end of the 1st century and the first half of the 2nd century CE (fig. 57).

Hence, by the time the 2nd century CE Jina sculptures were made

the *dhyānamudrā* was a hand gesture commonly found in depictions of Buddhas, Jinas or any ascetic figure engaged in meditation. However, the *dhyānamudrā* was the only hand gesture adopted by seated Jinas, since it was one of the most characteristic elements of their core iconography.

The other ascetic posture that characterizes most standing Jina images is the *kayotsarga*, which can be considered as the standing counterpart of the *dhyānamudrā*. It consists of a straight standing position with the hands hanging down. It is used by Jaina practitioners to meditate on the nature of the soul while giving up one's physical comfort.⁴⁷



Figure 58: Torso of standing Jina in *kayotsarga*, probably Rṣbha, Mathurā c. 2nd century CE.

⁴⁷ According to Jaina literature, 21 of the 24 Jinas attained their liberation by standing in this posture (Zimmer, 1953: 212).

Regarding the standing Jina sculptures that were carved in Mathurā, most of them are unfortunately conserved in a fragmentary state, with the pedestal on which the Jina originally stood being the only part of the sculpture that survived until our age. Yet, all the sculptures that preserve the upper body clearly show that the Jina was depicted in *kayotsarga* (fig. 58).

Even though no standing Jinas were depicted in any of the *āyāgapaṭas*, the standing Parśvanatha sculpture, which according to Quintanilla belongs to the 1st century BCE (see 3.2.1), can be considered as the very first sculptural representation of a Jina in *kayotsarga* (fig. 18).

4.3.2 The seat of the teacher

Teaching to their disciples was one of the most important activities in which ascetics engaged in India. In fact, the spiritual teaching of a master who is seated on an elevated platform is a common scene found in Indian literature and different artistic media (Sears, 2014: 176).⁴⁸

All seated Jinas from Mathurā carved between the 2nd and 3rd centuries are sitting on such an elevated platform. Overall, as we pointed out in the previous chapter, these consist of rectangular podiums with a scene of lay and monastic Jaina devotees worshipping the wheel. Some of the surviving Jinas stand on similar rectangular platforms, yet without a lion on each corner (fig. 59).

⁴⁸ A description of the ideal *yogin* in the *Bhagavad Gītā* already mentioned that he is to be distinguished among men by “establishing a firm seat for himself, in a clean place, not too high, not too low, covered with cloth, and antelope skin, and kuśa grass”: <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/6/verse/11> (20-08-2022).



Figure 59: Platform of standing Jina depicting the wheel flanked by monks, nuns and lay devotees, Kañkālī Ṭilā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

The omission of the lions in the standing sculptures could be related to the fact that this symbol was strictly associated with seated figures. The lions made the seat of Jinas royal, a lion throne (Skt. *siṃhāsana*) of a *cakravartin* (Joshi, 1989: 348).

Artistic precedents of the seats of the Jinas are found in 2nd century BCE *stūpa* reliefs and early 1st century CE *āyāgapaṭas*. A prototypic seat of the Jina was already depicted in the Rṣabha relief (fig. 17). The seat of the Jina in this scene is significantly simple and basic, virtually consisting of a cubical platform without any sort of ornamentation.

Regarding the seats depicted in the *āyāgapaṭas*, these are not rectangular platforms but rather pillared podiums crowned by the Jina (fig. 53). A symbol depicted in some of the oldest *āyāgapaṭas* and that could have served as a source of inspiration for Mathurā artists to represent the Jina seated on a platform is wooden stand that was mistakenly interpreted by some scholars as a stylized throne (Skt. *bhadrāsana*).⁴⁹

However, the depiction of platforms for religious teachers was not restricted to the iconography of the Jina.⁵⁰ By the early 2nd century CE, Mathurā artists already had a

⁴⁹ The auspicious symbol labelled as *bhadrāsana* in the *āyāgapaṭas* is a *sthāpana*, a wooden bookrest used as one of the main objects of worship in Jaina rituals. This object was used to place sacred scriptures that the *ācārya* (spiritual teacher or guide) would recite in order to preach to the Jaina devotees or engage in meditation. We see this symbol as part of the 8 Jaina auspicious symbols (skt. *aṣṭamaṅgala*) that decorate the edges of the *āyāgapaṭas* and even individually as the main object of worship in the oldest dated *āyāgapaṭa* (Jaina and Fischer, 1978: 10; Quintanilla, 2000: 108-109; Quintanilla, 2007: 103).

⁵⁰ We could go all the way back to the 2nd century BCE reliefs of Bharhut to trace back the earliest depictions of rectangular platforms as empty seats of the Buddha that were worshipped by devotees. Gobert and Thiriet (1974: 65), following the classification of Indian seats and thrones proposed by Auboyer (1949), described

common way of carving the seat of *kapardin* Buddhas in the form of a rectangular platform with a scene in the center and a lion on each side. In addition to this, the way the Isapur Buddha is seated follows a similar structure as the seats of the *āyāgapaṭa* Jinas since his platform stands on top of a pillar with a rectangular base and multiple upper layers framed like an inverted pyramid (fig. 21).

Thus, the cubical platform on which Rṣabha sat gradually evolved in the next three centuries. The platform took the form of an elevated podium in the *āyāgapaṭas* and served as a source of inspiration for the first seats of the *kapardin* Buddhas that had lions on each corner facing to the side. The platform of the seated Jinas from the second half of the 2nd century CE would be characterized by the worship scene of the wheel in the center that became a canonic element of the Jina iconography.

4.3.3 Monks and nuns

As far as early Historic Mathurā is concerned, the most popular Jaina sect of monks and nuns that put a significant amount of emphasis on image production was that of the Ardphālakas.⁵¹ We see them depicted in the main scene of most of the pedestals of Jina sculptures, where they worship the wheel in the center.

An analysis of the composition of these monastics and the key features that distinguished them from lay devotees reveals relevant information regarding the hierarchy of the Ardphālakas and their appearance (fig. 60).

this type of seat as an altar-throne (Fr. *trône-autel*). According to them, this was the least developed form of seats in Indian art, which basically consisted of a rectangular block of stone where the divinity or the teacher was supposed to seat. The Buddhist bas-reliefs of Sanchi and Barhut represented this seat as a simple three-dimensional platform ornamented with floral motifs that accompanied other aniconic symbols of the Buddha such as *chattras* or *Buddhapadas* (Gobert and Thiriet, 1974: 65-67).

⁵¹ They are virtually mentioned in all inscriptions on *āyāgapaṭas* and Jina images from the 2nd century BCE until the 3rd century CE, together with the names of mostly female donors and their family members who belonged to lower social classes such as goldsmiths, caravan leaders or iron-mongers (Joshi, 1989: 346; Quintanilla, 2009: 115). According to the story of the Jaina schism, Digambaras would have migrated to the south and maintained an orthodox Jaina lifestyle while monastic rules were relaxed in the north, which motivated ardphālakas to partially cover themselves. As such, some authors consider the possibility that ardphālakas could in fact be a proto-Svetambara sect (Jaini, 1978: 491).



Figure 60: Detail of pedestal of seated Jina showing a wheel on a pillar in the center flanked by *gaṇadharas*, monks, nuns, lay devotees and children, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd-3rd century CE.

The most distinguishing characters represented in the pedestals were the *gaṇadharas* that flanked the wheel, whose upper hierarchical position as chief-monks is highlighted by being represented fully naked and with pot-bellies. Regular Jaina Ardhaphālaka monks, represented on our left side, have the *colapaṭṭa* as the only piece of cloth that covers them while they hold the *rajoharaṇa* on one hand. Conversely, Jaina nuns were depicted on our right side wearing long robes and no ornaments at all in contrast to the female donors on the pedestal, who wear *sarīs* and jewels as markers of their lay status (Joshi, 1989: 345-347; Quintanilla, 2009: 113-114).

Architectural reliefs of Jain *stūpas* that may have predated the sculptures of Jinas also represents these members that formed the Ardhaphālaka community of Mathurā. The uppermost layer of a tympanum from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, for instance, depicts Jaina monks and nuns flanking a *stūpa* (fig. 61). An evident hierarchy can be noticed in the distribution of the figures, since fully naked *gaṇadharas* sit next to the *stūpa* in *añjalimudrā* forming a central triad, followed by Ardhaphālaka monks holding the *colapaṭṭa* and nuns with flowers on the edges (Quintanilla, 2009: 120).



