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The Standing Buddha of Guita Bahi

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Part I

The Standing Buddha of Guita Bahi Further Thoughts on The Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft

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Please click on the thumbnail images in the article below to go to a "large image page" with a large image and full caption details, including citations of previous publications of the sculpture; in each citation the date assigned the sculpture (if applicable) is shown in boldface. The image can be enlarged by clicking on it, and can then be further enlarged by clicking on it again.

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In an article entitled "On the Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft" published in 1975, Mary Slusser (1918-2017) discussed two important metal sculptures of standing Buddhas from Nepal [1]. One is the earliest dated metal sculpture from Nepal yet known, a standing Buddha with an extensive inscription dated to the equivalent of CE 591, in the collection of the Cleveland Museum (fig. 1) [2]. This image has caused considerable disagreement among art historians who remain divided as to whether the image itself (as opposed to the base, which likely was cast separately from the figure) is of Indian or Nepalese origin [3]. The other image is a lovely standing Buddha presently in the collection of the Kimbell Art Museum, first exhibited in 1975 in Dr. Pratapaditya Pal's exhibition in the Asia House Gallery *Where the Gods Are Young* (fig. 2). This sculpture is inscribed but not dated, but is generally agreed to be from the 7th century, a date that can be inferred from the paleography and linguistic style of the inscription [4]. Other metal images of the standing Buddha from Nepal have been published since Slusser's article which can be dated on stylistic grounds to around the same ca. 7th century period or slightly later (see figs. 13-17 below). None of these is inscribed.

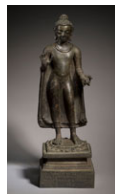


Fig. 1

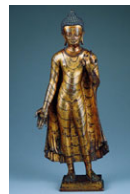


Fig. 2

A standing Buddha in Guita Bahi in eastern Patan, over life-size and probably the largest Nepalese metal sculpture now known, must be counted as one of the great marvels of Nepalese metalcraft. This Buddha presides as the main deity (New. *gandhurī devatā*) [5] of Prathamaśrī mahāvihāra, the largest of the three viharas that make up Guita Bahi. At 6 feet 8 inches, (2m 3 cm) it is the largest of the main deities of the viharas of Patan, and likely of the entire Kathmandu valley [6].

The god is now worshipped as Dīpaṅkara, a Buddha of the past whose cult is very popular among the Newar Buddhists of the Kathmandu Valley [7]. The identification as Dīpaṅkara is reinforced by means of an extensive covering of the figure in gilded repoussé copper, which likely dates from the 18th or 19th century (fig. 3). This sculpture has been published only a few times in the past, and the images published have shown the figure with the later repoussé covering in place [8].



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

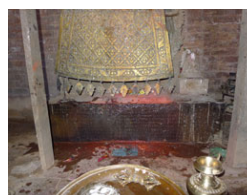


Fig. 6

I was first introduced to the Guita standing Buddha in 2008 when I was brought to Guita Bahi by friends from Oku Bahal [9]. We were able to have the repousse coverings removed and I was stunned by the extraordinary sculpture, a masterful portrayal of the standing

Buddha, that was thus revealed (figs. 4, 5). The Buddha is shown standing in an elegant posture similar to that of the Kimbell Buddha (fig 2), with the right hand down at his side in the varada mudrā, the gesture of giving or granting a boon, and his left hand held near his shoulder grasping the hem of his robe. An extensive inscription is visible, carved on the separate stone base, which I was told was 13th century (fig 6). This is a very late date for a sculpture of this quality and style, as it far surpasses any previously known work of that period. But perhaps it could be an unprecedented masterpiece from this period: after all the late 13th century was one of the most glorious eras in the history of Nepalese art, the time of the famed Arniko (1245 – 1306), the young sculptor who left Patan at an early age and created many glorious works in Tibet and China and rose to become head of the Chinese Imperial workshops, with the title the Duke of Liang.

Later I was able to obtain the book on Guita Bahi written in Newari by Herakaji Vajracarya (1951-2007). This is the most important single resource for the study of Guita, where the author provides readings and translations of the inscriptions found in Guita, including that inscribed on the base of the Buddha sculpture (see Appendix 1, inscriptions) [10]. I saw that the inscription, dated to NS 399, or CE 1279, relates details of the history of the vihara and some of the principal teachers there, and commemorates the restoration of the vihara after a devastating earthquake. The inscription clearly focuses on the rebuilding of vihara and does not focus specifically on the sculpture – in fact it refers to the consecration of the gods (devān) in the plural [11]. This clearly implies that “the gods” were already in place. This would mean that the Guita Buddha (as well as other sculptures in the Guita complex) was in fact older than this inscription. Certainly the quality and style of the sculpture would suggest a much earlier date, perhaps from the 7th to 9th centuries that it might be assigned after comparison with previously published sculpture, noting for instance the similarity with the Kimbell Buddha.

A recent surprise discovery of another, much earlier, mid- 6th century inscription on the back of the stone pedestal on which the 13th century inscription is inscribed has raised another possibility.

This early inscription came to light partially as a result of a long-standing renovation effort by the Guita Bahi Preservation Committee. Work on this renovation had already commenced when the earthquake of April 25th 2015 struck. The Buddha itself was not damaged in the 2015 earthquake. [12]

The brick walls of the inner shrine in which the Buddha stands are separated from the outer walls of the temple, creating a narrow circumambulation corridor. Rebuilding both these walls was part of the original renovation plans. First the outer wall was rebuilt before the earthquake of April 25 2015, and the inner wall – the wall of the central shrine where the Buddha stands - was dismantled for rebuilding after the earthquake.

Gyanendra Shakya has recounted that, when the bricks of the inner wall behind the Buddha were removed, on March 6, 2016, the Licchavi inscription was revealed on the back surface of the very stone base on which the Buddha stands (see Fig. 8). Previously the entire back, inscription included, had been buried within the wall. Gyanendra Shakya and the Preservation Committee informed the Department of Archeology (DoA) and the DoA epigraphist officer Mr. Shyam Sundar Rajbanshi of the find. After two weeks, on 21 March, 2016 Mr. Rajbanshi came and took a rubbing of the inscription, which he subsequently published in an article in the Nepal National Archive journal [Abhilekh](#) [13].



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

The wall has now been rebuilt with a horizontal “window” let into the wall, revealing the inscription, which can now be viewed and studied by any visitor who enters the circumambulation corridor of the shrine. (fig. 7). In its present state, however, it seems as if it might be a separate stone and inscription entirely, as it is difficult to judge from the narrow rear corridor the relation between the inscribed stone and the sculpture in the shrine on the other side of the wall. But the photographs taken on the day that Mr. Rajbanshi read the inscription, show clearly that the mid 6th century inscription is inscribed on the back of the very same stone as the later 13th c. inscription above which the Buddha now stands (fig. 8 – many details).

