

## 1.6 Seeing the Buddha 2

### Representations of the Buddha After His Passing

By Piya Tan ©2003

Main source: Piyasilo, *The Image of the Buddha*, 1988a.

#### THE FIRST BUDDHA IMAGES

The first images of the Buddha were **sculptures in human form** that appeared in **Gandhāra** (northeast Pakistan) and in **Mathurā** (northern India, on the Yamuna River, NW of Agra) during the last half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Understandably, these were areas ruled by foreign powers: the Greeks in Gandhāra and the Scythians (Śakas) in Mathurā.

In Gandhāra art, the Buddha was at first depicted in approximately human size, equal in size as the other figures in the **reliefs** though he was the central figure. Later, however, the Buddha figure was made larger than the surrounding ones. Finally, they appeared independently of the biographical contexts, and the first Buddha images as we commonly know them appeared.

Mathurā and Gandhāra were important centres of Buddhist art. Many Buddhist inscriptions dating from the reign of the Greeks, the Śakas, the Parthians (Pahlavas) and the Kushans have been found there, testifying to its importance in the history of Buddhism.



### The first Buddha images



(Phot. Royal Academy of Arts, London.)



- Gandhari Buddha images: Greek.

Mathura Buddha images: Asian & Mixed