Figure 61: Uppermost layer of a Jain tympanum showing a *stūpa* in the center flanked by *gaṇadharas*, monks and nuns, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

Ardhaphālaka monks were for the first time represented in the early 1st century CE *āyāgapaṭas*. The Pārśvanātha *āyāgapaṭa* shows two naked, fat monks (probably *gaṇadhara*s), flanking the 23rd Jina, with the *colapaṭṭa* hanging from their arms (fig. 51). Likewise, the Vasu *śilāpaṭa* depicts two *cāraṇamunis* (flying monks) that flank the uppermost part of a *stūpa* (Fig. 62).⁵²



Figure 62: Detail of Vasu *śilāpaṭa* showing a flying *cāraṇamuni*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 75-100 CE.

4.3.4 The emphasis on asceticism

Asceticism was, without a doubt, one of the key elements that characterized Jainism and what distinguished it from other Indian religions. Regarding the Jina iconography, ascetic symbols have a substantial role in distinguishing the Jina from contemporary Buddhist or Hindu sculptures.

⁵² *Cāraṇamunis* are highly accomplished Jaina monks who have the power to fly. The ones depicted in the Vasu *śilāpaṭa* touch their foreheads with the right hand and grasp a bowl with the left one while the *colapaṭṭa* hangs on their left forearm. Being shown above the *kinnaras* could mean that they were regarded as superior beings (Quintanilla, 2007: 137).

The *dhyānamudrā* and the *kayotsarga* are respectively a hand gesture and a posture that highlight the central role that meditation has in Jain doctrine. The fact that they are the only postures in which seated and standing Jinas were represented once again shows the importance that iconographic consistency had for Jains. It is true that the *dhyānamudrā* was also represented in sculptures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at Mathurā. Yet, this happened in a significantly inconsistent frequency compared to seated Jina sculptures, where the *dhyānamudrā* was an axiomatic symbol that always had to be represented.

The representation the Ardhaphālaka sect was another way in which Mathurā artists highlighted the asceticism that was so characteristic of the Jain doctrine as well as the local character the sculptures. The clothing worn and the objects held by Ardhaphālaka monks and nuns, as well as their hierarchical disposition, represents the ascetic lifestyle of the local Jain community of Mathurā.

4.4 The Jina iconography: identity and continuity

The core iconography of Jina sculptures from the Kuṣāṇa period as defined in Chapter 3 developed through a systematic combination and selection of symbols that had been in use by local Mathurā artists in the previous three centuries. This selection of symbols and its significantly consistent disposition made the iconography of the Jina different from that of Buddhas or Hindu gods, and it embedded it with a distinctive identity.

The development of the Jina iconography that led to the seated and standing sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period was characterized by a balance between continuity and identity.

On the one hand, the Jina iconography combined popular pan-Indian symbols used by local artists in the previous two centuries such as *lakṣaṇas*, *nandipādas*, wheels or umbrellas represented in *āyāgapaṭas*. Mathurā artists also made use of these symbols in the first anthropomorphic images of Buddhas, since they served to illustrate their similar religious ideas. As such, we see an artistic continuity in the way the development of Jina

iconography results from the combination of pan-Indian symbols, a process underwent by early Historic Buddhist and Hindu art.⁵³

On the other hand, the systematic choice of specific symbols set the Jina images apart from Buddhist and Hindu sculptures, highlighting the ascetic lifestyle that was so characteristic of the Jain doctrine. Mathurā artists did not represent the Jina with an *uṣṇīṣa* on top of the head, the right hand in *ābhayamudrā* or a tree at the center of the pedestal. Instead, virtually all Jina sculptures from Mathurā have a *śrīvatsa* on the chest, a wheel at the center of the pedestal and Ardhaphālaka monks and nuns flanking it.

In fact, it is the presence of the Jain monastic community in all Jina images from Mathurā what makes their iconography unique. Overall, the depiction of elements that characterize the ascetic lifestyle of the Jain monastic community, such as the *rajoharaṇa*, *colapaṭṭa* or the kneeling *gaṇadhara*s, highlights how important asceticism was for the Jains of Mathurā. Likewise, the fact that the *dhyānamudrā* and the *kayotsarga* became the postures in which seated and standing Jinas should respectively be represented can be explained from the strong link of these two postures with meditation, the *par excellence* Jain ascetic practice to attain liberation.

The meticulous way in which all Jina images follow exactly the same iconographic pattern was intentionally designed to meet basic Jain doctrinal concepts. Sculptures of Buddhas and certain Hindu gods from Mathurā also display some of the same symbols discussed above. Compared to the strict serialism that characterizes Jina sculptures, the symbols represented in the sculptures of Buddhas from Mathurā display a greater diversity.

A comparison between the pedestals of seated Buddhas and Jinas that were carved at Mathurā during the Kuṣāṇa period serves to illustrate this important distinction between Buddhist and Jaina iconography. As we pointed out many times so far in this thesis, virtually all Jina pedestals from Mathurā represent the same scene using the same elements: the wheel worshipped by male and female devotees (lay or monastic) and one lion in each corner.

⁵³ Even though the use of pan-Indian symbols was a characteristic feature of early Historic Buddhist and Hindu art, the consistent way that Jaina art from Mathurā did it increased the sense of identity expressed in their artworks.



Figure 63: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing the wheel surmounted on a pillar being worshipped by male devotees, Mathurā, c. late 1st century CE.



Figure 64: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing a tree worshipped by male and female devotees, Mathurā, c. early 2nd century CE.



Figure 65: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing a seated Buddha in dhyānamudrā flanked by two figures, Ānyor, Mathurā, c 2nd century CE. After Myer, 1986: fig. 20.



Figure 66: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing the wheel surmounted on a pillar flanked by a *yakṣas* in each side, Mathurā, c. late 1st century CE.

The pedestals of some *kapardin* Buddhas represent the same scene with the notable difference that the lions are missing in the earliest sculptures and the male/female distribution of devotees still was not applied (fig. 63). The central object tends to frequently change depending on the sculpture. Thus, some pedestals may represent a tree as the main object of worship (fig. 64) while others may instead depict a seated Buddha in *dhyānamudrā* (fig. 65). Likewise, *yakṣas* could be the figures flanking the main object of worship in the center of the pedestal (fig. 66), a phenomenon that never occurred in sculptures of seated Jinas.

Another aspect that could be considered as further evidence to prove that Jina images from Mathurā differed from Buddhist and Brahmanical ones is their resistance to Kuṣāṇa influence. While the iconography of certain Hindu deities and the Buddha seems to have been influenced by artistic conventions brought by the Kuṣāṇas, the Jain art from Mathurā seems to have overall remained untouched from foreign influences. Indeed, this is another point that we will explore in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 Mathurā Jaina art and foreign influences

We have seen that the development of the core iconography of Jina sculptures from Mathurā was characterized by a balance between continuity and identity. On the one hand, most of the symbols that we identify in the standing and seated Jina sculptures were part of a pan-Indian visual imagery that was also used by other Indian religious sects such as Buddhists or Hindus. This was the case of popular Indian symbols such as the wheel, the lions or the platforms of seated Jinas, which can also be found in sculptures of seated Buddhas carved by Mathurā artists around the same period. On the other hand, a meticulous selection and a significantly consistent arrangement of these symbols distinguished Jina sculptures from other contemporary religious art. The precise seriality that defines virtually all Jina sculptures from Mathurā infuses them with a strong identity that matches core Jain religious concepts.

Yet, was this Jain identity also highlighted in a different way by Mathurā artists? Was there any other key aspect of the development of Jain iconography that distinguished it from what Hindu and Buddhist iconography from the same period underwent?