This inscription, of the early Licchavi period, describes the consecration of a metal Buddha image, in the year 464 (Śaka Samvat = CE 542). It is worth quoting this inscription, in loose translation, in full:

This is the devout religious work of Śākyabhikṣu Yaśomitra, (donated with the aim) that his father and mother, his teachers and all sentient beings might obtain enlightenment (anuttarajñāna, the unsurpassed wisdom). This bronze image of Lord Buddha was consecrated by the permission of the Great King Rāmadeva, when ruling for a long time, and the well-wisher the great Mahāsāmanta Kramalīla. Dated the 13th (lunar day of) the waxing moon of the (month of) Mārgaśīrṣa of the (Shaka) Era 464 (December 542 CE.) [14].

This inscription is well preserved and very clear, and specifically mentions a Buddha “made of bronze” (bhagavato buddhasya kāṅśya pratimā). It is the only Licchavi inscription we know of that refers specifically to a metal sculpture of the Buddha. Because of the mention of the king Rāmadeva and the Mahāsāmanta Kramalīla, the dating is secure and there is no doubt regarding the reading of the year. One other dated inscription mentions Rāmadeva and Kramalīla, and another inscription on the base of a well-known stone sculpture of Avalokiteśvara, has also been assigned to the time of Rāmadeva [15].

How shall we ascertain the date of the standing Buddha of Guita?

The discovery of the Licchavi inscription inscribed on the back of the base strongly suggests that the Buddha is in fact the original mid-6th century sculpture. When the vihara which housed it was restored in the late 13th century after a major earthquake the

sculpture was re-consecrated on the same base – with an inscription added on the front of the pedestal commemorating the reconstruction of the vihara.

Another possibility might be that the present image was indeed a replacement of the original 6th century sculpture, destroyed or damaged beyond repair in some earlier disaster, but made well before the post-earthquake restoration and consecration recorded in 1279. And yet a third possibility is that any previous image was damaged beyond repair and that the present image was made for the 1279 reconstruction of the vihara.

Could this wonderful figure in fact be as early as the mid-sixth century? An examination of the image itself, and a comparison with other dated sculptures of the same subject, and a survey of the art historical scholarship of this particular theme is useful in an attempt to reach a conclusion.

In order to aid fellow art historians – and visitors in general - in forming their own judgment, we offer here a group of comparable Nepalese sculptures of the standing Buddha, both in metal and in stone, from the earliest period to the 13th century, the time of the inscription on the front of the base. For convenience, we have repeated fig. 1 and fig. 2 with this group, as fig. 12 and fig. 15. Sculptures which are inscribed have the figure numbers of the thumbnail captions in red. Often these inscriptions are often not specifically dated; those that do have a date are shown with that date, in C.E., after the figure number. The only sculptures with inscriptions are fig. nos. 12, 14 and 15, and of these only fig. 12 (previously shown as fig. 1), the Cleveland Buddha, has an inscribed date. In addition, we will include in the thumbnail captions the range of dates assigned to each sculpture by the various historians who have studied it; citations for all these dates are included in the captions of the large image page linked to the thumbnail.

It has always been my belief that the history of art in Nepal should be firmly based on whatever dated works are available, but as we shall see in assessing the standing Buddha, those are very few and far between, so that art historians are obliged to arrive at dates through comparisons with other sculptures, a process known as “stylistic analysis”. Given the paucity of dated sculpture – in the group we will examine there is only one dated sculpture - much stylistic analysis regarding the age of works of art is necessarily highly conjectural.

The following gallery of images could not have been compiled without the extraordinary work - and generosity with his images - of Ulrich von Schroeder, whose books have become indispensable guides to Himalayan art [16]. Again, please note that the images below are thumbnails, which can be clicked to go to a “large image page” with an enlarged (and further enlargeable) image and accompanied by full caption details, and in some cases other detail images. The captions include the full details of the citations we mention in the text.

We will start below “at the beginning” with the sculptures of the standing Buddha that have been ascribed to the earliest dates by the art historians who have published studies of Nepalese sculpture. It is indicative of the uncertainty surrounding the dating of sculpture that the very first image we show, a stone figure now missing but originally in a small shrine in the Vajrayogini complex in Sankhu, has been dated from the 4th c. to the 12th c. by the three scholars who have published it (fig. 9 -see caption citations for details). It is certainly of an early type, and seems to suggest a sculptural tradition at its very beginnings, which is likely why Ulrich von Schroeder assigned it a 4th century date. The second, fig. 10, is a wonderful and very well-known fragmentary figure of the Buddha from Chabahil – called by Ulrich von Schroeder, who fell in love with this sculpture when he first came to Nepal in 1965 – “the most famous of all Nepalese stone sculptures of standing Buddhas”. [17] He and most other scholars agree on a date of the 5th or 6th centuries. The third, fig. 11, is the well-known Buddha in Bāṅgemūḍhā Ṭole in the heart of old Kathmandu, and here scholars also agree on a ca. 5/6th century date. The fourth, fig. 12 - the same as our fig. 1 above, is the earliest known dated bronze sculpture from Nepal, The Cleveland Buddha, which has been dated to CE 591, although the reading of the date is undergoing review [18]. Please click on the thumbnails to access the large image page for each sculpture, where you will also find citations of previous publications of the image and the dates assigned by the authors.



Fig. 9
4th-12th



Fig. 10
c 5th-6th



Fig. 11
5th -6th c.

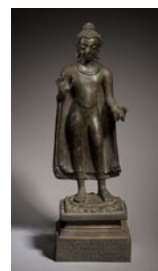


Fig. 12 (also fig. 1)
dated 591

The next example of standing Buddha, fig. 13, now in the National Museum in Chauni, is a relatively recently discovered stone sculpture found at the same time as the magnificent Buddha of Śaṅkhamūl (fig. 17 below). It is dated to the ca. 6th c. by Ulrich von Schroeder, but assigned a later date (8th/9th) in another publication (see large image caption; please refer to the citations in the captions for all dates). Fig. 14 is in the collection of the British Museum in London, and is the second sculpture bearing an inscription, which does not indicate a date; but, because of the style of the sculpture and the paleography of the inscription, it has been assigned a date of 6/7th c. by von Schroeder, while the curator of the British Museum put the date slightly later, at 7th/8th c (see fig. 14 caption). The next, fig. 15, is the second sculpture studied by Slusser and Gautam Vajracarya in 1975 (fig. 2 above), the lovely gilded copper figure from the Kimbell Art Museum, regarding which art historians have generally agreed on a 7th century date. This sculpture is also inscribed, but once again without a date; the paleography of the script used in the inscription, however, reinforces the 7th century dating [19]. Our next sculpture is a stunning figure of a standing Sakyamuni in the collection of the Lima Lhakhang of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, one of the greatest repositories of South Asian Buddhist art in the world (fig.16). Slightly larger than the previous figure, the Kimbell Buddha, this figure has been dated by von Schroeder to the 7th or 8th c. He has his hands in the positions most commonly found in figures of the standing Buddha from Northern India, with the right hand up in the gesture of fearlessness and the

left down by his side holding the hem of his robe. This is relatively unusual for a Nepalese work, but is the same arrangement seen with the Cleveland Buddha, (figs 1 and 12) [20]. Like the Kimbell Buddha, his robe is shown with cascading striated folds, whereas in all the other images we have so far examined the robe is smooth and unpatterned. This, along with the positions of the hands, is one of the principle differences between these various depictions [21].



