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This gray schist Buddha (India, Gandhara, 2nd-4th century) can be seen in the exhibition *Asian Orientations: Treasures from Honolulu's Oriental Art Society*, July 9–August 18. The Cobey Black Collection

Seated Buddha

Gandhara, from Taxila, Pakistan or Swat

2nd-3rd century AD

Grey Schist

Gift of Cobey Black, in memory of Brigadier General Edwin F. Black,
1986 (5491.1)

The Buddha, who lived in the 6th century B.C., was not depicted in human form until the Kushan dynasty, 1st -3rd centuries A.D. There were two main geographical centers under the Kushanas, one comprising the ancient region of Bactro-Gandhara (Northwest Pakistan and Afghanistan), and the other at Mathura, in Northern India. In Mathura the indigenous Indian visual tradition predominated. In Gandhara, which lay close to the trade route across India from the Roman Empire to China, there were stylistic influences from the classical Greco-Roman world. The subject matter and iconography of the images are, however, entirely Indian.

Buddha images may be identified by a number of iconographical signs. Principal among these is the *ushnisha*, a bump on top of Buddha's head which is interpreted as a receptacle for his supernatural wisdom. In the Gandharan style, the *ushnisha* is generally concealed by wavy hair fashioned in a classical topknot, as seen here. On the Buddha's forehead is the *urna*, which originated as a tuft of hair between the eyebrows, and symbolizes the wisdom of insight.