We should not forget that most of the Jina images discussed in this thesis were carved between the reigns of Kuṣāṇa Kings Huviṣka and Kaniṣka II (c. 150-250 CE). This was a period characterized by the establishment of Kuṣāṇa control over the city of Mathurā and North India.⁵⁴ Not only did the incorporation of Mathurā into the Kuṣāṇa Empire cause its region to be exposed to political, economic and social influences coming from the west, but it was also during this period that a significant amount of foreign artistic motifs arrived to North India.⁵⁵

In fact, the iconography of certain Hindu deities was influenced by the implementation of some of these motifs and artistic conventions. The development of the

⁵⁴ The construction of the Maṭ shrine under Kaniṣka and its expansion under Huviṣka can be considered as the *terminus post quem* for the consolidation of Kuṣāṇa rule over Mathurā and its surroundings. The striking similarities between the *devakula* at Maṭ and the *Bagolango* of Surkh Khotal (Afghanistan), both temples that were built by Kuṣāṇa kings and contained royal sculptures, indicates that the Kuṣāṇas considered the area of Mathurā to be geostrategically as important as their territories in Bactria (Fussman, 1989: 195-197).

⁵⁵ Van Lohuizen defined this period as the culmination of the second biggest wave of foreign migrations coming from Central Asia towards the Indian subcontinent. Political changes such as the *kṣatrapa* system, a new fashion of dressing among the elite or military innovations such as the use of helmets or coats of mail were introduced in India during this time (Van Lohuizen, 1989: 74-75).

iconography of Śīva in Kuṣāṇa coins has been a hot topic discussed by a significant number of scholars. Overall, the deity named as Weś in the reverse of most of the Kuṣāṇa coins started being a hybrid deity that combined attributes of the Greek demi-god Heracles, the Iranian god of wind Vāyu and the Hindu god Śīva and became this very last as it was gradually Indianized.⁵⁶ Likewise, the representation of Skanda in Kuṣāṇa coins highlighted his martial attributes while Sūrya was basically depicted as a Kuṣāṇa king by Mathurā artists (Mann, 2014: 229-230; Frenger, 2020: 401).

Did the iconography of the Jina also adopt foreign artistic motifs brought to India during the Kuṣāṇa period? Where can traces of such foreign influences be observed? Or, on the contrary, did the Jina sculptures of Mathurā lack any sort of foreign impact and remained as a mainly local product from Mathurā? This assumed conservatism of Jaina art is what we will explore on this chapter. The reluctance of the local Jaina community of Mathurā to adopt some of the iconographic changes Hindus allowed as a consequence of Kuṣāṇa dominance, together with the seriality highlighted in Chapter 4, could be interpreted as a systematic choice with the aim of strengthening Jaina religious identity.

5.1 Traces of foreign influences in Jina sculptures

The impact of foreign artistic elements that were carried to India as a consequence of the Kuṣāṇa conquest had a significantly greater repercussion in the development of the iconography of certain Hindu deities.⁵⁷ Yet, a closer analysis of the Jina sculptures from

⁵⁶ There seems to be a general agreement among scholars when it comes to define Weś as an early form of the Hindu god Śīva linked to the investiture of the king (Pal, 1988: 32). However, most of the disagreements are related to the iconographic origins of this prototypic version of Śīva. Authors such as Ciro Lo Muzio or Joe Cribb believed that most of the iconographic traits of this early anthropomorphic representation of Śīva were inherited from Hellenistic deities such as Heracles (Lo Muzio, 1995: 162; Cribb, 1997: 36-37). Conversely, Pran Gopal Paul, Debjani Paul, Rita Devi Sharma and Himanshu Prabha Ray proposed that prototypic anthropomorphic representations of Śīva already existed since the 1st century BCE, as it can be seen in coins and seals issued by the Śaka King Maues and the Indo-Parthian King Gondophares (Paul and Paul, 1989: 126; Sharma and Ray, 2006), while Martha L. Carter believed that this prototypic Śīva was probably inspired by an already existing Bactrian deity (Carter, 1994: 33). Yet, the author that probably went further in this discussion was Razieh Taasob, since he claimed that most of the iconographic elements found in these early representations of Weś could have derived from the iconography of the Avestan god Vāyu (Taasob, 2020: 92-94).

⁵⁷ Rather than a direct conscious choice of Kuṣāṇa rulers, these foreign motifs and artistic conventions were adopted by local Mathurā artists as a consequence of changes in the taste of the elite. Official contacts between court officials, visits of foreign ambassadors or marriage agreements were the usual instances in which such an exchange could have occurred. Yet, the exchange of artisans and sculptors was probably what enabled canonized artistic formulas to be transmitted (Sinisi, 2018: 163-165).

Mathurā reveals that some of the elements that characterize their iconography could indeed had been subproducts of certain foreign motifs brought to Mathurā during the Kuṣāṇa period.

5.1.1 Jaina devotees wearing foreign clothes

We have seen in Chapter 3 that the central panel of the pedestal of virtually all standing and seated Jina sculptures from Mathurā is characterized by a wheel flanked by devotees. In Chapter 4 we highlighted that the clothing as well as the position of the devotees served to differentiate Jaina Ardhaphālaka monks and nuns from lay male and female devotees. Indeed, certain elements related to the monastic community such as the *colapaṭas*, *rajoharaṇas* or the nudity of male monks served as symbols that pointed out the ascetic attributes of these individuals.

Yet, when it comes to analyze how lay Jaina devotees were portrayed in the Jina pedestals we can identify some examples that differ from the rest. Overall, male Jaina lay devotees tend to be represented wearing local Indian clothes, such as a *dhotī* or a piece of cloth that leaves one of their shoulders uncovered. Conversely, female Jaina lay devotees usually wear a *sari* which they hold with the left hand (fig. 67).



Figure 67: Detail of typical male and female lay devotees carved in Jina pedestals, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

However, some Jina pedestals depict the Jaina lay devotees that flank the central wheel dressed as members of the Kuṣāṇa political elite. On the one hand, we have a handful of examples of Jina pedestals in which male lay devotees are wearing the typical Parthian dress that characterized most of the portraits of early Kuṣāṇa kings in sculptures and coins.⁵⁸ This costume consists on a coat-like long tailored tunic, sewn long trousers, heavy horse-rider boots and a belt worn over the tunic. (fig. 68).



Figure 68: Detail of Jina pedestal showing two male lay devotees wearing the Parthian dress, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd-3rd century CE.



Figure 69: Detail of seated Jina pedestal showing the main female donor wearing a long-sleeved garment, a female lay devotee wearing a *sari* and a Jaina nun accompanied by a dwarfish figure wearing the monastic robes, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

On the other hand, a significant number of female lay devotees wear a long-sleeved and thin garment with a v-shaped cut. This contrasts with the classical Indian *sari* worn by other female lay devotees or the long robe worn by Jaina nuns (fig. 69). According to van Lohuizen, this woolen garment was introduced by the Kuṣāṇas during this time and, as a

⁵⁸ I am avoiding to use the misleading term “Indo-Scythian costume”, so recurrent in literature from the 20th century (Rosenfield, 1967: 177; van Lohuizen, 1989: 75-76). Instead, I chose the term “Parthian dress” proposed by Knauer (2008) which she used to refer to the nomadic costume worn by Kuṣāṇa kings in their representations in different media. All in all, Knauer defined it as a ritual costume worn originally by kings of the Arsacid dynasty in order to honor their nomadic ancestors. The costume was popularized across the Iranian world in the turn of the first millennium and was probably adopted by the Kuṣāṇas in order to imitate Arsacid patterns of empire formation, just as neighboring kingdoms of the Parthians such as Commagene had also done (ibid. 278-281).

consequence of adaptation to the warm Indian climate, became gradually thinner to suit the needs of the local female fashion.⁵⁹

The Jaina tympanum that we discussed in the previous chapter also depicts Jaina lay devotees from Mathurā wearing such foreign clothes. We noted that each of the three layers of this tympanum probably represented the hierarchy of the different members that formed the Jaina community of Mathurā (Quintanilla, 2009: 120). In the uppermost layer Ardhaphālaka monks and nuns are flanking a *stūpa* while semi-divine beings in *abhāyamudrā* that bear weapons and flowers flank a seated Jina respectively. Yet, the most striking feature that characterizes the third layer of the tympanum, as far as our current discussion is concerned, is that all lay devotees are wearing the aforementioned non-Indian clothes (fig. 70).



Figure 70: Third layer of Jaina tympanum depicting lay male and female devotees flanking a female deity, Kaṅkālī Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.