Fig. 13
6th-9th c.

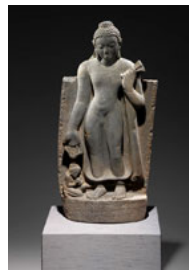


Fig. 14
6th -8th c.

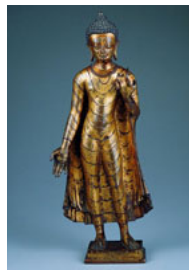


Fig. 15
7th c.



Fig. 16
7th -8th c.

The next sculpture in this group is a relatively recently discovered, spectacular life size standing Buddha now kept in the International Buddhist Meditation Center near Saṅkhamūl in Patan (fig. 17). This figure, discovered in the nearby Bagmati River, was first published – as Maitreya - in several short articles by Prof. Dr. Abalbert Gail, who refrained from assigning a specific century date, preferring the general term “late Licchavi”. Von Schroeder features it in his recently published *Nepalese Stone Sculptures*, where he dates it 8th century. Von Schroeder also assigns an 8th c. date to the magnificent standing Buddha ensconced in an upstairs shrine near the Vajra yogini temple in Sankhu (fig. 18), one of the largest (135 cm) and most significant metal images in the Kathmandu valley. Mary Slusser gave it an 11th c. date when she published it in her magnum opus *Nepal Mandala* [22]. Fig. 19 is a stone sculpture of a standing Buddha that was recently repatriated to Nepal from the USA. Again we find a wide range of dating: the National Museum dated it 7th century, while it was dated by Lain Singh Bangdel in his “Stolen Images of Nepal” to the 11th-12th century. Fig. 20 is another smaller gilt copper sculpture from the British Museum dated by von Schroeder to the 8-9th c., by the museum to the 9th c., and by Pratapaditya Pal to the 9th-10th c. (see captions details)



Fig. 17
8th c.



Fig. 18
8th-11th c.



Fig. 19
7th-12th c.



Fig. 20
8th-10th c.

The next group of four images are all metal sculptures. Fig. 21 is a gilt copper figure with a square base and a relatively elaborate aureole and halo resembling that of the life-size stone image of the International Buddhist Meditation Center (cf fig. 17). This example is again from the Lima Lhakhang in Tibet, and is dated by von Schroeder to the 10th/11th c. Figs. 22 and 23 are also both from the great treasure store of the Lima Lhakhang and seem to perhaps have been made by the same hand, as they resemble each other in style and finish. Von Schroeder dates both to the 10th-11th centuries and both are copper with almost imperceptible traces of gilt. The first, fig. 22 displays the familiar disposition of the hands we see in the great majority of standing Buddhas from Nepal including the subject of this study, the Buddha of Guita Bahi. Fig. 23 is, at 75 c, slightly larger than the very similar fig. 22, but shows the hands as in the gestures found in almost all bronze images of the standing Buddha ascribed to Gupta India, also found in the Cleveland Buddha (cf. fig. 12/fig. 1), and also in fig. 16, the impressive gilt copper Buddha also in the Lima Lhakhang (cf notes 20, 21). The next figure we offer in comparison is now in the collection of the Norton Simon Museum in California (fig. 24). While it has a better-preserved gilded finish, it is similar in size and in posture, stance and modeling to fig. 22. Von Schroeder dates it to the 11th-12th centuries, while the Museum dates it to the 12th c.



Fig. 21
10th-11th c.



Fig. 22
10th-11th c.



Fig. 23
10th-11th c.



Fig. 24
11th-12th c.

With the next three figures (figs. 25-27) we see considerably more variation in style than we have seen before, and we note that several of these following sculptures were very likely made in Tibet, although Nepalese influence is evident. Fig. 25 is a small figure on a rectangular base from the Lhasa Tsug Lhakhang, or Jokhang, and has been dated by Ulrich von Schroeder to the 11th c.; von Schroeder attributes it to the “Tibetan Gilt Copper Traditions”. Fig. 26 is another sculpture from the Lima Lhakhang, in the Potala Palace, which von Schroeder also dates to the 11th century while placing it in the “Nepalese Schools in Tibet”. It shares the “Indian”

disposition of the hands (see note 12), and is unusual for this group in the portrayal of the robe which is shown leaving the right shoulder bare and the right side of the body free of the robe, while all other portrayals so far, including the Guita Buddha, show both shoulders covered and the robe falling behind the body on both sides [23]. In Fig. 27, another sculpture of the Tsughlakhang or Jokhang, again dated to the 11th c. by von Schroeder, we see again both shoulders covered, but the treatment of the robe - flaring out from the body from just above the waist - and the general proportions of the figure, with a large head and the hands pulled in to the body, depart from what we've seen earlier. The hands are in positions we have not yet seen, the right hand down in varada mudra as we've seen in most of the Nepalese portrayals, but the left hand holding the robe at about the level of the waist as is often the case with the Indian-style sculptures.



Fig. 25
11th c.

Fig. 26
11th c.

Fig. 27
11th c.

The next two metal sculptures we'll examine exemplify the variations in posture, proportions and style that we have encountered as we move from the earlier periods to the later centuries. Fig. 28 is in the collection of Tibet House, New Delhi, and is dated by von Schroeder to 11th-12th centuries (1050-1150 AD), while Dr. Pal dated it to the 10th century. It clearly resembles a few of the sculptures we've reviewed earlier that have been dated to the 10th or 11th centuries, such as fig. 22 and particularly fig. 24 of the Norton Simon Museum. Fig. 29 is of some interest to us, as it is attributed to Nepal (early Malla Period) and dated to circa 13th c. by von Schroeder in his *Buddhist Statues in Tibet* (2008) [24]. This sculpture is in the Jobo Rinpoche chapel, next to the most sacred image in all Tibet, the central Buddha of the Jokhang, in the Jokhang or Tsug Lhakhang in Lhasa. This is the only sculpture of all the ones that we have seen so far that is dated by a scholar to the 13th century, the time of the inscription carved on the front of the base of the Guita standing Buddha. Yet it is not necessary to be an art historian to see that the two figures are very different. There is of course a difference in size (though the Jokhang figure is relatively large (89 cm) for a "portable" image), but there are many other differences. The Jokhang sculpture has a striated robe where the Guita Buddha's robe is smooth (a difference in detail rather than quality). Although the disposition of the hands is similar, the Guita image is far more graceful, the left hand held to the shoulder in an assured and natural pose, and the right in an expansive gesture away from the body, while the Jokhang sculpture has the left hand pinching the robe in front of the chest- as if he were holding a flower - and the right hand bent in towards the thigh (perhaps a later distortion). The legs of the Jokhang sculpture are spindly and straight and stiff, while the Guita Buddha displays the lovely fluid modeling and elegant dehançment that so typifies the best of Nepalese sculpture. In short, they are miles apart in quality and sculptural excellence.