Virtually all male Jaina devotees that flank the female devotee on the left side of the tympanum are dressed as foreigners. They wear the Parthian tailored dress characterized by sewn long trousers and a long tunic. In addition to this, we can distinguish horse-rider's heavy boots and a belt worn over the dress. Likewise, some female lay devotees on the right side of the tympanum are wearing the long-sleeved garment mentioned above, the other main foreign piece of cloth brought to India during this time.

The adoption of foreign clothes that were worn by the Kuṣāṇa political elite was not a phenomenon restricted to the Jaina art of Mathurā. There are examples of statues of

⁵⁹ This type of garment became so popular among female members of the Indian elite that we see it in the next centuries been worn by Gupta queens in coins (Van Lohuizen, 1989: 75).

Hindu deities carved by Mathurā artists whose appearance may have changed because of the influence imposed by Kuṣāṇa fashion.

The deity that underwent by far the most noticeable change in appearance as a consequence of foreign costumes that came into fashion during the Kuṣāṇa period was the sun god Sūrya (fig. 71). Not only do sculptures of Sūrya from Kuṣāṇa period Mathurā represent him wearing every piece of cloth that characterized the Parthian dress worn by Kuṣāṇa kings (a thick long tunic, tailored trousers, heavy boots, a helmet with earflaps, a belt...), but also his posture and the objects he holds perfectly resemble depictions of Kuṣāṇa kings in coins such as those of Vima (fig. 72).⁶⁰



Figure 71: Squatting sculpture of Sūrya dressed as a Kuṣāṇa king, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE.



Figure 72: Obverse of double stater of Vima Kadphises depicting the king seated on a throne, Afghanistan, 113-127 CE.

⁶⁰ Marion Frenger suggested that Sūrya sculptures from Kuṣāṇa Mathurā were modelled after Kuṣāṇa rulers because of an ancient belief that tended to visualize the sun god wearing the attires of the contemporary ruler of India at the time the image was produced. This would explain why representations of Sūrya from Bodh Gaya depict the god dressed as a typical ancient Indian monarch wearing a turban. As such, this can be considered as “living” feature of the early Historic iconography of Sūrya (Frenger, 2020: 400-402).

What was the reason for Mathurā artists to adopt such foreign costumes and change the appearance of some of the most relevant Hindu gods or Jaina lay devotees that commissioned their artworks?

This phenomenon could be interpreted as a change in fashion caused by the role of middlemen of Iranian motifs, practices and visual patterns that characterized the Kuṣāṇas. Fabrizio Sinisi has studied how the Kuṣāṇa Empire underwent a significant political, cultural and artistic transformation at the beginning of the rule of Vima Kadphises (r. 113-127 CE). The royal visual imagery of the Kuṣāṇas started to be modeled after the most prestigious and powerful political entity of the Iranian world at the time: the Parthian Empire. As such, Kuṣāṇa kings started to be represented wearing a ceremonial tiara, the Parthian dress and a prominent beard in order to fit in the Iranian royal fashion of the time (Sinisi, 2017: 880-882).

Not only did the Kuṣāṇas reproduce visual formulas of the Parthian Empire in their coins, but different territories under their control or neighboring states that payed homage to them also followed their example. Chorasmia, a buffer state between the Parthian and the Kuṣāṇa empires, was one of these states since its kings started to wear the Iranian tiara and having a full beard due to political and economic exchanges with the Kuṣāṇas (Sinisi, 2018: 172-174).

Did Mathurā artists then adopt canonized Iranian visual imagery from the Kuṣāṇas and implement it in artworks produced for Jainas?

The problem with this issue is that, although an adoption of the Iranian royal fashion by lay devotees is undoubtedly evidenced by some of the Jaina sculptures from Mathurā, the motivation behind it was probably different from what made the Kuṣāṇas look at Parthian Iran as a model of royal iconography.

The Iranian royal imagery of the turn of the first millennium was characterized by a growing “orientalization” that followed on the decline of Hellenistic kingdoms. As such, the Parthians started a re-elaboration of royal iconographic patterns with the aim of claiming an ancestry that went all the way back to the Achaemenids. This was the reason why Arsacid rulers started to be portrayed wearing rider costumes that recalled the Central

Asian and nomadic origin of all Iranians.⁶¹ Likewise, the Kuṣāṇas were inspired by the Parthians and incorporated their royal iconography when they were in their process of empire formation (ibid. 160-162).

However, the Parthian dress worn by Jaina devotees in Jina pedestals probably had a different symbolic role. On the one hand, just as the *colapaṭas* of the Ardhaṃhālaka monks highlighted their ascetic lifestyle, the long tunics and riding boots worn by male donors in all likelihood symbolized their lay status. On the other hand, Mathurā artists were probably the ones who purposely apply a foreign fashion in order to represent lay members of the local Jaina community. Lay Jaina donors did not wear such elite clothes. Thus, the Parthian costume that we see in some Jina pedestals was probably the momentaneous result of a clothing style that was in fashion when the sculptures were produced.

5.1.2 The lion throne: the seated Jinas and Vima Takto

The seat flanked by lions, one of the most characteristic features of the core iconography of seated Jina sculptures from Mathurā, has been a recurrent topic in this thesis. In Chapter four we concluded that the inclusion of lions transformed the platform where the Jina used to sit, originally a symbol of an ascetic teacher, into a lion-throne. This throne was a symbol of a universal monarch and an ascetic teacher that presented the Jina as a spiritual king.

The famous seated statue of the Kuṣāṇa king Vima Takto was found next to the Maṭ shrine together with other sculptures of Kuṣāṇa rulers (fig. 73). This was one of the most discussed sculptures of a Kuṣāṇa king made in Mathurā in the first half of the 2nd century

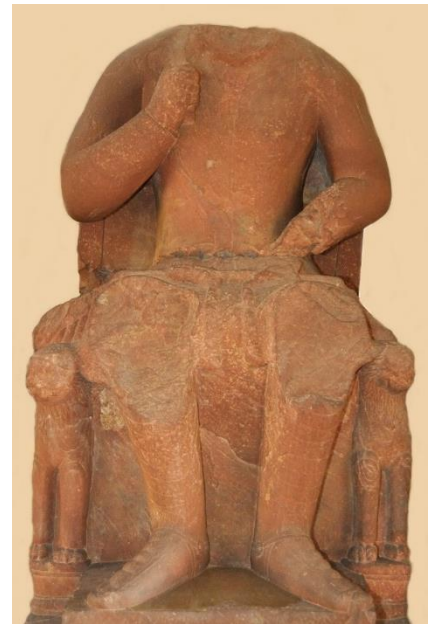


Figure 73: Seated sculpture of Vima Takto (r. 80-90 CE) flanked by standing lions, Maṭ, c. 2nd century CE.

⁶¹ The Sasanians also continued with this iconographic trend of recalling the ancient nomadic past. A set of early Sasanian graffities incised in Persepolis where the royal figures are riding horses and wearing rider costumes are a clear evidence of this Iranian royal imagery that wanted to establish a link between the Achaemenids and the Iranian rulers of the time (Callieri, 2003: 138-139).

CE,⁶² a key period in which seated *kapardin* Buddha sculptures with lions in their pedestals were made by local artists, yet a time when similar seated Jinas were not carved. The artwork consists on a sculpture of Vima seated in *bhadrāsana* on a throne with a backrest and standing lions as legs of the throne. The Kuṣāṇa king is holding what seems to be a mace with the right hand a sword hilt with the left one.

Were the Jainas of Mathurā or the local artists motivated to represent Jinas seated on lion-thrones after seeing that this royal iconography was also used by the Kuṣāṇas?

According to the classification of Indian seats proposed by Abouyer (1949: 32-34), both the throne of Vima and the platforms where the Jinas from Mathurā are sitting belong to a category of seats characterized by animal decorations. The problem with this classification is that it overlooks many fundamental elements that differentiate both seats.

Stylistically speaking, the throne with the backrest and the lions as legs where Vima is sitting belongs to a West Asian tradition of royal furniture that symbolized the investiture of the king (Levit-Tawil,

1983: 60-63). The early 3rd century CE Purim panel from Dura Europos that depicts King Ahasuerus, the Hebrew adaptation of King Xerxes in the *Old Testament*, seated on a similar

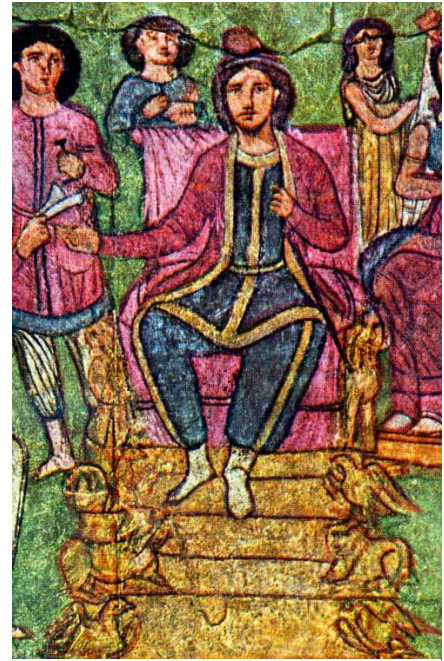


Figure 74: Detail of Purim panel representing King Ahasuerus seated on a throne with lions, Dura Europos, early 3rd century CE.

⁶² Rosenfield defined the seated sculpture of Vima as one of the earliest examples of a *siṃhāsana* (a lion throne) in the history of India. Though, he already pointed out that the seat differed from contemporary Buddhist examples of lion thrones in form and style and that it was probably derived from West Asian models (Rosenfield, 1967: 183-184). Verardi and Grossato (1983: 257-259) considered that the statue of Vima perfectly fitted in the traditional Indian representation of kings that were supposed to sit on a lion throne, hold a *danḍa* to apply justice on one hand and a sword for sacrifices on the other hand. Likewise, Fussman (1989: 194) considered the statue to have a royal rather than a religious connotation, just like the standing sculpture of Kaniṣka. The fact that the statue was undoubtedly made by a local Mathurā artist is evidenced by the use of the red spotted sandstone, which characterized most of the sculptures carved in the different workshops of the city, or the presence of typical Indian motifs such as diminutive makaras in the straps that adorn the boots of the ruler (Mitterwallner, 1986: 61; Knauer, 2008: 270). Mitterwallner proposed that the statue, hence, was possibly carved by a Mathurā artist with the assistance of a court official from the North West that was familiar with the imagery of Kuṣāṇa kings (Mitterwallner: 1986: 62). According to van Lohuizen (1989:77), the main innovations that characterized this famous Mathurā sculpture were the use of a high chair throne and the *bhadrāsana* posture, both artistic motifs introduced from the North West.



Figure 75: Drawing of a relief representing King Antiochus I of Commagene shaking hands with Zeus seated on a lion-throne, Nemrut Mountain, late 1st century BCE.

throne with a pair of lions is a famous example of this type of West Asian throne and posture (ibid. 58-60) (fig. 74). Moreover, a late 1st century BCE relief from Nemrut Mountain that represents King Antiochus I of Commagene shaking hands with Zeus seated on a throne has been considered as one of the main models that inspired the statue of Vima (fig. 75).⁶³ Not only does Zeus wear the Parthian ritual costume of a king that we already discussed above, but he also has an apron covering his knees and two lions standing as front legs of the throne, just in the same way as Vima (Knauer, 2008: 275-278).

As we discussed in Chapter 4, the lion-thrones of the Jinas of Mathurā evolved from a

basic platform reserved for ascetic teachers that we see in the oldest narrative reliefs of Mathurā or earlier Indian sites such as Bharhut. It is more probable that the Jaina community of Mathurā started to commission the making of Jina sculptures with lion-thrones due to the pressure after seeing how popular was this artistic motif among their Buddhist competitors (see 4.2.1).

In addition to this, we should consider to what extent was the Jaina community of Mathurā exposed to lion throne imagery from the Kuṣāṇas. It is very unlikely that Jainas entered the *devakula* at Maṭ and had the chance to see the seated sculpture of Vima. Likewise, there are no depictions of lion thrones in any of the coins issued by Kuṣāṇa kings.⁶⁴ Thus, even though they were produced in the same period and by the same artists,

⁶³ The Parthians may have been the mediators between the Kuṣāṇas and the Kingdom of Commagene as far as the transmission of the throne with lions is concerned. Just as it happened with the tiara, the rider costume or the full-beard, the Kuṣāṇas probably adopted all this royal iconography from the Parthians during their process of empire formation (Knauer, 2008: 280-281).

⁶⁴ The only exception could be depictions of the Bactrian god Mana in the reverse of some Kuṣāṇa coins where he is represented seated in *bhadraṣana* on a throne with legs that look theriomorphic: http://numismatics.org/search/results?q=reference_facet:%22JCD%200385%22 (05-05-2022).

the lion throne symbolism of the Vima sculpture and the seated Jinas belong to two different traditions.

5.2 Pre-Kuṣāṇa foreign elements in the Jaina art of Mathurā



Figure 76: Stūpa railing pillar depicting a standing male figure wearing the Parthian dress and a Phrygian cap, Koṭā, Mathurā, 1st-2nd centuries CE.

The foreign elements that are present in the Jaina sculptures from Mathurā mentioned above coincide with the Kuṣāṇa period. However, what if by the time the Kuṣāṇas conquered North India these artistic motifs had already been part of the Indian visual imagery for a couple of centuries? Would not this underplay the impact that the Kuṣāṇas had in the development of the art of Mathurā since the 2nd century CE and define them, as Rosenfield put it (1967: 184-186), as the last of many waves of cultural influences coming from Central Asia?

Regarding the early Jaina art from Mathurā, we should not forget that most of the *āyāgapaṭas* included decorative elements that were foreign in origin. Centaurs, tritons and griffins that decorated the outer circles of *āyāgapaṭas* or early architraves from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā were artistic motifs that had probably been imported from Hellenistic or Iranian cultures (Quintanilla, 2007: 39-41). Likewise, the Parthian dress that we see in some of the Jina sculptures was already present in the pre-Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā and older Indian sites such as Sāñcī and Bharhut.⁶⁵

The rider costume characterized by a long tunic with a belt and heavy boots was the traditional dress of ancient Iranian people such as the Parthians and the Śakas, both of which had politically dominated Mathurā or its neighboring areas.⁶⁶ The

⁶⁵ A *stūpa* railing pillar from Bharhut has a yakṣa carved on it whos wears foreign clothes that can easily be identified: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bharhut#/media/File:Bharhut_Stupa_Yavana_symbolism.jpg (21-08-2022).

⁶⁶ In fact, the iconography of the early Kuṣāṇa elite was significantly influenced by the Śakas. This can be seen at early Kuṣāṇa sites such as Khalchayan or Noin Nula, where Yuezhi warriors (AKA early Kuṣāṇas) are depicted with the same heavy armour and rider costume that the Śakas had been wearing for at least two centuries (Sinisi, 2020: 380-382).

cultural influence of these Iranian invaders that predated the Kuṣāṇas is evidenced by *stūpa* railing pillars that depict *yakṣas* or warriors wearing the Parthian dress and tiara or older reliefs from Sāñcī that represent musicians playing foreign instruments and also wearing similar clothes (figs. 76 and 77).



Figure 77: Detail of *stūpa* relief showing foreign musicians, Sāñcī, c. 1st century BCE.

As far as the lion-throne of the seated Jinas is concerned, we already pointed out in Chapter 4 that the antiquity of lions as symbols of royalty in Indian art was four centuries older than the conquest of the Kuṣāṇas.⁶⁷ The lion is a frequent motif that we encounter in pre-Kuṣāṇa Jaina art of Mathurā across different media, be it on top of pillars carved in *āyāgapāṭas*, in *stūpa* medallions or at the base or capitals of columns. Thus, by the time the Kuṣāṇas controlled Mathurā, the lion was a localized and domesticated Indian motif.

5.3 Jaina conservatism or a matter of historical development?

The Kuṣāṇas influenced the development of the art of Mathurā from the second century CE onwards. The incorporation of Mathurā into a massive empire that connected Central Asia with India resulted in the strengthening of political, economic and cultural exchanges with the west. These circumstances led to modifications in the iconography of certain Hindu deities such as Sūrya, Śiva or Skanda, who adopted Iranian and Hellenistic elements that changed their appearance and function. Likewise, the Buddhist art from Gandhāra adopted certain features that might have derived from Zoroastrian motifs that characterized the iconography of Kuṣāṇa kings.