Another standing Buddha that has been dated to the 13th c. (fig. 30) is the remarkable gilt copper sculpture that has been exhibited several times and was sold in 2015 in Hong Kong. This sculpture is very similar in stance and disposition of the hands to most of the images we have viewed, but the voluptuous crispness of the details of the face and the unusually exaggerated modeling of the body set it somewhat apart; these qualities combined with the rice grain pattern on the hems of the robe suggest that it may be related to the Khassa Malla tradition of Western Nepal and Tibet.



Fig. 28
10th-12th c.

Fig. 29
11th-13th c.

Fig. 30
13th c.

It is worth noting that the last two standing Buddhas we have seen, both given dates of the 13th c - the period of the inscription of the Guita Buddha - are the last metal sculptures of the standing Buddha that are seen in the major surveys of the art of Nepal. It is sometime said that in the early Malla period most of the gods of Nepal "sat down", that is, were depicted in seated position, and although this is not the case with some deities such as the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, it does seem to be the case with the Buddha, who is, from the 13th c. onwards usually portrayed seated. In the case of stone sculptures, Ulrich von Schroeder's *Stone Sculptures of Nepal* jumps from the 11th c. to the 15th century (the gigantic standing Buddha in Swayambhu, discussed below, fig. 31) without a standing Buddha, and then on to the 16th c and beyond [25]. Most of these later stone portrayals are relatively crude and naïve and/or are clearly copied after earlier sculptures. Many of the later standing Buddhas were created in the context of the *caturvyuha* caityas where standing figures are the traditional norm.

Difficulties in dating Nepalese sculpture

Before we make an effort to ascertain the date of the Guita Buddha it is worth again exploring the difficulties encountered in dating Nepalese works of art. Of the 21 sculptures we've looked at above, only three are inscribed (figs. 12, 14 and 15) and of these only fig.

12 (also fig. 1), the very important (and somewhat controversial) standing Buddha in the Cleveland Museum of Art, has a date.

Even the reading of a dated inscription can be fraught and requires a rather esoteric expertise; and even among those scholars with that expertise, there is often disagreement. The written date of the Cleveland Buddha was originally read by several Indian scholars as either 343, 233, 353, or 313 - all assuming the Gupta era - and Stan Czuma, who wrote the first study of the sculpture, preferred the year 313, the equivalent of 632/633 CE. It was only later when Dr. Pratapaditya Pal and Dr. Gautam Vajracarya were able to examine and study the inscription that the alternate reading of 513 (of the Śaka era prevalent in Nepal = 591 C.E.) was determined, but even that reading has come under recent scrutiny [26]. In several other instances of early bronzes inscribed with dates similar confusion has occurred [27].



Fig. 31

Of the 21 standing Buddha figures we have briefly catalogued above, the Cleveland Buddha is the only one inscribed with a date. Two others are inscribed, but are undated, but the paleography of the scripts used and the language have made an approximate date of these more ascertainable; so in the case of the Kimbell Buddha there is agreement that this lovely sculpture (fig. 15, also fig. 2) is from the 7th century. The stone standing Buddha in the British Museum (fig. 14) is less widely published, and while the Museum dates it as 7th-8th c., von Schroeder feels it is somewhat earlier, dating it to the 6th/7th century [28].

The other 18 sculptures are dated by the various scholars who have assigned dates to them according to their individual understanding of the progression of style in art over the centuries (what we call "stylistic analysis"). Differences in these analyses can result in dates that vary quite widely from one scholar to another when studying the same sculpture, as we have seen.

Another characteristic of Nepalese art that makes dating problematic is what we might call "persistence of style": early styles can continue into much later periods, often apparently through deliberate copying. An extraordinary example of this was recently revealed by Ulrich von Schroeder in his two volume *Nepalese Stone Sculptures*. In the course of his research, Von Schroeder discovered that two figures of the standing Buddha in the Swayambhu area are 15th century copies based on a much earlier model. The larger one, the largest stone standing Buddha in Nepal, is very well known and has been widely published as between the 5th and the 11th centuries in many publications. (fig. 31, see citations and detail photos in large image page) [29].

What is the date of the standing Buddha of Guita?

There are three possibilities regarding the date of the Buddha of Guita.

- 1) The first possibility is that the Guita Buddha is the very "bronze Buddha" of the Licchavi inscription on the back of the pedestal, which has survived all the subsequent earthquakes, and thus dates to 542 C.E., making it not only the largest metal sculpture known from Nepal but also the earliest.
- 2) A second possibility is that it is a work earlier than the 1279 inscription, but later than the sculpture mentioned in the Licchavi inscription, perhaps from the 8th-9th centuries, a sculpture made to replace the Licchavi image when it was damaged beyond repair, but which survived the earthquake which necessitated the 1279 renovation of the vihara.
- 3) A third possibility is that it is a late 13th c work made to copy and replace an earlier image – either the bronze Buddha of the Licchavi inscription on the back of the pedestal, or perhaps to replace a later replacement of that Buddha which was in turn damaged beyond repair in another earthquake which struck some time before the renovation of the vihara in 1279.

After reviewing the gallery of standing Buddha sculptures (Figs 9-31 above) the third option appears highly unlikely. The thirteenth century examples we have reviewed (Figs 29-30), do not begin to approach the style and sophistication of the Guita Buddha. If such a gigantic sculpture had been made to copy and replace an earlier image it would be likely that the feat would have been specifically mentioned in the 1279 inscription.

It is our opinion that the first is correct. This is almost surely the "statue of a bronze Buddha" consecrated by Yaśomitra during the reign of Rāmadeva in December of CE 542.

It has survived many earthquakes – as many as 15 or more if the estimate of one earthquake every 75-100 years is correct (a calculation which was correct in the case of the 2015 quake, which occurred 81 years after the great earthquake of 1934) [30]. The latest we could reasonably date the sculpture would be to 1279, meaning that it has survived in very good condition for some 740 years. This would give it a good chance of having survived the previous 737 years. The only damage to this remarkable sculpture is the loss of most of the little finger of the right hand, and the loss of sections of both earlobes. The very size of the sculpture no doubt protected it. Where many smaller sculptures are destroyed by falling timbers or masonry in an earthquake, in the case of this over life-size sculpture, the building would have collapsed around it.