Was there any specific reason for Jainas to avoid foreign influences and to support images that remained as local as possible? The answer to this question might be related to

⁶⁷ The construction of the Mauryan lion capitals in the 3rd century BCE, which were probably inspired by Iranian prototypes, marks the beginning of the use of the lion motif in the history of Indian sculpture (Rosenfield, 1967: 184).

the demographics of the Jaina community of Mathurā as well as the historical development of Jainism.

Virtually Jina images from Mathurā were commissioned for the Ardhaphālakas, a Jaina sect of monks whose area of influence was restricted to Mathurā and, to be more specific, the Jaina *stūpa* of Kaṅkāli Tīlā. As we already pointed out in Chapter 2, archaeological evidence as well as Buddhist stories such as the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā* suggest that the presence of Jainas in Mathurā during the Kuṣāṇa period was stronger than that of Buddhists (van Lohuizen, 1949: 148-149).

According to Johannes Bronkhorst (2016: 468), some crucial events that happened during the Kuṣāṇa period in Mathurā resulted in Jainism and Buddhism spreading to different directions. This was a time referred by him as the “Middle period” of Indian Buddhism and Jainism, which was characterized by an ongoing debate on settled monasticism and the decay of asceticism. Both, Jainas and Buddhists produced legends that criticized certain religious groups that lived a lifestyle full of comfort.⁶⁸ While the Buddhists tried to defend settled monasticism in response to Jaina critics, Jainas advocated for a severe asceticism and a wandering lifestyle that Buddhist monks had left apart (ibid. 472).

Yet, it was probably because of this severe asceticism that the expansion of Jainism was restricted to the Indian subcontinent. The freedom of movement of Jaina monks was significantly restrained compared to their Buddhist competitors, who were able to move across different monasteries and go on missions to distant lands. In addition to this, Jainas received virtually no royal support during this time and had to rely mainly on donations from lay devotees (ibid. 477-478). As we pointed out many times throughout this thesis, inscriptions from Mathurā show that most of the lay devotees that commissioned the numerous Jina images from Mathurā were to women married to men of lower social classes (cotton-dealers, iron-mongers, bakers...) (Quintanilla, 2009: 115).⁶⁹

⁶⁸ These are the Buddhist and Jaina stories of Devadatta and Gosāla Maṅkhaliputta, rivals of Gautama Buddha and Mahāvira respectively. It is speculated that these legends were created around the same time and that they influenced each other (Bronkhorst, 2016: 469-470).

⁶⁹ The representation of lay Jaina devotees dressed as members of the elite might seem contradictory. Yet, perhaps Mathurā artists portrayed them in such a fashion as a way to emulate that royal support of the local Jaina community existed, even though this was not the real case.

Hence, the small traces of foreign influences that Jina images from Kuṣāṇa Mathurā display, compared to the significantly bigger changes underwent by Buddhist and Hindu art from the same period, can be considered a consequence of the regional character of the Jaina community of Mathurā. Rather than a conservative doctrine that rejected foreign influences, it was probably their lack of presence in regions that were exposed to a higher impact of foreign influences like Gandhāra that resulted in Jaina art being more local than Buddhist art. Together with the meticulous selection of symbols and their consistent arrangement that we highlighted in Chapter 4, its existent but restricted foreign influences made Jaina art from Mathurā unique.

Chapter 6 Concluding remarks

This thesis began with the aim of exploring the canonization of what I have defined as the ‘core Jina iconography’, a unique phenomenon in the development of early Historic Indian art that happened at Kuṣāṇa period Mathurā.

Between the 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century CE Mathurā artists selected certain symbols that would conform the basic iconography to represent Jaina teachers. This core iconography would be respected in such a meticulous and consistent way that Jina sculptures produced in the next centuries and even nowadays adhere to it.

This iconographic consistency did not exist in sculptures of Buddhas and Hindu deities carved around the same period in Mathurā, which was a distinguishing element that gave Jina sculptures a singular identity. Likewise, many of the symbols that were selected to be part of the core iconography highlighted one of the key elements that characterizes Jainism: its severe asceticism. The presence of the Ardhaphālaka monastic community and lay devotees in virtually all worship scenes from the Jina pedestals increases the local nature of the Jina sculptures.

As proposed in the introduction of this thesis, art has the power of strengthening the self-perception of any kind of imagined communities, even religious ones. It is true that inter-religious dialogue and the share of similar visual imagery characterized all Indian religions during the early Historic period. Yet, while Jaina art made use of the same pan-Indian symbols as other religions and underwent similar artistic developments, it also defined its identity with the canonization of an iconography that would be respected in every single sculptural depiction of a Jina. Hence, we can consider that Jaina art from the Kuṣāṇa period was defined by a balance of continuity and identity.

6.1 The archaeological constraints of Mathurā

An analysis of the timeline of the main archaeological excavations that were carried out in Mathurā reveals that earliest of these were characterized by an underdeveloped methodic approach. This in turn offered a distorted picture of the material culture that was mainly collected at the end of the 19th century. Hence, most of the scholars that studied the art of

Mathurā from the middle of the 20th century and up to the present had to work with damaged and incomplete sources without any indications of findspots.

Yet, this situation significantly changed in the third phase of excavations at Mathurā, when annual campaigns of the ASI and the German team of Hebert Härtel at the neighboring site of Sonkh introduced modern archaeological methodic approaches. In fact, this latter excavation exposed all the main stratigraphical layers that characterized ancient sites around the area of Mathurā. Overall, Mathurā and its surrounding area underwent a gradual process of urbanization during the PGW and NBP periods followed by an extension of the city during the Maurya period. The last two centuries before the Common Era were distinguished by the construction of ancient religious sites and images such as *nāga* temples or colossal *yakṣa* statues under local rulers of the Datta and Mitra dynasties. Subsequently, Mathurā was controlled by Śaka and Kuṣāṇa invaders during the first three centuries of the Common Era, a time when sculpture production significantly increased.

What truly differentiated Mathurā was its ancient archaeological landscape. While the main city was based next to the bank of the Yamunā river, workshops of local artists and religious sites that belonged to different sects were located in the periphery.

As far as Jaina art is concerned, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā was probably the most important site of Mathurā. More than half of the images from the database that I completed during my research come from this site alone. Having the remains of a *stūpa* which is considered as the oldest surviving religious structure in the history of Jainism, the discovery of this site was a pivotal moment in the development of Jaina studies. However, the emphasis on demonstrating the antiquity of the first Jaina *stūpa* resulted in one-dimensional picture of the rich Jaina material recovered from there and a lack of detailed descriptions.

6.2 The birth of the Jina core iconography and its timeline

The most remarkable feature of the Jina sculptures collected in my database is that, despite small variations, they all meticulously follow a core iconography that combined royal and ascetic symbols.

On the one hand, all seated Jina sculptures represent the naked Jina seated with the hands in *dhyānamudrā*. Some *lakṣaṇas* such as the *ūrṇā*, long earlobes or the *śrīvatsa* on the chest can be identified. Though, the *uṣṇīṣa* is still not represented on top of the head of

the Jina during this period. A halo decorated with different vegetative and geometric patterns or a seven-hooded snake tends to be represented on the back of the Jina. The pedestal where the Jina sits consists of a flat rectangular platform flanked by lions at each side and with Brāhmī inscriptions engraved. However, the most prominent feature of this part of the sculpture is the worship scene represented in the center of the pedestal, where a wheel representing the Jaina doctrine is flanked by male devotees and monks on our left and female devotees and nuns on our right.

On the other hand, standing Jina sculptures presented a significantly much more pronounced variation regarding the platform where the Jina stood or the subsidiary figures that flanked the Jina at different heights. Nevertheless, all standing Jinas were represented in the iconic *kayotsarga* posture and with the same *lakṣaṇas*, halo or seven-hooded snake as the seated Jinas.

This core Jina iconography was canonized at a very specific moment in the history of Jaina art from Mathurā as we saw in Chapter 3. Local artists had been representing seated Jinas in *stūpa* reliefs and *āyāgapaṭas* since the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE respectively. Buddhists were the first at representing their teacher in three-dimensional sculptures with the seated *kapardin* Buddhas that started to be carved in the second half of the 1st century CE. Yet, it took a gap of almost one century for Jainas to start commissioning seated sculptures of their teachers. This shift happened between the reigns of Huiṣka and Vasudeva (c. 150-230 CE), when seated Buddha sculptures had undergone a couple of waves of influence from Gandhāra and were about to represent the worship scene of the wheel in their pedestals. Thus, the seated Buddha sculptures from Mathurā can be considered as the main source of inspiration for the first seated Jina sculptures. Once three-dimensional sculptures became their main object of worship, Jainas from Mathurā started to commission *en masse* great numbers of seated and standing sculptures of Jinas.