The most powerful argument that this is the Buddha of 542 is of course the inscription, hidden for years on the back of the pedestal, and giving all the details of the religious donation of an image; and not just any image, but specifically a "bronze statue of Lord Buddha". In contrast, the inscription of 1279 gives no details at all regarding "the gods"; it is concentrated on the history of, and restoration of, the monastery itself, which strongly suggests the Buddha was already there at the time. It is unlikely that a sculpture of such magnitude would have been newly consecrated without any mention of a donor.

The Licchavi inscription is in almost perfect condition, in contrast with the inscription on the front of the base, which has suffered considerable damage despite being half the age. It is likely that the Licchavi inscription was always on the back of the base, and thus hidden from view or the tactile worship of devotees. This placement would be unusual, as most dedicatory inscriptions are incised on the front, rather than the rear, except in the case of smaller later bronzes, where often the inscription is found on the empty rear of a lotus pedestal. If the Licchavi inscription was originally on the front, then we must assume that at some point (perhaps in 1279) the position of the Buddha was reversed on the base and the new inscription carved. Because of the difference in the condition of the two

inscriptions, this would appear to be less likely than the possibility that we see the Buddha today in the same relationship to its stone base as was the case when it was first made and consecrated. Furthermore, the Licchavi inscription is carved on an elevated section of the stone base just behind the Buddha's feet; had the inscription been in front, it would have hidden the feet of the sculpture (see Fig 8, details)

Unfortunately it has not been possible to make a detailed close-up examination of the sculpture itself or of the base. From the photographs we have, it is clear that the feet of the Buddha are planted on a shallow oval two-level stepped subsidiary base, curved at the front corners. This subsidiary curved base is either part of the stone base, or is part of the Buddha and thus in metal (as we suspect is the case), or a combination of the two, with the top plate being in metal and the lower part in stone (Fig. 32, also see fig. 4, detail 5, base). Metal sculptures of standing Buddhas that have been separated from their original bases often have a flat base plate, as is the case of the copper standing Buddha in the upstairs shrine in Sankhu, whose base plate is embedded in a block of wood (fig. 18, detail 4). So at this point we really do not know exactly how the sculpture is attached to its base. A full physical examination of the connection between the metal sculpture and the stone base is much to be desired, and hopefully will be possible at some point in the future.



Fig. 32

In all cases where a sculpture is attached to a separately made base with an inscription, it is prudent to question whether they were made at the same time. It is partially this healthy skepticism which has created the controversy surrounding the origin of the Cleveland Buddha (figs. 1, 12), as technical analysis revealed that the sculpture and the base appear to be separate castings, allowing the supposition that the sculpture was made in India while the inscription on the base is clearly Nepalese.

The same uncertainty is true of the Guita Buddha. It is primarily this uncertainty that may lead scholars to hypothesize that the second option we have presented is correct, that the Buddha we now see, while certainly of a style older than the inscription of 1279, must be later than the original Licchavi inscription, and is a replacement of a somewhat later period. While this remains a possibility, it would seem strange that a further consecration of the original figure, of such an extraordinary size and presence, would have been consecrated on the same base as the original, without commemorating the replacement in some way in another inscription that would have been passed down.

In my first article regarding the dating of Nepalese metal sculptures, I wrote, "...it will be clear to the reader familiar with the corpus of Nepalese works of art in metal presently known to us, that the dates engraved on several of these sculptures are surprisingly early, and contrary to the opinion expressed by some scholars that Nepalese works of art are too often assigned unreasonably early dates, they seem to present some evidence that the reverse is in fact the case." [31]

In 2010, Mary Slusser, the author of the article whose title we have paraphrased here, presented evidence via radiocarbon testing that we have long underestimated the age of some of the greatest wood sculptures of the Kathmandu valley. Her reassessment brought the earliest wooden sculptures back from the previously earliest envisaged date of the 13th century by some 5 to 6 centuries, with the earliest wooden struts being dated by C14 to the period of CE 660-860, and two free standing sculptures even earlier, to ca. 531-680 [32].

We feel a similar reassessment may now be due for the dating of metal sculpture as well. If the Guita Buddha is indeed the bronze statue commissioned by the pious monk Yaśomitra in 542, then we must reassess the age of several of the other sculptures we have reviewed above.

There is still much we do not know about the Guita Buddha. Clearly a high copper content alloy and surely a hollow casting, no seams are visible in the surface that would indicate that it was joined together with separately cast pieces, as is often done for larger sculptures today. If it is a single pour, that is a stupendous feat of technology for any metal-casting tradition in any age. We have much to learn and hopefully further research can be carried out on this extraordinary work of Buddhist art.

One of the greatest and earliest metal sculptures of Nepal has been hidden in its late medieval disguise for centuries: the magnificent "bronze image of Lord Buddha" of 542 CE of Guita Bahi.

Footnotes

1. Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1975, "On the Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft", *Archives of Asian Art*, XXIX, pp 80 -94, with a reading and translation of the inscription of figs. 1 and 2 by Gautamvajra Vajracharya. Slusser's article was built on the groundbreaking work of Dr. Pratapaditya Pal, specifically his 1971 article "Three Dated Nepali Bronzes and Their Stylistic Significance.", where he noted "wild speculation among scholars" regarding the dating of Nepali bronzes, and the often dismissive attitude of early scholars regarding the antiquity of bronzes from Nepal (Pal, 1971, "Three Dated Nepali Bronzes and Their Stylistic Significance." *Archives of Asian Art*, vol. 25, 1971, pp 58-59).

2. A further study of the inscription is underway in Nepal, which may recommend some changes in the reading supplied by Gautamvajra Vajracharya in the article by Mary Slusser, (Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1975, p. 93).

3. Several scholars decided it was of Indian origin:

Stanislaw Czuma, "A Gupta-Style Bronze Buddha", *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 57, no. 2, (1970): 55-67.

John Guy, "Parading the Buddha in the Post-Gupta Age", *Orientalism*, March 2016, pp. 102-12 and

Aurora Galdi, "Travelling Icons and Travelling Donors: A Metal Buddha Image in The Cleveland Museum of Art", *Orientalism*, Vol. 49, No 1, Jan-Feb 2018: 96-102

Other scholars treat it as Nepalese:

Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1975, "On the Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft", *Archives of Asian Art*, XXIX, (1975-76) with reading and

translation of the inscription by Gautam Vajracharya, p.93.

Slusser, 1982, *Nepal Mandala*, Vol 2, pl 448.

Pal, Pratapaditya, 1978, *The Ideal Image*, [catalogue of the exhibition held at Asia House Gallery] (New York: The Asia Society) fig 71, p. 118.

von Schroeder, Ulrich, 1981, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, 74E.

Alsop, Ian, 2005, "Metal Image-casting in Nepal" in Van Alphen, ed, *Cast for Eternity*, (Antwerp: Ethnographic Museum) p. 103.

4. Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1975, "On the Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft", reading and translation of the inscription by Gautam Vajracharya, p. 93.

Also, Pal, Pratapaditya, 1975, *Nepal, Where the Gods are Young*, [catalogue of the exhibition held at Asia House Gallery] (New York: The Asia Society), no. 1 Buddha Śākyamuni, 7th c.:

von Schroeder, Ulrich, 1981, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, 75F, 7th century:

Vajracharya, Gautama V., 2016, *Nepalese Seasons: Rain and Ritual*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York p. 162-164, cat 52, Devavatara Buddha, 7th c.

5. This term, *gandhurī devatā* often applied to the presiding deity of a Buddhist vihāra has puzzled scholars. Kashinath Tamot has recently provided a convincing etymology tying the term to the prakrit/hybrid Sanskrit term *gandhakuti* (Tamot 2020). It is worth noting here that there are several identifications of the early standing Buddhas of Nepal. They have been traditionally called either Sakyamuni Buddha or Maitreya Buddha, often depending on their position within an ensemble or the style of their robe. Another popular designation among the Newars for the traditional Nepalese standing Buddha is *Devāvatara*, which is a reference to the story of the Buddha coming down from the Tushita heaven after visiting his mother (see also note 12).

6. Vajracarya, Herakaji, 1999 (N.S. 1119) *Guitahyā Bahi Vihāra Sangh (Gustala Mahāvihāra, Prathamaśrī mahāvihāra, Vasuccaśīla Mahāvihāra chagū adhyayana* (A study of the Guita Bahi vihāra Sangha), p. 53. The size of 6' 8" was given "without base" but has not been verified, and while it does not include the rectangular stone base, it may perhaps include the subsidiary base (see fig. 32). Vajracarya also noted that this is the only "main deity" (*gandhurī devatā*) that is positioned above ground level.

7. The *Dīpaṅkara* cult become popular in the Malla period, perhaps as early as the 14th century, and is still very popular today. The earliest documentary evidence of images of *Dīpaṅkara* is from the mid 15th c. (Michaels, 2013, p 320). *Guita Bahi* holds an important place in the *Dīpaṅkara* cult in the Kathmandu valley, and takes its modern name from the legends associated with the *Dīpaṅkara* story: *Dīpavati Nagare Sarvānandanrpa Samskārita Padmocaśrī Māhavihāra*. Several important Newar Buddhist rituals are closely connected with the worship of *Dīpaṅkara*, including the annual *Pañcadān* ("five offerings") festival; the Patan observance of *Pañcadān* starts at *Guita Bahi*. (Vajracarya, Herakaji, 1999, p. 55, nos. 14 & 15).

8. Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1982, *Nepal Mandala*, two vols. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), vol. 2, plates 485, 486, "copper repousse, 13th c. (?);

Vajracarya, Herakaji, 1999 (N.S. 1119) *Guitahyā Bahi Vihāra Sangh (Gustala Mahāvihāra, Prathamaśrī mahāvihāra, Vasuccaśīla Mahāvihāra chagū adhyayana* (A study of the Guita Bahi vihāra Sangha) (*Dīpavati Putsakālaya, Guita, Patan*), 2nd fig before p. 1 Michaels, Axel, 2013, "From Syncretism to Transculturality: The *Dīpaṅkara* Procession in the Kathmandu Valley" in Hüsken/Michaels, editors, *South Asian Festivals on the Move*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag), pp 317-342. Fig. 2, 13th c.

The later repoussé covering has acted as a kind of disguise. Had this covering not been in place the real date of the sculpture might have been surmised much earlier. This situation is repeated in the case of several other sculptures in the Kathmandu valley.

9. Bijayaratra Shakyā, Rajan Shakyā and Phalsman Shakyā are three extraordinary artists and friends who are also art history sleuths with an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of Himalayan metals arts. Phalsman is a master engraver, and Bijay and Rajan are master lost-wax sculptors. They have taken me to many wonderful places in Patan, and it was through them that I first saw not only the astonishing Buddha of *Guita* but also the Buddha of the International Meditation Centre near *Śaṅkhamūl* (see Fig. 17 detail 2). Their close relationship with *Guita Bahi* was reinforced by the work they carried out with several other artists in recreating the wonderful clay sculptures of *Amoghapaśa Lokeśvara* in *Vasuccaśīla Māhavihāra* in *Guita* (Shakyā, Gyanendra, 2010).

10. Vajracarya, Herakaji, 1999 (N.S. 1119) *Guita Vihāra Sangh (Gustala Mahāvihāra, Prathamaśrī mahāvihāra, Vasuccaśīla Mahāvihāra chagū adhyayana* (A study of the Guita Bahi vihāra Sangha), p. 61, reading: translation in Newari by Shantaharsha Vajracharya 1999, fn 38, p. 87.

11. see Appendix 1 for a full reading, translation and notes on this important inscription, and also **The Buddha of Guita Bahi: Part II Inscriptions and Historical Notes**, by Kashinath Tamot, forthcoming on asianart.com at asianart.com/articles/guita/part2. Here is a rough English translation based on the Newari of Shantaharsha Vajracharya in Vajracarya, Herakaji, 1999, fn 38, p. 87 and the Nepali translation of Dhanavajra Vajracharya (Vajracharya, Dhanavajra, 2011, p. 139):

Salutations to the Buddha, He who has defeated anger and all other enemies, who has received the full initiation of the kingdom of the dharma; may the mighty (bira) Buddha, adorned with all qualities, bless all the beings of the three worlds forever.

The great city of Lalitpur is renowned in all directions. There are found many temples (where men of virtue) practice knowledge. On the Eastern side of this great city, there is the beautiful vihāra of Gusatala. There the bhikṣu called Yatīndra Gautamaśrī, of great fame, who dispels the darkness... of the kaliyuga through wisdom and the daily practice of the mantra, oversees the saṅgha of the pious bhikṣus of the monastery. This saintly person with the help of the entire saṅgha of bhikṣus, established other viharas in Lalitpur. His disciple, Kṣāntīśrī, was best of all those who observed the vows and the path.

On the first of the bright half of Māgh in the year 399, he systematically restored the earthquake-damaged monastery. They consecrated the god(s) and performed the *lākṣahuti* fire sacrifice, and raised the great flag. By the virtue of this act, may the king reign piously, may the rain come and the earth be filled with grain. May it be good for all mankind.

12. The only damage visible on the statue are the missing little finger of the right hand, the losses of most of the earlobes of both ears, and a very small nick on the nose of the Buddha, all of these losses are visible in both pre- and post- earthquake photographs (see fig. 4 and details).