6.3 Jaina selection of symbols: a balance between continuity and identity

The symbols that were selected to represent in sculptures of Jinas had two simultaneous objectives.

On the one hand, most of the symbols identified in Jina sculptures from Mathurā belonged to a pan-Indian artistic idiom that had been employed by different religious sects indistinctly during the early Historic period. *Lakṣaṇas*, the halo, *nandipādas*, lions, *cāmara*

bearers, wheels or the rectangular seats that define virtually all Jina sculptures from Mathurā were these pan-Indian symbols. They had already been present in the earliest anthropomorphic depictions of Jinas, such as the 2nd century BCE *stūpa* relief depicting the last dance of Nīlāñjana, or the early 1st century CE *āyāgapaṭas*. Likewise, Buddhists had already made use of most of these symbols for at least a couple of centuries. The symbolism of the reliefs of the earliest Buddhist *stūpas* of Bharhut and Sāñcī and especially the seated *kapardin* Buddha sculptures can be considered as a source of inspiration that led to the iconography of seated and standing Jinas. All in all, the presence of these symbols indicates that Jaina art made use of the same visual repertoire as other religious communities and underwent similar artistic developments.

On the other hand, there were other symbols that were intrinsically associated with the Jaina doctrine and the asceticism that made this religion so unique. The *kayotsarga* was a meditative posture exclusive of standing Jina sculptures and that served archaeologists to undoubtedly identify a damaged sculpture from Mathurā as a depiction of a Jina. Even though it was also employed in seated depictions of Bodhisattvas or Brāhmaṇas, the *dhyānamudra* was the hand gesture that was axiomatically used in all seated depictions of Jinas since it highlighted how important meditation was for the Jains. Moreover, the lack of the *uṣṇīṣa* on top of the head of the Jinas could be interpreted as an intentional choice of Mathurā artists to differentiate Jina and Buddha sculptures during this period. In addition to this, the presence of Ardhaphālaka monks and nuns was what differentiated Jaina pedestals from Buddhist ones. Mathurā artists put special emphasis on representing the clothing, accessories and hierarchy that distinguished the local Jaina monastic community, such as the *colapaṭas*, *rajoharaṇas* or the fat *gaṇadhāra* monks that flanked the wheel at the center.

Yet, the main feature that set apart Jina sculptures from Mathurā was probably their meticulously consistent iconography. Sculptures of seated Buddhas made by the same artists used many of the main symbols that characterized the core iconography of the Jina, such as the worship scene of the wheel in the pedestals or the *dhyānamudrā*. However, they did so in an inconsistent way that led to every Buddha sculpture from Mathurā being different from each other. Even though they had minor variations regarding the number of devotees or the way the wheel was placed in the pedestal, virtually all Jina sculptures from

Mathurā followed the same composition and made use of the same symbols. In fact, the seriality that distinguished the great number of identical Jina sculptures made at Mathurā would remain as one of the most distinctive features of Jaina sculpture.

6.4 Restricted foreign influences as a consequence of historical circumstances

Foreign influences did not have such a great impact in the development of the Jina iconography compared to that of popular Hindu deities such as Śiva, Sūrya or Skanda, which underwent a major transformation. Yet, we can notice traces of foreign influences in some Jina sculptures.

The depiction of male Jaina devotees wearing the traditional Parthian costume and female Jaina devotees wearing long-sleeved garments in some Jaina pedestals can be considered as artistic motifs imported from the West. However, rather than canonized Iranian visual imagery that was brought by the Kuṣāṇas, Mathurā artists probably depicted Jaina devotees wearing this type of clothing because it had already been part of the Indian since post-Maurya period. Likewise, the presence of the Parthian costume in all likelihood had a different symbolic role compared to its representation in Kuṣāṇa portraits. Wearing these foreign clothes highlighted the lay status of the Jaina devotees that commissioned the Jina image.

As far as the lion throne that characterized all seated Jina sculptures is concerned, it is very unlikely that the Jainas of Mathurā were exposed to Kuṣāṇa lion imagery present in royal portraits such as the Vima statue at Maṭ. The lion imagery employed in Kuṣāṇa royal portraits, such as in the throne of Vima, belongs to a West Asian prototype of royal furniture that was popularized among the Iranian world in the turn of the first millennium. The lion throne of seated Jinas derived from a lion imagery that had been present in India since the Maurya period, the evolution of a rectangular platform where the earliest anthropomorphic Jinas used to sit and the adoption of the lion thrones depicted in the *kapardin* Buddhas that predated them. Furthermore,

Rather than a religious conservatism that made them reluctant to adopt foreign artistic motifs and imagery, it was due to certain historical circumstances that Jaina art from Mathurā was significantly less exposed to foreign influences during the Kuṣāṇa period. We



Figure 78: Seated Digambara Jina sculptures, Chaubis Maharaj temple, Jaipur, 18th century CE.

should bear in mind that virtually all Jina sculptures discussed in this thesis were commissioned by female lay devotees paying homage to the Ardhapālakas, a local Jain monastic sect with a sphere of influence that was restricted to the area of Mathurā. In addition to this, the period and the place where all these Jina sculptures were carved coincided with a major debate between Jainas and Buddhists on settled monasticism that strengthened Jainism's emphasis on asceticism and a wandering lifestyle.

In fact, the Jina iconography that developed during the Kuṣāṇa period seems to reflect this debate. Compared to sculptures of Buddhas made around the same time that displayed a greater iconographic variety, the constant presence of Ardhapālaka monks and nuns in the pedestals of Jinas highlights the central role that asceticism had for the Jainas. Likewise, the iconographic consistency and the serialism displayed by a significant amount of almost identical Jina sculptures that were placed next to each other in Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā represents a core Jain concept. This is the idea that the Jina is the embodiment of the perfected soul that has broken through the karmic bonds, and a pure soul must be identical to another. Hence, each Jina sculpture should also be like all others (Cort, 2010: 54).

Long rows of seated Jina sculptures that are identical to each other are a common feature of Jaina temples that can be visited nowadays (fig. 78). Yet, it was at Kuṣāṇa period Mathurā when serialism, together with other symbolic elements, became part of the Jina iconography. All in all, the canonization of the Jina iconography was a unique historical phenomenon that shows us how the strong identity of a regional religious sect was reflected in art.

Why the Jinas were different: The canonization of Jina iconography in Kuṣāṇa Mathurā

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Figure 33: Relief fragment depicting two devotees worshipping the seat of the Buddha with *nandipādas* behind, Bharhut, 2nd century BCE., Bharhut, c. 2nd century BCE. Size unknown. After Coomaraswamy, 1956: Plate IX, Fig. 27.

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Figure 35: Acalā *āyāgapaṭṭa* depicting a seated Jina between a pillar crowned by a lion and another one crowned by the wheel, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 25-50 CE. Buff sandstone; H. 78 x W. 71 cm. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 252. After Quintanilla, 2007: Fig. 159.

Figure 36: Detail of pedestal of seated Jina depicting a male and a female *cāmara* bearer flanking the wheel, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 19. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009091.

Figure 37: Detail of seated Jina flanked by *cāmara* bearers at shoulder height, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 300-550 CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 119. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009139.

Figure 38: Detail of pedestal of seated Jina with monks and nuns flanking the wheel, from Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 16. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009099.

Figure 39: Detail of Amohini *āyāgapaṭṭa* that shows a Jaina female deity being flanked on her left side by a female *cāmara* bearer, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 15 CE. H. 96,5 x 111,76 cm. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 1. After Quintanilla, 2007: Fig. 148.

Figure 40: Detail of the Nīlāñjanā relief that shows a *cāmara* bearer clanking the Jina Ṛṣabha, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 100 BCE. Buff sandstone; size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 354/609. After Quintanilla, 2007: fig. 27.