13. Rajbanshi, Shyam Sundar, 2016, "Pāṭan guitabahiko aprakāśita licchavikālakā abhilekha. श्यामसुन्दर राजवंशी, "पाटन गुड्डतबहीको अप्रकाशित लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख" in *Abhilekha*, journal of the National Archives, (vol. 33, 2016:74-76) See also Appendix 1, Appendix 1, Inscription 4: **The Guita Bahi Buddha Licchavi Inscription** by Kashinath Tamot with Dr. Nayanath Paudel

<http://asianart.com/articles/guita/part1/app8.html>.

See also Part II of this article, **The Buddha of Guita Bahi: Inscriptions and Historical Notes**, by Kashinath Tamot, forthcoming in asianart.com/articles/guita/part2/.

14. a translation of Rajbanshi, Shyam Sundar, 2016, "Pāṭan gūitabahīko aprakāśita licchavikālākā abhilekha. (Unpublished inscription of Licchavi Period from Patan Guita Bahi)". *Abhilekha* (National Archives, Kathmandu), No. 33 (VS 2072), pp. 74-76.

For a full treatment of this inscription please see AppenAppendix 1, Inscription 4 : The Guita Bahi Buddha Licchavi Inscription by Kashinath Tamot with Dr. Nayanath Paudel 1, Inscription 4: **The Guita Bahi Buddha Licchavi Inscription** by Kashinath Tamot with Dr. Nayanath Paudel <http://asianart.com/articles/guita/part1/app8.html>.

See also Part II of this article, **The Buddha of Guita Bahi: Inscriptions and Historical Notes**, by Kashinath Tamot, forthcoming in asianart.com/articles/guita/part2/.

15. For further details and an image of the Avalokiteśvara sculpture, see Appendix 1, Inscription 4, **The Guita Bahi Buddha Licchavi Inscription** by Kashinath Tamot with Dr. Nayanath Paudel <http://asianart.com/articles/guita/part1/app8.html>.

16. Ulrich von Schroeder's books are indispensable guides to the art of the entire Himalayan region and India. In addition to his encyclopedic volumes, he has offered free use – as long as the published credits are included - of a myriad of photographs via the DVD that was offered with his volume *108 Buddhist Statues in Tibet* – subsequently published on jokhangsculpture.com, and the SD card that accompanies Vol II of his recently released *Nepalese Stone Sculptures*. The jokhangsculpture.com images are identified as such wherever they are used in the images below, and the images from the Nepalese Stone Sculptures SD card are identified by the marker "NSS SD card". From these notes in the captions the reader will very quickly see how much we are indebted to Ulrich von Schroeder's tireless scholarship and generous sharing of images. In the latter effort he has been joined by numerous museums that have abandoned the practice of controlling the release of images of their holdings and have instead made the images available to all users, an admirable and rational change from previous practice.

17. von Schroeder, Ulrich, 2019, *Nepalese Stone Sculptures, two vols, vol II, Buddhist* p. 880.

18. A Nepalese scholar and epigraphist is proposing an alternate reading of the inscription which may change the suggested date of this sculpture. This study will be published soon.

19. Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1975, "On the Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft", *Archives of Asian Art*, XXIX, (1975-76), p. 81, also n. 5.

20. This variation is of some importance in comparing the Nepalese tradition versus the Indian. It should be noted that Ulrich von Schroeder, in von Schroeder, 2001, *Buddhist Sculpture in Tibet*, two vols, vol. One; *Indian & Nepalese*, records four other sculptures with this arrangement of the hands, (nos 136A-B, 137A-C, 137D-E, and 141C-E, which we illustrate here as fig. 23). See also note 21.

21. We will be referring to many images of the standing Buddha in this article. Since our investigation is largely art historical, we will not address two issues that are involved with the iconography and identity of these figures.

One issue involves the variation in the positions of the hands for standing Buddha figures from Nepal and India. The first arrangement has the right hand in "abhaya mudrā" or the gesture of fearlessness, and the left hand holding the hem of the robe either down beside the left leg or at about waist height. This arrangement of the hands of the Buddha is common in bronzes (and stone sculptures) attributed to Gupta India, but is also found in some Nepalese depictions (see figs 1/12, 13, 16, and 23). Another arrangement, usually (but not always) found in Nepalese sculptures, and seen in the Guita Buddha, shows the Buddha standing with his right hand open, down along his right side, a gesture either interpreted as varada mudrā, the gesture of giving or charity, or as Viśvavyākaraṇa mudrā; and with the left hand holding the tip of the robe raised near the left shoulder. The variation in the name for the gesture of the right hand seems to depend on the identification of the figure as either Śākyamuni (varada) or Maitreya (Viśvavyākaraṇa).

The other issue regards the iconographical identification of the Nepalese standing Buddha figures. They are identified as Buddha Śākyamuni, Maitreya or sometimes, Devāvatara (see Vajracharya, Gautama V., 2016, pp 162-164, cat 52). Often these identifications are based on the appearance of the robe (smooth or pleated) and /or the positions of the hands, as we see above in the two definitions of the most common gesture of the right hand in Nepalese standing Buddhas.

We will not use these identifications in this article where we will usually refer to the images as "standing Buddha" (although in the full captions to images we will note in the citations when more specific identifications are used by other authors).

These issues are important and of considerable interest, but we will not address them in this article.

22. Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1982, *Nepal Mandala*, pl. 458.

23. This arrangement of the robe is more often found in the Indian Pala tradition and subsequent Buddhist styles influenced by the Pala tradition.

24. von Schroeder dated it to 11/12th c. in his earlier *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet* (2001); it is not unusual for scholars to reassess their opinions of dating occasionally.

25. von Schroeder, Ulrich, 2019, *Nepalese Stone Sculptures, two vols, vol II, Buddhist* pp 898 – 903, pl 281A – 283F.

26. The various reading of Indian scholars, 343, 233, 353 (later corrected to 213), or 313 were arrived at assuming that the Gupta era of CE 319/320 was the era of the inscription, while Vajracharya's reading is based on the Śaka era of CE 78. Dr. Czuma's preferred reading, 313 (300-10-3), resulted in the CE date 632/633 he proposed in his first article on the sculpture. Dr. Czuma did contemplate a Nepalese origin, which was suggested by some of the language in the inscription and by the supposed origin of the sculpture from the Nepalese Terai, but the Nepalese traditional Śaka era or other eras "could not even be considered because they will be much too early for the style of the Cleveland Museum figure" if the reading of 313 (300-10-3) was accepted (p. 63). Gautam Vajracharya read the first character as 500 (500-10-3) which as Śaka samvat equaled CE 591, which ended up being only 41 or 42 years earlier than the date arrived at by Czuma' Gupta era 313 reading. One of the problems affecting these readings stems from the fact that the characters for 100, 200, 300 and 500 in the Licchavi character set are not that different from each other, and in an inscription which is not completely pristine, confusion can occur.