Figure 41: Detail of Sihanāṃdika *āyāgapaṭṭa* showing a seated Jina with a *chattra* on top, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 25-50 CE. Reddish sandstone, H. 65 x 57,5 cm. National Museum, New Delhi; J. 249. After Quintanilla, 2007: Fig. 157.

Figure 42: Standing Buddha sculpture carved in Mathurā with the remains of a stone umbrella above, Sarnath, c. 125 CE. Stone; H. 290 cm. Sarnath Museum. After Brown, 2002: fig. 4.

Figure 43: Detail of a *stūpa* railing pillar depicting a female and a male devotee worshipping the wheel, Bodh Gaya, c. 2nd century BCE. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bodh_Gaya_railing_adoration_of_the_wheel_of_the_Law.jpg (22-08-2022).

Figure 44: Mātharaka *āyāgapaṭṭa* depicting the wheel as the main object of worship at the center of the tablet, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 20 BCE. Red sandstone; H. 86 cm x W. 86 cm. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 248. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009075.

Figure 45: Pedestal of seated Jina with the central wheel mounted on a pillar, Kañkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 33. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009072.

Figure 46: Fragmented pedestal of a seated Jina with the central wheel resting on a *nandipāda*, Kañkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 20. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009090.

Figure 47: Pedestal of standing Jina with the central wheel hold by a *guhya*, from Kañkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 68. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009118.

Figure 48: Pedestal of seated Jina with the central wheel resting on the ground, from Kañkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 14. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009098.

Figure 49: Seated Jina sculpture flanked by a *nāga* and a *yakṣa* in *añjalimudrā*, Kañkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 3rd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 117. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009153.

Figure 50: *Śilāpaṭṭa* depicting female dancers, flying monks and *kimaras* flanking the *stūpa* as well as the *yakṣa* Naigameśin and a *yakṣī* on a niche next to the stairs, Maholi, Mathurā, c. 75-100 CE. Red sandstone; H. 71 cm x W. 55 cm. Government Museum, Mathurā; Q. 2. After Quintanilla, 2007: Fig. 168.

Figure 51: Kimbell Art Museum *kapardin* style seated Bodhisattva flanked by *yakṣa*-like attendants and small *yakṣas* flanking the wheel in the pedestal, Mathurā, c. 131 CE. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kimbell_seated_Buddha_with_attendants,_Mathura.jpg (28-01-2022).

Figure 52: Deteriorated head of a Pārśvanātha sculpture, Kañkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 114. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009142.

Figure 53: Detail of Pārśvanātha *āyāgapaṭṭa* showing snake-hooded Jina flanked by two Ardhaphālaka monks in *añjalimudrā*, Kañkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 15 CE. H. 86 x W. 94 cm. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 253. After Quintanilla, 2007: Fig. 151.

Figure 54: Architrave depicting a *nāga* court scene, Sonkh, c. 2nd century CE. H. 121 cm. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Naga_Court,_Sonkh,_Mathura,_100_CE.jpg (28-01-2022).

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Figure 55: Bust of Balarāma with the snake canopy, Ganesra, Mathurā, c. 3rd century CE. H. 30,05 cm. Photo courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Accession No.: 52704. Retrieved from: https://vmis.in/ArchiveCategories/collection_gallery_zoom?id=1335&siteid=541&minrange=0&maxrange=0&assetid=73756&self_archive_id=162534&index=836#focused_div (23-03-2022).

Figure 56: Detail of Katra architrave showing seated Brāhmaṇas, Mathurā, c. 100 BCE. Red sandstone; H. 25 cm x W. 144 cm. After Quintanilla, 2007: Fig. 33.

Figure 57: Relief sculpture of a Bodhisattva seated in *dhyānamudrā* and flanked by three devotees in *añjalimudrā*, Maholi, Mathurā c. 1st-2nd centuries CE. Size unknown. Mathurā Museum; 3231. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-002782. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:90822> (23-03-2022).

Figure 58: Torso of standing Jina sculpture in *kayotsarga*, probably Ādinātha, Mathurā c. 2nd centuries CE. H. 68,6 cm. Mathurā Museum; B. 36. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-002787. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:86544> (23-03-2022).

Figure 59: Platform of standing Jina depicting the wheel flanked by monks, nuns and lay devotees, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 7. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009106.

Figure 60: Detail of pedestal of seated Jina showing a pillared wheel in the center flanked by *gaṇadharas*, monks, nuns, lay devotees and children, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd-3rd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 3. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009096.

Figure 61: Uppermost layer of a Jaina tympanum showing a *stūpa* in the center flanked by *gaṇadharas*, monks and nuns, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Red sandstone; H. 31,75 x W. 36,83 cm. State Museum, Lucknow; B. 207. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009177.

Figure 62: Detail of Vasu *śilāpaṭa* showing a flying *cāraṇamuni*, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, c. 75-100 CE. H. 73 x W. 57 cm. After Quintanilla, 2007: Fig. 170.

Figure 63: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing the wheel surmounted on a pillar being worshipped by male devotees, Mathurā, c. late 1st century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; B.1. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009198.

Figure 64: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing a tree worshipped by male and female devotees, Mathurā, c. early 2nd century CE. Size unknown. National Museum, New Delhi; L. 55. 25. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-008904.

Figure 65: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing a seated Buddha in *dhyānamudrā* flanked by two figures, Ānyor, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. After Myer, 1986: fig. 20.

Figure 66: Detail of seated Buddha pedestal showing the wheel surmounted on a pillar flanked by a *yakṣas* in each side, Mathurā, c. late 1st century CE. Size unknown. Mathurā Museum; 2866. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-002745.

Figure 67: Detail of typical male and female lay devotees carved in Jina pedestals, Kaṅkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 19. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009091.

Figure 68: Detail of Jina sculpture pedestal showing two male lay devotees wearing the Parthian dress, Kaṅkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd-3rd century CE. H. 86 cm. Mathurā Museum; B. 67. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-011688.

Figure 69: Detail of seated Jina pedestal showing the main female donor wearing a long-sleeved garment, a female lay devotee wearing a sari and a Jaina nun accompanied by a dwarfish figure wearing the monastic robes, Kaṅkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. Size unknown. State Museum, Lucknow; J. 12. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009107.

Figure 70: Third layer of Jaina tympanum depicting lay male and female devotees flanking a female deity. They wear foreign clothes, Kaṅkāli Tīlā, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. H. 31,35 cm x W. 36.86 cm. State Museum, Lucknow; B. 207. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-009177.

Figure 71: Squatting sculpture of Sūrya dressed as a Kuṣāṇa king, Mathurā, c. 2nd century CE. H. 48 cm. Mathurā Museum; 12.269. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-011759.

Figure 72: Obverse of double stater of Vima Kadphises depicting the king seated on a stool, Afghanistan, 113-127 CE. Guimet Museum; MG 24356. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Double_stater_Vima_Kadphises_Guimet_MG24356_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Double_stater_Vima_Kadphises_Guimet_MG24356_(cropped).jpg) (30-04-2022).

Figure 73: Seated sculpture of Vima Takto (r. 80-90 CE) flanked by standing lions, Maṭ, c. 2nd century CE. H. 208 cm. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Vima_Kadphises_statue_Mathura_Museum.jpg (20-04-2022).

Figure 74: Detail of Purim panel representing King Ahasuerus seated on a throne with lions as armrests, Dura Europos, early 3rd century CE. Size unknown. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4c/Mordecai_and_Esther.jpg (20-04-2022).

Figure 75: Drawing of a relief representing King Antiochus I of Commagene shaking hands with Zeus seated on a lion-throne, Nemrut Mountain, late 1st century BCE. Size unknown. After Knauer, 2008: fig. 6.

Figure 76: Stūpa railing pillar depicting a standing male figure wearing the Parthian dress and a Phrygian cap, Koṭā, Mathurā, 1st-2nd centuries CE. H. 78 cm. Mathurā Museum; J. 56. Photo courtesy of the Kern Institute Photographic Collection, P-011957.

Figure 77: Detail of *stūpa* relief showing foreign musicians, Sāñcī, c. 1st century BCE. Size unknown. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5f/Foreigners_in_Greek_dress_playing_carynxes_and_aolus_flute_at_Sanchi.jpg (20-04-2022).

Figure 78: Seated Digambara Jina sculptures, Chaubis Maharaj temple, Jaipur, 18th century CE. After Cort, 2010: 58.