A further study of this inscription is underway by several scholars in Nepal.

27. Two other examples of controversy surrounding dates involve figures of Visnu. A small sculpture of Visnu appeared briefly in the Bombay market sometime around 1971, and was sufficiently well-photographed by the then Prince of Wales Museum to allow the inscription to be read with the year as "172". Scholars disagreed on the era this date referred to. Several scholars assigned it to the Nepal Samvat, resulting in a CE date of 1052 (see Pal 1971, p. 60-61, also n. 10; von Schoeder, 1981, fig. 83c, p. 322; Slusser, 1982, Vol 1, app. IV-1, no. 171, where era is shown as (NS?)). One scholar considered this a surprisingly early date on stylistic grounds (Khandalavala, p. 34). Later, scholars attributed the date to the Manadeva era or Amsuvarman era of the late Licchavi period resulting in 748 CE; this latter view has now generally been agreed upon. (Pal 1971, note 10; Alsop 1984 pp 26-31; Vajracharya G, 2012, 10-12; Vajracharya, D, 1973, inscription no. 171, pp 590-591). This is another example of the problem of assigning the correct era to a date, although in this case the reading was not in dispute. In the case of the Cleveland Buddha, the readings **and** the eras differed, it was dated first using the Gupta era with one reading (300-10-3) and then using the Śaka era with another reading (500-10-3). Another Viṣṇu sculpture, a gilt repousse plaque of the god in the Los Angeles County Museum, was the source of confusion caused by an unusual way of writing the date. The year was written "in words" as "trayasamadhike vatsarake śate" which, with the help of Dhanavajra Vajracharya, was interpreted by the author as "in the year 103" or CE 983 (Alsop, 1984, 33); Dhanavajra's nephew Gautamvajra Vajracharya agreed with the reading but corrected the translation to "in the year, (which is) three times more than a hundred" that is, "in the year 300" , or CE 1180, which solved the knotty problem of the appearance of so many late elements in the plaque (Vajracharya G., 2012, pp 16-17; Alsop, 2015, <https://www.asianart.com/articles/visnu/index.html>).

28. The inscription has not yet been read and translated in full, although previous research indicates it "names several donors who dedicate the merit from commissioning this image to the attainment of supreme knowledge (i.e. Buddhahood) by their teachers, kinsfolk and all sentient beings." (Zwalf, ed. 1984 p. 122). A Nepalese epigraphist, Nayanath Paudel, has indicated he feels the paleography would indicate a time around the time of Amshuvarma, early 7th century, thus in the middle range of the estimates given by previous scholars (Paudel, Nayanath, 2020, forthcoming.)

29. von Schroeder, Ulrich, 2019, *Nepalese Stone Sculptures*, two vols, *vol II, Buddhist* fig. VII-7, 280A and 280B p. 878 and 896. Although many scholars dated this huge sculpture to an early period, others did not. Dr. Pratapditya Pal, in his seminal 1974 treatise *Art of Nepal: Part I, Sculpture*, found it odd that this sculpture (which he did not include in his plates) survived the destructive raid of 1349 of Sultan Samsud-din without "even a surface scratch" and noted that, along with another sculpture, it poses an "almost insoluble problem in the history of Nepali sculpture"; he dated the smaller of the two sculptures (von Schroeder, 2019, 280A) to the 17th century (Pal, 1974, pp 54-55, 54, n. 12, and fig. 78).

30. See *The Standing Buddha of Guita Bahi: Part II Inscriptions and Historical Notes*, by Kashinath Tamot, forthcoming on asianart.com, for further information on medieval earthquakes from Nepalese historical records. A Wikipedia page sums up earthquakes in Nepal from 1255 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_earthquakes_in_Nepal.

31. Alsop, Ian, 1984, "Five Dated Nepalese Metal Sculptures", in *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. XLV, 2/3., p. 208.

32. Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 2010, *The Antiquity of Nepalese Wood Carving: A Reassessment*, appendix 2, p. 262).

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हेराकाजी वज्राचार्य (अन्वेषक) गृह्यतःया भी विहार संघ (गुस्ताला महाविहार, प्रथमश्री महाविहार, वसुन्वशील महाविहार) छमू अध्ययन ने सं १९९९, यल (दीपवती पुस्तकालय, गृह्यत, यल)

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Appendix 1: The Inscriptions

In this appendix we present the inscriptions found on the four sculptures in this article that bear inscriptions.

These four sculptures are shown below: we use the Fig. nos found in the article. First is the Standing Buddha in the Cleveland Museum of Art, (fig. 1/fig.12) bearing an inscription on its separately cast base of 591 AD. The second is the Standing Buddha in the Kimbell Museum (fig. 2/fig. 15), with an undated inscription on its integral base generally assigned to the 7th century. The third is the stone Standing Buddha of the British Museum (fig. 14) , again with an undated inscription on its integral base, which has been dated between the 6th to the 8th century. And the fourth is the Standing Buddha of Guita, (fig. 4) the subject of this article, which bears two dated inscriptions on its separate stone pedestal, a long inscription on the front with the date 1279, and a short inscription on the rear dated 542.

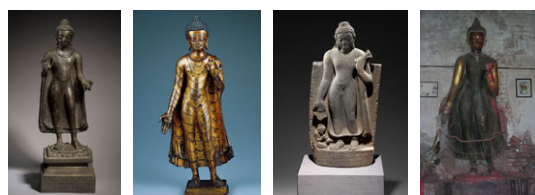


Fig. 1/12

Fig. 2/15

Fig. 14

Fig. 4

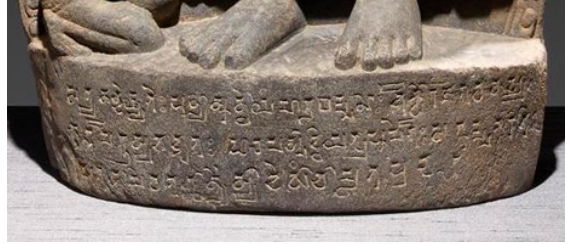
In the large pages linked from the thumbnails below we offer photographs of the inscriptions and the associated readings and translations of figs. 1, 2 and 14.



Inscription 1
Inscription fig. 1/12



Inscription 2
Inscription fig. 2/15



Inscription 3
Inscription fig. 14

In the large pages linked from the thumbnail below we offer photographs and rubbings of the inscriptions on the Standing Buddha of Guita, both the early Licchavi inscription of 546 on the rear, and the later inscription of 1279 on the front of the stone pedestal of the sculpture:



Inscription 4
Inscription fig. 4 rear
dated CE 542



Inscription 5
Inscription fig. 4 front
dated 1279